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NHL Draft Guide

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≡ RANKED PROSPECTS (1-40)

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
1	Connor Bedard	C	Regina Pats	WHL	DY	A	42
2	Adam Fantilli	C	Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	DY	A	52
3	Leo Carlsson	LW/C	Örebro HK	SHL	DY	A	63
4	Matvei Michkov	RW	SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	DY	A	75
5	Zach Benson	LW	Winnipeg Ice	WHL	DY	A	91
6	Ryan Leonard	RW/C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	103
7	Will Smith	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	113
8	Oliver Moore	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	126
9	David Reinbacher	D	EHC Klotten	NL	DY	A	138
10	Dmitri Simashev	D	Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	DY	A	147
11	Dalibor Dvorsky	C	AIK	HockeyAllsvenskan	DY	A	157
12	Quentin Musty	LW	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	A	172
13	Gracyn Sawchyn	C/RW	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	A	182
14	Calum Ritchie	C	Oshawa Generals	OHL	DY	A	191
15	Axel Sandin Pellikka	D	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	A	201
16	Matthew Wood	LW/C	Univ. of Connecticut	NCAA	DY	A	213
17	Colby Barlow	RW	Owen Sound Attack	OHL	DY	A	222
18	Gabe Perreault	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	230
19	Andrew Cristall	LW	Kelowna Rockets	WHL	DY	A	239
20	Samuel Honzek	LW	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	A	253
21	Gavin Brindley	RW	Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	DY	A	261
22	Brayden Yager	C	Moose Jaw Warriors	WHL	DY	A	270
23	Tom Willander	D	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	A	278
24	Daniil But	RW	Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	DY	A	287
25	Eduard Šalé	RW	HC Kometa Brno U20	Czechia U20	DY	A	296
26	Nate Danielson	C	Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	DY	A	307
27	Riley Heidt	C	Prince George Cougars	WHL	DY	B	315
28	Oscar Fisker Mølgaard	C	HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	329
29	Jayden Perron	RW	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	B	339
30	Mikhail Gulyayev	D	Omskie Yastreby	MHL	DY	B	349
31	Ethan Gauthier	RW	Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	DY	B	361
32	Beau Akey	D	Barrie Colts	OHL	DY	B	368
33	Nick Lardis	RW	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	DY	B	376
34	Luca Cagnoni	D	Portland Winterhawks	WHL	DY	B	384
35	Bradly Nadeau	C	Penticton Vees	BCHL	DY	B	393
36	Otto Stenberg	LW/C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	398
37	Caden Price	D	Kelowna Rockets	WHL	DY	B	410
38	Lukas Dragicevic	D	Tri-City Americans	WHL	DY	B	420
39	Tanner Molendyk	D	Saskatoon Blades	WHL	DY	B	429
40	Koehn Ziemmer	RW	Prince George Cougars	WHL	DY	B	438

≡ RANKED PROSPECTS (41-80)

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
41	Felix Nilsson	C	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	449
42	David Edstrom	C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	456
43	Danny Nelson	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	462
44	Kalan Lind	C/LW	Red Deer Rebels	WHL	DY	B	468
45	Trey Augustine	G	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	474
46	Matthew Mania	D	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	B	476
47	Charlie Stramel	C	Univ. of Wisconsin	NCAA	DY	B	482
48	William Whitelaw	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	B	488
49	Joseph Willis	LW/C	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	B	497
50	Aram Minnetian	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	504
51	Quinton Burns	D	Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	DY	B	512
52	Hunter Brzustewicz	D	Kitchener Rangers	OHL	DY	B	518
53	Coulson Pitre	RW	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	B	525
54	Michael Hrabal	G	Omaha Lancers	USHL	DY	B	531
55	Carter Sotheran	D	Portland Winterhawks	WHL	DY	B	533
56	Oliver Bonk	D	London Knights	OHL	DY	B	537
57	Timur Mukhanov	RW	Omskie Yastreby	MHL	DY	B	544
58	Beckett Hendrickson	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	551
59	Alexander Rykov	RW	Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk	MHL	DY	B	555
60	Anton Wahlberg	LW	Malmö Redhawks J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	561
61	Lenni Hämeenaho	RW/LW	Ässät	Liiga	DY	B	567
62	Kasper Halttunen	RW	HIFK	Liiga	DY	B	573
63	Connor Levis	RW/C	Kamloops Blazers	WHL	DY	B	583
64	Noah Dower Nilsson	LW/C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	587
65	Alex Čiernik	RW	Södertälje SK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	595
66	Easton Cowan	C	London Knights	OHL	DY	B	601
67	Juraj Pekarcik	LW	HK Nitra	Slovakia	DY	B	607
68	Carson Rehkopf	C/RW	Kitchener Rangers	OHL	DY	B	612
69	Aydar Suniev	LW	Penticton Vees	BCHL	DY	B	617
70	Gavin McCarthy	D	Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	DY	C	623
71	Étienne Morin	D	Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	DY	C	627
72	Roman Kantserov	RW	Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk	MHL	DY	C	633
73	Jacob Fowler	G	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	638
74	Theo Lindstein	D	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	640
75	Andrew Strathmann	D	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	648
76	Cameron Allen	D	Guelph Storm	OHL	DY	C	657
77	Andrew Gibson	D	Soo Greyhounds	OHL	DY	C	667
78	Maxim Štrbák	D	Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	DY	C	672
79	Denver Barkey	C	London Knights	OHL	DY	C	678
80	Tuomas Uronen	RW	HIFK U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	685

≡ RANKED PROSPECTS (81-120)

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
81	Mathieu Cataford	RW	Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	DY	C	691
82	Luca Pinelli	C	Ottawa 67's	OHL	DY	C	696
83	Damian Clara	G	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	702
84	Hoyt Stanley	D	Victoria Grizzlies	BCHL	DY	C	704
85	Felix Unger Sörum	RW/LW	Leksands IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	708
86	Albert Wikman	D	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	713
87	Luke Coughlin	D	Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	DY	C	718
88	Alexander Hellnemo	G	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	722
89	Jake Fisher	C	Cretin-Derham Hall	USHS-MN	DY	C	724
90	Rodwin Dionicio	D	Windsor Spitfires	OHL	D+1	C	730
91	Vojtech Port	D	Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	DY	C	737
92	Aiden Fink	RW	Brooks Bandits	AJHL	DY	C	740
93	Francesco Dell'elce	D	St. Andrew's College	CISAA	DY	C	743
94	Juha Jatkola	G	KalPa	Liiga	D+3	C	748
95	Jesse Kiiskinen	RW	Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	750
96	Rasmus Kumpulainen	C	Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	757
97	Jakub Dvořák	D	Bílí Tygři Liberec	Czechia	DY	C	763
98	Jayson Shaugabay	C	Warroad High	USHS-MN	DY	C	769
99	Noel Nordh	RW	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	775
100	Adam Gajan	G	Chippewa Steel	NAHL	D+1	C	780
101	Hudson Thornton	D	Prince George Cougars	WHL	D+1	C	782
102	Tommaso De Luca	C	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	C	793
103	Jordan Tourigny	D	Shawinigan Cataractes	QMJHL	DY	C	796
104	Andrei Loshko	C	Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	DY	C	800
105	Gavyn Thoreson	LW	Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	DY	C	803
106	Cole Knuble	RW	Fargo Force	USHL	D+1	C	809
107	Isac Hedqvist	LW/C	Luleå HF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	815
108	Dylan MacKinnon	D	Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	DY	C	820
109	Carson Bjarnason	G	Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	DY	C	825
110	Jimmy Clark	C	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	DY	C	827
111	Cole Brown	RW	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	DY	C	831
112	Nico Myatovic	C/RW	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	C	834
113	Saige Weinstein	D	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	C	838
114	Egor Sidorov	LW	Saskatoon Blades	WHL	D+1	C	841
115	Martin Misiak	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	846
116	Zach Nehring	RW	Shattuck St. Mary's 18U Prep	USHS-Prep	DY	C	850
117	Chase Cheslock	D	Rogers	USHS-MN	DY	C	854
118	Paul Fischer	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	859
119	Luke Mittelstadt	D	Univ. of Minnesota	NCAA	D+1	C	862
120	Brady Cleveland	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	868

≡ RANKED PROSPECTS (121-136)

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
121	Michael Hagens	D	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	C	871
122	Donovan McCoy	D	Peterborough Petes	OHL	DY	C	874
123	Griffin Erdman	LW	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	C	878
124	Alex Pharand	C	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	C	881
125	Lucas St. Louis	D	Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	DY	C	884
126	Alex Weiermair	C/RW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	888
127	Jonathan Castagna	C	St. Andrew's College	CISAA	DY	C	891
128	Carey Terrance	C	Erie Otters	OHL	DY	C	896
129	Tyler Peddle	LW	Drummondville Voltigeurs	QMJHL	DY	C	901
130	Arttu Kärki	D	Tappara U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	904
131	Kalem Parker	D	Victoria Royals	WHL	DY	C	909
132	Noah Chadwick	D	Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	DY	C	913
133	Zeb Forsfjäll	C/LW	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	916
134	Michael Burchill	LW	Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	DY	C	921
135	Emil Pieniniemi	D	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	924
136	Ignat Lutfullin	RW	SKA-Varyagi im. Morozova	MHL	DY	C	929

≡ ALL PROSPECTS (ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Chris Able	D	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	F	1569
	Tanner Adams	C	Tri-City Storm	USHL	DY	C	1018
	David Adaszynski	LW	Calgary Hitmen	WHL	DY	F	1598
32	Beau Akey	D	Barrie Colts	OHL	DY	B	368
	Arttu Alasiurua	C	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	D	1092
76	Cameron Allen	D	Guelph Storm	OHL	DY	C	657
	Vilmer Alriksson	LW	Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1510
	Hunter Anderson	LW	Shattuck St. Mary's 18U Prep	USHS-Prep	DY	F	1378
	Matthew Andonovski	D	Kitchener Rangers	OHL	DY	F	1416
	Reid Andresen	D	Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	DY	F	1601
	Ivan Anoshko	C	Dinamo-Shinnik Bobruysk	MHL	DY	F	1491
	Alexander Assadourian	C/LW	Niagara IceDogs	OHL	DY	F	1418
45	Trey Augustine	G	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	474
	Samuel Barčík	D	HKM Zvolen	Slovakia	DY	F	1339
79	Denver Barkey	C	London Knights	OHL	DY	C	678
17	Colby Barlow	RW	Owen Sound Attack	OHL	DY	A	222
	Alexis Beaulac	D	Shawinigan Cataractes	QMJHL	DY	F	1460
	Owen Beckner	C	Salmon Arm Silverbacks	BCHL	DY	F	1332
1	Connor Bedard	C	Regina Pats	WHL	DY	A	42
5	Zach Benson	LW	Winnipeg Ice	WHL	DY	A	91
	Patriks Berezins	G	Tri-City Storm	USHL	D+2	D	1315
	Arvid Bergström	D	Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	1003
	Tristan Bertucci	D	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	C	951
	Attilio Biasca	C	Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	D+2	D	1198
	Kevin Bicker	LW	Jungalder Mannheim U20	DNL U20	DY	D	1087
	Brady Birnie	LW	Swift Current Broncos	WHL	DY	F	1603
109	Carson Bjarnason	G	Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	DY	C	825
	Philippe Blais-Savoie	D	Tri-City Storm	USHL	DY	C	1022
	Ian Blomquist	G	Vasteras IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	D+2	D	1317
56	Oliver Bonk	D	London Knights	OHL	DY	B	537
	Daniil Bourosh	RW	Rouyn-Noranda Huskies	QMJHL	D+1	F	1462
	Zachary Bowen	G	London Knights	OHL	DY	F	1643
	Braeden Bowman	RW	Guelph Storm	OHL	D+2	D	1170
	Morgan Brady	D	Spruce Grove Saints	AJHL	DY	D	1077
21	Gavin Brindley	RW	Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	DY	A	261
	Finn Brink	LW	Maple Grove High	USHS-MN	DY	D	1110
111	Cole Brown	RW	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	DY	C	831
	Benjamin Brunelle	LW	Rouyn-Noranda Huskies	QMJHL	DY	F	1464
52	Hunter Brzustewicz	D	Kitchener Rangers	OHL	DY	B	518
	Boston Buckberger	D	Lincoln Stars	USHL	D+2	D	1229

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Cole Burbidge	LW	Saint John Sea Dogs	QMJHL	DY	F	1466
134	Michael Burchill	LW	Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	DY	C	921
	Austin Burnevik	RW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	942
51	Quinton Burns	D	Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	DY	B	512
	Davis Burnside	RW	Ohio State Univ.	NCAA	D+1	D	1133
	Grayson Burzynski	D	Swift Current Broncos	WHL	DY	F	1603
24	Daniil But	RW	Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	DY	A	287
34	Luca Cagnoni	D	Portland Winterhawks	WHL	DY	B	384
3	Leo Carlsson	LW/C	Örebro HK	SHL	DY	A	63
	Kalle Carlsson	C/LW	Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1513
	Cayden Casey	C	Andover High	USHS-MN	DY	F	1381
127	Jonathan Castagna	C	St. Andrew's College	CISAA	DY	C	891
81	Mathieu Cataford	RW	Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	DY	C	691
	Adam Cedzo	LW	HC Ocelari Trinec U20	Czechia U20	DY	F	1341
	Aiden Celebrini	D	Brooks Bandits	AJHL	DY	D	1079
	Andon Cerbone	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	D+1	D	1232
	Charlie Cerrato	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	D	1157
132	Noah Chadwick	D	Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	DY	C	913
	Gennadi Chaly	D	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	D	1235
117	Chase Cheslock	D	Rogers	USHS-MN	DY	C	854
	Alex Christopoulos	RW	Windsor Spitfires	OHL	D+2	F	1420
65	Alex Čiernik	RW	Södertälje SK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	595
83	Damian Clara	G	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	702
110	Jimmy Clark	C	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	DY	C	827
120	Brady Cleveland	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	868
	Ryan Conmy	RW	Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	DY	D	1237
	Joseph Connor	C	Avon Old Farms School	USHS-Prep	DY	F	1384
	Seth Constance	D	Tri-City Storm	USHL	DY	F	1571
	Cooper Conway	RW	Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	DY	D	1113
	Matt Copponi	C	Merrimack	NCAA	D+2	D	1135
	Joey Costanzo	G	Niagara IceDogs	OHL	DY	F	1645
	Charles Côté	D	Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	DY	F	1468
87	Luke Coughlin	D	Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	DY	C	718
	Sam Court	D	Brooks Bandits	AJHL	D+1	F	1330
66	Easton Cowan	C	London Knights	OHL	DY	B	601
19	Andrew Cristall	LW	Kelowna Rockets	WHL	DY	A	239
	Mai Crnkic	RW/C	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1516
	Cody Croal	LW	Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	D+2	C	1025
	Ty Daneault	RW	Drumheller Dragons	AJHL	DY	C	933
26	Nate Danielson	C	Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	DY	A	307

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Alexis Daviault	D	Erie Otters	OHL	DY	D	1172
	Nathaniel Day	G	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	C	1065
102	Tommaso De Luca	C	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	C	793
	Mikey DeAngelo	LW	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	DY	C	1028
	Frantisek Dej	C	HC Modre Kridla Slovan	Slovakia2	DY	F	1343
	Kocha Delic	C	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	D+1	C	954
93	Francesco Dell'elce	D	St. Andrew's College	CISAA	DY	C	743
	Matthew DiMarsico	LW	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	D+1	D	1240
90	Rodwin Dionicio	D	Windsor Spitfires	OHL	D+1	C	730
64	Noah Dower Nilsson	LW/C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	587
38	Lukas Dragicevic	D	Tri-City Americans	WHL	DY	B	420
	Aiden Dubinsky	D	Univ. of Minnesota Duluth	NCAA	D+1	F	1406
	Tyler Duke	D	Ohio State Univ.	NCAA	D+1	D	1137
97	Jakub Dvořák	D	Bílí Tygři Liberec	Czechia	DY	C	763
11	Dalibor Dvorsky	C	AIK	HockeyAllsvenskan	DY	A	157
	Adam Dyal	G	HC Energie Karlovy Vary U20	Czechia U20	DY	F	1647
42	David Edstrom	C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	456
	Brayden Edwards	C	Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	DY	D	1284
	Santeri Elo	LW	TPS U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1347
	Michael Emerson	RW	Chicago Steel	USHL	D+1	F	1573
123	Griffin Erdman	LW	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	C	878
	Matteo Fabrizi	D	Red Deer Rebels	WHL	DY	F	1607
2	Adam Fantilli	C	Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	DY	A	52
	Jonathan Fauchon	C	Blainville-Boisbriand Armada	QMJHL	D+1	F	1470
	Niks Fenenko	D	Baie-Comeau Drakkar	QMJHL	D+1	D	1201
	Antonio Fernandez	D	Lincoln Stars	USHL	D+1	F	1575
	Ryan Fine	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	D	1160
92	Aiden Fink	RW	Brooks Bandits	AJHL	DY	C	740
	Emmitt Finnie	C	Kamloops Blazers	WHL	DY	F	1610
118	Paul Fischer	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	859
89	Jake Fisher	C	Cretin-Derham Hall	USHS-MN	DY	C	724
28	Oscar Fisker Mølgaard	C	HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	329
	P.J. Forgione	D	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	F	1422
133	Zeb Forsfjäll	C/LW	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	916
	Drew Fortescue	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	945
	Cooper Foster	C	Ottawa 67's	OHL	DY	C	960
73	Jacob Fowler	G	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	638
100	Adam Gajan	G	Chippewa Steel	NAHL	D+1	C	780
	Brad Gardiner	C	Ottawa 67's	OHL	DY	D	1175
	Ethan Gardula	LW	Cushing Academy	USHS-MN	DY	F	1388

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
31	Ethan Gauthier	RW	Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	DY	B	361
	Sebastien Gervais	C	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	F	1425
77	Andrew Gibson	D	Soo Greyhounds	OHL	DY	C	667
	Justin Gill	C	Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	D+1	F	1472
	Kooper Gizowski	LW	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	F	1613
	Terrell Goldsmith	D	Prince Albert Raiders	WHL	DY	D	1287
	Jacob Guévin	D	Nebraska-Omaha	NCAA	D+1	D	1141
	Rudy Guimond	G	Taft School	USHS-Prep	DY	F	1649
30	Mikhail Gulyayev	D	Omskie Yastreby	MHL	DY	B	349
	Salvatore Guzzo	RW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	F	1411
121	Michael Hagens	D	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	C	871
	Ty Halaburda	C	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	C	1044
62	Kasper Halttunen	RW	HIFK	Liiga	DY	B	573
61	Lenni Hämeenaho	RW/LW	Ässät	Liiga	DY	B	567
	Kaden Hammell	D	Everett Silvertips	WHL	DY	D	1289
	Ty Hanson	D	Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	DY	D	1243
	Jeremy Hanzel	D	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	D+2	C	1048
	Sam Harris	LW	Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	D+1	D	1246
	Ethan Hay	C	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	F	1428
107	Isac Hedqvist	LW/C	Luleå HF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	815
27	Riley Heidt	C	Prince George Cougars	WHL	DY	B	315
	Marek Hejduk	RW	Harvard Univ.	NCAA	D+1	D	1145
	Hugo Hell	D	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1519
88	Alexander Hellnemo	G	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	722
58	Beckett Hendrickson	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	551
	Joseph Henneberry	C	Acadie-Bathurst Titan	QMJHL	DY	D	1204
	Ty Henricks	LW	Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	DY	D	1249
	Daniel Heroux	G	Kimball Union	USHS-Prep	DY	F	1651
	Ty Higgins	D	Acadie-Bathurst Titan	QMJHL	DY	D	1206
	London Hoilett	RW	Calgary Hitmen	WHL	DY	F	1616
	James Hong	LW	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	F	1577
20	Samuel Honzek	LW	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	A	253
54	Michael Hrabal	G	Omaha Lancers	USHL	DY	B	531
	Dylan Hryckowian	RW	Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	D+1	D	1251
	Axel Hurtig	D	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1521
	Mikhail Ye. Ilyin	C	Almaz Cherepovets	MHL	DY	C	994
	Nikita Ishimnikov	D	Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	DY	F	1493
	Elias Jansson	LW	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1349
	Kai Janviriya	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	D	1163
	Emil Järventie	LW	Ilves U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	D	1096

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
94	Juha Jatkola	G	KalPa	Liiga	D+3	C	748
	Beau Jelsma	LW/C	Barrie Colts	OHL	D+1	C	963
	Daniel Alexander Jencko	C/LW	Malmö Redhawks J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1524
	Aron Jessli	LW	Pickering Panthers	OJHL	DY	D	1131
	Cameron Johnson	C	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	F	1579
	Jacob Julien	C	London Knights	OHL	D+1	D	1178
	Jimi Junkkari	D	Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1351
	Kalle Kangas	D	Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1353
72	Roman Kantserov	RW	Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk	MHL	DY	C	633
130	Arttu Kärki	D	Tappara U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	904
	Olle Karlsson	D	Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1527
	Daniil Karpovich	D	Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	DY	C	997
	Artyom Kashtanov	C	Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	DY	F	1495
	Larry Keenan	D	Culver Academy	USHS-Prep	DY	D	1117
	Sean Keohane	D	Dexter School	USHS-Prep	DY	C	935
	Ruslan Khazheyev	G	Belyve Medvedi Chelyabinsk	MHL	DY	F	1653
	Nikolai Khvorov	LW	Omskie Yastreby	MHL	D+1	D	1210
95	Jesse Kiiskinen	RW	Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	750
	Justin Kipkie	D	Victoria Royals	WHL	DY	C	1053
	Peetu Kiukas	D	SaiPa U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1356
	David Klee	LW	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	F	1582
	Yegor Klimovich	LW	Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk	MHL	DY	F	1497
106	Cole Knuble	RW	Fargo Force	USHL	D+1	C	809
	Matteo Kočí	D	HC Energie Karlovy Vary U20	Czechia U20	DY	F	1345
	Ryan Koering	D	Eden Prairie	USHS-MN	DY	D	1121
	Cameron Korpi	G	Tri-City Storm	USHL	D+1	C	1067
	Kristian Kostadinski	D	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1529
	Carter Kowalyk	D	Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	DY	F	1619
	Roman Kukumberg	LW	HC Modre Kridla Slovan	Slovakia2	DY	D	1089
96	Rasmus Kumpulainen	C	Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	757
	Emil Kuusla	LW	Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	D	1102
	Andrew Kuzma	RW	Madison Capitols	USHL	DY	C	1031
	A.J. Lacroix	LW	Chilliwack Chiefs	BCHL	DY	F	1335
	Axel Landén	D	HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	1007
33	Nick Lardis	RW	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	DY	B	376
	Maël Lavigne	LW	Baie-Comeau Drakkar	QMJHL	DY	F	1474
	Charles-Alexis Legault	D	Quinnipiac	NCAA	D+2	C	940
	Hugo Lejon	RW/C	Västerås IK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	1011
6	Ryan Leonard	RW/C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	103
	Tom Leppä	C	Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1358

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Mazden Leslie	D	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	C	1056
63	Connor Levis	RW/C	Kamloops Blazers	WHL	DY	B	583
44	Kalan Lind	C/LW	Red Deer Rebels	WHL	DY	B	468
74	Theo Lindstein	D	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	640
	Jaden Lipinski	C	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	C	1060
	Harrison Lodewyk	LW	Prince Albert Raiders	WHL	DY	F	1621
	Yoan Loshing	C	Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	D+1	F	1476
104	Andrei Loshko	C	Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	DY	C	800
	Preston Lounsbury	C	Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	DY	F	1479
	Tanner Ludtke	C	Lincoln Stars	USHL	DY	C	1033
	Max Lundgren	G	Des Moines Buccaneers	USHL	D+3	F	1655
136	Ignat Lutfullin	RW	SKA-Varyagi im. Morozova	MHL	DY	C	929
	Angus MacDonell	C/LW	Mississauga Steelheads	OHL	DY	D	1180
108	Dylan MacKinnon	D	Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	DY	C	820
	Connor MacPherson	RW	Leamington Flyers	GOJHL	DY	F	1400
	Ryan MacPherson	C	Leamington Flyers	GOJHL	DY	F	1402
	Hudson Malinoski	C	Brooks Bandits	AJHL	D+1	D	1081
	Calem Mangone	RW	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	C	968
46	Matthew Mania	D	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	B	476
	Matteo Mann	D	Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	DY	C	988
	Quinn Mantei	D	Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	DY	D	1292
	Giacomo Martino	LW	St. Michael's Buzzers	OJHL	DY	F	1364
	Anton Maryshev	D	MHK Spartak Moskva	MHL	DY	D	1213
	Lukas Matecha	G	Pardubice	Czechia	DY	C	1069
	Matthew Mayich	D	Ottawa 67's	OHL	DY	F	1431
70	Gavin McCarthy	D	Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	DY	C	623
122	Donovan McCoy	D	Peterborough Petes	OHL	DY	C	874
	Will McDonough	C	Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	DY	F	1585
	Deagen McMillan	RW	Tri-City Americans	WHL	DY	D	1295
	Luke McNamara	C	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	D	1183
	Cooper Michaluk	G	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	F	1657
4	Matvei Michkov	RW	SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	DY	A	75
	Ethan Miedema	LW	Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	DY	C	972
	Marco Mignosa	RW	Soo Greyhounds	OHL	DY	F	1434
	Quentin Miller	G	Quebec Remparts	QMJHL	DY	C	1071
	Cole Miller	RW	Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	DY	D	1298
50	Aram Minnetian	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	504
115	Martin Misiak	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	846
119	Luke Mittelstadt	D	Univ. of Minnesota	NCAA	D+1	C	862
39	Tanner Molendyk	D	Saskatoon Blades	WHL	DY	B	429

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Ondrej Molnár	LW	Erie Otters	OHL	DY	C	977
	Blake Montgomery	LW	Mount St. Charles Academy Prep	USHS-Prep	DY	F	1391
8	Oliver Moore	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	126
	Lucas Moore	D	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	DY	F	1437
71	Étienne Morin	D	Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	DY	C	627
	Vadim Moroz	RW	Dinamo Minsk	KHL	D+1	D	1216
	Ty Mueller	C	Nebraska-Omaha	NCAA	D+2	D	1148
57	Timur Mukhanov	RW	Omskie Yastreby	MHL	DY	B	544
	Carsen Musser	G	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	1073
12	Quentin Musty	LW	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	A	172
	Sutter Muzzatti	C/LW	RPI	NCAA	D+2	D	1150
112	Nico Myatovic	C/RW	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	C	834
	Sawyer Mynio	D	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	D	1300
35	Bradly Nadeau	C	Penticton Vees	BCHL	DY	B	393
	Nikita Nedopyokin	C	SKA-Varyagi im. Morozova	MHL	DY	F	1500
116	Zach Nehring	RW	Shattuck St. Mary's 18U Prep	USHS-Prep	DY	C	850
43	Danny Nelson	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	B	462
	Jackson Nevers	RW	Edina High	USHS-MN	DY	D	1125
41	Felix Nilsson	C	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	449
99	Noel Nordh	RW	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	775
	Jesse Nurmi	LW	KooKoo U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	D	1105
	Anton Ohlsson	C	Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1532
	Sam Oremba	LW	Regina Pats	WHL	DY	F	1623
	Owen Outwater	C	Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	DY	F	1440
	Aksels Ozols	G	HS Riga	Latvia	DY	F	1659
	Marcus Pacheco	RW	Kelowna Rockets	WHL	DY	F	1626
	Joe Palodichuk	D	Fargo Force	USHL	D+2	D	1254
131	Kalem Parker	D	Victoria Royals	WHL	DY	C	909
	Lee Parks	RW	Vernon Vipers	BCHL	DY	D	1083
129	Tyler Peddle	LW	Drummondville Voltigeurs	QMJHL	DY	C	901
	Oliver Peer	RW/C	Windsor Spitfires	OHL	D+2	D	1186
67	Juraj Pekarcik	LW	HK Nitra	Slovakia	DY	B	607
	Christopher Pelosi	C	Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	DY	D	1258
	Janne Peltonen	D	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1360
	Matthew Perkins	LW	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	D+1	F	1588
18	Gabe Perreault	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	230
29	Jayden Perron	RW	Chicago Steel	USHL	DY	B	339
	Dominik Petr	C	Lukko U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1363
	James Petrovski	D	Owen Sound Attack	OHL	DY	F	1443
	Hugo Pettersson	LW	HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1535

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
124	Alex Pharand	C	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	DY	C	881
135	Emil Pieniniemi	D	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	924
82	Luca Pinelli	C	Ottawa 67's	OHL	DY	C	696
	Aaron Pionk	D	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	D+2	C	1036
	Chase Pirtle	RW	Mount St. Charles Academy Prep	USHS-Prep	DY	D	1128
53	Coulson Pitre	RW	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	B	525
	Eric Pohlkamp	D	Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	D+1	C	1039
	Benjamin Poitras	C	Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	DY	D	1260
91	Vojtech Port	D	Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	DY	C	737
37	Caden Price	D	Kelowna Rockets	WHL	DY	B	410
	Eero Prihti	D	Ässät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1367
	Scott Ratzlaff	G	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	C	1075
	Benjamin Rautiainen	RW	Tappara U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1369
68	Carson Rehkopf	C/RW	Kitchener Rangers	OHL	DY	B	612
9	David Reinbacher	D	EHC Klotten	NL	DY	A	138
	Ivan Remezovsky	D	SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	DY	F	1502
	Yegor Rimashevsky	LW	MHK Dynamo Moskva	MHL	DY	F	1505
14	Calum Ritchie	C	Oshawa Generals	OHL	DY	A	191
	Elis Rix	RW	Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1538
	Ben Robertson	D	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	DY	D	1262
	Charlie Robertson	G	North Bay Battalion	OHL	DY	D	1319
	Milo Roelens	LW	Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	D+1	C	991
	Austin Roest	RW/C	Everett Silvertips	WHL	D+1	D	1303
	Anthony Romani	RW	North Bay Battalion	OHL	DY	C	981
	Lucas Romeo	RW	Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	DY	F	1481
	Jake Rozzi	LW	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	D+1	D	1265
59	Alexander Rykov	RW	Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk	MHL	DY	B	555
	Jacob Sagadin	C	Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1540
	Lukas Sagranden	RW	Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1542
25	Eduard Šalé	RW	HC Kometa Brno U20	Czechia U20	DY	A	296
15	Axel Sandin Pellikka	D	Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	A	201
	Olivier Savard	D	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	F	1446
13	Gracyn Sawchyn	C/RW	Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	DY	A	182
	Ian Scherzer	C/LW	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1545
	Garrett Schifsky	C	Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	D+2	F	1591
	Bennett Schimek	RW	Providence	NCAA	D+2	F	1409
	Albert Schioldan	RW	HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1548
	Zachary Schulz	D	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	948
	Eli Sebastian	C	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	D+1	F	1594
	Ethan Semeniuk	W	Vancouver Giants	WHL	DY	F	1628

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Niklas Seppänen	D	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1372
	Kaden Shahan	RW	Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	DY	D	1268
	Magomed Sharakanov	D	MHK Dynamo Moskva	MHL	DY	D	1218
	Zachary Sharp	D	Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	DY	D	1271
98	Jayson Shaugabay	C	Warroad High	USHS-MN	DY	C	769
	Oren Shtorm	RW	Everett Silvertips	WHL	DY	D	1306
114	Egor Sidorov	LW	Saskatoon Blades	WHL	D+1	C	841
	Nicholas Sima	RW	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	F	1449
10	Dmitri Simashev	D	Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	DY	A	147
	Filip Sitar	C	AIK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1551
	Svante Sjödin	C	Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1554
	Carter Slaggert	LW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	F	1413
	Jake Sloan	C	Tri-City Americans	WHL	D+1	F	1630
	Hampton Slukynsky	G	Warroad High	USHS-MN	DY	D	1321
	Yegor Smirnov	C	Almaz Cherepovets	MHL	DY	F	1508
7	Will Smith	C	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	A	113
	Blake Smith	D	Flint Firebirds	OHL	DY	D	1188
	Konnor Smith	D	Peterborough Petes	OHL	DY	F	1451
55	Carter Sotheran	D	Portland Winterhawks	WHL	DY	B	533
	Matthew Soto	RW	Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	DY	C	984
	Spencer Sova	D	Erie Otters	OHL	D+1	D	1190
	Jan Sprynar	RW	Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	DY	D	1208
	Jan Spunar	G	Portland Winterhawks	WHL	DY	D	1323
	Cam Squires	RW	Cape Breton Eagles	QMJHL	DY	F	1483
	Maël St-Denis	C	Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	DY	F	1485
125	Lucas St. Louis	D	Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	DY	C	884
	Hunter St. Martin	LW	Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	DY	F	1634
	Elliot Ståhlberg	RW	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	D	1226
	Jakub Stancl	LW	Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1557
84	Hoyt Stanley	D	Victoria Grizzlies	BCHL	DY	C	704
	Blake Steenerson	RW	Maple Grove High	USHS-MN	DY	F	1394
36	Otto Stenberg	LW/C	Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	398
	Lucas Stockselius	C	Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1560
47	Charlie Stramel	C	Univ. of Wisconsin	NCAA	DY	B	482
75	Andrew Strathmann	D	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	C	648
78	Maxim Štrbák	D	Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	DY	C	672
	Tomáš Suchánek	G	Tri-City Americans	WHL	D+2	D	1325
69	Aydar Suniev	LW	Penticton Vees	BCHL	DY	B	617
	Nikita Susuyev	LW	MHK Spartak Moskva	MHL	DY	D	1221
	Joel Svensson	C/RW	Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1563

RANK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	LEAGUE	YR	GRADE	PAGE
	Brandon Svoboda	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	D	1275
	Niklas Talvikunnas	D	HPK U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1374
128	Carey Terrance	C	Erie Otters	OHL	DY	C	896
105	Gavyn Thoreson	LW	Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	DY	C	803
101	Hudson Thornton	D	Prince George Cougars	WHL	D+1	C	782
	Anton Topilnyckyj	D	Charlottetown Islanders	QMJHL	DY	F	1486
	Djibril Toure	D	Sudbury Wolves	OHL	D+2	D	1195
103	Jordan Tourigny	D	Shawinigan Cataractes	QMJHL	DY	C	796
	Teddy Townsend	C	Eden Prairie	USHS-MN	DY	F	1397
	Oliver Tulk	C	Calgary Hitmen	WHL	DY	D	1309
85	Felix Unger Sörum	RW/LW	Leksands IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	708
	Samuel Urban	G	Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	DY	F	1661
80	Tuomas Uronen	RW	HIFK U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	C	685
	Noa Vali	G	TPS U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1663
	Borya Valis	LW	Regina Pats	WHL	D+1	F	1636
	Josh Van Mulligen	D	Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	DY	F	1638
	Nicholas Vantassel	RW	Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	D+1	D	1278
	Visa Vedenpaa	G	Karpat U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	D	1327
	Emmanuel Vermette	LW	Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	DY	F	1488
	Petter Vesterheim	C	Mora IK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	F	1566
	Will Vote	RW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	D	1166
60	Anton Wahlberg	LW	Malmö Redhawks J20	J20 Nationell	DY	B	561
	Ryan Walsh	C	Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	D+2	F	1596
126	Alex Weiermair	C/RW	U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	DY	C	888
113	Saige Weinstein	D	Spokane Chiefs	WHL	DY	C	838
	Melvin Wersäll	RW/LW	Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	1014
	Ethan Whitcomb	RW	Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	D+1	D	1281
48	William Whitelaw	C	Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	DY	B	488
86	Albert Wikman	D	Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	C	713
23	Tom Willander	D	Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	DY	A	278
49	Joseph Willis	LW/C	Saginaw Spirit	OHL	DY	B	497
	Jeremy Wilmer	RW	Boston University	NCAA	D+2	D	1152
	Zaccharya Wisdom	LW/RW	Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	D+1	C	1042
16	Matthew Wood	LW/C	Univ. of Connecticut	NCAA	DY	A	213
	Logan Wormald	LW	Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	DY	D	1312
	Florian Xhekaj	LW	Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	D+1	F	1454
22	Brayden Yager	C	Moose Jaw Warriors	WHL	DY	A	270
	Stanislav Yarovoi	RW	Vityaz	KHL	D+2	D	1224
	Otso Ylitalo	C	Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	DY	F	1376
	Radel Zamaltdinov	RW	Irbis Kazan	MHL	DY	C	999
	Austin Zemplak	D	Victoria Royals	WHL	DY	F	1640
	Adam Zidlicky	LW/RW	Mississauga Steelheads	OHL	DY	F	1457
40	Koehn Ziemmer	RW	Prince George Cougars	WHL	DY	B	438



2023 NHL Draft Guide

by Elite Prospects

∨ INTRODUCTION

Finally, a normal, ordinary scouting season. No interruptions. No cancelled tournaments. No significant logistical hurdles. Just a whole lot of great hockey and the chance to scout as compelling a draft class as we've seen in our four years of draft guide work at Elite Prospects.

The process started in August with the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, and it came to a close in May or June with the U18s or the Memorial Cup – depending on who you talk to. Most scouts on the team side will amass upwards of 150-plus live viewings in that period, compiling a mountain of game reports in the process, and then review each other's work with a series of crossover viewings on film.

We try to approximate that process at Elite Prospects with a team of 13 scouts covering every corner of the hockey world, mixing in a combination of live viewings and film work to help amass as comprehensive a set of data as possible to inform our decisions as we build our final board for each year's draft. As always, our partners at InStat Hockey proved invaluable to this process; their inventory of film and data made this all possible.

There is a definite asymmetry of resources and person-hours in the NHL's favour, but we do our best with what we've got, and our legitimacy as a go-to resource for coverage of the draft and the prospect sphere more broadly is such that we're able to consult with many of the sport's decision-makers and cross-examine our work on a nearly constant basis. It's all part of the process.

The culmination of that work is our longest draft board and as expansive a list of prospects as has ever been included in an Elite Prospects draft guide. All told, we ranked 136 players for this year's draft, and we've included 403 prospects in the guide – both the highest marks in the history of the Elite Prospects draft guide.

There were some contentious debates within our ranks, many of which will rage beyond this draft. Some compromises were made between diverging opinions. It's always a delicate balance, finding a way to make everyone happy and proud with the end result of this year-long journey.

Luckily, I can say with a great degree of confidence that we got there. We pored over this ranking repeatedly – player by player, region by region – until we were certain that we'd produced the best board that most reflected the work and opinion of our scouts.

There's no real suspense at No. 1 in this year's draft. That's been Connor Bedard's spot for some time now, and all he's done this year is consolidate his hold on that spot. Adam Fantilli made things interesting at the start of the season, but a cool showing at the World Juniors next to Bedard's superhuman performance put that all to rest. You come at the king, you best not miss.

That doesn't necessarily mean that Fantilli is entrenched at No. 2, though. That may be the broad consensus in the public sphere

and even the conclusion that we arrived at in our final ranking, but this isn't quite the case on the team side. Don't be surprised at all if it's Leo Carlsson who is the first to follow Bedard onto that stage in Nashville.

Where things really get interesting is at No. 4 overall. We're not that far removed from this year being thought of as the Connor Bedard and Matvei Michkov Draft, but that's clearly no longer the case. Michkov's contract extension which keeps him in Russia until 2026 and the geopolitical fallout of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine have some teams cool on the prospect of taking him with a top-five pick.

The most likely candidate to step into that void is Will Smith, the standout first-line centre for the USNTDP's U18 team. We ranked him as the No. 7 prospect in this year's draft, but many in the industry, particularly on the team side, view him as among the draft's three or four best players.

This is the point where the draft starts to open up. Zach Benson is the clear No. 5 prospect in this year's draft by our reckoning, but that doesn't appear to reflect the feelings of NHL decision-makers. Increasingly, it looks like he might fall from the top-10 entirely.

Some combination of Ryan Leonard (No. 6 on our final ranking), David Reinbacher (9), Dalibor Dvorský (11), Colby Barlow (17), Axel Sandin Pellikka (15), Nate Danielson (26), and Tom Willander (23) will likely make up the rest of the five-to-ten range, and from there, it's the wild west in this year's draft.

Whatever happens, you'll be ready to follow along with the Elite Prospects 2023 NHL Draft Guide. We've accumulated 404 individual scouting reports, along with thousands of unique game reports that offer a game-by-game look at our process and the evolution of these players over their draft year, complete with manually tracked data sets from our directors of North American and European scouting, Mitch Brown and Lassi Alanen.

This is the biggest, best draft guide we've ever produced at Elite Prospects, and we can't wait for you to dive right in and see for yourself.

✓ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our first set of acknowledgments has to go to the people who have helped turn EP Rinkside and the Elite Prospects scouting team into the powerhouse that it is today.

This project can't happen without the work that Mitch Brown, Cam Robinson, David St-Louis, Lassi Alanen, J.D. Burke, Daniel Gee, Joey Padmanabhan, Lauren Kelly, Russ Cohen, Greg Balloch, Jimmy Hamrin, Marek Novotný, and Dylan Griffing all put in over the course of this season.

Likewise, we would like to acknowledge the support of EverySport Media Group. They've provided our staff with the resources necessary to see this project through, and they've been unwavering in their support of everything we do at Elite Prospects.

Specifically, a due of gratitude to Peter Sibner, Johan Nilsson, and Uffe Bodin for all of their support of everything we do on the Elite Prospects scouting team and over at EP Rinkside.



J.D. Burke | Editor-in-Chief

@JDylanBurke

J.D. Burke is the Editor-in-Chief of EP Rinkside, the editorial branch of Elite Prospects. His work has appeared previously on TheAthletic, Sporting News, and The Nation Network. Burke is an established name in the amateur scouting community, with nearly a decade of experience covering the NHL Entry Draft and prospects in at least some capacity.

Meet The Team



Mitch Brown | Dir. of North American Scouting

@MitchLBrown

Mitchell Brown is the Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting. Based out of Canmore, Alberta, the perfect location for his climbing passion, Brown regularly attends WHL games. Possessing an equal amount of scouting and culinary skills, if he wasn't spending 12 hours a day tracking games from every major league in North America, he'd be running his own pizza place.



Lassi Alanen | Dir. of European Scouting

@lassialanen

Lassi Alanen is the Elite Prospects Dir. of European Scouting. On top of regularly attending Liiga and U20 SM-sarja games in Finland, where he's based, Alanen followed both the Russian and Swedish leagues closely this season through video. Over the past season, he has been tracking the draft-year data of many of the past top European prospects. His historical stats and viewings have helped us contextualize the performance of many of the top players from the 2023 draft class.



David St-Louis | Lead Scout

@DavidSt_Louis

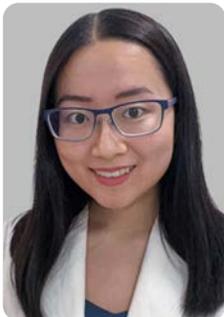
Based out of Trois-Rivières, Quebec, David St-Louis is a writer and the Lead Scout for Elite Prospects. He wrote previously for TheCoachesSite and SBNation's 'Eyes on the Prize' blog. He's watched more hockey than probably everyone in your life combined, and that just accounts for this season's work.



Cam Robinson | Dir. of Film Scouting

@Hockey_Robinson

Cam Robinson is the Director of Film Scouting for EP Rinkside, analyzing and assessing prospects from around the globe. A regular contributor on Sportsnet 650, and the face of Elite Prospects on Instagram, Robinson is a strong hockey media presence. He's also a middle school generalist teacher, a father of two, a husband of one, and an avid reader.



Lauren Kelly | OHL Scout

@laurkelly24

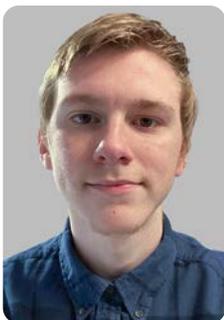
Lauren Kelly is based just north of Toronto and an alumna of TMU's Sport Media program. When she's not accidentally injuring herself in some bizarre fashion, seeing a doctor for yet another health problem, or running the Elite Prospects social media accounts, Lauren also spends a ridiculous amount of time sitting in traffic while driving to OHL games (usually in Mississauga). She has also dabbled in OHL colour commentary and previously wrote for SB Nation.



Daniel Gee | USHS, BCHL, and WHL Scout

@DanielGScouting

A student of the details of the game and compulsive note-taker, Daniel Gee writes by far the longest game reports amongst our staff. His daily novels and unrivaled passion for High School hockey help our team unearth some of the hidden gems in each draft class. Based in Prince George, where some on our team think he lives among actual cougars, Gee also regularly attends WHL games. On top of his High School and crossover video work, he follows both the top WHL and BCHL prospects closely.



Dylan Griffing | Russian Regional Scout

@GriffingDylan

Dylan Griffing is a writer and the Russian regional scout for Elite Prospects while being based out of Wisconsin, USA. He spends his time tracking data, playing Football Manager, doing puzzles, and then staying up until four in the morning watching Russian junior hockey. He is very grateful for his three cats, Lulu, Lola, and Pandey, who constantly distract him while he tries to get work done.



Greg Balloch | Goaltending Scout

@GregBalloch

Greg Balloch is the goaltending scout for Elite Prospects, providing scouting reports, video analysis, and player grades for goaltenders across the hockey world. He is also a radio producer and broadcaster for Sportsnet 650 Vancouver, and Digital Media Manager for the BC Hockey League.



Jimmy Hamrin | Swedish Regional Scout

@jimmyhamrin

Jimmy Hamrin is the Swedish regional scout for EliteProspects. His work has appeared previously in McKeen's, and he also contributes to HockeySverige. A rink rat with a passion for scouting, Hamrin is plugged into his region's Junior hockey, always having the latest news on its prospects. He closely watches the region, looking to find the next great Swedish NHLer.



Joey Padmanabhan | USHL Scout

@joeypad2

Joey Padmanabhan traded in his skates and stick for a pen and notepad, joining the Elite Prospects Rinkside team as a USHL scout. He played AAA hockey in Chicago, going toe-to-toe with many of the players he now scouts in the USHL. When he's not taking notes or watching film, he continues to give us ice-level intel, as he's still meeting top draft-eligible prospects on the ice for scrimmages.



Russ Cohen | American Scout

@sportsology

Russ Cohen is an American scout for Elite Prospects, covering the professional and NCAA ranks, as well as being an accomplished writer for Sportsology and radio host for the Sportsology Radio Network. He covers the New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers on the NHL side, too. His work has appeared on NHL.com, CSNPhilly.com, FoxSports, The Hockey News, and countless other venues. He also co-hosted Hockey Prospect Radio on NHL Network Radio as part of the SiriusXM network.

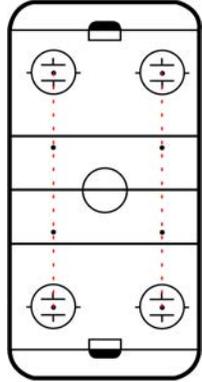


Marek Novotný | Czechia and Slovakia Regional Scout

@MarekNovotny96

Marek Novotný is the Elite Prospects Czechia and Slovakia regional scout, as well as a contributor to EP Rinkside. Novotný has been passionate about hockey since he was a child, and he turned that passion into a professional pursuit in 2019 when he worked for a year with his hometown hockey team, HC Slovan Ústí nad Labem, as a business manager. He's continued to work in hockey, completing an internship at the Czech Hockey Association and working in the sales department for Bílí Tygři Liberec of the Czech Extraliga.

Glossary



DOT(TED) LINE:

An invisible line that runs parallel to the boards from the defensive zone faceoff dot to the offensive zone faceoff dot, dividing the "interior" of the ice and "exterior" of the ice.



STRIDE EXTENSION:

The generation of power in a stride, characterized by a push and extension finishing behind the player, ideally with a toe push and ankle twist.



STRIDE RECOVERY:

The forward movement of the extended leg, ideally under the shoulders finished with a 90-degree knee bend.



GAP CONTROL:

The management of distance between the defender and attacker; an ideal gap is often stick-on-stick to limit options, and increase the odds of a break up and recovery of possession.



RISK-MITIGATING FOOTWORK:

A rush defence strategy that emphasizes middle-and-out backpedal routes, backward momentum, and avoiding weight-committing crossovers until the attacker has as few options as possible.



PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS/ADAPTABILITY:

The ability to locate a secondary or tertiary play after an unexpected variable alters or eliminates the primary option.

SMALL-AREA GAME:

The puck control, handling, and skating that allow a player to maneuver through traffic, and often times, escape traffic.



SLIP PASS:

An alternative to the saucer pass where the player pulls the puck in towards their skates then passes, changing the angle of release.

HOOK PASS:

An alternative to the saucer pass where the player lengths their grip to change of angle of the pass.

RUSH PATTERNS: The combination of routes, stickhandling, and skating habits (especially crossover usage) that a player uses in transition.

DECEPTION: The ability to mask intentions by indicating another play, ranging from fakes shots to more complex combinations of look-offs and subtle body fakes.

PACE: The speeds at which a player can execute; often characterized by active feet through pressure, passes, and puckhandling.

OFF-PUCK OFFENCE: The movement a player makes into pockets of space for supporting the offence or becoming a scoring threat, often timed with passes or shots to decrease odds of getting tied up by the defending team.

OFF-PUCK DEFENCE: How a player defends players without the puck, including but not limited to: net-front defence and closing gaps to deter passes.

AWARENESS: How often, when, and where a player scans the ice.

PROCESSING: The speed at which a player picks up on the details of the play, including the speed, direction, weight-shift, flexion, stick and feet angle of teammates and opponents (and the space between them).

ANTICIPATION: Ability to fill the blanks of perception based on the knowledge and experience of the game, his team's system, and the opposition's.

TIMING: A player's ability to organize his movements to be in a position to make a play at the right time.

SELF-AWARENESS: A player's ability to know what plays are accessible based on his skill-level.

MANIPULATION: The use of movement, puck positioning, passing, or deception to move defenders away from the player's desired space or lane.

ADVANTAGE CREATION: Plays made with the intention of maximizing the recipient's time, space, and options with the puck.

BODY POSITIONING: A player's ability to put himself between the puck and opponent, by cutting in front of that opponent.

PUCK PROTECTION: A player's ability to use his body (knee, free-arm, and back), skating and handling moves to shield the puck and escape pressure.

Ratings System Explained

You'll note that we grade our draft-eligible skaters based on six criteria using a 1-to-9 linear rating scale. Where necessary, we've applied half-grades to widen the range of outcomes. The six items that we've identified as most crucial to the evaluation process are as follows: skating, shooting, passing, puckhandling, hockey sense, and one's physical ability. For posterity, the absence of something from our rating rubric isn't evidence of its absence in our evaluation. We've covered every base, whether it's firsthand analysis gleaned from entire days spent in musky rinks sipping stale coffee or making phone calls to the scouts who hold the levers of power at the NHL draft. Now, let's get into the specific player tools that help shape the form of our analysis.

✍ SKATING

This one seems pretty straightforward, right? Think again. So much goes into a player's skating, and then there's a whole heap of contributing factors that help one determine whether there is room for improvement, the capacity for development, etc.

Here are the items on our checklist when evaluating a player's skating:

- Input: ankle flexion, hip flexion, knee-bend, stride extension, stride recovery, torso angle, hip tilt, head movement, arm swing.
- Output: three-step explosiveness, top-end speed, agility (four-way mobility).
- Habits (frequency and timing of usage): crossover usage, in-motion plays, cutbacks, heel-to-heel (ten-and-two), motor.

Most of these items are covered in the glossary section of the EliteProspects 2023 NHL Draft Guide. If it's not, then we feel as though it's relatively commonplace in hockey conversations and not worthy of the space.

✍ SHOOTING

You know it when you see it. Some players can sling the puck with such thunderous force and surgical precision as to leave their opponents completely helpless. The Patrik Laines, Auston Matthews, and Shea Weber of the world deploy this threat on a shift-to-shift basis, and they make it look easy.

Then there's everyone else. For the remainder of the league, it's about increasing one's ability to create offence on the margins with tactical efficiency rather than any overwhelming physical force.

Here are some of the items that help us evaluate the best shooters, the worst shooters, and everyone in-between:

- Power
- Shot placement
- Diversity of shots and releases
- Feet inside the release
- Shot selection
- Shooting under pressure

We've graded shooting including an off-puck timing/pocket of space identification variable, much like how there are more sense-based attributes in the passing section.

✍ PASSING

Rigorous, peer-reviewed work in the analytics sphere has shown that playmaking is the ability that holds up best in the fight against Father Time. One can build a lengthy, productive NHL career playing the role of a set-up man rather than a finisher. It's a pretty valuable skill, even if it doesn't earn one as much time in the limelight.

Here are the items we've honed in on as indicative of one's passing ability:

- Diversity of passes
- Directionality
- Deception
- Quick-possession reads
- Willingness to pass

Just like shooting, we've graded passing while also including some hockey sense elements, like the awareness and anticipation of a player and his ability to create lanes by manipulating defenders.

⌵ PUCKHANDLING

The ratio of relative importance to controlling the flow of play or goals to the highlight reel potential of puckhandling is perhaps the most disproportionate of any ability in any sport. The list of phenomenal puckhandlers who couldn't bring enough value elsewhere to justify their position in the NHL is a mile long.

This is a list of the items we consider when evaluating a player's puckhandling ability:

- Technique (top hand positioning, rolling motion, posture...)
- Hip pocket handling
- In-motion handling
- Backhand use
- Underhandling
- First-touch plays

⌵ HOCKEY SENSE

The Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting, Mitch Brown, put it best when describing hockey sense, saying "hockey sense is like borscht; everyone has their own recipe."

We've tried to create our own version of hockey sense, and in so doing created a fairly extensive list of items, some of which would suffice for a player rating all their own:

- Habits: Rotations, awareness (scanning).
- Reads: Processing, adaptability, anticipation, planning, manipulation.
- Decision-making: feel for what plays are open or not, self and role awareness, play selection.

⌵ PHYSICAL

The NHL is doubtless a more accommodating environment for smaller, more skilled players. Even so, it's inherently more difficult for players with certain physical profiles than others. Size is one of the few things one can't teach.

On top of a player's willingness to be physical, these are the items that helped us determine a player's physical grade:

- Skills: Body positioning, puck protection, absorbing contact, escaping contact, plays from the boards to the inside lane.
- Strength: height, weight, force, stamina.

The 1-to-9 Rating Scale

We've introduced a 1-to-9 linear rating scale for six player attributes.

Definition: the grade represents the most likely outcome of the player's tool in the NHL. This doesn't include just regular NHLers, but includes the 900-plus skaters who play in the NHL in any given season.

A 5 means that we project this skill, at minimum, to be NHL average, an 8 projects to be a high-end skill, and a 3 means not NHL-calibre.



The Grading System

Two competent interlocutors might process the same information and arrive at different conclusions. It's true of almost any field, within reason of course.

The average NHL draft board is somewhere between 80-120 players long, and I've yet to speak with a single team that's ever finished their list.

With that, we wanted to help offer a more holistic, single-use metric to account for a player's acceptable range based on our determination of the player's skill set, upside, and certainty. Someone might not make our final draft ranking, but that doesn't mean there isn't a reasonable range where they should go.

This grading system works as follows.



Making Of The Draft Board

At Elite Prospects, our goal is to provide readers with as much information as possible on prospects. Open up a player's profile and you will see his scoring numbers, an NHL comparison, a quick description from NHL executives, a detailed breakdown of their game, our game reports, and for many of these players, manually tracked data.

But our work only feels complete when we also explain why we ranked them the way we do. In some cases, this is what matters the most. We want to give insight into the process itself; a messy, fun, exhausting, and challenging affair with a lot of literal ups and downs.

Before you dive into this making of, if you're not familiar with the A- and B-level players of the draft, it's probably best that you read through the guide first and then come back to this section. All of the stats and tracked data we refer to in our explanations can also be found on each player's profile.

✍ CHAPTER 1 - THE BIG FOUR

Connor Bedard may have never left his spot perched atop our ranking in the No. 1 spot, but we'd be lying if we said that we hadn't considered another prospect for the top of our board. There was a small window between October and December where we felt it was worth discussing Adam Fantilli's claim to the top spot.

Coming into the season, Fantilli's tools already earned the admiration of our staff. Couple that with his historic start to his NCAA season and the rapid development of the tactical side of his game at Michigan, and it felt like he had an outside chance at usurping Bedard at the top of this class.

There's a character trait that unites many of the people you see ranking and evaluating prospects both in the public and private sphere: They enjoy debates. This is both a quality and a flaw. On the one hand, it's good to think outside the box and challenge public consensus; on the other hand, this kind of desire to be a contrarian is a bias in itself. Sometimes, it can lead one down the wrong path.

"I have Bedard ahead of Fantilli, but I think there is still a discussion to be had. Fantilli might have a better impact than Bedard on the boards and defensively in the NHL, at least at first," Elite Prospects lead scout and resident Devil's advocate David St-Louis said in our first meeting back in December. "Fantilli is also a centre and a power forward, so a couple of NHL teams might be considering him at first overall."

St-Louis likes to challenge opinions, especially his own (at whiplash-inducing speed). While his analysis usually ends up nuanced, the process to arrive at his takes looks anything but. Players shift up and down his mental board like they're on a roller coaster and he likes to invite everyone else along for the ride. The scout's channel in our Slack is just a rollercoaster of St-Louis' consciousness, lined with paragraphs of text and clips as he seeks out the opinions of others to help settle debates within himself.

The more cool and calculated approach of the team's scouting directors – Mitchell Brown on the North American side and Lassi Alanen on the European side – with their meticulously tracked data sets act as counterbalances. Both of them like to accumulate viewings, reason through projections, and build their takes over time.

A few weeks after our first meeting, Bedard's incredible World Juniors erased any possibility of a race for the top. His performance made it clear that he was the crown jewel of the draft, the lone candidate for the No. 1 overall spot.

With Bedard locked in, the debate shifted to the No. 2 spot. Fantilli, Leo Carlsson, and Matvei Michkov, the three other elite prospects of the draft, all looked like candidates for it.

At first, the 2023 NHL Draft was supposed to be a two-horse race between Bedard and Michkov, but some small concerns knocked Michkov off the first overall track early in the draft season.

As our Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing stated in a couple of early draft meetings, Michkov searched for his identity with SKA St. Petersburg. As he looked to integrate himself at the professional level, his playmaking game took the backseat. He started funnelling shots on net from every angle. His more stream-lined plays and poor decisions with the puck hid his creativity and instincts.

"I started questioning where he would be on our list last season," said Griffing in our December meeting. "At the moment, he has more of a junior game. There's a lot to like, but also some questions about his play. I think he's pretty solidly in that number four spot for me."

We knew his talents hadn't left him, but his development didn't seem to progress as fast as Fantilli's, who was becoming a much better off-puck player in Michigan, and Carlsson's, who was becoming increasingly comfortable at the SHL level.

Later in the season, Michkov's hockey sense started to shine through once he joined HK Sochi, a freer environment that allowed him to take control of the offence.

Yet, even as Michkov's performance improved and some of the concerns about his season faded, he never quite managed to rise up from his fourth overall spot. That ranking still felt right for the majority of our scouts who watched him throughout the season. Though, we should mention that Alanen did push to move him up, as the Russian was tops in his historical data set in many categories.

"I'm Team Michkov," announced Lassi Alanen. "His playmaking and transition game has looked a lot better and he has been more engaged defensively in the second half. If we want to prioritize upside, we have to have Michkov at three."

While we do value upside the most as a team, we also take into account the prospect's chance of reaching their upside (certainty) and, to a lesser extent, his versatility – or ability to integrate a secondary role, if he falls short of that upside, too.

NHL teams do have to hit on their top picks to furnish their team with talent, and just because a player may have an easier path to the NHL doesn't necessarily mean that he has less upside. Subjectively, we feel that toolsy, smart, and versatile prospects tend to adapt their game and develop better than the more specialized ones.

The gap in upside between Michkov and Fantilli and Carlsson felt much smaller, compared to the gap in the certainty of their projection.

Because you can't really call Michkov versatile. Although he has a large arsenal of high-end scoring tools, the winger is at his best when he can impose his style of play; when he can play in anticipation, move ahead of puck movements, hold on to it, and orchestrate elaborate passing plays. To succeed in the NHL, he might need a coach who understands his game, who gives him a bit more leeway, and who runs the offence through him.

Carlsson and Fantilli would also work best in such an environment, but they can fall back on other parts of their game if they can't find the back of the net on a given night. They can better mould their style of play to their teammates, and adapt to different roles on the team and to different in-game situations.

Versatility matters when thinking ahead to the playoffs and the construction of All-Star, championship-calibre teams.

So while Michkov might surpass Carlsson and Fantilli's production in his prime by 10-20 points, we project that the more well-rounded game of the two other forwards could enable them to control and impact the game just as much as Michkov.

≡ CHAPTER 2 - THE USNTDP

Zach Benson checked most of the main boxes in our evaluation. He's got a multi-dimensional game, top-line upside, and we're confident in his chance of reaching that upside. It's why he cemented himself as the fifth-best prospect in the draft for us.

It takes a lot to impress Brown, our most detailed and dedicated evaluator, but as he compulsively tracked more and more games of Benson, his appreciation for the forward's play only grew.

"He's one of the best playmakers that has come through the draft since we started doing this, at least on the North American side." Brown said in our March meeting. "He's just so adaptable. You can put him with any combination of linemates and that's instantly the best line on the team."

Benson impacts more areas of the game than Will Smith. He's better along the boards, better in the defensive zone, better in transition (both as a carrier and a passer). And despite the size difference, we project that he will remain more effective in all of these facets as he matures. He can also accomplish a few of the same highlight-reel moves as Smith and he's better at picking his spot to use them, too.

We also believe that Benson has the capacity to generate a higher impact in all facets of the game, along with a higher production potential than both Ryan Leonard and Oliver Moore. Benson's hockey sense grade is a full point higher than Leonard's and two points ahead of Moore's on our sheet.

After Benson, the six to nine spots on our board belonged to the USNTDP.

Leonard, Smith, and Moore rapidly shifted around these spots in the second half of the season, reflective of our team's difficulty ranking them.

"In the last five or so games that I've watched, I think I'm leaning Moore over Smith," said Joey Padmanabhan in our March Meeting. "He is such a dynamic skater. I don't think he employs changes of pace as much as he should, but I think the potential is there."

"I'd say I'm probably one of the higher on Smith here," said Elite Prospects Dir. of Film Scouting Cam Robinson in a Slack discussion. "And one of my biggest concerns is how he'll perform in tighter situations. This one might bite me down the road, but I think Smith is ahead of Moore by a clear margin."

"I have witnessed Smith do well in games with tons of scouts," countered Russ Cohen, one of our crossover scouts. "He isn't phased. I think Leonard is overall the best guy in terms of NHL translatable skills in the whole program, but at the moment (in March), I'm putting Smith and Moore ahead. Smith because of the playmaking and Moore because of the speed."

"It's a toss-up for me. I think, if pressed, I lean Smith, but that changes from one day to the next," added EP Rinkside Editor-in-Chief and NCAA scout J.D. Burke, who followed all of these prospects live at the U18s.

Robinson, Cohen, and Burke are three of our more industry-connected scouts. They all have their personal preferences – Cam for pacey, creative forwards; Cohen for prospects who pay attention to the details of the game; and Burke for those who please his primal desire for violence – but they also bring a well-rounded point of view to these meetings.

The external pressure to rank Smith ahead mounted as the season went on and he became a consensus top-five pick for most draft outlets and NHL teams. Although we had our doubts about the centre in the middle months of the campaign, we appreciated his evolution at the end of the season. His skating improved and his decision-making, too. He became more efficient in his choices of plays.

His upward trajectory contrasted with Moore's, who arguably became more entrenched in some bad habits as the season went

on. We continuously put forth the argument that the USNTDP's second-line centre lacked the supporting cast of Smith on the ice. To us, that's why he didn't score and tried to overly create with his speed, but as the gap between Smith's and Moore's performance and development grew, we couldn't justify keeping Moore ahead anymore, even if a couple of our scouts continued to think of him as the best prospect on the team.

That said, at some point, we realized what united us all is our shared love of Leonard's game. We chose him for the sixth overall slot to be consistent with our ranking philosophy and evaluation and to reflect the majority opinion. But more than that, we truly believe in his upside.

Leonard arguably added just as much if not more to his game over the course of the season than Smith did. He also showed more diverse skills than both Smith and Moore. And while there's a gap between Smith's and Leonard's playmaking skills, when given an opportunity, the shoot-first Leonard showed us that he can also manipulate defenders to open passing lanes. We like his vision. His shot, skating, physical and small-area game, and defensive play project better to the NHL than Smith. And he also projects as a better scorer and physical player than Moore.

After slotting Leonard and Smith at sixth and seventh, Moore became our de facto eighth overall prospect. While many scouts outside our team came down on his upside as the year went on, stating decision-making issues, we think Moore's above-average sense will shine through as he develops.

✓ CHAPTER 3 - BALANCING UPSIDE AND CERTAINTY

We placed the two top defencemen of the draft class after the three USNTDP forwards, as we believe there is a gap in upside between the two groups. The three forwards could all become top-line play-drivers and, while the two defencemen could also ascend to an NHL top-pair, their chance of that seems slightly smaller.

Teams will have more control over David Reinbacher's development than Dmitri Simashev's. Reinbacher is also more aggressive and confident in the offensive zone. These two qualities usually lead to faster and better development. For those reasons, and because Alanen pushed for it, we ranked Reinbacher a spot ahead.

On our first board in December, we placed Dalibor Dvorský at seventh overall. That was mostly because St-Louis saw more potential in the Slovak prospect's tools and fought to keep him in the top 10. But even at the time, our European Scouts – Lassi Alanen, Jimmy Hamrin, and Marek Novotny – already ranked him between 10 and 15.

"He's not as exciting as Will Smith or Oliver Moore, but he has many great habits," said St-Louis in our December meeting. "He's very attentive to details, rotates well, moves pucks off the boards, and has interesting rush mechanics. There are many NHL elements in his game."

After sliding down our board during the year, due to his average performances in HockeyAllsvenskan, the 10-to-15 range is where Dvorský ultimately wound up. We put him at 11th behind the two defencemen, as in a vacuum, a No. 3 defenceman has more value to us than a second-line forward, the more likely role of most of the forwards ranked immediately after them.

In general, we barely value positions when ranking players. That factor only serves as a tie-breaker when we can't decide between two prospects on other merits.

All three forward positions are becoming so interchangeable in the NHL that player roles seem to matter less. And while defencemen spend more time on the ice than forwards, highly skilled wingers and centres can more often change the outcome of a game with one play. As a tie-breaker, if we are forced to choose, we still value defencemen a bit more than centres and centres a bit more than wingers, the exception being first-line centres, who have the highest value of all.

Quentin Musty shares a similar upside as the USNTDP forwards. He debuted at 18th overall on our first board, mostly because of the endorsement of St-Louis and Brown, but then climbed as Elite Prospects OHL scout Lauren Kelly, a skeptic at first, got on board with his profile.

"I've done a 180 on Musty from the beginning of the season," said Kelly in our March meeting. "At the start of the year I wasn't sure if he had the attention to detail and the defensive engagement, but he has just taken his game to another level. He has looked amazing. He is dominant, scoring, and setting up plays. The backchecking has looked better. Really impressive player and the upside is huge. That's why he is my top-ranked OHL player."

Although we believe in his potential, we held off on moving him too high. He settled at 12th overall. Musty possesses a lot of high-end offensive tools, but he has a lot to clean up on the decision-making side to make his talents shine through every game. The more certain projections of the prospects ahead of him had them win out in the end on our board.

The reason you see Musty and Gracyn Sawchyn higher on our lists than most others is because we value flashes of high-end abilities disproportionately more than baseline performance. We want to see special elements, even if they're infrequent. We then bank that those elements will become much more solid parts of a player's game as he matures.

Smart and inside-driven, both players showed many different dimensions to their game and some incredible moments of high-end skills. They can chain stickhandling moves into deft passes to teammates, play a harder style of game, and score. All the top-six forward ingredients are there in their game.

"Sawchyn has to go at 13 and I'm going to claim territory on this one," said Brown in our February meeting. "The dynamic flashes are right up there with some of the top guys in the WHL, except for Bedard. There is a lot of upside there. It's just that sometimes he fades in the background, but that could just be the consequence of being a third-line centre on a team with an absurd amount of talent."

Some of the abilities of Musty, Sawchyn, and Calum Ritchie, the next prospect on our list, may have been hidden by their environment. Musty lacked chemistry with his teammates in Sudbury; Sawchyn played down the lineup of a Memorial Cup-contending Seattle team; and Ritchie lacked support in a weak Oshawa team.

We pushed the 6-foot-2 centre 14 spots after seeing him take over shifts in the OHL's second half and act as a strong two-way, connective force at the U18s. Ritchie is almost a sure-fire NHLer, but he has the stickhandling skills and the vision to become a top-six offensive driver.

We view him as having a similar upside as Axel Sandin Pellikka – a middle-of-the-lineup player with the possibility of more – but as we have seen more Ritchie-like players translate to the NHL than Sandin Pellikka-like players, we ranked the centre ahead.

"Other defencemen like him, undersized and mobile ones from Sweden, struggled recently with the physicality of breakouts and retrievals when they arrived in the NHL," said St-Louis in our January meeting.

Our next prospect, Matthew Wood, is a special case, the highest boom-or-bust profile we have on our board. With a clear, significant hurdle before joining the NHL – improving his skating – there is more risk in his projection. That risk weighed him down our board, but we couldn't bring him down further than the 16th overall spot due to the high upside, one he confirmed at the U18s against his age group.

When we make our list, we don't purely rely on the eye test, although it's our primary evaluation tool. We also take into account production. Wood's high numbers pushed him up our board during the season. And it's the same story for Colby Barlow.

If we only relied on the eye test evaluation, Barlow may not have featured inside our top-20, but we gave his 46-goals season a bit more weight when ranking him. When a player's production is that high, we don't ignore it, as it sometimes points to underlying talents that may not pop as much from an eye-test point of view.

"I'm not sure how he's scoring as often as he does," said Kelly in our March meeting. "He's putting himself in the right areas. He can score off the rush and the shot is great. His upside isn't as high as Musty, but it's probably a safe bet that he will play on a second or third line."

Why Wood over Barlow?

Wood has more upside and a better playmaking game than Barlow; Barlow has the better scoring tools and the easier path to the NHL. Already, between these two sets of qualities, we pick the first one. And there is also a clear hockey sense gap between the two prospects. Wood's grade is a full point higher.

We also took into account production more highly when ranking Gabe Perreault and Andrew Cristall, two similar, highly talented, but flawed prospects who had opposite trajectories on our board.

At the moment, we feel that their 18th and 19th overall placement accurately reflects their ceiling and high-end production. That said, as this spot is a compromise between their boom and bust potential, a middle-ground, we may end up regretting the placement no matter what happens with them.

Despite the pleas of USHL scout Padmanabhan, who favours upside the most on our team, Perreault didn't feature on our first December board.

At the time, our team saw him as the passenger on the top USNTDP line, before realizing that he was its main driver many games. We pushed him in our first round on the following boards and then at 18th overall on this last one following his record-breaking end of the season.

Anyone who listened to our draft meetings would know that we were always very conscious of the skating and translatability issues of Cristall's game.

"It's one of those situations where you have him in the top 10, but do you really want to take him in the top 10?" said Brown in our March meeting. foreshadowing the winger's fall on our last list.

We stomached Cristall's flaws until the U18s and kept him high on our board despite our uneasiness with the placement, but at the tournament, these flaws became too glaring to ignore. He dropped to the 19th overall spot. We refrained from dropping him further, however, for the same reasons Perreault climbed: His high-level hockey sense and playmaking abilities.

Perreault moved ahead of Cristall because we see the USNTDP winger as being more adaptable than his WHL counterpart. As one of the best play connectors of the draft, we feel he will better be able to mould his game to different linemates. Cristall showed this season that, to succeed, his team's offence needs to be funnelled through him.

That being said, one has to keep in mind that, placed in a more favourable situation, like Perreault's USNTDP, Cristall would probably be seen in a better light by both the public and private spheres. And vice-versa for Perreault.

When ranking players, we like to run thought experiments like these to compare them and see past some of our perception biases.

⚡ CHAPTER 4 - HIGH CERTAINTY ≠ LOW UPSIDE

Brown and Alanen's tracked data also enables us to see through a players' production and find the ones whose numbers may not accurately reflect their potential.

Brayden Yager is potentially one such player. While his numbers suggest that he's a top-end prospect in this draft, his average advanced stats (and our eye test evaluation) made us question his play-driving skills during the season.

It's why the more toolsy and better play-driving Samuel Honzek moved ahead of him in the second half on our board.

If we're looking at more project picks, we prefer picking the ones that bring more quality ingredients to the table. Yager's shot surpasses Honzek's, but the 6-foot-4 Slovak centre beats Yager in most other categories. There is quite a gap in playmaking and

puck-retrieving talent between the two, especially.

Burke, who handles the NCAA side of our scouting, pleaded with us to push Gavin Brindley up our board. Relentless, he slowly won his campaign over the course of the season.

While we do take into consideration historical tendencies – few 5-foot-8 forwards make the NHL – Brindley’s speed, well-rounded game, and playmaking talent convinced us to push him ahead of Yager. While Yager is more toolsy, Brindley brings more dynamic qualities, has a more mature game, and he performed better at a more difficult level already.

There are a lot of parallels that can be drawn between Brindley and Swedish defenceman Tom Willander’s style of play, upside, and progression during the year. This is why they ended up in about the same place, only separated by Yager. Both prospects focused more on the defensive side of their game at the start of the season, but then, as the calendar turned to 2023, their offensive skills surfaced. They became better playmakers and puck-movers for their formations.

As they both rely more on a pace advantage to score, their scoring might become more limited at the next levels, however.

Contrary to players like Andrew Cristall and Gabriel Perreault, who also have a high ceiling and a low floor, we wouldn’t be comfortable drafting Eduard Šalé and Daniil But in the top 20.

For Šalé, it’s because we came to view him as, at best, a complementary top-six NHL scorer. That’s a valuable role, but we feel Cristall and Perreault, if they reached their upside, could have a higher impact as top-six and powerplay half-wall playmakers.

But while it’s the gap in ceiling that explains why Šalé finds himself lower on our board than Cristall and Perreault, it’s the opposite for But.

Looking at the NHL population, there are even fewer players in the NHL that resemble But than Cristalls and Perreaults. We used Gabriel Vilardi as a style comparison for But, however, Vilardi is 6-foot-3. The taller a player is, the harder it is for him to develop the functional technical abilities needed, especially the agility, to score in the NHL.

So But’s projection is even less certain to us than one of the two smaller forwards

We also value age and development path when ranking prospects. The team that drafts him won’t have as much control over his development as he will play in the KHL, a lower-paced league that may not allow him to develop the movement habits he needs to succeed in the NHL.

All in all, when computing all of the factors that go into their diverse projections, especially the gap in hockey sense between Cristall/Perreault and But/Šalé, the gap between the first two and the last two became large enough to insert four other players in it, four NHL-paced, harder-working, two-way prospects, who may have easier paths to the NHL.

Once again, just because a player has a higher floor doesn’t mean that his upside is any less high. If the development of Honzek, Brindley, Yager, and Willander picks up, they could realistically end up reaching similar high roles in the lineup as But and Šalé.

✓ CHAPTER 5 - PREFERENCES MATTER

Scouts’ preferences start to matter a lot more the deeper we go into our list.

From 26 to 32, you will find some players who maybe should be lower based on their combination of upside and certainty, on their skills projection, or numbers, but who stuck in the range due to the confidence of one of our scouts.

This is especially true of Riley Heidt, Jayden Perron, and Mikhail Gulyayev.

Robinson, the biggest fan of Heidt on our team, and to a lesser extent, Elite Prospects crossover scout Daniel Gee, pushed to

include Heidt, a lethal power play scorer, high on our board many times during the season. They both came down on him in the latter part of the campaign, but they still felt that he belonged somewhere in that late-first area.

As for Perron, a player who once figured in our top 10, pushing him down proved a little more difficult, as it meant going against our USHL scout, Joey Padmanabhan, the biggest believer in the Chicago Steel forward out there.

While it did make sense to us to have Perron this high on our first couple of boards based on his high upside, we couldn't keep him in that spot after we decided to remake our board with the same consistent philosophy.

In the latter half of the season, we tried our best to stick to a formula that had at its forefront upside but also factored in other elements previously mentioned (certainty, skill, projectable habits, production, advanced stats profile, historical comparables, age, development path, etc...). We ranked players in order of who subjectively scored the highest on that formula.

As there are very few 5-foot-8 players in the NHL, especially ones with closer-to-average skating, Perron slid down the board. His course stopped at 29th overall, a spot where a team looking to swing for the fences could comfortably draft him, knowing that few other upside bets of the type exist in that range.

The same discussions happened with Gulyayev.

Griffing likely would have placed him in our top 20, but the risk factor made him drop. Few 5-foot-10 defencemen get the same opportunities as their taller counterparts, and Gulyayev's environment over the next few years might not offer him the guidance and ice time he needs to understand how to use his skating ability and improve his reads. That being said, his elite mobility and massive offensive upside had us keep him in our first round.

"Even if his defence isn't great right now, he always has the feet advantage and that's a really solid base to improve off of," wrote Griffing in one of our Slack discussions.

Sprinkled around these three prospects are three others who don't have the same upside, but who have a lot of professional habits already and project very well to a middle-six NHL role. Their floor propped them up to our first round: Nate Danielson, Oscar Fisker Mølgaard, and Ethan Gauthier. The better tools of the first two and their ability to play the centre position had them move ahead of Gauthier.

Hamrin, an evaluator always on the lookout for NHL translatable players, had us put Fisker Mølgaard high on our board early in the season, as he made his first steps in the SHL. As he continued to evolve during the season, it became clear to us that he absolutely belonged in that range.

"A very smart kid. The offensive upside is not as high, but Fisker Mølgaard should definitely be in the 20s range," confirmed Hamrin in our March meeting. "It's a very safe pick there."

Beau Akey was the last prospect included in our top-32.

We wrote an article a couple of months ago that explained our ranking of the North American defencemen, but the playoffs and the U18s changed our view of many of them. In the end, the smooth-skating Akey grabbed the pole position. We believe in his shutdown game, but it's really his more frequent flashes of offensive and puck-moving skills in the season's second-half that gave him the push.

❧ CHAPTER 6 - THE REST OF THE BOARD

As we move deeper into the board, the way we rank players shifts slightly. Our hard-line philosophy softens and gives way to more creativity. Preferences start to matter more and more and we compare prospects less on their potential future impact and more on their raw tools.

A great endorsement, like the one Kelly gave for Joey Willis, is often enough to make us consider a prospect in our top-64.

We also move away from saying things like “these prospects should become better power play quarterbacks” and instead rank players based on, for example, their passing skills and awareness, and hope that those abilities help them become NHL play-drivers.

The reason is simple: As prospects get rawer and rawer, it becomes harder to envision them in NHL roles. As we can’t project their roles as clearly, the next best thing is to order them based on their talent level, while also keeping in mind comparables, upside, and certainty.

As a general rule, players who possess at least one high-end ability get favoured over other ones who may show more professional habits, but lack those special attributes. It’s why the high-end mover Luca Cagnoni and the deft shooter Bradly Nadeau moved ahead of the more vanilla Caden Price.

Gee made us see the light on Nadeau. In his eyes, he was exactly the kind of boom prospect you aim for early on the second day of the draft.

“He’s a pure upside pick,” said Gee in our March meeting. “The only thing is that he’s currently going to Maine University, so we don’t know how the development will go.”

Players like Danny Nelson and David Edstrom stand as an exception to that rule. Their game may lack top-six upside, but their floor is too high to ignore. They’ve got NHL tools and professional habits.

As you can see from our reports, we do a lot of crossover scouting at Elite Prospects. This way, we can better compare players across regions and guide them to the most appropriate area of our board. The one exception to our crossover method is goalie scouting. The position is too complex for us mere skater evaluators.

Gregory Balloch, goalie scout extraordinaire, took care of our goalie scouting this season. He provided us with tool grades, projected upsides, and also the ranges of the board that he felt each goalie belonged to. With his help, we added the netminders and put the final touch to our list.

∨ CONCLUSION

Although we improve our ranking process every year, we came to terms over the last few seasons with the fact that it won’t ever be perfect. The list never feels finished, no matter how much we tweak it. Some placements will always feel wrong to some of our scouts and we can’t avoid our biases.

That said, we tried as best as we could to not succumb to outside pressure and stay true to our own ideas and values when making our board. Overall, this ranking accurately reflects our view of this draft class. We’re thrilled with the result.

We hope that reading through this explainer and the profiles, the thousands of hours we put into the project shine through. And as with every guide, we promise to come back next year with an ever more refined product, as we learn from our methods, mistakes, and, hopefully, our many hits.

SCOUTS POLL RESULTS

Best Straight-Line Skater



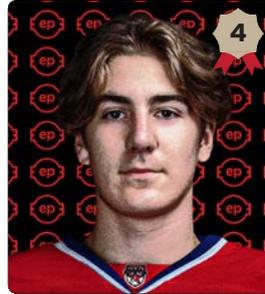
Oliver Moore



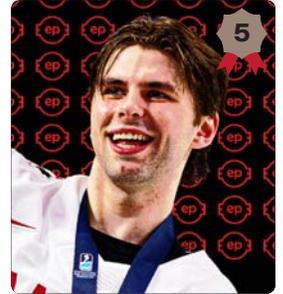
Tanner Molendyk



Connor Bedard



Dmitri Simashev



Adam Fantilli

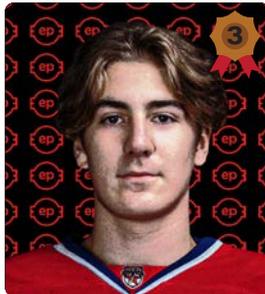
Best Four-Way Mobility



Tanner Molendyk



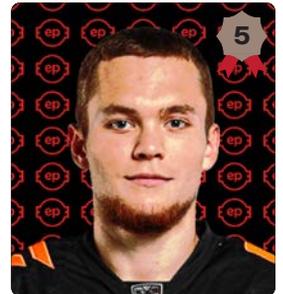
Oliver Moore



Dmitri Simashev

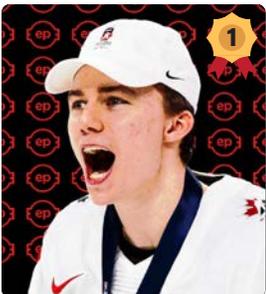


Connor Bedard



Mikhail Gulyayev

Best Shot



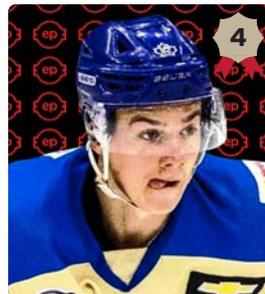
Connor Bedard



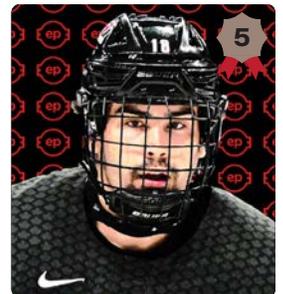
Adam Fantilli



Matvei Michkov



Bradley Nadeau



Colby Barlow

Best Hands



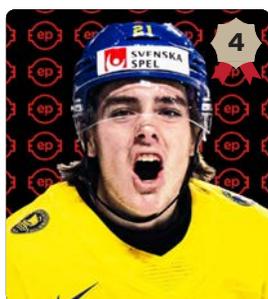
Connor Bedard



Andrew Cristall



Matvei Michkov



Leo Carlsson



Will Smith

Best Vision



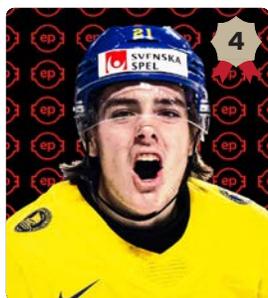
Connor Bedard



Zach Benson



Matvei Michkov



Leo Carlsson



Gabe Perreault

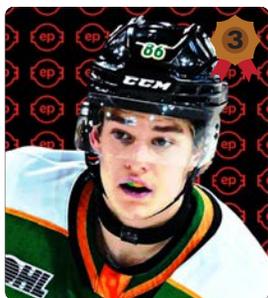
Best Motor



Zach Benson



Gavin Brindley



Denver Barkey



Oliver Moore



Tom Willander

Highest Ceiling



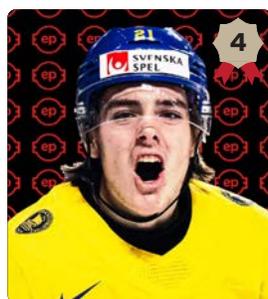
Connor Bedard



Adam Fantilli



Matvei Michkov



Leo Carlsson



Will Smith

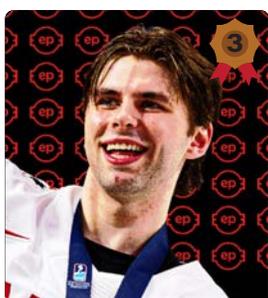
Highest Floor



Connor Bedard



Leo Carlsson



Adam Fantilli

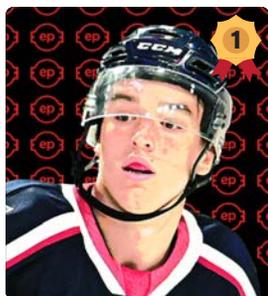


Ryan Leonard

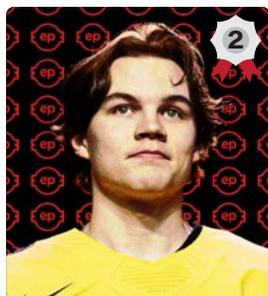


Matvei Michkov

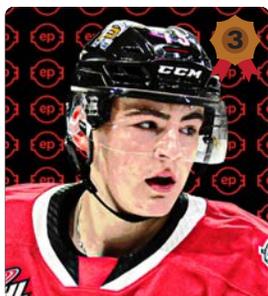
Best Offensive Defenceman



Lukas Dragicevic



Axel Sandin Pellikka



Luca Cagnoni



Mikhail Gulyayev



David Reinbacher

Best Neutral Zone Defender



Dmitri Simashev



Tanner Molendyk



David Reinbacher

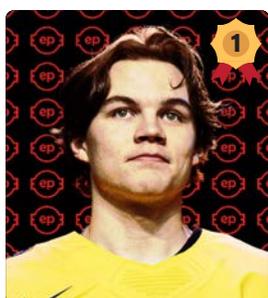


Beau Akey

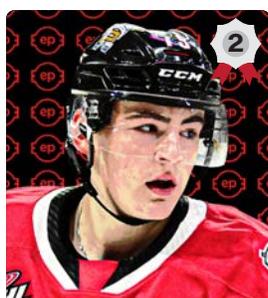


Tom Willander

Best Transition Defenceman



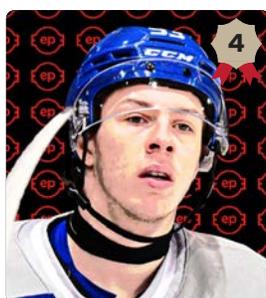
Axel Sandin Pellikka



Luca Cagnoni



David Reinbacher



Matthew Mania



Dmitri Simashev

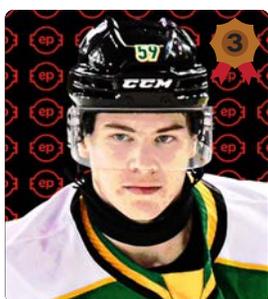
Best Shutdown Defenceman



Dmitri Simashev



David Reinbacher



Oliver Bonk



Beau Akey



Tom Willander

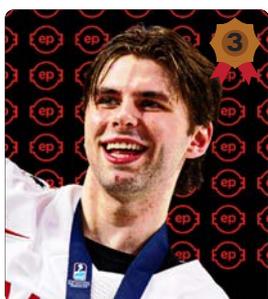
Best Offensive Forward



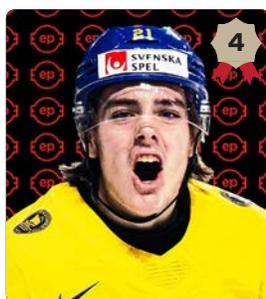
Connor Bedard



Matvei Michkov



Adam Fantilli



Leo Carlsson



Zach Benson

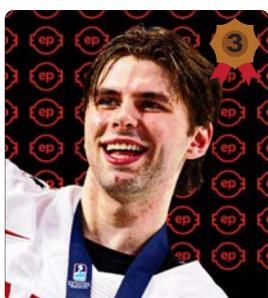
Best Transition Forward



Connor Bedard



Oliver Moore



Adam Fantilli



Matvei Michkov



Gavin Brindley

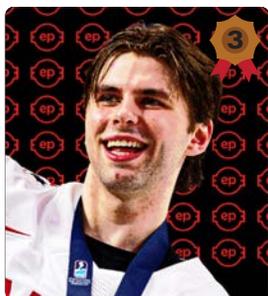
Best Two-Way Forward



Zach Benson



Oliver Moore



Adam Fantilli



Dalibor Dvorsky



Gavin Brindley

Best Power Forward



Adam Fantilli



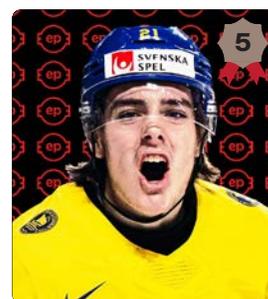
Ryan Leonard



Quentin Musty



Dalibor Dvorsky



Leo Carlsson

Hardest Hitter



Brady Cleveland



Kasper Halttunen



Ryan Leonard



Dmitri Simashev

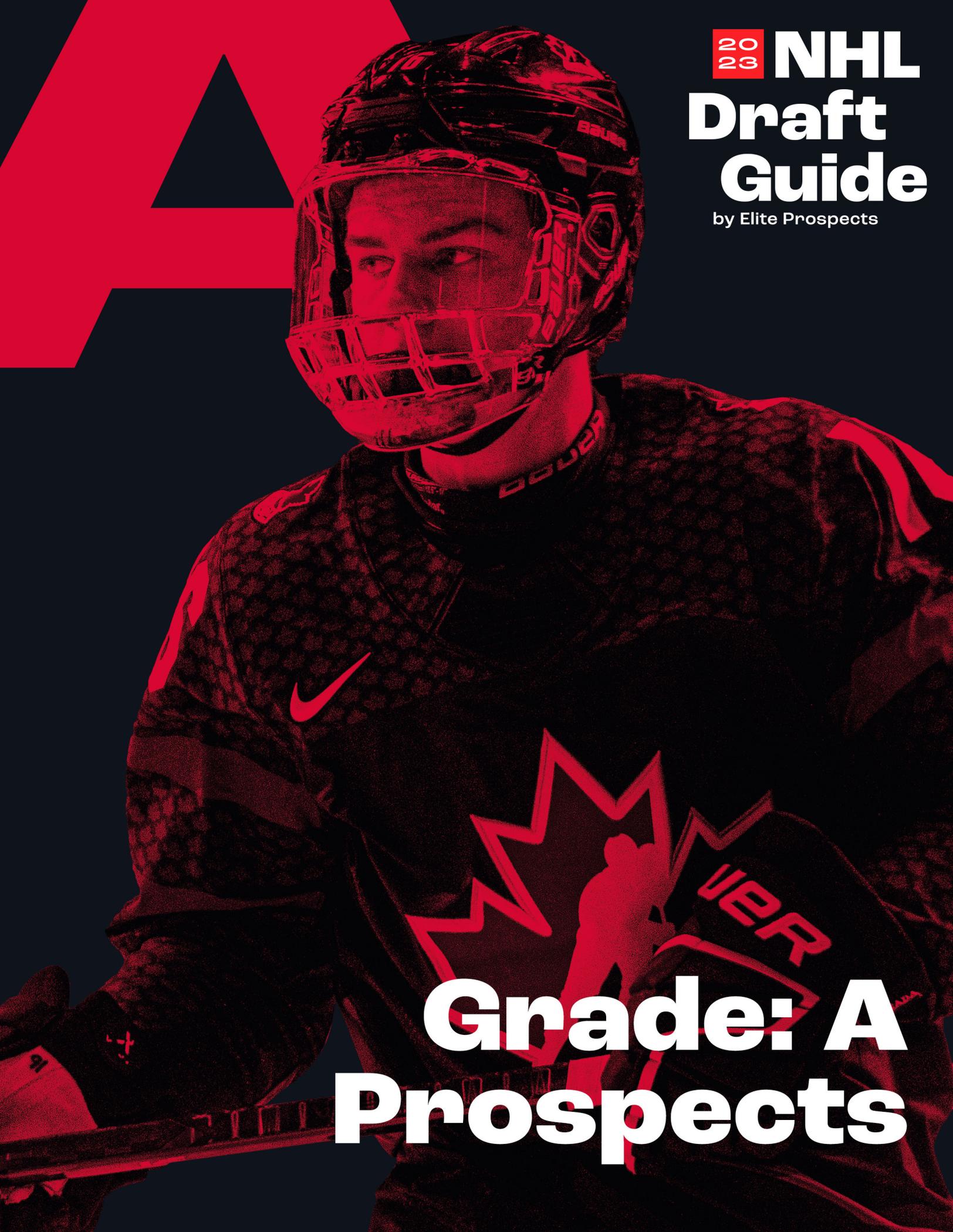


David Reinbacher

20
23

NHL Draft Guide

by Elite Prospects



Grade: A Prospects

Grade: A



1 Connor Bedard

AGE 17.164 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF David Pastrnak, Auston Matthews



Lethal Shooter



Ankle Breaker



Hockey IQ

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

5'10"

Height

185 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

7

Skating

9

Shooting

8

Passing

8.5

Puckhandling

9

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Regina Pats "C"	WHL	57	71	72	143	2.51
Canada U20	WJC-20	7	9	14	23	3.29

SCOUTING REPORT

What does one do atop the throne? Leave no doubt. Instead of settling for simply being one of the best prospects the sport has seen recently, Connor Bedard improved – dramatically.

As his game expanded, so too did his list of accomplishments. His production rivalled Connor McDavid's, essentially going point-for-point on a weaker squad. Then, there was his all-time World Juniors, punctuated with that goal against Slovakia, cementing his place in hockey lore before even setting foot in the NHL. He won just about every award he was eligible for.

He left no doubt.

Shooting, handling, dynamic rushes – these are a few of Bedard's standout skills. His curl-and-drag shot – pull the puck in, elevate the top arm, and narrow the stance to put the full body behind the shot – will be mimicked for years to come.

Every step of the way, Bedard masks his intentions to multiple levels of deception, attacks defenders at angles and with changes of pace, and completes every play at blinding speed – a functional pace unmatched by all but a select few NHLers.

Alone, those skills would carry Bedard to a top-line scoring role. But

Connor Bedard

F | Regina Pats | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 198.1



as the WHL learned this season, those aren't his only skills – not even close.

Bedard's the ultimate adapter. When the shot from range didn't work, he played the off-puck game like a top-end NHLer. He consistently worked to get open in space, detached from defenders just as lanes opened, and even feigned drives only to stop in space, all before teleporting the pass into the top corner.

Teams that swarmed Bedard in transition quickly learned that he's just as dangerous of a playmaker. He played the give-and-go game and showed high-level playmaking ability – borrowing the deception and pace from his handling game to create passing lanes. Where he used to rush plays forward, he found success faking the drive before cutting back and hitting the trailer, one of the big developments in his game this season.

Down the stretch, Bedard was unflappable, even as opponents ramped up the physicality. He already shot, passed, and pulled off insane dekes with a defender hanging off his back, but he also became one of the league's best forecheckers. He stepped into opponents, fought for body positioning, and ripped pucks off sticks like an NHLer.

The flaws are few. Picking his spots a bit better, sure. He must develop just a little bit more precision as a playmaker, but that's not uncommon for a player currently pushing the limits of his game at this stage. Of course, improving his pace and reads in the defensive zone will need improvement, but he also showed enough defensive value late in the season that it could become a strength one day.

Between the elite shot and hands, the overwhelming pace and deception, and top-end playmaking, there's no doubt that Bedard could challenge for Best Player in the NHL one day.

For now, his adaptability and diverse skill set makes him the most NHL-ready prospect to come out of the draft since Auston Matthews.

He's a franchise-defining player; the type of talent that constantly finds new ways to improve, makes everyone around them better, and always rises to the occasion.

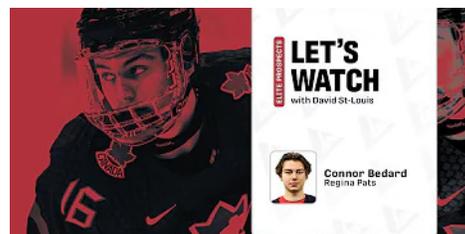
≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Connor Bedard, Adam Fantilli, and the race for top spot in the 2023 NHL Draft



What we learned at the 2023 World Junior Hockey Championships



VIDEO: Let's Watch: Connor Bedard

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Geez, what else do I need to say? Best release in the world soon. I don't know if there is anything original left to say about him." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's a very exciting player. He's going to generate instant offence in the NHL. Good players are going to want to play with him, and he's going to turn good players into great players, great players into all-stars. The sky is the limit for this kid. Any cliché you want to say about him, you can."

"He's absolutely a generational prospect. You've got to put this kid right now in the Sidney Crosby, Auston

Matthews, Connor McDavid category.”

“He’s a legit scoring threat. He’s got a chance to score or create a goal every shift. He’s got that sort of bite to his game. The one thing about him that we noticed this year was that he was always above the puck, probably because his linemates weren’t good enough or he was being too cautious about getting back. Just wait until next year when he’s able to skate a little bit more or know that someone else will be above the puck above him if he gets caught. He’s going to be able to take even more risks and create more chances.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“Special player. Elite player. The hype is real. Has a unique release that can beat NHL goalies. This kid is going to score a ton. He sees the game differently. It looks slow for Connor. He will be one of the most prolific goal scorers in the league. He will be on the highlight films. No issues. Will be first overall.” NHL scout, April 2023

“I could say nothing surprises me about Bedard, but I could also say everything because how can you project him doing this? You can’t. If he was 19 years old doing what he’s doing, it would be incredible, but he’s 17. So you don’t expect or project that, but in the short time here, he’s always had the rise-to-the-occasion ability. He’s super dialled in. He continues to put on a bigger show every time.” - John Paddock, January 2023

“He’s represented us so well. Great upbringing, humble kid. He does a great job of representing us wherever he goes. He loves it when we do stuff like small-area games or scrimmage. He’s proven a lot by winning and losing, competing and challenging himself, but he’s not just a player in practice. He shoots the puck harder than anybody and nobody outworks him. He’s on a mission in practice or games. He just wants to be where he can play.” - John Paddock, January 2023

“It was great playing with him. He’s a great guy. He has that ability that everybody sees when he plays the game. You guys all see it, and it’s the same for us at ice level. Great guy. I had no issues with him. It was fun to be a part of it.” – Adam Fantilli, September 2022

“Obviously, he’s a great player. Off the ice, he’s like a man. He’s like one of the older guys in the room. He’s really mature for his age, which was kind of surprising when we first met each other. Just his maturity and the way he carries himself is unreal. I’ve been asking him if can show me his specialty there. I think it might be his whippy stick. I think he uses a 65.” - Ryker Evans, April 2021

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Do I have anything new to say about Bedard? Somehow, yes. The physical game has taken another step. It’s body positioning and how he keeps opponents on his back. He fakes one way with his feet before going the other, and steps into opponents before cutting away. As soon as defenders shift, he instantly claims space. This was also a violent game. He ran into opponents, shoved them to the ice. He blocked shots, pickpocketed pucks, and provided proactive off-puck defence. Oh, and about his insane assist. He took the puck inside crossovers, set up the defenders on about four different angles in quick succession, using his full body to ask intentions, went under a stick three times, cut back, and passed cross-slot for a goal. He creates space for every shot in every way imaginable. Backhand to forehand. Pump fakes into a quick drag. The defender still hasn’t fallen for it? How about a reach out, before pulling it back, and then firing under the stick at full speed. Unstoppable.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Bedard’s at the stage of the season where he can post a 6-point game without it being an especially eventful game. The mechanics, intelligence, skill, and pace mean that even when he’s not getting high-danger opportunities, he’s still putting pucks in the back of the net. He grabbed a clever assist by shooting low for the rebound from the strong side sharp angle spot where

he normally goes high. Outraced opponents with ease, turning deep defensive zone positioning into unpressured offence up the rink. The defence continues to improve. He's good. He's proactive, physical, sets picks, wins battles, and eliminates off-puck threats. The playmaking and advantage creation, too. He cuts back, delays for support, cuts across the slot and drops pucks back. He skates his routes to completion to create space. He attacks the inside. And spots and connects with teammates through layers, often multiple at a time. Always masks his intentions. Dynamic and explosive, but controlled.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Regina Pats - WHL

An all-time, otherworldly game by a prospect who continues to get better when it doesn't seem possible. Regina was down 3-0 early in the second. Connor Bedard scored two straight, set up the third, then scored two more to win it. A lot of his work started in the defensive zone. He doesn't scan enough off-puck, but he has everything else: pace, physical skills, stick work, supporting reads, timed interventions, and anticipation. He supports down low and eliminates threats. When he's not back first, he manages gaps and space – not floating, but not overskating either. Forechecking remains a strength. Angles, interceptions, hits, and creates chaos. Nasty to play against. From there, the skills appeared all game. He took 17 shots – almost none left value on the table. He skated every off-puck route, creating space for his teammates. Dropped pucks into space, found the trailer, rushed the net. Instantly attacked the inside. Set up every 1-on-1 at angle, at full speed, using his eyes, puck positioning, and feet to deceive the opponent before attacking in the opposite direction. Perfect pass receptions into the hip pocket beat defenders and instantly read to the next play. Arrived in the slot just as the lane opened, and always adjusted to make sure he was always an option. Built the offence with give-and-gos and short-range passing. The only complaints were a couple of hope passes that didn't have a clear target. Winnipeg's stars came to play in all three zones, each dominating stretches of the game – until Bedard came on the ice and reminded Benson, Savoie, Geekie, et al. there are several levels between them. A killer.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A dynamic, electric game. Bedard's pace is unmatched. He handles the puck, changes direction, shoots, passes, and chains together different moves at full speed. No one compares at this level. Every move to beat opponents is set-up with several other quick plays and reads first. He slows down, fakes one way with his body while faking another way with his eyes, then goes in a different direction. Insanely adaptable – he instantly adjusts to defenders, always taking the best play. Keeps his feet moving through checks, as he did during an outside lane rush that ended with a shot off the crossbar. A few of the incredible plays this game. He fired a spinning shot off the rush, reloaded high, accelerated through the reception into space, weight shift deked around an opponent, faked shot so convincingly that two defencemen bit, then toe-dragged inside and passed cross-slot for the assist. Grabbed another primary by drawing a penalty on the powerplay, then shooting low for a deflection at the top of the circle. And he scored with a ridiculous back foot one-timer, elevating his top arm and curving his body to narrow his profile (to maximize power in-tight), beating the goaltender across the net. Last one: he found the trailer off the rush, instantly deked off the boards through an opponent upon the next reception, worked high before cutting back, slipped past another along the boards, then forehand-backhand for what should've been a high-danger chance had his teammate not whiffed on the shot. He delays for support, hits teammates as they arrive in lanes, works the give-and-go, and reads opponents (even deceptive ones) to grab steals on the forecheck.

Cam Robinson: February 1st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs Regina Pats - WHL

Calgary played Bedard close to the vest in this one. They shaded him very well in the offensive zone and limited his rush attempts to ... a handful. He was still able to be dangerous but it was through his play creation rather than the release. Of course, he scored a ridiculous goal where he curled out from the corner, identified a shooting lane through the defender's legs and zipped it cross shelf. It was pinpoint perfect, but a pro goalie would've had the shoulders up to close that window. A feature that I've noticed creeping into Bedard's WHL tape is his decision-making with the puck. Despite double teams, he has been making a habit of cutting, waiting, then firing even if the lane isn't there. It's led to a lot of blocked shots and missed nets. But in this one, he was utilizing his mates more effectively. On a late 6v4 power play as the team tried to tie it up, he was deferring almost exclusively. Until the puck squirted to him in the high slot, then he showed the smart poise to fake, shift then fire. It was a misfire that didn't get off of the ice, but was forced in through some help. He nabbed the shootout winner too with his patented fake backhand, forehand deke. It wasn't the most electric or productive of games, but I enjoyed his smarts and his compete.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

By the numbers, this was the best game I've ever tracked. Bedard had 13 scoring chances, 9 slot passes, 18 controlled entries on 18 tries, and even set up a few chances, for a record 5.6 game score. And somehow, I think he'll beat that at some point this season. The added patience with the puck has really paid off. He's never rushing anything. In those moments, he shows deception with his full body (layered). He creates so many different options for himself. With his back to a defender in open-ice, he's unstoppable. He twists and turns, stops and starts, and attacks space instantly. But he's not just manipulating; he's adapting. He reads the opponent's reaction, then immediately attacks. If he cuts inside and the defender keeps backing up, he doesn't just stick to the plan – he accelerates into the extra space and fires. The shot's the shot. It's the best we've seen. Inside leg, outside leg, in motion, full speed, with pressure – doesn't matter. Oh, and he always attacks the inside. His board play continues to improve; always scans, never forces a play. But that's not necessarily always true off the rush. He forces pucks into lanes that aren't quite there yet – the manipulation that creates space his shot works for the passing, but the timing isn't quite at the same level. Still, his playmaking will be an instant strength in the NHL, especially because he shows the willingness to play a give-and-go game. I watched a lot of Connor McDavid draft year tape earlier this year. He wasn't doing the stuff that Bedard does. The era plays a factor. But it's hard not to be excited about what Bedard will do in the NHL as soon as next season.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Bedard had 11 scoring chances at 5-on-5 on 12 shots. It was incredible. The speed of his attacks, combining the hands, edges, crossovers, and shot is ridiculous. The shooting skill is insane. He easily shoots off the pass, adjusting to even the trickiest of positions. He adapts his shot to the pressure in front of him. He overwhelms with pace. He's physical and aggressive in contact, getting low and skating through the hands of opponents. He wins positioning around the net. He instantly attacks the middle. The playmaking wasn't really there in this game, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. The passes just didn't click and for once, his teammates were actually finding him, letting his off-puck instincts shine. A lot of the plays – the off-the-pass shooting, physicality along the boards, and dynamic rush attacks – look like the stuff he'll be doing next season in the NHL.

Cam Robinson: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Bedard was creating so effectively in this one. He was a transition monster, turning what appeared to be benign rushes into high-danger scoring chances through his use of a crossover-laden approach – darting this way and that, setting it up with feints and fakes, and meshing it all with his hands. And then the shot. He receives and releases in a blink with extreme power generation. The compete along the wall was also encouraging. Teams feel they can beat him with force and grind him down outside of the danger areas. But in this one, he was pulling pucks off the wall quickly. He was fighting for inside position. He was engaging, lifting sticks, and winning battles.

David St-Louis: January 2nd, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - WJ20

An all-timer, all-star, historical, separating, legend-building, dream-like performance from the game-breaking, hockey artist, clear first overall pick, potentially generational talent Connor Bedard. Yeah...It should never have been a debate.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - Canada vs Sweden - WJ20

Bedard continues his domination of the tournament. He moves well off the puck, which contributes to his high volume of touches and identifies teammates quickly to build scoring chances (something he is doing more and more as the tournament advances, forgoing the individualistic rushes, a sign of adaptability, a characteristic of elite prospects). The skills are all high-end, and we've described them a lot already, except for the board play. But Bedard still finds ways to move the puck off the yellow to a teammate, even if he has to expend more energy to pull it off. He's competitive. And above all, he makes plays evident for teammates. They know where to position for him and he gives them a clear next, best play. So much to appreciate in his game.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Canada vs Czech - WJ20

Bedard looked like the only player that showed up for Team Canada. That's partly because he got every prime opportunity to

create: every powerplay rush and half-wall possessions. He made the most out of them, however, showing dangles and drag-shots and fakes and slip passes...Everything was on display. His individualistic style, partly a consequence of his environment in Regina, might reduce the overall quality of Canada's scoring chances in the tournament, however. Bedard could look to build scoring chances instead of trying to score off the rush, although I think both methods have their merits -- he did score in this game with his drag-shot.

J.D. Burke: December 4th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

An inefficient game that ended on a low note with pitiful efforts on a pair of Oil Kings goals, and Connor Bedard left this contest with five points (one goal and four assist) nearly all of which came at evens. And you know what? I don't even care about the thrown away pucks or the complete no-shows defensively. Bedard was ridiculous. The thing about the puck management and the giveaways is that you have to place them in the appropriate context. You're watching the most singularly skilled draft prospect in nearly a decade pushing the limits of his skill set, experimenting with a part of his game (his playmaking) that was once a relative (emphasis on the word relative) weakness. The first assist really put all of this work on display. Bedard carried the puck nearly end to end, turning away from pressure in the corner of the offensive zone and then furnishing a cross-ice feed through four (4!) bodies for the tap-in. The next assist saw Bedard swat the puck out of a pile of bodies at full speed with one hand on his stick, lead the 2-on-1, and pick up an assist with a cross-ice pass around a defender's stick. The third helper saw Bedard use the dotted line and a change of pace game through the neutral zone as the lead puck carrier before starting a tic-tac-toe goal with a spinning pass. Oh, and Bedard sniped a goal at full speed on another 2-on-1, just for good measure. His handling skill, creativity, adaptability, problem-solving -- it's all at an elite level. The growth we're seeing from him as a distributor is absurd. I could write another two or three pages worth of reports on Bedard's performance in this game. He's unlike anyone I've ever scouted. Without equal as a draft year player.

Daniel Gee: December 2nd, 2022 - Regina Pats vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Probably the most absurd viewing I have ever had from a prospect -- my brain is fried. Bedard showed out against Prince George, creating on practically every touch. Constantly attacking with proactive speed, he had numerous downhill shooting chances. He scored on three of them and hit the post a couple more times. One of the goals was called off, but he still beat Young easily. Bedard's shot is prolific. Always curling and dragging to the inside, the angle-changes are just debilitating for goaltenders to read. His wrist fold is so quick through his release, the downforce so violent in terms of power creation, that even with PG's Ty Young being set, couldn't handle the 10+ opportunities. One one sequence, Bedard shot through a blocking defender, using them as a screen and placed the puck just above the pad -- unstoppable manipulation at this level. His second goal was more impressive -- burning up the left wing one-on-one, Bedard stopped up, leveraged all his weight on his inside leg and roofed a puck top right-hand corner -- the defenders gap was destroyed by the stop up and the knowhow to power off the inside right leg is just unheard off, let alone the placement across the goaltenders body. Constantly double teamed, Bedard showed a tonne of problem solving and adaptability to the pressure -- triangle handles, nifty backpasses to open teammates, no-looks on tape, he just has an incredible amount of patience on-puck and in resistance. He overhanded a couple of times in open ice leading to some bad turnovers -- hardly can blame him when his puck touches were literally turning to gold.

Bedard has such a huge selection of body manipulations, jukes, and fakes that blend so well with his hands -- it makes him a monster transitionally. His delay game is extremely developed -- half pivots, drawing attention, hooking and slipping passes to trailers activating up the middle. He stripped a couple of pucks on the defensive zone blue line -- keeps his stick recoiled and surprises blueline defenders -- went 5-hole but had the opportunity saved.

Unstoppable, inevitable, and downright scary -- he could have scored 6 in this game and it wouldn't have been shocking. Bedard looks like a generational talent.

Cam Robinson: December 2nd, 2022 - Regina Pats vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

What Daniel said.

Cam Robinson: November 29th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Regina Pats - WHL

Something of an off night for Bedard. He looked like he was down on energy, but still managed to create a few high-danger chances for himself and set up a couple for his mates. The Pats were smart and recognized that Kelowna was playing Bedard extremely tight and used that to lean on Howe and Suzdelev instead. That said, he could've likely been more dangerous if his mates did hit him in flight or identified that cross-seem dish with more regularity on the PP. He managed to extend his point streak to 24 games with a primary helper on the OT winner where he slid it right into the wheelhouse of Suzdelyev.

Cam Robison: November 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Wow, this was one hell of a performance by Bedard. I didn't realize Mitch and David had already punched in reports for this outing, so I'll just let you read there. But my goodness, the manipulation, the awareness, the speed, the adjustments at speed. Everything just screamed super elite. This had a real "Patrick Kane in his prime" type of feel to it.

David St-Louis: November 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Wow. There is so much to say here that I'm not sure 2000 words would cover the whole game. Bedard showed elite manipulation abilities over and over again to run through teams and generate chances. He beat defenders by: attacking at an angle, changing lanes, changing speeds, baiting pokechecks, leveraging other options, with his stickhandling ability, with crossovers, by absorbing hits to make plays, by using them as screen...He used movements, his own skill, and teammates to beat them, quite often combining different manipulation styles. The skating looks high-end even if the posture not, as he can fully load his legs to feint and go around the opposition. He handles with short, rolling motions that keep the puck in reach at all times for micro-adjustments as he goes around sticks. He's extremely aware (constant scanning), processes extremely fast (can pick up the slightest movement cues from defenders), anticipates well, plans, adapts....He has pretty much everything in his game. He cheats offensively and could handle retrievals better. The first weakness is pretty normal in a weak team when down a few goals and the second one, well, he's 5'9" and mostly a rusher, in-zone manipulator. He has all the technical ability to become better at them and he's already super inside-driven so it's not an issue of engagement.

Mitchell Brown: November 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

The best single-game performance I've seen in a long time. He led the game in just about everything other than points, showing the complete skill set in the process. The shot's a 9, no doubt. It will be a generation-defining shot: how he positions his feet, hands, the drag motion, and his ability to modulate the release according to the information in front of him. He's playing slower now, which benefits his game overall. It makes his changes of pace more dynamic. His edges are much better than I've previously thought: he turned an outside edge cut into a heel-to-heel while handling the puck, then cut back across the net front under pressure for his goal 10 seconds into the contest. As he gets stronger, the stride will only improve. Handling: always attacking an angle, changing pace, hip pocket, deceiving constantly. Playmaking continues to level up, now he's manipulating defenders and throwing look-off hook passes through defenders and slipping pucks through tiny windows. Used the Makar move – step inside, draw pressure, stop, explode off the inside edge – to beat pressure from the point twice. Players take runs at him and just bounce off. Even showed some defensive ability in this game, defending 1-on-1s while skating backwards and mostly excelling. Grabbed a few stops on the backcheck. Then, there's all of his off-puck routes, getting inside positioning, well-timed movements into space, and always keeping his stick free. Even managed to redirect a pass towards the net with his stick between the defender's legs. This dude is out here doing literally anything and everything and looking unstoppable in the process. Haven't seen a CHLer like this since McDavid.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

A tame game for Bedard's standards, but everything was still visible. How quickly he reads defenders and attacks their vulnerabilities is fascinating. He baits pivots, cuts inside on their heels, waits for them to follow his cutback before accelerating, moves pucks across his body at lightning speed to wait for reactions. So many of these rushes will be even more effective against pros as he'll have more support and defenders are more likely to react to his high-pace trickery. Some difficulty connecting with his passes in this game, but he still continues to show his playmaking development. He gains the zone, cuts back, looks for the trailer, and even tries to manipulate with his shot threat to create the passing lane. An elite prospect.

Cam Robinson: November 11th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs Regina Pats - WHL

Another night of Connor Bedard doing things that no one else in this league can do. He ended up with 2+1 - including a silky cross-ice feed into the wheelhouse of Suzdalev for an A1 on the power play, and an incredibly difficult between-the-legs goal while moving away from the net and below the goalline. Bedard's shot from out high has been less effective of late but it's mostly due to teams sticking someone on him at all times. But that's just opened up his distribution game which has shown steady improvements over the last year. He manipulates defenders with his hands, changes in speed, and cutting and curling into space to open up lanes. He needs little to no time to recognize a seam and hit it. He works the puck all around the circumference of his body in-flight and from a stationary position on the setup.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Five points for Bedard. His growth as a playmaker continues. He's so patient in transition, cutting back and delaying for support. Manipulates just as effective at low speeds and high speeds. Manipulates defenders to open up passing lanes, often through multiple defenders. Shows awareness of his options, turning a failed play immediately into a successful one with a different decision. There are missed opportunities, some from a lack of scanning and some from a more general lack of awareness, but play selection's different for him than other players - his shot and hands are just that good. The hands also continued to sign. So many different elements: the mechanical soundness and the adaptability it creates, the hand speed and constant hip pocket puck positioning, the creativity, and the balance, edge control, and handling skill when pressured and off-balance. He fought the puck a few times, but nothing too concerning. He looks like a soon-to-be NHL superstar. That he's made such a clear effort to improve his playmaking (at the expense of other skills that would be guaranteed points) is impressive.

Cam Robinson: October 16th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Bedard was strong again in this one. He was using the passing game a lot more than in previous outings, showing off the quick cuts and hands to create separation from defenders and then hitting his mates in open space. He sent one backhand saucer pass from above the circles, across the grain and through two folds onto a mates stick for a wide open net which was somehow bungled. Trying to take the puck off of him while he's making those quick moves and using his body to protect and then curl back is an exercise in fruition. The shot wasn't as lethal or threatening, but that was part of the gameplan against. Lethbridge was on him tight all night, trying to deny the pass and when he did get it, they were stacking defenders between him and the goal and rushing quickly. Everything we've come to expect was there - the speed, the hands, the mind, the vision. Kid is good.

Cam Robinson: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

I can't help but feeling like Bedard still hasn't hit his stride this season. And yet, he still demands the most attention and is threatening nearly every time he's on the ice. He and Sudalev are quickly becoming a must-see-tv. The skill and creativity the duo displayed in this one was on another level. Bedard was using his hands a ton in this one, but his feet were slowing down a lot too. It's like you see from the that guy at drop-in who is better than everyone else, they can generate speed, get the puck and then stop skating and just try to dangle everyone. Bright side, he was pushing into the net front area and sniffing around loose puck. His shot was there but wasn't able to get it off as often as he'd like. A goal and two helpers in a medium outing is about par for the Bedard though. He just always finds a way.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Three points and probably earned a couple more. Bedard completed a give-and-go, missed the net after dangling around a defender, and was robbed in-tight. But his playmaking was the most impressive part. Delayed for his teammates to skate their routes (leading to a post), dropped a puck between his legs for a chance, won positioning as he cut across the slot before finding the middle-lane driver, and connected with a wicked cross-slot backhand saucer pass for a chance. In transition, he's more patient than last year. He cuts, scans, then finds a teammate moving up the middle. He also crushed a player who tried to hit him. Really, the only flaws were a couple of poor pass receptions (unusual for him), blind passes, and two poor shots that would've been better served as the vintage outside leg wristers with a narrow stance rather than widening and leaning over his

stick. He'll be a superstar.

Cam Robison: September 29th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

An early season look at the draft-eligible version of Bedard and it wasn't a disappointment. Two goals, three points and a bushel of chances. He was good in the faceoff dot and commanded everything offensively for the Pats. Despite quite clearly being the best player on the ice and then some, I'd say he was still ironing out some of the early season issues. His handles weren't all the clean, had several attempts blocked, and during the 5-on-3 in OT, he was mobile, but wasn't able to really find a lot of real estate. Of course, he decided to just whip the most casual one-time snapshot post and in to win it as the power-play was about to expire. We know the drill - his abilities are supreme and I quiver at what the West is going to have to deal with when he's cooking at full speed here in a few minutes.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2021 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Another unreal performance from Bedard. Explosive, dynamic, and creative. He's an exceptionally manipulative player, using weight shifts, hesitations, eye deception, and puck positioning to misdirect defenders – and that's while overloading them with pace. He short-circuits even the best defenders at this level. He could play a more perimeter game and thrive but instead tries to break to the middle with every possible opportunity. Scored with a wild curl-and-drag where he pulled the puck inwards so fast that the goaltender couldn't even move before the puck left his stick. The playmaking continues to improve, showing a delay game, high-level deception, and a give-and-go mindset. Really, the issues are extremely minor – and he's not even eligible until 2023. He leans back into his crossovers while accelerating instead of forward. He plays a bit too fast, often sprinting forward into defenders instead of slowing down and looking for the kick out pass when it's available. Still too reliant on that inside-out dangle that smarter defenders predict and eliminate by going for his stick. A bit too optimistic on some of his pass attempts. He looks like a superstar.

Mitchell Brown: November 27th, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Watching Bedard remains an experience unlike any other in junior hockey. He's already the most skilled player in the country, and you can practically see the improvement with each passing week. After having some playmaking issues early in the season, Bedard's using the threat of his shot to set up teammates. And not just with a basic look-off. He's actively manipulating defenders by moving away from his target, waiting for them to react, and then passing through to his open teammate, often at an exceptional pace. He still blindly through pucks to the inside on occasion, but that's pretty minor at this stage. While he's not shy about shooting from the perimeter, he maximizes his odds by skating parallel to the boards instead of angling towards the net, which makes the goaltender have to adjust to him – had a couple of very close looks that could've just easily been goals from that play. The speed of his release is shocking, too. It's not just the hand speed or how quickly he prepares his upper body. It's the feet. I've never seen a player who shoots off their outside leg inside strides and crossovers like Bedard (tons of players can shoot in stride/crossovers, but it's off the inside leg). Or rather, I've never seen a player who transitions from strides and crossovers into his outside leg shot as fast. It's insane. Really, the issues are minor: he leans back into his crossovers during acceleration instead of leaning forward, he abuses the forehand-backhand deke through the triangle, and, well, that's about it. He's an immense off-puck threat, an engaged, proactive defender, and a lethal creator.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Oh, Bedard's an elite playmaker, too? After forcing passes like crazy early in this season, Bedard's found his timing. He slows down to delay for options when possible but without losing the pace that makes him exceptional. He times his passes through sticks and skates, keenly aware of his movements cause reactions from defenders. Adjusts puck positioning to access teammates, timing said puckhandling to ensure defenders don't figure out the pass is coming. Straight-up manipulates to open lanes, too. Builds a lot of his offence around give-and-goes, but sometimes misses the opportunity to make the pass just after gaining the zone. Scored with a wild outside leg wrister essentially built into strides after knocking the puck out of mid-air on the backhand. The way that he plays off his teammates, particularly Ryker Evans, is special. Just throw a puck into his general vicinity in any direction and he'll turn into a chance. Superstar potential.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Statistically, this was the best game I've tracked this season from any player. Bedard led in pretty much every category. As usual, the shot was fire. It's NHL-calibre, probably among the elite already. His set ups are special: he never keeps a defender directly between him and the net. He comes in slightly off-center to ensure that he's not shooting into spin pads after changing the angle. He builds his weight shifts inside his skating movements into his desired space, allowing him to fire early than goaltenders/defenders expect. He plays with the timing of his releases, too -- he's just pulling the puck back and firing immediately. Extremely inside-driven, combining pace and deception to overwhelm defenders unlike any other prospect. For his first goal, he cut inside, deceive pressure, then loaded his weight on his outside leg for a turn -- which became the shot. He never planted the inside leg, instead only returning his toes to the ice before kicking back and powering through the shot. Combined with a handle directly into his shooting pocket and subtle angle change. Dynamic posture and adaptability through the roof.

Bedard doesn't overhandle the puck, gets involved defensively, changes lanes constantly, wins races and escapes with possession, establishes body positioning -- has NHL details already. The skating still needs work (lacks hip engagement) but it'll improve with time. Forces passes as usual, but he passes hard and accurately to get them on his teammate's sticks -- they just can't do anything with them. Needs to slow down as a playmaking and improve his timing. Still, he's a superstar in the NHL -- I have no doubt.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg Ice - WHL

Everything Regina does runs through Bedard or Evans, sometimes both. Bedard's adaptability really stands out; he can play any style, in any situation, and doesn't get locked into one. His pace is unrelenting and the shot's one of the best on the planet. He both has the skills surrounding his shot and the intelligence to maximize it. Loves this backhand-forehand deke, where he fakes the cut to the inside, reaches around, and then quickly taps the puck under their stick and explodes to the outside. The most translatable play, it is not. But the deceptive set up, pace, and handling skills are elite. And he's not just an individual attacker. He understands the give-and-go game, how to reposition and get open, and how to integrate his teammates into the game. Legitimately, it sometimes feels like he's deferring too much. He's a game breaker of the likes I haven't seen in years; a superstar.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Had never heard of Connor Bedard until this game. Eye-opening performance. Perhaps a decent prospect. In this one, Bedard was in the middle of pretty much every play. The way that he manipulates defenders and how quickly he capitalizes on it is special. Incredible pace, extreme inside drive, highly creative, and a lethal shooter. Forced a ton of passes. He tried to deceive to open the lanes, it didn't work, and then he passed anyway. But he also an outstanding one-touch/under pressure passing game. Non-stop pursuit, grabbing six steals on the forecheck and hustling back for a stop late in the game. He's faster and more explosive this year, achieving deeper skating posture than last year. He's lock to be a superstar.

Mitchell Brown: October 6th, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg Ice - WHL

Everything on this team either runs through Bedard or Evans. Evans was hot tonight, Bedard wasn't. He was still good. NZ play-driver who changes the point of attack and creates advantages in the OZ as a result. Took too many low-percentage shots, getting run out of space (also, his linemates can't keep up at times). Very inside-driven in the offensive zone, always in projectable ways. He's never outracing defenders to the net, instead cutting across, spinning off pressure, etc. He sees holes in defenders and space off-puck that only a handful of elite players do. Shot's an 8.5, at least. Near-perfect outside leg release with heaps of diversity, deception, and a textbook curl-and-drag wrister. Puck explodes off his stick, insane control of his placement, and he always sets up his shots to ensure they get through. Need to see a bit more playmaking sometimes, although he tried a pretty advanced through pass in transition. It didn't work. He's a generational player at this stage.



2 Adam Fantilli

AGE 17.926 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 12, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Tage Thompson, Yevgeni Malkin



Got that Dog in him



Toolsy



Ankle Breaker

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

7.5

Shooting

7

Passing

7

Puckhandling

7

Hockey Sense

8

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	36	30	35	65	1.81
Canada U20	WJC-20	7	2	3	5	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

It seems like ancient history now, but there was a time this season when it looked like Adam Fantilli might make a push for first overall in this year's draft. If nothing else, it looked like we might have to have the discussion in earnest at season's end.

By the time the calendar turned to November, Fantilli had stamped his name on the scoresheet 18 times over the course of an eight-game point streak. A level of per-game offensive output that eclipsed Jack Eichel, the previous gold standard in the Salary Cap Era, and came within a stone's throw of Paul Kariya's 100-point 1992-93 season at Maine.

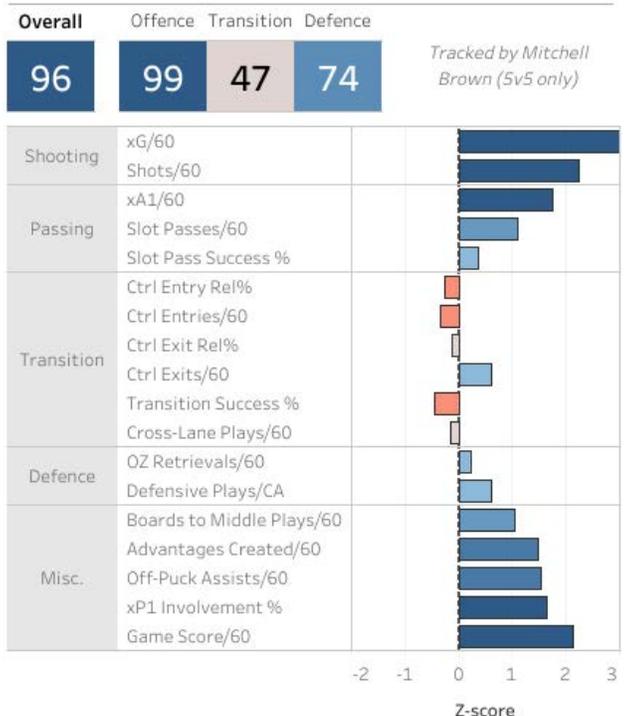
The tape was every bit as complimentary of Fantilli's work, too. Simply put: We're yet to scout so dominant a player at the college level in all our years doing guide work at Elite Prospects.

Eventually, Fantilli's numbers stabilized and an unremarkable showing in his country's colours at the World Juniors put those hopes of draft year primacy to an end, but we shouldn't let this take away from what we witnessed this season.

When Fantilli was on, there wasn't anything the opposition could do to stop him. It was really something to behold.

Adam Fantilli

F | Michigan | NCAA | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 113.0



He's the power forward that teams covet at the draft and pain themselves to acquire by other means when that fails.

A puck-dominant player, Fantilli builds speed ahead of each possession, attacks through the neutral zone with crossover-heavy weaving rush patterns, and carves through defensive formations with equal parts cunning, skill, and power. Every touch is an opportunity to drive the net and Fantilli's never seen one that he could pass up.

The end result was a highlight reel as a true freshman that would surpass most first-round picks' entire college careers in length and quality.

Not content to fade from the game off-puck, Fantilli probed for shooting opportunities during sustained in-zone possessions, managing space, timing his arrivals perfectly, and sending the puck on goal with force and precision as a one- and two-touch finisher. The one-timer was particularly potent.

You aren't likely to see Fantilli enter the Frank J. Selke conversation at any point in his career, but he's well-beyond baseline competent as a defensive player and even featured regularly on Michigan's penalty kill as an 18-year-old. He's physical. His motor never stops. And his on-ice intelligence is ever-present in the defensive and neutral zones as it is the offensive third.

That part of the game won't be an obstacle to his NHL transition, but Fantilli's tendency to play hero puck may prove prohibitive to immediate success. It's a delicate balancing act. You want the best, most talented players to have the freedom to impose their will on the opposition, but it can't come at the expense of your team's ability to control the run of play. Fantilli didn't always walk that line with the most grace at Michigan.

Still, as far as knocks go, "He wants to take over the games a little too much for his own damn good" is about as desirable a flaw as you can have at this stage in your career. Since when were 18-year-olds renowned for their discretion anyway? He'll acquire it in time, just like everyone else.

When it all comes together, Fantilli has the potential to be a franchise-altering first-line centre, the type that can take over a game or even a playoff series when the chips are down. The power. The skill. The competitiveness. It's all there, and it makes him one of the most extraordinary players in this class.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



Adam Fantilli wins Hobey Baker Award; Devon Levi repeats as Mike Richter Award winner



Who will win the 2023 Hobey Baker Award as college hockey's best player, and who should?



NCAA Stock Watch: Adam Fantilli's historic production leads the way

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I like him a lot, No. 1 type guy in most drafts. I think he'll play next season and have one of those seasons where he'll be more physically ready for the NHL next season than Bedard and for that reason people will maybe put expectations almost too high at some point." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's the full combination of size, skill, and compete. He can really skate, get up and down the ice with ease. He's got a great stick, a great shot. Brings it when the game is on the line. His best attribute, for me, would be his

compete. He's a top-six centre, but he can play anywhere in the lineup. Coaches are going to love him. For me, he's closer to Bedard than Leo Carlsson or Matvei Michkov are close to him.

"He checks all of the boxes. He's a winner, wants to win. Makes everyone around him better. The big example for me was Gavin Brindley. He had one goal at Christmas. Then he got to play with Fantilli in the second half, and now he'll be a first-round pick. He even elevated Rutger McGroarty." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"A prototypical centre you want for the playoffs or a Cup run. Big, long body. He's fast, powerful and strong. Skill, he has a great shot, he can score. What's underrated about Adam is how competitive he is. He is a throwback, mean, tough, will run over you to win his hockey game. I think he's the real deal. Sometimes we get caught up in the regular season production. It really is a different game in the playoffs. He can be a legit #1 centre for a team that wins the Cup and he can be a piece that drives them to it. Most years he's going first overall if it wasn't for Bedard." – NHL scout, April 2023

"He's the prototype. He's huge. He's long. He's explosive. He's fast. He's powerful. He's skilled. He can wire pucks and score. Something people should know about him too is his competitive intensity is off the charts." – NHL scout, September 2022

"This is the best game in the world. I like playing it as much as possible. There were some games where fortunately I was relied upon quite a bit. It was in big situations, so I got extra minutes. I loved the extra minutes. I loved how much I got in Chicago." – Adam Fantilli, September 2022

"Physicality is a part of my game. I like to incorporate that into every single game. Physicality wears teams down. I have to insert that a little bit more. All over the ice. It's really helpful at the end of games." – Adam Fantilli, September 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 15th, 2023 - Canada vs. Slovakia - World Championship

A really great game from Fantilli. He positioned himself as a shooter constantly and used a variety of unconverge techniques (spins, timed jumps into space...) to get open for teammates. A couple of purposeful give-and-goes to move around defenders and a lot of speed. His pace and ability to drive through defences really shone in this game. He cut through Slovakia's defence, losing the puck but finding it back; he tried to split the defence and also created delay plays upon entry to involve teammates in the attack. He played with energy and took care of his defensive assignments. Limited minutes but he made the most of them.

David St-Louis: May 14h, 2023 - Slovenia vs. Canada - World Championship

A lot of pace from Fantilli. He played even faster than in college, which is good. It shows that he understands what stage he's on and that he needs to elevate his game. He moved his feet constantly to get open for teammates. He was engaged defensively, hit opponents, and forechecked. Some forced plays, but they didn't result in turnovers. I really like his off-puck game. He understands where and how to move to get pucks on his stick and get shot chances.

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Colgate vs. Michigan - NCAA Tournament

A commanding performance from Fantilli, who left this game with a goal, an assist, a plus-two rating, and three shots on goal. The goal happened in the blink of an eye, but you could almost see it develop in bullet-time: Fantilli scans the ice as he collects the puck in the defensive zone, registers the space in front of him, and identifies an isolated defender. Then, it's game over. He just explodes up-ice, building speed through a crossover-heavy weaving pattern, skating in and out of the defenceman's blind spot before pulling away for a clean look and sending a laser past the Colgate netminder. The assist on Rutger McGroarty's

goal was pretty garden variety stuff, but Fantilli sprung Gavin Brindley for a breakaway with a perfect stretch pass through the neutral zone and was generally very efficient with the puck in this game. I also thought this was one of Fantilli's better defensive performances of the season – there was a backcheck in the first period that took away a sure goal from Colgate. Shame about the discipline (two penalties) but this is as close to a perfect game as you'll see from someone.

J.D. Burke: March 18th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - Big Ten Championship

Not a particularly strong performance from Fantilli. Mostly, he faded into the background, only grabbing a single point with a secondary assist that bounced off a defenceman's shin pads – hardly what you'd call a display of high-end skill – while his line combined for about seven points. Fantilli was most effective in transition and the defensive zone. You also got the odd display of high-end handling skill, if only in flashes. Even at his least effective, Fantilli's tools show up and remind you why he's a No. 1 overall talent. Still, it's a little concerning that he's totally vanished from so many of these hockey games. More discretion as a puck carrier and fewer hope passes would go a long way toward making him a more effective hockey player.

Cam Robinson: March 11th, 2023 - Michigan vs Ohio State - NCAA

Another demonstrably impressive outing from Fantilli. Sure, he dropped two goals and four points – all primary. But one of each was into the empty net. But he also drove play, was the general on the ice for virtually the entire game – calling for passes, directing teammates, carrying the puck, dishing it, driving the middle lane and opening up space. Things we just don't see from an 18-year-old. He had 11 shot attempts. He was great along the wall. He was relentless on the puck carrier. On one play he was harassing the last man back with speed and stick work finally forcing him to try and cut hard, lost his feet and stole the puck for the HD chance.

Defensively, I'm very impressed with his awareness. He switches up, he sticks to areas, sticks to men. He gets the puck and can quickly make smart plays - faking down, backhand pass up the wall and they're off.

First overall talent.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Michigan Wolverines vs. Michigan State - NCAA

A lot of interesting moments from Fantilli. He still showcases everything from finer skills, when he dangles through feet and comes out the other way with the puck, to harder abilities, when he drives the net and boards. In this game, he was more about the finesse, however. He showcased his catch-and-release shot and his off-puck game, his talent for sneaking around defenders and popping into space at the right time to beat the opposition. He can play any role you want him to play.

Cam Robinson: March 4th, 2023 - Michigan vs Wisconsin - NCAA

Ho hum. Another game, another three goals for Fantilli. He did it in a variety of ways tonight. First grabbing a power play goal off a shot from a tough angle that ricocheted in. Then he went hard to the net front, battled, got position, found a loose puck and muscled it home. Finally, at even strength, he made two really nice reads to fly into space and keep the puck in before corralling it at the blueline, came in downhill and fired from deep distance and picked the corner. Terrific velocity and aim on that last one.

He was also skating miles, working the boards well by picking pucks off of it, gaining control and making measured decisions to carry it, pass it, or wait and allow further support. The intelligence and calm demeanour he shows is nearly as impressive as his statistical profile. He was out there killing penalties again and was clean with his reads and didn't overreach or chase.

The skating is there. The size. The smarts. There's little to dislike and a ton to love.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Michigan vs Wisconsin - NCAA

Woow. That's a first overall caliber performance, maybe even in this draft. We never talk about it because the chances are slim, but Fantilli could actually become the best overall player out of this crop, the guy with the most championship and greatest

playoff performances that people argue had the better career even if he put up a lot less points. He just has everything. He hits, defends, plays with pace, gets open in the offensive zone, drives the net, battles there for pucks, seals them on the walls and moves them to teammates, plays the give-and-go game, catches and releases pucks instantly, dangles through defenders, carries pucks across zones...Name it and he does it. The tools are all high-end, too. Just an exceptional talent that rarely comes through the draft. Crazy that there two of them this year. Fantilli is quite unique, too. It's like he was made in a lab to become a first-line NHL center.

J.D. Burke: February 16th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Ohio State - NCAA

I don't know if I'd describe this as an especially dynamic game from Fantilli, but he had his moments. Even found the scoresheet, collecting a pass at the top of the faceoff circle and overpowering the Ohio State goaltender with his wrist shot. Could've picked up an assist too, if his teammate would've just finished the tap-in opportunity that Fantilli sent his way through a sea of sticks and skates. Puck touches were few, but Fantilli made the most of them. He consistently tried to gain the inside, to varying degrees of success, and made a few really sharp passing plays. Skill level really pops even when things aren't coming together for him. His first touch is so impressive. I'm not as sold on his feel for the game, all things being relative.

David St-Louis: February 3rd, 2023 - Michigan vs. Michigan State - NCAA

Fantilli got thrown out of the game for fighting. That's another thing he can do, on top of the rush offence, physicality on the boards, defence, net-front game, playmaking, off-puck instinct, and shot. He's just everything. All he needs is to become a little more dynamic off the rush (less tripod dangling through defenders sticks and more crossovers patterns). A player that is so diverse will be close to impossible to shut down in the NHL. The hockey sense maybe is not high, high-end, but it's at least a 6-6.5 on our scale. He anticipates, thinks about the receiving conditions of teammates before passing, has many creative moments, processes the play fast -- it's just that he acts a bit blindly and with a little too much hope in certain situations, throwing pucks to teammates who aren't exactly there in the lane. But will that stay a problem? I don't think so.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Michigan - NCAA

Another violent game from Fantilli. He had his chances, too. Skated the middle to create a passing lane, then moved back out in front of a late-game deflection opportunity. Scored off another Brindley rebound. He spaced the offensive end by moving wide and popping into space at the right moment. Won body positioning to fire off shots in transition. On the power play, he zipped the puck around effectively, showing pace and deception. A slick slip pass under pressure was the best pass at 5-on-5. The pace, physical skills, scoring instincts, and handling game are so exciting; clearly a first-overall talent. The decision-making still lacks. In one sequence, he could've skated through the defender's hands and cut inside. Instead, he tried to deke through another player and lost the puck. It's little plays like these that perhaps suggest he's not an exceptionally aware player, but it won't matter too much.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Penn State - NCAA

A lot of bad decisions from Fantilli in this game, mostly due to a lack of awareness (pre-scanning). He sends pucks to no one, anticipating that teammates are there on the receiving end. They are usually in the area he sends pucks to, but not necessarily in range of the puck. Something he has to fix. The skating is wide, but he beats players off the mark at this level and in races (like in his goal at the end of the game) and he can protect the puck in flight. He defers too teammates in certain situations where he should carry and tries to dangle in other situations where he should pass. Yet, his defensive engagement, tools, flashes of manipulation, and off-puck instinct (like the goal he scored by attacking the slot and making a catch-and-release shot) give me confidence in his projection. The inefficient game he's playing right now won't be the one he will have in the NHL when he matures.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - NCAA

Fantilli scored a pair of goals off rebounds and set up a couple of chances. The best was a backhand pass to the slot from behind the net while moving. He was a physical force -- he's really bringing it more lately. He runs through opponents, skates

through their hands, and gets involved in every battle. Otherwise, it was a messy game from Fantilli. He lost the puck on a 3-on-2, missed passes, and skated straight into traffic without an escape. It matters, but given his tools and environment, probably less than most prospects. He's a powerful skater with dynamic puck skills and an expansive arsenal of skills. He could play next year.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - NCAA

Fantilli was the best player in this game. He was a wrecking ball, skating at opponents and sending them flying. Strong night on the forecheck. He ripped possession away from opponents. It's like they don't read the speed that he's coming toward them at. In one sequence, he grabbed a break up by crushing the point man, then sprinted up the ice and fired off a chance. Scored with a perfect off-the-pass wrister. He remains at least a 7-grade shooter. Maybe 8, given his advanced catch-and-release shot: head up, chest up, hands always positioned to shoot, and feet always ready for the weight transfer. He uses crossover-laden rushes to beat opponents, mixing in weight shift dekes and heel-to-heel changes of pace. He overcomplicates plays sometimes – going between the legs for a bad and inaccessible pass with a teammate open in the middle was the most egregious. The potential here was electric.

Daniel Gee: January 14th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Ohio State - NCAA

Fantilli hunting the puck is akin to a piranha swarming a piece of meat in the water. He's relentless, his motor is revving, and he's ready to do anything to push pressure and work pucks back in Michigan's possession.

On one of Fantilli's first shifts he blended a bunch of pro habits; after grabbing an open ice puck he opened his hips to get in a better body position on a forechecker, from there he fended off the check, placed a puck into empty ice, allowing Samoskevich an unopposed entry -- resulted in a snipe from the top of the circles. His shifts are full of details; one touching pucks to promote faster north-to-south attacks, driving hard through the slot off-puck, threading passes through layers -- so much positive work. On one shift he pre scanned a retrieval in the fard corner, found a pass seam through three defenders, leading to a one timer in the slot that rang iron. In the same shift he raced for a puck just inside the Ohio OZ, initiated a battle, and from his stomach he passed a puck into the middle of the ice resulting in a give-and-go goal. I don't think there is a player in this draft that possesses the sheer pace and skill combo. That being said, Fantilli often makes poor decisions on-puck, especially when navigating traffic -- constant turnovers from attacking through too much resistance or failed handles. He executes at times and it shows how high-end his hands can be, but right now Fantilli seems to be still trying to figure out what works at the NCAA level. Regardless he shifts his weight in pressure, targets triangles, and loves to chuck slip passes to teammates as he gravitates the attention. An extremely physical threat in sustained pressure, Fantilli was rocking Ohio defenders on the forecheck -- a nightmare if there is any inefficiency on the retrievals. He's so engaged off-puic - there were so many sequences where he was wide open on the wing, backdoor, or in the slot, and he just never connected with (despite working open seams and moving constantly to support the play).

While his defensive effort started out rocky in this one -- a blown zone while the puck was being battled at the net front, Fantilli was a disruptor defensively. He locked to secondary threats eliminating their sticks, scanned often and moved proactively, and he was a constant pressure pusher -- so much so that he caused problems for Ohio's point men. The desire to be impactful makes him special. These inefficiencies in his game will work their way out with haste.

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2022 - USA vs CAN - WJ20

Fantilli didn't play a lot. His game still lacks a bit of control. He really wants to do too much with the puck and away from the puck. He tries to dangle through multiple defenders, speed past them, and crush them on the forecheck. He's almost over-pacey right now. It's when the game settles down a bit and he has time to think and plan that he starts to shine. He can anticipate one-play-away and position himself for that next pass. He almost scored doing that, hitting a post. I see that facet of his play in college, too. He's not as mature as Carlsson or as talented as Bedard, but he could be a healthy mix of both when he settles in his pro identity, not reaching their highs, but being more versatile, better defensively -- maybe.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - Canada vs Sweden - WJ20

Fantilli was demoted in this tournament, but the flashes are still there: speed, rushes, passing ability, physicality (although it's a facet that he needs to learn to control). What separates him the most from a player like Bedard is the situation awareness. Fantilli is just a beat slower to understand which situation he's in, what the defensive picture is, and where his outlets are. He's already fixated on one play and not always the best one. He's young for this tournament, however, and I still like his hockey sense.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Canada vs Czech - WJ20

Some would call this a rough game for Fantilli, as he was directly responsible for two of the opposition's goals, and it would be fair. He missed a scan and was late, just a bit, on a stick check as a defenceman drove behind him, and he went to double cover another opponent on a second goal with Zellweger. It was just as much Zellweger's fault, but the difference is that Fantilli saw Zellweger arrive to cover his opponent; he could have switched. He didn't. Those aren't mistakes that matter -- at all. Overall, Fantilli was Fantilli. He showed advanced offensive ideas from the Michigan to delaying and hitting the trailer off the rush. He also adapted his speed to stay or enter pockets of space to link passing plays. His plays, for the most part, failed. But I love the way he approaches the game anyway.

J.D. Burke: December 3rd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Another relatively quiet outing from Fantilli, who failed to find the scoresheet, though not for a lack of trying – seven shots on goal in this one, two of which looked like sure goals were it not for a pair of ridiculous saves from Jared Moe. Play selection was a bit of a problem. You were caught watching Fantilli skate at numbers, trying to dangle his way to a highlight reel goal while either failing to register or just outright ignoring passing options or making passes to players who were in worse positions than himself, again missing better options. Fantilli does an excellent job of creating shooting opportunities for himself. He works with a high off puck pace, finds space between checks, and times his arrivals perfectly. Puck skills are obviously beyond reproach, I just wish he would rein it in a bit at times.

J.D. Burke: December 2nd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

I'm not sure I'd necessarily characterize this as a poor performance from Fantilli, but I don't think it was a particularly good one either. His puck touches were few, and he really didn't make much of anything happen with possession either. It was a lot of the same hero puck that marred my Fantilli viewings in early October. That said, I thought he did some exceptionally good work on the penalty kill, scanning off puck, closing on players as passes arrived, and taking valuable time off the clock by playing keepaway. Fantilli picked up a goal in the third period with a one-timer from the goalline that looked spectacular at first glance, but was actually more of a whiff than anything – he barely connected with the puck and it just kind of squeezed between Jared Moe's skate and the post en route to the back of the net.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Harvard vs. Michigan - NCAA

Fantilli followed up yesterday's incredible performance with another solid one. The skating, handling skill, and shockingly, patience in transition all stood out. He cut back, then attacked defenders with a speed differential. Showed off the hands, baiting the poke and tucking pucks under their stick. Usually enters the 1-on-1 at an angle, keeps his feet moving throughout. In transition, he was very inefficient but also showed tons of projectable stuff: stepping inside before passing, working pucks laterally to moving teammates, and resetting. The playmaking comes and goes. In this one, it wasn't really there, despite his flashy assist. He missed opportunities to move pucks early, even with a clear lane, to instead of make a significantly worse play a second later. Lacks deception at times. Best playmaking comes when he's gliding with time and space to find his options. Same projection as before.

Mitchell Brown: November 25th, 2022 - Harvard vs. Michigan - NCAA

A fantastic game from Fantilli, showing the full toolkit (but with the same limitations as normal). The way he gets open in the slot really stands out. It's not just mindless movement, but timed dashes into the slot, stick presented, head up. The shot's a 7-plus. Top hand's always in position to shoot instantly. Weight's over one leg or the other as he enters space. When he's not preparing to shoot, he's skating into defenders to set picks, cause collisions, and create lanes. Always establishes body positioning. The playmaking's not great. There are flashes of really high-end stuff, but he doesn't deceive consistently, forces plays into lanes

that aren't open, and doesn't show much ability to open closed lanes. In general, he's a more proactive passer than previous, using give-and-gos and making the early pass to create advantages. I think the playmaking will improve significantly. He's a first overall-calibre talent.

Cam Robinson: November 12th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

Fantilli simply impresses even when he's not impacting the scoresheet in a major way. The way he handles his routes in transition. The way he's able to use the darting move to the inside, coupled with his hands to unload his shot. The physicality that he's been adding. Each of these traits are highly uncommon in a freshman - but as a package, they're extremely rare. I especially like how much power he can generate with his stride, but he doesn't rely on it simply catch defender's flat-footed. The edges have grown noticeably over the last season. He's giving Bedard a run for his money this year.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

A quiet performance from Fantilli, but I'm still coming away impressed in performances like these. He wasn't creating much high-value offence but his growth as a distributor continues. Moves the puck at the right moments. When carrying, he attacks at angle, then cuts across. He's no longer the outrace player that he was before. The shot's like 7, at least. Hands and feet always in position to shoot, pucks explode off his stick. Understands how to get open, with his movements standing out on a Michigan team that does the off-puck movement better than anyone outside the NHL. Just flattened a guy, too. He looks like a future top-line forward. A first overall-calibre talent.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

Fantilli had a quieter 2nd and 3rd period, but the first one was another reminder of his skills. He attacked defenders on arcs, feinted them, showed great outside edge moves like cutbacks to separate and protect the puck, played with a lot of pace, attacked the middle to collapse the defensive formation on himself and kick the puck wide...The skating off the rush grades as above-average for sure. Even his defensive effort and overall puck management was good. In the 2nd and 3rd period, he forced more passes however. They were predictable to defenders or just impossible to connect. The decision-making could still improve, but the tools and the flashes of high-end thinking makes him a clear top-2 player.

Cam Robinson: November 11th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

Fantilli wasn't as demonstrably excellent in this one, but there were still the flashes - especially in transition where he's so powerful and shifty. Loads of confidence. Notre Dame played him tight throughout though and he wasn't able to get his shot through or capitalize on the man-advantage. He did make one clean backhand chip over the blade while in-flight and entering the zone on the power-play before rifling the shot just high. He did still grab two helpers - including one excellent primary one where he recovered the puck on the left wall, spun, assessed, made an outside-inside deke and snapped it to the netfront all in one-motion for a one-time chip in goal. Couple of forced errors on the wall in the defensive end and threw the puck away across the ice once or twice. But the power, the transitional effectiveness, the intelligence. It's all there. Even when he's not at his best.

J.D. Burke: November 5th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Penn State - NCAA

Another one of those performances where Fantilli could go entire periods (like, say, the opening frame) without generating much of anything, and then his tools just allow him to flip a switch and take control for a shift or two at a time. Real hot and cold. At his best, Fantilli was pushing pace, collecting passes without breaking stride, attacking through the neutral zone with weaving rush patterns and disappearing into defenders blind spots as they pivoted to match his speed. That was the good stuff. Other than the assist (a retrieval behind the net that he turned into a pass out front to Mackie Samoskevich) and his overtime winner (Fantilli hopped on a rebound and snapped it past the Penn State goaltender), there wasn't an awful lot from him during sustained in-zone possessions - no sequencing of passing plays or even really much off-puck movement or pace to create looks for himself. Defensively, Fantilli worked hard enough, but he was far too puck-focused on a few occasions and could've easily been burnt. The physical skills are all so ridiculously advanced, but he's really left me wanting in a lot of my viewings.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Western Michigan vs. Michigan - NCAA

Impressive, impressive performance from Fantilli. I tried to save and cut all the highlights from this game to share with the world on Twitter, but they didn't all fit inside the 2 minutes limit: slip, hook, and backhand passes followed by dangles through and around opponents, massive hits, forechecks, and timed off-puck movements, anticipated ones to score. Even his defensive game was on point. He played the penalty kill, pressured opponents, and intercepted passes. He looked like a fourth-year NCAA veteran. The puck management was much better than the previous game, too. It's rare we see prospects make instant adjustments to their play like this. Western wasn't as good as the last game defensively, but Fantilli (and Samoskevich) opened them up, too. Skating looks like above-average projection, the handling, too (significantly above, with every play blending into the next again), the physicality will be more than NHL calibre...There is a bit of everything in his game. And the hockey sense mark keeps improving. He also has the size. If he keeps up performances like this one, he could be the number one overall pick at the end of the season.

Cam Robinson: October 29th, 2022 - Western Michigan vs. Michigan - NCAA

This was a standout performance from Fantilli. He grabbed two second-period goals and eight shots in the 6-5 OT victory. It always amazes me when a player of his calibre is able to sift around the offensive zone and time his landing in the soft spot just when he needs to get there, but that's what Fantilli did on his first goal and what he seems to do on a regular basis. His passing game looked excellent in this one too. He was managing the puck well, drawing coverage, hitting seams, sending little slip passes back and up. He was physical on the forecheck while taking strong routes. There's no way this kid looks anything like a freshman out there. The confidence is staggering.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Western Michigan - NCAA

This was a bit of a down performance from Fantilli, which was expected against a stronger defence. Not many of his plays connected, but he still absolutely looks like he belongs. Rare are the 17-year-olds who can score on a closely contested net-drive like he did, by protecting the puck with his handling skills and body. His handling is really what shone the most in his game; each move blended into the next. He spotted vulnerabilities in defenders' coverage and exploited them, not with grandiose dangles, but simply by sliding the puck into open areas, away from their stick. The off-puck game was on point, too. The speed overall didn't look as great as some of his early performances. It still projects as above-average in the NHL for me for the moment, but His rushing game could be more limited against better formations at his age in the NCAA.

David St-Louis: October 21th, 2022 - Lake Superior vs. Michigan - NCAA

A great performance from Fantilli...against Lake Superior, but a great performance nonetheless. He scored with two-net-drives, one with a catch-and-release shot and another one by dangling through a defender and then sliding the puck under the goalie. The opposition was pretty weak, but Fantilli wasn't forcing anything. He clearly recognized his opportunities and used them, he made plays to his teammates, showed better support and scanning than I remember, and won many battles by establishing body positioning. So, this was a game that featured both good displays of habits and skills. If Fantilli can push his hockey sense grade to high-end this season, no one will be able to move him out of that top-2 ranking spot.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Boston University vs. Michigan - NCAA

Some incredible plays from Fantilli and some downright awful ones. Set-up a goal with a laser-beam for a cross-ice pass on the power play. Late in the game, faked the shot, froze the defenders, and passed cross-ice for a chance. Attentive support player across the ice, especially in his own zone. He skated straight into pressure without an escape route. Creates speed differentials for himself but doesn't exploit them. Tries to dangle through defenders in high-leverage situations where the reward would be minimal, and perhaps even worse than if he just made the basic pass. Threw away pucks on the breakout, failing to check over both shoulders for threats. Missed opportunities to drive inside for a chance, instead taking a low percentage shot. The physical tools are exceptional, even if the stride could benefit from more refinement. He's powerful and aggressive. Hands and shooting could be 7.5-plus grades. His tools mean the poor plays won't matter that much, but it'd be nice to see him start using his teammates, scanning more frequently, and using the advantages he creates.

Cam Robinson: October 16th, 2022 - Boston University vs. Michigan - NCAA

A mixed bag from Fantilli in this one. Up against a well-rounded team in BU, he was still able to generate a ton of offensive opportunities and threw 11 pucks towards the net. He also made a pro-level dish to the net front on the man-advantage to nab an assist in the second frame. He was trying a bit too much on his own though - especially in transition. The hands are strong, but BU was playing him tight and thwarted those moves or forced him into making poor passes. He was pressured along the wall in his own end a lot and struggled to make a play in time. These are good experiences for him as he'll need to be able to assess quicker and make those wall plays under duress a lot more as he moves up.

David St-Louis: October 14th, 2022 - Boston University vs. Michigan - NCAA

Fantilli finished with three assists, and while he played well, I'm not sure it was a performance that warranted three points. Michigan is just that good. He didn't have the puck a whole lot, but when he did, he showed some interesting elements: net-driving abilities, quick passing, catch-and-release shots...He seems to have an instinct for positioning, off-puck spacing, and for offensive rotations in general. I wish he didn't try as many high lob passes from the defensive zone to the neutral-zone. They didn't work and they won't work. I'm not sure yet about skating. The mechanics aren't perfect, but it's probably one of those things I shouldn't obsess over since the speed looks more than fine.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A much more refined performance from Fantilli than previous ones. In situations where he usually stretched the ice and looked to beat the defender wide, he slowed down and cut inside. He delayed with possession on the breakout, using his speed off-puck to back off defenders and he creates space for his teammates. Deked and then passes instead of looking off looking to do everything himself. Cross-ice looks, too. There's still a lack of foresight in his game, highlighted by a sequence where he failed a deke through a defender with options. Had it worked, he would've crashed into the shoulder of the next defender. Physical, as usual, although in a modern subtle form. He traps the feet then runs through the player with his upper body. Left the game injured late in the third period.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

The best game I've seen from Fantilli this year. A machine on the forecheck and defensively; just so consistent in applying pressure. He grabbed a pile of scoring chances, combining off-puck movement, individual skill, and mechanical proficiency to great effect. Scored with a lacrosse goal at a noticeably high pace. The strongest playmaking game I've seen from Fantilli, delaying to find options, consistently identifying teammates through layers in OZP, and trying some more advanced plays. He still lacks timing, adaptability, and accuracy. Funnels plays up the board instead of looking to the weak side for options. He tries to deke through pressure where a pass would have the same effect. The tools are insane. Perhaps a 7-grade shooter, 6-grade skater, and 8-grade physical player at this stage. But the current iteration of his game will limit his play-creation ability in the NHL. Lots of time, and he's improved so much since the start of the year.

Mitchell Brown: November 28th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

There's little doubt that Fantilli's going to be a top-six forward in the NHL. He plays fast. Just non-stop attacks, wave-after-wave. An NHL-calibre shooter with a number of releases and considerable power. Physical, often excessively. Stride's all power, waiting to be harnessed by additional depth and mechanical refinement. And he's an engaged, proactive defender for a winger and an inside-driven attacker. But I still question the heights that he'll reach in the NHL. While he wants to play on the inside, he defaults to beating defenders along the perimeter first - highlighted by a trio of sequences where he could've cut across the front of a defender and instead tried to beat them wide. He forces passes that aren't there, forces through defenders when he has their feet beat, and gets locked into outracing players with the puck. He's definitely a more skilled playmaker than he's shown thus far, flashing a delay game, one-touch ability, and deceptive setups built around his handling. He's definitely a top prospect for the 2023 NHL Draft, arguably the No. 2 considering Michkov's contract.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

This was the most diverse game I've seen from Fantilli in terms of rush patterns. Consistently faking the outside before cutting to the middle early, often in the NZ. Few outside lane dashes. His aggressiveness bringing the puck to the middle will really help his game at the next level. First, he has to start making better decisions on the inside, however. He kept trying to deke through pressure and trying to teleport the puck through defenders instead of delaying, problem-solving, or making the easy pass. His playmaking in other areas, shines however. He finished his off-puck route, creating the drop pass opportunity for a goal. Consistently builds speed under the puck. Of course, there's shooting and power element to his game, as well. He requires lots of refinement, but it's still a season-and-a-half away. Looks like a top prospect for 2023 with top-line upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The way Fantilli handles the puck is integral to his success. His top hands always pushed in front of body -- ready to shoot, deke, or pass without adjustment. He uses that combined with pace and power to consistently create offence of all types. Problem-solves to find new opportunities, and has a manipulative mindset when looking to pass. Precise timing on his passes, especially in transition. He's a bit drive-wide-dependent, but he's such an explosive and deceptive player that I think he can do it at the next level. Very involved in the backcheck and forecheck. Top-line potential.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. NTDP U18s - USHL

Fantilli's electric with the puck. He's a power-shooter who bounces between finesse and kicking the front door in. There's still skating work to be done, but he's manipulating defenders, attacking the inside, and deceiving when given the chance. He's still mostly a shooter. He comes in, either tries to drive through the defender and get to the net or cuts across and fires. Shot is super advanced: Elbow up, distance between feet, proper shot selection, turns pass into catch-and-release shots, shoots in stride, and so on. He's a bit careless on the breakout, but overall, it's tough to see Fantilli becoming a top-5 pick, especially if the playmaking comes along.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Fantilli's an impressive player for many reasons, but his energy on the backcheck, physicality, and puck retrieval skills were the shining elements tonight. He seeks contact at every possible opportunity, sometimes even forgoing the skill play to just run into someone. But his game lacks serious refinement with puck. He tries to deke constantly. Many were successful. Just as many weren't. Poor set ups: straight line, in a glide, waiting for a reaction that never came because he wasn't drawing it out. Instead of delaying or problem-solving, he forces the play anyway. Half of his moves were better if he just cut inside instead of trying to go around. Hurries his passes under pressure. He's a wicked shooter already, and he has some scoring instincts around the net. To become a top player at the next level, he needs to manipulate pressure, work give-and-gos, and develop a delay game. Physical tools are exceptional; likely a top-3 pick next year.

J.D. Burke: September 25th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Fargo Force - USHL

You just knew from the opening faceoff that Fantilli came to play. He just about made something happen every time the puck was on his stick. He's so deceptive, which is a great sign for his development. Rather than just trying to power through opponents, Fantilli is now starting to shift them out of his way entirely. Where he was once a fearless kid, he's now an absolute force and a lot for opponents to handle physically. Some great puck protection mechanics sealing off back-pressure on the shorthanded goal he scored in this contest. Huge backcheck in this one, too. Needs to rein in his feet a bit, as the kicking motion is a little on the inefficient side.

J.D. Burke: March 27th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18 - USHL

This kid just attacks. He plays at one pace, throws himself at the opposition with reckless abandon, gets physically bullied, and comes back for more. It's honestly a little inspiring in its own way. You know what? There's plenty of skill to go with the speed and bravery, and that's how Fantilli is playing top-line minutes in the USHL two years away from walking the draft's stage. He's still attacking in a straight line, and the physical limitations are so overwhelmingly obvious at this level, but you put the puck on his stick in space, and he'll do damage. That happened, as Fantilli sniped one home in the third period of this game.

Grade: A



3 Leo Carlsson

AGE 17.721 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 26, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Anze Kopitar, Joe Thornton



Hockey IQ



Ankle Breaker



Vision

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

7

Passing

6'3"

Height

194 lbs

Weight

7

Puckhandling

7.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Player Grades

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Örebro HK	SHL	44	10	15	25	0.57
Sweden U20	WJC-20	7	3	3	6	0.86
Sweden U20 (all)	International-Jr	15	10	7	17	1.13

SCOUTING REPORT

The list of more complete, well-rounded players in this year's draft than Leo Carlsson is a short one. If you're reading this draft guide in its ranked order, then you've already crossed their paths. After that? Nada.

He's the real deal. The total package. Whatever you look for in a draft prospect, Carlsson's got it in spades.

You could gather as much with a cursory glance at his Elite Prospects page, too. Carlsson finished fifth all-time in draft-year scoring in the SHL, one point behind Washington Capitals centre Nicklas Bäckström, though they tied in per-game output. He was nearly a point a game with Sweden at the World Juniors. To cap it all off, Carlsson heeded his country's call at the World Championship, even centring their top line at times.

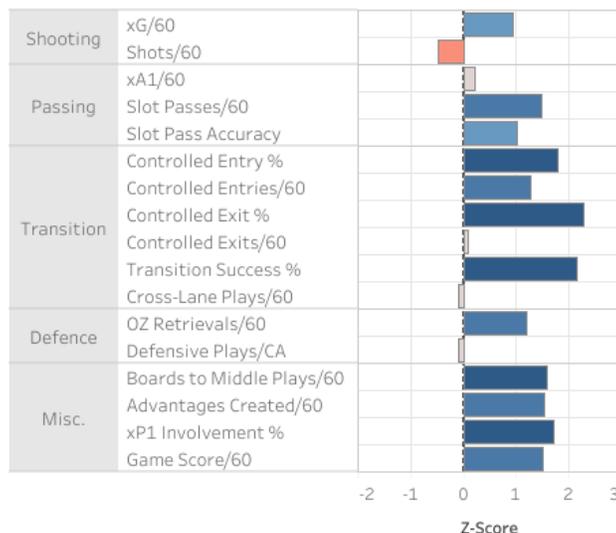
You don't amass a list of accomplishments like that without the sort of skill, maturity, and physical build that Carlsson brings to the table. The foundation on which his game rests is his sense. It's the highest-graded tool on our 1-to-9 linear system, checking in at 7.5, tied for fourth-highest mark in the entire draft.

Leo Carlsson

F | Örebro HK | SHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 20 | Minutes Tracked: 272.3

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Carlsson's ability to register gaps in defensive coverage, recognize passing options, keep pace with offensive and defensive rotations, and manipulate opponents to his whims makes him a constant threat. Simply put: He's never out of position, always one

or two steps ahead of his opponents.

That natural feel for the game as a starting point kind of acts as a force multiplier on everything else Carlsson does on the ice. It elevates his skilled passing to creative, cunning displays of playmaking; his good-not-great shot to a legitimate finishing weapon.

Don't mistake Carlsson for a player with an all-sense build, though. He's legitimately skilled, too. Crafty as a handler, intelligent and cunning enough to set up each manoeuvre with eye-level and body deception, and dextrous enough to swashbuckle his way through defensive formations en route to the goal.

He's not afraid to drive the inside, either. Carlsson practically lives there at times, working a high off-puck pace and a willingness to doll out and take physical punishment to get around the goalmouth, where all the fun stuff happens.

The catch, and it's an all too familiar one, is that the foot speed isn't quite where you'd like it to be with this player. He's hardly plodding out there, but I'd hardly rate his mobility as anything more than slightly above average, if that. Mainly, this owes to a high stance, one that lacks ankle dorsiflexion and suffers a heel kick on extensions, a set of deficiencies that not only limit his top speed but his capacity to protect the puck, too.

There also just isn't as much developmental runway in front of Carlsson as there is with other prospects. He's about as physically developed as he'll get, relatively close to his ceiling as a player already. This isn't to say that he won't improve with time. Not by any stretch. But there's probably a cap on how much more we can expect from Carlsson at the next level.

Thing is, there's no such thing as a perfect prospect, but Carlsson is pretty damn close. In most years, he's an uncontested No. 1 overall pick. This year, he's more like to go at two or three.

Some consolation prize for teams who lost in the NHL Draft Lottery. All they're going to get is a player with first-line centre potential who can score at a point a game clip, take on tough matchups, and contribute in every phase of the hockey game. That's what you're getting with Carlsson.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Sweden Stock Watch: Leo Carlsson catching fire in the SHL playoffs



Standout draft-eligible performances at the 2023 World Juniors

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I didn't see him a ton in person, but our guys in Sweden raved about him a ton. Long-time NHLer I think." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"Love him. He's big bodied, has good hands, the sense is there, can complete his passes, the work ethic is strong. Just a really good player.

"I definitely think Leo Carlsson is more talented than Adam Fantilli. The only thing that Fantilli has on Carlsson is that he's a much more physical, intense player. With the puck? No comparison." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I like him. He has a big body, skilled. Has shown he can make plays and score. I want to see him play with more pace and get inside more consistently. I have a bit of a concern there. No concerns about the NHL. He's too skilled and too big and talented. I'm guessing he goes third overall. You feel good he produced in the SHL and World Juniors. It's going to translate. I've had some friends saying he's competing to go two but I think there's a drop. I also don't think he's the third most talented player in the draft but I think he goes third." – NHL scout, April 2023

"The role he has in Örebro... with power play and offensive time – it's cool to see! He reads the game in a fantastic way and finds good solutions at a high pace. Very loyal to the team." – Sweden World Juniors head coach Magnus Hävelid, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 18th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Hungary - World Championships

Carlsson showed a lot of skills in this game. He won battles, forechecked, stole the puck, and immediately found teammates in the slot. He carried the puck across zones with crossovers, made weight-shift fakes to open lanes, and then moved around defenders. He attacked the slot in the offensive zone, faked shots and then connected with teammates...Just a great playmaking performance. And he's showing that he can handle the center positioning. He's got the low and slow part of it down. Now, he just needs to become better at adapting his speed and positioning and scanning behind him to shutdown attacking threats in this role. Of course, it's Hungary. But the flashes still matter.

David St-Louis: May 15th, 2023 - Finland vs. Sweden - World Championships

I do think Carlsson could play at center. He supports plays well, gets his stick inside lane defensively, supports his defencemen near the net, can box out opponents, and he manages the puck well low in the zone. He also has the reactionary handling speed to get the puck out of trouble and the distribution game to connect with line-mates in transition. I've liked some of his delay plays at this tournament. He has not flashed as much here as in the SHL, but he's been effective.

David St-Louis: May 14th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Austria - World Championships

A pretty good game from Carlsson, but he didn't really show his exceptional qualities either. I liked his defence; he stuck to his man. He made give-and-goes, dangled around a couple of sticks, spent a lot of time in the slot and showed uncoverage techniques there...He manipulated defenders a bit to open passing lanes or slip pucks through them. And he scored with a drive-by at the net at the end of the game.

Jimmy Hamrin: May 6th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Sweden - EHT

Leo looks impressively comfortable at this level already. He plays centre on a line with Lucas Raymond and Leo gives Lucas the room he needs. The ability to adapt to a pro star and make him better impressed me in this game. Leo plays with poise and certainty. He never holds on to the puck too long or too short. If he needs to hold on to the puck an extra second to create a play he does so. He also moves the puck effectively to push the play ahead. He has the puck most often on the outside but isn't afraid to get inside the slot to create a screen or deflection. His outside play isn't ineffective though, he wins battles, covers the puck and makes strong plays to the inside. He is strong at keeping possession and creating longer attacks. Leo played on the first line, first PP-unit and was on the ice with the pulled goalie to try and tie the game late. If he gets used in this role in the WC, he may get a chance to even better his draft stock and maybe compete closer for the 2nd spot.

David St-Louis: May 4th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Switzerland - EHT

Same Carlsson, but not a lot of highlights in this one. He supported plays well, showed off-puck instincts to get inside passing lanes and pockets of space, and he made the best play available. He tried to delay upon entering the zone to connect with teammates, but he often lacked support. He was consistently deceptive and beat defenders with feint. I'm back to thinking

that his skating is more of a 4.5 than a 5, however. He lacked a bit of balance and agility in this game. Not sure if he's all that comfortable at center yet.

David St-Louis: April 9th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Skellefteå AIK - SHL

Only flashes for Carlsson in this game. He used his body to win back pucks on the boards and instantly make plays. His awareness under pressure is a constant plus and he has the handling skills to evade sticks and make plays in tight spaces. His skating was a bit of a problem in his defensive pressure. Quick attackers can make him move side to side and then escape from him. He lacks the agility to follow them. I still really like the hockey sense. It's high-end.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 3rd, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Skellefteå AIK - SHL

Another impressive performance. Leo dominated in this game in many different ways. On the first goal of the game, he was fast into the boards winning the puck in battle in the offensive zone. That started a play with the goal a few passes later. The relentlessness in that situation was impressive, he looked like a predator hungry for the puck.

He also had a primary assist on a nice play where he opened up the play with some nifty moves on the left side and found a teammate right on the tape inside the slot to score. He opened up a pocket for the goalscorer to capitalise on. All through the game he was on the move with the puck or on the hunt to get it. With the puck, he had several scoring chance assists with fast and precise passing to open teammates. He looked good on the right circle on the power play with a couple of slot passes too. His shot was the only undermining part of his offence in this game. He fired a couple of one timers but didn't hit the puck clearly.

I really like how he, at this level, can travel with the puck while scanning for options at the same time as he covers and/or handles the puck to get past opponents. Tonight, he looked like an elite player.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 1st, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Leo had a very strong game putting up the tying goal and created the game winning goal with a brilliant zone entry set up. Leo was involved from start to finish in this game. He floated effortlessly with good positioning defensively and activated speed fast when his team got the puck. He had many strong zone entries and exits using his speed and play reading. He looks more explosive than he is when acts so fast. It is like he is seeing the routes to take before everyone else. He rarely gets surprised or completely shut down. He drove a lot of plays that way in this game. Floating and then taking a fast lane at the right time and attacking.

He also shows good awareness with the puck making smart short plays around him. He can carry the puck over distance as well as connect plays with short puck touches. His small-area skill is impressive and had some highlighted moments in this game. All in all, Leo is starting to take his game to the next level. He had some sequences where he looked like a heavy unstoppable force. He showed more creative flashes and took more action. I don't have any hesitations of him becoming an elite player in the NHL. Almost all his skills and style of play is projectable to the NHL. He is really competing for the number two spot in the upcoming draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 27th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Leo was good but not dominant in this game. He didn't get much offence but had some good plays. He is very active and smart. How he covers the puck, shows small area skill, makes fast and smart decisions. He had good dekes in tight spots and had one particular smart behind his back pass in his own end that started a 2-on-1 for his team. He also had a fight (more wrestling to be honest). Almost all his patterns look translatable to the NHL and smaller rinks. His pre-scan and off-puck play is so solid. The question mark is how big of a star he will become. If he is not an elite producer, he will still be a very good two-way player in the NHL nonetheless.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 19th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Leo had an okay game but not a standout game in any way. He didn't get much ice time late in the third period either. He was used on the power play but not the penalty kill. He makes smart reads off-puck and helps his team connect plays. He tried to drive some offence without success. He skates comfortably with the puck with good puck protection. When an opportunity dies he takes back the puck for the team to start over instead of dumping it in and keeping possession for the team. He never looked stressed on the ice. Without the puck he sought open spots in the offensive zone, usually on the inside. He crashed the net a couple of times and was tough to handle with his big body. All-in-all a quiet game offensively but showed strong responsible play all over the ice.

Lassi Alanen: March 2nd, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Brynäs IF - SHL

Carlsson was a major contributor to Örebro's win in overtime, creating the turnover that directly led to the game-winning goal, netting him a secondary assist in the process. Carlsson's small-area craftiness, ie. scooping pucks from in tight, making small poke passes and one-handed tips, is a big part of his value. One particularly nice play where he received a cross-ice pass off the rush but didn't opt for an immediate shot, instead deking around the defender who was expecting to block and doubling the danger level of the chance. Could've engaged a bit better in a few defensive sequences and didn't have the most offensively dominant game overall, but even in an average game, Carlsson is able to impact the game positively. For many draft-eligibles at this level, this would've been among their best games of the season.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Linköping HC - SHL

One of the better SHL viewings from Carlsson, albeit he did cool off a bit the later the game got. Still, scored with a slick net-front deflection and set up a couple high-quality looks for his linemates. Especially early on, it felt like he was involved everywhere all the time. Skating continues to look more and more projectable as far as the speed and first few steps go, even if he's likely never going to be the most mechanically sound. Showed a well-rounded offensive game with some off-puck flashes and great playmaking moments. Played his usual selfless game, using his teammates a lot and avoiding holding onto the puck for too long; sometimes I feel like he could be a bit more individualistic even.

Lassi Alanen: February 16th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Timrå IK - SHL

This was a much better demonstration of Carlsson's abilities than the last viewing a few weeks ago. He was making a lot of smart, little passing plays off the rush, gaining the zone, dropping the puck back to his teammate, then creating space by finishing his route down the middle. One of those drives resulted in a goal after the puck ended up bouncing to him in the net-front. He's just such a professional with all the little details. Doesn't necessarily push his limits as much as he could, but that's the situation he's in playing in a pro league instead of juniors. The combination of quickness and puck protection skills makes him a tough one to defend even for the stronger defenders.

J.D. Burke: February 4th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Carlsson didn't even get to take part in a sustained offensive zone sequence until about the midway point in the hockey game. Then his line flipped a switch and dominated play from about that point on. Carlsson made some really exemplary plays in that time, including one rush sequence where he corralled a difficult pass on the entry and hit a trailing option with a spinning dish for what could've been a scoring chance – really sharp problem-solving ability and skill on full display there. Carlsson supported the play, made well-timed movements off-puck to create passing lanes, and he was really quite sound defensively when things weren't going his line's way early.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - Växjö Lakers vs. Örebro HK - SHL

This wasn't a very exciting game for Carlsson, not recording a single shot attempt or shot assist throughout. Just wasn't getting the puck in any zone, spending a lot of time chasing on the forecheck and defending the cycle at the point. He wasn't necessarily bad, just rather invisible for large stretches. I think he's added one or two steps of quickness to his skating this season, though. His first few steps are more explosive and the top speed is formidable. If he adds more fluidity, you could argue his skating projection has jumped over average, maybe to 5.5 territory on our scale.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Carlsson showed more of his rushing game in this one. He can pick up speed with crossovers, cut across the ice, enter the zone, cut back against a defender, and feed a pass to one of his teammates coming in behind. It's a formula that could work for him in the NHL -- if he adds just a bit more explosiveness. I've seen a lot of talks about moving Carlsson to center, and while he does have center defensive skills (the supporting game, the awareness, the stick work...), a team that does that would lose some very clean breakouts from the wall. Carlsson is so effective at holding off pinching defencemen, protecting the puck, and bumping it to middle-driving teammates. He's honed that part of his game a lot and it already seems above NHL average. He uses give-and-goes in transition, can manipulate defenders, and feed passes to the slot. A lot of skill, a lot of great habits.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. HV71 - SHL

Carlsson looks quick. The skating fluidity (transition between crossovers and forward strides and the opposition) isn't up to NHL standards, but the overall straight-line speed and two-step acceleration are what matters in his game anyway. He's always manipulative, always scanning, always finding solution to pressure. The game looks easy for him and I wonder why he's not playing more since he's making an impact every time the puck touches his stick. He uses teammates, but can also escape defenders by using a combination of puck protection skills and stickhandling moves. Just a pro.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 19th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

A strong game by Carlsson. He is again one of the most impactful players in a game and scored a goal. A thing that makes him so impactful is his awareness in all situations. He is proactive to get first to the puck in battles. He prepares to handle the opponent and to cover the puck. As a whole, this was a low eventful game and not many clear scoring chances. Leo created some of them by taking the puck to the middle. He did not need a lot of space to get the puck into danger. Leo also had a strong checking game and one a lot of board battles and was the brain behind many of Örebro's retrievals high in the offensive zone.

With the game being low paced with tight battles it fitted Leo's strengths well. He is very strong for an 18 year old and the way he outsmarts opponents ahead of puck battles makes him effective. When he skated with the puck he scanned well and also showed strong awareness and had a good passing game. He opened up the ice well a couple of times. He is also smart in skating into where the puck is heading before his opponents. These situations are translatable to how games in the NHL are played too.

Lassi Alanen: January 12th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Linköping HC - SHL

I'm less and less worried about Carlsson's skating being an issue at the next level. The mechanics aren't necessarily great, but there's been clear, continuous improvement made. There's quite a lot of ankle flexion visible during most of his strides and the extensions are pretty well completed and the overall stance has become deeper. He showcased that particularly in his second shift of the game, driving and beating a defender via the outside lane off the rush, then cutting to the inside for a high-danger backhand chance. Not the most eventful game from Carlsson overall, a lot of time spent in the defensive zone. He did score, though, releasing a nice cross-body outside leg wrister on the power play. Small-area skill, physical play were also visible in occasion. Struggled a bit in transition, but mostly because his team was behind most of the time.

Lassi Alanen: January 4th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U20 WJC

Not the best game of the tournament from Carlsson, but still found ways to make an impact as his linemates struggled quite a bit. A couple of excellent quick and accurate feeds from the boards to the middle, a few forechecking steals. The skating is a limiting factor, but he makes it work and I've liked his rush patterns throughout the tournament. Just quite couldn't complete the dekes in this one. Almost ended the OT by attacking the middle, staying on the puck against two opponents before setting up his linemate for a chance.

David St-Louis: January 2nd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 WJC

A great performance from Leo Carlsson. He showed his ability to bring the puck from the wall to the front of the net multiple times. He attacked that area constantly without it, too, scoring two times from his drive. He also almost put up another goal by driving wide on a defender, freezing him first with a feint. The combination of off-puck skills, anticipation, physical skills, and playmaking is really dangerous in his game. He has a bunch of little technical detail in his game; I like the way he takes care of opposing sticks first when entering battles.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

There just aren't many plays available to Carlsson in a game like this. Yet, he still makes them happen as much as possible. He moves the puck quickly to teammates, anticipates their runs, but also tries to force his way through. He created entries by spotting the puck into space, by dropping it to teammates, generally showed a soft touch in his handling, and made a couple commanding passes, those indicating to teammates where they should move by sending the puck to specific areas. He constantly tries to create "heels", to make defenders turn in a direction so that he can shift in the other, but his skating looked like more of a problem against the dynamic forwards of Team Canada.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Germany vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

I don't think Bystedt and Carlsson are good complements. One wants to rush through entire teams and the other one looks to build scoring chances with short passes. Carlsson plays at a lower-pace and with less agility than many other Swedish forwards in this team, but he might be the smartest. He gets pucks from the wall to the inside part of the ice, identify passing lanes instantly, manipulates defenders to create them, and gets open for return passes. He always knows his next play. His skating, at least in straight-lines, doesn't seem to be a problem at all in this tournament. It's another story when he looks to change direction or accelerate from a stop, however. I'm still a big fan.

Mitchell Brown: December 27th, 2022 - Germany vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

A bit of a scare for Sweden in this one, part of that's likely linked to Carlsson. He was very good, but he was also careless with the puck. He threw away pucks with passes that missed their target or wouldn't have benefitted their target had they connected. That killed a fair bit of the momentum his line was building. But the rest of his game is so obviously NHL-calibre. He attacks the middle instantly, delays the right moments, supports plays effectively, and has pro-habits defensively. The handling skill and general fluidity are so impressive, and will only improve as his skating becomes more consistent and powerful. How easily he handles the puck with his full wingspan – in tight, across on the forehand, across on the backhand – really stands out, it's not unlike watching Jason Robertson. He looked like a potential top-line forward.

Cam Robinson: December 8th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs HV71 - SHL

Leo Carlsson was back to some of his old tricks in this one. Manipulating the puck in tight spaces, making defenders miss, coming off of the wall with possession and a plan. He scored a nice goal at the net front on the man-advantage as the puck squirted out front. The netminder challenged and Carlsson quickly looked shot before slipping it to his backhand for an empty cage. Earlier in the game he walked in against several defenders and dangled around two before going between the legs for a scoring chance that failed. But the level of difficulty, the situation, the level of play that he was trying these type of moves, and mostly succeeding with them, was impressive. I'm still unsure about the feet. He has such a wide base, but it doesn't really hinder his speed out there and certainly adds to his strength and balance. It does hinder his ability to fully cross over though.

The motor was running throughout, he has pro habits along the wall in the defensive end. The strength. The pre-scans. The hands. Very projectable stuff.

Lassi Alanen: November 24th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Carlsson hasn't scored in a few SHL games, but I wouldn't be too worried. He had multiple good OZ shifts in this one, slipping pucks to the middle from the boards and getting a grade A rebound chance late in the game. The skating limited him a bit on few occasions, notably couldn't really get enough leverage and complete his crossovers to drive the net. The work rate and

defensive game are very projectable, though. Always scanning, reading the situation and responding accordingly.

David St-Louis: November 13th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 Five Nations

I don't know if we are allowed swearing in game reports, but hopefully the editor will miss this one. Holy fuck. One of the best performances I've seen from a draft-eligible prospect over the past two seasons. Of course, the competition wasn't as good as what Carlsson is usually facing -- and it showed. Incredible smart and skill sequences. I don't know where to start. The skating looked better (but it was a zoomed-in camera) and the handling skills looked elite. On multiple occasions, Carlsson showed manipulative playmaking abilities and even high-level planning. The hockey sense grade, based on this viewing only, would be at least an 8. The game felt incredibly easy: he made picks to create space for teammates on breakouts (and himself), slowed down opponents in transition with his forecheck, dominated the boards (getting away with possession, spinning on opponents to retain it, and find outlets), adapted his skating to stay or find pockets of space, went to the net-front for rebounds, rushed in the offensive zone with a combination of crossovers and weight shift fakes, created separation from opponents with feints... Just an amazing performance. Clear top-3, maybe top-2 in this draft.

Lassi Alanen: November 13th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 Five Nations

At times Carlsson was really styling on the Finnish challenger squad, encapsulated by the third period goal where he deked his way through the defender and roofed the puck in very quick succession, demonstrating high-end puck control. Carlsson was relying on his hands more than usual, embarrassing defenders a few times and turning the puck over in other sequences. Still, there were also some impressive rush patterns (heavy crossover usage, changes of pace to gain separation, puck protection) and displays of passing skill (hooks, slips, manipulation). Kept his pace high throughout the game, making a NZ steal with a clever stick lift, passing to his winger, then sprinting up down the middle to receive the puck back, getting a high-danger chance and drawing a penalty. In other sequence, he recovered the puck along the boards, made a quick pass, then relocated towards net, leaving the defender behind him and tapping in a goal after a clever pass by his teammate. Carlsson's skating habits and overall output is clearly greater than the mechanics. His handling was a bit inconsistent throughout the tournament, but there were some high-end moments, too. Among the best playmakers in the draft, plays with pace and understands off-puck routes/positioning, applies pressure well and works hard. He should be in contention for a top-3 slot.

Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 Five Nations

Sweden got outplayed heavily here, and Carlsson didn't have his best game, though he still managed to have some great sequences. One of them involved him sprinting straight out of DZ faceoff, getting to the loose puck before the defender for an exit, then crossing over to the middle, creating space for his linemate by drawing the lone defender with him, then perfectly slipping the puck under the defender's stick for a partial breakaway. Also had some more subtle yet creative passing plays. On the other hand, he forced a bit at times, trying to do too much by himself and ran out of options.

Lassi Alanen: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U20 Five Nations

Carlsson was probably a bit more inefficient here than he is usually in the SHL. Most notably he was trying to handle his way through defenders 1v1 and sometimes not making the humble play, instead holding on to the puck too long. Did he still create offence? You bet. Added a pretty assist by forechecking the puck back in the OZ, then hooking a drop pass for a scoring chance and a goal. Also deflected a bouncing puck for a 4v4 goal of his own, and could have easily had more points with multiple individual chances and also setups. Always using hooks and slips to dodge defenders' sticks. Also a crafty cross-ice backhand saucer to set up a high-danger chance off the rush. A bit more mishandling than usual, fumbling some possessions, but also some great highlights of puck control in tight. His ability to scoop loose/50-50 pucks is also notable.

Jimmy Hamrin: October 25th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Leo has a great motor. He is always on the move, challenging and creating offense. He works hard defensively as well. He reads the game well and is strong away from the puck too. Defensively, he detects danger and takes smart lanes in his checking. Offensively, he engages and gives good support for teammates. His strength and balance are very impressive at this age against

men. He rarely loses a physical puck battle and can hold off opponents and skate away with the puck.

With the puck, Leo played more individually in this game. He travelled with the puck and tried to find openings. He did not show skills to open up space but he sure showed that he is good at taking advantage of the space that is given to him. Twice in the game he came with high speed towards a defenseman who gave too much gap and he just walked by them and created a grade A chance for himself.

Leos puck handling shows flashes of high skill, especially deking at high speed near his feet. He can fake going to the outside and quickly deke close to his feet in the other direction to beat the opponent to the inside. At times, I do not like his puck protection as he often leans a bit forward and controls the puck far and right in front of him. That makes the puck non-protected if he meets a smart and fast defenseman. When a good gap is presented in front of him he looks very slick with those moves though.

Leos skating is an asset that I have seen been up for debate. He has a good habit of creating space and separation for himself with crossover skating in forward motion. He generates speed with every stride and shows quick feet too in those sequences. When he quickly starts skating like that it often takes the defense by surprise and makes him hard to stop. He needs to find tricks like that to be able to separate as his north to south speed is not elite enough to create space of its own. It will be all about timing and technical tricks. And it is a good sign that he seems to recognize this already.

All in all, Leo is a top 5 caliber prospect for the upcoming draft. I can see a top line power forward with a strong motor, strong zone entries and a pattern breaker for his team.

Jimmy Hamrin: October 8th, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

A great game by Leo who was one of Örebro's best players in the game. In the press conference coach Niklas Eriksson when asked on which players stood out said: "Leo Carlsson stood out for us, he always moves the puck and his feet at the same time. He created a ton and had an assist on a good play". Leo played on one of the top lines and was used in the first power play unit, playing the first overtime shift as well as being chosen as one of the penalty shooters in this tie game.

Leo is a strong skater. His technique isn't flawless though. His strides are a bit back heavy but it does not seem to matter that much in the big picture now. He has long strides and skates fast with ease. He can easily keep up with the SHL pace and save energy. His acceleration could probably be more explosive with some technical improvements. His skating helps his checking game well as he can shrink space without working hard. He skates fast with the puck as well and can transport it.

Leo has soft hands with short puck touches. He can also control the puck while skating fast. He delivers soft saucer passes. He controls the puck well close to his body and shows skill in tight areas. I really like how he can succeed with putting the puck in a small space close to the opponent and walk by him. He tried it multiple times and had success with it too and opened up space that way. He does not show skill to control or open space for others than himself though.

When he has the puck he is scanning the ice well while moving his skates. He had an assist in the game when he carried the puck into the offensive zone and walked around the defense on the outside and around the crease and found a teammate for a one-timer. All the way he scanned and showed patience with the puck. One part of Leo's game that helps him to play this well in SHL as a 17 year-old is his physical strength. He is big and strong on the puck. He can cover the puck well while skating with it. I also like how he competes and hounds after the puck when the game is on the line.

All in all, Leo Carlsson is a very impressive prospect. In the big picture he is a power forward, but the details in his game are impressive and translatable. His strength. His small area game. His short puck touches. His ability to skate at full speed, stick handle and scan the ice at the same time. His passing game. His competitiveness to drive play. Those are all translatable assets. He does not open up space for others and or have enough control of spaces for him to be considered a future top elite point producer but definitely a solid producer in the next tier. Leo looks like a future top line forward in the NHL.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Carlsson continues to produce, logging a primary helper in this one after entering the zone, circling the net before dishing the puck to the slot from below the goal line for a one-timer. A lot of good stuff yet again. He's not extending cycles unnecessarily, but capitalizes on opportunities to bring the puck inside. Can combine physical play (making intentional contact to bump and spin off defenders) with handling and smarts (avoiding overhandling to let the puck get to advantageous position before taking it, allowing him to spin off the defender quicker). Some solid off-puck ideas here, staying in motion in the OZ and making dashes towards the net-front instead of being stationary, even if he didn't get rewarded for them. Lacks ankle flexion with slightly hurts his leverage in corners and limits his overall forward stride, but I don't think it's a huge issue. Awareness stands out, always scanning the surroundings, even with the puck.

David St-Louis: October 8th, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Constant scanning of the ice, precise passing and even some deceptive playmaking ideas. I like the rush patterns, the way he creates from inside, outside, which is different than many players his age, especially in the SHL. Great battle habits: takes care of opponents' sticks before taking possession, cuts them at the hands, establishes body positioning...He defends relatively for his age in the SHL, too, with some good angling and switches in coverage. He had a couple of good off-puck moments, sneaking at the far-post and driving by at the net for tap-ins. The stride is not pretty (lack of ankle flexion, kicking feet, rounded back, extensions not completed), but I don't think the speed/acceleration will be an issue. The overall balance and agility might become ones, however. He's a very interesting player with a rare combination of high-level hockey sense, habits, and technical handling skills.

David St-Louis: September 29th, 2022 - Brynas IF vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Carlsson is one of those not-ideal-mechanics-but-good-output skaters. He digs deep in crossovers, leans over the ice, and propels himself quite well, even from a stop, and he can accumulate speed off the rush. Honestly, the straight-line game is not a concern for me or the small-area, stop-and-start defensive game either. The agility moves will remain difficult due to the lack of ankle flexion and the small weight shifts. I liked a few of his rushes in his this game, the way he combined crossovers with constant puck shuffling (at a different rhythm), with his head up, and the way he cut laterally along the ice to manipulate gaps. He seems capable of playing a hard, engaging game, too, although, once again, the skating form limit his ability to protect the puck and establish body positioning; he gets beat by other players who go under him.

David St-Louis: September 27th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs Brynas IF - SHL

I watched one game of Carlsson but I already feel like I know the player. First impressions are always dangerous so I'll hold back from making too big of an early judgment. High hockey sense with mechanical problems -- the hardest players to project. The skating is really problematic, a high stance that limits his agility and balance and puck protection and that will probably have him become more of a straight-liner in the NHL. Range is important in the NHL and not just in terms of stick reach, but also in terms of four-way mobility. Cut backs and rapid turns off the rush are becoming essential parts of the game. It's harder for a player who is limited in terms of manoeuvrability to create consistent offence. BUT. The passing ideas are high-end and the puck control, too (although he stick handles mostly in front of his body due to the high-stance skating). He's scanning a lot, every second away from the puck, which makes his off-puck game quite projectable. A great off-puck and passing game is already a strong NHL base. Add to that a physical engagement and you definitely have a player. The upside could be harder to figure out -- or not, if he's that smart.

Lassi Alanen: September 22nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

Not a ton of puck touches or notable moments from Carlsson in this one. The biggest highlight was an offensive zone pass interception, following that by immediately taking to the net via the outside lane, but the backhand shot came up empty. Frölunda just made a good job at taking away time and space from Örebro and Carlsson wasn't able to get into groove, turning over a few pucks near the offensive zone blue line after getting swarmed. There were still a few examples of high-end handling. The way that he handles in his hip pocket and combines quick cutbacks and turns is so effective.

J.D. Burke: September 17th, 2022 - Linköping HC vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Talk about starting the season on a high note – Carlsson was spectacular. Picked up a goal by corralling a pass from his defenceman at the faceoff dot and just sending a wrist shot top-corner. He could've left this game with at least another goal or two if he wasn't robbed on the power play in the third and perhaps a little deferential for my tastes with the puck, understandably or otherwise. I'm not sure if he's added a gear as a skater or if his constant motion makes him look faster, but he's covering a lot more ground than he did in his draft-minus-one season. Just an exceptionally high off-puck pace, constantly repositioning off of his passes, adjusting his angles, etc. It felt like there wasn't anything Linköping could do to knock the puck from Carlsson's stick. He handles in his hip pocket, deploys weight shifts and cutbacks to create separation, and is just plain physically strong. God, there was one sequence where Carrlsson made a pass to his defenceman at the top of the offensive blue line, exploded past the opponent opposite him, and powered through traffic to the backdoor for a give-and-go scoring chance. I like this player.

Lassi Alanen: August 27th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 Four Nations

Another two-goal effort from Carlsson. Beat the goalie clean with a mid-range wrister on the PP from the right flank and made a super-slick pass reception into a deke to open up the defender and goalie after a cross-seam pass for an easy backhand finish. Carlsson isn't a volume shooter but when he pulls the trigger, he's dangerous from mid-range. Clearly a knack for placing shots just over goalie's shoulders. Gets a good pop even without much loading and a high grip. Not as many puck touches in this one compared to the previous games, but made those touches count. Still cheats a bit for offence by fleeing the zone early. Could be coaching related, though. Doesn't play that physically, but made breakups on the forecheck with strong stick work. Looks like a top prospect for next summer.

Lassi Alanen: August 26th, 2022 - Slovakia vs. Sweden - U20 Four Nations

Not sure if it was even worth watching this game with Sweden scoring 11 times versus a weak Slovakia squad. Somehow Carlsson only managed one secondary assist despite his line scoring multiple times. Doesn't mean he didn't set up a bunch of chances with his playmaking, though, which clearly grades out as above-average or better on our scales. Noteworthy how quickly he can execute hook and slip passes out of nothing, really hard for the defender to anticipate them. Carlsson was a bit too handling-focused in this one, being clearly in a limit testing mode. Some of them worked, others caused turnovers. Picked his spots better in the previous game. Work rate is not the highest and took some lazy off-puck routes, but can be explosive when he wants to.

Lassi Alanen: August 25th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U20 Four Nations

Carlsson was the man of the match for Sweden, scoring twice and adding a primary assist in the process. He could have easily had a few more points with all the offence he was generating. We're clearly talking about a combination of skill and intelligence with Carlsson. He showcased a very advanced passing game, implementing hook passes under the defender's stick with smoothness and quickness rarely seen from a prospect his age. When not given space off the rush, he delayed, cut back and made a successful pass to an open teammate. Impressive give-and-go sequence in the offensive zone with Calle Odellius and it would have resulted in a hat-trick if not for a great save by the Czechia netminder. Handling looked projectable. Stride is not mechanically perfect, but he's rather agile and fluid for his age, also showing good explosiveness from a standstill. Flew the zone early a couple of times, not the most engaged effort defensively, but did some work on the forecheck. And rifled two beautiful goals, once going upstairs off the rush and following that by cleanly beating the goalie short-side with a wrister after an OZ steal. Looked like a top-10 pick for the 2023 class.

J.D. Burke: August 4th, 2021 - Sweden U18 vs. Slovakia U18 - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

The only real deficiency in Carlsson's game, that I've noticed thus far anyway, is his forward skating stride, and I'm starting to wonder if that's even much of an issue. Carlsson is surprisingly agile for someone with his build at this stage in their development, working punch turns, weight shifts, and just showing solid four-way mobility in general. Couple that with high-level skating habits, and he's going to cover more than enough ground. There's also a tonne of runway for him to improve as a skater.

Did his best work below the hash marks. Was a menace on the forecheck. Puck protection mechanics were on full display; there just isn't much opposing defenders can do to separate him from the puck.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2021 - USA U18 vs. Sweden U18 - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

The thing I'm always saying about the 2023 NHL Draft is that there aren't enough players with legitimate star power at the top of the class. Now, obviously, Leo Carlsson isn't in the same category as Connor Bedard and Matvei Michkov, but he's probably in the next group. Anyway, what a showing. If Carlsson wants the puck, then he takes the puck, and there's often little anyone can do to stop him. He created one of Sweden's early goals on just this sort of play, manhandling the American defender behind the net, stealing possession of the puck, and immediately setting up his linemate for a goal in front. Puck protection mechanics are great. Created space for himself in the neutral zone with dotted line use. Not necessarily explosive as a skater but moves well enough.



4 Matvei Michkov

AGE 17.767 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 09, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Brad Marchand, Nikita Kucherov



Lethal Shooter



Tactician



Vision

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	148 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	7	7
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7	8	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
SKA St. Petersburg	KHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
SKA-Neva St. Petersburg	VHL	12	10	4	14	1.17
HK Sochi	KHL	27	9	11	20	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

Under ordinary circumstances and in any other year, Matvei Michkov is the consensus No. 1 pick, viewed as a player with the potential to alter a franchise's short- and long-term prospects from the moment he walks the draft's stage.

These aren't ordinary circumstances though. Not by any stretch of the imagination. For reasons in and out of Michkov's control.

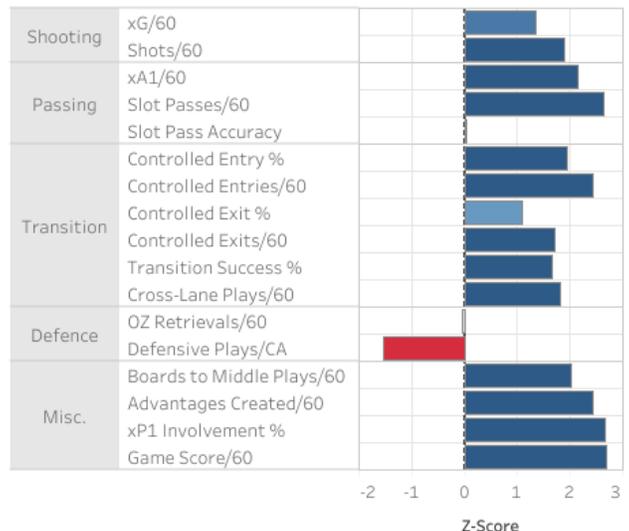
The conversation starts with the geopolitical situation. Russia's horrific, illegal invasion of Ukraine has complicated matters, limiting teams' ability to scout these players in person or establish a rapport to aid them along in their development. Some NHL teams have even expressed concerns about the ability of Russian players to secure work visas when they come to North America; for others, it's more of an if than a when.

Then Michkov struggled out of the gates in his draft year, with doughnuts on the scoresheet in three KHL games (with almost no ice time) with SKA St. Petersburg before joining their farm team SKA-Neva St. Petersburg in the second-tier VHL. This opened the door for the likes of Adam Fantilli and Leo Carlsson in the No. 2 and 3 spot.

In the backdrop of all this was Michkov's multi-year contract extension with SKA St. Petersburg, one that would keep him in Russia through the 2025-26 season. It might not have been an issue back when this was the Bedard-Michkov draft, but as

Matvei Michkov

F | HK Sochi | KHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 214.5
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Carlsson and Fantilli entered the picture, teams began to wonder if the wait was worth it that high in the draft with viable alternatives.

How many general managers have the sort of job security to wait him out? Can you count them with one hand? So, where it once was the Bedard-Michkov draft, no such dynamic exists going into Nashville. It's now the Bedard draft, with many in the industry increasingly convinced that Michkov will fall out of the top-10 entirely.

To think, it wasn't that long ago that Michkov outdueled Bedard at the U18s in Frisco and Plano, Texas, leading the tournament in goals and points, eventually capturing MVP honours (though Canada beat Russia 5-3 in the gold medal game). Uh-huh, that's right, it was all good two years ago.

Much of what made Michkov such a compelling, once thought of as generational talent remains though. He's still more or less the same player once you cut through the miasma of everything around him.

The rare triple-threat winger, Michkov is a constant threat to find the back of the net. His puck skills are near the top of the draft, owing to immense creativity, hip pocket handling, dextrous hands, and a never-say-die attitude. You may think that you have him, but most of the time, you really don't. His ability to problem-solve his way out of defensive pressure is at a level all its own.

Michkov creates plays on the ice that we can't even fathom with the benefit of a bird's eye view. Naturally, this otherworldly skill as a handler makes him a pretty lethal finishing talent, too. Michkov doesn't just dangle for the sake of dangling; it's always with a set purpose in mind, often allowing him to gain the middle of the ice, increasing the quality of each look as a shooter.

And with a release as strong as Michkov's, that counts for a lot. Blessed with a top-notch wrist shot, one-timer, and one-touch finishing ability – this is a player that can credibly threaten from just about anywhere in the offensive zone. That hasn't convinced him to settle for low-percentage looks, though.

It's Michkov's development as a playmaker that marks the most significant growth this season, particularly after he joined HK Sochi. He's always been a capable small-area distributor, especially cunning from below the hash marks and behind the net. An enhanced delay game off the rush has made him a more well-rounded, projectable passer, giving him a fall-back game on the rush that allows him to create in any situation and confronted with any set of defensive pressure.

Ultimately, in Michkov, you're looking at one of the most skilled, inventive scorers in this year's draft – and most recent drafts, too. The complete offensive package. A game-changer destined to eclipse the point-per-game mark at the height of their powers.

The only real catch with Michkov on the ice is that he's perhaps a bit too ambitious for his own good, often overhandling or trying plays that are far too complex to work in a professional setting. This is hardly anything new for players with this profile, and we anticipate it will correct itself with time and reps in professional hockey.

So, is Michkov worth the wait? Once you get past the third overall pick, it's a no-brainer.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Russia Stock Watch: Matvei Michkov taking off with HK Sochi



Matvei Michkov's loan to last-place Sochi has paid off and showcased his skills



Fantasy Focus: Dissecting the Youth

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"We didn't have any scouts in Russia, we pulled them all out, so this kid is like a black box. The film looks good, but honestly, I don't know. It's hard to give a fair read. We don't have a great read on many Russians, and honestly, beyond this kid I wouldn't draft any Russians this year." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He has that natural goalscoring touch. Even when he's got the puck in the corner, if the goalie drifts away and there's the smallest opening over their shoulder – he notices.

I thought he started kind of slow with St. Petersburg in the fall. When they moved him to Sochi, he played some impressive games. His game in the KHL and the way he changed his season was very impressive. He's certainly up in that top three group. If you put him in the CHL, then he would've put up about 130 points.

The question is, can he take the pounding in the playoffs when you're playing in North America? And what about the contract situation? He can probably make several million in the KHL right off the hop.

The only knock on him is maybe the skating with the size. He's not the fastest skater, but he's really shifty and quick and doesn't play with hesitation along the boards or in high-traffic areas." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"Love him. Based on pure talent and scoring ability I think he's in the same tier as Bedard. I've been blown away by him. Unique scoring ability and has a shot that will consistently beat NHL goalies. He's the most dangerous player I've ever seen from behind the net and the goal line. Side angle, short side, he's so deceptive, crafty and accurate. If he was a western Canadian kid, I think it would be a serious question of 'is it Bedard or Michkov.' – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Dylan Griffing: March 11th, 2023 - Kapitan Stupino vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

For a potential top-three pick, you'd probably want to see a bit more out of Michkov in a game in this environment; however, his smarts still poked through with some real solid flashes on breakouts and through the transition. Struggled to attack the inside much, made most of his plays from along the boards and behind the net, a common theme for him, but still provided plenty of value with that playmaking. Not much of a scoring threat at 5v5 here, really honed into the playmaking role while sprinkling in low percentage shots here and there.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. HC Kunlun Red Stars - KHL

I don't think a viewing can get much better and more productive than this with just 11 minutes of ice time at 5-on-5. Michkov managed to add five(!) points in that span, including a bunch of highlight reel plays including a lacrosse goal executed to perfection. Basically everything he did turned into gold. Sure, the competition was as weak as it can get at this level, but it was a battle between two terrible teams. The offensive skill is unrivalled in this year's class in Europe, the smarts are elite. Manipulative playmaking, constantly finding passing lanes and creating advantages in the offensive end and also in transition. High-end passer from backhand, too. Physicality isn't going to be an issue for him, given how good he is at spinning off pressure, avoiding getting hammered along the boards. Skating is probably close to an NHL average projection-wise, might be a tad higher given how agile he can be at his best, even if the technique isn't high-end. I think he's a top-three, if not top-two player in this class.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. HC Kunlun Red Stars - KHL

Weak competition. Amazing game from Michkov. He showed all his skills. His playmaking: used the back layers to create space and speed for the offence, manipulated defenders to create lanes, used give-and-goes to beat defenders, and the use of his

backhand in tight spaces to move the puck to teammates. His off-puck skills: timed movements, speed control to stay inside lanes, underlapping/overlapping runs off the rush. And his scoring: drove the net and fired in-stride. He's not yet strong at this level, but quite elusive on the walls. He has agility techniques and he's very good at timing his escapes to avoid pins. And, to top it all off, he scored with a lacrosse goal. Speed looks average to above-average now. Physical skills are not a concern. He drives inside. All of the other softer skills are either above-average or high-end. He has a unique style of game, for sure. He will require a role tailor-made for him in the NHL, à la Panarin, for sure, but he's worth it. He's worth the wait and the uncertainty. Just an elite talent, someone who understands the game at a rare level.

David St-Louis: February 23th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. SKA St. Petersburg - KHL

Michkov needs to improve defensively. He's not involved, not really helping, and only pretending half the time. He thinks of himself as only an offensive player. His skills in that facet of the game are unreal, so it's pretty normal at this stage. A lot of smart, planned movements in this one: lateral cuts in the neutral-zone to manipulate defenders and create space for teammates, explosions inside space to beat defenders off the mark and create odd-man rushes, and overlapping/underlapping patterns off the rush to enlarge gaps. His skating has improved since last year. It's pretty clear.

Lassi Alanen: February 23th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. SKA St. Petersburg - KHL

Another rather strong offensive showing from Michkov. The playmaking was - yet again - the star of the show. Not sure there's that much more to write about how he succeeds in that area: strong vision, ability to execute on difficult slips and one-touch passing plays, willingness to try to push the limits and licence to do so from the coaching staff. Is he doing much defensively? Not at all, it's pretty much all offence, though he's been really good in transition in the KHL. He's not wasting his touches anymore, connecting on most of his passes and regularly finding his target in the middle. Just super smart as a facilitator and an offensive creator.

J.D. Burke: February 13th, 2023 - HC Salavat Yulaev Ufa vs. HK Sochi - KHL

I don't think there are any Selkes in Michkov's future. That much seems certain. He cheats for offence so brazenly that he's practically out of the frame when the puck is in the defensive zone. Even when he's generous enough to enter the fray, he's straight legged, late on switches, and putting in what one could generously describe as a rote effort at best.

Thing is, you're not really drafting a player like Michkov to take on a matchup role at evens, and his offensive ability shone through this contest. He took the odd faceoff but mostly lined up at left wing. Some of his best work occurred along the boards, where Michkov would shimmy, open up his hips in the 10-2 position, and furnish creative passes (often on the backhand) to set his linemates up with some pretty solid scoring chances. Really strong playmaking performance.

My concerns from this viewing are two-fold. Aside from one give-and-go sequence that didn't come together, I'm not sure Michkov spent more than a few seconds total on the inside - everything happened along the boards or on the perimeter. He showed some creativity and problem-solving ability as a puck-carrier, but often skated into pressure and threw away possession.

Lassi Alanen: February 13th, 2023 - HC Salavat Yulaev Ufa vs. HK Sochi - KHL

If Michkov racked a ton of scoring chances in the last viewing, now it was his turn to be the setup man. It was a very strong playmaking effort from the perimeter, showcasing a lot of his passing repertoire. Smart delays off the rush, then finding a trailer in the middle or dishing the puck across the ice. Quick one or two-touch feeds to the slot from the end boards. Took the puck to the inside in the OZ five times at 5-on-5, all with passing, and completed all of his slot passes (something he usually doesn't do as he's known to go for low-percentage feeds to the middle regularly). Sure, his overall play style in the other areas of the rink is very liberal. Doesn't really give the best effort defensively and mostly plays to just create offence. Am I very concerned about that? Not really if you're as talented as he is. We've also seen good defensive efforts from him from time to time in the past, even if this necessarily wasn't that.

Cam Robinson: February 11th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs Kunlun Red Star - KHL

This was a standout performance from Michkov. Granted it was KHL but still. He was highly engaged throughout. The obvious was the goal in-flight off of the left wing. He leaned outwards to ensure it wasn't deflected and wired it far side corner. He also grabbed a pretty primary helper where he received a cross-ice feed, loaded for the shot then whipped it back across the net front for the tap in. He tried a similar play later in the game but it was stopped. Those are advanced plays and show off his improving playmaking game.

In transition, there was some more patience and consideration with the puck. He did fire a few into the middle to be picked off, but it's a building stage.

He was something of a cannon ball out there in this one. Driving into the middle of the ice with possession and looking to cause havoc. Robustly throwing himself into the forechecking route. Engaging along the wall.

The hands remains really nice. He was weaving and darting into and out of traffic, making moves, beating players, hitting lanes afterwards. Overall, strong offensive decisions - even if some of the results didn't pan out. He's still a bit raw, but the skill level is super high.

This was one of the better outings I've seen from him.

David St-Louis: February 9th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. HC Spartak Moskva - KHL

Another great Michkov performance. The creative playmaking is back. He's adaptable, sees the better play, doesn't force as many passes as before, and moves the puck quicker. He relies on his delay game a lot and I wish he would attack the middle of the ice a bit more with the puck, but he's very inside driver away from it, constantly at the net, spinning away, faking defenders to gain space. He scored with one such drive, attacked inside to make the defender think he was moving that way, before going behind his back to the front of the net for a tap-in. There's deception even in his off-puck movements! He tries defensively. He's not effective, but he tries. That's progress.

Lassi Alanen: February 9th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. HC Spartak Moskva - KHL

A lot of good stuff from Michkov here, creating over a goal's worth of xG at 5-on-5 alone and ending up scoring later in the game with a nice back post tap-in after a net-drive. There were chances off the rush, from rebounds or by spinning away from pressure behind the net, then trying to ram the puck in. But the playmaking was also very noticeable. He's still inefficient and tries low-percentage stuff, but I'm not very worried about that; play selection will improve in the future. Adapted well to the changing situation with his transition passing and made plays with pace when needed, delayed when it was beneficiary. Excels at playing off contact.

Cam Robinson: February 7th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Dynamo Moskva - KHL

Really decisive mode for Michkov in this one. He was going to create in the offensive end and even with the matchups leaning close on him and taking away the shot a lot, that wasn't going to stop him. He was utilizing his hands to create separation and then hitting some tough folds cross ice. ONE-touch passes where he looked ready to load up for a shot that froze the defense. He was absorbing pressure along the wall and making clean outs. He create a few scoring chances for himself but couldn't finish in this one.

In the defensive end, he is really good along the wall, but got a little chaotic in-zone when hemmed in. He also threw a couple of pucks away into the middle of the ice - seemingly a given every night. But the overall playmaking in his game and the instincts in the offensive end were all plus.

Lassi Alanen: February 7th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Dynamo Moskva - KHL

This was one of if not the best playmaking performance from Michkov this season. Just consistently a threat in the offensive zone, one-touching pucks to the middle through pressure, flashing increased levels of deception and quick reads. Even some

manipulation thrown in there. The delay game off the rush is starting to become more and more used and effective, entering along the boards, then slowing down while gliding to the middle, drawing in two defenders before making a drop pass to the trailer - just brilliant stuff. Transitional game has been so much better in the KHL compared to VHL. Making skilled plays while having an increased success rate. Delays often in transition, too, but also turns up the pace when he sees an opportunity.

Dylan Griffing: February 5th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Lokomotiv Yaroslavl - KHL

Michkov faced off against a rotated Yaroslavl side and just couldn't get too much going. He had one nice rush cutting right down the middle of the ice and taking on four defenders, using simple puckhandles before getting a shot off. He mostly trailed on transitions, waiting for the right time to switch to the other wing for a drop pass to get a quick shot off. With offense set up, he struggled to get the puck away from the walls. Outmuscled on battles and struggled to keep balance while also trying to control the puck. He had one standout playmaking flash, a pass from behind the red line into the low slot for an oncoming teammate that didn't connect. Broke up a pass in the neutral zone to halt an imminent counterattack. Definitely not a standout performance from him.

David St-Louis: January 14th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Metallurg Mg - KHL

What a game. Michkov looks like a chess master again with how he moves in the offensive zone, finds space for himself, bounces the puck to teammates, anticipates the flow of the play, spins on defenders around the net to get his stick on puck, and adjust his skating to stay in lanes off the rush. He's really at his best playing this sneaky scorer role. He even preemptively establishes body positioning on opponents to create a pocket of space to instantly shoot on reception. His skating is a bit hunched over but the speed looks better and he uses it more to pressure away from the puck now. The physical skills continue to develop and the passing game is still high, high-end even if it is inefficient. Decision-making continues to be an issue I do not care about at all. He's just experimenting. It's a great thing for his development. The hockey sense is an 8-9 grade for me. A potential game-breaking talent at the NHL level.

Lassi Alanen: January 10th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Vityaz Moscow Region - KHL

Quite a bit quieter showing compared to the previous ones, but still some cool stuff from Michkov here. Scored late in the third by surprising the goalie high far side with a really surprising and precise inside-leg wrister from deep in the half wall. Showed some board skills, being slippery and hard to pin down, then passing the puck to the inside for a scoring chance. He just wasn't getting the puck that often in transition, which made him less visible off the rush.

David St-Louis: January 8th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. SKA St. Petersburg - KHL

Awesome game from Michkov. He's still getting adjusted to the pace of the game and passing to one and covered teammates, at times, but you can already tell that he's going to dominate NHL shifts. He uses his teammates all the time, transforms passes into dangles between his feet, spots pucks into space for teammates, enabling them to walk to the net. He can dangle through sticks and his physical game keeps developing. He shows good timing when going to the net and handles breakouts well, not passing to the first option but the better one.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. SKA St. Petersburg - KHL

Michkov's off-puck timing really stood out here. First, he had a high-danger chance off a partial deflection after a faceoff, establishing body positioning just at the right time. Then later, he slowed down as his teammate beat a defender wide off the rush instead of driving himself to the lap of the other defender, being in prime position to score against his actual team with a wicker catch-and-release wrister. The play selection - mostly in terms of passing choices - is still an issue, but some of the playmaking ideas are high-end and he has the finesse to execute on them regularly, slipping pucks under defenders' sticks and such. Also showed physical skills, establishing contact before puck reception to complete a retrieval and even had a few hits in the neutral zone. The puck skills are high-end, too. A clear-cut top-4 talent in this class, could honestly be top-3 or even top-2 based on pure upside.

Dylan Griffing: January 5th, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. CSKA Moskva - KHL

This Sochi loan spell is going to really not do a lot for Michkov's draft stock. He's adapted well to the league, utilizing his teammates (maybe too much), but it's just impossible to do anything. He had a couple nice give-and-goes, one that finished with his best scoring chance of the game, but plays just don't string together with this Sochi team, even against a rotated CSKA. The passing through breakouts is what stood out the most, because there weren't many puck touches in the OZ. Decision making is still weak, but there were enough good plays to outweigh the questionable ones. Finished the game with an end-to-end rush that finished with a blocked shot from a good area. He also blocked quite a few shots, if that tickles your fancy!

Lassi Alanen: January 3rd, 2023 - HK Sochi vs. Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod - KHL

Michkov continues to have great moments even if he's not producing. His passing in transition has been particularly good so far, slipping and spinning pucks under pressure with really high precision and demonstrating his problem-solving skills and smarts overall. Had a couple of high-danger chances by being in the right place at the right time to receive and instantly release a loose puck. He takes difficult passes in motion and has improved his physical game quite a bit. Sure, he doesn't really care about defending that much and cheats for offence, but partly it looked like a system-wide thing.

Lassi Alanen: December 28th, 2022 - HK Sochi vs. HC Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk - KHL

KHL is clearly the right place for Michkov. While the quality of teammates isn't very high, he should be getting a lot of minutes and relied on as a top scorer. Strength didn't seem like an issue here. He can get smothered along the boards from time to time, but he also spun away from pressure multiple times, then immediately tried to attack the inside with passing. A couple of great passing ideas that were barely intercepted, a lot of deception and manipulation layered in his playmaking and zone entries. The lack of strength still shows in his stride, notably he has trouble keeping his chest up when he tries to skate at full speed.

Dylan Griffing: December 25th, 2022 - HK Sochi vs. Ak Bars Kazan - KHL

Michkov got a new set of linemates for his second game and there's clearly chemistry growing quickly. While there weren't many true highlights apart from his first goal with Sochi and a shootout goal, the connecting plays were really interesting. There was still a clear lack of inside play, he made a pass or two to escape the walls, but he was mostly hugging the boards and keeping his passes to the perimeter. Two shots from the goal line, even. The off-the-puck movement counteracted it nicely, though, there isn't much straight line speed, but the bursts of quickness are enough to boost him into space or to cut in front of the net for a tip. His most dangerous play at 5v5 came from a poor pass from an Ak Bars defender that Michkov got the read on first, picking it up and firing a shot off. It still seems like the power play is going to be where he gets most of his points for now, having more room to get shots off and not facing as much physical pressure. The strength was less of an issue in this one than his first game, still gets knocked off the puck, but it took more.

Cam Robinson: December 25th, 2022 - HK Sochi vs. Ak Bars Kazan - KHL

Christmas game! And the first tally with the new club (and a shootout goal). Michkov was smart away from the puck - hunting down seams and soft spots to receive the puck in dangerous positions on the ice. He was good along the wall - picking up rims, taking pressure and making exits with the pass. Still got dumped a few times by bigger players but held his own alright.

Wasn't all that effective in turning his transition carries into chances instead choosing to keep the puck to the outside. He's super threatening on the man-advantage (as per usual). He takes it and can look off options and hit cross seam. He can shift his weight, alter the release point and get pucks through. His one-timer is a big threat.

The hands showed pretty well with a couple of sequent moves to avoid pressure. The skating is good. The mind is clearly there. We need more consistency in his decisions. More focus on inside-driving rushes. More nuance to his shooting decisions at even-strength. It's all very doable with time and work. He's raw stil.

Dylan Griffing: December 23rd, 2022 - HK Sochi vs. Kunlun Red Star - KHL

First game with his new club and it was always going to be an uphill battle, but a goal against in his first shift just felt fitting in a way. An expected slow start, new system, new teammates, and the works. There were a few flashes, notably off the rush, the confidence was on display skating into a ton of traffic on two occasions and one was followed with a nice pass that was interrupted by a stick lift. He was most noticeable on the power play. Extra space to work with is his best friend and he had one big scoring chance with the man advantage. The limitations are clear, he isn't strong enough to withstand heavy pressure. Knocked off pucks easily, losing battles for space, and struggled to ever leave the boards with the OZ set up. Lack of strength mixed with no high end speed is going to hinder him going forward. He's going to have to get used to not having the freedom he had with SKA-Neva, as well. There was no cherrypicking on display in this one, which was a breath of fresh air!

Starting off his time with Sochi with three straight games against below-average KHL sides (KRS, Ak Bars, and Nizhnekamsk) is nice for him to get his toes wet, but the following games against Dynamo Moskva and Torpedo will be real tests.

Dylan Griffling: December 13th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Sokol Krasnoyarsk - VHL

This was maybe the least promising viewing of Michkov I've had all year. He really struggled to create separation – his hands still are not great, he was clinging on for dear life most of this game and losing the puck too often. Even when he was holding onto possession, it wasn't pretty and there was a lack of end result. He was also just holding onto the puck for far, far too long. The inability to escape pressure was limiting his options, forcing himself to just try whatever he could to get out of danger to poor results. His best plays came when he was at a standstill, letting the pressure come to him and then passing out. He had some nice moves to get a little more space before shooting, but it wasn't enough of an opening to actually make something happen with leaving him with almost all of his shot attempts being blocked or having to somehow shoot through the tightest of gaps and missing the net entirely. Major cherrypicking going on in this one, as well, and, because his team was basically playing on the penalty kill with him hovering at the red line, he wasn't getting the puck very often. Not supporting his team on breakouts or through transitions unless he was the one starting them. Showed off some deception when evading forecheckers, mostly through his agility and slipperiness. This game didn't really look like a top-5 player at all.

Lassi Alanen: December 11th, 2022 - HC Ernak Angarsk vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

Michkov was very, very involved offensively in this one, ending up with over a goal of xG in just 13 minutes of 5v5 ice time, combined with a bunch of chances on the power play, too. There's a ton to like about his release, playmaking, ability to build plays and chances for himself with manipulation and give-and-gos. His off-puck timing is very impressive, too. Once he gained the body positioning on a defender and timed his move to the net-front perfectly and got a deflection opportunity. Other times, though, he did get outmuscled off pucks quite easily. The decision-making is not always there, either. Aside from a few OZ backchecks, Michkov's effort level defensively was basically non-existent, always being the first to flee the zone and the last to return. It did get him a breakaway opportunity (and a penalty shot attempt after he was slashed) and a goal off a 2v1, though.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - HC Ernak Angarsk vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

There will be more obstacles in Michkov's NHL path than Fantilli, Bedard, and Carlsson: the size, the lack of defensive ability, the forced plays, and the unusual playstyle. The decision-making is not really worrying at this stage because the hockey sense remains extremely high-end, seen in his passing ideas, manipulation, and off-puck timing. Michkov can build scoring chances by using teammates, by finding pockets of space, lanes (he constantly adjusts his footwork to them and clearly reads more than one pass away sometimes), and with some newfound physical abilities. Multiple times in this game, Michkov won retrievals, protected pucks, and moved them in controlled ways. Great for his NHL projection.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Omskie Krylya - VHL

Michkov has an NHL shot. The goal was an example: catch, release, top of the net in tight. The shooting skill falls apart when he's trying more solo-skill-focused stuff, like drag shots. Might be from the skating. Very inside driven, using a bunch of different skills to get the space, including a drag back into between the legs to cut through back pressure. The physical skills continue to look like a strength: he always wins body positioning before touching the puck, uses his limbs to keep or push defenders behind him, and times his escapes. High defensive involvement when he's not flying the zone, angling, pressuring early, and anticipating

(SKA-Neva's weak side forwards consistently stretch the ice). Some poor shooting decisions, but nothing too egregious, defenders would've jumped the lane. Still, I haven't seen any manipulative playmaking from him yet – a manipulator creates the passing lanes for a better chance. Some poor off-puck reads, alongside just as many great ones. Entered his teammate's space a few times. Transition game lacks some polish, but all the solutions exist in his game: delays, early passes, short-range passes to the inside. Looked like a potential top-six scorer in this game.

Dylan Griffing: December 8th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Omskie Krylya - VHL

This was one of the least inspiring games I've seen out of Michkov. Perhaps it was played into by the fact he was playing against two other 2023 eligibles and he wasn't exactly standing out compared to them, but this just felt like a game he'd have at the start of the season. The playmaking traits weren't present, very shot-heavy, not utilizing his teammates to enhance his scoring chances. He had one nice between-the-legs move to cut in from the wing and get a shot off, one of most creative plays I've seen out of him with his hands. Picked up a goal late on, piggybacking off of his teammates drive to the net that fell right to Michkov, and hit the post on an empty net in his next shift after a good forecheck. The offensive zone plays were just kind of forced from his end. Low-percentage passes and shots that lacked any deception, just not very dynamic or difficult to close down by the opposition. Lack of pace was also more worrying than usual in this one.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. HC Metallurg Novokuznetsk - VHL

Michkov's delay game was working in this one. Instead of forcing plays ahead, he reset, cutback, and found teammates moving through the middle. Generates significant power out of the heel-to-heel in these situations, which also generates some optimism for his skating. The off-puck game's a clear strength. He's always moving, dipping behind and across defenders. Wins body positioning every single time. Times his movements with the play around him. Stick's always free. Some of the reads are elite, making movements that don't just make him a passing option, but actively create different passing lane by engaging multiple defenders. After passing, he relocates immediately, even on broken plays. He has some puckhandling and protection difficulties at times, but all the skills are there. Learning to be consistently heavy on the puck and adding strength probably makes his physical game an advantage in the NHL. He's a bit selfish at times, but nothing unusual. The bad plays are consistently in the same two categories (overshooting, poor transition/handling decisions), and the latter has just as many high-end plays that act as obvious solutions. Takes some weird routes defensively that let the attacker into space, but he generally works hard, angles, wins positioning, and attacks the stick at the right moments. Lots of work before he's a truly effective defender, but he could get there through his physical skills and anticipation. The manipulation doesn't really appear as a passer, which might make him more second-line scorer than top-line scorer, or more of a secondary player on a top line.

Dylan Griffing: November 15th, 2022 - Russia U20 vs. Russia U18 - Cup of the Future

This game won't blow your socks off, but there were a lot of really promising signs that Michkov is adapting his game to really lean into the playmaking skill he has and become that dual threat talent that he can be. Delay game was pretty awesome, picked up a secondary assist on the only goal of the game by assessing the ice after an entry and choosing to drop the puck back into a teammate in space rather than go 1v1 with a defender. I still see issues with the hands, he isn't really that much of a problem solver on his rushes and it feels like he has his move planned from the moment he gets the puck and then skates until he gets in the spot to try to pull it off. Makes him very predictable on top of the fact that he doesn't hold the puck very safely and it drifts away from his stick commonly. Another game where he had an impact on the forecheck, which is still neat to see. I'm coming around on him, for sure. I still can't see him challenging Bedard/Fantilli, but there's definitely arguments for him to be in the #3 spot.

Dylan Griffing: November 10th, 2022 - SKA St. Petersburg vs. Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

First real KHL test of the season for Michkov, grabbing just under six minutes of ice time against a bottom feeder side. Not a ton of time to get much going, but the playmaking flashes were on display again. Creative passes to break the puck off the walls, whether that be through transition or in the offensive zone. Moved well away from the puck to escape the radar of the defense and slip into space. Two separate occasions he was able to elude the Amur defense in good areas to operate and distribute the puck from, neither play panned out in the end, but the potential is clearly there.

Cam Robinson: November 10th, 2022 - SKA St. Petersburg vs. Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

Back up in the KHL for the second consecutive game, Michkov saw nearly six minutes in this one. Tough for him to show off much in that amount of ice and playing down the lineup. But you can still see the mind for targeting areas, slipping checks, hands and vision. He handled the downward pressure from the defenders in his own zone to effectively get pucks off of the wall and move it in the right direction. He was fluid in the offensive zone - shifting and reading the movements of his mates, trying to work the puck around for a chance. Couple of shot attempts. None on net.

Cam Robinson: November 8th, 2022 - SKA St. Petersburg vs HC Admiral Vladivostok

Michkov was back up in the top Russian circuit and saw... two shifts. He and his mates had the puck for maybe five seconds over his two minutes of ice. He lost a footrace for a dumped puck and took a poor route giving the opposing defender a clean breakout opportunity. He carried the puck through the neutral zone for a backhand, cross-ice dump that failed to lead to possession. The end of his last shift resulted in a breakaway for Admiral. That was it.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Yermak Angarsk - VHL

Michkov has so many different ways to impact a game. He has all the tools goals in the NHL: the shooting, handling, inside play, physical skills, and off-puck instincts. In one sequence, he dangled through a defender on reception, cut inside, reached out to avoid the defender's stick, then reoriented his body instantly to fire for the goal. There were high, high skills passes. Tons of intelligent off-puck reads, anticipating plays well in advance. He made a defensive impact through anticipation and well-timed engagements. The skating's only average at this stage - he doesn't really cut back as more as he stops and turns on his inside edges. But he has the skills to overcome it. The physical skills are at least a 6, size doesn't matter. He wins inside positioning instantly, cuts across the opponent's hands, uses his bottom hand and legs to fight off sticks, out-muscles opponents from disadvantaged positions, and consistently outleverages them. And he always brings the puck inside. The puck pursuit looks weak, but he still gets steals because of how quickly he reads the play, and he's better in zone when he's not tasked with stretching the ice. In transition, he makes bad plays. I don't know how they're a projection concern. He shows the delay game, small-area playmaking, and vision to avoid those more solo or long-range plays when he's asked to do so. Looked like a potential top-line scorer.

Dylan Griffing: November 5th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Yermak Angarsk - VHL

Another really good outing from Michkov, starting to feel more confident in him to be pushing towards the tippy top of this class. The only negative thing that stood out here was that he wasn't really pushing hard enough to make things happen after holding onto the puck for extended periods of time. Seemed like there was always a lot of promise when he started the move, but he was opting to make overly-safe passes too often. Outside of that, he was taking control of this game. Still question the overall skill, but he is so creative to escape out of being closed down through his passing. Had a really sweet between-the-legs backhand pass to an open teammate in the slot. Two big scoring chances at 5v5, including a goal. I still see more of a playmaker moving forward, but a very good one at that.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Yermak Angarsk - VHL

Michkov continues to show high-end stuff, even if the consistency isn't quite there. Some of his play selection was odd or too eager, trying to cut inside against three defenders, etc.. But his vision and ability to execute on tough plays was also evident, highlighted by a beautiful one-touch between-the-legs pass to the slot - an extremely difficult play to pull off. His ability to anticipate plays in the OZ also stood out, taking smart routes to intercept passing lanes. Scored a beautiful 5v5 goal, cutting inside on a defender before releasing the puck without breaking a stride in the middle of a forest of sticks. The dual threat potential is obvious with his skill set. Sure, the transition stuff was far from perfect yet again, with some forced plays here and there. But the skill, creativity and shooting/playmaking prowess all rate highly.

David St-Louis: November 3rd, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Sokol Krasnoyarsk - VHL

Pretty awesome game from Michkov. He's a bit inefficient with the puck; he sometimes turns it over trying to attack packs of defenders, but overall it seems easy for him to play his style of game even at his level. There were numerous timed off-puck movements to get pucks and scoring chances. He made smart passing plays, used teammates to create space for himself (give-and-goes), and just added a dose of creativity to the team's offence on most of his shifts. He's very manipulative, adaptable and most of his plays seem to have a clear purpose (even if he's sometimes a bit too ambitious in his choice of plays). His defensive awareness could improve.

Dylan Griffing: November 3rd, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Sokol Krasnoyarsk - VHL

Michkov picked up a PP goal and scored twice in the shootout to secure the win for SKA-Neva in this one. I thought this was one of his best games of the year, or at least one of the cleanest. He did a really good job of getting high value shots off, cutting in from the wing with his go-to between the legs deke and a nice off-puck move to get around the defender and get to the net. He also had a nice give-and-go to start the rush for his team and then used his speed to burst through and follow up on the play, finishing it with a shot on goal. The ability he has to manipulate the pace of play and throw off the rhythm with his sudden bursts of speed is definitely a valuable part of his game. It is becoming a bit concerning that he isn't finishing anything at 5v5, with just one goal to show for the opportunities he's had this season. He was utilizing his teammates aplenty, but also skating with possession into dead ends to balance it out. He holds onto the puck for a very long time, which has been a theme this season, but in this game specifically, he was clearly using that time more wisely to scan and plot out what was going to happen more. Safe passing to allow himself the chance to use his off-puck movement was a pleasant site.

Cam Robinson: November 3rd, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Sokol Krasnoyarsk - VHL

One of the better viewings of Michkov this season. Sure, he grabbed the power-play tally by sliding back right off of the drawn, setting his feet and uncorking a one-timer while still moving away from the net. And sure, he scored twice in the shootout - the second with a one-handed highlight reel finish. But it was the way he was leveraging his hands and adapting to the plays on a regular basis that impressed me the most. He's showing a level of vision and dissection of defensive schemes that I hadn't seen before. He still tries too much, and will blindly throw a pass into nowheresville, but we'll take those outcomes over a risk-averse type. He's going to continue to adjust and mature and those should become less frequent, while creative attempts connect more often. If this is a player who can become nearly as effective with the pass as he is with the shot, then we've definitely got something cooking.

Dylan Griffing: October 26th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Rubin Tyumen - VHL

Scored the overtime winner, but another game where he struggled to really get involved. It's unexpected that his forechecking is what is standing out more than the rest of his game. While his shot is obviously insane, the way he slips under the radar to weasel in as the F1 to break up plays is impressive. In the DZ, he exited the zone so early so often, the most I've seen in this league. Not even trying to stick check, just floating around and giving up space. Another bad DZ passing turnover, but another game where his passing was clean. Passing out of danger was solid. The production has been historically great, but the overall performances are leaving much to be desired.

Lassi Alanen: October 26th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Rubin Tyumen - VHL

Michkov scored the game-winnig OT goal, displaying his trademark quick release, turning a pass reception into a shot in one swift motion. Not a hugely impactful showing otherwise, though. Struggled to get puck touches in the OZ, and a big reason for that was his transition play, which continues to be lacklustre. Doesn't scan enough before pass receptions, resulting in a lot of missed passes that should be rather easily avoidable. The lack of strength also plays into this, as he often wants to move the puck as quickly as possible, not trusting in his ability to hold on to the puck in the DZ or NZ against men. Did some of his best work by intercepting passes and pressuring on the forecheck, turning one of those situations into a chance for himself. One-touch playmaking in the OZ remains one his biggest strengths, even if we got just a couple of flashes of it here.

Dylan Griffing: October 24th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk - VHL

First game back from Russian hockey limbo and Michkov faced arguably the best team in the league. He picked up a goal and an assist, but overall, this was his least eventful game of the season. He barely even touched the puck at 5v5 through the first two periods. Off-the-puck reads were good, disrupting plays on the forechecking, and putting himself in the way of passing lanes. Individually created a few turnovers. Was making mostly basic plays with the puck, showed off good patience, but the decision making wasn't always there. Super effective through one-touch passing, though. Another pretty bad turnover in the DZ, tried too much to escape the forechecker and finished his move with a weak pass right onto an opposing stick that allowed Yugra to regain the zone control. There was at least a clear thought on this pass unlike some of the others in previous games, but it's another mistake that needs to be removed from his game if he wants the chance to make a KHL impact this year.

Lassi Alanen: October 24th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk - VHL

Despite scoring a power play tally and adding a pretty primary assist later on in the game (following an OZ interception, he received a cross-ice pass the near the point, turned a perfect reception into a another cross-ice saucer for a one-timer goal, keeping the lane open by threatening a potential shot with his stance), it was a rather uneventful outing for Michkov aside from few shifts later on in the game. Didn't get many puck touches at 5-on-5 and struggled to move the puck in transition with control. I don't mind the turnovers that much if at the same time he's creating a ton, but that just wasn't the case here. Games like these are pretty inevitable in the pro ranks, though, and he still managed two points.

David St-Louis: October 7th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. HK Tambov - VHL

Michkov's hockey sense grade remains an 8+ for me. I've stated many times in other reports that I don't care too much about decision-making. This is something that Michkov can calibrate as he matures. Some of his plays are too risky, too ambitious, and do him more harm than good. But the way he sees the ice, his awareness of teammates and defenders, his anticipation, his ability to manipulate not just one but multiple defenders, his capacity to see what the best play will be based on the movement and positioning of multiple variables...These things are all exceptional. I have to check my biases when I watch him because he plays the game exactly how I like it. His clever off-puck movements lead to him getting pucks in favourable spots, his great first touches allow him to instantly improve his offensive conditions, and his manipulation abilities to break open defences. He's the link between the plays of teammates. And a threat as a finisher. His skating looks better this season. The mechanics are relatively sound and he seems to have the speed necessary to escape VHL opponents. Although he still manipulates by downshifting, his overall pace is better. He crosses his feet to pick up momentum and attack pockets of space ahead of the play now. Michkov remains a smaller winger who will likely never have a powergame; there will be many obstacles in his path to a top-line NHL role, but his hockey sense should prevail.

Dylan Griffing: October 7th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. HK Tambov - VHL

This season is going to be a real test to see if Michkov can break out of his bad habits. The tendency to cherrypick at the blueline and take himself out of the game really limits his impact and his team's effectiveness through transitions. His passing looked very strong in this one, but he just doesn't seem to care to play as a team rather than hope a spring pass finds him for a breakaway. That said, there were plenty of shining moments for Michkov. When he's utilizing his teammates, things click and plays just happen. It's really a sight to watch. His connecting skills are great, scanning well, and looking off shots to find better chances through passing. He didn't really waste many chances by taking bad shots here (barring one shot from behind the net, trying to bank it off the goalie (he loves those shots)). Probably his least interesting game away from the puck, though. Pretty lazy, not anticipating plays, and mostly just letting things happen in front of him. He did throw a pretty big hit and had two pretty nice takeaways, though, so he was still making some things happen in that regard. Major habit that needs to break is overextending when covering the point. Watching him apply almost zero pressure on the pointman and then just leave the zone hoping that somehow his team now has the puck is agonizing.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. HK Tambov - VHL

This was a lot better showing from Michkov compared to the previous one. Especially after the first period, things started to lock in place and he was creating chances every other shift. Got on the scoresheet early on PP, scoring with an excellent catch-and-release wrister (high grip, very quick weight shift, perfect placement) after a cross-ice feed. No doubting the shooting skill he

has. In the OZ, he was connecting with his teammates a lot more often compared to the previous outing, playing with pace and moving the puck quickly and immediately moving towards the next play. At his best, Michkov's offensive pace is really high and he's combining handling, passing, and off-puck movement pretty seamlessly. A couple of quick DZ breakups turned into exits, entries and chances, once almost getting tripped, partly falling but at the same time baiting the defender to reach, then just recovering and moving the puck away from the defender's reach and getting a high-danger look. Sure, he once turned the puck over at a terrible spot, high in the OZ point, which led to a partial breakaway against. And the DZ play wasn't very inspiring, ie. reaching at the wrong time, showing little effort or fleeing the zone early. But this was a much better example of what he can do offensively.

Lassi Alanen: October 5th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Dizel Penza - VHL

Michkov with a pretty interesting outing here. Some good stuff, ie. initiating contact before puck reception to gain extra space to spin off the defender, few good off-puck routes. Michkov is not a player who needs to always be on top of the puck. He can spend quite a while outside of the defencemen's radar, just looking for an opportunity to make a move. This allowed him to make a couple of OZ steals, attacking the puck-carrier with a more unusual timing. Turnovers were an issue here. And it's not necessarily just the turnovers, but the lack of idea between the passing plays that resulted in them. Didn't scan enough before receiving the puck, threw some odd low-percentage passes towards the middle as of result and one turnover resulted in a goal against. Missed the best play a few times in the OZ playmaking-wise. You'd want to see more from a potential top-3 pick.

Dylan Griffing: October 5th, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Dizel Penza - VHL

Michkov followed up his strong outing against Khimik with a game with a lot more similarities to his first VHL match, not great. The failure to scan for danger is becoming a real issue and he was actually punished in this one with a goal against coming directly from him giving the puck straight to a Dizel player. Just really failed to read the entire ice, tunnelvisioned on one option rather than seeing if there were better options available. Struggled to get away from pressure, lacks the hands and pace to beat guys, so he was mostly just fighting to stay alive long enough to make a pass. One of the worst games I've seen of his, too many bad habits that he's stuck in.

Dylan Griffing: October 3rd, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Khimik Voskresensk - VHL

First real VHL test against a pretty good team and this is the kind of performance that really shows what Michkov can do. Played with much more control and it resulted in less mistakes. There still were misplays on his part, but nothing that wasn't due to him being so new to the league, so no faults there. Unlike his debut, he was looking to get involved in plays rather than be the one to do it all. The playmaking habits are really good, making fast scans and using one-touch passes to get the puck out of high pressure areas. He made so many good connecting plays and this is where his intelligence really shines. There's inconsistencies to his hockey sense in the offensive zone, but it is so high end when he's playing through transitions. He went from 11 shots on goal in his first game to just 4 in this one and that needs to be more consistent. He still picked up a goal while not wasting as many chances with low danger shots. Most of the shots he took were from valuable areas, as well.

The play off the puck was honestly good again. He was getting involved physically on the forecheck, getting into good positions, and he forced a couple of turnovers on top of it all. He's reading plays on the forecheck nicely to get up into puck carriers' faces, but still just not taking full advantage by not using his stick to actually disrupt the play.

Dylan Griffing: October 1st, 2022 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Ryazan-VDV - VHL

VHL debut for Michkov and his first full game back from his injury. Picked up two goals. I was a big fan of his connecting passes through transitions, pre-scanning on retrievals to make quick passes to streaking teammates and really push play forward quickly. However, when he was given more time to play around on breakouts, he wasn't up to the task, giving the puck away twice on plays where Ryazan could've done some major damage if they were at least an average VHL team. There was one rush that was going to be a 3-on-2, but he switched to the same side that was already occupied by a teammate for a drop pass, leaving the other side of the ice completely empty. The carrier dropped it off and missed the F2, so the puck fell right to Michkov and he was able to pass it to the slot for a good opportunity, but it was just such a misplay on his behalf because that

play is not working nine out of ten times. Still questioning his thought processes when he shoots, he gets tunnel visioned to shoot when there are certainly better options available. No denying his shot, though. He will fight through as much as he needs to to get a shot off. Finished with 11 shots on goal! The playmaking decisions still feel better than the shot decisions. He was getting himself into good positions to make plays on the defensive and forechecking sides of things, but he doesn't proactively try to act on those positions, so he just occupies the space and doesn't do anything with it.

Dylan Griffing: August 3rd, 2022 - Russia U25 vs. Avangard Omsk - Sochi Hockey Open

Michkov's entries and passing was what stood out here. Heck, he even made some nice defensive plays. First time I've seen him so proactive to break things up, even if it was just because he was dying to get a breakaway. I think that's going to hold him back moving forward, because it's clear that he won't attack the inside lane against KHL competition – he wasn't doing it last year, either – and he isn't getting the spring passes that shoot him into a 1-on-0 like he can get whenever he wants in junior. Doesn't look any bigger or stronger than last year, still getting kind of bullied behind the net. He looked to try to be more deceptive with his puckhandling, still holding it out quite far away from his body and barely clinging on to possession, but had some good misdirection plays. Shot quality was bad. This is a frustrating player.

Dylan Griffing: May 5th, 2022 - Russia U20 vs. Russia - Friendly Match

Michkov is not doing a great job of cementing himself as a top, top player in the 2023 draft. It's clear that, right now, he is pretty reliant on space being afforded to him. Put him on the power play? Stud. The 5v5 play just isn't there. He was a passenger for basically the entirety of this game, he had two really nice rushes late in the game, but up to that point, nothing to really keep note of. Positive notes, that is. He really struggled on his breakout passes, no scanning or pressure management, not deceptive enough to get around a defender 1-on-1, not attacking inside, and forcing plays. Rarely entered the defensive zone, not proactive or making reads on defense. At one point, the puck was literally in front of his own crease and he was waiting at the red line for a spring pass. He got it, at least.

Dylan Griffing: April 23rd, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL Playoffs

If, for whatever reason, MHL coaches are watching Michkov right now, I don't think they're liking what they see. The shot selection is just so off putting, he has a knack for killing attacks for his team by shooting from either behind the red line or firing it at a defender's shins. The physicality of Krasnaya Armiya's blueline made life very difficult for the small winger, getting closed down immediately behind the net and turning the puck over many, many times back there. Even against the smallest player on the opposing team, Vladimir Grudinin, Michkov didn't stand a chance. The usual off-puck game was apparent, waiting for his team to get the puck while he waited at center ice. His only real scoring chance came from him sliding back behind the play while one of his linemates stopped a rush and got the puck to him. The positives came in transition where, while he wasn't doing a lot of individual things, he linked up plays, showed some glimpses of deception and agility, and created a chance for his team with a give-and-go to Khusnutdinov for a clean entry and shot on goal. Overall, Michkov was a one-touch shooter and was shutdown almost everywhere else on the ice. I'm not impressed.

Dylan Griffing: April 15th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL Playoffs

Pretty quiet game despite picking up a goal and an assist. He was mostly just a connector, moved the puck pretty well outside of the zone, passed against the grain and was pretty dynamic. His assist was pretty smart, moved away from the offensive blue line and hit Nikita Chibrikov with a backwards pass that let him burst into the zone and score. He had a nice give-and-go, as well, showed off his hands and explosiveness to get a shot on goal. His game did start to get sloppier as it went on, not scanning and not deceptive enough to win his 1-on-1s. He was more present in the defensive zone than usual, making reactionary plays while remaining not very proactive. Still cheated for offense quite a bit, but he stayed further back and used his off-puck movement to get a head of steam before receiving a pass, rather than just waiting at the offensive blue line at a standstill.

Dylan Griffing: March 8th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Two goal game for Michkov, a lucky chance after a terrible pass from Loko's goalie and a rush right after stepping on for his shift, getting behind the defense right away. However, this was far from his best game. Really strong on his edges and made smart, quick decisions to bounce off the walls. Skating is a 5.5 right now, nothing else compares to his edgework. Attacked the inside more than usual. Shot selection still really poor and he is still creating most of his offense from behind the net.

Dylan Griffing: February 15th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

Perhaps it's just case of being given too much freedom, but Matvei Michkov cherrypicks harder than any other prospect I've ever seen. To his credit, he blocked a few shots and even tried to throw a hit, but he dipped as soon as there was even a chance a player on his team as going to gain possession. Shot is still elite, shot selection is still the opposite. He adapts well when shooting, curl-and-drag wrister is super strong, can shoot while skating with speed, and is pretty deceptive. For a player cheating for offense as much as he is, the quality of his shots is so underwhelming. He was even given a 2-on-1 inside the offensive zone after a Dynamo player fell down and gave Michkov the puck just above the red line, so Michkov took a shot from basically behind the red line instead of trying to be creative or utilize the extra man he had. This game was also very physical which absolutely exploited one of the main weaknesses in his game. Immediately getting knocked away from he puck behind the net and getting rubbed out against the boards. He showed off more creativity in motion than he's shown this year, making some nifty moves with his hands and using the mohawk and widening his stance to make quick turns and treat the other team like they were pylons. Overall, I came away more impressed with his, 2024 eligible, teammate, Ivan Demidov.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2021 - Russia vs. Sweden - WJC-20

Michkov is highly manipulative. We saw that on his goal. He attacked down, but got pressured by a defender, so to gain the note, he pulled the puck back, forced the defender to lunge for it, and then used that lunge to get a step on the defender. Smart. I liked his work on the boards in this one, too. He established body positioning, hit, and kept his feet moving to beat pressure. He uses the back layers of the attack, understandings spacing and timing...A lot to like in his game.

Mitchell Brown: December 26th, 2021 - Russia vs. Sweden - WJC-20

Michkov scored twice in this game. One was a fluky finish off one of the best executed between-the-legs moves I've ever seen. He reached back to encourage the chasing defender to reach, then accelerated and cut inside towards the net. Might not have been able to gain the middle with a normal move – reaching back like that caused the defender to alter his route. The second was a double-deflection from behind the goal-line – one of four shots he took from zero-chance land in this game. In total, he took 11 shots but really only had three or four scoring chances. I understood one or two of the low-percentage shots, but he really leaned on it instead of using his playmaking. That was all the more confusing because he actually set-up a number of quality looks for his teammates around the slot when looking for them. Didn't see any high-level playmaking details, but he moves the puck at the right times, has some deceptive qualities, and understands how to use passing to further the offence before a shot. Looks like a star, but many questions around his game linger.

Dylan Griffing: November 29th, 2021 - SKA St. Petersburg vs. Severstal Cherepovets - KHL

Pretty solid game from Michkov despite not getting a single shift in the first period. Took charge of some rushes, used his skill more than I've seen from him at this level, and showed strong problem solving tendencies. Had a nice play where he drew three opposing players towards him and passed it off to his teammate to get in close. Shot from stupid angles, of course, but the shot is still so nice looking.

Dylan Griffing: November 13th, 2021 - Russia vs. Sweden - EHT

Michkov scored, maybe, the cleanest Michigan goal ever in this one. Almost scored in the first period, as well, but he was robbed after he spotted the crease was left open and picked his spot. He does this really effectively, utilizing give-and-go's to attack the crease that way, rather than driving to the net-front himself. Played at a low pace throughout, again, I think he ends up more of a playmaker than a shooter as he continues to develop. Attacked the center of the ice from the wings and showed solid problem-solving ability and deception. Two of his five shots came from behind the red line, which is a common theme in

his game. Two of the others were just not from dangerous areas at all. He can slowly skate up and snipe in wristers all day in the MHL, but it clearly isn't working so well against tougher competition. Puck protection is a little worrying at times, bringing the puck too far back on his passes and inviting a stick to knock away possession before he can get the pass off. I think Michkov is an elite talent, but it feels like he'll be fighting to not drop the #3 rather than make a push for #1 in this class.

Dylan Griffling: September 14th, 2021 - SKA St. Petersburg vs. Spartak Moskva - KHL

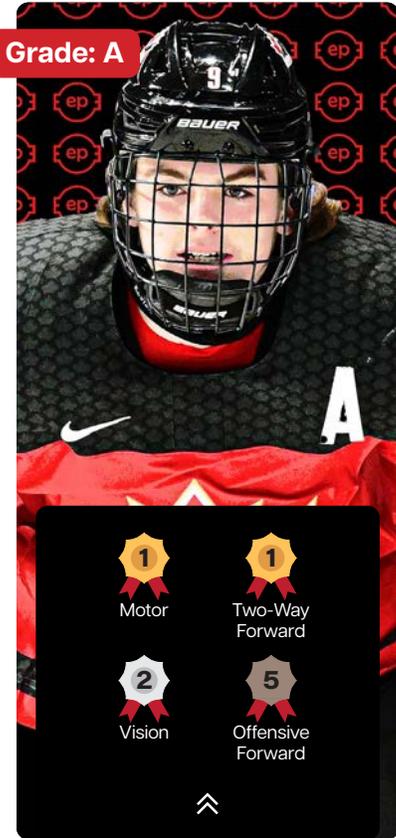
I think weak shot selection is going to be brought up all the time with this player, and for good reason. He basically only shoots from the red line. One play in particular, he got a pass that led to a solo rush, 1-on-1 in the offensive zone, mano a mano; what does he do? Sticks to the boards, ignores the inside lane entirely, and shoots from the corner. That's not what a truly elite talent does. Yes, he's still getting used to the league and there is always the physicality difference – there's just no reason to take a completely low-risk shot there when there's an opportunity to get a really useful chance. On a positive note, he showed flashes of tight area skill and problem solving abilities. Glimpses of a player who could make an impact in the KHL, he just isn't ready for the league yet.

Dylan Griffling: September 2nd, 2021 - SKA St. Petersburg vs. Severstal Cherepovets - KHL

This was Michkov's first game of the season and KHL debut and he did not look very out of place. He's not a show stealer yet, but the promise is there. He's unlikely to ever really shine in the defensive zone, mostly just hanging out above the circles waiting for his teammates to make the play and get him the puck; however, he did combine with his teammate to create a turnover and start a breakout that slowed down after Michkov flubbed the pass. He had a 1-on-0 for his only real scoring chance in this one, just couldn't finish it off. I think he ends up being more of a playmaker as time goes on. His shot selection isn't great and a lot of his offense comes from behind the red line, but his passing from behind the net is going to translate a lot better than trying to score from back there. He picked up a secondary assist on a breakout pass that was probably more luck than skill, but if it was actually what he planned, then it was quite the play. Pretty deceptive and creative, picks his spots well, explosive skating.

David St-Louis: 6th August, 2021 - Russia vs Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Michkov has been creating more solo chances than anything else at this tournament. He eludes defenders on the boards, showing puck protection skills in the process, attacks inside, and rushes away on breakouts to beat the opposition off the mark. The shooting skills are interesting. He scored with an in-stride release in this game and had multiple other chances.



5 Zach Benson

AGE 17.345 DATE OF BIRTH May 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Brayden Point



Hockey IQ



Vision



Tactician

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	159 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	8
Skating	Shooting	Passing
6	8	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Winnipeg Ice	WHL	60	36	62	98	1.63

SCOUTING REPORT

Much has been made of the Big Four in this year's draft, but Zach Benson's play this season was such that we couldn't help but wonder if there wasn't more of a Big Five at the top of this class.

Certainly, his quality was more closely aligned with the players in front of him on our board than anyone from the No. 6 spot onward. He's that damn good. And he's been that damn good for a while now.

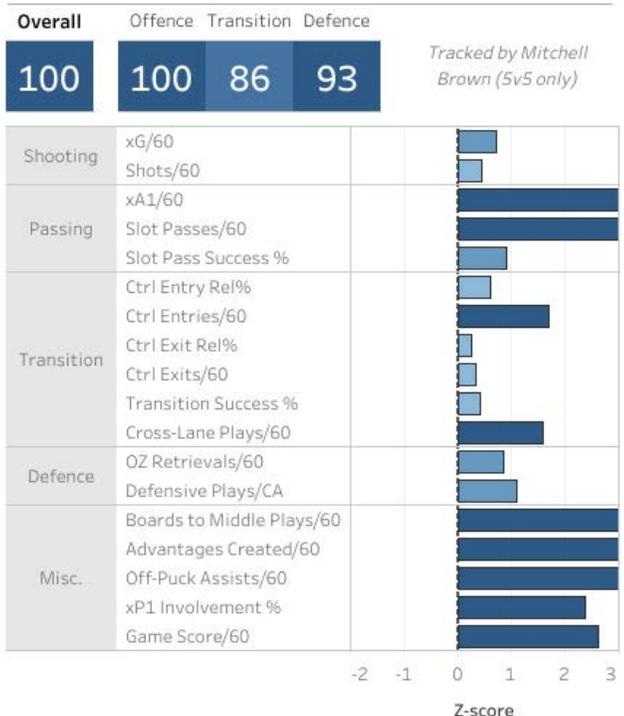
"Many nights last season, it seemed like 16-year-old Zach Benson was the Winnipeg ICE's play-driver, on a team that eventually had three first-round NHL picks," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown said. "He orchestrated the game with high-pace manipulation, quick passing lanes, and a knack for being in the right place at the right time."

It's Benson's feel for the game and his ability to bend the opposition to his will that sets him apart from most players in this draft. With the puck, he's a cunning manipulator, selling false intentions with his subtle movements and his eyes to clear defenders from pockets of space, drawing them into his orbit before connecting with his linemate in that newly vacated ice.

Away from the puck, the 5-foot-10 forward is constantly scanning the

Zach Benson

F | Winnipeg ICE | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 152.6



ice, registering passing options well in advance of collecting possession, ready to strike with one- and two-touch passes to set the table for his linemates to feast.

This skill is visualized in Brown’s manually tracked data set. Benson’s expected primary assists and slot pass success percentage check in at the 100th percentile, in a sample that includes 700 forwards from this season. In a multi-year data set of over 3000 forwards, his underlying playmaking data is second to only Connor McDavid. You might have heard of him.

And while we’re not sure that it would be fitting to characterize Benson as a dual-threat scorer, every bit as potent a finisher as a distributor, his handling and physical skills allow him to create more than his fair share of pucks into the opposition goal himself.

Simply put: Benson doesn’t play small. He’s interior-driven as a puck carrier, protective on the first touch, and capable of establishing inside positioning along the walls for retrievals. The contemporary NHL is more about leverage than it is about size, and he’s going to be just the latest example of that dynamic.

The same is true of his work in the defensive zone. The ICE forward is a proactive, intelligent defensive contributor, always occupying the right passing lane, and equipped with a great defensive stick that allows him to steal possession from his opponents.

You’re probably tired of hearing this by now, but Benson, like the four players we’ve already profiled, is a No. 1 overall talent by the standards of most drafts.

And yet, it won’t surprise us in the slightest to see him fall from the top-10 entirely in this year’s draft. Benson’s an average skater at best, with an elevated stance and a stride that breaks down quickly. Teams often stray from 5-foot-10 players with that sort of deficiency. Especially when they’re only 159 pounds.

That would be a mistake, in our estimation. Benson has the potential to be an elite, playmaking first-line winger who can contribute in every phase of the game. You win with players like this.

🔗 LINKS & MEDIA



Zach Benson has his sights set on a top 10 selection in 2023 NHL Draft



WHL Stock Watch: Nate Danielson becoming an offensive force in Brandon



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup

🗨️ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Small, and I think we’ve gotten around looking that as too much of an issue, but it is an issue. I really like how he works, how he plays when tested. But will he be able to do it against pros?” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s pretty small, pretty light, not the best skater. I think he could slide. That would be a mistake though. He’s a complete player who’s shown he can make a difference in all areas of the game. An elite competitor with elite hockey sense.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“There might not be a smarter or harder working kid in the draft. He’s been arguably the best player on a team full

of NHL first-rounders since he was 16-years-old. I don't think the comparisons to Brayden Point are inappropriate." – NHL scout, April 2023

"Ever since I was little, I loved to play off the rush. Create off the rush. And play with lots of speed" – Zach Benson, October 2022

"I take lots of pride in my defensive side of the game. I think it's extremely important, and it's a huge tool for the next level." – Zach Benson, October 2022

"I've worked on my skating a ton. Ever since I was little, I was in power skating camps. Still to this day, this summer, I worked with Barb Aidelbaum and just wanted to get a quicker first step and lengthen my stride a bit. Whenever you can work on it, it's the most important thing in today's game. Absolutely, you can never be too good at it. Every summer I try and improve every facet of my game." – Zach Benson, October 2022

"(Connor) McDavid is McDavid, Brayden Point is extremely smart and plays a strong two-way game. Another guy is Patrick Kane. I have similar traits to him. He's an elite player if you watch the little things he does. That's what sets him apart from everyone else. I think I have similar traits to him. He's an elite player. I'd love to be him one day. You just take little things from his game, and I try to make it work in my game." – Zach Benson, October 2022

"I think my hockey IQ is pretty good. And I think that's what sets me apart from everybody in this class. Just thinking the game sets me apart. The game is played at a fast pace. I can think of things beforehand to find the right spot. I watch two or three NHL games a night. I think you can learn so much from watching them." – Zach Benson, October 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: May 17th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

There's no denying there was some drop-off in Benson's effectiveness in this tight game, but he still showed the full skill set. His warts only really appear when he has to carry the puck for longer stretches – opponents make up ground on him and he can't manipulate opponents as effectively with a lengthy possession. Otherwise, he did everything else. He used rapid-fire manipulation to passes through opponents, scanned before every touch and instantly found the best play from those positions, and attacked the inside. His pass selection off the rush remains strong. He always tries the first open, but if it's not open, he delays and waits for the second or third. Strong defensive game as usual. I think he's clearly the third-best prospect from North America. No one else combines this level of skill, pace, intelligence, inside play, playmaking, and defence.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

A really strong game from Benson and he got rewarded with luckier points, an empty-netter assist and a goal gifted from a weird bounce. His other assist was quite nice. He attacked down the wing, dangled Molendyk, cut back and started a tic-tac-toe play. Benson continues to show an incredible awareness of the ice at all times. He manipulates defenders, moves them out of pockets of space, invites teammates in, and then makes deceptive backhand feed to them. He can absorb shoves and spins off of them, elude pressure on the walls with skating moves, not quick ones, but timed well enough to create separation, and he plays at an unreal pace all the time. The defensive engagement, motor, abilities to absorb hits, elusiveness, combativeness, inside-driven nature, and handling, passing, and shooting skills are all very NHL projectable, but it's the hockey sense, the elite game-reading ability at higher speed, that makes him a top-five prospect in this draft for me. He's a player you root for, too, with his hard play style at his size.

David St-Louis: April 19th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

It's legitimate to have some concerns about Benson's game. When a player's main quality is his motor, even if all of his skills are NHL projectables, there is a chance that his play takes a step back when his competition becomes just as energetic, pacey, and intense as he is. Benson's skating and stature only allow him to create small advantages at this level. Most of his plays are made under

intense pressure, especially in these playoffs, as opponents can get on him and stick to him relatively well. Yet, he still manages to connect some ridiculous passes, backhands from a zone away, slip feeds through two defenders, and one-handed dangles around sticks. He's not just smart, but an elite reader of the game. And his playmaking looks second to none in this draft class. This wasn't his most eventful performance or his best one (he lacked support), but he still managed to give his team the win with a precise pass on the powerplay to the inside of the box. Tic-tac-toe and in. He's going to stay at 5 on our board. There is a good chance that another player behind him surpasses him in terms of offensive production and star potential, but you can't get it wrong if you draft Benson at 5. He's almost everything a team wants: an elite worker and thinker of the game.

Cam Robison: April 14th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL Playoffs

In his return to action after missing five weeks, Benson was back but you could see he was trying to adjust to the playoff tempo early on. He was a bit rusty with his hands, but the motor and more importantly, the mind were there in spades. He grabbed a goal after making several intelligent decisions in the offensive end. The draw was won directly back to him, he drew two defenders and sent a between the legs pass to the point. The play moves around and he sets himself up to receive a high to low pass and he curls and drives right down the middle of the ice, once again drawing two defenders. He sold shot, slipped it over to the right flank and continued to the netfront to time the return pass where he tipped it home. A lot to like and showed off his inside-drive crossover where he was really pulling the under skate through and generating quickness and control.

In the middle of the second frame, he took a great route on Mateychuk and forced him into a tight spot that led to a turnover, from there, Benson got into a serious puck battle in the offensive corner where he came out with it, faked up the wall curled back low and went for the wrap attempt. Lots of strength, edge work, puck protection and then the quick attempt. It wasn't his most glamorous outing but a nice showing after being shelved for awhile.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Regina Pats - WHL

An incredible game from Benson, showing more dynamic individual skill than usual without losing the translatability. He was a machine along the wall. Instantly attacked the middle when possible. When not, he faked going down the boards before cutting the inside. Manipulates opponents at a frightening speed. Grabbed an assist by freezing two defenders, cutting inside, and passing off the backhand across the slot. Deked through opponents multiple times, once by getting their feet moving in the wrong direction. The usual stick work and defence appeared. A disciplined backtracker, he applies immense pressure but never overextends. If he doesn't get the steal, he forces a poor play. His second assist was a crafty retrieval play, where he sticklifted the opponent on one side then grabbed the puck on the other. Some of the passes didn't work, but he was showing an incredible skill set: hook, slip, backhand, spinning plays. The foot speed isn't top-end, and his stride still breaks down quick, but he generated power off his inside edges as he attacked the inside. One shift sequence where he couldn't convince the defender with a narrow weight shift highlighted than skating concerns linger, but at this stage, it won't matter much. He's a top-line forward. The smartest player in the last few drafts after Bedard.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Late in the game, Benson intercepted a cross-slot pass, attacked the middle, worked the give-and-go, and then deflected the return pass back on net. That's his game. He understands the nuances of defence, transition, and offence – and how to link them together. He's really a masterful passer, dissecting multiple defenders at once. Some of his best sequences: perfect hip pocket reception into a cut, delay, and cross-slot pass and a slot cut into a look-off backhand pass through two defenders for the teammate rushing the net. He manipulates at both high and low speeds. He changes pace. He attacks the middle. He has perfect touch on many of his passes. He reads feet and takes lanes that are given to him. He applies the perfect amount of skill to every read. Sometimes, his passes were a bit soft. And there's no doubt the skating will have to improve. But the more I watch, the more I see a top-line scorer with big-time defensive impact.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Benson is incredible. He controls the game. On the breakout, he delays, draws pressure, and passed to open teammates, but he can also make the best play at pace if needed. He shows an advanced understanding of space creation. When he goes to cutback

away from pressure, he leans into their space first, creating more space on the escape. He fakes one thing, waits for the opponent's reaction, then passes on their heels. He instantly recognizes subtle cues from defencemen, then punishes them for it – as he did for his goal, where he faked, cut inside, then flung a no-look wrister into the far corner. The defensive stick was working all game long. One of his numerous steals directly led to a goal. The skating's still weak, but he has some edges and skills (heel to heel, jabs, punch turns). It's probably an average projection if strength's the upright for his variable depth. A hockey genius, really. He's the clear No. 2 from the WHL.

Daniel Gee: February 11th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Benson is a pace monster out there, pushing details non-stop throughout his minutes. This wasn't the best Benson game I have seen, but he sure played his brand of hockey throughout. Constantly leveraging space in the sustained pressure, Benson started the game with an incredible sequence. He read his teammate was going to force an end-board ring so he darted from the slot and corralled the puck behind the net. After cycling high, Benson opened his hips, cut laterally across the back of an aggressive forechecker and sent a pass into traffic in the crease -- a step ahead the entire shift. His forechecking is heads and shoulders better than most of his peers in this class. He applies instant pressure because of his processing of the developing play and clamps down hard on opponents sticks to disrupt breakouts. In the third, he was drilled on the end boards but still fished away two pucks from Oil King defenders. When they finally broke free, Benson darted to the right-hand circle, got up and under the stick of the breakout man, stole the puck and feathered a backhand pass to McClennon -- the effort is just ridiculous. So elusive on the boards, he's scanning and manipulating with his feet on OZ retrievals -- it makes him almost impossible to contain when there is an element of space. This manipulation base shows throughout his game. In the third, Benson carried a puck east-to-west, opened his hips and juked his body right to fake a pass; defenders froze, he attacked downhill and may have tipped the post on his shot.

His off-puck support was valuable in this one. In the first he shifted backdoor, into an open seam and one-touched a shot at the net -- massive padel save. In transition he constantly drove the middle to push back defenders -- in one sequence it gave Savoie a ridiculous amount of room to shoot, resulting in a goal. Late in the game he supported a far-board carry, about 6-7 feet away, the carrier went behind the net and Benson timed his activation into the centre pass lane and scored an easy goal. He can be inefficient -- sometimes shooting through too much pressure or overthinking puck touches. For example, instead of getting a shot off quickly with a catch-and-release, he took a step to the inside and tried to shoot through four defenders. I think he'll weed these out of his game though. I love how he is just trying to constantly out think opponents to create advantages -- it's why he's special. The forward stride remains the biggest issue -- the recoveries are just so wide and he degrades heavily across his shifts. Even weight-transfer puck caring sequences just are awkward because he barely shifts weight. Benson's at his best when he is really cutting hard on his edges and builds up proactive speed in the neutral zone.

Cam Robinson: February 11th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

There isn't a play that Zach Benson won't attack. His speed isn't elite, but he gets to pucks so quickly because of his reads on the play. He attacks on the forecheck with that same pace and instincts while also using smart angles and routes. With the puck, he's constantly darting to the inside, using both sets of edges to either open up and facilitate and face-first view, or cutback quickly and provide a new-found cushion on the defending players. He was forcing defenders onto their heels with his constant attacking pace but wouldn't settle for an outside lane rush attempt but instead using that advantage to gain advantages for his mates to streak into holes and hit them with passes. His off-puck activation is incredibly well timed and was again in this one. He knows how, when, and where to situate himself to time pass receptions. He was also able to one-touch those passes back across, chip to himself and jump around, or corral and fire in one motion.

He grabbed a goal in this one by using the entire ice sheet. He got back on the play and recovered the puck behind his own goal line, twisted a couple of times to shake pressure, made the outlet and then attacked the middle lane to join the rush. He saw that the play was going to go low, so he slow, supported it, and then timed his landing in the homeplate area perfectly with the low to high pass. Bang, back of the net. Smart, efficient, two-way. All of it. Sure, he attacked too readily a few times and lost possessions. He overhanded it a bit coming out of his own end. But these are nitpicking. This is kid is a pro.

J.D. Burke: February 9th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

I think I'm pretty much over the concerns about Benson's deficiencies as a skater at this point. It's not even that his stride has really come along much this season; it's just that he so clearly understands how to work within and around those limitations that I'm increasingly convinced they won't be an obstacle. Angled attacks, give-and-goes, the occasional use of the mohawk along the perimeter – Benson gets around just fine. He plays the game at an exceptionally high pace. Some really sharp plays in this game too, the best of them being a 1-on-1 rush chance during which Benson tied up the defenceman's stick, played the puck into space, and then kind of shimmied around him for a partial breakaway chance. Benson consistently connected on difficult passing plays through layers, particularly on the power play. I don't know if Benson is in the same tier as Connor Bedard, Adam Fantilli, etc. but he's pretty clearly at No. 5 as far as I'm concerned.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blade vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

I'm pretty much convinced that Benson is a top-five prospect in this draft at this stage. He doesn't have the highs of some of the other prospects ranked around him, but his highs are almost as high and way more frequent and way more diverse and way more projectable. He does everything: plays at pace, protects the puck in flight, attack the cage, run perfect off-puck routes, times himself in pockets of space, spins on defenders to get open, uses crossovers patterns off the rush to break in the offensive zone, attacks defenders at an angle to dangle through their feet, make short give-and-goes, make long give-and-goes, commands teammates by communicating with them or by pointing to the next play with his stick, rotates back defensively ahead of time... And I could go on and on and on. Skating still looks like an average projection, but he's extremely dynamic because he tries his damn hardest every shift and moves the puck quickly and uses his edges. The rest of the skills look potentially above-average. Really exciting, complete prospect.

Daniel Gee: February 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Benson went all out in this one. Transitionally some of the things he does are so impressive. Whether it's an entry where he chips the puck through a triangle to get an inside lane, or a cut into the middle of the neutral zone to pull players off the wings, just to chip to a man with more speed, he's always creating advantages. Benson was doing things like waiting for a defender to stop moving their feet, just to attack their off-side knowing he could then work past them. Off-puck he was crashing all game, looking for backdoor passes. Finally in the second, Prososky connected, leading to an easy goal. Just after that play, he filled the left-wing, with all the Blades defenders deep, he took a pass, cut laterally across the slot, shot, and his rebound was potted. Probably the best example of his individual skill that I have seen happened in the third. On a neutral zone race for a puck, Benson tactically stepped into the lane of the pursuer, winning the race. He wheeled hard, working his crossovers to gain speed, beat a defender with an inside-outside move, split two other D, corralled the puck from his skate-to-stick in motion, and deked out the goalie on the backhand for his second. Unreal play.

Anticipation aided his in-zone offence. In the first he intercepted a clear, pushed off laterally to escape a check, dropped his shoulder on a high-to-low carry, cutback on the right-hand circle to escape pressure, and threw a hope-pass into the crease. Great protection and elusiveness for his size. Initiated proactive contact to beat out Molendyk on a retrieval race -- so disadvantaged against him skating wide he had to fake an inside push, get Molendyk pivoted the wrong way, only to handle across his back and drive hard into his shoulder to get body position on the end boards. Genius stuff. Benson wants to impact the game on the backcheck but players often are able to pull away -- if he gets into the vicinity of the puck, he's an amazing disruptor. In the second he got his stick in the release of Sidorov shot, nullifying the chance. One of the best viewings of a draft-eligible I have had.

Daniel Gee: January 28th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Another strong game for Benson who continued to show a mountain of positive details. Impactful in transition he problem solves pressure at such a high pace. In the first, with two forecheckers converging in the NZ, Benson opened his hips, hopped between the players, passed the puck off to the wing and drove the middle. He constantly works to push defenders back when he is off-puck in transition and it creates so much space for his teammates. He was a menace on the penalty kill all game. In the first he pickpocketed a forward on the right-hand circle, rushing up the ice and killing 20-30 seconds with a pin. Later after Savoie beat out a hold, Benson filed off-puck took the crease pass, deked the goaltender, but slid the puck wide. He was trying to layer pucks more in this viewing than I have seen -- some of the decisions were perplexing at best and it frankly made him inefficient in this one. On a downhill attack off the left-wing, he found a pocket of space to cut into, handled into the slot, and instead of taking the

high-danger shot, he threw the puck backdoor to a mess of players. He looks for chaos constantly. Whether he is saucerizing a puck into the crease, or throwing a hope-pass to a teammate, it was a constant pattern -- not ideal when there are better plays. In one sequence he read a board ring, jumped on a puck and reversed it behind his back to teammate in the slot. Beyond that a lot of crease passes that were just knocked away. Benson lost a lot of physical battles in this one -- looks the part of a sub 170 pound forward. He tries to work proactive contact but he's just so light and easy to fend off -- he's adapted to really be an annoying forechecker with his stick work and small-area game but at times it's just not enough. I liked some of his work in the OZ. Benson wheeled the zone constantly trying to work passing lanes to the middle open, Punch turned on the boards to escape pressure, give-and-go attempts, and off-puck plants in the slot. Stride will be a disadvantage in pro -- lunges/waddles side-to-side when late in shifts, recoveries remain far too wide leading to short subsequent push offs. It's the biggest caveat to his game as I believe a lot of the inefficient touches work their way out when players like Benson possess such a high level of sense on the ice.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

A similar game to yesterday's, albeit not quite as exciting. He set up a chance with a backhand pass through two players from behind the net, the area where his playmaking shines brightest. Cut in off the boards, then grabbed a chance. His board skills continue to be impressive. He's outmatched sometimes, but he wins body positioning, throws reverse hits, and cuts back at the perfect moments. The defence was stellar. He gets ahead of the play, turns, then gets his stick inside and skates through the opponent's space. Not necessarily dynamic in this game. He wasn't creating lanes or even opening them. His tools limit him at times, unable to cut inside under pressure or draw the defender's poke/pivot with handling and edge work. He was also throwing pucks away and not creating much off the rush. As such, the questions about his dynamic upside are returning, but he's so intelligent and creative that he will find ways. Physical development will help a lot, and he still has a lot of runway.

Mitchell Brown: January 27th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Another monster game from Benson. He grabbed nine steals in this game. He intercepted passes, anticipated the next play down low and jumped into the lane, ripped pucks away from opponents, and timed his lifts/checks perfectly. He did all the usual stuff. He started give-and-gos, sprinted his lanes to the net, and instantly turned receptions into chances, highlighted by a one-touch backhand feed for a point-blank look. His off-puck movement is precise and intelligent. He gets to the front of the net, engages the defender, then slips away to the far post. He also stays just outside the slot for long enough to slip off defenders' radar before dashing inside. It led to several chances in this game. Every pass, especially in transition, created time and space for its recipient. He steps inside, draws pressure, and passes wide and vice-versa. The puck skills and skating were a bit limiting in this game. He couldn't open closed lanes from his lane and he wasn't manipulating opponents. The hands failed a couple times, especially early in the game. Nothing major. He's an incredible defender and creator. The second-best player from the WHL, no doubt in my mind.

Cam Robinson: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Team Red - CHL TPG

Benson stood out among a sea of elite players. Working on the top line and the top power-play unit alongside Bedard, he was the more dynamic of the two for the majority of the game. His acceleration was consistently on display as he blended those first few strides with darting cuts to the middle and well-timed cutbacks to relieve pressure and open up more space to work with. On the forecheck, he continued to put defenders on their heels and force them to make quick plays. He was steamrolled on two occasions where he simply failed to escape but popped up both times and continued to fight for possession or get back to disrupt the returning action.

He was rewarded with a late tally while the net was empty. He once again was hard on the forecheck and forced a poor pass along the back wall that was intercepted, he popped out to the slot, opened his hips and got set. He one-timed the pass for a quick fire goal. Benson was arguably the top player from Team Red in this one and displayed his smarts in all three zones. The skating doesn't bother me at all - even though it's not blistering, simply because he uses the sheet so well and is so clearly wise with his movements and attack routes.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Benson got demolished a couple of times. He suffered great hits, but was always right back on his feet. He made the early passes

to teammates, stating odd-man attacks, supported defencemen low in the zone, and orchestrated scoring chances in the offensive zone. It was a typical Benson game, where he showed all of his skills and smarts. He had a great chemistry with Bedard. The pair should have scored a lot of goals. Benson can overpass sometimes, but it's normal when you're playing with two great shooters.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Come on. This is just getting ridiculous. Benson set-up four high-danger looks at 5-on-5, capped with a pair of late-game should've-been-tap-ins. The best was a cutback followed by a laser beam through the defender's feet along the boards all the way to the far post. He immediately found teammates working into the slot, delayed when necessary, turned steals into offence, and created space by skating his routes and drawing defensive attention. He racked up seven steals in this game, too. Angles, times his poke checks at the perfect moments, overwhelms with pressure, and anticipates plays. The skating's still a problem; it's visible in his rushes (he's easily kept wide and overwhelmed) and along the boards where his lack of depth prevents from his exploding out of his turns. But he will find a way. He's just too smart and proactive. He shows all the skills necessary to play without having skating as an advantage: the off-puck reads, anticipation, body positioning, delay game, and playmaking. He could be the third-best prospect from North America.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Spokane Chiefs- WHL

What a game. Benson showed his playmaking in this one. He delayed the play to let lanes opens, moved sticks out of the way to reach teammates, veiled his play on the powerplay, moved to shift the defensive box around and open space for teammates... Change of pace, lanes... Everything was there. He lacks high-end dynamic qualities (the skating remains an average projection at best), but if he can control the game, command it like in this outing, there won't be any problem for him. The off-puck reads are as good as ever, but it's really his hard skills that took the forefront in this game. He won every battle by establishing body positioning on the walls, protected the puck on first touch, and escaped pressure by keeping his feet moving. He rushed the net, found an inside positioning, and battled to keep it. He scored multiple times. Honestly, in this game, he looked like a top-6 pick. Oh yeah, and he's engaged defensively, too.

Mitchell Brown: November 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Benson was a bit quiet in the early going, but turned it on late to help Winnipeg pull away. All the usual stuff from Benson. He scored by getting winning positioning on a defender, freeing his stick, and deflecting a shot past the goaltender. Several other intelligent off-puck plays – running into opponents' space, taking sticks to clear lanes, and general net-front nuisance – created space and lanes. Playmaking-wise, he delayed and found the player moving towards the net. He doesn't necessarily cutback and reset; instead, he stops up, manipulates the incoming defender with his handling skill, then slips a puck through them. Still on the fence whether Benson will be able to do that in the NHL with his current level of skating. He can't convincingly shift his weight or use his edges to really sell another play. The stride looks better than I previously thought, although it still lacks polish. The edges were always the issue anyway. He's smart enough to play with skating as a weakness, but I'm unsure about the heights he'll reach.

Daniel Gee: November 12th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Benson was a beast in this one. Probably the activity-level I have seen out of a WHLer this season and a far better viewing than my last. Pressure was the name of his game in this one. On an opening sequence he pressured and stick-lifted a puck carrier, slipping a pass to a breakout man. Little plays like that made him an untenable threat. In the first on a penalty kill, Benson pressured on a backcheck -- he read that the left-wing was covered so he shifted, planted his stick and blocked a pass to the right-wing. As the puck bounced to another Wheat King, he pressured that man, poked the puck free and counter-attacked off puck. He took a slip pass from Benson, attacked the back of a defender and scored on the breakaway -- faked high, deked to his backhand to open up the 5-hole and slide the puck through. But that wasn't the only defence-to-offence production he had in the game. After forcing a turnover with a stick lift, Benson carried in off the right-wing, sent a backhand east-to-west, and drove the slot, tapping in a rebound for a goal. His transition habits are immense. Cutbacks to escape pressure, constantly open as an off-puck pass option, constant boards-to-middle movement. In the second he drove off the wall and cut across the net -- he had a tap in but lost control slightly, nullifying the dangerous chance.

In sustained pressure the physical and mental pace was equally as present. Benson has an immense amount of escapability out of tight areas, pops into punch turns and cutbacks to shake pressure, and he's always working in tandem with puck carriers to add himself as an option. One-touch passes, chaos creation, problem solving, skill blending -- it's all here. While he over handles at times, I doubt this is an issue at higher levels with how fast he processes -- it's just about habit adjustments. I worry about his skating and complete diminishing against players who can match or outmatch at higher levels, but I think in Benson's case, the activity level and brain should be able to overcome it at some level.

Mitchell Brown: November 8th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

In isolation, Benson's skating won't provide any advantages in the NHL. It's wide, weak strides and struggles to shift his weight over either leg. But it probably won't matter much. He's better much with cutbacks, combining puck positioning, deception, and timing to shake pressure in ways that will translate to the NHL. He won't be puck-carrying threat in transition, but he isn't already. He makes the right play at the right time, quickly moving pucks when possible and manipulating opponents when necessary. His skating occasionally means that when he doesn't mask his intentions, opponents have no difficulty stopping him. But he's so good away from that puck. So disruptive. He intentionally puts his stick in one lane, waits for the opponent's reaction, then meets them on the other side. Just as teammates enter the battle, he just gives a quick lift or poke to aid them. It's masterful. The crazy saucer pass assist probably won't happen again (both opponents he beat should've intercepted it), but it showed his vision and craftiness. So many different passes: hook, slip, backhand, etc. He looked like a potential top-line forward. He will find a way.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Benson was outshined by Cristall in this game, but it was an impressive performance regardless. He understands how to play his game in the NHL already. Delays when most sprint, especially dangerous at the top of the offensive zone after letting the backchecker fly past. From there, he cuts inside, fakes a lane change, uses the heel-to-heel to slip away from pressure, and connects all sorts of crafty short-range passes. Same skills appear down low. The best sequence of the game: he won a retrieval, passed the puck off the back of the net to himself, and then sent an absolutely incredible saucer pass in front for a chance. Always positioned in the right spot, and his hand-eye coordination and stick work always shine. He intercepts passes, knocks pucks away inside the handle, and gets underneath opponents' sticks. The hands looked closer to average in this game, whiffing on pass receptions and lacking the finer control to play his in-traffic game. The biggest concern remains skating. His acceleration pattern is weak, generating little power. It's just his stride, which lacks depth with an awkward-looking extension. The limitations appear on his edges, too. He doesn't win many races unless he has the advantage. It's not a huge concern given his intelligence and style of play (delay, small-area skill, give-and-go, off-puck movement). He has top-six upside, but I'm not sure where he fits into this draft class.

Cam Robinson: October 18th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs Victoria Roays - WHL

God, it's hard not to love the habits of this player. Even though this wasn't the most dynamic game for him offensively, he just breathes smart decisions all over the ice. In the second frame, he came backchecking high into the defensive end, read the defender walking in, stripped him with a sitck lift and accelerated back the other way to create a two-on-oh with Savoie. He gave, he got back, and fired home the tally. It showed off his smarts, his well-timed defensive play, acceleration and patience.

Later in that middle frame, he stole the puck along the wall in the defensive end, accelerated, made a quick move to beat the defender at the line and broke down the middle for a three-on-one. He drew coverage, patiently waited and sent another backhand saucer over to Geekie who didn't get all of it.

He was a menace on the man-advantage, constantly rotating around, sending cross-ice feeds into the slot area with a variety of methods - including a nice little backhand, aerial into space. He knocked down clearing attempts, cutback, and reset the umbrella. He had some dangerous looks that didn't connect but managed to reset again. Smart defensively

Daniel Gee: October 15th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Questionable performance for Benson, who didn't look like a top-5 pick, hell, even a top-10 selection in this game. Benson is hampered by his stride -- knees are knocked inwards causing him to be an inside-edge operator and laboured recoveries in a

straight line. That being said, his sense is so high end. In the first on a rush, Benson shuffled down the near boards, sending a perfect pass-off-pad that created a small rebound. He had another feed off the near boards in the third, hitting an option in the slot who couldn't catch-and-release the reception. Some delay elements -- Benson drove and cut laterally in the third, but had no pass support. Beyond these sequences, he was inefficient -- attempting low percentage handles (windmill dekes), heavily layered attempts to the inside directly into turnovers.

Tried to work a give-and-go in the third, despite being on-puck and open directly in front of the net. Had a lot of issues moving the puck from the perimeter into the idle. Shifted into the net front countless times in this game -- I question if that's the best use for a player like Benson. A major factor defensively, Benson pushed forechecking, pressure, and flexed his anticipation. In the second he almost disrupted an attacker enough to just about pick-pocket the puck carrier. His pressure almost led to another puck strip on the blueline. He even intercepted a pass in his own zone, reading and clogging the lane. Not the most inspiring game but this was the hardest leg of the ICE's road trip so it wouldn't be out of the question if that was a factor.

David St-Louis: October 15th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Not as eventful of a game for Zach Benson, but he still showed a lot of good elements. I like the pace in his game, pace of feet and decisions. The skating form is still far from perfect, but I'm less and less concerned about the overall output. Some of the issues (stride length, flexion, recovery...) seem fixable, too. He tries to get the inside positioning on net-drives and loose pucks, but only succeeds when he has a speed advantage; he lacks the strength to win 50/50 battles. He was way more of a playmaker than shooter in this game, overpassing a bit, but he can manipulate opponents.

David St-Louis: October 12th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Impressive, impressive performance. Based on this one performance, I'd give Benson a very high grade for hockey sense: a lot of scanning, rapid scanning, too, close to getting possession, and even in situations where players don't typically scan but should. And his anticipation grades high, too. It guides him off-puck; he purposely lets his gap with defenders enlarge so he will have more space to get the puck and make a next play. He moves the puck quickly (out of traffic) and intelligently, understands how to manipulate defenders with movement and give-and-goes, plays with pace...A lot to like. The skill grades vary. The skating remains average, mechanically flawed, but the stickhandling, in flashes, grades high-end. Benson has a tight control over the puck. He baits pokechecks to fire around them, and slip passes through and around opponents. His defensive game is also interesting: constantly engaged, stealing pucks with his body and timely stick interventions, and in the right spots. Like I said, a lot to like.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Benson was solid, as usual. He's a highly disruptive defensive player, always backtracking, angling, and timing his engagements. Likes to stay behind opponents, wait for the pass, then go under their stick and spin off with the puck -- does it in all three zones. He's patient. He delays the right moments, both inside space to get open and with the puck to wait for support. Precise passer who works pucks through and around traffic. Lots of projectable ideas based on drawing and deceiving pressure. Shot's an NHL projection, too. Times his movements into the slot to get open. Fires off the pass at the right moments and handles before shooting at the right moments. Highly intelligent, at least a 6.5-grade hockey sense projection, maybe even a 7.5 or 8. Getting to the upper grade will likely require another level of dynamism and manipulation to his game. That might come through skating. Right now, his narrow, elevated stance limits the effectiveness of his crossovers and weight shifts. He can't separate. It leads to dump-ins, turnovers, and failed entries. Acceleration: a couple of unfinished crossovers immediately into his (weak) stride. It's a problem here, it'll be a problem elsewhere. Physical development will lead to a lot of natural improvement, no doubt. He's a top-10 candidate.

David St-Louis: October 7th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

There were a lot of good elements in this game. Benson is still just as defensively engaged, he uses teammates in transition, has some crossover patterns to open space in the neutral-zone, and he plays well all over the ice, understanding tactics to separate from coverage and how to control his speed to get the puck inside space. Defenders do catch up to him and they do handle him quite easily along the boards if doesn't have a preexisting advantage (speed, space...).

David St-Louis: September 30th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

The skating didn't impress early on, but it didn't seem like too big of an issue overall during the game. Benson skates on inside-edges constantly, wide overall, which limits his weight-shifting and ability to transition from crossovers to forward strides and to retain speed. He pulled off many great plays, but many of those by the skin of his teeth. What will happen when the competition grows stronger and faster? Sure, he will also gain his own strength and improve in terms of skill, but will his hockey sense and overall engagement in the game be enough to earn him a top-six spot? Not sure at this stage. The awareness, mental pace, and ability to make plays inside traffic are intriguing.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Benson's skating gradually became a bigger issue throughout this tournament. He wasn't able to separate in this game. Lacks the ability to weight shift fully. Crossovers aren't really crossovers, except backwards. He's manipulative through his eyes and movement, but can't manipulate better skaters. Or rather, he can, but he still can't escape with possession because they can recover faster. Still, he's incredible in other ways. He moves pucks at the perfect times, hooking pucks around sticks or slipping them under. So effective along the boards. Even when he's second to pucks, he wins by trapping the feet and taking the stick. One poor play along the boards didn't leave his recipient with the space to receive the puck, but that's about it for errors. He's going to be fascinating to watch this year.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Benson's skating was more of an issue in this game than in previous ones. He couldn't find any separation with his feet, and the upright stance prevented him from loading his push off leg on weight shifts. Defenders pushed him outside, even when he proactively cut to the middle. Overreliant on his inside edges. Still, he showed off-puck skills and defensive ability. Backtracks without overcommitting, always perfectly positioning to intercept the drop pass or prevent a shot. Immediately plays the puck into space to start the rush. Wins retrievals even without body positioning, taking the stick and then using his feet to trap the defender's against the wall. Created a goal by sprinting his route, drawing the defender, and jostling for positioning, opening a lane across the net front. Benson's skating might prove to be an issue, but strength's clearly an issue. It will improve, but will it improve enough to become a top-six forward?

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

You won't find many players who can carve through a defensive formation with the sort of effortlessness that Benson displays with nearly every puck touch. There's just so much forethought and planning that goes into every possession, much of it aimed towards getting opponents to commit with their feet early and cutting across them to gain the middle of the ice. It's how he works past what appears to be an average-at-best skating stride and turns a relative weakness into something that's hardly limiting in the slightest. You couple that drive for the middle with elite off-puck pace and technical passing skill, and you're looking at a special player. I would even be so bold as to rate him as a potential top-10 talent at this stage in the proceedings. Should note that Benson picked up a goal by backhand chopping at a loose puck on a rush play at the net front and drew a penalty by keeping his feet moving through contact.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Benson scored the 2-0 goal, shovelling a backhander top shelf after picking up a contested pass. He drew a penalty by cutting inside, his favourite place to operate. He created multiple chances, turning forecheck steals into high-danger looks and manipulating defender's sticks to creating passing lanes. His rate of execution stands out on this highly skilled Canadian team, making high-end plays at high pace and with pressure. When he's not creating offence, he's getting open in the slot by pushing off defenders into space at the right moments and timing his movements from the boards to the middle. All-in-all, Benson looks like a top prospect for the 2023 NHL Draft – a player bound for massive point totals and a lengthy highlight reel this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Benson had the points in this game, but it was a largely inefficient performance from a player who normally drives results with little waste. He tried no-chance passes without a clear end-goal, forced dekes that suggested a lack of foresight, and missed better passing options to make more complex plays. His hands and feet fail him in moments, which could be a concern moving forward. He also shows some excellent refinement, like his late-game crossover rush, followed by a high-wire deke to the inside. I've seen better from Benson, but this gives me a few other things to watch for in the WHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2022 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Benson and Milne continue to battle for the best player on Winnipeg, outshining Geekie and Savoie consistently. They did it again tonight. Benson scored twice: one crafty far-side shot after arriving to the crease at the perfect moment, and one individual effort on a loose puck before going backhand five-hole. His pace and deceptiveness combine to make him a high-reward, low-risk attacker, even with stride and strength limitations. A hit on the forecheck followed by a backhand pass into the slot was one of several passes for scoring chances. Delayed, starting handling to bait the defender to reach, then passed under their stick for a chance before following up and getting a rebound chance of his own. One pass that wasn't even close, but this was about as close to a perfect performance as I've seen. As long as the stride (heel kick, lacks depth) comes along, he should be a top-10 pick. Very Marnier-esque.

Mitchell Brown: November 20th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

It's crazy that Benson's a D-1 and I already know that he's going to make an impact every night. He can play so many different roles. Forechecker, turning retrievals into scoring chances? Check. Off-puck scoring threat with timed movements into the slot? Check. Deceptive open-ice playmaker? Yep. Subtly manipulative attacker who pries open passing lane? Sure. He's a model of consistency, and like Milne, one of the drivers of this team. Keep this up, and he'll be a first-rounder next year. Great player.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg Ice - WHL

Yet again, Benson was Winnipeg's best forward in this game. The puck follows him because he's always working to get it back through pursuit and off-puck movement. Finishes every off-puck route, which directly led to his assist on the night. Executes his passes at the right time, deceives but not too much, and understands how to prolong or create lanes. Give-and-go game. Scored by getting open and hesitating on the forehand before roofing the backhand. Didn't have quite the same inside game in this game as he did in yesterday's game. Still, an impressive prospect with top-six upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Benson doesn't play a ton, but consistently makes the most of his minutes. He's so advanced because of his details -- highly skilled, but relies on projectable plays. He uses his handling skill as a small-area problem-solving tool over his primary play-creation tool. There's very little waste to his game: Attacks the inside, delays for the trailer, deceives. He has a number of ways to connect with teammates. Strong off-puck instincts, highlighted by movement, timing, and a give-and-go game. Establishing body positioning off-puck. Some warts of the defensive end, but not for a lack of trying. He's also quite involved in the forecheck -- it'll come. Stride's projectable to average at least, lacking a bit of hip flexion but he wins the odd race for a disadvantage. Definitely a star in the WHL and looks like a first-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 6th, 2021 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg Ice - WHL

In a game loaded with prospects, Zach Benson was the best one by a comfortable margin. Sniped a goal off a step-in wrister, although with a big wind up that probably prevents it from going in at the next level. Consistently found pockets of space, showing catch-and-release skills. A somewhat individualistic transition player, but drives entries at a decent rate without many inefficiencies. He'll need to look cross-ice more regularly going forward. Consistently involved in puck pursuit. The most exciting parts were the playmaking, highlighted by several manipulating sequences with an end-goal. He shifts his weight, pulls the defender over, then quickly cuts back while buying time for the teammate to drive the inside lane. Fakes shot to draw pressure to himself, showing the timing and tracing (slip and hook passes, for example) to connect at the perfect time. Can't believe he's making these plays a year out from his draft. Going to be a star.



6 Ryan Leonard

AGE 17.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF The Third Tkachuk



Hammer



Lethal Shooter



Toolsy

Player Info

RW/C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

192 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

6.5

Shooting

6

Passing

6.5

Puckhandling

7

Hockey Sense

7.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	57	51	43	94	1.65
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	17	11	9	20	1.18
USA U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	8	9	17	2.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Ryan Leonard's got that dog in him. Think a Great Dane with a spiked collar, tattoos, and a mean-looking, badass scar – that kind of dog in 'em.

He's bringing it. Every shift. No matter the score. No matter the stakes. It's always overtime in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final when Leonard steps onto the ice. If you're not up for the fight, that's your problem.

This isn't why we've moved him up to No. 6 on the final Elite Prospects board for the 2023 NHL Draft, though. That's not a spot for unidimensional bruisers. No, Leonard is there because he's one of the most talented skaters in this draft, an inside-driven scorer who can beat opponents with his hands, shot, and passing skill in equal measures, all while maintaining a clean defensive conscience.

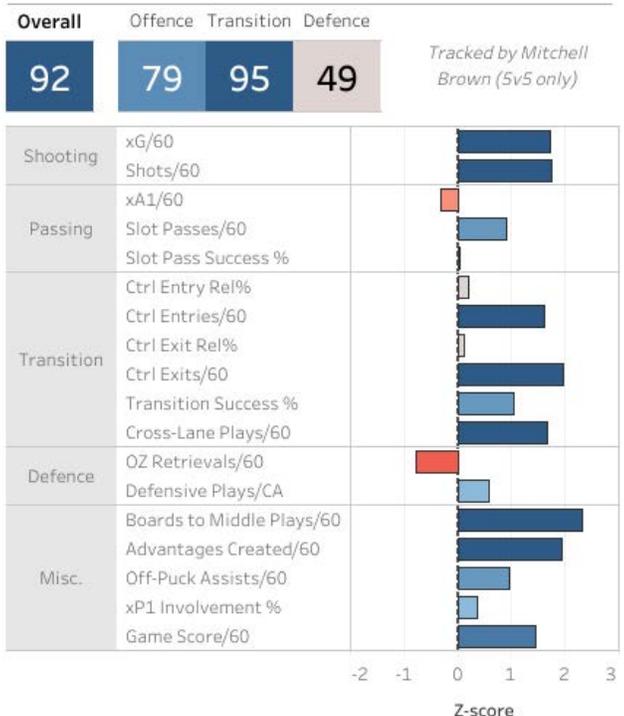
Put another way: The type of player you win with when the games matter the most.

"The BC commit is dangerous with the puck in the offensive zone, possessing a pro-calibre shot and hands," Elite Prospects USHL scout Joey Padmanabhan said of his game. "Leonard is incredibly deceptive, using his upper body and eyes to turn defenders' feet and sticks before walking around them or getting a shot on net. Leonard

Ryan Leonard

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 149.1



is a great facilitator, as well. After making a move, he can find guys in stride in dangerous spots. An above-average skater, Leonard can employ all of these tools off the rush too, making him even more versatile.”

That point about Leonard’s ability as a facilitator is critical to understanding our enthusiasm for this player, because you can’t tell the story of his draft year without broaching his development in that facet of the game. Better still, how that growth allowed him to become more potent with his established skills as a finisher.

Where Leonard was once content to play a straight-forward, north-south power forward’s game in his draft-minus-one season and even the beginning of this one, there was clearly a concerted effort on his part to add a changeup to his rotation rather than just leaning on his fastball.

By the second half of the season, you could see those changes on a shift-to-shift basis – the addition of a delay and give-and-go game, using deception to set up passing plays, etc. – elevating his already present passing skill to far more effective ends.

And this didn’t come at the expense of his power game. Leonard still had it in him to explode past an opponent in space or bury the shoulder or carve his way through an opposing defence with a vast array of handling moves en route to the goal like a power forward straight out of the 80s.

When you take all of this into account, it should be pretty easy to understand our affinity for this player relative to most in the industry. I mean, what’s not to like about a player who is a skilled dangler, a lethal shooter, and an intelligent, skilled passer who bullies opponents and shuts things down in the defensive zone? Especially when they just might be able to line up at centre.

Whichever team gets Leonard in this draft is going to be very happy to have him on their side. Lord knows, you’d hate the alternative.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



What we learned at the men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout’s Notebook: The top prospects from the USNTDP

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Really good all around player, the 200 foot guy, he’ll fit well in the NHL. I think he’s a real safe, smart pick for someone.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“Can he play centre? Yeah, for sure he can. Will he play centre? It depends who you want him to play with. I gotta think that BC is going to want to keep that first line together, so he’s probably going to stick on the wing, unless they move him to centre and move Cutter Gauthier up with those guys.”

He can play anywhere in the lineup. He’s a top-six guy, but he can play any forward position. He can kill penalties. He can play the power play. He’s tenacious. He’s got a little bit of Matthew Tkachuk in his game. And he’s an impressive kid when you meet him, too. He checks off all of the boxes.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He will be a top-20 pick and top-nine forward in the NHL. A powerful, smooth athlete [and] a strong skater with

speed and he has 1-on-1 skills. Heavy shot, and a great release. He's also very physical and hits with impact." – NHL scout, April 2023

"I'm a power forward who gets the inside, loves to shoot the puck. I'm very physical, too." – Ryan Leonard, April 2023

"My biggest role model is my brother. He's been my day one guy that I could talk to at any given moment about life or hockey or anything. He's just kind of been there for me my whole life." – Ryan Leonard, April 2023

"Yeah, that's who he is. Ryan Leonard doesn't take days off. I haven't seen it once in two years, so I'm not expecting to see it anytime soon. That's who he is. He's always going, and this is every single game, every single practice – he's playing like it's playoff hockey for him all of the time. He only knows one way. There's no other switch. Obviously, another strong game from him and his line. That's the expectation that we have. That's the expectation that they put on themselves. They're creating a lot of offence, but I believe those guys should get a lot of credit for their play away from the puck, too. They've been really good in this tournament." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"Their whole team was pretty hard to defend. He's really skilled. He's a fast skater. It's pretty hard to defend him." – Jakub Dvořák, April 2023

"He's just amazing. To talk about him, he's just an amazing player, great shot. He just makes plays out of nothing." – Danny Nelson, April 2023

"Lenny had an opportunity and he capitalized. That's who he is. He's a big-time player who thrives in big moments. It could've been a number of guys, but it's not shocking that it was him." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"I always take puck battles personally. I want to win all of them." – Ryan Leonard, November 2022

"I'm the type of forward who likes to get to the net. I like to use my lower body and I focused on that in the weight room. It gives me power and helps me a lot. I feel like some players don't go to the hard areas enough and I feel that's a spot where you can get rewarded the most." – Ryan Leonard, November 2022

"I think my speed is good. Near the top of the team. I'm not the fastest guy but I'm up there for sure." – Ryan Leonard, November 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

Although Leonard performed very well, I didn't like his tournament as much as others as his playmaking game really took the backseat. We know he can pull off the same plays as his teammates, the deceptive feeds and all that, but he was much more slot and net focused in the tournament. But in this game, it was perfect. While the rest of the USNTDP team was focused on creating the same elaborate passing plays, Leonard and Nelson streamlined their attacks and, because of it, managed to make a difference. Leonard is versatile. That's a great quality to have. He won't get shutdown as much as others. Whatever you need him to do, he will do. And he's got that gamer mentality, too.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

I'm almost running out of things to say about Leonard at this point. Another really strong performance, particularly as a distributor.

I don't know that Leonard is the most deceptive playmaker, but his ability to register options, leverage the threat of his shot, and connect with linemates is at such a high level. He's particularly potent off the rush, adjusting his speed and changing lanes to set up each pass, often driving low into the zone, drawing defenders toward him, and sending the puck high into the slot, giving his teammate the puck with time and space. The power game is ever present, too. Leonard just straight up bullies players out there. On top of it all, he's a supremely intelligent defensive player with an unbelievably high motor. He's right up there with Will Smith and Oliver Moore for me.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Leonard has been more of a solo creator at this tournament. He takes advantage of the early drives of his teammates in transition that push back the defenders to take the puck from the neutral zone to the top of the slot and fire. He may be a little too trigger-happy, but we know the playmaking skills are there. A few hits from him in this one, too.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - U18s

Leonard's tools shone in that game. He crushed several opponents, outskated others, drove the net, showed his shot, and even his manipulation skills. He's pretty much the full package. Even the hockey sense grade is clearly above-average. He might be smarter on the ice than Moore, too. Not sure who I would pick between these two. He has those finesse playmaking tricks, too, the fakes to open passing and shooting lanes, the delays, and the hesitation moves. Just a great, well-rounded player.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

More great work from Leonard, who probably could've left this contest with Best Player of the Game honours, if not for the fact that he was already named that twice through the round-robin part of the tournament. Leonard's goal was special. He picked up the puck in the neutral zone, identified a lone defender in space, and just exploded past him before sneaking the puck five-hole on the Czech goaltender. Leonard was characteristically physical in this game; he absolutely launched a Czech forward in open ice at one point. Made several plays as a distributor. I honestly have moments where Leonard is my top forward from the program. Another really strong game.

J.D. Burke: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs. Switzerland - U18s

Another just absolutely dominant performance from Leonard, who was the best player in this game by a country mile – awarded accordingly with Best Player of the Game honours, too. Leonard picked up five points in this one, perhaps the most beautiful secondary assist I've seen this season among them; he collected the puck in the neutral zone, chipped the puck into space with his backhand, shifted his weight violently to get their first, chained his collection of the puck into a dangle, and then started a tic-tac-toe passing play that led to a Gabe Perreault goal. Leonard tried a similar play in the first period, and this time, he made it happen. He also had a deflection goal, a catch-and-release goal, and a one-touch on a puck that bounced loose to him for the tally. On top of all that, Leonard played the full 200 feet of the ice, tracking well, supporting low in the defensive zone. About as perfect a game as you can play, though we do have to account for the fact that it was against a weak Swiss team.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Probably one of Leonard's tamer offensive performances at the tournament, even if he left with a goal and an assist. There were moments, though. Leonard worked a couple of power forward-type moves to take the puck to the net for a scoring chance. He was ever-pesky on puck retrievals, too. Sometimes you forget that he's not even 6-feet-tall with the way that he bullies opponents off the puck. That said, I thought Leonard faded as the game went on, and I even left with some concern that he might've hurt something. It just seemed like he was involved in a scrum away from the play on every other shift, and the attrition of that started to show as we got into the final frame. There were some instances where he was very slow to get up, even looked hurt at points. Here's hoping that's not the case, because he's been amazing at this tournament.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Not as eventful of a game for Ryan Leonard, at least compared to Gabe Perreault and Will Smith, but he's just as impressive in his

own ways. He's really capable of moving opponents off the puck with just one hand. He can dangle through them and anticipate the plays of his teammates and attack just the right pocket of space at the right time to get the puck. He's always scanning on retrievals and always first on pucks. A lot of net-drives in this one, too.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

I'm not sure I've ever seen a player take something that once registered as a relative weakness and turn it into a strength quite like Leonard has with his playmaking this season. The passing skill is off the charts good; at one point, Leonard completed a pass from the seat of his pants, as he was falling down. It's the vision and the habits that really stand out though. Leonard is picking up trailing options, adjusting his routes and his pace to level out and attack with numbers or create passing lanes, working the give-and-go game. It's just so damn impressive. Even more so because it hasn't come at the expense of the power game that's there as the foundation of his game. Leonard had a power forward drive to the net in this game that just as easily could've found the back of the net. In any other year, this is a top-five draft pick for me.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

Commanding performance from Leonard, who was probably the best player for either team in Team USA's 7-1 drubbing of Latvia – one goal, two assists, three shots, and a whole lot of hits. The one thing I really came to appreciate in this setting was the way that Leonard opens up space for his linemates. Consistent support, a willingness to drive the inside off the puck, and hard work on retrievals allow Leonard to increase the quality of each look and ensure that his team retains possession for long stretches of time. Some interesting flashes of passing skill in this game too, though I would probably characterize this as more of an early-season Leonard viewing – more hits and shots than dishes.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Leonard was the best player on his line by a huge margin. Not saying much, but there were some exciting moments. He stepped in, dangled around an opponent with ease, won body positioning on the other side, then launched a screaming shot. He looks like an NHL shooter already. The release is essentially instantaneous. He has passing skill, too. He tries backhand saucer passes through layers and looks for teammates on the other side of the defence. He misses opportunities sometimes (he drew all five Chicago skaters towards him, but then shoot from the outside with a clear pass for a Smith point-blank shot). That should improve. The physicality, defence, and breakneck pace were visible all game. Honestly, I think there's a real chance he's the best prospect from this group. The puck skills are arguably better than Smith's, and the ideas are just as impressive, even if they appear less frequently.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

This was a more difficult showing to assess simply because Leonard didn't have the puck all that much. He's still very much a shoot-first player, but his skills lend themselves to getting into scoring positions. A couple attempts to use his frame to drive the net and turn the corner that almost worked; he's a good skater but will need to add explosiveness if he is going to become a burner at the collegiate and pro levels. Some nifty plays with the puck in sustained o-zone play, one in particular where he pulled the puck from his hip pocket through his legs in a Kent Johnson-esque fashion to beat two defenders and find a dangerous lane to the net. Some nice passing sequences on the powerplay where he found the cross-ice seam to Smith or hit Perreault in the bumper spot. The shooting is still exceptional, Leonard deceives, manipulates, finds his space and gets pucks on net. More than happy to pick his spot through a screen from 30+ feet out if the opportunity is there. Defensively, was really impressed with Leonard's game. Always hard on pucks, used his stick nicely to take away lanes and angle, finished checks consistently and made opponents pay for holding onto the puck too long.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Leonard in a shift: He launched a wrister that knocked the goalie's stick out of their hands, supported high and spun a puck on net, drove the net for another chance off the boards, and then sprinted on the backcheck and slammed the puck carrier to the ice. He drew penalty early in the game after getting the steal, then scored with a two-touch wrister. Built the offence with creative passes and brought big-time defensive pressure. The skating could be a 6 or higher. Textbook knee bent, powerful, and a clear base for adding more speed. The only issue was the playmaking. He tries stuff – that's great. But he stared straight at his eventual target,

leading to easy interceptions. That will improve. He still looks like a top-10 talent. What a force.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP vs Madison Capitols - USHL

A great game from Leonard in what was a dominant performance for the NTDP. Generated a ton of scoring chances, both himself and through playmaking. A nice goal where he drove inside, dropped it to a teammate, and cut to the back door for a tap-in. Showed some nice shooting deception, faking with his eyes and chest before changing the angle. A sweet assist, too, where he pulled the puck through his legs and drove the goal line before slipping it to a teammate in the slot. Off-puck play is solid too, slips into tight, dangerous spaces and manages pucks well when he gets them. I'm not sold on the skating, the stride looks a bit short and the recovery is a little sloppy, but the hands, shot, and vision are too impressive to ignore. A first-round talent for certain. Excited to watch more.

Cam Robinson: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP vs Madison Capitols - USHL

In an absolute route, Leonard only came away with a goal and an assist. But I liked his game. There was power as he worked along the wall, cutting to the middle, protecting the puck. He made a nice play where he used the power and puck skills to maintain control on the far board, cut back spin, dish and it led to a tap in goal for Perreault. He was smart in the defensive end and the skating was good. He made a slick little play to carry the puck into the zone, fake outside, cut inside, drew coverage and dropped a sneaky little back slide pass and then drove to the netfront to direct the shot pass for a goal. Lots to like in his game.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The skill flashes continue to get more and more interesting. Leonard borrowed some of his linemates habits in this one and just went all on the creative dangle/passing plays. He tried to slide the puck around defenders by going to one-hand and managed to complete the maneuver with a bit of improvising. It wasn't a good decision, but at this stage, I'm more interesting in knowing his skill ceiling. He can blend catch into shots really fast. This is good for his NHL projection.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Leonard doesn't always pop in viewings as often in his linemates but every now and then he shows a display of skill that pulls you out of your seat. One particularly brilliant sequence on the kill where he beat a defender down the wall and toe dragged around another to get inside the dots before launching a dangerous wrist on net. Off puck timing was a strength for Leonard in this game too, distributed the puck laterally then worked hard to get back into the play through soft spaces in the slot. One time in the third when it finally paid off for him, launching a hard curl and drag to beat the goaltender low blocker. Some good distribution ability too, a few nice centering passes from the corner and behind the net that almost connected. A bit of snarl to Leonard's game too, unafraid to finish his checks and take whatever consequences come after. One of the better players on the ice in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Leonard doesn't create at the same volume as Smith, Perreault, or Moore. But his flashes are just as high-end and exciting, if not more in some cases. Late in this game, he dangled around one opponent, then another, scanned inside the turn, and then fired a look-off pass across the slot. He has the patterns, the mechanics, and the reads to create like his teammates, but there's only so much puck to go around. He was more of a puck-carrier than Smith in this game, but also showed some exciting vision and passing on breakouts. Understands how to create advantages for his teammates with lateral passing. Doesn't rush plays forward. He's a punishing force out there, too. The development probably won't be unlike Snuggerud; his game should scale up and he clearly has the high-end puck game. A clear top-10 pick at this stage.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs US - 4 Nations tournament

The off-puck moving Leonard was back in this game. He overshot a couple of passing lanes, but mostly, he was there for his teammates, right place and right time. Add those off-puck skills to his ability to instantly dangle and manipulate defenders, and his speed -- he broke free off a defender and then cut inside another one in this game -- and you get a very interesting NHL package.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

I didn't see as much of Leonard in this one, but the flashes were great. I like the way he can pick up pucks and immediately surprise the opposition with a dangle. He reacts very fast to the opposition and anticipates well away from the puck. He was just as physical as in other games and got a couple of chances to go one-on-one with the goalie. He made them move to find an opening.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Leonard, so impressive. A pair of goals in this game, showcasing his shot. The shot's all upper body, yet he gets some serious heat on it. He adapts his release too, pulling the puck slightly inwards around defenders. He always wins body positioning, which gives him that extra room for the shot. And there's also the handling. One-handed pass receptions and moves. He uses his full wingspan to handle the puck, faking down the outside before pulling the puck across his body and onto his backhand to cut to the middle – with his feet moving. Reads defenders' feet and immediately reacts, even at high speeds. Underhandles, keeps his feet moving, and always deceives before making his moves. His coordination, fluidity, and habits surely mean he'll find space in similar ways in the NHL. Uses give-and-gos, passes through defenders, and always skates his off-puck routes. And it wouldn't be a Leonard game without at least one massive hit. Another excellent performance. He looks more and more like a top-10 pick.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

So Leonard is equally as good as a playmaker as Smith and Perreault. He just needs occasions to show it. With Moore, he can control the puck more. What's impressive about him is his ability to locate seams inside and attack through them with his hands to improve the location of his shot and find better passing opportunities. He's always in the middle of the ice. When he's not there, he drives there. He's just as good at finding space away from the puck to set up as a shooter. He can protect pucks and crush opponents on the boards. Not much missing in his game. He has chemistry with everyone. Top-10.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Leonard was the best player on the ice in this game, setting up four goals and ripping an pull-in wrister on a 2-on-1 for a goal. The most exciting part of his game was the handling. He instantly – I mean, instantly – took pucks off the boards at full speed and attacked the middle. Every first touch was perfect. He charged at defenders, then dropped pucks back. He deked through them. He attacked wide, then slipped pucks back into the slot. He overwhelmed opponents on the backcheck and forecheck with pressure, stick placement, and strength. He set up a goal by faking the shot, then passing at the perfect moment – a play that shows there's a lot of more playmaking than I've seen early in the season. Being a bit more consistent with his passing and playing off the threat of the pass more will boost his upside. The skating's powerful and explosive, and could be refined into a serious weapon at the next level with improved posture and edges. He could be the top player from the NTDP this season.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

Ryan Leonard didn't stand out as much in this game. He barely got the puck. But it gave us a better look at his off-puck game which remains a strong point. He moves well in pockets of space, positions well defensively, and almost turned steals into breakaways and odd-man rushes. It's not really Leonard's fault that he fades to the background when the talent rises up around him, but it's something we have to account for. I'm not sure he will be a play-driver in the NHL, more of a complementary top-nine force. I'm betting top-six, but what's good with him is that he has that B, checking game that he can still fall back on. A high value prospect, but we have to be careful when evaluating his upside.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Full disclosure: I love watching this dude play hockey. It's so much fun. I always leave with just a massive block of text in his part of my notebook. It's equal parts violence, skill, and cunning in every viewing. This one was no different. Leonard was physically punishing Wisconsin's defender's from puck drop to the final horn. It's purposeful, too. He leaves most of these engagements with possession and attacks the inside with pace – weight shifts, fakes, eye-level deception, sometimes in the same sequence. Showed some serious skill corralling a loose puck that seemed out of reach without breaking stride for an attack off the rush. He turned

the corner on a Wisconsin defender on one play and overpowered the goaltender for an unassisted goal. He's in the top half of the first round, for me.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

One play described Leonard's playstyle: He chased after a puck-carrying attacker in his zone, caught up to him, rammed him down to the ice, took the puck, made a perfect stretch pass up to his teammates, attacked in support, got the puck, dangled around most of the ice, and shot on net. This guy is an NHLer. Every team must have him really high on their list.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Another impressive game from Leonard. The speed at which he's able to smoothly receive passes, engage physically, and handle the puck is impressive. Late in this game, he deked around a defender while loading up the drag shot, somehow maintaining the outside edge of his outside leg in the process. He attacks with crossovers, uses his lower body to win positioning off the rush, and instantly knows the next play when he runs out of space. He's more of a shooter at this stage, but he clearly has playmaking potential. Drops pucks behind him, deceives, and makes lateral passes in the neutral zone that get his teammates attacking with speed. And that's not to mention the physical skills. He runs through opponents to kill entries and he's always establishing body positioning with and without the puck. Looked like a potential top-six winger in this game.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota University vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Leonard just lacks that extra layer of skill to turn into a monster on the ice. He understands the skill game, the complex rush patterns, and the spacing of the ice, can play away from the puck, link passing plays, use a deceptive posture, and finish passing plays, but he also brings the sand paper. He's physical and strong, outmuscling college opponents for pucks. The combination of a soft touch (that, when it's a little bit more precise will enable him to create even more), physicality, and passing mentality is a great package. He's an easy projection with upside. I'd take him in top-15 and sleep on my two ears.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Leonard's a tank. Several times, he powered through checks like it was nothing. He's deceptive, patient, plays fast, and looks to the inside. Not every rush will translate, but he shows all the skill to be an effective puck carrier in the NHL. Showed some playmaking too, only in spurts. He looked for the trailer and moved pucks to teammates in better positions than himself. More of a secondary player on his line, getting few valuable touches in transition. And he wasn't great off-puck. He missed opportunities to rush the slot or get open for his teammates. That will need to improve, or perhaps it was just this game. Looked like the NTDP's second-best prospect after in this game.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Leonard is not as fancy as Moore or Smith but he still brings a lot of skill to the table. He's adaptable in his passing, capable of finding the best play, and even of using deception to reach teammates. He's more of a shooter but he can use the threat of his shot to open lanes. He's aware of the whole ice, uses trailers to open the play, and he also has hard skills, which appear in his constant drives through the hands of opponents. The combination of hard and soft skills makes him the player of choice for the power play bumper. He's probably a first-rounder in this class as the tools also look above-average on average.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 9th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A fantastic game from Ryan Leonard who is showing that he should be in the conversation with Moore and Smith. Showed the same great rush habits, getting off the wall, finding the inside lane, putting himself in a spot to get a high quality shot. Was effective on the wing as well, consistently making the right play in his own zone to start transition. The craftiness worked out for him in this game, a few dekes and dangles effectively deceived defenders and created space for him. Showed a hard nose for the net too, got a goal from battling in front on the PP and banging home a loose puck. Another chance where he nearly scored by driving cross crease. Unreal shot look-off in overtime with his upper body to set up Oliver Moore for a backdoor opportunity as well.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Leonard has a lot of qualities, many of which revolve around his physical game. He runs into plays at full speed, relishes any opportunity to make contact, and with the puck, always secures body positioning for making the play. In one rush, he delayed, beat the first forechecker, won positioning, then dangled around the next one before charging up the ice. Made an intelligent, but inaccurate pass when managing heavy pressure from a defender. Looks like a projectable shooter, highlighted with a near-textbook in-stride wrister. Made a ton of really impressive short-to-mid-range passes in transition for Smith and Perreault. He looked like a legitimate first-round candidate in this game, even if none of his plays led to high-value offence.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 18th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Niagara University - NCAA

Leonard is a fun player, even if he is a one-man show a lot of the time. He's an above average skater and exceptional shooter who is inside driven off of the rush and uses his teammates as decoys to get himself the highest quality shot he can. This might be a negative if he wasn't so damn good at firing the puck. He's versatile, shooting off both legs, using screens, etc. and is strong enough to beat goalies from far out. Hands are average to above average, has the occasional careless deke but also had one sequence where he went inside out on a defender before getting a good short side backhand attempt off. Certainly among the best NTDP has to offer this year.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - Five Nations

Leonard can make passes, but he's more of a solo driver who loves to go around defenders at full speed with crossovers, cut inside their hands, drive inside and the net. He prioritizes shooting over passing, which makes him a good complement to Smith in certain ways. He has playmaking skills -- manipulation abilities and awareness -- however. The skating looks not necessarily high-end but at least above-average: great form and output.

Cam Robinson: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Not a bad outing from Leonard in this one. He's a shooter and he searches out advantageous opportunities to uncork a shot whenever possible. In the first frame, while flying down the flank through the neutral zone, he picked up a bad pass that banked off of the wall, kept it wide with speed and snapped one home. He had a partial break a few minutes later that was snatched. He didn't get another attempt until overtime where he had one nice rush that ended up with an in-tight opportunity. The skating isn't bad minus the pronounced heel kick.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Leonard shoots and crushes opponents. It's a fun combination. He actively looks to be physical, waiting out opponents, letting them close on him as he retrieves pucks to then reverse hit them. I've rarely seen that. He scored with a shot from the faceoff circle in this game, but had other opportunities. The release is quick - very quick. No pronounced weight shift or loading time, just a quick lean and spring. He has the skill to complement the plays of Smith, too. He's mostly the finisher on the line from what I can see.

J.D. Burke: October 21st, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. RPI - NCAA

Not a particularly strong performance from Leonard. Actually left this viewing a bit concerned about his feel for the game. Many of Leonard's puck touches were defined by tunnel vision, an ability to problem solve against numbers, and poor play selection. He was skilled and physical as ever. Leonard had one play in the first period where he corralled a difficult, hard pass in his feet without losing much speed, led a 2-on-1, toe-dragged around a sprawled out defenceman and got a shot off. He looked a lot more like a mid-first than someone in the top-10.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Leonard missed opportunities to use space. He cut inside, but then fired immediately instead of walking in. He took low-percentage shots. He dropped pucks back to teammates that weren't there. But he was a consistent physical presence. He slammed players into the boards and won the positioning battle. One exciting sequence: he built speed with crossovers, faked the outside drive, cut

inside, and got a chance off a give-and-go. Potential looked high, perhaps the best on this squad, but this was a mediocre game.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Of the many big names among the NTDP forwards in this game, it was 16-year-old Ryan Leonard who demonstrated the most NHL skill. He read pressure, cut off their hands, and immediately passed to teammates in the slot. Deception on the set-ups combined with immediate play recognition made every single of his passes connect. Turned retrievals directly into offence, and he had a solid backchecking sequence to grab the steal, too. In stride wrister off the rush for a scoring chance. Only nine minutes and it's still early in his NTDP career, but he looked great. Excited to see more.



7 Will Smith

AGE 17.499 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF J.T. Miller, Trevor Zegras



Vision



Ankle Breaker



Tactician

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	7.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7.5	7.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

5 Hands
5 Highest Ceiling

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	60	51	76	127	2.12
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	20	15	27	42	2.10
USA U18	WJC-18	7	9	11	20	2.86

SCOUTING REPORT

Will Smith is one of the first round's foremost wildcards. Someone with the potential to wholly and drastically alter the complexion of the top-five, if not the top-three of this year's draft.

For some teams, there isn't a Big Four at the top of this year's draft – it's a Big Five, and Smith is comfortably in there. For others, it's still a Big Four, but he's a part of it. Then some teams hold him in similar esteem as we do. His draft range, it's a land of contrasts.

It's not hard to see the appeal with Smith. He's one of the draft's most gifted puckhandlers, a human highlight reel almost every time he steps onto the ice. His ability to turn the mundane – like a pass reception on the breakout or a puck retrieval along the wall – into something special is really something to behold.

He may not be one of the best players in this draft (he's not far off), but he's undoubtedly one of its most entertaining. The way that Smith blends dangles into passes, chains plays together, and processes the game at speed – it's just special. There's no other way to describe it.

Aside from dazzling, it's also made Smith pretty damn productive. In fact, the second-most productive player in USNTDP history, his 127 points this season are second only to his wingman Gabe Perreault.

Will Smith

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 171.6



Mostly, these dangles serve Smith's ends as a playmaker. His instinctual handling skill, with feints and deception aplenty, opens up ice for himself and his linemates, and he has the touch as a distributor to connect every time. He made life all too easy for his linemates at times.

You don't score 50-plus goals without the ability to find twine yourself, though, so don't discount Smith's ability to finish the job himself either. Sure, he can put a goaltender into the spin cycle, but he's also a capable off-puck scoring threat, probing for shooting opportunities and timing his arrivals into space perfectly before sending one- and two-touch shots on goal.

Of course, the catch with Smith's playing style is that he hasn't quite learned to appreciate the finer side of discretion. He's not the most efficient player, often playing at the upper limit or beyond his skill level with the puck, often overhandling or trying plays with little-to-no chance at success.

There's also an absence of hard skill in Smith's game. He's not much of a force on puck retrievals. Not a very hard-nosed player by any means. He's skilled, and he plays a skilled game.

Then there's the defensive zone. There are some in our ranks who rate Smith as a capable, willing contributor in his own end of the ice, and others who aren't quite as convinced. It's been a year-long battle among our scouts. If you're looking for a tiebreaker, though, it's perhaps worth noting that his head coach Dan Muse raves about his 200-foot game. So take that as you will.

You're not drafting Smith to win loose pucks or shut the opposition's best down, though. If you're drafting Smith – and especially if you're doing so in the first three or five picks – it's because you believe in his offensive upside and his potential to be a game-breaking No. 1 centre at the NHL level. He has the talent, and with a little bit more maturity to his game and some added pop as a skater, it's well within his means to get there.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



USHL Stock Watch: Will Smith emerging as the USNTDP's best in this year's draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"You watched him a lot I know, I think we all saw at U18s how good he is, how he's that next guy, the one who when actually against his peers, will be a superstar. It's kind of not fair to him because the other guys are breaking the curve for fair expectations." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He had a great Under-18 tournament. He's a high level offensive player. I mean, him and Gabe Perreault had the highest-scoring seasons of anyone at that program – that's against players like Jack Hughes and Auston Matthews and Jack Eichel. It's pretty impressive to do that.

"He's got a high IQ. He's got a great skill set. He's shifty with the puck. He's got good vision; I think he doesn't get enough credit for his playmaking ability. He's a great scoring threat, for sure." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He has the highest skill level of the Americans this year. I think you can make an argument that Ryan Leonard

and Oliver Moore are safer picks. Based on pure dynamic, offensive skill. The release. The passes. The creativity. The kid's high end. Top line NHL skill level. He's a little cheaty. I haven't liked his game as much the second half. The way he's managed the puck. He needs to mature his game. He would be smart to play two years of college. Special player. Definitely a top-10 talent. There is a bit of a miss factor there. Not saying he will miss." – NHL scout, April 2023

"Elite hockey IQ. His ability to manoeuvre in traffic, beat defenders 1-on-1, and create offence is at the top of this draft class. Potential number one centre." - Western Conference Executive

"A multi-dimensional offensive threat with high-end handling, shooting and passing. Needs to work on his defensive game a lot if he wants to be a centre in the NHL but the offensive potential is among the highest in the draft." - Eastern Conference Scout

"He is going to make a lot of defensemen look silly - high skill, sense, and speed. Lethal combo. At times he is guilty of taking some shifts off but at his best, he is a high-octane offensive player." - Western Conference Scout

"Has almost everything you look for in an elite point producer. The skating isn't great yet but it keeps improving. If he was 6-2, he'd go second overall. The potential is that big." - Eastern Conference Scout

"Yeah, he's outstanding. Outstanding." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"My head is always up. I think my Hockey IQ is my strong suit. I always try to make plays, try to find the open guy. I'm also a shooter, so I can score, too." – Will Smith, April 2023

"He's having a great tournament. He's had a great year. He's had a great two years. Will and his linemates with Gabe and Leonard, and you've always got guys like Oliver Moore that I want to mention and bring into that mix. These are guys that have had great years on both sides of the puck. I'm proud of those guys and how they've created a ton of offence, but also the way they're working away from the puck. That's important for our team. Then I think you've got all four lines where you've seen contributions from every line now. That's what we want to have. Smith's line has been great, they've had a great year." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

⌵ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs. Sweden - U18s

Smith's usual creativity didn't work as much in this game. The defence was tighter on him and there wasn't as much space on the ice, but his skills still shone through in key moments. He passed the puck into spots for teammates, ahead of them, to allow them to pick up those passes in stride and attack the net. He exploited mistakes and turned steals into direct offence. He forechecked a bit harder and came back on defence a bit lower. He forfeited some battles but entered others to win back the puck. He was more patient in his zone (a bit), blocking one key shot. Like usual, he seemed to always know where his line-mates are on the ice, hitting them with perfect spin and backhand passes. His skating is better than in the early season, especially in crossovers. Those are fantastic. But he lacks outside edge moves for the most part. He's not as elusive or as quick as he should be to play his type of game in the NHL. Skating development would help him. It's an average grade for me at the moment. The rest of the skill set, especially the handling and manipulation abilities will compensate. I'm convinced that he's a top-5 or 6 pick in the draft now.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

There's just no stopping Smith at this tournament. He opened the scoring for the Americans by sprinting past a Slovak defender who made a bad read at USA blue line, collected the puck in stride, and snapped it home without losing a step. The next goal was a laser of a wrist shot from the faceoff circle after shaking the Slovak defender with a handling move. Then he completed

the hat trick with a one-touch finish off the rush. When he wasn't scoring goals, Smith was flashing a high level of intelligence as a distributor – look-offs, an advanced delay game, give-and-goes, etc. The handling skill was ever-present. Like I said in my last report, what can I even add at this point? Smith's been unbelievable at this tournament, and I suspect the MVP is a lock at this point.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs. Slovakia - U18s

Best game I've watched from Smith this season. This is the player I was looking for and that I thought he could be after my first couple of viewings in the early season. Manipulation skills -- yes -- but at pace. Smith took advantage of his every opportunity to dangle and rush past defencemen. He scored on a breakaway and pierced through the defence a couple more times with his feints. He hit teammates with stretch passes, deceptive ones, and showed perfect off-puck positioning and timing to get the puck from them. The negatives: low defensive involvement, a lot of offensive cheating, and he shied away from battles. The positives far outweighed the negatives, however. Smith has a clear understanding of the playmaking and give-and-go game, an elite one.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

I'm not sure what I can add at this point in the tournament. Smith was, once again, one of if not the most creative and skilled players on the ice. One of the things I really appreciate about Smith's game is the way that he builds plays, almost always with the inside of the offensive zone as the puck's final destination. Smith picked up a goal in this game by hopping on a rebound around the goalmouth. Smart, creative player with boundless handling skill. I get why some in the industry view him as the fifth-best player in this class.

J.D. Burke: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs. Switzerland - U18s

This was probably my quietest Smith viewing to date at this tournament. One has to imagine he was in cruise control for most of this game. The Americans scored 15 seconds in and had the result in the bag by the end of the first period. His goal was a reminder of just what an intelligent player he is, though. You could see Smith directing traffic as his defenceman went back on the retrieval, guiding his linemate into space, then sneaking behind him on the rush and using him as a screen after receiving the drop pass, sending an absolute laser past the Swiss goaltender.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs. Finland - U18s

This is the best that Smith's ever looked in any of my viewings. Five points. Best Player of the Game honours. It was something to behold. Smith's skill level as a handler is just absurd. The goal that he scored was a perfect example of that. Smith had the puck in the neutral zone, made his approach, regrouped in the face of pressure, found an opening, and then carved his way through four Finnish skaters en route to the goal of the tournament. That was just one of many highlight-reel calibre dangles. He was pacey and intelligent as a playmaker. He created shooting opportunities for himself off-puck, including one instance where he sent a cannon of a one-timer on net for what should've been a goal. Smith made strong defensive zone reads and supported his defencemen well below the hash marks. When people talk about Smith as a top-five talent, this is the stuff they're talking about.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs. Finland - U18s

One of Will Smith's best games this season. He was better defensively, better positioned, better in support, and showed a little bit more effort all around. Many highlight-reel plays, including one where he dangled through the entire team to score. Smart rush patterns (underlap/overlap) and also some quick passing plays in transition. A bit of everything while still showing high-end skills. I doubt his skating ever becomes a large problem. It's more of an average projection for me at this stage. I'm still not seeing any physical play and he's at quite an advantage in this tournament with the large ice.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

A cool five-point game for Smith centring the American first line. I'm not sure how much of a report this game warrants – a stat line like that against a team like Norway (respect due) tells you pretty much all you need to know. If anything, it might undersell Smith's performance. By my count, there were another two Grade-A scoring chances on his part that just as easily could've found the back of the net. Smith was dangling his way through their defence like they weren't even there, his usual foundation of handling skill, fast twitch hands, and creativity on full display nearly every shift. Funny enough, his goal was pretty garden variety stuff – just a one-touch finish in the slot into a more-or-less open cage.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

You got to see the best and the worst of Smith in this contest. The skill is undeniable. Smith can dangle his way out of trouble with relative ease, often finding escape routes that are barely perceptible with the benefit of a bird's eye view. A dextrous, hip pocket handler with endless creativity – it's a lot of fun to watch! Smith's passing skill was ever present, too. Where he struggled a bit was with his play selection. Smith had a tendency to stare down his targets in this game, giving defenders the time they needed to close on plays and eliminate scoring chances before they developed. He shot when he should've passed; he passed when he should've shot. Still, he left with two goals; one a deflection on a Ryan Leonard point shot, another a bank shot off of the back of the Latvian goaltender. It was a good, albeit imperfect performance.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Smith scored the tying goal late, a steal followed by a far side wrister, showing short-side in the set up. He flashed the skill to knock down a waist-high pass for a shot in the first period. But this was a disappointing game otherwise; a collection of poor reads and missed opportunities. In transition, he was easily overwhelmed by pressure. One time, he even cutback despite having an accessible teammate up the middle, got swarmed, and then dumped the puck out to the other team. He cut inside, but instead of taking the lane to the net he created, he stopped and let backpressure catch him. Didn't try anything of note as a playmaker. Lacked pace. Lacked awareness. Didn't create space for his teammates. Not a factor off-puck. Didn't look like a first-round prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A different game from Smith. This was more of a shooting game. He stayed behind the defence and grabbed a breakaway goal. Cleaned up a rebound for his second. Went back against the grain on a one-timer on a 2-on-1. He showed off-puck instincts to stay open in space. He also threw a massive hit and created offence off the forecheck. There were some bad plays, however. He gave up on the backcheck a couple of times, fired off blind passes to no one, and didn't create any lanes. He's deceptive and clever if given space; he'll change pace to wait for his teammate to skate the lane and freeze defenders with shot fakes, but he didn't create any passing lanes, he prolongs existing ones. Without the ability to create lanes, he will have to find other ways to create in the NHL. Leaning on the shooting game more is a solid start. He looked more like a mid-six scorer than top-line creator in this one.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Quite an offensive showing for Smith. Started the game hot by turning the corner on a Muskegon defenseman before earning himself a dangerous shot in the slot. Another sequence where he danced around his coverage on a 2-on-2 before finding a seemingly impossible seam to hit his teammate at the backdoor. The stickhandling ability and deception is exceptional. Baits defenders with pumps, look-offs, and dekes. Was super shot-driven in this game, almost to a fault at times, with a few of his attempts getting blocked or whiffing. Doesn't do much with his skating, though it's not necessarily a liability. A fun showing for the consensus top-10.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

On the powerplay, Smith was incredible. He froze opponents with hip pocket deception, which provided the base for shots, dekes, and passes. He must be a nightmare to defend on the penalty kill as nearly every play that he makes has the exact same set-up – making it impossible to figure out what's coming next. At 5-on-5, he wasn't much of a factor until late in the

game, where he started moving his feet, supporting plays, passing to teammates off the boards. Equally skilled as a passer off the backhand as forehand. When it wasn't working through most of the game, Smith was making blind passes, not deceiving defenders before passing, making soft plays on breakouts, and not supporting plays. When it all came together, he looked like a potential top-six scorer.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A fantastic game from Smith, showing a full skill set. He started the game with an in-motion saucer pass cross-ice for a chance. Grabbed five points in total, some were high-end plays. There was the powerplay assist, where he circled high, deked in, passed back. How about the fake shot inside a pass reception before passing cross-crease for a tap-in. The change of pace and deception game is top-end. He angles towards the opponent, pulls the puck as if he's about to shoot, waits for the opponent to react, then hits the gas the instant they step forward. He's especially danger in open ice, where he can cycle between crossovers and glides, letting pressure catch up, before peeling away and passing. He gets the NTDP moving a full unit in these rushes. These are top-six centre plays. He also had a solid game defensively. He stepped into opponents and backtracked into lanes for interceptions. He checks out in moments. Sometimes, he skates without his stick on the ice, not giving his teammates a passing option, or reaches at opponents and gives up on the play as soon as they (predictably) dust him. Lots of habits to improve, but this was the dynamic, top prospect I've heard so much about this season. A top-10 game.

Cam Robison: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

The camera angle was my biggest enemy in this one. It was as terrible as the shellacking that the NTDP put on the Caps. Casual little five-point night for Smith as they linked up him, Perreault and Leonard and that trio was running all over the place. Smith was arguably the least obvious of the three despite leading them in points, but his hands and his passing were on display. He made a really nice look-off slip pass for an A1. Finished with a slot cutting shot. On the first shift of the game, he send a rocket of a saucer pass across the rink while in-flight. Over a couple of sticks and through the folds right onto the tape. Big league pass. He also looked a little lazy on the forecheck. A little lazy on the backcheck. But it was a blow out too. Seems like he wants the puck but he doesn't always want to work to get it.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Smith was fully back to his old habits in this one. Three missed passes for every good one. He just tries everything and doesn't really care about the outcome. Low effort defensively. I know this is just the current environment; I shouldn't weight his decision-making too much right now, because he has the skill and the sense to figure it out, but it's getting a bit hard to keep him high when the care level is that low. It's all-in on the creativity every time, every shift. Is something really creative if it takes so many attempts to pull off? He will really need to shake a ton of bad habits in his pro transition. I believe he will do it; we've seen many other examples of players like him who went on to have success.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The best game I've seen from Smith. He created a powerplay goal with a quick hip pocket fake before sliding the puck across the slot. He cut back and inside pressure, only to escape with a quick pass to the other side. Lots of smart short-to-medium range passes to beat defenders, complemented by intelligent off-puck movement that ensure he was always an option. Apart from that one powerplay sequence, he didn't really manipulate opponents with his feet and deception. It's more quick hands across the body to pull defenders in one way before beating them to the passing lane. Still, an encouraging performance. He even tried defensively, getting a couple of stops at the top of the zone. He looked like a top-15 pick in this game.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A better game from Smith. It's reassuring to see a more efficient performance and a better playmaking one overall from him, where he shows more translatable patterns. He moved better away from the puck, inside pockets of space, sent the puck quicker to teammates, seemed to know their positioning at all times, manipulated defenders with his hands and movements to create space for teammates, and showed an incredible hand-eye coordination. I still have my doubts, but I do respect the skills.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18 Four Nations

Will Smith only shoots as a last resort. He scored multiple times in this game, but only after checking that he couldn't make the extra pass to a teammate. He's experimenting, creating, flashed high, high-end playmaking abilities. He puts scoring chances on teammates sticks by being poised, patient, and manipulating two or three defenders. Against weaker opposition, he's dominating most shifts.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs. Sweden - U18 Four Nations

It's hard to look past Will Smith's experimentation on the ice. He is constantly forcing plays. I don't care too much about decision-making in a high-end player's draft year (they all experiment and try creative plays), but Smith just doesn't really adapt to the game. He makes his choice of plays based on the situation he is in, independent of how the defence is positioned. I would still give him an above-average hockey sense grade, but maybe not a high-end one anymore. He has one trick: a deceptive hip pocket fake, and he uses it extremely well, but his entire game is mostly based around it. That, and his anticipation of the flow of the play away from the puck. He's good at giving options to teammates. I still like him quite a lot, but there are many question marks in his game, more of a boom-or-bust prospect than I first anticipated. If he can't translate the playmaking and become that top-line, half-wall quarterback, what is he? At the same time, if he can improve his decisions and reads and hone the playmaking elements, who could beat him for such a role? No one.

Daniel Gee: February 8th, 2023 - Finland vs. USA - U18 Four Nations

Smith's off-puck game was elite in this game, but he is probably one of the more frustrating players to watch in this class. He had over five high-danger chances in this game, flashing a lot of high-end tools, but he's limited by his sense and decision making.

He's so ridiculously proactive off-puck, looking to work give-and-go passes constantly. He gets moving early, giving him a speed advantage as he takes receptions, and can blend handles in large-ice. A first period separation saw Smith pop a puck 5-hole, but he was denied. So strong at sneaking behind defenders' peripherals and causing confusion among opposing defenders' ranks. In the second he filled an off-puck lane, upped pace to get behind a defender and just tapped the puck wide. A lot of failed passes -- hooks and slips to targets he should have avoided. A benefit of having practically unlimited touches across a given game. Huge DZ to OZ wheels using his crossover speed and large-ice handles in the third-- attacked into three defenders, losing control and knocked off balance.

Smith should have had a couple goals in sustained OZ pressure. At the onset of the game he managed to reject a far board clear, skated into a pass seam, taking the reception -- all alone, Smith cut across the net but shot it into the goalie's glove. Didn't score on a catch-and-release shot shortly after. Abuses eyeline manipulation crosses from the point on the powerplay -- it stops being deceptive after he does it 4-5 times in a period. Regardless, his downhill attacking into passing east-to-west was dangerous all night. Smith had a power play sequence in the second period where he one-touched a puck, had a downhill off-puck shot blocked, and a couple of layered passes into the dotted lines for high-danger chances. He's straight up overpowering when he uses delays and has that space with the man-advantage. Does some wild things like extending his arms outward so that when he executes the pass, it's out of the defender's clogged lane. In the third he did this, slipped a puck circle-to-circle. So many one-touch plays. Hit and miss defensively -- had a couple of nice pick-up plays where he found secondary threats but he provided little disruption. Not his game and he's attacking so much it's not a surprise. Great game but I'm not convinced he is as projectable as Moore or even Leonard.

J.D. Burke: February 8th, 2023 - Finland vs. USA - U18 Four Nations

Really strong performance from Smith, who deserved a far better fate on the scoresheet than the blanks he left with in the goal and assist columns. His skating is more above average than high-end, but he plays at such a blistering pace that he appears much faster out there than he has any business looking. Smith takes the puck in-motion, skates through each pass, and doesn't really need to break stride to get his shot off. The development of a crafty give-and-go game serves him well in this regard, too. Smith generated some really stellar scoring chances in this game, a partial break in the first period and a well-timed approach

into the slot for a low-high one-touch chance the best among them. I thought he managed space well during sustained offensive zone sequences, and the way that he leveraged the threat of his shot to create passing opportunities caught my attention on a few occasions. His play selection worried me a bit in this one at times, but not jarringly so. I don't necessarily know where to place him in this range, but Smith looked like he belongs in that 5-10 group.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

An impressive game from Smith, the best I've seen since that standout October 27th performance. He connected with two of the best passes of the game: a backhand pass to the slot when pressured by two defenders and a delay into a perfect through pass for a high-danger look. His timing and set up on both passes were high-end. He deceived with fakes on pass receptions and puck positioning (he exposes the puck to bait the poke check), tries to cut inside, and in this game, showed a lot of in-motion skill. He was deking opponents inside crossovers, feinting with weight shifts, and trying to establish body positioning. There were some questionable plays, soft passes and plays straight to the other team that suggested a lack of awareness. He also chose the wrong move/pass on a couple of occasions, failing to read the opponent and passing lane. Still, these are forgivable when Smith's showing flashes of top-six playmaking skill. His off-puck offence comes and goes, but it was strong in this game. Clean up the shot, and he probably becomes a scoring threat at the next level. He looked like a top-10 pick in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Smith showed the usual flashes of skill; his handling and vision are undeniable. The execution was lacking in this one, however. Almost seemed a step behind the play at some points, trying to feed passes through after the window had closed or making a slick play around the first defender only to try the same move around a second. Benefitted from Perreault's exceptional passing ability off-puck, had a few grade-A's that he couldn't finish. I'm not sure at this point what elevates Smith to the next level. It's probably not the skating or motor. That's fine. But are his hands and IQ good enough to make him a top-6 forward at the next level? I'm honestly not sure yet. More viewings to be had.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

In 2022, I wrote that Smith was the driver on his line and Perreault the connector, complementary scorer. That was wrong. Or maybe it flipped. Smith is benefiting from Perreault's play-driving more than the opposite now. Smith, like it has happened to many other top forwards on the program in previous years, is now overcreative. He misses good scoring occasions because he tries the more complex, low percentage play. All of his qualities continue to shine: his passing skills, vision, handling, and even his skating looked better in this one, but the decision-making is a small issue. Hockey sense still ranks above-average because of his manipulation abilities and off-puck skills. Not sure what to make of him anymore. It's fine to experiment, but Smith is harder to project to an NHL role due his lack of diversity. He's a playmaker and off-puck driver.

Cam Robinson: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

I love the way Smith was setting up his passes. He was drawing coverage, pulling the puck inside and then sending out crisp passes through folds. He was blending his quick hands with his vision to create additional space, using the backside of the blade and hitting streaking mates in open ice. One no-look cross-ice dish on the PP was especially impressive. He missed a couple other passes too, but we'll take the bad with the good.

The skating was good again, utilizing a cross-over laden approach and accelerating quickly and pushing into free spaces and hard areas alike. The threat of his shot doesn't demand much respect which only adds to the impressiveness of his distribution game.

Daniel Gee: January 27th, 2023 - Bowling Green vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Smith had his moments in this one -- sequences that were special, but he struggled to play efficiently across his shifts. So many of Smith's transitional plays are a mix of high-end tool integration and ideas, blended with poor timing, questionable decision-

making, and troubling execution. On one second period play, Smith sauced a puck across the neutral zone, static -- instantly the lane clogged. In the first he wheeled around the net, chucked a very soft pass to a teammate leading to an instant turnover in the defensive zone. He was driven wide in the third on a rush, slipping the check, finding a completely covered teammate in the slot -- a hope play in it's core. Tries to handle inside on other sequences, hip-pocket protected but just far too much resistance. Off-puck he drives the middle. In the first he took a slip on a slot drive, but found himself too in-tight and pushed out to the far corner. Forward stride is an issue -- just no power creation. Crossover speed is his main tool and he did slice through some neutral zone defenders in this one. He was more successful during sustained offensive zone pressure. On the onset of the game, Smith shifted to the net front, tipped a puck on net and got a one-timer off the right-hand circle right after. On a subsequent shift, he showed some anticipation -- caught a pass on the left-hand circle after a pressured retrieval and cut in on net. Smith managed to feed a pass to the right-hand circle leading to a high-danger shot. Blended his hands with a toe drag on another play and flexed his four-way mobility to get into an open pass seam. Some pretty weak plays on the boards -- just a limited physical presence. Smith scored near the end of the third. Got the puck on the left-hand circle, loaded a shot and utilised a screen. Placement was top glove, he dragged inward, the top of his body almost contorted inward to shoot around a defender who was effectively screening his goaltender.

No defensive impact -- it's a problem against NCAA competition. He's a puck watcher leading to reactive movement. Absolutely lost during multi-variable, longer sustained sequences in his own zone. Laboured backchecking efforts with no secondaries taken. Had one disrupted release in the third but this was rough. Skilled but I doubt a lot of his habits translate properly. Looked more like a late round project than a top of the draft prospect.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Smith picked up three points in this game but it was far from a dynamic performance. It was good to see a bit more urgency in his game, he was actually striding toward opponents and applying pressure on the forecheck (it led to one of his assists). He grabbed a few stops in the defensive zone, eliminating threats and cutting off the top effectively. A couple of smart passes in transition alongside a failed rush were about it for flashes of upside. He inaccurately threw pucks into the slot, either because of his poor scanning or poor pass selection. The latter's been a consistent theme in my viewings. A mechanically sound wrister led to a goal, but I didn't see anything that suggested a potential top-six scorer in this game. More of a late-rounder based on this one.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

About an average Smith viewing. The usual flashes of creativity and playmaking were there, a few nice touch and area feeds through the neutral one to improve puck position and advance the rush. One rush where he managed to pick up a full head of steam (he's not all that slow once he gets going) and slipped the puck through his legs before delaying, unfortunately blew a tire. A nice assist where he had a pass off pad to a teammate. Worked hard off the puck to become a factor but didn't always succeed in evading his check. Really great defensive showing, worked hard on the backcheck, found his man quickly, took away passing lanes and tied up sticks. The stride isn't very pretty but it's fine for this level. There's a nasty bend at his hip and heel kick that will need to be refined. He's solid but to me doesn't have one skill that jumps out at you and says, "this guy is a top five pick." More viewings to come.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel Top Prospects Game

Smith can spend long stretches of game not really moving the needle for his team, but then he gets a breakaway or the puck inside space and his skills are overwhelming. He can manipulate, dangle around sticks, and has an elite hand-eye coordination. He scored by one-timing a flying puck to the back of the net. He hit a couple of cross-ice passes through seams and used his deceptive posture to delay for other lanes to appear. He's still an incredibly inefficient prospect who constantly tries to force, especially dangles, that aren't possible. A constant with him. Not sure it's going to go away as he matures as he always played like this. I'm more concerned about that side of his game than I was with Logan Cooley who at least had an history of playing a more translatable NHL game.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Some nights, you just don't have it. Smith did a lot of things exceptionally well tonight, but the puck just wasn't bouncing his way. There was the one play in the first where he stole the puck from an opposing forward at the offensive blue line and sniped it off of the post and out. There was another play like it where Smith caught someone off guard on their attempted breakout and then sent the puck just a little wide. Then he missed a tap-in that Gabriel Perreault beautifully set up by toe-dragging the defender opposite them on a 2-on-1 into the shadow realm. So, it wasn't working out for him as a finisher, but he showed some great stuff creating those opportunities, and he was characteristically sharp as a setup man. A lot of look off feeds through layers, that sort of thing. He also saved a sure goal with a fierce backcheck to catch an opponent right as they were about to jump on a loose puck with a yawning cage. That this is what a bad night looks like for Smith just about says it all. He was excellent, but deeply unlucky.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

A pretty good game from Smith overall. A quieter one. The flashes of skill were still there, but he took care of the defensive end more. He doesn't really have a lot of defensive skills at the moment, but he was in the right position for the most part and competing for pucks. He abused the mistakes of the opposition and could have had a few points. Deceptive passes after deceptive passes -- same as usual. I think he will be a great scorer at the college level if he can just become slightly more efficient with his touches.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Five primary assists for Smith, but there weren't a ton of great plays in this game. He had his usual USHLers-can't-defend breakaways, which led to two of his assists. The first one was a smart play to follow up the puck and throw it back into the slot. Connected with a quick pass back to a teammate in space instead of forcing a puck into the slot for another assist -- smart play. There wasn't much deception or manipulation in this game. He had handling moments, but only inside a low-pace glide. Didn't establish body positioning either, which allowed opponents to get the break up when reaching back. Stayed behind defenders a couple of times instead of sprinting to the net, leading to missed opportunities to become a shooting threat. More a late-first-type performance, even though he was everywhere on the scoresheet.

Cam Robinson: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Five primary helpers and just five total shot attempts in this one. It really showcased the type of offensive contributor Smith is. To be honest, not many of his points came of decisively impressive plays. He hit a couple of streaking mates for breaks which were good. He worked the hands in transition and off of the wall on the man-advantage. He wasn't blazing in this one, but it was more of a cruise control outing for many players as the game was a walk off and his minutes were cut to curtail risk of injury. c

Joey Padmanabhan: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

This was an interesting performance from Smith. The good was really good but the bad was very bad. It was a tough start to the game for Smith as he just always seemed to be a step behind the play. On a few occasions he took an extra handle to make a pass and put it behind his teammates, other times he just flat out missed them. A few careless dangles too that resulted in play being turned the other way. Then, there were a few glimpses of what Smith can be when he wants to. A great 2-on-1 where he sold shot with his upper body and slid it to Gabe Perreault on the back door. Another similar chance where he and Perreault exchanged twice before Smith tapped it into the open net. In the following frame, Smith found an open Perreault in the slot while coming around the net for his second assist of the night. A three point night against North Dakota is hard to be critical of, but the good plays were sandwiched by so many careless ones. Need to see more consistency from Smith through a full 60.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

This game did nothing to ease my doubts around Smith's playstyle. Ranking him high is banking that his world-class projectable playmaking ability will carry the rest of his game. The skating is a 4.5 and the pace is low. He got surprised by the backcheck multiple times in this one. He will adapt to college hockey and his stride gives him more speed than Perreault, but he's pretty one-dimensional and that's always scary at the top of the draft, but he's so good in that dimension that it bleeds out into other

elements. He passed away a couple of great scoring chances in this one.

Cam Robinson: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Report No. 3 for this game and I'm going to be a little different from my esteemed colleagues. Yes, we saw the flaws in Smith's game in this one. A couple of examples of overhandling. He was pressured by speed and forced to make rushed passes that missed. He tried a few others that simply were read or blocked. But my goodness, playing as a 17-year-old, slight centre against a legit D1 club he flashed the high-end skill and plamaking. His first of three points was a slick look-off dish for a primary helper. He identified the space and altered his speed to maximize it. Received the puck, looked shot all day and once he gets both defenders to bite and go down for the block, he slips it over for the gimme. He followed that up with a similar play where he looked shot, got the defenders to bite, slipped it over and then went to the net to receive to return pass and tapped it in. Finally, in the 3rd, he grabbed a loose puck behind the net, drew coverage and slipped a pass back against the grain and into the slot for a bangbang goal.

Again, the ultimate power out of his stride is limiting at this point. He needs to be able to handle pressure better. He needs to readjust in situations more. But the high-end skill is very evident and if we use our imagination on how he'll develop with more strength and maturation, then we can easily see a top six forward down the line.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Not the type of game that inspires much confidence. Smith had a couple of moments, but it was mostly just all weak plays and missed opportunities. He lacked urgency and awareness with the puck, missing opportunities to skate into opponent's space to protect the puck. Didn't try to fight off sticks, either. A couple of smart off-puck reads showed than he understands how to get open and become a threat, but the puck rarely came. The skating's an average projection, at best. Wide and not exactly quick, but his proactive movement allows him to get the jump on defenders sometimes. Didn't look like a first-rounder in this game.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Too much of a good thing is sometimes a bad thing. Smith is incredibly fun to watch, but when you streamline games, the multiple turnovers that are part of his experimentation starts to annoy you just a little bit. But then, he pulls off a nice pass between opponents, a clever one, and you're right back to thinking that he's one of the very best manipulators in Junior hockey. His game isn't all that diverse, however. That's pretty much what he does. The speed is nothing special and the physical game... Well, it might be there, but I haven't really seen it. He's good enough of a playmaker to make a career as a top-six guy, but the lack of diversity is a bit worrying.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Right away, Smith's skating stands out as a could-be issue. He's not exactly quick out there. There were moments where opponents pulled away from him despite his comparatively higher stride frequency. Wide and collapses at the hip. He's always moving on his edges, but he lacks the depth to really explode out of his moves. He won't need skating as an advantage to play his game in the NHL, though. He manipulated opponents, combining look offs, deception puck positioning, and movement (like, moving away from his eventual target to shift defenders) before passing. Lacks precision and consistency on the next play. Off-puck movement and awareness looks like a strength, too. He's clearly the top prospect from the NTDP at this stage, but I don't think Moore and Leonard are too far off.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 18th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Niagara University - NCAA

Smith has sequences where he's the most exciting player on the ice and sequences where he's frustratingly careless with the puck. His hands are certainly an asset and he's manipulative with the puck on his stick, but too often he tries to make moves through players rather than manage and protect the puck, leading to high turnovers and transition the other way. He's a fine skater, but not quick or agile enough to create great separation. He shines on the powerplay, where he has time and space to handle, had a great cross ice assist to Perreault where he sold the shot and slid it for a back door tap in. Nearly had a highlight

reel goal where he toe dragged around a Niagara defender but missed the shot. Some nice off-puck timing displayed too.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - U18 Five Nations

A great game for Smith. We really saw his manipulation ability. He makes defenders uncomfortable constantly with hesitation moves and his puck-at-the-hip posture. He anticipates the drive of teammates and plans his offensive sequence, delaying to let them get in position. He also manipulates through passing like give-and-goes. He scored by catching a pass behind him while splitting the defenders. He also scored by going one-on-one with a defender and feinting him for a good two seconds until he got an angle. The playmaking skills are off the charts.

Daniel Gee: November 10th, 2022 - USA vs. Sweden - U18 Five Nations

Smith was insane in this game -- he scored a couple goals and blended a bunch of high-end tools and habits. Smith's transition game is all built upon proactive speed. He's a constant disrupter due to this speed, backing up defenders, messing with their gaps. Smith uses stop up delays -- one of his first shifts of his game he entered on the near boards, stopped up, cut through a lateral seam, and made a no-look drop-off pass to a walside activator -- the peripheral vision and mental mapping was wild. On his next rush, Smith drive open space through the neutral zone, took pass reception from behind, dragging it forward in motion, whipping the puck top shelf -- it was such a high-end play that blended all the aforementioned tools and habits. Power move attempts, fake shots, he was equally deceptive on-puck. Smith had an interesting sequence in the third -- attacking 1-on-1, he manipulated the defenders triangle, but the puck rolled off his stick. Smith won the race on the retrieval, he cutback to shake pressure, but he had no support, leading to a TO -- nice adaptation to a bobble. Smith scored another goal -- off a board bank he again was attacking 1-on-1 -- he stopped up off the left wing, causing the Swede defender to essentially to freeze; Smith toyed with him, handling to the middle until they couldn't work laterally, and fired in a weak shot. While Smith was less prevalent in sustained pressure, he found seams incredibly well. His timing off-puck was impressive. Not sure about his stride at higher levels -- his recoveries devolve wide. He's risky, a lot of what he does won't work at higher levels, but his ability to break down defenders has to count for something.

Cam Robinson: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A couple of primary transition helpers in this one for Will Smith. The first was off of a bad pass that broke right. The second showed off his great awareness to drive the middle, sell the shot and slip a pass back to his mate for the open net. But the real kicker in this one was that Smith had FOUR breakaways - three of which came in the third period alone. He tried a myriad of methods to score, including a between-the-legs attempt while being hauled down that resulted in a penalty shot. He failed to score on any of them. That said, he was clearly exploiting the poor coverage and showing off his great speed. The hands and the vision were there. He can break the puck out, suppose the rush. Drive the middle lane. It was a fun outing.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Smith is sometimes overly creative but he's clearly smart with his positioning and passing. He adapts his speed to create space for himself, uses teammates instantly for give-and-goes, challenges defenders, manipulates them to open space for teammates... He abused coverages a lot in this game, creating multiple breakaways. Some of his plays were imprecise and the skating is a bit worrying, very wide and not a lot of straight-line speed. But the hockey sense makes up for it. He could be the top USHL player in this draft. The handling and passing are above-average.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Smith is adaptable. This is only one game, but the hockey sense grade is probably a 7-8 based on some of the plays he made. He did force some passes, but overall, he adapted quickly to defensive pressure, found the best play to make, and executed it quickly -- great NHL qualities. He played defence well (for a USTNDP player), good positioning, and a clean steal, organized the attack with his movements and passes (give-and-goes), and manipulated defenders. What I liked the most is his anticipation: he clearly played a lot of sequence one-pass away, moving ahead of his teammate's plays. He got a breakaway out of one

sequence because of that anticipation.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Smith dangles through defenders, brings pucks off the boards, creates speed differentials with cutbacks and acceleration, and has some adaptable shooting skill. He easily strings together all sorts of different moves, if the feet allow it. Sometimes, they don't. He has some physical skills (cut through back pressure) and moves the puck effectively, but he's mostly an open-ice creator. The lack of speed will prove costly unless he gets better at playing inside contact. He's definitely a top prospect for the draft – few have this combination of awareness, puck skills, and sequencing. But lots of questions still.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Smith has the USNTDP style. He tries everything. Hyper-creative and confident, you see him chain dangles, feints, skating moves, and passes through defensive layers. He's the motor of his line's offence. He can manipulate everyone on the ice, slowly or with pace, depending on the situation. The game is clearly way too easy for him at this stage and the USHL defences too permissive. The skating is a bit worrying. It's wide and doesn't deliver much output. He will soon have to make many of his plays in heavy traffic due to defenders easily catching up to him. I'm not sure how well that will go. He has the sense, the passing and handling skills to become that top-line NHL forward, but I wish he was a better mover, too.

J.D. Burke: October 21st, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. RPI - NCAA

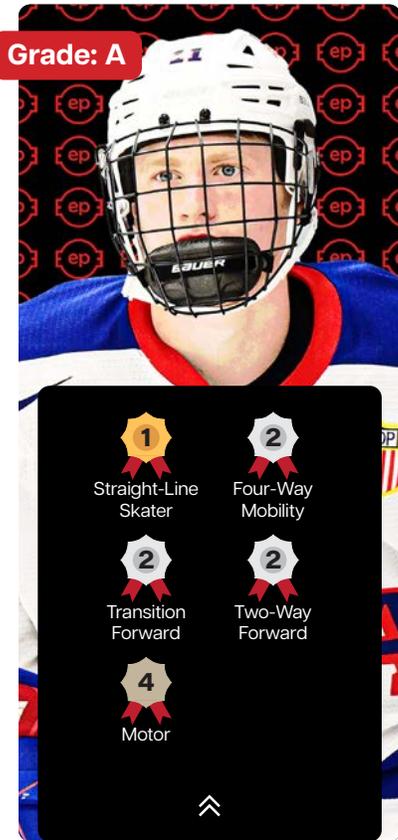
Really strong performance from Smith on the program's top line, chipping in with a pair of goals (one was an empty-netter) and assists for four points total. The first goal was a wrist shot off of a won faceoff that just squeaked through the RPI goaltender and across the goal line; the first assist was an uncontested, short range pass to Gabriel Perreault who sniped it top corner, but the second one was a nice display of skill, with Smith digging the puck out of a crowd, toe-dragging to the inside from the wall, and then hooking the puck to Perreault again for his second tally of the game. Smith's handling skill really stood out in this one. That and his deceptive playmaking – look-off feeds, fakes, etc. Actually just about connected on a WARP pass at one point. I'm not sure about the motor or the skating but there's no denying his skill or sense.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Smith had a breakaway chance, capitalizing on a loose puck in the defensive zone. He scored with an angle-changing wrister on the power play, stepping into space before rifling the puck short-side, quickly followed by an assist on the next shift. But this wasn't a standout performance skill otherwise. He struggled with retrievals, either forgoing the battle entirely or getting knocked off balance with his high stance. Blind and inaccurate passes led to turnovers. Didn't show any manipulation or deception, and the stride's weak. He doesn't engage his hips and drops his check toward the ice. Not much in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Smith didn't connect on every play, but he showed some of the best ideas in the game. Delaying for options, deceptive set-ups to prolong lanes, and a slick curl-and-drag wrister. He supports the puck and arrives into space at the right time. There's a lot off-puck here when combined with his defensive game. All-in-all, a pretty advanced player at this stage. Excited to watch him more.



8 Oliver Moore

AGE 17.647 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Dylan Larkin



Fleet of Foot



Toolsy



Motor

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

8.5

Skating

6

Shooting

6.5

Passing

6.5

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	61	31	44	75	1.23
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	8	17	25	1.09
USA U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	4	5	9	1.29

SCOUTING REPORT

We've never scouted a faster, more agile skater than Oliver Moore in our time covering the draft in an editorial capacity at Elite Prospects. Full stop.

The way he outraces opponents to loose pucks, explodes past them in space, and covers ground on the backcheck – it would strain credibility to describe it in text. You almost have to see it for yourself to believe it.

It's an obvious, overwhelming advantage for Moore, paired with an elite motor and an attention to detail that forces him to leverage it to positive ends at every corner of the ice.

"The skating's incredible. The stride's not perfect, but he integrates linear crossovers into already explosive skating," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a November game report. "Made up huge deficits of space several times in this game. He's always working to win races, be first on loose pucks, and create. Lots of skating skills: cutbacks, cuts, jabs, heel-to-heel, and more, and he uses them all at different speeds."

So, any conversation about Moore has to start with his skating. It's the defining characteristic of his game. Seems apt. That's not where the discussion ends, though. Certainly, you wouldn't be reading about

Oliver Moore

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 160.9



Moore at this juncture were that his sole dimension as a player.

Because while it's not a universally held position (not even within our ranks), Moore has flashed among the most creative, skilled, intelligent displays of playmaking of any player outside of the Big Four in this year's draft.

At his best, Moore's anticipation allows him to process plays one or two steps ahead of everyone else on the ice. Blended eye-level deception and feints clear bodies and sticks, opening up passing lanes that other, less inventive players may not be able to access. His habits as a puck carrier in space – using the dotted line, changing rush patterns, etc. – suggest an ability to leverage his speed to serve his ends as a rush distributor, too.

Of course, "flashed" is the operative word, as it relates to the Minnesota-commit's playmaking skill. It's why many in the industry (some in our ranks among them) view Moore as more of a worker than someone with legitimate top-six upside; the reason you're likely to hear his name called a fair bit later than where we've placed him on our final board.

Perhaps there's something to it. The thing is, Moore often plays too fast. We may have lamented the lack of support on his flanks – especially at the U18s – but it's fair to wonder how much he could've gotten out of better, more sophisticated wingmen when he's not even giving them a chance to join the play. The occasional bit of tunnel vision, hope passes, and poor play selection lends credibility to the argument that he doesn't have the feel for the game necessary to drive offensive results at the next level.

So, banking on Moore as a high-upside play at the draft is a gamble. He's as divisive a player as you're likely to find in this part of the draft. And we think he's worth the trouble.

Here's the thing: Moore is going to play. We know this. The foundation in place with his speed, tenacity, puck skills, and two-way diligence make him among the safest bets to secure a full-time NHL job in this draft. His tools' advantage will diminish as he rises the ranks, but they won't disappear entirely.

Whether Moore's flashes of high-end playmaking will become a more consistent element of his game will determine who wins this bet – the true believers or the skeptics. Now begins the fun part – finding out who's right.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Oliver Moore is a one-of-a-kind prospect in the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Notebook: The top prospects from the USNTDP

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He played below that top line for the NTDP, I like that, I feel like I know more about him. I love the skating." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's this year's Frank Nazar. You gotta remember, that first line didn't move, so he's going to get stuck with that worker label, but it's not a bad thing. I don't think he's a true finisher. He creates all kinds of chances with his speed, but I don't think the finishing ability comes naturally to him. Again, he's a centre, but I think he can play the wing. Don't be shocked if Logan Cooley is back at Minnesota and he takes Matthew Knies' spot on that top line. He's got a ton of upside. He might be the fastest player in the draft. You guys do a 1-to-9 scale for skating, and he

should be a 9-grade.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s probably the fastest kid in the draft. He’s explosive. He has elite top speed. Offensively he’s dangerous with that speed. He’s creating more now through his playmaking, and he can score too. He’s a player an NHL team will win with. His effort is outstanding. He hunts pucks. He takes pucks away. He’s excellent defensively using his speed to back pressure. He can play centre or wing. NHL coaches will find a lot of ways to use him, and with his character and speed, there’s no miss factor.” – NHL scout, April 2023

“He’s a relentless competitor. You can be fast and create offence off of that. His speed drives his game. He’s a guy who plays at both ends of the ice. There’s so many different ways with him that he’s able to create momentum for this team. The speed is definitely a big part of it. He’s got a great stick, a great shot. I think his line has been generating a lot of chances. Maybe not as many as have gone into the net like a line like Smitty’s, but they’re generating a lot. With his speed and his overall game and his work ethic and his compete, he’s able to impact and change the momentum in a lot of ways.” – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

“He’s a leader. There’s a reason he’s wearing a letter. He’s a guy who, whatever we’re doing, he’s going to push everybody. Whether it’s in the weight room, in practice – whatever it is. He’s a guy who is an extremely, extremely, extremely driven hockey player. That’s just who he is as a person. He wants to be great at everything he does. It doesn’t matter what we’re doing – he wants to be great. He’s a guy who is extremely coachable. He’s always trying to find new ways to get better, which is always a big part of why he’s had the year he’s had and the two years he’s had. It’s also why he’s a guy who’s going to have a lot of success in the future.” – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

“Yeah, I definitely credit my skating instructor Katie McDonough, back home. I’ve been working with her since about sixth grade, and she’s really developed my stride into what it is now. I definitely credit her a lot.” – Oliver Moore, April 2023

“I like to model my game after Dylan Larkin. He’s a really good centreman, pushes the pace, uses his speed all over the ice. I kind of like to model my game after him.” – Oliver Moore, April 2023

“My first three strides are what separates me from other guys. My top speed as well, I can get up there and be pretty high. I’m still working on controlling that and controlling the speed of my game, but that’s how I’d describe my skating.” – Oliver Moore, April 2023

“I’m kind of someone who just likes spending time around the guys. Kind of funny, have a lighter mood. I’m just a guy who works hard every day.” – Oliver Moore, April 2023

“I’ve always been a faster player, but I’ve definitely developed more kind of dominant speed ever since I’ve gotten older and stronger in the weight room. It’s developed over time. I think [Nathan] MacKinnon is a guy I like to watch but a comparable could be Dylan Larkin. Just the way he uses his speed. In the neutral zone especially. Off the rush. I hope I get to that level someday.” – Oliver Moore, February 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

Oh, Moore. Not sure what to make of him anymore. He’s still my favorite prospect on the team, but he has had real trouble connecting with teammates at the tournament. We saw him orchestrate great zone exits and link plays through all three zones. He created through his speed, like usual and also by opening lanes with deception and by attempting give-and-goes. But he plays so fast that teammates have trouble giving him back the puck and handling his own feeds. Moore’s game will improve with better teammates for sure, but he also has to learn to diversify his attacks and play more of a chess match than

checkers, at times. We know he's capable of much more. The potential is immense. As usual, same defensive engagement, motor, forechecking, and even physicality on the boards. He does everything but could do everything even better with the right guidance. I'd love to work with a player like that. A great project for a development team. He's also a safe projection. His motor and skating and defence make him an automatic NHLer.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

My kingdom for an entire game where Moore has high-end linemates, all respect due to Ryan Fine and Carey Terrance. I just want one of his highly skilled, creative passing plays to result in something. There were plenty of them in this game. Moore's skill as a handler in particular shone bright. Moore also got a few good looks as a finisher, sneaking away from defensive coverage for shooting opportunities and sending one- and two-touch feeds on goal. He got absolutely robbed on one such occasion. I'm not sure my projection for Moore has changed much at this tournament.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Moore continues to have weird decisions, but this was overall a pretty great game from him that reminds you of his potential. He's everywhere all at once, in every wall battle, in every rush, and in every net-front scrums. He does too much, but that's also a quality. When given powerplay opportunities, the same manipulation skills that make the success of Perreault and Smith start to resurface. He can hold defenders in place with shot fakes, veil his passing target, and then launch precise passes to teammates on the wing. A lot of intense backcheck that aborted Slovak attacks, too. Skating is still elite.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Best feet in the class. Easily. But in this one it looked like they were the processors instead of his brain. He was frenetic - backchecking, forechecking, getting to space, carrying across the dotted line. He wanted to create or impact every play on every shift - which can be great, but it also pulled him out of position and left his mates scratching their head on some plays. Now, those same mates simply can't hang with him skill wise or creativity wise. Plays were dying on their sticks when a higher talent level would've facilitated continued possession. It's hard to think that if Moore and Smith switch places, the point totals would swap as well. I did enjoy how Moore blended his puckhandling with his feet - setting up inside drives with a speed-driven shake to the outside before bringing it to the inside of his stance and pulling the defender off balance. I'm still unsure of the brain - he'll need time in school to allow his processing to catch up with the wheels.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

Another good game from Moore. You saw a little bit of everything from him in this contest, too. There were flashes of high-end creativity and vision as a distributor. Some great work defensively, particularly tracking through the neutral zone. I thought Moore pulled off some really great dangles to gain the inside in the offensive zone, too. I'm not sure if this was his most efficient performance - the odd hope pass was still there - but he was still a net positive and then some. Moore looks like a top-10 talent.

J.D. Burke: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs. Switzerland - U18s

You got a bit of the good and the bad from Moore in this game. On the one hand, you had some exceptionally intelligent and creative displays of playmaking made possible by his ability to dart past and shake opponents. On the other, a lot of hope plays, missed passing opportunities, and generally wonky decision-making. He was still full value in transition and in the defensive zone, too. Moore also picked up a goal with a wrist shot that squeaked through the goalie late. Just a totally fine performance.

Cam Robinson: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs. Switzerland - U18s

Excellent in transition - getting low to support the wingers, catch the wall to inside pass and get going. He's so quick and shifty off of those first three steps that it's an absolute headache to try and contain him. But then it got dicey. Throwing pucks into the middle without a ton of foresight, missing clean looks to work a give and go or simple a give, he fired a couple blind passes up

the middle that led to instant turnovers with his mates buried low. He also made a couple of high-difficulty, creative plays that were set up by his hands - one in particular stood out as he had the defender bite that he was going wide with speed, curled back and hit a streaking winger through a little seam for an quick scoring chance. Also came back and thwarted a couple of chances just by being so damn fast and relentless. A bit of everything from Moore in this one.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

There were some really exciting moments from Moore in this game, including one instance where you saw what a difference-maker his speed can be. Moore caught up with an opponent in the neutral zone, stole possession of the puck, and then immediately turned play in the opposite direction with a series of dangles before sending a puck to the slot that would've been a tap-in goal with better positioned teammates. Kind of the story of the tournament there. Moore is stringing together what should be really special passing plays that are just lost on his linemates. Eventually, Moore made something happen for himself, stealing the puck and then going in alone for the wrist shot goal. The physical skill is something to behold, and I think we'd get a better sense for his abilities as a playmaker with more skilled and intelligent linemates.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Oliver Moore continues to lack support. His teammates are rarely good options. He's the fastest player at this tournament by far, but as it's typical for him, his speed can lead him to make mistakes, as he tries to outskate opponents. He created turnovers on the forecheck, instantly beat two layers of opponents in transition, made cross-ice passing plays, manipulated defenders, drove the net, spotted the puck to teammates on the cycle...There is just a bit of everything in his game, but the decision-making holds him back (and also the lack of support on his wing). The sense is more of a 6 grade than a 7 one, however. Above-average, but not high-end. There is still a ton of opportunities in his game. He's a development team's dream.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

It's really hard to evaluate Moore in this environment. Not because of the competition but because of the lack of support on his line, all respect to Carey Terrance and Ryan Fine. I'm routinely watching Moore create exceptionally intelligent, creative passing plays through layers that turn into basically nothing - flubbed one-touch shots, mishandled receptions, plain whiffs. I'm getting frustrated on Moore's behalf. All the hallmarks of Moore's game are there. He's the clear driver on his line, a force in transition and a standout defensive player. Moore also scored a one-timer goal in garbage time. Not sure this performance moved the needle for me.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

A really strong performance from Moore, who was one of the Americans best forwards, if not their most consistent player from puck drop to the final horn. He brought it every shift. Moore's speed is just such a difference maker. It opens up offensive opportunities that just aren't there for other players. It's like he's sending area passes to himself at times, playing the puck into space behind defenders and exploding past them with weight shifts and explosive cuts. Moore's showing significant growth as a playmaker, too. Several layered, deceptive passes in this game, many of which resulted in Grade-A scoring chances. Moore picked up a goal with an excellent in garbage time, though it has to be said that the goalie was swimming so wildly that he was practically out of the frame by the time the puck was off his stick. Picked up an assist on a low-high pass from below the goal line, too. He looks like a no-brainer top-10 pick.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Moore was arguably the NTDP's best forward in this miserable game, which isn't saying much. He brought patience without losing the speed. Cut inside, drove wide, delayed for support, and looked to set up his teammates at every chance. In one sequence, he drew the defender's pivot before passing through them to the inside for a chance. Made an impressive one-touch deke through the opponent before cutting back. The defence was the highlight. He overcomes huge deficits of space to steal pucks and force turnovers. An incredible work rate to alongside a detailed, proactive defensive game. He still looks like a top-10 player in this draft. Top-six upside and the base of tools for more.

