

## Tigers defenseman Holden commits to NCAA D3 Nichols College Bisons in Massachusetts

The Aurora Junior A Tigers announced last week their veteran defenseman Christian Holden has committed to the NCAA D3 Nichols College Bisons.

Holden is the third Tiger from the Class of 2025 to earn a US hockey scholarship this season. He joins fellow blueliner Jack Rispin who committed to the Lake Forest College Foresters and speedy centreman Andreas Mikrogiannakis who committed to the Rochester Institute of Technology Tigers.

The Stouffville resident explained why he chose Nichols College as his post-secondary destination.

“After reviewing the schools on my list, Nichols really stood out. On the hockey side, they've had lots of recent success and it's a strong hockey program. Nichols College is also a business school and I was impressed with their accreditations. It was a big selling point for me. It's a perfect blend of athletics and academics. The academics had to match the hockey.”

Holden is also looking forward to living in Dudley, Massachusetts.

“Another reason I chose Nichols was the location?it's close to Boston?about a 40-minute drive ? and it'll be great to see a Bruins game. It's also a small town and I'm from Stouffville so that's a selling feature. The town centers around the university and living there is like if Nichols was placed in the centre of Stouffville.”

The graduate of Bill Hogarth Secondary School in 2022 will be earning a “four-year Business degree with a specialty in Finance.”

“I enjoy studying Economics and I took a number of business courses in high school to prepare myself for this degree.”

Holden delineated his goals as a student-athlete at Nichols College.

“Ideally, I have a couple of options and I am bit torn. If I have the opportunity to play pro hockey, that will be great and I hope to pursue that option. But, that being said, if I have a great job opportunity after graduation, I can start my career in business. The school will give me the opportunity to either keep playing hockey at the next level or to join the corporate world. They have a co-op program at Nichols so that will give me great experience.”

Holden expressed his appreciation to the Aurora Tigers' management for helping him commit to Nichols College: “Starting with Jim Thomson?Jim gave me a chance to play for three seasons with the Tigers and gave me the Junior A opportunity after having a rough time in my rookie season with the Stouffville Spirit. Jim also gave me Lee Burton as a contact who works alongside Jim to place players.”

In addition to thanking Thomson and Burton for their timely help, the 6'7", 228-pound defenseman also thanked “James Thomson?he was my D coach with the Tigers and he runs Summer D-skates. He's helped me a ton to be a better defenseman. My Head Coaches with the Tigers, Darcy Roy and Tom Milne, helped me become a better player, too.”

When asked about the highlight of his three years as a Junior A Tiger, Holden offered two memorable moments.

“One of my favorite experiences was the home opener three years ago against Markham?it was a double overtime game and it was a crazy win for us. The crowd was electric and the barn was packed. I got into a fight, too. It was an exciting game to be a part of that game. The school games were great, too. When we played North York two years ago and we had 800 kids in the seats ? they were loud and it was a great atmosphere.”

Holden, having achieved his dream of playing US College hockey, offered advice to young hockey players with similar goals: "It might sound like a bit of a cliché, but never give up on your dreams."

"I was sent down in my first year in Junior and I was worried about getting back to the OJHL. I'd encourage the kids to work through injuries, scratches all the ups and downs. There will be a ton of challenges. Stay on track and stay focused."

Sage advice from a graduating Aurora Tiger and the pride of Stouffville.

Christian Holden reports to the Nichols College Bisons on August 23 to play his inaugural season in the Conference of New England.

**By Jim Stewart**