

## Top NHL prospect Letourneau bids adieu to SAC, sets sights on Boston College

Dean Letourneau took time from a wonderfully busy schedule to discuss both his stellar 2023-24 season with the SAC Saints and an impressive timeline of future events.

When we met in the Le Brier Family Arena lounge on Friday morning, the 6'7" Saints centre was hours away from his high school graduation at SAC, weeks away from being a prospective Top 30 selection in the NHL draft, and months away from going to Boston College to begin his NCAA playing career and business degree studies.

It's evident that this polite young man from Braeside, ON, is living the Canadian hockey dream and he settled into our interview like a seasoned pro.

Being interviewed has become old hat for this articulate eighteen-year-old. Letourneau was interviewed by 25 teams at the NHL's Scouting Combine held in Buffalo, NY, last week. He has been connected to at least three NHL teams' draft plans, including the New York Rangers, Calgary Flames, and Pittsburgh Penguins.

Letourneau, who also played field lacrosse for the Saints this Spring, was an imposing presence at the Combine in Buffalo and his impressive statistics from the 2023-24 season have created a stir in hockey circles.

The talented, smooth-skating forward tallied 61 goals and 66 assists for 127 points in 56 games for SAC's First Hockey squad. He led the Prep Hockey Conference—the top high school hockey league in North America—with 25 points (14 goals and 11 assists) in 14 games.

Despite these individual accomplishments, Letourneau acknowledged that the highlight of his Saints' career was our team winning the MacPherson Tournament this year.

We made that one of our team goals at the beginning of the season. It was really exciting that our leadership group was able to win our school's tenth championship in 40 years of running the tournament. I was with these guys when we had our disappointing third place finish last season. We remembered what that was like to finish out of the finals so we were happy to leave behind a winning legacy. We won two tournaments this year and we've set a high standard for next year's team.

Letourneau, who was named the MacPherson Tournament's MVP, was honored to be named the top player at the prep school hockey showcase event.

I was pretty happy to be selected as the MVP, but I was happier that we won the tournament. It was really cool to beat Bishop Kearney in the championship final. We hadn't beaten them this year before the MacPherson—we lost our first two league games against them—so beating them twice on our home ice was another great part of winning the championship.

In addition to winning championships with his hockey teammates, Letourneau reflected on the best aspects of attending St. Andrew's College for Grades 11 and 12: Meeting all my new friends, coming into a school with great traditions, and playing hockey.

Doing all these things I love made this a special place for two years.

In addition to reflecting on a golden season with the Saints and treasured memories at SAC, Letourneau is also looking ahead fondly to being a student-athlete at Boston College in September.

I'm going to study business at Boston College, following in my dad's footsteps. My academic strengths include Math and Accounting so I'll be working on a business degree while playing college hockey.

Although Letourneau has his sights on Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts in the autumn and has committed to Boston College for the 2024-25 NCAA season, he is also looking forward to attending the NHL draft in Las Vegas, Nevada with his family in late-June.

Projected by TSN's Bob McKenzie to be selected 32nd and Sportsnet's Sam Cosentino to be selected 30th, the big-bodied centre is ranked 20th among North American skaters by the NHL's Central Scouting.

Both Sportsnet's Jason Bukala and Elite Prospects have him ranked 40th in the draft.

When asked if he had a preferred team to be drafted by on Friday, June 28, Letourneau noted that "there isn't a preference. I'd love to go to any team that drafts me."

"It'll be an honor. There will be a lot of excitement in Vegas with my family with me and waiting for my name to be called. Playing in the NHL has been a dream for me."

It's evident that on June 28-29, high-scoring Dean Letourneau will join a long line of fine St. Andrew's College student-athletes to be drafted by an NHL team. By being drafted, he'll make his final contribution to the rich history of the prep school that has been his home away from home for the last two years.

**By Jim Stewart**