David St-Louis: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A great performance from Moore. Much better decision-making in this one. He slowed down to involve teammates in his play, especially off the rush. Same defensive involvement. Changes of speed to beat defenders and get to more favourable positions. And he only gets better at dragging defenders down the zone with his speed, and cutting back to hit teammates in the space he just created. He still gets rid of the puck a little too quickly when pressured sometimes, but his options aren't always evident. Skating is still close to elite. It might be elite. Hockey sense is still above-average for me. The handling skills follow the speed. And he has some instances of physical play. It's more of a weakness at this stage, but he gets in the right protective positions and he has the balance. I'm confident in his projection.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

The good and bad from Moore. The good is overwhelmingly good – top-line level. He has ridiculous speed. He erases huge deficits of space to win races. The motor is just as impressive. He never quits on plays, applies non-stop pressure, and defends like a pro – proactive down low coverage, leans on opponents but keeps his stick on the ice, and closes space on shooters before they even receive the puck. He's a menace out there. The skill stands out, too. He works pucks through opponents, plays the give-and-take, uses space and deceives opponents before making the next play. He has impressive habits, cutting inside before cutting back or instantly taking space upon pass receptions, for example. But he's not always aware of the next layer. He doesn't always make the best play, even if his tools and skills have already created it. But even if he can't figure that out, he'll play. He's just too fast, too intelligent, and too disciplined. A top-nine forward minimum, with top-line upside.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Not a great performance from Moore. He had a few moments, like great shots off passes prepared with deception, and some creative passing plays, but the inefficiency struck me in this one. Moore can't really figure out the play all that well when he runs out of evident options. He usually defaults to dangling or making cycle passes that are not all that well timed or set up. The hockey sense might be more of a 5.5-6 than a 6.5-7 as I previously thought. I see flashes of high-end thinking, but he lacks the kind of adaptability that make elite prospects. I still think he's a clear top-10 talent in this draft. Maybe Ryan Leonard could be ahead of him.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Moore's defence was really impressive. Positioned perfectly, turning on the jets when needed. He supports down low, scans off-puck, anticipates where the puck's headed, and provides short-range passing options for his teammates. The way he uses his speed continues to shine. He doesn't just cut back. He steps into space and leans on the opponent, then cuts back into space. He chips pucks into space and challenges opponents to race, which he always wins. First touch is just about always perfect and he's always pushing the puck when accelerating (instead of handling it) to further his speed advantage. He plays a give-and-go style, perhaps almost too much at times. Lots of creative deliveries, stuff like passing behind his back and tricky-to-spot passes through multiple opponents. He gets ahead of the play at times. But his mechanical advantages and vision suggest a player who will have an easy path altering and developing his plays. Looks like a clear top-10 talent.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs US - 4 Nations tournament

This tournament is exposing a few flaws in Moore's game. Not new ones (playing too fast, fumbling the puck, passing late...), but slight concerns. He never plays with as much talent as his top-line teammates, but he's not one to make teammates that much better either. He's mostly a solo driver on his line, trying to create every play. He's not selfish, not at all, but most can't follow his hyper-speed. He's left alone sometimes. Slowing down, involving others at their speed would do a lot of good for him.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

This is one of those games where Oliver Moore played too fast for his own good. He outskated teammates, killed his support, and made things more difficult for him. He also fumbled the puck trying to execute three plays at the same time. I love the

energy, the pace, and the intensity, especially away from the puck, but he would gain from slowing down just a bit sometimes and using his very real manipulation skills to go through team, not unlike Will Smith. Great reception details once again: he plans them, accelerates on first touch, and manipulates on first touch.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another standout performance from Moore, this one largely on the defensive end. He takes support seriously. Always comes back deep, while also managing play higher up in the zone effectively. He overwhelms with speed and pressure, but rarely overextends. When he did chase too much, he managed to get back into the play and steal possession. Times these low-high engagements – little risk. He had several exciting offensive plays, showing board skills (drawing pressure before cutting back and attacking the slot), playmaking (instantly making the next pass upon reception, even ones into the slot), and shooting skill (pulling pucks around sticks, slipping away into space). His transition habits are among the best in the draft: build speed under the puck, attack the middle, draw pressure, pass through it, relocate for the return feed. A couple of times he missed his passing target by failing to adapt to his puck positioning to the lane (i.e., not pulling the puck inwards or reaching out before the pass). That's fixable for a player with these tools and this much awareness. He looked like a top-10 pick with top-six upside. Skating, handling, intelligence, change of pace game, vision, and defence.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Moore creates so much on the forecheck. He's always on opponents, never letting them have any space, turning steals into offence. He plays at hyper-speed and can read the ice at that speed, chaining passes, dangles, cutbacks, and drag-shots, seemingly being able to contort his body to pull off anything he wants. The hyper-speed does make him miss some plays (he overskates them), but he's not one of those speed and only speed players. He uses teammates consistently, knows their position, and anticipates plays well. Defensive and offensive value, abilities to create offence from the boards, strong balance, high-level hockey sense, and one elite ability in his skating. I think he's a top-end prospect in this draft.

Daniel Gee: January 27th, 2023 - Bowling Green vs USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Moore is awesome -- one of the better performances by a draft-eligible player on the program in this game. Three-plus high-danger chances and production -- Moore didn't look out of place against NCAA competition. Moore will actively up his pace to better support teammates off puck, driving to the inside of defenders looking to lock him down in dangerous areas. On-puck he is crafty, understands how to manipulate gaps and create advantages. On one shift he wheeled out of the defensive zone, stopped up to create space against some neutral zone aggression and pushed laterally, finding a seam. Moore sprinted up the ice working a give-and-go that ultimately failed. He absolutely explodes out of pass receptions putting Bowling Green's defenders on their heels. He did this in the first, using hip-pocket integration, handling across his body to avoid a check, and pivoting away, finding a trailer -- the amount of room he created was immense. Space creation was a theme -- in the same period he turned a defender with his speed, dropped off the puck and cut to the inside, driving both defenders back. Linemate had half the zone to walk into and pick a spot to score. Some failed crossover laden rushes due to the puck being in front of his body, but he's so manipulative that he easily beats defenders on most handle plays. On one second period attempt he used eye-line misdirection to get a tricky shot off. Pass off pads, net crashes -- his transition game is not only developed but could do damage already in the professional game.

In sustained pressure he loved to work downhill attacks in this viewing. Integrates pivots and punch turns to escape into open seams and like in transition, looks to drag defenders deeper. Elusive off his edges he worked a spinorama in the first snapping a cross crease backdoor -- it just bounced over the tape of the target. Strong pass supporter -- always available in a seam.

Lots of defensive impact in this game as well. Was a main penalty killer and pushed a lot of pressure in transition. Outraced a Bowling Green defender on the end-boards, stole a puck and jammed the puck on net while trying to waste time. Backpressure forced a couple flip-ins. Gets under sticks and disrupts. Supports battles below the goalline. Looked more like a top prospect than Smith.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

There was one ridiculous sequence in this game where Moore received a pass while accelerating in crossovers, instantly read the backchecker's feet and attacked the middle, then dangled through another defender on his very next touch at full speed. That play, and many others, suggest that Moore has the draft's second-best functional pace after Bedard, just unreal stuff. But this was more of a defensive performance from Moore. He was everywhere on the forecheck, sprinting from one check to the next. He ripped possession away and immediately pressed the middle three times, once leading to a chance. Offensively, he left a lot of value on the table. He missed passing options, took low-percentage shots, and blindly threw pucks into space. To be fair, a lot of these were solid ideas, based on teammates actually being in supporting position. He plays too fast, not letting plays develop before distributing or attacking. The tools are incredible, but where he ends up on our board will likely be determined by how much he adds to his game in the second half.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Watching Moore is such a tough task sometimes. The skill is so impressive and you have to love his work ethic. On the other hand, the playmaking leaves a bit to be desired, especially in this game. If you were to take a silver lining away from this game, it's that most of the time Moore had the right idea with his passes. The problem was for someone with his speed, everything was just a step too late. The extra handle allowed forecheckers to get sticks in lanes sometimes, and on other occasions, Moore tried to thread the needle through multiple defenders only to get the puck picked off. The speed is obviously next level. In this game it was almost more of an asset defensively. Moore is so dangerous on the backcheck and forecheck and works to make himself a factor, often winning foot races and earning possession. Takes great routes and angles, too. Would love for him to use his speed better offensively, particularly off the puck to get to open ice as a support. A couple extraordinary solo sequences where he started churning his feet and blew by a D with a slick dangle at top speed. A nice release on the power play for a goal too. The potential is through the roof and I think that's the selling point here. He does need some refining with respect to his IQ.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

The best player on the ice. By far. So dynamic, so pacey, all over the ice, all the time, involved in every play, stands out every shift. Moore overplays sometimes; he's too fast for his own good, too dynamic, but it's a super translatable style. He has all the skating techniques, inside and outside edges, and he anticipates well away from the puck. He fights for the puck on the boards, wins it, and while he overpassed in situations where he should have shot, when he did use his release, one could see how effective it could be in the NHL. He scored with a catch-and-release that went post and in and almost put up another goal with an in-stride shot while attacking the slot.

Cam Robinson: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

This was a highly entertaining outing for Oliver Moore. He uses his speed everywhere. In transition with the puck, in short burst acceleration to pickpocket an unsuspecting opponent who thinks they're clear to exit the zone, while chasing down opponents in the neutral zone while killing a penalty. His wheels are everything. The legs clearly feed the wolf in this instance.

Against Div1 competition, Moore was the most dangerous player on the ice. He started things off with a controlled entry, with speed of course, and sent a little backhandhand to the slot that rattled to a mate. A1. He used the speed in the second period to go 100 feet, burn the defender and snipe it. Later, he caught an aerial flip, brought it down, and sent Leonard away for a speedy break. A1 number two. Finally, on the man-advantage, he called for it at the point, walked in, feint, cut outside and ripped it for the 4 point night.

He was integral on the PP, was killing penalties effectively and killing time while down two-men, worked the point well on the PP. Just a really fine outing. Of course, it wasn't all roses. He lost the handle a few times while blazing around. He lost some physical battles but wasn't shy to engage.

I just can't get enough of this kid's ability to move though. It's clean.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

You really have to keep your head on a swivel when Moore is on the ice. I'm fairly certain he caught like four unsuspecting Wisconsin players attempting to break the puck out with a well-timed stick-lift and almost immediately turned each steal into something offensively. God, he's so fast. It's unreal. I don't know if I've ever scouted a more natural skater in my time at Elite Prospects. It's not all tools, though. Moore manages space well, scans regularly, plays diligently at both ends of the ice. There's a lot to like. He picked up an assist on the first goal of the game with a shot-pass off the goalie's stick and onto Will Vote's stick for the tap-in goal. He scored his own by exploding past a Wisconsin defender and sniping one short side.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Speed, speed, speed, and not great puck management. That was pretty much Moore's performance. The skating is unreal. He pressured defenders on breakouts, stole pucks, evaded them with hard cutbacks (even Jack Gorniak, one of the fastest players in the NCAA). He didn't really know what to do with the puck after outskating both his team and the opposition. He had no option, so he was forced to delay and into cycle plays that didn't really work. Outmuscled on the boards, but constant effort to win pucks and stay with his check. A pretty good performance overall, but the puck management could have been better.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Not a ton of creation from Moore in this game, but it's tough to overlook the skill and speed he brings. He's not just fast, but he changes pace, cuts back, and prepares of all his 1-on-1s with proper form. Always wins positioning before touching the puck. Receives, recovers, and handles the puck in his hip pocket, always ready for the next play. He's always applying pressure on the forecheck and backcheck. Looked more like a mid-first in this game, but the tools keep him higher. Given his tools and style of play, adding new skills and reads shouldn't be too much of a challenge.

Cam Robinson: January 10th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs Michigan State Spartans - Friendly

The wheels; they are so damn good. He was flying against NCAA competition and leaving them standing still. One rush attempt, he grabbed the puck in flight from the back pass inside his own zone, made a little feint to the inside, blasted outside and beat the first guy. Enters the zone, hard cut to the middle before slicing back wide on a dime - completely crossing up the defender, two quick strides and it's a shot on net. He also buried an unreal wrister from a tight angle on the PP where he found short side cheese. Elite shot coming in. And it was all because of a speed-driven, shifty entry that he ended up holding onto, cutting across the top of the zone and shifting the entire scheme. He was a cheat code for entering with possession on the PP throughout, either darting in and curling back, or darting into the heart of 3 or 4 defenders, patiently holding on and creating cushions for his mates to slip into and then move it.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs USNTDP U18s - USHL

A solid showing for Moore, who got better as the game went on. Moore struggled with playmaking early, trying moves and feints without scanning, forcing passes, and getting funnelled along the wall. The speed is an asset but Moore doesn't always use it to his advantage. Rather than changing speeds, attacking different lanes, delaying, etc. Moore is often hellbent on turning the edge, only to get angled off into the corner. His success later in the game came from diversifying his rush patterns, getting off the wall, and making early passes and getting in position for returns. He had two nice tucks, one from earning position in front and getting a tip, the second from firing a well-placed backhand short side on an unsuspecting goalie. Had a beautiful cross ice assist from the half wall on the power play too. A toolsy player who just needs to use his talents a little smarter.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs USNTDP U18s - USHL

One of the better games I've seen from Moore. He lacks a bit of control right now, but it's normal when you break the sound barrier as often as he does. He weirdly didn't pass to a couple of completely open teammates in the slot, but he saw them. I think he expected them to step forward or something and when they didn't he froze. But apart from those hiccups, Moore was the same playmaker. Despite being able to skate around any defender in this league, he's still using teammates when it's the better play, pushing back defenders and dropping pucks into space or kicking it wide. His off-puck game is also pretty advanced, smart. He understands when to slow down and which routes to take to get the puck in prime areas. He uses give-

and-goes. He's one of the fastest operating forwards in the whole crop, and he's also capable of deception/manipulation, he goes to the net, attacks inside...Not much missing. His quickness is amazing, one of the best we've seen in the past few drafts. He can win any retrievals, even from a disadvantageous position. He makes picks for teammates, he's adaptable in his choices of play, and his speed serves his defensive game. He's the kind of player who could have a spot on a penalty kill and get a lot of breakaways. The skating is not textbook, but the accelerations are. This is someone who has innate speed. I think he's a top-10 guy. Not as refined in every facet as some other players there, but that's both good and bad. Moore could really explode... figuratively and literally.

J.D. Burke: December 16th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Cedar Rapids Rough Riders - USHL

Not what you'd call the best game for Moore or his line. They were on the ice for three of the Rough Riders six goals and failed to find the back of the net themselves; Moore just straight up missed his man on a cross-ice feed and watched as he deposited the puck into a yawning cage for one of those goals against. Moore's skill and physical ability was still off the charts good in this one. I'm really not sure that I've ever scouted such an effortless, powerful, and nimble skater as Moore. It's unreal. You couple that with advanced rush patterns, a give-and-go game, and plus-level skating habits and it's like everyone else is skating in quicksand. Moore had a few relatively good looks – a look-off shot through traffic and a one-touch try in the slot stand out – but mostly struggled to generate much in this game. It happens. I'm still fairly confident in Moore as a top-10 pick in this year's draft.

Cam Robinson: December 14th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Muskegon - USHL

Another eventful game for Oliver Moore. He blends his crossovers so quickly into the full stride that he can cut across zones and then take off all before defensive structures can adapt. It opens up lanes for him to make a pass, but more importantly shifts the structure so much that the secondary lanes that are created are often the more dangerous. An example was his first point of the game where he wheeled across the top of then umbrella with about a dozen crossovers; slid the pass to the goal line before Vote sent a between the legs dish to Perreault for the tally. Perreault returned the favour later with a nice dish to Moore on a 2-on-1 in the third frame. Moore was able to wait for it, get down, allow the pass to cross his body and finish it.

Moore had numerous chances created off his speed. On one play, he blew through the neutral zone like a rocket, received the pass off of his inside skate, kicked it up, corralled it and fired it all at top speed. Another, he blended those crossovers on the downhill, cut around the defender for a grade A chance. Loads to like about his ability to identify space both with and without the puck. The speed is a serious weapon.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Moore's an unbelievable skater. The form isn't perfect, but he flies regardless. His cutbacks aren't just textbook, they're explosive and he chains different moves immediately afterwards. Few players can flip between their edges like him, let alone at the speed that he does it. And there's also way he uses his skating. He prepares the cutback by leaning into the opponent, creating more space. He wins body positioning before touching the puck. He chips pucks into space and recovers them on the other side. Every wide lane drive is set up with a fake and weight shift that convinces the defender he's taking the middle. The playmaking comes and goes – he usually has projectable ideas but he makes blind passes and assumes a lot. Still, he looked like the best prospect from the NTDP in this game.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Moore is very fast. That's established by now. His skating is a bit weird, however. He has atypical, but even more pronounced USNTDP stride, the hunched over, flailing upper-body posture with shorter strides and a lot of crossovers. He flies with that posture, but he forfeits balance a bit for it. Otherwise, he's just as talented of a playmaker as ever. He retains awareness inside moves, manipulates...We didn't see those skills as much in this one, but the ideas were there. Defensively, he pressures well, especially on the forecheck. No one wants to win loose pucks more than him. He's a top-20 talent in this draft.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 9th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

I'm starting to worry a little about Moore. He's clearly gifted, but the playmaking and smarts that really intrigued me early on

have become few and far between and instead he's relying too much on dekes and dangles, most of which fail. There's still some reason for optimism, he's smart in his own zone and effective on the backcheck, picking up sticks in transition. He's most effective where he uses his eyes and chest to deceive instead of attacking triangles. Had one great look in overtime where he sold shot and slid it backdoor to Fischer who couldn't pull the trigger.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Moore was the best player in this game. He plays fast, doing everything in motion. He's always moving – crossovers, backwards crossovers, backwards skating, cutbacks, jabs, quick stops and accelerations – and not many strides. The hands don't match, but they keep up enough. At top speeds, he makes quick, short passes and repositions. At slower speeds, he tries to be more of a creator, manipulating opponents with fake shots and look offs before sliding pucks across. A nasty slip pass in this game. His off-puck movement's very impressive, moving into space at the right moments, engaging with defenders before pushing off, and reloading high in the offensive zone before attacking the slot with speed. He's like Brindley, but the tools all check out a grade higher. Exciting prospect.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Moore was excellent in this game, facilitating a good number of the NTDP's chances. His speed is his identity, he knows he can turn the corner on defenders at this level and often does it successfully. That said, I would love to see him develop more of a delay game, rather than attacking in straight lines once he gets over the offensive blue line, even though he is at this. Showed nice poise on a 3v1, where he outwaited a sliding defender to create a backdoor tap-in. Showed some nice off-puck habits too. Got high in the offensive zone when the puck was at the point to create a 3-2 formation, slid behind a winger to get a pass from the D, and got a quick shot on net. Smart and deceptive on odd-man rushes and was strong in the faceoff circle too. Picked off a pass to the point to create a 2v0 rush on the PK, slid it over for another apple. Fun player to watch.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 18th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Niagara University - NCAA

Moore centered NTDP's second line with Danny Nelson and Austin Burnevik. His skating is obviously his best asset and he uses it to solve problems through the defensive and neutral zones, employing stops and starts, cutbacks, punches, etc. The speed is a blessing and a curse, more of the latter in his own end. He's so quick that while he can anticipate and cut off passes, he sometimes over commits in his own zone and gets burned. In the offensive zone, I don't really see much of a delay game from him. It's a lot of trying to turn the corner and making a behind the back or cross ice pass. One nice sequence where he did delay and used crossovers to move to the weak side through high ice before creating a high danger chance, I wanted to see more of this, but it is at the very least encouraging.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - Five Nations

Moore sometimes looks like a one-trick pony. His speed is everything. It's the base of his game offensively and defensively, but then he also shows foresight in his passing, good timing to hit teammates when lane opens, and he has uncoverage techniques to support teammates by giving them passing options. He doesn't have a Smith in his lane to bounce pucks off, unfortunately. He creates and defends solo.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

What a performance from Moore. His skating continues to be his biggest asset, although it's a different kind of skating that we're used to. No straight-lines (his forward strides are actually not that efficient), but a lot of outside edge moves, cutbacks, quick turns, and even a split-stop that I've never really seen before -- all moves that he uses to shake the opposition and find passing lanes. He's all about pace and playmaking, but he's so pacey that this is going to be an advantage that he retains even at higher levels. He does everything in movement (again, pace): receiving pucks and passing; every move leads into the other, and he thinks the game at an above-average level, too, showing anticipatory abilities, capacities to play inside a system, and awareness. I really like his package. He could be a high pick in this draft.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A really impressive performance from Moore. The skating's incredible. The stride's not perfect, but he integrates linear crossovers into already explosive skating. Made up huge deficits of space several times in this game. He's always working to win races, be first on loose pucks, and create. Lots of skating skills: cutbacks, cuts, jabs, heel-to-heel, and more, and he uses them all at different speeds. He plays fast, slow, and constantly switches between. He establishes body positioning before touching the puck. He scans on every touch. He passes to the trailer, passes ahead, and cuts back and inverts front pressure. Sets up teammates on the backhand and under pressure. And while he could just burn defenders wide, he's always taking the middle when possible. He looked like a potential top-six, if not top-line forward. So much potential. With that skating and functional pace, he could be a top-five pick.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s vs - USHL

Moore is more elusive than smart, at least that's the impression I got from this game, but he does create with his speed and he spots in the gaps in which to use it. He pushes defenders back and changes fear, fakes them with a shot-posture, manipulates, and hits teammates with passes. He drags them one way and cuts back the other way....A lot of interesting plays. The skating looks like an above-average mark.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Moore was the best player in this game. He's exciting to watch. He beats defenders not just with speed, but with pace. He accelerates inside pass receptions and dekes. Fakes out incoming defenders with changes of pace and a well-timed heel-to-heel. Not every play worked, but his self-passes are generally intelligent plays given the positioning of the defender's feet and his speed. Plays a give-and-go game, too. Always finishes his off-puck routes. He makes the occasional high-value play, but he's not necessarily creating those opportunities through a superior understanding of the game. Instead, he plays the short game. Quick passes, given-and-gos, short-range plays to get his team moving with speed. Skating will continue to be an advantage in the NHL with depth, explosiveness, reaction time, and advanced edges. He could be a top-15 prospect in the draft.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s vs - USHL

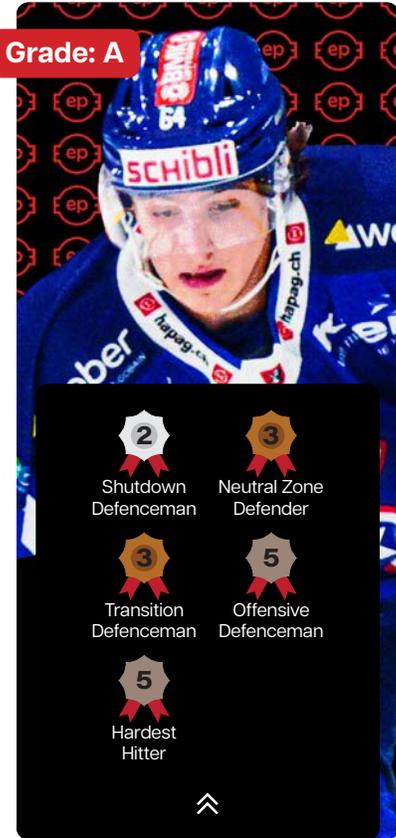
Sometimes, I'm afraid that Moore dominates only through speed, but then he pulls off incredible passing sequences, too. He does spot options and good plays even while trying to outspeed defenders. His outside edge moves have to be some of the best in the draft. It's striking how Moore can catch a loose puck and spring in a new direction, opposite to the one he just came with a single, deep cutback. He is a bit over-reliant on placing the puck into space and then outracing defenders to it. Again, is he only a speedster or a skilled overall prospect? Not sure at this stage, but he could be a top-15 prospect if we confirm the hockey sense.

Joey Padmanabhan: September 25th, 2022 - Omaha Lancers vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The best forward in this game, Moore's speed was on display throughout this game. He consistently beat opponents to loose pucks, demonstrated versatility in his rush patterns, and made himself a factor on the backcheck. There wasn't much more you could expect from him on a night where Smith, Leonard, and Perrault were relatively quiet. The skating alone looks to be NHL-projectible and his other skills were similarly impressive. Looks like he could be a high-end prospect in this draft.

Mitchell Brown: November 28th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Up with the U18s, Moore was one of the best players on the ice in this game. He consistently put defenders on their heels with his combination of speed and handling. If they didn't relent, he tapped the brakes and waited for the trailer. Missed a couple of these passes, but also connected with several high-difficulty ones for scoring chances. Not sure there was a player more involved in transition, as he frequently freed up the puck and skated it out of the zone himself before attacking the defence.



9 David Reinbacher

AGE 17.890 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 25, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Moritz Seider, Mattias Ekholm



Hammer



Transition Ace



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6	5.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	6	7.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
EHC Kloten	NL	46	3	19	22	0.48
Austria U20 "A"	WJC-20	5	0	2	2	0.40
Austria (all)	International	5	0	1	1	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

There wasn't a lot of fanfare for David Reinbacher coming into the year, but he's slowly but surely distinguished himself for many in the industry as the best defenceman in the 2023 NHL Draft. Talk about a glow up.

You can't say he didn't earn it either. A full season spent in one of Europe's most competitive men's leagues, the Swiss NL. A top of the lineup role with Austria at the World Juniors and then another impressive albeit short run in his country's colours at the World Championships. There aren't many better indicators of NHL success than experience playing ahead of your age group – better still, playing productive hockey ahead of your age group – and Reinbacher has it in spades.

Further scrutiny revealed that he wasn't just surviving those assignments – Reinbacher was a difference-maker at every level. He led EHC Kloten's blue line in total minutes at even strength and escaped with a team-leading plus-five goal differential.

It's easy enough to see how Reinbacher generated those results. His game rests on a projectable, rock solid defensive foundation. As opponents attack through the neutral zone, he gaps up early, builds speed going backward to match that of the puck carrier, takes away the middle of the ice with his stick, and closes with force once he's

David Reinbacher

D | Austria | WJC | Draft Year

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 74.2



registered support.

Standing at 6-foot-2 and equipped with a skating stride that's already a cut-above-average with room to get better – even when you've got Reinbacher beat in space, you don't really. His defensive range allows him to recover on a moment's notice should he commit early with his feet or find himself a step behind the play for any other sort of reason.

During in-zone play, Reinbacher excels in body-on-body scenarios, matching opponents footwork, driving through their hands or working a strong defensive stick to dispose them of the puck, sealing them off along the boards, and quickly transitioning from defence to offence. At the net-front, he easily boxes out opponents and wins rebounds and loose pucks with urgency and physicality.

He isn't quite as sophisticated away from the puck. His understanding of defensive rotations and switches still very much a work in progress. But these things can come with time and the sort of structure that he's likely to find himself in at the NHL level.

Reinbacher is already a capable puck-mover, able to explode past forecheckers, make a good first-pass, and even activate into the rush if the opportunity presents itself. He'll need to become more deceptive on puck retrievals and develop a better feel for pressure for him to elevate that part of his game for NHL competition.

There were some moments – particularly late in the season and at the World Championships – that convinced us Reinbacher may have the offensive chops necessary to produce offence at a decent enough clip in the NHL, too. His handling is dicey and he's not the most creative player with the puck, but he's intelligent and has some developed some habits that should allow him to take advantage of his considerable tools at the next level. Give-and-goes, managing space off-puck, activating from the weak side, etc.

So you may not be likely to see Reinbacher sit atop the NHL defencemen's leaderboard in scoring, but there's a decent chance that he'll generate enough offence to hang in a top-four role. Perhaps even on the high-end of that range.

So, when it comes to Reinbacher, you're looking at a contemporary defensive defenceman that can move the puck with the potential to develop into a secondary scorer from the offensive blue line. That makes him one of the best defencemen in this draft, and a damn good bet to go a bit earlier than where he's landed on our final board.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



With WJC showing David Reinbacher established himself as a top defensive prospect



What we learned at the 2023 World Junior Hockey Championships



Central European Stock Watch: David Reinbacher surging up NHL Draft rankings

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Best defender in the draft for me. More stay-at-home type for today's game. Like he's offensive, but I struggle to call him a great puck mover because of the standard we have for that now in the game." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's good. I think he's one of the three best defencemen in this draft. I think if you're looking for an all-around guy who can do everything, you're going to go with him." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I think he's fine in transition. I like his first pass and I think that sometimes he can just carry the puck up the ice like a natural when there isn't a first pass option. I don't think he has the ability to trick opponents at the blue line – look left and go right and vice-versa. I don't think he has that. But he's a really good all-around package. I can see a team taking him and plugging him into their second pair at some point. He's going to be a cornerstone on your defence." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"He is the best defenceman I've seen. I like what I saw. Size, length in skating. Smart player. Not high end in any one area. There's legit top-four upside. Moves pucks well. He jumps up ice. He creates odd-man chances 5-on-5. Probably secondary power play in the NHL. Penalty kill as well. Nothing flashy. Probably a valuable NHL defenseman. He's done it against men and was good at the World Juniors." – NHL scout, April 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 14th, 2023 - Austria vs. Sweden - World Championships

Reinbacher got injured trying to split the defencemen in this one after getting the puck through the neutral-zone. He didn't anticipate that he could get taken out with such a violent hit. It's too bad, honestly, because this was turning to be an amazing performance. Reinbacher was incredibly aggressive in his choices of plays all game. He controlled the flow of the play, looked for controlled transition passes, and landed many of them (although they could have been just a bit more precise). He made the right defensive and offensive rotations. He shifted the defensive box with rapid footwork at the point, attacked down for backdoor plays, and attempted give-and-goes with teammates constantly. His skating looked like a clear above-average mark and his stickhandling like not a problem at all. A great puck distributor and even some creativity. I'm sold on him as a top-10 pick and maybe even as a number.2 NHL defenceman. Such a safe player with a lot of upside, too. With just slight technical and processing improvements, he could dominate NHL shifts. Honestly, he might even be a better defence prospect than Nemeč and Jiricek were last year. Not convinced of this, but his skating is much better than Jiricek and he manages the puck better and he's just way more aggressive than Nemeč. I like him a lot.

David St-Louis: May 13th, 2023 - France vs. Austria - World Championships

Reinbacher is still missing the finer reads and handling skills, but his offensive game kept improving through the season, and now, against a weaker competition like this, it shows up consistently. He's running around the zone looking for pass options, constantly activating up ice, and creating zone exits and entries. Again, the plays aren't precise, but he's 18. He has time to tighten up some of these feeds and the ideas supporting them are great. He's quite intelligent and he knows what the next play should be, where and how the puck needs to move -- it's just putting everything together.

Marek Novotný: April 29th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Austria - Friendly

The Austrian defender played quite well in the friendly against the Czech Republic. He played in the top pair, he was very confident. I especially like how calm a defender he is, he reacts very quickly to the development of the game and thanks to his skating he is everywhere on time. He uses his range very well, his pokechecking is quality and physicality is his main strength. At the same time, he can react well when facing odd-man situations. In this game, for example, he disrupted an almost certain goal pass in the forechecking area. He was also part of the PK and PP. He controls the blue line and can find the shooting lane. His stickhandling is a bit of a problem. Top prospect.

Marek Novotný: March 11th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Bern - NL

David Reinbacher is an extremely interesting defenseman that I enjoy watching. He's a big right-handed defenseman who has good skating, is a calm yet aggressive player who does big things on the ice. First of all in the defensive zone he looks like he has all the control whether it's scanning, being able to engage the physicality or getting rid of pressure from opposing players. The Austrian defenceman reads the game well, he has great strength which he demonstrates by easily outmuscling adult

opposing players in the Swiss league. He uses his range very well. He consistently uses the pokecheck when facing the rush, has no problem in battles at the boards, and if he sees he is losing a battle, he becomes more aggressive and can turn things to his side. In the offensive zone, on the other hand, he controls the blueline well and sends dangerous shooting passes or slap shots. In the game, he faced a 3-on-1 situation and disrupted the cross-ice flip pass with his composure and range. Opposing players ultimately didn't capitalize on the shot. He lacks stickhandling, which is obvious when he was in tough situations and could have shown some maneuvers.

David St-Louis: March 9th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Bern - NL

Another great defensive performance from Reinbacher. He's already so strong. He can box opponents much older than him completely out of the low-slot, pin them to the boards, and swipe the puck away from their sticks. He controls the neutral zone and is always switching and checking his man in the defensive zone. He could turn into a high-end defensive player in the NHL, one of those physical and mobile and rangy defencemen who don't give any space to the opposition. Offensively, his poise is increasing, but he still lacks that high-end mechanical fluidity that make great powerplay quarterback, although the instances of fakes before passing and hard shots from the point (he scored on one of them) suggest that he may transform into at least an average NHL playmaker from the back. A top-end prospect in this draft.

David St-Louis: March 2nd - EHC Kloten vs. Rapperswil - NL

Another awesome performance from Reinbacher with a few more offensive flashes. That's honestly what I'm looking for the most. I trust his defence. I trust that he can play 20+ minutes a night in the NHL as a shutdown element, but I want to see skill from him, more mechanical fluidity, and he's showing more of it as the season goes on and his confidence rises. He catches pucks in movement, moves them quickly, attacks for backdoor plays, and even holds on to possession to let plays develop. He has hints of deception in his game. A great project for a development team, on top of being almost a sure-fire NHLer. Really feels like a top-10 pick.

Cam Robinson: March 2nd, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Rapperswil - NL

Really stout defensive performance from Reinbacher in this one. He mirrors rushing footwork extremely well, positions himself to force players and keep them to the outside, he can physically move them from the net front, box them out of the slot, he was switching well with his mate. But that rush defense was really something for a kid in a pro game. He was moving the puck well and reading opportunities too. He was activating on the weak side and timing his arrival to receive a pass in motion and quickly decides where to go/move it too. This is the type of performance that scouts are looking for to give the indication that he'll be able to blossom into a true two-way defender with the offensive generation side coming along. Maybe I've been too hard on him. He looked like a top-10 pick in this one.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. SCL Tigers - NL

A top-10 performance from Reinbacher. His defensive anticipation is still not a strong point, but he's a great engager and he's getting more and more comfortable handling and breakout the puck even under pressure. He used the net to shake forecheckers and carry the puck out and passed to a couple of teammates in the middle of the ice. It's really his physical skills that stand out the most, however, as he can already outmuscle players much older than him. He wins every retrieval by establishing body positioning on pucks. His skating looked like at least a 6-grade.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Lausanne HC - NL

Reinbacher's play-killing ability is already really impressive. He's aware, consistently scanning for his man both in-zone and off the rush. Occasionally concedes too much space but can recover well due to the skating. One really nice rush breakup where he was caught in an unfavourable situation, was still able to stop his man with smooth footwork and physicality, then start a counter-attack with a quick pass. He does get caught by forecheckers occasionally when he's not careful with back pressure, same goes for retrievals. I've liked the offensive experimentation with passing. He still shoots a lot from the point, but more and more has started to use the threat of the shot as an advantage used for cross-ice slap passes. Hard to one-time those pucks

given they're often coming in at such a velocity, should probably tone that down a bit.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Bern vs. EHC Kloten - NL

Reinbacher still has some technical limitations and his offensive instinct is not up to some of the other top defencemen we have seen come through the draft in past years. Yet, it's hard not to like him. He's so aggressive and not just defensively anymore. He tries plays, jumps in the attack, protects the puck, and skates past opponents. He's engaged in the play, physical, and wants to create advantages for his team. There is a lot of potential there if someone can help him refine his handling and skating skills.

Daniel Gee: January 31st, 2023 - EHC Ajoie vs EHC Kloten - NL

Reinbacher looked the part of a top-end defensive prospect in this game. His transition game was especially impressive. Reinbacher constantly worked the breakout in-motion snapping hard-tape passes. He resets too much, especially when faced with pressure, but at least he isn't jettisoning pucks. He constantly found dangerous pass seams through the neutral zone and flashed some manipulation habits on his retrievals. Reinbacher also worked a lot of proactive speed off-puck, working in-stride to push the transitional attack forward. His best sequence was in the second. Reinbacher reached for an opponent cross, bursted through the puck reception, carried the puck in off the near boards and drove the net, executing a backpass against the grain to a trailer, all while he cut across drawing attention. A high IQ play. Has protection habits and can fend off pro's off his edges and shielding arm. Reinbacher already pushes a bunch of translatable habits in the offensive zone. He walks off walls and tries to get to the middle of the ice to better his shots. Not afraid to activate, protecting in his hip pocket while he scans for seams. Manipulates pressure on the blueline with fake-passes and slap-pass plays. Reinbacher also anticipated the subsequent play well in this one, dropping down the perimeter to stuff clearing attempts. Will pass into space instead of conceding a turnover and even one-touched a couple of pucks off the line. Shot is hard and Reinbacher constantly is moving to work pucks into his wheelhouse.

Limited defending in this game. Reinbacher had a few sequences in transition where he was able to push aggression on some poorly protected pucks. He understands switch offs and where to recover during breakdowns. On one shift he quickly detached from one threat and took out a secondary shooter with a stick-in-release stop. Flashed the physical side of his game in sustained pressure. Absolutely sent a man horizontal on an endboard hit. I love his profile, he could play NHL games right now -- will need to work on small-area game and continue to leverage his manipulation habits to overcome the heightened pressure at higher levels.

Cam Robinson: January 31st, 2023 - EHC Ajoie vs Kloten - NL

The feet were moving in this one. Offensively, he was jumping into the play regularly and asserting himself as an option. He was receiving in-flight, making little lateral adjustments as he carried, and attacked inside the dotted line. He even made one play where he entered with possession, cut across, handled the puck, faked and then went back against the play for a nifty backhand pass. Really clean stuff. The play smothering was here as well, as he defended the line with an active stick, and stepped up to completely close the hole on one play and laid an opponent out. He knows how to defend against speed at this level, and can alter his pace to mirror what's in front of him so as to not give too wide of a gap. His awareness was on display as you can see him anticipate where pucks will go at both ends of the rink, and it allows him a jump on things. There's a lot to like here.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Geneve-Servette HC - NL

Reinbacher's breakouts have gotten a lot cleaner from the beginning of the season, I think. He's more comfortable both as a carrier and a passer. There were sequences that really highlighted his skating, which looks like a legitimate high-end tool projection-wise at this point. On some retrievals, he wasn't as aggressive as he could've and should've been, giving up space for the opponent to gain body positioning and win the race. Offensively, he's still very focused at shooting from the point, but does mostly a good job at getting the puck through the pressure and has a knack for shooting for deflections and rebounds. Still, he probably should be activating more from the point to maximise his value; his skating should allow him to recover nicely if he's caught slightly off position.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - EHC Klotten vs. ZSC Lions - NL

Reinbacher is capable of some creative plays. A three-zone bank pass led to a breakaway for one of his teammates and a goal. He mostly showed his defensive side in this one, sticking to his check with his footwork and boxing out attackers. He's not yet a shutdown force (he does let up and give some space to attackers at times) but he's on his way there. We still have to figure out the upside.

Lassi Alanen: January 25th, 2023 - EHC Klotten vs. ZSC Lions - NL

This was a rougher game for Reinbacher's team, and he he got beaten pretty cleanly off the rush to the inside and for a goal – not something you see every day. Still, a lot of things to like again as well. The skating continues to impress, even if he overcommitted that one time when defending the rush. The physicality was notable in few occasions, rocking an opponent with an open-ice hit near the OZ blue line. There was one sequence where Reinbacher from three months ago would've for sure dumped the puck in, but he instead used his skating and reach combo to carry the puck cleanly to the zone, drawing a penalty in the progress. There's been clear growth since the World Juniors, probably got a bunch of addition confidence.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - EHC Klotten vs. HC Ambri-Piotta - NL

I'm a believer in Reinbacher, he continues to improve his league play after a very good showing on a bad team in the World Juniors. Got two primary helpers at evens here, the first after his point shot was deflected and another one after his fake shot into pass for one-timer got converted from a really small angle. There's probably quite a bit of inflation on his current point totals (at least a little bit), but it's still impressive. It's mostly the defensive game that impresses at this level, as he did mostly really well against the rush and on retrievals, shoulder-checking both directions and mostly making the right decisions even under pressure. The puck skills are a bit iffy still, but the skating is a major strength. Once exploded off a DZ faceoff and carried the puck out in a situation where the vast majority of defenders in this draft couldn't have. Another time saw him activating off a NZ faceoff, receiving the puck near the OZ blue line and then slipping a beautiful pass to the middle for a rush chance. He's a bit unrefined in many ways, but I see way more upside than I did in my first viewings of the season.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2023 - Austria vs. Latvia - U20 WJC

Another impressive game from Reinbacher. Burned once early in the game, stepping up and across to make up space (he should have stopped and built backwards momentum instead of lunging forward). The rest was strong: he takes away the middle early, comes across quickly but never exposes his heels, and finishes every closeout with force. Always on the hip of his check, never over-extending off-puck. Physical force. With the puck, he's a bit awkward because of his rigid top hand, but he's comfortable moving the puck across his body and pushing it forward with one hand when possible. Proactive activator. Compresses the zone, times his pinches well, takes up space off-puck. Stays in deep after activating. Hit a shot-pass for a high-danger look, showing his vision. On breakouts, he cuts back, passes through pressure, and beats forecheckers into lane. A bit of deception, too. Lots of cross-lane plays. An advantage creator. He looked like a potential middle-pairing defender in this game with lots of runway. Could be a top-15 pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 30th, 2022 - Germany vs. Austria - U20 WJC

Probably the game I was most excited to see coming into the tournament, and Reinbacher didn't disappoint. By the numbers, this was a massive performance, at the time posting the fourth-best single-game Game Score from a blue-liner in the tournament. The defensive potential's high-end. He wanders in the neutral zone, but recovers, times his engagements at the right moments, and never exposes the space on his heels when defending the rush skating forwards. A consistent angler with a punishing play-killing style, although he's prone to mechanical breakdowns. Always follows his check off-puck, disengaging and re-engaging at the right moments but his athletic posture must improve (spends a lot of times with his legs straight, resting on his heels). The other standout component is the activation. This isn't usual stuff. He proactively reads space up the weak side, launches himself into space, and even goes straight down the middle. Had two chances, first cutting across the front of a defender off the rush, second by jumping straight down the middle of the offensive zone and fading wide to get open. Always finishes his routes and even takes opponents' sticks to create space. This was his best game with the puck in the

tournament. The hands are a bit clunky (locks his top hand to his side when moving, but tries to put pucks in his hip pocket), but he generally pushes the puck into (the right) space and keeps his head up. Lots of little passing skills, delaying to pass on a forechecker's heels, passing under their sticks, or hooking pucks around them – he tries to create advantages. A little panicky along the walls, but options are often limited, and the ideas are usually sound under pressure. Maybe not a top-10 pick-type performance, but he's right there. Looked like a potential No. 3 with a bit of imagination, maybe even a No. 2 if the puck skills improve by a grade.

Mitchell Brown: December 27th, 2022 - Austria vs. Czechia - U20 WJC

Blowout game, but Reinbacher had some moments, for sure. Late in the game, he pivoted early, angled, poked the puck away, dangled through and stepped to the inside on the forecheck in one motion, faked out the incoming forechecker, and started a 3-on-1 rush. A couple of slick retrievals, highlighted by a double cut in tight to deceive and escape. The only Austrian defender to have any moments defending the rush, keeping a wider base, taking the middle away, and closing distance when necessary (was rarely targeted because of Austria's NZFC). Pivoted early and matched speed, but never overextended. No needless exposure. Rare to see a player so refined at defending the rush in so many different ways. Tough to stand out in a game like this, but he showed NHL skills.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Austria vs. Czechia - U20 WJC

I continue to be very impressed with Reinbacher's performances. Who blocks a point-blank shot when down 8-0? Reinbacher. He has that kind of defensive grit and consistency of performance. He over engaged sometimes in this game, but for the most part, he brought a lot of structure to Austria's team whenever he was on the ice. He should be playing 28 minutes, not 15. The defensive aspect projection is mostly a lock at this point. We know he's going to be good defensively. He could become an elite rush defender, too. But the puck plays are getting better. He manipulates the forecheck with angles (drags them one way, passes the other way) and skate fakes, doesn't pull off all of his plays, but the majority yes. He makes quick passing plays, activates with pace (activations also help his rush defence), and he consistently moves to create lanes, on first touch with powerful lateral strides. I really like this prospect.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Austria vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

WOW. This guy might be a top-10 pick. The tools are massive. Two strides to separate from anyone, puck skills that are NHL-caliber (and could develop), and a really advanced physical game, timed hits, pins, establishes body position. There is a real sense of timing and a desire to pressure in his defensive game; he doesn't overcommit, but when he does commit, he hurts. He pushes attackers to the outside off the rush, at five-on-five, and on the penalty kill (playing Austria's hyper-aggressive formation well). And there were more flashes of offensive abilities in this one: attracting players before passing, manipulating them (once or twice), and activating up ice. I was looking for him to show those offensive flashes in the early part of the season. If he keeps it up at this tournament while maintaining the defensive projectability, watch out. I'm not sure where his climb will stop on our board. That's how unreasonably excited I am about this ridiculous performance in a completely loss game. Never gave up, was engaged all through it.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - EHC Kloten vs. Geneve-Servette HC - NL

I can respect Reinbacher's defensive tools from the skating to the reach and defensive work rate and physicality, but his on-puck play left a lot to be desired. Fumbled pucks along the boards, easy passes hit the forwards' feet. And many times there wasn't any noticeable pressure applied either. The best sequence saw him activate through the middle, receive the puck on top of DZ blue line, enter the zone with a slight delay and then hit the trailer with a simple yet the right pass. He could end up being a very hard player to truly rank. I'd very much like to see him in a different environment.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Kloten vs. Geneve-Servette - NL

Reinbacher did not manage the puck well in this one. A lot of fumbled and missed passes, rushed plays, etc... His potential is all in the tools, the good posture, physicality, and reach. Reinbacher looks like a more imposing defenceman than a 6-foot-0 one.

He has a sort of presence on the ice with his mobility and the potential it gives him to close on threats and box them out. He's unafraid to push back against much older opponents. There is some hidden offensive potential; maybe he has a sort of Seider-like offensive development, because he does try some plays, but the lack of touch and confidence is a bit worrying right now.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - SCL Tigers vs. EHC Kloten - NL

A pretty standard Reinbacher viewing. The defence remains the biggest selling point, both off the rush and against the cycle. He has the physical tools and the mindset to kill plays along the boards and near the DZ blue line, staying on his man effortlessly even against strong competition. He could probably already hang in the NHL with his defensive game. The play with the puck wasn't as encouraging; missed targets on pretty simple breakouts. He had a few nice moments where he had the patience to delay and deceive, waiting out the forecheckers before actually passing in another direction. Not many puck touches in the OZ in this one. He's probably going to go pretty high due to his profile, but I'd want to see more consistent play with the puck to buy into all of the hype.

J.D. Burke: November 19th, 2022 - EHC Biel-Bienne vs. EHC Kloten - NL

Puck touches were few for Reinbacher in this contest (we're talking single digits), but he made most of them count. He turned a low percentage slap shot into an assist, bouncing the puck off of the goalie's chest, his linemates shin pad, and into the Biel-Bienne goal. At one point, Reinbacher fished what would've been a sure goal off of his own goal line, too. Mostly, this viewing highlighted Reinbacher's strengths as a defender. Nothing too, too high end, but the Austrian defender consistently made calm, calculated, proactive reads, and then dominated opponents along the boards physically. Reinbacher consistently registered secondary and tertiary threats, too. The skating looked good as ever. Looked like about a mid-first-round pick, but I need to see him play with the puck a bit more before I land too decisively.

David St-Louis: November 13th, 2022 - Denmark vs. Austria - Germany Cup

We saw more of Reinbacher's offensive game in this one. He carried a few pucks, used deception to try and freeze forecheckers and wait for a play, and seemed to retain an awareness of his option as he moved all over the ice. His skating enables him to walk the line offensively and improve the location of his shot. There is nothing particularly advanced about his offensive game, but if he can maintain the same effective plays in the NHL, and become this shutdown force that he has the tools to mould himself into, the above-average mobility, reach, and physicality, then he will be a top-four defenceman for sure. Reinbacher has had good and less good performances so far this season. His projection varies from game to game, but if he keeps an upward curve in his development, he could end up in our top-32 or even higher.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Denmark vs Slovakia - Germany Cup

Reinbacher continues to struggle on retrievals. He just doesn't have the right techniques to shake the forecheck. But he can hold possession on the walls, get it back, and then escape with a couple of powerful stride to hit a teammate. He anticipates well off the rush, pinching at the right time, gapping at the right time...The skating is incredibly smooth, a clear above-average grade. It helps him find passing lanes.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - EHC Kloten vs. HC Lugano - NL

Pretty unimpressive showing from Reinbacher here. One nice sequence where he was partly breaking up a play in the DZ, carried the puck near the blue line in tight before dishing a breakout pass to the middle. He scanned quite a bit on breakouts before puck reception, but the passing accuracy/decision-making was lacklustre. Looked timid with the puck at times. Not many OZ touches. Have to watch more.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - EHC Kloten vs. SC Bern - NL

Reinbacher actually managed to look very good here. The defensive game remains very projectable due to the physical tools (posture, skating, reach) and his mindset was on point, too, gapping up early in the NZ, creating stops and immediately

moving the puck up the ice with crafty one-touch passes. Opened the game with a high-danger chance after recognizing an opportunity to jump the rush via middle and receiving a pass after a cutback after an entry. Also logged a primary assist later with a smooth cross-ice pass in the OZ. The retrievals were still a bit shaky at times. He was scanning the weak side a lot, then pivoted the other way and got caught a few times. The puck skills are average at best, maybe slightly below. There's a clear path for him to becoming an NHLer and he's flashed some upside, too. Interesting player to monitor.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Bern vs Kloten - NL

Reinbacher is not comfortable making plays with the puck, unless they are laid out for him. The puck skills are decent, but it's really just a conservative mentality. He makes rims, chips instead of trying more direct passes on breakouts and regroup, shoots at the net in the offensive zone (barely moving to create lanes)...His whole game is defending, something he can do well one-on-one due to his combination of size and skating, but not as whole away from the puck due to lesser awareness and anticipation. He's probably a pick, but the upside is bottom-pairing so far.

Lassi Alanen: September 30th, 2022 - EHC Kloten vs. HC Lugano - NL

Reinbacher had a few flashes with the puck on breakouts, drawing in pressure, taking the middle lane and then making an long outlet pass. Also added a primary assist after one of his shots got deflected mid-air. Other than that, it was not a particularly encouraging performance. Didn't seem to figure the gap control at any point, sometimes giving too much space and other times committing too hard, leaving him exposed to feints and dekes. Defence seemed very reactionary. Run out of ideas on multiple breakouts. Offensive game was heavily focused on point shots.

David St-Louis: August 15th, 2022 - Switzerland U20 vs Austria U20 - World Junior Summer Showcase

Reinbacher seems to me like a potential solid NHL defensive defenceman. There are flashes of more in terms of puck skills and the mobility to go with it, but the lack of anticipation (he only reacts) makes it hard to envision him taking over games at the highest level. He could be a player who survives very well in limited minutes, only we see a massive skill and confidence development out of him, and when he's playing in the NLA this season, he won't have the environment to experiment.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2022 - EHC Kloten vs SCL Young Tigers - Austria U20

I'm looking back at those games after watching Reinbacher's draft-year. He was basically the same player last season in Junior hockey, but with more offensive flashes. The handling skills were still a problem at the time, the physicality was still impressive and the mobility, too. He seemed to control the ice a lot better than his teammates. He anticipated the flow of the play well, too, and connected plays, bringing the puck from the defensive zone to the offensive zone, trying give-and-goes, and even some deceptive passes.

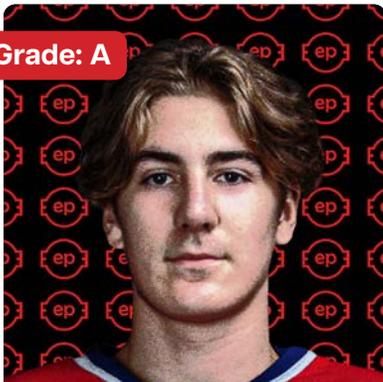
David St-Louis: January 28th, 2022 - Biel Bienne vs. EHC Kloten - Austria U20

Reinbacher is capable of deceptive plays, but he's not the most assertive offensive players. Or, maybe his coaching staff prevents him from attempting more difficult, risky plays. A couple of times, he had a backhand pass option in the middle of the ice on breakouts and he didn't take it, afraid of creating a turnover. But he also carried the puck the length of the ice and wrapped it around the net and picked up a second goal on the powerplay half-wall. He pulled off a cross-ice pass and then got the puck in return pass. He one-timed it in. I like what I'm seeing.

David St-Louis: January 15th, 2023 - EHC Kloten vs. Winterthur - SL

A couple of really nice offensive flashes from Reinbacher in this one. He took every puck he got in movement, in lateral slides, to create some distances from defenders. He beat defenders outright with his skating and handling moves and attacked down to take on the goalie. He delayed, took the puck back to teammates to avoid forcing it through the opposition, and seemed to keep up defensively to an extent. He lacks a bit of quickness, but it's normal at 17 years old in a professional league.

Grade: A



10 Dmitri Simashev

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Jacob Slavin, K'Andre Miller



Hammer



Play Killer



Fleet of Foot

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

201 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

7

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

7.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lokomotiv Yaroslavl	KHL	18	0	0	0	0.00
Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	29	1	9	10	0.34
Loko-76 Yaroslavl	MHL	4	0	2	2	0.50

1

Neutral Zone
Defender

1

Shutdown
Defenceman

3

Four-Way
Mobility

4

Straight-Line
Skater

4

Hardest
Hitter

5

Transition
Defenceman

SCOUTING REPORT

Dmitri Simashev defies logic. Six-foot-four, 18-year-old defenceman just shouldn't be able to skate the way he does, and if you do, you should probably have a fair bit more to show for it on the scoresheet than the pithy 12 points he amassed across 33 MHL regular season contests.

Yet across our viewings, a lot of crossover scouting among them, our confidence in this player's ability never waned. He's the real deal and we're confident he'll prove it with time.

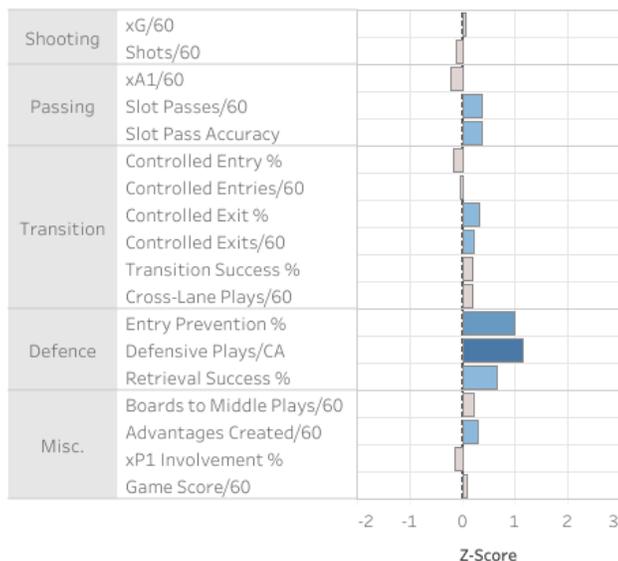
You have to remember, this whole exercise is about determining what the prospects in this year's draft will look like three, four, five-plus years from now – not today. And when you look at everything Simashev brings to the table, it's pretty easy to be confident that better, more productive days are ahead.

Sure, you start with skating. He has perfect posture, sinking deep into his stride, with ample flexibility through his hips, knees, and ankles, allowing him to generate power and agility that few can match.

That's not where the conversation ends though. There's so much more there.

Dmitri Simashev

D | Loko Yaroslavl | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 229.4
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



"It's really not a contest. Dmitri Simashev wins," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an article comparing all of the

top defensive prospects out of Europe's physical tools. "All of his main abilities, his skating, handling, and physicality project as high-end in the NHL. And as he's 6-foot-4. He probably has one of the largest wingspans in the whole draft, too...Strictly in terms of tools, Simashev is an NHL team's dream."

Though we haven't quite seen Simashev leverage these unique physical gifts to productive ends over a sustained sample of play, it's worth noting that there were signs of a turnaround in the MHL playoffs – points in six of seven contests at one point, aided by a pair of three-game point streaks.

This wasn't really a flash in the pan either. Simashev's second half of the season was just plainly more productive, with 11 points across the final 17 games of his draft year – a 0.75 per-game points rate that would place him comfortably in the top 10 all-time among first-time draft-eligible defencemen in the MHL.

Becoming more sophisticated and daring with the puck will allow Simashev to make good on his promise at the next level. Little things like going for the best option rather than the expedient one in transition, activating with more regularity into the rush, better managing space from the top of the offensive zone. All stuff that's well within his means.

In the mean time, Simashev's projection to the NHL is a relatively easy one because of the defensive foundation that's already in place. He gaps up early in space and can match opponents speed with relative ease, and his considerable defensive range allows him to recover if he's lost a step. He can match opponents footwork with ease in the small-area game, taking away time and space before closing with force.

So, bear with us. Simashev may not look like the draft's best defenceman on paper, but you can't judge a book by its cover, right? With the right development plan, he has the potential to not only be one of the best defencemen in his class, but among the NHL's best defencemen period.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Russia Stock Watch: Matvei Michkov taking off with HK Sochi



Russia Stock Watch: Marat Khusnutdinov reaching new heights with SKA

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I loved his game on video, but once again the Russian factor here makes it hard for me." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I don't know if he's the best defenceman in this draft, but he's certainly one of them. You've got to love the skating. He just glides all over the ice. When you see him skate, the first thing I thought was, 'wow, that's a player who's going to handle 30 minutes in the NHL.' I think the sense and skill look good, maybe not high-end, and with that mobility, he's certainly one of the best defencemen.

"He makes pretty good plays with the puck. As for upside, there just aren't that many high-end defencemen in every draft. If you look at the NHL, how many true power play defencemen are there? Maybe 10, right? There's that next group of defencemen who can play on the power play and they have some deception and they can contribute, and I can see him becoming that second-unit kind of guy. And if you have many better options than him, you're in pretty

good shape.” – Eastern Conference executive, May 2023

“Big, can move. Looks like he has some puck play. He’s up ice defending. He looks like Mukhamadullin at his age.” – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: March 22nd, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHC Spartak Moskva - MHL

Still not that confident with Simashev as a top-10 pick, even if the tools are great. I might be underestimating his hockey sense a bit, but I still continue to leave these games wanting more from him. Partly, it’s an issue with play selection that should improve, but partly I just don’t see him making high-end plays with the puck all that often. Breakouts are too inconsistent for a player with his skill set. He actually activated a bit more often than in most of my previous viewings, making a couple of well-intentioned weak side movements from the point, just couldn’t quite time them right to keep the cross-ice passing lane open. The defensive projection is still high-end, for sure. But should he be ahead of Reinbacher on our board? I’m starting to think maybe not.

David St-Louis: March 21th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Spartak - MHL

Smooth. That’s how one could best describe Simashev. He’s so technically proficient and rangy and agile that every play blends into the next, softly, assuredly. I’m not going to describe his tools again, but they continue to shine. And I see more flashes of sense than I did in the first months of the season. He’s aware, knows his options, can turn defence into offence, but he’s not that creative. He picked up an assist in this one by feeding the puck to But for a breakaway coming off the penalty kill bench.

David St-Louis: March 14th, 2023 - Mikhaylov Academy vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Guy is a unicorn. Reputedly 6-foot-4, skates like the wind, high-end agility, physical skills, at least average puck handling skills, and more and more creative ideas. The hockey sense is closer to average than above-average, but he has the right ideas now at the offensive blue-line. We see more shot fakes into lateral passes, more pucks caught in movement and carried along the line, harder shots and passes to teammates in the slot. He kills opposing rushes and can easily engage on opponents on the boards. He’s not one to read and understand multiple variables plays, but will that really matter? He has sooo many solutions to plays because the tools are ridiculous and he’s smart enough. His situation might not allow him to develop properly, however.

Cam Robinson: March 11th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs AKM Tula - MHL

At the MHL level, Simashev is a smothering presence. He thwarts oncoming rushes with his footwork, his closing speed, his active stick and his penchant for denying the line at every opportunity. He’s so large and so mobile, that playing against juniors looks almost too easy for him at times. In this one, he was more active in jumping into space without the puck and looking for offensive opportunities to create. He didn’t show too much lateral agility at the top when trying to clear lanes, but he also had five shot attempts and all five found the mark - including one that found the back of the net. There was one play where he carried along the blue line while opening up his hips and threw two pump fakes while working those edges before firing it through. It was a nice glimpse of what we can hope to see more of.

It’s difficult to project exactly what his offensive upside is as he’s not the most creative with the puck or with his routes. But he does flash some things that indicate there certainly is more to come. And even if it doesn’t, his ability to shutdown plays in-zone and disrupt rush attempts will make him a very worthy NHLer.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - HC Loko vs Mikhaylov Academy - KHL

Simashev’s technical ability is simply ridiculous. He’s gifted. It’s so easy for him to close out on opponents, break up a play, take the puck, pass it, activate, and get the puck back for a shot. He’s mobile, sufficiently skilled as a handler, has physical abilities and the desire to use them, and he builds his game from the defensive end up, in the sense that he cares about defensive

details, applies them, and does so successfully. Again, the hockey sense isn't a strength, but it's not a weakness either. He has some more imaginative plays and the NHL game would be much easier for him, considering his uncommon tools, than most others. That's worth a lot.

J.D. Burke: February 23rd, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Sakhalinskie Akuly - MHL

An effective albeit boring 22 minutes of ice time for Simashev in this contest, which he left with one shot and a plus-one rating. Not much to speak of offensively. Simashev had one somewhat exciting activation – an end-to-end rush that ended predictably with the puck being swatted from harm's way because of how far he handles it out in front of his frame – and one decent look during a sustained pressure. That was about it. Simashev was efficient in transition, but I didn't see anything particularly exciting there. His defensive range is unreal. I don't know if I saw enough creativity with the puck to rate his offensive projection as a particularly ambitious one, but if you skate as well as Simashev does at 6-foot-4, then you're going to play. I'm also open to the possibility he has more to show offensively than we've seen thus far this season.

Lassi Alanen: February 14th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg - MHL

I'm still not quite sure what to make of Simashev. You can't deny the tools and the technical proficiency, and the defensive play-killing ability is a top-notch projection. The way he's able to use his mobility and defensive skating combined with a strong defensive stick and understanding of defensive angling and physicality is impressive in every viewing, and he's able to smother a lot of plays off the rush as of result. Handles himself well during in-zone sequences, too. There's an easy path for him to play from that perspective. The breakouts and the offensive upside are the things that concern me. You're making a bet that his hockey sense, most notably play selection will improve (which it usually does when you have such high-end tools). His passing timing was a bit off, he was passing to already covered teammates. He's not leveraging the skating to the fullest extent, prefers to pass instead of carry. Offensively, I didn't see much. A couple of point activations, using the mobility to beat the first man. There were some give-and-go ideas that his linemates didn't realize.

Cam Robinson: February 10th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs Dynamo Moskva - KHL

A low-event outing for Simashev in this one. A big part of that was opportunity as he was held to just six shifts and none in the final half of a mostly-tied game. He made two nice pinches - one in the NZ to stop a rush before it could get rolling, and another early in the 2nd where he flew down the wall and kept the puck in and the play alive. He did get a bit caught in-zone defending but got back in time before it hurt the team. He made some nice retrievals – very straight forward but his skating allows him to get back, recover and quickly move the puck while under duress.

Dylan Griffing: February 7th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

Another rock solid game defensively from Simashev, he still looks like he belongs at this level. Like Sochi, Amur are a bad KHL side, but still much more difficult than junior. His positioning on opposing rushes was great, stick and body position forced play out wide where he could close down physically or force a low percentage shot. He was so quick to close off space and was winning battles like a veteran of the league. As for with the puck, he played safely. Really patient, usually assisting the breakout rather than starting it himself, but there were some sneaky, smart plays mixed in there. Few touches in the OZ, tried waltzing the blueline once and couldn't break away from his man and he inevitably had it poked off his stick. In a perfect world, we would see more glimpses of his offensive skill at this level, but he is clearly playing like he's told to not do much more than win possession for his team.

David St-Louis: February 7th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

Great defensive performance from Simashev, both off the rush and in the defensive zone. He closes his gap early and fast and has the skating ability to match the speed and footwork of players much older than him. He's physical and can pin opponents to the boards and also evade them with hard cutbacks. The hockey sense still looks average, but honestly it doesn't matter too much with the tools and structure that he has. He even had one play where he walked the blue-line with the puck, head down, and managed to shake a couple of defenders. The puck got pokechecked away -- he should have looked or anticipated the

counter -- but it was still an interesting play: Simashev is developing more offensive confidence. It's good to see. The more he experiments, the faster he'll improve.

Dylan Griffing: February 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

Simashev's skating looked absolutely awesome this game. He's a real contender for the best skating defenseman in this class, especially given the frame he has compared to the rest of his competitors for that spot. Defensively, he was rock solid as per usual. Cutting off passing lanes, using his physical advantage along the boards, and putting himself in positions to make plays with the skating. He reads plays defensively at a high level. The issues from early on in the KHL season remained, though, with a handful of rushed passes immediately after a takeaway. He still did manage to put together some nice, stretch passes. Would they work against a better KHL team? Well, that's a different question. Not a ton of touches in the offensive zone, but he had two standout plays, both revolving around his skating and escapability from the blueline. Created a big scoring chance after breaking a defender's ankles and sending a pass/shot towards a teammate, but the goalie got to it first. Right now, it seems the hockey sense with the puck is his biggest weakness, and, to me, it's not really that weak an area, just inconsistent. The combination of size, skating, defensive sense, and reach are all fantastic. A top-10 pick for me.

Cam Robinson: February 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

Sometimes it's easy to forget that we're watching a kid playing so well at the KHL level. Simashev only saw about 11 minutes of ice in this one, but he was highly effective. The skating is clearly his best attribute. He uses it to cut off lanes, to tighten gaps and force the carrier into mistakes. His long reach aids in this and he boasts a really active stick in open ice against the rush, and along the wall to fight to strip and steal. He's also not shy about using his big frame to get inside position and hold onto it.

There wasn't much in the way of offense in this one, but I enjoyed his ability to gain possession and then make heady transition passes from the DZ and NZ. He received the puck in flight several times and made a little shift before moving it to a mate to keep the rush building.

A highly toolsy player with size and terrific defensive habits. There's going to be a spot for him in a team's top four for a long time.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

What a game! Simashev was still the same engaged defender, shutting down rushes with his skating and breaking cycles with his reach, but it's really his puck-moving and offensive game that shone the most. He has more space here than he will have in the NHL, but he's making the right plays. He takes pucks in movements, fakes at the right time, and then slides away from forecheckers and defenders. I don't think he's a high-end thinker of the game, but even if he's just an NHL average projection, with his tools, it's still worth a top-10 pick. He's scoring more, too, so that makes it easier to slide him up.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

We only really saw flashes of Simashev's ability in this one. Had a surprising amounts of difficulty moving the puck with control at the start of the game, opting for weird dump-outs even when he should've been able to make a better play from the position. Later on, he started to flex his muscles a bit more, combining his smooth four-way mobility with passing against the grain to the middle for a slick breakout. The defensive stick and presence are still impressive, even during a quieter game like this. The best offensive moment came at the point out of a faceoff when Simashev waited for his partner to move, delayed the pass by threatening with a shot and then no-look slip passed the puck for a scoring chance. Still, the overall contributions were left short. You'd want to see more involved performances from a potential top-15 pick, especially at this level.

Mitchell Brown: January 5th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

The potential is immediately obvious. Simashev's a fluid skater and puckhandler in all directions. He easy builds speed backwards, frequently uses near-complete crossovers when handling, and effectively uses his outside edges. Passes pucks from

backhand, under pressure, and even behind his back. Both his outside and inside leg wrists look like NHL shots; they're quite refined for a blue-liner at this stage of development. In this game, he did almost nothing of note with the tools. The aggression holding the line was impressive; how he closes on opponents and keeps his stick in the right lane to avoid getting beat through. He angles and keeps attacks wide, but also drifts too far wide and commits to engagements too early. On retrievals, he scans and makes simple plays, moving through his passes and activating into the rush. Head up on most retrievals/when necessary. Puck decisions were often weak – passing to teammates with pressure, inaccurate plays, making easy plays with better options. He could be a top-four defenceman, but he could also just be a bundle of tools.

David St-Louis: January 5th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

This wasn't Simashev's best game, but we got to see a bit of everything still. The tools are as great as ever, above-average skating combined with a fluid handling ability and a penchant for playing physical -- many hard pinches on opponents. The offensive decisions could use some work. He passes to covered teammates and rushes some of his plays; he didn't create many advantages on breakouts in this one, didn't always see the better play, but he was involved offensively all through the game. I still think he's a top-15 prospect, even if the results are somewhat poor and the hockey sense probably a 5.

Dylan Griffing: January 4th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

Simashev opened up his 2023 with not just one, but TWO points. It's kind of funny how he makes these awesome plays at the offensive blue line, but both of his points in this one came from the most anticlimactic plays from his perspective. Again, this league isn't a challenge for Simashev. Defending is too easy, he's more physical than anyone on the ice, smarter than anyone else, and executes after making quick reads in the DZ. His skating continues to look awesome, it may even be a 7 grade for me at this point. So fluid in all four directions with his frame is going to project so well to the next level. Would love to see him back in the KHL before the season's end, but he's really pushing hard for a top-10 spot on our next board.

Lassi Alanen: January 4th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

This definitely wasn't the best Simashev viewing I've had and got me double-thinking where we have him ranked currently. The defence and the skating remain big assets, but he hasn't shown as many flashes of offensive and transition upside than he did in my early viewings. Some odd transition moments where he opted for uncontrolled plays under pressure. The difficulty of the league should be considered, too, and he plays on one of the best teams. I feel like I should be seeing more, even if ironically he's now started to rack up points. I guess it mostly comes down to how highly you value the tools.

Dylan Griffing: December 25th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krylya Sovetov Moskva - MHL

It's becoming less and less about his performances and more about praying that he puts up some points. At this point, great games are just the expectations set for him and he keeps living up to them. He just eats people alive, kills attacks, and turns plays the other way. The offense continues to impress, though, he's becoming more of a menace on the offensive blueline, using his edges and shifting body weight to send defenders the other way and then opening up space to work. He's not the quickest, but he has good speed for his size and has the skating ability to get around guys at this level. He's looking like a lock for the top-10, even if he has three points to his name this year.

Lassi Alanen: December 24th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krylya Sovetov Moskva - MHL

Simashev finally recorded a primary assist in the MHL. Funnily enough, it was just a simple drop pass to his teammate who went through the NZ and scored a beautiful solo goal, but a primary assist nonetheless. He actually had some trouble moving the puck in this one. Retrievals seem to be a relative weak point, turning the puck over with a bad pass and not using his skating advantage to beat the F1. In the OZ, he actually got more chances than average, whether it was by activating on the weak side or joining the rush as a second option. Defensive game wasn't really tested here.

Lassi Alanen: December 13th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg - MHL

Simashev remains a pretty dominant force at this level. Made multiple defensive breakups and defended the rush with a lot of poise and confidence. With his reach, skating and physical makeup, he's going to be a pretty easy above-average defensive projection to the NHL. Good stuff on breakouts, mixing simple passing plays with puck rushes with his feet. Didn't really get tested on retrievals given his team was on top of the game all the time when he was on the ice. Definitely has more offensive upside than the point totals would suggest.

Dylan Griffing: December 13th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-Varyagi - MHL

Simashev is having a field day in the MHL, so confident, so smart, and so many dangerous chances created leading to another pointless game. He's still clinging onto the single point he has this season, but the offensive upside is certainly shining through despite that. He's starting to make the most of all of his puck touches rather than focusing on shooting, deceptive moves to activate from the point, great skating to get around guys, and the playmaking was awesome in this one. Probably could've had a multi-point game if his teammates could just finish off the chances. Still has his moments where he looks out of place with the puck, but they're becoming less and less common as he grows more and more confident. Uses his teammates well, mixes in his fair share of highly individualistic plays, but given his KHL track record, I don't think those flashes are going to be mainstays in his game. He's seriously making a strong case to be the #1 defenseman in this class and I'm all for it.

Dylan Griffing: November 30th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

Another awesome game from Simashev. Still no points, but on the ice for three goals for, plus showed off some great puck-moving ability through his hands and passing. Really liked how quickly he read his surroundings to determine his next move, plenty of escapability, and clean passing to finish off his moves. The confidence is there for sure, perhaps overconfident at times – skated into a 1-on-5 at one point, turned it over, but had a nice deke mixed in before he eventually lost it. Don't see the overconfidence as a problem, it's his first time really trying this stuff this year and he needs some points to boost his draft stock. Strong defensive game as per usual, even threw in a pretty big hit!

Cam Robinson: November 30th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

My first official look at Simashev illustrated quickly why our team is high on this player. He skates beautifully. Not just for a 6-4 player, but as a whole. He didn't use it to really ramp up the pace and continuously lead the rush, but he just looks extremely smooth out there. He was able to recognize threats, gap up effectively and protect the line. He got unlucky a couple of times for some goals against but nothing egregious.

He was physical. He was good along the wall. I liked his routes to retrieve pucks and escape pressure. Looks like a pro playing a junior game but without the clinching offense. Would love to see that too.

David St-Louis: November 30th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

Simashev again shows pretty much everything you want out of a defensive prospect. He's physical, boxes out, hits. He communicates with teammates defensively, switches on his man, uses his stick to deny space, and kills plays near the blue line. He uses deception in his passing and tries to evade the forechecking F1. And he also has some offensive moves. His plays are not always precise and they are limited in "reach", in the sense that he just moves the puck to the next guy, not really looking to make killer offensive plays, which partly explains his low production. The lack of pace is a bit concerning and the lack of scoring, too, but he remains a high-end prospect in this draft.

Dylan Griffing: November 28th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

This was the most active I have ever seen Simashev and it was pretty awesome to see. He didn't always look comfortable with the puck per se, but he still showed plenty of confidence. He just needs to work on how to finish his moves sometimes because he was pretty evasive and dynamic, the decision making hindered his effectiveness. Still, a lot of good moves with his skill and skating. Very reliable puck movement, especially compared to the other defensemen on Loko in this one. Defensive game was as good as usual, even playing against an offensive dynamo in Ivan Demidov, he kept him quiet when they were out there

together. This guy is definitely pushing to the top-15.

Lassi Alanen: November 28th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

I can't believe how Simashev hasn't scored more this season based on how he plays. Sure, he's got a strong projection defensively due to his skating, reach, size, physicality and aggressive mentality to kill plays early, but he's also trying a ton of stuff with the puck. The decision-making isn't perfect, and he got himself in trouble a few times, but the tools are so obviously high-end in many ways, and he's showing willingness to push them to their limit, which you love to see. Some of the handling sequences were a bit awkward, but he pulled off multiple impressive moves, too. A big shot from the point as well, quite surprising he hasn't scored with it yet. Even flashed the ability to shoot in-stride from his inside leg off the rush.

Dylan Griffing: November 9th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

Simashev returned to KHL action after a stint in the junior league playing against pretty weak competition. Always good to see a player be able to adapt his environment because the skill gap between bottom feeders in the MHL and bottom feeders in the KHL is still immense. Solid game on the defensive side as usual, looks like he belongs in the league from that standpoint. So frustrating to watch him with the puck, though. Another Chayka/Grudinin situation where the player has puck skills and has shown them off in other leagues, but he clearly isn't being allowed to try things or doesn't want to risk losing his roster spot. Quick passes and shots just to get the puck on and off his stick in a hurry. This was probably going to be his most ice time of the year, but he picked up an injury in the 2nd period and missed the rest of the game. Looks like he'll be missing out on playing for the U18 team at the Cup of the Future.

David St-Louis: November 9th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

Simashev was clearly not as confident with the puck at this level as he has been in the MHL. That's pretty typical for such a jump in competition (and with coaches asking him to play simpler). But the defensive game is already extremely projectable. Just the size and mobility will make him an above-average NHL defender. He also anticipates puck movements, pinches proactively, loads his leg to close out on opponents before the puck gets to them...A lot of good stuff away from the puck. In puck-moving situations, he showed the usual habits: moving on reception to find lanes and scanning, sending pucks into space... I really like this player.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Mikhaylov Academy vs. Loko - MHL

Simashev sometimes looks sluggish when handling the puck. It's best to not overrate his handling/passing ability, but also to keep in mind that his profile, a 6'4" 17-year-old defenceman, is often a bit behind the curve in terms of finer mechanics and he's already well above-average in terms of footwork when shadowing opponents. It's very hard to escape him; he's suffocating, especially for opponents who get close to the boards. They expose themselves to pokechecks and pins. Simashev is not just a defensive defenceman, however. He has offensive awareness. He spots teammates; it's just connecting with them that can sometimes be harder for him. He has no problem relying on the boards or lobs to get them the puck. He seems like a better-safe-than-sorry defenceman who could definitely learn better ways.

David St-Louis: October 21th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Atlant Mytishchi - MHL

Ten seconds in, I already knew that Simashev was my kind of defenceman. He skated the puck up-ice, great posture, used that posture for deception, skated in and made a simple, kick pass to a teammate, fully in control. The skating is a clear above-average grade even if he played at a low-pace in this game and he's got the rush to complement. He was calm, poised all game, making much more advanced breakout plays than we usually see in the MHL, and even feinting defenders in the offensive zone to reach teammates. Honestly, he showed everything I want out of a defenceman -- albeit against low competition. If he keeps it up, he's going to become my top defenceman for this draft and a likely a top-10 pick.

Lassi Alanen: October 21th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHK Atlant Mytishchi - MHL

Simashev has a case to be the best defenceman of the 2023 class. There's just so much to like about his combination of size, skating, willingness to try stuff at this level. It's actually very surprising he doesn't have more points based on how he's played in my viewings. Constantly looking to leverage his mobility off the point with edgework and quick feints. One superb cross-ice breakout pass through multiple layers for an exit and an entry, one high-end cross-slot shot assist with deception. Strong defensive effort, too, aside from a few odd charge into a scuffle that his partner luckily covered for eventually. The offence might lack some refinement, but he has ideas and the willingness to push the envelope.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Russkie Vityazi - MHL

Simashev's tools are just superior for this level. The start of the game was pretty quiet, but then things started to get going. He skated circles around the opposition a couple of times, drawing two penalties in the process. In the best sequence of the game, he forced a dump-in, received the puck quickly, took a few crossovers to exit through the middle, entered the zone and beat the defender wide, driving the net for a high-danger chance. Very strong posture, good crossover usage and explosiveness, clearly a strong athlete. He beat opponents near the point with weight shifts and feints, had intention behind his activation and flashed playmaking skill. Solid defensively, very hard to beat cleanly due to his skating and reach. Looked like a potential top-15 pick, to be honest.

Dylan Griffing: September 30th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Severstal Cherepovets - KHL

Simashev's minutes took a tumble for a few games, but he was back playing 12 minutes in this one. Perhaps it was the MHL game, but he looked much more willing to do things with the puck. Carried it out of the defensive zone and dumped it in to the offensive zone once and activated from the point and showed off some skill to dodge around one defender – he just didn't find any passing lanes, so he took it around the back of the net and wheeled it around to his partner at the point. Not a fancy play or anything, but it's a step forward and progress is progress. Defensively, he played really physically. Not giving an inch along the boards and really getting involved to break things up. Looks like he could use an extra step of speed, not really challenging on loose puck races and getting into defensive positioning early instead of going all out for it. Got exposed on one rush, leaving his man open on a 3-on-3 rush and seeing a dangerous shot attempt for Severstal.

David St-Louis: September 28th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Torpedo - KHL

These performances make it seem like Simashev could survive in the NHL right now. He has the length and the skating and he's pretty mature in his defensive approach, proactive even, at this level. He boxes out early, gaps up, but not too much when there are multiple threats, scans for attackers, scans in retrievals, but of course, rims and glass-and-outs pucks, like it's typically the case with KHL rookies. But then, he gets the puck at the offensive blue line, walks it, aims for sticks, and can shoot at them with pin-point accuracy. I thought he created a deflection goal, but I guess it must have been disallowed. A great performance.

Dylan Griffing: September 23rd, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-194 St. Petersburg - MHL

Day off for Lokomotiv, so Simashev went and played his first MHL game of the year, accruing 13 minutes of ice time. His mature, simple style of defending remained prevalent, which wasn't much of a surprise. It's clear he belongs at the KHL level because of the defending alone, so it was more interesting to see what he was doing with the puck. He definitely looks more comfortable trying things at this level. He has pretty average or slightly below average hands, so he isn't going out there trying to beat every guy he sees, but he was skating with the puck more, using his edges and weight shifts to slip past defenders with relative ease. There's puck-moving attributes that he hasn't been able to even try at the KHL level that he was able to show off here that make me like this player even more. He'll likely return back to Lokomotiv, so maybe this game will have given him the confidence to get a little more creative with them.

Dylan Griffing: September 19th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dynamo Moskva - KHL

Simashev got 13 minutes of ice time in this one, which is absolutely huge for him. He didn't disappoint, either. He remained playing his simple style, scanning the ice but opting for mostly d-to-d passes. He made a few long stretch passes that were pretty nice, but mostly he was the pass before the zone exit. While simple, he was making smart passes that were opening

up the ice for his team to break the puck out. I would still like to see more out of him in that regard, though, because whether he is limiting himself or his coaches are, seeing some more creativity would be a breath of fresh air. He did try some things I haven't seen from him much this year, simple, but effective puckhandling, aggressive to keep loose pucks from exiting the zone, and patience at the blueline. Things are starting to click on the puck for Simashev, but it's still holding him back from being a legit top talent this year. Defensively, things remained positive. Hiccups positionally while defending the rush, but he was using his physicality much more, closing down space quickly, and reading the ice really well. Seriously no major complaints in his own end despite this being the most difficult opposition he's faced in the biggest role he's had with Lokomotiv. If he can keep this consistency up, he may just spend the whole year with the KHL club, which is just crazy for a player of his age.

Dylan Griffing: September 7th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk - KHL

The lack of on-the-puck play is really becoming a concern for me. He really struggles to execute passes and doesn't really have much skill. He did make one nice, deceptive play to take out a forechecker and open up a passing line, then passed it right into his teammates boots. The defense is what's going to keep him in the KHL, but it doesn't seem like he'll be getting chances higher up the line-up, seeing as they stopped playing him entirely about midway through the 2nd while the game was tied up.

Dylan Griffing: September 4th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Traktor Chelyabinsk - KHL

Once again, Simashev just stuck to his role and did a really solid job. He was given a bit more playing time, only three shifts in the second period, but got quite a few chances in the third when Lokomotiv was easily winning. Played some strong defense, physicality clearly isn't an issue for him. Moves well to close off positions, covers the inside, and maintains good gap control. With the puck it was all simple passes or zone clearances, not trying to do too much, but still ended up with some shot assists for his troubles. Would like to see some more creativity with the puck, but he's probably not going to be able to given his role with the club.

Dylan Griffing: September 2nd, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg - KHL

Simashev made his KHL debut in Lokomotiv's season opener and he did his job out there. This was the role I figured he would play – 7th defenseman, eat up minutes, clear the zone, leave. He finished with just over seven minutes of ice time, which was more than expected, especially after not playing in the first period at all. He made one nice defensive breakup and then cleared the zone which was the first, and really only, impact he had on the game, but it was enough for his coach to start giving him the nod a bit more.

Dylan Griffing: August 13th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dynamo Moskva - Friendly

More of the same in this game, solid defensive game with no breakout skill. He just can't seem to get the timing down – rushing when he doesn't need to or waiting too long and letting pressure go face-to-face with him. It may just be the feeling out process, because I haven't seen this much struggling from him in the MHL, but he needs to be able to transition to playing against harder forechecking competition quickly if he wants a spot on this team.

Dylan Griffing: August 10th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Severstal Cherepovets - Friendly

Simashev is a great example of what a simple, intelligent, and rangy defenseman looks like. He isn't pushing the envelope of what a defenseman should do and he is more of a pure shutdown guy. He closes gaps quickly, uses his size to his advantage, and reads plays super well. There are definitely head scratching moments with him, primarily on breakouts. The simple nature of his game leads him to a lack of creativity and a lot of bounce passes just hoping for the best. I think it comes down to him trying to be in control of the puck for as little of time as possible to negate the potential of an even worse turnover and, thus, lose minutes. I think he will be getting KHL minutes this year because of his defensive game, just to eat up minutes, but he will need to clean up his on-the-puck game if he wants to be more than a 7th defenseman for Lokomotiv.



11 Dalibor Dvorský

AGE 17.252 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Elias Lindholm, Bo Horvat



Versatile



Tactician



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

6'1"
Height

201 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

5
Skating

6.5
Shooting

5.5
Passing

6.5
Puckhandling

6
Hockey Sense

7
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
AIK J20	J20 Nationell	10	10	11	21	2.10
AIK	HockeyAllsvenskan	38	6	8	14	0.37
Slovakia U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	8	5	13	1.86
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	5	1	2	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Few players are as familiar with the ups and downs of navigating their draft year better than Dalibor Dvorský.

It feels like he's been doing it for the better part of three seasons.

An early arrival on the 2023 NHL Draft scene, Dvorský has long been thought of as one of this year's very best offerings, even viewed by some as a top-three talent at times in his draft-minus-one season.

A good-not-great year with AIK in the Swedish second-tier HockeyAllsvenskan took some of the shine off of the Slovak centre in his draft year, but a distinguished performance in his country's colours at the U18s meant that he got to end the affair on a high note.

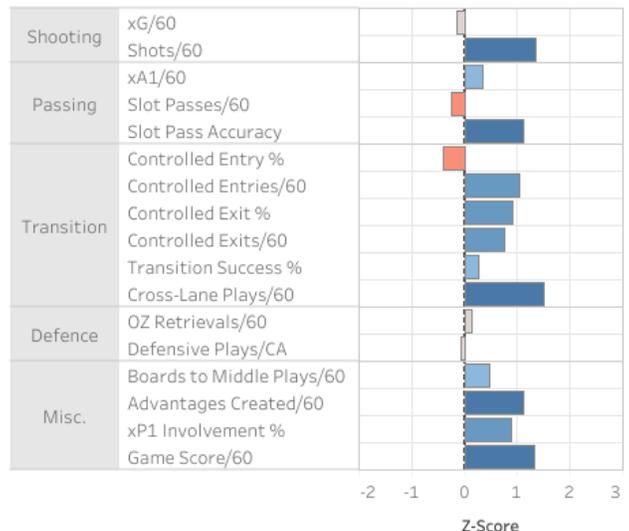
Now the industry is left to detect the signal from noise and try to make sense of Dvorský's true talent level and where it ranks in this year's draft.

For Elite Prospects, it was a back-and-forth affair all year, with Dvorský starting the year at No. 8 on our first board, before falling to 11, then 17, and finishing the season off at 10.

Let's start with what we know about Dvorský. He's a reasonably skilled, exceptionally detailed and intelligent two-way centre who

Dalibor Dvorsky

F | AIK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 166.5
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



has acquitted himself well in one of Europe's best professional leagues for the better part of two years. The production hasn't quite aligned with his reputation – even when adjusting for the setting – but he's been value and then some anytime he's played among his peers internationally, the lone exception being at this year's World Juniors.

That's a hell of a starting point. The sort of thing that almost certainly augurs some level of NHL success. Certainly, we have a hard time imagining a scenario where Dvorský isn't at least a capable middle-six centre at the NHL level in the not-so-distant future.

The more difficult part of this evaluation was determining whether there was more in store at the next level.

It's not that Dvorský didn't flash high end skill. It's that he almost exclusively, well, flashed it. This wasn't a consistent facet of his game across our viewings, particularly in HockeyAllsvenskan.

At his best, Dvorský was a confident, skilled handler, a lethal shooter, and a capable distributor, though these skills diminish when he's at full speed, something our Swedish regional scout Jimmy Hamrin has keenly observed this season. He's more quick than explosive too, a good skater but perhaps not a great one. His anticipation serves him well as a playmaker, but he's not exceptionally deceptive, by any means. His shot is well above-average and perhaps the closest he comes to having a defined separating skill.

Is that enough to be a first-line centre at the next level? Well, perhaps not as currently constructed, but with the right development regimen, it's well within his range of possibilities.

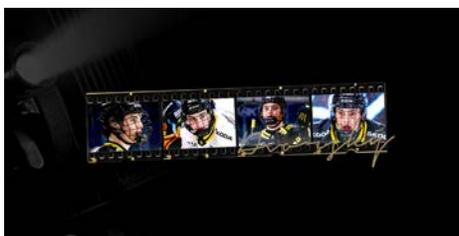
Whatever the case, while we may not quite be bullish enough on Dvorský for our ranking to align with those that make up the Elite Prospects Draft Center's consolidated rankings, it's not that we don't see what they do.

At the very least, you're getting a matchup centre that can anchor a middle-six line and drive strong territorial results while chipping in on both special teams units. You know, a Swiss Army Knife-type of player that every coach wants to see on their roster sheet. That's the baseline for Dvorský, and perhaps he'll use that as a springboard up the NHL scoring leaderboard in time.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Film Room: Exploring 2023 NHL Draft Prospect Dalibor Dvorský's Potential



Standout draft-eligible performances at the 2023 World Juniors

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I really like what he did for Slovakia, I think you get a bit more on those kids from international play because they have to carry things, they don't get to play with a top line like the kids from USA or Canada do. I really like what he did at U18s, I really like how smart he is." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's got very good hands, a very good shot, good hockey sense. He's strong on the puck. I didn't think that he had a lot of pace at the U18s, but I didn't think that pace was a problem when he played with AIK in Sweden. I don't know if it was because it was a long season or whatever it was, but it seemed like he slowed the game

down a bit at the U18s. Everything with the puck is really, really good.

He has the skill and the shot to be a top-10 pick. He's got a really good wrist shot, it's quick and accurate. I don't know if it's the skating or the pace, but that makes me a little bit worried there, but it wasn't an issue in Sweden. Yeah, I would say he belongs in the top 10." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I think he's a great player. He will probably be a top-10 pick at the draft. He's a young '05 but a great leader in the locker room. On the ice, he's a great kid and a great player. He's a great guy." – Adam Gajan, May 2023

"The two most intriguing guys in this draft are Dvorský and Šalé. Dvorský at Hlinka two years ago was like 'oh my god this kid is special.' Look at the skill level, shot, I.Q. He's had a weird year in a lot of leagues. Some beyond junior level stuff. Probably too much too soon. Reminds me of the Shane Wright situation with leagues. Crafty, intelligent, high-end skill. Needs to engage more consistently and work hard off pucks to get pucks. Work harder on skating. Still think he's a top-10 pick. He's boom or bust." – NHL scout, April 2023

"Great person, great friend. I've known him from a young age on some of those younger international teams. I'm really happy that I could play with him. He's a great teammate and a great player on the ice. I hope he'll have a good ending at the tournament." – Roman Kukumberg, April 2023

"He's a great leader and he showed it in deciding points in the games at this tournament. He did a great job." – Slovakia U18 head coach Tibor Tartal, April 2023

"He has a shooting instinct and he's very strong with the puck. He can find space on the ice where he's able to score." – Slovakia U18 head coach Tibor Tartal, April 2023

"I think I'm a good offensive player with a good shot, strong on the puck and a good understanding of the game. I'm a two-way centre. I play like myself, but when scouts ask me [who I model my game after] I usually answer John Tavares or Anze Kopitar. I think I'm similar to them. Both are really strong on the puck and have a similar skill set as me." – Dalibor Dvorský, April 2023

"He's a hockey player. He plays a pretty complete two way 200-foot game with above average sense – needs to improve pace but his motor will allow him to overcome this. Solid prospect." – Western Conference scout, March 2023

"Probably the safest player outside of the elite handful. Pro strength and 200 foot game. We've seen high-end production but that likely isn't his game in the NHL." – Western Conference scout, March 2023

"He's a workhorse. Drives play up and down the ice. Defends well. Won't be a big point guy, but has an energy line future." – Eastern Conference scout, January 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - U18s

Dvorsky does have more advanced playmaking ideas. Here, with more space and a manageable competition, we see them resurface. He gained in confidence over the event and now he's pushing back defenders and dropping the puck to teammates inside space, distributing the puck deceptively on the powerplay, and even orchestrating and directing the offence from that spot. His game has a lot of potential. He's not a finished product and I'm sure we will see his speed improve quite a bit over the next years. His mechanics are sound. He just needs the strength.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

Probably not Dvorský's best work at this tournament, but there were moments where he flashed his skill and his sense all the same. He actually picked up the lone Slovak goal in this contest too, jumping on a rebound around the goalmouth and pushing it across the line. Just as easily could've picked up another goal on a handling move, were it not for a pretty solid save by the American goaltender. There was clearly a concerted effort on the part of the Americans to shut Dvorský down, and I think he struggled under all of that pressure. He didn't have a lot of time or space (or options, for that matter), and it was hard for him to create much on most shifts because of it.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Dvorsky continues to flash skills. I thought there was a gap between him and Ritchie at the start of the tournament, and while I still think Ritchie is the better playmaker, Dvorsky is closing that gap and maybe even moving ahead in my mind. The skating posture is better and he doesn't have as much support. Yet, he's still orchestrating chances. He's physical on the boards and tries hard defensively (a couple of hard backchecks in this one), although he needs to be even closer to his check. Taking that extra stride is sometimes the difference between a shot against and a block, a goal and a puck deflected in the stands. Dvorsky is always attacking inside, with and without the puck, and he has the skill to dangle defenders on his way there. He sees teammates quickly, too. Probably should have stuck to my early season take that he was a top-10 talent in this draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

If I compare Dvorsky here from what I saw at the junior playoffs in Sweden, his competitiveness stands out even more which also displays his skills more. He takes this Slovakian team on his shoulders and plays with more determination. He competes hard in all three zones and drives the offence. He still lacks separation speed and when he skates and handles the puck the muscle tone is high. I like how he uses crossovers to travel over the ice and his awareness of space is good. His passing was more consistent than it has been over the season. He is good at taking the puck to the inside and makes fast decisions in the offensive zone. I like how he shows pride and determination playing for the national team which better his all around performance. A two-way middle-six centre prospect.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Another good Dvorský performance, although I think his high scoring is overselling his capabilities right now. He's about the same player I thought he was before the tournament, except I underrated his handling skills. He's really capable of keeping the puck under pressure and his technique, rolling/short motions, is great. His playmaking game shines a bit more at the tournament: He uses the back layers of the attacks, delays, looks for teammates cross-ice...But he presents himself more as a scorer with his hand-eye coordination, his net drives, and his catch-and-release capabilities.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

A great game by Dvorský. It wasn't the best competition, but that's okay because Dvorsky himself doesn't have the best linemates either. They are more skilled than Germany's, but they aren't those creative playmakers that can set him up for chance after chance and exploit his off-puck skills. In this game, with the extra space, they could. Dvorsky rushed the puck, dangled through the opposition, scored again and again, kept the puck under pressure, worked the boards, and flashes his higher-end skills constantly. That's a good game to watch if you want to be reminded of his offensive potential.

Cam Robinson: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs Germany - U18s

Once again, Dvorský was the straw that stirred the drink for Slovakia. He was pushing play through the middle of the ice, was activating into space off-puck and was constantly calling for passes and looking to fire pucks on net. He was holding onto the puck more in transition and adding complexity to his playmaking – often waiting for an outstretched poke before handling and moving it. Drawing that coverage. His ability to get open in the slot led to all FOUR of his goals. Big goals too, and he provided the comeback to get Slovakia into the Quarters. He continues to make straight forward passes to get the transition going out of

the defensive zone and his ability to clog up lanes, be physical along the wall and take smart routes on the forecheck continue to stand out. Those are all very pro level skills he has and was putting them on the German teenagers who didn't have a ton of moves to combat it.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - U18s

Not a great game from Dvorský, who mostly faded in the background. He did have one notable sequence: He got the puck on the wall, cut across inside, and then scored. Otherwise, he wants to make plays, but there is nobody there to accept his passes or even to understand his ideas. It's an impossible offensive situation for him. His battling skills are still interesting.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

I wonder how Dvorský would look surrounded by creative talent. He has some good ideas, but they don't always come to fruition. He's physical, shows skating and stickhandling skills, supports well, and he drives the net. I'm still unsure of the hockey sense grade. It's not average, not high-end, somewhere in between. The thing is: I don't think it will matter too much for his type of game in the NHL that he's not a creative player. He will follow the system guidelines of his team, and paired with the right offence-driving teammates, he will still score his share of points. I see him as that two-way, reliable, puck-retrieving, and moving pivot that teams look for in their middle-six.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - U18s

Dvorský flashed some skills in this game, more than Salé, too. Especially in the second and third period, he was making plays through and around opponents, and actually creating better looks for them, which is what we wanted to see. His board skills will serve him well in the NHL and his defensive game continues to improve. He has really taken on that identity as a two-way player. Handling skills look above-average. I'm still a believer in him. He's a safe NHL projection with upside. If he shows more flashes of hockey sense than we can easily move him up. He already seems to know his options well at the tournament. He should dominate against these other formations of the same level like Czechia and still show well against the top ones.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - U18s

I liked Dvorský in this one. He was taking charge of nearly every situation and playing hard in all three zones. His backchecking and board work stood out as he's clearly the leader and was making it known that every inch of ice would need to be battled for while he was out there. Offensively, his game started to pop half way through as he was more agile in his transportation of the puck and using his hands to set up some of his rush attempts. He was hammering one-timers on the power-play as that's clearly the set play. He looked frustrated at times as he was setting up plays that were dying on the blades of his mates. The counting stats likely won't pop off simply because his quality of mate is fairly low in this situation. But he's been good.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

A good game by Dvorský. He was highly involved and competitive all through the game and scored two goals. He looks like a senior player amongst boys in some sequences but less impressive in others.

The good thing is his hockey sense and defensive play. He is aware of his surroundings and where the play is heading. He does many small things like covering the boards before the opposing defenseman has even rimmed the puck yet. He can then let the puck go past him because he knows he has a teammate behind with more room. And so on... In breakouts he doesn't need the puck to create space. He draws defenders by skating in a lane that opens up the play behind him. He was very impressive on the penalty kill. His team was up by a goal late in the game and with the opposing goalie pulled, Dvorsky broke up the play multiple times with aggression, anticipation and puck skills.

The not so good stuff is his inability to make highly skilled plays that can translate to high levels. He skates and handles the puck with seemingly a high muscle tone which makes his puck touches uneven in softness and in time on the blade. He pushes so much power in his skating sometimes that when he needs to make a quick turn his balance is gravitated too much on one

motion that he looks stiff in the next one. Dvorský is an NHL player in the making. Probably as a solid second or third line centre.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Not a good night for Dvorský. The team lost this decisive semifinal 6-0. Dvorsky had some good looks offensively, especially on the power play, but wasn't able to score. You could see his hockey sense off the puck. He goes to the areas where the puck ends up before it gets there. When he skates with the puck he sees the lanes he needs to go and shows some nice deking moves.

His puck handling wasn't great. Multiple passes looked sloppy giving his teammate a bouncing puck from having it flat on his stick to begin with. On the power play he was a bit trigger happy but displayed a hard shot from the right circle. He one-timed the shot multiple times and was square to the pass, setting himself ready to shoot. The feeling I'm left with after this game is the same as before. At this level, he should be able to dominate more consistently, especially 5v5.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Even though he scored two goals, added a helper and was an important player for his team winning a big game, Dvorský left me wanting more in this game. He wasn't very creative or showed enough offensive skills. He made simple plays where he could have done more. He also overhandled the puck at times. Still, he was very strong on the puck and a dominant force that way. He had many break ups, he played physical and was all together solid in all aspects. He liked his competitiveness too.

Cam Robinson: March 24th, 2023 - Lulea U20 vs AIK U20 - J20 Nationell

Dvorský was credited with two goals in this one although InStat jumped into the game late. I was a fan of his hunting for space - constantly shifting, sifting through holes, setting himself to receive a pass and look to create something dangerous. There were a lot of straight forward decisions - little head fakes, shift the position of the puck and fire. He carried the puck with pep through the neutral zone and was forceful along the boards. He made one play where he sold shot, faked the inside cut, slipped it to his backhand and tried to go shelf. It was blocked, but it showed a level of creativity.

The whole package is very... good. The stride has power and some good quickness. He has handling skills -albeit not overtly creative or super dangerous. The shot is heavy and can beat netminders from distance at this level, but also can get clogged up easily. Passing is fine. IQ is good. He's maybe the safest non-lotto kid in this class. But the upside remains in question.

Marek Novotný: March 19th, 2023 - AIK IF vs. MoDo Hockey - HockeyAllsvenskan

The Slovak forward tried to block shots all game, disrupting passing lanes. He was physical, he also delivered one massive hit in the neutral zone. Unfortunately, this game didn't make me feel much better about Dvorský. Yes, I appreciate his efforts to help the team, to play a two-way game, but overall he was overmatched in the scrums, got rid of pucks quickly, and there were moments where he was unable to get the puck out of the zone.

Daniel Gee: March 10th, 2023 - AIK vs. Tingsryds - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský is a bundle of pro habits blended with hard skill. Kind of an all-encompassing game, he flashed a lot on the rush in this viewing. A smart off-puck driver, Dvorský gained position on a first-period rush, leaning into a much bigger defender, and redirecting a dangerous puck on net. Understands the value of driving the middle after pass-offs -- one-touched a puck early in the game, extended his stride and pushed back the defence. He was less effective on-puck in transition. In the second he faced three defenders on the near boards. Dvorský punched to the middle of the blue line and found a clean pass option, driving the slot yet again. On another sequence in the third, Dvorský used a handle and edge cut to change directions on a gapped defender, driving straight into pressure and turning over the puck. He understands the value of give-and-go sequences -- in the third he layered a pass into an entry, working a pass back and forth with a linemate before he slipped a pick into the crease. He's not dynamic at all at this level in transition but the flashes are present.

A lot of Dvorský's transition work led to real sustained offensive zone sequence and cycle plays throughout the game -- this is where he excelled. While he often defaulted into a net-front role, Dvorský is a great puck supporter, always working to add himself as an option, especially when the puck is worked on the perimeter. There's evidence of him accessing his outside edges to cut back out of pressure and he blends protection habits like hip-pocket holds. He constantly is accessing pressure and working to combat it. You won't see him handling to the inside, or flashing high-end manipulation but he will promote zone time -- could be a product of a teenager in a mens league. Dvorský comes alive on the powerplay with more space. In the second he flashed some four-way mobility on the right-hand circle, moving to set himself into a lane for a one-timer. On the same shift, he took too long on a catch-and-release to score on an open net -- a big mistake. Not creative enough to be a high-end scorer.

Projectable defender to higher levels. Locks onto secondary threats and pressure pushes hard when under pressure. Assists defenders down low, and can find supporters out of the board battles. He's 100% playing NHL games, but he strikes me as a lower-ceiling option, possibly middle-six, that has higher certainty than some of the riskier smaller options projected in the first round. Where we place him really depends on draft philosophy/direction.

Cam Robinson: March 10th, 2023 - AIK vs. Tingsryds - HockeyAllsvenskan

At the professional level, Dvorský keeps his game straightforward - and the name of the game is driving the middle, working the boards/cycle, and getting to the net front. These are all very translatable and important steps to access and prove to evaluators that his floor is extremely safe. In this one, he was very strong along the wall. He picked up pucks while under duress, he cycled smoothly and fell in line to keep th possession rolling. He was activating his outside edges to cutback and break coverage, he was fighting for inside position.

I thought he showed smart planning and route-decisions while handling the puck in transition. Again, all very methodical and safe - nothing too creative or risky. If a defender was cutting off his avenue, he would keep it wide or get it in deep. He did throw one pass blindly to the middle and it was easily picked off. The power in his stride is evident and likely has more to come as he develops further strength. I'd like to se more agility and quickness laterally but that certainly isn't the crux of his game. It would add my deception and escapability perhaps altering the perception of his offensive upside. Safe.

Lassi Alanen: March 8th, 2023 - AIK vs. HC Vita Hästen - HockeyAllsvenskan

Not sure there was anything new to take away from this game. It showcased pretty much all of the traits and tendencies we're used to seeing from Dvorský at this level. Responsible two-way play, finishing his checking routes, showing physical skill and willingness to use contact to his advantage, already having pro-ready strength in puck battles (which helps combined with his craftiness and smart usage of contact to protect the puck). Strong at extending the cycle, but doesn't really have the skills to end it. Rarely goes for the kill, instead often extends the play with a simple pass to the point or a pass back to the depth. When he gets off the perimeter, it's usually without the puck when he goes to the net-front to screen and look for rebounds. That's arguably his most projectable skill in the OZ (the net-front play). Combining that with an above-average release (can shoot from both feet, good pop behind the release, can reasonable beat goalies clean from mid-range), he could reasonably score decently well in the NHL in a complementary role. I just don't think the offensive skill is that high ultimately, even if the tools are good to great pretty much across the board. Very hard to see a scenario where he doesn't become an NHLer, but there are bets with more upside available in the first half of the draft.

Lassi Alanen: February 28th, 2023 - AIK vs. Västerviks IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

No points for Dvorský, but this was among the more productive viewings at the pro level offensively. Rang the post with a really nice wrister off the rush. The mechanics behind Dvorský's shot are really good, bolstering his argument as a potential off-puck scorer in the NHL. If he gets space in the slot, he can beat goalies clean from either leg. He did end up setting up a high-danger look, too, with a pretty crafty pass in tight from a situation where he'd have usually went for a shot himself. Physical skills very evident on retrievals; he's already very effective at those, managing to retrieve his own dump-in a couple of times to establish OZ pressure. Still not a high-end creator, but a safe pick who has a high probability of playing games in a decent role, even if he's not going to be a primary driver.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 25th, 2023 - Almtuna vs AIK - J20 Nationell

This was a game where Dvorský got every opportunity to show off his skillset. He had the puck a lot, scored three goals and created a ton of chances. He carried the puck through both exits and entries. He showed good awareness of space and could open up space with a pass inside the blue line. He often took the lane through the middle using good crossover skating technique to generate speed. The biggest downside of his skillset to me is an inability to vary his pace and energy with the puck. If he skates at full speed and the space in front of him shrinks he can't just slow down or turn to open up more space like elite NHL players do. He needs to find a good pass option or he will lose the puck. He will never be fast enough to beat players with just speed either.

A big strength is his awareness of space in small areas when he isn't skating at full speed. He thinks the game ahead of opponents with pre scanning and knows where his teammates are and what the best play ahead is. He is also smarter than his opponents (and teammates) at this level to position himself to be an easy playable option for his teammates. I like how he is always scanning and understanding where the game is heading. His manipulating skills depend on how much energy he needs to use in his skating. His puck skills are less impressive at high speed, but in power play situations he shows an understanding and ability to manipulate. His competitiveness and work ethic are worthy of recognition as well. He is a strong player for AIK in all situations and all three zones in this game.

Marek Novotný: February 22nd, 2023 - AIK vs Djurgarden - HockeyAllsvenskan

Terrible performance by Dvorsky. He was on the ice for three of the opponent's misses, one push was enough to protect the puck and he lost his balance and subsequently possession of the puck. He wasn't able to properly keep the puck in the offensive zone, but what I have to give him credit for is that I liked how involved he was in the play and his constant effort to forecheck and disrupt passing lanes. Two-way center, in my eyes, to the third line in the NHL.

Cam Robison: February 17th, 2023 - AIK vs Vasteras - HockeyAllsvenskan

A strong two-way showing in this one. Dvorský was really keeping his moving in all three zones. He was quick on the forecheck, worked hard on the back check, closed out on the defenders at the top of the defensive end. Overall, his work along the wall was really strong. He plucked pucks, he lifted sticks, he took a step back from a crowd and would snake the puck and turn it into a clean exit. While he really doesn't flash much in the way of creative playmaking, he connects on a ton of passes - especially while transporting through the neutral zone. There was a backhand saucer, aerial pass while carrying it with speed before driving the middle lane that was particularly nice. He buried one at the net front by lurking for space and timed his ascent to the low slot perfectly to receive and get it up top in a hurry from in close. Had another tough angle attempt that just about found the tiny window. Strong game.

J.D. Burke: February 15th, 2023 - AIK vs. Ostersunds - HockeyAllsvenskan

I would characterize this as a strong showing from Dvorský, but I remain unconvinced of his offensive upside. Increasingly, I see a player with high-end details and supporting instincts but lacking the high-end tools and feel for the game necessary to generate offence at a high-end clip at the NHL level. Dvorský supports the breakout well, making himself available and scanning before the puck arrives on his stick so that he's ready to transition his team from defence to offence with little hesitation. In the offensive zone, Dvorský strikes up a similar posture, seeking out support opportunities when the puck is along the boards. From there, Dvorský fights admirably for net-front positioning - he almost scored twice on these sorts of plays - and holds up remarkably well under physical duress. On the power play, Dvorský managed space well pre-shot, improving the quality of each look. His goal was a savvy read off the rush; Dvorský timed an arrival into space at the backdoor perfectly for a one-touch goal into a yawning cage. There was an excellent backcheck from Dvorský in the first period, too. I don't know if you can take a player as limited as Dvorský any higher than 15, but he's pretty damn close to a surefire bet to play in the NHL.

Daniel Gee: February 15th, 2023 - AIK vs Ostersunds - HockeyAllsvenskan

What a mature, hard-working performance by Dvorský in this game against Ostersunds. He had some trouble in transition --

shocked by some backpressure on a couple of near-board carry outs. He got better as the game went on, taking receptions off his backhand, slicing through open seams. On the last play of the game, he drove the net, crashed, and potted a rebound -- no goal due to time.

More impactful in the wide-open environment in the offensive zone. Dvorský defaulted to the net front and did well to fight through box outs and disruption. He opened space backdoor for a teammate to score in the first. Confidently carried a puck low-to-high; when forced into an end-board battle, he won it, fed the point and continued battling as the shift continued, even activating backdoor on occasion. This eventually led to a goal later in the game. Dvorský read his defender scanning option on the left point, activated into open space and buried the puck off the first touch. Anticipated passes well in the offensive zone, used the inside of the ice -- nothing extraordinary but great pro-habits. On a couple of power plays he really leveraged downhill attacking. On one play he took a wicked shot off the goaltender's right shoulder -- he had pass seams available for better options. Dvorský loads his shot off of pass interceptions, but fails to get a couple through later on. He doesn't have a lot of separating tools and is fairly perimeter at this level. Will need to access the middle at a much higher volume going forward. Worried his ceiling is a bit limited to be a top pick, but it's understandable that he's well-liked. Plays so hard, and has the right idea on most of his shifts, just lacks some of the game-breaking habits and skill-blending that scream top-line potential. He has a defensive element to his game which obviously helps the projection. Processes multi-variable attacks well, backchecks hard to take away sticks (killed a chance in the first with a stick lift). Need to watch more.

Cam Robinson: February 15th, 2023 - AIK vs Ostersunds - HockeyAllsvenskan

No one will ever accuse Dvorský of not working. This kid has a serious motor and he uses it on nearly every shift. He forces his way to the middle and drives the net at every opportunity. He can understand timing and searching for space though, so it's not a blind net front driving thing. He was good in-zone and on the PP, garnering a really nice HD chance on a downhill wrister. He was also clean at the net too, pulling coverage, looking for screens and tips, opening up for backdoor plays. He was making quick passes out of the defensive end, and wasn't shy to carry it himself when space allowed for it. He did get stripped a couple of times in transit though too.

The issues remain the same. He's a pro player who has a very high floor. But you have to really project to see a route to him becoming a clear top-six contributor down the line. Does his strong skating mechanics eventually lead to more speed with development? Does that help him utilize his hands more? Will it give him more time to become a more creative passer? He flashes those traits more in the J20, but even there he's not a dominately creative type - he wills his way to two points per game.

I like him, but I don't love him in the top 10.

David St-Louis: February 13th, 2023 - Kristianstads IK vs. AIK IF - HockeyAllsvenskan

Still unsure about Dvorský's overall skill level, probably closer to average than above-average. The selling points are his physical, cycle game, his attention to details, and his tool foundation. He's not that fast right now, but the skating looks projectable. Same for the handling. The offensive instinct isn't very noticeable in most shifts at this level. He's extending possession, but not really improving it. Not really his fault on many occasions; teammates just aren't giving him good plays to hit.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - AIK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

This was the most potent version we've seen of Dvorský in his recent J20 detour. He scored twice, including a patented net-front goal by getting open at the right time, receiving a shot pass from the point, quickly adjusting to his backhand to beat the goalie. Liked his passing in transition, delaying effectively to find the middle on a couple of exits. The handling skill was visible in few ways, including one of the slickest moves I've seen this season, putting the heel of his blade on top of the puck, then scooping it between his legs in one smooth motion. Not that it really resulted in anything, but it was really cool nonetheless. He still struggles at finding cycle-ending plays instead of just sticking to the perimeter. The go-to move is just to pass to the point, then move towards the net to his office. Defensive game remains a selling point. He's got physical skills and some off-puck details, including well-timed stick lifts and such. He's a first-rounder, but I do think we have him too high currently (11th).

Cam Robinson: February 3rd, 2023 - AIK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

A demonstrably impressive showing from Dvorský in this one. He was manipulating in-flight off of the rush, creating space for himself and for his mate. Using nice pace changing to create separation. The work to get to the net front is always a highlight and he was being lining it there a ton in this one. He loves the give and go option with a full head of steam while driving the point. He was locked down on the defensive end as well. Leaning on bodies, picking pucks off of the wall, protecting the puck, attacking weaknesses and mishandles quickly.

His skillset really does scream energy line type with a bit of offensive upside. I don't think we'll see the high-end pieces come out with his lack of creativity or adjustments.

Lassi Alanen: January 30th, 2023 - Linköping HC vs. AIK - J20 Nationell

Dvorský's upside is a bit hard to gauge, but it's getting pretty hard to see him as a consistent top-six forward. He has projectable elements, like his net-front play, physical skills along the boards, even flashed some nice shiftiness on few of his rushes. Got two primary helpers, one after his rebound was buried and another after he intercepted a pass mid-air in the OZ, quickly took few strides towards the middle and set up a one-timer chance on the inside. I don't know if the skating is going to allow him to be an effective cycle ender, more of an extender at this point. The hand-eye coordination is pretty great, evident by that one interception and another really good mid-air pass reception in the neutral zone. But when it comes to offensive zone creativity and playmaking, there are quite a few better options in Sweden alone.

David St-Louis: January 30th, 2023 - Linköping HC vs. AIK - J20 Nationell

I have to accept the idea that Dvorský is not the player I thought he was at the start of the season. The skating form is great, but the output likely won't ever match the form, and while he has some rapid puck shuffling, the handling can be a little bit choppy. Even at this level, he misses some better plays he could make. He's a high-certainty NHLer, but more of a third-line, middle-six projection with half a point per game as a realistic production projection. At least that's where I am at in his evaluation. The physical skills are above-average and he has the skating foundation, the agility, and form to play a sound forecheck/puck protection game in the NHL. He could be a great complement to play-driving teammates and even score a lot more, as the detail guy, the puck retriever, and short passer on the right line. We've seen that happen quite often, think Philip Danault with quicker hands. Probably a top-20 pick still, but not as exciting as I first thought.

Lassi Alanen: January 25th, 2023 - AIK IF vs. Mora IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský was back in HockeyAllsvenskan and back to centre duties. I just feel like he's a natural centre and was immediately more effective than he was when they tried to use him on the wing. His best moments arguably happened in the defensive zone as he advanced the puck smartly with small-area passes, multiple times being able to start a rush via the middle doing so. Defensive positioning and physical skills were very solid, too. He remains relatively toolsy all-around, even if the skating isn't as great as the stride would initially suggest. Even the handling looked good, even if his offensive skill remains a question mark to me. He gets looks methodically, including one high-danger chance after being left open in the slot when his team created space and caused havoc with nice OZ movement.

Lassi Alanen: January 21st, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. AIK - J20 Nationell

Dvorský's skating remains puzzling. He just doesn't seem to have much in the way of natural explosiveness. There were sequences where he accelerated with really good form and high stride frequency, but the output just didn't match at all. Pretty hard tool to grade. He had slightly more puck touches in transition, and had some nice moments where the skating and handling combination looked pretty good. Failed to generate many chances off the rush, though. The puck protection skills were evident during longer in-zone sequences, but mostly he was just looking for rebounds or deflection opportunities from point shots.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - AIK IF vs. MoDo Hockey - HockeyAllsvenskan

Not a particularly noteworthy performance from Dvorský, managing a secondary assist while AIK was looking to score at the end of the game without a goalie. Played on the wing in this one, which meant he wasn't as visible in the defensive zone. The physical skills along the boards were on display a few times, but he also turned the puck over a couple of times when he exposed the puck early and couldn't stickhandle his way through pressure. One scoring chance off the rush at 4-on-4, tried to rip it short side but the goalie was on top of the situation.

David St-Louis: January 12th, 2023 - AIK IF vs. Almtuna IS - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský's physical play is what stood out the most in this one, net-front and on the boards. I have no doubt that he will have the same impact in the NHL. His speed looked a bit better here than at the WJ20 and I still really like his skating form. Yes, he might not be the most explosive player naturally, but the great form will still give him a lot of agility. My main concern, the same one since the start of the season, is that he doesn't improve the condition of the offence all that much. He makes a lot of neutral, cycling plays. Simple ones when he has a bit more skill than that.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Slovakia vs Latvia - U20 WJC

The offensive limitations are more clear in this setting than they were before at the pro-level. He had the excuse of "maybe he plays a safer game in this environment to avoid mistakes". I still see flashes of manipulation and off-puck skills, but it's hard to envision Dvorský becoming a point-per-game player -- except if he is slotted between two offensive drivers and acts as the supporting element. In this one, he popped open for boots in the slot, positioned himself well defensively and scanned frequently. He flashed more dynamic abilities on the powerplay. His acceleration and speed remain quality; I still think the skating is an above-average projection especially considering his great posture. My biggest issue is that he tends to keep the puck on the board with his cycle plays, not really take it to the middle. It's not really a question of physical skills, more about play selection. He looks for the next open play, but doesn't really try to break open any passing or driving lane.

Cam Robinson: December 26th, 2022 - Finland vs. Slovakia - U20 WJC

A no-nonsense game from Dvorský in this one. He was hard in the corners - leaning on opponents and being physical. He protected the puck well, he was good in the dot, and transitioning the puck effectively. His speed was an issue at times, but he was drawing coverage and sending clean dishes out to space and hitting mates in flight. The overall ceiling on his skill is a bit dicey at this point, but I see a very clear path to an energy line centre role.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Finland vs. Slovakia - U20 WJC

This was a typical Dvorský game. He showed the same strong two-way play, supporting defencemen and teammates all over the ice, creating quick transition plays (both via carries and passing) and showing some playmaking elements. I especially like the timing of many of his passing; he looks to attract before moving the puck and generally just shows good situational awareness. He hits, protects pucks, and makes plays in tight spaces. He gets inside and puts pressure on the opposition.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Vastervik vs. AIK - HockeyAllsvenskan

I remain a pretty big fan of Dvorský. I understand the potential offensive NHL limitations that come from maybe his lack of imagination or high-end control over the game, but he's in the Alls...against professionals...It's not really an environment to develop that, at least this season. Few players have his defensive attention and effort. He doesn't just fill his position; he covers for teammates. And his skating + physical skills are legitimate shutdown tools. He also plays a nice supporting game in transition and in the offensive zone, he can transform retrievals into clean passes to teammates inside space (even when under the direct pressure of a defender), and dangle opponents on first touch. The high-end defensive game, pro habits, and high skill level should make him at least a top-8 pick on our board.

Lassi Alanen: November 23rd, 2022 - AIK vs. Mora IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Pretty meh game from Dvorský overall. He's great on the power play from the half wall, and almost ended the game in OT with

a one-timer that hit the post. At 5-on-5, it was on the quieter side of things. I wonder if he can truly links his tools together to become a more dominant force. The skating stride, the handling, the shot should all be relative strengths in isolation, but he's simply not creating that much in the offensive zone at evens aside from being an off-puck threat in the net-front. The upside is somewhat of a question mark, even if he has a high likelihood of playing due to many pro level habits.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 16th, 2022 - AIK vs. Vita Hästen - HockeyAllsvenskan

A quiet game in the score sheet but another impressive performance by Dvorský. It is a bit of a mystery that the AIK coach did not play him for more than 14 minutes of the game. He was involved around the puck in every shift and made things happen. If AIK is to have more success this season, I think Dvorský is a key player for them.

Dvorský works hard and reads the game very well. His skating limitations were not as visible in this game. The way that he kept close to the puck actually made him look quicker. He drove play by giving good support low and making fast and strong passes in all three zones to move the play forward. The pattern in his offense is by passing the puck. He finds space well when he carries the puck too but he is always scanning for options and has the hands to give himself both time and space to do so. He is also not afraid to get in front of the net and can both stand there for screens or crash it for a rebound. His physical play is strong in the sense that he never hesitates to compete.

Dalibor Dvorský is definitely a grade A prospect with a high chance of panning out.

J.D. Burke: November 18th, 2022 - AIK vs. BIK Karlskoga - HockeyAllsvenskan

Let's just say that it's not a coincidence that this game represented the second-lowest ice-time in HockeyAllsvenskan action this season for Dvorský, who was benched for about the final 15 minutes. Just an odd game all around. Dvorský was uncharacteristically sloppy defensively, particularly early, getting lost in rotations and arriving late on switches – he just kind of looked lost away from the puck. The most generous appraisal I can offer of his offensive work is that he worked hard on retrievals and held up physically. There was one backhand attempt from the slot on a counter-play but that was about it offensively for Dvorský. What you would call a game to forget.

Lassi Alanen: November 16th, 2022 - AIK vs. Vita Hästen - HockeyAllsvenskan

Pretty standard Dvorský viewing, not much new learned. Skating mechanics look better than the output for the most part. Physical game and pro-level ability to absorb contact and spin off it remains good. Committed to the defensive side of the game, scanning habits are strong. Mixed bag in transition; some great cross-ice feeds to create exits, other times he passed to already well-guarded players who had no chance of receiving it. Not many touches in the offensive zone aside from some typical cycle moments that didn't lead to offence.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 14th, 2022 - AIK vs. Kristianstads IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

At the first look, Dvorský does not look like much. His skating needs a lot of effort to keep up with the pace at this level. He works hard but it looks like he is chasing the game and can't keep up. Then you see him on the power play...

He elevates his whole line on the power play with tremendous control of space and elite play making. He moves the puck fast with control on his stick and actually moves the penalty kill with just his hand and feet. He delivers cross-ice passes with and sets up teammates in great opportunities to score. He had an assist in this with a beautiful soft pass from low right circle cross ice to high left circle to a defender who just could skate into the puck lane, receive, shoot and score. Once you have seen what he can do with the puck, you start to see good things without the puck as well. He works hard in both backcheck and forecheck. He reads the game well defensively and he also plays with some edge physically too.

It is clear that Dvorský is a smart and competitive player. He shows strong awareness of his surroundings and processes the game faster than most players in this league. He has quick puck touches, fast decision making and strong puck control. His speed will always be an issue but with his skills and smarts he should be able to compensate for it well at higher levels too. I do

not see him being a driver all over the ice though but a strong in-zone player and a power play specialist. A top 10 caliber player for the draft I would say.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Switzerland vs Slovakia - U20 ICH Trophy

It's one thing to see offensive limitations in Dvorský's game against professionals, but it's another one to see them against players of his calibre. He is really not a creator on the ice. He relies on short passes, delays, and cycle plays -- he relies on teammates to create for him, mostly, or at least to break up the defence so he can find scoring chances in the slot and around the net. He connects plays, retrieves pucks, battles, defends...but he is not really a playmaker.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - AIK vs. Södertälje SK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský's defensive game remains strong. He's scanning consistently, taking a good care of his positioning and excelling in man-to-man defence, too. He's clearly physically advanced for his age and is able to win battles, hold pressure on his back as a result. Offensively, he was yet again more of an off-puck threat, making his way to the net-front for deflections and having one high-danger chance off a rebound. One rush where he beat multiple opponents to enter the zone through the middle but didn't have the awareness to make a pass that would've resulted in a high-danger chance. Some execution mistakes in transition but the ideas are almost always solid.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Västerviks IK vs. AIK - HockeyAllsvenskan

What shone the most in Dvorský's game here is his defensive ability. There is a reason why he is getting minutes with a pro team at such a young age. He's responsible. He looks for his coverage, sticks to him, scans the ice for threats, switches on other attackers to help teammates... These plays are projectable. His tools are also a big advantage even at this level. He has the potential to make some dangerous crossover rushes and become an automatic offensive zone entry machine. He's not there yet, but it could come. He missed a couple of better plays in this game. I'm not sure he's a top processor/anticipator of the game yet.

David St-Louis: October 26th, 2022 - AIK vs. Östersunds IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský's tools are something else. An above-average handler and skater, and potentially even physical player, he has everything he needs to succeed in an NHL role. In this game, he managed the puck well overall (except a couple rushed plays), used teammates well, scanned the ice constantly, and stayed active in the defensive game, filling the right positions and taking away sticks. He has some offensive instincts, like when he challenged a defender off the rush, kept him guessing with a deceptive posture and hesitation moves and then passed to a trailing teammate to establish possession for his team in the offensive zone. Ultimately, what will determine Dvorský's rank on our board will be his hockey sense grade. If it reaches an above-average level, it will be hard to keep him off the top of our list.

Lassi Alanen: October 26th, 2022 - AIK vs. Östersunds IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský's pro-level details stood out here. His defensive game looked mature, he was quite easily able to hold his own physically and had multiple situations where he either screened the opposition to create space for a teammate or interfere with the defender's stick for the same purpose. I also liked his timing around net, spinning off defenders to establish himself as a deflection threat multiple times throughout the game. Skating stride remains a strength and helps his leverage. He does need to really power up and get low to generate power, which can be quite taxing. His "surfing" speed isn't that great.

Lassi Alanen: October 17th, 2022 - Almtuna IS vs. AIK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Dvorský scored twice, after a weird dump-out into a 2-on-0 after the puck bounced back from the end board and after a rebound on the power play, sprinting to a loose puck that nobody else saw, including the goaltender. Much to what I wrote after his J20 games, Dvorský's style is suited to pros. He was rather diligent off-puck, supporting the play down low on both ends of the ice, making small but play-advancing one-touch passes on loose puck retrievals. Physically strong combined with a low

posture, able to cut opponents from their hands and establish body positioning. Did get pinned a few times along the boards, couldn't escape pressure. Didn't do anything super noteworthy with the puck, but was pretty efficient, advanced the play and scored. Dvorský's chances of playing are high, maybe even in a top-six role, though I don't think he'll be a big-time play-driver, more of an off-puck puck threat and intelligent two-way player. Though he does have a strong foundation to build upon, we'll see.

Cam Robinson: October 12th, 2022 - AIK vs Almtuna IS - HockeyAllsvenskan

I liked the effort level from Dvorský in this one. He was making good reads and making smart plays throughout. He scored the lone goal for his club, completed the majority of his passes - albeit most were straight forward. He was physical during puck battles along the wall, and closed out quickly on his defender when his team was hemmed in. Support the play with changes in speed and isolating pockets to be available as a recipient. He's looking much better at this level than he did to start the season. The team is underskilled, and he's having to adjust to that, but I thought this was a nice step forward outing at the pro level.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2022 - AIK vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Another multipoint game for Dvorský, who flexed his shooting ability to score twice. For the first one, he scored from the half wall with a very subtle yet powerful outside-leg wrister, almost looked more like a snap shot with the lack of any real drawback motion. On the second, he scored with a in-stride wrister off the rush, yet again very quick but powerful release. The shot is a real strength by the looks of it. One high-end playmaking sequence where he cut back near the end boards and dished a cross-ice pass through multiple opponents for a scoring chance - impressive display of vision and quick adaptation. Dvorský isn't particularly dynamic, but the fundamentals are pretty much all there. Showed physicality on and off-puck, supported his linemates pretty well with his routes and obviously has a knack of off-puck offence. I wouldn't say he's taking over games or dominating, yet continues to produce a lot. Game is probably better suited for pro level.

David St-Louis: October 1st, 2022 - AIK vs. Skelleftea - J20 Nationell

There are times where Dvorský doesn't know what to do with the puck, when he's stuck along the walls with limited options. At this level, he has the tools to find solutions to every play. The skating is high-level and the handling, too. A couple of smooth crossover rushes with plenty of feints got him from the defensive zone to the offensive zone. And some timely defensive pressure lead to turnovers that he then capitalized on. He attacks the middle consistently and with determination with and without the puck. He rotates well, seems aware...It's just the higher expressions of hockey sense that I have doubts about (anticipation, planning, manipulation...). We'll see. On tools and details alone, he's a top pick in this draft.

Lassi Alanen: September 30th, 2022 - AIK IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

This was quite a bit better than the first Dvorský viewing of the season. He looked a lot more dangerous at 5-on-5, using his physical tools to manoeuvre his way to scoring chances and also set up a couple of them himself. The details in his game remain, creating space and eliminating sticks, finishing his off-puck routes, taking away threats defensively. The skating form looks really good, even if the output isn't quite there as much. But he did have a couple of dynamic-looking rushes where he used crossovers and weight shifts to beat players 1-on-1. Tried to take pucks to the middle off the rush and set up his curl-and-drag wrister, which he definitely has in his arsenal. Came pretty close to scoring with it one time.

Lassi Alanen: September 20th, 2022 - AIK IF vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Dvorský added two assists in rather unspectacular fashion, once just setting up a point shot and another time just handing the puck to his linemate who did all the work in the offensive zone and eventually scored. Dvorský played a ton in his J20 season debut, but didn't have too much to success as on-puc facilitator. He missed opportunities to cut back, instead trying to handle his way through defenders without properly setting up the moves. Didn't get a ton of offensive zone puck touches and was mostly kept on the perimeter. Without the puck, he spent a lot of time in front of the net pretty stationarily. I have appreciation for Dvorský's off-puck game, though. He knows how to establish body positioning while anticipating rebounds and make contact with the defender's stick to disrupt him from trying to break up passes. Got a high-danger chance by losing the defender with

a pace change and sprinting towards the net from the corner, clearly anticipating a possible rebound. The puck ended up deflecting from a teammate and already in motion, Dvorsky got to it first, though he ended up missing the net.

Mitchell Brown: August 12th, 2022 - Slovakia vs. Latvia - U20 WJC

Not a ton of offence at 5-on-5 from Dvorský, but a positive game overall. Consistently established body positioning, whether that was on retrievals, puck battles, or when working the puck along the boards. Used pivot turns and cutbacks to puck pressure on his back. Used his stick to fight off back pressure instead of handling the puck. Some deceptiveness, including a look-off pull-in pass which eventually led to a goal. Consistently used those skills to walk pucks off the boards, adding in handling skill, too. In one sequence, he beat two defenders off the first touch, taking the puck from behind his body to the front while moving. While consistently supporting the play by getting open in space, he missed opportunities to get into passing lanes, preventing his teammates from connecting. Forced the odd play instead of using his teammates. The mechanical ability seems quite high, and he already has details. Looks like a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.

Marek Novotný: August 9th, 2022 - Slovakia vs. Czechia - U20 WJC

Dvorský, who played against older opponents from the Czech Republic, was very aggressive in disrupting passing lanes with his active stick and was very successful at it. He played his two-way game and overall was strong in all three zones with his skating and commitment. Dvorský wasn't afraid to be physical and his ability to regain possession of the puck was decent. His hip involvement helps him showcase fake moves to fool opponents. I also liked how he was actively scanning the opponent in the defensive zone and in the offensive one, he was carefully waiting for a pass in front of the net. Otherwise it was a fairly average game, but definitely important to consider his age at this tournament.

Marek Novotný: April 1st, 2022 - AIK U20 vs. Linköping HC U20 - J20 Nationell

I'd say that was a pretty mediocre performance. Dvorský did his job, but I didn't see anything outstanding play throughout the game. I liked how engaged he was both offensively and defensively, and how he was aggressive in all the one-on-one battles. Passes were accurate and at one point he showed incredible vision when he sent a diagonal pass across the pitch from corner to corner to a rushing teammate. At times he trapped himself by thinking too much about the play and lost a few pucks.

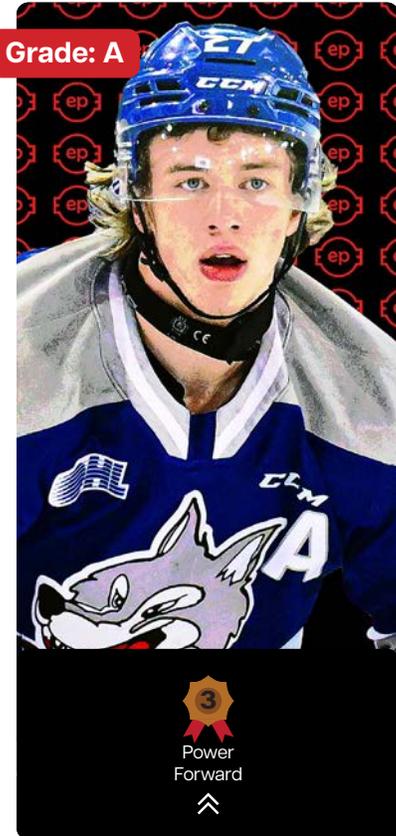
J.D. Burke: August 4th, 2021 - Slovakia U18 vs. Sweden U18 - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

The Slovaks loaded up on draft-minus-one talent with their third line, playing Dvorský at centre between Alex Čiernik and Ondrej Molnár. Dvorský was the straw that stirred the drink for this line, which was among the most effective units for the Slovaks at 5-on-5 in this contest. Dvorský must've forced two or three separate turnovers on Maxim Strbak's second period point shot goal, the result of an extended run of offensive zone time. Really admired Dvorský's battle level in this contest. Played hard along the tracks, beating far more physically developed players for the puck. Went to the net-front and fought hard for inside positioning. Showed some real separation speed on a rush chance early in this contest. Snuck into soft-ice and sent a one-touch wrist shot on goal to score the game-winner for the upstart Slovaks.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2021 - Slovakia U18 vs. USA U18 - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I mean, what can one even say about a performance this strong? Dvorský picked up four goals before the halfway mark, two of which came on the power play. The first one was a garden variety play – there was a juicy rebound from a Juraj Slafkovský one-timer that was just begging to get sent home, and Dvorský obliged. Then there was a crafty little bit of Pavel Datsyukian thievery at the side of the goal, plucking the puck from the defender's feet and then jamming it past the goaltender. Then there was the one-touch finish from the slot. Then there was the one-timer goal on a rush play. Just fantastic stuff.

Dvorský's game is unusually detailed for a player this age. There's the blend of pace and patience that's a testament to his heightened offensive instincts. The small area skill that speaks to his natural ability. The dotted-line use and changes of tempo in open ice to create space for himself that makes clear his refinement. It's all there. He's such a remarkable player.



12 Quentin Musty

AGE 17.195 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Pavel Buchnevich



Lethal Shooter



Vision



Ankle Breaker

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	7	6.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7	7	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves "A"	OHL	53	26	52	78	1.47

SCOUTING REPORT

First, Quentin Musty frustrated and divided our scouts. Then, he won us all over, one after another with his exceptional play in the second half of the season. Now, he finishes the year as our 13th-ranked prospect for the 2023 NHL Draft.

The draw with Musty was always obvious. He brings a little bit of everything to the table and does so in a projectable, imposing 6-foot-2 frame. Better still, he's not shy about leveraging every part of it to dispossess opponents of the puck, wreak havoc along the boards and at the net-front, and to barrel down the wing off the rush.

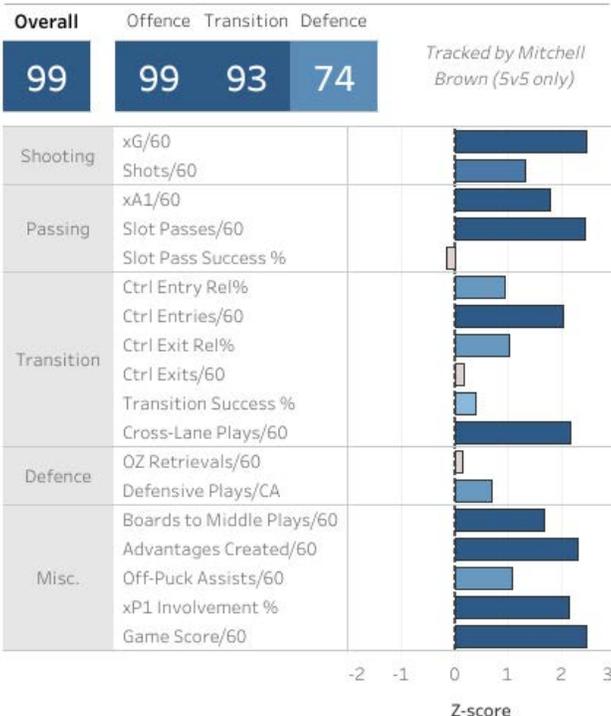
Put another way: Musty has what it takes to be a power forward at the next level. The NHL tends to covet players with that profile, and we do, too. They're not just fun to watch. They can take over games and playoff series. You want them in your lineup.

For now, he's more of a bruising playmaker. His vision is top-notch, and he's equipped with the cunning and passing skill necessary to connect with layered feeds around skates and sticks. Give-and-go plays, a sophisticated delay game – he's got it all. If his linemates are open, then he'll find them. If they're not, he has the intelligence to make them open.

Now, the problem, particularly early in the season, was that Musty

Quentin Musty

F | Sudbury Wolves | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 141.4



seemed just a little bit too confident in his passing skill. Sometimes he would try to connect on plays that just weren't there, sending hope passes into a sea of bodies and costing his team possession in the process. We may have been more forgiving of this flaw early in the season if not for the fact that his commitment to the defensive side of the game is dubious at best – that much hasn't changed. To his credit, he became much more efficient as the season wore on.

As you might've guessed based on Musty's almost half-a-goal-a-game this season, he's a pretty capable finisher, too. The best of the Sudbury Wolves winger's finishing tools are his hands. He's a dextrous, inventive hip-pocket handler, able to take opponents on 1-on-1 in space and instantly chain pass receptions into dekes and shots with zero wasted movements. Sometimes, he'll just plain old bury the shoulder and drive for the net-front down the wing.

His release speed and power can beat goalies from distance, but he prefers to get inside before firing. He shows the intelligence to pop in and out of space as a shooting threat away from the puck, often getting to soft ice and sending one- and two-touch shots on goal.

Musty will need to add another step or two and recommit to playing in the defensive zone to seize on his potential at the next level, but these are hardly insurmountable barriers to success. Especially not when he's already a projectable skater and just putting in a consistent effort will be enough to elevate his defensive game.

The potential here is sky-high. Musty's handling, playmaking, and intelligence away from the puck packed into a 6-foot-2, decently mobile frame should make him a no-brainer top-15 pick in this year's draft. Evidently, many in the industry don't see it that way. Time will tell who's right.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Quentin Musty redefining what it means to be a modern power forward



OHL Stock Watch: Matthew Maggio taking off for the Windsor Spitfires

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I think there's value there. I think that he'll slip a little bit, but that's because of how everyone else played at the end of the year. He's an interesting guy. Big guy, got soft hands, plays hard. I think he's more of a complementary winger than a go-to guy." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He'll have to be a power forward at the next level or he won't play. He's got to be the F1. You can't be a perimeter guy. He's got to be hard to play against. And I think that if he can do that, then he'll be money for ya. He's got all of the tools and the size to go along with it." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"Saw him in the summer with the Americans. I was like prototypical NHL size. Really good skill. Heavy shot. I liked his compete. I found him to be a bit selfish but when I popped in to see him with Sudbury, I saw a much more competitive, playmaking player. First round pick." – NHL scout, April 2023

"For my OHL career. I've worked on being a complete 200-foot player." – Quentin Musty, April 2023

"Yes, I guess I would [say I'm a power forward]. Just look at my frame and how I protect pucks. I think I have a little more skill than the regular power forward would." – Quentin Musty, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** April 5th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Musty didn't like that his team went down 4-2. His game turned into a bit of a mess after that. He was chasing opponents and not necessarily to get the puck back from them...Just to have them meet the boards. The first two periods was more of the good version of Musty we have seen in the second half: a lot of timely passes, technical ones, well-timed to progress the play, some physicality (for the right reasons), some feints, and clever off-puck movements. Not the best end to a season, but his competitiveness, although it's not expressed in the best way all the time, can be seen as a positive sign.

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

A lot of perimeter offence from Musty in this game – outside shots and passes to the point – but he was solid everywhere. The backtracking and forechecking stood out all game. He stepped into opponents, forced poor decisions, and pickpocketed possession. His more creative pass attempts, usually from the boards to the middle, were just a bit too early (his target was on the right path, but hadn't arrived into the lane quite yet). He got open in space, created advantages in transition with his passing, and nearly set up a tap-in. Not a big-time performance, but I'm still seeing a top-15 pick with top-six upside.

David St-Louis: March 31st, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Everything is there, but the skating. That's how I feel about Musty's game at this end of the season. He got massively better as it went on. It's rare we see such drastic improvements in a player's game. The mobility is a bit better, the defensive game is much better (still a weakness), and the collective game/the passing a lot better. Now, we can say that he hits the best options most of the time, actively looks to connect with teammates as his first idea, manipulates to open passing lanes better... He plays a much more efficient game. Some great flashes of handling skills in this one, too. He threaded the puck under sticks, around skates, and hit teammates in stride for great scoring chances. He carried pucks in the offensive zone, hit opponents, and battled around the net. I really like this player. The mechanical flaws are a bit scary; they might hold him back, but he's a clear top-15 talent for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty was dynamic at times, walking through everyone with ease. It's not just the handling skill; it's how he sets up his moves. He fakes one way, goes the other. He baits the poke check before tapping the puck under their stick. Almost never attacks opponents straight on, preferring to enter 1-on-1s at angles inside crossovers. He keeps his feet moving, head up, skates through the opponent's recovery route, and adapts instantly. When he wasn't tearing apart the opposition with his hands, he was the ultimate support play. Non-stop pressure on the backcheck and instantly knew the next play. He played the connector role, moving pucks between two teammates. Give-and-gos featured regularly. Stepped off the boards before making the next pass. Instantly recognized teammates in scoring position and found space off the puck. And he has every type of pass in the book: hook, slip, backhand, saucer, between the legs, everything. He looked like a top-10 player in this game with clear top-six, if not top-line upside.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A quieter game from Musty who couldn't get the hands going. He skated into pressure and tried to walk through opponents, but got smothered (usually by Akey). Still, there were also exciting reads. He deceived opponents before passing back into the slot, often using different types of deception in one play. The vision was visible – the cross-slot passes and lateral plays off the rush. Always looking to the middle in the offensive zone. The shot's at least a 6.5. He has everything. The right hand placement, the adaptability, the off-the-pass shooting, and the skill. Using the hands to create a bit of space for his shot would make him a bigger threat off the rush. He continues to look like a top-20, if not top-15 talent. Top-six upside.

J.D. Burke: March 10th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Really difficult prospect to get a read on. For prolonged periods of this game, Musty looked like a no-brainer top-10 talent. There were flashes of playmaking skill that would rate among the best in this class. Musty consistently turned retrievals into passing

sequences, found ways to connect with his teammates through sticks and skates, and used his frame and relative speed to open up space on the rush. The one assist that he picked up was a perfect example of that – build speed through the neutral zone, attack between the two defencemen, pull them into his orbit, and hit his wingman in stride for a clean look. On other plays, Musty may as well have been skating with blinders on, completely unaware or wholly disinterested in getting the pucks to linemates in far better positions. I'm not sure if I would necessarily describe Musty as a poor defensive player, but he cheats for offence constantly. His skating has come a decent way from the start of the year, but it's still an inefficient stride. I still like him better around 20 than I do at 10, but I'm starting to come around.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

Musty's skating scares me a bit when he backchecks. No ankle flexion and not a lot of momentum generated, unless he really puts in the effort, but then, he gets into crossovers and everything becomes more fluid. He manages the puck better than at the start of the season, using his teammates more, and putting in more effort defensively. He had some weird decisions in this one, but some of his missed plays are simply because his teammates don't do what he expects them to do, like not attacking clear open spaces. He's a deceptive player and he often prioritizes that deception over another scanning movement. He had one extremely impressive sequence where he dangled through the other team, using fakes and a change of speed, and then set up one of his teammates for a goal. The manipulation instincts, shot, off-puck sense, and the high-end technical handling skills form a very interesting package.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Passy Musty is good. He wins the battle or receives a pass, looks for his options, then immediately connects, working in the individual skill when necessary. It also leads to more opportunities. He had one incredible shift, getting open just inside the hash marks for a deflection and then one-timing a perfect pass with perfect form, with an impressive display of puckhandling under heavy duress in between. In that sequence, he not only attacked the middle, but scanned then looked away from his eventual passing target to keep the lane open. The hands remain nasty, he easily handles the puck in tight and far away from his body. He tries more advanced plays, like look-off cross-slot passes and even manipulates the defender first. The skating stands out as a potential issue. He's a bit on his heels, but he's not dependent on a glide to make things happen anymore – he moves through his plays and accelerates with the puck into space. He looked like a clear top-15 prospect. Dynamic with shooting, passing, and handling achieving at least 6.5 and the physical skills weren't far behind.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty grabbed a lucky goal, but this was another impressive game. He set-up a pair of goals: a drop pass through the legs into space and a pass for a deflection that took like 8 bounces. Some of the passes were inaccurate, but he also adapted to lanes. Consistently brought the puck to the middle. He's an exciting player in just about every facet. He has some physicality, lots of handling skill, vision, shooting ability, and manipulation ability. High average pace but also has a delay game. He's still a top-15 prospect in this class.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Yeah. Definitely overrated Musty's skating. He has that quick burst in crossovers, but the high stance is problematic. Thankfully the passing game is improving, especially in transition. And he's putting in more of an effort defensively...in stretches. He's manipulative and an imaginative offensive player. He got the point role on the powerplay and does that job well. The skating limits his ability to protect the puck low in the zone. I assume he has more development runway than most prospects, however.

Lauren Kelly: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty is back! After missing a month with a hand injury I wasn't sure how the time off would affect him. And while his timing looked just a bit off when it came to passes and stickhandling sequences (it looked like he was fighting the puck on several shifts, and it rolled off his stick on several carries), he still scored two goals. The first one he sort of batted at in mid-air and it rolled in past the goalie. The second goal was textbook Musty, just unloading on a release in front of the net after a turnover. He was backchecking more in this game, but there was one particular sequence where he would have caught Luke Misa in time to prevent

a scoring chance if he hadn't stopped skating in the neutral zone. He's still not scanning much, if at all, in the defensive zone, but he's engaged and aware, laser-focused on who has the puck as he plots to steal it back. He was his usual, pesky nuisance on the ice too, finishing checks and in the thick of scrums after whistles, but didn't cross the line. No PK time despite Sudbury having to kill off a five-minute major. Definitely my strongest viewing of the season on him. Hopefully he continues to build on this play as he shakes off the injury rust.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty's skating was less fluid than I remember in this game. The high-stance, wide forward strides kinda limit his acceleration and ability to catch up to certain plays, but he's also naturally explosive and has great form in crossovers. It's not too much of a concern. He continued on the path of becoming a better playmaking in this one. He did try some impossible plays, but for the most part, he moved the puck quickly and ran really good routes to position himself offensively. He can make plays through opponents, protect the puck on the boards, and he seems to know the next play. His awareness is a plus (not something I would have said necessarily early in the season). The defensive engagement is not really there, however.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

The quick passing continues to make its way into Musty's game. He's especially good at off the walls. He picks up rims cleanly and then one-touches them to teammates in the middle of ice. He was a bit more defensively engaged in this game -- as F1. Away from the play, he tends to step toward the offence a bit more than he should, but it also nets him scoring occasions, like the breakaway that he got. I like the collective game now and he still has the fluidity in his movement necessary to dangle around opponents, shoot around them, and make plays through them. The forward strides are a bit worrying, wide and lack of ankle flexion, but it's better at top speed. I should make my skating grade more conservative.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

It was by far the best collective effort I've seen from Musty. Constant backcheck, angling, effort away from the puck, sprinting ahead to create space for others, going to the net, making short passes, using trailers, but still showing the flashes of skills. He will score in transition in the NHL with the kind of reception into drag-shot he can pull off. He looked for the better play, not just throwing pucks to no one, and although he didn't always pre-scan for the goalie's position or his teammates' position before sending pucks, he mostly had good decisions in this game. He's really capable of great passes when he wants to. He was physically engaged, offensively and defensively, and will become a good enough defender if he can stop puck-watching as much and learns to use his reach to block lanes a little better. I'm more confident in his projection now, seeing that he can evolve. The tools are still great.

Daniel Gee: December 31st, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs Sudbury Wolves - OHL

It's hard for me to not see a lot of projectability in Musty's game. While his stride is undoubtedly clunky, he gets a tonne of travel off his pushoffs, working a fairly high motor across his shifts. Heel kicks reduce his recovery potential but physically he is just so rangy.

Musty started this game taking a pass reception in-stride -- he drove the net, hitting the blocker on an extended drag. His presence continued to be immense. Proactive large-ice handle, targeting the back of a pivoting defender meant a clean entry -- Musty bumped a pass back and planted backdoor. Playmaking is a standout tool. He pulls off slips to the middle of the ice, connects through layers laterally, and can one and two-touch crosses. In the second he set up a teammate for a goal after a middle drive to the net. Habits are hit-and-miss at times. On one sequence, a 2-on-2, he crossed into the path of his teammate puck carrier thinking he was going to get a bump pass forward -- he ended up colliding and ruining the entry. Tries to work the middle in sustained pressure.

Defensive effort was the other standout factor of his game. Deep in his defensive zone supporting the breakout, he was such a disruptive player in this one. Angling on the backcheck, upping his pace above the run of play, he was even clamping down on secondary threats. Becomes somewhat reactive on longer shifts but this is such an encouraging two-way effort.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Musty's overall effort was better, but still inconsistent in this game. Some shifts he would be hounding puck carriers, battling for pucks, and supporting teammates in the DZ. Other times, he would be the last one back into his own end, hover high in the neutral zone, and avoid contact. His individual skill is unquestionable, with off-balance feints that can fool opposing defenders, quick-timed pass attempts to teammates, and his ability to escape pressure while carrying the puck was a lot stronger in this game, affording him more time and space to create. He's not trying to execute solo missions in the offensive zone as much anymore, instead trying to work give-and-gos with his linemates. He can still hold onto the puck for too long. But this was an encouraging viewing.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty's clearly a skilled shooter. Not many players turn passes into powerful wristers like him. Top hand and stick are always positioned to make the next play. He arrives into space at the right times, too. Otherwise, this was more of a concerning than impressive performance from Musty. He didn't show much awareness of backpressure, leading to turnovers in transition. Lots of pucks passed to no one, dump-outs with options, and getting pickpocketed. Missed opportunities to scan before reception and with the puck, and he also didn't show much patience with the puck. One nice place-and-chase entry suggests there's more than just dekes in his transition game, however. Very curious to see how he performs in the second half.

David St-Louis: December 13th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty is still a puck-hug. Sometimes, it works out for him, as he's one of the best skaters and handlers in the whole draft class, capable of dancing around sticks, cutting laterally, and then attacking inside with a reacceleration. But other times, he just loses the puck in bad situations. He doesn't seem interested in passing -- unless it leads to a direct scoring chance, a potential assist. He has some playmaking ability and I do think he sees the plays, but just decides to not take them. He made a beautiful saucer pass on a 2-on-1 and he set up teammates for far-post tap-ins a couple of times in this game. They didn't always complemented his plays all that well either, missing those occasions. The potential with Musty is immense and I do think he still deserves at least an average hockey sense grade. The processing is fine; it's the decision-making that is a pretty big problem right now.

Lauren Kelly: December 10th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Three points in this game for Musty, and there's no denying he's on a heater. He hasn't had a pointless game since October 29th. He wasn't much of a factor on his second point, but his goal and assist in overtime were both generated as a result of a ton of space on the ice (through defensive breakdown and 3-on-3 OT). He also played over 26 minutes in this game. Started off the game strong, stripping a player in the offensive zone to create a scoring chance for himself about ten seconds later. He's still nowhere to be found on backchecks or even when the puck is in his own end for long stretches, and I fear that the lack of defensive engagement is going to be a detriment to his game down the road. A couple of pass attempts through seams were picked off. There are still a lot of question marks.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty's motor was up and down this game, but he showed a lot of playmaking skill in this game. Set up a goal with a look off slip pass. Won body positioning on retrievals, turning his feet to sell the defender one play, then cutting back and zipping the puck in front. Combined the motor with offence through passes to the middle and to the trailer. Ideas in transition were strong, attacking the middle then passing wide or vice-versa. Runs into trouble when trying to handle through everyone or making plays without scanning first. Some soft plays with back pressure. The shot's a clear 6+ grade. Easily fires pucks off the pass, top hand always in position to shoot immediately. Looked like a potential top-six forward in this game: shooting, playmaking, off-puck instincts, physical skills.

Lauren Kelly: December 4th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Seven points is nothing to scoff at, and Musty's playmaking brilliance was on display for several of those goals he helped create. But when the puck didn't find its way into the net on other shifts, it didn't really feel as though he was consistently dangerous. Not engaged in battles, lots of circling in his own end, and really only showing intensity once his team had regained possession and went up the other way - and wasn't anywhere to be found on backchecks. A couple of poorly-timed defensive reads meant he was too far away to cover any open space or cut off players on their way to the net. Still floats too high in the defensive zone,

sometimes exiting before his teammates have even gotten controlled possession. When he has the puck, Musty thrives when he has space. Lots of it. There was lots of four-on-four and odd-man rushes in this game, and the extra ice afforded him more time to think through plays and passing options, and execute accordingly. His puckhandling under pressure was a bit better on this one. But I still don't know if I see a first round pick yet.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Best player on the ice. Musty's skill level is high. He instantly turns pass receptions into dekes and shots, keeping his top hand in front of body as much as possible. Fakes shots on pass receptions, cuts inside. Scored with that play, finishing it off with a low in-stride wrister – an NHL shot. Turned steals into offence. Consistently put himself in favourable positions, cutting inside, getting open in space, and instantly turning pucks off the boards. The decisions aren't always great in those positions: he blindly throws pucks into space for teammates (turnovers), lacks awareness of back pressure, and doesn't always make the best play. He's clearly better without pressure than with it. But his combination of tools and understanding of body positioning to close off back pressure should improve that with time. Even then, when he's looking to pass, he hits teammates moving into space, slips pucks under sticks, and deceives. He looked like one of the 10-best prospects from North America in this game.

David St-Louis: November 24th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty really showed his playmaking here. He made many one-touch, pre-planned passes to teammates in odd-man rushes with pin-point accuracy, showing that he can both identify and anticipate teammates around him. Other ones of his passes went in closed lanes, however, and apart from those flashes, the rest of his game was quite lacklustre. He's not all that engaged away from the puck and he has a bit of temper and retaliates on clean or accidental hits. I'm not sure what to make of him at this point. He could be a top-10 talent in this class if he puts it all together more often.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Puckhandling under pressure was another issue in this game. Musty tried to break the puck out of his own end, hesitated when a player challenged him, then lost possession and fell over trying to get it back. He's better at creating off-puck or executing very quick passes in the offensive zone, typically one-touches to teammates on an odd-man rush. Scored once, recognizing open space in the slot and opening his body up to receive the pass and get the one-timer off. Backchecking efforts were inconsistent, even when he has ample opportunity to close off the attacking player in time. Not a first round pick based on this performance, but could be worth a second or third if a team is willing to invest significant time and effort into recalibrating some of his instinctual tendencies - using his teammates more, less dangling attempts on rushes, improved engagement defensively would go a long way to increasing the odds that he can adapt to pro-style hockey, because the offensive talent and individual skill is there.

Lauren Kelly: November 6th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Musty picked up two assists in this game. His first was a shot from the half wall that missed the net, bounced off the boards and right to David Goyette on the doorstep. The second was a cross-ice pass on the powerplay for Sudbury's eighth goal of the game. His biggest detriment to offence in this game was his inability to create anything while under pressure. He almost seemed to panic when he tried to enter the offensive zone with the puck on some sequences, and he fumbles puckhandling when he's hounded by opposing players in the offensive zone. He's better at maintaining possession when he enters the zone along the boards than down the middle of the ice. On one particular carry along the boards, Musty cut back and a pass to the slot connected. He wanted the puck on the powerplay several times, but never got the opportunity to execute a one-timer. I don't know if I see a first round pick just yet.

David St-Louis: November 2nd, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds - OHL

Ouf. There is a lot of development work ahead for Musty. He's like that giant block of clay (?) that you have to chisel (?) and sculpt into a top-six NHLer. The potential is there, but it's hidden by overdangling tendencies, a lack of awareness, an inconsistent defensive engagement, an inability to use teammates effectively, a poor understanding of the purpose of dangles and puck protection moves, a lack of true cutbacking ability...And so many other factors. Clearly, Musty is the kid who always outtooled his opposition. Bigger

and faster and more skilled, he could run through teams with the same patterns that he continues to repeat to this day but now fail them. The lack of adaptability is concerning, but at the same, the game is easier for him than others. Not many have his combo of skills. If he can just reorient them in a new direction and complement them with more awareness, watch out. The development team that will get him has to be well equipped, however: skill coaches, video analyst, and someone to get through to Musty and teach him a different game.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Interesting performance from Musty. A bit of a messy one. He's clearly inefficient, but the potential is there. He has the high-stance skating that I used to underrate, but the way he skates -- all crossovers and rapid weight shifts around opponents -- is NHL projectable. It's Josh Anderson-like. That's the player he reminds me of. The style is not similar, but the mechanics are. Musty is more skilled. He probably sees himself more as a playmaker, but his future probably lies in adding more of the harder skills. He can fight through checks to go to the puck, make plays off the back wall (created two great scoring chances). With a little bit more awareness, that could be a big part of his game. The off-puck game was also really interesting in this game, very purposeful, the drives into space. He knew what he was doing, shading toward the periphery and then coming back in.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

This was a really strong game from Musty, albeit a frustrating one. Par for the course there. Musty was the clear driver on Sudbury's top line, playing opposite Nathan Villeneuve and with David Goyete lining up down the middle. Weaving attacks through the neutral zone, layered deception to set up each manoeuvre, and dexterity as a handler -- it was all there. Musty is a player who wants the puck on his stick, and while there's a propensity on his part to get tunnel vision when faced with pressure and miss his linemates, I would still rate this part of his game as a distinct positive. There were two separate occasions where Musty crossed up a defenceman in space for a clean look. I'm not sure it's even fair to describe Musty as lacking vision generally either. His assist was brilliant, a spinning puck retrieval and dish to a linemate that he hadn't even scanned for. Just wonderful anticipation there. The fly-bys are truly maddening though, whether it's passing up an opportunity to get involved in the forecheck or just blatantly, egregiously cheating for offence when the puck's in his zone.

Lauren Kelly: October 21st, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Last viewing I wanted Musty to pass more, and he delivered in this game. He was surveying his passing options on the powerplay, and also using his teammates more on the rush. His assist was a nice give-and-go entering the offensive zone, recognizing that the defenceman had drifted to the boards and moved to space, received the pass and then sent a backhand feed across to an open teammate far side. Off puck, though I think he still needs to work on some things. He's not using his body to position himself for success in battles, opting to try and fish it out with his stick only, and he lost quite a few 50/50 battles that way. Similarly on backchecks, if he was able to catch up to a player in the neutral zone, he'd default to trying to intercept the pass with his stick. Only when that failed did he then have to use his body to push the player off the puck to create a turnover. I think he's getting better at finding shift-to-shift consistency, but he's still got some work to do.

Lauren Kelly: October 16th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

I'll give Musty credit where it's due - the engagement and effort levels were both improved upon in this viewing. There were times, though, where I wished he would have passed the puck instead of taking a shot. His shot is legit, don't get me wrong, but they were on sequences where his teammates may have had better angles or the pass would have exploited the goalie's movements. Still, the lack of scanning in his own end limits his effectiveness there, as he's not expecting pressure when he does receive the puck or a player gets left open. But I didn't feel like he had a significant impact on the game at all, positively or negatively. Not really any evidence of his dynamic offensive skills in this game. Pretty pedestrian viewing from a player who is typically known for making his presence known in some way.

Lauren Kelly: October 9th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Watching Musty gets incredibly frustrating at times. It's as if he's a walking (skating?) contradiction. He'll be active and aware in the

DZ on some shifts, and at a standstill on others. He doesn't scan, ever, in his own end. When the game isn't going his team's way (like in this one, Saginaw dominated for large stretches), Musty is constantly throwing his body around with seemingly no rhyme or reason. Trying to slash players as he pressures them around the ice. He'll charge in and attempt to get the forecheck started, and then just stop. He tried to make plays, but his passes missed their intended targets or were picked off. His playmaking needs work. And yet, he still picked up two points in this game. A really nice delay and then subtle shift to change the angle of his release, before firing it past the goaltender from the slot. His assist came at the end of the game; he pretty much just threw the puck towards the net and it was redirected off a defenseman right to a teammate. I just can't figure out who he is as a player. There's obviously tons of skill here. But I question his ability to put it all together at this level already, let alone at future ones. Granted, it's early in the season. It could click into place come the new year.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

There were at least five examples of Musty's off-the-pass shooting ability in this game. He took pucks directly into his shooting pocket, keeping his head up and his hands in front of body. No additional movement required to shoot. Shot immediately, delayed inside the release, and mixed in the odd stickhandle to conceal his intentions. Adjusted hand positioning for the pass, such on his one-time tap-in goal. In-stride wrister, driving power downward. He's an NHL shooter. The rest of his game still has a lot of work required. Tries to set-up teammates but doesn't scan. Throws pucks into space that teammates can't access. Handling skill enables access to tricky passing lanes, but he lacks the precision passing to make the most of what he created. Defence comes and goes. Skating lacks depth, but he's closer to achieving optimal knee bend than last year. More of a shooter and reactionary skill player. He could be a first-rounder, but there's a lot of work to be done.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Musty's so inefficient. He kept turning the puck over by trying to do everything himself. He misses positive plays to make low-percentage dekes with little reward. Manipulated sticks through deception and movement, but didn't move the puck early enough. The usual flashes of high-end handling skill allowed him to carve through defenders to gain the middle. Many of his passes were off, both weight and timing. Passed into space a couple times successfully. Have to see more of that. Right now, he's still figuring out how to use his tools.

Lassi Alanen: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I'm not a big fan of Musty based on this tournament. Heavily reliant on individually outskilling the entire opposing team instead of utilizing his teammates better. I see playmaking skill and vision in flashes, but it's overshadowed by all the turnovers caused by not passing early and not being quick and skilled enough to pull off his current style with consistency. He did have some very good off-puck moments in the OZ, cutting in front of defender's with perfect timing to get a couple of quality looks. USA also relied heavily on his shooting straight out of faceoffs, must have seen at least 10 examples of this during this tournament, props to the guy always winning the OZ faceoff from the left side. I don't think he brought much defensive value either. Hustled hard a few times on the backcheck, but not meaningfully. Flew the DZ many times to look for counter-attack opportunities that weren't there. Got destroyed by a Slovakian forward in his last shift of the game, just being very casual with the puck right after a pass, not engaged at all. Some similar weird moments throughout the game where it looked he stopped trying that hard. There's skill and upside, but a lot of holes needing to be filled.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Musty versus the world, and Musty lost. He kept trying to deke through everyone, failing most of the time. He always goes for the extra move instead of passing or cutting back. Lacks precision as a passer, too. Many of his passes are hope plays to the inside after running out of space. He's clearly a gifted handler, and he continues to show physical skills through body positioning (he really uses that free hand and gets low to put defenders on his back). A well-timed sprint from the boards to the middle lead to his best chance, but this wasn't a particularly good game from Musty. Lots of work to be done in the decision-making department, based on this tournament.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Chaos. Everytime Musty stepped on the ice, something happened. For much of the game, it was physical play. He was involved in every scrum, took a silly penalty, and drew two. When he wasn't making plays, he was hunting down the puck carrier to slam them into the boards. When the puck arrived on Musty's stick, he created. He was moved to the right side of the powerplay for this game, which instantly paid dividends with a nasty top shelf wrister. He swapped out the in-a-glide dekes that plagued yesterday's game for more active feet. He leaned over his outside edges, deked inside crossovers, and constantly changed directions to confuse defenders. Instead of forcing plays to the inside, he waited the extra second for pressure to arrive, then passed. He even flashed a bit of a give-and-go style, something that will only bolster the impact of such a skilled, multi-faceted scorer. There's been much talk about the trickiness of his projection in the early stages of this tournament, but more performances like these throughout the year will only make his upside more exciting.

Lassi Alanen: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Some really flashy plays by Musty here. A pretty solid lacrosse attempt from noticeable pace, requiring really good touch and puck skills. Really nice deke under the defender's stick off the rush before passing the puck back to his initial lane with backhand to set up a chance. But there were a ton of inefficient turnovers, too, forcing plays inside with handling instead of looking to pass and make the higher percentage play. Skating looks clearly below-average projection-wise, too, with high stance and lack of quickness.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

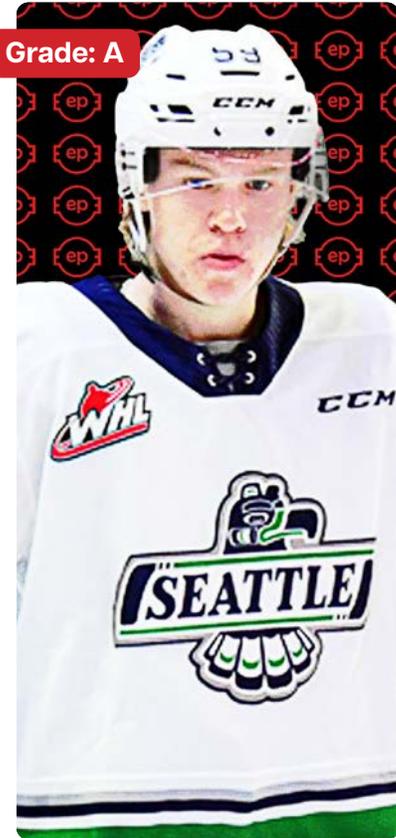
Musty looked like the Musty of last year: good and bad. The good's the obvious puck skills. The deft touch, creativity, playmaking, and inside play. He always wants to cut inside. He makes subtle plays after flashy ones to build the offence. Lacrosse chance, hit the pipe with a slick wrister, too. He also kills a ton of opportunities. His weight is always centred. He takes pucks in the middle of his body and widens his stance instead of using his outside edges. As a result of the first, he failed to convert on chances after cross-slot passes – he couldn't shift his weight across with the pass. Stride lacks depth and quickness. Very excited to see how he evolves throughout this season.

Mitchell Brown: March 6th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty's flashy. Sometimes to a fault. He looks to beat defenders 1-on-1 with his hands. He often succeeds, partly because of superior hand speed and partly because of projectable setups (weight shifts, eye deception). When he's looking to use those skills to attack the middle, he's incredible to watch. When he's locked into outside lane attacks, he's easily defended. His offence in this game was mostly of the inefficient variety, but he had one awesome shot-pass for a point-blank chance. The off-puck instincts are here, just waiting to be fully realized by a give-and-go. Timed movements into the slot, constantly adapting his positioning to get open for a return pass. Top-line upside, but will require a bit more work to achieve than some of the other top prospects for 2023.

Mitchell Brown: October 31st, 2021 - North Bay Battalion vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Musty has some shifts where he's trying to posterize everyone. He's relatively deceptive in his setups, and he's quick edge-to-edge with independent hands and feet -- it'll work at this level. But the really impressive sequences were more projectable plays for the NHL. He slips around a player, attacks the inside and brings a defender with him, and then passes to a teammate skating into the space he just created. Skilled off the backhand. He's already winning battles, overpowering defenders, and creating space with his body. The puck protection mechanics aren't there yet, but I think he's aware of to do it. His feet let him down. Musty looked like a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.



Grade: A

13 Gracyn Sawchyn

AGE 17.655 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Troy Terry, Robert Thomas



Hockey IQ



Ankle Breaker



Got that Dog in him

Player Info

C/RW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

6.5

Passing

7

Puckhandling

6.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	58	18	40	58	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Gracyn Sawchyn's average spot based on the outlets accounted for in the Elite Prospects Draft Center isn't even high enough for him to register in our consolidated rankings. Even with us placing him at 13th on our final board.

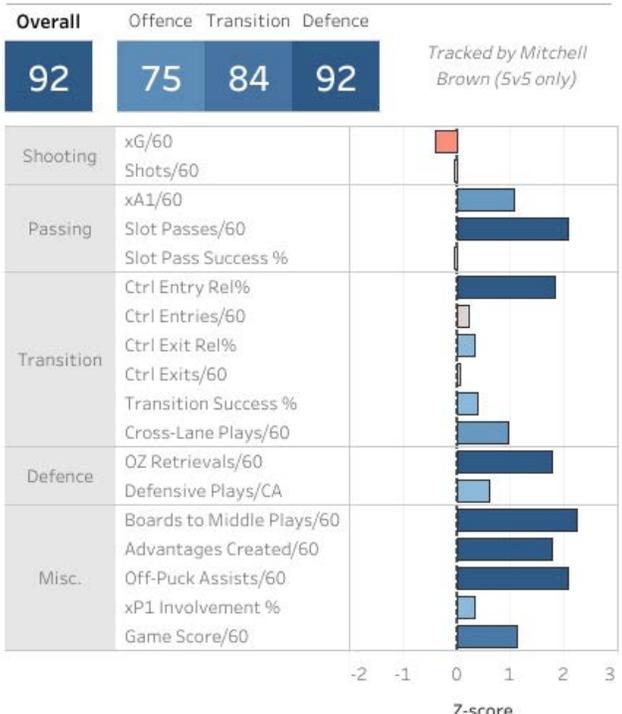
So, yeah, we're sticking our necks out a bit for this player, and we know the stakes. This ranking is going to make us look like geniuses or complete buffoons, with very little ground in between.

Here's why we think Sawchyn's play will place us in the former camp: He's a skilled handler, a cunning passer, and has a lengthy track record of generating offence at a commendable clip on top teams. There have been flashes of skill and creativity that would place him in the top 10 of this class. Furthermore, there are at least trace amounts of dog in his DNA.

Now, of course, we have to acknowledge that commendable is the operative word as it relates to his output this season – just a cool 58 points in 58 games – but context, as always, is key. For starters, just look at that Seattle Thunderbirds roster. They won the WHL championship for a reason. There were seven drafted prospects in their forward ranks by season's end, three first-rounders among them.

Gracyn Sawchyn

F | Seattle Thunderbirds | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 115.5



And so opportunities were scarce, and Sawchyn often had to settle for a spot on the second or third line and second-unit power play opportunities. It can't be said that he didn't make the most of them. Certainly, most middle-six forwards aren't humming at a point a game pace.

The playmaking is the star of the show with Sawchyn. His vision never fails him, and he's a cunning, manipulative passer who always makes the right play.

"Sawchyn's game is not a complex one. He sprints hard after the puck, and if he can't outright win the race, he tries to win the ensuing battle," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a Scout's Notebook. "Then, he looks for a teammate. He feathers pucks off the backhand through defenders, slips them under sticks on the forehand, and completes all sorts of crafty one- and two-touch plays to teammates moving in space. If the pass isn't available, he drives inside without much concern for his safety."

Like many of the game's best scorers, Sawchyn is pretty lethal away from the puck, too. He does an excellent job of managing space, controlling his speed to time his arrivals, and generally plays with a high off-puck pace. He's constantly looking for ways to impact the game, puck on his stick or otherwise.

He's lethal away from the puck in the other sense, too. Sawchyn is constantly applying physical pressure to his opponents, finishing his checks, and cutting through opponents' hands to win pucks along the boards. He's just an absolute menace out there. Maybe even a little chippy at times. You know, the classic love him on your team, hate him on the other team player.

Certainly, you'd like a player in this range at the draft to be more productive. Sawchyn has some warts to work out of his game too, a propensity to overhandle the puck and an about average skating stride foremost among them. Still, we like this player. We like him a lot. And we're willing to stand by that evaluation. Here's hoping Sawchyn proves us right on an NHL second-line before long.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Five standout WHL rookies



2023 Memorial Cup Preview

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's a bit of a confusing player.. the hands are undeniable. He's light, but he's feisty. Gets to the middle. The skating isn't all that pretty but it's effective. But then he goes dark for long stretches. Being buried in that Seattle lineup doesn't help him, but we've expected to see more. Probably a second rounder who could end up being a player." Western Conference scout, June 2023

"Love his puck skills and playmaking instincts. I like his push back. But gets too cute in traffic and gives the puck up too often. He needs work but the skill is there." - Eastern Conference scout, June 2023

"I'm a two-way forward who likes to rely on his skill a lot. Make plays. Can be used anywhere in the lineup. I want to gain some weight and get faster." - Gracyn Sawchyn, May 2023

"I think he played his best hockey when he was flying under the radar earlier in the season. That performance at

the Top Prospects Game really caused a lot of people to take notice though. He plays on the edge and can handle the puck in a phone booth.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s on that stacked Seattle team. You have to look at it with that context. He’s not getting first-unit power play time, first line time like the Brayden Yager, but very skilled. Great offensive stick. Really good one-one-one. Can make a lot of plays. Needs to improve his scoring finish. Has great hands but lacking a bit around the net. Has some bite to him. Has killed penalties. Has to improve his skating.” – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: May 17th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

An impressive game from Sawchyn, albeit not as dynamic as usual. Scored a tap-in goal on the powerplay. Connected with a long-range saucer pass through multiple layers for a high-danger chance. Even added a bit of deception to the set up. Otherwise, he skated his routes, battled for positioning around the net, earned a couple of point-blank looks, and provided lock down defence. Not the exciting, high-level offensive creator Sawchyn, but a player who looked on a top-nine NHL path. He’s a still a top-15 prospect for me.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Another good game from Sawchyn. I saw his motor more than his skills in this one, but they showed up too. Consistently physical and a lot of hits. He sealed pucks with his body and then moved it to teammates. He scored around the net, battling for a round. He played defence, great defence, coming back at just the right time to cut lanes. Off the rush, he manipulated defensive gaps, challenged defenders and then made plays to teammates, and also dangled through a couple of sticks. Just a solid overall player with flashes of high-end sense and skills.

David St-Louis: April 19th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Amazing game from Sawchyn. Also a very easy one. But I like these blowout games in the WHL/OHL as they make it easier to see the skill ceiling of prospects and compare it with other ones playing in easier leagues on stacked teams (USNTDP). Sawchyn made a bunch of highlight reel dangles against defenders. He manipulated their feet, opened passing lanes, and rushed around them. He caught pucks while protecting them and then fed teammates running to the slot. He’s equally as skilled as a Ryan Leonard, except maybe for the shot.

Cam Robinson: April 19th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Some really high-end plays from Sawchyn in this one. He was handling the puck as well as always, but seemed to have an extra incentive to get into traffic, draw a stick or two before slipping it out of reach and either quickly moving it - as he did for a very nice A1, or to curl back and look for more options. I really liked his battle throughout as well - he disrupted a couple of transnational attacks by getting back and lifting sticks, stepping inside on players. He was quick to pucks and was strong along the wall. He came back and broke up a 2v1 and stayed with the guy to fight for possession. All in about 12 minutes of ice from the bottom six in a blow out. Not bad.

Daniel Gee: April 18th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sawchyn was in a depth role in this blowout win for the Thunderbirds. This game wasn’t competitive at all, which taints the viewing in its entirety, but it helped me get a better grasp of Sawchyn’s game. While the dynamism on-puck was at full display, he was overly cute at times, overcomplicating puck touches to the point where he started to lose possession. You overhandle on an exit and stay static, trying to out-handle pressure? You will turn it over. If he gets too close to the perimeter of the ice, he’s easily worked off-puck -- appears so light out there. Regardless, when he does execute, you would be hard pressed to find a draft-eligible WHLer with similar puck skills, not named Bedard. Dangerous all night off the rush, Sawchyn flashed a full

repertoire of his skill set. Slips to the inside, handles out of every puck touch, constant deception use -- hard not to love what he does in motion. In a first period shift he filed in behind the entry man, took the drop-off pass, curl-and-dragged past a static defender, and snapped a shot past Ty Young's ear. The shot was apparently tipped, but the play was all Sawchyn. Blends four-way mobility with his small-area game to exploit delays. He made an egregious bad play in the third. After pulling off a crafty handle into a backpass, Sawchyn just threw the puck into the slot, without any pre-scanning. No teammate within 10 feet of the pass location.

Sawchyn's in-zone offensive shifts were dominated by powerplay opportunities. He's net front, probably due to the glut of talent on the roster. He redirected a shot with little resistance from the left-hand circle. His best shift was at 5-on-5 at the onset of the game, however. Sawchyn initiated a battle in the near corner and fought a puck off the wall and into the middle of the ice. His edge and handle blend allowed him to pull the puck through two defenders trying to pinch him. He escaped out of pressure, in what was an insane display of skill blending between his hands, edges, penchant to be inside focused, all with his head up scanning pass options. Still think he's a top WHLer in this class -- we may have him a tad high, but if you buy into the argument that his upside is pretty endless, then I guess he's right there in the top-20 range.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

I'm not sure if Sawchyn's skill level is as high as some of the top-end prospects in this draft, due to a skating stride that is a bit more limiting, but it's certainly up there somewhere. The skating is about average and I'm sure nobody will notice its flaw because, knowing how Sawchyn plays, he will stride at maximum capacity all the time in the NHL and mask his inefficiencies. But it won't allow him to dance through a neutral zone or create odd-man rushes as much. That being said, the net-front game will absolutely become a strength. He has the hand-eye coordination (he batted a puck mid-air in the net in this one - goal got called back) and the handling skills to dangle through sticks and get there. He picks up rebounds, fakes opponents to feed pucks to teammates around the blue paint, and he consistently turns defensive interceptions into offence. One of the more complete players in this draft class and also one of its most skilled and intelligent players. A no-brainer top-15 pick for me.

Daniel Gee: March 3rd, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Outstanding game for Sawchyn who flashed creativity, skill blending, and advanced processing. While he didn't have a lot of touches transitionally, on a third period powerplay, Sawchyn was an animal. He took a neutral zone pass in stride, entered on the right-wing with his head up, popped on his heels and executed a hard stop to disrupt the closest defender's gap. From there he saucered a layered pass to an open linemate who overshot their positioning. Such a high-end play. Multiple early skate-to-stick handles and triangle handle attempts that didn't quite work. Even flashed catch-and-release ability.

Where Sawchyn found the majority of his success was during the numerous sustained offensive zone sequences that Seattle had in this game. The details are almost overwhelming. From proactive stick lifts in the slot, to perfectly timed off-puck activations, it's clear that Sawchyn is gifted when it comes to sense. Works cycle pays low-to-high and looks for opportunities to leverage skill. In the second, Sawchyn managed to spin and hook a pass from the near boards to the right-point in pressure. Shortly after he stripped the puck from Dragecevic with a stick-lift, attacked deeper 1-on-1 and rifled a shot which sent the goaltenders stick flying. Retreating, Sawchyn intercepted the subsequent clearance and as the goaltender grabbed his stick in the corner he floated the puck into the open net... Sawchyn operates on instinct in some cases. An example came in the third; Sawchyn crashed hard on the forecheck and forced a bad pass. He managed to pick up the puck on the near boards, popped his edges 10-2 to cut into the middle of the ice, dropped back and toe-dragged the puck through a defenders triangle in the slot, feeding an activator on the left-wing for a high-danger shot. So impromptu, so creative. If anything, he struggles with some of the physical elements -- folded a couple times in physical pressure and while some of his handle attempts are flashy, he can be inefficient by virtue of what he tries. Regardless, he's such an active forechecker, who can break open games on any shift. Even a plus defender -- disrupts, works hard on the backcheck, supports and forces the puck to the perimeter. There's a legitimate argument that he's the top WHL forward available after Bedard and Benson -- this is all in a depth role too. What would he be as the primary option? I'm guessing there would be more buzz.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A solid game from Sawchyn, showing off the full skill set. The handling skill continues to shine, how he easily handles under pressure, fights off defenders at the same time, and fakes out incoming pressure. Manipulates opponents in a variety of ways: turn to face and fake out, cutting on their heels, look offs, and spinning to put pressure on his back before faking one direction. There's defence and puck-getting ability, too. Angles opponents wide, skates through their hands, and gets above the play. Knows the next play after getting the steal. Grabbed an assist by stealing possession before slipping a puck cross-slot. He missed a few of plays, but he timed them well. Skating was problematic for stretches in this game. Outside edges lack some refinement and crossovers lack some push off. Some awkwardness, too. He looks like a clear top-20 prospect, if not top-15.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Another great performance from Sawchyn in a series of great performances. He was the same, effective net-front presence. He created offence from the boards with a mix of puck protection techniques, handling skills, and pure effort. He connected passes, but didn't only hit the first option, but the pass one, the teammate that most top-32 prospects on our board wouldn't even see. He opened up passing lanes with fakes, dangled through opponents, and was defensively engaged. There's pretty much everything in his game. The skating looks average, however. It won't matter too much. He's a sure-fire A-level prospect for me. A big riser. We always like those.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Another incredible performance of Sawchyn. Sure, Victoria, but sometimes it's good to watch what a prospect can do when he's freely allowed creativity on the ice. And we saw it in this game. Sawchyn is keenly aware of his options and passing lanes opening. He controls his skating and moves in ways to connect passing plays. His physical skills serve his playmaking game and he has a bit of a mean streak on the boards. Two highlight reel sequences: a breakaway in which he dangled the goalie, but instead of scoring himself, he dropped the puck to a teammate coming in behind (he had spotted him prior to his dangle), and an off-puck movement, where he timed himself in a passing lane, dangled a defender on reception, and then scored. He's a clear top-20 pick in this draft for me, and might compete for a higher spot. A great package and an easy NHL projection.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

I love this prospect. His playmaking and passing game and vision are just as good as some of the top players we have on our board right now, like Ryan Leonard, and he has more energy than him and he's playing against tougher competition. The hockey sense is a 6.5-7 for me, the skating a 5 (average), the handling a 6, and there's the physical play that at least deserves a 6. An easy NHL projection based on his pace and forechecking and net-driving and supporting game with a thick layer of skill that gives him top-six upside. I'd draft him in the top-15 for sure.

Cam Robinson: February 17th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn is just so smart out there. Every decision he makes has a little bit of a wrinkle to it to make it more difficult to defend. It's really a treat to watch. He had a great rush early in the game where he used several feints and moved the puck outside in on the defender before bursting through and firing a shot. He was really working the shot on this one - spinning, delayed wrist from the high slot. Downhill wrist where he got to one knee to generate extra power - one while up a man, one when down a man. The hands are really quick and fluid. He can work in a wide arc around his body. And despite being a bit slim, he goes to the hard areas. Gets knocked down a lot. But he goes. I think we may even be underrating his skating a bit. Could be a 5.5 with room to grow.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

In a game that Seattle completely controlled, Sawchyn wasn't much of a factor. He did the usual stuff: intercepting passes, backtracking to force turnovers, quick plays off the boards, some flashes of reactionary handling skill, and give-and-gos. In one sequence, he intercepted a pass, waited for his teammate to get to the slot, and connected with the look-off backhand pass. There were also many failed plays. He tried to deke with passing options, his skating couldn't provide him the separation he needed, and he missed the best option on at least two of his passes. Looked pretty limited from a skill standpoint in this one,

but still the same intelligent, hardworking player. Looked more like a late-first.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Another really impressive performance from Sawchyn. The finer skills in his game keep improving. He's a legitimate playmaker now, probably one of the best in the draft. He has many of the patterns: delays, rush underlap/overlap, fakes to open cross-ice seams...And also the off-puck timing and drives to complement that playmaking game. Also, he's relentless and one of the best wall players in this class. I wish he completed more of his plays in this one -- quite a few of his passes ended up to the other team -- but these plays don't really matter for his projection considering just how fast he's improving. A clear top-20 for me now.

Cam Robinson: February 11th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

The set of hands on this kid. He has lightning quick moves that he's able to pull off in tight quarters - often bring the puck into his body before either spinning, cutting, or pulling it back out. He can work them from a standstill with two men trying to disrupt. He can work them in transit with the puck to pull it through the defenders triangle, make them miss and cut to the inside. He had one play where he was one on three, entered with possession, cut across the line, made an inside out deke before sending a backhand right along the blueline to a streaking mate. Loads of calm, considerate actions on that one. His vision stood out in a big way in this one. He sees plays developing, can read the defensive schemes and knows what he should do. Unfortunately, actually pulling off the high-difficulty passes were hit and miss in this one. He had a nice little primary helper by dishing it on a 2-on-1, and only two shot attempts - both blocked.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Nothing really flashy from Sawchyn, but really effective hockey. It started in the defensive end, where he won body positioning, battles, and closed lanes. He was really feeling it pursuit, as usual, grabbing six steals in a variety of ways. From there, he pushed play to the inside or cross-ice, consistently creating an advantage for his recipient (save for a couple of turnovers). The best one: he deked through a forechecker while fighting off another to gain the middle, then passed back across the ice for the exit/entry combo. His off-puck skating was a consistent factor in this game. He skated to the net and brought defenders with him, creating space behind him. Provided the screen on Lambert's first goal and created the lane along with the net-front chaos for Korchinski's goal. A pro game. He's a first rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 31st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn had more impressive plays in this game. Used a give-and-go in the offensive end before going between the legs for a chance. He spun off checks and passed to the inside. Showed backhand passing skill under pressure. As usual, he was a nuisance on the forecheck and backcheck. He goes all-out for every puck, but it's rare to see him over-extend or take himself out of position. The transition game continues to shine, even if his touches weren't numerous. He draws pressure, passes through it, and accelerates back into the play. A couple of lateral passes that lead to entries/exits. He could be a first rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn has ascended to dynamic status. He's still the same forechecker, taking direct routes yet still finding ways to funnel puck carriers into pressure. He angles and times his engagements in all three zones. The board play was the star. He skates into the defender's space, then goes back between his legs or cuts back (over either leg). He turns to face the inside to manipulate the feet of incoming defenders. Dekes around opponents. For his assist, he one-touched a puck between his own legs, walked inside, and set-up a cross-slot opportunity, one for a game-high seven shots assists. There was also open-ice skill. He let backcheckers overskate before attacking inside on their heels. In-zone, he snuck away from pressure just outside the slot, won positioning in front of the net, and arrived in space behind the backs of defenders. Not all reads were great: he failed to use the space of a defender's heels once (tried to dangle through them instead, which was more risk for the same result) and blindly threw the puck away after gaining the zone. Nothing unusual or concerning. The skating's a more interesting question. His posture lacks and his crossovers fail to generate momentum sometimes (doesn't fully extend his crossovers it seems). His skating skills are better, getting deep through his cutbacks and turns, preparing his moves with fakes, and accelerating out of

them. He looked like a clear first-round, top-15 talent in this game.

Daniel Gee: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn continues to impress. He's small and can be a bit inefficient with some of his touches, but man, does he pull off some impressive sequences throughout his minutes. So crafty and deceptive in transition in this game. I love how he funnels to the inside.

On one first period sequence he handled into the middle of the ice, walked a defender with a triangle-based deke, and sent the puck into open space -- a hope play but something that would work with the right players. He absolutely rifled a shot off the right-wing. A subtle drag inward, cross-body attempt allowed him to pick the top-corner, short-side. The release was downright wicked and the angle change froze Portland's goaltender. Sawchyn isn't a burner but he generates proactive speed in the neutral zone -- one one sequence he tried a windmill handle but turnover the puck over -- a teammate followed up the puck and for a dangerous shot off. Showed a power game in the second. Turned a defender and took a high-danger shot in the slot, attacking the rebound right after.

Passing skill blended with manipulation as well; in the third he cut into the middle, looked off his pass target and slipped a puck into space, leading to a shot. In sustained pressure, Sawchyn showed a lot of adaptability on the boards. He punch-turns out of pressure, shakes off slower defenders, and gets off the wall where he can create. His best sequence was in the second period. The puck was ringed around the far boards. Sawchyn initiated a battle, won the puck, put it through his legs to escape the pile, and backhand slipped a puck to a weak side activator (Allan) who scored. It was just an incredible play. He forces some of his passes but he has so many positive puck touches that I think it won't matter much as he matures. The biggest question is going to be the size and average skating combination -- will it present some major hurdles? Possibly, but his toolset and sense could overcome that at higher levels. I like him as a fringe first, top of the second player.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team Red vs. Team White - CHL Top Prospects Game

Sawchyn was probably the best prospect in this game after Bedard. An incredible showing. He attacked the net consistently, made tactical chip behind the defence instead of forcing dangles, but also showed his handling skills when needed. He worked the boards, made creative passing plays, backchecked hard to pressure the opposition into mistakes, chained feints into dangles to make plays inside, and battled for pucks all over the ice. A rare combination of soft and hard skills, always a plus in a projection. Main issue with his that projection right now is his overall skill level. The size of the advantages he creates are small. He's not outright beating players, but really working to create his plays. Not sure he's a skill player in the NHL right now, but he could be. Easily. The hockey sense looks like a high-end grade.

Cam Robinson: January 25th, 2023 - Team Red vs. Team White - CHL Top Prospects Game

Sawchyn was one of the standout players in the TPG. He was decisive with the puck and made several high-difficulty plays in traffic. The hands were super quick and he had the patience to wait for a poke before shifting his weight, pulling it inside and cutting into free space. His strength remains an issue but he's not fearful of the net front of the wall play. He was especially aggressive on the forecheck where his routes allowed him to pressure quickly. The skill level shone at a first round level in this one.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Sawchyn's ability to make plays off the wall is very valuable. He shakes defenders with his handling skills, with cutbacks, with physical skills, but mostly with pure energy. He's not just a grinder, however, as his game also features a healthy mix of playmaking and off-puck instincts. He's more of a "funnel pucks on net" guy than advanced playmaker, but I'm sure he will be able to take his opportunities to create in the NHL. Otherwise, the bulk of his scoring will be found around the net. Good engagement on the forecheck. He's at least a B-level prospect for sure.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

A very impressive performance from Sawchyn. He moved decently well away from the puck, attacked lanes, and fired passes catch-and-release style. Anticipated the next play with and without the puck (mostly following the system guidelines), helped defensively, established body positioning on the boards, and showed some handling skills, slipping pucks through opponents. A wide variety of skills, a higher pace of play, and a general engagement in the game. He drives the net, plays the goal-line on the powerplay, and hunts rebounds. And he even creates passing lanes when needed! An interesting prospect.

Cam Robison: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Really nice showing in transition for Sawchyn in this one. He has a shifty and darting style while carrying the puck that meshes extremely well with his plus-rated hands. He was able to handle pressure along the wall in the defensive end, pulling pucks inside and make quick outlets to the streaking middle man. On the forecheck he took nice routes and engages physically despite being outmuscled a lot of the time. Overhanded a bit and his feet stopped moving ahead of his shot which telegraphed it a bit too, but correctable habits.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn was the best draft eligible in this outing. He's a strong retriever-playmaker combo, showing nuance and advanced skill in both areas. But this was mostly an open-ice game from Sawchyn. He manipulated incoming pressure with weight shifts and head fakes, before pushing off into space. Cut inside with a jab before firing off a shot. Only at low/controlled speeds, but that he's showing open-ice skill makes me confident in his projection. Seattle's a big, skilled team and he's probably their best forward at getting pucks off the wall, too. He could be an early second.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Sawchyn couples retrievals and playmaking unlike all but a few prospects. Wins races, gains body positioning, then immediately knows the next play. Makes a lot of quick passes from the boards to the middle. In open ice, he tries a lot of quick touch plays that have varying outcomes. When they work, they're brilliant, hitting an uncovered teammate in scoring position. Some are never-looked plays, and some are just poor play selection. Set up the overtime winner with a quick double cut to shake off pressure, then turning the retrieval into a point-blank chance for his teammate. The skating lacks refinement; his quickness lacks from stops. But he has stride output and anticipates the play well ahead of most of his peers. He looked like a solid B prospect in this game: clear path to an NHL role, but achieving heights greater than the third or fourth-line will require significant work.

J.D. Burke: November 1st, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

The highs in this performance were so, so exceptionally high. Among the best that I've scouted this season. Sawchyn's assist, in particular, just about brought me out of my seat. His teammate lobbed an area pass to the faceoff circle on a rush play, Sawchyn exploded past the defenceman opposite him, and furnished a slip pass under another defender's stick as he was hauled down on the play, setting up his linemate for a tap-in goal. Strangely enough, a kind of subdued effort on the forecheck; mostly, Sawchyn hung above the play and forced opponents into turnovers with proactive reads, a high motor, and a good defensive stick. Some great displays of handling skill, often blending pass receptions into dangles. I also liked most of his ideas as a distributor, though he was misfiring on his passes early. Sawchyn's stride doesn't look great, but the activity rate is exceptionally high. He's such a little pest out there, too. I like that.

Daniel Gee: October 29th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sawchyn was a forechecking force again in this game. A constant harasser below the goal line, he combines stick-lifts and proactive contact to win pucks. Quick lateral slips and escapability through his handling. He's smart about who he targets on these retrieval efforts. If a teammate is in a battle, he will target an opposing supporter's stick instead of mindlessly crashing. Past that, he can create out of these efforts. In the third, he almost jammed in a forehand wrap on a quick touch. Sawchyn forces a lot of hope passes -- especially when centering the puck, but it's probably a byproduct of how many retrieval wins he has in a given game, along with Seattle pushing a fairly fast-paced game. His best chance was off a fair-board to left-hand

circle drive; Sawchyn was able to get a shot off as the goalie came across, all while being tripped in the process -- huge right-pad save.

Extremely middle oriented in transition, he loves to walk pucks into the high slot before distributing off to the wings. His skill pops the most in transition -- he had a sequence where he popped a backhand handle through the legs of a defender to allow him to cut in off the right-wing. He's constantly in-motion which helps, but he gets lost in making low-percentage plays at times. An example of this was a sequence in the second -- a spinorama pass way off target -- like why? Regardless, he's still pretty fun. On a 4-on-4, Sawchyn cut into the middle off-puck, handled out of a reception, and had a backhand shot saved. Weight-shift habits help his exclusive -- he dangled three Cougars on another rush, attacking all their weak sides. He's a pick for our board - probably a second round guy.

Cam Robinson: October 29th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sawchyn's ability to work inside the dotted line is extremely impressive. He utilizes the darting skating style while transporting the puck and crosses up the defensive schemes on route. In this one, he was pulling defenders into his sphere of gravity, maneuvering the puck at the last second and hitting seams to streaking mates. He was also extremely aggressive on the forecheck. Lifting sticks, leaning on the body, cutting off lanes, and generally pressuring the defenders into making a quick play. He's guilty of throwing pucks away - especially while attached to overly complex handling moves, but it's likely that's a product of his creativity and can be cleaned up with proper video work and structured coaching.

The skating isn't a true weapon but the way he uses his edges allows him to mask what little deficiencies he has in that regard.

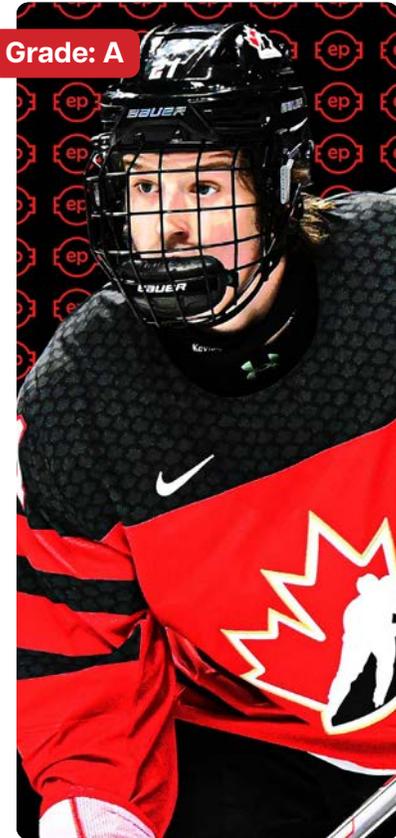
Daniel Gee: October 28th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sawchyn might be a player. Skated on the wing with a bunch of drafted prospects, he was very much a complementary piece -- limited touches, retrieval and constant forechecking work making up a lot of his game tonight. His intensity is low, and he lacks some body position habits but it works to some extent in the WHL. Out of these sequences he created a fair amount of turnovers leading to some dangerous centering passes. He clearly processes the developing play well. Crafty one-touch passes, layering, and an attempt to drag defenders as he works low-to-high. Pass execution was a bit of an issue -- just way off target on longer attempts, passing where the player is, instead of where they are moving too. Schaefer and Sawchyn struggled to connect at times (passes in feet and not in shot wheelhouse)

More of a threat in transition, this is where Sawchyn was at his best. His hands are a standout tool -- so much dexterity and execution in small space. In the first he took a small saucer pass and slid a shot on net with a nifty chop out of the air. Sawchyn was popping out skate-to-stick pass receptions, barely losing a stride on another play. He had a wild zone exit where he jumped through a tiny seam of two Cougars rushing to pressure him, just getting his arms extended enough (all while off-balance) to connect a pass to a teammate higher in the NZ. Lacks protection habits on-puck -- holds it in front of his body on a lot of carries. Just no hip-pocket protection. It took Sawchyn until the end of the second to show more ability. First he curl-and-dragged a pass reception allowing him to walk down the right-wing and place a dangerous puck high. On a subsequent play he adjusted his rush pattern to the inside (Cougars collapsed deeper) and dropped off to a teammate who eventually created a goal. Not sure the tools are all that impressive with Sawchyn, but the brain is definitely present. He has a short stride and plays on his inside edges almost exclusively. Limited push off or straight legged extensions. Could be a pick based on habits and role in the lineup.

Mitchell Brown: October 11th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sawchyn put in the work in this outing. He was hounding the puck carrier, forcing dump-outs and stealing possession. Comes across the hips, follows through with his shoulder. Went from one player to the next, sprinting cross ice if necessary. An impressive display. There was also plenty of skill. He dangled around traffic and launched NHL-calibre one-timers on the powerplay. At 5-on-5, he broke off the boards and attacked the middle. Manipulated pressure by cutting inside, then passing back against the grain in one sequence. Tape-to-space passes. Didn't look dynamic, and the skating was potentially average, but there were a lot of projectable qualities about this performance.



Grade: A

14 Calum Ritchie

AGE 17.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Passy Joel Eriksson Ek, Mark Scheifele



Hockey IQ



Vision



Versatile

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'2"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

7

Passing

7

Puckhandling

7

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Oshawa Generals "A"	OHL	59	24	35	59	1.00
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	3	6	9	1.29

SCOUTING REPORT

Calum Ritchie is your favourite scout's favourite player. Someone who doesn't necessarily jump off the screen and command your attention with jaw-dropping feats of skill or overwhelming physical gifts but nonetheless makes a significantly positive impact every time he steps onto the ice.

As you might expect given that description, he's pretty sharp. Ritchie's hockey sense is his defining quality – his separating skill.

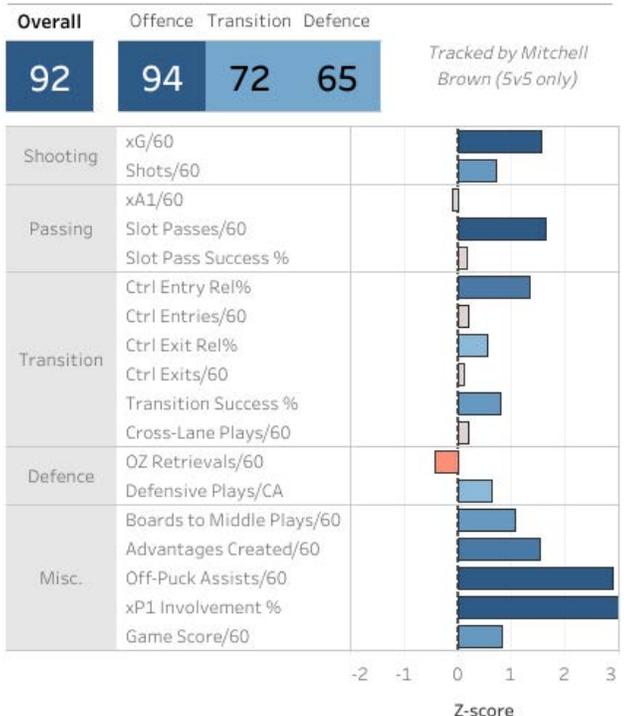
In the offensive zone, that means supporting the puck carrier, connecting plays, anticipating gaps in coverage, identifying where to position himself off-puck, and controlling his skating to arrive in the right places at the right time. He may not be flying out there, but his mental pace is through the roof.

He's the ultimate possession extender. Someone who drives exceptional territorial results by acting like a force multiplier anytime his team is in the offensive zone.

Even when his team does lose possession, Ritchie has what it takes to win it back, leveraging himself against opponents physically, cutting through their hands, and putting his team right back on the attack. Seriously, that wall game is among the best in the class; equal measures motor, intelligence, and muscle. Not someone you want to

Calum Ritchie

F | Oshawa Generals | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 126.2



see bearing down on you as you go for a 50/50 puck.

Of course, you need to have some skill to be a top-15 pick, and Ritchie's got plenty of that, too. He's not the most inventive or creative handler, but he dangles his way around opponents with hip pocket handling and fast-twitch, dextrous hands. He's a legitimately impressive small-area player.

His best work occurs as a playmaker, though. Constant scanning allows him to register the position of everyone on the ice and identify the best option before connecting with pacey one- and two-touch feeds. Layered deception enables him to hide his intentions, making each pass just a little bit easier to hit, too. You just won't find many more efficient, intelligent passers.

"While Ritchie isn't the manipulator that other top prospects are, he's a space creator," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote of Ritchie. "It often comes in simple forms, like a retrieval play that draws in two defenders before a passing or an early pass in transition to give his target a runway to the net. Simply put, he already plays the game that he will play in the NHL."

The catch is that Ritchie is a below-average skater because of generally poor posture, the result of a rounded back and a lack of ankle dorsiflexion. There just plain isn't that much pop in his stride. He's also almost a little too cautious or deferential at times, prone to simple, basic plays with the puck.

You can live with those cons in a player with as much going for them as Ritchie. He's an intelligent, competitive two-way forward with significant handling and passing skills who could take on any assignment or play in any part of your favourite team's lineup. If things go right, perhaps even on an NHL second line.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Canada's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Like Yager for me, not the season I would have expected more out of him." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's my top player in the OHL, ahead of Colby Barlow. This guy is going to play, for sure. He's got all the tools. He can play centre, can play the wing. He can play any special teams role. He's very smart, reads the play well." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I thought he was really good with his speed and his awareness on the ice, and he was making things happen. Digging for pucks as well. He did everything for us tonight." - Canada U18 head coach Jeff Truitt, April 2023

"Ritchie's a great player, too. I love playing with him. He battles hard, he's really smart, and he's going to have a really long career. Great hockey player." - Matthew Wood, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

A quieter game from Ritchie, but I still see it now. He looks so much like an NHLer in the way he analyzes the ice. He always knows his options. He moves the puck quickly and precisely, inside space. Sets up teammates, makes picks, and doesn't overcomplicate plays (for the most part). He battles and freezes the opposition with feints. His skating doesn't look as much of a problem. Clear middle-six projection and a chance at more.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

I'm not sure I've seen many players with a better wall game than Ritchie this season. He takes the right lines, gets underneath opponents, drives through their hands, and makes plays with pace once the puck is in his possession. Probably one of the strongest players from the elbows to wrists in this year's draft – those stick-lifts are lethal. Some really skilled, intelligent small-area passing. This is a player who can do a lot of damage below the hash marks.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

They could've given Best Player of the Game to Ritchie and I wouldn't have batted an eye. It was that strong of a performance – total domination in every phase of the game. Most of his best work occurred as a distributor. Ritchie won pucks along the boards, quickly identified the best option, and made highly skilled passes to make sure they got the puck in just the right spot. Between-the-legs feeds, hooks, slips, saucers, backhand and forehand – Ritchie made it happen. He picked up a hell of an assist on Matthew Wood's goal, entering the zone, widening his stance so his linemates could level up, and then picking him up as a trailing option and chipping the puck into space on his backhand. Ritchie also sneaked one past the Swiss goaltender on the rush for a goal of his own. A dominant wall game, pro-level habits, and a high level of skill. Ritchie brought it all this game. Some of the scouts in attendance definitely took notice, too.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Canada vs Switzerland - u18s

Ritchie is the best player on this Canada team. He's going to move up significantly on our board. The defence is just as great as the offence. Maybe it's because he's playing next to Matthew Wood, the skating doesn't look as much of a problem. What I love the most about his game at the tournament is his ability to steal pucks from the opposition and immediately turn those steals into great scoring chances. His game is very mature, every aspect of it blends into the next, which makes him an ever-threatening player -- when he has talent around him. In the OHL, we saw his two-way skills, but he lacked the opportunities to show his more creative side. We see it here. We can't weigh these performances too much (as the OHL viewings still count and we know he can be a more passive player), but this tournament has still answered many of the questions I had about his play.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Calum Ritchie has been one of the best players at this tournament. It's weird because he's not all that flashier than he was in the OHL, but next to two talented teammates, it's evident how valuable his supporting/facilitator skills could become in the NHL. He's extremely aware, to the point where I think he has a constant map of his teammates in his head. He always seems to know the next option and he helps teammates in their every offensive moves with picks, by stealing back the puck and feeding it to them, and by completing and connecting tic-tac-toe plays. He blocks shots, backtracks hard, and can draw penalties with his high-level stickhandling skills and inside drives. I really like this version of Ritchie. A clear top-20 talent, probably higher.

Cam Robinson: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Ritchie has been very good at this event and this game was no different. He was making smart reads in all three zones - hitting mates with clean passes, moving his feet, defending space well. He was actively changing his gears to create space while transporting the puck and his off-puck awareness really shined as well. I'm still undecided for his true potential, and the feet are a limiting factor. But we're seeing more of the offensive generator we had hoped for.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

This tournament is now convincing me of Calum Ritchie's potential. He forechecks hard, supports plays well, but above all, it's really his passing ability that impresses me the most. He seems to always know his outlets and he can connect with them with his high-level stickhandling and playmaking skills. He drove the net consistently, too, in this one. He scored from a tap-in there. The hockey sense is a 6.5-7 grade for me (high-end).

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

A great game from Ritchie. He just looked like an NHLer in this one. He showed his deception skills and his ability to take charge and create when needed. He manages the puck better than most, creates lane, anticipates the flow of the play, and even has the physical skill to prevent opponents from escaping on the boards. He launched a cross-ice pass to a teammate in the last frame. It landed perfectly on the stick even if he didn't have much space to make the pass and hit his target. He then followed the play, stayed a few steps back, and scored off the rebound. He's smooth and poised.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Mostly invisible in this one. Sure, it was a blowout and Ritchie didn't seem capable of finding a comfortable chair in their lineup. He also didn't get a lot of pucks. Not the best conditions to shine. But everyone had their moments -- not really him, however. I'm only pointing it out because it has been a recurring theme this season. Ritchie has to grab his occasions to create and show more at this tournament. He continues to show that he can find outlets under pressure, catch difficult passes and make plays out of them, and defend one-on-one, but it would help our confidence in him if he became a primary offensive contributor in this team.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Ottawa 67s vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

One of the best performances of Ritchie I've seen this season. He played with more speed, pace, and urgency. He tried defensively, linked plays in transition, and showed his playmaking skills a lot more in the offensive zone. Many, many deceptive passes in this one. He knows where his outlets are, what the best next play is, and how to manipulate defenders. He seems calm and aware and he anticipates well. He protects pucks well on the wall, gets out of traffic, and passes inside. He's just a solid prospect, a guy you draft top-15 and watch slowly develop into, hopefully, a 2nd-liner.

Lauren Kelly: March 3rd, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Ritchie fell awkwardly in this game in the second period and left with an injury. Prior to that though, it was the typical performance from him, a little quiet, positionally responsible, laid a couple of hits along the boards, deft stickhandling. Always understated and never all that consistently flashy. Skating will hold him back a bit offensively at future levels, but the defensive game will carry him far. Hopefully the injury isn't a long-term one, since there isn't much time left in the season and he'd likely play a pivotal role for Canada at the U18s if he's healthy.

Lauren Kelly: February 26th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Ritchie played one of his best games of the season in this one. On his goal, he caught a lucky bounce whipping a puck on net, and his assist in regulation was off a sequence where he powered his way to the net through defenders with the puck and tried to poke it in on the far side. The highlight, though, was his play on the overtime winner - he dangled through all three 67s on the ice before passing back to a wide-open teammate at the far post for a one-timer. He was a monster physically, finishing checks and using his frame to cut off lanes for opposing players. He tries to get in on the forecheck, but skating limitations prevent him from doing anything more than just pressuring from behind. On rushes, he'll move across the ice to back players up and free lanes for his teammates, and expose gaps in coverage by stickhandling through the slot and getting shots off. His motor was a lot more consistent in this one, playing with both pace and intensity. This is the kind of viewing that solidifies him as a first-rounder.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Ritchie supports the play well, drives the net (he scored twice that way in this game), and shows high-level handling skills in moments. His best sequence was in overtime, when he set up a backdoor play with a toe drag around a defender. Even in his best performances, he still looks a bit bland, however, as he fades in the background until he gets the right occasion to use his skills. He's not breaking open the game and controlling the play. He's a complementary force. He should play the same type of game in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Ritchie scored with a one-timer off a pass behind his feet. That was an NHL shot. It wasn't an especially impressive game in terms of creation, but Oshawa struggled to create offence as a whole. He works pucks laterally through opponents, scans for options before receiving pucks, and gets open after moving. The defensive stick was working in this game. He grabbed a bunch of stops, getting inside opponents, and deflecting shots. He flashed the passing skill and physical skills. The skating remains a weakness but he's such an intelligent off-puck skater and passer. In a better environment, he would be setting up way more scoring chances. He looked like a potential mid-six forward in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Oshawa was dominated, but Ritchie was among the game's best players (Oshawa had seven scoring chances, Ritchie was involved in four). He had a trio of chances, drove the middle, and brought some defence and playmaking. Found space in the slot by reloading high and disengaging as the puck came near. Turned steals into offence. One time, he instantly pulled the puck off the boards and walked inside. Another, he deflected a pass and drove the net. He only makes basic passes, but he moves pucks early to let his recipient skate into space. Hard skills appear, with how he spins off pressure, skates through the hands, and uses his bottom hand to lock opponents to his back. The skating's a problem: he lacks lower-body flexion and struggles to separate with his moves. The physical skills are a solution. He looks like a top-15 pick in this game. The low-volume creation's more a result of his environment.

David St-Louis: February 15th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

It always feels like Ritchie is operating at 70% capacity. His skating is a bit of an issue, but it's really the motor that isn't there. He plays an understated game, if that makes sense. Right place, right time, connects plays between teammates by being super aware of their position and simply deflecting pucks to them with extremely soft stickhandling and passing skills. He's well positioned defensively, too. The harder skills appear on the boards. He can't escape pressure, but he can delay plays and extend possession with his frame. An intelligent player with size, he will probably get drafted high, but the lack of pace -- or pace potential puts a cap on his upside projection.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Ritchie's passing is high-grade. The soft touch passes, made with precise timing, in the right spot, they add a lot of upside to his game. He could be a high-level connector in the NHL, especially since he also has the stickhandling skills to play such a game. He's so effective at keeping the puck in traffic and turning receptions into dangles into passes. And he can also pick up some speed and make more pacey attacks in crossovers. I'm becoming more confident in his projection.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Here's Ritchie in a shift: A pass into the slot, tracking the play while staying open, a pressured one-touch pass between the legs perfectly timed for his teammate breaking off the boards, and then detaching from the net-front defender for a pair of high-danger chances. One of the best shifts I've seen from a prospect this season, showing his ability to link different offensive ideas in quick succession. The passing skill is at least a 6, maybe a 7. Pucks leave his stick with the perfect weight, whether he's hooking pucks behind him, saucing them over, or slipping them under. He's a defensive presence, too, consistently closing space on opponents to eliminate shots and forcing poor decisions on the forecheck. Wins body positioning and keeps opponents

locked to his back. The skating remains an issue, and while it might limit his upside, it won't prevent him from becoming a top-nine forward. He's just that smart. He has all the below-average skater skills and reads, whether that's the advanced passing arsenal, delay game, or off-puck offence. Looked like a top-20, if not top-15 pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

The best game I've ever seen from Ritchie. He did all the Ritchie stuff: constantly winning body positioning, creating space for his teammates by skating his off-puck routes, non-stop pressure on the backcheck and forecheck, and moving pucks early to let his teammates walk into space. But it was way more dynamic than usual. He instantly chained pass receptions into dekes into scoring chances. He skated towards groups of defenders before kicking pucks out wide. He passed through defenders, even off the backhand, and hit teammates moving into space. Fired off a pile of scoring chances, combining his shooting skill with his knack for arriving into space at the right moments. The best shot was a backfoot one-timer on a 2-on-1, an NHL shot. The skating was still a limiter in this game. His upper and lower body are locked together; he can't escape on his edges. There were moments to the contrary, but he mostly handles the puck in a wide glide, riding his inside edges uncomfortably heavy – and limiting his adaptability in the process. Still, he looked like a clear-cut potential mid-six forward in this game.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

This game made me remember why I liked Ritchie so much to start the season. The hockey sense stands out in the way he chooses his play and uses his teammates and also off-puck, in his drives to the net, with the right timing and speed and angle of approach, and in transition to give timely passing options. He flashes high-grade stickhandling skills in this game when going through defenders and defended well for the most part, with the right positioning and intensity on the forecheck. He still skates in one block -- no ability to really shift his weight or separate his upper body from his lower one. That's still a severe limitation in his projection and even in his ability to generate plays at the OHL level. Overall, he was still active and pacey, but yeah, I'm not sure of the NHL projection. I think he gets there in a middle-six, 2nd-line role, if he can get the necessary skating development and learns to take charge a little more.

Lauren Kelly: January 3rd, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Ritchie had some very positive moments in this game, but they were few and far between. Two primary assists, including a cross-ice pass through traffic on the game-tying goal. One ridiculous shift where he stickhandled through the offensive zone, dodging sticks, checks, and bodies to finally find enough space to get a shot off. Flashes of his ability to beat defenders 1-on-1 with dangles between the legs. But he was still quite passive, hovering in both ends, constantly scanning, but opting for the safer play instead of a better scoring chance (passing back to the point vs. threading the puck down low). At one point, he ended up as the lone man back defending a 2-on-1, a situation that was likely very foreign to him as he didn't seem like he knew whether to attempt to stop the pass or the shooter. He wasn't much of a factor in transition, retrieving loose pucks in his own end, leading the breakout but passing almost immediately to teammates further up the ice. Skating really needs overhauling, especially from an acceleration aspect.

Lauren Kelly: December 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A powerplay goal for Ritchie in this one, a nice set play where he started the passing sequence at the point, then skated down to the slot and finished off a pass from below the goal line on one knee. But I find he's still too passive offensively, waiting for opportunities to present themselves to him instead of making things happen for himself. I don't know if that passivity is typical of a player whose skillset seems so dynamic. He's still an impressive support player, with intelligent reads and positioning. The skating holds him back from creating and manipulating. I'm beginning to question the upside now. He projects higher than a bottom-six forward with his tools and flashes of offensive skill, but he lacks the offensive consistency that you'd like to see out of a player who should one day be a top-six forward. His long-term projection is confusing right now, and that uncertainty could affect how high he ends up being ranked and drafted.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Ritchie is a bit too reliant on a the same rush plays, the delays followed by lateral kicks to teammates or cut backs into passes to the trailers. He manipulates with deception and with downshifts -- and he can also act as a rush shooter, coming in behind to get the puck in the slot and score. He has a projectable defensive and supporting game and he could develop the physical skills. His lack of offensive diversity does worry me a bit. He's not taking over game, just connecting plays, and hitting what the defence gives him. His skating is also limiting him to straight-line attacks. The team that drafts him might just end up with a bottom-six supportive forward.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

Another game where lots of players created high-value offence on Oshawa, but nothing for Ritchie. He had one interesting offensive play: he escaped pressure along the boards, then passed to his teammate who was moving from behind the net to the slot. Didn't connect. He doesn't show any manipulation or deception. He just looks and makes the play. When given space, he takes low-percentage shots instead of trying to beat defenders or even simply skating closer to the net before shooting. In transition, he has the inception of better rush patterns (crossovers, attacking defenders at an angle) but just settles for perimeter shots. Solid defender. He mirrors footwork, keeps attackers wide, and proactively eliminates his check. Legitimate physical skills through puck protection. Always works to put defenders on his back. But I don't see much more than a third-liner right now.

Lauren Kelly: November 25th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Ritchie's pace looked a lot better in this game. He was consistently engaged, hunting for pucks, trying to win battles, and going to open areas in hopes of receiving the puck. Both of his assists were secondary tallies off inconsequential puck touches, but on both goals, he recognized when defenders weren't scanning, crept in tight, and beat the goaltender. Skating remains an issue - there were a couple of DZ sequences where he was easily walked around, which led to prime scoring chances. Still, he's got decent escapability and puck protection abilities, using his frame and edges to spin around defenders along the boards and cut into the slot. Highly likely he's a top-15 pick in this class.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Ritchie is solid, but he doesn't generate much high-value offence at this level. That's a concern. Maybe it's the environment. He does a lot of positive things. Plays the high F3 especially well, getting open, dipping into space at the right moments, and kicking play out wide. An intelligent play-supporter deeper, too. Always wins body positioning off-puck, keeping defenders on his back as he flips between supporting and scoring position. Defensive involvement was high, as always. Some passing ideas, but nothing advanced. Doesn't manipulate opponents or attempt to take the middle; he settles for low-percentage shots. Barlow and Ritchie are similar projections, but Barlow looked like he had more skill in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Patiently waiting for Ritchie to create offence in my viewings. Still nothing. He was only on the ice for a single shot for at 5-on-5. Don't see that from supposed top prospects often. Oshawa didn't create much offence overall, but Ritchie's part of the problem. He makes the simplest, easiest play possible, even if gifted time and space to create - he won't even step into space before making his decision. His supporting reads, off-puck skating (routes, getting open), and body positioning all look like strengths. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game, at best.

Lauren Kelly: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Ritchie is a player who you sometimes have to zero in on for entire shifts to really appreciate the nuances in his game and his subtle effectiveness. He doesn't force plays or try to plow his way into the offensive zone if there aren't available lanes, preferring to swing back and get the puck to another teammate with a better option to enter the zone. He comes back to support his defencemen and is there to help when they bobble the puck on breakouts. Confident stickhandler in small spaces and under pressure. Again, skating is going to be something he has to continue to work on - it would help his separation ability and his sometimes low-pace play. He needs to add some more explosiveness on his first couple of steps - sometimes he'd circle back to his own end to pick up speed before taking off up the ice.

Lauren Kelly: November 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Ritchie went pointless in this game, but this was one of his strongest performances so far this season. He recognized a bad line change early in the game and found an open lane, received a pass and was in on the breakaway. A harmless looking wrister was stopped in tight. Made a good defensive read to disrupt a pass across the slot. Protected the puck well on the cycle down low as he waited for teammates to get themselves open. Consistently surveyed his options when he had possession, but didn't force passes through difficult seams. Dangled around a defenceman along the boards on a zone entry, but his pass to the slot couldn't find a teammate. Had another opportunity late in the game by slipping past opposing players with the puck and trying to get around a defender 1-on-1, but was pushed off balance. The one limitation that concerns me is his skating ability. It hinders his ability to keep up with the play, especially when he doesn't have possession. He would go in to try and retrieve a puck on the forecheck, but was beat either by the opposing goaltender or defenders. He pressures puck carriers on the penalty kill, but he can't always keep up with faster skaters along the boards. That's probably his biggest area for improvement, because that lack of power and acceleration also affects his separation ability on the rush. Still, the hockey sense is undeniable. Probably the strongest draft-eligible out of the OHL right now.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

I continue to appreciate Ritchie's game. He didn't touch the puck as much in this one, but he supports plays well, plays his role (offensively, defensively) and links plays with teammates. Good off-puck movements into good passing sequences. He spots offensive advantages (like open lanes), anticipates the position of teammates (nice behind-the-back pass from below the net to the front of it for a scoring chance), and has some advanced shooting mechanics (in-stride with a sudden weight shift). The skating didn't look problematic in this game, not necessarily because it had better mechanics, but he showed that he's fleet of foot; he can quickly run through a neutral-zone with crossovers. His output in rush sequences could be sufficient at the NHL level. The hockey sense is really what is most attractive about his game.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Skating is a bit problematic. I don't think I'm saying anything new here: rounded back, limited ankle flexion, wide stance, kicking feet...A large range of problems that probably won't be easy to fix and that will make him a below-average NHL mover. The skating is already limiting at this level, making it harder for him to push back Ds and reach certain plays, but he's clearly smart. I liked his puck management in this game, always finding teammates, knowing their position, and buying time for lane to open with feints and hesitation moves. The handling is above-average. He scored in overtime with a close to catch-and-release shot. If Ritchie continues to show the same awareness, fast processing, and anticipation (he deflected a puck in the slot to a teammate in a better position behind him without looking in this game), there won't be much keeping him from the NHL, as he has the size and the handling skills, and I'm sure the defensive stopping will become better. Improving the skating would definitely help.

David St-Louis: October 23rd, 2022 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

I continue to be really impressed by Ritchie. Of course, I'd like him to be a better skater, but he has pretty much everything else. Only good decisions in this game, great puck management, constantly using teammates, not forcing plays, timed off-puck movements to become options for them, and a lot of pace to his decisions. He's also capable of higher-end plays, like the time he attacked through the opposing formation and dropped the puck behind him to a teammate skating in the middle of the slot. The puck travelled under two sticks to reach his teammates. He doesn't have a lot of support in this game and that will probably keep his numbers low, but the habits and skills, the defensive engagement, and the constant good ideas should make him a top-10 prospect for us. I like him way more than some of the other top players I have watched this season.

Lauren Kelly: October 15th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

I spent most of the first period questioning why Ritchie was touted as such a high pick, with a low work rate and being mostly unnoticeable on his shifts. Then with under two minutes left of that period, he dangled around a defenceman before roofing the puck top shelf. Go figure. But it's Ritchie's off-puck play that stood out, especially in the second half of this game. He would use his stick to create offensive zone turnovers, scan in his own end, help his defencemen box out players in the slot, used his

frame to impede players trying to cut to the middle of the ice, and made a nice defensive read to prevent a breakaway chance. His last shift of the second period was particularly impressive, using his body to protect the puck as he circled the offensive zone. Nice area passes down low, toe drag attempts that he lost the handle on, good speed to beat out an icing in the third, and using his body to get inside positioning on his own retrievals. I still think his acceleration needs some fine-tuning and added speed would only make him a more effective player.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Picturing Ritchie in the NHL requires no imagination. He's an NHLer – a good one, at that. Offensively, he's always positioned in the right spot. Pushes off defenders into space, stays inside space, and when engaging around the net, he gets low, disengages at the right moments, and always wins body positioning. Stays moving while tracking the play. Combines the physical skills, off-puck positioning, and scoring skills to dominate off the cycle. Shot's an NHL skill with a drag shot and one-timer that both generate significant force. Adapts the drag shot to the position of the defender and goalie, capable of lengthening or shortening the motion. Backhand and slip passes to get pucks through defenders to the inside. The off-puck impact translates to the defensive end, tracking his check and engaging at the right moments to prevent deflections and receptions. Ritchie wasn't much of a transition threat, which goes back to last season. The odd slick pass appears, but he's more of a straight-line carrier without dynamic qualities. Similarly, he failed two of his best passing ideas because he was too slow to pull the trigger on the pass. Looks like a top player for the 2023 draft with 2C upside.

Lauren Kelly: October 7th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Ritchie was somehow only credited with two shots on goal, but he took three shots in this game and every single one of them ended up in the back of the net. Finished off a 2-on-1 for his goal, one-timer in the slot went off of a teammate in front, and a toe-drag snipe in the slot also went in off a teammate. Nice carries on the rush, simple passes to teammates, good in support. Didn't go charging in on the forecheck too often. Outside of his production, he wasn't too flashy in this game. Opened himself up to receive passes in the slot, but wasn't dangling around players. Kept his playmaking simple, and deferred to his linemates a bunch. Consistent, reliable effort on every shift. I don't know if his skillset is all that advanced, but he'll be a serviceable NHL player, and that says a lot at this stage of the season.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Ritchie got his second gift goal of the tournament. This was also arguably his most effective game of the tournament. He cuts inside, drops pucks back for his teammates. It's all simple space creation with him, but he does it at a high level, combining mobility, handling, and physical skills. Created a breakaway for himself by moving behind the defender, taking their stick, and turning his body to win positioning – don't see that too often. He's an intelligent off-puck player, providing support in all three zones. Shrinks and expands the ice when necessary. Not an advanced player, but an all-around strong one. Looks like an NHLer, for sure.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I thought Ritchie flashed more skill than he did in the previous two efforts. Some really impressive handling sequences, including pulling the puck really close to his body without it affecting his comfortability that much. Puck protection remains strong, as well as some of his off-puck reads. Contributed defensively, too. Looked like he had the physical advantage over many of his peers. Skating needs honing, sure, but there are clearly a lot of projectability with Ritchie's game.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Ritchie's a bit on the bland side at times, but he's still so effective. The defence, supporting reads, and puck protection should make him an NHLer. In one sequence, he fought off intense back pressure with his stick, then passed cross-ice for a chance. He makes the early pass, creating runways of space for his teammates. That's the extent of his advanced offence. He's not a manipulator. But he's aware and strong. Shot has power, control, and release speed. He's a top-10 prospect, but I still have questions about the ultimate upside.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Slovakia vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Ritchie added two secondary helpers on the power play in Canada's 9-0 win over Slovakia. Not playing that many minutes in this one, Ritchie wasn't among the most visible players offensively, especially with the puck. I'm fond of his off-puck support game, as he's clearly smart with the routes he takes and knows how to time his movements to the slot, netting him a high-danger look in the first period. Also a strong puck protector who bounced off incoming back pressure with ease. Still not the most dynamic forward but a lot of skills that should translate well to the next level, including defensive acumen.

Lassi Alanen: July 31th, 2022 - Canada vs. Switzerland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I don't know how much there is to write about a such an extremely one-sided game, but Ritchie had some impressive moments nonetheless. He wasn't particularly dynamic, but just knew where the puck was going to be in a few seconds, scoring with a nasty backhand fake from a breakaway or setting up one by himself with a lob from the DZ blue line. Not the quickest skater, took a couple of dumb penalties, but knew his way around the slot area really well. Off-puck timing looked solid, also springled with some playmaking creativity.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

It doesn't make sense how good Ritchie is already. The skating concerns are legitimate, and his offence didn't pop in this game, but everything looks NHL-calibre already. He's a wicked defensive player: disrupting plays down low, winning possession on the backcheck, sprinting to the point to prevent point shots, anticipating switch offs earlier than his teammates, and winning battles. Already a strong transition player, combining handling, passing, and inside play to consistently gain the zone. Rushes his passes in the OZ and unnecessarily dekes sometimes, but he doesn't have much support out there. He's a top prospect for 2023, for sure.

Mitchell Brown: December 5th, 2021 - Oshawa Generals vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Yet again, Ritchie led the Gens in even-strength time on ice. It's not too difficult to see why. He's a strong support player with enough individual skill to create quality looks. This wasn't a particularly high-event game, but he flashed an ability to manipulate defenders before gaining the middle. The skating lacks depth, but it's impressive through his footwork and the timing of his moves. In one sequence, he turned a cut across into a mohawk to protect the puck, before exiting it with strides. Wins battles through a combination of reaction time, quickness, and body positioning. Looks like a top prospect for 2023.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Ritchie's played more minutes than other Gens forward in this game. Offensively, he wasn't mind-blowing. Some off-puck movement, some skill, and anticipation. Whiffed on what could've been a technically-perfect curl-and-drag wrister. Diverse attacker and creative, perhaps sometimes a bit too willing to defer -- not a big deal. But I mostly came away impressed with his details. He supports battles and engages in them at the right times. Scans away from the puck, identifies threats, and eliminates them. I like how angles out attacks even in trickier locations, like puck carriers along the boards about to step inside. Looked like a top prospect for 2023.

Grade: A



15 Axel Sandin Pellikka

AGE 17.515 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Rasmus Sandin, Samuel Girard



Evasive



Transition Ace



Analytics Darling

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

6

Passing

6.5

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	31	16	20	36	1.16
Skellefteå AIK	SHL	22	2	3	5	0.23
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	2	9	11	1.57
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	5	16	21	1.11

SCOUTING REPORT

Axel Sandin Pellikka first caught the attention of our scouts with his strong play in a supporting role on Sweden's blue line at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup in Red Deer, going from an unknown quantity to someone with mid-round potential.

At least, that's what we thought when leaving the tournament. By the time our scouts assembled to put together our first draft ranking of the year in December, Sandin Pellikka's distinguished play on Skellefteå's blue line at the SHL level was such that we had to bump him all the way up into the top half of the first, at No. 12 overall.

His exceptionally strong work on Sweden's blue line at the World Juniors only reinforced our belief in this player, but then something strange happened. Sandin Pellikka faded a bit upon returning to the SHL, before he was eventually demoted to the J20 level in February, where he played probably his worst hockey of the season. Go figure.

Luckily, Sandin Pellikka rediscovered his form in time for the U18s, where he made the tournament All-Star Team and took home Best Defenceman of the Tournament honours with 11 points in seven contests. He saved his best for last.

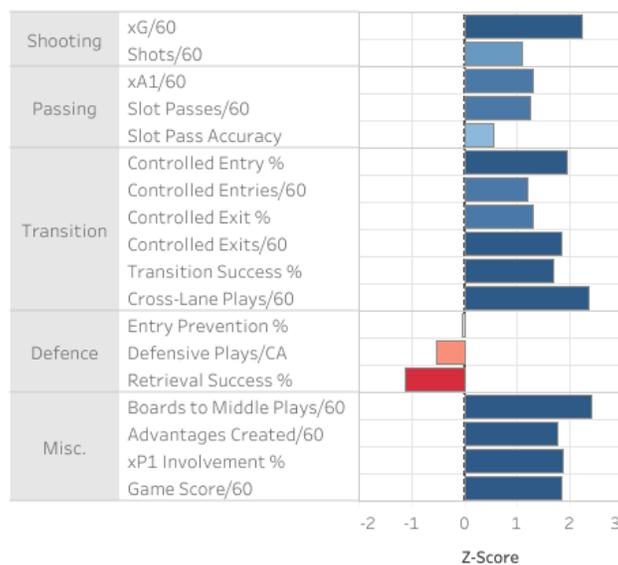
What makes Sandin Pellikka such a fascinating player and perhaps even something of a wild card at the top of the draft is his unique profile. It's a down year on the blue line period, and it gets

Axel Sandin Pellikka

D | Skellefteå AIK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 177.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



even leaner when you're looking for offensive defencemen who can quarterback the power play. He's the lone exception.

"Sandin Pellikka is an offensive defenceman with legitimate first-unit power play upside," Swedish regional scout Jimmy Hamrin wrote in a year-end player report. "His puck skills, playmaking, shot, and the ability to walk an offensive blue line make him a credible scoring threat with the puck on his stick, as does his ability to process options and make plays at speed off the rush."

The one hitch is that Sandin Pellikka isn't what you'd call a high-end playmaker, lacking some of the anticipation and manipulative abilities necessary to really open a defence up from the blue line. We saw signs of growth in this regard as the season wore on, though, so this may not even be an issue by the start of his draft-plus-one season.

I suppose this is the point where we're supposed to tell you that becoming a more defensively sound player is going to be critical for Sandin Pellikka's development, but that's not really the case here, even if he is a smallish offensive defenceman. The Swedish blueliner is an engaged defender, particularly stout between the blue lines and along the boards.

His frame is such that Sandin Pellikka is sometimes overmatched physically, and he's not the best off-puck defender either (often a bit reactive or lost during cycle sequences), but it's not like he's critically deficient.

You'd also like to see someone with Sandin Pellikka's profile be a bit more effective or at least projectable as a puck-mover. He's undoubtedly competent if not outright good as is, but a lack of feel for pressure often forces him into uncontrolled panic plays, something that NHL teams will pick apart.

So there's still plenty of work ahead with Sandin Pellikka in his pursuit of an NHL career, but the upside here is pretty high. There are only 32 first-unit power play spots up for grabs in the NHL with the shift to a four-forward, one-defenceman set, and he's got what it takes to land one of those gigs. And be damn effective in that spot, too.

The question is how effective Sandin Pellikka can be at 5-on-5. With careful development, a career low-end top-four defenceman seems very attainable.

🗨️ LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Axel Sandin Pellikka driving for first round in 2023 NHL Draft



Film Room: What makes Axel Sandin Pellikka a prize in this year's draft

🗨️ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"We have some guys who like him a lot, some who don't. I think his lack of size and the skating of a typically efficient smaller guy make it hard to see his translation to NHL." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"To me, he's someone who has the potential to develop into a first-unit, power play quarterback sort of defenceman. One of the 10-15 guys who can run a power play from the blue line. The question with him is always going to be his defence." - Eastern Conference executive, May 2023

"Really intelligent. Poised, execution, puck mover. Smooth skater. Is he a legit Josh Morrissey? First power play,

heavy productive offensive guy or more like Cam York in Philly. Nice skater, nice puck mover, having a hard time establishing himself in the NHL because he isn't a dynamic first-unit power play guy. He's Cam York with a better shot." – NHL scout, April 2023

"I [have] been trying to get better every game since the Hlinka tournament. The longer the game goes, the more you have the puck, the more confidence you get. I want to be an offensive defenceman. It feels good." – Axel Sandin Pellikka, February 2023

"I think he's a first-rounder. He's very cerebral and smooth. Good puck-moving D with offence, and he's performed well in the SHL." – NHL scout, February 2023

"I would say, Quinn Hughes or Cale Makar [are the players I model my game after]." – Axel Sandin Pellikka, February 2023

"Extremely skilled player with fantastic skating ability. Fierce competitor who performs well beyond his age group. Has performed well at the senior level when given the opportunity. At the junior level, he is a good two-way defenseman with offensive potential. There's no denying that he's an incredibly talented player." Skellefteå J20 co-head coach Martin Sandgren, December 2022

⌵ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

A quiet game from Sandin Pellikka. He can tone down his aggression and just take what the other team offers him. That's a quality in the NHL, especially in the playoffs. He didn't commit many mistakes and made some timely defensive stops. His hockey sense shined, but in more subtle views, like when he made a pick on a breakout to give his teammate more space to handle the puck. He was more physical in this performance than usual, too.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Sandin Pellikka is still effective even when he's quieter. He walked the line a couple of times in this game, faked defenders, and attacked down, but mostly he used skating to protect the puck and move it to the next teammate. He avoided overplaying in the offensive zone. He's composed under pressure and knows how to manipulate forecheckers. I'm still unsure about his defensive potential, especially one-on-one in the defensive zone, but he remains one of the best defencemen in this draft.

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Sweden vs Latvia - U18s

Pretty much in line with Sandin Pellikka's play throughout the tournament. Still continues to shoot a lot from low-percentage areas; looks like systems-related. Most of the shots aren't very powerful, but he gets them through with high success rate given his lateral mobility and fakes; it's clearly something he has drilled over and over again in practice. Continues to kill a ton of plays in transition, with well-timed pinching and aggressive gap control that hasn't really bitten him or the team. Mostly strong work on breakouts, too, aside from a couple of lapses late in the game when the score was already decided.

Lassi Alanen: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18s

No points for Sandin Pellikka in this one, but he was still Sweden's primary driver from the backend, playing almost 24 minutes in total. Rush defence continues to shine at this tournament. He gaps up early, uses his mobility to guide forwards and makes well-timed interceptions and steps up appropriately. Not as dominant during in-zone sequences, but he's been able to hold his own during those, too. Skating remains a plus-level tool; he was able to dance around the entire Czechia NZ trap a couple of times to gain the zone and create off the rush. The opponents after Canada have taken way better care in that Sweden hasn't been able to create as many odd-man rushes, which has limited Sandin Pellikka's overall chance creation a bit. He continues to shoot

a lot from the point, would like to see him activating a bit more often to maximise the value of his skating. This style of OZ play has been his bread and butter for the whole season, though, so not sure if we're going to see changes in that. He still jumps on opportunities to activate when they're there.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - U18s

Axel was dominant in this game offensively. He frequently displayed his impressive handling skills. He was solid in his decision-making and showed impressive creativity. He scored on the power play and added some good chances to that. He looks so self-evident at this level playing his game. He drives play from the backend and can handle various options. On the offensive blue line his 4-way mobility skills really show in his motions. He dekes and skates in one motion all the time. An outstanding offensive performance.

Lassi Alanen: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Another strong showing from Sandin Pellikka. Found the back of the net on the power play with a snappy and really pin-point wrister from the top of the circle. Another game where the transition skill really shined through, both on and off the puck. He was breaking a ton of plays on top of his own blue line, both with accurate stick checks but also using physical contact to force turnovers and dump-ins. Used manipulation to advance the puck up the ice with his passing, a ton of cross-lane plays and always taking advantage of the middle when possible. Didn't get as many rush chances compared to the Canada game, a lot of point shots in the hopes of possible rebounds and tip-ins instead. Gets his shot open as well as any defenceman in this year's class.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Sandin Pellikka is getting better and better at freezing defenders at this point. He got the timing down, the right posture, and he finds more and more occasions to use his feints. He intercepted a lot of pucks in this one and turned them into instant offence. He was all over the ice again, Sweden's offensive motor, and its best player by quite a margin. Every single one of his plays, passes and shots, are prepared with fakes in this tournament.

Lassi Alanen: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Really strong tournament opener for Sandin Pellikka. Took over the game at times early on, adding three points in the first period alone and two extra helpers on the power play later. Feints and evasiveness at the point were on display, using give-and-gos along the boards to activate down the strong side. Probably the best play of the game saw him reading the play defensively to make an interception on top of his own blue line, immediately starting a counter-attack, joining it as a trailer, getting the puck back for a scoring chance, with a goal following from a rebound. Scored his goal from similarly jumping on a rush opportunity as a trailer. Quick and effective passing plays and reads on the breakouts for the most part. Impressive stuff, looked the part of a top-15 pick.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

What a performance from Sandin Pellikka. It didn't start as well as it ended -- Canada pressured him hard on the forecheck at first, making him fumble pucks -- but then he took control of the game. He's unphased by pressure, when he has his options in front of him. He uses his teammates as props for fakes, makes forecheckers hesitate, and then beats them with his skating. That's a formula he will be able to replicate in the NHL. He activated down at every occasion, sniffed backdoor plays and vulnerable opponents, danced around them, and was the main transition motor of Sweden. An all-around great showing, the kind that will reassure our team about his placement on our board.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 2nd, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 playoffs

A season ending game for his team, Pellikka showed little urgency or desperation. He was a solid player with excellent support, good passer and skilled on the offensive blue line. It wasn't until his team were down by two goals that he really took action. He

skated around the offensive zone and made a play that led to a goal.

It was like he could dominate if he wanted to but waited until late in the game. Most puck decisions in this game were good, but I would have wanted to see more offensive hunger.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Linköping - J20 Nationell

This was overall a great game of Sandin Pellikka, but maybe I'm still left wanting more. Maybe it's just an issue of having unreasonable expectations. He did rise quite a bit for us in the first part of the season and now I want him to continue improving when it's unrealistic. He's very talented still. He can really dance around opponents, create lanes, create breakouts, and he always operates with a distinct grace and smoothness. He's not as quick as Gulyayev, but he uses more of his skating capabilities. He has pro-ready defensive habits, just not the strength to go with it. I find that he's a bit stuck in the same patterns offensively, however. He's not that adaptable, but defencemen like him don't really need to be when placed in a good NHL offensive system. The guidelines are there for them.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 12th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Pellikka dominated in this game. He played a ton and had the puck a lot. His skating abilities look better and better. Maybe, the level fools me a bit but he looks faster. His four-way mobility is impressive. He was scanning with the puck on his stick looking for multiple options. He moves and manipulates smoothly across the blue line. He fired many shots through traffic but could have been more precise and hit the net more often, even if the shots were closely wide or high and dangerous if they got deflected.

The precision in his passing struggled a bit too. He scans and controls the puck but it sometimes feels like when he makes the pass or shoots, he isn't meticulous enough. It shouldn't be stress related as he creates an enormous amount of time and space at this level.

As the game went on it got close and he showed more urgency and aggression when he was helping his team defend the lead. Up to that point it was like just having fun with this mobility and speed. He pre-scanned and positioned himself well at the end of the game. He broke up plays with good reads too.

All-in-all, this is an A prospect with great tools and hockey sense. He isn't really challenged physically at this level though. His precision and result should be better and more consistent. I don't have a clear idea on why that is.

J.D. Burke: February 25th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Not a particularly convincing performance from Sandin Pellikka. Not for the better anyway. It's almost kind of jarring to see him playing his worst hockey of the year in the J20 after playing so well in the SHL and at the World Juniors. Sandin Pellikka was characteristically evasive from below the goal line, shifty on his inside edges and explosive through weight shifts. Had one particularly compelling rush, activating through a pass to his winger for a give-and-go into space before leading the attack up ice. I'm not sure Sandin Pellikka created much of anything from the offensive blue line though. He actually struggled a great deal to even maintain possession in that spot, often skating himself into a corner and either having to retreat into the neutral zone or send an uncontrolled pass into the corner. His defensive work was pretty poor, too. A lot of late switches, instances where he was too puck-focused, etc. I'm not even sure he looked like a first-rounder in this one.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

I still feel like Sandin Pellikka's early season junior games were more impressive compared to the ones he's played since the year changed. He's not bad, far from it. He's still someone who can log a lot of ice time at this level and do so effectively. But the high-end flashes are fewer. He did end the game on a high note and with a vintage Sandin Pellikka play, passing to his partner, then sprinting up the boards, cutting to the middle to receive a stretch pass and splitting the defence for a partial breakaway chance. But aside from that, he's been more conservative with his play when his team has the puck. He also plays inside a system that doesn't encourage playing fast, which could be a reason for why he's not pushing his advantages as hard as he did.

But those things were really what made him so exciting in the first place and separate him from the other Swedish defencemen in this year's class.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations Tournament

If Sandin Pellikka became a better shooter, just a little bit, his offensive game would grow much more dangerous. He's really effective at faking and then stepping around defenders at the top of the zone. He makes intelligent plays like shooting on a pad to create a favourable rebound for a teammate. He isn't exploiting his skating to its full potential, but the play he pulls off successfully at this level will also work in the NHL. His game is translatable even if he isn't the strongest defenceman and won't be the strongest defenceman in the NHL. He's fluid, active, and an attentive defender, albeit a slightly passive one at times.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - 4 Nations Tournament

Tom Willander outplayed Sandin Pellikka in this one, but the flashes were still great. He's incredibly smooth and manages risk well on defence, too. He can read defences as he moves and adapt to their counters. He makes a ton of hesitation moves, stop and starts to create lanes. He orchestrated the attack from the back, not getting much help from Lindstein in most sequences.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Sandin Pellikka has a high level of technical ability. He can stop and start so easily and dance around the opposition. Shots fly off his stick as he leverages the flex technique. There isn't a lot of power behind those releases, but they are well-timed. He was a bit overmatched defensively one-on-one. It make take him a while to learn to defend at an NHL level, if he can do it. He has the stickwork down and the mobility, but he won't ever be a physical engager. I like his reads for the most part. He looks to move the puck into space and he handles retrievals against back pressure better than at the start of the season.

Lassi Alanen: February 5th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Sandin Pellikka hasn't been as good as he was at the junior level after he spent quite a bit of time in the SHL. Not sure if it's related to that, but I wouldn't say it's impossible. He isn't making similar high-end end-to-end rushes, but is more contempt at trying to move the puck with his passing. He does still use his mobility a lot, showcasing impressive edgework as he lures in the forechecker before passing D-to-D or dropping the puck back, but he's not advancing the play at the same rate as he did in most of the J20 viewings during the first half. Sometimes there was quite a lot of flash for little substance here. He's not creating nearly as much offensively at 5-on-5 either. His defensive game has arguably improved, though. He's more adapt at handling the rush and using his stick to angle out and break up plays. The retrievals are still somewhat of an issue, does seem to struggle with the pressure on his back way more than when it's in front of him. As we've seen, it's not easy to bounce between different levels, so we can cut him slack there, too, but he didn't look like a top-15 pick in this one.

David St-Louis: January 30th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - WJ20

Same Sandin Pellikka in this game with his many strengths and few flaws. The mobility shone time and time again in the way he eluded forecheckers on regrouped and exploded past them on breakouts to find pass options. He's getting more fluid and better at incorporating handling movements in his skating cuts. He's engaged, very engaged in the play. Plays at a pace higher than the league and does his best to play the physical game around the net. He's improving in his ability to read and cut opposing passing lanes. I like what I'm seeing from him overall this season. The limitations at his size will be clear in the NHL and he's not as creative as some of the top, diminutive skating defencemen in the NHL, but I think he has top-four upside considering the defensive effort and ability on top of his mobility. He's projectable in many ways.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

I don't think this game was really it from Sandin Pellikka. When he's not creating in transition, using his mobility to break the puck out and create entries and activating in the offensive zone, he's a lot less effective. Shocking, I know. Probably just an off-game in that regard since he's proven he can do all of those things at a high level previously. 1-on-1 defence looked pretty solid throughout, usually gapped up early and forced the opposition to dump it in. He still struggles at times with off-puck defence

and by getting caught too far up in the offensive zone, although you could also blame his forwards for not covering for him. Retrievals remain a bit hit-or-miss, often doesn't move the puck early enough and gets smothered along the boards.

Lassi Alanen: January 19th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Leksands IF - SHL

A pretty tough first period for Sandin Pellikka. The last shift of the period was particularly rough, as he turned the puck over in the DZ three times in a row, leading to a long DZ sequence. He then didn't play a single shift in the second, but returned in the third and played quite a bit better. The turnovers demonstrated his issues on retrievals, not scanning or deceiving enough and cutting straight into pressure. In the third frame, he passed the puck a lot quicker and more accurately. The skating is still a strength even at this level. Rush defence looked solid overall, but he puck-watched quite a bit in the defensive zone and lacks much in the way of stopping power. The hockey sense is still somewhat of a question mark to me.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - Canada vs Sweden - WJ20

The doubts with Sandin Pellikka are back. It's not really fair considering his opposition in this one. He's young to face such a dynamic offence, but the same issues that were present against the USNTDP resurfaced. I'm afraid Sandin Pellikka is a player who looks good but lacks a bit of substance. He can elude opponents, but he makes those moves independent of his environment, like they are scripted, not made when the opposition affords them. In this one, he turned to find space, to elude, and create lanes, but sometimes just put himself in worse offensive situations. I still think he's an A level prospect. I love the skating ability and the confidence to try plays and the way he always joins the offence. He tries hard defensively even if he gets outmuscled and his reads in that facet of the game were good enough against such a top opposition.

David St-Louis: December 29th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

Sandin Pellikka got more comfortable as the game went on. He lost the puck multiple times trying to make more complex plays, fumbling it as he finished his execution. He also passed to coverage teammates. He was also outmuscled on a couple of occasions. Yet, this was a very positive viewing of him as he flashes abilities that will make him a quarterback of this team in just a year, if developed correctly. He anticipates the offensive flow well, attacks down to support teammates, makes evasive moves at the blue line, is adaptable in his passing (hits the best option at the top of his game), and he just wants the puck to make plays. I'm not sure about his overall defensive impact in the NHL or about his hockey sense grade (he remains more of a do-er than a thinker for me at this moment), but I think he's a legitimate A prospect.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Germany vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

I loved this game from Sandin Pellikka, both offensively and defensively. I'm still not sure about the overall hockey sense. It's a 6 max for me, but his ability to react to the play and shake defenders with his skating will continue to serve him in the NHL. He can really toy with approaching attackers, not unlike some of the top blue-liners in the NHL, taking steps back to force them in a direction before cutting back in the other, moving alongside the blue line to create passing lanes. There is some planning to his moves; he knows the next target he wants to hit. Of course, he's allowed to operate in full open ice against formations like Germany -- we haven't seen his retrieval and defensive game as much, but the rush aspect of it, his gapping, footwork, and stick work was on point in this one. I even saw him box out approaching attackers. He's always there to make scissor plays with teammates in the offensive zone and generally seems to anticipate offensive plays well.

Mitchell Brown: December 27th, 2022 - Germany vs. Sweden - U20 WJC

Sandin Pellikka was one of the best players in this game. He has a lot of qualities, from how he joins the play, uses space in the offensive zone, creeps down the weak side, and spins off pressure before starting the rush. He's a stout 1-on-1 defender, keeping attacks wide and engaging at the right moments. In space, he's a bit more unaware. Similarly, he had some difficulty managing pressure in this game. He makes soft plays with the puck and off-loads possession in moments where he could press, delay, or well, do anything else.

Cam Robinson: December 13th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Frölunda HC - CHL

There is a lot to like with this player. He's confident with the puck. He's confident in jumping into space and making himself an option to receive the puck. He was handling oncoming rushes with clean footwork and decisive stick work. In a Champions League game against a rival SHL club, he skated over 20 minutes and was noticeable for most of them. There was one shift in overtime where he faced speed carving in and backpeddled with an agile stance, timed the pivot and extended his stick while enforcing contact. He knocked the puck away, recovered it and curled the net to subdue the pressure. He quickly slipped it back to his mate and then took off to receive the puck and go down for a scoring chance.

There was a couple instances where he was unable to take great routes on dump ins as he tried to shoulder check for pressure and gave up the route. But those didn't end up hurting.

The lateral ability he shows is highly promising. He's able to connect his hands and fakes with them to shake coverage and open up lanes to shoot or pass. It has a very Quinn Hughes-like feel when he's activating those weapons.

I like him.

Cam Robinson: December 10th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Rögle BK - SHL

Really nice offensive showing from Sandin-Pellikka in this one. He activates with so much purpose and often in the right spots. Rare to see him fly the zone or jump in as a 4th forward up high without it being a smart decisive. For a 17-year-old in the SHL, he has a load of confidence to pull those plays off, and clearly has the confidence of the staff as well as they excuse the little hiccups he makes defensively at times.

In this one, he jumped up, received the outlet, paces it perfectly and sent a beautiful area pass for an A1. He grabbed another primary helper on the PP with a nice fake slap shot to one-touch pass.

The agility and lateral mobility are really really clean. With his hands and his awareness, it makes for a formidable presence at the top of the umbrella and while exiting the defensive zone with possession. He makes pros miss. We like that.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Rögle BK - SHL

Sandin Pellikka is getting more and more trust from his coaches, playing a total of 17 minutes in this one and also getting used on the power play. He rewarded the trust with two assists: spotting an opportunity for a quick counter-attack, jumping on it aggressively by fleeing the zone (as a defenceman!), dishing a beautiful saucer into space for a goal. The other primary helper came just as the power play was about to end, feeding the puck to the half wall for a one-timer, deceiving by threatening with a point shot. Sandin Pellikka's defensive details come and go. He's not strong enough to break plays down that often, but smart stickchecks created a turnover or two. He also scans a lot, which is encouraging, even if his positional play lacks at times in the DZ. Retrievals could be cleaner. There's no doubting the mobility and skating chops, easily evading defenders once he gets them in front of him. Liked his play at the point, too, using his edges to open up lanes and making good decisions for the most part.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Leksand IF - SHL

Sandin Pellikka finally got some power play time in the SHL, and played over 10 minutes in total. Liked his mobility at the point, opening up shooting lanes with good edges and enough explosiveness. Activated into the play quite often in the OZ like we've seen in the J20 level, creating space even if not receiving pucks. Rush defence was a strong suit here, too, breaking up a play early that resulted in a quick counter-attack and a chance for. There's a lot to like here.

Cam Robinson: November 26th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Leksand IF - SHL

There is serious upside baked into Sand-Pellikka's toolbox. The combination of awareness, skating, lateral agility, and hands make him elusive and threatening. If he's able to connect those together on retrievals (which shouldn't be too difficult) there's a chance we're looking at a high-end prospect. He can move the puck with the pass as well, and sets them up with feints and fakes to cause space and lanes. However, I've yet to see him connect on any really high difficulty type passes. Really like his rush

defense and footwork mirroring. Is able to pivot with fluidity.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Leksand IF - SHL

Very impressive game. Sandin Pellikka just looked at ease against professional opponents. He was never shy to make plays or engage on them defensively, although his size and lack of strength caused problems at times. He adds a lot of pace to his team's game with his acceleration on reception and give-and-goes. He moved most pucks well and supported the next plays of teammates. He even feinted some defenders to open space and lanes in the offensive zone. Good risk mitigation on rush defence. The skating looks potentially high-end (but we have to be careful considering the SHL pace of play). The issues are the same: some poor retrievals (doesn't handle back pressure well), can't pin opponents, but the flashes of anticipation remain interesting. He mostly knew his next play instantly.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Just a casual a hat-trick and five-point game for Sandin Pellikka, a defenceman. Sure, he got a bit lucky on one of his goals, as it was meant to be a pass off an odd-man rush but got deflected to the net from the defender's stick. The other two were actual shots, one with a beautiful short side wrister and another with a one-timer on the power play. The mobility and skating/handling combination remains the biggest selling point, combined with the aggressive involvement offensively. Defensively, I thought that he was quite passive for most of the game. Scans decently well and has the feet to become a more effective defensive player. Also had some trouble on retrievals, which is quite surprising for a player with his skating ability. The hockey sense grade is a bit of a question mark, but probably at least slightly above-average given how well he processes the game for the most part, especially with the puck.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden U18 vs. USA U18 - U18 Four Nations

Axel played big minutes in this game and was put in all situations. The game was tougher for him. USA challenged him more than what I have seen from other teams. His awareness with the puck and pass selection was not as strong in this game. It is also clear that his top speed is not elite. He lacks natural explosiveness although being a technically sound skater.

I like many of Axel's defensive habits. He is aggressive physically and uses his stick to shrink space. He scans the ice and covers the biggest threat. He is active in front of his net and to the corners. He had some tough shifts where he was a step behind on the rush and could not catch up. He also had sequences where he kept up well.

Offensively the pass selection from the backend could at times be better. To his defence, the team did not support well either. He did not have any really bad plays but too often the attack died shortly after his pass because the next guy did not have a good option to enter the offensive zone.

On the power play, he is very strong. I really like how he can open ice with agile skating moves. His passing play inside the offensive zone is always strong.

All in all, Sandin Pellikka has some interesting puck and skating skills and combines it with aggressive defensive play. The downside is his size in combination with lacking elite top speed. For me, he is a good option late in the first round.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - Five Nations

Not the greatest game of Sandin Pellikka. He's more toolsy and smooth than he's adaptable. He relies on learned moves and fakes, has got the timing of those down, and he can walk the blue-line and spin on forecheckers, but he misses better options and his moves can lack some purpose. Defensively, he's fine one-on-one, but anything more complex and he falls a bit behind the play. I'm not sure the skating is great enough to give him an A grade on its own.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 11th, 2022 - Sweden U18 vs. Czechia U18 - U18 Four Nations

A solid game by Sandin Pellikka. Axel is a smooth skater with a low muscle tone. He controls the puck well while moving his feet and his crossover skating is strong. He can shift direction in his skating and deke at the same time. Axel skates with strong lower body balance and is hard to knock off the puck.

He played a solid defensive game. He showed strong gap control and played with aggression in his own end. He can deliver good hits but also plays smart defensively with his stick. He was good at shrinking space for the opponent.

Axel is at his best at the point on a power play. He moves smoothly across the blue line and has a very good touch with the puck. He never mishandled the and stopped many bouncing pucks keeping the pressure. His passing is quick and precise and he sets a high pace for the whole power play. He has a dangerous shot and fired a couple of silent hard wristers in this game. He also has a good slap shot but it was not shown in this game.

Axel showed a calm presence and showed awareness in all situations. He looked like he had more than one option most of the time and could wait out the opponent. He scans the ice and can open ice, mostly by moving his feet while deking. Although not being a tall kid he can move the puck with a wide span and shows good control.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - Five Nations

Sanin Pellikka has some really good habits in puck distribution on the powerplay. He prepares each pass with a feint, freezes defenders, and keeps the play moving around the ice. He takes his occasions to shoot, too. I'm not sure he's a true manipulator of the game, but he's mobile and enough of a threat. Same defensively. He can kill most easy plays, defends the rush well overall, and is engaged in his zone. The skating doesn't look as good on smaller ice.

Lassi Alanen: November 2nd, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Sandin Pellikka moves so effectively around the ice. There might not be another J20 defenceman this season who is as mobile as he is. Joined the rush, cut to the middle to enter the zone, then beat the defenceman outside, drove the net and scored. Did the same thing another time later in the game, but this time couldn't convert it into a goal. And it didn't even look like he was going that fast based on the stride frequency, it was simply effortless. Looked to activate into the play constantly in the OZ, always looking for opportunities down the weak side. The skating and handling combination is a big weapon in transition, but his passing accuracy and overall carefullness with the puck could've been better.

David St-Louis: October 23rd, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Both the skating and handling could be high-end. I know the stance is high (lack of ankle flexion), but the overall posture is good. He can spin on forecheckers, deceive them, but mostly moves the puck well only when his options are in front of him. On retrievals, his game lacks poise and awareness. He can be pressured into poor decisions, although he does make picks to help teammates get the puck out of the zone. This game, he flashed manipulation skills to open shooting and passing lanes in the opposing zone. He used teammates and tried to create better conditions for them before passing them the puck.

David St-Louis: October 21st, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs Mora - J20 Nationell

Sandin Pellikka is a very toolsy defneceman, a smooth handler and skater with a lot of puck-moving potential. A lot of good decisions in this game with the puck: rapid one-touch passes to teammates and great first touches of the puck, protecting it from the opposition. He's engaged physically and defends the rush well, but his in-zone defending could use some work. He was on switches. He did join the offence whenever possible. He showed no real playmaking, mostly a simple distribution game in the offensive zone.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

I didn't like Sandin Pellikka's defence in this one very much. He got burned off the rush badly one time, lacked overall foresight with his positioning and played mostly reactively in his own zone, chasing plays and being too puck-focused. He also seems to

get stripped off the puck a few times per game due to not moving his feet or the puck quickly enough below the goal line. I liked the elusiveness, breakouts (for the most part), his involved play style in the offensive zone. Made moves from the point to improve his shot location. The tools are good, probably not high-end.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Sandin Pellikka was all over the ice in this one. He was joining pretty much every rush, consistently looking for give-and-gos and other opportunities to get involved in the play in the OZ. One of those rush activations were rewarded in the form of a rebound goal after 2v0 situation. He also notched a primary helper after his point shot got deflected mid-air. At times, he was really pushing his skill limits, trying to dangle his way through situations where his hands couldn't quite perform up to the task. I did like how he was manning the in-zone offence from the point with his passing. Defensively, he wasn't as tight off the rush as he could've been. Still, a very interesting prospect to follow. He has the mindset and at least some of the skills, too.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Sandin Pellikka was back playing with the U20 team after a stint in the SHL. He found his way on the scoresheet with a power play goal (played left half wall on PP), stalking a point shot and scoring on the rebound. The highlight of his game was the evasive mobility he used to beat incoming forecheckers, shifting his weight to one side to bait the defender before exploding to the other. Pretty effective cross-over usage off the rush to gain the inside in NZ. Set up a couple of chances via drop passes off the rush. He activated and provided weak side support, though mostly it didn't seem that instinctual in the OZ, ie. some odd timings. Skates quite a lot with a pitchfork without the puck. Skill level remains a question mark, tends to handle in front of his feet instead of in the hip pocket. Not the smoothest touch. A few defensive stops, mostly in the NZ.

Lassi Alanen: September 29th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Färjestad BK - SHL

Sandin Pellikka's line got pretty much hammered in for majority of his shifts, which didn't exactly play to his strengths. His defending was mostly reactive, he lost his man a couple of times due to puck-watching too much and he couldn't stop cycles with his physicality, only getting pushed aside time after time. There were a few flashes: a couple of nice breakouts from backhand (also a couple of similar turnovers, though), activating through the NZ and joining rushes. Couldn't really get much going here overall, though.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

So, Sandin Pellikka can activate! He finally turned those in-motion passes and pass receptions into activation. He joined the rush, starting give-and-go sequences. He deked off the point, stepped inside, and fired off a scoring chance. Tried to activate off-puck down the weak side. He was evasive, as normal. And he got his stops on the defensive end, apart from getting burned once. Threw another big hit in one ice to prevent an entry. Missed pinch killed an offensive zone sequence, which makes me wonder about the instinctiveness of this new-found activation. Still, this was an exciting game from an elusive, intelligent player who didn't maximize his tools earlier this tournament. He's worth investing time into this season.

Lassi Alanen: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sweden's coaching staff relied heavily on Sandin Pellikka in this one, logging over 23 minutes of ice time purely at 5-on-5, combined with his usual PP duties. Defensively probably the best effort of the tournament from him, making multiple good breakups in the neutral zone with his skating. Transitions with the puck remain a strength, too. Looks to pass inside, is good enough skater to beat incoming back pressure and forecheckers. One of his many point shots finally got deflected and rewarded him with a primary assist. Otherwise, he's still not doing much offensively in these games despite clearly having tools to do more. I think I like him more than Lindstein still.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sandin Pellikka has taken no fewer than 45 shots for deflections this tournament, and one of them finally worked. That's his sole

play offensively. It's frustrating because he could clearly do more. On retrievals, he fakes and cuts away from pressure. Looks inside and cross-ice for breakout option, showing touch and precision in the process. He moves through every pass and pass reception, positioning himself to join the rush – but he doesn't. He even fakes passes in one lane and uses the other. Defensively, he made a big glove save, threw a couple of hits, and killed plays by staying on his check from the offensive zone to the red line. He has some upside, but the offence must improve.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sandin Pellikka's skating remains a strength, at least at this level. He's not necessarily super fast, but the footwork is deceptive and pretty fluid. Good crossover usage in transitions. Some turnovers with not properly scanned passes, but mostly a cleanish night in that regard. He does take some odd off-puck routes on retrievals, which led him to get beaten in a few races. Upside offensively remains a question mark. He can occasionally chip in off the rush as a second wave threat, but didn't even get that many puck touches in the OZ. I have reservations about his defensive awareness, too. Is he purely a transition player?

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sandin Pellikka's so evasive. Not necessarily explosive, but he uses double cuts and cutbacks to evade pressure. Even deceives with his feet. Under heavy pressure, he maintains the deception and finds ways to squeak out with possession. In transition, he usually makes simple plays but shows some skill when carrying the puck with crossover-heavy rushes and a bit of deception. Didn't achieve anything offensively. Looks like he has some upside. Curious to watch him later this season.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sandin Pellikka definitely had a few nice plays here. His skating grades out pretty well based on my early impressions and he was advancing the play up the ice quite nicely with his feet, but also knew when to slow things down. Solid work on retrievals, too. Offensively, he didn't activate much and relied a lot on point shots or shot passes pretty clearly meant for deflection. A few defensive over-reaches, but nothing major. Not the toughest opposition either.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sandin-Pellikka's best decisions never amounted to much in this game, but there were plenty of plays that should lead to long-term success. He cuts back to escape pressure, shows some quickness, and deceives in open-ice to mask his intentions. Accelerates out of his passes, suggesting activation potential. When skating the puck, he uses crossovers to constantly misdirect opponents. Defence wasn't tested much in his game, but he killed a couple of plays by reading the pass and jumping into the lane. Drifted too far outside the dots when defending on puck. Worth watching more.



Grade: A

16 Matthew Wood

AGE 17.605 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Jason Robertson



Lethal Shooter



Tactician



Toolsy

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

190 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

6.5

Shooting

6.5

Passing

6.5

Puckhandling

7

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Connecticut	NCAA	35	11	23	34	0.97
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	7	6	13	1.86

SCOUTING REPORT

Matthew Wood was the youngest player in college hockey, and still one of its most effective ones in spite of that, finishing his freshman year with 34 points in 35 contests at the University of Connecticut. This, after a 45-goal, 85-point draft-minus-one in the BCHL with the Victoria Grizzlies.

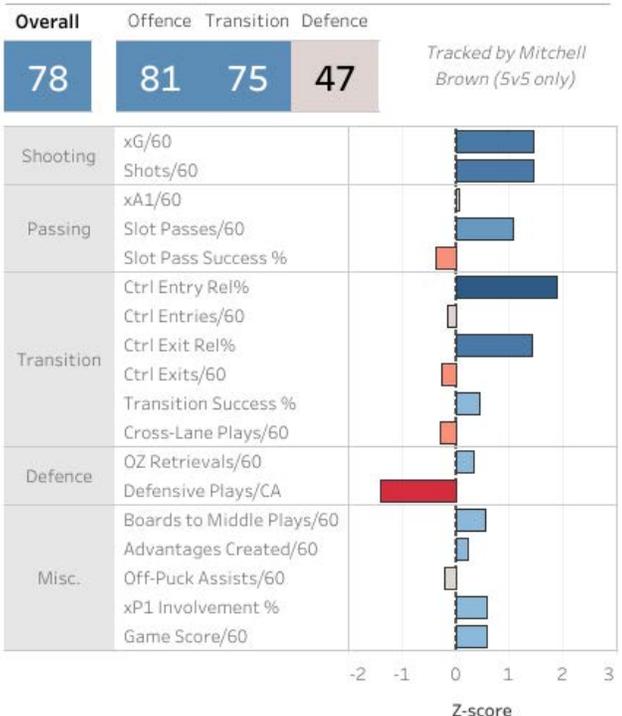
He's a player that's long been on scouts' radar, and with good reason. Wood's been putting up video game numbers at nearly every level he's played, done so in a projectable 6-foot-3 frame, and drawn rave reviews for his character off of the ice.

Still, we greeted Wood with considerable skepticism coming into the year. That he struggled so immensely at the U18s last spring and then at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup to start this scouting season offered pause that perhaps much of his gaudy scoring could be attributed to playing in the not-so-competitive Coastal Conference in a Junior A league (albeit, one of the stronger ones).

Much of this skepticism appeared to be confirmed by Wood's early work at college. Sure, the points came easy. The Huskies funnelled their power play through his cannon of a shot, and it worked. Closer scrutiny revealed a mostly unidimensional player with significant mechanical hurdles and inflated point totals.

Matthew Wood

F | UConn | NCAA | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 108.8



“Wood has mostly played like a blunt object at college, but it hasn’t kept him from stringing together some highly productive outings with UConn in the early goings,” EP Rinkside Editor-in-Chief and resident college hockey scout J.D. Burke wrote in one of his October game reports. “Many of the same red flags that tempered my enthusiasm at the Hlinka Gretzky remain. Wood is still playing an incredibly simple north-south game and not showing much explosiveness or dynamism in the process.”

Then, something changed. Wood’s game took a significant step forward in time for the new year, showing a more projectable, compelling complement of skills that just might allow him to generate offence at the next level in a sustainable fashion.

You start with the handling. Where Wood used to exclusively take on defenders from a glide with the puck exposed well in front of him and his feet and hands locked in unison, he was now using hip pocket handling, feints, weight shifts, and even give-and-goes to get around defenders. You know, the sort of thing that will work against NHL defencemen.

Next up, growth as a distributor. Simple things like scanning away from the puck and maintaining a detailed mental map of the ice allowed him to connect with pacey one- and two-touch passing plays. You’re not looking at the second coming of Joe Thornton here, but Wood became a strong enough distributor that teams now have to respect the threat of his pass. This, of course, will open up opportunities as a shooter.

Still, the skating is grim. That much hasn’t changed. It was every bit as sluggish at the U18s to close out the year as it was at Hlinka Gretzky that started it. And it affects every part of his game. Any hope of a top-six projection rests on at least a full-grade improvement in this regard over the next two or three seasons.

When you watch someone take as many significant steps forward in their development over the course of their draft year as Wood did at UConn this season, though, it’s easy enough to imagine a scenario where that happens. He’d hardly be the first player in a 6-foot-3 frame to need a little extra time to get up to speed.

If that happens, Wood has the capacity to be a top-six forward with size, a booming shot that can credibly threaten from range, handling skill, and some cunning as a distributor. No, he’s probably not the next Tage Thompson, no matter how many outlets will try to make that comparison, but he can be a solid contributor in his own right.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Matthew Wood is ready to be the next UConn first-round success

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Biggish centre that I think can grow a bit. Get the feet moving. I like that he went to UConn, I like seeing more Canadians going that route, using American colleges like Fantilli and Wood did to get roles at 18 they maybe wouldn’t otherwise. I also like how strong he is.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s a little bit of an enigma there. On the power play, he’s great. When his top speed is going, he’s fine. It’s just that his skating is a big concern for where the NHL is going right now. He’s got a great stick, soft hands, but you never see him as the F1 and you only really see him score on the power play. His first three steps really have to

improve. He does some good things, it's just that there are some holes in his game.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I’ve been to games where Wood has outplayed Cutter Gauthier. The production is tremendous for his age. Elite shooter. One of the best shots in the draft. Awesome offensive hockey sense. Gets open in scoring areas. Ability to make plays with his stick. Some question his compete. I have no issue with it. The skating is his major detriment. If he makes the NHL he will be one of the worst skaters. At the same time at the Hlinka, last year internationally, BCHL. He’s produced beyond his age level. Release, size. Hands, hockey sense is top end. Could be a Mark Stone type.” – NHL scout, April 2023

“I’d say I’m an offensive threat. I can score from anywhere and make plays. But I don’t take the defensive side of the game lightly at all.” – Matthew Wood, April 2023

“I wear 71 because of Yevgeni Malkin. He has always been my favourite player. Obviously, Tage Thompson went to UConn as well. I try to look at his game and model my game after him too. Two great players and I really look up to those guys for sure.” – Matthew Wood, April 2023

“With Matthew Wood, he’s a big, tall guy with some speed, great hands, and he complemented the other guys, but he can make some plays as well that kind of make you go ‘wow.’” – Canada U18 head coach Jeff Truitt, April 2023

“I thought college would help me work on things like playing with pace stuff like that. It’s a fast game with strong guys and I thought that would get me ready for the next level and push me to where I want to be.” – Matthew Wood, December 2022

“I love making plays. Finding open guys. Drawing guys to me. It’s one of my favorite parts of the game.” – Matthew Wood, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - u18s

Wood can’t make plays with his feet and stickhandling at the same time. That will need to change if he wants to become a top-six playmaker, a role he can aspire to. I loved his last play of the season, his little manipulative slip pass to Celebrini in the overtime sequence. It was a great illustration of his talents for reading small gaps, baiting defenders, and spotting teammates in favourable situations. He’s a top-end playmaker in this draft and his game has a lot of untapped potential.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

This is a different Matthew Wood than the one we watched in October/November. We used to have doubts about his vision and playmaking, but they were unfounded. Those things are massive strengths in his game. He has to fight through inefficient mechanics to accomplish most of his plays (his body is more limiting than an advantage) but his ideas are great. He battles for pucks, takes them inside, and drives the net, too. he’s not afraid to take hits to make plays. He’s more of a playmaker than a powerforward, however (at least at this stage). His skills shine more with teammates who have the speed to create a bit more space for him.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Kind of a tough game for Wood. There was one drive to the net-front from the wall that had a certain power forward feel. He was characteristically engaged and intelligent in the defensive zone. You kind of saw Wood’s limitations as a skater reveal themselves again in this game. He was just a step late on loose pucks, couldn’t separate along the wall, and couldn’t really generate much as a result on a shift-to-shift basis. Wood’s intelligence off-puck was ever present, but the offence is running

through Macklin Celebrini. He's had to take a bit of a backseat as a finisher. Looked like a player destined for the 15-20 range on our final board.

Cam Robison: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Not a ton of offensive generation in this one for Wood. The feet were a bit of a hindrance, but mostly if that the stifling play of the Swedes that really kept him in check. He was smart without the puck, looking for pockets of space, supporting the puck carrier, etc. Defensively, he was looking really strong. Quick stops and starts, keeping good position, supporting the defenders and wingers. He still made some high-difficulty plays but it seemed like his feet stopped moving when he decided to get creative. Otherwise, there were some give and gos through the DZ and NZ to facilitate transitions with pace and possession.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Wood's progress this season is impossible to ignore. This was just the latest example. Wood made calculated, high pace passing plays, took intelligent routes off-puck to open up space for his linemates, and put in an excellent defensive effort. Eventually, Wood got rewarded with a tap-in goal at the net-front on a counter play. The feet are a problem. That part of his game hasn't really come along much this season. He's just a second late getting to his spot on more than his fair share of developing plays, which says nothing of how this deficiency costs him loose pucks. Smart player, though. The shot is high-end. I think he's got to be around No. 15 on our final board.

Cam Robison: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

A really strong performance from Wood in this one. He was attacking the middle lane with and without the puck, was fluid in transition, was smart in his own end and played with some pro habits defensively. Made a really nice A1 by receiving a tough pass to the middle, he extended to receive it, brought it into his feet on a one touch and snapped it backhand across ice for the one-timer finish. 10 minutes later, he received another puck in the middle of the ice in-flight, but this time, he was set and released it with little kickback on the one-timer and buried it shelf. The feet looked much better in this game than earlier in the season. Progression!

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Canada vs Switzerland - u18s

Wood's game has grown more efficient as the tournament progresses. He knows where his teammates are, makes plays to space for them, and then drives inside. He can't win many puck battles as he lacks the speed to beat defenders in a race and body them off the puck, but I'm definitely bumping his sense grade after these performances. A lot of nice give-and-go plays and tic-tac-toes.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Wood's skating limitations were clearer in this game. He's still a bit clunky when he moves and part of these weaknesses will remain in the NHL, but I severely underestimated the hockey sense in the first part of the season. Wood scans the ice, processes the play fast, and anticipates it. At the start of the tournament, he got surprised by the quick defensive pressure on him, but now he seems to have fully adapted. Playing with Ritchie and Celebrini does help. One is very responsible and supportive and the other one dynamic. Wood is still creative, capable of great inside drives and finish with his hands, even in tight spaces, and he can somewhat protect pucks down low, even if his skating makes those situations a bit awkward.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Wood isn't as skilled as Ritchie, the player on the other wing of his line. The contrast puts things in perspective for our board, but Wood's potential remains quite high. He's a much better playmaking in tight than he was at the start of the season. The stickhandling skills stand out every game. He made a really nice pass to Ritchie for a tap-in goal in the first. He sometimes has trouble reading passing lanes.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

The flaws in Wood's game showed up in this one. He doesn't manage space well. He gets too close to teammates, doesn't feel defenders on his back, and tries plays he doesn't have the room to pull off. The skill is really interesting, but he's better at reacting than orchestrating scoring chances. It's a contrast with the last game, where, despite his team getting blown out, he showed more flashes of hockey sense.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

A great, great performance from Wood, especially in periods two and three. It might be weird to say that after a blowout loss, but this tournament matters more on an individual level for Wood. He's against his age group and his skill look two or three cut above everyone else's, especially when paired with a player like Celebrini who can find him with passes. Wood showed he could connect plays, catch difficult passes, dangle around defenders instantly, prepare his plays with deception, rapidly find teammates in the slot, and create offence from the wall. I'm starting to believe in his projection a lot more. He might belong ahead of players like Ritchie (probably) and Barlow (maybe). The skating is a significant flaw.

David St-Louis: March 11th, 2023 - UConn vs. UMass - NCAA

Another pretty great performance -- in terms of projection. Wood, at this stage, is a low-pace college player with quite severe mobility limitations, but if he does improve his skating, even just by a grade, he could become a top-six NHLer. His awareness of the ice improved massively since the start of the season. He's connecting difficult plays under pressure now. He's also better at using his frame and physical skills along the boards. His handling looks better (I bumped it by a grade) and his overall coordination, too. He can contort his body to adjust to passes, catch them, and fire them on net or make the next play. More defensive effort, too. His hockey sense deserves an above-average grade, too. A very interesting player, but the team that drafts him will have to be patient with him.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Boston College vs. UConn - NCAA

By far the best performance I've seen from Wood this season. He made many advanced plays including give-and-goes, dangles through two defenders, and chained those plays into scoring chances. He protected the puck with his handling, mixing in weight-shift fakes as he moved through the defensive formation. And he took the puck from the wall to the middle of the ice repetitively. Great first touch habits: accelerating on reception, dangling on reception, passing on reception...He's highly coordinated inside his many limitations. The skating grade could be a 4 now. I think he could be a top-32 prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2023 - Alaska Anchorage vs. UConn - NCAA

The best game I've seen from Wood. His wrist shot looks much better than at the start of the season. He keeps distance between his feet and his hands in front, really pulling that top arm back and moving it across his body to shoot through opponents. Can shoot off either foot and even in motion (off the inside leg). In moments, he shows chaining ability, whether that was receiving a pass, fighting off pressure, and passing for an assist or toe-dragging around a stick inside the pass reception before cutting inside for the shot.

He has a lot of great ideas -- give-and-go entries, drawing pressure before cutting back, accelerating through pass receptions into open space, making immediate passes off the boards to the middle, and spinning off checks just as the puck comes near for deflections. He's held back by his skating, and also some accuracy issues. He whiffs on plays and throws pucks behind his opponents. Transition touches are highly variable. He's occasionally deceptive but rarely a manipulator. He's not aggressive enough with the puck at times, but how much of that is a consequence of the skating? Probably a bit. More and more, I think he has top-six upside. More work to get there than other top-15 challengers, but it's getting easier to see. He has NHL shooting, passing, handling, and off-puck instincts, to go alongside a boards game that will become a strength if the skating just improves a bit.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - UConn vs. Northeastern - NCAA

A strong game from Wood in the creation department. Several chances. In one powerplay shift, he set up a chance with a cross-slot slip pass under pressure, stepped inside for a drag shot, and then hammered a one-timer off the pads that was eventually put in. At 5-on-5, he set-up a late-game chance, consistently got open around the slot, and even flashes some give-and-go and more exciting playmaking ability. The ideas are just a bit off – pucks leave his stick too late and he doesn't see the trickier options – but he's moving in the right direction. Flashed the hands and scoring instincts in quick succession to get open, deke through a player, fire off a shot, and clean up a rebound. Along the boards, he skated through the hands off opponents, then attacked the middle, and skates towards opponents before cutting back.

The skating's a big question. He's upright and very weak on his edges. Not explosive or quick. Opponents easily match his footwork and eliminate his options. Lacks in motion skill. Consequently, he's not much of a threat off the rush. Not much of a defensive player either. His projection isn't easy. It requires imagination. He can play with skating as a weakness if the playmaking improves. The shot's lethal and he has the ideas (get open, get pucks off the boards, some manipulation flashes).

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Northeastern vs. UConn - NCAA

Wood remains fascinating. There are really exciting flashes and plenty of concerning moments. The exciting flashes are mostly linked to his decisions, while the concerning ones are mostly mechanical. That's a positive sign as his skating continues to improve. He adapts his release to lanes, capable of shooting under and around sticks. (Nearly) escapes pressure along the boards with cutbacks timed just as the opponent leans. Passes off the boards to the inside, set up with a bit of deception even under pressure. The hands, although not likely to remain an advantage without skating improvement, allow him to cut around opponents, maintain the puck under pressure, and occasional puck off an ankle breaker. Cuts off the boards and attacks the middle, but the skating often fails, preventing escape or getting resultign in just a low-percentage shot. He also has difficulty absorbing contact. Too straight ahead with the puck in transition this game, leading to turnovers and missed opportunities. The defence was better than in previous viewings. He was backtracking, trying to stay with the puck, and even swooped in for a break up. Nothing standout, but he's trying. Really tough projection, but he clearly has top-nine flashes.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2023 - Northeastern vs. UConn - NCAA

Lots of exciting, but awkward flashes from Wood in this game. His patience stands out. He doesn't force rushes down the boards, instead preferring to cutback or even cut inside when given the opportunity. Not a manipulator in those rush sequences, but he sets up his passes with a look off. A couple of passes failed. A couple of missed scoring chances. But he also scored by staying in space and, in general, created chaos with his off-puck movement and net-front positioning. There are exciting handling and shooting flashes, too. He quickly loads his weight for wristers and dekes through opponents, even off the backhand. Not much defensive contributions in this game, although his forechecking led to a few steals. Skating remains a major question. He already plays a game conducive to the slow game in the NHL, but he's so easily knocked off balance with that upright stance and his edges provide no separation. Clearly has top-nine skills, but he's a long way out.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Boston University vs Connecticut - NCAA

I'm starting to understand that Matthew Wood's projection will just be incredibly hard this season and there is nothing we can do, no amount of viewings that will likely change that. With his skating and frame at his age in the NCAA, Wood will always be at a disadvantage at five-on-five. He can't handle any kind of contact. The game also feels really fast for him, not just for his feet, but also the pace of his decisions. He takes first-touches toward traffic instead of away from it due to a lack of awareness. This was an overall good game from him, however, as he managed to show why he could turn into a legitimately good NHLer. On the powerplay, he identified passing lanes, tipped shots (scored from a deflection), and moved the puck quickly and smartly. He knew his next play, felt comfortable, and his handling skills showed up. He tries defensively and had some good moments, and at five-on-five, he can anticipate the game reasonably well. I'm really not sure where to slot him. I think the second half of the season will tell us more about his projection. Hopefully.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - UConn vs. UMass-Lowell - NCAA

Not much from Wood in this game, but the flashes were exciting. The wrister's a bit awkward in moments, but he has legitimate

skill. In one sequence, he baited the defender's stick forward, then pull in and shot under their stick. He skates into pressure before cutting back. He tries to win battles with body positioning. Instead of cycling, he looks for teammates on the inside. And he doesn't engage in races that he can't win, preferring to cut back instead. There's just a lot of awkwardness and poor skating. They prevent him from making the most of those skills. Going to be a tough one.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Providence vs Connecticut - NCAA

A much, much better performance from Wood. I can see the potential here, maybe not as a first-rounder (the issues are pretty large still), but there are qualities. Wood can feint, link passes, and handle the puck with more precision than most players his size. He even managed a between-the-legs dangle and an-stride release that scored. He can position off-puck reasonably well and engage opponents physically. He really is a one-play-at-a-time player, however, due to a lack of fine awareness and some mechanical breakdowns in his stride and, as a result, in his handling. I'm not sure about the whole scoring potential in the NHL, but it's safe to assume he's behind most other top players in this class right now, as he's a young Freshman in college and was used to the BCHL competition.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Connecticut vs Maine - NCAA

I don't think I had a positive note on Wood in this game. He's big and he wants to play physical. That's good, but both the ideas and the execution were off, with and without the puck. The game is too fast for him, as he's not scanning, but I also have doubt about the processing, as multiple times, he couldn't find solutions to closed lanes. The technical ability also lagged behind many of his teammates: couldn't catch passes, delayed moves, out of rhythm... He played his own game without adapting to constraints.

J.D. Burke: October 27th, 2022 - Boston College vs. Connecticut - NCAA

This is probably the most efficient Wood's looked as a playmaker. He routinely turned retrievals into low-high setups, using his massive frame to overwhelm defenders behind the Boston College goal and immediately sending the puck into the slot for Grade-A scoring chances. There was even the odd attempt at creating through the delay game, where Wood would curl on the zone entry, allow his teammates to level up, and get the puck around bodies and sticks to hit his teammates in stride with well-placed passes. Still, the limitations are striking. Wood isn't a particularly cunning or manipulative passer, always taking what's there rather than creating passing opportunities for himself through deception. He has a nasty habit of telegraphing his passes, particularly on the power play. Simply put: There's more technical passing skill there than there is cunning as a distributor. The same handling issues that have plagued Wood in nearly all of my viewings revealed themselves in this game. He almost always attacks on a straight line, and still keeps the puck well out in front of him more often than not. Again, I just seem someone far better suited to the back half of the first round than a player with legitimate top 10 abilities.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Connecticut vs. Boston University - NCAA

Wood was great on the powerplay. He hit the post with a one-timer. Lots of intelligent shooting ideas. Moved the puck effectively, albeit not with much deception. At 5-on-5, he was limited. He's a crafty handler but his upright stance (always on his heels) limits his ability to manage contact. When he uses his edges, the front of his skate blade comes off the ice – he comes to a complete stop where he started the turn. It's a problem. At this stage, he's an off-puck player: getting open between defenders, supporting the puck, and finding space on the weak side. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Connecticut vs. Boston University - NCAA

Wood showed a bit more nuance to his game compared to the Hlinka. He tried to manipulate opponents, both through his movement and eyes. Delayed, drew pressure, tried to pass through it. It only worked once along the boards. Otherwise, the timing was off and the lanes weren't always accessible. Doesn't bother scanning on too many touches. In transition, he cuts back, looks cross-ice, and tries to hit teammates moving with speed. His patience in transition was visible all game, helping mask his skating deficiencies. Didn't show much shooting ability in this game. Not a game that highlighted his skills in isolation, but combined, I left this viewing with a more positive impressive of his NHL projection.

J.D. Burke: October 15th, 2022 - Connecticut vs. Ohio State - NCAA

Wood has mostly played like a blunt object at college, but it hasn't kept him from stringing together some highly productive outings with UConn in the early goings. His three-point performance in this contest pushes him to over a point a game on the season, and even if the competition hasn't been great, no denying he's earned his flowers. Wood's goal followed the same formula as his first two: Get open, catch the pass, and send it on net with little delay. All three of the goals have come from range, too. His first assist was probably the most impressive play of the bunch. Wood collected the puck in the neutral zone, charged for the offensive zone, took the puck outside, warded off backpressure, and used his frame to get through a defender and get a shot off for the rebound helper. Wood also made an excellent, diving defensive play to intercept a pass and stop a sure goal; funny enough, Ohio State scored anyway a few seconds later. Many of the same red flags that tempered my enthusiasm at the Hlinka Gretzky remain. Wood is still playing an incredibly simple north-south game and not showing much explosiveness or dynamism in the process. But I'll be damned if he's not making it work anyway. It looks like he belongs in the 15-30 range, but it's early.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Wood's clearly limited by his skating. It affects everything: handling, shooting, passing, and puck protection. When he's in a controlled glide, the handling skills shine. He toe-draws around sticks, beats defenders with hand speed, etc. Any faster, and it falls apart. Right now, he's best at getting open just outside the slot, whether that's short support or far post, ready to shoot off the pass. But I didn't see any notable timing or movement on these plays. And he lacks passing skill (imprecise passes that kill sequences) and vision (killing a 3-on-1 by delaying too long and then missing the second play). He hardly looked like a first-rounder in this game.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

It's becoming increasingly clear with each viewing that Wood isn't a top prospect in this class, and this goes back to last season. Wood's feet are grim, and he compounds matters by attempting dangle plays at a glide. Too much of his game runs through his hands, and I don't even see his handling skill as even an above-average projection as currently constructed. He's made some gains as a playmaker relative to last season (at least, through the three games of preliminary round action at the Hlinka), but it's still a below-average component of his game. There was still an awful lot of hope passes from Wood, especially in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Wood hardly looked like a top prospect in this game. The skating's the obvious limiter. He struggles with strides, crossovers, stops, and starts. He had a couple of classic Wood plays, getting his stick on the heels of a defender before shooting off the rebound or deking around a defender for a chance. He's a classic overhandler, both in the sense of deking too much and handling the puck too much inside his movements. Hands can look worse than they actually are as a result. Playmaking is a weakness, too. He's not a proactive passer, and he lacks the passing skill to connect his better ideas. UConn will be tough for him, I suspect.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Wood's skating is going to be a problem, at least based on this tournament so far. Lacked pace, stride looked very inconsistent and he had Aatu Rätty level dependency on his inside edges, basically locked on them. Had a few nice moments later in the game, showing handling skill and some vision, but most of his passing attempts towards the slot were either too late or just lacked execution and were interrupted. Some weird defensive routes, too.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Wood has some moments of evasiveness with the puck, but it's all low-pace, with-space turns along the boards. He lacks the depth to explode from his moves, let alone to link them together. It also limits his ability to manage contact, despite otherwise sound details (body positioning, use his free hand). He relies heavily on his inside edges when handling the puck. He shows

terrific touch, but it won't be enough in the NHL. A couple of slick feeds aside, this was an inefficient performance. He passed to where his teammates were, not to where they were headed. He lacks both timing and adaptability on his deliveries. Away from the puck, he creeps to the far post and has shows a knack for turning tricky passes into scoring chances. Upside's significant, but I have more questions about his game than the other top players in this group. Good thing there's a whole season to answer them.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - Victoria Grizzlies vs. Langley Rivermen - BCHL

There are many reasons to be excited about Wood's game, but few were visible in this outing. Right now, the skating's a massive issue. Wide, always on his inside edges, can't separate or change directions with any quickness or explosiveness. He lacks the extra layer of passing skill to make the most of his ideas. The inability/unwillingness to change puck positioning pre-pass is visible as a shooter, too. He tends to just wind up and fire. Mechanics are limited. Shots deflect off defenders and miss the net wide and high. Right now, he's most effective as an off-puck lurker with off-the-pass shooting skill. The off-puck timing and movement will determine how effective of a goal-scorer he becomes at the next level. He's relatively engaged and physical in pursuit – could become strengths at some point. A few poor transition decisions, but he generally delays, resets, and builds speed underneath the puck. Definitely a top player for 2023.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2022 - Chilliwack Chiefs vs. Victoria Grizzlies - BCHL

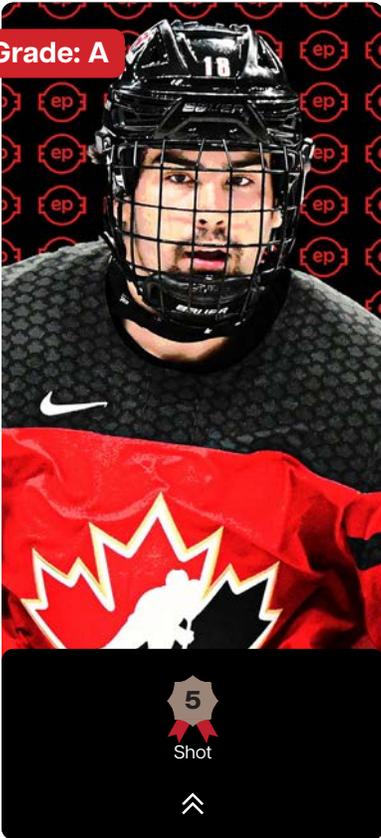
Wood's clearly a skilled, intelligent player, but there's plenty of work to be done. The good is obviously the shot and handling skill. He's primarily an outside leg wrister, showing skill both in-flight and off the pass. Curl-and-drag wrister limited only by skating, and he has crafty set ups. There are the beginnings of playmaking, transition, and physical potential here, too. First, he delays instead of forcing plays up the boards. He attacks the middle, then kicks the puck out to the perimeter. There are flashes of deception – two look off passes in quick succession led to his assist. And he uses his bottom hand to fend off sticks, looks to get players on his back, and so on.

Skating presents the most obvious limitation. He's weak. He lacks depth, there's a ton of chatter through his cuts and turns, and he stumbled a bunch. Crossovers aren't close. He struggles to shift his weight and push laterally. Shooting mechanics have some limitations as a result. He's also a high grip handler who continually tries to deke through everyone. Limited awareness of plays around him in moments, but it's also easy to see this improve. Too many in-glide, puck-in-front dekes, however. Off-puck, he's aware but not necessarily occupying the best space. Tends to get open, float, then wait rather than adjusting to stay in the passing lane. Right now, he's a skilled shooter and passer who flashes projectable ideas, but lacks execution. He's going to be a tough player to evaluate next season.

David St-Louis: December 4th, 2021 - Victoria Grizzlies vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Wood is a bit limited mechanically, not unlike other larger players. It's harder for him to execute dangles and skating moves, but he still has a technical ability. We see it in his shot. It has a pretty great form: weight stacked over the lead foot, flexion, and power. He's physical, can dangle through teams (if he has a runway of speed), and some creativity. I'm not sure how good he is at rapidly chaining plays, something he will have to do in the NCAA and the NHL, due to the execution limitations and some awareness problems, but there is talent there.

Grade: A



17 Colby Barlow

AGE 17.584 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Carter Verhaeghe, A Bear



Lethal Shooter



Hammer



Tactician

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	7	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	6	7.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Owen Sound Attack "C"	OHL	59	46	33	79	1.34
Canada U18 "A"	WJC-18	6	3	1	4	0.67

5

Shot

SCOUTING REPORT

Colby Barlow is one tough customer. Maybe not a power forward in the traditional mould, but someone with a fair bit of size, snarl, and a shot that could put holes in the endboards.

You want him on your team. You're loath to see him on the opposite bench. That sort of guy. You get the idea.

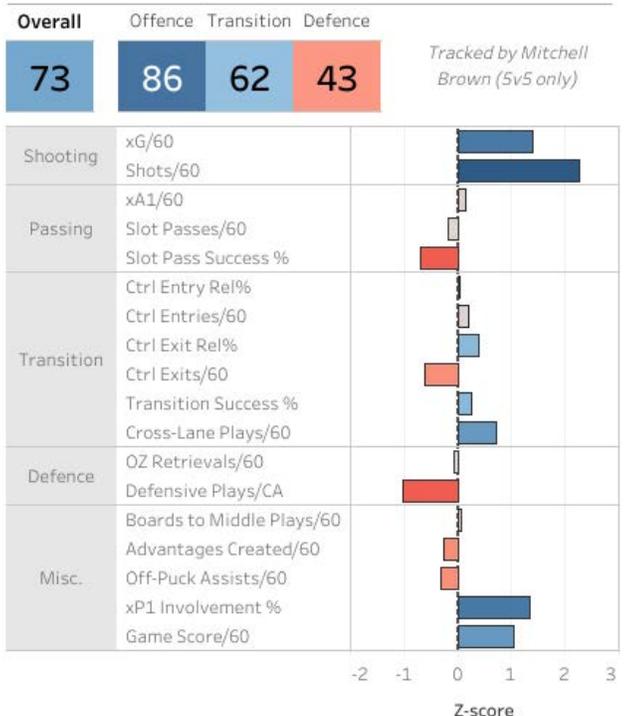
Any discussion about what makes Barlow special, though, has to start with his shot. You don't score 46 goals in 59 OHL contests without a wicked release, and his was among the best in the entire league last season.

Barlow can take a puck just about anywhere in his wheelhouse and send it right back on goal with one- and two-touch shots, one-timers, and a form-perfect wrist shot with an unlocked top arm generating a whole lot of downforce. He can get those shots off from either leg, too. It's pretty special to watch.

"There is a quick release and a Barlow release," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a game report from the U18s. "His goal was one of the most impressive shots I've seen not just from him but overall this season. A lightning-fast drag-shot that left no chance to the goalie."

Colby Barlow

F | Owen Sound Attack | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 126.7



Barlow pairs that shot with cunning and a nose for soft ice away from the puck to realize its full potential as a finishing tool. His sense of anticipation is a clear strength, informed by constant scanning away from the puck, and he always times his arrivals into space perfectly to make himself available as a passing option for his linemates.

When that fails, the Owen Sound Attack winger is more than willing to just wreak havoc at the net-front and send home rebounds. You won't find many more willing if not outright enthusiastic garbage goal scorers in this class.

The same logic applies on puck retrievals. Barlow is hard on the puck and always takes the extra stride to finish his check. His motor runs high and he tracks reasonably well through the neutral zone while making a consistent effort to backcheck.

"Barlow may never be the flashiest player on the ice, but he plays a style of hockey that coaches will love in future levels," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a January game report. "Positionally aware, defensively responsible, in constant pursuit of the puck, uses his speed and power to back defenders up, can score off the rush or create from down low...Doesn't shy away from contact."

Now, how well this game will scale up well to the NHL is a bit of an open question. Barlow is already about as physically developed as he'll get – the dude looks like he has a mortgage and gets excited by the prospect of mowing his lawn, if you catch my drift. He's also a bit unidimensional, something of a blunt object as currently constructed. His game is built for the NHL already, but how much developmental runway is left?

Whatever the case, Barlow's floor is high enough and his finishing skill potent enough that he's a really strong bet to be a middle-six scoring winger with some snarl, at the bare minimum. You're laughing if you get that player anywhere in the teens.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Colby Barlow has to prove himself to be a first rounder



Meet the Team: Canada's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Heavy, great goal scorer. He'll score in the NHL." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I think that I play a hard, 200-foot game. I'm a power forward, hard on the forecheck, and I get to the dirty areas. I'm able to bury my opportunities when I get the chance." – Colby Barlow, April 2023

"There's a few guys I look up to. I don't really specifically pinpoint one guy. I just try to shoot the puck and get into scoring areas, like Matthews. I protect pucks and get to the net like John Tavares. Just a couple of guys that I watch and try to emulate some of the things that they do." – Colby Barlow, April 2023

"It's always good to set up teammates. The OHL is a fast league. The important part is to snap the puck over quickly, and they usually finish it off." – Colby Barlow, December 2022

"It's important to battle and get position. Tip pucks and bury rebounds. It's a part of my game that I take a lot of pride in." – Colby Barlow, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

I'll say this much about Barlow – you never doubt the motor. Man, does he ever bring it, shift after shift, from puck drop to the final horn. It seemed like Barlow walked that line of seeking out contact without chasing the play perfectly in this one, playing the body to win possession and using push-offs to separate from opponents along the boards. Working smart and hard. I'm not sure that the skill stood out much in this contest, though. Barlow generated a handful of shots, none of them of an especially high quality. There were a few fumbled dangles and failed pass receptions, too. I'm not sure that Barlow created many looks for himself away from the puck either. This performance was all about his work in the defensive zone and on offensive zone puck retrievals. Otherwise, pretty quiet.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

There is a quick release and a Barlow release. His goal was one of the most impressive shots I've seen not just from him but overall this season. A lightning-fast drag-shot that left no chance to the goalie. Apart from that, Barlow was a better playmaker in this game. He recognizes passing plays and offensive patterns and he can make the logical next play. He's not creative, but he won't have any problem connecting with teammates at the NHL level. His skating doesn't look like a problem at this tournament. Just a lot to like. Great hand-eye coordination, too. He intercepts a bunch of pucks at this tournament and he's overall defensively responsible.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Barlow looks like a checker more than anything else in this tournament. I have to superimpose what I know he can do, from his OHL season, to understand why he's still used in the roles he is on the powerplay. I like his energy -- a lot. He's constantly in movement, constantly pressuring the opposition, and constantly hunting for space. He attacks the net and is generally at the right place at the right time. I haven't seen much creativity or chemistry with teammates so far.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

Barlow took the time to show his handling skills at times in this one. He's not Andrew Cristall in that department for sure, but he can go through opponents given the right occasion. He pursued the puck hard all game and rushed it up ice. His board play stood out, too. A reverse hit to keep possession of the puck and always first on it. Good puck management, especially in the first period. He participated in tic-tac-toe and give-and-goes. He's the same player as in the OHL, but he takes center stage more often.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Barlow had his moments. He shined more than Ritchie. And most of his scoring chances and higher moments were self-generated. That is good, for a player who can rely on shooting off the pass. He fades in the background for stretches, but that's also good for his kind of playstyle. He pops in open spaces when you don't expect it. He created a great chance for himself on the penalty kill. He took the puck, attacked down the wing, and fired almost in-stride at the goalie. Otherwise, he went to the net, played a cycle game...He overall looked for hits more than puck steals. He looked like OHL Barlow.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Barlow wasn't a factor in this game outside of a bit of defence and the shot. He drops his chest through his shot but the release is still blindingly quick. Really holds that outside edge. Adjusts to passes to shoot instantly, curling his body around the puck and launching his body through it. Impressive stuff. But he's not much of a transition threat or playmaker. He leaves value on the table with some of his shots and play-building skills didn't appear much in this game. He's a goal-scorer with a 7-grade shot, but his game has limitations, at least for now. A smart development team could really squeeze a lot more out of him because he occasionally tries passing plays and shows first-touch skill.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Barlow's path to the NHL is pretty straightforward. He's an NHL shooter. Hit the post twice from sharp angles. Adaptable release, firing from tricky positions while pressured. Creates a bit of space for his shot, but his pass receptions aren't always clear, which limits some of his effectiveness. At least a 6.5 shooter. He's not a playmaker, but he has play-building skills. He anticipates lanes closing and cuts back instead of forcing plays forward. Changes the point of attack with cross-lane/ice passes. He misses opportunities to hit teammates in scoring position. The defence could be a strength; he has the motor and physical skills. Tried to beat a defender with his hands but failed because he didn't change pace (just turned his body). He's talented. A fine mid-to-late first. I get why a team would pick him top-15.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Barlow's a bit of a quiet player. He falls into the background with quick touches and low-percentage shots. In the early stages, his most notable play was a wide drive and perimeter shot. The skating looks like an NHL skill. He pushes his knees past his toes and engages his hips, but he's not explosive. He's a solid forechecker and defensive player, but again, not an especially standout one. But he's a capable transition passer. He delays, looks cross-ice for options, and even showed a bit of prowess with carrying the puck in one sequence to create a lane down the outside. The shooting skill, attention to detail, and play-building should enable him to play, but even at this stage of the season, I remain unsure of the upside.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Barlow was good in this one. Transitions defence to offence, finishes his checks, dumps and chases, battles along the boards, used his stick to deflect passes. Drag shot coming down the wall. Scored (he may never stop) after following the play, recognizing that the defender was wandering away from him, and finishing off a pass from Cedrick Guindon. Barlow's best moments in this game though were not at 5-on-5. He forced turnovers on the penalty kill, won battles along the boards and generated shorthanded scoring chances. At 4-on-4, he went end-to-end before shooting from the outside, cutting inside and picking up his own rebound. He's definitely an NHL player, probably the safest projection out of this OHL class. But is there enough dynamic offence to his game to add to his upside?

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Barlow can almost score at will. His shot looks automatic sometimes, its power and precision. His one-timer motion is short, but the puck just explodes off his stick. He has NHL scoring upside, but will need the right players on his line, the playmakers to set him up. Besides moving the puck into space and give-and-goes, Barlow is relatively limited with the puck. But I can get behind a top-15 off-puck scorer (he's great at finding space), high-end shooter, and defensive player. That's a top-six NHL package, again, on the right line. But I also feel like that's an optimistic projection considering the lack of dynamic and playmaking qualities. Still unsure at this stage.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Barlow is not dynamic or creative, but he has that good next play mentality. He keeps things simple and the puck off his stick, which allows him to use his best attributes: his physicality on the walls (he forechecked well), his net-front game (he got his stick on rebounds), and his shot. He's not all that adaptable and flexible in his release, but he can fire off bad passes. He has that sort of skill. I'm still not sure what to think of him.

David St-Louis: January 14th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm- OHL

Barlow showed more diverse elements in this one, crossover rushes to beat defenders wide and the start of a playmaking game. He delayed on entry to find a trailing teammate. He doesn't open passing lanes, but he knows where teammates are and offloads the puck to them fast in the offensive zone. He's aware and anticipates reasonably well. He has defensive value at this level (plays penalty kill), but I'm not sure his skating will make him a PKer at the next ones, maybe if he becomes even better

at taking away lanes with his stick. He's physical on the forecheck, willing to finish body checks. Otherwise, he's just as good at finding areas in which to set up as a shooter and he fires a volume of shots at the net, surprising goalies. The skating is an average projection, decent form, but he won't ever have NHL agility or abilities to separate from the defence in tight spaces.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Barlow looks like an NHLer, that's not in doubt. He shoots like an NHLer, morphing his release to the sticks and skates around him. He curls pucks around sticks, mixes in the odd look off, comfortable (and quickly) fires off his outside leg. The hand placement, upper body, and lower body are textbook in these shoots. He understands how to win body positioning on opponents, driving his leg in front of the opponent's as he turns the corner. An effective forechecker and builds the breakout rather than forcing it ahead on breakouts. There was great playmaking read, gathering his rebound and passing it back across the slot for a tap-in. The ultimate upside remains in question. He's not a dynamic player, he's not an overwhelming physical force, and he's not an off-puck stalwart (whether that's actually defending or getting open). A likely NHLer, but not sure where he fits in a lineup yet.

Mitchell Brown: January 11th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Barlow scored a goal that perfectly encapsulated his game. He went cross-ice on the breakout, sprinted to the net, and tapped in a cross-slot pass. That pass changed the point of attacking, shifting the opponent's defensive structure to enable his subsequent unimpeded dash to the net. He is, at least, a 6.5 shooter, maybe. It's a bit upper body-dependent but he's an adapter shooter and shoot just about any pass immediately. Only makes basic passes in the offensive zone, but he's a solid defensive player. He still looks like a first-round prospect. Maybe a mid-six shooter. A stronger physical game – puck protection, cutting through the hands – would make his projection easier.

Lauren Kelly: January 5th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Barlow may never be the flashiest player on the ice, but he plays a style of hockey that coaches will love in future levels. Positionally aware, defensively responsible, in constant pursuit of the puck, uses his speed and power to back defenders up, can score off the rush or create from down low. Anticipates the movements of his teammates and opposing players well, putting himself in positions to either receive passes for quick shots, or intercept passing plays. Doesn't shy away from contact. He could be a little trigger-happy in this viewing, which sometimes prevented him from utilizing better passing options.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Barlow plays on what is in front of him. He's all straight-lines, probably because of his wide skating that makes him go on tracks. He misses better plays that he could make by involving trailers and he's a shooter first. That's not a recipe for him to become a playmaker at the next level. That being said, he has that fibre, too. He can delay and hit those trailers when there is not an opportunity to shoot (then he tunnel vision) and when he can't bulldoze his way to the net. I still love the NHL scoring potential, around the net, in tight spaces (he can get the puck to hit stick and launch it in an instant), and by popping inside space. He lacks small area skills when it comes time to protect, handle, hold, and pass, however; he doesn't have that kind of finer ability, at least that's what I feel like. So, I see mostly a middle-six forechecker, net-driver, with short-passing ability, and powerplay scoring potential. I'm not sure he will have the overall skill level to consistently play with top-line playmakers who could make use of his shot.

Lauren Kelly: December 11th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Another solid viewing of Barlow. Two assists, though both secondary, led directly to goals - once where he picked off a player below the goal line to set up the passing play, and the other where he found a loose puck, got alone behind the net and with the goalie out of position, went around to the far post and fed a teammate on the doorstep. Consistently engaged, anticipated well, hunted for pucks, picked off passes, and looked like a top-15 pick. Better agility and edges in this one, engaged physically, and also showed an ability to stickhandle through and around pressure. Added acceleration would help his escapability.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Barlow looks like an NHLer. He does all the NHLer things. He wins battles, supports plays, attacks with speed, gets open, and gobbles up any and every loose puck. Overwhelms players with pressure and rips away possession. The shot's just ridiculous, firing several complex one-timers with his body turned. Has the skills and reads to play his game in the NHL. Pushes pucks to the middle in transition, passes, then relocates for a return feed. He's not a playmaker. He has sound ideas, such as hitting the middle lane-driver or finding a teammate off the boards, but lacks the passing skill (ability to access lanes) and the selection (saucers when he should keep the puck on the ice) to take advantage. Doesn't delay or deceive to create lanes. Yeah, he's a first-rounder, but a mid-one probably. He'll play. He'll be good. But I'm unsure if he's more than a decent mid-six guy at this stage.

Lauren Kelly: November 23rd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

This was the performance I had been almost waiting to see from Barlow. Constantly on the hunt for pucks, engaged, finding pockets of space, and anticipating defenders well. Three goals for a hat trick didn't hurt either. The first goal almost looked like a fanned pass that ended up going five hole. The second, he found wide open space in the slot and one-timed the pass. The third was probably his prettiest goal of the season, corralling a loose puck at the side of the net before moving across the slot, delaying, and then finishing on the backhand near the goal line on the other side. He was dominant on shifts. He looked like a top-15 first rounder in this one.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

While Barlow is not really a playmaker -- the two-on-one sequence where he tried to fake his pass for two-zones, never looking at his teammate, only to send the puck off-target proved that -- he can quickly connect plays in transition and manage the puck well. His game is connecting plays, supporting them, and finding space for shots. It works at this level and it could work in the NHL, but I'm not sure about the overall upside of his game. The skating looks like a 5 to 5.5 grade, same for the handling. The shot is a quickdraw and can be used in traffic, so maybe it's a 6 to 6.5. He's probably a first-rounder, but not necessarily an exciting one, at least at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Barlow scored the late-game winner, winning a race and then firing a nasty inside leg wrister far side over the goaltender. The mechanics are strong: head up, chest up, elbow above elevated, and he shifts his weight lightning quick. Looks like a 6-7-grade shot. Other qualities: supporting play, winning body positioning before getting the puck, getting open, quick plays off the boards in transition to start the rush, and strong defensive work. He's not much of a playmaker. He has handling skill, but like with his passing, is limited by his lack of manipulation ability. Skates in straight lines, from one defender to the next. Also didn't show any ability to get pucks off the wall in the offensive end. He's an easy NHL projection. Confident he plays, but just how much upside is there?

Cam Robinson: November 13th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs Erie Otters - OHL

A strong performance from Barlow in this one. He was hunting pucks, sniffing out pockets of space, and was engaged physically throughout. I liked his routes into the offensive end and timing to the high-danger areas. He was rewarded with two goals and a primary helper. His first tally, he hunted around on the right side while the play was low in the left corner. He kept his feet moving and timed the jump in for a one-time finish. The second he did a similar thing but in the high slot before wristing a squeaker home. Tack on six shots, some smart outlet plays off of the wall and consistent work rate. He was the most noticeable player on a shift-to-shift basis.

David St-Louis: November 13th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs Erie Otters - OHL

Now I know why Barlow has been so highly touted. The scoring game is very translatable. He shows effort to get the puck back, pressures opponents, moves pucks quickly to teammates (using trailers), and then relocates in pockets of space. He sniffs

shooting opportunities ahead of the play and his quick-draw one-timer and wrist-shot are threatening. He's not the most exciting player in terms of playmaking, but he could be a good vanilla complement on an NHL-skill line, someone who makes a trio work with his work ethic, quick passing, and scoring ability. There are a lot of guys like him in the NHL.

Lauren Kelly: November 12th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Two points for Barlow in this game, an assist on a pass that sprung a teammate on the breakaway, and an empty-netter to seal Owen Sound's victory. Skating feels like it's going to be an issue for him this season. He struggles to gain the zone with possession, escape pressure, and takes too long to execute plays at times. That being said, he uses his frame well to establish off-puck positioning. Work rate was still inconsistent on a shift-to-shift basis. Scans in his own end and communicates with his teammates about open coverage. Identifies threats but the skating hinders his ability to eliminate them in a timely manner. He's an NHL pick, but I'm still not sure how high.

David St-Louis: October 21th, 2022 - Eerie Otters vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Barlow didn't look like a top-20 pick in this one. Not a lot of "special" elements. That said, it was an all-around strong game from him from a positioning standpoint, offensively and defensively. He was physically engaged and moved the puck well to the next teammate. But honestly, if I wasn't looking for him and paying attention to his every move, I probably would not have noticed him much during the entire game. The tools look like average grades overall. Maybe the skating could reach a higher one, but his pace was relatively low in this outing.

Lauren Kelly: October 19th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

I don't know what it is about Barlow, but he just doesn't look anything like the player who dominated at the Hlinka. At least, not yet. That being said, he still picked up four points in this outing, though one was a secondary assist and one of his goals was a deflection that he didn't even see the puck on. His other goal was a tricky little backhand from the goal line and the other assist was just a short pass in the offensive zone to a teammate for a one-timer. But production aside, he was kind of invisible on most shifts. Struggled to gain the zone with the puck, didn't get many looks in tight, and an inconsistent work rate, especially with backchecking and scanning. Kind of a puzzling viewing, honestly.

Lauren Kelly: October 15th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

This was a better showing from Barlow, who was back to using both his physical skills and off-puck play to produce quality chances for himself and his teammates. Really liked to creep into space in this game, but he didn't get the puck in those areas. I still think he would benefit from more scanning in his own end, and his efforts on the backcheck seemed laboured - often he was the last one back to the DZ and he wasn't usually leading the rush or forecheck, either. Maybe some fatigue after playing back-to-back nights? Barlow picked up three points in this one. His first assist was just a secondary one, but he made a nice play on his second assist, shielding the puck with his body as he entered the zone, circling around the net and then feeding a teammate from below the goal line. Good awareness of passing options on that sequence. His goal was the overtime winner, a one-timer on the powerplay. I still feel like I was left wanting more from him though; his intensity and effort levels were inconsistent on shifts and he wasn't really a factor in transition. I'd like to see more of his playmaking abilities, as the shot is already a strength.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Despite the hat trick performance, I felt this was a bit of a pedestrian showing by Barlow, at least when it came to creating high danger chances for himself. His first goal came off a tip in the slot, the second was burying a rebound, and the third was an empty netter. But especially early on in this game, it felt like he was fighting the puck a little bit - it would roll off his stick, or he'd bobble passes, and it limited his ability to create legitimate scoring chances of his own. Still, Barlow demonstrated that with sound positioning and good off-puck reads, he can still put himself in areas of the ice that allow him to contribute production-wise. He would rip one-timer after another on the powerplay, and on the 5-on-3 advantage Owen Sound had in the third period, he fired off three of them before diving back towards the blueline to keep the puck in with his stick. It didn't really seem like he

was using his physical skills to his advantage in this one either. Hoping this was just an off-game for him.

Mitchell Brown: October 12th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Barlow was pretty quiet in this game, save for a breakaway chance and a couple of wristers in transition. A couple of his shots left value on the table. In transition, he didn't show much skill. Skated until he couldn't. No deception, changes of pace, or notable handling skill. A couple of intelligent lateral passes on breakouts suggest that he can bring similar skill in the neutral zone. A couple of passes to no one. Didn't see much from him beyond the shot and motor.

Lauren Kelly: October 8th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Owen Sound had as many shots in this entire game as Mississauga did in the first period alone, and unfortunately, Barlow was reduced to constantly having to fight to get the puck back for his team. And he did a commendable job; he was excellent at picking off passes, getting himself in the way of cross-ice passes, and forcing turnovers in both zones. Excellent use of his physical skills, whether it was shielding the puck with his body or shouldering off opponents and beating them to loose pucks. Didn't throw too many hits. Most of his extended possession came on the powerplay, but it was rare that he had the time or space to attempt or execute difficult plays. He and his teammates were just constantly trying to get the puck back. I don't know that I saw a player who has been labelled as a top-15 pick in this (very deep) draft, but maybe it was just a consequence of his team having an overall poor game.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

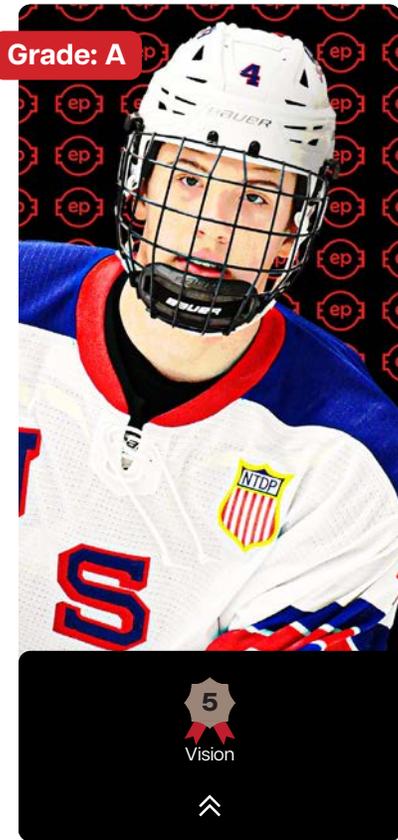
Barlow dangled around a defender in spectacular fashion, coming in at an angle, then going forehand-backhand-forehand under their stick for a chance. Always looks to establish positioning on defenders, no matter the situation. Powers past checks and uses early contact to create space. But he showed playmaking limitations in this game. He doesn't manipulate defenders, which leads to turnovers on the better opportunities he spots. Lacks adaptability as a passer. Doesn't lead teammates into space, passing to where they are, limiting his team's breakout. In this tournament, he largely looked like a high-probability third liner. That's still exciting.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Barlow was just carving up Slovakia all game. An incredible display of puck control in the period was among the highlights – top hand free from his hip, head up. He connected with a cross-slot pass through an opening barely bigger than the puck, and grabbed an assist with hip pocket deception on a 2-on-1. Physical skills and defence were also apparent in this game. He outmuscled opponents, won body positioning, anticipated passes, and pushed plays to the perimeter with overwhelming pressure in pursuit. He's going to do some serious damage in the OHL this season.

Mitchell Brown: April 2nd, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Barlow got stuck with the puck a few times in this game. He tries to outrace defenders, driving his way to the net if he can. If he can't, he takes a shot or throws away possession. A turnover-prone player in transition as a result. Lacks the finer edge work to load and push laterally to sell his best moves. But he's a relentless worker. Just hounding every puck carrier. Pushes plays wide then comes across the hips. High physical potential through work rate and desire to establish body positioning. The shot's an NHL skill already, and he has the off-puck skills to get shots. Always positioned in the right space, whether that's right down the middle, on the weak side, or acting as short support. If he becomes a bit more patient in transition – making plays to the inside, delaying, etc. – he'll be a top-two rounds prospect for 2023.



18 Gabe Perreault

AGE 17.359 DATE OF BIRTH May 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Clayton Keller



Vision



Hockey IQ



Tactician

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	165 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5.5 Shooting	7.5 Passing
7 Puckhandling	7.5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	63	53	79	132	2.10
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	19	26	45	1.96
USA U18	WJC-18	7	5	13	18	2.57

SCOUTING REPORT

No one has ever scored more points in a single season with the USNTDP than Gabe Perreault's 132 in his draft year. Not Auston Matthews. Not Jack Hughes. Not Logan Cooley. He's at the top.

You won't hear his name called in the first five picks, though. Even the first 10 picks feel like a bit of a stretch. No, in all likelihood, we've got him ranked right around where he's likely to go.

The easy takeaway there would be that Perreault was an empty calorie scorer or that his numbers are inflated. I mean, how else would one explain that sort of divergence between a player's bottom line and their draft ranking?

That's not necessarily the case, though. It's a little more nuanced than that. Because Perreault really was full value for the program this year. The points were well-earned.

The starting point in any conversation about Perreault's game is his sense. He's among the most intelligent players in this class, even convincing some in our ranks that he was a superior thinker to his linemate Will Smith at times.

"Perreault plays to his strengths," USHL regional scout Joey Padmanabhan wrote in a December game report. "He's not especially

Gabe Perreault

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 170.5



quick or big, but he's got great hands and sees the ice exceptionally well. The puck is on his stick for a stride or two, just long enough to draw a forechecker, then it's on the tape of a teammate in motion with space."

Perreault is a deceptive, adaptable, pacey playmaker who always makes the right choice with the puck. He can sequence plays, put pucks into space, and problem-solve against numbers with relative ease.

And while we may not think of Perreault as someone who projects as a high-end goalscorer at the next level, his off-puck intelligence, slick hands, and a deceptively strong release should make him a credible dual-threat scorer at the NHL level.

At this point, I'm sure you're wondering what the holdup is then. Not much suspense here: It's the skating stride. Perreault just isn't quick enough for a player his size. It makes an otherwise relatively easy projection to an NHL middle-six fraught.

Perreault is a top-heavy skater with a wide stride and an inability to access his outside edges. It's not just that he can't separate in space; it's that he doesn't even have the mechanisms to buy himself time against heavy defensive pressure along the boards or during sustained offensive zone pressures.

Still, there's a lot to like about Perreault. In the right environment, preferably one with a lot of predictability and structure, he can thrive at the NHL level. Something like a career in an NHL middle-six with power play upside seems well within reach.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout's Notebook: The top prospects from the USNTDP

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Another kid where the numbers are great and I think his showing requires some slightly tempered expectations. He can do great things, but I don't have him as high on my lists as some of the places I've seen him listed." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He'll go in that 10-20 range. Obviously a smart player with skill, but the skating is going to keep him from going in the top 10" - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"His offensive upside is off the charts. He's got great instincts, great hands, great vision - the puck finds him. His dad played in the NHL, so he's got a little bit of pedigree, too. He's just got to add a gear and develop more of a backup game." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I'm on "Team Gabe" because he's up there as one of the smarter players in the draft. He plays hard, honest. He has a lot of skill. Gabe needs to have a couple of big summers in terms of getting stronger. He has to improve his skating. Realistically, in the NHL, Gabe isn't going to be a guy who can drive a line. He might be a high-end complementary guy, to those types of players. By the time we get to the draft, he will break Auston Matthews' record for points in a season with the program. What's he like without Ryan Leonard and Will Smith? At the same time. He outproduced them both by quite a bit. I think somewhere between 15-20. Top-six guy with power play reps in the NHL." - NHL scout, April 2023

"I think he's done a really good job. in terms of his approach to the day-to-day. [That] would probably be the biggest thing. He was probably 130 or 140 pounds when he came in here. It was crazy. He took full advantage of the strength program, but he always stayed late and did extra. He stayed on top of nutrition. He's making those extra efforts to make sure that part of his game and that part of his development continues to grow, and it has. He's a guy whose offensive IQ is through the roof. The way he sees the ice, the way he can create space for himself, for others – it's at a really high level. You combine that with the skill set that he has, and obviously it's led to a lot of points. You see him, and even tonight when the score is that we're up by a couple of goals, and he's still tracking back, he's still being detailed, he's still doing those things. And he creates offence that way, too. It's not just with time and space. It's also coming back, off the track, in transition. I think that part of his game has come a long way." – Team USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"He's awesome. He's a guy you look forward to seeing every day. He's a super competitive kid. Really competitive in terms of anything we're doing, small area games or anything – he's going to try to win. That's the way that Gabe is. He's a guy who loves being in the rink. He loves being with his teammates. Those are the people you want to work with every day." – Team USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

Things started off reasonably well for Perreault, who had an early chance to add to the Americans lead on a 2-on-1, were it not for a big-time save by Samuel Urban. He flashed some usual Perreault hallmarks in this game, too – intelligence passing plays, passing skill, and a give-and-go game. I thought he mostly faded into the background as the game wore on though. Which, fair enough. It got pretty ugly. I think the last two games have kind of exposed Perreault's limitations, particularly with his wall game. Just a real inability to separate against physical pressure and get inside. Still, I think this tournament has pretty much guaranteed he's a first-round pick. Deservedly so.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

I didn't think Perreault flashed as much in this game. He tried to emulate a couple of Smith moves, but he doesn't have the same skills so these plays ended up failing. He's definitely more engaged on the walls than his teammate, however. And he can fake in the same ways with his hip-pocket posture. Most of his passes had great timing, still.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - U18s

Perreault can't really handle board battles. That much is clear. He wins some of them through pure energy, but he can't really resist contact or play off of it. That said, he continues to have incredible flashes of sense mixed in with skill. He caught the puck ahead of himself to bait a pokecheck, passed it behind his back to protect it, and then shot it inside space for his teammate, starting a clean net drive for that teammate. There were a couple of other plays of that quality, too. Not his best game – Czechia's defensive formation shut down some of his creativity – but he's still a treat to watch.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

Probably one of Perreault's more tame performances at the tournament. There were a couple of interesting plays here and there – mostly some pacey attacks off the rush – but for the most part, Perreault faded into the background. Skill level seemed a bit lower in this contest, too. He whiffed on a one-timer opportunity and was a second too late reading a developing passing play with his linemates, costing them a scoring chance if not a goal. He still left with an assist, though.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs Switzerland - U18s

A solid showing for Perreault in a game where he didn't have to do much. The standard habits were there, pre scans, excellent

passes, great off puck movement. One behind the back pass to Smith for a tap in goal. Leonard and Smith were drivers on the line, but Perreault more than held his own. Had some excellent finds in transition, constantly relocated to space. He's a special player, might even be a first round candidate.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

This was a pretty special performance for Perreault. The playmaking ability and handling are special and already close to NHL-caliber. He's so crafty, manipulating triangles, using dekes and feints to open up passing and shooting lanes. As good of a stickhandler as he is, Perreault doesn't carry the puck longer than necessary. He's aware of where pressure is and if he has to touch it off to avoid a check he's more than capable. Some nice hustle defensively too, working on the backcheck to seal off lanes, couple of hard finished checks too. Looking more and more like a first rounder and is clearly not a passenger on his very talented line.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Perreault orchestrated multiple scoring chances in this one. If he has an option ready or more space, he's hard to stop. He knows how to leverage every advantage to create even bigger ones. At this point, I think the hockey sense is near elite. Or at least, he has developed so much chemistry with teammates that he's always playing in anticipation, He's spoon-feeding great chances to his teammates. The motor of his line. Not the most flashy, but really the connector, a high-end one. He looks quicker in those games, but I'm watching from afar and everyone looks quicker with the zoomed-in camera.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

A historic performance for Gabe Perreault, who broke Auston Matthews' record for the most points in a season with the USNTDP U18 squad in a season, setting a new record of 121 by the time the night was over. All told, Perreault left this game with a hat trick and five points total. The most impressive of the bunch was a goal he scored in the first period, batting the rebound of his own breakaway attempt out of mid-air and into the Norwegian goal. Perreault was the one driving the bus on the American first line tonight, his skill level jumping out at you nearly every time he touched the puck. Not that I've ever doubted his handling ability, but this was the best it's ever looked. Something that really stood out was Perreault's attention to detail, even as the game got out of hand. Just consistently making the right reads defensively and keeping his motor running to the final horn. The skating? Well, it's still not where I'd like it to be, but I'm willing to bet on Perreault in the first round anyway.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

Just a perfectly solid game from Perreault. Clearly not the driver on his line, but an effective support player. Certainly not a slouch, by any means. Perreault flashed high levels of skill at points even, particularly as a distributor; inviting pressure to create space elsewhere and then passing through or around bodies and skates. This was how he picked up his assist on Ryan Leonard's goal. He also knows how to manage space well away from the puck. I don't see any separating skill, but he's adequate in nearly every phase of the game. Tricky player to rank, especially because of the environment he plays in, alongside two clear top-10 talents in this year's draft.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

The NTDP wasn't good in this game. Perreault was a major reason why. He struggled a lot. The pace seemed too high for him at times. His feet failed and his skill didn't appear. When he tried to beat opponents, they easily stepped into him and beat him to the puck. He had no answers for Chicago's pace and pressure. As soon as his passing options disappeared, his effectiveness went with it. A concerning game that highlights what could happen if the skating doesn't improve.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault had a couple of standout plays: a deke into a between-the-legs drop pass for a high-danger shot and secondary assist, and a look-off cross-slot pass with space. Scored with a sharp angle one-timer. He's talented, but this was a frustrating game

overall. His skating doesn't allow for much at times. He tries to deke, but can't beat opponents to the puck on the other side unless they jump at him. He's patient, but sometimes opponents overwhelm him when he refuses to make the early pass. So many plays failed. He's smart; he's aware of his options and often chooses the best play. But if there aren't clear options, he's not making a play. Maybe that works in the NHL with superior structure and predictability, but the skating (edges especially), puck protection, and decision-making will have to improve to get there.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Even early in shifts, Perreault's barely moving out there. He struggles to generate power and all his manoeuvres come off the inside edges. Sluggish, and also committing off-puck. That's a problem. But the intelligence with the puck shown was the best in the game. He connected with backhand passes under pressure, deflected a puck in front, ripped wrists off the rush, and dangled through opponents. In the sequence for his deflection goal, he stopped, deked through one, then connected with the smooth spin hook pass I've ever seen and got open in the slot for a one-timer. He whiffed on some pass receptions and passes and made poor plays under pressure. Sometimes, he didn't wait for the opponent's reaction to his deception before moving the puck. Still, he looked like a first-round prospect.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

This was the best and worst of Perreault. He was a liability at times. Blind passes to the other team, soft passes into pressure, low-percentage shots, and no-chance dekes. Any sort of opposing speed led to turnovers, and he was easily eliminated from plays. But then, he became the game's best creator for a couple of shifts. He set-up Leonard for a tap-in after moving wide as he received the puck, dragging the defender with him, before going cross-crease. The other standout play, he drew three defenders, turned back to his own blueline, then slipped a backhand pass back into space for Leonard to skate onto, before getting open at the far post for a tap-in. These are genius-level plays. Could be top-20, but there's more volatility in these games down the stretch. Not sure.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

There's no doubt that many of Perreault's plays fail; his skating's too much of a disadvantage to connect on some of his solo plays, even when he successfully manipulates the opponent. But there's so much here. The quick-possession vision and passing skill, the off-puck instincts and shooting, and even the defence. Positions himself to be in the middle of the play, prepared to immediately move the puck to a teammate in better position. Lots of crafty plays off the boards. Lots of individual skills needed to play with skating as a weakness in the NHL, but he still needs to develop a puck protection and delay game.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs US - 4 Nations tournament

Perreault is just as capable of feinting as Smith. He uses deceptive postures to force defenders back and open holes and he has a sixth sense for where his line-mates are on the ice, reaching them instantly. The one-touch passing and two-touch passing alleviate some of the skating concerns, but not completely. He had one play in this one that showed his potential: Leonard missed a drive inside but the puck deflected to Perreault, who picked it up, attracted pressure, and immediately sent it back to his teammate.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Nothing new to write about here for Perreault. He's the smartest puck manager and mover on this team by quite a margin. He always knows where his next best option is and always manages to connect every play. He moves well away from the puck, gives supporting options to teammates himself, and can chain quick receptions into dangles into passes to better positioned teammates. The skating was exposed a few times in this game, but he knows how to use crossovers to give himself a bit of a boost when he needs it. If he doesn't have options around him, he can't really create by himself, however. He's a passer -- only a passer. And someone who scores around the net by timing himself with puck movements. High-end hockey sense, but a game that isn't fully projectable to the NHL. Just a bit more pace and physicality would improve our confidence in his ability to translate his talents.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another game where Perreault was the play-driver on his line. Skating's a problem. That's established by now. The edges are the most concerning part because his game will have to be so heavily change of pace/delay at the next level (his lacks depth, his cuts kill all of his momentum in the new direction, and he's often off-balance on his edges). But, there's a lot of skill and intelligence here. He anticipates the next move of opponents, which enables him to get the jump on opponents on the forecheck. Instead of dumping the puck in, he cuts back and slides pucks through his own legs or goes backhand to the inside. Oftentimes, it seems like he instantly knows the next play upon reception, even when it's a tricky cross-ice pass through layers. He slips pucks under sticks and hooks them around.

In one shift, he grabbed three high-danger chances, highlighting his off-puck offence. He moves constantly, in and out of the slot, as the puck moves out. Stick's always free. Where he gets into trouble is when looking to create out of extended possession. He misses options and succumbs to more mobile defenders. He has fast hands and creativity, but even when his moves work, he lacks the agile and push off power to beat the defender to the other side. He's a first-rounder at this stage, but I see the argument to the contrary. It often seems like he's already limited at this level because of the skating.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

In 2022, I wrote that Smith was the driver on his line and Perreault the connector, complementary scorer. That was wrong. Or maybe it flipped. Perreault's passes were almost automatic in this one. He knew where to find Smith at every turn, literally. He doesn't skate with the puck. The skating is still an issue, but his decision-making has improved and his creativity didn't suffer. That's rare. He made stretch passes, behind the back passes, one-touch and two-touch feeds. He drove inside, timing himself with the play to get the puck and create scoring chances....Just a lot to like now. I'm not convinced of his NHL future due to his skating and distributor/off-puck scorer only playstyle, but he's so impressive at this level.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Five points for Perreault, including three goals. They were what one expects from Perreault at this stage: tap-ins and one-timers following smart plays from Perreault. He understands when to engage opponents and when to angle. He moves in and out space, showing a knack for getting space just outside the slot. Area passes and perfectly weighted saucer passes allow him to further the play in all three zones, despite his skating. And that's the big question. He's upright and unbalanced. He tries to slow down and delay, but his cuts generate no power or separation. His shot's also a bit strange, firing off his inside leg and throwing his chest towards the net. Could've just been this game. He's skilled and smart, but I still wonder what his game looks like at the next level. Without skating improvement, he probably loses a huge chunk of the offence.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

I severely underestimated Gabe Perreault's game at the start of the year, thinking he was more of a complementary connector on his line. He's more than that. He's a driver. The stature, skating, and lack of physical plays are three huge strikes, but the mind, handling, and passing skills could make up for it. He's a boom-or-bust, a high upside, low certainty prospect. A ton of impressive dangles and playmaking flashes in this one. He looked like the best player on his line. I really wish they would have broken up that line, however, as I want to see Perreault away from Smith and Leonard. It's too easy for them.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

The best way to characterize Perreault's performance would be as quietly effective. No splash plays or highlight-reel moments, just highly intelligent play with the puck nearly every touch. The sort of thing that augurs production when the bounces start going his way. That wasn't the case tonight. Perreault's line – opposite Ryan Leonard, centred by Will Smith – dominated territorially at 5-on-5, but they just missed on a few plays. One such occasion was a 2-on-1 that Perreault led with Smith – Perreault held the defenceman then toe-dragged around him to set Smith up for a tap-in with a wide-open net that he somehow missed. One thing I came to appreciate was the way that Perreault took what was in front of him. He doesn't force plays. He was particularly effective with the delay game off the rush.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Four goals for Perreault, and they were about as much of Perreault goals as you'd expect: two rebounds, a wrister on the power play, and a breakaway goal that just snuck in. The first goal was the best, curling the puck around the goalie before firing with backpressure. He showed more puckhandling and individual rush skill than normal. He generally has the right ideas. He attacks at angles, then goes back in the opposite direction. The lack of depth inhibits his weight shift, which prevents him from completing a lot of these moves. There were also plenty of times where he forgone skating entirely, hitting quick-possession area passes to moving teammates. His passes were a bit inaccurate throughout this season, and he has a tendency to throw pucks to teammates with more pressure than himself. He even grabbed a couple of stops with well-timed dashes into lanes on the defensive end.

A well-rounded, intelligent performance from Perreault. Still, the skating makes the game so much harder for him already. Developing his depth and edges will be integral to his success.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota University vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Quite the game for Perreault, who was arguably the best player on his line. Perreault plays to his strengths, he's not especially quick or big but he's got great hands and sees the ice exceptionally well. The puck is on his stick for a stride or two, just long enough to draw a forechecker, then it's on the tape of a teammate in motion with space. Had a couple of goals in this one two, the first a sweet feed from Will Smith on a 2-on-1 and the second a feed in front where he had time to curl and drag in the slot. Someone I would take a chance on in the second round; the hands and vision are very intriguing.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota University vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

I get it now. Perreault is still mainly a playmaker, but he also has an above-average understanding of the game, especially away from the puck. He positions well and moves into areas to get the puck back and improve the location of his next pass. He looks for open ice and sends the puck there, anticipates the drives of teammates...He really shine next to a puck retriever like Leonard and an artist like Smith. The anticipation ranks pretty high. If he can add a bit more speed, physical skills, and defence, he's a top-9, powerplay guy. More of a long-shot, second-rounder than his line-mates for sure. But he's not that far from Smith in terms of playstyle and capabilities.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs USNTDP U18s - USHL

I continue to see Perreault as only a playmaker. He connects plays, holding pucks under pressure to do so, passes the puck into space, uses deception...And that's all enough to produce and be useful in this team. I don't really see the appeal past that playmaking ability. He's always the complementary forward on every line that he's on. He's great at what he does, but is it enough to carry him to a top-nine NHL role? I need to watch him in isolation.

J.D. Burke: December 16th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Cedar Rapids Rough Riders - USHL

It was tough sledding for the most part for Perreault's line – they were on the ice for three Rough Riders goals against in all-situations play – but I thought he acquitted himself well given the circumstances. His performance in the defensive zone was particularly strong. Perreault scanned regularly away from the puck, made proactive moves to disrupt developing plays, and had a good sense for when to collapse low in the defensive zone. In general, I thought he supported the play well at both ends of the ice, kind of acting as a play-connector for his line. I don't see any real separating skills in Perreault's game, but I think he's a really sharp playmaker with great touch as a passer. I'm not sure if he's a first-round talent, but he's someone worth betting on in the middle of the draft.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

An ugly performance but one that suggested this wasn't the usual effort. He scanned constantly, including four shoulder checks on a single retrieval. He had great ideas offensively, drawing pressure instead of outracing it before passing. None of it worked.

He missed teammates or failed to identify the best play in those situations. A lot of turnovers. But he's always trying complex plays to create advantages, such as passing laterally to moving teammates. Not really an interesting performance, but he's better than this.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault is an offensive-minded player who really springs to life when his team has the puck. He's not bad defensively per se, but is exceptional at anticipating transition and flying to dangerous areas on the ice to initiate the rush. The passing ability is the most exciting part of Perreault's game. He's exceptional at pre-scanning before he gets the puck and zipping it quickly when he gets it. Had an exceptional cross ice backhand feed in OT that led to a good scoring chance for the NTDP. A skilled player who could be a riser.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault's a solid player. He's a limited skater, with his ankle dorsiflexion lacking and his hips elevating. Can't beat players with quickness, but he plays fast. Could benefit from a focused effort to delay in transition. Still, he's a crafty player overall. Stays open between defenders, constantly moving and reevaluating the situation. More of a shooter in this game, following up loose pucks and rifling pucks off the pass. Passes didn't connect, and he didn't show any interesting ideas or vision. A late-second, early-third type of performance.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 18th, 2022 - Niagara University vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Perreault is the perfect accessory player for Smith and Leonard. The game runs through his hands; he's toolsy and plays with his head up to thread the needle for dangerous passes. He doesn't have exceptional speed or edgework, but is fast enough to gain the inside track and problem solve with a move or a pass. He's a pass first player but displays some off-puck timing and ability to get into scoring areas. Had a nice tap in from Smith on the PP where he darted to the back door. Maybe a second-rounder but has the potential to move up.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Again, Perreault just feels like the Smith companion. Smith with his positioning and choices of plays dictates passes and Perreault, with his above-average precision, hits him. He sees plays develop -- I'll give him that, but I don't find him as technically adaptable as Smith to create lanes. He has a bit of a frenetic energy; he feels rushed. The skill will pretty keep him higher on our board, but I'm not sure of what he brings overall so far, besides his high-awareness, anticipation, and passing skills.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault benefitted from playing with Smith in this game, but there's no doubt that Smith would've have had the same success without him. Perreault's a skilled playmaker, highlighted by the give-and-go that led to his tap-in goal (a nasty saucer pass through layers) and a hook pass for a high-danger look for Smith. Backhand passing skill, too. He plays a give-and-go game, but sometimes is too willing to move possession instead of drawing pressure first. The skating's likely the culprit: he's wide, hunched, and struggles on his edges. He gets ejected from cuts. He looked like a late-first, early-second in this game, showcasing top-nine potential but a lot of work to be done.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s vs - USHL

All I can say about Perreault in this game is that he was a great complement to Smith, the real star of that line. He followed the plays of his teammates, spotted him in open areas (like that great lob pass above two defenders to hit Smith in-strider in the offensive zone), accepted the give-and-goes, and finished the chances. He had a poor defensive effort to start the first shift, but it was a long one.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault had some amazing ideas in this game, taking pucks in awkward positions and redirecting them to open teammates. Understands how to get open, support the puck, and make quick-possession plays from those spots. Many of his ideas failed, however. His feet failed him and struggled to stay balanced under pressure. He's mostly an anticipator of the play, not a player who takes control.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s vs - USHL

Perreault has passing skills, but I'm not sure what else. His skating is very limited. His boots seem heavy at times, when he tries to elude defenders and contort his body to get a pass through. He's already having to compromise his posture and reach the maximum of his handling skills to make plays at this level. He identifies lanes and teammates extremely well, but I'm not so sure about the total skill level. He seems like just a passer to me, a really good one. He moves well away from the puck, finds lanes to get the puck and open spaces, but when it comes time to separate from defenders, to escape their coverage, the limitations appear once again.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

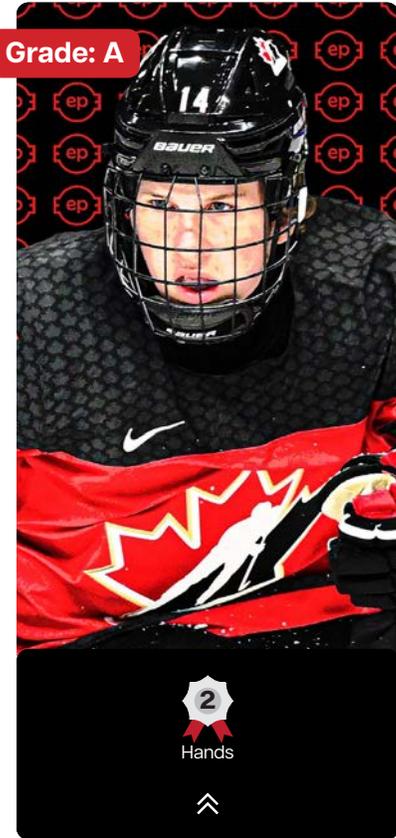
Perreault struggled at even-strength. His skating does him no favours, and he didn't do anything to offset it. He didn't deceive, delay, or establish body positioning. No notable off-puck sequences. A pair of points on the powerplay, highlighted with a spinning pass to Smith, was as far as his impact went on this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

There's an argument that Perreault was the best player in this game. At the very least, he was the most effective in his minutes. He set up five scoring chances, including a goal (a bit of a lucky pass, truthfully). Turned a forecheck steal into a quick forehand-backhand and pass around a defender for a scoring chance. Fought through pressure and sent a backhand pass to a teammate arriving into space. Finishes off-puck routes, scans constantly and knows the next play when the puck arrives on his stick. Skating needs work, but he's such an aware, high pace player. Finds space off-puck and has an adaptable shot from his free top hand. Looks like a top prospect for 2023.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. NTDP U18s - USHL

Perreault wasn't quite as effective as Ryan Leonard, another 16-year-old playing up with the U18s, but he was effective in largely the same way. He read pressure, passed through it or tried to slip out the backdoor. Crafty set-up for a scoring chance to an activation defenceman. He wasn't particularly interested in carrying the puck for long periods, preferring to (understandably) defer to his linemates. Still, an pleasantly surprising performance. Excited to see more.



19 Andrew Cristall

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Jonathan Huberdeau, Matias Maccelli



Ankle Breaker



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	7.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7	7.5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kelowna Rockets "A"	WHL	54	39	56	95	1.76
Canada U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	2	4	6	0.86

SCOUTING REPORT

There isn't a more divisive skater in all of the 2023 NHL Draft than Kelowna Rockets forward Andrew Cristall.

This was true in our ranks. This was true in the broader public sphere, with his name appearing as late as 35 and as early as six in rankings accounted for in the Elite Prospects Draft Center as of this writing. And it's every bit as true among the actual decision-makers at the NHL level.

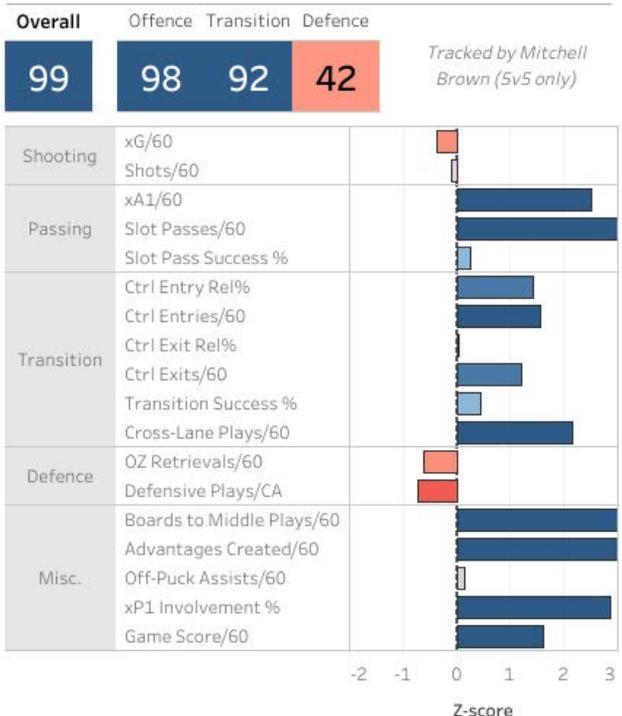
He's the ultimate high-risk, high-reward prospect, and your tolerance for that sort of gamble will determine how high you're willing to take him.

For most of the season, we thought the juice was worth the squeeze. He started the year at No. 5 on our December ranking and stayed in the top-10 through the next two that followed. It wasn't until an abysmally poor showing at the U18s and increased scrutiny by our staff began to shake our conviction with this player, to the point where he finished the year at No. 18.

When Cristall is on, it's special. The highs are among the best in the class. Seriously, we're talking levels of creativity and skill that would fit within our top-five. There's a reason he was there to start the year.

Andrew Cristall

F | Kelowna Rockets | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 136.7



“A dynamic player through and through, Cristall adds the extra flash to every play,” Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a WHL Stock Watch article on EP Rinkside. “He beats defenders with head fakes, handling skills, and slick edges before cutting inside or finding a teammate burst into the slot. He starts the plays, builds them, and then puts the finishing touches on them. His full offensive impact is among the best in the class, and he continues to grow away from the puck. As such, he’s emerged as a legitimate top-10 prospect and could earn a spot as high as the No. 5 rank in the Elite Prospects’ upcoming rankings.”

He’s an inventive playmaker, capable of turning the mundane into the brilliant, breaking down opponents with feints and deception before sending perfectly weighted passes to his teammates to do the rest.

The puck skills are elite. It’s often as if there isn’t any move that he can’t pull off to beat a defender in open ice. The skating as a whole isn’t even close to where it needs to be, but Cristall is an evasive inside-edge skater, capable of escaping pressure in the small area game with relative ease.

The problem with Cristall is that the lows sink into the earth’s core. When he’s bad, he’s really bad. There’s no beating around the bush with this stuff. His motor comes and goes at his whims. There’s no willingness to contribute even as much as a rote effort in the defensive zone, regardless of the stakes or the score. Even when the points are there, it often left our scouts wanting.

“Despite potting five points across two games, Cristall put together two fairly different performances against the Cougars,” Crossover scout Daniel Gee remarked in a Scout’s Notebook on EP Rinkside.

“Inefficient puck management, tunnel vision, and an inability to make plays, or even escape from the perimeter plagued the left wingers’ minutes in the first game. Cristall shrugged off open pass options in the middle of the ice, made poor decisions because he was constantly looking down at the puck, and made some questionable choices on the forecheck, initiating little pressure. At 5-foot-10, 165 pounds, the 17-year-old looked very much like a player who did not want to fully engage physically, influenced negatively by aggression.”

To make matters worse, Cristall’s skating has a long way to go before it’s even an NHL average stride. One of the scouts we reached out to for comment in this year’s guide described him as the worst skater in the class. That’s a bit rich for our blood, but we’re not enured to his deficiencies.

Cristall’s forward stride is hindered by a wide recovery, a tendency to play on his heels, and an inability to generate power through his crossovers, much of it owing to a lack of flexibility through his lower body. There is a lot to work on here.

So, no, we don’t think the reward is quite worth making the risk of a top-10 investment, but Cristall developing into a first-line playmaking winger wouldn’t surprise us that much either. It’s just that it’ll take a lot of time and work to get him there. He’s one of the most fascinating players to track in this draft.

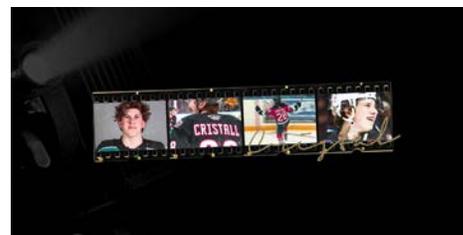
≡ LINKS & MEDIA



WHL Stock Watch: Welcome to the Andrew Cristall show



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Film Room: Making sense of Andrew Cristall's game in Kelowna

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Really like how he creates plays, he puts teammates in a spot to be better and create chances all the time. Not great skater, but I don't think it's as bad as some others do." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"If he's going to play, then he's going to have to take the long road to get there. Like, he's going to have to spend some time in the American league. Because his skating and size ratio just doesn't add up. There's no backup game. He's a good junior player, but I don't know how it translates to being a great pro.

"It's going to take someone that really, really likes him and believes in him for him to go in the first round. Like, you watch the NHL playoffs right now, and who is he? When you watch the NHL playoffs, who do you watch and go, 'that's Andrew Cristall?' There isn't anyone for me. He can go in the first round based on his numbers or he could go in the third. I think he'll go in the first though." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I have no idea where he's going to be drafted. Love the skill obviously, but he's a one-way player and his skating has to come a long, long way. With how he thinks the game offensively, the upside is enormous, but he also has to be one of the riskiest players in the whole draft." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"If there's a worse skater in the draft, I haven't seen them. You add the fact that he looks like he's 5-foot-8 out there too, and I can see him sliding a long way on draft day. But you can't argue with his skill. His hands are elite and his vision is elite. There's a lot to like about his game, but he's really high risk, high reward. It definitely wouldn't surprise me if he gets his name called on day two." - Eastern Conference scout, January 2023

"High-end hockey sense and small area quickness - some concerns about rink length speed and 200-foot game but O-zone play is pretty high end - he has consistently provided offence." - Western Conference scout, January 2023

"Some of the best puck skills and vision in the class. Production seems to follow him around which speaks to his offensive intelligence. The skating and the compete level are what concerns us - especially in a smaller winger." - Western Conference scout, January 2023

"A fun junior player, but not someone we'd feel comfortable taking in the first round." - Eastern Conference scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Kind of got to see the best and worst of Cristall in this game. At his best, Cristall was evading defenders with inside edge manoeuvres and handling skill, stringing together some slick moves in the offensive zone, even forcing Sweden to take a penalty to contain him at one point. At his worst, you saw Cristall pulling up at the offensive blue line and surrendering possession lest he take a hit and then doing a total fly by in the defensive zone that directly leads to a goal against. I guess you can almost live with the fear of contact and the poor defensive play if Cristall is productive and making things happen, but that hasn't really been the case in this tournament. Mostly, he's been unable to generate much of anything during sustained offensive zone pressures, often defaulting to uncontrolled plays or small-area passing from the perimeter.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Cristall is trying to adapt his game at the tournament. He dumps the puck a bit more in pressured situations to avoid mistakes, he goes to the net more, and he pursues the puck more. He plays with more pace. He's also ineffective. He can't make plays

in dense coverage. There is extra space on the ice at the tournament and he can't really use it either. Too bad. One good sequence: He attacked down the wing, pushed back the defence, and dropped the puck to a teammate.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Cristall more or less scored the same goal twice, leading an odd-man rush up-ice, opening up his hips in the face of physical pressure, and sniping one from an impossible angle past the helmet of the Swiss goaltenders. On the one hand, I hate to see a player abuse the mohawk as much as Cristall does, but the first goal was an excellent example of how he can leverage it to create shooting opportunities – getting into that stance moved the Swiss goalie off of his post, cheating for the pass, and Cristall sent a laser past him as soon as that post wasn't sealed. This is clearly an intelligent, creative player, but I had some concern in this game watching Cristall struggle to create or even get inside in the face of pressure during sustained offensive zone sequences. There just isn't a separating gear there as a skater. He's evasive, but he can't pull away or really get the puck off the wall. This was a pretty abysmal defensive showing from Cristall, too. No engagement whatsoever, straight-legged and waiting for play to turn in the opposite direction. Cheating at times, even. It's easy to see why The Hockey Men™ don't quite share the public sphere's enthusiasm for this player during games like this.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs Canada - U18s

It only took me six months, but I'm starting to understand the knocks against Cristall. The sense remains a giant plus for me, but it won't matter if he doesn't have the tools to support it. Cristall is amazing when he has any advantage to leverage, when he has a passing option and he can use that option to fake defenders and freeze them. He keeps them off of him that way. But when he's in a tight spot, without a clear option...He just doesn't have any solution. He can escape with his skating (he lacks the acceleration) and he can't hold defenders on his back due to his lack of strength and his smaller frame. How often do players have clear advantages to leverage in the NHL? 90% of his plays will be made under a lot of pressure. He won't be able to keep the puck in control of his team, especially because he's so inefficient with the puck, always trying plays with very little chance of success. The upside is gigantic, but the chance of success is lower than I first thought. I overestimated the tools.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Cristall absolutely needs good passing options at all times. Otherwise, he doesn't have the tools to escape pressure himself. He lacks acceleration and physicality. He can freeze defenders with his feints, but he's mostly static at this tournament. The absence of dynamic qualities hurts his projection a bit. I like that Cristall always looks to make the best play, too. And he can recognize that best play even under a lot of pressure. He's extremely aware and processes the play very fast, faster than almost every else in this draft class. Now, is it always best to try to hit the highlight-reel play? Probably not. He has the same issues as Will Smith, but he lacks the environment to make his skills shine at this tournament. Next to Perreault and Leonard, in the other weaker group, Cristall would have filled that highlight reel. He did manage a deceptive assist late in the game.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Cristall got 8 minutes of ice time. I don't really understand it. Is Riley Heidt that much better as a performer? He has more two-way abilities, but Cristall's forecheck has been quite a bit better in this tournament. He looks smaller than his counterparts and he lacks the strength of some of them, but even with limited ice time, he still finds ways to make things happen when he steps on. His puck management is a problem (especially at the offensive blue-line), but he generally aims to find the better option, not just an option. With the entire hockey world seeing him as a liability, which is fair to an extent, it's becoming harder to be in his camp, however. I'm not sure he will receive the opportunities his skill deserves, just because of the stature, the skating, and the lack of defensive play.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

Cristall might be the most skilled player at the tournament, Even with the presence of Celebrini on the team, Cristall looks a level above in his ability to handle inside traffic and plan his space. He receives in ways to instantly separate from defenders and make his next play and he just looks more competitive in this tournament. The size/strength/skating limitations do show up

quite often, but the sense is just undeniable. Many ridiculous plays in this one that was just a stride away from connecting. The potential is immense. He just needs to develop a functional NHL game.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Cristall is a weird player to project. In this game, he was simultaneously too cute in his plays and also overaggressive. He seemed clearly bothered by the score, as he went off his play cards and decided to charge the front of the net (as best as he could with his frame) a couple of times and he also went into skirmishes. I'm not sure if that's good or not so good. The usual flashes of high-end playmaking sense were there. He thinks the game two or three moves ahead sometimes, clearly manipulating defenders and setting up plays with purposeful movements. A few give-and-go attempts and delays. He didn't have a lot of chemistry with Celebrini, which is weird, but I guess makes sense considering their puck-dominant styles. Celebrini couldn't always read Cristall's plays. If these two are to play together, they will need to get on the same page, especially off the rush. Cristall loves his under and overlapping runs. Same weaknesses in his game: lack of sturdiness, not a lot of straight-line power, and questionable decision-making.

Daniel Gee: March 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

An abysmal effort for Cristall who rarely touched the puck 5-on-5 in this game. While the quality of his teammates and his wing position is a major factor in how much he can actually cook in a given game, you expect more play driving out of the forward. A non-factor in transition, Cristall was dominated physically in this one. Nearly sandwiched on one shift in the first, Cristall's work attacking the middle was met with some crushing hits. Playmaking didn't flash at all -- on one sequence he nearly killed a teammate with a suicide pass and on another, he floated a pass to a man completely covered in the slot. Still opens his hips into 10-and-2 to create some lateral mobility but often for no particular reason.

He comes alive on the powerplay where he has space to break down defenders and abuse a delay game. In the first after a switch off at the top of the point, Cristall worked downhill and hooked a pass to the right-hand circle leading to a goal. A common play of his to exploit the passiveness of some penalty-killing structures. Any attempts to work inside were halted by defenders covering the lanes. Some no-look-hope passes and soft play on the boards. His best scoring chance was in the second. He found a puck on the doorstep, adjusted his arms tighter to his body and tried to roof a puck short side to no avail.

Looked lost defensively. On one sequence he scanned over both shoulders didn't find any secondary threats and then was reactive when the pass was executed. He did have a great interception on a cross-circle pass but that was the extent of his defensive efforts. Didn't look like a first-rounder in this one. Looked like a small forward with a poor stride who needed a lot of support and touches to create -- I've seen him play infinitely better.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Chess-master Cristall in this game. Constant use of back layers, give-and-goes, and off-puck movements to create and link great plays. He's the driver of the offence, he commands it both with and without the puck. The wall play remains a clear weakness, but he can find ways to escape traffic by keeping his feet moving and using ready options. If no one is there or if he mishandles the puck, then the opposition can easily stop him. His margin for error will be thin in the NHL, but I'm sure he will find ways to adapt. The hockey sense is a 7.5-8 grade. He's a pure offensive planner and we really see that in draft cycles. No one was on his level of sense in last year's draft. I'm a believer. He will find ways to adapt and contribute, but will also need the right team and insulation to function -- like the help of a puck retriever.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

A tale of two games for Cristall. It started out poorly. He was too slow to access lanes, fired pucks straight at opponents, made soft passes to no one, missed lead passes, and even passed up a scoring chance to make a drop pass to a covered teammate. Separately, those are fine. Combined, he didn't show any sort of NHL skill or ability. But he came alive late in the second. He set up a goal with a one-touch cross-slot pass, went cross-ice on the breakout for another assist, and grabbed a few chances, including one inside lateral crossovers under pressure, a high-skill shot. The delay game was here, connecting with a cross-

ice saucer pass that allowed his teammate to walk into space. But there weren't any truly high-level reads here. It was a lot of runaway manufacturing and quick-possession plays – nothing that suggested a top-six NHLer. And there's the skating. Wide stride with limited power, crossovers were barely crossovers. Lack of acceleration and power because of limited lower-body flexion. Often on his heels. The edges are slick, he can really open his hips and pull that outside edge under and across his body. Production aside, he looked like a late-first, early-second in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

An unusually physical game from Cristall. He stepped into opponents, crosschecked them to the ice, and earned himself 10 minutes in minor penalties. Showed a lot more determination on the backcheck than usual. It was also a skilled game from him. He worked the give-and-go and showed off a ton of passing skill. Connected with a pair of cross-crease passes on the powerplay under pressure, manipulating the defenders to secure the lane. Delays, finds the trailer, but understands when to press forward. The skating was a bit of a question mark in this game. He doesn't complete anything of his movements – strides and crossovers fall short of full extension. His heels kick wildly. He jumps straight into his stride, with lacks depth, and he can't get his crossunder leg far enough, limiting the power of his push offs. He has top-10 skills, no doubt. But the skating's a concern.

J.D. Burke: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Just a commanding performance from Cristall, even if he only left this contest with the one assist. Creativity, adaptability, pace, patience, skill – it was all there. Cristall's straight line speed stands as an obvious limiting factor, but he's developed an advanced delay game and honed his skill on his inside edges as means of getting around this deficiency. I've some concern that he relies too much on those parts of his game, but it's working at this level. Consistently connected with his linemates through layers, three such occasions resulted in Grade A scoring chances. His creativity as a playmaker is just phenomenal. Jailbreaks, give-and-goes, lob passes into space through sticks and skates – he always has an answer. He got physical in this game too, picking up four penalties total for 10 penalty minutes. Ultimately, I just can't see a world where a player with his ability as a distributor isn't a lock in the top-10.

David St-Louis: February 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Everett Silvertips - WHL

Cristall played with a sort of pace, fervour, and physicality that I've rarely seen from him this season. He was still cheating offensively regularly (also part of his team's system), but he played the F1 defensively role better, engaged opponents on the walls, and created offence from the outside in a lot more. He looked quicker, more pacey, and made better decisions with the puck. The goals were nice, but it's really the energy that made him really focus on his game, as it showed a little bit more potential than usual, or not really potential, but it made me more sure that having him top-10 is the right call. If he can just add that extra urgency and made it a more regular part of his game, watch out, at least in Junior. The skating foundation is sound. He had one crossover rush in this one that showed his full speed potential. I don't think my above-average potential NHL skater projection was necessarily wrong, maybe a bit optimistic, but it's possible. He just needs to show the full output more often. Great game. Again, four goals. That's nice. Some great shots.

Cam Robinson: February 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Everett Silvertips - WHL

Despite being his first game back from a five-week stint on the IR, Cristall was a man possessed in this one. He was playing with far-reaching enthusiasm on both sides of the puck - something we don't often see from him. His pace was high, he was engaged in the defensive zone, fighting for pucks lower down the boards and keeping opponents to the outside. Offensively, obviously, there was a ton to like. He tallied four goals in a variety of methods. The first was a quick strip and steal from behind at the top of the offensive zone, pass, get it back and quick finish. The second, a nice finish on the 2v1 pass - opened up and got his hands set early. The third, he dug the puck out of a corner scrum and showed off the hip flexibility by opening up 10and2 to curl around into the slot facing the net and snapped it home. Empty netter for good measure.

This was a standout showing.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Cristall's game, when pressured, sometimes falls apart. He tries to get too creative and funky when the simple chip or short-pass play would net him better results more often than not. It's rare that we get to a point where I say that about a prospect, as I do like experimentation and imaginative plays, but Cristall is probably hurting his results with his playstyle. Not really a big concern long-term, however, as I'm sure he will settle down in some areas of the ice. His biggest value will probably come from the powerplay half-wall and in favourable rush situations at 5-on-5. He uses and sees all of his options, processes the play very fast, knows how to position/reposition away from the puck, leverages a good scoring chance into a great one...I'm not sure where it's right to rank him; there is risk as he lacks dimensions a bit, but he's a high-end prospect for sure.

Cam Robinson: January 3rd, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Victoria Royals - WHL

Not the best showing from Cristall in this one. He scores an absolute snipe of a goal off of a dumb turnover by the Royals coming out of their own end. Picked the far side perfectly. But otherwise, the vast majority of his play creation happened on the powerplay. He was shifty and flashed the high end handles a few times to create some space for the shot - a shot he was really leaning on tonight. But he failed to get it through or hit the net the vast majority of the time. Kelowna didn't play a very good game but he was their most dangerous player even on a lesser showing. He played close to 30 minutes in regulation so perhaps the volume of shifts kept him from driving more at 5v5.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Cristall set up four scoring chances and sniped a goal at 5-on-5 – a real solid night. The goaltender was way out wide, which opened the far side, but he kept his blade closed to mask his intentions. The best play was a heel-to-heel reception into a chip-into-space deke before beating another defender and sending a perfect backhand saucer pass onto his teammate's stick – around another defender. He beat three in a single sequence. Elite play. Lots of quick plays off the boards to create other looks, too. There were also a ton of bad plays. He kept trying to feather pucks through the Royals' layered defence, staring down his target before. Defenders easily read the plays and knocked them down. More deception is required. But in this game, even when he was deceptive, he was never deceptive with pace, which led to more issues. His game probably follows the same path as most high-end, high-skill junior scorers: He swaps the low-percentage passes for better ones as the competition demands it. But there's always a chance that he doesn't – and in that case, might have real difficulty scoring in the NHL. Still, he looks like a top-10 player.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Cristall is one of the craftiest passers in the draft. If there's a teammate open, he finds him. He probably developed that style of play as a consequence of his lack of output and harder skills. Another work around his weaknesses: his tendency to run ahead of breakouts. He got a breakaway in this game by sprinting up as soon as his teammates had an occasion to recover the puck in the defensive zone. He tries that play multiple times per game. To buy time and wait for options, he enters a glide, moves the puck to his hip, and fakes defenders, making them hesitate to run at him. I appreciate Cristall's skills, but the lack of diversity in his game is making me doubt him, too. I'm sure the pace will improve (like for every other prospect), but he probably won't develop hard NHL skills or be an inside driver all that often. His game is controlling defenders with his deception and passing from outside to the inside.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Cristall often attacks in the same way. He picks up a bit of speed in the neutral zone, keeps a deceptive posture, downshifts to enlarge his gap with defenders, and feeds the puck laterally to a teammate or delays to hit a trailer. His game is all about deception and manipulation and those gap manipulations. That, and that taking advantage of mistakes. It's not really a projectable style of game, but the anticipation, stickhandling skills, and manipulation could be used in a much more pacey game. The stride looks NHL projectable even if he isn't playing that fast right now. Not sure what to make of him at this point.

Cam Robinson: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

A game like this really showcased the entire picture with Cristall. His ability to work into the middle of the ice, navigate the

traffic with his hands and hit passing lanes to streaking mates is really nice. It's the type of puck skills and playmaking that could translate up. However, his feet were slowing down and the pace was way too low. He was taking back checks off, his forechecking game was non-existent for much of this one, choosing to float in and take a passive approach. Additionally, he stickhandled into traffic, threw pucks into the middle for turnovers, and failed to really create any high danger chances for himself.

The skating continues to concern me. It's a short stride that takes additional time to get up to top speed - a speed that is maybe projectable to NHL average but I'd guess a bit below. He has good crossovers and his inside edge work is really nice. But at his size, with his strength and style, he's going to need to either add another gear or figure out how to be at the high end of his dynamism all of the time. Not an easy ask.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

This was more of the draft-minus-one Cristall. Lots of cool stuff, but little high-danger offence. The good: the handling, vision, and inside play. He's not a perimeter playmaker. He cuts inside, slices between defenders, and escapes the boards with possession. First touch of the puck is almost always perfect; he moves through pass receptions, dekes on the pass reception, and knocks the puck into his hip pocket. He completed one-touch passes. He dangled through and around opponents. Made the extra move a couple of times, once resulting in a chance, and few times resulting in a turnover. His patience and skill drew two penalties. He also lacked pace, skated into unbreakable traffic, and didn't show high-level vision or playmaking.

If he simplified his game in a few spots, he might've created more. To his credit, he was involved off-puck in this game, eliminating sticks to create lanes and providing support down low in his own zone. A performance more in the 8-to-12 range of the draft. Top-line puck skill and creativity, but the rest of his game looked more second/third-line level.

Cam Robinson: November 29th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Regina Pats - WHL

Cristall clearly took this game very seriously. With Connor Bedard coming into his barn, and the hype that it drew in the rink, it was Cristall who was the best player. Not just between the two draft-eligibles, but the best player on the ice. He scored two and added two helpers - including jamming home the tying goal late in the game with the net pulled. He was showcasing the high-level tools - the hands coupled with the intelligence to move into space. The shot. The passing and look offs. His skating in a straight line remains just whatever, but I like the edges, and I love the mind. He uses it to change gears and get a jump on loose pucks. His play away from the puck while his team has possession is advanced. That quality where he can slip into areas unnoticed and at the right time to receive high danger looks. His play away from the puck in his own end remains a work in progress.

David St-Louis: November 29th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Regina Pats - WHL

Cristall was set up to have a great performance with his team's multiple powerplays. He controlled the flow of the play, feinted defenders, opened lanes, shifted the defensive box...He's one of the best manipulative playmakers in the draft. The skating looked above-average (a 6?) in terms of speed/quickness and he was somewhat involved physically, laying hits and trying to establish body positioning on retrievals. He got outmuscled, however. I didn't see him use many crossovers to carry pucks; he's mostly a straight-line, delay, feinting playmaker -- there are few of them in the NHL. You basically have to be elite at what you do to use that style and for the coaching staff to tolerate some of your defensive, wall shortcomings. So there are some doubts. The hockey sense grade is very high: he's aware, anticipates, reads multiple layers, involves teammates, manipulates, plans...It's all there.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

So, Cristall is human. This was a return to his play last year, a bit concerning. His plays were guesses, throwing pucks blindly into areas hoping teammates would be there. They weren't and most of the time, they didn't have any reason to be. He made a ton of soft plays with the puck. Didn't make an effort to advantage the play a couple of times; just threw the puck away. Wasn't moving off-puck. Wasn't much of a factor defensively. There were still flashes: he drew pressure before passing, used a give-

and-go to get the puck off the boards, and ripped pucks around on the powerplay. But nothing that suggested the top-6/10 pick I've seen earlier.

Cam Robinson: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Certainly not my favourite Cristall showing this season. He was throwing pucks into the middle of the ice. Stickhandling into deadends, he was hesitant and ineffective along the wall. The feet weren't moving all the much even when he had space in transit and would normally blend a whole bunch of crossovers to serpentine through NZ. Instead he was mid-gear up the flank with little threatening presence. Of course, it wasn't all bad. He still made a few high-level passes, he was threatening on the PP, create a change in release points and getting pucks through. He made a smart defensive break up that led to a quick transition back and scoring chance for. But overall, a sub-par outing with more poor than good.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

On one hand, Cristall overcomplicates plays, makes decisions based on assumptions without scanning, and lacks any real projectable quickness with his stride. On the other, he's dynamic; extremely so. His edges, when coupled with his deceptive posture and change of pace game, should help him find space in the NHL. Not to mention his off-puck game; how he gets open between defenders, resets high and moves down the slot, and how he gets open around the net. So patient with the puck, but has the extra gear when necessary: he makes one-touch plays (even in motion), sets into space to draw pressure before passing, and manipulates incoming pressure by skating towards it. Backhand and slip passes, even when pressured. Creates advantages, builds the offence, then puts the finishing touches on the play. Five assists in this one. The defence lacks at times, but he has the tools. He proactively eliminates sticks offensively and anticipates passes. Generally a strong worker across the ice. Wins body positioning through his edges, turning away from pressure at the right moments. He looked like a top-10 prospect in this game. At the time of writing (November 10th), he's my No. 2-ranked prospect in the WHL.

David St-Louis: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Cristall is a hockey genius - sometimes. He rushes plays to avoid contact and tries to be overcreative, but he also makes plays that no one else on the ice even sees, the kind of two-three step ahead planning that separates the good from the elite prospects. He has a high level of understanding of gap manipulation and rush offence, always looking for to maximize speed and space for his team by moving the puck to the right teammate. And he retains a high awareness of his surroundings even while under heavy pressure. His off-puck timing is one of the best in draft, too: He anticipates the formation of pockets of space, attacks them, and then chains high-level reception/dangles into more elite playmaking moments. On the powerplay, he's always probing for weaknesses and making defenders hesitate with the way he handles the puck and shimmies. He's a chess player. He looked a bit quicker in this game, too.

Cam Robinson: October 29th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

A really creative and noteworthy outing from Cristall in this one. His hands and visions are high-end for the WHL. He has the patience to outwait defenders and slip passes into pockets. It helps that his shot is weapon enough to keep them honest, but opponents also have to respect his hands as well. He was pushed to the outside a couple of times when he rushed it, but also hit the inside lane early and was far more effective during other transitions. He controlled exited 4 times, and had 5 controlled entries. Two primary helpers including a really nifty between the legs move at the top of the zone while handling and spinning. Kid's creative.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Another great performance by Cristall. The wall play and defensive game could still improve, he remains a 5'10" playmaker with some inefficiencies, but the rest is there: the manipulation, the deceptiveness, the pace, the change of pace, the use of teammates, the awareness and anticipation. Most playmakers in his style try a lot of hope plays, but Cristall connects at a much higher rate due to better sense capabilities. He's even good away from the puck, at positioning himself to get pucks in the slot and off the rush. Just a lot to like. He's clearly a top-10 pick for me and I have high hopes for him. One play that stayed with

me: Cristall attacked the offensive zone in a 2 vs 3, he kept a deceptive posture to make defenders uncomfortable, and push them back, waited for a 3rd teammate to skate in support and get behind them, and then slid the puck through defensive sticks up to that teammate. That was a high-end solution to a difficult situation. Most players here would have dumped the puck or forced their way through, but Cristall made the best one possible.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Cristall had some pretty interesting moments. He dangled through multiple defenders a couple of times with fast hands and chained feints, challenged defenders every time he had the puck. He looked dangerous, like someone who would take charge if he only was given the opportunity, but the puck touches were limited. I like his passing instinct, the way he attracts defenders on himself before moving the puck, and the way he spotted pucks into space for teammates when he couldn't reach them directly. The handling skills looked significantly above-average. The off-puck game also looked strong. He picked up a goal and an assist by positioning himself inside a lane and an open space and getting the puck in favourable situations. His most impressive sequence was his breakaway in overtime; he made one of the most complete feints I've seen, shifting his whole body into an edge to fake a shot, before going to his backhand and slipping the puck between a pad and the post. A highly skilled prospect for sure.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

The most memorable early-season performance I've seen from any prospect so far. He was trying everything. Builds his game around changes of pace, edges, and handling skill. Likes the pivot turn and heel-to-heel to conceal his intentions, especially off the rush. Once the defender leans forward, he accelerates. From there, he connects with backhand saucer passes, forehand plays through traffic, and tries crafty shots in-tight. When given space, he deceives in more traditional ways (eye deception), but he lacks the consistent deception and manipulation to complete some of his more complex ideas. Still, he consistently builds a runway of space for his target, moves pucks through multiple defenders at once, and delays just enough to let his target skate their route. Supports plays off-puck (offensively) and fluidly shoots pucks off the pass. Puck-on-string handling with an active top hand, and has some creative ideas (swiping at opponents' sticks while handling, intentionally dropping pucks into his feet and kicking them back to his stick). He has a ton of a flair to his game, but also has moments of just baffling decision-making: dump-ins with a clear entry, a lack of awareness of backpressure, and no-chance shots and passes. A lot of wasteful blind plays off the boards and he hangs onto the puck too long sometimes, missing opportunities to make the high-danger play. But the solutions for all those exist in his game; he's dynamic and an inventive creator. He looked like a clear top-six projection and perhaps a top-10 prospect in the draft in this game.

David St-Louis: October 7h, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Cristall's combination of pace, creativity, and high-level skill could easily make him a top-10 prospect in this draft. The scoring, too. In this game, he was active on the forecheck and comfortable when making fast plays in traffic. He played a pass and reposition style that netted him a goal, but it was also pretty clear that he is capable of creating plays at will at this level. He can outskate defenders, dangle through their feet, and make give-and-go around them. The processing speed seems very high. On one play, he spotted the puck in the feet of a defender (out of reach), knocked the opponent's sticks away (in the middle of two puck touches), and then moved around him. The play failed, but it was another example of his advanced handling game. He has a real desire to create plays, to take charge of the offence every time he steps on the ice. He's not a "planner" per se, more of a great improvisator, and the decision-making suffers from the constant creative displays, but he's a player who will only keep pushing his skill level over the next few years. His motor is pretty good, too: active on the forecheck and in backchecks.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Cristall's playmaking is something. It was visible on his assist, delaying just after gaining the zone before sending a perfectly weighted pass through multiple defenders for a goal. Otherwise, this was a pretty ineffective performance. His timing on his passes was off, with pucks leaving his stick too late or too early. Missed an opportunity to create a chance by passing earlier, and then still forced the play after the lane closed. Lacks deception on his passes, too. Heel-to-heel use to turn his back to defenders, cut inside. None of those sequences resulted in anything because he loses momentum when doing it and lacks the

awareness of players on his blind side. Lacks quickness in general. Lots of poor plays on breakouts, flinging pucks off the boards with no pressure and multiple options. The vision's more prevalent in the neutral zone, making lots of lateral plays. The off-puck game is here, how he positions himself inside pace, makes plays out of retrievals, etc. Tough projection, but the playmaking's worth a lot.

Daniel Gee: October 1st, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

A revelation compared to last game. Inefficient puck management made way for frankly extreme levels of execution, processing, and the creation of constant breakdowns. One of the better draft-eligible performances I have ever seen, Cristall recorded four assists and could have scored more in this effort.

Practically playing the entire game within the dotted-lines, Cristall was playing so fast in this game; one-touch passes, on-the-spot processing, and extreme pass layering stretched the Cougars' defenders east-to-west, making it almost unstoppable to clog shooting lanes. Cristall had an epic first period powerplay shift -- after one-touching to a man backdoor for a high danger, he regained the puck, attacked downhill, handled through pressure and started a goal-line to bumper passing play, resulting in a goal. Later in the second he slipped in behind two Cougar defenders, drove on net with Ty Young on his stomach, hooked as he went to pot the puck into the empty net. On a subsequent play he set up another backdoor chance that was miraculously saved (very layered pass). His best passing play was in the third; after his downhill shot off the left-wing was blocked, he grabbed the loose puck, dragged to the inside to hande past a defender, set his arms to shoot, and then popped a pass cross-hash to Szturc who blasted a one-timer in the net. So much impromptu genius in the ozone.

Cristall was so deep in his bag in this one; timing activations into the slot created redirection chances and exploited his handling in transition. In the first he had an incredible triangle-located attack on a defender, popping heel-to-heel to cut in-and-behind another defender. Give-and-go attempts, delay-game stopups, a couple of pass-off-pad (rebound-based) plays -- so smart. A true elevated effort, he was easily the best draft-eligible in this game, which wasn't the case the night before.

Daniel Gee: September 30th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

The individual skill is eye-popping with Cristall. Off a broken play, he attacked through the middle one-on-one. Deking through Keaton Dowhaniuk's triangle, Cristall handled into the centre lane, creating a breakaway. Faking backhand, forehand, backhand, he easily got Ty Young to bite, roofing a puck. Nevertheless, Cristall is typically pretty inefficient on-puck. He flairs to the perimeter too often and is regularly out-muscled, sealed off from his intended lanes. Cristall tries poorly timed handles in pressure, feet-static, setting up his handles too late and in-tight. He had a horrible turnover in the far-corner in the first period doing just that. On another sequence he tried to lap the Cougars' zone, only to be pressured offside. I think he just lacks problem solving and inside habits, but he has the capable edges (constant heel-to-heel activation) to beat opponents inside. Cristall does some good with possession, though. He had an energetic break down the right wing, failing to connect on a 2-on-1, but barely missing an aerial tap-in of the deflected puck -- processed the play so quickly. Processing is also evident on multiple one-touch pass attempts -- just could not for the life of him connect (execution errors). Cristall tries to work high-danger-area give-and-go's; in the third on a powerplay he attacked downhill, passed off but didn't get the return. On the same sequence he fed a cross-crease pass to a teammate who had their shot saved. He was better off-puck in this game. In the second he activated into the crease, slipping behind the Cougar defender's peripherals. He managed to one-touch a centering pass. While that shot was saved, Cristall then timed a crease flyby as a point shot came through, just missing the tip. Drives the net well in transition and takes defenders' attention.

Concerned with how limited Cristall is as a forechecker and pressure pusher. He almost refuses to even work into the vicinity of opposing puck carriers, often turning off. He floats high above his circles in his defensive zone and his backchecking support is non-existent on some shifts. Regardless, he's tricky and skilled in open ice. I just don't know if Cristall translates as well as others in his class who have a more well-rounded game. The physical hurdle is probably going to be immense but there's too much to like here.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cristall's going to be a tricky player to evaluate this season if this game is anything to go by. The perfect touch on some of his passes – dropping right onto his target's stick, often with little wind up or tell – stands out. He's evasive on his inside edges, using the heel-to-heel to turn his back to defenders, slip away from changes, and change pace. But he's so inefficient. He misses the best play to instead circle the perimeter or delay. In one sequence, he had the pass available for a high-danger chance, but instead chose to wait and throw a spinning backhand pass. Turnover. Tries to beat defenders when flatfooted or even after a lengthy glide. Considering the stride, Cristall's must be super efficient to play in the NHL. He's the opposite. Good news is that there's tons of time and this might not even matter much.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cristall is a fun player to watch, that's for sure. Another game where he started pretty slow but picked up things in the second period, where he had some great chances and setups, should have probably netted one point at least. In some ways he's a bit of a one-trick player with his consistent heel-to-heel usage and delays, which are useful tools but currently a bit overused by Cristall. He's turnover prone, lacks strength in battles (though the edgework allows him to midgate this to some extent), lacks quickness and separation gear, but man, he also had some high-end moments in terms of pure skill and even vision.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cristall had one of the best plays of the game, moving from the boards to behind the net, setting up a goal with a backhand pass through a defender. His small-area passing has been shining all tournament. He knows how and when to deliver pucks through defenders, often timing his pass with their pivots. But he's such an inefficient player. On a rush, he flung a puck high into the air and wide instead of committing to the shot or pass. There was a high-danger play available. He's slippery and deceptive, but lacks the precision to consistently create advantages. Still, it's August. Going to be interesting to watch him moving forward.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

This was not as eventful of a viewing than the previous one, but especially on the second half Crystall showed intriguing skill yet again. He doesn't have the physical advantage to bulldoze through players, instead using edgework and fluid movement to evade pressure in the offensive zone to a surprisingly high degree of success. There are definitely inefficiencies in his game and he wasted quite a few possession due to inability to protect the puck along the walls and throwing hope passes towards the slot. But the vision and skill level are definitely noteworthy.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cristall had one of the best plays of the game, using a give-and-go in the neutral, dropping the puck back to a teammate, which led to a goal. It was an intelligent play that showcased his vision, foresight, and skill. He's a slippery skater more than an explosive one, using heel-to-heels and quick directional changes to invert pressure. The stride falls apart at times, and he lacks a separation gear. Game lacks restraint in general. He throws pucks away, misses the best play, and gets pushed to the outside. The passing skill, however, should help improve his efficiency with time. Definitely a player worth investing plenty of time into.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Twice in this game, Cristall used the heel-to-heel to turn his back to the defender, then cut inside. The first time, he started the heel-to-heel inside a pass reception. The second, he grabbed an assist by getting to the net. Fumbled a couple of pucks and he's not an explosive skater. Tools might be an issue. But he has some slick passing deliveries: fake shot into a pass, spin passes, and backhand plays under pressure. He also knows how to support plays in transition, shrinking and expanding distance when necessary to maximize his teammate's options. Early signs suggest a potential top-64 prospect.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cristall made some high-end plays in this one, showcasing very intriguing level of skill, poise and vision. Impressive moments off the rush; cutting across the defender, threatening with a give-and-go pass but taking the puck towards the net himself and having

his rebound shoved in by his linemate. One insane spin pass from behind the net to the slot for a HD chance. Clearly a slick operator, even if he's not physically that strong and lacks quickness. Interested in watching more.

Mitchell Brown: April 10th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Cristall showed off the playmaking in this game. He moved pucks early, delayed at the right moments, and deceived to prolong lanes. Incredible touch to feather pucks through tiny openings, giving his recipient time and space to work with. Tends to rely on huge swaths of space to do his best work – better defenders will close on him sooner. He already gets forced into poor decisions, lacking the adaptability and manipulation to create new lanes. Shot lacks power because he leans back on his heels but he's always getting open in the slot. Many timed movements into space and positions himself between checks. Skating might be the biggest hurdle he faces next season. We'll see.

Daniel Gee: April 6th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Promoted early to the Dach line, Cristall put together some high-end plays in this viewing, but struggled to finish a mountain of chances.

Cristall's transitional habits are pretty refined for a D-1; both on and off-puck. He's ever available off-puck adjusting his routes to pop into lanes. Weakside activations, adjustments to get to the inside lane, a lot of sense based actions here. In the third he filed in on the left-wing, and let go a fairly weak shot in motion after a fortuitous bounce -- important point here is that he was available in the high-danger area. On-puck, Cristall is rather relentless. In the first he tapped a puck past an aggressive activation, walked in off the LW, and released a shot glove side low that was saved. He had some nifty feeds as well. A slip pass through a defender's legs was the highlight of his efforts.

In sustained pressure, especially on the man-advantage, he lives in the hashmarks and the slot. In the second he had a high-danger chance off of a left-hand-circle activation and crashed a pile up in the middle of the ice. He showed some signs of a delay game on another shift, waiting and popping a backhand pass into the high slot for a teammate to skate into -- wild play. In the third, Cristall read an entering feed, moved into soft ice and managed to get a low shot off the left-pad.

Skating needs work over the offseason -- some mechanical issues are present. He currently falls backwards in his crossover and his forward stride degrades greatly as his shifts continue. Nevertheless, he looks like a potential A/B player for our 2023 board.

Daniel Gee: April 5th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Cristall is interesting because, while he is inefficient at times, throwing hope passes through the slot, when he does have targets, he generates a plethora of high danger chances. This, along with an already developed delay game in transition, is super exciting. In the second, Cristall delayed on the entry, made a sharp cut into the slot, and walked down the slot for a chance -- shot saved. It was an incredible sequence in which he exploited a collapsed defence and natural picks to create off a perimeter entry. These types of plays were apparent throughout. Delay on entry, wait until a lane opens up, and a feather passes to create a chance. One-touches in transition, mohawk cuts laterally on pass receptions, stop-ups -- really nice performance in this viewing. Shot seems underdeveloped to finish on these chances -- lacks weight transfer and has some placement (precision) issues currently. While the mohawk was used effectively in some cases to add manoeuvrability, he overuses it, and couldn't really exploit it to cut into the dotted-lines. For instance on a one-on-one, instead of attacking the defenders triangle, he popped into the mohawk, couldn't burn wide around a well-gapped defender, and was left with a contested sharp angle shot -- maybe he learns how to use it better going into his draft year?

Cristall's sustained zone play was very hit-and-miss in this one. He worked a lot of centering feeds out to Max Graham who was planted in the slot -- a couple of the sequences should have resulted in conversions. Found that when he worked pucks low-to-high he often would just throw the puck into the slot hoping to create chaos -- always through an immense amount of layers. He had some powerplay time, in a bumper role. He was able to recover a rebound and slash a puck on net, but it was knocked away.

Weak defensive effort in this one. Watching a lot in his own zone, pace dying on the backcheck at times. Easy to beat in transition as he is far too static and susceptible to weight-shifts. Overall though, there's lots of fun things about his game to build upon.

Daniel Gee: February 18th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Cristall's a really crafty player for his age and role on Kelowna. Despite limited minutes, his blend of handling, scanning, and passing decisions stood out. In transition, he easily beat F1's with his weight-shifts and edge work. Passing precision and execution faulted a bit transitionally as Cristall hunted players within layering -- right decisions for the most part, and some clear ability to saucer, slip, and hook pucks. Overuses the mohawk as he scans for pass options -- it allows for some lateral mobility but seems like a crutch as he buys time looking for targets. He had one far board carry in which he fought through pressure, cycled around the net, and was able to push the puck low-to-high to start a cycle -- he seems like he's at his best when he's using his tools to gain the line and then work into sustained pressure. Delay game is present already.

His lateral ability through the use of the mohawk helps him more in the offensive zone. On one first period shift, he pulled the puck from behind the net, mohawked and connected on a pass high (led to a teammate post). In general he understands how to get his stick free to work around defenders. He hope-passes a bit too much from below the goal line, born out of won retrievals, and trying to move pucks to pre-scanned teammates who had already moved. Cristall will need to work on his penchant to overhandle the puck. He often will take the puck out of dangerous areas, a bad habit that will have to be cleaned up over the next year(s). While he really ups his pace on-puck, there are some stride issues -- recoveries are wide, knees not fully bent for a lot of his shifts. Harassess neutral zone threats hard in transition. Production and skill set scream a potential high pick in 2023.

Grade: A



20 Samuel Honzek

AGE 17.841 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 12, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Tomas Hertl, Pavel Zacha



Toolsy



Versatile

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

185 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

6.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

7

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vancouver Giants	WHL	43	23	33	56	1.30
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	2	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Samuel Honzek is about as close as you'll get to a lock to play NHL games once you get out of the first 10 picks, and when you get into this part of the draft, that's all you can really ask for. It doesn't sound all that ambitious, but the numbers are what they are.

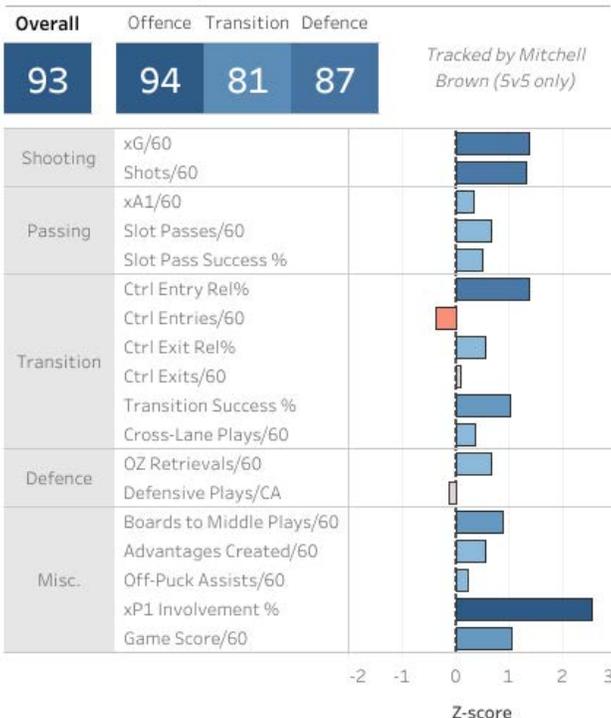
The foundation of his game is just so strong. Honzek is a 6-foot-4 centre with hard skill, who moves well, has good feel for the game, and can rip the puck. There's always room for those players in an NHL lineup.

This is especially true when the player in question already knows how to leverage that frame at 18-years-old. Honzek has as among the most developed, high-end wall games in this entire draft, showing the ability to fend off pressure and get the puck inside from the boards.

"Rare is a shift where Honzek's ability to protect the puck doesn't appear," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scout Mitch Brown wrote in a Scout's Notebook on EP Rinkside. "The 6-foot-4 winger gets and keeps defenders on his backcheck, using body positioning to create offence. But instead of just brute-forcing plays, he plays with a ton of finesse. He fakes cutbacks in one direction before going the other, turns to wait for pressure to arrive before accelerating, and combines the edges with in-motion handling to slip around defenders."

Samuel Honzek

F | Vancouver Giants | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 127.0



And once Honzek has moved into a shooting position, that release takes care of the rest. The mechanical form is deeply impressive – top arm unlocked, pushed well out in front of his body, lower body flexion allowing him to generate significant downforce on each release. Put another way: This guy can send absolute lasers on goal.

You'd like to see Honzek pair that shot with some credibility as a playmaker to round out his skill set, but that remains a work in progress. He has passing skills, consistently displaying the ability to feather weighted passes to his teammates, often through layers even. A lack of scanning limits his success, though, and he's not exceptionally creative as a distributor.

Now, the caveat here is that Honzek's Vancouver Giants weren't a particularly good team last year and that support on the flanks was hard to come by. They finished with a sub-.500 record, a minus-50 goal differential, and scored the second-fewest goals in the entire WHL.

There's some potential for Honzek to play in an NHL middle-six, perhaps even generate offence at a decent enough clip. The tools are high-end almost right across the board, and while he's not an incredibly creative player as currently constructed, it's not hard to imagine an environment with more support coaxing that out of him long-term. Once you get into the second half of the first round, he's a perfectly reasonable bet.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Each team's X-Factor at the 2023 World Juniors



Scout's Notebook: Five standout WHL rookies

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Let's see what happens in the pro game when he no longer has the size advantage/strength advantage he had with Vancouver." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"You could tell he played with men last year before coming to the WHL. He's physical, fast, and has pro polish already. You just hope that this isn't a case where the kid is done developing early since he looks years more mature physically than a lot of his opponents." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"He's big, fast, and disruptive. He's one of the best forecheckers in the Western league, and he's a pretty smart playmaker too. He's physically mature already though, so he might be closer to a finished product than a lot of other kids in this class." - NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 6th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

In this game, he played every other shift and did his best to drive his team forward, alternating strong solo plays and passes. He picked up three points, mostly by funneling pucks to the net with purpose (aiming for sticks and rebounds). In the end, his effort weren't enough. Hit and miss. I like Honzek overall, but this is how I would characterize him this season. The tools are amazing, especially for a guy his size. And he scored a lot. He has range, physical abilities, shooting power, and even stickhandling skills.

His skating form is quite sound for a player his size. He can fold over his skates and improve his balance that way.

He's really projectable as a wall player and net-front guy and he does play with relative aggression. I'm sure someone could teach him to lock it down defensively, too. I'm not sure he sees the whole ice or really understands how to create with his tools. There is a good chance that he ends up as this really toolsy player that fans expect a lot of, but never really puts it all together. He has an extra layer of skill compared to some of those similar players in the past. And there are times where he flashes more higher-end hockey sense. I like him as a top-25 player on our board. Right now, I like the Barlows and Ritchies more. They are more actualized as players, more consistent in showing their strengths, and I'm more certain of their projection and hockey sense. There is a boom upside with Honzek, a smaller chance, in my opinion, but it's there.

J.D. Burke: April 4th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

The one thing that consistently stands out with Honzek of late is just how far he's come as a skater this season. He's not just quick for his size; Honzek is legitimately fast. I'm not quite as convinced of the handling skill. Honzek routinely whiffs on pass receptions and his first touch is pretty clumsy even when he does connect with the puck. He's intelligent, though. Honzek had one really high-end play in the first, collecting the puck along the half-wall, selling a pivot to the point, and then cutting back into the faceoff circle before finding his linemate in the slot for a scoring chance. Honzek manages space well away from the puck and seems to have a strong sense of timing, too. I'm not all that convinced that there's high-end upside with Honzek, but he'll definitely play. He's more of a top-20 pick than top-10 for me.

J.D. Burke: April 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

This was shaping up to be one of my worst Honzek viewings of the season through the opening period, but his game stabilized at about the midway point and he wound up scoring the Giants only goal of the game (series, too) with a wicked wrist shot on the power play. I don't know that I would rate Honzek among the better skaters in this draft, but I'm consistently impressed by his small-area manoeuvrability for someone his size. He seems to get more deceptive with the puck in each viewing, too. His puck protection mechanics are already NHL-calibre, too. Looked like a mid-first-round pick to me.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Quiet first period for Honzek, but then he exploded with three points, including two similar goals that came from far-post drive. The last one gave his team the win with ten seconds left. He's a hard player to figure out and project. I still have hockey sense doubts: He's not always aware of defensive pressure and he's more reactive than playing in anticipation for the most part. His plays are imprecise both due to the difficulty he has coordinating his large frame in really tight spaces, but also due to slightly late reads. That being said, he has playmaking moments and instincts. He attracts before passing, shifts the defence, and moves well away from the puck to get shot opportunity. He also prepares dangles with feints. I'm afraid he ends up as just a supportive, energy, checking powerforward in the NHL, but there is an extra layer of skill there and clear sense flashes.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Honzek suffered a big hit in the neutral zone while receiving a suicide pass. He tried coming back, but it wasn't a good idea. He played a great game before that point, at least in terms of efficiency. Less flash, more simple one-touch plays and better usage of space overall. He accelerated on reception, attacked space in the neutral-zone, dropped the puck to teammates after attracting defenders, forechecked, went to the net, made cycle plays, worked the boards. His game in this one looked like how he should play in the NHL.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

I'm pretty sure that a team is going to draft Honzek in the top-10. The NHL attributes jump at you. I'm still not sure about the upside, but it's almost a guarantee that he will play. Few players can drive the net as fluidly and as easily as he does with his skating, wingspan, handling skills, and frame. It wasn't a great performance from him, however. A lot of missed passes. His skills showed up, but he didn't connect with teammates all that much. His pace was low overall and his awareness/processing seems

to lag behind other top-end prospects in this draft. Still, I'm a pretty big fan. He's the antidote to a draft containing a lot of smaller, skilled forwards -- for a team looking to add size.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Two goals but not a ton of completed plays from Honzek. The first goal was reaching around the goalie on the backhand. The second, he beat the defender, drove his inside leg forward to prevent the reach around, and attacked the net. I mean, the potential's obvious. He has hands, physical skills, vision, and flashes of pace in a 6'3" frame. He dekes around opponents, through them, and slides pucks under their sticks. Tries the give-and-go, too. In transition, he cuts back instead of forcing plays forward. Really, it's just a matter of pace and reads. Not sure if he fully understands how to manage space and he's not assertive enough with the puck. He attacks the inside, but only takes it if there's a large swath of ice in front of him. With his tools, he could create it. He also dekes when he could just claim the space (sometimes, he creates space and moves away from it). He's pretty clearly a top-nine projection. He'll play, but there's potential for more.

Daniel Gee: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Honzek was a lot better in this game than yesterday, but he still didn't drive play like you would expect. So big and skilled, it's not surprising to see Honzek make a slip pass to the inside in transition. He was available multiple times off-puck, but to no avail. Saw more attempts at a power game. In the second Honzek carried the puck in on the near boards, attempted to fend off with his free arm, but didn't cut hard enough on his edges -- he was easily pushed away from the inside lane. Delay elements when on-puck -- in the third he made a little punch to the inside to handle across the back of a defender, feeding Leslie for a goal. It was one of the few plays where Honzek really got his feet moving.

He was stronger in sustained pressure. In the first he intercepted a puck on the forecheck, passed off and filed the weak side -- took the pass reception and got a high-danger shot on net -- sure goal but he didn't convert. Honzek linked up with Leslie again in the third; fed the blue paint. Impressive use of his range in the cycle in this viewing. When Honzek extends his arms and then hooks the puck it's pretty much unstoppable to disrupt effectively. Only leveraged his hard wrist shot once -- made a low-to-high wheel and took a really deceptive wrist shot off the circle. The sound of his shot in the arena is wild -- the power is considerable notches higher than what you usually see. Looked like a top prospect again, but in terms of his projection, we need to see him take control of games at a higher level. There are players who create and drive results that should be ahead of him. Just not as engaged as you would want or expect.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Honzek has awesome moments, mostly in ways similar to Matyáš Šapovaliv from last year. Where most players charge ahead, he delays then takes on the stationary neutral zone forecheck, creating speed differentials. He looks cross-ice for passing options in transition, attacks the middle, and starts give-and-gos. Hook and slip passes to connect with teammates. The defence was tighter than earlier in this season. Anticipated attacks, closed lanes, and earned stops by outworking opponents. At this stage, my questions with Honzek are more around reading space. In one sequence, he used a give-and-go and sealed off back pressure before firing off a chance. That was impressive. Other times, he won positioning but didn't actually do anything with it.

He settles for low-percentage plays when he can steamroll his way to the inside. Doesn't manipulate or sometimes even read side pressure, highlighted by a turnover behind his own net when the opponent gave him half the rink and he straight into them. A suicide pass up the middle and couple of other turnovers on the breakout only echoed those concerns. He'll play, and I have little doubt he will be effective. But improving his awareness of space and options will be a must to crack a team's top-nine. There are worse bets, he already creates advantages. More of an 18-32 player for me at this stage (early-March).

Daniel Gee: February 28th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Honzek was disappointing in this game for the Giants, who struggled from the drop of the puck. Static feet and a lack of proactive movement completely diminishes the skill and size advantage Honzek brings to the game. Multiple instances where he essentially became a slow moving 6-foot-4 target on pass receptions -- easy target for aggression. He just can't access

his edges when he is working from a stopped position. Regardless, Honzek found most of his 5-on-5 creation in transition. His individual skill shines when he gets in motion -- push offs through seams, some one-on-one handles to beat more static defenders, all with inside-adjusted routes. He can punch off the entry and even flashed a couple of power game elements off downhill attacks. Honzek had a sequence in the second, a hard cut into the slot off the far boards allowed him to leverage his ridiculously hard wrister -- he missed the net, but the power creation he is able to achieve from pressing that massive frame into direct down force is downright terrifying. Beyond this, the only real sustained offensive zone pressure was on the powerplay. Honzek worked downhill multiple times both on and off-puck. His best sequence was a high-low give-and-go attack with Halaburda that allowed Honzek to pivot in front of the net into a jam play. On a subsequent shift, Honzek made a nifty wand-like handle working down the right-wing, crashing hard on net, knocking the net off. He has some ont-touch elements and supports the puck carrier through smart seam occupations, but he just did not create enough in this one.

Honzek struggled defensively in this game as well. His centre of gravity is so high that his triangle and legs are constantly manipulated through slip passes. He had an easy stop high in the zone, but Hiedt just threw the puck under him and it neutralised his relatively great lane clogging. All-in-all it's easy to see why Honzek is an intriguing prospect but he has to get in motion so much more proactively to have success at the next level, where size and skill advantages will diminish.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

A bit of rust, but two really nice goals, the first one of a half-wall shot that gave no chance to the goalie and a second one after bulldozing inside to take his own rebound. I'm always amazed at his tools: size, skating, handling, passing, shooting skills. Average to above-average grades for all of those. Hard to keep him out of the top-20 honestly based on that alone. He's scoring, he reads the game well (enough), and there is upside there, a lot of untapped potential. You see it in his finer plays. He can work the board, elude opponents with real cutbacks, and handle through them. The reads aren't precise -- he misses advantages (space and numbers) -- and he's not yet dynamic, but wow.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

The potential shown in this game was top-six scorer. Honzek can do it all. He scored with a step-in outside leg wrister, prepared with crossovers. Perfect upper-body form. Scored later by following up his wrister and dragging the puck around the goaltender under pressure. Special stuff. His shooting form's at least a 6. He really elevates that top arm, able to pull the puck in tight and fire with a narrower stance. Changes the angle super fast and has some creative shots, like a drag shot that went short side where most go far side. He has passing skill, a delay game, cutback-and-escape game, an impressive work rate, and more complex passing ideas. The execution's a bit limited, at times. His passes were a bit off, he missed opportunities to attack space. He's not as aggressive as he could be. But the potential's clear. He could be a top-15 pick for us.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - USA vs. Slovakia - World Juniors

Honzek left with an injury in the middle of the game. Too bad because this was a much better performance from him. He used his frame to win pucks and also to drive the net, multiple times. His speed really shone. If he can get a head of steam, he can traverse a neutral-zone like it's nothing and then attack the net straight out of that run. He played with more urgency overall and a higher level of comfort.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Slovakia vs Finland - World Juniors

Not the greatest game for Honzek, who looked a bit overmatched against Finland. He threw many pucks away, missed passes...I did appreciate his board game. He used his body well to protect the puck and cycle it. He was also effective in the bumper position

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

It wasn't that much of an eventful game for Honzek despite the three points. The skating looked a bit better in sequences. He has projectable stride mechanics when in hard pursuit of the puck. He can win it in tight quarters, protect it, and spot it into

space for himself and teammates. He picked up a couple of points on the powerplay with his passing. The second assist was the nicer one, as the puck slipped under a defensive stick to get to his teammate in a scoring position. His goal came off a net-drive and a rebound. Honzek just has an all-around NHL projectable game, but I don't see a top-six player.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Honzek set up the overtime winner by cutting inside on Price's heels, then going backhand cross-slot – shorthanded, too. Grabbed a goal with a pass into the slot that deflected off a defender. There were exciting moments along the boards. He instantly took pucks off the boards and attacked the middle for chances. In one sequence, he beat two defenders in quick succession before driving the middle. Always skates through the defender's route to win space and he's always in the right spot on the forecheck. He's strong on the boards, but improving his touch in-tight, alongside the actual routes he takes from the boards, will be integral to becoming an effective NHL scorer. Right now, he takes too long to make decisions and only bulldozes into the clear lane, missing opportunities to skate through the hands of the defender and create a better look. Not much playmaking in this game. He looked more like a solid three-line projection, putting him around the late-first, early-second.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Honzek's more agile than fast, but he showed a real burst off-puck to tap-in a rebound on the powerplay. In-tight, he uses cutbacks, heel-to-heel skating, and one-foot stops to escape. In one sequence, he used a double cut that was deep for a player at this level, successfully tricking the defender before escaping. When he cuts back or stops, he waits for the defender to follow before accelerating. There's a lot of potential with Honzek's skating, especially if he hastens his decision-making process. Other interesting qualities: NHL shooting mechanics and variety of shots, resetting/delaying in transition, finding space off-puck and winning body positioning, backhand passing skill, working pucks off the boards, and winning puck battles. He's not especially creative, but he already understands how his skills create space for his teammates. He's a first-round candidate.

Cam Robinson: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

There's something really intriguing about Honzek's game. And it's not just the pro-level habits that employs - like his ability to catch and release, his board work, his forechecking routes and pressure, and general compete level. It's that it seems like his skill package - as nice as it is right now, has a lot of room to grow.

The thing that curtails some of his effective play creation and solo creation is his default puck protection - one of his strengths. He feels pressure and almost immediately moves into that protect stance which limits his ability to create out of it. If he's able to build a resistance to that habit and accelerate through that pressure, oh boy, there's a lot of things he could do.

Daniel Gee: November 13th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

A hulking forward, Honzek's low pace and activity rate was scary at first, but man does his brain overcome those issues. He was a monster in this game and frankly carved the Cougars up in transition. He started the game with a nutmeg slip pass, a play where he then moved into the slot to set up a shot. On the next play he carried the puck into the offensive zone, cutback to switch the pressure, handling until he found an activating Pentecost in the mid-slot -- leading to a goal.

The delay game habits were a constant throughout his touches, along with weight-shift manipulations to make for easier neutral zone movement. He tries to connect through layers -- off both his forehand and backhand; does fail a lot but when he connects it's an automatic chance in the WHL. Some of his shooting habits are poor -- perimeter, low percentage shots with little rebound or chaos potential. The thing is, his size and tool blend is so powerful that he can just pull off some crazy sequences. In the third, off an outside drive, Honzek lapped the zone, stopped up to shake off a defender, and layered a centering feed to a backdoor teammate who one-timed a puck on net -- somehow saved. He was so determined though. On the next shift, he carried down the near boards, slipping a puck into the middle, leading to another goal.

Didn't really love much of his sustained zone shifts. Honzek was outmuscled by a much smaller Hudson Thornton on the near boards in a second period play -- just shouldn't happen given his frame and indicates there are some protection and high-centre

of gravity issues. He stacks regularly with teammates and was late getting into open lanes. The contrast between his transition play was immense in this one.

The stride affects his ability to defend. He can barely pivot so the resistance he pushes is lacking when he tries to disrupt entries. Almost no backchecking support and reactive movement (just a half-second behind the movement of the puck). He's at least a B prospect.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

Not as many great moments for Honzek in this game. The pace of play and decisions still irks me a bit, but it should improve; it's his first year in North America. He will learn to play at a higher speed and has the skating to do so. I even saw some outside edge moves in this game. His wrist-shot seems threatening. He scored with a quick draw under relative pressure to start the game. On and off the puck and in the back of the net. On the powerplay, he constantly repositions inside lanes to get one-timers off. He attacks inside. He lacks a bit of awareness. More pre-scanning would help him find options quicker. He delays some plays that don't need to be delayed.

David St-Louis: November 2nd, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

A lot of interesting elements in this game. The only thing really missing was a bit more awareness and pace in decisions, but Honzek has an NHL translatable play. He can protect pucks against defenders, find outlets, even to the middle of the ice (made a really nice hook pass for a scoring chance). He can attack inside from the wall with his handling moves, frame, and ability to identify seams. He can also protect the puck as he rushes (but mostly by downshifting, going into a tripod and trying to keep the puck away from sticks). He made good decisions overall and showed some purposeful off-puck drives. He's more of a third-line projection for me right now, a checker, protector, passer, a complementary offensive player, but the certainty of his projection will boost his stock. There are also glimpses of higher-end abilities like that hook pass and his final net-drive where he had the patience to manipulate the goalie before scoring in a flying Bobby Orr way.

David St-Louis: November 1st, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

Honzek put up three points tonight, one of a shot rebound, another with a cycle play, and a last deceptive pass in overtime. He has some skill as a playmaker, but what stands out most are his train-line qualities, his speed and size. He's intimidating as he drives in straight-lines up the ice. I doubt he ever becomes a truly agile player, but his skating could become a strength in an NHL forechecking game. He cheated offensively a bit in this game, cutting certain routes short, or more accurately, not realising when he had to help teammates who lost their man. The puck protection is interesting. Honzek can't really escape with the puck on the walls, but he can seal it from the opposition, hold it, and let a teammate make a play on it.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Finally, a viewing where Honzek looked human. He was just okay in this game. He had some issues with the puck, losing control with his feet moving. Relied on the same patterns in transition: get puck, stop, wait for middle lane driver, then pass. No adjustments or adaptability within that. Lacks the speed and deception to complete his drives. Not a manipulator; more of a take what's available player. Solid night on the forecheck, winning possession from disadvantaged positions and intercepting passes. Otherwise, this was hardly an interesting performance. More of a mid-round type of performance.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Okay, I was probably wrong about Honzek's skating. He's a bit lumbering in open ice, struggling to complete his crossovers, but he's a skilled skater who shows enough lower-body flexion and timing that his skating's not a weakness. He fakes turns before going the other way, uses weight shifts to mask his intentions, and times his cutbacks just as the pressure arrives (wide base, uses inside foot to drive motion). In-motion skill, highlighted by a toe-drag during a pass reception inside the heel-to-heel. Shot's a clear NHL skill already. He pushes his hands way in front of his body, elevates his top arm elbow to his shoulder (or even higher), and generates downforce through lower-body flexion. Requires a bit of space to set up his wrist, but the mechanics

are sound. One-timer's projectable, too. And even if the skating doesn't become a strength, his game's centred around drawing pressure, outwaiting it, and passing through it. Cuts back, waits for the defender, then cuts back again. Looked like a potential first-round candidate in this game.

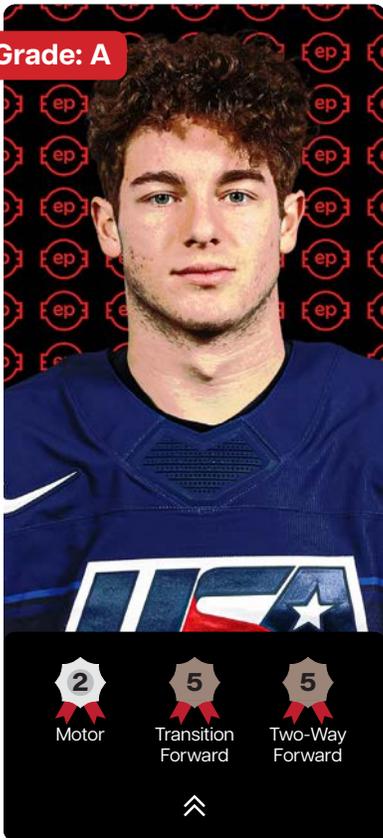
J.D. Burke: October 8th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Not a particularly moving performance from Honzek, though he finished with a goal and an even goal differential, if memory serves. I'm not sure if I would necessarily describe him as a poor skater. There's some depth in his stride, certainly. But his mechanics are inconsistent, lumbering even at times. There was a chance at a partial break in the first period where he clumsily lost the puck because of this, kind of fumbling his way into a non-opportunity. Bad look. Mostly, Honzek hangs above the puck, trying to create counter plays. That's how he scored his goal, quickly getting open down the strong side wing when his linemate forced a turnover and going in with time and space to fire a wrister past the Thunderbirds goaltender. His puck protection mechanics looked like a strength, too. Honzek strikes me as a reasonably intelligent player in need of some refinement to unlock more offensive output.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

The best player on the ice in this game. Honzek's lumbering, can't escape with his edges, and lacks quickness, but he showed just about every other skill. He attacked the middle, both with his hands and with passes. Delays when possible to find support on the rush and to wait for his teammates to jump into space. Slip and hook pass use. Playmaking looked like a potential strength, as did his shooting game. Stayed anonymous to defenders just outside the slot, then popped into space behind their backs. The skill didn't appear as much in transition, likely the consequence of skating. Defensively, he scanned regularly and grabbed a couple of stops. Not the most active player, but he supported and anticipated. Looked like a second-round candidate in this game.

Grade: A



21 Gavin Brindley

AGE 17.945 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 05, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Chandler Stephenson



Evasive



Versatile



Motor

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'9"

Height

157 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Michigan	NCAA	41	12	26	38	0.93
USA U20	WJC-20	7	1	3	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Gavin Brindley is the Swiss Army Knife of the 2023 NHL Draft; the "Break in Case of Emergency" player capable of meeting the demands of any situation on a moment's notice.

That much is reflected in his deployment. Only one forward on Michigan – you might've heard of this guy, goes by the name of Adam Fantilli – played more all-situations minutes on a per-game basis than Brindley's 19:15 last season.

You can't say Brindley didn't make the most of those minutes either. The sixth-most productive draft-eligible season in the Salary Cap Era. A plus-18 goal differential and 58.3 percent shot attempt share at evens. Stellar micro statistics, as recorded by Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown.

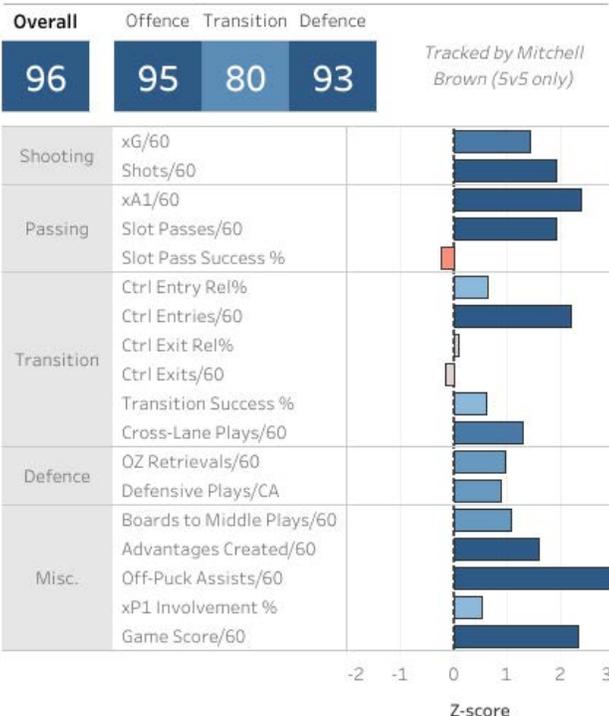
Hell, Brindley even played like his team's mascot in many of our viewings – an unrelenting ball of ferocious energy bouncing around the ice at lightning speed from one player to the next. You know, a wolverine.

"Brindley is a high-motor player who excels on the defensive side of the puck," Elite Prospects American regional scout Joey Padmanabhan wrote ahead of the World Juniors. "He's a tenacious forechecker and reliable in defensive zone coverage."

Gavin Brindley

F | Michigan | NCAA | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 97.0



As the season wore on, Brindley’s play with the puck began to improve, too. And as the calendar turned to 2023, it all came together for him.

At once a straight-line, single-speed puck carrier, Brindley started to change lanes and tempos, developed a give-and-go game, added some deceptive elements as a distributor, and his handling skill just seemed straight up better. Suddenly, there was cause for optimism among our staff for a more optimistic projection, perhaps even from an NHL bottom-six to middle-six.

Under ordinary circumstances, a player this productive with those specific skills would be a lock for the first round and then some.

Not so in this case. Brindley sits in the final third of the first round on most boards as of this writing, according to the Elite Prospects consolidated rankings on the Draft Center page.

So, what gives? The obvious starting point is Brindley’s 5-foot-9 frame. Even in a contemporary NHL that drafts more according to a player’s merits than their capacity to ride roller coasters, that’s a red flag that many have to overcome in the eyes of the 200 Hockey Men’s™ most antiquated evaluators.

For some, the skating isn’t good enough for him to work in a depth role; for others, the skill not sufficient to work in an NHL top-six. Those are understandable skepticisms, even if we don’t necessarily share their concerns at Elite Prospects. Not to the same degree anyway.

As we close the book on this scouting season, we do so with the belief that Brindley actually represents one of the safer bets in this year’s draft. His skating, motor, and defensive intelligence make for a really solid foundation. He’ll play; it’s just a matter of how high up an NHL lineup he’ll ply his trade.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Gavin Brindley’s “skating and hockey mind” driving under the radar success at Michigan



Frozen Four preview: Powers new and old clash in NCAA semifinals



Standout draft-eligible performances at the 2023 World Juniors

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

“It’s funny, you’d watch Michigan and Fantilli’s season made you forget how good this kid was. I think he could be one of the better players in this draft when we look back at it.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I think what happened was that for the first half of the year, there was the one goal, and that was because he might’ve been overthinking skating at centre and that slowed him down. Once he got to go on the wing and play with the best player in college hockey – as much as I think Adam Fantilli made Brindley better, I thought he made Fantilli better, too. He made him play faster. This guy’s got a motor, can fight on the forecheck, fights hard to get back defensively. He’s going to go around 20.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I’ll be honest with you, I don’t think he plays. Not a pick for me. The skill level is good, but it’s not great. You have to be really fast at that size, and I’m not sure if Brindley’s really that fast out there.” – Western Conference scout, February 2023

"I wouldn't say I am a pass-first guy, but I'm definitely a playmaker. I made reads and decisions on the fly whether to pass or shoot. Just making hockey plays is one of my best attributes. Things happen. You don't always have to pass or always have to shoot. I think I make the right decision most of the time." – Gavin Brindley, December 2022

"A lot of credit goes to my skating ability. Obviously, I'm an undersized guy. That would mean being quick on your edges and spinning off guys and using your body to protect the puck is really important and behind the net. I think I use that to my advantage." – Gavin Brindley, December 2022

"He's undersized but is very tough and very fast. Elite skater and worker. He can kill penalties. He can forecheck. He's got some offence, but the speed and energy will play for sure. He's got a lot of depth and layers to his game." – NHL scout, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Colgate vs. Michigan - NCAA Tournament

This was definitely a good performance from Brindley, but not a needle-mover. He left this game with a goal, an assist, three shots, and a plus-two rating, playing on Adam Fantilli's right wing, opposite Rutger McGroarty. You had all the Brindley staples in this one: Intelligent in-zone defensive play, robust forechecking, inside-driven transition playmaking, etc. His goal was a nice enough play. Collect a puck in space at speed and then dangle into the slot for a clean look and a slap shot goal. The assist was better; a set of handling moves at the top of the offensive zone to shake the defender before getting the puck to Luke Hughes, who hammered it home. The path to a middle-six if not a top-six projection seems increasingly clear at this point.

J.D. Burke: March 18th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - Big Ten Championship

This was a fitting end to Brindley's non-NCAA tournament season. From a bit role in the bottom-six to one of Michigan's most effective players in a conference championship game. Three assists, three shots, and a plus-two goal differential at evens. Can't complain about that. Even though the skills development and creative growth has been impossible to ignore, it was mostly the year-long staples that defined Brindley's work in this game. It seemed like he was in the thick of the action from puck drop to the final horn, playing at top speed, his motor running without interruption, constantly pressing the initiative. Brindley's defensive zone work is just so advanced for a player this age – constant scanning, proactive positioning, an understanding of rotations, etc. Brindley was an unholy terror on the forecheck too, taking the right line, getting underneath opponents before driving through their hips, and winning pucks with second and third efforts. At one point, he outmuscled Matthew Knies on an offensive zone retrieval. Handling mechanics are variable, but his skating and small area manoeuvrability allow him to work around those limitations. Increasingly, I view Brindley as one of the safest bets in this draft. He'll play.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Michigan vs Wisconsin - NCAA

There are performances where Brindley just looks a bit smaller. It's not his fault, but when he enters a battle without a clear speed advantage, well, he gets pinned. It's automatic and it will be automatic in the NHL, too. He has all the elements needed to become at least a checking presence in the league, however, despite the season: the pace, the speed, the defensive mentality, the stickwork, and the willingness to take the extra strides to cut plays. I see some playmaking development. He's much better at using his hip pocket and change of speeds to freeze defenders and go around them to get to better playmaking areas.

J.D. Burke: February 24th, 2023 - Notre Dame vs. Michigan - NCAA

It seems like Brindley is adding new layers to his game with every viewing, pushing the boundaries of his skill set in the process. The deception that he started to flash right as the calendar turned to a new year is now a staple of every possession. Brindley is leveraging the threat of his shot to hold opponents and create better passing opportunities or improve the position of his release. I'm not sure if I'm seeing significant growth as a handler, but Brindley's learned how to place pucks in space and let his footspeed take care of the rest – bank passes, pucks into space, signs of a give-and-go game, etc. He's a legitimate burner

out there. Brindley is fast, pacey, creative, competitive as all get-up, and increasingly creative with the puck. Super interesting prospect.

J.D. Burke: February 16th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Ohio State - NCAA

Probably one of my least interesting Brindley viewings from an offensive perspective, but it's not like he was actively bad or limited his team in that regard either. Brindley operated mostly as a play-connector in this one, applying himself on the forecheck, supporting the puck, and winning back possession with a strong defensive stick in the neutral zone. There was one particularly sharp give-and-go play to gain the inside for a decent look, too. It was the defensive zone and on the penalty kill where Brindley shone brightest though. Constant scanning, proactive reads, and a really strong stick allow him to punch well above his weight and neutralize far more physically advanced opponents with relative ease.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Michigan Wolverines vs. Michigan State - NCAA

A lot to like in this game. Brindley took hits to make plays all over the ice on the walls. He helped create breakouts and turned forecheck into steals. He drove the net, linked passing plays in transition, and even manipulated defenders on a couple of occasions. He's far from Will Smith on the ice, but he can open up defenders to slide pucks through them. He did just that on his assist on Fantilli's goal. Brindley is still the same fierce, energetic worker and still the same high-end skater, but now it's easier to project his playmaking game. He knows his options, and for the most part, hits the best one and creates lanes to them. There is a lot of pace in his passing plays, too. He's all about forward movement. This will help him in the NHL. Two goals. On each of them he showed the same off-puck moving abilities. There isn't a lot missing in his game except the size. If he was 5-foot-11, he would go in the top-10.

David St-Louis: February 3rd, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Michigan - NCAA

I underestimated Brindley's off-puck game. He's always in motion, always attacking lanes, bouncing around defenders to find them, especially on the power play. He anticipates plays ahead of time and moves to support them. And he's such a great pressure and rush forward. There is a lot there. The combination of sense, speed, and defence could take him pretty far. The skating mechanics are very sound, too. He could add even more momentum in his game, considering he has the right flexions and the upper/lower separation to pull off even more agile moves in flight and retain his speed as he changes direction. It's mostly a third-line role that awaits him, but maybe if he continues to improve tactically offensively, we see him become an uncommon (at his profile) top-six forward.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Michigan - NCAA

Brindley was Michigan's best player in this game. It started with the defence. He was everywhere, grabbed nine steals at 5-on-5 alone. He skated through the hands of opponents, anticipated passes, and threw a crushing hit in the neutral zone. The best one: he stayed in the defender's blind spot and as soon as they looked, he hit the gas and jumped around for the steal. The skill's more variable, but continues to trend up. He hit a couple of textbook one-timers on the power play, both leading to points. Those were 6-grade shots. He's always turning and cutting away from pressure – sometimes like an NHLer, other times with inside edge-only turns. He lacks patience in transition and layers as a passer. He forces pucks into lanes that are closed or simply aren't viable options. He skates straight at opponents in glides with the puck in front. But then, out of nowhere, he sets up a near-chance with a look off pass. The best play was his first goal, turning a tricky pass reception into a chance for his teammate and cleaning up the rebound. That showed skill, diversity, and an ability to link ideas together. I still have difficulty figuring out his skill level. It's mediocre for stretches, but there are flashes of superior plays and habits. Pretty confident he's an NHLer, though.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Penn State - NCAA

Brindley continues to play too fast, frantic a bit. He's intense on the forecheck, intense on defence, and when he rushes the puck, but he misses occasions to slow down, really hold the defence in one of his manipulations, and then accelerate off the mark after freezing them. The manipulation is resurfacing -- that's the good news. He showed also some timed movements in

the slot, anticipating puck movements and passes ahead of time to get it right on his stick in a scoring position. The skating continues to shine away from and with the puck. He still remains a 20s guy for me at the moment.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - NCAA

A more tame game from Brindley after yesterday's standout performance. He's so focused on the net. It works in his favour, as it did when he cut inside, sprinted past a defender, and fired off a chance that Fantilli put in. But it still leads to missed opportunities. He passes into the slot instead of finding the trailer and his deliveries lack deception. Turnovers are common, but it's more about the missed opportunities. Still, he does everything else. He sprints every route to create space, beats opponents to loose pucks, anticipates the next play on the forecheck, and backtracks like an NHLer. The skating didn't look as dynamic in this game. He's quick because of his push-off frequency and projectable because of his form, but it was hardly an advantage in this game. More of a late-first/early-second performance.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - NCAA

Brindley was so impressive in this game. The pace overwhelms opponents and there's real craft to it. Along the boards, he baits opponents in one direction before coming across with his stick in the other. He sticklifts opponents just as the puck comes near to win possession. He traps the feet of opponents and skates through their hands as they escape. A couple of times, he didn't force plays ahead, instead delaying and cutting inside. He set up a scoring chance with a nasty saucer pass, and his assist showed a more patient Brindley. He cut inside, waited, waited, found the lane, then passed. Scored with a textbook drop knee one-timer – hands in front, chest up, leaning on the outside edge of the outside leg – placing it top corner. There were some bad plays. In one sequence, he was forced into a low-percentage shot because he didn't spot a teammate cross-slot earlier in the sequence. In general, he'd benefit from manipulating opponents more and attacking the space on their heels. I still don't know if Brindley's a top-six skill projection. But everything else screams it.

Mitchell Brown: January 4th, 2022 - USA vs. Canada - U20 WJC

Brindley does something every shift. It's impressive. He gains the zone, drops pucks back, then rushes the net to create space behind him. So inside-driven, too. He doesn't just wait for opportunities to open; he creates them by winning body positioning, scanning, and cutting back as the opponent leans. He pops into the slot at the right moments. Probably not a big-time goal-scorer at any level, but chances will come regardless of the competition. He's more of a short-range, give-and-go playmaker than a true manipulator or high-skill creator, but his pace, defence, and puck-winning ability should make him a solid third-liner, at least. His open-ice skills aren't as impactful as his board skills, but and it's worth considering how much more nuanced his offensive game has become since early last season.

David St-Louis: December 29th, 2022 - USA vs. Switzerland- WJ20

I didn't learn anything new about Brindley in this one, but he keeps impressing me anyway. He stands out a lot more than Stramel, his line-mate: his pace, his quick passing, forechecking pressure, and crossover rushes. He lacks the finishing touch on some of his manipulation attempts; he tries to be overly deceptive and throws pucks away.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - USA vs. Slovakia - U20 WJC

Brindley was Team USA's best forward in this game. He had a trio of scoring chances and set up two more. The pace overwhelmed the Slovak defenders. They had no answer. He attacked at full speed, weaving across the dot lane and sprinting past opponents. Continues to show advanced board skills. His size is basically a strength, enabling him to get lower than opponents and cuts through their hips like they're not even there. He times his cutbacks with the opponent leaning on him. Always gets body positioning. Doesn't waste time with needless cycling. The only real concern is the lack of high-level skills. He's needlessly deceptive, plays too fast, throws pucks into space blindly, and doesn't manipulate opponents. Still, he looks like a solid middle-six prospect. Could be a top-20 pick.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - USA vs. Slovakia - WJ20

One of the best performances I've seen from Brindley. He was the best player on Team USA for long stretches. His speed and pace showed up constantly. He ran through and around teams with crossovers, all while scanning to find teammates in the middle part of the ice. He scored by tipping a point shot from Lane Hutson, attacked the net constantly, and used cutbacks and evasive maneuvers to separate from opponents along the walls of the offensive zone. His penalty kill work also stood out: constant pressure, constant stick work to kill lanes, and an intense forecheck that disrupted the opposition's entry. He does play too fast for his own good sometimes, but he looked a lot more like an A prospect than a B one in this game.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - USA vs Latvia - WJ20

Brindley continues to play the game at hyper-speed. He looked a bit smaller next to many of the U.S top forwards in this one, but his speed continues to provide him with scoring opportunities. He can jump on loose pucks, evade defenders, and pressure the opponent. As the season progresses, it's becoming more and more clear that there will be a cap on his offensive production. His best asset is his motor. To convince us of his potential, Brindley has to improve his timing as a playmaker and overall vision.

J.D. Burke: December 9th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Michigan State - NCAA

I'm not sure Brindley took full advantage of the opportunity in front of him in this game, with Adam Fantilli at Canada's World Juniors camp and Michigan needing someone to step up in his absence. I don't even think Brindley was necessarily bad. He plays honest defensive hockey, shows an advanced understanding of offensive rotations, tracks well through the neutral zone – all of the habits are really strong. Brindley also connected with his linemate on a backdoor passing play that should've resulted in a goal. But the individual skill level just isn't popping like it did earlier in the season – perhaps a quality of competition thing. Brindley's motor, skating, and habits are beyond reproach, and we're starting to see growth as a playmaker, but at a certain point, there needs to be more production.

J.D. Burke: December 3rd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Continually impressed by how many pro-level details reveal themselves in Brindley's game, but I'm beginning to wonder about the actual skill level. On the rush, Brindley takes the puck inside at every opportunity, drags defenders towards him, and furnishes area passes into the space they vacate for teammates to capture in stride. Without the puck, Brindley drives the inside and takes a defenceman with him, creating space for the puck carrier. Actually saw some flashes of deception as a handler in this game, which was a new wrinkle – there just hasn't been a lot of that this season. Brindley continues to just wreak havoc on the forecheck, too. He's a puck retrieval machine, size be damned. Michigan coaching staff played him a ton in high leverage spots and even had him out there when Wisconsin pulled the goalie.

J.D. Burke: December 2nd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

There were some really exceptional flashes from Brindley, who just seems to take over shifts when he's at his best. There was an opportunistic drive to the inside with speed that resulted in a crossbar-and-out scoring chance. Another like play occurred in the third period, with Brindley charging past the Wisconsin defence for a wraparound setup that Mark Estapa just plainly wasn't ready for – if that's Rutger McGroarty at the net front then Brindley gets an assist on that play. He was physical, getting low on opponents going into the board for puck battles, cutting defenders off at the hands, and leaving with possession more often than not. Strong work in the defensive zone, too; it's pretty revealing that the coaching staff trusts him with defensive zone starts and penalty kill reps when the games are close. Strong habits as a playmaker, scanning for options and then repositioning himself to create passing lanes with which to connect. Some flashes of the mohawk from the periphery to widen his field of view. I continue to grow quite fond of his game.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

I really like Brindley's pace and work rate. He tries his best all over the ice to capture pucks and feed them to teammates. He rarely holds on to possession, but tries give-and-goes, pass-and-repositions. There were some playmaking flashes in this game, like deceptive passing attempts. I'm not sure what to make of his whole game. He has a lot of projectable elements, he's a player you root for with the way he plays the game, but there might be a cap on the offensive ceiling. At the same time, the flashes are there and we know Freshman don't usually perform as well on the offensive fronts. And on the third hand, the Freshman

who don't perform offensively are usually not the ones becoming offensively dominant in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Harvard vs. Michigan - NCAA

I like the way Brindley plays. He charges at opponents, overwhelming them with speed and pressure. Forces a lot of turnovers and generally disrupts the opposition's play-building. Offensively, he's more of a play-builder himself. Give-and-go, skate his off-puck route, lots of short-possession plays. He's most just an outside lane speedster, using various tricks to beat opponents, but only to further his advance down the perimeter. Haven't seen much creativity or high-level offence. Even at this stage, he mostly creates through his work rate and straight-forward style. He looks like third-line, second-round type.

Mitchell Brown: November 25th, 2022 - Harvard vs. Michigan - NCAA

Brindley's motor always drives his value. This game was no different. He outraced defenders to loose pucks, crunched them into the boards, and stayed in constant motion. Head's always up. Goes from one space to the next immediately, often in intelligent ways: in one sequence, he got open in the slot, popped down low to support, then sprinted high and back across to get space between defenders. Brindley has dynamic skating qualities – high crossover integration, pace, and constantly changes lanes – but he lacks much explosiveness. His speed's the product of his off-puck movement coupled with his teammates' ability to create advantages. Don't think his skating will be an advantage at the NHL, but it won't be a weakness, either. Glimpses of intriguing ideas, manipulating defenders with hesitation moves and putting pucks just inside their reach. And he was more willing to throw pucks to the middle from the boards than earlier viewings. But he plays too fast; there's little precision in his game. And his game's built around outside speed. He looks like a mid-six forward, perhaps a third-liner.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

Brindley has a couple of interesting plays, winning positioning around the net before passing cross-slot for an even better chance and his usual full-speed-ahead stuff. At this stage, I'm a bit down on the overall upside. He's doing the same stuff that he developed last year: the high-pace give-and-gos, occasional manipulation through movement, and intelligent off-puck routes. But he's not nearly as effective getting to the inside because his speed isn't nearly as much of an advantage. He's more of a small-plays player who lacks greater offensive capabilities. I'm quite confident he plays, but not sure I see him playing effective minutes beyond the third-line. There's lots of time, however.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Notre Dame - NCAA

Brindley almost plays too fast for his own good. The effort is admirable and the pace, too, but he often throws pucks to teammates more than he passes them. His game lacks a bit of manipulation and deception; it's only him trying to hit gaps before they close. The skill level is pretty high overall and the defensive habits, physicality (for his size), crossovers, and awareness are projectable. The lack of high-end playmaking will likely keep Brindley down our board if he doesn't have more special moments.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Western Michigan vs. Michigan - NCAA

I wish Brindley would create more with the puck on his stick. He looks dynamic, but he lacks the speed necessary to push back defenders and escape them off the rush, which forces him to make a lot of his plays under heavy pressure. His success rate remains pretty good in those situations, due to above-average handling skills and awareness, but the game just seems hard for him, like he's surviving with strong habits and small-area skills. I know this is just a first-year and he's scoring decently, but this could be a window into what awaits him at the NHL level.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Western Michigan - NCAA

Brindley has pretty much all the habits you want. He's not generating points right now and his speed could be better, but he's always scanning, well positioned, cutting lanes, reloading above the puck, rotating at the right time, making micro-adjustments to his positioning, supporting plays well...He's aware, engaged, and active. That's already a lot for a 17-year-old Freshman. The crossover rushes, where he picks up momentum, moves defenders around, and finds space to send the puck are promising.

David St-Louis: October 21th, 2022 - Lake Superior vs. Michigan - NCAA

A fun game from Brindley who could express his skills a bit more than against Boston University last weekend. There is a lot to like. He attacks inside consistently, to dangle through, but also to set up others. He clearly has an understanding of playmaking mechanics, of the need to attract defenders on himself to create space for others. And his inside-drives will become more effective as he ages and gains strength. He's still hyper-active in all three zones. The skating looks potentially above-average, the handling and passing too, and there is enough physical engagement at his size to not worry too much about his NHL projection.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Boston University vs. Michigan - NCAA

Brindley started off this game well. The pace was high, as usual. He's also built off last season's more projectable habits. He sprints inside, draws pressure, passes wide, then continues down the middle. Always looking for the give-and-go. Manipulates through his routes and lateral passing, creates space with off-puck skating. The same energy applies on the defensive end: he sprints when necessary and locks onto his check. Despite his high pace and intelligence, the skills looked closer to average than significantly above it. His pace of operation and physical skills mean his projection doesn't require much imagination, but he looks more like a top-nine candidate rather than a clear-cut top-six projection. Curious to watch his growth this season.

J.D. Burke: October 14th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Boston University - NCAA

Another exceptionally strong performance from Brindley, who continues to look the part of a top-15 talent in a stacked 2023 NHL Draft. By final horn, he'd picked up a goal and a pair of assists centring the third line between Jackson Hallum and Rutger McGroarty. Brindley's been playing a game that's mature beyond his years going back to his draft-minus-one in the USHL, but he's taken it to another level at Michigan. He's the clear play-driver on a line with a draft-plus-three skater and last July's 14th overall pick. Brindley builds speed before each touch, changes lanes and speeds in space, and then drives inside to attract defensive pressure to free up space elsewhere. The development of a give-and-go game allows Brindley to gain the inside of the offensive zone with relative ease in spite of his 5-foot-9 frame, and an advanced understanding of how to gain leverage allows him to win more than his fair share of puck battles along the boards. Signs of an NHL-projectable game as a playmaker revealed themselves regularly – look-offs, feints, etc. – but his accuracy as a distributor wasn't always there. Further to that point, I thought Brindley missed opportunities to settle for his first read on a few occasions. Michigan wound up using Brindley on the penalty kill late in this game, and I thought he acquitted himself well in those circumstances. Really hard to poke holes in his game at this point.

David St-Louis: October 14th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Boston University - NCAA

Good defensive performance from Brindley. I like his motor; he's very active, moving around the ice with that typical US hockey-wide stride. His stick is in the right lanes; he pressures well -- probably why he's on the penalty kill for his team. He also made a few nice offensive plays. The playmaking shone. He knows how to create entries by cutting across the ice, freeing space for teammates underneath. He can pass with deception. A few of his feeds did end up on the stick of the other team; he approximated a few plays, but he doesn't look overmatched at this level.

J.D. Burke: October 8th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Lindenwood - NCAA

Everything happens for Brindley at a breakneck pace. He's updating his mental map of the ice with constant scanning, building speed before each touch, and acting without a moment's hesitation once he's secured possession of the puck. During sustained offensive zone play, Brindley probes for shooting opportunities, times his arrivals just right, and strikes with equal potency as a one- and two-touch passer and finisher. Picked up an assist in this contest by cutting across the defensive front on a zone entry, driving the middle, and dropping the puck to Seamus Casey who sniped one top-corner. Had several Grade-A scoring chances of his own, either creating shooting opportunities with his handling skill or getting to the right place, at the right time. You're not really projecting a player with Brindley's skill set to the NHL in a checking role, but I also think he deserves a ton of credit for how hard he worked on the defensive side of things in this contest. Covered dutifully for pinching defencemen, backchecked hard, tracked well through the neutral zone, and supported play in the defensive zone. A really complete effort from Brindley.

J.D. Burke: October 7th, 2022 - Michigan vs. Lindenwood - NCAA

A relatively subdued outing from Brindley, who was nonetheless effective and managed to pick up an assist by the final horn. What this performance may have lacked in the usual highlight-reel fare that I've come to expect from Brindley it more than made up for with pro-level habits and brief flashes of handling skill that should augur future production. He clearly has an advanced understanding of offensive and defensive rotations, knows how best to support the play at both ends of the ice, and generally has a knack for being in the right place, at the right time. If anything, I thought Brindley really distinguished himself defensively in this contest. The motor never stops, he tracks well, and he's something of a pick-pocket in space. The skating looks great. Brindley is equal parts elusive and explosive. Better still, I think there's another gear he can unlock with added core strength; he's still not really engaging that part of his body in his forward stride in space.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2022 - Omaha Lancers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

The growth of Brindley's game continues at an insane speed. Now, he's manipulating defenders. He changes pace, leans over one leg, waits for the defender, and then changes direction. It's opened up his playmaking game, now trying give-and-gos where he previously tried to deke. Beats defenders with passes now, rather than trying to beat them before passing. Connected with a few tricky passes to the inside, and a on-and-off cross-slot pass. He's much better at engaging now, too. He gets low and then drives his leg in front of the incoming defender's. Combines pace and deception on retrievals, and then immediately makes the play to the middle even when pressured. If he learns to manipulate pressure in the offensive zone, he'll become a first-rounder. Pace, inside play, off-puck instincts, projectable shooting, and passing skill waiting to be unlocked with a playmaking mind.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Brindley's figured out how to play slow while maintaining the breakneck pace that makes his game effective. He sprints, slows down when approaching a defender, then speeds up to get around them – it's a simple change of pace game, but it works. In one sequence, he completed a nasty toe-drag off the boards to the inside, exiting the more with crossovers. Pre-scanning on retrievals, turned his toes in the opposite direction he was planning to go, waited for contact, and then separated. Still gets pushed into the odd no-chance play, but he's better at delaying for options now. Legit skill as an off-puck scorer, whether that's by playing between checks or using a give-and-go to gain the middle. He'll be a fun player for next year.

Mitchell Brown: October 9th, 2021 - Omaha Lancers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

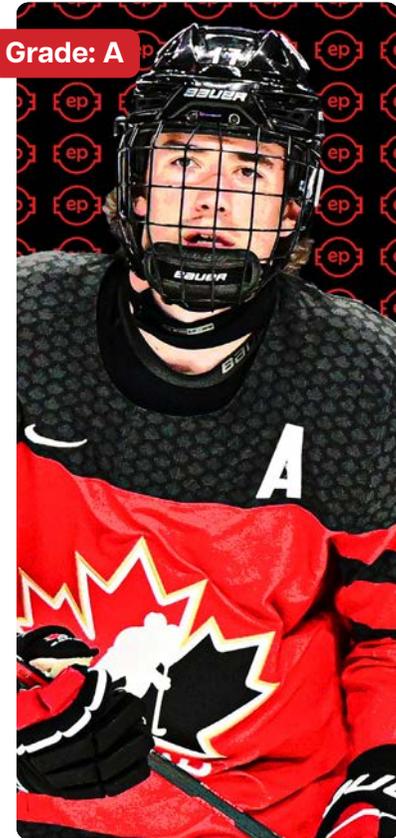
Brindley is all pace. He sprints straight-ahead, trying to outrace defenders at every possible turn. Scans and seems aware of options, but he won't make a play until he's beaten a defender. Ends up missing his teammates. The pace gets him stuck into low-percentage shots. Can't manipulate because he's so focused on outracing. His motor on the defensive end and retrievals is notable, but he didn't show any notable skills. Overall, he just plays too fast. The tools are interesting: knees pushed over toes, almost full extensions, and a top hand that floats across his body when handling instead of staying on his hip. Tons of passing skill too, just chooses to use it at the wrong times. Game will require serious reworking, but the tools and pace combination as a draft-minus-one leaves me optimistic.

J.D. Burke: September 24th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A much more subtle performance from Brindley in this contest, but he was still an absolute force. Some really advanced puckhandling habits revealed themselves -- the puck in his hip pocket, hands independent of his feet, etc. -- and he coupled that with some great look-off deception to create chances throughout. This kid doesn't take any shit either, which is important for someone his size -- he's scrappy. He's going to be a high pick in '23 if people can get over the size thing.

J.D. Burke: September 23rd, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Brindley was probably the best player on the ice in this contest. Just an electric performance from this kid. He's physical, plays between checks, and seems to love every minute of it. He's so good at positioning himself to achieve leverage going into puck battles. He gets low, and there's little the opposition can do to shake him from his spot on the ice. He picked up a rebound goal early, and then deflected a point shot past the goaltender for the overtime winner.



Grade: A

22 Brayden Yager

AGE 17.699 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Reilly Smith



Lethal Shooter



Tactician



Versatile

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

7

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Moose Jaw Warriors "A"	WHL	67	28	50	78	1.16

SCOUTING REPORT

This was setting up to be a big year for Brayden Yager. Almost a point a game in his draft-minus-one after going third overall to the Moose Jaw Warriors in the WHL Draft – everything was trending towards the 6-foot shoot-first centre, solidifying his status as a top-10 pick.

Things started off well enough, too. Yager looked great in his country's colours at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup in Red Deer, the unofficial start of the scouting season. The points came early and often when he returned to Moose Jaw in time for the regular season.

Yet our scouts, pretty much right across the board, left many of those viewings wanting to see more from Yager. Specifically, we wanted to see a little more diversity in his game. That he could be more than a blunt object, even a very forceful, effective one.

Because there's no denying the shot. That's always been the main draw with Yager. It's what powered him to 34 goals in his 16-year-old season in Moose Jaw. The Saskatoon product can fire the puck without breaking stride, off of either leg, and in tight spaces. It's a powerful, accurate, and sometimes even deceptive release.

"The puck absolutely explodes off his stick, no matter how compromised his body positioning appears to be during release,"

Brayden Yager

F | Moose Jaw Warriors | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 122.9



Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a Scout's Notebook on EP Rinkside. "He rips it off either leg in just about way: two-touch, one-timer, and catch-and-release. His inside leg wrister is his signature shot, tipping his weight over his outside edge while somehow keeping his chest up and exploding through the shot. He takes every single puck directly into his shooting pocket, prepared for the next play."

It seemed like Yager was poised to pair that shot with a projectable playmaking game this year, building off his late-season success in his draft-minus-one as a distributor. On the surface, mission accomplished – he doubled his assist totals year over year. This was mostly the byproduct of increased volume rather than craft, though.

Yager is more willing to pass the puck, but he lacks the creativity or the touch necessary to project to the NHL as an especially productive setup man. A lack of consistent scanning habits means that he's not prepared to strike with one- or two-touch passing to catch an opposing defence off guard. There's a distinct lack of problem-solving skills against pressure. On top of it all, there are just too many hope passes.

What you're getting with Yager at this juncture is more or less the same player that came into the season, at least as it relates to his skills profile. He's an intelligent, skilled shooter with a decent motor and a willingness to contribute in the defensive zone, but lacking some of the finer elements to project as a really high-end point producer at the next level.

Make no mistake though. This is a player with 30-goal upside, if things break right. A little more physical strength, maybe even an extra step or two as a skater, and Yager can get there.

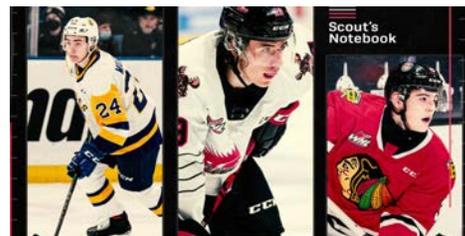
≡ LINKS & MEDIA



WHL Stock Watch: Welcome to the Andrew Cristall show



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup



Scout's Notebook: A quintet of early-season WHL standouts

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"We had him higher going into this season, he kind of disappointed me. Maybe there's something that clicks next season. Bit of a gamble pick for me in the first round." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"Looked like he was going to be in for a huge year after the Hlinka, but that might've been the high point of his season. I've been left with big questions about his consistency. His tools are high-end, but I don't think he's going to play C well enough to stick there in the NHL." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"From the speed to the shot, he has NHL tools. The numbers look good too, but I don't think it was unfair to expect a bit more from him this season. Too many nights where he just blended in, but he has talent in spades." - NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 19th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

No real change in Yager's game over the course of the season for me. I think his defensive zone play may have gotten better

and his puck management, too, but not significantly. He's a shooter, one who moves well away from the puck, who finds pockets of space, and sets up inside them for shots. He caught pucks and launched them on net repetitively in this one. Didn't score, but the shooting skills are impressive. I'm not sure he reads passing lanes and anticipates them as quickly as most top prospects. He's really good at what he does, but seems fixed in his strength and style of play. At the NHL level, he will need the right, complementary teammates to succeed. I doubt he becomes a true driver. His motor could improve further and his physicality, too, making him a shutdown winger or center, but he will likely remain a give-and-go player and an off-puck shooter first-and-firer. Can't drop him too much. There is a clear NHL game there and a high-end skill. I think he stays a top-20/25 prospect for us.

Cam Robison: April 18, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL Playoffs

Not your traditional Yager viewing as he only fired one shot on goal. But he was clearly focused on the playmaking side of things. I'm not sure he missed a single pass in this one - ending the night with three helpers. Two of them were quite nice, including a low-to-high dish while coming out the corner through a seam onto the tape of a downhill streaking mate. The other, in transition where he hit through another seam for the primary. He was efficient in the defensive zone, keeping his feet moving and getting low to support the defenders and provide outlet options for his wings. He was handling the puck well including several breakouts with control. The production is rolling this spring.

Cam Robison: April 15th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL Playoffs

A three point out for Yager in this one help Moose Jaw even their series 1-1 with the ICE. He scored both goals during an extended first period man-advantage. The first, he lurked around the high slot, waited to punch lower and timed it perfectly to receive and bang home a goal in tight. The second one was a classic downhill wrister from distance that beat the netminder clean. He failed to generate much at even-strength, but he was making smart passes all over the ice - including a couple more complex ones. He intercepted an elevated pass in the NZ, spun and sent a quick little backhand against the grain to move the offense back the other way. And in the offensive end made a nice no-look pass through a seam while selling shot and freezing the defensive scheme. He lost a couple of board battles down low and had a couple more work out despite being pinched off.

Would love to see him drive play more regularly - especially at 5-on-5. But this was a productive outing and a strong team win against a good team. We'll take that.

Mitchell Brown: April 5th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Yager scored by rushing the net and deflecting the pass off the post before tapping in the rebound. An underwhelming game. He missed passes, even easy ones. Way too hard, way too fast decisions on breakouts - he missed opportunities to advance the puck with just a bit of patience. He only makes plays in transition when there's a clean lane, and even then. He did show a bit more playmaking prowess, but nothing advanced. He doesn't look enough. The skating's an above-average projection, achieving a full knee bend and dropping his hips even deeper inside outside moves. The defence is a strength, too. He's an intelligent support player. Better breakouts will add more value. He's not dynamic, and while he has the tools to get there, it doesn't seem likely at this stage. A mid-six, powerplay scorer.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager fanned on his best look off the game at 5-on-5 - a one-timer off the cross-slot pass. Missed the net on his best powerplay look, too. He continues to show an exciting shot. He fires off either leg like an NHL. Pucks explode off his stick and the release is instant when needed. Keeps his blade closed as he walks into the lane, but he doesn't show much high-level deception. Otherwise, this was another quiet game from Yager with the puck. He plays off defenders, but never dictates their actions. He cuts inside on passive defenders, but won't create the gap himself. The passing has flashes - a slip pass under a stick or short-range pass off the boards - but there's not much here in his offensive game that looks top-nine-calibre than the shot (which is first-line-calibre). He's a really solid defensive player, however. He anticipates lanes, closes them, supports plays proactively, and sprints all-out on the backcheck when necessary. The skating's a clear above-average projection with room to add more explosiveness given his mechanical refinement. A fine late-first for me. Mid-six, powerplay scorer with some defence

and a chance to ascend a bit higher if the playmaking comes along.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Yager still hasn't developed the playmaking skills necessary to become a top-10 prospect in this draft. He's still an off-puck mover, supporter, scorer. He misses passes and doesn't set up some others well enough. I'm sure he will get better in that aspect over the next year or so, but I doubt he ever becomes that half-wall power play one quarterback. And that's too bad because he has the shot to occupy that position. One of his releases in this game was really impressive: catch-and-shoot with a reception far from his body with his feet pointed toward the boards, at a 90 degree angle. He still positions well offensively and defensively and he can rush the puck. The skating grade is a 6 for me. Great technique.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager did a good job of shadowing Connor Bedard on his shift. It's not just defensive effort with him, but also awareness. He takes the time to scan for lanes and anticipate the next play. He could become a penalty killer at the NHL level and there's a good chance that he retains a centre role. The only thing standing in his way to this role is his puck distribution. Same thing every report. No real change to the playmaking projection. We assume it will improve, but for the moment, he remains an off-puck scorer. He had multiple drive to the slot, well-timed drives, in this one. He scored on a breakaway, had one assist off a transition pass (a nice one), and another one because he missed a wide open net. Not sure what to make of him. I'm sure he's a first-rounder, but quite a vanilla one except for the scoring.

David St-Louis: February 8th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Not much evolution in Yager's game this season. The qualities are still the same. He moves extremely well away from the puck, finds space, anticipates the flow of the play, attacks inside and the net, and he release instantly from a variety of positions, create shot lanes...He also rotates well defensively and is engaged in the game. The skating looks projectable, maybe above NHL-average, but the passing decisions remain on the weaker side (moving the puck to covered teammates, not identifying the best play, not opening up passing lanes...). Playmaking usually improves in prospects. We can maybe bank on that, but right now he's far behind other top prospects in that aspect. He looks like an off-puck, complementary scorer, and defender in the NHL.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

We're at the mid-way point of the season and I'm still not convinced of Yager's playmaking instincts. He did find a couple of teammates open in the slot, but the errand passes from the half-wall weren't as convincing. He got a breakaway with his speed; his skating continues to be one of the best in this draft class. He didn't pop all that much surrounding by talents, but by comparison, his tools still shine when focusing on him. He has all the solutions to his problems in his game already.

Mitchell Brown: January 17th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager had a couple of moments of skill, but otherwise this was a quiet 5-on-5 performance. Touched a puck behind him to the front of his body, deked around an opponent, and fired off a chance. He followed up plays and dropped pucks back and eliminated sticks. He struggled in transition, only gliding with the puck and not establishing body positioning. Opponents killed his attacks before they started. He forced passes through closed lanes – again, the glide. If he were on his outside edges, he would've found a better lane. Playmaking is just short range passes, rarely through defenders. Didn't even get much of a look at his shot. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Another Yager performance with a muted 5-on-5 impact, although he had a couple of chances. The release appeared on his power play goal, a catch-and-release wrister short side. Picked up a high-danger chance with an identical shot off the rush. One sequence suggested legitimate playmaking skill: taking a pass across his body, faking the shot, then dropping it back for a chance. The forechecking and backchecking were consistently impactful, anticipating and angling. But there was also a lot

of nothing. He struggles to create at 5-on-5 because his off-puck game isn't high-end (lacks timing and tends to take a more reactive off-puck role) and he's not a dynamic transition option. Lots of glides into forced passes or straight-line attacks that get killed along the boards. He shows a lot more creativity and skill on special teams, even the penalty kill. Another game where he didn't look like a first-round candidate. Upside looked more limited with a long road to get there.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager accomplished very little in this game. He arrived in space at the right moments, largely through the same methods (staying behind the puck carrier, controlling speed, then popping into the slot as they cutback or enter a glide). The way he shoots from tricky positions remains so impressive. But he didn't show any puck carrying, defence, or board ability in this game. Firkus did all the work, and he was along for the ride. If his off-puck reads were just a bit better and playmaking more prevalent, he would've had the puck more in this game. He didn't look like a first-round candidate in this outing.

J.D. Burke: December 10th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Not what I'd call the most impressive performance from Yager. He picked up a goal by finishing a 2-on-1 rush with a shot that barely squeaked past the goaltender, but was otherwise absent as a shooting threat – one play where took a puck off the half-wall and to the inside for a clean look aside. Mostly, I thought Yager's neutral zone and rush playmaking stood out in this game. Let's just say, not a performance fitting of a top prospect – but that happens to the best of 'em, so nothing to worry about either.

David St-Louis: December 3th, 2022 - Red Deer vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager has a really defined game, easy to understand. That's pretty rare in prospects and that deserves some recognition. He's a support artist -- right place, right time, in transition and in the offensive zone. Much better away from the puck, he knows how to find space and how to set up his shot. The skating shows up, at times; it looks like an above-average tool (strong posture) and he's a good defensive element at this level, playing the center position well, its spacing and duties. The playmaking lags behind the rest of his abilities, however. It should develop over the next few years, but he just has trouble balancing deception and precision. His ideas are good, but he doesn't check to see if they are viable; he just throws pucks in lanes. He needs either more awareness or more manipulation to open up those lanes.

Daniel Gee: November 23rd, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Firkus and Yager struggled to really connect in this one and the later was the worse for it. Yager slept-walked through much of this game. A limited factor in transition, he was filling well off-puck supporting carriers by driving the middle of the ice -- wasn't really a pass target for any puck carriers throughout. On-puck is where Yager flashed more ability. In the first he snapped a three line breakout pass in motion off a defensive zone recovery. Later, Yager executed a weight-shift manipulation handle on an entry, stopping up to add a delay element. He didn't capitalise on the newfound time with the puck, rushing a pass into the middle, leading to TO. Defence-to-offence was a theme -- one of Yager's best sequences saw him anticipate a pass in his defensive zone and instantly push a 4-on-1 counter attack. He doesn't protect well -- carrying in front of his body, even when facing pressure. Yager was much more prevalent in sustained pressure. He was finding open pockets of ice, setting his stick, in the hopes of leveraging his shooting. Yager did this well in the first, but heeled a one-timer badly. His forechecking habits are all here, shadows puck carriers, pressures to the outside, but he lacks the physical element needed to create a stop. The rest of Yager's touches in this game were pretty poor -- deflected slip attempts, bobbled receptions. Not the type of play-driving performance one would expect from such a highly touted prospect.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Yager's a bit boring. He's a shooter with a huge arsenal of shots and the instincts to score in the NHL. Understands how to get open, shoot off the pass, adapt his release to the situation in front of him. He's a bit trigger-happy and not much of a play-builder, but he's effective as a passer. Draws in defenders before passing, adding a bit of deception when necessary to secure the lane. He takes advantages, furthers the possession, but doesn't build especially well on top of what his teammates have

done unless there's a scoring chance immediately available. He's a defensively aware player who puts in the extra effort on many players. He'll play, he'll score, but I'm doubtful that he'll be much of a driver in the NHL.

David St-Louis: October 14th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Not a very interesting game. Yager didn't commit any big mistake, but the possession plays were disjointed and infrequent. Moose Jaw just couldn't organise their attack at 5-on-5 and so we only got glimpses of Yager's skill. His puck management could be better overall; he tends to fire on net from too far away and to get rid of the puck a little too quickly in his zone, when he has space to make better plays. He's positioned well defensively, but also lacks awareness of opposing passing lanes.

J.D. Burke: October 9th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Kind of a quiet game from Yager, but I suppose that's par for the course on the wrong side of a 4-1 drubbing. The only noteworthy offensive moment that I can think of was a feed through a clear lane from the offensive blue line to his linemate for what should've been an easy goal at the backdoor. Otherwise, Yager was largely limited to the perimeter, unable to gain the inside or produce many memorable touches. There was one opportunity off-puck for a good look in the slot, but Yager overshot his spot and missed out on the play as a result. Some good work on the forecheck and in the defensive zone. Yager cuts opponents off at the hands, drives through their hips, and consistently displays an understanding of how to generate leverage under his opponents. So, there's that.

Cam Robinson: October 8th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

The way the puck jumps off of Yager's stick is wildly impressive. He generates so much power and leans every ounce of strength into it, yet it comes off so quickly and requires little wind up. This one showed that shot, but it also showed his new sense of play creation. He was moving himself, moving the puck, forcing the opposition to adjust to him and his feints and then working the lanes. I liked his off puck instincts to find space in motion and then attack holes. Defensively he had been a bit passive at times last year. He was active and engaged through this one - exploring ways to jump and force a turnover without being too aggressive. I really like this player.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager's playmaking improvements seem to have transferred to the WHL. On the powerplay, he completed fast one-touch plays and manipulated defenders to open lanes with the shot threat. Elsewhere, he was a consistent creator. He delayed to wait for his teammates to skate their routes before feathering pucks through. Won battles and spun pucks back out into the slot. Recognized that multiple defenders incoming means there's an open teammate, and promptly connected. Not every touch was perfect, but it's bringing the rest of his game together. His goal was the culmination of the delay, vision, and give-and-go game. Shot remains a strength, even with its oddities. He primarily shoots off the outside edge of his inside leg, leaning so far over the puck that he tilts shoulders back across to stay balanced. Regardless, pucks explode off his stick and he's quite deceptive. Transition game's a bit more hit-and-miss, where he's prone to missing his target or failing to identify them altogether. High crossover use and understands how to play the slow game. High degree of difficulty on many transition plays, too. He's a potential top-10 player in this group, with clear top-six upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager often falls into the background, playing the off-puck shooter role with success, but the moments of play-driving ability are exciting. He uses the middle, deceives (and skates at incoming pressure to fake them out), and uses a ton of shorter lateral passes. When he's in sniper mode, he shows NHL instincts, mechanics, and skill. He sprints his routes, stops his space, stays between defenders, and reloads above the play, even in the offensive zone. Always building speed towards the net, even during in-zone play. Once receiving the puck, he instantly puts it on his hip, prepared to immediately make the next play (shoot, pass, carry), including along the boards and during cutbacks. Catch-and-release wrist is powerful and deceptive. His outside leg shot is an NHL shot, adapting his release to the pass without any sacrifice in power. Two-touch shots, even taking pucks off the backhand directly into his wrist. If there's a puck, he can shoot it off the pass. No wind up. No dust off. Exciting player. Looks

like a top 10 candidate.

David St-Louis: September 30th, 2022 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager looked like the high-skill player that I heard a lot about in this game, although only in flashes. He can release off passes and in-stride, even prioritising the in-stride motion in situations where most would just fire from a stop. He passed the puck deceptively and smartly, to the teammate with the most amount of space or with the best angle at the net. His rushes featured a lot of crossovers and his feet and hand patterning were distinct, creating more deceptiveness. He seems to have a lot of stickhandling range. Nothing too impressive overall, but a good performance nonetheless.

David St-Louis: September 24th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Yager struggled to connect passes in this game, forcing many through closed lanes. I don't think it's a lack of processing; it's more probable that he lacks playmaking tools. He just doesn't know what to try when his options are closed and seems really dependant on his teammates making the next play evident for him. He will get better and more predictable teammates at higher levels, but his assists numbers could be limited. Otherwise, the off-puck game is high-level; controls his space, his speed, sneaks in between defenders, great timing...And the shot is ever-dangerous, especially the in-stride, inside leg wrister. The defensive game was generally on point, too, both in terms of effort and awareness.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Whenever Yager gets the puck, it feels like he's going to score. The puck explodes off his stick, dropping his weight over his inside leg while keeping his chest up. The release is sudden, even when there's a bit of a wind up. Masks the placement of his shot inside the release and alters the timing. He also showed some playmaking this game, working against the grain before passing back into the slot and turning good scoring chances into great ones by making the extra pass. He looks like a top player for the 2023 Draft.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

This was probably Yager's best game of the round robin portion of the tournament, showing more skill as a distributor than I'm accustomed to seeing and continuing to wreak havoc on opposition netminders with his wrist shot. Showed a ton of patience with the puck on his stick, letting plays develop rather than rushing a low percentage shot or just funnelling the play towards a sea of bodies. One passing play, in particular, stands out; a picture perfect against the grain feed through a sea of bodies that resulted in a scoring chance. Looks like a middle of the first round talent in this class, the usual caveat at this stage being that it's early.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Yager scored with that inside leg wrister again, jumping onto his inside leg as he drops his weight over his stick. Generates the power laterally, but, rather impressively, bows his shoulders back over his base to stay balanced. Also has better knee bend of his shot compared to last season. The playmaking was inconsistent in this game. There were a couple of reactionary passes that failed. That was also a play where he circled the net and found the net pass, and another when he gained the zone and slipped a puck under a stick for a secondary assist. Playmaking growth will likely determine just how high we rank Yager, and the early returns have been positive. He's also become a solid defender, backtracking effectively and timing his sprints at the right moment. A potential top-10 prospect.

Cam Robinson: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

A standout performance offensively from Yager. He was really sending defensive coverages for a miss with his blend of look-off passes, fake shots before slipping pucks into the middle, carving inside and dishing out before driving the net front. He grabbed two goals of his own, because that's what he seemingly does. His ability to catch and release in flight gives you a glimpse of the type of dangerous transition finisher he could develop into. He was good along the wall and got low and supported his mates in

the defensive end. A really strong outing.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Yager wasn't doing the heavy lifting in terms of driving play, but whenever he got the puck in the offensive zone, he turned it into a scoring chance. Wrist shot mechanics looked easily above-average; ability to adapt angle before the shot, pristine catch-and-release wrister. Playmaking really popped here, too, with some great slips and regular passes to the slot. Impressive display of off-puck instincts on one of his two goals, getting lost from the defenceman before offering his stick for a perfectly-timed pass to the back post.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Yager scored twice in this game, showing both off-puck instincts to slip behind the defender and into space at the perfect moment and a deceptive shoot on the powerplay, showing the goaltender far-side with his blade before going short-side. But it was the playmaking that popped in this game. It's no longer second. He fakes shots before passing, looks to the middle instead of taking low-percentage shots, and even manipulates defenders with eye deception. The handling allows him to problem-solve pressure, but he didn't overhandle – he moved the puck as quickly as possible. Scoring instincts, deception, playmaking, pace, and a small-area game – he looked like a potential top-line forward in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 31st, 2021 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Quiet game for Yager, beyond the first-period snipe: open blade during wind up but still blasted the puck past the goalie. I don't think he's individually dynamic, or at least, I haven't seen it yet. His hands and feet operate in the same rhythm which limits his manipulation potential, but he's so fast within it that it won't be too limiting. Consistency finds space above the puck, swooping down from higher in the zone. Some playmaking limitations, as he consistently failed to recognize the best option. Passing often seems like a last resort rather than an instinctual decision. Perhaps not an elite player, but he has top-six upside.

Mitchell Brown: November 6th, 2021 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Yager's shot defies physics. He shoots off a near-straight inside leg with his toes pointing away from his target. He drops his torso over the stick to generate downforce, often turning his body to face the net while leaving his feet behind. In theory, he should have very little control of the resulting shot. It should be sweepy and weak. Instead, it's a bullet. He consistently creates havoc with his shot -- never see him just shoot straight at the goaltender. His handling skills and off-puck instincts play equal parts in setting up the shot. In Moose Jaw's roaming structure, he might be the only player who truly understands how to both create changes in coverage and find himself in space to shoot. A consistent presence on the forecheck through anticipation and hand-eye coordination. It's easy to see the top-line upside already. He's a dynamic problem-solver with play-driving ability and a clear path to improvement.

Mitchell Brown: October 2nd, 2021 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Up front, Yager's already the play-driver for Moose Jaw. He's always in the middle of the play -- he just refuses to be denied the puck. His positioning helps, too. He's always open off-puck, ready to receive and fire or deke through a defender. Involved in the DZ, scanning for threats and eliminating them. The shot's the biggest selling point with the way that he shoots off the pass is already NHL-calibre. Wrister's a bit strange (he drops his upper body over his stick instead of getting lower body flexion and shows a strong preference for shooting off the inside leg), but it's powerful and the placement is slick. More of a fast-twitch handler than an advanced manipulator, but he still easily carves through defenders at this level. Deceptive when given a bit of space in the OZ, but too straight-line in the NZ. Yeah, he's probably going to be a star.

Grade: A



23 Tom Willander

AGE 17.597 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Mikey Anderson, Dmitry Orlov



Motor



Evasive



Play Killer

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

5

Motor

5

Neutral Zone
Defender

5

Shutdown
Defenceman

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	39	4	21	25	0.64
Rögle BK	SHL	2	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	3	5	8	1.14
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	3	9	12	0.63

SCOUTING REPORT

Tom Willander has been among this draft's biggest risers on most rankings, including ours. To our credit, he impressed us early, as evidenced by our game reports, and it was more of a case of growing admiration rather than being caught totally off guard by his skill level.

Then with an exceptionally strong showing at the U18s, Willander made himself a consensus first-round pick across the industry. Perhaps even someone destined for the first 15 picks.

Willander's value stems from the combination of high-end skating and motor. He's always engaged defensively, using his dynamic posture and evasive footwork to guide attackers away from the middle and break up plays along the boards. When you add the fact that he's both strong and skilled physically and relentlessly competes for every puck – he's a nightmare to play against. Even if you start or manage to gain an advantage, Willander has the quickness to recover most of the time. Simply put: He's one of the most projectable defensive players in the entire draft.

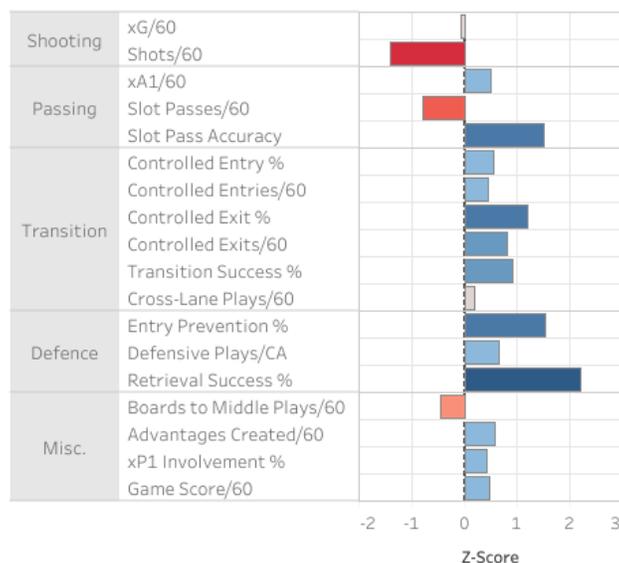
Also elusive with the puck, Willander was among the better breakout artists at the J20 level this season. He was quite conservative with his play at the start of the season, often deferring to his partner and moving the puck quickly instead of trying to take full advantage of his skating. The U18s offered an example of what Willander is capable of when he's constantly activating, filling up space and overall maximizing his impact in transition.

Tom Willander

D | Rögle BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 180.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Willander's defensive reads are a strength, but high-end offensive instincts are currently missing from his game. He can consistently create potential openings and advantages with his feet, but couldn't often capitalize on them.

As Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis summarized in one of his game reports, "Willander lacks the awareness and processing inside his moves to really make the best play. He activates, shifts alongside the blue, and makes some cheeky 1-on-1 moves and passes, but the offensive reads and creativity lag behind the toolkit."

A reported move to Boston College in his draft-plus-one season should serve him well in this regard.

Even if Willander doesn't end up taking significant steps offensively, his floor as a prospect remains high. Becoming a complementary No. 4 blueliner who provides a lot of defensive value through his skating, motor, and physicality while being able to move the puck competently is definitely in the cards, even without any major developmental leaps. And if the offence does take off? Watch out..

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout's Notebook: Checking in on Felix Nilsson, Tom Willander, and David Edstrom

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Pretty boring player for me in a good way. Consistent, good things happen with him on the ice." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's good. He's good. He might be in the end of the first round for me. I don't think that he has the creativity of an offensive defenceman, but the mobility is great. He's a size up on most players. He can pivot off of checkers and take off. The sense isn't really creative, but there aren't any concerns. The skating is very good for someone that size." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"A right-shot D with great skating and some size. Can play on both sides of the puck." - NHL scout, May 2023

"National team defenceman who I would argue has the best skating ability in the league. He is difficult to beat in one-on-one situations. He is very good at driving the play and has developed his game with the puck. His absolute strength is his skating ability. It is rare to see a skill that stands out as much as his skating." - Rögle BK J20 head coach Max Bolin, December 2022

"A defensive general who plays a simple and strong defensive game. A defenceman who is incredibly solid and defensively strong." - Rögle BK J20 head coach Max Bolin, November 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

Willander was very engaged. He played everyone as physically as he could, pinning, hitting, and shoving everyone in his vicinity.

He established body position on pucks and battled, sometimes two-vs-one, to stop the opposition's cycle and gain back control of the puck. I didn't see much from him offensively overall. That should be his team, too, in the NHL. I doubt he ever becomes this powerplay quarterback. I still think he's a shutdown guy with supplementary offence. A puck-mover, but more of a breakout artist than a playmaker.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Willander seems to kill the cycle with more ease than Sandin Pellikka. He made good passes on breakouts, carried the puck out, and transformed puck steals into offence. He's quite elusive and can run around the ice. He's playing a lot at this tournament and his game never seems to break apart.

Lassi Alanen: April 25th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Germany - U18s

Pretty much the same things were on display here compared to the previous viewings. Some missed passing plays, lacking accuracy under pressure, but the raw skating ability was enough for him to create off the rush against weaker competition. A couple of really impressive moments of edgework near the point, too. At the moment, he doesn't quite have the sense or the instincts to take full advantage of the tools, but with the right development staff, it should be teachable to a level where he can play in the NHL. The defensive projection remains a top-4 worthy given the skating, the physicality and the motor.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Willander sometimes plays too fast for his own good. He's a bit of the Oliver Moore of defenceman. He doesn't have the smoothness of Sandin Pellikka, but he compensates with pure energy and work rate. Many of his plays do work, but I wonder which ones he will be able to carry with him in the NHL. He's a talented defensive engager, a physical and effective one. That will stick for sure. Or at least I think it will.

Lassi Alanen: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - U18s

Another great game from Willander, arguably even better than the previous one, though against lesser competition. The concerns about his instincts and sense with the puck remain. He tends to have moments where he passes to a covered teammate when he's not even pressured and sometimes his skating gets him in trouble where he doesn't have the problem-solving skills to get out of. But man, the tools are just great. Skated lapses around the opposition multiple times, activated down the middle, then made a good drop pass play for a high-danger look. He's a bit different as a skater compared to Sandin Pellikka, but as good or even better in certain aspects like raw rushing speed. Defensively, he was really good at killing plays along the boards and getting back possession. Wasn't challenged as much off the rush in this one.

Cam Robinson: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - U18s

A really strong performance from Willander in this one. He was activating into the rush, filling lanes, attacking soft and dangerous portions of the ice. With the puck, he was making mostly clean outlets and rushing the puck with his feet when given the opportunity. You can tell that those rush attempts are often by the seat of his pants and he can run into some trouble, but overall, it was a positive element. On the defensive side, he looked great defending the rush. He gapped up really well - even against speed, and was quick to angle players off, use his stick, and if that didn't work, keep them to the outside and less threatening.

Lassi Alanen: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

A solid game from Willander all-around. Pushed the pace with the puck, showcased his plus-level skating to beat forecheckers and evade pressure on breakouts and at the point. There was one particularly nice play where he was able to turn and separate from his man, skate towards the goal line, then dish a nice passing attempt to the slot that partially hit its target but wasn't able to be properly received in tight. The idea was solid, though. The defensive potential was also visible on few instances. Maintained a high motor, both with and without the puck.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

It's becoming clear to me that, more than his skating and handling skills, more than his physicality, it's Willander's motor that is his greatest asset. He's hyper-energetic, hyper-pacey. He breaks the opposition through his work rate and mobility -- by moving his feet so quickly that they can't keep up. It's not a translatable recipe, however. Willander will need to develop better offensive instincts. He makes the right plays, but it's just that the base of his offensive game is using his tools to create an advantage and then find a way to leverage it. Only high-end movers and handlers can operate that way and score in the NHL. And Willander is not quite at that level yet. The really good: battled for every puck, established inside positioning on every retrieval, boxed and gapped hard on opponents, escaped them consistently, looked for the better play in possession... It was a great showing from him, offensive and defensively. He cemented his status as one of the best defensive prospects in this class.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

While the Canadians basically no-showed this one, Willander looked really strong. He has obvious tools at his disposal - firstly, the skating. He's a clear plus skater. He has good quickness and agility - able to shake pressure on the forecheck and free himself up to make an outlet or carry it with control out of the zone. He can ramp up to a high top speed in a line. His backwards skating and footwork mirroring was clean against the rush, and he's quick to supple weak side support in the Dzone, front at the netfront, and be physical when the opportunity arises. He played with a lot of pace in this one and it really helped keep the wheels turning offensively for Sweden and stop Canada from getting much going while he was on the ice.

This guy could turn out to be the best Swedish defender from the crop.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Gold medal game. Tom had a good but not excellent game. Although he scored the game winner back door after walking in behind the defence, he didn't dominate offensively throughout the game. He had some bad plays with the puck under pressure. The best part was instead his defensive play. With impressive four-way mobility and aggression he defends very well both on the rush and in his own end. He wins the puck an impressive amount of the times he engages in a defensive battle and retrieves the puck for his team and makes a play in the next situation. Rögle is always a better team when he is on the ice.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Tom was the best player on the ice. He was a defensive stud, playing aggressively, tight gaps and breaking up passes. He skated back and retrieved the puck a couple of times when a break away or two-on-one the other way was about to happen. His puck handling from the backend was very solid. Hard crisp passes to create controlled breakouts. He rarely skated with the puck like he did earlier in the season. He played in every key situation and showed activation and aggression on both ends with good timing.

If there was any negative, he missed a gap on a goal against and wasn't able to shut that play down. It wasn't only on him but he could have read it a bit better. He also gets a bit stiff in his hands a few times.

He looks like he will be an NHL player down the road.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Tom played a big part in this game that Rögle won to advance to the Final 4. He played in all situations and his skating and puck handling are so well schooled. His crossover technique and puck handling at the same time makes him hard to stop.

His decision-making is yet not impressive. He scans for options but often finds low percentage plays or turns the puck over. He had some good looks offensively but with poor execution.

His mobility, puck technique while skating is a very translatable asset. He will play in college and get time to challenge his

strength and learn how to use his best assets to better use.

David St-Louis: March 29th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Willander is a bit bland and the offensive reads aren't yet fully there, but I love his game still because he's easy to project. Sometimes, you just want to avoid a puzzle and get an NHL and that's what Willander is. High-end four-way mobility (takes pucks in movement, steps around opponents with a fake and an acceleration), physicality (reverse hits to secure pucks, pins opponents on the boards, closes on them fast...), and technical skills on defence (angling, stick work and positioning...). He was more offensive than defensive in this game and did concede a couple of rush chances against because of it, but overall, another solid performance from him.

Lassi Alanen: March 12th, 2023 - Rögle BK - Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

This was probably the weakest showing I've seen from Willander this season. He was struggling a lot more under pressure than previously, trying to escape with all sorts of weird moves like passing to himself using the boards while spinning away from the pressure at the same time. Sometimes he was able to hold onto possession but didn't create any advantage, other times he turned the puck over. Even got beaten wide off the rush for a high-danger chance once. Left questions about the overall hockey sense in addition to the offensive instincts, though this was mostly an outlier performance considering the entire sample size. Wasn't able to advance the play in transition that much, either, which limited his OZ time and added to the amount of shifts he had to spend defending. The highlight of the game was the one quality breakout pass he was able to hit down the middle that ended up netting him a secondary assist.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK - Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Not a spectacular showing from Willander by any means. I'm not sold on the offensive hockey sense. We see some flashes of it, like when he went for a well-timed activation down the middle to complete a give-and-go sequence for a scoring chance. But he's not consistently maxing out the opportunities his tools give him. One of the most mobile defenders in the draft, for sure. He almost broke one pair of ankles at the point with a powerful feint ala Cale Makar. His ability to walk the point is simply very good, even if he doesn't have the instincts to maximise its value. Just get him into a good program with development staff and he has all the tools from skating/handling perspective to blossom. Defence remains projectable.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Willander lacks the awareness and processing inside his moves to really make the best play. He activates, shifts alongside the blue, and makes some cheeky one-on-one moves and passes, but the offensive reads and creativity lag behind the toolkit. He still projects as a shutdown defenceman with occasional puck-moving ability at this stage, but the tools could help him develop into so much more. He's a great project to take on, but one you draft 20-45, not really top-20.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

Willander has a large defensive range. His four-way mobility stands out just as much as Sandin Pellikka's at times. He created entries with his skating and puck protection abilities, found solution to forechecking pressure, and even lead the attack on the rush a couple of times. His point creativity is expanding as the season moves on. It's like a switch turned on when the calendar turned to 2023. And his defensive game is highly projectable. I'm not sure he's an offensive defenceman in the NHL (he might just be one at this level where he has more time and space) but the skating and defensive attention is highly projection.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Stock rising. Fast. Willander was one of the very best players in this game and the best Swedish defenceman. The rush defence and in zone defence was on point again. He's scanning and sticking to his check. He makes timely interventions. But it's really the offence that is starting to shine more and more. He's borrowed some of Sandin Pellikka tricks with the way he fakes forecheckers and attacks up ice. He attracts before passing and seems to read the game a play ahead at times. He's mobile,

smooth, and technically proficient (to an extent). The NHL base is very strong. Not sure he's a top-four defenceman just yet, but a safe number four with some offensive flashes seems like a realistic projection. He's one of those prospects who could pop out of nowhere, too.

Cam Robinson: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Oh, I liked this showing from Willander. A lot. He controlled the game in all three zones out there for Sweden. His approach against the rush is really poised and calm. He times his stick checks really well and angles players away from the middle well. When he's on the opposite side of the carrier, he doesn't give up much space and then closes in quickly to disrupt the pass of smother his man. The skating is really clean - nice long, fluid stride and recovery that generates ample power. He's wasn't overly creative with his east-west game or adding spins and loads of cutbacks, but he still rushed it well and transitioned it quickly with the pass to get the offensive rolling... often using a quick fake and shift to beat a forechecker and then asses on the move.

He looked like a first rounder in this one.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Willander's tools remain the big selling point when arguing his case. The skating continues to look really good, comfortably above-average projection. He uses his edges really well, especially notable when he's cooking at the point. Pulled off the classic Makar move of receiving a pass, baiting the defender with a weight shift and then exploding to the other direction. He's obviously not as explosive as someone like Makar, but the foundation is really good to start to build upon. The sense is a bit trickier of a projection. Defensively, I feel like he reads the game well and he's not dumb offensively, either, but he still hasn't figured out how to maximise his tools properly. He's very much a problem-solver (without high-level problem-solving skills) instead of a meticulous planner, often skates into trouble as of result. Willander's future outlook is going to depend quite a lot on the team that drafts him. But the floor is relatively high, too. His projection as a rush and in-zone defender alone could make him an NHLer.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

This was a lot better game from Willander compared to my previous viewing. Made far fewer mistakes with the puck, using the kind of controlled, possession-focused style he showed a lot in the first half of the season. He's starting to flex his skating skills on breakouts more often, beating the pressure outright instead of always deferring, although he still does the latter a lot, too. The edgework at the point is also very intriguing, even if currently he doesn't always know how to use it to the full extend. One might think the right development staff could really mold him into something exciting based on the tools. And he does have some flashes of competent puck-moving, but he also often skates himself into trouble and doesn't see some of the more difficult passing lanes. The defensive game remains projectable, especially the rush defence was on point for the most part in this one. His skating allowed him to be on the backfoot at start but to recover and break up the play on one notable occasion. Shows willingness to play physically, too. He's a project as a pick, but one that I'd be willing to take relatively high, if he keeps this up.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

This was my first viewing after Willander's injury that kept him out of the lineup for a while. Not sure if it was related, but it wasn't quite as effective as I've been accustomed to with him. Made more mistakes with the puck on breakouts, not moving it quickly enough and getting smothered by the pressure (often tried to use the mobility to circumvent these issues but couldn't quite do it) or the passes weren't simply connecting, missing by an inch (though some of them were just badly received). Walked away from the game with two assists, still, one of them being a beautiful stretch pass down the middle for a breakaway. Willander's skating is proven to create advantages, and at times his effortless speed reminds me of Sandin Pellikka. But he doesn't have similar offensive instincts, deferring to his teammates on odd timings when he could still keep pushing himself.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 8th, 2023 - Mora IK vs Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Willander is an above average skater. His skating technique isn't perfect but he is hard to catch. He uses crossovers all the time

in his north-to-south skating and rarely uses more flowing effortless long strides. His crossover technique generates speed with both long and short strides and that makes him slippery for opponents and he uses it to manipulate with also. It's impressive to see him travel with the puck in a zick-zack kind of style. His skating is strong in all four directions. He can easily use his backwards skating one-on-one defensively but also offensively. He can in transition fool an opponent with deking in a space behind him and quickly change direction forward again. He can also travel sideways across the blue line with the puck, both backward and forward. His balance is centred more in his upper body which makes him forward leaning in physical battles, which is a weakness. It also affects his reach negatively sometimes.

The other tools in the toolbox are harder to assess in this game. He tends to travel too much with the puck, but who can blame him with that skating at this age though. It looks fun to try stuff. I do think he missed a couple of opportunities to make better plays. He is not as skilled in his passing breakouts as when he skates out with the puck. He has some good passing plays, but also some not so good passes. I like that he never dumped the puck out though.

He didn't show any really creative stuff using just his hands. His puck control is okay at speed and he moves the puck well in short ranges in front of him with quick hands. He can control the puck far from his body as well as close which helps him to cover the puck. He lost most of the puck battles where he didn't start with the possession. He could cut off space well though. He wasn't strong either with his stick or physically in those situations in this game.

I like his defensive positioning and he is quick to use his stick to cover gaps. He actively scans to read defensive situations. I also like how he activates offensively and joins the attack. He plays to his instincts and can, with help of his skating ability, have more than one option and escape pressure if his first passing instinct gets covered.

He has both standout tools as well as holes in his game. I would like to see consistently better passing decisions and less travelling for his play from the backend to feel translatable. I would also like to see better board play and successful break ups than in this game.

For the draft, I think Willander is at least a second round prospect at this point. His development is trending in a good direction. You make a bet on above average skating, proactiveness in all three zones and decent hands. He has potential in both his defensive game and his offensive game. When I saw him on the smaller rink at the WJAC he handled pressure well and looked aware in tight spaces. Here, he had more time and space and did not look as smart in his decisions.

David St-Louis: January 7th, 2022 - Leksands IF vs Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

And there are the flashes! Willander is definitely capable of offence. He doesn't the smart, instant reads of a Cagnoni for example, but he can fake and evade and spin on opponents, change speed to separate from them and hit two-zone stretch passes. The offensive hockey sense is a below-average projection at this stage, but the tools and the desire to create will likely make him pop inside a more structured system -- if he continues to push his game and try those plays. Great defence here: risk mitigation, positioning, aware away from the puck, tight gaps...The skating looks like a 6. He's mobile and agile and the posture is sound. The handling skills are at least a 5, maybe more. I'm more excited about his projection now.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada East vs. Sweden - WJAC

Tom Willander was the best player on the ice. He pinned and entangled attackers low in the zone and tried a bunch of controlled breakout passes in situations where most players at the tournament just throw the puck away. He battled for positioning everywhere on the ice and showed his fast mobility in puck-moving sequences. He does play fast, very fast. He looked adaptable and unphased by pressure. He didn't force many plays despite the pace he played at. His rush defence was on point and his mobility continues to shine.

Jimmy Hamrin: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs. Sweden - WJAC

Willander had a strong defensive performance in this game and he played a lot and in all key situations of the game. He battled hard, played physical and was proactive to break up play. His neutral zone play was consistently strong shutting down Canada

but missed a few gaps on the rush in his own end. He got caught on some long shifts too where he battled but was visibly tired leaning on his stick to catch a breath when he could.

In his offensive game he played simply to move the puck. He went on first instincts and showed awareness in pressured situations. He knew where his teammates were without needing to look in that direction because he had pre-scanned. He did not create a lot of offensive value though and it was either short passes or puck travels. His four-way mobility is valuable to his game in those situations to gain space. He moved the puck well out of danger often. In the offensive zone he is active and is good at passing the puck to each side on the power play. He opens up shooting lanes for others moving smoothly sideways and then delivers a pass on the move. He had no slot passes or particularly creative solutions offensively. He can fake a bit with his upper body to manipulate before a pass. Most of his shifts were in Sweden's own end, I would say.

In this game he showed a lot of physical engagements to get to board and to battle in tight places. He is strong on his skates but leans a bit forward in the battles which hurts his balance and reach a little at times.

David St-Louis: December 13th, 2022 - Sweden vs USA - WJAC

Willander's mobility is his biggest asset. His game is based on his rush defence and his ability to spin on forecheckers to evade them, something he did multiple times in this game. He can also make simple passing plays on breakouts. I'm not sure how valuable his whole game is in an NHL projection perspective, however. He needs to provide a bit more exciting, projectable plays than just the transition defence and the occasion escape on regroup.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Willander's strengths remain clear. He's strong on retrievals with strong scanning habits, always looking to turn the forechecker's feet one way and then explode or pass to the other direction. Mobility and skating overall rate at least slightly above-average on our scale. Shuts down opposing rushes effectively, either breaking up the play early (right as the puck is coming to them) or at least forcing them to dump it in. Flashes the ability to beat pressure at the point, too, which shouldn't be a surprise considering he already does it a lot in the DZ. In-zone defensive reads are a bit inconsistent and reactionary, even if he scans a lot off-puck, too.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Five Nations

I've come to appreciate Willander's tools in this tournament. He has made many plays, but not many egregious mistakes either. He hits the next open teammates, defends the rush well, is physical, at times, and he supports his partner well. I still want to see more flashes of higher-end ability before ranking him, however.

Lassi Alanen: October 23rd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Willander does a lot of really good things. His habits are strong all-around, pre-scanning before puck touches and on retrievals, waits and sucks in the forechecker before passing. Cutbacks are mechanically sound and effective, especially at this level. Accuracy on the breakouts was mostly on point aside from few hiccups. One really nice Cale Makar -esque move on retrieval where he turned to face the incoming pressure, turned the forechecker's with a feint combination, then exploded the other way. With pretty decent quickness, stuff like that makes me think he could project as a slightly above-average skater. Still not very sure about the offensive upside, didn't do much at 5-on-5 aside from point shots and simple plays.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

I'm quite fond of Willander's game. He's clearly a pretty smart player, looking to maintain possession in every turn, making calculated plays in every zone. Knows how to delay on the breakout, then cut back and pass through pressure. Also knows how to suck in the forechecker before making a simple D-to-D pass for an easy breakout. He showed that he can also carry the puck, showing pretty solid elusiveness and overall skating ability to do so. Avoided defending the cycle by preventing clean entries and did a pretty good job overall at breaking up plays early. Flashed some intriguing skill as an OZ passer and a power

play quarterback. Not a big shot threat from the point, it seems. The real question is how good are the tools truly.

Lassi Alanen: September 17th, 2022 - Linköping HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Willander has some intriguing qualities. He scored by slowly drifting down low on the weak side, then being perfectly positioned to one-time a cross-seam pass. Some other weak side activation attempts also, clearly was aware and looking for them. Other puck touches in the OZ included a few point shots and D-to-D passes, which was also his preferred method to break the puck out. Good patience under pressure, didn't really panic and opted for more controlled options. The opposition wasn't deploying much of a forecheck, though, so he didn't get tested that much in this regard. Some reactionary DZ defending, once getting beat pretty cleanly from the boards to the middle because he took a lazy route.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Willander makes some soft plays with the puck and misses the best play on occasion. He's talented, however. He cuts back instead of forcing plays, and refuses to dump the puck out when pressured. He often finds separation through speed and changes of pace. Defensively, he's reactionary in-zone, but closes space in the neutral zone and along the boards effectively. Physical, too. He has the details to become a better offensive player, whether that's the deception on retrievals, slip passes, or patience. Worth watching more.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I'm not sure I'd necessarily call this a good game for Willander, but I thought he was one of if not the best Swedish defenceman. Everything's relative, right? Continues to take a proactive approach as a defender, closing on opponents as the puck arrives on their stick and taking away their time and space. This is especially true of his work in the neutral zone, where he gaps up early and regularly intercepts stretch passes. Moved the puck decently well in this contest, with some pro concepts baked into his transition game – deceptive retrievals, skating through passes, use of the middle of the ice, etc. Haven't seen much of anything from Willander in the offensive zone, though. Could be an early Day 2 prospect.

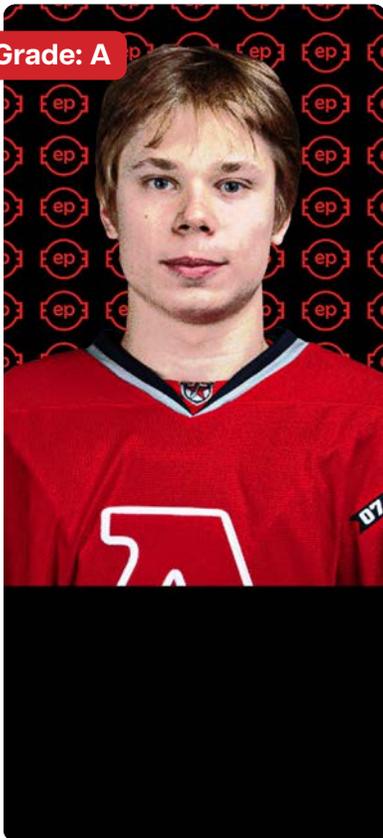
Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Willander has details. He takes pucks in motion, beating the defender into space. Prefers to make simple plays in the offensive end, but on breakouts, those habits result in more impact. He beats forecheckers into passing lanes, using the middle lane when possible. He cuts back and looks for better options. Slip pass use. More activation would bolster his offensive and defensive games. Looks like an intriguing prospect.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Willander had moments. He lost the puck, but still had the presence of mind to throw out a head fake to trick the forechecker. Patient with the puck, but lost the puck because he didn't move it early enough on one breakout. Showed some activation ideas and skills, cutting back and escaping pressure when along the boards. But his ideas rarely amounted to much. Preferred to make simple plays after beating one. Defence was a big question mark in this game. Still, he's a player to watch.

Grade: A



24 Daniil But

AGE 17.581 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Gabriel Vilardi



Raw
Talent



Lethal
Shooter



Ankle
Breaker

Player Info

LW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'5"

Height

203 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

6

Shooting

6

Passing

6

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lokomotiv Yaroslavl	KHL	15	2	0	2	0.13
Loko Yaroslavl	MHL	26	15	11	26	1.00
Loko-76 Yaroslavl	MHL	6	3	3	6	1.00
Russia U18 (all)	International-Jr	3	1	3	4	1.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Sometimes, you can get a pretty good feel for a prospect just by looking at their Elite Prospects page. It's a starting point, anyway. Not so with Russian forward Daniil But.

Because when you see that 6-foot-5 height in his bio and pair it with his point totals, you could just as easily be fooled into thinking he was a power forward. Perhaps even just a bruising winger with some skill.

That's not really the case, though. Sure, you might find some elements in his game that could lend themselves to that player type somewhere down the road, but he's more of a finesse scorer as currently constructed.

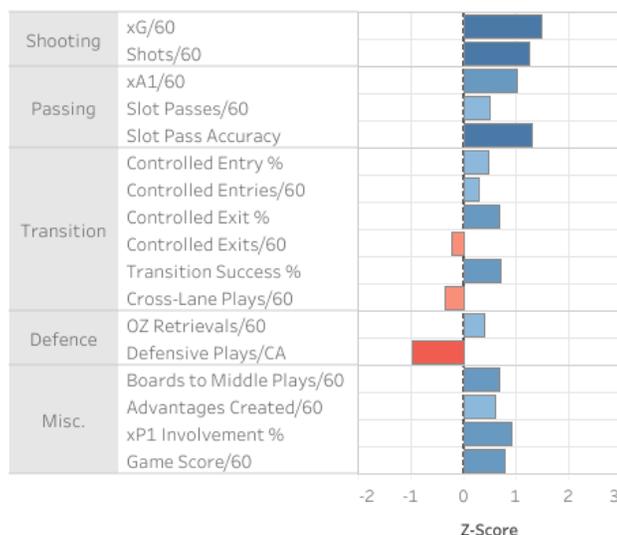
Think the 5-foot-7 soft-skill player putting up gaudy point totals that you want your favourite team to draft, but big – very big.

The first thing that jumps out at you with But – once you get past the way he towers over everyone else on the ice – is just how coordinated, dextrous, and creative he is with the puck on his stick. His ability to chain difficult pass receptions into handling moves and handling moves into passes or shots is really quite remarkable. Not even just for someone his size, either.

On top of that, But is a potent finisher, capable of getting his shot off on either leg, with a quick release, and almost textbook

Daniil But

F | Loko Yaroslavl | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 218.4
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



mechanical form. The way he pulls a puck back into his frame and leans on that stick to generate downforce into each release – it’s really impressive stuff.

The most projectable element of the Russian winger’s game is undoubtedly his playmaking though. It often feels like But is thinking one, two, three steps ahead of his opponents, making subtle movements to open passing lanes, and setting his teammates up to find twine. When those lanes don’t open themselves up, But has the reach and the nimbleness to get around his opponents with hook and slip passes. He plays with pace, decisiveness, and skill as a distributor.

Surely, at this point, you know what comes next though. It’s the but with But, and it’s a pretty significant one at that – his skating.

“Due to their great lengths, But’s limbs can’t fold into an athletic, balanced, and explosive skating stance,” Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a Film Room article on EP Rinkside. “He holds on to possession under pressure and drives through opponents – to an extent – but it’s hard for him to escape these opponents with the puck and catch up to them on the forecheck. Unfortunately, those are the main abilities necessary to become a power forward, the role many envision for him. But has the sense, strength, and stick skills necessary to perform that role, but he probably would have been a better fit for it had his growth spurt stopped just a bit earlier.”

Really, he’s one of the more fascinating case studies in this year’s draft. St-Louis coined him “one of the mystery boxes” in this class for a reason. The skill base and physical profile already present with But could lend themselves to a pretty productive NHL career as one of the most coveted player types in the league – a true power forward.

Right now, though, But’s frame almost works against him. It’s actually fairly easy to knock him from the puck. His skating limits his effectiveness or at least how effective he can be in the NHL, too. With careful development, though, the pay off here could be pretty special. And that’s why he’ll probably be a first-round pick.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Daniil But is one of the mystery boxes in the 2023 NHL Draft Class



Russia Stock Watch: No stopping Alexander Nikishin with SKA

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Big kid, that’s clear. But back to the Russian thing, he’s hard to project.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I think he’s an interesting player, too. Big guy. He seems to work pretty hard. I like his game with the puck. He’s got some 1-on-1 moves and can make some good plays. He’s good with the puck and can protect it with his body. He works pretty hard. The skating isn’t like with a classic Russian and the fluid stride, but the speed is fine, I think. The feet are pretty quick for a big guy who is 17. I don’t see a lot of heaviness there. I like him. I’ve got time for him.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Cam Robinson:** March 21st, 2023 - HC Loko vs. MHK Spartak - MHL

But had a couple of really nice plays in this game and both landed him on the scoresheet. The first, he picked up a loose puck and galloped down the ice to just eke out a breakaway coming off of the left hand side. He sold a cross crease deke, stopped and tucked it in near side. He had good speed, but looked awkward during the whole process. The other was on a zone entry on the power play where he slowed, created a pocket in the middle of the ice, received the pass and waited for the mate to streak to the netfront. He placed the pass well through the defender and onto the tape for the deflection in. Otherwise, there was very little play creation. Lots of decent wall work and cycling. He made a crafty backhand pass while driving down. Certainly wasn't a standout performance overall. The lack of mobility in small areas and quick acceleration hurts every part of his game - not just his elusiveness with the puck. The height is working against him no doubt, but he needs to sort that out in a big way.

David St-Louis: March 21st, 2023 - HC Loko vs. MHK Spartak - MHL

But continues to be physical, but it's his softer skills that shine the most. He's really deceptive in his offensive approaches, always trying to make defenders hesitate, to fake them to try and open a better play. It's pretty clear that his passing ability developed as a result of his mobility issues. It's a good thing. Always knows his options and really aware as a player. He goes into every situation having already identified his out. That's the mark of NHLers. He scored off a breakaway. His dangle was pretty awkward (his mobility limit the range of his stickhandling, too) but he did beat the goalie and outskated the defender. Again, his speed is fine. It's his small-area skating (agility, two/three-steps quickness) that are issues.

David St-Louis: March 14th, 2023 - Mikhaylov Academy vs. HC Loko - MHL

But's hockey sense shines every shift. I have no doubt that he's a smart hockey player with advanced ideas. He instantly spots teammates and connects with them, he sends the puck inside space for them when he can't reach them directly, and he can pass to the middle from the boards. The mechanical ability remains a significant weakness, however, as he lacks the quickness and the pivoting ability and the agility to get to some pucks and pressure on the forecheck well and escape defenders on the boards. My view of him hasn't really changed. He's one of those players for whom size isn't an advantage but a weakness. I doubt the skating really improves in terms of form. His speed is more than fine, but he's going to be a straight-liner who will need the right teammates. He should probably be in our top-32 and I can see, somewhat, why some people have him high, but I think that's underestimating mechanical weaknesses.

Lassi Alanen: March 10th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. AKM Tula - MHL

One of But's signature plays is the quick release right out of an OZ faceoff, particularly from the left side. That play first netted him a scoring chance, then later it resulted in a goal. But's shot is an above-average projection. He has a variety of different ways he can shoot, including in-stride. Placement is also often smart. There are flashes of impressive sense, too. Used his body off the rush to create space off-puck and has solid understanding of offensive schemes and how to anticipate play. The mechanics are a limiting factor, for sure. The skating stride is just plain ugly, especially when he really tries to power down and accelerate to full-speed. He's relatively fast for this level, but it's going to affect him more and more as he moves up through the levels. Not sure how much it's going to improve, either.

J.D. Burke: February 14th, 2023 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg - MHL

There were some truly impressive flashes of skill from But in this game, a couple of remarkable handling sequences in tight foremost among them. His first touch and the way that he blends receptions into dangles is just unique for someone this size. That same touch reveals itself in But's playmaking, whether it's one-touch setups through numbers or using that massive wingspan of his to hook passes around opponents. I'm not quite as sure about the rest of his game though. But's skating is pretty abysmal, though he surprised me on a few occasions with some pop in space and the puck on his stick - he legitimately seems to add an extra grade as a skater when he's carrying the puck. He hops through his crossovers and is top heavy, almost skating parallel to the ice at times. I appreciate the thought process that goes into the cutbacks along the wall, but he isn't

getting any separation on those moves. He's pretty easily taken off the puck for someone his size, frankly. Very interesting player.

Lassi Alanen: February 13th, 2023 - Loko-76 Yaroslavl vs. HC Mamonty Yugry - MHL

But had a solid showing here. The playmaking stood out the most. He works pucks from the boards to the middle with creative and clever passing, slipping pucks mid-stride and using his gravitational presence to create space. He was able to combine that with solid forechecking effort for a few quality looks after turnovers. Work rate remained solid throughout the game, both on the forecheck and the backcheck. The stride can look rather ugly and it's likely going to be a limiting factor in the NHL, even if he has the heel-to-heel and other similar techniques to add a bit of extra agility. There are moments of smarts away from the puck, which helps the projection. Some of the tools remain first-round calibre, from the handling to the playmaking.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - HC Loko vs Mikhaylov Academy - KHL

The main question with But is: how good will he be along the boards in the NHL? Is his stature going to be an advantage -- or a disadvantage? He can't really fold into an explosive, balanced position. He has hard skills, but his center of mass is high and he won't be able to pull off any agility moves in reduced space. I'm not sure he's going to be a point producer, more of a complementary force in a middle-six, a two-way forward, forechecker, occasional playmaker -- someone who could extend possession along the boards, hold it there, but not really carry pucks out of traffic all that often. Same for the net-front. He's imposing, but lacks the functional skills to make more of an impact. I think he's more of a 25-35 prospect than a top-15 prospect.

Cam Robinson: February 7th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

It's pretty darn clear what type of player But is. He has tremendous size and he uses it to handling in a wide arc around his body. That lofty wingspan is a great tool. He can protect the puck on the rush, he can bowl towards the net front. But more often than not, he uses it to handle and then distribute the puck. But saw a tidy 14 minutes of action in this one - the most of his young KHL career. Sure, it was against Amur, but it's not like it was against Sochi or Kunlun.

He had one play where he grabbed the puck low along the wall in the offensive end, curled off the wall, handled it twice, split two defenders barreled hard to the middle and fired a shot off in flight. A really nice, heady play that showed his length and strength. He also took a puck in flight towards the top of the defensive end, handled it, cut through the dotted line and attacked the middle on the rush. It was a 1-on-3 and he coughed it up, when a dump in would've been the play, but it was really the only other creative aspect he showed in this one. Every other rush and carry led to a pass that missed the mark or a dump. The skating mechanics are actually alright, he just lumbers a bit and struggles to get up to top speed. The size is a cause of this, but he needs to find a three-step acceleration that can help him explode to loose pucks and gain a bit of separation. Clearly a project pick, but I wouldn't be surprised to see a team take him in the first round - maybe even the top half.

David St-Louis: February 7th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs Amur Khabarovsk - KHL

But has limited carry ability if he starts from a stop. He relies on his passing in transition and that's fine. That's how he will play in the NHL, too. Even at this level, his passing game shines. It's mostly his physical play and ability to take the puck from the wall to the middle of that ice that shone in this game. He did it a couple of times, even getting a shot off in one occasion. His limited explosiveness and high stance will make it harder for him to pull off these moves in the NHL, but I bet he finds ways to work the boards and get pucks to the middle anyway, through his frame or by using his handling and passing. Consistent defensive effort in this one, even some high effort backchecks to catch up to attackers and cut passing lanes.

Dylan Griffing: February 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

But picked up his 2nd career KHL goal, but this performance left me wanting more. He was on an MHL line with this heavily rotated Yaroslavl side and his linemates, Shumilin and Volkov, were doing most of the driving. That said, But had some nice off-puck moments on the forecheck and backcheck, but the next play wasn't there for him in this one. He wasn't making plays with any semblance of pace, gliding to basically a standstill and not deciding on a play quick enough. There was leeway playing

against a weak Sochi side, so he wasn't getting punished on these plays like he would against tougher competition, but even then, the plays weren't really coming for him. Mostly an off-puck shooting threat, but not really getting chances to fire off shots playing with two other guys trying to make names for themselves in the squad.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

But's teammates didn't read any of his plays this game. He made the right ones (considering his skating limitations), cycled the puck well, protected it, and pressured on the forecheck/backcheck, but he didn't really manage to generate anything really interesting, until his goal on a 2 vs 1. I really like his hockey sense. For me, it's at least a 6-grade. He anticipates the game well and just knows how to connect with teammates. He runs the right routes and moves well away from the puck. He consistently puts the puck inside space for teammates and manipulates the feet of defender first to give those teammates a better chance to access those pucks. He also acts as that physical, screening net-front presence that NHL teams will want.

Cam Robison: January 14th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Sputnik Almet'yevsk - MHL

But was really moving in this one. It was a blow out, but it wasn't against one of the bottom feeders, Loko was just driving everything. He had speed through the NZ and was carrying the puck, making a fake outside and then inside move to beat one man. He took a puck in flight, bursted wide and cut to the net front but rang it off of the crossbar. He hopped off of the bench and picked up a pass at centre and stumbled his way to a partial break where he clapped a big shot home. The stride and posture were both throughoughly ugly though. Banged home a netfront rebound goal too. There were plenty of power plays for him to work with, and while at times he's this big, confident player who can handle and show patience, he can also just make simply, non-threatening plays often. No deception, just slide down a bit and fire it into shin pads or an easy stop. Id like to see a lot more calculation to his decisions. The trnsiiiont work and the wall work were both really strong though, he was coming off the half wall battle with purpose. The skating base is so wide. Great for protection, awful for acceleration.

Dylan Griffing: January 8th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Spartak Moskva - KHL

But continues to get put with very talented linemates for this level, so he's sort of just along for the ride most of the time. Simple connecting plays, but the flashes still shine through. He had a nice stick lift on the forecheck and then created a big chance in the slot for his teammate and had a couple of big scoring chances for himself. It's so frustrating how small he plays for how large he is, he uses his reach somewhat well, but there's just no physical play with him. Had some plays where he looked quicker than I've seen before, which is a good sight.

David St-Louis: January 5th, 2023 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya - KHL

But had some awesome passing moment and really awesome, the definition of the word, some jaw-dropping stuff. He's hyper-aware of his surroundings, processes the play fast, and anticipates the drives of teammates. He's always using them...when they are there to be used. He can dangle and toe-drag around defenders and chain those plays into passes. The handling and passing grades might be 6-7. The skating remains limiting. But definitely sees plays that his agility won't let him connect. He's probably a first-rounder, if you like that kind of project. He forechecks well and reads opposing plays well, if he can get there.

J.D. Burke: January 4th, 2023 - Krasnaya Armiya Moskva vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Not my best But viewing of the year, by any stretch of the imagination. Mostly, he stood out for his work in the defensive zone, scanning off-puck, picking up threats as plays developed, backchecking (though his tracks are hit-or-miss), etc. Offensively, But was inefficient. A lot of straight-line attacks and dangles from a glide and low percentage plays. To his credit, But scored in this one, corralling a loose puck after a faceoff and sniping it home around an opponent's stick, top-corner. God, the skating is rough.

Dylan Griffing: December 19th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. HK Sochi - KHL

Limited ice time for But, around eight minutes, but he was able to string together a few nice plays. His situational awareness has improved so much from the start of the season. His best play was an attack he started with a DZ exit, getting a pass in stride

and then passing it off immediately when he saw the forecheck pressure right in his face. He got the return pass just out of his reach, but chased it down, dropped his shoulder, and cut to the net front. Had some decent shots, adding some additional deception through his pre-shot movement. Mostly basic plays outside of the shooting.

Dylan Griffing: December 10th, 2022 - Loko-76 Yaroslavl vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

I don't know if there's a player who has improved as much as But has over the course of this season. While I still don't quite see him as a first rounder, there's probably a case for him to slot into a spot late into the round. He continues to play into his strengths very well to make up for the weak areas of his game. He can't beat anyone for pace, so on rushes, he goes as far as he can, then retreats to the perimeter to either distribute or find a pocket to skate into. Not enough dynamic skill to beat guys 1-on-1, so he opts to turn his back and use his body to shield possession while he waits for teammates to catch up. There's clear dual-threat offense at this level, but I think it's the playmaking that'll take him further, he'll just have a really solid shot in his arsenal to use when he gets the chance as he continues to play at higher levels. His rushes are just so, so slow, really struggles to get to the dangerous areas when he gets challenged and the lack of skills limit him to perimeter playmaking, which is fine, because he is really effective from there. I just don't think it's enough to warrant that A-grade, yet.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - Loko-76 Yaroslavl vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

But continues to churn out pretty great performances. Scored the game-tying goal in the last minutes with a one-timer on the power play after a nice relocation to receive the pass. Also added the eventual game-winner during the shootouts. But's skating isn't the most projectable based on his posture and technique, but he has enough skating skills and quickness for it to be a non-issue at this level. Set up multiple scoring chances off the rush, flashing some intriguing playmaking skill (no-looks, slip passing). There's still room for growth in this area, but the skill flashes are indicative of potential. Handling is probably above-average, too. He's impressively adapt at picking up loose pucks from scrums and recovering possession on the forecheck. I don't think A-grade is unreasonable at this point.

David St-Louis: November 28th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Avangard Omsk - KHL

A nice performance from But. He played his system role very well through the game, offensively and defensively. I underrated his quickness previously. He won many races to loose pucks and established body positioning on pucks. He didn't really manage to control the contact and pass the puck out of trouble, but it's still a nice first step for someone his age in the KHL. The flashes of playmaking were there; he locates teammates even behind him and find ways with his stickhandling to feed them the puck. He scored by coming down the funnel in the offensive zone. The read was a bit late but he got the puck anyway and slammed it in.

Dylan Griffing: November 28th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Avangard Omsk - KHL

But picked up his first career KHL goal, charged towards the net to receive a pass from behind the net and roofed it. Wasn't a standout game physically, but he was forcing his way into the sea of bodies in front of the net and slipping into good areas to catch a pass. He had a pretty nice goal scoring opportunity from that. Apart from that, much of the same as the rest of his games this year. Good playmaking limited by his speed and not enough physicality in puck battles. He's such an interesting player, there's just an uphill battle ahead for him.

David St-Louis: November 16th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Kazakhstan U20 - Cup of the Future

Not a great performance from But. I get that playing against a weak competition might tempt a player to just show off every puck touch, but But overdid it. He's smarter than what he showed. His skating remains a pretty big issue: he couldn't catch up to opponents on the forecheck or escape them under pressure. He was stuck on the wall, stuck playing a cycle game. He did score with a nice outside/inside attack, after protecting the puck, but it was the one instance. His hockey sense resurfaced when he started distributing the puck better in the later half of the game.

Dylan Griffing: November 15th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Russia U20 - Cup of the Future

Another solid game from But, but I'm still wavering on if I'm really a believer or not. He's so perimeter based despite the value he brings through his frame and curl-and-drag wrister, turning down opportunity after opportunity to either take advantage of the spot he's already in or take advantage of the lanes that he was given. Instead, he would go from one dot to the other or head back towards the point to try to create a play that he values more. He was actually pretty successful at driving dangerous offense through these decisions, his playmaking was solid and the shooting threat was enough to drag defenders towards him. The low pace is the issue, though, because he can generate some space for himself right now, but there's not enough separation speed or deception to really make this style of play translatable until the skating improves. He seems to know his limits, at least. In one play, he entered the zone on a 2-on-2, was given the outside lane by the defender but opted to circle back towards the point instead of trying to win on pace and found an open teammate near the slot with a pass. I really don't know with him, is he a first rounder? I wouldn't go anywhere near there. Second round is a possibility and I want to believe in him.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Belarus U20 vs. Russia U18 - Cup of the Future

But continues to remain more of a playmaker than anything else and, again, he's surprisingly good at it considering the coordination limitation that affects every player his age at his size. He does make some poor decisions, but also shows an ability to remain aware of his surroundings inside traffic and moves, unusual. He uses his body a bit, not enough. He mostly goes for the puck when he could ram opponents off of it, but I see him attempt pick plays and rush the net. His stride has some decent mechanics, probably an optimistic 4.5 grade for me. The lateral agility will always be a weakness.

David St-Louis: October 22nd, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dinamo Minsk - KHL

But tries to play a harder game, but you can tell that he's more comfortable in the soft-skill playmaker role at this stage. If there is a way to reach a teammate, he can probably do it. He anticipates the game at a fairly good level and has the passing skills to complete play. The question with him is pretty simple: will his skating form, the high stance, allow him to become a puck protection force in the NHL, the role teams will want him to fill? I think no at this stage. He's not Elmer Soderblöm, who was a much better mover even in his draft year. I'm not sure what he is for the moment. Good play overall from him in this game, puck management, and net-drives. He did what he was supposed to be, but could have used his body better.

Cam Robinson: October 22nd, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dinamo Minsk - KHL

Playing at this level truly highlights just how much work But needs to do on his skating. He just couldn't handle it at the speed in any regard. He was slow on the forecheck if he even bit on the F1 position, and the odd opportunity that he had to get a hit on in that situation, he passed it up. He couldn't get into positions to receive the puck in transit of anywhere threatening off of the rush. When he did have the puck, you could see he knew what he should do but just didn't have the pop to get to the net on his drives. He was making smart little outlets, and can pick the puck off of the wall well. Just way too slow.

Dylan Griffing: October 22nd, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dinamo Minsk - KHL

After a game against Dynamo Moskva where But saw just two minutes of ice time, he played again vs. Minsk, picking up just under 11 minutes of TOI. The results were, frankly, not good. He just cannot separate from players at this level. He's too slow, unwilling to use his frame, and the hands he has just aren't enough to carry the weight of his flaws. That unwillingness to use his frame was so brutal to watch off-the-puck, as well. One play in particular, he was chasing down the puck on the forecheck, showed off his bad skating stride, lost the race, and then stopped before making contact with the defender because...? That size needs to be more of a selling point, if he can't skate, can't read plays effectively, AND isn't using his 6'5", 203 frame, what is he?

For the positives, there were a few. He was making some better decisions with the puck than usual, but it really came down to his inability to do things individually because of his shortcomings. Drop passes were nice, pulled off a few of those. Off-puck movement was promising, almost got a goal from a tip at the net front. Seems like that may just be what he is, though, a tall screener. I'm still holding out hope, however, it is dwindling.

Dylan Griffing: October 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

After a quiet first period, But actually showed a lot of promise in this game. The low pace is always concerning, but he was drawing defenders to him and distributing the puck really well. Adapting to his surroundings to adjust how he handled the puck, showed more willingness to use his body as a shield, and was completing the majority of his plays. Moved into space off the puck well to get into one-timer opportunities. He was stringing good plays together, which was a sight to see. Had a nice rush that ended in him hooking a pass through to a teammate in the slot, then followed the play, applying heavy back pressure on the counter rush, won the puck, and then sent a pass up the ice to a wide open teammate for a 1-on-0.

Dylan Griffing: October 15th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Dinamo Minsk - KHL

Pretty solid KHL debut for the big man. Not trying to do too much, mostly moving the puck through quick passes, and was active off the puck all game long. Some mistakes here and there, but nothing overwhelmingly negative to say here. Looked confident and comfortable, albeit playing on a line with two of the best forwards in the KHL in his limited minutes. His skating mechanics seem to be good enough at this level, but his lack of pure speed will hold him back until that improves. His defense against a set offense wasn't great, floating around and not covering much, clearly more focused on offense.

David St-Louis: October 13th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHC Spartak - MHL

A lot of promise in this game for But. I'm not sure he's an A prospect, but he showed a range of abilities. The skating is high-stance; he won't ever be an average NHL mover, but he has some agility moves, like 10-and-2s that he can pull off. His passing game shone the most, a lot of area passes and not forcing too many plays. He doesn't scan a lot; his game is based on anticipation at this level, but if he doesn't map out the ice more, he will become a turnover machine against better defences. The handling skills are a clear above-average grade. But seems like the typical tall guy who built his game around his handling skills, but he seems smarter in his approach to the game than the average type.

Lassi Alanen: October 13th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHC Spartak - MHL

But's playmaking (really nice slip pass on the power play for a primary helper) and handling skills (big wheelhouse, good puck control in tight) remain intriguing, but the overall package is still a bit concerning. He did some cool skating stuff like heel-to-heel to gain the middle, but they don't really have too much power behind them, couldn't separate and got his shot blocked. Opts for quite a few low-percentage shots after circling up to the point. One really nice pass after an entry to the middle, which resulted in a primary assist. Could've also scored at least once with all the chances.

Dylan Griffing: October 4th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

I think this was But's best game of the season so far. There is still a lot to be desired from him – actively choosing against taking advantage of his frame, overhandling, and the skating isn't very good. Scored two goals and created a handful of chances through his passing. He uses his reach well to hold onto the puck through checks and uses hook passes nicely to pass the puck out of pressure. Had a really electric first period, but slowed down after that. Wasn't really getting involved, lacked deception on the rush and was closed down (and almost knocked down) by Vladimir Grudinin, who is almost a foot shorter than him.

Lassi Alanen: September 27th, 2022 - MHC Dynamo St. Petersburg - Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

But continues to have very good moments while the hockey sense concerns remain. It's just inconsistent. He played a couple of nice give-and-gos in transition and in the offensive zone, then followed those up by taking some odd low-percentage shots and not recognizing a couple of easy passing lanes. Really seemed to want to score with a wrap-around, tried it multiple times in this game. I like this skill level, can look pretty dynamic with his hands at times. The skating remains a weak point when looking at his projection.

Dylan Griffing: September 24th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

If you close your eyes and imagine what But could be if everything goes right in his development, then maybe there's a really good player here. However, he just isn't anywhere near where he needs to be right now. Far too individualistic in transition, looks

like he's going to lose the puck at any given moment because of how far away it is from his body, and lacks the skating ability to weave around defenders like he tries really hard to do. He ends up just skating in a straight line on almost all of his carries, lacks any deception, and the results are staggeringly negative. A lot of forced plays in the offensive zone, as well, shooting from low percentage land and sending passes into the slot and hoping there's someone there. Clearly doesn't pre-scan enough and tries to make decisions way faster than he needs to. Would like to see him utilize his reach more on defense. Right now he just waits until the carrier skates right into him to try to create a turnover rather than extending his stick early to take up even more space than his frame allows.

Dylan Griffing: September 18th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. Almaz Cherepovets - MHL

I really just don't know what to do with this player. Good hands, good shot, good size, but boy is he slow and makes poor decisions. It just feels like everything he does well is so tailor made for the MHL – no defenders take advantage of how slow he is and how far away from his body the puck often is, they just hurl themselves at him and hope he topples over. He had a goal and, while it was a really nice drag and wrister, he literally skated into the zone into a 2-on-1, didn't protect the puck at all, and shot the puck before the defender put in a stick check. That's just not going to work at any other level. He's going to get a lot of hype this year as a huge player who produces well, but I just don't see first round qualities enough to overlook the skating and processing speeds.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. MHC Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

But's playmaking really shined here on multiple occasions. Comfortable passing from either side, has gravitational elements, hooks and slips effectively. Hands seemed likely at least slightly above-average projection-wise, used his reach to pull pucks across defenders. Circled a bit too much on the perimeter, but also did one nice boards to middle drive, then spinned back and dished a cross-slot feed back to his original spot. Rifled the puck for a goal from the half wall just as a penalty had ended, and definitely should've had a pair of assists, too. The decision-making looked a bit spotty at times, especially notable on a rush where he literally had an open lane to the net, but somehow decided to still pass behind him to nobody. Skating probably projects below-average. There are things to like but some concerns, too.

Dylan Griffing: September 5th, 2022 - Loko-76 Yaroslavl vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - MHL

The size and reach advantage But has is his biggest weapon, he just lacks any other above-average assets. His hands are fine, he uses his body to shield the puck more than using his hands to make space. He struggled with handling the puck way too far away from his body, leading to quite a few possessions lost. There were some glimpses of good playmaking ability, passing through tight areas and using his strength to hold the puck longer to let plays develop, but it's limited by his handling ability and very low pace. The skating is just not good enough right now.

Dylan Griffing: August 11th, 2022 - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl vs. Salavat Yulaev Ufa - Friendly

But struggled to get the puck in this game. Probably not ready to be playing against KHL opponents yet. Skating looked marginally better than previous viewings, but overall, hard to conclude anything from this other than he should be starting the year in junior.

Dylan Griffing: September 21st, 2021 - Loko Yaroslavl vs. SKA-Varyagi - MHL

There's a lot to like with But. Standing at 6'4", he can easily make space out of nothing using sheer willpower and creative handles. He isn't a particularly effective finisher, but he drives to the net often and got a handful of chances right at the netfront. His playmaking and off-puck movement were what really stole the show, he adapts well to his surroundings and re-routes efficiently to open up space for himself, then fires just crazy passes off. He attacks the inside hard, using his size and creativity, but the passes he makes to the slot are what can take his game to the next level. Not particularly proactive on defense, but he loves battles on the boards and won just about every battle he was in. Skating is the main area of concern, but he's a giant 16-year-old, so that may just have to come with time.

Grade: A



25 Eduard Šalé

AGE 17.518 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Kyle Connor



Vision



Brain



Toolsy

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
6'1" Height	168 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6.5 Skating	6 Shooting	6 Passing
6.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Kometa Brno	Czechia	43	7	7	14	0.33
Czechia U20	WJC-20	7	1	5	6	0.86
Czechia U18 "A"	WJC-18	5	4	2	6	1.20
Czechia U20 (all)	International-Jr	11	3	7	10	0.91

SCOUTING REPORT

Eduard Šalé could be the latest example of an over-scouted, over-scrutinized prospect who has just spent too much time underneath the microscope. Someone who impressed the scouting community so much early that we've spent the better part of the last year tearing him apart.

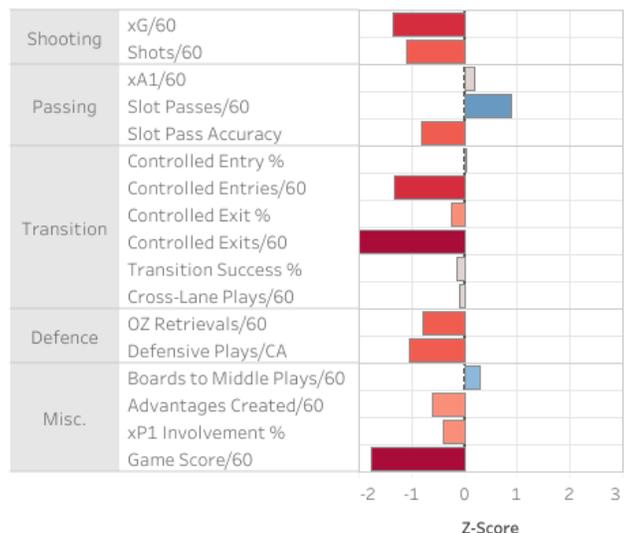
Because of sheer talent alone, Šalé is a no-brainer top-10 pick. Perhaps even higher. And he has the resume to match on his Elite Prospects player page.

He's been playing up in age groups in league play since his draft-minus-two season and in his country's colours since his draft-minus-one, has professional experience, and puts up gaudy scoring numbers (for the most part) in the process.

The physical tools are all high-end, almost every one of them earning a 6-grade on our 1-to-9 linear tools grading system. The only exception among his scoring tools would be his hockey sense, a matter of some debate within our ranks that we eventually settled with a 5-grade as a compromise – one that I'm not sure really satisfied any of our scouts, so you know it's good.

Eduard Sale

F | HC Kometa Brno | Czechia | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 16 | Minutes Tracked: 193.2
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



With those tools, Šalé knows how to generate offence. Simple as. He's an exceptionally skilled passer who can feather the puck through layers to connect with his linemates with perfect touch – just ask Jiří Kulich, his linemate at the 2022 U18s in Germany.

As a shooter, Šalé can fire the puck in-stride, with perfect mechanical form, off either leg, and hammer one-timers home from the faceoff circle.

Don't go discounting Šalé's hands, either. His ability to corral difficult passes and blend his first touch into highly skilled handling moves at speed is through the roof.

"His hands are great, his first touch with the puck is soft, and he can control it without any significant problems in any position," Czech regional scout Marek Novotný wrote in an Extraliga Playoffs game report. "Skating is strong, his positioning is forward, and he can pick up speed without significant trouble."

When everything comes together, it's really something to behold. One of the scouts we reached out to for comment in this year's guide described him as one of the five most talented players in the draft.

The problem? Most of the time, it didn't come together with Šalé this season. His high point was the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, and almost everything that followed was deeply disappointing. Not even just because he wasn't feeling it but because he didn't seem to care at times – not a charge that we make lightly.

Simply put: Šalé's motor is as deficient as his talent is impressive. Our staff was left to wonder on more than one occasion whether he even likes playing hockey. There's no drive for loose pucks. There's no physicality. There's not even a feigned, rote effort at making plays in the defensive zone. He cheats for offence and can be knocked from the puck with a stern look.

"I don't think Šalé made any notable plays throughout his 12 minutes of ice time," Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen wrote in a February report. "The closest he got to a contribution was after a slick stretch pass from a teammate, but Šalé's saucer pass to the slot didn't hit the target. He just lacks the ability to play off contact. If you guide him towards the boards and get close to him, he doesn't have the skills or the fortitude to escape. Lacks physical strength, but also the physical skill and willingness."

It's not like the game is going to get less physical or the opponents less fierce as Šalé rises up in competition. So yeah, it's deeply concerning, and it was enough to drop him into the 20s.

The potential with Šalé is sky-high. Think a top-of-the-lineup forward with game-breaking skill that you can run a first-unit power play through. He'll need to develop a lot more gumption and a little more awareness of how to create out of structure to seize on it though.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Standout draft-eligible performances at the 2023 World Juniors



Meet the Team: Czechia's roster for the 2023 World Juniors



Each team's X-Factor at the 2023 World Juniors

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Someone is going to draft this kid and teach him some of the finer points of the game. If that happens the skill will take over and he'll be a real good player." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“Are you getting a kind of Filip Mešár with this kid? I like his scoring ability. He’s a streaky player. But when he’s on, he’s very effective. Again, you watch the playoffs right now, and you have to ask if he’s going to help you out in the playoffs. There’s a lot of tools there.

Those guys who play underage and start early, we put them on such a high pedestal, and then their draft year comes, they’re not as good, and we shit on them. It’s like we have too many viewings on them. Because if it was his draft last year, he’s going high. He’s gonna go in that 10-20 range instead this year.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I’m a little bit like you guys where I wonder about the motor and the passion for the game. I mean, I’ve seen him at some games where you just go ‘wow.’ I mean, he’s 6-foot-2, he skates really fluidly, there’s no question about his hockey sense – it’s all there. You give him the puck on the power play and he can make a play. He can look guys off and create some really nice passes. I’m pretty high on the talent, but at this point, you’re not sure of the drive to play. But if he plays, he might not even be a top-six forward; he might be a first line forward.

“There’s some immaturity there with him. In time and with maturity, playing with men, it’s going to help him come along a lot.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“That kid is one of the top five most talented players in the draft. Top tier. Maybe the men’s game is too much too soon for him. Junior game looks kind of boring for him. He should be dominating the U18s and Hlinka. He looked like Mason Raymond to me last year. If he falls, he could be a steal. He will play in the NHL. Chance of first line wing, first-unit power play guy. Tough year.” – NHL scout, April 2023

“He’s such a good player. He’s also such a good person in the locker room. I can’t say a bad word about him. He’s a great leader on the ice. He can make a difference on the ice. I think every team needs a player like him.” – Jakub Dvořák, April 2023

“He’s great. He’s got an explosive 1, 2, 3 steps. It’s like Eichel. I remember him from the same age group, up until he was 20. He knows how to manage the puck. He has 1-on-1 skill. He needs a great centreman who is going to help be responsible defensively though. Šalé can make a huge difference offensively.” – Czech U18 head coach Jakub Petr, April 2023

“He’s a great player. A goalscorer with a great shot. He’s definitely one of the hardest players I’ve ever played against. Great shootout guy. He’s definitely got a bright future in front of him.” – Michael Hrabal, April 2023

“I look at [Jonathan Huberdeau] and I think I’ve a little bit of the same style on the ice.” – Eduard Šalé, April 2023

“I think I’m an offensive, smart guy that can score and create chances.” – Eduard Šalé, April 2023

“He’s got the gift. He can score in practice. He can score in like 90 percent of situations that we put him through. As a coach, you always like that you have that guy with the hockey sense and that killer instinct. He can score from almost anywhere on the ice.” – Czechia U18 head coach Jakub Petr, April 2022

“He’s special on the offensive side. I was just telling him – I’m not his club coach – that you’ve got to be a two-way forward though, and he has been.” – Czechia U18 head coach Jakub Petr, April 2022

⌵ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - USA vs Czechia - WJ18

Šalé mostly creates with his speed at the tournament. He drove down the ice, feinted an opponent, went past him, and then

backhanded the puck on net. His teammate scored on the rebound. He forechecked well but didn't really finish his check or battle for pucks. I'm still unsure about his off-puck instincts, but they are hard to evaluate in a game like, that he spent turtling around the slot and holding off the other team's attack.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

I'm not sure that you can say Šalé left it all out in the ice today. The entire Czech gameplan depended upon scoring on counter plays. Šalé had his share of opportunities to turn the corner and drive the net on American defencemen on precisely those types of plays, and he pulled up every single time. Now, does he score on any of those chances if he's willing to play through contact? Can't say, but I know that you're not going to if you shrink in the face of physical pressure. Šalé eventually picked up an assist on a rush play, smartly sending the puck off of the American goaltender's pads and to his streaking linemate who did the rest. Kind of a fitting end to a poor draft year for Šalé. I still believe in the skill level and the feel for the game, but you're not going to play in the NHL if you're that soft.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

One of the best games of Šalé I have seen this season. He forechecked, found quiet spots around the net and the slot, drove the net often, and worked the boards. He's not a high-energy player, but he made the right plays in this one. He pressured Canadian defencemen, helped cause turnovers and loose pucks that he then turned into breakaways and 2-on-1s. He showed his passing skills and scored with a one-timer on the powerplay. I was also impressed by his rush patterns. Šalé knows how to create space for himself on the attack. He drops behind teammates and slows down to get to the top of the slot. If only his teammates know how to find him there more often.

David St-Louis: April 21th, 2023 - Czechia vs Germany - WJ18

Šalé started the game with more effort than usual. He pursued pucks, knocked them loose, and then used his speed to create. He got a goal that way. He drove the net when he had space, but didn't really commit on those net-drives when he didn't have the room to cut inside, but instead stopped his course short. Good puck distribution on the powerplay, but the offensive instincts there are inconsistent. He doesn't really scan for open lanes but just throws pucks in them hoping to connect. His off-puck game is a bit inconsistent. He positions well, but doesn't really prepare his space to receive pucks in better situations. The tools continue to shine.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - WJ18

We're at the end of the season and I still don't know what to think of him. He could be one of those players that comes out of his shell after his draft season and makes us look bad for ranking him so low, but I continue to have doubts about his projection. The hockey sense gets about an NHL average grade from me, in terms of projection. He makes some good plays: chips inside space to teammates, drop passes and moves decently well away from the puck, but there are no flashes of high-end creativity. The tactical side of his game is underdeveloped. Which is both a flaw and an opportunity. He can't really see the best plays at this stage. I would overlook that and still rank him top-20 if he showed more urgency or physicality or any elite skill with more regularity, but he continues to be generally passive for long stretches, even against his peers. The high-end skating, shooting, stickhandling package will keep him in the first round for us. They're really interesting. With a couple of great performances in this tournament, where he takes charge, he could really improve his stock. We just need to see it.

Marek Novotný: March 22nd, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs HC Vítkovice - Extraliga Playoffs

The Czech forward is still part of the team in the playoffs. But this game was his last for 2 reasons. He took a crazy knee on knee hit which knocked him out of the game and it looked like his season could be over, but luckily that was ruled out. The other reason was that his team was eliminated in the next game, allowing Šalé to prepare for the U18 World Championships. Unfortunately, I didn't see much in this game, Eduard looked without enthusiasm, any drive. You can see on his legs how often he waits in the defensive zone to set up the offence, he is incredibly offensive minded. I like to say he circles on the ice a lot like a shark waiting for the right opportunity. You see that in his game on a regular basis. He hasn't been prominent in battles at the

boards, he loses pucks, he has a problem with physicality against grown men.

Marek Novotný: March 17th, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs HC Vítkovice - Extraliga Playoffs

A playoff game against a very tough opponent. Eduard was aggressive in the offensive zone. Attempting to cross in the slot on a couple of faceoffs. His hands are great, his first touch with the puck is soft and he can control it without any significant problems in any position. Skating is strong, his positioning is forward and he can pick up speed without significant trouble. I would like to see more activity and sharpness with his edges. Again, a physicality issue.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Sparta Praha - Extraliga

Šalé was barely involved in the game aside from a few simple OZ passes and some failed transition plays. He's often F1 on the forecheck but rarely actually accomplishes anything noteworthy. Most of his defensive play remains bad; he's only present on a surface level, not actually pursuing pucks or engaging physically. His off-puck game remains an issue to why he's not getting many touches, especially those where he's in favourable situation. These games are a huge turn off, even if the tools are still there. It's never been a tools-related issue anyway. Games like these have been far too common for Šalé this season.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Olomouc - Extraliga

Šalé should be so much better at this level based on the tools alone; it's just that he's not accomplishing much, especially at 5-on-5. Another game where he wasn't creating offence at evens to any degree. Drifts wide off the rush and doesn't maintain any sort of gap to the defender, making it very hard to pass to him. Basically he's just hoping that the puck gets through the defender and he gets to odd-man situation; it's basically cheating in my books and fits with the other shortcuts and lack of compete we've seen at this level. It'd be extremely hard for me to use a first-round pick on him based on his league play.

Marek Novotný: February 17th, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs HC Verva Litvínov - Extraliga

Eduard Šalé pulled off nice manoeuvres during the power play. He dished out quick and accurate passes to his teammates and showed that his shot is top-notch, despite not scoring. His skills are top notch when everything fits together like a puzzle. I still stand by the fact that Šalé is the top talent in this year's draft. I'd just like to see more hunger for the puck, a desire to be more involved in the game, he has the talent. He could be extremely dangerous.

Lassi Alanen: February 15th, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Plzeň - Extraliga

What am I supposed to take away from a game like this? I don't think Šalé made any notable plays throughout his 12 minutes of ice time. The closest he got to a contribution was after a slick stretch pass from a teammate, but Šalé's saucer pass to the slot didn't hit the target. He just lacks the ability to play off contact. If you guide him towards the boards and get close to him, he doesn't have the skills or the fortitude to escape. Lacks physical strength, but also the physical skill and willingness. The tale might be different internationally, but these league games aren't doing him any favors.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs USA - 4 Nations

This was a better performance from him. He was more involved defensively, played the penalty kill, and generally backchecked harder as F1. Šalé has a delay game, in the sense that he can connect plays in transition, use teammates to break defences. And he has the stickhandling ability necessary to go through sticks. I continue to pretty much only see tools when I watch his game, even when he's performing better. The reads aren't all that precise and it's hard to push his hockey sense grade past average. He needs to become better at moving away from the puck if he wants to be this 30-goal, half-wall, powerplay scorer. He has the mechanics to fill a top-six role, but so much about him is raw. That means a lot of potential, but a lot of concerns, too.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - 4 Nations

I know this is an exhibition game, so it's normal for Šalé's motor to not be as present, but I would have expected a bit more

engagement and energy from him in this game. It was, after all, a chance to show his game against junior competition. He couldn't really solve defences with any of his high-end tools, missing passes, forcing dangles, waiting too long to make plays and closing lanes. When I tune in to watch Šalé, it feels like I'm looking at a player in D-1. He's mostly just a passenger with skills. He needs to learn to drive the play in some ways at least, because I can't believe that NHL teams will remain interested in him as a top-15 player if he keeps up like this, and that, despite some decent international performances.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - 4 Nations

Šalé does play the penalty kill effectively. He has the stick work and the engagement to fulfill that role. He finds teammates quickly with the puck when he doesn't tunnel vision on dangling. He makes nice breakout passes. He forechecks with decent intensity and can keep the puck under pressure with his handling skills. He scored off a 2-vs-1 off a broken play and made a couple of nice breakout passes from the wall. I still question the overall hockey sense. He doesn't spot the best play or show any anticipation, off-puck timing, or really manipulation skills. He's a tools guy who could end up as an NHL scorer if the defence becomes good enough.

David St-Louis: February 3rd, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs. Oceláři Třinec - Tipsport Extraliga

There is more urgency in Šalé's game, but I struggle to project him to an NHL role. There is a lack of refinement in both the way he uses his tools, in his overall game reading, and even in the way he shoots, his biggest strength. He abuses the opposition's mistakes, but he doesn't really understand the defensive game. He can outskate, but not really manipulate with his skating. He can shoot, but it's not really a quick draw, more of a drawn out release. His game will have to undergo severe transformations to function in the NHL. The tools are hyper-interesting, but I'm just not convinced.

Lassi Alanen: January 11st, 2023 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Olomouc - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé had a few flashes, but I'm still quite concerned about the overall urgency and work rate. It's so frustrating because the tools are much greater. Actually did make some nice plays under pressure on breakouts, but he's not much of a play-driver at this level. He was late on most forechecking sequences and then didn't really battle to recover. A few defensive breakups, though. Some off-puck flashes, but it's not consistent.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Canada - World Juniors

Šalé hasn't convinced me at all in this tournament. This was his best performance and I still find myself doubting him every shift. The reads are off; he wanders more than he positions and he's still nonchalant in certain situations, even on this stage against this competition. He can find space away from the play offensively to get his shot off -- he proved it on his assist -- and he has passing skills (he made a nice backhand feed to a trailing teammate for a scoring chance, but not before forcing another one through two defenders). He can also really shoot the puck. He's more of a B-prospect, second-rounder project than a top-10 guy for me now.

Mitchell Brown: January 4th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - World Juniors

A bit of a better game in the motor department for Šalé. It wasn't great. It wasn't good. But he won some races, involved his body in battles, and even sprinted to get back in the play. Hammered the crossbar with an NHL shot off a faceoff. But that's really about it. A pretty ineffective game. Locked to the outside. No real transition play apart from one shift. Made simple, basic plays, but never actually furthered Czechia's offence. Looked more like a second-round candidate in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Czechia - World Juniors

It's not hard to see why Šalé's been benched for two periods while also taking a space on the top line when he plays. He's highly skilled, but has the deadly combination of both lacking urgency and off-puck instincts. So, not only is he late to pucks, space, and lanes, he lacks the motor to recover. It's uncommon to see him lose pucks or positioning even when he has the advantage. It means he's not always able to take full advantage of the skill. He scored with a nasty wrist shot around a defender,

shooting over the goalie's shoulder when showing short side. Also connected with a slick look-off slip pass for an assist. There were other playmaking flashes that were deceptive and intelligent, but not quite high-level. Figuring out just where his skill level lands will dictate his placement on the board. If the energy's still an issue on the stage, it's not likely to change in league play in the second half.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Austria vs Czechia - World Juniors

I really have to be careful when watching Šalé because he's not really a prospect whose style I enjoy all that much. That being said, he still provides a lot of interesting elements. He made a few really nice setups in this game with one-touches and backhand passes to teammates. He's mostly a run-into-a-problem-and-figure-it-out player, but he's good at it and he also shows anticipation in the way he looks for support. He knows where his teammates are driving and he seems to be able to calculate their next position without having to constantly rescans. The skills remain above-average.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Canada vs Czechia - World Juniors

Šalé really needs to show more hockey sense in this tournament. He's surrounded by better players who can read off of him a bit better. He was mostly late on his off-puck reads in this one, missing rotations or overskating. He did contribute to a goal by keeping possession down low, escaping the defensive presence and passing to his defenceman who got an open lane to the net. The tools continue to shine and I'm sure Šalé will continue to improve his board work as he matures. He remains a first-rounder, but he could really improve his draft stock with just more flashes of anticipation.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - HC Litvinov vs. HC Kometa Brno - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé hasn't added a point in eight league games now, and his ice time is also dropping notably. I can't say that I'm very surprised. In this one, he didn't accomplish much aside from a few shifts. The technical skills remain; being able to take pucks in motion, skating and handling base (a beautiful and nifty deke to gain an entry and beat a defender in the the period). But the overall package just isn't delivering. He's gliding a lot, not putting himself in favourable positions to receive the puck, and when somebody tried to pass to him, his receptions were simply atrocious many times.

Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2022 - Finland vs. Czechia - U20 5 Nations

Another pretty good outing from Šalé for the most part. Many of the tools remain very intriguing, how he's able to move to pass receptions and maintain consistently good posture throughout the shifts, using crossovers to pick up speed. Many of the playmaking ideas were also decent. He was moving the puck early, then relocating. He's not manipulative or creating that many advantages, but he's taking advantage of the ones he has. Some odd moments, though, like reacting late and taking a very odd route to a loose puck after teammate's shot (maybe thought that a defender would pinch to it?) or being careless on a DZ recovery, whiffing his pass entirely and giving up a chance against. Scored the game-sealing empty-netter.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Finland vs. Czechia - U20 5 Nations

A much better performance from Šalé, who constantly used his teammates in this one to try and build scoring chances. The tools are high-end, from skating to handling. I didn't see him put them all together in this one, but they give him a lot of potential. It's the playmaking that was the most interesting. He made a few deceptive passes to teammates, using the threat of other plays to complete those passes.

Lassi Alanen: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U20 5 Nations

Šalé found his way to the scoresheet by one-timing a cross-ice pass off a 2v1 rush. There were definitely good moments. Flexing his skating and handling mechanics to separate in transition, making some effective passes off the half wall on the power play, a few well-timed movements in the OZ. Some of the play selections were an issue, most notably his unwillingness to cut to the middle when he had a clear lane a couple of times, instead opting for the outside lane and in turn getting smothered along the boards. Effort level has been a big issue in the league play, and here it was slightly better, though it still was an issue in certain

situations. With his skating stride, he could have easily closed the space on the backcheck and forced a breakup or at least a dump-in, but chose to reach instead.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Kometa Brno vs. Motor Ceske Budejovice - Tipsport Extraliga

Concerning performance. The level of care in Šalé's game was basically 0. I'm not one to value "compete" as much as other scouts, but it's hard not to get annoyed at such a performance. It's not just that he's physically disengaged and moving at 10% of his output, but he's also not processing the play up to capacity either. I can't imagine that his choice of plays are actually limited to attacking packs of defenders to dangle them. He looked like a frustrated or disconnected player. I'm trying not to make this report too harsh, but Šalé needs to pick it up in the next games or he will drop significantly in the draft. I have yet to see the amazing tools that show up from time to time in his game in Extraliga, not because they aren't there, just because he's not looking to escape coverage to become options, he's not getting the puck back, and not actually moving to create anything. I guess if he got more puck touches, his game would come alive a little more, but he's supposed to know how to contribute to a team other than that with his puck plays and he shouldn't be wasting the few ones he gets.

David St-Louis: October 23rd, 2022 - Karlovy Vary vs. HC Kometa Brno - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé scored on the shootout, a beautiful move where he went from a forehand fake to a backhand top-shelf shot. The rest of the game was mostly uneventful. Šalé couldn't make a play. He got the puck multiple times on the walls but didn't have passing lanes open and he seemed to struggle to escape opponents. I don't know about his skating. He didn't seem all that elusive in this game. He also could have done a better job to get open for teammates. He ran the right routes, but when those close, when he became covered, he should have switched path or speed.

Lassi Alanen: October 21th, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. Sparta Praha - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé remains a frustrating player. We saw the offensive skill in one occasion, where he entered the zone, cut to the middle and made a give-and-go with a linemate who set him up a high-danger look. He also made a nice breakout pass to the middle for an eventual breakaway opportunity. Other than that, pretty bleak game. He scanned on breakouts pretty frequently, but wasn't able to connect with his passes and turned the puck over instead. His skating is not looking as good as it could be, because he's simply not putting in enough effort. The work rate is low. Some odd defensive moments, too, where he was at the right spot but didn't take the extra step to actually make a difference.

J.D. Burke: September 27th, 2022 - Oceláři Třinec vs. HC Kometa Brno - Tipsport Extraliga

A decent enough performance from Šalé, but nothing that screamed top-five or top-ten pick. To his credit, Šalé was more inside-driven than I'm accustomed to seeing, particularly off of the rush, where he generated most of his best plays in this contest. Šalé had one particularly slick feed in the neutral zone, turning a difficult pass reception under pressure into a two-touch passing sequence around an oncoming opponent without so much as breaking stride. There was another play where he caught the puck at about centre ice, cut across the defensive front, drew a defender into his space, and set his teammate up with a slick look high in the offensive zone with a drop pass. Šalé had a couple of interesting moments as a shooter, too. There was one where he read the developing play and charged through contact for a chance to pick up a rebound that really stood out. Another where he processed an opportunity for a decent look high in the slot and adjusted his positioning to make himself an option for a one-touch feed.

Lassi Alanen: September 23rd, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Rytíři Kladno - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé got on the scoreboard early yet again, slicing the opposition with a pretty cross-ice pass across the neutral zone, leading into a half breakaway for his linemate who ended up roofing it. Otherwise, it was a pretty standard Šalé showing. Clearly skilled, sees the ice well with the puck and can execute on difficult handling to passing sequences. One high-end pass reception off the rush, combining it into an outside lane drive that almost worked. But I still have a feeling that Šalé could be a dominant force at this level with his current tools with a higher work rate and effort level. Gives up on some pucks way too quickly, flees the zone early (though could be just a systems thing).

Lassi Alanen: September 18th, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Motor České Budějovice - Tipsport Extraliga

Šalé got on the scoresheet after a failed cross-slot pass off the rush somehow ended up on his stick through the goalie and a defender, leaving him a pretty easy job to finish near the net. Šalé's mechanics remain supreme. He passes and receives passes in motion, has great fluidity in his movement and stride and handles well at high speeds. If he gets any runway in open-ice, he's a tough one to defend on counter-attacks. Nice give-and-go play in the DZ that set him up for a successful exit and entry. Mechanically fluid in-stride inside leg wrister off the rush on one occasion. But the motor, off-puck intensity and lack of scanning were apparent here like they were at Hlinka. They won't be a huge factor at this level and likely won't inhibit him from producing, but are definitely things to consider regarding his NHL projection.

Marek Novotný: August 16th, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Verva Vítkovice - Friendly game

Overall, an average to below average game from Šalé. As for the positives, he once again showed that he has great vision and can feed his teammates with quick and accurate passes. He once again proved that he has a very good ability to control the puck from all possible positions, whether it's knocking it out of the air and straight attacking or getting control of a bouncing puck. That first touch is just fantastic. Šalé is a smart forward who can also create some defensive action in the form of breaking up passes, blocking shots or even creating pressure and aggressive play. But in this game he was quite out of position especially in the defensive zone. He fumbled several key passes and was unable to enter the offensive zone when he tried. But you can definitely see that skating-wise he was the best player on the ice.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šalé started the game with a bang, creating an entry with a middle-lane drive, then creating a 2v1 with his on-puck route before making a cross-slot hook pass for a high-danger look for his linemate in his first shift of the game. Also scored in the first period with a catch-and-release wrister from high slot. Mechanics remain very intriguing as Šalé is able to take passes in motion, combine deft handling into heavy crossover usage and already has pretty well-developed rush patterns. Off-puck, I'd still like to see more urgency from him, both offensively and defensively. He has moments in the OZ, but especially in the NZ and DZ, he could easily utilize his skating to a great degree and create more breakups and steals by taking extra strides and engaging physically. Might have been preserving energy, and for a reason as he played a ton for a forward. A candidate for the first half of the first round.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šalé's off-puck comes and goes. Too often, he doesn't sprint his route, or even move into the passing lane, limiting his teammates' options. But he also had a couple of great off-puck reads, moving into the slot with perfect timing while readying his stick and getting ahead of the puck carrying between checks. The latter led to play here he shifted around a defender, then fired a pass back across the slot for a scoring chance. Lots of crafty passes, dropping pucks into space, spinning them inside, and leaving pucks in space. Moves through pass receptions, which allowed him to burst through two defenders for a look. Highly fluid and mechanically refined. Looks like a top prospect for 2023.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šalé was barely noticeable in this game. Continually stopped when cutting wide. Teammates couldn't get him the puck, but he was also ending up ahead of the play and unable to become an option. Off-puck movement looked like an issue. One shot showed his skill level, turning tricky pass into a two-touch wrister, keeping his top hand pushed off his body and his elbow elevated through the reception.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Not as productive showing from Šalé here, against a much stronger opposition compared to the hat-trick game versus Germany. Still, managed to set up a very important goal in the third, making a well-timed cross-slot pass off a man-advantage rush for a rather easy finish. Šalé's still a very skilled skater with above-average explosiveness and cross-over usage. I would have liked to

see more urgency off-puck, though. He does a good job at cutting to the middle from the boards in the OZ with the puck, but he can take some liberties with his positioning without the puck. Something to monitor going forwards.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

A quieter, but still impressive game from Šalé. He's so fluid. He accelerates within a couple of crossovers. He's a dexterous handler and skill playmaker. When he cuts inside, he establishes positioning and uses his stick to get under back pressure. Set up a goal with cross-crease pass through a defender, perfectly timing his pass through the defender. Created several similar looks throughout the game – should've had another assist, at least. He looks the part of a top prospect for 2022.

David St-Louis: August 2nd, 2022 - Czechia vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

This game was easy for Šalé. He got a bunch of free rushes and almost-breakaways that he converted, a ton of space, a lot of turnovers to capitalize on -- all situations that enabled him to show his speed, technical handling ability and shot. He has a mean backhand (an adjective that just seems to fit that type of shot since goalies at this level never seem to except it), but I find that he moves mostly independent of his environment, like the defence isn't really there, which is common for prospects who were always more skilled than their competition. He doesn't adapt; he forces his way through with his superior abilities. I didn't like the one sequence where he attacked a pack of defenders with better options open (an empty wide lane and a teammate on the other side of the ice to use). Tools are great, not sure about the hockey sense grade so far. He can clearly spot defensive vulnerabilities, however, and exploit them.

Marek Novotný: August 2nd, 2022 - Czechia vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Absolutely dominant performance by Šalé. The Czech forward scored 3 goals and added an assist in this game. He scored the first goal after 31 seconds, when he deflected the puck with an amazing tip and the German goalie had no chance to react. The second goal beautifully demonstrated that Šalé is like a shark waiting for the right opportunity to surprise the opponent. Suddenly, he appeared behind the German defender's back and with speed he got past him and mercilessly executed the breakaway with a wrist shot. The third goal was very nasty with a beautiful backhand shot. Šalé was the overall driver of the offense, very dangerous on the power play, and from which he registered the primary assist after an amazing and quick pass that almost made it to the net. He also turned on the warrior mode along the boards where he can get the puck with very good work with his stick. Šalé also has a very quick release. Still don't like some of his defensive decisions, but he is a top prospect of the upcoming draft.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Czechia vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šalé had a dominant showing here, scoring three even-strength goals and adding a primary helper on the power play. He was probably Czechia's most dangerous player off the rush, utilizing his speed and skill advantage to create. He was easily able to break through Germany's defence duo with middle-lane drives without the puck, but also got some looks by cutting to the middle in front of the defender. Skating and handling mechanics are both easily above-average. Some of his passes could have used angle-changing and got intercepted as of the result. Dangerous on the forecheck, knowing at least some body positioning basics and overwhelming with pace. Defensively could have been a bit more engaged a few times, leaving too much space for the opposition off the rush.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šalé's mechanical foundation is advanced, far beyond the rest of his peers. He easily passes and dekes without breaking stride/crossovers. Takes passes in motion and immediately knocks them into the next position (hip pocket). Before receiving pucks, he scans and establishes body positioning. In this game, that technical foundation allows him to cut inside, deke around defenders, and gain the zone. Made several crafty drop passes, starting give-and-goes and highlighting his off-puck instincts. Complaints are few. Didn't pull the puck across far enough to turn his shot into a scoring chance in one sequence. He also missed a couple of opportunities to gain the inside lane. Clearly has top-six, if not top-line potential.

Marek Novotný: February 25th, 2022 - HC Vítkovice Ridera vs. HC Kometa Brno - Extraliga

Šalé in another Extraliga game, this time with very limited ice time. His first touch with the puck is great, sometimes it feels like the puck is stuck to his stick. When he handles the puck, he doesn't have much of a problem with it, even when it's bouncing. He's also shown he can protect the puck, but I'm still unsure of what kind of player he is in physical battles. Twice in one shift he was looking for an opportunity to tip the puck in. I haven't seen him with the puck on his stick much in these Extraliga games so far, but when he has it, he is very dangerous.

Marek Novotný: February 22nd, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Verva Litvínov - Extraliga

Šalé is a great talent. He's a smooth skater and he does everything at high speed. He's the type of forward who is eager to attack. Sometimes that hurts his game, as some of his decisions in the defensive zone were too heavily based on starting the offense. Defensively though, he scanned well and watched his opponent. He was also ready to disrupt the opponent's passing game. His ability to pass accurately and at such a quick pace is impressive. Šalé is unstoppable when he is on his game, he can dominate even against men with his speed and soft hands. He was also part of the power play and notched a secondary assist.

Marek Novotný: February 16th, 2022 - HC Kometa Brno vs. HC Oceláři Třinec- Extraliga

Šalé had relatively high ice time, but it's really frustrating from my perspective that he doesn't have the puck on his stick more. I was expecting to see more action than before, but his teammates didn't help him lead the attack. Otherwise, he was great, again actively disrupting passing lanes and being more aggressive in battles at the boards. He created pressure on the opponent and also managed to get the puck out of the defensive zone several times. His first touch with the puck is really impressive. His puck control and overall perception of the flow of the game is high level, so it won't come as a surprise that he can score goals with a nice tip, which he did in this game. I also like how he extends his arm in battles and then his smooth hands and puck protection engage to get past opposing players.

J.D. Burke: August 4th, 2021 - Czech Republic U18 vs. Russia U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

Šalé was probably the Czech's best forward in this contest. Super high work rate, took good lines on the forecheck to disrupt opposition breakouts, attempted some highly creative plays through traffic, and regularly drove the inside of the offensive zone. These are all things that you love to see. Created the Czech's final tally with a well-timed pass into the slot to connect with teammate Dominik Petr for the garbage-time goal.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2021 - Czech Republic U18 vs. Finland U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

Shifty little player, this Eduard Šalé. Does everything at the highest possible speed, skating through passes, pass receptions, shots, etc. Soft hands and good touch allow for two-touch shooting opportunities even with difficult passes. Expertly warded off back-pressure to create a partial break and beat the Finnish goaltender with a nice move at speed. Interesting player.

Grade: A



26 Nate Danielson

AGE 17.967 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 27, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Filip Chytil



Toolsy



Fleet of Foot



Versatile

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

185 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brandon Wheat Kings "C"	WHL	68	33	45	78	1.15

SCOUTING REPORT

Perhaps no one player in this year's draft exemplifies the divergence of opinions between the team side and the public sphere than Nate Danielson. Most on our side of the aisle rate the Brandon Wheat Kings centre as a middle-to-late first-round pick; many on the team side as a lock for the first 15 picks. Time will determine who's right.

The reasons to believe in Danielson are obvious. He's a rangy 6-foot-1 centre with NHL-grade tools almost right across the board. He wore the captain's C and acquitted himself admirably on a middling-at-best Brandon Wheat Kings team, finishing with 78 points in 68 games – no small feat.

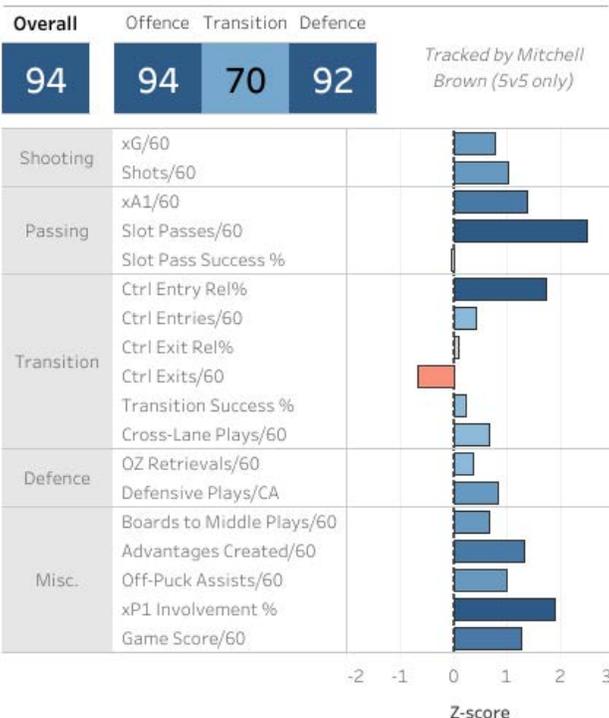
Mostly, Danielson was a creator of rush offence, building speed beneath the puck, charging through the neutral zone with possession, carving the ice up with powerful, agile crossovers, and turning the corner on opposing defenceman. Equal parts natural speed as a skater and handling skill made that a relatively effective signature move for the Wheat Kings centre.

More adaptable handler than a natural problem-solver, Danielson's handling skill in the face of pressure allowed him to retain possession in a lot of crunchy spots as a puck carrier. Certainly, his ability to diffuse pressure with the puck on his stick was among his best qualities.

Nate Danielson

F | Brandon Wheat Kings | WHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 147.0



“Until recently, Danielson’s WHL career has been one of solid impact but not dynamic play. That’s changing,” Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a Scout’s Notebook on EP Rinkside. “He’s become more aggressive with the puck, cutting inside on defenders and attacking the net more. The depth of skill he shows is exciting: edges, handling skill, shooting, and vision. As Danielson continues to tighten up his timing and reads, those flashy sequences of individual skill should result in even more offence.”

And while we often left our viewings wanting from Danielson as a distributor at evens, the extra time and space on the power play seemed to allow his skills to shine through more clearly. He isn’t a master manipulator or lane-opener, by any means, but his passing skill and touch allow him to connect through sticks and skates with relative ease. It also has to be said that the Wheat Kings didn’t offer Danielson much support.

There are some who believe a more structured environment with a better supporting cast will bring out the best in Danielson and unlock untapped potential as a top-six centre at the next level. Maybe they’re onto something.

We’re not quite as convinced, as evidenced by his spot on our board. Danielson has the tools and the power game to translate to the NHL, but we envision his career path as that of a bottom-six, two-way forward who can contribute secondary offence and perhaps chip in on the second unit of both special teams groups. In other words, an awesome find about anywhere from the 15th overall pick on.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



WHL Stock Watch: Nate Danielson becoming an offensive force in Brandon



WHL Stock Watch: Lukas Dragicevic scoring at an historic clip from the blue line for Tri-City

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Little bit older if I remember right, so I take that with a grain of salt, but good player that coaches will love. Pretty high chance he plays in NHL for me.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I don’t know if he has the hockey sense to stick as a C in the NHL, but he can flat out fly. I think his skating alone makes him a pretty safe bet to play NHL games.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s so dangerous on the rush because he has elite speed and great hands. One of the fastest guys in the league on a curve.” – NHL scout, April 2023

∨ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

A robust defensive game from Danielson. On one penalty kill shift, he stole possession twice and nearly set up a chance. Proactive backtracking, retreating above the puck, and when he can’t, he steps on the pass to pressure the puck carrier. Always supporting down low, covering high and moving back behind the net as needed. Pinched opponents along the boards, winning the puck and securing body positioning in one move. Inside-driven offensively, drawing a pair of penalties. He had a

couple of classic Danielson rushes – crossovers for attacks at angles, underhandle, and subtle change of pace deception to slow defenders before accelerating. Most failed, and when they didn't, they failed to result in anything. He doesn't use up space before passing or cutting back – preventing him from consistently creating advantages as a result. He skates into corners and traps himself with the puck. Fast, but can't separate on his edges, which limits his puck protection. He's an NHLer, especially now with the physical game. But he still seems more like a 3C than a top-six forward. There's always a chance because Brandon's so limited offensively, but I can't justify having him inside the top-15, or even top-20 based on what I've seen this season.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

I continue to see mostly a middle-six center, a more defensive one maybe than offensive one. The frame is interesting and I like the speed overall, especially when he's attacking down the wing. He scored that way in this game. He took the puck, strided around a defender, and beat the goalie. His best offence seems self-generated with carries like this, which is not all that translatable to the NHL. (He's speedy, but not an elite rusher that could pull off these plays consistently in the top league). He's aware, but the execution was hit and miss overall in this game. He connected on some passes to high-danger areas and missed others. So, all in all, above-average skating, closer to average handling, shooting skills but inconsistent playmaking, and projectable physical game. If he really leans into his shutdown quality, he could still become an NHL-driver, someone who complements two skilled wingers very well with his defensive ability, shooting, and hard skills.

J.D. Burke: March 12th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

I'm having a hard time getting excited about Danielson as a prospect. It just seems like he's already playing at the upper limit of his skill set, and it's not really that impressive at this level as is. He has some handling skills. He's adaptable in the face of pressure or numbers. But it always feels like he's flying by the seat of his pants, reacting to what's in front of him rather than creating or manipulating opponents himself. Mostly, Danielson's best work occurred in the defensive zone. A lot of proactive support below the hash marks. Some intelligent reads and consistent effort on the track. He doesn't cheat for offence. Danielson also hopped on a loose puck in the Winnipeg ICE crease and snapped it home for among the easiest goals in his career. Looks like an early second-rounder to me.

Mitchell Brown: March 7th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Not much ice time from Danielson, but this wasn't a productive game. He lacks precision and awareness. Passes to the other team, throws pucks blindly into space, and when he tries more complex plays, he drops his head and waits too long before passing. Proactive down low support in the defensive zone and even a bit of physicality. He absorbs contact and understands when to cut back. Outside speed, with his hopping crossovers providing separation. The edges aren't quite as refined (his inside leg walks through his turns, preventing immediate acceleration). He's pretty clearly an NHL player. He supports, skates his routes, shows some creativity on the powerplay, and his speed will remain an advantage at the next level. But I don't see a play-driver or creator at this level, meaning he likely won't be one going forward.

David St-Louis: March 1st, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

I see the appeal of Nate Danielson. He's an NHLer. I'd bet on it. The tools are all NHL calibre or above NHL calibre. He could forecheck well in the league, play on the penalty kill, centre two talented, smaller wingers and act as a stabilizing presence. I just don't think there is a lot of special in his game. He wins scoring chances by using his tools or through trial-and-error most of the time. He runs down the wing, outspeeds defenders, and then shoots on net. And on the powerplay, he tries passes through and screened shots. Sometimes they work. He could keep the same play style in the NHL and earn a career in the bottom-six, but I'd like to see more from him, more creativity, before pencilling him as a future middle-six centre. It's a role he could play, but the only quality I see that he could really leverage is his defensive game. I'd draft him between 20-35.

David St-Louis: February 14th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

When he gets to pick up speed with crossovers, Danielson can really fly through the neutral zone. He helped his team score two goals by carrying pucks in. He also showed that he understands gap manipulation, to an extent, by pushing back defenders and

using teammates coming in behind. He's at his best as a playmaker behind the net and on the half-wall on the power play. In those spots, he's quite deceptive. The hockey sense will remain an average grade for me -- and that's how I would characterise the whole game in general, but that's a compliment. He's very NHL projectable, but maybe more to a bottom-six role, as a supportive player than a scorer.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Danielson is not the most exciting player in the draft, but he's one of the easiest to project to the NHL. He has the hard skills: the hits, puck protection, forecheck, net-drives....Some playmaking flashes (he knows where teammates are and can find them in high-danger areas) and he has a good feel for where to position without the puck, the off-puck timing. He also seems to care about the defensive game. Add those abilities to NHL calibre tools and you have your arguments to select Danielson somewhere between 15-30 at the draft (depending on your philosophy). If he starts showing more advanced offensive abilities from now until the end of the season, maybe we can push him higher on our own list.

J.D. Burke: February 5th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Not the most impressive Danielson viewing I've had this season. His biggest moments were a pair of penalties, one absolutely heinous hit from behind that should've been a major among them. Not a lot of puck touches for Danielson in this contest. The most interesting was a drive wide on a zone entry and a hook pass to pick up a trailing option for a scoring chance. Showed some intelligence with his routes and his timing off-puck. He was characteristically sound in the defensive zone, too. I'm just having such a hard time seeing Danielson as a top-15 pick, even though many in the industry hold him in that esteem.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

Not a great performance from Danielson. The only flash I saw from him was a precise slot pass. Apart from that, he faded in the background. This is too bad, as this was really an occasion for him to show his skill in a different environment. His team isn't the most creative, but maybe that's also an inherent trait for Danielson just not a product of his environment. The tools continue to be very interesting for his NHL projection.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

It's Edmonton, but this was still an impressive game from Danielson, showing a level of nuance and skill that I've only seen from him in flashes. First, he showed a delay game, passing skill (backhand, slip, saucer), vision to connect through layers, and off-the-boards skill. He connected with a backhand slip pass off the boards and a look off forehand passes into space. Found the trailer. Grabbed an assist by anticipating the D-to-D pass, then fighting off the opponent's stick and passing through the traffic in front. Second, this was a more physical game from him than usual. He threw a couple of hits, got inside positioning on opponents, and absorb contact to make the next play. Third, he was more engaged in the defensive end, bringing the level of energy and play-killing that he'll need consistently at the next level. The best play was a close-out at the point. Where most forwards change forward, he slowed down, kept athletic posture, and didn't fall for the puck carrier's trickery. There were also the usual not-so-great Danielson stuff, including low-percentage shots with better options. He's not a manipulator and skates himself into traffic without any real, consistent ways to escape. The skating's lot of short, choppy motions. But he looked like a clear first-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Danielson had some flashes in this game. He turned on the jets, then cut inside for a chance at the tail end of the powerplay. He easily took passes in motion and continued attacking the net. Consistent defensive impact. He skated above the puck carrier, took the middle, then pressed the attack to the outside. Engaged at the right moments. Dislodged possession along the boards. Supported down low. Took the extra stride. A lot of his offensive impact was limited by a lack of scanning. He threw pucks inside without looking first and shot from the outside without looking for options in the middle -- he missed several easy-to-hit, better opportunities as a result. Tried to dangle through a defender late in the game, but he overskated, waited too long, and had his head down, preventing him from finding another play once the deke was eliminated. Similarly, his skating's a bit concerning. He's quick, but it's all short, incomplete crossovers and strides. It should improve, but his narrow base and lack

of more explosive edge work could prevent him from having speed as an advantage at the next level, and speed is how he primarily creates at this level.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson plays fast, able to outrace opponents with a series of crossovers and weight shifts to the outside. From there, he shows vision (passing back into the slot, especially after gaining the zone on the powerplay), a willingness to attack the middle, and the beginnings of a delay game. He doesn't necessarily read feet, evidenced by a play where he shot instead of cutting inside with the defender's feet in a bad position, but he does read and exploit passive gaps. Most of his plays only come out of a glide; he relies on his speed to overwhelm, but not to execute. He lacks a bit of depth (strides and crossovers) sometimes, but he still separates from opponents consistently. Without improving his functional speed, there's a chance the offence doesn't translate, especially given that it lacks layers. Still, he's a refined defensive player and brings off-puck offence through positioning. A bit more motor, and he'll play. Could be a mid-first depending on the tools.

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A better playmaking game from Danielson, who hit on many of his offensive zone passes. He used give-and-goes to move around defenders and didn't just drive the wing to pass shoot but to look for drop passes to teammates. Multiple passes from the wall, too. My only issue is that he turns toward pressure before making them, like spinning in place, instead of moving his feet and attracting the defensive presence elsewhere. He doesn't spot all of the advantages he has, all of the better plays he could make, but the hockey sense could still be an above-average grade.

Mitchell Brown: December 11th, 2022 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson has many qualities. He effectively supports plays down low, skates his routes off-puck, gets open in the slot, anticipates passes and occupies the lane, and understands when to delay in transition. He has some interesting skill, too. One-timed a puck off the post with a redirection shot and set-up a teammate with a look-off cross-slot pass under pressure. But these plays are few. He mostly plays a simple game, making neutral or positive plays, but never the best play. Doesn't chain or sequence skills at an especially high level, doesn't take advantage of the space his teammates create for him, and doesn't create many advantages for his teammates. He looks like an NHLer. He plays like an NHLer. But I'm not convinced he's anything more than a third or fourth-liner, even if the offence and energy improve.

David St-Louis: December 7th, 2022 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson forces a lot of plays. I think he's aware overall, but the decision-making suffers from a desire to create that is too high in an environment where he lacks support and he's supposed to be a main driver. He also lacks the manipulation abilities that could allow him to open plays that aren't there. The tools are generally above-average, but I think he's mostly a bottom-six projection, a checker who will connect plays, to an extent. He has the physical skills, the speed, and the defensive engagement.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson had another gear compared to normal. He wasn't just positioning himself in the right spots, he was ripping away possession from attackers and then punishing them. Didn't just skate his routes, but engaged with defenders, tying up with them to create passing lanes. And he was trying to move pucks into and across the slot to his teammates, rather than settling for the safe play. Late in the game, he connected with a one-touch slap pass for a point-blank chance. The shoot and transition play were more encouraging. He won pucks, used the heel-to-heel to slip away and fire in one smooth motion. Consistently open around the slot. In transition, he delayed, built speed under the puck, passed laterally, and used the middle. Otherwise, Danielson still seemed to play below his skill and lacked awareness of options. The playmaking was as usual: blind plays to areas where he expects teammates to be, lacking the adaptability and craftiness to get pucks through the desired lane. Pass receptions and shooting the pass require work, missing opportunities to pull pucks across the goaltender or even get a clean shot on net. He looks like a potential third or fourth-liner who will require added aggression and consistency to get there.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs Everett Silvertips - WHL

Danielson looks like a future NHLer with his relatively good skating mechanics, handling skills, and what seems like a three-zone presence, but there are many things that suggest that he won't become the top-six player that he was touted to become a year ago, like his lower pace of play, inconsistent reads, badly timed dangles, and the way he passes. Although he can connect with teammates in high-danger areas, he's not really a playmaker, someone who opens up lanes. He looks toward the same areas and sends pucks there hoping to find a teammate. His game lacks a bit of urgency and life. He seems to be going through the motions a bit, which can be normal in a struggling team like Brandon. Danielson could be a first-rounder based on tools and the potential of his game, but again, I see him more as a complementary presence on a bottom-six. One sequence that suggested more potential: his goal. He came down the top of the zone, timed himself with a teammate controlling the puck on the back-wall, and arrived precisely when he needed to one-time the puck in.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson has a lot of projectable habits and details: hip pocket handling, cutting across the front of defenders, taking the inside when given space, changing pace, staying in motion off-puck, finishing off-puck routes, and handling switches of coverage. He's not an especially high pace or energetic player, but he's a solid bet to be an NHLer given these details and defensive game. But he lacks the extra layers of skills to really move the needle, even at this level. He doesn't deceive or manipulate defenders, create an inside opportunity for himself, and settles for perimeter plays. He doesn't have a delay game, either. Lots of weak plays, poor decisions as a passer, and missed receptions. He looks like an NHL player, but not sure if he has enough to become a good one.

Mitchell Brown: November 2nd, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson likes to circle the offensive zone then fling a pass to the net front. In one sequence, he faked the shot, waited for the defender to turn, then pass, but that was the only example of high-level offence in this game. He gets forced wide, kept there, and doesn't have any ideas other than keep going straight ahead. The crossovers barely count as much, although his stride's projectable. Scored by arriving late into space in the slot, finished off with a one-timer. Understands how to space the offensive zone. His defensive engagement's a plus, and he quickly turned loose pucks into breakouts. But he's not a particularly inventive or diverse player. Probably more of a second-round candidate.

David St-Louis: October 19th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL

This was a good all-around game from Danielson. He made a few nice passes, including some difficult ones (like a behind the back feed as a defender collapsed on him on the boards), but he also forced a lot of plays, both passes and dangles. He showed he could work to get open, but also stayed net-front and forced his teammates to rim the puck down to him, leading to cycle battles. He misses some defensive coverages, hit others...You get the picture. Danielson seems like an all-around projectable NHL player, but I felt like I was watching more of a future bottom-six contributor than a top-six one in this game.

Daniel Gee: October 12th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Danielson led the way, not only for Brandon but also in terms of draft-eligibles littered throughout this game. Advanced in almost every way in transition, Danielson's game is projectable habits. He takes almost every pass in-stride, leaving little lag time on his receptions, often pushing him an extra step ahead of defenders trying to establish a gap. On top of this, Danielson possesses clear passing skill. On his first play of the game he slipped a pass into the middle to Johnson -- who was subsequently tripped. Hook passes are prevalent as well. Delay game elements are present -- not afraid to cut back to switch pressure and find trailers. In the second after delaying and sending the puck to a trailer, he shifted to the left-hand circle, got the puck back and rifled a shot right over Brennan's blocker side shoulder -- the precision to find the area between the mask and shoulder was frankly nuts.. Found Hyland backdoor after taking a pass in-stride, turning Dowhaniuk, and extending his reach so when he released the cross-seam it was through an open lane. Danielson even has manipulation habits -- weight-shifts and attacking the back of open-ice defenders allows for north-to-south manoeuvrability.

In sustained offensive zone pressure, Danielson pushes a singular pace -- as fast as possible -- it's hard for teammates to completely connect with him because of it. For instance, in the second he sent a really nice pass in space but no one was even

prepped to skate onto the puck. He's like a running back always fighting through resistance and pressure. With that comes forechecking value -- just obliterates passive and unsure handlers on retrievals. Works his shot in downhill rotations on the power play -- tried to set up a pass-off-pad at the end of the third. Very impactful and distributive defender in his own zone. He scans and moves proactively to take away secondaries -- he basically nullified the bumper as an option on the Cougars' PP. An intense pressure pusher, he rejected a couple of pucks, targeted Heidt and forced him into bad passes, and chased heavily. He will have to adjust as he hits higher levels but the base is there. He's going to play a lot of NHL games -- probably in a secondary scoring role who adds defensive value -- especially when the advantages from his high-effort-level aren't as prevalent among pros.

J.D. Burke: October 10th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

It was difficult to get much of a read on Danielson's game in this environment. You can tell it's still early in the season, because these early games are just so disjointed and so absent of any flow from one shift to the next. To his credit, Danielson flashed skill in every facet of the game in spite of this -- handling, shooting, passing, etc. Skating looked about average if not slightly above average, too. I don't know if the craftsmanship matches the tools, though. Danielson regularly crowded his linemates when he wasn't completely stationary off-puck. Most of Danielson's best work occurred defensively. Constant scanning, a high work rate, constant support below the hash marks.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson wasn't able to get much going in this game, despite positive habits and ideas. His best plays: cut inside, draw two defenders, pass to the flank and support the cycle before passing back into the slot for a chance. He has a lot of projectable tools: hands, skating, passing, and even shooting. But he lacks the change of pace game to maximize his skills. Saskatoon's better rush defenders easily kept him wide. After passing, he stands around and waits for the puck to come to him. Plants himself in front of the net instead of trying to get open or create space. Whiffed on his best scoring chance of the game. I saw better last season; it'll come.

Mitchell Brown: April 27th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Danielson might already be Brandon's most dependable creator. He's smooth, creative, and consistent. Attacks the inside early to create opportunities to the outside. Delays at the right moments. Shows a bit of skill as both a shooter (getting open inside space) and passer (delay, drop pass, slip pass). Right now, he's more of a transition threat, where he's using his crossover-heavy attacks and deft hands to gain the zone. Game tapers off in-zone, but that's really the case for everyone on this Brandon team. A bit more aggression with the puck would help significantly, too. He missed opportunities to pull pucks from the boards to the middle. Could be a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.

Mitchell Brown: December 27th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Danielson was probably the best player in this game, one filled with NHL prospects. The core of Danielson's game is the skating and handling combination. He's a force in the NZ, overwhelming defenders with speed, handling skill, and occasional deception. Could turn those rushes into manipulation sequences by changing pace, and a deeper posture will allow him to squeeze more power out of his frequent crossovers. In the OZ, he takes too many poor shots and defaults to the simple play too easily. But, there were moments of high-level thinking. He delayed to find the trailer, creating an obvious cross-slot pass for a scoring chance. Some work to do defensively, but puck pursuit's a strength. He closes space quickly without committing his weight too early, then funnels plays up the boards. He's on the cusp of being both dynamic and a play planner; could be a top prospect if his development continues.

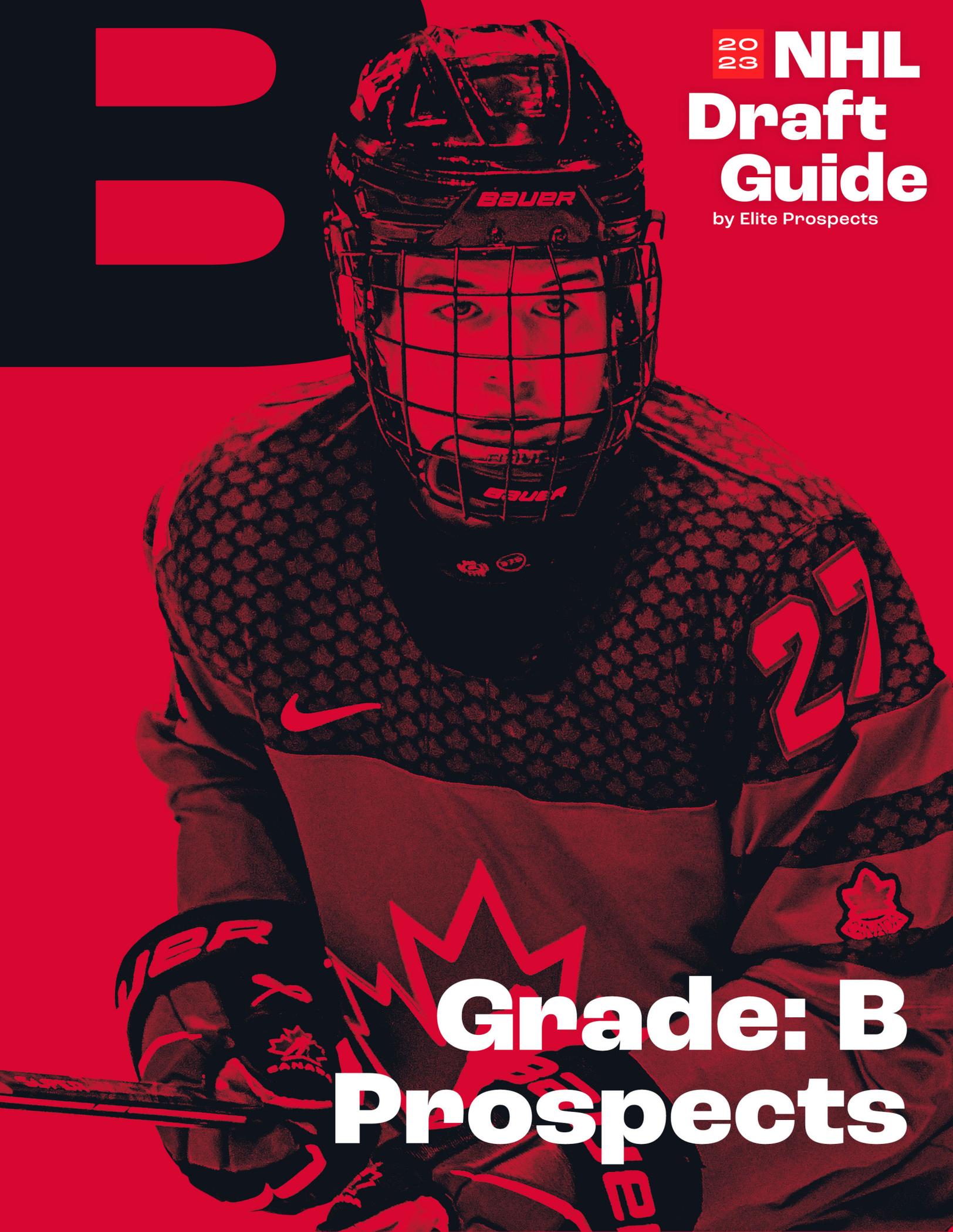
Mitchell Brown: October 23rd, 2021 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Danielson left the game in the first period after getting hit from behind into the boards. He did a lot of nothing for most of his time, except for one shift on the PP. He weight shifted around a defender and cut inside to gain the zone. He made a one-pass-away play that led to a chance, before relocating to get open. Skating is his most exciting tool. He pushes his knees over his toes, engages his hips, completely most strides, and uses his outside edges. Really separates from defenders at this level.

20
23

NHL Draft Guide

by Elite Prospects



Grade: B Prospects



Grade: B

27 Riley Heidt

AGE 17.477 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Angry Nick Schmaltz



Vision



Hockey IQ



Pest

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	6.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	6	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Prince George Cougars "A"	WHL	68	25	72	97	1.43
Canada U18	WJC-18	5	0	2	2	0.40

SCOUTING REPORT

Riley Heidt is among the most legitimately skilled players to come out of the WHL this year. One of the rare triple-threat scorers in this draft, a player who can beat you with his hands, shot, and pass in almost equal measures.

This was especially true on the power play, where Heidt amassed 45 percent of his points last season – for context, Connor Bedard's 45 have him at 31 percent, Zach Benson's 20 at 20 percent, Gracyn Sawchyn's 16 at 27.5 percent, Andrew Cristall's 33 at 35 percent.

Put another way: Heidt was one of if not the most potent first-time draft-eligible power play scorer in the entire WHL.

It isn't difficult to see why Heidt would thrive in that environment. The additional time and space brought out the best in his game, allowing him to create in structure, using manipulation, pace, and a heightened awareness of his teammates' positions to pick opposing defences apart one pass at a time.

Give Heidt an inch, and he'll dangle his way through one, two, maybe even three opponents and take the puck to the net himself.

And while the Cougars forward was undoubtedly more effective on the power play, it's not like he wasn't a key contributor at even

Riley Heidt

F | Prince George Cougars | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 146.3



strength, too.

“Whether Heidt is initiating early contact to sweep in and behind a puck-retrieving defender, layering a west-to-east pass to stretch defensive schemes, or even processing the upcoming play to float a pass into space, he is a dominant presence on the cycle,” Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in an October Scout’s Notebook on EP Rinkside. “Nasty physically, despite his 5-foot-11 frame, Heidt has the handling, shooting, and vision to inflict major damage on opponents.”

This feels like a good time to get into Heidt’s physical dimension. In a word, he’s nasty. Even standing at a modest 5-foot-11 with a frame that isn’t all that developed, this guy packs a serious punch. He takes the extra stride to play the body, never passes up an opportunity to sneak in a shot behind the play, and is an enthusiastic combatant in scrums.

On retrievals, Heidt establishes inside positioning early, drives through opponents’ hands, and separates them from the puck. And the use of contact to create space in the small area game allows him to spin off of defensive pressure and attack the inside.

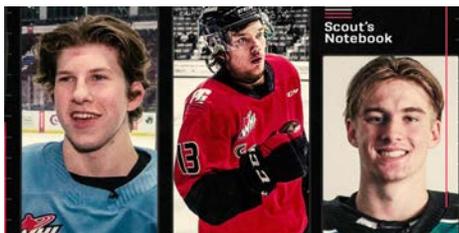
The problem is that Heidt’s profile aligns with that of a lot of really good junior players in the past who struggled to translate their game to the next level. Whether it’s the disproportionate amount of power play offence, the lack of more explosive outside edge skating manoeuvres, wildly inconsistent play, and virtually no concern with playing defensive – the red flags are numerous.

Granted, the potential is sky-high for Heidt, too. That’s why we’ve ranked him well inside of our first round. He can be a middle-six scoring winger with power play utility, and that sort of value is hard to find once you get out of the teens.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout’s Notebook: An early look at Andrew Cristall, Caden Price, Riley Heidt, and Koehn Ziemmer

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Great with the puck, great on the power play. Need to see more in other parts of his game.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“I just don’t know what he does or what he gets accomplished. He gets points at home on a team where someone’s gotta get points. He’s a little bit of an enigma.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“The good is that he has truly elite hands and he can do whatever he wants with the puck. He’s also a pretty good skater for his size, so the tools look really attractive. The bad is that he’s a perimeter player that doesn’t play any defence either. He’s going to have to change his entire game to see NHL ice.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“His hands are special and he’s a truly elite stick handler. Without the puck he’s a work in progress, to be generous.” – NHL scout, April 2023

“There isn’t one single skill that’s even average. He can skate, he can compete, and he puts up a ton of points. Great kid with a bright future.” – NHL scout, January 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

One of the better games of Heidt. I don't see a lot of skill in his game at the tournament, but he's at the right place at the right time. He plays with energy. He has looked more comfortable with the puck on his stick as the tournament went on. Not sure what he's doing on the half-wall on the powerplay, however, as he's not as good as many others on this team at catching and moving pucks quickly and with deception. I like the pace in his game and the defensive involvement. He has some creative rush patterns.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

There were a couple of interesting moments from Heidt in this contest, most of them occurring in the neutral zone. Heidt consistently found a way to sneak into opponents blind spots, one time even setting himself up for a clean breakaway look that the goaltender stopped. His work during sustained offensive zone pressures wasn't quite as impressive. Heidt's off-puck pace came and went, as did his support game. Some flashes of handling skill – nothing new there – but none of it really amounted to much. Heidt caught a Swiss forward with a devastating hip check in open ice. That was neat.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

I'm not seeing much from Heidt at the tournament besides effort. He forechecks well, chips and chases after the puck, and battles for it on the walls. He drives the net. A lot. And he finds teammates quickly. He doesn't bring as much skill and creativity as Cristall, but I can understand wanting a better two-way player like him higher in the lineup.

J.D. Burke: April 4th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Very much so an on again, off again performance from Heidt, who flashed a lot of what you'd want to see from him in a given game, but only in small measures. The playmaking skill is obvious, particularly off the rush. He changes lanes, speeds, tempos, and often tries to gain the inside, if not for his own ends then to drag opposition defenders into his orbit and create space elsewhere. A lack of anticipation and patience cost him repeatedly though, as Heidt often parachuted out of plays for low percentage shots or dangles right as passing lanes developed. Play selection more broadly left me wanting. In the defensive zone, Heidt made the occasional foray low into the zone to offer support and made himself available as an outlet, but his work rate was variable at best. A lot of fly-bys and a lot of cheating for offence. He looks like a B-grade prospect to me.

Daniel Gee: March 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt uses his delay game in transition and it works to such a high extent. In this game he was more dynamic transitionally. In the first he executed a stop-up on an entry, causing an aggressive defender to fly past him. Executed multiple one-touch plays with Ziemmer and Wheatcroft. On one sequence, Heidt manipulated a defender, using shoulder shakes to break a man on an entry. He passed off to Ziemmer, activated into a pass lane deeper in the zone, and wired a hard one-timer off the goaltenders toe. So much power on the shot. Heidt tried multiple funnels inside -- he even faked a one-time shot, passing back to the slot to Wheatcroft. As the play developed, Heidt found a rebound on the side of the net and feed a wide open, slot activated Ziemmer who basically had an open net. The execution speed, the restraint not to jam the puck, and the vision to find the best option made this play special.

He recorded another assist in sustained pressure -- after taking an amazing layered slip from Ziemmer (near boards to left-circle), Heidt one-touched the puck to Wheatcroft for a tik-tac-toe goal. On the defensive end, Heidt did an amazing job containing Cristall to the outside on a attempted cut inside. He overextends sometimes, but he's a legitimate disruptor now. Top-20 in this draft -- if he can find another gear pace-wise, his projection will only get better.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt's an interesting combination of clear pro-calibre habits and details alongside many junior scorer tendencies. The contrast

between how he wins positioning and space away from the puck versus how he actually creates offence is pretty shocking. He gets inside, spins off pressure, sprints his routes, and skates through the hands of opponents. With the puck, it's all gear down from mid-speed passes in glides. Some deception in the form of a quick look off, but he relies heavily on his teammates to (a) win the race to the slot, and (b) open space where he can delay. He's best when getting open, a player moves the puck to him, then he quickly makes the next play. As soon as he has to create the space with the puck on his stick, he only gears down and glides. No real creation in motion or at notable speed in this game. Not a top-15 candidate for me at this stage, looks like a third-line playmaker projection with average mechanics.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Lots of skill plays from Heidt in this game, highlighted by a one-touch pass off the rush to turn a scoring chance into a goal. A quick pass off the boards to the middle led to another chance, set up by his off-puck movement (down low to the boards instead of rushing the net). A nasty saucer pass set-up off the rush. In-stride wrister off the rush. The physical skills were notable, as usual. He throws hits early to create distance and win battles. He also missed opportunities to manipulate pressure, including one from the side. He didn't create the best play when he had the puck for more of a split-second. Not a dynamic skater or puck carrier either. To me, he looks more like a middle-six, late-first candidate. The lack of extra layers of skill is concerning for a player with his tools.

Daniel Gee: February 21st, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt barely touched the puck in this game; a major factor in this was a myriad of one-and-done puck touches by Wheatcroft, who took hold of the transition efforts in this game. Nevertheless, as the game went on, Heidt started to make more of an impact. In transition, he had trouble escaping pressure off-puck -- he essentially had had a man attached at his hip, sometimes even doubled. When Heidt did get possession on a first period rush, he overcomplicated a play on the right-wing, opting to one-touch the possession back across the slot instead of taking what would be a fairly dangerous shot due to the location on the ice. Eventually Heidt was able to escape pressure in the second, grabbing a newly turned over puck, working in 3-on-2, and slipping a pass perfectly across the crease for a primary assist. Heidt had some problems getting pucks to the inside in sustained pressure. He was heavily pressured on the half-wall and the Cougars failed to push the inside initiative to lesson the harassment. Heidt was boxed out at any attempt to the middle, and was never really found as a shot option when he did find some space in the middle. Eventually, Heidt was able to intercept a clear, walk down hill, handle to the backhand, and feather a puck backdoor, tape-to-tape -- his pass target whiffed on a wide open net. He absorbs contact so well -- the Heidt formula is to take the reception, pivot and absorb, and then launch off that flat footed pressure pusher. I'm unsure how this will work at higher levels where he will be considered as undersized.

Where Heidt made most of his impact was on the penalty kill and in his own zone -- an area of his game that is just night-and-day better than at the start of the season. He killed so much time across all the different Portland man-advantage plays. On one second period sequence, Heidt managed to dangle a defender through his triangle, take the puck into the OZ, and waste nearly 20 seconds. He anticipated passes and jumped into lanes for the intercepts -- he did this on a 5-on-3 -- a massive inflection point of the game. Even working into shot lanes looking to clog shots. All-in-all a good effort that maybe showed more of his utility at the next level, rather than the offence-generation that he is known for. Heidt's use of his outside edges had been a discussion around the EP scouts and it's clear he barely accesses them in a given game. I think it's why some come away down on his skating. I don't think his stride is too much of an issue; ups pace at the right times and can separate if he needs it.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

A quiet game from Heidt, whose down-gearing didn't prove much offence. He popped into space at the right moments, picking up a scoring chance. Mostly perimeter playmaking without any ability to get to the middle. Since he's not a dynamic skater, he couldn't beat the Kamloops' rush defence. Instead, he dumped the puck (with space) and never recovered possession. The defence was solid in spurts, however. He scanned and eliminated threats. Some flashes on the powerplay. This wasn't a game that suggested a first round prospect, especially given Ziemmer's success.

Daniel Gee: February 8th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was a blowout for Prince George, but Heidt wasn't really a major factor in it despite some production on the powerplay. Off-puck activations were strong and he ran the PP on the half wall. Heidt nearly scored late in the second -- a hard one-timer off a Wheatcroft pass just hit the side of the net. Again his movement into open space was the key here. Heidt was crafty in transition in this one -- in the first he took a Ziemmer pass in the slot, worked a drop-pass give-and-go back, but the pass was just out of reach. It was the right idea in the situation. Stays on his inside edges almost the entire game. He almost scored on a rebound off a Wheatcroft breakaway as well -- couldn't get a clean shot off but caused a juggle in the crease. Again, not the best I've seen for Heidt -- really expect him to take over games more than he actually does.

Cam Robison: February 4th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

A couple of primary helpers for Heidt in this one I. On the first, he got inside position, chipped it up the wall and collected it himself before sending a one-handed pass to the middle for the A1. It was a hard play and showcased his strength along the wall. He wasn't as dangerous with the puck in a shooting sense in this one, but he was completing passes at very high rate - through folds in the NZ, quick ups out of the DZ, and he was working the puck around very well on the PP (as usual). He did lose a few puck battles for what looked like a lack of competitive fire which is something we don't often see from him.

The stickhandling was fluid and had some creativity to it while in transit. His skating is clean - he's quick to pucks, has good top speed and the form rates out as above average.

Just an okay showing I'd say.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

I'm starting to see why the team likes Heidt so much. He can do a bit of everything at quite a high-level. He finds space and launches rockets at the net, slips pucks under opponents, manipulates them to open lanes, and even has a physical side to his game. He establishes body positioning on retrieval and isn't afraid to go in battles. Maybe he's a bit too fancy at times and maybe his skating could be a bit better, but the offensive potential is really there. The stickhandling and shooting and passing look all like above NHL average projection. And despite his size and skating base, I'm ready to give him a 5 or more as a physical grade.

Daniel Gee: February 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Another good performance for Heidt, who was the Cougars' best player in this one. He must have had 4-5 scoring chances off the hop in this game, all from pass-supporting plays with Koehn Ziemmer. What makes him special at this level is the execution speed he operates at -- whether Heidt is working a give-and-go, or upping his pace to jump into an open lane, he's almost always available off-puck. The extra layer of being able to catch-and-release pucks only makes him more dangerous. He struggles with placement at times -- which leads to logo-based shot locations, but that skill will develop more over time. On-puck he was super elusive in this game. On one shift he forced a turnover in the neutral zone, poked the puck past a layer of two Royal defenders, and snapped a deceptive wrister off the left-hand circle. He finally saw conversion in the second after waves of attacking. He started a rush with a chip-and-chase. This led to a deflected backhand pass to an off-puck threat. On the same shift, Heidt floated backdoor and whipped a rebound that popped out in the slot -- threw the monkey off his back. Shortly after, he slipped a puck in transition from the right-wing to an activated Hudson Thornton, who one-touched it to Wheatcroft for a goal. Just a lot to like when Heidt is on-puck. Adjusts routes, changes of speed to disrupt gaps, side steps that force pivots, all blended with passing skill. He's not a prolific handler, but he is in terms of protection.

When set up in the offensive zone, Heidt was once again a force on the powerplay. He runs the whole unit on the half wall, working up and down into attacks. He continued to show manipulation habits, eyes selling shot as he sent a layered pass across into one-time shots. He's a smart rotator, dynamically reacting to other teammates' activations. In the third on a 5-on-3, Heidt cycled low to high, occupied the top of the slot, and sent a pass into Thornton's wheelhouse for a one-time goal.

Some lazy defending in the first -- missing secondary threats, not disruptive enough. Heidt cleaned it up for the rest of the game. Proactive shifts into the middle of the ice, willingly blocking one-timers, and just great work below the goal line to push

pressure. In the third on a penalty kill he even read, anticipated, and stole a pass working the puck into a counter attack. This was one of those performances where he really stepped up and dominated his minutes.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Heidt has some moments of high-end hockey sense and other ones where you question his play-reading, with and without the puck. He's widely inconsistent from shift to shift and game to game, not necessarily in terms of effectiveness, as he's always pressuring and involved in the play, but in terms of projection. He's hard to grasp. His stature and short stick and playstyle hurt his projection a bit (will he be able to maintain the physicality at higher level considering it's not based on elusiveness but straight up body contact?), but then he also has moments where he gets a puck on the wall, fakes a pass, and hits a teammate in stride in the middle of the ice. Right now, I like his pace of play and engagement more than his playmaking ideas. I'm not sure he's translatable with his style at higher levels. But he could be. Great off-puck instinct, too, to control his speed and attack scoring areas at the right time.

Cam Robinson: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Team Red - CHL TPG

One of the better even-strength showings from Heidt just happened to come on the big stage of the top prospects game. He was especially good with his off-puck offensive instincts as he deftly attacked lanes and holes to be situated with time to receive passes and fire pucks on net. He walked into a big slap shot down Broadway, found space in motion at the top of the circles, caught a low pass and attempted a quick Michigan. More often during league play, Heidt relies on the man-advantage to create offence for his mates, but instead he flipped the switch in this one and it was nice to see.

He was also effective on the penalty kill - thwarting lanes and attacking with quick strides. He pressured well. He was creative on the PP but wasn't the focal point, instead trying to situated himself in positions to receive and shoot. He was also physical along the wall and made smart outs to relieve pressure defensively.

He was named player of the game for Team Red. I'm not convinced he was the best player for his squad, but a top three of four showing from him with those teammates is nothing to sneeze at.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Heidt looked more comfortable on the powerplay in this one. Watching him, it feels like he's more reactive than playing in anticipation. But he has the skills to play that sort of game and thrive, especially at this level. He attacked the slot to get his shot off, tried a bold Lacrosse move, and he showed his more physical side. Despite his smaller stature, Heidt knows how to protect pucks. He had multiple chances near the net and more should have went in.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Another awesome game from Heidt. The skating form isn't where you want it for a smaller player, but the quickness is not a problem. He gets pushed off the puck sometimes, but he does engage physically when he can control the engagement. He moves well away from the puck, sees plays develop, plays with pace, attacks inside...He's tenacious in general and seems comfortable on the wall. He's involved defensively, especially in F1. And he has moments of planning in his playmaking. He has a sort of command on the ice in his best shifts.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Heidt had a couple of plays in this game. Grabbed an assist by finding the trailer, making the quick read to beat defenders into the lane. Cut inside, then went backhand to a teammate for a chance. He's slick, but he's primarily exploiting gaps. He only creates gaps by gearing down, but his top-end speed isn't pronounced enough to consistently create in the WHL, let alone the NHL. There are a lot of physical skills here, but rarely linked with the passing. As soon as players lean on him, he drops his head and misses the early option as he forces the late play. He plays in the NHL, but he looks more like a third-liner unless he's in the right situation. And that's a fine bet in the mid-to-late first. Just don't see the dynamic upside.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Heidt was just alright in this game. There were some exciting plays. He zipped a cross-slot pass on the powerplay for an assist. He froze defenders by hanging onto the puck for an extra second before passing into the slot. And he got open inside space, leading to a deflection opportunity. A couple of quick plays off the boards on the breakouts, cross-lane passes in the neutral zone, and some intelligent backtracking and off-puck defence rounded out the game. But I'm skeptical of the upside. He lacked deception and timing on his plays. He wasn't manipulating to create lanes and so many of his passes weren't even close (or didn't even have a viable target). He missed pass receptions because he was so focused on the body positioning battle. Looked more like a skilled, late-first/early-second in this game who might fall short because of a lack of layers to his game.

Cam Robinson: January 17th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Not a whole lot to get excited about in this one. Heidt was jumping into pockets of ice, trying to help propel the Cougars offense that was looking a little dry tonight. He had some downhill shot attempts - a couple blocked and one stopped. On the powerplay he was on the right side wall and sent a blistering pass to the slot for an A1 but it was in garbage time. But it was a pro pass with a look off that sold the shot. He was also working the left point at times up a man.

I liked his jump. He had some good battles along the wall. Worked the puck in some tight areas. But the team just couldn't get a whole lot of sustained pressure.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was a monster game from Heidt, who built upon last night's effort with even more scoring. What was instantly striking across his minutes was how on point his anticipation was -- for both teammates and opponents. His support and the frequency that he clogged lanes counter attacked out of stops was impressive.

More of a transitional threat in this one, Heidt was supporting the play so well in this one. He was wide open a couple of times but Chase Wheatcroft was having some issues getting the puck through layers. He had a sure goal on one first period sequence, but Heidt had to adjust his hands, unable to catch and release the puck backdoor. On the same sequence, Heidt sent a pass to the middle to Ziemmer -- an eye popping find that highlighted his vision on-puck. In the second after teeing up Wheatcroft for a one-time shot in the slot, Heidt crashed the net, grabbed the rebound and flung the loose puck in the net from a sharp angle. It was a supremely smart play -- one in which he anticipated. Later Heidt showed some examples of eyeline manipulation -- he connected with a linemate for a high-danger shot, selling that he was scanning in a different area. He was overwhelming shift-to-shift, frankly. Heidt had this play where he popped on his heels 2-on-1, sending a pass off pad -- support was just behind the play. Delays, give-and-go's, he was on a roll.

Some slick powerplay sequences here -- he loves to attack downhill, work into passing lanes -- he found Ziemmer on one play by heeled a low one-touch shot wide. Puck protection remained strong; pivots, extends his stick away from the checker, and blends passing skill to keep cycles alive. Even started some rough stuff at the end of the 3rd. Another game where he maximised his tools -- exciting prospect going forward.

Daniel Gee: January 6th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

While Heidt scored on his first touch of the game -- Ziemmer leveraged the threat of his shot to send a perfect cross on a 2-on-1, this was one of those games where Heidt didn't fully maximise his tools. Nevertheless, his game was full of nuanced details. He was a no-panic operator in transition. Pressure? Heidt still completes the handle into a slip pass. Pull-up handles to avoid aggression, drop-off passes finding trailers -- like most of his games, Heidt's transition of the puck was on point -- full of blended deception throughout his game. His best possession was on a penalty kill; Heidt laid a pass 2-on-1 to Wheatcroft who missed a wide-open net. Too much gliding off-puck in this one though -- needs to up his physical pace to open up more opportunities.

Heidt completed a bunch of layered W-to-E passes from the half wall in this viewing. His best sequence was in the first; he read the clearing pass, blocking the uncontrolled exit. Heidt then slipped the puck to an open man on the near boards, who set up

Thornton for a one-time shot. Habits remain advanced -- he reads support and works pass-off-pad plays, he eats up available space with downhill attacks, and he continues to protect the puck exceptionally well for his size. In the third, Heidt made a smart pivot to put his body in between a defender and the puck and essentially goaded them into taking a hooking/tripping penalty.

Defensively, this was a solid performance from Heidt -- the Cougars were outshot by a large margin and he was pushing a tonne of pressure on Roest when they were matched up. Physical below the goal line, amazing lane clogging, and snarly throughout. Looked like late A-grade -- I've seen him dominate play at a clear level higher.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

This game, in particular the third period, challenged my thoughts on Heidt. He was a monster, controlling the flow of the game like one of the best prospects in the draft. He zipped pucks through opponents, skated his routes to create space, and found teammates in high-danger areas. Controlled the game from the half wall at 5-on-5 for stretches. Patient and clever, although more deception is required to access these lanes in the NHL (or even in the WHL often). The best pass was a backhand pass through two defenders for a point-blank chance, set up by his off-puck skating. The physical game's also a nice touch. He comes across the hips, eliminates sticks, slams players into the boards, and even makes sure to give them a shove as he skates into their space. The inside edge-only, glide-heavy skating will have to improve, but he looked like a top-15 pick in the third period of this game.

Cam Robison: December 6th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Another strong performance from Heidt in this one. He jumped onto the scoresheet by grabbing a primary helper on the PP about 90 seconds in. He's very smart with his motion while up a man, moving the puck, coming up high, receiving the cross ice pass and then skating downhill and drawing coverage before zipping the pass to the paint for the tap in. He was smart to spots and hit seams in all situations. In the neutral zone, he caused turnovers with a quick and decisive stick that led quick strike offensive opportunities. Defensively, he was more confined to his spot and didn't run around much. Still a little dicey with the reads though. Was more reliant on the pass again, but did set himself up and had a couple of Grade A scoring chances - both while driving the inside dots and timing his landing in the slot area well.

The stride remains less than ideal with it's wide base and a lack of explosivness. He's quick and can dart around small areas really effectively, but in a foot race he lacks the form to get there in a hurry.

Cam Robison: November 13th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

We need to bottle this game from Riley Heidt and make sure he takes a sip from it before every game. Because this was the type of complete offensive game we're looking for. Hell, he wasn't even a complete liability defensively either. Noted as a playmaker, it was great to see Heidt driving the middle lane and going to the net with the intention of receiving and firing or cleaning up the trash. Two of his three goals came via that route while the other was the product of slipping to an open pocket on the PP and drilling a ont-times up and under the bar. We've lauded the power-play work of Heidt for some time, but he was much more a assertive, intelligent and effective at even-strength in this one. 6 of his 7 shots were at 5v5. He makes a move, gives the puck to a mate and cuts to an opening for the return - normally something he's more likely to do while up a man, he was doing it at evens tonight. This was a top-10 pick game.

Daniel Gee: November 13th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

Probably the best 5-on-5 performance that Heidt has put together in the last three years with the Cougars -- significant because his best play has skewed so heavily to the powerplay. He scored three in this game but had multitude of other chances. His game is so sophisticated in terms of details. Heidt had a transition chance where he stripped a puck in the defensive zone, attacked 2-on-2, funnelled a puck to the middle, crashing hard and just potting a rebound wide. He popped a power move later after taking an entry pass from Ziemmer -- he slid the puck on his backhand but it was saved. Lots of pro-habits -- give-and-goes, activating into open seams.

Where Heidt did all his damage was in sustained pressure. First roaming on the net front, he tipped a puck through three layers and then knocked in the rebound. In the second, Heidt failed a catch-and-release shot on the right-hand-circle, but reset and hammered a one-timer top-glove-side. His placements have always been strong but this was an exceptional case. Later in the second he handled past a defender into a pass, nutmegging them; Heidt attacked the crease for the give-and-go play and tapped in an easy goal. A lot of these sequences saw Heidt really maximising his tools to create, along with playing at a mental and physical pace that he doesn't really activate unless he's on the man-advantage. If he can play at this tempo all the time, his projection is much higher than a middle of the lineup piece. Past the goals Heidt was using hip-pocket protection, boxing out defenders as a screen threat, and timing high-danger-area activations.

His defensive game had its difficulties and bright spots. In the first he completely missed a release disruption leading to a goal against. Just not postured or ready with the pokecheck. He redeemed himself a bit on a subsequent sequence, poking away a one-time pass two times. He's smart enough to process the play, it's just about engagement level. For Heidt to be successful at higher levels it will have to be through volume touches and the only way to get that is to win defensive zone pucks and counter-attack -- especially considering Heidt's rather insane transition game.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Heidt's brilliant on the powerplay, from how he skates off-puck to his deception. It's not just traditional deception (look offs), but how he's always positioned to make multiple plays. His cross-slot pass, curl-and-drag shot, pass down low, and pass to the point all have the exact same set up. And he's also always guiding his teammates into space and giving them shootable pucks. He could run an NHL powerplay right now with the way he manipulates to open lanes. At 5-on-5, his impact is muted. He had a couple of slick passes, he only created one high-value look. Skates at incoming pressure, then passes wide and skates his routes to push back defenders. A bit of deception, too. Moves pucks off the boards after winning body positioning. Grabbed a short-handed primary with an impressive sequence: scanned before receiving the puck to see his teammate flying the zone, then delayed and faked the pass back into his zone before passing up the ice to the middle. There are some top-15, if not top-10 elements to his game. But given his mediocre 5-on-5 impact in my viewings, I'm not sold that he's a first-rounder quite yet. Either way, he looks like a potential mid-six forward.

David St-Louis: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Heidt is a great passer, but more of a connector than creator. That distinction comes to mind when watching him vs Cristall. Cristall opens plays that aren't there. Heidt makes intelligent passes to open teammates. Only on the powerplay does his skills start to shine a bit more. He has more energy than Cristall, more defensive involvement, and he's just as good at moving away from the puck. Multiple tic-tac-toe plays in this one. There is a lot of pace in his game, but I don't see high-level moving abilities: agility, four-way mobility, cutbacks. He mostly cuts his motor and tries to dangle in a glide. He's fast in the way he plays, but lacks the kind of dynamic skills that would make him more projectable.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

The skating is pretty problematic, mostly inside edges and very wide, limiting his weight shifting ability and even influencing the rest of his mechanics, his shooting and handling, but I thought Heidt showed more translatable abilities than Ziemmer in this game, more playmaking flashes and better off-puck movements. He also looks quite quick despite the not-perfect form. He moved defenders away from teammates when he had the puck, creating pockets of them, and showed a scanning ability with the puck even when pressured by defenders. He made his mark more on the powerplay than at five-on-five, however.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

When Heidt skates with the puck, his handling falls exactly on the rhythm of his skating, which is a symptom of his wide, inside-edge stride. He can't really shift his weight, so he lacks deception in his moves; he can't really push back defenders, so he has to rely on high, ineffective delays. His off-puck game was on and off. Sometimes, he struggled to escape coverage, but he also scored twice by finding passing and shooting lanes as they appeared, once from a one-timer in the middle of the slot and another time from a deflection. This off-puck game will have to become a strength and his playmaking, too, if he wants

to become an NHLer, as the speed and physicality won't get him there. He still had some instances of higher-end thinking in playmaking in this game. Some encouraging signs, but clear weaknesses, too.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

I'm still waiting to watch Heidt and be anything other thanwhelmed at 5-on-5. He's just a guy at 5-on-5. He mostly just glides around, making the odd slick pass to gain the zone or making crafty plays to teammates just as they skate into space. He controls the flow of the game when he's on the ice, but not in an especially dynamic way: he creates runways of space and then lets his teammates do their thing. That's a skill, absolutely. But he's not a shooting threat, not especially creative, and throws pucks away on plays that just aren't there. There are flashes of something more: gaining the zone, cutting inside, passing cross-ice to a teammate. He has clear potential as a defender and physical player through his positioning, ability to win battles (even from disadvantaged positions), and willingness to make contact. But he mostly looks like a generic bottom-sixer who runs PP2.

Daniel Gee: October 15th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt was deep in his bag in this one. The transition game is still so dominant. Off-puck he's so good at hiding and popping in and out of coverage, hiding in the peripherals of defenders. He was linking up with Ziemmer all game in transition. On one play in the first he filed in as a trailer, took a pass from Ziemmer and wired a hard one-timer on net. Later in the third Heidt had an amazing off-puck activation but sent a crease-located shot right into the crest of the goaltender. A common pattern across his games this year -- mechanically his shot is fine but placement is the biggest issue. His on-puck transition work is the best part of Heidt's game. Constantly using the middle of the ice he blended handling and deception on a 2-on-2 attack in the second. A drag to the middle and a hard wrister in the mid-slot led to a drawn penalty. Later on a powerplay he entered wide, stutter-stepped and manipulated the feet of a defender, then pulling the puck wide with speed into an open ice. Some hope passing on other sequences, devoid of scanning, just trying to create a quick play.

Heidt's play in sustained pressure went unrewarded in this one. On a first period forecheck he stole a pick in the corner; got under the stick and used his centre of gravity to push the defender away. He centred a pass to Carter MacAdams who failed to score on a wide open one-timer. The playmaking continued in a string of second period power plays. He processed a check in the slot, spun off the aggression and bumped a pass to Wheatcroft who drilled a left with his shot -- Heidt almost scored on the play when a weird bounce jumped his way. Lots of details and unconverted plays. He's entirely projectable, but the lack of sequences where Heidt really uses his separating tools to dominate a shift just are not present in his game.

Tonnes of defensive effort from Heidt. In the first he stripped Benson of the puck in the slot on the backcheck. He had some penalty kill minutes in the third -- tonnes of far board pressure and superior body positioning on board battles led to another drawn penalty. Misses secondary threats in sustained pressure but he's generally aggressive in how he engages. Obliterated a man with a hip check in open ice -- called for tripping. Added snarl he plays with could be a separator. Heidt probably isn't an overwhelming scorer in the NHL -- detail-oriented play will lead to at least minutes in a middle-six for a long time.

J.D. Burke: October 8th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Kind of a tough game to leave with any meaningful analysis of Heidt's play. I'm not sure that his line had so much as a minute of cumulative offensive zone time, and I suspect Heidt's puck touches landed comfortably in the single digit range. Mostly, I saw a lot of fly-bys on defensive zone puck retrievals, some rote late hits further up ice, and then some genuinely good forechecking work as the game went on. Heidt picked up a goal on a counter play, snapping the cross-ice feed home to get the Cougars within one of tying the game. Not leaving this one with any new impressions of his game.

Cam Robinson: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

I love the way that Heidt plays the game - in the sense that he's a skilled player who is consistently hunting pucks, hunting bodies, lifting sticks, and enacting physical pain. The down side is that his skillful package isn't always on display which it wasn't tonight. The hands are there but he wasn't able to leverage them into the space needed to hit the lanes or get his shots through. We're still looking for consistency from Hedit.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Heidt's already a pro in how he wins battles and engages. He gets low, engages early, and comes across the hips. If he can't win the footrace, he widens his stance and traps the opponent's feet along the boards. Lots of impressive little sequences, a lean here, a nudge there, to win the battle. Otherwise, this was a pretty uninspiring performance from Heidt. He made some clever transition plays to further the offence, but was never a direct part in it – save for his goal from a sharp angle. Most of his best plays failed to connect. Shot into shin pads. He plays a bit too fast with the puck sometimes. Hardly a notable performance.

Daniel Gee: October 1st, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

While Heidt outclassed Cristall the night before, it was the other way around in this game. A disappointing effort for the centre, Heidt's positive transition habits still exist; attack the middle, draw in defenders, and bump to open wingers, he just didn't execute in this one. Deflected passes and turnovers haunted his possessions. An example was a play in the second. Heidt read a Kelowna breakout, attacked into the offensive zone with almost no support, and instead of delaying or cutting back, he rushed into three defenders, turning over the puck -- did his brain turn off? One-touch passes were off target, and the frequency of touches was halved compared to the game previous. Heidt had one great play in transition though -- deking a defender on a one-on-one handle, he was slashed, leading to a penalty shot. His attempt was saved as he opted for a 5-hole placed shot in-tight.

In sustained pressure, he was more of a supporter in this game; worked multiple pucks low-to-high in the cycle -- the Cougars system calls for point shots galore. Heidt had a one-time chance in the first; a hard shot off the right-hand circle that he missed badly, hitting the side of the net. His defensive effort was just not the same as I have seen. Bad body positioning (back to the play), not involved enough in halting the cycle. Heidt had a nice angle off in the first, but it still resulted in a goal against as the puck still made it to the crease. Hoping the up-and-down games don't trend here but it might be the reality with this Cougars team.

Daniel Gee: September 30th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

It's starting to look like Heidt is going to dominate a lot of minutes this season. Another productive night for the Cougars, the Sask-born forward was a real difference maker on the defensive end of the puck. High-paced activations, driving Kelowna forwards to the perimeter, backchecking angle-offs, Heidt was a constant supporter deep in his own zone. His best defensive sequence was an effort in the second, where he attacked an entering Max Graham, facing him head on. From there, Heidt drove him to the outside, drilling him on the sideboards.

While Heidt's transition game was less pronounced than his previous performances this year, elements of a delay game still existed. He loves to enter off the left-wing, delay and string pucks cross-ice to a driving Ziemmer. It works like clockwork; Heidt disrupts the gaps of the defenders by slowing-up, the high pass lane is wide open, and Ziemmer drags the puck inward towards the slot to get a high-danger shot. There's a developing power game element that Heidt is patterning as well. In the second he drove a defender on his backhand, popping the pucks through his legs after the reception; wasn't able to cut in front of the crease, but hooked a centering pass against the grain to no one. Changes in pace also cause more problems for opposing defenders. On-puck it allows him to drive the middle with speed, gathering attention and opening up his wings. Off-puck he can get into passing lanes, in-and-behind the defender locking onto him as a secondary threat. In the second on a 3-on-1 he took a perfect cross-crease pass from Ziemmer, but his shot (which he one-touched) was saved.

The meat of his game was in the offensive zone. He recorded a primary assist on a pass to Samson, who picked a spot and scored from the point on the powerplay. Good lane clogging mostly disrupted his slot funnelling passes, but Heidt had a pretty incredible pass from below the goal line, popping the puck between his legs to a wide open Ziemmer backdoor – couldn't convert. He scored off a broken play in the second. After Thornton made an amazing activation and cut to the inside, bobbling the puck in pressure. In one-motion Heidt jumped on the puck and sling-shotted it top-shelf from the right-hand circle. This game was a complete effort, a good sign for Heidt's detractors last season.

Daniel Gee: September 24th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt was in on all three Cougars' goals in this one; a couple of secondary assists and a bank goal, but they weren't even close to the best sequences he had in this game. Dangerous in transition once again, he quickly attacked Dragicevic (who was struggling in transition all weekend), driving in his edges into a power move, only to be horse collared by the defender. Protection habits were perfect, arm shielding and creating space, strong on his outside edge, and the right idea. On a subsequent play, Heidt made a wonderful pass into space but his linemate was a bit too behind to skate onto it. He was being doubled and tripled on his carriers, opening space up dramatically. On one second period play Heidt got a desperation pass off in immense pressure, leading to a Wheatcroft reception, he pulled-up one-on-one and tried a wild stop-up spin move that ultimately failed. As the game progressed, Heidt deferred the puck carrying and immediately got a breakaway from a lateral cut into a pass lane -- leading to a low-placed shot that was saved. So intelligent in transition.

Heidt's goal was pretty innocuous but he saw that Tri-City's goaltender was off his post and banked a puck in quickly off a puck retrieval. He tried centering pass after centering pass in this one, failing to hit his target on most of the attempts. In the third, he finally hit an activating Kmec in the slot, with a looping hook pass for a high-danger. His best play in the entire game was built off his anticipation. He intercepted a clearing in the high slot, found Ziemmer cutting to the net and set him up for a gimme drag-across-the-crease chance. Ziemmer couldn't raise the puck. Heidt is so low-panic and skilled that he just racks up volume chances. He was forcing passes, and Tri City adjusted, but then he just started shooting pucks himself -- mechanics look better than last season -- absolutely rocketed a one-timer wide off the top of the right-hand circle. Overall, a limited defensive effort by him. Backchecking habits aren't formed. He will create resistance if he's in the vicinity of the carrier, but he's typically hunting to counter-attack. More work on this end of the puck will only equal more possession. First-round projection without diving into too much of the rest of the class.

Daniel Gee: September 23rd, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt didn't get on the scoresheet in the Cougars opener but he flexed all the tools and habits that made him dangerous in his D-1. A wizard in transition, Heidt is so much farther advanced than most WHLers. A rush-pattern adjuster, focused on the inside, his advanced delay game and constant scanning just cripples defender's gaps and led to so many open pass seams. Weight-shifts, nifty unlocked-arm handles, and hip-pocket protection helped him create clean entries. His best sequence was in the second; delaying as he entered on the left-wing, Heidt pulled the puck back and connect to a downhill attacking Hudson Thornton who was activating off the right-point. The pass lane wouldn't have been there if he didn't stop-up, letting the Tri-city defenders collapse deeper.

Very strong in sustained pressure, Heidt was a monster on the numerous powerplay opportunities the Cougars had in this game. Facilitating goal-line to bumper one-touch passing plays, Heidt also bumped multiple pucks into the bumper himself that were all flubbed or saved. Wheatcroft missed three to four opportunities in this vein. Heidt passes into space, uses the boards to hit crashing teammates -- very smart stuff. Less effective five-on-five in this one -- pace is low in a lot of sequences and struggled to work through pressure. To be fair there was just little 5-on-5 time throughout his minutes anyways.

Defence is still very hit-and-miss. A lot of his sequences result in empty calorie efforts because he will refuse to even activate into a proper defensive posture. When he is engaged, he can be a good pressure pusher. One play stood out; Heidt was able to stick-lift Dragicevic along the boards, but after he lost the strength battle, he gave up on the play and let the opposing defender activate deeper. Needs to keep it going more. He had a comically bad slide into a 2-on-1 pass lane on a powerplay (he man's a point so he was the only defender back). Dived too early, basically at the mercy of the puck-carrier. Looks like a top-rounds player -- could have been a 2-3 point night if there was more catch-and-release ability of his bumper located teammates.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Heidt's magic on the powerplay. He moves pucks quickly and with a purpose. He draws pressure, passes through it, deceives, and shows dual-threat skills. He creates lanes, prolongs them, and beats defenders into them. Set up a pair of goals (one was waved off) on the powerplay. At 5-on-5, his play was significantly worse. He still had moments -- winning battles, spinning off checks and gaining the middle, and stepping into opponents. But he didn't use the space given to him. He rushed some of his plays. Nothing major, but I'm curious to see more this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Heidt's going to be the litmus test of physical play projection this season. He'll get dismissed because he's short, but physical play is one of the defining characteristics of his game. It's not just that he hits, but that he understands the finer points of puck protection. He waits for pressure to arrive, cuts back, then uses his bottom hand to push the defender on his back. He has many subtle details, too: trapping feet along the boards and faking a turn one way before going the other. He has an NHL shot and deceptive playmaking. He finds space in the slot, timing his movements to the middle. First-round candidate. Can't wait to watch not-August hockey.

Daniel Gee: April 9th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt was dominant in stretches of this game, particularly when it came to connecting his processing and mobility. He had some of the more impressive give-and-go sequences I have seen this year -- thinking multiple steps ahead of the play. In the third, Heidt worked the puck through the neutral zone with speed, passed off to a planted man on the blue-line and took the return pass slicing into the middle of the ice. He then proceeded to take the puck on his backhand and in one motion fed Ziemmer who was wide open on the right-wing. Ziemmer made a pass off the pad giving Heidt an empty net, just missing high -- should have been a goal. His habits in motion are so immense. He drives the middle off-puck to suck in defenders, he delays to open lanes on-puck, has a variety of passes to string sequences together -- hooked a couple of pucks in this viewing. Uses weight-shifts, body-misdirection, and dexterous handling to create deception. Constantly changing angles of attack.

Heidt did most of his damage in sustained pressure-- protection, scanning, and footwork to walk around the zone with immunity. He hope-passed too often, defaulting to place pucks into pressure instead of capitalising on his movement. His forechecking to win pucks back was ever-apparent. He travels to where defenders are about to move to proactively create seal-offs; small area game and physicality creating wins. In the third he walked into a pass from the far-boards to snap a puck for a high-danger chance -- knows how to work off teammates and occupies dangerous areas of the ice. He also assisted on a Ethan Samson power play goal to tie the game late; worked the puck off the half wall and fed the one-timer perfectly.

He was caught very high on a goal-against in the first but he was pretty active after that sequence. Heidt had a couple great angle-offs on the backcheck. Absolutely levelled a neutral zone puck carrier on one sequence, only to catch another Royal in the high slot later in the game. Wouldn't doubt him being an A-grade prospect next year; too high-end. May need to push a higher pace next season and continue to develop his finishing ability.

Daniel Gee: February 11th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt was strong in this game; pushing a tonne of pressure transitionally and through the cycle, particularly on-puck. So slick north-to-south, Heidt relies more on processing, manipulation, and handling than using overwhelming speed. One of his best sequences came in the first; Heidt attacked up the slot on-puck, made a short bump pass to a teammate driving the wing. From there he chased a retrieval, popped an unbelievable centering pass on the backhand to Ziemmer, scanning the entire way. Overpassed on another transitional attack -- had the puck in the slot and decided to pass off -- weird decision (tends to pass out of the slot too much). In general his rush patterns as a trailer were excellent -- always driving dangerous areas of the ice. Heidt can be almost calm to a fault in pressure. In the third he pulled off a great pass with an opponent draped all over him.

Activated much deeper in his own zone and supported puck battles more than I have seen. Can pick pockets and kill sustained pressure. His effort transitionally was fairly weak, however. His defensive posture is garbage and he let multiple defenders walk right around him, providing no neutral zone resistance. In the second he was just out to lunch on a teammate turnover and engaged far too late, despite the puck carrier being in his line of sight. Puck management problems -- probably due to age. Seems like at times he overestimates his ability to hold onto pucks while in pressure.

Habits just need to be cleaned up -- seen him all year and this was a rough one in comparison, but he's a super exciting player.

Daniel Gee: December 28th, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Heidt is such an advanced player for his age when you consider his ability to problem solve through pressure, finding soft-areas of coverage, and stringing handling, and shooting sequences together.

Easily the best Cougar in this game, Heidt was a fairly dangerous player transitionally. Being more methodical than quick while on-puck, Heidt strung together crossover weaves, handing, and scanning on most of his carries. Support varied much of the time, which often led to Heidt swaying outwards on the perimeter. The good thing is, he layered pucks well when support showed, and he's frankly amazing under close-pressure. Simple spin-offs, cut-backs, and small-area handles using the boards allowed him to be ridiculously slippery. He could stand for more consistent hip-pocket puck carries, but it looks like it's coming. Probably his greatest contribution to this game transitionally was off-puck. On one shift he acted as a decoy on a 2-on-1 allowing Ziemmer to score short-side. Later he trailed in on a 3-on-1 and sniped a shot in -- top-arm flared, synced weight-transfer, and I can't stress this enough, the placement of his shot was incredible. Frankly, he is always targeting dangerous spots -- low shots five-hole, open space high, it's a major strength. Heidt was missing an element of manipulation -- he often had his release interfered with in this game.

In sustained offensive zone sequences, Heidt's end-board cycling, ability to work through checks, and protection in this viewing, was better than I have seen from him. He helped facilitate an amazing second period possession where he fought through three different Silvertip defenders, drilled his check on the far-boards, while also popping into the slot in open space. He actually almost scored a second goal in the first. Planted in the slot, he moved slightly deeper into a passing lane, one-timed a shot five-hole, and hit the post. Another shift had Heidt bait the puck, pull it inside, spin out of pressure and complete the pass -- ending the sequence with a forearm shove on his check.

I think defensively he could be more consistently engaged. In some sequences, he is a true back checking supporter who helps drive opponents to the perimeter, in others, Heidt is far too static. Tends to float high to work out quicker counter attacks, leaving him as a non-contributor down low. When he does get below the dots, his sense stands out -- amazing support player in battles. Looks like a first rounder, but he is slight, and small.

Mitchell Brown: December 17th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Heidt's an impressive attacker in just about every facet, but I was most impressed with his puck protection in this game. In one sequence, skated the entire length of the ice fending off a check and getting a chance. Several times, he created a bit of space for himself with well-timed hits while retrieving the puck. He gets low, but he has difficulty maintaining that depth for stretches. It should improve. We'll see how much the skating improves, but he has first-round upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Pure chaos whenever Heidt's on the ice. He blind throws pucks into the slot, takes low-percentage shots, glides around without a care in the world, and somehow, consistently looks like the best player on the ice. The shot's unreal, especially considering his age. Textbook curl-and-drag wrister: back foot kicked out but stable, top elbow above his shoulder, hands in front, and significant downforce over the stick. He sets off-centre from defenders to ensure that he shoots around them rather than into them. The 5'11" listed height is surely a projection, but his size doesn't seem to limit his physically. Waited for a forechecker to walk into his shoulder, knocked him over, and then set up a teammate with a breakaway feed. He needs to scan more, use his teammates, and fix his off-puck posture (knee bend), but he's dynamic with a bomb for a shot.

Grade: B



28 Oscar Fisker Mølgaard

AGE 17.573 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 18, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Mikael Backlund



Fleet of
Foot



Hockey IQ



Play Killer

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

163 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	21	6	17	23	1.10
HV71	SHL	41	4	3	7	0.17
Denmark U18	WJC-18 D1A	5	6	6	12	2.40
Denmark U20 "A"	WJC-20 D1A	5	1	2	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

We've already broached a few players in this range that divided our scouting team, resulting in a year-long battle over how to rate and rank them for the 2023 NHL Draft. Yet no such dispute arose when it came to Oscar Fisker Mølgaard. Everyone was a fan.

Really, what's not to like? Mølgaard made the unlikely ascent to HV71's SHL lineup early and established himself as an everyday fixture by the Christmas break. By the season's end, he finished second only to Leo Carlsson (you may have heard of him) among first-time draft-eligible skaters in points with seven in 41 contests.

Then to cap it all off, Mølgaard joined Denmark at the World Championships, where he failed to generate any offence on the scoresheet but impressed scouts with his work rate and attention to detail.

On paper, that's a hell of a draft-year résumé. Further scrutiny with in-person viewings and crossover video scouting only bolstered his case.

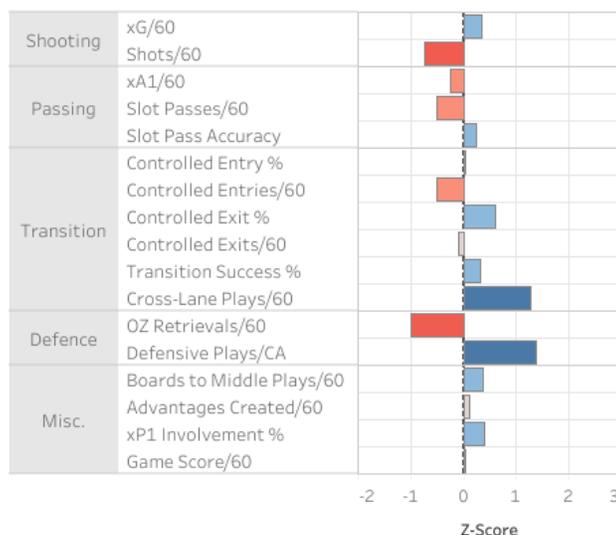
Mølgaard doesn't really jump off the screen at you for any sort of separating skill or high-end dynamism with the puck. That's not his game, though he's at least adequately skilled in most respects offensively, earning above-average grades almost across the board on our 1-to-9 linear tools grading system for his physical tools. No, you really have to know what to look for with this player. Blink, and you'll miss what makes him special.

Oscar Fisker Mølgaard

F | HV71 | SHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 178.2

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Mølgaard is all about the details. In the defensive zone, the Danish forward scans regularly, registers primary and secondary threats, positions himself well to take away passes, skates through opponents' releases to disrupt shots, and is intelligent enough to keep up with defensive rotations. Offensively, he drives the inside off-puck to create space, supports his linemates, finds outlets under pressure, and puts in yeoman's work on retrievals.

"Mølgaard is a safe bet to make the NHL as a middle-six centre," Swedish regional scout Jimmy Hamrin wrote in his year-end player report. "He brings a lot of NHL projectable qualities to the table, whether it's skating, a good motor, or above-average hockey sense on both sides of the ice. Mølgaard won't become a high-end scorer at the next level, but he'll pick up his fair share of points. He is smart and skilled enough to make creative plays. He lacks a dangerous shot or the elite skill set necessary to make the highlight reel though."

The hope for Mølgaard to exceed our offensive projection lies in his handling skill and skating. He's not one of the most gifted handlers in this class, no, but he's shown the ability to sequence his moves well between his hands and his feet, which does indeed project well to the next level – you watch the most gifted puckhandlers in the sport, and this is a prerequisite for so many of their best moves. He's also generally quick and elusive on his inside edges. There's legitimate small-area skill there.

Stop me if you've heard this before, but at this point in the draft, you just want someone who can play and make positive contributions on the margins of your roster. That's the floor with Mølgaard, who is well-positioned to at least hold down a centre spot in the middle of an NHL lineup and contribute to both phases of special teams. Perhaps, in the right spot, more is in store.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



How Oscar Fisker Mølgaard's elevated himself to a top prospect in the 2023 NHL Draft



Sweden Stock Watch: Felix Nilsson a silent riser in the 2023 NHL Draft



Sweden Stock Watch: Axel Sandin Pellikka's draft stock is soaring

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I like him. Good person. Really high character person. Works hard both ways of the game. He's responsible without the puck and pretty smart with the puck. More of a setup passer than a 1-on-1 skilled, beat you in open ice kind of guy. He has a lot of tools that I think can translate to professional hockey, with the work ethic and awareness. His head is always moving, he knows where everybody is on the ice. He'll never last in the second round. No chance."
 – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"Smart, hard worker, 200-foot player. An easy player to like." – NHL scout, May 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 14th, 2023 - France vs. Denmark - World Championship

A very conservative game from Mølgaard. He played a defensive role and didn't get any offensive chance -- which is pretty normal for a player of his age on the World stage. He did miss an occasion to cut inside the slot, but when you only get 9 minutes of ice-time, it's hard to get in an offensive rhythm.

Jimmy Hamrin: May 13th, 2023 - Denmark vs. Hungary - World Championship

In his WC debut for Denmark, Mølgaard played as the 3rd line centre. He didn't get to play on any special teams unit and his ice-time got sporadic. I don't know if it was the sporadic ice-time or if he was nervous but he played a very conservative and quiet game. He supported his teammates well and didn't take any risks. He positioned himself behind the wingers on every offensive zone entry as if he was expecting a turnover. He competed well along the boards and had a couple of shots. His time with the puck was very limited and defensive mindset didn't help the attacks all that well. He did show that he understands defensive risks well and that he can play centre at high events like this. He kept up well with the pace of the game and NHL merited teammates.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 13th, 2023 - Denmark vs. Sweden - EHT

In his second game with the national men's team Mølgaard had both good and bad moments. The bad were two turnovers in his own end and a missed coverage. The good moments was that he was, in some way, in and almost all scoring chances Denmark had, which weren't many to be honest. He had one shot himself and also a couple of nice setups. As in the first game, he centred the first line and played on the PK. No real icetime on the PP. His skating really stands out. He can quickly separate from opponents even at his level. He was hard to catch when he turned away with the puck. His positioning without the puck is good. He also detects quickly when a teammate needs support on a play. He had some quick decisions with the puck that looked good and he also broke up a couple of plays stealing the puck. He looks very solid even at this level and many if assets translate well.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 12th, 2023 - Denmark vs. Sweden - EHT

The debut with the national men's team for Oscar. With that in mind, I was impressed with his overall performance. He centred the first line and played on the PK. He stood out with his speed and smarts. The good patterns in this game were his defensive readings. He used his speed and smarts to go to where the puck was heading with aggression and he broke up many plays which turned the puck over to Denmark. He had a strong performance on the PK too where he broke up plays. I also liked the fact that he showed some skills with his hands during attacks. He was the driver on two scoring chances. He came in with speed and skill and drove to the middle. This performance made the assessments of his strength and what he can be even stronger. The floor is very high.

David St-Louis: April 12th, 2023 - Denmark vs. Sweden - EHT

Somehow, Mølgaard always performs better vs professionals than juniors. A ton of nice little plays from him in this one. He turned a steal in his zone into a net-drive the other way. He made quick breakout passes off the wall and then activated up ice to get the puck back and dangle an opponent by passing the puck through his feet. (He missed the net-front pass, but that wasn't entirely on him -- nobody drove there). He used teammates in other lanes and behind him off the rush and eluded opponents on the walls. And that's on the offensive side. On the defensive side, just like always, his effort was constant. Good positioning and pressure. We can't have him too high on our board, but he's absolutely a B+ prospect, a top-40 player in this draft, when you account for the potential skill development.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Oscar dominated a lot of the play in this game but didn't succeed offensively. He created some big chances, both with passing and for his own. He cut inside to a half breakaway in the overtime but missed and also missed a penalty shot in the decisive shootout. His work ethic and defensive play was phenomenal though. Always a step ahead and he won almost all puck battles, he took big responsibility in his own end and played low as a centre, like a third defenseman at times. He skated a lot with the puck, showed a few good playmaking moments but they were few. He didn't really show the ability to open up and manipulate on a consistent level. His skating looks exceptional at junior level.

Lassi Alanen: March 25th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Massive amount of ice time for Mølgaard in this one, logging over 26 minutes in total and over 24 minutes at 5-on-5 alone. He did slow down a bit as the game went later in the third period, so there probably was pretty gassed and understandably so; those are massive minutes of a centre. In terms of what we saw, it was a pretty classic Mølgaard performance. Racked up a couple of scoring chances and set up a few with his playmaking. Scored from the net-front after scooping a rebound and having patience to hook the puck to beat the goalie instead of immediately just whacking at it. Another high-end chance by simply outpacing the defender and beating him to the outside before a net-drive and backhand shot. Drove the play in transition well.

Still not the most dynamic attacker off the rush overall, relies a bit too much on drop passes. He doesn't really have a formidable shot at this point; one of his rush attempts missed the net by a meter at least and didn't seem to hit anything. Defensively sound all-around, which is to be expected. Also showed more physicality than in his early games this season; has picked up pro-level habits during his stint in the SHL that he can now use in the juniors, too. Established contact and bumped players before retrieving the puck, etc..

David St-Louis: March 25th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

When I watch Mølgaard at the J20 level, some of the magic of his SHL performances go away. He doesn't have the advanced offensive reads. He can manipulate defensive gaps (to an extent), pass the puck, rush the puck with crossovers, battle around the net, and breakaway with his speed. There are offensive skills and tools, but he's not anything close to a manipulative playmaker like some of the top-end prospects on our board. He has the checking game, the pace, the technical ability, and the right instincts, but the offensive hockey sense is closer to average. We have to keep that in mind when ranking him. And also the fact that he likely has more development runway than other prospects due to his background and skills.

Lassi Alanen: March 8th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard was back at the J20 level for the first time in a while. The SHL experience somewhat showed in his play earlier in the game. He was deferring a lot to his linemates, trying to keep things simple. As the game progressed, he started to take more and more advantage of his skating base, which is simply elite for this level of play. When he gets going, he's basically an automatic entry machine. Sometimes he tried to cut inside by deking through the defender, often turning the puck over. Then he tried to shoot, but often left value on the table this way. Interesting to see if his rush offence improves if he keeps on playing at this level for a few more games. He should have all the tools for it. Sure, there were also a few highlights, especially playmaking-wise. Crafty backhand feeds to the slot from behind the net. Also one high-danger chance off a behind-the-net pass for him, too.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Linköping HC - SHL

Mølgaard was back playing down the middle and had a pretty averageish showing for his standards. One really nice playmaking moment where he recognized a cross-lane option after the opponent turned the puck over in a critical spot, flashing his vision. The tools remain intriguing; the skating is an easily above-average projection, if not high-end. Defensively very sound, maintains a high work rate that compensates for the lack of physical strength at this point in time. When he gets stronger, he's going to be an even more effective defensive force. The pro-style habits are pretty much all there, even if he's not able to rack up scoring chances after scoring chances at this level just yet. Very interesting to see how he progresses next season.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Färjestad - SHL

What an incredible player. Mølgaard misses some more advanced plays; he's not that kind of high-end manipulator, but the rest of the game is there. The hockey sense grade is above-average, maybe a 6, and he has the skating ability to create easier plays for himself. We already see him elude SHL defenders in tight space -- or almost elude them, lacking just a bit of strength to make his play work. He's got the defensive game down at this level already. I'm pretty sure I saw him use defensive deception on one shift, too. He purposely hid his reach, left a lane open to invite the opposition to use it, and then took it away. He turned a steal into a net-drive, and leveraged that net-drive into a pass across the slot for a teammate in an even better position.

Awareness, fast processing, anticipation. It's there. High-end tools. Check. Habits? Check, check, check. I doubt he's a top-line

forward in the NHL, but a 2nd-line, two-way center? Possible. Crazy for someone with his career path. But I'm starting to believe it. I have to make sure I don't get too excited, too.

Lassi Alanen: February 7th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Probably the least effective game from Mølgaard among the most recent viewings in the SHL. Just couldn't quite make an impact, lacked puck touches and got smothered along the boards on few of his entry attempts despite the quickness advantage. Spent a lot of time chasing and defending. Still, he received quite a lot of ice time from the coaching staff and even played a few shifts in overtime, which is an encouraging sign. Still a fan of this player, these kind of games are bound to happen when you're a 17-year-old playing in such a good league.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Crazy to think that Mølgaard is playing 12-15 minutes a night, as a centre, in the SHL. It says everything about how refined his defensive game is and how great his habits are and how toolsy he already is. Clear above-average NHL average skating projection. And his engagement on the wall, the way he tries to establish body position on pucks, has the skating foundation to protect pucks and try to spin on opponents, and his physicality on the forecheck also make me want to give him an above-average grade in that facet of the game. He's such an interesting project. He's aware for sure. And he shows an understanding of rush offence with the way he skates ahead of players or drop behind them to create pocket of space. He could be a top-20 pick.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Timrå IK - SHL

Mølgaard was one of the best players on his team in this game. His ice time has gotten up lately and now he plays on the power play as well at this level. He works hard and shows good defensive readings. He is proactive and plays in future situations in the present. That made him read and show up in the dangerous areas when the puck headed there and he had some nice looks. On the power play he played on the left flank as the set up guy. He tries to manipulate to open up space. He shows good playmaking skills. Mølgaard is always on the move and scans the ice. Although being so young he is relentless in his checking and puck battles. His team is in a tough spot in the standings and he is a player that seem resilient to the score or the momentum in the game which gives team energy even in tough periods. His skating technique is impressive as well as his compete level and hockey sense. He is not an elite offensive talent by any means but he can create offence also and be used in various roles.

David St-Louis: January 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Timrå IK - SHL

Mølgaard is more at ease playing off the rush and reading the play off the rush than in the offensive zone at this stage, but he makes smart passes, looks for controlled plays, and can somewhat evade pressure. He has the skills to attack the middle of the ice, challenge defenders, and open up passing lanes with his stickhandling. He's now on the powerplay and being put on the ice at the end of game, when in need of a goal. On defence, he anticipates opposing drives well, sticks to his check, supports teammates well...He plays with pace and is fully engaged in the play.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Mølgaard found his way to the scoresheet, displaying the usual board skills and handling to receive a pass off the rush, beat his man to the middle and scoring with a wrister through pretty thick layer of screen for the goalie. Not sure how much new there is to write about at this point, as this was pretty much on par with the previous SHL viewings with Mølgaard. He remains a greatly improved, or at least more impactful relative to the level compared to his early season play at the J20 level. It'd be fun to see him back at the junior level for a game or two to see how he'd look after this wildly successful SHL stint. Though based on his play, I don't think it'll be happening, as he's established himself as a full-time SHLer now, and even a centre, which is hugely impressive.

The level of offensive ability is still a bit of a question mark, but even based on what he's shown so far, a first-round selection is

easily justifiable. Just a lot of projectable tools packed onto a player who was playing in Denmark just a few years ago. Crazy that he's talked about so little, at least in the public sphere.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

Even on more quieter nights, Mølgaard's game remains very projectable to the next levels of play. Even when having a lot of room for further physical development, he competes hard for loose pucks and the inside position, and comes out on top from a surprising amount of battles he enters. The skating and particularly the acceleration patterns looked really good, being able to gain separation from a standstill at this level is really encouraging. He could be a legitimate above-average skater in the NHL, if not better than that. There was a lot of time spent on the defensive side, but Mølgaard had a few flashes in the OZ. He's particularly good at driving the middle and keeping his stick open, making himself a passing option but also creating space by drawing in pressure, which resulted in one high-danger rush chance as he created room for a feed to the slot for F3. Also got a scoring chance of his own late in the game, winning a battle along the boards, instantly cutting to the middle and getting to a scoring position. Unfortunately, it looked like someone got to make contact with their stick, which disrupted the shot a little bit.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - SHL

Having gone back to watch some of the earlier Mølgaard tape from the junior level and then coming back to this, it's pretty clear that he's one of those players who really impresses you at the pro ranks despite not being a dominant force at the juniors. This was just a really, really solid showing in the SHL once again, being used as a centre and living up to the role with his diligent defensive positioning and smart puck-moving. The skating is already an advantage at this level, and the way that he battles for body positioning and wins it against much stronger opponents is really impressive. A combination of technical skills but also requires a certain mindset and work ethic. Got two chances from the net-front after the puck bounced to him, but couldn't convert. Based on his play, he should've been playing even more than he was.

David St-Louis: January 5th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Brynas - SHL

Mostly a defensive showing from Mølgaard. His acceleration still stands out. He launches himself forward. His two-step accel is one of the best in the draft, edges digging deep, knees recovering under shoulders, rocketing forward and his body with it. He has outside edge moves like cutbacks that allow him to match the movement of attackers and stay on them at all times. He scans defensively, scans consistently, switches, and is an adaptable passer who finds solution to closed lanes. Not an eventful showing but the combination of skating, passing skills and habits has a lot of value still.

Lassi Alanen: December 28th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Malmö Redhawks - SHL

This was probably the least effective viewing from Mølgaard I've seen in the SHL this season. Not necessarily a bad one, though he did get shut down quite often in transition, either smothered along the boards on breakouts or being guided there off the rush. Still, the energy level and skating habits kept him relevant on the forecheck and also defensively. I wouldn't draw many notes from games like these; they're bound to happen for a player at this development stage and age.

David St-Louis: December 15th, 2022 - Denmark vs Norway - U20 WJC Division A

Another game spent defending and chasing after broken plays. Mølgaard never got the puck back after passing it to a teammate. Maybe once. It gave us another occasion to see his defensive game, his attentive and aware stick work, and his patience. His skating and honed defensive game gives him a fallback if the skill game doesn't work for him. That's another bonus in his projection. He created a few chances off the rush, going through or around multiple defenders with quick crossovers. He scored the only goal of his team in this tournament by sprinting through two zones and using the defender as a screen to get it past the goalie. He looks like a long-term center option if he can get good enough at faceoffs.

David St-Louis: December 1st, 2022 - Leksand vs HV71 - SHL

We always have to be careful with this sort of analysis as we can stretch it out too much, but I liked Mølgaard's ideas and

adaptability in tight spaces in this game, even if his plays didn't work for the most part. He got crushed on a breakout because he didn't scan behind him for an approaching defender, but then the next play, he scanned for that defender, let him approach, and let the puck slide through to a teammate behind him. His combination of motor, high battle energy, and individual skill makes him annoying on the boards even at his young age in the SHL. He figures out ways to get the puck out of traffic instantaneously.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. HV71 - SHL

Another impressive showing from Mølgaard in the SHL, being back on the wing for this one. Deflected a goal late in the third and set another up by fishing a loose puck from a scrum and dishing it to a defenceman for a shot near the hashmarks. Mølgaard's skating, playmaking, handling, smarts all look like above-average tools. Had the patience to delay off the rush and find the best play with a cross-ice feed through layers of pressure. Apt at applying pressure on the backcheck due to his skating and work rate.

David St-Louis: November 24th, 2022 - Skelleftea vs. HV71 - SHL

Wow! I've rarely seen such a young player so comfortable in the SHL. The skating really shone in this game. It's clearly an above-average grade. The speed and acceleration enabled him to shutdown or at least attempt to shut down a bunch of opposing plays. He was engaged physically, cutting at the hands multiple opponents despite his light frame, and going to the net to screen. But it's really the playmaking that stood out. He seemed comfortable on the half-wall, adapted, hitting the best play, manipulating with posture. A lot of pace, a lot of skill, and defensive engagement. This was an A-level game.

Cam Robinson: November 24th, 2022 - Skelleftea vs. HV71 - SHL

An eventful game for Mølgaard and then first time I've checked in on him in the SHL. He looked like a player who had recently moved up a tier - flying around a lot but struggling with routes and maybe trying to be too engaged rather than smart out there. He settled down a bit as the game wore on. The skating is a highlight. He maneuvered in traffic well and was able to make quick short passes into dangerous areas for his mates.

Early in the 3rd period, he smartly revolved around a board battle, picked his spot to pull it free, cut to the middle and hit the high man to grab an A1 and cut the deficit to one goal. He was awarded a goal later in the frame as the point shot ricocheted off his leg.

Lassi Alanen: November 22nd, 2022 - HV71 vs. IK Oskarhamn - SHL

Mølgaard played centre here, for the first time in my SHL viewings. And despite relatively meager minutes, his offensive output shined. Combined a really nice forechecking steal into a crazy backhand cross-slot saucer that perfectly landed on his linemate's stick. Another sequence saw him convert picking up a loose puck from the corner into a scoring chance with a quick feed to the slot. Could've easily buried one himself, too, getting one uncontested chance in the slot where he probably could've deked the goalie instead of one-timing it given he was so near the goalie and didn't have immediate pressure. Skating is a plus-level tool, playmaking is as well. A lot to like about this player based on performances like these in the SHL.

David St-Louis: November 17th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs HV71 - J20

I continue to be extremely impressed with this player. He's not really putting all of his abilities together just yet, but everything is there and at a pretty high-end level. He's also 6' and 163 pounds and played in Denmark until the 2021-22 season. There is a looooot of developmental runway there, so much that I think he's a default A at this point. He makes great defensive reads, steals pucks, pressures with his stick and angles, shows a constant effort level, races with all his energy to loose pucks, takes hits to make plays...With the puck, he deceives and chain moves, always in motion, he scans for the next plays, and has that next-play mentality, and he moves to open passing lanes. He attacks the net and has the inception of physical skills. The skating is a high-end grade, not due to perfect mechanics, but an impressive top-end acceleration. I think his mobility is only going to get better. He also goes to the net, screens, establishes body positioning. I'm having a hard time finding a flaw besides the lack of putting-it-all-together like top prospects in this draft. He's an amazing project that I wouldn't pass on.

Lassi Alanen: November 6th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard was back at the J20 level for this one, being held pointless despite a few quality scoring opportunities. Loved one of the first sequences he had, skating the puck out of the DZ, gaining the middle before passing to his wing for an entry, then sprinting the middle and gaining body positioning for a give-and-go and a scoring chance. These kind of projectable plays are Mølgaard's calling card aside from the skating and handling combination. Still, however, he's not taking over games offensively at the junior level. He does a lot of good work in terms of play-driving in both directions, though, and there are flashes of intriguing playmaking skill that could be unlocked in the future. I'm a fan of him as a project.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Färjestad BK - SHL

Second game of his career in the SHL for Mølgaard and he found his way to the scoresheet. Unintentionally blocked a shot from his own defenceman in the net-front, turning into a free backhand scoring chance and a second one off the rebound that he ended up burying. Mølgaard's lack of strength was apparent in many situations, but it's not very concerning. He was still able to contribute, once flat-out beating a defender off the cycle with a well-timed cutback and explosive first steps out of it. Inside-driven attitude, looked to take pucks to the middle off the cycle and off the rush. A few handling jitters. The pace remains a strength and allows him to contribute defensively.

David St-Louis: October 26th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Oskarshamm - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard lacks just a bit of deception sometimes, but he has the skills to generate NHL offence. He can pick up pucks, elude defender on the wall, and send passes flying to teammates in the slot. He can manipulate the feet of defenders off the rush and in the offensive zone, and he generally makes smart passes. He's not really a threat to score from the half-wall, however, due to a below-average shot. On the defence, constant effort. He annoys with his stick, creates steal with it, and cuts opponents at the hands to get the puck. The steals turn into breakouts and offensive zone entries.

David St-Louis: October 23rd, 2022 - Vasteras vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Impressive showing. Mølgaard clearly has a good understanding of the game. He's always thinking next play, scanning for it. He's a bit slow in his execution however, but he can attack with pace, with a combination of skating and handling moves, especially when he gets the puck low in the defensive zone. He's always deceptive on the power play, receiving while he initiates his next play, shifting his weight...And he's effective defensively, turning steals into offence. The tools all look projectable. He was pushed around near the net but that's pretty normal considering his lighter build. He will have to add strength.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard continues to have intriguing moments, even if he's not necessarily taking over games. He scored a nice goal, starting a counter-attack with a nice slip exit pass under the defender's stick, then sprinted up the ice through the middle and blocked the defender's recovery lane, resulting in a partial 2-on-1, a shot and a rebound that Mølgaard finished. He had another cool rush where he speeded up the outside lane, then laterally cut inside on the defender for a high-danger chance. Skating remains projectable, likely at least slightly above-average grade. Shifty on his edges, can fake defenders with weight shifts. He does have a tendency to throw blind passes towards the slot and turn the puck over that way. Sometimes the ideas are good, other times not so much. He was playing on the wing in this one, which I don't quite understand as one of his biggest strengths previously was his ability to build up plays in transition by getting the puck down low. Work rate remains a positive.

J.D. Burke: October 15th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. HV71 - SHL

There weren't many opportunities for Mølgaard to flash his skill or offensive creativity in this one, but I came away impressed with what I saw from him in the defensive zone. Mølgaard is an engaged, proactive defender, constantly surveying the defensive zone for threats and making well-timed interventions before threats can develop. He displayed an advanced understanding of defensive rotations during sustained in-zone pressures, never looking out of position for so much as a second. Mølgaard doesn't seem limited by his size or relative lack of physical development either. He gets underneath opponents on retrievals and drives

through their hips to win puck battles. His wall game stood out as a distinct positive. Mølgaard's skating looks significantly above average, too. Perfect skating posture, certainly. If a performance like this one is any indication, he could very well be one of this draft's best defensive forwards.

Lassi Alanen: October 9th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard flashes skill, but hasn't turned in a dominant showing yet. This one was very much in line with the previous one. Got a high-danger chance by making a very nice interception and read on top of OZ blue line, getting to a partial breakaway but couldn't finish from the backhand. The cutback is a legit strength, from the mechanics (outside edge usage) to the quickness. Used it to shake off pressure a few times in the defensive zone to start a breakout. Uses his speed advantage to gain the zone, then often delays and looks for drop pass options or trailing teammates. Plays a pro-style game in many ways, from the way he works defensively and always takes care of his man, which probably hurts his offence a bit. He's intriguing, but I keep left wanting more based on the tools.

Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - HV71 vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard has the tools, from the projectable skating stride to the quickness, outside edge prowess and other notable skating skill, mixing in a few heel-to-heels and other neat details. Has strong base for a delay game off the rush. The hands are able to keep up with the skating, too, which should make him a dominant transition force. The overall output just wasn't really there, but it was mostly from not getting enough touches; when he got the puck, he mostly made the right play. Also another game where he flashed playmaking ideas from below the goal line particularly, but the execution wasn't quite there. I feel like he should be more dominant.

Lassi Alanen: September 28th, 2022 - Linköping HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard did most of his work in transition. He supports his defenders down low, gets the puck via a pass or picking it up loose, then starts an attack with either a carry or a pass to either of his wingers. Has enough separation and proficiency with crossovers to usually beat the first forechecker. Had one high-danger scoring chance at 5-on-5 where he made the defender hesitate by potentially threatening with a pass, then decided to drop his shoulder and drive the net instead. Otherwise, nothing major happened for him offensively. Looks like a strong faceoff guy, won the vast majority of his draws and has done so to start the season.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard's mechanical base is solid. He moves at an above-average level, fluid stride and handling combined together. He might not have elite speed, but his quickness and outside edge usage - maybe the most important things - are there. The playmaking was the second highlight. Added two primary helpers, but the funny thing is that they didn't even come from the better passes he made. Some of the slot pass attempts got picked, but he also displayed some great vision for cross-ice passes, masking his intentions by threatening first with the shot. He's an interesting player.

Lassi Alanen: September 18th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

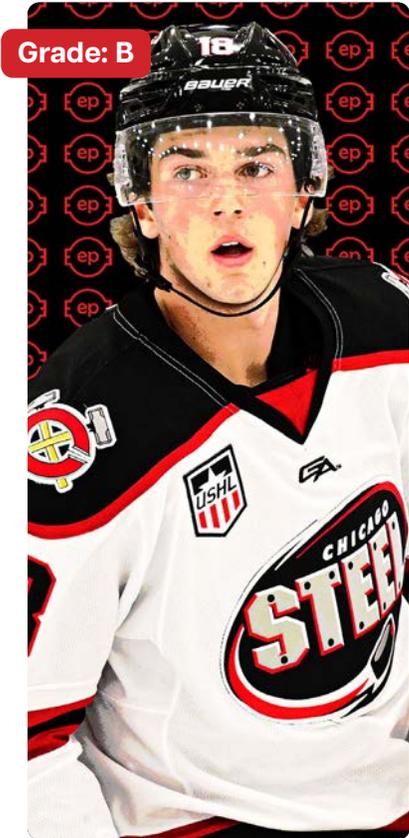
Mølgaard did quite a bit of good stuff here. His playmaking stood out, being able to complete more difficult passing ideas, displaying solid scanning habits. He'd gather speed without the puck, receive it and enter the zone, drag the defender to the outside lane with him before slipping the puck to the middle. One really nice breakout pass that pierced the defence and resulted in a breakaway for his linemate. Played a give-and-go game in transition and knew how to put himself in favourable positions off the rush, almost having a breakaway opportunity of his own if he could've received the stretch pass. Gave a pretty solid effort on the backcheck and disrupted a couple of entry attempts. In-zone, he was a bit puck-focused and quite lost at times.

Lassi Alanen: September 14th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard's commitment to the defensive side of the puck was pretty evident. There was no hint of sacrificing defence to sprint the zone, instead his offensive output probably took a hit since he was often the third or fourth player to enter the offensive zone. Lacks strength, but already showed solid positional awareness. And the breakout passes were pretty crisp as well, slipping pucks quickly through the pressure so his linemates could get a free carry exit. The best offensive play came early in the game, where he deked around a defender below the net, then immediately hit a teammate in the net-front with a pass. That was a grade A example of playmaking skill and the ability to make a quick read. Tried to make similarly quick passes later but couldn't hit them with similar precision.

David St-Louis: September 11th, 2022 - HV71 vs Vasteras - J20 Nationell

Mølgaard positions well defensively, especially for a player his age in the J20. He tries his best to protect pucks on the wall despite his frame and moves the puck quickly to teammates, playing a pass-and-reposition style that translates well to higher levels. He showed a lot of skill in this game: He knocked a puck down mid air and then passed it to the slot, caught every puck in movement on the powerplay, and challenged defenders. His best play came off a faceoff. He sprinted to the offensive zone, displaying his acceleration, caught the puck between his legs, pulled it to his stick, faked a drive down the wall, and then cut inside to beat the goalie. High-end play.



Grade: B

29 Jayden Perron

AGE 17.677 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Jonathan Marchessault



Ankle Breaker



Vision



Tactician

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'8"	157 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	6	6.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7.5	6.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicago Steel	USHL	61	24	48	72	1.18

SCOUTING REPORT

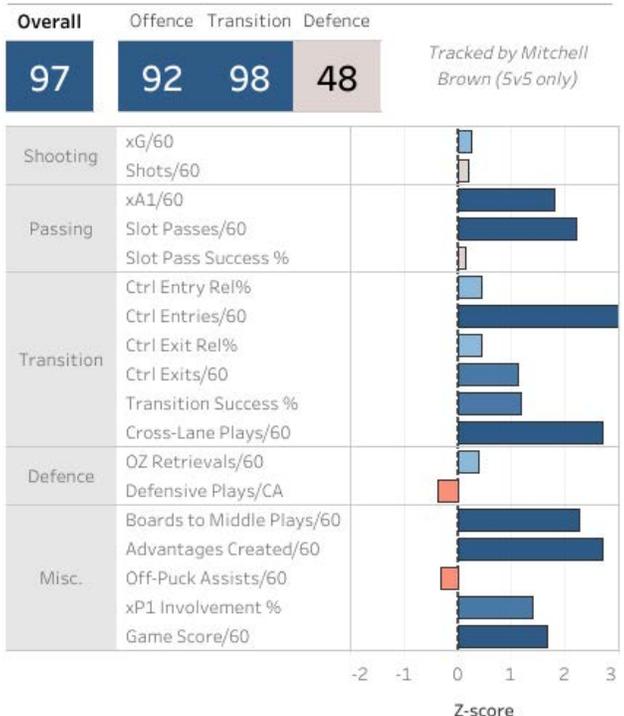
There are always battleground players in the Elite Prospects scouting room, and Jayden Perron was one of the more fiercely contested ones in this year's draft.

His champion was our USHL regional scout Joey Padmanabhan, who scouted Perron closely with the Chicago Steel and quickly came to admire his intelligence, creativity with the puck, and work rate. A cursory glance at his early season game reports reveals that this Steel winger was a first-round candidate from pretty much go.

"Perron was one of the more exciting players to watch this weekend," Padmanabhan wrote after the USHL Fall Classic in late September. "He's a cerebral playmaker with the puck, utilizing a deke when necessary but also having the maturity to delay when he's outnumbered. He's a dangerous stickhandler and can turn a careless reach from a defender into a high-quality scoring chance for himself or a teammate. He plays nicely away from the puck in the offensive zone, especially as the high man, where he keeps his feet moving in an attempt to lose coverage before swooping down when his linemates get possession. There were several stretches throughout the weekend where Perron was the best player for his team, and he certainly looks to have the makings of a top-level prospect in the upcoming draft.

Jayden Perron

F | Chicago Steel | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 130.3



Meanwhile, Elite Prospects lead scout and resident Hockey Man™ David St-Louis greeted that enthusiasm for Perron with a great deal of skepticism, admiring the skill level but questioning the translatability of his profile to the NHL.

Everyone else fell somewhere between the two extremes, and we reached a compromise in that space when it was time to place Perron on our board.

The selling points of Perron's game are obvious, immediately apparent after one viewing. He's an exceptionally intelligent playmaker, anticipating plays one, sometimes two steps ahead of everyone else on the ice, setting up each pass with eye-level and body deception, and weighting each pass perfectly to set his linemates up to finish the play.

You won't necessarily see the Steel winger bulldozing his way through opponents or burying the shoulder, but his handling skill allows him to play keepaway, pairing nicely with his patience as a distributor to let plays develop and strike at just the right moment. Those hands also make for a nice finishing tool.

There aren't many Frank J. Selke Trophies in Perron's future, but he tracks well, backchecks hard, and makes intelligent reads in the defensive zone. He's a 200-foot player, even if a quick look at his Elite Prospects player page wouldn't give you that impression.

The knocks on Perron are that the skating doesn't match the puck skills and he's not the most efficient distributor, playing more of a volume game than picking his spots and striking with that killer instinct. And standing at just 5-foot-8 without separation speed, it's fair to wonder how well his game will scale up to the next level, despite relatively sound puck protection mechanics.

Still, skill almost always wins out, and Perron brings it in spades. There's a bit of a boom-or-bust dynamic at play here, but if everything breaks right, you're looking at a top-six, playmaking winger who can contribute on a first-unit power play.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



USHL Stock Watch: Macklin Celebrini putting himself in the pole position for 2024 NHL Draft



USHL Stock Watch: Nicholas Moldenhauer catching fire with Chicago Steel



USHL Stock Watch: Will Smith emerging as the USNTDP's best in this year's draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's in that list with Riley Heidt, Andrew Cristall, and maybe even Gabe Perreault a little bit. It's going to take someone who really likes him. You gotta ask, what's he going to do in the NHL? Like, his speed to size ratio isn't great either. He's very skilled, good on the power play, got good overall instincts, good playmaking ability, but he's not effective on the defensive side, not hard to play against, and there's no backup game."

"I would say that he'll go from the late-20s to the late-40s. It'll be kind of like Bobby Brink. I mean, it wasn't a good year in the United States, outside of the program. So what happens is, you overvalue these players sometimes and you try to make it work." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I see some places have him too high. I go to a lot of Steel games. I think Perron will go in the first round. I think he's a second rounder. Small, light, not elite speed. I think Celebrini cooked up a lot of offence. To his credit, a lot of skill, awareness and creativity. He's not as greasy in close. He's a kid I worry about. He's too skilled not to be a two-round pick." – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel.- USHL

A great game from Perron. He was the best player on the ice. His manipulation game only improved as the season went on. He fakes, cutbacks, manipulates feet, drags defenders away, and then pierces the defensive formation to create plays. He played with more pace in this one than early-season games. Away from the puck, he controlled his speed and space to remain a pass option and he fought through checks to get to the net. I liked the mix of intensity, speed, and deception. This playoff performance could serve as an argument to move him ahead of Whitelaw, whose playmaking game hasn't shone as much.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Best player on the ice. Perron shows a ton of playmaking skill. He outraced opponents before hooking a pass back into the slot, layered look offs onto simple passes, delayed off the rush before going cross-slot, stepped into pressure before cutting back and passing into the middle, and even passed off the goalie's pads for a rebound chance. The creativity of deliveries, the pre-pass set ups (deception, leaning on pressure), and touch are high-end. Build plays in transition, played the give-and-go game, and showed projectable defence. He has the full skill set, save the size. This was an eye-opening performance for me. I see the first-round prospect again.

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron is a perfect complement to Celebrini. He's not as dynamic but his off-puck anticipation allows him to mostly always be in the right spot to receive passes from his dynamic teammate. He gets some really easy chances playing with him, but he also creates his share, by manipulating the defence off the rush with changes of pace and slipping pucks past them, into space for Celebrini. His skating stride has a pretty good form overall -- not perfect, as it's wide a bit -- but enough to think he could become much more dynamic as he ages. Already, when he's carrying the puck in, one can tell that he can fake at speed or chain weight shifts and handling moves and crossovers. That's projectable. We might have gotten a bit too excited about his potential in the early season, but he remains at least a top-40 prospect, someone you bank on early despite his size. The playmaking game, the defensive engagement, the anticipation, the physical skills (to an extent), and the skating potential, these qualities are worth quite a lot.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Lots of flash from Perron, not a ton of results. Still, he shows some advanced skills. It's not just that he cuts back or dekes; it's that he prepares every move to maximize the success rate and space on the other side of the defender. He reads opponents' momentum and exploits it. Non-stop changes of pace and deceptive posturing. Instantly chains together plays, even with his feet moving. One-touch and quick-possession vision. Faded off checks into space for opportunities. There are lots of poor plays -- passes to no one and passes that aren't close to their target -- which limited his effectiveness. Lots of one-and-done touches from him in this game. A challenging projection but still has top-six skill.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Some great, some concerning from Perron. He has that extra layer of skill; an understanding of how to use his tools to create space and opportunities. He plays the give-and-go game, goes cross-slot for options, prepares cutbacks by stepping into the defender first, and manipulates sticks to create passing lanes with his hands. The hands are exciting, and he flashes more skill at speed than usual. On a powerplay rush, he received a pass, used the weight shift deked to beat the defender, then passed for a tap-in.

The concerning plays are linked to his lack of awareness of options. He prepares space, but doesn't use it. He passes up the boards with better options. He passes when there's no option. Doesn't scan enough. Doesn't seem aware of pressure beyond the most immediate defender. I have my doubts about the ultimate upside. Still, the skating's better than I previously thought and he has defensive ability and physical skills. A late-first is fine given our board.

David St-Louis: March 5th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A weak opposition maybe but by far Perron's best game this season. It reconciled me with the idea of keeping him top-20. Playing with Celebrini helps him massively. He doesn't have to be dynamic as Celebrini already breaks through defences and pushes them back. Perron can make many of his plays in glides. But he has his own ways of pushing the pace, through give-and-goes and instant movements on reception.

His skating projects as above NHL average for me, even if he looks slower now; the mechanics are really good when he tries and as the pace of the game will increase around him, he will be forced to use his skating more. Every prospect increases their tempo and I suspect that Perron will increase his significantly. He has some edgework already; you see it when he contorts his body to pull off a drag-shot directly off a pass for example. In this game, he was mostly a playmaker, however. He kept the puck into space, moved to get it back from teammates, dangled through the opposition, deceived defenders to open lanes. He overdangles and makes a few too many hope passes (especially to the slot) when he gets pressured, but he's clearly a skilled and intelligent player with defensive value -- a pretty rare combo.

Joey Padmanabhan: February 28th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Not the greatest showing for Perron and he was still pretty impressive. One of those nights where the ideas were there but the execution was just a bit off. A few attempts at hook passes and slot feeds that hit a stick or were mishandled. A couple of attempts by Perron to be a hero and move through multiple defenders' triangles, which admittedly almost worked. Perron was at his best when he built up speed and used cutbacks and delays to find support. He's agile enough to create space for himself in four directions and has the vision to thread the needle to incoming teammates. Great game for him off the puck, he constantly is in motion to clear a path for teammates or become an option himself. One case where he found a soft spot in the slot, drew in pressure and dished to a teammate backdoor. The skill level is exceptionally high as it's been all year, just want to see it put together better.

J.D. Burke: February 17th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids Rough Riders vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A commanding performance from Perron, who picked up a pair of assists and sent three shots on goal across nearly 20 minutes of ice time. I'm not sure if I see dynamic, separating skill, but Perron's intelligence with the puck, cunning away from it, and mature details elevate his profile in lieu of a high-end skating stride or top-tier handling skill. As a puck carrier off the rush, Perron uses the dotted line, a change of pace game, and deceptive skating patterns (opening up his hips along the boards, weight shifts, etc.) to create space that he couldn't otherwise access with his about average stride. Signs of an advanced delay game revealed themselves, too. In the offensive zone, Perron's highly intelligent and adaptable with the puck, and plays with a high pace away from it, constantly repositioning off of shots and passes to improve the quality of his next look. Ultimately, I view Perron as more of a mid-to-late first-round prospect than someone in the top 10. I've just seen too many players with his profile struggle to translate to the next level. But he's an intriguing player.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

The more I watch Perron, the less convinced I am. The lack of dynamic qualities is really hurting his projection, and while I think he's one of the smartest prospects in the draft, he's not Michkov or Benson smart, just above-average in terms of NHL projection. He has physical habits along the boards and moves very well away from the puck to find space and scoring chances. He scored with a pin-point one-timer that hit the top of the net after dropping behind one of his teammates and creating space for himself in the offensive zone. He's engaged in the play and probably a 7-7.5 grade stickhandler, but he doesn't show his flashy skills all that often. He can't really hold defenders in place with fakes and beat them as he doesn't have that kind of acceleration. He would probably fit better in the 20s on our board, a spot that better balances the risk of his projection and his evident upside.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Perron relies on his teammates to get open to complete playmaking sequences due to a lack of high-end skating ability and

reaching, but more so due to a lack of consistent manipulation abilities. He anticipates plays well, but should be connecting with teammates in scoring areas at a higher rate to be this high on our board. The defensive engagement, stickhandling ability, instinct to find space, and overall skill level are still pluses.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 21st, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Another really nice showing from Perron. The playmaking continues to be the highlight of his play, he's incredibly shifty and uses his inside edges coupled with his chest to bait in defenders before moving out into space. Look-offs, pass fakes, Perron does it all to set up his teammates in dangerous positions. He supports the puck nicely in the offensive zone, supporting his D up high when appropriate and popping to soft areas when the puck is below the goal line. Loves to use his one-timer, especially on the power play but also in even strength play where the offence has been established. The shot isn't anything crazy but it's good enough to get through when a goaltender isn't set. I get the concerns on the skating. The straightaway stride isn't the cleanest, there's no debating that. But he builds up a good amount of speed through his crossover and is nimble enough on his inside edges to work inside defenders and uses his hands to evade checks. The agility isn't bad either, he creates some separation with his punches and stops. There's clearly a route here to skating improvement and once he unlocks that extra gear, the sky's the limit.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

The best play from Perron was a rush where took advantage of poor defensive skating, instantly deking to the inside, and then going look-off cross-slot for an assist. But he also manipulated opponents in several instances, moving sticks out of lanes by slowing down and deceiving. Other plays showed a lack of foresight, deking through opponents without an actual end goal. He tries to work off the boards, but occasionally gets trapped. The skating's less of a concern for me. He achieves proper knee bend inside his stride. While he's not powerful, he's a hard-worker and clearly has a lot of physical growth to go. He's also not consistently effective with his feet moving; it seems like he needs the glide to his best work. And I'm still unsure of where the reads and feel for the game ultimately land. But he has NHL hands and passing skill, and flashes of high-level manipulation.

Cam Robinson: January 7th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Perron continues to flash the high-level thought process on the ice but can be limited by a lack of separation speed. When it does work right, boy does he ever look good. On a play in the 2nd period, Perron collected the puck off of a high glass bank at the top of the defensive end, transported the puck to the flank of the neutral zone, make a feint and cut to the middle as he entered the zone, sent a high-to-low dish and sprinted for the goal mouth where he received the puck back for a tap in. High skill plays with smarts and knowing when and where to attack.

In the 3rd, he showed the smarts again by leading the rush, moving the puck and then delaying and hunting for a soft space near the top of the circles. Puck came back and he got down and leveraged his strength to extend the arms and finish it off.

His playmaking was smart at times, drawing coverage and slipping pucks through. But he also ran out of real estate and passed into boxes. The real concern here is two-fold: He's too small, and he's not dynamic enough a mover. His pace is relentless which affords him the success at this level. But it's unlikely he'll be able to do the same in the NHL without adding a plus to his acceleration and top speed.

David St-Louis: January 7th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Perron is forced into passing by his skating and smaller stature. Out of these weaknesses was born an awesome playmaking game, however. He attracts defenders, moves counter to their feet, using their momentum against them, and then slips the puck to teammates attacking past him. He catches pucks in movement, pulls it between his legs, goes around the net, and reaches a teammate in front of the net. He anticipates pockets of space and attacks them at the right time, offering good support in transition. These flashes of skills are sandwiching a lot of worse decisions and plays, overall. Perron tries too much and passes to covered teammates. The pace is already quite high for his skating ability and his smaller stature is a problem. I don't know. We have to be careful when ranking him.

Daniel Gee: January 6th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

This was an impressive transitional effort for Perron. While he doesn't have the overwhelming speed to burn past defenders, he instead uses an array of deception to work clean entries. Constant handling across the back of defenders, path-changing weight-shifts through his crossover use, and body manipulations make him almost impossible to read for a gapped up defender. The large-ice manoeuvrability is just hilarious because of this. In the first, Perron made a neutral zone handle across the back of defender, after the puck was momentarily stripped, Perron took an entry pass, and def a teammate 2-on-1 -- they heeled the shot. He showed a bunch of one and two-touch pass ability in this one, but forced an absurd amount of lateral passes through unrealistic layering. Led to a mountain of turnovers. The entry work was impressive all night but he is virtually unable to work pass supporting defenders to attack into the middle. So many beautiful entries leading to perimeter/goal line shots. There is passing skill -- slips, stop-up delays, but this was an inefficient effort. I love how he baits aggression and the deception is a great adaptation but this will be an issue at higher levels.

In sustained pressure, Perron exploited static blocking posture defenders well, but was still a pretty inefficient passer. He patterns into low-to-high carries, working into downhill attacks. Generally his off-puck play is strong, playing off teammates well. This led to a second period shot off the right-hand circle. Anticipates clears, scans on OZ retrievals -- fun habits.

Defensively he tries to be a disruptor but his size is obviously a factor. He prevented a Lumberjacks player from walking off the goal line to the slot with check and then shifted to disrupt another activating crease threat. He even threw a hip check on one sequence that sent a man flying. Perron is a fun player but the physical limitations and lack of north-to-south speed is scary. We have to be careful where we rank him in an attempt to properly hedge the positives and negatives of his makeup.

Cam Robinson: January 6th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

I continue to really enjoy Perron's ability to understand the flow of the game and recognize space on the ice. He can do this with and without the puck, but I especially appreciate his off-puck timing and use of space. However, this game was not his best. He was spamming shots throughout, but was neutralized several times by a lack of footspeed to get around the defenders, and was guilty of throwing pucks into congested areas for obvious turnovers - a couple of times on the backhand which were painful to watch.

The defensive awareness and work rate is really strong, he takes great routes on the forecheck and times his stick lifts and body work well to force turnovers or drive the defenders into difficult spots. There's a good deal that needs polishing, but the crux of his upside remains improving the speed. Everything hinges on it.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Perron lacks dynamic qualities. As the season advances, it's becoming clearer that it will be a severe obstacle to his NHL development, but he has the next best thing: an above-average ability to anticipate the game. He knows what's going to happen. He steals the puck from opponents, attacks, deceives them to pass to teammates, and then immediately repositions inside space, making their next play evident. He's a defensive force, an inside-driver, and a smart decider. He's maybe more of a top-20/25 prospect than top-12, but definitely one of the better ones in this draft.

Cam Robinson: December 17th, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs Chicago Steel - USHL

A really strong outing from Perron. He was driving play at even-strength -- often utilizing a serpentine transition route to skew the defensive structure. He was blending his hands with his crossovers and found success -- utilizing cutbacks and dotted line acceleration into pockets. He was using a whole slew of passing options from direct cross-ice feeds to slip passes, area passes, saucing over sticks in close quarters. The forechecking remains very impressive. He was moving his feet a ton and is slightly above average in speed for this level, but it's a handcuff at the next as it's difficult to imagine him adding much more with an already strong mechanical and postural setup.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Pretty unbelievable that Perron didn't get a point in this one. He was all over the ice and was a huge offensive catalyst for his line. Perron's ability to see the ice with his feet in motion while problem solving is second-to-none. He uses weight-shifts and dekes to bait defenders in one direction before exploding out the other way, allowing him to easily gain the zone or create space for himself once inside the blue. He's a skilled distributor, looking for hook passes, area saucers, etc. He sucks in defenders and moves the puck at the perfect time.

The size would be a bigger issue for me if he wasn't so good at finding space and getting off the wall. He looks more and more deserving of a top-15 pick.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel vs.- USHL

Wow. One of the best games I've seen from a draft eligible forward in this draft. Perron has a total command of the game in all three zones. Of course, he has some limitations (reach) and there are still some plays that he maybe misses in transition (he could use the east-west space a bit better), but there were so many high-end moments, I don't even know where to start. On defence, he switches, stays with his guy, identifies lanes...In transition, he uses teammates but also carries pucks with dynamic crossover rushes. The speed isn't where it needs to be for a guy his size, but it could get there with more strength and his good posture. Away from the puck, he adjusts to the play, manipulates gaps, finds extra space. And most of all, he's a real playmaker, with advanced ideas and the manipulation and handling skills to pull them off. He could be a top-10 pick -- a risky one, but I see it.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 12th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Perron continues to make an argument for himself not only as a first rounder, but a high first rounder at that. He's just so complete. An adept passer through all three zones of the ice, Perron knows when to delegate in transition and consistently finds options with speed. His feet are constantly churning and he generates a ton of speed through linear crossovers. He's got a diverse set of rush patterns, he's capable of delaying and finding help or doing it himself. Had an unreal cross ice assist on the powerplay to tie the performance together.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perron has the stride. He pushes his knees past his toes, engaged his hips, and really drives off that push off leg. He closed space on opponents, leading to one of his numerous steals in this game. He was everywhere, engaging opponents at the right moments, winning positioning, swooping down low at the right moments, and dipping into battles and popping out with possession. Not a ton of offence in this game, and I continue to be skeptical of how he reads the game; he passes into closed lanes and only really makes plays through one defender. That's fine, but makes me wonder if he's not the potential top-line scorer I thought he could be last season. Really effective transition game, however. He easily chains together pass receptions, dekes and passes. Feathers pucks over and under sticks with perfect touch. Cuts back at the right moments. Gets plays to the inside to punish passive gaps. Looked more like a late-first in this game.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Perron continues to flash impressive stuff. He chains high-level handling moves, into feints, into passes to the slot. His teammates can't always follow his plays. He can hold on to the puck inside contact, cutback to evade it, and use teammates to avoid pressure all together. He's also adept at finding space away from the puck to set up as a shooter. Everything is there in his game...I just wish he would be a little faster and taller. Ultimately, it shouldn't matter too much, if the hockey sense keeps on growing. And I'm quite confident that it will.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 3th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A whale of a performance from Perron, who finished with a hat trick and an assist. First goal came from picking up the loose change on a 2-on-1. Second was a back door tap-in where he beat out his d-man to the spot. Third was a shot through traffic that squeaked under the pad. His secondary assist was nice too, had a soft catch through the slot to escape a check before dishing it down to the strong side post. Despite his size, he showed a bit of snarl and a willingness to finish checks and engage

physically. Perron may have had three goals but also had several high quality shots that he created for himself by using his hands and feet to work through and create separation from defenders. An all-time performance.

David St-Louis: December 3th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

An impressive game from an impressive player. I'm not sure about Perron's whole projection, but the skill is undeniable. He's elusive (can shift away from pressure), capable of making skilled passes under pressure (one-touch or more complex), capable of manipulating, and even holding some back pressure. The skating doesn't look high-end, but it's sufficiently advanced for his size to give him a chance to succeed. I liked his space-finding abilities. He got a few scoring chances from it.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron had his moments, setting up chances, drawing a defender along the boards before cutting back and attacking the middle, and cutting inside for chances. His transition play's so strong, whether he's carrying the puck or passing with cross-lane/ice passes to find teammates through defenders. Creates advantages. This wasn't a strong game decision-making or reads-wise. He forced plays that weren't there, blindly passed pucks into space. He manipulated the first defender to create the lane, but didn't respect the rest of the players on the ice. I don't know if it's experimentation or if he's just running the scripts, unable to adapt as the variables change. Looked like a second-round-type in this game. Obviously highly skilled, but major questions about the reads and true understanding of the game.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron threw a lot of plays away in this game. He should have kept control of the puck, but he was determined to find the quickest to a scoring chance, often attacking the middle against multiple defenders or sending the puck there. He assumed the position of teammates -- they weren't there -- and lost the puck in a dangle war against opposing sticks. I like his manipulation abilities (through deception, movement, and passing) and the way he skates the ice, always looking for space. The inefficiency is a minor concern.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Quiet game from Perron. Turned a forecheck steal into a goal, but otherwise, didn't get much offence going. Showed the usual handling skill, complemented with his ability to draw pressure, delay, and cut inside. Incredible touch on his passes, always creating advantages. But it rarely resulted in much offence. A bit of a tough game for everyone involved. Not much to go on.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

On the powerplay, on the half-wall, you see Perron's manipulative playmaking abilities, his constant shimmering hips and shoulders hiding his intentions, the fast twitching of the puck as he shuffles it, and his eyes scanning for an opening. He has a real dangle ability. He can play keep away under pressure, thread the puck around or under multiple sticks with perfect control -- often the attribute of shorter forwards with high speed hands. He uses teammates, plays a pass and reposition style, and adds pace to the game, although his skating will have to get better to earn him an NHL role.

Joey Padmanabhan: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron was remarkable in this game on both ends of the ice. He's shifty, pulling defenders one way with a crossover then exploding the other way to take the corner. He's clearly a skilled puckhandler and baits opponents into bad reaches before pulling around them to fire a dangerous pass or get the puck on net. More impressively, he's great defensively, using his speed to get into lanes on the backcheck and anticipating passes in the d-zone before turning play the other way. Had two highlight reel goals, one where he protected the puck on the outside and tucked it short side from a tough angle and another on the man advantage where he used the defender as a screen and put it over the goalie's glove. Certainly a player to keep an eye on.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron scored twice on the powerplay: a sneaky wrister along the ice and a drag shot after testing the penalty kill's reaction to his movements, then attacking the inside and shooting around the defender. The skill level's so high. He has a knack for getting pucks through lane. The best was a no wind-up backhand saucer pass for a zone entry, landed perfectly on his teammate's stick. Puck on a string and never seems rushed. Still unsure about the skating, and there's little doubt that he benefits from playing in the USHL. Regardless, he looks like a first-round candidate.

Joey Padmanabhan: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A typical Perron showing: employing edgework and changes of speed off the rush, using his hands to work towards the inside, creating fantastic scoring opportunities for himself and teammates, there isn't much more you can ask for. He's just as good defensively, using his speed to tie up sticks and break up plays on the backcheck and staying tight to his man without cheating the play in zone. He's one of the best forwards on this roster and boasts the skill of a first round talent. Someone to pay close attention to.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron's still Perron. The hands are incredible. He easily manoeuvres through and around defenders. Baits their stick, pulls it around. Establishes body positioning after and before beating defenders, taking pucks across his hips when possible. Edges look even better this season, complete with a textbook cutback inside a pass reception to escape along the boards. Identifies teammates moving into space and executes. His best reads missed their target due to slightly off timing, but that he always looks to further a play is impressive. Rung the post with a shovel shot over the goaltender's shoulder. The usual Perron stuff in transition: cutbacks, regroup, give-and-gos, lateral passing, moving plays to the inside. Defensively, he anticipates, eliminates, and breaks up plays. Stayed on check, but never lost positioning, over-extended, or needlessly chased. Positions himself in the right areas, and especially impressive at getting space just outside the slot. He has top-six upside.

Dylan Griffing: April 1st, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Perron just creates offense nonstop. He was quite a presence on the forecheck this game, which was a pleasant surprise. So patient and poised, lets defenders come to him and then makes them look silly with his hands or fires off a pass with the newly opened space. I love his skill, he's a really adept problem solver, so creative and deceptive, and is rarely caught overhandling the puck. Two primary assists and a goal in this game. His first assist came after he disrupted play on the forecheck, received a pass in the corner, and then waited for the slot lane to open before finding a teammate there for a goal. Second assist came after his shot rebounded into the crease and was put away. The goal was pretty nice, he has a cannon of a wrister and buried it. So many good tools to go along with how smart of a hockey player he is.

Dylan Griffing: March 4th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

I really like this player. Skating won't blow anyone, but his off-puck movement and IQ saw him sneak past the Green Bay backline on multiple occasions. On the puck, he is something special. Great hands and vision, constantly reading the ice, proactively getting involved in plays, even if he isn't the one leading a rush, he utilized touch passes and deceptive movement to open up space and allow his teammates to get moving. Made a couple of nice defensive plays, nothing too crazy going on in his own zone, but he tries to get his stick involved to break up plays when he can. The playmaking skills he has are already fantastic, but he also throws in a crazy good wrist shot to even further his offensive prowess. He looks like he's going to go early next year.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Perron's consistent offensive force. The skating requires work, but he's usually in the right place. He even deceives defenders with his off-puck routes and sneaks up behind defenders, just as he did for his goal. A wildly skilled and imaginative handler, but he uses his teammates at the right times for give-and-gos. Consistently puts himself in the middle of the play, adapting his route and speed to ensure he's both an option and the next play's open. Set up Fantilli with a wild cross-crease pass that I initially thought was a shot. A top player for next draft.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perron's one of the most exciting prospects in the next year's class. He's already a strong, consistent creator in the USHL with NHL details. A highly individual player, sometimes to his detriment, but he blends in enough give-and-gos and off-puck sequences to believe his game will work at the next level. Master of drawing pressure towards himself, but doesn't wait around. Plays fast and precise; waiting for exploitable windows while also taking space when it's given to him. Shot continues to look NHL-calibre. Wicked curl-and-drag wrister with his outside leg angled away from the net, using the open hips to create the downforce.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

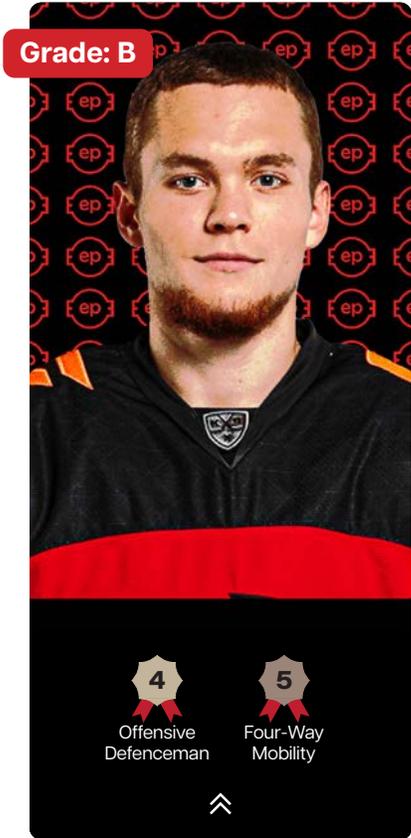
Perron's an exciting prospect. He's a dynamic stickhandler: weight shift set-ups, wide range of motion, and plenty of creativity. Builds his dekes inside of movement, which allows him to recover pucks on the other side of defenders. Scored with a deflection on the PP and set up a goal with a close-slot pass, holding the puck just long enough to freeze the opposition before passing. Uses the inside and plays a give-and-go when necessary. A nice balance between individual skill and team play. Top-six upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Just non-stop deking. Half of them failed. Perron's just such an instinctively creative player, though. He immediately recognizes space and tries to seize it. More of a passing mindset will take his game to the next level. He gets himself trapped in transition and gets forced into dump-ins or turnovers, but there's so much read-and-react ability that I think it'll improve. Delay game off the rush and he showed some shooting skill and awareness. Looks like a top prospect for next season.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. NTDP U18s - USHL

Perron had the best shift of the game, that's for sure. He cut across the front of the defence, then dangled around the backchecker before beating another play with a weight shift. Dropped the puck back for a scoring chance, got it back, and then skated high in the zone. Nazar fell asleep, and he cut back and beat another player while cutting inside. The handling skills are all here: Top hand free, quiet handling motion, creativity and adaptability, backhand control. Makes defenders move their feet with his handling skill, and then cuts back through them with perfect timing. Advanced delay game, too. Instead of trying to turn the corner on front pressure, he spins back and waits for options. Connects with the trailer. Weak skater at this stage, very little power generated and struggles to build speed. But he's an inside-driven, manipulative attacker with tons of puck skills and a legitimate motor on the defensive end. Looks like a first-rounder for 2023.



30 Mikhail Gulyayev

AGE 17.389 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Tyson Barrie, Quinn Hughes



Raw Talent



Fleet of Foot



Ankle Breaker

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

7.5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
6	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Avangard Omsk	KHL	13	0	1	1	0.08
Omskie Krylia	VHL	12	0	4	4	0.33
Omskie Yastreby	MHL	22	2	23	25	1.14
Projected	MHL	24	2	25	27	1.13

SCOUTING REPORT

Man, can Mikhail Gulyayev fly out there. You give him an inch, and he's sprinted a mile past you with about as effortless and clean a stride as you've ever seen. It's the defining characteristic of his game; the foundation on which every other part rests.

Primarily, this skill serves the Avangard Omsk product in transition and at the offensive blue line as a means of evading forwards. Gulyayev has an excellent feel for pressure in these situations, baiting in opponents with a look or a feint in one direction before cutting sharply in the opposite one or exploding through a weight shift into space.

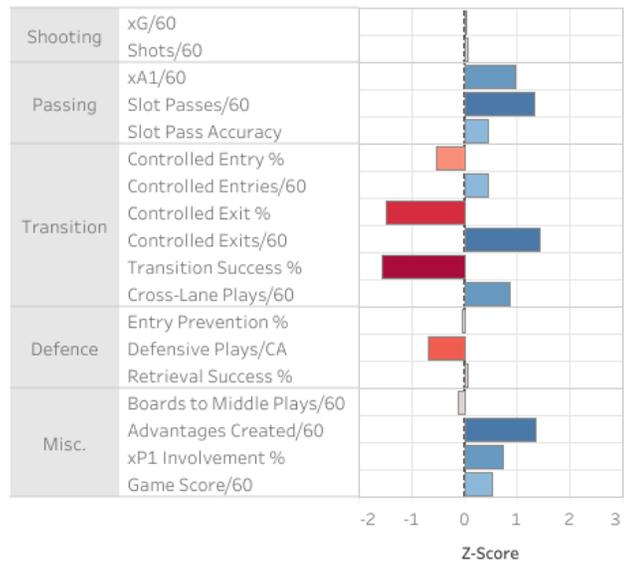
Every bit as comfortable a defensive skater, Gulyayev gaps up early, often attacks puck carriers on an arc, and always takes away the middle of the ice with his stick. His feet are sometimes overly committing in space, but his considerable defensive range is such that he's well-equipped to recover when an opponent thinks they've crossed him up.

The same dynamic is true of his in-zone defensive work. Gulyayev is reactive, with scanning habits that come and go, prone to chasing the play, but he's rarely all the way out of it because of his ability to cover ground.

Where Gulyayev often left our staff wanting was in the way he leveraged those considerable gifts as a skater, especially in

Mikhail Gulyayev

D | Omskie Yastreby | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 198.5
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



the offensive zone. You'd watch him shake a forward high at the offensive blue line and then take a low-percentage shot from the coffin corner of the offensive zone with an ocean of space in front of him to attack downhill. Often stationary, he missed opportunities to activate down the weak side in many of our viewings.

It's frustrating more than anything, because a player with his profile should be so much more effective. Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis and Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen tried to capture this dynamic in their article on EP Rinkside comparing many of the top European defencemen in this draft.

"His game is a lot less refined than the other defencemen presented here, but with the right development, he could unlock moves that only the top skaters in the world, like Quinn Hughes, pull off on a regular basis in the NHL," they wrote. "He could become one of those rare defencemen who retain a significant skill advantage even in the top league. If he fully develops his mobility, he could play keep away and create automatic breakouts and break-ins for his team."

For now, though, Gulyayev lacks sophistication. He doesn't build or sequence plays so much as react to and take what's in front of him. This works in the MHL, but as his considerable skills advantage diminishes in his pursuit of an NHL roster spot, it may not.

Still, you don't often go wrong betting on physical tools and pure skill, and Gulyayev brings a lot of that to the table. His reads and his feel for the game will have to improve, but if they do, a low-end top-four defenceman's gig with second-unit power play utility seems wholly attainable.

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Comparing the best European defence prospects in the 2023 NHL Draft



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"He's kind of like a discount Dmitri Simashev. He's smaller, but I like his game with the puck. He's certainly more risky as a pick than Simashev, for obvious reasons. We've seen a lot of Russian defenceman who can play with the puck do really well before. Can he be one of them? I mean, you're drafting for talent here. The main knock is that he's not that big. If you draft him, you're drafting him for his game with the puck.

I think he's an offensive defenceman. He sees the ice. He's mobile, a quick skater. I think he's good at passing the puck and skating the puck. It's just that the game is very different in Russia. They don't forecheck as hard. There isn't as much pace. You have to project if he can handle that or not in North America. The talent is interesting though, I think. I think he'll play on the power play.

I don't know if he's a first-rounder. That would scare me. But he's a second-round pick, for sure. I mean, look at where Adam Fox went. I'm not saying he's the same player, but he has the same profile – a small player who is good with the puck and can defend. He went in the third round." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 8th, 2023 - SKA-1946 vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Another convincing defensive performance from Gulyayev. With his skating, when he wants to, he can really suffocate the other team, giving them no space in the defensive zone by switching from check to check. One time, he pressured an opponent on the half-wall, followed the puck to the top of the zone and forced the other team to leave it to avoid his stick. His skating is Quinn Hughesy in moments. And -- I've said this in every report, and I'll continue to say it again -- he still has more opportunities to use it. He did on the powerplay in overtime. He caught the puck in movement, accelerated down, and then swung it to a teammate in open space for a shot. I want to see even more of that. I think he's a top-25 prospect in this draft. His slighter build will remain a weakness defensively, he's not a player with high-end hockey sense, and I'm not sure about his development environment, but his package of skills is just too interesting.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

I'm not sure that I would characterize this as a poor performance from Gulyayev. He left with an even goal differential at evens playing big minutes in a matchup role and picked up a garden variety short range secondary helper on the power play. I'm becoming increasingly concerned that Gulyayev lacks the feel for the game necessary to be a difference-maker at the next level though. His tools offer him so many advantages at this level, but he still doesn't know how to use them to their best effect. Gulyayev can shake an opponent with relative ease, but lacks the vision to build or sequence plays -- everything seems so reactive. He's okay on retrievals, but consistently makes panicked plays with the puck and misses better outlets in the process. Puck management was a serious problem in this game, as it often has been in my viewings. Mostly, I've come to admire Gulyayev's defensive work. He's impossible to beat in space, the motor runs high, and his defensive range allows him to cover for the fact that he's a bit reactive at present. I just don't see a top-four defenceman at the next level, though.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs SKA-1946 - MHL

A much more convincing performance from Gulyayev. The thing we really wanted to see out of him in these late performances is defensive effort. And he was extremely engaged in this one. He's uber aggressive in his defence right now, so he overcommits a lot, especially with his footwork, but it's almost better this way at this stage of his development. He's one of the best skaters in the world. It's good that he takes risks and acts like it. He can always learn to manage his pinches later on. He was quite physical in this one, working the boards and the front of the net. Again, the effort was there. Now, the next stages for him is to improve his timing in defensive interventions to steal the puck from opponents before having to battle them and, offensively, he has to use his skating even more. He's shoot-first when he should be move-first.

Lassi Alanen: April 3th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL

I continue to leave these games wanting more from Gulyayev, but he doesn't really deliver. He has his moments and flashes of the things he used to do way more frequently earlier on in the season and in the VHL, like a nice cross-lane pass to set up a scoring chance or using his feet to get out from under pressure. But the breakouts are still very much an issue as a whole; dumps out the puck a lot, trying to look for lobbs to the middle from the boards that rarely work. When he goes for a pass, it's usually to an already-covered teammate who doesn't really have a chance to receive it properly.

Offensively, the shoot-first mindset dominates his play, always looking to fire pucks immediately when he could try to cook something better, especially given his skating. Some fine defensive breakups, but also prone to bad reads. One particular almost ended up costing a goal against when he completely forgot about his man off the rush and drifted towards the player with the puck when he should've taken care of the weak side instead. It's fair to wonder how he'd do in a different system given how much better he looked in my VHL viewings, but is he ever going to be in a favourable system during these critical years of development? There's a lot of risk and the upside just isn't showing in these viewings, even though it should be still there.

Lassi Alanen: February 14th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. HC Sputnik Almet'yevsk - MHL

Gulyayev's skating never fails to impress; it's a legit high-end tool and he's one of the most explosive and agile movers in the entire draft. There were impressive moments. He joined the rush as a trailer, once getting the puck and setting up a scoring chance with a nice cross-ice pass; a hint of the playmaking skill he showed earlier in the season. Looked for net-front deflection with shot passes from the point, but couldn't really connect with any of them. Should leverage his mobility and explosiveness from the point more often, even if he's good at getting the shooting lane open with lateral movement, too. Still leaves a lot of value on the table in transition and doesn't impress defensively. Some of the passing decisions in transition are just plain bad, deferring to already covered teammates when he has a clear lane to skate himself. Frustrating to watch.

David St-Louis: February 13th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs Sputnik - MHL

Gulyayev has some moments offensively, but I don't see a creator as much as someone who lets his skating create for him. He's quick, fast, and agile. His skating projects as high-end. He attacks on first touch, can make skate fakes and elude opponents. I'm just not sure about the precision in his game, his understanding of spacing and timing to make feints and when to make them. He's a bit conservative with his high-end tools and while there is some deception and manipulation in his game, it's not refined. Drafting him is drafting his skates and then teaching him the finer points of the game. The rush defence might be his best ability. He steps up on opponents, does so with great timing, surfs (pressures with forward skating), and kills most plays before the blue line. That's projectable. In the defensive zone, he plays at half capacity, not really using his mobility as much to close preemptively on players. It's probably that he lacks anticipation and strength.

It could take him a while to get this facet of his game at an NHL level considering the amount of habits he has to learn, the first one being shoulder checking. He's surely going to become a lot more active in the defensive zone as he matures. On breakouts, he's passive, rimming and dumping most pucks he could skate out, and even deferring on powerplay breakouts where he should be automatic. That's mostly the fault of his system, his creativity not being encouraging. I see him more as a 25-40 prospect on our board than as a top-20 prospect. I'm not sure his development will be optimized in Russia.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Amur vs Avangard - MHL

This was a pretty good defensive performance from Gulyayev all things considered. He has trouble following the play at this level, always a bit late on his check, but the effort was there and he closed his gap every time he could on opponents. Engagement matters and pace, too. As long as Gulyayev does use his skating to reduce space from the opposition, he's easier to project to the NHL. He kept his plays simple with the puck. I think it's partly because of his competition and system and what is asked of him (he doesn't want to make mistakes), but also because he doesn't always see the better plays.

Dylan Griffing: January 22nd, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Gulyayev's status as a game breaker at this level has certainly dwindled, but most of the key aspects of his game remain. The main thing missing is the creativity. His breakouts just aren't what they were, he's shooting pucks up the ice with a lack of forethought. At one point, he had the puck behind the net with some space from the F1 and he slowly skated towards the wall until the F1 was directly in his face and dumped it out of the zone. It's like he's actively trying to play more defense? The acceleration is just awesome, though, and his hands are good. He exploits pockets of space very well, there's just a lack of end result. Footwork at the blueline is also a major strength for him. He's incredibly evasive and there's flashes of the creativity we saw from him earlier in the year when he's manning the point. I still think this is a fantastic prospect, should be pushing towards the top-10, but the performances have been getting seemingly less and less promising, so 10-15 is moreso his range for me.

Lassi Alanen: January 21st, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. HC Chaika - MHL

Somewhat better than the abysmal previous showing, though still the same issues remain relating to the breakouts and overall playing demeanor. To his credit, he was flexing the skating chops more. The four-step acceleration remains one of the best in the entire draft; he can get an upper-hand on almost any player at this level if they're starting from even ground. Some better maneuvering on the breakout with his passing, too, drawing in pressure before passing. Still some very odd dump-outs that shouldn't happen with his skill set at this level, but it could be just an environment related thing, ie. his coach encouraging him to do so. The OZ playmaking and creativity have disappeared from his game to a pretty notable extend. The OZ moment saw him

beat his man at the point with a slick fake shot into an outside lane sprint, blending it in with the pass reception, too. Those are the highlights that still make Gulyayev an intriguing bet.

David St-Louis: January 3rd, 2023 - Tolpar vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Gulyayev's game is based around his skating and only his skating. That's what it feels like sometimes. He misses occasions to maximize that elite tool, too. We don't see manipulation moves out of him (not anymore); it's just outskating, outmaneuvering. His passes are hard, and for the most part, smart, but there is a lack of planning behind most of them. He just spots someone half-open and sends the puck there, and then he doesn't always reposition quickly enough as an option. His defensive game was mostly good here. He can somewhat engage physically and kill plays with his mobility, especially by surfing or pressuring attackers head on. I still really like him as a prospect, but I'm not sure how he will develop in the Russian system over the next few years. Is he going to learn to maximize his skating? If he's just fast, it won't cut it. I don't think he's really looking to take over game at this level.

Lassi Alanen: January 3rd, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

A weak performance from Gulyayev for the most part. I'm not sure if it was because he doesn't want to play at this level anymore, but he just seemed not to care. Most evident on breakouts where he just refused to make controlled plays, just lobbing the puck to the NZ over and over again without any real purpose, even when he had controlled plays open or could've just cut back without any issues. The skating remains intriguing and we got a few glimpses of that where just effortlessly breezed through the first forechecker and gained the middle. There just wasn't much ambition in his play. The defence remains reactionary.

Dylan Griffing: January 3rd, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

I did not come away with many positives in this game. The breakouts were so sloppy, often just dumping the puck out of the zone (unpressured) to just sit back and wait for Magnitogorsk to re-enter the zone. He spent so much of this game in his own end and he was a major reason for that. There were some nice moves from him to beat the F1 and open up ice, skating out of the zone is a strength with the acceleration and agility, but, like with his exits, his entries were almost entirely dump-ins to the corner that were recovered by an opponent. Serious lack of execution and scanning, he was rushing just about every play. The blueline manipulation wasn't present in this game at all, point shots and d-to-d passes were basically the only things he did in the OZ. Defensive side of things was the same as usual, looks like he's doing things, but can't execute on any of his reads because they're so delayed. Weak retrievals, as well. Didn't look anywhere near the best player on the ice on any given shift, really worrying.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Sarmaty - VHL

An overall better performance from Gulyayev who continues to remind me of the top, small, shifty Ds that made the NHL in previous years -- at times. He moves to find and create lanes, kill plays not necessarily because he's positioned perfectly, simply because you can't really go around him. He's too fluid, too shifty, and he can explode out of any step and retain speed inside pivots. He holds the puck to attract defender before passing in the offensive zone, but he doesn't have many elaborate ideas. He needs to treat the puck with more care under pressure. He just slammed it toward dangerous areas in his zone a couple times.

Daniel Gee: December 10th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs Rubin Tyumen - VHL

This was the first time I've seen Gulyayev play -- his tools are immediately apparent. A gifted skater in terms of explosiveness, lateral ability, and pace, his execution speed was ridiculous in this viewing. Two-touch receptions into entry passes, end-to-end carries leading into cutback delays -- he can really exploit the game with how well he moves. Unfortunately he spams simple passes, defers constantly, and refuses to skate pucks up the ice at regular intervals even though he could on practically every touch. I still like the transition play though -- Gulyayev works give-and-goes in motion, executes near perfect board bank passes, and puts a hell of a lot of power on his outlets. Strikes me as a player who needs to realize he can exploit at much higher levels.

There's some habit issues with Gulyaev in the offensive zone -- as mentioned, he defers a lot of pucks through D-to-D feeds on the line. He's frustratingly stationary as well, firing rather hard shots from the perimeter of the ice. If any movement occurs it's often middle-to-boards which just kills the effectiveness of shot attempts. Gulyaev still does everything so fast though -- there's no nuance to his touches. There's clear skill -- evidence of slip passes, some activation backdoor, and threading pucks through layers. His best sequence was a weakside activation -- he took the pass, rounded the net and got a high-danger on a forehand wrap -- more of that would be welcome. Shooting mechanics are strong -- rotates through pucks dropping his weight down, just so ineffective due to location problems.

He didn't defend much but in transition, Gulyaev is ridiculously aggressive. He launches himself into puck carriers in the neutral zone and on the blueline in an attempt to haul the entry before it happens. He gets the stops but better handlers and passers will pick him apart. In sustained pressure Gulyaev will straight up abandon checks to contest open ice. On one sequence he made such a dumb activation rushing up the rightwing to check a shooter, leaving man alone at the side of the net -- the carrier then passed high-to-low, unimpeded by any netfront resistance. No real secondary threat lock downs -- I question how well Gulyaev can process multivariable defensive sequences but I need to see more going forward. He should be in our top-30 for the tools but there's considerable risk here.

Dylan Griffing: December 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

This was a pretty cool game from Gulyayev. Not the cleanest, but he's so dynamic and he clearly thinks pretty well, the execution will come with time. He had a few solo rushes where he utilized his insane acceleration and ability to find and attack pockets while at a high pace. The end result of the rushes were almost entirely shots that weren't all that dangerous. Would like to see him try to set something up if there isn't a clear path to goal. Still a huge fan of his ability to turn plays around very quickly, to go from a standstill in the DZ to firing a pass up the ice to start the attack. Again, the execution is a work in progress, but the confidence is there for sure. Defense is still bad.

David St-Louis: December 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

It's all about skating with Gulyaev, defensively and offensively. He's always on one leg or the other, always explosive, and elusive. He's not really an aware defender at this stage, but if he sees his check, even if he's a couple stick lengths away, he can gun at him and pick him up. Same on the puck-moving side. Three steps and he's gone, separated from opponents, and in a position to launch a pass up ice. He's confident with the puck, willing to carry it or pass it around sticks. He lacks a bit of imagination offensively at this level -- too many shots from the corner of the blue line. Someone needs to teach him how to use his skating to its full potential.

Lassi Alanen: December 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

Gulyayev's explosiveness is pretty next level. His first steps are among the best in the entire draft class, maybe even the best. Almost nobody accelerates from a standstill as quickly as he does. Used that skating advantage to rush through the neutral zone multiple times, but the decisions after entering the zone were almost exclusively low-danger shot attempts. Didn't look to manipulate or activate from the point, instead shooting from there, too. I've seen legit passing skill from him and it shows on his breakouts (which were strong throughout the game), but it's just not very consistent. Defence remains a weak point; took weird routes and angles while defending the rush, though he does have a cheat code for recoveries with his feet.

Dylan Griffing: November 26th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk - MHL

Like most of his MHL games this year, this was very, very chaotic. He is just plain bad at defense which makes him a bit painful to watch at times. Got walked multiple times, got burned on the rush, and was losing just about every physical encounter. He threw two hits (one was a penalty) which was a rare sight and fun, but this boy is a small one. With the puck, he lacked control, but brought the entertainment factor to make up for it. To say he was activating a lot would be an understatement, he was basically a fourth forward for Yastreby. Involved in as many rushes as possible, really using his pace to his advantage through solo rushes and give-and-goes. The majority of his moves just didn't end in anything that was controlled enough to be a real chance for his team. Losing handles, skating into logjams, or just not finishing his chances. As fun and awesome he is from a

puck moving and offensive standpoint, it's hard to really push for him because of how weak the defense is in comparison.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Sibirskie Snajpery Novosibirsk - MHL

Gulyayev was all over the place here. I really liked the give-and-go style rush patterns, taking a couple of crossovers to separate to the middle, then making an outlet pass in-stride, accelerating further and getting the puck back on top of the OZ blue line. The problem was that he couldn't get much done with those rushes, losing the puck control at top speed multiple times. Other times, he was pinching aggressively and got two looks by jumping on loose pucks. I like the shooting mechanics for the most part, flashes the skill to curl the puck to dodge the defender's stick. Defensively, not so great performance here. He gets a few stops per game with his skating alone, but the positional awareness really comes and goes.

Dylan Griffing: November 21st, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Metallurg Novokuznetsk - VHL

Gulyayev returned to the VHL after his international stint and this was not one of his better games. His defense was getting exposed really early on, he just gave up so much space at the net front. Bad positioning and reactions and isn't strong enough to hold off checks, so defending the crease is certainly an area that needs to be improved upon and soon. He's still able to make the defensive plays that are in front of him, so he's not a complete tire fire in the DZ, but there's a long way to go if he wants to drive positive results on defense. With the puck, the same habits were on display. Going behind the net and sending the F1 the wrong way with a simple move to open up operating room, drawing in forecheckers for as long as possible before distributing, and using his explosive skating to burst up the ice. Plays just weren't being executed, though. He had one very bad pass right up the middle of the ice, right into two Metallurg players, despite having SO much time on his hands. He enjoys turning plays around very fast, something that works very consistently for him in the MHL and has proven to be effective at this level as well, but sometimes he really needs to slow it down and survey the ice instead of making the rash decision to try a high risk, high reward pass.

Dylan Griffing: November 16th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Kazakhstan U20 - Cup of the Future

This game was not a close one at all, but boy did Gulyayev absolutely take over. Dominated the blueline with momentum shifts, fakes, and all sorts of handles. He opened up so much ice through his dynamic movement and he took advantage of every lane he was given. Literally impossible to stop for the Kazakhs. I loved his play on the PP, as well. While it wasn't much of a challenge for this team to get things going, he wasn't wasting chances by trying to be the main character. The puck movement was seriously awesome, sending passes all over the ice and completing just about all of them.

David St-Louis: November 16th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Kazakhstan U20 - Cup of the Future

This is the Gulyayev we want to see. A ton of offensive involvement: pinches, two-zone carries, fakes at the blue-line, timely shots on net. Weak competition for sure, but he showed everything he could against it. His defensive footwork is interesting, too. He can match the movements of any attackers, stick with them, and pokecheck the puck away. And with his mobility, he can instantly take advantage of any vulnerability, say an attacker dropping his head or losing the puck.

Dylan Griffing: November 15th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Russia U20 - Cup of the Future

This one was a hard watch. Gulyayev was hemmed in at his own end for the vast majority of this game, with his defense getting exposed as a major weakness. His partner also being a bad defender wasn't helping him much at all, but it was certainly a difficult game for Gulyayev. Weak checks, poor situational awareness, and, overall, looked pretty disinterested. With the puck, this was one of the worst games I've seen out of him. His whole team was outclassed by the older kids, so he wasn't getting many chances with the puck, but he just wasn't completing anything out there.

Dylan Griffing: November 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

Gulyayev picked up a goal and an assist and put on a show with the puck, as per usual. He's just so dynamic and so unpredictable, creating separation against the forecheck is no problem at all. Making moves to get just an inch of space and

then deciding to make a pass or explode with his fantastic acceleration, players at this level just cannot stop him when he has the puck. Had a really nice sequence in the second period, stepping up on a slow moving puck, faking a slapshot to evade one opponent, then activating, drawing two different defenders towards him, before firing a cross seam pass to a wide open teammate for a shot on net. His ability to manipulate and open up ice is going to take him a long way. Moving into pass receptions was another strong area of this game in particular. On the defensive side of things, he was finding himself giving up a lot of space due to overextending and overcommitting. Forced his teammates to cover for him way more than needed and his stick checks were weak, meaning that he was stepping up and not even coming close to breaking things up most of the time. Still made some nice plays, notably a big hit along the boards, but the defense needs to be cleaned up for sure.

Dylan Griffing: October 28th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Izhstal Izhevsk - VHL

Gulyayev's ability to locate open ice and attack it is going to take him a long way. The deceptiveness and explosive skating alongside his smarts give him so much control through transitions, utilizing his tools and his teammates to create beautiful hockey plays. The decision making does have its bad moments, but it's not quite bad enough to ignore the majority of his plays being really smart. He did find himself skating directly at defenders and waiting too long to try to dangle them in this one, turning the puck over on two or three occasions, just not giving himself a chance.

One thing that really makes him stand out compared to other young Russian defenders is his pre-shot moves. There are a lot of defensemen in the Russian hockey system who have good shots, but they don't add anything to it to make it an actual weapon. Gulyayev moves into receptions, uses shot fakes, and is willing to look off the shot if something better opens up in that extra time he creates for himself. Just adds another layer to his offensive ability and is something that he can continue to build upon. The defense is worrisome, there's no denying that, but he looks like a potential top-10 pick.

J.D. Burke: October 26th, 2022 - Molot Perm vs. Omskie Krylia - MHL

I'm not sure if I would characterize this as a good performance from Gulyayev, but the tools are nothing short of captivating. I think he's an easy 6-grade skater. Start there. I don't think the handling lags all that far behind, either. Even so, Gulyayev played a bit too fast for his own good, often rushing plays and turning the puck over in transition. His only noteworthy offensive activation resulted in an assist, though it was a garden variety pass. I actually thought his defensive work was strong. Gulyayev scans away from the puck, makes proactive interventions, and battles physically, often making second and third efforts to win pucks. Interesting player.

Cam Robinson: October 22nd, 2022 - HC Kuznetskie Medvedi vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

This kid moves extremely well. He has shifty edges that he's able to use to break coverage and shake opponents. At the blueline, he was using a lot of lateral work to get himself open for a shot attempt, or to stack with his hands and fakes to beat one defender and move into space to look for another play. He was quick to jump onto loose pucks and drive the transition -once leading to a 2v1 and HD chance for. You can see how badly he wants to get puck touches, and when he has it, he's poised and confident handling it in-flight or drawing coverage before moving it. I liked how he allowed the play to unfold in front of him while defending the rush and was quick to step into a lane and angle out attempts again.

David St-Louis: October 22nd, 2022 - HC Kuznetskie Medvedi vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Gulyayev continues to impress with his skating ability, which will likely receive an above-average grade (maybe a high-end one). The game is just easy for him (a little too easy). He can escape anyone and find outs in every situation. I wish he would use his mobility on retrievals to shake the forecheck instead of rimming pucks, but rims on breakouts are an MHL special, so I can't really blame him. He seems comfortable with the puck, extremely comfortable, and he's willing to make plays, to fake defenders and attack down, with and without the puck. He supports offensive plays, joins the rush, comes down for a shot... His defensive game was generally on point in this game, too: some great angling and stick checks. I'm not sure how high the hockey sense grades, but the tools are NHL caliber for sure.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - HC Kuznetskie Medvedi vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Gulyayev's explosiveness continues to impress. He doesn't really need to turn defender's feet to beat them on breakouts or near the point, just powering through with a couple of powerful strides will almost always do the job. The playmaking is the other standout tool. He has a really strong vision for passing ideas and executed on the majority of them. His passes are sometimes unnecessarily powerful, but that's really nitpicking. He also executes these passes in-motion – really impressive stuff. Leveraged his skating to get his stick in the way of shots and broke up a couple of plays along the boards. I'm still not sold on the overall hockey sense, though. Some of the decision-making, especially on breakouts, still baffles me from time to time, opting to dump the puck out when there's passing options open (and with his skating advantage he could just cutback or feint and make a move to the middle). Not sure how much that matters, though, because some of the tools are so good.

Dylan Griffing: October 20th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - MHL

It's pretty obvious that Gulyayev is way too good for this league. Probably could be classified as bullying. So dynamic with the puck, manipulating anyone in his path, and making very efficient plays to keep things going the right way. His explosive skating is hilarious to see at this level, because he seriously is unstoppable when he gets moving. This game was full of incredible plays from him with the puck. On the defensive side of things, he was making plays in his sleep. His footwork is really nice, allowing him to give up space to force the puck carrier to make a move before inevitably stepping up and breaking it up. Hopefully he won't be playing much more in the MHL this season as there clearly isn't much more for him to prove here.

David St-Louis: October 9th, 2022 - Avangard vs. Kunlun RS - KHL

It was a pretty difficult game for Gulyayev with some interesting flashes. Of course, he's weaker than his opposition, so it's harder for him to neutralize opponents on the boards. He got beat more than once while he tried to close out on them. What he had to do is move preemptively, ahead of passes to be there when it came and swat it away. He was in good positions with good gaps off the rush most of the game, but his in-zone defence, it could improve. We already see the tools, the skating and handling, that could serve him in the NHL to escape the forecheck. He did it a couple of times in this game. Once, he spun on an opponent and skated up ice to push the puck to a teammate, and at the end of the game, he spun on a defender and tried to gain the offensive zone, but he underestimated the speed of that opponent. He caught up to him and Gulyayev lost the puck.

Dylan Griffing: September 16th, 2022 - Avangard Omsk vs. Barys Nur-Sultan - KHL

Despite picking up his first KHL point, I don't really think Gulyayev is ready to be playing in this league quite yet. He struggled with controlled zone exits under pressure, opting to try to dump it out more often than not and failing on most of his attempts in doing so. His positioning defending the rush was shaky and his lack of physicality hindered his ability to make plays along the walls. He was able to get himself in between the puck and the carrier to cause a turnover once, but that's about as physical as he can get right now. He was able to make some nice plays on offense. It's clear his game is limited, but he is still at least trying to do things. I'm never a fan of an overly shoot-first defender, but Gulyayev was unloading his cannon from the point and causing real chaos in front of the net, which holds value for sure. I think he'll be getting more games with Avangard as the season goes on, but for now, I think letting him get used to playing against men at the VHL level is the best option.

David St-Louis: September 13th, 2022 - Omskie Krlya vs. Lada Togliatti - VHL

This was a great performance from Gulyayev. It felt like he belonged at this level. With his skating, he closed down hard on attackers off the rush, killing their plays with a combination of timing and good angling. He made multiple passes through and around opponents, using the boards and his backhand, and his skating escapes were all graceful and effective. I like the way he moves on every reception especially in the o-zone. It contributes to shifting the opposition's defence and opens lanes. Gulyayev has a bit of everything in his kit. He could easily become the best defenceman in this draft.

Cam Robinson: September 13th, 2022 - Omskie Krlya vs. Lada Togliatti - VHL

Really nice showing in the VHL for Gulyayev. He was his mobile self in all three zones and utilized that ability to quickly cut off lanes and disrupt rush opportunities by closing gaps quickly and extending his stick. Additionally, the darting style lent itself to passing opportunities which he used to transition out of the defensive end very effectively, and to work the offensive end and

maintain possession. He plays with a lot of pace.

Dylan Griffing: September 13th, 2022 - Omskie Krlya vs. Lada Togliatti - VHL

Gulyayev picked up his first VHL point in this one and showed off a lot of playmaking prowess. The way he controls the blueline is phenomenal – luring in pressure to make a move and fire a cross-seam pass. It's his bread and butter. He has a really good shot, but he showed off his ability to adapt to the situation, read the ice, and shoot when he has a teammate b-lining to the net. He almost picked up an assist from one of his shots being redirected. Breakouts were very clean, he assessed pressure well and made the right play just about every time. For a young Russian defenseman, it's very rare for a player with the skill and pace that he has to play so responsibly.

Lassi Alanen: September 11th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Zvezda Moskva - VHL

Very quiet game from Gulyayev here. Struggled on breakouts quite a bit, which was surprising. He didn't really have the willingness to cut back at any situation, which limited his effectiveness. Passing accuracy also wasn't what it should've been. Left me wondering about the overall skating grade as the quickness and straight-line speed are both great, but haven't seen that much in the way of edge work, cutbacks, lateral movement, etc.. Defensive game looked a bit better. Showed understanding of contact game, but was outmuscled when he tried to bump shoulder-to-shoulder on a retrieval.

Dylan Griffing: September 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. AKM Novomoskovsk - VHL

So much speed! The plays he was pulling out in his debut at this level were pretty crazy. Joining the rush, activating from the point, and putting his hands and feet to good use. Had a really sweet pass from his own redline that led straight to an entry. Just a super fun player to watch while he has the puck. Blocked the inside lane really well and didn't really let anything happen on defense. Got dangled once, but kept good enough body positioning that no real danger came out of it. A lot of above average tools and a really smart hockey player. Going to be challenging for the top defenseman spot this year for sure.

Lassi Alanen: September 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. AKM Novomoskovsk - VHL

Gulyayev is so explosive, could be one of the most explosive skaters in the draft. His stride is pretty interesting as his knees don't really come past his toes and the upper-body is inconsistent but he's still in a deep stance and has good extensions and recoveries. Had some nervous moments with the puck here and there, but I liked his overall attitude towards breakouts. Definitely someone who can beat F1 with his feet and then move the puck laterally. There were a few spotty defensive moments here and there, not optimal angles taken or diving way too early while defending a 2v1. But he did leverage his explosiveness to prevent a HD chance at one point.

Dylan Griffing: September 5th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

Gulyayev is simply too good for this level. It's a little ridiculous. The skill and pace he exudes make him dangerous every single time he has the puck. While I am still noticing processing errors or perhaps just trying difficult plays just because he wants to, the negatives are really hard to pick out in his game. Defensively solid, a bit more aggressive than usual, pinched up too far at points, but, overall, his skating ability, positioning, and scans make him tough to get past, even with his small frame. Absolute cannon of a shot, too. His goal wasn't getting stopped if there was a bus parked in front of the net. Awesome player.

Lassi Alanen: September 5th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

Gulyayev scored on the power play with a big slap shot from the point, but it was his playmaking that really stood out. Whether it was creating an entry, cutting back and delaying before dishing a backhand feed into the slot for a scoring chance or making cross-ice slap passes from the point, his vision and ability to execute were impressive. The skating also stood out, particularly how much quickness he had when he wanted to accelerate or change gears. Killed plays early with some aggressive in-zone defending and also off the rush. Sometimes left value on the table where he could've capitalized on his tools, particularly in transition. Still, a really intriguing player to watch going forward.

Dylan Griffing: August 23rd, 2022 - Avangard Omsk vs. HC Sochi - Sochi Hockey Open

Gulyayev was pretty solid in this one, looked really comfortable on the puck while still playing a simplified variant of his game. Scored a nice goal off of an entry, cut to the inside, and then put away his own rebound. Defended pretty well, but the positioning was a weakness and he has a tendency to float away from his area and give up ice. He's being given a ton of opportunities this pre-season with Avangard, getting good minutes at 5v5 and usage on the top power play unit. Will be interesting to see where he lands come the regular season.

Dylan Griffing: August 7th, 2022 - Avangard Omsk vs. SKA St. Petersburg - Sochi Hockey Open

Clearly limited, Gulyayev struggled most of this game. Retrievals lacked deception, reacted slow on defense, and his breakouts were very uncontrolled. Maybe it was his gameplan from the coach to constantly dump the puck out of the zone, but it was pretty ugly regardless.

Dylan Griffing: July 27th, 2022 - Avangard Omsk vs. Omskie Krylya - Friendly

For it being his first time playing against KHL players, Gulyayev didn't look too bad. He scored a goal in his first shift, but didn't really get much else going. Definitely held back from things he was doing last season, I would've liked to see him try a solo rush or two, but, understandably, he opted to pass to his teammates before doing anything himself. He had one really nice pass that led to an entry, picking up a loose pick and immediately going behind the back to an open teammate, who I don't even know how he saw. Got caught pinching high on a goal against and his recovery was way too slow. Youngest player in this game and that did show, but overall, he could definitely keep a spot with the VHL team this year.

Dylan Griffing: April 8th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Krasnaya Armiya - MHL Playoffs

From a pure flashiness standpoint, this may have been the least interesting game I've seen from Gulyayev. That said, he was still awesome. I am starting to believe the processing speed is a real thing to be concerned about, he needs to work on assessing pressure and then staying composed, mostly on his breakouts. Outside of that, there were no real holes in his game. Defensively, maybe the best game I've seen out of him and it was against a really strong Red Army lineup. He will not give up the inside lane, keeps positive body positioning, keeps his feet moving, and forces the issue with his active, aggressive stick. Breakouts and transitions were stellar for the most part, he is always looking to move play in the right direction. Turned play right around from the DZ after creating and recovering turnovers, one leading to a full coast-to-coast rush that finished with him finding a teammate in the slot from behind the net. Worst thing about Gulyayev is I can't live my dream of him moving to the CHL and becoming the next Pavel Mintyukov.

Dylan Griffing: March 14th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Mamonty Yugry - MHL Playoffs

Pretty weak game here from Gulyayev. Rushed his breakouts, lacked pass accuracy, and just struggled to make an impact. His mindset of getting the puck up the ice immediately was his ultimate downfall here, failing to scan the whole ice and opting to go with whatever his first option was, viable or not. Still made some nice plays with the puck on his stick, had one really nice, hard breakout pass and displayed his hands on a few occasions. Defense was fine, not standout, body position and four-way mobility go a long way for Gulyayev. He got into the playoff style, physicality wise, becoming more of a pest and throwing his body around, just not very strong.

Dylan Griffing: February 15th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - MHL

Not the most refined performance here. I've never seen him get so frustrated before – a mix of him mishandling the puck and being the only man back on three(!) 2-on-1s, not ideal. He took two penalties because of it, got into a scrap in the crease and was sent for the box for that, plus a boarding call. He was moving his feet too quick for his own sake in this one which is where the mishandles came into play, forcing him to slow his pace down to play with more control. That worked out for him and his game improve substantially after giving himself the time to corral the puck properly and make reads. I love how quick he turns play around to go from defend to attack. Defended pretty securely, as well, but I'm sure he would've loved some extra help from

his partner to really shut down Reaktor.

Dylan Griffing: December 21st, 2021 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Maybe it was just because he was playing against much weaker competition than my previous reports, but the processing issues were not issues here. He was able to showcase his shot off the rush and found the back of the net early on. The shooting ability he possesses is really impressive and this game he was using it more wisely, as well as, adding in shot fakes to get defenders moving. The shot combined with the playmaking, skating, and skill all culminates to make a monster offensive defenseman. He scans the ice so fast and waits for his teammates to start moving so he can hit them and carry their momentum into dangerous areas or just bomb passes through the seam and exploit mistakes from the other team. His acceleration, once again, is a joy to watch. He'll get the puck at a standstill, read his options, and then crawl up the ice before exploding through. His defense is honestly pretty good as well. Lacks physicality, but he squares up and forces the puck carrier to make the first move and created quite a few turnovers from just outsmarting the other team. Moves over to cover for his teammates whenever needed. Another great performance.

Dylan Griffing: October 26th, 2021 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Maybe the best game I've seen from Gulyayev thus far. His activations were just incredible, utilizing his teammates to get himself into motion and then blasting through the transition. He can really move, pacy and has really nice footwork – crossovers, pivots. Throw in his hands to the mix and this kid is just impossible to stop at this level. Breakout passes were stellar, he gets a lot of power behind them, but still controls the pass enough to allow his teammate to handle it. Very nice three line cross pass to set up a major scoring chance, as well. Picked up a shorthanded assist after knocking the puck carrier out of possession and then going coast-to-coast, getting a nice shot on goal and the rebound landed right on his teammate's stick for the finish.

Dylan Griffing: September 24th, 2021 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

It's hard to get excited for a DY-1 MHL defenseman given how many times I've been disappointed in the last few seasons by other players; however, Gulyayev just oozes style and elite offensive instincts. His acceleration is a dangerous weapon and he broke through transitions on many occasions this game. Needs to add a bit more dynamic movement, though, a lot of straight-line skating, but when he added in lateral motions, he was impossible to stop. He has really nice hands, tends to overhandle at the blue line and his processing speed needs work, but the base is there to be a really effective puck mover who brings a ton of pop to the offensive zone. He shot the puck a lot this game, a bit too much for me, but he has a ton of power behind his slapshot and just lacks accuracy. Shot selection wasn't great when he moved off the blue line. Had a really nice play after recovering his shot that was blocked, skated all the way from the top of the right circle around the net and brought a couple defenders with him before firing a cross slot pass to a wide open teammate. Main area of improvement is his processing speed and execution of breakout passes, but Gulyayev is a very impressive talent.

Dylan Griffing: August 6th, 2021 - Russia U18 vs. Sweden U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

Really solid performance from Gulyayev. Made a solid read on a give-and-go that let him enter the zone (unfortunately, on a 1-on-4), but allowed his forwards to get a line change in, join him in the zone, recover the puck, and score. He's just a really, really smart player. Always scanning, shifting to cover open ice, and attacking early to force the puck carrier to try to get around him. Sweden scored twice while Gulyayev was on the ice, but neither were from dangerous areas because he simply does not allow anyone near his crease. Runs the power play efficiently, doesn't fall victim to spamming point shots like a *lot* of Russian d-men do. Awesome player.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2021 - Russia U18 vs. Finland U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

If this performance is any indication, then the hype on Gulyayev ahead of the 2023 NHL Entry Draft is going to be immense. So much offensive potential. Scans constantly off-the-puck for quick, pacy options once it arrives. Skates through passes. Worked the give-and-go to get inside and create chances in the offensive zone. Made a brilliant read about midway through this game to create a breakaway chance for himself. I like.



31 Ethan Gauthier

AGE 17.636 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Ryan Hartman, Joel Farabee



Vision



Hammer



Tactician

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	6	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	66	30	39	69	1.05

SCOUTING REPORT

After an impressive Hlinka Gretzky Cup tournament where he scored six goals in five games for Canada, Ethan Gauthier settled into his role as a two-way forward on the Sherbrooke Phoenix.

He complemented the team's stars quite well for a time and then, after the team acquired more talent, he moved down the lineup and continued to perform at about the same level.

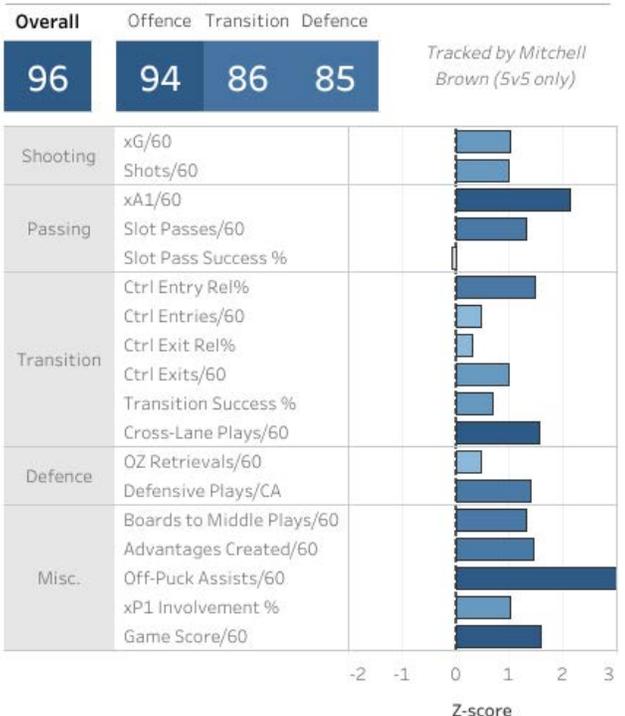
There is not a lot of flash in his game, unless you count his massive hits. Occasionally, you see him dangle his way to the slot and score or pull off behind-the-back feeds to teammates rushing there, but he mostly plays a quieter style of game.

He acts as the link between his teammates' plays. He one-touches the puck to them in transition and helps move the puck from lane to lane to break in the offensive zone. And there, he keeps the puck in control of his team and improves the dangerousness of the offence by winning board battles, passing through and around defenders, and by rushing the net to tip shots and get his stick on rebounds.

While Gauthier plays a straightforward game, his choice of plays makes it clear that he's one of the smartest forwards in the draft. He manages the puck well, plays with pace, and always drives ahead off the rush to clear the defence and create space for teammates.

Ethan Gauthier

F | Sherbrooke Phoenix | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 96.4



Predictable and engaged, he always provides passing options to teammates, especially in transition.

“He knows where to look, where to move the puck, and where to position inside space,” Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report. “And on top of his mental attributes, he possesses a lot of hard skills, too.”

Add his above-average stickhandling to his many professional habits and physical skills and it’s easy to project Gauthier to a role as an NHL middle-six winger with utility in both phases of special teams.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: Zachary Bolduc's evolution as a playmaker has his stock soaring



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

A pretty good game from Gauthier, another one. I wish he had that second gear to use in certain offensive situations. He can't really turn the corner on defenders and that might be a problem at the next levels. He also skates in one block (no separate between upper and lower body or no hip hinging), which may limit his ability to improve his outside edge moves like cutbacks, but he has every tool he needs to still succeed: the sturdy frame and puck protection mechanics to resist contact and the passing ability in tight spaces to connect with his outlets. Good defensive positioning overall through the game. He's still a 25-35 prospect for me, a safe NHL bet with playmaking upside. If he can get his skating to a clear 5 or 5.5, his upside could increase significantly, too.

Mitchell Brown: April 29th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Gauthier consistently gets the puck off the boards. That's his game. He wins body positioning, finds teammates moving into space, and has the skill to connect from just about any position with any pass. His game is full of solutions, even if he's not using all of them yet. He has more advanced skills, like change of pace to beat opponents, one-touch vision, and off-puck instincts around the net. Physical and consistent attention to detail. He still doesn't play as much as he should. Scanning before possession would enable him to get more out of the few touches he gets – right now, he enters too many battles blind. More third-line than top-six scorer, but the flashes of more are consistent enough. A late-first, early-second type.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Blainville Boisbriand Armada - QMJHL

Gauthier can't really set up dekes. He has the handling skills to pull them off and he can beat opponents rushing at him quite easily, but when approaching defenders off the rush, he cuts his motor, goes into a glide, and tries to slide the puck between their stick and feet. Doesn't work. Won't work. Thankfully, he's not an overdangler. He's an efficient decision-maker and puck manager who prioritizes sending the puck to teammates inside space and who does so consistently. He's not really all that flashy but he can pull off some impressive moves under pressure to keep the offence alive and create scoring chances.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Gauthier is real solid, but the variable skill level remains a concern. The good is the pro style and flashes of individual skill. He plays a give-and-go style, sprinting every route, and generally making the right play once the puck arrives, whether that's shoot or pass. He adjusts to lanes to prepare his passing, going around opponents. Capable of making plays at speed. Lots of lateral plays to build the offence. Very physical, of course. In one sequence, he baited the poke check to set up the curl-and-drag shot. Wasn't smooth, but it showed that he can play off opponents' momentum.

Too often, however, he doesn't even look. He considers one defender, then makes a decision – straight into the next layer. He's a lay-up. There's little doubt Gauthier will play, given his motor, playmaking, and physical style, but I think it's more in a third-role role than a top-six one. Unless I'm missing some other details, like an especially inside-driven style or manipulation.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gauthier has such a mature game. He's probably more physically developed than most (but still has room to grow), but I'm talking about the mental side of his game. His tactics, understanding of the flow of the play, and decision-making seem really advanced for someone his age. The game feels easy. He knows where to look, where to move the puck intelligently, and where to position inside space...And on top of his mental attributes, he possesses a lot of hard skills, too. I don't think the hockey sense is high-end or elite -- as he lacks that kind of creativity -- but he discerns what has to come next in the play and doesn't force anything.

The lack of high-end tools is a bit disappointing, but I'm sure he plays if he can just a bit more pace and develop the rushing game even more. He had a couple crossover rushes in this one where he manipulated defenders and found teammates in the slot. We can't forget that he's now playing a bit down the lineup, in a role where he doesn't get the puck as often anymore. It affects his scoring and projection.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

A very Gauthier performance. He fades in the background a bit unless you actively look for him, but then you spot the details: the way he establishes body positioning on every puck, his multiple great decisions under pressure to manage the play and keep possession for his team, his defensive help, his hard forechecking, and his overall tactical understanding of the game. Gauthier knows where the play is headed and he supports it well. He has hand-eye coordination, but not high-level stickhandling skills. He's strong and balanced, but not really speedy or quick. He can score, but mostly by attacking the right spots, not because of a deadly release.

The tools are closer to average, but the great habits and tactical understanding and the hard game are very projectable. He's a player you draft between 20-35 and watch become an NHLer after he adds some dynamic elements to his game.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Gauthier managed the puck well -- like he always does. He worked the boards, funnelled pucks on net, and made the logical next play. He's capable of deception. We saw that in his game, but he was far from the most skilled players on the ice. What's attractive about his game is his hockey sense and his work-rate. That's still an NHL package. In this one, he tried to initiate more advanced offensive ideas but couldn't pull off the execution.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Gauthier set up a pair of goals with impressive passes. The first was a fake before going backhand around the defender for a tap-in. On the powerplay, he circled high, deked around an opponent, then passed into the slot for a deflection. Shows lots of passing skills in every situation. He changes pace, fakes, and anticipates plays developing. A very physical, but controlled game. Works to get above the puck, angles players to the outside, and secures possession by establishing body positioning. An intelligent, well-rounded off-puck player. He creates space by skating routes, but detaches at the right moments. He look like a

late-first in this game.

David St-Louis: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Gauthier made me see it again with this performance. He's still barely getting the puck. Sometimes he goes through shifts without even touching it a single time, but there is a lot of playmaking potential in his game. It appears when he gets the puck on the half-wall. He starts manipulating to open up options, just like many of the better setup artists in this draft. Otherwise, he's still just as physical, laying many crushing hits, he adapts to closed plays, moves the puck smartly, and still looks toolsy -- to an extent. His grades are closer to 5. He looks like a sure-fire NHLer, but probably more a middle-six guy. Developing his speed and east-west game would help in transition. He's always well positioned.

David St-Louis: December 8th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Gauthier played an all-around good game. What worries me the most in his play is his lack of finer skills in tight spaces, the edgework and stickhandling. He flashes high-grade hands, at times, but he lacks the cutback and agility moves to escape defenders in tight spaces. I like how he reaches the net and moves pucks quickly. He has a projectable NHL game, but he needs an extra layer of skill to lock down that top-nine role.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

A relatively quiet game from Gauthier, except for a few moments. The highlight: delayed, drew pressure, dangled through it, attacked the middle, and cut through two more defenders for a high-danger chance. There are many individual components here. He understands how to manipulate opponents. Plays a give-and-go game. Funnels pucks to the inside. Moves pucks laterally in transition. Identifies teammates in a better position than himself and immediately moves the puck. He's not puck dominant, even when playing lower in the lineup. And he often leaves value on the table to make a simpler play, just like the rest of the Phoenix forwards. The defence is always there. The motor, body positioning, physical skills, and anticipation will be strengths in the NHL. It'd be great to see him in a different environment.

David St-Louis: November 25th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Again, it's hard to evaluate Gauthier as he never gets the puck. He only plays supportive, off-puck roles, like the front of the net. It's not that he can't find space or support plays, but both Roy and Gill are hyper puck-dominant player, so Gauthier is stuck as the connector. He's mostly just a quick passer, an effective one, who can adapt to closed lanes and bypass opposing sticks, protect pucks and pushes defenders back. His plays were all pretty basic in this game. I still like him; he probably remains an A, but his context is not favourable.

Mitchell Brown: November 20th, 2022 - Quebec Remparts vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gauthier was the best player in this game. In transition, he played a supporting role, working pucks off the walls and hitting teammates up the middle or attacking the middle and passing to the outside. His lateral passing in transition always shines. As usual, he did all the off-puck stuff. Skates his routes, pushing back defenders, setting up teammates, and getting chances. Chained pass receptions into dangles into shots, broke pucks off the boards and toe-dragged around opponents, and followed up plays to fire off chances. A complete shooting performance, and just about a single one was the best play. He also set up a couple of chances.

Mitchell Brown: November 16th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Quebec Remparts - QMJHL

Gauthier played most of this game away from Roy and Gill, and still didn't accomplish much. He had a chance, set up a couple, and generally created space with his net-front movement. Doesn't just plant himself, but actively engages with defenders, pushing them into each other or spinning off into space. His teammates don't find him. He has lots of passing skill and strong ideas. They were most visible in transition, where he consistently made smart, short-to-medium range lateral passes and used the middle, but again, it rarely resulted in Gauthier getting the puck back. Defensively, he combines work rate with body

positioning and anticipation. Comes across the hips. Couples of the poke check with a shoulder and a turn to win possession, then secure the opponent to his back. He looked like a could-be third-liner.

David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Pheonix vs Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Gauthier didn't score in this game, a rare occurrence, but he continues to reaffirm his status as a top prospect. The only flaw I can find in his game right now is his inability to complete his high-end sequences. He forechecks, steals pucks, spins on opponents to protect them, uses his body, gets inside, but the last segment, finding the pass option, truly separating from coverage, keeping an awareness of second defenders, it's not fully there yet. But it's November. And he can complete those high-end plays, he has given us many examples so far. I'm confident he will turn into a top-end prospect for this class. The tools seem like at least an average projection, probably an above-average one.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gauthier's setting makes it very hard to evaluate his game. Yes, he's getting points on the Sherbrooke first line but he is barely touching the puck. He only acts as a connector of plays, a one-touch passer, net-driver, and a physical presence. He's a complementary forward who has the skill to be a driver. He creates space for teammates, slows down the game when necessary, speeds it up, positions well away from the puck, and shows a constant soft touch to catch and move pucks. He's interesting, but hard to evaluate, not because he's a product of his environment, but because he's getting points while also being limited by it.

J.D. Burke: October 14th, 2022 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Not a particularly compelling Gauthier viewing, but there were still indications of a highly skilled player that revealed themselves throughout. Hard skill, to be more specific. Gauthier was physically engaged from puck drop to the final horn. Literally, his first shift included a slew foot on a late forechecking hit. The odd flash of high-end handling skill revealed itself, with one sequence where he pulled the puck off the boards and tried to create a give-and-go sequence to gain the inside standing out. Several instances of pacey playmaking, too. I'm not sure about his feel for the game; play selection was dodgy in spots with the puck on his stick and some of his routes away from it left me puzzled. His commitment in the defensive zone was beyond reproach, but it would've been nice to see him scan maybe once or twice.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gauthier was Sherbrooke's best player in this rather crazy offensive game. He showed a bit of everything. Set up a goal after baiting the defender, then accelerating, capped off with an excellent backhand feed through layers. Took pucks off the boards, worked to the middle. Always open, winning inside positioning around the net and timing his movements into space. He's the play-driver on this line with Roy, taking charge of the puck in transition and creating the advantage for Roy to exploit. The hands looked above-average, as did the passing and shooting. The physical game remains impressive. Comes across the hips, then cuts through the hands. He looks like a top-15 prospect in this group.

David St-Louis: October 6th, 2022 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gauthier continues to be more of a complementary player on his line. Roy was its main driver here. Gauthier cycles the puck, puts it into space for teammates, and then relocates in scoring areas; he scored that way by getting the puck at the far-post off a Roy pass. I like his habits. He scans constantly, positions well, is engaged defensively, and he uses his teammates. He plays with pace, but I think there is more there. He showed in one offensive sequence that he could manipulate, leveraging options -- a pass to Gill -- to fake the defence and gain access to the net. The hockey sense is probably above-average.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Gauthier came to play this tournament; there's an argument that he was Canada's best forward. In this game, he continued the non-stop violence and work. He was crushing people, throwing massive hits in open ice, running into everything that moved,

and coming across the hips on the backcheck. Power play wrister off the bar and in, using a quick handle while repositioning his hips for the shot. Showed better shooting skill in other sequences, too. Force the odd pass, but usually scanned and moved pucks effectively. He looked like a top-32 player in the 2023 Draft. Lots of upside and a high probability of playing. Or maybe not, it's August.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Pretty similar effort from Gauthier compared to the previous one in the semifinal. Brought off-puck offence by going to the net with intent and force, getting a few rebound looks, or by making well-timed moves to the slot. Huge physical presence throughout the game, laying big hits in every zone. Effective off the cycle. Still inefficient with his playmaking, once he even looked for one whole second and still passed cross-ice even when nobody was there. Scored on the power play with a powerful wrister. Gauthier is one of those players who has many qualities valued at pro level, bringing his likelihood of playing in the NHL pretty high.

Lassi Alanen: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Gauthier's modern power forward style is definitely fun to watch. He can bulldoze his way through players in puck battles and excels at extending the cycle by recovering pucks or winning battles. Scored a beautiful goal after a net-front drive off the rush, taking the puck across the net before beating the goalie with a backhand shot. Gauthier also flashes playmaking chops, but it's inefficient; he turns the puck over quite often with his tricky passing attempts, would benefit a lot from more rigorous scanning and play selection. Brought some defensive value with his backtracking and physicality, looks like a pretty well-rounded package.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another strong game from Gauthier. He continued to run through or over everything that moved, with one of his hits leading to a scoring chance. Scored by turning a tricky pass reception into a net drive, beating the goaltender across the crease on the backhand. Created two more chances with passes from the boards to the middle, and in one sequence, positioned himself in the middle of the play, scanned, and then passed immediately for a high-danger chance. Inefficiencies remain, such as a spin pass to no one, but this was a complete performance from Gauthier. The skating looks like at least an average projection, while the playmaking and physical skills look above it. Could be a top-32 player in this draft class.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Gauthier has been the straw that stirred the drink on Canada's top line, working alongside Brayden Yager and Zach Benson at evens. He's taken to the support role with aplomb, seeking out contact, creating chaos at the net front, and outworking defencemen on retrievals nearly every shift. This hasn't come at the expense of his play with the puck either. Gauthier's consistently displayed high-end passing skill throughout this tournament, carving defences apart one pacey pass at a time. We've even seen the odd display of small area skill that would fit with a first-round grade at times. His in-zone defensive play has been a strength in this tournament, but Gauthier totally gapped on an assignment in the first period that very well could've resulted in a goal against. Still, he picked up a nice assist on a give-and-go play, and was definitely a net positive presence on the ice for Canada.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Gauthier's so violent. This tournament has made that clear. He wants to inflict pain. And when he's not hitting, he slipping checks, driving the inside, and winning battles through body positioning. He stops in space, gets open around the slot, and follows up plays. Some skill, including a nasty saucer pass and some handling, but it looked a bit closer to average in this game. Still, physical skills plus intelligence and discipline. There's lots of upside here. August hockey, but he looked like a top-45 candidate.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Gauthier came to play. He set the tone early with a massive hit along the boards, then continued to take healthy runs at players, place himself in the middle of scrums, and battled for every puck. There were a lot of subtle plays in this game, too. Fake shot a 2-on-1, then passed through the defender with perfect timing. Attack the middle, drew pressure, passed to the outside. Consistently opened in the slot. Goal highlighted his awareness: took the defender's on his way to the net, then shot against the grain off the pass. Looked like a top-two round player.

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Acadie-Bathurst Titan - QMJHL

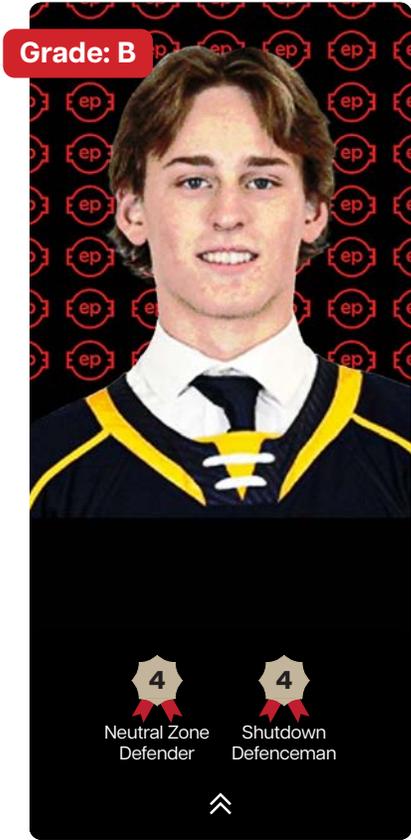
More details from Gauthier in this game. Advanced for his age in terms of supporting plays, getting open, and off-puck routes. Sprints to stretch the ice or back off defenders. Builds speed under the puck. Engages, then gets inside positioning as pucks come into the slot. Tries more complex passing plays with limited success, but that he adapts puck positioning to the lane, deceives, and uses his backhand suggests there's a lot of runway for improvement. Could become a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.

Mitchell Brown: April 12th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

A refined performance from Gauthier. He uses give-and-gos to beat defenders in transition, delays along the boards for pressure to arrive before cutting back, and consistently builds speed under the puck and gets open inside space. Combined look offs and hip pocket deception to prepare passing lanes. Looks to get pressure on his back. Not much of a defender, but he's an intelligent forechecker. Angles and supports. Unsure of technical ability at this stage – looked limited in some instances and above-average in others. Could be a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - QMAAA tournaments

Many above-average tools potentially. He has creativity and is an inside driver. He can read the play away from the puck to support it. Hard skills: keeps defenders on his back and separates in front of them. Good defensive engagement (supports and intercepts). A few poor decisions, from a lack of awareness of space and overdangling.



32 Beau Akey

AGE 17.592 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Brady Skjei, Noah Hanifin



Fleet of Foot



Play Killer



Toolsy

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

4	4
Neutral Zone Defender	Shutdown Defenceman

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Barrie Colts	OHL	66	11	36	47	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

It's not for nothing that Barrie Colts skating coach Paul Matheson uses Beau Akey to help demonstrate key mobility concepts on his Twitter page.

The Colts blueliner has perfected his drills. He can pivot with a single step without losing speed, explode forward with short, explosive steps, and stack his full weight over one of his outside edges to abruptly change direction. His form isn't textbook, but his power and agility received significantly above-average grades.

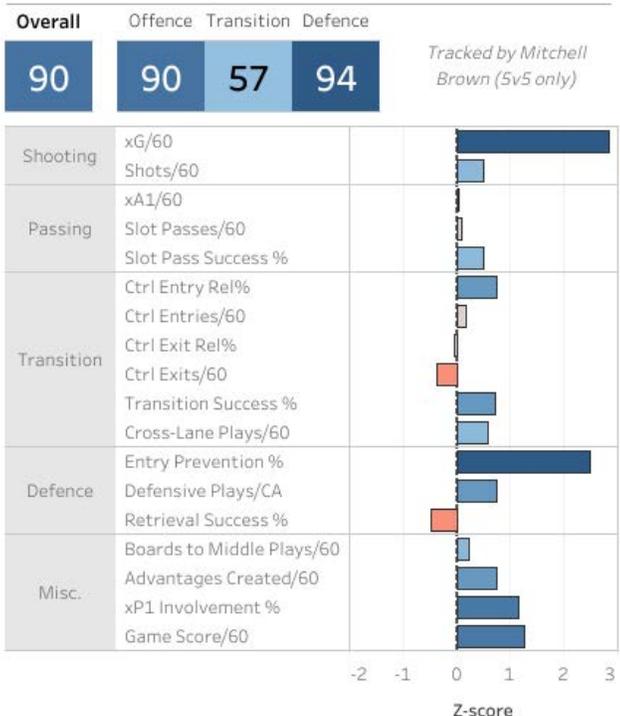
As a scouting team, we place a significant amount of emphasis on skating when we're evaluating defencemen. It's why Akey is ranked much higher on our list than most of our industry peers.

With his precise and powerful footwork, he can shadow attackers and push them to the outside, pinch on opponents in the offensive zone before they can break out the puck, and absorb and box out attackers rushing to the slot.

"Some of his best work came off his ability to anticipate players on the rush and use his stick to poke pucks away, as well as while chasing puck carriers in his own end," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a March report.

Beau Akey

D | Barrie Colts | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 170.8



“A stick work masterclass from Akey. Tight gap, perfect posture, never over-extended. In a four-second span, he poked the puck away from the opponent twice before pivoting and stick lifting another,” Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in another March report. “Angled opponents, instantly recognized the next play, intercepted passes, and skates through their hands to secure possession.”

Defending is what Akey does best at this stage. This facet of his game in and of itself could lead him to an NHL role, especially if he can further improve his anticipation in the defensive zone. But we also believe in his ability to become a two-way defenceman.

We’re banking that his offensive game will improve, that the flashes of kills he showed us this season – the skate fakes followed by middle passes, the dangles at the point, and the down-the-board activations in the offensive zone – will become routine as he matures.

Akey has the two ingredients necessary to further his offensive development: The high-end skating ability to beat defenders 1-on-1 and enough playmaking instincts to find the next play after escaping pressure.

“Just a sick game from Akey,” Brown wrote in another March report. “On the power play, he manipulated opponents before passing and read the opponent’s momentum. He stepped into space before firing and pulled off an in-stride wrister with textbook form.”

In a few years, if he’s encouraged to experiment offensively, Akey could become a 20-minute-a-night, second-pairing defenceman.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout’s Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A typical Akey game here. He defended the rush very well with his footwork and large wingspan. We don’t have measurements yet, but I’m willing to bet that he has the arm length of a larger player (or maybe that’s just his stick that is longer than most). He didn’t always manage the puck well but had some interesting flashes to compensate: skate fakes followed by two-zone carries and slip passes. The skill is there. He just doesn’t know how to fully use it yet. The hockey sense is closer to average, but the tools are so great that he could still create a lot more offensively, simply by moving a lot more and activating a lot more. Although, I like that he’s more aggressive on the offensive end now at the end of the season than he was earlier.

J.D. Burke: April 2nd, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

I left this viewing mostly impressed with what I saw from Akey, even if the execution wasn’t necessarily always there – and a very ugly minus-four aside. Akey just plays the game with an attacking mindset. He’s always probing for opportunities to activate from the offensive blue line or to join the rush, and I think most of his reads were pretty sound on those plays. There were maybe one or two ill-advised pinches, but the volume is such that I’m none too concerned. That same mindset applies to much of his defensive

work. Akey gaps up early, guides opponents to the outside with his stick, and then closes with force, often well in advance of his own blue line. His in-zone defensive work is a bit more clumsy, but I don't think egregiously so. I'm a big believer in the tools here, too. Particularly Akey's handling and skating. He looks like an early second-round pick for me.

David St-Louis: March 25th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

The offensive plays are there...They're just awkward for the most part. It's impossible to give Akey that high of a grade for offensive hockey sense based on this season, but he's one of those players who understands that facet of the game well enough (the fakes, the activations, and the blue line movements) to develop into a better point producer in subsequent season. He's skilled. He just needs to learn how to use his above-average skating ability. Skating form isn't perfect, but he's naturally agile and quick. Same defensive engagement. His defensive anticipation could improve, however, and his retrieval managements, too. A raw prospect in most aspects of the game, except one-on-one defence. He has the footwork, stickwork, and bodywork figured out for the most part.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Akey sticks to his check at all times. He's a bit awkward in his engages but he does stop opponents most of the time. He kills plays early in transition, sometimes by surfing down (skating forward) to meet them. He intercepts opponents and passes. And his playmaking game keeps improving over the course of the season. He only shows his offensive skills when absolutely necessary, however, but when the pressure collapses on him, you see his awareness. He knows his outlets. And he has some shooting skills. He can fire in stride while attacking down the wing. He's just a more conservative player than most. His skating is already a good offensive tool. As he moves along the blue line, he shifts the defensive box and creates opportunities.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Just a sick game from Akey, who looked like a future top-four NHL defenceman. He was activating, creating, and smothering the opposition. He activated down the boards and looked cross-crease for what should've been a tap-in. He grabbed a pair of chances off the rush after getting a stop, passing to the middle, then staying the play. The highlight was a deke inside before passing the puck into the slot while falling. Avoided dump-ins, preferring to draw pressure then pass through or find players behind him. On the powerplay, he manipulated opponents before passing and read opponent's momentum. Stepped into space before firing, highlighted by an in-stride wrister with textbook form. This game showed a full offensive tool kit. Playmaking, passing skill (backhand, slip), shooting skill (5.5-grade), handling (5.5 grade). He did the usual defensive stuff, too. He eats up so much space. The stride's not ideal but the edges, transitions, and defensive posture are among the best across the CHL. It's really only the breakouts now. He occasionally tries more complex plays, but he's mostly just passing up the boards to teammates with more pressure himself. Still, this was another first-round performance; the third in the second half.

Lauren Kelly: March 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

I feel like this game really encapsulated who Akey is as a player, and solidifies what I've seen all season. He's such a naturally gifted skater, from the fluidity in his edges to the way he accelerates as he takes the puck up the ice. He's aggressive when defending the rush, but not overly so, keeping his gap tight and forcing players to the boards. There were a couple of in-zone defensive lapses, including on Mississauga's fourth goal, where he drifted too far away from the far post, likely trying to defend the player higher up near the point, which left space open for a player to drift into and finish off the play. That goal did come at 4-on-4, though, so there was a lot more open ice than there typically would be. He scans constantly in his own end, but had a couple of failed clearing attempts that led to turnovers and eventual scoring chances against - as he gets stronger, I feel like this won't be as much an issue, because it's more of not being able to ring it around the boards than sending bad outlet passes through the middle of the ice. His overall defensive play was positive. Some of his best work came off his ability to anticipate players on the rush and use his stick to poke pucks away, as well as while chasing puck carriers in his own end. His goal came off a floating wrister from the point after walking the blueline to wait for traffic to build up. There weren't too many activations, on the few instances where it looked like he wanted to pinch up because there was space, his teammates weren't able to maintain possession and he was forced to circle back and get ready to defend. I like him for the second round.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A stick work masterclass from Akey. Tight gap, perfect posture, never over-extended. In a four-second span, he poked the puck away from the opponent twice before pivoting and stick lifting another. Angled opponents, instantly recognized the next play, intercepted passes, and skates through their hands to secure possession. Left the puck in space for his teammates to pick up and then joined the rush. He got stops early, got them deeper in the defensive end. Add in the skating – how easily he transitions and links together different skating moves – and his defensive upside is among the best in the draft class. The puck game was a bit better in this game, too. He used the middle a bit more and made a couple of quick passes off the boards. Offensively, he's still fluid but lacks ideas. He transitions from forwards to backwards, backwards to forwards, and stops to backwards crossovers with so much ease and quickness, but he rarely uses the space that his skating creates. It's especially annoying because he does have habits – moving pass receptions and stepping into space to draw pressure. Still, that's teachable. He looked like a first rounder in this game, my second viewing of that calibre down the stretch.

David St-Louis: March 9th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. London Knights - OHL

In some shifts, Akey can't seem to make a play with the puck, but then the very next one, he carries the puck through two zones and drops it to a teammate to create an entry. Or he chains a fake into a pass across the defensive box on the powerplay. The technical ability is there, but the offensive reads are not. He misses space he could attack. The defensive techniques and attention are high-end for a prospect his age. And the skating also looks high-end and we know he works with top-level skating coaches. If he can just become average at the offensive game, he could become a top-four NHLer.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

There was one shift that perfectly summed up Akey: he lost the puck on the pass reception, tried to cut back, fell, passed to the other team, then took a penalty. He passed straight to the other team for a goal against earlier in the game. He rarely uses space, preferring to shoot immediately, most obvious in one sequence where he had a clear path straight to the slot and one-timed a floater towards the net instead. He's awkward with the puck, struggling to move and handle at the same time. Then, he had one sequence where he stepped up, deked around a stick, then fired off a chance that suggest he has a lot more to give. The inception of an activation game is here, sprinting out of retrievals for the return pass up the middle (that never came) or well-timed pinches. He looks good defensively because of his posture and backwards mobility, but he was mistake-prone in this game. He has some physicality and he takes NHL routes on retrievals, but he's not an easy watch. Still, the defensive potential combined with the offensive flashes make him an exciting project.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Against a weaker team, Akey showed more of his offensive games, more activations, more playmaking in the offensive zone, more risk-taking and plays around opponents. I'm back to thinking his skating is closer to high-end. He has some limitations (upper/lower body separation) but his four-way mobility or agility is a massive advantage and so is his backward skating. He will be a great rush defender in the NHL and he looks like a clear candidate to make the league, even if he lacks the technical skating/handling combination and offensive and puck-moving fluidity of other defencemen in this draft. He turns interceptions into offence, mitigates risk well, and defends the front of the net. He won't be a scorer, but an effective 4 or 5 seems possible.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Akey is still not making many plays, but when he gets a clear advantage, an opponent off-balance rushing at him, or a pass option in the slot, he has the mechanical ability and processing to make the play. He looks really mobile in some sequences, especially in rush defence, but his forward strides aren't all clean. I still think he's a projectable above-average NHL skater. The defensive game is a projectable strength: boxes out, follows his man, kills rushes, scans... He's not a creator at all, but the skating and physicality and defensive game and flashes of puck-moving abilities are enough to make him a clear B prospect. More of a bottom-pairing projection than top-four, but it's possible he gets there by leveraging his defence.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Lots of potential shown by Akey. The defence is the most refined part. Precise stickwork, highly disruptive, keeps attacks wide, tracks

them high, gets inside positioning, and pins opponents at the right moments. Grabbed a ton of breakups; poking away possession at the perfect moment. One opportunity led to a chance the other way, where he skated into the defender creating a passing lane behind him. With the puck, he's a mess. He has tools and he's reasonably aware. Give him space, and he'll execute, as he did for a powerplay snipe. Without it, he throws pucks up the boards or makes simple plays. Activates a bit, so he will continue getting touches in prime situations. He looked like an early-second in this game. Lots of upside, refined defensive game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A first-round game from Akey. He was everywhere in the rush game, joining the rush in every which way. He used the weak side, the middle, and got up the ice with quick short-range passes and in-motion give-and-gos. Read the space before his forwards. He grabbed a pair of chances off the rush and set up another, showing an NHL one-timer, but also a lack of deception as a passer that allowed the goaltender to cheat on a 3-on-1. Even when he's the best option, his teammates don't use him as much as they should. Some of his rush sequences started with Akey killing a play off the rush, where he keeps a wide, centred base. He angles attacks and pivots at the right moments. He had one of the most impressive plays I've seen from a blue-liner this draft cycle, too. He took a pass perfectly, moved inside backwards crossovers to the middle, waited for the defender to close, then escaped with heel-to-heel and stepped inside for a shot – that's not an accident. While his hands failed him several times in this game (including on a shorthanded rush where he chipped the puck into space and skated through the defender's hands to win positioning), he rolled the back out the back and underhanded in that sequence. The wrister's a problem (he drops his inside shoulder too much and starts with the puck too far behind him). He still forced passes up the boards when he could've used the ice to hit a teammate. Missed options (lack of scanning) and only looks to play pucks ahead. Still, the combination of skating (heel kick aside), activation, defence, and offensive flashes made Akey look like one of the best defenders in the draft in this game.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Akey's skating continues to shine. He looks really technically proficient. One of his shots, after he activated down, hit the crossbar. He made many one-touch plays. A lot of pace in his game overall and professional habits. He hit difficult neutral-zone passes and even used deception to beat the forecheck. The offensive instincts aren't really there, but he could develop them. He has the skills and, when he's confident, he makes those creative plays.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A lot to like in this game from Akey. Scanned and established body positioning on retrievals, then made a quick pass to escape. Those plays flowed with breakout – smooth carries when given space and passes through opponents. Used the middle and passed cross-ice. Created advantages. Showed the offence in this game, too. He turned a shot fake into a cross-slot pass, activated regularly, and grabbed a chance with a weak side activation into a one-timer on a tricky pass. He's a fluid skater who easily links pivots, turns, and cuts; the type of skater that shouldn't have much issue adding explosiveness. It's the same for his handling – he takes pucks in his hip pocket, adjusts to bad passes, and makes plays with his feet moving. Mechanical ability is high. He looked like a top-32 candidate in this game. Lots of work, but lots of runway and the defence is already a strength.

Lauren Kelly: January 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Akey may not have picked up any points in this game, but he was doing pretty much everything besides scoring. Some pretty crazy activations early in the game, backing defenders up, delaying, cutting back or spinning around them. Walked the blueline with his head up and threaded shots to the net. Drove the middle on breakouts and head straight for the net on the powerplay. Constant DZ scanning and communication with his teammates. Good anticipation of when play was going to go the other way, he'd start backing up even before his team fully lost possession. Scanning on retrievals, spinning off forecheckers, laying the body in the corners to win puck battles and executing passes under pressure. Tied up sticks and boxed out players in the slot. Created turnovers in the offensive zone by intercepting breakout passes. His one-on-one defending was impressive, with an active stick, a tight gap, and pushing players to the boards. Took away the pass option defending on a 2-on-1, and a good stick check to eliminate the threat of a player who was alone in front. Just a really impressive game all-around. He's a high second round pick for me.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

This was by far Akey's best performance so far this season. Sure, two of his three points came on the powerplay (including scoring the overtime winner), but he was activating off the point, attacking the inside, but also not taking too many risks offensively. He also defended the rush well with a tight gap, kept pressure on cycling players, and wasn't drawn out of position on sequences. He kept his feet moving, anticipating changes in possession, and recognizing when he needed to back off instead of pinch up. When he has possession at the top of the OZ, he keeps his head up to survey passing options, delays, and then tries to thread pucks down low. His assist at even strength was at the end of a minute-and-a-half shift, and the result of corralling a loose puck in his own end, breaking out of his own end under pressure, shifting to the middle to open up a passing lane and draw coverage away from a teammate, and then passing off. There are opportunities for him to add another layer of offensive creation (more activations, manipulation), which would help increase his upside.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

For the most part, Akey was just playing catch with the Guelph Storm. No real thought to his breakout passes, just rims straight to the other team or into a battle. No scanning, either. But he's skilled on retrievals, taking the proper route (always at an angle), scanning, and showing some evasiveness off his edges. The hands looked better than my previous two viewings. First touch allowed him to accelerate into space, used his full reach comfortably, and kept his top hand free from his body. Late in the game, he actually tried to make plays. He delayed, slipped a pass up the middle, sprinted up the ice, and stayed between defenders for a return pass that never came – a first-round play. Tried a solo rush, attacking the defenders on angles and showing handling skill and creativity. The defence was really solid. He overskated once or twice but never significantly. Knees bent, head up, establishes his gap early, keeps his stick on the ice (even when pivoting), and effectively handles multiple attackers at once. Very curious to see what he looks like late in the season.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

I keep wishing for just a little bit more from Akey. Right now, the sense grade is about a 4.5 for me, so below-average in terms of projection, but he has everything else. He tries hard. He's engaged. I really like his posture, knee over toes, back angle that matches the ankle flexion...Those mechanics will give him an easier path to speed and agility improvements, although those two things are already strengths. He's just a great foundation to work with, especially since he already has defensive abilities: risk mitigation, engaging off the rush, awareness... Right now, the upside is limited to a bottom-pairing role for me due to the reads problems, especially offensively, but if he starts experimenting more and hitting on more complex plays, he could move up fast on our board. Just things like shaking one forechecker or walking the line or activating into the play preemptively more...Yeah, those things could do it.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A poor performance. Akey fumbled pucks early, made a couple of awful passes, and wandered a lot. His activation was mostly just following the play – not proactive. Ended up behind the play a few times as a result. Most defensive zone touches were poor. He either threw the puck straight up the boards to teammate or lost control. He's not building plays, using the middle, or even trying to create an advantage. Doesn't scan. He puts himself in favourable positions sometimes, so perhaps the decisions improve. Defensively, he's solid. Knees bent, head up, doesn't over-extend, reach, or commit with his feet. Angles and times his checks at the point of least resistance. Physical. Wins body positioning on retrievals, angling his toes in the direction the puck's headed, which allows him to cutback or outrace the defender (he doesn't go straight back at the boards, always on an angle). He's a talented, refined skater but sometimes it seems like he lacks urgency. I don't know. He's a toolsy player but I didn't see anything that suggested he'll put it together in this game. He seemed like a one-tool mid-rounder, not unlike Oscar Plandowski back in 2021.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

A pretty basic game from Akey. He threw pucks along the boards on retrievals, didn't activate much, and missed opportunities to create better looks. The skating's the best of his game, floating from edge to edge, stops to starts. Knees over toes, chest up, and a huge arsenal of skating skills. Most of his activations are smooth, lacking a bit of explosiveness – but he has those in moments. On the powerplay that led to the winner, Akey showed the offensive skill. He slipped pucks around defenders, deceived, used space and effectively used his skating to manipulate pressure. He doesn't do it at 5-on-5, but I wonder how much of that's a consequence of playing huge minutes at this stage. He has some defensive moments, but gets burned because he plays too loose through the

neutral zone. Generally effective in-zone, closing space along the boards, following stick with shoulder, and scanning regularly. Looked like a toolsy second-round candidate in this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Akey was a lot more active in this game. Jumped up into the rush more than usual, including the recipient of a decent scoring chance on a 2-on-1. Was the first one in pursuit of the puck into the offensive zone sometimes, which did seem a bit out of character based on my previous viewings. But ironically, had more opportunities to land himself on the scoresheet than he did in games where he did end up on it. Played a little less than his usual ice time this game, just under 25 minutes. Defence was all over the place in this one for both teams, but sometimes Akey's overzealousness in the offensive zone burned him at the other end, as he was caught too far back to stop the ensuing odd-man rush. The offensive instincts were really encouraging in this one though, so if he continues to increase the level of risk, he just has to learn how to pick his opportunities a little better.

David St-Louis: November 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Akey tries hard. He defends his zone as well as he can. He's active and engaged, constantly looking for his check and boxing out players. The effort is there and admirable. What destroys his safety net, however, is his poor puck management. He lacks the pace, finer skills, and confidence to make controlled plays. The handling skills don't seem to be a problem; it's mostly a processing and poise thing with him. He can escape opponents, but all of his moves are mostly scripted: he spins because he knows how to spin, not because it's the best play. There are hockey sense concerns.

Lauren Kelly: November 11th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Akey is eating a lot of minutes for Barrie early on in the season. He played over 30 minutes in this game, and was tasked with killing a lot of penalties for the Colts. As a result, he was a bit all over the place trying to adapt to changing lanes, cross-seam passes, or jumping into the empty net because his goalie was drawn out of position. Tried to use his stick to disrupt passes. He was getting beaten trying to chase puck carriers along the boards in his own end. He'll add strength in the coming years. At one point he was playing the bumper on the powerplay, which was interesting to see. More offensively minded in this game, as he was sneaking in off the point and looking for passes, but didn't get the puck in the areas he wanted. Not sure how much offensive upside there is to his game, but again, it's still early.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Akey's puck management, especially on the powerplay, cost his team a lot. He was responsible for multiple turnovers on the powerplay, because he rushed his passes. It's easy to rush him into bad decisions and his technical skills do fail him at times. It's his defence that is the most projectable element in his game. But if he doesn't improve his offensive touch, he won't become anything more than a depth, defensive option. I'm confident that we will see progress until the end of the season.

Lauren Kelly: November 3rd, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Akey scored the first goal in this game, a floating wrister from the point that made its way through traffic and into the net. I liked what I saw from him in this game. Kept the gap tight defending rushes, pushed players to the outsides, scanned on retrievals, and made quick passes on the powerplay. His breakouts were limited to quick passes to teammates waiting in the neutral zone; rarely did he lead the rush up the ice himself. Probably a mid-round pick at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A bit of a quiet game from Akey. When he activates, he's impressive. He moves through pass receptions, sprints up the middle, and commits. Decisive pinch that he followed up on led to a chance. Deceives a bit. Takes a lot of point shots that aren't necessary, but generally uses space before shooting. On breakouts, he's messy despite occasional great ideas. Doesn't scan and throws pucks into space blindly. Often overpowered. The occasional delay before working laterally and using his handling skill gives optimism that his breakouts will improve. Defensively, he's mostly a mover. He closes space and mirrors footwork, but doesn't get many stops.

He looked like a pick, for sure.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Akey didn't have as many offensive flashes in this game, but he played with a quiet confidence. Whether he was under pressure or not, he made calculated decisions with the puck and didn't seem fazed if a pass he made was picked off. He did jump up into the play a couple of times, but he didn't receive the puck often enough to create that way. Defensively, he was solid, closing off gaps in time and not wandering very far in his own end. Challenged players along the boards and in battles. Strength will need improvement, as he's still losing some key battles. Not as many turnovers in this one and he wasn't exploited defending the rush much. Encouraging viewing.

Lauren Kelly: October 6th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

The first things that stand out with Akey are his offensive instincts. He is constantly joining the rush up the ice, though he won't get too deep in the offensive zone if there are numbers in support. Likes to creep up into the slot, but his teammates didn't get him the puck there often in this one. Great ability and poise to walk the blueline (including a nice little dangle around a sprawling forward to keep the puck in at the line and pass off to a teammate, where he picked up a secondary assist). Scored with a heavy slapshot from the point. I didn't see too many skilled pass attempts that succeeded, but the short passes he did send to his teammates connected in the offensive zone (mostly on the powerplay). Akey is a little turnover prone at times on the breakout, where if he's heavily pressured he'll cut back and he can lose possession easily in motion. However, he scanned a little more on retrievals than I saw last season. Skating is an overall positive; he's a more fluid and mobile skater than a powerful one. His defensive strides need work - he'd get beat in one-on-one situations where he'd be forced to pivot forwards in an attempt to keep up with players going outside before cutting across the slot. Defended several odd-man rushes in this game, especially as Barrie's structure fell apart in the third period and fared well, though he could be beat by faster skaters. There's a lot to like here.

Mitchell Brown: March 6th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Akey's consistently impressive. He activates regularly, uses the inside on breakouts, makes tons of small-area skill plays, and moves the puck at the right times. Is he turnover-prone? Sure. But it's early and he's clearly net-positive. Passive rush defence, but closes space around the blue line and gets stops deeper in the zone. Over-extends and loses battles, but nothing that will have long-term implications if he keeps improving. A well-rounded puck-mover with substantial upside.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Akey's exciting to watch already. His game requires calibration, but he has the tools. He uses the inside, deceives, beats plays with his hands, stops rushes, scans off-puck, and shows plenty of offensive creativity. He's dangerous when leading the rush or joining it. Uses his teammates at the right times and finishes his off-puck routes. He's more fluid than explosive, but I like his mobility from his ankle flexion and crossover integration. Perhaps a first-rounder in 2023.

Mitchell Brown: October 28th, 2021 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

This is the beginning of Akey's OHL career, and I was already mostly impressed. The bad: Doesn't pre-scan on retrievals ever, panics on the breakout, and lacks defensive skating fundamentals. The good: everything else. His skating, shooting, and handling all looked projectable to NHL average, if not better. Extremely fluid already, stacking skating and handling manoeuvres. Even a bit deceptive at times. Stepped into space before shooting, and used his teammates somewhat effectively. Offensive game already seem advanced at this stage, and he's trying more advanced transition plays, like baiting the flush out, attacking the inside, and beating the next forechecker. And while he was outmatched physically, he grabbed a pair of interceptions by reading the play while staying near his check.



33 Nick Lardis

AGE 17.189 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Smaller Roope Hintz



Lethal Shooter



Fleet of Foot



Motor

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	165 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6.5 Skating	7 Shooting	5 Passing
5.5 Puckhandling	6 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Peterborough Petes	OHL	36	12	7	19	0.53
Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	33	25	21	46	1.39
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	4	0	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Screenshot this. Save it to your old-takes-exposed folder and slam it back into our faces next season if it doesn't come to pass. Because we're confident that Nick Lardis is going to score 50 goals in the OHL next season.

His production with the Hamilton Bulldogs in the second half of the season was no fluke; it reflected his true scoring talent, the high-end shooter that he can be. And with an extra offseason of training under his belt, we don't see how he could not reach those heights.

"He skates at opponents to set them up as screens for shots," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a February report. "He fakes wide, then goes backhand to the middle straight into his shooting pocket. He used a textbook drag wrister for a chance. And his one-timer is, at least, a 6.5-grade shot. He scored off the backfoot with a cannon after getting open on the weak side and he immediately shoots off the pass, highlighted by a catch-and-release wrister with his hands in position and stick loaded upon reception."

No matter where the puck arrives, Lardis finds ways to slam it into the net. He can do so while sliding backward, rushing ahead, with his feet pointed away from the target, and with instant catch-and-release motions. And there aren't any shots missing from his arsenal. He can

Nick Lardis

F | Hamilton Bulldogs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 120.9



beat goalies with wrist shots, one-timers, and even on the backhands when the occasion calls for it.

On their own, Lardis multiple shooting skills already make him threatening, especially on the power play, but it's really when you factor in his tactical understanding of the game that his upside as an NHL scorer becomes clear. The winger understands how to set up his shots, where to move, how to move, and at what speed to get his stick on a pass and fire it in. He anticipates the flow of the play, keeps the puck in control of his team with short passes, and then pops open.

His playmaking skills have yet to bloom, however, and while the prospect's skating ability received high grades from our staff, we do have some concerns about his wall play.

"Constant defensive support, better effort in battles, and he got in on the forecheck," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a March report. "His motor was excellent (especially compared to my last viewing), but he still shied away from full contact."

At this stage, Lardis is better as an off-puck player, offensively and defensively. That's an issue for his projection, but as we have observed many pacey and skilled shooters like Lardis develop secondary playmaking skills over the years, we remain confident in his upside.

Lardis may never become a high-end defensive player or setup artist, but he could be one of the few players available on the second day of the draft that offers clear top-six upside.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Canada's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Mostly, a pretty quiet game from Lardis. He faded into the background during sustained offensive zone pressures, his puck touches were few, and I don't think that he distinguished himself defensively either. To his credit, Lardis made the most of every touch. There was one particularly exciting dangle, a pass reception that he blended into a handling move between the legs to gain the inside for a clean look. That was one of two jaw-dropping displays of skill in this game. Then again, Lardis also totally whiffed on a tap-in at the net-front, and only moments later the Swiss scored one of their three goals. In conclusion, this game was a land of contrasts.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Canada vs Switzerland - U18s

Lardis plays with pace, passes the puck smartly and quickly, pulls off some dangles, and finds space well away from the puck, but he also has some hidden skills. He flashes some crazy plays from time to time and those make you think that he has so much more to offer, like the time in this game where he caught the puck behind him, hooked it between his legs, and moved around a surprised defender. I'm a believer. He could be a first-rounder.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

I didn't see as much from Lardis in this game. He forechecked and caught a couple of passes from Cristall, but he doesn't have a ton of chemistry with the winger. Lardis likes to play at pace; Cristall slows the play down. These two did connect for a goal at the end of the game. Lardis one-timed one of Cristall's deceptive passes.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Lardis had some nice playmaking flashes in the first period, pucks he sent off the wall right to the middle and teammates he found instantly after receiving possession. His awareness is a plus in his game and his skating, too. He's incredibly elusive with it. Easy for him to fake one way and explode the other along the walls. He can jump into space with his mobility and catch up to the rush.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Only flashes for Lardis in this one. He was engaged in the game despite the score and tried to help teammates on the boards. He's far better in open ice, however. His skating stride is one of the best in the draft. He caught a puck, launched far ahead of him, without breaking stride, brought it back into his control, and then made a kind of in-stride drag-shot against a defender. The shooting skills look high-end. He used his teammates, played with a lot of pace, and even contributed on the forecheck. No real playmaking flash, however.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Lardis looked entirely like a powerplay specialist in this game. He's at his best at the far-post, across the ice, where he can receive pucks and slam them in. He has the talent to shoot further than that -- he showed it during the season -- but the playmaking wasn't there as much in this one. What I did like was his defensive engagement. He used his skating to catch up to plays and break them a couple of times. He's still as good as ever at finding pockets of space and lanes in the offensive zone to set up as a shooter.

J.D. Burke: April 2nd, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis may well have been the best player on the ice for either team in this contest, playing a complete game and finishing with two assists and ten (10!) shots on goal. With the quality and volume of looks that he generated for himself, it's a wonder that he didn't finish with at least a goal or two on top of that. Lardis just knows where to be, and when to be there, away from the puck. Most of his scoring chances occurred by sneaking away from coverage and then arriving into the slot for catch-and-release and one-time shots, all of which the opposing goalie was equal to. On the power play, much of the Bulldogs offence seemed to run through him, too. As a distributor, Lardis displayed a willingness to take the puck inside and draw defenders to his space to create elsewhere, along with an advanced delay game. The way that he consistently got pucks through bodies and sticks, even using the odd bank pass, suggests a high level of passing skill, too. Lardis looked like an early second-round pick in this one.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

The usual from Lardis. He had his chances and showed some nuance getting them. On the cross-ice break that Hamilton looks for, he skated through the defender's hands before touching the puck, creating a high-danger opportunity. Used hesitation moves to bait defenders before accelerating into space. Completed a give-and-go and even hit a look-off slip pass to an open teammate. Reloads high and builds speed into the slot for chances. Fired off either foot in a number of ways; the shot's a clear 6.5-plus projection. He has mechanical-soundness, power, control, and a wide arsenal of shots. Hard-worker and always in pursuit; a bit more proactiveness with his positioning would help. There are some playmaking concerns but I see them more as the product of his environment. After all, he has flashes. Not a manipulator, but he doesn't need to be to play. He looked like a top-32 prospect in this game.

Lauren Kelly: March 15th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

No points for Lardis (or Hamilton, as they were shutout) in this game. I liked Lardis' play off-puck in this one more than I liked his decisions when he had the puck. Constant defensive support, better effort in battles, getting in on the forecheck. His motor was excellent (especially compared to my last viewing), but still shied away from full contact. He's still a shooter on the power play, but there were a couple of sequences where he delayed for too long either waiting for traffic to form or just to change the angle of his shot, where he may have been better served passing the puck off. Playmaking was a non-factor in this one, and if he got the puck in transition he usually just dumped it in instead of trying to create with it or even just maintain possession. One sequence where he was puck watching coming back in support, didn't scan, and left a player wide open at the far side for a scoring chance. He's a pick, but I'm still unsure of the long-term projection.

Lauren Kelly: March 12th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Three points for Lardis in this game, including two goals scored off the rush - quick weight transfer, faster release coming down the wall. But it felt like, at least for large stretches of this game, that Lardis wasn't leveraging his motor in ways that he typically does, at least off-puck - he wasn't hounding puck carriers as often and his defensive timing was hit and miss when it came to trying to cut off plays. Aside from his goals, Hamilton didn't have a ton of sustained offensive zone pressure, which limited Lardis' ability to create plays in the offensive zone. The shooting skill is unquestionable, but I still have my reservations. He'll definitely make our next board, but I'm not sure how high yet.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A lot of nice flashes from Lardis in this game. He plays almost too fast for his own good, at times, as he closes plays for himself while running around the ice, but he also connected with give-and-goes and started tic-tac-toe plays, too, especially on the powerplay (where he has more space). The shot is still incredibly threatening. Not only can he catch and release the puck, but his stick barely moves in the motion. It's super fast and gives the goalie no chance. He truly has one of the best shot in the draft class and the off-puck game is still quite a strength. He identifies lanes, attacks them at the right time, positions well... If he can learn to modulate his pace and manipulate defenders a bit more, he could become a top-six NHL forward out of nowhere.

David St-Louis: March 9th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis's game has a lot of potential. He links plays with teammates, delays to find them in transition, has some rush patterns (weight shift manipulation off the rush). The hockey sense seems like a 6-6.5 grade. His defensive effort is constant and his transition passing is getting better. He's really effective in the high slot, as F3, finding space, but he has to develop more of an F1 game on the forecheck. From what I've seen of him, his shot also grades high. He has top-six potential, but a small chance of reaching it considering the skating and especially the physical limitations. More of a boom-bust. A second round candidate.

Lauren Kelly: March 5th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Erie Otters - OHL

I'm seeing most of the same habits from Lardis as I had in previous viewings. Great forechecker, a more concerted effort on backchecks, and an excellent motor, but sometimes, the situational awareness lags behind a bit and he's still playing too fast. He loses pucks on the rush as soon as he runs into pressure, either because he's picked up speed too quickly or he's not able to maintain possession at his top speed, and he put himself offside a couple of times trying to carry pucks over the blueline. But he's really great at pushing defenders back with his speed when one of his linemates has possession and creating space for them in that way. He's always a shooting threat on the powerplay, although his shots are usually heavy wrists. His goal came off a nice wrister where he picked up the puck after a turnover, delayed slightly as he looked like he was going to fake the pass, and took the shot. Not really any playmaking flashes in this one. He's probably a mid-second.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

The skill Lardis shows at times is exciting. He hit a booming one-timer while moving backwards, the type of shot that players rarely try in the OHL, let alone connect with. He used a give-and-go for an entry. Skated his routes to create space behind him.

The usual motor in this game. But the reads just aren't there sometimes. He plays too fast. When he goes for loose pucks, he didn't look first. So, when he passed back into the slot, he gave his teammates a poor pass when he could've easily set up a chance had he known where they were. He didn't deceive to open lanes, even when he had space. The speed and shot make him a top-45 player in this class, for sure. He can shoot at an NHL level and while he won't have as much rush success in the NHL, he will still find a separation in spurts. But he'll have to lean heavier on the passing and diversify his rush patterns to get there.

David St-Louis: February 28th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

My main concern with Lardis is that he's massively more effective as F3 than in other forward roles. He's a space hunter, creator, a scorer who knows how to control his speed, who anticipates the flow of the play, but who can't really retrieve pucks or orchestrate the play at a high level. I'm sure his playmaking will become a strength over the next two years, but the total lack of forechecking, retrieving, puck stealing (through physical skills) abilities is concerning. He's like the goal-scorer version of Gabe Perreault. I really like him and I appreciate the sense and the skill, but he will need the right teammates to succeed.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis scored a breakaway goal by taking the lead pass through the defender, then flinging the puck into the top corner after a quick fake. The play started in the defensive end, where he backtracked, picked up a dump-in, and moved the puck quickly, then sprinted up the ice and blew past his check. He has an NHL and some supporting skills, including off-puck reads and flashes of a transition (breakout) passing game off the boards. Motor's strong, too. He's not a playmaker but he also doesn't have many opportunities. Feels like a player who could really take off next season, but the lack of playmaking also might make replicating his production in Hamilton tricky. No idea. Hedge by putting him somewhere in the mid-to-late second. He has some top-six skills but getting there's going to take a lot of work.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis grabbed a pair of chances by getting behind the defence and beating the defender to the net. He skates through his opponents' route and lets the puck through him first. He has the habits to play a fast game in the NHL. There's some forechecking and defensive upside, too. The off-puck instincts complement the shooting game. The rest of his game needs serious development, at least based on this game. He reads gaps, but doesn't create them. He occasionally has an intelligent idea as a puck carrier – like faking high, then deking off the boards – but he's not a playmaker. Missed opportunities to build the offence with his teammates. Never delayed or even looked for the trailer. Lots of solo and sharp-angle shooting. A bit more playmaking off the rush will really bolster his NHL odds. Still, he has a lot of physical runway and there's legit quickness to his game. He should make our board.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

After forcing a pass to the middle, Lardis scanned, delayed, then slipped a backhand pass through the defender into space with the perfect weighting, creating a chance. Don't see that from many prospects. That, combined with his lateral passing game on breakouts, gives me a bit of hope for developing the playmaking. Right now, he's predominantly a shooter. He skates at opponents to set them up as screens for shots. He fakes wide, then goes backhand to the middle straight into his shooting pocket. He used a textbook drag wrister for a chance. And his one-timer is, at least, a 6.5-grade shot. Scored off the backfoot with a cannon after getting open on the weak side. Immediately shoots off the pass, highlighted by a catch-and-release wrister with his hands in position and stick loaded upon reception. His off-puck movements are mostly strong, too. He reloads high, escapes pressure on the weak side, and doesn't engage in needless battles. He has a lot of work to do, but he has tools and flashes the plays that he'll need to play in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

If Lardis had a bit more transition and puck-carrying ability, he'd challenge for a first-round spot. He takes pucks flatfooted, then makes a flatfooted pass. He skates straight at opponents. He plays too fast. He can't manipulate opponents or effectively

attack the middle. But he reads feet and understands how to escape pressure on the cycle (even if he's not a play planner). The wrister's a clear NHL skill. He shows vision, highlighted by his slap pass across the crease for an assist. There's defensive ability from his motor and anticipation on the backcheck and forecheck. The skating isn't advanced mechanically – he'd benefit from a more pronounced acceleration phase and a deeper stance in his stride – but he has legit quickness and speed. Lots to work with.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis has speed. He uses to separate from defenders and attack the net, with and without the puck. He took on the goalie one-on-one after cutting around a defender, dangled the netminder, and scored. And almost got another goal by presenting his stick to a teammate driving down the wing. His skating is flawed a bit, wide and hunched over, but he can generate power and the pace really shines when he gets in crossovers. He can't manufacture complex playmaking sequences, but when he gets a bit more time to plan his passes, you see that he understands and reads the game well. The hockey sense is a 6 grade for me at this point. I really like the defensive engagement. He can beat goalies cleanly, too. I haven't seen any physical skills, however, and with his frame, I doubt he's all that effective along the boards.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis recorded 1.44 expected goals at 5-on-5, one of the highest single-game marks I've tracked this season. The diversity of the chances were key. He sprinted the middle, skating into opponents' routes, before tipping the puck on net. Reloaded high and skated into space for one-timers. Shot under pressure. Faded high into space and kept his stick free. Scored with an NHL step-in wrister on the powerplay. The highlight was an outside drive, turning the corner on Gavin White, one of the OHL's best skaters, keeping the puck under pressure, skating through his hands, and then beating the goaltender across the crease. The combination of explosiveness and control was exciting. He also showed playmaking. Not creating high-danger offence, but he sells plays before passing, moves pucks to teammates with space on the flanks, and generally moves the puck at the right times. Hard-worker, too. The skating's not perfect mechanically, but he's explosive and he has lots of physical runway. He looked like a top-20 pick in this game.

Lauren Kelly: February 4th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Two powerplay points for Lardis in this game, the first scored in typical Lardis PP goal fashion (receiving a cross-ice pass and sending a wrister from the faceoff dot). The second, he looked like he wanted to repeat his goal, but the pass bounced off his shin pads and down towards the crease to another teammate. There were a couple of sequences, though, where Lardis delayed for too long winding up for a shot and ended up having it stolen from behind. The only instances where his delays resulted in scoring chances were when he had time and space to work with on the powerplay. But he has to rein in his speed a little bit. He's overskating pucks, missing passes, turning pucks over on breakouts as soon as he runs into pressure or is forced to dump it in if he maintains possession because he can't beat the defender 1-on-1. Still no DZ scanning, and for a player whose skating is one of his strongest assets, he doesn't use it to his advantage defensively. I'm not really sure what it means for his NHL projection, if there even is one.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

Another great game by Lardis. He was defensively engaged, made plays to space for teammates, tried give-and-goes, moved the puck intelligently, and his speed really shone. His shot, too. He dragged a puck around a stick to get it past a defender. His off-puck game is one of the best in the draft. Constantly well-positioned in this game. And his pressure game was also a positive. There's a lot to like in Lardis's game.

Lauren Kelly: January 19th, 2023 - North Bay Battalion vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis picked up three points in this game, but his most impressive sequence was on the overtime winner, forcing a turnover behind the net and feeding a teammate in the slot. When he uses his speed and times his reads properly, he's a constant threat to create turnovers and regain possession for his team. He's excellent along the boards and in 1-on-1 battles like that. But when

he's the one coming up the ice with possession, as soon as he runs into pressure, he turns the puck over, whether at even-strength or on the powerplay. But defensively, he was kind of a mess in this one. The effort level was better on backchecks, but he's still not shoulder-checking at all and his overzealousness to pursue pucks drew him away from opposing players and left them wide open. He avoids contact, allowing activating defenders to spin around him as they come down the wall and cut towards the net.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

A standout performance in the work rate department. He was a menace on the forecheck. He won races, and when he couldn't he fought for body positioning and then skated through the opponent's stick. Sealed off the boards on a clearance, then popped into space for a goal. Proactive backchecking, taking away options and stick-lifting opponents as the puck came near. The offence was all off-puck. He reads space, reloading high and dipping into the slot at the right moments. Stick always on the ice, head always up. With the puck, he made a couple of smart, but inaccurate cross-ice passes, and forced dekes and outside lane dashes that weren't there. Tools looked like NHL projections across the board in this game – that's a pick.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Another great performance from Lardis. Few offensive chances, but he made them count. The playmaking is surfacing. A few times, he spotted a teammate in a better position than him and rapidly fed him the puck. He's a patient handler and has some deception. I'm sure his passing game will significantly improve as he matures. The off-puck talent was on full display: adjusts his footwork to be in the best one-timer position, anticipates lanes and controls speed to get in them, hunts pockets of space...And he helped defensively all game. Fully committed. A lot to like in his game.

Lauren Kelly: January 13th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Lardis feels like a prospect I should like a lot more than I do at this stage. But this viewing gave me more confidence in his potential. He's got a high work rate, a constant motor, supports defensively... he ticks a lot of the off-puck boxes that I normally look for. Backchecking efforts were a lot better in this game, using his speed to close off players rushing up the ice with the puck. Scored off a nice one-timer on a 2-on-1, dropping down to one-knee to unload on his off-side. It's incredible how different he looks in Hamilton compared to when he was in Peterborough. I'd like to see him build on playmaking flashes and whether or not he's got any sort of physical game - board battles, playing through checks, etc.

David St-Louis: January 8th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

That was a very interesting performance. Lardis offers a lot of skills. Multiple times in this game, he chained a reception into a dangle or a fake or a pass. His skating isn't mechanically perfect, but he plays with a lot of pace, a lot of straight-line pace (he could add more lateral rush patterns). He found space all over the ice to receive pucks, especially in the offensive zone, and showed a variety of releases. His defensive contribution was mostly limited to pressuring and backchecking (not really positioning), but the effort will translate into something more with experience. Lardis seems like a typical, skilled off-puck OHL shooter. These guys always add a ton of new skills out of nowhere in year 2 and 3 by leveraging their anticipation and talent for attacking space. I like him. But it's one game.

Lauren Kelly: January 7th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Lardis is puzzling. He's got an incredible motor heading up the ice into the offensive zone, but it's nowhere to be seen on backchecks. He shows flashes of advanced distributing skills and executes quick, no-look passes, but also doesn't anticipate well on receptions, and is usually having to chase after a puck after he can't receive it. Some of his best work came on the powerplay in this game, when his team had extended time circling in the offensive zone. It was how he scored his goal, finishing off a cross-ice pass from the faceoff dot. Rushes up the ice led nowhere because he lost possession coming over the offensive blueline. He's got potential, and his tools look NHL-average at worst. But he needs to start leveraging them better.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

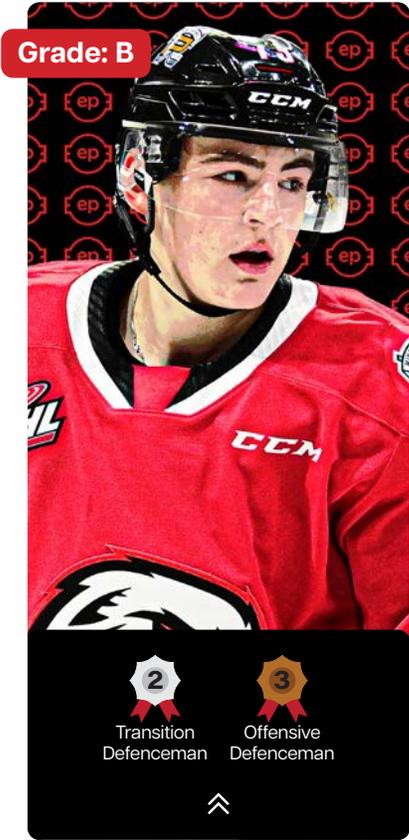
Lardis does everything too fast. He fights the puck and misses opportunities to create with playmaking. Shooting looks like a strength, with projectable form and a knack for arriving in space at the right times. But if this game's a sign, there's not much else here for NHL purposes. The pace doesn't appear defensively, he doesn't show much creativity or playmaking, and he lacks the tools to play his game in the NHL.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

For all the hype, I wasn't blown away by Lardis in this game. He doesn't scan in his own end. He got possession to start the breakout and instead of passing off to either of his open teammates ahead of him, he decided to try and flip the puck up high in hopes that it'd land near one of them instead. He did score one of Peterborough's seven (!) goals in this game, off the rush along the boards, a shot beat the goalie far-side. The goal aside though, he really wasn't noticeable on his shifts. I didn't see any offensive zone creativity and he just looked slow. There was no urgency to his pace on shifts. I'm not sure what to make of him just yet.

Mitchell Brown: January 29th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Lardis is a sprinter. He tries to outrace every opponent in transition, usually in a straight line. It didn't work much in this game, resulting in just a handful of no-chance wristers from the outside. Shooting form is a strength, elevating his elbow and pushing his hands far in front of his body, even mixing in an in-stride shot sometimes. In-zone, he shows a bit more cunning and creativity. He worked a puck off the boards then passed cross-slot for an assist. Motor is a strength. Skating could be a strength if starts engaging his hips and achieving more depth. Looks like an interesting prospect, but falls into many common junior traps.



34 Luca Cagnoni

AGE 17.734 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 21, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Vince Dunn, Samuel Girard



Evasive



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6.5	6	6.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	6.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Portland Winterhawks	WHL	67	17	47	64	0.96

SCOUTING REPORT

Look at the rest of the top blue line offerings out of the WHL, and there's one constant: They were all top picks into the league. Luca Cagnoni wasn't even picked. Yet, he quickly rose from free agent signing to No. 1 defenceman on a top team with two NHL draft picks. Now, he's poised to bring his dynamic game to the show.

Coupling dynamic edge work with proactive activation, Cagnoni dissects the forecheck. He shifts one way, explodes in the opposite, hits the open teammate, then flies up the rink to become a lead pass option. Every one of his puck touches builds off the previous, creating further time and space up the rink.

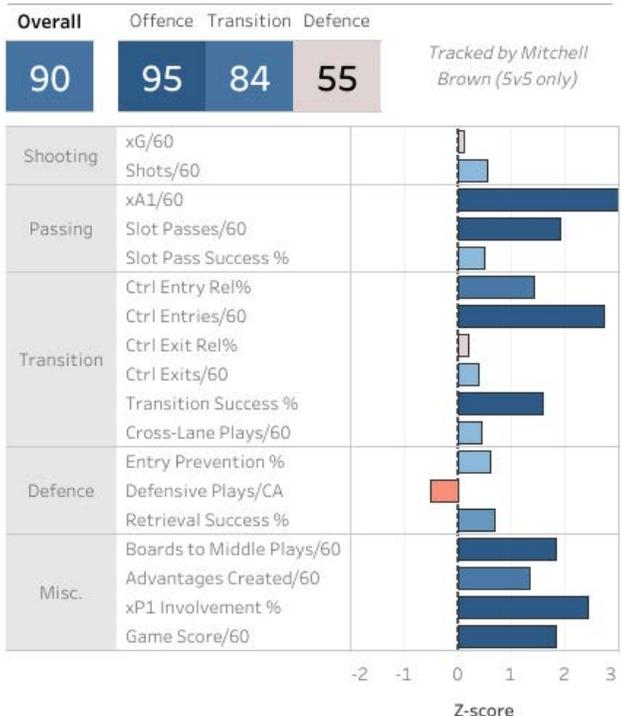
In the offensive zone, Cagnoni controls the game. He's a volume shooter but rarely takes a poor one. He starts – and finishes – passing plays and fakes shots to set up teammates around the slot. Lateral movement pulls defenders to the perimeter, creating space to attack the inside and vice-versa.

Defence was a concern throughout the season, but Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis saw enough to believe it won't cost him at the next level:

"Cagnoni is now a legitimately strong defensive player at this level. Good gap in the neutral-zone, helped by his skating. Anticipates

Luca Cagnoni

D | Portland Winterhawks | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 143.3



rotations in the defensive zone, closes on opponents quickly, gets his stick in the right lanes, and effective angling techniques. I also see him using his body to knock opponents off the puck.”

Most of the critiques around his game revolve around one thing: Most of the NHL defencemen with his profile must be especially dynamic offensively. For Cagnoni, that means more precision and even more manipulation.

Conversely, the NHL is becoming increasingly tolerant of these players. In a few years, when Cagnoni’s ready to push for a spot, more spots might be available for these players.

As such, he’s a bet based on the offence becoming even more high-end and the game continuing to move in his direction. If Cagnoni hits, he could become an exciting top-four defenceman with substantial point production.

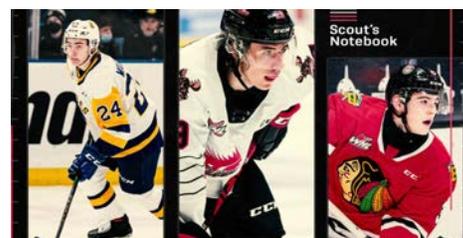
≡ LINKS & MEDIA



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



WHL Stock Watch: Welcome to the Andrew Cristall show



Scout’s Notebook: A quintet of early-season WHL standouts

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Look at the majority of teams that had success in the NHL playoffs this year and all of their bluelines are big, mobile, and physical. Cagnoni is mobile and can pass well, but he’s certainly not big or physical. I think that’s going to scare a lot of teams off.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“Great on his edges and a really gifted passer. Has to come a long way without the puck to have a chance as a 5-foot-9 lefty defender.” – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 19th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kamloops Winterhawks - WHL

Cagnoni is now a legitimately strong defensive player at this level. Good gap in the neutral-zone, helped by his skating. Anticipates rotations in the defensive zone, closes on opponents quickly, gets his stick in the right lanes, and effective angling techniques. I also see him using his body to knock opponents off the puck. The light frame hurts his defensive projection, but I’m a lot more confident in his upside now, as he will probably be competent enough defensively to become the transition and offensive motor he can be for an NHL team. He continued to manipulate defenders to open lanes, planning more of his movements than ever before, and he was constantly in movement, which helped him shift the defensive picture and find plays. Above-average handling skills, high-end skating, and a clear offensive mind. I’m back to where I was in the early season. He could very well be the best defensive prospect out of North America.

Daniel Gee: March 10th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Cagnoni was dominant in this one, a two-goal, one-assist effort, flexing his mobility to create advantages both on the rush and off the point. So good at blending his edges and handling in motion, Cagnoni was turning defenders and destroying F1’s

consistently in the first and second periods. What's almost more impressive is that he problem-solves pressure extremely well. For instance, in the first, after he scooped back into his defensive zone to pick up a puck, Cagnoni sliced hard on his edges, transitioning into his crossovers. With one motion he handled to the backhand to beat the F1, entered the offensive zone, stopped up, scanned, and as a defender pushed over, Cagnoni reversed against the grain, sending a puck into the slot. No teammates activated into the soft ice, but an impressive play nonetheless. On the same sequence, Cagnoni got the puck back at the blue line, drove hard on his backhand around a pressure pusher, attacked down the right wing, separated his upper and lower body and took a dangerous shot, potting the small rebound for a goal. He attacks the middle on his controlled entries, only to pop pucks out to the wing via backhand saucer passes. On one play, Cagnoni did this, filing straight through the slot, taking the pass back and jamming the puck on net. Breaks out in motion, uses the boards, flashes playmaking -- it's all there transitionally. In the offensive zone, the habits are strong. He moves every puck to the middle of the ice, can send passes into shooting threats' wheelhouses, and he can punch turn past pressure. He snuck a shot through on his first shift of the game, a weak attempt that was deflected en route. No off-puck weakside activation in this one, the first viewing I have had where it wasn't a core part of his game.

Cagnoni is pretty nuanced defending the rush. Part of his success is that he leverages his defensive skating to always be in front of the attacker. Even when his triangle is exploited, he runs screens so they can't even work around him. Combine that with an active, probing stick, and some aggression in the neutral zone, and he was fairly stingy. In sustained pressure, Cagnoni relied heavily on lane clogging, scanning secondary options so he could jump up or down and create some resistance in the passing lanes. Because his positioning is so sound, he was available to disrupt a couple of dangerous downhill shots, ready in the lane proactively. He lacks a physical element, which may hurt his translatability, but it's clear he's developed habits over the past couple of seasons that make him a more functional defender when projecting him up. Not sure if he will be afforded PPI or top pairing minutes which also brings up the question of role.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Not much change in my view of Cagnoni's game after this one. I really appreciate his extra defensive engagement late in the season. He intercepts passes, blocks shots, works the walls, and even shows physical skills. He can protect the puck in flight with his skating stance (by lowering himself and using his free arm and leg to shield) but he loses most 50/50 battles on the walls; he can't push away an opponent on a path to retrieving a puck. It will only get worse as he rises in levels. He's still the same activator and manipulative passer. His hockey sense grades as above-average, but not high-end for me. I don't see the same kind of in-the-moment manipulation, lane creation, and higher-end planning that make top, smaller offensive defencemen.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A quiet outing from Cagnoni. He had a bunch of poor transition plays, either making a poor read or missing his target entirely. Still, the ideas were there. His activation reads create space, especially on the breakout. More of a defensive game. He showed some physicality to knock players off boards, skated through the hands for break ups, and went under sticks. Overpowered a few times. I've seen a lot better from him.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

These last few Cagnoni viewings have cooled me a bit on him. He hasn't been bad -- far from it. But he's not manipulating opponents or creating advantages in the same way as he was in the earlier viewings. Maybe I'm just getting sample size'd. Either way, he's still been effective. At 5-on-5, he took five shots and set up six more. The highlight was a weak side activation read that become a dash to the slot and then down low. He used the back of the net to deke the defender, then passed back into the slot for a chance. Faked on pass receptions, worked laterally before shooting. He activates immediately, anticipating every opportunity and rarely getting too far up the rink. Still, he will require a favourable environment to make these reads. How much better does Caden Price look in this environment? Considering he has advanced activation reads and flashes of manipulation, probably a lot better. And there's the defence. It could be a neutral in the NHL. He gets on his check early (sometimes) and closes space at the blue line (usually). He has play-killing instincts, highlighted by his timing on his pokes and body positioning contests, but his crossover-heavy defensive skating leaves him vulnerable. More of a 25-40 candidate at this stage, I think. Top-four upside, but looks like more has to break right for him than the prospects around him... maybe even Dragicevic.

Daniel Gee: February 21st, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Cagnoni had a more mixed effort defensively in this viewing -- especially compared to last game, but he was still effective across his minutes. Cagnoni's secondary threat identification and subsequent lock downs highlight his play when defending the rush. Constant stick-lifts, pressure, and lane-clogging with the use of his four-way mobility. He helped limit a few higher-danger sequences. For instance, in the second, Cagnoni tracked a Cougar through the slot who was cutting in on net -- the pressure Cagnoni pushed forced a slip pass out of the slot instead of a dangerous shot. Was caught on a couple counter attack rushes while Portland was on the powerplay. The first sequence had Cagnoni steady his feet and get his stick in the release of a shot on a 1-on-1. The second sequence he faced a 2-on-1, took the middle away, and gave his goaltender the shot, resulting in a goal against. He has problems with body position at times -- presenting his back to attackers in key moments.

Cagnoni particularly struggled on some late game penalty killing sequences where he just mentally was behind the play. Late to disrupt secondaries, slow to process the subsequent play. It paralyzed him from a mobility standpoint -- a far cry from his efforts yesterday afternoon. I still like his in-zone defending habits, though. Cagnoni is a robotic scanner, mental mapping movement. He reads plays from the boards to the middle quite well. In the first on a PK, Cagnoni deflected a nifty centering pass from Riley Heidt. Very quick on rebounding pucks in this one.

Impressed with his transition work. Used stop-ups, delays, and blended small and large-ice handling to beat pressure. Absolutely walked Heidt on one forechecking pressure push. In the first he head-manned an attack, entered off the left-wing, had the entire top of the net but only ticked an in-stride shot off Brennan's arm. He joined every rush that developed, upping his pace to crash his weak side routes -- he's often up in the play before some of the Portland forwards. In the first a puck skipped over his stick backdoor.

He eventually scored on a tap-in in the third, on the weak side. Layered a couple outlets, and had a few successful retrievals. On one he gained position in the lane, stick lifted the forechecker at the perfect moment, and escaped. Not much manipulation, more reliant on his skating. Not much success during sustained offensive zone pressure. He tried to work downhill but nothing really materialised. Fake shots into passes to the circles were common, as were board-to-middle pucks. Was bullied a tonne in this one. Was hammered on the wall off a pinch, head down, but popped back up immediately. I like the player a lot based on these last two viewings but he's another tricky WHL defender eval in terms of projectability. Is there enough manipulation in his game to survive the NHL forecheck? How will his game look when everyone is mobile at the next level? Valid questions in my opinion.

Daniel Gee: February 20th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Cagnoni's growth from his D-1 season to now has been immense. More confident, better on-puck decision making -- the game seems slower for him. Cagnoni's anticipation in this game stood out from the onset. In the first on a penalty kill, he read a pass above his defensive zone blueline, jumping into the lane, leading to a clear. Later in the period, Cagnoni attached onto a secondary threat, anticipated a cross-crease pass to a backdoor option, and got his stick in the lane to create another turn over. These sequences were common in the first. Beyond that his transitional defending was strong from a mobility point of view. Masterful control of his four-way mobility allowed Cagnoni to essentially space and gap any Cougars' attack. In overtime, on a 2-on-1 against, he was able to pressure the carrier and tip the puck away before the pass even occurred. He was a bit reactive at times, but he's able to make up space at such a rapid pace that he still is able to reject rebounds and add supporting pressure along the perimeter.

Saw more individual skill in Cagnoni's transition game -- far more than last season. Nearing the end of the game he reversed a puck on an end-board retrieval, weaved end-to-end on a crossover heavy carry, toe-dragged a defender one-on-one and wired an in-stride wrister off the bar. To blend those tools together, in the context of a 0-0 game, late in the third made this play immense. Cagnoni's general transition habits are excellent. Always works breakouts in-motion, his play doesn't degrade in immense forechecking pressure, he slips pucks, uses the boards to create quick ups, and he constantly finds options with speed up the middle of the ice. On top of this, Cagnoni joined multiple rushes, activating on the weak side to drive backdoor, constantly creating mounting odd-man pressure in transition.

The details pile up; in one sequence he read a tip-in on the red-line, stick lifting the intended tip target, deking to the backhand to instantly beat backup pressure for an entry. He targets the backs of defenders when they pivot to the inside, and pushes protection habits in the offensive zone. When set up with sustained offensive zone pressure, Cagnoni is constantly moving pucks off the perimeter and into the middle of the ice. This helped stack the Cougars defenders in the middle, opening the wings up for downhill attacks. He layered deception on the line and flexed his mobility to work slap-pass/wrist-pass plays and leveraged his processing to make proactive pinch plays on the side boards to keep pucks alive. I liked his downhill work as well; constantly would work down lanes to leverage better shooting opportunities. Shot is not a threat from the point -- lacks power and can't reign it in to hit the net. He actually whiffed on a couple of shots on the point, funny enough. Has all the ability and habits to be an impact defender at the NHL level -- the sense and mobility will take him places.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Is there a better defender at using the weak side than Cagnoni in this draft? He doesn't just see space on the weak side; he creates it by sprinting ahead of his forwards and building his breakout decisions around maximizing numbers up the ice. He flies, Sotheran connects. This was a solid offensive performance from him, doing all the usual stuff. He's creative, uses space before shooting, finds teammates in the slot, and stays engaged when activated. The key will be learning how to manipulate opponents from the point with his feet and quick passes. Defensively, this was a standout performance. He was physical and engaged. Instead of reaching, he kept a balanced stance and his stick loaded. As opponents closed in, he kept backwards momentum and disrupted their handle. Tight off-puck gap. Absorbed hits on retrievals and escaped with possession. Without a truly high-end offensive game, the defence will have to be consistently tight and punishing (and he has to eliminate his tendency to overcommit laterally) -- not to mention he'll require a favourable environment to cook. But I believe in his game. He's still a first-round candidate.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Same Cagnoni. Exciting offensive moments, purposeful puck movements, controlled plays over dump-outs, high-end skating moments (especially quickness in this game) counterbalanced by weaker defensive engages and risky plays. I wish Cagnoni would open up slightly more offensively or be an even better manipulator. It would be easier to push him up the board, but right now he's an above-average offenceman with a difficult defensive projection. I really liked his assist: established body positioning on a loose puck and moved it perfectly to a teammate in the slot. High-end thinking in a pressured situation and some physical skills. There is potential in his game.

David St-Louis: February 7th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

It's still a bit hard to imagine Cagnoni in the NHL considering his build and play style, but wow is he impressive at times in the WHL. Contrary to many other defencemen in this draft, Cagnoni seems to think ahead to his next offensive plays. He doesn't just move, but moves with purpose -- to try and orchestrate plays. He's engaged in the defensive zone, but quite ineffective, often giving up the inside on puck retrievals (which can be a legitimate strategy at his size). His activations are based on anticipation and made with perfect timing and the agility really shines, too. I don't know. More of a 30-40 project pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Two goals for Cagnoni but the tools only appeared in spurts. The goals were impressive, especially the second. He held the zone, waited for the defender to give up on his stride, then hit the gas and fired far side. He deked under sticks, used the weak side to activate into the play, and skated his lanes to create space behind him. He wasn't evasive on the breakout, preferring to make straight-forward plays that often led to dump-outs or in-zone turnovers. Passive off-puck gap led to two entries against -- and he didn't even try to make up the ground. There was one impressive rush defence sequence that suggests he could become a strong play-killer. On a half-ice 2-on-1, he took away the middle, read the opponent's incoming stop, poked away possession, then went back around them on other side, leading to an exit. If that's the quality of defence that's to come, he'd be an easy top-20 pick given his tools and skill level.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Cagnoni looked like the best defensive prospect in NA in this game. He was all over the ice, offensively and defensively. He distributed the puck well, drove through the middle to shoot on net, participated in most offensive plays, and even pinned opponents on the wall of the defensive zone. He tried hard defensively all game long. Effective rush defence. Cagnoni always seems to look not just for a play, but the best play. That's an appreciable quality.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A solid game from Cagnoni, exchanging the offensive impact for a more transition and defence than normal. In one sequence, he cut off the boards under pressure, passed up the middle, then joined the play. He understands how to create advantages in transition while keeping the turnovers few – delaying, deceiving, and attacking the incoming pressure. Grabbed a couple of NHL rush stops by keeping backwards momentum and weight balanced, but also showed a tendency to reach and overcommit with crossovers. He anticipated plays and read the cycle, earning him a few stops down low.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

What is Luca Cagnoni going to do if he can't translate his full offensive game to the NHL? I feel like that's a question I'm maybe not asking enough. He had three points in this game, but they were mostly simple plays, shots that rebound, stretch passes that hit, nothing like we have seen from him in some previous games. His defensive game, it's relatively solid at this level, but he's not the most urgent or aggressive defender and while he's engaged here, I feel like quick and hard professional attackers will make short work of him in many situations, off the rush and off the wall. He's at his best with space, when he can cut in and cut away, and play with opponents. I don't know. I'll have to think more about his projection.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Cagnoni is at his best when he can attack inside the offensive zone. He has multiple tricks to pierce the defensive box and get to a threatening slot position: he can fake high defenders, use give-and-goes, and attack the seams between the low defender and the high defensive winger. From that slot position, he can shoot, but he mostly decides to leverage his drive and shot potential into more setups. Cagnoni is elusive (he can really dance from edge to edge and shift direction on a dime), deceptive, and bold. It's a nice mix. I wish he would be an even better skater, especially on outside edge moves; it would make his projection easier (Quinn Hughes model). He's also aggressive defensively in his rush defence and on the walls. I find him a bit formulaic overall. He has some high-end patterns, but I'm not sure how translatable his game is.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Cagnoni created three scoring chances, turning a steal on the forecheck into a pass to the slot, faking a shot before going cross-ice, and joining the rush before setting up a teammate cross-ice. Excels at putting himself in favourable positions: sprints up the weak side often way ahead of his teammates, uses the middle effectively, stays inside space, and moves through his passes and pass receptions. He looks like a genius sometimes in transition, cutting away from pressure and seemingly preparing space for his next move, creating the advantage for his teammate. Next touch, he just throws the puck away without drawing pressure first. It seems he's not so much intentionally manipulating opponents to create advantages, rather, using superior handling and skating to escape and then find the open teammate. Not planning, but a high-end reactionary prospect in spurts, for sure. Looked like a first-rounder, albeit a late one.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

To me, Cagnoni feels more like a player who dominates through a skill advantage than a higher-end understanding of the offensive game. He's a read and react guy more than a planner and he has the handling and skating to still make plays. He misses better options, overshoots a bit, and sends pucks to no one in transition, expecting teammates to be there. He's a "one-variable-at-a-time" player. You get the picture. The skill is interesting and the defensive habits, to an extent, too. I'm not a huge believer so far in the profile, but he's clearly one of the most talented defencemen in the draft. If he was playing with the USNTDP, against weaker competitions, disorganised defences, there would be serious buzz around his name and game.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Impressive performance from Cagnoni. He's inflating his stock, but I'm still not sure what to make of him. He doesn't really manipulate in puck-moving, just very elusive; he can't shake the forecheck, multiple opponents, and find passing lanes. He's pretty smart about his choices of plays, but also throws pucks away and gets surprised by opponents. He has good habits: protects the puck first on retrieval, pins opponents to let teammates win the puck, stick in lane, scans...But the awareness could be better and the anticipation, too. He's a first-rounder, I think, maybe even a high one, but he could be just an agile player dominating certain shifts with that agility.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

I didn't see Cagnoni's defensive game as much in this one. He seemed to close his gap well off the rush, stick with his check in the defensive zone, and switch on threats relatively well. At his size, he isn't the best wall engager, but that's expected. He can feint defencemen, off the rush with a series of crossovers and lane changes, and with simple shot fakes. I don't think there is a lot of planning to his move, however; he's more of an improvisator. The feints do come easy to him, but I'm not sure about the whole play anticipation. He activated on pass receptions, joined the rush, passed to the middle...A lot of interesting elements, but at his size, I'd like to be convinced of his hockey sense.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A chaotic game that gave way to the more proactive style I'm used to seeing from Cagnoni. It started with turnovers off retrievals, passes to no one, and uncharacteristic dump-outs. Wasn't reading the feet of incoming pressure. Later, he started cutting back, across, and inside to make passes on the heels of forecheckers. Tons of slick passes to the inside through forecheckers. Strong situation skating skill use, using cutbacks in-tight and heel-to-heel when looking to generate more lateral distance. Always keeps his head up. Controlled skating: slow, then fast. Two crossovers and he pulls away from most opponents at this level. Uses body orientation and edges to deceive. Activation didn't appear much in this game until the later stages, using the weak side to get a chance. Faked a shot while stepping in from the point, before going cross-slot for a chance – that's an NHL pass, a great one at that. Defence is best in-zone, where he tracks the play, but doesn't necessarily proactively eliminate threats. Chases at times. Backed off too easily off the rush. Cagnoni clearly has NHL ability; he makes the types of plays expected from a contemporary top-four defenceman. He could be a first-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Cagnoni was extremely impressive in this game. The usual skating and edges appeared. He easily cuts back over either leg and builds speed through picture-perfect crossovers. Can push play directly ahead when possible, but he prefers to cut back, reset, and create speed differentials for his teammates up the ice. Lane selection and lateral passing continue to shine. Skilled on the backhand. Some offensive impact in this game, manning the top of the powerplay effectively. At 5-on-5, he jumped ahead of the play for a scoring chance, connected with a slick shot-pass for a deflection, and nearly created a tap-in after working off the point. Tons of retrievals, winning positioning, angling his feet where he was headed, then making straight bumps to escape pressure. Some of his paths on the breakout are problematic, failing to read the feet of pressure and skating directly into the path, rather than manipulating. Gets stops by killing plays early, but struggles to track and eliminate in his own zone (small sample in this game). Smaller things: missed a couple of opportunities to jump up the middle in transition become an option and removed his bottom hand when handling around pressure, leading to turnovers or missed opportunities. Lots to like in this performance. Looks like a clear top-64 candidate.

Daniel Gee: April 28th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL Playoffs

Shocked that Cagnoni played in this one -- clearly a half-stride slower due to an injured knee in the previous game. With that came fewer minutes and less involvement throughout -- a stark contrast to his all-encompassing play on the 27th.

Where Cagnoni let his presence felt was transitionally and offensively. Constant escapes from pressure off the end-boards, pre-scanned outlets at distances, and activations were present throughout. On one first period shift, Cagnoni activated on the weak

side, jumped onto a loose pick on the left-wing and had a shot blocked away. He pushed some nice handles on an entry on the next shift, popping a puck laterally and working through the inside lane. Easily manipulates past F1's faking with his shoulders and head. All-in-all good stuff. In sustained pressure, his activations continued to be impactful. On one shift he pushed into the slot but bobbled a hard pass (right idea anyway). Later in the second he activated once again into an open hash-marks, and one-timed a centering pass -- a huge high-danger chance that was saved. Shot mechanics need work, placements as well, but setup is all present.

Don't want to evaluate this viewing too intensely due to the fact he was playing injured, but overall he was still fairly effective and remains an extremely exciting player for next year's draft.

Daniel Gee: April 27th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL Playoffs

Cagnoni played a lot of minutes in this viewing; first option for Portland's defence core and double shifting to occupy the point on both power play units.

He doesn't really do anything extraordinary in sustained pressure. Cagnoni will regularly move pucks into the centre of the ice -- a good habit. From there he tends to just look to send low placed pucks through traffic, essentially to look for redirections. He had a couple of deeper activation plays; in the third he executed a nice stutter step handle to punch into a clearer shooting lane just above the circles -- shot was still blocked and represented a weaker part of his tool kit. In transition, Cagnoni was an in-motion facilitator in this viewing. Scans on retrievals as well. Cagnoni jettisoned an absurd amount of pucks out of his transitional carry outs -- would like to see more creation out of his touches. Knee'd by Riley Heidt and missed a couple of shifts.

Appears to be a bit underdeveloped in terms of rush defending habits. Cagnoni does his best to steady his feet and gap out, but he's frustratingly passive with his stick -- he won't even initiate a poke at times, even with the stick recoiled and ready to activate. He starts into a pivot and chases, rather than heel-pushing and keeping strong body positioning. The thing is, he was a great lane occupier who tipped and blocked multiple cross-crease/cross-ice feeds, proactively jumping and scanning secondary threats. He will even harass off-puck players in his vicinity. In sustained pressure Cagnoni lacks a lot of apparent strength -- while he tries to clear the crease, he frankly is bullied out of the way too often. Same goes for seal offs on the end-boards -- he moves at the right times to cut off cycle plays but he just loses the battles. Maybe more leverage work is needed. In the third he just could not contain or move a redirection threat out of the way, leading to a high-danger chance against. He went nuclear on a couple shifts -- careless turnovers and bobbles. Needs to clean those up. On one first period shift, after Cagnoni deflected a slot pass, he let Heidt pick his pocket on a really dumb handle out sequence. He then was manipulated by Ziemmer with a deke to the inside. Again, he played a lot, but I think this was an average viewing in totality.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Cagnoni had the best sequence of the game. He went behind his net, cut inside, beat two forecheckers, completed a pass to the outside, joined the play, took a pass inside a heel-to-heel, deked around a defender to gain the middle, and fired off a chance. A great example of sequencing. Some difficulties remain making plays on retrievals, and he sprints straight into forecheckers sometimes. Not rare for a draft-minus-one, but there's work to be done. Lots of mechanical ability and skills: handling, passing, shooting, skating mechanics, and skating skills. Looks like a projectable three-zone defender with first-round potential.

Daniel Gee: February 25th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Cagnoni played a major role for Portland in this game on the second pairing, eating up additional minutes as the game turned into a rout.

Cagnoni is a really interesting player. Smooth transitionally and always passing in motion. Apparent ability to handle past F1's, using weight-shifts, and protection based handles. Picks up speed on behind the net wheel outs and processes threats quickly. Avid user of board banks and layered feeds. Cagnoni had some issues connecting on outlets -- multiple turnovers from the board banks mentioned. He had an awesome stretch pass to create a 2-on-1 out of a teammate, leaving the box in the first. Scans on retrievals but doesn't manipulate with his feet or body at all -- can get maneuvered out of the way easily. Not much

offensively in this viewing. Cagnoni had one shuffle manipulation play to get a shot through in the first -- moved towards the boards and away from the slot, however. Very weak slap-shot attempt from the point -- more focused on placement and chaos creation in the crease.

Looks small defensively right now -- but he fared well transitionally. Very aggressive stick first activations to guide entering threats. Body positioning needs work and he needs to be more cognizant of it because of his size. In sustained pressure, he micro scans constantly - it helps him be proactive in a lot of cases. Found him to be very passive physically - not surprising due to size and age. Cagnoni shut down a couple of secondary crease threats on the few Cougar sustained pressure shifts in the second. Overall, a lot of opportunity, but he is a fine WHLer already.

Mitchell Brown: January 29th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Lots of turnovers in this game, but it's easy to see Cagnoni's potential. He regularly sprints into the rush. Creative from the point, using handling skill and deception to trick incoming defenders before rushing down the boards. Spots teammates on the inside in all three zones, combining pace, deception, and timing to connect. Inconsistent gap but shows timing and instincts when closing space. Retrievals are a work in progress (he throws pucks away under pressure), as is his physical game (rarely establishing body positioning). But he looks the part of a slippery, skilled creator for the 2023 draft.

Grade: B



35 Bradly Nadeau

AGE 17.364 DATE OF BIRTH May 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Mike Hoffman



Lethal
Shooter



Tactician



Toolsy

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

5'10"

Height

163 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

7.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Penticton Vees	BCHL	54	45	68	113	2.09

SCOUTING REPORT

There probably aren't enough superlatives in all the English language to describe Bradly Nadeau's draft year with the Penticton Vees.

The New Brunswick-born centre beat up the BCHL, scoring 113 points over his 54-game season. On top of all that, Nadeau won the BCHL's award for Playoff MVP after scoring 17 goals and 35 points on a run that saw the Vees only lose once on their way to a Fred Page Cup. Other than presumptive No. 1 overall Connor Bedard, Nadeau's shot doesn't have many rivals in this year's draft.

The power that Nadeau creates off his shot is not only downright terrifying to witness in person, but also awe-inspiring from a mechanical point of view. He's effectively stacked more nuance and deception to make it an even more dangerous threat. From his curl-and-drag attempts around sprawling defenders to his angle-changing release, Nadeau's arms are always separated from his body leveraging the full force of his upper body leveraging down on the stick.

A ridiculous one-time threat, Nadeau wired pucks off the left-hand circle all season, shifting and setting his feet, powering through the puck with proper timing, all while dropping his whole body through the shot. The creation off these shots was key for the Vees' attack. If Nadeau didn't score, crease crashers cleaned up the rebound, often too hard to handle for the contingent of opposing goaltenders.

Much of Nadeau's shooting success is born from his off-puck game, working into soft ice to fire off the pass reception. His feet are always moving in an attempt to outpace and confuse defenders. He attacks and eats up available space.

"Nadeau is like a looming shark out there – he floats on the peripheries and then strikes without mercy," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a February report. "He plays with an almost unnatural sense of urgency across his shifts, looking to create quickly in order to fully break down defensive structures."

While Nadeau's playmaking isn't as prolific as his shooting, he was a true dual-threat scorer in the BCHL this year. One-touch passing plays, high-difficulty layer attempts, and feeds into space – he brought it.

The right-hand shooter's biggest issue is layering manipulation to better open up pass seams. Much of what he does from a playmaking perspective is based solely on execution speed rather than commanding play around him. He has the hands to pull off more difficult manoeuvres and play a slower, more refined passing game, but the connection between the two tools hasn't been fully realized yet.

There are some question marks about some of the more translatable habits missing from Nadeau's game. He lacks agility, especially when you have a deeper look at his mechanically average skating. Nadeau showed some ability to take bad passes in-stride, but his small-area game sometimes lacked too much for our scouts' liking. Furthermore, a lax defensive game creates a risky projection for the Maritimer.

While the Elite Prospects scouting team believes that the playmaking will come along to allow to blend better with his handling to help Nadeau become a dual-threat scorer at higher levels, he's a risky prospect for multiple reasons.

The BCHL was frankly not a challenge for him as a finisher. Add in the fact that his top-six projection has little wiggle room, and you have a prospect that is either going to do great things for your organization or nothing at all. It's easy to become infatuated with the scoring potential at the NHL level – there's clear 40-goal upside here. Nevertheless, the certainty is murky at best, and this is the conundrum teams will face when hedging whether to select him or not.

Regardless, Nadeau is taking the NCAA route with a commitment to the University of Maine. He'll have a familiar face there in his brother Josh, a 19-year-old winger who dominated BCHL play with the Penticton Vees this past season as well. This extra development time will be key for Nadeau to round out his game, and more importantly, ply his skill against better competition.

∩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's one of those projects that I think if you have a second first-round pick he's the perfect guy. You can wait, you can see what he does in college, and maybe you get rewarded for it." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"You look at the kids drafted pretty high out of the BCHL recently and I think it's safe to say that none of them have really lived up to expectations. That's not to say that Nadeau isn't a good prospect though. His shot is one of the best in the class, and he does a bit of everything well." - Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

∩ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 3rd, 2023 - Salmon Arm Silverbacks vs. Penticton Vees. - BCHL

Nadeau isn't nearly as NHL projectable in games like this where his space is limited and there aren't teammates to pass to, which is normal as he's a pure finisher at this stage of his career. He's great in the offensive half of the ice, when he's allowed to cut alongside the ice, drop pucks to teammates, and get them back in scoring areas. The Silverbacks did a good job of shutting down a few of his opportunities in this one. His skating remains a bit of a problem, but he offsets his mechanical flaws by blending in crossovers inside his forward strides. They give him short bursts to move up and down the ice.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Penticton Vees vs. Salmon Arm Silverbacks - BCHL

Nadeau has so much to offer in terms of offensive talent. Some of his skills are top-15/10 good in this draft. The shot is unreal. He can fire with so much power and even from awkward positions with one-timers and wristers and he knows how to move away from the puck, where to attack and when to attack spaces to receive passes and get it off. He has grown as a passer over the course of the season. Now, he consistently finds teammates and instantly, too. He can one-touch or two-touch passes to others and set them up for scoring chances. I'm also seeing him manipulate with weight shift fakes and lateral cut off the

rush. His skating is more of a 4.5-5. It's a bit high and clunky. He hops in crossovers. There is a Mike Hoffman projection there if all goes well. 40-goal potential in the NHL, but his defensive and wall and pressure game all need to improve significantly and his skating a bit, too. A true boom-or-bust prospect as there isn't really a safety net there at all.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - Penticton Vees vs. Nanaimo Clippers - BCHL

There are a few questions around Nadeau's projection. Does he have the quickness to separate from defenders and play his game at the NHL level? Not sure. He might develop it but the skating mechanics remain quite clunky. Overall speed is fine and adding strength will help. Does he have the passing talent to keep a top-six spot? More and more, I think yes. He does miss some more advanced opportunities/options when they aren't directly in his field of view, but he hits teammates instantly in high-danger areas routinely when he can face the play. So maybe a lack of playmaking anticipation, but definitely the precision and stickhandling skills and vision is there. Once again, the shot is an absolute weapon. It checks all boxes.

Daniel Gee: February 25th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Prince George Spruce Kings - BCHL

Nadeau is like a looming shark out there -- he floats on the peripheries and then strikes without mercy. He plays with an almost unnatural sense of urgency across his shifts, looking to create quickly in order to fully break down defensive structures. A quieter game in transition, Nadeau still pushed a tonne of skill. Inside-outside handles, separating his upper and lower body to pull his stick back, only to hit his brother as a trailer rushing up the slot. He one-touched pucks, translates defensive zone steals into give-and-go attacks, and even pushed a delay game across his shifts. Struggled to create until the end of the third. Nadeau entered through the middle of the ice, lost temporary control but kicked the puck up to his skate, instantly working into a hip-pocket hold and a route change. As the shift went on, Nadeau checked a puck off a man on the left-hand circle and fed Josh Nadeau backdoor for a tap-in. Slip and hook integration.

He was an overwhelming attacking presence in sustained pressure. On one play he quickly jumped off the bench, took a pass downhill, popped a puck past an aggressive defender and found Josh in the slot -- he mishandled the reception. On a subsequent shift, after working some inside passing, Nadeau almost set up another goal with a high-danger centring pass. Just constantly looking to create and play at a pace that the Spruce King defenders couldn't contend with. In the second he absolutely wired a shot off the post -- his shot, in person, is downright terrifying -- so much power through his release. Showed more ability on the boards -- absorbed contact in the third, striped a puck and set up a one-touch play to another teammate who found an open Josh Nadeau. Strong off-puck play as well -- attacked and crashed the net, worked into open seams and floated into the slot looking for high-danger shots. Nadeau barely tries on the defensive end of the puck -- coasts on the back check and lacks scanning habits. Did get a stick in the release of one shot and helped win a couple of battles, but generally, it looks like attacking is a singular focus. Fringe first rounder for our board -- the BCHL is too easy but he will have a lot of scoring success in Maine next season. Dynamic option for teams lower in the order.

A great playmaking performance from Nadeau. Many slick passes, pucks he slipped between sticks, bank plays on the boards to reach teammates, fakes into cross-ice feeds. He's known more for his scoring talent, but the playmaking is also a high level tool. Not a lot of pace. Most of his plays were made in a glide, but the skill is undeniable. His biggest playmaking tool is really his shot. If he threatens it, the opposition will bite. He went to the net frequently in this one, too.

Daniel Gee: December 30th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Bradly Nadeau was dominant - he and his brother picked apart the West Kelowna Warriors. Such an overwhelming shooting threat -- he was wiring one-timers off the left-hand circles. Nadeau is talented at getting his feet set, powering through the pass with proper timing, and dropping his body through the shot. While he didn't convert these one-time chances, the rebounds created easy opportunities for crashing teammates to work in the goal. There's the catch-and-release ability, use of the inside, and almost every action is in motion. Nadeau flashed some playmaking beyond-shot contributions. A couple of centring passes to Josh in the slot. He connected from the far boards to the slot for a high-danger shot -- through a maze of layers. Similar flashes of skill in transition. Weight-shift and crossover integration on his carries through the neutral zone, no look drop-off passes to trailers, in-motion one-timers -- very strong sequences. He targeted the backs of defenders on his handles and even scored on a two-touch release in the third. A 5-point effort -- the BCHL is too easy for him.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Here's Nadeau! A much better performance from him than the ones I saw before. I'm starting to understand his game now. He flashed much better playmaking abilities, instant passes to the slot to his teammates, more awareness and anticipation. He did force some plays still, but those were less frequent. The hockey sense looked better. What he lacks are small-area skills. He's a bit of an awkward player when under pressure. The stickhandling shines, but when the puck is in his feet and he has to use his skating or body in combination with his stickhandling, sometimes he falls apart. The skating looked better. He has that high-stance and short strides that make the success of many NHL taller power forwards - except Nadeau is 5'10". So I still think he is more of a 4.5 skater with the agility limitations. The strongest aspect of his game right now is the off-puck anticipation, his ability to find space, and his shot.

David St-Louis: November 19th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Prince George Spruce Kings - BCHL

Some better passing moments for Nadeau. He does have some slick handling skills, capabilities to bump the puck to teammates, send them into space ahead of them...When he's not forcing the puck through. He doesn't seem all that able to build scoring chances (to anticipate defensive reactions and the drive of teammates and make plays accordingly), but he can somewhat link plays in transition. The shot is high-end. He pulled off a Matthews-drag in this one, pulling the puck way into his feet, all the way to the middle line of his body. The angle change and power was brutal. The skating remains limiting and he's not a physical player by any means at this stage. His game in its current form is very far from an NHL one. I'm not sure about the development he will receive at Maine University. More of a higher-risk, higher-reward B prospect for me. There is a lot of development work ahead, both mechanically and in terms of playmaking ideas.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Nadeau can fire off passes. He scored with one-timers this game after sneaking away from the defence in a pocket of space. His movements were purposeful; he scanned the formation of space and rerouted to attack it, setting himself up to receive a pass. His puck management was pretty poor overall, a ton of forced passes, a couple of which sent to no one. The skating looked better overall in this game, but the zoomed-in camera always makes everyone look faster. I'm not sure about his upside due to the skating and the lack of playmaking (so far in my viewings), but the off-puck and one-timer combination should have him score in college.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Vernon Vipers - BCHL

Nadeau is a high-stride, high-frequency crossover kind of player, but contrary to other players who will have more NHL success with such a stride (Musty), he lacks the weight shifting ability, which means that most of his lateral moves remain awkward, like adjusting for a shot. He skates like a 6-foot-2 player not a 5-foot-10 one. It's not a projectable stride, although he has some speed and quickness. Nadeau was better at positioning away from the puck than making plays with it in this game. He supported plays well and had a couple of playmaking moments.

J.D. Burke: October 20th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Alberni Valley Bulldogs - BCHL

Alright, now that's a little more like it. Nadeau showed us the skills and the sense that have fuelled him to better than two points per game at this point in the BCHL with an exceptionally strong three-point performance (two goals and an assist) to close out the Showcase after a pretty suspect debut. His skill level is absolutely through the roof compared to most BCHL players. Nadeau blends handling, passing, and shooting skill with an unrelenting sense of pace to just pick apart opposing defenders. On one shift, Nadeau's work rate and pace allowed him to turn offensive zone retrievals into passing plays that resulted in probably four or five separate scoring chances. Technical passing skill was on full display on those sequences, as Nadeau connected by sneaking the puck under sticks, past defenders, and even around the net itself. He picked up his first goal with a one-touch finish on a counter play, and then his second one mere shifts later on a give-and-go off the rush. Should also add that Nadeau's off-puck pace really stood out in this contest. The defensive details often elude Nadeau, as evidenced by the first goal against where he was puck-watching and lost his man (and his expression immediately afterwards revealed that he knew he'd fucked up). A failed attempt at an overly complicated handling move in a poor spot resulted in another Grade-A scoring chance against.

Still, Nadeau looks like a clear cut second or third-round prospect.

Daniel Gee: October 20th, 2022 - Penticton Veeps vs. Alberni Valley Bulldogs - BCHL

This was the version of Nadeau that is so well regarded – he was a beast in this game, recording two goals and an assist, as well as setting up and contributing to a handful of unconverted chances. Nadeau's feet are always moving, helping him not only outpace defenders while on-puck but also get to dangerous spots on the ice off-puck. After recording an assist on a pass to the point on a power play, Nadeau followed that shift up with a slot activation, one-touching the puck on the net. His high pace allowed him to win a bunch of pucks on the forecheck -- in one sequence Nadeau hooked a centring pass to a man in the slot, who somehow didn't score. He loves heel-to-heel edge manoeuvres. While he doesn't use it to get to the inside, on one play he opened his hips and sent a pass backdoor that was missed by the planted Veeps teammate. He had multiple passes backdoor -- he loves to attempt high-difficulty layers, for better or worse. Nadeau is a true dual-threat attacker – he scored on a one-timer in the third -- set up on a nice cross from his brother Josh. He converted another chance shortly after in transition. He took a pass on the right-hand circle and wristed the puck top-shelf. While Nadeau had a lot of space to pick his placement, his mechanics are impressive; his arms were completely unlocked from his body, and the chest is over his stick proving more downforce on his bottom hand. He even changes the angle of his shot, pulling his release closer to his body -- all deception.

Nadeau does some fun stuff in transition – passes into space, drawing defenders to bump passes to open wings, and cutting through the middle lane. Part of his success is his pass receptions-- can basically manoeuvre any reception (behind, in feet) and pop the puck up to his stick without losing a step. He hops a lot in his crossover -- it limits the time his edges have carving into the ice. Nadeau combats this with a high stride frequency. Regardless, he will move well enough to project higher. Probably a B prospect -- even a fringe A prospect in the last couple of drafts.

J.D. Burke: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Veeps vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Not what you'd call the strongest performance from Nadeau, but I thought that the skills that have fuelled his gaudy production to this point in the year were nonetheless evident, even if they weren't leveraged towards productive ends. He definitely profiles as a dual-threat scorer, with deceptive passing and potency as a one- and two-touch finisher; he's one of only a handful of players in this league capable of executing a catch-and-release shot, it seems. Showed a decent amount of handling skill too, blending difficult pass receptions into difficult dangles on a few occasions. The Veeps played Nadeau on their first line at even strength and in both phases of special teams. He wound up picking up an assist, and could've had a goal too if he wasn't robbed on the breakaway. Still, a pretty unremarkable performance on the whole. He looked more C-Grade than B.

Daniel Gee: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Veeps vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

For all the hype around Nadeau, this was a relatively tame performance. His mental and physical pace is incredibly high -- it gives him an almost unnatural advantage over most of his competition. When he winds up his linear crossovers, his feet are moving a mile a minute to combat the inefficient hop that occurs as his skates cross. This pace led to a bunch of impactful plays. In the third he took a pass of the wall; one-touching the puck as he took the reception, he bumped a pass to a teammate in the crease, leading to a high-danger. The play went down so fast that the defenders and goaltenders had problems processing it. He tried to force a bunch of heavily layered pucks on the power play -- a habit I have seen in previous games. He connected on one backdoor feed through layers but it didn't result in a scoring play. Nadeau is super interesting; there are changes of pace in his game, he can pass as well as he can shoot, and he is a very proactive mover off-puck (to get into open lanes). Things just didn't connect today -- Suniev outplayed him by a large margin.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - Fredericton Caps - NBPEIMU18HL

Little ball of energy on the offence. Mental pace seems high. Sees ahead of the next play. Takes best option, not first option. High-stance on skating, can't access edges, but makes good use of crossovers (linear and serial). Great off-puck skills; finds soft spots, manages space, tries give-and-goes. Can make plays through contact. Defensive engagement, but overdangles lead to turnovers.



Grade: B

36 Otto Stenberg

AGE 17.299 DATE OF BIRTH May 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Tomas Tatar



Ankle Breaker



Vision



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

6

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Nationell	6	3	5	8	1.33
Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	29	11	15	26	0.90
Frölunda HC	SHL	23	1	2	3	0.13
Sweden U18 "C"	WJC-18	7	7	9	16	2.29

SCOUTING REPORT

It seemed like every time the stakes or the competition ratcheted up, Otto Stenberg was more than equal to the challenge.

That was the story of his draft year. He started off strong at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, faded a bit in J20 and J18 action, and finished the year strong with an outstanding showing at the U18s in Switzerland.

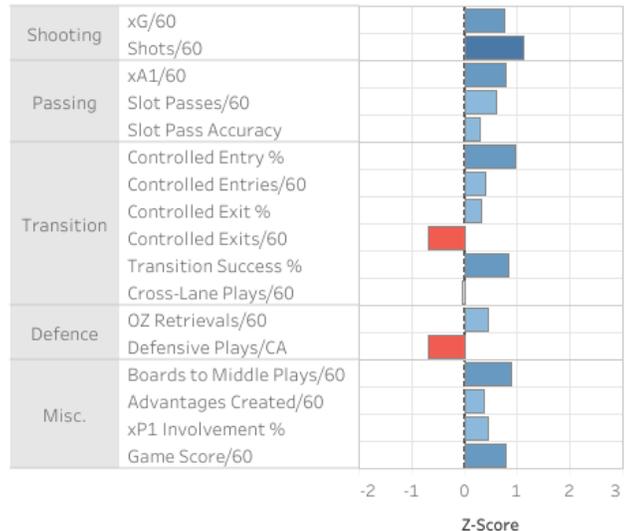
The first thing that stands out with Stenberg's game is the pure skill with the puck on his stick. There's a reason that we gave his puckhandling a 6 grade on our 1-to-9 linear scale, tied for the highest mark of his tools.

A dextrous, creative hip-pocket handler with soft touch, Stenberg regularly broke down and dangled past opponents in space, never shying away from an opportunity to put a defender in the spin cycle.

"I continue to love his first touches; he processes the play very fast and links actions one after the other, with somewhat of a clear idea in mind," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December game report from the World Junior A Challenge. "Off the rush, he attacks inside, cuts laterally, and tries to manipulate. On the boards, he establishes body positioning, pushes against opponents

Otto Stenberg

F | Frölunda HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 235.3
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



with his back and his outside edge, and keeps possession.”

And on top of that, Stenberg’s eye-hand coordination consistently stood out across our viewings. When it comes to puck skills, he’s got ‘em in spades.

A true dual-threat scorer, the Frölunda centre’s dangles often serve his ends as a finisher and a passer rather than operating as a finishing tool themselves. Stenberg is deceptive, always hiding his intention or sending false signals to open up passing lanes, and he has the touch as a distributor to connect with relative ease. His release isn’t among the best in the class, but it’s more than sufficient to score goals in professional hockey.

“He’s a competitive, skilled forward, who likes to drive play with the puck on his stick,” Swedish scout Jimmy Hamrin wrote of Stenberg on EP Rinkside. “A dual-threat scorer, Stenberg can beat you with his shot or his pass. He’s also pretty strong on the puck. Still, his all-around game will have to improve for him to become a pro player.”

The question with Stenberg is whether he’s skilled enough to translate to a top-six role at the NHL level. After that, it’s what happens if he falls short of that mark, which is often the case once you get to this part of the draft. Because this is a player who needs a lot of touches and a lot of possession time to flourish.

By adding some hard skills and becoming more of a force on retrievals and in the defensive zone, and pairing that with some extra zest on his release, the projection becomes a fair bit clearer. If Stenberg can pull that off, then he can play in an NHL top-six.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



“So far, everything has clicked” for Otto Stenberg every time his country calls



Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

“I worry about the consistency beyond his shot.” - Western Conference scout, May 2023

“Does he have the drive to go to the slot? I don’t know how willing he is to get to that middle part of the ice and battle. That’s the question for me. I think the skill is pretty good. Sometimes in open ice, I see a lot of skill.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

I see him as a skilled winger. I think his skating is very good. He’s got good speed. He’s shifty. He’s quick. He’s a bit undersized or maybe average sized, but he’s just a skilled player. He’s probably one of the better ones outside of the big names.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“A competitive winger with speed and skill.” – NHL scout, May 2023

“Looks like he can play in the NHL but what’s the ceiling here? He’s already a physically strong, thick, built kid. Very competitive. Has enough skill, skating and hockey sense. Special. High pick. Strong but he’s not 6-foot-4. Interesting player. Could go 20th overall or slide to Day 2. Kind of like Carl Grundstrom.” – NHL scout, April 2023

"He's good on the ice, but also great off it. He gets the guys going and is our 'go to guy.' On the ice, he's an incredibly skilled two-way forward." – Sweden U18 head coach Anders Eriksén, April 2023

"I've played both centre and wing at home. For me right now, it doesn't matter. I like to play wing. I like to play centre too. When I play wing, I can get more opportunities off the wall with speed. At centre, I can set up players, my wings." – Otto Stenberg, November 2022

"I'm ok on face-offs. It's a little bit hard to play on the wing and then come back in at centre. As a wing, it's pretty easy to play in the defensive zone. At centre, you have to skate more. Play more defence. For me, it doesn't matter but I've played more at wing this season." – Otto Stenberg, November 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

I see significant improvements in Stenberg's shot. It could be his bottom arm. He really locks it when firing a one-timer, adding a flex point and a bigger kick. Maybe it's my imagination. One way or another, Stenberg has had an impressive tournament. He reads plays well, doesn't force as many pucks through (he used to do that earlier in the season), and is more engaged defensively. This wasn't his best game but he still threatened the US defence on a number of occasions.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Stenberg is a mystery to me. I'm not sure if he's a top-20 prospect or a top-50 one. The flashes of skills are more and more impressive. He evades opponents on the walls, attacks inside, understands gap manipulation (overlapping, underlapping movements to create space), drives the net, and shows high-level hand/eye coordination. And he has some defensive value. I'm not sure what he looks like on North American ice. He didn't pop nearly as much at the WJAC, but he didn't have a strong early part of the season overall. I think he's the kind of player you compromise on. You value the skill but also the historical tendency of players like him to not fully translate their talents that show up inside a lot of space to the NA professional game. I still think he requires a lot more space and puck touches to succeed -- but he's convincing me more and more. He could develop physical skills.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

He is having a superior tournament and I will be surprised if he is not on the All Star Team. He leads the team with strong competitiveness and instincts. He plays intensively and is strong on the puck with good control and a good wrist shot. He finds open space well and shows determination to capitalise every time. He also drives the play with the puck a lot. It is clear to me that he has a physical upper hand against his peers when he plays with high intensity. He skates too much with the puck at times and doesn't show the ability to control pace and rarely makes elite smart plays or show impressive defensive awareness. The competitiveness and leadership impresses me though. Even if he is dominating every game, I am still hesitant to see him as an A prospect. He gives me a Lias Andersson vibe.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

I'm not quite as sold on Stenberg's skill level as most, but there were some legitimately solid dangles in this game. His first goal was pretty alright, a deflection in the slot that bounced off of an opponent's skate, onto his stick, and then off the netting in Canada's goal. I've also long admired his knack for consistently making the right play and placing himself in the thick of the action. Just an excellent support player, at both ends of the ice. I'm not sure about the pace, though. Many of Stenberg's touches go on and on, which is a credit to his ability to shield the puck along the wall, but doesn't augur well at heightened levels of competition. I don't know, he's still pretty solidly a B-grade prospect for me.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

In the semifinal matchup against the Canadians, Otto Stenberg was the most productive player on the ice. His five points catapulted him to third in tournament scoring and he led his team to the finals. A couple of things stand out while watching him play for Sweden vs playing for his club team - he's far more assertive internationally. We know he has the incredible hands and darting style, but even in the J20 we don't see him attack the middle of the ice as he has at this event. He blends those hands with quick lateral moves, he hunts for soft ice in dangerous positions, he wants the puck, tracks it, was taking clean and effective routes on the forecheck, supporting the play. He was their leader. His ability to read and react to defensive schemes and alter his pace to create separation in order to enable passing lanes or new routes stood out against a Canadian team that just could contain the offence. Away from the puck and in a defensive position, he still has a lot of refinement.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - U18s

The best player on the ice. Otto shows creativity and strong play driving all game. He had nice dekes and passing plays. He had an impressive playmaking assist. He is strong when he has the puck and covers it well. He attacks in similar patterns to a young Jonathan Toews. His off the puck play isn't similar though. The way he dominates isn't that projectable. He won't have any of his advantages at the highest levels. A way to get advantages is being better without the puck.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Another great international performance from Stenberg. His shots are going in now, due to more precision and off-puck skills. He's constantly popping in the middle of the slot to get pucks and send them in, especially on the powerplay. His first point was his most impressive. He entered the zone, cut across, made a dangle around a stick, moved around a second defender, and scored with a shot across the grain. He looked just as skilled, if not more skilled, than many of Canada's top players.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Talk about getting a jump on the tournament. Stenberg was strong in this one - grabbing two goals and four points as Sweden steamrolled Canada in the opener. He was attacking through the dotted line with frequency and precision. On one such play, he made the cut inwards, showed off the hands to deke around a defender putting the puck through their triangle, held it to outwait the next defender before burning it back the other way for the tally. Stenberg absolutely loves playing for Sweden and looks overtly dynamic when he does. The hands, the agility, and the offensive IQ are all there. He's still a bit of a floater away from the puck in the NZ, but I really liked his reads with it, and his support and transitional play. He's already a strong playmaker but there's even more buried in there.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 playoffs

Clearly the best player on his team in this game. He worked hard over big distances, he drove play, he competed and put up four points. Stenberg has speed as a weapon at this level and that makes his offence shine so much more. He is strong on the puck with good control. He showcased an impressive shot with quick release and also one-time slapped the puck a couple of times. He scored on one of those but also on a beautiful move on a break away.

It is clear that Stenberg has skill and competitiveness. Fact is still that he hasn't been able to execute as much I would have liked on higher levels. I am not sure how translatable his puck skills are.

Lassi Alanen: March 22nd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Stenberg found the back of the net after a slick pass from behind the net from a teammate. He initially couldn't get a proper shot off, but managed to finally hammer in the eventual rebound/loose puck, even if Rögle ended up taking the game by a clear margin. Aside from the goal, this wasn't a particularly good game from Stenberg. When his line got their best chances, Stenberg wasn't really a major part of them aside from the goal. He was left drifting on the perimeter, unable to connect with his slot passes and having trouble deking his way through defenders, relying a bit too much on the handling. When it works, it looks great but he has to find more projectable ways to create in games like these. The skating remains fine, but he was unable to find separation via the outside lane against better defenders on the opposing team. Looked like the version we saw early in the season at the J20 level.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 12th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

I was left wanting more of Stenberg in this game. I don't see NHL upside. He is a decent but not an impressive skater. His posture and ankle flexion doesn't look good and he has a hard time protecting the puck and stick handling with range due to that. He scored a goal on a hard wrist shot and is good at receiving passes and to be quick into the next moment of action, but he will need space to be effective at higher levels as he can't protect the puck well or has the ability to control or open up space with his hands. He had some good backhand playmaking moments in this game where he moved in one direction and delivered a good backhand pass in the other direction.

When it comes to his hockey sense he has a good understanding of his surroundings when he has the puck on his stick, but the delivery wasn't impressively good in this game but you could understand what he was trying to do. He also wants to have the puck and wants to take action, which makes him a decent support and zone entry player. He moves into good spots and sees where he has to be to get the puck. Defensively, he looks slow to make decisions and not fully committed. He gives out more energy to take action when his team has the puck than without it.

I am not convinced of Stenberg as an A prospect and what he is. He has good moments with the puck and has an attacking mindset but in the long run he is 5'11 without having his skating as a weapon or is elite skilled with the puck. He is not a strong defensive player and he lacks the ability to manipulate and drive offence with his hands. He doesn't have impressive numbers to show for at the end of the season. His instincts are good though and he processes the game well and has the puck handling skills to make quick plays. Will that be enough to be a top or middle six forward in the NHL?

Lassi Alanen: February 28th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Skellefteå AIK - SHL

Pretty much in line with the previous Stenberg viewings in the SHL. His balance and strength to protect the puck and absorb contact just aren't quite there yet against men. He also turned the puck over terribly in his own zone, trying to evade pressure but getting stripped in the DZ slot and then immediately got scored on. There's intriguing flashes from time to time, though he didn't really have many of them here. Most of his entry attempts were shut down off the rush when he didn't have speed advantage. He had a few shooting opportunities, once winning body positioning near the slot to get his backhand open but couldn't get that good of a shot off. We haven't really seen the shooting skill appear that much in the SHL yet, the good flashes have mostly come via playmaking.

Lassi Alanen: February 22nd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Stenberg is a different player in the J20 to the one we saw at the start of the season, at least based on the output. Added an almost goal worth of expected primary assists - the playmaking chops are undeniably good and blend in with the individual puck skills. He's able to slip passes through the tightest of gaps. One particularly nice sequence where he first took the puck to the middle from the end boards, then slipped a pass across the crease that should've netted him a primary helper hadn't the recipient whiffed on the puck. He got his primary assist later in the game via a beautiful stretch pass through the middle for a breakaway. The handling skill is high-end, adapts the puck position super quick and precisely. He's not a big-time play-driver still, but now he's at least delivering as an offensive creator.

Lassi Alanen: February 21st, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Stenberg struggles at times in transition with SHL-level defenders who're able to take away space and engage with their sticks at the right time (during pass reception). He also has moments along the boards where he just runs out of options and doesn't have the puck protection skills and strength to hang onto the puck. But on the other hand, he did spin away from pressure near the end boards, separated and then dished a pass to the slot for a one-timer chance. The hands are arguable high-end, and he did flash them here, too, deking one defender off the rush and partly beating him to the inside, but then getting stripped in traffic. Don't know how many conclusions you want to draw from these games; J20 and international performances are probably better at showcasing his talents. But even here, you see the flashes of same things he does against his peers, just less effectively and with a more limited frequency.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - SHL

This was a pretty meh showing from Stenberg, at least compared to the previous one I had of him in the SHL. He had some moments, mostly again with the playmaking, hitting a teammate with an early and hard pass in the middle off the rush or another nice attempt at finding an open player in the slot from below the goal line. But the puck touches were also limited once again, and he's definitely a player who is at his best when the play runs through his stick. He ended up getting a secondary assist on the eventual game-winner in OT, but it was just a basic return pass to the defenceman who set up a breakaway with a stretch pass. Games like these are bound to happen for a player his age at this level.

Cam Robinson: February 16th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs Linköping HC - SHL

The more reps Stenberg gets in the SHL, the more confident he's becoming. He was playing a really direct style in this one - plenty of stops and starts and closing out on opponents. He was handling well in traffic, jumping into holes. He had several chances including a nice partial break where he tried to go high short side on a tight angle and just missed it. He saw some decent second power play time and was working in the bumper. He clearly knows how to position himself to be open and came close to potting one and setting one up. He was on the ice for three of his teams six goals.

I like the chemistry that Stenberg has going on with fellow 2023-eligible David Edstrom, and 18-year-old Isac Born. The kid line was handling themselves well in this one.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations

Otto Stenberg always wants the puck. He bangs his stick on the ice to get it, puts himself inside space to be an option for teammates, and he holds on to possession as much as the other team let him. This game, he acted more as the finisher. He really worked on his powerplay release. The shot that used to miss the cage or hit the goalie in the chest in the early part of the season now score for him. There is progress in his game and he's clearly skilled. I'm just not all that confident in his profile after getting burned by other successful J20 prospects of his type -- and his numbers aren't all that impressive, although they are improving.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - 4 Nations Tournament

One of the best performances I've seen from Stenberg this season. He connected with many teammates in the slot, attacked the middle a lot more, shielded possession on the walls, played with more pace...The skill-level projects as above NHL average and he's an aware and imaginative passer. He looks like a top-20 pick in this draft. The only thing that give me pause is my past history with other Swedish forwards who had great tools to keep possession, rush the puck, and control the flow of the play. Stenberg won't get the puck as much in the AHL and the NHL. He won't get to control the flow of the play as much as he does now, and I'm not as sure about the off-puck offensive game and his ability to adapt to become more of a give-and-go, quick strike, checking forward. He's got powerplay abilities, but not high-end powerplay abilities. Basically, is the skill-level great enough to make him one of those top-six NHL driver? Maybe. All the solutions to his potential development problems are there in his game. He needs to move up on our board...Carefully.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Stenberg barely got the puck in this game compared to some of his other performances this season. But when he did get a bit more space and a runway to pick up speed, his game started to shine. He can outmaneuver opponents, blow past them, cutback, and find teammates. He plays with even more pace now at this stage of the season than he did before. He transformed steals into scoring chances and made quick plays off the wall. Again, I'd like to see him create by being more of an off-puck presence, but maybe I'm asking too much. He showed a higher skill level than almost anyone else in this game.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 4th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

This was one of Stenberg's best games at this level. Frölunda had a lot of regular players missing out and Stenberg got the chance to play a bigger role on the team and took it. Stenberg showed some promising sequences where he was the driver on

his line. Stenberg scanned well and showed patience with the puck. He shows skill and the ability to make creative plays. They didn't succeed but you could see smartness in what he was trying to do. He worked hard all game and won some battles. He contributed to some scoring chances. Defensively, his checking game is better than his own zone play. He can look a bit confused in his positioning in his own end at times and not as comfortable as in the offensive game. I do believe that he will have the ability to learn the defensive side better as well.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Timrå IK - SHL

I think this was Stenberg's best SHL showing so far, so things are definitely trending in the right direction. It's been the playmaking skill that has been his calling card so far at this level, having multiple impressive moments in this one. One super slick pass from the boards to the middle which also showcased his handling skill, how he was able to adjust the puck and the angle in tight space and then slip it out under pressure. Later on he was able to set up a quality chance with a cross-slot pass, though it was a more simple play as he had a lot of space to operate and the passing lane was wide open. The skating continues to look already fine for this level, reaffirming the fact that he's at least 5 grade on our scale. Actively looked to get the puck to the inside, which I liked, even if he didn't always pick the right spots and lacks strength at this level.

Cam Robison: February 4th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Timrå IK - SHL

This was a really nice showing from Stenberg. He was given a few extra minutes and took the opportunity to show he could handle the pace and skill level of the SHL. He was holding onto the puck in transition and was trying some in-flight moves. He was using the cutback often along with some head fakes to try and shake coverage along the wall. Maybe the best shift happened in the first period where he read the play and jumped into a lane to intercept an outlet pass. He recovered it in the near corner, made a couple of moves, passed it to the point and drove the middle. He supported the carrier behind the net, got the puck back, made another fake and cut inside, pass behind the net then drove right to the paint and received it for a bang bang chance. Really heady and driven action.

I enjoyed his effort and work along the wall despite being a lighter player, he was game. The positioning is still a work in progress in his own end during sustained pressure. But he's learning.

Looked like an A in this one.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

Stenberg can keep up with the pace at this level, but his physical game didn't translate, which is normal considering his age. He makes quick passing plays, gets involved defensively, and is generally aware of the ice. His skating holds up; he looks quick. He was mostly pressured into giving up the puck in this one. I'm not sure he's ready for the level just yet, but the tools remain interesting.

Lassi Alanen: January 24th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Stenberg scored his first career SHL goal, getting a bit lucky with a shot from below the net that ended up bouncing in from the goalie. Definitely what he intended to do, but obviously a very low-percentage play that ended up working this time. The most impressive play came later, as he showed good quickness to get past the defender via the outside lane for an exit, entered the zone and dished a backhand pass that didn't get to the intended target (from what it looked like anyway) but ended up bouncing to the third Frölunda forward for a high-danger chance. He tried to work his quick passing plays in the OZ, but couldn't have that big of an impact offensively outside of the formerly mentioned rush sequence (and the goal I guess). Pretty standard outing for a player of his profile playing at this level.

David St-Louis: January 19th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

I'm starting to see it. It being more killer playmaking from Stenberg. My biggest grip with his game is that he had a bunch of high-level possession tools (puck protection, stickhandling skills, elusive skating), but could really create much with those. He lacked the position and awareness and the manipulation to improve offensive conditions and create paths to scoring chance. He just kept

the puck and looked good doing it. Now, the production is coming because he's making more productive offensive plays with the puck: one-touch passing to the slot, give-and-goes in transition, shooting through screen on the powerplay...Luck is also favoring him a bit more than it did in the first part of the year. I still have my reserves about his game, but he's very toolsy and engaged in the game. He's probably a first-round pick.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Yeah, Stenberg is looking more and more like a late first-round talent. He was using the middle more in this one, showing pretty dynamic rush patterns, weaving together his handling and skating skills. At the end of one of those rushes, he picked the puck from the boards, beat pressure to the inside and dished a pass that resulted in a primary helper. Picked up another primary assist earlier off the rush. He's still not a high-end manipulator and doesn't really plan plays that well, relying more on reactionary (handling) skill, but the tools are good to high-end pretty much across the board, as he has some physical skills as well. Finally looking like the player he was supposed to be at this level all along.

Cam Robinson: January 15th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Really dynamic showing from Stenberg in this one. He was dangerous in nearly all situations. He was working his hands and fakes to beat opponents, was taking the puck to the middle often, and created chances for his mates. On two occasions, he drew coverage, make a slick move and then zipped pucks to the middle for HD chances. One resulted in an A1. He grabbed another with a partial break that he sold shot and slipped a short backhand to his mate for the tally.

He was skating well on the rush, using a lot of crossovers to accelerate and alter his route patterns. He blended those rushes into several shots and attempts. The shot comes off the stick quickly but isn't overly heavy at this point.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Stenberg remains a skilled yet frustrating player. He should have all the tools to dominate at this level, from the handling, playmaking, shooting and even the skating. And he did have many impressive moments. Really adapt at making subtle passing plays from the perimeter to the slot, from forehand and backhand and especially from below the goal line. There were also multiple impressive handling sequences, even if all of them didn't result in anything or he fumbled the puck at the end. A few dominant shifts using those tools. But he could be a lot better if he had more pace, attacked the middle more and used more give-and-gos and improved his off-puck timing. He doesn't properly utilize his teammates, in-zone or in transition. He can create steals on the forecheck with smart reads and anticipation, despite the work rate not being on the higher side. I could see an argument for late first-round based on the work he's put out during the last month, but probably more of an early second-rounder for me. If he starts to show more pace, more willingness to utilize teammates, more functional skill, he could make the jump to an A-grade, because the flashes are very impressive.

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

These more recent J20 viewings of Stenberg have been a lot better than the ones I had earlier in the season. Most notably, he's showing more skill. The hands are really good, demonstrated by the way he effortlessly pulled pucks across his body, handled in tight and made a couple of beautiful dekes off the rush, reacting immediately once the defender committed and turned their feet. Looked a bit more inside-driven, too, taking advantage of openings when defenders didn't respect that possibility. Rang the post with a rush shot from hashmarks; could've easily ended up with a few points. There's at least some physical skills, too. The pace of operations could still be a bit higher for me to be more confident in the projection.

Lassi Alanen: January 5th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Leksands IF - SHL

Another SHL game where Stenberg played under nine minutes, spending most of the time either defending or on the forecheck. We did see hints of his playmaking ability, as he pulled off a really nice, one-touch pass from below the goal line to the slot. Tried similar play a second time later, wasn't able to connect with it that time. Struggled a bit in transition to deal with pressure early on, but then made a really nice entry where he gained the zone and held onto the possession alone until his line was able to complete

the chance and get reinforcements to the OZ. Has put more effort in the defensive game in these SHL games.

David St-Louis: December 18th, 2022 - Sweden vs USA - WJAC

Stenberg really has trouble finishing his plays. He waits a second too long, tries to find another opening on the goalie, even as he has him beat....He just can't seem to pull the trigger on the finishing touch of his plays. It's really bizarre. He manufactured a few grade-A scoring chances for himself in this game, but he can't convert. The tools are interesting, he plays the penalty kill well, he can protect the puck...But he's just a beat too slow on certain plays.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs Latvia - WJAC

Stenberg was the best player on the ice, by far, like by a mile. Everyone was just a spectator or a participant in his plays. I continue to love his first-touches; he processes the play very fast and links actions one after the other, with somewhat of a clear idea in mind. Off the rush, he attacks inside, cuts laterally, tries to manipulate. On the boards, he establishes body positioning, pushes against opponents with his back and his outside edge, and keeps possession. He battles for pucks and shows higher-end playmaking ideas: surprising and deceptive passes from below the goal-line, for example. I also liked his off-puck offensive movements. He knew his next play and skated to areas before teammates looked to pass to him. He just seems like he has a developed understanding of the game and the tools to execute his ideas. Of course, the opposition wasn't all that great, but same for his supporting cast. Sweden lost that game.

Lassi Alanen: December 1st, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Timrå IK - SHL

Not too many conclusions to be drawn from this one. Stenberg played around nine minutes here, and was on the ice for two goals against, but neither was really his fault. The skating looked pretty solid in a couple of occasions, able to handle the speed of play at this level from that perspective, at least based on this. He mishandled the puck on a few pass receptions. Solid positional play defensively, forced one breakup by pinning the forward along the board. Didn't really have any notable puck touches in the OZ. We'll see whether he gets more games at this level as the season progresses.

Jimmy Hamrin: December 1st, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

Otto played 9 minutes in the big league here. He worked hard, played physical but did not create much with the puck. Otto does not have any clear weapons at this level yet. His skating is strong but not fast enough to be a weapon. He is not physically strong enough to be a force and his puck skills does not stand out in any way either.

He skates with the strides slightly short and at top speed his muscle tone looks to be high and he loses softness in his hands. He looks like he is angry when he skates. Positionally, he is sound in the checking game but offensively he was not as involved and did not find the right spots quick enough.

Otto is a 5'11 power forward that has relied much on speed and strength at junior level. He thinks the game fast too but needs more time to learn how to find the right spots to be in offensively at senior level. In junior, he is more used to taking action instead of finding action by trusting his teammates to see him if he is open. He likes to play with energy but in the senior game he needs to learn how to save energy as well.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Stenberg is starting to heat up. He had more and more flashes of intriguing skill, the handling and playmaking being the primary tools used. The hands are clearly an above-average projection. He's very crafty in tight, adapts quickly. One sick spin pass from behind the net to set up a high-danger scoring chance; a bit lucky that it got through but the end result was amazing nonetheless. He does lack pace at times and still isn't a big-time play driver. Still could use those tools to gain the inside more often. But things are seemingly trending in the right direction.

Lassi Alanen: November 23rd, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Stenberg scored in his first shift of the game, almost right away when a dump-in redirected from the boards straight to the slot, and Stenberg was there first and finished with a pretty one-touch release. Could've easily had another goal, given he had at least two cross-ice one-timer chances from odd-man rushes. Pretty much whiffed on the first attempt and couldn't convert the second one either. I'm still not sure about Stenberg's true skill level. He flashes high-end stuff, but then fumbles the puck in the neutral zone and freezes when he'd need to beat a player 1-on-1. He had scoring chances, but didn't really set up any of them aside from one nice behind-the-net no-look backhand pass against the grain that showcased the upside he has. I don't think the skating should be a limiting factor at this level, either. It's at least very close to an average projection.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 23rd, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Otto played wing on a top line with Noah Dower Nilsson as the centre. He started off great with scoring a goal off a lucky bounce just seconds into the game. Other than that, Otto was not particularly dominant in this game. He works hard, shows an attacking mentality and wants to make stuff happen.

I see him in style, mostly like a power forward. He plays energetic and has both good puck skills as well as good awareness on the ice. He processes the game well and can make smart plays in tight places using short puck touches. Defensively, he can be a bit impatient at times wanting the play to move ahead but he also played strong on the PK in this game. He moves his head and reads the power play well and covers passing lanes smartly.

Otto's skating is quite explosive but the stride could be more effective. He skates with a short stride and uses much energy to play fast. Still, he can show good awareness at high speed so it is not like his brain is totally focused on just breathing and moving when he plays with energy.

Otto has a good shot and puck handling, but not elite hands to open space with. He cannot control the pace either, and mostly plays at the same pace when he drives the play.

Without the puck, he shows awareness to give good support most of the time. He was the receiver on a 2-on-1 and a 3-on-1. Both ended with him shooting a one-timer. Both times he managed the space properly for the teammates to be able to feed him the puck. On the power play though, there was a sequence where I thought he stood still in a covered passing lane which made the seeking teammate not pass him and the play died. There he could have opened the play if he just changed his position.

To summarise, Otto is a strong and competitive 5'11 power forward who would be more effective if he had a bigger stature or even better skating. He is at least average on all tools and could pan out as middle or bottom six forward.

Lassi Alanen: November 16th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Stenberg was put on the same line with Noah Dower Nilsson, and the two combined for some good moments throughout the game, mostly the former as the shooter and the latter as the playmaker. But Stenberg's highlight of the game was a passing play, first circling the offensive zone high, coming down low, slipping the puck under the defender's stick and circling behind the net before passing against the grain to the net-front, resulting in an easy tap-in – a good example of Stenberg's potential when he's at his best. In transition, he was really inefficient, though, not finding ways to advance the puck successfully. Defensive game isn't a strong suit, either, with lack of physical skills and inconsistent effort level.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - Five Nations

Stenberg looked a bit slower in this game. The skills did shine at times as he pulled pucks around opponents and scored, but he's more of a lower-paced playmaker, one who relies on his hands a bit too much sometimes. It was a hard setting for him; he didn't have much offensive support, but he did look a cut below many of the USNTDP top players. He has some physical habits (cuts players at the hands) and he plays on the penalty kill.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - Five Nations

One sequence encapsulated Stenberg's playstyle very well. He got the puck at the offensive blue-line, pulled it in his feet to avoid a stick, looked around, attacked the middle, loaded a shot...and then just fanned on it, sending it on the goalie's pad at low-speed. He scored later in the game, but overall, Stenberg is weirdly ineffective despite the higher-end skill. It's hard to understand what's going on in his play, but he is just not finding assists and goals as often as he should be with his skill, even though he has a good all-around package.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Västerås - J20 Nationell

What impressed me the most about Stenberg in this game were his first touches, mostly all planned, quick and soft, led to the next play. He has some playmaking instincts; he attracts before passing, looks to bring multiple defenders on himself. He processes the play fast. I'm not sure he has the high-end skills to really break games open (It's always easier to create at the J20 level) but there's a reasonable skill level there. He attacked inside constantly, too, sometimes bringing the puck from the boards all the way to the slot.

Lassi Alanen: October 25th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Not that much different of a Stenberg viewing from the previous ones. He has a good delay game off the rush, good handling and shooting skills but lacks the tools to put those skills together in a comprehensive package that would allow him to take over games. Some of his rushes were a bit careless in terms of puck positioning, allowing him to get backchecked and stripped. Some lazy off-puck routes, taking long circles to recover into defensive formation. Body language looked frustrated.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Some better off-puck moments from Stenberg early on in the game that netted him a couple of chances, cutting in front of defenders and timing his movements. It's just flashes with Stenberg, as I haven't seen him truly taking over a game this season. I don't think it's a willingness issue that he's forced to the perimeter. He's clearly trying to cut to the middle multiple times per game, but doesn't have the physical skills or the quickness to separate between the defender and the forward holding the point. Can be held off by defenders along the boards, lacks contact skills. The shooting skill is evident, particularly catch-and-release wristers. He gets them off quickly and with mechanical prowess. I have a hard time seeing him as a first-rounder, though.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Stenberg scored just as the power play was ending, getting a bit lucky with his pass to the net-front being deflected by opponent's skate. Got absolutely rocked early in the game on the breakout but returned after a short break. Not a whole lot of notable moments at 5-on-5. Stenberg always has good handling moments, pushing the puck into space under opponent's stick to accelerate or moving pucks outside of his body to keep them away from defenders' reach. One really nice one-touch pass from boards to middle to create an entry and a chance, but that's about it. His attempts to cut middle in the OZ were smothered as he didn't have enough quickness or physical skills to pull them off. Doesn't do much in terms of off-puck offence, dependent on getting the puck on the perimeter.

Lassi Alanen: September 14th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Stenberg's skill level is very evident in short bursts. There was one particular sequence where he received a pass, turned to block out the first opponent, moved the puck across him on his backhand and then pulled it back towards him to avoid a pokecheck from the second opponent – truly high-end handling stuff. Also added a primary assist with a very good feed off the rush, recognizing the opening passing lane and executing on it early instead of holding on to the puck until the last possible second. He has trouble linking those separate skills together, though, leaving him often ineffective or just circling on the perimeter. Not a notable off-puck threat either. Skating probably projects slightly below-average, too. Obviously a player to be monitored closely, but left wanting more.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Stenberg didn't show much in this game. He needs lengthy possession sequences to create; didn't get them. Poor routes, preferring to move away from pressure rather than manipulate it. There's reactionary skill, such as cutting inside on the heels of defenders,

but it often leaves him and the puck in worse position than where he started. Lacks foresight. Also makes soft plays with the puck. There's no disputing the shot and handling skill, but there were few links between his tools in this game. Off-puck looks like a major question.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Stenberg scored the put-away goal late with a wicked wrister off the rush. Sudden release, showing short side before launching the puck far side as the goaltender shifted. Keeps his elbow up and powers through the shot with his chest – easy to develop more shooting skills. He has some playmaking ability, but it usually comes after a lengthy offensive zone possession. Loves to circle high and survey the ice, which resulted in little this game. But he also created a goal by winning a battle along the boards. He clearly has handling skill, patience, and an NHL shot, but I'm not sure about the links between those skills and his skating. Curious to watch him more this season.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

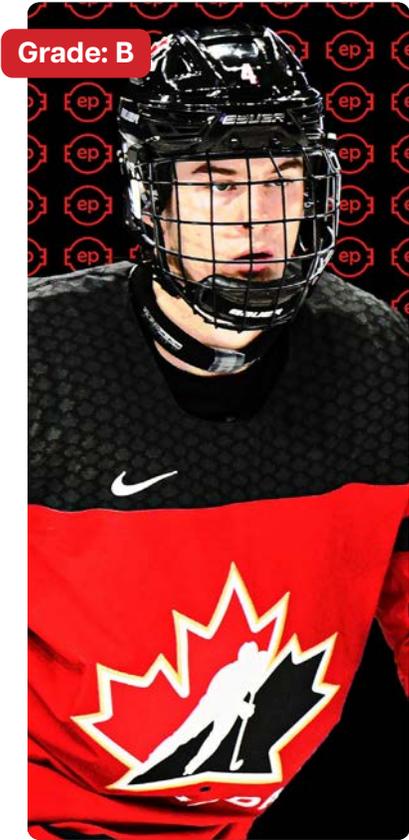
There's a ton of pure skill in Stenberg's game, but you wonder about his ability to create for himself after a game like this one. Sure, the talent deficit between Sweden and Canada is pretty staggering, but Stenberg is supposed to be Sweden's best forward and I barely noticed him save for the one scoring chance, a wrist shot that went post, crossbar, and out. This was just a wholly inefficient, unproductive game for Stenberg.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Stenberg hit the post and crossbar with a wicked wrister. Sudden release with proper form. But this was mostly a quiet game from him. The patient handling and circling the offensive zone didn't work against Canada. They either took the puck from him early or he threw a panicked play to the middle. The reactionary skill simply didn't work, and his lack of planning and manipulation stood out as concerns. August hockey, however.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

A trio of points for Otto Stenberg in this outing, recording the game-winning on the powerplay with a one-time bomb and sealing the victory with an empty netter. Within a shift or two, it became clear that Stenberg's one of the most mechanically sound players at this tournament. He's highly fluid, stringing together pass reception, dekes, and passes while moving. There were moments of creativity and exceptional reactionary skill, including a spinning deke on a pass reception for a chance and several highlight reel moves to the middle. Details were also visible in Stenberg's outing, including body positioning, delaying to wait for the trailer, and pro-level backtracking. Given the combination of skill, awareness, and mechanics, Stenberg looks like a first-round-calibre talent for the 2023 Draft.



Grade: B

37 Caden Price

AGE 17.060 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 24, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF MacKenzie Weegar



Play Killer



Vision



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

6

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kelowna Rockets	WHL	65	5	35	40	0.62
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	0	5	5	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

Caden Price put together some of the best performances among any defencemen in this year's draft when he was at the top of his game. The problem? Those performances were few and far between.

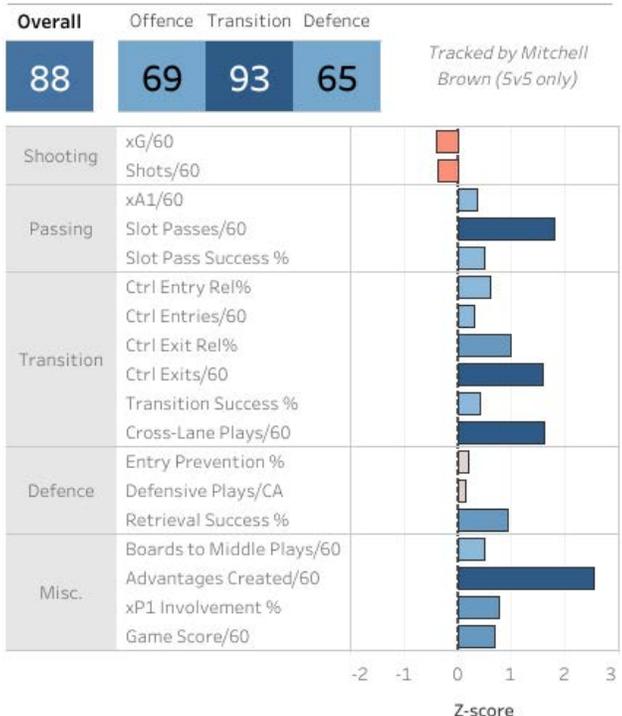
When Price wasn't feeling it, there wasn't a board we could make that would be long enough to accommodate him. We're talking borderline no-draft stuff.

"Reading our reports on Price is like riding a roller-coaster. Great highs follow deep lows," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an article comparing the top North American defence prospects in the 2023 NHL Draft on EP Rinkside. "Who is the true Price? A mistake-prone, out-of-sync defenceman or the most NHL projectable blueliner on this side of the Atlantic? At his best, Price makes every play in the book, offensively and defensively. He's a defensive stopper, a puck-mover, and a playmaker. Improving his mobility would give him more freedom to activate offensively and play aggressively defensively."

As such, any bet on this Kelowna Rockets defenceman is a gamble that an environment with fewer demands, more support, and better structure can coax the good out of him with more consistency while weeding out the bad,

Caden Price

D | Kelowna Rockets | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 148.2



When Price is cookin', he's creating advantages at every corner of the ice, starting with his work on the breakout. He scans for opponents and outlets going into each defensive zone retrieval, shakes the first forechecker with a deceptive first touch, skates into space, identifies the best play, and connects with a perfectly weighted pass with pace. He can hold off contact, problem-solve against numbers, and keep his team on schedule.

Many of the same principles apply to his work from the offensive blue line, though Price's opportunities to show them off were few on a Kelowna team that didn't necessarily give their defencemen the green light to activate into the play. Still, flashes of high-end creativity and deception as a distributor revealed themselves in our viewings, if only sporadically.

Perhaps the best, most consistent element of Price's game this season was what he did away from the puck, though. His defensive skating is a distinct strength, and it's one he leveraged to make stops early and often.

"Another standout quality in the August-born defender's game was his transitional defending. Not the fleetest of foot, Price still manages his gap well, which allowed him to force multiple Cougar dump-ins on entry," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in an early season Scout's Notebook on EP Rinkside. "Smart half-pivots, where he launches with a leading knee towards the perimeter, while pushing off his inside edge with his back foot, allowed for easy guiding to the outside. Even in desperation sequences, Price outraced multiple Cougars who were undoubtedly looking to break free, swooping in, establishing body positioning, even fishing a puck away in one case. If there was anything to nit-pick, Price is too passive physically and misses secondary threats in his peripheral from time to time."

So, yeah, there's genuinely a lot to like there; you just had to get a lot of viewings in and pay very close attention to see it. Hell, maybe even get lucky with your sampling of views.

The question for our staff is how to make sense of it all. Whether Price's highs make him an above-average hockey sense grade or his lows a below-average one, and whether he'll be able to overcome a below-average skating stride to play his game at higher levels of hockey.

Should Price become a more consistent, reliable player, particularly with the puck on his stick, and maybe even add a step or two as a skater, then you might be looking at a bottom-three defenceman at the NHL level. If everything breaks right? An NHL top-four seems within reach.

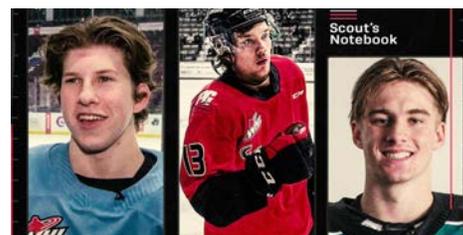
📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Notebook: An early look at Andrew Cristall, Caden Price, Riley Heidt, and Koehn Ziemmer

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I think I'm a puck-moving, two-way defenceman. I think I can play in all situations and that I'm really adaptable to any role that I'm given. I think my skating is my biggest strength and I think that I see the ice really well. I'm a two-way defenceman with a lot of offensive potential, too." – Caden Price, April 2023

"There's lots of guys I model my game after. I like Heiskanen. I like Chabot. Another guy I've watched recently is Chychrun. I've worked on being harder to play against and that's definitely one of my goals. It was hard to play that

way on the big ice and defend that way, but that's what I'm working towards." – Caden Price, April 2023

*"His game has been trending in the wrong direction. He was asked to handle way too much for Kelowna this year."
– NHL scout, April 2023*

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

I'm not sure about Price's tournament overall. He certainly didn't improve his stock, but I don't think he hurt it as much as Cam Allen's. He engaged Swedish attackers, stripped them of the puck, followed them on the walls, and activated up-ice in this game. I just wish he would have shown more offensively. He's pretty much just a rush defender and short-passer at the event. He didn't get powerplay time so it's not entirely his fault. We're nearing the end of his season and I'm thinking it's probably more appropriate to project him as a bottom-pairing project with a lower chance of top-four upside.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Tough game for Price. I don't think his play with the puck was particularly creative or efficient, be it in transition or the top of the offensive blue line. He fared well during in-zone defensive sequences, but was overly committing with his feet in space and got cooked a few times. Looked like a B- or C-grade prospect in this game.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Price has been the best defensive prospect of Team Canada in this one for me. It's close. There isn't a lot of separation between these players, but he has made more plays than Allen, his partner, especially on breakouts, while also being relatively effective on defence. He did forget Eduard Sale in front of the net, but thankfully, Sale didn't score. Apart from that, his stick is in the right lanes defensively and he looks to make plays around the forecheck.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Good and bad moments from Price at this tournament, just like in the WHL. He really mistimes some plays, like the hit he attempted on an opponent at the end of the game. He missed hard and met the boards. But then, he also has other moments where he pinches and strips opponents just as they get the puck and smoothly receives passes and transfers them to teammates. He activated down the zone to contribute to the offence, and defended the front of the net well, but had moments of awkward footwork, not unlike Dragicevic. I liked Price's desire to make plays, overall. One sequence that stood out: He took the puck down the zone, ran around the net, reversed hit an opponent, and got a shot off after wrapping around the net.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

Price didn't have as many interesting moments as other defencemen on the team in this game. It's partly because he didn't receive powerplay minutes -- or at least I didn't see him with a man advantage. He's not as mechanically fluid as Cam Allen. There is a gap in skating there, that we already knew, but that is quite striking when they are on the same ice. What I liked about his game here, especially the first period, is that he came to play. He pressured opponents with a lot of energy in the first minutes of the game, closed on them and looked to make plays. He set the tone. It was supposed to be an easy game for Canada, but after Sweden's game, they had to start right.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Not the greatest game of Price. He didn't have a lot of options on breakouts for sure, but most of his plays were also uncontrolled, a lot of rims and chips. When he did get a bit more space and time with the puck, his passing game resurfaced. He spent the game chasing Swedish attackers, unfortunately. He didn't have as many occasions to show his skills.

Daniel Gee: March 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was the best viewing of Price I have had all season. He was dynamic, in control, and was a constant threat every time he touched the puck in transition. Started the game with multiple tape-to-tape board bank exits and then he started to carry the puck. In the first, Price entered through the middle with speed, ran into the corner, running out of space, but still pivoted and set up sustained pressure. He sussed out the pressure as the game continued and made adjustments. In the third, he carried the puck through the neutral zone, sliced passed a defender by deking him on his weakside (across his back), and attacked through the slot. He nearly scored on an off-puck file through the slot, just missing an open net. Way more weight-shifting, opening of hips, and deception use. He even floated a saucer pass through a seam, hitting a man in stride, leading to a penalty call. He was better in sustained pressure. One-touch passes off the top of the point, passes into space, smart pinch plays. On one sequence, Price handled out of pressure on the blueline and sent a puck in space. On a second period powerplay, he found a crazy seam left-point to backdoor, but there was no shot -- vision on the play was so strong.

His defence off the rush wasn't as prolific as in other viewings, he remained aggressive on the blue line. Price struggled with his gap on a second period rush -- he backed in too deep, allowing a clean shot in the mid-slot with no disruption. In sustained pressure he showed some similar issues with space -- indecision facing a shot on the right-point led to clean shot attempt. Cleaned up his efforts as the game went on. Price made a big anticipation read and intercepted a puck on the left-hand circle. A lot of pin into board seals and turnovers across this game. All-in-all an amazing game. Has more offensive potential than I thought -- the work in traffic is just something I haven't seen from him all season.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

And...an amazing performance. It's crazy how inconsistent Price can be, but this was a nice reminder of the top-four NHLer he could become if everything breaks right. He killed rushes, pin attackers to the boards, stripped them of the puck or at least forced them to stop, he boxed out attackers...But it's really with possession that he distinguished himself, both in his smaller, simpler plays, and in his creation attempts. He showed an instinct for developing plays, seemed to know the best options, and even opened a couple of options that weren't there by carrying the puck or faking. The bad reads were still there but drowned out by the highlights. 4.5 seems to be the right grade for his skating, but with his power, he could get to a point where he can correct mistakes in the NHL. Reasonable agility in his game, too.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Calgary Hitmen - WHL

I almost wish I didn't watch this game. Price has these off games, where his decisions under pressure are consistently suboptimal, where he's late on checks and pucks, and his skating looks like a bigger issue. He plays like he's disconnected -- even though he still has some great highlights where he moves to create passing lanes and spins on forecheckers. The lack of consistency makes it very hard to push for him. He might still be the best NA D, but it's a projection we will make with a lot of doubts.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price was impressive, the best player on the ice after Dragicevic. The defence was the most consistent part of his game. A passive gap conceded the zone a couple of times, but he quickly closed space and grabbed the stop. The skating still lacks power, opponents nearly beat him with speed alone -- but his instincts and timing prevent that, for now. He angles, wins positioning, anticipates, and never overextends. This was also an exciting game with the puck. He was looking to create off the point. He moved through pass receptions, used space, deceived opponents (fake shot, look off, deceptive body positioning), and looked for passing options. Connected with a trio of passes into scoring position from the point at 5-on-5. On breakouts, he used the middle, sent look-off lateral passes, and reversed play when necessary. Drew pressure -- nearly leading to a few issues because of his lack of quickness -- to create advantages. He looked like a first-rounder in this game, perhaps a top-25 prospect. Vision, defence, activation, and breakout skills -- all in an environment that isn't conducive to most of it.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price is frustrating, but a lot of that's from the environment. He's intelligent and even creative in moments, but he rarely puts himself in position to use those skills. Missed activation opportunities. Still, he had his plays. In one sequence, he pinched, faked the spin, then worked high and nearly set up a deflection. He pre-scanned on his touches, which enabled quick escapes on the end boards and allowed him to one-touch a cross-slot pass for a near-chance. Uses space before shooting. Wish there was more volume, and the defence wasn't quite as noteworthy as normal in this game. Still, he looked like a 30-40 candidate with No. 4 upside.

David St-Louis: February 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Everett Silvertips - WHL

This is the kind of game that could convince me that Price is the best North American defensive prospect. The skating is a bit problematic in that he won't ever have the elusiveness needed to push the offence at the NHL level, but the offensive ideas are good. He looks for controlled plays, has some shifty moves, can create lanes, and he generally knows his next play. He's aware of options, anticipates them, too, and at his best, he's kind of a creator, too. There are enough offensive ideas shown to believe in his ability to get in a top-four NHL role -- if he leverages a shutdown game, too. He's hit and miss all the time at this stage, but the hits always make me want to move him up. He's a safer projection than Cagnoni, a better game-reader than Molendyk, and a better mover than Dragicevic. He projects well defensively. I'm quite confident in him, even if I'm projecting him more to a bottom-three role than top-three.

Daniel Gee: February 8th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was a more muted game for Price but he still pushed a tonne of positive play in transition. Constantly working to gap in front of defenders, cutting off their routes, Price was able to knock away a few possessions in this game. He had a great sequence in the first where he got his stick in the release of a shot on the right-wing. He stopped numerous Wheatcroft handle plays, exploiting the fact that he was trying to work low-leveraged handles through the slot. Later in the third he annihilated Wheatcroft on another handle. He misses some secondary threat scans, but all-in-all a good effort. In his own zone, Price locked down on a couple of Riley Heidt's off-puck activations, quick to drive him to the boards. He continues to show no-panic below his goal line after changes in possession. Unfortunately, Price made a crucial error in this one. After tracking and harassing an off-puck threat cutting across the slot, he released from the forward at the worst possible time, allowing them to redirect a point shot in -- why did he do this? Maybe to not chase, but there needs to be more awareness of the upcoming play.

Price does some fun stuff in transition. He popped into a spinorama to avoid an aggressive forechecker -- such slow execution but it worked. He breaks out in-motion which helps him find seams. He flashed some handling ability off a reception in the second to avoid some neutral zone pressure. In-zone offensive play is still painfully basic. He struggled to find teammates in their wheelhouse on the powerplay, and didn't really even think of activating. A couple of hard wrist shots sewed some chaos but beyond that, just not much here. I think Price is a good hedge on day two of the draft. His upside is limited but he'll play games because he can impact the game on the defensive end of the puck.

Daniel Gee: February 7th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price may have the best stick work out of the entire draft and we would be fools to underestimate how much it limits chances when he is on the ice and what it means for his translation to the NHL. Clinical defending against the Cougars transitional attacks, Price's gap control, guiding, aggressiveness on the blueline, and shot release disruption was on full display. He killed 5+ entries just with aggression on the line. Recoils, darts out, and shocks defenders with a well-timed pokecheck. The same principles apply for disrupting shots -- Price sent numerous attempts high up in the net. He had a couple mishaps in this game, however. First, he misjudged a battle and was caught flat-footed on the OZ blueline. He upped his pace on the backcheck and dove with his stick extended to tip the release. Second, while combating Chase Wheatcroft one-on-one, he hauled the forward down after a couple of triangle-based inside-outside handles. Price's habits in sustained pressure were strong as well. He constantly scans secondary targets to build a mental map. His execution waivers -- misses a tie up a fraction late, but it's not too worrying because the base habits are there to be successful.

Transitionally, Price is pretty much in perpetual motion on the breakouts. He lacks higher-end elusiveness on-puck and settles into safer breakout options, but this is most likely a function of coaching -- you can hear the directions. His retrieval work is

basic for the most part, but he did misdirected on a couple sequences -- waving his stick like a wand and changing direction with his feet. Price has some ability to work crossover weaves on carry-in attempts. His best transitional sequence was in the second; a stutter step caught Ziemmer static in the neutral zone and led to a Price shot off the left-hand circle -- no net drivers to jam at the rebound. Prolific usage of the boards to connect on outlets or jettison the puck in immense pressure. Almost a safety valve for him. He can saucer pucks through layers in small spaces -- he always finds a seam. A very basic player with offensive pressure. Has some useful skills such as two-touch passes and a fairly hard wrist shot, but he often works himself into the boards. For instance, in the second he faked a shot off the point, awkwardly carried it around the perimeter, ran into resistance, and reversed a pass right to a waiting Cougar -- just so uncomfortable with activation. Price is a B grade -- he will need to take significant steps to improve his offensive impact, but I like the defensive game and transition habits, even if it's basic in it's current form. He'll work well in any safer system.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Price played with MacKinnon, which means he was tasked to make every breakout play. He succeeded, for the most part, in difficult situations. He lost the puck in key situations, but also orchestrated a couple of nice attackers. He kept his game simple, but then also dangled through the forecheck when he sense an opportunity. At the offensive blue line, he mostly just fired shots. No complicated play.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Victoria Royals - WHL

It's rare I call a player inconsistent, but it's really the case with Price. One shift, he's spinning on defenders, shaking them to find a lane and fire on net, looking like a more high-end mover, and the next he's not really trying to find a breakout, just rimming the puck on first touch without much pressure. He looks like an NHLer for sure. I think he could lock it down defensively pretty well with his frame and if he gets his skating to close to an NHL level. He already has the rush defence, but I'm not sure if the offence will ever truly develop to make him a potential powerplay quarterback.

Cam Robison: January 3rd, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs Victoria Royals - WHL

I really enjoyed Caden Price's game in this one. He was highly mobile through all three zones. He was proactive against the rush with strong posture and a well-timed stick. He was quick to read plays and jump on loose pucks in the defensive end. In possession and under pressure, he was overly calm and several times throughout the game he was able to shake that pressure with cutbacks, feints, and quick edges. One play in particular, he used about 3 cuts and curls with head fakes to break loose and make a smart outlet. His outlets were for the most part very clean as well - hitting short passes and looking off those short ones to hit cross-ice, cross-zone passes to get the offense rolling. He was mobile at the point, firing five shots on net and getting unlucky not to grab at least a point or two. Not much physicality in this one, but he didn't need it. It was a very intelligent outing.

The skating at straight away isn't ideal, but he has nice posture and no real glaring mechanical issues. He's just not overly fast. The edges are good, and the defensive skating is really coming along - little movement, few crossovers, and closes in with purpose.

Looked like an A-grade in this one for sure.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Price had moments in this game. At this stage, he's mostly defence with breakout flashes. The defensive skating continues to be a strength, even with limited power. He keeps his crossovers few, keeps his stick in the middle, and even when he concedes the zone, he promptly gets the stop. Turnovers abounded early; he passed to the other team with weak passes and pucks that were out his teammates' reach. But there was one high-end play, where he faked on the retrieval, cutback, cut again as the player made up the ground, then worked up the boards and found a teammate on the inside. Lots of cross-lane plays as the game wore on, showing his play-building. In the offensive zone, he used space, hits the open teammate in the slot, and activated when given the opportunity. Kelowna's defence contribute little to their team's offence, with inconsistent activation and support. Price would create more in a different environment. The skating's remain a potential problem, especially accelerating out of stops and

maintaining his depth as he works between crossovers and strides. He's not quick, but he understands how to draw pressure and change pace. Should get close enough to NHL-calibre. Looked like a late-first.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

The volatile games continue. Price has a lot of intriguing qualities. He reads pressure, cuts inside, looks cross-ice, and defends the rush like an NHLer (no over-extending, wide base, angling). The rush defence is a constant. The puck game isn't. He misses outlets, flings pucks up the boards into beatles, and makes the most basic of basic plays – only to instantly recover possession, cut inside, and send a cross-ice pass to a moving teammate. Offensively, he makes simple plays that don't build the offence, until he decides to activation. In this game, the skating habits and edges were the source of his struggles. In one activation sequence, he took the puck flatfooted, then waited for the defender to come at him before hitting the gas. The defender easily stopped him – has to move through the pass or get the defender's feet moving. On breakouts, he lacks the in-tight edges and quickness to evade pressure, which led to two turnovers. I'm certain he looks better on a different team, but I thought the puck game looked a lot better last season.

Cam Robison: November 29th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Regina Pats - WHL

A strong showing offensively from Price. He was jumping into spaces, supporting the transitions, and uncorked a really pretty goal on the PP. Defensively, he was mirroring opposing threats with his feet and keeping a nice gap. He made nice first passes for the most part but did have a couple of plays where he either passed on instinct or just missed by a mile. I do worry about him facing shifty speed off of the rush as his pivots still look a little clunky.

David St-Louis: November 29th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Regina Pats - WHL

There is nothing truly exciting about Price's play at this level. He's an engaged, good-first-pass defenceman. He has the mould of an NHLer -- even the skating, a weakness, could get to an NHL average grade considering he has the right posture for the most part. He defends the rush well -- steady posture, stick in front, not reaching, mirroring footwork -- and he stuck to Connor Bedard all night, nullifying some of his chances. On the powerplay, he's a simple distributor who takes his chances. He has some more advanced offensive and puck-moving abilities, like slip, area and deceptive passes, but for the most part he's just solid. I could see a team reach for him at the draft or him falling down to the 25-40 range considering he might just turn into a bottom-three D.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Far from an interesting game from Price. The rush defence was the only thing that worked in this game. He takes away space early, while keeping weight balance. Kills plays through pressure. Over-aggressive a couple of times, but he follows through with his shoulder to secure possession. Breakouts are just ideas. He struggles to separate (both with strides and crossovers), which puts an immediate damper on his breakout ability against a solid forechecking. When given a bit of space, he manipulates and passes through defenders. Nothing happened at pace this game, however. A couple of high-end passes on the powerplay, but nothing at 5-on-5. Looked like a late-second in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price was very impressive in this game. The gap was tight and his defensive skating is strong: few crossovers, wide base, times his stick checks with the handle or pass to maximize the odds of the steal. Always seems to know the next play after getting the break up. Offensively, he proactively fills space and shows projectable playmaking. Identifies passing lanes, keeps his head up, and moves into them while masking his intention. Doesn't manipulate to create, but to prolong. Some crafty deliveries, too. Game was more mixed on breakouts. Generally, he delays, draws pressure, and passes to the open teammate. Excels at working pucks laterally through forecheckers. Also had a few plays to nobody and wasn't making much happen with his feet moving. The edges remain a problem, he gets thrown out of his turns, struggles to shift his weight and explode across, and struggles to maintain his balance, strides, and crossovers through pressure. He looked more like a second-rounder than the first-rounder I thought entering the season, but he's not too far off.

David St-Louis: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price is solid in the defensive zone. He scans, defends the net, gets his stick in lanes, mirrors attackers...That facet of his game is pretty projectable. The hockey sense looks average; he doesn't understand or isn't capable of fully executing manipulation sequences. He breaks down when it comes to judging timing and spacing. But he's quite smooth in the way he handles and moves the puck, poised. I see him more as a shutdown defenceman and puck-mover at higher levels, a defenceman who take what is there than a creator, but there is value in that. Probably a 20-40 pick.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price played more than 30 minutes; it was hard for him to really take over the game as he had to conserve energy. He's a pillar of this team, but nothing truly special in any facet of the game. It's defensively that he shines the most for me: consistently engaged and stopping plays. The skating is really limiting on retrieval. Hard for him to escape forecheckers cleanly and the skate fakes he tries are a bit useless considering he can't really shift his weight enough to make anyone bite. But he's smart in his choices of plays, he's capable of slipping pucks under sticks, and carrying it up ice. He has a good combination of skills and he's active. Again, probably a B-level prospect.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

An overall strong showing from Price, especially in the puck-moving category. He can use deception to open lanes and leverage one option to open space for himself and others. His head is and his posture deceptive. I'm not sure about the skating yet; it looked like a weakness in this game, but he looked generally defensively engaged and confident, showing some defensive anticipation in key moments. He can also join the rush and lead attacks. He went through defensive formations a few times.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Another just okay performance from Price. The playmaking appeared once: step in, fake the shot, pass to the high forward in the middle. On breakouts, he beats pressure, then passes through the next layer to an open teammate. A real advantage creator. But he also made a lot of soft, inaccurate passes that compromised his target's reception or just didn't hit all. The rush defence remains: he gaps early, widens his stance, keeps his head up, and takes away the middle. Timing on his stick checks is among the best in the WHL. On his heels a lot when skating and generally looks off-balance when he builds momentum. Didn't use his edges as much in this game. He looked more like a second-round-or-beyond prospect in this game.

David St-Louis: October 7h, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

I didn't see as much from Price in this game. He's there defensively: good risk mitigation, positioning, and threat identification. His stick work is a constant plus. He keeps it inside lanes and closes his gap on opponents quickly. The defensive skating or footwork will become a bit of an issue at higher levels if he doesn't improve his skating posture, but the flashes of puck-moving, puck-carrying, the confidence, assertiveness, and engagement, and the reasonable skill-level...They probably make him a B-level prospect in this draft.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

A mixed performance from Price. The playmaking appeared a few times: joined the rush and looked cross-ice, a give-and-go from the point, and some long-range breakout passes. He also missed opportunities to make a better play. Stops pucks dead from the point, hoping to use the wind up to fake out defenders. One problem: he lacks the edges and weight shift to accelerate again from those positions. Even his goal, where he took a puck in motion, faked the shot, then worked back to the boards, highlighted his limitations on his edges. He can't get separation. It's a problem on breakouts, too. Forechecked into poor decisions. Throws a lot of pucks away or simply misses targets by passing to where they are, not where they're headed. Otherwise, Price brings a lot. Uses the activation game to improve his shooting location, he kills plays early in the neutral zone, holds the blue line, anticipates rotations and switches in the defensive end. He could be a first-rounder in this class, but I'm not sure this game suggested as much.

Daniel Gee: October 1st, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Steady more than anything, Price had a better game than the night previous, but he had to defend a whole lot less, as Kelowna was dominant throughout this game.

Price was aggressive within reason in transition; multiple step-ups to his own blueline to force dump-ins. Steady feet with attackers in vicinity and very proactive crossover-use to maintain gaps. One of his better plays was at the end of the first; Price completely drove an attacker wide, forcing a weak backhand on net -- the inside lane protection was textbook. Defending sustained pressure Price was sealing off the end boards much better in this game, leveraging his size to take away the potential centering pass sequences that the Cougars were pushing constantly throughout the weekend. Stick-in-release stops, smart body positioning on retrieval races (swooping in-and-under forecheckers). Was put in a poor spot by Cristall and completely outraced an attacker to nullify a breakaway.

Much more of a transition threat, Price flashed some real passing skill. Slips, two-line long bombs, in-motion efforts. Still spinning off a lot to reset, he did look more confident carrying the puck. He executed a huge wheel and escape out of his own zone -- the most pace I've seen him play with, assisting on a subsequent goal because of his fast breakout. He had a pretty significant stutter, weight-shift manipulation play on another breakout. The stride is rough, and the manipulations were short, but it seems like it's something he's working into his game. Independent upper and lower body allow for more passing adaptability in motion. Price even had a sequence where he drove the puck in off the right-wing, sending a bad hope pass into the slot as he was pushed into the end-boards. He doesn't always commit to joining the rush as a pass option. Does try to deceive with his feet on retrievals.

The most underdeveloped part of his game is in the offensive zone. Decision-making and execution errors plague his game. A bad no-look D-to-D pass (absent of any scanning) gave the Cougars an easy breakaway on the penalty kill when his pass was intercepted. To his credit, he actually caught up to the attacker, wrapped his stick inside and hooked the puck back -- it was an incredible mistake and recovery for Price. Beyond that, he is far too planted, and didn't show much manipulation or activation off the blueline that you would expect from a top defender process. He's a step down offensively compared to the WHL class from the year before, but he projects as a better defender than some of them.

Daniel Gee: September 30th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

A fairly innocuous game by Price overall. Almost always spinning off forechecking pressure, he delayed Kelowna's transition by a good margin, constantly resetting into safer options. A lot of outside-edge activation on these plays -- fairly panic free as well -- I doubt this flies against more aggression because the action itself is pretty laboured. He made a couple of notable outlets in the second; an in-motion two-line pass through a created seam up the middle (in-motion and leading to a breakaway), and an incredible board-bank pass highlighted his efforts. Clearly a talented puck mover. Far less volume than you would expect from a top-prospect -- deferred too much in this one. His habits in the offensive zone were a bit peculiar -- almost like he was rushing too much with the puck on the blueline. Price had multiple shots blocked by first layer defenders. On a lot of these sequences he got pucks back immediately, only to manipulate those first layer defenders with board-to-middle movement. He managed to get something like five shots on net off of this movement. Low-placed, often in heavy traffic, with the goal of chaos creation in the crease. Struggles when he is in the middle of the ice to keep possessions alive (pinching). Best chance of the game was off a keep-in. Price intercepted a dead puck, deked to the backhand, and then walked down the centre lane for a shot; he ignored an option backdoor ready for the redirect. An interesting play and skill blend sequence to get a high-danger.

Price keeps his feet fairly steady when facing transition attackers -- strong gap, limited overextensions and reaching. He struggled to lock down a secondary threat on a faster Cougar break, just a half-step away from checking a net-drivers stick. In sustained pressure he showed a significant amount of scanning throughout his shifts -- actively mental mapping the entire time. He failed to contain some end-board activators though. Made a nice desperation sliding block of a cross-crease pass after a dangerous turnover at the left-circle. He's a great player -- want to see more separators in the offensive zone.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Skating might prove key to Price's NHL projection. He trips over his feet, lifts his inside leg when turning, and barely completes most of his cutbacks. Doesn't engage his upper-body at all. He has major difficulty on his edges. But there's clearly upside. He activates, used the heel-to-heel to shield the puck, then created a chance in the slot. Defensively, he keeps his weight centred, establishes his gap early, and kills plays in the neutral zone. He had three tricky stops in this game. The skating limits his breakouts, but he's also prone to throwing away pucks with dump outs or poor passes.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Price's playmaking didn't shine in this game. A couple of reasons for that. First, he took a couple of pucks flatfooted, missing opportunities to manipulate the incoming defender or gain the middle. Second, he skated straight into pressure with no ability to escape. Third, his skating still looks like a potential issue, lacking the depth to flip his toe caps quickly and explode through his turns. There were also standard turnovers from not seeing the next forechecking layer. A couple of stops at the blue line highlighted defensive upside. Development through the season will interesting to follow.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

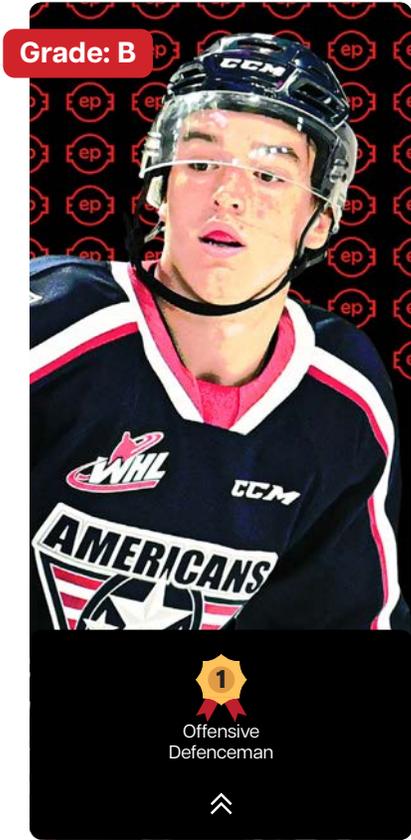
More incredible playmaking from Price. He made several excellent short-to-mid range passes from the point: backhand passes into space to activating partner, drawing pressure before passing, and tape-to-space forehand passes. He set-up two goals, including one with a crazy saucer pass from the boards to the far post for a tap-in – don't see that too much. A lot of his playmaking was Mintyukov-esque. Exciting. He activated regularly, both in-zone and off the rush. Defence was a bit more of a mixed bag. He stepped outside too early, but also grabbed recovery stops. Didn't fall from the trickery of opponents, and kept a strong, wide base most of the time. The playmaking could become special, especially if he's able to weed out the soft plays in transition.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Price stood out in this one due to his OZ playmaking. His first assist of the game was a rather typical pass after a won faceoff, but the second one was pure magic, connecting with a quick and powerful pass through multiple layers for a backpost tap-in when the goalie was clearly expecting a shot. Fair play as so was I. Some well-timed activations aside from those occasions, too. Skating looks a bit so-so and not very well balanced, which limited his ability to cutback or escape from pressure with his feet. Defence was varied, but he made some good stops, too.

Mitchell Brown: April 10th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Price's passing created a fair bit in this game. He steps into space, draws pressure, then distributes. Completes passes off the backhand, forehand, and while moving. Cross-ice/lateral plays, too. Activated from the point, then looked inside for passing options. Lacked deception on one sequence that would've led to a scoring chance. Rush defence looked refined and projectable: balanced, heel pushes, head up, and kept his stick on the ice. Times his engagements with the incoming pass; didn't over-extend. Skating looked like a potentially significant issue. He's heavily reliant on one-foot stops and turns. When he tries to escape, he finishes his manoeuver in the same place he started it. Leads to additional turns and cutbacks, increasing his exposure. Lacks any sort of quickness. The vision should allow him to play without skating as a strength, but it has a long way to go. Lots of time, fortunately.



38 Lukas Dragicevic

AGE 17.392 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Slower Noah Dobson



Ankle Breaker



Lethal Shooter



Vision

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	6	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
6	6.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Americans	WHL	68	15	60	75	1.10
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	2	2	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Let's say it up front: Lukas Dragicevic is the best offensive defenceman in this year's draft.

No one combines his level of puck skills, vision, and activation. For both of his WHL seasons, Tri-City's offence has flowed through him. He's the initiator, connector, and often the finisher. And he led the team in ice time both seasons – no small feat for a player who switched from forward just a few years ago.

Dragicevic's skill is the envy of most forwards. He sends opponents careening into the boards with rapid-fire handling, uses them as screens with fluid curl-and-drag shots, and freezes multiple at once with deception before setting up a tap-in.

But it's not just the skill; it's how everything interacts. Many of his best sequences start on the breakout, where he manipulates the first forechecker, then passes off. He activates, gets the puck back, completes another give-and-go, then fires off a chance. And then he controls the game inside the offensive zone, single-handedly putting Tri-City on an unofficial power play.

Sluggish acceleration often prevents Dragicevic from obtaining the space his hands create. He finds ways around it, relying heavier on passing against better opponents. That's a positive start, as the

Lukas Dragicevic

D | Tri-City Americans | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 169.8



professional game will demand that from him.

There's also the issue of defence, Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown detailed in February:

“Defensive skating really holds Dragicevic’s defence back. He shows some instincts. He tries to angle, engage early, and eliminate threats. He sees plays developing and looks to put an end to them. But he always ends up chasing because he reaches when closing space, overshoots the puck carrier, and slides too much through his stops when matching footwork.”

Full stop, the defence must improve to get the green light in the NHL. The skating, too. Combined, he’s just a little too risky to confidently place him in the first round, but if both improve, he will make our tepidness look silly. Dragicevic has the mind and the skill to rack up the points in the NHL, perhaps in a middle-pairing, first power play role.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Lukas Dragicevic is an offensive defenceman to watch in 2023 NHL Draft



Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



WHL Stock Watch: Lukas Dragicevic scoring at an historic clip from the blue line for Tri-City

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“Six-foot-two right handed defensemen with a lot of skill don’t grow on trees, but I’m terrified of the skating. His boots are so heavy and there are so many things wrong with his stride that I don’t think it’s an easy fix. He’s a project, but the upside is something teams have to pay a lot of money for.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

“My two-way game is something I’m still taking steps to improve. I’ve only been a defenceman for three years now. The position is pretty much brand new to me. So I’m working very hard on the defensive part of my game. And keep getting better at that. I know that’s what is going to get me to the next level.” – Lukas Dragicevic, April 2023

“It’s my offensive instincts and my hockey sense [that are the best parts of my game], for me personally. Having the puck on my stick. Making the right plays. I make a good first pass. Breaking out pucks to guys who are open. It’s about being smart with the puck.” – Lukas Dragicevic, April 2023

“My skating has gotten a lot better. I take a lot of pride in the work I’ve put in. My skating continues to get better. I think it’s helped my offensive production.” – Lukas Dragicevic, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - U18s

Dragicevic looked more comfortable as the tournament went, more at ease playing his game. He landed a giant hit on the backwall, defended better overall, and froze forecheckers with fakes on regroup, and seemed to be better capable of evading them with his skating. His poise stands out next to a prospect like Cam Allen who seems to panic on more of his touches.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Dragicevic moves more precisely than Etienne Morin, but there is a parallel there. Both are confident offensive players, playmakers, with skating issues that prevent them from executing their more advanced ideas. I think Dragicevic is smarter, a better puck manager and a passer overall. He makes better decisions in transition and he's more engaged defensively. He separated a couple of Swedish attackers from the puck along the walls in this game. He should be higher, but we probably can't have an immense gap between these two. Same strengths and weaknesses, to an extent.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Dragicevic made some characteristically intelligent offensive reads, particularly trying to spring rush and counter attacks, but the execution wasn't always there. The best moment for Dragicevic was when he sent a flip pass into space to key a rush play into the Swiss zone. Really sharp stuff. Eventually, Dragicevic picked up a secondary helper on the power play with a garden variety, short range pass from the offensive blue line. The defensive skating worries me though. Tough player to make heads or tails of.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Dragicevic's offensive instincts were more on display in this one. He organized an exit at the end of the game. He got the puck to Ritchie, followed him up ice, slowed down inside space, got the puck back and scored. He had a couple of other instances where he carried the puck across zones. His blue-line footwork in the offensive zone remains mostly ineffective at the tournament. He can't really beat defenders, but his playmaking abilities haven't left him. He had a better gap in his rush defence in this one, for the most part.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - U18s

Dragicevic's defensive game is getting exposed at this tournament. I liked his stick work and physical play on the boards for the most part, but his defensive skating needs work. It's harder for him to follow opponents around while defending the rush as he has to use multiple short strides to do it. It's the same story at the offensive blue line. If he already has momentum, he can walk it well and find shooting lanes, but separating from and matching opponents is more difficult. He again had a sequence where he carried the puck the length of the ice and got a scoring chance. His speed is fine when he gets going and does have some nice ten-and-two moves.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Dragicevic's skating is a bit of an issue. The contrast between Tom Willander and Axel Sandin Pellikka didn't help him in this one. He tried to accomplish the same plays as them but required about 2x more strides to do it. He just can't transfer his momentum laterally like they are doing. He's still pulling off nice plays at the opposing blue line: He moves to find shooting lanes at the point, tracing u-shapes while keeping possession, and when he's under more pressure, he offloads the puck quickly. The ideas continue to be better than the mechanics. Improving his skating is a must in his NHL path.

Daniel Gee: April 1st, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Dragicevic had a much more involved game today, in all areas of the ice. He was a monster defending the crease in this one. Scanning, limiting sticks, removing screens -- he looked very projectable. On one first-period shift, he saved a goal by interfering with a Funk shot. Constant backdoor scanning and detaches from the net to push aggression were all within reason and impactful. On one second-period play, he poked the puck away on the end-boards after leaving the net front -- he executed so quickly to kill the cycle. On the rush, his defensive skating still presented an issue, but he was proactive enough to have consistent gaps throughout the Cougars' waves of attacks. For whatever reason, he is usually milliseconds away from a lot of stick-based disruption plays. Misses checking the release of shots by inches at times. Got very lost on a first-period cycle in his own zone, just behind on every pass -- when he loses that mental map it gets scary.

He had a much busier game attacking on the transition. Dragicevic started the game with an end-to-end carry on the

powerplay that led to a deep activation play. He's almost exclusively on his inside edges as he works N-to_S, limiting how dynamic his movement can be. He continued to join transitional attacks off-puck. In the second he took a pass after the entry, stopped up to disrupt a defender's gap and snapped a pass across the rink right onto tape. Worked in motion much more than in yesterday's game and flashed some attempts to use manipulation (Shoulder shakes and jukes look odd when he stays on his inside edges). Dragecivic was better in the offensive zone in this game as well. Absolutely hammered a couple of downhill shots on the man advantage -- shooting tool is legit. Had a couple of monster arial keep-ins off the line -- more anticipation plays. Coming around on Dragecivic but I think we have him in the right range (second round).

Daniel Gee: March 31st, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

I wouldn't characterize this as one of Dragecivic's better games. He was on for three goals against, one being his fault. A blinding screen with no sticks locked down in the crease allowed Hudson Thornton to walk downhill and snipe a shot past Suchanek. He struggles to disrupt on any given shift in his own defensive zone -- sticks just constantly left unimpeded in the crease. The thing is, he's a tank in front of the net -- box outs? No problem. Physicality on retrievals? He just absorbs it. Dragecivic's scanning habits help him to some degree, especially when pushing aggression, but he doesn't have enough four-way mobility to access and use everything that he takes in. In transition he's poor. It's all built around his undeveloped defensive skating. He waddles backwards, very rarely accessing his outside edges, and has to make proactive pushes back to have more time to develop a gap.

His size is such a plus factor though -- rarely are opponents going to slip by him if he leverages his frame into the boards and if he stays in front of the attacker, he can lock them down. How prohibited will the defensive skating be against players with more pace? It could be devastating. Dragecivic gets under sticks and activates to contain threats -- it's more playing on instinct than anything. On one sequence Dragecivic was able to tank a hit and get the exit. After the counter-attack commenced, he was able to reject a dribbling puck, shift to the net front, and blocked a hard wrist shot off the right-hand circle. It was all play reading in terms of positioning.

In transition, he constantly joined the rush as a weakside option. Deferred on the breakouts for a lot of the viewing. On one occasion in the second, he was very static as he released the pass; while it wasn't picked off, the teammate on the other side of the reception was pressured immediately because of the original lack of motion. He was half asleep on another carry out -- a poor handle and turnover deep in his own zone caused a long sustained pressure shift against. Mainly just floated pucks from the point in the OZ -- in the first period, one of the shots was redirected for a goal -- a hard, low shot. Some board-to-middle movement, but that was only on the man advantage. I get why he is liked but this wasn't a performance that would warrant enough conviction to raise him from a second-round projection.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The more I watch Dragecivic, the more I appreciate his passing game. He doesn't open lanes but he does find creative ways to get the puck to teammates anyway, by, for example, using the boards and passing between his legs. He can quarterback the powerplay from the point or the half-wall -- equally well -- and sometimes his shots are passes, too. He aims them at sticks for deflection. The hockey sense is a clear above-average grade for me, even if he doesn't care as much about the defensive play. He does have some tools for the shutdown game, a decent quickness from a stop and physical potential. He needs to add the awareness, the anticipation, and the urgency. He's low-pace and a bit static at the point and he could improve his physical engages. He could improve a lot of details, in fact, but I think he's a worthy top-45 prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

The best draft-eligible in this game by a large margin, Dragecivic was manipulating opponents and creating chance after chance. A lot of his work started off the rush. He skates towards opponents, then pushes off laterally. Delays when necessary. Always looking for the cross-ice option; he was tearing Kelowna apart with his lateral passing all game long. Where many defenders retreat, he pushes ahead to keep play moving and occasionally slip a puck through a defender for a chance. On the point, he was deceptive and manipulative. He faked opponents, cut inside, and looked for teammates around the slot. Draws pressure, manipulates their feet, then attacks open space. A bunch of NHL sequences, highlighted by a late-game rush where he delayed,

then fired a look-off cross-slot pass under the defender's stick for what should've been a tap-in. Instantly reads the opponent's feet and reacts, too. Oh, and he scored by cutting inside and firing far side. There were the usual Dragicevic concerns. The defensive skating's poor. He generates momentum but stops as soon as opponents get close, preferring to reach or kick at the puck instead of taking the body and keeping momentum. So many crossovers. He gets stops still, but it's tough to imagine an NHL where he's not getting burned every other shift without improvement. Still, he's an upside swing. The offensive brain and skills are 6s, if not higher, across the board. A late-first.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The best player in this game. Dragicevic's offensive potential is so high. He reads pressure, freezes opponent's feet, manipulates them, uses the middle, shows 6-grade passing and shooting (minimum), uses every ounce of space, and activates into every play. Late in the game, he read the rotation on the weak side, worked down the flank, faked the shot before passing behind three defenders for a point-blank one-timer. Elite play. Grabbed a pair of scoring chances by stepping into space. Set up another chance by activating up the weak side, receiving the puck, gaining the zone, and passing cross-ice. The more I watch, the more I'm convinced he has a top-pairing offensive upside. The major questions are the skating and defence. He's engaged; he tries. He has some ability to get inside opponents and trap them to the boards, but he's so vulnerable as a defensive skater. Overskates and struggles to maintain speed through pivots. High, upright stance also limits his quickness with the puck, making his margin for error slimmer than most prospects with his skill set. Lacks some awareness on breakouts, and in general, he doesn't show the same level of puck skill on the breakout as he does in the offensive end. Still, there's a strong late-first argument.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Defensive skating really holds Dragicevic's defence back. He shows some instincts. He tries to angle, engage early, and eliminate threats. He sees plays developing and looks to put an end to them. He gets the odd clean stop with textbook details. But he always ends up chasing because he over-extends when closing space, overshoots the puck carrier, and slides too much through his stops when matching footwork. But if that's fixable, he's an exciting prospect. He understands the activation game better than most prospects. He joins the rush at the perfect moments, making advanced reads to stay in space and remain an option. He cuts inside for chances, but also makes quick passes back to his teammates. His breakouts and retrievals are designed for the activation game, preferring short-to-medium range passes followed by immediate acceleration to get open for the return pass. He has handling skills, creativity, and shows more playmaking on the powerplay. The shot's at least a 6-grade. He has the potential to become a significant offensive piece in the NHL; it all depends on the skating and improving the even-strength playmaking.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs Red Deer Rebels - WHL

To shine, Dragicevic needs the offence to flow, to move from player to player, to have multiple passing sequences. He's someone who links plays and finishes them, but he can't really beat opponents on his own or force a play into existence; he has to be the link somewhere. He needs space, give-and-goes, tic-tac-toes, open options, activation potentials -- a structure and talent around him. He's a driver, but only if there are options around him. That's a bit of an issue for his NHL offensive projection, where the offensive play often gets stopped after a couple of passes, where tools matter to create advantages, unless you play in a very top offensive system or on the powerplay. Still, the handling skills are phenomenal: hand-eye coordination, slick movements, fakes, and creative ideas. No flashy dangles, but a lot of precision. He's also clearly an intelligent player who understands the offensive game, where his outs are and where he needs to support. Above-average sense and handling, but the skating is still a pretty large weakness. He does defend, but it's not a projectable aspect of his game at this point.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs Spokane Chiefs - WHL

I quite like Dragicevic's offensive game. He's both a playmaker and scorer and activator. He can beat forecheckers one-on-one (as long as they arrive facing him), pull off somewhat elusive moves to shake them at the blue-line, fake before passing to freeze opponents, and aim shots through. He's ahead of his activations, meaning he anticipates them and arrives at the right time to get the puck from teammates and he consistently finds the best play. The skating is a 4-4.5. No outside edge moves. Lack of depth, lack of quickness, limited pivoting ability, limited recovery ability. He defended decently in this one (the rare times he was

asked to play defence), but if he gets beat off the rush easily as he has no way to catch up or adjust his speed. He's really at the mercy of any opponents quicker than the average. He needs skating improvements to play his game in the NHL. His form could become a bit better, a bit lower, and he will add strength, but he won't ever be able to play the game on a more lateral plane. Most great offensive defencemen in the NHL can take pucks in movement, drag defenders one way, and then cutback or spin/sprint the other way to create space for themselves.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Dragicevic evaded the forecheck on a couple of occasions. His skating looked like a bit of a problem, at times, in this game -- he got walked by Bedard because he overcommitted in his defensive footwork -- but he can rely on his deception to still make plays against pressuring opponents. His offensive game didn't really shine in this high-pace, high-skill environment, which reinforces the theory that he's at his best in a team where he can control the flow of the play and get a lot of puck touches and prime powerplay opportunities. He did show flashes of his physical game.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

There are times where Dragicevic's offensive potential seems astronomical. He manipulates opponents with his feet and hands at the same time. Spots teammates in open lanes and executes immediately, but can also pry open lanes with the manipulation. Deceptive. Activates into every play and usually claims the best space; knows when to sprint to push back defenders. He has both plus-shooting and plus-passing skill, even if he leans heavily on the shooting. This game, he was manipulating to pass and manipulating to set up deflections. Tri-City struggles with offensive zone spacing, which greatly limits Dragicevic's playmaking opportunities. Instead, a lot of the playmaking has to come through shooting for deflections and rebounds. Knowing that he has that playmaking makes me way more confident in his projection. Elsewhere, this was a messy game. Super beatable off the rush with his combination of poor defensive skating and gap control. But he showed some play-killing deeper in the zone with pressure, physicality, and intelligent switch off reads. He passed straight to the other team at least four times, failing to assess threats and missing better plays. I was wrong about Dragicevic. He's a legitimate first-round challenger. He has top-four upside, but it will require a lot of work.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs Victoria Royals - WHL

I'm not sure what to think with Dragicevic -- I struggle to see how his current habits could translate at all at the NHL level. A very hit-and-miss transition game, he high-flipped more pucks than not. His best play was a rink-wide pass into a breakaway, leading to a goal. It was an impressive feat, slicing through practically every player on the ice to send his man in with space. There are some activation habits -- a weakside attempt in the first represented a great off-puck shift. The activation continued in sustained pressure -- he registered another assist after activating, slipping behind coverage who were puck watching on the strong side.

Where Dragicevic worries me is on the defensive end of the puck. He still can't handle speed due to his lagging foot speed. This means he has to take aggressive swings on his own blueline to combat outside manoeuvres. He's so sturdy that he can really clamp down on lighter attackers -- enough for support to swoop in and start the counter-attack. Dragicevic just eats up poorly protected pucks. The problem is when his aggression isn't available, he almost always is in some sort of trouble due to poor pivoting (legs are so stiff). He loses easy retrieval races, is a late processor, and is frustratingly passive when it comes to contesting shots. Where he does see some reprieve is in sustained pressure. His positioning is generally strong, and he acts almost like a column, impeding access to the inside. Dragicevic puck watched too much in this viewing though - leading to reactive block attempts. I don't think he's a good handler in small space -- this is evident on retrievals and end-board battles. He missed a routine tie up on a second period penalty kill and couldn't shift over to box out a secondary threat. This led to a goal against. Dragicevic chased too much for my liking, but he did disrupt a few lanes due to the aforementioned good positioning. He's firmly a second day guy for me -- there's just too much risk here for such a throwback defender. This is my third poor viewing.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Dragicevic positioned well in this one, but his overall involvement was limited. Any other defenceman in his position would have likely made the same plays -- except for a few passing ideas. He plays 30 minutes, at a low pace, one dictated by his feet mostly; he backtracks ahead of the opposing rush to avoid getting beat, but still can't completely kill plays due to a lack of four-way mobility. He didn't really have to play much in-zone defence. His transition passes were mostly good, a few stretch passes and lobs to racing teammates and shorter feeds, too. In the offensive zone, he can manipulate, drag defenders away to create lanes, but due to his feet, he's mostly limited to a distribution role. He scores a lot, but that's pretty normal considering the usage and the powerplay time.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Starting to figure out Dragicevic's game. He's a legitimately strong activator. He has a ton of different ways to get open. Just off the rush, he shrinks the distance by following the puck carrier, expands it by flying down the weak side, and trailing up the middle, often sometimes switching between them in quick succession. Where most players retreat, he angles and pressures the puck carrier to force a dump-out or get a steal. His work from the point shows real skill and anticipation, using his posture to deceive opponents, manipulating their feet by dragging the puck in one direction before accelerating in the other, and vision. The skating means that many of his best reads get killed -- he's on his heels and struggles to separate. His defensive engagement's high, but his reads are late. He tries, but he's so beatable off the rush. The offensive mind looks legit, and I like his defensive energy. If the skating comes, he could be a middle-pairing option. But that's going to require a lot. He could be a first-round candidate.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Dragicevic is full of great habits offensively. He's deceptive in his posture and handling, keeping opponents guessing. He passes with pace, one-touch and two-touches, especially on the powerplay. He activates off the rush, often leading it (which can also be a bad habit as it affects the defensive game...), and he can carry pucks in the zone by using his inherent deceptiveness with his posture. His puck-moving game is impaired by his team's stretch system and "safer plays" mentality, at least that's what I think, and also by his skating. He can't shake the forecheck on his own so he doesn't try a risky "through the forecheck" play; he dumps the puck out. The skating probably grades as a 4 and the defensive game is not up to the level of the offensive game. His reads are late, his gapping is loose, and he can't really correct mistakes. So, he's an offensively minded defenceman, a puck-mover on his best days, with some deception and instincts, who could learn the defensive game, but suffers from likely permanent skating issues, as they look postural. That's probably a B prospect.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The highs are so very high, but the lows are, well, everything other than the flashes. Some of the highs: delaying, passing, joining the rush up the weak side ahead of his forwards, curl-and-drag wristers set-up by his activation, manipulating incoming pressure with weight shifts before pushing off wide, and flashy handling skill. Used all sorts of tricks -- cutbacks, heel-to-heels especially -- to change pace and attempt to beat forecheckers. Key word being attempt. Even when he creates the advantage, his feet fail him. He just can't separate with that stride. As a result, many of his best sequences are killed at the blue-line or just result in him endlessly circling around, dangling around one player at a time and never truly getting space. He shows proactive activation skill, handling skill, vision, and shooting ability, but he's rarely able to create the best outcome. Defensively, he's a mess. He works hard, not smart. Tries to play physical and kill plays, but he's always chasing because he positions himself in the middle of nowhere. Rarely actually locked to his check. Struggles with speed. Breakouts are just short-range plays for activation opportunities or dump-outs. No in between. He could be a first. He could be a third.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Dragicevic continues to score, but he's not especially effective at this level otherwise. His defensive skating leaves him vulnerable to attackers with creativity and speed. He gets beat in just about every situation possible, and his reaction is usually to lay on the ice or reach and get beat again. He activates into the rush, showing a bit of vision and shooting skill, but lacks the extra layers to complete most of these plays. Takes too long to make decisions, too. He didn't look like a draft pick in this game. Weak mechanics, poor details, and limited impact on the game.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Dragicevic looks more like a project than an A prospect. At least that's my impression right now. He lacks the mechanics that lead to agility: ankle flexion, back angle... And didn't show many great ideas under pressure in this game. His game only started to shine with time and space on the powerplay. The defensive effort was admirable.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Dragicevic had the play of the game. He stepped in, sold the shot, then fired a cross-slot pass for what should've been a goal. Everyone was fooled. Some other strong offensive plays, too. He has the right ideas. He skates towards the middle, bringing the defender with him, then cuts over his inside edge and drives wide. Give-and-go rush activation, but his teammates rarely do anything other than the dump the puck. The environment's a big limiter. Skating might prove just as problematic. Lacks ankle flexion, keeping his hips too high. Can't explode out of the skating moves he tries, sometimes coming to a complete stop. Lacks the quickness to win races, and sometimes concedes way too early. Defensive skating is all gambles, marred by poor pivots. There are draftable qualities, but he has a long way to go. Curious to track his development.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

It's early, but the flashes of exciting skill from last season haven't been built upon. In moments, Dragicevic shows projectable transition habits. He cuts back, twists away from pressure, and delays to invite pressure, then he advances the puck to the middle and passes to the flanks. But he throws pucks away for no discernible reason and misses the best play when he's actually trying to create. Defensively, he's a bit messy. The defensive skating limitations combine with a tendency to over-extend for disastrous consequences. Leans on his toes, then lunges forward. Once the attacker approaches, he leans on his heels and kills his momentum. Zero offensive impact, but this wasn't a great game for Tri-City in general. Curious to see how he develops this season.

Daniel Gee: September 24th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Undoubtedly a better performance in this game, Dragicevic put in some good work in the offensive zone. Constantly being ordered to move the puck into the middle of the ice by Tri-City's coaching staff, the direction immediately paid off in the first. After Dragicevic took a low placed point shot on the powerplay, a rebound managed to pop out of the chaos resulting in an early lead. Working the puck high, Dragicevic had an amazing carry west-to-east, activating into a downhill attack. From the circle, he ripped a shot that missed by inches, exploiting the collapsed Cougar's defenders. The next period, he made a deft activation into soft-space in the mid-slot, taking a pass, one-timing a shot top-shelf. He got low and powered through on one knee. Placement, execution, power, it's all there once he gets off the blueline. I still doubt it's a tool that will be a weapon at higher levels -- his mechanics are quite poor, but he's a functional shooter the lower in the zone he gets -- combine that with smart activations and he will score in the WHL. Dragicevic was fairly interesting in transition. Stutter-step manipulations, in-motion breakouts -- he even had a beautiful end-to-end carry on the powerplay where he pulled off multiple weight-shift moves to beat the forechecking contingent. Really rough on retrievals, however. No feet-manipulation, a lot of panicked board banks.

Less nuclear-level errors in his own zone, but Dragicevic still had some concerning sequences. He struggles in pressure, has no escapability when he does have the puck, and that leads to forecheckers closing space and long prolonged battles below the goal line. Reactive stick work and a lack of inside-lane protection creates too many inside advantages for his opponents -- when planted his stick was just not ready to clog lanes or disrupt releases. A much better game defending the transition, Dragicevic guided opponents to the outside better, but was still beaten and turned by Riley Heidt on a first period play -- Dragicevic ended up horse-collaring him in response. His best sequence was in the third when he was able to protect the inside lane and redirect a shot wide. I feel like he will be overused this season, that will lead to compounding errors, and he will make more mistakes, souring projections. Would he be better in a more insulated role? Probably, but he doesn't look like a defender I would consider as one of the top-tier guys of this draft.

Daniel Gee: September 23rd, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Dragicevic showed some solid habits in the offensive zone. A constant boards-to-middle puck mover, he was constantly working to funnel traffic-heavy shots from the middle of the point. His shot from the blue line appears fairly underdeveloped mechanically--no downforce, not powerful enough to make it through layers. Had a hard time manipulating Cougar pressure pushers -- often had his attempts blocked by the first layer. Dragicevic was better in transition -- popping multiple in-motion breakout passes. Skating deficiencies affect his carry attempts. As he stands, it looks like he is skating in sand; stride is short, almost no push-off and extension.

Looked woefully unprepared to defend the Cougars' transition -- he frankly was beat up all game. Wheatcroft kept driving him wide throughout the game, Dragicevic unable to not only judge the oncoming speed, but adjust his feet (heel-push, proactive backwards crossovers). Feet are so static that he has no explosiveness when he is turned, leading to a lot of reaching. Had to be a play like this across each period. Four-way mobility will have to be a lot better to even be a professional. In sustained situations, Dragicevic looked overly tired throughout a lot of his shifts -- this was evident in the first when he tracked down his check but just did not have enough energy to get his stick-in-the-release of the puck carrier. Had a couple great rebound clearing sequences but he was very much fighting for his life under the Cougars forecheck and cycling. Very physical in the corners -- took out frustrations on Heidt after multiple third period penalties against. First game of the season and Tri-City was under-manned but he didn't look like a high-end pick in this one. Will have to watch much more.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Dragicevic needs to clean up his rush defence, but he's already a strong engager deeper in the DZ. Times his checks with the incoming passing, lots of scanning, and subtle tactics to establish positioning and win battles. Inconsistent on breakouts, but the ideas were consistently sound: draw in pressure, pass through to the teammate on the inside. He doesn't panic and default to clearances; he looks for a better play first, even after his original play changed. Activated into the rush and set up a pair of scoring chances. He's already an impressive player.



39 Tanner Molendyk

AGE 17.614 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Matt Grzelcyk



Fleet of Foot



Evasive



Play Killer

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

7.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saskatoon Blades	WHL	67	9	28	37	0.55

SCOUTING REPORT

There are smooth skaters, there are explosive skaters, and there's Tanner Molendyk. Every game is a masterclass in some element of skating, whether that's turns, cutbacks, speed, or lateral movement. That mobility could make him the surprise challenger for the draft's top defenceman down the line.

A quick series of crossovers launch Molendyk past multiple opponents; it doesn't matter if he's moving forwards, backwards, or laterally. At full speed, he changes directions with sudden outside edge cuts, heel-to-heel skating, and tight turns.

With that skating, Molendyk stays in opponents' faces non-stop. Even speedier, skilled opponents struggle as he instantly claims the middle, forces them wide, then darts across for the steal in a blink of an eye. His stick work's precise, and his hits heavy. Undoubtedly, he's one of the best rush defenders to come through the last few drafts.

Then, Molendyk goes on the attack. Part-dynamic rusher, part-passer, he carves up the forecheck before sending a team up the ice with a long-range pass. He makes every play in motion to instantly join the rush. There's little doubt that he will continue to outskate opponents in the NHL, and he could do so much more.

"He can beat defenders off the point in so many different ways: fake

Tanner Molendyk

D | Saskatoon Blades | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 157.9



shots on pass receptions, faking inside to the outside, stop-start deception, head fakes, and so on,” Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in January. “But he never commits to it. As soon as the defender closes a bit of space, he hits the brakes and throws the puck into the corner. He doesn’t read the opponents’ feet, it seems, which leads to turnovers (sometimes) and missed opportunities to create (often).”

As the margin for error shrinks with each step up the ladder, being able to squeeze the most out of every inch of space counts more and more.

Of course, Molendyk doesn’t have to become a dynamic play-creator to reach the NHL. That’s the benefit of being a dynamic play-killer with breakout skill. But if he can learn to exploit the opportunities his skating creates, there’s a real chance he’s a complete, minute-munching defenceman inside a team’s top-four.

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“Elite skater. Probably the fastest player in the draft. Guys can’t touch him when he has the puck between the blue lines. I think he’s a pretty good defensive player too. Hands and brain need to catch up to his feet though.” – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Winnipeg is just too strong. It’s hard to evaluate Molendyk properly in these games as he is forced to make plays against not just one but two forecheckers on his back, and while his in-zone defence has probably improved, he’s still not capable of thwarting two-on-one attacks near the net, constant two-on-one attacks. He’s not rising above but also overwhelmed. Some good puck distribution moments and a couple of nice breakouts when he had a bit more space. He can turn, absorb a hit from an opponent, and use the shove to spin off and carry up ice, leaving the other guy way behind. Skating is still elite. Handling follows the feet, for the most part. Physical skills are projectable due to the great skating foundation. Sense still seems closer to average.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs Red Deer Rebels - WHL

A strong game for Molendyk overall. He scored twice, two nice goals, too. On the first one, he made the breakout pass, activated up ice, got the puck back, evaded a slide, and beat the goalie with a shot. In the second one, he carried the puck out, passed it after attracting the defence, and then batted a return pass mid-air into the net. These three zone plays, Molendyk can make a lot of them with his skating. It’s close to an elite tool. It’s so good that he can build a whole NHL game on top of it. His rush defence was as strong as ever. Even if he started his backtracking a couple of steps late, he’s so quick and agile that he can catch-up to any play. His in-zone defensive footwork and angling also improved over the course of the season. It’s very easy

for him to stick to attackers and it will be the same in the NHL. My issue remains the same: I don't believe in the hockey sense as much. When situations get more complex, when attackers have clear advantages to leverage against him, like a pass option or more space or more speed, he freezes a lot more. He becomes passive and removes his biggest advantage: the aggression potential that his mobility gives him. Same on the offensive side. Molendyk carries a ton of pucks out, but he doesn't really know what to do with them. He tries the same scripted weight-shift fakes, hoping his speed and those feints will clear a path for him. He can still read the game; he will likely earn an average mark for his hockey sense and his skating will mask some of his flawed reads, but despite having a potentially elite NHL mobility, I'm not sure he will ever become a play-driver with it. I see him more as a bottom-three, two-way, but mostly shutdown defenceman who follows system guide-lines and has the occasional highlight-reel carry when the conditions are right. That may still be a top-40 pick in this draft.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Molendyk got forechecked in this game. His skating wasn't an advantage when the pace and reads were poor. He had 12 turnovers on the breakout. He basically had three plays: skate straight into pressure, cutback into pressure, or a dump out. He tried skill plays sometimes, like a quick stick wave to mask his intentions – but the play he was hiding was the wrong play. Didn't scan enough, head always looking straight up the rink. Avoided the middle at all costs, even when it was the only option, and coughed the puck up a ton as a result. Not much offence in this game, either. Took pucks flatfooted, didn't use space, and only made simple, obvious plays. Not deceptive, even when given time to freeze the defence. Save for a couple of rushes where he overskated, the defence was solid. Threw some big hits, kept attackers to the perimeter, and killed plays around his net. That looks like his game at the next level. He looked like a mid-rounder in this game. I've seen better.

Cam Robinson: March 1st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs Red Deer Rebels - WHL

I feel confident in saying that this was the best showing I've seen from Molendyk. You can tell right from his first shift that he was locked in. He was active all over the rink. In the offensive end, he was quick to jump on loose pucks along the wall, use his terrific skating to backward crossover and pull himself toward the middle and fire a shot mid-walk. He was in near constant movement, hunting for a spot, hunting for an opportunity to step up. In the defensive end, he was quick on retrievals and made some really creative moves to break pressure, take a few hard strides and move it. Then jump into the play. There was a ton of that. He followed up an attempt to split the D which was foiled, grabbed the loose puck and ended up with a HD shot for. He was drawing coverage in his own end before smartly moving the puck. He was sticking to his man at the netfront, following him to the slot and breaking up low-to-high plays before they could get going. The skating was on full display. It's a serious weapon. And if he can play this style of aggression more often, he'd be a slam dunk A-grade. We need more of these games.

David St-Louis: March 1st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs Red Deer Rebels - WHL

One of the best games I've seen from Molendyk, especially the first periods. My concerns are the same, but it did reinforce his strengths: the rush defence, effort, high-level skating, carry ability, and occasional puck-moving flashes. Great man-on-man defence. He sticks with his check, mirrors footwork, helps others when breakdowns happen, and turns steals or interceptions into offence. He had a couple of nice breakout escapes, including a backhand slip pass. He attracts before passing, activates... The playmaking habits are there. I'm still not sure they are supported by the right reads and processing, but his package will certainly carry him to the NHL. When the pressure increases, will he be able to make the same plays? He relies a ton on his skating at this level and, while it will remain an advantage for him in the NHL, he won't be so much at ease.

Daniel Gee: February 14th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

First time seeing Molendyk live and it's apparent that video does not do his skating justice. Possessing a rather sneaky separation gear on his carry attempts up the ice, he exploded from his defensive end multiple times in this game. His habits combine to create an immense blend. His retrieval work stood out early. Molendyk scans, manipulates, and wheels for quick outs. On one play in the first he pulled off the stick wand, faking with his shoulders and stick, cutting hard against the grain to shake off pressure. In another sequence he fended off closer pressure with one arm and then escaped with the use of his stride. He looked to punish the Cougars off of every mistake. In the first he stole a puck on the right-hand circle, worked downhill, paused, and feathered a pass backdoor that was just off. He had a similar play on the powerplay in the third. After exploding up

the middle with a crossover laden wheel in the NZ, Molendyk entered the OZ, delayed again with an abrupt stop-up, and found a teammate in the slot, leading to a shot. He understands the value of space. Later on a 2-on-2, Molendyk attacked into the pressure, dropped off a pass to Sidorov filing as a trailer, and drove the defenders back -- just supremely smart. While he is a dynamic mover off the blueline and didn't face much pressure pushing, he struggled to create the same way he did in transition. Floats weak shots off the point after board-to-middle movement. Evacuates quickly out of pinch attempts too early. Can evade with the puck but rarely creates.

A very aggressive neutral zone activator while defending the rush, Molendyk killed a bunch of entry attempts in this one. Even when the aggression backfires, he's mobile enough to dash into the middle to help disrupt more elusive inside rush-patterns. He knocked Ziemmer off-balance on one entry, exploiting the skating mismatch. Even stood up a much bigger Ethan Samson who was crashing in the middle. Body positioning is key and Molendyk is always working to leverage it. The aggression was prominent in sustained pressure, almost more so. On multiple occasions Molendyk evacuated his positioning near the net to push direct pressure on top-of-the slot puck carriers. This surprised them, leading to clears. On one PK he pushed pressure and was able to get back to clear a forehand wrap attempt. Killed possessions by working COugars to the outside and even clogged lanes late in this one. Took a nasty shot off his leg on a monster block in the third. Behind on a couple of faster one-touch plays. His worst sequence was in the third -- activated too high, lost his check, and wasn't able to provide enough resistance on a rebounder. I think he may struggle to create at the NHL level and his mobility mismatches defensively will diminish when he faces higher competition, but there is a lot to like in Molendyk's rush defending, retrieval and transition work. Will be a useful prospect regardless, but his projection is fraught with the risk that he just ends up a mobile bottom pairing option if steps in his development go haywire.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs Winnipeg Ice - WHL

I really struggle to see Molendyk how others see him. For me when I watch him, I see a player who developed around his skating, who honed certain patterns in certain situations and then replicates them game after game without really processing or reading what's going on around him. He's elusive and he made some really nice activations in this one. He defends the rush well and works fine in the defensive zone, but the pace and the flow of the play, he's just not really a part of it. He could function as a bottom-pair defensive specialist if he learns to anticipate in zone defence a bit more or slowly develops in the AHL and becomes experienced enough that he develops the right positionings. I need to watch more.

Daniel Gee: February 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

A wildly impressive performance by Molendyk who had his hands all over this game. So mobile in transition, he constantly hit teammates up the middle of the ice in this game, always in motion. Board-banks across two lines, shifty retrieval work -- he's such a projectable puck mover. On one retrieval in the first he popped the puck through his legs to pull it off the wall and avoid a board crasher and start the breakout. Later in the game, he trailed in off-puck through the slot, activating into a small pass seam, timing it perfectly. Molendyk attacked the net, pivoted, and hooked a pass to a wide open weakside activator for a high-danger chance. I don't know how projectable he is in the offensive zone. He had one really impressive sequence where he flashed his mobility on the blueline. After a board-to-middle movement, Molendyk cut back on the line to avoid an aggressive push. Out of the manoeuvre another forechecker attacked, leading to a handle and lateral push off back into the middle. By doing this he had pulled three defenders high and when he released a shot in the high-slot, a teammate was able to jump on the rebound with no defensive resistance. Beyond this play there wasn't a tonne of activation. While the aforementioned sequence was a wild showcase of his edges, the chances he escapes like he did in the NHL are much lower.

Molendyk's transitional defending was the real standout factor of his game. Always gapped and looking to disrupt possession, he drove multiple rushes to the side and end boards by containing and cutting off the inside lane. He got his stick in the release of in-zone shots, and was stepped up constantly on the line. Even when faced with Zach Benson working his edges, proactive contact, and handling behind Molendyk's back, he was able to stay with him through the sea of manipulation -- I like his adaptation here. Molendyk locked down secondary threat sticks well and even started to throw his body around late in the third. He was burnt badly by a Benson rush -- split right down the middle as his momentum was manipulated. When handling pressure, the lack of strength is apparent with Molendyk -- he constantly lets attackers on the inside of the ice, unable to win body positioning. He had an amazing tracking play in the second -- he found an ICE player drifting away for a centering pass,

chopping the puck away on reception. Molendyk even saved a goal by taking Geekie out who was positioned backdoor on a penalty kill. Looked like a first rounder in this game in terms of impact. Maybe he doesn't produce at the next levels, but as he matures, these defensive habits and mobility could take him a long way.

Cam Robinson: January 28th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs Saskatoon Blades - WHL

A lot of shot attempts for Molendyk in this one, but not a lot of substance to them. He is often guilty of being too stationary as he prepares to unload his wrist. Taking a moment to draw that pressure and using his quick acceleration or edge work to peel open a lane and allow more traffic would do him wonders. Still, he was a bit more creative, using several shot pass attempts at a streaking presence, and grabbed a primary assist on a crossing tip play. He hopped out of the box and received the puck for a break but again didn't make it hard on the netminder with a pretty clear cut shot.

Defensively, once again I loved his reads. He was slipping the stick check out effectively to defend the defensive line, and even when they didn't work, he would fall back and read the next pass and be in position to intercept or box out. I keep thinking there's more coming offensively, but we need to see more than a flash. Especially on the PP where he's getting opportunities but is looking too stationary.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team Red vs Team White - CHL TPG

The only thing I really like about Molendyk is the rush defence. It's super smooth, beautiful to watch, a work of art in his angling and timing on pokechecks and engages -- when it's one-on-one. The hockey sense concerns are big for me. He can't adapt to unusual situations, defensively or offensively. As long as the game is predictable for him, follows the usual routes, he's fine, but if there's an odd-man rush or if he's stuck backchecking like a forward, he can't make the right reads. The slow forecheck helped his puck-moving game shine here. I like the effort, the rush defence, the activations, and the occasional breakouts, but I'm not a believer, not at this stage.

Cam Robinson: January 25th, 2023 - Team Red vs Team White - CHL TPG

Molendyk was probably the standout player in this one. He wasn't the most electric. He didn't rack up all of the points, but for a player who came into the event as an afterthought, he was buzzing all night. He got things rolling with a step up check in open ice on Beau Akey that clearly energized him and the crowd. He was activating as usual but was more dynamic - taking cutting routes and creating space and then distributing. On the man-advantage, he was opening up, moving laterally, utilizing fakes and feints. It didn't result in pucks on net, but didn't force the defensive structure to move and opened up lanes.

He was his normal self on against the rush, taking on Connor Bedard twice and closing the gap quickly and shutting down the attempts before they really even got started.

It was a physical, smart game that showed his speed and a bit of the potential he could have in the offensive end. His shot selection remains too primitive - even in this strong showing.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Molendyk could be the most dynamic defender in this draft. The edges border elite and he clearly wants to be involved. He can beat defenders off the point in so many different ways: fake shots on pass receptions, faking inside to the outside, stop-start deception, head fakes, and so on. But he never commits to it. As soon as the defender closes a bit of space, he hits the brakes and throws the puck into the corner. He misses opportunities to make the extra crossover to create space. He doesn't adapt to his release point to shooting lanes. He doesn't read the opponents' feet, it seems, which leads to turnovers (sometimes) and missed opportunities to create (often). His rushes follow the same patterns: skate until he runs out of space, then shoot. Never tries the extra move. Of course, there's a lot of good in his game: non-stop activation, aggressive rush defence with mirroring footwork and innate defensive timing, and some physicality. Flashed an in-motion give-and-go to gain the zone for one of his best rushes of the game. If he puts together the various skills with anticipation and more confidence under pressure, he'll be unstoppable at this level. But that's a huge if given his play at this stage of the season.

Cam Robinson: January 17th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Molendyk was showing the supreme command of rush defending in this one. He doesn't allow attackers a chance to gain ice - especially towards the middle. He steps up and just smothers rush attempts with a clean stick check, or a body on body move. He can cut off lanes by reading the eyes and the patterns. Its s damn shame he can't do the same thing from the opposite side of the coin while he rushes the puck. Molendyk activates into the play as a high option and when he receives the puck will show off the edge work and create a little more room for himself. However, in this one, he didn't really do much with that space.

He needs to figure out a way to be a calm with the puck as he is without it and facing it. Easier said than done. But with his skating ability and rush defence, he's going to have a long runway to figure it out. And if not, employing a simpler style of transitioning the puck with quick outlets or deferring to a more creative mate is the likely future.

Mitchell Brown: January 17th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

More of the same from Molendyk. He's an NHL rush defender, killing plays early, often, and in a variety of ways. That's established. The question is the upside. The skating's at least 7-grade - rare to see players with such refined outside edges. He takes and makes passes in motion. He's explosive from stops. But his offensive reads were mostly poor in this game. He activated, filled space, and pinched at the right moments. But as soon as the puck arrived on his stick, he refused to use space. He fired low-percentage shots, passing up opportunities to cut inside for a chance. Always fired the same outside leg wrister; never adapting the release point to the pressure in front of him, let alone creating space for his shot - lots of deflected shots. He cuts back when he could advance the play. His game is all reactions to what's immediately in front of him. If he adds planning and anticipation atop the tools, defence, and involvement, he could make him a No. 2 or 3. But that's a lot to ask, considering he doesn't even show those in flashes.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

There is a lot of chaos and panic in Molendyk's game. It always feels like he's in a rush. He has the skating to play this kind of game successfully at this level, but the lack of planning and control will hurt him a lot at higher levels. He scans, he's aware, but he doesn't anticipate. It's all high-speed reactions. The only time where he settles down is on the powerplay, where he scored with a one-timer. He catches pucks in crossovers, challenges defenders, outskates them, gets inside...He's a threat, but too frantic for me. It's really all about the tools projection with him and hoping that he settles down and learns to anticipate and be ahead of the game more.

Cam Robinson: December 13th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs Saskatoon Blades - WHL

This was an interesting outing from Molendyk. He made several complex plays with the puck that worked out and made him stand out. He bombed a flip pass from the defensive end over two opponents that was caught by his teammate, pulled down and led to a goal. In the second frame, he read the play well, scurried hard and quick to the net and timed a cross slot feed for a quick stride goal.

He also made a horrendous play behind his own net where he sent a soft pass right in front of the crease which was intercepted and tapped home.

The skating is really clean. He has depth to his stride, recovers well under the body. Not much wasted motion or effort. He opens up the hips and can move laterally well but doesn't enough. I really like his backwards mobility - that's where the edges really shine and he sticks with opponents so well. First three steps generate a lot of power. The skating is the crown jewel here.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Molendyk does stuff without much awareness of his opponents at times. He tries to deke or sprint through them, not respecting that they, well, exist. He reacts, reacts, reacts - there's little foresight or planning to his game, save in moments. There were a couple of plays where he held the puck in his hip pocket, waited for the forechecker to engage, then cut back and launched

himself up the middle. He has intelligent rush patterns, attacking at angles and taking the inside. More significant pace changes will help him keep the middle, which is why he generates so little offence right now. Right now, he's best defensively. He's a machine. Stops play after play, taking away the middle first, before coming across and getting the steal. Always in someone's face. Mirrors footwork to trap players along the boards. Off-puck, there's a lot of work to be done. He's more of a second-rounder at this stage.

Cam Robinson: November 30th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

A productive outing from Molendyk as he grabbed a goal and a primary helper in this one. The goal came as he attacked down the flank and took a nice shot from a not so great angle. He tried to pick the corner but it generated a rebound which he fished around for and eventually buried as the net was coming off. The primary helper came from a cross-ice pass and shot reception at the line which got through the goalie but was banged home. On several occasions, he was using a simple one-timer without timing traffic in front on the PP. It was ineffective. He did show a nice lateral shake and move towards the middle before sending a chest high wrister through traffic. It was what we need to see more often from him. Maybe with a better shot selection.

Defensively, he was strong at defending the blue line, but did get a bit crossed up a couple of times in zone.

He also made a few ill-advised passes while joining the rush. Appeared to be trying to get too cute to drive the middle lane and then finesse a little pass through two folds which was easily thwarted. Again he was the high-man, received it and had the middle lane but skated himself right into the defender and coughed it up.

He needs to either simplify his rush game or add a couple of degrees of creativity. We love that mobility though.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Medicine Hats - WHL

Molendyk continues to show a higher-end mobility, but it's hard for me to look past the lack of anticipation and processing in his game. He has the skill to make the next play if that play is open, and he can defend predictable situations, but add one more variable and he seems lost as to what he's supposed to do. He's just there, a neutral presence in most plays, at least that's what I feel. He displays skills but there is no urgency to create. Some of the decisions were relatively poor and he missed some relatively evident coverages. All I see are above-average tools at this juncture.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

The usual from Molendyk. He's an aggressive rush defender, taking away space immediately and getting in opponents' faces. Runs into difficulty sometimes because he's overaggressive with his crossovers. Evasive on retrievals, using deception and cutbacks to prepare space. Offensively, he makes simple plays for the most part. When he tries to get involved, he becomes turnover-prone. He does everything too fast, but all of the individual components are there: deception, body positioning, handling skill, edge control. More of a short-to-medium range passer in transition, building plays with lateral passes and the occasional puck to the middle. When he joins, he passes and skates his routes to create lanes. Looked more like a second-rounder in this game.

Cam Robinson: November 12th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

A more physical outing from Molendyk in this one. He was strong along the wall and handled forechecking pressure well. He even dropped a big hit at the post as a player was attempting to wrap it. Instead he ate a shoulder to chest hit. He was tight up against rush attempted - taking the space away effectively before any creative plays could begin. He didn't jump into the rush as actively in this one but instead used a more simplistic quick out passing game - which suited him just fine.

Not a standout game, but quietly effective.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

This was a pretty basic performance from Molendyk, but basic good, not the bad kind. He was involved in most plays, but not creating anything extraordinary. He moved to create lanes, kept forecheckers on his back as he handled, rammed opponents off the puck, stretched passes to teammates up-ice. I'm not sure about the overall hockey sense, but the tools are really interesting. He looks like an above-average skater and handler. Add the physical game on top and reasonably good rotations and you could have an NHL player.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Molendyk's tools and rush defence. The skating's the obvious one: how easily he maintains his edges through contact, how quickly he changes directions, and the explosive backwards skating. He was basically perfect defending the rush in this game, using that mobile to take the middle, force plays wide, then crunch the player along the boards. Entered battles outsized but threw his weight into the hands of the opponent to win. As usual, he showed a ton of handling skill, keeping pucks in his hip pocket, bringing them closer to his body when necessary, and using the underhandle. The issue remains that he doesn't sell a lot of moves with weight shifts and he tries to play at his top speed as much as possible. He ends up fighting the puck a lot. He doesn't need to play at his top speed to separate at this level. Offensively, he has solid fundamentals: use space, build the play, move through pass receptions. But it's rare for these plays to lead to much high-danger offence. That's also a Saskatoon-wide limitation. Molendyk looked more like a second-round candidate than a first-round one in this game. Upside's high.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Molendyk is DY Olen Zellweger: the strengths, weaknesses, and path for improvement are all the same. Molendyk's all mobility. His feet are a bit chaotic when the puck, but he achieves optimal depth while keeping his chest and head up. Just like Zellweger, he's prone to play too fast with the puck, cutting back into pressure he just beat, fighting the puck at top speed, and making mistakes off retrievals. But, he also delays, outwaits pressure, looks inside and cross-ice for options, and joins the rush in every way imaginable. The offence is more about blasting shots with occasional playmaking. Defence remains a huge selling point, even if he misses the occasional close out. He explodes into the backpedal with a series of crossovers, taking away the middle with ease. Keeps a wide base and maintains his speed with heel pushes. Head's always up. Stopped seven of eight rushes against, all in a variety of ways. He surfs across, forces the pass outside then darts across to kill the play along the boards, and gets face-to-face stops. And the rushes are just crazy, even if he's prone to skating into groups that he can't escape: pulls away from pressure with shocking ease. He could be a top 20, if not top 15 in this class. Dynamic with high-end play-killing ability.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Molendyk's such a skilled skater. He uses punch turns over either leg (his outside leg turn is especially impressive), uses two-foot stops and jabs as much as possible, and gets full extension on many of his crossovers. His forwards crossovers aren't quite as refined as his backwards, but they're close. Explosive in all directions, especially backwards and laterally. On breakouts, he uses the skating to beat forecheckers into lanes, to deceive, and to outskate pressure. Long and short-range passes: backhand saucers, tape-to-space bullets, and precise cross-ice passes (the best went underneath the sticks of two forecheckers) and he accelerates out of all them. Occasionally prone to losing his check off-puck, but a refined defensive player who takes the middle away, kills entries early, intercepts passes, and pins attacks to the boards. Offensively, he's more inconsistent. He creates tons of space with his evasiveness, and shows a willingness to both pass and shoot. But there was also poor space management in this game. He drew pressure but didn't exploit it, didn't use space before shooting, and tried to force passes through defenders instead of pushing off laterally and moving into the lane. Lacks the additional layer of shooting skill to become a threat from the positions his skating gets him. The technical base is strong and he's already polished in many areas. Excited to see how he grows this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Molendyk had another strong game. The skating's clearly the selling point. Defensively, he uses heel pushes to build backwards speed and fully-loaded pivots to explode across. He eats up space and piles up stops in the neutral zone. Forces a ton of dump-ins, too. The skating allows him to outrace defenders and forecheckers, an advantage that he maximizes with change of pace

and occasional deception. Weight shifts, too. Uses the middle, then looks to the boards for teammates sprinting ahead. A nasty pivot turn hesitation left a forechecker metres behind. Doesn't overhandle, preferring to use his teammates or play pucks into space and beat defenders on their pivot. He was arguably Canada's best blueliner in this tournament. Looks like a top-15, if not higher, candidate.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Real shame about Molendyk getting hurt early in this one. He was up to his usual tricks up to that point, using his skating to generate entries and exits with ease, and his deception to open up passing plays from the offensive blue line. Some really advanced habits and offensive concepts already baked into his game, whether it's space management, drawing in pressure as a puck-carrier to create opportunities elsewhere, or moving through each pass, shot, reception, etc. His work on retrievals is already at an NHL level. Molendyk's had some not-so-great defensive moments in this tournament, but I'd rate his work in that zone as a distinct positive. I hope we see more of him before the tournament ends. Looks like one of if not the best defensive prospect in the class.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Molendyk left this game early, but still showed a bunch of interesting stuff in his few minutes. He got his neutral zone stops as usual. His skating continues to shine. He accelerates through pass receptions, waits for pressure to arrive, then fakes and moves in the opposite direction – projectable habits for creating offence. In one motion, he took a puck off the boards and spun around his outside leg to the middle. And he's always leveraging his tight gap into activation and vice-versa. He's dynamic with play-killing ability. A top player for the 2023 Draft.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Molendyk had at least five stops in transition this game. He anticipated attacks to the inside, then timed his stick check without over-extending. He threw hits, angles plays, and suffocated players with a tight gap. Give-and-go breakout passes that became rush activation. He still outskates everyone in spurts. Scored with a late-game wrister from range, but the shot looked more like a weakness in this game. He struggled to turn a pass in his feet into a legitimate scoring chance. Game's still a bit chaotic overall, but he's making faster, tighter decisions than last year. Or, it's just August hockey. What do I know?

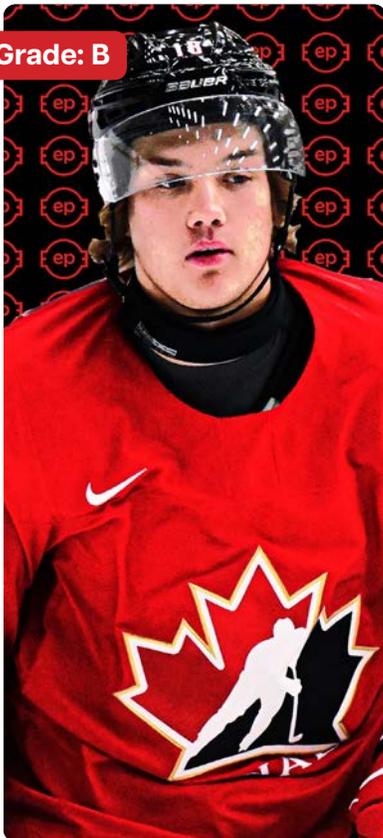
Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Dynamic. What Molendyk couldn't outskate, he out-thought. He dangled through defenders, around them, used the middle, and created advantages. He deceived with his eyes, weaving rush patterns, and fake shots. His intentions are never clear. Even when getting pulled or pushed, he still sneaks away with possession. His pinches are timed perfectly. Leans playmaking over shooting from the point, but lacks the precision to make full use of his skill and vision. Defensively, he's sound. He angles, times his engagements, and kills plays in the neutral zone. He mirrors footwork and keeps his check to the outside. Net front coverage needs some work. Looks like a top prospect for the 2023 Draft.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Molendyk had major issues on the breakout in this game, passing pucks to no one and skating straight into pressure. Still an impressive performance as an activator. He finds space up the weakside, down the middle, and as the trailer. He's always open. Passes in motion and then sprints. A bunch of kills in the neutral zone with a tight gap (established in the offensive end). Skill's high, although he missed a couple of opportunities to make the best play (shot instead). Independent hands and feet, handling skill, and in motion skill. Looks like a top prospect.

Grade: B



40 Koehn Ziemmer

AGE 17.770 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 08, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Lower-pace Travis Konecny



Lethal Shooter



Ankle Breaker



Hammer

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	6.5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
6.5	6	6.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Prince George Cougars	WHL	68	41	48	89	1.31

SCOUTING REPORT

Koehn Ziemmer is here to do three things: Smash skulls, break ankles, and snipe. Rinse and repeat. As such, he will be a valuable commodity at the draft, likely hearing his name called 10 or so spots higher than where he's ranked. And that's a perfectly justifiable decision.

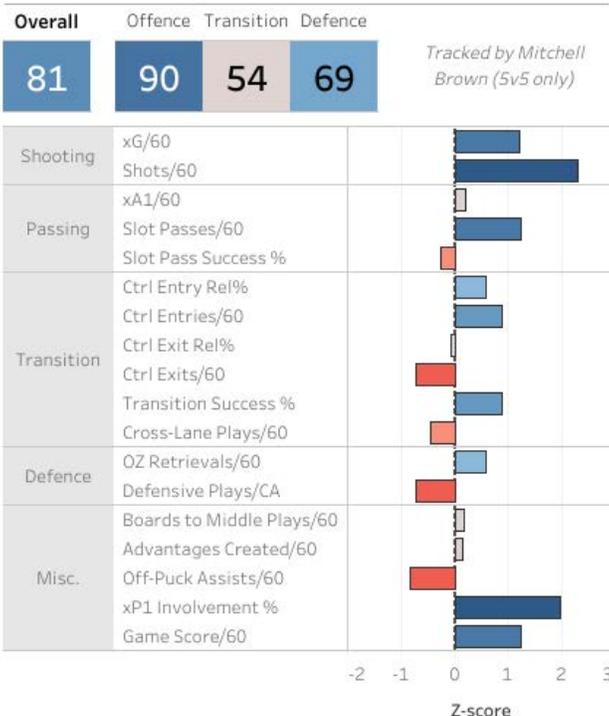
Sniper's release, small-area skill, off-puck instincts, and off-the-pass shooting – Ziemmer looks the part of an NHL goalscorer. He zips shots around defenders, pump-faking and toe-dragging to create that little extra space for the release. With perfect timing, he spins off checks and gets open for deflections, rebounds, and flashy in-tight moves.

Watching Ziemmer is also an IV drip of (often unpenalized) violence. He throws reverse hits with the puck and crushing hits along the boards without it. Crosschecks, nudges, and non-stop always being in the way are the subtler ways he ensures opponents know he's on the ice.

Throughout the season, Ziemmer steadily swapped out the perimeter shooting for passing. He recognized that the threat of his shot came with its own gravitational pull. When defenders reach in, he passes under their stick to a teammate across the slot or rushing the net. In transition, the increased willingness to pass appeared as cross-ice

Koehn Ziemmer

F | Prince George Cougars | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 152.0



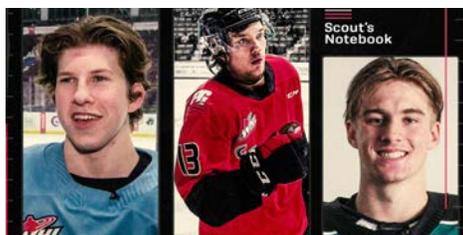
passes for entries, delays for support, and give-and-goes.

Those are welcome changes to Ziemmer's game, who will have a much smaller margin for error than his peers because of skating. His stride is wide, hunched, and generates little power. His edges suffer.

"History shows that the NHL isn't kind to players with significant skating limitations, no matter their hand speed, physicality, and shot," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a February game report. "It's also a clear pathway for him to improve. He's already effective – how much better does the rest of his game improve with just a bit of skating improvement?"

Given his skill level and intelligence, Ziemmer won't have to be a pretty skater or even an especially quick one. He will just have to be quick enough. We're cautious, hence his ranking, but he's worth a first-round pick for teams with a strong development staff.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: An early look at Andrew Cristall, Caden Price, Riley Heidt, and Koehn Ziemmer



WHL Stock Watch: Welcome to the Andrew Cristall show

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He took a bit of a jump in his overall game, I like where it's going with him. Needs to work on the skating." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

📄 GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 5th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Another great game by Ziemmer. He can do everything on the ice (besides moving). He fires with power, quickly (catch-and-release), can spin off checks to attack the net and get his stick on flying pucks, and he can connect passing plays, deceive and manipulate defenders to open spaces for teammates, and win pucks back on the boards with stick and physical work. The hockey sense looks quite higher end. We have to remember that he's old for this draft and playing with a strong playmaking teammate in Heidt. And most of all, that the skating is far from NHL-caliber. He's so hunched over that I'm afraid he's going to develop back problems. The form needs to at least be tweaked a little bit. He could become an NHLer even as a below-average skater, but not with his current speed and stance. Still, I could see a top-40 pick used on him. A team with a history of skating development could select him.

Daniel Gee: March 15th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Easily the best player in the game -- Ziemmer's growth, rounding out his game this season has paid serious dividends. Executing more and more one-touch plays, he deferred off-puck in transition, working off-puck to find an open seam for Heidt to pass into. In the first, he nearly scored off a quick shot off a Heidt delay pass. Drove the middle often to open up even more space for his linemates to operate. Absolutely teed up Heidt on a nifty one-touch passing play in the third. As the play developed, Ziemmer

took a pass from Wheatcroft in the slot -- executing a nice curl-and-drag to cut inwards in the slot but was stick checked -- liked his presence of mind to try and work into a clearer lane. Stride is so prohibited at times so it's interesting to see Ziemmer leverage passing plays that generally promote faster play.

Ziemmer put together some significant sequences in sustained pressure. In the first he won a puck on the near boards, scanned Heidt on the opposite circle, and slipped a puck through a defender's legs, setting up a tic-tac-toe goal for Wheatcroft. The vision here was so impressive -- something absent from his game earlier in the season. He recorded another assist in the second -- the key here was his off-puck movement. Ziemmer floated into the slot, set to shoot -- he took a pass from the right-hand circle, beating the goalie, dribbling behind. Wheatcroft jumped on the loose puck. Give-and-go activations and long cycle plays built on supporting and rotating habits allowed Ziemmer and his linemates to dominate at time. In the third, Ziemmer scored -- this time he was the benefit of another tic-tac-toe play. Has a variety of different shots - allows for adaptability. Gets the puck off his stick with little follow-through. Absorbed abuse on the perimeter and hunts for opportunities to leverage physicality. All good stuff. He does enough to overcome mobility issues -- his sense is the biggest factor as he's a great off-puck mover, but it's still a major question in terms of his translatability. He's a B prospect because of it, just to hedge the high level of risk that comes with his profile if he doesn't see improvements with his stride and crossover mechanics.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer was the best draft eligible in this game, a really standout playmaking performance. He adapts to lanes (most of the time). He delays, shows shot, then passes back to the middle just as Heidt runs the route. He slipped pucks through opponents. Pucks left his stick at the perfect moment, even if the pass was a touch inaccurate. Used space before shooting and didn't leave any value on the table. A destructive physical presence. He hit a guy, took a crosscheck to the face, then beat him up. Several big hits in this game, running over opponents. More importantly, he secured body positioning and absorbed contact. Skating looked more like a 3 than a 4 in this game. Crossovers aren't there. Backwards mobility isn't close. Edges are undeveloped. And he fails to get his knees to his toes. He's a proactive mover and a standout worker, which will help him overcome mechanical disadvantages at any level, but the skating still has to improve a lot to get to the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Ziemmer's an interesting prospect. The skating's tough to look past, but it's also a clear pathway for him to prove. He's already effective -- how much better does the rest of his game improve with just a bit of skating improvement? On the flip side, history shows that the NHL isn't kind to players with significant skating limitations, no matter their hand speed, physicality, and shot. He's an intelligent forechecker, anticipating lanes and closing them. He understands how to get open inside space. The hands shine in tight, whether he's toe dragging around opponents, knocking down passes, or going under opponents' sticks on his way to the inside. But his overreliance on his hands makes him inefficient and turnover-prone in transition. And he didn't show much playmaking in this game in any area. Mostly just straight-ahead plays and low-percentage shots. Maybe a second-rounder? Tough one.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Where Heidt simplified and created little, Ziemmer understood how to create against Kamloops. Instead of trying to race opponents along the outside, he stayed in space and didn't force plays. He dropped pucks back, waited for support, and used his teammates when possible. Scored with a quick wrister over the moving goalie. The physical side was there. Not a dynamic performance, but a solid one. He understands his strengths, weaknesses, and how to get open. Improving the skating is a must, as is the defensive engagement. But he's trending up in my eyes -- playmaking-dependent.

Daniel Gee: February 8th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer leveraged his shot quite a bit in sustained pressure. Eventually after some Prince George pressure led to a 5-on-3, he wired a one-timed shot off the left-hand circle, adjusting his feet to take the reception in his wheelhouse, and powering through his knee. I don't love a lot of his habits in the offensive zone. He made a lot of hope plays in this -- no-look passes through occupied lanes, working towards the perimeter and getting trapped. He sets up backdoor and helps contribute to endboard

battles, working jam plays or centering passes when possible. In the third Ziemmer's small-area game flashed -- a phone-booth handle out of the near corner allowed him to connect with a linemate in the slot. Unfortunately, his target delayed on the catch-and-release, nullifying any chance of a non-set shot. Where Ziemmer has really seen the biggest growth this season is in transition, particularly with his playmaking. Last year and early this year he would have shot practically every puck off the wing. Now he is leveraging the threat of his shot to a great extent, almost too much on some sequences. In the first he started a passing sequence with Heidt and Wheatcroft, a one-touch play. Later he dropped a pass to a trailing Wheatcroft who hammered a one-timer on net. He holds onto pucks too long and it hurts his game in this one. In the first he tried to carry and handle through pressure, trying to work the inside -- that was promptly rejected. Later in the game after he pushed paterally into the middle off an entry, he was pushed to the outside, and lost control on a handle in the corner. Not the best performance for him but the game was so out of reach in the third that any form of intensity was dead in the water.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

I have a hard time looking past the skating. It might be one of the most challenging bases in the whole draft for a top prospect: hunched over, lacks flexion all over, extremely wide...It affects every part of his game and severely limits his upside. He needs help to at least get his skating projection to a below NHL average projection to make use of his playmaking game and his vision. Because right now, it's a 3.5 on our scale, which means significantly below average. What's remarkable is that he still manages to manufacture speed with his stride -- with a lot of effort. There is potential there, especially considering the awareness has improved, and his passing game is a strength. Some power forward elements, too, with the way he drives the net.

Daniel Gee: February 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer has been a solid playmaker this season, but his recent performances are proving that he has clearly taken a step. He's accessing more higher-level passes like slips, hooks, saucers, and blending some legit manipulation in the process. His go-to move recently when attacking the odd-man is to load his shot and time a slip across to an off-puck teammate. He pulled his off with Heidt, but the shot was somehow saved. Instead of mindlessly shooting, he will even pivot allowing him to scan supporters -- on one shift he did this, had no target, and then fired a crossbody shot through the defender's triangle, ticking off the goalie's blocker. One of Ziemmer's best sequences was in the second -- he broke into the offensive zone, pivoted and stopped up, teeing up a downhill attacking Heidt as he drove the middle of the ice. He's still stripping a lot of pucks on the defensive zone blueline, just barging through defenders who trap themselves with little room on the boards. In the third he stole a neutral zone puck, created a two-on-one, loaded for the shot, and made another slip to a teammate -- it was disrupted, and predictable but all-in-all a good attempt. He had his own off-puck scoring chances, one he overshot and only could get a backhand off. Ziemmer showed some power game elements -- on one rush he made a quick drag onto his backhand and sliced in on the net, getting a high-danger shot on net, leading to a juggling act by Victoria's goaltender.

Really leveraged his size in sustained pressure. Stole multiple pucks off of end-board battles and sent well-placed centring feeds out of the turnovers. He even won a couple of retrieval races -- somehow... Ziemmer is still fairly simple though -- he loves to just plant in one area (usually backdoor) and wait for plays to develop around him. He scored a really bad goal, a dump-in shot from the line that ticked off the goalkeeper's glove and in the back of the net. Overall a flawed player but we have to respect his growth and the tools when we rank him.

Daniel Gee: January 28th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Ziemmer had another mixed game. He was awful in transition -- not enough outside speed to work past better-gapped defenders leading to dump-ins that he could never win the actual retrieval. He was far too static working breakout passes and wasting possessions. When Ziemmer had more space he was better. He yet again used the threat of his shot, loading the wrister up, only to send a nice 2-on-1 cross to Heidt (who tapped it back by accident). Ziemmer has some adaptability in pressure as well. On one third-period rush, he attacked into the middle on a 2-on-2 but was enveloped. On the fly, he made a smart hook pass back to a trailing teammate who fumbled the reception and shot -- to get the pass off under that pressure without a recent scan was impressive. His sustained play was similar -- a lot of bad sequences and a few flashes of real ability. When he's off-puck his play wavers, floating high in the zone or planted backdoor. He had worked into the middle a few times and leveraged some catch-and-release ability. Ziemmer's placements were good in this one -- under the blocker, aiming for above

the shoulder. He should have scored in the third. Ziemmer took a pass at the crease after a TO and had the goalie swimming. Ziemmer came across and didn't even get a shot off, handling too far to the side of the net -- just a puzzling sequence considering his small-area game. Physical in this one -- he obliterated a puck carrier on the near boards in the third. I don't see a tonne of translatable aspects of his game beyond the flash of tools and size. Will struggle to keep up with the heightened pace of pro and his leash will be incredibly short. Curved back, locked ankles, tiny stride length, no power through recoveries, and just not enough activity throughout his shifts. I wonder how limiting the stride is -- he's probably a different player even with average stride mechanics.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Ziemmer showed his ability to make plays inside contact in this game. He played the bumper position, moved to accept passes, jumped in board battles, and at the net-front. He can resist shoves, despite a suboptimal skating stance, as he has that bouncy ball quality. He recovers his balance and keeps the puck. He had at least one nice pass to the middle of the ice and a couple of fakes to get around players. The combination of soft and hard skills in his game is interesting.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was an eye-opening performance. Even the skating looked better, especially in crossovers. Great off-puck routes and timing, anticipates the play, presents his stick to teammates in the offensive zone at the right place, and fed on the play of others. He also created his own by manipulating the defence and dropping the puck to teammates or going through the opposition with his hands himself. The qualities are clear and the skating doesn't seem as worrisome as before. The shot is probably a high-grade. He's got power and precision.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Ziemmer was the best draft-eligible in this game, even with some execution issues. He has shooting skill, vision, plus-handling, and a real nasty side. He demolished a couple of players in this game. Instantly cuts inside when given space, reading space on the heels of opponents and deking through them. Blend the inside cut with a drag shot in one sequence. In another, he drew the entire defence then dropped the puck to a teammate rushing the net. Scored by shooting out of a quick stickhandle and firing short-side when his blade showed far side. Not all of his passes work; he's inaccurate under pressure, but he times his plays. I think the playmaking becomes more a factor at the next level, where his individual skill doesn't carry him. Looked like an early-second in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Inefficiency remains in Ziemmer's game. He forces shots into closed lanes, not showing an ability to adapt his release or create space for his shot. However, he flashes the manipulation as a playmaker, skating towards opponents, baiting their stick, then passing under it. Scored with a wrister from the boards, started with a give-and-go and set up with a look off as he ripped the shot short side. The shot's far less potent when he's pressured, but the puck explodes off his stick when given space. Skating's a huge issue, with the limited lower-body flexion, hunched upper-body, and limited push offs. It prevents him from making the most of his transition mind and defence. He tries to create advantages, works hard to disrupt plays on the backcheck, and shows timing on the forecheck, but often falls behind the play. I have no idea what to make of him at this stage. He has top-nine skills along with an exciting physical style but his skating development will have to be significant.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Ziemmer's effectiveness was largely a product of Heidt, but he still shows a lot of individual ability. He has handling skill, passing skill, and a clear NHL shot. How effective those will be in their current states remains up for debate. He requires space to shoot and his passing's only focused toward the net. Still, I liked some of his passing reads, mixing in a quick handle to freeze the defender before passing through them. Lots of quick stops and starts to create the lane or mask his intentions. When given a bit of space, he takes the middle. When not, he settles. His skating provides only disadvantages at this level, which will have to offset by a far more proactive style at the next level. Maybe a second rounder.

Daniel Gee: November 23rd, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer is wholly underdeveloped in some areas -- skating being the primary area, but the individual tools are nothing to scoff at. A high-level executor at the WHL level, he is very much a point and shoot player. He's underutilized though -- often placed near the net front due to his great small-area game, instead of shooting positions where he can leverage his shot. I don't think he processes the game well in sustained pressure so that might be the ultimate reasoning behind this coaching decision. Often he carries into pressure without scanning and doesn't utilize support properly.

A much bigger factor in transition, Ziemmer does some fun stuff in-motion. He ups his pace, drags past static defenders, and shoots through their triangles to add more deception to his shot. He tries to handle into power moves, but the mobility hampers his effectiveness. He's almost an overconfident passer -- he made a really dumb backpass into pressure -- no teammates were around so it was extremely questionable from a decision making standpoint. He's starting to leverage the threat of his shot into better playmaking sequences. A second period slip pass to the middle was evidence of that, leading to a high-danger shot. Ziemmer actually pulled the puck behind his back. In the third he slipped a pass to Heidt who was in alone off-puck leading to what amounted to an empty net goal.

He was lost in his own zone. The defensive coverage was quite poor. He has no pace, and the lack of four-way mobility makes him ineffective.

Ziemmer's profile is just so strange. I doubt the skating gets to a level where he can be effective and the sense issues in some scenarios only exacerbate his projection. He has some high end tools though. He's a major project for this draft -- if a team can help his explosiveness he has a chance.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Ziemmer has a lot of intriguing elements. He's a 6 or 7 handler, highlighted by the way he moves the puck in-tight. Understands the value of hip pocket puck positioning. Builds a lot of his value through his hands, not just deking but adapting to passing and shooting lanes. He doesn't play a game that lends itself to his skating limitations, but he flashes a bit of vision in transition. More delays would help. Shot's also a clear strength, but I wonder if it will continue to be. Requires his set feet to prepare his shot; there aren't many in-motion shots or dynamic receptions. Weight is always over his inside edges. Without skating growth, I doubt he makes it, but the skill is worth a second-rounder.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Not a great game from Ziemmer. He didn't seem to be able to adapt to his environment, making plays and decisions independent of defensive pressure and the positioning of teammates. It felt like he was following a script more than anything else. His positioning on the ice dictated his plays. His decisions were also relatively slow. The issue is really a lack of awareness, but due to lesser scanning habits and an inability to map the ice when handling against close defensive pressure, especially on his backhand. That wasn't a top-prospect performance.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

The lack of awareness in Ziemmer is a critical flaw, but it's also an opportunity. He has to learn better scanning habits. It could be relatively easy, too, because he isn't overwhelmed by the game; he can make plays, hold the puck under pressure...There is space in his game to add the awareness layer. If he does, the whole game could open up for him. But it's such a weakness right now that I have trouble even analyzing the rest of his game, because most of his plays, routes, and choices have that lack-of-scanning origin. Until that improves, it will be hard to project him to the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Koehn Ziemmer scored the overtime winner with his go-to play: cut inside, push laterally to the outside, then shoot just as the defender re-adjusts. He nearly fell during the lateral push. Skating's a massive issue: limited ankle flexion, hips stay high, chest

drops low, edges are weak, limited power, no quickness. It also limits his shooting motion – he requires his feet set and his weight over his inside edges to prepare his shots. His from-a-glide wrister is a well-above average shot, but that he has such limited variety and relies so heavily on the same play to create space for his shot means he'll struggle to fire against professional defending. He also doesn't even pretend to pass, even on 2-on-1s. Lacks scanning, too. At this point, I see Ziemmer more as a fringe-B prospect: a skilled handler with a dangerous wrister and some physical skills, but the skating, decision-making, and playmaking are costly.

Daniel Gee: October 15th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer's transition game will get overlooked because he plays with Riley Heidt (who is a damn near aficionado at moving the puck north-to-south), but there is legit ability here. He started the game by driving and setting up a Heidt one-timer with a backpass. On the same shift he saucered a puck into a high-danger. The layering was pretty impressive. On a powerplay in the second, Ziemmer drove on the outside, handled and weight-shifted through traffic, extending arms in his hip-pocket to protect -- he hooked a perfect pass to Heidt who fumbled his placement. Can't separate due to his rounded back and tiny stride length though -- in the third Ziemmer pounced on a loose puck but was enveloped as a defender caught up.

Still deadly in small-space, Ziemmer looped the net on a first period sequence, deking through a defenders triangle in front of the net -- he found an activating weak-side defender. He's such a quick processor in the offensive zone; on one shift he two touched a puck from the far boards into the slot -- there had to be some advanced level of reading the developing play and mental mapping for him to be able to pull off the pass that quickly. There's probably another element of deception he could layer on his game -- he telegraphs a lot of his actions with his eyes, body position. The skating issues are complex -- his activity rate is a bit above average to combat the inefficiencies but the mechanics are just so ugly. It will limit him on the perimeter and in transition in the NHL. He might have enough other tools to overcome some early hurdles, which could lead to some kind of role as a powerplay specialist (shot, small-area handling, passing skill). Sub-32 ranking for us because of these issues -- if was even an average skater, Ziemmer is an easy first round projection.

Cam Robison: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Ziemmer is an interesting one. He has that knack for having the pucks follow him around in high-danger areas. He sets his body and hands up away from the puck and is ready to catch and release in a blink of an eye. He wasn't creating opportunities for his mates much in this one, as the blinders were on a bit. At the end of the day, all of his skills have the potential to be that of a top-six player - minus the skating. If he can't develop a better posture (rounded back), acquire adequate ankle flexion and increase his quickness and overall power, then the rest of his tools won't translate. Without the skating, he's a junior scorer; not a pro. We'll be watching closely.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Ziemmer's an interesting one. The handling skill stands out. He carves through defenders, pulling pucks in towards his feet and reaching out across his body. Fired a between the legs shot for chance. Even completes his dekes off pass receptions. But he's far too eager to dangle through everyone, choosing to deke when a pass will have the same outcome. Similarly, he's doesn't bother using his teammates before shooting, both leaving value on the table and furthering his reliance on individual skill. He has a ton of passing skill in spurts, but didn't use it in this game, and when he does, he doesn't scan. There are a lot of interesting off-puck elements, from the physical style to his ability get open around the slot. Always establishes body positioning around the net, and he's always moving through the slot, rather than planting his feet. The skating's the hindrance. No ankle flexion, hips raised, and chest dropped. He really struggles to generate any power. Opponents get under his centre of gravity and easily knock him off balance. Going to fun to watch this season, but evaluation largely hinges on skating development.

Daniel Gee: October 1st, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Other than Cristall, Ziemmer was probably the next-best draft eligible in this game. A transition threat all night, he funneled a lot of pucks into the dotted-lines using slip passes. He had one sequence where he slipped a puck to Wheatcroft wide open in the mid-slot -- instead of shooting Wheatcroft threw a puck into Heidt's feet, who was open on the other wing. Trying to work

give-and-go's. I was impressed with Ziemmer's pace (not to be confused with his stride, which has major issues). Ziemmer should have had an assist on a third period play. A 2-on-1, he completely outwaited a floundering defender, hooking a pass behind their feet, to Dumanski who missed the one-touch shot. He's a high-end playmaker, maybe a 5.5 or 6 grade. Ziemmer absolutely loves his curl-and-drag wristers when he has some momentum behind them -- always exaggerated, he frankly destroys static defenders with it. In the second he fired a shot off a blocker of a drag shot, one of his high-dangers in the game. Saw more route adjustment in this one. In the third he stripped a neutral zone puck, worked into the middle of the ice, but took too long to bump a pass back, absolutely smothered with pressure.

Ziemmer struggled with layering in sustained pressure, but he was one-touching practically every puck on the powerplay. He had an incredibly smart sharp-angle shot that he placed right at a planted pad, creating a juicy slot rebound that no Cougar picked up on. Had numerous nice handles working downhill, exploiting vulnerable triangles and aggressive probing sticks. Violent once again in this one -- threw his weight around to the point where he fought a Rocket (Cougars were down a lot) -- broke the kids nose with a late punch. Fun game by Ziemmer overall. Showed he could create when Heidt was having a poor game. Still think he is a second day guy due to his skating and translatability issues because of that, but his tools are very impressive -- the physical element just adds another dimension.

Daniel Gee: September 30th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

It's pretty clear Ziemmer can be a bit inefficient on-puck. He forces passes into heavy layering and while he does still move his feet as he releases, he doesn't really adjust routes laterally in the neutral zone, making him susceptible to aggression in transition. Regardless, Ziemmer was all over the puck in this game, particularly when it came to pressuring Kelowna puck carriers, and creating turnovers. He intercepted multiple passes by clogging the centering pass lane, even pick-pocketing a puck later in the game, born from some great back-pressure. He linked up with Hudson Thornton on the powerplay, a far-board entry that included a stop-up and give-and-go pass to the defender, who stepped into his pass, blowing a puck in the net. Ziemmer had a nice off-puck activation, reading Heidt's delay on the left-wing, swooping-in, dragging inward to beat a static defender, only to fire the puck high (this exact play has been a constant this season). There is some element of deception in his game; On a 3-on-0, he executed a perfect pass to Heidt backdoor, even kicking his leg out to fake the shot (trying to freeze the goalie) -- Heidt somehow couldn't convert. Not a lot of handling in this game -- struggles to get in motion enough to use the tool. Ups pace well enough at the WHL level, but I am worried about his translatability. Can he play at an NHL-pace? The stride mechanics don't help. Ziemmer undoubtedly has every other tool here, and even the missing habits are more adjustments than anything. He's an obvious pick, but he's going to be a project that might be too grand for some. Think of an off-puck shooting threat as a projection.

Daniel Gee: September 24th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Continues to just score in every way possible. Ziemmer potted two in this one, and nearly completed the hat-trick. Still hampered by his mobility issues, Ziemmer recognized a counter attack, jumped up in the rush to create a two-on-one, and wired a one-timer off of one knee as the pass came across. The short strides and rounded back are hard to watch but you can't deny his recognition of the breakdown, upping his stride frequency and getting involved. Less than desirable transition play beyond that goal. Not in-motion enough for slip passes to make it through triangles. Static passing and perimeter routes mean instant pressure makes him an easy target for aggressiveness, let alone mounting pressure and supporting defenders. In the second he had Heidt and Wheatcroft free for a two-man breakaway, and had the pass intercepted -- easy to jump into the lane because he was planted on the far boards (he had only one layer to beat -- a board bank would have even been a better choice.)

Tools flourish in the offensive zone for Ziemmer. In a second period powerplay he activated off the goal-line, timing his movement with the point-shot, tipping the puck in for his second goal -- it was an amazing screen and frankly well-thought-out play. On a subsequent powerplay, he manipulated everyone on the ice with a fake shot, only to send a tape pass to Wheatcroft in the crease for a high-danger chance. Off a wonderful exit-interception by Heidt, Ziemmer cut hard from the near corner, taking the pass, pulling the goalie across their crease; he couldn't raise the puck, despite being on the forehand, but that was about as easy of a hat-trick goal as you could ask for.

He's going to score a tonne this year; deception, shooting ability, offensive instincts are all so strong. Just wondering how much of a risk he is to select with his troubles getting in motion.

Daniel Gee: September 23rd, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Unfortunately, Ziemmer's skating is still very poor; showing a lack of discernible improvement from last season. Still very hunched and straight-legged because of no ankle flex, he has limited side-to-side push off and a locked shoulder base while he pumps. Beyond that, Ziemmer looks like he's ready to put up some serious numbers this year. A force on the multitudes of powerplays the Cougars received in this game, he typically lived on the near board goal-line, popping passes into the bumper and facilitating a tonne of one-touch plays. Chaos shots into the crease, low-to-high carries -- he looked very confident. His best sequences came in the third; on one shift, he executed a give-and-go slot cut, unleashing a low-placed shot that was saved. Later, after Keaton Dowhaniuk activated lower and shot a sharp angle shot on net, the puck deflected off a skate right onto Ziemmer's stick which he quickly two-touched top-shelf blocker side for his first of the season. The precision of the shot, along with how quick he released it off a broken play was extremely impressive.

Ziemmer flashed his hands and inside-oriented-thinking in this game. In the second he had a high-danger saved after dragging past a static defender while attacking downhill on the right wing. He's predictable because he almost always defaults into a drag and shoot handle -- Tri-City defenders even started probing more aggressively and disrupting his release more. Despite the bad stride he got free on a breakaway -- had a significant amount of back-pressure and couldn't really get the separation to release cleanly, missing his shot high by a good margin. Shoots through defenders triangles, great in small space -- he has a lot of tools to overcome mobility issues. The lack of improvement is scary though -- probably a 3 or 3.5 projection as he stands. End-of-first, second-round projection if teams feel they can get his skating to a passable-level. Blew up two different Americans' in this game -- chose violence a lot. It could be a bigger element of his game this season.

Daniel Gee: April 9th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

More balanced game than the one previous. Ziemmer was a legitimate threat playing off-puck to Riley Heidt's transitional efforts. A second period give-and-go sequence was executed to near perfection, Ziemmer completing a feed to Heidt as he drove the net. Later in the third, after Heidt dropped the puck off at the blue-line and took the pass back with speed up the middle, he completed a one motion pass to Ziemmer who pulled off a perfect pass-off-pad (Heidt missed the open net). When Ziemmer was the primary puck carrier on the Cougars transitional attacks the results varied -- unable to separate and a lack of pre-scanning meant that defenders were able to gap and eliminate him with aggression. When faced with more space, he is pretty predictable; he is almost always going to attack the gapped up defender with a drag move. I like his mentality to get to the inside, but I wonder if this will affect him more next year as teams key in on him as the Cougars second offensive option. Executed a nice slip pass in transition, but was unable to string anything else out of the play. There's real ability here.

Ziemmer's play in Victoria's end was hit-and-miss. He had some nice activation plays working off the half-boards and setting backdoor; great rotation cycling plays in the first period, working in tandem with his linemates, but really unable to transfer the puck movement off the walls. He made an egregiously bad backpass as he grabbed a puck on the right-point -- no scanning, bad instincts in terms of mental mapping. Needs to up his pace to offset mechanical issues with his stride.

Daniel Gee: April 6th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer's play this season has been sporadic and productive; this viewing being on the sporadic end of the spectrum. Puck management issues plagued him throughout this game, particularly when he tried to execute off the first touch in transition. But overall the teams were mismatched, limiting the volume of touches, especially as the game wore on. Mostly activating off counter-attacks transitionally, Ziemmer showed some promising habits. Hip-pocket protection on-puck, a handling and delay blend, and deft placement of pucks remain his strength. He escaped on a 2-on-1 off-puck but the pass from Heidt was deflected away; Ziemmer recognized the break early and proactively jumped up. Could not for the life of him execute a one-touch pass in this game -- probably due to the pressure the Cougars were facing. In sustained pressure Ziemmer was better, mainly due to the space provided on the powerplay. On one first period sequence he had multiple scoring chances off the right-circle; a puck popped out into the hash marks that Ziemmer missed badly high. Question his decision making on another play; corralled

a rebound to the right of the net, had shortside room and a clogged crease, but he still opted to make a low-percentage pass into the pressure. Strong forechecking habits in this viewing. Absolutely enveloped a puck-retrieving defender and then deflected a panicked breakout pass. Bobbled a puck late that led to an easy EN goal -- hence the continued puck management issues. Hope passed too much for my liking in this one.

Still very concerned by his stride and posture. Shin angle is stiff causing him to bend over and push his weight on his toes. He does have a very apparent second gear that he can activate-- mostly due to pace and footspeed ramp up. Skating might very well push him down the board just due to the inherent risk next year. Probably a B prospect if the skating doesn't improve over the summer and the delay game becomes more prevalent.

J.D. Burke: December 18th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Ziemmer started the game off skidding, with poor puck management and an inability to connect on much of anything through the first half of the hockey game. Then things started to turn for the better late in the second period. Ziemmer seems to relish contact. Turned into a force for the Cougars in all three zones, contributing low to help his defenders, tracking well through the neutral zone, and playing the part of a buzzsaw through the middle of the offensive zone. Some great eye-hand coordination to deflect the puck for a scoring chance at one point. His off-puck pace in the offensive zone and the puck support really stood out, as did his small area game... the kid has legitimate skill. Could be a special player in time for the 2023 draft.

Mitchell Brown: December 17th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Ziemmer tried the lacrosse move twice in one shift, almost converting with the second one. Otherwise, his game was pretty simple. Mostly finding space just outside the inner-slot to fire from. Playmaking comes and goes, showing cross-ice vision and breakout skill one sequence before forgetting he has teammates entirely the next.

Daniel Gee: September 18th, 2021 Prince George Cougars vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL pre-season

Pretty ridiculous game from Ziemmer. Yeah, the stride is ugly and posture is brutal, but his ability to knock pucks away from defenders and push transitional attacks is so impressive -- multiple breakaways in this game (similar to how A. Martino operated at the USHL). Advanced selection of dekes, with a ton of small ice maneuverability, make his handling already above NHL quality. Dexterous hands almost led to a goal early in the first as he manipulated the Blazers goalie into swimming -- he made a 10-bell save (arm always unlocked from his hip). Shot is probably 7-grade already, if not better, and the Cougars use him like NHL clubs push top goal scorers. Tied the game in the final minutes on a powerplay. Fake shot off the right-hand circle that he dragged into the slot and executed a brilliant arms-forward release that he popped 5-hole. He was activating his weight-transfer as he maneuvered his feet to execute the cut -- just a wild blend of skill there. Probably the best of the Cougars along with Heidt.

Daniel Gee: May 5th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

While Ziemmer has a lot of areas to develop over the next couple of seasons, he was still able to flash some projectable tools to make an impact for the Cougars.

Ziemmer has the offensive tools to do damage in the WHL. His small-space handling helped him leverage a couple of key scenarios against the Giants. On one play in the second, after several shoulder checks (mental mapping of opponent positioning), Ziemmer processed a broken player on the far-boards, won the race to the retrieval in the neutral zone, and scored on the breakaway. The move he used was high-end; deke to the backhand to fake 5-hole and open the goaltender up, and another shift to the backhand to score in the empty net. What was impressive about this play was he executed under a good amount of pressure (arms were completely unlocked from his body). His small-space handling continued to aid him in this game. On one neutral zone shift, he popped the puck through the F1's legs, stringing a backhand deke immediately after, but was kneed on the play as he pushed forward in the neutral zone. Ziemmer's second goal was a product of chip and chase play to the near corner of the Giant's defensive zone; he dragged the puck out of a pile of bodies, into the slot, and scored on a deceptive (but wild) spin shot in the slot. These chip and chase were patterned throughout on Ziemmer's transitional carries-- he had trouble changing the apex of his attack and was forced outside often. This is most likely due to the blend of his rough skating

mechanics-- his back is very curved, his knees barely reach 90-degrees, and his ankle flexion is pretty rough. He heel kicks constantly, can't really extend completely, and doesn't snap back in his recoveries powerful enough. He wasn't an effective pressure pusher on the forecheck, spinning off of some more obvious activations, unable to leverage enough mobility to make a difference. His pace in general could be higher. Off-puck, Ziemmer needs to be more ready for shooting and catch and release opportunities. Heidt sent some impressive (and layered) passes into Ziemmer's wheelhouse, and he seemed a bit surprised, often bobbling the puck -- you would like to see him be able to leverage his shot in all opportunities.

Defensively, as mentioned, his shoulder-checks were active, but he was reactive on most of his shifts, slowly activating to some faster Giants' passing plays. His processing was a bit behind but he has the mental mapping habits. Might be a bit fast for him at the moment. It will be interesting to track his development.



Grade: B

41 Felix Nilsson

AGE 17.233 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Peak Mikael Granlund



Analytics Darling



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

6

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	36	19	22	41	1.14
Rögle BK	SHL	18	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	12	2	6	8	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

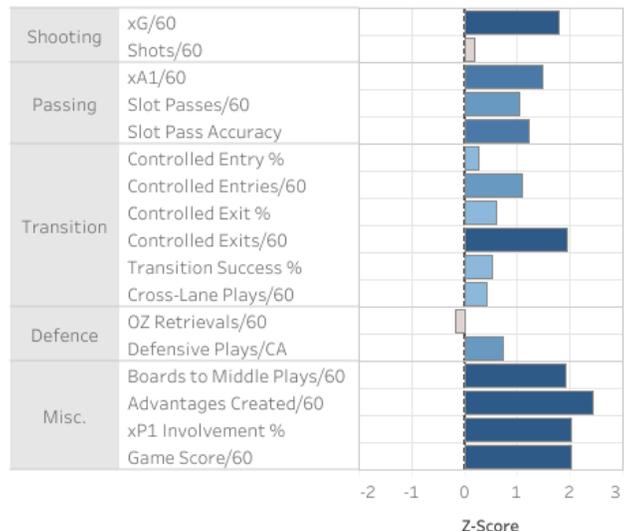
This year, there might not be a more undervalued draft-eligible player in Europe than Felix Nilsson. At least in our estimation.

Nilsson's first months of the season with Rögle's J20 team were enormously successful, both on the ice and on the scoresheet. It wasn't a surprise he eventually made his SHL debut and got a total of 20 games of experience at the men's level. A strong showing at February's Four Nations positioned Nilsson as a top player for Sweden at the U18s, but an injury ended up cutting his season short in March.

While he's not the quickest skater on the surface, it's hard to find aspects of Nilsson's game that are not projectable to the NHL. The playmaking skill stood out the most at the J20 level. He combines a strong vision and mental awareness of the surroundings with finesse and above-average technical passing skills. One and two-touch passes from the boards to the middle were Nilsson's bread and butter. He's inside-driven and constantly generates advantages for his teammates, both with his individual skill and his ability to connect with passing plays.

Felix Nilsson

F | Rögle BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 16 | Minutes Tracked: 254.2
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Nilsson is far from a volume shooter and often picks his spots carefully, but his release can't be overlooked either. He's proven he can occasionally beat goalies clean from mid-range, although he still likely projects as more of a facilitator at the next level. The skating also took steps forward as the season progressed, now projecting as an NHL average tool. He started to become more

elusive in transition through crossovers while his rush patterns got more unpredictable and diverse. Then there's also how he reads and commits to the defensive side of the game.

Nilsson is an enticing combination of upside and projectability and there's a chance his translatable skill set means he'll be a full-time SHL player as early as next season.

As long as he keeps getting stronger and preferably a bit quicker, his strong sense and technical skills should be poised to make him a middle-six NHLer, whether it'll be as a centre or as a winger. He has potential to be one of the steals in the draft if he ends up slipping.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Film Room: How Felix Nilsson became a sneaky good prospect for the 2023 NHL Draft



Sweden Stock Watch: Felix Nilsson a silent riser in the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Notebook: Checking in on Felix Nilsson, Tom Willander, and David Edstrom

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"I'm with your Swedish scout on this one. I think he's a really smart player who works hard. I think he's got some offensive upside." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"A smart two-way centre. Makes others around him better." – NHL scout, May 2023

"Felix has an enormous amount of skill in his game. What he does with his mind and hands is at a very, very high level." – Rögles BK J20 head coach Max Bolin, December 2022

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Jimmy Hamrin: March 22nd, 2023 - Rögles BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

I wonder how well Swedish NHL-scouts can sell him to upper management, because of his underwhelming physical tools. He is neither big, explosive or shows elite stickhandling. Everything else is great though. He skates well and reads the game exceptionally well and is way ahead of most players in a J20 game. He is strong both defensively and offensively. He is a good board player. He is a good transition player. He makes plays to the inside. He breaks up plays and competes hard. He is always aware of his surroundings and makes smart plays. He covers the puck well and is aware of space when he travels with the puck. He finds ways to open up space with either skating or passing. Good passer and a decent shooter.

Cam Robinson: March 19th, 2023 - Rögles BK vs IF Malmo Redhawks - J18 Nationell

Geez, this was fun. Clearly the J18 circuit is way below Nilsson and he proved it. He had about 10 legitimate scoring chances to go along with his 12 shot attempts. He was darting around with possession, using a serpentine route pattern often, handling on the outside of his body to set up inside cuts. He even had some nice pushback when faced with physicality. Scored a gorgeous goal by going wide, faking outside, and slipping inside and shooting in motion. Too easy, but nice to see him dominate.

Lassi Alanen: March 18th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Another productive showing from Nilsson offensively, culminating in a rebound goal off the rush. Could've had a couple of points more, though, based on all the chances created. With better finishing touch, his point totals from this season could be even higher. As the season has progressed, Nilsson has added more and more shiftiness to his skating. He's not necessarily the most dynamic or the quickest, but changes gears effectively, blends crossovers at a good level and uses his edges to evade pressure. The stride has also improved from the first viewings. I've got a deep appreciation for how inside-driven he is. On one rush, he took the puck in the DZ, beat one guy with a quick stop and sprint for an exit, then skated for an entry, glided towards the boards but then slipped back to the middle instead and even though he lost the puck momentarily, it resulted in a partial 2-on-0. If he was a bit more dynamic, he'd be a clear-cut first-rounder in my books. Still, an early second-round pick seems justified based on how solid he is pretty much everywhere, both offensively and also having a pro-ready off-puck game and work rate.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 13th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Rögle BK - SHL

Felix got about 5 minutes of ice-time in this one but there isn't a single bad play from him. He takes the smart routes, forechecks, backchecks and tries to make smart offensive plays as well. He doesn't show any ability to manipulate with creative moves and dumped a puck in a one-on-one for example. He seeks the middle when he can and I also like his motor and his pace. A strong forechecking motor definitely has value in today's NHL. I can see him becoming a very effective middle six forward in the NHL with strong underlying numbers and putting up a decent amount of points. It's a shame he wasn't able to score any points in the SHL this season. He created chances in his small role but didn't have any needed puck luck. Still, with a more flashy toolbox, he would have been able to create his own "luck".

Lassi Alanen: March 11th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

This was a mega performance from Nilsson, about as good as it's going to get offensively without actually recording any points. Seemingly, he was either setting up or pushing himself into high-danger scoring chances every other shift. Some really impressive sequences of handling, manipulation and playmaking skill. Also showed his intelligence off the puck, both with how he played between checks in the offensive zone but also how he contributed defensively with his positioning. The work rate is a plus, too, intercepting one potential scoring chance by backchecking hard immediately from the bench. The finishing skill isn't high-end; a better shooter would've likely converted at least one of his chances, but there's just too much to like elsewhere. Even the skating is starting to look more and more like a strength. He's starting to mix in some nice heel-to-heels and other deceptive maneuvers on his edges. He looked like a borderline first-rounder here.

Cam Robinson: March 11th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Nilsson was absolutely flying in this one. He had multiple high danger chances simply from his dogged puck pursuit and then using his hands and puck protection to get to the slot or net front. He was great along the wall, getting body position, opening up his hips and carving out while holding off the defender. He picked the pocket of a winger on the breakout, turned and quickly accelerated on a curve to the net for a glorious chance. Had another chance where he came around the net, curled and snapped high glove and caught iron. Heavy and quick release that got up top from a tight angle. He looked like a pro playing in a junior league for several shifts. Away from the puck he was constantly adjusting his pace, hunting for space. He had a netfront dish that he timed perfectly by opening up for and just missed on the bang bang play. He was doing the same defensively, only hunting for threats and getting in lanes. A really impressive showing.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - Lulea vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

The issue with Nilsson is always comparing him vs other second-round offensive talents on our board. The skill level is a notch below some of the WHL and OHLers, but it's clear he thinks the game well, can orchestrate it and anticipate it. The hockey sense shines, but it's also not high-end. He's all-around good prospect with flashes of more. In this game, he drove inside, distributed the puck well on the powerplay, baited sticks to open passing lanes, and drove in and cutback to create space for teammates. He tries to act as a shooter on the powerplay half-wall but missed a few of his one-timers.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

In a game where Skellefteå dominated Rögle, Nilsson managed to score the only goal for his team with a crafty deflection from the net-front. It wasn't the most exciting game from him, partly due to the circumstances. Still managed to show some of the lesser appreciated details about his game, like how solid his work rate is and how he breaks up plays defensively with good stick work and by winning body positioning. The skating remains an average projection and these latest viewings only make me more confident in it; he should be adding an extra gear with further strength development. Like I said, the offence didn't really pop in this one as his line was able to establish offensive pressure in only a handful of shifts.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

The first part of the game made me doubt Nilsson's skill level a little bit, but as he flashed more and more abilities as the game went on, I was back to thinking he belongs in our second round. His mechanics could be a little more fluid; he could be a little more dynamic, but he has some advanced playmaking ideas (give-and-goes, fakes...) and he seems to always know his next play. He also showed some physical skills on retrievals and a talent for creating offence from the boards. It's hard to compare his abilities with other NA second-rounders; maybe he wouldn't look as good against a different competition, but I think it's fair to have him where we do.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Nilsson makes me think he's a little too vanilla in the way he plays to have him in the first two rounds at times, but everytime that thought pops in my mind, he manipulates two defenders to open a passing lane to a teammate, showing that he has both the skill, the awareness, and the sense necessary to create more advanced plays. I'm not so sure about his shooting skills overall, and he missed way more plays than he hit on the powerplay, but the flashes are interesting. We have to be careful not to push him too high, but he's a good project in that second or third round.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18 Four Nations

Nilsson was one of the best forwards for Team Sweden in this difficult game. He pursued the puck, showed effort defensively, and initiated passing plays, he was inside-driver, rushed the net, and scored from it. He knows how to keep possession for his team, but he lacks the necessary power in his cutback to truly evade pressure. Again, it comes down to some good habits and NHL projectable tools, but a lack of special most games.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Nilsson showed more shiftiness with his rush patterns than I remember from previous viewings. The footspeed still isn't anything special, but he showed he can weave through pressure, fake with weight shifts and use crossovers to separate. Also helps that his puck control is generally impressive. Another game where he didn't end up with any 5-on-5 points but could've easily had one or two. At least got a secondary helper on the power play. I still really like this player, probably in the early second-round range. There are a ton of projectable elements in Nilsson's game, combined with above-average handling and playmaking. Not sure if he's a dual threat at the next level, but should score decently well in addition to racking up assists. The key will be if he can add more explosiveness to his skating. A ton of room to grow physically still, which will benefit his style a lot.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Another game where Nilsson didn't necessarily have as dominant of a showing offensively than in the ones I saw before he moved to play in the SHL for the most part. His defensive game remains projectable and on the stronger side, but the offensive creativity has been neutered a bit. Still not sure if I'd be too concerned about that, however. He still made a couple of his signature lightning-fast passes when he saw the opportunity. Was used below the goal line when Rögle was looking for a goal without a netminder late in the third; not a bad call considering how good he's at making passes from that area. Very solid in transition, always uses the middle when possible. The skating still remains likely an average projection, although the output is probably not as good as the stride form should suggest, which makes me wonder how much room there is for growth, as he doesn't seem like the most naturally explosive athlete.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 15th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Felix was a big driver for Rögle in this game. He played centre and was very active in all three zones and through both transition and in the offensive zone. He carries the puck a lot but also makes smart decisions. He scans with the puck and shows impressive awareness. He processes the game well in both choosing the right lanes when he skates as well as when to play the puck or hold on to it. He gives good support and connects the plays for his line. He processes the game at a high pace and shows awareness in his surroundings. His defensive play is both hard working back checks and smart positioning. He played with some attacking defensemen in this game and Felix did not hesitate to cover up behind them. He lacks strong physical tools. He is not a powerful skater or a physically strong player. He leans a bit forward in his skating and could better his ankle flexion. He has a good stride and decent lateral movement. His legs are fast and he skates with intense movements. Still, he does not need to use up all his energy to skate fast either, he glides well too and can shift direction smoothly. He uses crossovers to generate speed and can keep the pace while changing direction. He looks like a player that can add more strength and with that the speed will pick up too. He is very intense and proactive now. I would like to see him be able to manipulate more (he had some nice no-look passes though) and shifting/controlling pace for me to see him as a big offensive producer at the highest level and can use more strength to be a solid bottom six player. The hockey sense and compete level is high enough for him to be an interesting pick in this upcoming draft. He is a prospect in various roles.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

This was probably the quietest game from Nilsson I've seen at the J20 level this season. Fair to cut him some slack because he's been up with the SHL team lately and hasn't played with the junior team in over a month; not especially easy to fluctuate between the two when you're asked to play very different roles and styles with each team. Still, he had some quality moments showcasing his abilities as an inside-driven playdriver and a crafty off-puck player. He's always in motion and does a good job at gravitating the puck towards him, just couldn't make things happen with it this time. The best chance came from a clever forechecking steal where he pressured with a stick tap on one side and then swung around the other to pick up the puck and got a high-danger look as of result. Not too much to draw from the playmaking or puck skills; I've seen enough high-level stuff from him that one quieter game doesn't really change the calculation for me.

Cam Robinson: January 14th, 2023 - Rogle BK vs IK Oskarshamn - SHL

I enjoyed seeing Nilsson adapt his game to the SHL level. While he only saw around 10 minutes of ice time, his feet were moving for much of it. He was quick to be the F1 and get in on the forecheck, hounding the defenders. He's clearly lacking in strength but it didn't stop him from trying to get a body or a push. Something. It's obvious that he knows where to be away from the puck - on both sides. He gets to spot to be an option on the breakout and through the neutral zone. He knows how to support a play, where to cycle up, and when to time his landing into soft spots, He knows how to fall back into a defensive position and clog up lanes. What he can't do at this level is get to all of those places because the speed is lacking. The feet are moving and the motor is strong, but the output generated is below average. He's in need of much more strength to help propel those ideas.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 12th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs Rögle BK - SHL

Felix played on the fourth line and got about 9 minutes this game. He didn't have many seconds with the puck and the touches he had, he played simplistic and dumped the puck or used a short easy pass. He showed smartness though. Played well in the neutral zone, stuck to the teams system and read the opponents play from the backend well. He had some break ups and created a scoring chance due to a smart forecheck. The patterns I like with his game is that he is proactive in his game away from the puck. He searches for the right position and scans where the play is heading and acts on it. He had some sequences where he looked slow to give his teammates support. His skating isn't an asset for him at this level at all. He is not naturally explosive and can't gain space in the first strides. The technique looks solid though so he will get a bit faster with more strength.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - SHL

Not really much to report about here. Nilsson's puck touches could probably be counted with one hand. Deflected pucks in deep, but couldn't really establish OZ pressure that way. Tried to move the puck with one-touch passes to the middle on exits

but missed his target. Got first to a few loose pucks in the OZ but couldn't find separation and got pinned to the boards. Defensive game remains solid and good enough for this level of play, but we didn't really see any of the things that make Nilsson such an interesting prospect to me.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada East - WJAC

Nilsson didn't touch the puck a lot in this game, but he still managed to pick up two assists, on one on the powerplay with a simple pass to the point, and another one by cutting across the ice to drop the puck to a teammate, creating space for a drive down the offensive zone. Nilsson understands rush mechanics. He attacks the middle and kicks the puck wide, attracts defenders on himself before passing... I'm not sure about the overall skill level, however. He looked fast in this one, quicker than his competition. It's also partly because his motor is a constant. He pursues opponents on the forecheck, hunts loose pucks, and aims to beat the opposition with speed in transition. Some timely defensive interventions in this one, too. He turned defensive steals into nice escapes and into transition passes.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs Latvia - WJAC

Nilsson played with a lot of pace. His head was also turning to map the ice. He moved the puck quickly off his stick and flied ahead of teammates to push back the defensive presence or carry the puck. He really played a collective, fast game, which is good for his projection. He also attacked the slot and the net-front area constantly. Attacking off the rush, he also shows some manipulation patterns, lateral cuts into drop passes. He has a nice package of skills overall.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

This was easily one of the best showings from any draft-eligible prospect I've seen this season. Nilsson was just creating chances left, right and center, both off the rush and off cycles. I might have underestimated his skating a bit previously. He likely has a path to at least average stride with further strength training and his rush patterns and crossover usage are already good. He pushed the pace off the rush when it was the right thing to do, then delayed and looked for a trailer when the opportunity presented itself. Really strong playmaking instincts combined with above-average handling skill. Some off-puck value, too. I don't know why more people aren't talking about this player.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Not much is missing in Nilsson's game. If he was just a little more dynamic, speedy, and agile, he could be a top prospect in this draft. He plays with pace, in the sense that he makes decisions quite fast, but the skating isn't an asset at this stage, despite a solid form. It can project as NHL average. His puck protection game was what shined the most in this one. He kept pucks under pressure, established contact before getting to the wall to get pushed into space, and kept the puck away from opponents. He manipulated defenders to open passing lanes, especially off the rush, and played effective defence, running the right routes and angling well.

David St-Louis: November 27th, 2022 - Frolunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Nilsson is an impressive defender for someone his age in the J20, a league where teams usually focus on offence, at least from what I've seen. He backchecks hard, angles well, and engages players physically. His physical skills will serve him in the pros. He can hold on to possession with defenders on his back. In this one, he tried to force many plays through the middle. The middle attacks are a good sign, but he only lost the puck trying to dangle it through. He's more of a passer than playmaker from what I can glean, in the sense that he doesn't create what is not already there, for the most part.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Nilsson struggled a bit early in the game, trying to force plays in transition, not being able to separate and couldn't connect with his passes. But as things moved on, he started to heat up and ended up with multiple excellent shifts at the end of the game. Got a secondary assist when he blocked a point shot and started a counter-attack, used his body to shield and gain the middle and perfectly timing his pass to his teammate in the slot on his backhand, resulting in a post shot and a rebound goal.

His inside-driven attitude can result in the odd unnecessary turnover, but I really value how determined he is at taking the puck to the middle. One sequence saw him battle for around 10 seconds in the corner, but coming away as the winner and instantly recognizing the space in the net-front and showing no hesitation in taking advantage of it. This guy makes passing decisions fast when he needs to, but also knows when to slow down. There's strong flashes of manipulation, too; he manufactures the best play if needed. Also remain pretty impressed with his defensive game, even threw a big open-ice hit in the neutral zone after a frustrating shift. And he's seemingly not even playing with that much talent, unlike the draft-eligible players in the opposing team.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Second career game in the SHL for Nilsson, and I wouldn't be surprised if he ended up getting more and more opportunities as the season progresses. No notable mistakes, did a good job in transition at moving the puck with control, backchecked and applied defensive pressure with good intensity and intent, passed quickly and effectively in OZ/kept up with the increased pace (which I didn't have many doubts about), very good movement in the OZ off-puck. Got a grade A scoring chance in the slot after the puck bounced to him from his linemate's stick check but couldn't convert. Did draw a penalty late in the third. Can't really find much to complain about. Obviously the skating isn't on par with someone like Mølgaard, but there could be a reasonable path to average stride.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

I remain a big fan of Nilsson's game. He makes decisions very quickly, and they're mostly the right ones. Really skilled playmaker, threads passes through pressure really well, delays and has the patience of a saint when he needs to. One of the better one-touch playmakers in the draft, too. Quite liked his defensive details in this one, too, killing a few plays in the neutral zone and keeping his man in check in the defensive end. If only he had a bit more quickness and explosiveness, we could be talking about a first-round talent. Oh, and he also scored with a sick mid-air deflection that required impressive hand-eye coordination.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

ot to be impressed about Nilsson's game many times. Sure, he's not the most efficient transition player and has tendencies for weird dump-outs, etc.. But on the other hand, I've yet to see another player at this level create as much with his playmaking this season (aside from Dower Nilsson). Nilsson's one/two-touch playmaking in tight is simply excellent. He recognizes openings quickly and executes on them with precision. The hands also are clearly above-average, though he misses some pass receptions here and there. Interesting rush patterns, has a delay game and utilizes contact as an advantage. Scored off the rush from a rebound and netted a primary helper with a beautiful cross-ice stretch pass. The skating is probably 4.5 on our scale, but there's a lot to like about in his other tools.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Another strong showing from Nilsson for the most part. The playmaking stood out once again, being able to see cross-slot opportunities through multiple layers of pressure or well-timed drop passes. Also seemed to get how to make those drop plays more effective by using his stick/body to screen the opponent, and made those off-puck plays in other scenarios, too. Scored after a neat little pace change, getting enough space in the slot to become open for a pass and finished by one-timing a pass from the same side. I was also pretty fond of his play defensively, making some well-timed breakups and forced the opponent to less-than-ideal options. If his skating takes a step or two forward in the future, he could really be a player to keep an eye on.

Lassi Alanen: September 18th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Nilsson showed some intriguing stuff in this one. He set up multiple scoring chances with small-area passes and showcased an overall strong vision, being able to make passing decisions quickly and precisely. Modified passing angles, passes under defender's stick, etc.. He was starting the cook in the third period, with the first two being more quiet. Defensively, relied on making reads and looking to intercept passes early. Skating looked like a below-average projection, though: wide base, wide recoveries, lack of ankle flexion. The output was good enough for this level for him to win a few races here and there.



Grade: B

42 David Edstrom

AGE 17.573 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 18, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Boone Jenner



Hockey IQ



Versatile



Analytics Darling

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'3"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Region	4	3	3	6	1.50
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Nationell	3	2	5	7	2.33
Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	28	15	13	28	1.00
Frölunda HC	SHL	11	2	2	4	0.36
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	5	3	8	1.14

SCOUTING REPORT

There are players in every draft who fly under the radar, going largely unnoticed because of a lack of dynamism in their skill set, that nonetheless outperform their flashier counterparts. This was the case with David Edstrom, right up until an excellent showing at the U18s thrust him into the spotlight.

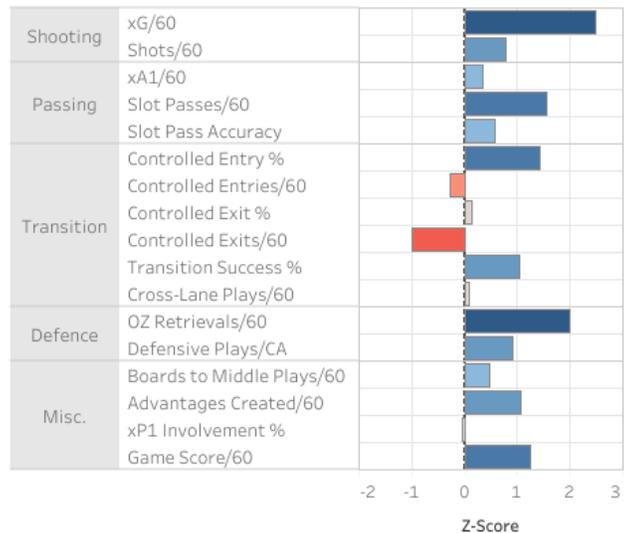
The truth is that Edstrom was always this good. You just had to know what to look for. While Edstrom doesn't have the offensive flair of his Frölunda J20 teammates Otto Stenberg or Noah Dower Nilsson, he should have the easiest time at translating his game to the NHL level in the upcoming years.

Edstrom is sneakily good in almost every facet of the game. He's made in the mould of a big two-way centre but also provides a lot of value offensively and – at times – even in transition.

Game after game at the J20 level, he showcased really good instincts away from the puck in the offensive zone, finding empty space in the slot and timing his movements to the net-front where he's an all-around formidable presence. As a result, Edstrom had the highest individual expected goals output at the J20 level out of all the draft-eligible forwards in our data set this season when adjusted for his ice time. Becoming a better catch-and-release shooter would make him an even more projectable scorer at the next level.

David Edstrom

F | Frölunda HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 14 | Minutes Tracked: 206.2
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



While Edstrom's agility could stand to improve and his stride has its quirks, he's surprisingly quick in bursts and can maintain a solid top speed. His handling also projects as around NHL average, in our estimation.

He's also a solid distributor of the puck, both in the offensive zone and on the breakout. And we've only glossed over the defensive projection, which is among the more compelling selling points in his game. He supports his defencemen down low, reads passing lanes, and covers space while handling his puck battles with care.

Overall, Edstrom's offence doesn't seem dynamic enough to warrant a top-six projection, and he might not be the most exciting player available in the spot that he's going to get picked.

However, with a reasonable development curve you're looking at a potential middle-six centre who can play in a shutdown role and contribute offensively through his smarts and net-front play. Based on his U18s, we wouldn't be shocked if a team ended up taking that deal as early as at the end of the first round. At the very least, Edstrom will be gone early on the second day.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Sweden Stock Watch: David Edstrom's turning heads with Frölunda in the SHL



Scout's Notebook: Checking in on Felix Nilsson, Tom Willander, and David Edstrom's

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Without a doubt, the U18s was the best he's ever played. I almost had to ask myself if he's that good. I know he's a very dedicated kid off the ice. He works very hard. His seriousness about his hockey is without doubt. I'm just not sure there's enough upside for him to be a first-round pick."

"I think he's a pretty safe player to play in the NHL. He's big, he works really hard, he's super dedicated off the ice, and he's got some mobility. I'm just not sure that the ability is more than third line potential." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I would say that I am a hardworking two-way centre who is good in the defensive zone but also has good offensive qualities. I am good at finding the open areas in front of the net." – David Edstrom, April 2023

"I would say I model my game after Gabriel Landeskog, Jonathan Toews. A strong two way centre." – David Edstrom, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

Edstrom reminds me of Nathan Gaucher from the previous draft. His skating ability is a grade below Gaucher, but he has the same defensive engagement, the same passing ability under pressure, and the same net-front drives. He can drive up ice with the puck, too, with crossovers. I could see a team drafting him top-32. I wouldn't do that (we had Gaucher in the late first, IIRC),

but there are enough tools and signs of sense in his game to bet on his development. He's competitive, too, more than most players on the ice. He played a good shutdown game in this one, but could have taken one more stride to stop Leonard's goal. He didn't. I bet this will haunt him and fuel him. An optimistic scenario for him is a third-line, penalty kill, and net-front powerplay role.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

This was probably one of the best, most complete performances I've seen at this entire tournament. Edstrom's linemate Otto Stenberg got all the points (five to his three), but it's clear who was driving that line. No shortage of skill on display in this performance – Edstrom picked up a goal with a nice set of dangles at the net-front, his second of the game. He also looked a fair bit more mobile and agile than I'd originally given credit, flashing above-average speed as a skater in space. He tracked well, backchecked hard, contributed low in the defensive zone. His ability to protect the puck and repel defenders stood out on a few occasions. You could talk me into Edstrom as a late-first rounder after a game like this.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

I'm starting to see it with Edstrom and I'll probably have to go back to rewatch some of his early performances. He's not the kind of player who pops unless you look for him. But his combination of size, skating, physical skills and reasonable smarts could get him drafted high. He goes to the net, backchecks, wins pucks on the boards, manages the puck well (good passes in transition and on the cycle), screens the goalie, and can play on a penalty kill.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18 Worlds

An excellent game by Edstrom. His line just hammered Canada tonight. He succeeded with everything he tried and showed his creativity to make plays in tight spaces. His stickhandling is average but the way he can cut through traffic is impressive. He uses size, explosive movements and an element of surprise thinking a step ahead of the opponent. His small area game looks translatable. I still don't like his skating stride but the short distance speed looks good at this level. He also reads the game away from the puck well and with that reach, he will be an effective checker to break up plays.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18 Worlds

Edstrom was excellent in this semi final route of the Canadians. While he "only" ended up with two goals and 3 points, he factored in on several more by being the perfect net front presence. His one goal showed off the potential for a power forward as he curled around the net with possession, slipped the puck inside and cut through the hole before a little fake and roof job. While the offense, the screens, the ability to get open in the slot/netfront were all great, it's his sturdy defensive qualities that really stand out. He's big, he skates well, he sticks to opponents, he knows how to cover space, switch off, support his D, support his wings for breakouts. He has a lot of pro qualities defensively.

This guy is sneaky. He's going on Day 2, but could turn into a really useful piece down the line.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - WJ18

I only see a potential checker in Edstrom. I know some of my colleagues like him more than that -- or they really believe in the certainty of that checking projection -- but I have yet to see the flashes of skill. He manages the puck well, dropping it to teammates off the rush and making quick lateral passes inside space, and he plays the F1 checking role well at this tournament, too. He drives forward to create space for others and comes back on defence rapidly. He could become a bottom-line, defensive presence in the NHL. Maybe there's more.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Edstrom had a few good plays but didn't dominate at this level. I didn't see any real evidence of him being a driver even if he is a big and old player at this stage.

He had some good playmaking moments and one smart “give-and-go”-assist that stood out. His skating isn't a weapon at this stage either even if he has quick feet. He just doesn't seem to be able to separate.

Lassi Alanen: March 24th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Edstrom managed to sneak into the slot - a common theme - and scored with a catch-and-release wrister after a great feed from Dower Nilsson. Not the first time I've seen this sequence of events play out. Edstrom could still take his goal-scoring to the next level by improving the shot and - even more notably - becoming better at chaining pass receptions into shots. Right now, there are times when his pass reception isn't as clean as it could be and doesn't allow for an instant release. Even in the goal he scored, there was a slight delay compared to the best shooters in the draft. Aside from the goal, it wasn't a particularly strong performance, but not a weak one either. He still contributed a lot on the forecheck, employing a solid motor and having a good timing with when to engage, often just as the opposition was about to receive the puck or had their backs turned to him. On a line with skilled wingers, Edstrom's role was seemingly just to advance the play in the OZ, get to the slot and the net-front and commit himself defensively. He did that job fine. I maintain with my previous assessment that I like the player overall and even without the high-end upside, he's among the more interesting options on the second day of the draft given how translatable his game is to the next level.

Lassi Alanen: March 17th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

This wasn't a dominant game from Edstrom, but he still logged almost a goal worth of xG at 5-on-5 alone, with just 14 minutes of ice time. The first high-end chance showed his quickness, as he was able to surprise a defender holding the OZ point with a couple of quick strides, poke the puck past him to generate a 2v1 rush, hiding his shot by looking at the potential passing target but couldn't beat the goalie. Later in the game, he did get his revenge by collecting the puck amongst a broken play and connecting with a give-and-go sequence that led to a pretty easy finishing job from what was basically a cross-slot tap-in. The high-end, play-ending playmaking moments haven't been there in the past two viewings, but he's still making great, more subtle passing plays along the boards to advance the cause. I rate his overall board skills rather highly, just like the net-front skills.

Lassi Alanen: March 12th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

A rather quiet game on Edstrom's standards, which have been set pretty high given his play lately. Offensively, he wasn't that involved and most of that said involvement came by the way of a couple of lower-percentage rush chances from the outside. He made a few nice passing plays in transition, but was also a bit more careless and wasn't scanning properly, leading to a couple of turnovers. His net-front play remains a big strength. Screened the goalie perfectly, which led to a goal via a rather innocuous point shot.

Lassi Alanen: March 11th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

I continue to be a fan of this player. As per usual, Edstrom didn't do any crazy end-to-end rushes nor did he deke his way through multiple players. He's just so smart with how he approaches the game. Supports the play, anticipates openings, times his movements to the slot, establishes and wins body positioning so he's ready to deflect pucks (one really nice try early in the game that just missed the net) and get to the rebounds before the defender. Off the rush, he often cuts back and looks for the trailer or a potential cross-ice pass. The playmaking execution was solid throughout, even if he didn't set up any particularly high-end chances, except right out of an OZ faceoff as Frölunda was looking to tie the game without a goalie. That sequence showed both handling skill and vision. His line did concede a couple of goals, but I still remain optimistic about his defensive game. His forechecking game was also very good in this one, as per usual. He's not the player with the highest upside, but he'll translate quickly to the SHL level and there's a decent chance he could develop into a two-way, middle-six centre in the NHL.

Lassi Alanen: February 22nd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Edstrom just continues to have sneakily productive games. He might have a bit more skill than I thought previously. The playmaking ideas were better and more meticulously planned, although the most impressive plays were still the quick, one or two-touch feeds to the middle after forechecking turnovers or otherwise quickly acquired possessions. Takes advantage of the

strong team that he plays in, pops in and out of the slot and times his movements well, pretty rarely staying stationary in the offensive end. Some great transition moments, too, including a cross-ice stretch pass that led to a partial breakaway. Scored from a breakaway of his own after well-timed cut to the middle for a pass that pierced the defence. I'd still have questions about his ability to create on another team, but he's an interesting prospect nonetheless. Probably a borderline second-rounder or an early third-rounder.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Frolunda vs Linkoping - SHL

Not a very eventful game for Edstrom, but he clearly could have played at this level this season. He rotates well, can handle the physical play, and play at the net. He did miss some passing options that would have improved the offence. His skating looks at least like a 5 (average). At his stature, that could make him threatening on the forecheck.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 4th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Frölunda HC - SHL

Edstrom plays his first game in the SHL with ice time. He got a chance to play on the second line and played 11 minutes in the game. He also scored his team's only goal in the game. He took care of a rebound and spinned around to get the puck in the net.

Edstrom stands out with good size and speed. He is fast to the situations and can keep up well at this level. His skating technique isn't perfect. He doesn't have full ankle flexion and he accelerates with a shorter stride leaning a bit forward. His short distance speed is good though.

Edstrom showed a knack of finding open space in tight traffic. Both his goal and a couple of scoring chances was him getting open in high traffic. He showed a quick release in those sequences too. He was good at ending up where the action around the net was and could have scored another goal as well.

Skillwise, Edstrom isn't a spectacular player. Even so, I would like to see him learn how to cover the puck better and to be more active in scanning with the puck. He has good instincts though and is more of a short touch player. His prescanning before he gets the puck is there and makes quick decisions. Edstrom is a player that needs to play with others to drive the play but he can also make them more successful with his quick instincts and finding of open space.

Physically, I would like to see him be more relentless in every situation. He doesn't shy away fully but could play harder with speed and size into the situations. His defensive play would benefit from a harder checking game.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Another game where Edstrom didn't really have any high-end plays but he still racked up multiple chances, ending the game with an empty-netter. He's at his best when he can connect plays and play short-range passing game in the OZ, give-and-gos included, then get to the slot and net-front and let his teammates get him the puck. He was also quite effective on the forecheck, angling players well along the boards, cutting them at their hands and getting the possession back. The playmaking is... not sure. There's flashes of quick and effective passing game in the OZ and he's actively taking every opportunity to pass to the inside, but there's also a lot of them that don't have clear intention behind them (no pre-scanning) and they get picked off almost every time.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Edstrom generated quite a lot in this one, and ended up scoring off the rush after a failed clearance attempt dropped right to his stick and he took full advantage of it. He's an interesting player to me. The skating stride is far from mechanically perfect, but the output and small-area quickness are both pretty solid. There's at least an argument for average projection. The playmaking isn't consistently great, but he does have some rather solid flashes of connecting plays quickly, finding teammates on the inside after turnovers, some passing skill. In transition, he does have some moments of poor scanning and passes to nobody, but it's reasonably fixable. The off-puck scoring value is one of the selling points. When you play with very skilled playmakers like Dower

Nilsson and Stenberg, you'll also get the pucks in the slot if you're open. The finishing touch isn't high-end, missed a couple of his slot shots. Projects to bring reasonable defensive value. I think he could be a bit more aggressive and physical given his size, but he's already decently effective.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

I'm starting to appreciate Edstrom's passing game a bit more. He can find the next logical offensive play, off the rush and in the offensive zone. He organized effective rush attacks and sent a pass from the backwall to the slot to an open teammate. Add that passing ability to his frame and projectable skating stride and you probably have an NHLer. Does he have a lot of upside? I doubt it. I think we're looking more at a fourth-liner, a role player, who could move up to complement teammates who need what he brings. Edstrom positions well defensively and he can retrieve pucks on the wall.

Lassi Alanen: January 19th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Edstrom earned a primary helper on the power play, coming down on the left flank and threading a cross-slot pass for Otto Stenberg to finish. At evens, he had a few looks, mostly from his off-puck timing to the slot, which continues to be one of the highlights of his game, maybe the most projectable element. The playmaking didn't pop off quite the way that it did in some of my previous viewings, aside from that slick power play assist. He's probably someone who benefits from playing on a good team with players who can take advantage of Edstrom's off-puck instincts. The skill level is probably on the more limited side. Tried to end cycles by protecting the puck and keeping the pressure on his back, then cutting to the middle, but was stripped everytime; didn't have the quickness, skill or deception to quite pull it off. He also missed quite a bit of time recently, so you'd think he's still getting adjusted to playing again.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Edstrom has a pretty interesting skill set. He's a capable playmaker in tight, being able to facilitate give-and-gos in the OZ and to make crafty feeds to the middle from the boards with an above-average accuracy, both from forehand and backhand. Also showed solid off-puck instincts here, getting open in the slot and being rewarded with multiple good scoring chances from one-timers and deflections. The skating stride is a bit concerning, but the output seemed greater than the mechanics. He's not a big-time driver in transition, but flashed here and there, like entering near the boards, baiting the defender before cutting to the middle for a high-danger chance.

Lassi Alanen: September 24th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Edstrom stood out due to his crafty passing game. A lot of smart cross-lane passes in transition, also turning OZ steals and interceptions into quick passes to the slot. Adapted the passing angle to complete the plays without having to saucer the puck over a stick. Scored from the net-front after a magnificent pass from his linemate, didn't have to work hard for that finish. Wasn't necessarily the driver of his line, but worked well as a play connector and contributed on the forecheck. Skating stride looks a bit iffy (lacks depth and ankle flexion), though he had decent quickness and straight-line ability.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Edstrom took a crafty pass and followed up his shot for a goal. A couple of other opportunities from off-puck movement, particularly moving straight down the middle. While he flashed handling skill and outside speed, he preferred to make quick cross-ice passes along the boards in transition. Turned a scoring chance into a high-danger look by making the extra pass. Consistently demonstrated vision and creativity. Lots of work to be done, but the early signs are promising.



Grade: B

43 Danny Nelson

AGE 17.118 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Charlie Coyle



Hammer



Got that Dog in him



Toolsy

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'3"

Height

203 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	62	21	26	47	0.76
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	8	9	17	0.74
USA U18	WJC-18	7	4	3	7	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

One of the draft's big risers, Danny Nelson looks poised to hear his name called inside the top-50. He was on fire down the stretch, closing the season on a 16-points-in-16-games stretch between the USHL and U18s.

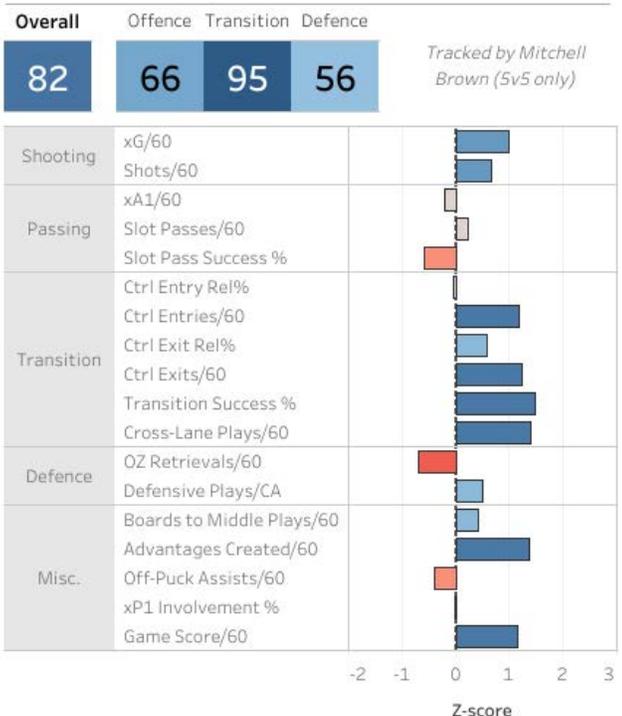
Every game, Nelson brings the same attention to detail. He doesn't just pursue the puck carrier, he guides them into pressure and goes for the breakup without chance. He steps into opponents, eliminates off-puck threats, supports plays, and shows a knack for getting open inside space. When tied up with defenders, only to push off into space, stick loaded for one of his booming one-timers.

Those skills make Nelson likely to play in the NHL, but that alone aren't enough to earn this spot on a draft board that emphasizes upside. Good news: We believe that Nelson has the skills to become a third-line offensive contributor.

That projection starts in transition. Nelson's a play-driver deeper in the lineup. He looks for controlled exits and entries, both as a passer and carrier. "He attacks the middle, claiming the space more passive opponents give him," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote in April. "Instead of charging ahead into pressure, he passes through it to an open teammate."

Danny Nelson

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 154.4



As the season wore on, Nelson showed more skill and vision. He tries more complex passes, like spinning plays or backhand dishes around opponents. Deception appears, usually in the form of a fake shot into a slip pass when given a bit of space. Many plays fail, but most are good decisions that will scoring plays as the timing and accuracy improve.

Add the off-puck game and shooting into that skill set, and that looks like a third-line contributor. Nelson's still a few years away; he's likely a two-or-three year player at Notre Dame. Even if the playmaking and transition game don't translate, he's still likely to carve out an NHL role.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"You have him at 53? I think he's going higher than that. You gotta remember, this was his only year at the program. He went through a big funk and then in the second half of the year, he might have been the most improved player on the team. He passes the ice test. He can skate. He's got good offensive skill. This guy is going to be the steal of the draft in five years. I don't think he'll sneak into the first round, but really early in the second round." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I'm a big power forward that's skilled and takes pride playing in both zones. I'm a 200-foot player." – Danny Nelson, April 2023

"I like modelling my game after Leon Draisaitl. Just the way that he's a big player and uses his body well. I kind of like to emulate my game off of his offensive elements. That's one of the guys." – Danny Nelson, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

Nelson continued to play his game in this one and his game was exactly what the US needed to beat Sweden. He won pucks on the wall, one-touched them to teammates, and then attacked the slot. In one of those instances, he got his stick on a flying puck, shot from the point, and he opened the scoring for his team.

Cam Robinson: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

A strong performance by Nelson. He knows what his responsibilities are and he focuses on them and executes. Really strong defensive presence with his motor and his physicality. He knows how to support his defenders, can switch off at the netfront in a pinch. He knows how to get low and support his wings, give a pass, get open to receive a pass. He even popped the opening goal. With his size and defensive acumen, he's got an NHL future. If he can harness some of his skill a bit more, there could be a really interesting middle six player here.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

You can only evaluate Nelson in flashes as he fades to the background for most of the game and only gets fourth-line minutes for the most part, but those flashes are interesting. He plays at pace, dumps the puck past defencemen and fetches it, but does it in a skillful way, with controlled chips. He has the power forward skills on the walls and he can make plays in transition, quick passes to teammates. I'm sure there is more there.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

More of the same from Nelson. Despite his limited minutes and limited role, he makes intelligent plays in all three zones. Not a lot of creativity or offensive generation in this one, but he knows how to move the puck quickly and help support the play. He's really strong on the wall and downlow to stem any cuts from low to high.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - WJ18

A great performance from Danny Nelson. He scored with a catch-and-release after finding space in the slot. His tools are really interesting and he reads the game well enough. His defensive engagement is one of the better in the team, at least he projects as a defensive player, as he can both engage on opponents with his body, steal pucks with his reach, and has the motor to impact the forecheck and backcheck. He wins pucks on the boards, escapes with his skating, and finds the next play. Another well-rounded player who could be drafted quite high. There is a small chance he explodes offensively in college in years 2 and 3.

Cam Robinson: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - U18s

Danny Nelson is one of those players who you have to watch out for to see how well he's playing. At this event, he was tasked with anchoring a bottom-six line, playing staunch defensive minutes, shutting off the middle, being physical, and keeping pucks down low in the offensive end. And he succeeded with full marks. His mobility projects a bit under average, but he makes up for it with a high work rate and smart routes. He was quick to pucks in corners and was getting positive body positions. I appreciated how he was supporting the D, and coming very low in the defensive end to help his wingers and facilitate straight up outlet plays. There's a good chance that there's a bottom six NHLer in there somewhere.

Cam Robinson: April 25th, 2023 - USA vs. Switzerland - U18s

Danny Nelson knows his role but can also slide in a little bit of creativity when the opportunity arises. He was terrific on the PK, getting in lanes, quickly applying pressure to the handler. He broke up one play and fought through pressure to carry it out and then carry it into the offensive end. He tried a complex handle to break in and lost control but it was nice to see him try. In the offensive end, he was sneaking around looking for space but was mostly focused on getting to the paint and looking for hard action. He had three great chances from that zone but couldn't quite bury them. Size, good feet, strong mind for disruption. Hands aren't great and while the shot can be heavy, it's not sneaky or setup too well. But the tools are there for a nice second round pick that develops into a useful piece. Kid looks like the type who steps up in the postseason when things get tight.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

The American coaching staff isn't asking a lot of Nelson in this tournament. He's centred their fourth line in every game thus far and played in a strictly defensive role. You can't ask for much more than what he's delivering in those minutes, though. Nelson's working hard in the defensive zone, supporting his defencemen, backchecking hard, getting in on the forecheck, tracking well. Nelson's had some moments as a distributor, too. Increasingly, I think we've gotta find room for him at the end of our board.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Danny Nelson didn't complete a lot of plays in this one. He often found himself alone in the opposition's zone, without a play to make. He did his best to keep the puck under pressure and to rim it around to support, but it was late to come. When he does have options, his passing game shines. He can spot the puck into space for teammates and then join them at the net.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

Nelson is really growing on me at this tournament, which is a funny thing to say considering he's centred the fourth line and not really seen the ice much. They have him playing a prescribed, defensive role, and he's taking to it with aplomb. Nelson drops low into the defensive zone to support his defenders, makes himself available as an outlet, tracks well through the neutral zone, covers for activating defenceman, and on and on. Just a tour de force performance as a defensive centre. He also picked up a nice goal in this game, sniping one past the Norwegian goaltender on a counter play. This is someone for the back of our board.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Nelson's plays often don't lead directly into offence, but he has skill and reads. He attacks the middle, claiming the space more passive opponents give him. He passes to teammates as they dash up the middle. Instead of charging ahead into pressure, he passes through it to an open teammate. The stick work was the highlight. He turned a steal into a goal with a leave pass, one of four clean steals he earned in this game. Doesn't fall for deception, doesn't lunge, and times his pokes. He's limited as a skater, lacking the depth to escape through his cut backs and the skill to keep his feet moving while handling. He could carve out an NHL still.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson faded as this game wore on, but continues to show NHL skill. The passing was the highlight. He set-up a few chances – two were very lucky passes that deflected – but that he's looking for teammates in positions where most shoot shows some craftiness. Grabbed an assist with a look-off cross-slot pass with a bit of space. Doesn't show that level of skill in tight, but keeps opponents on his back along the boards, allowing him to spot teammates and make a quick pass for the escape. The vision extended to breakouts and entries, using his teammates to build plays and start give-and-gos. Strong on the forecheck; tools could NHL projections across the board. Given the flashes, perhaps there's more creativity than he shows regularly. He looked like a top-two rounds prospect with third- or fourth-line upside.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Lots of interesting stuff from Nelson in this game. In one powerplay shift, he wired a wriester off the pass, then passed down low, spun off his check, rushed the net to draw the defender, and created the cross-slot passing lane. Nelson understands how to create space with his off-puck skating, that much is clear. At even-strength, he's too quick to pull the trigger. He needs use space. But he continues to flash that vision, as he did with a pass to the slot after cutting back. The skating's underdeveloped and he's not much of a forechecker, but he's a proactive, projectable defender. A bit more pace will make him an NHLer. He has shooting skill, off-puck value, and an improving playmaking game. He could be a late-second.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Nelson broke free from a defender at 4-on-4 and went to the net for a pass and goal. The physical skills and off-puck game are NHL-calibre. He shows that regularly. But I continue to see more playmaking from him that gives me hope he could be more than a fourth-liner. He tries to pass through opponents along the boards, attacks the inside when he can't, and shows passing skill in transition. Lots of players look to rush ahead; Nelson uses his teammates, passing through opponents when necessary. Looking like a top-two rounds prospect these days.

Cam Robinson: March 10th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Nelson was moving well in this one. He made a couple of hits in the NZ away from the boards to smash up any play creation Madison had going. He was hard on the forecheck – taking good routes to funnel the defenders into trouble on the opposite side. He was sneaking around a bit in the OZ, looking for soft ice and on one occasion found it. He received a pass with his back to the net, one-touch, spun, and fired all in one motion for a tally. He's cerebral which is good, but we could stand to see a bit more pressure and pace at times too, as his role will be an energy liner down the road.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Nelson showed a bit more vision than I saw in the first half of the season. Or rather, passing ideas. He spun pucks into the slot and made a couple of plays to the inside in the rush. But he didn't actually look before passing. If he did, he would've created offence on each of those tries, instead of a contested puck. Scored a goal by crashing the net. He doesn't get a ton of touches, certainly not in favourable positions, which makes it hard to evaluate. Perhaps there's more skill here, I've seen it in other games. More energy and better defensive reads would make the projection a bit easier.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Another pretty straightforward game from Nelson. He backchecked, forechecked, forced the opposition to fumble the puck, played with some physicality, and battled on the walls. He made simple transition passes that found their man. There's a lot to like about his straightforward game, especially at his size. He's not as mobile as John Beecher, but the projection is about the same, with Nelson having less of a chance to hit his powerforward upside.

J.D. Burke: February 8th, 2023 - Finland vs. USA - 4 Nations U18

Not a particularly convincing performance from Nelson. At least, not in the offensive zone. Most of Nelson's puck touches occurred along the boards, where he was able to fend off defensive pressure reasonably well and maintain possession but struggled to separate or create anything out of these plays. Eventually, Finland's defence would overwhelm him, and Nelson would lose possession. Like clockwork. Off the puck, Nelson was mostly static, either late to shooting opportunities or in the wrong position. There was one play where Nelson took a Will Smith pass from below the hash marks and sent a two-touch feed into the slot for a scoring chance and another where he sent a bank pass through the neutral zone to set up a scoring play off the rush, but that was it for offensive moments. Otherwise, Nelson played sound defensive hockey and contributed in transition, but that was about it.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A bit of a different performance from Nelson, showing a more nuanced game than normal. Where he previously forced plays forward, he'd pass or even cutback. He showed patience under pressure and cross-lane vision, finding teammates through defenders. Had his chances as usual, along with more defensive value. He backtracked to kill plays along the boards and intercepted passes. A couple of his passes were blind and predictably turnovers. A more consistent off-puck motor in the offensive end, whether that's forechecking or finishing his off-puck routes, would make him a slam-dunk top-60 pick if this transition game sticks around. Solid.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson is effective but lacks a bit of refinement in his overall game. He makes the odd give-and-go play, but he's mostly all about forechecking pressure, net-drives, and shots. More of a straight-forward driver and player than a high-end playmaker like some of his teammates. There's nothing wrong with that. He's probably a pick considering his size and projectable tools overall.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Not the best game from Nelson, even though he seemed to be right in the thick of it in a lot of its key moments, on Team USA's highest-scoring line. He worked hard, but was mostly easily dispatched by Wisconsin's defenders along the wall. With the puck, Nelson's slow decision-making and lack of pace cost him possession on a few occasions. You love the work rate, but I'm not sure I saw a lot of skill in this one.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson is a pretty straightforward player. He receives the puck, gets his feet moving, and finds an outlet on the wing. That was generally the extent of his playmaking in this game. Had some nice offensive awareness around the net to dart in and try to jam pucks home where he could, also floated higher to space to make himself an option. One nice flash of skill where he was able to slip a pass behind coverage to Vote on the backdoor but couldn't bury. His reach and strength are a huge asset on the forecheck, Nelson had a few good, active sticks where he was able to disrupt breakouts. A great player to have on your team

but probably more of a mid-late round talent, no particular skill that makes you want to reach for him.

Cam Robinson: December 14th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Nelson plays a smart, heavy game and did so well in this one. He made himself an option on the breakout downlow, made quick plays to the flanks and got his feet moving to support or becoming an option back in the middle. Made a couple of more creative plays through the NZ and into the offensive end, a little slip pass, a little set up with the hands before cutting inside and making a hard snap cross crease. He grabbed two assists - one primary, one secondary. I like him as a later option in round two.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson's not much of a play-driver. He makes simple plays to his linemates, Moore and Vote. Usually straight-ahead plays but flashes some craftiness with a lateral pass through a defender to change the point of attack or stepping inside after faking one out. He shot at the right moments, passes at the right times. The shot looks like the better tool, but he didn't overshoot. Consistently open in the right areas, but lacks the timing and off-puck movement to secure his position. Looked like a mid-round prospect.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The NTDP has had a lot of players like Nelson over the years: big shooters with some off-puck instincts and knack for deflecting every waist-high puck around the slot. Many of them haven't worked out. Nelson seems different though because he has flashes of in-motion skill, brings a bit of defence, and there's a physical component to the off-puck game. He wins inside positioning, keeps his feet moving, and gets open between defenders. No playmaking, play-building, or transition skill shown in this game, but he looked like a potential fourth-liner. Could be a mid-rounder.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

Nelson was often pressured into mistakes in this game. He looked elusive but overdangled in situations where he should have passed and tried to pass in situations where a dump-and-chase forecheck would have worked best. The risk-reward gauge needs some tuning. He also needs to develop rush patterns; he heads straight at defenders to try and dangle them on occasions. I liked that he finished his checks, but needs to see more from him overall.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson's a shooter. He ripped an outside leg wrister for a goal. Not perfect form, but head up, fast energy transfer, intelligent placement. He has some supporting skills: pass receptions (letting pucks come across his body into his shooting pocket), a bit of handling skill, and some off-puck movement to get open. Lacks timing. And he's not much of a passer or puck transporter at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Nelson didn't achieve much outside the offensive end. In the offensive end, however, he was effective. He spun off checks, won inside positioning, and grabbed two scoring chances in quick succession. Showed some off-puck instincts, alongside shooting skill. Touches were limited. He only makes basic plays in transition and doesn't show a ton of defensive awareness or energy. A September game.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

First game with Green Bay for Danny Nelson, and he came to play. He bombed with a bomb from the top of the slot and had a few other looks, getting open away from pressure and firing off the pass. Showed some passing skill in transition, hooking pucks to teammates and relocating. Some down-low playmaking, showcasing vision and skill even in the plays didn't connect. Physical. Even some dynamic rushes. Looked like a top prospect for next season. A standout game.



Grade: B

44 Kalan Lind

AGE 17.638 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Michael Bunting, Sam Bennett



Raw Talent



Hammer



Pest

Player Info

C/LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	154 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	7
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Red Deer Rebels	WHL	43	16	28	44	1.02

SCOUTING REPORT

After these playoffs, every team's going to be looking for the next skilled, physical super pest. While Ryan Leonard's the top candidate, Kalan Lind would make for a nice consolation prize in the latter part of the first round or early on Day 2.

Equal parts net-front finisher and intelligent playmaker, Lind scored a point-per-game pace while averaging the sixth-most minutes among his team's forwards in all-situations and ninth at even strength. Ninety percent of his points were primaries, highlighted by 23 primary assists to just five secondaries.

Fearlessness and unending physicality tie Lind's many skills together. He takes every opportunity to make contact, big or small, and wins body positioning in every situation. Just as opponents get sucked into the battle, he detaches for a rebound chance or a quick pass back into the slot.

Beyond the huge hits and incredible backchecks, there's a subtle brilliance to Lind's game. He ties up opponents around his own net, then sets picks to create space for his teammates. As he skates up the ice, he starts passing plays and takes defenders' sticks along the way, creating space for his teammates. He times his off-puck movements to maximize his time with the puck, and has the in-tight skill to complete plays under duress.

Kalan Lind

F | Red Deer Rebels | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 87.9



Similarly, Lind's a nuanced offensive player, detailed by Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown in March: "He tries to manipulate opponents to create lanes, consistently attacks the inside and obtains favourable passing positions, and shows creativity and adaptable passing skill on breakouts and exits. He just doesn't get many opportunities to pass because both of his linemates plant themselves at the net front."

While holes in Lind's game are few, there are two big ones: Skating and size. He doesn't bend his knees much, dropping his chest to the ice instead. Power and efficiency lack, and it limits his ability to absorb contact – that's a huge issue for the draft's foremost seeker of contact.

At nearly 6-foot-1, but only 155 pounds, there's little doubt that Lind's skating will improve as he packs on the weight and strength. That's the key to his development.

Lind has the skill, determination, and style to play inside a team's top-nine, but he's years away for now.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 16th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Like for most players, Lind can pick up speed on a curve with crossovers. That's the way he can run around defenders and get to better spots on the ice. His transition passing was another positive in this game. I'm a bit concerned about the skating. As he lacks ankle flexion, he can't absorb choc or spin off of them as easier. He can't really fake and elude opponents in tight spaces and his forward strides are hunched over, reducing their efficiency and power. Lind reads the game well and I still like his playmaking. He's also quite physical and the motor stands out, too. If he can correct some of his skating mechanics, he could become a middle-six NHLer.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels- WHL

Lind takes hits to make plays and he dishes them out, too. He plays with pace, mostly because of his quick puck movement and straight-line mentality. He drives ahead, drives the net, drives to and through opponents. He missed a few passing plays in this one, but overall, I think his playmaking remains a strength. His skating is the biggest issue in his projection. His speed seems fine, but the total lack of ankle flexion limits his manoeuvrability.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

The best player on the ice. Lind's a menace. He's physical to the point of comedy (if you're not on the other team), taking massive runs at opponents, looking for every tiny bit of contact, starting scrums, and battling away in front of the net while still having the awareness to detach and get open. One opponent gave up on a foot race because he was lining them up. The physical game is special, no doubt. But he's so much more. He's an incredible forechecker and backchecker, an intelligent off-puck threat, and increasingly, a skilled playmaker. His assist: break off the boards, a perfectly-timed cross-slot pass under a stick. He tries to manipulate opponents to create lanes, consistently attacks the inside and obtains favourable passing positions, and shows creativity and adaptable passing skill on breakouts and exits. He doesn't get many opportunities to pass because both of his linemates plant themselves at the net front. Some innate quickness despite his limited ankle flexion. He's a long-term project, but the payoff is high. Players with this level of physicality and intelligence aren't common. The skating will improve as he adds weight. There's a first-round argument for him: top-nine upside and a solid bet to play, provided he protects himself better.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

First game in two months for Lind, and he opened it by falling face-first into the boards. This was an impressive game, as usual. He lives by "take a hit to make a play." Fearless. He will need to learn to protect himself. He goes all-out in unwinnable battles and makes himself vulnerable in contact. Tough as hell though, full credit to him. He's also a very physical, aggressive player himself. He took some bad penalties, threw some hits, and used his physicality to create space for his teammates.

For one waved off goal, he engaged three defenders, setting a pick on the last one, to create a free puck for his teammate, then screened the goalie on the ensuing shot. Grabbed four high-danger opportunities. But I think he's more of a playmaker, potentially anyway. He tries to manipulate opponents and slip pucks through. He looks inside off the boards for options and attracts opponents, but his teammates always plant themselves at the net front when he has the puck. His options are limited as a result. Probably much better in a different environment. I think he could crack the first-round, even with the skating.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind only got out there for five minutes at 5-on-5 before getting injured, and somehow grabbed four retrievals. He ran into opponents at full speed. He threw reverse hits. And he showed a bit of finesse to reach around and steal possession. The only notable offensive play was a rush, attacking the inside, dropping the puck wide, then skating the middle and setting a pick to create the shot. The skating's still rough, but it's going to improve. Not much going on this game, but he could be a late-second. Suspect he goes higher.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - White vs. Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

Lind hits. Often and hard. He got Benson with a crushing one early in the game and he also pulled off a a reserve hit to keep possession of the puck. He seems to play a sort of hybrid game. He makes a lot of cycle plays, forechecks, and he plays physically, but also relies a lot on his hands. He had many flashes of creativity in this one, a few timely passes, based on anticipation, and a couple less timely dangles that he tried to force through opponents.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

It was just flashes from Lind in this game, but yet, he was probably his team's best player. No-event hockey. Grabbed an assist by gaining the zone, passing, then providing a moving screen on the goaltender. The board play was the star of the show. He took pucks in the hip pocket, then spun off pressure and attacked the middle. Shuffled in one direction to bring the incoming defender, then cut back. He pulled pucks in-tight and snuck them around the other side. The skating fails him sometimes; he's just too upright and awkward. The motor was there, as usual. He's a menace. But the rest of his game wasn't. He made some awful passes, failing to read a moving target and not coming even close. He whiffed on shots, even though he had the space and technique to fire. He skated into pressure with no chance of escaping. Lots of poor decisions in transition that led to turnovers under pressure. The skating's a limiting factor, but the transition game really holds him back, too. By scanning and moving pucks inside more often, he'd get so many more chances coming back up the rink. Chased hits instead of the puck. He looked like an early-third candidate in this game, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

A classic Kalan Lind game. In one shift, he threw a hit on the backcheck to prevent an entry, crushed a guy on the forecheck, then drew a penalty after the whistle. In true pest fashion, he instigated a fight and as soon as the opponent dropped the gloves, he skated away. Tons of physical play in this game. He's a menace. He also showed some skill in this game. He slipped pucks through opponents on entries, cut inside in the neutral zone, and worked lateral passes all game long. He read the feet of opponents, using their momentum against them. Sniped a short side goal off his outside leg, too. Took pucks in his hip pocket and escaped along the boards. The breakouts and skating limit his game at times. He forces plays ahead and he's not much of a puckhandler or manipulation threat. The skating has a long way to go, too. Lacks depth, wide, chest collapses the ice, and his outside edges are undeveloped. But he's light, the depth's variable, and there are flashes of power. He's a project, but lots of reason to believe in his game.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Lind's qualities are pretty evident. He's a playmaker with physical inclinations. He drives the net and plays that net-front role on the powerplay, too. He pursues the puck hard, battles for it on the boards, and lays some hits, too. He sees passing lanes and generally knows his next play. He has NHL abilities for sure. The hockey sense seems above average. The physical grade might be, too, although he doesn't have the mechanics just yet to complement that side of his game.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind's a low-volume creator who only shows NHL skill in flashes. But what's there is exciting. Physical play, board skills, inside attacks, off-puck instincts, and a bit of playmaking. He has the occasional delay or quick pass off the boards, but he's mostly trying to get everything to the net immediately. And while he has moments, his lack of lower-body flexion and weak edges limit his effectiveness as a puck carrier. Really seems like a projection dependent on physical growth. Going to have to watch a lot in the second half.

Mitchell Brown: November 8th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Lind tried to throw a hit and ended up on the worse end. That's really how his game goes at this point. His dedication to the physical side will only lead to better results as he gets stronger and improves his skating. Right now, it mostly serves to be a pest along with some puck protection ability along the walls. Makes passes of the boards to start the rush. He has intelligent rush routes, like cutting back and building speed into a flat-footed neutral zone forechecker or taking the middle early, but he struggles with identifying his options and even handling when there. Perhaps more of a third round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Lind's going to become quite the force when he bulks up. He runs into everything that moves, engages in every battles, and starts non-stop scrums around the net. The lack of strength limits his stride, but the skill remains. He toe-dragged around a defender, redirecting the puck mid-move to avoid the poke, then got a chance. A long-range slip pass that coupled as an escape of the boards for an assist. Showed a shot that's a bit more lower-body engagement away from being a projectable NHL tool. Takes pucks across his hips and immediately goes to the net. Lack of transition impact remains, but I think he's a potential top-two rounds pick. There's lots of upside here, waiting to be unlocked with strength.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lind showed a bit more playmaking in this game, dropping pucks back to his teammates and trying to feather pucks through layers. No matter what he's doing, he looks awkward. The stride compromises his puck protection, handling, and physical play. The latter's problematic for his style of play – he tries to run into everyone at full speed, and usually gets the worst of it. Took a silly penalty by holding the defender's foot after getting knocked down. He's a tricky projection. Excited to watch more this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lind looks awkward at the best of times, even when he's creating offence. He's so upright. Whenever he goes to do something quickly, he barely keeps it together. Lacks balance. Still, there are clearly created ideas from Lind, especially off-puck and as a playmaker. He gets open in the middle of the ice, then chooses the correct next play, both for shooting or passing. Dangled through a defender to create a 2-on-1, then outwaited the defender for a cross-slot scoring chance. The usual Lind stuff applied: relentless physicality, intelligent defensive positioning, and non-stop disruption.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

I'm not sure that I've ever seen a skater play with such reckless abandon for their own health and the health of others than Lind. It's truly staggering. Every shift involves at least two or three sequences of manufactured violence, and I'm not really sure Lind comes out on top when you run the math on hits delivered and those taken. It's not resulting in much in the way of offensive output either. Lind finished the round robins with one point, a goal in Canada's 14-0 drubbing of Switzerland. The skating is a problem. It's all activity rate with a pretty jarringly poor mechanical foundation. So too is the play selection. Lind shot out of what would've been a Grade-A scoring chance if he could have identified the trailing option, a consistent problem through this tournament. Mostly, I'm seeing a ton of defensive value, and a lot of red flag about his offensive ability.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Skating will determine Lind's effectiveness. The stride lacks depth. He lacks power. He tries desperately to play a physical game, running into opponents at full speed, but often fails. He has board skills (body positioning), but often gets shoved into the boards anyway. A disciplined, ferocious forechecker, too. Wins a lot of pucks on the second and third effort. Gets open inside space, staying above the defender or slipping behind them into space. The playmaking was an issue in this game. He created a 2-on-1, only to shoot without even so much as looking at his teammate. He missed the best pass on another occasion to make the simple play. Not deceptive or particularly high pace with the pace. Clear path to a third-line role in the NHL, it seems.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lind was quite involved in the physical side of the game, as usual. Got the worst of several his hit attempts, however. His skating's linked to that. He lacks the depth to leverage and tends to engage by coming up and over, rather than getting low and exploding through. His motor on the defensive end is undeniable, and he still shows a ton of defensive instincts. With the puck, he lacked some pace on decisions, but also made tricky plays from the boards to the inside. Equal parts shooter and passing in this game. Skating will be the key this season.

Mitchell Brown: May 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind was everywhere in this game. He scored with a wild wrister from the top of the slot, cutting across and then pushing the puck into space, allowing him to walk into the shot. A creative pass for an assist after getting open in the slot. Several thunderous hits, a couple of which resulted in penalties. He clearly wants to make a physical impact on the game. Defensively, he's proactive and disruptive. Angles players, eliminates off-puck threats, and supports down low. There's a lot of interesting elements to his game, but will require skating growth to bundle them together. All-in-all, he improved a lot throughout this season. The offence took a significant step.

Mitchell Brown: April 27th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

On the top line with King and Bains, Lind played against Ridly Grieg all game, and successfully baited him into penalties and poor decisions. He plays the role of pest well, and much like Greig, he gets away with a lot because of his thin frame that prevents him making the most of his aggression. Already applies that aggression to consistent back pressure and never-ending forechecking pressure. Works to get above the puck and come across the body for the stop. Lots of subtle skill plays in this game: delay to outwait forecheckers before passing cross-ice for the breakout, hook passes after faking the shot, and crafty slip plays. Skates out of space in transition without the ability to manipulate defenders, but the potential's clearly high. He's skilled, intelligent, and downright nasty. We'll see how the skating improves. That's the key.

Mitchell Brown: December 15th, 2021 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

This was the best game I've seen from Lind so far. He was a force in puck pursuit, which he instantly leveraged into scoring chances. In one sequence, he set up a teammate in the slot and then dangled around Pickering for a scoring chance. The rebound became an assist. There's not much deception or mechanical proficiency to his game; it's all about pace and linking together different ideas quickly. I don't know if he's a top prospect for next year, but he's close to a breakout.

Mitchell Brown: October 26th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind had moments in this game, mostly by sneaking into space and firing off a one-timer. Failed to convert all three quality looks. Showed some diversity in his off-puck game, finding space in both transition and OZP, albeit not with standout timing. With the puck, he generally takes too long to make the next play, often losing the option altogether. And he doesn't demonstrate the problem-solving skills to find a new play. There are flashes of the top prospect he once was, but I have my doubts about his game at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: October 23rd, 2021 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind fades in and out of games as he looks to play a checker's role. He can be physical, but mostly ends up losing battles after

failing to establish positioning. There are moments where the offence comes alive and it's easy to see the immense upside. In one sequence, he faked the wraparound and came back for a chance. In another, he got the steal, passed, moved to the slot, and deflected the ensuing shot. Another deflection led to his second chance of the game, and this one under heavy pressure. However, he does everything in a glide, lacks some creativity, and doesn't attack the inside. I'm sure some of this is coaching. Still, not a particularly impressive game beyond those few moments.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2021 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Lind sniped a sharp angle goal in the first period, and then spent the rest of the game trying to hit people. He had a couple of solid ones. Absorbed contact to set up a quick angle-changing wrister. But that was it. Lots of running around. Lots of handling flashes, but only in a glide. I didn't see anything too exciting. Seems to be embracing a checking line role, but at the expense of some offensive impact.

Grade: B



45 Trey Augustine

AGE 17.559 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Carter Hart



Fleet of Foot

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

7	6	5.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	7.5	5.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	33	2.13	.926	1
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	14	2.34	.928	1
USA U20	WJC-20	6	2.85	.891	0
USA U18	WJC-18	6	1.61	.934	-

SCOUTING REPORT

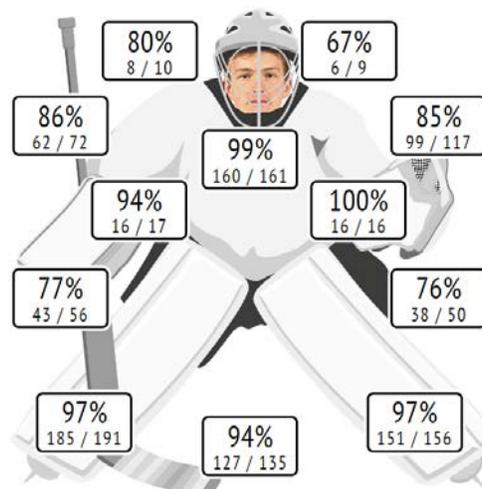
Although the 2023 NHL Draft is without a true A-tier prospect goaltender, one team is going to be very pleased by selecting the USNTDP's Trey Augustine in the second round or later.

He's not the kind of goaltender that will astound people with a flashy style. What he does provide is an excellent technical foundation that will ensure at least moderate success at the next level. Listed at 6-foot-1, 179 pounds, his frame will likely scare a few organizations away, but the combination of his skill set and playing style should put those worries to rest.

Augustine is one of the most-polished skaters among the goaltenders available in this entire draft. He is extremely patient on his edges as well, which makes him an incredible play-reader off the rush. His post-integration is NHL-calibre already. Whether you're talking about his post-sealing ability, hinge as he rotates, or strength of pushes off the post – he ranks high in every regard. Augustine is also a wizard on jam plays with below-the-goalline puck movement. His transitions in and out of reverse-VH are smooth and efficient compared to other goaltenders on the same development path.

The concerns around Augustine's size are mostly alleviated by the proficiency of his post-seals and ability to lift his body up with his anchor leg to take away the top portion of the net. He also has incredible net awareness – the ability to always know where the frame of the net is and hit his spot when retreating back to the post. Even when he makes an aggressive move, he's able to

SPOTS ON GOALIE



recover back to his post quickly and easily. As a viewer, you rarely get the sense that he is caught out of the net.

While some questions remain about his ability to track the puck at the next level, he makes up for it with incredible hand discipline. Sometimes, even on shots when he does not track the puck very well, he will still make saves with his hands simply due to their positioning. The positioning doesn't waver as the game goes on, either, even in situations when you would expect fatigue to set in and his hands to drop.

Overall, the ceiling on Augustine is tough to pin down. He is the kind of goalie that does extremely well in a structured, predictable system that allows his repeatable technique to take over. How will he react to a more challenging environment? That will be the question that teams will have to answer for themselves before selecting him. The floor is mighty high on Augustine, though, and the team that selects him will be receiving a very exciting goaltender to mould.

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

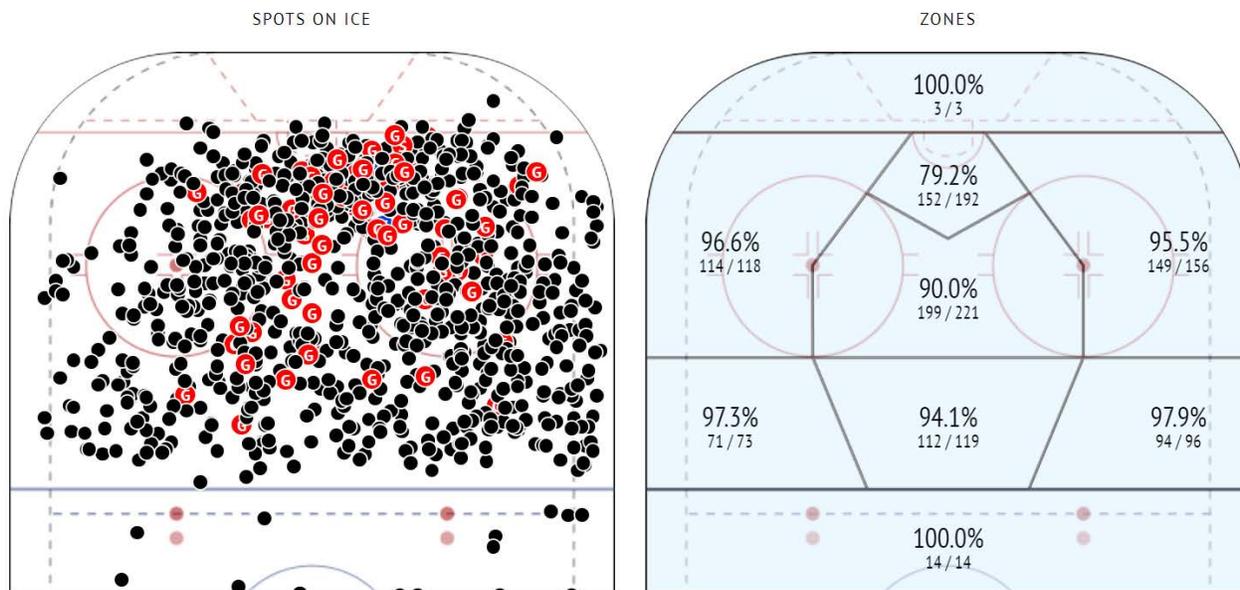
"Probably late second, early third. Kind of cookie cutter. Technically sound. Good hockey sense, good feet. You worry about his size. When plays break down does he have that next gear dynamic to him? People had the same concerns about Dustin Wolfe and that's working out well. Will be the USA goalie at the World Juniors the next two years." – NHL scout, April 2023

"I thought Trey was outstanding. A credit to our goaltending coaches and not just with him but with all of our goalies. We also have an assistant coach in Dan Darrell who puts in a lot of work behind the scenes." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"The kid is so resilient. The work that he puts in, how prepared he is. He gives everybody so much confidence. That's two years of work. Two years of him being absolutely relentless in terms of every day finding a way to get better. This meant a lot to Trey. He was in net there last year. We had three players on the team, four players that were on the ice that were on the other side of it. It meant a lot. Trey's won a silver, he's won a bronze, and I fully expect it there with that kid. He's a winner of a human being. An unbelievable person. I was just telling him I'm proud of him." – USA U18 head coach Dan Muse, April 2023

"Trey is Trey. Best goalie in the world. He had our back any time. That's all I got to say on Trey." – Ryan Leonard, April 2023

≡ SPOTS ON ICE





46 Matthew Mania

AGE 17.677 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Kris Letang



Toolsy



Raw Talent



Analytics Darling

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	5.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
6	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves	OHL	67	10	28	38	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

In a draft short on defencemen, Matthew Mania stands out as one of the highest upside offerings. The chaotic, high-skill creator was among the OHL's most productive even-strength scorers per minute, sitting seventh among his positional peers. That beat out top NHL picks, big name prospects, and every other first-time draft eligible.

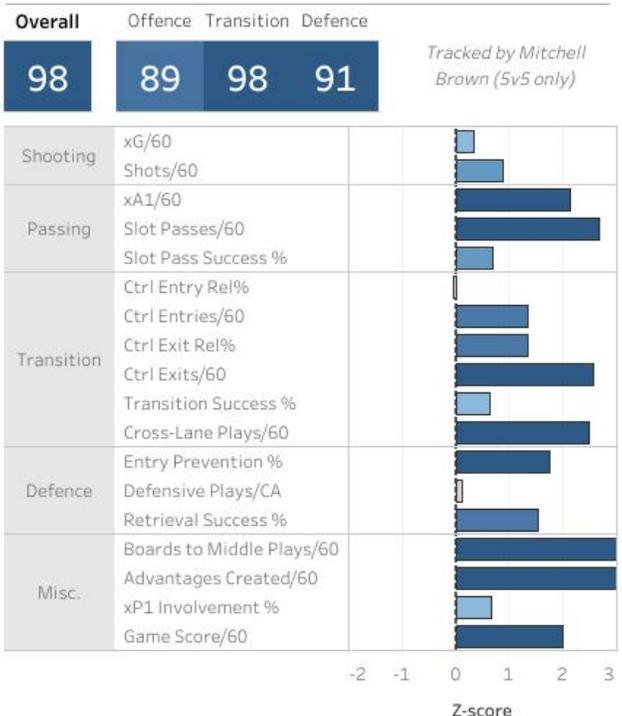
Few players squeeze as much value out of every puck touch. Mania never settles, instead manipulating multiple opponents to create a better option. With backhand skill that rivals top forward prospects, non-stop deception, and both shooting and passing ability, he has the tool kit to justify such confidence.

There's so much creativity to Mania's game. He activates into the rush with give-and-gos after pulling the puck off the boards, beats opponents with backhand drags, slices through forecheckers with long-range passes, weaves through the opponents with shocking ease, and breaks down opponents at the point before setting up teammates across the slot.

With great creation often comes turnover issues, Mania's no different. He forces plays that just aren't there, no matter how much deception he adds. Accuracy lacks. And sometimes, it seems like Mania's just improvising out there, skating into trouble without an escape route.

Matthew Mania

D | Sudbury Wolves | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 144.8



The rawness defenders to Mania's defence. He's a kill-or-get-dusted rush defender. Sure, he's physical and ultra-aggressive, but he lunges at opponents, chases plays, and loses his check off-puck. Better habits and off-puck reads are required to harness his defensive instincts.

The chaotic nature of Mania's game means there's a chance he always lacks the refinement to hold down regular minutes. But he has the skill, confidence, and creation mindset of a top-four, point-producing defenceman.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lauren Kelly: April 5th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Mania's skill is unquestionable, but he didn't get too much of an opportunity to jump into the play to create. A lot of rush attempts were stopped in the neutral zone and it felt like Mania was a little hesitant to activate from the point, not wanting to risk getting caught on an odd-man rush. He was solid at defending the rush, keeping a tight gap and using his stick to disrupt puck carriers. On sequences where he did try to make plays through activation, he was easily pushed off the puck or forced to circle back to the point. If he was able to gain the zone off the rush, he wasn't able to get inside, and was forced to the corners instead. Not the most encouraging viewing, but I know he's capable of more.

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

It's in tighter games where Mania's inefficiency becomes an issue. He tries stuff that has no chance of working. But he also adapted in this game. After the passes through the opposition weren't working, he started either passing around pressure or skating the puck himself. Although the carries ultimately resorted in dump-ins, they were last-resort plays, as he tried to weight shift and deceive his way through players first. If the skating had a bit more power, he'd have claimed a few more lanes and generated better opportunities. The playmaking wasn't a part of this game, and his passive gap appeared, too. But he engages opponents at the right moments and gets inside positioning. Looked more like a late-second than the early-second I've been seeing lately, but that he adapted through this game gives me confidence going forward.

David St-Louis: March 31st, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I continue to only see flashes with Mania. He's skilled. Tools look above-average in terms of NHL projection. He can evade defenders and forecheckers, move around them and attack down. He can carry the puck and make moves at the offensive blue-line. Some good defensive moments, but he's raw in that facet of the game, not always seeing the opponents attacking around him. He really reminds me of Aram Minnetian on the U.S side. Raw, with upside, Mania's tools are a bit better. I see their defensive game as quite similar at this stage. They're projects who need close development work.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania controlled this game. He activated non-stop and usually created from those positions. Set up three chances: hook pass from the boards and a quick pass between two defenders. The timing's a bit off on some of his passes, but he has the ideas and he's deceptive. Stepped into space before shooting, and the time he didn't, he hammered the crossbar. Scored an end-to-end goal by splitting the forecheck, setting up the defender with crossovers, then attacking their stick as he put the puck under it. In general, he has a lot of forward-like qualities to his game: the handling skill, high crossover integration and setting up defenders on angles, the constant passes through pressure. Delays the right moments to hit a moving teammate. The defensive was solid in this game, too. There were bad plays in the usual ways. He tries passes through narrow lanes with limited reward if they connect. Sometimes, it seems like he's just trying stuff. But he's fearless and creative. Easier to recalibrate. He's an early-second for me. If he hits, he'll become a top-four defender. Lots of risk, though.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

More of a defensive performance from Mania. He shows play-killing instincts, stepping up at the right moments, anticipating passes, and getting inside opponents as they handle the puck. Physical and challenged opponents by skating their space and through their hands. He's very chaotic, overly aggressive and prone to defensive skating errors. But the potential's there. Offensively, he's creative and skilled. Don't see many defencemen with the backhand skill that he has, setting up dekes on the backhand, easily bringing the puck across his body back to his forehands, and connected with tricky backhand passes. Hit a shot-pass to a moving target for a deflection, showing his vision. Always looking for the best play on the breakout, beating and manipulating opponents if necessary. Uses the full width of the ice. Looked like a clear top-45 prospect in this game. Lots of work ahead, but he has middle-pairing upside.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

Mania can escape forecheckers quite easily with his skating. He's always jumping into the play, trying give-and-goes, and using deceptive postures to open passing lanes. He overplays, overcommits still, but it's better to be aggressive at this stage and physical than passive and tentative. He does check out sometimes in his in-zone defence, letting opponents roam freely around him. Mania is inconsistent, but the flashes are high-end. His technical ability is very interesting.

Cam Robinson: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

Holy activations, Batman! Mania loves to jump into the rush and this game was no different. He was actively leading rushes, moving the puck, jumping into new spaces. He wasn't so much lurking or hunting so soft spots, he was racing and pushing into areas looking to receive and strike. Unfortunately, that same level of carnage cannot be said of his in-zone defense. He got completely lost several times, just idly slipping away from his coverage or becoming mesmerized by the play and losing his man. He ran around a bit looking for hits, and missed a few rushed outlets where he had time. But still, the aggressive play making and finding with his legs and offensive smarts were impressive. He needs a lot of refinement, but there's tools here.

Lauren Kelly: March 3rd, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Until this game, Mania hadn't scored a goal since mid-January. He potted two in this one. On the first, he stickhandled through the neutral zone, maintained possession crossing the blueline despite nearly running into a teammate, dangling past a defender and finishing short side. On the second, he walked in from the point after receiving a pass and wired it past the goaltender. He's just so fun to watch in the offensive zone. Constantly activating, shifting weight, feinting to draw defenders one way, walking the blueline, taking the puck in deep to try and feed his teammates from down low, picking off clearing attempts at the blueline. That kind of chaos doesn't always lend itself to successful plays in his own end, but he doesn't give up on plays, remains engaged, and tries his best to get back into position. Compared to most of his OHL defence counterparts in this draft class, he's certainly the best offensive catalyst. He'd be a fun selection in the second or third round.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

The skill level and engagement are something. Mania looks to activate with every touch. He jumps into every sequence, pushing back defenders, getting open on the weak side, and staying inside whenever possible. He knows where to be and anticipates

space opening. One of his many puck plays was a nasty backhand drag around an opponent off the faceoff. He's physical, closes space on opponents quickly, and always looks to create advantages for his teammates in transition. The issue in this game was skating. He tried to spin away from pressure and cut inside, but he lacked any sort of quickness exiting the moves – too upright and doesn't lead with his head/torso. Starts stationary, too. But if he can figure that out and settle down a bit, he has middle-pairing upside.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Mania shut down a ton of rushes in the neutral zone before they even manifested into anything, which was a definite positive. He still gets caught in the offensive zone a fair amount, but was able to get back (and even steal the puck back in the neutral zone from behind). Lots of jumping up into the play, especially with the extra open space in the IceDogs end. The offensive awareness and anticipation is off the charts good. The defensive awareness still leaves a lot to be desired, whether it's allowing players to slip past him or not even being aware of threats around the net (scanning issues). But it's as if he's got the puck on a string when he has possession in the offensive zone. It's pretty fun to watch.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

The best player on the ice. He connected with perfect saucer passes and slipped pucks under sticks on the breakout. Faked shots with his eyes, puck positioning, and feet before rolling them into shot-passes. Always tried to create from the point. He barely escaped on one play, but he takes pucks in motion and reacts quickly. Is he planning plays? It doesn't always seem so, but he also manipulated back pressure by turning his feet and even his head in one direction before going the other, peeking over the shoulder to make sure the opponent was following first a couple of times. That led to a late-game scoring chance with a backhand pass into the slot. Joined the rush and killed plays (awkwardly). Stepped up and across to push attackers wide. His upright stance limits his defensive skating and ability to separate off his edges. He looked like a potential No. 4 or 5 in this game. Lots of upside, lots of work ahead.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Erie Otters - OHL

When I watch Mania, I mostly just see technical ability. In many ways, he looks like a D-1 player, an unrefined prospect who could really blossom over the next two years, but who carries a lot more risk. His game is not very translatable at this stage, despite the NHL-caliber tools. He's a good pick between 50-70, I think, but I'd sooner select Cam Allen, Beau Akey, Luca Cagnoni... These prospects are more advanced in their development path in at least one facet. Mania is just pure potential, a collection of offensive mechanics, habits, and skills.

Lauren Kelly: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania is super impressive when he has possession. Keeps his head up, stickhandles, and then launches clean breakout passes up the ice. Activates off the point, shifting weight to bait defenders into leaning one way before changing directions on a dime to escape them along the boards before taking a shot. Lots of end-to-end sequences where he dances through opposing players and tries to take the puck straight to the net. Off-puck is where Mania struggled in this game, however. He scans on retrievals, but he was beat clean as he slowed down to retrieve the puck on a couple of sequences, which led to extended offensive zone time for Mississauga. A couple of breakout passes through the middle of the ice were picked off. One rush sequence where he wasn't able to gain the middle, he turned the puck over, which led to an odd-man rush. Like most offensively-minded defenders, there's a bit of risk with Mania's game. But the offensive creation and potential is enticing.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania has all the offensive mechanics. He can rush the puck with a combination of crossovers, weight shifts, fakes, and accelerations -- and use the same elements in the offensive zone to create. Once again, the main question mark for me is reads. He makes it up as he goes, but some of his movements lack a bit of purpose. I'm also unsure of how to rate his skating. On one hand, he has a high stance that limits explosiveness, but on the other, he seems naturally athletic and a free-mover, in that he can twist his upper-body and drop his weight to make really tight turns. The defensive game is still a pretty large weakness.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Is Mania really reading the game and reacting or is he just following scripts? I'm not sure how I would rate his hockey sense. The reads are not really there on the defensive side. His gapping has improved and his net-front defence, too -- he's more engaged -- but he waits to be forced to make a play. And while he has many playmaking habits, like attracting and faking before passing, I'm not sure he's really a creator, in the sense that he doesn't purposely open plays, but just uses his skills and learned deceptive habits to keep the play flowing. I like that he can dangle and move around forecheckers, carry the puck, and how he constantly attacks space. For now, I see a prospect who will struggle to translate his game.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

A lot of the OHL defenders in this draft class play a more risk-averse, calmer defensive style. That is not Mania, whose highs in this game probably made him the most dynamic blueliner I've watched in this OHL class so far, but also the most prone to mistakes. He's a one-man breakout machine, keeping his feet moving and his head up, stickhandling through the neutral zone, ducking past defenders and spinning away from checks until he's gotten in close enough to get a shot off. Two assists in this viewing, the first off a shot that took a bounce weird enough to cause a mad scramble in front and the second off a point shot that was tipped. He activates, attacks inside, and pinches up constantly, but on the shifts where he's unsuccessful at keeping the puck in, he's usually caught too far back to help defend the ensuing odd-man rush. The offensive instincts alone make him a player to keep an eye on for the rest of the season.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania's mistake-prone but his ideas are so strong. He fakes incoming pressure, cuts away, attacks the inside, spins off checks, looks cross-ice, and instantly peels pucks off the boards. He's shifty, constantly changing directions when working the puck up the ice. Wins positioning, quickly bumps the puck to a secure area on retrievals. Offensively, it's the same story. He wanders a bit and not every decision seems to have an end-goal, but he's generally creating advantages and making smart plays. Add in the defensive engagement and physicality, and he could be a second-rounder.

David St-Louis: December 13th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania is going to be hard to evaluate this season. He's very loose defensively (large gaps, late reactions...) but also shows real engaging ability and he has the tools of a shutdown defenceman. And offensively, he's creative. He went end-to-end for a shot on net and had multiple other incursions in the offensive zone. He plays risky, but he has the playmaking habits (movement on reception, deception...) to play that style. The tools look above-average. A really interesting project.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania was very involved offensively. He joined the rush, beat defenders off the point, and attacked the net. Didn't really manipulate opponents aside from one change of pace; activation was the consequence of reading situations and jumping into the play at the right moment. He doesn't settle for outside shots, instead taking the puck straight to the net. An advantage creator in transition, he always looks for a teammate up the middle or cross-ice before making the easy play. He wants to create with nearly every touch. Defensively, he's physical, but often reactive. Wanders off-puck sometimes. Lacks the depth and explosiveness to match attackers along the boards at times, but there are also moments where he easily mirrors and then pins the attacker along the boards. He looked like a second-round candidate, but I need to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

An impressive game from Mania. Offensively, he moves through pass receptions with his head up, steps to the middle, and uses space before shooting. Not explosive off his edges, but he has some quickness to evade pressure and enter lanes. One shift was a masterclass of space management, capped off by setting a chance down-low from behind the goal-line. In transition, he takes pucks to the middle, passes laterally, and skates the puck out of danger when necessary. Creates advantages, but he's not manipulating opponents to create his lane. The defence could be strength. He has some poor habits (committing too early,

late to close space), but he instantly turns break ups into offence with quick passes or delays after getting the opponent on his back. He looked like a solid second-round candidate in this game.

David St-Louis: November 24th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mania is a bit chaotic, but there is a lot to like in his game. He bounces from check to check, finishing most hits, overcommitting, yes, but also killing his share of plays. He skates with a high-stance, but with a lot of elusive, great form, crossovers that enable him to pick up speed and attack through defensive formation. He's aggressive offensively, capable of manipulating, and shows playmaking instincts. I like his vision.

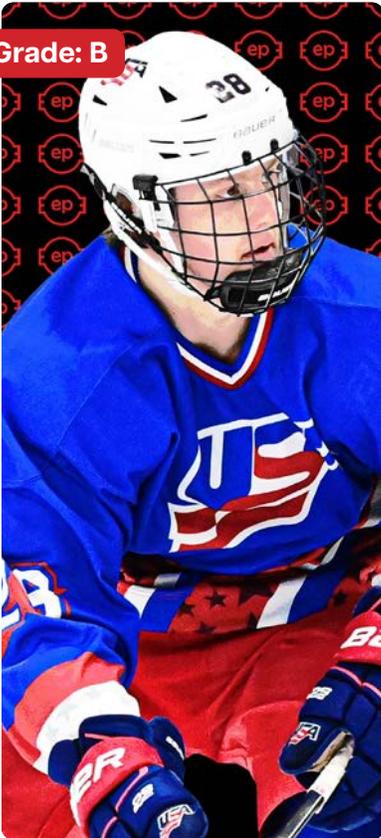
J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

This was a really impressive performance from Mania, who played significant minutes on Sudbury's top pair, opposite Nolan Collins. The first thing that stands out is the pace at which he plays. Mania collects the puck, and he's off to the races. His handling skill is clearly above average, and while there are some mechanical quirks to his stride – he's upright, lacking much depth, etc. – but the output is at least average, too. Mania flashes deceptive, projectable elements as a puck carrier, too. Changing rush lanes, changing tempos, using eye-level deception to set up each move. Really sharp stuff. What concerns me with Mania is what happens when the game slows down a bit. There doesn't seem to be much planning there. It's all instinct and feel. It works at this level because of Mania's skill level and cunning with the puck – he can be very deceptive when pressured – but I'm curious about how it scales up. Mania actually struggled a fair bit to move the puck as a passer, and I don't rate his defensive game as particularly strong. Tough projection, but he looks like an early Day 2 pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Mania has a lot of intriguing qualities. After getting stops, he always seems to know the next play. Leaves pucks into areas for teammates to pick up with speed. With the puck, he's elusive and creative in spurts. His best sequence: faking the shot, skating into traffic, then using the double cut to fake pressure before passing to the inside for a shot. A bit unstable on his edges – could just be the small sample. Well-timed and weighted shot-pass for a deflection resulted in a chance. Committed to the outside lane too easily and relies too heavily on crossovers, leading to a chance against. Reactionary off-puck defence, but he works to close space and kill plays along the boards. Excited to see more.

Grade: B



47 Charlie Stramel

AGE 17.918 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 15, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Eetu Luostarinen



Motor



Versatile



Vision

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

216 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Wisconsin	NCAA	33	5	7	12	0.36
USA U20	WJC-20	7	0	3	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

There was perhaps no greater evaluative challenge in this year's draft than Charlie Stramel, and that makes him one of the real wildcards once you get into the back half of the first round.

There was just so much promise coming into the year, and why not? Stramel had just capped off a distinguished, productive draft-minus-one season spent bouncing between the USNTDP U18 and U17 squads with nearly a point a game at the U18s. If we're drafting a year ago, he's probably a top-15 pick.

Then he went to Wisconsin as a true freshman, and it was pretty much all downhill from there, with the exception of a solid showing in his country's colours at the World Juniors. Thrust into a top-six matchup role in the nation's top conference with little support and on a team that played with almost no structure, his results reflected as much.

Still, many of the qualities that made Stramel a compelling prospect in the first place were able to shine through from time to time, reminding us of the player he can be under better circumstances.

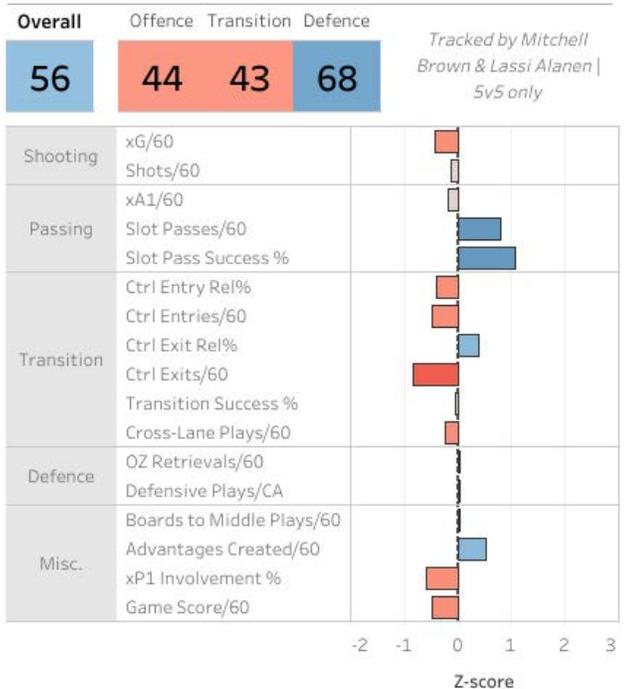
Because when Stramel is at his best, there are signs of a player with a reasonably straight-forward projection to the bottom of an NHL lineup.

Most of his finest work last year occurred below the harshmarks and

Charlie Stramel

F | USA | WJC | Draft Year

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 87.9



along the wall. Stramel's skill as a small-area distributor was a constant across our viewings, something that seemed immune to the noise around him. His ability to parry opponents and sequence plays with touch and pace from in tight made him a constant offensive driver during sustained offensive zone pressures.

"You're starting to see flashes of the small-area passing that made him so effective as a draft-minus-one skater, including one play where he blended a retrieval off the half-wall into a handling move and then furnished a look-off setup to Cruz Lucius for a scoring chance," EP Rinkside Editor-in-Chief J.D. Burke wrote in a December game report.

We saw the odd glimmer of smarts from Stramel as a finisher, particularly in how he slinked in and out of coverage with a high off-puck pace, trying to get open for shooting opportunities, but only in flashes. Primarily, Stramel did his work as a goalscorer in tight, fighting at the net-front for deflections, rebounds, and loose pucks.

But anyone projecting him to a power forward's role at the next level is, well, doing just that – projecting. Stramel wasn't much of a creator of rush offence, doesn't have the best touch as a handler, and lacks the speed necessary to be that type of player.

Instead, what you're getting with Stramel is a fairly refined two-way player with some touch as a passer and some snarl in his game. The projection to a bottom-of-the-lineup role is pretty straightforward, but anything more than that? Time will tell.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout draft-eligible performances at the 2023 World Juniors



Charlie Stramel embraces the challenge of being a true freshman at Wisconsin



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster for the 2023 World Juniors

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"If you go back to last year at the program and you see all of his goals, look at who he's on the ice with. He's playing with Cutter Gauthier, Rutger McGroarty. Then he goes to Wisconsin, only has the five goals, they may as well have been the worst team in college hockey, no structure." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He's been the same size since bantam, so he's got a little bit of those bad habits catching up to him. Things like holding onto the puck for too long because he could get away with it. I don't know, he's an enigma. He could go late-first, early-second and it wouldn't shock me, just because the potential is there. I think he'll play on the wing. He's a power forward, bottom-six guy." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"He will probably go in the top 10 or 15 picks. He's a huge centre. Good skater. Can play the power game and he's got some sneaky finesse offence too. Wisconsin is playing him a ton. Scouts want to see him play with more consistent awareness as the season progresses. I think he plays in the NHL for sure. I think he will be what you saw at the World Juniors – a third or fourth line centre who kills penalties, provides physicality, and adds the odd bit of offence. At Wisconsin they asked him to be a power play point producer and he's not intelligent enough to do that. There's enough puck poise and hockey sense concerns here. He's a big, strong, athletic, bottom-six guy. Where do you draft him? Those guys aren't very valuable. Probably give up a second to get a guy like him at the trade deadline. In the first round, take a swing at the offence but I don't think that's him." – NHL scout, April 2023

"I think to an extent. It helps that I've always been very big. I take the weight room very seriously. Making sure I can

physically stay up with these guys. I've been playing up since a very young age. Through Pee Wee, squirts, and all of that. It's something I'm used to. I enjoy the challenge. It's awesome. It helps my game a ton especially playing with the older guys." – Charlie Stramel, November 2022

"I like to think I am a power forward. I have speed and like to play a 200-foot game. I like to be hard to play defensively and hard to defend offensively. Help my linemates out and do anything I can to produce. A 200-foot power forward that uses his speed to the best of his advantage with size and physicality." – Charlie Stramel, November 2022

"I think just jumping on guys and making an unexpected defensive play. Make it seem like you aren't going to jump at them, and I have a long stick because I'm a bigger guy, so I'll do anything I can to get the puck and get it going on offence. Closing plays is a big thing in my game to try and help my team get on offence." – Charlie Stramel, November 2022

⇩ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: February 25th, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Penn State - NCAA

Another relatively quiet performance from Stramel, but not a bad one. Stramel played his usual, efficient game, supporting the puck at both ends of the ice and kind of acting as a conduit between defence and offence. Most of his work in the offensive zone occurred at the net-front, where he picked up a series of scoring chances on goalmouth scrambles. Skating still looks like a below average projection, but he's perhaps a bit more nimble than I gave credit. Certainly, a bit more evasive. I think Stramel's projection is probably that of a third-line centre at best, but it's hard to make heads or tails of his game in this environment.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Penn State - NCAA

Not a lot of change in Stramel's game from December until now. He's not really completing plays and the ones he tries, well, they aren't the ones that will lead to the best offensive chance. His projection is based on his frame, decent skating frame, physical skills, and his defensive involvement. He wins battles by taking inside positioning on pucks and he backtracks to counter the opposition's attack. I continue to see more of a fourth-liner than a scorer in an NHL lineup. His game just seems too raw for this level of play. Not a lot of support inside this team, too.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Minnesota vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

By the numbers, this wasn't a game to remember for Stramel. He took one shot, completed zero slot passes, and didn't record a single entry at 5-on-5. But there were a lot of solid ideas and flashes of NHL skill. He chipped the puck around a defender, won the race, then went backhand to the inside. He delayed just long enough to freeze the nearest defender, then passed to a teammate in the slot (just missed). For his one shot, he intercepted a pass, drove wide, then shot under the defender's stick. In all three plays, he showed NHL skill.

The execution lacked – improving his timing and reading more than one defender at a time would help. He always skates his routes. One time, it created a passing lane for a goal. Heavily involved defensively. Backtracked, won inside positioning, and threw players down to the ice. Some clever plays, like getting his leg between Knies' and sneakily tripping him to get the stop. I feel confident in projecting him to the NHL. He should play in some capacity. But I'm not sure he's more than a fourth-liner. There are flashes of more, however.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Minnesota vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

An effective game from Stramel. He showed some real playmaking potential in this game. Lots of great ideas. He tried cross-slot passes under duress, delaying for the lane to open, and even trying a look-off slip pass through two players. The lack of pace stands out as a concern. He's always gliding with the puck. There were no flashes of true in-motion skill in this game. And his

ideas fail, usually because he's too optimistic. The defence was a strength in this game. He's aware and positions himself well. A bit more urgency would help him get cleaner stops. On the offensive end, he skates to push the defence back and provides an effective moving screen around the net. Nothing advanced, but intelligent hockey. He looks like a clear third or fourth line projection, skating-dependent.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Wisconsin vs. Michigan - NCAA

Just an abhorrent performance from Wisconsin most of this game. No interest in defence or even really trying at times. Stramel was fine, though. He started off the game by not reading that his defenceman was pinching, dipped into the zone, and then hustled back on the backcheck but didn't once think to look over his shoulder and cover the country's leading scorer. Oh well. There were times where he gave up on pucks and plays. But as the game wore on, he showed more and more. He anticipated passes. He supported down low. He backtracked, keeping opponents wide before bodying them off the puck. Grabbed a couple of chances, one following up a loose puck and another with a nasty deflection from a tough angle. The skating's weak but he generally understands where to position himself. Should improve, given the general instability in his stride. Looked more like a potential checker than a first-rounder.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

This game started off promisingly enough for Stramel. You had all of the hallmarks of his game on display – the hard work on the forecheck, the puck support low in the offensive zone and below the hash marks defensively, the small area passing – on display. Actually saw some interesting plays from Stramel as a rush playmaker, consistently cutting inside, drawing defenders towards him, and then sending the puck to teammates in space. Or trying to anyway. It didn't always work out. Then the game got ugly, and Stramel more or less vanished. A whole lot of straight line attacks, trying to turn the corner on defencemen and failing miserably, chipping the pucks into space that he couldn't access, etc. He's such a tough evaluation.

Mitchell Brown: January 4th, 2023 - USA vs. Canada - World Juniors

Stramel set up a quality chance, fired off one of his own for an assist, and took advantage of Brindley's hard work on the forecheck by intercepting passes and winning races. But this was more of a concerning game with the puck. Didn't show much versatility or adaptability. Just straight-forward, dump-and-chase hockey without much foresight. It's fine to play that game, but the player still has to set defenders up and place the puck in recoverable areas. Stramel did neither.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - USA vs. Slovakia - World Juniors

Stramel didn't create as much as his linemate Brindley did, but it was a solid showing overall. He understands when to move the puck, connecting with his teammates building speed up the middle instead of forcing pucks forward. He's an intelligent supporting player, although he's occasionally late arriving in space and lacks a bit of urgency. Shows a bit of shooting and passing skill, although nothing too notable. Threw a massive hit in the third period and was generally involved along the boards. Looked like a clear fourth-line projection.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - USA vs Latvia - World Juniors

Only flashes for Stramel in this game, but I'm liking him more and more. He looks to build scoring chances and seems to understand where to skate to create the most advantageous situation for his team, especially off the rush. He uses teammates, delays his play to put them in the best possible situation, can make plays through defenders...There is a bit of planning in Stramel's game and the skating doesn't look like too big of a weakness at this level.

J.D. Burke: December 9th, 2022 - Wisconsin vs. Minnesota - NCAA

Stramel pounced on a loose puck in the slot and sniped home Wisconsin's lone goal in this game, a case of being in the right place at the right time more than anything. That's hardly a knock on Stramel though. His off-puck pace continues to elevate with each outing and on a line with better passers, I think Stramel would have far more goals than he does. He's getting to the net front and finding ways to sneak away from coverage. Managed to send a one-touch shot on goal for a scoring chance in the third period

with one such play. He's also a bit of a shit disturber, too. Just straight up skated into the Minnesota goaltender after the whistle and got his hands up for no particular reason other than to be a dink.

J.D. Burke: December 3rd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Stramel seems to be getting more and more comfortable with Wisconsin's, ahem, system with each passing viewing. You're starting to see flashes of the small area passing that made him so effective as a draft-minus-one skater, including one play where he blended a retrieval off the half-wall into a handling move and then furnished a look-off setup to Cruz Lucius for a scoring chance. Nice flash of eye-hand coordination on a net-front deflection that nearly resulted in a goal, too. Had another scoring chance in the first period, sneaking into a defenceman's blind spot for a one-touch scoring chance that he just missed the net with. Then, of course, Stramel hit someone in the numbers, had to sit for a five-minute major, and then just kind of faded into the background of this game.

David St-Louis: December 3rd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Stramel improved massively between my last viewing and this one -- pretty typical for a college Freshman. He's supporting even more plays well now, showing up on time on breakouts to take the puck up ice and drive at the net. He uses feint to gain himself a bit extra space in transition, freezing defenders, and he looks to create passing plays. He can't really escape the boards with possession, but he can't protect it and send it to a teammate with a short pass as he holds a defender on his back. The flashes of hockey sense are more frequent and the playmaking shows up more, too. The skating remains a difficult projection. It looks like a four and will always be limiting his upside.

J.D. Burke: December 2nd, 2022 - Michigan vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

It's not much of a stretch to suggest that Stramel was Wisconsin's best forward in this contest. He picked up the Badgers first goal of the game, exploding past a forward that was covering for a pinching defenceman, leading the 2-on-1 up-ice, holding the defender in the middle with his eyes, and then sending a laser past Erik Portillo. The lack of any puck support continues to limit his effectiveness during sustained in-zone possessions, but that's par for the course with this team. Skating looked about average, puck skills above average. Work rate was high as ever. He's a really tough evaluation this year. I just want to put him on basically any other team than this one.

J.D. Burke: November 4th, 2022 - Wisconsin vs. Michigan State - NCAA

The pace of the college game continues to be an issue for Stramel, who had another largely ineffective outing for Wisconsin as they got just throttled to the tune of a 5-0 loss. The only qualities that are really standing out in a remotely consistent fashion right now are his motor, physicality, and defensive work rate. There just really hasn't been much else there. There's clearly some technical passing skill in Stramel's bag of tricks, but you don't really get to see it leveraged often in this Wisconsin system that is entirely based on quick breaks and counter plays and averse to any sort of support or small-area game. It's all punt and hunt hockey, and Stramel is uniquely ill-equipped to find any sort of success in that environment. So, for now, it's all bone-crushing hits and strong play in the defensive zone. I'll be surprised if Stramel is in anyone's first round by season's end if this continues.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - Penn State vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

There were some highlights from Stramel in this performance. He generated Wisconsin's best look of the game in the third period, collecting an area pass in space as the trailer, skated downhill and fired the puck on goal for a scoring chance that the goalie easily stopped. It wasn't the most advanced play, but Stramel took what was there and could've just as easily scored with a better shot. He also drew a penalty in the first period, securing possession along the boards, using a deceptive manoeuvre to drive inside and force the Penn State forward to take a tripping penalty in the process. Stramel really stood out in this one for his puck support at every corner of the ice and high work rate. Skill level doesn't really stand out, but that's going to be difficult on this Wisconsin team.

David St-Louis: October 21st, 2022 - Minnesota Duluth vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

This is going to be a rough season for Stramel, if this game is any indication. He shone a bit more when he had space, time to think

about his plays. Then, you saw him find solutions to closed passing lanes, orchestrate the offence, create space for his teammates, and find the right rotations. He scored on a great sequence where he created an offensive zone entry, drove the slot, and a couple of seconds later, the net for a tap-in. But right now, the high-level competition and the lack of support he is getting in Wisconsin has uncovered numerous issues with his game: a lack of pace (both to his skating and decision-making), poor scanning habits that lead to forced plays and thrown pucks and force a dump-and-chase game, and overall poor spacing with teammates in transition sequence. Basically, to survive and thrive in this environment, Stramel would need to be a really high-end thinker of the game, but currently, the only advantages he creates for himself and others on the ice are through his tools, his frame and handling abilities.

David St-Louis: October 14th, 2022 - St. Cloud State vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

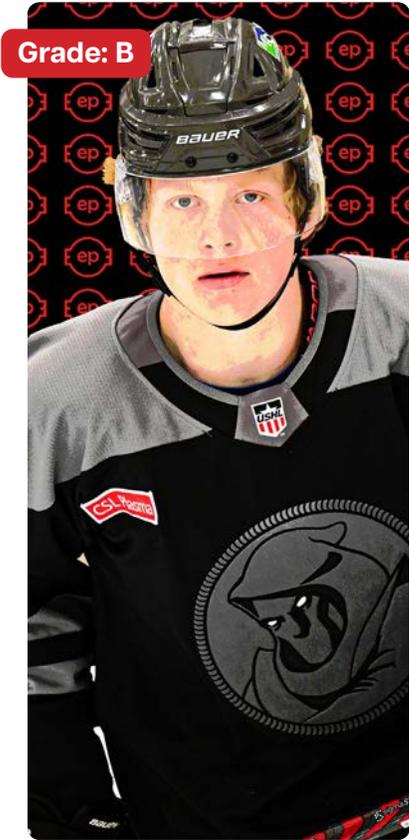
The lack of pace in Stramel's game continues to be very concerning. He's probably a 5 skater (average projection); we see it sometimes, but he plays at about 60% of his capacity at all times. The lack of awareness inside his moves is also concerning, but in certain sequences, he shows that he has an understanding of rotations, of where teammates are going to be and passes to them quickly. He can link some plays fast, but it seems impossible for him to escape defenders enough to create plays at this stage. I'm not sure what he could be at the NHL level. Right now, I see him more as a potential bottom-line checker (if he develops the speed) than a top-six skill player. It seems unlikely that he develops both the mobility and higher skill level to reach such a role. It's early though. We'll monitor the progress, but the Wisconsin environment has toned down my optimism.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2021 - USNTDP-18 vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Stramel scored once in this game with a fast shot after being forgotten in the slot. To get leverage on that shot and fire it quickly, he fell down to his knees. Stramel's skating looks like a significant weakness so far, but I'm not sure if the speed is a problem or he's just a low-pace player, who prefers gliding and surveying, that give-and-going and pushing defenders back. The mechanics are good in his stride, but he has trouble accessing outside edge moves. He also had trouble retaining awareness of teammates while controlling the puck under pressure in this game -- many of his passes missed or were not well timed. The frame is imposing, the handling skills are there, but I have some doubts.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2021 - USNTDP-18 vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Stramel lumbers on the ice. It's not entirely a skating thing, more of a pace issue. The decisions are slow; he gets surprised and stripped by opponents, and the movements, too. He has some soft handling and passing moments, but mostly his plays are approximated, as he lacks the tools and the shiftiness to escape pressure and gain the time and space he needs to make plays. His frame and his off-puck game are his main qualities for me at this point. He finds space well, understands the overlap/underlap rush meta, and gets pucks. Good rotations.



Grade: B

48 William Whitelaw

AGE 17.608 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Phil Kessel



Fleet of Foot



Lethal Shooter



Toolsy

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'9"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6.5	7	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
7	6	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	62	36	25	61	0.98

SCOUTING REPORT

William Whitelaw is talented. There's no denying that much. In a world where we rank players exclusively according to their offensive upside, he's a clear-cut first-round pick.

Simply put: If you're looking for a player with the complete offensive package, then this is your guy. Whitelaw blends plus-level skating, blistering mental pace, and a triple-threat scoring profile to generate offence at will; all of his physical tools earning well above average grades on our 1-to-9 linear tools grading system.

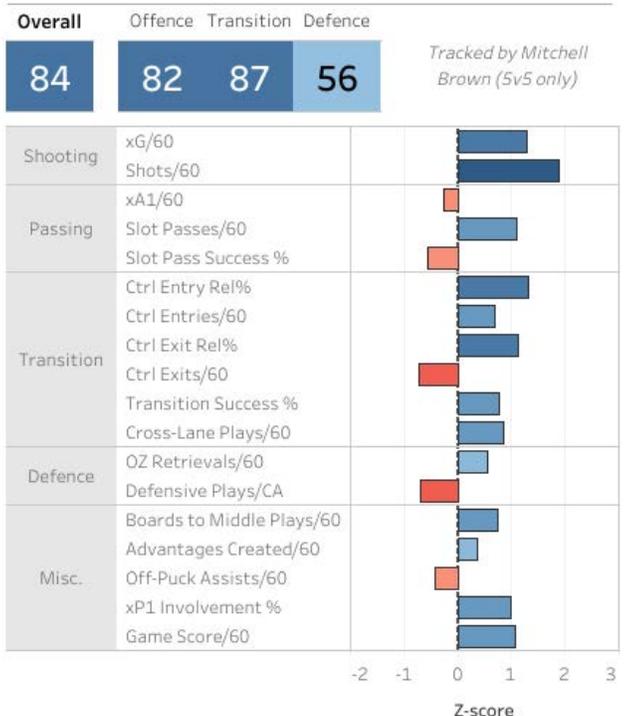
Whitelaw is most effective as a finisher, with an adaptable, deceptive, and potent set of releases fit for any situation. Wrist shots, slap shots, one-times, catch-and-release – he can send them all on net and beat goaltenders clean from range.

And while he started the season as a single-speed, straight-line rush attacker, that's not really the case as we close on the 2023 NHL Draft in Nashville. By season's end, Whitelaw became a much more cunning, efficient distributor, capable of setting up highly difficult passing plays with deception and connecting with his linemates with relative ease.

Now, at this point, I'm sure you're all wondering how such a player could land in the second round in our final ranking. Some of that

William Whitelaw

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 160.1



boils down to translatability. Whitelaw acquits himself well physically for someone in a 5-foot-9 frame at the USHL level, but he'd hardly be the first with this sort of build to struggle as the talent pool compresses.

If you're drafting for pure upside, then perhaps you're comfortable betting on Whitelaw to be an exception to the rule with a first-round pick. If you're aware of the stakes that come with missing that high in the draft, well, that changes your calculus.

In discussions with NHL personnel, we've often found that they share this assessment of the situation. The skill level is great, but the profile is fraught, and they haven't exactly been all too impressed with his off-ice makeup, as you'll find when you get to the industry chatter section of his profile.

Perhaps in the right environment, Whitelaw can be guided to long-term NHL success, The skill is there for him to develop into a top-six scoring winger.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



USHL Stock Watch: Daimon Gardner healthy, hitting the scoresheet with Tri-City Storm



Standout performances from the 2022 USHL Fall Classic



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I'm not a Whitelaw guy. He's selfish. There's a reason he was left off the World Junior-A challenge team. It has nothing to do with his hockey abilities. He thinks I am better than all of you guys. My teammates suck. Add in that he's small. Not a fun guy to put your name on the line with. What's funny is he is a legit goal scorer. Legit release. Very talented offensive player and goal scorer." – NHL Scout, May 2023

"He's produced in big games. Last year against Germany, in the Hlinka, one of the best performances I've seen this year. It's all about risk assessment. When do you draft one of the most talented goal scorers? He only wants to play the game one way? There's a high ceiling there." – NHL Scout, May 2023

∨ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Not the best Whitelaw performance. It was kind of a return to how he played in the first games, where he tried to cheat on breakouts to get ahead of defenders, receive pucks, and break free to take on the goalie. He doesn't have great playmakers as line-mates so that may be why he switched back his strategy. It still looks like he has the puck on a string when cutting through traffic. For some reason, it's always his stick that is first on it, first to get it back.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 22nd, 2023 - USNTDP U17 vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A good performance from Whitelaw in what was a one-sided game for the Phantoms. The offensive execution was exceptional as always. He is steps ahead of the play, finding support and relocating in space. The skill level is first-round caliber; he churns

his feet to beat players to space with the puck and is more than capable of using a slip or dangle to get to the inside. Whitelaw anticipates transition and finds space in the wings to spring the attack the other way. He's still passive defensively, floating above the tops of the circles without possession and occasionally losing his check from the point. He's got a bit of grit on the forecheck, finishing checks and attacking hard; he actually manages the physical element of the game well for a player on the slight side. Still, the offense is too good to ignore, there's late-first, early-second potential.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U17 vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Uneventful showing for Whitelaw, even though he did record a goal. There were a few nice flashes, some nifty plays to get to the middle in transition and off the rush. The shooting volume was as expected, a few bad angle rips but a couple good looks in the high slot as well. The goal was a tap in off a rebound, nothing crazy but good spatial awareness. Passive defensively but a few good looks in transition and off the rush where he delayed and found the outlet. Also capable of turning and burning. He has so many skills to weaponize, it's hard not to call him a first-rounder or at least an early second.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A dynamic game from Whitelaw, who basically went play-for-play with Celebrini and Perron. The skill level at speed immediately stands out. He dangles opponents at full speed, attacks the middle fearlessly, spots teammates in the slot, and attacks the net. Dangled in and decked a dude in one sequence, before connecting with a spinning hook pass into the slot – that was fun. He overwhelms opponents with his pace. He has backhand and forehand dekes, bringing the puck across his body fluidly at speed. Adapts his shot to the lane, although his set-ups could use a bit of work. He has advanced playmaking ideas – step inside and go cross-slot or roll the shot into a cross-crease pass – but his timing's still just a bit off. Pucks leave his stick a bit too early and bit too hard for his teammates. He has top-10 skill in this draft. The intelligence and off-puck game aren't at that level, but the latter keeps improving.

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs Chicago Steel - USHL

An incredible game from Whitelaw. The transformation since the start of the season is striking. He went from a solo driver, a straight rusher who refused to use his teammates to a smart playmaker, who manages the puck well for the most part, and who applies himself a lot more defensively. He uses his speed to pressure, gets his stick inside lanes, and looks more patient on breakouts. He picked up multiple points in this one, with his passing skills, his shot, and his speed. He has all the tools; he's even physical. His skating form is almost textbook. It confers him a lot of balance and he leverages it to protect the puck in flight. The only thing missing from his game is manipulation skills. I haven't seen them as much. Usually, players don't develop these manipulation tools, but Whitelaw is so advanced skill-wise that it wouldn't require as much of a shift for him. And he already showed that he can develop significantly over the course of months. The more skill players have, the more assets and solutions they have to figure out development problems. The sense grade might not be as high as other top-end prospect (maybe above-average in terms of projection but not high-end), but in terms of skills, few in the draft can match him.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Another standout game from Whitelaw. He has pretty much everything at this stage. He shoots like an NHL, plays with pace, uses his teammates, and even runs players over. The physical skills shown in this game were exciting. He stepped into opponents as they arrived, then cut back. Scored with a step-in wrister on the powerplay with a subtle angle change – a 7-grade shot. Spotted teammates in the slot and showed the passing skill to connect (backhand, slip), especially from behind the net. Elsewhere, his timing and accuracy are way off. He tries to force pucks through lanes. A top talent in this draft, no doubt. But uncertainty remains. Either way, he looked like a clear first round talent in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Pretty exceptional game for Whitelaw. He's such a dynamic problem solver, his hands allow him to get out of tough spots on the wall and work his way into the middle. The shot is exceptional, one insane rip from the left circle that beat the goalie clean over his shoulder short side. Opposing d have no choice but to respect him off the rush, he's too quick and can beat guys clean to

the outside. Another goal where he battled in front and stuffed home a rebound. There's so much skill here, hard not to see him slipping past the second round.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Whitelaw attacked the middle constantly in this game. One of his attacks drew a penalty, on which he subsequently scored. Deked through an opponent at full speed for a high-danger chance later in the game. He gets open, shoots off-the-pass, morphs his shot to the lane, and builds plays with lateral passes and give-and-gos. Not necessarily a playmaker, but it's easy to see him in the NHL now. Especially with his physical skills. The game might not be as dynamic as I once thought, but he still has the tool foundation. He could become a top-six forward.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 25th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Whitelaw continues to shine in the offensive zone. He's incredibly crafty; spin-o-rama passes, look offs, tough angle shots, he's fun to watch. Manages contact nicely, puts the puck into space and uses weight shifts to shield off checks. He has eyes in the back of his head and always seems to find the right passing option at the right time. Gets good shot volume on his own too. Great off-puck timing too, found soft spots off the rush. Very transition-oriented, flies the zone early to try to start the rush and doesn't provide much defensively though he got some kill time in this one. A lot of skill and a fun player.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 24th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Pretty strong Whitelaw showing. All the usual habits, using his hands and feet to navigate to space in the offensive zone. Some great deception to penetrate the middle, used slips and hooks to find teammates on the flanks. A nice power move in the first to earn a cross crease goal. Still a bit errant in his own zone, flies early to try to get started on transition. But the tools are too strong to ignore. The hands, the feet, the vision, they're all first-round caliber. Will be interesting to continue watching him through the end of the year.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Whitelaw sniped on the penalty kill, but this was a quiet game. He delayed to invite contact, threw the reverse hit, then drove the net for his only 5-on-5 look of the game. Plays the off-puck and give-and-go games better these days. He passes through opponents and gets open inside space. But the degree of difficulty on his passes wasn't especially high. The mechanical ability is high, among the best in the draft – skating, shooting, handling. He still looks like a 20-40 candidate.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 8th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Pretty uneventful showing for Whitelaw. A couple of the usual displays of skill, manipulating defenders and finding space to shoot through screens, including a nice inside outside move where he hit the crossbar from the top of the circles. Incredibly inside driven off the rush, uses quick cuts to get inside the dot lanes. Some great displays of managing checks, using the momentum of the puck to spin off defenders and find space. Still a bit of a passenger defensively, lots of turnaways from pucks in his own end in an effort to fly the zone. The skill level is impressive, just need a little more on both sides of the puck.

David St-Louis: March 8th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Whitelaw didn't manage to find scoring plays in this one, but the tools were on full display again: multiple fast crossover rushes, delay passes, and a couple of dangle attempts. He's becoming more of a playmaker, at least compared to the first part of the season, but he still has some puck-hugging tendencies. I'm convinced those will go away with a better supporting cast, as his teammates can't always catch-up to him or his ideas. He cheats on offence, but also broke a couple of plays defensively, showing great timing. And he showed some physical skills in this one.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A nasty from Whitelaw. He threw at least three crushing hits along the boards. Stepped through the hands of opponents to secure positioning. His playmaking growth continues. He looks for teammates instead of pulling the trigger as defenders close in. The shot and skating are still the stars, both could be 6.5-plus projections. Fast, explosive from stops, and adapts his shot to just about every lane. He still has top-15 skill.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Whitelaw showed much more willingness to pass than I've previously seen. Did most of his plays connect? No. But he was trying to delay for help, set up teammates as they rushed the net, and looked back into space instead of immediately pulling the trigger. The shot remains rather ridiculous – he adapts his release to the situation and fires in a split-second. Didn't rely much on the hands. Showed some physicality, too. He stepped into opponents and skated through their hands. Not a pretty game, but a solid performance that speaks to his growth as a player.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Whitelaw didn't show the same offensive upside in this one, but his defensive game is improving and I'm starting to see the physical play that others have been talking about. He finishes hits, establishes body positioning on the boards, and skated hard to catch up to attackers on a few backchecks. He lacks the high-end manipulation skills that make the success of Will Smith and other USNTDP players, but the tools are still very interesting. He's one of the best skaters in the draft and one of its top handlers too. And there's the shot.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

There is so much skill in Whitelaw's game. He can outrace opponents even when many steps behind, steal the puck, and get breakaways. He can outspeed, outmaneuver, and even plays with somewhat of a physical edge. The game looks easy at times for him at this level and his skating and handling clearly project as above NHL average. His shot, too. He sometimes forces plays that aren't there, but generally has become more efficient as the season progresses. He also has an instinct for scoring: finding space and attacking the net. Everything is there in his game, it's just making it function at his size in the NHL and toning down some of his less desirable tendencies.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - BioSteel Top Prospects Game

Whitelaw was the 2nd most dynamic prospect in this game after Oliver Moore. He does everything at high speed, often playing too fast for his own good. I liked his board work in this one. For such a small player, Whitelaw looks strong; he can leverage his explosive skating posture to stay on his feet and win pucks from opposing defencemen before moving them to teammates. I'm not sure about his off-puck positioning; he overshot a few passing lanes. He was a bit overcreative in his choices of plays, but also completed some harder passing plays. One of the most skilled players on the ice with the vision and processing to go with it. I liked his system play overall, too. He can be more than an offensive cheater.

David St-Louis: December 31th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Another impressively quiet performance from Whitelaw. It's weird, but I'm almost more satisfied when he settles down and plays a more collective game, because it shows that he can. His off-puck timing still needs some work in his pass-and-reposition game, but he's not the only one at fault when the puck doesn't connect. His teammates don't always read his intentions. He's still cheating offensively, but also making it up with some harder backchecks. His rush patterns are getting more varied, especially because he's now using teammates more, attracting defenders on himself by cutting to the middle and kicking the puck wide. The handling and skating both have different rhythm as he rushes; he could become an NHL powerplay entry machine. A lot of upside here. A really exciting prospect, even if we have to account for the playstyle limitations in his projection. He will need a strong development team to push him in the right direction.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 29th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Not a bad showing for Whitelaw. The tools are all there, the speed, the hands, and certainly the shot. It's more a matter of how well he employs them to create offensively. After a careless dangle turned giveaway early in the game, Whitelaw found that he could have more success facilitating and relocating. With the puck, Whitelaw got his feet moving and used his speed to attack the middle and push D back before finding flanking teammates in the space he created. From a standstill, he used touch passes and hard rims to stymie defensive formations. He was also unafraid to just walk in and shoot, sending his dangerous curl and drag wrister on net multiple times, having success once. Defensively, he seems so disengaged. There are so many bad habits, turnaways, flying the zone, losing his check. Whitelaw wants to play offense but does nothing to create transition. He's on Youngstown's penalty kill but only for his speed I suspect. Whitelaw's got a bit of a chippy side too, he likes to finish his hits on the forecheck but seemingly just to piss guys off. He's got a habit of stopping right in front of goalies on frozen pucks before taking an absolute beating from opposing d-men. It was kind of funny to watch. There's first round talent here, but I worry that his game isn't well rounded enough.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Madison Capitals vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

This was a top-20 caliber performance. Or maybe I'm getting a bit too enthusiastic. Whitelaw's tools are all above-average, except maybe for the physicality, but there are flashes of competency there, too. But it's really in his choices of plays that he is starting to improve. If there is a scoring chance for himself, he is not one to pass it away, to leverage it to give a teammate an even better look. That's too bad. But when lanes are closed, he is starting to use his skill to create for others, showing manipulation in the process with movement and fakes. He clearly sees the ice. He just makes poor choices. And that's fixable, usually. I have high confidence that he will become a better and better playmaker. The defensive game? Well, that's another story. I doubt he ever becomes an engaged defender. He flies the zone and is hyper-focused on generating right now. Still, he remains firmly an A for me, a great project. I'd take him in the top-20 with some confirmation about his willingness to improve.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Whitelaw continues to be the most interesting prospect puzzle. The shot's a legit 6-7 grade. The skating and hands aren't too far behind that range. Does he use them in the right ways? Not really. He just burns down the outside and lets pucks fly. Doesn't manipulate opponents or even seek to create advantages for his teammate in transition. When he's actually interested in passing, they're usually great ideas (going back against the grain, for example), but fail. Away from the puck, he has potential. He's physical, gaining leverage on opponents and winning battles without much difficulty. Defensively, he makes some intelligent reads. He also completely disengages when the puck isn't near. Supports the play effectively, getting open between defenders and taking intelligent routes to get open. But just as he does defensively, he also disengages there, too. On tools, he's a clear first-rounder, maybe a top-15 talent. But his game must change a lot to make it.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Whitelaw was really looking to move the puck in this game. He took pucks off the boards and instantly passed to the inside. Tried backhand, slip, and spinning passes. Didn't show much timing or accuracy, however. Some of these passes weren't even the best decision – he just passed to the first teammate he saw, rather than the open one. Doesn't manipulate to create passing lanes. But he did show some more advanced ideas: one-touch passes in shooting position to teammates in an even better spot and fake shots into passes. Also effective in transition through using his teammates. Still, Whitelaw's mostly tools. The shot's at least 6.5 or 7 – he brings the puck in tight, narrows his stance, explodes through the shot. Shortens or elongates the release motion depending on the options in front. Mechanically, he's similar to Firkus, albeit without quite the same level of shooting craft. Aggressive at taking pucks to the middle. Aggressive off-puck, moving all across the ice as he calls for the puck. And he's quite physically adept, using the heel-to-heel to put defenders on his back, getting low to win positioning after deking them, or simply running over them. He tries to deke through everyone instead of simply skating into the space earlier and using his physical skills to keep possession. Skating's a legitimate NHL skill if he can fix some of his habits. He cuts back, then stops, and then accelerates. He didn't accelerate out of his cuts. Heel kick but projectable form, explosive at times, and incredible edge control. Looked like a first-rounder in this game, although he's not an easy watch.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

The reads continue to lag behind the tools with Whitelaw, but I liked that he played a collective game in this one, using his high-end skills to get the puck to others, be it from behind the net or off the rush after delaying. The skating and handling are extremely impressive, especially when they combine off the rush to propel him past defenders. His crossover rushes will make scouts dream this season, but then they will be slammed back to reality after he runs into a pack of defenders and loses the puck. That's still there in his game.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A better showing from Whitelaw. He became a more generous passer (still below-average in terms of playmaking opportunities used per 60, however). And he showed more of his off-puck game. He remains a pure rusher, someone who outspeeds with crossovers to shoot on the goalie (something which he likes to do from every angle), or to take him one-on-one. He is just a collection of great tools at this stage of his career and someone will have to teach him a better collective game and overall reads. So far, he can hit the evident passes.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

An impressive game from Whitelaw. He was looking to distribute and was rewarded up the ice. He passed through opponents, passed laterally in transition, even connected with an impressive look-off slip pass under pressure. He took a bunch of shots at 5-on-5, but most were good/the only decisions. He's an explosive shooter, capable of firing in motion and curling the puck around sticks and skates at speed. Wins body positioning before recovering the puck. For his goal, he took the defender wide, then skated back into their space and drove the net, elevating the puck across the goaltender. Still, there were a lot of come-in-and-rip plays, but he clearly has NHL tools. If the playmaking improves, he could become a top-six scorer. He's just that skilled.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

One of the most selfish performances from a prospect I've seen. Whitelaw just refused to pass, preferring to attempt multiple two-zone carries that just ended with him losing the puck over and over again. He only passes as a last resort, around the net, only makes "finishing" passes, not building ones. The tools are high-end, the skating and handling, but he needs more sense in his game otherwise they won't translate. He looks like more of a shooter than a playmaker, but rush shooters are especially not translatable to the NHL. In the NHL, you fire off passes or you don't score.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Whitelaw plays hero puck. He tries to skate and dangle through everyone before letting a shot rip from the outside. He doesn't even take especially smart routes; he's not creating advantages for himself with weaving rush patterns or give-and-gos. He just goes. In spurts, he shows some playmaking: a drop pass to a teammate in better position than himself, a shot-pass from the point, and a couple of plays off the boards. Nothing advanced. But enough to suggest that he knows his teammates exist and can be used. Defensively, he disengages when the puck isn't near, but finds another gear when it gets close. Also has some physicality to his game. The shot's at least a 6.5. Incredible form. The skating lacks refinement in terms of habits and mechanics, but his quickness, depth, and skills all project significantly above average. He could be a first-rounder.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

Whitelaw is all speed and shooting. There is nothing else in this game at this point, no advanced rush ideas, all crossovers, head straight at defenders or try to fly by them in the wide lane. He tries to pick a corner at the net but only ends up missing the target entirely. I didn't see him complete any real play in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Pretty underwhelming performance from Whitelaw, who wasn't especially noticeable in this game. Was held to the outside for most of the game and only had one sequence where he manipulated a stick to gain the inside lane and fire a shot through a screen. Didn't manage pucks particularly well, even on the man advantage, where the Steel's PK flood seemed to confound him

and forced him to thread passes through tight spaces. I've seen the talent and playmaking ability before, but it wasn't there tonight.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A quiet game by Whitelaw's standards. The hands and shot still stood out in moments. In one sequence, he invited two defenders by letting the puck enter their space before reception, quickly cut around one, then fired. The shot's fun: he elevates that top elbow super high, collapses his legs inwards, and pulls the puck towards his body before firing with shocking speed. The exit velocity of some of these shots was noticeable faster than any others in the game. His defensive effort was high, anticipating passes and shots from the point and sprinting to get the spot. Limited playmaking because he was so focused on beating players with speed and firing; never delayed or looked for the trailer. He plays like he can outskate everyone at this level. He can't. Good thing he has the tools to adapt.

Joey Padmanabhan: September 24th, 2022 - Waterloo Blackhawks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Whitelaw is such a fun talent to watch, he is an elite puckhandler and shooter, arguably one of the best in the league. He generates a high shot volume and whenever he has an opportunity to get the puck towards the net he takes it, firing off both feet, shifting his weight in both directions, using screens, etc. He's a bit too dangle-prone, he gets away with it at this level and he's exceptional at working through defensive triangles, but he doesn't create much offence through his skating. He's fun and flashy but I also think there's a good deal of substance here. Had one nice snipe in this one. A player to keep an eye on for sure.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Whitelaw had a bunch of fun plays, but this tournament has mostly highlighted projection concerns. The speed of operation, handling skill, and awareness of defenders' positioning all stand out. He seamlessly cuts inside on their heels, toe-drags around their sticks, and chains moves together. But he also misses opportunities to use the trailer or space. He skates from one defender to the net, not using the space his tools create. In transition, he always sprints ahead of the play and misses opportunities to stop in space and receive the puck. To his credit, he sets picks, always stays in motion in in-zone play, and generally understands how to support plays. He's just very net-focused right now.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Whitelaw has moments where it comes together and his game looks projectable. He delays, deceives, and uses his teammates at the right moments. He's a skilled handler, skater, and playmaker, capable of linking the three together in quick succession. But he struggles with awareness of back pressure, gets caught in the outrace everything loop, and sprints when he should stop in space. He forces shots. Rarely takes the extra split-second to wait for the space to open up that he's creating with his rush patterns and skill. Dynamic potential, but lots of work to be done. Or not, it's August.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Considerably weaker effort from Whitelaw compared to the amazing tournament opener. The stuff that worked against Germany, wasn't working that well against a better opposition. Handling is still a strength, but forcing plays that weren't available led to turnovers. A few nice playmaking efforts, setting up his linemates from along the boards. Quite a few shots from bad angles as a result of not getting in prime areas. One really nice backcheck to prevent a high-danger scoring chance. The talent is clear, but translatability concerns are legit.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Whitelaw wasn't the player that he was against Germany. The stride appeared to be a greater issue in this game – he couldn't find the space against a tighter Finland team. But, some of it was his own doing. He played too fast, overhandling pucks, accelerating before having positioning, and keeping the puck too far from his body. He also deked into traffic with no end goal – if he beat the first one, he would've ran into the shoulder of the second. Still, he showed all the same qualities that make an

exciting prospect: pace, handling skill, physical skills, and passing ability. He slips pucks through defenders, both for passes and dekes. Lots of upside here. Remains one of the most exciting players at this tournament.

Lassi Alanen: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

What a performance. Whitelaw was electrifying offensively, seemingly creating multiple chances every shift. Pushed the pace, displayed high-end handling even under pressure with high radius of comfort, was deceptive with his playmaking with subtle fakes and also inside-driven with a couple of great net-drives. Handling looked projectable, preferring to keep the puck across his hips. The biggest problem was the inefficiency with his playmaking early on in the game where he threw multiple blind passes towards the slot for interceptions. As said, that was only really a problem early on, and after that, he made some high-end plays to set up chances near the slot. Looked like a top prospect, no doubt about it.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Whitelaw's dynamic. We already knew that. His time in the USHL suggested as much. But this was a different performance from him. Even higher pace, even more aggressive, and even more skills shown. In the early stages, he kept beating defenders wide. It worked. He used stutter steps and hip pocket deception to bait the poke check, then drive. Later in the game, he started showing a delay game and more patience. The handling skill pops under pressure. He doesn't overhandle, preferring to push the puck into space and fight off defenders with his stick when necessary. Powered through checks and threw some big ones of his own. Near-perfect cutback, waiting for the defender to close, then dropping his chest and hips, pushing his top hand out to his side, and exploding to the middle. Then connected with a cross-slot pass, one of many. Deceptive on some passes, but a couple of no-look plays had no clear target. Off-puck skating mechanics have some holes, but it's clear that he has top-six upside. In motion skill, physical skills, playmaking and manipulative qualities. Exciting.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

USHL debut for the highly touted Whitelaw and he didn't disappoint. Whitelaw off the rush, slowing down to stay in the passing lane and one-touching the puck into the open net. Many players hit the gas where he slowed down – great read. Noted strong off-puck instincts, particularly along the far post. He doesn't just stand there, instead moving into the pocket at the right time: early enough that his teammates see him as an option, but late enough to keep his stick free.



Grade: B

49 Joey Willis

AGE 17.507 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Ty Dellandrea



Hockey IQ



Tactician



Motor

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	68	15	29	44	0.65

SCOUTING REPORT

A cursory glance at Joey Willis' draft year production won't do him many favours. However, the scoresheet often only tells one side of the story, especially in Willis' case, and it would be a mistake to judge him solely on his 15 goals and 44 points in 68 games.

The hallmark of Willis' game is his intelligence, which he uses to create advantages for his teammates and expertly support the play in all three zones. While his tools may be NHL-average across the board, Willis demonstrated a keen understanding of how to work around his limitations and excel in spite of them.

And by the end of the campaign, Willis had earned a reputation as one of the best off-puck draft-eligible players in the OHL this season amongst our staff.

"Every pass, every play had a direct purpose," Elite Prospects' Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in an April game report. "He uses the give-and-go constantly. Sprints every route and takes every nearby stick to create space for his teammates. He's the off-puck assist master."

Perhaps the most enticing aspect to Willis' game is his defensive play. His off-puck instincts, coupled with an unrelenting motor, allow him to thrive in his own end. Willis anticipates rotations, pre-scans

Joey Willis

F | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 143.9



on retrievals, constantly impacts puck carriers and forces turnovers with ease. He will cover the open points in the offensive zone if his defencemen have jumped up into the play and he can also effectively close gaps while defending the rush, often able to successfully kill plays in the neutral zone more consistently than some OHL defenders.

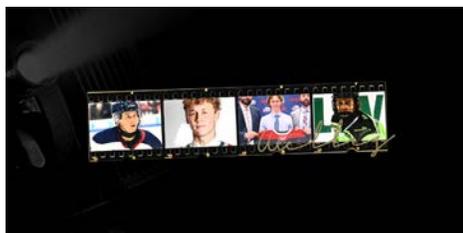
However, Willis' draft-year production was accurately reflective of his offensive habits – despite having NHL-calibre puck skills, he isn't especially aggressive or adaptable as a puck carrier. He creates the bulk of his offence either off the rush, if not through give-and-gos, then by beating defenders up the ice for breakaways, or by jumping on loose pucks down low.

He's not the most dynamic play creator; however, he will engage defenders while carrying the puck, use the middle of the ice, and create space for himself by manipulating defenders with feints and cutbacks while allowing his teammates time to get open.

Some of Willis' inconsistent production this season can be attributed to tool limitations, but it was evident that at times, his steadfast, almost stubborn "defence-first" approach also hindered his opportunities to create with the puck. However, in Saginaw, Willis is in one of the better spots in the CHL for offensive growth, and we do expect his production to improve next season.

It's unlikely that Willis will ever be a dynamic offensive producer, but his intelligent vision, remarkably mature on-ice habits and defensive prowess are easy selling points, assets which will serve him well at future levels. Whether NHL teams agree remains to be seen, but don't be surprised if Willis is still around late on Day 2 of the draft.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Film Room: Unearthing Joey Willis' off-puck genius and defensive mastery



OHL Stock Watch: Brandt Clarke playing best hockey of his career as games matter most

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 10th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Willis had the same defensive presence as always. He didn't get a lot of puck touches but made the most of the ones he got. He deflected a stretch pass past the defence to score and made a spino-rama pass to another teammate for an empty netter. He's quite elusive, but his skating remains an average projection for me. What's the most attractive about his game is his defence, checking game, puck management, his ability to read gaps, to connect with teammates, and his overall anticipation. A smart player, not a creative one, with good enough tools. Does he become an NHL player? For that to happen, he has to become an extremely good version of himself.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Saginaw's best player in this game. The game flowed through Willis. Every pass, every play had a direct purpose. He uses the give-and-go constantly. Sprints every route and takes every nearby stick to create space for his teammates. He's the off-puck assist master. Way more puck skills shown than I've previous seen. He hit teammates with passes into the slot under pressure, connected with a projectable one-timer for a goal, and even prepared space by faking one way before claiming it. Understands how to create advantages for himself and teammates. He could become even more aggressive with the puck. He's not also not

especially adaptable. Better plays will open up but he sticks to the original play. It just doesn't seem like a big deal at this stage. He has NHL puck skills across the board, vision, a rather insane defensive game, and an impressive motor. He will find a way. Maybe as a third-liner.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis had a big game in terms of creation. He set up a trio of chances: cutting inside to engage multiple defenders before a drop pass, shot-pass off boards, and finding the trailer of the rush. Contributed to a goal with the classic Willis' off-puck assist, skating his route and providing the screen. Grabbed two chances with a lateral pass for entry, then taking the defender's stick, allowing Haight to get him the puck. He's one of the smartest off-puck players around. With it, it's only obvious plays (i.e., in space) and the occasional flash. He misses opportunities to create the best play. Not a manipulator, although he shows the habits (faking one way to prepare a cutback, for example). I don't see many NHL outcomes for him at this stage. Maybe bottom-six forward who brings defence and off-puck play, but the skill still has to improve to get there.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Another great performance from Willis, the ultimate pro. Willis is so good defensively that he sometimes forgets that his primary job is to score. He clearly anticipates plays, knows what's coming, but he isn't moving until he's sure that it's in motion, keeping instead a higher, defensively neutral position. It's very evident on cycle in the offensive zone. He could get a jump on pucks, but doesn't. He scans a lot, is very aware, judges his space well, moves well away from the puck to conserve it and get pucks and shooting chances. Defensively, he helps, goes out of his way to shutdown plays, and takes good routes. I'm still unsure about the overall skill level and he's a bit short to occupy primarily a defensive role in the NHL, but he belongs in our top-50. Really like him and I hope NHL teams see the same things, too. He deserves to be picked despite the lower numbers.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Willis scored a pair of goals in this game, a rebound after a give-and-go and an NHL-calibre catch-and-release shot. But that was it for offence. He's not creative or especially toolsy. Lacks pace and awareness of backpressure at times. He can't manipulate opponents. Based on this game, I'm not convinced there's much offensive upside here. But he's such a smart off-puck player. Always in the right spot. An proactive defender who angles plays. Always scanning, no matter the zone, no matter the situation. Looked more like an end-of-board candidate. He's a bet on intelligence and a strong development team.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Willis is too good to be playing on the fourth line and this game proved it. By the third period, he was back on the first line getting regular shifts with Hunter Haight and Calem Mangone. This might have been the best off-puck defensive performance I've seen from a draft-eligible all season. Pressured puck carriers, lifted sticks, stole pucks in the offensive zone before looking for pass options. Supported his teammates constantly, especially his defenders. Slid back to cover his defenseman, retrieved the puck at the offensive blueline, some quick hands to corral under pressure before feeding it back in deep. Skates back deep into the defensive zone, won a battle in the corner, and started the breakout. It was like clockwork: backcheck, retrieval, transition back up the ice. Supported the play, won the puck back, started the breakout, stole the puck back when his teammate lost possession in the offensive zone, stickhandled around the net to survey his options before coming around to the other side and taking the shot. Went end-to-end on a shorthanded rush before trying to pass from below the goal line to a teammate (the pass was deflected away). On powerplay zone entries, he picks up speed really well - he had two great scoring chances off rushes he started himself that he only took because pass options were closed off, good weight shift onto his inside leg and got the release off quickly. More manipulative rush patterns too, slowing pace, executing direction changes to allow his teammates to catch up to the play and him to escape pressure and gain the zone. Seals off opposing players defensively, his awareness and defensive intelligence is off the charts. Yeah, the lack of offensive production is a bit of a concern. I'd like to see him getting to the inside more with the puck (aside from when he's in the slot looking for redirections). But his off-puck play is incredible. I'd fight for him to be on a team's board.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis had a couple of high-end plays in this game. First, he faked the cut back to bait the forecheck to start the breakout. Second, he received a pass, hesitated to encourage the reach, deked around, went backhand into the slot for a point-blank look. The rest of this performance was a poor one. He was unaware of backpressure, lacked pace in his decisions, tried to deke through multiple defenders, and missed passes. Everything happened too slowly. He's a solid defender though; already looks like a pro there. Looked like an end-of-board candidate in this game.

Lauren Kelly: January 12th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis finished off a 2-on-1 pass from Calem Mangone to score his lone goal of the game - the puck bounced further away from him after he received the pass but he was still able to get a quick shot off. He could have had several more points in this game, though, as he didn't shy away from shooting and taking pucks to the middle. Defensively solid as always, with the understanding that he should cover open points if his defencemen have jumped up into the offensive zone. The overall offensive production is going to hurt his case for the first round, but he'd be a really good bet in the 35-50 range.

Lauren Kelly: January 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Willis was consistently involved in the play. The processing abilities continue to stand out, along with his intensity while pressuring puck carriers, forcing them into turnovers. Showcased some good small-area passes, manipulative rush patterns, and executed give-and-gos with his linemates. Lots of controlled zone entries, with the ability to escape pressure at high speeds while carrying the puck and maintaining possession, execute cutbacks. He shows creative instincts with the puck in the OZ - toe drags, fakes, no-look passes. And I really like a lot of his defensive decisions - he's always the one sliding back to cover empty points with defencemen deep in the OZ and comes back to support his teammates on retrievals. Keeps his head up on breakouts and slows pace down to survey his options. I do think there's more skill to his game than he's shown this season and what's reflected in his production (which is what's holding him back from being a first rounder at this point).

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

What a game from Willis. He did everything. The highlight: delay to let the forechecker fly by, start a give-and-go, then connect with a spinning pass through the slot. Lots of crafty ideas as a passer. He delays and accelerates at the right moments. He pops into space at the perfect moment and shows some adaptability through his shot. He forces the odd play, but he also shows an advanced understanding of where his teammates are and instantly connects. Not every play will be perfect, and that's okay. Sets picks, skates his routes, and effectively supports the play across three zones. Handling and skating likely aren't advantages in the NHL, but achieves enough lower-body flexion, uses his outside edges in tight, and shows enough handling skill to think they're at least 5 grade. He looks like a potential mid-six forward; the type of player perfect for the early second in this draft.

Lauren Kelly: December 29th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Willis was excellent in this game, and his line with Calem Mangone and Sebastien Gervais was consistently driving play and creating scoring chances, especially off the rush. Worked give-and-gos, he executed a spinorama pass through the slot that hit its intended target, looked for the intentional redirection on shot-passes from the point, and anticipated when his teammates would find him in pockets of space. He may not have picked up any points in this game, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. Quick passes would find teammates as a result of pre-scans, no-look pass attempts from below the goal line were just beyond the reach of his linemates, and he would try to draw defenders out of position circling in the offensive zone to try and free up passing options. The one area that was maybe lacking a bit was his defensive play in this game, as he was a little more aggressive with his positioning, although he wasn't at fault on either of the goals he was on the ice for. If he can continue to show the offensive instincts he displayed in this game, the production should hopefully follow.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis does pretty much everything on the ice. I especially liked his rush manipulations in this one, his criss-crossing with teammates to create space and better gaps, more speed to attack. He knew his next play with the puck and constantly found space away from it. The effort was consistent in all three zones. The tools look average, however, and the lack of scoring is not promising. I do think he's more of a top-50 guy than a top-32 -- at least until the results come.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Willis is such a strong defender. He communicates, anticipates rotations, engages at the right moments, and even angles attackers wide. Doesn't expose too much space on his heels when coming across. He looks like a refined defenceman. Leverages those skills to win battles, hold the offensive zone, and kill plays the defensive zone. He makes basic plays with the puck, but occasionally has more advanced ideas. He delays, finds the trailer, builds offence with give-and-gos, and works pucks laterally. A solid game, but more of a mid-round performance.

Lauren Kelly: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Hunter Haight's arrival in Saginaw has pushed Willis down the depth chart and off the first line, and it looks like he's still trying to find his footing with new linemates Dean Loukus and Matyas Sapovaliv. Still, the off-puck play is a tremendous asset, and he had a couple of nice rushes for controlled zone entries, but those sequences didn't materialize in scoring chances as he was either the only one in the offensive zone, or he passed off to a player who mishandled and lost control. More flashes of high-end skill, but I'd hope they become more consistent as the season continues. Defensively solid as usual, with the ability to recognize and anticipate danger in his own end and when play is going to get turned over. Good pressure on puck carriers. Is he a first rounder? That's where I hesitate a bit. High probability second isn't out of the question, though.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

This was one of the best off-puck offensive performances I've ever seen in junior. Right place, right time, all the time. But he doesn't just do that; he takes control of defenders and alters gaps. He sets picks, runs the middle, and takes opponents' sticks so his teammate can cut inside. The defence was astute and proactive. Showed some serious puck skills, too, highlighted by turning a tricky pass reception instantly into a deke through a defender before firing off a shot. Along the boards, he always turns his back to the opponent with the puck in his hip pocket. Even steps off the boards to throw a bit of a reverse hit. It's a long-term projection, banking on the off-puck intelligence, defence, and flashes of skill resulting in a major breakout. But he's a solid bet in the mid-second.

David St-Louis: December 6th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis does a lot of good things on the ice. He protects pucks, holds them, and finds teammates. His passing plays were, for the most part, clever. He defended well and even flashed higher-end skills when he managed a spin dangles around two defenders. I can see the Owen Beck comparison. Not sure if Willis has the same tools or sense, but this was a first promising viewing. He didn't generate a lot of dangerous scoring chances, but he controlled the game, with and without the puck.

Lauren Kelly: November 23rd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis had a couple of notable opportunities to score in this game, one one-timer attempt and a shorthanded breakaway that he was tripped up on (he scored on the subsequent penalty shot). Showed some slick hands and stickhandling abilities as he delayed and cut across to open up the goaltender's five-hole. Really liked his work in transition tonight, as he was constantly moving the puck up the ice when he had possession. Broke the puck out to start an odd-man rush and fed a saucer pass over a sliding defender to a teammate who couldn't quite finish. Loves to try and stick lift unsuspecting players left wide-open from behind in his own end. He did have issues gaining the middle at times, and executing advanced passes in the offensive zone was hit or miss. But he was always in constant pursuit of the puck and his engagement level was high. Another good viewing.

David St-Louis: November 23rd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis makes many of the right plays. He scans for his space and defenders, is active defensively, constantly switching on threats, using his stick to block lanes...He can protect pucks from opponents and he uses his teammates. I'm not sure about the overall scoring potential, however. He doesn't have many advanced offensive ideas. He's the guy that works hard, has some hard skills, understands system plays, and takes advantage of mistakes from opponents. I like him, but he's probably a B.

Lauren Kelly: November 19th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Willis continues to grow on me. He's so aware defensively - on his first shift of the game, he anticipated well and lifted the stick of a player right before he received the puck on the doorstep and knocked it out of harm's way towards the corner. Then he made another good stick play high in the defensive zone to strip another puck carrier and help his team regain possession on the same shift. He's constantly scanning and engaged in the play. He wasn't as effective in transition in this game - he lost control of the puck a few times, but his effort to try and win it back was commendable and he was successful on several occasions, though it did limit his ability to get into the offensive zone cleanly to create chances. He attempted give-and-gos, played defence on some shifts because there was a defender deep in the offensive zone, and made a couple of nifty stick lifts throughout the game to force turnovers. He picked up two assists in this game, a secondary one by winning a faceoff and the other off the rush, sending a cross-ice pass to a teammate, who scored. Played with good pace, although at the tail end of some shifts he looked like he was in desperate need of a line change, and his skating stride suffered as a result. Conditioning will likely improve with time. Sometimes it's to believe that this is his first season in the league.

Lauren Kelly: November 13th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Another solid viewing of Willis. Effective support player defensively, coming back to his own end to help his defenders out, slide back up to the point when one of them has jumped up into the play in the offensive zone. Really impressive on the rush, gaining entry along the boards and cutting back to survey his options, or driving up the middle of the ice and stickhandling around defenders before passing off to teammates. Didn't take too many shots, but was a key distributor for his team. One standout shift where he essentially had the puck almost glued to his stick as he circled the offensive zone, passed to a teammate, slid back to cover the open point, and then when the puck looked like it was going to exit the zone, somehow managed to dive and keep it in at the line. Consistently worked give-and-gos with his teammates on the rush and in the offensive zone. I'm liking him more with every subsequent viewing.

Lauren Kelly: November 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis' off-puck play is just so impressive. Reads and processes the play very quickly, recognizes weak areas in coverage, and executes accordingly. Excellent patience in the defensive zone, consistent scanning and high effort level. He stole the puck behind the net before coming around to the front and spinning around a player who was pressuring him before getting a shot off. He's a tremendous support player and works well in transition, with the ability to change pace when necessary. Came from the opposite end of the ice to help a teammate start the breakout, gained the offensive zone, then faked a pass across the slot and instead dropped it back for a teammate to set up a scoring chance. He picked up an assist in this game simply from accidentally blocking a teammate's point shot, and the puck bounced to an open teammate. I don't know if he's a top-32 candidate yet, but there's a lot to like here. Potentially a top-64 player.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Willis didn't get much offence going in this game, but he showed skill, intelligence, and defence. Attacks the inside in transition, showing both an ability to fast and slow, often in succession. Lots of directional changes and lateral passing, too. Looks like a modern NHL forward in that regard. Defensively, he's very impressive. Always comes across the puck carrier's hips and wins positioning. Gets above the puck when possible. Frequent scanning and high engagement. He's a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Willis drew a defender in, passed the puck off the back of the net through their legs, and worked play to the net for an assist. That was a well-executed play. Didn't get much else going at 5-on-5 offensively, but it's hard to criticize him for that. Just a really impressive transition player, even with a few turnovers. Delayed when necessary, used the inside, passed through defenders, and always looked to create advantages with lateral passing. Not too much how many of these sequences started with defensive zone work, jumping into shooting lanes, disrupting shots, or preventing them entirely with well-timed, non-committing stick checks. He looked like a second round candidate in this game.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Really intriguing stuff from Willis in this game. Showed good defensive awareness right off the bat, recognizing open coverage, constant scanning, interfering with passes and players trying to move through the slot, pressuring puck carriers up the ice, sliding back to cover the point because Saginaw's defencemen (well, really just Pavel Mintyukov) are never there, and then adequately defending a 1-on-1 rush the other way and stopping it at his own blueline. Flashed some encouraging offensive skills in this one, too. Crafty puckhandler, using both his body and stickhandling to dodge players along the boards. Not afraid to take the puck from the outsides to the front of the net (he picked up an assist after his initial move to the net was stopped by the goalie and a teammate finished off the puck). Always aware of where his teammates are and how to get open to receive passes. He's got a pretty dangerous looking shot as well, showcased on his goal at the end of the second - broke his stick on a one-timer on his offside down low, raced off to get a new stick, and returned just in time to receive a pass and wire the puck in. He was an engaged and hard working player in battles, but would rarely emerge with the puck as larger players didn't have much issue shouldering him away, and he's not really a forechecker or typically working with the puck in transition. His skating looked all right; I didn't notice any glaring issues with his mechanics, although it didn't look like he ever reached his top speed at any point in this game. That being said, I'm curious to see how he continues to progress this season.

Grade: B



50 Aram Minnetian

AGE 17.493 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Kevin Shattenkirk



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	62	7	24	31	0.50
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	22	0	6	6	0.27
USA U18	WJC-18	7	1	3	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

In a rare weak year for the USNTDP's blue line, it's Aram Minnetian who claimed the top spot in the eyes of our staff. He cooled off down the stretch in USHL play, but his resurgence at the U18s showcased his potential as an activator and play-builder in the NHL.

Creating advantages for teammates is the core of Minnetian's game. In the offensive end, those come in the form of well-timed activation, becoming an additional option or drawing defensive attention to create more space on the rink. When the puck arrives, he avoids point shots, preferring to start give-and-goes, connect with teammates in the slot, or working laterally to draw in the defensive structure before passing through it.

Those same plays appear in transition, with Minnetian's always-in-the-play mentality creating passing lanes. When he leads the rush himself, he looks to pass through opponents to open teammates on the other side.

There's also a defensive benefit to the activation game; Minnetian's usually gapped up through the neutral zone. He pivots early, skating forwards to push the attack to the perimeter. He has flashes of NHL-calibre physicality, and as he continues to tighten up his off-puck defence, they will only appear more.

Aram Minnetian

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 182.4



For Minnetian to bring this style of game to the NHL, he'll have to improve his breakouts and tools. Right now, he defaults to simple up-the-boards passes when pressured, leading to turnovers. His skating fails to provide much separation, and while he has moves, he often loses the puck when trying them. Improving the skating and handling combination will create more options under pressure, which should lead to better decisions.

Minnetian's not putting the finishing touches on many plays, but his style – play-building through activation and passing, and play-killing on the other side – is becoming more and more common in the NHL. He could play in a bottom-pairing role, or perhaps inside the top-four if he becomes a full-fledged creator.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships



Scout's Notebook: The top prospects from the USNTDP



USHL Stock Watch: Daimon Gardner healthy, hitting the scoresheet with Tri-City Storm

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I'm a two-way offensive defenceman. The unique thing about me is that I'm as good offensively as I am defensively. You can put me in any situation." – Aram Minnetian, April 2023

"My whole life I've modelled my game after Drew Doughty. He was my favourite player growing up. I had a fat head on my wall of him. Recently, I started watching Bowen Byram on Team Canada, when he was playing at the World Juniors. He just caught my eye. I play exactly like him. I love watching him play, the way he controlled the game. I just try to take stuff from him." – Aram Minnetian, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - u18s

Minnetian will definitely move up on our board. This wasn't his best game, but I've seen a lot more positive elements from him than negative at the tournament. He's landing hip checks, scanning more for options, and making safer plays but also mixing in his usual aggressive activations. He could have put up a couple of points in this one. Skating is a clear above-average projection. He's agile, elusive. The forward stride is not as effective due to mechanical flaws, but he's still speedy enough.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

Another really strong performance from Minnetian, one of many at this tournament. Once you get past Cole Hutson, he's clearly been the best American blueliner at this tournament. I've always liked Minnetian's skating, but we're seeing some new layers in this setting. In the place of an overreliance on cutbacks, Minnetian was working a wide array of inside edge manoeuvres in space and at the top of the offensive zone, shaking opponents with ease in this game. He made some excellent breakout passes too, including one to spring his teammates for an odd-man rush early. Some sharp activations from the offensive blue line. Honestly, Minnetian looked like a borderline first-round pick. He was just in total control in every phase of the hockey game.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Minnetian has been effective in this tournament, calmer, more poised. He takes care of his own end, blocks shots, sticks with his check, absorbs more rushes. He doesn't risk as much offensively but you still see him pull off agility moves at the point. I like this version of him. He's easier to project to an NHL role. I would like him to connect with teammates more often on breakouts, however.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 27th, 2023 - Czech Republic vs. USA - U18s

A fine showing for Minnetian, who didn't do much offensively but provided solid transition play. His first pass was best asset, Minnetian found outlets through the middle of the ice and on the wings with consistency and had few turnovers. The rush defense wasn't nearly what I hoped it would be, he was a bit too passive, allowing the blue and angling towards the goal line and refusing to engage instead of stepping up early and forcing play the other way. Limited offensive showing, a few streaks in from the blue when the puck was below the goal line. Overall, a smooth skater with great touch, there's a ton to like.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 25th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. USA - U18s

A good defensive showing for Minnetian. Strong surfs through the neutral zone to turn possession around early. A few big hits in the defensive zone as well. The skating is an asset, he's smooth with transitions to create separation from F1 to find an outlet. Needs to figure out spacing in the offensive zone a bit better, he could definitely get more touches. Some good pinches, a couple where he got burned but for the most part didn't let Swiss forwards behind him. Some interesting activation ability too. Couple of turnovers, but the ideas are there with his passes, has some deceptive handling ability too. There's something here.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

This was an excellent game from Minnetian, far more in line with what I've seen with the program this season. Minnetian diffused pressure on defensive zone retrievals and made efficient, pacey transition plays (with the exception of one brutal suicide pass in the first period). Away from the puck, Minnetian scanned for and registered shooting threats, often making proactive moves to eliminate plays before they developed. His footwork defending in space was form perfect. Minnetian's most impressive moments occurred in the offensive zone though. He was making regular weak side activations from the offensive blue line, often going low into the zone, getting the puck, and funnelling it to the net-front. Minnetian also picked up his first goal of the tournament, sneaking into the high slot and sending a catch-and-release shot past the Finnish goaltender. He looked like a B-grade prospect in this one.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Minnetian continues to be the most interesting blueliner on this USNTDP team. He supports the offence, attacks down the zone for backdoor plays, makes fakes at the blue line to create lanes and moves around defenders. He took a puck all the way to the net in this game. I liked how he constantly scanned for threats in the defensive zone. It's not a facet of his play that is that easy to evaluate considering he's always spending his time attacking with this elite junior team. The skill level is NHL calibre, but it's not as good as the top defencemen in this draft.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

A nice performance for Minnetian, who excelled in transition and showed some impressive skill in the offensive zone. He's got a ton of poise with the puck and uses agility to escape to space before finding an outlet. An extremely capable powerplay quarterback, as well. Rush defense looked better in this game, maybe because he was more confident against Norway, but started his surfs early with good stick positioning. A few great pinches too where he shoulder checked to the inside and stepped down with authority to extend the possession.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

Nice bounceback performance from Minnetian in this game. He was extremely effective in transition, drawing in forecheckers and then shaking them with deception on the retrieval before keying the breakout up-ice. I'm not sure if he's the most explosive skater, but the amount of separation that he gains on punch turns along the walls is super impressive. Likewise with the way that he spins away from pressure. Both of those evasive manoeuvres showed up at the top of the offensive zone on multiple occasions in this game, often to improve the position of each shot and pass. Some more intelligent, planned out activations in this game, too.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

Not a particularly strong game from Minnetian. I thought he handled the Latvian forecheck a bit better than most American blueliners, but that's about all he did well in this game. He was overly puck-focused in the defensive zone. His work at the offensive blue line was predictable and ineffective – attack down hill, cut back away from pressure, and then scramble for an option. No planning, little deception, and most of these plays resulted in a loss of possession in one way or another. I expected a lot more from Minnetian, especially given the opponent.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 2nd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Pretty underwhelming showing for Minnetian. The skill is apparent but the execution was lacking in this one. A few defensive possessions where he tried to do too much, utilizing one too many punch turns or feints to try to escape the F1, only to get angled into the wall. A few nice transition plays where he found outlets quickly through the middle. Some smart point activation as well where appropriate. The rush defense looked shaky here, pivots were a step too slow and allowed opposing forwards with speed to gain the corner. There's a lot of intrigue, but there's some smoothing out to do with Minnetian's game.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Minnetian's intelligent but lacks some skill. He fakes passes, joins the rush, and looks cross-ice for options, but he doesn't open lanes. He's not explosive or especially quick. And he struggles with pressure on breakouts. Instead of weaponizing it, he instantly offloads the puck – which keeps his offensive touches few in games where the NTDP is struggling. This was a solid defensive game, perhaps the best I've seen from him. He jumped into lanes, intercepted passes, keeps attacks to the outside, and grabbed some stops as he wrapped up opponents. Late to his check a few times. It's tricky to imagine him in the NHL sometimes. Maybe he becomes more dynamic in future seasons, but right now, he's limited by the tools and breakouts. He's a fine 60s or 70s candidate for our board.

David St-Louis: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

I continue to love Minnetian's ideas: the activations, the fakes at the back wall and at the point, and some of the passes. The execution isn't always great right now. His skating is already a selling point, but he needs to add just a bit more agility. He can make his moves when he has a bit of momentum, but he lacks the full explosiveness in changes of direction to really pull off his playstyle consistently -- right now. We'll see what happens at the next levels. I think we have him in the right spot at this point, late-second/early third. The tools are interesting enough and the creativity is good for his future development. The defensive game will have to improve, both on and off the puck, especially his anticipation and gapping, but he has moments where everything falls into place and he makes great stops.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A concerning game from Minnetian, showing the same flaws as yesterday's games more frequently. Tough game along the end boards. He's not deceptive or especially aware. Opponents pressure him into poor plays. He skates into pressure with his head down, passes into pressure, and prefers to let pressure come to him, rather than keeping his feet moving. It's a problem. Beaten on the defensive a few times, too. All of these are linked to his breakout struggles. He's too simple, lacks pace, and the hands and feet combination fail frequently. The only redeeming quality in this game was activation, how he uses space off-puck along the point. And he showed some creativity and shooting skill later in the game. But didn't look like a pick in this game. Overall, he's trending down for me in the second half. Hope the U18s are better.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A high activity game from Minnetian, who continues to show an advanced activation game. He uses space, fakes opponents, and passes into the slot. Pinches to hold the zone, and often knows the next play as soon as he gets the puck – that led to a chance at the top of the slot. That play-killing extends to the neutral zone, where he gets on opponents early and angles them wide. Stepped up for a big hit. The hands fail him, both as a handler and a passer. And he really struggled on breakouts in this game, especially off the end boards. No deception, low pace, and struggled to connect with his passes. Always succumbed to panic. But there were a pair of high-end plays off the boards under pressure late in the game. He looks more like a third rounder than second. Could become a bottom-pairing option. Maybe a bit more if the tools take off.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

The active game I've seen from Minnetian. While the usual poor retrieval plays were there, he looked better on breakouts. In one sequence, he went up the boards, cut inside, then passed cross-ice for the breakout. A lot more puck-rushing than normal, which led to a couple of turnovers. But he also was more involved in zone entries and offensive zone play. He deked off the point a few times, albeit a bit awkwardly, and looked to set up chances. One sequence where he moved through two defenders directly led to a goal. Late in the game, he set up a break up chance. He looked like a solid second-round in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A pretty exceptional showing for Minnetian, whose feet and vision are everything you could want in a two-way defender. Catches the puck in stride, gets his toe caps up the ice, finds an outlet. Consistently. Has enough poise to recognize when he can beat an F1, and uses his edgework to find open space. Probably a more average rush defender, but works hard to surf and kill the play early where he can. Some great stretch passes between the ice to send teammates on breakaways or odd-man rushes. Showed some point manipulation too, freezing shotblockers, moving through ranks and files to create better scoring opportunities. He's a really impressive talent.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Minnetian's a really likeable player. He gets up on opponents early, joins the rush often, and always tries to create something. Deceives opponents with look offs and slips pucks through forecheckers. When he joins the rush, he fills the right lane and stays in space. After passing, he continues forward and stays in the passing lane. Just a really strong facilitator. He's not a dynamic puck carrier or especially explosive skater, which makes his upside a bit more situational than the other exciting activators that have come through the Program. Retrievals needs some work and he was too quick to offload pressure on the end boards. Defensive skating is a bit vulnerable, lunging forward. Still, he looks like a potential NHL player. Maybe a bottom-pairing option with a bit of runway. He'd be a fine late-second.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Czechia vs US - 4 Nations tournament

Minnetian continues to flash impressive abilities. I like how he can make plays through forecheckers on breakouts. He has the poise needed to attract them and the skill to pass through them. He really needs to stop trying to pull his spin move at the offensive blue line, however. It just doesn't work for him. Not enough explosiveness and he doesn't do it in the right situations. Again, he's a pretty raw prospect with potential. He's always involved in the play, even driving the net.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Minnetian is the only defencemen in this back-end that stands out to me. Again in this game, he attempted a bunch of play that failed due to mechanical or timing issues, but the confidence is projectable. He generally has good ideas, but lacks just a bit of space and power to pull them off. He battles with the opposition on the walls, gives timely pass options to his partner, makes nice breakout passes, and can feint the opposition to attack down the wall. He almost scored with one of his drive. He can be a bit loose in his defensive gapping. He's a project, but an interesting one.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian's on the cusp of a breakout. He has some limitations, but they seem so fixable. He loses the puck with poor receptions and handling, forces pucks up the boards, and his skating doesn't always allow him to take advantage of the plays he sees. But the plays he sees are really impressive. He activates down the weak side, then comes back through the middle. He dekes around opponents. He fakes out incoming pressure to sneak down the perimeter. He always becomes a passing threat in all three zones – he creates so many favourable situations. He links together tricky skating moves, like transition straight from crossovers into a punch turn. And while there are limitations, he has flashes of NHL handling. Tightening up the puck skills could lead to an offensive explosion.

This was also the best I've seen from him defensively, highlighted by a half-ice 2-on-1 stop where he kept up with the attack, put his stick in the lane, retracted it, and then was ready to jump back in for the interception in perhaps a bit of defensive deception. He looked like a potential early-second in this game. Lots of upside, but achieving it might be destination-dependent.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian seemed more mobile than I remember in this game. The stance is high, but he can make some separating cutbacks and his offensive ideas are good in general. He activates, moves alongside the blue line, shakes the forecheck and the opposition's defence, he fakes on first touch by bringing the puck at his hip. He wants to create. That's projectable. He's error prone, but the combination of tools and confidence makes him interesting as a B-C level prospect.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Minnetian continues to impress. This wasn't quite like the Dec 9th game, where he controlled the flow of the game with his touches, but he still had flashes. He puts himself in advantageous positions: sprinting the weak side, following up plays, and providing short support. Turnovers don't deter him; he stays engaged and always looks to give his teammate an easy-to-hit, advantage-creating option. Made quick plays off retrievals before joining the play, turned break ups into zone entries. Pivoted, angled, and slammed into opponents to get stops. Tried a one-touch pass through multiple defenders that nearly connected. With a pump fake, he could've opened that lane. Another sequence: moved through a pass reception inside backwards crossovers, hit the brakes, passed cross-ice.

The bad: breakouts generally don't show the same level of skill because he prefers to make to boards, he's an awkward defensive skater at times, and a couple of inaccurate passes. His ideas are so solid. A rare player who has the ideas up the ice and can sequence them starting in his own zone. He looked like a late-first/early-second.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

A great game from Minnetian. He really tried to show off every time he got the puck. Like in every other game, his mechanical ability couldn't follow his ideas at times, but I like his offensive aggressive. He's always scanning the ice looking for seams and spaces to attack. He tries to take the puck to the net from point all the time and he also offers defensive skills. He can pin opponents to the board and close on down in the neutral zone. His rush defence was on point in this one. I like how he can move pucks off the board. He's a bit limited as a prospect right now and not very efficient, but he's probably a 2nd or 3rd defenceman.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

That was an eye-opening performance from Minnetian. I don't think the physical coordination is quite high-end and he's more of an ideas than execution player as constructed, but the ideas in this game were excellent. Minnetian has a great sense for when to activate off of the offensive blue line, with well-timed pinches to sustain possession, always registering support before making that final push. On one play, Minnetian exploded out of his stance to intercept a stretch pass and split the defence for a scoring chance – more partial break than a clean look. He made some big stops at the defensive blue line, too. I could be sold on Minnetian as a mid-rounder. He definitely warrants further inquiry, if nothing else.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

One of the better games I've seen from Minnetian. He intercepted pucks and carried them all the way in the offensive zone, made good retrievals play, activated into the play with good timing (just as teammates turned to pass to him), and generally looked for the better play. I still have my concerns about his agility. It's a strength overall, but he bounces out of turns due to his particular cutback and pivot techniques. It's not ideal as he doesn't get as much speed out of his change of directions. His defensive game was quite solid overall, but he could stay even tighter on his check.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Minnetian was a bit awkward-looking in this game. He gets too far out in front of his feet sometimes and also fought the puck. But he still pulled off a couple of tricky moves and showed better breakout skills than normal. He's still very dependent on the outside, but he delaying that extra second to let his teammate get ahead of the opponent before passing, bypassing the battle. He also fired off a couple of cross-lane plays. The activation was here, as usual. He puts himself in great positions, using the middle, the weak side, and trailing. The ideas are better than the execution. Defensively, he got lost in the neutral zone a couple of times but also used powerful, full-extended backwards crossovers and c-cuts to generate momentum and keep attackers wide. It's a bit rough sometimes, but he could be a No. 4. Looked like a mid-second.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian controlled this game for lengthy stretches. He doesn't just join the rush; he becomes an easy-to-hit option, demanding the puck through the creativity and timing of his off-puck reads. He sprints up the weak side, sneaks down the middle, and becomes effective short support in transition. He took pucks off the boards on the breakout before hitting teammates up the middle, adding a bit of flair when possible. Reads the feet of opponents. When the puck arrived on his stick, he slowed down and looked for teammates in the slot or cut inside for a chance. A bunch of smart passes that nearly connected, although his sets up prevented that. He deceives, but struggled to open lanes. That's something worth watching.

Retrievals were his enemy, making one soft play early and losing a race later. But showed enough skill when given a bit of space to believe they will improve. And his breakouts feed into his activation: short range or lateral plays that allowed him to jump into the play. He looked like a late-first in this one with middle-pairing potential. Curious to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian's a solid activator and powerplay distributor. He reads the feet of the incoming defender, then moves in the opposite direction. Sometimes, he fakes out the defender. The habits need to improve. He doesn't consistently move through pass receptions and stops pucks dead while waiting for the defender to close space. Lacks pace and takes too long to make plays. But when he gets into the right area, he shows a lot of interesting ideas, whether that's angle-changing shots or slick passes through defenders to the middle. The pace becomes more of an issue on breakouts, where he's inaccurate and doesn't working laterally to move into passing lanes. Defensively, he concedes ground too easily. Looked like a mid-rounder, but an interesting prospect.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Minnetian would gain from pulling the trigger earlier on his plays. He looks for the perfect one sometimes and just ends up missing all of them as a result. It's a not good practice in puck-moving sequences. He had some permissive defensive sequences and some much better ones, where he intercepted passes. His best play was a long stretch pass to Smith for a breakaway. That pass went through at least a couple of opponents and it hit Smith on the tape. I like the way he can lead players with his passes, too.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian takes forever to make some of his plays, but the ideas are often great. He draws defenders, fakes them out, attacks in the opposite direction. Initiates give-and-gos from the point, moving through his pass to ensure he pops out of the other side.

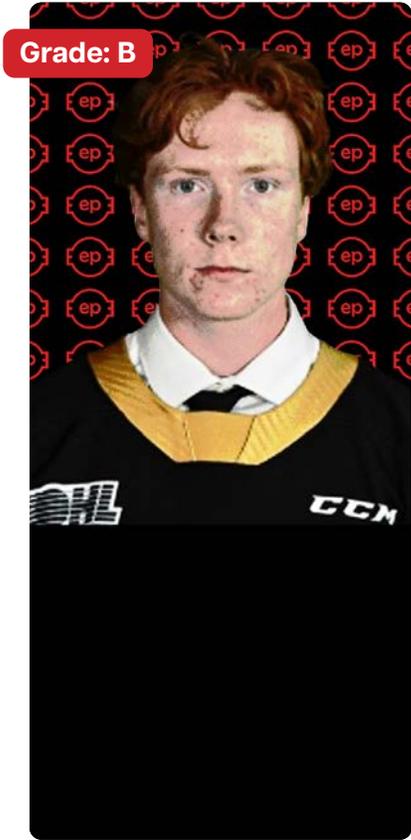
Lots of deceptive posture, whether that's a quick shot fake or orienting his body towards the net before continually along the point. Delays in transition; doesn't needlessly advance the puck. He looked exciting. There's some upside here.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

Minnetian showed his offensive potential in this game. He's limited laterally; he doesn't have the deep outside edge moves of some of his counterparts or an ability to walk the blue-line as fast. He's more of a high-stance skater with some quickness, but he can manipulate defenders. He has manipulation formulas and he has some advanced offensive ideas, like give-and-goes to move around the opposition. With some technical skating improvements, his game could take massive steps. It's easier said than done, however.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Minnetian had a couple of moments offensively. He moved through pass receptions, cut back, and consistently tried to create in the offensive zone. In transition, he's a bit more limited. He spins away from pressure and occasionally deceives, but he's usually only making up-the-boards plays after that. Defensively, he was porous. Weak, upright pivots allowed opponents to beat him wide and he let opponents slip behind him. Curious to see how his game develops. Looked like a potential pick.



51 Quinton Burns

AGE 17.422 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Ryan Lindgren



Hammer



Transition Ace



Play Killer

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	54	2	27	29	0.54
Canada U18	WJC-18	3	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Had Quinton Burns stayed healthy for the duration of the U18s, he might have established himself as the best North American defenceman. That's how effective he was in the first few games of the event.

More precise and confident in his rotations than his teammates, he solidified a shaky Canadian defence and helped them bounce back from their opening 8-0 loss to Sweden.

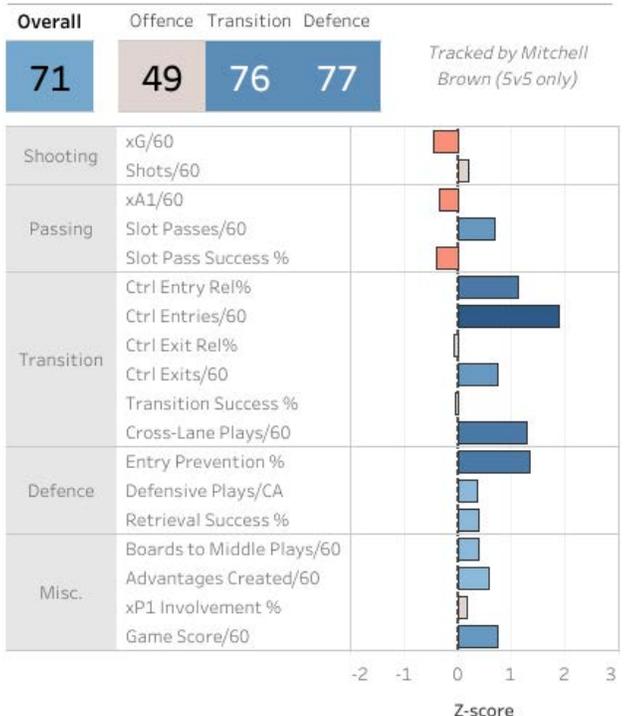
For most of the season – the U18s included – Burns looked more like a shutdown defenceman. When projecting him to the NHL in a few years, that's likely the role that he will fill.

"Burns never quit during the game," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote after Canada's first game against Sweden at the U18s. "Even down five or six goals, he was still defending with maximum effort, chasing after attackers, hitting them, and getting his stick on passes."

Capable of handling long minutes and tough defensive assignments, Burns was on the ice for almost half a game at a time for the Kingston Frontenacs most nights. His heavy usage meant that he had to pace himself, but his effectiveness didn't suffer because of it.

Quinton Burns

D | Kingston Frontenacs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 177.0



He's an engager first and foremost, a player who almost prefers letting opponents get the first touch on the puck just so that he can crush them on the boards in the second that follows. Although his frame won't be as large of an advantage at the professional level as in the OHL, Burns's physical skills project well to the NHL and his skating ability, too. His strength and balance will enable him to box out opponents from the front of the net and his mobility to neutralize passing lanes and deny space.

Projecting his play with the puck was a bit harder for our staff, however.

"Burns has all of the advanced transition ideas," Elite Prospects Director of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a February report. "He spins off checks, attacks the inside, looks cross-ice for options, and even manipulates incoming pressure. He slips pucks through forecheckers, then sprints to join the rush, but most of his passes miss."

Right now, the most realistic projection for Burns is a bottom-pairing role, but he doesn't need much skill development to elevate his upside. Small agility and handling improvements would help him connect on many more of his plays and give him a much better chance of becoming a top-four defenceman.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Canada's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Burns might be more of an average skater than a high-end one, but he has moments where his agility shines. The most attractive thing about his game is really his effort level. He's always on opponents and trying to make plays happen. His plays are mostly simple, but he had a nice stretch pass in this game. He activates with teammates and makes some rudimentary fakes... His rush defence could turn into a strength, but he really has to stop lunging for pucks. It's a bad habit.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

Quinton Burns has been one of the better defencemen of Canada in this tournament. His physicality is his main skill. He's one of those defencemen who like to purposely let opponents win puck races on the wall to crush them on it. It works as a strategy for him as he also has the mobility to prevent them to escape. He's not a playmaker by any means, but he distributes the puck well at the point. Canada didn't really have to defend the rush all that much in this one, but he was caught lunging for pucks instead of using his mobility a couple of times.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Quinton Burns never quit during the game. Even down five or six goals, he was still defending with maximum effort, chasing after attackers, hitting them, and getting his stick on passes. The handling skills looked fairly limited in this one, but he looks like he has the frame and skating combination to play such a high-energy defensive role. He only made simple plays in this game, but he was on opponents immediately and consistently.

Lauren Kelly: March 26th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Burns picked up an assist in his final game of the season, off a slapshot that went wide but took a favourable bounce off the boards right to a teammate in front. Overall though this was a bit of an up and down game. He got the stops in the defensive zone, but he struggled on breakouts. He was either nearly stripped from behind, or fell over trying to circle back in his own end. He's limited by his hands when it comes to offensive creation, relying mostly on a shot to generate scoring chances. But there were some moments where he just burned out of his own end with the puck with a full head of steam, and he was successful at not only getting the puck through the neutral zone but also entering the offensive zone with controlled possession. He's really good in flashes. I'd be interested to see how he looks at the U18s.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

The usual from Burns. He has advanced ideas with the puck, especially on breakouts. He steps inside, draws pressure, passes through it, cuts back at the right moments, and looks cross-ice for options. A bit of deception. But he's imprecise. It's partly him, partly his teammates. Pucks miss their target and he's way too optimistic sometimes. Offensively, he tries to work laterally and shake pressure, but his hands kill the play. He uses space (sometimes) and looks for passing options. The defence is the most solid part. He's aggressive and physical. Gets inside opponents hands, checks the stick. It requires some imagination because of the lack of consistency, but he looks like a potential No. 4 or 5. Would be a fine second-rounder.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Burns has a lot going on for him. He lacks playmaking skills, one-on-one manipulation and deceptive passes, but we see the inception of these things. He's at least attracting defenders before passing. He's a good backhand passer -- that's an effective breakout tool in the NHL. He can also carry the puck across zone, and while he's not particularly fast at this stage, his skating form is relatively projectable, a bit wide, but it's only a small hit to his projection. His mobility is more than fine. He has quite a long reach in his rush defence with the combination of his wingspan and four-way mobility. He positions well defensively, managed the puck well in this game, and played physically on the walls.

David St-Louis: March 22th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

I only saw simple plays from Burns in this one. He played at a lower pace than some others, but handled his defensive responsibilities well. He's well positioned, capable of boxing out, and playing opponents physically. He laid a couple of hits. Most of his plays were rims or short passes, but he got body positioning on every pucks. He did activate up ice on a couple of occasions, showing some smooth crossovers, but didn't really manage to move past any defender. I'd say he can read the game pretty well, overall, identify closed lanes and find the better play.

Lauren Kelly: March 19th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Burns played a ton for Kingston despite the lopsided score, over thirty minutes. He's able to execute breakout passes under pressure, joined the rush on a few sequences, and was fairly consistent at killing plays in his own end, keeping his gap tight while using his stick to poke pucks away. I don't know if I saw all that much offensively, but that's probably not the type of player he'd be in the NHL anyways. Simple, straightforward player. Definitely not a bad bet in the mid-rounds.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Burns had a solid game overall, but I still struggle to see interesting NHL elements. He makes stops, but he's more reactive than someone who anticipates the game well. He had some nice breakout plays, using his backhand, but his handling skills are closer to average. He doesn't really manipulate defenders or orchestrate the offensive play all that much. He's smooth at times, but also a bit clunkier in other situations. I can see him becoming a bottom-pair NHL defenceman, if he leverages his defence, reasonable mobility, and improves his puck-moving ability.

Lauren Kelly: March 9th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Burns had some good moments and more rougher ones. Great speed in transition, but his outlet passes don't always hit their intended targets. When his breakout passes hit, they're often springing teammates on odd-man rushes - but he really loads up everything he has into those passes, almost as if any less power will result in them not hitting their intended targets. Got beat defending the rush quite a few times. One somewhat baffling sequence where he retrieved the puck in his own end and then just shot it to the end of the rink without stopping to survey pass options in his own end. Activates off the point, but often leaves the puck behind or can't gain the inside. I feel like he rushes a lot of his decisions with the puck. Still not really sure where he lands in the confusing sea of OHL defenders in this draft class.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

The usual from Burns. He has all of the advanced transition ideas. He spins off checks, attacks the inside, looks cross-ice for options, and even manipulates incoming pressure. He slips pucks through forecheckers, then sprints to join the rush. Most of his passes miss. Kingston was shorthanded with three of their five blue-liners leaving the game, so some of the third period clearances were likely a product of keeping it simple. Offensively, he moved through pass receptions and stepped into space. Nothing advanced, but enough to keep the play moving. The defence remains a strength. Tight gap, keeps attacks wide. Even when he concedes the zone, he quickly closes space without overcommitting, then gets the stop by following the poke check with a shoulder through the opponent's hands. He looks like an NHLer, but more of a bottom-pairing option because of the tools and volatility with the puck.

Cam Robison: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A bit of a mixed bag from Burns in this one. You can see the tools at play on most of his shifts. Defensively, he has good posture and stands up to protect the line and forces attacks out wide. He's smart with his positioning in zone, but it's the rush defence that stands out. In transition, he makes quick cuts, feints and spins to create space and lanes to distribute it. He can jump into areas and look to receive the puck in-flight to cause mismatches. But it's unclear if he's just not that smart once he has the puck or if he's rushing things because he over or undershoots his passes way too often.

There's clearly some upside here, but he needs to exhibit a lot more poise with the puck and focus in on adding some more nuance to his decision-making. Taking an extra beat, or finding the puck with a bit more time and space.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

More offence from Burns than usual. He joined the rush, activated down the weak side, and tried to create with the puck on his stick. Went end-to-end before passing under a stick for a chance in the slot. Delayed, passed through pressure instead of dumping pucks. He has more space in the offensive zone than he thinks; his decisions are too hasty. In one sequence, he shot from the top of the circle when he had a clear path to the slot along with passing options. His hands also fail him sometimes. The breakouts and defence are interesting. He creates advantages, but he's turnover-prone because he's constantly reversing play while being unaware of back pressure. The upright skating prevents him from exploding through his edges, meaning that even when he times his escapes, opponents either knock him off balance or beat him to space. Gets his stick in just about every lane, deflecting and disrupting. Gets on opponents early (for Kingston) and shows projectable defensive skating. He looked like a potential second-rounder in this game. Clear path to the NHL, has skill and intelligence, and he's limited by his environment.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Burns is all over the place. He has the ideas, but rarely the execution. The breakout passes just miss their target. He starts give-and-gos but whiffs on pass receptions. He tries more advanced passes to the inside in the offensive zone but they missed their mark. He uses quick fakes and cuts to work away from pressure, but at such low speeds that opponents recover - he can't separate. To his credit, these ideas are often advanced: fake one way, pass the other and step inside to draw pressure, then pass through it. Activates up the weak side and stays activated when it's the best play. Shot looks NHL-calibre, with a textbook outside leg wrister when he's given a bit of space. The gap's variable, but he flashes NHL play-killing, too. Takes away the middle, drives the attack wide, and keeps backwards momentum. Dusted once, though. Couldn't generate enough power with his strides. He looks like a potential bottom-pairing defender, perhaps in the 80-plus range.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

First game back in a month and it was straight back into the fire. Burns it's highly volatile, but shows projectable, if not exciting, stuff. He jumps into the rush, sues the weak side, finds teammates driving the middle, skates his lanes, and tries give-and-gos. Shows backhand passes skill, going cross-ice and under sticks to connect. Passes miss and he eats too many pucks along the boards instead of making a quick play. The defence was solid in this game. Mirrored footwork and pushed attacks high/wide. Tight off-puck gap, got stops with the incoming pass. Didn't reach. Sometimes knew the next play after getting the stop. Skating's upright and stiff, preventing him from escaping pressure. Tends to reach and kill his backwards momentum. He also plays a ton, shows some advanced ideas, and has flashes of offence with deception. He looked like a second-rounder in this game, albeit a project pick. Could be a No. 4 or 5.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Volatile. Burns played 35-plus minutes, so efficiency is not expected, but he left a lot of value on the table. Several dump outs with options, skating straight into pressure, reaching poke checks that killed his momentum and left him chasing, wandering the neutral zone off-puck, and blind plays off retrievals. The stride, with high hips and a massive heel kick, looked like a potential flaw. But there were impressive sequences. He deked around sticks, faked out opponents while establishing body positioning on the end boards, and tried to evade off his outside edges. A step-in, look-off pass created a scoring chance. Worked pucks laterally and tried to make plays through the forecheck. Physicality earned stops and closed on opponents quickly to contest shots. The skilled plays show limitations – he often cuts back straight into the backpressure he's trying to evade and he doesn't always wait for the opponent's reaction when he's trying to deceive. The other side is that Kingston was greatly outmatched and Burns was likely net-positive. A mid-round performance.

Lauren Kelly: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Burns played almost 40 minutes in this game, which probably isn't ideal given how he played for the majority of this viewing. He was kind of all over the place. Struggled on breakouts a bit, especially if he slowed up along the boards or bobbled the puck in his own end. Collided with his defence partner as they tried to defend the rush and both took the inside lane. Faceplanted into the boards after losing an edge on a retrieval. Despite having to come back to his own end to stop players from getting in on partial breakaways, he closed the distance quickly and used his stick to force them into harmless shots from the outside. Limited offensive flashes in this one, aside from shots from the point. I'm still not sure if I see a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Ignoring the turnovers for a moment, Burns looks like an NHL player on the breakouts. He steps inside, looks cross-ice, deceives opponents, and makes quick, advantage-creating plays to his teammates across the rink. Draws pressure and accelerates just as the forechecker commits. Accuracy waned and some of his ideas were optimistic. The skating's a potential issue. His crossovers are hopping and his depth varies significantly. Heel kick in stride, but he achieves a near-full knee bend. In short, efficiency and stability lack, but he has a projectable foundation. The defence was strong. Early in the game, he took the middle, pushed the opponent wide, then forced the dump in. Repeated that sequence a couple of times, adding in a bit more physicality when necessary to secure possession. Pinched at the right moments, joined the rush, looked for teammates before taking low-percentage shots. Worked laterally, cut back, which showed some evasiveness and smarts, even if he wasn't explosive. He looked like a potential NHL defender, maybe in a bottom-pairing role but there's still runway. That's a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Mistakes compound for Burns, and Kingston in general. But he's not deterred from trying stuff. He tries to manipulate opponents with his hands and head positioning, he cuts inside on the heels of forecheckers and passes under sticks, he often looks at the middle for options first. He tries to beat opponents off the point. Many plays failed. He didn't always choose the best play (or even a positive one), he struggled with handling and pass receptions, and some turnovers were the fault of his teammates. Cuts back into pressure a lot, although all the Fronts were doing that. Either way, he doesn't get much support out there. Not many passing options. The defence is the most refined part. The stick work's a bit messy – he swings his stick and reaches out – but

he gets stops. Keeps attacks wide, forces passes with immediate pressure, and gets inside positioning. Physical. He could be a second-rounder. It's rough to watch but he plays way too much. The advanced plays are there.

David St-Louis: December 8th, 2022 - Niagara Icedogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Burns skating grades oscillates between a 4.5 and 5 for me. He clearly lacks straight-line speed and while he's reasonably agile, he's also caught reaching for pucks quite often. He won't be a highly mobile NHLer if he makes the league, but I don't see the skating as a big issue for now. He defends well one-on-one, can engage on opponents, but he's a bit late on his rotations sometimes. Some deceptive passes in transition and timely activations up ice. He handles the puck well at the point, finding the next open teammates with passes, reading closed and open plays, and using ten-and-two moves to face his options and fire shots on net. His game is not that exciting, but he's effective. I could see him becoming a bottom-pair NHLer, maybe even a top-four if everything goes right in his development.

Lauren Kelly: November 13th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Quite the up-and-down game for Burns. Gave the puck away under pressure and was stripped of the puck going back on a retrieval (despite scanning beforehand), which led to a breakaway chance. Showed some execution issues when he had the puck at times. Activates from the point occasionally. Jumps up into space, but rarely receives the puck in the areas he's asking for it. Decent mobility. Delayed, then passed to a teammate to pick up an assist in this game. Good gap control, closing off rushes in the neutral zone and along the boards in his own end quickly. Not sure what to make of him yet.



52 Hunter Brzustewicz

AGE 17.795 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 29, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Passy Gustav Forsling



Transition Ace



Evasive

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kitchener Rangers	OHL	68	6	51	57	0.84

SCOUTING REPORT

Hunter Brzustewicz, or "Brue" as he sometimes introduces himself, was the subject of many fierce debates within our ranks.

One of our scouts was impressed by his puck-moving game early in the season and continued to see him as one of the best transition forces in this draft, a great option for an NHL team wanting to add some pace to their game.

"Again, great puck-moving habits," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a March report. "Brzustewicz can really evade opponents with incredibly tight turns and spins and lateral steps. And he tries to deceive on every pass. And he's always activating. The transition part of the game, he's got it. He just needs to perfect his reads under pressure."

Brzustewicz can constantly make forecheckers miss with fake changes of direction, timely spins, and by moving the puck before they can get to it. And, at the top of his game, when he's in tune with the plays of his teammates, his puck skills also start to resurface in the offensive zone. He attacks space to fire on net and manipulates defenders to get shots through and opens passing lanes to the slot.

But the Kitchener Rangers defenceman's performance fluctuated from game to game and, because of it, there was divergence in

Hunter Brzustewicz

D | Kitchener Rangers | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 145.2



our evaluations of this player. Brzustewicz lost his aggressiveness some weekends. His deceptive skills abandoned him; he let teammates make the bulk of plays and faded in the background, becoming simply a rush defender and a puck distributor.

Some of our scouts also questioned his skating ability, as while it's clearly above-average at the junior level, an asset, it may not stay that way in the pros. Brzustewicz completes most of his breakout escapes by using his inside edges or by pivoting in place. He doesn't have the same cutback explosiveness as high-end NHL puck-movers who separate from opponents with just a couple of strides. And while he kills a lot of opposing plays in transition in the OHL, his backward skating might not generate enough power to allow him to do the same at a higher level.

As Brzustewicz is one of the older players in the draft class, we weighed his inconsistencies and mechanical inefficiencies a bit more when ranking him. He ended up in the middle of our second round, a spot that accurately reflects his number four upside, but also his weaknesses.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



9 data-driven thoughts on the USNTDP ahead of the 2022 NHL Draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“One of those guys who has that size. He can make some plays. Good, solid, I don't see high end, ‘I'm excited to hang our hat on him because of whatever’ talent.” – NHL scout, April 2023

“Can move the puck well and skate it out of trouble. Shifty and elusive against the forecheck and on the power play. Still doesn't know how to defend speed.” – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lauren Kelly: March 12th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Brzustewicz struggled on retrievals in this one. He'd get beat to pucks by faster skaters, decide to take longer lanes to get to the puck, and wasn't always able to escape while under pressure, usually having to circle back to shake players or try a bank pass back to his D-partner. Joined the rush, but was squeezed off the puck along the boards and turned it over. Picked up two points in this game. On his goal, he delayed, walked in from the point to the middle, and then beat the goalie with a wrist. On the assist, it was another play where he looked like he was going to shoot before sending a quick no-look pass to a teammate. Small area passes were usually successful. He didn't activate all that much in the offensive zone, aside from his goal. It was a decent viewing, but I wouldn't have him ranked higher than a mid-second.

David St-Louis: March 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Again, great puck-moving habits. Brzustewicz can really evade opponents with incredibly tight turns and spins and lateral steps. And he tries to deceive on every pass. And he's always activating. The transition part of the game, he's got it. He just needs to

perfect his reads under more pressure. His defence continues to be ultra-reactive, which is fine because he has the mobility to adjust to opposing moves, but he will get baited into bad reads and plays at the NHL level. His path to the top league might be harder than Beau Akey's but the upside is greater for sure, considering he has a lot more offensive potential.

David St-Louis: March 7th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Brzustewicz continues to improve his playmaking game. The useful and effective activations are now more frequent. His skating lacks ankle flexion, but he has the agility and he mirrored and matched the footwork of opponents quite well in his rush defence in this one. Still prone to error, but I think it's time I bump his upside a bit. He's doing the same things as Price and Cagnoni and the physical side of his game, although he doesn't win battles outright, is showing up more. He has a great package of tools and habits and he clearly drives the play on this team on many of his shifts. He probably deserves a bit more respect on our board.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

The activation game and offence were working in this game. Brzustewicz jumped into every play, claiming space/lanes before his forwards, then creating offence. Fired off several scoring chances, including a curl-and-drag shot while stepping in. Looked for teammates across the slot, connecting with a tricky pass through multiple opponents for a deflection. Always skates his routes to completion. The defence is mostly getting on opponents early and forcing dump-ins. The skating stands out as an issue. He's evasive off his inside edges but struggles to generate power backwards and laterally. Lots of turnovers on breakouts, but the degree of difficulty was high. He's worth a second-rounder. NHL potential through his activation game and rush play-killing, but the lack of dynamic skills limits the upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Kitchener controlled this game with Brzustewicz on the ice, dominating the offensive zone for stretches. He created a bit, but mostly through simple passes and quick shots. The manipulation I saw early in the season hasn't appeared in a long time. He doesn't so much create lanes as he does make well-timed plays through them. The defence is a strength now because of his superior positioning and tight gap, but his skating remains a vulnerability. He struggles with acceleration, over-rotates his upper-body, and he lacks the power out of his pivots and turns to recover on plays. Looks more like a mid-to-late second; the type of player worth betting on because of his brain, but his margin for error will be slim without a dynamic offensive game or suffocating defensive impact.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Brzustewicz often knew the next play right away. After getting a stop in transition, he immediately passed back up the middle to an open, moving teammate. In one, he even deceived first. Lots of pressure on those plays, too. He's so patient under pressure. Sometimes too patient. He gives up his stride/crossovers when forecheckers lean on him, making him prone to turnovers. He's not quick; the forwards crossovers lack power. The skating's a visible issue when defending the rush, too. His backwards crossovers are short and generate little power, and he has trouble loading his weight through pivots. When he's not perfectly positioned, he's easily beaten. He gets his stops through well-timed interventions, usually from pivot and surf. He's creative on breakouts and no doubt an advantage creator, but without bringing that same skill set to the offence zone and with defensive skating as a weakness, sticking in the NHL won't be easy.

Lauren Kelly: February 8th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Quiet game from Brzustewicz in this one. Not many offensive activations, started breakouts but was usually forced to pass off quickly instead of taking it through the neutral zone himself, and struggled to escape pressure in his own end. Did pick up one point, looking for the shot, before sending a no look pass to a teammate on the powerplay. He did have a tendency to get beat by faster skaters on the rush. I don't know if I'd draft based on this performance, but I know he's got more potential than what he showed.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Brzustewicz has the habits of a puck-mover and offensive defenceman, the escapes on the backwall, the deceptive passes, the fakes before shooting and the lateral mobility to go with it. He also activates into the play and looks to manage his space and attack passing lanes. He's both effective with and without the puck. Already those characteristics give him a leg up on many other defencemen in this draft, but he has times where he hits the wrong options or he's not aggressive enough with his tools. There is an air of passivity. This was not one of those performances. Especially at the end of the game, he made a lot more happen with spins and well-timed passes and activations. Still, you select him for his tools and puck-moving potential first and foremost, hope he can develop defensively, and becomes even more confident offensively in his last Junior season.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Brzustewicz always activates for backdoor plays and it continued in this game. He was an option every time his teammates gave him a chance to become one. Brzustewicz also shone defensively. He stayed with Bedard inside more complex moves, showing that his defensive footwork could turn into a strength, and he made some stops on other high-end offensive CHL talents. When he gets the puck at the blue line and can't find a play, he does tend to panic a little bit, however.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Brzustewicz has skating ability. He steps into space, then spins off pressure with tight turns. Lots of skating skills shown. The issue is more backwards. C-cuts lack power and struggles to generate momentum with his crossovers. That greatly decreases his margin for error defensively. He does have instincts, highlighted by well-timed pokes and a knack for getting inside opponents just as the puck comes near. But he probably loses a lot of his defensive effectiveness without significant skating growth. The breakouts weren't really working in this game. He skated into traffic and couldn't find separation. But he was more involved offensively than normal. In one shift, he faked a shot, stepped into space, passed back, and then activated down the weak side and kept the puck moving once it arrived. Split defence for a near-chance later. He's intelligent and aware, but without better tools, the next level will lead to a dramatic drop-off in impact. Still, gotta bet on intelligence finding a way, especially because he missed an entire season. A mid-to-late second seems reasonable.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Brzustewicz had his moments in this game, especially on the breakout. He scans, delays, beats the F1, and uses the middle. Lots of subtle delays, sprinting up the perimeter before hitting the brakes and finding a teammate through the middle. Aware – he knows the next play after recovering possession, but limited by frequent poor first touches of the puck (pushes puck into the incoming defender, bobbles under pressure). A weak game defending the rush. He was always on his heels. Conceded too much space, letting attackers cut across him. He looked like a mid-rounder – some standout qualities, but a long way to go before being able to use them at the next level. I've seen better from him.

Lauren Kelly: December 18th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

This was my first in-person viewing of Brzustewicz, and he was solid. Showed a lot more instances of activations, his ability to escape and evade pressure on breakouts, scanned on retrievals, and eliminated threats while defending the rush. Defensive skating looked strong in this one, keeping his gap tight while forcing opposing players wide. Still, the activations didn't really lead to too many scoring chances, though there was one sequence where he took the puck to the middle before passing to an open teammate. A couple of point shots were blocked. I still don't know if he's shown enough high-end offence to play himself into first round conversation yet. But he moves the puck well, is hard to force off pucks, and his defensive reads continue to look more encouraging.

David St-Louis: December 18th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

This is the first game that I watched that Brzustewicz looked like a first-rounder. I would give his skating a 6 grade based on this game because of the constant elusiveness, the spin moves around forecheckers, the crossovers to get up-ice, and the extensions to protect the puck. He activated on the offence all through the game, deceived forecheckers, and passed around

them. There aren't any advanced ideas in his game, but he plays the puck-mover role well and his rush defence seems to get better with time -- many tight gaps and breaks before the blue line. His in-zone defence is hit and miss. He made some nice reads but also missed rotations. He's a bit old for this class and I still didn't see any engaging skills but overall the skills and puck-moving habits stand out.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Brzustewicz didn't really have to worry about the defensive game in this one. It always makes it easier to play around the forecheck and activate offensively. He was a constant breakout artist in this one, timing his moves/spins against forecheckers, making reversal plays, many passes to the middle, activating ahead of the breakout (sometimes too ahead) to be in a good passing position...He's adaptable as a passer, hits the best option, and gives options back to teammates. Despite his status as one of the most consistent puck-mover in the draft, I still have trouble projecting his upside. If he can develop a stronger, harder defensive game, he could become an effective n.4 in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Better skaters can shake Brzustewicz off the rush. He doesn't give a ton of space, but he's vulnerable to speed and especially changes of pace. Lacks the extra level of defensive skating (explosive backpedals to take away the middle). Otherwise, he's a solid rush defender: he times his engagements at the point of least resistance, gets up in the attacker's space, and doesn't over-extend. The breakouts weren't working in this game. He tried to create, but often skated straight into pressure or blindly passed. A bit of playmaking in his rare activation sequences, but nothing advanced. He's best when he's activating, getting involved in the play. Lots of standing around in this one. Looked like a mid-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

He picked up a secondary assist in this game, but I really didn't see too much offensive creation from Brzustewicz in this one. Not many activations off the point, didn't orchestrate too many passing sequences, and was pretty passive on rushes, always deferring to teammates. Looked fine defensively, there were a couple of occasions where he lost coverage in front of the net, but his gap looked a lot better in this game and his timing to close players off along the boards was good. Decent effort to get back to stop breakaway chances (not his fault), even if he couldn't get back in time. I have some doubts about the offensive upside at future levels.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Brzustewicz didn't create much in this game. He mostly locked to the point and his hands failed on pass receptions and along the boards. But the intent to create was there. He doesn't just bump the puck forward or reverse it. He tries to step inside, pass cross-ice, and fake out pressure. There's so many manipulative qualities to his game, and he's certainly an advantage creator. Most defensive zone touches are focused on giving the next player in the sequence time and space. Up and early on his check in the neutral zone, earning key stops. Held the blue-line effectively. Not a standout game; his tools looked average across the boards. But his mind looks a step or two above. A solid mid-to-late second-type performance.

Lauren Kelly: November 27th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Brzustewicz finally scored his first OHL goal, following the play up the ice and finishing off a tic-tac-toe passing play with a quick one-timed shot in the slot. He also added a couple of assists, though neither really displayed any manipulation or deception - one was an outlet pass to spring a teammate on the breakaway, the other was a pass down low to a teammate who eventually set up the goal. He likes to jump up in the play and activate off the point, but he usually circles around the back of the net instead of cutting to the middle, and tries for the shot instead of passing to a teammate down low. He was caught a little too deep in the offensive zone a couple of times and was beat pretty easily by the forward going the other way. He's got potential, but I'm beginning to question the offensive upside a bit, and the rush defence was hit and miss at times, as players had little issue beating him outside. Again, I'm not quite sure he's a first round pick just yet.

Lauren Kelly: November 11th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

I didn't see anything in this viewing that I didn't already know about Brzustewicz. Great offensive instincts and passing execution in the OZ. Joins the play, works give-and-gos with his teammates, keeps his head up on breakouts. Again, though, his execution lagged behind on outlet passes, either because they were picked off or they became icings. Scanned on retrievals, but doesn't eliminate threats effectively in his own end off the rush, and there were a few instances where he was late to recognize open players. Gap can be an issue too defending 1-on-1, but he's usually able to force players to the corner and pin them along the boards. He didn't really move the puck up the ice himself as much as he normally does, relying on either long-range passes or dropping the puck back for a faster forward who had circled back. I don't see a first rounder yet, but there's potential.

David St-Louis: October 30th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Not as good of a performance from Brzustewicz. He still did all of the same things as before, the activations, the breakout carrying and passing, but I'm not sure it was supported by as much hockey sense, discerning ability. For now, Brzustewicz looks more like an activator, a do-er, than a manipulator of the game. The line between those two things is small and subjective and this evaluation is subject to change easily, but he looks mostly like a player who makes the extra effort, who uses his skills to take what is there, not necessarily to open up better plays. He missed some of those better plays in this game. I like the overall skill (although it's not top-end; he mostly skates in one block, but he does have outside edge moves...) and he positions well defensively and you can see the effort. He's a B-grade for me at this stage. It could easily improve.

David St-Louis: October 25th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Brzustewicz is a puck-mover. That game made it clear. He escaped the forecheck multiple times and clearly showed an understanding of retrieval mechanics -- attracting before moving, letting the gap close, staying deceptive, and then making a move. He looked for teammates up-ice and in the middle, only reverting to reverse plays when he was forced to. I liked his rush defence, his aggressive close-outs on the boards, and his overall stick work. He seems to have some offensive chops. He found himself behind the opposing net for a few seconds in the offensive zone, trying to set up teammates like Gretzky. The technical ability seems a bit limited, but many of his skills will end up grading above-average, I'm sure. Interesting performance.

David St-Louis: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Brzustewicz made a few nice transition plays and stops in this game. He put up two assists with a shot from the point and a breakout pass in overtime. He also missed better plays he could have made and the skating is a bit worrying as he's already getting beat wide at this level. His game feels a bit capped right now in the OHL. He can make the plays he needs to get the puck from the defensive zone to the offensive zone and he can distribute and shoot on the powerplay...There is some deception. But I'm not sure how well his offensive game will translate to higher levels against faster and more hermetic defences.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

What a performance. Brzustewicz completed three of the five most impressive plays in this game. He used give-and-gos to lead the rush, then join the play. Finishes his routes to push back to the defender. Highly, highly manipulative. In transition, that appears when he delays to invite pressure, accelerates into space, then slips a puck through pressure for a clean exit. He puts pucks just out of the grasp of defenders. Fluidly moved pucks from the backhand to forehand, and back again, which set up his chance: cut inside with a jab, accelerate into space, then a slick drag shot around a stick -- after faking the drive across a weight shift. A similarly high-end play occurred from the point, where he faked the pass down low twice before passing a teammate in the slot. Shows potentially 6-to-7 playmaking in the offensive end. Breakout passes were hit-and-miss, although he was always trying to create an advantage and his teammates were on the hook for a couple of the turnovers. He's a relatively engaged defender, getting stops just inside the zone and keeping threats to the outside. Net-front needs work -- minor stuff. Gap control remains passive, and he doesn't mirror footwork. He concedes too much ground, which Guelph exploited a couple of times. Overall, the skating looked like the weakest part, but I need to take a closer look. Could be first-round candidate.

Lauren Kelly: October 21st, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

There's no questioning Brzustewicz's offensive abilities. His ability to pivot and escape pressure while maintaining possession and start the breakout was on display from the moment puck dropped on this game. Lots of shots from the point. Great passing as a powerplay quarterback, including executing a nice one-timed passing sequence that led to a goal (he didn't pick up an assist on that play though). His outlet passes to teammates at the offensive blueline rarely hit their intended targets, though, and ended up being icings. Defensively is where I continue to have concerns. He gets beat to the front of the net by opposing players and then has difficulty establishing positioning or boxing them out. He shoulder checked on retrievals, but he lost sight of pucks and couldn't recover them in time before they were picked off by another player. Gap control remains an issue as his speed slows when he skates backwards. Kind of a tale of two players at opposite ends of the ice. He needs to find some sort of defensive consistency this season.

Lauren Kelly: October 16th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Not quite sure what to make of Brzustewicz after this one. Lots of positive attributes, from his activation abilities, to his skating and short-range passing abilities. But I have some concerns, mainly about his defensive play. His skating when defending odd-man rushes was a big hindrance; he almost came to a standstill around the slot which allowed the players to get around him quickly, and it also affects his ability to close the gap and stop the rush. He doesn't scan in his own end when the opposing team is circling, and really only scanned on retrievals. Several of his attempts to start the breakout through stretch passes to teammates turned into icings, and he gets squeezed off the puck in battles along the boards. But he thrives in the offensive zone. He's always jumping up into the play and likes to play deep in the offensive zone. He'll activate off the point and stickhandle around the forward challenging him and then walk into the slot for either a shot or pass off to an open teammate. He'll walk in and fake slapshots to change the angle of the shot before sending a wrister through. His passes are tape-to-tape when he's in the offensive zone and his teammates are within reach - he set up Carson Rekhopf for several one-timers on the powerplay. Great offensive vision. But his defensive play lags significantly behind. I don't know if it's enough for a first round argument yet, but it's early in the season.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. NTDP U18s - USHL

Brzustewicz and Powell were in a competition for who can defend the rush worse. I think Brzustewicz won. His defensive skating is nightmare fuel. He starts off well enough -- heel pushes to angle out, and then he just keeps going, and going, and going. He ended up at the boards before the puck carrier, literally begging the puck carrier to step around him directly to the inside. They always took him up on his invitation. He refers a lot in every area, except for one sequence. He got the puck on the point, passed, sprinted down the boards and popped into the slot for a point-blank chance. He only played a handful of minutes last season -- still getting warmed up. But I'm intrigued based on that play alone.



Grade: B

53 Coulson Pitre

AGE 17.756 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Tanner Jeannot, Brandon Tanev



Motor



Analytics Darling



Versatile

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

172 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Flint Firebirds	OHL	59	25	35	60	1.02

SCOUTING REPORT

Here's a list of OHL first-time draft eligibles who scored more even-strength points per minute than Coulson Pitre: Quentin Musty, Colby Barlow – that's it. Scoring is really only a fraction of what he brings to the table though; his versatility might be unmatched by his year's OHL crop.

Looking for a wrecking ball? Pitre hits everything, fights for body positioning with every limb, and never gives up on a play. How about a finisher? He's always in the right place at the right time, able to capitalize with a wrist that blends the pass reception, toe drag around the defender, and release in one smooth motion. What about a down low playmaker? That's Pitre, who uses those physical skills to possession before sliding a backhand pass to the slot.

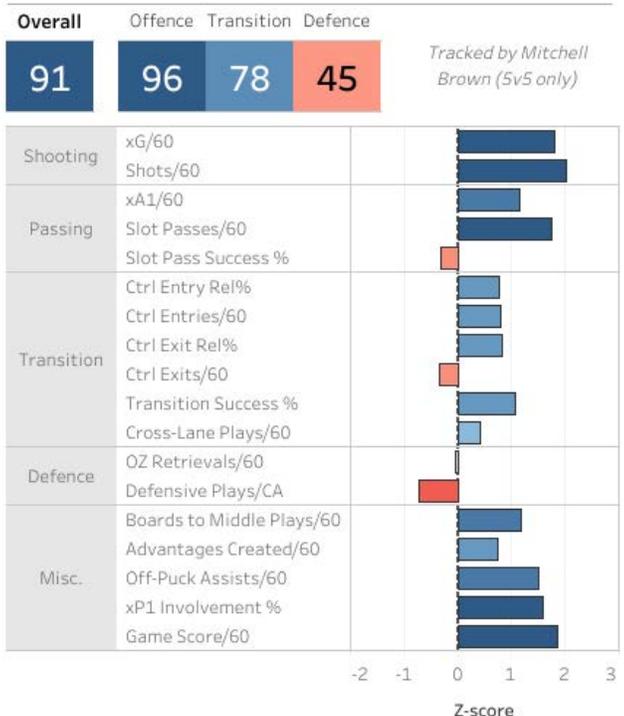
Pitre also brings defensive value with his endless energy and aggression, as well as some transition skills through his place-and-chase game, handling skills, and flashes of deception.

The other side is that while Pitre's well-rounded, he might not have that one special dimension. His passes are inaccurate and often reactionary. An upright stance limits just about everything, from his agility to puck protection. Without improving the skating, there's a chance his physical game will be rendered ineffective in the NHL.

Coulson Pitre

F | Flint Firebirds | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 143.0



There are flashes of higher-end abilities, even if most go incomplete. He tries to manipulate opponents with deception before passing, shows a more proactive passing game off the rush, and has the edges and subtle changes of speed to skirt around the checks of bigger opponents.

If Pitre builds off those, there's a chance he becomes a third-line power forward, providing a bit of value across the ice. If not, he has the versatility and robust style to make the NHL in a depth role. A combination of upside and certainty makes him worthy of a top-two rounds pick.

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Great utility in his game – can play it anyway you want." – NHL scout, April 2023

"Highly versatile player. It will be the difference between someone of a similar skill level not making it, and him making it." – NHL scout, February 2023

∨ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Game-winner on a breakaway to force game seven. Pitre was involved all game long. He hit everything, fired off a bunch of chances, won battles, and showed some playmaking. His shot's still limited by his upright stance but he has everything else: power, adaptability, off-puck instincts, a variety of release, and pass reception skills. He takes every puck in his pocket and pulls pucks around sticks before firing. Doesn't manipulate opponents or even create lanes, but he consistently found teammates off the boards for chances. He plays a direct, straightforward game, limited mostly by his unwillingness to play off his teammates in transition – it's a lot of straight lines, reactionary passes. The projection here is really the shooting, off-puck, and physicality combination. The skating will have to improve, but he has third-line upside.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre didn't bring the same level of physicality as normal but this was a solid game overall. He had his chances: a one-timers off a turnover and catch-and-release wristers with movement built into the reception to access the lane. His shot's clearly NHL-calibre, but his upright stance and narrow set up mean it looks a bit strange at times. Builds play in transition with passes, a nice touch that I haven't previously seen. Tried to be more of a high-skill playmaker in this one, trying to manipulate opponents to create passing lanes. All of his attempts failed. The timing's off and the time between his final scan and the deception's too long – pucks leave his stick too late or were aimed for a target that never arrived. The skating has to improve to get to the NHL, but his path's relatively clear. Get stronger, maintain the physical play, and be a shooting threat. Pretty confident he plays and the flashes of playmaking ideas make me believe there's a chance he's more than just a fourth-liner.

Lauren Kelly: March 12th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre didn't have much to show for offensively in this game, but his off-puck play remained an asset, from intercepting passes, retrieving pucks in his own end to start the breakout, and disrupting opposing rushes in the neutral zone. If he was able to strip players of possession, he was quick to feed his teammates up the ice to start the rush again. He protects the puck well in the offensive zone as he tries to escape pressure, but he's often forced to pass back up to his defenders at the point. There are limitations to his playmaking still, but he puts himself in the right areas to at least help his team sustain pressure in the offensive zone. It almost feels like has at least one clean breakaway scoring chance in every game, which is a testament to his ability to read off defenders and expose them when he sees opportunities to.

David St-Louis: March 11th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre showed a bit more playmaking in this one, but generally I don't appreciate his sense or physicality as much as other scouts

who watched him. Maybe I'm just catching lesser performances. I only see flashes and I'd tend to rate most of his abilities as average at best. He did play with effort on defence and turned a steal on the forecheck into a goal. He overdangled at times, but also chipped the puck into space to fetch it. Some deception. Not sure what to make of him.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre's one of the most violent prospects I've seen. He steps into everyone, crosschecks everything. He fights with every limb on retrievals, never giving up on a puck. Pins opponents, gets low and spins off them, and pokes the puck through them and then seals their stick to secure possession. That last play was how he set-up a pair of chances. Scored by getting two whacks in front, set up by about 18 crosschecks in 20 seconds and a shove to clear space. He has down-low passing skill, and tries to create space for his teammates, but his accuracy and pace both lack. The skating's an issue, too. He gets low when needed (for cutbacks and off-puck sprints), but his upright stance entering battles and with the puck is a problem. He's always trying to break through the defence off-puck instead of staying in space. There's a lot to like here, but just as much to question. I think he plays, but likely in a depth role. If the skating and off-puck reads improve, there's a third-line upside here, which makes him a fine late-second.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Flint Firebirds vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

A solid game from Pitre, apart from a dumb penalty and some poor passes. Fired off a bunch of scoring chances, including a pair of drag shots off the catch. He sits a bit back in his shot, but he has handling skill and patience, delaying just long enough to clear the defender before firing. Attacked the inside consistently. Used c-steps to absorb and separate from contact. Handling skill to beat opponents with his feet moving. Missed better passing options to instead handle the puck and lacks the skill on his passes to connect his more advanced ideas. Although, he did show a bit of deception and desire to create lanes. That's a fine starting point. He looks more like a potential bottom-six forward, who one drives the net, creates some chaos, and scores the occasional goal off the pass. A fine second-rounder, especially if the skating improves.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Flint Firebirds vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Not the most eventful game. I didn't see Pitre's physical side as much, even though I've heard a about it, apart from one crosscheck to the neck of an opposing player. The skating looked like a 4.5-5 grade (average) and he missed a few passing occasions. He turned defensive steals into offence, had one nice playmaking sequence, and flashes some handling skills. Probably just a down game. If he hit the pass on a few of his two-on-ones, he could have walked out of the game with a couple of assists.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2023 - Flint Firebirds vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Pitre has better playmaking ideas off the rush, where the play is more often scripted. He knows where to look. I'm still unsure if he can read the game in the moment, however. He was extremely physical in spurts in this one, finishing borderline late checks with a distinctive violence. He showed some handling and passing skills, drove the net, and was generally well positioned defensively.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre picked up two assists in this one. The first came off a pass reception in the slot, where he was able to corral a bouncing puck and get a quick shot off (rebound was finished off by a teammate). The second was equally as impressive, he picked up a loose puck in the neutral zone and instead of pivoting around to skate it up the ice himself, he recognized that a teammate had beaten defenders up the ice and fed him with a backhand pass to spring him on a breakaway while standing backwards in the neutral zone. Another solid defensive, off-puck performance as well. Just so much to like about his game.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre was on a rampage in this game, one of the most physical performances I've seen this season. He started the game by

running over Vinzenz Rohrer, one of several big hits. He used his physicality to pin opponents to the boards after losing the initial race and strategically pinned players to the boards before beating them back into space. Still loves that drag shot. He starts with his feet narrow, which limits his curl distance but he sets up defenders on angles to offset it. Scored with an NHL one; the type of shot that many junior players, but only a handful complete. He showed some playmaking, too, although he was lucky on his best pass of the game. Still, he's a solid down-low playmaker. His passing game across the rest of the ice is much more limited. He could be a third-line winger, but the skating and playmaking will have to improve to get there. A fine late-second.

Lauren Kelly: January 27th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre is so disruptive. Whether it's laying hits, powering through checks, skating through lanes to force players into different routes, or using his stick to strip players of possession, his off-puck reads are impressive. For a player who lacks a separating gear in his skating stride, he gets in for odd-man rushes or breakaways quite often, able to expose weaker-skating defenders. Worked give-and-gos with linemates, although that appeared to be the extent of his playmaking in this viewing. His shot looks promising as well. Looks like a second rounder to me.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

That was a really good game from Pitre. He sent a couple of pucks inside to Benson and got his own shot off by catching Benson's passes. He can fire in traffic -- that's projectable -- and he's got off-puck instincts, in the sense that he can find space in the offensive zone. He drove the net and generally seemed to know his next play. His hard skills combined with his anticipation and a reasonable skill-level make him an interesting prospect. He's consistently at the net, too.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre's a wrecking ball. He slams players into the boards, comes across the hips to win possession, and disrupts players on pursuit. And then he looks to the middle. The skating's not likely to provide an advantage at the next level, but he has enough skills around the skating to offset it. He easily takes pucks in motion and knocks them into space as he accelerates. He skates through the route of defenders to win body positioning and prevent reacharounds. Even when they catch up, he fights for positioning and maintains his balance, leading to his goal. Shows NHL shooting skill, too. Not a ton of playmaking, other than simple plays, although he connected with some slick lateral passes under pressure to get his team moving up the middle with speed. Looked like a potential second-rounder with third-line upside. Lots to like.

Lauren Kelly: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pitre's defensive play stood out immediately in this game - he was proactive, recognized open players, and used his stick to deflect passes and regain possession for his team. He consistently scanned, there was good effort on backchecks, and used his frame to get inside positioning on opponents and pin them against the boards. Offensively, he showed small area skill, worked give-and-gos with his teammates, attempted toe drags around sliding players, and powered past players 1-on-1. On his assist, he went wide before cutting to the slot to beat a defender and get in on a short breakaway. His initial shot was stopped but his teammates finished the play off. Pitre reused his speed and frame to separate himself from two defenders and fight off pressure, and finish on the backhand. He lacks a bit of explosive speed, but he uses his larger frame to his advantage and is still able to fight off checks and get in alone for scoring chances, which is impressive. He's probably a middle-six projection with his defensive play.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Another impressive game from Pitre. The physical game was a factor all throughout the game. He won positioning, set picks to create shooting lanes, joined every scrum, and shoved every player as he skated past them. He had some exciting playmaking ideas, including look off slip passes under his own feet and clever cross-slot passes from the corner. The execution lacks - he makes reads based on assumptions rather than actual information, and he takes too long to make decisions under pressure. But there's also the higher-end stuff, baiting the poke/pivot from an opponent before attacking the inside, that suggests it's habits causing the issue, not a lack of intelligence. It's improvable. Not a dynamic skater, he prefers to play a place-and-chase game

with the occasional slick move. On breakouts, works pucks to the middle/cross-ice under pressure – that should be more of a factor in his neutral zone play. Pitre continues to look like a potential second-round pick. Lots of NHL qualities.

Lauren Kelly: November 19th, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. London Knights - OHL

When Pitre turns it on, he can carve through opposing teams' defence with ease. The perfect example of that was his goal in this game, shielding the puck as he walked in off the rush, toe-dragged around a sliding defenceman, and changed his body positioning to open up his chest for a better angle and then shot far-side to beat the goalie. On his assist, he retrieved the puck from the corner, delayed and spotted a defender creeping in from the point, and passed through the slot to set up his teammate for a one-timer. Good off-puck reads and positioning, engaged defensively, but he was kind of invisible on some shifts, and dominant on others. Maybe a low second, early third? There's definitely decent offensive skill, but he isn't taking over games consistently yet.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A fun game from Pitre. He was involved in a ton of plays, showing a vast skill set. He delayed instead of challenging defenders to unwinnable races, showing textbook form. Then, he set up the trailer for a chance. He turned fake shots into cuts to the inside into shots. He constantly attacked the inside in transition, cutting across defenders or making the quick pass to the middle. Won body positioning, shoved players into the boards, then immediately knew the next play. Set up chances off his backhand. A well-rounded, complete offensive game. Not dynamic, but enough skills to suggest a third-line scorer in the NHL with some forechecking ability. Need to get a better understanding of his skating.

Lauren Kelly: November 6th, 2022 - Sarnia Sting vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Two goals for Pitre in this game, the first off a one-timer on a 4-on-4 and the second off a tipped point shot on the powerplay. Oddly, it looked like he had more energy in this one than he did in the last, despite this game being the third in three nights. He was throwing some massive hits along the boards, pressuring puck carriers, and tried to create turnovers in the neutral zone. I didn't see too much playmaking or instances of manipulation in this one though. Decent defensive effort. Probably a mid-rounder based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 5th, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

The puck wouldn't stop going into the net for Flint in this game, and Pitre was the beneficiary of three points, though he could have had a couple more. Early in the game while killing a penalty, he forced turnover at the blueline and skated in on a shorthanded breakaway but was stopped. His first assist was a cross-ice pass on the rush to a teammate. Then he scored off the rush, with a defender draped on top of him as he tried to cut across to the middle of the ice. His initial shot was stopped before he batted the puck in out of midair with the shaft of his stick. He picked up a third assist with a short drop pass to a teammate to start off a tic-tac-toe sequence. The skating looked like more of an issue in this game - his stride was sluggish, he struggled with separation, and at times it looked like he was exerting a tremendous effort on backchecks. I didn't see stride issues in any of my previous viewings, but it's something to keep an eye on. It could have been fatigue (this was the second game of a 3-in-3), as he wasn't flying around the ice in his usual manner.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Subtly effective game from Pitre. He picked his routes a lot better in this one and wasn't charging all over the ice with reckless abandon. Threw several hits along the boards, but didn't showcase much of those physical skills in open ice. Tried to create turnovers in the neutral zone by impeding the rush, but oftentimes he was flatfooted if that attempt didn't pan out and then was too far back to help out defensively, he'd probably benefit from keeping his feet moving on those instances. Still constantly hounding puck carriers as the opposing team reset in their own end. Two assists in this outing, the more notable of the two coming in the third period. He showed good anticipation of his teammates and the developing traffic in front of the net, before sending a slap pass to a teammate on the doorstep from the corner below the goal line. Had a couple of other scoring chances as a result of slipping away from loose coverage in the slot. Probably not a first rounder given it's a pretty deep draft year, but I

could hear a top-64 argument out.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A quiet game from Pitre. He wasn't involved in much across the ice, save for one shift where he tracked down the puck three times for a trio of high-danger chances. Passes were mostly simple plays to open teammates, although he showed a bit of play-building ability in a couple of transition sequences. Not much to go on.

Lauren Kelly: October 5th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Yet another prospect with a serious case of the zoomies, Pitre was flying all over the ice in this one. Hard on the forecheck, lays the body along the boards, pressures puck carriers. Surprisingly physical for an average-sized player, Pitre threw his body around in attempts to separate players from pucks and he was remarkably effective at regaining possession that way. His intensity and effort in the defensive zone was good, but I didn't see much scanning or shoulder checking in this one. His backchecks could be more consistent (in comparison to the effort he has on the forecheck), as he was usually the last one back in his own end, especially early on in this game. Great puck protection and stickhandling abilities; he dangled his way around several Greyhounds defenders, slipping in and out of coverage with the puck on his stick. Scored a nice goal in this game shorthanded, forcing a turnover at his own blueline before coming in on the breakaway and burying his own rebound. Also had one notable play in the neutral zone, breaking up the rush as he was skating backwards before turning it into an offensive zone rush for his team. Really intriguing performance from him in this one. I'm excited to see more.



54 Michael Hrabal

AGE 17.652 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 20, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Ben Bishop



Draft Twitter Fave

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'6"	209 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	6.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	7	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Omaha Lancers	USHL	31	2.86	.908	3
Czechia U18	WJC-18	5	3.11	.920	-
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	13	2.43	.927	1

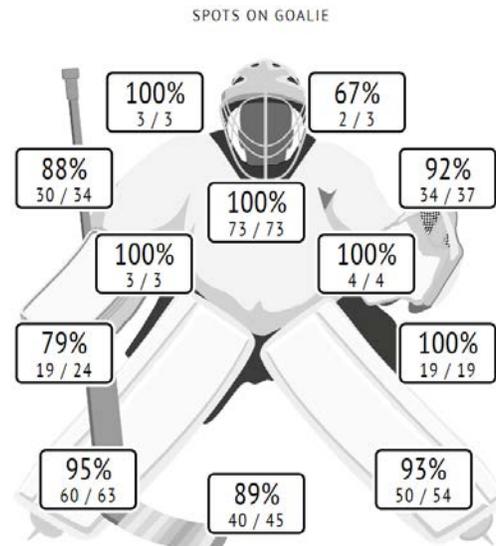
SCOUTING REPORT

Strong showings internationally and a commitment to the University of Massachusetts have driven Michael Hrabal's draft stock through the roof. With many analysts picking Hrabal as the top goalie available at the 2023 NHL Entry Draft, he most definitely comes with everything you'd expect from a highly-ranked goaltender: Size, strength, and a technical base that is good enough that goaltending coaches feel like they have a lot to work with.

Hrabal's size is the clear advantage that he has on the competition. He towers over screens, and even when he's presented with a tough challenge in front of the net, he battles well for sight lines and rarely loses visual attachment on a shot. When faced with a jam play in the crease, he seals up incredibly well. Hrabal has very long legs and takes away the lower portion of the net effectively.

On rush chances, Hrabal loves to use the overlap technique. This means there is an extra step of space he has to cover at the back door, but he can handle it easily with the sheer length that he has when he stretches all the way out. His overall skating speed is a bit of a worry, as he has trouble building backwards momentum on quick-developing plays. This can lead to some ugly-looking goals when he is caught out of position simply due to not having enough speed to keep up with the flow of play.

The era of the 6-foot-6 goaltender being automatically transformed into a boring, robotic style is gone. Hrabal is a goaltender that continues to prove that by having some great desperation tools in his toolbox. The desperation has not been coached out of him



in the slightest, and you will not see him give up on a play.

Hrabal has a lot to offer in terms of the typical things that NHL teams look for in the draft. He's a fantastically large goaltender with raw skill, and that alone would be enough to get him drafted quite high. His ability to already understand and play a style that utilizes his size effectively is what elevates him to the top of the class.

INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's got traits that project to being a No. 1 goalie in the NHL. He stole the show against the USNTDP at the Fall Classic and that will stick with teams. He's huge, athletic, and intelligent. Just a matter of him performing at a consistent level this year and beyond. He probably goes in the 2nd round. I think a lot of guys are jumping off his ship because of his numbers at times. I don't think you should. He's a young goalie, playing away from home in a tough league. One of the worst USHL teams with a coach who is tough on goalies. High end talent, he's big." – NHL scout, April 2023

"He's the leader. He's such a good goalie. I'm glad that I had an opportunity to play with him. When he's in the net, we know we're safe." – Jakub Dvořák, April 2023

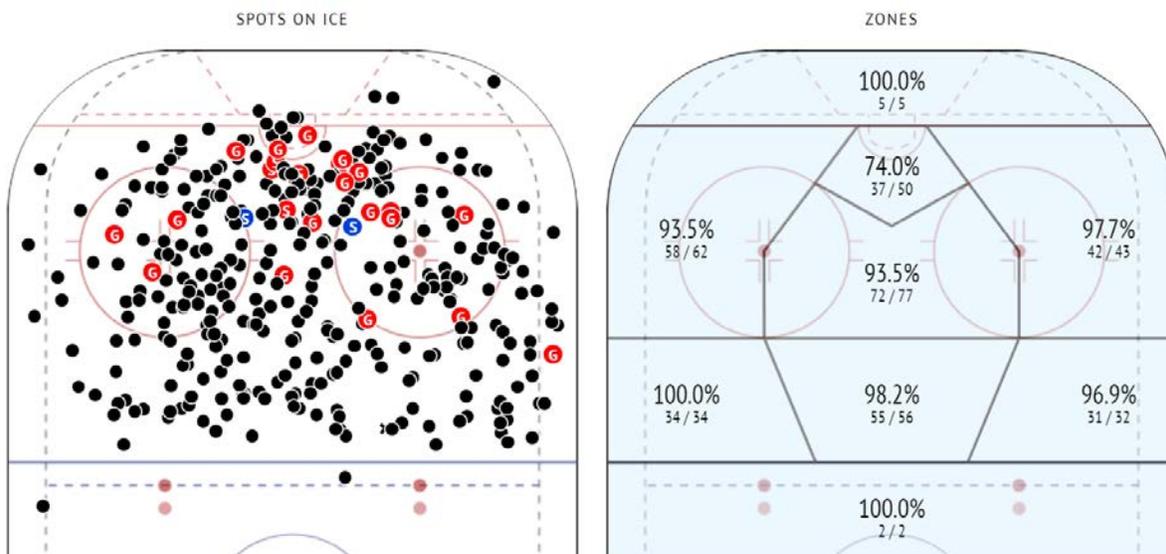
"He's great. I talked to him before the tournament because he's played in the USHL, and he's different then all of the players I've got here. He's got his own way. He's going through the USHL to university. We have three coaches here, and he's smarter than all of them together." – Czechia U18 head coach Jakub Petr, April 2023

"He stole the show against the USNTDP at the Fall Classic, and that will stick with teams. He's huge, athletic, and intelligent. Just a matter of him performing at a consistent level this year and beyond. He probably goes in the second round." – NHL scout, October 2022

"I tried to be quicker on the ice. It's a smaller rink than I am used to. It will be quicker, and I think that's better. I worked on explosiveness with sprints and jumps off-ice. I think throughout the year, I will get better." – Michael Hrabal, October 2022

"That's a hard question for me. I watch the league overall. I don't have a favourite goalie in the NHL currently. It's hard to say what goalie I play like. I try to take something from every goalie. How they react to situations. Then I practise it so I can do it in games." – Michael Hrabal, October 2022

SPOTS ON ICE





Grade: B

55 Carter Sotheran

AGE 17.222 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Travis Sanheim



Transition Ace



Hockey IQ

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	6	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Portland Winterhawks	WHL	68	4	19	23	0.34

SCOUTING REPORT

In a different era, a player with Carter Sotheran's characteristics would likely be pigeon-holed into a shutdown role. In today's game of activation and puck play from blueliners, more towering, play-creating blueliners are popping up.

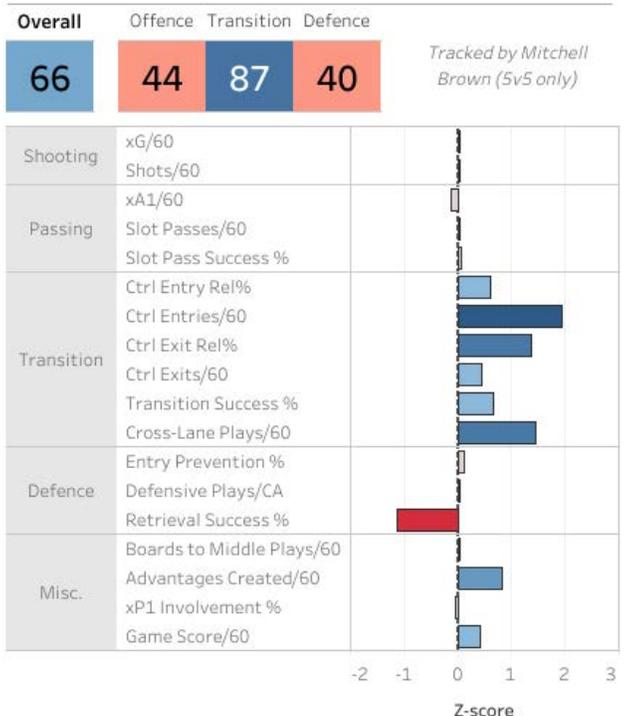
A transition ace, Sotheran consistently creates favourable situations up the rink with patience and skill on the breakout. Like the top puck-movers, he draws pressure, manipulates it, and finds a teammate on the other side. Instead of passing into battles along the boards, he cuts back to find a better option. After passing, he accelerates into the play, using those same exciting skills further up the rink.

The anticipation and feel for the game appear on the side of the puck, too. He angles opponents, forcing them wide before going for the puck. A developing physical element should make his defence a strength in the NHL. And when he recovers possession, he instantly makes the best pass to start the counterattack.

In the offensive end, Sotheran makes the same reads: Activating down the weak side, faking out opponents, and setting up teammates. He's a better creator than his point totals show, but he's not quite as effective from the blue line-and-in.

Carter Sotheran

D | Portland Winterhawks | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 120.7



One solution for finding more offensive success is skating improvement. While Sotheran's an evasive and skilled skater, he lacks stability, especially on his outside edges. His initial steps are sluggish, too. Since he properly loads either leg and uses counterforce to explode out of his turns, his evasiveness could translate. It comes down to adding strength, tightening the form, and timing his manoeuvres a bit better.

Skating growth will also enable Sotheran to escape with possession on retrievals, a current hole in his game, improve his rush defence, and make him even more dangerous in transition.

Sotheran's an intelligent, skilled player, capable of playing on a team's second pair. It will take longer for him to reach his upside than most prospects ranked in this range, but he could be worth the wait.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 19th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kamloops Winterhawks - WHL

The skating was more limiting for Sotheran offensively in this game. It's a lot harder for him to make good plays against a defence that shuts down his space. He was at his best as a defensive engager in this one. He rammed opponents on the walls, separated them from the puck, and positioned himself well defensively. It's easy for quicker and clever opponents to manipulate him inside space, however, as they just need to angle his feet one way to easily bypass him in the other direction. I come away with the same evaluation of his game: the ideas are good, but the mechanics are limiting.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks. - WHL

I continue to think that Sotheran is one of the smartest defenceman in this draft. He moves the puck well, manipulates forecheckers to create lanes, and he rotates ahead of defensive plays. The defence could be a strong point for him at the professional level, especially at his stature. His range compensates for his skating in his rush defence. And he can absolutely shift his weight from leg to leg, it's just a matter of gaining some strength and quickness. He will stay a below-average skater for sure, but he could get his mobility up to a point where it's NHL-caliber.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sotheran, so impressive. The activation reads and breakout ideas are right there with Cagnoni. He gets pressure on his back then accelerates into space. Beats opponents with weight shifts, as he did on multiple rushes. Uses the middle, looks cross-ice, even deceives opponents. Fluid once he gets moving, but the initial steps are sluggish and weak, and the hands fail him at times. Panicked retrievals and easily pressured into poor plays if his space is taken away as he gets his first touch. There's defence here, which makes the projection a bit easier. He steps up on turnovers to eliminate space. He keeps attackers wide. Follows up on plays. He's an early-third for me right now. It requires a lot of imagination but he has the brain.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

It's easy to get excited about Sotheran. He's such an intelligent activator, proactively filling space, jumping ahead of his forwards, and using the weak side at the perfect moments. He created advantages through always being an option. There were also flashy moments, including one where he deked around a defender and passed up the shot to go for another round – a poor decision, but he showed skill. He's a better defender in zone than off the rush, as quick-moving attacks, especially ones that develop close to him, easily escape his grasp. Still, he's a hard-worker who cares about the off-puck game. He scans, eliminates threats, and boxes out opponents. He has NHL abilities, and there's no doubt his activation game coupled with size will get him drafted, but the skating's a major question. Didn't get much done in transition in this game, either. Overwhelmed by forecheckers and pressured into poor decisions.

Daniel Gee: February 21st, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sotheran was moving much better in this game. He was keeping his feet in motion, and was a major contributor on the defensive end of the puck for Portland. Sotheran is an incredible rush defender. It's all built around steady feet, protection of the inside lane, staying in front of the attacker, and establishing a proactive gap. Against Wheatcroft, one of the best handlers one-on-one in the WHL, Sotheran stayed in front, shifted across as Wheatcroft tried to change the angle of the attack, and poked possession away as an off-puck threat filed behind him. This was a constant -- even when his triangle was manipulated by Ziemmer on another sequence, Sotheran forced a pivot after he refused to have his momentum worked against him. He's passive with his stick, the biggest weakness across his minutes. Because of this, he almost never is reaching, despite his range being an advantage. Sotheran battled hard in sustained pressure. Intense boxing out and punishment in the crease area. He doesn't plant and wait for plays to develop around him -- he will detach from the net, push pressure to the outside and even swoop in to support battles on the walls. He was angry in this game -- every whistle he was starting something. Like Cagnoni, Sotheran struggled late in the game after some quicker execution in his own zone -- a bit lost after a few switch offs. Regardless, he found a way to make an impact, stick-lifting/checking anyone who timed their activation through the slot.

Saw more of an impactful transition game out of Sotheran in this viewing. His hands and subsequent handles are poor but he can snap an in-motion breakout. He even connected on a rather smart 3-line board bank pass to send a teammate in. Right after that sequence in the second, he found a teammate through a neutral zone seam for a clear cut breakaway. Evades and wheels hard on retrievals but tried to absorb the physicality rather than manipulate. I think Sotheran is a player for the end of the board. He's smart, has an NHL frame, he's imposing in his own zone, has a mean-side to his game, but I wouldn't expect much of anything offensively. C-grade prospect in my opinion.

Daniel Gee: February 20th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

A quiet but effective game for Sotheran, who looks imposing out on the ice due to his NHL-ready frame. A poor skater because of a myriad of mechanical issues, Sotheran played a proactive game when defending against the rush. At any sign of a battle loss, Sotheran is already multiple feet out of the offensive zone ready for a counterattack. His habits are excellent; stays in front of the puck carrier and establishes an early gap. Even when his triangle was attacked with an inside-outside move in the first, he took out the man instead of contending with a stick check in small space. There are legitimate guiding habits. Even if Sotheran struggles to explode out of a pivot, his reach allows him to contain the lane at some level. He had a wonderful play stop in the first; a mini 2-on-1 formed and he was able to get his stick in the release. The lack of four-way mobility hurts him when there isn't time to be proactive. In the first he had a puck carrier on the outside, looking to feed the puck into the slot. Unable to pivot or drop back into the pass lane efficiently, he easily allowed the inside pass (right behind his feet) leading to change against. I'm not sure how well Sotheran processes multivariable defensive situations in sustained pressure, but he sure leverages his size whenever he can on the perimeter -- if he's locking you down in a pin on the end boards, it's essentially over. He pushes a surprising amount of pressure in his own zone and, as guessed; he wins a lot of his physical battles out of these pushes. He only had one real, notable offensive play. In the second during a 4-on-4, Sotheran tried a cut across the high slot, but stopped moving his feet, making himself an easy target. The idea was right, but mechanically, he couldn't get it done. He's a low ceiling prospect but the size and sense blend are interesting. He'll take a fair share of development to even hit his ceiling, but he could be a useful depth piece down the road; excited to watch him tomorrow.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Big game from Sotheran. The highlight was a break up in his own end, followed by a rush where he manipulated an opponent, then drove inside for a chance. When he gets moving, he covers a lot of ground -- and he can handle the puck in motion. It's at slower speeds where the skating falls apart. He slows, cuts back, and even waits for pressure, but opponents recover or simply beat him to the other side and get the stop. Still, the ideas are sound. He uses tons of give-and-gos to offset his skating. He shows passing skill and patience under pressure. And he has the defence. He keeps attacks wide, surfs across, wins body positioning, and closes space with force. A unique prospect with a bit of upside. Lots of development -- skating, breakouts, and puck skills -- but he's a candidate for our board.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Another interesting performance. I'm sure of Sotheran's hockey sense. It's clearly above-average. He reads the ice very well, anticipates the flow of the defensive and offensive play, reads lanes, and hits the best option. He can protect pucks, box out, hit,

and even fake opponents. He's slow-paced -- it's easy to move around him, but there are some projectable skating mechanics. When he gets the strength necessary to hold on his outside edge, he could really become a lot more mobile. His shot is quite weak at the moment, however. That's probably due to his poor skating, too.

David St-Louis: February 7th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

What an interesting prospect. His skating is a problem for sure. He faceplanted about a dozen times in this game trying to execute agility maneuvers, but his form isn't all that bad. He can shift his weight better than most skaters his size. It's kind of a Pickering situation. Otherwise, he was great. He boxed out opponents, hit them off the puck, organized controlled breakouts by sending the puck inside space, positioned well defensively...A lot to like but the mechanics hurt his projection a bit.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sotheran's limited at times. He loses races he should win and loses possession under pressure. But there's a lot of intelligence behind the obvious turnovers. He waits for pressure to commit before passing through it. His assist was a great example of knowing the next play, turning a loose puck into a quick pass up the middle perfectly slicing between two opponents. On breakouts, he looks up the middle and cross-ice for options before accepting the outside. Activates often, whether that's to hold the zone or to become a passing option. The mechanics means he pucks leave his stick poorly and he's prone to breakdowns, but there's upside here. Could be a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sotheran was impressive in this game. His game's mostly ideas at this stage. In one sequence, he recognized the numbers, cutback, and started a give-and-go to clear the zone. He activates a ton, uses every inch of space on the rink. He fakes on passes, hooks pucks around opponents, attack the space on their heels, always looks cross-ice or up the middle on breakout touches. Defence was concerning, mostly linked to his skating. Slow, weak pivots and backwards skating proved costly, even against mediocre skaters. The skating looks the big hurdle, alongside the hands. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sotheran's lumbering but skilled. He prepares space with deceptive routes, changes of pace, and head fakes, before accelerating. He activates often, and usually in intelligent ways: give-and-go, use middle, find space up the weak side. In transition, he makes quick plays to the inside, cross-ice, and generally tries to find the advantage. His speed of execution's low, which results in turnovers and lanes closing before the puck arrives. Defensively, he has some advanced skills: angling, making up deficits by coming across, and frequent scanning. Ideas are sound, mechanics aren't. There is NHL potential.

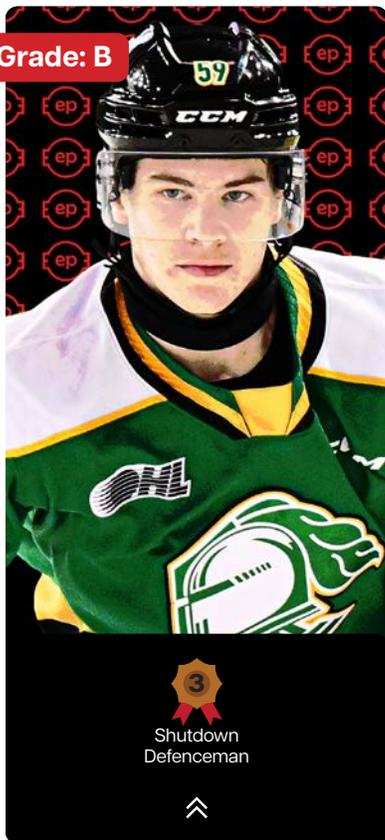
Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sotheran's mostly ideas. He tries to use the middle, tries to deceive, and tries to activate into the play. Quite effective when he's able to beat defender with an in-motion pass reception. He gains the zone, then makes a simple, but positive pass to advance possession. Scans but fails his best ideas when pressured, like a cutback (too upright, loses edge) or hesitation move (doesn't establish body positioning). Poor weighting on his passes. Only reads one forechecker at a time. The turnovers piled up throughout this game. Defensively, he angles. Makes up deficits by coming up and across, rather than lunging forward. Shoulders players into the boards then seals off. The ideas are sound, but the tools fail him. Really interesting prospect.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sotheran gets into trouble when he's forced to skate. He's sluggish and always on his heels. Lacks lower-body flexion. Edges are weak. Hands are much better. Completes tricky backhand passes under pressure, slips pucks just out of the reach of defenders, and brings the puck across his body. Activates at the right moments, too. Adept at using the weak side to fill space. Always looking to sprint up the ice. Beaten defensively because of his skating, but also effective made up deficits of space off the rush, angled plays wide, and killed them along the boards. Has to rely heavily on upper-body strength rather than positioning to get some of these. Still, a lot of interesting elements to his game, not unlike his teammate Marek Alscher. Worth keeping an eye on.

Grade: B



56 Oliver Bonk

AGE 17.682 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Jake McCabe



Hammer



Play Killer

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
London Knights	OHL	67	10	30	40	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

All 200 of the NHL's hockey men™ really believe in Oliver Bonk. It's easy enough to understand why. Shutdown defencemen like him tend to have a lot of value in the postseason. Teams pay hefty sums at the trade deadline to add them to their ranks.

We also believe that Bonk could become this kind of reliable, defensive pillar for a team.

While he's a couple of inches shorter than most NHL shutdown veterans, he already has many of their habits: He safeguards his team by backtracking ahead of offensive turnovers, blocks access to the defensive zone, forces opponents to dump the puck around him, and then seals the puck from them on the back wall. He pushes attackers wide in the defensive zone and scans the ice behind him to stop backdoor plays.

Contrary to many other defencemen his age, Bonk's performance doesn't fluctuate; he's constantly engaged in the play, consistent and mature in his shutdown approach.

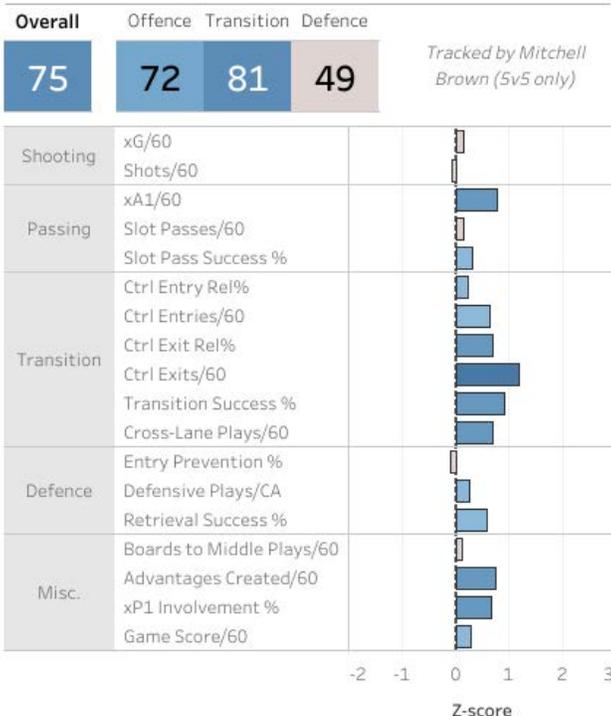
He's a surefire NHLer. But can he become more than just a defensive specialist?

We're less convinced of that. Bonk's skating stride projects as

Oliver Bonk

D | London Knights | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 137.5



average at best as currently constructed. His footwork lacks fluidity. His effectiveness is reduced against shifter attackers and even more so in puck-moving sequences. While Bonk's defensive game is more advanced than his B-graded counterparts on our board, his puck plays lag behind them significantly.

The London Knights tend to use the boards on breakouts more than other junior teams. We have to take that into account when projecting Bonk, as that can partly explain why he defaults to rims and chips in the defensive zone. But even in open ice, where he has time and space, his plays lack finesse, deception, and planning. The puck mostly moves on and off his stick toward the next logical, open target.

His team's offence rarely improves when the play moves through him.

Maybe he develops a better playmaking instinct over the next few years; Bonk does show an instinct for activations, at times, but as he isn't experimenting with the puck as much as others, it's more likely than not that he will become a shutdown defenceman.

Still, if he can further improve his footwork, the skills he already possesses would still be more than enough to earn him a consistent bottom-three and penalty-kill role in the NHL.

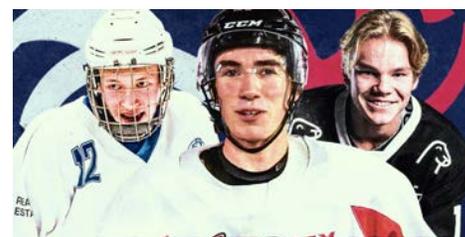
≡ LINKS & MEDIA



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Really good reading and maturity defending for a young kid. Has some of those things you want guys to learn as they get older." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"I like his upside. I think he's still scratching the surface, you know? He's got a great stick. He's got good o-zone moxy for a defenceman, can walk the line and get pucks through. He's a solid partner on the defensive side. He's just gotta get strong. Get stronger and add another gear. He's got a high ceiling. I would say he's raw. It's a bad year for D, though, so somebody might overvalue him. He could go in the first. Wouldn't shock me if he went in the second." - Western Conference scout, May 2023

"In four years he may be the most complete defender of this draft - needs time, but a great skill set." - NHL scout, April 2023

"There is a serious player in here. He can chew up minutes and owns good tools." - NHL scout, March 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 11th, 2023 - London Knights vs Peterborough Petes - OHL

Same game from Bonk. Very consistent, both a positive and a negative. I didn't see much evolution in his style of play, but he

was a bit more involved in the offence in this one. He tried give-and-goes when possible and attacked pockets of space down the offensive zone. He found himself alone in the slot on one occasion. Puck-moving game remains more limited, but I may have underrated his skating. It's closer to a 5 than I previously thought. He's capable of skate fakes and elusive moves.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Same attention to defensive details. He made stops, boxed out opponents, and used his reach. Almost automatic in rush defence due to a solid gap and his stick work. He can get into trouble when opponents pick up speed and attack him at an angle, but he managed his backtracking well to avoid that. The skating still isn't a strength, however. I don't see much offensively at this stage in his game. (I'm not sure why he's playing on the powerplay). But he's activating and moving alongside the offensive blue-line well. I continue to see a future shutdown, likely bottom-pair NHLer. But if he learns to manage the puck even better and make more controlled plays and if he can improve his skating a bit, maybe he plays as a number four.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk is very defensively engaged but he gets beat wide a little too often because of his lacklustre skating mechanics at this point. He knows who he is, however, and plays within the limits of his skills, which is always a plus at the pro level. We do want prospects to experiment. He follows his man, gets his stick in passing lanes, and engages opponents. He shines the most in the defensive zone when he's tasked with boxing out or breaking a cycle. A lot of board passes, not many controlled ones.

Lauren Kelly: March 9th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk jumped up into the rush a lot in this game, but it didn't really seem like he had a plan once he crossed over the offensive blueline. He'd put in concerted efforts through the neutral zone to keep up with the play, follow his teammates over the blueline, and then kind of kill his speed, too close to his teammates for them to pass the puck to him for a legitimate scoring chance, when the far side of the ice would have been wide open for him to receive the puck. He has ideas for how to create offence, he just lacks the technical ability to execute them. Defensively, he was drawn a little far from defending in front, but his 1-on-1 defending on the rush looked solid. Probably a mid-round pick based on this performance.

David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk showed a bit more offensive abilities in this one. He danced around forecheckers at the blue-line and similarly in his own zone to try and create passing lanes. His moves lack a bit of foresight, however, and they don't always improve the conditions of the play for him. He does them because he feels like he has the room to pull them off, not because they lead to a better play. He has a penchant for physical play -- that's a very projectable element. He needs to develop the right body positioning techniques. He was extremely engaged defensively in this one, always trying to block passing lanes and push attackers away from high-danger areas. I see him more as a third-round prospect than second-round.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Bonk jumped into the play a ton this game. He had multiple shifts where he joined the rush twice. Used the weak side but mostly provides short or trailing support. When he gets the puck, he usually makes the simple play -- shots, drop passes, etc. -- but he generally keeps plays moving. The most exciting offensive play was a pinch into a slot pass for a deflection. He's awkward and his hands fail at times. Mostly an inside edge skater, too. But he brings a robust defensive game. He eliminates threats, keeps attacks wide, gets the occasional well-timed steal, and keeps play moving in the offensive end to keep use those skills less frequently. He's not adaptable and he's pressured into poor plays. I think he plays, and there's no doubt he'll accumulate a lot more points next season, but unsure if he becomes a solid NHL player. The activation game and defence makes him a candidate for our board, perhaps in the 70s.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk plays a relatively simple game even at this level, based on staying in position, defending the front of the net, going down to

block passing lanes, applying himself on the boards, firing pucks to the net, and making short breakout passes. He's more of a reactive defender at this stage, but he has the tools to play that style in the NHL and still become an average to above-average shutdown NHL defenceman with some puck-moving ability.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk showed a bit of skill in this game. He stepped inside on the heels of the first forechecker, then passed against the grain. He waited for his teammates to skate their routes by faking inside, then passing once they got open. Activated a bit, mostly when London had the zone established. Crept in off the point for a near-chance, but with no support. Used pump fakes before some shots – slowly, mind you – to get a bit of room. He has some defensive upside. Retrievals are simple. If the options aren't clear, he offloads the puck. He tries more complex plays, but pucks roll away from him. Timing on his plays lacks, too. He looks like a candidate to play, but will he be effective? A depth piece.

Lauren Kelly: February 14th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk showed more offensive potential in this game than in prior viewings. Although he was usually forced to cut back after breaking the puck out of his own end and leading the rush, he was able to gain the zone properly, though there were also shifts where his breakouts were cut off in the neutral zone and he turned the puck over. A couple of instances where he joined the rush, jumped up into the offensive zone, but wasn't able to really execute with the puck once he received it. Gap looked better in this one, keeping players to the outsides and then pinning them to the boards. A few shifts where he looked like he was puck-watching in his own end. He was caught up the ice a couple of times after joining the rush and wasn't able to get back in time. This was a bit of a weird viewing... I don't even know if he's a draft pick based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: February 8th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk's effort level is never in question. He uses his frame to pin players to the boards, his longer stick to poke pucks away in the defensive zone, and he's always engaged. He did wander a bunch in the defensive zone following possession a bit more than I'd like to see out of a defender, especially since he could be drawn all the way out to the point on some sequences. Offensively, Bonk keeps his puck play simple. Passes are tape-to-tape on powerplays, but from short ranges. Shots are just wrists from the point. Breakouts end at the neutral zone, as he'll stop up and pass the puck back to one of his faster teammates. I don't really know think he's going to be much of a producer from the back end at future levels, he's probably more suited to a shutdown role. But if that's the case, he definitely has to focus more on his positioning and defensive skating. I don't see a first round pick yet.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

After this game, I see Bonk more as a future shutdown defenceman. It's partly a bias because he spent so much time in his own zone, especially defending around the net, which he did well for the most part, but it's also because the offensive foundation, the instincts, aren't there as much in his game compared to other top defencemen in this draft. The mechanical ability also lags a bit behind. His strengths could be his physical play, stature, range, and relative mobility. I see more of a good-first-pass defenceman than a quarterback -- let's put it this way.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Bonk pretty much only made safe plays. He can't really handle the puck under pressure at this stage. He's just a good-first-pass defenceman, and that's what he projects to be at the next levels. He's one of the best defensive engagers in the draft, however, great at managing one-on-one skirmishes and adaptive defensive footwork for the most part. If his skating was better, I'd have no problem with him higher on our board, but he just lacks dimension. He's a size and reach and physicality projection.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Lots of stuff from Bonk. He tried the same rush three times – skate down the boards, one-foot cutback, pass back up high. It

failed all three times because the pass was easily read. His game is patterns, it seems, which explains why he can put himself in the right position but rarely make the best play. He does make plays, however. He joins the rush, fakes on pass receptions before shooting, and gets open at the top of the slot. Some proactive activation. Delays instead of charging ahead when it's an option. But he's awkward. His skating and hands falls apart under pressure. Awkward at times. There's also defensive upside. He's physical, engaged, boxes out, and switches coverage. A bit weaker off the rush, where his backwards mobility becomes more of an issue, but he's solid. More of a 80s or 90s prospect, but probably deserves to be on our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Bonk was arguably the best player in this game, if the hands can be overlooked. He delayed, made plays through forecheckers, killed rushes, joined the rush, and created a bit offence. Uses space, either stepping into fire or staying open inside it, as he did for his goal. The defence remains the most exciting part of his projection at this stage. He has a lot of pro qualities (quick decisions, switch offs, eliminate middle, close lanes) and moves pucks quickly off the end boards. The puck skills are limited at times, with his hands causing turnovers (poor pass receptions, especially). Looked like a 3.5 in this game. The rest of his game's clearly NHL-calibre, with bottom-pairing upside.

David St-Louis: January 7th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

A bit of a chaotic performance. Bonk showed everything you want out of a defensive prospect, but without the layer of skill and technical refinement that makes it easier to project such a prospect. He activates, moves relatively well laterally, pins opponents to the walls, absorbs contact to make plays, and generally plays a harder brand of hockey. He needs to become a little more fluid mechanically, however. He's an interesting prospect. I have to watch more. If he can connect more plays more regularly, he could move up our board.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk's hands fail him at times, he pushes pucks too far in front of his body and lacks the refiner pass reception and control to complete his more advanced ideas. The stride certainly doesn't help, either. But those ideas are strong. He cuts back before passing through the F1 to the middle, spins pucks back to the middle after driving wide, and attacks the inside before passing to teammates through the defender. Joined the rush often, and when activated, he stayed in deep. A retrieval master class in this game: won positioning before cutting back, reaching around players to stick lift them at the right moments, turning to face the F1 before putting the puck out of their reach. Consistently prepared his escape, showing planning, scanning, and awareness. Defensively, he ranges between too passive and too aggressive. Faster attacker clearly beat him in the neutral zone because he can't manage their speed. A lot of work to be done, but I see NHL upside. Looks like a late-second candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk has moments where the skating becomes an advantage, waiting for pressure before bringing his turning leg under his body and accelerating. Other times, he widens his stance and turns on his inside edges, killing his speed. The stride also has its limitations; he's an awkward mover at times in general. But his ideas are often very strong. He delays in transition instead of challenging players to races. He uses the middle, starts give-and-gos, and changes the point of attack with cross-ice passes. Jumps off the point, fills space, and even shows a bit of vision and playmaking. Getting into those positions more regularly will be important for his development. Simple, but effective plays off retrievals and he gets the occasional stop in transition. Could be a mid-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: December 4th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Bonk's skating doesn't look so bad in person? His ability to escape pressure was an issue at times, but he was starting the breakout, executing cutbacks at both ends of the ice, jumping up into the play in hopes of getting the puck in space, and his gap was solid for a player whose stance can still be a bit too wide. Used his body to pin players against the boards if he felt he was losing the edge defending the rush. As far as positioning went, he was kind of all over the place in his own end, but would point out open players to teammates, scan on retrievals, and he killed a number of plays by anticipating and redirecting the

puck to safer areas. Played deeper in the offensive zone than I'd ever seen in previous viewings, constantly scanning. Is he a first round pick? I don't think so. But second or third rounder isn't out of the question.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bonk picked up two assists in this game, one off a simple pass to a teammate on the powerplay, and the other was a wrist shot from the point that was deflected in. Probably worth noting that he's riding a seven game point streak, and he's got 10 points in that span. I'm not sure there's too much of a dynamic offensive level to his game, though. Most of his points will probably be the result of similar plays to the ones that led to his assists. He struggled with handling the puck at times, when he wasn't under any pressure. Defensively, there's lots to improve upon, but the gap is getting better and he uses his stick effectively to break up plays. Breakout passes are a mixed bag, as sometimes he throws blind passes up the middle nowhere near his teammates, but other times those no-look passes hit their intended targets perfectly to start an odd-man rush. Mid-round pick?

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Bonk's a bit basic, although I like his ideas when he's trying to make plays. He jumps off the point, starts passing plays, and hits teammates moving into space. However, he's mostly very simple with the puck, missing opportunities to create advantages. Breakouts are a consistent area of trouble, throwing pucks away or reversing to no one. Some defensive skills: keeping a tight off-puck gap and timing his stick checks with the pass reception. Didn't look like a draft pick in this game, but he's interesting enough to keep watching.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Another uninspired performance from Bonk, who left this game with an assist and a plus-one rating. The assist wasn't all that special; an uncontested five-foot pass from the top of the umbrella to his linemate who made good on his shot. Defensively, Bonk was strong through the neutral zone, gapping up early and taking away the middle of the ice, but I thought his in-zone work wasn't quite up to standard. It just seemed like Bonk was swimming, chasing the play every time it shifted to his zone. The way he moves the puck almost reminds me a little bit of draft year Cal Foote – all short range passes, sometimes to teammates in worse positions than himself. I'm actually fairly intrigued by Bonk and think there might be something there on the balance, but he looked like a no-draft in this game.

J.D. Burke: October 28th, 2022 - North Bay Battalion vs. London Knights - OHL

A fairly nondescript performance from Bonk, but there are signs of offensive development if you squint. Bonk's not what you'd call a particularly skilled or cunning player with the puck on his stick, and the space management from the offensive blue line and in rush activations leaves something to be desired. He's starting to join the rush more frequently though, and a nice wrinkle to his game has been the newfound habit of skating through his passes. There was even some deception on one breakout in the third period – don't see that often. The connection rate on his outlets wasn't as high as I'd like in this game, but I liked the thought process on some of these plays. Defensively, Bonk was solid as ever – gapping up early through the neutral zone and using his stick to parry rushing attackers attempts at entries. He clearly understands defensive rotations, and his range allows him to win most puck battles handily. He's a smart player with good habits, I think, but I want to see that better reflected in his play with the puck, particularly in the offensive zone. The skating needs to come along, too.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

An eventful game from Bonk. Jumped off the point on the weak side to turn a pass into a goal with a catch-and-release wrister. The shot looks like an NHL tool. The skating, not so much. It's most problematic defensively, with his feet getting crossed too easily, lacking the power to explode out of his pivots, and struggling to mirror footwork. He's an intelligent defender otherwise, engaging at the moments of least resistance, scanning lots, and aggressively taking away space. Breakouts are hit or miss. There's the odd crafty play: move inside, draw pressure, pass just outside of their reach. There are the confusing ones: rims to no one and carries that seemingly have no destination. Misses opportunities to use the middle, but that's really how the London Knights play. He could be a candidate for our board. We'll see how the skating and reads develop.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Bonk took more offensive risks in this game. He jumped up into the rush, but was pretty set on shooting when he got closer to the goaltender instead of deciding on a likely more successful passing option. His ability to escape pressure on retrievals was better in this game. But it still feels like he's either second guessing or overthinking his carries. His skating was a hindrance when trying to come back to prevent breakaways. There's probably a draft pick in him (can't underestimate the power of NHL bloodlines), but I don't see a first rounder yet.

Lauren Kelly: October 8th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Bonk only being listed at 6'2" is the most bizarre thing to me because he skates (and looks!) like he's four inches taller. Now, the skating isn't great by any means, but I'll be honest - I've seen worse. His mobility isn't too bad for being 6'2", but there's little explosiveness and his stance is far too wide at times. I've never seen a defenseman attempt to do the middle splits and reach forward with his stick defending one-on-one. Bonk's skating is much better than when he has possession - confusion or hesitation with his handling abilities impedes his stride significantly. He slows down completely before trying to skate the puck out. He's all over the ice at times, playing up high in the neutral zone trying to poke the puck away instead of allowing his forward teammates to do it. Very raw project here, but there's potential. Bonk pre-scans and fakes on retrievals, can change pace and execute cutbacks well in spite of the rough skating. Passing ability looks decent, and the shot is powerful (that wind-up goes nearly vertical). Will play a ton for London this season, and on both special teams - he was already up to 30 minutes in this game and it's the beginning of the year. Development over the course of the season will be interesting to watch.

J.D. Burke: August 5th, 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Increasingly, I see Bonk as a player with distinct mechanical limitations but enough going on upstairs to operate within them effectively. While not particularly deceptive or manipulative on defensive zone retrievals, Bonk instead relies on using contact to draw in forecheckers and create separation. From there he makes simple, effective outlets. In rush and counter defensive sequences, Bonk's footwork can be exploited - he turns like a U-Boat and struggles to match attackers speed - but his length allows him to recover in most instances. He has a great defensive stick. Further to this point, Bonk's constant scanning allows him to register secondary and tertiary threats defensively. The skating though... Bonk recovers his stride so, so wide, and there isn't even the slightest bit of flexibility in those ankles. Looks like a C or potentially even a B grade projection, but the range of outcomes isn't especially ambitious.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Bonk lacks creativity and technical ability with the puck. Makes simple plays at the expense of finding better options. Doesn't create advantages. Lacks the skating to make use his retrieval ideas, but the pathway for improvement's clear. He pre-scans, deceives, and changes pace. After getting positioning, he waits for pressure to arrive, then cuts back. Defensive upside comes through neutral zone stops. Length gets him the occasional recovery stop. Exploitable footwork. Curious to watch him more.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

The mechanics are rough, and I mean rough. Bonk's among the least coordinated skaters and handlers in this tournament. I don't even know where to start on the specifics. It's as if his skating needs a complete mechanical overhaul. And still, there are moments where I see a vaguely interesting player there. Bonk generally reads the game well, often in a way that allows him to get around his significant mechanical deficiencies. He's a proactive in-zone defender, gaps up early between the blue lines, and usually takes and sends passes in motion. The scanning comes and goes, and when it went in this contest, it resulted in a missed defensive zone assignment that very well could've resulted in a goal. Could be an interesting bet at the back of our board.



Grade: B

57 Timur Mukhanov

AGE 17.247 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Yanni Gourde



Motor



Vision



Raw Talent

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'8"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

4

Shooting

6

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Avangard Omsk	KHL	1	0	0	0	0.00
Omskie Krylia	VHL	31	4	4	8	0.26
Omskie Yastreby	MHL	15	8	9	17	1.13
Projected	MHL	17	9	10	19	1.12

SCOUTING REPORT

Rare is the 5-foot-8 forward who spends their draft year playing professional hockey, but Timur Mukhanov is the exception.

Clearly above-average skater, the Russian forward can outspeed most of his professional opponents down the wing off the rush, take off with pucks on the walls before defenders can react, and slip through set defensive formations before they collapse on him.

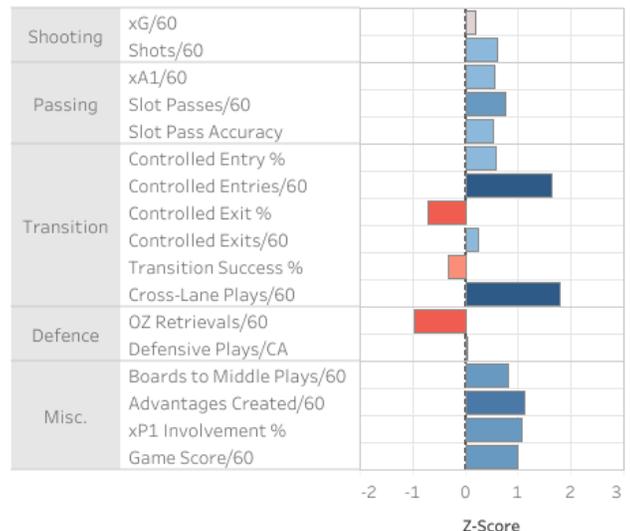
And the winger also knows how to use his speed defensively. He hunts opponents on the forecheck, herds them to the outside on the backcheck, and constantly pressures opposing defencemen at the top of the defensive zone. With his motor, Mukhanov constantly removes space from the opposition.

While Mukhanov lacks the strength to absorb contact on the walls of the offensive zone, as long as he keeps his feet moving in those situations, defenders will always have a hard time stopping him. He can shift around them, open them up with feints and stickhandling moves, and create passing lanes for teammates.

The main issue with his game this season, apart from his size, was his lack of scoring. Despite being everywhere on the ice in all of his shifts and generating quite a few dangerous looks for teammates with skillful passes, when he was on the ice, pucks never seemed to end up in the back of the opposition's net.

Timur Mukhanov

F | Omskie Krylia | VHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 134.3
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



“Mukhanov is probably the unluckiest player in the 2023 Draft,” Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a December report. “This guy just cannot buy a point despite the quantity and quality of the chances he’s creating. He had one really sweet pass from behind the net – skating behind with pace, then sending a pass to the slot while spinning away from his man to find a teammate. He’s so creative and smart, the playmaking is seriously towards the top of the crop this year.”

Despite our love for Mukhanov’s game – his pace, defensive engagement, and playmaking – we had to reason with ourselves when it came to ranking him. Few 5-foot-8 players make the NHL and the ones that do often possess at least one elite skill. Although Mukhanov has a lot of good qualities, he lacks that special element currently.

The June-born forward played this VHL season through and through as a 17-year-old. Our hope is that he might have more development runway ahead of him than other forwards in the draft.

To give himself a better chance to reach the NHL, however, Mukhanov will have to develop his skating and deception even more, to keep defenders at bay, create more space for himself, and avoid entering close-quarter battles.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout’s Notebook: Data-driven notes on Mukhanov, Dower Nilsson, Stenberg, and Hämeenaho

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 15th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. HC Chaika - MHL

Mukhanov isn’t seemingly getting top-line minutes in the MHL playoffs despite probably deserving to play more. He was getting a bit frustrated with his teammates, too, visibly looking angry when they fumbled his passes. The viewing tracked with the previous ones. Mukhanov has some small-area skill, good vision in transition and brings a lot of speed and pace, but lacks finishing touch, physical skills and is quite reliant at creating off the rush with a speed advantage. Got a couple of good looks off the rush and tried to mask the release using the defender as a screen, but his conversion rate on those plays must be so low given how many times he’s tried that play this season. A hard player to rank properly, I feel. I’d probably start to consider taking him from late second round onwards. Players with his profile don’t have the highest rate of panning out.

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. SKA-1946 - MHL

Not sure why Mukhanov is not playing more. He’s clearly one of the best elements on the team. Hyper-pace, really energetic, constantly in movement, tries hard defensively, jumps in board battles (even if he’s at a disadvantage there), and he connects passing plays at a high rate. He runs around or through checks, makes quick passes off the wall...The skating projects as above-average and the passing, too.

Lassi Alanen: March 23rd, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

I’m not sure what the projection with Mukhanov is. Could he be a middle-six winger in the NHL? Not sure if he has enough offensive skill as a primary creator and he’s not an off-puck scorer either. He’s got a shoot-first mentality without that good of a shot. He could be an energetic two-way winger who works hard on the forecheck, but he’s got an uphill climb with his size and

lack of strength in puck battles. He continues to create the vast majority of his chances off the rush and had a couple of nice ideas in this one, but couldn't quite execute on them. Skating remains a strength and an above-average projection, but he's just not been able to weaponize it offensively in these latest viewings. I've seen better from him at this level.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. Buran Voronezh - VHL

Mukhanov lost almost all of his battles in this one. He just can't go shoulder to shoulder with opponents. He has to map their positioning at all times and anticipate the flow of the play to remain inside space and use his skating to get to pucks or to take them away from he has to absorb a contact. He supports plays well and has some playmaking instincts on top of a high defensive engagement. It's telling that the team uses him in the bumper position. While he can't absorb contact, he's good at spinning away from it and making quick puck movement and finding space in tight.

Dylan Griffing: January 28th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. Buran Voronezh - VHL

By far the weakest Mukhanov viewing I've had. A rare case where his lack of strength really excluded him from a game entirely, getting squeezed off pucks all game long. Trying to outpace everyone wasn't working and his only flash of anything was quickly halted by a pokecheck. Wasn't even impactful off the puck; Vorenezh played a very slow tempo style and he was often overskating on the forecheck, anticipating a quicker breakout pattern.

Lassi Alanen: January 26th, 2023 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Loko-76 Yaroslavl - MHL

Mukhanov is very much a rush creator. The speed and quickness are both above-average projection, which helps him to dissect MHL-level neutral zone defences with ease, especially when he gets to wind up in his own end first and then attack with a speed advantage. The problem is the projection as a scorer. His playmaking flashes are impressive - though we didn't really see them in this one, aside from a couple of nice one-touch passes in transition - but a lot of his game revolves around shooting from the top of the circle, which just hasn't proven as an effective way to score for him. I'd still like to see him challenging defenders more when they back up, using the threat of the shot to get into better scoring positions.

Dylan Griffing: January 20th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. Gornyak-UGMK - VHL

As the season winds down, a much-needed boost in production for Mukhanov is looking more and more unlikely. Don't get me wrong, the performances have still been good, but this Krylya team is just bad. No chemistry, lack of talent (called up a 17-year-old with 6 MHL points this year), and everyone is so individualistic. Mukhanov has had to stand out from an off-puck perspective in this stretch of terrible form from his team; generating turnovers, using his motor, and taking up space defensively. His play with the puck is still effective. His transition play was better than most of his teammates, using his pace and lateral movements. Good passing, as well, really deceptive and creative. More shot-heavy than usual in this game. Can't blame him, somebody needs to score some goals for this side.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. Dizel Penza - VHL

Mukhanov failed to make an impact in this one. Though he did get a few chances off the rush as he usually does; I'm just not convinced at his ability to finish them. He has to load up his full body to the shot, reducing the accuracy and the effectiveness of the release. We've got a pretty sizeable sample and it points that he's not a dangerous finisher from mid-range. Mostly, I was baffled with some of the dump-outs he opted for, not even bothering to scan even when he had time to do so. Could be systems-related, though. He should have the skating chops to be a transition ace, but we didn't really see it here. Motor remains good, but wasn't able to impact the game defensively that much in this one.

Dylan Griffing: January 5th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. HK Tambov - VHL

This wasn't really one of Mukhanov's best games, but there were still quite a lot of good things showing. The power play was running through him, which was good to see, using the additional space to his advantage to make smart plays, but also escaping pressure really well with his quick feet. His shot looked great in this one, as well. There's still issues with his problem

solving on rushes, which is becoming a pattern with Omsk prospects. He's showing more lateral movement to try to evade oncoming traffic, but still just sort of skating right into danger instead of trying a move to avoid it.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Sarmaty - MHL

Mukhanov just can't finish plays. He misses the last touch that would lead to a goal, from a mechanical fault (like wiffing on a release) or because he tries to be overly deceptive and misses his passing target. Otherwise, he's as toolsy as ever. Easy weight shifts in his skating that makes him very shifty, always deceptive. He can somewhat make plays on and from the walls. He anticipates the next play at a reasonable level and shows some good play building on the powerplay. He lacks a bit of awareness of space and defenders as he moves around with the puck, and like said before, his plays are imprecise, at times. The lack of scoring is concerning, but I'm sure he would put up numbers in Junior. We have to be careful not to push him too high but the 25-40 range seems right, unless others start performing way better.

Lassi Alanen: December 26th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. HC Sarmaty - MHL

This was the Mukhanov performance I've seen in the MHL, easily, and it demonstrates the growth his game has seen in the VHL. The playmaking just carved up the opposition, completing multiple passes from in tight to the slot for prime scoring chances, mostly off the rush. It's clearly an above-average ability. The skating is another clear advantage at this level. Sometimes gets himself in trouble by skating directly into pressure without purpose, but has an effective delay game off the rush, not dependent on outpacing the opposition. He just doesn't seem to have much finishing ability. Whiffed on a few of his scoring chances and couldn't convert on others. It's a bit worrying for a player with his profile.

Lassi Alanen: December 12th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. HC Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk - VHL

Mukhanov's skating and motor always stand out when watching him, but this was a pretty mild game compared to some others I've seen from him this season. His decision-making was a bit more mixed bag. He's always willing to end cycles early by trying to pass to the slot, but pretty much every attempt was cut off in this one. His rush game is often too focused on cutting to the middle and shooting, which hasn't netted him many goals despite the number of attempts being ridiculously high. He does have a solid delay game and vision, too, but the plays just weren't connecting here. I do respect the off-puck value he brings defensively with his pace and work rate, though.

Dylan Griffling: December 10th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Rubin Tyumen - VHL

Timur Mukhanov is probably the unluckiest player in the 2023 Draft class. This guy just cannot buy a point despite the quantity and quality of the chances he's creating. He had one really sweet pass from behind the net – skating behind with pace, then sending a pass to the slot while spinning away from his man to find a teammate. He's so creative and smart, the playmaking is seriously towards the top of the crop this year. The shot continues to hold him back, but he's so apt at slipping into open ice and getting big chances for himself. Motor always stands out, a bit reminiscent of Marat Khustnutdinov, which is a big positive.

David St-Louis: December 8th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. SKA-Neva St. Petersburg - VHL

Mukhanov is just as pacey as ever. He's so quick. The skating is a real weapon at this level. He's on opponents in a second and easily separates from them off the rush and with cutbacks behind the net to then find teammates in scoring areas. He's aware and anticipates the play and he passes with some deception. Some of his decisions in this game on the cycle were pretty poor, however, as he passed back into pressure constantly. He also got outmuscled on the boards.

Dylan Griffling: November 26th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Sokol Krasnoyarsk - VHL

Another really nice outing from Mukhanov, as he continues to rack up high quality scoring chances with no points to show for it. Really showed off his puck protection and hold-up play here, using pace changes and simple skills to evade defenders while also drawing more to him to allow things to open up around him. The lack of strength is going to hinder him for a while, takes a lot of hits to make plays which is always scary, but he plays into his tools well enough that the physicals don't hold him back

too much. One huge scoring chance at the net front and another pretty solid chance following a nice sequence with a give-and-go, but he just cannot buy a finish. The shot is the biggest thing holding him back right now, the playmaking is good and he's proving to be effective off the puck, finishing the chances he works so hard for is just not possible for him right now and the point totals reflect that.

David St-Louis: November 21th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Metallurg Nk - VHL

Wow. Talk about a great performance. And it's a projectable one, too. Mukhamov plays at high pace and he was much better defensively in this game, pressuring opponents quickly, switching from positions quickly, recovering loose pucks quickly...He lacks a bit of ankle flexion, but I continue to see him as a potential above-average NHL skater due to his acceleration and pace. He's elusive, too, constantly on one leg or the other, has puck protection mechanics (gets off the wall, forces defenders to turn their feet, before cutting back in the space he created), and he looks to create 2-on-1s off the rush. In one sequence, he took the puck in his zone, made a give-and-go to beat a first defender, cut across the ice to isolate a defender with a teammate, kicked the puck to that teammate, and then attacked the net for a deflection shot. He didn't overpass in this game. He took his opportunities to shoot when the passing lanes were closed. Just a lot of exciting elements. He has some A elements.

David St-Louis: November 16th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Kazakhstan U20 - Cup of the Future

Mukhanov didn't take over the game, but if you looked for him, he did show the full extent of his skill. He understands the timing of plays and how to manipulate the defence to keep the puck on his stick long enough and delay to hit those plays. He was arguably better at creating offence from the wall than the much larger But in this one. As he moved quickly and escaped pressure before it got overwhelming. His off-puck game is strong, too. He anticipates the flow of the play well and supports it.

Dylan Griffing: November 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

Decent game from Mukhanov, but expecting more from him in this kind of environment. His offense was really limited by his lack of pre-shot deception and creativity. The unwillingness to make a move and risk giving up the shot location that's available despite being lower danger leads to wasted chances, and there were a lot of wasted chances from him. All of his playmaking was coming from behind the net, passing across his body to fool the defender on him and sliding passes into the slot. Outside of that, he was basically just connecting plays, not really trying much. His motor was still very visible.

Lassi Alanen: November 3rd, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. HC Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk - VHL

Pretty typical Mukhanov viewing. His motor not only makes him an effective off-puck player but also a dangerous threat off the rush. Knew how to pick his routes and make himself available for breakout passes through the middle. There's mainly two things he does off the rush with the puck: either advances to the hashmarks before shooting or delays and looks for a potential trailer or starts a cycle. If he had a better shot and the ability to curl-and-drag pucks past the defenders, he could have quite a few goals at this level already. Playmaking likely projects as at least slightly above-average. You could make a case for an A grade, to be honest. Might be more of an early second-rounder still, but things are trending in the right direction.

David St-Louis: October 30th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Neftyanik - VHL

I'm a big fan. Yes, Mukhanov is 5'8", but he has the physical skills. He can hold on much older opponents on his back, spin off of them, and push pucks to teammates into space. He's first on every loose puck, establishes body positioning, uses his skates to free them from scrums...Off the rush, he switches lanes, changes speed, delays, and manipulates to connect with teammates. He's always passing, always looking to build scoring chances, not forcing much. He has off-puck instincts, moves well to support plays...Honestly, I can't find many weaknesses in his game. His profile doesn't scream A-level prospect, but all my viewings point toward such a grade. We'll see.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. HC Izhstal Izhevsk - VHL

There was one really, really nice sequence in this one. Mukhanov was receiving a loose puck near the boards and threatened the incoming pressuring player with a fake slap shot, which worked and ended up giving him space to get established. He then

continued by cutting inside on that same defender, drawing in another player before dishing a pass through him for a high-danger scoring chance. It was nice to see more adaptability from Mukhanov with the puck. He still somewhat leaves value to the table by shooting off the rush with a below-average release, but it wasn't as big of an issue here.

Dylan Griffing: October 24th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Toros Neftekamsk - VHL

Just another solid performance from Mukhanov. Turning NZ puck battles into OZ entries, devouring up loose pucks, and, again, overall working so hard to be effective. Maybe not the cleanest game from an offensive standpoint. He's starting to get a little too shot heavy and not deceiving defenders beforehand, so really just racking up blocked shots and softies right now, but he's getting into good positions to be shooting more than I've seen previously. Made some nifty passes as well to start attacks from the DZ and to finish them with high value plays in the attacking zone. He's slowly becoming more and more comfortable in this league, still lacks the confidence and opportunities to really pull off high level plays, but the effectiveness is clear as day.

Lassi Alanen: October 24th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Toros Neftekamsk - VHL

A pretty quiet start to the game for Mukhanov, spending a lot of time in the DZ. Things picked up eventually, though, and he ended both setting up a couple of scoring chances and getting a few looks of his own. He can adapt and react quickly to changing situations with his passing, being able to advance the puck in transition when quickly pressured or capitalize on an OZ passing play when the lane suddenly opens. Some of his rushes are pretty predictable, though. A few times he entered the zone with speed and could've probably faked a shot and tried to beat the defender outside, but decided to blast the puck to the defenders' shins instead. High, high work rate both with and without the puck, bringing quite a bit of defensive value just by applying pressure and having enough physical skills despite his small frame.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. HK Tambov - VHL

Mukhanov turned on the grind mode for this one. He was all over the ice, hustling hard on the backcheck and applied a ton of pressure. He prevented entries by taking the extra stride and always engaging both with his stick and physically. There were quite a few scoring chances that resulted from his work ethic, whether it was from stopping a rush and turning on the jets for a counter-attack or intercepting a pass or forechecking the puck in the OZ. It's always hard to judge the skating of these small players with high stride frequency, but I'd be comfortable with projecting it at least slightly above-average. There were a few handling mistakes along the boards and some of his passing plays could've used a better setup.

Dylan Griffing: October 16th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. HK Tambov - VHL

There's something really satisfying about watching a player really working to earn a spot on a team and that's exactly what Mukhanov is doing. His hard work was rewarded with his first professional goal in this one. He's such a pest, chasing down puck carriers, covering passing lanes, and scooping up loose pucks with pace. He just pops up everywhere and makes good things happen. Creative passing to escape danger, but it seems his hands are limiting him right now. Struggled to escape the walls and was typically resorting to resetting the puck to the point if he didn't get knocked off the puck right away. Would like to see more unpredictability on his rushes. Sticking to the outside lane and skating in a straight line too much. Handles pressure really well despite the limitations in place. While he still tries to rush plays or do everything while skating fast, he doesn't panic when he's face to face with pressure, making some sweet passes to keep rushes alive. His shot is below average, struggled to shoot off the rush and his goal was kinda flukey, but he's getting into good shooting positions and taking valuable shots. Had one nice move where he delayed the shot to open the lane more, but his mechanics are a work in progress.

Dylan Griffing: October 14th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Khimik Voskresensk - VHL

VHL debut. Mukhanov is tiny, but it was hard to not notice him buzzing around the ice. The motor is a dangerous tool and his willingness to attack on the defensive side of things was so impressive. He was making great reads, using his pace, and breaking a ton of plays up. That work rate is going to take him a long way into earning a spot on this team. On the puck, there were flashes of things that are going to work well for him moving forward and definitely things he needs to work on. His hold-up play was pretty strong, using practical skill moves to cradle the puck into areas where he could then make a pass out of

a pressure situation. Mistakes came through his decision making in these scenarios, just not really using the time he creates for himself to scan thoroughly enough to find the right pass, but there were certainly good passes in there, as well. Skating up the ice, he wasn't very deceptive and was skating into traffic. His hands are fine enough to maybe work his way out of those spots in the MHL, but the physicality difference between him and VHL defenders makes his life very tough. Like other draft eligibles making their debuts in the VHL or KHL, it's all about breaking out of habits. The off-puck play is really a great start for Mukhanov, he just needs to work on slowing down and making the right play rather than the first play.

David St-Louis: October 11th, 2022 - Loko vs Omskie Yastreby - MHL

I've ever seen an MHL player want to use his teammates as much as Mukhamov. Every puck, he moved within one second to someone else, most of the time smartly advancing the play. Of course, he didn't get many of the pucks he sent to teammates back, but he did the maximum he could. He supported the plays of teammates well after. Mukhamov plays with pace, is clearly an above-average skating and technical passer, he can manipulate defenders by using his speed and feints on the powerplay, and he seems to know his next option. He can also delay, slow down, attract defenders on himself to make plays to incoming teammates. Good sense of timing and anticipation. He also some forced some plays and passed without scanning some other times. He could gain to be a bit more selfish in certain situations. He got knocked off the puck and didn't help defensively in situations where he could. I'm not sure he's an A, but he has tools and signs of above-average play-reading abilities. Interesting.

Dylan Griffing: October 10th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Another really, really good performance from Mukhanov. So dynamic and creative, incredible on his pass receptions, and creates so many chances through his passing and stickhandling. One of the most talented players in the MHL right now and the fact that he's so skilled but also so intelligent is really impressive. He knows his limits and utilizes his teammates before trying to make an over the top play and it results in more valuable chances being created. This could be a player who finishes in the second round range for our rankings if he keeps this up.

Lassi Alanen: September 20th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Avto Yekaterinburg - MHL

Mukhanov plays with a ton of pace and has a clear skating advantage at this level. Went through the neutral zone multiple times with ease. One particularly impressive sequence saw him breaking out near the boards, then cutting to the middle and splitting the defence for an entry, then delaying along the boards before dishing a beautiful backhand saucer to the inside. Unfortunately the recipient botched what should've been a guaranteed high-danger chance. Tends to handle in front of his body. Got shut down a few times along the boards for too many cutback attempts and not having much strength. Enjoyed his defensive presence, too, particularly on the backcheck.

Dylan Griffing: September 20th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Avto Yekaterinburg - MHL

I'm becoming a pretty big Mukhanov fan. So many excellent playmaking qualities, plays with high pace, and good hands. This whole Omsk team is a ton of fun and he is one of the highest quality players on it. Finally playing with some better linemates and he's able to execute a lot more plays successfully. He's always looking to attack the inside with his passing, but he also showed off a bit more of his shot, scoring his third goal of the year. The biggest area of concern with him right now is that he has a tendency to handle the puck far away from his body, something that we saw with Gleb Trikozov last year, and it makes him susceptible to getting it knocked away. His defense isn't anything really to note, but he did make a nice play to apply back pressure and come away with possession. He just followed it up with holding the puck too long and almost scoring an own goal.

Dylan Griffing: September 10th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Tolpar Ufa - MHL

I was hooked when he made three high danger passes in a row and attempted a Michigan right after in one of his first shifts. This is an incredibly dynamic, playmaking winger, brings skill and intelligence, and chips in defensively as well. So really, a lot to like. He makes really quick scans and used a combination of touch passes and great patience to make his playmaking really unpredictable for the defense. He's one of those junior players that is a lot smarter than his teammates, so at times it does feel like his skill is being wasted by his linemates forcing the puck back to him or have just the weirdest rush patterns ever. Picked up a goal late on, but his shot isn't really that much of a weapon.



Grade: B

58 Beckett Hendrickson

AGE 17.227 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 24, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Alex Wennberg



Vision



Hockey IQ



Raw Talent

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	52	13	21	34	0.65
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	21	7	9	16	0.76
USA U18	WJC-18	7	0	2	2	0.29

SCOUTING REPORT

Every draft cycle, a handful of prospects immediately outplay their draft spot. Often, it's not the consequence of sudden development; it's that they were finally given the opportunity to shine. Beckett Hendrickson will be one of those players.

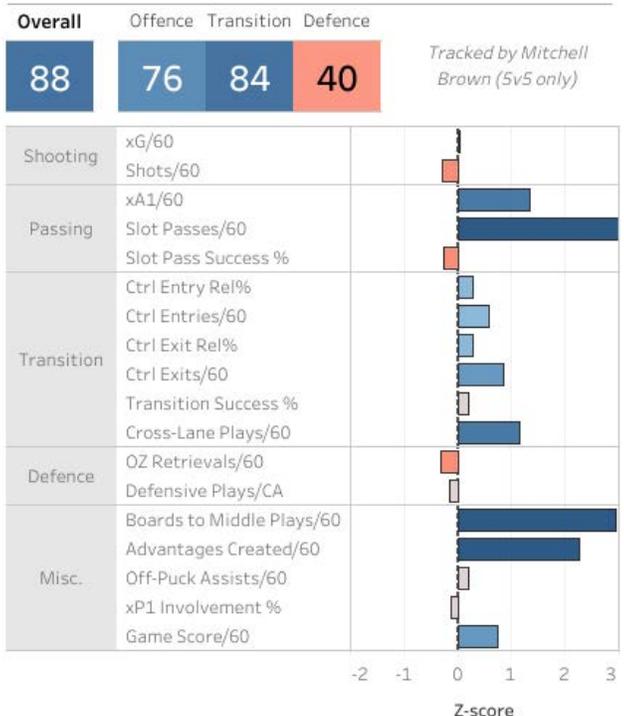
Hendrickson's one of the most skilled passers in the draft, with an arsenal of dishes matching the best players on the Program. He hooks pucks around sticks, slips them under, and sauces them over sticks with no wind up, even off the backhand. But he doesn't just take open lanes; he creates them with multiple layers of deception. He slows down and angles away from his eventual target, baiting the defender. The second they pivot or reach, he passes.

The combination of passing skill and lane creation appear in all three zones, in all situations. He goes cross-ice on breakouts, guides teammates into space off zone entries, and sets up chances down low after winning the battle – in all three situations, he's creating favourable positions for his teammates.

But there are concerns, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown details, "If he doesn't have a passing option, his game crumbles. He just glides ahead with the puck, waiting for a defender to close on him. Sometimes, it creates times for his teammates to catch up and he finds them. Mostly, he gets pushed

Beckett Hendrickson

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 129.8



off the puck without much issue. Often, it seems like he lacks the handling skill, shot, or skating to create in ways other than passing.”

Late in the season, Hendrickson began to challenge the specialist label. In flashes, he showcased an NHL shot complemented with a knack for arriving in space just as the puck arrives. Handling skill appears, too. Board skills through a combination of body positioning, reverse hits, and quick plays off the boards suggested there’s a power forward element to his game.

As such, there are many ways for Hendrickson’s game to go from here. We project him as a power-playmaker, creating with deft passes off the rush and down-low skill, perhaps on a third line. To get there, he must improve his outside edges, especially his cutbacks and turns. He’s committed to the Minnesota Golden Gophers, but a quick stop with the Sioux Falls Stampede for a full USHL season could benefit his game.

∩ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships



Scout's Notebook: The top prospects from the USNTDP

∩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“He’ll be late in the draft, like the third or fourth round. He’s an honest two-way player, penalty killer, blocks shots, good on the forecheck, works to get back – just a solid north-south guy. Any kind of scoring is a bonus.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

∩ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Same as Nelson. You only see flashes from Hendrickson and it’s all about projecting those flashes, as he doesn’t play as much as the top guys and rarely gets the puck in very favourable circumstances. You have to look for him. He also has power forward elements, physical skills that blend with handling ones. He can protect pucks, extend offensive zone possession, and find teammates from the walls.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - WJ18

I’m starting to see it with Hendrickson. His skills only appear in flashes, but he does make good decisions with the puck. He battles on the walls to get out with the puck, passes well, attempts give-and-goes, and finds teammates with regularity. He has some dangling moves. He’s not as impressive as some of his teammates, but there are NHL-caliber elements there.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

I saw a bit more of Hendrickson in this game as things got out of hand, and I thought he played really well in those minutes. I’m not sure about the forward stride, but he was evasive on his edges in this game. Had one particularly interesting passing play on an entry, repelling a defender trying to pressure him off the puck, and then hitting his trailing linemate with a hook pass. Just an

intelligent, skilled player. Looks like a pick to me.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Hendrickson had a couple of flashes, but struggled managing pressure. Opponents kept him to the outside and he never tried for the middle. If he doesn't have a passing option, his game crumbles. He glides ahead with the puck, waiting for a defender to close on him. Sometimes, it creates times for his teammates to catch up and he finds them. Mostly, he gets pushed off the puck without much issue. Often, it seems like he lacks the handling skill, shot, or skating to create in ways other than passing. Not a draftable game, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

If I didn't have priors baked in, I'd have left this game thinking Hendrickson was the top prospect in this group. What a game. The passing skill is surely among the best of the draft eligibles in North America. Expansive arsenal: backhand passes off the boards, delays into look-off cross-slot dishes (as he did for a his shorthanded primary), one-touch passes off the rush, spinning hook passes, and slip passes just as the defender reaches in. He does these in all three zones, all situations. He also shows more than just the passing. He showed an NHL one-timer for a goal, hit a moving deflection in front, even looked off a teammate to fire. Lots of physical skills, making quick plays off the boards, combining puck protection with handling, and cutting through the hands. Defensive value with well-timed pokes and proactive off-puck positioning, and he knew the next play immediately. Late in the game, he blocked a shot, then went end-to-end, deking through two opponents, setting up the first at an angle, then walking the line and beating the next defender into space. So, maybe he's not just a specialist. This was a first-round game, even if some of the plays didn't connect and the skating's still a below-average projection.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Hendrickson played with Moore and Eiserman. The highs were right up there with the top players in this game. He faked and delayed before passing. The timing on most of his deliveries was perfect. He waits the extra split-second for pressure to arrive but also looks for the early pass to let his target walk into space. Uses hook, slip, and backhand passes, under pressure and layered with deception. Showed more shooting and scoring instincts than usual. He popped into space at the right moments, walked off the boards under pressure for shots, and nearly scored with a redirection between his legs. The game also showed the flaws – the upright stride, lack of edge development, and lack of strength. All of those are connected – they will improve. Right now, those mean his only solution to pressure is passing. Often, it seems like he has no other skill. The 6-to-7 grade passing means he's making our board, but he's a specialist who will require a lot of time.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Hendrickson showed the usual passing skill and vision, but only a couple of plays connected. He followed up a loose puck, deked with the pass reception, then went look-off cross-slot for a chance. A couple of other plays where he manipulated defenders showcased his planning, but it's always in a glide and the subsequent pass didn't connect. The best attempt was one where he reached out, got the poke, pulled the puck back in, and cut inside. Shot looked significantly below-average. Little power and doesn't use his lower body in the shot. Brought the usual defensive value and he's a smart passer in transition. Looked like a late-second in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The usual from Hendrickson. He can pass. He gained the zone, then made the early entry pass off the backhand for a chance – a great read to bypass a footrace. On breakouts, he delays and looks for controlled plays through opponents. The most impressive play, he turned on the pass reception to absorb a hit, waited for Cleveland to get above him, then passed into space for the clean exit. He's overmatched physically at times and the skating has the classic strength-related weaknesses. But he's smart and works hard. Still like him as an early-third. Lots of runway and a clear NHL skill.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Hendrickson isn't a huge part of the NTDP's transition game, but he should be. He makes smart, intelligent play-building passes. The stride's weak with highly variable depth, which might explain why he's always looking to pass. He connects off the backhand, through pressure, and around the sticks off opponents. He identifies lanes quickly and doesn't give away his intentions. Intelligent off-puck play, sneaking away behind or between defenders to get open. He could be a late-second. Seems like a lot of improvement will come with physical development.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Alright, you have my attention. It's earned after a performance like this one. Hendrickson was the clear play-driver on USA's third line, forcing the opposition into mistakes on offensive zone retrievals, operating as their primary puck carrier in transition, and just generally working his tail off. His motor runs high. The skill level seemed to match it too, if only for this match. Hendrickson showed some craftiness as a handler on more than one occasion, easily outmanoeuvring his opponents. Picked up a goal leading a 2-on-1 rush by holding the defenceman and the goaltender, looking pass before sending a laser of a shot into the back of the net. Could be a mid-round bet.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Hendrickson's a bit outmatched physically sometimes, but it didn't matter much. He knows when to move the puck, when to skate, and when to delay. Lots of crafty plays off the boards, connecting with opponent teammates building speed up the middle or planted in the slot. Along the boards, he drew pressure before cutting back then passed. Defensive value, too. He supported down low, cut off the top, and anticipated plays along the boards. Looks like a player who could take off in the second half. Lots of projectable reads.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

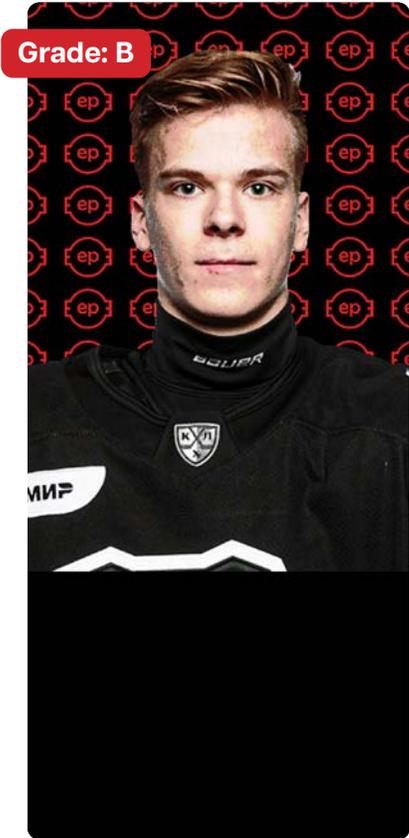
Big game from Hendrickson. He was feeling it on the forecheck steal. He ripped possession away from opponents, then went straight to the net for a pair of chances. A late-game steal led to a chance; he delayed just long enough to wait for his teammate to pop into space then connected. Showed vision and timing there. He's not deceptive and didn't show much handling skill, but he was an effective off-puck player. He moved to the net-front at the right moments and provided screens. Could be a mid-rounder depending on the tools.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another impressive game from Hendrickson. He took a pass behind, knocked it in front, drew the defender towards him, then passed to the teammate arriving in the next wave for a high-danger look. Deceptive, patience, planning. Vision and playmaking were consistent themes of his game, whether he was starting the breakout or getting pucks off the boards. The skating's variable in depth and form, and he doesn't show much in motion skill. Didn't get out there much, but I'm excited to see more.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Hendrickson played most of the game with Perreault and Smith and didn't disappoint. Sure, it wasn't a dynamic performance but there's a ton of playmaking ability here. He set up three scoring chances, including a backdoor cross-crease look for Smith. He deceived opponents, albeit only in a glide. He arrived in space at the right moment for a rebound chance. He takes intelligent routes across the ice to get open while staying in the middle of the play. Skating isn't a strength, so he delays and works the lateral passing game to hit teammates. And he was a consistent presence on the defensive end. Curious to see more. He looked like a potential second-rounder, not too unlike Devin Kaplan from last season.



Grade: B

59 Alexander Rykov

AGE 17.173 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Vladislav Namestnikov



Motor



Versatile

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	170 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6 Skating	5 Shooting	5.5 Passing
5.5 Puckhandling	5.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Traktor Chelyabinsk	KHL	6	0	0	0	0.00
Chelmet Chelyabinsk	VHL	20	4	7	11	0.55
Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk	MHL	3	0	2	2	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

If someone asked us to identify the biggest wildcard in the draft, Alexander Rykov would make the shortlist.

Rykov rapidly established himself as a top talent in the 2023 NHL Draft with his early-season play in the VHL. While most prospects of his age were stuck developing in the MHL, he was honing his diverse skill set against professionals. He gradually earned more 5-on-5 and power play ice-time as he proved himself worthy of the calibre of play.

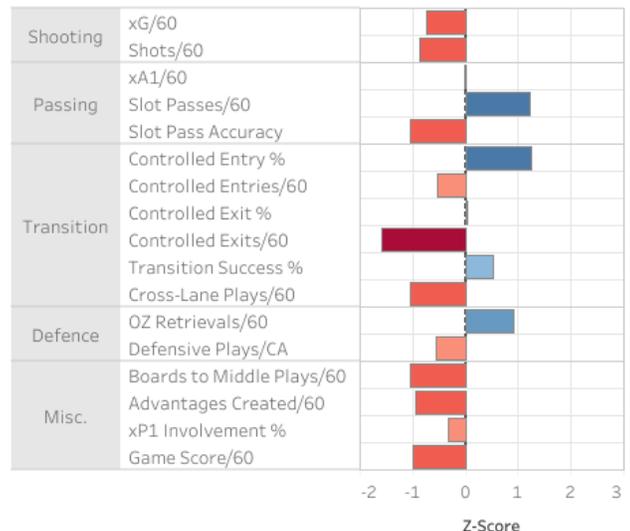
“Rykov started this game off incredibly well,” our Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a December report. “The confidence he’s gained with the puck has been amazing to see, it is hard to believe that he is the youngest player in the league because he is playing like a regular. The small-area game is great, bringing pressure to himself to make a pass or make a quick turn to accelerate out of danger.”

But then, for reasons unknown – probably an injury – Rykov’s season was cut short. He only played one game in the second half of the season, and he only touched the ice for a total of two minutes.

Still, even if we didn’t get to see his evolution in the second half, we kept Rykov in the first two rounds of our board. His prolonged absence didn’t erase his potential; it just hid it for a time.

Alexander Rykov

F | Chelmet Chelyabinsk | VHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 138.3
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



The Russian winger received above-average grades for his tools almost across the board from our staff. Agile and deceptive, Rykov can turn on a dime and contort his body to shift around opponents off the rush. He moves and passes with purpose; he draws defenders to him with lateral cuts and then drops the puck to teammates inside space. He always seems to know his next open option.

On top of his rush skills, he also possesses small-area abilities. He can shield the puck on the walls with a combination of edge and stickhandling work and slip the puck through defenders to teammates in the middle of the offensive zone before repositioning to support the next play.

Add his solid defensive game to his large skill foundation and you've got a player who has a high chance of playing in the NHL. Before his injury, we saw enough progress in his playmaking in the VHL to project him to a middle-six role, but as we didn't get to confirm those improvements in the second half of the season, his upside remains unclear at this stage.

Still, because of his numerous qualities, strong performance in a professional league, and young age – Rykov was born in July – he represents a sound gamble in the second round of the draft.

✧ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He works hard and reads the game well, but he's not that creative with the puck. I'm not sure he's dynamic or shifty enough." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

✧ GAME REPORTS

Dylan Griffing: January 13th, 2023 - Traktor Chelyabinsk vs. Spartak Moskva - KHL

Nothing mindblowing here, Rykov was just a pretty solid, complementary player in his limited minutes. Showed off his puck protection ability in high-pressure situations and passed the puck crisply. Hard work on the forecheck and in battles, as well. Outside of that, not much else of note – no scoring chances or big playmaking flashes, most of his touches ended in simple passes and no inside driven attacks.

Lassi Alanen: December 27th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. HC Rostov - VHL

Pretty much in line with my previous viewings of Rykov. The tools remain solid across the board aside from the lack of finishing talent. The skating projection is at least slightly above-average and the technical handling and passing skills are projectable, too. Made a couple of really nice plays with the puck, one of them being a really nice give-and-go sequence in the third period to set up a high-danger chance. His instincts for connecting plays like that are impressive, even if he's not churning scoring chances at a high rate at this level and in this environment. There were frustrating moments where his teammates wouldn't pass him the puck and missed other opportunities. Looks like an early second-rounder to me.

Dylan Griffing: December 27th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. HC Rostov - VHL

Rykov started this game off incredibly well. The confidence he's gained with the puck has been amazing to see, it is hard to believe that he is the youngest player in the league because he is playing like a regular. The small-area game is great, bringing pressure to himself to make a pass or make a quick turn to accelerate out of danger. He had one really nice example of this, bringing three(!) forecheckers to him before sending a pass to a teammate in the NZ to set up a 2-on-2. He slowed down in the 2nd period, but he picked it back up in the 3rd, becoming more dangerous in the OZ and setting up a very nice scoring chance through a combination of passing and off-puck movement. I think he could very well end up a top-25 player on our board.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. HC Zauralie Kurgan - VHL

Some impressive stuff yet again from Rykov. Added a primary helper after getting into an odd-man situation, delaying slightly

and then dishing the puck to the middle for a goal. The playmaking/passing skill remains intriguing. He tends to force plays occasionally and overpass when there are better options in front of him, but he also connects plays well and acts as a reliable link and glue on his line. Remains projectable from a mechanical standpoint. Could he become a middle-six contributor who can add value on both sides of the puck? It's possible and those players are always valuable.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. HC Zauralie Kurgan - VHL

A great performance. Rykov skates a bit like Alexander Romanov, in a very low stance. It means that his edges are always loaded; he can turn on a dime and contort his body to move through and around opponents. There isn't really anything missing in his game. He rotates well, scans, makes the right plays (for the most part) and he shows some legitimate small-area abilities to retain and move possession (puck protection skills, technical passing ability, awareness...). He's also manipulative -- to an extent. He prepares some plays really well, like the lateral cut and delay in the OT period to give his teammate a wide open lane to enter the zone and score, but he also forces other plays. Tools + good habits + improving playmaking and the scoring potential we already noted...He might play in the VHL, but usually these things are worth a lot at the draft. We might have to look into moving him up.

Dylan Griffing: December 14th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Gornyak-UGMK - VHL

First multi-goal game at this level for Rykov with an assist thrown in there as well, another awesome game for him. Feeling more and more confident calling him a legit first round talent. He's fully adjusted to the league now, the hands are no longer an issue, way more confident, and still providing value on defense. His ability to draw penalties is also standing out, seems like he's drawing at least one in every viewing I've had this season. As he continues to add more skill and dynamic movement with possession, he's becoming harder to stop. His two goals were both amazing, first one was a snipe on the power play and the second was a solo-rush from center ice, cutting across the net, and tucking it in. Never seen him try a move like that, but he looked so comfortable pulling it off. The offensive upside was a worry at the start of the year, but the dual-threat potential is there. Add in the two-way game, this is my kind of player.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Gornyak-UGMK - VHL

I see Rykov mostly as a utility middle-six guy in the NHL, a connector of sort, who plays effective defence, rotates well, wins pucks on the boards, finds the next play, and contributes offensively with some playmaking and his scoring touch. I don't think the skill-set or the instinct is top-six caliber, but playing in the VHL can hide some abilities from prospects. What's missing right now: a bigger desire to take charge, better off-puck instincts to reposition after a pass, more manipulation, more speed/pace (although the skating projects well)...We'll see. The two goals he scored with his shot were nice.

Lassi Alanen: December 6th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Khimik Voskresensk - VHL

Strong, strong showing from Rykov here, especially compared to the previous one. The tools continue to look projectable, and while he still didn't get the puck all the time, he made the most with almost every touch he got. Some excellent passing highlights, including rush delays into cross-ice feeds and crafty small-area passing plays to extend play. He can pass with pace and advances the game well in transition. Then there was one play where he had the patience to bait out a defender and beat him to the inside with a fake shot for an even better scoring chance. Not sure about the finishing touch, the playmaking looks more projectable. In addition, he looked very solid defensively in this one, breaking up multiple plays in-zone and against the rush. Clearly smart, at least moderately skilled, good skater and plays the game in a projectable way.

Dylan Griffing: December 6th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Khimik Voskresensk - VHL

This was probably Rykov's best VHL game to date. His hands looked great, his passing was incredible, and the defense continues to impress. Would be a sure-fire A grade prospect if there was some finishing ability in his game. He had two big-time scoring chances and flubbed them both, one being a, literally, completely empty slot chance that he shot right at the goalie. The playmaking really stood out here, drawing defenders towards him and making crazy awesome decisions on what play to make next. Between the scoring chances and the passing plays, he could've had like four points, just creating so much dangerous

offense. More games like this in the future could definitely lead to him cementing a top-32 spot.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Dizel Penza - VHL

Hard to evaluate Rykov in a game like this. He only had a handful of puck touches at 5-on-5, and they were mostly in transition where he was often just clearing the zone. You can still see the solid mechanical base with the skating form and pace, but not much else. He wasn't able to get the puck in favourable spots, and I'm not sure how much blame you want to lay directly him for that. He did get to play quite a bit, around 16 minutes at even-strength alone.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Dizel Penza - VHL

Only a few puck touches for Rykov in this one. The tools are still really interesting, above-average for the most part. He plays with pace, forechecks with intensity, and pilots the half-wall well. He's mostly a shooter from the position, but he also shows passing ideas. It's hard to evaluate him at this level. The team gives him his share of minutes, but he rarely gets the puck in really advantageous situations.

Dylan Griffing: November 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

Not much happening here. Igor Chernyshov drove the bus on Rykov's line for the vast majority of the one. Smart plays, but not necessarily impactful ones. Tried some more advanced plays with his hands, but that's still a work in progress. Not his best outing of the year, that is for sure.

Lassi Alanen: November 2nd, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Zauralie Kurgan - VHL

Two really nice primary assists from Rykov here. First, he made a breakout pass to the middle that opened a lane for a breakaway. Second, he received a perfect stretch pass near the OZ blue line, got into 2v1 situation and threatened the puck across the ice for a one-timer goal. Rykov's work rate remained high throughout the game. He was always trying to make himself available off-puck, getting involved on retrievals and forechecking hard. Handling looks awkward at times, but didn't really affect him in this one. On the other hand, he can keep control of the puck in tight and make the occasional deke to beat a defender. Looks like a potential second-rounder to me.

Dylan Griffing: November 2nd, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Zauralie Kurgan - VHL

Two assists in his first game back from benchwarming with Traktor. It's hard to overlook the below-average puck skills, he's apt at making a simple move to get an extra second to work with, but he just isn't able to break out of danger individually and shuffles up and down the boards trying to escape. No denying how hard he works, though. Applying back pressure, getting physical, and disrupting plays. Wants to win every battle he enters, good at slipping out with the puck, but, again due to his lack of handling, it's hard for him to do much to continue the play. His passing was nice. His games are always clean, this one no different, really valuing his time with the puck to instigate attacks to the inside. It's going to be hard for Rykov to find a rhythm this season with this inconsistent playing time. Going from playing Silver Division MHL teams to sitting on the bench for an entire week to being back with Chelmet, it's like he has to re-find his footing every game he plays. The results are coming, still, and he's becoming more and more confident, but it would certainly be much easier for him if they would just stick him with one team – preferably Chelmet.

Dylan Griffing: October 22nd, 2022 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk - MHL

Rykov is stuck in a bit of a limbo situation right now, only playing home games for all three Chelyabinsk sides, so he's back with the MHL team (for now). Still certainly too good to be in this league. Another performance reminiscent of draft year Svechkov where most of his plays are connecting, but as soon as he tries more advanced plays, his teammates struggle to keep up and he has to re-simplify. Two primary assists, one was super sweet, showing off his hands, and slotting a pass across the slot and the other being a casual, one-touch bomb from the DZ blue line up to his streaking teammate. Just an overall good performance from him, making plays at both ends of the ice and making all attacks as dangerous as possible.

David St-Louis: October 22nd, 2022 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk - MHL

Rykov is great at making plays in traffic. His handling skills get him out of trouble, but he also has some puck protection abilities and a high awareness/anticipation of teammates. The sense grade is probably above average, considering he has also makes reasonably good decisions and shows adaptability. He has a solid skating posture (knees past toes, ankle flexion, good back angle...) and he handles the puck precisely -- underhanding, spotting the puck into space... Not sure where to slot him, but considering he has tools + habits + sense, he could be a top-32 guy, even if it's all based on flashes.

David St-Louis: October 20th, 2022 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. MHK Molot - MHL

Rykov continues to flash some high-end abilities, like on his net-drive, where he accelerated past the defender, spotted the puck under his stick, lifted that stick, and then drove straight at the goalie. He mixed both soft and hard skills on that sequence. He can cleanly pick up rims, spin off the board with them, find teammates while under pressure...It's hard to judge a player based on so few minutes and only two or three flashes, but I'm interested.

David St-Louis: October 12th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Bars Kazan - VHL

We didn't get to see much of Rykov's offence, but he has good pro habits. He rotates well, scans on defence, is physically engaged...He can protect pucks, find teammates while under pressure, and his skating looks like a potentially above-average grade. I liked the inside attacks; he definitely looked to take the puck toward high-danger areas.

Lassi Alanen: October 12th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Bars Kazan - VHL

A pretty nice outing from Rykov here. His playmaking is a bit inconsistent in terms of execution. I don't think he's particularly manipulative or deceptive; adding one of those elements would greatly increase his success rate. But he does have some great moments of inside play. There was one very good sharp cut to the middle that ended up resulting in a tripping penalty and a scoring chance. Can access his outside edges effectively. Skating remains projectable, and he's got a lot of good off-puck habits. Some of the rush patterns are a bit easy to defend.

Dylan Griffing: October 8th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. AKM Novomoskovsk - VHL

Rykov returned to VHL action to face AKM. What really stands out about him is his work ethic. This is a player who is clearly working his butt off to stay in this league, making plays all over the ice, keeping his motor running, while keeping his brand of hockey going. His head is always on a swivel in the defensive zone, making constant reads allowing him to know what's going on at all times. Reaction time is really fast, as well, so he can read the play and make a move on it if the opportunity is there in the blink of an eye. This was really apparent when AKM would wheel the puck around the boards, he's just so quick to react to that and get over there and try to move the puck out. Offensively, not too much was happening in this one. He had a nice chip pass on a 2-on-1 that didn't quite catch his teammate's stick and he showed more confidence stickhandling, which was good to see, but still the skill area of his game is the weakest.

Dylan Griffing: September 21st, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Dinamo St. Petersburg - VHL

First VHL goal in the books and he played a solid game here. I'm flip flopping on him over and over, but I think there's a pretty good player here. It's still just the skill holding him back and that's something that really is improvable upon. He's already very intelligent and mobile, so if he can get the hands to catch up to the rest of his toolset, he will have a much easier time controlling his offensive game. That said, he already looks much more comfortable trying things at this level. He pulled off a couple nice moves to open up operation space, including one that led to his goal. Again, the defensive game is so impressive for a player of his age. Reads the ice so well, picks his spots appropriately, and looks to turn play the other way quickly with his passing and skating ability.

Lassi Alanen: September 19th, 2022 - SKA Neva St. Petersburg - Chelmet Chelyabinsk - VHL

Rykov had some good moments here. The skating stride looked projectable: a lot of ankle flexion, deep knee bend, pretty consistent upper-body, proper extensions and recoveries. Was able to find separation when he needed to. He overhanded the puck a few times off the rush when he could've just pushed it into space or keep it on his backhand and then drop his shoulder and drive the net. Moments of good vision, was able to thread passes to the middle off the boards. Read the play off-puck pretty well overall. Interesting player.

Dylan Griffing: September 15th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk - VHL

VHL debut for Rykov, he did fine. I'm starting to feel like I do like this player too much and the upside is going to be heavily limited by his hands. Regardless, the defensive game looks like it's translating just fine to the higher level. He reads the ice so well, reacts quickly, sticks to his guy on rushes to the net, and has an active stick to break plays up. Physicality is not an issue at all in this league, he literally tried to kill a guy with a hip check at one point. With the puck, he didn't do all too much. Mostly just connecting plays rather than driving any offense. It is his first game in this league, so maybe the offense will come with time and he just wasn't able to show much off yet.

Dylan Griffing: September 6th, 2022 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. Tolpar Ufa - MHL

First game of the year for Rykov and he played pretty well. I really enjoy his defensive game, while this was a lot of back-and-forth, he was still able to establish good positioning and use his long reach to snatch passes and get the play going the other direction. Threw a pretty mean hit, as well. His passing is his strongest asset on offense, but he unleashed his shot a few times and he has a pretty nice wrister. The skill and dynamic play is where the issues still arise. He was a big fan of the classic 'spin back along the boards over and over and hope the defender just goes away', which, to his credit, worked once and he was able to move to the inside where he, then, lost the puck. But trying that move over and over is just silly and isn't generating anything. His hands while skating with pace looked better than last year, but he still lacks the dynamic skill to really make use of it.

Dylan Griffing: July 28th, 2022 - Chelmet Chelyabinsk vs. Rubin Tyumen - Friendly

Rykov was flying around. Looks faster and stronger than last season, but the skill issues are still issues. He is not dynamic at all, really struggles to beat defenders, and was playing way too fast for his own good. He did make some nice plays with the puck, his hands in tight are good and he is a smart passer, the pace in which he was playing was really holding him back the most. Defensively, he was solid again. Guy is a hound for the puck and uses his footspeed accordingly. For his first VHL experience, he did fine.

Dylan Griffing: February 22nd, 2022 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Another strong outing for Rykov and he's really shaping up to becoming a first round player in my eyes. The main concern I have is his rush offense and, this may be because of a lack of skill and deception with pace, he is always thinking backwards. The use of drop passes to escape danger is fine here and there, but the amount of times he entered the zone with a head of steam just to lay it off to a teammate behind him was worrying. Outside of that, there was flashes of everything in his repertoire. The forechecking ability, zone defense, small area skill, and playmaking tendencies were all on display. It's certainly a rarity to see a player of his age playing the responsible game he does in this league, reminiscent of Fyodor Svechkov.

Dylan Griffing: December 26th, 2021 - Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Here's an interesting two-way player. Rykov is one of the smartest non draft eligible players I've seen in the MHL with his defense and problem-solving tendencies guiding him to be quite the talent. His ability to escape pressure in tight, draw defenders towards him, and make simple handles make him tough to wrap up with the puck. There's issues with his puckhandling with pace, but I'm not too concerned with that yet. Shot is pretty nice – powerful and a quick release. Reads the ice and actively makes plays off the puck, both on the backcheck and forecheck.



Grade: B

60 Anton Wahlberg

AGE 17.200 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Lawson Crouse



Raw Talent



Fleet of Foot



Ankle Breaker

Player Info

C/LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Malmö Redhawks J18	J18 Region	3	1	3	4	1.33
Malmö Redhawks J20	J20 Nationell	32	14	13	27	0.84
Malmö Redhawks	SHL	17	2	2	4	0.24
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	3	3	6	0.86
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	14	7	3	10	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

Anton Wahlberg had some of the best highlights out of any player in the J20 Nationell last season. There were multiple end-to-end rushes where he outplayed entire defensive schemes with his speed and skill before leaving the netminder helpless with a quick release.

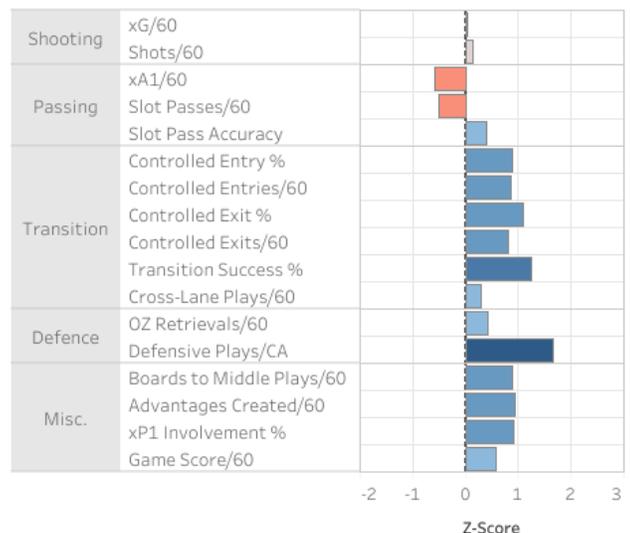
He was an offensive dynamo for the low-scoring Malmö Redhawks' J20 squad and started to earn solid minutes with the SHL team during spring.

When it comes to individual tools, Wahlberg's skating got mixed reviews from our staff throughout the season. When he reached his full gear and got to attack with speed through the neutral zone, he looked unstoppable from time to time. On the other hand, his agility and small-area manoeuvrability weren't nearly at the same level. His stride got a lot heavier late in shifts and games, perhaps pointing to some issues with conditioning, although he also played a ton at the J20 level. In the end, we settled on an average projection, given he did already show some improvements throughout the season.

Creating the occasional chance from an end-to-end rush can be in the cards for Wahlberg at the next level, but the main chunk of the offence will have to come in other ways. At least some of the answers seemed to be in his game already. While he's prone to overhanding, his skill should serve him well in longer in-zone sequences where he can work the boards, use his size and reach to protect the puck and look for a lane to the inside. He had the occasional flash of higher-end playmaking, too, although he was

Anton Wahlberg

F | Malmö Redhawks J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 187.2
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



mostly a solo creator in the juniors.

Even if Wahlberg's offence doesn't take off at the next level, he's still got a solid backup plan as a power forward who can use his reach and skating to backcheck and break up plays defensively while carrying the puck in transition and using his strengths to extend cycles and complement his linemates.

The physical tools could be seriously impressive, especially if Wahlberg keeps on refining his stride and becoming more agile in tight. He's raw, but the upside is worthy of a second-round pick.

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Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's Notebook: Three underrated Swedish forwards in the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I play with speed and am strong on the puck. A big and skilled forward." – Anton Wahlberg, April 2023

"He has many facets to his game and competes hard. He is smart, has a good hockey sense and an understanding of the game. He has so many elements to his game that it's hard to pinpoint just one. He's big, explosive and strong on the puck. He can take it himself, beat his man and put it top shelf, but he can also set up his teammates. He has played some games in the SHL with great success. What stands out about him is his technical skills combined with hard work" – Malmö J20 head coach Serhan Cicek, February 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

It was probably just a misevaluation and not really a significant improvement, but I really do feel like Wahlberg's skating is better now, closer to a 4.5 (slightly below-average as an NHL projection) than a 4 (significantly below-average). He carried pucks in transition, forechecked hard, won pucks, and then passed to teammates in the slot. He dangled through sticks to create openings for himself and rushed the net. A consistently dangerous presence in this game.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Wahlberg reminds me of Matthew Wood. A lite version. Same clunkiness at times and flashes of skills. Wahlberg isn't nearly as advanced as a playmaker, but he has surprising in-tight skills anyway. He scored from the middle of the defensive box in this one on the powerplay. His agility improved over the course of the year.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

There are always good moments with Wahlberg, but the all around pattern is that he has trouble reading time and space. He

can shrink space on his own with tunnel vision stick handling. He also seems to lose focus easily and have poor shifts more often than most prospects. But then there's the good stuff too. In this game he buried a one-time slapper top shelf on the power play. The body control, anticipation, timing, reach and power he shows in those sequences are very likeable. I could see a team take a chance on him earlier than he will be ranked. The selling point is that he will figure out the inconsistency and things fall together with his impressive physical tools.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

All-in-all not a strong game from Wahlberg. He had some good moments but also many bad looks. He was sloppy with the puck and in his checking game. He also took some bad penalties late in the game. For me, it's his hockey sense that's the issue. He has all the physical tools to dominate at this level. He had some plays where he just took the puck from the boards to the middle with winning the puck and having a scoring chance after just a few strides. On most occasions though, space just seems to shrink for him and he always plays on his first instinct and the play dies. He will need to learn how to manage space better.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Wahlberg continues to have these really great flashes of skill. He anticipated the play off the rush in this one, slowed down to accept a pass and fired on net. He kept pucks under pressure by using his frame and stickhandling skills. And he carried pucks inside from the wall. He has passing instinct and physical skills and flashes of hockey sense. Maybe he should be higher on our board. He's very raw at this stage, however.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Wahlberg had an okay game. He scored on a good shot and was involved offensively. I liked his in-zone board play on the attack, keeping possession and taking the puck to the middle. One problem he has had all season is finding consistent efforts and he lacked that in this game too. His checking game and activation on the forecheck was inconsistent. He either lacks the natural instincts or he just loses concentration. The play with the puck was inconsistent as well and he didn't drive much of the play. I like his speed and strength though. Covers the puck very well.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Sometimes, Wahlberg doesn't play quickly enough. He succumbs to pressure, but other times, he rapidly steals possession and feeds it to teammates in the slot. His forechecking game continues to be a plus in his projection and his handling skills show up from time to time. He scored off the rush in this one and picked up an assist on one of Stenberg's goals, again, with a rapid pass to the middle of the ice. Some intriguing elements in his game. I'm not sure he's going to be putting them all together this season, but it might happen over the next ones.

David St-Louis: March 25th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Some great and no so great moments from Wahlberg. His stature is both an advantage in terms of reach and puck protection and a disadvantage. He skates in one block, with limited agility and overall balance against open ice contact. At times, he took the puck toward traffic or didn't anticipate defenders coming onto him and other times, he caught the puck in a protective stance and quickly moved around the defensive pressure or moved the puck to a teammate. He drove inside, dangled, played the bumper position, and won some pucks on the walls. He's a very raw prospect with more skill than the average prospect in this draft, but it's important to consider the size as both an advantage and a limitation in his projection. He did not really take his game closer to a power forward role this season. You draft him for his tools and hope to see a lot of development.

Lassi Alanen: March 24th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

I still maintain my earlier notion that Wahlberg is greatly overused by the coaching staff (given his conditioning status) and it really shows in his game the time winds down. In the third period, he looked gassed a lot of time and his work rate slowed down significantly, even it has never been his strongest suit. He did break up plays against the rush and even had some solid

backchecking sequences, but they always came at a cost regarding the rest of the shift. The skating is a tough one to evaluate, since the top speed and even quickness are good to even very good, but the overall elusiveness and agility aren't on the same level. One can wonder how much the overusage shows in his skating, too. Leaning to an average grade at this moment. There were some skilled moments in transition, like delaying and passing to the middle on his backhand for an entry even after a long shift. One dangerous chance off the rush, but his 5-on-5 offence was pretty neutered in this one. The sense grade will be a hard one to give. I don't think he's that smart off-puck, but there are intelligent moments with it. You're still mostly betting on the tools with Wahlberg.

Cam Robinson: March 16th 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Brynäs IF - SHL

This was my first look at Wahlberg this season, and I've gotta say, I was impressed. He was highly competitive out there. He battled for space, he battled for pucks, he was relentless on the forecheck. Clearly, this is a player with good size and good speed. He kept his game simple with the puck, but was considerate without it. He lurked around for open spaces, he connected on the timing to receive, move and give it back. He even tallied an empty-netter. Really strong performance from the 17-year-old.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 16th 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Brynäs IF - SHL

This is the best game I have ever seen from Wahlberg. He was a forechecking beast! He played fast and physically. He won puck battles, drove break ups and connected on offence. He was awarded with an empty netter to secure a big win for his club. Last game, he got benched late for being a defensive risk. In this game he was used all the way and got to play to defend the lead when Brynäs pulled the goalie. He played on a line with veteran Carl Söderberg and they connected well. He filled in on open spots, had some good give-and-go situations. He backchecked relentlessly. He seeked the inside, got in front of the net. Wahlberg supported well but played more to instinct than with strategy.

All-in-all, Wahlberg has speed, size and competitiveness. He hasn't always competed hard in every viewing but this was a big event and really put out his best performance. This game showcased his upside. He handles the puck quite well (average) but isn't a driver that plans or manipulates. He is a power forward in the making.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 14th 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - SHL

Anton has earned a regular spot on the SHL team with strong play lately and this is the biggest game of the season. Anton is big and fast and uses that to his advantage. He has an attacking mindset. He goes to the net and tries to position himself in the best way to create a scoring chance. In a 3 on 2 offensive zone entry he slowed down his pace by skating further to the outside and got himself open to a cross pass. A small thing but it created space in the middle and a better chance for his team to score. He didn't have the puck a lot though and the touches he had weren't much to take notice of.

Defensively, Anton looks lost. He does not seem to understand how to position himself and becomes more of a watcher than a doer which makes him too passive. Late in the game, when Malmö was defending a lead, Anton got benched for the remainder of the game. To summarise, Anton can play a power forward role at this stage quite well already. He has the speed, the size and mentality to take action. That has draft value. In the long run, he needs to develop a better sense and awareness to be able to be consistent and the force he has potential to be. With size and speed he should be able to break up more plays.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

Wahlberg can truly hold on to a puck. He has the qualities needed to work the boards, extend possession, and create better offensive looks for his team. He's not a master of the cycling progression right now, but at 6'3" and with his handling skills, he could become really good at it. He improved over the season, too. His decision-making with the puck is a bit better. He's more efficient. I don't see him as a playmaker, but there are flashes.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18 Four Nations

Anton Wahlberg has a good stride for his size. He rushed the puck a couple of times and used the acquired momentum to cut

back against pressure and separate. He lacks technical refinement, but he could get there. He showed decent awareness of options and an ability to check, at times.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

The reservations about Wahlberg's game remain, yet he's also one of the lower-ranked players who has actual upside based on his tools. When he gets to attack with full speed off the rush, he's really hard one to defend. And he doesn't need that much time to get to that full speed, as his quickness is also quite impressive for a player his size. Scored another highlight-reel goal off the rush, coming down the wing, deking the defender under his stick, getting to the middle, baiting the goalie with the threat of the shot but pulled the puck to the backhand instead for an easy finish. He's also demonstrated more translatable ways of creating, too, passing and then using his skating and size to gain body positioning on the inside and make himself an option for a return pass. There's also some pretty encouraging playmaking moments. He just lacks finesse in a major way. He has probably messed up his pass reception in the scoring areas more than anyone I've watched this season. And the body language isn't hugely impressive. He does backcheck most of the time with solid intensity, but it comes and goes. He's seemingly got just a few modes, either going full speed or then giving up on plays and not being engaged defensively. Meaning he'll get stops when he's engaged, but also has big mental lapses when he's defending in-zone, not scanning and just drifting aimlessly. There could also be some condition issues. He's definitely a pick-worthy project, but one of the more raw ones.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg's skating is a real weapon off the rush. It seems like at least few times per game, he's able to use crossovers down the middle, get the puck, then outskate the defender via the outside lane, drop his shoulder and cut to the middle. Could've easily scored at least once with that move here. I don't think he'll maintain that skating advantage in the NHL, so it's not necessarily the most projectable way to get your chances, though. The handling is a bit puzzling. He's made some great 1-on-1 dekes, but also struggled with pass receptions in key moments in the slot. He's been in the right place at the right time a couple of times, showing better off-puck timing, but he'll need to catch-and-release those pucks to take advantage. There are clear translatability concerns, but also tools-based upside. And I think there's some playmaking skill, too.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 8th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Big game for Anton with two goals and a helper. One of the goals was a beautiful solo performance. Anton is a big centre with good wheels. He is a fast skater with a long stride. He is strong on his skates and covers the puck well. His game is a lot of puck travel though. He likes to come with speed and challenge the defence. He is good at deking close to his body and to take the puck to the inside. He lacks dynamic offensive tools and his offensive game is not translatable that way. He needs to play smarter to support the offence when he isn't the carrier. On the power play he is mostly stationed in the slot. He played big minutes and looked tired in his long shifts. In the defensive zone he had some shifts where he looked very tired. His speed and size makes him interesting for the draft but he needs to develop more dynamic to his offence and play smarter off the puck.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg is the king of scoring highlight reel goals from individual efforts. In this one, he went through the entire rink, combining deft and subtle handling with quick weight shifts to beat one man to gain the zone, then beat the second to the outside, cut to the middle and finished with a top-shelf shot from up close. He also had a few other cool sequences with the puck, showcasing his rather impressive quickness for a player his stature. Used it pass to the middle for an entry, then sprint to the inside himself, gain the inside track and receive the puck completely open in the net-front, only to fumble the deke to the backhand and not being able to get any sort of shot off. I am worried whether he's too reliant on pure 1-on-1 skills. He's not much of a defensive player either, looking pretty tired in his own end for large stretches of the game. Not the hardest work rate overall either.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs Sweden - WJAC

Wahlberg's skating in open ice is a bit clunky. His handling falls in rhythm with his strides, which makes him more predictable, and he loses a lot of speed when carrying across the neutral zone. He doesn't look like a skilled player in those situations. In

some ways, and it's a bit unusual, but he's a better as a reactive dangler in tight spaces than with a lot of open ice. In those situations, defenders see him coming and have time to adapt.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg added two points on the power play, redirecting a puck from the back post and getting a primary assist after another one of his tip-in attempts ended up in a rebound goal. The overhanding is a problem. He frequently gets in trouble, trying to be too cute with handling in front of the body off the rush. The occasional flash of skill just doesn't compensate for the turnovers. Another game where he broke up or intercepted a lot of plays in the DZ, but couldn't really start up attacks effectively. Doesn't really play a give-and-go game, whether it is because of the quality of teammates or something else. The skating output continues to look good, especially for a player his size. There's upside but a lot of uncertainty, too.

Lassi Alanen: November 2nd, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg is really apt at being at the right place at the right time in the DZ. He doesn't look like the most consistent defensive player, but still ends up intercepting quite a lot of plays in the NZ and DZ. He's got the reach and actually hustles pretty well to get close enough to pick pockets and get his stick in the way. Also makes him a solid forechecker. The on-puck play remains handling-focused. The sense doesn't seem like that high of a grade for me. Misses passing opportunities and doesn't have a proper delay game off the rush, it's either all about deking, driving outside or occasionally cutting inside.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

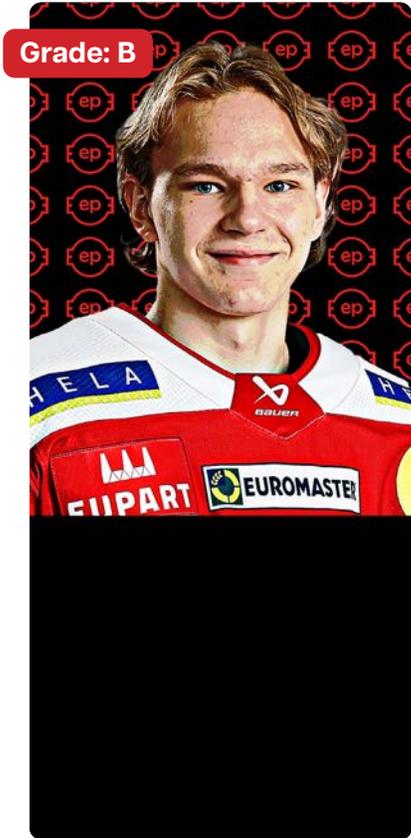
Pretty much in line with my previous Wahlberg viewings. There are some impressive flashes, but the overall execution and hockey sense are questionable. The handling is arguably slightly above-average. Completely embarrassed a defender off the rush, taking the puck between his legs before getting to scoring chance. There were a few nice defensive moments and he shows decent level of inside-drivenness. But some of the passing choices were just plain bad, not scanning beforehand and just throwing the puck towards the middle in the offensive zone. Stride lacks ankle flexion and the posture is upright, even if the output is slightly greater than the skating form. Haven't seen similar levels of off-puck instincts that I saw earlier in the season, mostly an on-puck creator here.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg flashed what he can do at his best, scoring twice. The first goal was particularly notable, picking up the loose puck with his reach and handling skill to beat the first man, then pulling the puck around the second one to gain the inside on a partial breakaway before roofing the puck from up close. A highlight reel play all-around. The second one came with a surprisingly quick release of a drop pass that beat the goalie from pretty far, not that much after the OZ blue line. The skill isn't quite consistent. He misses the best play occasionally and some of the execution on his passes isn't quite there yet. The skating is probably 4.5 currently, but you could make a case for average projection. Pretty strong glide that he uses alongside his reach to backcheck effectively in the NZ. Some of the defensive reads remain odd, but he contributes quite a lot on the forecheck. The talent on his team and line seems to be pretty limited, too, so he could already do more on a better environment. Raw but interesting player.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Wahlberg had some good and some bad moments here. There were flashes of manipulative playmaking, gravitating in multiple defenders before slipping pucks to inside off the rush. He also showed pretty solid off-puck timing with some of his movements to the slot and net-front, establishing body positioning in the process. One of those movements resulted in a goal from a broken play that got ultimately waved off due to the goal being moved. Then again, some of the passing was inefficient, sometimes he held on to the puck for too long and got stripped since he tried to rely on his frame instead of keeping his feet moving. On another sequence, he turned the puck over near the OZ blue line in a spot where you really shouldn't have, resulting in a goal against from a breakaway.



Grade: B

61 Lenni Hämeenaho

AGE 17.855 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Slower Tanner Pearson



Hockey IQ



Tactician



Problem Solver

Player Info

RW/LW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

6.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ässät	Liiga	51	9	12	21	0.41
Finland U20	WJC-20	5	1	1	2	0.40
Finland U20 (all)	International-Jr	13	3	2	5	0.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Lenni Hämeenaho might be *the* player in the 2023 draft with the widest gap between their hockey sense and skating.

The lack of raw tools didn't prevent him from putting up impressive counting stats last season at the U20 level and they didn't prevent him from cracking Ässät's Liiga roster this season.

Adding 21 points in 51 games and averaging 16 minutes of ice time per night, Hämeenaho's season ranks sixth in points among all draft-eligible skaters in Liiga over the past seven years, beating out highly-touted prospects like Roni Hirvonen, Rasmus Kupari, and Juraj Slafkovsky. Hämeenaho also tied for most goals amongst his teammates during Ässät's postseason run, not fading out of the picture like many others of his age have done in the past.

As mentioned earlier, there's no doubt about Hämeenaho's best quality being his intelligence. He's an extremely smart off-puck player at both ends of the rink. He finds quiet ice and pockets of space in the offensive zone, popping in and out of the slot, anticipating possible passing lanes and rebound opportunities.

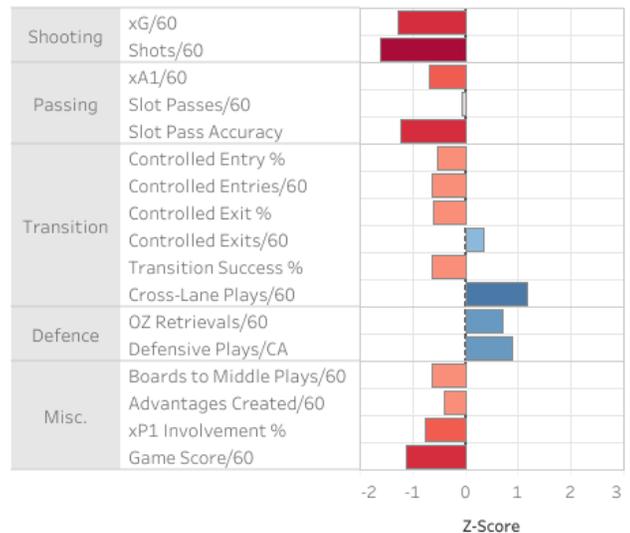
His instincts around the net are simply unmatched in this year's class of Finnish prospects. The same qualities also allow him to break up plays defensively, foreseeing the developing plays in advance and positioning himself accordingly.

Lenni Hämeenaho

F | Ässät | Liiga | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 211.4

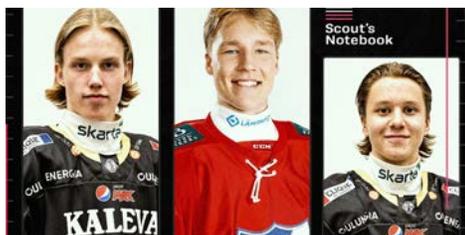
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



On the other side of the coin is Hämeenaho's skating. It's a problem with both the mechanics and the output. There's a notable lack of ankle flexion and an ugly tilt at the hips, resulting in a hunched posture. Both the top speed and the acceleration are lacking. He has trouble finding separation even with his solid work rate, which is a clear limiting factor both in the current moment and for his projection. It particularly limits his effectiveness off the rush and results in overhandling.

Of course, there are players with below-average strides playing in notable roles in the NHL, and the vast majority of them have a strong feel for the game like Hämeenaho. A third-line winger who can contribute on both special teams and provide secondary scoring due to his instincts could be a reasonable ceiling. Further skating improvements will only increase his odds of reaching it.

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Five thoughts on Finland's performance at the 2023 World Juniors



Meet the Team: Finland's roster for the 2023 World Juniors

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"A smart, hard-working complementary winger who can play up and down the lineup." – NHL scout, May 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: March 26th, 2023 - Ilves vs. Ässät - Liiga

Hämeenaho might be among the most interesting players in the draft. There is such a massive gap between hockey sense and straight skills in his game. He's clearly a really intelligent player on the ice: He moves well away from the puck, finds pockets of space, makes the right plays with the puck, anticipates the flow of the game, pressures relatively well, but the skating projects as significantly below average. It prevents him from handling around the opposition, reaching passing lanes, and even from protecting the puck adequately. He works hard. He battles, but he's all energy, handling skills, and sense right now. I'd still draft him in the top-60.

David St-Louis: March 26th, 2023 - Ässät vs. Ilves - Liiga

Not a very eventful game from Hämeenaho. He did score by attacking down the wing and sniping a puck past the goalie. But the rest was quieter. He made a couple of nice breakout plays, battled around the net for rebounds and to screen the goalie, and also on the boards for pucks. His lower pace of play is still a problem for his projection. Even on his shot, another player would have made it an in-stride release, considering the space he had, but it wasn't really possible for him with his mechanics. I think his potential is limited to a fourth-line role, but he could become one of these fourth-liners that play the penalty kill and speciality roles on the powerplay -- so a real role player, a defensive stalwart that still earns a lot of minutes, and that has upward mobility in the lineup as a complementary piece, but can't really contribute all that much on the rush.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - Ässät vs. Lukko - Liiga

Not a particularly impressive game from Hämeenaho here. The flaws were on display, like how he struggles to create off the

rush as a puck-carrier, being relied on his hands alone, handling in front of the body and leaving the puck exposed in the process. The dekes just don't work at a very high percentage, when he can't really set them up properly and they're easy to read. I'll give him credit for one slick between-the-legs move in-zone after receiving the puck in the high slot, using it to gain enough space to get his shot off from in tight but couldn't beat the goalie by trying to go high from up close. Skating stride remains the biggest issue (lacks ankle flexion, knee bend, clunky stride overall) that extends to other areas as well, as I've written previously. In this one, he couldn't really show his strengths that much either.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Ässät vs. TPS - Liiga

Another demonstration of Hämeenaho's off-puck smarts, his ability to find pockets of space and time his movements to the slot and establish body positioning at the net-front. That's how he generates his value at this moment in time. Scored a beautiful goal off the rush just this way, sneaking his way open at the slot at the right time, then finishing with a slick two-touch shot that couldn't have been placed any better, just over the goalie's shoulder. He's not doing much in terms of play-driving, though. Most of his rush sequences involve him opting for rather low-percentage shot attempts. I haven't seen notable delay game off the rush, the playmaking and skill are limited because of the skating. His defensive game is a selling point given how he reads the play and positions, but could be even better with improved posture and quickness.

Lassi Alanen: February 10th, 2023 - Ässät vs. Lukko - Liiga

It's the skating that's holding Hämeenaho back. He's unable to find separation off the rush, tries to use some crossover patterns to approach defenders but the lack of quickness or outside edge proficiency forces him to resort to low-percentage dekes or dump-ins. One of those deke attempts was successful, though, as he was able to slip past the defender using the inside for a scoring chance. That was the highlight of the game for Hämeenaho in this one, aside the beautiful cross-lane stretch pass that opened his linemate up for a partial breakaway. The skating does limit his cycle game somewhat, too, as he's not able to employ pockets of space quickly enough to make give-and-gos work.

Lassi Alanen: February 1st, 2023 - Ässät vs. Jukurit - Liiga

Hämeenaho has better moments here than in the previous viewings. For one, he finally returned on the scoresheet, entering the zone on 3v2, then launching a powerful wrister from the top of the circle, cleverly using the defender as a screen while circumventing his shinpads at the same time. He had another similar rush where he cut to the middle and went for a same-side slip pass instead – the idea was really good but the execution was just slightly off. The playmaking results from this season aren't very good but I still think he's a smart playmaker overall, even if finishing plays is his calling card. Continued to struggle a fair bit in transition, though.

Lassi Alanen: January 18th, 2023 - Ässät vs. SaiPa - Liiga

Another really bland Hämeenaho viewing in a row. Failed to make an impact in any noticeable way, other than a few nice passes to the middle to beat pressure in the defensive zone. More often than not, though, he didn't have answers against pressure in transition and was forced to dump the puck out or in. When he tried to enter the OZ with control, his attempts got shut down, not having enough quickness or handling skill. Even as he would've gotten a scoring chance off the rush after driving the middle and receiving the pass at the top of the circle, he fumbled the pass reception and couldn't get a proper shot off. Not having nearly as many impressive moments as he did in some of the earlier viewings this season. He's a pick, but probably in the late second to early third range.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Ässät vs. Kärpät - Liiga

Hämeenaho added a secondary assist on the power play, entering the zone, passing under defender's stick, then relocating to the net-front and screening the goalie for the shot that went in. Other than that, it was a very quiet game from him. The mechanical limitations were very clear from skating and even handling perspective, and he even had trouble connecting on more basic plays or receiving passes from teammates. A lot of time spent defending and holding the point, but also didn't have any notable defensive highlights.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Finland vs Slovakia - WJ20

Hämeenaho looked better as the game went on. He transformed a couple of steals into scoring chances in the third period by reading the puck carrier and getting his stick on passes as they were launched. The technical ability still looks limited; he evades stick but can't separate. He's an adaptable passer, but can't really turn around rapidly to hit targets. His lack of speed forces him into bad decisions, but the off-puck game continues to shine. He anticipates pockets of space and controls his skating to remain a good option for teammates.

David St-Louis: December 1st, 2022 - Sport vs. Ässät - Liiga

Hämeenaho looks defensively responsible, based on his tendency to want to help teammates and the effort he puts in to join battles on the wall and cover his man on the backcheck. Of course, his lack of speed and acceleration is a problem in that facet of the game, too. Even his handling looks limited. But the off-puck game remains a strength. He knows how to rotate, where to position. He also has some playmaking ideas, holding the puck, cutting laterally to buy time for teammates to get in scoring position, and then passing deceptively. The hockey sense looks high-grade, but the technical abilities low-grade.

David St-Louis: November 30th, 2022 - Ässät vs. SaiPa - Liiga

I'm really impressed with Hämeenaho's off-puck reads. This guy plays chess on the ice. He's always well positioned to get a puck, with the right body angle, and at the right timing. He surveys the plays and complements it by linking passing plays and deflecting shots near the net and also by positioning for one-timers. He protects the puck well with his hands, but is limited by a clearly below-average posture and stride along the walls and in open ice. The skating will be a huge hurdle, but he looks like a smart player.

Lassi Alanen: November 16th, 2022 - Ässät vs. JYP - Liiga

Not really much to write about here from Hämeenaho's perspective. His line was behind on the play consistently, leading him not getting many puck touches in the OZ even if he knows how to occupy pockets of space at the right time and anticipate the play really well. The ones he got didn't result in anything either. He's not really a controlled transition player with his current skating, being too easy to close in on and almost every time being forced to dump the puck in. I still have a lot of respect for his defensive details, too, but he did let him man to gain body positioning and a high-danger chance as he did lean his weight on the wrong side for a second and doesn't have nearly enough quickness to recover once he gets behind the play.

Lassi Alanen: November 13th, 2022 - Czechia U20 vs. Finland U20 - U20 Five Nations

Hämeenaho's game is slightly limited and he's not doing a whole lot of high-end stuff, but his basic game will still rack up points, even at this level. Scored from the slot right after the power play had expired, again doing a good job at getting open at the right time. Made some solid small-area passes with slips under sticks and looked for give-and-gos. Some passes were on the inaccurate side, but the ideas were mostly good. Kept up with the pace and applied pressure to the puck-carrier on the forecheck.

Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden U20 vs. Finland U20 - U20 Five Nations

Hämeenaho scored on the power play, displaying his off-puck instincts and ability to find pucks in the net-front. Moved away, then established body positioning while moving back in, sealing the puck away from the defender's reach and scoring from a rebound. Also got another high-danger look at 5v5 by the way of smart movement in the OZ, getting lost from the defender and timing his move into space. Skating looked a bit better in this one pace-wise, a bit more explosiveness and top speed, though the stride form is still not flattering and causes problems. Didn't showcase a lot of notable skill or playmaking, but at this level, his game is likely going to rely on his off-puck instincts, keeping plays alive and giving an honest effort defensively, which he did.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. Ässät - Liiga

Hämeenaho finally found his way to the scoresheet, scoring two big goals in the third period. Followed the shot off the rush and scored on the rebound, then later read the play perfectly, intercepted a breakout pass and clinically finished five-hole. Hämeenaho's transition plays were cleaner than in previous viewings, moving the puck immediately when the opportunity was there and cut back if he didn't find an opening. The skating still inhibits his on-puck offence and he has to rely on his smarts to create offence from broken plays and with his off-puck instincts. It so happens that those are some of his biggest strengths.

Lassi Alanen: October 22th, 2022 - Ässät vs. Lukko - Liiga

Another pretty quiet showing from Hämeenaho despite getting a ton of ice time, having established himself as a clear-cut top-9 forward on this team. He struggles to hold on to the puck at this level, often being forced to dump pucks out when he could just wait a bit longer and make a controlled play. On OZ retrievals, he also tries to move the puck with the first touch, sometimes being successful. Some straight-line rushes where he tried to get to shooting location via outside lane, but failed to do so most of the time. One nice cross-ice passing play off the rush, but even that was a bit fluky as it bounced off the skate of the defender. The posture hurts his leverage in puck battles quite a bit.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2022 - Ässät vs. TPS - Liiga

A more quieter showing from Hämeenaho compared to my previous viewing. His line wasn't able to establish much in the form of offensive zone control. Hämeenaho's skating flaws were more prevalent when he couldn't escape as effectively along the boards if he didn't have any passing options available. Instead he was forced to dump the puck out a lot from his own zone. Some pretty simple handling errors here and there, too.

Lassi Alanen: September 24th, 2022 - KalPa vs. Ässät - Liiga

Actually a very solid showing from Hämeenaho here, adding a secondary assist on the power play. The stride remains grim and limits him in certain aspects, but it didn't prevent him from doing cool stuff. His playmaking shined in multiple situations, making a couple of crafty feeds from below the goal line. In another situation, he was able to pass immediately upon receiving the puck on the forecheck and create a scoring chance as of result. Also drew two penalties near the boards. Was forced to dump out the puck a few times unnecessarily, but also made some slick passes in transition, favouring the middle. Liked his work rate away from the puck, too. Not surprised his role has increased since his debut.

Lassi Alanen: September 13th, 2022 - Ässät vs. Ilves - Liiga

Hämeenaho was able to play his way to Ässät's opening night lineup and made his Liiga debut on the fourth line, which is a testament to his performances throughout the preseason. There might have been a bit of nerves in this one since he missed quite a few pass receptions on breakouts that he should have been able to handle. Not a whole lot of puck touches offensively as Ilves was clearly the dominant team throughout the game. Was able to intercept a few passes in the NZ with good reads and hand-eye coordination. Skating hasn't gotten any better from last season, though, at least in terms of technique. Still very hunched over all the time, lacking almost any ankle flexion and tilting from the hips. It's going to be hard projecting him to the NHL because of it.

Lassi Alanen: April 23th - May 1st, 2022 - U18s

Hämeenaho played the entire tournament on the third line and played the bumper role on the second power play. He didn't put up huge point totals, but sneakily was one of the better offensive creators at 5-on-5, finishing top-1 in expected primary assists and top-4 in expected primary points among forwards on the team. Hämeenaho's skating is an issue that needs serious work over the next year, but he's got a lot of desirable qualities. I've known him more of as a net-front finisher and a shooter, but he was showcasing a lot of solid playmaking habits during this tournament, setting up his linemate Uronen up with some clever ideas. Defensive side is also a work in progress, but there's definite upside with Hämeenaho. Recently signed a long pro extension with Ässät.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Hämeenaho is clearly a talented player. He opened the scoring early with a beautiful curl-and-drag wrister off the rush, taking advantage of the diving HIFK defenceman. Later on, he got a primary assist on the power play when his shot's rebound was buried from the net-front. I was particularly impressed by his ability to string together handling sequences into shots, ie. the curl-and-drags, quick fake shots to beat the forechecker before an actual release. He has a rather high turnover rate, often trying to go for the fancy play in transition or in the OZ. He'd be a lot more effective if he was able to execute on those plays with a bit more consistency. I have to say that he was also getting the puck back a ton, whether it was from recoveries after shots, forechecking or backchecking. It's pretty interesting how effective he can be in this regard despite being a clearly below-average skater in terms of his stride.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2021 - Tappara vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Hämeenaho's skating is a problem, and is going to affect his projection massively unless he improves a lot in the next 1,5 years. The current stride is just ugly, there's no getting around that. Despite it, though, Hämeenaho has started the season rather productively in the U20 league. This wasn't one of his better performances, but he still made a few good plays. His off-puck savvy is probably the biggest asset. I liked how he tried to establish body position by cutting defenders at their hips, even if his skating flaws prevent him from doing it more effectively. Should have scored on a grade A chance after backdoor pass, but somehow wasn't able to finish.

Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2021 - U18 Five Nations, Switzerland

Hämeenaho started the tournament on the third line, but his role fluctuated and he ended up being the 13th forward in the latter games. I don't really agree with that decision as I thought that he played pretty well in his first game (also first appearance with any national team). Hämeenaho's smarts are very good. He's got a knack for loose pucks, and scored the opening goal in the second game of the tournament from the net-front. He has good awareness of his surroundings and can dish smart passes in transition. The lack of footspeed was very apparent as he's clearly a below-average skater with lack of knee and ankle flexion.

Grade: B



62 Kasper Halttunen

AGE 17.274 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Adrian Kempe



Lethal
Shooter



Hammer



Raw
Talent

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

207 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

6.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HIFK U20	U20 SM-sarja	18	18	6	24	1.33
HIFK	Liiga	27	0	1	1	0.04
Kiekko-Vantaa	Mestis	3	1	2	3	1.00
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	14	9	9	18	1.29

SCOUTING REPORT

It's not often that one of the draft's best shooters slides to Day 2, but that's likely to be the case for Finnish winger Kasper Halttunen.

Halttunen entered the season as a first-round talent off the back of a great draft-minus-one season between his league and international play, but struggled to find his place after making the jump to HIFK in the hopes of establishing himself against men.

At the U20 level, he scored at a goal-per-game clip but only managed a singular assist in 27 Liiga games. And despite his high-level scoring, even his U20 league play left a lot to be desired on most nights. He did cap off the season on a strong note, playing arguably his best hockey of the season at the U18s.

There's no denying Halttunen's ability to rip the puck. He's got a one-timer from the left half wall that power plays can be built around, even at the next level. He's not shy about using it either, surpassing 15 shots on goal on multiple occasions this season.

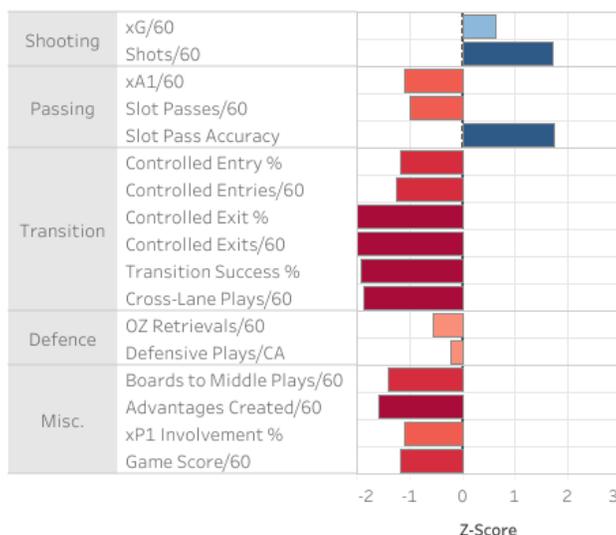
Shooting that much can also be an issue, though. That was particularly the case at the U20 level where Halttunen often became tunnel-visioned, only looking to deke his way past the blue line and shoot off the rush. This pattern is easily noticeable in the data: A lot of shots, very little in terms of playmaking. Halttunen's shot volume also carried to Liiga, but he struggled mightily in pretty much every other facet of the game.

Kasper Halttunen

F | HIFK | Liiga | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 113.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



It's not that Halttunen can't make plays for his teammates; he strung together a handful of playmaking moments during his run at the U18s. At his best, he's difficult to contain along the boards due to the combination of handling and physical skills. To his credit, his work rate also improved this season.

There are still a lot of habits Halttunen needs to exorcise from his game, overhandling and deking attempts without proper setups being one of them. Becoming more give-and-go focused, improving his off-puck timing and adding an extra gear and a better four-step acceleration would go a long way.

There's attainable middle-six upside as a goalscoring power forward for Halttunen, but a significant risk of going bust, which drops him on our board.

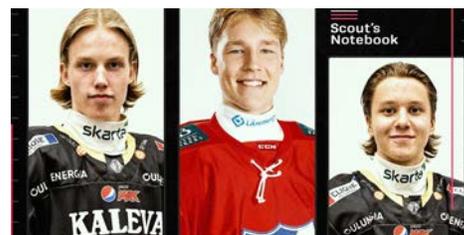
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≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"Obviously, he's got a really great shot, but I'm very worried about the sense and even the skating. Like, he's a bit behind the play sometimes. I'm not a big fan, I can tell you that." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I'm satisfied with how he played for the team, and how he makes smart decisions with the puck. He helped us win this game. I see him as a power forward. During these three years, I've loved the passion he has to score goals, drive to the net, and to win pucks. It was good to see him get that goal." – Finland head coach Lauri Merikivi, April 2023

"I'm a pretty hungry goalscorer, and I'm big-bodied. I want to win games and do whatever it takes to win games." – Kasper Halttunen, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

I thought Halttunen looked fine here and throughout the tournament. He led the team in points and goals by a large margin, played all the big minutes and the offence flowed through him, especially on the power play. He's still somewhat inefficient with his touches, doesn't find separation with his skating all the often despite trying. But he also had some if not the best playmaking flashes he's had all season, which is encouraging. Still would like him to get his teammates more involved in transition and at building up the plays. The shot remains a big weapon; it's too bad that Finland's top power play was almost entirely built around it which made it easier for the opposition to try to take it away. I don't have any qualms about Halttunen's work ethic either. He was involved on the forecheck and played his usual physically-punishing style along the boards. The NHL projection has gotten tougher and tougher as the season has progressed, but there are still things to like, even if he might never have the feet or the sense to translate. I think we probably have him around the right spot at the moment (late 2nd/early 3rd).

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Not sure what to make of Halttunen. On one hand, the shooting skills are very interesting. You don't want to let a shot like him drop too much at the draft. He also has the handling skills and the reach and moments where he plays a physical, power forward game, where he drops his shoulder and runs through defenders' hands to try and get to the game. He wants to have the puck on his stick and score in big games like these. But his skating remains a bit of a problem and he's also not overly physical or pacey or engaged for a player his size. He lacks dimensions at this time. He had one great pass to the slot to an open teammate, but he doesn't really look to build the offence all that much through passes. He only looks for that final assist-pass, that direct scoring chance plays. Otherwise, he's mostly a solo driver. He forces plays in situations where he should manage the puck better. And I'm not sure about his skills in tight spaces. He's more of an open-ice dangler and shooter at this stage. At his size, it's likely that he's behind the curve in terms of development compared to other players. (Taller players tend to take long to develop) I bet we see more changes in his game, more improvements than others overall. I could see a team drafting him in the 2nd round.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

This was probably Halttunen's best game of the tournament, but I'd hardly describe it as an especially strong performance. There was the goal, a seeing-eye, powerful shot by the faceoff circle that went post-and-in, and even more physicality than usual, but that was it. Mostly, Halttunen faded into the background, making questionable plays with the puck, attempting dangles from a glide or a standstill, and looking like a pretty unrefined shooting threat off-puck. Halttunen tracked reasonably well in this game and made a concerted effort defensively, but nothing too special there.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Halttunen is mostly a shot. That's when he pops on the screen. Otherwise, he mostly floats in all three zones. I know he has handling skills, but he's not moving around anyone, mostly because his feints and moves aren't paired with his skating. He acts in glides. He's still deceptive in the way he handles and capable of physical play, but mostly, he's a power play shooting threat. The team that drafts him will likely primarily like this about him and hope he can develop a decent checking and transition passing game to get himself in positions to use his shot.

J.D. Burke: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18

Another quiet game for Halttunen, though he picked up a tap-in goal at the side of the net, burying a rebound for his second of the tournament. I'm not sure that Halttunen has the feel for the game necessary to project to a scoring role at the NHL level. His play selection to this point in the tournament has left me puzzled more often than not. Just a whole lot of turnovers and low percentage shots. I'm starting to see Halttunen as a low-ceiling bet, though you never want to count out a player with the sort of physical gifts he possesses.

Lassi Alanen: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18 Worlds

Halttunen found the back of the net from a rebound, scooping the puck after a blocked shot and had a rather easy job to bury it, though he did the required pre-work by establishing body positioning ahead of the defender. Not that it was a particularly effective game from Halttunen overall. Over the course of the two games in this tournament so far, he has racked up a few goals and a solid bunch of scoring chances, but a lot of the credit goes to his linemate Konsta Helenius for setting him up. With the puck, Halttunen is still very turnover prone and doesn't create that many advantages himself. He has the big shot and the physicality to impose himself at this level, but failed to find separation multiple times, drove into crowded areas without clear intentions.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Finland - U18s

The draw to Halttunen's game is obvious. He flashes the sort of power forward game that NHL executives covet, playing keepaway along the boards and driving the net at every opportunity. Halttunen picked up one such goal in this game, stringing

together a couple of handling moves and taking the puck to the net for the goal. Even accounting for that goal, I think his ambition as a puck handler often exceeds his skill level. Overall, kind of a quiet game for Halttunen, as has often been the case in my viewings. The tools are enviable, but I'm just not sold on the craftsmanship.

Lassi Alanen: March 15th, 2023 - Kiekko-Vantaa vs. KeuPa HT - Mestis

Halttunen added a primary helper in his Mestis debut with Kiekko-Vantaa, in a sequence that was also his best play of the game, taking the puck to the middle off an exit, then threatening the shot off the rush but instead went for a well-timed drop pass that led to a goal. I feel like Halttunen would've normally decided to shoot from there himself, but it looked like he tried to distribute the puck more often than normally in the offensive zone. It shows that he's not a particularly good playmaker - at least yet. The timing behind the passes wasn't always on point, he didn't create space before passing but often passed to the direction he was already skating at. There were some solid ideas, though. Some transition moments where he had the patience to look for the centre in the middle instead of just blindly throwing the puck out of the defensive zone. On the other hand, he could still benefit from further pre-scanning so he'd be more prepared consistently. Would also go a long way in helping his defensive game. Could've worked a bit harder on a couple of backchecks.

Lassi Alanen: March 11th, 2023 - HIFK vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen was held pointless in TPS' win over HIFK to advance to the semis in the U20 league playoffs, failing to add a single point in the three-game series. It wasn't a lack of effort in the shooting front that held him back, though, as he recorded 13 shot attempts at 5-on-5 alone and a bunch more on the power play. Many of them were solo attempts off the rush, some of them more justified than others. There were a couple of delay and curl-and-drag attempts and two of them hit the post, so one could say he was a bit unlucky, too. The volume shooting wasn't really there as much in the previous viewings I've had, but he really turned it back up for these playoffs. Halttunen's best moments were in front of the net and on retrievals, when he created space and havoc for his linemates to use. He can be a bit stationary, but it does work for him fairly well at this level because of the strength advantage. The off-puck instincts are a bit of a question mark still, though, and he'd really benefit from them given that I don't really see him as a high-end on-puck creator. The compete level was pretty solid through when accounting for the huge minutes that he played.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - HIFK vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen found the back of the net with a powerful one-timer on the power play after many failed attempts from the half-wall, finally getting rewarded for the shot volume. When the shot truly hits, it's a hard one to stop. The sheer power behind the one-timer is among the best in the draft class, easily. At 5-on-5, he had a couple of backhand looks from the slot, but he wasn't really driving the play or the offence, which has been a trend in these recent viewings at the U20 level, which is definitely worrying. The handling habits are a bit detrimental, leaving the puck exposed in front of his feet too often and having too predictable rush patterns. There hasn't really been any development during this season, I don't think.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - HIFK vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

I keep waiting for Halttunen to have a true pop-off game at the U20 level but it just doesn't seem to happen. He did end up scoring early after his scooping pass from a wrap-around ended up bouncing into the net via a defender's skate; not necessarily the most highlight reel goal. A lot of long shifts in the OZ, but really struggled - once again - to get to any scoring chances. A lot of time spent cutting back on pressure but not really finding separation, then passing the puck to the point, looking to get it back on the perimeter. To his credit, there were times earlier when he tried to go to the inside without the puck and had some solid timings, but his teammates weren't getting the puck to him and he looked visibly pretty frustrated because of it. But his team overall is still one of the better ones in the league.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - HIFK vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

Another not-very-convincing showing from Halttunen. Didn't create anything notable at 5-on-5. He can cycle the puck for long periods of time and has strong physical presence for this level, but failed to convert those cycles into meaningful offence.

The skating remains a concern; the stride recoveries are wide, the inside edge dependency is a real thing. Struggles to beat players outside even at this level, but doesn't seem to have too many ways to create besides trying to beat players 1-on-1. How is he going to create offence at the next level aside from his shot is a real question. He should be putting together stronger performances at this level.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - HIFK vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen actually had some nice moments here despite not really racking up any big-time scoring chance numbers or any points at 5-on-5. His passing game was looking a bit better, finding options in the middle from in tight instead of always resorting back to trying to handle his way through the traffic. We also saw a few nice off-puck movement sequence in the OZ. He was actually not as stationary in the net-front, but played between checks and could've easily had one high-danger look at the end of one of his activations, but ended up mishandling the pass reception in a weird way. Still not the most efficient creator, for sure. On the power play, on the other hand, he was pretty ruthlessly efficient, scoring two goals with just over two minutes of ice time. The first one was a pretty standard outside leg wrister off an entry from the top of the circle, the second one being his patented one-timer.

Lassi Alanen: February 12th, 2023 - Finland vs. Sweden - U18 Four Nations

Halttunen got on the scoresheet again, this time when his shot was tipped in on the power play. Aside from that, he got his other good looks offensively on the power play as well, as Finland's unit was predictably built around his shot and one-timer. If he can't launch the one-timer, his go-to is to try to step inside a bit more with a fake shot before actually releasing, and that eventually allowed him to get the shot through that was tipped in. Halttunen had some other flashes, too: a very pretty backhand pass off the rush once he ran out of space on the outside. One nice manipulation along the boards, faking the defender one way with his feet on retrieval before quickly changing the angle and going the other way. At times, was able to bulldoze his way through contact. Last season, I thought the puck skills were a strength, but I don't necessarily see it the same way anymore. He can dangle players at the junior level, but he's been fumbling pucks a lot more and the touches don't seem as soft. Still gets tunnel-vision on most plays, fixated on the shot. Could've gained the inside a few times with better skating.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations Tournament

Halttunen's defensive game looked better in this one. He played a simpler version of his usual style. He dumped the puck when he couldn't beat opponents with his speed and then forechecked. The skating remains a problem, but the flashes of handling skills continue. He can cut across defences and fire around them and use his frame to pin opponents on the boards. He's not really a shooter off the pass as much as a carry-in-and-fire type of scorer. That hurts his projection a bit. Best play: a skate fake to pick up a retrieval and turn to face options.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - HIFK vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Not a particularly dominant showing from Halttunen, but again, he still managed two goals with just over 12 minutes of 5-on-5 ice time. Scored with a pretty move after getting into a breakaway straight out of the penalty box, then tipped in a shot from the point later in the game. Mostly, similar issues remained from most of the previous U20 level viewings from this season. He's locked on his inside edges, tries to get cute with the dekes off the rush, misses the best play. There were a few flashes of what he could do better, like hooking pucks to the middle in entries and using his gravitational aura to create space for others. The physical skills are pretty superior for this level whenever he's in the mood to use them.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - HIFK vs. HPK - Liiga

Halttunen had some on-puck flashes, creatively maneuvering his way around pressure by bouncing the puck to himself using the end boards and at the same time spinning away from the opponents. Got a few rush chances by skating the outside lane, receiving the puck with an entry pass and the stepping in to fire. His shot should be such a weapon that he's going to score one sooner or later, right? The overall impact is still pretty lacklustre, particularly in transition where he's seemingly allergic to trying to pass for an entry or exit, almost always choosing the uncontrolled play if there's no easy carry option. Not sure if this

is confidence or team structure related, because he should have more skill than he's showing. The work rate off-puck remains pretty solid, but he's not nearly as smart as someone like Hämeenaho, which leaves him chasing the play a lot.

Lassi Alanen: January 13rd, 2023 - HIFK vs. TPS - Liiga

It's weird that Halttunen hasn't scored in Liiga yet, since he has plenty of chances at this point in the season. One of the higher-end ones happened here, as TPS' defence collapsed completely after a faceoff and he was left alone in the net-front for a high-danger chance that he didn't end up burying. While Halttunen's overhandling and try-to-deke-everyone attitude have been problems at the U20 level, he just can't pull off similar stuff here due to mechanical limitations, and doesn't even try to do so. He's much more of a dump-and-chase player who tries to interrupt plays on forecheck. Didn't really have much success while doing so in this one. Fumbled a few easy pucks.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Örebro - Champions League

This was a great game from Halttunen. He got multiple scoring chances from the slot, receiving passes and turning them into one-timers. He battled net-front and scored from a rebound; his effort was constant in every one of the scrums; he tried to cut inside with and without the puck. Yet, I still have my doubts about his game. He's a player who is really focused on outhandling the opposition and his reads aren't always precise. I'm not sure his "skill player" package will be enough to get him a top-six spot and I'm not sure his "effort, inside-drives, net-front play" will also be good enough or supplemented by enough defensive abilities to earn him a bottom-six spot. I'm not sure. He's a complex projection because it's an uncertain one, so you have to balance the upside -- flashes of top-six skills -- and the high uncertainty. Overall, the formula probably makes him more of a B-grade second-rounder than a first-rounder, at least for me. Although the physical abilities he often shows (driving from the wall to the inside) and the reports on his improving defensive game could convince me.

Lassi Alanen: December 13th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Lukko - Liiga

Just an absolutely terrible start to the game from Halttunen, just basically turning the puck over with every touch he got. Showed some of his bad habits, ie. handling in front of his body off the rush, keeping the puck exposed, not utilizing his teammates properly. Missed a great passing window off the rush that would've resulted in a guaranteed quality chance, but circled behind the net instead and got pinned down. Things started to look better later on, though, making a great entry feed after a faceoff that resulted in a scoring chance. His cycle game also started to look more effective, getting a chance by cutting to the middle through pressure. Probably more of an early second-rounder than a first, but he's a hard player to get a good read on.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Jukurit - Liiga

Not a very noteworthy showing from Halttunen here. Struggled to move the puck in transition, either being forced to dump out of the DZ, or if he received the puck in the NZ, just often either mishandled it on reception or was forced to dump it in. This limited the offence his line was able to create. Didn't do that much with his OZ touches either, hammering the puck from the boards towards the net, once getting into a scoring chance but his shot was disrupted effectively by a stickcheck. Threw his body around quite a bit, but wasn't able to have that much of an impact defensively.

Lassi Alanen: December 2th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Two goals and an assist for Halttunen in this one. He could have an even greater impact at this level with better play selection, but even while playing like this, he's going to score a lot. Multiple great sequences down low where he spun off defenders or brute-forced his way to the inside by using his physical tools. Got a high-danger deflection opportunity, screened defenders and created space. Scored his first goal straight out of faceoff, showcasing his handling to pull the puck to him from the scuffle, stepping inside and firing a wrister far side. The rushes were far less effective, either opting for the low-percentage outside leg wrister near the hashmarks or trying to drive inside via the outside lane. His skating is not good enough to do that consistently even at this level. He would really benefit from a delay game, which he currently doesn't have in a significant way.

Lassi Alanen: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden U20 - Finland U20 - U20 Five Nations

Honestly a pretty good outing from Halttunen overall. Not necessarily a dominant one, but he made most with his puck touches. Added a primary helper on the power play by making a nifty between-the-legs shot near the goal and his teammate shoved in the rebound. Opting for low-percentage shots has been a problem with Halttunen, but in this one, he delayed and cut back off the rush, making some crafty passes under pressure. Competed well for loose pucks and gave a solid effort defensively. Exit efficiency could've been improved with more pre-scanning.

Lassi Alanen: November 10th, 2022 - Czechia U19 - Finland U20 - U20 Five Nations

First game for Halttunen after his three-week injury. He was initially supposed to be on the challenger roster, but got promoted after other players were forced to drop out. He started the game being placed to the middle of the box on PP, but quickly got moved to his usual spot on the half wall with immediate results: the first shot (one-timer) hit the crossbar and the second (an outside leg wrister) rewarded him with a goal. The shot remains the biggest strength. Also made one really slick pass reception off the rush with his skate, followed by a penalty drawn. Not a lot of memorable moments at 5v5, but I liked his effort level off the puck, starting the game off with a big hit in the DZ. Could be an angle for him to make the WJC team in a bottom-six role.

David St-Louis: October 8th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Karhu-Kissat - U20 SM-sarja

I'm not sure about the skating and his ability to retain his awareness or update his map of the ice as moves and dangles, but this was a pretty impressive performance from a skill standpoint. The shot mechanics looked on-point. He easily went through teams, multiple times, skating on arcs to move defenders' feet and open their triangle to slide the puck. He scored with one-timers, in-movement wrist-shots, and by relocating away from the puck. He could be just a player who shines in easy games like this where he has the space and the lower competition to do whatever he wants.

David St-Louis: October 7th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Kärpät - Liiga

Halttunen is clearly trying to prove himself at this level and that desire brings some good elements: He's physical, violent even, finishes checks, battles in the corner, rushes the net. I thought he managed the puck relatively well in this game, too, despite limited touches. The skating looks rough a bit, feet kicking as he goes. It's hard to truly evaluate his game in this setting, but it's clear that he cares about making an impression. Good defensive positioning overall, too.

Cam Robinson: October 1st, 2022 - HIFK vs TPS - Liiga

Skating on the third line in this one, Halttunen was reasonably effective in his 12 minutes of ice. He grabbed a helper for his first point of the season after digging hard on a broken faceoff and getting the puck to the point. He attacked the crease after the pass and helped cause the havoc needed for it to go in. Nearly buried it himself. The skating remains a bit sluggish from a standstill, but he was showing some pretty nice mobility on his edges as he fought his way through traffic to get in on the forecheck. I like his defensive positioning and posture.

Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - HIFK vs TPS - Liiga

Halttunen is clearly trying to establish himself physically in these games, finishing every check when possible and overall getting involved in altercations. I'm still wondering about the vision. He clearly had a passing lane to the slot for a high-danger chance after an OZ steal but decided to push to the middle himself and try to shoot. There was another sequence where he held his head down and tried to bulldoze his way from the boards to the middle without any real opening. Would benefit from more scanning with the puck.

Lassi Alanen: September 28th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Sport - Liiga

Around 10 minutes of ice time for Halttunen in this one. He's physically very much capable of playing at this level, looking to establish body positioning before every battle and protecting the puck mostly successfully along the walls. Didn't have as many shot attempts as he did in his debut, but mostly made good decisions with the puck with limited touches. One of Sport's goals could be blamed on him at least partially, having dropped low near the net to cover for his center and having his man score

from a rebound. Skating likely projects between 4.5 and 5 on our scale. He can do pretty well in a smaller role in Liiga due to his physicality and improved work rate from last season. Whether that's optimal for his development is another question.

Lassi Alanen: September 3rd, 2022 - HIFK vs. HPK - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen added a primary helper in his season debut with HIFK's U20 team, taking advantage of HPK's poor rush defence on the power play and slicing the ice with an accurate cross-seam pass for a backdoor tap-in – good stuff. At 5-on-5 though, I thought that Halttunen continued where he left off at Hlinka for the most part. He was too fixated on individually creating chances for himself, relying too heavily on his 1-on-1 handling. Sure, he did deke one opponent pretty well and got a scoring chance, but there were also too many turnovers. Skating looked sluggish, not having the extra gear to beat defenders wide. One weird sequence where his team would have gotten a 3v2 rush chance if he hadn't gone for a change right in front of the puck-carrier. At least provided some defensive value with a nice physical stop near the slot.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Can't say that I've been impressed by Halttunen's tournament overall after the first few games. It's pretty clear that the coaching staff wasn't too thrilled about his play either, with him only playing around 11 minutes in this one. Sure, he was still retrieving pucks well in the OZ and generating a decent amount of shots, though most of them were very low value. He just passed on many better plays in the pursuit of individual chances, overforcing a ton of his entries and dekes, causing a bunch of turnovers. Skating didn't look as good as it has in some of the previous games. Hasn't shown as much of the physical domination as he did in the earlier games, either. Still a potential first-rounder, but probably at the end of it currently and needs to show more stuff once the league play starts.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Halttunen had grabbed an assist by starting a give-and-go, driving the net, and losing the puck. Not a highlight reel sequence, but it suggested that some of the concerns around his game already have solutions. Another example: pre-scanning along the boards, then delaying instead of dumping the puck out. A bit of a return to the physical play of previous games, too. Still, he traps himself with the puck and misses opportunities to make the best play. Handling skill only appears as a reactionary tool; he never tries to stack the deck in his favour in transition. Not a manipulator. Perhaps he adds that throughout the season.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Halttunen started off this tournament trying to make a statement physically. In this game, he didn't accomplish much. He was reactionary and late off-puck, and struggled to make plays with it. Teammates weren't getting him possession, but he's rarely in the best position. The physical play wasn't visible, despite the weight of this game. Skating lacks refinement. Lacks quickness and creativity with the puck. Not sure he looked like a prospect in this game, but I've seen better. Also: August.

David St-Louis: August 3th 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I'm reading some other reports on Halttunen and it sounds like he didn't have the greatest tournament, but this was a relatively promising game against a weaker opponent. He showed a lot of interesting elements: he attacked defenders on an arc and deceived them on the powerplay (manipulation), showed high-end hand-eye coordination and ability to use his size and reach inside his handling and shots, he attacked the net and scanned before retrieving pucks on the boards...So overall, some good habits and skills. I'm not sure about the whole hockey sense deal. He did miss better options he could have made, but with a bit more time and space, he spotted advantages, like a lane inside, and used them. The skating looks like it will become a below-average grade as we get more confident in our evaluation as the season goes on.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another Halttunen performance that left to be desired. Sure, he did a fair bit of work in transition, actually sharing the team-lead in controlled entries at 5-on-5. He also had moments on the forecheck, once hustling hard to get the puck back, manhandling

the opposition along the boards and playing the puck back to the point, with the sequence eventually leading to a goal. Despite tertiary assists not being a thing, this goal wouldn't have happened without Halttunen's effort. But he also wastes so many of those entries to shoot from LD angles and leaves a lot of value on the table as of result. Turnovers were an issue; he was forcing a lot of deking attempts and having minimal success as of result. Physically he's among the most dominant players here, but I'm still waiting to see more off-puck skill, playmaking and better play selection.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

I was really hoping for a bounceback from Halttunen after a pretty dreadful outing against the Americans yesterday, but that wasn't in the cards. Instead, the Finnish winger continued to make many of the same plays that have frustrated and concerned me about his projection to this point in the tournament. Halttunen's handling skill still lags far behind his confidence as a handler, and I'm not even sure many of his attempted dangles serve much of a purpose. He's often handling his way out of passing opportunities or further to the outside, and these plays rarely if ever work. The low percentage shots continued to rear their ugly head, too. And the skating isn't great either; Halttunen tilts at the hips in a big way, failing to engage his core on his forward stride. To his credit, Halttunen flashed some playmaking ability in this game, and that's a first in this tournament, but that's about it for positives in this one.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another frustrating game from Halttunen. He struggled with turnovers, missing passes, taking low-percentage shots, and deking with little purpose. However, there were positive signs. Playmaking featured more in this game, trying to slip pucks through defenders to the inside. He was also running over players. In one sequence, he crushed the puck carrier, then escaped with possession, leading to a goal. Strange player. Hoped to see more skill, but I'm still leaving the preliminary round with a largely positive impression of his game.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Not a very impressive effort from Halttunen in this one. Sure, he got his shooting opportunities and even rang a post on a quick far-side wrister off the draw, but basically of his attempts came from low-danger angles. Play selection was an issue, and he forcing stuff too much through his hands. Fumbled some basic passes on the power play, too, causing turnovers. Seemed to be visibly frustrated with his play, too. I liked how he used his physical tools a few times, dropping his shoulder and initiating contact to bulldoze his way to a outside lane drive, but he wasn't particularly dominant in this area either. Definitely should have more left in the tank.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Somehow, in a very physical game, Halttunen was hardly noticeable. This should've been where he popped. Instead, it was mostly poor decisions and missed opportunities. The skill level is questionable in moments, but there's no doubt that he occasionally sees options, he just chooses to make the low percentage play. That play is usually come across the blue line and shoot. His shot's a bomb, there's no doubt. He nearly dented the post with a look off wrister on the powerplay. But he doesn't try to maximize his impact with it: passing up opportunities to cut inside, pass, or delay to instead take a no-chance wrister from range. That he wasn't visible in the physical aspect was also concerning. Summer hockey!

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Halttunen scored a powerplay goal with a one-timer, aiming far side on the moving goaltender. His game is largely built around that shot – in-stride wristers, outside leg wristers, two-touch shots, and off-puck positions that places him between checks. He's also physical, perhaps among the most physical prospects in recent memory. He doesn't pass up an opportunity to make contact, even manufacturing opportunities to do so. Ran over several players and powered through checks without issue. Turned to get pressure on his back, then threw the reverse hit. Few of his best ideas resulted in anything tangible, largely because of puckhandling limitations. He's patient, but rarely attacks space or seeks to improve the condition of the puck. First impression: he looks like a first-round candidate, but perhaps a late one.

Lassi Alanen: April 23th - May 1st, 2022 - U18s

Halttunen finished the tournament third in points among Finland's forwards as an underager, playing the whole tournament in the second line together with Nyman and Rönni and manning the left flank on the second PP unit. While he didn't have his best showings during the games that mattered the most (although he did score the hugely important game-tying goal during the quarterfinal), Halttunen's tournament was overall promising. He started off really well during the group stages and showed the combination of skill, shot and power forward qualities that make him an intriguing prospect. Skates well enough for his size and if he adds an extra gear next year, he's going to be even scarier. Displayed good understanding of potential give-and-gos and was strong around the net-front. A first-round talent for 2023.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Very quiet game from Halttunen here. Didn't get many offensive zone puck touches until the last couple of shifts where he got a few shooting opportunities, mostly from the perimeter, though. Also didn't get many puck touches in transition, often flying the zone too early. Even when he got the puck passed to him, he was already too close to the opposing defenceman and had a hard time receiving the pass successfully. I don't think he had any successful transition plays at 5-on-5. Skating still needs a fair bit of work: lack of ankle flexion, doesn't finish his strides properly, somewhat inefficient upper-body. That combined with very handling-focused attitude towards offensive creation and 1-on-1 play wasn't working.

Lassi Alanen: November 27th, 2021 - Jokerit vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen was the best player on the ice in this one for my money. He was constantly dangerous in the offensive zone, pushing the play towards the middle and creating chances for himself and his linemates. Halttunen's pace with the puck was good, maintaining a solid work rate. His hands stood out in tight, and that plus his size is going to be a deadly combination in corners. He was starting to feel himself as the game progressed, and even attempted a lot of creative stuff, like passing the puck to himself using the backside of the goal. Halttunen's shoot-first mentality was apparent, but he was more varied with his attacks than in my previous viewings and tried to pass in situations where he would almost always shoot himself. And yes, he ended up scoring the game-winning goal in overtime, beating two players with an aggressive cut and good handling before beating the hot JYP goalie just over the blocker far side. Halttunen's certainly the best 2005-born player in Finland right now and looks poised to be a first-rounder in 2023.

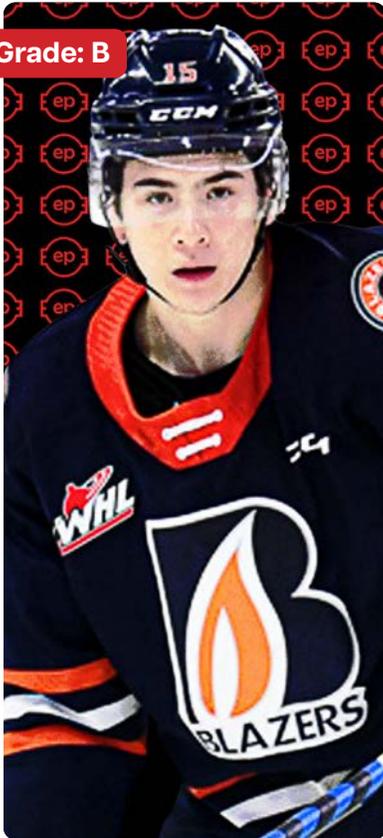
Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2021 - U18 Five Nations, Switzerland

Halttunen played on the top line of Finland's U18 team for the entire tournament, being one of the top point producers on the team throughout the event. Halttunen had some of the best flashes on the team. He's got a strong level of skill, being able to dangle his way through defenders from time to time and being an overall sound handler. He's a very shooting-focused player and sometimes leaves value to the table in rushes by trying to shoot through the defenders legs instead of looking to pass. His one-timer on the power play is a big weapon from the left half wall and he scored one of his goals with it -- he's got a ton of power with it. Halttunen's got some edge to his game, too, and at six-foot-three, he's got the makeup of a goal-scoring power forward. I'm not sold on his playmaking yet, but he did make probably the nicest pass out of all the Finnish players in the tournament with a no-look feed to the net-front for a tap-in. There's definitely first-round potential for 2023.

Lassi Alanen: September 26th, 2021 - Jokerit vs. KOOVEE - U20 SM-sarja

Halttunen was skating on Jokerit's top line and top power play unit. He hammered a power play goal after a clearly practiced play where he rotated from the left half wall, circling from behind the defenceman at the point, received a pass from the right half wall and one-timing it in. The velocity behind that shot was something else. Halttunen also had multiple opportunities to score with one-timers from the left flank. His slap shot is already a big weapon for this level. At 5-on-5 though, I wouldn't say that Halttunen was that dominant. He's got good explosiveness, but the stride form does need some work. His passing execution seemed to be just off that day. Still, he showed decent work ethic off-puck and made some good backchecks, closing in on players along the boards and using his body to separate them from the puck.

Grade: B



63 Connor Levis

AGE 17.945 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 05, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Late-career Jordan Staal



Vision



Tactician

Player Info

RW/C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kamloops Blazers	WHL	68	27	40	67	0.99

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing on a third-line role on a deep Kamloops Blazers squad didn't prevent Connor Levis from scoring 67 points in 68 games. His highly specialized playmaking game was a consistent factor game-in-and-game-out.

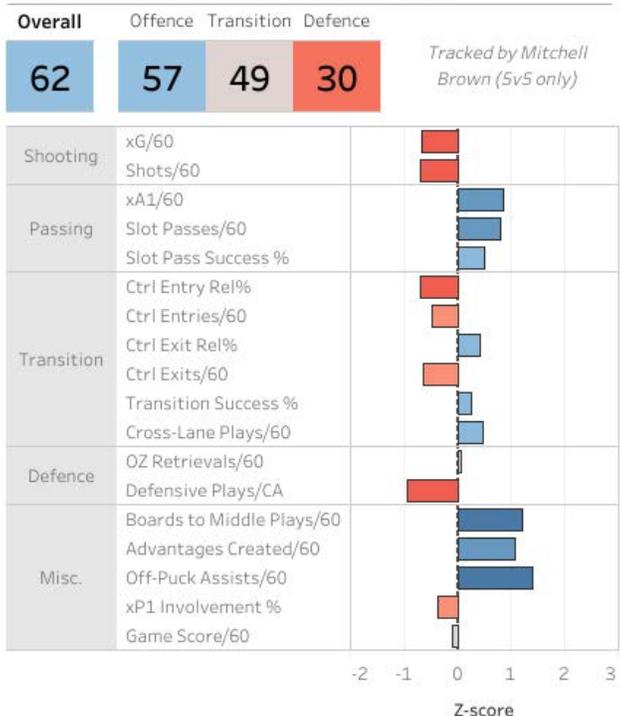
Levis isn't much of a shooter or puck-carrier. Instead, he's an off-the-boards playmaker, combining thievery, puck protection, and passing skill. He's a machine on the end boards, turning puck battles into point-blank chances with backhand and slip passes under pressure. He builds the offence in transition, passing pucks laterally before relocating for a return pass.

While shots were few this season, Levis flashed an NHL-calibre release. He arrives in space at the right moments and adjusts to the lane, ensuring his teammates always have him as an option. Those reads primarily serve his quick-possession passing game right now, but could make him a bigger goal-scoring next season.

When Levis tries to play a more individual game, the skating and handling prove limiting, even when he sets up defenders on angles or claims the middle of the rink. As such, developing more layers to his passing – deception and manipulation – and a sturdier defensive game will be imperative to his NHL success. If he does it, Levis could carry his specialized game to an NHL team's third line.

Connor Levis

F | Kamloops Blazers | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 120.5



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I think I'm a bit bigger of a body; I can use my size and physicality. I can get inside to create plays at the net. I have a good shot when I can get inside and use it. I just do my best to play a structured game." - Connor Levis, June 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Kind of a nothing performance from Levis, despite playing on Kamloops' top line alongside Logan Stankoven and Daylan Kuefler. He even got some looks on the power play. There was one relatively intelligent play, a give-and-go to try and gain the inside when confronted with numbers at the offensive blue line, but it didn't even really materialize so... points for effort, I guess. Mostly, Levis operated in a support role, applying himself physically on the forecheck, backchecking diligently, and always with his motor running high. I'm not sure that Levis can drive a line at this level, which doesn't bode particularly well for his NHL prospects. We'll probably find out next season whether that prediction holds.

J.D. Burke: April 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Doughnuts across the board for Levis on the scoresheet, but I thought this was a really strong performance from him as a support piece. His best work came on the penalty kill. There was a Giants power play in the first period that he effectively neutralized himself, getting in front of every developing play with his stick and quickly transitioning the play up ice, taking tons of time off of the clock in the process. At evens, Levis' work was defined by strong puck support and an unrelenting forecheck. I'm not sure that I saw a lot of skill or high-end offensive instincts with the puck on his stick, but Levis' puck touches were few so that may be a sampling issue. Good game, looked like an end of the board player.

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

A great game by Levis. The skating is a bit of a problem. The form is decent, but the acceleration will need to improve if he wants to reach the NHL. That said, I'm seeing a bit of everything in his game. Flashes of higher end sense (some impressive passes under pressure), physical skills along the boards and in front of the net, defensive help, smart puck movements (including shots aimed for rebounds), give-and-goes, and even some more creative rush patterns. Levis is interesting because he has the frame and the physicality to play a bottom-line role and the skills to maybe move up. He could be a top-64 guy.

David St-Louis: March 11th, 2023 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Levis scored at the very end of the game by tipping a shot when the defence gave up on checking him. It was quite an uneventful outing for him, overall. He kept things neutral. He forechecked, layed a couple of hits, connected plays in transitions,

and make pick plays to create space for teammates. The tools are interesting, but it's harder to evaluate his true skill level when he's barely getting the puck or offensive opportunities.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2023 - Medicine Hats vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Nothing really to see or evaluate in this game. Levis just played a supporting role. His skating stance looks sound for the most part, but his actual output doesn't allow him to beat defenders off the mark. He attacked the net, forechecked, and positioned well defensively. He played on the penalty kill.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Levis' playmaking isn't particularly layered, but it's intelligent and proactive. He connected with a trio of passes off the boards, pre-scanning before receiving and passing at the right moments. In one sequence, he moved back behind the net, bringing a defender with him, before one-touch passing back against the grain for a chance. Immediately turns interceptions and steals into offence. The question remains the mechanics. The strides are weak; his hips rise through his movements and don't sink deep enough into his stance to fully extend his strides and crossovers. When he tries to play a more skilled game in transition, it leads to turnovers. He's not a puckhandler or all that creative, but he reads the play lightning quick and makes positive plays. He deserves to be on our board because of the potential that he becomes this overpowering puck protector and playmaking, but the odds suggest more of a fourth-line passer.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Levis looks like he did in the first half of the season. He's an intelligent forechecker and passer. He understands when to move the puck, when to relocate, when to go cross-ice, and when to delay. Prefers to move pucks to the middle instead of cycling or resetting. A few quick passes off the boards led to opportunities. Showed a bit more shooting skill than usual, highlighted by an NHL release with his chest up, hands in front, and elevating the top arm elbow to narrow the stance and explode through the shot. Without skating or handling as advantages, he will have to rely on his puck protection and intelligence to make the NHL. Both are there. A bit more deception will help, too. He's likely a fourth-line projection, but he has decent odds of playing because his game is so focused around key skills (quick puck movement, getting the middle).

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Levis was shooting the puck in this game, picking a handful of scoring chances. Nothing too noteworthy; he did his usual stuff. He skates his lanes, pushing back defenders or beating them into space and sealing off pressure. Stays in space when necessary. Shot's not notable mechanically (although he prepares his shots, putting pucks straight into his hip pocket as he did for his assist), but he might find some goal-scoring success soon. The passing's really the star. He makes quick reads to the inside. Didn't get a ton of touches in this game, but the forechecking was clicking. He could be a third-rounder, but wouldn't be surprised if he goes higher.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Even in wide-open games like this, Levis doesn't show any additional skill. He makes the occasional play in transition, but he usually just skates straight at the next defender. Rush patterns must improve; he needs to give defenders something to think about. But he's an intelligent player otherwise. He lets pucks go through him to teammates in better position, taps pucks into space instead of handling, and makes tons of crafty plays along the boards. Reads the play, anticipates space, gets inside. Not a dynamic, deceptive, or especially creative player, but he often looks like an NHLer. Could be a late-second, early-third type.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Didn't see anything new from Levis in this game. He's an effective forechecker, defender, and battler. There's definitely passing skill and vision. He works pucks off the boards and passes to the inside. Adapts puck positioning to the lane instead of trying to force a pass through. Backhand skill. Effective under heavy pressure. He's a relatively basic transition puck carrier, with his

best work coming when he's making the early pass and relocating. He's a late-second, early-third-type. An NHLer, but likely in a bottom-of-the-lineup role.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Levis has a few tricks up his sleeve, faking a pass high before cutting inside, faking the move to the middle to gain the zone, or tapping the puck behind him before cutting back. Otherwise, he's relatively limited by his mechanics. The top hand stays glued to his hip and he doesn't have much in-motion skill. But he's an intelligent player who gets plays to the middle. Wins positioning, cuts to the middle, makes the early pass. After passing, he relocates to get open in the middle, constantly adjusting to the passing lane. Levis looks like an NHL player. Not a dynamic one, but perhaps a player who fills a secondary third-line or fourth-line effectively.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Not a complex performance, but a good one from Levis. He wins battles, gets open, or supports down low, then quickly moves the puck to an open teammate. Lots of little passing skills: adjusting to the lane, backhand connections, in-motion plays. Not particularly deceptive or manipulative, but he processes and completes quickly. Consistently got pucks off the boards, usually with that passing skill. Not creative in transition, mostly using passing to further a sequence for his teammates, but he was often creating the advantage for them. Defence was a strength, too: rotated, supported, anticipated passes, and applied pressure. Read plays where his teammates lost their check, then swung down to help when necessary. Skating's weak. Unsure of hands. Looked like a late-second candidate in this game.

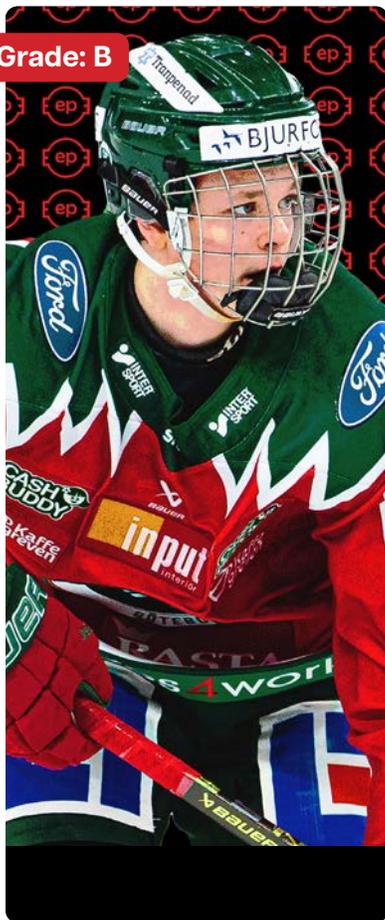
Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Levis is a simple, but effective player. He plays fast then slow, slow then fast, adjusting speeds whenever necessary. After gaining the zone, he looks to slow down, throw out a fake or two, then pass back to the middle to an open teammate. Along the boards, he waits for defenders to lean, then cuts back, bringing the puck across his body early to secure the position. Immediately passes from those positions. Not a best play creator, but generally making positive ones. Defers to his teammates in transition, leaning heavier on off-puck positioning and quick passes. Lots of clever plays off the boards in transition, too. Defensively, he scans often, adjusts constantly, and identifies help defence situations. Sometimes overextends on the steal but his pressure is net positive. Looks like a solid late-second-type.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Levis mostly played on the top-line in this game, complementing the skill of his linemates. It's not always pretty with Levis. He's not especially quick, and prefers to enter a wide, controlled glide to make plays and decisions. He struggles in transition as a result, despite showing vision and play-building ability when given space. In-zone, he shines more. He wins battles, cuts inside, and finds teammates around the net. Conceals his intentions. Generated a goal by passing inside after winning a battle. Later, created a chance by cutting laterally and linking up with a teammate building speed toward the net. Skating lacks depth and skills, although he used a jab to step across the slot. Generated little power, but shows that he can add skills. A fascinating performance because of the clear divide in his game. Curious to watch more.

Grade: B



64 Noah Dower Nilsson

AGE 17.392 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Casey Mittelstadt



Ankle
Breaker



Vision



Lethal
Shooter

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

6

Passing

6

Puckhandling

6

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Region	4	5	7	12	3.00
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Nationell	3	3	3	6	2.00
Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	37	26	28	54	1.46
Frölunda HC	SHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	2	4	6	0.86
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	5	8	13	0.68

SCOUTING REPORT

No draft-eligible player in Europe started their season as explosively as Noah Dower Nilsson. He added 33 points in his first 20 games and would've been a front-runner for the league scoring title had he not gotten hurt in December, which caused him to miss games and interfered with his groove.

Still, only a handful of draft-eligible players in the J20 Nationell have scored at a higher rate over the past few years.

If measured by pure offensive flair and ability, Dower Nilsson would rank near the top in this year's class. He's got an impressive blend of playmaking, raw skill, and offensive sense, but he was also extremely opportunistic – in a good way.

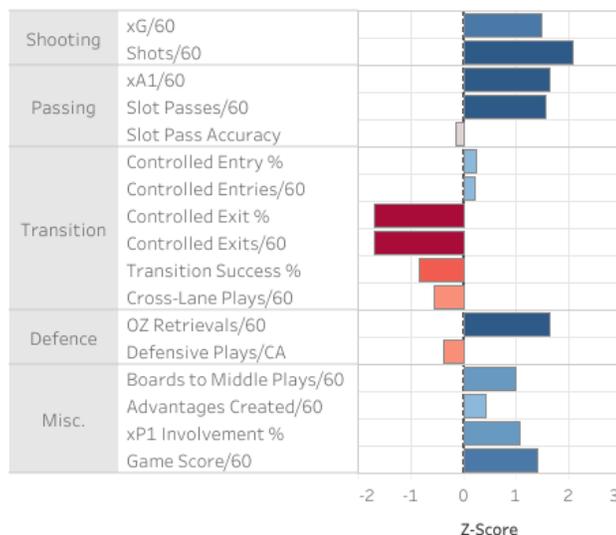
Dower Nilsson was responsible for some of the most impressive playmaking feats of the season, whether it was by manipulating defenders off the rush to create space or by turning forechecking steals into ridiculous spin passes to the slot from behind the net. Even after a lot of viewings, he still managed to surprise you with some of the creative ways he found to create offence. Even while he didn't always make the best decisions and often could've been more efficient, his offensive instincts and sense are still undoubtedly great.

Noah Dower Nilsson

F | Frölunda HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 15 | Minutes Tracked: 234.4

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



That said, there are serious concerns about how his game is going to translate to the next levels. This season, he was far away from being a complete player, focusing almost solely on generating offence. In transition and especially on breakouts, he was very inefficient and often relied on his linemates to get the puck to him on the top of the offensive zone blue line. There's also one serious tool limitation as Dower Nilsson's skating grades out comfortably below-average due to the high stance, short stride, lack of quickness and inability to access his outside edges. You'll be hard-pressed to find many top-six NHL forwards who have as many issues with their skating.

A boom-or-bust tag is very much warranted with Dower Nilsson. If there are notable skating improvements which allow him to become passable defensively and in transition, he certainly has the offensive upside of a top-six creator, almost certainly as a winger. It's a lot to ask, though, and it's reflected in where we ultimately ended up ranking him.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Sweden Stock Watch: David Edstrom's turning heads with Frölunda in the SHL



Scout's Notebook: Three underrated Swedish forwards in the 2023 NHL Draft



Scout's Notebook: Data-driven notes on Mukhanov, Dower Nilsson, Stenberg, and Hämeenaho

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"He was phenomenal in the junior league. I think he's got a lot of offensive upside. The injury hurt him. He couldn't really get his game back after that. He's got 1-on-1 skills. He's probably one of the top Swedish forwards. He made some plays in the first half of the season that were just wow. He was such a threat with the puck. It's one thing to produce, but for me, it's how he put up those numbers. If he puts everything together, he's going to be one hell of a player. I don't have any concern with the skating. The stride is fine. With strength, I think the skating will be fine."
 – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"An offensive, talented forward. He plays a lot on our power play." Sweden U18 head coach Anders Eriksén, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Dower Nilsson hasn't flashed his skills nearly as much at this tournament. He's probably going to continue falling on our board, unfortunately. I see clear progress in his defensive game and the handling skills still appear in flashes, but he's not the playmaker I thought he was at the start of the year – or that facet of his game has gone dormant. He's too risky in the early rounds and I doubt he gets drafted there.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Just not the decisive output you were hoping to see from Dower Nilsson in this one. Canada obviously plays a tighter, more robust system and he was unable to turn his quick hands into anything more than touch and go puck movement. He was ineffectual in his attempts to get into the middle of the ice. Defensively, he did well. He was smart in his positioning, came down

low to aid and support, broke up a cycle play. But he's in a weird spot, he won't be a defensive player and the offensive game appears too soft to really translate.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Dower Nilsson pulled out a forechecking game that I didn't really see from him over the course of the season. He was on the heels of opponents all game, creating steals and forcing them to rush their passes. I didn't really envision that in his projection. If he can solidify that element, on top of continuing to show high-grade stickhandling skills and the vision, then he will cement his spot as a B-level prospect on our board, an interesting project.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Dower Nilsson battled for some pucks. He was more engaged on the boards and around the net. While we did have him too high previously, there is still a unique playmaking skill there. He can find teammates even while under a lot of defensive pressure. He lacks the technical skating ability to evade pressure and reach these options cleanly, but the ideas are there. He's not getting as many pucks as Stenberg, but the skill level (apart from the skating) is close.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Noah had two good looking power play assists in this game. One with a precise cross pass through the slot to a one timer in the net. The other opened up space on the same side by drawing PKers to him and passing behind them.

Other than that, his game wasn't that impressive. He looks faster at this level but he still has trouble with his balance and he did not create enough 5v5. He didn't show much competitiveness either and had some sequences where he cheated defensively.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

These Dower Nilsson viewings just aren't getting any better. The last few have arguably been the weakest hockey he's played this season, which is exactly an encouraging sign. We already knew he's not much of a defensive player and has clocked below-average transition numbers all season, but now the offence isn't flowing that well either. He's spending more time without quality touches. There was a sequence where he had space to cut to the middle and tried to open up his hips, but lost the control of the puck while trying to do so. Turnovers on entry attempts remain a theme. I might have overestimated the degree of the handling skill previously, it's not standing out in these viewings. Instead, the reliance on them is already causing trouble.

He did make one vintage Dower Nilsson play late in the game, reading the defender like a book, intercepting his D-to-D pass behind the net and dishing the puck to the slot for a high-danger chance. Didn't help that much as the viewing still left a bad taste in my mouth.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 25th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Noah's clear weaknesses are not showing progression. His scoring has slightly dropped off late and when you take away the scoring there isn't much left to be excited about. His hockey sense is still amazing though. He thinks the game ahead of everyone and is so well positioned on the ice. He is proactive and gives great support. I really like how he supported well in all three zones in this game.

His skating posture is still bad. He uses his arms a lot to gain speed and his balance is poor. He can show flashes of good explosiveness and good ankle flexion in his straight line skating, but just flashes. His puck skills are not elite either which makes it tough for him to compensate for his lack of balance. He has trouble receiving pucks that aren't on the tape, he has trouble covering the puck while skating forward, he has trouble delivering long passes when his balance is off and so on and so on.

If he can't develop his technique and posture, he is never going to play in the NHL. Earlier in the season, I could hold it to lack of strength or a fast physical growth but I would have wanted to see some progression late in the season. The thing is that he

does not look physically weak either and 6'0 and 183 lbs doesn't suggest that he has much more growth in him.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson added a primary helper in a play that was super impressive if it was indeed intentional. First, it looked like he tried to shoot the puck, got interrupted and the puck slid to the back post for a tap-in, but on further review, it looked like it was possibly Dower Nilsson's plan all along. Probably still not, and I wouldn't give the benefit of the doubt to many prospects there, but I wouldn't put it past this specific player. Still can't say that I'm a huge believer in the translatability of his game. He should continue to produce at the next level if he's given freedom and a set of good teammates to work with, but there needs to happen a lot for him to reach the NHL.

Over the most recent viewings, he hasn't even been that dangerous at producing offence at 5-on-5. He hasn't been clicking with his linemates as well and hasn't been able to enter flow state. A lot of his passing attempts are getting picked off and the lack of quickness is also hurting. His line was able to cycle the puck for long periods of time, but they weren't able to turn that into concrete chances all that often. And offence is still pretty much all that Dower Nilsson does. If that's not going well, he's not providing much value.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson's offensive sense is still a strong point. He anticipates the play like the top scorer that he is, seeing offensive openings in coverage, which mostly showed through his off-puck play and positioning. He also reads opponent's breakouts well, intercepting passes and picking pockets with stick lifts. It does come at the expense of some defence, though he was back playing down the middle in this one and had to contribute more on his own end, which did limit his effectiveness and relevance off the rush. The skating remains a big weak point and he just doesn't have the footspeed or the conditioning to go deep on both ends. Certainly projects as a winger in my eyes, as it allows him to play more relaxed while in the DZ and get up the ice more quickly. I don't think he was necessarily bad defensively, but the lack of games at centre did show itself a couple of times. The inefficiency continues; turned the puck over a lot by trying to deke his way through defenders' triangles unsuccessfully. Overall, I don't think that looked like a top-64 prospect in this one.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

It was really a mistake to have Dower Nilsson as high as we did at the start of the season. A few flashes of playmaking convinced us of a much higher potential than he probably has in reality. Or, more accurately, it made us think that he was closer to reach his upside than he actually is. Dower Nilsson can dangle through traffic and manipulate defenders, but he struggles to make plays in tight spaces due to his skating form. He's a project, an interesting one, but a project nonetheless.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

We might have gotten blinded by Dower Nilsson's playmaking skills in some of his early performances. That, and his scoring. The skating weaknesses and the lack of defensive engagement hurt his projection significantly. He again showed some great ideas in this game, when he did get the puck, but I'm not sure how much he will have it at higher levels if he doesn't add some more dynamic qualities and checking skills. He might be more of a middle-of-the-second-round player.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18 Four Nations

This is not the right environment for Dower Nilsson to shine. He lacked the space and the puck touches. He's a volume creator, meaning that his creativity shines and turns into production when he's allowed to try plays over and over again. He flashed his passing skills, when he made plays under sticks or attempted to connect with teammates in the slot. His skating doesn't allow him to be a consistently effective offensive producer against such a tight checking team.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

This was a good game at showing Dower Nilsson's weaknesses. Just wasn't getting a whole lot done overall. Sure, he had his few moments offensively, showcasing the quick smarts and playmaking with plus handling skill, but didn't get the puck as much in favourable positions as he did in some of his best previous viewings. Still not a big-time play-driver. Considering how good he is as a playmaker in the offensive end, it's weird how much he seems to struggle at passing the puck in transition. The motor is on the lower side defensively. He does scan, but clearly tries to conserve as much energy as possible for counter-attacking opportunities and offence overall.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Another game from Dower Nilsson where he went long times without doing much at all, but then the highlights were really impressive. He's very much a flawed player. The skating is below-average, he doesn't drive play in transition and instead relies on his team to transport the puck to him near the OZ blue line or in-zone, and he doesn't take defence that seriously, loving to just drift away from the DZ as early as possible. But he's also clearly very skilled and manipulative, smart offensive creator. Took pucks to the middle with both his feet and passing. He recognizes passing windows very well, almost always passing with the correct timing. Tried to get even a bit too cute a few times, but the ideas are always there and the execution is also among the best in the draft class, at least from Europe. Very interested to see where he lands on draft day. Obvious strengths, obvious flaws.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 27th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson did not impress in this game except for two particular sequences. In those two, he delivered two Draisaitl-type assists with his back behind the play. In both sequences he scanned the ice both before and when he got the puck. He then had full control of the situations and delivered passes to open space where a teammate could skate into it and score. It was like he had eyes on the back of his head.

Other than that, Dower Nilsson looked like he was chasing the game. He did not support either exits or entries well and was not the driver on his line. He lost the puck easily a couple of times. He did not show any strong manipulating skills with the puck either. He worked hard and won some puck battles but also lost some by being too passive into the situation.

His skating is, as said, a big issue for him. He gets the puck off balance and can have trouble covering it when his balance is off. His hockey sense is elite and the big question is how much can he improve the other stuff.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson delivered two magnificent assists in this one. He might be one of the very best spin passers in the entire draft. For many, those passes seem like desperate last resorts, but Dower Nilsson could actually be able to create with them consistently even at the next level. And I can't really think that he's getting lucky at this point with the rate that he's pulling them off. Good scanning habits sure do help in this regard. It wasn't a very good game otherwise, though. The usual struggles to get involved in transition. The off-puck stuff was still there in the offensive zone, but he couldn't quite receive a couple of the passes that were directed at him in the slot. He missed quite a bit of time injured before this one, so we can cut him some slack for that, though. If you want to be optimistic, it's still impressive how he can manufacture two goals even when rusty and having a quieter game otherwise. The hockey sense was still on display, even if in a limited extend.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson's playmaking continues to shine in tight spaces. He can slip pucks under stick and also spin on himself to deliver precise feed to teammates in other corridors. He has the playmaking formula down: He attracts defenders on himself, moves them around, and then finds teammates in high-danger areas. His forechecking has improved, but he doesn't really have the tools to get pucks back, as his skating is a bit of a problem. So he needs a David Edstrom to do that work for him. But if he gets the puck in good spots, near the back wall, at the halfwall, he can leverage those advantages into something impressive. A limited player, but with clear hockey sense and handling skills.

David St-Louis: December 3rd, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson's hockey sense continues to impress me a lot. He clearly thinks the game at a level that is much higher than everyone else on the ice, with and without the puck. He delays and speeds up plays to involve teammates and make defenders as uncomfortable as possible. He uses teammates to move past defenders, feints, and change of speeds. He orchestrates whole offensive sequences by himself. I really think he could thrive in the NHL even as a below-average skater, if he learns to be more physical and develops the net-driving even more. He was found around the net a lot in this game. A first-rounder for me.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

The rumours of Dower Nilsson's demise were greatly exaggerated. What a game from him. He did play a ton, but also racked up scoring chances left and right and also set them up with equal amount of pace. According to my data, this was the most productive 5-on-5 showing from any draft-eligible player I've tracked this season, with over 2.5 worth of expected primary points. Also recorded a staggering 13 slot passes. The hockey sense is simply very high. He sees where the puck is going next. He didn't do much heavy lifting in transition, fading to wait the puck on top of the blue line, getting it there many times and then cooked from there. Also did get pucks in motion with well-timed movements to the middle. Fantastic playmaking from below the goal line, using slips, hooks, even spin passes to circumvent the defender. Impressive delay game off the rush, even if he's maybe too reliant on it as he can't outrace defenders outside consistently. Ended up scoring from a rebound, but also showed a lot of shooting skill. Has the in-stride wrister in his arsenal, also flashed a pretty mechanically sound curl-and-drag shot off the rush to curl around the defender's stick.

The off-puck instincts in the offensive zone are really good, too. Circles up high without the puck, then enters the slot with the perfect timing for a scoring chance. Obviously benefits from playing on one of the top teams in the league, as they're able to set him up when he makes himself available, but still. The skating is still a problem, probably a 4 grade. But how much does it matter at the end of the day when you're a high-end thinker and have above-average shooting and playmaking skill? Definitely looked like a first-round worthy talent here.

Jimmy Hamrin: December 2nd, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Linköpings HC - J20 Nationell

Noah was the best offensive player for his team in this game by far. He scored the only goal and created a lot. He shows strong awareness of space and finds openings both with the puck and without. He is particularly strong in the offensive cycle game, switching places and is always near the puck and going to the right areas for his teammates to have an easy pass into open space because Noah is available there. His hockey sense is his best asset.

Noah's skating is not pretty to look at. It is clear though that he can improve his speed and balance with better strength in his legs and ankles. His balance is centred in his lower body and uses long strides. The technique though looks at times weird. His east-west mobility is limited and his backwards skating also. His upper body movement takes energy but does not generate speed by the looks of it.

Noah's puck skills are good, especially his wrist shot. He scored a goal from distance in this game and he can fire it while moving forward. He is good at creating space for his shot just before he fires it. He controls the puck well at range also, but lacks the ability to open space with just his hands. He could get better at deking while skating, he had a few sequences where the space shrunk as he could not move past the defenseman because of his skating. Still, he covers the puck well skating with his legs wide and controlling the puck far from his body. It is clear that his brain is doing most of the work for both his hands and feet. The ability to be at the right place positionally is better than his actual skill set.

Defensively, Noah was solid in this game. He had some strong backchecks and competed well in his own end. Physically he lacks strength and balance but he does not shy away and I like his competitiveness.

A future outlook for Noah is as a smart top six forward (center or winger) with good positional awareness and with solid point production. His skating should be able to improve a bit with more strength. He lacks elite tools other than his brain though.

Lassi Alanen: November 23th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

A pretty lacklustre showing from Dower Nilsson in this one. Started to question his true skill level. He wasn't driving the play in pretty much any meaningful sense, being reliant on opponents' mistakes and counter-attack opportunities instead. Mishandled the puck multiple times on exit and entry attempts. The skating also hurts his transition upside and effectiveness quite a lot, making him more dependant on the handling. Sure, he still could've had a few points, with one cross-ice 2-on-1 pass and another rush setup. But I'm starting to have doubts about the translatability of his game. Could've just been an off game, of course. We'll have to see how things start to trend.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 12th, 2022 - USA vs. Sweden - U18 Five Nations

Noah did not have a lot of success in this game but I like his efforts and competitiveness. He played wing instead of centre which is his most common position. He created chances with his skating although he is not fast or skates technically well. His cross overs looked good and he travelled in the offensive zone and had some good entries.

Noah lost the puck a lot though and his puck protection skills need work. When he skates at full speed, he is not able to cover the puck well. He fell multiple times with the puck and it is clear that he lacks ankle strength to be strong on the puck. He was not able to open space with his hands offensively either.

As a winger he was inconsistent in his puck support, especially from the backend. He cheated for offence and made himself too far away from the puck which got a teammate defenseman in trouble. Most of the time he made himself open though and was a good player for his team on both breakouts and entries.

I also like how he attacks the inside. He was pushed to the outside but always tried to find a way in. He drew a penalty that way too. He wants to make stuff happen and was never a no show in his shifts.

When I see Noah against high quality opponents when it comes to speed and strength at this level it is clear that he knows how to play but lacks the strength and speed to execute it. With a good physical development his skating, especially his balance, will be stronger. If he does that, this will be an interesting prospect. His skating will at best be average, but his hockey sense and competitiveness stands out for me.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - U18 Five Nations

I still see incredible flashes of hockey sense in Dower-Nilsson's game. Like his teammates, he barely got the puck in favourable spots. Hard to evaluate him. But in his one-on-ones, he baited sticks, spotted the puck into space, and found ways to extend the possession of his team just a little while longer. He also forced his way inside and lost the puck, but the playmaking and supporting instincts are there. The skating will be a huge hurdle, however.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Five Nations

The skating is a large weakness here. Dower Nilsson always has to find workarounds on the ice. It reduces his ability to manoeuvre around opponents and protect pucks from them. That being said, he makes the right plays and has an uncommon creativity, like the time where he spun on himself to launch the puck to the other side of the ice, in a pocket of space, to a teammate. The playmaking is high-end if he is in a situation where the skating doesn't matter. He should further develop his passing game, use more give-and-goes, to avoid running into those situations, but he's still pretty dangle-focused right now.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Västerås - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson reminds me of Mark Stone in the way he plays. I'm not sure if he watches Stone, but there are many similar elements. The skating looks about the same: high-stance and short strides. His defensive game is based around stealing pucks from unsuspecting opponents (but also on good rotations and lane identifications; he plays PK) and he's a manipulative playmaker who uses lateral cuts along the ice and delays to find teammates and build scoring chance. The handling skills look

quite high-end; multiple sequences where he dangles and keeps the puck against multiple defensive sticks. The skating remains very limiting; there is only one Stone, but Dower Nilsson looks like an interesting prospect. He's scoring a lot, too.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Västerås IK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Just a very uneventful showing from Dower Nilsson, particularly at 5-on-5. Just couldn't get much offence going, either mishandling or passing inaccurately with most of his touches. There were cool ideas, like spin passing from the boards to the middle, but the execution didn't quite work. Then again, picked up a loose puck near the goal line and made a crafty pass across the net-front for a catch-and-release goal. There's definitely skill and offensive smarts, it's just not very consistent.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson is a pretty interesting player. His production has been outstanding to start the season, but there's definitely question marks about his game. He added a goal at the end of the game from a rebound and a primary assist earlier, sniffing out a potential pass, intercepting it in the slot, moved the goalie to his backhand side and then dished across the net for his teammate for a tap-in. He's clearly smart at identifying openings offensively, but also does so in less translatable ways, ruthlessly fleeing the DZ in the hopes of a counter-attack opportunity. Flashed some shooting skill, executing an in-stride wrister well off the rush, using the defenceman as a partial screen. Skating looked at least slightly below-average projection-wise. He lacks ankle flexion, the upper-body is inconsistent and he's not particularly quick, either. Not the most efficient with his touches, turning the puck over just after crossing the blue line a few times. Approached defenders from arcs, but often entered a glide before trying to deke below their sticks – didn't work that well.

Lassi Alanen: September 14th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

A pretty unremarkable showing from Dower Nilsson here. Offensively it consisted mostly just from a few rush chances from outside, also a couple of nice backchecks and puck steals with stick lifts. In transition, he struggled a lot to move the puck efficiently, opting for a lot of wishful lobs towards the middle from the boards. I guess it did work one time where he two opponents misread the situation and his linemate was able to get to a breakaway and score. But mostly he just ended up turning the puck over trying to exit the zone. Skating looks below-average and he lacks quickness, especially the later the shift goes. I've seen better from him.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Dower Nilsson is clearly skilled and pretty smart, too. Knew how to get lost from the defenders in the OZ, only to time his move to the slot or near it for a scoring chance off a pass. Some reckless handling, but also some sequences showing quick hands in tight and some deception. Clearly went for a lacrosse attempt in one of his first shifts of the game but couldn't lift the puck properly. Hand-eye coordination is still evidently strong based on how many pucks he was able to swat from air. Knack for OZ pass interceptions, too. Skating is pretty clearly the biggest issue, stride lacks depth and he's not particularly quick or elusive. Also seemed to look pretty gassed late in shifts, especially later on. Not sure how much you'd want to read into it, though.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Dower Nilsson had one of the best plays of the game, receiving a puck in the slot with a timed dash. Instead of taking a backhand shot, he dropped the puck back to a teammate in an even better position, leading to a goal. Took pucks from the boards to the inside lane with both his hands and passing skill. Skating looked rough at times, unable to use his outside edges and lacking quickness. Worth watching closer.

Grade: B



65 Alex Čiernik

AGE 17.937 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 08, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF A more skilled Nicolas Aubé-Kubel



Fleet of Foot



Draft Twitter Fave

Player Info

LW/RW

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Södertälje SK J20	J20 Nationell	18	9	12	21	1.17
Södertälje SK	HockeyAllsvenskan	15	1	5	6	0.40
Västerviks IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	10	2	4	6	0.60
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	5	2	1	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Alex Čiernik has been a household name in the scouting sphere for some time. Having moved to Sweden at a young age, Čiernik already scored at over a point-per-game pace at the J20 level last season and played a key role for Slovakia's U18 team internationally.

This season, he faced a common problem by already having dominated in the juniors but not being quite ready for a full-time role at the men's level.

For a smaller scoring winger, Čiernik has most of the technical skills to build a successful career. He's an explosive skater who can weave through neutral zone defences with crossover-heavy rush patterns and accelerate quickly to win loose puck races. His hands can also keep up with his feet, allowing him to attack the triangle of the defender in a number of different ways.

At the J20 level, he relied heavily on these two tools, which led to some great highlights but also some frustrating sequences. Čiernik was often the victim of tunnel-vision, opting for a lot of low-percentage shots and missing many high-level reads in the process.

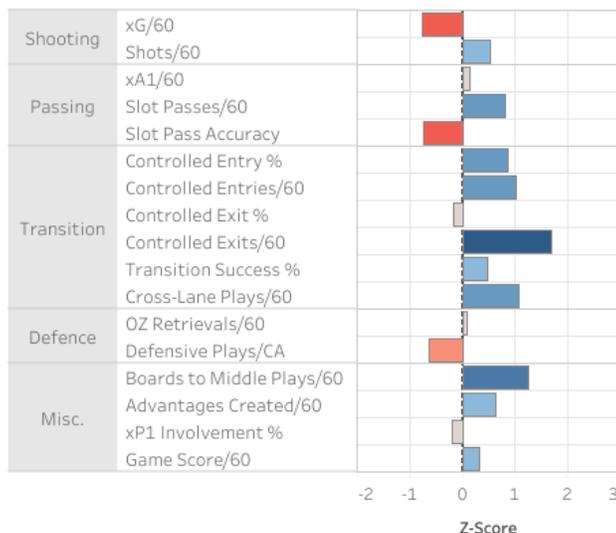
Used to being able to outrace opponents regularly, he hasn't developed much of a physical game yet, which hurted him along the boards. Without the puck, he was often inefficient and defensively uninterested, though his effort level was noticeably better in HockeyAllsvenskan.

Alex Čiernik

F | Södertälje SK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 150.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



However, some of the answers to Čiernik's problems already appear in his game from time to time. He's shown he can play more of a give-and-go game, even if it has been only in short bursts. Even if he's quite old for this year's draft, the most important tools are above-average across the board; he could reasonably continue to outskate defenders even at further levels.

Čiernik is very much so a boom-or-bust type prospect with relatively high upside but also a low chance of panning out.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Alex Čiernik navigating the “ups and downs” of shifting teams and priorities in his draft year

≡ GAME REPORTS

Marek Novotný: March 29th, 2023 - BIK Karlskoga U20 vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Alex Čiernik is a supporting forward with good skating skills, especially speed. He's active in both offensive and defensive ways, showing his skilled hands especially by dishing out accurate passes during the PP. He wasn't afraid to go for the difficult cross-ice passes and was constantly looking for teammates in open space. He also got in a nice breakaway chance that probably would have resulted in a goal if he had passed to a open teammate, but in the end he chose to shoot. Čiernik is a prospect who will be selected in this year's draft.

Marek Novotný: March 18th, 2023 - Mora IK vs. Södertälje - HockeyAllsvenskan

Great game by Čiernik. His game was without significant errors, he was active in all directions. I liked him the most on offense, he offered himself in open spaces, thanks to that he also got a great scoring chance. The Slovak forward is a big threat on the PP, especially as a playmaker. I especially liked the fact that he was able to work in tight spaces, got out of pressure with relative ease, and was also able to use the boards under pressure to pass to a teammate in the neutral zone. His shot is ok I would say. I see him as a nice 2nd round pick, more in the second half of that round.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 12th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

It would have been better for Čiernik if he had gotten the chance to finish the season with Västerås in Allsvenskan. He got an offensive role on a level that really challenged him to learn and develop. This level does not do that and Čiernik isn't doing much to help himself either. It is clear that he needs to be challenged to step up, like in Allsvenskan and the WJC. He shows good awareness defensively. He forced some break ups with smart reads. He shows a very low grade of aggression and intensity though. He should be able to dominate more. With the puck, he has strong puck control and a good shot. His passing precision is good too. He did not take good advantage of the time and space he had and over handled the puck or chose simple plays over creative plays. He had some moments where he lacked vision with the puck too. In one sequence, he opened up the defence with a quick turn and deke but wasn't able to detect a clear and open teammate in the slot and chose to skate behind the net with the puck instead and the play died.

Čiernik is a fast skater with good puck skills. He reads the game well defensively but his offensive hockey sense does not stand out. He looked like a goal scorer with tunnel vision. He is at best a B prospect.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Södertälje SK vs. Björklöven - HockeyAllsvenskan

Some good moments from Čiernik. He plays a more collective game than I remembered. He constantly used teammates off the rush and in the offensive zone. It was his way of avoiding contact mostly, but he also built some nice scoring chances with attempted give-and-goes and tic-tac-toes. He did force some passes but the playmaking seems like a strength overall. He was involved in the backcheck, too. Čiernik reminds me of other good European player of his type, smaller and speedy, who didn't translate to the NA game.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 25th, 2023 - Tingsryd vs Södertälje - Hockeyallsvenskan

A weird game where Čiernik got almost half of his ice time on the power play. He had the puck a lot with room but didn't get much done. He scanned with the puck, had some deceptive moves with passing up to the point but had trouble getting to inside the slot and getting passes through the box. He didn't showcase his biggest strengths with speed and his shot.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Södertälje SK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Still not sure what to make of Čiernik's play in the latest viewings at this level. I don't know if we should put up that much emphasis on these games (wouldn't be the first underperforming player who is frustrated about being sent back to juniors at this point in his career), but on the other hand, I had questions about his play even earlier in the season, mostly about the hockey sense. He just defers to low-value plays way more often than he should based on the tools. Basically, it seems like if he doesn't have a big tool advantage (unlikely at next levels), he's going to struggle to create. There were a few solid plays later in the game; his playmaking isn't necessarily bad even if inconsistent. There's just a clear lack of urgency. He's a pick based on the tools, but how high? Maybe still a late second-rounder, but could be surpassed by others.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Södertälje SK vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

This was probably the weakest viewing I've had of Čiernik at the J20 level this season. He basically got nothing accomplished offensively and even struggled in transition at times. The circling on the perimeter has been a longer trend, but it was especially noticeable here. He had the tools required to take the puck to the inside multiple times here, but passed on those opportunities and mostly just kept cycling the puck or passing it to the point. The playmaking just isn't high-end enough for him to make things work if he's always on the outside; he needs to generate openings by pushing his limits. The viewing overall seemed to lack passion: gave up on plays too quickly, wasn't really competing that hard for pucks. Could be just that he doesn't think he should be playing at this level anymore, which wouldn't make him the first player to do so.

Lassi Alanen: February 13th, 2023 - Västerviks IK vs. BIK Karlskoga - HockeyAllsvenskan

Čiernik's defensive game looks a tad bit better now than it did at the start of his loan and in the junior ranks. One well-earned and notable breakup to disrupt a shot in the slot. I don't know how projectable it is still, but he didn't really put in any effort in some previous viewings, and that's not been the case in the two previous ones at least. Offence is still harder for him to generate. He wasn't particularly efficient creator in the junior ranks, either, but benefitted a lot from the skating and handling advantages to get in favourable spots more often than the rest. Now, he's kept to the outside more easily and smothered physically along the boards, even if he has the quickness and enough physical skill to get the entry. The playmaking just isn't that high-end, neither are the offensive instincts.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Västerviks IK vs. Mora IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Pretty much on par with my previous Čiernik viewings with Västerviks. Gets a lot fewer puck touches than he does in the J20 Nationell, especially in advantageous situations, which limits his effectiveness quite a lot. He's not a high-end thinker, so when he's forced to rely less on his speed off the rush, his offence suffers quite a bit. He did get one high-danger chance from the slot after a feed from below the goal line, but it wasn't a particular display of off-puck timing or instincts. The skating isn't as big of an advantage as it is at the junior ranks, so his game is getting exposed a bit. Doesn't really plan his plays well in advance. Some of the passing in transition was fine, but he was mostly forced to cut back and re-group. One nice defensive hustle on the

backcheck that prevented a very possible scoring chance, which was nice to see.

Lassi Alanen: February 1st, 2023 - Västerviks IK vs. Södertälje SK - HockeyAllsvenskan

I have a lot of respect for Čiernik's technical base. The skating posture, mechanics blended with the handling are great to build upon. He flashed those tools multiple times in transition, taking the puck to the middle, then passing across the grain for an entry. Not much else was accomplished at 5-on-5, though, aside from few offensive zone retrievals and simple passing plays. I have yet to see flashes of high-level skill in the HockeyAllsvenskan from Čiernik. He's not the most active defensive player, either, and lacks necessarily physical skills along the boards. Probably still a second-rounder, but likely a late one.

Lassi Alanen: January 25th, 2023 - Västerviks IK vs. Almtuna IS - HockeyAllsvenskan

Two secondary helpers for Čiernik in this one, one of them on the power play and one on the game-winner in overtime. Neither was that notable, though, just simple passes with the heavy lifting being done by the other players. Čiernik's skating is an advantage, but he's not able to just easily coast through the neutral zone at this level, requiring him to dump the puck in more. He's not a high-end forechecker despite the speed. The physical skills rate as below-average as a projection. I'm not sure if the skill or playmaking are really that great, either. He flashes the odd delay off the rush, but the outside lane drive is still what he opts in for the most part. Didn't get any real shooting opportunities at 5-on-5 either.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 20th, 2023 - Västervik vs. AIK - Hockeyallsvenskan

Alex has found a good place with the last place team, Västervik. He plays regularly on the top line and gets power play minutes. He was involved in a lot of the action in this game. He uses his explosive speed to his advantage and he was good at finding opportunities to shoot the puck. He scored a goal on the power play and had some good looks to score.

This level is probably good for Alex development. He can't just beat opponents with speed and that was clear in this game also as he was shut down in the neutral zone on many occasions. He started an attack and his space just shrunk and he either passed the puck in panic or lost it trying in a deke attempt at the offensive blue line. He learned as the game went along though. He dumped the puck in a few times and had some good entries too. There were a few plays where he actually slowed his pace down to find a back door pass to open up the attack. The pattern in his game is a shoot-first attacker with explosiveness as his weapon. His wrist shot is dangerous inside the slot but it is not an elite shot. I would like to see more stick manipulation and smarter playmaking to bump him up as an A-prospect but I like this situation and how is slowly adapting. He is still very involved in the game and tries to make better plays. He has a tough time along the boards at this level yet and it almost looked like he did shy away from contact a few times.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Västerviks IK vs. IF Björklöven - HockeyAllsvenskan

Čiernik scored in his first game on loan with Västerviks in HockeyAllsvenskan, and what a slick goal it was. Received a cross-ice pass with his skate straight to his wheelhouse, then dragged it back close to his body for a short side release just over the blocker to beat the defender and the goalie, using the former as a screen. Not the most memorable game otherwise, didn't get many puck touches in the offensive end. The skating should be an advantage at this level, too. Applied solid back pressure on few backchecks. Interesting to see if this loan is going to be a longer term one.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Södertälje SK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Čiernik's skating advantage at this level is very clear. You could reasonably project that his skating could be an advantage even at the NHL level. It makes him one of the better puck-carriers at this level, easily weaving through pressure and beating opponents wide all the time. He could use the middle more often for my liking. The transition passing in this one was quite impressive at times, too, craftily passing from the boards to the middle on multiple breakouts. Added a primary assist for a partial 2-on-0 when the opposing defender got blocked and slipped from the contact of his teammate. I don't think he's a high-level playmaker or a manipulator. The shot is decent but not notable. The defensive projection isn't particularly noteworthy either; he's going to put in a lot of work to become a more projectable third-liner.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 2nd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ20

Čiernik left the game prematurely and only played half way through the third period. He is an explosive skater. His skating technique isn't super effective on longer distances or doesn't make him particularly agile. He uses a natural explosiveness to shift pace on short distances and it is very useful in transition. Canada is the team with the highest pace in this tournament but Čiernik could beat them to the puck. That is a weapon he will always have at any level.

Čiernik also has a quick release and a dangerous one-timer. He had three shots in this game and only had a rebound in front of the net that did hit the net. The other two shots were blocked and he wasn't able to open up space with either his hands or his speed to give himself good room for his shot. He doesn't over handle the puck and tries to play the game fast, and with more skill and agility he could become a good offensive player. If he can't add that I see concerns in his overall offensive game. He will need to be able to create space in more various ways. Čiernik works hard, competes well and plays with intensity in this game. His passing game, like his shot, needs room to be effective. He can show awareness close around the puck and make fast decisions though.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Slovakia vs Latvia - WJ20

Čiernik's speed is really impressive. He will be able to outskate NHLers just like he outskates the opposition at this tournament. Of course, like many players with fleet feet, he has based his game around his speed. He rushes the puck, adds feints inside his crossovers, accelerates to win pucks, and makes passing plays at speed, too. He made some weird decisions in this one, but overall, the game looks translatable, to an extent. His good posture means he could add even more speed as he matures.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Finland vs. Slovakia - WJ20

Čiernik has the technical ability to play at the speed that his feet give him. He can chain handling moves and processes the play fast, showing that through his instantaneous usage of teammates off the rush. He also has the manipulation and the anticipation of passing lane opening. His speed is also a pressure tool and we saw him cover for teammates at times defensively. He's an interesting player.

David St-Louis: November 30th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs. Kristianstads - HockeyAllsvenskan

This is a player who relies entirely on his speed of feet and hands to create. He looks to outspeed every shift and generates mostly through individual efforts, winning loose pucks, creating steals... He's elusive but he definitely takes advantage of the European Ice where there is more space to escape to. He's quite attentive and engaged, however -- maybe he learns to play a better defensive and collective game. He's a pick, probably, but I'm not sure if he's a B.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Quite often Čiernik is just outskating his opposition at this level. He comes down low in his own end to get the puck, then transports it up the ice with weight shift fakes and handling, occasionally with a give-and-go. It's what he does with those rushes that's a bit troubling. He has the habit of just throwing pucks towards the slot with a rather low success rate. To be fair, he did start to cook more the later the game went and eventually made a nice backhand pass from below the goal line to set up a game-tying goal late in the third as they had pulled their goalie. Quite certainly a B-grade prospect.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Switzerland U20 vs Slovakia U20 - ICH Trophy

An impressive performance from Čiernik who drove his line's offence, a line centered by top prospect Dvorsky. He's flat out better than Dvorsky at creating something out of nothing. He does it with his speed, but not only. He has a sense for where teammates are and he reached a few of them with skilled backhand saucers and slip passes. He scans on retrievals, moves to create better passing angles, and has some tricks, like cutting in a defender's space and getting his stick under the defender's stick to fire. He scored that way. He's capable of deception...A lot of qualities there. He's a risky pick if you draft him too high because of his lighter build and game that is based on his skating, but in the latter second or third round, he's a good choice.

He doesn't seem as interested by the defensive game at the moment.

Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Čiernik didn't do much at all at 5-on-5. Struggled with simple things such as pass receptions and basic handling tasks, fumbling the puck at odd positions at times. Couldn't really get his outside lane drives going, was stopped rather easily without proper deception or other forms of setup. Plays in transition lacked pre-scanning, which resulted in a lot of blind passes thrown to the middle without much success. I'm not sure if Čiernik does have any high-end tools, maybe the skating. He's pretty well-rounded, but I'd have to see more from him to buy into the hype.

Lassi Alanen: September 17th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Already having scored at a high clip last season, Čiernik can coast at times but still generate chances. Most of his best work in this one was done right after forechecking steals in the OZ, pick-pocketing the puck from the defender with a quick stick lift, then attacking the middle. Still pretty inconsistent defensively with his scanning and urgency. Some solid rushes where he delayed, dropped the puck to the second wave and blocked the defender to give his linemate more space to drive outside.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Södertälje SK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

I thought that Čiernik was - at least to some extent - a victim of his teammates' inability to move the puck or make plays. Instead of opening up space for him off the rush and passing to space or just passing early, they multiple times skated towards him, dragging the defender with them and then passed. But whenever Čiernik had some room to work with off the rush, he did pretty good work. He is an inside-driven player who uses the middle in transition, utilizes changes of pace and quick direction changes to maneuver his way around defenders, both outside and inside. Scored two goals at evens, one from a rush rebound and another where his shot luckily bounced to the net after a deflection by the opposition. Skill level seemed pretty high. Defensively, I would have liked to see more urgency and scanning. A player worth monitoring throughout the season.

Marek Novotný: September 4th, 2022 - Sodertälje SK vs. BIK Karlskoga - Friendly game

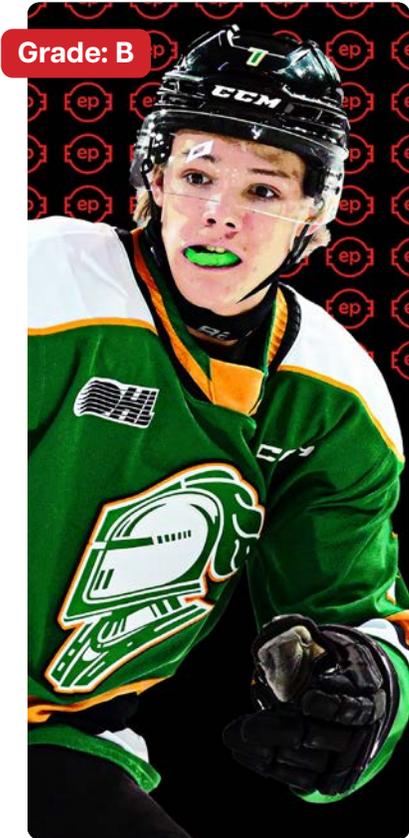
Alex Čiernik played an interesting game, at least in terms of being able to show some of his strengths. He's a dynamic skater who was constantly chasing opposing players all over the ice. His straight-line speed is great, his first 3 steps are enough for him to develop amazing speed. He is very involved in the game overall, especially in the offensive zone. He's also shown that he has quality hands. Defensively though, it hasn't been a positive. He lacked more activity, guarding the opponent, and vision around him.

Marek Novotný: August 27th, 2022 - Sodertälje SK vs. Valerenga - Friendly game

I love how active a player he is. He brings energy to every substitution and the relentless pace he has throughout the game is great. Čiernik can make a nice switch, get around the opponent, he definitely has the hands to do it. Too bad he doesn't have the puck on his stick as much, otherwise I believe he would be playing much more dangerous hockey. Great forechecking role, but his defensive work was really bad.

Marek Novotný: August 26th, 2022 - Sodertälje SK vs. Stjernen Hockey - Friendly game

Čiernik is an offensive weapon. First of all, if you see a loose puck on the ice, he's the first player to skate for it. His role in the offensive zone is versatile as he is very active in all directions. But overall his ability to steal the puck and pass it quickly to one of his teammates is his big responsibility. He did that in this game, recording one assist. He is a very dangerous offensive forward. There's still that one missing step to finish things off, but the offensive potential is huge. Defensively, however, his play is weak and his passing style, when he often sends a backhand flip to his teammates at times, is also not ideal as he caused turnovers a couple of times.



Grade: B

66 Easton Cowan

AGE 17.323 DATE OF BIRTH May 20, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Mats Zuccarello



Motor



Vision



Tactician

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	6	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
London Knights	OHL	68	20	33	53	0.78

SCOUTING REPORT

Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown finished one of his game reports on Easton Cowan with this line: "He's intelligent and creative, and, for the most part, doesn't rely on advantages that he won't have at the next level."

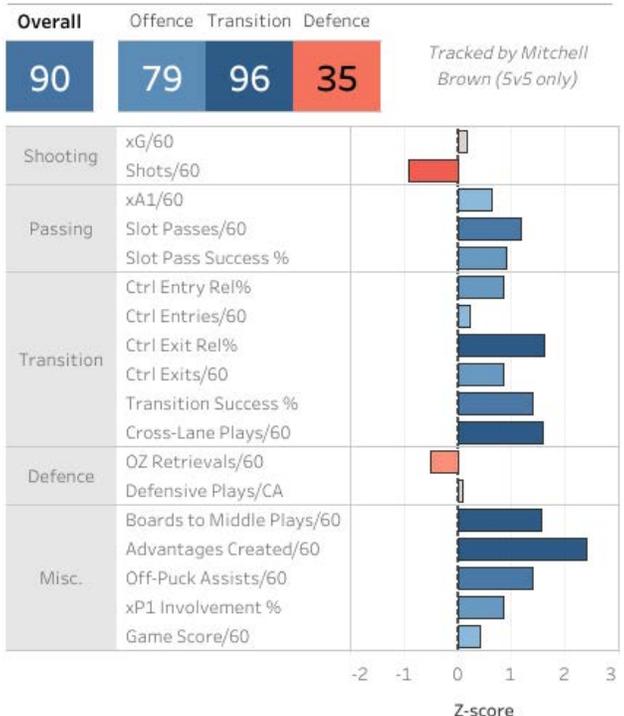
The last part is what influenced our ranking of Cowan more than anything. Contrary to other undersized-by-NHL-standards CHLers who create by outspeeding and outdangling the opposition, the London Knights winger does it in a more projectable way – by outsmarting opponents. His hockey sense will remain an advantage at higher levels.

Of course, we would like for him to have blazing speed, multiple acceleration gears, and quick hands to go with it; these skills would make his NHL future more certain, but we do feel confident in his ability to adapt to the higher level of play. Even under high defensive pressure, the energetic Cowan should still be able to link passing plays in transition, manipulate defensive gaps with clever movements and feints, and find pockets of space in the slot.

He sees plays others do not and his passing skills and high motor made up for some of his skating flaws this season. He spotted teammates rushing in even behind defensive lines, connected with them with hook and slip feeds, and then skated as hard as he could

Easton Cowan

F | London Knights | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 120.3



to then join them on their attacks.

“A bit of deception to his movements, using weight shifts to show one thing but preparing another,” Brown wrote in a February report. “Attacks the middle and works plays high. He anticipates his teammates’ routes and involves them. Bypasses defenders with quick passes then sprints for the return. The defence was strong, too.”

While Cowan remains more of a long-shot NHLer than some other players we have on our board, with a little skill development, his game could take off. In a year or two, he could look like a future top-nine and power play scorer for an NHL team.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: 7 standout single-game performances

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 11th, 2023 - London Knights vs Peterborough Petes - OHL

You have to admire Cowan's work rate. He just never stops. I would like him to have a bit more control over the game and his game sometimes, but the playmaking flashes continue to appear. He establishes body positioning on pucks, spins off his check, and battles for possession. He does try too hard sometimes with his choice of plays and drives around the ice, but I like that he uses teammates when they're available. And he has a pretty good sense for moving away from the puck, for attacking pockets of space at the right time. He's very inside-driven, too. A player who could make a lot of noise over the next years in the OHL.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

I didn't see as much of Cowan's game in this one. He made a few nice slip passes to teammates, attacked with pace in transition, connect plays on his line, and also drove the net. But he got pushed off the puck on the walls. His best play came in the second frame on a two-on-one. He got the puck faked a shot and sent a pass back to his teammate at the far-post for the goal. The flashes of hockey sense are still there in his game, but we might have him too high based on the overall profile and tool kit.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan picked up a few points, but it wasn't his most eventful game. He took advantage of the mistakes of opponents. He scored on the penalty kill -- a great shot that he delayed an extra beat to force the goalie to go down. He couldn't really separate from opponents, due to his skating form, but he eluded them with 10-and-2s and still managed to reach passing lanes. He was always scanning defensively and offensively and turning defence into offence. I still like the offensive skills, but I didn't see the flashes of high-end hockey sense as much in this one as he got less favourable situations.

Lauren Kelly: March 9th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan's lone point of the game came off a nice play to pick up the assist, retrieving a loose puck while on the penalty kill, carrying it through the neutral zone as he waited for Barkey to get open, and sent the puck past two defenders right to Barkey in the slot. His playmaking is probably his strongest asset at this point, but he's also a reliable off-puck player. He's unafraid to attack the middle and is good in defensive support, lifting sticks and trying to force players off pucks when he has the opportunity to. He's

probably more of a third round pick than top-64, but I really like his game.

David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan's skating is a bit of a problem in his NHL projection. It's wide and he doesn't get much power out of it, but he's got the playmaking part of the game down: He knows his option, anticipates his teammates' routes, links plays skillfully, and can even use deception (to an extent). He also drove the net quite often in this one. He's a connector at this level. I'm not sure I see an NHL translatable player based on the pace and the lack of mechanical ability. I like his ideas.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Another game where Cowan was London's best draft eligible player. He scored with a wrister down the winger and set up a goal with a quick pass to the point. The most exciting parts were the patience and give-and-go game. He never sprints needlessly. He steps into the defender, then cuts back or peels off. A bit of deception to his movements, using weight shifts to show one thing but preparing another. Slip passes. Attacks the middle and works plays high. He anticipates his teammates' routes and involves them. Bypasses defenders with quick passes then sprints for the return. The defence was strong, too. Really involved in the defensive end, especially in the third period where he worked to get above the puck and keep attacks wide. Not much in the way of physical skills; his only notable board touch was a cutback straight into the backpressure he was trying to escape.

He's a second-round candidate. Lots of runway. He's intelligent and creative, and, for the most part, doesn't rely on advantages that he won't have at the next level.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

A pretty great game from Cowan, especially on the playmaking side. He sends pucks ahead of teammates to allow them to pick them up in stride, slips passes through defenders, and even with some deception. His skating shone a lot more here; he consistently outskated defenders, but I can't see his grade being more than a 5 due to the technical limitations at this point. He finds space well away from the puck, drives the net...Similarly to Barkey, part of his setup game is based on outskating defenders to open lanes, which makes it not as translatable. I haven't seen physical abilities yet. Still, I like the playmaking and the vision.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

So much to like from Cowan in this game. Set up a couple of chances with a combination of pace and deception. Grabbed a primary assist by faking a shot on the reception then sliding the puck cross-slot. Hook and slip passes under pressure. In transition, he sees every option and chooses the best one. He advances when possible, but also cuts back, attacks the middle, and starts passing plays to create the best option. The highlight was a cutback into a look-off slip pass up the middle. He draws pressure to pass through it. An advantage creator. The issue remains the stride. He has the skills – heel-to-heel, advanced punch turns, and two-foot cuts – but his stride's wide and hunched. Speed isn't a strength. The margin for error will be slim. Like Barkey, he's a late-second, early-third based on this game. Ideally more in the third round.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Cowan's chemistry with Denver Barkey is tremendous - they don't even need to look before sending passes to one another. His playmaking abilities continue to stand out, as do his forechecking abilities, physical skills, and plays he makes in support defensively. He continues to flash playmaking abilities, especially on the rush. He's got a high work rate and a strong motor in spite of obvious skating mechanics issues. One nice sequence where he escaped pressure circling back to the point, coming down the far side and sending a no-look pass through the seam to a teammate on the other side. I could hear a late-second argument.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Every Cowan performance looks the same: a lot of energy, a lot of pace, a lot of effort, and some advanced playmaking moments. The skating is very flawed, but he still gets some speed out of it. He lacks physical skills, but he still fights for pucks and tries

to hit. He's at his best with the puck off the rush, where he can cut across and manipulate gaps, and plan pockets of space for teammates and scoring chances. I like his defence. He commits hard, but I'm sure he will get better at positioning and anticipating as he matures. He's a really nice project in the third round.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan was London's best draft eligible in this outing. He didn't waste time cycling the puck, opting for quick passes off the boards. A flash heel-to-heel to slip around a defender before nearly setting up a teammate showcased his vision and also handling (most players goes through the defender's stick, he just used turned his back to the defender). He completes plays off the backhand. He skates his routes and gets open inside for chances, as he did for his goal. And there was an excellent play at the end of his shift, where instead of dumping the puck, he carried into the zone and drew a penalty. The stride's wide and weak; skating will prove to be weakness without added strength and mechanical improvements. But he looked like a late-second/early-third candidate. Skilled, but behind the curve in terms of physical development.

Lauren Kelly: January 17th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Cowan picked up two goals in this game, a short-side goal off the rush and the empty-netter. His offensive reads were excellent in this viewing, spinning off checks down low to thread pucks to the slot from behind the goal, jump on turnovers and generate scoring chances, and bringing pucks from the boards to the middle of the ice. Defensively, he scanned, anticipated, picked off passes, and started the breakout. His ability to maintain possession and continue the cycle even when getting crosschecked to death is also quite impressive, as well as his ability to funnel pucks to teammates with no-look passes while under pressure speaks to his awareness. There's a lot to like about his game.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Cowan was even quieter than Barkey in this game. He's an intelligent off-puck play and has some creativity, but his touches were few and execution limited. A solid night on pursuit, however. He forced a couple of turnovers with pressure on the forecheck and ripped away possession on the backcheck. Not layers or creativity shown. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Let's get the problematic out of the way: the skating stride and the lack of physical ability. The rest of Cowan's game is very interesting, especially the playmaking. A lot of advanced ideas, including some planned in advance. Cowan shoots pucks into space for teammates, ahead of them, makes creative plays, gap manipulation, give-and-goes...He fakes and deceives defenders. Of course, he's limited to connecting plays in open ice, but the sense is clearly an above-average mark, especially because he moves well away from the puck, too.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan scored once in this game, tapping in the puck on the doorstep after a teammate forced a turnover. But he stood out defensively, whether it was constant scanning, intercepting passes on the penalty kill, backchecking and lifting sticks, before transitioning play back up the ice. He was more of a support player offensively, following play up the ice, going to open areas as his teammates cycled the puck, but made good off-puck reads and anticipated well. He's probably a mid-rounder based on this performance.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan didn't accomplish much offensively. But his presence on the ice was consistent for the usual reasons. Many players dump the puck out or extend the cycle where Cowan delays, lets pressure fly on by, then attacks the middle. He instantly recognizes teammates through layers in transition. He's an advantage creator; someone who should translate his game to the professional level without much difficulty. But the upside's unclear. Time to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

After Barkey, Cowan was the best player in this game. His creativity is the perfect complement to Barkey's motor. He delays in transition, feathers tricky passes into lanes, and always sprints to get open. Even set a pick to create space for Barkey behind the net. His board play is strong. It's not just that he cuts back often, but how he prepares the cutback. He slows down, waits for the defender to lean, and then cuts back and attacks the space on their heels. He looks like an NHLer along the boards. The skating's weaker outside the cutbacks, where a lack of lower-body flexion and inconsistent form limits his quickness. But he also has the quick-possession passing game and vision to overcome it. Looked like a second rounder.

Lauren Kelly: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan looked a bit fatigued for stretches of this game. The intensity was inconsistent; on some shifts, he was stickhandling and protecting the puck, cutting back and outworking defenders, but on others, he was a bit of distance removed from the play and hovering around the perimeters. He did score a goal, finishing off an odd-man rush with a tap-in at the far post. He protects the puck well, but poor skating mechanics prevent him from separating himself from defenders - he's a bit too hunched at times and the acceleration can be a problem. Still, he knows how to use his body to shield pucks and give himself more time and space to work with. Pressured well off-puck, and decent effort on backchecks. Could be a second or third rounder based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: December 4th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Cowan was London's best draft-eligible player. His playmaking was excellent, working give-and-gos with his linemates, delaying, executing long range passes on the breakout, sending tricky passes through seams at top speed, and faking the shot before passing off. Super high work rate compared to my last viewing, he made something happen offensively on every shift, even if the puck didn't go into the net. Provides constant off-puck pressure, almost forcing turnovers. Great play facilitator in this game. He could benefit from scanning a bit more in his own end, but that was about the only complaint I had of him in this one. If he plays like this for the rest of the season, he's probably a top-64 pick.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Cowan had flashes in this game, but his impact and work rate on shifts was inconsistent. On some, he'd take the puck up the ice and try to create a scoring chance. On others, he wouldn't even be within the camera frame. Attacked the inside when he had possession. Didn't really use his teammates too much. Tried in the defensive zone, but didn't really make an impact there either, he'd be shouldered off in battles or lose his man in key areas. I don't know if he'd be a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

London's best player in this game. Cowan's stride lacks (wide, hunched, incomplete extensions), but his edges stand out. Sound cutbacks around his inside leg, getting low and driving his momentum laterally. Keeps the puck tight to his body and head up. Outside leg cutback needs some work, but he sets it up by waiting for the defender to lean on him, and even uses his back to establish angles for the escape. Then, he takes the puck off the boards and attacks the inside. The inception of give-and-gos in this game, although he didn't receive any return feeds. Exceptional work rate on the forecheck. Non-stop pressure. Makes the obvious passing reads with pace and accuracy, but didn't show any additional vision or skill. Really, the core of his game is putting himself in favourable positions through pace, delays, and work rate, but he doesn't make the best play with them. He looked like a solid B prospect in this game.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I would characterize this as probably just an okay game from Cowan, but there were some really impressive flashes throughout. The first thing you notice with Cowan is the work rate. This guy makes second, third, fourth efforts on pucks and often escapes with a possession, his 5-foot-10 frame be damned. With the puck, I thought Cowan lacked pace at times (one neutral zone turnover that directly led to a goal against stands out), but his playmaking still looked like a distinct positive. Cowan is deceptive, skilled, and I think his feel for the game is a strength. The skill level as a handler and a shooter didn't really stand out, but it's one viewing. Cowan looks like a middle of the draft prospect for me.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Cowan was the best player in this game by a large margin, forming an exciting duo with Denver Barkey. It started with his defensive work, chasing down the puck carrier, anticipating passes, and forcing turnovers. Then, he immediately went on the attack. Showed handling skill, passing, off-puck instincts, and pace. Instantly adapted to the play around him. Skates all of his routes, stick on the ice and winning inside positioning when necessary. Around the net, he gets inside, then spins off into space as the puck comes near. When away from the crease, he lurks off the radar of defenders or positions himself between them. He had a bunch of chances in this game, largely through those off-puck movements. Stride's lack the toe snap finish, but his edges look strong. Mechanically-sound inside leg cutback provide escape along the boards. Doesn't overhandle the puck. He looked like a solid B prospect in this game.



Grade: B

67 Juraj Pekarcik

AGE 17.008 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Teuvo Teravainen



Hockey IQ



Transition Ace



Vision

Player Info

LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

6

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HK Nitra U20	Slovakia U20	16	9	11	20	1.25
HK Levice	Slovakia2	6	0	5	5	0.83
HK Nitra	Slovakia	30	0	3	3	0.10
Slovakia U18	WJC-18	7	3	7	10	1.43

SCOUTING REPORT

It feels like every U18s has a breakout star, and this year was no different with Juraj Pekarcik being that player for the Slovaks.

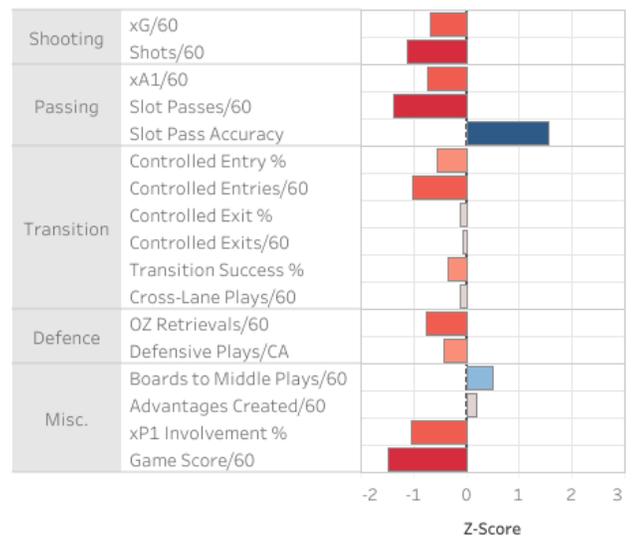
It's not that we didn't watch Pekarcik in Slovakia. We did. But it's hard to evaluate a player who only plays an average of eight minutes and barely gets offensive opportunities. Pekarcik only put up three points over his 30 games in the Tipos Extraliga, but he scored 10 in seven games for Slovakia at the U18s.

Of course, his placement next to the team's main offensive driver Dalibor Dvorsky helped his production, but one could argue that Pekarcik was driving the bus on many of their shifts together. He carried the puck across zones, attracted the defence, and made deft slip passes back to his centre. His playmaking game stood out almost as much as Dvorsky's at 5-on-5.

Pekarcik plays at a projectable pace, a high one. Some mechanical flaws in his skating reduce his agility and quickness in certain situations, but when he's allowed to pick up speed with crossovers in the neutral zone, he can pierce through teams. His stickhandling skills make up for his lack of burst. They allow him to evade sticks and make plays under pressure.

Juraj Pekarcik

F | HK Nitra | Slovakia | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 14 | Minutes Tracked: 130.5
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



"The sheer hustling mentality and work rate continue to stand out the most," Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi

Alanen wrote in a November report. "Even when the dump-in doesn't happen on his side of the ice, he crosses the rink and pursues the retrieval when he sees an opening."

Just like in his league play, the winger's forechecking pressure created some scoring opportunities for Slovakia. He pursued the puck as hard as he could as often as he could.

If the winger can refine his offensive reads and develop his tactical game even further, and if he can also hone his skating mechanics and get lower in his posture, he could become one of those high-energy and skilled middle-six forwards that many teams look for.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - U18s

Pekarcik's energy and forecheck deserve praise. He never gave up on a play through the tournament. He's always on the puck, forechecking, pursuing, and when he does get it, he immediately creates. He reminds me of Wahlberg in some ways (Team Sweden). He has the energy and the battling abilities, but also stickhandling tricks. His game is very raw, but that's also a good thing, projection-wise. A lot of runway there.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Pekarcik's hockey sense is legitimate. He can see when a play is closed and when he needs to switch to a new lane or a different option and he does that at quite a high pace. He's also involved away from the puck, and he understands attacking layers, that it's better for the offence if players aren't clogged but taking more space on the ice. He drives inside, passes quickly, and can dangle through sticks.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Pekarcik's high-stance skating remains a problem. It limits his shot power, too, as he can't fully activate his stick flex. He has to scan more on retrievals to find options quicker, but overall, I'm impressed with what he's showing. He has playmaking instincts and he can dangle through sticks. He plays with a lot of pace and he moves the puck, precisely, very quickly, too. I wonder what he could do in a CHL league. He tries defensively, even if his gap with his check is a bit loose.

Cam Robinson: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs Germany - U18s

A standout performance by Pekarcik - granted it was against the Germans, but he was decisive with the puck - making all sorts of plays with pace, snap on the passes, and then immediately gets himself into a position to get the puck back, cause havoc and/or simply drive the net front. His first helper, he cut into the middle on the PP, lost the handle, made a smart little move to recover, hesitate and then fire cross seam for the A1. He had a couple of secondary helpers where he made passes and then, you guessed it, drove the net. Finished up with an empty netter to seal the game. The crossover-laden approach works really well for him, but we'd like to see him get lower and stay lower, really driving that inside skate under his body to maximize power and stability.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

I'm discovering this prospect at the tournament. I will have to go back to watch some of his league tapes after, but he has some interesting elements, that's for sure. He skates with a high stance, but plays with a lot of pace, helped with crossovers. He moves the puck very quickly, but doesn't get rid of it. He finds teammates fast. He can also manipulate defenders one-on-one or at least beat them with his handling skills. I'm not sure about the sense.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - U18s

Juraj Pekarcik showed decent speed in this one. He has a high stance in his skating, but he can move through zones with crossovers. He had a couple of timely defensive interventions and played physically. I liked that he tried to use the back layers of the attack when entering the offensive zone. I'm not sure about the overall skill and sense level just yet. The stickhandling skills look like a strength.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Slovakia vs Sweden - U18s

Pekarcik might be the most skilled forward on this team after Dvorsky. He plays with a lot of pace. He locates teammates fast, sends the puck to them fast, and charges ahead. He's physical, a driver. I'm not so sure about the overall skill level, but his combination of crossover speed, size, and stickhandling skills could prove tempting for a team. He could be an addition on our board, near the end.

Cam Robinson: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Pekarcik was noticeable in several positive ways against a much stronger Swedish club. He was driving the transition by getting the puck, moving it off quickly and driving the middle lane. He was tough on the defenders on the forecheck, and made smart little handles and movement in the offensive zone. He popped into the high slot, receive, spun and fired all in one motion to get Slovakia on the board and cut the lead to 2-1. A really nice power-play move. In the 3rd, he helped cut the lead to one again as he curled in the NZ with the puck, fired it over to Dvorsky on the wall and once again drove the middle. The skating is a little hoppy at times, but he generates a lot of speed quickly especially while attacking on an arc.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - HK Nitra vs. HK GROTTO Spisska Nova Ves - Tipos Extraliga

In line with my previous viewings of the player. Pekarcik's motor is arguably his biggest strength, and while the skating stance remains problematic, he has decent separation quickness. Stole the puck at the top of the point in DZ, then sprinted and had enough speed to get into a breakaway but couldn't convert. Best passing moments include him connecting plays quickly and playing a give-and-go style. Some handling flashes, too. One of his better games of the season so far. I can see a good argument for him in the latter portion of our board.

David St-Louis: February 21st, 2023 - Levice vs. Slovakia - Slovenska Hokejova Liga

Many flashes of skill from Pekarcik in this one. He's a bit too dangle-oriented (he wants to go through teams with his stickhandling), but he can also use his hands to move defences around and create passing plays. He got the puck in the corner of the offensive zone early in the game and then launched it back to one of his teammates driving inside, almost blindly. A great display of awareness. Other times, he missed a better play, however. The handling skills is a 5+, but he lacks balance in his skating. The crossovers give him speed, however.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - HK Nitra vs. HKM Zvolen - Tipos Extraliga

Pekarcik's role has remained stagnant at this level, playing around 10 minutes per night in a more checking role. He does fit that bill pretty well with his energetic playstyle and high work rate, but it's harder to get a full picture of him or if there's more skill than he's able to show at this level. There are interesting playmaking flashes here and there, being able to find the middle-driving centre on a breakout or in the neutral zone to advance the play in transition. Posture remains problematic and a limiting factor at the current moment. There are also moments of mishandling the puck in tight and upon receptions. Has moments where he looks like a pick, but I'd like to see it more consistently.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HC MIKRON Nové Zámky - Tipos Extraliga

Not a very eventful evening for Pekarcik here. Didn't log any notable offensive plays, even if there was one cool passing idea. He clearly recognizes when he has an opportunity to pass the puck to the inside. His own effectiveness is somewhat limited by the current mechanics and high stance as it's harder for him to gain leverage on the opponent and his balance is on the weaker

side. Flashes some physical skills, but unable to use them to a great effect currently.

Lassi Alanen: November 23th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HC MV Transport Presov - Tipos Extraliga

Easily my best viewing of Pekarcik so far. In addition to his hustling on the forecheck and backcheck, his playmaking showed up more and more. One particularly nice play where he was able to fish a puck out of a scrum with impressive slickness, then dish to the middle from below the goal line with a slip pass for a scoring chance. Also a couple of strong moments of vision in transition. Also got a few chances of his own off the rush and flashed better movement off-puck, playing better between checks and putting himself in favourable spots to get the puck back. Encouraging performance all-around. Looked like a draft-worthy player.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HC '05 Banska Bystrica - Tipos Extraliga

Hooray, Pekarcik finally cleared the 10-minute mark despite not logging any shifts in the third period. The sheer hustling mentality and work rate continue to stand out the most. Even when the dump-in doesn't happen on his side of the ice, he crosses the rink and pursues the retrieval when he sees an opening. His line was able to establish decent OZ pressure and Pekarcik himself flashed some playmaking touch. I haven't seen any noteworthy skill in these viewings, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 30th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HC Kosice - Tipos Extraliga

Pekarcik turned a couple of forechecking sequences into scoring chances for his teammates. The passes weren't anything special, instead actually pretty simple; the more impressive part was how he got to those advantageous positions with his work rate. The stride remains a flawed one, although further strength training should ease some of the issues, but the overall output seems to exceed the mechanics, which is a good sign. Still haven't seen any high-end or particularly exciting stuff from him at this level, but he's yet to clear 10 minutes of ice time either.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HK Poprad - Tipos Extraliga

Pekarcik plays with a lot of energy and hustle, that's for sure. Sometimes it comes at a cost, like when his hands couldn't quite keep up (could also be just the limited ice time and what it does to your puck feel). Or when he made a very dumb charge into a head hit in the neutral zone when the opponent was about to dump the puck in, resulting in a major penalty and ending Pekarcik's game. Skating posture is a bit problematic, but could improve with further strength development. Hard to really judge his game beyond that until he starts to get proper minutes.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. MHK 32 Liptovsky Mikulas - Tipos Extraliga

Pekarcik played his season-high nine minutes in this one with HK Nitra. He opened the game with a slick breakout feed to the middle, but didn't get that many puck touches in total. Looked to play with a high motor, even as his stride tended to break down as he really went for it, causing him unable to get to the inside with crossovers. Backchecked actively, but could've benefited from taking the extra stride and closing in physically instead of reaching with his stick. We'll see whether he gets more ice time in further outings.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Pekarcik's all hands. He has a slick toe drag that he uses to pull pucks off the boards and step inside. But he's not reliant on it, showing passing skill and edge work to find other ways to navigate pressure. Now, actually making the next play remains an issue. He puts himself in positive positions, but then defaults to a simple play or refuses to use space. So, he's a deker who doesn't create much offence. Not sure how much value that has. But he's worth a look later in the season.

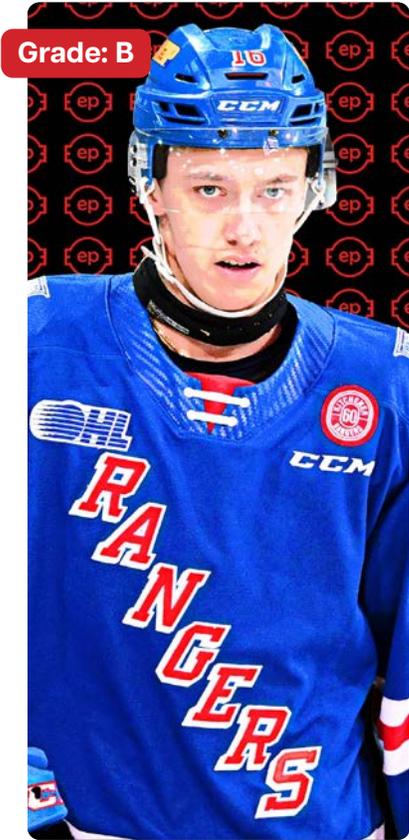
Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Pekarcik was fun in this blowout game. He showed a nasty toe-drag twice, beating a forechecker behind his net and combining the toe drag with a shot around a defender. The latter was a high-skill play under pressure. He also casually played keep up with

the puck while gaining the zone. He didn't get the puck much, but he continues to show NHL-calibre puck skills. The rest? No idea.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Pekarcik has some handling and skating limitations, with his hands and feet locked in rhythm. Struggles to find separation. But he showed backhand passing skill and creativity. When most players throw pucks away, he slipped the puck under a stick. He followed up loose pucks, got open after passing, and even showed some shooting skill with a wrister that featured a delay inside the release. Consistently established body positioning, both with and without the puck. Has some NHL qualities, worth watching this season.



68 Carson Rehkopf

AGE 17.688 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Victor Olofsson



Lethal Shooter



Tactician

Player Info

C/RW Position	Left Shoots
6'1" Height	194 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	6 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kitchener Rangers	OHL	68	30	29	59	0.87

SCOUTING REPORT

Carson Rehkopf is a perfect example of a second-round forward. He has just the right mix of upside, rawness, and higher floor that teams covet in that range.

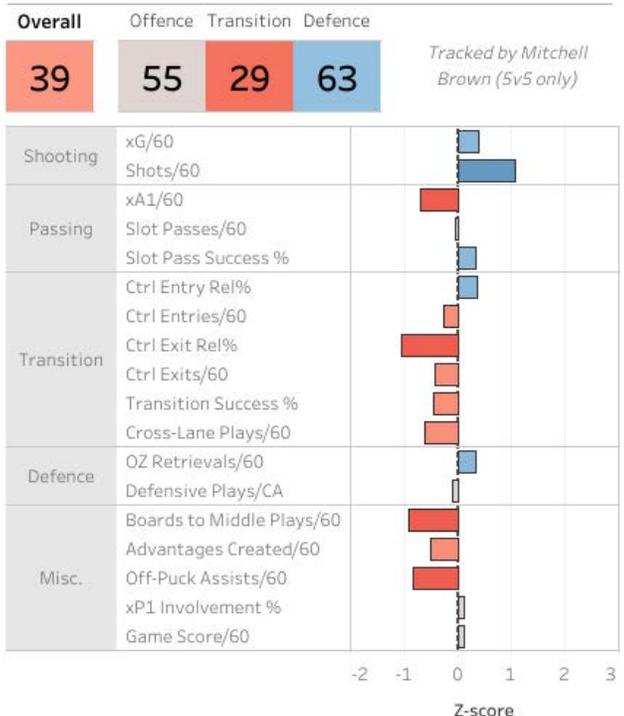
At this stage of his career, his game is mostly built around his shot, the best of his skills. In the offensive zone, he prefers when he's freed from the puck, a burden for shooters like him sometimes. Because then, he's allowed to sneak away from the play, hunt pockets of space, and call for a pass just as he enters them to fire it in the net.

"A hat trick and four points from Rehkopf in this game, and all three of his goals were scored with a quick release," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a November report. "The one thing that Rehkopf does well is open himself up to receive passes in key areas, and then he's able to wire the puck into the net from there, whether he needs a couple of seconds to wind up or if he's in the right position to unload a one-timer."

The flashes of skill are evident in Rehkopf's game and not just in his release. He scored some memorable goals this season, like the one at the top prospect's game where he dangled through defenders to take on the goalie himself. We also developed an appreciation for the forward's playmaking skills. They only appeared inconsistently in his game, however.

Carson Rehkopf

F | Kitchener Rangers | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 101.4



Those inconsistencies were our main issue with his play this season. For stretches, we saw flashes of every type of ability in the forward's game. Some games, it's his defensive play that stood out. Other times, his transition passing, and at times, his physicality and puck protection.

Save for skating, his largest weakness at this stage, Rehkopf already possesses all the skills he needs to become a three-zone, triple-threat OHL scorer.

To reach the NHL, he needs to become just as good at applying those other skills as he is at playing the off-puck shooter role. If he can round out his game and become more consistent with his abilities, we can envision Rehkopf becoming a top-nine and power play scorer.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lauren Kelly: March 12th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

He may not be driving play, but Rehkopf is sneakily good at finding space and weaving through defenders in the offensive zone, lying in wait for teammates to get him the puck. Unfortunately, he didn't get too many scoring opportunities in this viewing. Defensively, he consistently supports the play, but he's not really too engaged in battles to regain possession. Instead, he relies on his teammates to dig the puck out along the boards, and then he's the one who is skating it out of the zone. Didn't see much physical play either. He's probably a mid-rounder at this point, but there wasn't a lot to glean from this viewing that I didn't know about him already.

David St-Louis: March 7th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Rehkopf showed more physical skills in this one. He established body position on a puck on the wall and moved to the middle for a teammate, went shoulder to shoulder hard to win another retrieval, drove the net...But he's still more of a skill-player than a grinder. He's that complementary finisher who can link passing plays but is at his best when he can hunt pockets of space. The skating grade is still below average for me due to the lack of agility -- even if he can pick up speed with some crossovers and is decently quick. I'm not seeing much defence from him, so it's hard to evaluate his skills there.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

A nothing game. Rehkopf didn't use space and refused to make a play in transition. He dumped pucks in with clear lanes to gain the zone and offloaded the puck with better options. Showed a bit more in the offensive, but not much. Took a couple of shots from the outside and made easy passes for shots. Didn't see any NHL skill in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Rehkopf was a factor defensively in this game. He proactively supported down low and backtracked effectively. He was perfectly positioning for a pair of interceptions. In one sequence, it directly led to offence after he started the breakout and joined the rush. His positioning remained strong across the ice. He's especially good at arriving into space off the rush; he doesn't rush the net, instead of staying between defenders. Whiffed on one of his better looks but also showed an NHL off-the-pass shot on multiple occasions. The playmaking wasn't there. Lacks lower-body flexion and edge control, which will limit his upside, but doesn't seem like enough to hold him back from reaching the NHL. Probably a mid-to-late second-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: February 14th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

It didn't really feel like Rehkopf moved the needle much in this game at all. He's not a factor in transition, if he's breaking the puck out of the defensive zone he usually passes off pretty quickly or will circle back into his own end to try and pick up more speed. He tried to get open in the offensive zone, but the puck never found him in those areas. He's better than what he showed in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Rehkopf was looking more like a passer in this game. Most attempts failed but it was encouraging. He manipulated defenders to create quick transition lanes and even showed shot and passed just as the defender's stick vacated the lane. He tried to be deceptive on his passes, including looking at the net before quickly pulling the puck back to access the lane. Timing was a bit off. He still took a very dumb shot early with a teammate open in the middle and nothing in the way. Has a tendency to move the puck without looking first. But this was an encouraging game. He still has the off-puck offence and physical potential, now with a bit more skill atop it. He could be a second rounder.

Lauren Kelly: February 8th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

A bit of a quiet game from Rehkopf, who was following the play up the ice more often than he was facilitating it. Still, he was aware and engaged, showed decent effort on backchecks and was consistently scanning in his own end. Would come back deeper to help support his defenders and recover loose pucks, but didn't always engage in battles. Flashes of his offensive game, including a few sequences where he'd try to get inside positioning on defenders in front to try and finish off loose pucks, shots in tight, trying to deke around defenders when he had possession, and threading pucks through tight seams. The skating prevents him from pushing pace right now, but he strikes me as a player who will definitely break out offensively in his DY+1, and his defensive play is sound. A good bet in the second or third.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

We shouldn't underestimate Rehkopf's skill level. His last goal proves it. He caught a puck by passing it between his legs, dangled a first defender, cut inside, and then faked out the goalie to score. He has a variety of releases and can fire in stride. He can make seam passes, slip passes, and has delay ideas. His skating base limits what plays he can reach and he's still not physical (although he does drive the net), but I like his off-puck game or understanding of where he has to go to complement the play.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Rehkopf finds space away from the puck. That's what he does best, but in this one, he showed that he can create his own offence, too, that he doesn't need teammates to feed him perfect passes in the slot to score. He dangled through and around, got to the net, and beat the goalie. His forechecking game also stood out. His passes didn't have their usual timing and precision, however.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Another solid defensive game from Rehkopf. He's reasonably proactive and backtracks without over-skating. He reads rotations and switches of coverage, popping down low or moving high when needed. Lost his check a few times, but mostly recovered before it was too late. He's not getting the same offensive opportunities that he was last year, largely a consequence of Kitchener's depth and not having playing on Pinelli's wing. But he still shows skill in flashes. He drives the net and occasionally hits teammates moving into the slot. A quick slip pass set up a point-blank chance. The skating's probably just a bit below-average in terms of projection. He's smooth but lacks a bit of depth and he's not explosive. He's a solid late-second with bottom-six upside. He will score a lot next year, too.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Not much from Rehkopf in this outing. He worked hard on the backcheck, grabbed a few steals on the forecheck, and saw more of his puck touches result in little. No shots at even-strength. On the powerplay, he showed more life. He stepped into space, wiring wrists on the net with a textbook outside leg release: head up, both hands in front, chest square. Moved the puck effectively, but nothing that suggested a higher level understanding of chance creation. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game.

Lauren Kelly: December 18th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Rehkopf looked really good in this game. Scored far-side on the powerplay, fooling the goaltender with a lightning-quick release. Tried to go between the legs on a rush sequence and lost control of the puck, but also delivered a perfect pass to set up a teammate on Kitchener's fourth goal. Recognizes dangerous areas in the offensive zone and gets himself open. He's still an awkward skater at times, a bit too upright in his stance and his stride breaks down a bit at the tail end of shifts, but he still pressures puck carriers well. The skating issues limit his effectiveness in transition, particularly regarding his ability to create off the rush, but it doesn't appear to deter him. Nothing too notable to write home about defensively. Probably a mid-rounder, maybe mid-second at best.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Rehkopf had a solid sequence early in the game, pushing the puck across his body and into space, beating the defender, then firing a chance. That was his only look of the game at 5-on-5. A couple of simple passes that led to shots – encouraging that he's not just a shooter. Low-volume in transition but he occasionally manufactures an advantage by moving the puck inside or using the dot-lane. He has defensive upside and puck protection ability, too. Not a needle-moving performance, but one that gives a bit more clarity about his game beyond the shooting. Could be a second rounder.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

What a game from Rehkopf. He showed everything: skating, shooting, playmaking, play-building, finishing, and defence. He set up a goal with a look off pull-in pass to beat a stick, before sprinting his route for the return feed. Build play in the neutral zone by passing laterally and relocating. Always open in the slot, arriving into space late, slipping behind defenders, and getting inside positioning. Immediately fires, although he had some difficulty shooting under pressure. He doesn't really adjust puck positioning before the next action, which leads to difficulty accessing lanes, but given his pull-in pass, it's in his game. Disruptive defensively. Beat defenders to the outside after attacking the first middle. Powerful, driving crossovers but his lower-body flexion lacked. Looked like a high second-round candidate in this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 27th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Erie Otters - OHL

A hat trick and four points from Rehkopf in this game, and all three of his goals were scored with a quick release. The one thing that Rehkopf does well is open himself up to receive passes in key areas, and then he's able to wire the puck into the net from there, whether he needs a couple of seconds to wind-up or if he's in the right position to unload a one timer. I didn't really feel like he was much of a factor in transition - most of his offence and other scoring chances came off sequences where either Kitchener was on the powerplay or had sustained offensive zone pressure at even strength. His offensive creation seems fairly one-dimensional at this point. Struggles to create plays and is pushed off pucks easily when he's trying to break into the offensive zone down the middle. His assist in this game was a secondary assist and it was because he was able to win a battle near the top of the circle and get it to a teammate, who then set up the goal. Not sure there's a lot to go on defensively, either. I wonder if he's already pretty much the player he is.

David St-Louis: November 27th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Rehkopf got a lot of scoring opportunities on the powerplay. He has a diverse arsenal of shots and can get some power behind his releases. He moves well to find passing lanes and generally has a good idea of the next play. He's not all that fluid mechanically, no real four-way mobility or agility. He should be a straight-liner at the next-levels. The flashes of handling skills, deception, crossover rushes, and anticipation do make you think that he could be more than the bottom-line, bottom-six presence he has the build to become. There isn't a great physical element at this stage.

Lauren Kelly: November 19th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Rehkopf scored once in this game, tapping in a pass on the doorstep. Made some good defensive reads to create turnovers before breaking the puck out by himself. Struggles to beat defenders one-on-one when he has possession and as a result, he's mostly limited to outside shots. He's better at finding space when he doesn't have the puck. Still needs to scan more in his own end. He's got a decent-sized frame, but he doesn't use it well enough to establish positioning on defenders or shield pucks from

them. Pretty quiet game all together. Not sure he's a top-64 pick quite yet.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Quite a good game from Rehkopf who already put himself in the top-64 conversation. The skating looks like a weakness -- kicking feet, no ankle flexion, and a bit of a heavy stride, but he anticipates the game well, controls his speed to attack and stay in pockets of space, and can rely on his passing to advance the play when his speed won't let him. Good puck management. He worked the boards and was a presence on the forecheck and around the net (although an infrequent one). He was a bit slow to recognize well positioned teammates and doesn't look like a manipulator, so maybe the playmaking hasn't developed in his game as much as other abilities.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Rehkopf mostly let Pinelli and Mešár do their thing. He tracked the play effectively, shrinking distance to the puck carrier as support or sneaking down the weak side. His reads are necessarily perfectly timed, but he understands how to get open. He's an NHL shooter, no doubt. But he lacks the finer skills (pulling pucks inward to shoot around defenders, for example) to get puck through. It's similar story as a passer, where he often has solid ideas (such as fake the shot into a pass to the middle, delay for the middle-lane driver to get free) but never alters his puck positioning before releasing, leading to turnovers. Despite his reputation, he didn't show much ability to move pucks from the wall or physical skills. Looked more like a mid-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: October 21st, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Rehkopf's defensive awareness was better in this one, scanning in his own end, sliding back to cover up his defencemen who had pinched up, and recognizing holes in coverage. Offensively, he worked well to find space, backing away from pressure and traffic to give him more time to shoot. But he had a fairly quiet game all together, and I felt like he relied on his shot a little too much to create offence at times. Rehkopf's shot is definitely NHL calibre, from its windup to release, but there were times that he was probably better off passing to an open teammate instead of taking a shot through traffic. He'd enter the zone with the puck and move to the middle, stickhandling until he felt like he had a good opening to take a shot, no matter where his teammates may have been in the offensive zone. Again, I didn't see a lot of playmaking at all in this one. That's probably the one area of his game that I haven't been able to get a read on yet.

Lauren Kelly: October 16th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Rehkopf looked a little lost in his own end at the beginning of this game, and while his scanning and positioning got better as it wore on, he still felt more of a passive bystander in his own end. But he was constantly hounding puck carriers up the ice and stripping them of pucks from behind. His physicality was on display, playing a heavy game along the boards while protecting pucks, or using his frame to win battles. The skating is a bit of an issue - he lacks separation ability on the rush (he tried to power past a defender to get in on the breakaway but was stopped) - and his stride looks a little awkward at times. There's no questioning his effort level on backchecks, but it looks like he's trying so hard to get back to his own end but not covering much distance for the amount of energy he's using. The best part of his game was his shot. Two of his three goals came off one-timed bombs from the half-wall on 4-on-3 powerplays, and the other was a curl and drag around a defender to change the angle followed by a quick release. Didn't see much from the playmaking side to offer any observations, but hopefully something for future viewings.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Rehkopf brought the violence in this game. He threw several huge hits, won battles, and powered through checks. But his best sequences were subtler. He won pucks, waited for the defender to close distance, then threw a reverse hit. While he's an in-your-face on-puck player, he sneaks away from defenders without it. He slips behind defenders. In-stride wrister and an in-motion pass reception as he cut inside for a pair of looks. The puck control comes and goes, and while he generates a separation gear in open-ice, he lacks stability on his edges. Playmaking lacks timing, but he has the occasional NHL-calibre idea. Upside as a shooter and physical player. Could be a top-64 candidate.

Grade: B



69 Aydar Suniev

AGE 17.830 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 16, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

SHADES OF Marcus Foligno



Vision



Hammer



Tactician

Player Info

LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

205 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3

Skating

5

Shooting

6

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Penticton Vees	BCHL	50	45	45	90	1.80

SCOUTING REPORT

While Bradly Nadeau was the main draw with the Penticton Vees this season, it wasn't all that uncommon an occurrence for Aydar Suniev to capture our attention. The Russian-born left winger crushed his second BCHL season, scoring 45 goals and 90 points in his draft year.

One of the craftiest playmakers in the entire draft, Suniev is a physical monster, operating at 6-foot-2, 205 pounds.

You have to see it to believe it with Suniev. And we liked what we saw at the BCHL Showcase in Chilliwack back in October. Enough to keep him on our radar for the remainder of the season.

"Seeing him up close opened my eyes to the physical impact of his game," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a February game report. "He is just constantly absorbing and countering physicality and pressure, opponents literally bouncing off of him across his efforts. Out of this absorption, he flashes higher-end skill plays and translatable habits. He looks huge on the ice – on the first shift of the game he drilled a Spruce King from behind and continued to be overly rough on the forecheck."

Able to layer a puck through even the thickest of coverages, Suniev feasted with cross-rink feeds into Nadeaus's wheelhouse this season. He wasn't a one-dimensional playmaker, though. A proactive processor, Suniev always has the next pass option hardwired in his brain before he even collects the puck. This creates almost absurd playmaking sequences at the BCHL, with few defenders being able to combat that level of execution speed. Give-and-go attacks, one-touches, a delay game in transition – the ability verges on ridiculous.

With that, the former St. Andrew's College forward blends a lot of nuance throughout his game. A manipulator when he grabs retrievals, it's not uncommon to see Suniev create deception with his feet, sending players flying. He opens his hips, to make lateral pushes to the inside or slip pressure, and his puck protection ability, particularly how he shields the puck and keeps his balance, makes him a monster along the boards.

Suniev proactively hunts for better routes and body positions meaning he has the inside track. He also has spectacular small-area handling moments as well, but Suniev has considerably more issues handling north-to-south, primarily because of the negative stride and handling blend he possesses.

“The mechanical ability is problematic. Suniev has a wide, hunched-over stride and a high-grip handling, which means that every time he rushes the puck up-ice, the puck is fully exposed in front of him,” Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a November report. “His handling falls in a locked pattern with his stride. He just has no rush creation potential at higher levels with his current technical base.”

Suniev’s chest-to-ground stride is the biggest caveat of his entire game. The stride is so prohibitive that it turns a player who honestly has first-round quality tools into a later option in the draft. Will he be able to use all the protection and little adaptations to beat professionals without improving his mechanics? It’s a valid question.

Nevertheless, Suniev isn’t just a playmaker. Able to curl and drag a puck and leverage power from his frame, he was a threat to score from a distance at the BCHL level. Inside-oriented rush patterns, the leveraging of defenders to act as a screen, and pinpoint placements aided his near goal-per-game clip this season. He fights to get to the inside of the ice off-puck and is daring around the net. He even attempted The Michigan in a BCHL showcase game.

An undoubtedly fun player, Suniev’s projection revolves around him overcoming his mobility issues. The positive is that a lot of the habits needed are in place to succeed at higher levels; the issue is that it was exclusively leveraged against lower levels of competition.

It’s clear that he will require some level of mechanical refinement with his skating – we have him as a 3-grade skater on our 1-to-9 linear tools grade system. If that happens, a middle-six wing projection isn’t out of the question. He’s too detail-oriented and skilled not to be able to play with good players. There are some question marks around his physical profile diminishing against players who are just inherently bigger, but considering the refinement that already exists with his physical game, it shouldn’t be an issue.

Suniev is committed to the University of Massachusetts in 2024-25. It’s unclear where he will play next season, especially considering he’s surpassed the BCHL at this point. Regardless, the NCAA should prove fruitful as a development destination for the Kazan-born winger.

🔗 LINKS & MEDIA



The Elite Prospects December ranking of the top 32 prospects in the 2023 NHL Draft



Standout performances from the 2022 BCHL Showcase

📄 GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - Penticton Vees vs. Nanaimo Clippers - BCHL

Suniev is an inside-driven, high-level playmaker, with physical skills, and skating limitations. There are many like him in the NHL, but

it's just a matter of determining how flawed the skating is. I doubt he will improve it over the next seasons. The mechanics are a bit wonky and he's older, more physically mature than other prospects in this draft. The pace is quite low, although he can rush the puck with some speed, with a combination of crossovers and fake changes of direction. He seems more like a 50-70 prospect than a first-rounder for sure. In the NHL, maybe he becomes a middle-six, secondary scorer, but for that to happen, he will really need to hone the checking and board-battle side of his game.

Daniel Gee: February 25th, 2023 - Penticton Veeps vs. Prince George Spruce Kings - BCHL

Suniev was the best player on the ice. Seeing him up close opened my eyes to the physical impact of his game. He is just constantly absorbing and countering physicality and pressure, opponents literally bouncing off of him across his efforts. Out of this absorption, he flashes higher-end skill plays and translatable habits. He looks huge on the ice -- on the first shift of the game, he drilled a Spruce King from behind and continued to be overly rough on the forecheck. He attacks the inside of defenders, taking out their sticks, and then overwhelming them. He's constantly trying to work advantages. On one shift Suniev was going to lose a race to a puck -- instead of conceding he lunged forward poking the puck deeper, cutting in front of the defender and crashing on the retrieval. An interesting adaptation to overcome his extremely bent-over posture and wide recoveries. In the second he drilled a puck carrier on the near boards, cut into the middle, but fumbled the puck. He scored on a powerplay in the same period. From the right point, he one-timed a shot top-shelf through layers of traffic. Leverages the spin and flexes his strength.

Despite the skating issues, he had a strong transition game. In the first, he opened his hips to work laterally past a defender and cut into the middle. He was unable to handle it properly due to his chest-pointing-to-ground posture -- I'm assuming that this may be an issue in the future. He loses speed while transitioning to the crossover as he falls backwards, almost like falling backwards on stairs. Suniev had a couple of nice weakside activations, one resulting in a shot in the chest of the Spruce Kings goalie. His best sequence of the entire game was a solo entry in the second. As Suniev entered on the near boards, he cut inward, popped the puck in his hip pocket, and rifled a curl-and-drag wrister through the screen top-shelf from the top of the circle. Hands did flash in this game. On a left-wing entry Suniev worked a route change to the middle, beat a man with an inside-outside move, and created high-danger chances with weak side passing through layers. Manoeuvred so well through resistance. Waivered before if he was a B or C prospect, the stride is so prohibited. Regardless, I believe in his habits. B-grade for next board, but I could see him going later (see Seminoff last season) because the skating and birthday are just inherent risks here. This league is too easy for him right now.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2022 - Wenatchee Wild vs. Penticton Veeps - BCHL

Suniev is great with the puck. He can find the next teammates, fake defenders one-on-one, and get around them. He has some deception, puck retrieval skills, he's physical -- a lot to like, but he floats a bit away from it and I'm not as sure about the off-puck instincts. The skating stride remains a bit weird: hunched over, knees in, and a lack of ankle flexion. The lack of stability in his upper-body, its flailing movement, removes some stability and affects his handling.

Daniel Gee: December 30th, 2022 - Penticton Veeps vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Suniev flexed on the powerplay once again. A one-touch cross slot shot to a hard one-timer by Bradly Nadeau resulted in a tap-in near the crease in the first. He teed up Nadeau again in the second and fed another teammate for a one-time shot in the third -- a beautiful stick check in the OZ, leading to a give-and-go goal. Beyond this, Suniev's game scared me. The skating looked worse than in previous video and live viewings. Chest to the ground due to his poor ankle flex, the widest recovers possible, -- it's almost if he waddles on the ice. It leads to a mountain of sequences where he is just trying to catch up with the play. When he does get into the vicinity of opponents off-puck he is a pickpocket artist, a legit two-way disruptor, but I question if this is even possible in a league with better movers. Suniev was so resistant to shoot in this one. He passed off multiple clear shooting opportunities -- goaltenders out of position. Instead of manipulating on the walls he was cutting back into pressure. The decision-making was so starkly different from what I have seen in the past. The hands in transition are strong. One-hand chip bys, triangle and feet manipulation. He had a crazy sequence in the third -- Suniev took a pass on the right wing with no coverage. He baited defenders closer, pulled the puck behind his body and fed back the puck to a teammate crashing. Requires more views but his projection has to be heavily hedged and debated next ranking.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Penticton Veeps vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Again, the mechanics are scary. I'd rate Suniev's skating as a 3.5-4 at the moment and the handling base doesn't help. He developed a high-grade passing game to compensate, but he's overreliant on passing, to the point where he foregoes scoring chances for himself to give the puck back to a teammate and he makes too many suicide passes in transition, wanting to move the puck quickly so he doesn't have to skate it. The off-puck game is a strength; he anticipates the flow of the play well and he can score. He also has a harder game that we see on the boards and in his net-drives. I'm not sure if he's a B or a C, probably a C considering the level of competition.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Wenatcha Wild - BCHL

Suniev scored three goals in this one, two on breakaways, all using his shot. The skating base affects the shooting ability; his release is a bit awkward but it is quick. Again, what shines the most with Suniev is the pass-and-reposition game. He anticipates the next play, hits it instantly (he can dangle to hit it, too), and then moves in pockets of space. The hockey sense is probably above-average, too. His older age, lower competition, unusual path, and lack of technical ability all play against him, however.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

The mechanical ability is problematic. Suniev has a wide, hunched-over stride and a high-grip handling, which means that every time he rushes the puck up-ice, the puck is fully exposed in front of him. His handling falls in locked pattern with his stride. He just has no rush creation potential at higher levels with his current technical base. He is strong and balanced, however, and as a passer, he's quite advanced. He knows his next play, moves the puck with pace, and then repositions to get it back. His give-and-go ability and instinct for the offensive game helps him create.

J.D. Burke: October 20th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Alberni Valley Bulldogs - BCHL

Not quite the performance we saw from Suniev in the first game, but I remained impressed with the Russian centre all the same. He's clearly an exceptionally skilled player for this level and my initial read is that many of these qualities will scale up well to the NCAA level. His puck protection mechanics, in particular, stood out in this contest, as Suniev weaved in and out of traffic retaining possession all the while with a great deal of frequency. The pace at which he plays is just sky-high, and I suspect he'll add another level on that front when he reins in his almost comically wide stride recovery. Showed some skill with the one-touch pass, finding a teammate for what should've been a tap-in goal that he just flat-out duffed. Granted, Suniev heeled a one-timer for what was a Grade-A chance all his own, so fair is fair, I guess. Signs of a delay game revealed themselves in transition, but the supporting cast around him didn't really take advantage of it. Defensive play is a strength. Suniev looks like a B-grade prospect and stands out as the pleasant surprise of the BCHL Showcase. We'll need more eyes on him as the season continues.

Daniel Gee: October 20th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Alberni Valley Bulldogs - BCHL

This wasn't the dominant effort that we got yesterday, but Suniev remains a player that looks destined for our board.

Crafty as ever in transition, Suniev was once again blending hip-pocket holds, deceptive rush patterns, and full-range handles to destroy Bulldog defender's gaps. He's ridiculously powerful stride-to-stride and loves to launch into large weight shifts. In the first, he had an outside lane power move; turned the defender instantly, fended him off with his arm, and crashed on his backhand. He's deceptively big at 6-foot-2, 200ish pounds and he knows how to leverage his size at the BCHL level. Suniev's sense stood out on a couple of other on-puck transitional attacks. He showed multiple attempts at employing a delay game; on one sequence he read that he would be driven to the perimeter, so he cut back and scanned, but ultimately turned over the puck. A lack of support is a factor, but it honestly looks like it's a new habit he's trying to work out timing-wise.

In sustained pressure, he leveraged his hard one-timer in this viewing. He missed the net but he gets all of that frame and weight when he rotates through the puck. Suniev almost was kicked out of the game for a brutal hit from behind in the second. He was allowed to return and recorded an assist on a point-shot goal. I liked how Suniev worked the puck around in the cycle. On one play he moved the puck low-to-middle, and then cut in the slot -- he couldn't get the shot off but it was a smart play. Looks like a B prospect for us.

J.D. Burke: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Talk about a first impression. Suniev was by far the best player in this contest for my money, outplaying Bradley Nadeau and AJ Lacroix in the process; I think I had more notes for Suniev, almost all of them positive, than those two combined. Suniev is just an absolute force on the forecheck and offensive zone puck retrievals. He wants puck, he takes puck. The skating stride looks kind of ugly – just an obscenely wide recovery and hops through his crossovers – but his activity rate and mental pace are both so obscenely high that it doesn't really matter. Not at this level anyway. Passing skill was on full display here, with Suniev working the full array of reach adjusted dishes and even flashed some skill passing into space. He's super deceptive too, even turning a seemingly harmless offensive zone retrieval into a two-touch passing sequence by faking out the defender opposite him into the shadow realm. The skill level seems high too; Suniev attempted a Michigan at one point. Habits are there too, with hip pocket handling, the puck cradled at the heel of his blade, and quick movements through his wrists and hands. Better still, he's one of like two or three players in this league that can fire off the pass with one- and two-touch finishing skill and a lethal one-timer. Suniev looks like a no-brainer B-grade prospect based on this. Hard to overstate how impressed I was with his performance.

Daniel Gee: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Suniev was a legitimate revelation in this game. Pushing pro habits and an incredibly high pace of play throughout the entire game, the Moscow-born forward was easily the best player in the game, outclassing Bradley Nadeau and Liam A.J. Lacroix.

Hip-pocket protection, changes in attacking routes, attacking the backs of pivoting defenders, and handling skill made Suniev a monster in transition. He had multiple slot shot high-dangers just based on the fact he kept getting to the inside. On top of this, he's big, (6-foot-2) and sturdy at 205 lbs, and when he drops his shoulder, Suniev is a legit threat to crash the net. He has an uncanny ability to work bouncing and uncontrolled pucks through gapped-up defenders, popping pucks through their legs and triangles, all while keeping his feet in motion to work past -- he's so comfortable handling in tight space. He even showed elements of a delay game. In the third Suniev stripped Lacroix of a puck in his own slot, working the other way, he recognized the perimeter lane on the right wing had multiple defenders ready to angle him off. In turn, he cut back and scanned for a trailer -- Suniev rushed the pass but he was right in his approach. His forward stride is his single biggest deficiency -- his recoveries are ridiculously wide, and it creates shorter and shorter subsequent push-offs. He overcomes this with the use of crossover speed, manipulation, and handling, but it's clear that he would be even more effective with better straight-line speed.

Suniev's sustained offensive zone play was just as dominant in this viewing. In the second he had a nifty spin-off to avoid a check. He looped the zone counterclockwise, opened his hips, and set a teammate up for a high danger in the crease as he worked high-to-low. In the third he hammered a one-timer on the right-hand circle for a goal – mechanics look polished; full follow through, driving through the pointing knee. His single greatest play of the game was at the end of the third. Suniev manipulated a defender on a retrieval, causing them to go the opposite direction. Another defender switched, so Suniev held him off with his arm working higher in the zone. He recognized a pass seam, and it led to a tap-in for his teammate. Even tried the Michigan on one shift in the third. I'm shocked by this performance. He could be a B-grade based on what we saw. Excited for his game tomorrow.

20
23

NHL Draft Guide

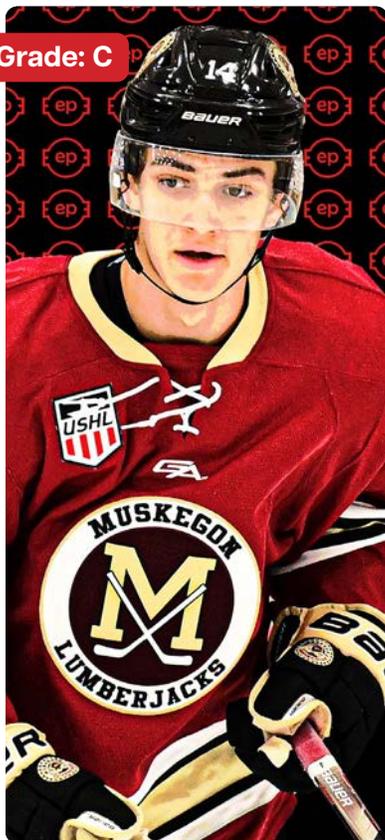
by Elite Prospects

4



Grade: C Prospects

Grade: C



70 Gavin McCarthy

AGE 17.288 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	42	8	19	27	0.64

SCOUTING REPORT

A mid-season injury interrupted Gavin McCarthy's near-point per game clip to start the season, but his diverse skill set was visible all season long.

McCarthy's part-robust defender, part-clever creator. He throws crushing hits, wins inside positioning, and eliminates off-puck threats. When the puck arrives, his advantage-creating skills take over. He fakes out incoming forecheckers before hitting both long-range darts and slick short-range plays around opponents.

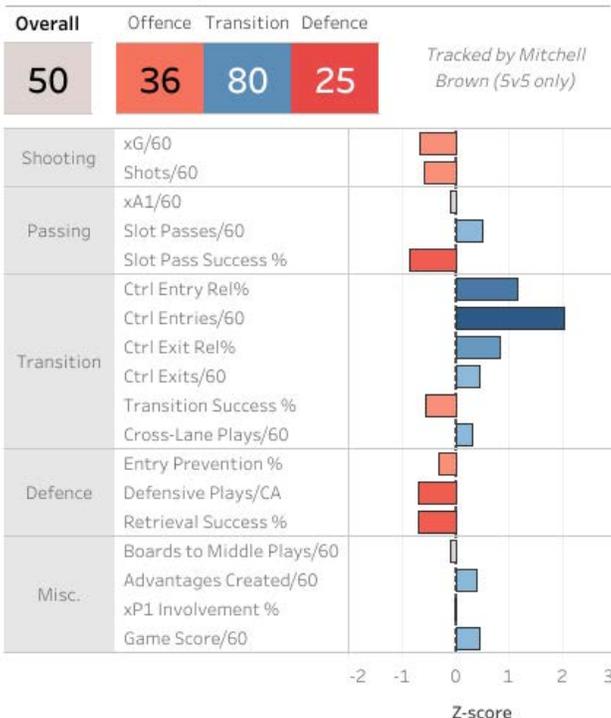
There's also plenty of flash to McCarthy's puck game. An angle-changing wrister and a non-stop activation game make him a constant threat. He tries complex passes and dekes, failing many, completing some.

That variability is game-wide for McCarthy, making it his clearest pathway for improvement. Defensively, he often reaches and plants his feet, getting beat off the rush. On breakouts, lacks the skating to pull off his more complex moves, frequently cutting back into pressure, getting stripped by backpressure, and passing to no one.

A lot of these rougher plays seem more like the consequence of experimentation rather than a lack of awareness. By upping the physical pace (foot speed, in motion plays) and mental pace (finding

Gavin McCarthy

D | Muskegon Lumberjacks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 131.4



options quicker), McCarthy could become a hard-hitting blueliner with some puck-moving ability, perhaps in a No. 4 or 5 role.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

McCarthy scored with a nasty drag wrister from the top of the circle, going far side off the inside of the post. The angle change was fast. He continues to show advanced ideas in transition. He fakes plays before cutting inside on the forechecker's heels and looks laterally for options. Takes the middle, patient, and passes through opponents. When it works, he looks like a top-65 prospect. But it often doesn't. He mistimes his passes, makes blind passes, loses pucks when trying to handle inside movements, and lacks pace. Everything just happens so slowly. He has some defensive value, but they don't have much value with his non-stop turnovers and poor play selection, which is a problem given his mechanical limitations. Still, he's a pick for me. A late one.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

For all of the flaws, I still believe in McCarthy. I see them more as a consequence of a combination of skating issues and experimentation, rather than hockey sense or puck skills. The skating fails him, no doubt. He lacks the depth to link moves together, absorb contact inside them, and to separate from pressure with a single cut or turn. He turns back into pressure, passes into closed lanes, and misses options. But he also manipulates opponents to create lanes by drawing pressure then faking. Always looking cross-ice or to the middle for options, passing through opponents when necessary. A true advantage creator. And he has the handling skill to deke around opponents. He spots teammates moving into the slot, uses space before shooting, and plays a physical style of defence that both provides a fallback game and should allow him to earn the trust of coaching staff. I'd pick him late in the late-second.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

McCarthy tries a lot of stuff. He dekes through opponents, passes through them, joins rush, and takes charge of the game at times. While he misses some of his passes and gets overzealous with the dekes, he rarely has support on his plays and when he does, he rarely gets the puck back. He's just as chaotic without the puck. Sometimes, he angles opponents and kills the play. Other times, he steps up and gets beat. In the former situation, he shows defensive timing and instincts, poking away pucks as opponents lift their stick off the ice or try to deceive him. That's the type of stuff he'll likely lean heavier on at the next level. He'd be a fine third-rounder. Could make him in a bottom-pairing role where he brings a bit of everything.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

McCarthy tried plays but none materialized. The usual low-pace skill, vision, and handling. He reads feet and tries to beat opponents. He was forechecked into poor decisions constantly. The defence was a bit better. He threw some bone-crushing hits to break up possession, won inside positioning on opponents, and eliminated off-puck threats. Passive and beaten off the rush. He could be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

McCarthy's a pretty consistent player, at least in my viewings. I see the same strengths, the same plays, and the same weaknesses. He's a physical defender who activates and tries to create offence. Uses the weak side, middle, and sets up as the trailer. His ability to create plays varies significantly, however. He has handling skill, quick hesitations before beating the reaching defender, but he only makes plays in glides. Doesn't create lanes for his shots or passes, so his otherwise exciting ideas – cross-slot passes, backhand dishes to the trailer – fail. The defensive skating makes him vulnerable as he commits laterally too early. He's an intelligent player, but lacks the tools and extra layer(s) of skill to make full use of the brain. He could be a mid-rounder. A fine end-of-board candidate for us.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

The usual from McCarthy: low-pace manipulation and intelligent activation reads alongside a physical, but reactive defensive game and pressure management limitations. He's patient, letting opponents fly by as he deceives or simply glides. He steps into space, waits, then cuts back as the forechecker leans in. Activates and skates his lanes to create space behind him. A clever breakout passer, but defaults to dump-outs too easily. Retrievals are hindered as a result. The upright stance limits his skating, especially backwards. He's either too committed or too late on most on-puck defensive plays, but his aggression and physicality help him get stops against USHL competition. He has a lot of modern-day defenceman qualities, but at this stage, it's challenging to project him to the NHL. If the skating improves a full grade, he could be a bottom-pairing option who brings a bit of everything.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

An interesting game from McCarthy. His puck movement from the blue-line is generally positive, preferring to hit teammates moving into space and drawing pressure before making the pass. Times his checks in the defensive end, controlling his speed or coming across the body at the perfect moment to disrupt the attack. Follows stick with shoulder, seals off the (former) puck carrier. Breakout ideas were strong, but missed most of his passes. He looks cross-ice, inside, and tries to reverse/delay at the right moments. None of the misses were particularly egregious, so it could just be a one-off. A solid game from McCarthy, although he sat for most of the second half of the game due to a fighting major.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

McCarthy does lots of stuff. I respect it. He tries to carry the puck out of trouble, activates up the weak side, looks for the teammates in the slot over taking point shots, manipulates pressure, dekes around players before stepping into space, and deceives constantly. Many of his plays fail because he does every at a very low speed, even for the USHL. When he's forced to play faster, it all falls apart. His hands and feet can't work in unison. The defence suffers from similar skating issues. Depth's limited, so he's beatable with speed. He doesn't generate much momentum because he's not deep enough to get much extension on his c-cuts. He often over-extends or commits too early, creating space on his heels or simply skating himself out of the way. Other times, he's too late. He has some play-killing ability because he's physical and gets inside opponents. He's definitely a pick and candidate for our board, but there's a lot of work ahead.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

I tuned into this game expecting to see a potential top-end prospect for this draft, considering McCarthy's scoring. He has offensive instincts and skills, but for the most part, McCarthy is more a great USHL quarterback, not as much an A or a B prospect, at least at this point in the season. He can feint, manipulate, and has an idea of the position of his teammates, but the forecheck and defender do surprise him, at times. He's lower-paced and his skating probably ranks below-average. He's more reactive than ahead of the game. No major flaw, but not really a special element to hold on to.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A lot to like about McCarthy's game. He has a lot of NHL skills. He manipulates incoming pressure with his hands, eyes, and feet. Baited the poke check a few times, and once, he dangled around the opponent to the middle. Used the heel-to-heel to slip off checks. He has hook and slip passes to beat forecheckers on the breakout. He reads opponents' feet and attacks the space on their heels. Even when he lost the puck, he still created something. There are flashes of activation, using the weak side and the middle to get open. A physical defender who anticipated passes and eliminated threats. The bad was the tools. His stance is upright, limiting his power generation in all directions. Especially noticeable when skating backwards. Prefers the low pace game with the puck, and doesn't have the upper-end to dynamically beat opponents. If he could make plays a bit faster, he'd be a clear top-two rounds prospect.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

McCarthy was a lot more active in this game, joining the rush in a variety of ways and looking to make plays himself. The result was his best game of the tournament. He cutback, used the middle, and even showed a change of pace game to bait pressure. Once activated, he stayed engaged. Physical defensive game, albeit lacking some details. Should be a good USHLer this season.

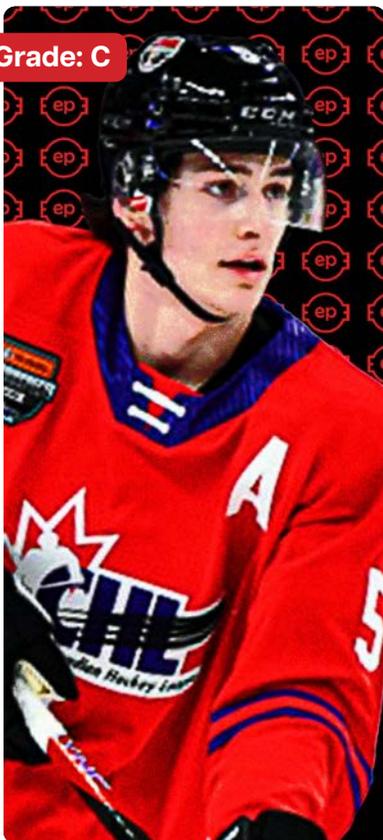
Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

McCarthy has moments of puck skills and physical play, not unlike Case. He tries to make more complex plays, cutting back and resetting or deceiving on retrievals. They rarely work. He tends to pass on the heels of his target or blinds throws pucks into space and hopes his teammate will be there. He threw a massive hit in this game and looked for a few others. Angles along the boards, but lacks the defensive skating to be an effective rush stopper at this stage. He'll be worth paying attention to, perhaps as a late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

McCarthy has moments of puck skills and physical play, not unlike Case. He tries to make more complex plays, cutting back and resetting or deceiving on retrievals. They rarely work. He tends to pass on the heels of his target or blinds throws pucks into space and hopes his teammate will be there. He threw a massive hit in this game and looked for a few others. Angles along the boards, but lacks the defensive skating to be an effective rush stopper at this stage. He'll be worth paying attention to, perhaps as a late-round candidate.

Grade: C



71 Étienne Morin

AGE 17.521 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter



Vision

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

6

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	67	21	51	72	1.07
Canada U18	WJC-18	3	0	1	1	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

We have a bit of a bias for modern defenceman at Elite Prospects, often finding ourselves drawn to blue liners who activate into the rush and fly down the wing during offensive zone possessions with enthusiasm. Étienne Morin can make many of these plays, and we took notice.

Still, his playing style is more of a mix between old and new school. He fakes opponents at the top of the offensive zone, but more often than not to get his own shots through. And while he does kill opposing plays in transition, he does it closer to his zone and more with his stick and body than his skating.

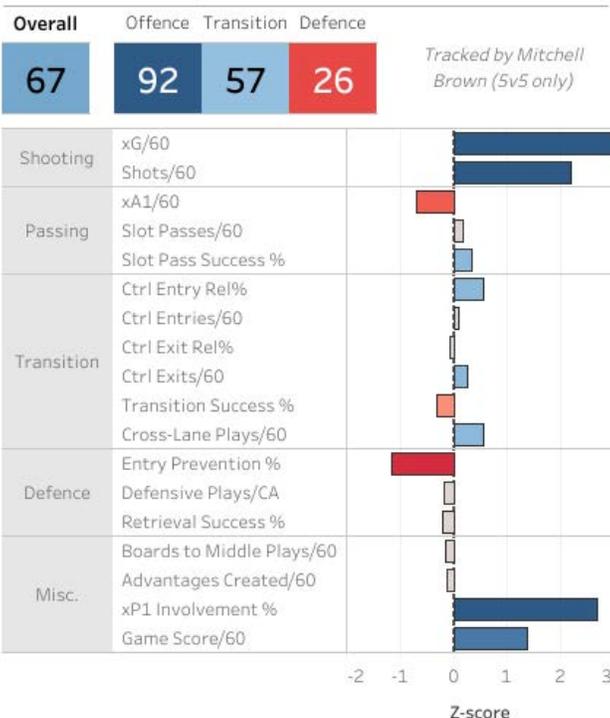
Morin can pull off some agility moves, but his skating has some mechanical flaws; it projects closer to NHL average. Plus, he often chooses to pace himself during games as he's playing around 30 minutes a night for his junior team.

"His shot is incredibly hard, he aims it well, and he attacks space in front of him," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report. "He improves the location of his release to increase his scoring odds. The Wildcats' offence runs through him."

Morin's shooting and physical skills form his NHL base. These two elements carried many defencemen to the NHL over the years –

Etienne Morin

D | Moncton Wildcats | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 138.4



Evan Bouchard comes to mind – but as Morin is a few inches shorter than most other NHL players of his archetype, he will need to develop other ancillary skills.

We believe in his offensive hockey sense, his vision, and ability to find great plays through defensive layers, but improving his decision-making in possession and risk management would go a long way to make him a more solid NHL prospect. He also needs to tighten up his gap with attackers in the defensive zone and play with more urgency there. Right now, his defensive game is by far his biggest weakness.

If everything goes right in his development and he does make the league, a top-four role doesn't seem out of the question for Morin.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



QMJHL Stock Watch: A review of the league's top draft-eligible prospects

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - Canada vs Slovakia - u18s

Not a great game from Morin to cap off a mediocre tournament. He still had the same issue at the event. Instead of taking the extra stride to close on opponents, he reaches with his stick, which only opens more space and possibilities for attackers. The defensive game is far from refined. It will necessitate a lot of work, but it's really the lack of engagement, even in a Bronze Medal game like this one, the very last of his season that is concerning. I don't have the impression that Morin will ever become one of those intense workers that make their team better and step up when it counts. His puck management and even his playmaking could have been better in this game, too. Part of the issue may be a lack of chemistry with his partner and teammates.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

I'm not really seeing much from Morin at this tournament. Many of his feints or deceptive manoeuvres are excessive – at one point, Morin opened his hips into the mohawk to evade no one in particular on a rush play – or ineffective. On the one hand, I guess you can appreciate the effort, particularly at the top of the offensive blue line. Morin is genuinely trying to create shooting and passing opportunities, but he sure does make it look difficult. Without the puck, he's struggling at this tournament. He's overly puck focused in the neutral and defensive zones. At his best, Morin can contain opponents reasonably well along the boards, but he's not a play-stopper. I'm seeing more of a C-grade prospect than B-grade.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Morin is still trying to deceive defenders at this tournament like he did in the QMJHL. His playstyle didn't change one bit. That tells me he isn't really affected by pressure -- that's a good thing -- but he also doesn't really understand how to adapt his game when the situation demands it. He runs straight at opponents to try and take away the puck from them and he overplays. He really needs to learn to take the extra step defensively to avoid reaching and placing himself in penalty trouble. He lacks the fluidity necessary

to execute his more advanced offensive ideas. I'm not sure he's all that translatable as a player, but I continue to appreciate the offensive sense and the confidence.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Not a particularly impressive performance from Morin, particularly in the defensive zone. I was impressed by Morin's ability to match opponents footwork in body-on-body situations, but a tendency to wander and get puck-focused away from the puck made him a liability more often than not. Morin made a poor read on a loose puck in space and got burned for a goal against, too. Some interesting moments from the top of the offensive zone, but nothing that really moved the needle for me. I'm really worried about Morin's feet, too. Skating needs to come a ways for him to have a chance at playing his game at the NHL level.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Canada vs Switzerland - U18s

A great game for Morin overall on the offensive side. He's not mobile enough to pull off all of his ideas, but I continue to appreciate the instinct at the offensive blue line and in puck movements. He knows how to shake defenders and how to create passing lanes and where to look for the best next play. Defensively, well, he's positioned decently but his gap continues to be a bit loose and he's puck-focused.

Mitchell Brown: March 19th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

The best game I've seen from Morin so far. He grabbed four points in a blow out the other way, but showed a lot of details that I haven't seen from him before. Quick delays and some patience on the breakout allowed him to start plays, once leading to a goal. Joined the rush, and instead of shooting immediately, he found a teammate in better positioning, leading to Morin's first goal. Still killed plays early without ending up on the wrong side of the puck too much. Physical, of course. Still had his turnovers and no-thought shots, but he also more creativity to walk off the boards or pump fake. Scored late with a powerful wrist shot past the screened goaltender. Not a projectable player, but clearly has NHL components. He probably looks better without a more focused role. He could be a third rounder.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Not as impressive of a performance from Morin, but the NHL elements are still there: his physicality, passing game, and shooting. Again, the mobility is a large issue. He can catch up to plays, but it requires a lot of effort from him. He's strong and powerful so he can make his suboptimal mechanics work, but he won't ever develop elusiveness with this skating base. I really liked his backhand passes through opponents on breakout. He could be more defensively engaged. He's thinking offence all the time and missing opponents sneaking behind him.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

There were some good plays from Morin, but this was mostly a disastrous game. It seemed like every touch was a turnover and every 1-on-1 was a chance against. He wanders too high in the neutral zone, gets beat off the pivot wide, doesn't maintain an athletic stance off-puck, and lacks urgency. His skating's a massive problem. He doesn't bend his knees, even when trying to escape from pressure. He gets overwhelmed and pushed into poor decisions. Throws away pucks under pressure and doesn't look before moving the puck on retrievals. Flashes more advanced reads, but nothing with the mechanical fluidity required to do them in the NHL. From the point, he hit a cross-slot pass late, but mostly took point shots. He has some moves, but he never waits for the defender to close in before making them. No quickness and doesn't use space. I don't see much upside here.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Charlottetown Islanders vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

There are some elements of Nicolas Beaudin in Morin's game. That's the other side of the coin. He's a low-pace passer and shooter who relies on stretch passes and pre-planned moves and plays at the point to score. He can defend relatively well in place and has some physicality in moments; he communicates and quarterbacks, but his game is not translatable at the time. He would have to integrate a lot more movement and become a lot more refinement defensively. The scoring is a bit of a mirage, too, despite the

shooting strength and point play because he's on the ice so often, over 30 minutes. He's a confusing projection, but not a top-64 for me.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Acadie-Bathurst Titans vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

I have to be careful in my evaluation of Morin, because he's just not my type of defenceman. I usually like shiftier, better defenders with playmaking abilities, but it doesn't mean that Morin's archetype -- shoot first defenceman who defend by giving up space and blocking high-danger areas -- don't work in the NHL. They have value. He's similar in many ways to draft-year Evan Bouchard, except the tools are a bit worse and the reads, too. Morin is also playing a lot of minutes, scoring a lot in those minutes, but mostly conserving his energy for the offensive game. The times we do see him skate at full speed, he either has no choice (he has to catch up to a loose puck) or he's activating up the ice. In offensive situation, his enthusiasm seem to make him lighter on his skates. Otherwise, his stride is a clear below-average projection, a pretty big hurdle in his NHL path. I doubt he ever will become a strong rush defender as he can't keep up with quick attackers and has pivoting difficulties in pressured situations, so he will have to give up space and use his length to at least deny the middle of the ice (like Bouchard). He should be able to engage physically on opponents on the walls and box them out around the net.

His transition game is hit and miss: flashes of give-and-goes and forecheck manipulation, but mostly at a standstill (he doesn't have any kind of elusive footwork), and it's about the same thing in the offensive zone. Morin is more than shoot-first, he's almost shoot only. That being said, he rarely overlooks better opportunities, as he's the best opportunity. His shot is incredibly hard, he aims it well, and he attacks space in front of him. He improves the location of his release to increase his scoring odds. The Wildcats' offence run through him. I find it a lot more interesting after this viewing and thinking about his game and projection. We could slide him somewhere between 50-70. That would seem fair. He isn't a high-chance NHLer, but if he gets the necessary technical help, improves his defence, and gets a better team environment, maybe he could become that NHL n.4. Again, not my type of defenceman, but we have to respect the building blocks that are there and the old school NHL potential.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Morin showed his strengths and weaknesses. He wasn't all that effective on defence. He engaged the opposition on the walls, but generally his gap was loose all over the ice. He made some bad decisions with the puck, too, but when he faced a bit less pressure, he also pulled off some really impressive breakout plays. The precision and offensive instincts are intriguing, but he's a specialist at this stage. His game will need a lot of refinement. Adding more pace and energy on defence would help.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Morin did the usual stuff, good and bad. He's a skilled shooter off the point alongside a bit of activation. Too static on receptions and with the puck in general, but there's catch-and-release shots, drag wristers, and more. Improving his feet will allow him to get more out of his shots. A very physical defender, throwing hits all game long. A few won possession, coming across the hips of his opponent, but most were reactionary hits. He's not aware of back pressure, doesn't respect speed in the neutral zone, and makes a ton of blind passes to the other team. Doesn't scan when going into the end boards. He plants his feet in the neutral zone and waits for opponents to come to him. That he's so keen to engage works in his favour at times, but as soon as he's beat, there are numbers going back the other way and he has no capability to recover. He has some intriguing qualities, but it's tough to imagine a path to the NHL that isn't completely overhauling his game in all three zones.

Mitchell Brown: January 15th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Morin's limited by poor habits and skating. As soon as the puck leaves his stick, he straightens his legs and glides, even if he's about to join the rush. He stops pucks dead on pass receptions. He's always on his heels, which when combined with his general lack of pace, leads to turnovers when he tries more advanced plays from the point. He tries to make stuff happen, faking on pass receptions, stepping into space, cutting away from pressure and finding a different lane, but many fail or go nowhere. It's the same story defensively. He's physical and aggressive, but constantly gets burned because of his defensive skating. Always on his heels, he can't recover if he's beat, and he's always lunging at opponents. He doesn't even keep his stick on the ice! There are moments of vision, activation skill (give-and-go while eliminating the opponent's stick to create the passing lane), and, of course, the shot.

But without a real transition game, defensive skating, and better habits, he won't get close to the NHL.

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

Morin shined some rush defence abilities in this one, but I continue to mostly see a static blue line shooter. He can pull off some evasive maneuvers when others rush at him, dangle them, and move past them, and he attacks for backdoor plays. His shot is always threatening and he has some passes in his arsenal, too, like give-and-goes, but he just seems like a good Junior defenceman, not really an NHL prospect. I have yet to see the upside, but there is enough to keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Morin didn't have the offence in this game, but his breakouts and defence looked better than usual. He didn't just throw pucks away or rim them around the boards; he stepped inside, delayed, and hit moving teammates, even in situations where I've previously seen him default to the easy play. Defensively, he tried to make up space, angled a bit, and was only caught in the neutral zone twice. Closed space quickly in the defensive end, often lunging towards his opponents – which isn't great – but he showed aggressiveness and smaller details (like coming across the hips, tying up, trapping feet) to kill plays. A solid understanding of more high-level areas and he's physical, but the tools are still limiting, as are the habits. Maybe an end-of-board prospect.

David St-Louis: December 9th, 2022 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Morin has an instinct for the offensive game. He sees plays develop, attempts to hit teammates in the slot, and registers open shooting lanes. He tries give-and-goes and stretch passes. The skating is a 4, probably. It's incredibly limiting and I'm not sure about the defensive impact. He lacks agility to evade the opposition, screens his own goalie from shots...He's mostly a blue-line shooter and quarterback who lacks the mobility to make the same plays in the NHL. I'm not sure if he's a prospect. Maybe a late-board one considering the offensive sense.

David St-Louis: November 27th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Morin lacks mobility. It makes the defensive game harder for him. He got beat wide a couple of times; opponents simply have to turn on the jets off the rush and leave him behind. His lack of speed also led him to give up on an opposing rush. That being said, he did make some plays, like a smooth dangle around a forechecker and a pass under the stick of another one. He has some playmaking instincts, but so far I'm not convinced of his upside.

David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

I continue to have doubts about Morin's skating, his high-stance that limit his agility and ability to recover to shutdown plays. He clearly has some offensive instincts, but he's more of a tower-of-power at the blue-line, a cannon, than the usual mobile, hyper-active, playmaking defencemen that we find in the NHL. He's an old school talent, a big-shot, more than the new age blue-liner. There is some deception in his passing. He can pass the puck around the forecheck, but some of his feints and dangles also lack purpose. I'm not really a believer at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Morin's always in recovery mode. It's partly the consequence of his skating: never enters a true acceleration phase, just going straight into his stride that has a significant lack of lower-body flexion. He has the ankle flexion down, and he's quite slick on his edges – it'll improve. But it's mostly the consequence of his lack of details and awareness. He uses space, but then blasts pucks straight into defenders instead of passing to the open teammate in a better position. He takes runs at players with his stick off the ice, not respecting opponents behind him. Doesn't take away the middle when defending the rush, letting opponents essentially use him as a pylon that needs to be passed around to gain the zone. He gives up on players, not showing any desire to correct his teammate's mistakes (or even his own). Off-puck, he doesn't bend his knees or show any urgency to close space. But there are moments where he shows real defensive skill, angling attackers to the outside, timing his engagements, etc.

The shot's a clear NHL projection, likely around a 6: hands in front, elbow up, chest square, and powers through his shot, even off the pass, and has a one-timer to match. He has creative breakout ideas, using a double cut to escape pressure, drawing incoming pressure to pass through it, and completing quick possession plays through multiple forecheckers. No idea what to make of him.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Everytime Morin stepped on the ice, it seemed like the ice tilted in Sherbrooke's favour. He couldn't get the puck out of his own zone. Some of his passes were solid ideas: small area plays for teammates to pick up with speed. Most were bad. He sent low-speed passes straight to the pinching defenceman, passed to teammates with more pressure than himself, and avoided the middle. Defensively, he reaches instead of engaging with his body. A tight gap earned an early-game rush stop, but he hunted the hit instead of the puck, conceding the zone. Poor athletic posture: legs straight. Steps up and plants his feet when defending the rush; doesn't angle, build backwards momentum, or surf across. In the offensive zone, he stops pucks dead instead of moving through his pass receptions and working laterally. Some rush activation in spurts, but largely ineffective. Didn't see any draft-worthy qualities in this game.

Grade: C



72 Roman Kantserov

AGE 17.986 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 20, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw
Talent



Vision



Evasive

Player Info

RW

Position

Left

Shoots

5'9"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Metallurg Magnitogorsk	KHL	1	0	0	0	0.00
Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk	MHL	45	27	27	54	1.20
Projected	MHL	47	28	28	56	1.19

SCOUTING REPORT

It took a little while for Roman Kantserov to find his place on our board, with many spirited tilts among our scouting staff leaving his draft stock hanging in the balance.

In some games, he looked mostly like a straight-line winger. He used his quickness in the MHL to outrace the opposition on the wing and create his scoring chances, a strategy that doesn't scale up well to higher levels of play. While Kantserov's skating may rank significantly above average at his level, his pace and skill advantage will diminish as he rises up hockey's professional ranks.

"Kantserov wasn't able to get the ball rolling in this one against stronger competition," Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen wrote in a January report. "There were a few nice rushes when he got to properly attack with a speed advantage and skate his way through the neutral zone, but when he was along the boards, his transition effectiveness dropped significantly."

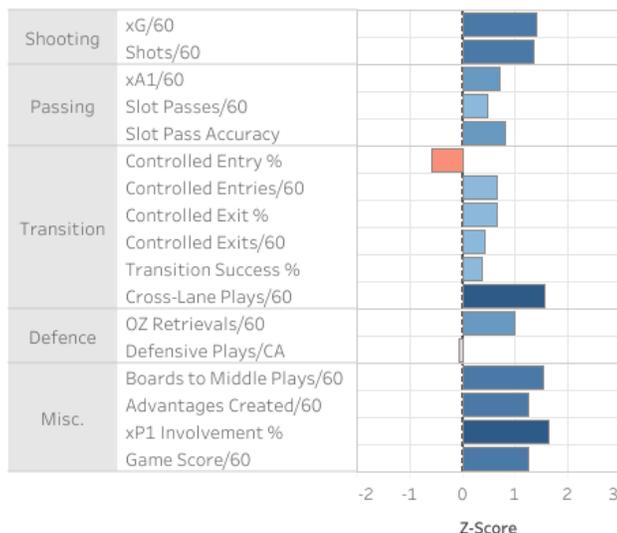
But as the season wore on, Kantserov took full command of the ice, thriving in his team's give-and-go oriented system. He started to look like a high-level playmaker who could orchestrate both rush and offensive zone scoring chances with a combination of clever skating patterns and puck movements.

Roman Kantserov

F | Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 192.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Kantserov is at his best when his skating and overall skills serve his tactical game. When, for example, instead of rushing wide on opponents off the rush, he drags opponents with him low in the offensive zone and then abruptly cuts back to connect with teammates in the middle of the ice. And when he blends in body feints, crossovers, and changes of speed to pierce directly through the defensive formations himself.

While we became more confident in his projection over the course of the season, at this stage, the 5-foot-9 Kantserov sticks mostly to the peripheries of the offensive zone. He builds his scoring chances from the outside part of the ice. That's a hit to his projection.

To seize on his potential as a third-line, secondary scoring winger, Kantserov will have to develop his give-and-go and deceptive playmaking game even more and, most of all, his physical skills. It's only by becoming sturdier and a better middle driver that he will earn a spot in the top league.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 15th, 2023 - HC Tolpar vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

Kantserov's game ended with a dangerous high hit, an elbow to the face. Not sure what prompted him to do that. It was a dumb decision. Otherwise, he showed the same interesting elements: a lot of pace in his offensive zone play, a projectable skating ability, handling skills, manipulation tricks, off-puck instinct... He still feels more like a great MHLer than a projectable prospect, but he would fit right in with some other prospects we have in the 50-70 range.

David St-Louis: March 12th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

Kantserov has some playmaking chops. He can manipulate the feet of defenders to open lanes to the slot and then attack then or to have them overshoot a pocket of space and then send the puck inside it to a teammate. The hockey sense continues to shine. I'm not sure how well his off-puck, slow-build-from-the periphery style will work in North America, but smart players do adapt. He makes good passing plays off the wall and under pressure at least. And he has a motor. He can use his above-average skating ability to reach pucks first and then seal them from the opposition. He could be a top-64 guy.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

A hat-trick for Kantserov who found the back of the net in a variety of ways. Added the first two off the rush at even-strength. The first one was particularly nice with how he curled the puck and set up the shot, using the defender as a screen and placing the puck smartly short side just above the blocker. The second one was just your regular finish after a 2-on-1 and a cross-ice feed, while the third one came off a power play set piece right out of a faceoff. There was a lot of good stuff from Kantserov. The skill level is showing frequently through his handling and playmaking. There was more attempts at gaining the middle off the cycle, although he's still sometimes too contempt with just looking for shooting opportunities from the outside and near the point. Mostly strong work in transition, too, with multiple clever passing plays to the middle from the boards. Probably among the best Kantserov viewings I've had this season, if not the best.

David St-Louis: February 18th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

Kantserov had some genius-level off-puck movements in this one. He stayed behind the backs of defenders, waited for his teammates to get in a passing position, and then attacked down. Purposeful and planned. There were many like these. He tried give-and-goes to create shooting lanes and made some complex delay plays to open up the offence after entering the zone. He was aware and consistently showed anticipation. The handling and skating skills look above-average. A very interesting prospect.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

Kantserov has a few ways he creates almost all of his offence. The darting rush attacks are arguably the main way and he's gotten

very good at them at this level, though I still have somewhat hard time seeing how they'll translate to the next levels. He does have the delay game off the rush to complement and add more diversity, though. In the OZ, he's mostly a perimeter playmaker and shooter, circling high and low while trying to find options, mixing in heel-to-heels to add more deception (though you can argue how effective they are). He's still getting all the freedom to roam around the ice and do what he wants; wondering how he'd do in a more structured environment. In this one, he added a primary helper on an empty-netter and scored himself earlier from a rebound bounce.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Sarmaty vs. Stalnye Lisy - MHL

I'm not sure if Kantserov's offensive zone ballet is his own or the team's. A lot of give-and-goes and timed movements inside space. It's great to see and it props up his scoring tools, but as his teammates are doing some of the same things, I'm inclined to think that the coach has a hand in how Kantserov moves on the ice. Still, the hockey sense is clearly above-average. We see it in how he commands the play. He moves inside space, but not before the puck has a chance to get there. He recognizes speed advantages and uses them, too. The skating looks above-average and the handling, too. He's a slight forward, however, who skates a bit hunched over. The balance and board play might be problems.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Mamonty Yugry - MHL

Kantserov's translatability is a question mark. He continues to have many junior habits. He's all over the place in the defensive zone. Flashes some physical skills here and there, even threw a big hit on the forecheck. Improving the upright skating posture and lowering his hips would make his contact game more projectable. In his current form, he'll have a hard time battling for pucks against bigger and stronger opponents. He does mix in a lot of heel-to-heels, but rarely finds any separation with them. Playmaking is the strongest suit, particularly when he's delaying off the rush and then feeding pucks to the middle. He can be inefficient with his touches, but gets enough of them to create, even if these more recent viewings have been milder compared to some of the earlier ones. Probably a third-rounder for our board.

Dylan Griffing: January 9th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk - MHL

There's no denying that Kantserov is a top-tier MHL player right now, but I just still struggle with projecting him much further than that. There hasn't been much refining of his game as the season has gone on and it likely correlates to the fact that he doesn't really need to change things to be successful at this level. Every game is roughly the same with him, very skilled and hangs on to possession for long periods of time and has enough pace to blitz through rushes. The skating still grades out to average for me and he's pretty average across the board barring the flashes of puck handling. Probably still a third rounder for me at this point, but he's a very fun and skilled player, so late-second isn't out of the picture.

David St-Louis: January 7th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk - MHL

Kantserov tends to overdangle a bit, but I love his first touches. They bring a lot of pace to his game. He always takes pucks in movement and can make immediate plays on reception. He sets up his shot chances by hiding away from the defence and by creating runways for himself. He moves with purpose, seems to have a plan. A lot to like.

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Kantserov has elusive skills, separation speed (at this level), good shot mechanics, the ability to fake before making a play, and the awareness to go with all of those abilities. He can make plays on first touch, by first identifying pressure and then immediately beating it with a stickhandling move, and he can involve teammates in plays with purposeful movements. Good posture in his rush offence. He can combine crossovers, fakes, and handling moves to carry the puck, and he's a very quick passer. A lot of give-and-go attempts. Not much missing in his game. Of course, the extra space really benefits his game. He's 5-foot-9, but he seems willing to battle for pucks. He always sprints to get first touch on them.

Lassi Alanen: January 3rd, 2023 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Kantserov wasn't able to get the ball rolling in this one against stronger competition. There were a few nice rushes when he got to properly attack with a speed advantage and skate his way through the neutral zone, but when he was along the boards, his transition effectiveness dropped significantly. One of the many ways his current game is very much suited to the junior level, not the professional ranks. The offence he generated mostly came from these few rushes where he was able to enter the zone cleanly, then distribute the puck. Didn't see any high-end plays, though. There were times when he looked quite frustrated as he wasn't getting the puck back and his linemates opted for shots instead. I don't think he's very effective defensive player either. I've seen better.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Mamonty Yugry - MHL

Kantserov is fun to watch, that's for sure. His current game is very much suited for juniors and MHL, being able to circle and re-group endlessly without much issue. Still, I really liked his playmaking, making some clever cross-seam feeds. He has also really utilized the entry -> cutback -> pass to the second wave formula to the max in my viewings, netting him bunch of scoring chance assists as MHL teams seem to really struggle defending against it. Has a skating advantage at this level, not sure how it's going to carry to the next. Shooting mechanics need quite a bit of honing (sweeping motion).

Dylan Griffing: November 14th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

One of the better games I've seen from Kantserov. The reliability on outpacing his opponents may become an issue moving forward, but he's becoming more and more confident pulling tricks out of his magic bag to elude defenders and open up maneuvering room for himself. The lack of control is worrying, though. He doesn't really think ahead when he gets the puck, so there's a lot of him skating into areas where he's destined to lose the puck or he'll just ignore his surroundings, refuse to scan, and skate in circles. The flashes are valuable, but his lack of overall smarts brings him down a peg or two. He took good routes off the puck, especially on the rush, cutting across the ice and dragging players with him to expand the carrier's chances of an entry. Could probably end up as a late-second rounder, but it feels like he's so far out that the third round is most likely where he lands.

Lassi Alanen: October 24th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. HC Sputnik Almeteyevsk - MHL

Kantserov did some intriguing stuff, like looking to play give-and-go based game off the rush, passing while gliding and then immediately changing his pace to beat the player and gain an advantage, unfortunately not to receive the puck back. He's skilled, handling well in tight and taking difficult passes in motion, once spinning to a partial breakaway after a stretch pass from the DZ. Plays with pace, but also has a delay game off the rush. I just don't know how good the playmaking skills are (kept getting intercepted a lot). The shot also doesn't seem like a weapon, either. Got outmuscled and kept on the perimeter a few times. Could be a late candidate for our board.

Dylan Griffing: October 14th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

One thing is for sure with Kantserov, and that is that he is a ton of fun. The translatability and effectiveness of what he does is a bit of a different story. He was closed down pretty easily quite a few times, either from forcing plays with his hands or not being strong enough to fight off physicality or stick checks. Even some plays that did work just looked like he was barely clinging on to possession and, against a better team, would have resulted in a turnover. Things were clicking here for sure, though. His delays were nice, he showed good skill in tight, and his passes were pretty sharp. Smart drop passes when he didn't have options available in front, albeit, he was skating right into danger a lot.

Lassi Alanen: October 14th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Kantserov seemed pretty fun, but not sure about the NHL upside. For a smaller player, he didn't really stand out with his skating and I didn't see any other high-end skills either. He did have good moments, no doubt about it. Finished his best 5v5 chance of the game with a quick release from in tight, had a few delays and drop pass plays off the rush, picked off multiple passes in the NZ with great anticipation and even showed some off-puck physicality along the boards. Worthy to watch more, but we'll see. Only a few days away from being eligible in last year's draft, too.

Dylan Griffing: September 21st, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk - MHL

There are certainly things to appreciate in Kantserov's game. There are really good flashes of skill and creativity, his utilization of different types of passes to adapt to situations, and a pretty sweet wrist shot on top of it all. However, he is so outside driven that it is hard to find value in what he does. He really struggles with escaping the walls and resorts to cutbacks to try to get space or just shuffles it around the boards or back to the point. There was rarely a time in this game where he had the puck in a set offensive play and it ever looked like he was going to do something dangerous. There was one play where he evaded two defenders and dragged the puck away from the boards, cut to the middle, and got a shot on goal, but plays like that are few and far between. The challenge of breaking off the walls is going to be even harder going forward if he doesn't add a step or two in pace and/or get much stronger. Right now, he is listed 5'9", 161, but he has a ton of balance to withstand contact at this level, at least. I don't think that's something he will be able to rely on moving forward as he starts playing against more and more physically strong opponents. Despite his production (on pace for 95 points this year), this looks more like a mid-round pick.

Dylan Griffing: September 5th, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Trying to figure out exactly what Roman Kantserov is, is proving to be challenging. He scored a super slick backhand goal to open up his season, deking a defender out of his boots beforehand, but then kind of trailed off for the rest of this one. He has hands, I counted two of them in this game, but he still ends up being more of a passenger on most plays.

Dylan Griffing: March 21st, 2022 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL Playoffs

Mostly an off-puck player in this one. I like his defensive game – reloads high often, uses his physicality, and makes proactive reads and acts on them to create turnovers. Showed some deception with the puck, but not enough to feel confident in his transition ability moving forward. His offense was either coming from feeding the point or shooting the puck himself. His shot is going to be his main offensive tool to build off of and he is pretty creative in the build-up to his shot. Used a fake shot nicely to manipulate the last defender and get a clear shot on goal and has pretty good hands in tight. He plays with low pace and struggles when he is forced to play quicker, losing his handles and struggling to keep balance. The off-puck game is already there, Kantserov's spot in this class will be determined by how he develops his offensive game next season.

Dylan Griffing: December 20th, 2021 - Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk vs. Irbis Kazan - MHL

Kantserov was clearly the third best player on his line. He was a fine checker, applying pressure and backpressure, created a couple turnovers. Bad on breakouts, no scanning and rushing his passes. He really struggles controlling the puck with pace. Not very dynamic or creative and it was pretty easy for the defense to shut him down. Pretty much just a perimeter playmaker with a distinct lack of dangerous passes. Physicality wasn't apparent and he was getting boxed out a lot.

Grade: C



73 Jacob Fowler

AGE 17.808 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 24, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'2"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	7.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	7	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	40	2.28	.921	5

SCOUTING REPORT

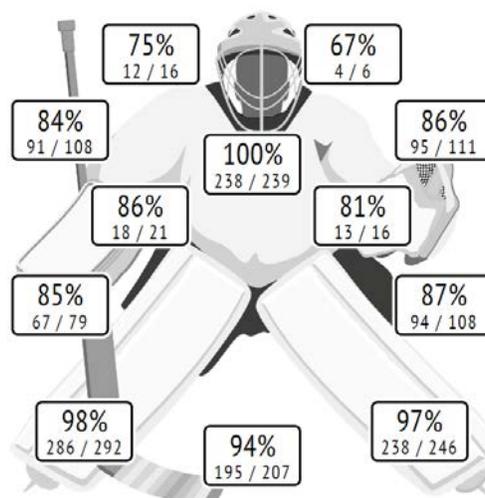
Spencer Knight, Joseph Woll, Thatcher Demko, Cory Schneider.

These are just a handful of goalies that Boston College has been able to successfully develop in recent years, and 2023 NHL Draft prospect Jacob Fowler is hoping to be the next household name from that school. After a brilliant year with Youngstown of the USHL, it certainly looks like he has the ability to pull it off.

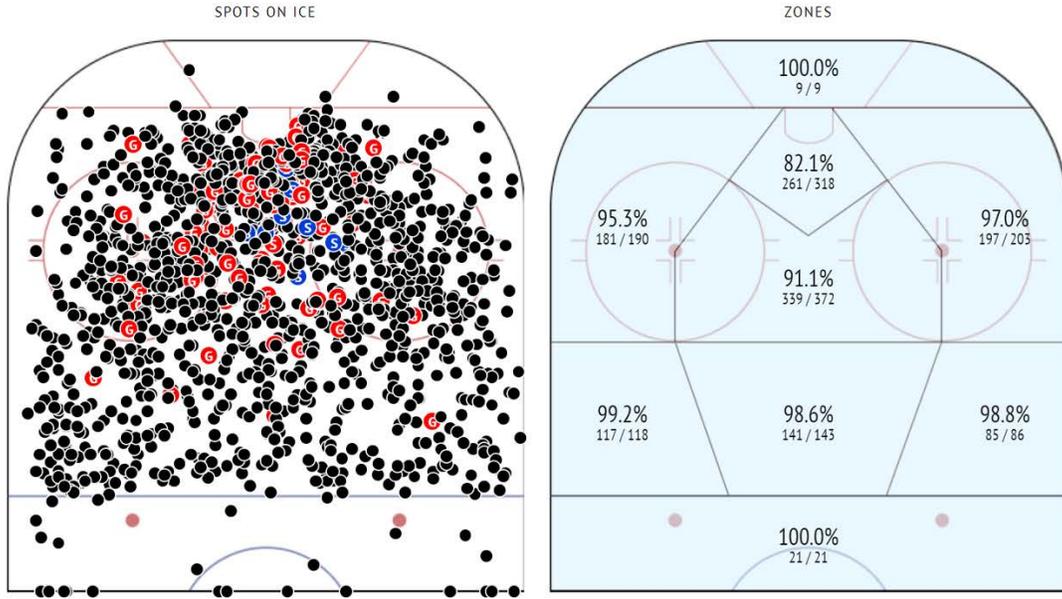
Fowler's explosive lateral movement is the first thing that jumps out at most scouts. It's easy to marvel at the overall strength that he pushes with. This is a testament to his physical training, but also to the confidence he has in his positioning. He doesn't normally set up aggressively in terms of his depth, but he is aggressive in his approach. He's not afraid to hone in on a shooter and leave more room at the back door because he feels like he can cover that area with the strength that he possesses. This approach works well for him in most scenarios, but he struggles to abandon this mindset on the penalty kill, which can lead to some goals against.

In terms of post-integration, Fowler ranks very high. His ability to transition in and out of reverse-VH is quick and efficient, which makes him very effective on low-to-high passing plays. If the puck is worked around the zone for an extended time, he has a tendency to get too low and wide in his stance. That makes him susceptible to one-timer opportunities when he gets caught flat-footed. There is a lot to like about Fowler's game. He is heading to a successful program to develop for at least a few seasons, and has shown an ability to already think the game on another level. With some adjustments to his approach and the added overall game experience that he will receive in NCAA, he could be one of the biggest names to come out of this draft class.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: C



74 Theo Lindstein

AGE 17.693 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Fleet of Foot

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	181 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5.5 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	14	2	5	7	0.50
Brynäs IF	SHL	32	1	1	2	0.06
Sweden U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	1	4	5	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

Theo Lindstein already established himself as a top prospect for this year's draft last season, debuting in the SHL as a 16-year-old and making Sweden's roster for the U18s as an underager.

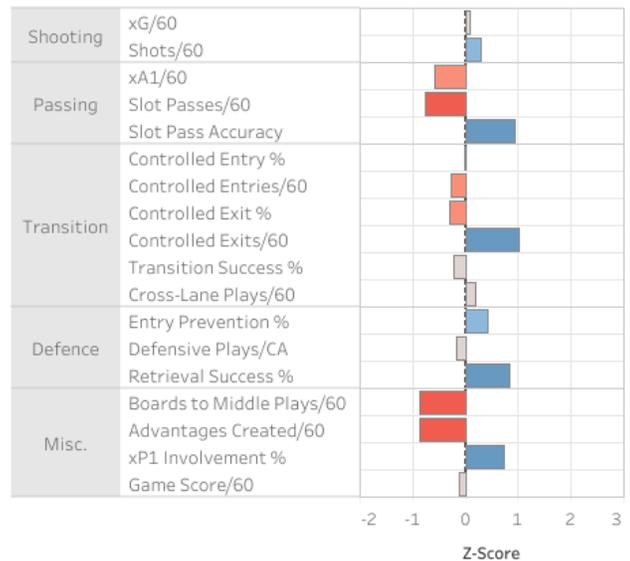
After starting his draft year at the J20 level, he rather quickly became a full-time fixture on Brynäs' blue line, even logging over 20 minutes per night as his team was fighting to keep their spot in Sweden's top men's league.

While it did take a bit for Lindstein to get going in the SHL, he earned his minutes in the crucial games, arguably playing his best hockey of the season during that stretch. He didn't try to force anything and kept things relatively simple, yet was able to advance the puck in transition, killing a few plays defensively, getting his point shots through the traffic and occasionally joining the rush as a trailer option.

While Lindstein has advanced up the levels quickly and was already able to log sizable minutes in one of the best pro leagues in the world, he's also not the most exciting, high upside bet.

Theo Lindstein

D | Brynäs IF | SHL | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 146.2
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



The biggest worries were caused by the decision-making and lack of high-end reads with the puck. Albeit a plus-level skater with good four-way mobility, he seemingly couldn't process the game quickly enough at times and lacked initiative, often deferring to his partner on breakouts. There's also a lack of offensive touch and creativity, even though he started to find more success

activating from the offensive blue line. The worry is that while he had a developmental head start compared to most of his peers due to the skating and physical maturity, others will be able to catch up or even surpass him in the coming years.

Teams will likely have Lindstein ranked very differently based on their drafting philosophies. Teams who value certainty and safety could end up ranking him rather highly, even in the first round, while teams looking to swing on upside are likely going to rate him lower.

While we ultimately fall in the latter camp, Lindstein has a reasonable path to becoming a bottom-pairing defenceman with utility on the penalty kill. And those players definitely have value, too.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



The 3 Stars from Day 3 of the 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He doesn't have much upside, but the skills are good. He's a mobile skater. You just wish he was a bit bigger. He's more of an all-around defenceman for me. A two-way defenceman. I don't think he has power play smartness, but I think he can move a puck quick enough and see the ice well enough to be a safe defenceman. Don't try anything fancy. I don't know if he's really that hard to play against, but the mobility is good. One of those all-around guys." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

I finally get it. It took a lot of viewings, but I understand the Lindstein love. He's a simple player. He hasn't changed, but he's very effective in games like this one, where the stress level goes off. He's just safe and calm and a play killer with his stick. He neutralizes attacks and he has the engaging ability, too, the physicality. Simple, good decisions and even some deception to open lanes when needed, but not when the plays have risk. I see a penalty killer in the NHL, a bottom-pairing defenceman, who, inside the right system, could aspire to more.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

All I see from Lindstein is a player who defers to his more skilled partner. He knows who he is. He knows his skills and what he can accomplish on the ice. That self-awareness is always a plus in a pro league -- and it's probably why he played in the SHL earlier than others. I would rather draft a player who has safer skills but also likes to experiment. I'm not sure how much Lindstein is going to evolve over the next years. He could become a bottom-pairing shutdown NHL defenceman. I wouldn't give him a higher chance of that than Willander and Sandin Pellikka's chance of becoming a top-four defenceman.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Lindstein showed more flashes of skills in this one. He dangled around sticks, made a few timely and smart breakout passes, and hit the logical next play most of the time. He's not a creator at all and I have my doubts about his handling mechanics, but if he can add those good first passes to his defensive potential than I think it's fair to have him where we do on our board.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

I just don't see the skill level with Lindstein. He makes occasionally interesting plays but not with fluid enough mechanics. He defers a lot, even in blowout games like this. I like his stick work defensively and his defensive skating for the most part. I just doubt the offensive potential, but he could become a kind of shutdown defenceman. He had one really nice backhand pass under pressure in this game. Maybe his offensive confidence will come as the tournament advances.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 16th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Brynäs IF - SHL

A solid performance by Lindstein. He played with more urgency and aggression in his own end. He held a good gap and was quick out to the boards with aggression. He joined attacks and played solid with the puck. The turnovers from last game were nowhere to be seen in this game. His mobility and positioning are his selling points. He doesn't hesitate or stress in tight situations. His offence is limited and simplistic and he hasn't shown much ability to be effectively creative. A solid B prospect.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 14th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - SHL

Big game with enormous pressure. Theo played on regular rotation and was used the whole game. The coaches seem to trust him highly at this age. I was not a big fan of his performance with the puck though. Malmö played an aggressive forechecking game and that gave Theo some problems. He needs to scan the ice better before he gets the puck. He had many situations where he turned the puck over because he couldn't handle the pressure from Malmö's forechecking. If he prescans better, he would see more options and could also use his strengths better to move the puck. His passing plays, even with time and space, were inconsistent. In the offensive zone, Lindstein is shy to create. He plays simple plays and rather chips the puck down the boards rather than try to shoot or move across the blue line. I still like his calmness and mobility. He does not stress, even if he made mistakes earlier. He positioned himself well defensively too.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 7th, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Brynäs IF - SHL

Theo Lindstein played on the second pair and got a lot of ice time in this game, at least 5v5. He didn't get to play on either special team. The good stuff: He skates well in all directions and has no trouble at keeping up with the pace at this level. He also can hold a good gap defending the rush. He doesn't look strong but the way he moved his feet made him handle physical pressure well. He skates with ease and goes into every situation with a low muscle tone. He shows patience with the puck and doesn't stress with the puck while checked up on. He makes good simple plays. He scans for options when he moves with the puck and isn't afraid to join the attack.

The not-so-good-stuff: He doesn't plan ahead with regularity, neither with or without the puck. He looks calm but he is also kind of slow to make decisions. He had some opportunities when he had time and space with the puck but didn't impress in any of those situations. The decision-making was slow and either skated into trouble or made a half bad stressful pass to a player that had little chance to do something. He handled the puck better when the options to do something were limited to one option. He's an average sized defenseman that skates well and can handle SHL at an early age because of that. That makes him interesting long term if he can develop his hockey sense. As it isn't his ability to handle stress or pressure I think it's possible for him to learn how to be more effective.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. HV71 - SHL

Lindstein wasn't as visible as he was in the previous game. He had more issues on breakouts and retrievals, sometimes scanning over one should only, then trying to play the puck to the other direction where he didn't have any teammates open. The skating was noticeable on few occasions; he's already got legit recovery quickness for the SHL level out of pivots and even from a close to a standstill. Didn't have any noteworthy offensive moments here. Defensively, follows his man around in-zone and contains the play pretty well, keeping the opposition to the outside but didn't have any notable stops. There's some lag on switches of

coverage. Still impressive how he logged over 21 minutes of ice time total in this one, which is probably a season-high for him.

Lassi Alanen: March 2nd, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Örebro HK - SHL

This was honestly a pretty good game from Lindstein overall. Did he do anything crazy impressive? Not really, but he made a positive impact in transition, killed a few plays here and there and helped his team to control the play at 5-on-5. Executed on some of the better passes on breakouts under pressure that I've seen from him; adapted to the situation quicker than previously and wasn't fixated on the first play that appeared. It wasn't a perfect game as there was at least one notable occasion where he had free space to skate to but went for a weirdly-timed passing attempt instead. Offensively, he recorded a lot of shot attempts in this one. Many of them were just trying to get the puck to the net, but there was also one better chance that came via joining the rush as a trailer. Not surprised he got over 17 minutes of ice time in this one given how he played; the coaching staff clearly wanted to reward his efforts.

Lassi Alanen: February 23th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - SHL

A pretty average game from Lindstein based on the previous viewings at this level. Makes the simple play on the breakout when the opponent gives him room and sets up in their neutral zone trap, but also had a couple of head scratching plays when the pressure notched up. The processing speed remains one of the biggest concerns. A couple of times he lacked urgency with the puck and turned the puck over because he couldn't move the puck in time. Gets caught out of position in the DZ sometimes, but often has enough quickness to recover decently enough. Many shifts where his line was stuck in the defensive zone unable to make a stop. A couple of decent retrievals with proper scanning and the right decision-making.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Leksands IF - SHL

Lindstein can hang at this level decently well without getting exposed much but it's also hard to find things that excite me, aside from the skating and mobility, which are the key selling point combined with the 1-on-1 defending and physicality. The processing speed just isn't up to par with the top defenders in this class. He's making the simple plays decently well, but not truly creating many advantages. He activated somewhat often, more often than in my average viewing at this level, drawing in pressure and creating space. They still look a bit forced and not that instinctual.

David St-Louis: February 18th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Leksands IF - SHL

Just being able to play at this level is already an accomplishment for Lindstein. He can be useful most of his shifts with his skating and ability to physically engage opponents, but these SHL performances don't reveal as much NHL upside. The reason Lindstein can hold his own in the league is because of his speed and relatively strong skating base. His decisions with the puck and ability to use the length of the ice to create will have to improve. I see him more as a potential NHL engager on a bottom-pairing, if he makes it. The potential resides in the skating, mostly. What I really like in this one were his offensive-zone activations. He showed a better feel for backdoor plays than in other performances.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

I only ever see Lindstein make simple plays. That's what he could do in the NHL, but I generally tend to avoid ranking defencemen who already start limiting their game to hang out with other players at the level they are currently at. A lot of rims and short passes from Lindstein and not a lot of flashes of creativity. Same on defence. He's decently effective in one-on-one.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Lindstein's technical ability is what's most interesting about his game. He has some good habits offensively and defensively, but I'm not sure I see a lot of instinct, sense, or processing in his game. The play has to be really defined for him otherwise he struggles to find its solution. His mobility give him a lot of checking potential, especially in the defensive zone.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18 Four Nations

Lindstein will probably drop on our next board. He's just not showing enough hockey sense in the way he handles the game. He places the burden of creating plays on his teammates. He doesn't really know how to open up the offence and his defensive game is mostly based on his tools. He got beat wide by Will Smith off the rush, far from a speedy skater, because of a clunky pivot. I see some qualities in his game, but I would rather try my luck with many of the other defencemen in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - SHL

This was the best Lindstein viewing in the SHL I've had this season, capped off with a game-winning one-timer goal late in the third. The offensive game remains a mystery to me; he wasn't really activating off the rush or in-zone, playing conservatively from the point but seeing the obvious plays and executing on them consistently. In transition, he was a lot cleaner even compared to most of my viewings in the J20. There were a few panic passes under pressure, but when the pressure isn't high, he connects on his passes and makes the right, simple plays.

The highlight was the defensive game, particularly how he killed plays against the rush and even broke up plays in-zone along the boards. The defensive skating is a bit hit-or-miss at times, sometimes using too many crossovers that could be taken advantage of, but his four-way mobility and quickness also serve him well when he can take a couple of strides to react quickly and get his stick and body in the way if the forward tries to beat him to the outside. He's better as a 1-on-1 defender and can struggle with his positioning and reactions at times in-zone, but did a pretty solid job here overall.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. AIK - J20 Nationell

This was a pretty uninspiring game from Lindstein. Just buried on breakouts and retrievals by the pressure, couldn't find the keys to deal with it effectively and started to resort to basic dump-outs instead of controlled attempts. Didn't really have any standout moments on the offensive side of things, either, despite some activation attempts here and there. This one didn't do much to alleviate the hockey sense concerns, quite the contrary.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 8th, 2023 - Brynäs vs Malmö - J20 Nationell

Theo is an above average skater. His north-south mobility is borderline elite and he also shows smoothness east-west. He has a long stride and can skate fast without using much energy. He can use his skating to active offence from the backend and to skate out of danger with ease. I would like to see him use his skating advantage better on the defensive plays and in the offensive zone. His rush defence should be more effective than he showed in this game. He was easy to beat and he looked soft when he tried to shut down his own blue line. In the offensive zone he should activate more. He activates so well in the other two zones but as soon as got into the offensive zone he chose to stay on the blue line.

I like Theo's puck control. He handles the puck well easily both close to his feet and with range. The execution is inconsistent though. He had some sloppy passes and did not show ability to manipulate opponents. Theo is a player that if he learns to execute his strong sides better could become an NHL player. As of now, there are too many question marks and his stock is trending down.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Lindstein continues to look better at the J20 level after his stint in the SHL. He's roaming all over the ice, and doing a lot of good things in the process. Still not sure if the instincts are that impressive, but he flashed better timing with his weak side OZ activations compared to some of the previous viewings. Skating remains the most impressive tool. The handling is solid for the most part, too, but he tends to make one or two blunders per game, like in this one where he fumbled the puck in the NZ and the opponent got a breakaway as of result. Should be a pretty solid defensive projection given his overall solid mentality and tools. Still not sold on the top-4 upside, but games like these make me more accepting of a top-64 argument.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - Brynäs vs Lulea - SHL

Lindstein doesn't offer a lot defensively at this level. He got beat wide and around a few times in this game. He looked unsure

of his next move, next check when defending. The upside lies in his tools, especially in his skating form, and in his desire to activate. He will be quite hard to rank, I feel.

Lassi Alanen: December 8th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Timrå IK - SHL

A better Lindstein viewing in the SHL, with some caveats. Flashed more urgency to activate into the play, even if the timings and routes weren't always optimal. Rush defence was pretty solid, gapped up nice and early for the most part. A few flashes on breakouts, too, even if there were many sequences where he just stood behind the net, waited for a change and then deferred to his partner on the breakout. A systemic thing that can't really be held against him, I don't think. When he had to do more complex stuff in transition, it was a mixed bag with one really nice stretch pass and other scenarios where he wasn't able to find the best play. Skating is probably his best tool, likely rates at least slightly above-average. Mobile and pretty good quickness. I still don't know what the upside truly is.

David St-Louis: November 20th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Lindstein flashed a lot of skills in this one. He activated, protected pucks on first touch, moved to create passing lanes, and sent pucks up ice. He's more mobile than I first thought, especially laterally, despite not a perfect skating form. His gap got better as the game went, too, tighter. I'm not sure about the hockey sense evaluation. His reads of situations, of when to activate and when and where to pass were not on point. Still, the tools and the modern defenceman patterns could make him a reasonable high pick.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Lindstein continues to have interesting moments, doing a pretty decent job defensively. He mitigated rush chances with his footwork as per usual and by getting his stick in the way of potential shooting opportunities. Mobility remains a plus-level tool. Activated into the play quite often, but I'm still not sure about the timings and sense; seems like something he does just out of a habit. He did score with a very nice, one-touch snap shot with perfect placement to beat the goalie up high. Also one really nice stretch pass that would've resulted in a partial breakaway if the opponent wouldn't have taken a penalty. Still not sure how to rate him overall, though.

Jimmy Hamrin: November 6th, 2022 - Leksands IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Not an impressive performance by Lindstein. He played a lot and engaged a lot but was not very successful on either side of the game. All in all, this was a poorly structured and mistake driven game as a whole. Lindstein is first of all a good skater. He can skate fast with ease and can skate well with the puck and out of danger. He also shows that he likes to join the attack. He had some good passing plays and he showed calmness in stressful situations. He had a move he did numerous times where he skated straight to the opponent with the puck and shrunk space for himself but then made a fast drop pass behind his back opening up the situation for his team. Other than that, his offensive game was quiet in this game. He had some rushes where he did not get a pass.

Away from the puck, I did not like Lindsteins gap control. He played both soft and had too much space between him and the puck too many times. He did not defend his blue line well on the rush and he made some bad reads chasing the puck behind his net and leaving open space behind him. He scans the ice and seems to detect danger, but the mistakes were a couple too many in this game. I would like to see more aggression too. To summarise, Lindstein's skating and passing were good in this game but his defensive play was not impressive. The tools were there but the execution was bad.

Lassi Alanen: November 6th, 2022 - Leksands IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Lindstein played a lot in this one, and showed more worrying tendencies. His on-puck reads have been inconsistent in my previous viewings, but in this one, his defensive game wasn't that good either. Just looked a bit lost in his own end, chasing plays and not scanning enough. Handling under pressure looked uncomfortable. Just over 40 percent success rate in transitions, turning the puck over quite a bit. Skating could project as NHL average. There's some quickness, was able to track down a

potential 2v1 and prevent a successful entry. Looks like a potential second or third rounder to me at best, definitely not a first rounder.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - SHL

Lindstein's aggressive gap control and rush defence were the highlight here and already translatable elements to the SHL level. Good footwork, good timing with establishing the gap, forcing quite a few dump-ins and breaking up plays. With the puck, he started out quite poorly, but improved as the game progressed and started to make more plays with control. One nice carry breakout through the middle, cross-lane pass for an entry and finishing the route by driving the middle.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. AIK IF - J20 Nationell

A pretty decent outing from Lindstein overall. He didn't do many notable things offensively, but defended well throughout big minutes and had a solid showing in transition. Kept a tight gap and forced dump-ins in the NZ, broke up multiple plays near the blue line, too. A strong 1v1 defender for this level of play. Completed his retrievals without many issues. At times, he didn't find the best play right away, but didn't get rid of the puck and re-grouped instead, which I liked. As the game progressed, his decision-making and ability to execute in transition improved. Used the middle quite a bit. Doesn't seem to have a strong feel for OZ activations, does them at odd times.

David St-Louis: October 21th, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

I don't have much to say. Lindstein did a lot of good things for this level. He defended off the rush well and in his zone, joined the attack, and launched a few shots on net. There wasn't really an impressive play, however. The skating is a bit upright. At least, he lacks ankle flexion. It's not all that fluid. He also streamlined some plays when he could have built better scoring chances. I'm not sure about the tools and instinct.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Lindstein played top-pairing minutes for Brynäs, and found his way to the scoresheet. He followed the play up high in the OZ and sprinted up the ice when there was a breakup, ending up in 2v0 situation and beating the goalie low. Otherwise, it was a pretty similar to my previous Lindstein outings. He was defensively sound, both off the rush and in-zone. Was able to break up plays early (there were a lot incompetent pass receptions which also helped) and maintained OZ possession a couple of times by stepping up near the blue line. Handling looked rather rough on certain situations, the touches were far from being soft. Some OZ activations but weren't very purposeful or well-timed.

Lassi Alanen: September 11th, 2022 - Mora IK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Lindstein has some good habits, but the skill level is not that high. He activated a few times to support the rush and notably executed a few give-and-gos near the point to beat the defending winger, though that also seemed to be ingrained into Brynäs' offensive system as other players heavily utilized it, too. Lindstein knows how to suck in one forward and then make a simple D-to-D pass, but can't adapt that well on the fly. One nice cross-over heavy breakout where he beat the pressure to gain the inside track, but just a lot of safe passes and not trying too much. Sometimes he even overpassed when the target was more pressured than he was. Rush defence seems like a strength, pretty tight gap throughout this game. Not a whole lot of offensive creativity aside from those give-and-go activations.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lindstein was finally noticeable, mostly in a bad way. Twice, he botched retrievals and gave the puck away for a goal. And he was unaware of threats around him, preferring to stay at the puck rather than scan. Doesn't look when making basic passes, trying to be deceptive when there's no pressure to beat – costing his team valuable advancement opportunities with imprecise passes. And he kills plays by rushing his passes. There was one incredible sequence, where he brought Canada's neutral zone forecheck across the rink with him, then threw a look off cross-ice pass for an entry and dashed up the middle. There's upside.

But this tournament was bad. Very bad. It might be meaningless.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

This was a pretty fluxuating performance from Lindstein. The start was plain bad with multiple defensive zone giveaways leading to quality chances for the opposition, as well as some reactionary defending that caused him to be behind on most situations. After the start, things started to pick up a bit and Lindstein actually was making some transitional plays aside from the usual D-to-D deferring, drawing in forecheckers before making cross-ice feeds that led to easy entries for Sweden. Rush defence remains a strength, too. Some good rush activations, but way too many point shots. Capped the performance off by turning the puck over behind the net that led to a goal against and ended Sweden's dreams of gold medal. Not the best tournament overall, leaving a lot of question marks about the upside.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lindstein's been hardly noticeable for most of this tournament, but he made a tremendous play off the rush. He gained the zone, then used a look off pull-in pass through a defender for a scoring chance – don't see that from defencemen too often. A couple of passes from the point to the middle also highlighted his playmaking, faking the shot first. But he's bland in transition, missing opportunities to push the pace, stretch the ice, and activate. Quite deception but only when unpressured, and he's turnover-prone. The upside was clear in this game, but he hardly looked like a top prospect. Will this tournament matter later on? Probably not.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another weak outing from Lindstein, who looked very ordinary against every non-Switzerland opponent through the round robin part of the tournament. Even some of the great ideas that made his first outing at least interesting even if the execution wasn't there totally vanished in this one. You really want to see a lot more deception and creativity with the puck from a player who many see as a top prospect in this class, and instead you're stuck with a low-pace distributor from the blue line who doesn't really support the play in any meaningful fashion. Skating habits need work, too. He's far too stationary for my tastes. Far more reactive than you'd like to see in the defensive zone, too. Bleh.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lindstein puts himself in favourable positions, whether that's by faking out the F1, cutting back, or starting a give-and-go sequence. But he doesn't do much with them. He prefers to make the simple play or simply go back to his defensive partner. Missed opportunities to take charge of the offence or even support it. The gap can be too passive at times, preventing him from his defensive instincts. Hardly exciting in this game.

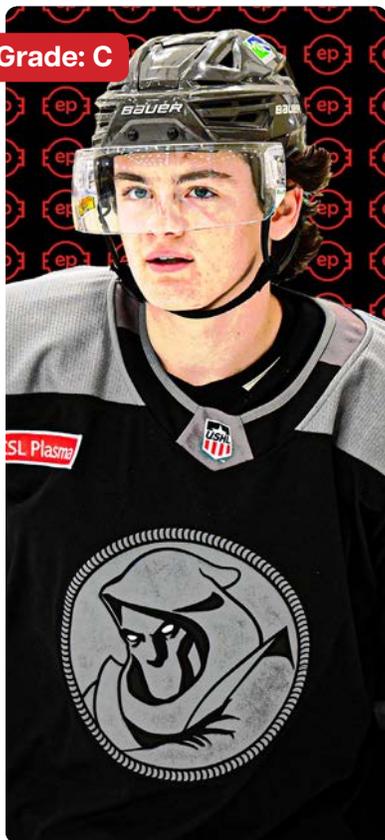
Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lindstein didn't achieve much in this game. He used some open-ice deception in spurts, but never at the right moments. He scanned for options, but still made several poor reads, throwing pucks to teammates with more pressure than himself or just straight to the other team. He clearly has technical ability and defensive potential. The former was visible through his skating, handling, and variety of passing skills. The latter, through his tight gap, stick work, and willingness to lean and pin attackers. He even killed high speed attacks in open-ice. Not an exciting debut in this tournament, but will it matter? No.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Not a very impressive showing from Lindstein in this one. Deferred a lot to his partner on breakouts, and often for no reason since the player he was passing had less options available to him. Some solid NZ defending, but some DZ mistakes due to poor reads or overreacting. Limited offensive game, a few point shots and some D-to-D passes near the blue line. Aside from the DZ gafs, I guess he played a relatively mistake-free game and advanced the puck mostly without turnovers. But didn't show much upside, even if his defensive game could be projectable in some ways.

Grade: C



75 Andrew Strathmann

AGE 17.548 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	56	3	35	38	0.68

SCOUTING REPORT

It didn't matter how many times we watched Andrew Strathmann this season. We just couldn't find a way to categorize this American defenceman.

Is he a high-event puck-mover? A physical shutdown presence? A creative playmaker from the blue line? Depending on which member of the Elite Prospects scouting team you asked, you got a different answer.

The truth is that Strathmann is all of these things, but rarely simultaneously. He's one of the rawer and more inconsistent defencemen in the draft.

One shift you see him pull off a dangle at the offensive blue line and attack down the ice to shoot on the net and you start envisioning his scoring potential in college and at the professional level. The next shift, you question his hockey sense as he forces a pass through multiple defenders.

"Lots of good and lots of bad from Strathmann," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown wrote in an April report. "The good was some of the best stuff I've seen from a draft-eligible defender in North America this season. Backhand dekes through opponents, a cross-slot pass after stepping into space, activation to

Andrew Strathmann

D | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 166.9



a pass off the goalie for a chance, and NHL-style defensive skating: wide base, knees bent, few crossovers, well-timed pokes, and follows through with his shoulder. The bad was the usual stuff from Strathmann. He made plays too complex while also throwing away possession for no clear reason, especially off retrievals.”

His defensive effectiveness also comes and goes from moment to moment. He pinches deep in the offensive zone to prevent opposing breakouts and closes hard on opponents in between blue lines, showing some quickness and agility in the process, but he sometimes struggles to read through deception. Attackers can make him bite hard on fakes.

Strathmann’s creativity kept him high on our board during the season, despite his inconsistencies. When he’s in tune with the game, he transforms himself into one of the best activators in the draft. He foresees offensive opportunities, skates down from his position, and enters pockets of space at just the right time to get the puck from teammates and make a dangerous next play. He also has a lot of 1-on-1 moves in his repertoire, fakes and dangles, that he sprinkles in his activations to pierce through defensive layers.

The team that drafts Strathmann will have to help him improve his reads and agility and remove a lot of bad habits from his game. He’s a long-term project, but one worth taking on in the third round of the draft, especially because he’s going the college route. At North Dakota, a well-known NHL defenceman factory, he will get the necessary time and guidance to hone his game.

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

“I’m not a fan. His skating breaks down, he’s easy to play against. He thinks he’s a tough guy, but he’s not tough. I just don’t know what he is or what he’s going to be. You watch his skating, and he can’t keep up with the pace.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s a tough one. He showed flashes in the under tournaments and thought he’d be the first non-NTDP player drafted out of the USHL. He’s tough and has some offensive flashes. He can skate, he fights, he’s exciting. There are some character concerns. Productive defenceman. Has a little of that Ryan Merkley, Tony DeAngelo stuff to him.” – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



USHL Stock Watch: Nicholas Moldenhauer catching fire with Chicago Steel



Standout performances at the 2022 World Junior A Challenge



Standout performances from the 2022 USHL Fall Classic

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel.- USHL

It’s the end of the season and I’m still not sure what to make of Andrew Strathmann. I think I may have overrated his skating slightly. He moves in one block, with little upper and lower body separation, something that limits his agility and elusiveness. He mostly acted as a defensive presence in this game, but not a very effective one. It was all effort and little anticipation. He got manipulated and beaten. I’ve seen better performances. I still like the flashes of creativity, the overall tools, and the intensity. He got in a fight

after a whistle. He's got that kind of edge.

Joey Padmanabhan: May 12th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A solid showing for Strathmann. Solid as ever in transition, great touches on his first pass. Demonstrated poise with the puck in his own end, taking ice behind him if needed to find outlets up the ice. Looks to activate in the rush and understood how to space the ice properly. Defensively, his size is such an asset. Uses his wingspan to take away the middle on his surfs and punishes opponents who hold on to the puck too long. I have questions about the footwork, and whether it's good enough to make him successful at higher speeds. But for now, he looks more than capable at the USHL level. Great powerplay quarterback, as well.

Joey Padmanabhan: May 5th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A solid outing for Strathmann. The transition play was consistent and reliable, he takes ice and finds outlets nicely. He's an aggressive defender, pinching where he has support and surfing on his own blue line. Some nice offensive touches too. Gets pucks through traffic from the point and fired one laser in the second period that beat the goalie clean. Really smart powerplay quarterback too, found seams through the neutral to skate and hit flanks with slips and hooks. Thrives in corner battles because of his size and strength. The skating isn't anything special but he looks like a candidate for the first two rounds.

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel.- USHL

It's the end of the season and I'm still not sure what to make of Andrew Strathmann. I think I may have overrated his skating slightly. He moves in one block, with little upper and lower body separation, something that limits his agility and elusiveness. He mostly acted as a defensive presence in this game, but not a very effective one. It was all effort and little anticipation. He got manipulated and beaten. I've seen better performances. I still like the flashes of creativity, the overall tools, and the intensity. He got in a fight after a whistle. He's got that kind of edge.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 22nd, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Some of Strathmann's warts showed up in this game. The footwork isn't where it needs to be and that was evident in this game. Bad angles and overly aggressive seals got him exposed a few times. One sequence in the second where he was able to get around the first forechecker but didn't have the edgework to explode past the second, resulting in a breakaway the other way. Super involved offensively, jumping into the rush every chance he got. A few nice looks from the point that got through and created some damage. There's some good stuff, but he might be a bit of a project.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Lots of good and lots of bad from Strathmann. The good was some of the best stuff I've seen from a draft-eligible defender in North America this season. Backhand dekes through opponents, a cross-slot pass after stepping into space, activation to pass off the goalie for a chance, and NHL-style defensive skating: wide base, knees bent, few crossovers, well-timed pokes, and follows through with his shoulder. The bad was the usual stuff from Strathmann. He made plays too complex while also throwing away possession for no clear reason, especially off retrievals. Passes were too hard, too soft, and just inaccurate. The upside is clear. He could be a No. 4 or 5 with skill, physicality, and activation. But he's also undisciplined, chaotic, and volatile. A long road ahead, but that's true for most of his peers. A 60s-80s type at this stage.

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs Chicago Steel - USHL

A better defensive game from Strathmann overall. He cut a few opposing chances off the rush and on the penalty kill. I don't think he reads the game all that well, but he has enough skills to make an impact in all facets of the game. He can dangle through opponents, and evade the forecheck, sometimes in elaborate ways, sometimes with a quick rim or pass. He supports the offence by always activating. I like his offensive patterns and his skills and his ability to play a shutdown game when he applies himself. He can't really manage the game well right now, however, or play both effective defence and offence at the same time.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Strathmann stepped off the point, faked, then passed to the hash marks for a chance. That's the type of playmaking I've been waiting to see. It was an obvious play, but he kept that lane open. It was a quiet game otherwise. He's a robust defender with tools, but he's prone to wandering and overcommitting. The edges are better than the forwards skating. All the usual critiques apply. He'd be a fine mid-rounder. Same range as Morin and Allen.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The usual from Strathmann. The on-puck defence is projectable. He keeps a tight gap, angles, gets inside opponents, and runs them over. He's quick to apply pressure. He joins the rush and occasionally flashes exciting handling skill. But most of his shifts result in little. He is mistake-prone, lacking awareness of space. He'd be much more effective if he carried the puck a bit longer before passing. He get stuck to the outside with space up the middle.. Also not much of a playmaker. Of course, he flashes better habits in all areas, but it's just tough to project him at this stage. There's just as much bad as good.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Strathmann is the USHL's Cam Allen. Toolsy, but limited by his reads and smaller details. The good: the physicality, stick work, defensive skating, activation, play-building skills (lateral passes, working plays through opponents), handling skill (fluid handler), and shooting. Right there, that's a clear NHL prospect. He skates his routes, occasionally manipulates opponents, and gets stops on second and third effort. The bad: he lacks the explosiveness to escape after beating opponents from the point, he lacks creativity at times, he's not much of a playmaker from the point (unless he's shooting for deflections), the off-puck defence lacks, and he's turnover-prone on breakouts. A late-second, early-third is fine, but there's a solid no-draft argument. I think we have to respect the upside; he could be a needle-mover in the NHL if the reads improve considerably. He's going to North Dakota; they've had a lot of success with players like him over the years.

Cam Robison: March 8th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

I was fond of Strathmann's defensive work in this one. He was proactive against the rush - closing up the gap at the blueline, sticking with his man but smartly advancing to pick up a loose puck away from the net front. He hustled back hard to break up a 2v1 and picked their pocket. He was making some smart reads in the defensive end. With the puck, he didn't do anything overly crafty in transition, but his outlets were mostly clean. In the offensive end, he was trying to use his edges with some feints at the top of the umbrella but he wasn't all that convincing and on two occasions was stripped in a bad position. A couple of shots coming down hill and another long one from the point. There are some tools here and his defensive evolution appears to be promising. Seems like a mid-to-late rounder.

David St-Louis: March 8th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Strathmann has some decision-making issues on the offence. He pinches too aggressively and doesn't manage the puck well -- a recurring theme for most of the season. But his defensive game is coming along nicely. His skating serves him very well to defend the rush; he can jump on attackers in a large radius around him due to his pivoting abilities and agility, and even break some 2-on-1s with hose superior tools. He hit and closed down space and mirrored the footwork of opponents in his zone. I'm not convinced of the offensive profile still, but the skills are there. We'll see.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

The usual from Strathmann. He's a skilled handler, one of the best in this year's blue-line class. In spurts, he shows awareness and creativity. He stepped inside, stopped, turned the incoming defender's feet, then accelerated into space and cut in. Mostly uses space before shooting, and if not, he's trying for the deflection. But he misses options and forces plays that aren't there. The defence was solid in this game. He's physical and gets inside opponents. The off-puck engagement's all over the play. No idea what to make of his game anymore.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

The Strathmann experience. He set up a pair of powerplay plays with shots for deflections – both perfectly aimed. He doesn't just dekes opponents, he fakes, sells it entirely, then claims the space. He used weight shifts to fake out pressure, then moved the puck. Activated down the weak side. He was physical and aggressive. He also did the usual bad stuff. A soft pass led to a goal, he didn't always use the space he created, and he often lacks awareness of options. Took a dumb penalty, too. The upside remains high – he has tools, manipulation ability, and physicality – but it gets harder and harder to justify him in the top-45 with volatile play and clear limitations as play-reader.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A lot more questions than answers at the end of this performance from Strathmann. His reads are inconsistent and while I'm not one to value decision-making all that much, when it seems to be a case of processing, it matters a bit more. The tools look NHL caliber, but he doesn't create with them as much. The times where he does make something happen offensively it's because he took a chance without really balancing the risks associated with his decision. The defensive engagement could be better. This looked like an off performance from him. I won't weight it too much.

Cam Robinson: February 10th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Strathmann was activating a bit more in this outing, but he wasn't doing it all that well. Mistiming spots, overshooting them, not supporting the play appropriately. He was fine in the defensive end, but a little sloppy in his positioning with a dash of curls instead of stops and starts which put him in vulnerable defensive positions. Outlets were fine, skating is fine. He could have real NHL upside, but I very much question the IQ and even the drive at times. Didn't strike me as a real asset in this one.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

This was one of the better performances of Strathmann this season. He was involved in every facet of the play. He moved along the blue line to find shooting lanes, had some playmaking moments, tried give-and-goes, stuck to his check defensively, and generally showed creativity. There is a lack of control in his game. He's aggressive without the anticipation and processing to back it up. He puts himself and his team in dangerous situations with his pinch and activations. His projection is based on his NHL tools, his offensive confidence, and habits (activations, constant movements, desire for controlled plays...), but he will need to solidify his game in North Dakota.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

Strathmann has the skills of an offensive defenceman. He controls the puck well, has feints, and he can spin on opponents and create space for himself, but he rarely puts it all together. He's not creative in that way. He did activate deep in the offensive zone on a couple of times, contributing to the offence by shifting the defensive box and pushing back opponents. He distributed the puck well on the powerplay. His skating really shone. I'm still not sure what to make of him. I'd draft him in the top-50, but with some doubt about his ability to become an NHLer, especially a top-four one. He needs guidance and better pattern recognition. He doesn't always see his advantages or how he could create them and forces plays.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - USA vs, Canada East - WJAC

Strathmann is not having the tournament so far that I hoped. He looks a bit shaky in his plays and can be rapidly forced into bad decisions. The retrieval mechanics are there, but he can only beat one player. He often gets surprised by the next layer of the forecheck as he hasn't really identified his outs despite frequent scanning. He's still deceptive and elusive, but the tools are more average than I previously thought. He has some good ideas in the offensive zone, some offensive instinct, but the plays aren't all that precise. I'm not sure what to think.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Canada West vs. United States - WJAC

Strathmann was mostly employed in a defensive role in this one, on the penalty kill and at five-on-five. He barely touched the puck. When he did, he tried overly complex plays, at times, and overly simple other times. But, I do really like his defensive pressure, switching, and overall engagement. He's mobile and constantly denying space and lane, constantly scanning. He has a future as a shutdown defenceman if his reads continue to develop. He made more than a few timely PK stops.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Strathmann's too passive with the puck sometimes. He hesitates after manipulating opponents and doesn't always take the space opponents give him. Showed off the hands to beat a forechecker by sliding the puck under their stick. Wins positioning and takes the opponent's stick after beating them. Joins the rush, finishes his routes, and gets open. But he could be creating so much more. I suppose it's a classic USHL issue. There's also a lot of defensive value. He's aggressive, closes space early, and generally keeps plays to the outside. Has a few bad habits, but he manages speedy attacks without issue. Could be a late-first. A pretty moldable prospect given his tools and engagement.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Strathmann's potential is undeniable. The skating breaks down pretty quickly, but everything else is here. He showed so many different skills in a single, Makar-like sequence. Moved on the pass reception with his head up. As the defender closed, hesitated, flipped their feet, attacked the inside, deked around another player, then turned a fake shot into a backdoor pass. It's high-pace manipulation, alongside vision, planning, and high-end handling skill. Had another crazy handling sequence later in the game. The hands could easily be 6.5 or 7-grade. Don't see this type of form, control, speed, and creativity from blue-liners often. Then, there's the defence. He's very physical, always looking to make contact to kill plays and win positioning. Tight gap, angling, and while he has some bad habits (lunging, leaning on his toes), he kills plays like crazy. Didn't show any notable breakout skill, but he clearly has the potential through his handling and manipulation from the point. Not unlike Ryan Healey from last year, who already looks like a great NCAA blue-liner. He could be a first-rounder.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Strathmann tries a lot of plays, but he's a bit of a mess, too. He overplays and breaks down under more pressure. I like the way he pushes his skills and there is a lot of potential there, but I'm not sure I'd grade the hockey sense all that high. He's more active than clever, at least at this stage. Maybe in college, the offensive game falls into place. Everything is there: the feints, the passes under sticks, the lane creation...Just needs a bit more planning and precision and purpose... His defence is relatively solid due to his combination of tools and activity. Aggressive and mobile, he closes on opponents off the rush.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

The potential Strathmann displayed in this game...Well, it's exciting. He could be a top-3 defenceman in this draft and maybe the best one when it's all said and done, if he keeps improving. The plays aren't great for the most part so far; they are all pretty simple, but his combination of solid rush defence, crushing hits, physical engagement, and legitimate puck-moving ability will definitely interest NHL teams. Strathmann starts and leads the rush. He attacks the middle and kicks the puck wide to teammates and he can run around the zone to try and find a play. He is not one to force these plays; he hits the best play he can find (as long as it's not a high difficulty one). His tools probably grade as average for me so far, but the posture is excellent. I could see him turn into an above-average NHL skater and handler. Again, all potential so far, not really results, the defensive awareness could improve, but I do love potential.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP - USHL

Strathmann didn't look like a high-end prospect in this game, but the NHL elements were easy to spot. He runs the right routes, is engaged defensively, makes safe puck-moving plays, and even controlled ones with more space. He can fake defenders to open lanes (with time to plan the move), and supports teammates well. The skating and handling are probably average. I need to see more but he could turn into a bottom-three NHL defender with skill development and processing speed increase.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A pretty rough game from Strathmann. He's too aggressive. He pinches at bad times and plays too deep in the offensive zone (not managing space effectively). Chased the play a lot. Aggressiveness even gets the better of him in transition face-to-face 1-on-1s. In moments, he shows more restraint, effectively managing multiple variables while slowly closing space. He passes through forecheckers and generally looks to create space for his teammates. Some impressive activation sequences, including one straight down the middle, dipping past a defender for a high-danger look. The stride lacks some depth and it's quite laboured. It deteriorates quickly, lots of skating growth will probably come naturally. Tried a hesitation move at the point that led to a turnover. Otherwise, makes simple plays in the offensive zone that don't contribute to much of anything. The individual skills look like a first rounder. The rest? Not so much.

David St-Louis: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP - USHL

Strathmann is not making any amazing plays at this stage, but he has the mould of a good NHL defenceman, the skating form, the handling capabilities, the patience, and the desire to move the puck in controlled ways. He can shut down gaps quickly, play physically.... I'm not sure about the overall sense at this stage and the mechanics are better than the actual outputs, but I'd draft him based on potential...And pretty high, too.

Joey Padmanabhan: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Standard outing from Strathmann. Defended his blue line hard, got his feet moving up ice with the puck, read forechecks well, and joined rush offense where appropriate. He's not someone who stands out with any particular skill, but he consistently does little things correctly, and he's a huge piece of the Youngstown blue line. Strathmann also quarterbacks the Youngstown first unit power play and does an excellent job of pushing forechecks back before slinging the puck back to forwards with speed. He's a stabilizing presence on the offensive blue and can get pucks through traffic to the net. Another impressive performance that leads me to believe he could be taken in the first 3 rounds.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Strathmann started this game by dangling off the point for a chance. His puck control – the range, form, and touch – all look like significantly above-average projections. Not many NHL blue-liners control the puck like him. But after that play, it was a pretty quiet game from Strathmann. He offloaded the puck too early on breakouts, but I generally liked his patience to build plays with lateral passes. Using an extra second would allow him to turn his vision into concrete advantages for his teammates. He popped into the play on occasion but missed several opportunities, too. Defensively, he grabbed a couple of stops, eliminated off-puck threats, and closed space early, but he was also caught in the neutral zone once by failing to judge the opponents' speed. Looked more like a second-and-beyond candidate in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: September 24th, 2022 - Waterloo Blackhawks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Strathmann is a complete package of skill, size, and meanness. It felt like he made a good play every shift, whether it was denying the blue line and breaking up opposing transitions through the neutral zone or catching an opposing winger sleeping and swooping in from the point. He was a huge catalyst for Youngstown's transition, moving his feet up ice with the puck, sucking in a forechecker and moving the puck to a player in stride. Had a nice goal where he blended a reception from the point and put a low wrist shot through traffic. Strathmann is a player who does a lot of things really well and seemed to impress a lot of scouts with his performance in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Strathmann showed the handling skill and activation again. When his teammates worked high, he popped down the boards for a quick pass. He pinched at the right moments, sprinted to join the rush, and tried to start give-and-gos from the point. Handling skill allows him to receive hard passes and slice through defenders. He fakes one way, fakes another, then attacks space. Waited for the defender's reaction before making the next play. When activated, he shows passing skill, too. Some cutback escapes on

retrievals created space. Occasionally overzealous and caught chasing the play, but he gets recover stops.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Strathmann's skill level is so impressive. He fakes, weight shifts, passes, and dekes in motion. Slip pass use. He cuts back to escape pressure, footwork that follows him to mirror attackers along the boards kill plays. Always looking for the give-and-go, whether that's from the point or in transition. Established body positioning before touching the puck, and works to get inside positioning when at a disadvantage. Stays balanced and uses few crossovers to generate backwards momentum and get stops. Projectable in many ways. Missed the best play on occasion – for example, he forced a pass up the middle for a 1v1, but he had already created the 3v2 by activating. .But then he fell apart late in the game, taking two penalties in the late stages. Exciting player. Can't wait to watch him in the USHL.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Strathmann's skating stride is pretty much textbook. Tons of ankle flexion, deep knee bend, smooth extensions, balanced upper-body without much noise. Handling remains impressive, too. Activations have purpose for the most part and he's killing off plays early in the OZ, creating turnovers or forcing players to dump out. Not afraid to stand up on his own blue line either, delivering a crushing hit. Some impressive stuff on the breakout utilizing these strengths, but also some miscues and unforced errors when he had better opportunities with a cutback, for example. Exciting tools and the execution is there, at least half-way. Looks like a late-first candidate.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Strathmann started out this game looking to create. He was electric. He has unique handling ability for a blue-liner, easily knocking pucks under defender's sticks, handling inside strides and crossovers, and throwing out a ton of deception in the process. He activates regularly, and always with purpose. Reads space up the middle, behind the play, and on the weak side. When turnovers happen, he's already gapped up and ready to kill plays. He even activates at the end of his shift, giving his teammate an extra passing option. Follows opponents high, but rarely chases. Doesn't over-extend. Plays tapered off throughout the game. His retrievals became an issue, relying on stick fakes and shoulder shakes rather than toe-cap deception, leading to turnovers or missed opportunities. He misses the early play sometimes. Upside's high. No doubt he has first-round skill through the preliminary viewings in August.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another intriguing performance from Strathmann. He was everywhere, yet again, always activating into the play in the OZ and defending and pinching aggressively every chance he got. The OZ activations were well-timed, even if the puck didn't end up reaching him. Looks to kill plays early and looks surprisingly sturdy on his feet despite being on the smaller end. Some turnovers in retrievals and in transition, but mostly sound work with a lot of deception packed into his handling and skating, which both rate highly.

Lassi Alanen: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Strathmann looked exciting in this one. Sure, he was trying a bit too hard on few occasions and turned the puck over as of result, but there's definitely a lot to like. Firstly, the skating and footwork looked really good and deceptive. Multiple good rushes up the ice with quick changes of direction and crossovers. Made the defender commit one way and went the other. Also very active in the offensive zone, not being locked to the point, and got a few scoring chances as of result, though he couldn't finish them. Not a whole lot of DZ time, but faired relatively well there, too. Interested to see how he looks against better competition.

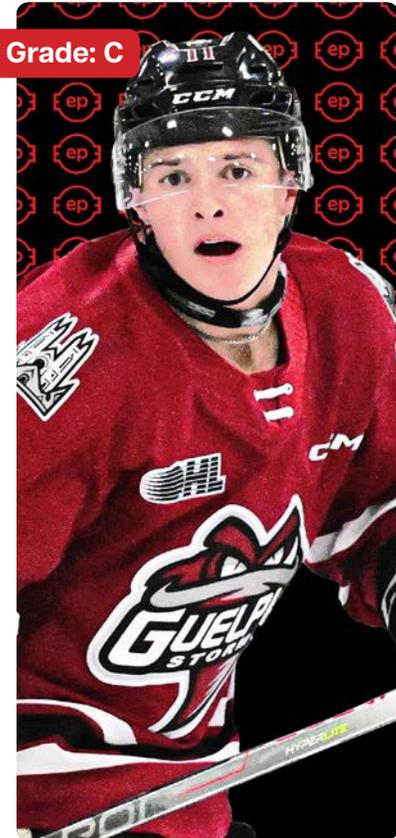
Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Not every play worked out, but there was so much to like about Strathmann's performance. First, he's highly deceptive. He never looks where he's going – always head faking or using eye deception to mask his intentions. Deceives on retrievals, too. Combines the deception with weight shifts and a change of pace game. Backhand handling skill. Lots of give-and-go plays from the point in this game, using the passing triangle to activate down the middle. Even used the play to work laterally which resulted in a scoring

chance for him. Shot could become an NHL skill: head up, chest up, elbow elevated through release. Not a perfect game, missing the odd opportunity to make a quick possession play with more reward or not waiting for the reaction of the defender before making the next play. Not common occurrences. Looked like he had first-round-calibre skill in this game.

J.D. Burke: September 24th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Don't have many notes for Strathmann in this contest, but on the whole, I liked his body of work between Thursday and Friday at the Fall Classic. He needs to bulk up in the worst possible way, but he's hanging in there nicely for an undersized draft-minus-one defender in high leverage spots, and that counts for a lot. Really aggressive neutral zone defender. Keeps play in front of him, and closes with authority at the right moment. Started activating off of the blue line more readily as these two games went on. There's something there for 2023. Committed to North Dakota.



Grade: C

76 Cam Allen

AGE 17.688 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw Talent

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Guelph Storm	OHL	62	5	20	25	0.40
Canada U18 "C"	WJC-18	7	0	4	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

We had to resist the temptation to send Cam Allen too far down our board when we met up to assemble our last ranking, even if his draft year ended on a dour note at the U18s.

We know what he's capable of. We saw it in his draft-minus-one and in stretches in the second half of his draft year. Allen slowly became more confident with the puck as the season progressed. He controlled the play more at the top of the offensive zone, distributed the puck better, feinted more defenders, and used his skating ability more often to elude them.

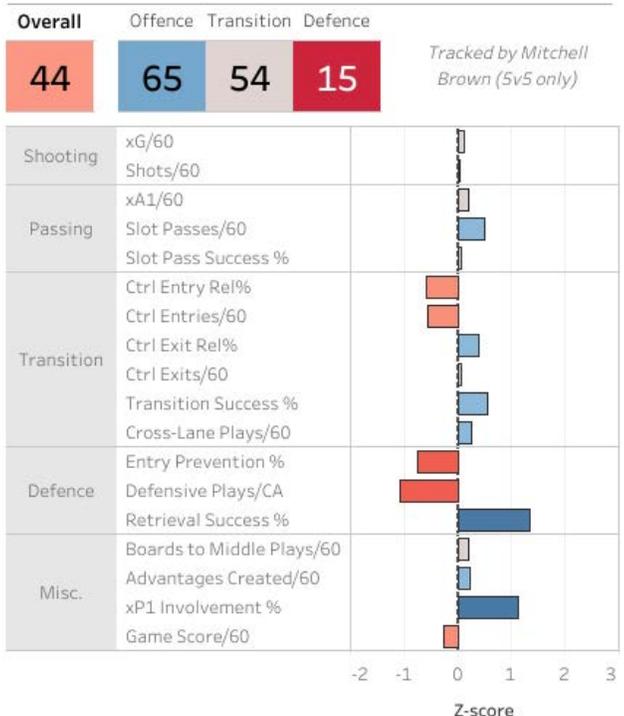
There's just no ignoring his play at the U18s, where in just a couple of weeks, Allen erased all of that progress. No player hurt their stock more at the event.

It was hard to find an explanation for his inconsistencies and bad plays at the tournament. Maybe it was a lack of confidence or the pressure of the scouts in attendance or maybe it was just playing too much hockey during the season.

In a Guelph team that lacked talent, Allen was tasked with doing everything. He played close to 30 minutes a night, featured on the penalty kill and on the power play, and acted as the team's main quarterback and shutdown element. He answered the calls of the

Cam Allen

D | Guelph Storm | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 175.3



coaching staff but at some point, playing so much without a strong supporting cast might have worn him down.

Still, Allen's potential can't have left his game entirely. We still believe that it's in there somewhere and a patient team could help unlock it.

Most of his tools received above-average grades from our staff. At his best, when his elusive inside edge moves complement his quick puckhandling and vision, Allen pulls off memorable plays.

"Allen looked a lot better in this game than in any of the past viewings," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a December report. "He was constantly activating from the point at smart times, stickhandling around defenders (...) Good anticipation of his teammates, executing one-timed passes across seams. Confident carrier on breakouts, delaying and evading forecheckers before taking the puck to the net himself."

And it's the same story defensively. When his skills come together, when he manages to time his close-out just right, lead with his stick, knock the puck away, and finish with a hit, Allen looks like a future top-four, two-way defenceman.

This season of peaks and valleys might have made Allen's projection more challenging, but he's not the first top prospect to have a down year. If the Storm defenceman can manage to get his game back on the right track, he could make the team that drafts him look like geniuses for banking on a bounce back.

LINKS & MEDIA



Who helped or hurt their stock at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships?



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup



What to make of the North American defence class of the 2023 NHL Draft

INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Looks like a player who is missing a lot of confidence. One minute he's defending the rush well and making crisp passes. The next, he looks completely lost." – NHL scout, April 2023

"Playing within his means will be the key to his success. Less is more with Cam." – NHL scout, April 2023

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Another mostly miserable performance from Allen. As with his last game, there were flashes, most of them in the first period – an activation from the offensive blue line into the slot for a scoring chance and an assist on the Angus MacDonnell goal. Then, it all seemed to fall apart. I'm not sure what this says about Allen, but it just feels like the game gets away from him so easily. It starts with one missed outlet and then he's double-clutching on every play, making cataclysmic mistakes, many of which lead directly to the back of his net. Eventually, it seeps into his defensive game, and he's caught between chasing plays and taking an overly cautious posture to avoid the big mistake. He looks completely shell shocked out there at times.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Oof. Allen is not helping his stock with these U18s. He just struggles to make decisions and handle the puck under pressure. A lot of mistakes, bad ones. And I'm not sure how effective he is defensively either. He's very reactive -- in all facets of the game. We can't drop him too much on the board as his tools are still really interesting and he could really figure it out in a major way over the next years, but yeah. He's not the top prospect he once was. I bet he gets drafted more toward the third round now.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

I'm not sure what happened during the first intermission, but Allen went from one of if not Canada's best, most effective defencemen to a liability in the space of a period break. Allen's work in transition was abysmal. Poor reads, worse execution, and some of the most dizzyingly bad turnovers I've seen in this tournament; at one point, Allen tried to sneak a pass through three layers of Swiss players to... I'm still not really sure who?... and it got picked off high in the zone, immediately resulting in a goal against. Allen's confidence clearly waned as the game went on, as evidenced by a less aggressive posture defending between the blue line. That didn't stop a Swiss forward from torching him in space, though. Allen also got burnt on a bad pinch.

If I'm working for a team, then this sort of performance makes me question whether to put him on my board period.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Canada vs Switzerland - U18s

Allen is not helping his case with this tournament. The tools continue to shine but the bad decisions with the puck are starting to accumulate. He has the agility to evade opponents, but then, he doesn't really know what to do next with the puck. He tries hard defensively, but I'm not so sure about his reads in that facet of the game either. Honestly, I'm sure there is more there. I think we're looking at a player who is a bit lost and who lacks confidence.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Allen hasn't performed like I hoped he would so far this tournament. He continues to rush himself and doesn't look all that comfortable in most situations. He makes straightforward plays, which is fine, but he has the skill to pull off so much more. Good defensive movements and gapping overall and the effort remains a constant. If he could just handle retrievals a bit better, he could really turn into a force for this Team Canada.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Cam Allen might be the most violent defenceman at the tournament. He keeps hammering the opposition. It's not a facet of his game that I really appreciated in the OHL. He laid another reverse hit in this one. His plays are mostly simple. He defends the rush well, pressures well in the defensive zone, and makes the next logical pass. He has some shimmy moves the offensive blue-line but he rarely tries more. That's a bit disappointing. We wanted to see more creativity in his game. It's still in his game, somewhere, but I'm not sure, ultimately, that he's that kind of defenceman.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - WC18

Allen is still hesitating and not fully comfortable, at least that's what it seems. It's the theme of his season, but the skill continues to shine. He has a lot more freedom of movement than most of his counterparts. He attracts opponents before moving the puck, looks smooth doing it, and he defended the rush well in this one. He absorbed a German attacker, matched his footwork, and then brought him to the ice with a hard reverse hit as he retrieved the puck. Nice display.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - WC18

Cam Allen got overwhelmed by the Swedish attack overall, but I liked that he never quit. He was still trying at maximum effort to defend and move the puck even near the end of the game. He had a couple of interesting moments in the first period, where his skating helped him shut down rushes from the opposition. He looked poised with the puck, more than many of

his teammates. Not a great game to evaluate him, but I thought that, despite the circumstances, his play was encouraging in stretches. He tried to make plays.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

A much better defensive game from Allen than the last meeting with Erie. He was aggressive and physical, bodying players off pucks and forcing dump-ins. Brought some offence, too. He joined the rush for a scoring chance, faked a shot off a pass reception before going cross-slot, and continued to show the shiftiness from the point. His best moves only result in point shots. He doesn't use space vertically; he doesn't manipulate pressure with the moves. He's awkward and sluggish at times, especially from his stops. The skill breaks down on breakouts. He misses outlets, turns into pressure, and throws the puck away. The uncontrolled plays aren't uncommon for this Storm team, but the breakouts look far worse than they did last season. More of a mid-rounder in this game. He has NHL tools but not a clear identity.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Allen has the beginnings of exciting point play. He uses space, fakes, and tries quick changes of direction. He can't generate enough power from his stops to truly separate, and his moves mostly serve to create slightly different angles for point shots. The hands also fail him. This was a concerning game elsewhere. Just a non-factor defensively. He refused to establish body positioning on one retrieval and then passed to the other team. Passive gap and didn't make up space. Looks like a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 10th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Allen pinched down the boards, then connected with a one-touch pass to the inside. He was bad otherwise. Two goals against were the consequence of poor defensive details. First, he fixated on the puck, lost track of his check, then got burned on the pass. Second, he didn't keep his stick on the ice when closing on an opponent – they simply passed around him. Took a dumb penalty, shoved players instead of winning body positioning, and panicked with every other puck touch. The hands, despite how fluid they look, remain a consistent source of problems for him – poor touch. Not a draftable game. Not even close.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Sault. Ste-Marie Greyhounds vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

It's hard to evaluate Allen's hockey sense. He shows great vision in some plays, but he doesn't make a lot of plays against stronger formations. He has the elusive one-on-one moves, but are they just reactive and a factor of his handling? He's not manipulating anyone, just using deft hands to control, stay deceptive, and see what opens up. But at the same time, he has the instinct to look for passing options around the net and he's always looking for the better play in the offensive zone. I think I'd settle on a low certainty 5.5 as a hockey sense grade or just a straight 5 (average). With him, it's all flashes. His game has a certain shakiness and I'm not sure he will be assertive enough to really maximize his offensive tools. I like him a lot more than at the start of the season. The doubts are big, but the upside is too. Defensively, he commits too much, but he has a good timing on his interventions.

Lauren Kelly: March 1st, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Again, this was a tale of two stories with Allen. The first period was tremendous - he looked like a top-15 pick, with the way he closed gaps, challenged puck carriers, killed the rush and plays in the defensive zone. He'd use his stick to strip puck carriers before starting the breakout himself. Offensively, not too many activations, but he'd cut back, stickhandle to escape pressure before trying a shot from the point. The second period was where things started to fall off the wheels a little bit. He was pressured and stopped on a breakout but did manage to pass off to a teammate. He was beat on a retrieval, lost his man along the boards, which led to a scoring chance. Any opportunity he had to carry the puck, he would lose it as soon as he ran into pressure.

The physicality ramped up at this point, as he laid players out along the boards (and into their own benches), got into multiple scrums and shoving matches despite the puck not being anywhere near him and at one point I did believe he was close to dropping the gloves. He finally took a roughing penalty at the end of the second period, and I think those two minutes in the

box at the start of the third gave him the opportunity to reset for the rest of the game, because he maintained his composure and was back to playing the way he had been in the first period. Bit of a puzzling viewing. I don't know if I see him climbing up our next ranking.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

All defence for Allen in this game. Tight gap and always on the right check. Eliminated threats. Kept attacks wide. The defensive skating should reach NHL-calibre. He uses few crossovers, keeps his base wide, and achieves proper flexion with his head up. The hands failed him and he couldn't make plays in motion. A handful of turnovers kept Guelph defending, even after Allen made some solid plays to get the initial stop. Late to check a few teams, although he got there eventually. More aggressiveness and decisive action would help. Not much offence shown in this game as a result. Looked more like a late-rounder in this one.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

A game spent defending for the most part. And Allen stepped up, showing good defensive footwork and check attachment, aggressiveness when needed, control when needed...He could develop even more urgency in help situations (when there's a breakdown), but generally he took care of his duties. He supports every offensive plays, continues to display high-grade stickhandling, and pace. He's an inside edge skater, but a quick and relatively elusive one. And while he barely got the puck, he has some more advanced offensive ideas. His game is more translatable than many others.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

There's a lot of good in Allen's game. He has the ideas in transition and flashes some technical prowess. He puts forecheckers on his back, attacks the inside, masks his intentions, and then hits a teammate on the outside lane. Where many players pass straight up the boards, he takes the extra second to find a teammate up the middle. He missed most of these plays. Some were inaccurate passes, but some were also because his teammates gave up on their route. He also had an impressive activation play, using the Makar step in, stop, and accelerate wide to beat the defender. He had a couple of projectable stops, showing a tight gap, physicality, and an ability to make up ground on a turnover without overcommitting (step up, angle). He's a tricky projection. In a limited environment, but one shift he looks like an above-average skater and handler. The next, the hands fail and skating fails to provide separation. And he randomly defaults to low-percentage plays where he just made the positive one. Mid-to-late second seems like his range at this stage.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Allen seems like an inside edge skater. His knees cave in a little bit. As a result, he has a natural advantage when doing spins and 10-and-2 moves and he really surprises defenders with those. I haven't seen too many outside edge moves, however. The difference between him and Brandt Clarke is that he has a lot more flexion in his skating. His low posture could enable him to develop even more agility manoeuvres as he matures. His speed and quickness also look above average at this level. The handling skills might be a 7 in terms of control; he's one of the best demonstrator of the rolling technique I've seen. He deceives before passes, activates, and looks for passing options at the point, not just blind shots. A lot to like, but he's a bit loose, chaotic, and error-prone. Still, I have a completely different perception of him now. He might be a first-rounder.

David St-Louis: January 29th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

That was a really impressive performance from Allen. He showed a lot more NHL elements. His stickhandling looked high-end, in terms of control, not necessarily dangler or feints, but that's a strong puck-moving base. And while he heel-kicks, he has a strong flexion in his skating and some elusivity because of it. The main issue is that, while he looks technically proficient to an extent, he's chaotic. Good and bad moments alternate rapidly with him. He acts without much foresight and approximates plays. I love the pace in his game, but he's almost overpacey, like he hasn't quite figured out the optimal rhythm of the game and his playing his own, independent of others. He was a bit loose defensively, late to a few spots and checks, but it didn't matter. He spent much of the game on the offence showing off his skills. I'm a lot more interested in his profile now than I was at the start of the season.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

Allen showed his skill level at times in this one. He made passes through defensive layers, defended the rush well, activated with teammates, and also made the right simple plays when pressured. He's still a bit tentative. He has the skill to take charge a lot more defensively and offensively. I liked when he walked down the zone to shoot on net. The skating stride is a bit unusual (deep and kicking feet), but it gives him significant agility.

Lauren Kelly: January 20th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Allen had some really good shifts in this game and some shifts where it felt like he was reverting back to early-season Allen. He was very aggressive defending in-zone, challenging puck carriers, but his overzealousness could sometimes draw him out of position, and it burned him on Peterborough's third goal, as he lost coverage on his man, then was beat to the net and crosschecked him into the crossbar. A couple of rush sequences with no scanning meant he brought the puck in offside. Whether it was adrenaline or frustration, there were a couple of instances where he could have been penalized - putting a player in a headlock after a whistle and a dangerous hit on an unsuspecting player who went headfirst into the boards (no call).

On the other hand, Allen's activations were positive, receiving passes, delaying to survey options, before taking the shot closer to the net. He stepped up on a player in the neutral zone to force a dump-in. On a breakout, he spun around a pressuring player, shielded the puck, escaped pressure, before entering the offensive zone. Based on this game, I think where we currently have him ranked is appropriate. I'd have some reservations about moving him higher right now.

Lauren Kelly: December 17th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Allen looked a lot better in this game than in any of the past viewings. He was constantly activating from the point at smart times, stickhandling around defenders - though not really attacking the inside and preferring to send passes from the half-wall into the slot. Good anticipation of his teammates, executing one-timed passes across seams. Confident carrier on breakouts, delaying and evading forecheckers before taking the puck to the net himself. Scanned and shoulder-checked on retrievals, used his stick to stop players 1-on-1, and kept his gap tight defending the rush. The effort level was unquestionable in this game. He did take one careless tripping penalty in the first period, but that was about the only negative aspect of his play. If he can continue to perform at this level, he should start climbing draft boards again.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Allen mostly just took pucks, stopped them dead, and fired them towards goal. Apart from one (impressive) sequence, he didn't try to open, let alone find shooting lanes. A shin guard hunter. He played a lot, but didn't do much on breakouts or entries. Lots of stationary play. He wasn't as physical as normal, but grabbed a few stops by closing space early. He's mobile and occasionally jumps into the play, but doesn't show anything of note in either category. Not explosive or especially agile, and the read when he's up in the play are basic. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Lauren Kelly: December 11th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Things continued to snowball out of control for Allen in this game. No scanning on retrievals, he was beat to the puck on retrievals, didn't scan and lost coverage by the net on Ottawa's first goal, and was nearly pressured into a turnover while trying to skate the puck out. Lost his balance and fell over trying to defend the rush and close the gap. Took a brutal delay of game penalty at the end of the first period, hammering a slapshot clean out of the rink... got called for hooking in the second, though he probably could have been called for the same penalty twice before that on the same shift, after a player cut around him in the slot and failed to get a shot off. Then ended the game with a fighting major. He was on the ice for three normal goals and the empty netter. This is a game to forget. But it just seems like these games are becoming the norm with Allen. Really concerning stuff.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

The best player on the ice in this game. Allen dissected the Rangers' defensive zone coverage, firing shot-passes into the slot and tippable pucks for deflections. Connected on a several. When Kitchener started collapsing, he snuck down the weak side, eventually leading to a chance. On breakouts, delayed, used the middle, cut across forecheckers, and found teammates two lines ahead. Created advantages. Very physical defensively, getting aware with multiple interference penalties. Still, he engages at the right moments, eliminates opponents, and closes out with force. Now, the bad. When Allen can't plan a play, he makes basic plays without scanning first – lots of turnovers. The play that led to most of the turnovers (recovery into a blind pass around the boards) is something that plagues everyone on this Storm team, but it's still a projection concern because taking away Allen's space (or perceived space) on receptions leads to similar outcomes in every zone.

Defensively, he's too often upright and flatfooted, and he's late to pivot early. Thrown out of his stops and turns from his upright posture on multiple occasions. He looked like a solid early-to-mid second prospect. More a planner with some tools and advanced ideas, but a project.

Lauren Kelly: November 26th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

This was a better viewing of Allen compared to others I've had this season. He played nearly 31 and a half minutes in this game, he was more aware of breakdowns in coverage and open players in the defensive zone, and scored a goal that began with him being the first one in on the forecheck, battling in the corner, before sneaking over to the far post and burying the puck. Scanning efforts were better in this one too. But I still have some concerns, specifically with his breakouts and possession under pressure. He is still hesitating way too much, whether it's trying to create a zone entry or make a play at the point. Lots of circling, he slows down, and you can see him thinking way too hard about the options that have presented themselves to him. Aside from the play where he scored, he wasn't activating or taking too many shots from the point either. That being said, it's still only the second month of the season, so hopefully this viewing was a sign of positive change.

Lauren Kelly: November 13th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

I'm beginning to think that Allen playing 30 minutes a game is hurting his development, as if he's under so much pressure to be Guelph's top defenceman on a very bad Storm team, that he's overthinking too many plays. He's losing puck races, battles along the boards, and his defensive positioning is off at times. He's trying to do too much - hit teammates with outlet passes that end up becoming icings, join the rush, jump up into the offensive zone, walk the blueline under pressure, escape his own end under pressure, throw hits to spark his team, play with an edge... His game is all over the place right now and it sometimes looks like he's in his own head. I can't really think of another OHL prospect this year whose draft stock has plummeted so quickly like this, but he's not playing like a first rounder, let alone a top-15 pick right now.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

This wasn't a first-round performance from Allen. He stops pucks dead in the offensive zone, hammering shots into closed lanes. Too often, he flings pucks up the boards to covered teammates or makes plays without scanning. He flips between chasing and locking himself to the ice off-puck. But there were a lot of positives in this game, too. He created advantages in transition by drawing the first forechecker, stepping inside, and passing to an open teammate along the perimeter. Joined the rush, completing his routes to push back defenders. There's a solid, often projectable rush defence game here from his engagement, stick work (middle-protecting, well-timed pokes), and physicality. There's not much creativity to his game, but he shows enough to believe he could be a defender and breakout player in the NHL. The skills he'll need to improve his offence – or rather, pass sometimes and actually try to open/create lanes – already exist in his breakouts. A top-four defender? Maybe not. Perhaps a mid-to-late second.

David St-Louis: November 2nd, 2022 - Sarnia Sting vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

It's early in the season, but I can already see Allen fallen on many boards. There is just not enough there. The production (6 points in 16 games) is very concerning considering the amount of minutes that he plays (half the game here). He should be generating way more, but he doesn't seem comfortable with or without the puck. He can defend passing lanes and one-on-one well; he seems engaged, but he doesn't seem to process the play well, finding the first out he can. There is not enough

scanning, not enough anticipation. He is not threatening offensively and not good enough of a shutdown presence to warrant a high pick at this stage. As soon as the defence becomes more complex (if he has to switch or take care of more than one variable), holes appear in his game. Not encouraging.

Lauren Kelly: October 25th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

I'm hoping that this viewing is as bad as it gets for Allen, because it was brutal. Granted, his teammates played just as poorly... Allen was on the ice for three goals against. One was the result of failing to recognize there was an open player by the net after the puck was turned over on a clearing attempt. The other was a bad giveaway in his own end after his entire team essentially stopped playing, trying to ring the puck around the other side of the boards. He also took two unnecessary penalties, one called roughing but was really a crosscheck attempt to the back of a player's helmet as he tried to stop the cycle, and the other for a dangerous crosscheck into the boards in the neutral zone. Pressured on retrievals and would lose possession. The one notable play in this game from him was a good pass cut-off in the neutral zone, which was a bit risky given a player would have been in alone if it hadn't worked - he went down on one knee and laid his stick flat to intercept the pass, and he timed it well. Other than that... this is a game to forget for Allen.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Allen was trying to be more of a playmaker in this game. He jumped off the point and funnelled play to the inside. His passes failed because there wasn't actually a viable target, but this is a welcome sight. Give-and-go activation from the point showed that he has the proactive activation game to make it work in the NHL. Still, he's best on breakouts. He fakes plays, cuts back, changes pace, and draws the F1 before turning on the jets. He's skilled, but it's not always pretty when he handles the puck with an exaggerated over-the-top of the puck handling style. But he puts pucks in tricky spots for defenders and uses his stick to fend off opponents. It should be enough in the NHL. His most creative plays fail, but he tries to create something on most of his breakout touches. Defensively, he's physical, proactive, and relatively consistent. The occasional passive gap or needless crossovers appears, but he tries to recover and make up ground. He looks like an NHLer, but I'm unsure about the upside at this stage.

Lauren Kelly: October 16th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Allen played nearly 32 minutes in this game, which is kind of insane given it's the third week of the season. That being said, he had a lot more opportunities to showcase his offensive skills in this one. He was jumping up into the rush, activating off the point more frequently, and creeping higher into the offensive zone when he felt there was an opening for him. Still, Allen was relatively good at leveraging those opportunities into legitimate chances for his team, while not sacrificing the defensive part of his game too often.

Allen did make a couple of uncharacteristic mistakes in his own end - he wasn't always scanning on retrievals and let himself get pulled away from the goal following puck carriers, and was too far to recognize open coverage and get back in time. There was one particular shift where he pinched up to try and keep a puck in and did, but his pass to a teammate was picked off and he was caught too far back to stop the shorthanded rush. Those mistakes were rare, though; overall, Allen was eliminating off-puck threats when he recognized them and using the boards well to clear pucks out of the defensive zone. His physicality didn't cross a line in this game. I still don't think that he's going to be an offensive catalyst at future levels, as his shifts in the offensive zone were still risk-averse. Still likely the most well-rounded blueliner to come out of the OHL this season.

Lauren Kelly: October 8th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Solid first viewing of Allen in this one. Activations off the point were smart, didn't overcommit defensively, and excellent puck protection skills. Transitioned defence to offence well, through no-look breakout passes and creating turnovers before breaking the puck out. He was pulled out of position a couple of times as the opposing team was cycling the puck, which left the front of the net exposed. Allen picked up two points in this one, a secondary assist starting the rush and scored on a point shot on a 5-on-3 powerplay. Very engaged in zone defence, closes on players physically as the puck gets to them. Felt like Allen kept a lot of his decision-making safe; he didn't try to take too many risks with the puck or with pinching up into the play, and

only jumped up into open space when he was sure his teammates would maintain possession. I'll be interested to see how he continues to build on his offensive capabilities as the season continues.

David St-Louis: October 1st, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Allen was mostly uninvolved in the play. He made simple transition passes and missed better plays he could make. At the point, he was mostly a shooter, when passing more to his teammates at the half-wall would have netted better results. I'm not sure about his whole defensive processing either. One-on-one, he made stops, but didn't adapt his positioning and aggressiveness and angling to the two-on-ones he faced on his side of the ice. The skating looked like an average grade in that game. It was probably just a down performance.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Allen had an exceptional defensive game. Keeps a tight gap both on- and off-puck. Gets stops with the pass reception, keeps his weight centred and his chest up, and keeps attacks to the outside. Pivots at the perfect moment to close the lane to the net, forcing shots. And he got his stick on every shot this game. With the puck, he uses weight shifts and fluid hands to beat the odd forechecker. But rarely to create advantages. From the point, he doesn't use space. Just shoots. And when he activates off-puck, he's late to space and can't make the next play. He has the tools to become an effective three-zone player, but clearly needs plenty of refinement. He'll play, and there's lots of runway for improvement.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Allen was alright. He gets his stops through mobility, positioning, and confidence. Angles plays the boards, funnels attacks up and away from his net, and eliminates off-puck threats proactively. With the puck, he's far from a best play player. On breakouts, he uses the middle and looks cross-ice, but only if there's no pressure in front of him. When he activates, he makes simple plays, even high-value ones are easily available. When he skates the puck himself, he just strides up the rink until he runs out of space. More crossovers and choosing to skate directly at forecheckers would help him get through. He's solid; a high-probability NHLer, but I haven't seen much upside in this tournament. August hockey.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Discipline may be an issue for Allen, who took a pair of incredibly stupid, selfish penalties in this contest, but I thought he was solid otherwise. The lack of any separating skill concerns me for a player who is supposed to be one of if not the top defensive prospect in the class, but there's still plenty to like. Allen's an efficient, engaged in-zone defender who closes on his check as the puck arrives, often with force. He gaps up early in the neutral zone, takes away the middle of the ice with his stick, and then closes at the right moment, always with sound footwork. His work in transition stood out as the best part of his game. Allen stacks deception onto his first touch, draws in additional forecheckers, and explodes past them with ease for the breakout. His stride and skating habits both rate as solidly above-average. Allen definitely looks the part of a first-rounder.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Breakouts are still a bit of a problem; Allen doesn't see the best play all the time and often resorts into advancing the play up the ice as quickly as possible, even while sacrificing possession. Also a lot of unnecessary shots, and when he made good activations and got into scoring positions off the rush, the wrister flew right past the net. Discipline issues are also real, took a dumb penalty and probably should have gotten at least one extra minor that wasn't called. But also a fair amount of good stuff. The skating gets a plus-grade and the defensive footwork continues to impress. Allen is hard to beat off the rush as he guides forwards towards the boards and physically imposes his will. Some violent shifts in this one. I'm not sold on the upside and the breakouts concern me, but the skating combined with activation, defensive prowess and physicality project well.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cam Allen took an unbelievably selfish penalty, but this was a solid game otherwise. He's not electrifying, but he's an NHLer.

He makes positive plays on breakouts. Even if he's not making the best play, he's still moving the puck effectively with minimal turnovers. Some escapability. Defensively, he's proactive, alert, and projectable. Doesn't just get the first stop, he gets the second and third. Switchable player who anticipates rotations. Problem-solved by applying pressure, but doesn't take himself out of the play. Activates, but the skill level doesn't seem particularly high. Curious to see more.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Allen plays a lot and generally looks really good. He stepped up for a hit that led to a chance the other way. But as he always does, he activated and stayed, leading to his goal. Later in the game, he switched from the point to the net front to the high slot. When activated, he doesn't show any notable skill or tool beyond understanding the off-puck game. That's fine. He's a solid defender, killing plays early and late, throwing hits to separate man from puck, and proactively eliminating off-puck threats. Breakouts aren't complex but generally positive. A player who can shaped into greater offensive impact by a progressive structure and development staff, but still has a high likelihood of becoming an NHLer all the same.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

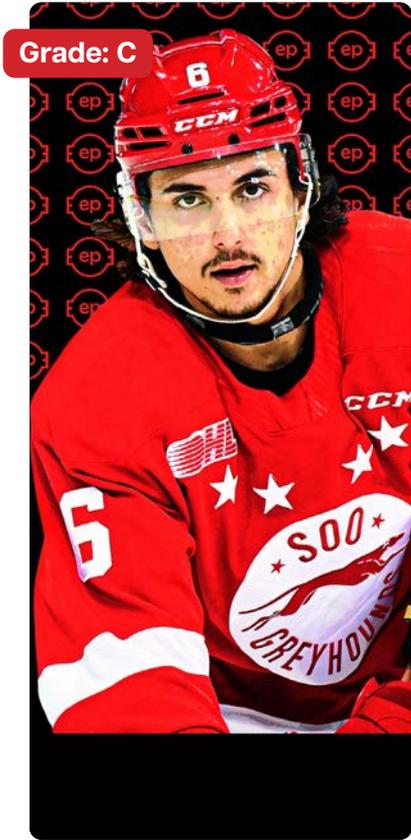
Same issues were present compared to the tournament opener. Allen's breakouts just weren't very good. One nice pass to the middle under pressure after picking up a loose puck in the DZ, but other than that, his passes either weren't accurate or he failed to pre-scan and ended up throwing the puck to the opposition. Scored after joining the rush and hammering a rebound from net-front – a sequence that probably wouldn't have happened against a better team. Some OZ activation, but not very effective or planned. Rush defence still looks strong and physical game gets a good grade, too; threw some effective hits to get puck possession back.

Lassi Alanen: July 31st, 2022 - Canada vs. Switzerland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Allen logged a beautiful primary assist in the first period, receiving the puck up the boards and instead of shooting, he had the vision to find a teammate on the backdoor with a cross-seam pass – great stuff. Allen's rush defence was also on point for the most part. He was pre-active, killing off plays even as early as in the offensive zone and kept a very tight gap. Then the negatives. Breakouts were a surprisingly big issue for Allen here, especially when you adjust for the opposition strength. He lacked execution a few times, was stripped of the puck on cutback attempts and overall just fumbled quite a few pucks. Some defensive zone issues, too, with a lot of overcommitting, leading him to get beaten and having to take penalties. I want to see a notable improvement in these areas.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2021 - Guelph Storm vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Allen might just be the Storm's best defender already. He's defensive skating already much better than Buchinger's (his partner), using a wider, quieter base to angle out attacks. Physical. Scans for threats and eliminates them early. Manages multiple threats at once. Activates regularly, often to set up a pass to a teammate. Deceives on the release of both his passes and shots. Supremely confident with the puck, deking through players with moves set up by his free top hand and weight shifts. Looks like a top player for the 2023 Draft.



Grade: C

77 Andrew Gibson

AGE 17.586 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Hammer

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	198 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Soo Greyhounds	OHL	45	7	14	21	0.47
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	0	3	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Most defencemen on Team Canada's back end hurt their stock at the U18s. They either committed too many mistakes or faded in the background too much, but the opposite happened with Andrew Gibson. He showed us that he could complete more plays with the puck. All he needed was a little more space and quicker teammates coming in support.

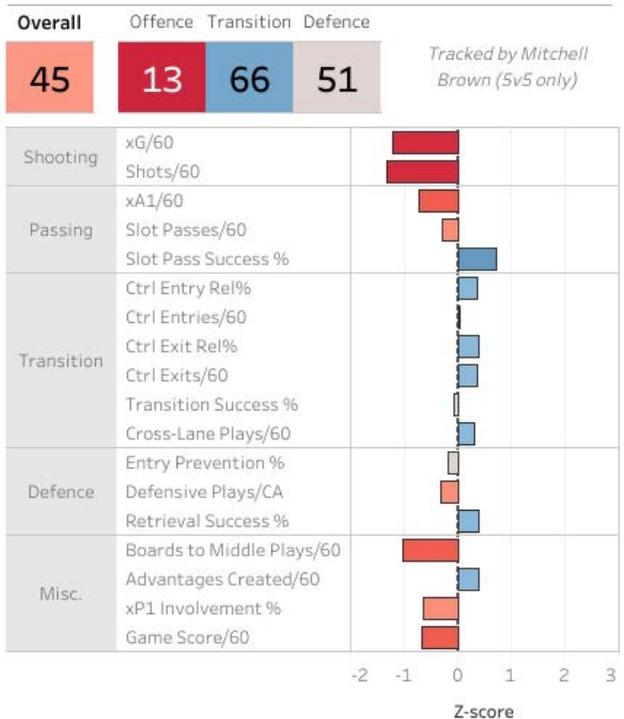
"Gibson was a good puck distributor in this game," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote after Canada's first game against Sweden at the U18s. "He made a couple of breakout plays under pressure and he passed well in the offensive zone to keep the attack flowing. I didn't see any creative ideas from him, but I liked his puck management and his rush defence."

For the most part, Gibson's ideas were good in the OHL. It's the execution that wasn't on point. He would attempt to move counter to the feet of defenders, deceive them with feints, or shoot around them, but his skating or handling would fail him at the wrong time, leading to a miss and a turnover.

In general, we do appreciate players who attempt plays, even ones outside of their skill level in junior hockey. Trying and failing is how players improve. And we did see a slight development in Gibson's puck skills and breakouts over the season, culminating with his

Andrew Gibson

D | Soo Greyhounds | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 160.3



quieter, but more effective performance at the U18s.

The defensive zone is where Gibson remains the most at ease, however. As Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a December game report, “He engages at the right moments, keeps attacks wide, and doesn’t over-extend”.

Improving his footwork would make it easier for him to follow and shut down the shiftier forwards of the OHL, but his range does compensate for his lack of quickness.

If Gibson’s skating does develop and if he can increase the success rate of his transition plays, he could become a solid bottom-pairing, shutdown defenceman for an NHL team.

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Breaking down top prospect performances at men’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Canada’s 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

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David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Gibson’s style -- quiet, physical, defensive -- clashes with other players on this blue line. He’s arguably been more effective in his role than everyone else. I like his breakout plays a bit more at this tournament than in the OHL. Maybe the extra space helps him. He gives his all defensively and while he scrambles a bit due to his skating (his defensive footwork is a lot of short steps that could get exploited by better players), he positions well overall. I like him. I’d rank him about where we have the second wave of defencemen on the board 60-80. I doubt he has top-four potential unless he fits a pure shutdown role near a really high-event offensive partner.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

This was a really impressive performance from Gibson in just about every phase of the game. I thought he took to his role as a stabilizing presence on this blue line with aplomb, defending well – particularly in the neutral zone – and making intelligent, efficient plays with the puck. Nothing too flashy, but always improving the conditions of his team’s next play. His defensive stick work was especially strong. Smart player.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

Gibson is one of the best neutral zone defenders in this team. He made a hard hit on an opponent to prevent him from catching the puck in between blue lines and his gap has been generally tight. I’m not sure about his odd-man rush defence. He tends to dive in those situations, which isn’t the best strategy. Offensively, he has his moments. He can chain fakes into down attacks and distribute the puck.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Gibson was a good puck distributor in this game. He made a couple of breakout plays under pressure and he passed well in the offensive zone to keep the attack flowing. I didn't see any creative ideas from him, but I liked his puck management and his rush defence. He could turn him into an effective bottom-pairing NHLer. I'm not so sure about his shot yet. The power seems fine, but he didn't create lanes for it.

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2023 - Sault Ste. Marie vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Gibson has the size and the reach to become a shutdown NHLer. He positions well on the ice, but due to a lack of skating skills, his gap tends to be a bit loose, which is fine as he has the range to compensate to an extent at this level. That being said, his lack of mobility could be exploited at higher levels. His puck management was far from a positive in this game. He barely connected on his passes and throw many of them to the opposition. He played a safe style of game that helped him manage the heavy minutes he's on the ice for. I like his handle mechanics for the most part. Maybe he could develop better puck-moving skills.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

A squirrely game from Gibson. It seemed like every other touch was a no-look dump out, even when not pressured. He has way more time than he thinks sometimes. I've seen better breakout performances, but this is a reminder that his mechanical ability remains limited at times (hands especially). There was a lot to like defensively, however. He crushed Dionicio, which is no easy task. He read threats and eliminated them or stayed between them (when the play demanded it). He looked like an end-of-board candidate. The added defensive impact gives me a bit more confidence.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Gibson's still ideas more than anything. He fakes on retrievals and fakes passes before going to a different target. Prefers to work pucks up the middle or laterally instead of up the boards, which leads to some turnovers but when he combines that with his delay game, he has success. Joined the rush a bunch, trying three variations of the game same give-and-go entry. The mechanics fail at times and he's not a creator once he gets the puck in the offensive zone. The defence is physicality and aggression. A bit passive through the neutral zone but he stays in lanes and eliminates threats in-zone. Looked like an end-of-board candidate with bottom-pairing upside. Similar to Quinton Burns, but Burns is trying and completing more advanced plays consistently and brings a more polished defensive game.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

The usual from Gibson. He has some sound ideas with the puck, deceiving, cutting back instead of forcing plays ahead, and trying to cut inside and pass through forecheckers. But he's unaware of backpressure and struggles to separate with his skating. He has moves, but he's so upright that he exits his moves where he started them. Prone to breakdowns, too. Defensively, he's fine. His skating limits him at times and his gap could be tighter. Looked like a late-round candidate in this game.

Lauren Kelly: March 10th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

This was Gibson's first game back after missing two months with an injury, and it was rough at times. I'm sure he'll shake off the rust eventually, but his timing and positioning just seemed to be a little off. He was kind of all over the place on certain shifts in his own end, instead of boxing out in front of the net. He struggled with defensive skating, as defenders would beat him easily down the boards - he loses a lot of speed trying to skate backwards and his pivots aren't quick enough to keep up with rushers. He kept a lot of his plays with the puck fairly simple, limiting himself to short range passes on breakouts and dump-ins at the blueline. He did pinch up quite a few times, which meant he was caught too far back when play went the other way and backchecking efforts were inconsistent. Doesn't really take the body defending 1-on-1, instead trying to use his stick to poke the puck away. I'd take this viewing with a grain of salt considering he hasn't played in two months. Need to watch more down the stretch.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

An impressive game from Gibson in the ideas department. He delays, manipulates opponents with deception (even on pass receptions), uses the inside, and looks for activation opportunities after passing. Subtle plays – like a quick pump fake on reception, or angling his body away from his target – drive his value. The ideas often fail, passing too far ahead of his target or lacking the skill to access the lane. As such, skill development's key here – puckhandling and positioning (especially in motion), skating (depth, outside edges), and reading his opponent's momentum. Defensively, he's volatile in terms of gap control but consistently working. Gets manipulated sometimes (he's too quick to react), but gets on opponents early. Understands when to back off. Gets inside the hands of opponents in battles. This was a second-round-type game. He showed a clear NHL skill set, but there's a notable lack of refinement. He wants to be a creator, it's worth betting on players like that.

Lauren Kelly: January 4th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Gibson picked up two points in this game, and both sequences were quite impressive. He stood up a player in the neutral zone, stole the puck, and left the puck for McConnell-Barker, who scored. On his goal, he received the puck at the blueline, walked into the slot, and wired it past the goalie. Still, the opportunities he gets to create offence are so few and far-between, and he rarely activates, so it's hard to imagine he'll put up that many points at future levels. Aggressive is definitely the best descriptor of his defensive play. Will wind up for slapshots to get the puck out of his end, finishes checks, and hounds puck carriers so heavily that it can often mean he gets taken away from the front of the net and leaves it exposed. There's probably a pick here, but he strikes me as more of a late-round than mid-round guy.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Gibson has some great ideas with the puck, attacking defenders on angles, cutting back, deceiving before passing to teammates. The skating's a bit of a limiter; he lacks lower-body flexion. Crossovers aren't crossovers. Pivots lack push off power. Lacks quickness in general and he's not especially fluid, at least not in this game. Defensively, he has some skill and awareness, but skating puts him at an immediate disadvantage in most situations. Perhaps a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

I don't see much execution from Gibson, but I generally like the ideas. He's relatively determined to make plays on the breakout, trying to go cross-ice, up the middle, and escape pressure along the boards with his edges. But he's vulnerable to speed, struggles to handle in motion, and misses the best option. Defensively, he's best when face-to-face with the opponent. He engages at the right moments, keeps attacks wide, and doesn't over-extend. But he struggles with pivots and defensive skating in general. Opponents burn him as he steps up and he wanders in the neutral zone instead of respecting weak side threats. The upright stance doesn't help the skating, either. Looked like an end-of-board candidate.

Lauren Kelly: November 25th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Gibson didn't do much of anything in this game. He wanders a bit too much in his own end, he's slow and beaten in races for the puck, and there were limited to zero offensive flashes in this game aside from harmless wristers from the point. If he's being asked to play a shutdown role for his team, he's not the most effective at eliminating threats or stopping the rush. Keeps his head up on breakout passes and occasionally pinches up to keep the puck in, but he also stood up at the offensive blueline to lay a hit despite the puck being long gone at the point of contact. He's not a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Gibson has some ideas with the puck. He skates through the opponent's route, fakes on retrievals, joins the rush, delays, passes to teammates on the inside, and looks inside/cross-ice for options on the breakout. He tries to create with most touches. Most touches failed in this game, however. He mishandles pucks, exposed the puck to forecheckers, and missed passing options. Nothing major, but adds another point of evidence that the skill level's likely an average-to-below-average projection. Impressive defensive game. He times his pokes and checks when the opponent exposes the puck. Tight gap, comes across, steps in, and forces dump-ins. He looks like an interesting project. Curious to see how he develops throughout the season. Could be a second rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Things look a bit rough with Gibson at times, he fumbles pucks, turns into pressure, and has some turnover issues. But the potential looks high. He's quick on his edges, often cutting back twice in quick succession. Joins the rush often after starting plays with a quick lateral pass. Lots of scanning. Resets/delays regularly, although he'd benefit from letting pressure come closer before hitting the gas. Closes space early with a knack for getting inside opponents. Right now, Gibson's too flatfooted. Tried an activation play from the point that failed because he didn't move through the pass reception (to get the incoming opponent's feet to turn). But he has some intelligent offensive ideas, such as passing into the slot instead of firing away point shots. Obviously, a lot of details have to improve: gap control, pressure reading, manipulation, etc. But he's an advantage creator with projectable edges and defensive upside. Could be a second rounder.

Lauren Kelly: October 1st, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Well... I unfortunately didn't get a chance to see Gibson's goal in this game, due to the broadcast cutting out about 10 seconds before he scored and not returning until three minutes later. And I can't find a replay anywhere either. So that aside, this was a nice little showing from Gibson. He added a couple of secondary assists, but for the most part he was a reliable stalwart on the backend with good mobility and a strong gap 1-on-1. Encouraging to see early on in the season. Could be a player to keep an eye on as the year progresses.

Grade: C



78 Maxim Štrbák

AGE 17.425 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'2"

Height

198 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	46	5	13	18	0.39
Slovakia U18 "C"	WJC-18	7	0	6	6	0.86
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	5	0	3	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Maxim Štrbák has all the elements needed to become a bottom-pair or perhaps even a No. 4 defenceman on an NHL blue line; a shutdown player who faces the opposition's second line and keeps them off the score sheet.

It's just there's a significant gap between that vision for Štrbák's career and how the Sioux Falls Stampede defender operates as currently constituted.

This season, especially in international tournaments, Štrbák played a highly creative game. He tried to make plays with every puck touch. A spin move here, a dangle there, and many slip passes – he pulled out every move in his repertoire to push Slovakia's offence and win games against each tournament's top teams. And to his credit, he did carry his team further than many would have envisioned at some of these events.

But the Slovak defenceman's average skill level probably won't allow him to pull off the same plays against professional competition. Unless, of course, he significantly develops his explosiveness and agility as a skater along with his handling skills.

"He wants to make plays. He pulls off many of them, but there is also a collection of turnovers, as he doesn't have the skill level of many of

Maxim Strbak

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Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 98.7



these Canadian defencemen,” Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an April report. “His NHL qualities are his desire to make plays and his ability to engage opponents.”

We believe in Štrbák’s work ethic, on and off the ice. His defensive tools also project well to the higher levels. If he can learn to manage the risk of his plays better and improve his footwork enough, he will put himself on a track to seize on his upside.

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“He’s really good, really solid. He’s good. His international hockey was a lot better than his hockey in Sioux Falls, maybe because his role was more defined. I think he wants to be more offensive than he is at times. He plays in all-situations and he’s not going to do that in the NHL. He’s got high compete, he excels at getting the puck out, he’s good in transition. There’s a lot of upside there with him.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“He’s going to Michigan State, which is a good spot. There’s a lot to like about him off-ice, too.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“As an ‘05, he was very good but wasn’t a main part of the power play. He was probably our second-best d-man and will be drafted very high. – Adam Gajan, May 2023

“I think I’m more of a two-way defenceman, leaning more to the defensive side. I like to take care of things defensively first, and then if there’s a rush, I’m always happy to support it. I think I’m also a good guy to have on the point on the power play. I try to be a good all-around player.” – Max Štrbák, April 2023

“In the NHL, I like to look up to Moritz Seider. He’s a good one. I think there’s some similarities that I can take from him. I like to just watch his game and learn as much as I can.” – Max Štrbák, April 2023

“He’s a two-way defenceman with dynamic skating, and I think he showed the experience that he gained from previous experiences at the Hlinka Gretzky and World Juniors in this tournament.” – Slovakia U18 head coach Tibor Tartal, April 2023

“Really good player, good leader. He’s our captain and I think that shows that he’s a really good leader. I’m happy to play with him, too. Amazing guys in here, in this locker room. I’m really proud to play with them.” – Roman Kukumberg, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** April 29th, 2023 - USA vs Slovakia - U18s

Up and down - again. I don't know what else to write because this has been Štrbák's whole tournament. I like the flashes, honestly. He can move around forecheckers and seems to be developing an instinct for when to walk the blue line and when he can step around defenders rushing at him. He recognizes more offensive opportunities and manages risk a bit better. A lot of errors, too, still.

His skating remains a bit of a weakness even if he seems more mobile to me than a few months ago. Maybe it's the extra space here. Defensively, well, it's just hard to stop the USNTDP. He's a raw prospect and I didn't expect a lot of clean stops. There weren't many.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

Kind of a tough game for Štrbák, but I'm not sure if that's really his fault. The Slovaks hard-matched him against the American first line (Will Smith, Gabe Perreault, and Ryan Leonard), and it's kind of hard to succeed in those minutes, no matter how well you play. Having said that, Štrbák made a few really poor reads in this game, particularly on the first American goal – just a bad pinch without support that immediately turned into a breakaway against. I'm just not sure that he has a natural feel for the game at either end of the ice. It's all very reactive and mistake-prone. Only compounding matters is the fact that I don't think the skating is where it needs to be.

Probably one of my better Štrbák viewings with the puck on his stick, though. He was efficient in transition and even had some savvy offensive blue line activations. Just a totally okay performance from Štrbák in a really tough spot. Looked like someone for the end of our board in this one.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Another up-and-down performance. Overall, my appreciation of Štrbák is still growing. The highs are interesting, the moments where he makes a clean cutback to shake the forecheck and sends a pass across the ice, inside space, to a teammate. Or when he fiercely defends the front of the net. I think I like him more than the QMJHL defencemen. He's extremely error-prone -- his reads under pressure will have to improve significantly, especially on breakouts -- but the tools and engagements are good enough to warrant a pick. A 60-80 player for me on our board.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

Štrbák is starting to convince me of his potential. He hit on many of his more difficult plays in this game. Sure, he had more space -- it's Germany -- but still, it's good to see that he can execute these spin moves and stretch passes and fakes with just a little bit more time. It can make one optimistic about his development. Solid rush defence from him overall in this one. I could see him fit somewhere with our other defensive projects on our board around 70 to 90.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - U18s

It's hard to project Štrbák. On one hand, he's extremely confident at this tournament. He wants to make plays. He pulls off many of them, but there is also a collection of turnovers, as he doesn't have the skill level of many of these Canada defencemen. His NHL qualities are his desire to make plays and his ability to engage opponents, but he will need skating, handling, and tactical improvements. He scans a lot, but I'm not sure about his processing. In other words, he's very raw, but confident, and has some interesting elements and moments. It's a tough situation for him, this tournament, as he's relied upon a lot and doesn't have much support.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

This was a good showing for Štrbák. What we want to see out of him is more plays with the puck and he showed those

abilities in this one. He moved past checkers and connected with teammates, found consistent exits, and turned puck steals into immediate chances for teammates. He used his backhand a bit more, too. He's still mistake-prone, a bit rawer than most and his game doesn't hold under defensive pressure, at times, but there are interesting elements there. He's scanning a lot more on retrieval, it seems, now. More of a late-board candidate still for me.

David St-Louis: April 20th 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - U18s

Štrbák looks like an NHLer, at times, but he's a little bit clunky in other moments. His handling skills and overall ability to handle pressure will have to improve significantly if he is to make the NHL. But there are other moments of smoothness, especially in transition, that make me believe that he can become that shutdown, good-first-pass defenceman. The effort is constant. Right now, his motor might be his best quality.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

I'm seeing a bit more skill from and creativity from Štrbák lately. It's not much, but he's trying to fake out opponents, control the puck as he looks for options, and even breaking down the forecheck. It rarely works. He fakes, fakes, and then shoots into shin guards. He lacks pace and awareness. He's not trying to create something; he's doing things for the sake of it. At least there's a bit of flash on the turnovers now. The rush defence was solid. He gapped early and closed space on opponents quickly. Physical. Nothing in-zone though. Maybe a late-rounder. The mechanics aren't there and I don't see much defensive impact beyond hits that occasionally kill plays right now.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

This was just an abysmally poor showing from Štrbák, though I suppose some credit is due for escaping a 6-5 loss with an even goal differential. I'm not even sure that he's going to be a particularly effective college player, much less a legitimate NHL prospect after a game like this though. To see someone struggle so mightily against a good-not-great forecheck like this, it's just not a good sign.

Štrbák's sluggish on retrievals and not particularly deceptive either. Forecheckers routinely caught Štrbák on the track and either forced him into a poor decision or stole the puck right out from under him. And as much as the skating concerns me, I think that his mental pace here was the real problem. Štrbák doesn't register options at the speed necessary to effectively create breakouts at this level. Štrbák was at his best when he carried the puck up-ice himself, but it's not something I expect to scale up to the next level. Even at this one, Štrbák rushes the puck into pressure without any foresight or planning and defaults into an uncontrolled play. Just a total no-draft for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

A solid game from Strbak, showing more skill and awareness than I've previously seen from him. He read pressure and skated away from it. Joined the rush, delayed, dropped a puck back to create a walk-in shot. Head up on reception, passed into the slot for a deflection chance and eventually a goal. An engaged defender, always trying to body up opponents and kill plays. He doesn't really weaponize pressure and he's just as likely to throw a puck into a battle along the boards as he is to create a clean breakout. The skills looks below-average, and his aggressiveness costs him against quicker or aware opponents. A mid-round game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Štrbák finally did things in one of my viewings, and it was bad. There were so many bad turnovers. He passed straight to the other team with and without pressure. Panicked as soon as a player skated towards him and offloaded the puck. One time, he had an easy, unpressured pass up the boards to create a 1-on-1. Instead, he skated a bit, then dumped the puck cross-ice before crossing the red line. Even when he looked over both shoulders before getting the puck, he instantly passed to the other team. He tried to beat defenders from the point with weight shifts, but he lacks depth so he can't cover the distance laterally to escape – easily defended. The hands were rigid, too. Stepped up for a couple of hits, killing the play once and getting dusted

the other time. To his credit, he tried to manipulate incoming pressure in a couple of sequences and his physicality helps him get stops in zone. But he didn't look like a pick. Not close.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 8th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

A tough game for the Stampede and a pretty bland showing from Štrbák. The skating is looking like more of an issue, Štrbák's weight is so far back on his feet that it prevents him from accessing any sort of small-space agility. Unless he's got time and space, he runs into forecheckers and struggles to defend in transition when play turns quickly. Give him a little bit of room and the narrative changes. On retrievals without close pressure, Štrbák corrals the puck and gets his toes pointed up ice before making a good first pass. When he's got space from the point, he's deceptive and uses dekes and look offs while walking the line. The problem is at the collegiate and pro levels, you don't have the time and space you do in the USHL. Even in this game, he got a dash after getting beat around the corner because he lost so much speed in his pivot. I'm a bit worried that these struggles are only going to worsen at higher levels.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - Finland vs Czechia - World Juniors

Štrbák can close on opponents and strip them off the puck. He's great in those close quarter engagements when the opponent is forced on him, then he rams himself between that opponent and the puck, and wins possession. Apart from those one-on-one situations, however, Štrbák lacks awareness and anticipation. He doesn't know his next play when he gets the puck and, when defending away from it, he lets opponents run around him, at times. His play here is not really all that different from in the USHL, but the weaknesses are magnified.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 9th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Starting to cool off a bit on Štrbák, he's a talented player but I'm worried about the translatability of his skating. He relies on poke checks and lunges when defending the rush rather than getting his feet to a spot and maintaining close gaps. I think this may be a function of a lack of confidence in his feet though. That said, he does use his stick to try to deny the blue early and sometimes it works out for him. He's also incredibly active in the rush off the puck and had a sequence where he joined the rush from the weak side, got the puck and had a shot off pad for an assist. He's a pick, but probably lower than I first thought.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Štrbák tries to make controlled plays, but he's generally error-prone. I'm not sure about the overall processing and awareness. He's a bit frantic in his plays. His rush defence was on point and he has the physical/engaging part of defending down, for the most part. I'm sure he could turn himself into an effective shutdown defenceman at the professional level, but although he does show some offensive instincts at times, in his feinting and activating, I'm not sure if he will be able to become more than that defensive element. The skating will have to improve. It's solid, but high. It doesn't give him as much speed and acceleration as it could.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Štrbák is constantly engaged. He plays with a lot of effort. The tools are about average, however. The handling, I would rate it as a 4.5 based on this game and his skating, maybe a 5. He was also late on some reads. He has qualities (motor, rush defence, engaging, first-passing on breakouts...), but the game lacks a bit of refinement at this stage. He can make plays through opponents at times.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

The best game I've seen from Štrbák early in this season. He was a force when defending the rush. He pinched to hold the zone, kept attackers wide, then killed plays with well-timed pokes and a heavy shoulder. A couple of smart, low-pace breakout plays that took advantage of, let's say, uncommitting forecheckers. Offence is just point shots and passes; he has more space than he realizes. Jumps into the play on occasion. He struggles when he has to move his feet and handle at the time. Retrievals

were also an issue. His high stance and low pace allowed opponents to jump around him and win the race. Looked like a late-rounder in this game.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs Fargo Force - USHL

Štrbák appears to be mostly a defensive defenceman. He laid multiple hits on unsuspecting opponents as they attacked through the neutral-zone in this game. He also used his stick well to remove space. The skating looked a bit rough at times. He had trouble catching up to the play due to his high stance. He made some puck plays, but generally, I didn't see the awareness and instinct and finer skills that characterize puck-movers

Joey Padmanabhan: November 5th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

The Stampede really lean on Štrbák, he plays nearly every other shift. The skating is looks like an issue, he has a habit of trying to lunge at opponents on the rush at his own blue line perhaps because he doesn't have the footwork to defend fast players in transition, and yet the fact that he tries to poke check at the blue line makes him liable to get burned. It's a catch-22. He makes simple but effective outlet passes and joins the rush nicely off the puck. Some nice activation from the puck and good mobility walking the line, he tries to change the angle on his point shots with a fake or stop. He's also strong in his own end, winning most of his board battles or getting a pin and waiting for help. Got the worse of a late hit in the second and did not return.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

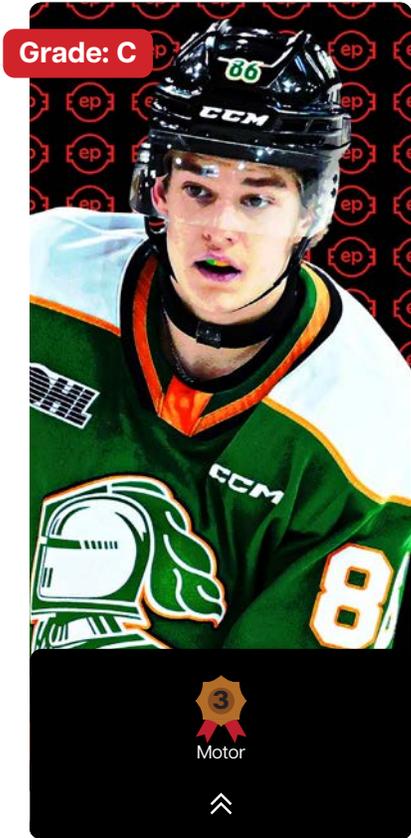
Nothing of note from Štrbák in this game. He's just point shots and a bit of physicality on the defensive end. Head's down at the point a lot, leading to missed opportunities. When he actually took space, he couldn't create a shooting lane. Breakout decisions are slow and lacking creativity. He forces plays up the boards and through forecheckers. Didn't look like a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Štrbák really struggled for lengthy stretches of this game. It started in the defensive end. A turnover machine. He didn't really show awareness of his options, mostly passing straight to the other team or to his wingers with heavy pressure. Didn't use space. But there were a couple of plays that suggested there's skill here. He read the feet of a forechecker, cut inside, then passed up the middle – one of two smart breakout plays in that shift. Zero offence to speak of, and not much defensive impact. He pinched down the boards to hold the zone a couple of times. That was it.

Mitchell Brown: September 30th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

A nondescript game from Štrbák. His skill comes and goes. When he's flatfooted, he uses the backhand, slip passes, and the middle. Patient under pressure. But he didn't show any in motion skills. Tried a drag shot from the point that failed because of an upright, narrow stance and poor move selection – that was it for notable plays. Threw a massive reverse hit, stepped up in the neutral zone a couple of times, and engaged with aggression around the net. Killed a couple of plays, but the physical game was mostly late and reactionary. Didn't see much in this outing.



79 Denver Barkeby

AGE 17.386 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Dogs got that Barkeby in them



Motor

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'8"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
London Knights	OHL	61	22	37	59	0.97

SCOUTING REPORT

It feels like there's a Denver Barkeby-type prospect in every draft. A smaller, high-energy forward who plays like he's a 6-foot-2 power forward anyway.

There's something different about Barkeby, though. On top of having that dog in him, he also presents some softer skills, enough of them to increase our confidence in his projection. Size be damned.

Barkeby absorbs hits to get their stick on the puck on the forecheck, chases opponents through the neutral zone, and drives the inside part of the ice consistently in the offensive zone.

He also understands how to make plays as a passer. He attracts defenders to create space for teammates, constantly uses them to progress the attack, and layers feints in his stickhandling. His quick give-and-goes only add more pace to his play. And he also knows where and how to position himself to get the puck back in dangerous spots. That's how he managed to score 59 points in 61 games this season with the London Knights.

"More of the same from Barkeby: high motor and work rate, lots of disrupting passes, stealing pucks from behind, supporting in the defensive zone, and pressuring puck carriers," OHL regional scout Lauren Kelly wrote in a March report.

Denver Barkeby

F | London Knights | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 122.1



Adding an extra gear to his skating would help Barkey on his path to a bottom-six NHL role. Right now, he looks quick because he strides at maximum effort every time he steps on the ice, but his stance is a bit wide and hunched over. Correcting his inefficiencies would only improve his speed, his ability to disrupt the opposition, and his give-and-go game.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Scout's Notebook: 7 standout single-game performances



Standout performances from the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"Undersized underdog who keeps proving people wrong he may just do it at the next level too." – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: May 11th, 2023 - London Knights vs Peterborough Petes - OHL

Barkey pursued pucks and used teammates at every occasion. A typical game. I don't think the hockey sense is high-end, but he does know the best next play as he attacks down the wing. He can skate past opponents, get to a prime playmaking area, and then launch a perfect pass to a teammate in the slot. Speed, passing skills, and a consistent motor. A lot to like -- but maybe more in the late second or third round.

Lauren Kelly: March 9th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. London Knights - OHL

Two points for Barkey in this game, his assist coming off a steal from behind the net before feeding a teammate sneaking in from the point, and his goal the result of him getting around a backchecking forward, cutting to the inside, and having his backhand shot dribble past the goalie.

Production aside, this was more of the same from Barkey, high motor and work rate, lots of disrupting passes, stealing pucks from behind, supporting in the defensive zone, and pressuring puck carriers. Tries to attack the middle on rushes, but can't always break through when facing larger defenders, though he definitely doesn't shy away from contact or get discouraged when plays like that don't work for him. If he can't penetrate the middle, he'll cut back after bringing the puck into the offensive zone and survey his passing options, pass off, and then head to the middle. The skating isn't perfect by any means, but he uses his speed to back defenders up and he can arrive at a top speed quite quickly. There's just a lot to like about his style.

David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey brings a lot at this level, offensively and defensively. He's always at the center of the play with his motor and speed. His skating is wide and a bit hunched over, but he seems naturally quick and can really pressure the puck and outskate defenders at this level. I don't expected him to end up being a significantly above-average NHL skater, however, and that's a hit to his projection. Some nice playmaking ideas: challenging defenders before passing, delaying, fakes... He constantly uses teammates (seems even reluctant to shoot, at times) and some creativity. I like his style, but I doubt his game is translatable. More of a

middle-round pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

A solid game from Barkey. The passing was really clicking. He found teammates rushing the net, escaped the boards with passes to the middle, and read the next play in advance. A bit of deception, too. But he's mostly beating defenders into lanes. When given space, he attacks the middle. When not, he makes a quick play to the middle then relocates to get open. The defence remains projectable. Everywhere on the backcheck and forecheck. Overwhelms opponents and also has a knack for well-timed sticklifts to secure possession. Without developing a more nuanced offensive game, making the NHL will be tricky. Still, he has the work rate, vision, and environment to overcome limitations. An early-third.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey relies on many of the same patterns on the ice. He drives wide, cuts in the faceoff circle, attracts a defender, and then feeds a lateral pass. He's all about conserving a speed/momentum advantage and surprising opponents with it. Again, great at this level, but some translatability issues. He's F1 to F1 sometimes, first on the forecheck and the backcheck, and he drives the net. He's inside-driven, but not fully, only when he has the space to do so, which is normal at his size. He helps on defence, handles board breakouts well, is aware...A lot abilities and some signs of higher hockey sense, but his path to the NHL will be harder than most. Skating is a 5.5 for me despite the mechanical flaws.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey did Barkey stuff. He grabbed an assist by driving wide then dropping the puck back to Cowan. He grabbed a trio of scoring chances by completing his routes and getting to the net at the right moments. Quick on-and-off shots. The motor always stands out. He always takes the extra stride, skates full speed into opponents, wins body positioning, and escapes with quick passing plays. Nothing too exciting when it came to the playmaking, however. He made quick passes to open teammates, failing to create the best play. Not a manipulator in this outing, mostly a quick-possession passer who kept the puck moving. With his average mechanical base, it's going to be an upward climb to the NHL. Can always count on him to bring his best effort at both ends of the rink. Perhaps a late-second or early-third.

Lauren Kelly: February 8th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey's intelligence pops every time he leverages his motor and physical skills to disrupt or eliminate threats. Whether it's badgering puck carriers, lifting sticks, supporting in retrievals, every move has a purpose. Offensively, lots of give-and-gos, reading off his linemates, putting himself in key areas to receive passes, beating defenders down the wall on the rush, and flashed some deceptive playmaking, including no-look passes through the slot where he faked the shot. His lone point in this game was a floater from the point, but he had several other scoring chances from better areas that he wasn't able to beat the goalie on. Looked like a B in this one.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

A really interesting performance from Barkey. I see what others like in him: relentless motor that translate into a high defensive impact, steals, and more offence. He's inside-driven, but he doesn't complete his attacks, knowing his size disadvantage; he challenges inside and then creates off close-outs. When a defender rush him, he passes in the other direction, inside space, to teammates. Physical skills: establishes body positioning, low posture, and even attempted hits. He tries give-and-goes and play penalty kill. The combination of motor, skating (even though the form is not perfect), defensive engagement, physical techniques and confidence, and playmaking could certainly turn him into an NHLer. Odds are still stacked against him, but he could be a B-level prospect.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey was everywhere in this game. His effort on the forecheck directly led to a goal. He had multiple shifts of multiple steals.

He overcomes with his non-stop pressure. Always keeps his feet moving. Stick always antagonizing the opponent. He throws hits, skates through the hands, and quickly moves the puck from there. But there wasn't any exciting offence from Barkey. It was mostly simple plays made brilliant by his effort, save for a pair of slip passes in transition. Given the skating of skating refinement, he looked more like a mid-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Barkey wasn't much of a factor in this game. The motor's always running, but he was involved in many plays. A couple of quick lateral passes, a chance in the slot, and creating a shot by skating his route off-puck were his notable 5-on-5 plays. Forced a play that wasn't there, gave the puck away a few times. No advanced ideas. The skating's wide and hunched. Not a performance that suggested NHL creator, but this was mostly a special teams affair. He has a chance to make it as a fourth liner.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Barkey looks quick. He has that constantly running motor. A plus for his projection. He made a couple of very nice, difficult passes off the wall after winning pucks from opponents. I didn't see physical skills, but his smaller stature and skating allowed him to get to the puck first. He has elusive moves to shake defenders and some playmaking ideas (delays, drop passes off the rush). He was stuck mostly on the perimeter in this one, which might be uncharacteristic considering what I've heard of him. His skating stride is a bit mechanically flawed, but he still looks speedy and quick.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Barkey wasn't always the catalyst of offensive creation in this game, but he made sure he was on the doorstep trying to finish the play off, and it led to his goal in the third period - he recognized both defenders were distracted, headed for the far post, and tapped the puck into the net. Attacked the middle, pursued pucks, timed his movements well, was a threat shorthanded and his defensive engagement was high. Clean zone exits, tried to beat defenders one-on-one into the offensive zone but was usually forced to dump and chase after it. Motor was constant in this viewing.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Not much offence from Barkey, or anyone, in this game. He took pucks off the boards, attacked the middle, and even manipulated opponents' feet to create space to the inside. That he gets himself to such positions in those ways means that the lack of scoring chance generation's likely a blip. The rest of his game's strong: the physical skills, defensive awareness, engagement timing, and his work rate. Tough to find players who bring such attention to detail alongside the non-stop motor. He could be a second-rounder. The skating lacks serious refinement, but he plays fast.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

This was the Denver Barkey show. He put on a masterclass of puck pursuit and battling. In the best sequence, he mirrored the opposing player's footwork, got under their stick, started a give-and-go, and rang a shot off the post. Always takes the extra stride to come across the hips. Uses his feet to win positioning or trap opponents along the boards. Really crafty stuff. Offensively, he always gets his routes, gets open, and looks to get pucks off the boards. Backhand and slip passes feature regularly. He's not really a manipulator, more of a player who identifies lanes quicker than his opponents and has the skill to connect instantly. Works well off the creativity of Easton Cowan. Barkey looked like a second-rounder in this game, a third liner.

Lauren Kelly: December 4th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

For this being my first in-person viewing of Barkey, I left a little disappointed. That's not to say Barkey had a bad game, but it didn't really feel like he was driving play or pushing pace the way he had been doing in previous viewings. A lot of his passes didn't connect in this game. Defensively aware, but doesn't always eliminate threats in time, whether it's because he's a little too far away to do anything, or he's not recognizing them until right before it's too late.

Good work recovering pucks on the forecheck, challenges puck carriers, and he and Easton Cowan have some great chemistry - Barkey reacted and read off Cowan's plays well to help create scoring chances. Controls the puck well under pressure. But when he (or Cowan) didn't have the puck, Barkey's effort to get pucks back was a little lax in this one. Now, it was the end of the weekend, he could have been fatigued - although they weren't playing a back-to-back, while the Steelheads were wrapping up a 3-in-3 weekend. I just felt like I wanted to see a little more from Barkey in this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

More of the same from Barkey, using his motor to challenge defenders for pucks, beat them in races for the puck, pressure them up the ice on the backcheck, disrupt passes, or lay hits. Offensively quiet in this one, but he had one good rush up the middle of the ice where he got past the defence and was stopped by the goalie in tight. Continues to demonstrate an excellent awareness of where his teammates are on the ice. Really good in defensive support. I'm not sure how much offensive upside he has, but he's definitely a pick. Concerns with those offensive limitations will probably affect how high he is drafted.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey's about as good of a defender as there is in the OHL among forwards. He's always working. Gets above the puck, pushes attackers wide, then times his stick checks. Always skates through the hands to win body positioning. Offensively, he plays too fast. Passes pucks too early; failing to maximize the space his recipient gets. He's skilled though, accessing tricky lanes and identifying teammates moving into space. Always skates his routes. Somewhat confident he's an NHLer, but the upside's looked limited in my early viewings.

Lauren Kelly: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Another typical Barkey performance in this one, all speed and motor. Didn't really see too much consistent offensive creation, but he picked up two assists. The first was a secondary marker after touching the puck off the faceoff, but on the second, he entered the zone on an odd-man rush and fed a teammate for a one-timer. At times, he was playing a little too fast, overskating the puck in the offensive zone and throwing pucks into areas that teammates haven't arrived to yet. Defensively strong, as always, with consistent scanning and recognition of open coverage. Not sure how high of a draft pick he'll be, but there's definitely a player here.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I'd say that Barkey was pretty clearly one of if not London's best forward in this game, but the bar wasn't especially high. Mostly, I found myself impressed with Barkey's work rate and defensive instincts, especially on the penalty kill. He's an engaged, intelligent defender, constantly scanning for threats, taking proactive steps to eliminate plays before they develop. I don't think Barkey is an especially explosive skater, but the activity rate is through the roof, and he covers ground well enough. Barkey showed some cunning and skill as a distributor, occasionally connecting on layered, look-off feeds (particularly of the low-high variety). A cool two assists on the night too, one of which was a well-weighted saucer pass on a 2-on-1 to set his teammate up for the tap-in. I'm kind of struggling to see a pathway to the NHL for Barkey. There just aren't many players like him in the big leagues. But I think he's worth a toss at the board late. Probably about a third-round pick on our board.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Barkey formed a dynamic duo with Easton Cowan in this game, basically willing the London Knights to a 4-3 victory. While the motor was impressive as always - sprinting above the puck, charging into battles with little regard for his own safety, and overwhelming the point with pressure - it was his skill level that was most impressive. One of the best between the legs drags I've ever seen, setting up the move with crossovers before using it to bait the pivot from the defender to open the passing lane. Connected with a backhand feed. Faked a wide drive and cut inside for a chance. Shot's not noteworthy mechanically but he understands how to get in position to create.

Engages and disengages at the right moments, sprinting into space while establishing body positioning. The stride remains weak,

crumbing throughout his shift. No power. And he plays too fast, trying to throw pucks into lanes that haven't yet materialized, but could with coaxing. Barkey's a solid player with a professional future, but the upside remains undetermined. Perhaps a mid-second.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. London Knights - OHL

I don't know if Barkey will be a first rounder when next summer arrives, but he plays a really effective and consistent game. Constant speed and pressure, on the forecheck or on puck carriers. Throwing his body around and winning battles. Stickchecking and scanning on every defensive sequence. He picked up two points in this game, his assist was a nice burst of speed and then a tape-to-tape pass across the slot to a teammate, and his goal was a tipped point shot on the powerplay. His effort level is consistently among the highest of the players on the ice. Off-puck reads as dangerous as his on-puck play, despite not being able to finish on a couple of chances. There's a lot to like about Barkey's game.

Lauren Kelly: October 8th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Barkey is a player I just expect to see get better as the season goes on. It's just the style of game he plays. He already has an impressive motor and is relentless on the forecheck. If he wants the puck, you can be sure that he's going to get it back - or die trying. He wins battles along the boards out of sheer willpower - but given his size, he needs to get stronger to make him even more effective in battles. He picked up one assist in this viewing, a nice little backhand drop pass to a teammate's stick on the doorstep while under pressure.

Barkey's stride needs a little refining - he has a tendency to hunch over and kick his heels a bit in an effort to get across the ice at full speed in pursuit of the puck. He also tends to fly the defensive zone a little early, and I didn't see much scanning or shoulder-checking from him at either end of the ice. His off-puck instincts are strong, using his quickness to pursue puck carriers and force them to the boards or into turnovers. His own ability to protect the puck is great, despite his smaller stature. But overall I wasn't blown away with his play with the puck. He kept his possession simple. No manipulation to his passes or pass attempts, and his shot release wasn't too deceptive either. The production should come over the course of the season. Definitely a player I intend to keep an eye on.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

No one works harder than Barkey. He sprints from one side of the rink to the other, disrupting multiple plays in the process. Gets low, then steps into the puck carrier's hands to establish body positioning and win possession. One shift, he did that twice within seconds to win two pucks. Forces dump-ins and draws penalties with his pressure. And he's always looking to crush players. Occasionally misses the best play with the puck, some of that's from his tendency to overshoot lanes and occasional first-touch issues. Still, he has vision, skill, and the awareness to make plays off retrievals and find teammates around the slot. I want this player on my team. No one works like him and he's such an intelligent worker. But how high of a pick to invest? That will be an interesting question to answer this year.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Barkey's motor is pretty insane. He was everywhere, contributing both offensively and defensively, on-puck and off-puck. For his stature, Barkey also plays a rather physical game, at least in terms of always looking to hit and hit hard. Stride isn't perfect, but he has decent quickness and never stops moving his feet. Also showed intriguing skills aside from the hustling. Not necessarily super manipulative as a playmaker, but recognizes lanes quickly and has decent handling skill to match. One of the more interesting prospects to follow this season and see where their stock ultimately lands, especially given his small stature.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

The usual from Barkey. He's everywhere at once. He steps into opponents regularly, comes across their hips to win possession and establish body positioning in one motion, and applies intense pressure on the penalty kill. Subtle contact plays create space along the boards. Skill level comes and goes. A poor first touch ends some plays before they start, but he also knocks down

tricky passes and immediately makes the next pass. Scored by getting open in the slot – a well-deserved one. Barkey's thin and his skating suffers as a result, but I think it could potential to become above-average. High frequency, quickness, edge control, and highly anticipatory.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Yet again, Barkey might've been Canada's best player in this game. He was everywhere. He overwhelmed the puck carrier with intense pressure in all three zones. He threw hits, stole possession, and forced turnovers. Always worked to get above the puck, even when at a disadvantage in terms of distance. As soon as he won possession, he knew the next play, whether that was sprinting up the boards or passing to the inside. Even at the end of shifts, he still gained the zone instead of dumping the puck in. Used eye deception and weight shifts to mask his intentions, and instead of sprinting, he cut back and found the trailer or delayed for options. Highly involved in every shift, showed some advanced offensive details, and playmaking skill. The disciplined slipped late, throwing a massive, but late hit. Going to be a fun season.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Barkey was among Canada's best players in this game. He was looking to make plays to the middle all game. It started by tapping the puck under the defender's stick, skating through it, and getting a chance while drawing a penalty. Several passes from the behind the net to the middle resulted in chances, including off his backhand and with altered timing (passing early to beat the defender's pivot). He forced a couple of plays, but nothing egregious. Took a player's stick off-puck, creating a cross-ice passing lane behind him. He was dynamic, intelligent, and created under pressure. Looked like a top-64 candidate.



Grade: C

80 Tuomas Uronen

AGE 17.493 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hockey IQ



Vision



Analytics Darling

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
6'0" Height	187 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	6 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HIFK U20	U20 SM-sarja	39	20	23	43	1.10
HIFK	Liiga	5	0	0	0	0.00
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	1	1	2	0.40
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	17	4	4	8	0.47

SCOUTING REPORT

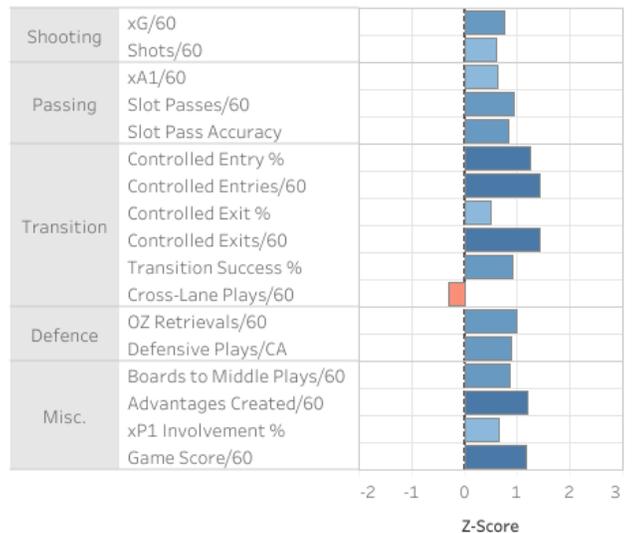
In every draft, there are players who don't seemingly have any dynamic or high-end qualities, yet they're smart, well-rounded and continue to put up strong results regardless. That label happens to fit Tuomas Uronen really well.

He already impressed at the U20 level last season and performed admirably at the U18s as an underager. Building upon his rookie year with HIFK's U20 squad, Uronen's production took a step forward and he led the team in both goals and points. It's not only the counting stats that are impressive, though. Uronen also had the clear-cut best underlying metrics out of all draft-eligible forwards this season. Even while he only had two points in this year's U18s, he was still arguably Finland's top 5-on-5 forward in many categories.

Uronen's game is built around his hockey sense and sneaky-good skill level. He anticipates the play in advance, takes intelligent routes both with and without the puck and manages the puck well during in-zone play. He's inside-driven, never cycling the puck needlessly and has a knack for playmaking from below the goal line especially. He's not a particularly dangerous finisher from distance, but his shot did improve from last season and his style of play does generate a lot of quality chances from the net-front.

Tuomas Uronen

F | HIFK U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 183.3
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



While he's not a dynamic skater, he maintains a solid pace and has a solid stride, projecting around NHL average as a skater

overall. Uronen is also versatile and useful on the forecheck, which initially helped him to earn a spot on the U18s roster for Finland a year ago.

Though he's a bit vanilla in some ways, there are also few clear holes in his game. If he adds an extra gear as a skater and continues to work on his shot and finishing from the net-front, he should have the skill set to become a productive Liiga player sooner rather than later. And if everything pans out, a career as a do-it-all middle-six winger in the NHL is not out of the question for Uronen.

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Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's notebook: An update on Tuomas Uronen, Jesse Nurmi, and Arttu Kärki

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

At 5-on-5, Uronen was arguably Finland's most consistent forward throughout the tournament and had a good game here, too. According to my tracking data, he topped the team in 5v5 expected primary points despite only logging a goal and a single assist in five games. He had a high-quality look after a cross-ice dish here and a couple of really nice plays to set his linemates up. Especially seemed to connect well with Emil Järventie throughout the event as that line stayed untouched. There were a number of areas where Uronen excelled. Puck protection along the boards, being able to extend the cycle even in disadvantageous positions but also ending them with creative passing plays. One particularly nice spin pass in the NZ for an entry and a partial breakaway for Järventie in this one.

One of the better forecheckers on the team, applied pressure consistently and showed physical skills. Skating is between an average and slightly below-average projection. Though the production wasn't there, I came away only more convinced in my opinion in that he's the third-best Finnish player in this class after Hämeenaho and Halttunen.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Uronen might be my favorite Finnish forward in this draft. His hockey sense continues to shine. He seems to always know his next play. He protects the puck well on the cycle and manages the puck well (putting it back into space for his teammates). He extends possession and connects plays in a team that lacks chemistry. He anticipates well, finds teammates even when under pressure, and he looks like a better skater than most of his teammates. He's not a high-end skill guy, but the sense is interesting. He should be on our board.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Finland - U18s

Kind of a quiet game from Uronen. He's clearly intelligent. Pucks seem to find him whenever he's on the ice. With the puck, Uronen's a creative playmaker, with enough passing skill to find teammates in stride off the rush or through layers during sustained in-zone possessions. Really strong supporting instincts at both ends of the ice, too. I don't know if you can draft a

player like Uronen who lacks a standout skill and isn't really a driver at this level, but there's a solid foundation in place just on the basis of his feel for the game.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - HIFK vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Another two-goal game from Uronen, scoring another long-range wrister goal after faking a shot, then stepping to the outside to get the shot open before beating the goalie short side. The second goal came after a long OZ battling sequence where he was knocked down multiple times, but ended up sneaking to the back post with his linemate making the hero play in getting the puck to the net-front from below the goal line, then passing to Uronen who had an empty net to put the puck into. Still, these latest viewings haven't been exactly what I've been hoping, though my expectations have been high. He just isn't taking over these games, only showing intriguing stuff in flashes.

In this one, we didn't really see the playmaking at 5-on-5 aside from a few give-and-go plays in transition. Caused some uncharacteristic turnovers with careless touches. The work rate remains fine, but it also means more difficulty in the projection. It was better last season from what I can remember. Some of Uronen's details are advanced, he's got a good vision for playmaking, he goes to the net and has flashes of off-puck skill even if his linemates can't always utilize it, the shot has improved. But I'm not sure there's any super high-end quality.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - HIFK vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

There are pro-level details in Uronen's game. I was drawn to the small physical things that he did, entering the zone, then taking away the opponent's stick with his own or intentionally driving towards them to create space. On OZ retrievals, he either made contact intentionally pre-reception or lifted the opponent's stick to gain an advantage. The work rate fluctuates throughout shifts and games, he's not always going at a hundred but there are moments where he goes hard in puck pursuit. The playmaking flashes were there per usual. I think he's probably the most capable distributor out of all the Finnish draft-eligibles this season; he's the quickest and most capable at turning turnovers into scoring chances, passing comfortably from either side. It wasn't a dominant game, but there are always things to like with Uronen, even if he lacks dynamism that makes the NHL projection tricky.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - HIFK vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

For a two-goal game, this wasn't really a good game from Uronen. He did score with a nice wrister right as the penalty had expired, beating the goalie with a quick release pretty long distance. Added an empty-netter later in the game. I haven't thought about Uronen as a shooter but the mechanics behind his wrister have improved. He had one notable playmaking flash, getting to an OZ puck first, then turning it into a cross-slot pass for a scoring chance. But other than that, he didn't really do much. Tried to work some give-and-gos and chip in plays in transition, but couldn't really find success. The outside lane attacks are somewhat limited by the lack of noteworthy footspeed. I was left wanting to see more.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations Tournament

Uronen's speed shined more than usual in this one. He looked dynamic away from the puck. He won battles on the wall and brought the puck to the middle part of the ice. Constant inside-drives all game. The skating looked NHL-caliber and he seemed to have the handling skills to complement it.

Lassi Alanen: January 18th, 2023 - HIFK vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Uronen scored after TPS player turned the puck over at the DZ blue line and the puck bounced to Uronen who basically got to go head-to-head against the goalie and ended up beating him with a quick short side release just above the pads. It was a pretty frustrating game for Uronen overall. Yet again, he wasn't really having much impact with his playmaking aside from one nice feed off the rush. He rushed some of his passes and just plain failed the execution on others. He attempts difficult stuff regularly, but still. Quite a lot of low-percentage shots, which he seems to defer to once things aren't clicking as he'd like. Still a skilled player who I like quite a bit, but this hasn't necessarily been as good of a season as he could've had. He doesn't have much high-end talent on his line, though.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - HIFK vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Did Uronen have many particularly impressive plays? No, not really. Did Uronen still manage over a point of expected primary points at 5-on-5? Yes. Added a primary assist after a no-look slip pass on 2v1, but the playmaking really wasn't that noticeable otherwise. HIFK just wasn't able to generate - again - that many long offensive zone possessions where Uronen usually thrives. He had some trouble in transition early on, but started to smooth things out in the second half, using more give-and-gos and actually getting the puck back, too. He does make a few nice defensive plays per game seemingly, but also is often flatfooted when receiving the puck in the DZ, which makes it harder to transfer to offence.

David St-Louis: December 27th, 2022 - HIFK vs Örebro HK - Spengler Cup

Uronen played like he belonged in this one, making the same choices and plays as his veteran teammates. He was engaged and positioned well away from the puck, continued to show the same puck protection skills, made a lot of simple cycling plays, and flashed a higher-grade handling skills when solving immediate defensive pressure. I'm not sure what to think of him. Nothing he did was overly impressive -- which isn't exciting for an NHL projection -- but at the same time his game is more mature than many other prospects.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

A lot quieter showing from Uronen compared to the previous one that I had. Jokerit's NZ trap proved to be a hard one to solve for Uronen and his line, and they weren't able to establish many longer OZ sequences as of result. I rate Uronen skill level, but he wasn't able to dangle his way through multiple opponents here. Got a few decent looks off the rush later in the game, but he's not a high-level shooting threat from distance. At least he chipped in on the other side of the puck, intercepting a couple of plays in the defensive end with solid positioning and stick work. Uronen has already played more physically than I remember seeing in the past, throwing a couple of bigger hits here as well.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Kärpät vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Good routes from Uronen in this one and good defensive positioning overall. He continues to force suboptimal passes, but also flashes legitimate playmaking skills when he has more space. He can delay, feint, and move to create passing lanes. I still like how he can delay plays and hold on to the puck under pressure. He seems to have honed his puck protection skills; he keeps his feet moving with a defender on his back, keeps them there, and the puck at a distance.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

One of the better games from Uronen I've seen this season. Creating a lot of high-danger chances with his playmaking off the cycle and being the clear-cut driver of his line offensively. One of those scoring chance assists netted him a primary helper, too. He was ahead of the play in the offensive end, getting to loose pucks first by staying in motion, cutting back, spinning off pressure before dishing a beautiful backhand saucer to the slot from behind the net. There's no draft-eligible player at this level this season who's as adapt at making key passes from below the goal line. One shot block near the point led to a breakaway chance that he couldn't bury. Probably should've been a multi-point game anyway.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Kookoo vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Uronen doesn't seem like a very skilled prospect, but one with good habits. He protects the puck well and can make simple plays after extending possession. He keeps defenders on his back runs around the zone, cycles the puck, but misses better options and/or tends to throw the puck to covered teammates. He isn't always thinking about the receiving conditions of teammates (if there is a defender next to them that will immediately make a play on the puck). The puck got away from him at times.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - TPS vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

A three-point evening for Uronen, adding a goal on the power play with a one-timer and two assists at evens. Still, I haven't necessarily seen that kind of improvement from Uronen I was expecting based on his D-1 campaign. His playmaking hasn't been very efficient, throwing some very low-percentage towards the slot off the rush without proper deception or manipulation. Easy for defenders to read those. He hasn't been as effective off the cycle, not having enough explosiveness on his cutbacks. Was forced to often just to pass to the point. Quite a few shots from low-percentage areas. His shooting will likely rate as average to below-average, so I wouldn't advise that. Still, there were better playmaking moments, too, threading passes through pressure towards the middle after luring in pressure off the rush, which netted him his primary assist. Work rate and effectiveness on the forecheck were also positives.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Uronen scored the game-sealing empty-netter and added a beautiful secondary assist off the rush in this one, bringing him to over a point-per-game pace for the season at the U20 level. Uronen stands out due to his ability to create chances out of thin air. He steals or intercepts passes on the forecheck, and immediately looks to turn those into passes towards the slot. He's a skilled passer, and the secondary assist was a good example of this: baiting the defender to reach near the blue line and then slipping the puck under his stick. Sneakily stole the puck after a dump-out by approaching the defender from outside of his vision, lifting the stick just as he was about to receive the puck and got a high-danger chance off a partial breakaway. He's not the most toasty player and the skating will need further refinement, but there are a lot of things to like, too.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Not the best performance from Uronen, but he's apparently just recovered from a pretty nasty flu, so we'll cut him some slack. I like the thought process on a lot of Uronen's plays. He's clearly a skilled, pacey passer with a knack for finding teammates through defensive layers. I worry about the skating, though; Uronen's awfully top-heavy. He's only played in two games so far, but I'd call it a pretty okay-at-best preliminary round for Uronen.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Uronen has mechanical breakdowns, but also moments of refinement. He dekes off the pass reception, deceives in spurts, and even shows some advanced passing skill. In this game, that was a hook pass and pinpoint dart to the trailer. But like yesterday's game, I didn't see anything else. He's too reliant on outside lane attacks and, because of the breakdowns, doesn't get much out of plenty of his touches.

Cam Robinson: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

I didn't mind this outing from Uronen. He has strong vision and the hands to draw coverage and wait for seams to open up. He was shifty and utilized some deft feints in transition to couple with his hands and made defenders miss a couple of times. The stride length and recovery was fluid but did generate high-end power. Was kept to the outside a lot in this one and looked a little disinterested away from the puck in the back half of the rink. There's clear skill here but plenty to be ironed out. Could be an interesting one though.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Uronen logged two goals, both times scoring from Emil Järventie's beautiful cross-ice feeds, both times burying the puck low short-side. He also made a solid play on the first goal, gaining the zone by making a quick pass to the middle lane by first adjusting the puck position. Playing his first game of the tournament after being out yesterday with a stomach flu, the conditions weren't amazing but he still managed three points, though aside from them he wasn't particularly visible. A few nice backchecks and contacts along the boards.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Uronen scored twice, both off-the-pass wristers off terrific feeds. He can shoot it, no doubt. But curious to see what the

shot looks like when not given perfect pucks. Elsewhere, this was mostly a quiet game from Uronen. He made a smart, but simple pass in transition for a secondary assist. He also killed a couple of plays with needless complication. First game of the tournament. And it's summer hockey. Curious to see him more.

Lassi Alanen: April 23th - May 1st, 2022 - U18s

Skating the entire tournament on the third line but getting top PP minutes as the bumper player, Uronen was probably the biggest positive surprise of the whole thing for me. From not having played any U18 national team games before April to being a top-3 expected primary point producer on the WC team is quite something. It's even more impressive if you consider that the drop-off in center quality after Lassila and Rönni was very steep. What impressed me the most was how Uronen was able to push the pace consistently with the puck and how he was always looking for the middle lane. He was the top performer in transitions among forwards with the most controlled entries on the team. He doesn't have a high-end shot to take advantage of all the situations he creates, but he still could have easily had more goals than two, even getting a lot of really good looks on the PP from direct passes from below the net to the slot. A shorter but stockier build, Uronen's puck protection game also seemed rather good. He was able to make one-touch feeds under pressure on breakouts and also on the offensive end. Just signed a pro extension with HIFK. A player who's progress in trending upwards and who could even end up making a case for a second-round pick in 2023 if keeps this up.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2022 - HIFK vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

What a game from Uronen. He was all over KalPa's defence in this one, creating chances and breaking up plays like his life was depending on it. It's honestly very unlucky that he didn't end up recording a single point. At 5-on-5, he had multiple high-end looks for himself, creating off the cycle by outworking the defence and ending up at shooting opportunities near the slot area. Also set up his linemates for multiple scoring chances by forechecking, creating a steal below the goal line and quickly passing it to the net-front. Not only does Uronen have a strong motor and feel for breakups, he also has good skill level to take advantage of it. He's not a high-end playmaker in the traditional sense, but does have a feel for formerly mentioned clever and quick feeds. Also has some off-puck instincts, getting one quality chance by a well-timed movement to get open.

Lassi Alanen: December 4th, 2021 - HIFK vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Uronen was skating on the right wing on the second line and received a lot of ice time on the second power play unit, playing mostly on the left half wall. He also found his way to the scoresheet, scoring with a quick wrist shot from near the faceoff circle on the man advantage. Overall, Uronen stood out as maybe even HIFK's most dangerous forward in this game. He was creating quite a bit at 5-on-5, being probably the primary puck carrier on his line and creating a lot of entries off the rush. He made some well-timed moves to the slot and got a couple of chances from them. He was looking to push pace and his skating habits looked very solid, even though his stride needs some work. Overall, a quite impressive performance.



Grade: C

81 Mathieu Cataford

AGE 17.542 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hockey IQ



Tactician

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
5'11" Height	187 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	5.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	68	31	44	75	1.10

SCOUTING REPORT

There isn't a single skill missing from Mathieu Cataford's toolkit. He can win pucks back on the forecheck, move them quickly to his teammates in the slot, drive through the hands of defenders to get to the net-front, make plays in transition, deceive opponents, and break into the offensive zone. And he can sneak in holes in the opposition's coverage and shoot off passes.

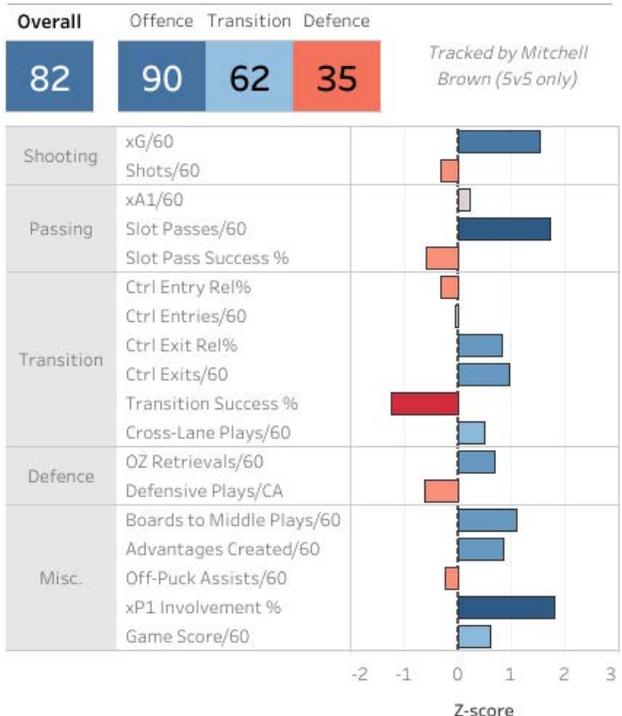
Many of his attacks give the sense that they were planned in advance, almost like he drew them up on the white board and presented them to his linemates before executing them on the ice. It helps that he played with Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Jordan Dumais, one of the smartest players in the QMJHL, but his tactical game continued to shine when away from him, albeit not as brightly.

It's almost a given that Cataford will continue to remain a highly effective play-driver for the Halifax Mooseheads over the next few years. His scoring should continue to increase too. But when widening the scope of our analysis, Cataford's NHL projection doesn't seem as certain as his future as a star QMJHL scorer.

While his skills and especially his hockey sense look NHL projectable for the most part, they look closer to average than above average compared to most B-grade prospects on our board. His game lacks that special element that would help him separate from the pack.

Mathieu Cataford

F | Halifax Mooseheads | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 111.3



Junior players who share his profile and possess all-around abilities tend to lose some of their shine as they work their way into an NHL system, especially as they start to compete against uniquely talented players from every corner of the hockey world for a spot in an NHL lineup.

To separate himself from the pack, not only does Cataford need to continue scoring at impressive levels, but he has to continue to develop his physical side and his main quality, his tactical understanding of the game. Becoming even more precise in his positioning and anticipation could have him become a complementary, two-way, third-line winger in the NHL and a player the coach use in multiple facets of the game.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: Jake Furlong's mobility, motor turning into offensive weapons in Halifax

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Oh, he's going a lot higher than where you guys have him. He might go in the first. He's tenacious. He's got a high compete. He's got the sense and skill. His skating sometimes breaks down because he's playing around 24 minutes and that gets down to conditioning. But he does all of the little things.

"You think of like Yannick Gourde? There's a lot of value in players like that. You think of Andrew Shaw? Guys like that. I think he'll be on a third line, but he'll bring value there. You should put him in the second round." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

I'm coming down a bit on Cataford as the season goes on due to the lack of special in his game. He's very effective at this level, a potential all-star CHLer, but the mechanical ability and overall skill level doesn't shine all that much. And while the hockey sense is clearly above-average, it's not high-end either. The main thing he has going on for him is his off-puck game. He positions really well and anticipates the flow of the play. That allows him to take advantage of space. To make the league, he will need to improve his speed and checking game.

David St-Louis: April 1st, 2023 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford does everything on the ice. He backchecks, steals the puck, positions well defensively, carries the play out, and connects with teammates. He understands rush patterns and the playmaking game. You see him attract defenders before passing, cutting laterally to shift the defensive box and create space for teammates, and even dangle opponents on his first touch of the puck. He plays the penalty kill and he's an offensive driver, too. Again, I wish there was another layer of skill in his game, but he's a safe bet on hockey sense. There is a grittier side there, too.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Victoriaville Tigers - QMJHL

Cataford doesn't shine as much away from Jordan Dumais, but he remains the perfect complementary scorer in the QMJHL. He understands the tactical game, where to slow down, where to speed up, where to turn back to look for passing options. And his skills seem to project as about NHL average, too. He linked a tic-tac-toe play in the middle frame which led to an assist, drove the net for scoring chances, and showed some skills to get open around the slot. A lot to like in his game, but nothing truly exceptional. He's a bit like Felix Nilsson in Europe. These two should be close together on our board.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Cataford didn't stand out in this game, but he made effective plays. He picked up two assists by moving the puck and making defensive stops. He's not a manipulator and that hurts his projection, but his tools are projectable, to an extent, and he's developing away from the puck, now playing the penalty kill. If a teammate is open, he sees him, and reaches him as quickly as he can, with forehand or backhand.

Cam Robison: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

A steady game from Cataford in this one. He played smart positional hockey, knew where to go to receive the puck, knew where to send it. I liked how efficient he was with the puck - no real creativity or risky plays to make something out of nothing, but he was tactical. Defensively, he stops and starts, keeps his head on a swivel and was quick to extend a stick to disrupt or lean in and cut off a lane. The skating looked pretty good. Doesn't appear to be holding him back at all at this level and would likely project as about average in the NHL. There wasn't a lot of lateral agility shown though.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Cataford scored off an errand puck. He hunted space around the zone just like in the QMJHL and his defensive play, a potential strength at the next levels, continued to shine. Smart puck management under pressure and he seemed to know how to buy more time and space for himself. The only issue with his game in this one is that he didn't create many plays in the inside part of the ice. He mostly placed that burden on his teammates. I've seen him drive there in the Q, however, so not a big concern.

Mitchell Brown: January 15th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford makes simple passes, gets open in the slot, and plays a retrieval-focused game. There weren't any moments of NHL skill in this game, saved for one rush where he attacked the middle early. He skates in straight lines at the same speed. Lacks pace and a delay game. Other than the one play, he doesn't try to change lanes or create advantages for his teammates. The off-puck game - getting open, winning positioning, following up plays - looks like his NHL skill, but there wasn't much of note when it came to timing or shooting skill. He didn't look like an NHL candidate in this game.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - Gatineau Olympiques vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

The more I watch Cataford, the more I like him. I don't think he's a top-six forward, but he has pretty much everything he needs to become an NHLer down the line. He can make plays, delay, slow down to create lane, and deceive defenders. He has the finer passing skills needed to hit difficult plays and he makes smart plays with the puck, both off the cycle and in transition. He's old school in the sense that much of his game is collective and physical and net-driven, but that's okay. He positions lanes and wins inside positioning on pucks and there is a sense of timing to how he operates.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford likes to take defenders wide then throw the puck into the slot. His game lacks layers. He doesn't cutback or delay; doesn't deceive or manipulate. He's a straight-line attacker without the tools to carve out a similar style in the NHL. But there were moments that suggested there's more here. He pulled the puck around a defender before cutting inside for a shot. He tried several complex passes that required vision and awareness to try (he only connected with one). In one sequence, he reloaded

high into the slot, fired off a chance, stayed in space, then went cross-ice to set up another chance. That play alone keeps me interested. Maybe a 70s-plus prospect.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Gatineau Olympiques vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford does have physical skills. He can cut inside the space of a defender and protect the puck. Making a play in that situation remains challenging for him, but the puck protection is there. He also rushes the net and creates pockets of space to get his stick on rebound with the same sealing technique. His playmaking is mostly based on area passes. He launches pucks toward certain spots, hoping a teammate stands on the other side. He has some anticipatory abilities, however, so some of those feeds do work. He's adaptable in his plays when he has a bit more time to measure them and he forechecks well. The tools are average. He looks more like a top-70 prospect than a top-40 at this point.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford plays a kind of powerforward game, but he doesn't exactly have the frame to pull that kind of game in the NHL. He drives forward, gets breakaways sometimes, forechecks, gets the puck back...The passing plays were pretty smart for the most part in this game. There aren't any really exciting element and his off-puck game shines a bit less in the absence of Jordan Dumais, who can find him anywhere on the ice. Cataford does have some playmaking elements, however.

David St-Louis: November 27th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford didn't have the strongest game despite the two points, one he picked up on a cycle play and the other one by waiting at the far-post for a puck. He had one creative rush, where he cut laterally, created a pocket of space for a teammate by pushing defenders back, setting up the entry, but most of the times, he just tried to outspeed defenders in the wide lane. The tools seem relatively interesting, but the motor on his line, the driver was Jordan Dumais with his many smart plays.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

I'm still unsure of what to make of Cataford. He makes every play in the book, but he's not highly manipulative or high-end toolsy. He has a good skill foundation, He's adaptable, makes controlled plays, can play away from the puck and with it just as effectively. He forechecks and backchecks and manages the puck well, and he even defends adequate in most shifts. Is that an NHL prospect? Maybe, probably, especially considering his ability to deceive defenders to reach teammates in HD areas shows up more and more.

David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Cataford scored four goals. Somehow, I'm still not sure of who he is as a prospect. He can make some passing plays, he attacks the right spaces, drives the net, can carry the puck through zones, but there is a definite lack of special in his game. He's a collection of good tools, an aware forward placed alongside one of the better QMJHL playmakers of recent years in Dumais. I still see him as a complementary player for now. He could be a pick, but I want to see him pull off more manipulation sequences, or increase his motor even more, or become even better at finding pockets of space to get his shot off -- just something above-average for me to base a projection on.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Cataford had his chances in this game. He beat defenders wide with speed and found space in the slot to clean up rebounds. In transition, he drives the middle before passing wide. Some defensive awareness, especially along the boards to anticipate passes and he collapses down low at the right times. But there's nothing all that interesting about this game. He lacks the speed to beat defenders with it consistently, not to mention that he's just a single-speed attacker right now. He lacks the handling skill and vision to connect through defenders. He's more of an off-puck player without exceptional timing or physical skills. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but there's a long way to go.

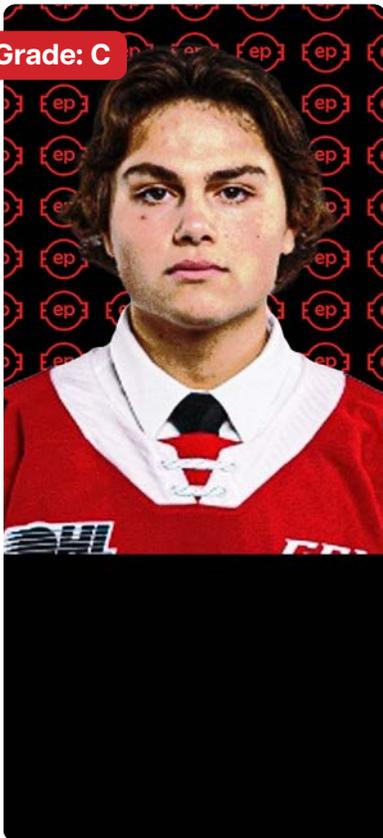
Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

The Cataford-Vidicek-Dumais line started off on fire before fading dramatically. Even in the early stages, Cataford wasn't the driver. He skates into pressure seemingly without the skill or awareness to escape, leading to turnovers and dead-end rushes. But, he's an intelligent off-puck player who is always scoping out his surroundings. Gets open above defenders, then dashes into the slot in front of them for clean looks. Uses the off-puck awareness to quickly redirect pucks to his teammates, too. In-tight handling skill and vision. Tools looked average. Same with the skill, except on the powerplay where he shows an extra layer of deception and patience. Could be a pick.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - QMAAA tournaments

Cataford is better at manipulating the game away from the puck. He anticipates the next play and attacks pockets of space with timing and presents himself as a pass option. Changes of pace and look offs against defenders to manipulate them, drag them away from teammates, and hit them with passes. Pace is generally low. I don't know about his overall skill-level, but the skills should be at least average in the QMJHL.

Grade: C



82 Luca Pinelli

AGE 17.447 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor



Tactician



Draft Twitter Fave

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'9"

Height

161 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ottawa 67's	OHL	67	29	34	63	0.94

SCOUTING REPORT

Part of the job when making this draft guide and our rankings at Elite Prospects is separating the junior scorers from the future NHL ones. But even as the scouting season came to a close, we struggled to figure out where to place Luca Pinelli.

Our opinion of him changes from game to game. He started the year as our 41st-ranked prospect, a spot on the list we often reserve for players who we think could establish themselves in a top-nine NHL role. But as the uncertainty around his projection grew, he dropped down the board.

We appreciate many elements of his game, the foremost being his motor. Pinelli is another one of those leave-it-all-on-the-ice OHL forwards, who plays with pace and consistently drives between the dots, quite often by going through defenders.

"Pinelli plays fast, to the middle, and with a ton of awareness," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a December report. "Reads the feet of opponents, attacks the space on their heels. Didn't show much manipulation ability, but he's clearly a high-pace read-and-react player with advanced scanning habits. Brings tons of defensive energy, too."

He knows how to support plays, too. He gets open in and around

Luca Pinelli

F | Ottawa 67's | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 134.8



the slot and can score with powerful catch-and-release shots that take advantage of the full flex mechanics of his stick. His shot gives him a 40-plus goal upside in the OHL and could make him a professional scorer, too. Because he can threaten the defensive box with his passing ability, he could become a powerplay contributor.

What makes his NHL projection more difficult than most is that the speed and sense that support these abilities grade closer to average than high-end. His skating could prove an obstacle in his development path, as its inefficient mechanics, his upright stride and heel kicks, force him to exert a lot of energy to produce speed.

Pinelli relies on his higher pace of play to score at the OHL level, but that's an advantage he will likely immediately lose at the next level. Becoming even better at passing the puck out of pressure and even more fierce in his slot drives would help him continue to score.

Two things give us hope about Pinelli's projection: His 18 points in 11 playoff games and the collection of diminutive, energetic, dual-threat, net-front-scoring forwards who beat the odds and made the NHL recently.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Pinelli had his looks in this game, but didn't make the most of them. A couple of times, he didn't create space for his shot, pulling the trigger into opponents – he needs to set up defenders on angles. The time he tried to, it was so low pace that the defender easily clamped down on his stick. He also doesn't use space before shooting sometimes. But this game showed a bit more playmaking than I've seen from him before. He used a give-and-go on a zone entry, attacked the middle, and passed back to teammates in the slot. Not high-level stuff, but encouraging given his projection's as a shooter. Skating's a weakness. He doesn't engage his hips. He's mostly running with a pronounced heel kick. He looks fast because of the output but opponents don't have difficulty matching him. He still looked like a late-round candidate in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Pinelli's a hard-worker and reasonably intelligent off-puck player. He gets open in the right areas and has the shooting skill to execute, as he did for his far-side wrist goal. He's always in battles and tries to win positioning. Some of his transition passing ideas are sound – going through opponents or making quick plays off the boards instead of relying on his hands. But I don't see much skill. It's just system hockey with a big-time motor and flashes of shooting. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

I see why many like Pinelli. He moves well away from the puck, anticipates the flow of the game, presents himself as a shot option... He rushes the boards and tries his best to win pucks despite his frame, and he can organize passing plays. He's aware and generally smart in his decisions. And he can quarterback a power play when given a chance. I'd just like his skills in a more toolsy player. His skating projects as slightly below average in the NHL and, while he is a playmaker and a shooter and an off-puck mover, I'm not sure he has the skill leverage to reach a top-nine NHL role. I will grade him as having that upside, but probably bring down the certainty. I want to see more dynamic skills from him.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2023 - Ottawa 67s vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Pinelli was more of a support player than an offensive catalyst in this game, but he still had his chances. Used his motor to backcheck, support his teammates, retrieve pucks, attempt to clear them out of the defensive zone or start the breakout, win board battles and move pucks to teammates. He was excellent in support, but he really wasn't driving play. He did score Ottawa's first goal, recognizing that the slot was wide open and finishing off the pass from behind the net. He was also stopped point blank with a one-timer that he got off out of midair on a 2-on-1, and had a breakaway chance and rebound opportunity but was stopped both

times while shorthanded. He was knocked over playing the net front on one of the powerplays and did struggle to bring the puck in deeper than the blueline, usually having to drop the puck off to a teammate following the play or dump the puck in.

His stride did have a tendency to break down at the end of longer shifts, more heel kicks. Another solid viewing, but he's probably more of a mid-second than a late-first.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Pinelli had his chances. He reloaded high and shot off the pass under pressure, cut inside off the boards for looks, and drove the net for his goal. Got open around the net, freeing his stick even under pressure. But I was more interesting one play: he cut inside off the rush, delay, and then hit a perfect saucer pass for his teammate driving the net. That's manipulation and planning. I haven't seen that from him before. Gotta see it a few more times to ensure it's not just one play, but this was a first-round play. The hands failed him and he didn't show the same level of energy off the puck (non-offensively). But this was a solid late-second, early-third performance.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Another game where Pinelli wasn't much of a factor. There's a lot of junior tendencies to his game. He doesn't look over his shoulder before making plays, he rushes pucks ahead instead of slowing down or cutting back, and he's easily kept to the perimeter. His skating's an obvious limiter, with high stride frequency but an upright, variable stance that greatly limits his power. Whiffed on his best chance of the game. Passing's only a reaction to pressure, and therefore, it's more likely to result in turnovers. I didn't see any NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Nothing from Pinelli in this game. He's a hard worker who pulls the trigger fast. Too fast, sometimes. He doesn't let plays develop or use space. Everything's a sprint. He didn't show vision or play-building skills. It's all just simple plays, often missing the mark or resulting in turnovers because he charges straight into traffic. Tools are average-to-below. Didn't show an NHL outcome in this game.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

For parts of the game, I thought Pinelli's skill-level didn't rise above the competition. But then he pulled off a couple of dangles and scored with a powerful catch-and-release. The flashes are there. He can open up his skates and go 10-and-2 and evade opponents. He has some board skills. And he was quite effective on the penalty kill.

Lauren Kelly: January 1st, 2022 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Pinelli was a constant threat to create in this game. Pressured hard, effort level was high in pursuit of loose pucks, anticipated well, recognized when he needed to back off plays to support open points, and was great in transition. Really liked to work give-and-gos, using stretch passes to find teammates and shock the opposing players in transition with his speed to get open. And it's how he scored the first goal of the game: Broke the puck out of his own end, passed across to a teammate before entering the offensive zone, driving to the net and finishing off the give-and-go.

His playmaking abilities really shone at even-strength, delaying, keeping his head up, and sending crisp passes through seams, an indication that his offensive skills are not limited to being a shot threat on the powerplay, which would help his long-term upside. He's still not scanning that consistently in the defensive zone, but Ottawa didn't spend much of this game in their own end, so it's hard to draw too many conclusions from his defensive play. Really solid viewing.

David St-Louis: December 17th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

I'm not sure I really see it with Pinelli. The flashes are few and far between at five-on-five. Right now, I see him as a take-what-is-there passer, with an above-average motor, but an average (maybe below-average) stride. He anticipates rotations, positions himself

well, and links plays. The hockey sense is probably slightly above-average (in terms of projection). I'm not sure I see an NHLer, however. I can't really put my finger on it. It's just a combination of the infrequent "special" qualities and the lack of pure speed.

He's the kind of player that could really convince me of his potential with a monster performance in the second half, one that really would show a higher upside.

Lauren Kelly: December 11th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Crafty ideas from Pinelli in this one, from dangling the puck between his legs on zone entries, to delays when playmaking and no-look passes through seams. Played with high pace, and acted more as a distributor on the powerplay in this game than a shooter. A really nice back-check shorthanded, getting all the way back to his own goal line to use his body and stick to force an opposing player off the puck and prevent a scoring chance. Weaved through multiple defenders to get a scoring chance off on the doorstep. Definitely the most dynamic and exciting forward out of this OHL crop. Feels like a player who will play himself into first round conversation if he continues to play like this.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Pinelli plays fast, to the middle, and with a ton of awareness. Reads the feet of opponents, attacks the space on their heels. Didn't show much manipulation ability, but he's clearly a high-pace read-and-react player with advanced scanning habits. Brings tons of defensive energy, too. The hand skill was the key skill, working through defenders with control or even maintaining control with a bouncing puck. Didn't see much notable playmaking ability. Looked like a second rounder in this game.

David St-Louis: December 4th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Pinelli's motor continues to shine. His timing away from the puck was a bit off in this one, recognizing shot setups a bit late. He completed a lot of passes and made the right rotations, driving ahead to clear space for teammates coming behind. He also got multiple shooting chances on the powerplay. Pinelli didn't show as much upside in this one. He didn't create lanes, just took what was presented to him.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

I have yet to see anything of note from Pinelli this year offensively. Yes, he's a pacey read-and-react attacker, capable of playing off the defender's feet but it's rare that he actually manipulates opponents to create favourable situations. He plays fast, tries to get the inside, and pulls the trigger – a lot. Not much of a playmaker. He's more of a worker, overwhelming opponents with pace and constant attacks of their stick. Comes across the hips, dips into the forecheck at the right moments, and wins plays on second and third efforts. Based on my first three viewings, he looks more like a potential checker with a bit of skill. Maybe late.

Mitchell Brown: November 21st, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Pinelli didn't accomplish much at 5-on-5 in this game. He's mostly an outside speed attacker with a bit of inside play in spurts. The pace of operation is high, but I haven't seen a ton of high-level offence from his game. He does, however, have plenty of a shooting upside. He sprints his routes, gets open, and cleanly fires off passes in different ways (outside leg, inside leg, quick angle changes, delays inside the release). The off-puck intelligence was apparently, dashing into the space between defenders or slipping behind and popping into the slot. Not really exciting from an NHL perspective, but he showed some third-line skills.

David St-Louis: November 21st, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

This was a really interesting game from Pinelli. He plays with pace, both in terms of decisions and movements, finds space well (scans for it, anticipates its formation), moves on to the next play instantly, can manipulate, and even generate some speed in rush sequences, despite suboptimal skating mechanics. His shot looks threatening and varied. He can catch and release pucks, delay before shooting to freeze the net-minder, and he seems to understand how to build scoring chances with his passing. He still looks like more of a powerplay threat than a five-on-five one, but I like the overall potential.

Lauren Kelly: November 20th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Pinelli's speed was on display from the moment that puck dropped. He was challenging puck carriers, pressuring opposing defencemen at the blueline and forcing them to dump the puck in, shouldering off defenders as he cycled the puck down low, and using his speed well on the penalty kill. Offensively, though, he was a little off his game. He tried to make no-look breakout passes that went nowhere, took a hooking penalty while his team was on the powerplay, missed a tap-in on the doorstep, and looked quite frustrated after he didn't get the puck in the areas he wanted on the man-advantage. He wasn't shooting as often as he usually does either. Scanning issues remain defensively. If he's a first round pick, it won't be because of this performance. He's probably a B-grade at the moment.

Lauren Kelly: November 15th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

A goal and three assists for Pinelli in Ottawa's shellacking of Kingston, though all three of his assists were secondary tallies and only one was the direct result of a play he started: entering the zone and sending a seam pass to an open teammate. His goal was a patented one-timer from the faceoff circle. Still, Pinelli cut through the Frontenacs' zone with ease on multiple occasions, weaving his way around defenders with ease and maintaining possession as he waited for teammates to join him. Stole the puck from behind the offensive goal line as Kingston was attempting to reset. Ottawa didn't spend much of this game in their own end, so there wasn't much to go on regarding Pinelli's defensive play. He's top-5 in OHL scoring right now though. That kind of production can't be ignored.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Niagara Icedogs - OHL

Pinelli's skating looked like a bit of a problem in this game. It was hard to confirm the skating projection, however, as he barely moved his feet. He was more focused on feinting defenders to open lanes or slow them down -- a legitimate strategy, but one overused. He knows how to manipulate and he showed a variety of releases: catch-and-shoot, one-timers (scored with one), and rush wrist-shots. It was a pretty easy performance for Ottawa.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Not much in this game. Pinelli plays fast, but didn't create much. Clearly a secondary creator on his line. His off-puck routes are generally sound, building speed under the puck and attacking defenders with speed differentials. Makes basic plays but doesn't manipulate or create high-value offence. Mostly just an outside attacker in transition. Didn't see anything that suggested anything more than a late-rounder in this game. Keep watching.

David St-Louis: November 9th, 2022 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

Pinelli looks pass-first to me, but he can also take his opportunities to shoot. I like how he approaches his setups. He creates two-on-ones when he attacks off the rush (isolates one defender) and uses teammates for give-and-goes. He aims to make controlled plays. I'm not sure I like the skating. He can generate some speed with crossovers, but he skates in one block (lack of a weight shifting ability, which means less effective feinting and changes of directions) and not much flexion. I don't know. At this stage, Pinelli seems like he could become a powerplay specialist, but I'm not sure I see many five-on-five skills.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

The mix of pace and skill is interesting. Pinelli works to get pucks back. He seems to hate losing them to the other team and goes to great lengths to pursue opposing puck carriers and steal pucks from them. He can find lanes on the powerplay to get his shot off and uses feint to free defenders and gain more space. Some passes to no ones and weird decisions, but overall, he has a lot of interesting elements. The skating might receive a below-average grade. The mechanics could improve.

Lauren Kelly: October 23rd, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pinelli's defensive efforts were stronger in this game, but he still has a ways to go. While he was coming back to support his

defencemen, he wasn't scanning as much as he should be. He turned the puck over at the offensive blueline, and despite his efforts to get back to stop the odd-man rush, the puck ended up in the back of the net. Speed hindered by a sloppy stride recovery. Tried to deke around players on zone entries and was stopped fairly easily by larger opponents. Didn't showcase his shot too much in this game, but he did delay a couple of times to try and change the angle of it before the release. The assist he picked up was secondary, just retrieving a loose puck after a battle along the boards. I think there's a player here, but it's going to take quite a bit of refining to turn him into a serviceable pro.

Lauren Kelly: October 8th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Pinelli's shot is definitely his strongest asset; he ripped a one-timer from almost the point that came off his stick so quickly the goalie had no idea it had even gone in. He is always a threat to score on the powerplay, but North Bay did a good job of expecting him to shoot and laying out to block his shots. He goes back and forth from being slippery and elusive in the offensive zone, moving between pockets of space to get himself into better spots to receive pucks, and charging all over the ice trying to get the puck back for his team. Showed off the mohawk stride a bit in this one in order to gain a bit of separation from pressure, but his acceleration could overall use a bit more power. Better defensive reads and scanning would help round out his game.

Lauren Kelly: September 30th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67s - OHL

There's starting your draft-eligible season off on the right foot and then there's recording a hat trick in the first game of said season. Two things stood out from Pinelli right off the bat in this performance: his motor and his shot. It seemed like he was alternating between charging in on the forecheck and laying players out with his smaller, 5'9 frame and ripping shots from the hashmarks on every shift. Pinelli kept up that frenetic energy all game long, forcing his way into board battles and hounding players for the puck.

An incredibly slippery player in the offensive zone, Pinelli slips in and out of coverage as he tries to open himself up to receive passes. But he doesn't just wait for the puck to come to him; if his teammates need support, he was right in the middle of it trying to help them win the puck back. Despite a smaller size, he protected the puck well on the cycle and stickhandled around in the offensive zone, looking for passing lanes - though if he found himself near the point, he tried to shoot from there and often those attempts were blocked. His release is tricky; Pinelli's stick doesn't bend much, but the power and velocity he generates in high-danger situations and his ability to get shots off seemingly without much effort was really impressive in this one. Picked the top corner twice on two of his goals. Didn't thread the needle too much in this game, but wasn't for a lack of trying. Good effort on backchecks as well, though I'd like to see him scan and shoulder check a little more in future viewings.

Grade: C



83 Damian Clara

AGE 17.671 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'6" Height	207 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	6 Transitions	5 Hands
5 Tracking	6 Post	4 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	35	2.79	.903	0
BIK Karlskoga	HockeyAllsvenskan	2	2.50	.936	0
Italy U18	WJC-18 D1B	4	1.25	.954	-
Italy U20	WJC-20 D1B	5	2.58	.917	0

SCOUTING REPORT

Wherever Damian Clara goes in the 2023 NHL Draft, it's going to be a groundbreaking moment for Italian hockey. Because when that moment comes, he'll be the first Italian-born player to be drafted into the NHL.

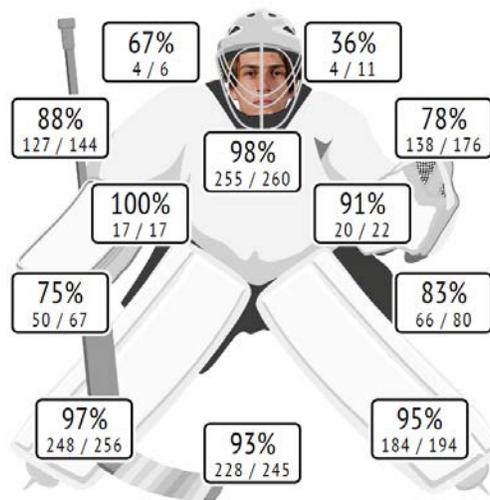
With a massive 6-foot-6 frame, teams that covet size at the position will have Clara incredibly high on their draft lists. It's really a matter of when, not if.

What makes Clara such an intriguing prospect isn't just his measurables – it's his skating ability for such a large goaltender. Yes, some of the finer details of his footwork around the crease need to be smoothed out. Fortunately, he is balanced and makes strong, confident pushes. It's the combination of his size and skating that bodes very well for his future at the next level.

Clara is also very smart when it comes to setting his feet on quick-developing opportunities. He knows that he already takes up most of the visual space with his sheer size, so gaining depth isn't as important for a goaltender like him. Setting his feet early allows him to focus squarely on the shooter and the release of the puck. This also leaves him less susceptible to being beaten on fakes, because his feet are set and he has access to both of his edges. Hopefully he can continue with this approach as the play speeds up around him at higher levels.

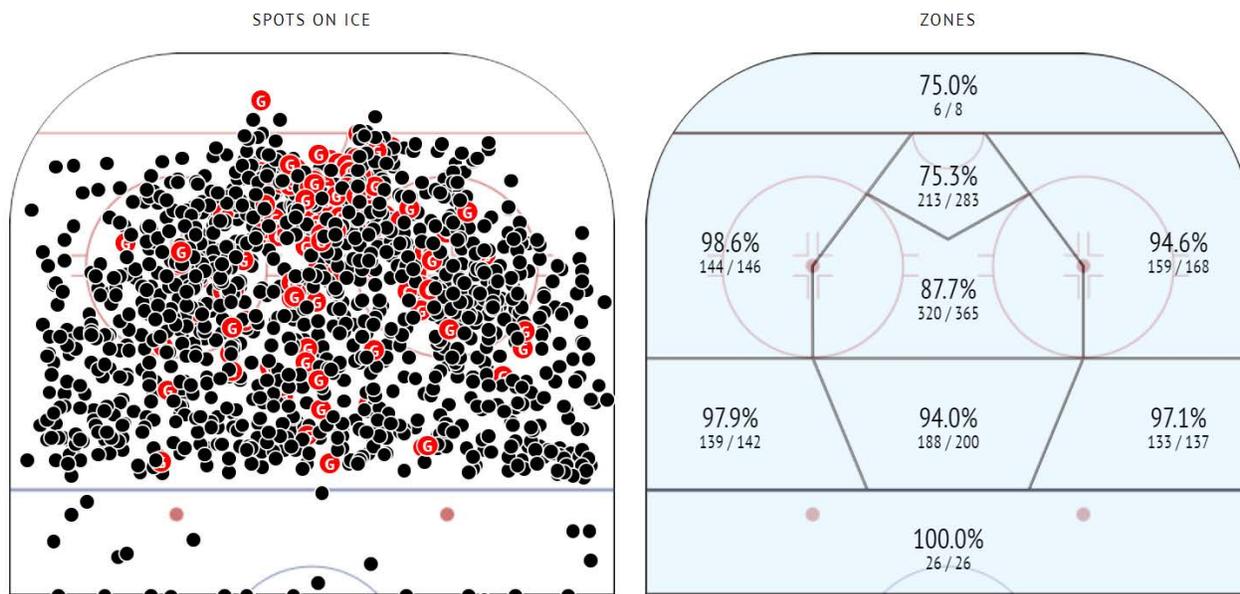
Another advantage Clara has because of his size is the coverage that he gets down low along the ice when in the butterfly position. This is especially on display when the puck is worked below the goal line. He will simply place a foot on each post and lean to either side as the puck is worked back and forth. It is a seamless transition into reverse-VH on either side of the net. In addition, good luck beating him up high when he seals the top of the net with his 6-foot-6 frame.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



Ultimately, Clara may not be the “complete package” but he has a very exciting skill set that is hopefully giving us a glimpse of the goaltender he can soon become. If he can build on his already above-average skating ability and continue to learn how to use his frame even more effectively than he already does – look out.

≡ **SPOTS ON ICE**



Grade: C



84 Hoyt Stanley

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Transition
Ace



Raw
Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'2"

Height

196 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

3.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Victoria Grizzlies	BCHL	53	4	34	38	0.72

SCOUTING REPORT

When we first scouted Hoyt Stanley at the BCHL Showcase in October, he instantly stood out as an interesting quantity among the draft-eligibles taking part in the four-day affair.

When a 6-foot-2, right-shot defender flashes mobility, that sort of thing will get your attention. Nevertheless, the West Vancouver-born defender looked simple, raw, and limited. Periodic check-ins helped alter that perspective, as he took massive steps forward in his development over the course of his draft year.

"Stanley blends his edges off of every puck touch," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in an April game report. "Whether he's side-stepping aggression with a step to the inside, or cutting hard on his crossovers to accelerate past neutral zone defenders, his ability to exit his own zone with control is one of his best assets."

Stanley appeared more confident and adaptable in transition in later season games compared to the showcase, overcoming some puck management issues that plagued him earlier in the year. Constantly working the puck in motion, whether it was through breakout passing or end-to-end carries, he exploited his mobility and large-ice manoeuvrability to be a menace working north to south.

"Shocked by the extent he is able to up his pace – in the first, he burned end-to-end and passed to a weak side activator. He showed more ability to shake off forecheckers on his retrievals and even flashed more protection ability," Gee wrote in a December report. "Stanley intercepted a pass in the first, drove wide, protected in his hip pocket, and sent a pass through the slot leading to a high danger. He is even adjusting his rush patterns to the inside after some perimeter forays early in this game."

Even retrieval efforts have some refinement; he cuts in front of forecheckers taking over their lane to the puck and establishes body position – he just lets opponents swoop back in too often.

What becomes even more intriguing about the Victoria Grizzlies defender is the aggression that he pushes in the offensive zone. A never-ending activator, Stanley was always in the mix to pinch downhill and prevent clears. He activates on the weak side as a pass option, detaches from the line to eat up space on-puck, and can even beat opponents one-on-one cutting through open seams. A limited shooter, Stanley has a ways to go in terms of developing the tool – barely leverages his upper body to create downforce.

The aforementioned aggression appears throughout Stanley's game, especially while he defends the rush. Leveraging his reach and mobility, the 18-year-old defender stays high and attempts to kill entries on his blue line. Even when his aggression backfired, he was able to recover. The defensive skating is almost there, it projects to at least league average in his current form. Steady, well-timed pivots and gap control to prevent inside-lane access.

While Stanley showed some positive habits under sustained pressure; anticipating passes and lane clogging, enveloping downhill attackers with his range, snapping on and eliminating secondary threats. Strength and everything that comes with it is Stanley's largest hurdle. He can't leverage his size currently, making perimeter work and board seals more of an adventure than they should be.

Regardless, Stanley will eventually gain strength when gets to the NCAA. With a mid-season commitment to Cornell University for next season, the Canadian defender will ply his trade in the Ivy League sooner rather than later. There's some risk with his profile – he still remains a very raw quantity, but he has bottom-pairing upside. His handedness and mobility profile will be interesting enough for some teams to take a chance on him in the first half of the draft.

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Physical tools are there in spades, but his game with the puck needs refining." – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 5th, 2023 - Victoria Grizzlies vs. Alberni Valley Bulldogs - BCHL

Still a fan of Stanley's game after this viewing. He was more reserved in his activation compared to viewings past, but he still flashed a lot of good throughout his minutes. Stanley blends his edges off of every puck touch. Whether he's side-stepping aggression with a step to the inside, or cutting hard on his crossovers to accelerate past neutral zone defenders, his ability to exit his own zone with control is one of his best assets. In the second, Stanley even executed a triangle-based handle to beat one defender but was unable to cut to the inside on the foray. He manipulates with his feet on retrievals -- he absolutely bamboozled a forechecker quickly popping his ankles left and right to gather the end-board puck with essentially no physical pressure. There are some more advanced playmaking thoughts too -- drop-offs to trailers, looking to funnel inside. Seemed unfazed by backpressure at times. I don't think he's too projectable as a rush attacker -- just not enough consistent advantage creation, but a projectable puck mover? For sure. Once set up with sustained pressure, Stanley pushes a significant amount of aggression, especially when he activates off the line to pinch downhill and prevent clears/breakouts. He levelled a Bulldog player on one of these sequences. His best play was in the second. Stanley used a cutback to escape pressure, attacked through an open seam on the left-hand circle, and protected the puck on his hip. And lifted a shot short side. The board-to-middle movement, the identification of the breakdown, and the execution was high-end. His shot is considerably weak -- he barely leverages downforce because his upper body is just not activated at all.

Once again, Stanley was an aggressive rush defender. He leveraged his reach better than I have seen, poking multiple pucks from poorly protected handles. The reliance on aggression can backfire, especially when delay elements are introduced, but Stanley's defensive skating is strong enough to at least recover some positioning. Stanley will often cut into an attacker's lane, and establish body position on a retrieval, only to allow that player to readjust -- not sure why it happens, but it's a pattern across viewings that has led to some issues halting pressure. There's a strength element that is missing in his game -- he can't leverage his size yet -- NCAA will surely help him with this. Stanley showed some great instincts in his own zone, detaching from checks, covering for breakdowns, and clogging shot lanes. He completely enveloped and disrupted multiple attackers working downhill attacks and shake-offs. Some secondary threat disruption too. His projection is bottom pair, but he could be a very useful pro once the NCAA

development track is done with him. Top 70 candidate for our final board. He's raw but he's worth the development time.

Daniel Gee: January 14th, 2023 - Victoria Grizzlies vs Langley Rivermen - BCHL

Another convincing performance by Stanley, who continues to flash translatable habits and tools across the entire ice. Even when he might not execute consistently, he's trying to do the right thing. For instance, on an early retrieval play, he stumbled as he tried to manipulate the forechecker with his feet, but at least Stanley tried, scanned, and wanted to deceive. His transition game was strong when he put it all together. Deep weakside activations, smart chip-and-chase sequences, hip-pocket protection -- lots of good stuff here. On one sequence in the first, Stanley popped into a hip-pocket hold to fend off pressure, got his get in motion and walked into an open seam. Later, in another in-motion carry, Stanley entered the OZ, and found a trailer that was following through the middle, leading to a high-danger shot. He even recorded an assist off a wheel-out carry and give-and-go attack. Manipulation use through his body -- juking through traffic. Stanley's game in the offensive zone is simple; activations on the weak side both on and off-puck. Some one-on-one handling ability -- worked an inside-outside move but run into limited space on the boards. He problem-solves pressure well; in one sequence he stopped a fairly difficult clear on the line, banked the puck past a forechecker and was first on the battle in the corner. Recorded a second assist off a fake shot in the first. Stanley ended up hooking the puck to an open man on the circle leading to a jam goal. Shot is rough -- works board-to-middle but cannot get shots through. Basically, an activator with limited effect on the blue line

While defending the rush, Stanley's aggression was evident. Killed multiple entries with his stick, stripped puck carriers who broke into space, and was proactive to a degree. Struggles to read inside passes from the perimeter especially chucked behind his body. His best sequence was during a one-on-one attack -- Stanley steadied his feet, guided his man, and protected the inside attacking the lane, batting a chip-and-chase attempt away. There weren't a lot of sustained defending sequences. In the first, he did a solid job rejecting some hope passes into the crease, but he struggles to provide real physical resistance despite his frame. Looks like a candidate for the end of our board -- he'll play games after Cornell.

Daniel Gee: December 31st, 2022 - Victoria Grizzlies vs Cowichan Valley Capitals - BCHL

Stanley had the green light to attack in this game and did he ever in this viewing. Constantly working the puck in motion, whether it was through breakout passing or end-to-end carries, he exploited his mobility and large-ice manoeuvrability to be a menace working north to south. Shocked by the extent he is able to up his pace -- in the first he burned end-to-end and def a weak side activator. He flashed more ability to shake off forecheckers on his retrievals and even showed more protection ability. Stanley intercepted a pass in the first, drove wide, protected in his hip pocket, and sent a pass through the slot leading to a high danger. He is even adjusting his rush patterns to the inside after some perimeter forays early in this game. His stand-out sequence of the game was a carry end-to-end in the third. Stanley attacked through the middle, weaved through traffic, and attempted a backhand nutmeg pass that was blocked. Showed some off-puck activation habits as well. Just wild stuff from him. In sustained offensive zone pressure, Stanley worked a lot of board-to-middle pucks but suffers from a ridiculously underdeveloped wrist shot. He combats this by working pucks quickly off of the reception -- curl and drags on the first touch. Showed some ability to manipulate on the line -- a second-period stutter step allowed Stanley to open up a shooting lane and avoid aggressive pressure. He's so willing to shoot but it's often not the best play.

Defensive skating has seen some improvements since the showcase. More steady, well-timed pivots to prevent inside lane use and aggression with his stick. Actively hides his intentions by recoiling his poke checks, and timing his disruptions. Had a standout defensive stop on a secondary threat in the first; stick lifted the crashing threat preventing a break. Tracks, scans, and will drop down to clog a lane with his body. Struggled with body position work on the perimeter of the ice. Often loses position in more sustained sequences because he pushes so much aggression. Overall, a candidate for our top 80 -- lots of tools, going to Cornell, NHL-frame, and a lot of translatable habits that can be moulded ever further.

Daniel Gee: October 18th, 2022 - Victoria Grizzlies vs. Merritt Centennials - BCHL

Stanley was a beast in this game, particularly in transition, flashing much more translatable pro habits. On a pacey first-period drive, Stanley built speed, weight-shifted past the F1, and jumped through a seam of two other Centennials, to execute a smooth entry. He doesn't have the best ideas once he enters the zone, but the transportation value is legit. Stanley was popping heel-to-heel shuffles, slipping pucks, and working pucks in motion. He even had an end-to-end power move in the third, jamming a puck on net on the

backhand. Stanley recorded an assist on a nice individual effort by Hiscock. On the defensive end of the puck, Stanley was once again hit-and-miss. Like last game, he can maintain a consistent gap if he isn't faced with outside speed (he needs to be prepped and proactive). In multivariable situations, the quality of his play wavers. On a 3-on-1, Stanley hyper-focused on shifting over to the secondary pass option, only to leave the inside lane open for the puck carrier to drive. He doesn't probe proactively or guide players to the outside. It's also quite odd how unwilling he is to use his range and mobility to halt entries at his blueline. In his defence, he was better under sustained pressure. End-board seal-offs killed perimeter cycle plays, and he eliminated a lot of dangerous sticks in the crease. He lacks strength -- it's most noticeable in his box outs, but that will come with time. There's enough here to mould. Not a pick for our board, yet, but this game was encouraging. We should get more crossover on him.

J.D. Burke: October 18th, 2022 - Victoria Grizzlies vs. Merritt Centennials - BCHL

A much better performance from Stanley in this contest. The most noticeable improvement came in the pace department. Stanley went through his reads in transition at a much higher pace and moved the puck with far more decisiveness than in yesterday's game. There was even the odd flash of activation where Stanley showed off his strong straight-line mobility, including a rush play that saw him carry the puck from the outside to the net for a decent scoring chance. I still think that Stanley's footwork in space is a problem and he relies far too much on his range to cover defensively. He's a project and perhaps one that isn't worth the trouble. But credit where it's due, Stanley looked far better today than yesterday. More performances like this one and I have no doubt some team (Ottawa) will draft him.

Daniel Gee: October 17th, 2022 - West Kelowna Warriors vs. Victoria Grizzlies - BCHL

First time seeing Stanley -- he's huge, fairly mobile, and is clearly the Grizzlies' biggest stabiliser on the backend -- if that exists in the chaotic nature of the BCHL. Stanley's ability to move the puck was perplexing throughout this viewing. We saw a mixed bag of static outlets, in-motion carry-outs, and limited if any, manipulation habits. His skating is the catalyst to all his success and issues -- when he gets his feet moving, Stanley can work up to a pace that actively creates issues in the BCHL. Present him with pressure in this game, and the carry devolves to a dump-in or an uncontrolled action. He had some good moments; a second-period protection/fend-off sequence, and a couple of attempts to funnel the puck inside. Stanley adds lateral ability through heel-to-heel activations, but that's the extent of his edge-based manoeuvres. Retrievals could be an issue at higher levels -- he had an egregious sequence where instead of manipulating with his feet, he opted to just tank the forechecker's physicality, leading to the most unnecessary battle in his own zone.

When defending pressure into his own zone, Stanley relies heavily on his reach. Prolonged pivoting, mainly because of a lack of outside edge use. This means that outside speed can be an issue. Stanley rarely explodes out of the pivot as well, reaching and physically forcing attackers to the outside. Most of his opponents didn't have the hands and inside habits to really do damage, but sacrificing body positioning and trying to defend with static feet will be an issue at higher levels. If he maintains his gap and keeps attackers in front of him, he's a legitimate presence to disrupt shots, etc. Stanley also patterns as very puck-focused while defending the rush -- two separate sequences saw secondary threats completely ignored in his peripheral, leading to some dangerous slot shots. In sustained pressure, he was a bit behind despite scanning threats. He had a couple of proactive stick-lifts as shots flowed from the point. He's undoubtedly a draft pick because of his right-shot profile, but at this point, there are not enough translatable habits to make our board, will have to watch more to confirm habits.

J.D. Burke: October 17th, 2022 - West Kelowna Warriors vs. Victoria Grizzlies - BCHL

It isn't hard to imagine a scenario where Stanley is a late-round pick in this year's draft. He's a relatively mobile 6-foot-2, right-shot defender with some snarl to his game. There's always a market for that. His game is a simple one, built mostly on his range as an in-zone defender. Stanley's more reactive than proactive but his considerable range allows him to recover quickly. His footwork leaves him vulnerable in space. It's a deficiency in his game that he compensates for by playing an accommodating gap and never committing with his feet; the upside is that it's difficult if not outright impossible for opponents to gain the inside, but he may as well be a turnstile at the defensive blue line when they take the outside lane. The lack of any pro patterns or deception on his retrievals and a low pace of operations with the puck makes for more glass-and-out plays than controlled exits. I don't think there's going to be any room on our board for Stanley without considerable skills refinement.

Grade: C



85 Felix Unger Sörum

AGE 17.003 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

RW/LW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

172 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Leksands IF J18	J18 Region	2	3	1	4	2.00
Leksands IF J20	J20 Nationell	42	10	36	46	1.10
Leksands IF	SHL	7	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	2	8	10	1.43
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	14	3	11	14	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Despite really strong production at the J20 level and even appearing in a chunk of games in the SHL, Felix Unger Sörum seemingly flew a bit under the radar. That was until the U18s where he was one of Sweden's best forwards and the primary playmaker on a supremely effective first line.

Unger Sörum's calling card is his passing. He's a crafty small-area distributor and responsible for some of the most creative feeds of the season. He was also consistently manipulative, both as a playmaker and handler. He keeps the defenders guessing through his movement and body language, then evades their sticks with smart slip and hook passes. His playmaking also pops off in transition; nobody made more cross-lane plays in transition among draft-eligible forwards at the J20 level this season.

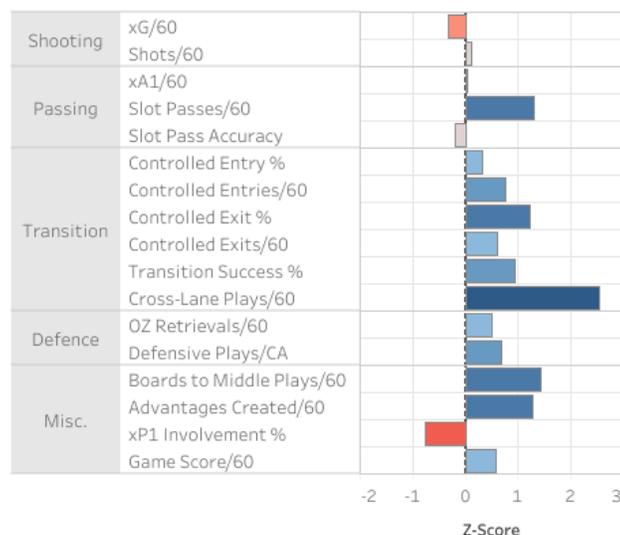
The question is whether his offensive skill and playmaking are truly high-end enough considering he's not the fleetest of foot and far from being physically imposing. There are occasional flashes of skating skill – mostly through crossovers or cutbacks – but his stride lacks ankle flexion and separation between his lower and upper-body. Players with his profile don't usually have the easiest time adjusting to North America.

Felix Unger Sörum

F | Leksands IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 149.2

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



There are reasons to believe Unger Sörum could potentially buck that trend, though. One selling point is that he's one of the

youngest players in the draft; he would've been a 2024 eligible had he been born just two days later. This should give him more developmental leeway compared to the vast majority of his peers.

Unger Sörum is one of the more skilled options a team could potentially pick in the middle rounds, although he could go off the board even earlier after his performance at the U18s.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"A competitive player who is good with the puck and has a talent for setting up others. Has a good shot but could use it more." – Leksands IF J20 head coach Jörgen Bemström, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18s

Unger Sorum has a tendency to launch suicide passes to teammates. He can't really handle contact himself so he moves the puck quickly, but sometimes, a little too quickly. But he has the playmaking instincts and the skill to play that passing game. His stride seems projectable enough. Add enough speed to his deceptive skills and his awareness and maybe he makes the NHL in a third-line role. His periphery game makes it more likely that he earns a professional career in the SHL. Probably a 70-90 prospect on our board.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Unger Sorum continues to have flashes of playmaking skills, interesting ones. He looks inside for plays and can connect with teammates with some deception. He manages the puck well in transition and has some defensive value. I'm not sure he will be on our board, but he's certainly a player I could see getting drafted.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Felix keeps being the brain behind Sweden's scoring line with Edstrom and Stenberg in this tournament. He set up goals and scoring chances every other shift. Mostly from the outside and in. He works hard and smart off the puck and breaks up plays. He covers the puck well and times his speed to get the upper hand one-on-one. He lacks high end skill and the ability to cut to the inside other than with a pass which could make him a soft perimeter player. His hockey sense and passing plays will make him a good pro player but the below average physical tools (speed and strength) will make it tough for him to make the NHL.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Unger Sörum is a fun player to watch. He supports the play really well, and is constantly getting himself open, using some inside-out plays, curls backs, quick darts to create some space before move the puck into a more dangerous position. He's a facilitator, and one that doesn't necessarily jump off of the page, but really helped the Swedes offense maintain possession in the Canadian end, and to transition it through the NZ. He's more of a soft skill player that uses his high-end awareness to make smart plays, but its' questionable whether he has a high enough ceiling to see those traits translate up effectively. Should be a good Euro pro at the very least.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

Felix had another strong game in this tournament. He was the driver on Sweden's top line. He showed good support and smart passing plays. Otto Stenberg had the puck mostly but very often after a setup by Felix. Felix sees the ice so well and gets into the open spaces and has the ability to pass the puck there too. He takes shots too which makes him harder to defend against. He set up the game winner with a deceptive pass up to the defenseman on the blue line giving him room to bury the puck. His physical tools aren't spectacular but his playmaking and hockey sense are appealing.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

A good game by Felix. He shows manoeuvring skills with the puck. He was a dual threat as he shot the puck a bit more. He scored a goal as well. He handled the pace and physicality well and got the puck to the inside too. I like how he connected plays for his line in all three zones. Strong processor and support.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

A really strong, puck possession-style game from Sörum in this one. He was working up the lineup and was showing off the hands with some creative plays in transition - slipping it back up through the feet, going backhand against the grain. He popped through the middle and had a break that was stopped. Made a dangerous backhand up high after making a move in across the blueline. He was shifty on the power play and roving around, switching places, changing the angle on his shots, seeling shot and slipping pass. His PP work was really clean and ended up getting a goal on a cross ice, low to mid pass. Less play driving at five on five, but Sweden was in complete control. He was making plays, and that's what we wanted to see against a team like Canada who can physically dominate.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Gold medal loss for Felix and Leksand. Felix was the player for Leksand though. He created many good scoring opportunities with good passing and also some manipulation moves. He is aware of time and space and rarely over handles the puck. He makes quick dekes and delivers a shot or a behind the back pass. He can sell a cross pass and pass it up to point or the other way around.

His shot isn't a strong weapon but he still shoots at times and that makes him harder to read. When he travels with the puck, he is scanning and making smart decisions. He tends to create mostly from the outside though which makes me question if he has enough speed, strength and skill to be a threat at the highest level. He has decent smarts defensively too but rarely creates breakups. I like him as a middle to late round draft pick.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

Felix had an offensively active game. He had the puck a lot and created many scoring chances from the board to the middle plays. He had a beautiful assist on the first goal on a high IQ set up play off a face off. He switched side after the face off to open in a left side board pocket and got the puck on a one-time pass from the D to then one-time pass the puck directly into an open teammate in the slot. Hje whole play confused the opponents.

That's kind of what stands out with Unger Sörum, his ability to plan plays, supporting the puck carrier and a step ahead in the next situation. His puck skills aren't high end but they're at least average. He can't manipulate or drive play with speed so to

become an NHLer he will probably need to add something more than just a high hockey IQ.

Cam Robinson: March 24th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs Färjestad - J20 Nationell

How about a four-goal, six point outing to get the stats padded up nicely? While Unger Sörum was clearly good in this one, it also featured some of the worst netminding you'll see at this level. That said, his process was good and the finishing just happened to work as well - he drove the middle, gave, got, gave again and then fired in-flight on the return. Two other goals came at the netfront on deft tips as he flew through the crease against the grain. He's not an elite skater. The hands are really nice, but again, not so nice you think he could be a real threat in the NHL - not at this point yet. I liked how he came off of the wall with possession, his head up, and scanning for options. He's so young and he flashes smarts and skill. There could be a player buried in here.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Unger Sörum hasn't still quite captured that same level of playmaking skill I saw from him in the first few months of the season. He's still attempting quick one or two-touch feeds towards the slot, but also throwing a lot of them blind and just having trouble connecting. Had one really nice setup, but also turned the puck over quite a lot. He's decently skilled with the puck, maneuvers effectively under pressure but doesn't have high-end hands.

The skating is still a limiting factor in the projection, too. He's feisty and isn't afraid to play a bit dirty, I'll give him that. But without high-end on-puck abilities, pretty average off-puck instincts and at least slightly below-average skating projection, there's only so far I'd be willing to rank him. I keep hoping he turns out a high-end playmaking performance, but they just haven't been there in 2023.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

Unger Sörum isn't the most mechanically fluid prospect but he had more than a few nice plays in this one. He created a couple of entries with his dangling ability, made other nice transition passes to teammates, precisely and quickly, and he showed his handling skills by cutting through traffic. I'm not sure he's an NHL prospect or a board candidate, but there are some interesting abilities there.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Unger Sörum doesn't always have the mechanical base to execute all of his ideas, but I like the combination of pace and deception in his game. He looked smoother overall in this performance (but it might also be the low-angle, zoomed-in camera). He protected the puck on the boards, battled for it, and attacked the net. I'm not sure about the overall NHL projection, but he has some interesting elements.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Örebro HK - SHL

Unger Sörum didn't make a lot of plays in this one, but it's clear he can play at that pace and has the effort to be a good enough checking presence in the offensive zone. He can pick up speed with crossovers, but mostly moves in one block, no lower and upper separation in his stance, which makes it harder for him to evade pressure along the walls. He went to the net and scanned inside his plays. Overall, he showed some good habits, but not a lot of offence, which is normal for a player at that age in the league.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Another pretty mediocre showing from Unger Sörum. The playmaking that he's been known for in the past just hasn't quite been there in the previous few viewings. Could be a sample size issue either way, but it really hurts his stock since it was pretty much his best single aspect. I respect the hustle on the forecheck and contributing also on the backcheck, though the stride really tends to break down as he tries to accelerate to full speed, especially later in shifts. Lack of ankle flexion is a problem,

even if you could argue some of the issues are due to lack of strength.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Not the most promising game from Unger Sörum despite getting on the scoresheet with a wrister from top of the circle. It looked like he wanted to go high but ended up beating the goalie with an ice-level shot instead. He just wasn't getting his usual offensive zone game working. If he's not contributing with small-area passing or quick feeds to the slot, it takes away a big portion of his game. If the defence isn't careful, though, he will find a way, getting a partial 2v1 down the middle after a good stretch pass. There are some skating skills, pretty effective stops and turns against pressure, but the overall mechanics remain limiting.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Unger Sörum is a feisty little player, no doubt. He showed a more physical side of him, actually competing pretty hard for pucks both on the forecheck and backcheck. The skating continues to be his weak point and a limiting factor, but you could reasonably argue he could have enough skills to overcome it. The playmaking flashes were there, the small-area craftiness was there, even some board skills as mentioned earlier. Also doesn't shy away from the middle when he has space, although he's more of a boards-to-middle playmaker, doesn't really have the skating to beat defenders to the inside with his feet. And he's two days away from being 2024 eligible. There could be a nice little sleeper candidate for our board.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Sweden vs Canada East - WJAC

Unger Sörum is skilled. That's for sure. He can evade opponents on the wall with timely spin, using his manipulation skills and anticipation to force them one way before cutting back the other way. His pass could be quicker or better targeted at times (he passes to covered options), but he's clearly one of the better playmakers at the tournament. He fakes constantly and well, too. His shoulders and eyes move at the half-wall on the powerplay; he keeps the defence guessing, finds a lane, and uses it. Not as big of a shot threat. I like one of his attacks. He cut inside from the wall with the puck. I more rarely see him do that, but it's a good sign.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - AIK IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Unger Sörum has pretty distinct strengths: ability to make passing plays in tight, delay game, some gravitational elements in his playmaking. There are a few weaknesses, though. The skating stride remains a bit problematic and will probably hinder his transition to the next level a bit. Off-puck, I don't think he's particularly smart, but it's also a luxury he can afford to have on this team given the strength of his linemates. Work rate seemed fine on the forecheck.

Lassi Alanen: October 23rd, 2022 - Leksands IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Not as good of a showing compared to the first one, but still some intriguing stuff, albeit in less efficient package. The playmaking skill seems to be the defining factor here. He can slip and hook effectively to dodge sticks and skates, delays when the situation calls for it and plays fast when it's the right decision. Makes the breakout pass to the middle with strong success rate. Skating seems a bit worrying, though. The lack of ankle flexion, pretty upright posture are telling of mobility issues that could impact him even when he gets more strength. He has some skating skill, using heel-to-heels to evade pressure.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Leksands IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

Unger Sörum is a slick operator, no doubt about it. The playmaking stood out the most, setting up multiple high-danger looks from behind the net, showcasing quick reads and execution. Also delayed just the right time on multiple occasions before passing, showing some gravitational elements. The handling also looked intriguing, pulling pucks across his body and keep it just outside the reach of his opponents. Faded to the background a bit when he didn't have the puck, but played on a really good line, so he got quite a lot of touches anyway.

Grade: C



86 Albert Wikman

AGE 17.518 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of Foot



Play Killer



Hammer

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

194 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Färjestad BK J20 "A"	J20 Nationell	43	2	10	12	0.28
Färjestad BK	SHL	11	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	2	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	5	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

On the surface, Albert Wikman's profile doesn't really jump out at you as that of a compelling NHL Draft prospect. After all, he only added 12 points in 43 games with Färjestad's J20 team.

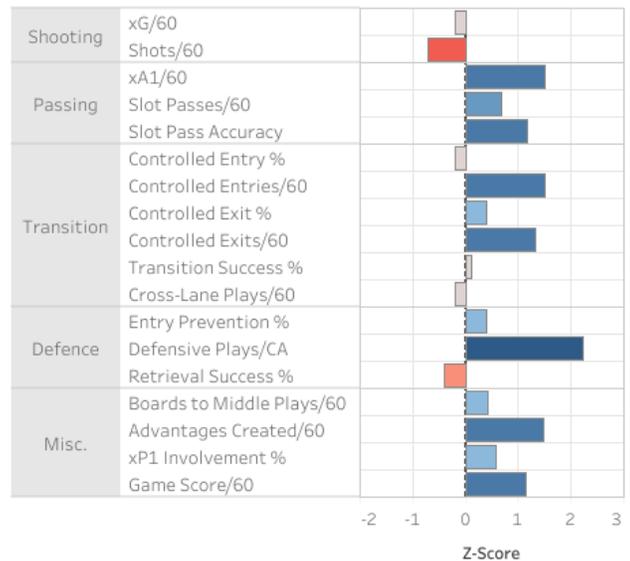
In this case, the production might be a little misleading. Because Wikman's one of the most interesting defence prospects from Europe after the obvious top names.

The foundation of Wikman's game is his skating, which gets an above-average grade from our team. Early on in the season, Wikman used his quickness and strong base to suffocate opponents defensively. He gapped up early, guided plays towards the boards, pivoted quickly and won the body positioning by having superior leverage and driving through the opponent's hands for an easy breakup. He generated a ton of defensive value by breaking up plays, both in transition and in the defensive zone.

As the season progressed, Wikman started to experiment more offensively, again leveraging his skating. At first, it was mostly the occasional fake shot into a lateral move to the inside from the point. Then he started to flex his muscles more often, carrying the puck confidently in transition and even chaining those rushes into actual rush offence with passes to the middle. As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen pointed out in one of the recent game reports: "I think there's more offensive potential than the low point totals would suggest, and the defensive game is still rather projectable."

Albert Wikman

D | Färjestad BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 189.3
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



At the next level, the majority of Wikman's value is likely still going to come through his play-killing ability and reliability defensively. Time will tell whether he keeps expanding his offensive horizons further; his play late in the season was definitely promising from this regard.

The floor is already relatively high; it's easy to see him develop into a bottom-pairing contributor in three-to-four years. And if everything breaks right, Wikman could even turn into a complementary No. 4 blueliner.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"A national team defenceman who is with the SHL team. An exciting player who I believe everyone in Värmland is aware of. He has a very exciting future and is at the top of all the tests." – Färjestad J20 head coach Niklas Fogström, November 2022

∨ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Wikman had a strong defensive game. He shut down space for Canadians continuously throughout the game. He scans and pinches at the right time. He has good reach and good stick work. His mobility looks at least average. Sweden is stronger as a team when he is on the ice. He was active offensively too but lacks the scanning habits with the puck. He handles the puck okay and in motion, but is slow to make plays.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

A workman like outing from Wikman in this one. Sweden did a terrific job of limiting Canada's space out there and Wikman was one of the leaders in the quest. He moves his feet, reads plays, angles rush attempts wide, and was quick to draw a stick out to disrupt a play or block a lane. He even had a little physicality down low and at the net front. He's a very average mover though, and handled the puck a little too stiffly to really expect him to do anything creative with it. But the up and outs to the wall were fine. He was very straight up in this one, but that can be okay.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 23rd, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs Färjestads BK - SHL

Färjestad got blown out in this game and that gave Wikman a lot of ice time in the third period. I really like his positioning. He keeps gaps close and scans well in his own zone and is aware of danger. He isn't physically ready to compete at this level yet and lost most puck battles. He looks soft and needs to add more strength. I would also like for him to anticipate plays better with his body as well. When he gets the puck he is usually in a naive position and doesn't cover the puck well. He was active offensively and made plays with the puck in this game and had some successful zone entries and breakouts.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Pretty much what I've been seeing from Wikman in 2023 at this level. His offensive game has taken a pretty notable step from 2022, and while it has maybe come a bit at the expense of his defence, it's not too worrying for me. His fundamentals are still solid, he just hasn't been as aggressive as he was and as you'd like him to be with his skating and size. In transition, though, he's improved a lot as a puck-rusher and even as a passer and facilitator. The first few steps gain separation against most opponents at this level. The flashes of mobility and more advanced edge work are there. Activated down the strong side for a hand-off, then aggressively took the puck to the inside for a backhand shot that was ultimately blocked. The OZ playmaking is progressing nicely. I think there's more offensive upside than the low point totals would suggest, and the defensive game is still rather projectable.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 25th, 2023 - Linköpings HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Albert played almost 25 minutes in this game and had a good game. I like his hockey sense, especially defensively. He scans and makes good reads. You can see him moving his head and detecting danger and giving himself options for the next play. He has a decent puck mover from the backend. His puck skills are inconsistent and he can look sloppy from standing still but handles the puck well when he skates with the puck. The foundations are there but the execution needs to be more consistent. He can lose the puck easily under pressure but it's more the skills that are lacking than the awareness in those situations.

Albert plays with good gap control, rush defends well and is also strong at winning puck battles in his own end. His skating is his best weapon in combination with his hockey sense. He skates fast with ease and has good ankle flexion and long strides. He is a good player on the defensive half but does not show much upside on the offensive side. He rarely joins attacks and can be standing still on the blue line. The readings and awareness to create in the offensive zone isn't present.

I see Albert as a good defensive defenseman with good size, skating and hockey sense. Middle round value.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Wikman logged a ton of ice time in this one, sometimes seemingly being on the ice every other shift. It continued the trend of more of a transition-focused and offensive Wikman compared to the pure shutdown guy we saw earlier in the season. His rush defence has arguably gotten a bit worse. He's not pursuing every opportunity as aggressive as he used to, but could also be that he's playing more and trying to conserve his energy better. And he's jumping on rushes as the puck-carrier way more often. He's still a pretty stout and projectable in-zone defender who makes the right read most of the time and has physical skills to back those reads up. Set up a couple of high-danger looks, flashing more playmaking skill than I'm used to seeing from him. Combining that with the strong puck-rushing game (but also capable of breaking the puck out with passing, too), it's becoming a real selling point.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

Wikman has seemingly gone through a bit of an evolution throughout the season. Earlier, what stood out was the skating combined with strong defensive play, aggressive attitude towards defending the rush and the occasional flash of on-puck ability through the mobility. In these past viewings, though, it's actually been Wikman's puck-rushing game that's been the biggest selling point. He had multiple impressive sequences - especially early in the game - where he carried the puck end-to-end, using nice feints and fakes to gain the zone. While leveraging those entries into something greater has been an issue, he actually set up a couple of scoring chances in this one through his puck-rushing. The skating seems like an above-average tool projection-wise. He's not all rushing, but can also make passes in-stride and generally handles pressure well in his own end. Wikman's rush defence has been somewhat weaker, though. He did get beaten wide for a goal and overall, he's playing a bit more passive, conceding more space and reacting later. A pretty interesting player.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Linköping HC - SHL

This was the first game of Wikman's career where he played over 10 minutes in the SHL, and he clearly struggled with the pace

of play. Being able to make relatively good decisions and having solid execution under pressure has generally been a strength for Wikman, but with the added pace and pressure, he did have trouble moving the puck and even handling it, looking awkward a couple of times when trying to do basic things. Defensively, we didn't really see much notable. He was able to keep the play to the perimeter and contain players along the boards, but wasn't really making a big impact either way. Probably should spend this season at the J20 level unless they really want to hone him in to the lineup, which seems unlikely.

Lassi Alanen: January 29th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Wikman really started to open up in this one. Multiple high-end skating sequences off the rush that displayed why it's such a projectable tool. He was shifty, changing his direction quickly by shifting his weight and exploding from his inside edges. In one play, he almost stopped near the OZ blue line, but was still able to explode and separate to gain the zone – impressive stuff. Decent crossover usage, too. One play saw him carrying the puck out of the DZ into the OZ right out of a faceoff, then beating the defender to the inside for a high-danger chance that could've been a highlight-reel goal. He doesn't currently have the offensive sense to take full advantage of the skating prowess, but maybe that'll come with time given he's showing more willingness to experiment.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Wikman didn't really stand out here in any sort of notable way, but still managed to do a lot of good things in the process. Gapped up nice and early most of the time, forcing a lot of dump-ins in the process. The in-zone play-killing wasn't really there, but he still remains really hard to beat 1-on-1. Even if you get an upper-hand on him, his recovery ability is impressive due to the skating and low center of gravity, which he uses to gain leverage over you in physical battles. Some nice passing plays on breakouts - notably with backhand - but some questionable decisions, too. The mobility at the point is a projection but a reasonable one; he did flash it once in this one, walking the point, then cutting back and passing. It's not on the level of Sandin Pellikka or Willander, but it could come with time. Right now, more of a defensive defenceman.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs Sweden - WJAC

Wikman didn't make many plays. His offensive potential seems overall limited. He stayed on the defensive side, aiming to contribute by shutting down opponents and he mostly chipped the puck out of pressure.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Wikman remains a pretty intriguing prospect, at least relatively. The skating is a strength, the defensive game is a strength if a bit raw at times. He does kill plays and does so without hesitation, always engaging physically and improving his positional play and scanning habits. The hockey sense is a bit of a question mark, some odd passing decisions here when the targets were clearly covered and he had better options available. Flashed his offensive potential with a beautiful ankle-breaker at the point to take the puck from the boards to the top of the circle for a scoring chance. The mobility could be a real weapon as he keeps developing. A worthwhile prospect to have at the second half of our board, I think.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Wikman had more defensive lapses in this one than in the previous viewing. He still killed quite a few plays, but his aggressiveness also got used against him by the shifter opponents. His playstyle also results in quite a few penalties taken, one instance of that here. He also probably had his single-best sequence, using his skating to take the puck out of the zone into a 3v1 odd-man rush straight out of a DZ faceoff, then setting up a high-danger chance with a backhand cross-slot pass. The skating projection remains slightly to clearly above-average and is the biggest selling point that differentiates him from many others with similar profiles (low-scoring, more defensively oriented defencemen).

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

I have respect for Wikman's game. The upside still remains a relative mystery to me and required quite a lot of imagination, but

I see why others would rate him more highly. The defensive game was pretty much on point in this one. He kills a lot of plays, whether its by stickchecking at the right time or outmuscling and outworking players along the boards, driving his hips through opponents' hands to create body positioning and snatch the puck away. He mostly makes the right play on breakouts, even showing some poise with the puck and better decision-making in this one. The offensive skill is still a question mark, but he did have a few activations off the rush and has the skating chops to start to do that more often. I'd probably rate him as above-average skater projection-wise at this point. The stride is powerful and the first steps are pretty quick. Interesting to see whether his offensive game will take steps forward, because the defence has done so already, or then I just had the odd less impressive viewing earlier.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

We mostly saw similar stuff from Wikman compared to the previous viewing. Offence mostly consisted of point shots here and there. Once, he did beat the pressure after faceoff, then gained some ground before shooting from top of the circle. We'll see whether that was a sign of things to come, because he does have legit skating ability. Mostly it was visible on breakouts where he used his wheels combined with pretty quality puck protection ability to carry pucks out of the DZ. Smarts are probably around average. He can retreat pretty deep into his own zone off the rush, but makes stops with his body and well-timed stick checks. Moved the puck pretty well through forecheckers. Nothing special but the accuracy and timing behind the passes was solid. Could be a late candidate but the upside seems rather limited.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Wikman looked like a defensive defenceman with at least average or slightly above-average skating ability and a strong build that has allowed him to move up the ranks early. Used that skating a couple of times to carry the puck out of the DZ while pressured, but failed to convert them into entries or proper offence. A few point shots (one one-timer that he completely whiffed on), didn't really activate off the rush or in-zone. Could've played a bit more aggressively against the rush a couple of times, but looked like a rather strong on-puck defender. Played man defence in-zone, locking his target and following him around the net area.

Grade: C



87 Luke Coughlin

AGE 17.430

DATE OF BIRTH Apr 11, 2005

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Evasive

Raw
TalentTransition
Ace

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

172 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	37	5	14	19	0.51

SCOUTING REPORT

Had Luke Coughlin started his season at the same time as everyone else, his draft stock would've been much higher by season's end.

Instead, the injured former fourth-overall pick in the 2019 QMJHL Draft only got back in the lineup in December. He had to play catch-up and only started to perform at his peak ability in the latter weeks of the season.

At 5-foot-10, Coughlin is undersized by NHL standards, but his skating ability compensates for his lack of reach and pure strength. With his loose hips and flexibility, he can easily shift his weight to launch himself around opponents and open up his skates to walk the blue line while facing his options. He's more agile than quick or fast, but his four-way mobility is one of the better ones in the draft.

Many of his skills are in high demand in the NHL. He can fake forecheckers when retrieving pucks on the defensive zone back wall, elude defenders at the offensive blue line and create passing plays, and close out on opponents fast in between blue lines.

"Coughlin's offensive game is resurfacing," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report. "He's a fluid mover at the offensive blue line and now a deceptive one, too, as he uses hip pocket handling and fake shots to keep defenders at bay and move the puck or find good lanes to fire in. He defends well for the most part."

As he became more comfortable, his game got an influx of aggressiveness. His reads improved, too. The mistakes in his defensive zone progressively went away, the highlight-reel-worthy plays increased, and his defensive positioning improved. Coughlin proved himself more and more capable of intercepting passes and stopping odd-man rushes and net drives.

Becoming even more dynamic with the puck is how Coughlin will beat his competition and ascend to an NHL lineup. Next year, we want to see him use his agility to not only move around defenders, but manipulate them more consistently. If Coughlin can

do that and improve his anticipation of the defensive play, he could become a bottom-pairing NHL defenceman, a power play specialist, and maybe even feature in a top-four role.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: A review of the league's top draft-eligible prospects

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Another strong performance from Coughlin. I'm excited to watch him next season, as if his playmaking continues to improve, he could put himself on an NHL path, a clear one. He engages physically in the defensive zone, sticks with his check, and moves the puck intelligently. He uses feints to carry the puck across zones and always seems to find outlets before the defence collapses on him. One lucky assist off a drive down the slot (the puck bounced on a teammate and in the net) and another one after a fake and a shot from the point.

David St-Louis: March 19th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Victoriaville Tigres - QMJHL

Coughlin's offensive game is resurfacing. He's a fluid mover at the offensive blue line and now a deceptive one, too, as he uses hip pocket handling and fake shots to keep defenders at bay and move the puck or find actually good lanes to fire in. He defends well for the most part, with good positioning and risk management. He could improve his first touches on breakouts; the puck tends to get away from him sometimes. His forward strides and quickness don't have the same pop as his agility, however, and he remains on the smaller side. He's more of a late-board player for me at this stage due to his profile.

Cam Robinson: February 25th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Baie Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Defensively, this was a much stronger game from Coughlin. He was proactive against the rush, using some nice foot mirroring and not crossing up on the back peddle much to allow for an opponent to take advantage of. I really like the use of his outside edges to shake pressure and gain an advantage. He doesn't telegraph it and often sets it up with a little fake. It's a pro-style ability that he's not afraid to use. Offensively, he made some nice outs - using the wall to bank, hitting mates in-stride. He picked up a secondary helper with a nice crisp long range outlet, and a primary helper on the PP where he cut to the middle faked a shot and moved it over to the flank who scored from long range.

A couple of poor decisions in the defensive end where he created some space to move it but sent it into traffic.

The skating is his clear advantage and it's nice to see him using it in all three zones to be effective. He's not a burner, but he has clear agility and acceleration. The strength portion remains a bit concerning as he gets hemmed up along the wall, and can lose the fight for position at the net front, but he's smart about it at least and tries to avoid battling, but instead slipping into spots to clog up lanes.

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Not sure what to make of Coughlin. He's raw and smaller, but the skills that he shows are in high-demand in the NHL: eluding opponents, making passes off the wall, getting the inside body positioning and faking opponents on retrievals (sometimes), aggressive close outs in the neutral zone, shadowing attackers in the defensive zone...His footwork is one of the better in the draft and he has offensive instincts. The hockey sense is still average for me, but the reads have improved significantly this season. I'll wait before ranking him, I think, but he could make a late apparition in our top-60.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Blainville Boisbriand - QMJHL

Coughlin continues to impress. I'm not sure where we should slot him on our board and he probably won't make our top-70 just yet because of it, but he's in a clear, fast upward curve in his development. He makes all of the plays that smaller defencemen like him have to make: fakes followed by evasive moves, killing rush attempts early with great angles and surfing, and moving at the offensive blue-line to shoot pucks through traffic. His defensive game has gotten better fast. He IDs the right checks and gets on them. I'm not sure the sense is high-end and he's more agile than quick and fast, but he's a very interesting prospect to keep an eye on.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Québec Remparts vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

A great game by Coughlin. He holds the puck a little too long against the forecheck, but I prefer a player who does that than one who just gets rid of it. I really liked his quick backhand pass off the wall on one breakout after scanning multiple times for his outlets. It was a difficult play, but he managed it well by combining awareness and skating and handling technical skills. He tries to box out defensively and mitigates risk well in his rush defence. I don't see high-end reads in his game, but he has the evasive moves and he uses them. He faked a defender at the blue line, moved around him, and attacked down the wall to feed a pass to one of his teammates in the slot. We don't really see Morin doing that all that often or even Tourigny. Coughlin has more skating fluidity. He definitely needs to develop his physical skills but the sound skating posture will help.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Baie-Comeau Drakkar vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

A much better performance from Coughlin. He's more patient, has more poise overall, and looks like a much better defender than he did in the first part of the season: better gap, closing faster, better risk mitigation. Of course, he still has a long way to go, but it's very encouraging to see progress. I like the puck-moving elements: attracting forecheckers before moving the puck, using deception, slip passing... He missed a couple of offensive reads, but he also created with his skating ability, by faking defenders and attacking down, and using give-and-goes. He assisted a goal with a planned movement and a pass on the powerplay. Nice outing.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanics vs. Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

I'm starting to really appreciate Coughlin's game. The defensive game was tighter in this one, better gaps, better angling, and better identification. Not sure what happened in the last month. I guess he's just getting back on track after missing time. I like the offensive skills still, the way he moves on reception, fakes opponents, walks the width of the ice, shoots for reasons, and tries to evade forecheckers. The decision-making could improve and he should be creating even more advantages with his agility, but steps forwards have been taken.

Cam Robinson: December 28th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanics vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

A mixed bag from Coughlin in this one. He showed his lateral agility in then offensive end during even-strength play with some smart movement at the top and quick passes. He made a couple of wise pinches as well. In the neutral zone, he was quick to close in on rush attempts and use his stick to disrupt. Blocked several shots from out high off of the rush. I liked his retrievals for the most part as he wasn't shy to activate his outside edges in concert with a fake or feint to cutback and break pressure. Several shot attempts but most ended up being blocked. He ended up with one really impressive rush where he beat the first forechecker, exploded up the ice, made another deke and had a high-danger chance. Really dangly, high-skill play.

There were some mistakes as well. He got caught chasing in his own zone a couple of times. He cleanly lost a footrace to dump in

where he had a head start. Was physically pushed out of his spot. Made a couple of poor passes into traffic that led to turnovers.

You can see the tools are there but he needs to leverage them even more and add to the decision-making.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Blainville Boisbriand Armada - QMJHL

I'm not sure about Coughlin's hockey sense. He's all over the place. There is a distinct lack of control in his game that makes it hard to project him, as even inside his activations and pinches, he doesn't seem to be aware of better plays. He makes the same plays in the same situations, independently of the reaction and rotations of defenders and teammates. The skating is wide and hunched over, but he does look exceptionally agile.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Val D'Or Foreurs vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Chaos. That's pretty much a typical Coughlin shift right now. He's violent in the defensive zone, throwing himself at opponents, often missing. He tries to escape forecheckers on breakouts, but can't always find an option. And he acts as a pure rover in the offensive zone, scoring from an activation, but also getting his team into trouble at times. The skating is the base of his game. It projects as above-average.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2022 - Victoriaville Tigers vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Coughlin got more confident as the game went on, but I understand why he's not playing a lot right now. He's tentative, not using his abilities to the max, especially his skating. He can't really gap appropriately, instead running straight at the puck, can't really ID or attach to checks. Offensively, he's mostly a shooter. He receives the puck, surrounds it fast with his skating, and then rips it on net. The skating gives him a lot of potential, however; he just has to learn to use more ice and manipulate.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Coughlin showed many projectable habits and details. He receives on retrievals, establishes body positioning, times his engagements at the moment of least resistance, hits when necessary, and guides plays to the outside. In transition, he's always looking to cutback or delay before making a quick play to the inside. After passing, he joins the rush. Some offence, but mostly uneventful activation and lateral movement along the point. The tools seemed limited overall, besides obvious fluidity. He struggles to separate with his feet and his hands don't offset it. There's definitely NHL upside here. Will be an interesting player to follow next season.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - QMAAA Tournaments

Coughlin participates in every play. He's all over the ice. He joins the rush, leads the rush, and moves all over the offensive zone (backdoor plays, walks the blue-line...). Skating looks potentially above-average and handling, too. Takes pucks in movement, off passes and retrievals. He moves to find lanes and tries skate fakes. Looks to escape pressures. Overdeception; he misses passes sometimes. High work-rate defensively and a lot of scanning, but lacks control; poor closeouts and out of position. He sometimes forces teammates to play defence in his place.

Grade: C



88 Alexander Hellnemo

AGE 18.696 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 05, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

G

Position

Left

Catches

6'2"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5.5

Transitions

6

Hands

4

Tracking

5.5

Post

4

Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Skellefteå AIK J20	J20 Nationell	23	2.32	.916	2
Skellefteå AIK	SHL	9	2.39	.895	0
Västerås IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	2	3.07	.861	0

SCOUTING REPORT

Alexander Hellnemo is an NHL Draft re-entry goaltender that played mainly for the Skellefteå J20 Nationell team. He appeared in a handful of SHL games as well, and is signed for the next two seasons with Rögle BK.

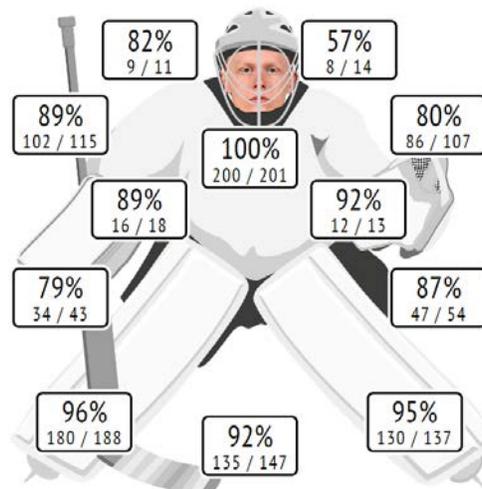
Hellnemo is known for impressing scouts with his exciting playing style and quick movements around the crease. Although his SHL numbers in a small sample size were very run-of-the-mill, he showed well enough at a young age to make some scouts very interested in his ability to compete at a higher level.

Hellnemo has some of the quickest hands of any goaltender in this draft. He often makes spectacular, seemingly impossible glove and blocker saves on high-danger opportunities. His playing style is quite aggressive. He loves to explode out at the shooter to force them into a panic move. Unfortunately, this comes at the cost of setting his feet a lot of the time. He was able to track the puck at the J20 level playing this style, but it is an incredibly difficult way to play at a higher level where shooters can do more with a lot less time and space.

Another noticeable downside to Hellnemo's game is his overuse of the reverse-VH technique. He loves dropping into the position, even when the puck is nowhere near the bottom of the circle. When he is faced with a play off the rush, Hellnemo does not take a lot of depth. His toes are usually at the top of the crease as the shooter comes a stride or two across the blue line. This leads to a lack of backwards flow and some interesting desperation moves as he tries to create enough momentum to push across. He also reaches his post very quickly due to the lack of depth, which may be leading to that habit of dropping into reverse-VH early.

It's easy to see why Hellnemo was a big hit with European scouts, coming in as the No. 1 ranked European goaltender by NHL

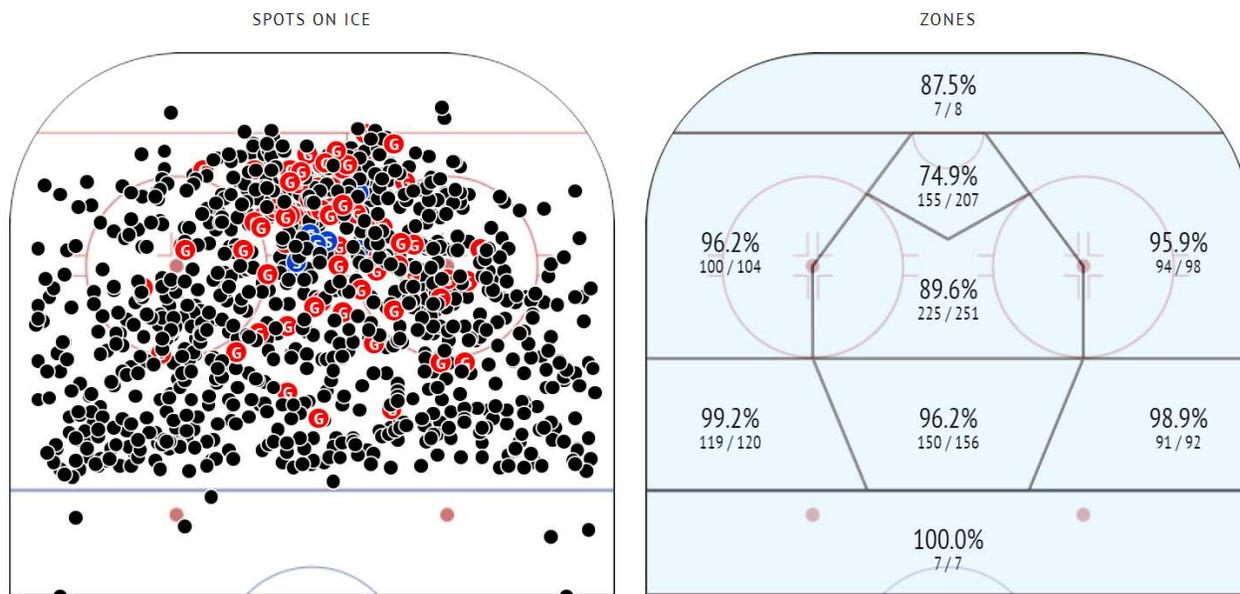
SPOTS ON GOALIE



Central Scouting. His lightning-quick reactions, aggressive movements, and big, sliding saves make it very easy to be noticed.

Hellnemo comes with some flaws, but his raw skill is apparent. The hope is that with the right coach instilling the right habits and approach, he will be able to become a strong technical goaltender with explosive capabilities rather than simply an explosive goaltender.

∨ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: C



89 Jake Fisher

AGE 17.471 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal
Shooter



Transition
Ace



Hockey IQ

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

6

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Team MAP South Hockey	UMHSEHL	20	20	24	44	2.20
Cretin-Derham Hall "C"	USHS-MN	29	34	29	63	2.17
Fargo Force	USHL	12	1	0	1	0.08

SCOUTING REPORT

While the process of evaluating standout players at the high school level can be a difficult one, sometimes a player rises to the top, flashing so much ability that they stand out from the pack. For this season, that player was Jake Fisher, who is our top-rated high school player in the 2023 NHL Draft.

The captain of Cretin-Derham Hall, the centre dominated in Minnesota high school hockey, scoring 63 points across 29 games and an additional 44 points in the Upper Midwest HS Elite League Hockey across 20 contests with Team MAP South Hockey. An overwhelming offensive threat, Fisher's shot is a standout tool, making him an ever-present threat to score.

Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explained the mechanics behind Fisher's shooting in an April game report, "Fisher could be a 6-grade shooter. He showed off-the-pass shooting off either leg. The goal was the most impressive, a smooth two-touch wrister with his feet moving. Keeps his hands in front of his body before and during the reception, shortening the release. Adapts his feet to the pass, twisting his body to get behind the puck, generating the power." Angle changes, two-touch shooting, crossbody attempts – his selection and variety is almost unlimited.

Often, the Woodbury-born forward's setup before the shot is just

Jake Fisher

F | Fargo Force | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 73.4



as impressive. A creative handler who blends changes in speed, sprints through his lanes, and protects at his hips, Fisher was dynamic off a large portion of his puck touches with Cretin-Derham Hall. He puts pucks in space, attacks triangles and feet, always a threat 1-on-1.

“In transition, Fisher’s handling showed to be a standout tool,” Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a December report. “In the first he just about pulled off a deke between his legs – he was checked and the puck popped to a teammate who got a high-danger shot off. His changes in speed, plus hip-pocket protection, and the proactive setting of hands to prep for his dekes made him a constant threat.”

Fisher’s physical profile shouldn’t be understated as well. He crashes the end-boards hard in the pursuit of jolting pucks free, leveraging the 6-foot-2 frame and high-end motor to create sustained offensive zone advantages. He wins an abundance of his battles, provides constant down-low support, wins body positioning, and rips through pressure to get to soft areas of the ice.

There’s even a defensive element to Fisher’s game. Leveraging his motor to provide perimeter guiding on the backcheck. He pursues pucks like a cat chasing a laser pointer. He isn’t mindless, though – the opposite really. Fisher’s proactive, processing the subsequent play and incorporating his physical tools to create stops and support his linemates.

While Fisher can generate some considerable bursts of power to create advantages, there are some concerns about his skating in its current form. His crossovers are prohibitive; his upper body bounces leaned-back and he has limited crossunder. Fisher’s stride length is also short further despite being fairly quick. Probably the biggest mountain to climb is the mechanical breakdowns that occur throughout his shifts. The longer he’s out there, the less refined he becomes.

It’s not so much an issue in high school; his heightened foot speed actually presents as an advantage. Nevertheless, the same can’t really be said for his play in the USHL with the Fargo Force. While he played a very limited role, less than he really should have, Fisher had some adaptation issues, which is never a great sign for a high school player’s translatability. Timing issues and solving more nuanced defenders were the major issues, but it’s hard to accurately evaluate a player who is in a diminished role, causing us to fall back on what we saw in USHS-MN.

Committed to the University of Denver in 2024-25, next season with Fargo could be an inflexion point for the Minnesotan forward. Based on what we have seen with Cretin-Derham Hall, the dynamism should show up at some point, maybe with another off-season of training under Fisher’s belt.

∨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

“The skating is an issue. Like, he played 12 games in the USHL and had one goal. There’s no backup game. I think that he’s a player where what you see is what you get. He’s already close to his ceiling. That’s scary.” – Western Conference scout, May 2023

“When I’m on the power play on my offhand, I do like to get one-timers off. Making the jump to the USHL you get the puck, and you have to get it off your stick right away. On my one-timers, I don’t do a big windup. My stick stays low, and I do a snapshot, quick-release one-timer. That’s a technique thing that I work on a lot. Every now and then I get a windup.” – Jake Fisher, May 2023

“In the offensive zone. I use deception. If a player is covered and I’m using the net. You see a guy in your peripheral vision, off the one-timer, you kind of make that quick pass to change the angle of the goalie and for a teammate to put that home for a goal.” – Jake Fisher, May 2023

“I play centre most of the time. I pride myself on being a complete player and having a good two-way game. With the offensive stuff, but also with the defensive stuff. Being down low. Face-offs is a big thing I practice every day. Most days after practice we have Matt Cullen or our assistant coach working on face-offs with us. They teach us new techniques.” – Jake Fisher, May 2023

"I shoot from all different angles. I really change it with toe-drag shots and I'm not afraid to shoot from anywhere. Whether it's shooting from a sharp angle and scoring or just to get it on the net for my teammates to crash." – Jake Fisher, May 2023

"I would say I'm more of a shooter. In my career, I've been more of a goalscorer. I pride myself on having a pretty good shot. It's something I work on a lot, at home and off-ice stuff. Using a quick release and shooting in the garage. We have a sniper's edge tarp. I like to use my shot when I can and when I have an open area to shoot. If there's a better chance to score with a pass, I'll make the play." – Jake Fisher, May 2023

"I don't think I'm blowing guys up mid-ice. The highlight hit, but I definitely do the needed hits in the corners and the kind that separates the puck from the body. Take the opponent out of the play, that's something I do well. The big mid-ice hit isn't my thing." – Jake Fisher, May 2023

"I like Jake. Some say third round. I think maybe four or five. Big body, straight line skater ,good motor. Really good shot. If he puts it all together. He has a chance. Fargo next year. Especially when he goes to Denver. It's a slow burn. He has NHL assets. Chance to be top 100." – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 22nd, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Fisher could be a 6-grade shooter. He showed off-the-pass shooting off either leg. The goal was the most impressive, a smooth two-touch wrister with his feet moving. Keeps his hands in front of his body before and during the reception, shortening the release. Adapts his feet to the pass, twisting his body to get behind the puck, generating the power. A couple of inaccurate passes and not much handling skill shown, but he also brings value as an intense puck pursuer, physical presence, and defence. Closes space fast and provides proactive support across the zone. Still looks more like a fourth-liner than a top-nine scorer, but the shot could help him achieve a bit higher, especially if he's above to convert the skating power into better output with improved form.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

I don't understand why Fisher doesn't play more. He's solid at this level, applying pressure in pursuit, looking to set-up teammates off the boards, starting give-and-gos, sprinting off the boards to the inside without the puck, and skating straight down the middle to push back defenders or become a passing option. The skating's not fully there yet. He's quick, but upright and his lean-back crossovers don't generate much speed. Only got out there for a few shifts, had a few steals. Tough to get a read on him here.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

An encouraging game from Fisher. He skated his routes to the net, won body positioning on opponents, supported plays in the defensive zone, and worked the give-and-go. Grabbed a rebound chance by rushing the net at the right moment, but also overskated space a few times. Set up a chance in transition with a quick pass to the middle. Given the context, he's not expected to create much. But he had a solid game and flashed some NHL-calibre abilities (speed, off-puck intelligence, physical skills).

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs Tri-City Storm - USHL

Another checking game from Fisher. He has a lot of skills that could make him an NHLer in a depth role. He sprints his off-puck routes, but also shows some nuance to them. He reloads and builds speed as the trailer. Physical and powers through checks. He absorbs contact without much issue at this level, even using well-timed, deep cutbacks when pressured. Leaves the puck in space to skate into it, too. Determined defence. He scans, steps into opponents, attacks every stick. Didn't show any real offensive skill, however, save one pass off the boards splitting two defenders. He looks like a pick to me, but I wonder how much that is because I can't get the November 13th game out of mind. Haven't seen that level of skill since.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Fisher grabbed a chance late next to the net, but that was it for offensive plays. But he was impressive in other ways. His transition game is already a strength. He delays and attacks opponents at angles. A few well-timed cutbacks showcased his skating along the boards, as did a heel-to-heel step where he across to the outside edge on the front leg. The stride breaks down fast, but skating could be an NHL skill. Intelligent off-puck supporting reads, but his timing lacks. Non-stop motor. Took too long to recognize a play developing – if he pre-scanned, he would've seen the middle-lane driver for a high-danger chance. Looked like a potential checker in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Under seven minutes for Fisher. He set up a chance with an easy-to-read play. Nothing too interesting. Showed a bit of board skills to draw pressure and cut back, but he lacks the depth to accelerate into space. Some forechecking and transition ability shown, but he also skated into pressure and lacked the skill to solve opponents. Not much to go on.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Fisher looks like he's tripping over his feet when he crosses over, but he generates some serious power off the rush. And he has the rush patterns to match. He pressed the middle, uses angles, chips pucks into space, and uses give-and-gos. Fluid pass receptions across his body with his feet moving and instantly transitions from forwards to stops to backwards without changing his depth. Not a creation game, but a solid first game back in the USHL despite the score.

Daniel Gee: March 11th, 2023 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Andover High - USHS-MN

This is probably the worst viewing of Fisher I have had. Inefficient puck touches plagued his game and he had far too many sequences where he overhandled, forced poor passes, and just made some poor decisions. For whatever reason the blend between Fisher's sense and tools just didn't materialize in this game.

Despite some major issues, Fisher still had a lot of positive flashes in his game. His touch on the puck is so light and he is exploding at such a high pace that any defender that wants to pressure him in the neutral zone is cooked. Add in rush-pattern adjustments on the entries and it's even harder. Fisher isn't invincible though -- he ran into a significant amount of secondary pressure clogging the middle lane he was trying to access. Outside dotted-line shots, no-look passes without the proper pre-scanning -- just so many wasted pucks. His tools are overwhelming though -- on one second-period rush, he hammered a centring pass off the post. On a subsequent play, Fisher worked the puck in on the near boards, slowed up, and found a man drifting into the high slot -- it was an easy assist through a wide-open lane and the shooter had all day to walk down the slot. In the first, he flashed his ability to problem solve in motion. Hard cuts and weight shifts allowed him to attack a defender's triangle with speed. He exploded past and curled and dragged past another defender to get a clean shot off. The execution speed and manoeuvring to break down the layer of defenders were impressive.

In sustained pressure, Fisher flashed a significant amount of elusiveness on the perimeter of the ice. Punch turns, cutbacks, and his great small-area game allowed him to work into the middle on a bunch of different occasions. He's unafraid of playing in hard areas of the ice. In the second he crashed the net hard, popping a shot short side, almost scoring. Think he's a high C or fringe B prospect for our board. There's so much to like here, even when he's off his game.

Daniel Gee: March 1st, 2023 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs St. Thomas Academy - USHS-MN

Fisher is a non-stop attacking force at the high school level. It's just 20-30 minutes of wave after wave of skill blending. While he tries an inordinate amount of chip-and-chase retrieval plays, Fisher shows legitimate skill in transition. Delays, combined with above-average tools dominate the USHS game. On one sequence in the first, Fisher took a drop-off pass on the near boards. He stopped up, cut across the top of the offensive zone, and rifled a short-side shot through the defender's triangle, using them as a screen. Top-arm unlocked from his body, leaning on his inside edge. He slips pucks, tries to start and finish give-and-go plays, and pushes a tonne of pace north to south. In the third he drove the puck into the offensive zone, protecting out of pressure, executing

a weight-shift weave, and dropped off the puck on the entry.

Tanks physicality easily in sustained pressure -- by virtue of this he sometimes operates in too much pressure, leading to turnovers. Crashes hard on the forecheck and works pucks-free. One first-period sequence had Fisher stripping a puck off the boards and into the middle of the ice. With four defenders converging to disrupt his possession, he passed off to an open man. Such a supremely smart play to access the middle and draw attention. He's so high even across his shifts. Fisher had one sequence in the first where he stole a goaltender's bank pass, and fed a teammate filling the slot for a shot that ticked the goaltender's shoulder. Fisher then dashed to the net, battled the pressure, and got free backdoor, tapping the rebound five-hole. Two-touch passes and shooting, working into soft ice -- fun player.

Super engaged defensively -- a disruptive quantity on every shift. Guides to the side boards on the backcheck, heavy on his stick. In the third, he read and anticipated a shot, and slid into the lane blocking the shot. Looks like a C-grade prospect. An exciting blend of sense, size, and some workable tools.

Daniel Gee: December 28th, 2022 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Wayzata High - USHS-MN

Fisher is a player. Another strong outing to back up yesterday's. A dangerous threat in transition, he continues to push translatable habits. Hip-pocket protection into handles, changes in speed, off-puck support, even a delay game to set up trailers and sustained pressure is present. In the second on a penalty kill, Fisher poked a puck by a defender carrying it down the near boards. Fisher blended his hands, dragged inward, and rifled a shot on one knee, just below the goalkeeper's glove. He got his whole body transferred through his release with pressure mounting. Later in the game, he took a drop pass and scored another knee-down wrist-shot top shelf. I think this is an adaptation to compensate for a lack of strength in his upper body. He's inside-focused off-pick, crashing the middle as a drop-back trailer -- he was frustrated after he received a poor pass by a man in front of him in the second. In sustained pressure, Fisher initially struggled with some physical play behind the net. He's tall, but looks fairly light on the perimeter. He combats this with proactive stick work and some positioning habits. There's one-touch passing, off-puck occupation of the slot, and some great examples of escapability off the boards using punch-turns. He's a constant supporter of the pass and it led to multiple one-time passes in this game. He needs to work pucks into the middle more instead of defaulting to low-to-high passes, but I think that will come eventually when considering his other habits.

Fisher's defensive game is mixed. He's a hard worker on the back check and can be disruptive. He tracks secondary threats well and drives on-puck carriers to the outside and the end boards. Fisher isn't very disruptive in passing lanes, working more high-paced pressure pushing on the point. He hounds the defenders, forcing quick passes. Some proactive movement in a 3rd period powerplay. He's definitely a pick, but we have to hedge his projection and the competition he is playing against.

Daniel Gee: December 27th, 2022 - Maple Grove High vs Cretin-Derham Hall - USHS-MN

This was an extremely strong game by Fisher -- one of the best I have seen from a player in the high school region. Fisher did most of his best work in sustained pressure -- he generally operates at a lower pace but explodes into higher-pace activations when needed. This happened in the first. Fisher won a race on an endboard bank pass, instantly connecting on a pre-scanned, no-look back pass top a trailing teammate (they sniped it top shelf). He layered deception on a second-period powerplay, faking a downhill activation and instead passing to the top of the umbrella, leading to a goal. He's inside focused working one-on-one handles to get to the inside. Fisher did this in the second and got off a nice cross-body shot that the goaltender just tipped away. Even has some net-front ability, -- tipped a second-period shot. Strong forechecker, with some cutback ability on the perimeter, good stuff.

In transition, Fisher's handling showed to be a standout tool. In the first he just about pulled off a deke between his legs -- he was checked and the puck popped to a teammate who got a high-danger shot off. His changes in speed, plus hip-pocket protection, and the proactive setting of hands to prep for his dekes made him a constant threat. On one entry he protected, dragged inward to avoid aggression, and took a shot that was blocked. There's inefficiency here, but he has so many puck touches that it makes some sense. Not just an individual handler though -- Fisher dropped off multiple pucks to trailers, taking defenders to the net. He drives the middle off-puck and he uses hooks and slips in motion. His stride is a 4.5 right now but projects to be NHL average -- stride length is short right now. Fun player; should be on our final board.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

A really, really impressive game from Fisher, showcasing a bit of everything in a limited role. First, the shooting game. He rifled a two-touch wrister from the top of the slot, the first touch changed the angle, the second released the puck. He sprints all of his routes, but also stays in space for opportunities – don't see that from high school players often. He could've had a couple of more chances if his teammates could connect. He showed board skills. He went under sticks early, faked in one direction with his feet before going the other, and keeps his feet moving inside pressure. A slick c-step escape along the boards showed some skating, too. The best shift saw Fisher fake the dump in, gain the zone, slow down, then accelerate to get the defender to pivot, then passing through them for a high-danger chance. Motor was impressive all game long, providing down-low support, skating his routes, and winning battles. The skating looks like a potential issue. He struggles to get much crossunder, but he has quickness for the level. Stride lacks refinement. Looks workable. He looked like a potential top-nine forward in this game.

Daniel Gee: March 10th, 2022 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Prior Lake High - USHS-MN

Fisher is the most charitable player on his team by a wide margin; it's a shocking juxtaposition compared to his teammates who take individualism to the next level when it comes to puck management. Regardless, there is a lot to like about Fisher's game -- even as a 16-year-old.

Fisher had independent control of his upper and lower body -- this allows for some extended range of motion passing and seam finds in transition. Hip-pocket holds add protection to his carries and he tries to add some delay elements in the form of stop-ups. He hooks passes out the delays and tries to slip through layers. Some questionable shooting decisions and fanned touch passes limited him on the onset but everything started to connect eventually. As the game rolled on he was working give-and-go on entries. On one play after the give-and-go completion, Fisher fed the slot, then got a 1-on-1 chance -- shot ended up being blocked. He has the right idea about most transitional play; execution was the main issue. Just could not layer a puck to save his life.

Lacks proper retrieval habits on the forecheck when trying to create sustained pressure. Doesn't really work his body to the inside and tries to target the stick than do anything related to his body. He was open so much off-puck but rarely took any passes to the inside. On one play in the second where he did get a centring pass in the hash marks, Fisher couldn't take the pass cleanly, failing the one-touch attempt -- also struggled to move to create a better reception.

Tonnes of defensive effort from Fisher in this one. He tracks threats in transition well and times pressure pushes with supporters. He gets sticks into lanes to deflect passes and jumps willingly into shooting lanes. In a second-period penalty kill, he had a wild block above the circles and then pressured Bump on a subsequent entry, making him turn over a puck on a move to the middle. Harasses so much. There's a strong base here and he's ahead of the curve in terms of his sense -- he will be a player to watch in the USHS circuit in 2023.



Grade: C

90 Rodwin Dionicio

AGE 18.463 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 30, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Vision



Ankle Breaker



Versatile

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

205 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

6

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

6.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Niagara IceDogs	OHL	17	4	3	7	0.41
Windsor Spitfires	OHL	33	11	32	43	1.30
Switzerland U20	WJC-20	5	1	0	1	0.20
Switzerland U20 (all)	International-Jr	12	1	2	3	0.25

SCOUTING REPORT

For returning readers, Rodwin Dionicio will be a familiar name. We ranked him as the 87th-best prospect in last year's draft. But after a standout World Juniors (where he scored a one-handed shootout winner before hitting the griddy), a scorching 1.3 point per game clip with Windsor, and a new wrinkle to his game, he won't slip through the draft again.

Nearly every puck touch, Dionicio looks to create. He's a manipulator, using fakes, changes of pace, and handling skill to constantly stack the deck in his favour. He uses one or all those skills to draw in multiple opponents, before hitting the open teammate across the ice, whether he's on the point or leading the breakout.

In the offensive zone, Dionicio's puppet master approach makes him one of the CHL's most dangerous playmakers. There's no reading him. His shots, passes, and dekes have the exact same set up. One touch, it's an immediate look-off pass out of the hip pocket. Next, it's an ankle-breaking deke. Then, he turns the shot into a pin-point pass to a teammate around the slot.

The mechanical shakiness that hindered Dionicio last year has improved, but his skating's still a significant hurdle. He's always on his heels, limiting speed and agility. Since he became even more of a deceptive, skilled puck carrier, the limitations mostly appear

Rodwin Dionicio

D | Windsor Spitfires | OHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 114.5



defensively these days. He's physical with play-killing instincts, but he can't generate the momentum to keep up with attackers and even when anticipating the play, he's often just too slow to kill plays.

But late in the season, Dionicio was moved to forward for stretches, the position he played growing up. There, he often outplayed his linemate Shane Wright, taking control of games with passing, handling, shooting, and manipulation skills that would be impressive for top forward prospects.

"Dionicio's speed and edge work aren't nearly as problematic on the wing," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote. "Maybe he has an NHL future as a dual-position player who plays more of a power-playmaker role on the wing and an offensive specialist on the blue line."

Dionicio likely won't claim the space in the NHL that he relies on now in the OHL, even with his manipulation. His defence could prove too limiting. But at some point, upside is worth betting on. And when skill combines with intelligence, players often find a way to make it work.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Looking at the noteworthy OHL players who were passed up in the 2022 NHL Draft



The 2022 World Junior Championships Preview

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Dionicio played forward alongside Shane Wright and Alex Christopoulos and was very clearly the play-driver of the three. He manipulated defenders to create lanes, dragging defenders wide before passing through them. Faked one play, did another. Set up what should've been a tap-in. Stepped into space for chances. Grabbed a bunch of steals of the backcheck. The issues remain the same: Dionicio's feet prevent him from making full use of the space he creates. He does all the work, but can't always claim the space. Lacks pace at times. He also gives up his stride too early – and it falls apart quickly. Conditioning might be an issue, so there's a lot of reason to believe his skating will keep improving. He was imprecise as a forward, making a lot of blind plays or just flipping the puck out. That's expected. It's been years since he's played forward regularly. Dionicio's clearly an NHL thinker; he could very well be a 6.5-to-7 hockey sense. The skating's a 3.5. 4 if generous.

Mitchell Brown: March 10th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Back to defence for Dionicio. He was alright. Set up a chance with a well-timed cross-slot pass off the rush. Created a couple of passing lanes up high before passing. Best work came in transition, where he cut back at the right moments, but also instantly used space, manipulating opponents high speeds (for him) before exiting the zone. Some high-level stuff, both as a handler to evade pressure (how easily he manages multiple opponents on the forecheck in quick succession, often by angling towards one, then instantly angling towards another after freezing the first one) and passer. Skating, of course. It's just so bleak. He lacks any sort of consistent knee bend. Always on his heels. Overskates opponents defensively, which often negates his play-killing instincts.

To his credit, he tries within these limitations. He's physical, times his pokes as the opponent exposes the puck, and tries to eliminate off-puck threats. But any small mistake, any slight dip in the motor, instantly gets exploited in the OHL. His NHL odds are very slim, but at some point, he's worth a shot.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Never seen a game like this before. Dionicio was the best defenceman on the ice in the first, was switched to forward after Windsor went down 5-1, and then was the best forward the rest of the game. At defence, he faked then shot for a deflection, immediately got the puck back, did the same fake, then turned it into a deke inside for a chance. Manipulates defenders, drawing multiple, then deking or pass through them. Tried more advanced backwards and laterally edge work from the point, failing some of it, but also using his deception to beat opponents, however small the victory. Scored with a give-and-go on the powerplay off the rush. Then, he moved to forward. He scored off the rush, then scored again by chipping the puck past the defender, cutting inside, and firing against the grain. Manipulated opponents by slowing down, dragging them towards him, then passing through them off the rush. Highlight reel dekes. Set chances left and right. He's an offensive powerhouse, one of the smartest in the CHL. While yesterday's game suggested that playing forward wouldn't work, this suggested that this might be his long-term pathway. He does all the same things, but his speed and edge work aren't nearly as problematic on the wing.

Maybe he has an NHL future a dual-position player who play more of a power-playmaker role on the wing and an offensive specialist on the blue-line. He has NHL-calibre passing, handling, shooting, and vision for a forward, no doubt.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A weird one for Dionicio. He was moved to forward for the second and third periods, where he wasn't any good apart from creating a pair of steals by skating straight at the player on the point. He has the ideas with the puck, but he's just too awkward to complete them. One example: lost the puck when coming across the blue-line, tried a pass that failed, then whiffed on a shot. Hammered a puck into the top corner late with the goalie pulled. When he played defence, he did the usual manipulation at low pace, but also showed some in-motion skill. Feet are just too heavy. On the powerplay, with all that NHL talent – Wright, Maggio, etc. – he controlled the game. He set up cross-slot chances, ran the game from the half-wall, set up a breakaway, and deceived opponents with every touch. Kind of ridiculous. I guess he's still making our board again just because the upside here is high. But he's not making the NHL without huge skating improvements.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2023 - Ottawa 67s vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Dionicio has taken one faceoff (and won it) this season heading into this game and for some reason, he was tasked with taking five faceoffs for Windsor (and he won three of them!). Odd, but impressive. Defensively, there were some concerns - he was beat 1-on-1 down the wall, struggling with his gap, and never recovered, following the player with possession behind the net instead of stopping up to cover an open player in the slot. On the second goal against, he was closed off on a retrieval, lost a battle along the boards, and was too far away to box out the player who walked right into the crease and scored. He did pick up a secondary assist on Windsor's goal. His one notable offensive play was a rush up the ice, stickhandling away from pressure, beating the defender wide and trying to cut into the slot for a scoring chance, eventually drawing a penalty later that sequence. I'd be hesitant to draft him based on this particular viewing, but I believe there's more to his game than what he showed in this one.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

There might not be another prospect with a greater gap between the good and the bad. The good is top-four defenceman level. He manipulates opponents, sometimes multiple at once, to create passing lanes. In one sequence, he faked on the reception, deked inside, went around another, then went cross-slot for a one-time chance. Uses space before shooting, deceives opponents on nearly every touch, and always tries to create an advantage on breakouts. The handling skill fails because of the skating, but he clearly has above-average touch and control – he works pucks across his body and through opponents with ease. The bad is will never play, mostly linked to the skating. He's always on his heels, making him vulnerable to speed with and without the puck. Attackers just hit the gas and beat him down the boards. Since he's so focused on creation with every touch, he misses

opportunities to make a quick pass to escape and then gets overwhelmed by the forecheck. To his credit, he has defensive instincts. He anticipates moves and pokes away pucks just as attackers expose the puck. He traps their feet along the boards, secures body positioning in battles, and eliminates off-puck players. On his check early, he gets stops in the neutral zone despite his major limitations. At some point in the draft, it's worth betting on upside. He's the smartest offensive defenceman from North America in this draft, but without major skating improvement, he will never get an opportunity to show it in the NHL.

Lauren Kelly: February 8th, 2023 - Flint Firebirds vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Three points for Dionicio in this game, and it really feels like he's finally found his offensive footing in Windsor. Dionicio shone in the offensive zone. On his goal, he snuck in from the point and towards the net before burying a loose puck, and for his primary assist, he leaned in for the shot from the point before passing off to a teammate for a one-timer. He walked the blueline to draw pressure away from his teammates before sending no-look passes back to them. Defensively is where there were concerns, as players would beat him to the inside on certain sequences.

Lauren Kelly: February 5th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Dionicio had two points in this game, and the highlight was his goal: deking around a defender, walking down the middle and ripping an old-school slapshot into the net. Defensively, he's proactive and engaged, challenging rushing puck carriers without being overly aggressive, using his body to block shots or his stick to pick off passes before sending his teammates back on the breakout. He keeps his gap tight and his backwards edges allow him to adapt to pace changes and cutbacks quickly without taking him off balance. Certainly a very creative player offensively, unafraid of activations, jumping up into the rush, working give-and-gos on breakouts. Physically engaged as well, he can fight his way through checks in the offensive zone, pin players to the boards in battles, and prevent rushers from gaining the middle. Really intriguing defender, especially as an overager.

Mitchell Brown: January 26th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Dionicio's really cooking with Windsor, it's good to see. He joins the play often and usually creates something. Cut inside off the boards before going cross-slot. Manipulated forecheckers, faking towards incoming pressure, faking them out, then accelerating. Hip pocket handling skill. In one sequence, he faked and then went back between his own legs before stepping up and passing to the middle for a clean exit around three forecheckers. He's fearless. The bad remains. The skating, of course. He lacks adaptability, forces passes to teammates since eliminated. Too slot/net-focused on his passing plays, instead of looking for the second layer. Still, he's confident, generally scans lots, and understands how to break the defences. Speaking of defence, he's physical, aggressive, and has play-killing instincts. He times his pokes, gets inside opponents, and doesn't fall for deception. But he has zero defensive skating ability. Always plants his feet and lets opponents come to him, overskates opponents constantly (but his instincts offset it for now), and doesn't stay in athletic posture away from the puck.

A long, long-term project. He's one of the smartest defencemen in the CHL, but his NHL odds are slim. Still, worth including on our board because if he plays, he has significant offensive and transition upside.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A really poor game from Dionicio. His skating was exposed nearly every shift. He tried to deceive, but opponents easily caught up and dispossessed him. Cripplingly low pace with the puck. Once he started making quick plays, he didn't look first – passing straight to the other team five times. The skating was a culprit for his poor defensive game, as he stepped up but lacked the edges to stop and angle. No chance he plays based on the skating in this game. But the flashes were ridiculous. He set up a goal by stepping inside, faking shot, then going cross-slot, manipulating multiple opponents at once. Manipulated opponents in transition, creating passing lanes. Tons of passing skill shown. Physical. That's really the projection here. He's a 6.5-plus thinker with 6-grade offensive skills and physicality. If the skating gets to a 4, he could be a capable No. 4 with PP ability. If it doesn't, he'll just be a flashy AHLer. He has a lot of work to do to even just get there, although I concede that his skating was better at the World Juniors.

Mitchell Brown: December 27th, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Austria - U20 WJC

Not a stretch to say Dionicio was the best player in the game. He scored the tying goal late and was a force in all three zones. Offensively, he activated into plays, stopped in space, dangled around traffic, set-up teammates, and even had a couple looks off his own. He spent an entire 5-on-5 shift controlling the game from the half wall! He spots teammates in scoring position like a forward, seeing teammates through layers and in positions where most defencemen pull the trigger. On breakouts, he manipulates, works give-and-gos, makes short-range passes to the inside, and never tries to outrace pressure. An advantage creator. And he's just a monster physically. Players bounce off him. Defensive skating is still limited but he earned his stops in this game: takes middle, closes early and with purpose. This was an eye-opening performance. If he's able to get off his heels a bit more and lean heavier on those flashes of in-motion skill, he could be a legitimately good NHL defenceman. He doesn't need to be an average skater to play; he's just that smart.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Another IceDog that probably should've been drafted, although Dionicio's more understandable. The mechanics fall apart often. He struggles with handling and moving at the same time. He's always off-balance. Lots of reaching defensively. There are moments of fluidity, but they are just as infrequent as last season. But those moments show a highly intelligent player. He manipulates defenders, delays to let them overskate his passing lane, fakes passes, fakes shots, and pushes play to the inside. He has a lot of reactionary skill, too. Defensively, it's awkward but he gets a ton of stops. Turnovers are an issue, largely from mechanical issues rather than poor decisions. No doubt it requires imagination, but he still looks like an NHL prospect. Players with this level of intelligence and physicality aren't common.

Mitchell Brown: April 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Dionicio intentionally manipulates opponents. The plays don't always work, but timing and volume of these sequences suggest they are legitimate. In one, he pivoted while handling the puck to face back pressure. Most players make the next play. He skated towards the next forechecker, then passed cross-ice to his target. Never gave away his intentions. He tries weight shifts, attacks defenders at an angle, uses changes of pace and pump fakes to mask his intentions. Heavy pressure on breakouts causes him to lose some of his effectiveness (unsurprisingly), but it's concerning that he defaults to so many rims and low-skill plays. Struggled with his pivots and backwards skating, resulting in a passive gap to defend against speed. When he closes space, he shows play-killing ability with well-timed stick checks, subtle angling, and devastating hits. I have no idea how to project him to the NHL. But if the skating improves, he clearly has NHL ability – and more skill and intelligence than the average bottom-pairing player.

Mitchell Brown: April 15th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Dionicio always comes to play. This was no different. He's big and lumbering. But that doesn't stop him from trying. He's a legitimately smart player, and not just in a run-the-scripts way. He adapts, problem-solves, and manipulates. A mid-third period was the perfect example of his game: he lumbered up the middle to a group of four defenders, he angled towards one, and as soon as their stick was within range, he accelerated (clumsily), defender around traffic (in a glide), then cut inside to shoot under a defender's stick. While he still gets pressured into poor passes up the boards and misses outlets, he also makes skill plays: backhand passes to the inside around a defender, cutback and outwait pressure before passing inside, and deking around forecheckers before making a quick short range pass.

Offensively, his game remains heavily activation focused, split between crafty on-puck reads and even better off-puck ones. No point shots. He beats pressure his hands, pinches at the right moments, and shows patience to wait for better opportunities. Sometimes, he misses the best play (failure to read) or can't access the lane (mechanics). He also doesn't move through all of his pass receptions, which led to a turnover in this game. Handling is rudimentary but he has ideas: forehand-backhand across the body on incoming pressure, underhandle when necessary, and fakes. He has a surprising amount of finesse at times. Defensively, he hits, angles, and tries. The lack of stability on his edges limits some of his effectiveness. He should make our board.

Mitchell Brown: April 3rd, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

A boatload of turnovers in this game, but Dionicio continues to show an advanced understanding of transition play. He steps to the middle, invites pressure, and passes through it to an open teammate. Constantly changes the point of attack with cross-lane passes. Deceptive with his eyes and puck positioning. Cuts back to outwait pressure. Gets and keeps forecheckers on his back. The pace is low, but he clearly has a workable delay game with an advantage-focused mindset. Now, actually getting the puck to its target is tricky for him. Part of that is the lumbering footwork and inconsistent tape-to-space passes. Defensive skating is virtually non-existent. He's an instinctual defender who gets stops with a tight gap, heavy shoulders, and a well-timed lunge. But his corrective tools are limited and pro-level attackers pick apart his skating and reaching. A team is definitely picking him, perhaps high. He'd make for a fine third or fourth rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Another intriguing performance from Dionicio, even if the passes didn't hit their mark. The good stuff: activation, using the inside lane, a bit of deception, well-timed pinches, retrievals, and confidence to make plays through layers. The bad: very few of those plays worked, and most of them ending up behind their target. Defensively, he's on his heels and drifts too close to the boards. He'll step up to throw a hit or come across the inside, but both of those expose him to getting burned up the middle. Moving and handling the puck at the same time creates issues for Dionicio, but that doesn't stop him from trying. And I appreciate that. I suspect a team picks him this year, which would be justifiable. A solid development staff could help him become a bottom-pair transition specialist. That's a valuable player to nab in the third or fourth round.

Lauren Kelly: January 30th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Dionicio might have been Niagara's best draft-eligible player in this game. He activated from the point, led rushes up the ice, and wasn't burned on any rushes against or by poor positioning in his own end. Didn't overcomplicate his plays with the puck or make any ill-timed pinches into the offensive zone. This was a pretty encouraging showing for a player whose team was overwhelmed by Mississauga by the end of the game. I could see why a team might use a late round pick on him.

Mitchell Brown: January 25th, 2022 - North Bay Battalion vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Dionicio plays well above his technical foundation. He struggles to move and handle the puck at the same time, but that doesn't stop him from trying high-value plays. Once he gets the puck in the OZ, he immediately looks to beat incoming pressure, even sometimes manipulating (but he can't properly shift his weight). He steps into space, looks off his target, then passes cross-slot. There's a delay game that shows an advanced understanding of creating advantages in all three zones, but especially on the breakout. But he's too patient – twice getting caught waiting for pressure to fly by but they just skated at him and stole the puck. As usual, he was mostly solid defensively. Force him to pivot, and everything falls apart, but in face-to-face situations, he'll kill the play. Doesn't load his push-off leg on the pivot. Physical and does a solid job managing faster, agile threats along the perimeter by taking away their space.

Without skating refinement, his effectiveness will dissipate once he loses the physicality advantage. Lots of work to be done, but he clearly has an understanding of the finer points of play creation. Will the mechanics get there? I'm becoming a believer.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Niagara's best draft-eligible. Dionicio's big, lumbering, and struggles with turnovers. But, he looks awesome out there regardless. With a quick shoulder fake and pre-scan on retrievals, he escapes pressure, then manipulates the next layer with a look-off cross-lane pass. Steps inside regularly if possible, and if not, tries to deliver the puck to teammates on the inside. Delays to outwait forechecking pressure. Activates at the right times, including one sequence where he busted out the one-touch between the legs deke into a backhand chance. Puckhandling doesn't always look natural for him – he widens his stance, drops his head, and locks his hand to his hip – but he's making the odd play in motion. Lots of reason to think this element of his game will continue to improve. Defensively, he's quite advanced. Sometimes over-extends, but he proactively eliminates space from the puck carrier and the stick's off-puck threats. Skating and coordination might limit his defensive upside at the next level. In which case, it's fair to ask what his role will be. Still, he looked like a draft pick – that transition skill is easily a pick in today's game.

Mitchell Brown: January 11th, 2021 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Dionicio has fantastic ideas with the puck. Clearly an advanced thinker who both has problem-solving and planning ability. In situations where most dump the puck, he delays and looks for a teammate up the middle. Deceives on retrievals, looks his intended target, and then connects up the middle, even off the backhand. He had several high-level OZ passes, including a manipulation sequence: he handled the puck, faked the shot with his full body, angled wide and forced the defender to chase, and then passed through him to his teammate waiting in the slot. Even though his mechanical flaws are significant, it's clear how he was playing centre full-time three years ago. And he's shockingly good defensively for a relatively new defender. Perhaps a bit too reliant on a strength advantage, but he tracks plays in the DZ with constant scanning, eliminates off-puck threats, and manages quicker players down low without much issue. His sluggish defensive skating gets exposed regularly off the rush, but he's quite proactive in DZC. Turns DZC into rush activation sequences without inducing too much risk. The shot (leans too far back), handling (fights the puck when moving his feet), and skating (lack of depth and control of edges) require serious work. He has turnover issues, but I'm a fan.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Dionicio fought the puck in this game. Tons of turnovers in transition: no-scan dump-outs, missed passes, and skates into pressure. He wasn't much better in the neutral zone, preferring to skate towards the boards and dump the puck in, even if a controlled play was open. He's physical and engaged defensively. Gives speed too much space, but he's reasonably proactive off-puck. The inception of OZP playmaking ability. I need to see more, but I didn't see an NHL draft pick.

Lauren Kelly: October 22nd, 2021 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Dionicio played well alongside overager Isaac Enright, showing a willingness to engage in battles in his own end and use both his body and stick. He was better in his own end in this game, sticking mostly to using his body and letting Enright clear the puck. Though he did have a couple of nice rushes up the ice, and also jumped up into the offensive zone a couple of times. A lot better of a puckhandler in the offensive zone than in his own end - when he's pressured, he tends to panic a bit. I don't think he projects as more than a third pair defenseman at the NHL level.

Lauren Kelly: October 7th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Dionicio had an up and down game. He demonstrated his puck rushing ability on the powerplay and protected the puck well. He was also a steady quarterback on the man-advantage and a good distributor. But it was a different story in his own end - there were a couple of lazy clearing attempts that were picked off or sent straight to another player, or didn't even get over the blueline. He was able to keep up with players on the rush and keep them to the outsides. Dionicio needs to bring the same level of consistency handling the puck in the defensive zone as he does in the offensive zone.

Grade: C



91 Wojtech Port

AGE 17.118 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'2"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Red Deer Rebels	WHL	2	0	0	0	0.00
Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	46	4	13	17	0.37

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing on the WHL's worst offensive team isn't a recipe for offensive success. That's why Wojtech Port – one of the WHL's craftiest offensive blueliners – scored a nondescript 0.37 points per game.

Right now, Port primarily creates two ways: Joining the rush and beating defenders off the point. The first is where he's most successful, jumping ahead of his forwards for a lead pass or igniting the offence with a give-and-go that places him in the middle of the play. The latter's the most exciting – a sign of what could come. He moves laterally, faking out opponents before accelerating in the opposite direction, then jumping into space.

That same deception appears on Port's breakouts, using his cunning to dismantle the forecheck. He draws pressure toward himself, slows down to feign vulnerability, then hits a teammate with a long-range pass up the middle. Sometimes, he throws out a bunch of fakes to confuse everyone before hitting a wide-open teammate.

On the defensive end, Port's one of the draft's better rush defenders. He gets on his check early, disrupting and killing attacks before they start. Instead of setting his feet and waiting for the attacker to come to him like many junior defenders (even the good ones), he makes up the distance, takes the middle, then turns his feet to force the attack wide.

Wojtech Port

D | Edmonton Oil Kings | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 135.1



The combination of the environment and Port's rawness mean that many of his puck plays fail. He doesn't have the acceleration of other players who try to beat defenders off the point with Cale Makar-esque moves, but he's also young for the draft class with a thin frame. He has more runway than most prospects, and Edmonton's activation-heavy, full-team offence style should lead to far more offensive opportunities in the upcoming seasons.

A lot has to go right for Port, perhaps more than most prospects, but the chance he becomes an effective No. 4 makes him worth a pick in the third round and beyond.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Scout's Notebook: Four standout low-scoring WHL draft eligibles



Scout's Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Port showed a lot of interesting stuff in this game, and a few concerning things. He went 5-for-7 defending the rush and grabbed a bunch of steals deeper in the zone to go with it. He wandered a bit at times, but he made up distance like a pro: he steps up, surfs, and angles the attack wide. Gets inside positioning on opponents. When he engages, he elevates and mostly uses his upper-body. That's a bit strange. He had some flashy plays from the point, using space with and without the puck. The highlight was an interception, lateral stop-and-start to beat two defenders, then stepping inside for a chance. Some of his passes miss their target (too optimistic) and while he tries to deceive, his timing isn't consistent. Skates into pressure at times, but that's also the cost of doing business as an advantage creator. Still, improving the mechanics, timing, and precision are required. He's a pick for me, but an end-of-board candidate. Lots of uncertainty given the situation.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Port blocked a shot with his face early in the third period, but his was impressive yet again. The defence is a selling point. He gets on his check early, angles them wide, and has play-killing instincts and physicality. Grabbed a ton of steals in this game. Showed more handling than usual, highlighted by a perfect two-touch pass reception into his hip pocket with his feet moving, hands that matched his feet as he walked the blue-line, and fakes to trick incoming pressure. He always looks up the middle and through the forecheck for breakout options. Creates advantages, immediately joins the rush. Manipulated the feet of a couple of defenders from the point, but both opportunities were killed. He has some difficulty keeping his depth and subsequently struggles getting that shin angle needed to really pull away after the stop. He's a pick for me. An end-of-board candidate. He could really pop next season.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Port was impressive in this game. He has a lot of projectable qualities. He fakes out incoming pressure with stick fakes, quick edges, and head fakes. Skates at opponents skating towards him to manipulate their feet, then looks cross-ice for passing options as the gap shrinks. Activates into the play consistently. On the point, he stays moving. Head up, moving pass receptions, and shows a bit of skill when given opportunity. In one shift, he fired off a drag shot, held the zone, then fired a cross-slot pass

for a one timer. It was a solid defensive game, too. He's too aggressive, but he tries to surf across on opponents and close distance early. Gets his stops. In coverage, he communicates, rotates, and engulfs the puck carrier. Loses battles because he engages more with his upper body, but there's a lot of intriguing NHL qualities here.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Port defends the rush like a pro. He gets on his check early and angles attackers. But the unique part here is how he makes up space, after turnovers and whatnot. Instead of setting his feet and waiting for the attacker to come to him, he closes space and uses crossovers and heel pushes to force the attack wide. Grabbed a quintet of rush stops in similar fashion. With the puck, this was a chaotic game. He had one slick breakout pass where he manipulated two forecheckers, but then kept looking for the aerial pass when he had clear lanes on the rink. He can deke and evade pressure with twists and turns, but he's not deep enough to really explode and link one move into the next. Give-and-go and uses space, but his shot's weak and he didn't show much vision. A facilitator more than creator in this one. He could be an end-of-board candidate. Lots of physical runway and he's a standout on a very bad team.

Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Best player on the ice. Port's not always in control, but he tries. He fakes one way, goes the other. Uses laterally movement to draw defenders, then accelerates in the other direction to pass or shoot. Uses the give-and-go on breakouts, dekes through opponents, attacks the inside, and delays when necessary. On a very limited team, he wants the puck. Like, really wants it. He's always putting himself in the middle of the play, calling for possession, and trying to create. There are times where it's not smooth, and where he misses the best play, but he's always trying something to advance the play. Lots of potential. He's thin with a lack of hip engagement, but not ankle flexion. Better mechanics will help him better use his brain. And he went six-for-six defending the rush. Anticipates the pass and proactively closes space. Gets inside opponents. Times his engagements. Angles. He looks like a solid 70s candidate with bottom-pairing upside and lots of runway.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Port has a lot of intriguing qualities. Tight off-puck gap, stepping up with the incoming pass reception to get the stop. He fakes out incoming pressure in a variety of ways: puck positioning, head fakes, weight shifts, and even combining multiple to create effect. Created several passing lanes that weren't there originally. Maintains the deception as he skates into the passing lane. Uses the middle, works pucks laterally, and joins the play. Crumbles with back pressure and on the end boards, missing passing early passing opportunities to make low-percentage plays. Offence was limited, but he showed the inception of offensive zone playmaking. Defensive skating's much worse when he's forced to manage speed; he commits laterally with crossovers and reaches in. Nearly beat to the middle a couple of times. He's an interesting prospect. Worth watching him more.

Mitchell Brown: October 12th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

The score through 40 lied. This was not a competitive game in the least; Everett destroyed them. As such, Port didn't get much time with the puck, in the offensive zone, or in any sort of favourable position. He made a couple of crafty transition plays, moving pucks laterally or to the middle, but he struggled with turnovers. Easy entry in transition; Everett kept exploiting a passive gap. When he closed, he forced attackers to cutback and then trapped them along the boards. That was a positive. But there's not much to evaluate in a game like. The shot attempts were 107-28 at 5v5.

Grade: C



92 Aiden Fink

AGE 17.808 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 24, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Tactician



Hockey IQ

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'9"	152 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brooks Bandits "A"	AJHL	54	41	56	97	1.80

SCOUTING REPORT

Aiden Fink may not have been drafted into the WHL, but it's a safe bet that he'd be lighting that league up if he wasn't in Junior A to preserve his NCAA eligibility.

Not only does the winger have that kind of skill, but he also turned into a two-way force for the AJHL's Brooks Bandits this season, a buzzsaw that ignited the team's offense every shift.

"He battled on the boards, battled behind the net, faked defenders before shooting, made give-and-goes around opponents, positioned well away from the puck, and opened up defenders with stickhandling moves to slide passes through them..." Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report.

Fink can do everything on the ice. He seems to spot and execute the best play in most offensive sequences. He can beat goalies with a variety of wrist shots and one-timers, shift the defence around with clever skating patterns, orchestrate passing plays in transition, and then drive the net to get his stick on a rebound in the offensive zone. He's pacey, inside-driven, and a high-energy forechecker. And on top of all that, he also shows some projectable defensive qualities from time to time.

We have little doubt that he will become an offensive driver for Penn State over the next few years. But his size, lower level of competition, older age for this draft class, and average at best skating stride gave us pause when it came time to rank him.

Although we could have moved him up a bit based on his variety of abilities and projectable hockey sense, the flaws in his game and overall profile make him a safer bet in the middle rounds of the draft.

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**The Anatomy of a Goalscorer:
Aiden Fink**



**Standout performances at the
2022 World Junior A Challenge**



**Previewing the 2022 World Junior
A Challenge**

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I worked on a lot of stuff regarding my scoring touch like my one-timer. I feel like I improved it a lot. My shot accuracy is something I am trying to improve so I can score even more goals. Regarding my scoring touch, I worked on my redirects, every scenario and how to score a goal. That's what I worked on." – Aiden Fink, January 2023

"When you're coming down you kind of see a little space up top. I feel like I see a lot of space up top. With my shot, I feel like I can hit that corner. I love to go up top. When I'm in close, I like to put it just below the glove, that's a spot I like a lot. It's just a quick-release shot. His glove is usually by his shoulder, if you release that shot, right above the pad and below the glove. It will go in every time." – Aiden Fink, January 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

An impressive game from Fink who continues to play with a high level of energy. He pulled off a drag shot, delayed upon offensive zone entry to try and connect with teammates coming behind the play, and he made a bunch of slip passes. He's very pacey at this level and it helps him create offensive advantages. He resists contact well, can bounce off of it, hold on to the puck, and then find passing options in the slot. A layer of skill, some clear hockey sense signs, and energetic play. He's definitely a prospect for our board.

Russ Cohen: February 24th, 2023 - Brook Bandits vs. Okotoks Oilers - AJHL

He played top-line right wing. He scored a nice back-door goal in the first period. He has a great motor. He is chasing the play a bit defensively. He does battle along the wall to try and get the puck going up ice. In the third period, he shielded the puck well and maintained possession under duress.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Brooks Bandits vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Fink is very pacey but his skating mechanics will need some polishing. His crossovers are exaggerated and not powerful enough on a curve. He needs to tighten up his recovery. He attacked in between the dots all game, attempted tips, and moved the puck quickly. He constantly uses teammates and can make fakes to open up passing lanes. Is he skilled enough to become an NHLer or is he just a good college scorer?

Russ Cohen: February 17th, 2023 - Calgary Canucks vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

Had a goal in the second period streaking down the ice, never hesitated, and went top shelf without a second thought. A true

snipe. His second was a power play goal that went top-shelf on a wrist shot. His third goal was beating the goalie's glove side high. If he gets his one-timer working the way he wants to. He will have a lot of offensive weapons. Tried to get his teammates in on the scoring. It was a 6-1 game.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Blackfalds Bulldogs vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Fink continues to play with a lot of pace and intensity. He's not the biggest, but he doesn't hesitate to slip in front of opponents and shield the puck to take it out of traffic. He makes effective passing plays off the rush, but his hunched over, slightly wide skating stride doesn't allow him to create a lot of advantages through speed alone. He has trouble separating from defenders at this level so that's not a great sign for his professional future. His skating form limits his agility (can't shift his weight all that easily). Although, when he doesn't have the speed to beat the defensive line, he's not afraid to chip the puck into space instead of trying to dangle through, something that would likely fail. He gives me some Matt Coronato vibe with his playstyle and hunched over skating. He forechecks with energy, steals the puck from the opposition, and makes some nice breakout passes from the wall. He's good at managing the puck overall. His deception and manipulation mostly shows up on the powerplay. It's not a frequent skill in his game. As he drives the net and can one-time pucks from the half-wall, he should be a scorer in college.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs. Sweden - WJAC

He battled on the boards, battled behind the net, faked defenders before shooting, made give-and-goes around opponents, positioned well away from the puck, and opened up defenders with stickhandling moves to slide passes through them...A complete game from Fink as he showed most of his skillset. Some fancier moves, some simple ones. Softer and harder skills. He catches difficult passes and always uses teammates. I like this player.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Latvia vs. Canada West - WJAC

Fink's tools aren't all that great; I'm not sure about the skating, but the offensive instinct is interesting. He sees the better play and can manipulate the opposition to make it. He was a cut above everyone else in this game, feinting defenders, creating lanes, and attacking the net at the right time to get the puck and score.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Canada West vs. Canada East - WJAC

Fink can take pucks from the wall to the inside part of the ice. He's really good at spotting openings, seams between opponents. The hockey sense stands out. He orchestrates his team's plays, fakes dangles to move around opponents, plays with a lot of pace (always), and fires on net when necessary. He's a motor, an offensive motor and a player with projectable defence due to his overall engagement.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Canada West vs. United States - WJAC

Fink is an intense guy. He looked pumped up to be here and was one of the main drivers of the team in this one. His game is all about pace, beating with speed, but not just speed of feet; he passes to teammates extremely quickly, uses them to reload the offence, attack from new angles, and build scoring chances. He can give-and-go and pass-and-drive, he goes to front of the net, scored from there...The skating looked good in this game. He's undersized, but the competitiveness and passing game will help him work around this flaw.



Grade: C

93 Francesco Dell'Elce

AGE 17.230 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Lethal
ShooterFleet of
FootRaw
Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

157 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
St. Andrew's College	CAHS	51	20	42	62	1.22

SCOUTING REPORT

Francesco Dell'Elce could very well be one of the biggest diamonds in the rough in this draft. The leading blue-line scorer across CISAA, the left-shot defender scored 20 goals and 62 points across 51 games for the Canadian-based St. Andrew's College.

A powerful skater, who commands the puck north to south, Dell'Elce's transition game and tool blending is the ultimate advantage creator. A cable and sometimes explosive skater, Dell'Elce blends edge work, handles, and sense to create dangerous attacks off the rush.

Elite Prospects crossover scout Daniel Gee broke down one of his more impressive sequences in a January report: "In the first period off a centre-ice faceoff, Dell'Elce took a pass in his own zone but was immediately pressured. He cut hard on his edges -- almost like a superbike taking a corner, breaking the pursuer's ankles. From there he accelerated hard through his crossovers, entered the offensive zone, slipped a pass to the middle on the entry, and filed backdoor. He scored on a tap-in when the puck was passed back." Simply put: He's never seen a rush up ice that he was willing to sit out.

Beyond that, Dell'Elce's breakout game is nuanced, miles ahead of this level of hockey. He blends small-area skill to beat aggression in his own zone, deking past forecheckers, breaking their ankles like he's stringing together an AND1 mixtape. He's not a manipulator off the retrieval, more leveraging his skating to escape pressure. He's always in motion, though, blending large-area manoeuvrability north-south.

Even when Dell'Elce takes the puck end-to-end and doesn't find playmaking options, he flashes a delay game, cutting back and working the puck into sustained pressure.

A deadly shooter from a distance, St. Andrews leverages this tool to a high extent, "St. Andrews has a set play on the power play where Dell'Elce switches off with a man on the right wing – it allows for Dell'Elce to get a downhill shot and leverage the stacticness of the defence. He did it multiple times in this viewing, one of the attempts leading to a deceptive cross-slot pass,

showing he can layer playmaking out of the activation. He ended up scoring in the second off this downhill attacking play, sniping a shot top-right corner off the top of the left-hand circle. Really flexed his power and precision,” Gee wrote in a February report.

Curl-and-drag, inside-foot shooting, smart placements, and power generation through clean mechanics makes his shooting tool dynamic for this level. The King City-born defender can beat the first pressure pusher with a handle, blend his skating to quickly eat up available ice, and create.

Aggressive defending the rush, Dell'Elce tries to challenge every puck carrier working down the right wing, knocking down pucks with his absurd hand-eye, and combating outside drives with his c-step and defensive crossovers. He isn't too susceptible to manipulation and tries to protect the inside lane, staying in front of the attacker.

He lacks strength while defending against in-zone pressure. It's apparent at the net front as he tries to work box-out plays and disrupt screens. He tries to bully off the net front, which is a start. Dell'Elce swings out aggressively at times, a trend across high school defenders. He's a proactive play reader, however, getting into pass lanes, dropping early to block cross-creases, and even disrupting secondary threats on occasion. The habits and instincts are workable, but at only 157 pounds, he's a lightweight who has to rely on stick work to defend even at this level.

Representing a boatload of risk, Dell'Elce still has top-four upside when you consider his tools and habits. He could be a shooting and transition threat at higher levels. He falls into the classic conundrum of a lot of offensively-inclined defenders – what role can they play? What offensive opportunity will they receive? Add in the fact that Dell'Elce played against relatively low competition when compared to his peers in the draft and it could mean too much risk for some teams. There's upside here not typically present in the later rounds, which could be enough to be selected, even if the certainty of him hitting is lower than most.

Dell'Elce's rights are owned by the Waterloo Black Hawks of the USHL and the Penticton Vees of the BCHL. It's unclear where he will go next season, but his teammate Jonathan Castagna is committed to Penticton for next season. Regardless, Dell'Elce secured a strong commitment to the University of Massachusetts for the 2024-25 season, taking the much-needed longer development route of the NCAA.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: February 26th, 2023 - Northwood School vs. St. Andrews College - USHS-Prep

Dell'Elce was rock solid in this viewing; from the defensive stops to some of his offensive zone sequences, it was a strong game.

St. Andrews has a set play on the powerplay where Dell'Elce switches off with a man on the right wing -- it allows for Dell'Elce to get a downhill shot and leverage the staticness of the defence. He did it multiple times in this viewing, one of the attempts leading to a deceptive cross-slot pass, showing he can layer playmaking out of the activation. He ended up scoring in the second off this downhill attacking play, sniping a shot top-right corner off the top of the left-hand circle. Really flexed his power and precision. Beyond that, the same habits as the previous viewings were present. He activated on the weakside occasionally, one-touches pucks off the point, drags pucks off the wall and into the middle of the ice, and shoots off the pass reception. He fed Castagna on another power play for a primary.

His transition game was strong as well. He utilized the boards, connecting on bank passes. Dell'Elce intercepted an outlet, entered on the far boards, and delayed, destroying an aggressive defender's gap. He has a bad habit of attempting static handles -- they fail because it's so easy to stop when someone isn't in motion. There still wasn't enough manipulation via his retrieval work. Simple reverses into pivots are his go-to move.

Really appreciated his defensive skating again in this viewing. So many situations where attackers tried to take Dell'Elce wide, only for him to stay with them, through deception attempts, and prevent access into the dotted lines. Dell'Elce was overly aggressive again on his line. Knocked away a bunch of entries. He's very hard to beat one-on-one at this level. On a power play, he had to contend with a counterattack. He stayed in front of the attacker and poked the puck away the second it was

vulnerable. Swings across to follow cutting threats -- in the second he drove an attacker into an endboard pin, but couldn't hold the seal for long. Kind of a mix of passive and aggressive at the net front. In the first period, he allowed a cross-crease pass, with essentially no disruption. This wasn't a common pattern though. He is generally always probing and protecting the hash marks, clogging the inside pass. He will need to get stronger and become better at boxing out screen threats. Loved his anticipation in the third. He got his stick into a cross-crease lane and deflected the pass away (almost making up for the earlier mistake). Fun player, lots of potential. Excited to see him in Waterloo or Penticton next year. Still think he has top-four upside.

Daniel Gee: February 25th, 2023 - Shattuck-St.Mary's Prep vs. St. Andrews College - USHS-Prep

This was the first big test where I get to see Dell'Elce against higher competition. It was shaky to some extent -- he was on for multiple goals against, but in totality, the teams were mismatched and the team-wide breakdowns on the penalty kill didn't help the matter. His aggression in defending the transition was still present here. Dell'Elce read a breakout early and jumped up in the neutral zone to instantly check the carrier on the red line. Loved the proactiveness and the early disruption play leveraging his mobility. He faced outside speed and protected the inside lane on a second-period rush -- resulting in an outside shot. On another third-period play, Dell'Elcedrove the carrier wide, even combating the slip pass to the inside with a spinning stick check in the lane. Even when he was caught high on an activation in the third, he activated a second gear, sprinted back to the off-puck backdoor threat and stick-lifted them just as the pass came across, saving a goal. Stick remained impactful. Dell'Elce had some significant stops in sustained pressure. In the third he recognized that his partner had committed too early on the left wing, allowing a turn and burn; Dell'Elce came across dropped to a knee and prevented the cross-crease.

He had a couple of unfortunate penalty-killing sequences against Shattuck's top unit. On one play, he must have stick-checked Nehring 4-5 times, preventing him from shooting, but when the cross came, it just layered through Dell'Elce and Nehring to Anderson who had the whole net. The physical side of the game will be his limiter. He tries his hardest to crash the boards but he's not the most imposing player.

The transition game is pretty wild. Joins every rush he can to add himself as an off-puck option. He doesn't manipulate all that well off the retrieval though -- mostly cutbacks to escape pressure, even to the point where he is initiating proactive contact. Won't work at higher levels. Starts an absurd amount of outlets, blending small-area handles to beat neutral zone aggression and connecting to move the play forward. In the first, he executed an inside-outside move on a defender, worked past them, chased the puck, but his pass weakside was deflected. Dell'Elce had a dangerous chance trailing in and catch-and-releasing a puck -- the goaltender came out for an aggressive save. In the offensive zone, he continues his activation habits.

On one third-period play he flashed some board-to-middle movement with a lateral cut, getting into the slot. Dell'Elce then made a sharp pass to a teammate set for a one-timer. It was a slick activation play. Shot remains an above-average projection. Curl-and-drag, inside foot shooting, smart placements, tonnes of power. Reminds me of a less dynamic but better-moving Scott Morrow. Top-four upside if things click in the NCAA track -- need to see him play in a better circuit next season so there's some obvious risk here.

Daniel Gee: February 24th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs. South Kent High - USHS-Prep

Dell'Elce was all over this game. Maybe the stride isn't as prolific as I initially thought, but he's still a high-end skater. The level of competition is poor -- it reminds me of Scott Morrow when he was with Shattuck. On one of his first touches, Dell'Elce burned out of his defensive zone, entered in the slot, unlocked his top arm, and transferred violently to beat the goalie's glove side. The ultimate do-it-yourself rush. I found his breakouts were a bit too static in this game. He's such a great mover that it makes no sense to stay that still while attempting longer passing plays. His hands blend really well when he's in motion.

On one first-period sequence, Dell'Elce faced pressure but handled and cut across the pressure pusher's back to beat them cleanly. He attacks the triangles, tried to work end-to-end give-and-go passes, and to his credit, got moving more as the game went on. He absolutely embarrassed a defender rushing him. Feet static, he backhanded the puck through their triangle and watched them as they slide away with their momentum -- it was like a basketball ankle breaker. Dell'Elce even will go as far as executing stop-ups to shake pressure -- basic delay elements. Dell'Elce showed more activation habits in sustained pressure. One of his first plays of the game was a weakside foray that saw him shift to the slot, wide open. He wanted to leverage his shot,

but he just could not work out the opportunity. He's so much quicker than everyone else at jumping on loose/free pucks that he keeps possessions alive. He had one interesting shot. A puck bounced to him on the left-hand circle. As a defender slid across to block the shot, he curl-and-dragged around them.

In terms of his rush defence, aggression remains his biggest ally at this level. His hand-eye is absurd. On one sequence he was facing an odd-man rush and knocked a puck down at the red line. Dell'Elce's defensive skating -- c-cuts into crossovers allows him to combat weight shifts. On a penalty kill in the second, he read a breakdown, decided to aggressively push an entry, drove them to the outside, and only allowed a bad shot on the perimeter. His stick work is solid, but he becomes a bit passive below the goal line. Dell'Elce had a great sequence in sustained pressure where he read a downhill shot and jumped up to block in with his feet. After the clear, he combated a cut off the right circle and poked the puck away into a clear. He left his check later in the shift, resulting in a rebound goal, but in general, it was a great sequence. Still looks like at least a C-grade player for our board. Maybe even B. The tools and habits are immense -- the biggest issue is the quality of competition. It would be nice to see him in a different environment.

Daniel Gee: February 5th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs. Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

First viewing of Dell'Elce and it's hard not to be excited about this player. His skating is high-end in almost every way, from the explosiveness he is able to obtain in his first three steps, to his edges to evade laterally, even down to his defensive skating. It makes up the base of his entire game.

Dell'Elce builds an incredible amount of speed through his crossover use. He cuts on his edges hard as he generates power. Layering on top of this is his sense. In a third-period end-to-end carry, Dell'Elce managed to pop into 10-and-2 edges, stopped up to send an aggressive defender flying, ultimately completing a pass to the inside. He practically always breaks out in motion, making it hard for opponents to anticipate his passing lanes. He constantly manipulates on retrievals and pushes proactive scanning habits to escape pressure -- cutback, escape. He even flashed the occasional activation -- on a powerplay he worked the weak side and rifled a shot on net through traffic. The shot, much like the skating is also impressive. In the first, Dell'Elce jumped on a puck at the top of the left-hand circle and quickly whipped a shot on net, without even a handle. Mechanically it was a great effort; top arm unlocked, knee dropped inward, and a huge rotation built a ridiculous amount of power. He had an incredible presence on the powerplay -- constant board-to-middle puck movement, one-touches off the line, and blistering shooting. In the second after working a handle to the backhand and executing a pivot to the inside to beat an aggressive defender, Dell'Elce ripped a shot on net that was blocked, sending the defender reeling with pain. Later in the third, after shifting to keep a puck in, he hammered another shot on net, the rebound being put away shortly after.

Dell'Elce wasn't overly aggressive, jumping up on his blueline, but he constantly remains gapped due to his c-cut and crossover use. He establishes superior body positions, stays in front of attackers, and works to disrupt the release of the opponent's shots. On one near board entry, Dell'Elce was taken wide -- his skating allowed him to protect the inside lane, completely killing the chance in the corner. His worst sequence was on a 2-on-1 -- dropped far too early and couldn't disrupt the pass. Dell'Elce lacks strength -- it's apparent when he tries to push physicality. In sustained pressure he was semi-locked to the net front, battling screens and working boxouts. He harasses the hell out of secondary threats in the crease. He's a bully at times, hooking and slashing them after the play. The biggest thing is that he's proactive by nature, which equals stops at this level. He very well could be a C or B-grade prospect -- the tools and habits are wild despite the level of hockey -- this was an incredible first viewing.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - St. Andrew's College vs. Culver Academy - CAHS

Dell'Elce's form isn't ideal, but he's such a fluid, agile skater. He's dynamic, using just about every skating skill in the book. He makes every play in motion, even more complex ones like cross-ice feeds through traffic. Non-stop changes of pace and direction make him a naturally deceptive skater. But he doesn't just charge forward, he drops pucks back and works give-and-gos. He fakes one way before going the other. His lateral skating stood out too, how he fakes before then across, hits the brakes, and goes back in the other direction. Walks into space before shooting, but he also pulls the trigger needlessly under pressure. The decision-making was poor at times, but he's also capable of long-range passes through opponents and even some manipulation. Looks like a pick, but a long-term project.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs Dexter School - USHS-Prep

Fourth viewing of Dell'Elce and he continues to impress on the offensive side of the puck. In the first period off a centre-ice faceoff, Dell'Elce took a pass in his own zone but was immediately pressured. He cut hard on his edges -- almost like superbike taking a corner, breaking the pursuer's ankles. From there he accelerated hard through his crossovers, entered the OZ, slipped a pass to the middle on the entry, and filed backdoor. He scored on a tap-in when the puck was passed back. It was a complete blend of his edges, stride, playmaking, and sense.

Dell'Elce had another wild transitional shift in the third. After walking an F1 with a deke to the backhand, he exploded around them, popped the puck skate-to-stick and handled cross the back of another neutral zone threat. He saucered the puck into an entry, accelerated into open space to take the give-and-go pass, and created a mini 3-on-1. He slipped a puck from the wing to the middle, but his teammate overshot and took the pass on the backhand. He doesn't manipulate much on the retrieval, more looking to outmanoeuvre opponents. Late in the game, he did execute a cutback to shake off a threat, which was a nice flash. His vision flashed in sustained pressure. In the first, he one-touched a puck through a seam to a teammate cutting through the slot. They sniped the puck.

Dell'Elce had some amazing in-zone defending sequences. In the first on a powerplay, he anticipated Koehane swinging high, setting up for a one-time shot. He pushed forward into the lane and just about intercepted the puck. Dell'Elce then got into the shooting lane and blocked a point attempt, clearing the puck. He seals well for his size. Leverages up and in. He still needs to get stronger though -- his physical efforts will not work at higher levels. While defending the rush, Dell'Elce kept a bunch of drives to the outside. He's still aggressive as ever, jumping up to neuter transitional carries. On one sequence in the second, Dell'Elce challenged the puck carrier, combated a weight shift to the outside and took the body, creating a turnover. One of my favourites this season. I think he tears up the BCHL and NCAA. Top-four upside for the NHL if these habits and tools persist.

Grade: C



94 Juha Jatkola

AGE 20.011 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 12, 2002 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+3

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'1" Height	176 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	5 Transitions	4.5 Hands
4.5 Tracking	6 Post	5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
KalPa	Liiga	40	2.16	.903	5
Finland (all)	International	2	2.04	.907	0

SCOUTING REPORT

Juha Jatkola is a goaltender that has been on the cusp of being drafted for a while. In 2023, after a breakout season for KalPa in Finland, that dream may finally become a reality.

He lacks the massive frame that a lot of scouts look for, but makes up for that with an intelligent, aggressive approach to facing shooters.

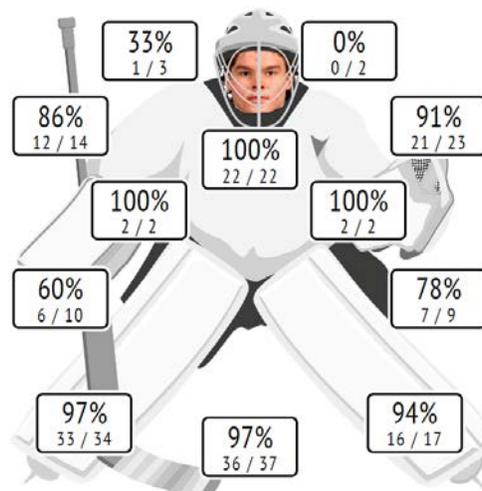
Jatkola likes to pick and choose the times when he is aggressive. He understands the importance of staying in the frame and reserves his bold movements for opportunities when he can force shooters into making mistakes. Playing in a professional league for an extended period of time for the first time in his career seems to have paid off dividends for his situational awareness. Those bold moves are on great display during rush chances, when he builds up a lot of backwards flow, and is able to cover a lot of space on the ice.

Strong skating ability in regards to both his strength and edgework are also key components to Jatkola's game. He is able to take efficient routes around the crease because of that ability, and he is also adept at ensuring his feet are set before a shot is released.

Jatkola plays a clean, technical style that becomes more apparent when the puck is worked below the goal line. His post seals are tight, you don't see many goals squeak through his arm or pad, and he is one of the better goaltenders in this class at transitioning out of reverse-VH. He is also very good at defending against the low-to-high passing play because of this skill.

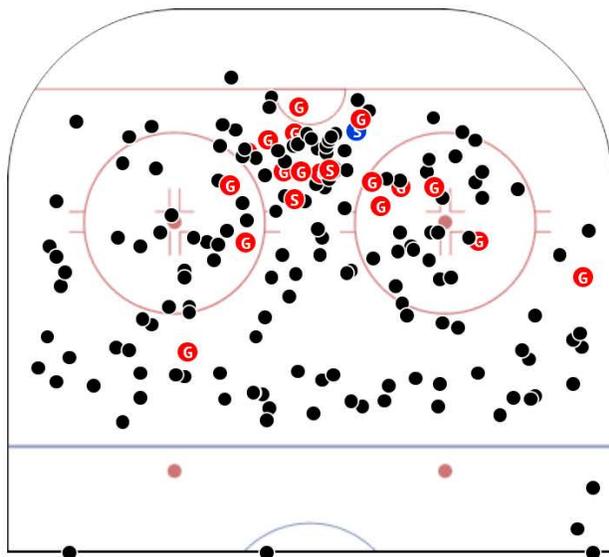
The recent developments in Jatkola's game are exciting because he retained the athleticism that scouts saw and loved in his first few years as a draft prospect, but now he's simply in position more and doesn't have to use the athleticism as often. There is still desperation to his game, we just see less of it now. Jatkola is hoping those evolutions in his game are enough to finally hear his name called at the NHL draft after years of waiting.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

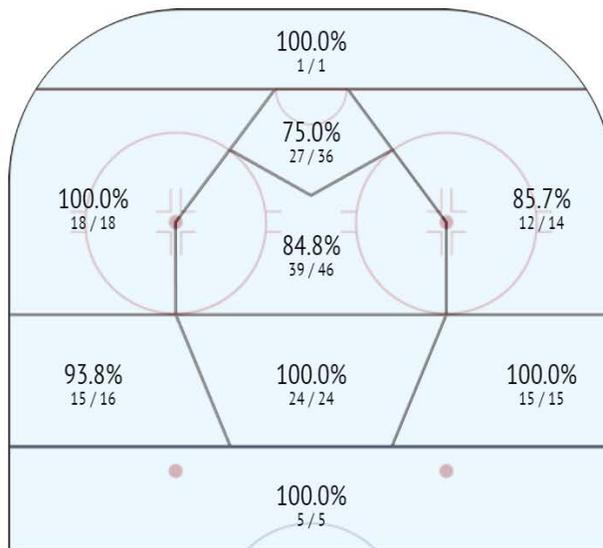


SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES





Grade: C

95 Jesse Kiiskinen

AGE 17.063 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter



Ankle Breaker



Raw Talent

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	6	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Pelicans U18	U18 SM-sarja	2	1	1	2	1.00
Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	31	20	23	43	1.39
Pelicans	Liiga	7	0	1	1	0.14
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	3	2	5	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Jesse Kiiskinen definitely has one of the strongest resumes among the players at the back end of our board.

The 6-foot winger was one of the top scorers at the U20 level this season, managing the highest points-per-game mark among all first-time draft-eligible skaters. He was rewarded with a handful of Liiga games with Pelicans, even appearing once in the playoffs.

International play is where Kiiskinen has really bolstered his draft stock, though. He's been the top scorer with the national team for two seasons now and seemingly always steps up his game when wearing his country's colours.

There arguably isn't a single high-end tool with Kiiskinen, but he's generally skilled and also relatively well-rounded. He's got one of the better curl-and-drag releases in the draft, regularly using it off the rush as a way to score while using the defender as a screen. Kiiskinen has mastered other shooting techniques, though he still prefers the outside-leg wrister above one-timers or in-stride releases. There are also flashes of impressive handling skill and even hints of clever playmaking and off-puck movement sprinkled in here and there.

Jesse Kiiskinen

F | Pelicans U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 189.4
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



For a player who scored as much as Kiiskinen did, his 5-on-5 play at the U20 level did often leave us wanting to see more. It's

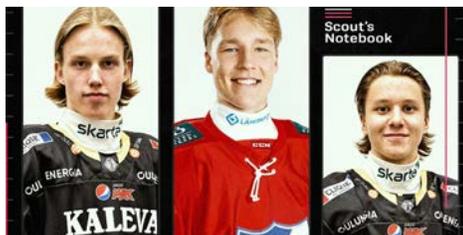
also reflected in the tracking data, which is more in the vein of your average draft-eligible forward rather than a dominant scorer.

His decision-making with the puck was often questionable and the skating and the pace failed to impress. In international competition, Kiiskinen's work rate and forechecking game both looked noticeably better and he was driving the play much more successfully compared to his league play.

There are clear steps Kiiskinen needs to take over the next few years to improve his odds as an NHLer. Adding an extra gear to his skating would be the most important one; it'd go a long way in making his forechecking and transition games more projectable.

Becoming a more dangerous off-puck scorer is another key. Especially at the U20 level, Kiiskinen was often relying a lot on his hands or the shot to score. An encouraging fact is that he's on the younger side for this year's draft. If everything breaks right, he could become a third-line scoring winger who contributes on the forecheck and has a positive impact on the flow of the game.

📄 LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Four data-driven observations from the U20 SM-sarja



Men's 2023 Under-18 World Hockey Championship Preview



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship

📄 QUOTES FROM THE SCOUTS

He's a really good young player, with the passion to play the game and the passion to compete. Those are at a really high level. – Finland head coach Lauri Merikivi, April 2023

📄 INDUSTRY CHATTER

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Kiiskinen has been at his best internationally all season, and this tournament wasn't really an exception. He was probably the biggest driver of his line in almost all of the games. Maintained a good work rate on the forecheck and also contributed defensively. Didn't have as many highlight reel plays off the rush as in some of his best games, the skill level didn't look as high as it has looked at its best. Skating remains at least slightly below-average projection to me, though he makes up for it with the work rate.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Kiiskinen has had a good tournament overall. He relies on the same plays mostly and they have a lower success rate. He drives down the wing and tries to go wide on the defender with a dangle. He attacks the net and he forechecks. I'm not sure he has the skill level to create scoring chances by himself at the next levels. I'd give his skating a 4.5 (below-average projection) right now. I like the pace, the way he drives ahead of teammates to create space for them, and some of his smoother stickhandling moves. I see some moments of passing ability, of offensive instinct. He could be a pick.

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Another game where Kiiskinen was the clear driver on Finland's top line, if not their best forward period. You had all the hallmarks of his game on full display – the physicality, the forechecking, the puck carrying in transition. There were some flashes of genuine skill too, though. Kiiskinen pulled off a couple of dangles at speed off the rush, most of which took him to the centre lane. Eventually, Kiiskinen got rewarded with a goal, picking up a rebound and snapping it home. The skating is grim. His stride is just so short. But the rest of his game is pretty damn solid.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

One of the best, if not the best Finnish forward in this game. Consistently visible for good reasons. Kiiskinen played a simple game for the most part: a lot of cycle plays and net-drives and a good forechecking presence. He scored off a rebound at the net. He tried some skilled plays, like a dangle followed by a wide drive, but the USA defence erased those plays. His off-puck game was hit-and-miss. He overskated lanes, but also supported other plays well.

J.D. Burke: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18

If you could just make Kiiskinen the tiniest bit faster, I think you could pretty comfortably project him to a bottom-of-the-lineup role at the NHL level. Not to repeat myself, but he's a clear play-driver at this level. Kiiskinen is an intelligent transporter of the puck in transition, works hard on the forecheck, tracks well and covers for his defencemen. Just an all-around good hockey player. Kiiskinen also flashed a decent amount of skill in this game, particularly as a distributor. There were signs of a give-and-go game at times, even. I think this is a player we have to have at the end of our board.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Finland - U18s

Every time I watch Kiiskinen in international play, he's the clear driver on Finland's top line if not one of their best forwards. His motor never stops. Kiiskinen makes second and third efforts on the forecheck, catches unsuspecting defencemen on the tracks, and is a diligent defensive player. The skill level doesn't jump out at you, but he's intelligent, detailed, and the puck seems to find him when he's at the best of his game. Kiiskinen scans ahead of puck retrievals and makes plays with pace. Play selection wasn't always great in this game, but he was a clear net positive. Kiiskinen picked up an assist by crashing the goal and prying a puck loose for his teammate. Looks like someone with a third-round floor.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

This was a bit better compared to Kiiskinen's performance in the previous game, but still left me wanting more. I wonder how well is his bread and butter move (come down the wing, set up the curl-and-drag, shoot or use it as a deke to the inside) going to work at the next level. The pace isn't always that great; he often starts to glide well before he starts to execute the move. The playmaking isn't anything special either. He misses the best play (once went for the formerly mentioned curl-and-drag attempt instead of passing to trailer in the middle who had way more space than him) and still throws a lot of blind passes.

In transition, his play has improved as the season has progressed. He still misses his target somewhat too frequently and he could afford to scan more, but he's started to use more cross-lane plays, driving to the middle before passing against the grain, etc.. The production has been great, but the underlying numbers aren't nearly as impressive.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

If Kiiskinen stepped up his game at the Four Nations like he always seems to do during international competition, this was another step back towards mediocrity. Didn't really get anything noteworthy done at 5-on-5 aside from a couple of solid transition plays. The playmaking awareness was lacking big-time, instead he was throwing the puck blind towards the slot multiple times when there was literally no one even close; a big issue with scanning and vision.

He didn't really have his usual moments off the rush either. Tried to set up the curl-and-drag wrister once but was too crowded to get it off. Had a couple of moments of off-puck timing, sprinting to the back post for a possible tap-in or weaving in and out of the slot, but wasn't getting the puck even when he was open. These kind of games are the reason I have a hard time being very

excited at this point, even if I've seen the good stuff in previous viewings.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations

Kiiskinen tried to carry the puck but seemed to lack the speed to really outskate defenders. He lacks the necessary stance to make explosive cutbacks. The skating looks like a 4-grade. He had one good one-timer on the powerplay and used fakes to open up more shooting lanes. Some instances of puck protection.

Lassi Alanen: February 11th, 2023 - Finland vs. USA - U18 Four Nations

Kiiskinen seems to almost always step up his game during international tournaments. Sometimes he doesn't really even stand out during U20 league games, but he's almost always one of the better players internationally. Scored two goals, one after sneaking to the back post for a tap-in off the rush and another after a beautiful end-to-end rush on the power play that saw him gaining the zone by beating a player to the inside, then firing from the defender's legs. In this class of Finns, nobody uses the curl-and-drag wrister as well as Kiiskinen does. He used it multiple times in this one and the setups were exclusively good; he's really got the movement pattern drilled down and has a strong feel for the shot. The other notable things included a couple of nice passes to the inside in the OZ, although he also wasted some possession with the occasional blind pass.

His defensive intensity always gets better in games like these, leading him to breaking up a few plays on the backcheck. He might be a bit one-dimensional in his offence creation, but you could reasonably bet on the skill and shot off the rush and hope that the rest of the game will follow. In terms of quickness and speed, he was able to hold up pretty well against a good opponent, though the stride is probably still a below-average projection (wide extensions and recoveries, not too much ankle flexion).

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen got on the scoresheet after an opportunistic 2v1 counter-attack saw him make the cross-ice pass, then following up to the backpost for a tap-in. I'm still not sold on Kiiskinen's impact, though, which leaves a lot to be desired for a player with his counting stats, especially at 5-on-5. When he had space, he flew past the NZ, but couldn't convert those rushes into true scoring chances. Tried to curl-and-drag his shot through the defender a couple of times, but didn't execute it quickly or smoothly enough, which led to the shot getting interrupted before the release. One nice net-drive after spinning off pressure in the corner, then immediately taking the puck inside. Skating is probably slightly below-average projection. Lacks dynamic ability. He's very young for this draft and he's still probably a pick later on our board, but I want to see more impactful play.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Despite a last-minute primary helper (though it was off a very simple pass, nothing heroic), this was a very, very bland game from Kiiskinen. With the fellow draft-eligible Rasmus Kumpulainen doing most of the heavy lifting in transition and even showing more offensive flashes, something Kiiskinen should have an advantage in, Kiiskinen did fade into the background way too often. Didn't make any notable offensive plays, deferred to a couple of low-percentage shots, mostly just rimmed the puck into the OZ in transition.

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen's production just doesn't quite seem to match his overall impact at 5-on-5. He had a few nice plays as the game progressed, but didn't really end up getting any quality chances at evens. Some of the blame goes to how his teammates couldn't really complete their passes even when there would've been a clear opportunity after Kiiskinen carried for an exit down the middle, passed to a winger in plans to get the puck back, but never doing so. Slick maneuvering on exits, creating advantages by beating pressure with clever little passing plays. He's skilled, but how skilled? The output isn't too great if you look behind the pure point production.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Kookoo vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen really showed his shooting ability in this one, beating the goalie off the rush with a really well executed curl-and-drag wrister. Also scored a second goal after coming off the wing on PP entry, shooting and following his own rebound. There are still

quite a few inefficiencies in Kiiskinen's game, but his knack for finding shooting opportunities and capitalizing off of them is not one of them. Also some cool puck protection moments off the rush to get his shot open, doesn't need a ton of space or time to do so.

David St-Louis: November 19th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen has moments. He can drive ahead, slip behind a defender and release in a toe-drag fashion to beat the goalie -- or protect the puck from a defender behind him, and get to the net. But when the play demands better tools, more separation ability, more crossovers, more deception, but he usually finds himself without great solutions. He's a bit slow to execute on certain plays and he is still forcing passes as a last resort move. I'm not sure about the NHL projection.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Lukko vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty much just an off-game from Kiiskinen. He still managed to get a primary helper after a simple pass off the faceoff and a wrister that somehow ended up beating the goalie clean from near the point. Still, just very little happened at 5-on-5 especially, being held to the perimeter and having his transition passes either miss or being intercepted. Doesn't really make plays from in-stride, which already hurts his effectiveness off the rush at this level. Reactive defending, not scanning that much. I know he's got the shot, the playmaking and decent skill but he didn't look like a draft pick in this one. I've seen a lot better.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - Kiekko-Vantaa vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Numerous flashes of hockey sense in this one for Kiiskinen. Of course, the competition wasn't great; there was a lot of space on the ice for him to operate, but Kiiskinen seems capable of planning and orchestrating plays with teammates. He's conscious of his environment and generally aware. He adapts his speed to try and connect with teammates and shows some wall abilities. He's really at his best in open ice when he gets to downshift, however, and that may be why he shines in games like this. He plays with a dynamic teammate that does a bit of the work for him, too. So yes, while there are doubts about his play, there are projectable elements, too. Average tools on...average, and flashes of higher level sense.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - KooVee vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen is at his best when working away from the puck -- or that's what this game made it seem. He's adaptable, rotates well, and makes up for his lack of agility by using teammates. He gave the puck away and attacked pockets of space. He tried to bring pucks from the wall to the inside part of the ice and showed some manipulation abilities to open defenders to try and slip passes across to teammates. His speed is decent in straight-lines. Actually, he did beat defenders to give passing options to teammates. I'm not sure about the overall tools, but this was a semi-projectable game.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

This really wasn't Kiiskinen at his best. He had some nice playmaking flashes at times, though I think he's probably more of an instinctual passer. Some nice slips off the rush to create entries, etc.. But there were also quite a few blind low-percentage pass attempts to the slot that didn't accomplish anything. Got basically gifted a free high-danger scoring chance after the opponent turned the puck over at the blue line with Kiiskinen being late on the backcheck after a scuffle behind the net, then ended up receiving the puck in front of the net with a ton of time and space, ultimately chipping the puck over the net. I have appreciation for the subtle skill, off-puck instincts and playmaking, but he's not truly taking over games.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

A two-point game for Kiiskinen, adding a pretty nice boards-to-middle primary assist and sealing the game with an empty-netter. Not the most impactful game from him otherwise, not getting too many puck touches in the OZ. We saw his vision on the play that lead to the assist, bumping off the defender before dishing a hook pass to the middle, but didn't connect on his other attempts. One nice outside lane net drive off the rush after gaining a speed advantage in the NZ. Defensively, he's puck-watching a lot and would benefit from more scanning.

Lassi Alanen: September 3rd, 2022 - Pelicans vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Kiiskinen found his way to the scoresheet early, slowing his pace and timing himself as a passing option for a behind the net feed that he one-timed effectively. There were things to like. Kiiskinen had decent success off the rush, mostly with delays via cutbacks and making passes to the second wave of attack. Pretty solid compete in the offensive zone, was able to scoop a few forechecking breakups and intercept some passes behind the net. Really nice NZ pass to a teammate in the middle who was able to get to a grade A scoring area as of result. Defensively, Kiiskinen was a victim of puck-watching, once costing a pretty good chance for the opposition as his man was able to activate behind him from the point.

Lassi Alanen: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kiiskinen had a pretty good showing here and in the entire tournament as a whole. He was among the most productive 5-on-5 forwards in terms of generating shots and shot assists, with some of them being better than others. I liked how involved he was in puck pursuit and in battles, winning a good chunk of them along the boards and being able to advance the play further some of the time, too. Generated a bunch of entries with his passing skill, too; he's always looking to hook or slip passes under the defender's stick. There's clearly decent skill, too. The shot was actually surprisingly little factor in his play in this tournament, also playing on his off-side on the power play.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kiiskinen was heavily involved in every facet of this game, especially the physical side. He stepped into opponents, slipped past checks, and got involved in just about every battle. Won most. Follows up his plays, always looks to be first on the puck. Backchecked effectively, scanning for threats and staying in passing lanes. Skill level looks relatively average, and he's not much of a creator. Turned a 4-on-2 into nothing because he refused to make the early pass. He makes simple plays when given space as both a shooter and passer. He had a solid tournament. Worth watching him throughout the season.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kiiskinen's probably been the best Finnish forward not-name Emil Järventie through the preliminary round of this tournament. He finally got rewarded for his strong play at this tournament too, going inside-out on a pair of German defenders before sniping one top-corner. The skill level with Kiiskinen is high-end, his handling and shooting standing out as the best parts of his toolkit. I've also found myself pretty impressed with Kiiskinen's details at times, too. He consistently attacks the defence on an angle, changing speeds and lanes on his approach, and his off-puck spacing and timing stood out in this contest, too. You couple that with Kiiskinen's work rate, and you're looking at a pretty interesting player. Certainly, I've been really impressed with Kiiskinen to this point in the tournament.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kiiskinen is solid. He's stood out every game this tournament for his details: off-puck movement, backchecking, and puck movement. Those were all visible in this game, with his motor adding an extra gear in pursuit. But the best part of this game was his skill level. He wired a pull-back wrister off the crossover, scored with an NHL-calibre wrister short-side after outracing the defender, and beat a defender with a weight shift before passing cross-crease for what should've been a goal. He lacks the finer details with poorly set-up dekes and inconsistent pass receptions. Not a ton of in-motion skill but there are flashes. Looks like candidate from the lower end of the line up. Worth watching this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another subtle, but effective game. A cool play: he rushed down the boards, but instead of angling towards the net, he skated parallel to the boards. Once the goalie slid over to adjust, he fired off the far pad for a rebound. He's an intelligent back-tracker and hard-worker on retrievals, even if he's not sprinting 100 percent of the time like many of his teammates. Not much creativity, but he moves pucks quickly, repositions, and starts passing plays. Unsure of skill level.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kiiskinen was quietly effective in this game. He plays fast, arguably too fast. But he shows a bit of handling skill and overall fluidity, chaining together strides, glides, dekes, and feints. Always looks to establish body positioning, often off the rush to get inside and create. Scored with a deflection, one of several plays that highlighted pro-calibre off-puck positioning. Lacks timing, but could become a strength. He's worth paying attention to.

Lassi Alanen: March 18th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Breakouts were a real issue in this one for Kiiskinen. Ässät's defencemen kept a tight check, which forced him into a lot of failed controlled plays and quite a few dump-outs. Kiiskinen does need a fair bit of space to be effective at this level and stage of his development. He's not a real driver of a line yet, but can contribute offensively, most notably as an off-puck threat, coming down the weak side and cutting towards the net for tip-ins or quick shooting opportunities. Though his motor is not super high, he's surprisingly effective at breaking plays up and played pretty solid positional defence in the NZ. Stride tends to break down quite easily, though, even if he has some natural explosiveness. He's still super young, though.

Lassi Alanen: February 11th, 2022 - Lukko vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

A lot of ice time for Kiiskinen in this one, especially on the power play. As one of the youngest players in the game, I thought that he left a decent mark overall. A shooting-minded winger with decent size and skill. Tried to pull off some give-and-gos and utilized hook passes in transition, though much of them were unsuccessful. Quick reaction time regarding loose pucks. Off-puck play seemed solid enough; probably not a defensive stalwart but not a liability either, a few good breakups here and there. Skating is probably the biggest area in need of work for next season as his stride has quite a few quirks.



Grade: C

96 Rasmus Kumpulainen

AGE 17.104 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Tactician



Play Killer



Ankle Breaker

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

196 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Pelicans U18	U18 SM-sarja	3	1	1	2	0.67
Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	41	11	23	34	0.83
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	18	7	8	15	0.83
Finland U18 "A"	WJC-18	5	3	2	5	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

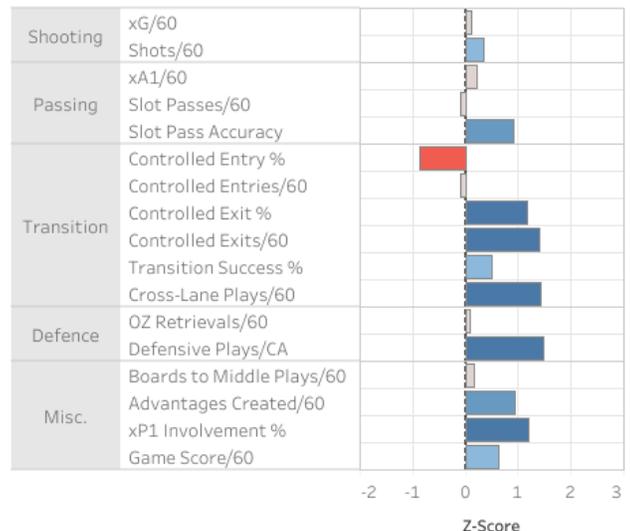
In a particularly weak class of Finnish centres, Rasmus Kumpulainen stands alone as the top option.

Coming up together through Pelicans' junior system with fellow 2023 eligible Jesse Kiiskinen, Kumpulainen had an interesting draft year. He showed quite a bit of promise at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, then played his worst hockey of the season in the first month of the U20 season. Things started to pick up as the season progressed and he performed well in the second half, both in league play and internationally, capping off the campaign with a solid showing at the U18s.

Kumpulainen is partly made in the mould of a typical big-bodied two-way centre, but there's also more skill than might initially meet the eye. There's a reason why we gave him a slightly above-average grade as a handler. Especially for a player his size, he's got a deft touch and large handling radius. He doesn't appear to have the shooting or playmaking skill to compete for a scoring title at the next level, but he facilitates his linemates rather well by protecting pucks along the boards and taking them to the inside while also providing a solid off-puck scoring threat. There's also the defensive value he provides by being engaged and physical when necessary.

Rasmus Kumpulainen

F | Pelicans U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 185.5
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Kumpulainen's biggest tool limitation is his skating. His stride lacks depth and his top speed, separation quickness and agility both

grade below-average. It's still worth noting that he managed to drive the play quite well at the U20 level, which shows up in his tracking data. There are some other inefficiencies in his play, like opting for low-percentage shots from the perimeter too often or occasionally overhandling the puck.

There's still a lot of reasons to be optimistic about how Kumpulainen's game is going to translate to the next level. His skating limitations aren't likely going to be punished that hard in Liiga, and if he manages to improve his skating projection, his odds of playing games in the NHL instantly go up.

Kumpulainen might not be the most exciting, high upside prospect, but there's a chance he ends up as a bottom-six centre who provides defensive value while also chipping in offensively with his off-puck timing and handling skill.

LINKS & MEDIA



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's Notebook: Four data-driven observations from the U20 SM-sarja

INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I'm a two-way player. Defensively, I'm a big centre. I like to keep the puck and play the simple game. I think I'm pretty good along the boards in the offensive zone, but I also think I can bring the puck from the defensive zone to the offensive zone. – Rasmus Kumpulainen, April 2023

GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Pretty much what I was expecting from Kumpulainen. Centered one of the top lines with Uronen and Järventie for the whole tournament and had five points in five games. Handling looked like a strength as it has done previously, even if the raw offensive skill isn't that high-end. Played more of a methodical game, protecting pucks along the boards, sending them towards the slot or to the net. He has a preference for low-percentage shots after circling high, which was also visible in this game and tournament. Skating remains a limiting factor. The defensive game wasn't tested that much in this tournament aside from the game versus USA, but it should be still one of the cornerstones of the projection.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Kumpulainen plays with energy. He attacks inside, and tries to protect the puck on the wall, but he lacks the elusiveness to do it effectively. He did manage to make one pass from the back wall to one of his teammates in the slot, but the skating limitations will prevent him from recreating that play against stronger opponents.

J.D. Burke: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18s

This is probably my best Kumpulainen viewing of the year. He picked up two goals on nine shots and just as easily could've

picked up a third. His handling skill continues to impress me. Kumpulainen's ability to chain receptions into handling moves, particularly in tight and around the net, into scoring plays just isn't something you see often from a 6-foot-2 player. His sense looks a little bit above average, too. He just has a knack for being in the right place, at the right, at every corner of the ice. It's not hard to imagine Kumpulainen's game scaling up to a depth role at the NHL level.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

One of the better games from Kumpulainen at this level this season. The playmaking was the star of the show. I've been a bit of a skeptic previously and his vision and ability to execute haven't been consistent, but these viewings make me more positive about his future as a potential distributor at the next level. He's got a solid delay game off the rush, waits out the pressure and then passes. One really, really nice find in the net-front from a small space near the boards. Utilizes drop plays effectively. The handling is a selling point; dexterous and the puck gravitates to his stick. The hockey sense shows in the routes he takes without the puck, his support play along the boards, both in the offensive and defensive ends. The skating is still probably a below-average projection, though. He's probably a bit quicker than his stride would suggest, but not by a lot. He's a pick, but he might already be gone in the range that I'd be comfortable taking the swing. Then again, maybe not.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - 4 Nations Tournament

Kumpulainen chained puck receptions with feints and dangles. He protected pucks on the wall by staying in movement, won battles, dangled around defenders, and evaded them with cutbacks. It was quite the skill display in this game. He can play keep away at this level for sure and take the puck inside. I'm not sure about the skating.

Lassi Alanen: February 11th, 2023 - Finland vs. USA - U18 Four Nations

Kumpulainen was one of the key players in Finland's win over the NTDP squad, scoring one of the goals by circling up high to pass to the point, then scooping towards the slot, getting to the rebound first and beating the goalie with a very nice one-touch snap shot and smart puck placement. This was a game that highlighted Kumpulainen's strengths as a puck distributor. He's always in the middle ready to get the puck, making himself available for passes, then can enter the zone or move the puck forward. Some creative playmaking sequences, nice drop pass usage, one really nice slip pass to the inside off the rush. Handling remains a strength and an NHL projectable tool. Skating requires further mechanical refinement, but it wasn't an issue here. He was able to cut back pretty effectively off the rush, create space and then find the trailer. Brings defensive value with his reach and by positioning soundly and taking his centre duties seriously. He's among the most intriguing Finns in this class.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Pelicans vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Not that inspiring of a performance from Kumpulainen in this one, aside from a couple of highlights. The offence is a bit of a mixed bag. At his best, he's using his reach and handling to get to the inside off the cycle, like he did once here to get a quality chance for himself. On the other hand, he still defers too often to simple shots from the perimeter. Skating is probably a below-average projection, though he's still young. There's a lot of room for improvement, though. The lack of quickness in tight limited his options in this one. Even if transition game wasn't as noticeable as it has been in my best viewings.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

I thought that Kumpulainen was overshadowed a lot by fellow 2023 eligible linemate Jesse Kiiskinen in this one. The latter did the heavy lifting offensively. Kumpulainen hasn't shown much in the way of ability to get off the wall or creative playmaking. He holds onto the puck, maneuvers on the perimeter and usually just throws a low-percentage shot towards the net. He's a very inside-driven centre in transition, though, always battling for the middle lane when carrying the puck or making himself a passing option. I haven't seen much in the way of high-end offensive on-puck details in a while. The upside seems limited even if there's elements in his game to like.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - Pelicans vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

In line with my previous Kumpulainen viewings. He's a good play facilitator and puck transporter at this level despite not being the fleetest of foot, because he's smart with his positional play, supports play to get the puck and has enough quickness and skill combined with his reach to be rather hard to stop when he gets going. His defensive game is also projectable and he forced a lot of dump-ins and killed plays in the NZ as KalPa tried to break through Pelicans' trap. The problem is that the offence seems limited. Haven't seen any high-end skill, playmaking or shooting in my previous viewings. Scored late in the third from a low-percentage angle as KalPa's goalie completely lost his balance when trying to move – basically a gifted goal.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Another pretty meh viewing of Kumpulainen after a couple of really good ones before that. Wondering if those were just anomalies and this is closer to his actual level. Not that he doesn't have good moments, too. He's pretty reliable in transition despite not having dynamic skating. He facilitates the play well, gets low to get the puck, has at least slightly above-average handling projection-wise and has enough quickness to pass by if he gets the upper-hand. Scored at the end of the game by entering via middle, delaying and then shooting from the point – a very low-percentage shot that ended up going in this time with good screening. He's a pick, but probably closer to the end of our board than the middle, unless he has a big second half of the season.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Way more middling performance than the last one I saw from Kumpulainen. It's not like he really got the puck in favourable positions despite putting himself in those positions quite regularly, with smart off-puck middle-lane drives. The competition isn't very hefty, but I like his projection as a centre among the draft-eligible Finns. He just plays the position diligently and knows how to facilitate his line in transition through the middle. Took the puck off the boards once, showing his hands to circle high, then take the inside route for a backhand chance. He's smart and crafty, even if he didn't really do as much offensively as he's done in the most recent previous viewings.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Wow, Kumpulainen looks a lot better now than he did at the start of the season. He was dangerous shift after shift, building up plays from the neutral zone and creating looks off the cycle. Handling remains a big strength for a player his size. The puck stays glued to his stick even in more complex situations and he's got a plenty of moves to escape pressure. Flashed impressive vision, too, circling the OZ high, then coming back down low and dishing a beautiful cross-ice feed for a high-danger chance. Displayed good hand-eye coordination with a difficult mid-air deflection from in front of the net. Finally got on the scoresheet on the power play by ending a beautiful tic-tac-toe play from Pelicans. If he keeps these performances up, there aren't many Finnish players who intrigue me more in this year's class.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

I wasn't as impressed with this game from Kumpulainen. He overhanded the puck in transition quite often and missed better plays he could have made. The tools are impressive, especially his puck-handling, but the timing away from the puck wasn't precise, at least until he finished a passing play later in the game. He got off the wall with possession a couple of times and can clearly identify and reach teammates in the offensive zone. Maybe this was just an inefficient performance.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Best league game I've seen from Kumpulainen this season. He was facilitating and building up plays from the DZ, then getting pucks back later in the rush, getting multiple chances this way. He was a bit more mobile and elusive, being able to feint to the outside, then explode to the middle for a breakout. Another sequence saw him starting the rush, then following the attack on the weak side and getting a high-danger chance by being at the right place for the rebound, unfortunately slightly whiffing on the shot. There's still room to be more efficient offensively off the cycle, but this was a step in the right direction. Defence was solid as always.

David St-Louis: November 19th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

A pretty good game from Kumpulainen. I still have my doubts have his potential as an NHL playmaker, but he has a lot of qualities. He tries defensively, cuts plays, and engages opponents. He makes quick plays with the puck and has above-average handling skills. He rotates well, attacks the net...He's a very straightforward player, but the defensive engagement will earn him roles at higher levels.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty expected showing from Kumpulainen. He probably did his best work in the defensive end, using his size and reach to break up plays and defend his own blue line competently, especially when Pelicans utilized a NZ trap. Offence came on the PP, receiving the puck in the middle off the rush, faking a shot to create space and then rifling the puck short side. Also got a primary helper on Pelicans' empty-netter. The handling remains a strength, most evident in his ability to maneuver under pressure in the DZ. One particularly nice sequence saw him handling his way to an exit against two pressuring forwards. Playmaking execution was lacking. The skating remains an issue.

Lassi Alanen: September 3rd, 2022 - Pelicans vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Not a good showing from Kumpulainen here, to be honest. He failed to make an impact offensively for pretty much the entire game, aside from one 4v4 shift where he went coast-to-coast, circled the net and made a well-timed feed to the slot, netting him a primary assist. Skating looked a lot more slumbering than I observed at Hlinka, handling wasn't particularly noteworthy either. He can make rush stops due to his absurd wingspan and long stick and contribute down low in the defensive zone, but we knew that already. The lack of effectiveness and puck touches in the OZ and in transition were worrying.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kumpulainen has impressed me quite a bit thus far in this tournament, centering the second line and playing the net-front/behind the net role on PP1. His defensive awareness is the best on this team among forwards. He kills plays behind the net, backchecks hard and knows how to leverage his frame and stick to create breakups. Skating seems to have improved a fair bit from last season. He's now able to turn those breakups into controlled exits and entries with more frequency. Handling has looked above-average in this tournament, too, displaying deft touch and large comfort zone with the puck. Scored on the power play after banking a shot strategically off the goaltender's back from behind the net.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

I continue to find myself impressed with Kumpulainen, particularly as a puckhandler. It just seems like he's in constant possession of the puck whenever he's on the ice, and that's by large a testament to his ability to leverage his 6-foot-2 frame to protect the puck. He seems to have a real knack for moving the puck through the defender's triangle, too. The skating could use a little bit of work, and there are times when Kumpulainen overhandles the puck out of shooting or passing opportunities, but he strikes me as a worthwhile prospect.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kumpulainen is clever, defensively responsible, and a skilled handler. His preferred puck positioning sees him enter a glide first, but he shows a ton of touch and control. He knocks pucks underneath sticks and catches them on the other side alongside head and body deception. Pucks never seem to get away from him. Scored by shooting the puck off the goaltender's back on the power play, and had a couple of other plays where he pushed off defenders into space. He dekes when he should pass at times. Nothing major. Looks like a really interesting prospect, provided he adds in-motion ability throughout the season.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kumpulainen's a solid player. There's defensive ability, especially off-puck. He scans, eliminates threats, switches off his check,

and communicates. Proactive defender. Pressures a ton of plays. With the puck, he has flashes. A nasty toe-drag around a defender became a scoring chance. Unlike most players at this tournament, he actually tries to slow down and wait for options. He even cuts across the front of defenders rather than trying to beat them along the perimeter. He has pro qualities, but further mechanical refinement is required.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kumpulainen mostly stood out for his defence – and a missed breakaway feed in overtime because he didn't shoulder-check. Defensively, he's always scanning for threats, tying up sticks, and switching off at the right moment. He pressures shooters and eliminates shots entirely. The hands were the best skill, dangling through contact, cutting inside, and deking off pass receptions. An overreliance on a controlled glide and stationary skill will limit his ability to play this game at the next level. Didn't see any notable playmaking or shooting skill.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Another difficult game for Kumpulainen, who's line was stuck in the defensive zone for the vast majority of the game. The lanky center does a good job during these situations, taking away passing options as off-puck defender and having the reach to get his stick in the way of shots while on-puck defending. He did struggle in transition, though, having tough time at gaining separation from the pressure and being forced into turnovers. Didn't get many notable puck touches in the OZ.

Lassi Alanen: February 23rd, 2022 - Pelicans - Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Kumpulainen, who had caught my eye at the recent U18 camp, was centering Pelicans' third line. It wasn't a very memorable performance, especially on-puck. His line wasn't able to put together much offence, aside from a few cycles. Kumpulainen is a tall, lanky center who projects as a below-average skater, but has shown good instincts on both sides of the puck. In this game, he most notably showed good defensive effort, backchecking hard (even if his stride did break down a lot during those) and being solid defensively against the cycle, pinning forwards effectively along the boards and contributing to a few breakups.



Grade: C

97 Jakub Dvořák

AGE 17.310 DATE OF BIRTH May 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'5"	203 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	7
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Bílí Tygři Liberec	Czechia	24	0	2	2	0.08
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	8	1	2	3	0.38
Czechia U20 (all)	International-Jr	3	0	0	0	0.00
Czechia U18 "C"	WJC-18	5	1	2	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

We eventually settled on a 7-grade for Jakub Dvořák's physical tool, but it isn't necessarily representative of the way he plays as currently constituted. It's entirely a projection.

Dvořák spent part of the season injured, but when he did play, he showed more interest in the offensive side of the game than the defensive side; he was more inclined to use his soft skills more than his hard ones. Especially against his age group at the international level, he constantly activated into the play in the offensive zone.

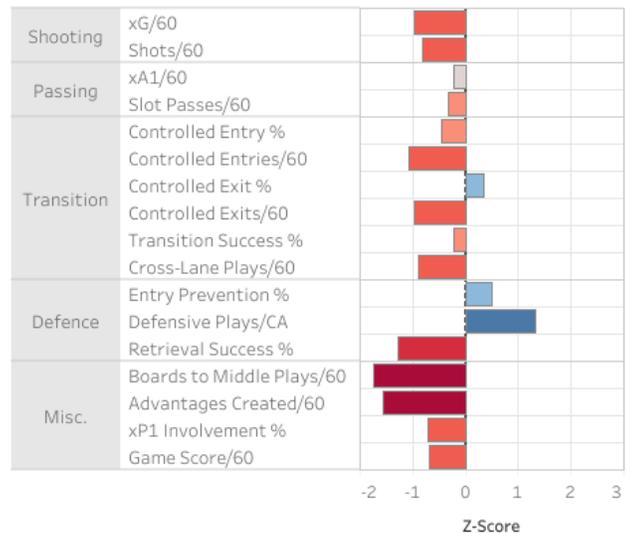
"He was gravitating towards open space more during the rush and received pucks well and gained the zone with his head up looking to create," Elite Prospects Dir. of Film Scouting Cam Robinson wrote in an April report. "He tallied his goal in this manner by jumping in as a high option, received, waited, and fired it home."

But while Dvořák could bring some offensive abilities to the NHL – he can distribute the puck and get his shot through a defensive box– he lacks the mechanical fluidity and the playmaking instinct that usually characterize powerplay quarterbacks.

"He caught pucks in movement, created shooting lanes, and launched pucks on net," wrote Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis in an April report. "I think his offense is pretty straightforward overall, but he has the right patterns in his game. He could follow a system and generate some points."

Jakub Dvorak

D | Bili Tygri Liberec | Czechia | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 127.1
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



To earn a career in the league, the 6-foot-5 Dvořák will have to change some parts of his game. His tools could serve him well in a more defensive, shutdown role. With his reach and decent agility for his size, he could erase the space of attackers and with his frame and balance, he could box out attackers from the front of the net.

So while Dvořák might not deserve a 7 physical grade at this stage, we're betting that this mark will fit him much better in a few years, after his NHL team sets him on a path to become more of a 1-on-1 stopper.

LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Czechia's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's notebook: What we learned about draft eligibles at the U20 showcase



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Very good size and a really good skater with a fluid stride. When I saw him, he showed good compete but no real physical bite. He wants to compete, no problem with that, but he doesn't punish opponents. It's more stick-checking and being there and not quitting, I think."

"I don't see any offence in him. I doubt it. I think he's a third pair, keep it simple, don't try anything fancy, keep opponents from the net kind of guy. The size and mobility give him a really good chance with that." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"It's tough for him because he got injured. He got injured twice in crucial seasons ahead of the draft. You can train hard, but still, games are games. He was great though. Under these circumstances, I thought he was great." – Czechia U18 head coach Jakub Petr, April 2023

"I try to be a two-day defenceman. I like to play simple. I can make a quick, good first pass. In this tournament, I tried to play tough, which I think I was. I like to add offence, too." – Jakub Dvořák, April 2023

"The last few years, I've really been watching Thomas Chabot from Ottawa. I'm trying to model my game after him. I see some similarities." – Jakub Dvořák, April 2023

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - U18s

Dvorak played the role asked of him by his coaching staff decently well in this game. His team's goal was to protect the slot at all costs. All five of their players regrouped around the area and tried their best to prevent pucks from getting to the net. Dvorak stuck to his check for the most part. He took away sticks. He played a safe game and didn't make many plays with the puck. He has the range and the stature to play this sort of game well.

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

I don't know that Dvořák played especially poorly in this contest, but he looked an awful lot like the same player I saw at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup – some interesting physical tools as a decently mobile 6-foot-4 defender, but clearly limited by a lack of refinement. Dvořák made intelligent reads in transition but failed to connect as a passer. An accommodating gap and poor footwork allowed American forwards to beat him in space. Dvořák mostly defended from a standstill, lunging at opponents with his stick. I think he's a pick because of the physical profile, but I'm not sprinting up to the stage to make it. This is a project.

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Czechia vs. Canada - U18s

I'm not sure what to think of Dvořák. His size makes him an NHL project, but I'm not seeing too many other NHL-calibre qualities. The team that drafts him will have to help him discover his skills and tighten up his defensive game. His gap is a bit loose at the moment and he makes a lot of uncontrolled plays. He does shine in the offensive zone, when he's allowed to come down for backdoor plays.

Cam Robinson: April 22nd, 2023 - Czechia vs Germany - U18s

Czechia had their way with the Germans in this one, but it was still nice to see Dvořák's offensive game shine a bit. He was gravitating towards open space more during the rush and received pucks well and gained the zone with his head up looking to create. He tallied his goal in this manner by jumping in as a high option, received, waited and fired it home. He had a couple of assists - a nothing secondary, and a lucky blocked shot that bounced to a mate. I still don't love the posture. Limits his stride length, power, lateral agility, etc. He's so large, that its not surprising he's upright, but it needs a good amount of refinement. With all the time he's missed this year, it's not shocking though.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Czechia vs Germany - U18s

Dvořák made a lot of plays in this game. He pinched on opponents, created steals, and turned down into shots on net. He caught pucks in movement, created shooting lanes, and launched pucks on net. He activated for backdoor plays and launched pucks on net. I think his offensive is pretty straightforward overall, but he has the right patterns in his game. I think he could follow a system and generate some points. The skating is pretty limiting, but for a defenceman his size, it remains decently fluid. I'm not sure of his potential on breakout.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - U18s

Jakub Dvořák could become an NHLer if his skating improves. His stance is really high and he's stuck in one block (can't flex at the hips to gain momentum in turns). His defensive game is a work in progress. He can engage physically, but not really follow the play away from the puck and gap all that well. His pivoting ability needs to improve. He made a couple of nice breakout plays and seemed relatively confident with the puck. The handling skills are functional for a defenceman his size. His projection is really based on reach and length at this stage, but I can see a path to the league for him. He got a couple of shots on net in this one, but the lack of flexion in his body doesn't allow him to leverage his size and potential power.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Czechia vs Slovakia - U18s

I was fairly impressed with Dvořák in this one. Not because his game really popped, but that he was making smart decisions with the puck. He was clam under pressure versus the forecheck, and made appropriate outlets passes - even tossing a couple of stretches after making a bit of a move down low. His backward skating looks a little bouncy as he's sitting up a bit too much. Made it difficult to withstand speed.

Marek Novotný: January 20th, 2023 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs Vítkovice Rideira - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák is simply outstanding as a skater, the level of the Extraliga doesn't give him a problem in this respect. What I have a problem with watching him is his defensive work, which lacks more commitment, more aggressive element, not being afraid to use his size. That's something I'm rather surprised with Dvořák, that he can't make the most of his size. Long range, playing more physical and dishing out hits is what he lacks and if he could improve on that, he would immediately become a different

player. The Czech defenseman is an offensively minded player who turns into a different player in the offensive zone and you can tell he's more comfortable. He was also a part of the PK, but it seemed to me that he was more or less just deployed there to make up the numbers. His biggest mistake was an inaccurate pass and a turnover that led to a goal. Dvořák is a prospect worth drafting, just needs to work on his defensive game and working under pressure in particular.

Marek Novotný: November 25th, 2022 - Sparta Praha vs Bílí Tygři Liberec - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák is a big, mobile defenseman who can cover the puck well with his size and height. He still has plenty of room to improve in escaping pressure, but he's shown several times that he's capable of it. He's also had no problem clearing the defensive zone and likes to get involved in the offense, which is supported by the fact that he's an offensive-minded defenseman. I liked his fake maneuver. He could be tougher on his stick and definitely work on his defensive game, which has huge holes.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - HC Sparta Praha vs Bílí Tygři Liberec - Tipsport Extraliga

To his credit, Dvořák's gap control in the neutral zone looked tighter than in my previous viewings. With his reach and intimidating size, he was already reaping the benefits in the form of more dump-ins by the opposition. Did his usual overcommitting lunge to the outside once to get beaten, but I'll still call it progress. On the other hand, retrievals remain a big weakness. He just doesn't have the escaping skills from under pressure, and combined with often too infrequent scanning, there's a lot of room for future growth. He still has to learn the defensive side of things, too, even if he has the frame and the skating to kill plays when the positioning and reads improve. It's a lot of projecting, though, and even then the upside seems very limited.

David St-Louis: November 18th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. Oceláři Třinec - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák projects as a shutdown NHL defenceman. He has the tools of the trade, the skating and physical play, the willingness to use his frame, to establish body position and seal the puck away from opponents, to use his stick to block lanes. To earn such an NHL role, however, he will have to improve many aspects of his game significantly. Pretty much all of his puck plays were poor in this game. Not enough scanning, slow decisions, straight-lines (passing and carrying), and just seemed uncomfortable in general. He mishandled the puck. The defensive reads could improve, too. He overshoots the play, doesn't scan for his man all that much, and only approximates his defensive routes and positioning. The package of tools is impressive, but a lot of work ahead. I wish he played in an environment where he'd get more secured puck touches, more space to make plays. It will be hard for him to develop if he can't experiment.

Lassi Alanen: November 13th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - U20 5 Nations

Dvořák's defensive game didn't impress me. He has the reach and physical skills to make the odd stop along the boards or in the NZ, but his footwork, timing and positional awareness were all issues throughout the game. One rush sequence saw him playing very near the boards in 3v2 situation and the winger had an easy job to just pass to the middle. Reactive defensive game overall. Scanning was only occasional, and unsurprisingly he had the most success with the puck-moving when he did so. Didn't look too comfortable with the puck, deferring to his teammates even when they were already pressured. I don't think he looked like a pick during this tournament, but have to check more of his league play.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - U20 5 Nations

Dvořák looks mostly like a project based around his size and skating ability. He can get to a low stance quite easily, which is rare for a player of his stature. That stance will translate to a good enough backward skating and some explosiveness in time. The sense evaluation, I'm not really sure about it. Dvořák isn't particularly aware or good at anticipating. He can run evident routes, support some offensive plays, but he is not one to make complex offensive maneuvers. It's a simple pass or a dump-out. Defensively, he relies on his tools mostly. He misses opponents behind him and doesn't position all that well to limit risk. There is a lack of foresight and understanding of the overall game. I like the tools, however. He's probably a pick, maybe a late one.

Lassi Alanen: November 10th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Sweden - U20 Five Nations

I wasn't particularly fond of Dvořák's performance here. He has reach and he used that to poke the puck away from the forward a couple of times, but it also left him very vulnerable, ie. if he misses, he's out of the situation. The defensive footwork was also a bit rough and something that more skilled forwards could have taken advantage of. On the breakout, he was passing to already covered targets even when he had a lot of space to work with by himself. Didn't scan enough pre-reception to identify the best target right away. Got a scoring chance by receiving the puck in-motion near the point and continuing towards the net.

Lassi Alanen: November 6th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. HC Plzeň - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák tried to receive a dumped-out puck on top of the DZ blue line, but it landed on his skate and bounced to the forechecker who ended up scoring. That was probably the best play to encapsulate the experience. Maybe that's being too rough, there were a few effective plays mixed in, but the overall package still isn't enticing. The handling is clearly below-average grade, the hockey sense is probably as well. Took a dumb penalty by just trying to rely on his reach instead of taking the extra strides to truly kill the play legally.

Marek Novotný: November 4th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. Mladá Boleslav - Tipsport Extraliga

Another game where I was not impressed with Dvořák's play. There were hints of defensive activity with an active stick, but overall he doesn't seem to be giving 100%. Positioning wasn't good either. Dvořák has been a defenseman so far, moving significantly behind the puck as if he's trying to catch it and not focusing as much on where the opposing players are. When he should be closing gaps, he keeps backpedaling, which is another gap in his game. He skates well for his size and projects as a shutdown defenceman, but there is a huge amount of work to do.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. HC Rytíři Kladno - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák really struggled on retrievals in this one. The combination of poor handling, lack of proper scanning and shaky decision-making really hurt him there, resulting in a turnover after turnover. Got embarrassed off the rush in his first shift of the game, committing his weight and launching himself to the outside as the opponent slid the puck under Dvořák's legs for a rush chance. I don't see really see a pick here, even if the size and skating combination will draw NHL attention.

Lassi Alanen: October 18th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. HC Plzeň - Tipsport Extraliga

Not too much to write about these Dvořák performances. He's big, skates pretty well and has the reach to kill plays occasionally in-zone and off the rush. That's about it, though, as his handling remains weak, the passing accuracy and decision-making poor due to the lack of anticipation and scanning. The only offensive contribution was a slap shot from the point. Doesn't take any risks, plays very conservatively overall with his positioning and decisions with the puck.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. HC Dynamo Pardubice - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák's projection is very much that of a pure defensive defenceman. At least projecting anything else will be really hard based on his league play because he simply doesn't contribute on the offensive side of the puck. The defensive projection is a bit tricky, too, though he did a better job at angling forwards off the rush and breaking up plays with his reach. Breakouts were tough. Just a lot of blind passes thrown to the opposition. The skating looked good from time to time.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. HC Oceláři Třinec - Tipsport Extraliga

Dvořák was mostly just existing on the ice without doing much notable. When he got the puck, he just get rid of it as fast as possible, the handling looked quite uncomfortable. Reaches to defend off the rush instead of taking extra strides, which allows players to beat him wide despite his reach. Sure, he can pin down players along the boards in the defensive end, but that's about it.

Marek Novotný: August 16th, 2022 - Bílí Tygři Liberec vs. Mladá Boleslav - Friendly game

Again, I was not impressed with anything Dvořák did in this match. He basically skated up and down the ice the entire game. The only thing he basically showed as a positive is his work along the boards, where he can outmuscle his opponent and steal the puck because of his reach. He also moves fairly well for his size. However, he lacks quality thinking defensively. He couldn't cover the opponent well and caused 2 turnovers.

Marek Novotný: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Dvořák as captain did not lead by example in the game against Sweden. In fact, he played a terrible game, as evidenced by the statistic that he was on the ice when the opponent scored 4 goals. His decision making on how to pass the puck or how to get out of tough situations was terrible. He was on the ice as part of the PP and PK units. He was in the quarterback role during power plays, but did basically nothing. He lacked any kind of activity, more movement and even aggression. His defensive work was ineffective and he even looked pretty confused. He couldn't maintain a good defensive position during the PK, so the Swedes had room to make quality passes. The only thing I liked was how he was able to set up a nice counter attack with a long and accurate pass across the ice, creating a great 2-on-1 scoring opportunity.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

A rough game from Dvořák, getting beat, losing pucks, and taking a penalty, but he scored the empty netter to ice the game. He gets the odd recovery stop, but his footwork's reactionary and committing – attackers continually exploited it. He's better along the boards, using his reach to poke pucks away. He fumbles pucks, misses pass receptions, and struggles with pass precision. Has some qualities, but they weren't visible in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Dvořák has notable defensive holes. He's not a play-killer, despite his reach. He doesn't use his frame effectively – only engaging when second to the puck. He wraps plays up but doesn't pin their feet. But he has moments when defending in space. He shows instincts and proactivity. With the puck, he cuts back to escape pressure, chips pucks into space, joins the rush, pops into space from the point, and even shows some playmaking. His passes are imprecise and he passes to teammates more covered than himself, but he's close to making positive plays with the puck. There's upside here, but it will require imagination.

Marek Novotný: April 23rd, 2022 - Czechia vs. Germany - U18 World Championship

I'm just not impressed with his game at all. The Czech defenceman is generally more involved offensively, where he likes to support the offence deep in the offensive zone with puck protection, but otherwise he couldn't show anything else. He can also be physical overall and use his range, but otherwise defensively he is unable to maintain a stable position to reduce the opponent's chances of any sort of offence. There is some potential there, but it would probably take a lot of imagination.

Grade: C



98 Jayson Shaugabay

AGE 17.447 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Ankle Breaker



Vision



Evasive

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

5'9"

Height

168 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

6

Passing

7

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

3

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	27	3	13	16	0.59
Warroad High	USHS-MN	31	33	63	96	3.10

SCOUTING REPORT

Jayson Shaugabay may be the most recognizable name from the high school hockey circuit for this year's draft, and it's for a good reason.

The right shot centre was the winner of the annual Minnesota Mr. Hockey Award, given out to the most outstanding senior hockey player in the state. Second in draft-eligible scoring across Minnesotan high school hockey, Shaugabay scored over three points per game for Warroad High, though they ultimately came up short in the Class A championship game.

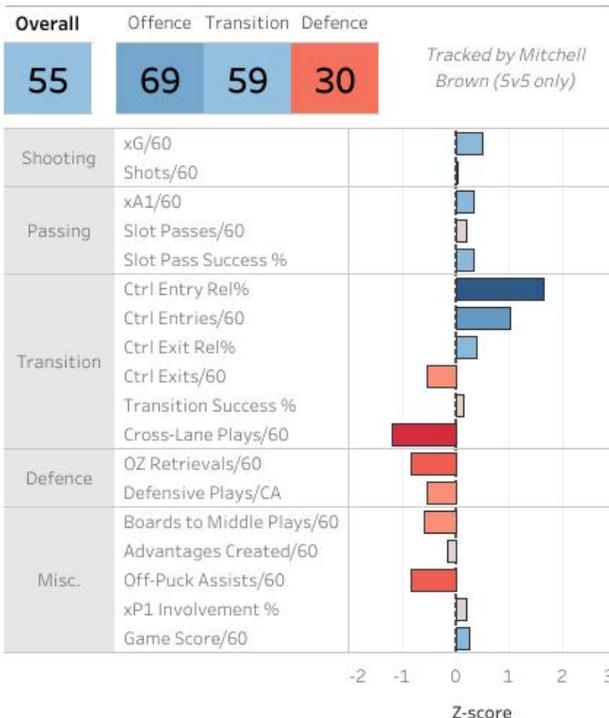
The primary way that Shaugabay creates advantages is through his playmaking and handling blend. Constant exploitation through the use of a patient delay game, he destroys gaps constantly, finding teammates through layers. Crossrink feeds, slips through triangles, handles into two-touch passes, he has the full complement.

Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown broke down some elements of Shagaubay's passing in a March game report: "Lots of passing skill from Shaugabay in this game. He went backhand through pressure multiple times to set up chances. The passes were timed perfectly. He's patient and waits for pressure to close on him before moving the puck. And the way that he blends handling skill into his passes enables him to access tricky lanes from

Jayson Shaugabay

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 89.4



odd angles. He also attacked the inside and dropped pucks back. Skirted checks. He's overly optimistic with his passes and doesn't always prepare lanes first."

Crossover scout Daniel Gee outlined how Shaugabay blends his hands: "He handles off of every reception which makes him so elusive off the pass. Found open seams constantly, floated picks through layers, and flashed a delay game. In one sequence Shaugabay had the puck in the far corner. Seeing a pressure pusher mounting, he popped the puck in his hip pocket, pulled the puck parallel across his feet, completely beating the defender, and layered a pass into the crease to a planted teammate. Just an outstanding play."

It wasn't uncommon to see Shaugabay pop a puck through the legs of a defender in an attempt to get inside.

Shaugabay is one to also push deception off his edges. Open-hip feints, working into cutbacks helped the Minnesotan create space and avoid contact. He's so averse to being hit, that it limits his game at some level. He will jettison pucks if he runs out of room and there's no manipulation option, even with body position. Add in the fact that Shaugabay's game is primarily on the outside of the dotted lines, and questions about his translatability as a player come into question.

Consistency has also been an issue, especially at the USHL level, with many Jekyll-and-Hyde performances where he barely looked like a pick. "Some flashes of skill and defence from Shaugabay when he wasn't on cruise control. A forecheck steal led to a pair of chances and he created a breakaway with a turnaround pass in the neutral zone, scanning before he touched the puck," Brown noted in a March report.

When Shaugabay is engaged, hunting and forechecking pucks free, he looks like a special player, one who could not only create second-chance opportunities but one who could also beat multiple opponents en route to the net. The problem is that these efforts were just too far and between.

This makes the Green Bay Gambler a risky player from a projection point of view. What will he be if he can't handle physical contact effectively when he reaches higher levels of hockey, with bigger stronger opponents? Not much if there isn't a serious adaptation.

Nevertheless, his skill is top-of-the-draft worthy. Teams will have to hedge these positives and negatives when considering selecting him. It's part of the reason why Shaugabay lands lower on our board. If he hits, you have a serious top-six upside, most likely on the wing. If not, there's no wiggle room for any other role.

Shaugabay is heading to the University of Minnesota-Duluth next season as one of their major recruits. He should produce at the NCAA level, but he will have to be a more consistent player than he showed at the USHL level and overcome the physical avoidance hurdle to be a more translatable player.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Jayson Shaugabay could be late riser in 2023 NHL Draft



USHL Stock Watch: Macklin Celebrini putting himself in the pole position for 2024 NHL Draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He scored a bunch of points in high school, very offensive minded, undersized. The scoring didn't translate in the USHL. I think he's got a chance to be a good college player, but I don't know that it translates to pro. He doesn't play hard. I mean, he's related to TJ Oshie, and other than the scoring, there aren't any similarities. He's a perimeter player, stays on the outside." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"Not exaggerating when I say he has the top half of the first-round puck skills. He's one of the most purely skilled players and best playmakers in this class. He's unselfish to a fault and needs to get nearer the net and shoot more. He will be one of the few players taken outside of the first round who realistically has the talent to develop into an NHL top-six/half-wall power play forward" – NHL Scout, March 2023

"I like to control the game with my smarts. I'm not going to be buzzing around, but I will use my body a little bit. I'm not a very physical guy. I try to take the game to another level at other people. If it's in the corner, I won't try and run through the guy. I might sit there, and wait for him to turn and take the puck from him. Something like that. I play skilled and smart." – Jayson Shaugabay, March 2023

"I think it's something god gifted with me I guess. I've always been a guy that lets it slow down and looks for the pass. I'm more of a passer than a goal scorer. I always like to slow it down and find that open seam." – Jayson Shaugabay, March 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 8th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

This was an extremely impressive performance by Shaugabay, who looked the part of a top-of-the-draft prospect throughout this viewing.

What was shocking is how engaged and disruptive Shaugabay was in all areas of the ice. The number of stolen pucks translated into instead attacking sequences was absurd. One of his first sequences of the game saw Shaugabay pickpocket a defender retreating and instantly working a centring pass (the goaltender read it well to block it). Later in the second, Shaugabay stripped and stole a retrieval on the forecheck, feeding a teammate with a pass into space (one-time shot). He worked a bunch of long, grinding, pressure shifts in the offensive zone. Lots of skill blending throughout as well.

On one sequence, Shaugabay popped his edges into 10-to-2 to slip a check on the boards and to work the puck low-to-high. On the same shift he activated into soft space and caught and released a dangerous shot -- this off-puck game was something I just haven't seen a lot of before. He handles off of every reception which makes him so elusive off the pass. Found open seams constantly, floated picks through layers, and flashed a delay game. On one sequence Shaugabay had the puck in the far corner. Seeing a pressure pusher mounting, he popped the puck in his hip pocket, pulled the puck parallel across his feet, completely beating the defender, and layered a pass into the crease to a planted teammate. Just an outstanding play. The delay and manipulation elements are separating. On one powerplay he looked pass but instead rifled a no-look shot which had to be corralled with a nice glove save. Shaugabay had an assist late in the third. A cutback into a give-and-go passing sequence allowed Shaugabay to slip a puck under a leg, only to regather it and cut into the slot --the puck bounced off a leg and a teammate scored but showed his ability to get off the walls and create. Just a tonne to like here.

In transition, he abuses a delay game, just like in his high school games. He adapts incredibly well; in the first, Shaugabay delayed on a near-board entry, popping a puck through a defender's triangle. The defender was able to disrupt, but with one hand, Shaugabay shovelled the puck into the slot. I like how he blends weight transfers, hip-pocket protection, and his otherworldly handling to create advantages -- just so powerful at this level. The unlocked top arm, the way he selects his handles, the range he's able to execute at to create lateral mismatched -- great stuff. Looked like a B prospect, someone who could be a 50-70 option for our board. He's adapted so well to USHL hockey after his HS season ended -- it has to count for something. Probably not an overwhelming scorer

at higher levels -- so focused on distributing, but he can create for others. Night and day are better than early and more recent viewings.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A really ugly game from Shaugabay. He had his chances, but could've created so much more. He threw soft passes up the ice for turnovers, didn't even try to engage physicality, didn't skate his routes off-puck to get open, and gave up on plays. Stick off the ice, never presenting himself as a passing option. Just glided around without much thought or energy. The hands and puck skill in general popped a few times, but this was an ugly game. Didn't look close to a pick in this game. One of the ugliest performances I've seen this season.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Lots of passing skill from Shaugabay in this game. He went backhand through pressure multiple times to set up chances. The passes were timed perfectly. He's patient and waits pressure to close on him before moving the puck. And the way that he blends handling skill into his passes enables him to access tricky lanes from odd angles. He also attacked the inside and dropped pucks back. Skirted checks. He's overly optimistic with his passes and doesn't always prepare lanes first. He could be a third-rounder. Lacks skating and physical skills, but such a crafty passer.

Daniel Gee: March 25th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Shaugabay was downright awful to start this game. He looked soft, timid, and played with almost no pace. Luckily, as the game continued on, the tools and higher-end habits started to pop, and he dominated on-puck.

His transition game was disjointed at times. His worst sequence came off a rather random spinorama pass off the side of his own net resulting in an early turnover -- a puzzling decision. Beyond that, Shaugabay flashed the elements that made him a special player at the high school level. On a 2-on-3 in the first, he popped into 10-and-2 edges to fake an inside cut. Instead, he cutback, shook off pressure on the entry and floated a backhand pass into space, that the pass target was just off on. He doesn't seem to like handling physical pressure so he will either work into a delay to disrupt aggressive gaps or jettison the puck if he's unable to manipulate the pressure. Shaugabay's hands, especially in small space is very high-end. On one transition play he took a reception behind his body. While outreached, he bumped the puck to a trailer that missed with a dangerous shot high. Not needing to even readjust before the pass was wild. He scored in the second. After grabbing a loose puck on the centre dot, Shaugabay chipped the puck by a mindless aggressive push from a Steel defender and worked into a breakaway. While in tight, Shaugabay handled to the backhand and roofed a shot over the blocker. He can make you pay in an instant with his skill blending.

He was poor in sustained pressure in the first. Low intensity, not willing to sacrifice on the perimeter or the forecheck. Really coasting around. In the second and third, Shaugabay was more engaged. On one sequence after Gamblers point shot was blocked, Shaugabay chipped a puck through a defender's triangle and snapped a shot -- glove side. Yet another example of his small-area game. He flashed manipulation qualities on a powerplay shortly after in the third. After connecting on a layered circle-to-circle pass, he got the puck back, stared down the net, and fed a no-look pass to the right-hand circle, resulting in a dangerous shot.

Not much of a defensive game in this one. Shaugabay had an awful sequence in the first where he had the opportunity to disrupt a hashmark-located shot, but just watched it go down instead. A lot of low-intensity floating. I think this viewing was an indication of the good and bad that can come with Shaugabay's game. C-grade for now, but he could easily be a B grade for us if we end up believing that his tools can take him places.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Some flashes of skill and defence from Shaugabay when he wasn't on cruise control. A forecheck steal led to a pair of chances and he created a breakaway with a turnaround pass in the neutral zone, scanning before he touched the puck. Powerplay assist with a pass for a deflection in front. He's talented with clear above-average handling and passing skill, but lacks supporting skills and skating. A long term projection and I don't think USHL games alone will give me a solid take, unfortunately.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

So, the good and bad from Shaugabay. The hands are wild. He had a couple of just ridiculous dekes in this game, setting up opponents with feet before going under their stick. He shows some playmaking, too. He draws pressure before passing through it. But he also tries to avoid contact sometimes. He battles when he has to, but offloads the puck. It's probably self-preservation at his stage. Still, he panicked under pressure a few times. And the skating's not an NHL skill. Adding strength will help, but he lacks quickness, power, and extension. He could be an end-of-board candidate. Curious to see if he has more high-level skills like manipulation – those will be key for his projection.

Daniel Gee: March 2nd, 2023 - Warroad High vs East Grand Forks High - USHS-MN

More of the same from Shaugabay who dominated in his copious amount of minutes. Nevertheless, pace issues still permeate, and he struggles to impact every shift like he should at this level.

Shaugabay abuses a delay game in transition -- it's so effective at the high school level to disrupt, or even destroy defender's gaps, that it allows Shaugabay the space to access his playmaking with very limited pressure. On top of this, Shaugabay's outstanding handling is just such a plus advantage against high school players. In transition, he will delay, and protect in his hip pocket, only to saucer a puck through a layer for a relatively easy assist. Not sure he loves operating into pressure -- will reset and spin off more aggressive pressure pushers, but he is almost a magnet against HS opponents -- players just converge and double him at every chance.

In the third, Shaugabay was attacking 2-on-2, cut inside, delayed and fed a net crasher with a backhand pass, leading to a high-danger tip. In the first, he took a pick on the neutral zone far boards and adjusted his route into the middle. Three defenders converged and he still got the pass through the seam. Some manipulation use -- it goes hand-in-hand with his handling ability. Stutters and shimmies with his shoulders to try and work defenders in the wrong direction. He actually converted a turnover in the neutral zone, saucering another puck on a 2-on-1 for a primary late in the game. It's too easy for him at this level.

The playmaking flashes in sustained pressure too. Talking about deeply layered feeds cross-rink. Shaugabay focuses on body position but he is weak on-puck when real physical pressure mounts -- this is a byproduct of his overuse of a delay game. Hands are similar -- inside-outside handles to beat opponents one-on-one with some of the use focused on trying to get into the middle of the ice. Nevertheless, he's far too static on most plays, not having enough pace or proactive speed built up to really leverage the handles. Some great supporting habits when he isn't behind the play due to pace issues. In the second he supported a teammate on the boards, takes the pass reception and hooked a pass into the hash marks from the right-hand circle. Such a crazy pass to not only execute but complete. Not sure how translatable Shaugabay is at the end of the day -- end of season USHL viewings will be important to find out how well he adapts. Probably a D or fringe C prospect for our board -- some of the tools are separating but he will be a project for whoever drafts him.

Daniel Gee: February 6th, 2023 - Warroad High vs East Grand Forks High - USHS-MN

Shaugabay showed a tonne of high school/junior habits in this viewing, but flashed a significant amount of skill at the same time. Some of his habits, particularly his off-puck pace, will be debilitating as he continues upward to the NCAA and professional hockey. He barely operates at an average pace on most of his shifts, leading to missed defensive stops and just a lack of general involvement in a given sequence.

Like a lot of successful scorers at the high school level, Shaugabay uses a delay game to break down defenders. Add in hip-pocket protection and he easily is one of the better setup men available out of high school. Along with the protection and delay skill, Shaugabay blends even more skill in transition. On one entry, he protected on the outside, turned a defender, wrapped around the net, and sent a high-danger pass backdoor -- the pass wasn't picked up. He layers 10-and-2 manoeuvres, triangle-targeted handles, and weight shifts to beat defenders. In the second, he dangled through a triangle, broke the defender's ankles, stopped up on the left-hand circle and then hit a teammate in the slot. Just after Shaugabay entered on the far boards, stopped up to destroy a defender's gap, dragged the puck inward to beat a defender overshooting on the back check, allowing him to feed a puck to the weak side, ultimately resulting in a missed wide-open net. He scored on a powerplay rush -- snapped a shot low blocker, cross-body.

Multiple passing plays in the third that should have been converted -- saucer passes backdoor, slips to the inside; just no execution.

Layers pucks in sustained pressure and continues to protect the puck at his hip. Some deception used as well. Shaugabay wheeled down the left wing in the first, faking one way, freezing the defender, and cutting into the middle. He was swarmed, but sent a back pass to an open man on the left-hand circle, drawing all four defenders. He pressures on the end-boards, stripping multiple pucks and working longer sustained sequences. Rang a puck on the left-hand circle on a powerplay. Shaugabay got the puck back, faked a shot, and found a man deep for a one-timer. No real defensive impact -- not enough motor. If he's in the vicinity, there is some disruption but not enough to impact the game at higher levels.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A bit of a quiet game from Shaugabay, but he had moments. The highlight was rush where he set up the defender, got the reach, then went under their stick and nearly beat the goaltender across the net with a wrist. He moved pucks at the right moments, but didn't show any advanced passing ideas. A bit of defence by tracking opponents and keeping his feet moving, even earning a steal at one point. He checks out when the puck's far away from him (in all three zones), which looks like an issue, albeit not an uncommon for High School players. Skating's average, although he's thin and has some skills off his inside edges. Needs to see more.

Daniel Gee: October 21st, 2022 - Cedar Rapids Roughriders vs Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Shaugabay was great in this viewing. On the surface level, he's a fairly average mover and extremely undersized -- a debilitating combination for translatability. He adapts to this at the USHL level by layering a large amount of deception when on-puck. In the first, he showed some delay elements -- pull-ups after burning down the wing, setting up sustained pressure. His handling is pretty special -- unlocked top arm, full range of motion, hip-pocket protection -- it's a legit translatable tool. In the second on the powerplay he carried the puck in with speed, popping the puck into his hip pocket, working around aggression. He snapped a pass to a crashing weakside teammate who just missed the reception. The ultimate sequence of Shaugabay's game was in the third. 4-on-4, he carried through pressure, baiting a poke check and slicing through resistance. He cut back, wheeled high, faked a drop-off, and attacked downhill. Eyes placed on the net, he no-looked a pass from the middle to the left wing for a high-danger chance. He had a couple of assists in sustained pressure; he jumped on a rebound while stacked backdoor, passing the puck to a wide-open man, backdoor. Later, on a 4-on-3, his pass to the point yielded another goal.

A reactive and chasing defender, this is the area where a lot of high school habits show. Overshoots on the backcheck, doesn't pick up secondary threats and doesn't seem to understand body positioning in his own zone. There's effort on the backcheck but he needs to develop better habits in his own end. Shaugabay looks like a pick -- more of a project than anything.

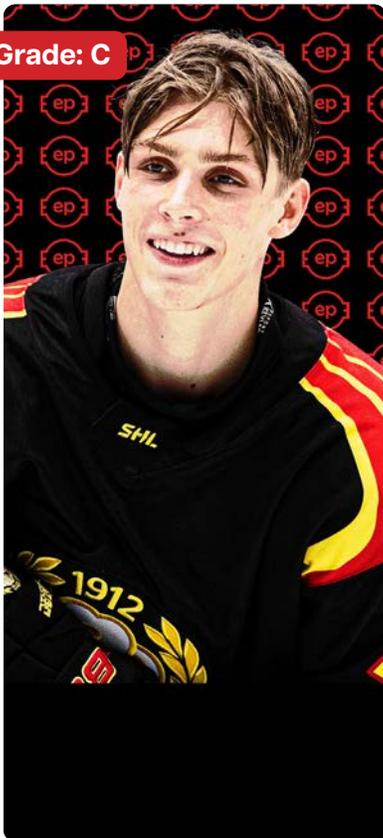
Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

There's little doubt that Shaugabay's skilled. In one sequence, he stopped, baited the defender, then dangled through them for the entry. Scored a goal by outwaiting the netminder. He's relatively deceptive, faking plays and using misleading body positioning to keep opponents guessing. He has some bad habits, like not attacking opponents on angle to set up his dekes and handling when a pass is the better play. Slight, but won his battles through body positioning and getting lower than the opponent. Definitely a prospect worth watching. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Shaugabay barely played, but made an outsized impact on the game. A poor passing decision deflected onto a teammate's stick for a goal, but it was his transition game and off-puck positioning that stood out. He moved pucks early and cutback when necessary -- no forced plays. In the slot, he wins positioning, moves into space, and tracks down loose pucks. Moves to stay open. Worth keeping an eye on.

Grade: C



99 Noel Nordh

AGE 17.638 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw
Talent

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brynäs IF J18	J18 Nationell	3	2	2	4	1.33
Brynäs IF J20	J20 Nationell	38	13	14	27	0.71
Brynäs IF	SHL	10	1	0	1	0.10
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	3	2	5	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

There are always a few battleground players for our staff in every draft. Noel Nordh wasn't the most hotly contested of the bunch, but there were still many differing reads on his game and potential.

His season was a bit inconsistent, featuring some strong games internationally and also a decent number of SHL appearances. At the J20 level, though, he wasn't a big-time producer and his underlying metrics were a mixed bag, too.

What we all agreed upon was that Nordh likely projects as more of a complementary piece rather than a primary driver of his line. He has the physical makeup NHL teams desire and also some of the required skills to become a third-line winger, at least in flashes.

One encouraging sign is that he was already quite capable at taking the puck from the boards to the middle, mostly with smart small-area passing plays. There are flashes of puck skills, although he often fell victim to overhanding. On the other hand, he also tried to play a more give-and-go style from time to time, but his teammates often weren't able to facilitate this.

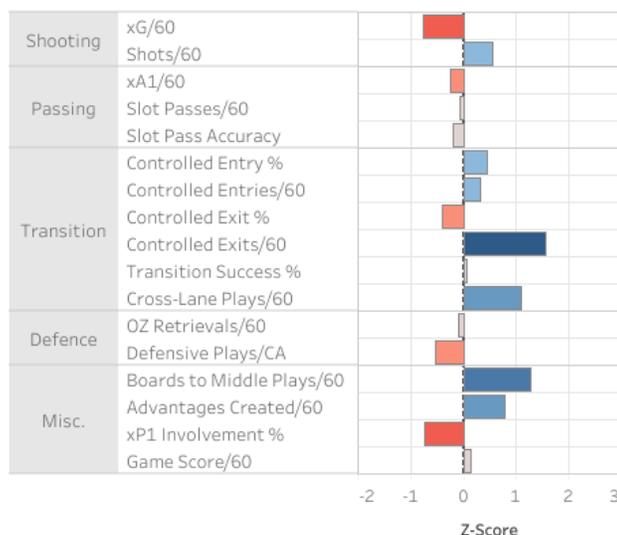
Nordh's skating clearly needs further refinement from a mechanical perspective and graded as slightly below-average overall, though he does have flashes of sound use of the outside edges and the ability to cut back on pressure. Improving his skating base would go a long way in improving Nordh's odds of landing an NHL job in the future.

Noel Nordh

F | Brynäs IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 149.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Elite Prospects' Swedish scout Jimmy Hamrin summed up Nordh's game nicely in a recent game report: "He is smart enough to play on higher levels. He has value on both a power play and a penalty kill. His defensive play and competitiveness are good. He could become a good complementary forward up and down a line-up and his style and assets would probably fit better on the smaller rinks."

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Previewing the 2022 World Junior A Challenge

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"I thought he started the season strong, but then he kind of faded. I thought he was a bit better at the U18s, like he got some confidence back and was able to make plays with the puck. He's got a good body. The skating looks a little sluggish, but it's not too bad. It's never going to be a weapon, of course. If he can work on his skill – because he's got some strength on the puck with that big body and he has the ability to win pucks along the boards and get them to the slot – I think he's got power forward potential. He scored some nice goals. There's something there to work with." – Eastern Conference scout, May 2023

"I try to protect the puck well. I have good size and can be strong in front of the net. I like to park in front of the crease and create chaos." – Noel Nordh, April 2023

"He creates space for his teammates, which makes his linemates better. At the same time, he has a heavy shot himself and always has the will to do the right thing." – Brynäs J20 head coach Rickard Wulffschmidt, December 2022

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Jimmy Hamrin: April 30th, 2023 - USA vs. Sweden - U18s

Noel had trouble with the pace of the game early on. He lost the puck, lost battles and kept falling down on the ice. He really needs to work on his skating abilities if he ever is going to make the NHL. As the game went along he grew into the game and found ways to keep up. He took smarter routes, covered the puck better and showed a big amount of compete. He made easy, smart plays with the puck. He often drove to the net and even scored a goal that way. He supported plays well and showed a motor to wanting to drive play and take action. He looks poised making plays. I can see a smart middle six forward here if he can find a more effective stride. He is smart and skilled but not smart and skilled enough to compensate for his lack of pace and balance.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

Nordh has some feints. He can beat players one-on-one. He's more agile than at the start of the season. He misses advantages, gaps he could attack, and passing options. Not sure about the hockey sense but he's one of the better elements of this Swedish team.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

Noel had a solid effort in this game. He is strong along the boards and has nice puck skills. He goes to the inside and crashes the net as a pattern in his game. The biggest issue in his game is his poor skating stride. He can't separate from opponents and rarely gets the space he needs to be dangerous. He is more of a player that connects plays and keeps possession. I like how he reads the game away from the puck and shows awareness. He is a "middle round pick"-player.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

Nordh has similar flashes of skill as Wahlberg. In fact, if I'm honest, I sometimes mistake them for each other in games. Similar physical potential, forechecking presence, puck protection, and flashes of handling skills. He can run around teams when set up with a runway and connect passing plays. He screens goalies well. He might be a pick. He's also a project as he's rawer than other prospects we have ranked but he could pop over the next years. Right now, he needs a bit more space to make plays than Wahlberg, it seems, however. His game can fall apart under pressure.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Noel is a smart offensive forward. He roamed the area around the net and created screens and deflections. He scored on a deflection as well. He works hard and is smart away from the puck. He anticipates where the puck is heading. His puck skills are quite good too. His skating technique is below average and doesn't accelerate fast enough. He will be reliant to play in a driving environment as he can't do it himself more than with giving support and to find dangerous space.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 3rd, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Nordh shows good awareness and off-puck smarts in this game. He scans proactively and positions himself to support the next situation. He shows good small area skills along the boards, the lines and around the net. He had some good give-and-go situations. He had a few good zone entries but did not drive the attack very often. His puck skills are good in small spaces but he lacks the ability to manipulate and to drive play. His skating is also an area that makes it hard for him to drive play over bigger distances. He is smart enough to play on higher levels. He has value on both a power play and a penalty kill. His defensive play and competitiveness are good. He could become a good complementary forward up and down a line-up and his style and assets would probably fit better on the smaller rinks.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

Many flashes of skills in Nordh's game. He pulled off a cross ice pass to a teammate for a scoring chance. He protected the puck well every time he got inside traffic and chained legitimately impressive dangles into skillful passes. I'm not sure about his overall technical ability and NHL potential, but flashes like these might lead us to include him late on our board.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Nordh needs to improve mechanically before we can really see his NHL potential. It doesn't mean that a team shouldn't draft him in the hope that his technical abilities smooth out, but it's hard to project him to any kind of role right now. He can't execute the plays he wants, and those plays are generally good ideas. He's hard on the forecheck and goes to the net. The physical element is a plus.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 4th, 2023 - Linköpings HC vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

I am not a fan of Noel's skating. His strides lack power and he needs to use a lot of energy to gain speed. His ankle flexion needs a lot of work for him to be more effective. His balance is centred in his upper body and he can't use his skating to cover the puck well which makes him inefficient with the puck. That's a shame because his hands and senses can handle space quite well. He is not a flashy player but shows good awareness with the puck. He had some sequences where he fooled opponents with puck patience as he let them close in on him as he opened up with a quick pass or deke. He contributes well in transitions and can manipulate opponents to gain space. He is also proactive and scans the ice. He plays with energy and is an intense presence on the ice. He is good at taking the middle too.

He needs to get more effective both in his offensive game as his defensive game. In his defensive game he chases the play too much without retrieving the puck. He has a good checking presence but the result to create turnovers needs to be better. Offensively, he does not drive enough scoring chances. He takes the middle, competes hard and open plays but with mostly short plays, both in time as well as distance. He is a bit simplistic and will be best at playing with a driver around him. His size, and hopefully gaining some strength and better skating technique could make him an interesting complementary forward that contributes with good transitional play and a connector of plays in the offensive zone.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

I don't know how much upside there really is with Nordh. He's mostly been just a cross-lane transition passer, and a good one at that, but not much more. He has the odd offensive moment, mostly with playmaking, but it's nowhere near consistent enough. He actually often fails to scan and instead just passes blind towards the slot, unsurprisingly with a low success rate. The defensive game isn't that great either. There was a situation where he was positioned down low to defend a man in front of the net after entering the DZ as F1, but then gave up on him and the centre couldn't react quickly enough to cover, resulting in a goal against. Even if he technically wasn't who Nordh was supposed to cover there as a winger, it was just a very weird lapse of judgement.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Pretty standard Nordh viewing. I appreciate his transition game, mostly due to how well he's able to find a teammate in the middle on breakouts or longer passes for entries. Started many promising counter-attacks this way. The skating speed limits his transition upside somewhat, but it's fine enough for this level for him to get by and also create the odd entry with his feet. Offensively, he had one nice cut to the middle off the rush, followed by smart passing play to create a dangerous look by eliminating one of the defenders in the process. But aside from that, Nordh's offensive game was pretty bland. I don't think there's any high-end tools and the instincts are only solid, not particularly great.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

This was a better demonstration of Nordh's strengths. He was making clever cross-ice passes off the rush to build up plays. He tends to slow down, often even stop before passing, which does tend to work pretty well at this level but could be a problem in the future. He does flash some skating skill, cutting back on pressure on breakouts, using the odd heel-to-heel to deceive. Had a few playmaking flashes in the OZ, one of them netting him a primary assist after he got a bit lucky with a puck bounce during a turnover, but did well at converting it to a slip pass to the slot. He's probably a late pick for our board, but I'm not overly excited, still. He could maybe reasonably turn into a bottom-six winger with some skill, especially if he cleans his skating a bit and improves his awareness, starts to scan more and develops physically. And also turns up his defensive motor a bit more.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Nordh had a couple of quality looks in this one, driving the middle lane, receiving the pass from the boards, dropping his shoulder to gain body positioning and firing from the slot or receiving the puck in the net-front via a pass from the point. Skating is probably 4.5 grade on our scale, not as high on his stride as I was at some point during the season. I see the flashes of skill and even some playmaking chops, but they haven't been very consistent lately. He's mostly been an off-puck scoring threat with some defensive value, hustling back to grab his man to even out a potential odd-man rush and using his reach to disrupt a few shooting attempts.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - Canada East vs. Sweden - WJAC

Nordh's skating looked like a bigger issue in this one. He has the agility, the ten-and-two maneuverability on his inside edges, but apart from that, the forward stride is quite slow. He's a dangle-through-stick-and-feet stickhandler for the most part and could scan a bit more before making some of his passes. Still, the size and length and overall skill level remains appealing. Not sure if he's a pick. He couldn't really find chemistry with Stenberg in this tournament.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs Latvia - WJAC

Nordh has the length and some skill to complement. He towered over that young Latvian team and used his size to protect the

puck on the boards, get pucks to the net, and his length to dangle around a couple of sticks. He seems like a raw prospect, but his skating stride is still somewhat projectable -- if he gets the right coaches to help him hone its mechanics and develop more power. He could become a net-front presence in the NHL, a secondary scorer, and a board player with some checking ability. He's a long-shot, but he feels like a player who will be drafted. The flashes of skill are intriguing.

Lassi Alanen: November 27th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

This was a pretty complete no-show from Nordh at 5-on-5. There was really only one notable play where he deked his way through a defender off the rush, cut to the middle and used a combination of outside edges and heavy leaning to gain the body positioning for a scoring chance, though he whiffed quite hard on the shot itself. I probably overestimated Nordh's skating ability a bit in the past, it's probably closer to a below-average projection overall. Transition plays were cut short due to overhandling and poor puck placement, also a lack of physical strength as he got outmuscled when he tried to get physical. He didn't look like a pick in this one, but maybe it's just a one bad night.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Nordh definitely has some playmaking skill. He flashes manipulation abilities, moving defenders out of his intended lane with his rush routes, doesn't give away the intended lane with his body language. Looks for slip passes to the middle. It's a bit odd that he isn't producing more, though he does play on a low-scoring team. His transitional play has been very solid in almost every viewing I've had, always looking to move the puck to the middle, using his middle lane a lot of a winger even with his own carries. Has the physical tools and the willingness to engage to win body positioning and puck battles. Defensively, there are some good moments of awareness but a bit puck-focused at times. He could be an interesting project pick.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Timrå IK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Nordh continues to show intriguing elements. He scored twice in this one, with the second goal being particularly noteworthy: a forechecking steal after a failed entry by his teammate, turned straight into a drop pass, then moving to the back post for a tap-in. Nordh's ability to link different skills together is notable. He can combine forechecking, physical play and playmaking. Good vision, identifies plays quickly and executes on them with accuracy. Completed four slot passes without any misses. I could see an argument for a mid-round pick.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Interesting outing for Nordh here, quite a bit better compared to my previous one. He was putting in serious work on the forecheck, using his strength and frame advantage to gaining body positioning to break up plays and establish pressure in the OZ. Some well-executed cutbacks here and there, too. Got a few looks by working below the net and then bringing the puck slightly above the goal line for a decent chance. Skating looked pretty decent, probably an average projection. Skill level is a bit of a question mark.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Leksands IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Nordh's noticeable plays in this one can be easily counted with one hand. The best came in the way of recovering an OZ entry chip, cutting back and making a feed to the trailing defenceman who had a runaway of space and took advantage of it, roofing the puck with a slap shot. Other than that primary assist, Nordh wasn't able to find success offensively or defensively. Opted for dump-outs under pressure, failed to create off the rush due to heavily relying on beating defender's 1-on-1, even if he did do a decent job at attacking them in arcs instead of just head on. Skating looked close to average projection-wise. Not a notably hard worker either. Shot is definitely heavy but when he got a solid chance from mid-distance, it missed the net by a meter or two.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Nordh was probably the only Swedish forward who showed up against Canada, creating his fair share of dangerous looks, throwing the body, and playing solid defensive hockey. Showed some flashes of handling skill in this contest, and I'd even rate his mobility as a relative strength for someone his size. He's not exactly what you'd call a burner in a straight line, but he sure is shifty. Found myself pretty impressed by Nordh's off-puck game in this contest. There may be a mid-round player here, but... it's early.

Grade: C



100 Adam Gajan

AGE 18.362 DATE OF BIRTH May 06, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'3" Height	176 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6 Skating	5.5 Transitions	4.5 Hands
4.5 Tracking	4 Post	5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	6	2.48	.906	1
Chippewa Steel	NAHL	34	2.57	.917	1
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	4	2.40	.936	1

SCOUTING REPORT

Slovakia's Adam Gajan is a University of Minnesota-Duluth commit who made a lot of headlines with his stellar play at the 2023 World Junior Championship.

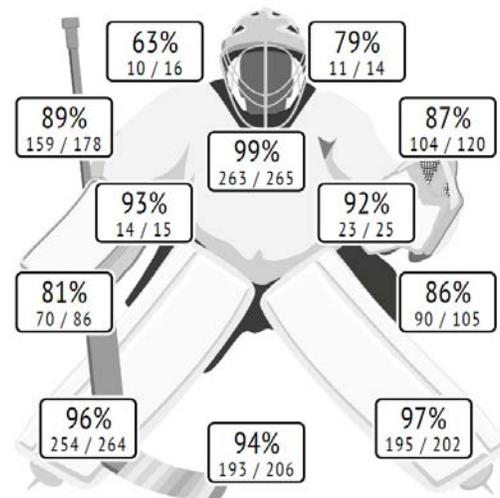
This is his second kick at the can after going undrafted in his first year of eligibility, and he finished the year as the sixth-ranked goaltender in North America according to NHL Central Scouting. That tells you just how much he has seen his stock rise in the last 365 days.

Boasting a 6-foot-3 frame, Gajan complements it nicely with the strength and quickness of his pushes. His legs are springy, especially when pushing off the post, but he also has a tendency to overshoot his mark quite often. He uses the overlap technique aggressively, and can get caught out of position if the shooter drives wide or goes for a wraparound attempt. Due to the overlap, he's standing an extra foot outside of the post and has a long way to get across to the other side of the net.

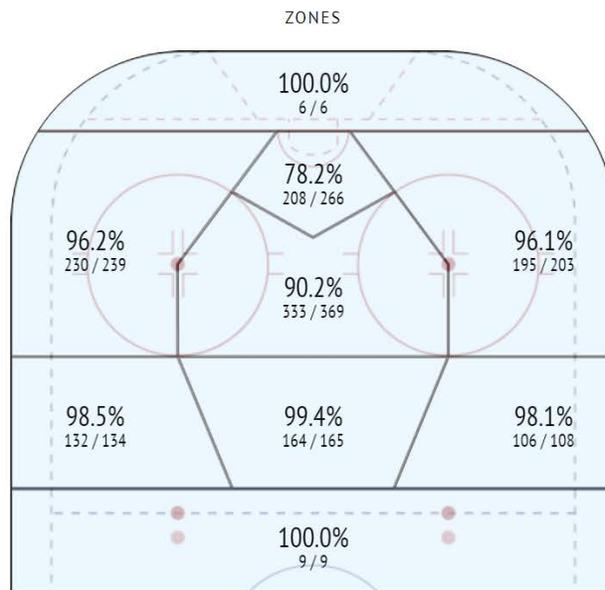
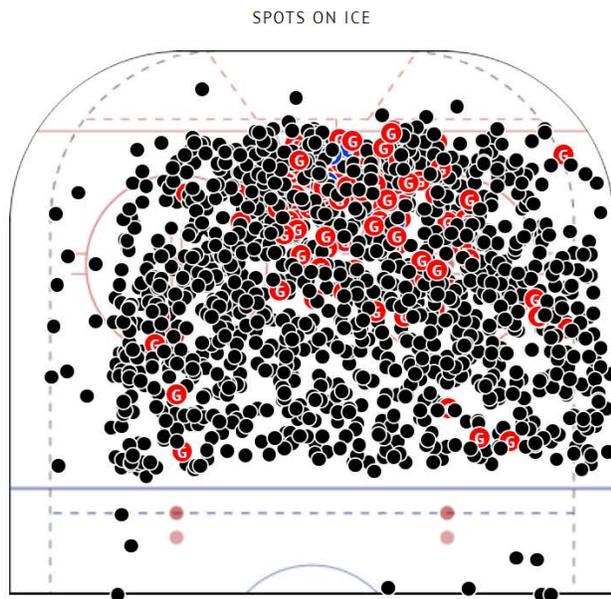
Gajan's flexibility is great and he loves to show it off. You will often see him bust into the full splits on one-timers, moving side-to-side. Leading with the head and hands while keeping the torso up may be a better way to go in some of those scenarios, especially if he wants to be able to recover and set himself up to make a second or third save.

Ultimately, Gajan is an energetic goaltender who has good play-reading instincts and reactions. The experience and situational awareness that he will gain from playing in college could be the key to unlocking his talent.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE





Grade: C

101 Hudson Thornton

AGE 18.866 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 04, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Transition Ace



Tactician



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Prince George Cougars "A"	WHL	68	23	51	74	1.09

SCOUTING REPORT

Elite Prospects' 80th-ranked player for the 2022 NHL Draft, Hudson Thornton makes his second-straight appearance in these parts. Simply put: He should've been picked last season. The tools were there, the reads were there, and the work rate was there. Now, he's one of the WHL's best blueliners, and most productive, with a 74-point campaign.

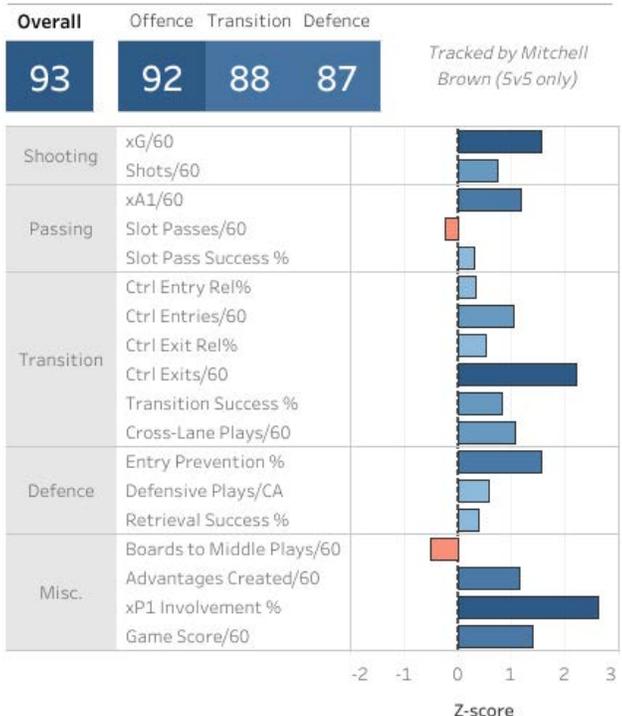
There isn't a single area where Thornton didn't improve this season, but the puck game's the clearest. In transition, he's weeded out the low-value players, instead preferring to make quick outlets to open teammates, pass through forecheckers, and occasionally manipulate opponents to create passing lanes.

Then, it's off to the races. Thornton sprints up the ice to join the play, staying in space or skating his route to completion as the situation calls for it. Improved puck control and creativity had him more of a scoring threat. The one-timer's a clear NHL shot, and he creates space for his shot with fakes and quick changes of direction – those two skills are how he scored most of his 23 goals.

When play comes back the other way, Thornton's more equipped to kill plays than ever. "There's a heightened acknowledgement of protecting the inside lane, especially when he is in situations where a consistent gap couldn't be formed," Elite Prospects crossover scout

Hudson Thornton

D | Prince George Cougars | WHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 188.4



Daniel Gee wrote. "Still has a level of aggressiveness on his own blue line, but his feet are more controlled and he's less prone to having his momentum manipulated."

Thornton's game remains chaotic. He's mistake-prone with the puck, and he's still learning how to best use his skills. Depending on how the skating comes along, he could become an NHL-calibre defenceman, perhaps as a bottom-pairing option who posts stellar underlying results.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: March 17th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Three points for Thornton in an incredible performance for the draft-plus-one. Where the Thornton last year was quick to throw away pucks and overextend, this year's player is almost the exact opposite, flexing a delay game, control in his own zone, and pushing upside across all facets of his game. Was a stalwart defender for the Cougars in transition -- drove multiple attacks wide with his gap and positioning. There's a heightened acknowledgement of protecting the inside lane, especially when he is in situations where a consistent gap couldn't be formed. Still has a level of aggressiveness on his own blue line, but his feet are more controlled and he's less prone to having his momentum manipulated. Thornton made a couple of reads leading to stops on secondary threats -- one on a net crasher and the other on a man attacking a rebound. Got caught with poor body positioning on one play but corrected it fairly quick. Not much sustained defending at all -- Victoria barely could set up in this one.

A far more confident player in transition, Thornton was flashing a lot of translatable habits. Double shoulder checks on retrievals and the blending of his hands allowed for some escapability. Has an extra gear to push more pace on-puck and can think a couple plays ahead. In the second on a 4-on-4, Thornton passed off on the entry, got the puck back and fed Wheatcroft, wide open in the slot, but he bobbed the reception. Where Thornton dominated was in sustained pressure. Flexes some four way mobility on the line with the puck, but he comes alive when he doesn't have possession. His activations and the accompanying reads have only improved over the past two seasons. He drops down, shuffles into open lanes and is locked and loaded to shoot if a layered pass comes through. On a second period powerplay he teed up Ziemmer, slot to the left-hand circle for an assist. His best sequence was on a third period 4-on-4. Thornton entered the offensive zone on the right-wing, activated his edges and beat a defender with a backhand deke, cutting into the slot in the process. From there he sniped a wrist shot glove side with the goaltender set. Clean mechanics and probably one of the best plays I have seen across his WHL career.

He created so much, funnelled play into the middle, and was the best player in the game other than Ziemmer. Looks like a higher-end C-grade for our board. I can't believe he wasn't selected last year -- a lot of upside in the offensive end of the ice.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Two goals for Thornton and monstrous performance overall. The goals were both intelligent off-puck reads. He uses space on the weak side, dips behind defenders, and pops inside at the right moments. Shot is a clear NHL projection, highlighted by his one-timer. The breakouts weren't consistently creating advantages, but he also sent a teammate in alone, and this was the best defensive performance I've seen from him in a while. He closed space immediately, forcing opponents to the boards because running over them. He grabbed clean stops and left pucks in space, too. Tools are closer to average projections, but the brain's above it. He's a 90s candidate for us, perhaps the best re-entry defenceman after Dionicio.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Thornton set up the overtime winner and scored with a step-in bomb at 5-on-5. All of his performances are roughly the same these days. He's one of the WHL's most effective blue-liners, even if he's on the more inefficient side. He misses outlets and the creation's variable, but the highs are right in line with the other draft-plus-one defenders in the league. And that's not to mention the defence. He gets in opponents' faces immediately but doesn't overextend. The big question is the offensive upside. There are flashes of creativity and manipulation, but nothing concrete enough to confirm they are hidden by the structure. He's a pick, but perhaps more of an end-of-board candidate for us.

Daniel Gee: January 28th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Not one of Thornton's best games, especially offensively. For the most part his decision making on the blueline was just poor -- he wasn't moving laterally or manipulating the high defender enough, leading to some pretty egregious shot attempts that didn't even make it past the first layer. He had a beautiful activation in the second, a play where he worked down the left-wing, handled to get inside the dotted-lines and unleashed a backhand on net while cutting. Beyond that he was just too inefficient. His transition game was even quieter. He overcomplicates some of his retrieval work, sometimes sending weak reverses that require instant support. His stride just becomes shorter and shorter on his in-motion carry outs.

In his own end, it was a typical Thornton performance -- he fought like hell to work box outs, loaded into blocking postures a bit too early, and he buried a couple opponents in end-board battles. One one shift he rolled PA20 in the corner and shifted to the net front where he won a battle and cleared the crease. His worst sequence was a weak clearance in the second -- it led to a long sustained sequence and a Cougars penalty -- just an unnecessary mistake. In transition he was keeping in the middle of odd-man rushes, forcing shots. His gap is great but his stick is far too passive -- allowing a man to get a clean shot off in the second leading to a goal against. Very aggressive in his step-ups on the blue line. Production is still strong and I've seen better from him -- but these types of games are probably why he was passed over last year. Should still be a pick for our board based on the upside -- C or D grade.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Thornton's inefficient with his touches. He ranges between planned, intelligent breakouts that create advantages to panicked offloads. That's not uncommon for high-minute players, especially because he's really the only viable puck-moving option on PG's blue-line. When it's working, he looks like a potential NHLer. He creates advantages, manipulating incoming pressure, cuts back at the right moments to escape pressure, and kills tons of plays in the neutral zone. Aggressive defending; he angles and then charges at the opponent to erase them. The offence was mostly shooting with a couple of intelligent passes mixed in. He still looks like a candidate for our board, perhaps in the 80s.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

A messy game on the breakout from Thornton. He tried to outskate pressure but his feet didn't allow it. He flung away pucks with space. But he also made some high-end reads, like manipulating the incoming defender before setting up a moving teammate up the middle. Created a high-danger chance by scanning before reception, moving wide, then passing through two defenders. He's always feeling it defensively. Energy's high, scanning's regular, and closes space with aggression (sometimes too much). He should make our board this year in the later stages. The combination of skills and defence could make him an NHLer.

Daniel Gee: November 23rd, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton was strong on the breakout in this game. He was working the puck in-motion, executing weight-shifts past neutral zone resistances, and blending improved handling through pressure. He loves to load proactive speed into downhill attacks -- Thornton nearly scored on a right wing entry, wiring a hard wristshot in-stride, knocking the Moose Jaw goaltenders blocker. He was a force on the blueline on multiple PG powerplays. He leverages his snappy release to send hard, knee-high shots into traffic. There's legit deception on the blueline now -- he's still learning how to fully leverage the play after faking shots, but it's a good sign. One-touches from the point and activation down the weakside were all present habits.

He's still a very chaotic defender. In transition he has trouble judging speed, leading into uncontrolled chasing. Thornton was caught high after activations on a couple of sequences. In sustained pressure, this was one of the stronger games I've seen from him. Breakups on the endboards, proactive body positioning on retrievals, and generally making live miserable for attackers on the perimeter -- taking a piece on every engagement. I don't know why he wasn't drafted -- there's a great base here and he has the production to back it up.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Thornton continues to impress as a re-entry. He's activating far more often, showing pretty advanced skills in the process. Starts give-and-gos, sprints his off-puck routes to create space, and even deceives a bit. From the point, he was mostly limited to shooting, but he has sound details. He moves through pass receptions with his head up, moving his top hand away from his body to take pucks on his forehand. He tries those Makar point plays from his inside edges, but he panics if the defender gets too close, failing to complete the manipulation process. His defensive game is so impressive. He takes away the middle before closing space early; gets lots of break ups in the neutral zone. He's still unrefined with the puck, but he's getting closer. Should be an easy re-entry pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Thornton's much better at using space and activating this season. On the powerplay, he steps in, draws pressure, then explodes laterally into the lane. Used that on his first goal, combining the movement with a shot fake. The hands look improved, he's moving pucks more fluidly with top hand positioning, keeping pucks in his hip pocket instead of in front. Still struggles a bit when in tight. Shot's a legit NHL weapon, showing a variety of releases: pump fake into a wrister, more traditional outside leg shots, and catch-and-release shots where the momentum of the pass shifts his weight. Fills space effectively. Kills plays early, tracks the puck carrier high, and eliminates off-puck threats. Easy pick as a re-entry, but the upside's still likely a bottom-pairing defender.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Prince George looks way better this year: tons of activation and more creativity on breakouts. Thornton's playing a much more aggressive game, too. He uses give-and-gos to activate off the point, jumps into the play constantly, and even gambles on pinches now. It's not always pretty, but he consistently tries to create from those positions. On breakouts, he's now bringing pucks inside, deceiving pressure, and firing long-range cross-ice passes. There are turnovers, but he hasn't played like this in years – turnovers are expected. He's the same effective defender, combining aggressiveness and proactive movement to trap the puck carrier along the boards and eliminate off-puck threats. Still prone to getting broken down by speed and deception, but defence could become a strength. Looks like a slam-dunk re-entry pick.

Mitchell Brown: April 26th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

When Thornton's activating into the play regularly, he shines. He's a proactive activator who shows both passing and shooting skill. In this game, he had a couple of chances, including one following a give-and-go with a two-touch wrister. He's also a solid play-killer, keeping a tight gap and getting stops at the blue line. Breakouts were mostly simple plays. Cutback into pressure twice, despite having an open lane to continue moving forward – it's clear that he doesn't always see options. Turns and cuts lack depth, and it's uncommon for him to truly find much separation, even when moving into the puck with speed. Some tools with flashes of intelligence and play-killing. Bottom-pairing potential with a significant path to get there. Probably an 80s candidate.

Daniel Gee: April 9th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Strong defending off the rush in this game for Thornton. Very aggressive on his own blue-line, sealing off the centre lane before Royal attackers could adjust their rush patterns. Gap was a major reason why he was effective in this one, blending stickwork to deflect pass attempts and receptions -- proactive. He can become very uncontrolled at times; especially when there are systematic breakdowns; he becomes hyper aggressive, over-extends, momentum easily manipulated. He had a second period shift where he conceded a high-danger chance while trying to recover on a quick 2-on-1. Cobatted a pretty nasty cut-back in the third. Thornton's play in his own zone was very typical to other viewings; struggles to seal off the end-boards despite his best efforts. He made a wonderful stop late in the game, reading a cross-ice pass and getting his stick in the lane. Was very aggressive at some points, chasing man-on-man coverage opportunities.

Thornton's main area of growth this season is in the offensive zone. Much more patient on-puck in this viewing. In the third, he executed a stutter step in pressure off the line and got the shot through -- he was panicked, but it worked. Thornton continued to be a really strong activation threat off-puck. In the first he drifted down and was able to get a sharp angle shot off. Later in the shift he worked the puck off the left-hand point and placed a shot glove side -- great chance that included a lateral cut plus patience. On a powerplay in the second after sending a low placed shot from the point, he crashed a rebound and created a bunch of chaos.

Overall really impactful. Easy player to bump for others when it comes to our final board -- production is nice considering QoT. Solid B prospect that might drift into the third round in our final rankings.

Mitchell Brown: April 3rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton has some defensive ability with flashes of puck skills and offence. He's best when he's activating and using his tools to manipulate defenders. Both of those are rare. And when he tries, he doesn't maximize his impact. Too often, he settles for low-percentage plays on breakouts. He missed opportunities to use the middle, delay, or pass cross-ice. Those are team-wide trends on Prince George, but without more confidence in his skills, he won't make the NHL. Defensively, he often gives attackers too much space, but shows play-killing instincts deeper in the zone. Nothing too advanced but he mirrors footwork and gets inside positioning. He didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Thornton's frustrating. He's clearly skilled enough to be a play-driver. In this game alone, he connected with a long-range pass for a breakaway after reading the forechecker's feet and cutting away. He anticipates rush activation opportunities, sprinting into the play from defensive zone coverage before his forwards even react. And he starts give-and-go sequences and clearly understands how to develop offence in the offensive end. But he just doesn't too often. He makes simple plays, throws the puck away, and defers too early. Defensively, he's solid. He eliminates threats, gets inside positioning, and kills tons of plays off the rush. Even when he concedes the zone, he keeps plays to the perimeter. Tight gap off-puck. I don't know what to make of him. The flashes are second-round but the inconsistency is more third-round.

Daniel Gee: February 11th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton was more aggressive in this viewing, akin to some of his performances early in the season. This aggression was present in all three zones, particularly in transition. Whether he was forcing a hard-to-breakthrough gap, adjusting with his footwork, or taking hard neutral zone swings at puck carriers, Thornton was a play killer in this one. Never really ever caught with poor body position, Thornton also made a few inside-lane protection swings, killing slot cuts and ticky rush patterns presented by some of the Giants' forwards. This aggression burnt him in sustained pressure; while he always is involved below the goal line, the sequences after lost puck battles cause the most problems for Thornton. With low-to-high plays, he usually attaches to secondary threat shutdowns (tying up tip threats and boxing out net front attackers). Any other centering plays to the circles or slot, handcuffs Thornton to some extent.

On multiple shifts he was clearly behind the play as the pass released -- could be an absence of scanning out of the battles. The habits in the defensive zone have remained consistent; he relies on his edges and feet to help contain attackers on the perimeter. He micro-scans and gets into passing and shooting lanes proactively. Not strong enough to really be a real physical presence -- should change as he develops.

As other colleagues have mentioned in past reports, Thornton really fails to use his clear ability to escape with pucks out of retrievals, always defaulting to messier but more simple D-to-D passes or uncontrolled board ups. He had one great retrieval through; in the third, Thornton scanned while he grabbed the puck, wheeled around his net, carried the puck end-to-end using a combination of weight shifts and picked up a tonne of speed through his crossovers. He just managed to get a shot off, stick-side off the right wing. If only he did that more. In sustained offensive zone pressure, Thornton was doing some great things; one-touch passes, constant downhill activations to add himself as a pass option, cut-backs to release pressure and a lot of board-to-slot puck movement.

In the first, he activated downhill and slipped a pass to Ziemmer for a high-danger tip. Was available for a couple other cross crease passes that never came. Picks his activation times well. Thornton also facilitated a couple of keep-ins that required a fair amount of small-area handling and hand-eye. Still looks like a second round talent that will probably slip a fair bit-- maybe at the end of the round. Probably plays too many minutes currently (such a massive taks on the PK and PP). Want him to activate his tools more often; the question is, will he ever?

Mitchell Brown: December 17th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

If there's a consistent theme with my Thornton viewings this year, it's that I'm always left wanting more. Not much, but just enough to make me question his upside. He's a strong defender with a number of ways to kill plays: he'll pivot early and surf across, break up plays in face-to-face sequences, outwork players, and time his checks at the point of least resistance.

He broke up two plays where the attacker tried to dangle through him, largely because he closed space quickly, forced the move, and then swiped the puck away just as they thought he was giving them space under his stick. Two activation sequences: (1) working laterally and finding the pass to the teammate on the far post, and (2) reading the feet of the incoming defender, deking around, and then losing the puck. Needs to be more aggressive with the puck. On retrievals, it seems like he's content to make the simple play inside of using his tools to step inside, manipulate, and pass. It often seems like he's playing below his skill level.

J.D. Burke: December 18th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Really not sure what to make of Thornton's play in this game. It was a bit of a mixed bag with some good moments, some not-so-good ones, and a little bit of in between. Some of his best work occurred in the offensive zone. Some offensive blue line activations, some deception as a distributor... all that fun stuff.

Foot work defending through the neutral zone was ghastly poor; my mans literally tripped on air at one point as a Giants forward essentially came at him in a straight line. That's going to happen when you're as hyper aggressive as Thornton is between the blue lines though, I guess. Lost containment along the boards on a goal against. Made some panicked plays on defensive zone retrievals.

Daniel Gee: December 14th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton's whole game is built on competitiveness, awareness, and a maximization of his tools. He may not be the best puck handler, skater, shooter, or physical force in the defensive zone, but the sum of all his parts creates an effective player with major scalability.

In this viewing, Thornton remained remarkably consistent when comparing his play to other games previous in the season. His gap control in transition was measured; he snaps onto players like a magnet and pushes aggression at the right times. In the first he made a huge lateral shift from the far-boards to the middle of his blueline to knock the puck off the stick of a slot entering Giant player . The footwork and control he had was pretty wild. He may have reached more than I would have liked on a couple of perimeter entries. Thornton was once again proactive in his stick placement, working to get it into releases and lanes. Stopped a sure goal in the third deflecting a cross-crease pass away. Early identification of secondary threats paid off; in the first he scanned a driving Giant and stick checked him, eliminating him from the play. One of the first times I have seen him unable to mirror the footwork of an opponent. He was also manipulated on the net-front by a Giant who faked a pass behind the net and took it into the crease and scored. Probably needs to slow it down a bit.

Transitionally, he was able to head-man a couple of rushes; in the first he increased his pace, drove on the right-wing, and fed MacAdams in the slot (who called for it but was instantly checked). Almost worked in a powermove in the second, one arm deflecting the pressure -- play was ultimately offside. A couple of in-motion breakouts in this viewing but generally quiet. He struggled a bit in sustained pressure. He had a really competitive shift at the end of the game with the Giants pushing to cut the lead in half.

This was a really impactful game in the offensive zone; it has me questioning if we underrate him a bit. In the first he scored a wild goal. After two great activations down to the top of the right-hand circle, a centering pass from the near corner deflected off a teammate and into Thornton's vicinity. In one motion he sniped a shot stick-side -- impossible to save. Wicked release on the shot. Habits wise he was constantly one-touching pucks, sometimes on the backhand. On a late powerplay he sent a low bullet of a shot while activating downhill -- he had half the net but directed it five-hole for whatever reason. He's undoubtedly a second-rounder, probably even a first-round talent based on my viewings.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2021 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton was arguably the best player in this game, highlighted by his rush defence, DZC, and shooting. He lacks some consistency in just about every dimension of game, whether that's activation, closing space in the NZ, or breakouts. Still, the flashes are exciting. He'll disrupt tricky rushes before diffusing them deeper in his zone without over-extending. When he activates, he fully commits,

using his knees-over-toes, hips-tilted-back stride to launch himself up the ice and get a scoring chance. He had fired off a classic in-stride wrister another transitioning directly from his strides to his outside leg and firing for his goal. Both shots require plenty of refinement, but that he's changing the rhythm of his releases and able to transition his weight quickly matters most at this stage. Lacks deception on the breakout, although he looks cross-lane for options. Establishes positioning and pre-scans on retrievals but still has difficulty connecting with the subsequent pass. He's definitely a draft pick, perhaps as high as an early second.

Daniel Gee: November 10th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was a typical Hudson Thornton game, for the most part. He stopped plays, was uber-competitive in his own zone, and pushed pace on practically every shift. The Cougars were hemmed in their defensive zone for most of the game and Thornton, who was on the first pairing, took the majority of the leg work -- especially on the penalty kill. More mistake prone than I have seen him in past viewings, breaking more rather than bending on some sequences.

Thornton's transitional defending was a mixed bag in this game. The good side of Thornton is when he mirrors footwork, maintains his gap, and stops play. In the first he gapped up well, poking a puck in the high slot, chasing the retrieval to the corner and containing until support came. Later he beat out an attacker on a broken play one-on-one, getting his tick in the release of their shot as they tried to manipulate and shoot around him. Thornton also threw a cataclysmic hit on the near boards after a lane clog in the second and rejected a rush on the blue line in the third. Static feet burnt him on another sequence, conceding the inside lane to Hall, who snipped a powerplay goal top shelf on Brennan.

A bit passive on a couple of blue-line entries, activating late on the rush attempts. As mentioned, he was essentially in his own zone for 70% of this game. Thornton pushed the same translatable habits I have seen before; scanning and mental mapping, mobile activations to clog lanes, and a tonne of battles within the crease. He had some great battles with Sourdif -- one one shift he swung into a pass lane on the right-hand circle, stretching out to poke a puck away from Sourdif who was constantly trying to feather pucks in the crease to create chaos. The most concerning play was when Thornton was essentially pushed to the outside on scrum -- lack of strength was an issue there.

A factor in the transition, Thornton joined multiple rushes and facilitated a couple of carry-ins. Had a questionable shot attempt attacking up the middle that was deflected away (had support on the wings). Turned aside on a power move up the right-wing on another play -- more appreciative of the attempt than anything. On a powerplay in the second, Thornton executed a board bank into space, cross crease that led to a high danger chance. He's a downhill shooter who activates on the weak side. One stutter-step manipulation play on the left point allowed him to move down the boards and fire off a slow placed laser just wide. Looks like a second-round guy (middle-to-bottom pairing projection) -- he's a max effort type of player.

Cam Robinson: October 30th, 2021 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton has decent feet and can manipulate at the top of the zone to set up plays or get shots through, but it's inconsistent and lacking creativity and perhaps confidence. I do like his lateral mobility and generally, four-way mobility on the back peddle. The skating posture is a bit hunched over.

Defensively, he showed smart footwork mirroring and squashed plays before they could get started through the NZ. In-zone, he's structurally pretty sound in his positioning and doesn't chase. He can make interesting decisions to jump start the offense that didn't always work, but I'll take that need for refinement over a less desirable trait of safety first at the junior level. He's a leader on this team as a d-eligible. I like that.

Thornton continues to intrigue me as a player who could see their game pop over the next 18 months

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton's offensive impact comes and goes -- that's my biggest issue. It's not that he doesn't want to be involved. He activates at the right times, calls for the puck, and proactively fills space. And once he gets the puck, he's such a strong lateral mover and fast-paced decision-maker that he creates openings. But he gives up on activation sequences, makes safe plays, and generally

seems a bit rushed in his decision-making with the puck. It's visible on the breakout, where he throws pucks into space but his intended target's nowhere near.

Defensively, he's a solid above-average projection. Not significantly so, but his defensive skating is mostly quiet for this level, and he kills a ton of plays. If he gets backed up, he makes up the distance while angling the play to the perimeter. If not, he kills the puck early and starts it back up the ice. Quite physical. Lots of shoulder-checking and general awareness. Some decision-making issues but he'll tighten it up given his skating, motor, and habits. Given his age, I need to see more assertiveness and consistency with the puck. For now, he's more of a second-rounder.

Daniel Gee: October 27th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Remains one of the more interesting and projectable defenders in the WHL. Thornton was a force once again on both sides of the puck and was straight-up the best Cougar in this game.

So much of Thornton's game is in motion, combining edge based activations, while blending hard, pin-point outlet passes. In this game in particular, Thornton was deep in his bag in terms of skating skill, pushing four-way mobility and quick transporting all game. I'm talking mohawk to round his own net quicker, exploding out of the maneuver to escape pressure, and generally being a deceptive pivot utilizer to shake off attackers. Breakouts were clean in this game, gets his feet moving and facilitates momentum-based attacks. In the first, Thornton shoulder peaked on a retrieval, facilitating the D-to-D ring, and then activated on the rush, taking a shot high in the slot (arm unlocked release, weight-transfer & downforce), creating a rebound and a primary assist. Habits in transition are strong -- he even had some hip-pocket puck protection on one controlled entry that ended up into a perimeter play.

He was a beast in sustained pressure again. Continued his overall habit of working pucks from the perimeter in the middle while blending some handling. He patterns into shooting from the top of the point, looking for rebounds off the boards or net-front but he generally gets the puck through as he opens up lanes with his lateral movement. Actively held up on a one timer to float a more tipable puck on one play in the first. Thornton had a couple dangerous weak-side activations, working into an open cross-ice lane but didn't get the pass -- visibly frustrated by it. Heeled multiple one-time shots, one in the second as he activated downhill, the other on a powerplay in the second -- scans the traffic but had timing issues. Thornton was a bit inefficient passing in sustained pressure; he's working into dangerous areas and is middle oriented with his attempts, he had multiple attempts rejected as the puck got lost in layers.

Thornton had a couple of standout transitional sequences. In the first he was hesitant on a lane clog, but prevented a pass to the crease, forcing the attacker to hit a trailer -- Thornton instantly snapped off to the secondary crease threat and tied up their stick -- insane processing. Showed general patterns from other games in terms of limiting perimeter shots with his stick work -- multiple sticks in release stops. Weakest play was on a Schuurman activation where Thornton bit hard on a weight-shift while on a powerplay, allowing the inside lane. He sometimes gets caught in poor-body positions transitionally, opting to leverage his forward stride instead of a pivot -- on one sequence he was able to contort his upper body enough to make a wild pokecheck while facing the opposite direction -- this habit will be exploited hard in Pro.

Felt that Thornton's defensive mental and physical pace in sustained scenarios was high-end. He is so proactive in clogging lanes, exploding back and forth proactively. On one penalty kill in the second, he blocked a Schuurman shot, contained a drive and roughed up the attacker, and finally jumped into another lane to get the clear. Stand out sequence. Pretty clear that Thornton should go high in this draft.

Cam Robinson: October 22nd, 2020 - Prince George Cougars vs Victoria Royals - WHL

The defining quality with Thornton is he has some really nice feet. He pivots fluidly and well in all three zones, has his head up and can make straightforward outlets on a regular basis. Stood up and protected the line well with oncoming rushes. He snapped a 100 foot bomb of an outlet in the middle frame that was very nice. He owns some good mechanics on the one-timer and was used at the top of the umbrella in a 5-on-3 situation.

On the PK, he's smartly positioned and held his ground in 1v1 battles at the netfront and jumped on weaknesses. He turned into

the boards on a hit and sold it as if he were hurt but popped up when the call was made. Not a great look but got the PP at least. Skating is structurally pretty sound - smooth extension and recovery. Could use a bit more ankle flexion for the toe snap.

Daniel Gee: October 18th, 2021 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Thornton played a very rushed game against Victoria, struggling more than what I have seen over the past month. He was much more mistake prone leading to some nuclear plays, but he was impactful as ever.

Thornton faced a ton of shorthand and sustained pressure minutes in this game. Still showing projectable habits; shoulder peaks on retrievals, establish body positioning down low, escapability, quick processing, active and probing stick checkers clogging lanes, and stick-in release stops. Puck battles were always seemingly focused in his corner and he won the vast majority of them, regaining possession. Transitional stops were still a highlight of his game. Multiple angle offs limited Victoria's Shuurman from doing damage on the inside. Was beat on one manipulation play in the neutral zone, biting hard and giving up the inside lane. Actions out of retrievals were the issue tonight. Lacked scanning habits and rushed breakout passes. The most egregious error came in the first; After rejecting a rush down the RW, Thornton threw the puck directly into the slot trying to hit a breaking out Cougars forward -- the pass was intercepted leading to a high danger break for Victoria. He had another outlet picked off, struggling to get in motion while passing. It led to full breakdown and collapse that had Kmec and Thornton collapsed deep to their net, resulting in a goal against.

Offensively, Thornton was pretty strong. Other than the execution errors on outlets, he had a wonderful three-line carry, showing some projectable large-ice maneuverability, blending a shot in the high slot -- individualistic but good to see him leveraging his tools. Thornton also had a couple of standout offensive zone shifts. Takes purposeful shots aimed to create rebounds. Strong weight-transfer mechanics on a one-timer in the first. If this was the only game you have seen of Thornton you would probably think he's pretty volatile as a player.

Daniel Gee: October 17th, 2021 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Another day, another monster game for Hudson Thornton, who was one of the more dynamic players on the ice for both Prince George and Victoria.

Thornton's a gamer in every sense of the word. Defensively, he was uber involved, impactful, and executed multiple stops. While defending the transition, Thornton was once again a stout protector of the inside lane. Even in scenarios where he picked up driving threats late, he fought hard to maintain a consistent gap, probe with his stick, and limit shots by disrupting his opponents releases. Aggressive on the blueline within measure, he activated perfectly on a sequence in the second to reject an inside move that his partner was beat on. Supporting habits are immense, and I don't think he allowed any dotted-line activations on Victoria strong-side activations.

In sustained scenarios, he was bombarded early with constant penalty kill shifts. On a 5-on-3, he clogged lanes extremely well, jumping around proactively as Victoria tried to collapse Prince George's formation. He made a wonderful read on Schuurman cross-ice pass, tying up a tip threat in front as the puck flew through the crease. In general Thornton was proactive, constantly dropping to a knee to block lanes, and again deflected numerous shots high with his great stick work. As shift lengths expanded, processing issues do appear -- he becomes very fixated on puck carriers, losing proactiveness; it can lead to some high-danger chances against.

Thornton had a command of his game offensively. He was always in motion, activating constantly off the left-point. On one shift he actually jumped off the bench onto a loose puck, shot on the perimeter and ultimately ended up taking the puck into the crease creating a tonne of chaos. He attempted multiple sharp angle shots, creating massive rebounds. Thornton's distribution was also impressive. With 4 minutes left to play, and some sustained cycling, Thornton made a perfect pass to Kmec from the near boards, which resulted in a shot and a Heidt GWG. He was executing one touches, give-and-go activations, and generally pushing a lot of stress on Victoria's defenders. Even in transitional sequences, he was leading rushes, making in-motion passes, and setting up drop-off passing plays. Ended the game with two assists.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Really strong start to the game but faded as it wore on. Still, Thornton has my attention. He stands out for his activation. He joins the rush like crazy on a very passive team. He's rarely just standing on the point, preferring to activate down the weak side, step in as close to the net as he reasonably can, and tries to manipulate defenders to create lanes. His feel for the puck needs some work, but he understands how to combine weight shifts, eye deception, and shot fakes to freeze defenders and go the other way. In one sequence, he used that activation to set up a chance with a backhand pass into the slot. As the game wore on, he activated less. He also became more turnover-prone, shoulder-checked less on retrievals, and grew more passive in his DZ coverage. Steady footwork while defending the rush, angles attackers wide, and was only beat on a high-level dot lane-crossing rush. Not a big deal.

He's quite physical, drives play up and away from his net, and has legit defensive timing ability. Powerful skater but lacks some depth. Puck skills are probably closer to average than above it, but he's an intelligent player who wants to be in the middle of the play. Looked like a top-two rounds pick in this game, if not a late-first.

Cam Robison: October 2nd, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL

A standout showing from the 17 year old. He looks every bit the part of a top-60 draft pick with his intelligent reads and anticipation. Defensively, he was stout in this one. His gap was tight and he used his stick well to disrupt the rush attempts. What really stood out was his footwork. He was balanced and comfortable in mirroring the oncoming forwards attack routes and was quick to expose a weakness and take the puck away. When set up in zone in the defensive end, he was constantly tracking the play and watching his six. He recognizes threats building quickly and gets his body and stick into lanes to mitigate them.

His shorthanded goal in the second period was the full meal deal. He extinguished the rush and forced the forward to bank around the boards; he popped into the slot, tied up a stick, cleared it out of the home plate area, then jumped on it and forced it to the flank. He jumped into the rush and turned it into a 3-on-1. His stride was on full display and he opened his hips and showed his flexibility to stay onside and keep his eyes on the puck. The finish was fine too.

It's early in the year, but this kid could have the juice to be a top round pick.

Daniel Gee: October 2nd, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Damn, Thornton was good in this game -- easily the best defender on the Cougars this game. His skill and ability to impose himself on a given game have undoubtedly grown over the offseason.

The translatable habits were plentiful and impactful all night for Thornton, who checked numerous boxes that indicate he will have success at higher levels. While defending transitional attacks, Thornton's lateral mobility translated into great gap control, making him practically unbeatable for Kamloops attackers. His feet become incredibly steady as attackers draw near, he timed stick checking activations perfectly, stepped up aggressively to eliminate room on the side boards, and constantly mirrored footwork to keep attacks to the outside. Even when defending on the weak side of attacks, Thornton was impactful. In the first, after numerous headchecks, he shifted to defend the slot, dropping to a knee to stop a cross-ice pass. A similar play occurred in the third, after missing a pokecheck he reacted extremely fast to clog the lane, again blocking the lateral facilitation.

Probably his best sequence of the game was born out of great defending. While penalty killing, an early scan allowed Thornton to deflect a pass, unable to clear the puck completely. He shifted to the slot, reading the danger to clog the high-danger Kamloops chance and speared the puck forward to start a break. Thornton joined the 3-on-2 rush, drifting to the left-wing, deflecting a puck in the net. These scanning into blocking plays were patterned throughout this game. His sustained defending, in general, was also impressive. Always activating to fill soft areas of coverages, covering lanes, and scanning. He had a pretty major defensive breakdown late in the game -- defending the net front, he got caught puck watching behind the goal line, not activating on an open crease threat -- ended up being the GWG, but it was honestly his only mistake of the game.

On top of the shorthanded rush goal Thornton had in the second, he had a couple of assists. One was born from a breakout that Heidt eventually redirected, and the other was a point pass to Hooker who scored off the right-hand circle. His transitional passing is great; hard, accurate, proper selection, backhand facilitations, board-banks -- good stuff. Sustained habits are even better -- constantly drags pucks to the middle of the dotted lines, incorporates a handling blend to freeze defenders, and has an NHL

average shot that constantly is facilitated through open seams. He has catch-and-release skill, scans and activates into pinch plays, attempts to drag and shoot around defenders. Love the habits. Above-average sense with average tools.

Daniel Gee: April 10th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

Hudson Thornton had an interesting game, flashing some translatable and non-translatable habits defensively against the Vancouver Giants.

Under sustained defensive zone pressure, Thornton profiles as a proactive lane clogger, who has the ability to rotate off of threats and re-focus his attention on other secondary off-puck opponents. Identification of high-danger threats was excellent in this game for Thornton -- multiple times, both in the first and third period, he was able to rotate off of transnational threats, getting his stick into the release, mitigating a couple of hashmark shots. Where Thornton is less proficient is defending on the transition. While he is willing to activate aggressively on his own blueline, Thornton rarely angles or guides attackers to the end boards. He heavily relies on backchecking pressure to do that work, while he defends the centre lane at all costs. This creates too many controlled entries and allows better attackers more leeway in creating off the perimeter. Some habits are good; Thornton rarely is beat through manipulation, keeping his feet mobile, but steady when facing on-puck attackers. His stick work, particularly his ability to intercept and knock pucks off of defenders is also fairly developed. Thornton can also mirror foot work pretty well, further preventing manipulation drives to the interior.

There is some projectability concern with Thornton's retrievals. In general, Thornton's skating limits him in one-on-one puck retrieval races. In this game, he relied on his goaltender and defensive partner to do heavy lifting on his end boards. (He collapses at the hips and has a static upper body, but possesses proper knee bend and shin angle -- can't activate an extra gear) As the match progressed, Thornton had more retrieval opportunities and did some interesting things. He attacks the puck at an angle, able to shift his boots rapidly in small-space to execute cut backs, pivots, and deceptive back passes against the grain. There's room to grow and add more skill here, and the habits are there.

Out of his retrievals, and into breakouts, Thornton put together a successful transitional performance. He completed a plethora of two-line breakouts, almost always in the mohawk -- a habit that allows him to scan while delaying (will have to be quicker at higher levels). He constantly activated on the weak side, adding himself into odd-man rushes. He scored a goal, activating up the near boards on a change, attacking into the Giants' zone with built up speed, shooting off the left-hand circle (arms unlocked, snap-release, exploited goaltender aggressiveness and picked the right corner). His controlled entries were limited but his unlocked right arm allowed for some maneuverability. In sustained offensive situations, Thornton again showed positive shooting mechanics -- particularly on one-timed attempts. He can leverage power through a dropped knee and can actually place the puck deftly. He almost scored on a 5-hole one-timer on a powerplay. He had an interesting drag to the middle of the point play in the third, working a give-and-go into another one-time shot. Some questionable pinch plays -- might have been systems. All-in-all, a player who has a strong base to build upon going into his draft year.

Grade: C



102 Tommaso De Luca

AGE 17.712 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 29, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Tactician



Analytics Darling

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

172 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Spokane Chiefs	WHL	65	16	33	49	0.75

SCOUTING REPORT

In the early stages of the season, Tommaso De Luca hardly registered on our radar. He was intelligent, but his game was just quick-possession plays: deflections, rebounds, and catch-and-release shots. But by the end of the season, the Italian-born Swiss forward was a play-driver for the Spokane Chiefs, showing a level of improvement rarely seen in a draft cycle.

In transition, De Luca uses weaving rushes that get defenders moving in the wrong direction, deft passes through defenders, and sudden delays to wait for support. He reads opponents' momentum, fakes, then cuts inside the space they exited. Constant changes of pace confuse defenders, while shot fakes and look offs in open ice extend passing lanes.

"He also understands the off-puck game," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown in a February game report. "Getting open in the slot, skating his routes to create space, eliminating off-puck threats, and anticipating the next play on the breakout."

All these skills combine to make De Luca a scoring chance machine in the WHL level, despite his limited supporting cast. He was one of few prospects to score in the 80th percentile-and-up in both scoring chances and scoring chance passes per 60, alongside top-end transition results.

Tommaso De Luca

F | Spokane Chiefs | WHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 109.6



Tools aren't De Luca's strength, which means that some of the play-driving's likely to taper off against pros. His handling base is narrow and his skating lacks power, especially the crossovers.

Still, he's skilled within those limitations and he's expanded his game significantly this season. He has third- or fourth-line upside, depending how the tools improve. While he's poised to return to Switzerland next year, perhaps the best move would be sticking around with Spokane.

LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Four standout low-scoring WHL draft eligibles

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

De Luca had the two most impressive plays of the game, both leading to goals. First, he went behind the net, pushed off wide, then went back into the slot with a cross-crease pass to the far post. Second, he faked the shot, then slid the puck around the defender. Both showed vision and patience, while the latter showed open-ice manipulation. Some fluid pass receptions and board touches. In one, he took the puck off the boards around an opponent and cleared the zone with one motion. Handling's choppy and in a glide, he's quick on the puck and shows touch. The skating looks like the main weakness. His depth is variable; his strides noticeably are weaker than those around him. He's hunched over and on his toes a lot. This game suggested a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

De Luca's a machine. Every game brings the same attention to detail, flashes of NHL skill, and intelligence across the ice. He cuts into the slot often, showing different skills. Sometimes, it's a backhand pass to a teammate after drawing pressure. Others, he skates into the defender then drops the puck back, creating a runway of space. He reads the opponent's momentum and constantly exploits it. They lean in, he hits the brakes. They reach, he puts the puck on their heels. Changes pace constantly.

He also understands the off-puck game: getting open in the slot, skating his routes to create space, eliminating off-puck threats, and anticipating the next play on the breakout. Always looking cross-ice for options in transition, often stepping to the inside first to draw pressure. Really, it's the mechanics. Doesn't get full extension on his crossunder leg; he's upright and lacks power. He's not a manipulator, either. But his reads and ability to play off what defenders are giving him suggests he could get there. He's a pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

De Luca has a knack for deflections. It's not just hand-eye coordination; it's how he gets open. He keeps his feet moving, gets in front of defenders, and disengages when the puck's about to head his way. The mechanics are a bit limited (narrow base, upright), even though he tries moves. Still, he has the right ideas. He manipulates opponents with weaving rush patterns and works the give-and-go. Lots of lateral passes through/around opponents. He has some physical skill, or at least, a desire to play

inside contact. And he anticipates the opponent's next move and eliminates threats. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

De Luca's such a smart player. He leans on players before cutting back, uses weaving rushes and changes of pace to gain the zone, and moves the puck off the boards with well-timed passes. He's an advantage creator, but his environment means that few get used. To be fair, he's also limited by his mechanics. He only uses inside edge turns, which makes him easier to defend and limits reacceleration. He manages pressure now, but it's rare for him to actually find space off the boards. I think he's a pick and end-of-board candidate. Depth player but has a real chance for more in the mechanics improve.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

De Luca's always trying skilled plays but he's limited by his feet and hands. His base is narrow and he's mostly comfortable handling with his feet locked in a glide. Opponents read his next move, and if they don't, he's not likely to catch the puck on the other side. But there's a lot of interesting qualities here. He's always looking to pass to the middle, drawing pressure when necessary. Uses the backhand and more advanced forehand deliveries. He's physical and proactive in pursuit. Gets open in the slot and keeps moving, which led to his deflection scoring chance in the second period. He looks like an end-of-board candidate. Likely a depth player but he has a chance to hit because of the intelligence. His supporting cast lets him down a lot, too.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

A game of highly variable skill. De Luca manipulated pressure with crossover-laden rushes, only to rely on lengthy straight-line glides the next rush. He reads opponent's momentum and exploits it, cutting inside on their heels – only to cut back straight into back pressure. The hands are interesting. He has some finesse, but he doesn't have much reach. He keeps the puck close to his body and beats opponents with hand speed, rather than deception. But he can also really pull the puck in tight to evade sticks, even with his feet moving. He's more shooter than playmaker, but his shot's at least 5-grade and he has some off-puck offence to go with it. Solid defensive performance, too. He took the extra stride to skate through opponents' hands and win possession, along with some proactive down-low support and quick close outs. Mechanics might be the biggest limitation, but he looks like a pro.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

The best player in the game. De Luca consistently advanced the puck under pressure, creating advantage for his teammates up the rink. He used look off passes, crossover-heavy rushes, boards-to-middle passes, and quick changes of lane. A perfect place-and-chase led to what should've been a chance, connecting with a backhand pass under duress. He always skates his routes, which created a high-danger chance in one sequence. Follows up plays, provides help defence, and gets inside positioning on opponents. Mechanics were the only hole. Relies on one-foot stops and inside edge glides to change directions. Quick hands but only inside his base – struggles when he has to adjust puck positioning. Still, he looked like a potential third or fourth-liner. A 60s-type performance.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

A simple, but effective game from De Luca. He didn't create many chances, but stuck with pucks and passed at the right moments. Missed opportunities to delay and find the best play, instead turning and firing something on goal. Doesn't look like an NHL prospect, but his motor and off-puck game could make him an effective pro.

Grade: C



103 Jordan Tourigny

AGE 17.545 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of
Foot



Evasive

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

168 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

4

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Shawinigan Cataractes	QMJHL	67	6	35	41	0.61

SCOUTING REPORT

Ranking Jordan Tourigny was one of the great challenges of this QMJHL draft class. It came down to one question: How much value should we put on one high-end attribute?

At this stage of his career, the defenceman distinguishes himself mainly with his skating ability, especially his edge work. On regroups, with his option in front of him, the defenceman can evade defenders with a combination of feints, spin moves, and quick accelerations. His ability to rapidly chain agility moves like this makes it hard for defenders to follow his movements.

Tourigny always activates in the play. He jumps ahead with teammates on breakouts and participates in every offensive play.

But the defenceman didn't manage to show the other skills that usually transform a high-end mover like him into an NHL play-driver, like an advanced playmaking ability and/or a strong shutdown game. This season, Tourigny's main method of creation was to move his feet faster than the opposition's, offensively and defensively.

"He held the blue line with aggressive offensive zone positioning and well-timed pinches," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December game report. "Even showed the necessary rush defence skills to play that game moving forward, gapping up early, surfing across, and angling attackers. But his puck plays from those positions weren't noteworthy."

To become a better NHL prospect and earn a role in the league one day, the defenceman will have to move away from his reactive style of game and develop more defensive anticipation and other modes of creation. Developing his shooting power could be a start. It would make him a bigger threat to score from the blue line.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: A review of the league's top draft-eligible prospects

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Tourigny's skating is as impressive as ever and I'm starting to like his in-zone defence a bit more. He defended the net-front well in this game, but with Shawinigan, he sometimes runs around hoping his elusive skating maneuvers create an opening for him. We tend to be more scared of players whose tools create for them instead of the opposite. We want the hockey sense to be in control and the tools to be an asset of service to the sense. Tourigny is not there yet. He has some smart plays, but I see mostly a Junior defenceman at the moment. He will still be on our board, probably toward the ends. The skating makes for a good development foundation.

David St-Louis: March 3rd, 2023 - Québec Remparts vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

A better performance from Tourigny who showed more of his potential. He made a couple great breakout plays through opponents, participated in every play, eluded defenders. He's prone to errors, but that's because more and more, he tries to create with every puck touch. The hockey sense is an average grade at best for me at the moment, however. He's more of a mover/doer than thinker, but he's so involved in the play that he will probably develop better timing and reads. The defence is pretty loose in his zone, but he's much more effective off the rush with his skating.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. - QMJHL

More and more convinced that Tourigny is a C-grade prospect for us. I really like the activations and the give-and-go attempts. He's active and moves well laterally, and there's the occasional pass through defensive layers, but I don't think he's really reading the game all that much. He's just going and figuring it out and not all that well at this stage. He could get significantly better over the next years, but he's more of that kind of mid-round project than a second rounder. The defensive game is loose or overaggressive. His game lacks control. The skating remains the biggest selling point.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

When Tourigny's plays are laid out for him, he can turn into a great offensive aid. He carried the puck and moved it to teammates, taking advantage of the extra skill around him. He looked poised and calm, for the most part. A few poor plays, but many more good transition passes and an effective puck distribution in the offensive zone. Passes were well prepared with fakes. Working on the retrievals under pressure would help his game. His rush defence was a strong point in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

A total non-factor. Tourigny just shoots or flicks every puck he touches. He doesn't create lanes, or even use the ones given

to him. Opponents pressure him into poor decisions. Doesn't even try to make a controlled play through pressure. A couple of simple, quick plays off retrievals showed a bit more skill, and he was engaged defensively. Boxed out opponents, guided a couple of attacks to the outside, pins opponents, and quickly switches. The mobility looked like the only NHL skill in this game, although the defence didn't seem far off.

David St-Louis: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

I didn't see Tourigny's skating as much in this game. He was mostly just a catch and shoot point-man. His awareness of threats and options seemed overall limited. He didn't look as fluid. I'm not convinced of his NHL potential yet. I think it's best we refrain from putting him in our top-64 despite the mobility and flashes of playmaking with it. His shot sometimes looks like a strength, but in this game, the pucks he fired either went off target or they lacked power. I like his physical engagement in the defensive zone. He tries to box out and he defends net drives well.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

It feels like Tourigny is close to a breakout. He's an intelligent activator. He uses the weak side, adapts his routes to take the middle, and understands when to fly about his forwards. He creates so many favourable situations by simply knowing where to be. His in-tight handling failed him a couple of times, otherwise he would've had a pair of high-danger chances. The breakouts also hinder his activation game. There's no creativity or diversity. It's just one pass up the boards after another. He's trying to get the return feed for the give-and-go – he wouldn't sprint up the middle if he wasn't – but most of his breakout passes worsen the condition of the puck. That's a problem. But if he figures out the breakouts, there could be something here.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Tourigny consistently created advantages with his activation. He reversed the puck and skated laterally to become a return pass threat and activation in one motion. He used give-and-gos to get off the point. Joined the rush by flying up the weak side. Held the blue line with aggressive offensive zone positioning and well-timed pinches. Even showed the necessary rush defence skills to play that game moving forward, gapping up early, surfing across, and angling attackers. But his puck plays from those positions weren't noteworthy. He missed opportunities to set up teammates, let alone create the best plays. Breakouts were mostly passes straight into battles along the boards. Didn't see any noteworthy shooting skills, either.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Nothing that suggested an NHL prospect in this game. Tourigny didn't even try to make plays on the breakout save for a couple of passes. He just flipped pucks off the glass, hammered them out of the zone, and flung pucks at the heels of his teammates. Conceded the zone without much friction. Used space before shooting from the point, and his shot looked like an NHL skill. But he wasn't looking to pass, didn't join the rush, and couldn't stop any plays. A rough outing.

David St-Louis: November 29th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Tourigny is just as fluid as ever. His skating really deserves an above-average grade. He can shift his weight from edge to edge, fake and change direction, all without much effort. He assisted on a goal by going around a high defender in the offensive zone, by feinting and then going around him before passing to the slot. Otherwise, in situations where he doesn't have a clear advantage, like more space, speed, or a two-on-one, he mostly defaults to simple plays: shots on net and short passes, which is fine. I'm not sure I see a high offensive upside in his game due to the lack of instincts for creative offence. He has some interesting tools, however.

David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Tourigny moves well for a draft-eligible. His skating could receive a 6-grade at the end of the season, but I'm not convinced by the rest of his game yet. While he has some moves to escape pressure and find lanes, his shot needs more power, especially in wrist-form. He deceives, but doesn't truly orchestrate plays, just takes what's there. I do like that his head is kept up inside all

of his moves, enabling him to find targets out of them. He cheated offensively a bit in this game, going too far on rushes, but he was willing to engage the opposition physically as much as possible around the net and the slot. He was strangely on the half-wall on the powerplay, suggesting either that the coaching staff sees playmaking skills in his game or that they don't necessarily have a forward with this kind of capabilities. We'll see!

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

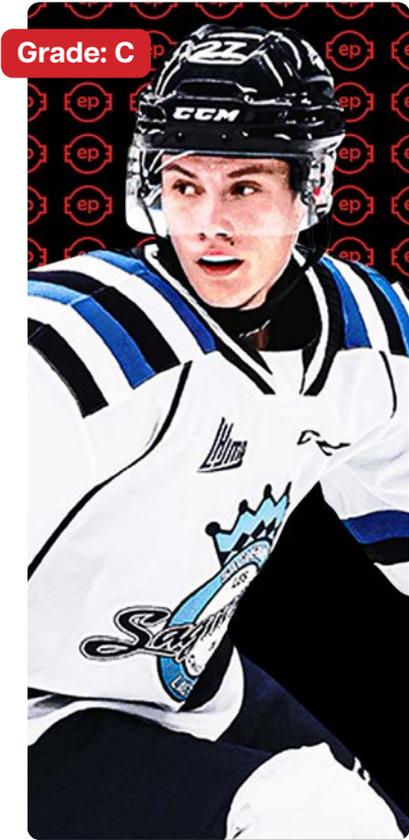
Tourigny had a frustrating tournament. He didn't accomplish much with his minutes. There were some defensive moments. He angled attacks to the perimeter, killed plays at the blue line, and won positioning to win battles. Tight off-puck gap. Some physical skills. With the puck, he doesn't create. He punts when pressure and defaults to his teammates to create advantages for him. Didn't see much upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Sweden - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Tourigny's a solid player, but I haven't seen anything particularly exciting from him this tournament. He activates at reasonable times, but doesn't take advantage of his work. He manages space from the point and distributes effectively, but he's rarely making the best play. Much of his current impact comes through play-killing. He angles players to the boards then steps into them or knocks the puck back out to centre ice. A bit of creativity on breakouts – using the middle, looking cross-ice – but he made a couple of weak/soft plays that resulted in turnovers. He'll probably stand out more with Shawinigan this season.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - Trois-Rivières Estacades - QMAAA

Tourigny is mostly just a transition defenceman right now: activations, stretch passes, and bank feeds. He attracts forechecks, finds options, and moves pucks quickly. He lack of offensive awareness (shoots at shin pads), but his mobility does serve him at the offensive blue line, too. He's a bit loose defensively.



Grade: C

104 Andrei Loshko

AGE 17.940 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hockey IQ



Tactician



Play Killer

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	67	22	48	70	1.04

SCOUTING REPORT

Matteo Mann may have been the main draw on the Chicoutimi Saguenéens, but the more we watched them, the more we realized that their best prospect may actually be the Belarusian import Andrei Loshko.

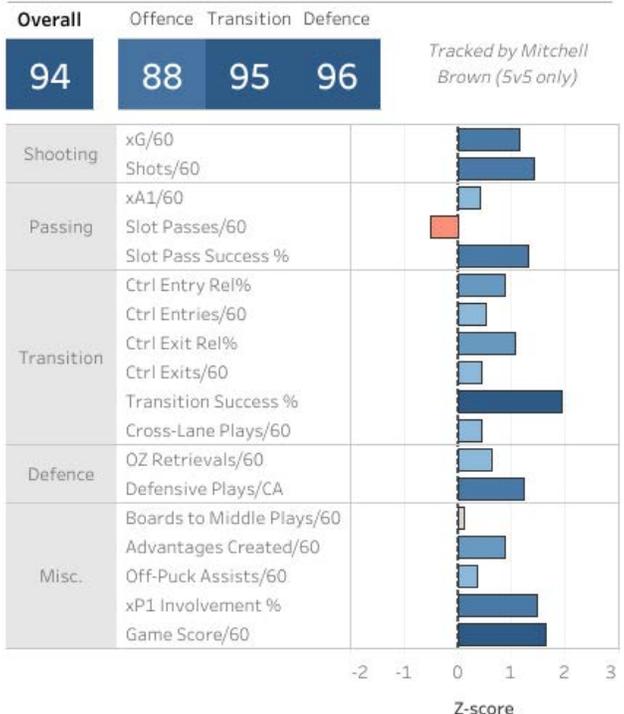
Loshko plays like a veteran. He's the player the coach sends over the boards to counter the opposition's top line, to play on the penalty kill, and protect leads. His mature game impressed our staff in every single viewing. He applied his team's system well and offered timely passing options to teammates in transition.

"He reloads defensively, anticipates the next play of opponents, supports teammates on breakouts, and knows his next play in possession," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a November report. "The hockey sense looks above-average – offensively, too. He's really intriguing."

Loshko aims to keep the puck in control of his team as much as possible. He looks for controlled, easy plays all over the ice, and completes those with a skillful touch. Capable of hooking and slipping passes past defensive sticks, he rarely runs out of solutions to beat defensive pressure. He's also capable of pushing back against defenders with his 6-foot-1 frame to attack high-danger areas.

Andrei Loshko

F | Chicoutimi Saguenéens | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 56.5



Loshkov's defensive and off-puck offensive game remains more projectable to the NHL than his stickhandling skills, however. The puck got away from him sometimes as he circled the offensive zone this season. Improving his handling skills would make his playmaking instincts shine and help increase his upside.

At this stage, we project Loshko more as a depth NHL centre.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Loshko has NHL-caliber skills, a defensive game, and an instinct for supporting plays. Honestly, he should probably feature in the third part of our board based on those elements. In this one, he executed an in-stride shot, made cycle plays after physical engagements, went to the net, and seemed to handle the puck better than in other viewings. He could turn into a bottom-six (probably bottom-line) shutdown player, a puck retriever and passer.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

I really expected more from Loshko in this game. I'm looking for an excuse to put him on our board, but the quiet performances, where he only shows defensive skills, good rotations, backchecks, forechecks...Well, they are not enough. I want to see improvements in the handling skills and playmaking.

David St-Louis: February 2th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Loshkov showed more skill in this game. He got off the wall, beat his coverage, and moved pucks to teammates. He attacked inside consistently, found teammates driving there, and carried the puck through zones. He forechecked and took care of his defensive role. The handling still looks choppy but it doesn't affect his passing and shooting too much. The advanced ideas are limited -- he's got mostly just a next play mentality, passing the puck to clear open teammates -- but the tools are good enough to project him to the professional game. Is he an NHLer? Maybe. Considering how involved he is in the checking game. More of a C-level prospect at this stage for me, however.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

The best player on the ice. Loshko showed skill, intelligence, and was rewarded with four points. Instead of rushing wide, he faked, cut back, then found teammates. Slip and look off passes to connect. Linked his skills together. Cutbacks were text book, punching around the ice leg and bringing his shoulders back over his base. Found teammates cross-ice, instantly knew his next play after winning possession, and a strong defensive performance. When he couldn't get above the puck, he backtracked, anticipated, and then pushed the puck into space. Angled attackers wide, came across the hips, and took the extra stride. He looked like a top-45 candidate in this game. Not high-level offence, but enough to secure a third or fourth-line role alongside the defence.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Loshko scored a pair of goals, including a tap-in on the powerplay. The best part of his game was the playmaking. He spots teammates inside or across the ice, has the touch to feather pucks through, and, on occasion, draws pressure before passing. He didn't show the ability to adapt to passing lanes, however. Led to turnovers. Showed a bit of transition skill, drawing pressure before passing through it. Not sure about the rest of his game. Skill level looked average. Skating: knees over toes, but hips often don't follow and his edges lack. Maybe a late-rounder based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Loshko scored the overtime winner with an NHL shot: catch-and-release wrister keeping his top hand in the same position

throughout the reception and release. Not necessarily a nuanced shooter (lacks deception, layers, and skill under pressure), but he's quick on the trigger and understands how to secure shooting lanes. Frees his stick and spins off pressure to the net-front, although better off-puck movement away from the net would increase his touches. The rest of his game wasn't exciting. Perimeter shooting, basic passes, simple rushes, and no real advantages or space created. Maybe a late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Loshko wasn't consistently a factor in this game offensively, but he made a solid impact across the ice. He angled puck carriers to the outside, then came across to force the dump-in or get the steal. Tracked plays deeper in the defensive zone, shoulder checking regularly. A couple of lateral passes to open teammates started the breakout. Arrived in space at the right moments, stayed in between defenders, and didn't force plays. Lots of simple, short-range plays to advance possession. Comfortable shooting off either leg, but both looked like average projections. Scored a hilariously lucky goal. No high-level offence: he wasn't delaying, manipulating, deceiving, or attacking the inside. Skating could be an NHL projection, with his knees past his toes in his stride, but he lacks the depth when using his edges to separate. Maybe a late-rounder based on this game.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Some really projectable moments in this game for Loshko. He looked comfortable handling the puck near opposing sticks, feinting to create a bit more space for himself, and wait for teammates to get in position. He looked to make controlled plays all game and scanned to find them -- constantly. There is depth in his stride, which translates to more agility and explosiveness. He managed to elude a few defenders in this game and I like how he tried to create switches in coverage, not just beat one guy. His defensive game was also on point, in terms of awareness and spacing and support -- a couple nice center breakouts that lead to offensive zone entries.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

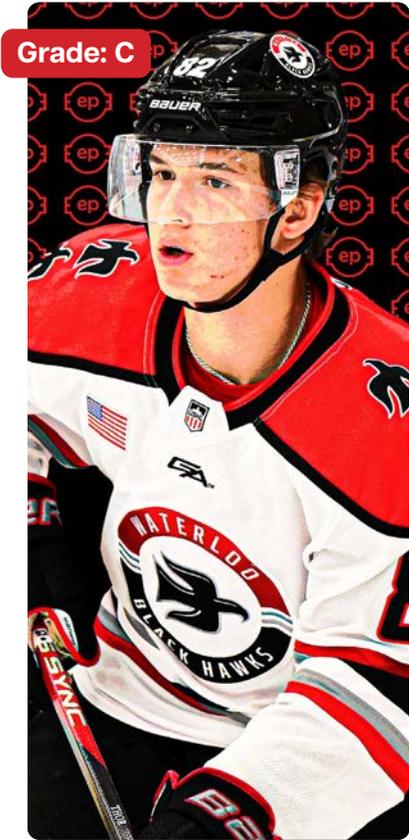
Loshko scored twice in this game around the net. His skills looked below average, however, both the skating and handling. He's adaptable, he scans quite a lot, he works to get open, but he doesn't always offer the right body positioning in transition to get the puck and move it quickly to a teammate. I was less excited about his potential after this viewing than the other ones. His October birthday is always a factor, too.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

This was a pretty quiet five-point performance for Loshko overall. The handling skills are starting to be a little concerning. Everything is open blade; he shovels more than he stickhandles, yet he makes it work for shots and relatively complex passes, too. His plays are smart for the most part, controlled and timely. He got his five assists simply by making the next play, finding a teammate who was open, hitting the right lane...Nothing fancy, but that's the kind of play connecting that could lead him to a professional career. An NHL one? Not sure.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022- Rimouski Oceanic vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Loshko continues to play a smart, translatable game. His handling skills project as below-average; he's pretty stiff in his handling and every move seems a bit more complex than it should be. There is just a lack of fluidity here. The skating is an average projection. Despite a relatively good form, the output could be better. Maybe it's a lack of strength. I have no doubt that he will increase the pace as he rises in level because he's so determined to play the right way. He reloads defensively, anticipates the next play of opponents, supports teammates on breakout, knows his next play in possession...The hockey sense looks above-average -- offensively, too. He's really intriguing.



Grade: C

105 Gavyn Thoreson

AGE 17.877 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 30, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Got that Dog in him



Motor



Tactician

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'8"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	23	9	14	23	1.00
Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	31	41	56	97	3.13

SCOUTING REPORT

You would be hard-pressed to find a Minnesota high school prospect in this year's draft that revealed more promise than Gavyn Thoreson this season.

With over three points per game with the Andover Huskies, the diminutive, but strong winger was first in draft-eligible USHS-MN scoring, and saw instant translation to the USHL, scoring 23 points across 23 games.

A nuanced attacker off the rush, Thoreson does everything he can to control the play. He drags defenders with him to create openings, incorporates a delay game to break down gaps, protects the puck at his hip to set up high-paced dashes through coverage, and he adjusts his patterns from the outside in.

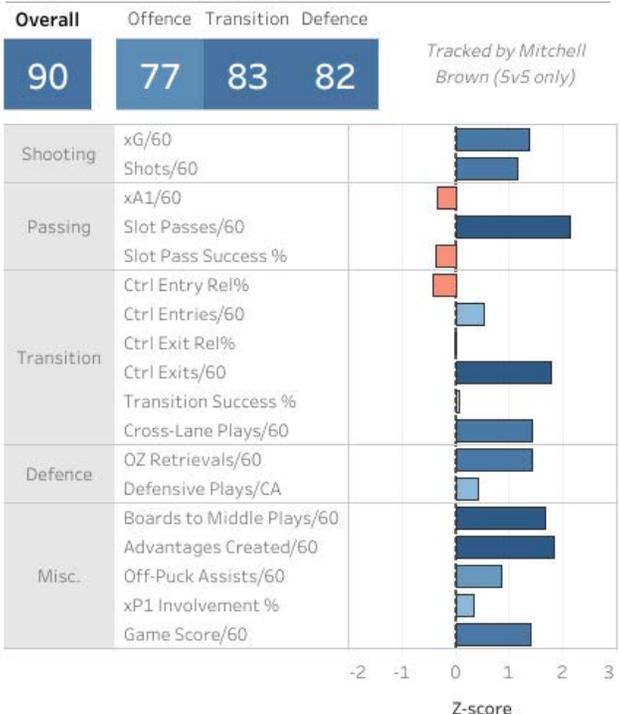
A brilliant off-puck activator, the Andover-born forward supports the pass like no other at the high school level, popping into soft-ice and open seams consistently. Give-and-go attacks are a constant across his minutes, filing to the inside, slipping pucks back to teammates, or creating off of pass-of-pad chances.

Thoreson played hero in the Class AA state tournament, tapping home a backdoor pass in the final minute of the game, after an insane weakside drive and net crash – a clutch player at his core.

While Thoreson lacks a manipulation layer to his game, telegraphing

Gavyn Thoreson

F | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 79.8



a lot of his actions, he executes so quickly that it's a moot point at the high school level. His pace and motor are separators even at the USHL level and should translate to even higher levels.

Such a persistent player, Thoreson simplifies in sustained pressure, leveraging his battle to prolong possessions.

Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown aptly described the 5-foot-8 wingers game in an April game report: "What a tank. Thoreson was outmuscling opponents on the forecheck every shift. He gets low – very low – and skates through the opponent's hands. If he can't, he just checks their legs and knocks them off balance. He battles like crazy. A player shoved him to the ice, so he took a diving run at him as play went the other way. A smart play? No, but it shows just how much he wants to make contact."

"For someone his size, he really leverages his strength and low centre of gravity to create issues on the forecheck. He gains body position, can pin defenders and push pressure below the goal line. Thoreson's off-puck timing is good – jumps into lanes at the right time to support the pass. In the second he wired a shot off the goal line – he chased the rebound, got under the defender and tapped the puck to Conway waiting backdoor," crossover scout Daniel Gee echoed in a December report.

There's an argument that the October-born forward left some offence on the table in the USHL, pushing a more inefficient game when compared to his high school performances. He often deferred to teammates quickly and looked desperate in transition. The same high-paced execution where Thoreson tries to leverage speed rather than manipulation leads to more errors and lost pucks than with Andover High. It's very much a situation of a player assessing the environment and learning what works and what doesn't.

With a 2024 commitment to St. Cloud State, Thoreson will have another season to better balance his game with the Waterloo Black Hawks. It could be a massive year for the American, who has the potential to be one of the more productive scorers in the USHL next season. There's a level of leeway with his projection, as he will most likely be able to play multiple roles. While Thoreson's upside is probably more limited than his offensive production suggests, it's easy to envision him as a middle-six contributor at the NHL level who can connect plays with other skilled players, leverage his motor and unique physical profile to win back pucks and connect plays.

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Tough one for me. Lights out high school and junior player. Is he the next Blake Lizotte where we just overthink it? He might not get drafted. Small, playing with his eyes down. Lots of speed and energy. Dominant high school player. You like guys to translate right away. Someone would be smart to take him at some point." – NHL scout, April 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 22nd, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

I don't know about Thoreson -- it may be an adaptation to the USHL hurdle, but he profiles as more of an energy off-puck crashing threat than a play driver like he was with Andover. Maybe that will come next season, but he just wasn't overly dynamic in this game. Came away more scared of his stride than I ever have been. Thoreson collapses at his hips regularly, often shortly into his shifts -- this affects everything, from his ability to handle, to where he supports off-puck.

Some of his habits in transition were a bit desperate. On one rush he took a slip pass, but instead of working a manipulation or a handle to beat a defender one-on-one, he just took a bad shot high in the zone. He tried a deke on the backhand to split two defenders, but flubbed the entry pass, looking very disjointed in the process. He made some good reads but followed it up with inefficiency. In the second he judged a high-flip pass, and jumped on the puck with pace, but was driven outside and took a low-percentage shot from the perimeter. Thoreson had one really nice sequence in transition -- he streaked into the slot off-puck, took a pass off his backhand, and slipped a puck to a man who was behind the defence. He tried a power move late -- dropped shoulder off the near boards, but he couldn't cut to the inside, lapping the net and working into a telegraphed wrap-around shot.

Thoreson crashed hard on a lot of sustained offensive zone sequences. After planting a backdoor in the first, a teammate threw a puck on the net off the far boards, sneaking through the goalie's pads. Thoreson was there to drive on the loose puck. At the end of the day, I think more of the Anover play will start to bleed over into USHL action. On one hand, it's great to see him adapt his game to produce, but he's a much more interesting player when he leverages the motor to turn defenders and more importantly, plays on the inside of the dotted lines. We have him too high right now, but he deserves to be in the 70-90 range on our final board.

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Thoreson has physical skills, creativity, and pace. Not sure about the mechanics, but he's smart enough to find a way, provided he weeds out the blind plays. He has flashes of a more nuanced game, where he draws pressure before cutting back or looks inside, then sends a dart to a moving teammate. He also brings off-puck ability. Doesn't just skate his routes; he times them. He stays in lanes, adjusting constantly. Spins off checks to free in front of the net. The mechanics will determine whether he plays, but I think there's reason for optimism given his success in the USHL and skill set. He make a fine mid-round pick.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

What a tank. Thoreson was outmuscling opponents on the forecheck every shift. He gets low – very low – and skates through the opponent's hands. If he can't, he just checks their legs and knocks them off balance. He battles like crazy. A player shoved him to the ice, so he took a diving run at him as play went the other way. A smart play? No, but it shows just how much he wants to make contact. After getting the puck, he passes into the slot or drives the net. His passes still lack timing. He sees options, but pucks leave his stick too late or too early – either failing to give his teammate time upon reception or failing to use up space before dishing, giving defenders more time to close on his teammate. Still, he has so many advanced passing ideas and deliveries that it's tough to see this as anything other than the adjustment curve. He also has off-puck instincts (getting open at the far post, dashing into the slot just as the puck carrier steps into the lane), defence, and transition value (play-building, pace). He can't really deke or beat players with speed, but if there were a 5'8" player without NHL speed who could make it in a depth role, it's him. What a tank.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Thoreson was one of the most consistently effective players in this game. He's an effective battler and off-puck player. He gets low and skates through the hands. Along the boards, he leans into pressure before cutting back. Scoring instincts and a knack for getting open in the slot. He's a bit too quick to move pucks – if he hung onto possession along the boards for a bit longer, better lanes would've opened. He's also not a dynamic skater or handler, which could become an issue moving forward. Curious to see more.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

There can be no doubt about Thoreson's capacity to hang in the UHSL. He's clearly talented enough, and when his skill fails him then the work rate is there to pick up the slack. Thorseon's goal was a nice display of awareness, hopping on a loose puck and quickly charging up ice to beat the Sioux Falls goaltender with a shot on the breakaway. Most of Thoreson's best work occurred on the forecheck, though.

I don't think that Thoreson quite gets the finer details of winning puck battles for a player his size – cutting opponents off through the hands, getting underneath opponents, etc. – but he's so damn persistent. Thoreson makes second, third, fourth efforts, and his stick work made him a veritable pick pocket along the boards in this game. On the one play, Thoreson physically pressured a Sioux Falls defender into a rushed pass that Miko Matikka picked off and sent to Gavin O'Connell for the goal. With the puck, I thought Thoreson left a lot of offence on the table, though. He's just too deferential for his own good, it seems. I want to see him have that killer instinct with the puck on his stick. I think he's about a back of the board pick for us.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Two goals and an assist for Thoreson. He was solid. Tapped in a loose puck and sniped one after the defender fell. He's not explosive, but he's an advanced physical player. He gets low and skates through opponents' hands to win body positioning, even before touching the puck. Leans in before cutting back, creating more space on the other side. Skates his off-puck routes, creating

space, and pops into space to become an option. He looked like a mid-rounder.

Daniel Gee: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Thoreson only played around eleven minutes in this one, but he was able to produce regardless. In a lower-leverage role, Thoreson was just okay. Didn't see the dominant transition game that he possesses at the high school level. The lack of a manipulation element in his game means successful fewer forays in the USHL. The off-puck game translated, however. On multiple rushes, Thoreson was driving defenders back, working as a weakside option, and sewing chaos in the crease. He deferred in the neutral zone multiple times to run in as an off-puck threat. He was dangerous on a couple of on-puck carries.

In the third, after working in on the near boards, Thoreson burned wide causing the defender to fall. He then walked in off the wing and popped a quick-low-shot five-hole. He rushed to capitalize on the breakdown and blended his edges to wheel quickly before support arrived. Almost all of Thoreson's prolonged shifts in sustained offensive zone pressure were centred around net-front and goalline plants on the power play. He was effective in the role, facilitating a bunch of one-touch passes into the slot. On a first-period powerplay, he flashed some evasiveness in pressure. After he picked up a perimeter puck, Thoreson faked a cutback to freeze an aggressive defender, then sent the puck high. This led to a one-time shot on the left-hand circle and a Waterloo goal.

Later he scored his second, a lingering puck on the line that he picked up as players battled in front of the goaltender. He's capable and has adapted pretty well -- definitive signs that he has some level of translatability from the HS game. More time and I think we see the confidence that was ever-present with Andover.

Daniel Gee: March 11th, 2023 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Andover High - USHS- MN

While Thoreson was a bit quieter than normal during the onset of this game, he ended up playing hero, scoring the game-winner with seconds remaining. Thoreson operates with so much pace and it's a clear separator at the high school level. Layer handling, pro-habits focused on the inside of the ice, and clear above-average sense grades and you get a dominating presence.

Like most successful high school players, Thoreson employs a delay game at every opportunity. On his first transitional foray, he stopped up on the entry, delayed and hit a man attacking downhill. Later, on a 1-on-1, Thoreson stopped up and fed a man trailing with more speed, who walked in and scored, and defenders left static. Rush patterns typically work from the outside in and Thoreson will work into the middle of defenders to draw attention, handling or passing out of the pressure to again, create space. This can lead to inefficient touches -- he telegraphs every move because he isn't a prolific manipulator -- what separates him is the execution speed; far too fast and high-paced to properly process. Pucks are knocked easily off his stick on handles, or just attempting to slice through a lot of pressure.

Clear passing skill was shown again by Thoreson. Slip passes in motion, focused on funnelling the middle of the ice, slick handling past pressure. Ran into some issues when defenders started to focus on taking the body instead of the puck. On one second-period rush, Thoreson built speed through a crossover weave, and executed an inside-outside move through the defender's triangle, but was ultimately slammed to the ice. He completely ramped his game up to another level in the final minutes. First, he poked a rebound high leading to an assist with a minute remaining in the third. After he almost set up another teammate with a pass-off-pad rush. His best sequence was an end-to-end rush -- tonnes of large-ice manoeuvrability to beat the F1, protection at his hip into a high-danger set-up. He got the puck back on the shift, handled and split two defenders, and jammed the puck on the net, just dribbling wide. Strong off-puck all game and it paid off in the final minute. Drove the left-wing off-puck and tapped a pass home to win the game. Just another level I have not seen from a HS prospect, in such a big game.

Thoreson tries a lot in these viewings and not all of it works, but the pace, his balance despite being short, and the skill blending all scream upside. The defensive impact is subpar -- static, and passive. D or fringe C prospect for our board. Excited to see his Waterloo games.

Daniel Gee: March 2nd, 2023 - Duluth East High vs Andover High - USHS- MN

Another monster game for Thoreson who was just so much better than every other player in this game. Obviously, he's small,

but Thoreson's pace and skill blend absolutely slaughters competition at this level. He had 5 points and was a constant creator. In sustained pressure, he's somewhat inefficient with his touches, but he has so many that I guess it comes with the territory. He scored in the second after he filled a seam. Picked a spot low blocker after taking the reception with speed. Some forechecking habits -- on one shift, Thoreson stripped a puck behind the net, and had Cooper Conway available for a pass, but he overhandled and took a rather dumb shot in pressure.

A dynamic threat on the rush, Thoreson put together some special attacking sequences. Actively works give-and-go attacks, files into open ice to rack up high-danger shots, dekes through triangles, uses delays to destroy gaps, and protects at his hip -- he has every element to do damage. On one of his first forays, Thoreson carried the puck in on the left wing, hooked the puck to an open man activating through the dotted lines, and burst up into a pass seam taking the give-and-go. He tried to feed the puck back again but it was deflected. Later on another give-and-go, Thoreson took a puck, and attacked a triangle but was taken out by the defender who ignored the puck and took the body. Flashes more than anything After these sequences, Thoreson levelled up. He carried in a puck on the left wing, passing off to a man lapping high, leading to an assist. Right after, he linked up with Conway who just won the puck off a strong retrieval effort; Thoreson hooked a pass out of his hip pocket to the crease leading to a high danger. He flashed his speed on a subsequent rush, picking the puck up in the DZ, upping his pace rapidly and popping a puck through a defender's legs on the exit. Thoreson entered on the right wing, beat a man on a backhand handle, and in one motion, slipped the puck to a linemate for a goal. Likes to pop on his heels and flashes some high-end edge work at times. Delays sent a couple of defenders flying. A lot to like here offensively -- I think he cleans up the inefficient actions as he progresses. Should be a factor on our final board.

Daniel Gee: December 12th, 2022 - Andover High vs Rosemount High - USHS- MN

Thoreson is the driver of his line with Cooper Conway. The caveat is that he is small out there, affecting his stride negatively. He darts around, but pace is more on the average end than anything. Short legs affect his stride length and power potential, but man, he is a sturdy and stocky player. Constantly plays off contact and is never really knocked off balance by bigger opponents, all while blending skill and high-end sense. Very talented in transition at this level. He's a constant threat to turn over pucks and counterattack, getting up under sticks, checking them away and breaking free. In the first he stole a puck off a stick check, instantly snapping a seam pass through two forecheckers. One and two-touch passes and shooting -- he nearly scored off a perfect off-puck file through a seam but the puck bounced on him on his follow-through. Has some legitimate crossover speed and is daring on-puck. Sliced through four defenders with an inside/outside edge weave -- instead of running into pressure he wheeled and set up a teammate.

He scored two goals in the rush. The first was a poor shot in pressure from the top of the slot. Loaded his arms, created downforce, kicked his off leg off the ice and whipped a puck on net -- top blocker. Later in the third, Thoreson pushed pressure in the neutral zone to create a turnover. He dashed to the slot off-puck, took a slip pass from Conway, split the defenders and popped a shot 5-hole -- seriously impressive sequence. Uses manipulation; mainly shoulder shakes, and shimmies. He had a couple more chances as well -- a dangerous second-period backhand off a 2-on-1 could have been a hat-trick goal.

For someone his size, he really leverages his strength and low centre of gravity to create issues on the forecheck. He gains body position, can pin defenders and push pressure below the goal line. Thoreson's off-puck timing is good -- jumps into lanes at the right time to support the pass. In the second he wired a shot off the goal line -- he chased the rebound, got under the defender and tapped the puck to Conway waiting backdoor. A lot of these adaptations to win pucks works at the high school level, but I wonder what his impact is like against more mature competition. Need to see his USHL games -- if it's consistent there, Thoreson represents a player with some tangible upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Another impressive game from human bowling ball Thoreson. I mean that literally, he was crashing full speed into opponents. He won some battles. Lost some. But he tried and showed projectable mechanics, getting lower than his opponent and skating through their hands. Winning body positioning before touching the puck will make his physical game more projectable.

Offensively, he's all ideas. In flashes, he controls the feet of defenders. For example, he skated laterally to bring the defence with him, then passed through them for the high-danger look. However, he mostly gets locked into plays. He's not deceptive or a manipulator.

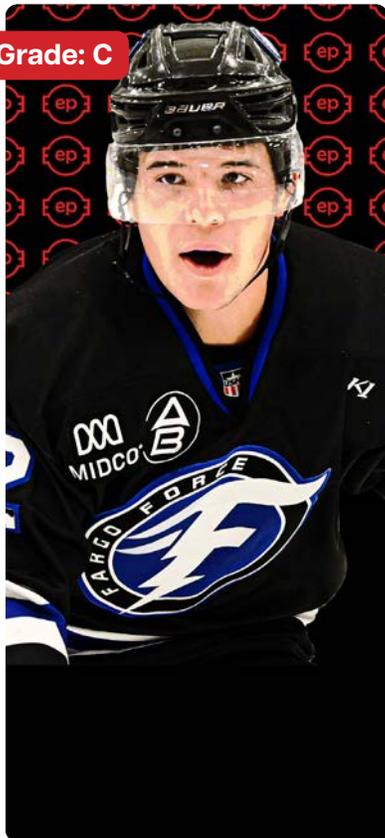
He tries to outrace opponents and fails. He tries to pass into closed lanes and fails because he stares down his target first. Clearly has vision and passing skill, spotting teammates through defenders and adding a bit of flash to his dishes. Scoring instincts, too. He gets open at the far post and pushes into space. Reloads high. Slips into space at the right moment. Skating's an issue. He lacks quickness. Lacks stability on his edges. He has an incredible motor and some legitimate NHL skills, so he's worth a pick. Think the high-level stuff could come with time; he flashes it.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

An impressive game from Thoreson, showing a huge variety of skills. He made tons of passes in transition off the boards, even off the backhand. Delayed the right moments to allow teammates to skate into lanes. When carrying, he showed vision and creativity. He hooked pucks through opponents and cut back before passing through their stick. Created a chance with a retrieval into a spin pass into the slot, a sequence that started with him securing the breakout.

There are physical skills, too. He skates into opponent's space, wins positioning, and even tries to get body positioning before touching the puck along the boards. Physical, throwing a couple of hits to secure possession. Deked through an opponent when given an opportunity. The skating lacks explosiveness and he's not especially quick, at least not in this game. And I didn't see any high-level offensive ability (i.e., no manipulation), but he was reading the opponent's feet. Needs to scan in the offensive zone to find better options. Regardless, he looked like a pick in this game.

Grade: C



106 Cole Knuble

AGE 18.208 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 01, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Tactician



Motor

Player Info

C

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Fargo Force "A"	USHL	57	30	36	66	1.16

SCOUTING REPORT

What a difference a year makes. Cole Knuble went undrafted last season and returned to the USHL as a new player.

In last season's draft guide, we outlined that he needed to swap out the solo rushes for a more proactive, give-and-go style that leaned heavier on his off-puck game. He did that, and then some.

Now, Knuble bypasses defenders with deft passes, a bit of deception, and non-stop movement. He's a true give-and-go player. Non-stop scanning and proactive off-puck positioning combine with that NHL style. In quick succession, he piles up multiple touches – the puck seems to follow him as a result. The game flows through him.

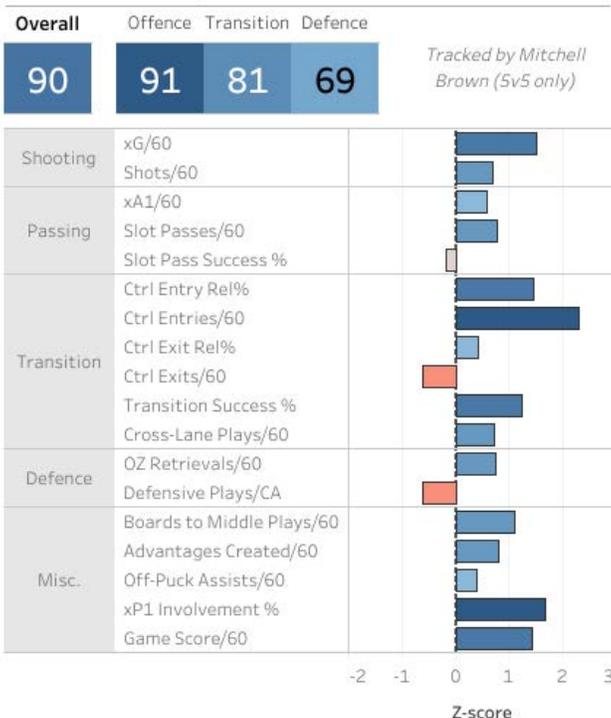
As a result, Knuble's a threat from everywhere in the offensive zone: A passing threat in both open-ice and down low and a scoring threat from range with an even better in-tight finishing game. He's physical, fearless, and just as capable completing plays with defenders leaning on him as he is in open ice.

At Knuble's current level of skating, space will be virtually impossible to find in the NHL. He has the passing skill, puck protection, and off-puck game to make it work, but there's a chance the skating just doesn't quite reach that level.

Cole Knuble

F | Fargo Force | USHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 109.9



Still, the hard-nosed centre looks on the path to become a third- or fourth-line forward in the NHL. A team would be smart to pick Knuble up in the middle of the draft.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



USHL Stock Watch: Nicholas Moldenhauer catching fire with Chicago Steel



Standout performances at the 2022 World Junior A Challenge



Cole Knuble's work ethic, skill have him well-positioned for 2022 NHL Draft

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"My favourite part is being able to build speed through crossovers. When you have the puck, you have a lot of speed versus on the wing where you feel stuck on the wall. I love getting the puck in the middle half and making a play." - Cole Knuble, January 2022:

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A really impressive game from Knuble, who continues to show thorough understanding of offensive creation. He reads and exploits gaps constantly. Instead of driving play into opponents, he cuts back and finds the trailer. Bypasses defenders with give-and-gos across the ice. Set up chances off the boards with passes under pressure. Always skates his routes, taking away sticks when necessary. The best read was continuing through the slot, skating into the nearest defender as the weak side teammate drove the net, then timing stick lifting the defender just as the pass came through, creating a high-danger chance. The tools still have their limits. He's not a dynamic skater or handler. But he's smart, creative, and has the physical skills to play. He's a pick this year. Could become a solid third or fourth liner.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

The tools are concerning. They prevent Knuble from completing his rush attacks and accessing lanes/space. He panics under pressure sometimes, seemingly aware that he won't find separation with his feet or hands. But the more I watch, the less it seems to matter. He's a much better player now. He's a rapid-fire thinker, linking touches together with intelligent off-puck movement. Gets inside positioning on opponents. Moves pucks at the right moments through opponents. Tied the game late with a wrister in front. He looks like a pick as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A play-driving performance from Knuble. There was the incredible goal, where he set up an opponent at angle, then deked around them just as they committed their weight with crossovers. He had a bunch of chances, with a couple starting from a give-and-go game. He skated passed wide and skated his route, received the return pass, and went straight to the net. There were a couple of poorly-planned solo plays, but the goal and give-and-gos are enough to convince that he has the right mindset and reads. Add in the defence, some basic, but effective playmaking, and there's enough here to become an NHL if the skating improves a bit.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs Tri-City Storm - USHL

The first two periods of this game were worrying. Knuble couldn't find or create space at all. Opponents easily overcame his sluggish starts and lack of general quickness. He turned to blind passes and hope plays that never really had a chance. He's not a lane creator, which stood out majorly in this game. But he came alive later in the game. He deked off the draw and set-up what should've been a goal off the backhand. Cut inside under pressure before firing under a stick. And he scored in the classic Knuble way: a one-timer just inside the hash marks on the powerplay. Not a draftable performance in isolation, but he showed enough skill in the latter stages to convince me he's still worth a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A big game from Knuble despite the blowout score in the opposite direction. He scored with a one-timer off the rush. The next shift, he passed the middle, skated his route, received a puck, dangled inside, and fired off another chance. Nearly converted on a breakaway after chipping the puck around the defender and winning the ensuing race. He shows a bit of everything: Inside play, off-puck instincts, handling, and shooting ability. The passing's inaccurate and often a last resort; he doesn't prepare lanes or create them. But he's a master of linking plays together and creating extended offensive zone time. The tools might prove limiting, but it's getting harder to keep him off the board. He has a better chance than many of the players we will rank at the end, despite his age.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs Blue - Biosteel top prospects game

I really appreciate Cole Knuble's game even if we have to be careful with him. He's a D+1 and doesn't have a common NHL build. He dominates shifts partly because of his extra experience and maturity compared to most other players. But he's effective on both sides of the puck, makes plays in transition, and can work the walls of the offensive zone at this level. He looks to bring the puck to the inside part of the ice...A lot of good habits and a sufficient layer of skill. I'd draft him in the late rounds. His lack of dynamic qualities will probably prevent him from becoming an NHLer, however. We'll see.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 31st, 2022 - Fargo Force vs Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Just a really efficient game from Knuble. He doesn't wow you with any particular skill. The hands are good, the skating is fine, not particularly explosive or agile. But what sets him apart is his vision and processing. Knuble always has his head up, prior to receiving the puck and with the puck on his stick. His vision allows him to draw in pressure before feathering a perfect pass to a teammate with space. Had a beautiful assist where he gained the middle, drew in two defenders by looking off a pass, then fed it to the opposite side to a streaking linemate for a tap-in. With his smarts and point totals this year, could be a candidate for a re-entry pick.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Really like what I'm seeing from Knuble here. Obviously, the re-entry status and the somewhat lower-pace of play should keep him down a bit on our board, but he's a really smart forward, who understands the game at this level. He creates space for himself with physical skills, attacks pockets, attacks the net, wins retrievals, but he's at his best in open ice where he draws pressure before passing. He delays his play when a teammate is not in position and evades the opposition with cut backs. An inside-driven, defensively careful, smart passing, rushing and now more of an offensive zone threat. I still have my reservations but they will fall if he produces at a high rate in this second half.

David St-Louis: December 18th, 2022 - Sweden vs USA - WJAC

This was Cole Knuble's game. He scored the game winner by identifying an occasion to rush in the zone and wrap the puck around the net. But it's more than that. He played on a line with Adams who didn't provide him with much opportunities to generate offence. Yet, he still manufactured something with most of his touches. His playmaking game has improved and his awareness might be one of the best on his team. He instantly redirected a rim to the front of the net to an open teammate in the second frame. He just senses their position and vulnerabilities in the defence. I'm not sure if he's an NHL draft pick; the tools

are somewhat average, but he certainly has the potential to become a great college player. He's a player we will keep an eye on in this draft cycle. The US coach seemed to use him in every situation.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - USA vs Canada East - WJAC

Knuble was mostly a solo driver last season. He drove in straight-line down the wing, tried to dangle opponents, and get to high-danger areas. This season, his playmaking seems to have taken steps forward. He still passes mostly after attempting a feint or a dangle, but he doesn't necessarily need to go around a defender before moving the puck. His feints now serve to open teammates and he makes a lot more give-and-goes. I liked his vision in this one; good decisions with the puck overall. He scored by building a tic-tac-toe play.

David St-Louis: November 25th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs Omaha Lancers - USHL

Knuble makes the right plays on the ice. He scans, spots teammates, spots open space, holds possession on the wall, manipulates, carries the puck, but there is still a bit of a lack of mechanical refinement in his game. His skating still seems to hold him back a bit and the overall pace of his remains on the lower-end. I'm sure he will become a great college player, but I'm not sure he will turn into a great pro. This was a pretty good game from him, however, carrying his team to a win.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

After the November 3rd game, I had high hopes. Knuble didn't accomplish much in this game. He skated his routes, which created a couple of passing lanes. He consistently opted for carry exists, but rarely created much with them because his rushes were mostly straight-line, single-speed attacks. Not much to suggest an NHL pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble had complete control over this game for several shifts. He showed a diverse skill with a far more intelligent game. He still does the odd solo rush, but only when it's the best play. Now, he delays, uses give-and-gos, and uses his physical skills to create space along the boards. In one shift, he grabbed three chances, highlighted by a backhand reception into a mid-air one-timer and an intelligent reload and downhill dash for a quick catch-and-release wrister. Stole possession, knew the next play. The skating still looks like below-average projection, and while he can manipulate a bit to beat immediate pressure, he doesn't create passing lanes. But this was an impressive game, one clearly indicative of a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble grabbed a trio of powerplay points in the first period, including two far-post tap-ins. It wasn't an interesting game otherwise. He reads opponents but lacks the skating to execute. His turns are wide and prevent immediate acceleration, leaving him late to access space. His passes are often too obvious, loading them up and staring at his eventual target. Liked the entries, however. He moved pucks laterally and drew pressure before passing. Nothing that suggested a re-entry pick.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 2nd, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Pretty uninspired performance from Knuble. Took a tumble into the boards early, so maybe he was nursing an injury during the game. Stayed on the perimeter in the offensive zone, firing the occasional low-danger shot on net. Not the most agile skater, he's got decent stride mechanics straightaway, but doesn't get a ton of depth through his tight turns and crossovers. Things went a little better for him when he started trying to get inside and use his size to his advantage. Got a goal from fighting through the slot to bang home a loose puck. Performed well in the faceoff circle. I'm not sure he's a pick, maybe last two rounds.

Mitchell Brown: March 20th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

I haven't noticed anything new in Knuble's game in my last few viewings. This game wasn't any different. Knuble's a gritty net-front player with the odd flashy play. The skating limits his lateral movement with the puck and not he's setting up dekes inside

crossovers. Instead, he glides and angles his feet in the direction he's about to beat defenders. It resulted in a cool play for the USHL, but it won't work at the next level. Board play is a strength right now, but his lack of depth (and tendency to compensate by dropping his chest instead of engaging his hips) will likely make his physical game a weakness at the next level. Too reliant on individual skill. Even when he scans, he still forces plays up the boards or even just dumps the puck in with options. I've seen passing skill from him before, but it rarely features in transition unless given the entire neutral zone to work with. Engaged defender, highlighted by his down-low support and disruptiveness. His current method of creating offence (individual skill, winning down-low battles, and planting himself in front of the net) won't translate to the next level given his tools and lack of nuanced skills. His adaptation will have to be significant, and even then, he's probably a bottom-of-the-lineup-type. Development keys: developing a movement-based off-puck game around the slot, give-and-gos in transition, improved skating mechanics (ankle flexion, hip engagement, and maintaining depth through turns, crossovers, cutbacks), and adding a delay game with the puck. Should be a fun college player, but that's a lot of work for a player likely to fill a bottom-of-the-lineup role.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble scored twice in this game. The best was a curl-and-drag wrister, initiating the movement before even getting the puck. The goaltender saw short side, he went far side. His game isn't nuanced, but there are interesting moments. He uses slip passes, pulls the puck into his feet before passing, and spins off pressure down low to gain the middle. Not a high-level off-puck attacker, but he's consistent about trailing the play and arriving into space behind defenders. The issues are mechanical and reading the play. For the latter, he rarely uses his teammates at the right time. He can pass, and even has passing skill, but he settles for low-percentage, play-ending shots over building the sequence. He passes at the wrong times in transition, always trying to beat defenders himself before distributing. For him, passing seems like the end, not a means to the end. He's not creating the best play, either. There's some upside here, but I doubt he makes our board.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble is just running through the scripts out there. The odd impressive moment (such a cut to the inside and pass to the trailer) is offset by large amounts of straight-line rushes and a lack of vision. He fakes out weaker defenders, but his inability to fully shift his weight and engage his outside edges prevents him from beating strong ones. He uses his teammates mostly as a reaction, rather than a proactive decision to shift the defence. If he made the early pass, his game would become a bit more projectable. For now, he doesn't play a projectable style and doesn't have the tools to justify a pick in lieu of scalability.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble does stuff – get entries, get chances, set up chances – in a way that's easy to see. It's not a surprise that he's getting hype. But I don't see him doing those things in a way that will work going forward. He's a limited skater (and even handler, if you get over the inside edge-only dekes), but instead of playing to his strengths, he tries to outrace defenders. Too often, he misses passing opportunities because he's so focused on beating a defender himself. There are flashes of projectable playmaking ideas and he's accurate on the backhand, but there are no greater flashes of manipulation, deception, or timing. Some off-puck movements, coupling retrievals with board play and off-puck movement with shooting. But the mechanical limitations make mostly a very simple player in these regards. I don't see an NHL pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble has some NHL elements to his game. The work rate stands out, especially in pursuit. He's a strong defensive support player, always coming back down low and picking the right side/distance to be from the battle. Once he gets the puck, he looks for teammates on the inside. In one sequence, he used a projectable cutback to escape down low before completing a backhand pass through a defender while being slammed to the boards. It's that area where his game shines the most. In open-ice, his limitations appear. He missed an opportunity to create a 2-on-1 because he choose to skate at the defender and deke through them instead – just make the early pass. A few other similar plays suggested a lack of foresight in his puck game. Puck control aside, his in-a-glide, single-speed handling style won't beat defenders in the NCAA, let alone the NHL. Didn't see any notable scoring tools or off-puck offence. Didn't look like a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Knuble doesn't have an easily discernible NHL role. The mechanical issues are significant, even if he dekes someone on occasion. Everything comes from his inside edges, weight on his heels. Lacks depth and drops his torso to the ice. Handles the puck in front of his body, in rhythm with his strides, with little hip pocket use. But dig deeper, and he's a strong support player with a projectable down-low game (provided the skating comes). Times his cutbacks well, preparing his preferred space by delaying and waiting for pressure to arrive. The game falls apart in transition. I don't see anything to warrant a spot on our board, but there's enough here to justify a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

The ideas underpinning Knuble's decisions were often sound. He attacked the inside. Looked for give-and-go options. Used a speed differential to beat defenders. The execution was poor. Mechanical ability came and went. At worst, he strode and handled the puck in rhythm, locking him into straight-line, single-speed attacks. At best, he beat defenders by faking one direction and going the other. Skating will be an issue. He lacks ankle dorsiflexion and doesn't engage his hips. Recovers a touch too wide with incomplete extensions. Some difficulty crossing over and shifting his weight, aside from one almost weight shift. Looks like a classic USHL prospect: flashes limited by both the supporting cast and his own mechanical limitations.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2021 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

I appreciate Knuble's forechecking and net-front play. There's not much nuance to it, but he gets his chances, wins battles, and gives himself a chance on every play. The mechanics only make the projection murkier. His strides are short and wide, with undeveloped outside edges hampering his in-tight ability. Lacks ankle flexion, for which he compensates by dropping his chest towards the ice. He can't shift his weight properly. When he tries to sell a move, he ends up dropping his chest even further, rather than widening his hips and stacking the push off leg. Clearly some advanced handling ideas, but the skating limits his execution. Didn't seem like a pick, but there's enough potential to keep me watching.

J.D. Burke: August 6th, 2021 - USA U18 vs. Czech Republic U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

The eye-hand coordination on display from Knuble really was something. Picked off a hip-level pass high at the defensive blue line on the penalty kill to start a 2-on-1 early in the game, picked up a redirection chance not long after, batted a puck out of mid-air attempting to redirect it past the Czech goaltender and then snapped it home, and managed to corral several ankle-level passes throughout this contest. Really strong showing from Knuble as a dual-threat scorer in general. Showed strong habits on the rush, pulling defenders to his orbit before dispatching of the puck, attacking on arc to drag the defensive front, etc. Seemed to thrive in traffic. Did a great job of picking up a loose puck around the Czech goal, taking it wide for the wraparound, and then sending the puck top-corner for the goal through a mass of bodies at the net-front. Picked up the insurance marker in the third period by holding the defence on a 2-on-1 by looking pass until the very last moment, at which point he sniped his second of the game past the Czech goaltender. Loved the work rate and urgency from Knuble in this contest.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2021 - USA U18 vs. Sweden U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Look, I get that he's the son of Mike Knuble, but I'm not sure the American coaching staff had to typecast him to this degree. It would've been nice for Knuble to get a little playing time away from the net-front is all I'm trying to say. Now, granted, Knuble picked a greasy goal by charging the crease after a weird bounce off the endboards placed the puck on his linemate's stick and then eventually his with a yawning cage. But that was about it for noteworthy moments from Knuble in this contest. Barely noticed him at all otherwise.



Grade: C

107 Isac Hedqvist

AGE 17.485 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of Foot



Motor



Tactician

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Luleå HF J18	J18 Region	1	1	2	3	3.00
Luleå HF J18	J18 Nationell	1	1	0	1	1.00
Luleå HF J20	J20 Nationell	41	14	20	34	0.83
Luleå HF	SHL	6	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Given Sweden's considerable offerings of depth and quality at the NHL Draft, it's no surprise that there's always a couple of good sleeper picks available in the later rounds. We think that Isac Hedqvist is the candidate to be that player in this year's draft.

Despite a strong season with Luleå's J20 squad which already earned him a quick look at the SHL level, he's still yet to debut with the national team. If he stays on his current trajectory, that's going to change sooner rather than later.

Don't let the 5-foot-11 frame fool you; Hedqvist is among the most inside-driven European players in this year's class. He's always looking to get the puck to the middle, whether by making clever passing plays to the slot or driving the middle lane off the rush as the F2. Hedqvist fights vigorously for every puck and often comes out of a battle with possession, even against bigger and stronger opponents.

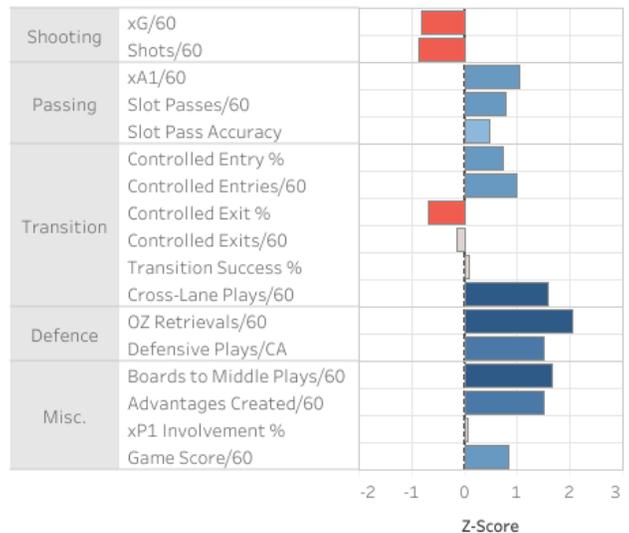
Being an above-average skater with impressive quickness and edge-work helps, but he's also got strong physical habits and a knack for cutting opponents at their hands to establish body positioning. And as he'll get stronger with further physical development, the number of successful puck battles, retrievals, and defensive stops is only going to go up even further.

Isac Hedqvist

F | Luleå HF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 146.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Offensively, Hedqvist primarily creates value in two ways: as a playmaker or with smart off-puck routes that draw attention, create space and occasionally also put him in scoring situations. Hedqvist's playmaking prowess is bolstered by really strong scanning habits; he's already got the next play figured out when the puck lands on his stick.

While Hedqvist might not have high-end raw skill or a blistering shot, he makes everyone around him better and has a very projectable style to the professional ranks. His skating, smarts, and relentless pace will provide value on both sides of the puck. There aren't going to be many players available in the later rounds with more interesting skill sets.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Three underrated Swedish forwards in the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Isac had an excellent performance this game. He was clearly the best player on his team and I can't get my head around how Team Sweden couldn't find a fit for him on the U18 roster. Isac drove break up after break up with his standout speed at this level. It was like AIK couldn't set up a play when Isac were on the ice. He also created many scoring chances with creative deking plays, good passing and very high pace. He showed awareness with the puck and good puck skills while playing at top speed. Even though he is not an elite skilled attacker he provides value offensively his speed and checking game will make him a solid bottom six forward. I think he is a player to consider in the late rounds of the draft. A speedy checker with a strong motor and good hockey sense.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Isac scored two goals but wasn't impressive in the game. He worked hard and intensively. He used his skating to check and drive for space offensively but he didn't drive with the puck and didn't open space with his hands. He lacks manipulation and needs to beat opponents with speed and intensity, which he does at this level. I liked his one-timer on one of the goals.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 2nd, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Isac had a big impact. He made a great play on the first goal. He created a break up on the forecheck. He forechecked with speed, pressed the opponent to the boards and stole the puck and passed it to a teammate in the slot who scored. He skated a lot with the puck and made good decisions with it. I would have liked to see more playmaking and pace variation but he was a strong driver and zone entry machine. He is a small speedy forechecker with good hands but lacks translatable space opening puck skills.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 1st, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

Isac didn't create much offence in this game. The opponents defended the slot well and held Luleå to the outside. Hedqvist was not able to be a difference maker in that environment. He looked fast and skated well with the puck but had big trouble cutting

to the inside. He lacks manipulating and deceptive skills and doesn't open up space other than with his feet. He tried some moves to get to the inside and showed a competitive drive to do so but was shut down every time.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 11st, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Hedqvist has a good motor, plays with intensity and uses his speed to create turnovers and retrieve pucks for his team. He had some good looks with the puck but lacks the ability to vary his pace. His skills diminish at the highest pace and is at his best when he can slow down the play with a good cross pass to the second wave of the attack. If you defend positionally well and can keep up with the speed he is quite easy to play against when he drives the play. A fast decision-making and strong playmaking is the key when he makes good offensive plays. He lacks physical strength but handles the physical play well. He just keeps going after hard hits and wins battles with tenacity and speed. He will probably be a good SHL player, fast and smart defensively and a good passer. The NHL seems like a stretch though. He has skills but not at an elite level and other than that mostly bottom six player tools but lacks the physical strength.

Lassi Alanen: March 11st, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Probably the most meager offensive showing from Hedqvist, who didn't really create much at 5-on-5. Tried a couple of cute passes to the slot and ideas were generally good, but the execution wasn't there. I don't think there's that much manipulative or deceptive skill, either. Hedqvist really shined as a defensive force in transition, though. He always takes the extra stride, using his quickness to close in and he always engaged the body, cuts them across their hands and breaks the play up. Also does this at times in the OZ to create turnovers. Even if he's not the biggest or the strongest, these type of plays are very projectable to the next level.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 7th, 2023 - Färjestads BK vs. Luleå HF - SHL

Isac got to play 11 minutes in this SHL game. He competed hard, he could skate with pace of the game and he had a few good moments with the puck. The skating is explosive and he is fast but his stride could be longer. When he skates at his highest pace it looks like his muscle tone is high and he can't really use his stick handling skills. He had one impressive cross ice pass in the offensive zone where he opened up the defence. He showed good awareness by scanning and playing within the system defensively. He positioned himself well. He looks like a small but speedy and smart checker with some nice puck skills and playmaking abilities. The size isn't a big issue as he gets to the inside and plays physical with strong competitiveness along the boards.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Hedqvist continues to rack up chances game after game, even if he's not necessarily dominating. A big reason for this how effectively he's able to drive the middle off the rush, establish body positioning and get a pass from the boards in the slot. For a smaller player, he really knows how to gain leverage over taller opponents, and it should only work better in the future when he gets stronger. The quickness remains an asset.

Some of the decisions with the puck aren't always the best ones and we didn't see much of the OZ playmaking in this one, but then again, he did set up one high-danger look after breaking up the play in the NZ (actually prevented another entry attempt 10 seconds earlier, which makes the extended sequence even better), then saucering the puck to the middle for an entry pass through pressure that landed perfectly on a teammate's stick. Could be an interesting project swing to take, especially considering he'll be available later in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: February 5th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

This was more tame showing offensively from Hedqvist, but the underlying positive tendencies are still there. He's quick, he's really proficient on the forecheck and also creates stops in the NZ, advanced the play well in transition both as a puck-carrier and as a one-touch passer. He did turn the puck over a few times later on after trying to deke his way through the defender; the hands are probably rather average. Is there enough playmaking upside to justify a pick since he's probably not going to be a

big-time scorer based on the shot? Maybe not, but he's more interesting than many of the players who're going to be selected ahead of him in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

A three-point night for Hedqvist who was involved in almost every goal his team scored here, all via primary assists. The first was a nice cross-ice pass just as a penalty was expiring, the second came after a cut to the middle off the rush, then a drop pass to the trailer, and the third one after he won a loose puck after an OZ faceoff and turned the puck to the high slot for a goal as his team was looking to equalize without their goalie. Hedqvist also had one of the better plays of the game when he retrieved a puck in the OZ by beating the defender to it, then immediately turned to the slot with a backhand feed, made possible by nice pre-scanning.

Skating and pace are projectable, and he's got solid smarts off the puck to make use of them, creating space and passing lanes and contributing on the defensive side of the puck. He doesn't really have a delay game, but that could be coming in the future. Same goes for physical development, which should help him to become even more effective at winning battles; he's already got the mindset and some of the required skills.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

A pretty standard Hedqvist viewing. Set up quite a few scoring chances, using his quickness and vision. A lot of pre-scans before puck reception allowed him to identify the best play and execute on it quickly after recovering the possession. Getting the puck out of the boards and towards the middle is probably his strongest attribute, mostly doing so with passing. The skating projection continues to look pretty good, reasonably at least average on our scale. He's smart with how he uses that skating to surprisingly get in the way of passing lanes, getting one forechecking turnover and scoring chance as of result in this one. He's not necessarily dominating and I feel like he could be even better right now given his tools. Defensively, he's a work-in-progress during in-zone setting.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Luleå HF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

This wasn't quite to the standards Hedqvist had set for himself with the previous showings. Not that it was necessarily a bad one; he did set up one high-danger look at 5-on-5, passing into space off the rush, which is one of his strengths. Just less frequently had moments that impressed with the puck. He's still solid forechecker who pushes pace and creates space off the puck for his linemates, also connecting plays well in transition. I just don't know if there's enough notable skill for him to be considered a legit prospect for our purposes. He'll have a pro career at least, I'm pretty confident in that.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Luleå HF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

I have quite a bit of respect for Hedqvist's game. I don't know if the skill is high-end, but he's making good things happen regularly when he's on the ice. Attacks defenders with pace off the rush and forces them to make errors and take penalties. Inside-driven, looking to attack down the middle both with and without the puck. Has really good scanning habits in transition for the most part, connects plays really well with clever one-touch passes into space and such. Contributes defensively with active backchecking, finishes his tracking routes. Physically still very much in development, so he can get outmuscled here and there, but doesn't care and still plays on the inside and fights hard for body positioning. Skating remains a projectable tool.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Luleå HF vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Hedqvist took some shifts early as a centre, but then seemed to move to the wing as the game progressed. The skating remained a strength at this level. Good quickness with the first steps, solid technique, able to get to his outside edges comfortably. Again, seemed to have a knack for picking up loose pucks in the DZ, then started multiple counter-attacks with smart passing plays. Did resort to dump-outs and ins when he had opportunities to cut back. Liked a couple of his off-puck sequences, attacking defenders from their backside, then cutting in front of them to drive the middle lane off the rush. Not sure about how high the skill level truly is, but he's an interesting player.

Lassi Alanen: October 9th, 2022 - Luleå HF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

So much good stuff in this one from Hedqvist. For a smaller player, I really appreciated his ferocity in puck battles and especially in the defensive end. When he decided to engage in a battle, he was basically always coming out of it with possession. Worked really hard for body positioning, smart with how he used his stick in the process, too. When he got the puck, he almost always pushed it quickly towards the OZ and the net. Skating looked like at least slightly above-average projection; there could be room for improvement with further strength training, too. Made cross-lane passes in transition, then completed his routes as F2 towards the net, almost getting multiple chances this way. Again, the establishment of body positioning was a trend with the off-puck offence, too. Flashed some intriguing playmaking skill as well.



108 Dylan MacKinnon

AGE 17.674 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D Position	Right Shoots
6'2" Height	187 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5.5 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	7.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Halifax Mooseheads	QMJHL	61	6	17	23	0.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Dylan MacKinnon's rookie QMJHL season didn't offer much optimism that he'd one day develop into a legitimate NHL prospect. Still, the industry sources that we speak with regularly took a keen interest in the Halifax Mooseheads defenceman, and so we followed their lead and honed in on him. Eventually, we saw his potential more clearly.

MacKinnon may be one of the rawest prospects in this entire draft. At this stage, he mostly shines in two situations: when he defends the rush and near the net. He's physical. He looks for contact. In fact, he seems at his most comfortable when fighting with opponents on boards. In those situations, his goal is not only to retrieve the puck, but also to neutralize opponents completely. He shoves them on the glass and slams them to the ice.

What makes him projectable as an NHL shutdown defenceman is not only his physicality, but his mobility. MacKinnon defends with a sound skating stance, with good flexion through his body and his weight stacked on one leg or the other. His explosive, balanced, and adaptable posture enables him to adapt to the movements of opposing rushes, close on them, and take away their space with his stick. We also see him pivot to meet the opposing rush with forward strides to gap up with attackers even quicker.

"Again in this game, he pinched hard, cut plays in transition, and

Dylan MacKinnon

D | Halifax Mooseheads | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 116.2



engaged opponents on the boards in the defensive zone. His timing and awareness are slowly improving defensively,” Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report.

Because of his great shutdown tools, MacKinnon would have featured higher on our board if he showed more abilities with the puck and better overall reads. Although we saw him occasionally use his skating to beat the forecheck, rims and chips remained his preferred plays on breakouts this season.

The lack of evolution in his offensive game made us lose a bit of confidence in his projection, and the missed defensive rotations, too. MacKinnon defends well 1-on-1, but he has to become better at resisting deception and at shutting down attackers when they arrive with numbers or more space.

MacKinnon could become a bottom-pairing, penalty-killing NHL defenceman, but for that to happen, he needs to improve his puck plays and overall processing of the game. Over the next two years, the departure of some of Halifax’s stars will give him the extra offensive zone time and puck touches he needs to improve his offensive game.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: The emergence of Evan Nause and Dylan MacKinnon



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Not much change at the end of the season for MacKinnon. I wish he gained more comfort with the puck but he’s still looking for the fastest outlet possible. He’s a good-first-pass defenceman in the QMJHL. You can be that in the NHL, but at lower levels, ideally, players have to experiment and learn to make plays under pressure. The skating is still a 5-5.5 and, at his stature, that means he could become a shutdown piece. He has the meanness to do it, the physicality.

David St-Louis: April 1st, 2023 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

MacKinnon attempted some fakes in this game. All of his moves are scripted, meaning that he doesn’t really adapt to his environment; he decides on trying something and he does it. His off-puck defending also needs some work. The hockey sense remains a below-average grade for me. That being said, the tools remain just as interesting and it’s very encouraging to see him attempt more elaborate plays. It’s by trying those playmaking tricks that he will get the feel for them.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Victoriaville Tigres - QMJHL

MacKinnon got a 15 minute penalty for fighting in the middle frame. He didn’t like that an opponent pushed a teammate near his goalie. A couple of shoves turned into a fist fight. He has that kind of aggression in him. He doesn’t just contain players but tries his best to bring them to the ice. The puck plays are not projectable. His handling is shaky and he lacks confidence in it; he prefers to make simple passing plays. I still think he deserves to be on our board simply with his combination of great defensive

posturing, aggression, physicality, and stature. I have a feeling that, once the stars in Halifax leave, he will get a lot more puck touches and maybe some powerplay time, two things that will help him refine his offensive game.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Can't totally explain it, but I'm a fan of MacKinnon. I think it's the combination of an incredibly raw puck game and the strong skating and build. I see a lot of potential in his game. He has the defensive part of it pretty much down. His reads could improve, but he's so engaged, aggressive, and he defends with such a solid posture that I think he could become a shutdown force in the pros. Is it too optimistic to project him to the NHL? Yes, right now. But if he manages to develop his breakout and offensive blue line sufficiently over the next two years and solidifies his defence even more, I think it's possible to envision him becoming a solid bottom-pairing element in the NHL. He's a long-shot as it is and we have to respect that with where we place him on our board. I like him a bit more than Morin right now.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs. Team Red - CHL Top Prospects Game

MacKinnon looked a step below his counterparts in this game. He defends one-on-ones well, but he's really not at ease making plays. He always delayed breakouts because he had to rely on d-to-d passes and reverse plays to his partner. His off-puck defending or threat identification also needs work. He got dragged out of position multiple times in this game. His skating is better than his handling. Despite the rawness of his game, I still remain quite interested in his projection. He's physical and mobile, and he had some flashes of offensive ability in this one. Just the fact that he's willing to jump on pucks and absorb hits to make plays is a good start. A long-term, but intriguing project.

Mitchell Brown: January 15th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

MacKinnon wasn't much of a consistent physical presence in this game. His defensive posture is generally sound off the rush: weight forward, lower body flexion, and stick protecting the middle. Away from the puck, he straightens up and reacts to the puck zipping around him. With the puck, he had one moment of skill, faking a pass reception, stepping into space, and firing into shin guards. Otherwise, he fumbled pass receptions and made a lot of plays that went nowhere. The stride's projectable, with his knees pushed past his toes, hips engaged, and enough quickness to recover on plays. He doesn't force plays up the boards, instead cutting back and moving the puck to his partner. That's a good start, but nothing that suggested an NHL candidate.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - Gatineau Olympiques vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

The most impressive performance I've seen from MacKinnon. I would still rate the handling skills and hockey sense below-average in terms of projection, but as the season advances, he is making more plays. It's really the offensive side of his game that matters, his reads with the puck and his execution, as it's pretty easy to project him as a shutdown guy. Again in this game, he pinched hard, cut plays in transition, and engaged opponents on the boards in the defensive zone. His timing and awareness are slowly improving defensively. He shows more skill. His passes are more precise and even layered with some deception. On a regroup, he opened up an opponent to launch the puck between his stick and skates to a teammate. And his shots are harder. He still has trouble picking up rims cleanly or readjusting under pressure to hit a play. I remember I had the same doubts about him in QMAAA (hockey sense and handling), but he seems to be on a slow, upward curve. I'd give him a C-grade for the moment and watch him in the second half. He's getting more minutes, earning them.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Finally, a game where MacKinnon looked like a legitimate NHL prospect. The same limitations – handling (especially pass receptions), lack of offensive contributions – were here, but he brought more than enough elsewhere. Instead of forcing plays up the boards, he cut back. He preferred to outrace the F1 to the middle, then pass cross-ice, or bait the flush out before skating up the middle. For these positions, he shows a bit of play-building skill and vision. Defensively, he was physical, aggressive, and projectable. Keep stance on his toes, head up constantly. He angled plays wide, crushed opponents, and grabbed stops deeper in the zone. Looked like a potential end-of-board candidate.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Gatineau Olympiques vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Mackinnon's puck plays are improving, slightly. He is getting more minutes and more touches. He shows himself more adaptable now, looks for the better play instead of just a play. He's not great at creating lanes at this stage, however. If there is a play, maybe he can reach it. If there is nothing available, he makes the default, safe, dump and rim..Which is fine at this stage. His timing is also better in his defensive interventions, pokechecks and hits.

He surfs in the neutral zone to kill plays, doing so as the opponent gets the puck to prevent a counter. The defence is still reactive, overall, wait-and-see. A problem. I'm still not sure if he's a pick, but I'm leaning yes. He could just end up becoming an AHL, shutdown defenceman, but he has enough tools and defensive ability and flashes of offence to keep me watching. The skating isn't perfect (slightly hunched over and kicking feet, a posture that limit agility in some situations), but the quickness in straight-lines stands out.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Ok, Mackinnon is violent. I didn't expect that level of aggression even when watching previous performances. He wrestled a few players to the ice, those who wanted to get close to his goalie or that went for his puck on the wall. His physicality, aggressiveness, and hard close-outs (better timed in this game) form a kind of NHL springboard. When a player is that willing to engage physically, he will be used over others who don't have such a special skill. The off-puck defending is nowhere close to his on-puck defending, but he still aims to use his stick well. He does go down a bit too much when trying to block passes; he would be better served if he scanned more to ID the target and then adjust his positioning while staying on his feet. Offensively, mostly question marks, still. But I saw more flashes here: passes through opponents, passes to the middle of the ice, and even some skate fakes. If he can get his puck plays and off-puck defending to an average level, watch out. I'm intrigued.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

There are NHL flashes in Mackinnon's game, but I also understand why he isn't playing more minutes. When the puck hits his stick, there is a high chance that it turns over. He lacks the finer stickhandling under pressure to problem-solve the forecheck instantly and he doesn't really plan his next all that much. That being said, I saw one hook-pass from him, through an attacker's feet in this one. He also took a few pucks in movement, separate from defenders, changed the offensive picture, and found the next play. Offensively, he seems to limit himself to mostly weak shots at the net. Maybe it's a tactic to force the goalie to go down? His value still comes mostly from his projectable skating (quickness + reasonable agility + straight-line speed), frame, and initiator mentality. He wants to be physical and he uses his stick well, for the most part, defensively. He's more of a puck-watcher than an anticipator. The tools give him potential, but he looks like a shutdown defenceman mostly. Not sure he's an NHLer. The reads and softer skills have to improve.

David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

I mostly see an engager, someone who can defend one-on-one with reasonable effectiveness. He prioritized playing the opponent over the puck in most of his wall battles, sealing the puck to get first touch on it or to allow a teammate to do the same, but he also had a tendency to go for hits when using his stick would have been better, like launching himself at attackers, shoulder first, when the puck lay there for the taking. He will have to learn to balance his aggressiveness. I liked that he scanned on retrievals, but he didn't make many controlled plays. He overall seemed uncomfortable with the puck, missing a few passes and shots. His physicality, projectable stride, and care for the defensive game could turn him into something at the pro level.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

A quiet game from MacKinnon with the puck, apart from a couple of well-executed punch turns to escape pressure along the boards. He's not really an advantage creator or even skilled. He does everything in a glide and doesn't look for high-value options. Basic plays. Doesn't use space. Defensively, he's solid. The physical component to his game provides a distinct advantage in the Q; he doesn't just hit players, but he angles, wins body positioning, and eliminates them around the net. The defence could be a strength, but that depends on his defensive skating. Need to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

MacKinnon was a top pick into the Q and has started playing real minutes lately. He has some redeeming qualities, mostly of the defensive kind. Closes space at the blue-line after taking away the middle. Forces dump-ins. Reaches and his defensive skating can be exploited. Retrievals and breakouts are generally poor, failing to scan properly and reversing pucks to the other team. Lack of individual skill. Requires a glide to make things happen. He has moments, however. Used a give-and-go off a retrieval to get into the play, and he generally finds the best option when given space. Uses space in the offensive zone before moving the puck. Didn't look like a draft pick in this game, but there's clearly enough here to keep me watching.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - Moncton Flyers - NBPEIMU18HL

The only advantages he creates are through physical attributes at this level. Hockey sense is a question mark at this moment. His game is centred around shots from the point. He can't easily read the defensive picture to get shot and pass through, at times. Some bad timing and execution on moves. The defensive game is much more projectable: good gap defensively; sits on checks, aggressive posturing, and a lot of 2nd efforts. He's a very fluid skater, a potentially above-average NHL one. He's capable of retaining speed in pivots. He tries to activate and has some deception in his passing plays. If his puck plays improve, he could become one of the better shutdown defencemen in the QMJHL.

Grade: C



109 Carson Bjarnason

AGE 17.211 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw
Talent

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'3"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	5.5	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	47	3.08	.900	3
Canada U18	WJC-18	6	3.51	.849	-

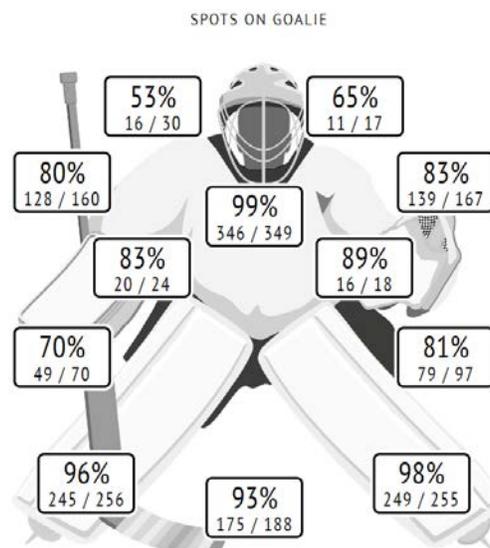
SCOUTING REPORT

Carson Bjarnason is an exciting prospect for a variety of reasons. He took an incredible leap forward in his development over the course of this past season, and found himself as the top-ranked North American goaltender by NHL Central Scouting

At 6-foot-3, 181 pounds, Bjarnason is a tall, lanky goaltender with a skill set that can only benefit from getting stronger and faster.

If it doesn't look like Bjarnason is 6-foot-3 to the naked eye, it may be because he uses a stance that is very cut at the waist. He projects well on top of the puck because of this, but there's a concern that leaning forward so much causes issues with his balance. The fact that he commonly ends up on his backside after lateral butterfly movements leads me to believe that he may be overdoing it just a little bit, and we may notice his stance gradually becoming more neutral as time goes on.

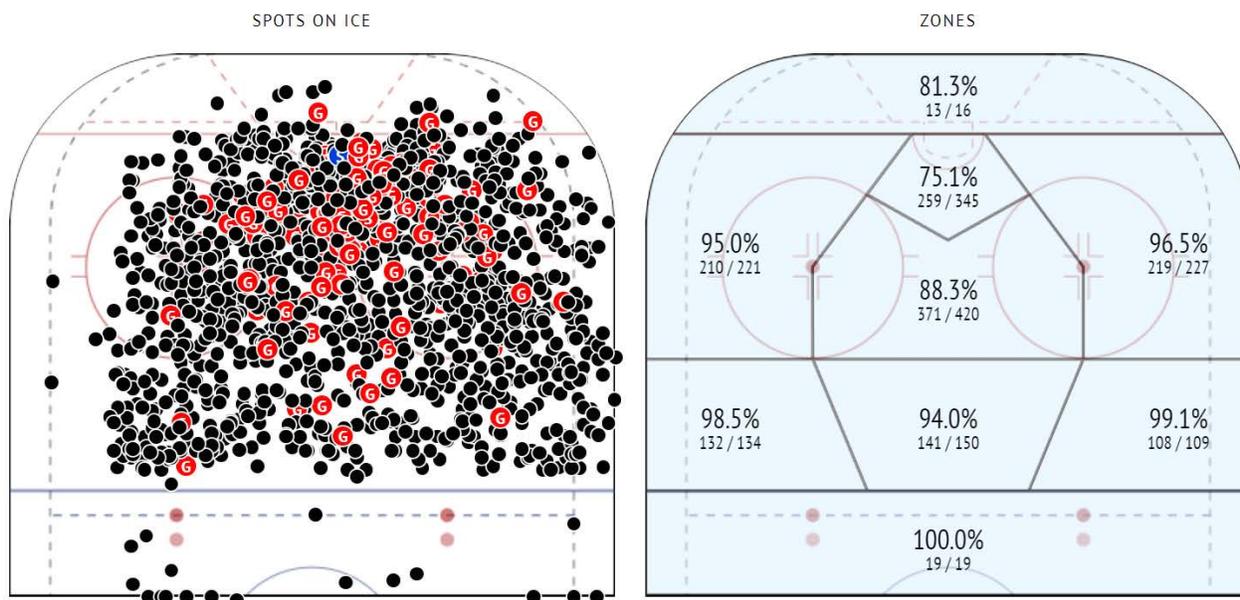
Bjarnason's legs are his biggest weapon. He consistently takes away the bottom part of the net with them. He uses the overlap technique a lot on rush chances because if there is a back door pass, he has the ability to stretch across and cover the extra space with his pads. He generally gets strong pushes off the post, but he has a tendency to push into empty space instead of on angle to the closest threat. That tendency could become a larger issue at the next level as the game starts to speed up, and plays become tougher to predict.



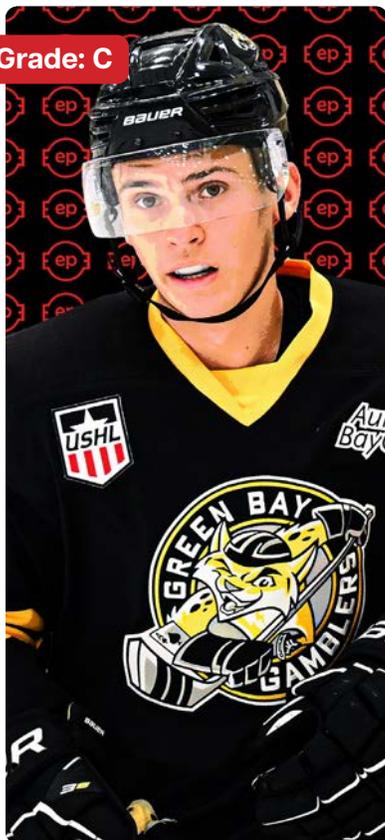
Drifting is another tendency of Bjarnason's. Sometimes he can become hyper fixated on the shooter and will drift out at them without coming to a complete stop. That makes it very tough to track a release of a good shot, which means he can be beaten on clean shots this way. Gaining depth on a shooter is nice, especially with the size that he has, but he needs to set his feet if he wants to give himself any chance at being able to track professional-level shots.

It will be interesting to watch how Bjarnason develops next season, because the team that drafts him will be hoping that he can keep up the pace he discovered in 2022-23. He has the ceiling to be looked back as the most talented goaltender in this draft. If he returns after a good summer with more strength and knowledge in his back pocket, you can also bet to see his name in consideration for Canada at World Juniors.

≡ **SPOTS ON ICE**



Grade: C



110 Jimmy Clark

AGE 17.975 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 24, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Ankle Breaker



Motor

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

6

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	62	19	28	47	0.76

SCOUTING REPORT

Early in the season, Jimmy Clark looked like a solid, but familiar USHL player. He was a standout worker, especially on the defensive end with his supporting reads, anticipation, and knack for out-of-nowhere steals. But as dynamic performances against top competition piled up, it became clear that Clark was one of the USHL's most skilled offerings.

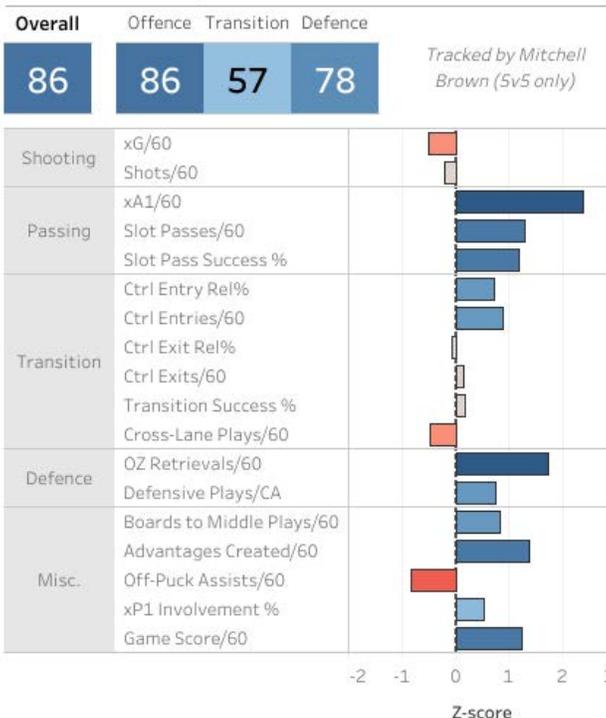
Few prospects show the level of playmaking ability that Clark possesses. He doesn't just advance the puck to open teammates; he creates those openings with fake shots and look offs before slipping pucks through traffic. With a quick fake, he pulls defenders towards him and dekes through them. Where many offload the puck, he waits a split-second to find a better option. And he pulls off all these plays at top speed.

Clark doesn't fall into the trap of other high skill players. He adapts his game to the situation, playing a more give-and-go, off-puck style when necessary.

To bring these puck skills to the next level, Clark must improve his ability with contact, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown explains: "He's mostly an open ice player at this stage. He tries, but usually struggles with back pressure when he can't deceive it, likely as a consequence of the skating. As soon as

Jimmy Clark

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 106.1



back pressure arrives, he tries to outskate it – which isn't a viable strategy when there's a defenceman in front."

Because of that, there's a chance he struggles to advance past the AHL ranks. But his skill level's just too high and motor too consistent to leave him off the board. He's headed to Minnesota, a top program. He could become a middle-six scorer with the right development plan.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Joey Padmanabhan: April 21st, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

It's hard not to love what Jimmy Clark brings to the lineup. He works so hard every shift and boasts a decent amount of skill too. The skating needs a lot of work, there's a ton of slippage in his stride and he doesn't leverage extension, but he churns his feet to be a factor on every forecheck, backcheck, and breakout. Some great hustle plays where he picked off passes or finished a check, forced a turnover, and found an outlet in dangerous territory. He doesn't have dynamic playmaking ability but consistently improves puck position and just works his tail off. Good enough to be on the board.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Another standout game from Clark, who has surely earned a spot on our draft board by now. He has everything other than skating. Lacks depth, but even when he achieves it, he still doesn't generate much power. Not quick with his feet, he has a high functional pace regardless. With that out of the way, let's start with defence. He supports plays down low, backtracked without overextending, closed space up, eliminated threats, anticipated plays and jumped into the lane just as the pass left the opponent's stick, and skates through opponents to win body positioning. Overpowered opponents a few times.

With the puck, he used weaving rushes and in-tight handling skill to get defenders moving in the wrong direction. Manipulated opponents with handling, pulling defenders in the wrong direction. Found a passing option where many dump the puck out. Linked the defence to offence several times, including one where he set up a chance from the net after getting the stop at the other end. Got open inside space for a one-time chance, shuffling to stay in the lane and away from defenders. He lacks patience at times, skating himself into the corner with the puck instead of cutting back. At this level of skating, the delay game is integral to finding NHL success. He could become an all-around third-liner, but there's a lot of work to be done to get there.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The best draft eligible in this game. Clark plays fast, to the inside, and with skill. Keeps his feet moving while handling and deceiving. So much deception. He turned a fake shot into a pass for a chance and beat the opponent wide by faking the inside cut with his feet. He's aware of options, tries plays, and has the passing skill to connect – slip and hook passes feature regularly. The skating's weakness from a pure mechanical standpoint, but that he maintains his handling skill and vision at high speeds creates confidence that it will improve. A solid defender, too.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A quiet game from Clark through two periods. But he came alive in the third and set-up the game-winner with a second left. Clark has so many skills. He deftly handles pucks in tight, slips passes, and prepares his lanes. He leans into opponents, fakes one way, deceives before passing, skating through opponents' recovery routes, and always looks cross-ice for options. The defensive stick led to five break ups – he was really feeling it. Grabbed his second primary with a steal, before faking the shot and going cross-slot. The shot's weak and the skating looks like a below-average projection, but the reads and puck skills were 6-plus grade in game. He could be an early-third.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Okay, Clark is for real. He entered the zone in a 2-on-2, scanned, then set up the defender with a shot fake before slipping the

puck back across the slot – a high-end play. Created another chance by leaning on a defender, cutting back, then passing under their stick into the slot. Fearless, too. Drove the net at full speed, stepped into opponents, applied intense pressure all game long (leading to offence up the rink).

There are flaws, however. The skating, as mentioned in other game reports. But he's mostly an open ice player at this stage. He tries, but usually struggles with back pressure. He can't separate from or deceive opponents, likely as a consequence of the skating. As soon as back pressure arrives, he tries to outskate it – which isn't a viable strategy when there's a defenceman in front. His open ice skills, pace, and defence are tough to pass up. But it means he's more a 70s-plus prospect despite having three clear top-45-level skills (passing, shooting, intelligence).

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Clark was Green Bay's best player in this game; he might've been the best player in the game in general. He was a factor just about every shift. He got things going by deking an opponent to the middle before passing for a goal. Connected with a few standout passes, including a fake shot into cross-crease dish for a tap-in. Completed plays off the boards and passes under and behind opponents. Used give-and-gos, scanned before making plays, and even showed a bit of hard skills to win positioning and cutting through opponents' hands. Involved on the forecheck and in the defensive end, mostly by anticipating plays. Skating looked like an issue; upright and on his heels. Still, he looked like a pick in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Cedar Rapids Roughriders - USHL

I really like Clark, he's a simple player but it's not for a lack of skill or effort. Clark's a hard worker with average skating ability who uses speed and strength where he can to beat defenders but also delegates possession if feels he doesn't have room to skate. The highlight of Clark's game is his defensive play. Clark is always aware of where his check is, busts his tail to be a factor on the backcheck, and is an exceptionally smart penalty killer, picking his spots to be aggressive and create chaos. There was some proof of concept offensively in this game too. Clark takes low and slow routes in his own end through the middle, gets possession with speed and uses the linear crossover in conjunction with inside edge shifts to beat defenders.

Some evidence of more advanced offensive skills too, a couple of delays, a fake to the inside followed by a slip, and even an attempted toe drag through two guys that almost worked; a pretty rare attempt for Clark. A nice goal where he found the puck in a scrum at the faceoff dot and fired a curl and drag to beat the CR goalie cleanly. A really smart assist where Clark hit the brakes right inside the blue, saw DeAngelo cutting to the back post, and made a great pass off pad. He's someone who could offer some value in the second or third round.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Clark's energy is always apparent. He sprints from one puck carrier to the next. Gets above the puck and pushes attacks wide. Anticipates passes, fills lanes. He reads opponents. Not much offence, however. Earned a chance by whacking the puck out of the air and firing a wrister in transition. Zero passing or transition skill shown at 5-on-5. A straight-line, single-speed shooter. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but he's worth watching given the flashes.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Clark scored a pair of powerplay goals. The first was a deflection. For the second, he walked off the boards, pushed the puck into space, then used a quick angle change to beat the goaltender across the net. A high-level play, showcasing skill, awareness, and tools. Apart from a steal that became a chance, this was a limited 5-on-5 game for Clark. The skating's an issue; he's so upright and generates little power. He's a solid worker, though. Going to have to watch him more.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

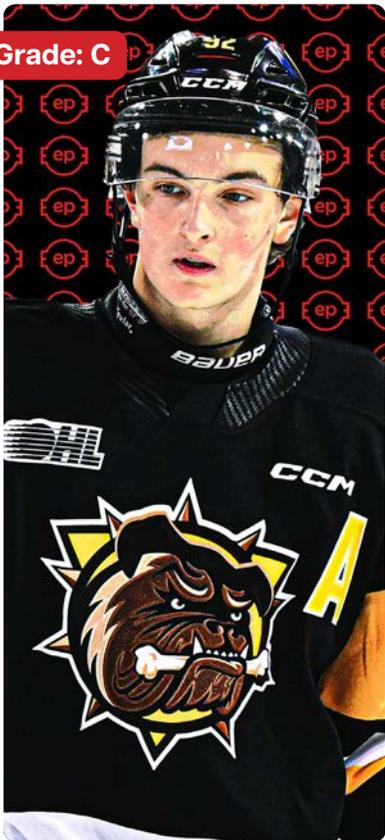
Clark didn't achieve anything in transition. He skated in straight lines, then offloaded possession once the defender closed in. Nothing interesting skill or mechanics-wise. But he comes alive on the forecheck. He angles the puck carrier to the boards, comes across

with his stick and then shoulder. Wins positioning, and then looks to the middle for options. Early season, but intriguing prospect.

Joey Padmanabhan: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Clark is a hard worker and a great defensive forward. He is a cerebral forechecker and understands where his stick and body need to be as F1 to angle opponents into traffic. He picks up a man in his own end and understands when he needs to collapse low as a support. Offensively, there's less to be impressed with. He's an average skater and can't create any kind of separation with speed or edge work. The hands are also about average, he won't impress you with a dangle or deceptive move the same way Shaugabay does on occasion. Shines brightest through the neutral and defensive zones, but the motor and defensive acumen are enough to merit further viewing.

Grade: C



III Cole Brown

AGE 17.386 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter



Transition Ace

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
6'3" Height	170 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5.5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	60	17	25	42	0.70

SCOUTING REPORT

Cole Brown isn't the usual 6-foot-3 forward prospect. He's not a punishing checker or power forward-type. Instead, he's a smooth skilled winger with point-producing upside at the next level.

With a precise one-timer and powerful in-stride wrist, Brown shoots like an NHLer.

To use his shot, he reads the momentum of opponents and occasionally dictates it. He cuts inside when defenders give him the opportunity, beats them down the outside, and cuts back when they lean in. Even more excitingly, he pulls defenders towards him, then dekes through them to create a lane to the net.

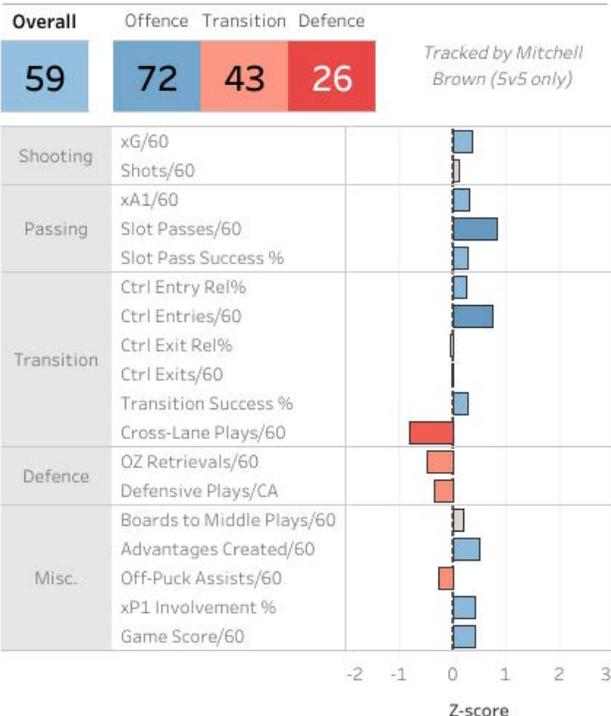
Brown's patient, letting plays develop before passing. That style in the NHL requires walking a fine line, and he veers on the lower pace end, allowing back pressure to disrupt his plays.

By skating into opponents' routes, winning positioning, and looking over his shoulder more, he'd create even more opportunities. Developing a deeper, more consistent skating posture will help, too.

With those skills comes Brown's hard-working, detailed off-puck game. Given all of those skills, he could earn a spot inside a team's bottom-six.

Cole Brown

F | Hamilton Bulldogs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 118.5



≡ **GAME REPORTS****J.D. Burke:** April 2nd, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

I'm not sure I would characterize this as a bad game by Brown. He played big minutes for Hamilton in their top-six, generated his fair share of transition plays, and even finished with a goal, going to the net and snapping a rebound home. I'm not sure that I saw anything to suggest NHL upside though. Every one of Brown's tools looked about average to me. Start there. I'm not sure that I saw any high-level creativity with the puck or advanced reads in any part of the game either. Brown attacked in a straight line, at a single speed, often against pressure, and displayed no real sense of planning or problem-solving ability. I'm not sure that Brown is a pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Another really solid, projectable game from Brown. He's deceptive, patient, and never pushes play straight ahead needlessly. As soon as the defender closes in, he cuts back or inside. Went under a defender's stick while cutting inside for a chance. Manipulated a defender by setting up the deke at an angle for another look. Showed handling skill and manipulation ability, although his hands can be too slow to pull off more advanced moves. A hand-worker on the forecheck and backcheck, too. There are blind plays and he's not quick, but he has enough skills to become an NHLer. Probably a depth player, but there's a chance for a bit more with his intelligent, proactive game.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A power play hat trick for Brown. The last two were wristers from the slot, attacking the middle of the rush before firing. He's a bit unaware of backpressure at times, but fully reads front pressure. He exploits pass gaps by skating to the middle. He exploits passive gaps by cutting back and looking for the trailing option. He makes quick passing reads but can also draw out a possession and find a teammate sprinting the slot. Since he's not entirely aware of his surroundings, back pressure will occasionally force him into a bad pass or hastened decisions after cutting back. He's sluggish out of stops, which doesn't help. The skating lacks depth and subsequently power in general. But he's fluid with the puck. He's a pick, especially because he already brings some defence through his backtracking and off-puck awareness. Could play bottom-six minutes and has the tools to score a bit in the right situation.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Another solid game from Brown. He reads space and chooses the appropriate attack. He cuts inside when the defender's too close to the boards or passively gapped. He cuts back when space runs out. In one sequence, he used a two-foot stop and accelerated to the middle for a chance. Uses lateral passes to bypass defenders off the rush. Spaces the offensive zone and gets open between defenders. The shot looks like an NHL tool. Shot in-stride and hammered a clean one-timer off the post. Skating's a question. Edges are somewhat developed and achieves proper lower body flexion in brief moments, but his crossovers lack any sort of crossunder and the stride falls apart fast. He's an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

This was a completely different game than the last Fronts-Bulldogs game. Brown was everywhere. He grabbed a couple of early-game deflections by skating his routes and stopping in space, winning body positioning on the defender when necessary. He also flashed some manipulation ability. He worked laterally to bait the defender to push, then exposed the puck. As the defender reached, he passed under their stick to a teammate rushing the net. Connected with a look-off cross-slot pass off the rush to nearly set up another chance. Knew the next play upon getting possession. Didn't force plays ahead, preferring to cut back when necessary. Some of his ideas failed and he's not mechanically advanced. But he looks like a pick. Intelligence, deception, and some defensive ability.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Another intriguing game from Brown. He's a refined defensive player already. He was always above the puck. From there, he anticipates, angles, and seals off the puck carrier. Anticipates passes and closes lanes. Supports down low. With the puck, he's a bit simple. He flashed a bit of weight shift ability and handling skill in a late-game rush, but mostly makes quick passes in transition. Off-puck's where he shines more. He gets open, rushes the slot at the right moments, and even stick-lifted a defender just as the puck came through, effectively using the opponent's stick to deflect the puck into the back of the net. It's not flashy, but he seems like a decent bet to play, and there's a bit upside here.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Searched long and hard for Brown in this game, and there wasn't much of note. He had major difficulty in transition. Lots of chip-and-no-chance-chase plays and turning back into pressure with better options. He has the ideas – cut back, pass laterally – but nothing clicked. He's reasonably fluid and has some playmaking ideas, but everything's just simple plays. And he's not a space creator off-puck or an advanced player along the boards. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Brown didn't achieve a ton this game, but he continued to show projectable habits. He doesn't force plays up the boards and uses his teammates effectively. Lots of strong defensive plays. Showed shooting and passing skill, including a look off pass to the middle. The shot's a clear NHL projection, a 5.5 at least. He can really rip the puck, he hides his release, and has a variety of releases. Curious to watch more. He looked like a mid-rounder in this game. Not dynamic, but smart.

David St-Louis: January 20th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

I didn't see a whole lot from Brown in this game. Only the size and skating combination. He can make some passing plays, but at lower pace. Ideally, he would be able to spot his options as he drove down the wing at full flight. But just that combination of speed and frame could get him drafted.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

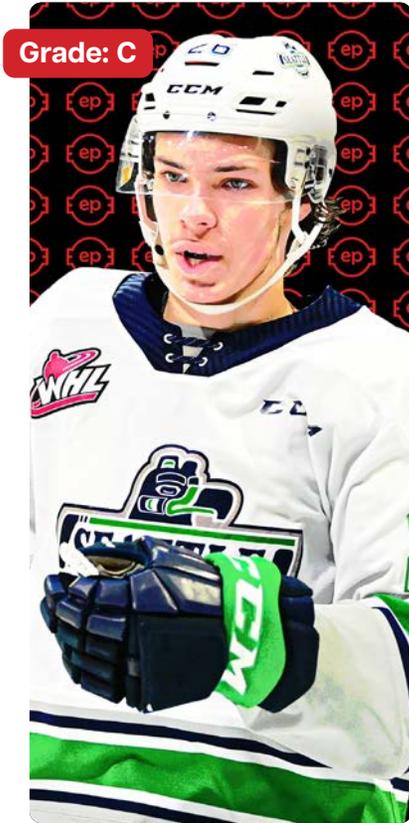
A fascinating game from Brown. It wasn't much of a creation performance, but rather one that showed NHL details. Instead of rushing the puck forward, he'd press the middle, then either continue if the defender relented or cut back if they stepped up. Quick passes to the middle led to opportunities, including his assist. Always tracked the play after passing, following up loose pucks and ripping away possession from opponents. His game was mostly quick, short plays and he wasn't manipulating opponents, but he showed enough skill and defensive ability to suggest an NHL prospect.

David St-Louis: January 13th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

I didn't see much in terms of sense for Brown in this game, but the tools are interesting. He's 6-foot-3 and has the speed to play in the NHL. He's more of an offensive player at this stage, a solo driver and creator, but he has the handling and passing skills to develop as a playmaking. I liked his pace. He caught pucks in movement and attacked down the ice.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Brown scored with a backfoot one-timer off the rush, beating the goalie across the crease. A really tricky shot, certainly an NHL one. This was more of a consistent game rather than a standout moments performance, however. Brown does a lot right. He gets open through movement and timing. He moves pucks east-west and delays at the right moments. Backtracks, gets above the puck, times his pokes. No playmaking shown, but just a solid all-around performance. Reasonably fluid, too. He could be a pick.



Grade: C

112 Nico Myatovic

AGE 17.789 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 01, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter



Motor

Player Info

C/RW Position	Left Shoots
6'2" Height	181 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5.5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	68	30	30	60	0.88

SCOUTING REPORT

One of the draft's biggest risers, Nico Myatovic is poised to go from a sixth rounder into the WHL to a top-64 pick into the NHL. His nearly three even strength points per 60 minutes was among the top in the league, beating out Riley Heidt, Brayden Yager, Nate Danielson, and more.

Myatovic's game is one of reading gaps, attacking space, and pulling the trigger. When the defence is passive, he cuts inside across the front. When gapped tightly, he hits the brakes and waits for support. Armed with an NHL-calibre wrister and two-touch skill, he turns tricky passes into screaming wristers and picks corners off the rush.

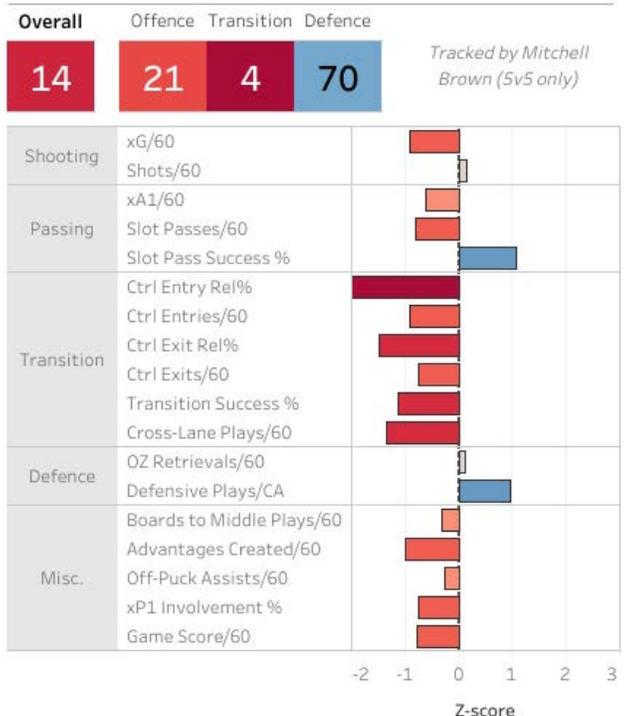
One of the WHL's better defensive forwards, Myatovic's often Seattle's first forward over the boards for penalty kills. Disruptive on the backcheck and intelligent on the forecheck, he earns stops at evens, too.

Despite the skills, he's not creating the gaps and space that relies on. He depends on teammates to create the advantage for him both offensively and in transition, which means he's not a play-driver at this level and doesn't project as one moving forward.

Myatovic's rapid space recognition, shooting skill, patience, and defensive value mean he's a solid bet to become an NHLer in a

Nico Myatovic

F | Seattle Thunderbirds | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 117.5



fourth-line role. And there's always a chance that he shows more creation ability when given the opportunity.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 18th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Myatovic's confidence with the puck in sustained pressure was super impressive. He finds seams to jump through, laps the offensive zone with confidence, and promotes pressure-building throughout his shifts. Early on Myatovic was even getting off the wall, accessing the middle in an attempt to get to more dangerous parts of the ice. This isn't a constant, however; struggles with finding pass options on the inside in this viewing. Off-puck there were some timing and recognition issues. In the second he essentially would have had a tap-in on the weak side if he would have filed deeper in the offensive zone.

More dangerous and frankly interesting on the rush. Myatovic worked an early first-period give-and-go to attack the net but only got off a poorly placed backhand into the crest of Young. Like how he adjusts his rush patterns to the inside and works to gain body position on tracking defenders. Had shot precision issues while in motion -- something I saw earlier in the season. Defaulted into a lot of dump-and-chase sequences as well. There's clearly some skill here, and his tools are workable to take a big step next season. Obviously, there are environmental factors here with how strong Seattle's forward core is. His work rate and the motor will interact well with his base of tools eventually.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Myatovic was effective in this game for the same reasons as usual. He sees space, he takes space. He cuts inside on passive defenders and always looks to circle high off the boards to get a frictionless escape. He had moments where he actually created the space for himself, once with a quick delay in transition before passing. The shot's the star. He easily knocked passes into his hip pocket for the shot, even getting a proper weight transfers with his toes pointed into the corner. Missed a one-time opportunity, but generally, the shot looks like a clear NHL tool. Makes basic passes, but skates his routes to completion, whacking away the sticks of opponents to create lanes behind him. Skating's a below-average projection, but he has flashes with the outside edges. Interesting player with some NHL upside because of hte shot and space reading. Would be a solid candidate for the 80s or 90s.

Cam Robinson: February 21st, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Victoria Royals - WHL

Seattle put the boots to Victoria in this one, but Myatovic was very good. He grabbed three goals and could've easily had 4 or 5 with a couple of his other scoring chances. The downhill wrist shot was working well, finding corners with a heavy snap to them. He went hard to the net for the third goal. He was strong along the wall, picking up pucks, protecting with his body, spinning out and looking for passing options. He and Sawchyn work well together - Sawchyn the playmaker, Myatovic the shooter. He was clean on the PK as well where he saw leading minutes.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

I continue to mostly see tools when I watch Myatovic, not necessarily sense or refined skills. His combination of his frame, projectable skating, good enough handling, and ability to stick to a system could make him an NHL player down the line, but I'm not sure he will ever be more than a fourth-liner. The creativity is not really there. He plays a really straightforward game and while he tries defensively, he's not a really effective shutdown player either at the moment.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Myatovic understands how to read space and gaps. He doesn't create them, but he's quick to attack the middle in front of a passive defence. Inside the offensive zone, he instantly recognizes space to carry to the middle or circle high. He's not creating high-danger offence - he's not that level of playmaker - but he shows a bit of shooting skill, like a two-touch wrister. A one-timer alongside better pass receptions would make him more of a threat. The defence was really solid in this game, too. He had

a bunch of stick checks for break ups and disruptions, getting back and across opponents or reading their feet and getting their hands. He's a fourth-line, depth projection. But I like his game. He has a lot of pro qualities that could be made into a solid NHLer, provided the technical base improves a bit.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Nothing all that interesting about Myatovic in this one, but he did make a few passing plays. His processing of the ice is not all that quick but he anticipates where teammates are and can feed them the puck. Good net-front game, as usual. And while he's not physical yet, he has the tools to become a more fierce player.

Cam Robinson: February 11th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

A fairly quiet game from Myatovic. He had a bang bang play at the net front where he timed his landing well and should've buried one. A few off the rush shots from distance that didn't really have a chance. He was carrying the puck a bit more and was usually aiming for the dotted line, but did skate himself into trouble a few times. Showed good on the outside edge with a few useful cutbacks. The straight away stride looked laboured and really wide - especially as he got later into his shifts.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Myatovic had a really solid game. It's not all there in transition. He has the routes sometimes, but the timing and play selection lack. It's when someone creates the advantage for him where he excels. He deftly works through defenders or slots to the inside. He knows how read gaps and exploit passivity. His goal showcased it, cutting inside before snipping back against the grain just as the goaltender shuffled across. He's a solid forechecker, too. Angles and seals off the puck carrier. Lots of stops in this game. And he created a high-danger chance with a one-handed pass back out to the slot, pre-scanning as he went into the battle. Not a player who will post great underlying results at this stage, but the potential's obvious.

Mitchell Brown: January 31st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Myatovic had a nice rush early in this game. He took the puck to the middle, feigned splitting the defence, cut across around the opponent and slid a puck on net. It was a projectable rush, using weight shifts, crossovers, and a bit of manipulation. That was about it with the puck in this game. He flung pucks straight at the other team and failed to identify passing lanes. He brought more on the defensive end, pushing attacks to the outside and supporting down low when necessary. Didn't see much upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Myatovic had a couple of impressive off-the-pass wristers that could be NHL shots. He showed awareness to attack the middle when given space, along with a bit of handling skill to gain the zone. Upright in-tight, which prevented him from finding separation on his edges, but he moved pucks to the point effectively. Brought a bit of puck pursuit ability, overwhelming one opponent on the backcheck and nearly setting up a chance after a forecheck steal. His habits with the puck are generally projectable to a pro level: he scans, reads gaps, delays, and takes the middle when possible. However, he didn't create these situations or even have any notable plays. Didn't look like a candidate for our board, but have to think he gets picked.

Cam Robinson: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Team Red - CHL TPG

Starting down in a third line role, Myatovic was elevated to the Bedard/Benson line in the 2nd frame and stood out more after that point. He wasn't carrying the puck much, deferring to the high-end linemates but was hunting for ice and had a couple of chances thanks to it. He knows where to position himself in the defensive end, and was strong along the wall. Grabbed an A1 with a little backhand pass to the low slot. Not a standout game, but some decent moments.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Myatovic's size and reach are his two best attributes. The skating is probably an average projection. He handles the puck decently well. He just looks like a good package of tools at this point, but his game lacks refinement. I don't see anything past that. He's not connecting with higher skill passes and while he has the frame to play a physical game, he's not really engaging.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

A defensive game from Myatovic. He applied pressure on the forecheck and backcheck with over-extending. Grabbed steals by skating across opponents and cutting through the hands. When he couldn't, he went under or over to disrupt. Solid in the defensive zone, too. He cut off the top, provided down-low support when necessary, and grabbed a couple of steals. Not much offence shown in this game, but the defence was interesting.

Daniel Gee: October 29th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Myatovic promotes successful breakouts with his support in the defensive zone so it's no surprise that it was the most prevalent part of his game. While he is still very much a mixed bag in terms of habits -- perimeter entries, rough handle sequences due to poor protection, he did some great things in this game. In the first on an east-to-west lateral shift, Myatovic released a quick in-stride shot that barely missed wide. It was a blending of skill that I haven't seen but the precision issues were still very much a factor. For instance, in the second, he activated on the weak side, caught-and-released a perfect pass, and missed very high -- if the net was a foot taller he'd convert a lot more. Intriguing because the setup is generally projectable until he needs to execute. Not convinced he has much ability in the sustained offensive zone scenarios. His only zone time was on the powerplay, where he is a hash-mark shooter. He overloads on retrievals instead of pulling back to add himself as a pass option.

Still not a fan of his defensive play. While he is a pretty active scanner, he is regularly late activating into pass and shooting lanes. His best sequence was a rejection of a centering pass, but beyond that his wide recoveries, slow stop-and-start mobility hurts him as a pressure pusher. Probably a pick, maybe not for our board -- his transition game in its current state will bear some fruit at the WHL-Level in the coming years.

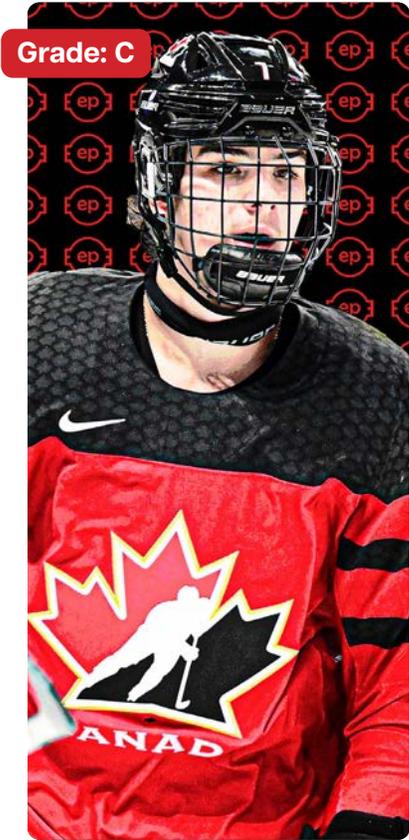
Daniel Gee: October 28th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Myatovic was coming back from a brief absence, having a quiet game for the Thunderbirds. There are some interesting elements of his game, though. A very perimeter player in transition, Myatovic has adapted heel-to-heel manoeuvres to help him slip aggression and angling -- not translatable at all but it works to some extent at this level. The positive is that he almost always tries to funnel pucks into the middle of the ice. One of his best sequences was a defensive play where Myatovic not only stripped a puck in the neutral zone but walked down the right wing, releasing a shot -- he missed high and mechanically didn't create enough downforce for it to be an actual weapon. There is some thought to creating pass-off-pad plays out of crashing supporters, but not prevalent enough in this one to call it a habit.

He's limited in sustained pressure. He pressures on the forecheck but doesn't play with enough intensity or motor to create tangible pressure on puck retrievers. Mainly aims for stick clamps or lifts. Some curious decision-making in the cycle -- on one sequence he could have hit a couple of different options in the slot as he carried the puck low-to-high, but opted to pivot and pass on his forehand -- the play led to a fanned one-timer. Too telegraphed and predictable. Fairly weak defensive play in this one --not involved enough on the backcheck, limited defensive posture in sustained pressure. The stride is an issue; chest is pointed to the ground when he fully lengthens out his stride and the ankle flex is a bit suspect. Not sure there is enough here to justify a spot on our board -- will reassess after tomorrow's viewing.

Mitchell Brown: October 11th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Myatovic didn't get a touch of prime touches in this game, but he looked to create. Drove the inside, chip pucked around defenders, and worked himself into shooting position. Knee bend lacks, but he's close to getting enough ankle dorsiflexion. Edges are lacking power, and he lifts his inside leg when turning. A bit of work on both forecheck and backcheck, anticipating passes and diving at the puck carrier. He's worth paying attention to.



Grade: C

113 Saige Weinstein

AGE 17.296 DATE OF BIRTH May 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Spokane Chiefs	WHL	57	4	14	18	0.32

SCOUTING REPORT

A Spokane Chiefs game isn't complete with Saige Weinstein levelling an opponent. Every shift, he looks for contact – big hits and subtle nudges to create a bit of separation.

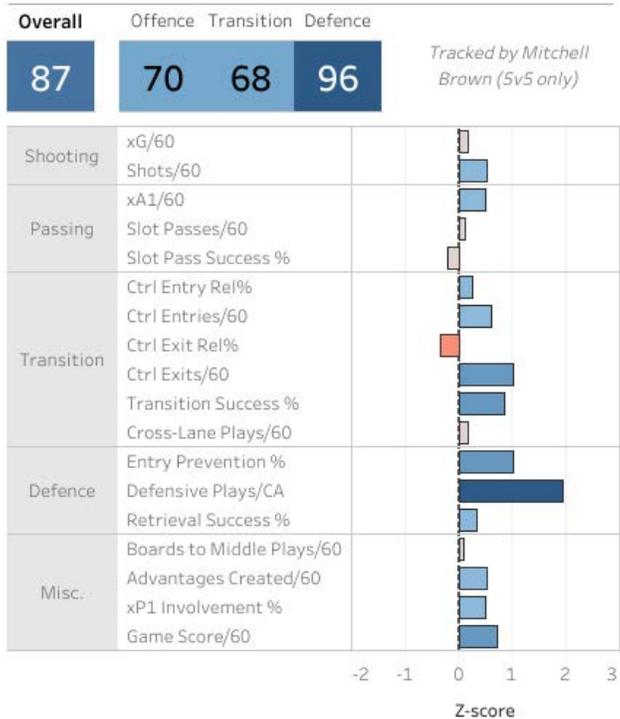
He's also a capable play-killer, taking away the inside to push opponents wide, poking the puck at the perfect moment, and closing out lightning-quick to force decisions. Right now, most Weinstein games are relatively quiet with the puck. He makes simple plays, takes point shots with space, and dumps the puck out with options. But not all are like that, with some performances showcasing his playmaking from the point, puck-carrying skill under pressure, and give-and-go rushes.

The common thread? The habits. In the good and bad games, Weinstein's always activating. He moves through his pass receptions with his head up. He plays off the opponent's momentum, attacking space on their heels. Those habits mean Weinstein's always in the play, always an option, and has the skill to execute. It comes down to sharpening the reads and looking to make plays more often.

Weinstein's physical defensive game and play-killing alone might not be enough to reach the NHL, but if he builds off those habits, his odds increase significantly. He could become a physical bottom-pairing option if his puck game improves.

Saige Weinstein

D | Spokane Chiefs | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 139.0



≡ LINKS & MEDIA

**Scout's Notebook: Four standout low-scoring WHL draft eligibles**

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Weinstein's always up in the play. He started several sequences by drawing in the first forechecker before hitting the gas, a quick look off to set up the next pass, and then he joined the rush. Doesn't show any notable skills or reads. He's mostly an activator at this stage; facilitating his teammates' skills by creating options. Reads opponents feet, as evidenced by one activation sequence where he beat a defender wide, but doesn't do anything to stack the deck in his favour. Some turnovers on the breakouts that suggested scanning issues. Didn't move his feet through retrievals. Not a creator; more of a late-round performance in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

A bit of a step down from my recent Weinstein viewings, but I still thought this was a solid game (save for the soft pass up the middle for a goal against). He's a capable play-killer and rush activator. Takes the inside away, angles opponents wide. Skates through their hands to secure possession without leaving too much space on his heels. Some lightning-fast close-outs in this one – NHL stops. He achieves essentially textbook posture through his stride but lacks depth when using his edges – should improve. Jumps into the rush and keeps the puck moving. Not a creator in this one and not much offensive skill shown. The breakouts were basic but he has some fluidity and quickness. This was a late-rounder performance, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

played Dragicevic for lengthy stretches of this game. His highs weren't quite as high either, but he showed NHL skills. The violence is the obvious one. He looks for the big hit, always skates through the hands to win possession, and works for body positioning with and without the puck. He loves contact. He also pinches constantly and unlike normal, he stayed in deep after pinching. Give-and-go breakout skill – head up, lateral pass, sprint on exit to get into the play. He's a bit weak mechanically at times but shows projectable quickness and deep stance once he gets moving. The highlight was a cross-slot pass after stepping into space masked with a fake shot – a showcase of the skill and vision I've been waiting for. It was an obvious lane, but that's a sign of what he could become at this level. He looks like a solid 60-plus player. He has NHL upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Another B-level performance from Weinstein. What a game. Completed a bunch of clean breakout plays, using hesitation moves and driving crossovers while reading opponents' moving to cut inside on their heels. Created advantages, worked the give-and-go. He's not the most mechanically-sound skater but he has generate significant power through his forward burst. The high stance becomes an issue on outside edge moves, like punch turns, where he lacks the power to really separate. The hands also fail him at times, not necessarily in big moves, but more inside pass receptions and linking receptions into the next play. Those are a bit concerning, but there's also significant defensive and physical upside here. He absorbs contact without issue – forecheckers bounce off him and he has uses well-timed c-steps to absorb and move. He runs over opponents like nothing. He

gets inside positioning constantly and skates through opponents' hands at full speed. He looked like an NHL in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

An impressive game from Weinstein, who was looking to create for most of the game. Late in the game, he went end-to-end and passed back into the slot for an assist, mirroring a play in the first period. He was reading opponents' momentum and going in the opposite direction, showing outside edges and handling skill. He deceived on some retrievals, used slip passes, and tried to deceive the next layer. Most of his more advanced plays worked; it's when he gets too simple that the turnovers arrive. The defence was also encouraging. Always running into people. He pins them to the boards, runs over them, and skates through their stick to win the puck. Angled attacks wide with non-committing footwork. He looked like a possible second-rounder in this game. Physicality, defensive upside, skating, flashes of NHL skill.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Fully acknowledging the context, it's tricky to actually evaluate Weinstein. He gets a lot of touches, makes a lot of poor plays, makes some good ones, and also has a lot of freedom – freedom that he might not get elsewhere. He jumps into every play, reading hand offs along the boards, rush activation opportunities, etc. He creates the odd lane by faking one way and going the other. He plays a bit too fast, but has the basis for manipulating opponents. He cuts back when possible. He's physical, too. Execution lacks. He's not creative and misses the best play when activating. Takes his teammate's space when activating instead of staying in space; wanders when activating instead of trying to make a play. Unaware of backpressure, especially along the end boards. He only looks over one shoulder then makes his decision, which ends up being a lot of plays straight into pressure on his blind side. He's aggressive, confident, and chaotic, but also clunky at times and mistake-prone. When he sinks into a proper stride, he shows that he can achieve NHL posture and even overcome a huge deficit of space on the backcheck. Going to watch a lot down the stretch.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

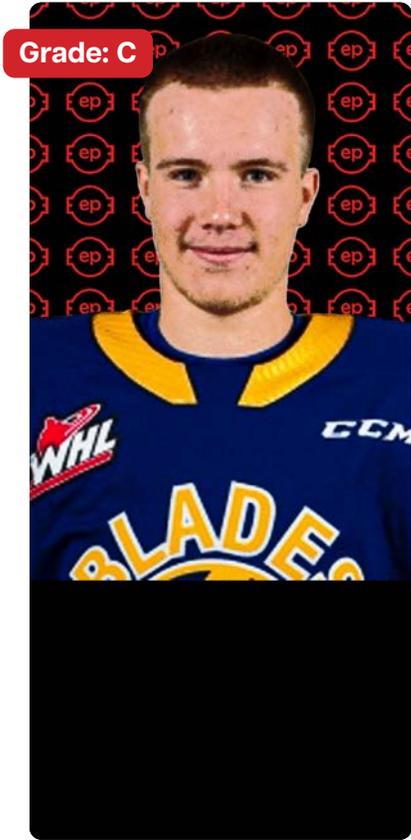
Didn't see much from Weinstein in the way of puck skills or creativity. He lacks vision, failing to identify teammates in better positions than himself. His next play is always clear to the opposition – skate down the boards. But there's a bit of upside here. He's always joining the play. Active pinching down the boards, as Spokane does. He's very physical, always looking for contact. He throws reverse hits, steps into multiple players quick succession, and battles for positioning. That's where he's best. The activation's a pathway for him, too. He joins the play frequently, following up loose pucks and turnovers, and then gains the zone. Better vision would help him create offence, but for now, he's a shooter. One clean inside leg wrister off the rush showed NHL mechanics and power. Maybe a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

A chaotic, but overall impressive game from Weinstein. Tons of activation. He pinched down the boards, weak side, and straight up the middle. Compresses the offensive zone by taking aggressive positioning, leading to several chances. Whiffed on a pass reception and awkwardly handled the puck from these positions. Similarly, he missed the best several times by not being aware of options and pressure. On breakouts, he uses area passes and creates the occasional advantage. Lots of simple plays that left a bit of value on the table, but this was a weak game for Spokane as a whole. Defensively, he keeps a tight gap but tends to lunge forward instead of suffocating the play along the boards. Pivoted early, but didn't surf across, conceding a free entry. Worked to recover, winning positioning from a deficit to secure the break up. Mechanics look average, but he has some modern traits. Looks like a potential draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Weinstein was hardly effective in this game from Canada. Not everyone can stand out, but Weinstein made several errors. He lunges forward when faced with a poor gap, rather than keeping his backwards momentum. Got burned. He also didn't cut away from pressure or reset. He preferred to make plays through it, leading to turnovers. There was a clever shot-pass to the inside in the first period, but that was about it.



114 Yegor Sidorov

AGE 18,244 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 18, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Ankle Breaker



Lethal Shooter



Raw Talent

Player Info

LW Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	176 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	6 Shooting	4.5 Passing
6.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saskatoon Blades	WHL	53	40	36	76	1.43

SCOUTING REPORT

If the WHL had a Most Improved Player award, Yegor Sidorov would've gotten our vote. The goalscoring winger went from a clever, but unrefined shooter to one of the league's most dangerous scoring threats. Surely, that should be enough to earn a draft pick as a re-entry.

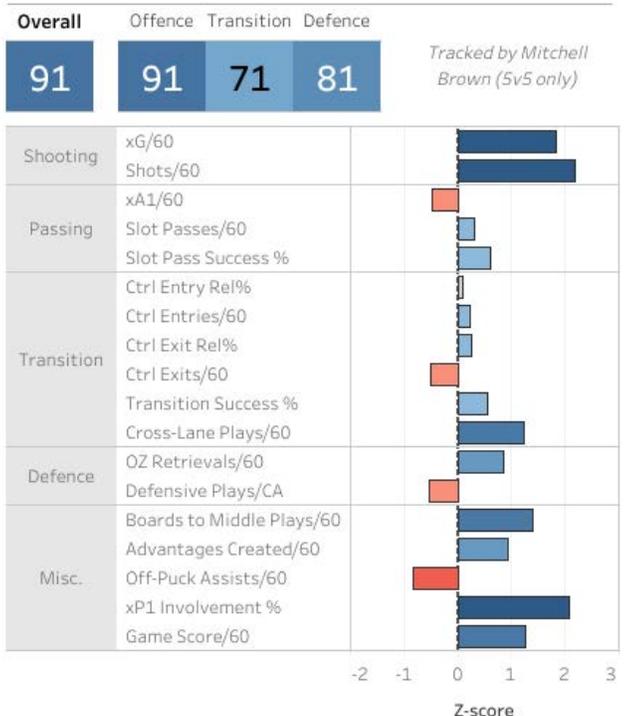
Sidorov's a collection of NHL tools and habits, starting with ankle-breaking moves and a potent shot. Endlessly creative, he evades pressure with flashy moves off either side of his blade, usually with one intention: Cutting inside for a scoring chance. A sudden release with deception build-in and a powerful one-timer adapted to the pass make him a threat to score from anywhere in the offensive zone.

A lot of players with those tools play the single-speed, straight-line game. Not Sidorov. He delays for support, cuts back to get defenders on his back, and starts passing plays through the neutral zone. The same skills that create space for his shot also house flashes of exciting playmaking ability.

While Sidorov has the skills, his play selection still requires a lot of work. "He's too patient with the puck – he cuts back, looks, looks, looks, and never makes a play," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in April.

Egor Sidorov

F | Saskatoon Blades | WHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 120.1



Sidorov defaults to low-percentage shots needlessly, succumbs to pressure with soft passes, and doesn't consistently use the space his hands and delay game create.

Consequently, Sidorov's still a long-term prospect. He arguably has top-six-level puckhandling, and his shot isn't too far off – that's worth a pick.

To make it, he'll have to repackage his collection of tools into a more translatable package. He's proven to be a hard-worker and added more physical skills later in the season. If Sidorov continues down that path, he could become one of the draft's biggest steals.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Sidorov has some incredibly exciting shifts along with frustrating ones that suggest a lengthy development curve ahead. In one shift, he circled the offensive zone twice, using the back of the net to set up the first deke, before using the edges to deceive at the top of the zone. He's patient under pressure, which set up a goal. Where many dump the puck out, he anticipated the defender retreating, delayed a split-second, then passed cross-ice without giving away his target. But he's too patient with the puck – he cuts back, looks, looks, looks, and never makes a play. Misses so many opportunities as a result. But the hands are legitimate 6-grade tool, so is the shot.

He's very physical, with one of his hits directly leading to a goal. When his plays fail, he works hard to regain possession and often makes plays on the second effort. The playmaking hinders Sidorov's effectiveness in the offensive zone. He defaults to low-percentage shots with better passes available. His delay game and hands create lanes, but he's not taking advantage of them. As such, his game remains a collection translatable tools and plays that aren't packaged together in a projectable way. Still, he's effective, a hard-worker, and has improved so much. I'd pick him late.

Daniel Gee: February 14th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Sidorov is a bundle of NHL-quality tools with almost zero refinement or timing. It's extremely reminiscent of the play of Danila Klimovich -- raw and so much to learn systems-wise, but without the physical profile. Regardless, Sidorov was able to flex those tools in this game to absolutely butcher the Cougars in this game. In transition there isn't a whole lot that screams "translatable" about Sidorov's game. He doesn't use his outside edges a tonne on his NZ carry attempts, working the middle with changes of pace more than anything. He's crafty at some level, working side-step handles to slice through layers, but he never really succeeds, lacking the subsequent play (a pass or another handle) to beat stacked pressure in the slot.

He doesn't seem to ever exploit the attention that he garners when he adjusts his rush-patterns to the inside. This led to multiple turnovers in this game because he just would not stop attacking into pressure. He was one of the main reasons why the Blades had trouble generating early on. His timing as mentioned was also a major issue. Sidorov tries to work more complicated passing plays live give-and-gos and does file the backdoor, but he was just behind on too many sequences in this game. Often not ready for passes, the puck explodes off his blade leading to panicked possessions. There's some real ability through all of these issues though. In the third he made a perfect pass-off-pad play on a powerplay, leading to a wide open cage for his teammate. Later he snapped a pass off the entry to a cutting backdoor threat to further the Blades lead.

The Blades constantly try to leverage Sidorov's shot in sustained pressure, especially on the powerplay. In the third, off the half wall, Sidorov made an excellent protection play on the board, working up and down the wing trying to find a seam. After passing off, he drifted to the right-hand-circle into an open seam and wired a fully rotated one-timer top-shelf -- an unstoppable shot to save. In that position he worked multiple low-placed shots into the crease to create chaos, looking to collapse the penalty killers closer to open up more room. Beyond this he missed multiple shooting plays with wide attempts as he tried to leverage his catch-and-release/one-touch shooting. Often overshoots positionally.

Sidorov has some solid supporting habits on the perimeter -- seals off ring outs early and protects out of the retrievals. Not much defensive impact at all -- he floats high on most of his shifts. For a D+1 you hope that more translatable habits were formed by now. Regardless, he is probably a good development bet for an NHL club, and probably should feature as a high-upside, high-risk player for our final board -- his road is going to be tough and will eat up a considerable amount of developmental resources to get him where he needs to be.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Sidorov took nine shots at 5-on-5; only three were scoring chances. He makes a ton of soft plays, none more visible than the weak shots he throws at the net from the perimeter every few shifts. On breakouts, he flings pucks around the boards to the other team. He's patient under pressure, occasionally creating an outside lane net drive opportunity or a slot cut, but he's rarely making positive plays from these positions. He waits, waits, waits, and then throws the puck away. He's scoring a lot, largely because of shooting volume and the occasional crafty release (pump fake to create space for his shot), but I don't see anything that suggests he'll score at the next level.

Mitchell Brown: January 17th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

Finally, a game where Sidorov's offensive work looked NHL-calibre. He manipulated opponents with changes of pace and handling, before cutting inside. Drove pucks off the boards to the middle. Slipped away from defenders and popped into space for one-timers. The one-timer's a legit NHL shot; he fires off his back foot while moving toward the net. Creates space for his shots by faking, then slowing up or bringing the puck across his body quickly. Tons of handling skill on display, especially late in the game, setting up his moves with a look off and occasional weight shift. Cuts back instead of forcing the play forward, but he's a low-pace player overall.

He never really digs his edges into the ice, taking advantage of passive gaps but rarely creating them. Better defenders prevented him from gaining the zone; he didn't have the edges or pace to beat them. Could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Sidorov still looks like a junior scorer. He dekes, but only at low pace and rarely creates much space for himself or teammates. Most of his best plays only result in low-danger, perimeter offence. Understands how to slow the game down, whether that's with a cutback or simply stopping before firing. But the baseline pace is so low that its effectiveness will drop significantly at the next level. The puck skills are fun, and there's no doubt that he has vision and play-building ideas in transition. But I don't see how he gets close to the NHL, at least based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Sidorov just keeps scoring. I don't fully understand it yet. He's not exactly creative or dynamic in transition; he skates in straight lines until he runs out of space. He has some physical skills -- winning body positioning, getting low to absorb contact, and inverting front pressure with a quick cutback. He's definitely more aggressive off the boards this season, spinning off checks to the middle and trying to brute-force his way to the net. It worked in one sequence, but nothing about those plays are translatable -- he's just relying on a speed advantage that won't carry. Need to watch him more.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Hat trick for the re-entry Sidorov. He still does a lot of the same interesting things as last season. He delays to wait for the middle-lane driver, resets before attacking the set defence, and shows a bit of off-puck offence by getting open at the top of the slot. Tries skilled plays: spins, between the legs shots, long-range passes. Game lacks pace and he plays with his head down a lot. Limited scanning. Misses opportunities to make the quick play. Maybe his game continues to evolve, but I don't see much intrigue here again.

Mitchell Brown: April 26th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Sidorov had a somewhat intriguing game in transition. He didn't force plays wide, instead gaining the zone, then cutting towards the middle of delaying. None of these plays resulted in anything, losing control of the puck or trying a no-chance pass. Tried a deke that failed. The skating lacks depth but he gets reasonable through his cutbacks and turns while showing agility and edge-to-edge quickness. There are moments where he looks like an NHL, and I like some of habits, but I don't think it's quite enough.

Mitchell Brown: March 30th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Regina Pats - WHL

There were moments of NHL ability from Sidorov. He completes boards-to-middle passes on breakouts, even off the backhand. When given a bit of space along the boards, he shows skating skills, puck protection mechanics, and handling ability. In one sequence, he waited for the defender to arrive, accelerated, then cut back into space. Body positioning for a net drive chance. Missed a high-danger passing opportunity to take a medium-danger shot, furthering questions about his vision. Even in his best sequences, he rarely creates something notable. He's too patient, waiting for windows to open that never do, and lacking the skill and awareness to manipulate for better options. I don't see him as a candidate for our board, but he's an interesting player.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Wong and Lisowsky had excellent performances; Sidorov was just along for the ride. He's not an NHL-calibre skater or shooter. He struggles to push his knees past his toes. Heels kick and blades strike the ice only on his inside edges. Some moments are skilled board play, he's likely not a legit prospect. Not enough skill, passing, ideas, or even off-puck value. Not a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 27th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Despite the high QoT, Sidorov was possibly the most bland player in the game. He doesn't scan with the puck – he just guesses. He's turnover-prone as a result. There are moments of great ideas: delaying for options, cutting back, using the middle. But because he doesn't scan, he doesn't have any awareness of threats and options. Doesn't have the puck protection to problem-solve. Didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Sidorov accomplished a lot in this game, starting in transition. He didn't force plays wide. Instead, he delayed for support. Made a quick pass to the middle. Down low, he drove play to the net, usually for a jam play. Off-puck, he was solid. He disrupted plays and supported the puck. Showed scoring instincts several times. In the best sequence, he reloaded high. As the puck came up the far side boards, he sprinted past his check down the weak side and received the pass. Elbow, head, and chest up through the shot – nearly snuck it in. But that he didn't shoot it immediately off the pass, despite a perfect pass reception continues to suggest a lack of awareness. When given a bit of space along the boards, he cuts back until he finds an opening. Lack of depth and a locked upper body prevent him from exploding out of this manoeuvres (he also stumbled through one). Interesting prospect, but I still don't see quick enough upside here. Lots of individual parts with few links between them, and skating could prove limiting.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Sidorov scored with a wrister off the pass after creating the zone entry. That was about it for this game. He's easily pressured into poor decisions with the puck. He skates straight up the boards into pressure, and doesn't have the skill or awareness to escape with possession. Not an off-puck player, either: he's late, reactive, and misses space. Some impact through supporting reads. Nothing that suggested an NHL pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 6th, 2021 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Sidorov's a bit of a mess with the puck. He's easily kept the outside in transition, forces plays, and runs himself straight into sticks and shoulders. He ranges from individualistic to too optimistic with his passes. In the OZ, things tighten up a bit. Retrievals continue to be a strength, where he deceives before getting the puck. Looked off his passing target and identifies options through layers, one time hitting an activating defenceman against the grain. Net drive goal -- not translatable, but he pushed the

defender's stick out of the way and carried the puck across the crease before shooting. Stride proper extensions, but he gets almost enough ankle flexion (hips don't follow, however). Overall, he looked like a draft pick. Certainly has the hands. The rest of his game will require greater development throughout the season.

Mitchell Brown: October 13th, 2021 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Out of many prospects in this game, Sidorov showed the most high-level skill, even if he wasn't particularly good. One sequence stood out, starting with the retrieval. He pre-scanned twice, prepared space, and escaped with a double cut. Punch turn escape on the pass reception after baiting the defender on his next touch, before getting open off-puck for a chance. And then drove the inside. In the process, he showed an awareness of pressure that no other prospect did. The off-puck instincts featured throughout the game, but he wasn't limited by forcing plays that weren't there in the NZ like crazy. He only played 9 minutes at 5-on-5. Need a closer look.

Grade: C



115 Martin Mišiak

AGE 17.959 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 30, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Motor

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

198 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

4

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Nove Zamky	Slovakia	29	1	9	10	0.34
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	27	6	11	17	0.63
Slovakia U20	WJC-20	3	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Martin Mišiak started the year in Slovakia's Tipos Extraliga with HC Nove Zamsky. He earned a regular role with the team, but as his ice time rarely rose past 12 minutes, he decided on a move to the USHL's Youngstown Phantoms. That switch offered him more opportunities to show his skills against his age group.

While his ice time increased, Mišiak's scoring pace did not when accounting for that uptick in usage and the lower-level competition. He only managed to put up 17 points in 27 regular season games, a relatively low scoring rate for a top prospect in the USHL, though his game did reach another level in the playoffs.

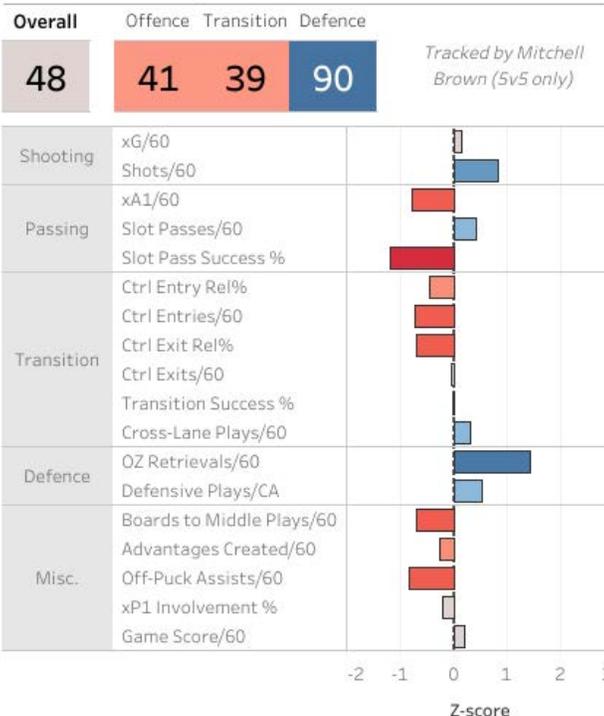
The setting is simply more suited to Mišiak's playstyle. A hard forechecker, he forces opponents to rush their plays on breakouts and creates turnovers. He drives the net, attracts the defensive presence there, and gives his teammates more room around the offensive zone to deploy their offensive skills. His ability to screen goalies also improved the shot quality of his line.

The Slovak centre plays with the same level of energy on the defensive side of the puck, too. He hunts attackers through the neutral zone, attaches himself to them in the defensive zone, and rarely lets go.

Martin Misiak

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 79.9



In nine postseason games, Mišiak put up 10 points. His scoring run helped the Phantoms win their first-ever USHL Championship.

“Mišiak’s a hard worker with some off-puck skills,” Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a report. “He pops into the slot at the right moments, staying just outside as the play develops. Physical and disciplined with his positioning. Supports plays. With the puck, he’s basic, opting for simple plays on most touches. When he tries more advanced plays – fake shots into backhand passes or delays off the rush – he lacks accuracy and awareness.”

Mišiak’s physical skills will probably remain his best attribute as he rises in level. His hunched-over skating may limit his forechecking ability at higher levels, but his innate power will make up for some of his mechanical stride flaws.

As he lacks overall skill and creativity, Mišiak projects more as a bottom-line presence in the NHL, a complementary forechecker and a defensive presence.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



**Central European Stock Watch:
David Reinbacher surging up NHL
Draft rankings**

∨ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

I liked Misiak’s defensive engagement in this game. He stuck to his check, following him around the defensive zone, and backcheck hard to get above it. He was committed to shutting down the opposition’s attack. He doesn’t really anticipate the flow of the play, but his effort makes up for his lack of finer reads. His playmaking game will need to improve if he wants to earn a career in the NHL, however. His plays are, for the most part, imprecise. He’s mostly effective as a net-front screen and a puck retriever. He seals loose pucks and extends his team’s presence in the offensive zone.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A very physical game from Misiak. He was also a major factor defensively. Pressured opponents, intercepted passes, backtracked without overdoing it. He’s just so limited from a skill perspective in my viewings. He mostly makes basic plays, and he tries more complex ones, they’re usually the wrong idea. Case in point: the hook pass through two sticks that predictably failed. If he just stopped and passed under one he would’ve created something. He tried a one-touch pass, but if he turned his hips off-puck, he would’ve been able to fire instantly for a just-as-danger look. With side pressure, he just sprints and shoots. He doesn’t delay, manipulate, or even just glide to out-wait opponents (which works a lot in this league). I haven’t seen NHL skill from Misiak, but the checking game could carry him to a depth role.

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Misiak skates very wide, but the speed and quickness seem fine. He intercepted pucks and turned those steals into offensive chances. He scored by driving the net. He caught a lob pass from Whitelaw and beat the goalie. He has shooting skills, catch-

and-release capabilities, and some simple fakes. He can establish body positioning on retrievals. I see more of a physical depth piece than a top-nine scorer, if he makes the NHL. I like some of the tools, but I'm not sure about the sense.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Misiak's a hard worker with some off-puck skills. He pops into the slot at the right moments, staying just outside as the play develops. Physical and disciplined with his positioning. Supports plays. With the puck, he's basic, opting for simple plays on most touches. When he tries most advanced plays – fake shots into backhand passes or delays off the rush – he lacks accuracy and awareness. He'd benefit from committing to his actions, whether that's cutting back, taking the inside, or deceiving with his full body. He has mechanical ability – full knee bend – and used more crossovers with the puck. But again, he's only making neutral or barely positive plays with the puck. He's rarely creating advantages. Doesn't look like a candidate for the board.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Not a ton of shifts from Misiak, but I still don't see a needle-mover. He's mostly a straight line player with the occasional smart short-range pass after several perimeter shots. Risk-averse. Doesn't carry the puck given space and doesn't take advantage of poor gaps. No inside play. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Another solid checking game from Misiak. He wins battles, anticipates passes, skates through opponents hands, and rips away possession. Intelligent support play. But I still haven't seen any offensive upside. He grabbed two looks on a 2-on-1 – that was the highlight. Nothing interesting shown. He shoots from the outside and only makes simple plays. Head is down a lot, causing him to miss otherwise easy-to-hit options. Skating could be a strength with his mechanics – knees over toes, hips stacked, chest up – but he didn't show much speed or dynamic skating qualities. Looked like a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A lights-out checking performance from Misiak. He took the extra stride to step through opponents every single time. Grabbed 10 steals at 5-on-5. When he couldn't steal possession, he disrupted plays enough to push them into support. With the puck, he has vision and awareness, but he's not creative. He makes obvious passes, missing many of them, and pulls the trigger when space runs out. Knees over toes, full knee bend. Didn't show much speed, but he's a mechanically sound skater. Could be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Misiak showed some short-range pass skill in this game. He dropped a puck between his legs for a shot and used a bit of deception to hit a teammate beside the net. Only made simple passes for the most part, never trying to work pucks through opponents or prepare lanes. Some defensive value through puck pursuit and anticipation. Didn't really look like a prospect in this game, but the passing skill has me curious to watch how the rest of this season goes.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - HC Nove Zamky vs. HK Poprad - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak had a pretty uneventful showing until the very end where he scored on his last shift of the game, receiving the puck in the middle with space off the rush and slipping the puck past the netminder with a solid catch-and-release wrist. Before that highlight, he mostly spent the game chasing on both ends of the rink without really getting much notable done. The transition stuff is really inconsistent with Misiak; he can make some really nice one-touch passes or smart cross-ice feeds from time to time, but then resorts to uncontrolled plays when he doesn't have the need to or has a string of missed passes. More of a game that leaves you questioning whether he's mostly a checker only.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - HC Nove Zamky vs. HK GROTTO Spisska Nova Ves - Tipos Extraliga

One of the better Misiak viewings over the past few of them. He was very active on both sides of the puck, causing havoc on the forecheck, laying a massive hit in the defensive zone, getting into scrums, flashing intriguing physical skill aside from the obvious hits. Set up a couple of looks off the rush, retrieved dump-ins. There are flashes of good playmaking skill. Tends to misfire some passes on breakouts, but the ideas are often solid. Skating mechanics are solid. Definitely looked like a pick here.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - HC Nove Zamky vs. MHK 32 Liptovsky Mikulas - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak can already be a destructive physical presence at the pros. Just ran over a defenceman on the forecheck to create a steal, then dished the puck to the slot, starting a sequence that ended up in a goal and a secondary assist for him. Laid another massive hit after a backcheck on top of his own blue line. Didn't really shine in other areas, though. I have some questions about his ability to make plays with pace. The skill level is also somewhat of a question mark. The further projection is likely going to come down mostly to his defensive and forechecking value.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - HC Nove Zamky vs. HK Poprad - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak was barely visible in this one. Only had a few puck touches overall, and didn't really do anything with them. The defensive game was pretty solid, scanned around quite a bit and positioned pretty soundly. Struggled to move the puck in transition, though he also didn't really get many opportunities to do so.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - HC Nove Zamky vs. HC '05 Banska Bystrica - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak continues to have pretty solid performances one after another. Created offence off the rush via smart drop passes, then blocking the defender to create a shooting lane for a linemate. One really nice high-danger shot assist after an OZ steal that would've probably resulted in a goal most of the time but the shot got blocked. Good hustling on the backcheck to help kill a few plays on entry attempts. He does tend to opt for a lot of low-percentage shots from near the point for some reason, not sure if related to systems. Doesn't really flash any high-end abilities, but he could be a solid candidate to make our board.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - HK Dukla Michalovce vs. HC Nove Zamky - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak has intriguing flashes. He does a good job on retrievals, sealing the puck with his body, establishing body positioning. He had some moments during longer cycles, cutting back, then turning to face the slot. One of those longer puck possessions led to a primary assist as he moved towards the point, made a drop pass to the defender who blasted the puck in with a slap shot. Really likes to deploy the drop pass off the rush, too. Had good timing on potential rebounds and deflections. Still not sure how to grade the skating, there's probably an argument for average projection, though he doesn't have that much natural quickness. The skill level is a question mark, too, but he's definitely worthy to monitor throughout the season.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Spisska Nova Ves vs. HC Nove Zamky - Tipos Extraliga

Misiak did some cool stuff, mostly cutting back and spinning away from pressure in puck battles and working pretty well to disrupt opposing rushes on the backcheck. One pretty crafty deflection attempt near the net-front. Skating looked like a slightly below-average projection, though I have to see more. Playmaking attempts off the rush weren't connecting, had to enter a glide before trying to dish. Though there also was a ton of NZ trap and delayed attacks being played in this game, not very much space off the rush to create.

Grade: C



116 Zachary Nehring

AGE 17.526 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Vision



Motor

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Shattuck St. Mary's	USHS-Prep	54	39	46	85	1.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Zachary Nehring takes to the game of hockey like it's the running of the bulls... the important distinction is that he's not the one running away.

A slight, but tall 6-foot-3 right winger, Nehring was a physical and scoring force for Shattuck St. Mary's this past season, producing 85 points across 54 games – good for fourth in the entire prep hockey circuit. An intelligent player with a lot of physical runway, the North Dakota-born forward already plays with an NHL-calibre motor.

Nehring effectively blended his size advantages and playmaking across his games this season, "He tried multiple power-based moves in transition, cutting on his edges and doing his best to deal with aggression. His playmaking flashes, which creates an interesting dynamic considering how imposing he is on the ice. Often Nehring would bump passes off and drive the net hard to open up space for teammates," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a January game report.

While his stride has some considerable inefficiencies – especially through his crossovers – Nehring possesses a second gear that he uses to help separate at the prep level, driving the middle off-puck or working into odd-man attacks.

Inefficiency rears its head in Nehring's game, solely based on how simple he plays at times. Instead of trying to create an advantage with his size, or hands, he falls into fruitless chip-and-chase hockey.

Nevertheless, nuanced forechecking habits expand Nehring's game. He actively seeks out shorter routes to the puck, swoops in to establish superior body positioning, initiates proactive contact, and he gets under sticks as he shields defenders away from the puck. Off these touches, he flashes cutback deception, further leveraging his frame, albeit running into pressure a bit too often. He often forces plays, especially when trying to get into the middle of the ice. It's off-puck where he's most efficient, spinning off defenders like a basketball player working a post move to attack rebounds or crash the boards.

Dedicated to disruption on the defensive end of the puck, the right-shot forward is a hard worker on the backcheck, proactively guiding and angling off attackers. He's physical, sending opponents horizontal on the perimeter of the ice. "Absolutely crushed an opponent in his own end -- sent him into a summersault," Gee wrote in a February report. Lane clogging and pressure pushing are also hallmarks of Nehring's defensive game, especially on the penalty kill.

Nehring is taking the developmental road less travelled, going straight to the NCAA without so much as a game of junior hockey experience.

Is this ideal? Certainly not from an evaluative perspective. The information gained about a player's ability to adapt to better competition is always valuable. Nehring's base is so intriguing and his size so projectable that it may not matter at the end of the day.

It's easy to believe in the Shattuck forward's game – Nehring has everything to suggest he could play a middle-six, forechecking role at the NHL level. A 2023 commitment to Western Michigan University will only help him grow his game.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: March 17th, 2023 - Shattuck-St. Mary's vs. Sioux Falls Power - USHS-Prep

Nehring is an absolute bull on the ice. He's limited to a degree but you can see right away that there is a path to the NHL with his size, motor, and playmaking blend. At the onset, Nehring struggled with puck management early in this game, especially in transition. Multiple carries through the neutral zone led to fruitless chip-and-chase turnovers. Even when Nehring was attempting to leverage his frame, he succumbed to pressure. His best sequence was in the second. After a near board entry, Nehring delayed, found a trailer, and worked a give-and-go, cutting across on the forehand for a high-danger chance.

Playmaking flashed again in this viewing. On one third period rush, Nehring dragged a puck on his backhand, and in one motion passed into the middle of the ice. He crashed and made a centring pass into another high-danger chance. One-touch use, and always seemingly in motion. He put pressure on an entry, worked the puck into a counter-attack and found Anderson on a one-on-two. Love his off-puck game. He drives his lanes hard. In the first, Anderson worked a pass-off-pad play, but he was unable to find a rebound. Nehring kept his momentum going and disrupted the counter-attack. He had a really smart drive where he stick-lifted a defender's stick in the slot to open up a cross-crease lane.

Recorded an assist after pushing some supporting habits in the first period. Nehring moved down to support a pass on the right-hand circle, stick-lifting a man in open ice. This allowed a teammate to pick up the puck, cut into the slot and score. He's a projectable board player, which goes a long way for his translatability as an NHLer. Protects well with his frame, even if he needs to add strength. Even integrates cutbacks to shake pressure. He runs into pressure off of them, often, so I don't know how well he can actually read pressure off his back or pre-scans his next action. Had a dangerous wrap-around pass attempt at the end of the second. Physical on the forecheck and on defenders working breakouts. Bottom-six projection but the certainty is high here. Nehring is the nice semi-blank slate that a good developing team could work with to bring some level of impact to the NHL game.

Daniel Gee: February 26th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs. Shattuck St.Mary's - USHS- Prep

Barely played in this one because it was a route but Nehring constantly brings it in his time on the ice. He was all over the ice working the forecheck, imposing his size and pace to retrieve pucks. Nehring was so active he kept running into teammates and their lanes. There's a level of play reading that goes along with these efforts in sustained pressure. Nehring read and intercepted a ring, centring the puck immediately to a teammate for a sharp-angle one-timed shot. Nehring crashed the crease and got another wack on the puck, holding off the box-out pressure with his superior frame.

Like Nehring's game on the rush as well. He has a second gear, which is overpowering at the prep level. This allows him to

work body positions better, especially when chasing second-chance pucks. He had a crazy shift in the first where he poked a puck forward, jumping around pressure. Nehring separated with his foot speed (recovers wide) into a 2-on-1, and made a no-look to Hunter Anderson who essentially had an open net. Absolutely crushed an opponent in his own end -- sent him into a summersault. Nehring will have his fans this draft and should be ranked. I doubt he's more than a useful bottom-six player at the end of the day, but he could be useful depth for a team looking for a player with projectable size that can skate and support.

Daniel Gee: February 7th, 2023 - Shattuck St. Mary's vs. Mason City Toros - USHS-Prep

Nehring is huge and probably the more translatable player when compared to Anderson. His tools aren't as impressive, but at 6-foot-3 he has a lot of room to grow into his frame. The reason this is interesting is that of his habits around the ice -- he is only going to get better with strength. In sustained pressure, he crashes the boards hard. He's a sophisticated puck retriever -- tries to work into shorter routes to the puck, proactively stick-lifts defenders, and uses his size to shield opponents away. Despite pushing this constantly, he won little pucks because his stride is debilitating to a degree. Wide recoveries in the forward stride and very bouncy shoulders in the crossover hurts him North-to-South. On the powerplay, he acts as a bumper/net-front screen.

He crashed through the crease in the second after a loose pick, having a one-touch shot saved. He redirected a couple of other point shots before getting beamed with one at the end of the second. The puck bounced to Anderson, who sniped a shot top-shelf. Seems limited skill-wise.

Mostly an off-puck driver in transition. Showed some small-area game, working multiple pucks from skate-to-stick off of poor passes out of his wheelhouse. Nehring had limited to no support when on-puck -- a couple of shots meant to create rebounds just dissipated into dust. On one entry, Nehring took the puck wide -- no pass attempts. He took a sharp-angle shot, collected the rebound, and protected the puck at his hip until a teammate swooped in to take possession. Nehring cut into the slot off-puck took a pass and mishandled the puck. A dumb entry into an intelligent play with limited execution. His other significant transition play was in the third. On a 2-on-1 Nehring spun-off pressure and delayed -- he tried to hit a trailer working the weak side but missed. May be too limited for our board -- lacks separating skills. He works hard for his line and his size is interesting, but I need to find out if there is more to his game other than just being a retriever.

Daniel Gee: January 15th, 2023 - Culver Academy vs. Shattuck-St. Mary's - USHS-Prep

Only played around two periods because Shattuck was dominating, but Nehring showed similar to other viewings. He's hard to ignore, one of the bigger players on the ice. He scored at the onset, stick set on the circle, taking a pass in his wheelhouse and wiring a knee-down one-timed shot past Culver Academy's goaltender. Nehring a tank in sustained pressure -- no one can hope to touch him when he pivots on-puck. Flashes some small-area skill -- he centred a puck between his legs but everyone missed the reception. His biggest contribution is on the forecheck as a puck retriever. In the second he rushed to the end boards, stick lifted a puck carrier proactively to win the puck. Nehring then fought his way through pressure to the net to get into screen position. He destroyed another Culver player on a subsequent shift on the forecheck -- just buried him on the near boards. Beyond the size advantages, he's limited -- we need to see him vs. better competition to really evaluate what adapts.

In transition, he's constantly bouncing off physical pressure. Absorb a hit, execute a pass. On one sequence as Nehring finally worked out of backpressure on an exit he managed to fend off a check, push the puck skate-to-stick and get the pass off. His passing is probably his next best tool. In the second he slipped a puck cross-circle from the far boards, but his teammate bobbed the catch-and-release. As the play developed, Nehring was able to hook a puck out of a forecheck effort behind the net, setting up a one-touch passing play. Edges are rough -- apparent on an outside drive. Nehring was able to get a low perimeter shot off, hurting the goaltender as they stretched out.

Was a penalty-killing option as well. Nehring is honestly a great pressure pusher and plays with aggression in sustained pressure. He wins most of his battles and has range. Projection seems to be bottom line. The size and playmaking blend are really nice and will require more viewings.

Daniel Gee: January 14th, 2023 - Shattuck-St. Mary's vs Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

Nehring was strong in this game, leveraging his size and motor to create for Shattuck-St. Mary's. He tried multiple power-based moves in transition, cutting on his edges and doing his best to deal with aggression. His playmaking flashes, which creates an interesting dynamic considering how imposing he is on the ice. Often Nehring would bump passes off and drive the net hard to open up space for teammates. He's so fundamentally strong within Shattuck's system -- in the first, he pressured a neutral zone puck carrier, stripped the puck and sent a near-perfect feed to a teammate in stride for a quick entry. On that same play, he forechecked, helped win possession back and worked the puck into the crease, snapping a shot high-blocker for a semi-dangerous chance. Mostly a middle adjusting puck carrier, his skating does present a hurdle -- he falls backwards and hopes in the crossover. His motor helps, but at higher levels, it could be an issue if there isn't further development.

There were some issues with getting inside while working the cycle, particularly on-puck -- a lot of trying to force his way inside. Off-puck he's a handful -- a bumper and tip-threat, and he's generally hard to move once he plants. In the second, he fought out of a boxout, spun like a post player in basketball, and easily tapped in a rebound. Nehring also supported battles very well, funnelling puck into the middle. On one shift he made a nice pass from the end-boards to the tape of a teammate. He was even manipulating with his shoulders on retrieval in the second - -cool to see the foresight at this level.

On the defensive end of the puck, Nehring was a factor the whole game. Huge, dedicated backchecking sequences saw a lot of proactive guiding to the outside. He clogged a lane in the second period off a faceoff, blocking a shot -- very committed. Physical in his own zone. Looks like an end-of-the-board pick, bottom-six projection, but he's interesting. Need to watch him more.



Grade: C

117 Chase Cheslock

AGE 17.890 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 25, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Hammer



Hockey IQ

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

205 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4

Shooting

5.5

Passing

4

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
St. Cloud Norsemen	NAHL	18	1	2	3	0.17
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	1	0	0	0	0.00
Rogers High	USHS-MN	28	4	27	31	1.11
Omaha Lancers	USHL	15	1	4	5	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Chase Cheslock is a goliath that just happened to play in the Minnesota high school hockey circuit. The 6-foot-3, 205-pound right-shot defender pushed some of the most suffocating defence in the entire state, even translating that play to the USHL with the Omaha Lancers.

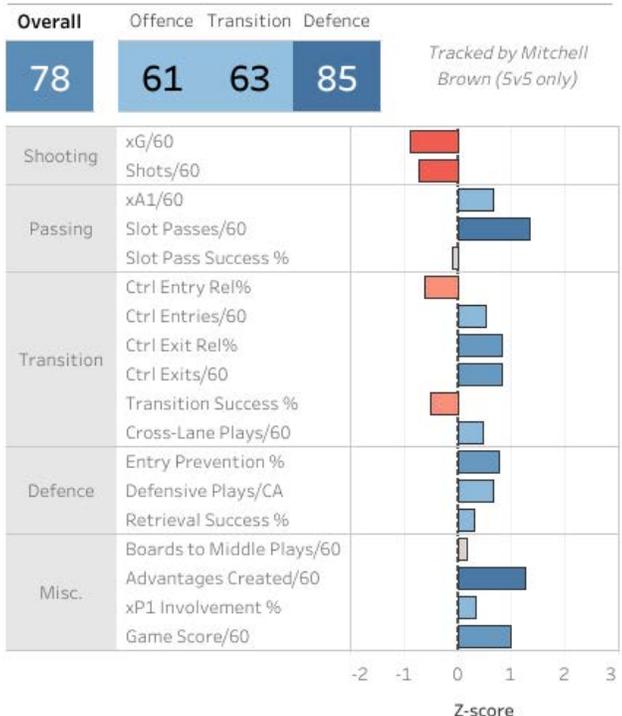
While he's somewhat basic on the offensive end of the puck, the Rogers' High Captain still put up respectable numbers with his hometown school, scoring 31 points across 28 games.

Always gapped and proactively able to swing across to pressure rush-pattern changes, Cheslock is one of the finer transitional defenders across the lower-leverage leagues. Aggressive jump-ups into the neutral zone, guides to the outside leading to crushing physicality, and full-on disruption of secondary threats, are all habits Cheslock pushes across his minutes.

Just as stifling during in-zone pressure, Crossover scout Daniel Gee explained how he operates in a February game report, "He's just as effective in more sustained pressure. Cheslock is a scary presence when he's locked to the net. He's like a beaver when it comes to his disdain of opposing players' sticks. Constant chops, lifts, and timed disruption plays make it near impossible to get a shot off in the crease. Box outs, physicality, punishing crosschecks – he makes the

Chase Cheslock

D | Omaha Lancers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 131.9



net-front living hell for his opponents.”

Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown also gave his review of Cheslock’s defensive game in an April USHL game report, “The defensive stick is the standout. He’s always disrupting, deflecting, and contesting plays. Pressures shooters if he can’t eliminate the shot outright. Ties up opponents at the right moment (timed lifts with the incoming pass/shot).”

Cheslock doesn’t possess the cleanest stride; clunky edge-to-edge, and his shoulders bounce in the crossover, but he operates at a workable level. His hands are also fairly rough though; the puck is always presented at the front of his body. There is some transitional ability, however. Cheslock is a stout activator on practically every rush he can join, adding himself as an option.

On-puck, Cheslock will fake shots, funnel pucks into the middle, and work low pucks on the net looking for chaos. He flashes legitimate vision on the breakout, hooking pucks, corralling clears in pressure and instantly snapping the puck back into a transitional attack. The aforementioned handling issues represent a mechanical limitation when projecting out his game on the rush at higher levels, however.

A more impressive playmaker than a shooter when set up in the offensive zone, Cheslock can layer pucks cross-rink with ease at the high school level. One-touches into the middle, slap-pass deception off the point, a lot of board-to-middle movement – all habits necessary to translate his offence at higher levels. Eating up available space, Cheslock is great at extending possessions, dropping down from the blue line to stuff pucks back deep, and even flashing some open hip manoeuvres to add some lateral ability to his game.

One of the more translatable USHS-MN defenders on paper, Cheslock is poised to have a big year with Omaha of the USHL next season. A commit to St. Thomas in 2024-25, the right-shot defender defends well enough to potentially be a bottom pair option for a team in the future. Considering his base, handedness, and already pro-level frame, there’s a chance he could be more than that – he is the type of player that teams like to invest development time in.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 21st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Cheslock was average in this one. Thought he struggled with the pace of the USHL at times, especially under sustained pressure. On one shift in the first, he overloaded to the far corner to push pressure, rushing back to the net front. He wanted to clog the pass to the right circle but just ended up reacting late to a goal-line to backdoor pass, even shifting out of position right before the pass. On a play in the second, Cheslock was reactive again on a one-touch passing play on the goal line. He’s overly aggressive in this one -- a common trait from high-minute high school defenders. He wants to step up to disrupt every shot attempt. There were some flashes of his secondary threat lockdown that he pushed so regularly with Rogers; stick lift plays, box outs, into supporting endboard battles. Cheslock was stronger in transition. Gap control and aggression with not only his positioning and stick created stops. He actually faced a one-on-one, combated an inside push from behind, and caused a cutback and reset. Cheslock killed a dangerous 4-on-2 in the third. He stepped up, anticipated one of the early passes across and passed right into a counterattack. Sacrificed a lot to stand in shooting lanes as well.

Wasn’t a lot of transition effort in this game. Pre-scans and leverages his 6-foot-3 frame to tank physicality, but he looked a bit shocked with how fast the forecheck mounted. Some smart pinch activations. He took a pass through his legs on a d-to-d pass, mid-activation on the right wing, but just ringed the puck after. Not sure there is much here at all -- none of the playmaking flashes we saw at the high school level -- maybe next year. Should make our final board. He’s huge, defends well enough and the base is made to be built upon in college. Probably not more than a five or six in the NHL, but he could be useful with some time.

Mitchell Brown: April 15th, 2023 - Omaha Lancers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Another solid game from Cheslock, who continues to make an impact on just about every shift at this level. The defensive stick is the standout. He's always disrupting, deflecting, and contesting plays. Pressures shooters if he can't eliminate the shot outright. Ties up opponents at the right moment (timed lifts with the incoming pass/shot). Mostly plays to his blue line off the rush, where he closes opponents and forces dump-ins. But, he also got on his check at the opposing blue line late in the game, forcing a turnover before carrying the puck back into the zone. He has breakout skill and vision, but he's limited a bit by his handling in motion. He spots teammates through layers, skates into lanes, and adapts to lanes. Backhand skill, too. A lot of impact from his activation across all three zones. Supports plays, becoming an option and creating more space for his teammate. He looks like an early-third candidate. Likely bottom-pairing upside, but could be valuable in that role given the versatility of his game.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

More of a defending and physicality game from Cheslock. He's overpowering at this level. When he leans on opponents along the boards, they don't move. Easily quashes plays. He tries to get on opponents early, too. But with limited success at this stage. With the puck, he's smart but limited by skill and scanning. Doesn't look enough before going into the boards. Full credit, he tries to invert pressure with cut backs or pass through it, but none of his plays worked. Hands failed when moving his feet and he struggled with passing receptions. Activated a few times, not in the garden variety way. He jumped into space to become an option for his defensive partner on breakouts and used the weak side. A solid game in a mismatch, suggesting some NHL upside. But the mechanics must improve substantially.

Mitchell Brown: April 7th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

A quieter game from Cheslock, but a solid one. He makes quick bump plays off retrievals then jumps into the rush. Activates immediately. Some flashes of long-range passing and breakout skill. He recognizes options instantly, but also shows patience to wait for those options to materialize. When he tries to handle and move his feet at the same time, it looks bleak. He loses control of the puck. Little offence, but the defence is solid. He's physical, disruptive, and plays with pace. Eliminates options. More of a mid-round game.

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Omaha Lancers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Another really impressive from Cheslock, who honestly looks like one of the most exciting blue-liners in the league already. Twice, he pinched down the boards and deked through an opponent's legs to gain the middle. He has handling skill inside an otherwise stiff and rigid style. Uses space before shooting and tries to create shooting lanes, although he can't always complete plays. He's always activating, which isn't unique for Omaha, but his ability to space and create with his off-puck movement stands out. His activation creates lanes on the breakout. He tracks players high and then immediately becomes a forward once receiving the puck. Stays activated. The defence has flaws – overskating, primarily – but it could be a significant strength. He's physical, aggressive, pokes pucks away just as the opponent exposes it, and almost always makes a quick play after getting the stop. One time, he even went look-off pass up the middle for a breakout within a second or stealing possession. He looked like a potential late-second, early-third in this game.

Daniel Gee: April 1st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

First USHL viewing of Cheslock and surprise, surprise, he was good at this level too. There is an obvious level of adjustment he's going through, in particular, his level of aggression when defending the rush, but you can see him adapting in real-time. Cheslock was burned from his aggression a few times in the second period. On one shift he made a push up the far boards, but the Buccaneers forward had already slipped the check. Very much a difference in pace issue. He remains a stout secondary threat lockdown defender at this level. Stick clamps, lifts, and boxouts are all present. He establishes body position, flashes his ability to anticipate the next play and disrupts the release of shots. In the second, he intercepted a pass in the neutral zone and sent it right back after the OZ entry. He didn't have a tonne of time in his own end. He had a hilarious play in the second where he muscled a puck out of a double team and broke it out -- showed just how strong of a player he is. He made an aggressive push all the way up to the right point on another shift, disrupting the cycle -- it was a deft play at the moment, a switch-off with a teammate.

While attacking on the rush, he flashed some higher-end playmaking. In the first while in pressure, he activated his edges and hooked a pass to his partner. He activated regularly in this one. In the second he joined a rush as a weakside option and filed backdoor, but the puck carrier had tunnel vision and didn't scan how open he was. He has so much poise in pressure. On one shift he corralled a bouncing puck and was double-teamed as the forwards looked for a break. Cheslock settled it down and got the pass off in pressure. Scanning habits on retrieval but like in high school, not much manipulation -- more tanking the physicality or moving the puck quickly after the first touch. In sustained pressure, Cheslock was simple to a fault. Low-impact shots from the boards did little to create anything for Omaha. He one-touches passes, but we didn't see the crazy cross-rink feeds he pulls out at the high school level. Regardless, this was a great game by Cheslock -- he should make our final board. A defensive defender with size -- possible bottom-pairing option in the NHL down the road.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Mostly spacing and defence from Cheslock. The spacing's really strong. He stretches the ice with his activation, making small adjustments to always stay in a passing lane. Activates up the weak side, middle, and becomes the trailer. Provides short support, reads hand offs, jumps into space, and tries to set up teammates. The defence is all instincts. He overcommits when making up ground and leaves his skates too much. But he angles attackers, gets inside their hands, pokes away pucks away as they expose it, and easily pins attackers to the outside. Hands failed him a few times, he skated into pressure, and the passing was variable. He's capable of quick-possession cross-ice passes under pressure, but he also will pass into heavy pressure with wide-open teammates. Lacks manipulation ability. He's a bit limited by his hands, but he still looks like a draft pick. Killing and creating plays like this is rare for a High School player in the USHL.

Mitchell Brown: March 19th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

A top-two rounds game from Cheslock, what a performance. He was everywhere, activating into every play, creating offence, and killing plays coming back the other way. He has projectable NHL habits. He receives every puck in motion, immediately claims space, keeps his head up, and even deceives opponents. In back-to-back shifts, he took a puck off the boards on the backcheck while moving, stepped inside, then created a walk in chance with a look off pass and then activated, exchanged, and passed for a deflection in the slot. Uses the weak side frequently, jumping above his forwards, gaining the zone, then slowing down for support. Scored by working laterally and firing back against the grain. The backwards crossovers are powerful, providing separation at this level. The hands are rigid, but he also took pucks off the backhand directly into his hip pocket. The defence was also a strength. He angled attacks wide, stepped into opponents, and immediately made the next pass after the steal. Played most of the game on his off side. Manipulated once, but he has some corrective ability. For the most part, he has quiet feet -- few crossovers, just c-cuts and heel pushes as he eliminates space. A couple of the retrievals were almost turnovers -- he enters the boards blind and doesn't wait for pressure to fully commit before passing. A really curious to watch more of him down the stretch. A pretty dynamic performance.

Daniel Gee: February 7th, 2023 - Rogers High vs. Moorhead High - USHS-MN

Another game, another strong showing at the high school level for Chase Cheslock. Continued the trend of showing off a more developed offensive game than I initially realised, especially while exerting sustained pressure off the blue line. He's simple in the way he operates. Activations downhill to add a weakside option, smart pinch efforts to keep possession alive, and a lot of board-to-middle puck movement. On one first-period shift, Cheslock activated to the end-boards, popped into 10-and-2 to slip a check, and then worked high, cut into the middle of the ice and got a shot off -- missed. Came away more impressed with his playmaking off the point. Multiple one-touches funnelling into the middle -- he recorded an assist with a one-touch to the left point. On one first-period shift, he sent a cross through huge layering (4 players) to hit a teammate on the left-hand circle. Cheslock was even using slap passes -- in the second he just missed his target backdoor. Cheslock showed a lot of sophistication in transition. He jumped up into multiple rushes. Tanked physicality on one retrieval, allowing him to send a 2-on-1 the other way. His best sequence was in the second. On a controlled carryout, Cheslock protected in his hip pocket and passed off on the entry but crashed the weak side, just tipping the puck wide with one arm.

There wasn't a lot of defending in this one. His defensive skating looks fine -- crossovers and c-cuts to establish a solid gap, and 10-to-2 edges to add lateral ability. Cheslock understands when possession is unstable. On one second-period odd-man rush, he

aggressively poked a puck off the carrier's stick, killing the chance. There's enough here to justify a C-grade.

Daniel Gee: February 2nd, 2023 - Rogers High vs. Anoka High - USHS-MN

Cheslock continues to push a tonne of translatable defensive habits. Super aggressive in transition, he constantly pushes a proactive gap, even switching off to take out more pressing secondary threats. Cheslock is robotic in his scanning of the weak side. On one first-period penalty kill, he read the potential threat backdoor and got back tip a hope-centring pass away. His frame is pro-ready and he tanks/absorbs physicality to create advantages. In the second he stepped up, tracked the puck carrier, stepped in their path, absorbed the contact and stole the puck. In more sustained pressure, Cheslock is a scary presence when he's locked to the net. He's like a beaver when it comes to his disdain of opposing players' sticks. Constant chops, lifts, and timed disruption plays make it near impossible to get a shot off in the crease. Box outs, physicality, punishing crosschecks -- he makes the crease hell. Cheslock's defensive awareness is outstanding for this level; being able to switch off and cover breakdowns to work better positioning is a key aspect of his game in his own zone.

More of an offensive threat in this game, Cheslock showed more ability to transport the puck. Wheels into cutbacks, two-touch breakouts out of the pass reception, and even some pace increases leading to odd-man attacks. He still doesn't protect the puck well, always in front of his body -- I struggle to see him be an overwhelming puck mover at higher levels. Some of Cheslock's off-puck habits suggest he could be useful, however. He walked into a one-time shot in the third and drove the slot off-puck. Flashed some ability to shake off the pressure as well. When set up in the OZ, Cheslock activated well in this one. Deep weakside jaunts create an extra option for his teammates. Shows some passing skill as well -- slip passes into give-and-go movement. Cheslock adds some lateral ability by opening his hips, but he's missing the manipulation habits to be an offensive creator in college. I like this player, he's a defensive defender but has some nice flashes on the offensive end of the puck. D grade prospect potentially, but unsure if he makes our main board.

Daniel Gee: January 14th, 2023 - Maple Grove High vs. Rogers High - USHS-MN

Cheslock is a player that we need to watch more. He was a monster defensively in this one, completely nullifying Maple Grove's best players. Cheslock is always gapped and ready to push aggression; he was constantly swinging across and killing one-on-one attacks in this one. Aggressive stick checks on his blueline, full-on tracking of secondary threats. He's a pressure pusher, a disruptor, and loves to drive carriers wide. In the second, he angled off a man and annihilated them on the end boards. On the same shift, he took the separated puck and wheeled out into a counterattack. He's mean at the net front, constantly harassing backdoor threats and screens. A bit of a throwback in that way. His positioning was almost always sound to make an impact and limit pass options. Pre-scan habits, proactiveness, battle wins, his tracking was unreal. His best play was in overtime, a sprawling leg-down block to prevent a cross-crease that would have ended the game.

Clunky edge-to-edge, Cheslock also struggles to truly handle the puck with efficiency. His shoulders bounce in the crossover and he lacks manipulation habits. He understands how to file in as a trailer. In the second, he joined a rush, took a pass, faked a shot, and passed to the middle. The puck was deflected, but Cheslock tracked it and sent a low shot on goal from the hash marks. He is not much of a shooting threat -- mechanically he's all arms. Doesn't leverage his enormous frame or lower body to transfer weight. Had an assist on a D-to-D pass, but beyond that nothing special. May not be well-rounded enough to be drafted, but those defensive habits are unreal. Will follow up on him and push for some crossover.



Grade: C

118 Paul Fischer

AGE 17.625 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Tactician



Problem Solver

Player Info

Player Grades

D

Position

Left

Shoots

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

6'0"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	56	4	17	21	0.38
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	22	2	4	6	0.27
USA U18	WJC-18	7	0	1	1	0.14

SCOUTING REPORT

While Paul Fischer didn't land on our board, NHL Central Scouting ranked him as the top blueliner from the Program. He's likely to hear his name called inside the first three rounds, and that's a justifiable decision.

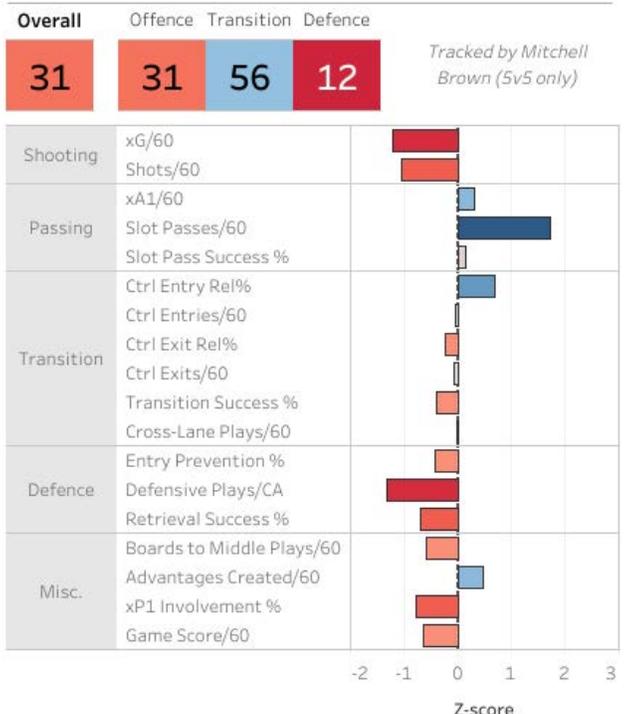
Fischer's a steady defensive presence, bringing a tight gap, proactive threat elimination, and physicality. Let Elite Prospects USA scout Joey Padmanabhan explain: "He's not exceptionally strong but leverages his frame to ride guys out while defending the rush. He doesn't fall for slips or dangles, and rubs guys out before making a simple but effective exit pass."

Flashes of skill from Fischer weren't regular, but they were impressive. He starts give-and-goes to activate into the play, surveys the offensive zone with heel-to-heel skating, looks for teammates in the slot over taking point shots, and changes angle inside his release.

Fischer's fluid, but not especially quick. The hands fail him at times. And he's often pressured into turnovers. His path to the NHL is likely as a bottom-pairing defenceman who lacks a true standout element. But for NHL teams, there's enough mechanical ability to believe that a stronger identity might appear in a bigger role. He heads to Notre Dame next season, where points might prove hard to come by, but he will certainly get opportunities.

Paul Fischer

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 165.0



≡ GAME REPORTS

Joey Padmanabhan: April 30th, 2023 - Sweden vs. USA - U18s

Really solid showing out of Fischer, just a reliable first pass in transition consistently. He's one of the better defenders on this d core, he closes off space early and uses his stick to seal off passing lanes. Knows where his check is, and decks out where appropriate. Stingy in-zone defense too, doesn't get beat to space and keeps players to the perimeter. A few smart rush activations too, with shoulder checks before to avoid putting his team at a disadvantage in transition. Smart pinches, took away the wall to prolong possession on a couple of occasions. Steady, smart, reliable.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 27th, 2023 - Czech Republic vs. USA - U18s

An exceptional game for Fischer, who showed his offensive chops in this one as well as his defensive game. He's not exceptionally strong but leverages his frame to ride guys out while defending the rush. Doesn't fall for slips or dangles, and rubs guys out before making a simple but effective exit pass. Some great poise on the blue line, taking advantage of the collapsed Czech IZD to find lanes to the net, or outlets on the flank. Decent rush activation, streaking into space to make himself an outlet for a Grade A, even if he doesn't get the puck all the time.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

I don't think Fischer is a particularly skilled player, but he had some strong moments in this one, particularly in transition. Fischer scanned on retrievals and made quick passes with pace. Nothing too special, but efficient. That wasn't the case for most American blueliners in this one. One thing that really stood out was Fischer's ability to get pucks through traffic from the blue line. Again, nothing special. Not much deception or manipulation. But simple and effective. He doesn't look like a draft pick, but he was fine in this one.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Some defence from Fischer. He poked away pucks just as opponents lifted their sticks, kept attackers wide, and make quick, simple plays off retrievals. The puck game wasn't there in this game, however. He's smooth but lacks power and speed. Hands provide little advantage. He doesn't create lanes or even try to make plays offensive, at least not in this game. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Not defence or breakout skill from Fischer in this game. Just flashes of offence, which were interesting. He activated off-puck, tried a give-and-go play to get off the point, and fired off a chance with a toe-drag wrister. Passed into the slot instead of taking a point shot. He's a fluid mover and handler, but not explosive or especially quick. Perhaps there's more offence here than I've seen before.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A really solid game from Fischer. He grabbed a rush stop, delayed for support, and then passed cross-ice for the breakout – a top-end sequence for the USHL. He showed skill when joined the play. Not making the best plays, but he used space and hunted down shooting lanes. He has the skills – heel-to-heel skating, handling – to open lanes, but never tries. Grabbed an assist by shooting for a deflection. The rush defence still needs work. He steps too far out the dot line and often tries to step up, instead of maintaining his backwards momentum and angling. He'd be a fine mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Fischer led a rush for a chance in the third period. A couple of stops by forcing dump-ins at the blue-line. But there wasn't much else. He only makes simple plays on breakouts. He's fluid from the point and works laterally sometimes, but never amounting to

much. Not a creator or especially adept at reading space. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Another very messy game from Fischer. The breakouts were bad, no way around it. He's quick to offload possession and doesn't seem aware of his options. Shows more vision in the offensive end, where he uses space and makes quick plays across the zone. Beaten off the rush with speed a couple of times. Skating lacks. He's smooth but he lacks power and speed through his transitions and crossovers. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but he continues to have enough flashes to keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

This was a game of many turnovers for Fischer. He tried several short-range passes that ignored the amount of pressure on their target. But he also had a couple of solid plays. He angled an attacker wide and grabbed a well-earned stoppage. Killed plays at the blue-line without overcommitting. A bit of physical play. Looked the part of a playmaker from the point. He beat a defender off the point then passed back into the slot. Some of his passes didn't connect, but he read teammates moving into the slot and tried to connect. That's encouraging. The skill level doesn't seem notable – he's not explosive or especially creative from the positions he creates from – but he seems aware and intelligent. Could be a pick.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fischer seems limited by his skill sometimes. He has some good ideas and he tries to manipulate the defence to open plays, but the execution just isn't there. It's approximative. The desire to create is commendable, however. He's physical on the boards and willing to pinch to stop the opposition from transitioning up ice. Some good habits, decent skill level, and good ideas. Might be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Fischer was effective on the breakout in this game. Nothing complex, but he waited for pressure, then passed to the open teammate up the boards. Reset when nothing appeared instead of dumping the puck out. Defensively, he was confident and aggressive. Killed a couple of plays at the blue-line, winning body positioning in the process. One awful backwards skating sequence on his inside edges, struggling to generate power with c-cuts, will be forever etched in my mind, but that seemed like a one-off. Looked like a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fischer launched a one-timer past the goaltender for a powerplay. Nothing too interesting there. Joined the rush and poked a poor pass back into the slot for a chance. His puck decisions were best in transition, where he drew pressure, passed through it, and created a couple of advantages up the ice. Defensively, he closed space quick, threw a couple of hits, and won positioning. Angled the puck carrier to the boards before securing possession. Looked like a mid-rounder.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

This looked like a strong performance from Fischer. He was strong on the puck, physical, sealing it from opponents to make plays on it. His decisions were overall quite slow, but with a bit more time and space, he made the right plays, even skill-plays, like sending the puck under the stick of an opponent to a teammate. He did get manipulated by the opposition and beat wide off the rush. The tools don't look all that interesting, but the habits, physicality, and game/puck management remain interesting.

Grade: C



119 Luke Mittelstadt

AGE 19.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 22, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'11"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Minnesota	NCAA	38	5	16	21	0.55
USA U20	WJC-20	7	0	3	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

This one is for the real Elite Prospects heads. Because if you've been following our work for the last two years, then you already have some level of familiarity with Luke Mittelstadt's game.

He was the 87th-ranked prospect on our final board for the 2021 NHL Draft and made a repeat appearance in last year's guide as a D-grade, unranked prospect after playing his draft-plus-one season with the USHL's Madison Capitols.

Now, after a productive freshman year at Minnesota, Mittelstadt makes one last appearance as our X-ranked prospect for the 2023 NHL Draft.

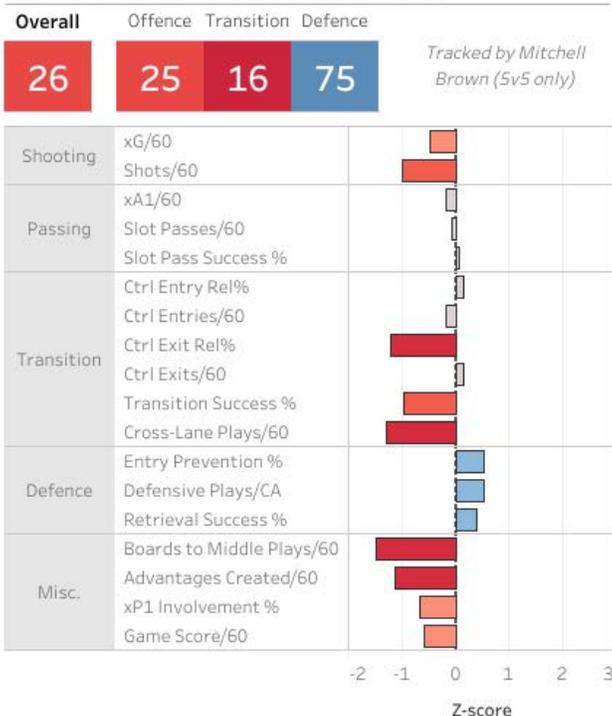
At his core, Mittelstadt is an offensive defenceman. The 5-foot-11 blueliner is most comfortable at the top of the offensive zone, navigating the blue line on his inside edges, probing for shooting opportunities, and making occasional forays low into the offensive zone with cunning weak side activations.

Blessed with the deepest, most talented blue line in college, Minnesota head coach Bob Motzko deployed Mittelstadt accordingly – carefully prescribed offensive minutes at even strength, often against the bottom of his opponents' depth chart, and a steady dose of second-unit power play reps.

Luke Mittelstadt

D | Minnesota | NCAA | Draft+2

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 66.0



To his credit, Mittelstadt handled those minutes about as well as could be expected, but it does make his projection a particularly fraught one. Much of my time in this industry and much of the draft analytics work by the pioneers in that field reinforces that you need to be a productive driver at lower levels of play to comfortably project to even a depth role at the NHL level.

Mittelstadt's 21 points in 38 games check off one box, but I'm not sure we can call somebody playing a carefully managed depth role a driver. The track record of production spanning three separate leagues in each of his draft years, a history of robust defensive play between the blue lines, and modest improvement as a skater may finally compel one of the NHL's 32 teams to make an investment in Mittelstadt at the NHL Draft.

He's far from a sure thing, though. A development regimen that prioritizes improving his off-puck reads and puck management may well elevate Mittelstadt to an NHL third pair, though.

INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He should've already been drafted. We don't have a need like that in our system so it wasn't a need for us, but I can't believe he went undrafted. He's a good player. He's smart, good with the puck, can run the power play, has a good stick and can get pucks through. He knows where to position himself and what to do. He doesn't get beat. I'm shocked he wasn't drafted already. He should be a pick this year. If you're him though, you almost don't want to be picked. You'll be the top free agent in a year or two." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

"When you start practice, to start a year, with some of the good ones, you go 'there's a good one.' And he had it right from the start. It's one of the reasons we were calling USA Hockey and telling them, 'Hey, you gotta look at this guy. I know he's undrafted, but he's a candidate for that World Juniors team.' His progression, I mean he had a terrific season last year in the USHL. He's really been great from the first day that he stepped onto the ice with us. We have to spread our minutes around, there's seven defencemen and it's the strongest d-core that I've ever had or will have. They all contribute." – Minnesota head coach Bob Motzko, April 2023

"Yeah, I think I've matured a lot, and that's been a big thing for me. Playing against Cooley and Huglen and all of our forwards every day has really helped me a lot defensively; I mean, having them on our team and making plays with them every day, it's super helpful." – Luke Mittelstadt, April 2023

LINKS & MEDIA



NCAA hockey championship preview: Nation's two best teams clash for immortality



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster for the 2023 World Juniors

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 8th, 2023 - Quinnipiac vs. Minnesota - NCAA Championship

I don't have a lot to go on here. Mittelstadt played as carefully managed and prescribed a set of minutes as anyone in either lineup tonight. I'm not even sure that he saw the ice more than twice in the first period, and though his minutes started to

tick up from that point onward, it wasn't by a substantial margin. To his credit, I thought Mittelstadt handled his assignments (however scarce) relatively well. Intelligent offensive activations into space, simple but efficient work in transition, and a keen attention to detail away from the puck in the defensive zone. Mittelstadt struggles to contain opponents in body-on-body plays, and there was one sequence late in the game where he got caught chasing the play a bit. His skating seems to have improved, but not substantially so. I think we can find a spot for Mittelstadt at the end of our board, but I'm not going to pound the table on his behalf.

J.D. Burke: March 25th, 2023 - St. Cloud State vs. Minnesota - NCAA Tournament

Another mostly nondescript game from Mittelstadt. It's just really hard to make heads or tails of where his games at when you have to do so 11 of the most carefully managed minutes at a time – a heavy dose of offensive zone starts, some second-unit power play work, and always against the bottom of the opponents lineup. For his part, Mittelstadt makes the most of his precious few shifts. He moved the puck efficiently, didn't make any mistakes in the defensive zone, and he's not afraid to activate into the play. Mittelstadt has a good nose for soft-ice off the puck, and a good sense for when to enter those spots as a passing option. My notes for this game were few, but almost all of them positive. Kind of par for the course this year. I'd be fine with Mittelstadt as a late-round pick.

J.D. Burke: March 18th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Minnesota - Big Ten Championship

It's hard to make much of Mittelstadt in this environment. I'm not sure that the coaching staff really trusts him in high leverage spots, and honestly, fair enough. There are six drafted defencemen ahead of him on the depth chart. So, Mittelstadt played sparingly, mostly in prescribed offensive minutes, and his puck touches were few. The Michigan forecheck gave him fits and I didn't see any particularly skillful or creative displays in the offensive zone. Mostly, Mittelstadt was fine in the defensive zone. He also somehow escaped a 4-3 loss with a plus-three goal differential. That counts for something.

J.D. Burke: December 11th, 2022 - Wisconsin vs. Minnesota - NCAA

Nothing too special from Mittelstadt in this one. He played on Minnesota's third pair and got a couple reps on the second-unit power play, but I'm not sure there are many plays that really stand out for better or worse. There was one particularly savvy weak side activation on the power play, but it didn't result in much. He apparently picked up an assist in this game, but it was a garden variety small area pass for a secondary helper on Brodzinski's goal.

Mitchell Brown: April 30th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

The most encouraging viewing I had of Mittelstadt this year. Beat a couple of times when defending the rush, but mostly kept it tight and angled attacks. Stride requires work, but he's fluid when moving backwards, using heel pushes to manage distance and reducing the need for crossovers. On breakouts, he cut back to escape pressure rather than throwing the puck up the boards – a lot more patient. He still does much of the same frustrating stuff from the point, like needless point shots. But he showed some playmaking and activation. Nothing nuanced, but enough to work Mittelstadt back into draft discussion. Maybe a late-rounder here, based on the rush defence and transition skill.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Mittelstadt has mostly positive touch habits: he moves on pass receptions and tries to fake out incoming pressure. But he settles for low-quality plays time-and-time again. He throws pucks away off retrievals, in open-ice, and from the point. He could manipulate defenders, but he often doesn't. Away from the puck, he looks a lot better. He proactively activates to fill space and become a shooting threat. He kills rushes in largely projectable ways. A solid off-puck defender too: he scans and eliminates but rarely overextends. Could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

If Mittelstadt had any confidence with the puck on breakouts, he'd be an easy pick as a re-entry. Instead. The projection mostly

comes down to rush defence and the odd flash in the offensive zone. The rush defence looks projectable: he builds backwards momentum with c-cuts, angles attackers, and times his engagements. Kills a lot of attacks by disrupting the inside of the attacker's stick without over-extending. His pivots remain a problem, but it's easier to accept when he's killing plays like this. From the point, he occasionally works play to the inside, shows some vision, and uses space before shooting. Until he decides to just blast low-percentage plays with any thought. He's not a pick this year, but the odds of him becoming an NCAA free agent signing seem high. He's solid.

Mitchell Brown: March 5th, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Mittelstadt had the odd moment, stepping into space before firing or making a projectable stop in the neutral zone. His game isn't advanced and lacks creativity. Too many passes straight ahead; there's little cross-lane or inside lane use to his breakouts, even when given space. Prefers to enter a glide when evaluating his passing options. In general, his game would benefit from more aggression – whether that's jumping into the play or eliminating his check faster. Pivots and skating are weakness; he was beat on the pivot a couple of times because he pivots late and doesn't load his push off leg. Didn't look like a draft pick, but his numbers are eye-popping.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2021 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Mittelstadt was a low-volume player in this game. Not many touches, and the ones that he had were mostly simple plays. Created a scoring chance by pinching and sending a backhand pass to the inside. In open-ice, he looks for teammates cross-lane and had the skill to connect, even if he lacks pace. Times his defensive engagement and doesn't over-commit. More activation and confidence with the puck are necessary to become a draft pick this year. Skating improvement will help, too. Wide recovery with limited ankle flexion.

J.D. Burke: September 24th, 2021 - Madison Capitols vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

I really wanted to see a lot more from Mittelstadt this weekend than I did. Some of the usual hallmarks of his game were ever-present -- the point activations, the end-to-end rush attempts, etc. -- but nothing ever really came of those rush plays. Granted, I missed his goal on Thursday, and for all we know, that's the play where it all came together. For the most part, a lot of ineffectual rush plays, most of them kept to the outside. Found myself pretty impressed with Mittelstadt in the defensive zone, for the most part, but his habits come and go. When he keeps his feet moving, he's an awesome defender in space. Late in shifts, he starts to lunge, stops moving his feet, and takes penalties accordingly. Skating looked a bit off. Recovers wide, his hips flair, shin angles all wrong. Could've had a better weekend.

Daniel Gee: April 17th, 2021 - Lincoln Stars vs Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Strong showing in around 15 minutes of TOI. I came away with a much better opinion of Mittelstadt's shot. His weight-transfer and downforce are still a bit of an issue, but he scored a wonderful goal off the right-hand circle. Arms unblocked, snapped through his wrists, and placed top corner. He took a large quantity of low, rebound oriented shots through traffic. Mittelstadt also had a string of high end passing sequences while exerting sustained pressure. He completed a couple of crossbody, no look pass off the point. In the second Mittelstadt tee'd up a perfect pass into a teammates wheelhouse for an open net one-timer (that was missed). Really good job working the point and pinching to keep cycle plays alive and operated well under tight forechecking pressure.

Mittelstadt had more issues defending transitional attacks. He makes good decisions in terms of when to pivot, but the lack of hip integration into his stride limits his knee bend means that he has to be super proactive in fast transitional breaks. He guided a few transitional attacks wide, typically playing man-to-man coverage as the broke down the boards. His toughest shift came in the second period. First he missed a pokecheck and allowed an attacker to drive the slot. Later in the shift, he faced a 2-on-1, lunged to block the crosscrease pass, and missed, resulting in a goal against.

Daniel Gee: April 4th, 2021 - Eden Prairie High vs Maple Grove High - USHS-MN

So, Mittelstadt played... most of this game, which also went to overtime. Eden Prairie's reliance on him amounted to a ton of puck touches, transitional defending plays, and essentially playing every other shift. In totality, Mittelstadt was excellent in this game, recording three assists, activating in highlight reel fashion at times, and displaying translatable defensive habits.

Mittelstadt is a 4 to 4.5 grade skater, but even with this deficiency, he vastly overcomes mobility issues with his decision-making and proactiveness. He put on a clinic defending the transition in this game. His gap was suffocating, his decisions to be aggressive almost always paid off, and he actively pushed attackers to the outside lanes and finished them with physicality. The habits here are immense; he guides and prods with his stick, disrupts the release of opposing shots, keeps his feet steady after c-cutting to get lateral positioning, and protects the slot at all costs. The processing is so quick. Out of the many stops, his biggest came in overtime; he made a huge pokecheck play while defending the transition, which went the other way and led to Carter Batchelder's overtime goal. He also had a huge open ice hit in the second after he stepped up to halt a transitional play. Mittelstadt also showed some great habits while defending under sustained pressure foremost, his ability to read developing plays and proactively moving to make defensive stops. In the first, he read a far board to right-hand circle pass, proactively moving to deflect the shot-pass. He is definitely a weaker defender under sustained pressure, though. In the third, he was on for a goal against after he was passive while defending a cross-crease pass. A similar play also occurred at the end of the first on the penalty kill; he failed to stop a cross-crease pass – just a bit late getting his stick in the lane. Where his skating catches up to him is on puck retrievals – they can be a bit of an adventure at times. I also worry about his four-way mobility and stop and start under sustained pressure -- he reads developing plays and activates to stop them but I don't think he can explode from a stop position to make a major difference. Closing space was an uphill battle in this game.

Offensively, Mittelstadt really put his mark on this game with his transitional passing; he hit teammates in stride, from distance, and facilitated Eden Prairie's high octane rush attacking. There were examples of one-touch passing which added to the quickness in which he transports the puck. Mittelstadt pops into the mohawk to add some lateral mobility and is great at using the boards for bank passes. He manipulates on his transitional carries, shifting his weight and driving his shoulder down to protect the puck and beat F1's -- not sure if he will be able to do this at higher levels. In the first he faked to the backhand on an entry, driving to the net for a high-danger stuff play – wonderful effort. He will need to carry the puck more laterally. He activates off the blueline as well, getting to shooting positions deeper in the offensive zone – his shot appears to be bit below average due to the lack of power he generates through his weight transfer and downforce on his stick. Two of his assists were off of sustained offensive pressure shifts; he facilitated well to Blake, Holt, and Batchelder, who were a menace in this game.

Daniel Gee: January, 16th, 2021 - STMA vs Eden Prairie High - USHS -MN

Mittelstadt recorded two-assists in a relatively positive outing against STMA. Great decision-making and pro-level habits allowed Mittelstadt to be a force for Eden Prairie.

Mittelstadt's defensive game was built based on his pivoting and ability to read developing transitional and sustained pressure plays. He was assertive, angling/guiding transitional threats wide, finishing them along the boards on his chances. He timed activations well, recognizing secondary threats, tying up sticks between the dotted lines, effectively limiting STMA on their possessions. He incorporated body-manipulations on retrievals, shoulder and head faking to shake aggressive forecheckers. The adaptability that he possesses blends so nicely with his ability to pivot his body quickly to face puck carriers or move into optimal puck-protection scenarios.

The pro habits continued in the offensive zone. I liked Mittelstadt's large-ice maneuverability on transitional carries in this game – he easily cut through STMA's transitional defenders in the neutral zone, allowing for many clean entries and passes into the offensive zone – not sure this translates to higher levels though. His first assist resulted from a successful opponent-guide to the boards, and a long, cross-rink outlet up the far boards. Another stand out play occurred in the third, where he created a turnover with an aggressive attack on the red-line; Mittelstadt was able to start a 3-on-1 rush, passing to his left wing, before getting the pass back as he drove through the slot – resulting in a high-danger chance and more sustained pressure. While exerting sustained pressure, he constantly moved pucks from the boards into the dotted-lines, setting up an umbrella attack.. He is a solid facilitator, deferring to pass to his wings for one-timed chances. He identified backdoor teammates and passed through layering well. Mittelstadt isn't too proficient on his backhand – so many of his attempts failed to connect due to power and precision issues – can be inefficient. His glaring deficiency comes in the form of his shot – his body was so arched back as he

shot one-timers, reaching back in his stance to make contact.

Mittelstadt's skating is probably a 4.5 tool grade. His edges are great and he can create some power through his 90-degree knee bend and quick extensions. Linear crossovers are a major part of his transitional carries, but his mechanics can start to waiver as his shifts extend. His stop-start is another deficiency – he lacks explosiveness under no momentum. The skating worries me; pace in the NCAA might be an issue. Extremely intriguing first viewing for me.

Mitchell Brown: November 28th, 2020 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Mostly a solid game from Mittelstadt, especially in transition. Quick outlets up the boards started the offence, but it was his ability to take and make passes in motion that really stood out. He identified his outlet before receiving the puck, then took the pass in motion, and quickly passed to his teammate in motion. A bit of off-puck activation, including one sequence down the boards where he tried to throw the puck back across the slot. His skating's going to be interesting to watch going forward. His shin angle is just about there, but his hips don't follow whatsoever. He's constantly on his toes as a result, and his strides don't really have much push off, more like a swipe of a credit card or something. He doesn't have much small-area separation ability, and he fell behind opponents in transition. Recovers too wide and doesn't generate any power. Not sure if he looked like a draft pick, but it's always hard to evaluate HS players in the USHL.



120 Brady Cleveland

AGE 17.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'4"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	3.5	3.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	3.5	7.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	55	0	6	6	0.11
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	19	0	3	3	0.16
USA U18	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Nearly every NTDP squad has a tall, toolsy defenceman. Brady Cleveland is this year's. But that's about where the similarities stop. He's not the activator or handler that Roman Schmidt was, or a shooter and experimenter like Tyler Kleven. Instead, Cleveland plays a simpler game, streamlined for the role he's likely to play in the NHL.

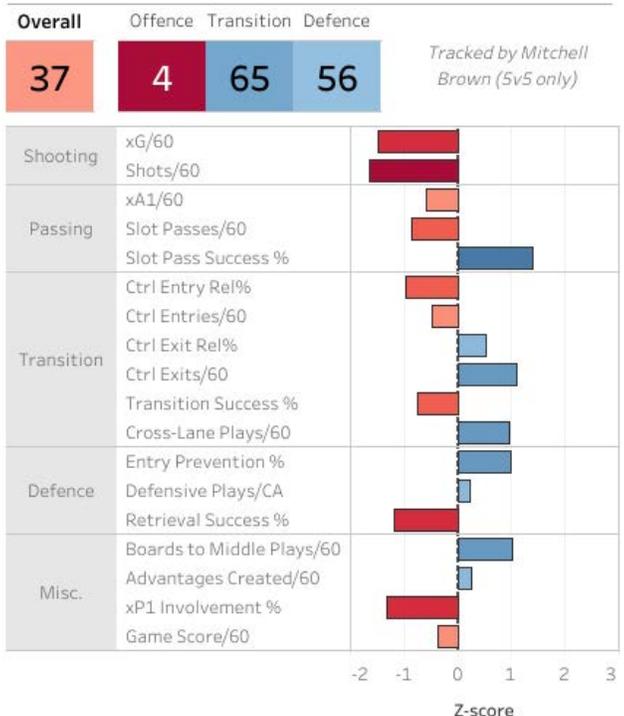
Cleveland's a physical, aggressive, and often fluid defender. He makes the traditional face-to-face stops, keeping his crossovers few as he guides attacks to the perimeter. But he also pivots to defend the rush skating forwards, angling opponents into a crushing hit along the boards. He identifies off-puck threats, pins attacks to the wall, and blocks the shots that he can't outright prevent.

While Cleveland doesn't show any notable offensive upside, he consistently completes breakout passes through pressure, mixing in the odd cross-ice pass and fake when possible.

When it comes together, Cleveland blows up opponents, kills plays, and starts the breakout in quick succession – that will be his game in the NHL. To get there, the hands, off-puck defence, and defending with pace will have to take a step. He could become an effective bottom-pairing option.

Brady Cleveland

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 102.2



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships



"My job is to move pucks and be hard to play against:" Brady Cleveland's profile sets him apart



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster for the 2022 U18 World Hockey Championship

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's a huge, long, mean, tough, and physical defenceman. He's going to play in the NHL as a match, shutdown role that kills penalties and impacts games with his physicality and defending. He won't be a guy that scores or points but he's going to be a really valuable player in the NHL and will make highlights with his hitting." – NHL scout, April 2023

"I just let the game come to me and whatever happens, happens. I'm a defensive defenceman. My job is to move pucks up and be hard to play against in the d-zone. That's what I take pride in." – Brady Cleveland, February 2023

"Brandon Carlo [is who I model my game after]. His size is close to the same and I have to fill out my frame a bit more. It's the size and his abilities." – Brady Cleveland, February 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Cleveland was a non-factor in this game. He had a memorable fall while building backwards momentum, but wasn't part of any other notable sequences – good or bad. He tries the occasional quick pass up the boards through pressure, but mostly prefers to offload possession. Not much of a play-killer or physical presence in this one. He's still fluid in spurts. Didn't look like a prospect.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cleveland had the shift of the game. He blocked a shot, took two runs at opponents, got the stop, passes for the breakout, then crushed a player with a reverse check. The defence was solid in this game, save for the usual speed-related breakdowns. He killed plays with well-timed pokes and hits. Angled opponents, even defending the rush skating forwards before pancaking a player along the boards. Zero offence shown, but he was a bit smoother on breakouts than normal. Hands fail and he's not adaptable. One sequence where he lost the puck trying to pass 10 metres ahead showcased that. Instead of making a different play when regaining possession, he made the original pass anyway, which was easily intercepted. Without better puck skills, he won't be a valuable player. But the extra physicality and emphasis on controlled plays have me convinced he could be an NHLer.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Projecting Cleveland isn't an easy task because he tries stuff without the technical base to complete plays – and then randomly gives up on plays for no clear reason. Still, the ideas are there. He looks to the middle, cross-ice, behind him, and beyond the forecheck for options on the breakouts. Even tries to get in the play a bit. Hands and skating don't really work in unison, but he, individually, has flashes of skill. The defence is concerning. He falls the slightest of feints and gives up his momentum too easily.

Gets a lot of reaching stops. Not super projectable but he's a physical presence. I have some time for him as a late-round pick, but I don't see the offensive flashes of the other tall, raw NTDP blue-liners of previous drafts.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cleveland wasn't out there much in this game, but his impact was consistent. He was a wrecking machine. He absolutely crushed two players, one of which probably should've been penalty. He closed gaps the blue-line to force dump-ins and knocked away possession from players who tried to beat him. He even had a couple of slick puck plays. Used the middle once and made a couple of plays in motion. Panics under pressure, however. And he struggles to navigate layers. Didn't look like a candidate for our board, but there's a bit of upside here.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

One NHL team is going to fall in love with this defenceman. Just ridiculous physicality, violence even. He crushes opposing players both in open ice and on the boards and he has enough technical ability to make the odd breakout under relative pressure. Well, I saw one good breakout in this one, but it captures the imagination. What if he can figure out how to add a layer of skill to his already intimidating game? For us...Not sure he's a player we will like as much, but maybe as a late-rounder.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

I'd say that Cleveland looked the most comfortable of any of the American defencemen in this game. Flashed the odd bit of deception on retrievals, took the best outlet rather than settling for the first one, and even showed some willingness to activate – though he's not quite as enthusiastic as some of his teammates. I just don't know what his defining skill or separating physical tool is at this point in his development. I didn't see much offensively, and it's not like he was a brick wall in his own zone.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

An ugly one from Cleveland. He kept throwing the puck straight to the other team, falling over his feet, and dumping the puck with options. A clumsy performance overall, even though his feet are actually quite fluid. He gets near full-extension on his backwards crossovers while handling. But nothing worked in this game. Panicked under pressure, didn't read pressure, and no offensive contributions. Wasn't his night.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

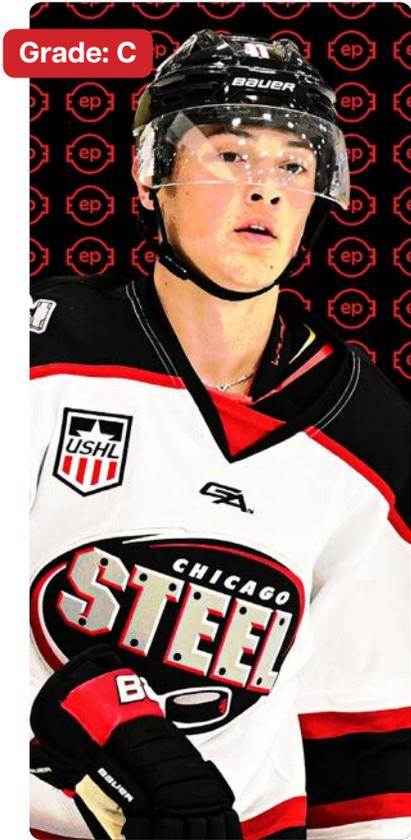
Cleveland threw a couple of hits at the blue-line and grabbed a well-earned stop behind the net after angling the attacker into the boards. That was about it. He missed outlet passes, didn't use his teammates effectively, didn't join the play, and didn't create any offence. Not a draftable performance.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cleveland's like many other tall NTDP blue-liners. He has some skill, some awkwardness, and plenty of confidence. The skating falls apart when moving backwards and laterally at times, but he also closed early and surfed across to get the stop. Physical when necessary. The hands aren't there. The passing might be. Makes quick touch plays off the boards to the middle and resets the play instead of forcing it forward. Nothing offensively. Could be something here. Worth watching more.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

Brady cleaved the opposition in this game with his stick and body on multiple occasions in this game. He finished checks, showed his physicality, and a useful physicality, too. He tried to seal the puck from opponents on retrieval to get first touch on it or to let teammates get first touch on it. He wasn't always successful but the intention was good. The skating and handling both look like below-average grades, however. Cleveland's habits will have to become really solid for him to stay on our board.



121 Michael Hagens

AGE 17.573 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 18, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Toolsy



Evasive

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicago Steel	USHL	60	9	17	26	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Soon, the last name Hagens will be known across the sport. James Hagens, a top prospect for the 2025 NHL Draft, will ensure that. But first, it's Michael's turn to hear his name called at this year's draft.

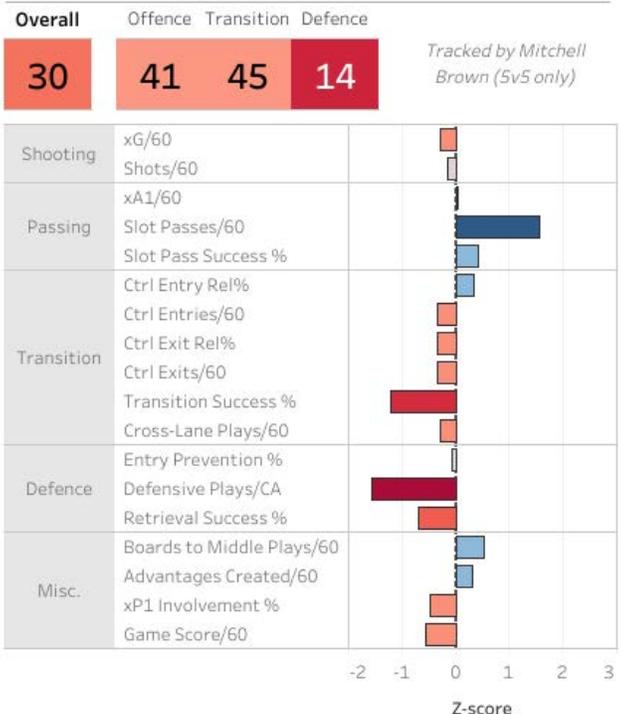
Hagens has NHL tools. Powerful strides and crossovers launch him up and down the ice, and his hands match. He chains pass receptions with dekes, shots, and passes, even at full speed. But instead of relying on his tools alone, he makes the extra move to secure space, whether that's a weight shift fake or cutback after leaning into the opponent.

At this stage, Hagens is more of a facilitator than creator, but there are flashes of more, using his tools to manipulate an opponent for a passing lane or breaking down the entire opposing forecheck single-handedly. He tries more complex exit plays at times, spotting teammates through layers, drawing pressure, then passing through it.

Leaning heavier on those plays while tightening up the defence are Hagens' development keys. He's a project pick, but could blossom into a play-driver at Harvard, a school with a track record of success with players of his ilk. He could become a bottom-pairing option in the NHL; the type who posts positive underlying results by keeping play moving up the rink.

Michael Hagens

D | Chicago Steel | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 110.3



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Hagens is a bit of a chaotic skater. He has skills and quickness, but he does stuff too fast. Tripped during backwards crossovers, but otherwise showed projectable defensive skating. Wide stance, knees bent, tight gap, angles, and doesn't reach. Activates often, allowing him to follow up turnovers. Not much skill or creativity shown, however. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Some exciting moments from Hagens. He fakes on pass receptions, steps into space, and avoids dump-ins to instead slide pucks to teammates. Reads opponents' momentum and (tries to) pass around it. Uses space in the offensive zone and keeps the play moving. Not always creating offence, but the potential is there given his skating, handling, and deception. The skill didn't appear as much on the breakout and he wasn't much of a factor defensively (the NTDP wasn't good this game). He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Only flashes from Hagens. He has some advanced breakouts ideas – step towards pressure before passing through/around it. That was about it. He was too quick on the dump-out trigger in this game. Lacks patience under pressure and only tried to advance pucks forward. He has in motion skill and an activation mindset, but it didn't lead to anything in this game. Defence was a weak point, too. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A tough one from Hagens, who was beaten off the rush and struggled with the puck for most of the game. He whiffed on receptions and missed his target with his ideas. Ideas were sound, however. He looks inside, uses the weak side, and tries to create a bit of space with fakes. Draws pressure. The best offensive play was a shot fake on reception before passing back into the slot. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Hagens got burned a couple of times defensively and turnovers were a consistent theme, but I generally liked his performance. He's skilled, quick, and tries complex plays. He joined the rush, beat the F1, and tried to manipulate incoming pressure. Showed handling skill and edge control, faking out incoming opponents before pushing off laterally into space. His offensive zone passing created opportunities for his teammates; he's always looking to feed the slot instead of passing to taking low percentage shots. An interesting prospect with handling skill, vision, and intelligence. He could become a useful piece down the line. Perhaps a third rounder.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Hagens is a bit awkward to watch with a long, yet wide stride. Doesn't fully extend his strides, but his edges looked advanced in spurts. Driving knee-over-knee crossovers, sudden cutbacks with perfect puck positioning, heel-to-heel skating, and notable power off his inside edges. Shifty, skilled handler, keeping pucks in his hip pocket, head up, and throwing in a bit of deception. Beat a defender off the point for goal, showing a mechanically-sound wrister led by an elevated top arm elbow and creating the downforce through lower body flexion.

Sometimes misses his outlet, but he has advantage-creating ideas, looking inside, cross-ice, and through defenders set up with cutbacks and occasional manipulation and executed off the backhand and forehand. Not scoring much, but he looked like a potential mid-rounder in this game. Lots of room to grow.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Hagens didn't get out there much but he showed skill. In one sequence, he jumped into the rush, dangled around a defender, then dropped the puck back to a teammate for a chance. Nothing notable otherwise. Makes basic breakout plays and doesn't have much stopping power at this stage. Curious to see more from him.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Didn't notice Hagens a ton in this game. He gapped up early and killed a couple of plays, but his pivots left him vulnerable. Lacks push off power (doesn't load his rear leg). A couple of interesting ideas with the puck, but didn't connect. Threw a puck between two options on the breakout. He's reasonably fluid, has some ideas (delay, use middle, join rush), and some defensive ability.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Only a couple of noteworthy plays from Hagens in his game, but both showed NHL upside. Where most players sprint from pressure, he delayed, then accelerated. Used a variety of skating skills to access space and change pace. Also showed some play-killing in the neutral zone by getting on his check early and timing his step up, but the defensive skating must improve. Worth watching more.

Grade: C



122 Donovan McCoy

AGE 17.929 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 11, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Analytics Darling



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Peterborough Petes	OHL	65	2	11	13	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

Some players just can't accumulate points, no matter what they do. Donovan McCoy's been that player. He does everything right and even shows offensive skill. One problem: No points. He's even one of the OHL's top draft-eligible players by tracking data, which suggests there's far more upside than the box score suggests.

McCoy's a shutdown defenceman and crafty puck-mover. He mitigates risk by staying on opponents' hips, disengaging to challenge shooters at the right moments, and eliminating pass lanes. He locks on to opponents in the neutral zone, stripping them just as they receive a pass or lift their stick off the ice.

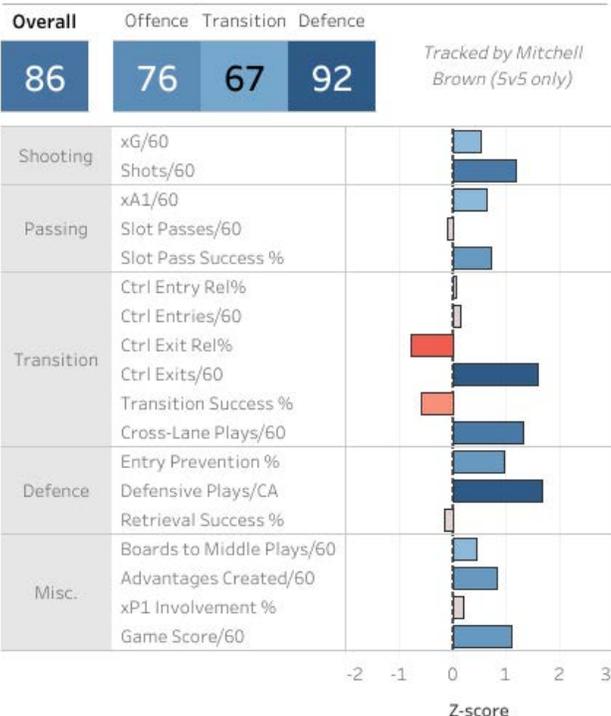
When McCoy gets the puck, he draws pressure and passes through it, even off the backhand and with his feet moving. Body positioning, deception, and slick short-range passes turn contested pucks along the boards into clean breakouts.

In the offensive zone, McCoy most makes simple plays, with the occasional shot-pass and activation read to support the play. He's not a creator, at least not consistently. Instead, he uses those skills to keep the puck moving.

To make the NHL, McCoy must tighten up the off-puck defence, complete more quick passes off retrievals, and improve his hands.

Donovan McCoy

D | Peterborough Petes | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 133.5



Presently, the hands are the biggest source of missed offensive opportunities. More lateral mobility and depth through turns will help him shake pressure, too. Production wouldn't hurt, either.

If he does it, McCoy could move the needle in a deeper role. He might be a long shot because of the scoring profile, but nevertheless, we believe.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I've seen enough to believe that McCoy can beat the odds and make the NHL as a low-scoring defender. He has everything other than offensive skill, and even then, it's clear he has runway. Breakouts: skated up the middle, attacked space immediately, avoided dump outs and passed through pressure, as he did for his shorthanded assist. Give-and-go rush activation, stays in the play and follows up pucks. Defensively, he was a machine. Tight gap on- and off-puck, poking pucks away just as the opponent went to receive the pass or lifted their stick off the ice. The retrievals are concerning at times, but he flashes some deception. The mechanics are the limiting factor. Handles the puck in rhythm with feet and doesn't have the explosiveness or mobility characteristic of shutdown defenders. Still, it's a 4.5 or 5 projection. He has a real chance of playing in a depth role. Could be an end-of-board player.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

McCoy has some impressive breakout reads under pressure, scanning, drawing pressure, and passing through it. Connects off the backhand and with his feet moving. There are a lot of simple plays that miss the best option, but he's not offloading the puck by any means. Pinches to extend zone time, but doesn't show much skill when up in the play. He's mostly a defender at this stage. To steal Lauren's phrasing, he mitigates risk like a pro already. He stays on opponents' hips, disengages at the right moments, and eliminates passing lanes when necessary. Gets on opponents early, takes the middle, keeps his stick on the ice. He could be a really capable play-killer in the future. Retrievals were an issue, but not for a lack of scanning. He was slow on a couple pucks and struggled handling another. He's not scoring at all but there's a real chance he takes off next season given his style of play.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Not much offence from McCoy, even though he spent most of his shifts in the offensive zone. Only basic plays, and even then they don't lead to much. But in the other two zones, he was one of the best players on the ice. Kept attackers wide, got inside the hands, checked opponents off the puck, and tried complex breakout passes through multiple opponents (and connected). Some attempts were optimistic, and his retrievals were an issue in this game, but he has potential to beat the odds and become an NHLer. He understands how to create advantages and gets stops without over-extending. Refining the edges and hands are musts. A fine addition to the latter stages of the board.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

McCoy missed most of this game, but was having a strong defensive performance. He killed plays early, deeper in the zone, and made the right play on every end-boards touch. He fakes, leans into back pressure, and bumps the puck to an open teammate. The hands remain an issue. He whiffed on a shot and doesn't show much ability to handle in motion. Not much to go on, but he still looks like a pick, even without the production.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

A lot of interesting skills shown in this game from McCoy, making me wonder how he doesn't score at all. Peterborough dominated this game when he was on the ice. On retrievals, he deceived with his feet and made passes back through opponents, even on the backhand. Killed plays at the blue-line, once directly leading to a breakaway chance. Avoided point

shots, preferring passes and activation highlighted by a shot-pass for a deflection in front. He shows some handling skill and evasiveness in moments, but he mostly acts a play-sustainer, rather than creator. There were some defensive miscues. In one shift, he let an attacker slip behind him and predictably got dusted when the puck arrived. Late on some off-puck reads. Skating lacks depth and quickness, but he tries more advanced edge moves, like double cuts. He could be a candidate for our board if this offence wasn't a one-off.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

McCoy struggled a bit defensively. Awkward and unaware at times. Wandered. Struggled on retrievals because he eats the puck instead of making quick plays. Offensively, he was impressive, one of the best in the game. He avoided dump ins to instead challenge defenders to wide-lane races. He deceived, drew pressure, and passes cross-ice for teammates building speed through the neutral zone. From there, he joined the rush. He grabbed a chance with a wraparound, walked off the point for a point-blank look, and even showed some in-motion fakes to create shooting lanes. The average touch in the offensive zone remains mundane – he doesn't consistently open lanes before shooting and his lateral mobility is limited. But this was a game that showed a lot of potential. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Lauren Kelly: January 20th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

McCoy's risk mitigation is excellent. He closes players well, and strips them of pucks before sending one of his own teammates up the ice on the breakout. He doesn't overcommit when defending the rush if he's left to cover more than one player. Uses his stick and reach to disrupt opposing carries. Keeps his head up on controlled breakouts, but he slows to survey his options before passing off - he's not the type of defender to take the puck up the ice himself. He did take a high sticking penalty in the second - he was a bit too overzealous with going for the stick lift. Caught puck-watching and didn't scan on the 3-3 goal, instead going to lay a hit in the corner, which left him unable to get back and defend the front of the net. Offensively, not much to note, just one harmless looking shot from distance. I'd really been hoping to see more offensive flashes from him, but it's possible that it's just not within his skillset. The defensive play is a major asset, though.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

A really impressive game on retrievals from McCoy. When he was first on pucks, he made quick bumps to get the play moving, scanning over both shoulders. When he was second, he pinned opponents to the boards and wrapped up their feet, dug for the puck, and then skated into their hands. Gets inside positioning on opponents consistently. Sometimes overcommits or turns his feet the wrong way, but he reads opponents, mirrors footwork, and times his pokes. With the puck, he's more volatile. Grabbed a chance by reading space on the defender's heels but never looked to pass. Missed options on breakouts, preferring simple plays. Looked like a late-rounder. Clearly has some NHL abilities, but the skating and puck skills were soft NHL average projections at best.

Lauren Kelly: January 3rd, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

McCoy scored his first OHL goal in this game (he went goalless last season), a floater from the point that seemed to fool the goaltender. The offensively risk-averse nature of his game was likely going to affect his production, though it's a bit disappointing to see he only has 9 points on the season. He did activate from the point more than I'd seen in previous viewings, though was usually kept to the perimeter despite trying to cut through to the middle and limited to a harmless shot towards the goal or pass through the crease. But the strength of his game is his in-zone defence, from his tight gap, to his ability to keep players to the outsides, box players out in front of his net, identify potential scoring threats, and use his stick to intercept passes or deflect shots away. He's probably more of a mid-to-late-round pick than a top-64 pick simply due to his lack of offensive upside.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

McCoy looked like a borderline first-rounder in this game. Can't believe he doesn't score more. Used space on every touch in the offensive zone, leading to a pair of scoring chances. He set-up a chance with a pass for a deflection to the side of the net. He jumped into the rush. He led the rush, beating the F1 then passing to an open teammate through the next layer. He looked like

a skilled advantage creator, and he's also a physical, assertive defender. Tightening up his gap off the rush and timing should make him a defensive force. There were some offensive limitations visible, whether that's a relatively stiff shot and rigid handling form. Time to watch more.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

I'm liking McCoy more and more with each viewing. This was the first opportunity I had to see him play in person, and he was far and away the Petes' best defenceman on the ice. Constantly scanning, both while defending zone entries and on retrievals. Closes gaps effortlessly, and he was near impossible to beat 1-on-1 off the rush. Always makes the best plays even if they're not the most dynamic ones. Very risk averse. He identifies and eliminates threats easily in his own end. He's very calm under pressure and quick to escape it, able to break the puck out of his own end with players hounding him up the ice. The one thing I question is the offensive upside. He didn't play at all on the powerplay (Peterborough runs the same 5-forward unit for the entire two minutes), and his only notable offensive plays were two keep-ins at the blueline to maintain possession for his team. Even not playing powerplay minutes, he was on the ice for almost every other shift. It's easy to see why the Petes rely on him so heavily. Top-64 isn't out of the question.

Lauren Kelly: October 20th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

I really liked McCoy's play in this game. He closed gaps, anticipated opponents' movements on the rush, created turnovers with a well-placed stick, and took his time to survey options before starting the breakout. There were a couple of instances where he seemed to second guess his decisions and it resulted in the other team stealing the puck back, but he seemed to settle down as the game continued. Offensively, not too much to note. Most of his shots were low-danger wrist shots from the point, and he only activated if he was under pressure and needed to skate deeper to dump it in. Definitely a performance he can continue to build on. He could be a darkhorse in this draft class.

Lauren Kelly: September 29th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Not a bad start to the season for McCoy, whose physicality and defensive positioning stood out from the onset of this viewing. He scans on retrievals, fights through checks, pinches up only to keep the puck in deep for his teammates, and uses his stick very effectively when defending one-on-one. Is a heavy, physically demanding presence in his own end, especially along the boards and in the corners. But he can move the puck, too. His one assist was a nice activation off the point, taking the puck to the outsides before cutting across the goal line for a shot, and the ensuing rebound was buried by a teammate. Solid on breakouts and didn't make too many mistakes in zone coverage, although on one instance in overtime he left the far post open, which led to a Grade A scoring chance. A player to keep an eye on for sure.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2021 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

McCoy already plays a ton and it's not tricky to figure out why. He's very focused on creating advantages up the ice through cross-ice passes, using the middle, and beating the F1. These don't always connect, but the ideas are sound. Similarly, he's a sturdy enough defender who both overpowers and outsmarts players. Tightening up his off-puck positioning is a must, especially because it'll help get into the rush more often.



Grade: C

123 Griffin Erdman

AGE 17.595 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of Foot



Motor

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	62	18	23	41	0.66

SCOUTING REPORT

Despite playing third-line minutes on a deep Waterloo Black Hawks team, Griffin Erdman tallied 46 points, 37 at even-strength. Given his role, that's a solid outcome. Especially when considering the numerous skills he showed off along the way.

Erdman sprints for every loose puck, contests every shot, and engages in every battle. After securing possession, he looks for the give-and-go, using a deep, powerful stride to launch himself past defenders on his way to the net. He battles for body positioning and fend off opponents, always giving himself a chance to make a play.

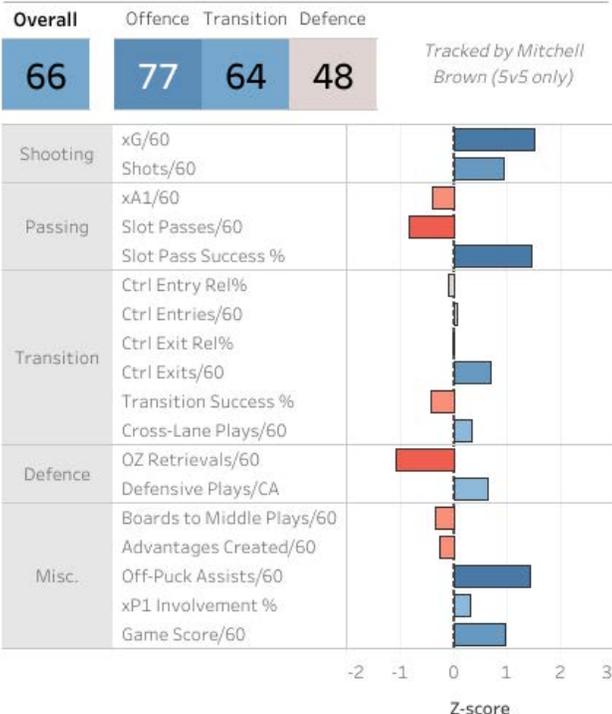
While the skills vary, Erdman consistently shows offensive upside, too. Some games, he's the hard-nosed net-front finisher with a knack for deflections and well-timed screens. Others, he's finding the trailer off the rush and starting passing plays. Then, there's the inside-driven attacker who puts defenders on his back as he drives the net.

To take the next step, Erdman must find better use of his speed off the rush. Sometimes, a cutback will create a better opportunity than a drive, for example. Take a quick look before passing and shifting gears in open ice will prevent him from falling into the background.

Erdman could step into the NCAA next season and find success with his motor, attention to detail, and speed. But another year in the

Griffin Erdman

F | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 89.1



USHL, this time as the go-to player, would likely be the best move for his development. He could become a third or fourth-line winger.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Erdman scored twice, with the first an encapsulation of his game. He forced the dump in, supported down low, worked the give-and-go off the rush, sprinted to the net, and fired off a shot after a quick handle under pressure. The motor, body positioning, and pace stood out nearly every shift. He gets inside positioning on opponents, checks them into the boards, and sprints to kill plays where many would glide. He shows some nuance, too. He finds the trailer off the rush, pops into space just as the puck comes through (rather than planting his feet), and has handling skill. The stride's an NHL projection, for sure. Not every play works – he passes to no one and makes decisions based on assuming his teammates' next move – but there's enough to believe it will improve. He could become a third or fourth-liner. He deserves to be on our board.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Erdman was so impressive to start this game, but faded throughout. He took the middle off the rush, reading the gap, then set up a chance. A bunch of smart breakout passes – off the boards to the inside, cross-ice, and well-timed to create offence up the rink. But by the time the second period rolled around, those passes started missing. He wasn't a factor in the offensive zone, failing to both create with the puck and get open without it. The motor took a bit of a hit, too. Looked like a pick early, not so much in the rest of the game. Could be an end-of-board candidate. He has an NHL checking game with pace and an ability to read gaps.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Erdman scored with a slick deflection in front and rushed the net off-puck for a one-time chance. He understands the subtleties of off-puck offence. He gets between defenders, behind them, and works laterally across the offensive zone. With the puck, he didn't show much. Rushed straight ahead and lacked patience in transition. Easy to defend. He has to start shifting gears and looking for teammates laterally. The skating form, energy, and off-puck offence have me convinced he's a pick, but likely as at the end of the board. He could be an effective depth piece.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

There were some flashes of really high-end intelligence from Erdman in this game, at each end of the ice, too. The first was a proactive defensive read to cut off a play near the defensive blue line, followed by a pass through the neutral zone to send his linemate in alone for a breakaway. Good anticipation there. Another play that really caught my attention was Erdman's decision to play a puck into space to jailbreak a teammate when faced with a three-man neutral zone wall. Mostly, Erdman faded into the background. His speed and his work rate made him a decently effective forechecker, but not much happened for him during sustained offensive zone pressures. I'm intrigued.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Erdman wasn't a factor in Waterloo's offence in this game, but he continues to show defence and play-building skill. Proactive support leading to him defending the rush a couple of times – dusted both, but that he was back there and trying to angle was encouraging. Wins body positioning on retrievals and when he can't, he attacks the opponent's feet before pinning them to the boards. Lateral passes, steps to the inside, and looks through forecheckers for outlets. He could be an end-of-board player.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Erdman had the assist on the late-game go-ahead goal, following a rebound with a quick shot. For the most part, he stays in

space when getting open. A consistent factor offensively. He beat defenders wide for chances, used quick cut backs to escape, and hit the open teammate when possible. Nothing advanced, however. Didn't accelerate out his evasive skating moves. He relies on a speed advantage that he won't carry and he didn't manipulate opponents. His work rate is impressive and he achieves a full knee bent inside his stride. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

The first period of this game wasn't available, but Erdman went most of the next two making zero impact. He set up a late-game goal with a quick pass into the slot, but mostly found himself trailing the play. Little proactive positioning. Sometimes, he overcame the space deficit and grabbed a steal, but that was about it. Didn't see any NHL upside here, but the stride and work rate are intriguing enough. I also can't get the September 25th game out of my head.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Erdman achieves basically textbook depth. He pushes his knees past his toes and engages his knees, giving him full extension on most of his movements. In this one, he wasn't explosive with that skating, but he clearly has a sound technical base. He's a standout worker, although sprinting from one play to the next. But he didn't show much nuance with the puck. Not a manipulator or especially creative. He plays fast and throws pucks to the net with the occasional pass. Didn't see much upside, but his attributes will keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Erdman was among the best players on the ice in this game. He scored a tap-in goal, one of his many chances throughout. Used quick changes of pace to trick defenders, then drove the net or cutback. Showed a bit of reactionary handling skill to evade an incoming opponent in the neutral zone. Attacked the middle, quick pucks to the outside. Non-stop energy. He applies so much pressure on opponents, overcoming deficits to close ground. Not sure about the skill level, but he looked like a draftable prospect.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another standout penalty kill game from Erdman. His energy's undeniable. Plays every shift shot out of a cannon, but rarely finds himself overshooting. He stays on the right side of the puck and angles. When he does over-extend, he gets the stop on the second effort. His offensive game is largely simple plays – pass to a teammate up the boards or chip it into the zone. Little creativity or diversity, and I haven't seen notable puck skills in these first two games. He's a fun player, worth keeping an eye on, but likely for the lower parts of the draft.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Erdman was everywhere on the penalty kill. In one sequence, he completed a trio of give-and-gos up the ice to kill 20 seconds. Relentless on the forecheck. Rewarded with a goal late in the game. Had another chance after a slot cut, but upside his outside leg, not his inside one, to initiate the cut. Couldn't get the separation necessary to get space for his shot. Skill level looked problematic – he can't shift his weight or deceive. Very much a straight line player.

Grade: C



124 Alex Pharand

AGE 17.693 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Toolsy



Raw Talent

Player Info

RW/C

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

201 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves	OHL	67	18	21	39	0.58
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	0	1	1	0.14

SCOUTING REPORT

Alex Pharand's production slowed down the stretch, only recording 16 points in 2023. But our impressions of his game grew increasingly fond. There aren't many constants in his game at this stage; instead, it's all about the flashes of top-nine skill.

For the most part, Pharand plays a straight-forward, disciplined game: High energy backchecking, physical forechecking, proactive defensive zone positioning, and intelligent off-puck routes in the offensive zone. But there's so much more there.

Pharand chains pass receptions with dekes and shots. Hesitation moves and handling fake freeze defenders, which he often uses to prepare passing lanes. He overwhelms opponents along the boards, escapes, then drives the inside. Instantly turns tricky passes into powerful wristers, but he knows when to make the extra pass to turn a chance into a sure thing.

These plays aren't gamely features. He's usually too passive with the puck, refusing to use space or carry the puck in transition. Perhaps he lacks confidence, or perhaps it's linked to a poor awareness of space.

When Pharand makes plays, he looks like a potential NHLer, one that can play without speed and agility as a strength. But without the

Alex Pharand

F | Sudbury Wolves | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 107.2



flashes, he looks more like organizational depth.

The chance that he could become a three-zone, skilled forward with positional versatility on a team's third line remains, hence Pharand's inclusion on the board.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Canada - U18s

Tough game for Pharand, who centred Canada's fourth line between Ty Halaburda and Porter Martone. The assignment is pretty clear: Take on toughs and play your opponents to a draw so that the rest of the line can do their damage. I'm not sure Pharand got it though. His defensive work rate wasn't especially high, I don't know that he tracked well through the neutral zone. At his best, Pharand put in good work on the forecheck, leveraging his size to win pucks along the boards, but I'm not sure he made anything noteworthy of those possessions. The skill level just doesn't pop for me. I'm not sure he's a pick.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Canada vs Germany - U18s

I'm not sure about Pharand's overall skill level, but one of his plays in the middle frame made me think he could be hiding more. He caught a puck behind him, brought it between his legs, located a teammate across the ice, and then launched the puck that way. He also protected the puck with one hand and kept a defender at bay with the other as he ran around the net a bit later in the game. I'm not sure about the skating grade for now.

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pharand put in the work defensively in this game, even late in his shifts. Didn't quit on plays and earned a few stops in situations where most players would've glided back. Transition's where he's most limited. He occasionally goes for a skate, but he mostly just gets rid of the puck as quickly as possible, missing passing options in the process. In the offensive end, he plays the off-puck game. He gets open between defenders, high in the slot, and drives the net as the puck works high. Grabbed two chances in quick succession by linking different off-puck ideas. There were no flashes of the exciting skill that I've seen previously. Likely not making our board because his NHL outcome is most likely a fourth-liner, but he'd be a fine mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pharand was a consistent, showing shooting skill, inside play, and a bit of playmaking. Cut inside a few times, once across a defender, once with a give-and-go for a one-timer, and once with a hesitation move before claiming space behind the defender. A clean inside leg, in-stride wrister showed off a projectable NHL shot. Delayed off the rush when necessary, not forcing plays. The skating's probably a 4, lacking depth and edges. The stride's the most solid part. The biggest issue remains that he's not especially creative or determined with the puck. When he makes plays, he looks like an NHLer. But he's passive. Perhaps he lacks confidence, or he's just unaware of his space and his options. He'd be a fine pick in the mid-to-late rounds for a team.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Pharand often plays below his skill level. He won't use space or carry the puck at all, preferring to pass or hammer the puck down the ice. He's inaccurate. But he also has flashes of more ability, hitting passes through defenders or delaying before accelerating into the lane. He also has physical skills (cutting through the hands), which led to his deflection chance, and a bit of vision, let down by his poor timing and inability to adapt to lanes. There's real potential here, especially if the skating's closer to a 4.5 grade, like it was in this game. A breakout candidate for next season.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A quiet game from Pharand. He made a quick pass to the middle for a chance, took a perimeter shot, and didn't contribute at

all in transition. Only straight-line plays with no creativity. He's a sluggish player and couldn't handle the pace in this game. More defence engagement would help him stand out. Didn't look like a prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Impressive game from Pharand, who was looking to set up teammates all game long. Connected with several short-range passes through pressure, even off the backhand. Adapted to lanes. Found lanes by skating into them and scanning. The highlight was his assist, gaining the zone, circling the zone, and passing cross-slot for a one-timer. He's aware off-puck, getting open inside space by winning body positioning. Solid defensively, too. The skating's a below-average projection, but he was looking to create offence. He could be a player, maybe in a fourth-line role. A solid end-of-board candidate.

Lauren Kelly: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pharand didn't stand out much in this game. He's a strong, sturdy player, but he doesn't use the middle of the ice much unless he's heading to the net to battle for positioning as a screen. Skating looked like an issue in this game, either slow and lacking acceleration or just fatigued from playing the night before. Really not much else to go on.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pharand started the game with Goyette and Musty. He didn't have many moments. He mostly plays a direct game: sprinting his routes to create lanes, engaging with defenders around the net, providing a moving screen, and occasionally making a quick play to the middle. Didn't show any notable puck skills, although his backchecking and forechecker both looked like strengths. He doesn't just chase mindlessly, he angles and anticipates. He could become a solid pro.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

The usual from Pharand. He's a basic-play player in transition with a bit of defensive value. He doesn't build advantages, take the middle, or demonstrate much skill to do either of those in the future. He's a hard-worker, occasionally over-extending but understanding how to win battles. Anticipates passes, proactively supports down low. He has some offensive upside, largely through his off-puck game around the slot. He gets inside positioning and frees his stick.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Pharand has a pretty significant strength advantage over his peers, which helps him overcome the lack of lower-body flexion when entering battles. He had some solid ideas with the puck down-low, but didn't connect. Mostly stuck to the perimeter otherwise. His off-puck movement and timing, how he gets open around the net, supports the play, and becomes an option, suggests he should be able to keep scoring goals as the competition ramps up. Curious to watch him more.

J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

It took Pharand about half of the game to really do much of anything interesting, but he was probably one of Sudbury's better forwards from about the 10-minute mark in the second period. Some interesting displays of handling skill, some touch as a passer. You started to see the foundation of his game really start to reveal itself. So, too, did the limitations, though. Pharand just cannot seem to get to the inside for the life of him. He's not even particularly good at funnelling pucks inside either. Lack of a separating gear as a skater is probably hurting him in this regard. I'm not sure I see a draft pick here, but it's early.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Pharand set up a goal with an intelligent pass off a rebound. Scored twice, including by following up a shot as he popped into space. Some shooting skill, including with a quick-release wrister that snuck past the goaltender short-side. He's a bit awkward at times, with pucks rolling off his blade and getting knocked off balance because he lacks lower-body flexion. Acceleration's clunky and sluggish, but he's a relatively proactive player in how he positions himself across the ice. With the puck, he's the standard junior straight-line, single-speed attacker who struggles with turnovers. Curious to watch more.



125 Lucas St-Louis

AGE 17.463 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Ankle Breaker



Analytics Darling

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	61	3	21	24	0.39

SCOUTING REPORT

Among North America's major feeder leagues, the USHL might be the one with the biggest gap between impact and production. Look no further than Lucas St.Louis.

This ultra-deceptive playmaker only recorded 25 points in 66 games, despite setting up chances shift-after-shift.

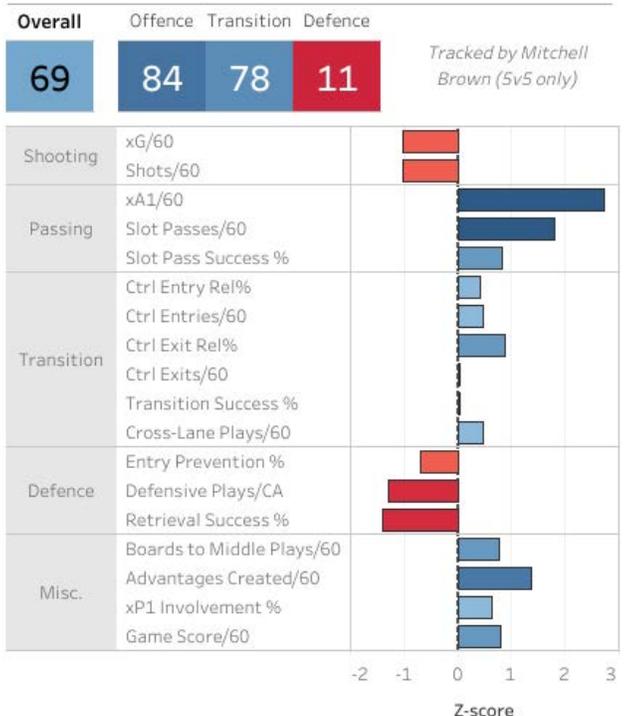
Few prospects pack as much deception into every touch as St. Louis. Name a play, and he will fake it. He fakes shots, fakes passes, fakes dump-ins, and even fakes cutbacks and turns. The best sequences see him link together multiple of these in rapid succession, before finding a wide-open teammate sliding through the baffled defenders.

In the offensive zone, St. Louis uses the deception to create passing lanes, walk-in shots, and occasionally break ankles. In an eight-game sample tracked by Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown, St. Louis set up more chances per 60 than 97 percent of CHL and USHL defencemen, highlighting those skills.

Sometimes, St. Louis maintains the deceptive act for too long, and lanes close when the puck finally leaves his stick. He's occasionally unaware of options. And there's a lot of work to do defensively – killing plays earlier, eliminating off-puck threats, and managing contact better.

Lucas St. Louis

D | Dubuque Fighting Saints | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 114.2



The defence improved a lot throughout the season, as did St. Louis's skating. If he makes the NHL, it'll likely be for his offensive capability. But he has the deception, vision, and skill to make it work. He's an exciting player who should continue to confound opponents in the NCAA.

⇨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Lucas has really good intelligence and feet." – NHL scout, October 2022

⇨ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

An impressive game from St. Louis. He's deceptive, crafty, and patient. In one standout shift, he created three shots by joining the rush, skating his routes, looking to the middle for options, and recovering loose pucks. All of those skills featured regularly in this game. He pinches at the right moments, creates space when joining the rush by skating his routes, and looks for teammates moving into scoring position instead of taking point shots. The defence and breakouts were both strong. He manipulated opponents by skating at them, before beating them with the weight shift. Up on his check early, angled, and physical to earn stops. Struggles a bit in multivariable situations and plants his feet to let opponents come to him sometimes. Still, he looks like a potential mid-rounder. He has NHL skill, vision, and deception, and the defence has improved. He should be on our board.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

St. Louis continues to impress down the stretch. He's smart, creative, and so deceptive, but remains a bit limited by tools and habits. When he's pre-scanning, he shows NHL skill. He fakes in every direction, fakes dump outs, and uses the inside. Turns stops into offence with quick passes through opponents up the rink. From there, he joins the rush and shows vision superior to many USHL forwards. But he often doesn't look, and leaves value on the table as a result. That's fixable, but it's a reason why his production doesn't match his skill level. Managed a 3-on-1 by applying immediate pressure to slow the rush down, then blocking the passing lane after support arrived. Closes space at the right red line, earning stops that keep his team on the attack. Long, long term projection, but St. Louis has an NHL mind, potential above average. He'd be a fine addition to the end of our board.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

A high event game from St. Louis. He scored on a breakaway at 4-on-4, activating up the middle and taking the pass in motion. He joined the rush often, setting up a couple of zone entries. Highly deceptive from the point. He faked a bunch of different plays before passing to create a walk-in chance. Set up another chance by faking the shot and passing cross-slot. When he's feeling it, it's basically impossible for opponents to read his intentions – there's potential here because of that. But there's a lot of work ahead. St. Louis has variable depth with a pronounced heel kick that impacts every part of his skating. Lacks power and quickness, which makes him beatable off the rush and easily pressured into poor decisions on breakouts. He could be a late-rounder. More likely, he takes off next season and becomes a re-entry candidate. I'd pick him though.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

St. Louis was one of the best players on the ice. Active and deceptive. He's always throwing out fakes. He fakes one way, fakes the other, and then makes the next play. Even when he has the opponent moving the wrong direction, he really sells it to maximize his time and space on the other side – as he did before sending a three-line pass up the ice for a chance. Set-up a point-blank opportunity by deking through pressure and going cross-slot. He activates to force dump-outs and hold the zone. The defence was solid, too. He pivots and surfs across, but didn't overskate or reach in. Limited by his mechanics and many of his plays are awkward. He barely completes many of the exciting ones. Still, he looks like a candidate for our board towards the end.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

St. Louis was a mess with the puck. Took too long to make plays, wasn't aware of backpressure, and passed to no one. Didn't establish body positioning and easily pushed off pucks. Didn't even try anything. Not really a draftable performance.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

St. Louis is so deceptive. He's always faking plays – drop passes, dekes, shots, everything. But that was about it in this game. He lacked pace, didn't create much offence, and wasn't a factor defensively. If he played a bit faster, he'd create a lot more at this level. Although the skating's a bit of an issue, with his elevated hips. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

St. Louis was highly involved, as usual. He activates consistently. He fills space, jumps down the middle, and uses the weak side. It's the USHL, so pucks don't consistently find him, making it a bit tricky to evaluate his skill level from these positions. There were a couple of flashes, mostly of deception. He fakes one way, goes the other. Delays inside his movements to really sell it. Backhand pass skill and slips pucks through opponents. The skating's an issue. He's upright and lacks quickness. Defence could suffer as a result. He's a bit passive through the neutral zone and then tries to make up space. Gets the occasional stop through his anticipating, but also gets beat across. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

St. Louis had total control of this game at times. He's so deceptive. He deceives on the reception with a stick wave, weight shift, and shoulder shake. Fakes one way, goes the other. Shifty off his inside edges. Turned opponents around several times. Intelligent activation, too. He uses the give-and-go, uses space on the weak side, and supports plays with lateral movement. His activation allowed him to set up a pair of scoring chances – and nearly two more with a bit more precision. He jumped off the point to hold the zone. He killed plays by pivoting and surfing across. He's a bit weak on retrievals and sometimes needlessly deceptive. The skating looked better in this game than at the Hlinka, but he doesn't feel as comfortable on his outside edges. Less stable, quick, and fewer moves. He looked like a mid-rounder in this game. Lots of great ideas, but perhaps a bit limited by his mechanics.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

St. Louis toe-picked and lost the puck. Couldn't recover. The stride's upright with a pronounced heel kick; limited power. He's easily outraced by most players. But he's so slick. He created a goal with a cross-slot shot-pass after stepping into space. Deceives constantly in open-ice, using heel-to-heels, pivot turns, and weight shifts. After beating one, he passed back to the slot without looking at his target for a chance. There's also plenty of patience to his game, cutting back to reset or find the trailer. When not falling, he shows some defensive ability through gap control and angling. Looked like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

St. Louis didn't show the same deception that he showed in the previous two games. He mostly made mistakes. But he still showed patience, a delay game, and some defensive instincts. He gaps early. Decisive. Subtle off-puck routes created space for his teammates going back for pucks. Missed an opportunity or two to activate and better support the play. Very curious to watch him more this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another volatile, but exciting game from St. Louis. He set up a goal with a cross-slot pass after activating, for one. He also deceived on just about every touch, faking passes, dump-ins, shots, and more. Always masking his intentions. He's overly deceptive at times, throwing passes into the slot blindly (turnovers). He plays too fast for his skill level at times, fumbling pucks and whiffing on pass receptions. His skating lacks, with his upright stance creating an unstable platform for puckhandling. But

he's quick from edge-to-edge – there's a clear pathway for improvement. He's a crafty playmaker with the skill to make it work in the NHL, but better habits will be required. He's worth investing serious time into this season. Dubuque-bound.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

The stride's an issue. St. Louis was burned from a lack of depth and push off power in several instances. He can't recover and he wasn't all that proactive defensively. Still, he was exciting in this game. He showed offensive instincts, creativity, and a varied offensive game. Faked on pass receptions before cutting inside. He blended his weight shift for the shot with cut. Delayed to wait for pressure to arrive before making the next play. Steps into space before firing. He's an efficient player in the offensive zone – focused on making the most of his touches rather than firing away point shots. Excited to see him throughout this tournament.

Daniel Gee: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

St. Louis was a bit volatile in this game, especially considering the mismatch between the two teams, but he has NHL draft pick qualities. Transitionally, St. Louis was moving the puck in-motion, activating into open lanes, and delaying his breakouts, but was unnecessarily risky throughout this game. Prolonged scanning and misjudging forecheckers' speed burned him in a couple of sequences in this game. On one play he had the puck poked off his stick as he shifted laterally in front of the net, scanning for an option (moving W-E, instead of N-S). On his carryouts, he often lacked manipulation habits (weight-shifting, attacking vulnerable sides of NZ defenders), limiting his overall elusiveness. He was more exciting in sustained pressure; multiple lateral shifts to move into clean shooting lanes were patterned throughout. On one sequence in the second period he deked out a pressure pusher, activated into a clean lane, and send a shot/pass backdoor that wasn't connected on. Shot lacks power, precision. St. Louis was a pretty active pincher, one sequence leading to a massive hit as he barreled down the far boards. Bobbled a lot of pucks on the point -- probably an ice issue though.

Defensively he was fairly rough, especially in transition. His forward stride is a major limiter; relies on foot speed as he barely extends his legs. Multiple sequences where he was behind the German attack and was racing back to mitigate an odd-man rush; wasn't able to get back to check sticks or gain body position g, leading to a shorthanded goal against in the second. When he had time to establish a gap, St. Louis was aggressive in the neutral zone -- he had a wonderful pass intercept -- showing some of his ability to anticipate the play. An active scanner under sustained pressure allows him to read the play proactively, but his pace in the defensive zone wavered.



Grade: C

126 Alex Weiermair

AGE 17.351 DATE OF BIRTH May 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

C/RW Position	Right Shoots
6'1" Height	190 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	55	11	15	26	0.47
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	4	5	9	0.39

SCOUTING REPORT

For some players, playing a depth role on the USNTDP doesn't allow them to showcase the full extent of their games. That's what seemingly happened to Alex Weiermair, a versatile prospect who flashed numerous NHL skills across the season.

If there's one area where Weiermair most consistently showed his skills, it was in transition. He weaves through the neutral zone with crossovers, starts give-and-gos, drives the net, cuts inside on poorly-gapped defenders, and cuts back as good ones close in. A desire to make contact with opponents, big hits and smaller nudges to create space, enables him to consistently find space across the ice.

In an environment where Weiermair receives more favourable offensive touches, the scoring tools should appear more. He owns one of the best curl-and-drag shots in the draft class, pulling the puck to his own feet under pressure and firing in one smooth motion. A quick-possession passing game makes him a threat off forechecker and behind the net.

To take the next step, Weiermair will have to further develop his skating and in-motion skill. He lacks pace at times, and he's not deceptive enough to play the lower-speed game at the next level. But given the breadth of skills he brings to the table, he'd make for a solid pick in the third round and beyond. He could reprise his skill-

Alex Weiermair

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 137.7



focused bottom-six role in the NHL one day.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Weiermair's not high-event, but his few gamely plays continue to show NHL upside. Off the rush, especially. He cuts inside across defenders, cuts back and finds teammates up the middle, and avoids needless footraces. Not manipulative, but he reads space, gaps, and lanes and generally makes a positive read to advance possession. Two such plays lead to chances in the offensive end. The skating and handling don't rate as NHL projections, but they aren't too far off. An advantage creator with the reads for more. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

More skill from Weiermair in this game. He's talented. He set-up a chance with a two-touch pass off the boards, turned a steal into a high-danger look, and fired off a curl-and-drag wrister off the boards for a chance. He's an in-a-glide creator, but he all these skills are trickier plays – the stuff that the depth players on the NTDP don't usually try. He has physicality and forechecking. The skating and pace are the main questions. Worth a look late in the draft. He has NHL puck skills and the right style to play in the NHL with skating as a weakness.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Finally, Weiermair's work led to some offence. He grabbed a couple of chances in NHL ways. He set up a defender at an angle, then curled the puck around their stick and fired, using the space between his own feet to keep the puck away. Connected with a nasty backhand pass around a defender after getting open at the goal line. His rush patterns remain advanced for a player who struggles with skating. He uses crossovers, presses the middle, changes pace, and exploits gaps. Sometimes, the lack of speed prevents him from making the play. And he's not deceptive – which means that some of his chances and rushes are defended without much issue. With NHL intelligence and flashes of skill, he could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Not much from Weiermair in this game. He made a couple of advantage-creating passes in transition. One late-game crossover rush showed some skill, although he was on his heels throughout it. A couple of shots off the rush. Skated his routes, creating space behind him in one sequence. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Weiermair continues to impress in a depth role. He got a puck into the slot that was eventually put in, the second of smart passes into the slot. He knows his next play upon reception. Keeps opponents on his back. Transition was all straight lines in this game, not exactly conducive to creating in the NHL, especially with skating as such a major weakness, but I've seen better. He's a solid fourth-line projection. Like him as an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Weiermair had a solid game in the physical skills department. He threw a massive hit, and more importantly, he skated into the routes of defenders and tried to establish body positioning. He has sound offensive ideas. He attacks the middle, draws defenders, tries to start give-and-gos, and moves pucks laterally off the walls. Skating and handling were limited – glide-only handling with limited quickness or edge control – meaning just as many of these plays fail as succeed. Grabbed a couple of late-game chances by skating his route (although giving up his stride too early) to deflect a pass and then getting open in front of the net. If he brought a bit more defensively, he'd be a solid fourth-line projection.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A lot of projectable stuff from Weiermair in this game. He grabbed a handful of zone entries, showing different skills each time. He attacked the middle, passed inside, change pace to bait the defender, and even read opponents' feet. In one sequence, he charged wide, slowed down, then drove the net while skating into the defender's recovery route for a chance. Another, he slowed down, waited for the defender to pivot, then tried to pass under their stick. Curled pucks around sticks before firing, highlighted by a projectable drag wrister that just missed. The shot and passing skills weren't noteworthy otherwise, but the ideas were sound. As he adds new skills, those reads should result in more offence. Gotta watch him more.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Weiermair is a good little player. He was really great defensively in this game, supporting his D in the corners, fighting to be a factor in the backcheck, taking away lanes in d-zone coverage. He's a speedster and it benefits him particularly without the puck. He beats defenders to space and puts himself in a position to get the puck with time to make a play. Some bad management of pucks, he's not a strong player and doesn't protect the puck particularly well. There were a few occasions where Weiermair got it poked away, or tried to execute an evasive move too late, only to get rubbed out. A nice curl and drag wrister from the right wing that beat the goalie clean. There's some talent here, it's just not very refined.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Weiermair's skating looked subpar, lacking depth and collapsing his torso towards the ice. Defenders overcome deficits on him. But he had an impressive game regardless. Won body positioning, kicked pucks to the inside in transition, and worked hard on the backcheck to eliminate the puck carrier's options. Arrived in space at the right moments in all three zones. Acted as more of a transition passer than a puck carrier, hitting teammates as they moved up the ice with speed. Not a dynamic performance, but an intriguing one all the same.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Weiermair made some really nice feeds again in this one with both facets of his blade. He launched a backhand pass before succumbing to defensive pressure in the neutral-zone, allowing a teammate to carry the puck in the offensive zone. And on top of his passing skills, he also displayed a harder game with his multiple net-front drives, with and without the puck. I'm not sure who Weiermair is at this stage, but he continues to show a variety of abilities. The skating look average (high stance?) and because of his lack of pure speed, he's better as a connector/playmaker than as a creator through hands.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

I couldn't see if it was really Weiermair or his teammate who made that pass, but it was a good one: He received the puck at the half-wall on the powerplay, attacked toward the net, creating space at the top of the zone, and then moved the puck to his teammate there, creating a high-danger shot on net. Weiermair showed more abilities to make passes based on anticipation in this game, delays on entry that he turned into open lanes for teammates, for example. In control of the puck, in between blue lines, however, he needs to develop better rush patterns; he mostly headed straight at defenders, seemingly lacking planning in his moves. I like the creativity to find plays.

Grade: C



127 Jonathan Castagna

AGE 17.405 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 20, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of
Foot



Motor



Raw
Talent

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

185 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

6

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
St. Andrew's College	CAHS	50	29	43	72	1.44
Toronto Jr. Canadiens	OJHL	1	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Jonathan Castagna plays the game of hockey like a giant boulder is bearing down on him. A full-on sprinter in transition, the St. Andrews College centre ripped up the CISAA circuit, scoring 72 points across 50 games.

Possessing projectable size at 6-foot-2 and 185 pounds, Castagna represents one of the more exciting options from the lower leverage leagues in this guide; one who can create advantages constantly throughout his shifts.

Crossover scout Daniel Gee had rave reviews in a February game report, "I don't think I have seen a player with this level of motor and effort in this draft. Castagna is constantly moving his feet, shifting laterally, sprinting through his lanes, and causing havoc. Add in his above-NHL-average top-end speed, and explosiveness from a stop, and you have a monster at the prep level -- he genuinely looks hard to handle at all times."

Castagna's hands, able to keep up with his 6-grade skating, are among the standout tools in his arsenal. Inside-outside handles and targeting the backs and triangles of defenders make the Toronto-born forward a constant threat to destroy a gap and pivot a defender. He doesn't have a large selection of moves, making him somewhat predictable, but his execution speed makes up for the lack of variety. He can pick up bad passes in full-stride making him even more adaptable on the rush. While flashes of manipulation were limited, Castagna blew the doors off in certain viewings. Shoulder shakes, and eye-line misdirection, all blended together with his explosive skating.

Castagna constantly has excellent ideas, working pucks to trailers as he drives defenders back, curl-and-dragging past aggression to get shots off, and even dropping his shoulder to work into power moves. But he can be a bit individualistic. Not surprising when skill gaps are this vast. He can force pucks at times, working hard to complete layered feeds and fruitless hook attempts that just lead to chip-and-chase sequences.

In sustained pressure, the St. Andrew's captain is constantly working dynamic four-way mobility and handling blends to get into

the middle of the ice. Gee explained a play from a February report, "With the puck on the near boards, he was double-teamed. He manoeuvred off the wall with a wild four-way heavy, half-cutback move, accessed the middle of the ice, cut through a seam and scored on a falling shot in the hash marks. Just a dominant sequence." While overhandling can be a bit of an issue, there is obvious ability here.

There is a defensive element to Castagna's game as well, rounding out his profile. Physical in his own zone, he will absolutely crush an opponent given the chance. An impactful backchecker, who leverages his speed, Castagna had some nice stick-lift sequences in our viewings. He pushes pressure, jumps into lanes proactively to block shots, and is disruptive with his stick between the dotted lines.

The biggest caveat of Castagna's game is the level of competition he played against. While he had a lot of opportunity to flex against some notable American prep school competition, any separating tools will do damage at this level. Regardless, the base that he possesses, should at the very least lead to a bottom-line energy role. He has more skill than that though, and could be a middle-six scorer if his development shakes out right.

Castagna is committed to playing for the Penticton Vees next season before he heads off to Cornell University in 2024-25. Get used to hearing his name now, because he could make some serious noise in the future.

✧ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: February 26th, 2023 - Northwood School vs. St. Andrews College - USHS-Prep

Castagna was strong in this game, dynamic for long stretches, especially in transition. His ability to sprint through his lanes, both on and off-puck is one of the best I have seen out of this class. The quality of competition isn't ideal and it should be noted, but Castagna had some incredible sequences.

On a second-period penalty kill, Castagna surprised a puck carrier with a quick stick lift, and exploded out of the offensive zone, taking a bump pass by a supporting teammate. He flexed his edges to pivot and cradle the pass, accelerated forward by transitioning from his forward stride to crossovers cleanly, and entered the offensive zone. From there, a 2-on-1 formed; Castagna layered a bunch of deception on puck. His stick said shot, he head faked, bounced his shoulders to fake a shot, changed his grip to flash pass -- it was so much that the lane clogging defender froze and it gave Castagna a lane straight to the crease, a handle-forehand shot saved. I haven't seen him layer that much deception on any puck touch before -- in the past, it has just been execution speed doing the damage. His hands are better than I thought. On one carry in the first, he pulled the puck back, then deked laterally across his feed to beat a turned defender. Castagna then opened his hips to cut into the middle of the slot, but the puck bounced on him. High-end stuff.

There is even flashes of a power game, something that patterned across my viewings. In the first he drove wide, handled to the backhand and quickly got a forehand shot on net crashing after the rebound on the end boards. So much small area escapability in this one, all focused on attacking the inside. If anything, he's a bit selfish on the puck, but I'm guessing that is a result of the league and situation he is in.

Castagna's work in sustained pressure revolves around a volume of attacking plays, more than most players would get in a given game. He'll outmanoeuvre defenders in small space, rush around the net, and work shots out front or at sharp angles. He flexed his edges on one shift in the second, lapping the offensive zone with his hips open, unable to cut to the inside, vulnerable to be buried by some physical aggression. Castagna scored off the right-hand circle on the powerplay. He worked downhill, cradled the puck and snapped a shot top shelf -- his release is extremely quick and he gets downforce applied quickly. Not much of a one-time threat, despite being set up for multiple across the viewing. Would have had another goal but he delayed a quarter-second on a catch-and-release shot backdoor. Regardless, his motor is high, Castagna has pace, and he had a couple of great off-puck, soft-area activations.

Still a major penalty killer for St. Andrews. Had a really strong, disruptive first-period kill, He jumped off the faceoff and deflected

a shot with his stick. Later in the kill he stood up on the line, made a powerful lateral push and contested the entry. Unfrotneutly, at the end of the shift, he was caught roaming high, not covering a secondary threat, leading to an easy cross-crease goal. Can slip into being a bit reactive and behind the play. Also stops leveraging his feet and reaches at times. The base is strong enough though. He's making our final board, and it's probably a bit low, but we have to weigh the quality of the competition, etc.

Daniel Gee: February 25th, 2023 - Shattcuk-St.Mary's Prep vs. St. Andrews College - USHS-Prep

Castagna didn't have the effort and motor I saw against Culver Academy -- disappointing because he's such a lesser player when it isn't present. This viewing was frankly a mess. A lot of turned-over, one-and-done puck touches, and some questionable physical sequences.

He still flashed some nice ability to pick up pucks in-stride at full speed. In the first after wheeling through the neutral zone, Castagna dragged a pass through his legs, drove on the right wing, and pivot-passed to a trailer. On the next transitional attack, he exploited his speed with an off-puck drive, taking a pass backdoor, deking to the backhand, and passing right into a South Kent defender. He struggled to protect the puck on some sequences and instead of working outside speed and trying to turn defenders, just turned the puck over on chip-and-chase attempts. Hook passes kept failing, floated saucer passes into space that no one could skate onto, easily pushed to the outside, the rest of the game was frankly bad when he has to face close physical pressure. If he can escape, as he did on a third-period rush, he can legitimately drive past opponents. In this rush, he took a sharp shot that ticked off the glove.

His play in sustained pressure was a bit of a problem in this viewing. Castagna was constantly late at recognizing necessary pressure-pushing sequences where his speed and ability to explode out of a stop could have created real disruption. He overhanded on a few occasions, opting for much harder-to-complete plays. In the first he tried to split a couple of defenders from the left point, losing control in the process. Just seemed a bit immature here. In the second he made another poor handle attempt to deke down the boards under immense pressure. He can punch stop -- it helped him on a third-period play to shake a defender, but he missed the net on the shot. Castagna had a flashy sequence in the first; after executing a spinorama off a check, he made a blind pass and found his teammate who took a bad shot. A dynamic play. Need to see more deception in his game. Castagna had one shift at the end of the game where he faked a ring high, cutting downhill inside. He popped the puck over a stick in the slot.

Liked some of the defensive efforts in this game. He killed a man making a centring pass in the far corner -- just buried them. Castagna worked hard on the backcheck and even had an impactful stick lift in the bumper. He's worth watching more -- might have been a bad game and it was Shattuck of all teams -- at the end of the day not many high school prospects have his skating ability.

Daniel Gee: February 24th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs. South Kent High - USHS-Prep

Castagna is so hilariously dangerous at the prep level because of his stride. Add in the fact that he's inside-focused, and is always sprinting north-to-south and Castagna can be a problem at this level.

Initially, Castagna struggled with execution in transition. Drive to the middle, drag to the backhand, and stick-checked away. Starts a 3-on-2 and tries to pull the puck forward on a handle, just too much disruption. These were common plays for the first half of the game. He's fairly inevitable though and he started to create in the second half. In the second, Castagna cut on the blueline taking a long feed. He crashed off the right wing hard on his edges and for a high-danger chance on a forehand shot as he sliced on the net. He's so dexterous in motion. Took a pass through his legs in the neutral zone while in full stride, passing off to the right wing, driving the middle and forcing the defenders back. Didn't really flash a lot of higher-end passing skill in this one other than a slick triangle-based pass in the third. He's so functional as a north-south driver, though. These habits will work at every level.

Castagna was able to score in sustained pressure. With the puck on the near boards, he was double-teamed. He manoeuvred off the wall with a wild four-way heavy, half-cutback move, accessed the middle of the ice, cut through a seam and scored on a falling shot in the hash marks. Just a dominant sequence. He was trying to attack inside all game. In the second after getting

a puck in the near corner, he quickly faked a cutout front around the net and reversed into a wrap. Some off-puck work too. Castagna drifted into the hash marks and flubbed a one-timer -- still a dangerous chance. Probably more of a D prospect than a C. Didn't love how inefficient he was at the onset -- makes me question some of his tools. There's a defensive element that is still present here. Big backchecking efforts, support of battles on the perimeter, and great anticipation play on the penalty kill. In the third, he was able to poke away a cross-zone pass.

Daniel Gee: February 5th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs. Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

I don't think I have seen a player with this level of motor and effort in this draft. Castagna is constantly moving his feet, moving laterally, sprinting through his lanes, and causing havoc. Add in his above-NHL-average top-end speed, and explosiveness from a stop, and you have a monster at the prep level -- he genuinely looks hard to handle at all times.

In the second, he tried an inside-outside handle but he was checked. Castagna still managed to win the puck on the subsequent forecheck. He targets the backs of defenders, who after reading his uptick in speed, have to make early pivots. The hands work at full speed, but he didn't appear to have a large selection to work from. Always triangle-located exploitation. While a lot of Castagna's north-to-south game lacks some nuance, he flashed some excellent ideas. No-look drop-offs, allowing him to drive back defenders and open space, curl-and-drag shots to shoot around planted pressure. He's almost always looking for shooting lanes to cut into. Doesn't throw away pucks when he faces insurmountable pressure. Will work back high to the point. He would do well if he could integrate more changes in pace, but as he stands, his skating is a high-end tool.

10-and-2 edges to slip pressure and high-paced crossovers allowed Castagna to chase and crash hard on the forecheck. On one sequence he picked up a puck on the far boards, dropped his shoulder, and drove wide on the end-boards. In an instant, Castagna chipped the puck through the legs of a defender in his way, and jammed the puck on the net, creating a rebound. He sprints to get to the inside of the defenders. He flashed his shooting tool on the powerplay. After feeding the slot for a one-time shot, Castagna was able to get his own one-touch opportunity. Arms unlocked, knee down, powering through the rotation -- mechanics appear to be strong. Flashed his hands on another third-period shift. Castagna had the puck on the point and toe-dragged a defender, cutting in the middle of the slot in the process. He ended up cutting too far across without a shot, but the lead-up was all the right idea in terms of skill blending and inside-oriented habit pushing. Made a nice cross-crease on the shift after.

Motor is present in his own end as well. Castagna shifted into shooting lanes proactively, multiple times, getting the block off. He even drove back on one backcheck and blocked a cross-crease -- a goal-saving, high-effort play. Looks like a C prospect -- separating tools, the effort is wild -- need to watch a lot more.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs Dexter School - USHS-Prep

After some early execution errors in transition, Castagna started to defer off the entries, driving defenders back by sprinting through the slot, opening space for his teammate who is on-puck. In the first, Castagna poked a puck free on the near boards, exploded out of the defensive zone, turned the F1, and passed off, crashing the net hard, even batting and jamming at the goaltender after the shot came through. It's a mature play that he has patterned throughout my viewings.

As the game rolled on, the execution started to flow. His hands keep up with his feet, which is great -- good in both small and large areas. He attacks directly into pressure a lot, often with the puck in front of his body, but he does flash some protection skills at times. At the CA Prep level, it doesn't really matter though. On another first-period play, Castagna deked to the backhand to beat another F1, slicing hard on his edges in the crossover. From there, he executed a weight shift to beat another defender, put the puck in his hip pocket, dropped his shoulder into a power move, and got the puck to a teammate who just missed on the backdoor. He recorded an assist in the third; after starting a 3-on-1, he worked into an open lane and fed a cross that was converted. He even read a pass that was made into open space made by Dell'Elce, sliced through three defenders with his speed to create a mini 2-on-1, looked pass and then took a dangerous shot.

His sustained offensive zone play is characterized by some board-to-middle activations. He had one of the best sequences I have seen from a draft-eligible player this season. On a second-period powerplay, Castagna baited a D-to-D pass and spun

off a defender pushing pressure. Off the near boards, he attacked downhill, punched inside deking a defender across their back. Castagna then cut by a static net-front man and hooked a puck perfectly backdoor. His teammate was caught watching behind the net and missed the pass. He has some pretty crazy forechecking sequences as well. In the first after reading and intercepting a far board ring, he funneled the puck to a man backdoor. As Dexter recovered the puck, Castagna chased, sprinted up the ice, and stick-lifted the defender working an exit. There are some real translatable habits on the perimeter. He initiates proactive contact, and slices into lanes in front.

He adds an extra dimension with his penalty killing. He pushes a lot of intense pressure to the point where he is even jumping in lanes and blocking shots no more than a couple of feet away. He is very disruptive in the middle of the ice with his stick. He stopped a Koehane (who is 6-foot-4) with a stick check as he activated and crashed. I like his potential upside and floor. At worst he will be a bottom-six energy player with special team value. Good commitment to the Ivy League too.



Grade: C

128 Carey Terrance

AGE 17.351 DATE OF BIRTH May 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Erie Otters "A"	OHL	67	30	17	47	0.70
USA U18	WJC-18	7	2	4	6	0.86

SCOUTING REPORT

On an anemic offensive team, Carey Terrance potted 30 goals to lead his team by 12. He was Erie's No. 1 centre, the first player over the boards for tough matchups, both special teams, and any high-leverage offensive situation.

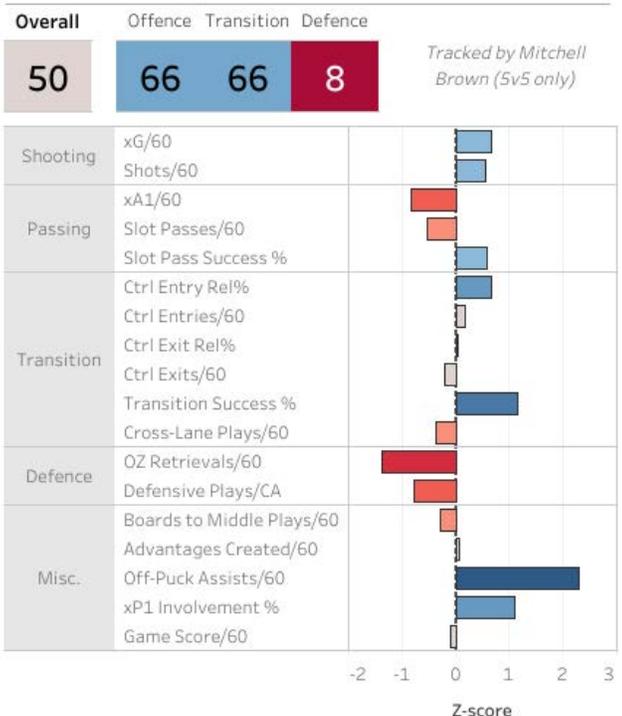
Terrance gets his chances two ways: Solo drives off the rush and give-and-goes. For the former, he dekes through opponents, burns them down the outside with speed, and then skates through their hands to his way to the net. For the latter, he takes the middle and passes wide before turning on the afterburners, beating defenders to the net for the return feed. Even if the puck never arrives, he pushes back defenders to create lanes elsewhere.

While Terrance doesn't get much sustained offensive zone time, when he does, he shows a similar level of skill. He draws pressure before cutting back, then drives the middle. Deflections and in-tight handling appear when he gets free from defenders. He has passing skill, using his hands to adapt the release point of his pass.

If there's a constant theme in our Terrance viewings, it's the lack of high-danger offence. Right now, he leans too heavily on the solo creator side than the give-and-go creator. Since he's always attacking opponents on straight lines, rather than on more successful angles, his 1-on-1 moves usually fail. He's not much of a passer, either. And

Carey Terrance

F | Erie Otters | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 128.2



he tends to overskate space off-puck.

Of course, a lot of these can be explained by the environment. Between his tools, inside-driven game, and energetic defence, there are no shortage of reasons to believe he will find ways to improve. With Erie filled with young talent, he will be a leader for the team – and his production will increase with it.

∨ LINKS & MEDIA



What we learned at the men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout's Roundtable: Just how deep is the 2023 NHL Draft



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

∨ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - WJ18

Terrance hasn't shown a lot so far in this tournament. He doesn't have a lot of chemistry with his line-mates. He can play at Moore's pace, but he seems to lack the off-puck skills at that speed to complement his line-mates. He missed give-and-goes and pockets of space. I'm not sure about the sense overall. He got the half-wall on the powerplay for a time and also didn't show the usual deception mechanics of top prospects.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

This is my eighth viewing of Terrance in the OHL and I still have no idea if he has any in-zone skills. He never gets any opportunity to show his skills. At this stage, he's mostly an off-puck player whose team never has the puck. He sprints his routes, pushes back defenders, and shows puck skill. But when that puck leaves his stick, it's usually about to head back up the other way. He has tools. He adapts his release to lanes, has some flashy hands, and flashes a projectable NHL stride. Speed could be an advantage, but again, it's just hard to get an idea of his projection.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Terrance has skill. He handles pucks and releases passes from basically under his base. He makes one-touch plays off the boards. And he always skates his routes, which led to a scoring chance. But he's rarely creating much of value. Too many blind plays; too straight line with the puck in transition. Flashes projectable skating posture and crossovers. The engagement and defence are strength, or the former should lead to the latter becoming a strength. He applies pressure, supports, and closes out on opponents quickly. He could be a depth player. I don't see much upside here.

Lauren Kelly: March 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Terrance was fine in this game, but it was more of the same things: spinning off checks, supporting his defenders, pressuring puck carriers, low-volume creation, and turnovers after running into pressure trying to break the puck out. He scored twice in this game. The first goal came as a result of him following the lay up the ice, getting stopped on his first attempt (a shot from down on one knee in the slot), before burying his own rebound. The second was also a shot from close range, shifting weight to get a quick release off (also from one knee). Decent forechecking effort and battled hard along the boards, but he lacked some awareness when he had the puck, getting knocked down and losing it on some sequences and also delaying for too long and turning pucks over on other sequences. Not really sure what kind of player he is at the next level.

Lauren Kelly: March 11th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Terrance finished off a 2-on-1 for his lone goal of the game, timing his drive to the net well to receive a nice pass from his teammate. But that was pretty much the extent of his offensive creation. He's opportunistic, but he doesn't create opportunities for himself, struggling to anticipate and manipulate defenders when he has the puck. His moments are so few and far between that it's hard to imagine, at least right now, that he'll be a productive player in the NHL. That being said, he's got potential. He's an engaged, proactive defender. He knows how to use his speed to create advantages off the rush, and he has a nose for the net. I don't know if I'd draft him based on this game though.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Terrance has a high work rate and puts himself in the play constantly. Always applying pressure on opponents and following up plays. Uses give-and-gos and always looks to drive the net. He's unaware. He forces plays through closed lanes and doesn't wait for pressure to arrive before making his next move. Didn't create any high-danger offence in this game because he was always too late to passing lanes and too early to attack space with the puck himself. I've seen better from, but this is a solid example of why offence has been inconsistent for him.

David St-Louis: March 4th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

I don't see much from this player. His skating is wide and high. The crossovers aren't fluid and he lacks agility. He made a couple of nice stretch passes in this game, including an indirect one with the boards, but overall, he missed better plays in the offensive zone. His processing of the game was a little too slow to see the slot options. I liked his defensive positioning overall, his energy, and his willingness to block shots.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Terrance was Erie's best player but this was an inefficient performance. The highlights were all plays off the rush. Blocked a shot, give-and-go entry, dashed to the net, and a scored with a nasty deflection over the goalie. Nearly scored with a burst up the middle to beat back pressure before skating through the opponent's route on his way to the net. Showed defensive ability as an off-puck defender, too. The hands had some moments, pulling pucks from behind his body into his hip pocket. Needlessly complicated a few plays as a passer. Didn't show any meaningful playmaking ability. The skating: knees past toes, engaged hips, showed some quickness. He could be late-second, early-third.

Lauren Kelly: February 16th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Terrance scored twice in this game (his second was an empty-netter), including a nice curl and drag around a defender after recognizing open space in front of the goal and heading straight for it as his teammates retrieved the puck. He's not the biggest player, but he doesn't shy away from forcing his way through pressure and into the middle of the ice, though his biggest issue is trying to maintain possession while doing so. I find he hovers a little high in the neutral zone, looking for teammates to spring him with passes even though they haven't regained possession fully yet. He can beat defenders down the ice, but he'll be forced to cut back because he isn't able to get around them. If he can get around, he usually isn't able to get a shot off as the puck rolls off his stick. He has the right ideas, but lacks the ability to execute. He's looking more like a mid-round pick than the second I initially thought he could be.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Terrance beat a defender wide then drove across the net for a powerplay goal. That was cool. He grabbed another change by sprinting the middle and returning the centring pass. That was about it. He tried a couple of dekes that even if they worked, he would've gained nothing from. Wasn't much foresight or playmaking to his game. He has some projectable tools, pushing his knees past his toes and achieving near-complete knee bend, along with the hands (when used properly). It's tough to evaluate him given his situation. I think he could make the board, but need to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Terrance is like two different players, the solo player and the off-puck player. The solo player flashes NHL quickness and some handling skill, but is largely a disaster. He takes the middle, but then glides straight at opponents and tries to beat them with hand speed. He doesn't drag defenders one direction to clear space or attack angles, so even if he beats the defender, there's no benefit. Sometimes, he just has to attack the space between defenders. Then, there's the off-puck, give-and-go player. He passes wide, sprints his route to create offence. Pushes the defence at worst, but often beats them to the net. He delays to find the trailer. The speed shines here, too. The edges were the standout of this game, using punches to escape pressure after stepping into space and drawing it first. And it was nice to see him create in-zone, getting open off-puck and using those edges along the boards. He looked like a second rounder. Wish I watched this game earlier.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Terrance looks like a real prospect in moments, but spends a lot of time doing nothing. He's a dedicated defender, but his reads and anticipation prevent him from turning his effort in quick-strike offence. A lot of basic plays in transition, too. He doesn't create advantages or take the middle. He occasionally burns a defender with speed to the outside. But there's also a lot of skill here, ranging from handling to shooting ability. Masks his release with deceptive puck positioning. Gets open off-puck, engages around the net, and gets his stick free. Quickly moves pucks off the boards to open teammates. Nothing advanced, but he's an effective offensive player with a clear path to becoming more creative. But he'll need to build better links between those skills.

Lauren Kelly: January 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

When Terrance turns it on, he is a force in the offensive zone. He carves through opposing defenders with ease, using his frame and edges to separate himself from pressure, attacks the inside, drives hard to the net, and beats defenders to pucks. His goal was a great individual effort, dangling through a defender 1-on-1 to get in on a short breakaway and beat the goalie up high in tight. But Terrance is quieter in transition and in his own end - he had a couple of good reads that forced turnovers behind his own goal, but he wasn't much of a factor in battles or in retrievals. Still, he's a solid support player and anticipates well when he doesn't have the puck. He's probably a mid-second right now.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Lots of positive moments for Terrance in this game, creating down low in the OZ, attempting toe-drag shots, and scored a nice powerplay goal in the slot, delaying before finishing up high. Comes back to help defenders out with retrievals before starting the breakout. He's a proactive in-zone defender, constantly scanning, and doesn't get drawn out of position. Shift-to-shift consistency was a bit hit or miss, but there's a lot to like about his game.

Mitchell Brown: November 21st, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Erie Otters - OHL

The biggest difference between Pinelli and Terrance in this game was that Pinelli has a lot more to work with. Terrance is on an island. That doesn't stop him from trying to breakdown defenders, attack the inside, and beat defenders with speed. At full speed, those moves are rarely clean. He lacks a bit of control and he's only charging straight at defenders. It's when Terrance gets the puck at lower speed when he shines. He instantly attacks the middle, dekes around traffic, wins body positioning, and starts passing sequences. The defence looks like a strength: he's disciplined, scans often, supports effectively, and anticipations rotations. He could be a second-round candidate.

Lauren Kelly: November 12th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Aside from one nice pass to a teammate on the powerplay for an assist, this was a pretty quiet viewing of Terrance. Shots on goal weren't too difficult for the goaltender to stop and his pace was inconsistent. Wasn't really a factor in transition. Squeezed off the puck trying to start the breakout. Not much to go on.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Terrance had some moments in this game. He plays a lot, and he's quite sound defensively. Angles attackers wide, wins positioning, closes down passing lanes, and supports plays. Skilled, but his best plays didn't result in much offence. Manipulates the feet of defenders with crossover-laden rushes, intelligent routes (attacks one defender instead of the space between them), and deceptive puck positioning. Along the boards, he waits for pressure to close space before accelerating. Threw a reverse hit to create space with the same formula. Teammates don't give him a ton of support; they collapse to the net and overskate space. Curious to see more. Definitely has NHL skill.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Terrance had Erie's lone goal in a game that got wildly out of hand in the third period. The offensive skills were on full display in this viewing. On his goal, he showcased quick hands in tight to settle a loose puck amid a bunch of sticks before roofing it. If Terrance didn't have the puck at the start of the shift, he was usually in possession of it by the end. He showcased good separation speed zone entries, driving wide before cutting in across the crease. On odd-man rushes where he had possession, he'd always opt for passes that were usually cut off by a sprawling defender. Spun in the corner to protect the puck under pressure before pivoting around the defender to get a backhand shot off. Laid open ice hits to stop players from entering the offensive zone. Really starting to grow an appreciation for the type of game he plays. If he can keep this up, top-64 isn't out of the question.

Lauren Kelly: October 7th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Erie Otters - OHL

I saw a very different Terrance in this one than the one who played at the Hlinka. Less offensive flashes, but more defensive prowess. For one, he was constantly coming back to support his defencemen (mostly because Christian Kyrou was up in the forecheck or leading the rush), making defensive zone retrievals despite being a centre, defending the rush, sliding back to the point instead of being down low battling for the puck because there was an open point. Good reads in the neutral zone, stealing pucks and turning play the other way. Good speed shorthanded too. He wasn't too physically inclined, but he did throw his body around a bit to shove players off pucks. He did generate a couple of scoring chances though, a one-timer in the slot where he dropped to one knee to get off that was stopped, and the assist he picked up was generated off a rush where he was kept to the outside but got the shot off short side and the rebound was eventually buried. But Terrance really didn't have the puck much in this game, and I'm not sure if it was because he would rather defer to teammates or because the Steelheads didn't let the Otters do much in the offensive zone. I need to see more offensive creativity as the season continues, but the defensive awareness is definitely a plus for now.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Terrance had flashes in this game, highlighted by a forecheck steal, give-and-go, and a backhand chance off the post in quick succession. He's an agile, creative player but has some difficulty when cutting back over his outside leg. Pressure and anticipation made him a consistent defensive presence in this game, disrupting plays, winning pucks, and creating turnovers. But he doesn't have the precision or timing to make the most of his skills, at this in this game. Worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Terrance is super slick. He keeps that top hand away from his side when handling, pulling pucks across and towards his body. Unique ability to handle in-tight. It's particularly visible in how he plays pucks into space rather than trying to deke through the triangle every time. The details lack, however. He hesitates, delays, and occasionally deceives, but never waits for the defender's reaction. Turnovers pile up. While he's a worker defensively, he misses switches, reacts late, and doesn't have much of a physical game, at least in this outing. There's definitely some upside here. He'll be worth watching with Erie.

Grade: C



129 Tyler Peddle

AGE 17.630 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor

Lethal
Shooter

Hammer

Player Info

LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

190 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Drummondville Voltigeurs	QMJHL	64	24	17	41	0.64

SCOUTING REPORT

We kept thinking that Tyler Peddle would break out and start scoring up to his potential. We thought something would click and he would finally become the top prospect he was touted to be coming into his draft year. It just never happened.

Part of the blame falls on his environment. The Drummondville Voltigeurs finished in the bottom third of the league and third last in goals for. Shooters like Peddle need a strong supporting cast to make their talents shine, especially when they lack the complementary playmaking touch and finer stickhandling skills to orchestrate scoring chances on their own.

There are two things the forward does well – fire pucks and hunt them down. While his offensive skills didn't develop as much over the course of the season, the time he spent pursuing attackers defensively helped him hone his craft as a checker.

"He provides some defensive value with how hard he skates and battles, but he makes some poor decisions with the puck and lacks the finer mechanical refinement needed to turn, receive, handle, and pass fluidly and quickly," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report.

Peddle has the speed, physicality, and motor necessary to play a more defensive role at higher levels and the release power to score on the powerplay. This down season makes him seem like a longshot NHLer, but this status could change rapidly if he reaches the 40-goal plateau next season.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: A review of the league's top draft-eligible prospects

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

Peddle showed better passing skills in this one. He continues to struggle to turn catches into immediate plays, which is weird sometimes because the skill level is there. He drove the net hard and jumped on loose pucks on the boards. He has that kind of intensity and energy. He looked like a B-level prospect in this one in moments, but his game broke down in other instances.

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

Peddle didn't play a lot in this game, but he did score twice. His ice time seems to be going down. He's still the same off-puck scorer, who positions well to make use of his shots, who drives the slot and who gets his stick on rebounds. His playmaking game is not as developed but he's generally aware. It's hard to still consider him a top prospect considering his performance this season, however. He loses the puck at key moments, struggles to link plays, and is dependent on things going in his favour on the ice.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

Peddle never gets the puck in good situations. This is such a rough situation for him this season, so rough in fact that I think we shouldn't penalize him too much for his production. He's not the kind of play who can do everything by himself. He needs playmakers to set him up and while he has some talent around him, the plays is always disjointed with the Voltigeurs. His checking game will translate to the professional game. It's fueled by his speed and physicality. He can somewhat protect pucks after getting them back from the opposition -- he assist on a goal that way. Stole possession on the backwall, shield it, and passed it to the middle for a teammate. He also made a nice, deceptive hook pass to another teammate on the powerplay. He has some skill and projectable checking game and his shot is dangerous -- when he has occasions to use it.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

This was a nice showing from Tyler Peddle. I'm still unsure of his NHL potential, but surrounded by talent and under the watchful eyes of scouts, he did perform. He showed his checking side, his physicality through hits and his speed to pursue the puck. He was always on the heels of opponents. This quality will ensure that he gets drafted despite his subpar production in the QMJHL. He attacked the net and displayed his release on a couple of occasions. His puck management continues to be a question in his game. The pace and intensity to get the puck back after losing it is nice to see.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Val D'Or Foreurs vs. Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

I continue to only see a shooter. Peddle can set up his shot with his passing and by finding space. He provides some defensive

value with how hard he skates and battles, but he makes some poor decisions with the puck and lacks the finer mechanical refinement needed to turn, receive, handle, and pass fluidly and quickly. He also doesn't always register his next play or if lanes are open for passes and shots. The inconsistent awareness and mechanical ability and the weaker Voltigeurs formation he plays in all limit his scoring. Woodworth is at least a talented playmaker. He opens opportunities for him.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Peddle would probably stand out more in a different environment. This is another game he spent chasing the puck. He's getting better at it, finishing checks, using his stick, and preemptively moving on opponents as they get the puck. But he's not a defensive player. He's an off-puck scorer, who really wants to move the puck to a teammate, get lost in the coverage, and fire on it from a pass. The skill does shine from time to time in a few slick passes and releases. The skating stride is high but he has some innate explosiveness. He's probably not a top-62 player for me at this stage. Maybe he could become one or be one in a better team, but his projection isn't clear right now.

David St-Louis: November 29th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Peddle didn't touch the puck enough to generate scoring chances this game. It must be a frustrating season for him. Woodworth can make some plays; he's one of the better playmakers in the league, but the team's total absence of transition play is definitely costing Peddle some points. He has the speed to play a checking game and he cares enough about defence. He can also set himself up for shots in the offensive zone by anticipating the play and positioning himself in pockets of spaces. But he's a one-play-at-a-time guy; he can't really chain a reception, into an acceleration, into a rush, and a quick/deceptive release. He needs more time and space to shine. I'm not sure about the NHL potential and his current environment where he barely gets a chance to create

David St-Louis: November 25th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Sherbrooke Pheonix - QMJHL

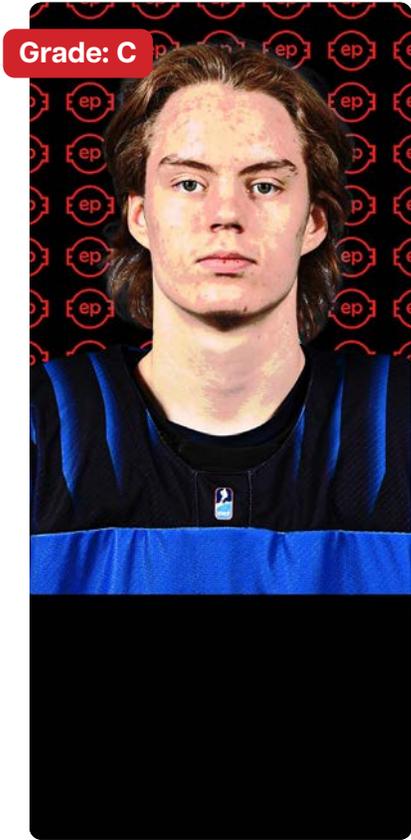
Peddle scored a hatrick in this one. One goal was lucky, but the two others were nice shots. He was not capable of creating much offence for himself, playing in a weaker team against one of the stronger formations in the QMJHL, but he did capitalize on his few occasions. I'm not sure Peddle will become anything more than a secondary scorer at the next levels, however. He's a bit slow with his decisions and movements, not in terms of footspeed, but he's probably more of a straightforward player who needs guidance on the ice or a strong playmaker by his side to give him the puck and enable his scoring -- at least that's what it feels like so far this season. I'm not confident in his projection. I'd like to see him in a better environment.

David St-Louis: October 30th, 2021 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs Québec Remparts - QMJHL

It was a rough game for Drummondville. Peddle barely got the puck, but he still managed to show a lot of skills. He made give-and-goes to move around teammates and sent a nice backhand pass under an opponent's stick in a 2-on-1. He dangled through the opposition, not in the usual let-me-attack-your-stick-and-skate kind of way, but by placing the puck past opponents and skating to get it back. He clearly has some offensive instincts, especially away from the puck to position. It could be hard to evaluate his full skill-set this season due to his lack of support. Peddle helped defensively a lot in this game, some strong backchecks and positioning play.

David St-Louis: 2020-21 season - Shattuck St. Mary's - 16U AAA

A lot of game-reading abilities: timing, pace, quick reaction time, problem-solving and planning, recognize options, can read defenders, creativity. He makes a lot of plays on first-touch. Some physicality (gets inside on defenders, cuts at the hands). Skating looks below-average; very-short stride and high-stance). Other tools look above-average.



130 Arttu Kärki

AGE 17.770 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 08, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Toolsy



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tappara U20	U20 SM-sarja	36	13	26	39	1.08
Finland U19 (all)	International-Jr	4	0	2	2	0.50
Finland U20 (all)	International-Jr	7	1	2	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Among first-time draft-eligible Finnish skaters in this year's draft, Arttu Kärki stands alone as the most frustrating yet talented player available.

Already scoring at a solid clip last season after being promoted to the U20 level, Kärki cruised through the regular season while maintaining over a point-per-game pace with Tappara's U20 program. He became the first defenceman to accomplish that feat since the 2014-15 season.

While the production is a touch inflated due to the lower level of competition early in the season and not directly comparable to previous years, it's still a wildly impressive accomplishment, indicative of Kärki's talent level.

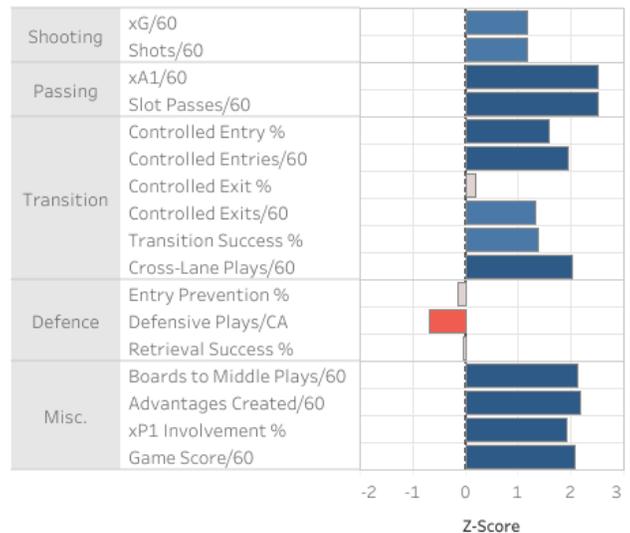
He's among the more purely skilled blueliners Finland has produced in the past few years. A dual-threat weapon, Kärki possesses above-average shooting talent with the ability to make plays off the rush and activate in-zone. He flashes manipulative handling skill and also is a capable skater with solid mobility at the point. He's also responsible for some of the better stretch passes of the season.

Arttu Kärki

D | Tappara U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 191.3

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only

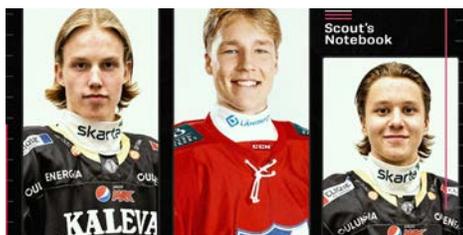


Based on his strengths, he should be way higher on our list. The problem? He's also got some significant flaws.

Defensively, he lacks both the instincts and even more concerningly the will. For the most part, he defended his blue line very passively and conceded tons of free space for the opposition despite his skating and frame. Then there's the issues when the pressure is on his back, most evident on retrievals and his consistent struggle at completing them, even while playing on the best team in the league and all the benefits it provides. Questionable and slow decision-making with the puck in his own end was also a theme, leading to way too many turnovers considering all of his tools and flashes of brilliance.

In many ways, his style of play is more suited to the larger European rinks and even then he needs to make big adaptations to earn a role in the professional ranks. With Kärki, you have the talent and the upside, but there's also a high likelihood he never plays an NHL game. He could be a solid bet in the right range, but all of the uncertainty makes it very hard to predict how deep he'll fall on the draft day.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Four data-driven observations from the U20 SM-sarja



Scout's notebook: An update on Tuomas Uronen, Jesse Nurmi, and Arttu Kärki



Meet the Team: Finland's roster for the 2022 U18 World Hockey Championship

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: March 7th, 2023 - Tappara vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki recorded a primary helper in Tappara's win in the first match of the quarterfinal series, with his point shot getting tipped in from the slot; looked like an intentional shot for a redirection. Overall, it was a pretty standard Kärki viewing. I still have major reservations about his game. The defensive stuff is mostly bad, whether it's off the rush or against the cycle. He did kill a few plays along the boards, but the overall awareness and mindset just weren't consistent. He has more lapses of judgement than most. Breakouts also remain very hit-or-miss; some truly baffling one-touch dump-outs or then delaying his pass for too long. But the skill level is also very visible in flashes. When he wants, he can be a mobile, reachy puck-carrier and a quality distributor and shooter in the OZ.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Tappara vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki doesn't do perfect games, but I think the good stuff outweighed the bad quite clearly in this one. Similar strengths compared to the previous viewings without as many clear mental lapses or bad defensive plays. He was creating a lot of offence, whether it was going end-to-end at 4v4 with more open ice, then dishing a pass to the slot. He delays, looks for passing options to the middle, gets his shot through traffic at a solid rate. The other signature move is to beat the first opponent at the point to the outside, then get to a decent scoring position near the faceoff dot. One of his lobs to the NZ ended up resulting in a breakaway chance, not sure if it was a 200 IQ play or just got lucky. He's got a history of doing similar stuff, but also wastes possessions in the process. Weirdly hasn't been challenged on retrievals that much lately, which has covered one of the big weak points.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Tappara vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

This game was another chapter in the Kärki experience. Many flashes of potential, many signs for concern. With him, you really want to do your background research and off-ice evaluations; you really want to get a look at his mindset. When he's cooking with his mobility, beating forecheckers, no-look passing to the middle, making moves from the point, activating off the rush, he can look

dominant. Then again, he turns the puck over a lot for dumb reasons, lacks pace with his decision-making, struggles defensively despite the tools. I've waited the entire season to see some improvements but it's mostly been the same every viewing. Still, he also has the highest points-per-game mark in the history of the league among draft-eligible defencemen, even though there are caveats to that.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Tappara vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

No other player in the draft frustrates me like Kärki. It's the combination of obvious talent and ability combined with a careless attitude, lacklustre defensive game and decision-making that truly gets me. This was probably still very much on the better side of Kärki viewings from this season. He made some great plays, leveraging his mobility to get past the F1, then dishing a beautiful pass to the middle for a clean breakout. Leveraged that same move with hesitation at the point to go outside, getting a scoring chance and drawing a penalty in the same sequence. The stride mechanics aren't always that pretty, but the output and mobility make his projection close to NHL average. Good activations off the rush, some solid playmaking from the point. One of his shot passes netted him a primary helper after it was tipped in from the net-front. Defensively, his box-outs were atrocious, rush defence passive (for the most part), positional play lacking; the usual stuff with him. Didn't get challenged much on retrievals in this one. Also, the breakouts can be so great but also so bad. There's lack of pace that really hurts him in some scenarios, even if the delays and patience help him in others. If you put him in a different environment or a different league (OHL/WHL), I'd be really curious yet worried about how he'd do since he'd probably get punished a lot harder for these flaws.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - Tappara vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

This game was just all the downside with Kärki with no signs of the upside. The rush defence is just plain bad. Keeps conceding a ton of space for the opponents to work with, tries to recover at the last second by reaching with his stick. The engagement level defensively (and even with the puck) leaves a pretty sour taste in my mouth almost every game. Lacks defensive foresight, but also makes odd decisions with the puck. Loves to just lob the puck to the neutral zone, even when he has open passing options and even easy ones, literally right in front of him. And he's playing with a ton of talent around him, too, pairing up with Kasper Kulonummi for the majority of the game. Didn't really do much offensively aside from a couple of point shots and D-to-D passes. One of the most frustrating players in the entire draft because we all know he's talented.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Tappara vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki's game is a land of contrasts. He can have impressive sequences showcasing his mobility, puck skills and sense for activations. And then again, his hockey sense is a big question mark and he leaves a lot of value on the table, especially defensively and sometimes in transition. The primary assist he had showed the good side, as he first deked a forechecker behind his net (risky move but worked), passed through the middle with deception, then activated to get the puck back after a delay by the entry player, got a scoring chance that eventually led to a rebound goal. Sometimes he can toy with opponents near the point with his reach, edges and hands. The gap control off the rush started horribly, but got better as the game progressed. The defensive reads are still often just bad, though. And the fact that he always tries to slow things down first with the puck is a worrying trend when you think about today's NHL. His style is so much better suited to Liiga's lower and more structured pace and the bigger ice. If he becomes tolerable defensively, he'll rack up a ton of points in Liiga in the future from the backend. But would I use a mid-round pick on him? He's probably gone before I'd do it, even if there's some upside.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Another Kärki viewing with some great highlights, but at the end of the day, it didn't leave the best taste in my mouth. He's among the very best blueliners at this level at beating the first man at the point, turning their feet to the inside with a weight shift, then exploding to the other direction. Demonstrated that in one occasion early in the game, taking the puck to the outside lane and then cut to the middle, missing the goal by an inch with his eventual shot. He's also skilled distributor off the rush when he joins it, at times even leading it. Breakouts remain hit-or-miss. One particularly perplexing turnover in the slot area that caused a goal against. Retrievals were an issue, too. Not enough scanning, wasn't planned for an one-touch play, often cut straight into pressure and turned over. Positionally a bit shaky defensively, even if he has the reach to make the occasional stop.

It's probably going to come down to how good one thinks Kärki's tools are, because he does have the willingness to make plays and some of the ideas are good, even if the decision-making is lacking. The skating is probably average projection at best. The hands are good and the shot is above-average, too.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Ässät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki continues to flash the things I was expecting from his coming into the season, but the overall package leaves a lot to be desired. He had a couple of nice OZ plays, beating the first forechecker at the point with body and stick fakes, cycling the net and getting a scoring chance. His transition game was a mess, though. Sometimes he froze under pressure and got stripped, other times he tried to escape with a cutback but failed to generate enough power to beat the forechecker. His outlet passes were either inaccurate or got picked off. While pressured, I counted one controlled exit and six failed exits. He gave up too much ground in neutral zone, giving up the blue line for free a couple of times where he had an opportunity to step up. Odd decision to jump on a rush when there was already a forward taking his intended route, then when the puck was turned over, he wasn't there to cover it, resulting in a breakaway against.

Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - JYP vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki has produced at a good clip to start the season, but I'm still left wanting more, even if this was better than my previous showings this season. In transition, Kärki has the tools to be effective both as a passer and as a puck-carrier, but seemingly has a few odd mistakes every game, like getting his pass intercepted in the slot while he could have just went for a simpler play on the same side of the ice instead of trying to go cross-ice. Offensively, he's got better vision than majority of defenders at this level, but at even-strength, he's often contempt at just rifling pucks to the net from the point. He gets those shots through with good success rate with fakes and some movement, but doesn't actually aim to improve his location. There were few good examples of what he can do when he activates and makes better play selections, you'd just want to see those more. Especially because his defensive game is below-average in many ways.

Lassi Alanen: September 3rd, 2022 - Tappara vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

I don't know what has happened to Kärki over the summer, but the start of the season has been rough to watch. He's not activating to the play like he did a lot last season and his offensive game consists of point shots or telegraphed passes on the power play that are easy to read for the goalie. He struggled mightily with the puck in his own end, fumbling at least half a dozen pucks for the opposition. There were a few nice inside lane passes where he drew in the forechecker to open up space, but they were about the only highlights of his game this time. Defensively, he's not as engaged as he could be, even if he can make the occasional rush stop with a good read.

Lassi Alanen: August 10th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja (pre-season)

Kärki was skating on the second defensive pairing and manning the second power play unit from the point in the U20 league pre-season action. He was definitely still a bit in a summer mode. Decision-making was a bit slow, some weird angles taken defensively. Stood up near the DZ blue line a few times, others he just conceded enough space for the forward to shoot pretty cleanly. Some good stretch passes, but also a few big turnovers in the DZ. Sets up his dekes from a wide glide, which is a trend from last season. Not much to write home about.

Lassi Alanen: April 23th - May 1st, 2022 - U18s

Kärki started the tournament as an extra, but worked his way to the lineup and ended up playing on the second pairing with Salin out for the last few games. Kärki's puck-moving skill was something the team desperately needed and he delivered decently well. There were times where he got caught with aggressive forechecking since he's still not consistently scanning before receiving the puck, but he also made some of the better breakout passes, including stretch passes through multiple layers for breakaways. Also very active in the neutral zone as a puck-carrier and had the most activations from the point, resulting in him having the higher expected goals output among defencemen despite not having that many shots overall. Remains an intriguing prospect for the 2023 draft.

Lassi Alanen: February 23rd, 2021 - Pelicans - Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Over the course of the season, Kärki has established himself as top-4 fit on Tappara's defence and had taken the top power play spot, even when Tomas Hamara was in the lineup. It's not hard to see why, as Kärki has grown into a very intriguing prospect for the 2023 draft. He's skilled on the breakout, has a very high panic threshold and a high skill level, which he combines in transporting the puck. Spins away from pressure very well, even if he's more of a problem-solver than a planner at this stage and could benefit from more scanning before he gets the puck. Multiple good activations from the DZ, supporting the rush effectively. Runs the power play well as more of a passer-type, does a good job at recognizing open sticks in the net-front and sends hard shot passes for tip-ins. Skates relatively well at this stage, too. Defensive game has gotten better since his first U20 level games, still work to be done there, though. I haven't seen a 2023 eligible Finnish defenceman with more upside than Kärki, even if he's on the older side.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2021 - TPS vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Kärki played on Tappara's third pairing in their 3-2 shootout win over TPS, and played an instrumental part in the win by scoring the deciding penalty shot, completely deking the goalie with a smooth forehand-backhand-forehand move. Kärki's a rather raw prospect, especially defensively. He pivots the wrong way on rush defence, positions himself badly on puck battles and gives too much space for forwards to work with. His poise with the puck was notable on a few occasions, having the patience to wait for lanes to open before passing. Sometimes he got too cute and got swarmed by the opposition, so there's a balance he still needs to find to be more effective.

Lassi Alanen: November 12th, 2021 - U18 Five Nations, Switzerland

I didn't have many previous viewings on Kärki, but as the youngest member of the defence, he managed to impress me quite a bit with his ability with the puck. Aside from Kasper Kulonummi, Kärki was the only Finnish defenceman who could move the puck consistently and make plays in transition. He was fearless with carrying or deking the puck through pressure and it definitely backfired badly a couple of times, once turning the puck over while trying to deke in the DZ, which resulted in a goal against. There were excellent highlights, though. Once Kärki managed to go end-to-end, deking his way through two defenders but couldn't finish the play. There might be an over-reliance on his handling, but it seems like a fixable thing. Defensively, Kärki is pretty raw and misplayed multiple times, but he's definitely got intriguing skill.

Grade: C



131 Kalem Parker

AGE 17.926 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 12, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Transition Ace



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Victoria Royals	WHL	68	6	32	38	0.56

SCOUTING REPORT

Big minutes have posed little challenge for Kalem Parker throughout his WHL career. As a draft-minus-one, he averaged over 22 minutes per game on Victoria's top pair. This season, he averaged 25 minutes on the dot, making him one of the most-used players across the CHL.

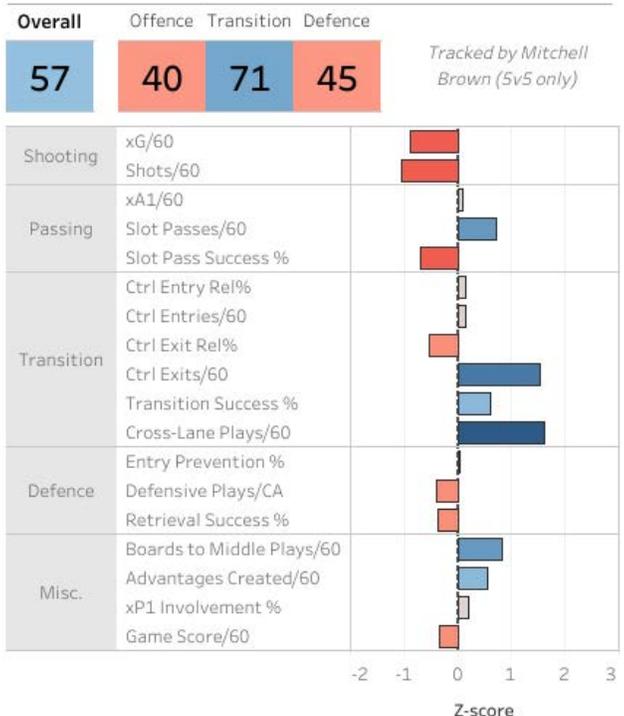
Despite logging huge minutes, Parker's not one to pass up an activation opportunity. In flashes, he also leads the rush with weaving routes and a bit of deception. He works the give-and-go, opting for short, in-motion passes that allow his team to charge up the ice as a cohesive unit.

The Victoria Royals are a porous defensive team with Parker as one of the few bright spots. He closes space early when he has support, forcing dump-ins and keeping attackers locked on the outside. Mirroring footwork and flashes of a punishing physical game reveal his potential as an NHL-calibre play-killer, too.

Turnovers and mistakes compounded for Parker this season. The environment's certainly a factor, but there's a lot of room for improvement by being more selective with his passes, scanning more often as he retrieves puck along the end boards, and staying in space when activating.

Kalem Parker

D | Victoria Royals | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 173.4



Tightening up the defensive reads and puck skills will be key for Parker to have success at this next level. He'd be a fine selection in the mid-rounds as a potential bottom-pairing defender. And there's a chance that the mistakes and miscues will work themselves out in a better environment, raising his upside.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: March 17th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Always a tough eval because of the quality of Victoria's roster, but Parker was a slight a bright spot in an otherwise disastrous game for the Royals. In transition, Parker had some early puck rushes -- punctuated by some weight-shift and deceptive change in directions. He understands body positioning on retrievals, but was missing the manipulation element in this game. The hands and skating blend are his best asset -- leveraged the tools in open ice to shake off an aggressive forechecker. Passed out of pressure well, especially to trailing options. Not much in the OZ -- he takes poor shots from the top of the point and activates on occasion. Nothing to indicate he will push a significant amount of offence at higher levels.

The defensive side of his game was strong, within reason. The Cougars' ran up the score and systematic breakdowns are hard to contend with. Parker made some smart, aggressive reads to kill and disrupt entries early in the game, but seemed to back off after waves of attackers started to flow. Latches onto secondary threats in the crease and flexes his mobility to stay in position. End of board candidate -- what is he on a better team?

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

This was the dynamic performance I've been waiting for. Parker transported the puck a bunch himself. He showed more pace -- and subsequently, more skating ability with more projectable strides and crossovers that are so close to full extensions compared to normal. He slowed down, angled towards the forechecker, then accelerated into space. He attacked the middle and maintained the fakes at speed. The next play after the rushes weren't as impressive, save for a deft saucer pass. He passed to no one and after passing, occupied his teammates' space and limited options in the offensive end. To bring his activation game to the NHL, he'll have to learn to stay in lanes and improve his routes. The defence had some holes. He drifted too wide and conceded the middle of the rush, after overskating forwards and getting beat on his heels. Beat on a late goal because he relaxed instead of maintaining athletic posture, which meant he had to reload his weight before he could pivot. But, there were also some flashes of physical and play-killing along the boards. The environment makes him a tough projection. He could be an 80s-plus pick for us.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Parker's a better skater than I previously thought. He's upright and low-pace -- until pressure arrives, then he achieves proper flexion and shows quickness, edge control, and changes of pace. Perhaps not the more advanced skater skill-wise, but he finds a bit of separation. Maintaining that depth/posture will be key for just about every part of his game. Right now, he skates into trouble because he's late to react and struggles building speed backwards (especially with backwards crossovers). Like Kipkie, he missed a ton of passes but showed projectable ideas. The more concerning plays are the retrievals. He looks over one shoulder and only makes along-the-boards plays. Turnover city. This was a solid game in other areas. He was involved in the offensive end, looking to carry the puck but not necessarily effectively using space. He activated but overskated (as usual). He was a physical force, running into opponents for big collisions and skating through their stick to win possession. He could be an end-of-board candidate for us, but more likely, he just misses the cut. He could play in the NHL in a depth role, especially if the physical game develops more.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Just flashes from Parker in this one. The usual activation. He used give-and-gos off retrievals, jumped ahead of his forwards, and provided short support. Not a creator, but he keeps the puck moving. Some craftiness with the puck on the point (shooting for

deflections), but he's not creating lanes or moving the puck especially quick. Indecisive when in space as an activator, leading to missed opportunities. The defence was interesting. He had some high-level defensive reads, keeping a tight gap, mirroring, and then following the opponent high to get the stop. But he was also manipulated by opponents and passed through. He was too aggressive closing space at times. He's an end-of-board candidate as a combination of skating, physical play, and activation.

Daniel Gee: February 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Kalem Parker was on the end of a couple of Cougars' goals in this one, but I thought he had an impressive game overall. He is already a fairly projectable rush defender. He's mobile and extremely aggressive through the neutral zone, looking for poke check and hit opportunities. In the first he barely missed an attacker with a thunderous hit. The aggression backfires in some sequences, but it's good he is always trying to disrupt the entry. Parker finds secondary threats as well, locking down net-drivers. When the game got chippy, Parker had Kmec lined up for a pretty brutal hit -- luckily enough he didn't connect, but he clearly targeted at the head. In sustained pressure, Parker is always scanning. He can explode from a stop which makes him adaptable at rotating to help win battles or get a clear retrieval. Despite the mental mapping, he was behind on a few sequences. In the first he missed a clear tie up in the crease after a point shot. Later in the second, he was on for Heidt's goal (a rebound). His worst sequence was a brutal end-board turnover that resulted in a Cougars' one-time shot in the slot.

Transitionally, Parker has some interesting tricks. He works give-and-goes/set-plays well. In the second after a crossover heavy carry through the neutral zone, he passed off to a man on the near boards; Parker burst through the slot, took the pass back and got a high danger off the left-hand circle -- Brennan made a nice save. He can work one-touches well, and once he starts moving, he puts defenders on their heels. I'm not sure there is much of anything in the offensive zone when looking at Parker's game. He reads the subsequent play well, shooting down to execute pinches. If he has ice to skate into, he will walk downhill to better his shot. On one powerplay, Parker worked the middle of the ice, and eventually got a downhill attack, leading to a shot off the right-hand circle. Runs the top of the umbrella and feeds the wings on the powerplay. Not sure his shooting or handling is anything special but I need to see more. Looks like a C or D grade prospect for our board. The base is easy to work with and Victoria has limited run support.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

A tough game for Parker. He couldn't get the puck out of his zone. Lots of passes straight to the other team or panicked dump outs with better options. A couple of quick passes through the first forechecker showed that he has ideas, but there will have to be a lot more consistency that front. Took a couple of late-game penalties and the defence wasn't notable in this game. He grabbed a couple of early stops but, for the most part, was also far too passive through the neutral zone, giving Kamloops a free pass into the offensive zone. No offence at 5-on-5, although he created a lane by walking the line then hitting the brakes and stepping to the middle. Not a draftable performance; tools looked 4.5-to-5 grade across the board.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

A really impressive game from Parker, even with the turnovers. Offensively, he was everywhere. He activated down the middle, won body positioning, and deflected a pass on net for a high-danger look. Faked out incoming pressure on the breakout. Cutback and then attacked the inside in transition. Looked for teammates around the slot instead of forcing shots through, and controlled the game from the point. He worked quick exchanges, read hand offs, and jumped off the point, but also integrated longer possession as his teammates prodded for openings around the net. The issues remain the same as usual: he overshoots space when activating, doesn't show any creativity as a passer, and lacks the handling and passing skill to connect with his more advanced ideas. Some of his ideas are also just never working. A bit more physical on the defensive end than usual and grabbed the early stop a few times. He's beatable because he concedes space laterally but has play-killing instincts and off-puck awareness. He could be an end-of-board pick, but I think he goes higher. Tough to evaluate him in this environment.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

An all-time chaos performance. Parker was everywhere, good and bad. He's smooth but not explosive or especially quick. He instantly flips his edges and has outside edge moves, but plays a super low pace. Which means that his breakout ideas –

passes up the middle, give-and-gos, cross-lane passes, lots of passes aimed behind the defence – fail regularly. He's too late to access lanes. Even when he's looking, he still regularly passes straight to the other team. Fights the puck, which only adds to the lack of pace. He's not deceptive, either. Which means these lanes close long before the puck leaves his stick. Lots of blind retrieval plays. He activates like crazy, but overskates space and gives up on plays too early. He could've had a point-blank chance had he just stayed in the passing lane late in the third period. The defence is just as up-and-down. Defensive skating is smooth but not explosive – meaning, he chases a lot. Didn't manage space laterally in this game, sticking to the middle without adapting to the play around him, basically encouraging free entry multiple times. But he also gets inside opponents and has some off-puck ability. Looks like I watching a lot of Victoria down the stretch.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Parker's solid. He's a robust defender who generally keeps the attack wide. The puck touches weren't consistent in this game, but he still had some plays. In general, his activation stands out. He needs to work on committing, but his best reads create advantages and options. He makes the quick pass, sprints, and gets open for the return pass. Steps inside to draw pressure, then looks laterally for options. Plays fail because he doesn't look while receiving the puck (it's also how he got hurt in the first period). Need to see more.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Parker continues to impress. Passing could be a strength. His ideas are sound. He draws pressure, uses the middle, and tries to pass through and around sticks. Often sees lanes through multiple defenders. But he lacks the deception and finer handling skill to access those passing lanes. Offensively, he makes simple, but intelligent plays: a well-timed pinch, a pass to a teammate moving into space, and using space before shooting. Shows more creativity on the powerplay. Right now, he's more polished defensively. He takes the middle, forcing attackers to the outside. Where most players retreat, he steps up, then pivots and comes across to close distance. Leaves pucks in space for his teammates after winning possession. Looked like a draft pick this year, perhaps a late-second or early-third round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Parker's refined in some areas, but seems limited in others. The positives are the unpressured breakouts (cross-ice, inside, joins plays), rush activation, physicality, and defensive instincts. Committing footwork through heavy crossovers that gave attackers the inside, but always got his stick in the way for the stop. Keeps attacks wide in the rush. Backs off too easily away from the puck, causing him to step up and gamble on pass interceptions. The bad's mostly linked to his puck game. On retrievals, he eats every puck instead of scanning and making a quick play. Limited on the backhand. Slows down and enters a glide to make decisions and the next play. Not an advantage creator. Mostly a shooter, too. On the other hand, many of his activation reads were proactive, but his teammates lacked the vision and skill to get him the puck. He'll be interesting to follow this season.



Grade: C

132 Noah Chadwick

AGE 17.351 DATE OF BIRTH May 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hockey IQ



Vision

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	67	5	15	20	0.30

SCOUTING REPORT

Look at Noah Chadwick's Elite Prospects page, and it'd be easy to make assumptions about his game. Big, low-scoring defender – probably not an offensive player. That'd be wrong. Even though he scored just 20 points, his point play shows more nuance and skill than many who outscored him.

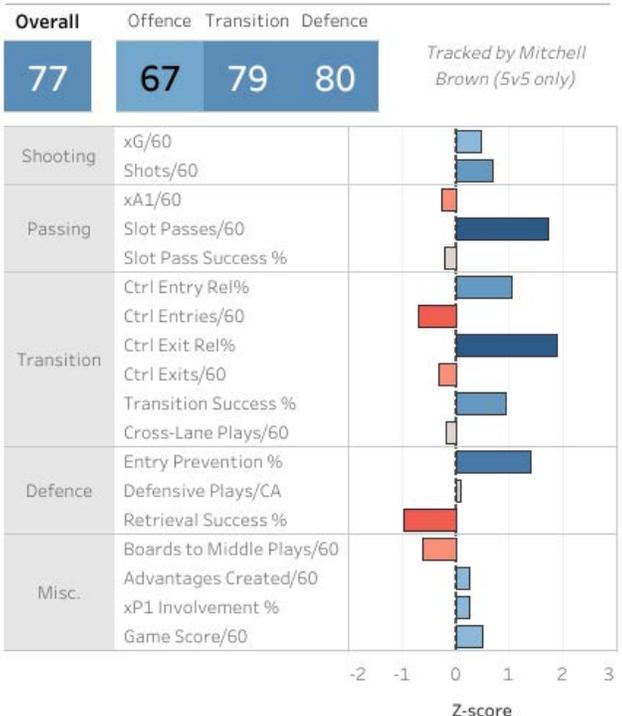
Chadwick moves through pass receptions, fakes plays, uses space, looks for teammates around the slot over shooting from the point. If a point shot's the best play, he usually aims for sticks instead of corners. He shows a similar desire to create in transition, forgoing dump-outs for passes through opponents, deceiving if necessary.

Defensively, Chadwick gets on opponents early and angles them to the outside; his well-timed pokes and stick work made him one of the WHL's better rush defenders. The skating's the biggest limiter across the rink, with a lack of depth limiting his power, edges, and stability. As such, Chadwick lacks the tools to make full use of his brain. In short, he creates lanes and space, but his skating and hands often prevent him from accessing them, limiting his production.

Still, for teams looking for defender with size and intelligence, he'd make a fine pick in the mid-to-late rounds. Chadwick has more upside than the average prospect selected in the range, but the projection's a long-term one.

Noah Chadwick

D | Lethbridge Hurricanes | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 127.9



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 5th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

There's not much more on Chadwick I can say at this point. He's good. He has NHL upside. It will come down to pace and tools. He has a lot of advanced ideas. He passes, activates up the weak side, then keeps the puck moving once it arrives. Always in the play. He pinches at the right moments, activates straight down the middle, and looks to break apart the defence with give-and-gos. Even layers deception on his plays – a look off here, a quick fake there and gets opponents moving the wrong way. His point-play when he's not activating also stands out, preferring to shoot for deflections/traffic/bounces. He's a capable play-stopper at this level who will likely run into issues when his length matters less and his skating matters more. He also needs to squeeze more value out of his activation reads, starting with keeping his feet moving, attacking the middle, and engaging defenders (instead of simply getting in space). If he's on our board, it's at the end. But I like his game. There's long-term potential here.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Another impressive game from Chadwick, controlling the game from the point several times. He uses give-and-gos, exchanges with his forwards, proactively activates, and always uses space with the puck. Showed more handling skill and patience than normal when activated. He reads the momentum of opponents, taking advantage of their momentum. His feet don't allow him to truly create these opportunities or create off breakouts. The ideas are there, however. He's not really a needle-mover defensive outside of the rush. He's a late-rounder. A project but one that could surprise given his vision and creativity.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Chadwick earned an assist by stepping into space, showing shot, and immediately passing cross-slot. He had another sequence where he held the zone, cut away from pressure twice, then looked inside for a teammate around the net. The vision wasn't consistently there, however. He used space before shooting and froze opponents, but didn't consistently take advantage of the space he created. Seems to lack some adaptability. But his point play – space management, pinches, off-puck movement – are generally pro-calibre. It's more the tools that prove limiting. If he doesn't improve his skating, he won't get close. It impacts everything: his breakouts, offence, retrievals, defence. Developing better edges, crossovers, and a deep stance will be key. I think he has NHL upside, but as a long shot. Probably a very, very end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: January 27th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

No offence from Chadwick in this game. He didn't get many opportunities, but also kept things very simple in the offensive end. But he was solid on breakout. He passed pucks through forecheckers and looked cross-lane for options. Not manipulating, but he understands when to turn away from pressure and when to advance the play. Defensive skating was variable. The lack of lower-body flexion means he struggles to keep up with opponents, especially off the pivot. But he showed defensive timing and instincts, angling players wide and poking away possession at the point of least resistance. Without the offence, he's probably not a pick this year. But I have time for his game. He could be something.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A rough game from Chadwick. A bunch of turnovers in all sorts of ways on the breakout. Didn't scan, missed lanes, and force plays. But he had flashes. He faked out incoming pressure, used the middle, looked cross-ice for options and joined the rush. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but there were interesting qualities.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Chadwick had a couple of exciting flashes. In one sequence, he moved through the pass reception, stepped to the middle, faked, and passed cross-slot, just missing his target. That's a legit play, even if it didn't work out. Joined the rush and stayed in space. Shot look more like a weakness than strength. He was involved in breakouts or entries, mostly making quick plays or not getting

the puck at all (for no fault of his own). Defence has moments. He gets on his check early sometimes and forces the dump-in. When he can't, he's beatable with weak pivots and an upright stride that generates little power. He has exciting flashes, but there are a lot of concerns in between.

Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

The second-best draft-eligible after Port. Chadwick's less toolsy than Port, but he's just as smart. He always uses space in the offensive zone, knows when to delay, uses the inside, and seems comfortable under heavy pressure. Knocks pucks straight into the hip pocket, prepared for the next play. Gets on his check early to the kill play, and then he often knows the next play. He has a lot of passing skill, too. He uses hook and slip passes under pressure. There were turnovers, but his teammates were at fault for a couple. The shot's a 5. It's predominantly upper body but he generates power, keeps his hands in the right position, and can shoot off the pass. A bit more pace and playmaking in the offensive zone would earn him a spot on our board, even with the skating as a 4-grade projection because of the lack of depth and edge control.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Chadwick was probably the game's best blue-line. He's really solid. The skating's a clear limitation. He never completes his crossovers with an upright stance and a notable lack of quickness. So, he can't match opponents off the rush. Instead, he makes well-timed engagements, often just outside the blue-line. With the puck, he's always looking to create. He activates down the boards, steps into space before shooting (as he did for his goal), and draws pressure on the breakout. He passes through pressure. He has ideas, and when they fail, it's more because his mechanics failed, not because he made a poor read. He has potential. Could be a pick for us.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

The best draft-eligible in this game by a large margin. Chadwick was playing an effective, projectable offensive game only limited by his teammate's inability to read the play at the same level. He joined the rush, delayed to wait for his teammates to jump into space, and managed space effectively on the second powerplay unit. Give-and-go point activation. Consistently passed over shooting, trying complex plays: fake shot, draw defender, pass against the grain. Moves through his passes and pass receptions. Defence was a bit of a different story. Passive gap, most often. But when he's gapped up with his weight balanced, he gets stops without over-extending. Manages risk. Forechecking pressure also caused some issues on retrievals and breakouts. He looked like a prospect worth keeping an eye on.



Grade: C

133 Zeb Forsfjäll

AGE 17.663 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 16, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Motor

Player Info

C/LW Position	Left Shoots
5'9" Height	168 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Skellefteå AIK J20 "C"	J20 Nationell	34	8	14	22	0.65
Skellefteå AIK	SHL	17	1	0	1	0.06
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	2	6	8	1.14
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	4	12	16	0.84

SCOUTING REPORT

Zeb Forsfjäll's game and character are mature beyond his years. Having debuted in the SHL just after turning 17, he already spent a sizable chunk of the season at the top men's level in Sweden while also filling the captain duties with Skellefteå's J20 squad.

He seemed to gain the trust of his coaches at every level, also centring one of the top lines in every international event this season.

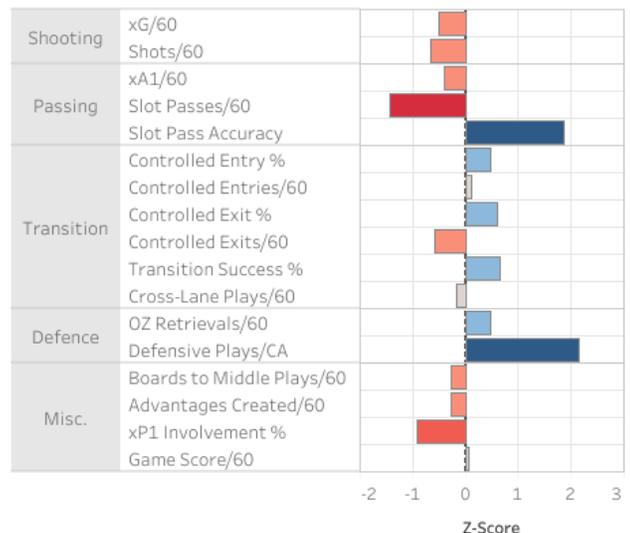
It's easy to imagine a scenario where Forsfjäll is a strong two-way contributor and penalty killer at the next level. He takes care of his defensive responsibilities meticulously, using his skating and motor to take away passing lanes, apply pressure on the backcheck and position soundly in the defensive zone.

The skating projects as at least slightly above-average on our 1-to-9 linear tools grading scale, helped by the low, dynamic posture, strong crossover usage and four-way mobility. He can also handle the puck at higher speeds, which should make him a reliable transporter of the puck at the next level.

There's no doubt about the fact that Forsfjäll is going to be a long-time pro without significant injuries. However, we were often left wondering if the skill level and upside are high enough to warrant the status of a top NHL prospect. Both his production and underlying metrics at the J20 level were rather mediocre, even if he found his way to the scoresheet frequently during international competition.

Zeb Forsfjäll

F | Skellefteå AIK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 117.5
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



While he has a plus-level motor, we found he lacked an inside-driven mindset offensively, often being too stuck on the perimeter. He had flashes of legitimate playmaking touch and even crafty shooting skill, but neither appeared as consistently as you would've hoped.

If Forsfjäll starts to attack the middle more aggressively and flash more high-end skill while getting stronger and even more effective without the puck, he could turn into a potential middle-six contributor, whether that's as a centre or a winger. The technical foundation and pro-style mindset are already there.

🗨️ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

🗨️ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"He's a player who is smart on the ice, always in the right position. Contributes in both the offensive and defensive game." – Sweden U18 head coach Anders Eriksén, April 2023

🗨️ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 30th, 2023 - Sweden vs. USA - U18s

Zeb had a good effort in the gold medal game. I really like his skating technique. He moves well in all four directions and is strong in keeping a high pace and he comes into situations with pace all the time. It really helps his game. He isn't that fast and needs a motional advantage if he is to beat opponents with pure speed. Maybe, with more strength he will get faster.

Forsfjäll works hard in a two-way game and is valuable on both the PP as the PK. He was involved in a lot of the action in this game. He lacks high-end puck skills and rarely shows any manipulation. When an opportunity is presented to him though, he often sees the open pass or route to create.

All-in-all, if he can generate more speed and use his motor and vision to break up plays and create in transition, I can see a player. Even if it is hard to succeed as a small size centre in the NHL that lacks inside drive. A late round prospect.

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Not a ton going on for Zeb at even-strength in this one, but he was an effective tool on the man advantage. He was working both sides of the ice for different looks, had a couple of nice one-timers from cross ice feeds - one for a late tally. He had some pop as the lead on some rush attempts, but they were usually forcibly stopped by the blueline or just inside. His inability to fight through the dotted line is discouraging because he has a good motor, he has good hands, he knows how to support a play, activate weak side with a threatening presence. He can fire it. But he just has a little too soft of mindset.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Zeb, as many Swedes, looked good in this big win. He is definitely a key player on this team, both on the offence and defence. I like how he is always on the move and handles the puck well with speed. He isn't explosive but has the ability to play long shifts at a high pace. He had the puck a lot and made good passing plays as well as a goal. He reads and goes to the right spots often. It looks like it could be a productive tournament.

Cam Robinson: April 20th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Sweden dominated this outing, and some of their players really stood out. But I was pretty lukewarm on Forsfjäll in this one. He's kept to the perimeter way too often, and when he did try to get to the inside it looked tentative and he was either poked off the puck, or physically thwarted. His best moves were the controlled entry, curl back, head up and look to dish it into the slot. The power play work was fine - the hands are good. Had the nice release for the goal. You can see he knows what to do, but can't execute it all the time.

David St-Louis: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs Sweden - U18s

Flashes of skill for Forsfjäll. That seems to be how every one of my game reports go with him, but it continues to be the case. The forward doesn't pop until he does. He created a couple of dangerous rush plays in this game by turning back and connecting with a trailing teammate and he scored with a piercing shot on the powerplay.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 2nd, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Forsfjäll was one of the best players on the ice. He showed a strong motor, good defensive play and offensive play driving. He supports teammates well, and drove the puck to the net. He scored a goal too.

I like his hockey sense, competitiveness and responsible play. He is small and not particularly skilled offensively. He feels like an SHL prospect rather than NHL. He skates technically well but lacks elite gear.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Four Nations

Forsfjäll had a good game overall. He stole a puck on the forecheck and transformed it into a scoring chance and he had a great cross-ice feed to Otto Stenberg, leading to another scoring chance. His plays were a bit hit-and-miss, not unlike our viewings of him this season.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Sweden vs Czechia - U18 Four Nations

Forsfjäll plays with a lot of pace. He has a low, dynamic posture and he can accelerate around opponents quite easily at this level. He also uses his skating and low stance to shield possession on the walls and keep possession under pressure. I didn't see much more in this game besides this ability to accumulate and keep momentum, but it's already intriguing.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - U18 Four Nations

Forsfjäll impresses in flashes. He moves well away from the puck, or at least well enough, rushes the net, and has good passing ideas. His technical ability was above-average in this game, but I'm not sure it's above-average when projecting him to the NHL." He's a player we have to keep an eye on.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 23rd, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Skellefteå AIK - SHL

Zeb plays on the fourth line providing energy and smart simple plays. He shows good awareness and strong play along the boards.

Forsfjäll is a good skater and can keep up well with the pace at this level. He skates with good ankle flexion and strong lower-body balance. He isn't naturally explosive but can handle physical pressure from opponents well.

Forsfjäll reads the defensive game well. He gives good support, he scans and is easy to play with. Offensively, he didn't have much opportunity to show anything. It was simple plays, pushing the game up the ice which was the role for his line as well.

A defensive centre with good instincts, board play and vision. He gives good support and competes well. His lack of size can somewhat be compensated with strong skating and balance.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

I'm still struggling to see the upside with Forsfjäll after a game like this. He's going to be a pro because of effort level defensively, skating prowess and the ability to connect plays in tight, but he's not a game-breaker, even at this level. Was able to facilitate his team in transition pretty well, but ran out of space a few times and didn't have the answers to problem-solve his way through them. A few quick passing plays in the OZ, but didn't really push for the dangerous areas. He screams a supporting player who can chip in offensively but only occasionally.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Forsfjäll is starting to cook in these more recent viewings. He's using his speed to attack off the rush with more aggression, connecting with his passes most of the time, making some crafty small-area feeds and give-and-go attempts. Scored with a nice wrister right off the face-off. Could've had another after he was coming down the weak side off the rush, cut to the inside, gained body positioning on the defender, made a difficult pass reception and got a backhand shot off from in tight. These kind of projectable sequences make me think maybe I've been underestimating him a bit. I still don't see high-end tools aside from the skating, but he's a pretty sound overall package. Could he turn into a third-liner? It's not out of question, despite being on the unlikelier side.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Forsfjäll can skate and also handle at pace, that much is pretty clear. The skating projection is probably a slightly above-average, like 5.5 grade on our scale. He can outskate with crossovers, gain the inside for an entry and then pass in motion. He's also trusty defensively, which likely hurts his offence. He could probably rack up more points if he wasn't almost always the last forward to enter the zone, often trailing one of the defenders as well. Skellefteå's system seems to encourage their defenders to activate, and players like Forsfjäll make it possible by covering their spots on the point. He did flash more playmaking skill than in most of my previous viewings, making some quick and crafty passing plays under pressure on the breakout and hitting the middle once in the OZ, resulting in a chance and a goal.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - Frölunda vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Forsfjäll is all about speed. That's his selling point. That, and his defence. He's engaged in the game and willing to engage opponents, repetitively. He plays a sort of physical style that lets him create steal and then turn them into rush offence. I'm not sure we're looking at an NHLer, here, but the combination of projectable skating (5-6), effort, defence, and some passing skills remains interesting. He needs to learn to make more complex offensive plays and improve his reads. It's a bit telling that he's playing the goal-line on the powerplay, a quick distributor/physical role, more than the half-wall. His playstyle clashes a bit with his build. And that's not always a good thing for a projection. I like the package overall.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Not many new things to be drawn from this viewing. Forsfjäll's strengths remain the same: good care of the defensive side of the game (supports down low, helps build plays up, positional awareness, well-timed stickchecks and pass interceptions, effort on backchecks), good quickness and pace, transition game, some off-puck instincts offensively. The skill level doesn't seem that high, and I haven't seen notable playmaking or shooting ability.

Cam Robinson: November 8th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs Brynas U20 - J20 Nationell

A couple of primary assists in this one for Forsfjäll. He was looking quick and making quick reads on the play. I especially liked how he has using a one-touch passing style on the man - advantage from the baseline. Smooth reception and right back off again. Off to the flank. Off to the flank. To the slot for a goal. Defensively, he was intelligent. He knew how to switch off down low to support his D. He was coming along for support to his wings on outlets. He had a good stick and the stops and starts, showed off his motor and energy. He's clearly leaned upon defensively and takes pride in it. He needs strength as he was physically shifted around a couple of times, but he stayed in the fight. I like the stride - even if it doesn't generate the type of speed you'd want from someone his size. It has a strong base for growth and provides overall quickness. This was a solid outing.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. AIK IF - J20 Nationell

I have respect for Forsfjäll's game, for sure. It's impressive to see a player his age already captaining a team at the J20 level and clearly being the guy who the coaches rely on setting the example for others. Took care of the defensive side of the game, aside from one situation where he reacted a second too late, and AIK managed to score off the rush. Also outmuscled at times but that's to be expected with his current stature. His skating looked solid in this one, likely rates as average projection-wise. Also scored off the rush after the goalie let in a wrister on top of the hashmarks. The question marks around the upside still remain. His rush patterns are mostly fine, but notably lacks delay game and manipulation.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Skellefteå AIK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Forsfjäll's defensive game continues to be the highlight of his game. He's always supporting defencemen down low, which also leads to him often being late when the puck is transported to the other zone. He covers for his defencemen in the OZ, too, often dropping high to hold the point. A couple of very good breakups, lifting the stick of the opposition just as the pass was about to arrive, both in DZ slot and near his own blue line. It's clear that he's willing to sacrifice offensive output for the defensive stuff. The best offensive moment came late in the third where he came out of the box and was able to beat the defencemen wide with an outside lane net-drive for a high-danger look, intelligently using his free hand to protect the puck from the defender's stick. Not a ton of delay or deception in his game, though.

Lassi Alanen: August 3rd, 2022 - Sweden vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Forsfjäll was very quiet offensively in this one. Made simple plays, like recovering pucks and returning them back to point, but didn't do anything that impressive, some good off-puck net-drives. Didn't display much in the way of complex playmaking or shooting skills. Was in trouble in transition, too, with Canada's heavy forecheck. Didn't cutback and look for a pass back, instead tried to outrace or dump the puck out. Defensive value was pretty legit, though. Worked hard on the backcheck and tracked his man with intent and carefulness. Really seemed to take that side of the game seriously.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Forsfjäll has handling skill at pace. He easily knocked down loose pucks and tricky passes into his hip pocket without breaking strides or crossovers. Scored with an inside leg, inside crossovers wrister on a breakaway. He plays fast, but his game boils down to outracing opponents. He gets locked into outside lane rushes. He doesn't manipulate, delay, or look for the trailer. He missed opportunities to find teammates in better positioning to take low percentage shots or force plays down low. To his credit, he uses the pace to disrupt defensively and get the occasional stop. Off-puck, he gets open in the right areas, but not with timing. Complex game. Curious to watch him more.

Grade: C



134 Michael Burchill

AGE 17.381 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Motor

Player Info

LW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'10"

Height

150 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Dubuque Fighting Saints	USHL	61	13	25	38	0.62

SCOUTING REPORT

Although Michael Burchill went unranked by NHL Central Scouting and scored at a pedestrian 0.6 point-per-game clip, we're convinced that he possesses NHL skill.

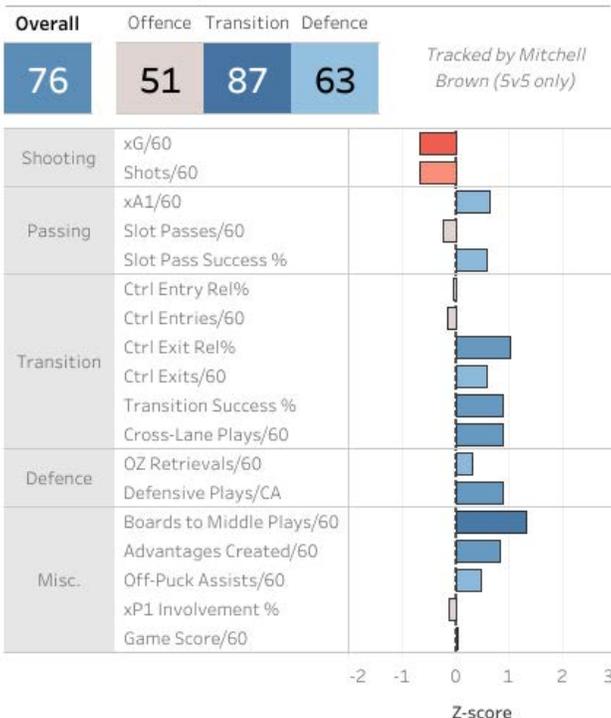
And with those NHL skills right across the board, Burchill's more than capable of filling the net in the future. He hooks pucks around sticks and slips them under when pressured. Where many sprint into traffic, he finds the trailer. High-speed dekes and crafty setups beat defenders, and puck protection skills keep them on his back. A powerful wrister, fired off either leg, shows some finishing ability, too.

Right now, Burchill creates favourable positions for his teammates with these skills, but rarely puts the finishing touches of scoring sequences. Puck touches can be infrequent for him, partly the result of his environment, partly because of variable off-puck positioning. He's also too patient with the puck at times, waiting for lanes that never open.

As Burchill tightens the decision-making, his defence should earn minutes. He's an intense backtracker, aggressive space-closer, and proactive threat eliminator. Burchill's a long-term projection, likely as a four-year player with development powerhouse Michigan Wolverines. But considering that he has top-nine skill, he could be worth the wait.

Michael Burchill

F | Dubuque Fighting Saints | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 102.8



⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Just a smaller, speedy player. Not the sort of player that translates to the NHL." – Western Conference scout, May 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Joey Padmanabhan: April 30th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

A tough night for Burchill. Bounces just didn't seem to go his way. A few pass attempts both in his own zone and in the offensive zone wouldn't connect, bouncing off skates or getting picked and going the other way. Many of his shifts were in the defensive zone without possession, too. He's got a high motor, I'll give him that, and he's an asset on the backcheck and in transition, but with the puck on his stick, it was underwhelming tonight. Need to see more.

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

A really quiet game from Burchill, apart from one high-speed, high-skill deke through an opponent along the outside. He doesn't out there much, but he's also not accumulating many touches. His teammates do most of the work as he floats around. When he got open, the puck never came. This is the down side of the USHL. So many games where it's impossible to get a read on a player because of the environment, ice time, and quality of play.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Burchill's more of a play-builder than creator at this stage. He's not the shooter or set-up man on Dubuque's scoring plays. He doesn't even get many touches in those positions. But he could. The skill's exciting. Hook and slip passes under pressure, one- and two-touch vision through layers, a delay game in transition, and deception with opponents on his back. He's patient to a fault sometimes, but every touch has the goal of building the offence, creating an advantage for his recipient. Add in the defensive value – immediate backtracking, close outs, and elimination of threats without overextending – and he has NHL upside. A long term projection, but he deserves to be on our board. If he translates the play-building to the offensive zone, he will post some serious numbers in the NCAA and could become a third-line forward in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Dubuque doesn't lean on Burchill much, but they should. He has a ton of skill for this level. He scored with a quick inside leg wrister off the rush and grabbed another chance off the other leg. With the projectable shot comes the passing and work rate. He's an intelligent, proactive backtracker and forechecker. Turns steals into offence. Slip and backhand passes. One-touch and quick-possession plays through opponents. He's not really scoring much, but it's tough to watch him have impressive games one after another not think he deserves a place on the board. He has NHL shooting, passing, handling, and vision, alongside a checking game.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Burchill's often let down by his linemates. He tries to lead them into space, but they rarely skate their routes. He has a lot of skill. He handles the puck while fighting off back pressure, attacks the inside with both carries and passes, and lots of skill to connect. In one sequence, he fended off two defenders before slipping a puck into the slot for a deflection. A smart off-puck player, too. He reloads and gets open in space. Disciplined, hard-working defensive player. The tools are average but he's skilled and intelligent. Skating should improve with strength. He's a pick for me. Could be a 60s or 70s candidate.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Another impressive game from Burchill. He doesn't get a ton of chances, but that's not his fault. He gets open behind defenders

and stays in space. Applies non-stop pressure in pursuit. With the puck, he looks for quick passes through opponents and leads teammates into space. Give-and-go style. He has more advanced ideas – cutting inside, reading feet, etc. – but the success rate is low because he doesn't prolong the lane with deception first. A little bit of improvement there, and he could play. Could be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Burchill might've been the best player in this game. He set up a bunch of chances. The highlight was off the rush where he showed shot to bait the pivot, then immediately passed cross-slot on the defender's heels for the one-time goal. Delays off the rush, finds lanes under pressure. Area passes and guides teammates into space, even off the backhand. A slippery skater, but mechanics looked average. Anticipated plays, intercepted passes, and worked harder on the backcheck. He could make the board. Clearly has an NHL mind and passing.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 6th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A pretty impressive showing from Burchill, who made things happen in his limited minutes on ice. The passing was the highlight of this performance, Burchill gained the offensive blue line by building up speed through the neutral zone through crossovers and would hook passes to teammates on the wings. Had two beautiful slips coming uphill from the left side dot that led to grade A one-timer opportunities. A gorgeous assist too where he drove wide deep into the zone, hit the brakes, and found the trailer. Shooting was on display on the power play, where he'd swing up, touch the blue and come downhill for a curl and drag. Some craftiness with just his hands, not a ton of manipulation with his skates, upper body, or eyes. Strength is an issue, Burchill is slight and gets knocked off of pucks easily. Has a super wide base in his stride that prevents any kind of extension, but gets decent speed out of the linear crossover. He's intriguing for sure.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Burchill had a high-pace rush with a quick change of pace to beat the defender wide before jamming the puck into the goalie's pads. That was it offensively. He made a couple of play-building passes on the breakout. Mostly a defensive performance. He was relentless on the backcheck, applying non-stop pressure. Sprinted where most players let their defencemen deal with it. A solid game, but nothing that suggested an NHL pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Burchill basically had the forward version of Lucas St. Louis' game. The mechanical foundation lacks, but the ideas don't. Burchill instantly chained together pass receptions and dekes, beating opponents with his first touch at least three times. He's a deceptive handler, using changes of pace and feints to mask his intentions. There's transition skill, highlighted by several quick-possession passes to advance play up the middle. The skating's wide and the crossovers are more hops – he doesn't drive off the crossunder leg. He shoots with his top hand locked to his hip and struggles to fire without entering a glide first. Still, he looked like a third rounder in this game, at least. A bit more playmaking and scanning and he could be even better.

Joey Padmanabhan: September 24th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Burchill's 3 assist night cemented him as a guy to keep an eye for this year's upcoming draft. Burchill operates at a high pace and is incredibly inside driven off the rush, blending his tempo with a good set of hands to pull players into the middle before delegating to teammates streaking down the flanks. When Burchill and Montes were on the ice together, it was difficult for Des Moines to contain their speed and cycle game low in the offensive zone. Burchill's got a bit of a thin frame and struggled in board battles when he wasn't able to get into the open ice with his speed, but usually he was able to navigate through pressure with his hands and feet. He's intriguing for sure, there's a heck of a lot to like from Burchill's skill set.



Grade: C

135 Emil Pieniniemi

AGE 17.540 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	3	3	4	7	2.33
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	31	1	12	13	0.42
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	15	0	4	4	0.27
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	0	1	1	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

The 2005-born class is a particularly rough one for Finnish defencemen; just look at how many underagers they brought to this year's U18 Worlds. The most promising of the bunch is – without a doubt – Emil Pieniniemi.

The 6-foot-2 blueliner already cracked Kärpät's U20 team in a full-time capacity last season and was their go-to guy during this year, logging big minutes and contributing on both special teams.

Pieniniemi's projection comes down to his defensive value combined with flashes of ability offensively and in transition. He was the best draft-eligible neutral zone defender in the U20 league by a wide margin, pinching aggressively and gapping up early, guiding opponents towards the boards before engaging physically. In the defensive end, he pins up opponents along the boards and has a solid box-out game.

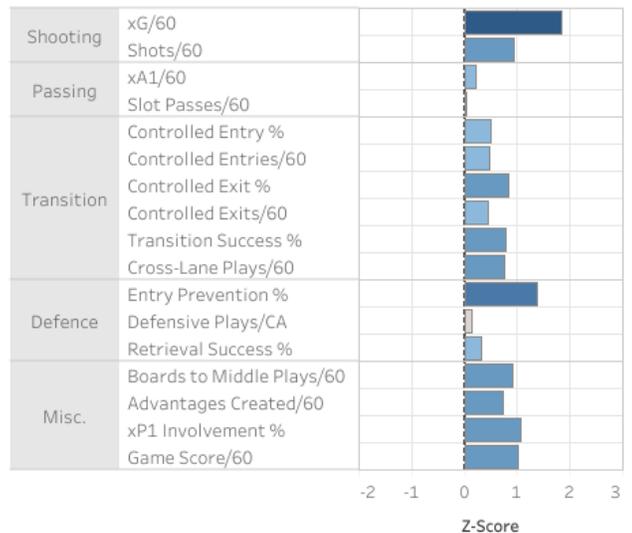
The offensive flashes mostly come down to weak side activations. Pieniniemi's timing with these usually landed him at least one scoring chance per game. The activation frequency wasn't very high, but when he decided to make a move, it was almost always well-timed and resulted in something concrete. On breakouts, he occasionally deceives and can find creative solutions, but also struggles with pressure at times.

Emil Pieniniemi

D | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 226.4

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



A lot of the time, the struggles come down to the lack of separating quickness. Pieniniemi's skating reasonably projects as NHL-average given his mechanics and willingness to use his edges, but the projection also relies on him becoming more explosive and coordinated with further strength training. Luckily, he seems to have a lot of room for such development.

Pieniniemi might not be the most exciting, high upside bet in the middle rounds, but you could imagine him filling a bottom-pairing role in the future.

Skill development from the skating to the handling will be required and his feel in transition likely has to get better, but Pieniniemi has the play-killing mentality and the frame many teams are looking for.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's Notebook: Four data-driven observations from the U20 SM-sarja

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

J.D. Burke: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Another tough game for Pieniniemi, though I suppose some credit is due for escaping an 8-4 loss with only a dash-one. It seemed like he was chasing the play more often than not in the defensive zone. His transition work was inefficient as ever, and we didn't even get the flashes of high-end offensive thinking that have made me curious about his game in the last few outings. Pieniniemi didn't even look like a draft pick in this one.

J.D. Burke: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18

Pieniniemi's game stabilized a bit in his second match of the tournament, but many of the same issues lingered. He's a clumsy distributor, intelligent enough to arrive at the right decision with the puck but lacking the touch to connect on many of these plays. There were some really interesting flashes from Pieniniemi off-puck, though. He consistently activated into the play, often finding soft-ice and timing his arrivals perfectly as a shooting threat. There was one set play, in particular, that stood out for me; a neutral zone faceoff where his team won the draw to the inside and Pieniniemi exploded down the ice to the side of the goal for what could've been a tap-in. I'm not really sure what to make of this player. All I know is that he's a very raw prospect.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Finland - U18s

This was a tough, tough game for Pieniniemi. The Swiss forecheck gave him fits for the entire game. Even when Pieniniemi had the time and space to make plays, many of his outlets sailed past their intended target, down the ice for an icing. Pieniniemi was at his best defending in the neutral zone. He stepped up for a couple big stops. His work in-zone wasn't quite as convincing, but there weren't any egregious mistakes either. Pieniniemi strikes me as a clumsy, project type of player.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Kärpät vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Another Pieniniemi viewing with relatively similar nuances. There are some flashes of offensive ability, mostly coming via intelligent activations, popping to the slot at the right time. There was one sequence where he used some edgework and had enough quickness to beat the defender to the outside at the point, then gaining inside for a scoring chance that ended up netting him a primary assist eventually. Other times, he failed to gain enough separation off cutbacks to beat F1 on the breakout. The defence remains mostly projectable, from the physicality, box-outs, active stick. The rush defence has been necessarily as high-end as it looked earlier in the season; he's conceding more space and not pinching as aggressively, but it's still a strength. The transition game is a mixed bag. Flashes ability to connect through layers and tries to fake out forecheckers on retrievals with his feet, but it's not necessarily consistent enough to be considered a big-time strength. There's a lot of projection required and the tools aren't anything special, but also some upside with relatively easy imagination.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Pieniniemi found the back of the net off a breakaway, following his man high in the DZ, recognizing an opportunity after a fumbled puck, bouncing on it and converting from a 2-on-0 with a quick in-stride release to beat the goalie just over the blocker on the far side. Mostly it was what we've grown accustomed to with Pieniniemi. I'm likely leaning to an average skating projection on our scale. There are already enough positives (ankle flexion, willingness to use edges) and there should be even more developmental leeway considering how much room there should be with further physical growth. Then there's the play-killing ability and defensive projection, which are both solid. There were some impressive moments of battling for body positioning and boxing out opponents. He did get caught a few times after the opponent went for a chip-in off the rush and the retrievals are very much a work-in-progress. The offensive activations only appear in flashes, but when they do, they are often well-timed. He probably will end up appearing at the end of our board.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Kookoo - U20 SM-sarja

This was Pieniniemi's first game in a month, and it seemed to have an impact, at least in some aspects. He wasn't his usual self against the rush, not having the same killer instinct and aggressive demeanor and gap control, instead giving up the blue line quite easily a couple of times. Handling looked wobbly, mishandled the puck in transition a couple of times. Had less patience than usually under pressure, opting for glass-and-out icings when he could've tried to cut back or make a passing play. Offensively, it was mostly quiet until the third period when he got a high-danger chance after a well-timed weak side activation towards the back post with perfect timing, but couldn't convert despite receiving a well-executed pass from a teammate that saw the opening. Skating is a tough debate between 4.5 and 5. You could argue either one based on how much faith you have in future improvement based on getting used to his body and adding strength.

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Pieniniemi's line was in a bit of trouble defensively in this one against the top team in the league. The skating could project around average if you're charitable and give him leeway to grow into his body since he does have pretty good straight-line speed already, it's just that the cutbacks and turns are killing his speed. Gapped up early and tried to prevent plays proactively, but wasn't as successful as in some of the earlier games. A couple of good activations off the rush, showing willingness to get involved in the play offensively.

Lassi Alanen: December 17th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Very mediocre Pieniniemi viewing here. He had some solid in-zone defensive moments, but his aggressiveness was punished a bit in a couple of situations. I still think his style of defending is the way to go, but his footwork was more committal than previously, and in addition he could've done a better job at scanning and anticipating the play. The puck skills seem a bit limited, glaring when he's under pressure. It could also be that he's just not very confident in his current level of skating and quickness out of cutbacks and turns.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Pieniniemi logs huge minutes for Kärpät, both at 5-on-5 and on the power play. Continues to defend aggressively, especially

outside of in-zone situations. Always pinches up when the puck is coming to the winger on his side of the ice. Got caught a few times being up too far up in the neutral zone, and once couldn't recover quickly enough to prevent a high-danger scoring chance. One breakaway against while he was on the ice, too. Retrievals remain pretty clean. A little bit more variance on breakouts, but mostly did fine here. Got a few scoring chances at 5-on-5 by positioning himself deeper in the offensive zone. I still don't see that much upside offensively. The shot isn't particularly noteworthy and he's not really looking to beat pressure at the point. Didn't activate that often in this one either, though he did play a ton.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Not a very good start to the game for Pieniniemi, who's lack of gap control off the rush (not usual) led to Tappara's first goal. Aside that, it wasn't a very noteworthy showing. Pieniniemi's skating is worrying me quite a bit. He tries to play on his edges to separate and deceive, but most of the time it looks very awkward and he's not explosive enough to truly separate. Wondering if his posture and explosiveness will improve as he grows into his frame? He operated mostly well inside of Kärpät's system on the breakouts, which included a lot of maneuvering behind the net and opening slowly against some variation of a NZ trap. I didn't see much deception, but his passes were mostly tape-to-tape. Manned the point on the top power play unit, but didn't accomplish much noteworthy. He can kill plays proactively and has some physicality to his game, even if it's currently limited by his mechanics.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty standard Pieniniemi viewing. Remains an aggressive on-puck defender who pinches a lot and forced quite a few dump-outs as of result. Gaps up early in the NZ and does it well for the most part. Pretty projectable defensive game overall given his growth spurt. The overall projection mostly comes down to how much you think his skating will improve once he gets used his increased height and how much offence he can unlock. Didn't display too much of it here, although he did have one partial shot hit the post after it got redirected from opponent's stick.

Lassi Alanen: September 17th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Pieniniemi made some nice plays on breakouts, drawing in pressure and even multiple forecheckers before dishing a cross-ice outlet pass. Defensively, he was pretty sound, too, not leaving much space for the opposition off the rush. He had his weaker moments, though. Notably, he doesn't seem to have much explosiveness out of cutbacks or pivots, which hurts his maneuvering under pressure with the puck. Tried to activate into the play a few times, didn't get any touches, though.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Pieniniemi has no explosiveness on his edges, but he tries to use them regularly. He cuts back, spins away from pressure, and tries to link together these moves. But he gets thrown out of turns and find separation. He's slick, however. He fakes passes up the boards, then uses the middle. Waits for pressure to arrive before making the next play. Killed plays early and often, especially through 20 minutes. Tight gap, on- and off-puck. Some upside as a transition upside.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

This was probably Pieniniemi's best game of the tournament to date, looking far more calm and in control than I'd become accustomed to seeing through his first two outings. Perhaps one can attribute that to the drop off in competition, but it still bears mentioning. Would like to see more advanced concepts as a part of his transition game, particularly on the retrieval, but there's no denying his evasiveness as a puck-carrier. I also thought that Pieniniemi made a few well-timed pinches and activations off of the offensive blue line to extend possession and create more dangerous looks for himself. I wonder about the overall sense on this player and his feel for the game, but I think there's some physical skill there.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Playing on the second pairing and second power play unit, Pieniniemi started the game strong with good decision-making under

pressure. He used the middle lane in his breakouts with passing, having the patience to wait for the lane to open before making the feed. Also jumped on the rush to create a chance but his shot got blocked. Got punished badly one time when he missed his timing on rush defence, getting deked after an aggressive stop attempt and causing a 3v1 for the opposition. Still, there's a fair bit of things to like as a potential mid-round pick if he continues developing.

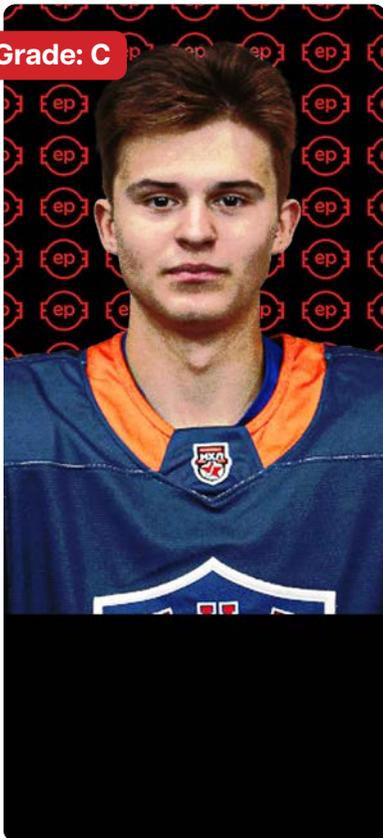
Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Pieniniemi skated on Kärpät's top pairing in this one. It was a rather quiet game from his part, especially with the puck. He has decent mobility at the point, some skill, but the execution left to be desired. The skating looked a bit better compared to the start of the season, but there's definitely room for improvement. He commits his weight too eagerly, which cost him getting beaten off the rush, even though I like his willingness to try to gap up tight and early. Added strength should fix some of the skating woes, though. He did commit a bit too hard in few DZ sequences, too, but overall had the mindset to kill plays, pin up players along the wall and displayed the ability to handle some multi-variable DZ situations.

Lassi Alanen: August 13th, 2021 - Sport vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja (pre-season)

Pieniniemi was skating on Kärpät's top pairing in their win over Sport in the U20 league pre-season action, also getting ice time on one of the power play units. He left a positive impression overall. Pieniniemi was keeping a very tight gap in the neutral zone, forcing multiple turnovers with his aggressive positioning. It backfired a few times but the forwards were ready to support him, so it wasn't much of an issue. He lacked knee bend and his skating had some other strength-related issues, too, but it wasn't that big of a deal. His retrievals were mostly clean and his DZ positioning was rather sound for his age. With the puck, Pieniniemi made mostly good decisions. He was pretty trigger-happy from the point, but also activated into space a few times with good results. It looked like he could play at the U20 level this season.

Grade: C



136 Ignat Lutfullin

AGE 17.592 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Vision



Ankle Breaker



Motor

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

163 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg	MHL	39	10	17	27	0.69
SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	12	2	1	3	0.25

SCOUTING REPORT

Ignat Lutfullin didn't manage to carve himself a spot on NHL Central Scouting's board, but to us, this is an oversight. The SKA-Varyagi forward rapidly became a favorite of our Russian Regional scout Dylan Griffing during the season due to his motor and flashes of skill.

"Tons of awesome passes as usual, he's just so creative and loves to draw attention to himself before dropping a pass off to set up offense," wrote Griffing in a December report. "The offensive tool-kit is just so much fun at this level – hands, agility, vision, shot all culminating into a dynamic, dual-threat forward."

One can't help but appreciate Lutfullin's consistent effort. He gives his all every shift and it's clear that he cares about the defensive side of the game. This is uncommon at the MHL level, especially for a player his age. Most forwards in the league reduce their pace away from the puck, but Lutfullin only increases his.

He pursues opponents, identifies opposing passing lanes, removes them instantly, gets possession back, and quickly launches the attack. A playmaker first and foremost, Lutfullin involves teammates in his plays, especially off the rush. He builds scoring chances with repeated passes.

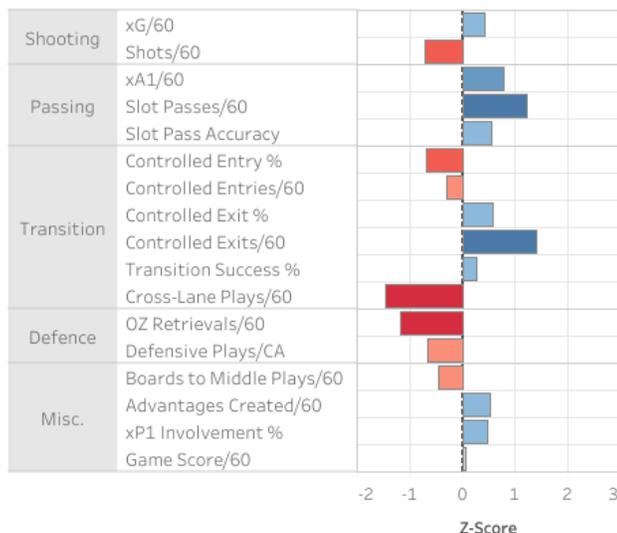
"The playmaking traits are really good, but the hands are a bit concerning," wrote Griffing in a November report. "There isn't a

Ignat Lutfullin

F | SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 74.13

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



lack of skill so much as there is a lack of control.”

Lutfullin’s attention to detail and collective game made us rate his hockey sense as above-average, but the forward won’t make the same impact at the professional level unless he adds strength. That’s the only way he will be able to sustain the physical board battle. He also needs to refine his technical ability.

His hunched-over stride limits his output on the ice, and while we do believe in Lutfullin’s passing skills, improving the precision of his touches would boost his offensive potential.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2023 - MHC Spartak vs. SKA-Varyagi - QMJHL

Lutfullin’s speed is functional at this level. It allows him to separate, but I don’t see his speed translating to an NHL setting. Some good passes. I like his playmaking ideas, but he also lost the puck under pressure. He works hard and showed himself defensively engaged. He comes back on the backcheck and positions well.

Dylan Griffing: December 22nd, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

Lutfullin being stuck on SKA-Varyagi makes me feel so bad. The amount of simple plays that the defensemen on this team can’t execute is infuriating, so the puck touches get limited by the lack of competence in the back end. He still absolutely dominated in this one and picked up a goal. Tons of awesome passes as usual, he’s just so creative and loves to draw attention to himself before dropping a pass off to set up offense. The offensive tool-kit is just so much fun at this level – hands, agility, vision, shot all culminating into a dynamic, dual-threat forward. I think he’s a good shot to take in the 2nd round this year.

David St-Louis: December 20th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. Krasnaya Armiya - MHL

That was an interesting performance from Lutfullin. The skating is a bit of a problem, a heavy forward lean that makes it harder for him to change direction and slip in front of defenders on retrievals, but apart from that, the rest of his game was solid, even defensively. Attentive stick details; puts it inside opposing passing lanes. He uses teammates off the rush and creates overlapping runs for them to attack with speed. He’s engaged and quick on loose pucks (it’s only when it turns into a 50/50 battle that he’s at a disadvantage) and he’s a quick passer in the offensive zone, a clever one.

Dylan Griffing: December 13th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Lutfullin continues to go out there and try things every shift. I don’t hate it, especially in a game where Varyagi lost 6-0 and offense is hard to come by. The end result remains messy and turnover prone, but the plays that are coming off are awesome and he drives offense very well for this team. He was too excited to take guys on 1-on-1 off of entries and killed attacks like that, his skill is much more suited for open ice, simple moves that leave him with clear options afterwards. The passing game was awesome, not many players utilize their teammates as well as he does at this level while also bringing the goalscoring attributes he has. The problem-solving ability is questionable, but he’s creative enough to still make the most of his puck touches most of the time. Had one really nice rush where he dangled the defender at the OZ blue line with a toe-drag and then sent an awesome pass across the slot that just didn’t connect. He’s a very raw prospect, but the tools are there.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. HC Kapitan Stupino - MHL

Lutfullin continues to showcase his playmaking skill. He has a wide repertoire of passes in his disposal and knows which one to pick in which situation. He can make plays with relative pace, but also has a delay game off the rush. Not that his teammates were really able to make much with those passes, though. His motor remains very solid, too, applying a lot of pressure to the puck carrier and making one particularly impactful breakup in the DZ. I don’t know if he’s a dual-threat, though, and the skating

is probably average at best. The skill level isn't on par with the playmaking, either. Still a pretty interesting player overall and could be a worthwhile project pick.

David St-Louis: December 6th, 2022 - Atlant vs. SKA-Varyagi - MHL

Lutfullin got lucky here. A broken stick gave him an assist. It exploded on a one-timer attempt and sent the puck rebounding to his teammate in the slot who buried it. Lutfullin has some playmaking skills. He's deceptive on reception, uses creative rush patterns, and can protect the puck well from opponents. He has some Rutger McGroarty vibes. His hunched over skating and high-grip handling do worry me a bit as he translates to the next levels, but he has the intensity and precision to figure it out.

David St-Louis: December 5th, 2022 - Atlant vs. SKA-Varyagi - MHL

Lutfullin creates from the inside, out. That's a good projectable sign. He tries to drive inside, to challenge defenders to create space for teammates. And he has some creative passing ability. His posture somewhat limits his vision, hunched over, hands in front, when he's running up ice with the puck, but give him more time to open up and he makes quick passing plays. His quickness looks like a potential strength, especially because he changes speed to beat defenders. I see more of a project here, but he has some interesting elements.

Dylan Griffing: November 18th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. AKM-Tula - MHL

Okay, I really like Lutfullin. He's a player who is very intelligent and sees the ice very well, just tries plays that are above his skill level right now. That said, he still did a ton of awesome things. He is so good at picking out defenders who aren't prepared for him to attack their lane, really deceptive passes to catch defenders off guard with the caveat that he is trying the more difficult plays that aren't consistently working yet. He utilizes his teammates very, very well through transitions, spotting when he has guys that have easier lanes than he or are already skating with pace while he's at a standstill. Quick, one-touch passes. Had a really nice between-the-legs drop pass to spring his teammate right into the zone for a nice shot on target. Picked up an assist at the end of the third with a sweet pass from behind the net. The playmaking traits are really good, while the hands are a bit concerning. There isn't a lack of skill so much where there is a lack of control. Handling the puck too far away, using off-puck moves to try to bounce around the defender and never gets possession back, and hanging onto the puck for too long at times. Had a pretty back turnover at the OZ blueline after circling from the boards that led to a 2-on-0 the other way. The defense was pretty good again, just taking up space and chipping in whenever he sees a chance to do so. Good at getting the puck out of battles. Overall, neat player.

Lassi Alanen: November 15th, 2022 - SKA Neva St. Petersburg - MHK Krylia Sovetov Moskva - MHL

Lutfullin should've scored here based on all of his chances, logging over a goal worth of xG with just 12 minutes of 5v5 play – impressive. Playing with better teammates, he got to showcase some solid off-puck play offensively, timing his moves to pockets of space. He was again pretty inefficient in transition, failing multiple carry-ins due to inability to beat with either speed or handling. He looked relatively inside-driven, tethering a few slick passes from the boards to the middle. Vision probably gets at least slightly above-average grade. Could be a late candidate for our board.

Lassi Alanen: October 20th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

Lutfullin scored twice here and the second goal was particularly nice, first beating the defender off the rush with a slick deke, then finishing short-side with a backhand shot that surprised the goalie. He did have some interesting flashes of vision, seeing passing lanes through layers of pressure and employing a delay game off the rush for a scoring chance on at least one occasion. Work rate looked good, disrupted a few plays in the NZ and DZ. Very much light on his feet at this point, though. Skating looked fine, probably close to average projection. There were some habits that could use work, including puck placement off the rush and trigger-happiness on situations where he could've manufactured a better play.

Dylan Griffing: October 20th, 2022 - SKA-Varyagi vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

I think Lutfullin is pretty cool, at least compared to the rest of the Russian crop for this draft. His high work rate is a big plus sign, despite being limited by an inconsistent ability to actually break up plays, he puts himself in really good positions to cause turnovers, applies hard back pressure, and did cause a handful of turnovers. His stick checks are pretty weak and he isn't physical, so those are clear areas of improvement, but the two-way potential is there. He was a bit of a hammer in this game. A lot of shots with no scanning beforehand. Kind of normal for a player of his quality on a bad team and he has a good enough shot that I can't really hold it against him, especially with the two goals he scored. The decision making was kind of weak in other areas, though, skating right at defenders instead of using the space in front of him to be more dynamic. His hands are pretty nice, but the moves he tries are often too galaxy brained to actually work consistently. I think he's probably a guy to look at in the late rounds, but I like him.

Grade: C



Ty Daneault

AGE 17.737 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 20, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Ankle
Breaker

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	161 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Drumheller Dragons	AJHL	53	37	28	65	1.23

SCOUTING REPORT

The Drumheller Dragons leading scorer Ty Daneault was one of the better stickhandlers in the entire AJHL last season.

With abrupt toe-drag moves, he broke free of defenders, attacked the slot, and unleashed his shot. With deft moves like this and clever offensive movements, he put up 37 goals over the full campaign, a total that placed him fourth on the AJHL's scoring leaderboard.

When he joins Merrimack next season, his talent for firing off passes in high-danger areas could make him one of their better finishers right off the hop. And as he forechecks with energy and plays well inside a system, he could earn a higher role in the team's lineup from the start.

"Daneault came alive in the second period," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report. "The first part of the game, he spent it mostly chasing the puck along with his team, but then he started using and showing his offensive skills a lot more. I liked his forecheck, but also his passes under pressure and the feints he pulled off against defenders."

To increase his chances of getting to the NHL, Daneault will have to work on his skating stride and develop even better off-puck instincts in the offensive zone. While he could separate from defenders quite easily at his level this season, adding more speed would facilitate his transition game in college and help him attack open spots in the offensive zone.

We appreciated Daneault's numbers in the AJHL this season, but also kept in mind his late birthday when evaluating him. Because of his average tools, we have our doubts about his ability to remain the same skilled goal-scorers at the professional level. If he can keep producing above expectations in the NCAA, his projected upside will receive a significant bump.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 28th, 2023 - Drumheller Dragons vs. Blackfalds Bulldogs - AJHL

Daneault attracts defenders before moving the puck. Some good playmaking ideas in his game. He attacks the net, plays with energy, and pursues the puck. He blocked shots, too. He's mostly a dangler, however, one who loves to use toe-drag moves. The handling skills look above average, but I'm not sure anything else in his toolkit is deserving of that mark. He can shoot with catch-and-releases.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Brooks Bandits vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Daneault came alive in the second period. The first part of the game, he spent it mostly chasing the puck along with his team, but then he started using and showing his offensive skills a lot more. I liked his forecheck, but also his passes under pressure and the feints he pulled off against defender. One of them, a long toe-drag around a diving opponent, helped him set up a shot. He clearly has skills. I'm not sure how well they mix with his hockey sense, but there are offensive abilities in his game.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs Sweden - WJAC

Daneault dangled around defenders. He baited pokechecks and then moved around them, but he didn't show a lot of awareness inside his moves. He forechecked hard, but his wide stride isn't as NHL projectable. Not sure about his off-puck instinct, offensively. He seems more like a puck-dominant player, a playmaking, dangler. He plays with a physical edge and can go shoulder to shoulder on retrievals to try and push opponents off the puck and win it.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Canada West vs Canada East - WJAC

Daneault tried making a pick play to free space for a teammate. It was a good idea, but he made it a little too obvious and the ref caught it. A couple of toe-drags in this one, but it's his forechecking energy and board battles that stood out. He faked before passing and spotted pucks into space for teammates. He overdangles, however, and the mechanical ability is not NHL-refined. I saw a nice cross-ice pass from him, however. He's worth a long look.

Grade: C



Sean Keohane

AGE 17.863 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 04, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw
Talent



Tactician



Play Killer

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

194 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

3.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cape Cod Whalers 18U AAA	18U AAA	14	1	5	6	0.43
Dexter Southfield School "C" USHS-Prep	USHS-Prep	32	4	12	16	0.50

SCOUTING REPORT

At first glance, Sean Keohane's numbers at the USHS Prep level look underwhelming. Averaging 0.5 points per game, even as a defender, doesn't inspire much confidence. The reality is Keohane is much more than these numbers suggest.

Part of a low-scoring Dexter Southfield School roster, Keohane represents upside in its purest form. At 6-foot-4, the Milton-born defender towers over his competition. What makes Keohane particularly interesting is how he blends his skating with his frame. A capable mover who quickly gets in motion on the rush, Keohane also flashes nuanced defensive skating, allowing him to push an absurd amount of aggression defending the rush.

"Fluid in the backwards crossover, Keohane actively blends his plus mobility to be aggressive while defending the rush," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a December game report. "Most of his stops are off of aggressive neutral zone pushes on perimeter puck carriers. Where the mobility [really] flashed was when Keohane combated rush-pattern adjustments. In the first, as a man cut across the defensive zone, Keohane was able to push laterally, guiding the threat to the outside with his stick."

When he's at his best, the American defender is leveraging his mobility to defend the dotted lines, using his long reach to probe and knock pucks to the perimeter and disrupt releases. He's physical, jumping off the net front to punish attackers on the end boards and tries to clog lanes with anticipation-based reads, pushing nastiness after the whistle.

At his worst, Keohane is abandoning his check to sprint at a downhill shooter on the off chance he is able to disrupt their possessions before they release.

A dull puck-mover, Keohane had issues in our viewings with finding the best options in transition. He lacks a manipulation element, both on retrievals and while he works north-to-south, which hurts his projectability as a puck mover. Even when Keohane exits with control, he's only really good for one large-ice manoeuvre before his hands lag behind his skating. When they don't he dumps every puck deep.

Luckily, Keohane activates off-puck at every opportunity, filing down the weak side and creating a backdoor option for his puck carriers. This activation value is immense, especially when envisioning it with players who could connect through layers.

He looks more functional while set up in the offensive zone. Keohane possesses an extremely hard shot, but his release is relatively slow and he has no precision. Nevertheless, he moves pucks into the middle of the ice constantly and has some playmaking value at the point. Much of his play is telegraphed, so he comes off as inefficient at times. The activation value carries over here, which is honestly where he builds value the most.

With the twisting positives and negatives of Keohane's game, it's clear the big, mobile defender will require a significant amount of time and development effort to create a functional NHLer. A commit of Harvard University and a draft pick of the Tri-City Storm, there probably aren't many better paths for a raw defender to follow. He has legitimate NHL upside as a bottom pair defender, if his development goes the right way.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: February 28th, 2023 - Northfield Mount Hermon vs. Dexter Southfield School - USHS-Prep

Fifth time seeing Keohane. He remains very much the same player, but he had a few more flashes in this game that are worth getting excited about at some level.

His lack of control of the puck is a major hurdle right now -- he has so many opportunities to really roll forward for the puck, but constant bobbles and mishandles hurt him. It's not like he tries stupid manoeuvres or is locking his arm to his body, he just has a limited touch in motion. Maybe it's stick length, but that's impossible to tell over video. In the first after head manning an off-puck rush, he took a pass and drove the middle of the ice, but was pushed out of the slot from behind, instantly losing the puck. Later he tried to drive behind the net but lost control. It just patterns throughout. Nevertheless, there was some great sequence for Keohane in transition.

On one second-period play, Keohane flashed some more nuanced habits. On a controlled carry-in, he flared wide, cut back to avoid a guide and made a great inside pass. Off the possession, he ended up taking a shot at the top of the point which sewed some chaos and a wide-open net miss. In the second, he connected with a teammate high in the neutral zone for a long, middle lane breakout pass, leading to a breakaway. Not a massive fan of the retrieval work -- he's a great pre-scanner but is always seemingly forcing retrieved pucks up the walls, often on his backhand. These uncontrolled attempts constantly are sealed off. Maybe he is better in a different system.

Keohane was at his best in the offensive zone in this viewing. He activated a lot in this viewing, a pattern across his games. In the second he worked down the left-hand circle faded towards the boards, and placed a shot-pass backdoor -- it bounced around in the traffic. Seen him do this before -- a more advanced play in his repertoire. He flashed more passing skill than I have seen. Keohane pulled off a wonderful hook pass right off the reception D-to-D. His most dangerous play was an off-puck activation. He read the low-to-high pass, activated down the left-hand circle, took the cross-slot pass, and shot a puck into a screen. His wrist shot is hard, he really leverages his 6-foot-4 frame to create power, but his release is slot, predictable, and he doesn't have much ability to place the puck. On the aforementioned shot, he had the whole upstairs and only ended up hitting the crest. Activation ended up leading to an assist. He took a puck off the right point right through a clear lane up the middle but was enveloped by a triple team. The puck bounced to a teammate who scored on the backend.

Very little transitional defending in this one. More aggression plays in sustained pressure. He's overaggressive when he doesn't need to be. In the first period, a player was working out of the near corner; Keohane rushed over to contest the pass, but it gave the NMH player the opening to funnel the puck inside. He leverages his frame to push physicality on the premier and works pins to prevent the cycle low in the zone. His best stop was in the second. After the puck was shot from the point and hit an opposing player in the crease, he quickly shifted to their strong side, dropped down and blocked the pivot shot. I think Keohane is drafted -- the tools aren't super impressive, but he's big, the aggression can be toned down in a better environment, and maybe his activation leads to more offensive results with better players. His stride projects at NHL-average, but he has work to

do to add strength. Bottom pairing upside barring some massive developmental progress, which could honestly happen given his base.

Daniel Gee: January 11th, 2023 - The Rivers School vs Dexter Southfield School- USHS-Prep

Keohane essentially played the entire game. Showed strong transitional habits -- steady feet, pivoting into angle offs and side-board guiding. He's enormous at 6-foot-4 -- makes all around him look small. In the third, he anticipated a breakaway pass and swung in to reject it before the reception. Most of his sustained defending sequences were on the penalty kill. He's reactive but clogs lanes in the cycle. Keohane doesn't leverage his size properly yet, which is apparent on the end-boards and perimeter battles.

Main transporter of the puck for Dexter. Operates at a relatively average pace, only made worse but poor protection habits -- puck is often in front and easy to pick off. Nevertheless, he's interesting. In the first, Keohane worked a give-and-go off the near boards, pivoted to scan options, delayed his pass until a defender overextended, and hit a point-man. Missing manipulation habits on retrievals and relies more on proactiveness and outskating opponents. He's a solid mover for his size, however -- probably still working into to his current frame. Consistently accesses his edges and mechanically he gets his knees -- with more strength you could have an enormous defender who skates at an above-average level.

In the first half of the game, he shot almost every puck off of the pass on the blue line. Little to no movement to open a lane or proactive scanning to find a better option. Just trying to chuck pucks as fast as possible on the net. As the game went on his activation flourished. So many slot files and weak side pass support. On one second-period powerplay, he got a high-danger one-time shot off an activation. Times seem activations too. On a late 5-on-3 Keohane showed a bunch of new habits in open ice. Give-and-go use, attacking into space, crashing the net off the shot, and even one-touch passing. The game was so mixed that I need to see more (first viewing) -- second half was so starkly different from the first. Maybe a pick for the end of our board.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - St. Andrews College vs Dexter Southfield School - USHS-Prep

Fourth time watching Keohane. His size at 6-foot-4 and his already great skating ability remain his most intriguing attributes. Keohane was nasty after the whistles in this one as well -- a scary proposition for the St. Andrews lineup. In the same breath, it's also clear that he has a myriad of high school habits that will have to be worked out at higher levels.

Almost all of Keohane's notable moments defending the rush involved the leveraging of his stride, stick, and aggression to kill perimeter carriers or poorly protected pucks in the neutral zone. His reach is impressive and impactful. The issues come alive deeper in the defensive zone. Because he is so aggressive, Keohane will cross his D-partner to swing across the plain of the slot to check a stick or a release. Often his partner doesn't switch, essentially leaving Keohane's man open at the crease. This happened in the first and third periods. I think there's a lack of trust as he's often working immediately at any sign of a turn. In one sequence he had to save his partner who was burned wide, but he left the secondary threat wide open. Out of all my viewings, this was the strongest lane-clogging effort. He knocked away numerous pucks and prevented multiple inside-lane activations from even entering the dotted lines. The mobility/size combination is nuts. He flashed a physical element in sustained pressure. He took out a strong side threat with a big hit from behind and then deflected a hope pass. He is equally as aggressive here, even when a teammate is working to create disruption, he activates too.

Basic to a detrimental level in transition. Across all of my viewings, there hasn't been really anything compelling. He gets in motion and snaps hard breakout passes, but he often throws pucks to enveloped teammates. Even when he gets on his horse and leverages his skating, he devolves wide and always dumps the pucks in. No real playmaking flashes despite the pass support available. Don't think his hands can keep up beyond a large-ice handle past an F1. Once set up in the offensive zone he becomes much more interesting. He's a constant weakside activator. Keohane will one-touch pucks from the point, he moves proactively to get into one-time seams, and he leverages a hard, inaccurate slap shot.

There's some advanced thinking. On one sequence he deliberately worked a slap-pass play backdoor but the shot was blocked. He drags pucks from the boards into the middle of the ice. He's so raw right now, but the base is about as exciting as you can

get out of a low-leverage league. I think he's picked; he won't make our board, but he should.

Daniel Gee: December 17th, 2022 - Cushing Academy vs. Dexter Southfield School- USHS-Prep

Keohane was a bit limited in this game, but it's easy to see why his profile is exciting. 6-foot-4, a clean stride and defensive skating habits already formed -- raw would be an understatement but it's hard to ignore the potential profile he could inhabit at higher levels.

Fluid in the backwards crossover, Keohane actively blends his plus mobility to be aggressive while defending the rush. Most of his stops are off of aggressive neutral zone pushes on perimeter puck carriers. Where the mobility flashed was when Keohane combated rush-pattern adjustments. In the first, as a man cut across the defensive zone, Keohane was able to push laterally, guiding the threat to the outside with his stick. On another cross-defensive zone cut, Keohane swung, to pressure the movement, but his partner didn't switch, leaving the backdoor wide open. The play showed more of Keohane's adaptability and was a product of the chaoticness of the prep game.

Liked how often Keohane got his stick in the release of downhill shots -- in the third, he prevented a dangerous shot off the right wing by checking the shift immediately on the shot release. Not overly physical but Keohane ended up injuring an opponent on a near-board hit -- the man fell and ducked, taking the full force of his frame. In sustained defensive zone pressure, it's apparent that beyond some puck protection plays on the endboards, he doesn't leverage his size enough. He's locked to the net and provides limited disruption to screen and backdoor threats. Not really much thought to box out at an effective level. Out of these net-front locks, Keohane struggles with some aggressive decisions. He wants to contest every shot, leading to hesitation, especially as the puck is passed around. For instance, on one first-period play, he detached from the net to push aggression on an end-board carrier, leaving no defenders at the net front. Leveraged his physical side in the corners. Buried a man late in the first and got the clear. Keohane was identifying and clearing rebounds constantly in this one as well. I want to see him in an environment with more hockey sense -- it feels like the aggression he wants to push is limited and punishing if there isn't the support to back it up.

An interesting transition player. Keohane blends his edges occasionally but jettisoned an absurd amount of pucks on the entry. He often tunnels into the dump play, not even attempting higher-level passing efforts like layering, hooks, or slips. His outlets are basic, in-motion breakout passes and off-puck weakside activations. He can up his pace, and separate and join transitional attacks at will -- makes him a valuable player at this level. Not much manipulation on his retrievals; more of a puck protector who relies on his wheels and size to escape forechecking pressure. His best sequence was on a penalty kill. After his high flip was intercepted, a teammate created a turnover, pushed forward, and Keohane sprinted up the ice on the right wing. He got the cross-crease but deflected the puck wide.

He ended up scoring backdoor in the third on the powerplay. Keohane fed the puck to the other point, dropped down backdoor and tapped in the goal-line cross-crease pass. Feel like a lot of Keohane's offensive zone touches are too telegraphed. I think back to a first-period pass backdoor -- his pass target was completely enveloped because it was too obvious. It feels like Keohane should be on our board -- he's raw but the habits and size suggest he should be scoring much more than he has. Going to be hard to argue though without even the USHS production.

Daniel Gee: September 24th, 2022 - Cape Cod Whalers U18 vs The Hill School - USHS-Prep

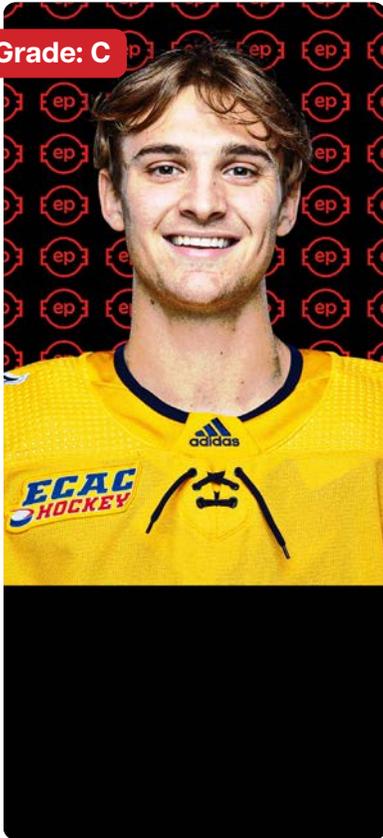
This was a bit of a weird game in how it was formatted - two twenty-two-minute periods, but Keohane was interesting, nonetheless. He's huge out there and looks head and shoulders taller than most of his teammates and opponents from The Hill School. With that, he also appears fairly lean, unable to fully leverage that strength. What makes Keohane so interesting is that he's got a projectable stride and he has a bunch of activation habits. Constantly attacking off the line to add himself as a backdoor or weakside option, he fundamentally changes the dynamic of sustained sequence when he is on the ice. He even works give-and-goes off his point passes.

In the first period, he passed off to the near boards and exploded through a lane between the dotted lines. As he crashed deeper the puck carrier decided to find a backdoor option instead, but Keohane did his job as a 6-foot-4 decoy. He one-touches

pucks from the point but struggles when he faces pressure and has to handle in small areas. This was apparent on a powerplay in the second frame -- just fumbled a puck in his feet with pressure on the blue line. His transition game shows similar issues with his handling. In the first he burst out of the defensive zone -- doesn't crossunder much as he weaved forward -- and tried to split a couple of defenders after the entry leading to an instant turnover. A teammate managed to support the play and fed the puck back into a heavy knee-dropped one-timed shot off the right-hand circle. The same off-puck activations are present here -- he even free-wheeled on the forecheck at times. While he works pucks in motion, uses open hips to scan for targets, and made a bunch of nice breakouts, his passing appears below average. He high flips a lot of pucks as a first option and doesn't flash any advanced playmaking qualities like layering, slips, hooks, etc. The four-way mobility is there to work backwards to avoid forechecking pressure, but these uncontrolled lob attempts he tries won't fly at higher levels.

In his own zone, he didn't have a tonne of work except for a late block and some net-front lock plays. He's very aggressive in transition -- he sprints at neutral zone, and perimeter puck carriers and tries to disrupt the entry at all costs. When he has to gap, he shows translatable qualities -- steady feet, a probing stick. This game was a bit scuffed so I won't take too much from it, but Keohane is a player we need to watch as the season continues.

Grade: C



Charles-Alexis Legault

AGE 19.030 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 05, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Raw
Talent



Transition
Ace

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'3"

Height

214 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Quinnipiac Univ.	NCAA	40	2	7	9	0.23

SCOUTING REPORT

Charles-Alexis Legault didn't play much with Quinnipiac in his freshman year, but it can't be said that he didn't make the most of his ice time. Besides, you can't exactly hold it against a 19-year-old rookie when they can't carve out a substantial role on a national championship team.

So, you had to piece Legault's season together one 10-minute block at a time (if that), all of them pretty carefully prescribed. This, of course, made him one of the more difficult evaluations in this year's draft. Especially because, well, you couldn't just write him off. There was some pretty interesting stuff happening in those limited minutes.

Legault didn't play like a seventh defenceman. Far from it. Where most in his station default to a risk-averse posture, this Bobcats freshman played with the confidence of a senior. Legault was among the most enthusiastic offensive activators from the blue line in all of the ECAC, availing himself of any opportunity to rush up the ice and get involved in the attack or seek out soft ice from the offensive blue line.

The same logic applies to Legault's work away from the puck. He's a robust defender, not content just to survive his shifts – he's actively seeking to initiate contact and dispossess his opponents of the puck. Legault plays with a tight gap in the neutral zone, and while his footwork is sometimes overly committing, his considerable defensive range allows him to recover in space. He's prone to occasional bouts of puck-watching in-zone, but he's mostly reliable, particularly in body-on-body defensive sequences.

So while we couldn't quite find a spot for Legault on our board, we would hope it's clear that we do indeed have some time for his game. The C-grade we assigned him indicates that anywhere from about the third round on is a fine spot to take him in this year's draft.

Legault will need to develop his skills with the puck, show some more creativity as a distributor, and perhaps become more proactive than reactive in the coming years to make it to the NHL, but there's certainly something there to work with.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 8th, 2023 - Quinnipiac vs. Minnesota - NCAA Championship

I'm not sure that Legault even cracked the 10-minute mark in ice time tonight, but he played well in a bit role at the bottom of Quinnipiac's depth chart. This was just a strong overall performance from Legault, who looked capable in every phase of the game – minus special teams, of course. Legault's an enthusiastic activator, willing to jump into the play but not at the expense of his team's defensive health. There was one particularly sharp moment in the first, a proactive read to intercept a breakout pass into the neutral zone that he immediately turned into a give-and-go play in the opposite direction. I'm yet to see any signs of advanced offensive thinking with the puck on his stick (may be a sampling issue... lack of ice time, etc.), but I like his approach philosophically. Legault's considerable defensive range allows him to contain opponents in space, though his footwork is sometimes a tad bit committing. He'll be a draft pick this year.

J.D. Burke: February 3rd, 2023 - Quinnipiac vs. Harvard - NCAA

You can't ask for much more than what Legault provided playing at the bottom of the Bobcats depth chart. He was durable defensively, particularly strong in body-on-body situations. His off-puck reads are generally strong, but a tendency to puck watch could start to bite him in the rear end as his role with Quinnipiac expands next season and beyond. There was one iffy moment – Legault tried to take on an incoming Crimson skater on an arc but misjudged his opponents speed and had to take a penalty to contain him – but that's about it. Legault's willingness – if not outright enthusiasm – for activating into the rush stands out. He has a great knack for sneaking into soft-ice as a trailing option. Skating looks about average, but skating habits elevate his ability to cover ground. I'm not sure if Legault is a candidate for our board, but he's definitely a late-round pick calibre of player.

J.D. Burke: October 14th, 2022 - Quinnipiac vs. North Dakota - NCAA

Probably one of the more interesting seven-or-so-minute viewings I've had. You had all of the highs and lows of Legault's game on full display in about as high-event a game as you're likely to see from someone playing as their team's seventh defenceman. It's clear that Legault wants to get involved in his team's offence. He's always activating into the rush, often sprinting through each breakout pass to join the play as a trailing option. Some instances of hip pocket handling and passing skill on these plays which definitely caught my attention. Legault was mostly solid defensively, but there was one abysmally poor read of a multivariable play in space that resulted in a partial break against that, to his credit, Legault was able to disrupt – his defensive range really is something. Interesting player. If not a player for our board, then someone to monitor as a free agent, certainly.



Grade: C

Austin Burnevik

AGE 17.699 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
6'3" Height	190 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U17 Team	NTDP	18	6	2	8	0.44
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	43	6	13	19	0.44
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	29	7	5	12	0.41

SCOUTING REPORT

This was a deep year for forwards with the USNTDP. So much so, that likely mid-rounder Austin Burnevik was sent down the U17 squad midway through the season isn't an indictment of his skill level. In fact, Burnevik's one of the more skilled plays from the Program this season.

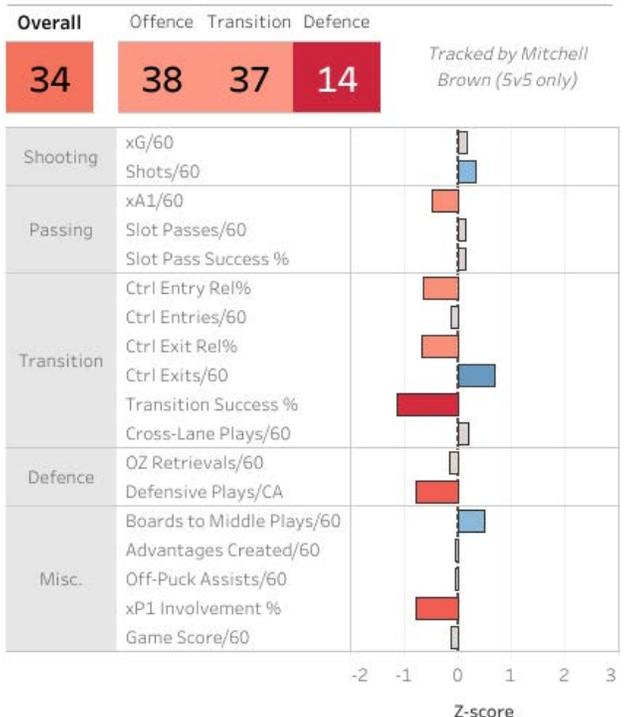
Burnevik has both NHL-calibre shooting and passing skill. He hammers pucks off the pass and fires quick-release wristers off the rush. Where many players force a pass through a lane, he uses his hands to find an open lane, often behind or through a defender, delivering the pass with perfect weighting.

"Instead of relying on skating and individual skill, he builds plays in transition with cross-ice passes and quick give-and-goes," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown detailed. "Instead of driving the net, he draws pressure, spins away, and passes to the inside. He arrives into the slot at the right moments, staying between checks when possible."

While these plays are intelligent, many of them are the consequence of Burnevik's skating. His upright stance limits his edge control, quickness, and stability inside contact. He also doesn't have the in-motion skill – passes, pass receptions, and handling with the feet churning – required to play in the NHL with skating as a weakness.

Austin Burnevik

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 84.2



Without improvement in both categories, he likely won't get close to the NHL.

As such, Burnevik is a swing on development. If he hits, he has the skill and style to play in a third-line role. But he's likely to be a four-year player at St. Cloud State. Patience required.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The usual from Burnevik. He has NHL shooting and passing. He sniped off the pass on the powerplay. He adapts to passing lanes, going backhand around opponents or sliding pucks through opponents. When given a bit of space to find a play, he makes plays off the rush. He finds options, attacks space, cuts back when it runs out, and then gets open. That exact sequence led to a chance, a great display play-building directly resulting in offence. When not given space upon reception, he's forced to offload possession. His skating and hands simply don't provide separation, and he'll have to develop better puck protection mechanics. He does have some solid skating habits, like cutting inside off the outside edge of the inside leg, but he can't generate any momentum. I think he gets picked, and it would be justifiable in the third round and beyond. But I don't see a candidate for our board anymore. Maybe at the very end. A long development curve to become a fourth-liner.

Joey Padmanabhan: February 25th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Pretty impressive game for Burnevik. Yes, the skating is a limitation but at this level it's not too prohibitive. Sometimes has to delay where other players would be able to create space with speed alone, but he has the awareness to move the puck right out of his stops, cut-backs, etc. Some nice in tight handling ability, sometimes needs to fire the puck instead of making the last dangle. Showed some off-puck timing in this game, finding a soft space in the slot as the third man high and burying a nice low-high feed. Not sure if he makes our board but there's something here.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A couple of Burnevik's ideas died because of his skating, even though he did the right things. He spins off checks and steps inside – no needless cycling. He presses the middle, baits the crossovers, then drives wide. If opponents catch up (often), he cuts back. Well, tries to. The skating's limited. A lot of failed entries because his edges stop him dead and forward stride/crossovers provide no quickness. Still, ideas, intelligence, vision, and off-puck instincts. He's definitely a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Every game seems the same: Burnevik's skating is an issue, but he has the skills to overcome. He delays, makes quick passes to the middle where most skate, and shows projectable playmaking in the offensive end. A bit more deception will help completing those plays, but it's hard to ignore the touch off the backhand. He's an intelligent off-puck attacker, staying between checks and arriving into space behind defenders. He looked like a top-75 candidate.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 31st, 2022 - University of North Dakota vs. USNTDP U18 - NCAA

Burnevik was about as good as he could be for nine minutes of ice time. Most of it was in his own zone, but he was solid defensively, taking inside out routes on defensemen, having an active stick in zone and on the forecheck, often disrupting. Had one offensive sequence where he streaked down the right wing and had a beautiful release that almost snuck in short side. Passing sequences were often simple, gaining the zone and making a drop pass, or threading a small area feed. The skating looked average, he has a nice stride for his size and kept up with delaying defenders, but there wasn't any sort of crazy explosiveness. Agility is solid. Someone who is really intriguing, but I wish he was used more.

J.D. Burke: December 16th, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Cedar Rapids Rough Riders - USHL

Burnevik was promoted to the second line (opposite Gabriel Perreault, centred by Oliver Moore) and I thought he really looked out of place in that spot. His puck touches were limited and he didn't make much of them. His skating isn't nearly good enough, even at this level, and it left him behind the play on numerous occasions. To his credit, Burnevik had a few sharp moments in the defensive zone and was a willing combatant at the net-front, but I didn't see anything there to indicate he's worth consideration on our board.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Burnevik was among the best players on the ice in this game. He knows his strengths and weaknesses. Instead of engaging in a fruitless race (his upright stance, short strides and crossovers make skating more a weakness at this level), he plays slow then fast. He draws pressure, passes through it. Completed some Devin Kaplan-esque cross-ice passes for entries and exits. Anticipates the direction of the play on the forecheck, leading to several offensive opportunities. Ends up chasing sometimes in the defensive end, but he puts in the work to recover. Two goals in this game, including a short-side bullet off the faceoff, showing the goaltender far side first. Unsure about the hands, but he could be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Burnevik's smart. He knows his strengths and weaknesses. Instead of relying on skating and individual skill, he builds plays in transition with cross-ice passes and quick give-and-gos. Instead of driving the net, he draws pressure, spins away, and passes to the inside. He arrives into the slot at the right moments, staying between checks when possible. Connected with a slick cross-slot pass under two defenders – perhaps there's more in-zone playmaking coming this season. He looked like a potential third-liner. Could be a late second.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Burnevik was quite effective in this game. The concerns were apparent right away: skating and handling. He can't do both at the same time and his feet provide no separation. Doesn't engage his hips and his push-offs are more slides as a result. But it didn't matter for most of the game. He takes the right routes off-puck, stays between defenders, and dips into space at the right moments. Takes pucks off the boards, attacks the inside, and instead of trying to race defenders, he moves the puck early to an open teammate. Delay game. Looked like a potential second-rounder in this game.

Grade: C



Drew Fortescue

AGE 17.384 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Transition Ace

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'3" Height	170 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	4 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	62	1	25	26	0.42
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	22	0	5	5	0.23
USA U18	WJC-18	7	1	2	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Points were hard to come by for Drew Fortescue. Watching the tape suggests a player who earned a better fate on the scoresheet. He's basically a quarterback whenever he steps on the ice, making quick, play-advancing passes across the rink.

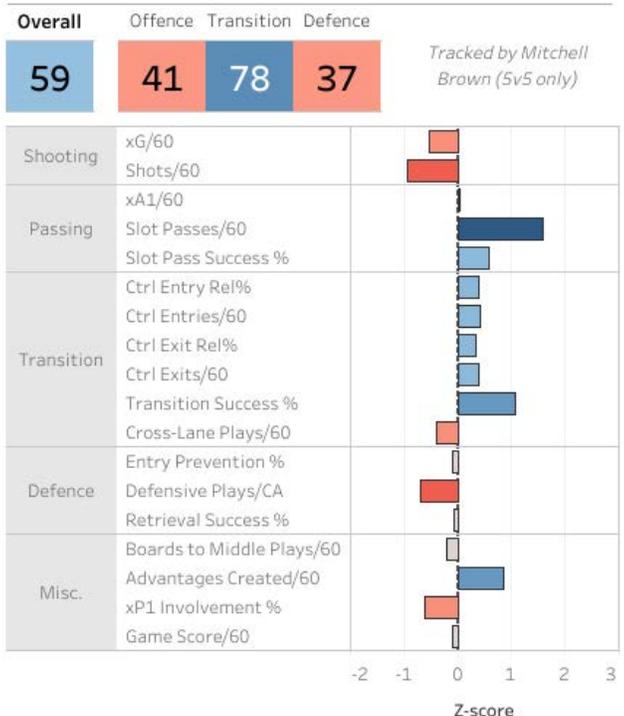
The quarterback-like approach appears in Fortescue's knack for finding teammates with short touch plays. They appear on the end boards, where he forgoes carries for quick passes along the boards, and on the breakout, where he turns pass receptions and steals into clean zone exits with medium-range feeds that slice through the forecheck. In the offensive zone, those plays are quick feeds to the inside after defenders overplay the shot threat.

Fortescue doesn't just read the positioning of opponents, he anticipates their momentum and deceives opponents to prolong openings, which should allow him to make these plays as he advances the ranks.

Defence might never be Fortescue's primary skill, but it's become a strength. "Physical, but controlled and proactive, he keeps opponents wide and then steps into them to kill the play," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote in March. "He pokes away pucks just as opponents expose the puck."

Drew Fortescue

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 173.6



Improving the skating, especially pivots and crossovers, will be key for Fortescue's development. He might never be a dynamic player, but he could become one of those bottom-pairing defencemen with strong underlying metrics.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Fortescue didn't accomplish much in this game. He was a non-factor defensively and with the puck, apart from a couple of passes up the board. He delays for support on breakouts. But he didn't show much play-building or creation potential. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fortescue went for a couple of skates in this game with mixed results. The puck rolls away from him when handling, but he understands how to set up defenders and change pace. The highlight remains the passing. He makes quick, controlled plays off retrievals. With space, he defaults to carrying. Without, he shoulder checks, deceives, and passes to the inside. Strange, but that suggests an NHL player. Add in the physicality, and he should make our board. Could be a solid mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A big game from Fortescue. Physical, but controlled and proactive, he keeps opponents wide and then steps into them to kill the play. He pokes away pucks just as opponents expose the puck. Simple, effective plays off retrievals. Breakouts were straight-forward plays, but he showed skill. He pressed the inside and tried to work pucks back into space. From the point, he's quiet but flashes ideas. In one sequence, he took a pass in motion toward the middle, looked for the D-to-D pass, realized that the defender was cheating, and then passed cross-slot instead. An intelligent read – not the type of play made by accident. There's definitely more skill here than I've previously given him credit for.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

The NTDP's best blue-liner in this game. Fortescue showed a similar level of activation and skill to Minnetian while killing all but one rush against (that result in the game's only goal against). He used the weak side consistently, getting above the play and becoming an option. Once receiving the puck, he used space, cutting back when necessary or simply dropping the puck back into space. Set up a goal by working up high from the boards, spotting Nelson rushing the net, delaying for a split-second, then passing. Another time, he cut inside and passed to the middle-lane driver. The rest of the plays were easy reads, but he kept play moving with positive plays. Then, there's the defence. He poked away pucks as opponents lifted their sticks, drove attacks wide, and stopped plays at the blue-line. Looked like a second-rounder in this game. The skating and skill are questions for me.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The best defensive performance I've seen from Fortescue. The pivots were problematic as usual, but he defended the rush skating forwards to angle. Eliminated off-puck threats, scanned regularly, and closed on shooting threats. He was effective offensively, immediately recognizing valuable passes and executing. He stepped into space then passed cross-slot in one sequence. On breakouts, he consistently escaped pressure and then passed to teammates in space, creating advantages. He looked like a potential mid-rounder in this game.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

There's definitely some mechanical ability at play with Fortescue. You saw it on more than one occasion in this contest, with the rangy defenceman stringing together some really slick moves in the offensive zone. Some really nice passes through layers, too. It wasn't quite as smooth on the breakout, where Fortescue took too long to work through his reads, turned the puck over often, and mostly looked panicked. Far too puck-focused in the defensive zone. I don't know, still too early to make anything of Fortescue.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fortescue hit a wicked shot-pass off the boards for a deflection chance. It wasn't a basic read, he had to look over his shoulder while managing pressure. Flung a lot of weak shots on goal from the point, but he was also trying to press the middle and create in transition. Few successful plays, but he had the right ideas. Beat consistently defensively. The defensive skating's an issue. He's always in recovery mode because he skates at the incoming attacker. Not great. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but some intriguing qualities.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fortescue blocked a shot halfway through the second and didn't return. He had a productive half game though. He activated straight down the middle, starting a give-and-go with his teammate. Draws pressure before passing. Defensive skating's a problem. He just skates towards the puck carrier paying little respect to other threats. One attacker just passed through him to a wide-open teammate up the middle. Always in recovery mode off the rush, but he shows some awareness and play-killing deeper in the zone. Curious to see more.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fortescue's skating is a problem. He makes up ground by skating at opponents. Sometimes, he angles, but in this game, he pivoted too early and gave up the middle. He lacks depth and his edges provide no separation. The forward stride and crossovers look better, although those matter far less for a defender. Still, Fortescue showed a lot of skill in this game. He won retrievals with quick passes and instantly sprinted up the middle for the return feed. In one shift, he set up a high-danger chance with that exact sequence, and then nearly had a scoring chance of his own. He showed vision and even a bit of deception (look off, hip pocket) to keep defenders guessing. Could be a pick, for sure.



Grade: C

Zachary Schulz

AGE 17.255 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Got that Dog in him

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	196 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	52	1	9	10	0.19
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	19	0	3	3	0.16
USA U18 "C"	WJC-18	7	1	2	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

On a blue line full of more controlled, calculating defenders, Zachary Schulz's intensity stood out nearly every game.

It's visible on the defensive end. Schulz is a suffocating rush defender, keeping his check tight without committing too early. He's physical, decisive, and times his interventions, tying up opponents just as the puck comes through and poking away pucks just as they expose it. Anticipates switches of coverage and instantly closes space on his new check.

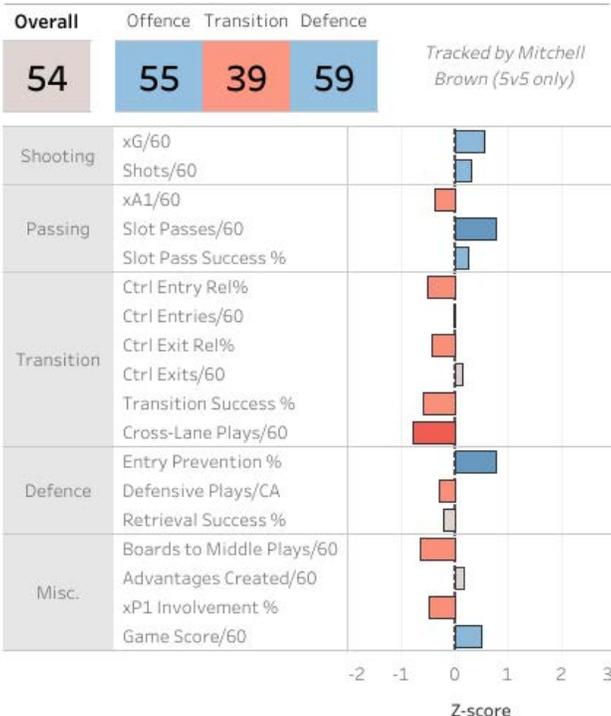
Most of the USNTDP's blueliners are primarily passers; Schulz brings puck-carrying. He evades pressure with crossover-heavy attacks, cutting around opponents to claim space and driving the net. But he also knows when to cut back and wait for support.

As the stat-line suggests, Schulz doesn't create much offence. His rushes create offensive zone time, but not much more, and he's not much of a passer. And without improving his skating depth, pivots, and crossunder (extension), both his defence and puck-carrying will take a hit in effectiveness at the next level.

Still, Schulz's work rate, off-puck defence, and aggression should create new ways to impact the game.

Zach Schulz

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 132.5



≡ **GAME REPORTS****J.D. Burke:** April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

Some really exciting flashes from Schulz in this game. If nothing else, he plays with a lot of intensity. Schulz explodes up the ice with crossover heavy strides, transporting the puck from zone to zone with a high level of efficiency when he had time and space; it was a bit of a different story when the Latvians brought numbers below the hashmarks, especially in the first period. Schulz made several really big stops in space too, registering support and stepping up on opponents physically between the blue lines. He even got a goal by stepping into a point shot and just hammering it past the Latvian goalie.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Schulz is best when he's carrying the puck. He evades pressure with crossovers as he works down the ice. He's also a proactive off-puck defender off the rush. He keeps his check close, managing the gap laterally and vertically. It enables him to get steals off passes and instantly close space on opponents when he can't. But he's beatable off the rush because of his skating. And he made a backhand pass straight to the other team for a goal against. He's pressured into poor passing decisions regularly. This was a tough game for the NTDP, but there's a strong end-of-board argument for him with his off-puck defence, puck carrying, and activation. He could become a depth piece.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Schulz flashes are mostly puck-rushing. He understands how to escape pressure. He cuts around opponents and funnels plays to the middle. Heavy crossover use, but his lack of depth prevents him from really exploding with them. Still, he uses those outside edges to accelerate through his lateral cuts. Not a ton of plays with the puck. The defence was solid. Beaten off the rush with speed, but closed space deeper in the zone for stops. Could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Schulz had the rush defence working in this game. He grabbed face-to-face stops and even switched off opponents to get the stop on the second effort. Skated through the opponent's hands to seal them off. Most of his puck plays failed. He made blind plays to the other team and passed too far ahead of his teammates. Didn't look like a pick, but this was a tough game for the NTDP's blue line overall.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Schulz is exciting to watch. He's aggressive offensively. He pinches often, jumps ahead of defenders for interceptions, and always moves through his pass receptions. The ensuing plays didn't lead to much, but he looked to the inside and created advantages for his recipient. Didn't get targeted much off the rush, but defensive skating looked like a potential strength. He kept a wide base, fully extended his crossovers, and showed projectable backpedalling habits (crossover into c-cuts, taking away the middle early). With a bit more confidence on breakouts, he could be a third rounder. More offensive impact would help, too.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Schulz was feeling it this game. He was activating regularly and leading the rush every chance he got. Weaving rush patterns featuring crossovers and quick stops allowed him to seemingly gain the zone at will. A couple of well-timed pivot turns confused forecheckers, too. He moves through passes and pass receptions. But his upright stance means his crossovers are barely crossovers; his speed advantage might not carry. And when he doesn't have the skating as an option, he defaults to simple plays. Similarly, he wasn't actually creating much when joining the play. He could be a mid-rounder.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Mostly, Schulz kind of faded into the background, often covering for a far more adventurous partner in Aram Minnetian. It

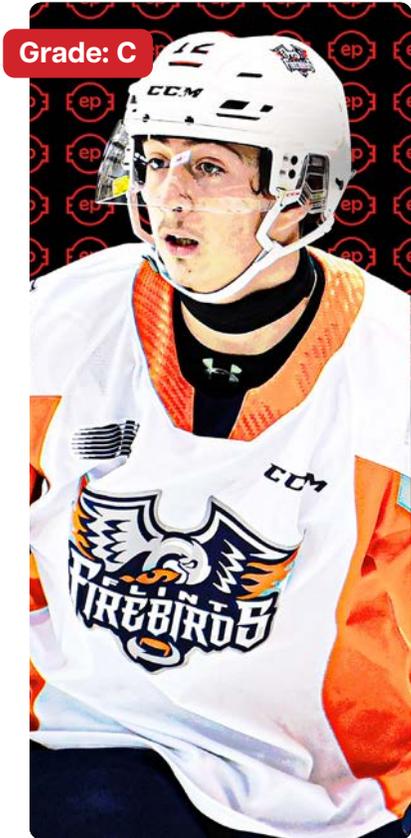
worked well enough for them as a pair, but it made getting a read on Schulz a fraught endeavour. Mostly, he stood out for his mobility. At least, he has great skating habits, exploding out of passes, skating through opposing passes and shots, etc. Need to watch a lot more of his tape to come decisively one way or the other.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Schulz was in the rush all game long. He started give-and-gos, passed laterally to teammates moving up the ice, and provided short support. Fired off a scoring chance with that activation, but the puck pattered off his stick. The skating's quick and functional – he integrates crossovers into his rushes and makes plays in motion – but he's not particularly explosive. Upright and choppy movements. The most pressing issue in his game looked like the breakouts. He has the patterns of an activating defenceman (using middle, give-and-go, etc.), but some of his passes are to teammates with more pressure than himself or miss their target outright. He could be a mid-rounder. Lots of intriguing qualities and that he's so invested in joining the play suggests his skill level will improve.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Schulz was one of the NTDP's more effective blue-liners in this game. The best play was an interception at the blue-line, jumping ahead of his check before ripping a cross-slot pass for a chance. Jumped in off the point for a little drag wrister. He moves through his pass receptions and understands how and when to attack space. The breakouts and transition game weren't effective. He deferred to his teammates and missed the best play. A solid defensive game, too. He stepped up on opponents timed with the incoming pass, established his gap in the offensive zone (which allowed him to pinch at the right moments), and kept attackers wide. Looked like a potential late-second/early-third with bottom-pairing potential./



Tristan Bertucci

AGE 17.178 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Flint Firebirds	OHL	63	11	39	50	0.79
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

After a slow start, the points came fast and furious for Tristan Bertucci. He recorded 42 points in 45 games down the stretch, showcasing upside. His work earned him a spot on Canada's U18 squad, albeit in a role that diminished as the tournament went on.

Bertucci's a lockdown defender with a budding transition game. He gets on his check early, matches opponents' footwork along the boards, and ties up sticks around the net. Physicality and pace kills plays across the rink, and make him a formidable 1-on-1 defender.

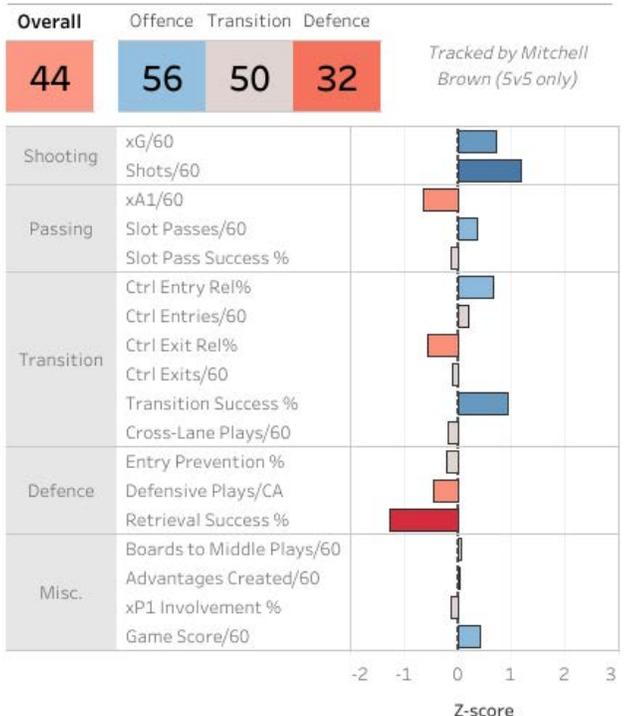
With the puck, Bertucci's primarily a shooter. He generates offence through point shots for deflections and rebounds with points shots, and occasionally catches a goalie off-guard with a funky release. On breakouts, he shows more advanced skills, like deception, weaving routes, and clever passes through opponents.

Bertucci's limited by his inability to manage pressure at this stage, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explains: "With pressure, he makes blind passes, rims pucks to no one, flings them out with passing options. And he struggles to keep positioning on retrievals. Right now, he struggles to get space – and he needs space to be effective."

As such, Bertucci projects more as a shutdown defender in the NHL.

Tristan Bertucci

D | Flint Firebirds | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 168.2



To get there, he will need to develop his defensive skating – maintaining a deeper stance and generating more power through his c-cuts and pivots – to better manage risk and contain speed.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Without forechecking pressure, Bertucci does everything. He fakes plays, manipulates incoming pressure, weaves through lanes, and creates advantages. With pressure, he doesn't do any of that. He makes blind passes, rims pucks to no one, flings them out with passing options. And he struggles to keep positioning on retrievals. Right now, he struggles to get space – and he needs space to be effective. Defensively, he's solid in 1-on-1s, where reads opponents and doesn't fall for their tricks. But he struggles off-puck, where he tends to wander and lets opponents work around him. Doesn't look like a pick for us.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

The best game I've seen from Bertucci since November. Joined the rush for a high-danger chance, drew pressure and faked it out before moving the puck, worked laterally along the point to access shooting lanes, and even created a couple of shooting lanes with his edges. The same issues remain. He's deceptive but unaware of what the deception actually creates. For example, he manipulated a forechecker but then passed to his defensive partner when there was a clean, unpressured pass up the middle. He consistently defaults to board plays over easier, higher value options. He does a lot of his trickery with his head down, which might be the culprit. Panics under back pressure. I don't see much defensive ability here. He's physical, but the off-puck reads and defensive skating aren't noteworthy. I understand why a team will pick him; there's upside. But he's not a pick for me.

Lauren Kelly: March 12th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci is mobile, engaged, and generally effective at breaking the puck out, although he was usually airmailing backhand shots to teammates out in the neutral zone instead of taking his time to assess better passing options. But for most of this game, he was kind of just there. Not too many activations, though he would walk the blueline on occasion to open up better shooting lanes. On one occasion where he tried to break the puck out himself instead of sending an outlet pass, he was stripped and fell over, which led to a partial 2-on-0. Gap is a bit wide, and he drops to one knee while defending the rush too quickly. I'm not sure there's a pick here.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci has a lot of modern qualities – rush activation, aggressive defence, east-west puck movement. The execution lacked in this game. His upright stance limits his quickness and ability to evade pressure. Offloads the puck when receiving a puck under pressure. No creativity and the tools limit his options. Defence is so committing; once he's beat, he's beat. Tends to wander off-puck, especially in the neutral zone. Drifts too far wide. In-zone, his aggressiveness often pays off. Not dynamic in the offensive zone. Didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci threw a hit to prevent a zone entry, pinched out an opponent along the boards, and activated into the play a couple of times. That was about it. He takes point shots with better options, wanders in the neutral zone, and gets beat off the boards. Committing defensive footwork. Doesn't show any skill unless he's given tons of space; otherwise, he offloads the puck immediately. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci scored twice with step-in wristers from the point, both mechanically-sound shots. This was mostly a down game otherwise. Defensive skating was a problem in this one. He wandered too high and wide, didn't bother building backwards

momentum, and failed to maintain athletic stance. Late in the game, an opponent skated straight at him and beat him. He did grab a couple of stops by stepping into opponents, including one well-timed off-puck read. From the point, he's a shooter. He tries to fake and open lanes, but ignores better positioned teammates an easier pass away. On breakouts, he never improved the condition of the puck. Just straight chips at his teammates to let them deal with the forecheck. Always passed to teammates with more pressure than himself. Not a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci scored with a walk-in wrister, firing far side with the puck out from his body. The shot's tricky. It'd be great if he activated more off-puck, jumping down the weak side or middle to become a passing option in scoring location. His game's disconnected right now. There are moments on the breakout, but he usually just makes simple plays. He throws pucks to teammates covered along the boards; doesn't seek to improve the condition of the puck. He clearly has the skill to create when activated. The defence was solid in this game, even if the basic retrievals suggested a lack of awareness. His rush defence is so crossover-heavy that it left him too far away from his opponent laterally sometimes, but he understands how to close the gap vertically. The physical play and aggression help offset some awareness limitations in-zone, and learning to become more decisive in coverage shouldn't be too challenging as a result. Looked like an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Bertucci struggled on retrievals in this game. He let opponents slip past him, failed to trap feet along the boards, and flung puck away when he arrived first. At least part of that's the skating. He cutbacks from his inside edges instead of using punch turns. History shows that's a great way to get forechecked into oblivion in the AHL. Given his retrieval touches, his offence wasn't working. It's all activation-focused, and when he's not activating, he's not creating. The defence wasn't there in this game, either. Didn't look like a draft pick, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Bertucci was activating constantly. He dropped pucks back to his defensive partner, then jumped up the weak side. Instead of retreating when his partner needed an outlet, he moved up the rink to become an option. Used the middle and followed up plays. The activation led to his goal, a short-side wrister with the release way out from his body. Tricky to read that puck was going. Set up a couple of looks by moving pucks into the slot under pressure, identifying a high-value target in one sequence inside a heel-to-heel, showing offensive upside. Occasionally defaults to low-percentage plays under pressure, and the breakouts lack the extra of layer of manipulation. Defence was a strong point – he killed plays early, eliminated off-puck threats, pinned attackers to the boards, and angled out attackers. But it might not be in subsequent viewings, given his crossover-heavy, committing defensive skating that left him vulnerable on several sequences. Looked like a potential second-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Wasn't all that blown away by Bertucci. Yes, he picked up two points - scoring on a slapshot from the point and having another wrister from the point tipped in. But he was prone to turnovers, especially trying to break the puck out in his own end, or sending the puck to teammates who were under pressure that didn't connect. Didn't scan much on retrievals. Struggled with control on his backhand. Skating looks decent, and he's probably a pick, but he needs to clean up his work in his own end.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A highly variable performance from Bertucci. Rush defence was a strength in this game: head up, taking the middle early, keeping his stick on the ice, then finishing off the play with the shoulder after guiding the attack to the outside. After winning possession, connected with several tricky passes through forecheckers to the inside, escaped with cutbacks over either leg, and then joined the rush. Uses space before shooting, but didn't show much notable playmaking ability in the offensive zone. Turnovers were an issue, especially after retrievals. He waited for pressure to come to him, rather than keeping his feet moving and engaging. Worsened the condition of the puck several times, passing to teammates with more pressure than himself. Some difficulty on the backhand. Looks like a pick, but lots of refinement is required.

Grade: C



Koča Delic

AGE 18.515 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 11, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Got that
Dog in him



Vision



Hockey IQ

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves	OHL	46	22	30	52	1.13

SCOUTING REPORT

Koča Delic has been a favourite of our North American scouts for some time now. He was a late addition to our 2022 draft board, landing at 113th overall, and we carefully debated his inclusion in this year's list, too.

Again this season, there were games where he looked like the best player on a Sudbury Wolves team featuring a few NHL prospects and at least one top draft-eligible one. He continued to act as the team's transition motor, finishing with one of the best profiles in that part of Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scout Mitch Brown's data set.

He orchestrated breakouts from the walls, passing plays in the neutral zones, and he consistently manipulated defenders upon entering the offensive zone, cutting back as they got on him, to reach trailing teammates skating inside space.

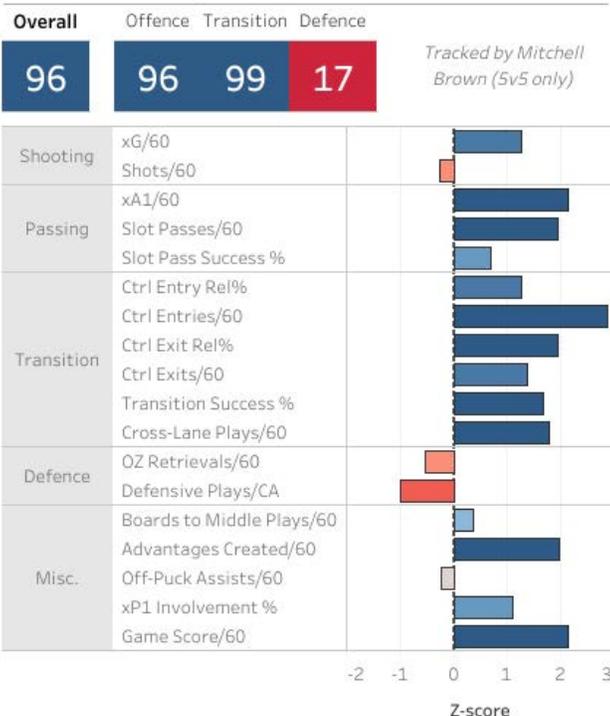
Delic understands the details of the playmaking game and he applies them consistently. And he's a relentless inside driver, who never hesitates to go through defenders to go to the net.

"Delic is everywhere," Brown wrote in a February report. "He circles the offensive zone, breaking angles and cutting inside when possible. No fear. He walked off the boards and sniped one, a play that he nearly replicated later in the game. He was putting the finishing

Koča Delic

F | Sudbury Wolves | OHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 108.9



touches on plays constantly, finding teammates for high-value scoring chances with deceptive feeds and quick lane recognition.”

But despite a better season production-wise and many flashes of high-end talent, Delic’s below-average to average tools doesn’t inspire confidence in his NHL projection. His skating especially has remained a weakness this season. His lack of development in that area makes it a lot more likely that he ends up becoming an OHL star and a European scorer than an NHLer down the line.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Looking at the noteworthy OHL players who were passed up in the 2022 NHL Draft



Meet the Team: Canada’s roster for the 2022 U18 World Hockey Championship



Scout’s Notebook: 4 first-time draft-eligible OHLers starting the second-half strong

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Lauren Kelly: April 5th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Delic does everything. He starts the breakout, leads the forecheck, comes back to support his defenders, retrieves pucks, and sets up his linemates for scoring opportunities. The motor is relentless, and in spite of skating limitations, he generates a ton of speed. Executed some difficult passes, through tight seams that landed right on his teammates’ sticks. He makes something happen on every shift. You can really see why, when he was injured, Sudbury struggled for large stretches of games - he was the missing link between Goyette and Musty. I’m not sure if this season was enough to warrant a selection as a re-entry given how many games he missed, but he definitely deserves a spot on our board.

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic was Sudbury’s best forward in this game, orchestrating their offence at every turn. He scored, got robbed on a tap-in, and set up chances. He plays fast, to the middle, and understands when cutback. Lots of variation in his rushes and offensive patterns; it’s tough for opponents to pin him down. And when one part of his game isn’t working, he finds another way to make an impact. The skating’s concerning. But he’d be a fine addition to the end of board. He flashed some real high-end playmaking at times this season and made some progress as a shooter.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic is everywhere. He circles the offensive zone, breaking angles and cutting inside when possible. No fear. Walked off the boards and sniped one, a play that he nearly replicated later in the game. He was putting the finishing touches on plays constantly, finding teammates for high-value scoring chances with deceptive feeds and quick lane recognition. If the skating were better, he’d be a top-64 pick as a re-entry. He’d also score more at this level. But hunched posture and lack of power makes his projection an uncertain one. I’d still pick him late. He’s a clear NHL thinker with and without the puck and the passing’s 6-grade, at least.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. London Knights - OHL

I still really like Delic’s vision, especially when he has a bit more space in the offensive zone, but he doesn’t seem to have

developed that high-end foresight that make the success of player of his size, especially ones, like him, who lack that extra skating gear. He supports the puck well, pressures the opposition, and is a strong link between his two puck-carrying, dominant teammates. He could fill the same roles at higher levels. I'd pick him as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Best player on the ice. Not close. Delic had a dominant shift, setting up a pair of chances. First, he went cross-crease for a deflection where most players shoot. Then, he intercepted a clearing attempt, deked around the first defender, attacked the middle. Then went look-off slip pass under the second defender's stick for a Musty one-timer. That had everything. Pace, planning, edge control, vision, manipulation; one of the best sequences I've seen this season. He perfectly positioned himself across the ice, picking up chances and instantly moving pucks to open teammates. He intercepted passes and won retrievals. He delayed when necessary. He looked like a clear pick as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

A couple of exciting plays from Delic, manipulating opponents to attack space and showing his edges. He's quick and elusive; fast to recognize space and prepares it with a quick fake in the other direction. More of a play-builder in this game. Lots of lateral passes, give-and-gos, and short-possession passes off the boards. The stride's limiting. He could be a pick as a re-entry, but it'd be nice if he scored more or was more involved in creating high-danger offence.

Lauren Kelly: February 26th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic is so disruptive on the ice. Uses his great motor to win puck battles, pressure carriers, and create advantages for his teammates. On his assist, he drew three defenders to him while stickhandling into the offensive zone before passing off to a wide-open Musty. Then there was that crazy effort on his goal to beat a defender for a partial breakaway and finish while falling. The skating's still not great. But he's consistently one of Sudbury's most impactful players. There's still potential for him to carve out a checking role in the NHL down the road, should he be selected as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Delic's still the driver on Sudbury's top line. The skating still lacks, with limited hip engagement. Better skaters easily manage his rushes, or would, if he wasn't such a proactive passer. He works pucks laterally constantly, passing under or around the stick's of defenders with ease. Attacks defenders, then drops pucks into the space behind him. Always working play off the boards and to the middle. Never stationary off-puck; moving in and out of pockets and presenting his stick. He's a short-range advantage creator with a high motor, but the tools might still prove too limiting. Still work paying attention to this season.

David St-Louis: April 28th, 2022 - Finland vs Canada - U18s

Delic is not all that visible in these games, but if you look for him, you see him put up the same effort as in the OHL, zooming all over the ice, on the backcheck and forecheck. He made some plays in this game and "scored" by stopping at the net after a rush. Otherwise, he blocked shots and started a couple of passing plays. His awareness of his space is a bit lacking and he's not a creator on this stage.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Team USA - U18s

The pace of the game felt a bit quick for Delic who looked like he was rushing himself all game. I liked his constant scanning of the ice, however, especially on retrievals and the way he manipulated defensive gaps off the rush with changes of speed. He used his outside edge to slow down and let a teammate move in front of him to push the defender back and create more space to make plays.

Mitchell Brown: April 13th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

I've come down on Delic a bit throughout the season. I don't see him creating much high-value offence. Everything's short-range and quick. He's not delaying or manipulating to create the best play. As an average skater at best, he'll have to add those to make the NHL. The good news is that he's still an active, surprisingly physical player with projectable off-puck offence. He sprints routes, times his moves into space, and gets open across all three zones without any issue. His pace and details should make him a big scorer next season. But I don't think his NHL odds are particularly high.

David St-Louis: April 9th, 2022 - Sault Ste.Marie Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

There is a lot to like in Delic's game, starting with his motor. He's fully invested in his every play and every shift, offensively and even defensively. His ideas are also, for the most part, great on the ice, even if the execution falters sometimes as he lacks the skating ability to separate and the high-end handling skills. He knows where teammates are and what the right play to make is. And he also has off-puck sense: timing and the right routes, especially off the rush to create space for others.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Another one of those junior skill players, although Delic's motor helps offset the untranslatable habits. The skating remains a limiter, although he plays fast – too fast. By adding a delay game, he'd upgrade his projection. He's not a perimeter player (because he tries to press the middle), but he often gets stuck out there anyway. Somehow inefficient while also playing a relatively low-risk game with the puck. I didn't see anything to suggest a pick in this game, although I've seen better. Probably a mid-third.

Lauren Kelly: April 3rd, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Delic is all speed, but the skating still lacks power. Lots of DZ scanning, got open and a shot off for a shorthanded chance, quarterbacked the powerplay at one point and was moved back to Goyette's top line after the first period. Good work down low on board battles and stepped up his physical game as the physicality ramped up. Got into a couple of tussles with Steelheads players in the third period. Worked well on board battles. But while he played on both special teams (and this entire game was pretty much played on special teams), I don't know that he made much of an impact at even-strength. Mississauga basically ran Sudbury's show aside from when they were shorthanded. I think he's a mid-round pick but I generally like his decision-making when he has the puck.

David St-Louis: April 3rd, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I'm coming down on Delic a bit. The skating is really limiting. Even if he can generate speed, it affects every other part of his game, especially the shooting. It's imprecise and uncoordinated for the most part. The deception is always the same and in the same situations, with a lane to the net -- fake shot into pass across. He has some wall play abilities; he moves the puck quickly. The first touches are pretty clever most of the time; they lead into the next play. He's much better than Goyette at recognizing and creating offensive advantages; the mental pace is higher. The skill limitations, the smaller size, and the lack of high-end creation potential makes me think of him more as a C prospect.

David St-Louis: March 25th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Nothing impressive about this performance. Delic barely touched the puck in favourable situations and he didn't manage to create much, except earlier in the game on a couple of rushes. His defensive game was a bit loose; he missed at least one switch that could have led to a goal. Skating is still a 4.5. I still like his energy level in battles and the occasional flash of skills. His passing game is really the standout element, how fast he sees teammates, anticipates their position, and connects with them. There is some deception in his game, but we should see give-and-gos and manipulations appear more and more frequently as he matures.

David St-Louis: March 20th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic's skating is problematic. Really hunched over and incredibly wide. Yet, he tilts at the hips enough to add some

explosiveness to his stride. There might be hope that he gets his mobility up to a 5, or NHL average. He plays with pace, especially in his passing. Very quick ID of teammates, fast processing, and the patterns in his game are pretty interesting. He knows how to manipulate gaps off the rush by using criss-cross movements. He dictates many of his lines plays and he plays with a kind of recklessness and physical engagement is surprising for someone his size.

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

The mechanical limitations really hurt Delic's projection. I'm not sure he manages to fix his skating all that much. He's still dynamic in certain aspects, so maybe it won't matter too much, but he's also undersized; the things he tries to do on the ice, the wall battles, the net-front drives, they don't work all that well for him now. I do appreciate the energy and the attempts. The hockey sense is probably a 6-6.5 grades. His open ice reads and plays and manipulations are quite advanced, like cutting across to open up a defender and let a teammate (Goyette) move past that defender into space. Delic passes it to him for a clear chance. He's there defensively, generally checking the right attacker. He's interesting, but more of a project.

Lauren Kelly: March 9th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic was one of Sudbury's best players in this game. He was heavily involved in the forecheck and battles for the puck in his own end and scored both of Sudbury's goals. The first came off a faceoff, as he corralled a loose puck before ripping it past the goalie. On the second, he read off a teammate with the puck and crept back door for a one-timer into an empty net. There was also a couple of sneaky pass deflections or tipped passes that he attempted, too. He's got good offensive instincts and with his defensive play, I think there's an argument to be made for taking him with a late second, for sure.

Mitchell Brown: March 6th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic was mostly a tertiary player on his all-DY line. Gains middle, then kicks puck to the outside and finishes his off-puck route – just didn't get the puck back often. One point-blank chance that deflected off the end of his stick. Lots of scanning before retrievals and pass receptions, and he usually made the right play. Play selection continues to improve: forced passes and missed opportunities aren't nearly as numerous. The pace and inside attacks are clearly NHL-calibre. He brings defensive value through pace and discipline, too. But does he have a clear offensive dimension for the NHL beyond being quick guy who moves puck quickly? Not sure. Still, he's far more intriguing than most players in this group. 70s type.

Lauren Kelly: February 27th, 2022 - North Bay Battalion vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Delic showed good speed through the neutral zone rushing pucks up the ice and worked well in small areas. Lots of pass receptions in the slot or on the doorstep, but also fed the puck down low to Goyette for Sudbury's second goal. Still not exactly sure where he projects long term or where would be a fair bet to see him drafted, though I'm thinking at this point he's at least worth a pick.

Lauren Kelly: February 21st, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Delic was probably Sudbury's best draft-eligible in this game, but the consistency was lacking a bit. Showcased good passing abilities, whether it was breaking the puck out or finding teammates in the offensive zone. Worked well in tight spaces, pressured puck carriers, and kept up with play as it went back and forth several times on shifts. The problem was that on some shifts, he just wasn't noticeable. He picked up the primary assist on the 1-0 goal, but I'd say his best play of the game came off a desperation play where somehow he was the last line of defence and dove out in the crease to save a goal (no idea where the actual defenders were). I like his attention to detail and speed, but his game could use some refining so he's not overskating plays and making more of a consistent impact with each shift.

Mitchell Brown: January 23rd, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

The most impressive draft-eligible prospect in this game by a decent margin. Delic plays too fast, I have no doubt about this. He throws away pucks in transition, unnecessarily dumps it in/out, and misses teammates with his slot passes because he's too far

ahead of the play. But, he's getting closer and he continues to show NHL skill. Connected with a perfectly timed cross-slot pass between three defenders for an assist. On a 2-on-1, he handled until the defender bit, then passed for a chance. There are look offs and one-touch passes in his game now, and most impressively, he had one pass where he faked the deke then passed to the trailer. Scored by moving away from the net for a deflection off a turnaround pass. Uses give-and-gos in all situations, including in OZP. He looked like a second-rounder in this game. On the quite the scoring tear, with 15 points in his last nine games.

Lauren Kelly: January 14th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Delic was a surprise standout in a game dominated by his linemate. Showed off some slippery skating early on, with great edges. His acceleration was a bit hit or miss at times, felt like he could benefit from lengthening his stride and he's not generating a ton of power. But it didn't hold him back from being an effective player in this game. He drew a tripping penalty early, was always chasing after the puck, and showed great effort trying to get back to impede a breakaway (though acceleration issues are what prevented him from getting anywhere near to stop it). He had a great heads up pass on the 3-0 goal down to a teammate in the crease, looking for the deflection the entire way. Also had some nice tape-to-tape, crisp passes executed well. Great individual effort on Sudbury's sixth goal, rushing 200-feet and protecting the puck in the neutral zone before dangling around a defender and taking the puck to the net where the rebound was buried. A very strong offensive showing, but I'd like to see what he can do at the other end of the ice. If he keeps playing this way, a second round selection isn't out of the question.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

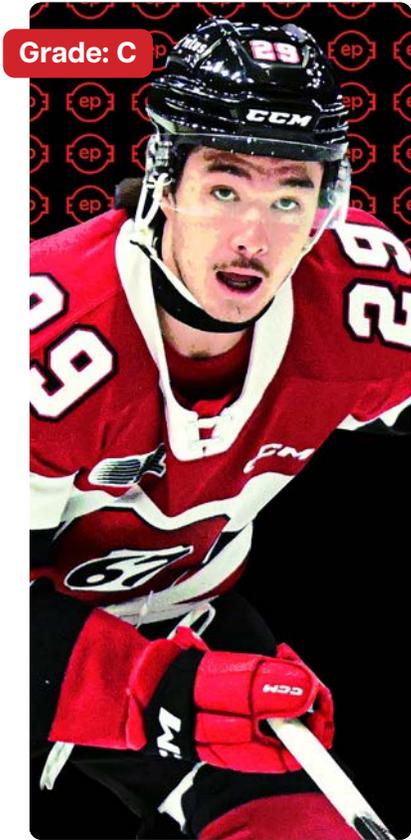
Delic plays a bit too fast at times. He races ahead with the puck, skates straight into defenders, and then loses possession. Sometimes misses the odd opportunity to use his teammates to achieve a better result because he's so focused on pushing the play ahead. Some skilled breakout passes off the wall to kick play to the inside, and then following up receive the puck again. He's mostly a playmaker, preferring short-range, volume playmaking into the slot over hunting the best play. That's fine, and he's a crafty skater with a few tricks (like the mohawk) to survey. Playmaking provides his primary method of getting a puck off the boards to the inside, but inconsistent timing on these passes (often passing too early for the window) limits his completion rate. Certainly has some NHL skills, but his combination of production and inefficiency hurt his case.

Mitchell Brown: November 14th, 2021 - Sudbury Wolves vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Another mildly interesting performance from Delic. He's a bit inefficient with the puck, often from accuracy issues, but I like the ideas driving these plays. He tries to pass through defenders, sneak pucks cross-ice, and even used his hands to manipulate a defender's stick and then pass back into the space he just created. Active on the backcheck, but seemed a bit outmatched in battles in this game. He's probably a fringe pick at this stage -- really depends on the development of accuracy, timing, and skating.

Mitchell Brown: October 28th, 2021 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Delic looked like an NHL prospect in this game. He was effective the entire game, but at first through more simple plays. Mostly quick short-range passes to an open teammate or driving the net. But as the game wore on, he tried some more advanced stuff. Nearly connected with a spin-around backhand pass as he skated towards the point. Executed quickly, often with great timing. Created out of retrievals. Unsure about the skating or handling skill, but he showed intelligence, creativity, pace, and passing skill.



Grade: C

Cooper Foster

AGE 17.529 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ottawa 67's	OHL	68	19	20	39	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

On a deep, well-rounded Ottawa 67s team, Cooper Foster's play-building style was a perfect fit. Several nights, he outplayed his higher profile teammate Luca Pinelli, with his off-puck game, work rate, and patience leaping off the screen.

Foster's a play-builder, preferring to delay, cutback, or pass rather than partake in a needless footrace down the boards.

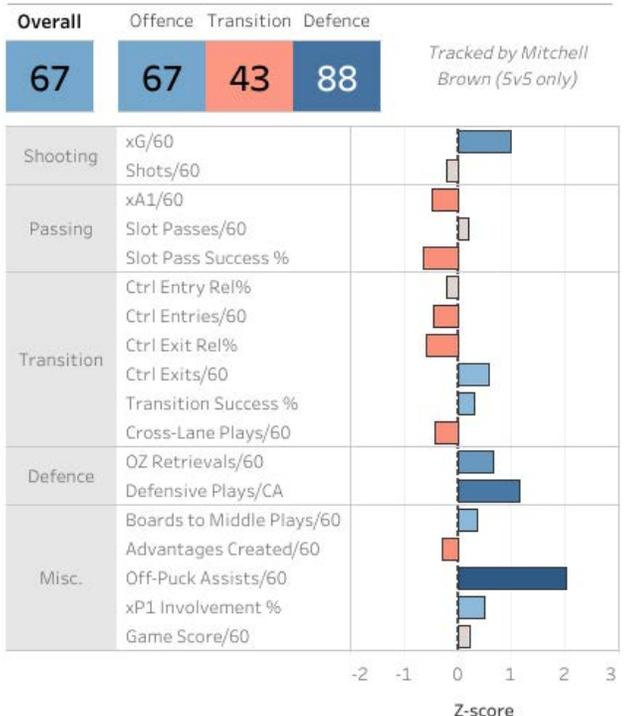
He always scans and draws pressure before passing, and he has the passing skill – slip, backhand, and even some deception – to connect. Along the boards, he steps into opponents before cutting back, creating a lane for his escape.

When the puck leaves Foster's stick, he dashes into the slot for a return pass or whacks away the defender's stick to open space for a teammate. Small adjustments make him a passing option around the slot. He's an impactful defender through his motor, proactivity, and aggressive closeouts, too.

Foster doesn't create much high-danger offence, despite his skills. Perhaps that's just the consequence of his situation, but he misses opportunities to take the inside, doesn't show much creativity, and isn't a shooting threat from distance. Simply put, he's a bit risk-averse.

Cooper Foster

F | Ottawa 67's | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 118.8



Still, Foster already plays an NHL game. That should make his transition to the professional ranks smooth, but without putting the finishing touches on more plays and improved tools, reaching top league might prove tricky. He'd be a fine mid-rounder.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Foster's not necessarily creative, but he's smart. He's patient, not forcing plays to instead delay and wait for lanes to open. Not a skilled handler, manipulator, or cunning playmaking, but he spots teammates moving into space, connects. That's where he separates from Gardiner in my eyes. The defence is just as good, too. He's proactive and applies non-stop pressure. A hard-worker. Offence can be hard to fully identify in these 67's games because they play such a low-event style. Perhaps there's a bit more here. A late-rounder, but not a candidate of the board.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

The best prospect in this game. Wasn't close. Foster puts on a masterclass in play selection and puck-getting. He won races for retrievals, pickpocketed opponents, and instantly knew the next play. Sometimes, he passed into the slot. Others, he attacked the slot for a shot. Grabbed a goal by skating through back pressure on his way to the net. He didn't force plays but he also tried stuff. He was looking for teammates in the slot, even under pressure, and connected off the backhand. Not a manipulator or much of a shooting threat for distance. He tried to manipulate a defender on a sort-of 2-on-1 but failed. That's fine. He still looked like an NHL prospect in this game. Checker upside, but he looked worthy of a pick.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2023 - Ottawa 67s vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

A quiet game from Foster, who didn't really have possession much. Challenged puck carriers, made one retrieval in the defensive zone, and tried a no-look pass from the boards under pressure that didn't make it to anyone. Not a draft pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A bit more creativity from Foster than usual. He used a hesitation move to beat a defender, looked into the slot for passing options, and even forced a play that wasn't there! In general, he showed vision, awareness, and ability to access lanes (backhand and pace to beat defenders into lanes). Doesn't give away with his intentions when preparing to pass, but he's not necessarily deceptive. His off-puck work led to a goal and a chance for himself, jumping into a passing lane to deflect a pass mid-air before firing off the rush. Whiffed on his best look of the game, however. The tools are average projections, at best. He has the habits (e.g., he steps into defenders before cutting back), but lacks separation ability. He's a checker at the next level but there's a bit of potential. Could be a fine late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Foster scored the winner by whacking a rebound mid-air off the backhand after dashing to the net. He's a very consistent player, bringing the same steady presence every single shift. He gets open in space, skates his routes, applies intense pressure without the puck, supports, and anticipates switch offs. He's not creative, but he's patient with the puck. Nothing that suggests a scorer at the level, but he looks like a pro. A late-round or draft-plus type. Doubt we rank him.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A solid game from Foster. He's patient, aware, and gets open in space. Could've had a goal with a one-timer off the rush. Lets pressure arrive and waits for plays to develop before moving the puck. Draws and steps into pressure before cutting back – a complete change from earlier viewings. He doesn't create much high-value offence. He starts on the outside and keeps plays

there, but he's not killing plays – he's working them high and low and taking space when possible. Ultimately, that might be enough to keep him from the NHL, but I'm curious to watch him more.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Foster has some physical skills and a desire to make contact. If he could leverage that into offence, he'd be more effective. Letting pressure arrive, cutting back, and skating through their route would prevent the low-percentage, low-value plays that he relies on presently. Not creative and the tools are below-average projections, except maybe the shot. The skating has some flashes, pushing his knees past his tools and showing some outside edge skills. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A better game from Foster. The motor was here, as were the off-puck reads. He's aware and decisive, allowing him to capitalize on poor passes and also create poor passes. Turned a neutral zone steal in a shot off the rush. With the puck, he was more patient and changed the point of attack with lateral passes. Grabbed a chance with a between the legs deflection at the side of the net. In the offensive zone, he was unaware of space with the puck. Opponents gave him space and he just passed to the point. No creativity or real play-creation ability, but the flashes will keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: November 21st, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Erie Otters - OHL

The same as the first viewing, minus the puck plays. Foster's solid enough, but the lack of puck skills and creativity really stand out as issues. He's a straight-line, single-speed puck carrier. Only takes what's available, and even then, it's usually the simplest option. Doesn't really advance the possession when the puck's on his stick. Didn't look like a pick.

Lauren Kelly: November 20th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Foster played his depth forward role well for the 67s in this one. Good positioning in his own end, protected the puck well on the cycle, and had a couple of good steals in the neutral zone where he read off the rush and picked off passes. Overall quiet game though. I'm not sure there's a draft pick here.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Some flashes from Foster. He's a consistent off-puck presence. Always backtracking and applying pressure. He skates into opponents' space. Gets open and supports play. Grabbed a pair of chances, including a deflection goal under pressure. He lacks separation skills, but wins positioning and keeps moving. Straight-line player who doesn't show much creativity, but he understands when to slow down or cut back off the rush. Looked like a late-rounder. Depth player upside. Worth keeping an eye on.



Grade: C

Beau Jelsma

AGE 18.384 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 28, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Motor



Analytics Darling

Player Info

LW/C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'9"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Barrie Colts	OHL	67	31	30	61	0.91

SCOUTING REPORT

For the straight-second season, Beau Jelsma appears in the Elite Prospects Draft Guide. Truthfully, we weren't entirely surprised that Jelsma went undrafted, given his stature and underwhelming counting stats, but after a season of growth, we remain confident he will find his way to an NHL organization.

Jelsma's never out of the play. His pace overwhelms, but he shows nuance by angling opponents into the boards, winning body positioning to secure possession, and proactively supporting the puck across the ice. When the puck arrives, Jelsma instantly attacks defenders with a mix of powerful strides and crossovers. He charges up the ice, putting defenders on their heels, before firing or hitting open teammates.

While the latter plays are still a work-in-progress, Jelsma remains on the board because his playmaking has improved, as noted by Elite Prospects OHL scout Lauren Kelly: "Flashes some playmaking abilities, delaying to survey pass options and finding tight seams through sticks. He anticipates, reads, delays, picks better lanes, attacks the inside, gets to open areas, and will drive the net on rushes."

By leaning heavier on those plays, along with more lateral passing and give-and-goes in transition, Jelsma could find a place as a fan-favourite buzzsaw in an NHL's teams bottom-six.

Beau Jelsma

F | Barrie Colts | OHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 109.1



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



OHL Stock Watch: Beau Jelsma making a case for himself as a draft re-entry



Looking at the noteworthy OHL players who were passed up in the 2022 NHL Draft



Scout's Notebook: 4 first-time draft-eligible OHLers starting the second-half strong

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lauren Kelly: March 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Another classic Jelsma performance in this one, using his motor to push pace, get in on the forecheck, find space, backcheck, and force turnovers. He cuts back, works pucks from the boards to the middle, and forces his way through traffic to try and score. Flashes some playmaking abilities, delaying to survey pass options and finding tight seams through sticks. Stole the puck in the neutral zone, dropped the puck off to a teammate and then drove straight to the net. Had one really nice sequence where he stickhandled past two defenders on his way to the net, but had his stick checked at the last moment before he could pull the trigger on a shot. His energy and work rate is always high. I'm a fan, but he's a re-entry and the production isn't in his favour. I believe he's worth a pick, but I also wouldn't be surprised if he's passed over again.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Jelsma set up a pair of goals late, including one where he delayed (slightly) and then found a teammate sprinting to the net. Mostly a shooting performance otherwise. He got open in space, pushed off defenders, and rushed the slot at the right moments. Fired pucks instantly upon reception. Linked off-puck reads together, getting open at the net front, then working back high as his teammate did to stay in the lane. The motor's always impressive. He could be a late-rounder. The issue remains the upside. He's not a manipulator or especially skilled. Looks like a fourth-liner if he makes it.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Jelsma scored a pair of a powerplay goals, a deflection and a slick two-touch wrister in-tight. He's an effective off-puck player, both offensively and defensively. He gets open, detaches from his check at the right moments, eliminates threats, angles opponents, and goes all-out when necessary. He's not creative or even much of a creator, even still. There are flashes of playmaking, but nothing advanced in this game. He looked like a late-rounder but there's still chance he hits because of his details and motor.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

A shorthanded goal for Jelsma, but that was about it offensively. He mostly just sprinted from one play to the next. He lacks a change of pace game and the playmaking isn't really there, except in short-range plays. The defence always shines, though. He has advanced footwork for a forward. He angles, uses heel pushes, and keeps his stick in the middle. He doesn't just rush at opponents; he traps them by taking away their space. Given his pace and specialized skill set, he has a chance to play. Maybe a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

I didn't see the improvement in this game. Jelsma was a straight-line speedster without much vision or creativity. He's a confident, refined defender and skilled shooter. Deep understanding of the off-puck game, eliminating threats, becoming an option, and always moving his feet. He looks more like a checker than a potential scorer at the next level. Not the type of game that gets a re-entry picked.

Lauren Kelly: January 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Jelsma was easily the best draft-eligible player (even as a re-entry) in this game. Jumped to glove down a loose puck in the OZ, cut to the middle, and went bar-down for the game's first goal. Picked up a secondary assist on Barrie's fourth goal and another on the empty-net goal. Drew a penalty with his relentless work in the corner trying to win a battle. Lifted a stick to save a goal while defending on a 2-on-1. He still has a great motor, but he's not using his speed just to get in on the forecheck. He anticipates, reads, delays, picks better lanes, attacks the inside, gets to open areas, and will drive the net on rushes. If he continues to play like this, he's got a good chance to get picked as a re-entry this summer.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Jelsma's started this game shot out of a cannon. He quickly grabbed a couple of chances and set up another. Everywhere on the forecheck and backcheck. His speed, combined with his direct routes and angling overwhelm opponents. After winning possession, he always looks to the middle first. The hands, vision, and general skill level look better this season. He's still a full-speed-ahead attacker, but now he makes the early pass after gaining the zone, starts give-and-gos, and attacks defenders inside crossovers/at an angle. Much better rush patterns. He's still a fourth-line projection, but his skill – pace, off-puck instincts, defensive tools – mean he could be a valuable piece to an NHL team.

Lauren Kelly: October 15th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Jelsma's puck skills have definitely improved from last season. He keeps his head up when handling, surveys his options, delays, and then passes off to open teammates. And it hasn't come at the expense of his off-puck play, either. Constantly attacking down the middle, hard work on the forecheck - though the zoomies seem to have been reigned in a bit, he's choosing his routes a lot better - and he's winning more battles along the boards. Lots of leading the rush, typically going wide instead of taking the puck down the middle of the ice, but he almost always enters the offensive zone with controlled possession. He's been a bit snakebitten to start the season, and only just picked up his first point of the season in this game, jumping on a turnover and breaking out of his own end before sending a pass from the neutral zone to spring a teammate on the breakaway. Hopefully it's a sign of more offence to come, because I can't see a path to an overage NHL draft pick for him without improving on his production from last season.

Mitchell Brown: April 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Seems like Jelsma figured out how to best use his pace and skill. Instead of sprinting down the boards, he cut inside and tried to push through the defence. If no seam opened, he'd cut back. He even cleared the zone, reset, then attacked to create a scoring chance. Grabbed an assist after delaying just after gaining the zone, handling around pressure, then passing to the trailer. The usual stuff still applied: defence, anticipation, playmaking from the boards. He's very inside-driven, tries to attack the net constantly. He'd benefit from trying to bring the puck across the goaltender instead of jamming the puck into the pads. He's certainly a third or fourth-line at the next level, but if this nuanced approach to offence is real, he could get closer to the former.

Mitchell Brown: April 3rd, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Jelsma's a checker at the next level. An effective one? Most likely. He's a puck retrieval machine and a subtly brilliant defender. Where most players sprint towards the point, he angles to push players into the boards and prevent the shot. In the offensive zone, he turns steals into offence and gets open in the slot. With the puck, he's a bit limited. He plays too fast – he just sprints from one defender to the next. He offloads possession too early. Doesn't have a delay game or much puck patience. If he adds those, his pace and flashes of handling, shooting, and playmaking could elevate him to a third-line role. Either way, he's more of an early-third candidate.

Mitchell Brown: April 2nd, 2022 - London Knights vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Not much in terms of NHL upside shown in this game. Jelsma mostly just sprinted from the one puck carrier to the next, getting the odd steal in the process. Scored the overtime winner, had a couple of looks at 5-on-5, but there was nothing advanced about these plays. The beginnings of the delay game I saw earlier in the season haven't appeared much in the second-half. He could become a useful energy player down the line, but his skating will have to improve to there. Ankle flexion is just about there along with a high stride frequency, but his hips sit too high and he kicks his feet wildly. Better mechanics will tap into his natural quickness. Could be a fine third rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 27th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Jelsma's pace and playmaking usually shine. This game was no different. He tried a couple of passes through the slot instead of forcing the wraparound – one connected for a point-blank chance. Consistently establishes body positioning. Gets inside defenders and spins away at the perfect moment. Took more of a short-range and off-puck skating role in transition. Overskates pockets of space, but he always finishes his routes to back off defenders and create space behind. Game isn't particularly nuanced, but he's a solid bet to play a fourth-line role in the NHL. Expanding the flashes of deception and delay game could get him a place on the third line.

Mitchell Brown: March 6th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Jelsma's a relatively easy player to project to the pros. He plays faster than his feet allow sometimes, but that he's so confident on the inside, so aware of body positioning, and so naturally quick, ensures he'll carve out a role somehow. A number of scoring chances and a pair of goals. Off-the-pass wristers, net drives, outside leg wristers in transition, and slot cuts before firing were some of his weapons. His shot's probably an NHL average projection or a bit above it. The passing is a bit more interesting, and likely determines his ultimate upside. If he learns to slow down, delay, hit the trailer, and adjust puck positioning to pass pucks through defenders, he could be a third-liner. Without it, he's probably more a Quad-A player. To be fair, he's a capable down-low playmaker who makes slick backhand passes to the inside, even with a defender on him. The defence and puck pursuit are major pluses that could help him, too. I think he'd be a fine third rounder. Lots of a great details, but the potential to get Will Bitten'd is high.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Good off-puck performance from Jelsma in this one. Provided the screen on the third goal to help fool the goalie, stole pucks in the neutral zone and forced turnovers. Came back in support, didn't necessarily make the dynamic plays that he's shown in previous viewings but his decisions were what the play required of him. Quiet as far as the offence went, but he plays well with pace and was solid in his own end in this one. Probably a second or third rounder. There's lots of upside here.

Lauren Kelly: February 3rd, 2022 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

With Barrie missing several key forwards due to injuries and suspensions, Jelsma played on the top line this one and was one of the best Barrie players on the ice. He had some great flashes of offensive vision in this one, after making good reads in his own end to pick off passes and turn play up the ice. Played with high pace and intensity in the offensive zone. I'd like to see a little more consistency in the defensive zone from him - sometimes he's engaged and pressuring puck carriers, but he can get caught puck watching too. He scored Barrie's second goal by outbattling a defender much taller than him and banging the puck in on the doorstep while falling, and he could've had a couple more goals in this one too. Height and strength are probably going to be turnoffs for teams at the draft, but I think he's a mid-round pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2021 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Jelsma's a draft pick, for sure. He plays fast, but it doesn't seem like he's already maxed out that area of his game. Lots of defensive details: heel pushes to angle out attacks when making up space, taking the extra stride to steal possession and establish body positioning, and direct speed on the forecheck to pressure the puck carrier. Offensively, he has flashes of top-

nine skill: delaying for the trailer, passing through pressure, peeling pucks off the boards and bringing them to the middle, and off-puck timing. He scored by sprinting to the net front, gaining positioning, then using his skate to redirect the pass. More deception during the set up of his passes will take his playmaking to the next level, but his pace allows him to access lanes many players can't. Could be a solid late-second or early-third.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Jelsma played 8 minutes in this game and was effective for most of them. He zips around the ice, bouncing from one check to the next. Much better than my previous viewing in puck battles: he established positioning on the puck, prepared space, and slipped out the backdoor. Wasn't involved in transition beyond a few chips, but it seems like he's trying to play a simple game. Give him an opportunity and he creates, as he did with a convincing shot that became a pass for a deflection opportunity. Lost his check on a goal against by over-backchecking. He looks like a draft pick, for sure.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Jelsma needs to play more. He's extremely effective in limited minutes. He plays fast, gets inside, and shows skill as both a passer and shooter. Assesses defensive pressure and reacts accordingly -- it never seems like he's creating unneeded risk for limited reward. Pace is the name of his game, but his stride can't keep up. The ankle dorsiflexion is there, but the hips don't sink into his movements, his feet kick upwards, and he finishes his strides too soon. The crossovers feature some hopping, but generate speed and he integrates them appropriately. Mohawk usage. Had a great set up cross-slot for a one-timer in a strong dynamic set up -- hands in front, weight over his stick ready to shoot or pass without notice. He lacks deception, or even much thought behind his plays, taking low-percentage shots instead of manipulating the defender to set up a teammate. Still, there's a lot here. He seems like a draft pick, even if he doesn't start scoring this year.

Lauren Kelly: October 29th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Jelsma's speed was something to behold, especially as the Colts were behind for most of the game. He was constantly zipping around the ice and putting pressure on the defense, coming back to help his defensemen out, and getting involved in battles. His tenacity paid off with the tying goal in the third period, which was a turned over puck that found him right in the slot that he fired top shelf. He showcased a ridiculous release on that goal. While the Colts as a whole got better as the game went on, Jelsma was one of the few that was consistently engaged and relentless in his pursuit of the puck all game long.

Mitchell Brown: October 28th, 2021 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Jelsma has zero physical game right now, even though he tries. He doesn't know how to establish body positioning, how to escape pressure, or how to engage in battles. When he's first on the puck, he backpressure simply runs through him without any resistance. Really struggles to get his space. But it doesn't deter him. He attacks the inside with regularity, in varying ways: faking the outside dash then delaying, cutting across the front, or passing to an open teammate and relocating to the inside. Some small-area playmaker skills, hitting the trailer or teammates on the same side of the ice. Hands-in-front, distance-between-feet, chest-up wrister that brought a surprise amount of pop. Moves quickly, but the stride lacks major refinement at this stage. He definitely looks like a draft pick.

Lauren Kelly: October 7th, 2021 - Barrie Colts vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

I came away from this viewing with a positive impression of Jelsma overall. He wasn't really involved in the offense much at all, but I really liked how he played in the defensive zone. He was constantly moving and keeping an eye on opposing players as they moved around, and he uses his stick well to try and disrupt passes. For a smaller player, Jelsma isn't afraid or hesitant to engage in board battles; in fact, he can almost be like a dog with a bone when it comes to trying to get the puck back. His determination is relentless in those situations, and most of the time he's successful. He's a great skater, with nice acceleration and smooth edges. Jelsma does need to work on faceoffs if he wants to continue to play centre at further levels of hockey, and I'd like to see him get a little more involved in the offense as he gets more comfortable to the OHL.

Grade: C



Calem Mangone

AGE 17.863 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 04, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Motor



Pest

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'9"

Height

161 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	67	18	29	47	0.70

SCOUTING REPORT

Five-foot-nine Calem Mangone doesn't share many similarities with the NHL forwards of his stature. The power forward section contains more stylistically similar players, whether that's the inside-driven Matthew Knies or net-front super pest Brady Tkachuk.

Mangone enters every board battle with a plan: Get low, crush the opponent, attack the inside. He knocks opponents off balance or launches them into the boards, spins off the next check, then dekes or passes to the slot. With non-stop scanning and deft hands, he usually chooses the right play and has the skill to complete it.

When Mangone isn't trucking through contact, he's drifting away from opponents around the net, eliminating off-puck threats, and forcing steals higher in the defensive zone. He's a scoring threat in tight, where his hands and physical play shine.

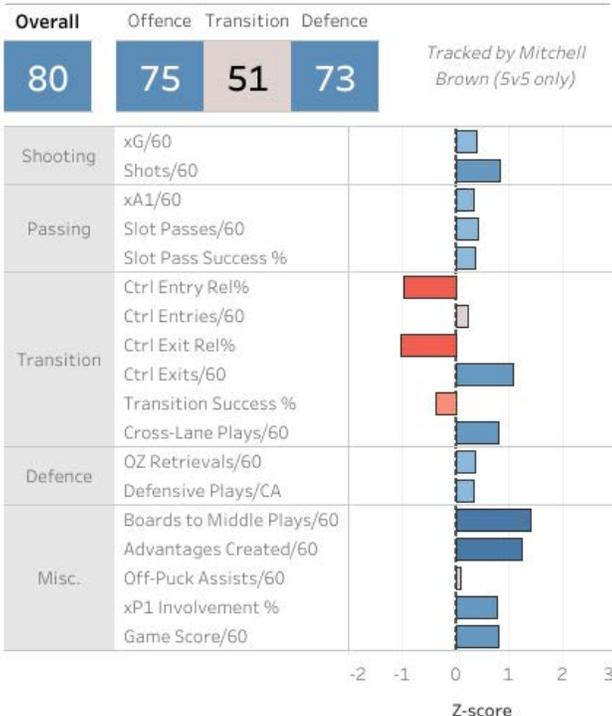
Elsewhere, Mangone's impact is more muted. He's not separating from opponents with speed or deception. His skating might fall just short of NHL-calibre, which might prove costly for his every-inch-counts game. If he improves it, he could become one of the NHL's most fun players with his physical style and inside play.

Expect a big season from Mangone next year on a loaded and development-oriented Saginaw Spirit team.

Calem Mangone

F | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 146.9



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Every Mangone game is the same, which is great. He threw some big hits on the forecheck, won battles, and out-leveraged opponents to gain body positioning and create space. He's always getting pucks off the boards, whether that's with a drive or a quick pass under pressure. The highlight was a backhand pass through a tiny opening as he circled the net. He's also a hard-worker and disciplined defender. Understands how to get open around the net. The issues also remain the same. He's not dynamic in transition. He tries to manipulate opponents but his low pace moves and lack of quickness prevent him from beating opponents, even when he tricks them. At his size, that might mean he's not a pick this year. But I believe in him and Saginaw's development. I think, especially given his base – physical skills, off-puck movement, shooting, playmaking, inside play – he takes off next season.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Mangone's everywhere. He scored with a two-touch wrister off the rush and grabbed a bunch of scoring chances. His shot's more of an average projection, starting his release from the side of his body and the puck behind his feet. But he understands the finer points of off-puck offence: spacing, getting open inside the slot, winning body positioning. The latter's how he does a lot of his work; he's always skating through opponents' hands. And there's also playmaking here. He manipulated a defender to create a cross-slot pass from the goal-line, a high-end play. Always finds a way to impact the game. Effective in all three zones. With better mechanics, he would challenge the top-45. Now, he's probably more of an end-of-board candidate for us.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A bit of a quiet offensive game from Mangone, save for his late-game assist where he manipulated a defender before passing to the hash marks. He really sold the fake, combining a weight shift, puck positioning, and a look off. The defence will be a clear strength at the next level. He's already proactive. Wins battles through body positioning and well-timed stick checks. Gets under and inside opponents. Shows some play-building ability by stepping off the boards and looking laterally for passing options. He's a bit limited mechanically and he's certainly not quick. Seems like a bit of a long-shot to play as a result but he's a smart player with physical skills on a great development team. He will improve. He's a solid end-of-board candidate for us.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Mangone was decent in this game, though he wasn't his usual high-energy self for stretches. He was stopped on the breakout in the neutral zone a couple of times after running into traffic, and other times he was forced to pass off despite making controlled zone entries because he wasn't able to escape pressure. Good stickwork from behind to impede breakouts, and used his smaller frame down low well to seal off breakouts. Couple of nice scoring attempts, delaying and dragging around players' legs before releasing quickly. Was a pest pressuring carriers on the penalty kill. Overall positive showing.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

A really solid game from Mangone. He's so aware. He always pre-scans. Chooses the right play, whether that's a one-touch pass through a forechecker or a longer possession before passing cross-ice. Lots of east-west puck movement, drawing pressure first. His physical skills are advanced. He enters battles already aware of his options, gets low, skates through the hands, and cuts back as soon as the opponent leans in. Defensively-sound, too. He's a cool player and should become a solid pro. The question is the tools. He flashes hands, but he likely a below-average skating projection. He's still a candidate for our board.

Lauren Kelly: January 12th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Mangone's motor just doesn't stop. He's constantly in pursuit of the puck, pressuring opposing players into turnovers, he's excellent on the forecheck, and despite his smaller stature, he protects the puck well along the boards and he's difficult to strip pucks off of. He can cut back and change directions quickly, attack the inside, and stickhande under pressure. He makes

intelligent reads and anticipates players well, constantly scanning and takes advantage of mistakes by recovering loose pucks and distributing them quickly (usually with no-look passes) to teammates. Defensively aware as well, typically sliding back to cover the open points if one of his defencemen has jumped up into the offensive zone. His handling abilities, coupled with his intelligent off-puck reads, make him a force at both ends of the ice, and a mid-round pick isn't out of the question.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Mangone scored with a deflection, cutting into the slot in front of a defender and presenting his stick to the defender. An intelligent read. The skating lacks in-tight and there's not a ton of quickness to his game, but he instantly takes plays to the inside. Attacks behind defenders, across, or simply just drives to the middle without much concern for his safety. Accuracy came and went, but the passing looks like a strength. He sent a backhand pass through a defender for a chance and built the offence effectively with shorter passes to the inside. Skilled handler but prefers to play pucks into space and recover them on the other side, even manipulating the defender's feet first. If the skating was a bit better, he'd be a clear second-rounder. Can't be too far off.

Lauren Kelly: December 29th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Mangone was involved in everything in this game, from leading the rush, getting in on the forecheck, laying hits, winning battles, pressuring puck carriers, and scored a goal by redirecting a pass in the slot. Very slick handling abilities, with the ability to manipulate defenders, cut back quickly, and maintain possession under pressure. Constant motor as well. Saginaw was pretty prone to DZ turnovers in this one, so I would have liked to see him come a bit further back into his own end to help support. Some of the passes he tried to send at his top speed misfired, but he showed great awareness and anticipation in the offensive zone, blowing past defenders and finding space. There's a lot to like here.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mangone finished off a rebound for a goal, one of a few chances he was involved in. He's a skilled handler and an inside-driven attacker. Always looks to take the middle, getting defenders on his back before sprinting to the inside. Perhaps too much of his game runs through his hands; he misses the passes that would have a better result sometimes. Defence impact was strong, coming across the hips to cut through the hands, anticipating changes of coverage, and winning battles. The skating looked below-average, which significantly hinders his chances of making it. Need to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

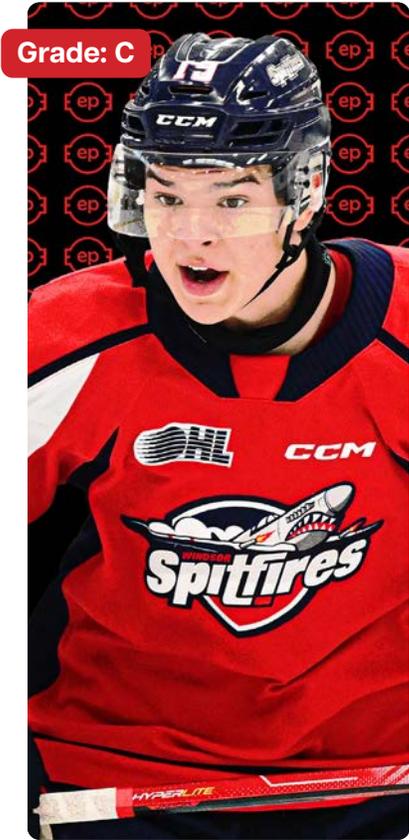
The usual stuff from Mangone, with a little extra physicality. He crushed Akey early in the game, threw a few more hits throughout, and consistently won body positioning and skated through opponent's routes to keep them on his back. He's a clever handler, exposing the puck to defenders before shifting back across. Looked to attack the middle from the boards, as usual. Disciplined backtracking to keep opponents to the outside. Lots of lateral, play-building passes in transition to keep his team moving. Dynamic style, but lacks the dynamic feet to bring his game to the next level. Still, he needs a spot on our board – lots of qualities that project well to the NHL, even if the pace and skating need work.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Impressive performance, showing a full skill set. Mangone distributed effectively, hitting teammates moving the inside, delaying to wait for their arrival, and even connecting with a one-touch redirection pass under pressure. Consistently won body positioning to protect the puck, keeping his keeping moving and then coming across the opponent's body to find separation. Inside-driven. Escaped with a cutback along the boards before attacking the middle for a chance. Manipulated a defender to turn them into his moving screen for a shot. A very physical performance, too. He was hunting down the puck carrier and trying to send them through the boards. He's most comfortable in a glide, putting the weight on his heels, and sometimes lacks pace with the puck. Overall, an intelligent player, but the tools might be limiting. Could be a second-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Mangone's so slick. Hard to believe he was a U18 pick. He's a patient player, combining off-puck intelligence and handling skill with an inside-driven, give-and-go style. It was his off-puck movement around the net that led to Misa's goal, engaging the defender and pushing off the far post as the defender chase, creating space in the inner slot for Misa to shoot. Gets pucks off the boards. Not a pacey player, necessarily. He prefers glides to handle the puck and attack space. But he recognizes options quickly and adapts. Transition game was a big hole, turning the puck over under pressure a lot, especially on the breakout. Works to get pucks back, coming across the hips and anticipating passes. Looked like a late-round candidate in this game. Curious to see more.



Grade: C

Ethan Miedema

AGE 17.485 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter



Vision



Raw Talent

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'4"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	6	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Windsor Spitfires	OHL	36	11	20	31	0.86
Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	32	9	12	21	0.66

SCOUTING REPORT

If there's one prospect who will immediately make us look foolish next season, it's probably Ethan Miedema. The 6-foot-4 winger has been a top player in the age group for years, with the shooting and passing skill to fill the back of the net. While it took him a while to regain his scoring touch with the Kingston Frontenacs, he finished the season with 11 points in seven games.

Miedema has dual-threat scoring potential. He easily turns passes into blistering wristers, curling pucks around sticks when necessary. A clever passer, he chooses the right pass for the lane whether that's slip, hook, saucer, or backhand. He spots his options early and guides teammates into space with his feeds.

Despite Miedema's size, he's not much of a puck protector at this stage. He's too upright and on his heels to absorb contact and separate with his edges. When skating combines with an over-reliance on perimeter shooting and a lack of physical skills, he's easily pushed out of games. That's what happened in most of our viewings.

There are flashes of better habits from Miedema, including a delay game off the rush and a more proactive approach to the off-puck game. His motor improved through the season, with several viewings suggesting it's a strength.

Ethan Miedema

F | Kingston Frontenacs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 110.0



Given Kingston's highly skilled, young team, Miedema should become an offensive leader next season. He has the tools for it. But to translate it to the next level, his skating and reads must improve.

≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



OHL Stock Watch: Brandt Clarke playing best hockey of his career as games matter most



OHL Stock Watch: Matthew Maggio taking off for the Windsor Spitfires



OHL Trade Deadline: Breaking down the biggest – and boldest – moves

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Miedema's a clever passer. He connected with hook, slip, and backhand passes, choosing the right pass for the lane. Always in a glide, but he spots his options early and makes quick plays. Leads teammates into space. The rest of his game was weak. He overhanded the puck, showed limited awareness of space off-puck, and didn't create any meaningful offence. The flashes are exciting, but there just aren't enough in my viewings to project him with any confidence.

David St-Louis: March 22th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

I didn't see anything NHL worthy in this game. Despite his size, Miedema forfeited body positioning on retrievals. His skating lacks refinement and his handling, too. He has a high stance and he handles with a very high grip, too. Not a lot of plays in this one.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Miedema showed a bit more skill in this game. He showed a bit of deception, but only in glides. He has some urgency with the puck, trying to get to the net and moving pucks quickly. There was also a physical to his game. But he showed much puck protection or manipulation ability, skills needed to play in the NHL with skating as such a disadvantage. At least he was anticipating the opponent's next move on the forecheck instead of chasing. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Miedema lacks mechanical abilities. He handles with a high-grip and skates with a high-stance. He lacks agility as a result. I didn't see a lot from him in this game. He floated away from the puck for the most part, but he did stand out on one particular shot. He attacked to the top of the circle and pulled off a precise and hard drag shot that cleanly beat the goalie.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Too many of Miedema's touches serve little purpose. He circles the offensive zone and tries to deke, but they never amount to anything. He's not much of a scorer or playmaker, but he has tools. He has passing and shooting skill, but he's so limited by poor decisions and skating that falls apart early into shifts. Showed a bit of a defensive game and some physicality. But I don't see a path for him to the NHL, at least not in these last few games.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Miedema shows skill when his feet allow it. In one sequence, he reloaded high and received the puck and shot without moving his top hand – a perfect example of shooting off the pass. His game is mostly passing. He spots teammates on the other side of defenders and looks for a quick pass to escape. He sees options. A lack of deception and creativity hinders his ability to take advantage. A bit of physicality but only when chasing the play. Didn't show any notable puck protection skills. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

A lot of plays from Miedema in this game. He was active defensively, angling attacks wide, pickpocketing opponents, and stepped into opponents. Pre-scanned, looked for options up the middle. A couple of 6-grade shots, including a booming one-timer and a drag shot set up at angle to shoot around traffic. Passes missed their targets, but he also never gets the puck back after passing. Tough to evaluate him. But there were some skating flashes, pushing his knees past his toes and engaging his hips early in shifts. The edges failed him several times. He looked like a mid-rounder in this game. Passing and shooting skill with some defence, but a long-term projection because he often forces passes and doesn't use space.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Miedema picked up a point in this game after circling back up to the point and threading a wrister through to the net, but I really don't know if he's a pick. Passes through the slot were nowhere near teammates, attempts to clear the puck out of his own end were stopped at the blueline by opposing defenders, and the skating continues to be a big concern. He's following the play instead of creating. Throws the puck away on breakouts because his teammates are nowhere near where he sends the puck. Defensive engagement was better, but he doesn't really seem to have a plan to disrupt possession aside from shadowing a player from behind. I'm not really sure what the projection would be, but I'd be hesitant to draft based on this game and what I've seen all season.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Miedema showed some playmaking from behind the net, that was about it. Nothing interesting in the set ups, but he's aware of his options from that position. Forced a pass or two and he was limited in transition. He's makes clever passes to escape pressure on breakouts, but only moved pucks straight up the boards for zone entries. When he beats a defender, he can't create space – low-percentage shot. No adaptability or creativity. Skating, defence, and shooting were all issues. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Miedema's not really a factor on the backcheck or forecheck. He mostly just floats. It's the same off-puck. He supports the play, but doesn't anticipate the next play. He's not a factor in transition. But he showed a bunch of passing skill and vision. He made a several quick-possession plays to open teammates, hitting the middle-lane driver off the rush, going backhand through pressure to the inside, and delaying before finding a teammate. Has some handling ideas, but he locks that top hand to his side, which prevents him from pulling the puck closer to his body to evade sticks. He's tall. That will get him picked. But with such a weak skating posture and no puck protection (at least in this game), he's going to have a hard time in the professional ranks. The vision won't be enough.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Miedema created a pair of chances by cutting inside off the rush and finding a teammate. For the second, he manipulated a defender with a look off before pulling the puck in and passing under their stick to the teammate driving the net. Otherwise, a really quiet game. A strong backcheck led to a goal for, but a weak one led to a chance against. Defence is variable. Skating is all over the place. He pushes his knees past his toes and even engages his hips at times, but it falls apart quickly. He's aware but late to make plays. The one high-level flash was interesting. He looked like a mid-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: January 8th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

I'll give Miedema credit where it's due - the engagement was much improved compared to my earlier season viewings. There was a concerted effort to try and beat defenders to pucks and get himself open to receive passes from teammates. The skating remains a big hindrance, though. He's not winning races to pucks, in spite of the increased efforts. When he runs into traffic or pressure while carrying the puck, he can't escape it and either loses possession or has to battle for it back. He laid a couple of hits in this game in an attempt to regain possession, but the puck had already been passed off. Passes to teammates just seemed to misfire, and he may have been better served delaying to survey options instead of one-touching passes across the ice to them. Almost every rush up the ice where he had possession seemed to end up in a turnover as he was trying to get the puck over the blueline. He knows how to get open in the offensive zone, recognizes breakdowns in coverage well and get shots off in tight. But he also got crossed up with his teammates on more than one occasion trying to cycle in the offensive zone. This was the strongest viewing I've had of him all season, but I still don't know if I'd draft him based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: December 30th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Miedema didn't play a whole lot in this game (under 12 minutes), and it was more of the same story - trying to fly the defensive zone before his teammates have controlled possession, breaking the puck out and losing possession trying to carry it over the opposing blueline, not being able to escape pressure. Scanning was inconsistent in the defensive zone, though he did have one notable read that led to him picking off a pass and turning play up the other way. There were a few instances where he tried to execute one-touch passes and no-look passes across the ice, but his puckhandling is a detriment to his playmaking abilities and the skating doesn't look much better. Don't think I'd draft based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 23rd, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

I really don't know what to make of Miedema. There's no defensive engagement, little awareness, he's at a standstill on most shifts in his own end, and as soon as he sees his defenders regain possession, he's flying out of his own end in hopes to receive an outlet pass (which is unfortunate, because his defenders are more than likely to lose possession than get the puck to him). He scored twice (he picked up an assist as a result of winning the faceoff). One was a deflection, and the other he outskated a defender to the far post for a tap-in on the powerplay. One-on-one, he tries to outmuscle defenders by going around them. Sometimes it works, but even if he's able to get around, he doesn't maintain possession. For a player with his height and frame, he avoids contact like the plague, again relying on his stick in board battles. He's kept to the outsides on the rush, and a lot of his shots are from the perimeter. The individual skill just isn't strong or consistent enough on a shift-to-shift basis, and his off-puck and defensive play is too glaring of an issue right now to gloss over. I wouldn't draft based on this performance.

Lauren Kelly: November 5th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

I don't even know where to begin with this viewing. The skating might look worse in person than it does on video. Miedema can't keep up with the play, gets stopped easily when trying to lead the rush, tries to deke around defenders to no avail. One curl and drag shot off the rush that was stopped, and then zero backcheck up the ice after. Breakout passes get turned over because he tries to move the puck across the slot instead of sending it up the ice. Lost possession on a carry in the neutral zone and was stopped at the blueline with a stick check. At one point, it looked like he wanted to throw a hit but changed his mind on contact and bounced harmlessly off the intended target. To cap it all off, he took one of the most baffling delay of game penalties I've ever seen - picking up a loose puck in the neutral zone under no pressure, circling back to his own end to survey his options, and then shooting the puck out of the rink instead of passing off to either of his wide-open teammates. His OZ carries aren't dangerous; lots of cycling, kept to the perimeters, can't penetrate the inside with the puck and is always forced to pass off to another teammate either down low or back up to the point. He struggles to make plays under pressure. He was almost burned on a lost puck race that he only ended up regaining possession for because a Steelheads player slipped coming out of the penalty box, which gave him enough time to get back and retrieve the loose puck. He rarely gets the puck in dangerous areas. Didn't show much promise in his own end, and the intensity and effort was inconsistent at best. A month into the season, and I'd be hoping to see any small improvements. But based on what I've seen so far, I wouldn't draft this player.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Miedema's play is a big concern when he's in his own end on some shifts. It doesn't help that he's constantly hovering near the tops of the circles, hoping that his teammates are able to regain possession and start the rush the other way. In doing so, he leaves opposing players wide open in the slot despite recognizing that they're uncovered. There's no concerted effort to try and get back to cover them. It doesn't help that he doesn't scan in his own end, either. Tried the spinorama-jam-puck-in on the doorstep on the powerplay, to no avail. Recovered a turnover and then tried to toe-drag through three players, and he immediately lost possession. He tends to only use his stick to try and win puck battles, despite him being 6-foot-4. Not much of a physical game either, in spite of his size. Received the puck on an odd-man rush, then delayed for too long before he ran out of runway and was forced to just shoot it at the goalie - he never looked to pass to his open teammate. The one assist he did pick up in this game was a secondary assist, a short pass in his own end to start the rush. I just really haven't been impressed at all yet. I wouldn't draft right now.

Lauren Kelly: October 6th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

I'm not going to put too much weight into this particular viewing given it's only one game and it's also the beginning of the season, but I don't think I saw a single redeeming quality in Miedema's performance. His skating is a big issue; Miedema moves up and down the ice at a leisurely stroll, but when he needs to pick up the pace, his skating turns into a weird kicking/running hybrid that impedes his transition abilities. He loses possession on rushes up the ice with no pressure. On one sequence in the third period, he had possession and started the rush, saw pressure forming in the neutral zone and circled back to his own end. Then he tried to start again, and with no pressure on him, he lost the puck carrying it through the neutral zone. His puckhandling abilities were lacking in this one, and he was constantly turning pucks over or unable to handle passes he received from his teammates. He hovers near the play, but doesn't engage in battles for the puck. He lost three board battles in this game and he didn't put up much of a fight either. One notable sequence was him sending a backhand shot on goal and then skating around the net instead of fighting for a loose puck in the crease. He tries in the defensive zone, but it doesn't look like he knows what he's supposed to be doing there. Little to no scanning or awareness of his teammates in his own end, and he's moving all over the place. His pass attempts didn't connect much in this one either, and only had a couple of instances where he showcased his shot, getting down on one knee to get an odd-looking one-timer off in the slot. He didn't have the puck nearly enough to demonstrate any manipulative playmaking abilities. I might burn this tape. It just wasn't good. But hopefully it's just one game.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Big game from Miedema. He scored with a precise wrister off a pass early in this game, then followed it up with several standout plays. He deked around defenders, arrived in space at the right moments, and made quick plays to the middle before joining the play as strong-side support. Disruptive on the defensive end, anticipating plays and getting his stick in the lane without over-reaching. The skating's a massive issue. When the proactive passing doesn't appear/options aren't there, he struggles to beat pressure and gain the zone. Lacks quickness and agility. Fear it's going to be a long road for Miedema.

Mitchell Brown: October 28th, 2021 - Guelph Storm vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Miedema's future hinges on skating development. He's lumbering with very inconsistent mechanics. Still, he flashes offensive brilliance at times. He slips pucks through defenders, passes around them, and has a terrific feel for pressure. When he runs out of space, he already knows the next play and executes quickly. The skating limits his defensive game, and he's not particularly effective in transition beyond short-range passing. He shows deft touch, vision, and foresight. Of the many big forwards Windsor's had in the past five-or-so years, Miedema's the most exciting.



Grade: C

Ondrej Molnár

AGE 17.600 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HK Nitra	Slovakia	22	2	3	5	0.23
Erie Otters	OHL	34	4	15	19	0.56
Slovakia U20 (all)	International-Jr	3	2	1	3	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Slovak hockey is on the come up. The 2022 NHL Draft was proof. A couple of years ago, the 2023 NHL Draft looked just as promising. Dalibor Dvorský, Maxim Štrbák, Alex Čiernik, Martin Mišiak, Samuel Honzek, and of course, Ondrej Molnár were the top names in a deep, exciting group.

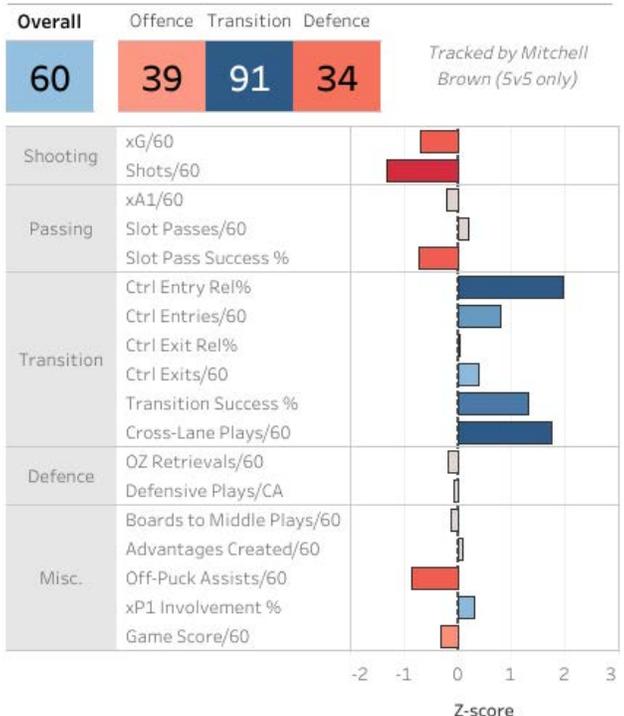
For Molnár, the potential was obvious. He filled the net in Slovakia's junior ranks, made his pro debut in his 15-year-old season, and dazzled as an underager in every international event. But after failing to earn a consistent top-nine role with HK Nitra, Molnár packed his things and headed to the OHL. While points weren't easy to come by, he still showed some NHL upside.

Molnár's best in transition, building speed under the puck before attacking opponents with speed. Once they back off, he cuts inside. If they don't, he cuts back or begins a passing play. Instantly, he recognizes passing options in transition, whether that's a cross-ice pass through the opposition's forecheck or a quick pass into the slot for a chance.

"Molnár's effective in positions with a clear option – he has the skills to adapt," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote. "Without it, his limitations appear. Goes into the end boards blind and he's largely lost as an off-puck attacker. He skates

Ondrej Molnar

F | Erie Otters | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 103.6



too close to his teammates, positions himself in impossible lanes, and doesn't try to win body positioning on opponents."

Consequently, some of the shine around Molnár has worn off this season. But it's also worth considering context. Adapting to new environments isn't easy, especially the OHL's third-worst offence. If he improves his reads and tools, he could become an NHL regular.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Molnár's fine as a linker of plays. He makes quick passes to open teammates, occasionally adapting to access the lane. Shows a bit of play-building in transition, but he's often glued to the perimeter. Erie didn't have the puck at all. Not a game that provided much insight into his skills, but I still see a player more limited by his mechanics. Really struggles with the off-puck game, too. He has some defensive value; it's more offence. He overskates space and doesn't stay in lanes. He didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Molnár was the most effective player on his line, backtracking effectively, setting up a couple of chances, and creating playing with speed in transition. Grabbed an assist by intercepting a pass, gaining the zone, cutting in, and passing to the activating defenceman. Set up a chance to the middle by pulling the puck back in his hip pocket, adapting to the lane. He's effective in positions with a clear option – he has the skills to adapt. Without it, his limitations appear. Goes into the end boards blind and he's largely lost as an off-puck attacker. He skates too close to his teammates, positions himself in impossible lanes, and lacks pace to his decisions. Could be a late-rounder, but not a candidate for our board.

Lauren Kelly: March 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Molnár just didn't stand out positively in this one. He played the point on the first powerplay unit, was stickchecked from behind and lost the puck on a rush, gave the puck away in the neutral zone because he didn't scan before attempting a no-look pass through the middle. He's not a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Molnár had a nice game on the forecheck but nothing relevant for projection purposes. He anticipates and sprints. That's it. He was very quiet otherwise. He made a couple of off-the-boards passes in the neutral zone that took vision. While he's often aware of his options, he's not aware of pressure. He doesn't skate through opponents' space or even fend off pressure with his stick. And he lacks tools to problem solve. He's the classic puck-in-front, stride-only, single-speed junior puck carrier. I didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Molnár had one flash, using a couple of quick moves to escape pressure before attacking the middle. The rest of the game was just a collection of poor decisions with the occasional defensive stop through physicality. He lost the puck several times, including on a partial break. He passed out of his best look of the game. Showed some dynamic skating qualities – crossovers and weight shifts – but his speed wasn't an advantage at this level. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Molnár was mostly a passenger in this line, with a couple of flashes. He takes advantage of passive gaps by cutting in space. A solid night without the puck, getting open, breaking up plays with well-timed pokes, and a couple of overwhelming backchecks. He's not dynamic, largely because of the tools. He handles the puck in front of his body in rhythm with his strides. He doesn't really change lanes or deceive, allowing opponents to steadily push him to the outside. Lacks quickness. Scored with a far side

wrister with a ton of space, nothing of note. Killed a play by overpassing. He didn't look like a draftable prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Molnár set up a chance by delaying off the rush and finding the trailer, faking out the defender first. Missed a tap-in later on. His game is more patient than creative. He attacks quickly, then hits the brakes and waits for support. Smart exit passes, hitting teammates moving into space through a forechecker or two. Tools looked average – puck in front, inside edge handling style. Although he flashes some projectable crossovers in one sequence. Not sure if he's a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Molnár was solid in this game, but nothing that really suggested an NHL player. He tries to outrace opponents wide. If it doesn't work, he shows a reasonable amount of proactiveness to cut back instead. He makes simple, effective passes to open teammates with the occasional more advanced read that didn't connect. He works reasonably hard on the backcheck, but prefers to reach rather than stride. He avoids contact at times. The tools looked average.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Banska Bystrica vs. HK Nitra- Tipos Extraliga

This was probably the least effective showing from Molnár I've seen this season, though he did play a bit more than usually. He was just buzzing around the ice, but not actually accomplishing much aside from applying pressure, though not actually getting any major steals as of result. Some fine transition passes here and there. The skating remains a debatable grade for me, probably 5 or 5.5 depending on how much you value pace and output versus mechanics.

Lassi Alanen: October 21th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. Liptovsky Mikulas - Tipos Extraliga

Molnár made the most of his ice time here, adding a goal and a primary assist with just eight minutes of 5-on-5 time. The assist was a good example of what he does at his best: stealing the puck behind the net on the forecheck and immediately hooking a pass to the net-front for a goal. Also capitalized after a defender tripped up when trying to receive a loose puck in the NZ, getting into a partial breakaway and beating the goalie with a slick inside-leg release. Molnár really should try to scan more before receiving the puck on the breakout near the boards, as it often happens at least once per game that he blindly tries to pass to the center in the middle but turns it over instead. Otherwise, I don't really know how much more you could ask with his current role. The skill level is still a pretty open question, but he does a lot of good stuff, too.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. Spisska Nova Ves - Tipos Extraliga

I wish Molnár would get to play more, but that's not been the case in the recent weeks. Here he only received around eight minutes of ice time and after a bad turnover breakout pass from boards to middle that led to a quality chance against at the end of the second period, he didn't get to touch the ice in the third. Not the most involved game from Molnár with the puck, though he did get one good look off the rush after a cross-slot pass but couldn't get enough leverage behind his one-timer to truly challenge the goalie. I liked him as a play disruptor, though, stripping the puck away from the puck carrier multiple times in the neutral zone throughout the game.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. Banska Bystrica - Tipos Extraliga

Molnár has his strengths and weaknesses. He was fumbling pucks in transition, trying to beat defenders in straight lines off the rush, handling in front of the body instead of in the hip pocket, and being quite easily shut down many times. On the other hand, he made some clever exit passes under pressure, once following up with a weak side activation, sneaking behind the defender and receiving the puck back in the slot and getting a high-danger rush chance. One nice delay into finding the trailer off the rush, too. Skating didn't look quite as good as it did on my first viewing, though. His work rate defensively was nice, but at times it came at the cost of sound positioning and especially scanning.

Lassi Alanen: September 16th, 2022 - HK Nitra vs. HC Nove Zamky - Tipos Extraliga

Molnár is a ton of fun to watch. Despite not logging any points in his season opener with HK Nitra, he was easily the most involved player on his line. Molnár was really effective in transition, being clearly an above-average skater for this level and taking full advantage of it by constantly changing lanes and taking the puck inside. Was able to get separation with his crossovers, too, and his cutbacks were quite effective as well. Set up his teammates for a few chances with drop passes off the rush. One really nice retrieval where he cut in front of the defender and used the boards to pass the puck to his side of the ice and spinning off contact. Interested to see if he can use his tools to create more offence in the next outings, or whether his game is more about outracing in transition.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Molnár's an interesting player. In moments, he delays, cuts back, finds the trailer, and plays a give-and-go game. Others, he's just sprinting. He tries to race defenders – sometimes with some tricks, like a weight shift or deke – to the net, then passes back to a teammate or takes a low percentage shot. Stickwork in the defensive zone grabbed a couple of stops. But I don't think he's all that dynamic or explosive. Add in the translatability concerns, and he's going to be a tricky projection this season.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Well, I can finally understand Molnár's aversion to ever passing the puck. The Slovak forward tried to connect with his teammates on multiple occasions in this hockey game, and just couldn't complete a pass to save his life. It was just a whole lot of pucks off of shin pads, hockey pants, etc. Granted, I suppose he deserves some credit for at least trying to use his linemates for a change, and I would even go so far as to say there were some pretty well-conceived ideas there, even if the execution wasn't. His skating and handling skill stand out as the defining qualities of his game, and I'd rate both of those tools as solidly average-to-above-average. Needs to play inside far more often. Not sure if I rate him as a player worth a spot on our board, but the usual caveat there is it's August. He's at least worth keeping tabs on.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another game with more projectable plays from Molnár. He used a bunch of give-and-gos, passing early then sprinting the middle, passing to the inside then slipping past his defender for a return feed, etc. All with his feet moving and head up. He dissected the Swiss neutral zone forecheck without much issue in this game. The one time where he tried to outrace the defender, he succeeded, then passed under their stick for a chance. He preferred to cutback and find the trailer. Lacks deception and the finer mechanical details. Many of his plays are too optimistic. He'd also benefit from committing to the inside more regularly. Some good defensive work, setting picks and backtracking. At this stage, he looks like a draft pick, but likely as a mid-round candidate. Lots of time left.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Canada vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Not a great game from Molnár, but a more projectable performance than yesterday's. He simplified his game in transition, using his teammates and chipping the puck into space. Instead of trying to outrace the Canadian blueliners, he dropped pucks back, slowed down, and made the early pass. He even manipulated with his feet, dragging the defender wide, before passing to the inside. Finished his off-puck routes, rewarded with a chance for it. The skating remains an interesting question mark. He has frequency, some quickness, and evasiveness, but he lacks upper-lower separation. Hopping crossovers. Will lose the speed at higher levels, and might not have the edges to offset it. Interesting player. He's definitely a prospect worth watching this season.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Molnár flashes some dynamic ability in this game. He slipped past checks, used crossover-centric rushes to misdirect defenders, and showed in motion skill. There were plenty of failed dekes, missed passing options, and turnovers. Didn't use his teammates at 5-on-5 consistently. On the powerplay, he showed a bit more nuance, slowing his movements to wait for defenders to commit. Slipped pucks through defenders. One give-and-go sequence suggested more translatable patterns in his game exist. Skating's a tough evaluation. High pace with high output, but he lacks upper-lower separation. The shoulders follow his hips and his crossovers are hops. He gets thrown out of cutbacks and turns as a result. Molnár has upside. I'm curious to see if the habits change this tournament.

Grade: C



Anthony Romani

AGE 17.178

DATE OF BIRTH Jul 12, 2005

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Transition
AceAnalytics
Darling

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
North Bay Battalion	OHL	66	23	20	43	0.65

SCOUTING REPORT

Here's an analytics darling: Anthony Romani. The mid-six winger was one of the OHL's best even-strength finishers per 60, with his 1.56 equalling or surpassing Shane Wright, Sasha Pastujov, and Brennan Othmann. He's also one of the OHL's more well-rounded draft offerings, making him an intriguing mid-round option.

In transition, Romani's like a quarterback. He spots teammates sprinting down the rink, then connects with a long-range cross-ice pass receivable without breaking flight. With a single pass, he regularly carves up the opposition's forecheck to create a fast-break chance. When not he's bombing pucks up the rink, he weaves through opponents with high pace carries and give-and-goes. Romani's also a capable defensive player with proactive positioning and all-out energy. Where many glide, he sprints to contest the shot. He ties up opponents, sets picks, and stays glued to his check.

While he's highly effective now, it's fair to wonder how his game will scale upwards without a clear-cut offensive dimension. He takes the middle when it's available, shoots when it's available, and passes when it's available – but rarely creates these opportunities. His skating and hands lack, which means to succeed against professional opponents, he'll have to find ways to not just react, but to create.

In open ice, Romani flashes the deceptive skills needed to pry open lanes. If he transfers those to more pressured situations, he could bring his high pace game to an NHL team's third or fourth line.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 12th, 2023 - London Knights vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Romani continues to impress in a limited role. His standout skills are transition passing and defence. He's like a quarterback. He

finds openings, then rifles long-range cross-ice passes to moving teammates. Consistent finds his mark. When he's not doing that, he outworking opponents along the boards and sprinting for loose pucks. Proactive coverage and always brings the extra effort to get stops, whether that's a tie up, pick, or all-out sprint. He scored by faking out the goalie in-tight. In open ice, he shows a bit of deception before passing. Mostly, he makes simple plays that keep the offence alive. Drives to the middle when given space, but doesn't force the ice. When pressured, the skill isn't nearly as impressive. He doesn't deceive or show much handling ability. Skating is probably more of a 4.5 projection, too. Maybe he's just a bit too basic skill-wise to play, but I also wouldn't be surprised if he expands upon those open-ice skill flashes. That could be his path to the NHL. I'd pick him.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Two goals and a bunch of impressive plays from Romani. The pace is noticeable right away. He attacks opponents with his feet moving, sprints every route, and constantly moves to get open. Turned steals into offence. Worked the give-and-go and hit a bunch of impressive passes: hook passes for breakouts, saucer passes through multiple opponents, and masked his intentions with look offs. The first goal showed the skill, a touch pass for the entry before flaring wide for a one-timer. Took pucks along the boards and instantly attacked the middle, one time drawing a penalty (that he promptly scored on). Leans back in his shot and keeps his hands tight to his body, limiting the power of his shot. But an impressive, detailed game from Romani.

Mitchell Brown: March 5th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Romani might've been the best player on the ice, especially in transition. He set up nine entries, often by dragging defensive pressure towards himself before passing cross-ice. Set-up a goal with a fake shot, moving the defender's stick, then connecting. Walked off the boards for a couple of shots. The mechanics might not be quite NHL-calibre, but the pace and intelligence seem to be. Impressive motor, too. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 12th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Barely any ice time for Romani. He scored by getting a lucky bounce through a defender before firing off a bit of an awkward shot. The skating and handling doesn't provide much separation. He tries to deke, but doesn't have much awareness of space, skating too close to opponents and not deceiving. He's unaware of back pressure, too. Lacks deception when pressure's near. Given his mechanics, that's going to be a development. The defence continues to remain strong; he's proactive, physical, and always working. Transition passing is a strength, hitting moving teammates with long-range, cross-ice area feeds. Might just be a bit too bland for the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 1st, 2023 - North Bay Battalion vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

A quieter game from Romani than January 26th. The defence was there, however. He stepped through the hands of opponents, cut off the top, and sprinted across for a stop. He anticipates, doesn't just work blindly. He's more of a builder than the finishing touches player with the puck. He finds teammates cross-ice in transition and plays with pace, delaying when necessary. Connected with a spin around pass for a chance and hit the post off a turnover. He doesn't always spot the best pass. Perhaps he's just a bit too bland to make the NHL, especially because his upright skating stance and lack of full extensions limits his skating projection. Probably more of a 4-4.5. Worth watching again.

Mitchell Brown: January 26th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

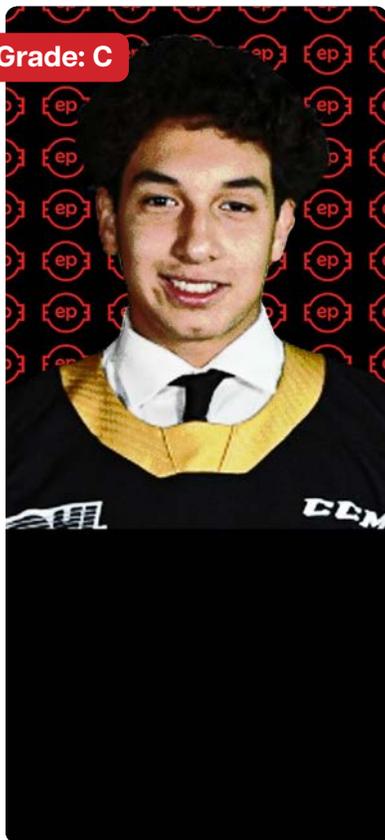
A standout game from Romani. He's not the most mechanically advanced player, but he plays fast, gets inside, and brings plus-level defence. Fired off a bunch of shots in this game, including walking off the boards for a look, a rebound chance after dipping into the slot, and wrister off the rush after beating the defender wide. Adapts to lanes, pulling pucks in to shoot around sticks. Not much of a playmaker, but he connected with a drop pass off a retrieval and showed some willingness to pass down low. He doesn't manipulate opponents or even try to set up chances with pressure. Lots of drive and shoot. A proactive, engaged defender. Could be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 19th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL



A fine game from Romani. His pace and energy stand out. He skates his routes, applies pressure in all three zones, gets above the puck, and cuts off the top while still being aware of threats down low. In transition, he looks to the weak side for options and connects. A couple of reads as a playmaker, but he's mostly looking to shoot. Passing is a last resort, unless he's behind the net. He doesn't open lanes or prolong them; he puts his head down and shoots. Doesn't show much handling skill, either. Skating's a bit upright but could be an NHL projection. The projection really hinges on the intelligence. Time to watch more.

Grade: C



Matthew Soto

AGE 17.041 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 31, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Got that
Dog in him



Motor



Transition
Ace

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	54	15	27	42	0.78

SCOUTING REPORT

Matthew Soto started his OHL career with 14 points in 13 games. Sure, he was mostly playing with Shane Wright, but his dynamic rushing game, forechecking, and pace made them the perfect early-season match. While his production slowed, he rebounded with a team-leading 42 points in 54 this season and could prove to be quite the late-round find.

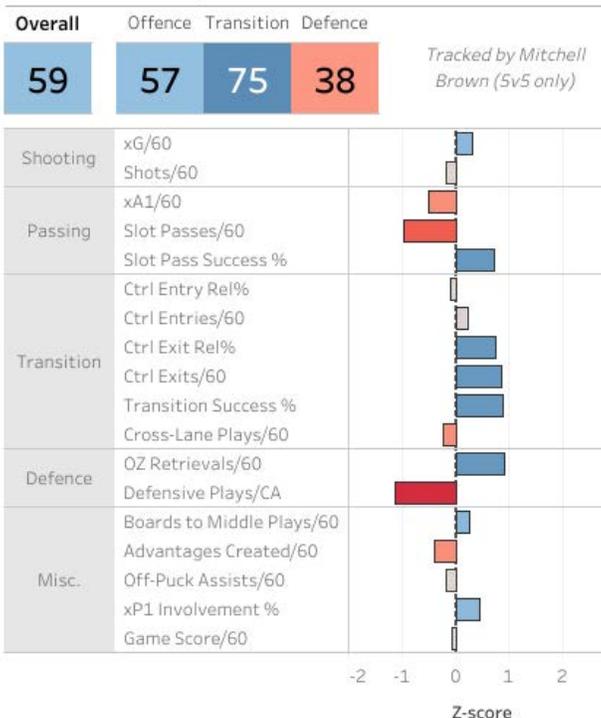
Soto's unrelenting pace overwhelms opponents. Crossovers, cutbacks, and dekes leave defenders confused as he barrels his way to the net. Never flatfooted, he constantly flips between scoring and supporting position, engaging in every battle possible. When opponents recover possession, he's the first player to apply pressure.

The rest of Soto's game is a land of contrasts. "One shift, he scans, reads the pressure, then adjusts to pass around it," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown. "The next, he makes a blind pass with time and space from the exact same spot. Offensively, he's a straight-line sprinter until he's not. Then, he works laterally, draws pressure, passes through it or tries to cut inside on their heels."

Leaning heavier on the projectable plays should make Soto one of the OHL's top scorers over the next two seasons. To reach the NHL, his wide, hunched skating must improve. He's powerful, but his

Matthew Soto

F | Kingston Frontenacs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 105.1



stance limits his stability, efficiency, and speed.

Soto has lots of time, and he still has plenty of physical runway. His pace will likely remain an advantage at every level. With a solid long-term development plan, he could score inside a team's bottom-six.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto was flying early, gobbling up every loose puck and playing at an insane pace. Turned a steal into a chance by instantly attacking the middle. Eventually, he slowed down and lost his effectiveness. He misses passing options by making plays too quickly and he's unaware of his options. He cut back into pressure over and over. He plays fast, but the decision-making looks like a concern. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but his pace and flashes of better habits suggest he has potential to take off.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Soto plays at great pace all the time. This is quite a projectable element. His skating remains a bit of problem; he moves wide and in one block, which limits his power and agility, but his overall output seems more than fine. He's always in movement, with and without the puck, to get open and stay away from defenders. He initiated many passing plays, showed some creative rush patterns, and positioned well defensively for the most part. More of a counter-attacking threat than a playmaker. Not sure if he's a pick.

David St-Louis: March 22th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto won't play in the NHL with this stride. It's hyper-wide, like one of the widest I've ever seen, like he's skating on train tracks. This form removes a lot of stability. Many of his plays were imprecise. He landed a couple of nice passes. He's aware, but also struggled to handle and shake off tight defensive pressure.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

It's hard to get a read on Soto's strengths and weaknesses. One shift, he scans, reads the pressure, then adjusts to pass around it. The next, he makes a blind pass with time and space from the exact same spot. Offensively, he's a straight-line sprinter until he's not. Then, he works laterally, draws pressure, passes through it or tries to cut inside on their heels. The flashes are exciting, very clearly top-75-calibre, at least. But there are constants to his game. He attacks the middle off the boards and never gives up on a play. He could be an end-of-board candidate. Kingston's a limiting environment for everyone.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Soto had a tough game. He had a couple of chances and brought his usual motor, but the offence just wasn't clicking. It's all outside lane attacks. Without the puck, he shows projectable skating form. He pushes knees past his toes and engages his hips. With it, he becomes too upright, preventing him from achieving full extensions and completing his crossovers. Wide and hunched. Edges are weak, but he times his cutbacks as pressure arrives. He plays fast, but foot speed likely won't be a strength at the next level with his current form. Didn't see any vision. Handling skill looked potential below-average with choppy form and missed pass receptions. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

The best game I've seen from Soto so far, even if he didn't create anything. Instead of charging at opponents like normal, he read their feet and attacked the middle when possible. It's all fast reactions – if he has to set up a defender, he defaults to the untranslatable out-speed rushes. Skates his routes and steps into opponents, but he's not proactive. He chases the play and doesn't stay in space. A hard-worker, but inaccurate and might not have the tools to play. Maybe a late-rounder, but not likely a candidate for our board.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Soto has potential, but he really needs to slow down to be a more effective offensive producer. He did show that on a couple of instances, where he carried the puck into the offensive zone and cut back to survey options. I'd like to see him delay a little more on the rush too instead of going charging across the blueline regardless of whether he's going to run into defenders or not. I feel like that's something that should improve over the next few seasons, as he should figure out how to time plays better and anticipate his teammates and defenders. He gets in on the forecheck quickly, but he's shoved aside by larger players in battles. Defensive engagement was better in this viewing. Feels like he's a pick, but maybe more for the tail end of our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Soto tries to be evasive with his edges but struggles to really sell and escape with the moves because he doesn't get deep enough. He's more of a straight-line attacker anyway, preferring to sprint up the boards, but he had one reset play that showed a bit more planning. He's a hard worker, plays fast, and has some off-puck instincts. Gets open around the net. Scored with an outside leg wrister on the powerplay, one of his only notable offensive plays. He will score a lot next season, but the tools don't look like NHL-calibre.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto had five scoring chances in the first period and then disappeared for most of the game. The chances showed a lot of NHL elements. He cut inside off the rush, snuck behind opponents to get open in space, and hammered a one-timer off the front foot. He stays inside space where many players rush the net. Set up a chance by attacking the middle, dropping the puck back, and then taking the defender's stick to build a runway of space. He understands how to play the off-puck, give-and-go game it seems. The skating's a concern. Hips aren't engaged and he never completes his strides or crossovers. Lots of wasted movement. He's an intelligent forechecker, though. Going to be interesting to watch him in the second half. Shooting and motor look like NHL skills.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Good, bad, and everything in between from Soto. He showed handling skill and inside play, taking pucks to the middle and deking around opponents while moving. Delayed, played with pass, found the trailer, and drove play to the net. A deflection chance in front showed his ability to detach from the defender around the net, while a cross-slot pass where most jam the puck into the pads showed a bit of awareness. However, he's often unaware of options and pressure along the boards. He makes plays too quickly and doesn't scan. The skating's a concern. He's upright and rarely fully extended his strides and crossovers. High pace and disruptive, but the game just seemed like reactions. He looked like a mid-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: January 7th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto plays too fast - as soon as he gets the puck, it's like he's got blinders on, and he's too focused on getting the puck into the offensive zone, not scanning for pressure or teammates (he'll run into defenders and his own teammates sometimes). He flies the defensive zone too early before his team has regained possession. His speed takes him way ahead of the play on the rush if he doesn't have the puck, and either he has to circle back to get onside or he takes the play offside. The handling and playmaking continues to be positive, in flashes. He just needs to slow down and take his time trying to create instead of trying to forcing plays with his speed.

Lauren Kelly: November 13th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto is slick, especially with the puck on his stick. Excellent puck protection abilities, confident carries under heavy pressure, can stickhandle in small areas of space, and uses his speed to separate himself from pressure off the rush and in the offensive zone. Comes back to support his defencemen quickly, but would benefit from more scanning in his own end. His goal was a precise wrister from the high slot after escaping pressure to open up more shooting space for himself. The speed is an asset, though he can play a bit ahead of his teammates at times and send passes that they're not expecting or have already left areas that they're trying to get the puck to. If he can reign in that motor a bit, that should help him time his plays better and increase his playmaking potential.

Lauren Kelly: October 15th, 2022 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Soto is all speed constantly, especially when the puck is in the offensive zone. Hard on the forecheck, chases after puck carriers, but his acceleration and top-end speed is a little rough - his stance is too wide at times, so it looks like he's kicking at the air. He's got decent handling and playmaking abilities; his assist in this game was a nice rush from the outside where he got the puck around a defender and then fed it across to a teammate. Likes to default to dekes entering the offensive zone if he has possession. The goal he scored was simply being in the right place at the right time - he was parked in front of the net and happened to have his stick in the right place when the defender turned the puck over. He made one weird decision with the puck where he forced a DZ turnover and instead of jumping up on a breakaway, he circled back in his own end while under pressure and nearly turned it back over. Maybe a mid-round pick at this point? Tough to say right now.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Away from Wright with Wisdom back, Soto still stands out. He plays fast, even with some mechanical issues. That led to a pile of failed entries in this game, mostly off the failed straight-line, outside lane speed variety. That pace also limits his playmaking a tad, as he clearly identifying options early and has the handling skill to connect, but rushes his plays. Didn't see the off-puck and shooting elements of his game in this one, but he also wasn't being set up by Shane Wright. Lots to like about Soto's game.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2021 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Soto spent most of this game with Wright and Chromiak, turning the puck over on as many breakouts as possible. Still, I like what he brought. He plays fast, attacks the inside, and uses his teammates in the offensive zone. While deferring, he still manages to make his statement with the puck through his handling skill and engagement. The stride recovery is too wide with a heel kick, and he definitely rushes plays. Definitely a player to watch. Great base.

Grade: C



Matteo Mann

AGE 17.707 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 31, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw
Talent



Hammer

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'5"

Height

225 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	45	0	5	5	0.11

SCOUTING REPORT

We had high hopes for Matteo Mann, the son of Ottawa Senators' assistant general manager Trent Mann, coming into the season. While he didn't score a lot in his draft-minus-one, his length and poise with the puck impressed our staff in moments. We expected the 6-foot-5 defenceman to build on the foundation he laid out in his first two years with the Chicoutimi Saguenéens and impose himself as a top-64 player in this draft class.

That scenario didn't materialize. Injuries kept him out of the lineup for a few weeks in the early season. And when he did rejoin his team in December, he didn't progress as fast as other prospects. His ice time started to decline.

This season could just be a blip on the radar in a few years if Mann manages to develop his skating stride and turn into the puck-mover and shutdown defenceman he can be.

Right now, like many other prospects of his size at 18-years-old, his mobility projects as below NHL average. Mann can't fold over his skates like a smaller defenceman. His reach compensates for his lack of agility and quickness, but this season, if he didn't time his defensive close-outs just right, attackers beat him wide with fakes, dangles, and quick accelerations.

When he did catch attackers, however, Mann made them remember their encounter.

"Mann crushed a few Remparts players in this one," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report. "One of his hits was exceptionally violent. His desire to play physically and his size make him a constant threat on the ice, but he also has finesse. He can slip pucks under sticks to teammates in transition. His awareness stands out constantly."

Mann lacks execution in his plays with the puck. He has some good ideas – he attempts to deceive defenders and activate into the play – but his success rate remained low this season.

A patient NHL development team, willing to invest the time to work with Mann over multiple years, could help the defenceman turn his good ideas into scoring plays and his physical gifts into a legitimate NHL shutdown game.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



QMJHL Stock Watch: A review of the league's top draft-eligible prospects

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Only 13 minutes of ice-time for Mann. I wanted to see more progress out of him during the year, but he's about the same player he was at the start. He engages opponents physically, uses his reach to hinder his check in the defensive zone, and attempts some passing plays, but the execution isn't yet there. He's a long-term project. The aggressiveness is projectable with his frame, but I'm not sure about the skating.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Mann's skating is a serious hindrance at this level. He gets beat wide constantly and manipulated. His wide, heavy stride, and lack of ankle flexion makes it hard for him to catch up to the play, escape opponents, and match them defensively. But there is potential in his game. He generally makes intelligent plays with the puck and recognizes offensive rotations and plays ahead of time. I'm sure the game would open up for him massively if he just add that bit of extra speed and quickness.

David St-Louis: February 2th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Mann showed more physicality in this one, crushing opponents on pinches and on the backwall. The main issue with his defensive game, well the technical one, is that he struggles to control his stick inside pivots and lateral steps. He can't really fluidly combine skating and handling on the offence either, limiting his choice of plays. He did have some interesting passes. He uses the board effectively in situations where he is challenged by back forecheck pressure. He uses space and attacks space. Mann is, overall, a player whose lack of technical ability (normal for his age at his size) limit some more creative ideas. He's interesting. Not sure he's a pick.

David St-Louis: January 25th, 2023 - Team White vs Red - CHL top prospects game

Mann got plastered to the boards on a couple of breakouts. He has to protect himself better and become more aware of pressure in those situations. His skating looked better in this game and his physicality really shone. He went down to stop a 2-on-1 and made a few good passes. He looked more in control as the game progressed and even got a couple of offensive opportunities. He attacked down to fire on net and caught most pucks in movement, creating a bit of separation from the opposition.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Not a ton of skill in this viewing compared to the previous. He grabbed an assist after holding the zone twice with pinches, then

taking a puck across his body and firing back against the grain on the goaltender. Fluid. One breakout play where he delayed, won positioning, then sent a backhand pass up the middle, but the most of his remaining touches were turnovers. Angles his toes in the direction the puck's headed on retrievals, skating back through the opponents routes when necessary, but then he just passes straight to the other team or mishandled. Didn't show much vision or playmaking in open ice. Game was moving too fast for him, it seemed. Liked the defensive effort, though. He's a better along the boards defender than open-ice one. He angles, mirrors, and wraps up opponents just as he closes the gap. Overwhelms. Could be a late-round candidate. Lots of work ahead and he's old for the draft.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda into Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Mann was picked apart on the rush all game long. He consistently wandered too high, letting attackers slip behind him. In all but one sequence, he couldn't recover once after getting beat with the pass. Pivots lose speed and crossovers don't provide much pop. He's an awkward handler who has some intelligent ideas, but consistently crumbles under pressure. Reaches for the puck instead of taking the extra stride. With that said, there's a lot of interesting qualities here. He makes simple, effective plays off retrievals and immediately repositions. He holds the blue-line. He attacks the inside, draws pressure, and tries to make plays through it. Adds a bit of deception onto his plays. Maybe an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

The best of Chicoutimi's draft eligibles from a projection standpoint. His ideas are genuinely good-to-great at times. He activates into the play, tries to hit teammates on the inside, and even deceives regularly. Early on, these plays weren't working. He didn't look, preferring to throw pucks into space instead of scanning then deceiving. In the second half, he started stepping into space for chances, scanning before adding the look off, and even layering deception (step in, fake shot, look off). Flash of handling skill to access a passing lane between defender's feet. The mechanical ability to translate these to the NHL isn't there yet. The defence isn't either. He has the right ideas, angling plays and mirroring footwork, but his crossovers and heel pushes generate little power. Vulnerable to any sort of quickness. Could be an end-of-board candidate. Clearly more skilled than the points suggest.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Players bounce off Mann. He also tries to get involved in the physical side of the game, too. The defence was the strongest part of his game. He poked away pucks just as attackers lifted their sticks off the ice, angled a couple of attacks to the outside, and kept a tight gap starting at the red line. He tries more advanced puck plays – look off cross-ice passes, in motion pass receptions before firing in stride, and activating as the trailer. None of those plays worked. The shot's weak (poor mechanics, no downward force), he makes plays based on assumptions, and lacks the coordination to pull off many of his moves. The defence alone isn't enough, although he showed he made simple, effective bump plays on retrievals that suggested he's aware. Interesting player, but this wasn't a game that showed much upside.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Québec Remparts - QMJHL

Mann crushed a few Remparts players in this one. One of his hits, on Zachary Bolduc, was exceptionally violent. His desire to play physically and his size makes him a constant threat on the ice, but he also has finesse. He can slip pucks under sticks to teammates in transition. His awareness stands out constantly. He's late on defence, however, often not matching his speed to the incoming rush and getting beat wide or almost getting beat wide. His skating is a problem at this level and it will be an even bigger problem in the next ones. But I'm sure he's further behind his peers as a 6'5" 17-year-old just coming off an injury.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Mann is better offensively than defensively or at least more comfortable. Some misses were expected in this game from him as he just came back from injury. Overall, he played well. The reach and a reasonable agility remain quite a large advantage for him at this level, but it's in his ideas that he impressed me, the give-and-goes that he tried, the timely activations, the pacey passes... The hockey sense grade looks at least average. If he can learn to defend more tightly and improves his acceleration, I could see NHL potential. The flashes are really interesting.



Grade: C

Milo Roelens

AGE 19.666 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 16, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Hammer



Play Killer

Player Info

C/LW Position	Left Shoots
6'6" Height	205 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	4 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	6 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	68	22	37	59	0.87

SCOUTING REPORT

This was by far Milo Roelens' most productive QMJHL season, as he managed to increase his point total from 18 in 47 games to 59 in 68 playing in the Sherbrooke Phoenix's middle-six.

While this kind of total is more impressive for a first-year QMJHLer than a third-year one, Roelens's expected development curve is different from most players. It usually takes a little longer for 6-foot-6 forwards like him to learn to use their unique tools – especially when they play centre.

It's only in the first months of this season that Roelens started figuring out how he could use his size and strength to his advantage.

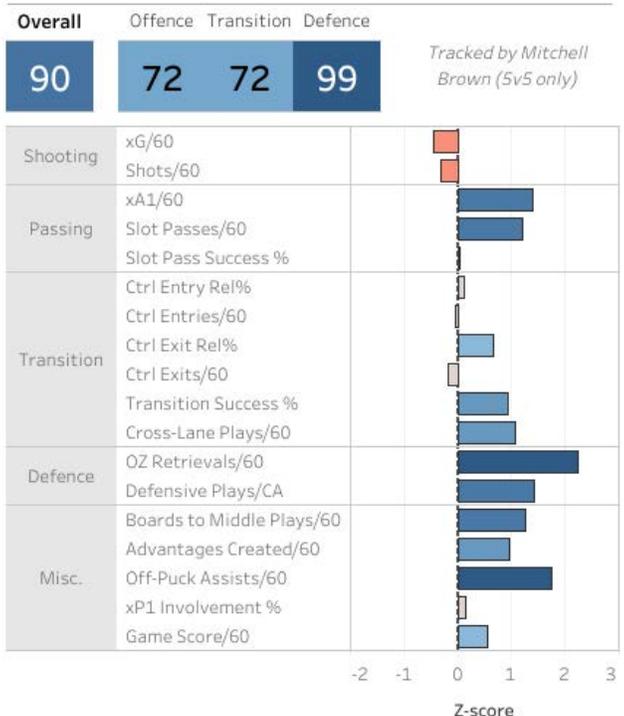
He became a force on the Phoenix's penalty kill this season, with his ability to chase down opponents on the forecheck and cut down their space in the neutral zone. And he started making more plays with the puck, too.

"He can read spaces, defenders, and passing lanes," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a November report. "He connects plays, manages the puck well, can break the puck out under pressure, and, at times, even pull off some creative feints."

His game is still far from professional calibre at this stage, though. Roelens still needs to learn a flurry of little skills and habits, especially

Milo Roelens

F | Sherbrooke Phoenix | QMJHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 104.9



on the skating and positioning side, to make his physical gifts work in a professional environment. For example, he finds himself on the outside of battles when he could use his frame to slip between opponents and the puck and protect it far too often. That being said, Roelens could become an interesting project for an NHL team.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 29th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

A super aware player, always looking over his shoulders before the puck arrives. Roelens has skill, too. He makes backhand touch passes around opponents, manipulates opponents to gain the inside, and some in-tight handling skill. Skates his routes, pushes back opponents, and anticipates the next play on the forecheck, either closing the lane or jumping into it for the interception. Physical, but struggles to protect the puck and win positioning because he's so upright. That's really the major issue: He's always on his heels. It's limiting here, where he can't load his weight over one leg to deceive opponents and explode laterally. Everything has to run through his hands as a result, which, despite his handling skill, already leads to turnover issues. A project pick. But his passing and handling might both be NHL-calibre skills, making him a justifiable pick towards the end of the draft.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

The best player for most of this game. He showed a bunch of passing skill. Touch passes under pressure, hook passes for breakouts, quick-possession plays after steals, look off plays, and backhand skill. A clear 5-grade passer, if not higher. He knows his next play when the puck arrives and spots teammates through a layer or two. Some puck protection ability – leaning on opponents, cutting back, timing his turns and escapes – but he lacks the depth to absorb and separate from contact. Even when he gets inside positioning, it doesn't benefit him much. Achieves proper knee bend inside his stride, but he's so upright and on his heels in all other situations. A long-term project, but that he has an NHL skill (passing), vision, and intelligence would make him a justifiable late-rounder.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

The lack of technical ability could prevent him from being drafted this season, despite his interesting build. NHL teams love projects like him, but Roelens still lacks the finer details and habits that would make his game projectable. He's physical, but from the outside in puck battles; he rarely manages to get the inside body positioning to protect pucks due to quickness issue and also a tendency to stop his routes short and use his reach. He needs a bit more urgency in his game. He moves decently well away from the puck, but he doesn't anticipate the flow of the play enough to get consistently good touches inside space. And his lack of agility makes it harder for him to get out of traffic. I like the handling skills, the strength, and at times, the defensive game -- he can pressure opponents well on the penalty kill -- but he's still far behind other NHL candidates of his age group. It's not unusual for players of his size, however, and I can see a team taking a flyer on him.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Roelens pickpocketed an opponent then immediately set up a chance off the chances. He's an aware player – both of options and threats. But he wasn't especially effective. Opponents easily fend him off, while he struggles to do the same. He absorbs contact, but find separation from him. Lacks edge control and quickness. Not really a draftable game.

David St-Louis: November 25th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Roelens has been really impressive since the start of the season. I underrated his hockey sense in previous years. He can read spaces, defenders, and passing lanes. He connects plays, manages the puck well, can break the puck out under pressure, and, at times, even pull off some creative feints in some instances. He has the hard skills, the puck protection and net-front game, and even defensive value, through his reach and relative mobility. I'd draft him in the latter rounds of the draft to fill a potential fourth-line role. His profile doesn't inspire confidence (lower-scoring re-entry), but the tools are interesting.

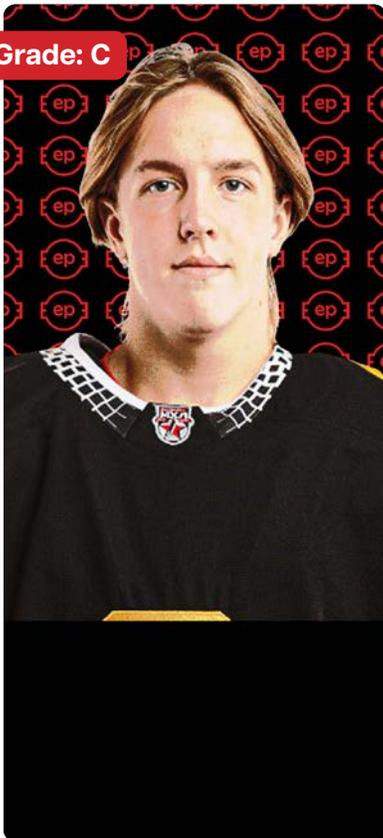
David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Roelens is a giant on the ice, but he moves decently well for his size. That's already a draftable combo. He filled a penalty kill role, removed a lot of space and lanes from the opposition, and then when the puck exited the zone, ran to it to steal it and keep it in his control to annoy the opposition and let the seconds go down. He is strong, too. He knocked two players at the same time in the neutral-zone in a puck battle. I'm not sure about the whole offensive upside and hockey sense, but the tools are fun.

David St-Louis: February 28th, 2021 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Gatineau Olympiques - QMJHL

Roelens is big. He has size, reach, and long limbs, but at times it feels like more of a disadvantage in his skating and puck handling. Both are below average (upright stance and choppy handling). He takes space near the net and wins inside positioning, can stream -- he scored on a rebound -- but besides that and the occasional puck steal from his long reach, I don't see NHL qualities in his game this season.

Grade: C



Mikhail Ye. Ilyin

AGE 17.581 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Tactician

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Severstal Cherepovets	KHL	21	0	2	2	0.10
Almaz Cherepovets	MHL	28	4	22	26	0.93

SCOUTING REPORT

Rare are the players who obtain a regular role in the KHL at 18-years-old, but Mikhail Ye. Ilyin is one of them. And watching him play, it's easy to understand why he got his invitation to Russia's top professional league.

"He's just so hard-working," our Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a December report. "Great motor to chase down plays and make things happen, winning battles and utilizing his teammates to be a player who can be the glue of a line. Active on both the forecheck and backcheck to get involved and turn plays around."

Ilyin applies the details of the game well. The puck moves from his stick to the next play smoothly and precisely. He rarely forces plays, preferring to protect the puck with his physical skills and wait for support. He rotates well, offensively and defensively, rarely gives up on plays, drives inside to support teammates, and gets his stick on rebounding pucks.

While most of his tools received below-average to average grades from our staff, his passing skills stood out. They compensated for his lack of mobility and slower pace of play. He can perform slip, hook, and even spin passes well, time them effectively, and send them in an area where teammates can catch them in stride.

Ilyin's hockey sense could earn him a long European professional career. If he wants to move over to North America and play some NHL games, however, he will have to add more dynamic skills to complement his tactical game.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Almaz vs. SKA-Varyagi - MHL

A really impressive game from Ilyin. It's clear that he's a smart player who understands the game, where to move next, where

to send the puck, which teammates are open, what the defence will look like ahead of him. He has some anticipation, the processing speed is quite high, he rotates well, and he's aware. Sense is definitely above-average and he connects plays with passing skills, hooks, spin, and slips. A C-grade prospect for me, however, as he lacks the NHL tools to support his tactical game.

David St-Louis: February 14th, 2023 - Almaz vs. SKA-Kareliya - MHL

No point, but an interesting performance. He carried pucks across zones, identified the best play most of the time, delayed to hit it or move the puck quickly to avoid losing it to defensive pressure. He played on the PK and managed the puck well. A lot of good in his game. I like the habits and the flashes of skills and especially the sense. The feels easy for him. He's a bit low pace, however.

David St-Louis: February 6th, 2023 - Severstal vs CSKA - KHL

A good game for Ilyin at this level. Honestly, he already looks like he belongs, like a KHL player. He rotates well, uses teammates, and forechecks with intensity. One of the turnovers he created with his pressure immediately led to a goal. He also makes good breakouts under pressure and he delays upon entry to connect with the back layers of the attack. A smart and effective forward.

Dylan Griffing: December 3rd, 2022 - Severstal Cherepovets vs. Vityaz Balashikha - KHL

Another really impressive KHL game for Ilyin and I'm definitely a fan of his. The offensive upside is limited, his shot is not very good and his hands are below-average, but the playmaking habits and the intelligence are very solid. He's just so hard working. Great motor to chase down plays and make things happen, winning battles and utilizing his teammates to be a player who can be the glue of a line. Active on both the forecheck and backcheck to get involved and turn plays around. Very responsible and impactful two-way game for a player so young in the KHL is so interesting.

Dylan Griffing: November 22th, 2022 - Severstal Cherepovets vs. Dynamo Moskva - KHL

Ilyin seems to be riding his wave of solid performances with the U18 team because this was an impressive one with the KHL side. While the tools are all right around average, it was his hunger to get the puck and keep it that really stood out. Aggressive on the forecheck to break up plays then used his puck protection ability to hang onto it and wait for teammates to arrive. He was making the plays that kind of need to be made for his team to get things going while not really driving any dangerous offense on his own. One touch passes, winning battles along the boards, and generally making safe plays to get his more skilled linemates involved. Holding his own in a KHL role on a good team against a good team is impressive, but his draft value remains limited by the tools. Maybe a fourth rounder, but I like what I'm seeing from him.

David St-Louis: October 17th, 2022 - Almaz vs. MHC Spartak - MHL

Ilyin has a good skating technique overall. He's not that speedy, but his posture is sound, which leads to balance. He sticks mostly to the periphery but also has a physical game on the boards. He involves teammates in his plays, pulls off the trigger on shots when he's in a good spot. He battles for pucks, plays a safer defensive game, staying high on forechecks to safeguard his team, and he backchecks. He's an effective MHLer, but I don't see any NHL skill.

Dylan Griffing: October 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

I quite liked Ilyin in this game. His tools all hover around average grades, but he's certainly intelligent. His hands are decent enough, but it's more so his movement with the puck on his stick that stood out. Weaving in and out, delaying to draw defenders towards him, and using off-puck dekes and give-and-goes to allow himself to build up speed upon the retrieval. Made some good plays in the defensive zone, engaging along the boards and winning battles. Feels like he may be more of a two-way guy moving forward, his offensive upside is limited by the toolset, but he reads plays really well, instigates and creates turnovers, and uses his teammates to his advantage through transitions. Maybe a late round guy.

Dylan Griffing: September 18th, 2022 - Almaz Cherepovets vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

This game was pretty awesome. His game isn't very advanced, but his intelligence and vision are great. Executing really creative passes to manipulate space. Opts to bring down pace and use delays to wait for movement rather than trying to beat defenders on skill. That delay game makes him one of the most dangerous playmakers at this level. He scans so quickly and executes very consistently. He picked up his first goal of the season on a play he created almost entirely through low pace puck movement, with a rebound landing on his stick and he blasted it home. Just a very responsible hockey player.

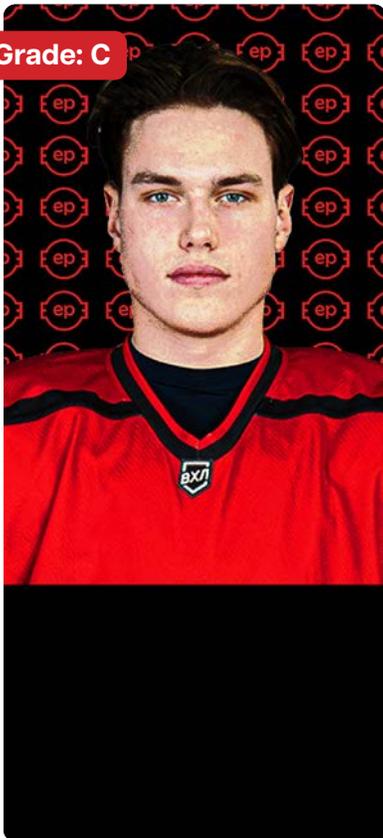
Dylan Griffing: September 12th, 2022 - Severstal Cherepovets vs. SKA St. Petersburg - KHL

KHL debut for Ilyin, getting a handful of shifts in against a very good team. He did fine for what it was, didn't dwell on the puck, just made some passes and called it a day. Off-puck movement was pretty bad I thought, seemed like he didn't really want the puck and floated away from plays. Don't think he should be playing at this level.

Dylan Griffing: August 5th, 2022 - Severstal Cherepovets vs. Vityaz Balashikha - Friendly

Ilyin got absolutely crushed with a knee-on-knee hit in his first shift, with that being the only real notable thing here. He showed off quick skating and flashes of hands, but wasn't able to create anything because of his poor passing and decision making.

Grade: C



Daniil Karpovich

AGE 17.775 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 06, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	209 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	47	10	25	35	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

Daniil Karpovich played in Belarus' junior league before joining Avto Yekaterinburg this past season and dominating the MHL from the back end.

Although he played in the league's weaker division, his 6-foot-3 size and high production (35 points in 47 games) for a first-year MHL defenceman likely put him on many scout's radars this season.

His size, reach, and good overall mobility for his size will likely make him at least an effective shutdown KHLer, but in time, we could also envision him turning into a power play quarterback. We saw him carry the puck across zones, pass it around defenders, and regularly get his shot through the opposition's formation at the point in the offensive zone.

"His game is built around his physicality and heavy shot, some flashes of puck-moving ability, but he doesn't have much finesse," Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a November report.

At this stage, although one can project his shot and physical skills to the NHL, his game lacks a lot of refinement, especially on the tactical side. He remains more of a project pick.

To become an effective KHL player and aspire to an NHL role, Karpovich will need to improve many aspects of his game, from the way he approaches his rush defence to his offensive zone movements. He needs to learn to better control his gap and his pokechecks, and he has to use more manipulation tricks and the space given to him in the offensive zone.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 7th, 2023 - Sputnik vs. Avto - MHL

Karpovich needs to refine his defensive details. The long sweeping pokechecks and approximate positioning won't work at the next levels. He will get dangled and the puck will move around him. He needs to close his gap faster and play with more pace overall. I saw flashes of offensive instincts in this one, but he's also a bit behind the curve compared to others in that facet of the game.

David St-Louis: December 7th, 2022 - Avto vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Karpovich was the most noticeable defenceman on this Avto blue-line. He forced a couple of passes, but attempted more controlled plays under pressure than his teammates. He skated the puck out of the zone and made plays around the forecheck. He was at the point on the powerplay. His execution wasn't always on point, but his ideas were good, for the most part. I like the aggressiveness. Good posture in rush defence, too.

Dylan Griffing: November 16th, 2022 - Belarus U20 vs. Russia U20 - Cup of the Future

Karpovich is definitely a long shot prospect because, right now, he is simply not good. His game is built around his physicality and heavy shot, some flashes of puck moving ability, but he doesn't have much finesse. Really poor gap control defending the rush and his defensive positioning is generally just not good. Skating also holds him back in that regard, weak on his edges and is a pretty stiff skater. Lacked control on breakouts, not pre-scanning on retrievals, just dumps out of the zone to prepare to play on the backfoot again. I still think there's something here as a late round flyer, but the value is limited.

Dylan Griffing: October 15th, 2022 - Avto Yekaterinburg vs. Ladya Togliatti - MHL

This game was full of plays that looked good from Karpovich, but not necessarily plays that are going to work against harder competition. The physicality is awesome, maybe over reliant on it when in possession, but he dominates players at this level. Shielding was great, just lacks the skill and pace to take full advantage of the positioning he gains from it. Had one end-to-end rush, but it wasn't a difficult one, since nobody really tried to stop him. Passing is a shot in the dark, not much scanning, just pass and pray. I have hope for him, maybe ends up as a 3rd rounder by the year's end, but he's just so raw right now, need to see more.

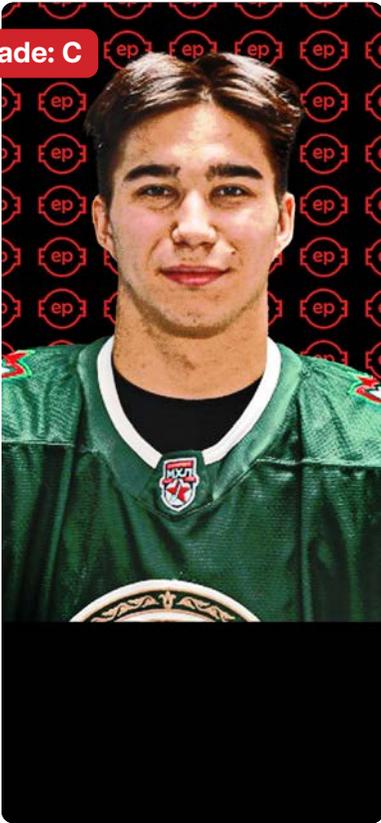
Dylan Griffing: September 7th, 2022 - Avto Yekaterinburg vs. Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk - MHL

For the first handful of shifts, Karpovich was simply a violent hockey player. Chasing hits hard and completely moving himself out of position, but also using his size with his reach to make good defensive plays. Sidenote: He missed almost all of his hits. Either he decided to calm down or he got a stern talking to from his coach, but something changed and he went from "kinda bad, but physical specimen" to "bad". No gap control at all stopped using his size almost entirely, and was terrible at defending the rush. He needs to find a steady in between of trying to kill every player on the ice and completely taking himself out of the game. Outside of the defense, his passing was really hit or miss. He had two pretty nice breakout passes, one from one-knee that ended as a primary assist. Not much skill, but he moves pretty well for his size. Lacks creativity to really be an advanced puck mover, yet there are some positive signs that shine through. Definitely a major project player.

Dylan Griffing: August 6th, 2022 - Avto Yekaterinburg vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - Friendly

I think the upside with Karpovich is limited, but for what he is, there is a solid hockey player here. Very rangy, uses his size well, and keeps it simple. Doesn't chase physicality, and opts to close down space first and then choose to either use his reach or play body. Inconsistent on-puck skills, there are certainly flashes of puck moving ability, nothing too high end, but he has pretty nice hands. Passing wasn't great and he definitely rushed himself at times; however, he showed some deception to be able to escape the forecheck on a few occasions.

Grade: C



Radel Zamaltdinov

AGE 17.104 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
5'10" Height	168 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Bars Kazan	VHL	7	2	0	2	0.29
Irbis Kazan	MHL	13	8	4	12	0.92

SCOUTING REPORT

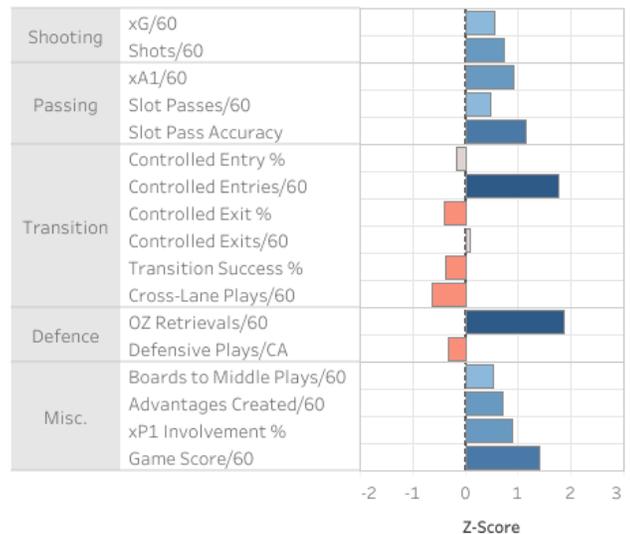
Industrious forwards like Radel Zamaltdinov are often hard to project to the next levels of hockey. On one hand, their bottomless tank of energy and motor makes them coach's favourites, but on the other hand, their main competitive advantage, their work rate, diminishes as they rise in levels. The higher the league, the higher the pace.

To adapt and continue scoring, the 5-foot-10 Zamaltdinov will have to develop his overall skills, especially his skating ability. In the MHL, he gets by defenders by striding harder and faster than them and by going through them with his handling skills, but larger defenders will easily box him out if doesn't improve his stride mechanics and overall skating power.

That said, if his rush offence doesn't translate, Zamaltdinov could fall back on his checking game and become more of a two-way forward who scores around the net. "He's not a cerebral player, that's for sure," Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen wrote in a January report. "He goes hard on the forecheck and packs a solid punch for a player his size, then tries to immediately get to the inside with wrap-arounds or quick passes."

Radel Zamaltdinov

F | Irbis Kazan | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 126.4
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Drafting Zamaltdinov is betting on his consistent effort, handling skills, and his potential for rapid improvements. The August-born forward may also have more development runway ahead of him than other prospects in this draft and he seems to be accelerating on that track. In the span of a season, he went from playing in the Russian U18 league to earning a role in the VHL for some games.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Lassi Alanen:** February 14th, 2023 - Irbis Kazan vs. Omskie Yastreby - MHL

Zamaltdinov's game-to-game output remains consistently high. He's shooting a lot but also creating some high-level chances for his teammates. Basically set up a chance that had the higher likelihood of going in rather than not by receiving the puck near the back post, waiting and dishing it cross-ice but somehow his linemate wasn't able to bury it, even when the goalie was completely out of the situation. That was a nice example of poise from Zamaltdinov who rarely shows such a thing, almost always preferring to play straight-forward. There were quite a lot of low-value shots in this one, too. Still, he remains really effective both on the forecheck and in transition as a puck-carrier. The skating projection is probably still slightly below-average to average, but he's able to make it work thanks to the stride frequency, motor and having needed lateral agility.

Lassi Alanen: February 14th, 2023 - Irbis Kazan vs. HC Belye Medvedi - MHL

Zamaltdinov's game hasn't really changed from the first viewings that I had of him a from a few months ago. He's a very straight-line attacker, but has a knack of constantly stealing pucks on the forecheck and gaining the zone in transition. Even in the tightest of spaces, he always seems to be able to come out on top and with possession. His offence is however limited by the tunnel-visioning and not having enough quickness or top speed to beat defenders to the outside. Tried that multiple times this game without success. There are physical skills and willingness to use them, but even that projection seems a bit tough given the mechanical limitations and lack of size/strength. He'll probably be mostly a forechecker/board guy at the next level who can rush the puck in transition and make the odd passing play, but I don't really see the sense for more at the moment.

Dylan Griffing: January 29th, 2023 - Bars Kazan vs. Lada Togliatti - VHL

I think this experiment is over, at least for this season. Zamaltdinov hasn't really stood out at this level and I don't see him turning it around. He's playing a very straight forward game on offense – skate towards the net and shoot. Which... fine? Nothing high end showing, the playmaking flashes are completely gone and his handles aren't coming off. As physical as he wants to think he is, he gets bullied off pucks and out of battles pretty easily. The only thing that keeps him an interesting name is the motor, but he's just not making plays with it right now. There's hope for him if he keeps a VHL spot into next season, but he's not a name for 2023.

Dylan Griffing: January 8th, 2023 - Bars Kazan vs. Zauralie Kurgan - VHL

It didn't take long for Zamaltdinov to get his VHL call-up. Just seven games in the MHL after returning from an injury that kept him out for over half of the season, he made his debut with Bars and netted his first career goal, as well. The performance overall was fine for his debut, not really connecting plays and the sense is definitely low, but the motor and physicality add value. Hands looked slightly above-average. Clearly a level below the other VHL draft eligibles that'll make our board (Michkov, Mukhanov, Rykov), but it's his first game, so hopefully the performances pick up from here.

Lassi Alanen: January 3rd, 2023 - Irbis Kazan vs. Krasnoyarskie Rysi - MHL

Zamaltdinov doesn't seem to have that many dimensions in his game. He rushes the puck up the ice, tries to shoot from the defender's legs or deke his way through for a scoring chance. When he tries to look for other options and delay slightly, he rarely is able to make anything happen. He's not a cerebral player, that's for sure. He goes hard on the forecheck and packs a solid punch for a player his size, then tries to immediately get to the inside with wrap-arounds or quick passes. I'll be interested to see how his style will translate given he doesn't really have any overwhelming tools. The skating probably projects slightly below-average given how choppy it is most of the time. Hands could arguably be average to slightly above-average. Not sure if he's a pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 28th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. HC Stalnye Lisy - MHL

Zamaltdinov did the vast majority of his overall work in short spurts. There were a couple of really good shifts where he was

using his motor, willingness to use his body and playmaking to create with pace. He still plays with a single, high pace and there are times where a more patient approach would be ideal. Other times, he gets tunnel-visioned off the rush and can't adapt his initial plan to the new situation. He's fine on the forecheck, sometimes even very good, but doesn't really approach defending in DZ with the same attitude. I'd like to see a better connection with his linemates.

Lassi Alanen: December 25th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

Two-game performance from Zamaltdinov as he scored from a rebound and later added an empty-netter to seal the win for his team. Albeit the production, it was probably his weakest game overall out of the three I've seen so far this season. The inefficiencies continue to show up. There are times where he spin passes to the slot and somehow connects, but most of the time, these blind-looking passes just result in turnovers. There are playmaking flashes, but a lot of his offence revolves around attacking off the rush and trying to shoot from the defender's legs with something resembling a curl-and-drag release. Those attempts got mostly blocked by the defender in this one. Lost his balance while trying to cut back a couple of times in the OZ. The skating has mechanical limitations, even if the output exceeds them somewhat and the high work rate continues to be one of the calling cards.

Dylan Griffing: December 25th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. Tolpar Ufa - MHL

While this didn't quite live up to the standards of his first game back, Zamaltdinov notched his first two goals of the season and the off-puck play was impressive again. He's so active in the defensive zone, using his pace to its full advantage to take up space even if he is a tiny hockey player. Gets his stick involved constantly to try to disrupt as many plays as possible and even uses it to help his teammates through transitions, lifting sticks at the OZ blue line to halt efforts to stop the puck carrier. Despite the goals, the offensive was much less valuable. The zone entries are nice, again, so much pace, but there was a real lack of care when distributing after. High volume passes into the middle of the ice that just weren't connecting enough and the skill wasn't really on display. He's still finding his footing, just his fourth game of the year, but that high motor and work rate are really intriguing.

Lassi Alanen: December 24th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

Zamaltdinov is a curious case. He's all about his motor and attacking with it off the rush, flashing impressive handling skill to beat defenders 1-on-1 and even some delay aspects in how he cuts back on pressure and can make clever passing plays to the inside. The flip side is that the playmaking is inefficient and he throws a lot of low-percentage passes. Not sure about the sense overall. Some of his routes with and without the puck are a bit weird, although it could just be the result of the environment. Threw a big open-ice hit to prevent a zone entry through the middle.

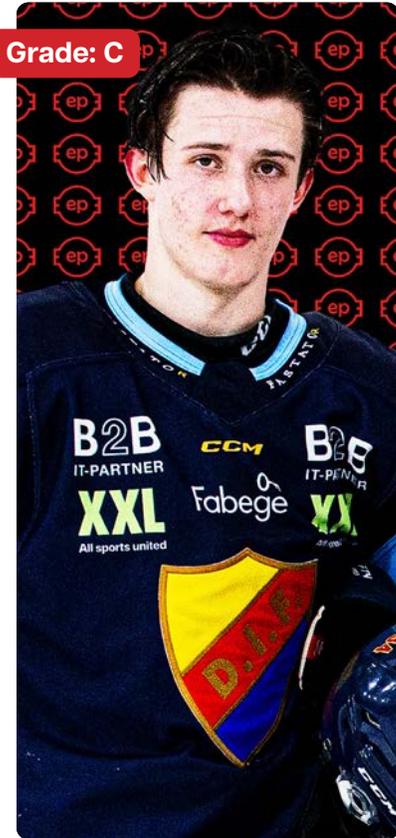
Lassi Alanen: December 18th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk - MHL

Zamaltdinov was everywhere in this one, and his consistent involvement was awarded with a primary helper after one of the best plays of the game, stealing the puck on the forecheck and quickly turning the puck to the slot for a perfect setup. Zamaltdinov's skating is far from perfect. He hunches over a lot and his hips stay high throughout the stride, limiting his top speed. But his high motor compensated and allowed him to get to most of the pucks first. It's going to inhibit his puck protection game and ability to battle for pucks, though. He wasn't that efficient with his touches in transition and made some plays with too much pace when he should've delayed, but he also had a couple of really nice connections that required skill. Not sure if he's a high-end shooting strength, but had a couple of nice off-puck moments. I'll be interested also to see whether he's just playing in one pace (mostly did here) or whether he can add more variety to his attacks.

Dylan Griffing: December 18th, 2022 - Irbis Kazan vs. Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk - MHL

Zamaltdinov finally returned to action from a long injury and this kid absolutely goes. The case for him to be picked is a tough one due to the sample, but this game really looked like he could be a prospect. The main thing that stood out immediately was the motor. He's not too dissimilar to Marat Khustnutdinov from an off-puck standpoint, absolutely rapid and hounding puck carriers constantly, but there's a surprising amount of physicality giving his small stature. The aggressiveness to create turnovers

and show up all over the ice is going to be something that gets him into at least the VHL team sooner rather than later. With the puck, he only thinks in one direction. It's a ton of fun to watch, but there's clear moments where he completely ignores scanning over his second shoulder or waiting on rushes to avoid playing right into heavy traffic. On the positive note, he is so dangerous in the OZ.. Right out of the gates, he was creating an absurd amount of chances. The one-way thinking does lead to him just hammering pucks towards the net, but there were a ton of plays where he forechecked to gain possession and distributed effectively. The hands looked pretty good, as well. The tools (pace, hands, strength, and shot) are awesome, but the sense looks like it trails behind. He doesn't have a ton of time to build too much bigger of a profile before the season ends, but more games like this very well could find him being worth a late-round shot.



Grade: C

Arvid Bergström

AGE 17.260 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Fleet of Foot



Transition Ace

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	163 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Djurgårdens IF J18	J18 Nationell	1	0	1	1	1.00
Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	41	2	21	23	0.56
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	0	3	3	0.43
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	1	4	5	0.26

SCOUTING REPORT

Following in the footsteps of other smaller, mobile defencemen, Arvid Bergström was among the more productive draft-eligible blueliners at the J20 level this season.

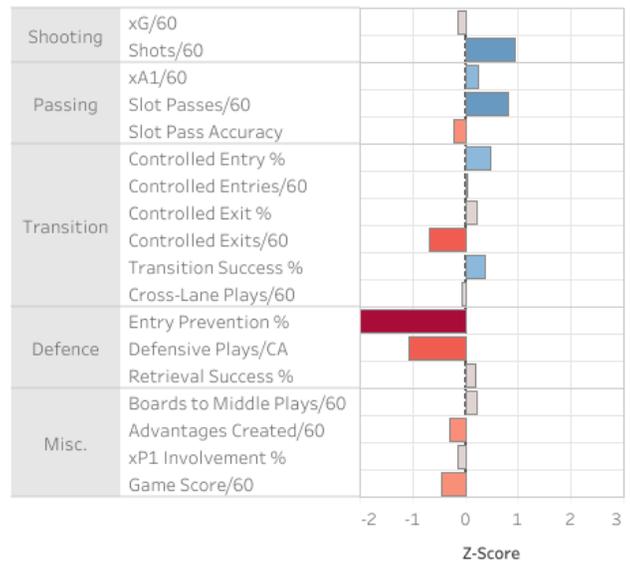
A mainstay with the national team for the second season in a row, Bergström's game is built upon his skating, which we project as slightly above NHL average. He's really fluid, moving comfortably in each direction. He's not as fast as he is agile, but his four-step acceleration is still quite good and projectable. He's also still physically rather raw and should have quite a bit of room for further strength development, which could take his skating to the next level.

With his skating as the foundation for his game, Bergström's strengths are on the offensive side of the puck. Djurgården's free-flowing system also played into his strong points well, making the two a match made in heaven.

As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen summarized in a recent game report, "At his best, he takes advantage of the system he plays in, joins rushes, plays give-and-gos in transition, getting the puck back in the middle for a possible scoring chance".

Arvid Bergström

D | Djurgårdens IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 146.2
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Bergström had the occasional playmaking flash in the offensive zone, but the majority of his production came through the

activations and transitional play.

Speaking of transitions, it's another area where Bergström is raw but shows promising flashes. He created advantages through some great cross-ice stretch passes, but also lacked timing and skill to execute some of the ideas he came up with.

However, defence is where Bergström really struggles. He concedes a ton of space off the rush; the opposing forwards rarely had any issues at gaining the zone. The gap control issues extend to in-zone play, too, and he lacks any sort of stopping power along the boards.

For a patient team, Bergström could be a solid late-round swing based on untapped upside, provided by the skating, active play style, and willingness to experiment. His defensive play has to come a long way before he can be comfortably used at the professional level, though, and even then the skill level might not be high enough to ever crack an NHL lineup. Bergström's still definitely a worthwhile prospect to monitor over the next few years.

⇨ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"A skilled two-way defenceman who likes to join the attack. Skating ability is what stands out here." – Djurgårdens assistant coach Michael Holmqvist

⇨ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

Bergström played his fourth game in four days but looked as energised as in his first game. He is a solid player with his speed, puck supporting and offensive activation. He could be a weapon offensively if he adds more puck skills. That's not a small "if" but not impossible. He has a chance to get drafted I think, but later in the draft. His defensive strength will need to improve a lot if he is to step up at the pro level next season.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

A must-win game for the third day in a row for Bergström. He had an okay game as a hole, but displayed the same flaws as I noticed in the J18 games. His rush defending is weak, not in position or mobility but in his stick checking and weak board play. He had trouble winning puck battles in this game too. I did appreciate his puck support in transition. He couldn't transport as easily at this level and he more often made a quick first pass to his first option. When other players were transporting the puck, he stayed back and in a good angle for a pass. His offensive activation is also something to like in addition to his above average north-to-south skating ability.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Although he was voted best player on Djurgården in this gold medal loss, I left the game unimpressed by Bergström.

First of all, his skating is very good. He has an effective stride with excellent technique. He flies all over the ice and can carry the puck on his own on both breakouts and entries. His east-to-west mobility is not as impressive though.

Second, his decision-making doesn't impress. He chose to carry the puck too much and although he took the puck to the offensive end the play shortly died afterwards because the opponents all five players had good time to get in position. I get that skating with the puck, when you can, is tempting when the opponents have a strong defensive structure but the only thing that it does is prevent a turnover earlier.

Third, his defensive play was not strong. He lost many battles in his own zone along the boards but more troubling was that his rush defence was poorly executed. With that speed defending the rush should be easy at this level and it wasn't a bad gap

either. He just couldn't make a good stick check and got beaten to the inside multiple times.

I don't see scanning patterns and his offensive play along the blueline wasn't that impressive either. He lacks the ability to open up space.

I think he will get picked in the draft due to his tools (skating) thinking he can develop some of his flaws. Maybe he can, but I don't see upside enough on either end to fit him into a role.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Arvid is first and foremost a good skater. He uses his skating both to drive offence and to defend. He generates good speed with his crossover technique. At this level he could dominate both defending the rush and attacking with transporting the puck. His puck touches are good and he is a decent passer, but it's mostly simple plays. He is not creative, doesn't show consistent scanning habits and he doesn't have any deceptive skills. In a more challenging setting, that could be a problem.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Pretty much in line with most of my viewings of Bergström. He's fluid on his feet with solid technical base of skating and handling. The skating posture is a bit upright at times and there's not a ton of ankle flexion, but he's mobile and decently quick nonetheless and further strength training should help with the consistency. At his best, he takes advantage of the system he plays in, joins rushes, plays give-and-gos in transition, getting the puck back in the middle for a possible scoring chance. He wasn't activating that much in-zone and I don't think that the 5-on-5 playmaking or shooting rate that highly; it's a lot of projection needed to be done. Defensively and in transition, he tends to have more struggles. It wasn't his worst game in these areas. At times, his rush defence can look pretty decent, when he gets to leverage his mobility to funnel plays to the outside. Other times, he conceded too much space and gives up the zone too easily, then making himself vulnerable to quick cutbacks. Passing accuracy and touch have been an issue pretty consistently. Some of the ideas are good, but there's lack of feel for the timing element. Maybe a worthwhile project late in the draft, but there's probably more interesting options available.

Lassi Alanen: January 29th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

There wasn't really much positive to take away from this game from Bergström. Didn't get to play much in the offensive zone, which limited his touches in the area of the ice where he's most competent at. On the other hand, he had to play a lot of defence, which he's not that great at doing. Overcommits his weight, doesn't really have the physical tools to pin players along the boards and can get beaten with quick spins. Some of the reads are just not good. Rush defence is more mixed; sometimes he's up in the play early, uses his stick actively and forced the dump-in, other times he concedes a lot of space for the opponent to work with. Mightily struggled to move the puck in transition. Some of the passing choices were just plain bad even if he looked aware and the execution was lacking, too. Didn't look like a pick in this one, but maybe it was just an outlier game.

David St-Louis: January 28th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

There are many interesting elements in Bergström's game, but what fascinates me above all else is his team's system. It's more than positionally fluid. Bergström can pretty play every position he wants on the ice. Some shifts, he spent more time in a traditional forward positions than as a defenceman. He activates with teammates and shows some playmaking skills from the half-wall. His game is incredibly raw at this stage, however, both in terms of tools and reads. Defensive gaps are loose both in the neutral zone and the defensive zone. And he takes on too much offensively. I like the effort and the confidence, but the execution needs serious work. Not sure he's an NHL project at this stage, but if he keeps playing that style, he will improve faster than most. He gets a lot of puck touches and a lot of different offensive look. Pretty entertaining.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Bergström managed to do a lot of good things with the puck. Not the cleanest game in transition overall, but quite a few of really nice breakouts using the middle lane. One of those passes led to a rush goal and a primary helper. The skating continues

to look like a interesting projection. The main value comes from the edges and shiftiness, not necessarily speed or quickness, but he also seems physically raw. Shows willingness to activate and already has a pretty good eye for when and how to do so. The system allows for quite a bit of experimentation. The defence still has a long way to go. Late with some of his reads, gives up space too easily, especially in-zone. He did end up preventing a potential breakaway chance with a last-second pokecheck, though.

Lassi Alanen: November 28th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Bergström scored the game-winner in overtime, reading the pass, intercepting it down low, circling back high and scoring with a nice wrister off the inside leg to end the game. Also added a primary helper at 5-on-5 when his point shot was deflected in from the slot. Pretty in line with the previous viewings. Bergström flashed some upside with his mobility and handling, but only a few times per game when he logs close to or over 20 minutes on most nights. His defensive game doesn't look that projectable (lacks stopping power, late on some positional plays), his transitions rely quite a lot on D-to-D passes instead of creating advantages by himself (works well at this level but not that projectable to the NHL/for a smaller rink). He has a knack for getting his point shots through and some of them are well-timed for possible deflections, but I'd like to see him leveraging his mobility more. Could be a candidate to the tail end of our final board.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

At his best, Bergström is a pretty slick operator. Added a primary helper on the power play with a nice slot pass from the half wall. The handling and skating seem around NHL average projection-wise. He deals with pressure pretty well in his own end, but it's a lot of deferring to his partner to make plays. He had multiple chances to carry the puck out himself, but deferred. Or he had a lot of space in front but decided to cut back into more pressure instead. It's weird because he does flash the skills to carry the puck through the neutral zone effectively. Defensively, he doesn't really add much value, even if he's not terrible either. Conceded more space off the rush again.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Bergström's rush defence looked a lot more solid in this one, establishing gap earlier in the NZ and keeping them away from the middle, forcing a lot of dump-ins this way. Good retrievals, though the forechecking pressure was mostly weak. In-zone defence is okay, positions pretty well for the most part but lacks any real stopping power along the boards and can get outplayed by the better opponents. Mostly a fine game on-puck, a few errors on breakouts but also some highlights in the way of one-touch passes and long stretch feeds for entries. I still don't see any standout tools and skills, even if he's pretty solid everywhere.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Bergström looked like the prototype of a smaller defenceman with solid skating and handling skills, but nothing really stood out. I saw a few nice relocations in the offensive end once Djurgården set up an in-zone scheme, decent gap control in the defensive end but too much space conceded in the neutral zone, quite a lot of one-timer attempts from D-to-D passes at the point. He was in some trouble on breakouts. I liked how he tried to play through the middle, but his passes either didn't connect or were intercepted.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Bergström was arguably Sweden's best rush defender in this game. He used c-cuts to build speed, using crossovers as little as possible. Established his gap early, then guided the attacker to the perimeter to force the dump in or get the steal. Prevented several scoring chances by keeping a tight gap in the defensive zone. Little puck skills shown, but didn't get much opportunity.

Grade: C



Axel Landén

AGE 17.466 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Hammer



Play Killer

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HV71 J18	J18 Region	6	2	3	5	0.83
HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	44	10	6	16	0.36
Sweden U18 "A"	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	19	0	1	1	0.05

SCOUTING REPORT

Hitting and overtly physical play has been on the decline for a while now in most European junior leagues, but there are still some players bucking the trend. Axel Landén is definitely one of those players.

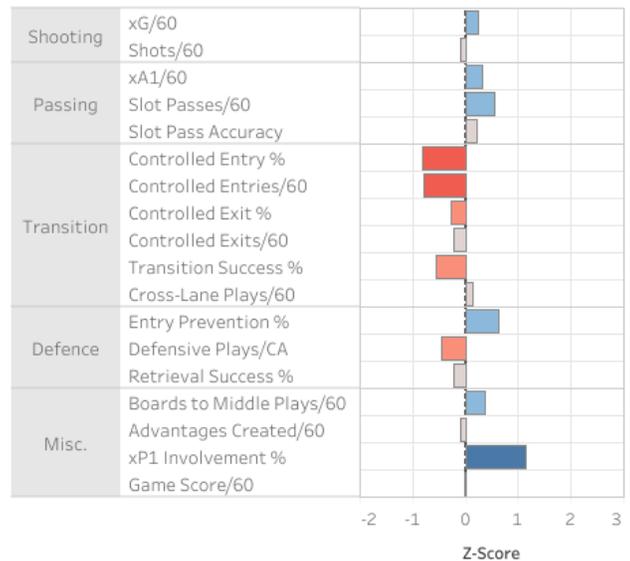
Physically, he was already among the more dominant presences at the J20 level. He chose violence almost every shift, whether it was by throwing hits on the open-ice or pressuring opponents along the boards.

While his overall defensive game still needs some cleaning up related to his positioning and reads, his competence in man-to-man situations will be instantly translatable. As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen pointed out in a game report: "The tools aren't that noteworthy, but he's physically active, engages in battles with purpose and has solid understanding on how to gain leverage and establish body positioning, pin players down along the boards".

With the puck, Landén can be inconsistent and tries to keep his game relatively simple, but also flashes some intriguing stuff from time to time, mostly through playmaking. He's shown he can find the best passing lane in the offensive zone, threading passes to the back post instead of going for simple point shots.

Axel Landén

D | HV71 J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 158.4
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



On breakouts, his passing tends to be more hit-or-miss, which is backed up by the tracking data. But even there he can have impressive moments where he reads the incoming pressure and hits the centre with a hard pass to start a rush.

Landén's development will be interesting to follow, as it could theoretically go into a lot of different directions. The most likely outcome likely sees him settling into the mould of a defensive defenceman who uses his physicality to overwhelm opponents. There's also a world where he builds further on his passing skill and becomes more of a two-way force. Either way, adding a bit more quickness and becoming a bit more comfortable with the puck are going to be key development targets.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"A very powerful defenceman that likes to make the big hit. Top in the country for his age class." – HV71 J20 assistant coach Christoffer Perron, December 2022

"I like to play physical and that's something that I've been doing my whole career. I like to be tough and strong along the boards." – Axel Landén, December 2022

≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

I get the same look every time I see him play. Competitive, physical and explosive. Technically, hands, body and feet don't always sync well which he needs to figure out for him to become a player at high levels. He strives to make good offensive plays but often lacks the ability to pull it off. I like that he wants to play though as "only-safety"-plays defensemen at this age rarely progresses to effective elite defensive defensemen.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

Axel competed well in this game. He defended aggressively to the puck carrier and shut down plays. He hits hard as he is explosive in his skating. He didn't always read the play initially but compensated with his mobility and explosiveness. He won't have time for that at higher levels. Offensively, he joined in on some attacks and had a grade A scoring chance in the slot but fanned on the puck. I like most of his passing plays from the backend. That said, he is a defensive defenseman first and foremost.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs Slovakia - U18s

The team that drafts Axel Landen won't get much offence out of him. He limits himself to simple plays for the most part, on breakouts and at the offensive blue-line. He dangled around the forecheck once in this game -- showing that he can do it, in a pinch. But right now, I see him more as a transition/defensive defenceman. His mobility is NHL projectable. His rush defence

seems like already a strength. He could become a bottom-pairing NHLer in time.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Axel had a good game. He had some strong stick checking break ups and played with good speed and aggression on both ends. Axel's skating looks average in this game. He is active and fast into situations. He leans a bit too much forward but shows good mechanics and a good stride.

He handled the puck quite well. His decision-making isn't super impressive and he isn't super skilled but he looked dangerous and active in the offensive zone as well. There is some value to him for the later rounds.

Lassi Alanen: March 11th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Landén's start to the game was pretty strong, as he was moving the puck effectively up the ice, using the middle and drawing pressure before passing on his breakouts. As the game progressed, though, he started to have more issues with puck-moving. He doesn't really have to skating chops to evade pressure as effectively as some of the top draft-eligible defencemen at this level. When he tried to cut back, he didn't gain separation and was smothered on the forecheck. His passing decisions also started to take longer and longer, leading into more turnovers. There could be still some value in the later rounds given his defensive game, pretty solid gap and physicality, but on the other hand, it'd be a lot easier to get excited if the tools were a bit better.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Landén's strengths remain the same throughout my latest viewings. His passing vision can be quite impressive in stretches, manifesting in accurate and well-timed stretch pass through multiple layers of pressure. They are often being sent from stationary and low pace situations; he's not really beating forecheckers first, instead relies on D-to-D passes to get enough space to pass from. Didn't do much offensively aside from a few point shot plays or setups. Defensively, he's relatively projectable. The tools aren't that noteworthy, but he's physically active, engages in battles with purpose and has solid understanding on how to gain leverage and establish body positioning, pin players down along the boards. His style suits a man-to-man focused defensive scheme instead of positional/area defence.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Landén's physicality continues to stand out. He's not afraid to throw his body while defending the rush, angling the play towards the boards in the process. In the defensive zone, he plays a very strict man defence, shadowing his man throughout the zone. Notably in the net-front, he often stood besides the goal, seemingly for the purpose of keeping the shooting lane open so his goalie would have better vision. Are the tools high-end? No, probably slightly below-average from skating to handling. His passing has proven to be a strength, though, but even then he often stands stationary instead of passing in-motion. He did end up having one high-danger chance off the rush after activating through the middle into an odd-man rush. Also added an actual goal later in the game with a nice release from the point, waiting a bit to scan out the goalie, then firing high far side with precision.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Landén didn't really have any notable moments with the puck, offensively or in transition. It was mostly just about basic passes and he wasn't challenged that much with pressure. It was the physical game that was on display here. While defending the rush, Landén made a couple of big hits to defer the opposition from entering with control. While defending off-puck, he did lose body positioning a couple of times when he tried to just physically block the opponent. On retrievals, he made a couple of nice physical plays that took out the F1 and let his partner get to the loose puck first. He was on ice for two goals against on back-to-back shifts and reacted a bit late on one of them (the other wasn't really under his control). Skating is probably a 4.5 grade at best, also seemingly pretty developed physically.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Frölunda caved in HV71 pretty hard in this one, but Landén still managed to add two primary points at 5-on-5. Frölunda had a bad timing for their change and Landén managed to enter the zone freely and beat the goalie from the top of the circle. Later his D-to-D pass at the point ended up netting him a primary assist. Landén's offensive flashes still remain intriguing. His vision is above-average for a defenceman in his age group. He finds lanes through pressure and finds the best play in the OZ with relatively good consistency. The tools aren't particularly noteworthy, though. The handling seems just fine and the skating is probably at least slightly below-average projection-wise. Doesn't seem to have too much natural quickness. There were shifts where he spend over a minute defending, but given how the whole team got caved in, I don't know how many conclusions you want to draw. Breakouts remain inconsistent, too. Maybe a candidate for the end of our board, depending on how he does during the second half.

Lassi Alanen: November 17th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Landén remains the land of contrasts. Really struggled on breakouts and on regroupings when he was pressured. Many of the dump-out attempts were unsuccessful and when he tried to move the puck with control, his passing accuracy was poor. Then late in the third, he used the boards to pass to himself and spin around a forechecker, then passing through another forechecker to the middle. Could've easily had a primary helper with a beautiful feed to back post for a deflection attempt that ended up missing the net. In that situation, most of his peers would've just opted for a simple point shot, but Landén saw and executed on the best play. Rush defence is inconsistent. Sometimes gaps up early, other times plays too passively or gets beaten outside. A weird player who flashes potential but the impact is very inconsistent.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - HV71 vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Landén is a pretty puzzling player. There are some great flashes here and there, quick reads on the breakouts, ability to find the centre on the inside with accurate passes, more offensive skill with playmaking and OZ activations compared to the majority of his peers. Retrievals were a bit more of a mixed bag, some good choices and some where he didn't have the skating or handling chops to evade the pressure. The tools aren't anything special, I don't think. Probably a 4.5 skater on our scale. Defence isn't a weakness but he can wander around the DZ sometimes and lose focus.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - HV71 vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Landén did more interesting offensive stuff than the majority of the draft-eligible defencemen I've watched at this level this season. He activated wisely and picked his spots well, once seeing a potential opportunity off the rush, accelerating, beating his man to the middle and establishing body positioning and getting a high-danger chance as his teammate recognized the play, too. Moved to the slot for a one-timer when he saw empty space and a teammate coming to his side from behind the net. Also flashed intriguing playmaking skill, seeing passing lanes to the slot that, once again, I haven't seen from many of his peers. Didn't really stand out defensively or in transition. Mostly a good job at defending the rush, but then reading the situation wrong a few times and both resulted in him getting beat wide and the opponent getting a scoring chance. Not sure about how good the tools are, seemed average at best. But there were promising flashes.



Grade: C

Hugo Lejon

AGE 17.436 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw Talent

Player Info

RW/C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	6
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Västerås IK J18	J18 Region	9	6	7	13	1.44
Västerås IK J20	J20 Nationell	46	9	29	38	0.83
Västerås IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	2	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Only four draft-eligible players in the J20 Nationell managed to add more points than Hugo Lejon. Despite this, he's flown under the radar for the entire season and didn't make a single appearance with Sweden's national team.

Though there are reasons to be skeptical about Lejon's status as a legitimate NHL prospect, he's almost certainly more skilled in many ways than a fair number of his peers who are going to get drafted in the later rounds.

He regularly incorporates manipulative and gravitational elements into his playmaking while also displaying above-average vision and craftiness under pressure. It also shows in the tracking data; Lejon set up more scoring chances than any draft-eligible forward at the J20 level when adjusted for ice time.

The concerns about Lejon relate to how he can take advantage of his offensive skill and drive play at the next level while being at least slightly below-average skater and lacking a physical game.

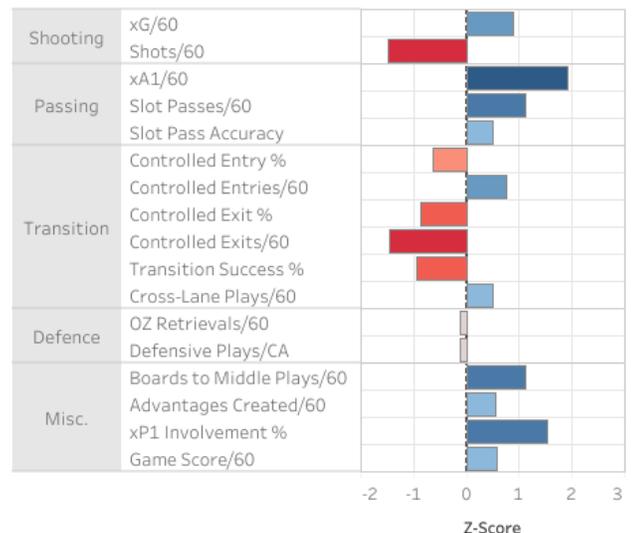
Spending too much on the perimeter was already been somewhat of an issue this season, though he does have decent off-puck instincts and managed to pop into the slot just in time for potential scoring chances.

Hugo Lejon

F | Västerås IK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 110.2

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Lejon is exceptionally raw and his development will likely take longer than many of his peers, but the underlying skill could make him an interesting flyer late in the draft.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Scout's Notebook: Three underrated Swedish forwards in the 2023 NHL Draft

≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 1st, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Västerås IK - J20 Playoffs

Not an impressive performance by Lejon. He got caught on some long shift on his own. He doesn't show either determination or strong awareness in his own end. On the contrary, his defensive pattern is that he floats and likes to cheat for offence. He made some good plays and found open space. He also had a hard time controlling space when meeting a more high pressure system like Leksand. He had some bad offensive plays where he stressed the play and didn't have to show for it at the end of the game. Still, he gets into open areas and tries stuff and he has a smart offensive mindset. He needs to develop his skating patterns and drive more to the inside to become a good offensive player at the pro level.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 22nd, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Playoffs

Hugo was one of the best players in the game. His straight-line stride looks quite decent in full power but he tends to use a shorter stride and play at a lower constant pace. He has a long stick and some impressive hands. He is a strong playmaker and pre-scans before he gets the puck and makes quick decisions with it. He has some manipulative moves and can create space. He tends to play too much on the outside. He is an offensive player with too many flaws to project as a top 6 forward but a chance good enough to take in a 6th or 7th round.

Lassi Alanen: March 10th, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. Brynäs IF - J20 Nationell

Lejon is a flawed player in many ways and a tough projection due to the not-that-impressive skating, lack of physical skills and inconsistent work rate and transition play, but there aren't that many draft-eligibles in Sweden who are as good at creating in the OZ out of seemingly nothing. Not necessarily individually by deking his way through pressure, but the playmaking is really impressive. He added a beautiful primary assist with a backhand pass to the slot from in tight near the end boards. Earlier in the same shift, he was able to execute the same pass when even more crowded, beating basically three opponents in the process. Set up a couple of other quality looks as well. Just an impressive vision combined with hints of deception and manipulative skill; it could be a legit NHL tool. Maybe stays a bit too much on the perimeter without the puck. There's decent off-puck instincts and timing around the slot, though.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Lejon actually played centre in this one, which was quite surprising to see. Looked to serve his game in that he didn't have to be receiving breakouts along the boards, which has been a big issue for him in my viewings. Instead, he got to roam a bit more freely and get the puck in space. Driving as the F2 down the middle, he did have one high-danger rebound chance after the

goalie bounced the puck in front of him after a pretty mundane low-danger shot. There were - again - flashes of some quality playmaking ability and vision. There were probably more passing plays that didn't connect than those that did, but some of the ones that did were quite impressive, sometimes through multiple layers of pressure. I still don't think he's necessarily a draft pick, but he could potentially really pop in the coming years.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Lejon has legit passing skill, at least more than the majority of his peers at this level. He's gravitational, attacks defenders with intention, dragging them towards him, then passes the puck into the space he just opened. He was really good at dodging sticks and skates, too, adapting the passing angle appropriately, whether it was hooking the puck under the stick or slipping the puck across his body. I'm still not sold on the rest of the skill set, though. He needs space to operate in transition, although he did do more work than previously at retrieving the puck. The skating could reasonably get to average level with further strength training, maybe. The mechanics aren't too bad. With the puck, he's still somewhat of a perimeter player, though he does make well-timed off-puck movements to the inside. Also improved focus defensively, especially against the rush and on the backcheck.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. AIK - J20 Nationell

Pretty much an off-game for Lejon at 5-on-5. Couldn't get anything substantive done. The best contributions were the few solid backchecks he provided, but that's about it. Transitions remain very hard for him. He just doesn't seem to have the patience or poise to hold onto the puck or look for passing solutions under pressure. He doesn't get low to get the puck on breakouts, instead he's almost the DZ blue line and when the defender tries to pass to him, he's often getting pinched and doesn't deal with that very well. We didn't really see the offensive skill in this one, either, having very limited touches in the OZ. The lack of strength and pace are legit issues considering his future as a pro, even if he is producing at a very solid rate this season.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Västerås IK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Despite not having a very noteworthy game otherwise, Lejon somehow ended the game with almost a goal worth of xG at 5-on-5 alone, and set up a quality look in the process, too. He's not someone who is driving the bus on his line, instead relied on the other players to get the puck to the OZ. Actually, he looked pretty careless and uninterested in some of the transition and defensive sequences. Hard to project his game forward if these things don't improve, even if he has skill. The scoring chances came mostly by him being in the right place at the right time, coming close to scoring from a 2-on-1 rebound and another high-danger chance after a blocked shot by a teammate. There's also the passing skill that's pretty intriguing. Flashes deception and has pretty strong vision in the OZ, finding and executing on passing lanes quickly.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Västerås IK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Lejon is just very uncaredful with the puck in transition. Multiple times, he turned the puck over unnecessarily just by hastily throwing a blind pass to the middle in the DZ. If he doesn't have space, he's going to struggle in transition given his lack of strength and quickness. But if he has space, he can cook. And we saw him do that a few times, setting up a quality chance off the rush where he anticipated the play, got ahead of it and got to attack with space. Showed some solid off-puck movement throughout the game, playing between checks and making himself available for passes at the right time. The one time his linemates took advantage of it, he ended up scoring from the net-front with a solid one-touch release from one knee. He's skilled, but not very projectable regarding the NHL.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Västerås IK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Lejon is clearly rather skilled and was used in an offensive role. Anticipated offensive opportunities pretty well, fleeing the zone when he saw that a counter-attack was possible. One of them resulted in a 2-on-1 where he baited the defender with the threat of the shot, then slipped the puck to the teammate cross-ice. Another particularly impressive sequence happened after an OZ faceoff, where he had the patience to fake the first opponent with a shot, deked to the inside instead and got a high-danger look as of result. Some of his passes to the slot were pretty low-percentage attempts, but that's to be expected with his role, I guess. I'm not sure how projectable he is, though. Probably at least slightly below-average skating projection, didn't seem like much of a play-driver. Have to watch more.



Melvin Wersäll

AGE 17.636 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor



Evasive

Player Info

RW/LW Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	163 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Djurgårdens IF J18	J18 Region	3	2	1	3	1.00
Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	31	14	9	23	0.74
Djurgårdens IF	HockeyAllsvenskan	6	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	3	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

If you're looking for a speedy winger with forechecking ability and flashes of intriguing playmaking skill, Melvin Wersäll just might be your guy in the later rounds of the draft.

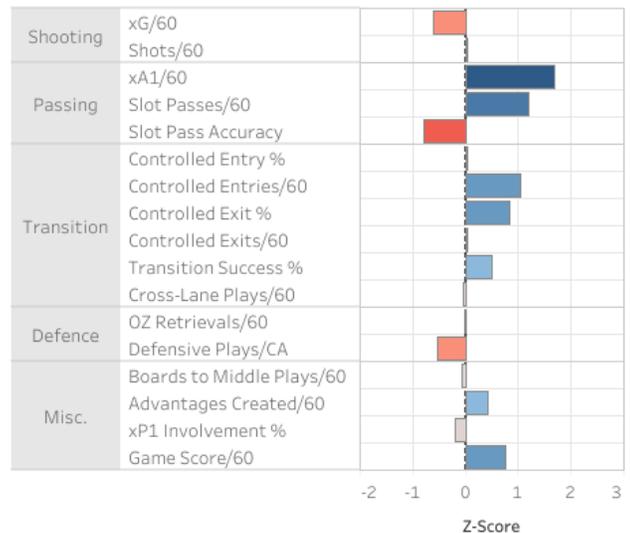
In his first full season with Djurgårdens' J20 squad, Wersäll's 14 goals in 31 games was the second-best mark on the team. He also appeared with the national team in February's tournament but ultimately didn't end up making the roster for the U18s. One could make the case that his league play would've warranted him a spot in the bottom-six, though.

Wersäll's stride can be a bit all over the place from a mechanical standpoint, but his skating output is nonetheless impressive. The first steps are explosive and he used his quickness and speed to separate from defenders consistently; he's clearly a very good athlete. Wersäll also plays with a lot of pace and maintains a high work rate. He's willing to take the extra stride to properly disrupt plays on the backcheck and outraces defenders to retrieve pucks in the offensive end.

Even while there are projectable elements in Wersäll's game, we wouldn't characterize him as particularly skilled with the puck. Currently, his offence mostly comes off the rush and through the advantages he's able to create for himself using his speed. There were games where his sense and decision-making looked questionable, but also other games where he scanned a lot more and made more advanced reads with and without the puck.

Melvin Wersäll

F | Djurgårdens IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 126.0
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Wersäll's path to becoming a pro seems rather straight-forward. His energetic style combined with the quickness and defensive ability should allow him to step into the HockeyAllsvenskan sooner rather than later. His chances of turning into a bottom-six NHLer depend on whether he can clean up his skating and handling and show continued improvements in his hockey sense.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

Game four in four days for Wersäll but there wasn't any lack of energy. He was a motor for his team with hard work, strong board play and some skilled moves. He scored a goal and assisted on the other for his team. On both goals he read the play well and executed.

He lacks the ability to control and open up space with just speed and/or hands but with good chemistry he is good at creating give-and-go situations and taking the puck to the net. He got pushed to the outside a lot otherwise. He is good at covering the puck but struggles to find easy ways to the inside. He seeks it though, which of course is good. He tries a lot of quick turns with preparation before he gets the puck as well. I like the effort. This is an interesting player for the second half of the draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

I liked Wersäll in this game. He was his team's best attacker. He competes hard and shows the ability to handle space well. He anticipates plays with good game reading and an active and aware presence. He has some good moves and playmaking moments. He plays physically and looks to have a degree of a naturally aggressive mood. What often holds him back is often the inability to separate from opponents and he loses a big degree of the touch with his hands when he plays with full intensity. His game takes a lot of energy and he rarely creates anything with ease.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Melvin competed hard in this gold medal loss. He shows strong board play with winning battles and takes the puck to the middle with tenacious work ethics. The opponents played a high pressure, high structured defense and Melvin couldn't open it up. He had to fight for the puck and if he drove the attack, the space shrunk. Offensively, not a strong effort and it makes you wonder if he has the weapons to be successful on higher levels. Skating isn't a weapon.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Melvin had a good game with a lot of offensive action and skilled plays. He shows good awareness of space, both with and without the puck. He opens up space with his hands and skating at this level. He can be deceptive and times his passes impressively. He drove the play for his line and played with intensity. He was hounding the puck to win it and created many give-and-go situations with his teammates in the offensive zone. The J18 level didn't really challenge his shown weaknesses but it was nice to see what he could do in a game like this. He shows creativity, skill, good sense and vision. He scanned and anticipated plays.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Wersäll had his flashes, ringing up the post with a surprisingly quick release off the rush and setting up a few looks. The most recent viewings haven't been that impressive overall, though. The playmaking flashes are probably the biggest missing factor. The skating still looks good for the most part and is a projectable tool, but how he uses it is sometimes questionable. To become a more projectable forechecker, he needs to learn to angle plays better. Right now, he often just speeds his way past the player and plays himself out of the situation instead of properly engaging. The overall sense is probably still an average NHL projection. There could still be a player here, but I'm not as optimistic as I was at some point, and even then I wasn't completely sold.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

This was a pretty invisible game from Wersäll overall. Not sure why, but he just wasn't doing much or connecting with the few plays that he tried. The skating and the motor looked worse than in most of my previous viewings. Could've gotten a high-danger chance after being forgotten in the slot but mishandled the pass reception and couldn't get a proper shot off. Transition passing was off, too. Not sure you want to put too much weight on what is still probably an outlier performance considering the entire sample I have of him, but the last few viewings haven't been it.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Wersäll had a few moments here, although I thought that the overall performance was a bit weaker than in some of the previous viewings. I keep repeating myself, but the combination of skating, decent smarts, some shooting skill (in-stride release) and the playmaking flashes making him a reasonable bet in the later rounds. I'm still not impressed with the skill level; the hands don't always keep up with the feet, he mishandles pass receptions, can't really adjust the puck that well in full speed consistently. So there might be a relatively low ceiling, but also a solid floor as long as he continues to get stronger on his feet and it also helps with the skating posture. Still, he drives play well at this level and you could argue he could be closer to point-per-game pace given the chance generation at 5-on-5.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Pretty much consistent with my previous viewings of Wersäll. He has the makings of an energy winger who can also chip offensively with his playmaking and by being opportunistic off the rush. Yet another game where his quickness showed in the way of a breakaway, this time to score an empty-netter to seal the win at the end of the game. He hasn't necessarily had the same defensive impact than he did in some of my earlier viewings, but I still like his forechecking game quite a bit. He also has had way more chances or chance setups than his point totals would suggest in my viewings. Yet again, he was able to set up a high-danger chance from an odd-man rush, benefitting from the defence's mispositioning and a really nice one-touch entry pass from his teammate. There's path for him to play at some point, could be a reasonable bet to make later in the draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 28th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. BIK Karlskoga - HockeyAllsvenskan

Hats off for his work ethic! He skates in full stride all the time, he blocks shots and delivers hits although being undersized physically, especially in a men's league. With more speed and strength he could become a relentless forechecker.

I also like how he reads the offensive game. He found space in a proactive manner and he had some nice set ups with the puck. His skills with the puck are average though. He can one-time the puck if he has the space to do so but can't open up space with his hands. He does not show the ability to be a manipulating player with his hands. He can beat opponents by scanning before he gets the puck and win space that way.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Wersäll's playmaking continues to improve in spurts. I still don't think he has much in the way of finer details like manipulating opponents nor does he hide his intentions particularly well, but he sees the best play and executes on it with consistency. One nice pass to space off the rush, dragging the defender with him to the outside and then dishing the puck towards the net for a teammate. Multiple quality passes off the cycle to the slot from near the end boards, one of them netting him a primary helper. He did have quite a bit of space to execute, so I'm not sure how effective he is as a playmaker when pressured. The skating remains a strength, quite clearly the biggest one of them, despite the work-in-progress mechanics. Pushes the pace, especially offensively, but also has the makings of a sound two-way player if he adds more scanning in the DZ.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 14th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Melvin is a hard working player with skill who put up 4 points in this 4-1 win. He skates like he is angry and with full energy. The efficiency in his skating technique could be better, he can't save energy. I like his straight-line stride and with more strength he

could get faster and more smooth. He leans slightly forward in full stride which limits the power in his stride. Wersäll shows good vision with the puck. He finds open space and he is good at taking the puck to the middle. His playmaking vision is impressive, but he needs to execute better at times. Some passes looked sloppy with stiff hands. He scans well and shows proactiveness. He is often ahead of the opponent before getting the puck.

With better speed and pace control he would be able to keep the softness in his hands better. In tight puck battles, Wersäll is good at getting the puck through and shows a tenacious work ethic. Physically he is thin built and will need to add more strength. This is a player to look out for in the later rounds of the draft. There are a lot to like in the way he competes and drives play at junior level. He will need to get much more smooth in his skating and hands to become an NHL player.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

This was the best Wersäll game I've seen this season. Not only was the usual rush offence there, as he did get another breakaway chance after the opponents messed up at the point, he reacted fast by sprinting up the middle, received the pass and wasn't able to be caught, though he once again failed to convert. But he was also creating off the cycle this time, and even with more variety off the rush. He was entering through the middle, then making a well-timed drop pass and taking away the defender with his body to allow his linemate to step into slot. He was playing nice give-and-gos in the OZ, then hitting teammates in the middle from the boards with sharp passes. I haven't seen a lot of handling skill, as he tends to struggle on some receptions and relies more on his skating to beat players, but the playmaking is probably better than I thought. Some of the passing decisions were a bit odd, ie. passing to an already covered target on the wing instead of continuing to carry down the middle. He's going to be a useful pro, I can sense that much, especially as he packs on more muscle.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

So yeah, Wersäll's offence is very much focused on the rush, but he's pretty good at that specific discipline. He not only has the explosiveness and speed to create advantages and gain the zone, but showed some playmaking touch in getting the puck to the middle and the slot area, slipping pucks past defenders' sticks. He's not really manipulative or deceptive, but executes on the plays that are available to him with a pretty solid consistency level. The skating stride is still all over the place at times, but the natural quickness and speed make up for it. He clearly lacks in both lower and upper-body strength, so the stride will likely calm down as he continues to progress. Still one of the better NZ defenders among forwards at this level. Not only applied back pressure, but is at the right place to cut off passing lanes and intercept plays. Does he have enough skill? I'm not sold, but he could be a potential bottom-six winger if everything breaks right.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Wersäll continues to disrupt plays really well on the backcheck, taking the extra strides necessary, lifting the opponent's stick and picking up the puck back for his team. The skating allows him to be effective on OZ retrievals, too, regularly outracing defenders to pucks. Offensively, this was a more limited performance. One nice entry where he was able to hang onto the puck near the boards and dish it to the middle for a partial scoring chance, but the lack of odd-man rushes did hurt his output somewhat. I'm not yet sure how skilled he is at creating in other situations. Haven't seen particular shooting or playmaking skill when there's no advantage already.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Wersäll had a bunch of scoring chances in this one and even set up one by himself, especially for a game where he was ultimately held pointless. These chances came almost exclusively from odd-man rushes off the rush, taking advantage of opponent's mistakes. Wersäll's skating output was quite impressive. His first few steps were explosive and he was able to separate with them almost every time. From a mechanical perspective, there's still a lot of cleaning to be done as he was a bit all over the place with his movement, but he's clearly a high-level athlete. One breakaway opportunity, two 2-on-1s; the skating netted him with quite a bit in this one. We'll have to see whether he can create with other ways, too. I appreciated his work ethic, though, backchecking very hard on multiple sequences to get the puck back in the NZ.



Grade: C

Tanner Adams

AGE 17.036 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Storm	USHL	49	12	21	33	0.67
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	2	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Although Tanner Adams failed to build off his impressive draft-minus-one season significantly, he's nothing short of a master of details. He comfortably plays both centre and wing, kills penalties, and provides three-zone impact.

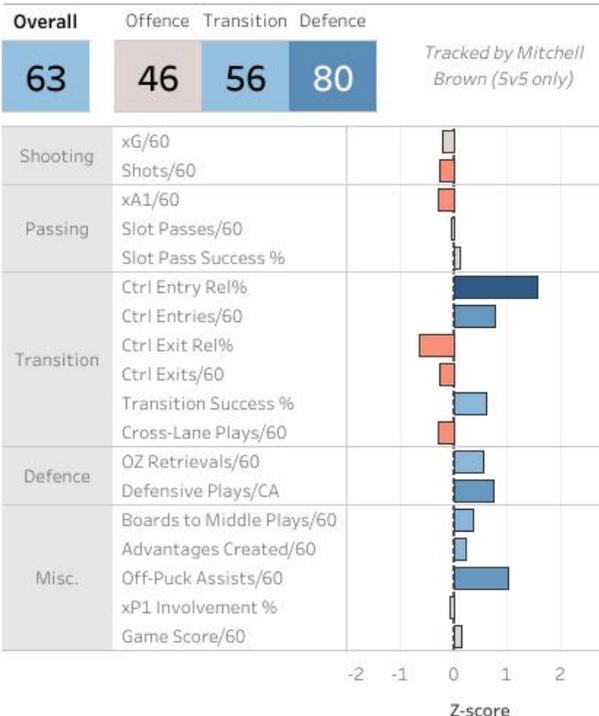
Adams shows NHL-calibre attention to detail. He doesn't just pressure opponents, he guides them into traps. He anticipates plays, racking up interceptions and poking away pucks just as opponents receive them. Physical, and always with the purpose of winning body positioning and securing possession. And he brings the energy every shift of every game.

Offensively, Adams is less refined. He reads opponents' momentum, passing into the space they exit. And he shows some down-low playmaking, getting opponents leaning on him before cutting back and finding a teammate in the slot. Smart off-puck decisions, like taking away a stick to let a pass through, appear frequently.

It's when Adams has the puck for an extended period where the concerns pop up. He handles pucks with too much force and plays too fast for his current mechanical level. A lack of quickness and stability on his edges limits his space. Improve those, and Adams looks like a solid bet to play in the NHL in some capacity. He takes a step as a playmaker, perhaps carves out a bottom-six role.

Tanner Adams

F | Tri-City Storm | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 109.3



≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



USHL Stock Watch: Macklin Celebrini putting himself in the pole position for 2024 NHL Draft



Standout performances at the 2022 World Junior A Challenge

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

Mitchell Brown: April 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Not much change in these Adams viewings done the stretch. The checking game is strong. He has ideas with the puck. He passes through opponents into the slot for chances. In one sequence, he waited for a defender to remove their stick from the passing lane before dishing, creating an entry. That fits in the pattern of Adams reading opponents before making plays. That's encouraging. He also scored with a step-in wrister on the powerplay, showing a level of shooting skill I haven't seen from him before. The usual concerns applied, however. He still has limitations as a handler and skater. Whiffs on passes and pass receptions. He looks more like a depth piece than an NHL regular, but perhaps I just caught bad games.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Not much skill from Adams in this game. He continues to show checking skills – body positioning, anticipation, energy, and off-puck defensive awareness. But he doesn't get many touches because he's always rushing the net instead of staying in space. When the puck arrives, he tries more complex plays but usually loses the handle. A bit of a delay game and vision in transition, but nothing that suggested NHL skill.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Adams grabbed a pair of chances in-tight off the forecheck. That's where he's most effective. He's a buzzsaw but also shows some anticipatory skills, getting the jump on opponents or pushing them into support. The hands consistently failed him. He has ideas – especially aware of how to cut inside on the opponent's heels – but never completes his moves. Pucks don't just roll off his stick, but he hits them too hard and plays too fast. Right now, he's solely a forechecker with some inside skills. Perhaps a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs Tri-City Storm - USHL

Adams heeled his best chance of the game, but had a couple of impressive plays. Created a powerplay marker by passing cross-crease from the goal-line with a bit of space. Read opponents' momentum and took advantage of it by cutting inside of their heels. Faded into space for shoots. Consistent motor to disrupt plays. The handling skill and skating prevented him from making full use of his reads – he lost pucks after getting inside and struggled with passes and pass receptions. Also passed out of the slot to the point for some reason. He looks more like a late-rounder. Could become a depth player in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

The same game as the February 18th report. He skates his routes, shows a bit of deception on his passes that start give-and-

gos, hits teammates planted around the slot with passes off the boards, and generally understands how to build plays when given a favourable puck in the neutral zone. Attacks the inside off the boards, brings defensive value through his motor and anticipation, and has a bit of physical skills to win battles. But he doesn't create many advantages. He struggles with puck control, especially with his feet moving. Head down on breakouts and missed options. Lots of turnovers as a consequence of playing too fast. If he improves his hands and skating, he could become a fourth-liner.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Solid game from Adams. He showed a bit more skill than I saw from him in the first half. He's mostly a give-and-go, off-puck attacker who makes quick lateral plays and skates his route. It's actually how he scored his slick late-game goal – rushing the net to get open. But he added a few more layers to the give-and-go game. He deceived and drew pressure before passing, creating a bit more space for the recipient. That's the extra layer needed to play like this at the professional level. Slip pass use and he shows vision around the net to find teammates in space. The tools still look below-average, but I've come to appreciate his checking game and attention to detail. Could be a fourth-liner if the mechanics take a step. A decent mid-rounder.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs. Blue - Biosteel Top Prospects Game

Adams can only make plays inside space. At least that's the impression I get from watching him in tournaments and at events like these, where the talent level increases. He gets pressured into getting rid of the puck, as he lacks the small-area mechanical ability to keep possession for more than a second. I only saw him complete cycle plays in this one.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Not much from Adams at 5-on-5. He lacks patience on breakout, preferring to throw pucks up the ice when pressure arrives. That's a contrast from his zone entries. He's not especially skilled, but he clearly reads lanes and tries to time his passes as the defender exits it. Only makes simple passes in the offensive zone, but he tries to get to the net. Didn't really show NHL skills, outside of the motor and defence.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - USA vs. Canada East - WJAC

Not a very eventful game for Tanner Adams. He only played 12 minutes and some PK. The pucks he did get from teammates, he didn't really manage all that well, heading straight at defenders to try and dangle through their feet or passing to teammates in bad situations. His pass setups could improve; he needs to drag defenders further away before attempting a drop feed. I liked his speed overall and his net-drives. He could have gotten his stick on a couple of rebounds. He's not one of the main elements of this team, however.

David St-Louis: December 11th, 2022 - Canada West vs. USA - WJAC

Only flashes from Adams in this game. His skating looked like a weakness in some parts of the early game, but then it looked better as the game become more open offensively. He had some playmaking moments and showed an ability to support the plays of teammates with well-timed drives. Nothing overly fancy, but he could score in this tournament. He seems a little too reliant on the one-handed feint when carrying the puck.

Joey Padmanabhan: November 25th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

I've got some time for Adams. He's good in the dot and has a high motor. Some nice passing ability on display too, took the puck wide a couple of times on the rush, changed his pace and found the high trailer. Couple good finds with the puck below the goal line too, sucking in pressure and making a quick dish to the slot area. The skating is an issue. He's got a ton of slippage at the end of his stride that prevents him from getting any real explosiveness and he's got this weird arm swing with his right hand that throws him off balance too. It's fine for the USHL but I wonder if it gets exposed at higher levels. More of a mid-round talent, at least right now.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Adams wasn't really a factor outside the backtracking and forechecking. He's an intelligent and hard-working off-puck player. But he was limited with the puck. Lots of straight-line plays into dump-ins or turnovers. He didn't try to draw pressure or pass through it. Easily defended. The skating's an issue, with a significant lack of lower-body flexion and a stride that goes too far behind him. In the offensive end, he sees lanes and generally passes through them. Didn't create lanes and didn't show any notable skill. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another impressive game from Adams details-wise, and he finally showed more skill. Deked around a defender, then completed a cross-ice pass while falling – the passing leading igniting a sequence that led to a goal. Scored a tap-in on the powerplay. Consistently open in this game, shifting between the net front and the slot, and skating his routes in transition. Works to get above the play. After winning possession, he doesn't force plays. Makes the early play when possible, but often waits for a second, scans, then hits a teammate moving up the middle. He looks like a solid bet to become an NHLer, likely lower in the line up. Or maybe not. It's August.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Adams' best game of the tournament so far, but he still wasn't great. He scored the US's only goal by finishing off a shot off the faceoff. He deked through a defender and cut inside, all in motion. He has some passing skill in the tough areas, and a bit of creativity under pressure. An intelligent support player, but he arrived to space late a couple of times.

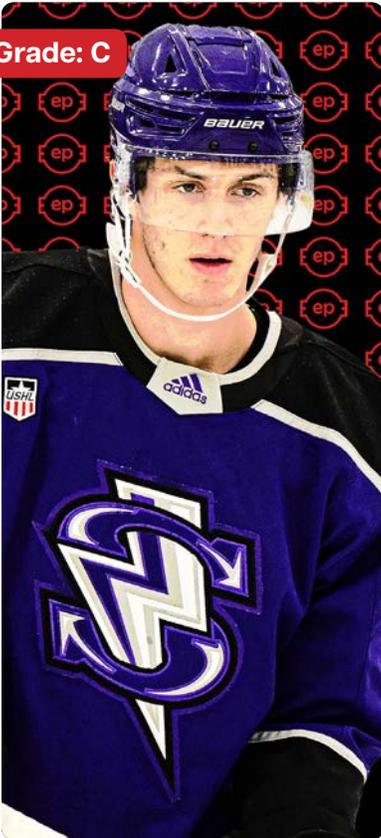
Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Adams hasn't been able to get much going at 5-on-5 through two games. He's a skilled handler and skating, using pivot turns, cutbacks, and fakes to bait the poke check. Takes pucks in his hip pocket, and often knows the next play immediately. He has some off-puck skills, both offensively and defensively. Gets open by getting between checks or establishing body positioning on defenders in front of the net. Hoped to see a bit more play creation from him in this tournament, but it's also summer hockey so I don't really care that much.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

A relatively quiet game from Adams, although he showed the usual forechecking ability, defensive work, and physical skills. Turned a steal into a scan by pre-scanning on the retrieval. Handling form also stood out, with his top hand pushed in front of his body with his head up. In motion skill in moments. A player to watch.

Grade: C



Philippe Blais-Savoie

AGE 17.266 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Play Killer



Raw Talent

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Storm	USHL	61	2	9	11	0.18

SCOUTING REPORT

There's no doubt that points are predictive of future success, but what happens when a player can do everything but score? With a near-complete skill set, Philippe Blais-Savoie might be this draft's best answer to that question.

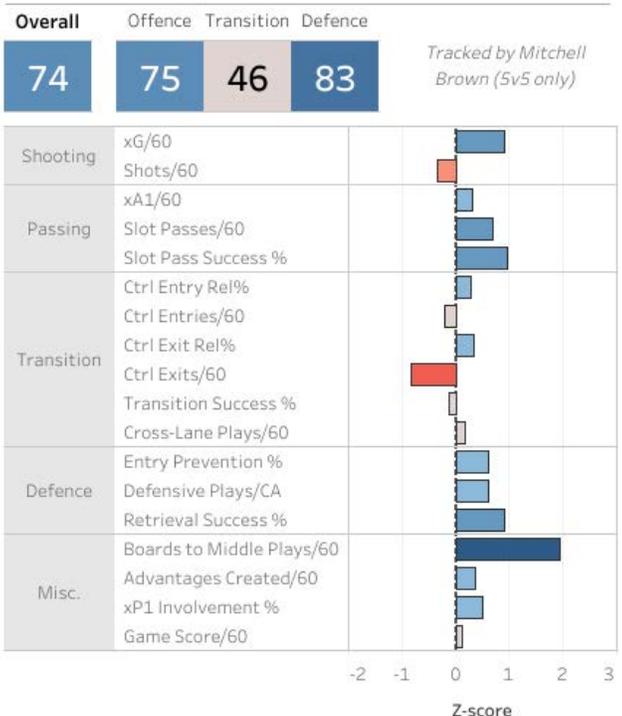
A lockdown defender, Blais-Savoie pins opponents to the boards, lifts their sticks just as the puck comes near, and boxes them out. He doesn't just react; he dictates. A suffocating gap pushes attackers to the outside and anticipates the cutbacks and dekes, earning stops off high-skill attackers. He anticipates switches of coverage and quickly contests plays.

Blais-Savoie is also one of the draft's better activators, using the weak side, the middle, and finding space as the trailer. When he gets the puck, he shows legitimate skill. He lets the momentum of the puck set up the weight transfer for the shot, dekes around opponents after reading their feet, and draws pressure before passing. Slip and hook passes enable access to lanes unavailable to most USHL prospects. He even skates his routes to create space and builds plays when activated like a forward.

So, why doesn't he score? The lack of speed and evasiveness is one problem. The skill level, despite exciting flashes, varies a lot. One shift, he's slipping pucks around opponents, the next, he struggles

Philippe Blais-Savoie

D | Tri-City Storm | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 117.6



to complete an easier pass. The reads vary, too. Sometimes, he creates an advantage by passing through the forecheck; other times, he won't even try to make a play. Put those together, and it's clear that a lot must go right in any given game for the offence to appear.

With a development plan that taps into Blais-Savoie's creative, play-driving side, he could become a do-it-all bottom-three defenceman.

✧ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Blais-Savoie continues to impress. The defensive upside shown in this game was high, perhaps NHL level. Off-puck, he usually stayed locked to his check, but detached at the right moments to close lanes or contest the puck carrier. Physical, eliminated sticks, and gapped up early off the rush. He anticipated opponents' next moves too, with the best stop being reading the incoming cutback before trapping their feet along the boards and securing possession. The skill level's limited at times. His hands prevent access to lanes. As soon as he tries more advanced plays – like a pass through a player – it either fails or squeaks through. He's on the up. Could be a late-rounder and the activation game I saw in previous games gives me some belief that it's the hands, not the brain, that keep his offensive impact muted for now.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A quiet game from Blais-Savoie, whose defensive skating continues to be an issue at this level. He's a hard-worker and certainly not shy to engage, but he can't generate the speed out of his pivots to match faster attackers. It also limits his game on the offensive end. Despite what the points might suggest, he's a relatively smart puck-mover and in-zone player. He looks inside and cross-ice for options – he has some play-building potential with better reads under pressure. He proactively activates off-puck, becoming an option or drawing attention to himself, especially down the weak side. An interesting prospect. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Lots of impressive activation plays by Blais-Savoie. He used his breakouts to get into the play once, reversing off a retrieval and skating up the weak side for the return pass. Jumped into ahead of his forwards and he picked up loose pucks. Tried a couple of passes into the slot from behind the net. The best read was lateral crossovers to bring the defenders high, then stopping and accelerating before hitting a hook pass back into the slot. That showed awareness, vision, and some ability to manipulate defenders. There were also concerns. His defensive skating remains an issue. He's late to pivot and lacks power. With the puck, he's late to lanes and takes too long to spot options, leading to turnovers. Limited mechanical/in-motion ability at this stage. He could be a late-rounder for a team perhaps.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs Tri-City Storm - USHL

Some more impressive plays from Blais-Savoie. The rush defence looks better than early in the season. He didn't just step up on opponents; he eliminated their space and pinched them off along the boards, forcing dump-ins or getting clean stops. He drifts too far wide sometimes and lacks corrective speed. Tried to work pucks through opponents and hit teammates working up the weak side with speed. Accuracy was limited, but the ideas were encouraging. Showed some offensive ideas and skill. In one sequence, he stepped into space, cut away, then passed back into the space he just left for a walk-in chance. Looked like a potential late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

One of the best single-game performances I've seen from a blue-line prospect in this draft, any calibre. Blais-Savoie showed some exciting offensive upside to go with the usual play-killing off the rush, angling, and problem-solving in multivariable

situations. He connected with a pair of passes from the point into the slot, stepping into space with his head up as he identified the options. Before passing, he brought defenders to his side of the ice, creating space. Lots of activation. He used the weak side and joined the play straight up the middle. A few of the plays he created in the rush: deked around an opponent before firing, drop pass and staying in the rush to create the lane, faking one way before attacking the defender wide, and outracing the defenders to the net for a high-danger look. The hands fail at times and the skating is still a 4-to-4.5 projection, with a lack of depth, power, and full extensions. The breakouts are where those limitations are most visible. He passes into pressure consistently (rather than through it) and doesn't create lanes. He looked like a late-second in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Where did this come from? Blais-Savoie had a standout game with the puck. He made a couple of advantage-creating passes through opponents to teammates moving with speed, highlighted by a dart after pulling the puck off the boards. He scored a goal (that was waved off) by reading the forward coming high, jumping down the weak side, and redirecting a hard pass into the open net, letting the momentum of the shot set up his weight transfer. There were times where his plays were too simple, but this was a big step forward. Especially considering how the defence also looked better compared to my first viewings. He was a proactive off-puck eliminator, killed plays in the neutral zone (once leading to a goal), and even killed plays off the switch off and rotation. He looked like a draft pick in this game even with the skating and handling looking like below-average projections. Eye-opening performance.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

So, Blais-Savoie might be a prospect after all. He's very, very simple with the puck. He only tries basic plays, doesn't move into space, doesn't activate, and doesn't try anything other than straightforward breakouts. Maybe he does in other games, but certainly not in this one. But he showed some real defensive upside. Not just physicality, but he was angling opponents and eliminating off-puck threats. Scanning often and aware. The lack of a puck game probably means he's not a pick, but there's long-term upside.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Blais-Savoie was very beatable off the rush, but he showed some in-zone defensive ability. He stayed on his check and clearly anticipated plays. Lots of reaching instead of getting inside opponents and outright eliminating them, but that's a positive start. The skills were limited in this game. Not much to go on.

Grade: C



Cody Croal

AGE 19.249 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 17, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Pest



Hammer

Player Info

LW Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	174 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	6 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	62	18	31	49	0.79

SCOUTING REPORT

Scoring in the USHL isn't easy, even for players in their 19-year-old season. So, even though Cody Croal's 0.8 point-per-game clip doesn't scream future NHLer, it's tough to see his rookie season as anything other than a success. And he shows the skill to be a top scorer at this level.

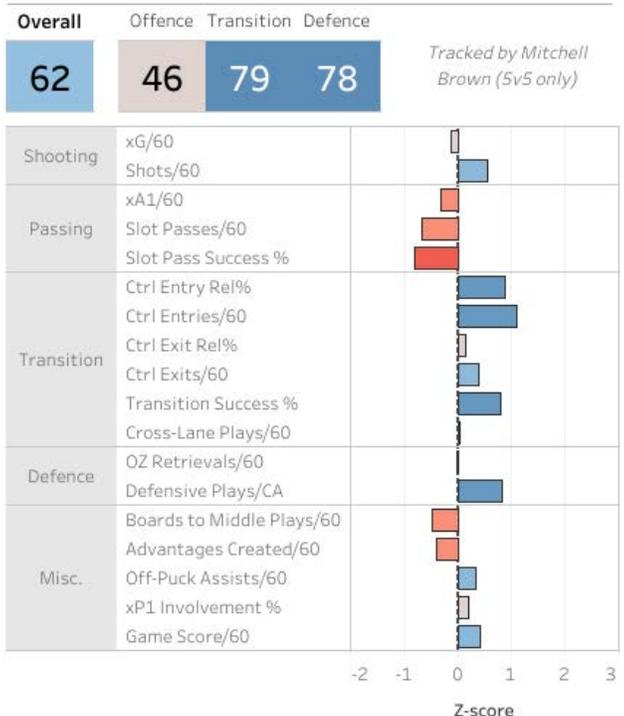
There are no shifts off for Croal. He's a menace. He smashes opponents into the boards, throws reverse hits, and gets involved in every scrum. With a powerful stride and non-stop motor, he outworks the few opponents that can't outrace. And he's legitimately skilled, too.

"The playmaking shown might've been the most exciting part of Croal's game," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in March. "He hooks passes around opponents, cuts inside before going backhand, and fakes shots before going cross-slot. Additionally, he manipulates sticks to create shooting lanes by putting the puck wide before going back across his body."

These aren't common skills from USHLers, not even the older, high-producers. As such, we're optimistic about Croal's odds. He'll have to improve his play selection, develop more nuance rush patterns, and change up the speed a bit more with the puck.

Cody Croal

F | Muskegon Lumberjacks | USHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 115.1



If Croal does those, there's a real chance he beats the odds and becomes one of the NHL's foremost pests while setting up the occasional goal.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Croal threw a couple of hits, won battles along the boards, and intercepted passes on the forecheck. He's a straight-line puck carrier without much vision or handling skill. When he looks to move the puck, he can't access lanes. But he understands the off-puck game and shows some shooting ability. Stays in motion and adapts to lanes. Could be a solid NCAAer, but there wasn't NHL upside shown in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Yet another standout game from Croal. Physical, aggressive, and skilled. Always looks for contact, big or small. Nearly set up a goal after driving wide with crossovers, leaning on the defender, and backhanded a puck across the crease. A similar rush with a chance off the forehand. Inside-driven. The skating's a clear NHL projection, with deep, powerful stance and the speed to beat opponents. Given his age and the level, a 5 seems fair for now, but there's a real chance he's closer to a 6. Heavily involved on the backcheck and in-zone; he pressures opponents, cuts off the top, and anticipates the next play. He could be a mid-rounder. A lot of components that should interest teams.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another impressive performance from Croal in this blow out game. He was physical all game. He stepped into opponents, won battles, and drove the net off the boards. Connected with a one-touch pass off the rush – that should've been a goal. That's the type of play that most USHLers can't pull off. The pace, motor, and shooting skill could make him an NHLer. Add in the playmaking, and there's a real chance he makes it late. I'd pick him late.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

The best player on the ice. Croal was a physical force, shooting threat, and playmaker. Bottomless gas tank. Pushes his knees past his toes, engages his hips, and drives that recovering leg forward – overwhelmed opponents with speed and won several races where he started at a disadvantage. He shoots immediately off the pass, but also adapts the release to the lane. He manipulates sticks to create shooting lanes by putting the puck wide before going back across his body. The puck leaves his stick at a strange angle. The playmaking shown might've been the most exciting part. He hooks passes around opponents, cuts inside before going backhand, and fakes shots before going cross-slot. Some of his passes failed, but he stuck with the play and regained possession. He's a draft-plus-two, but he showed NHL ability in this game. Skating, skill, physicality. Wouldn't be surprised if a team picks him.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Croal was a force in this game. He's a physical and defensive presence every shift. Refuses to be outworked. He takes the extra stride, battles for every inch of the ice, and hammers players into the boards. He's skilled, too. He has 5-grade passing skill, at least. The shot's different, but highly effective. Pulls the puck back against the grain before firing and creates space for his shot. Uses the middle, gets open, handles the puck in his hip pocket at speed, and builds plays with quick passes through opponents off the rush. The skating's a clear NHL projection, too. Knees over toes, hips engaged, chest up, legitimate speed at this level. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Croal had a pretty quiet game at 5-on-5. He didn't accomplish much with the puck, forcing plays up the boards with other options. But he scored a breakaway goal on the powerplay and shovelled a puck top corner on the penalty kill. The lack of any sort of playmaking is a concern. But he's a projectable skater. He achieves a full knee bend and keeps his chest up. Mechanics are less refined, but he generates power and has a bit of quickness. Looks more like a checker in the NCAA.

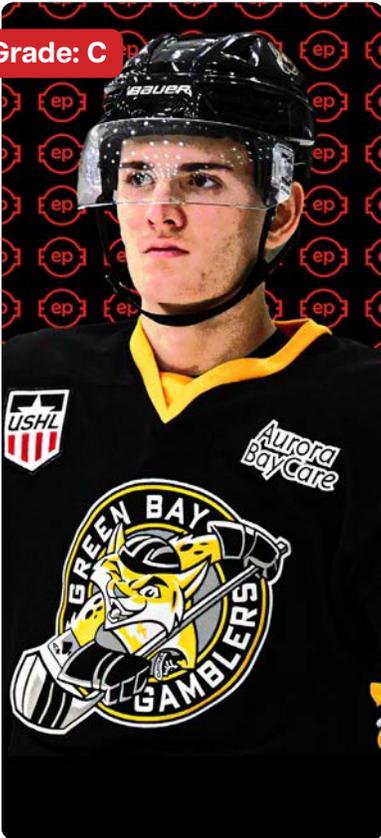
Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

A mid-October performance caught my eye, but I think I chose the wrong follow up game. Croal played a lot, but he wasn't a factor. A few flashes of the physicality, but he mostly ended up chasing the play. Lots of poor, panicked reads under pressure. No technical ability shown. He gets open high in the offensive zone, moving and staying in lanes, but the puck never came. Didn't look like a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Violence is Croal's game. He throws hits, reverse hits, punches people, and starts scrums. The work rate on the defensive end stood out, grabbing a pair of steals with his stick. Creativity lacks, but he has some skill and reads. Backhand pass under pressure for the breakout, following by a cross-slot pass in the offensive end where most players shoot. He doesn't create lanes or space for his shots or passes, but takes what is given to him. Interesting player, might be picked because of the physical skills and hands.

Grade: C



Mikey DeAngelo

AGE 17.822 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	52	11	24	35	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

The 2023 NHL Draft has been a long time coming for Michael DeAngelo. The winger first burst onto the prospect scene with a standout string of games as a call-up to the USNTDP in 2020-21. He struggled mightily the following season, recording just six points, but rediscovered his scoring touch this season.

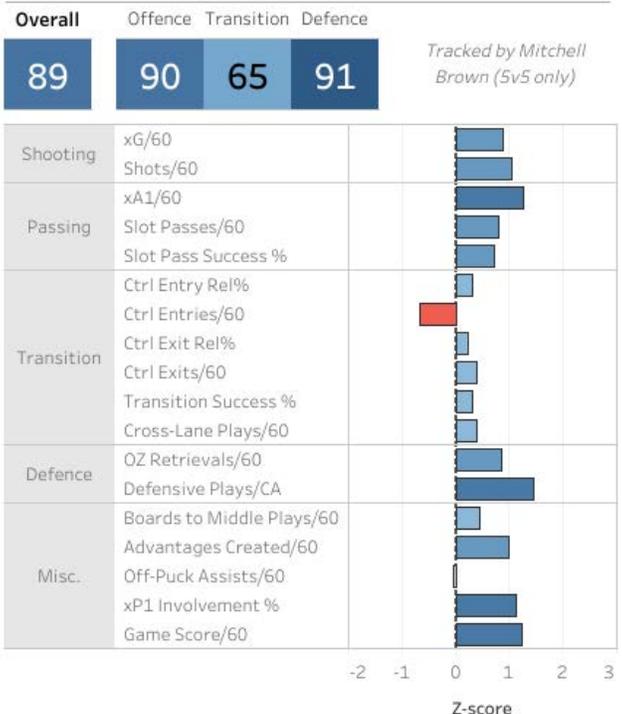
DeAngelo's value comes from his off-puck play and quick touches. He skates his routes, pulling back defenders to create space for his teammates, and makes one- and two-touch passes to open teammates for scoring chances. Always in motion, he frees his stick for deflections and one-timers around the slot and creates turnovers on the backcheck.

There are flashes of more advanced skill from DeAngelo, too. When getting open, he keeps his hands in position to shoot off the pass and adapts his release to the lane in front of him. Along the boards, he toe-drags around opponents and attacks the inside. And he occasionally manipulates a defender before passing.

Without better tools, DeAngelo's straightforward game might not be enough to make the NHL. But with more of those exciting skill flashes, he could carve out a role deeper in the lineup, complementing point-producing forwards when given the chance. He'd be a solid pick up in the mid-to-later rounds.

Michael DeAngelo

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 86.4



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

DeAngelo with a solid all-around game. He nearly scored with a nasty curl-and-drag wrister off the rush, deked off the boards under pressure, set up a couple of chances, and was a play-killing machine all game long. He even flashed some more advanced playmaking by dragging the defence across the ice with him, before passing to the middle for a chance. The hands look like an NHL tool, for sure. How he keeps the top hand away from his hip and handles the puck tight to his body. Looked like a potential mid-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

DeAngelo with an effective shooting and defensive performance. Stayed just outside the inner slot and popped into space at the right moments. Moves the puck and instantly heads to the slot, beating defenders or staying behind them when necessary. One-timer looked like an NHL projection. Showed a tiny bit of play-building skills in transition to kick pucks out to open teammates with speed, but he lacked the same level of foresight as a passer elsewhere. In general, offensive passing seemed like a last resort. He doesn't have the profile of a pick, lacking tools and production. But he could become a strong NCAA player in a couple of years given his off-puck game.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Another solid game from DeAngelo. He scored with a redirection goal on the powerplay, showing his off-puck movement to claim that space. A dependable off-puck player, he frequently disrupts and dispossesses opponents with well-timed pokes and hits. Gains body positioning and skates into opponents' space. Shows some puck skills in flashes – tricky pass receptions into powerful outside leg wristers, slot cuts under pressure, and a bit of handling skill in a glide to evade pressure. Not a dynamic skill player – it might fall just a bit short of the NHL. But there's clear pro upside here. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

DeAngelo scored a rebound and created a rebound for an assist. His playmaking, at times, was the most impressive part of his game. He skates his off-puck lanes, creating space. Once he receives the puck, he finds a quick option and repositions. The best was a one-touch drop pass before rushing the net to create some chaos. A couple of drop passes allowed teammates to walk into space before firing. A dumb deke killed a 3-on-1 and he didn't show much skill beyond on the quick-possession passing. The motor continues to impress. Perhaps he's an off-puck player at the next level. A tough role to play, but if his tools improve, perhaps he does it. Looks like a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Not a ton of events from DeAngelo in this one, but he was solid. He's an intelligent defender up top. Backtracking needs some work, but he anticipates the opponent's next play and beats them to space. Work rate was high. Turned the steals into offence a couple of times, including a quick step-in wrister after anticipating a pass. Used the give-and-go for another look later. Flashed a one-timer that looked solid, angling his torso towards the net and driving through his hips. Not dynamic and the hands looked weaker. Same with the skating. Lacks depth and quickness. Didn't look like a pick, but he seems like a breakout candidate because of the intelligence.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 27th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Kind of a bland performance from DeAngelo. His hands are a huge asset, had a nice 1-on-1 where he danced through a defender and earned himself a nice scoring chance. Some passing deception too, had a sequence where he showed a one-timer and dished it to a teammate backdoor for a grade A. A bit of laziness defensively, some errant uses of his stick that opponents easily maneuvered around and took DeAngelo out of the play. The skating is below average, no signs of high level acceleration of agility. A bit weak on his skates for his size too, got knocked off the puck too easily. Some interesting skill but nothing

overwhelming at this point.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 28th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

An interesting showing from DeAngelo. Didn't touch the puck much but when he did, made the simple, correct play and usually improved possession. Couple of nice touch passes that confused defenders and allowed Green Bay to find a shot from open ice. Without the puck DeAngelo hustles for better or for worse. He's probably a slightly above average skater but in this game he was forechecking like a chicken with its head cut off. DeAngelo was puck chasing at 100 miles an hour and sometimes it worked but other times it just put the Gamblers at a disadvantage positionally when the puck ultimately entered their zone. Offensively off the puck, the game was much cleaner. DeAngelo spaces out nicely, identifies which lane to work through in transition and supports the puck nicely. The kid has some skill and he works his tail off. Not writing him off yet.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

DeAngelo was Green Bay's best forward in this game, grabbing a pair of primary assists. The first was an interception that was quickly put in. For the second, he reloaded instead of stretching the ice, took a pass in motion, and passed on the defender's heels to an open teammate. This game showed a lot of in motion skill beyond the pass reception. He used jabs exited with crossovers to cut inside and made decisions with his feet moving. Nothing advanced, but the type of stuff that most USHLers don't do. He has scoring instincts (getting open at the right moments), vision, and forechecking ability. Not a manipulator or especially deceptive, but all-around skill. He could be a pick.

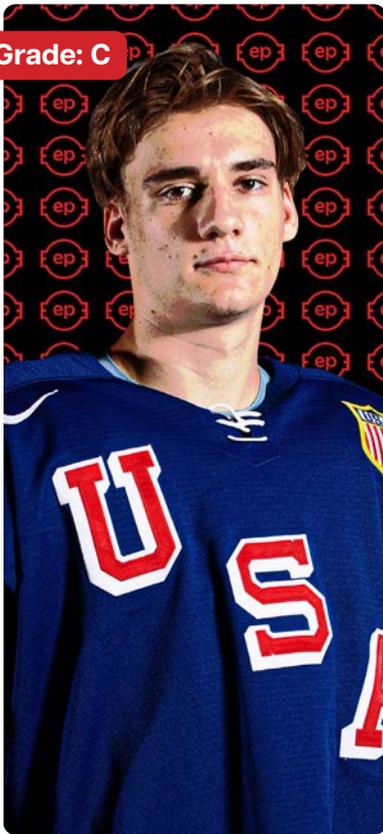
J.D. Burke: August 6th, 2021 - USA U18 vs. Czech Republic U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

One could make a case for DeAngelo as the most effective American forward in this hockey game, and that's no small feat as a draft-minus-one forward in a tournament for first-time draft-eligible skaters. His puck skills were sublime. It's not just the pure skill on display, though that's pretty swell in its own right. It's the way that DeAngelo baits defenders, getting them to move their feet one way, and then cutting back to explode past them unimpeded to the net for a chance. Picked up a goal in the second period with a one-timer on the power play. Got a bit of good luck in the third period as a routine dump-in took a funny bounce off of the stanchion and onto his stick in the slot with a yawning cage – he made no mistake.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2021 - USA U18 vs. Sweden U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Really strong performance from DeAngelo. Explosive first two steps allowed him to separate from opponents for a few great scoring chances. He actually picked up an assist on the penalty kill by sprinting past the Swedish blueliner and taking the puck to the net, letting his teammate bury the rebound. Showed some really great puck skills in space. Took the puck to the inside at every opportunity. Best of all? No relation to Tony DeAngelo. That was a relief.

Grade: C



Andrew Kuzma

AGE 17.627 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Ankle
Breaker

Player Info

RW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

198 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Des Moines Buccaneers	USHL	5	0	0	0	0.00
Madison Capitols	USHL	50	17	20	37	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

After an early-season trade and 13 points in 31 games, Andrew Kuzma finally found his stride. He scored 13 times and added 11 assists in the season's final 24 games, making him one of the USHL's more productive final-third scorers.

Kuzma's feet never stop moving. He sprints on the backcheck to prevent entries, charges full speed into opponents to send them flying, and makes the extra effort where most players glide. On the offensive end, that mentality gets him open around the net for off-the-pass shots.

Puckhandling is Kuzma's most exciting skill. He doesn't just have a deep arsenal of moves; he sets up his moves on angles to draw defenders one direction before going the other. With that base, he manipulates opponents to gain the inside, open shooting lanes, and occasionally, to set up teammates.

Lacking mechanical soundness as a skater, Kuzma overcomes with his high-pace style. Despite that, he requires a lengthy glide to set up plays. Defenders catch him in transition, killing plays before they start. He's also too reliant on his hands, missing passes that would be a lower-risk, higher-reward opportunity.

Without improved mechanics, Kuzma will struggle to find the space that he relies on at the next level. But if his in-motion skills take a step, every aspect of his game will benefit, from his physicality to handling. He could become a fun third or fourth-liner.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 15th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Kuzma scored an incredible goal in this one. He reset, built some speed, received the pass, attacked the inside, then waited for

the next defender to react. As soon as they reached, Kuzma deked inside and roofed a backhander. He continues to manipulate opponents to set up his dekes. He's also an intelligent off-puck attacker. Timing lacks, but he skates his routes, gets open in the slot, and provides short support. High pace and physical. Skating is an issue. On his heels and requires a glide to make his plays. Similarly, he needs a bit of runway to make stuff happen – he's not really a one-touch creator or playmaker. He takes too many outside shots, but he flashes some passing skill when the play's obvious. The highlight was a move to the backhand to pass behind a defender for a high-danger look. He's talented. With a bit more in-motion skill, he'd make our board. Think he's decent a mid-round talent. Improve the skating, add some in-motion skill, and he could become a fun bottom-six forward.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Two goals for Kuzma, both off-the-pass shots. The first was a one-timer on the powerplay, which he set up with a give-and-go entry. He plays a relatively straightforward game. He reads space, stays inside it, and rushes the net when necessary. Struggles with pressure in transition; he gets rid of the puck too early. Upright and on his heels when skating. But he's a solid defender. Scoring a lot lately, too. Worth another look.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Kuzma showed some forechecking ability, but it was a really game of what could be. He's on his heels, only handles in a glide, and struggles with puck control at times. But he tries more advanced stuff. He reads the opponent's momentum and attempts to exploit it, trying to claim the space on their heels. Adds a bit of flash sometimes. Not a dynamic game, but a solid performance in this blowout. Perhaps there's some runway here.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Omaha Lancers vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

What a game from Kuzma. He was a menace, throwing crushing hits across the ice. Lined up opponents at least eight times, forechecking dump-ins and turnovers. Defensively responsible and non-stop movement, proactively supporting down low and also getting a stop with a diving poke check. This was also a skilled game from Kuzma. He's a deker, setting up opponents on angles to get them to move their feet, then cutting in the opposite direction. Instantly reads opponents. Always skates his routes. High pace, but he lacks the skating – the depth to load the weight shift and explode laterally, especially – to make the most of his mind. Hopping crossovers and wide turns. He's also not much of a passer. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

A quieter game from Kuzma, who barely got the puck. He fired off a pair of chances just inside the circles, but didn't show any of the playmaking I saw in the previous viewing. The upright stance prevented him from absorbing contact a couple of times. A couple of steals through his effort, but he didn't show much anticipation or positioning. Not much to go on in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Kuzma's an interesting prospect. There's clearly potential. He tries to manipulate opponents with hands, but he lacks pace and precision, which prevents him from completing the sequence. The best example was a 2-on-1, where he faked out the defender and went to the backhand, but it was contested and he passed too far ahead. Looks for teammates around the slot, doesn't force shots, and brings a bit of value across the ice. Worth watching more, especially if he starts scoring.



Tanner Ludtke

AGE 17.800 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 27, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Tactician

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lincoln Stars	USHL	57	32	34	66	1.16

SCOUTING REPORT

Quietly, Tanner Ludtke just posted one of the most productive draft eligible USHL seasons of the last decade, after scoring just once in 24 games last season. His 1.16 points per game was tied for 16th in those parameters, similar to Matias Maccelli while eclipsing Mackie Samoskevich, Matthew Knies, and Shane Pinto. Not bad company.

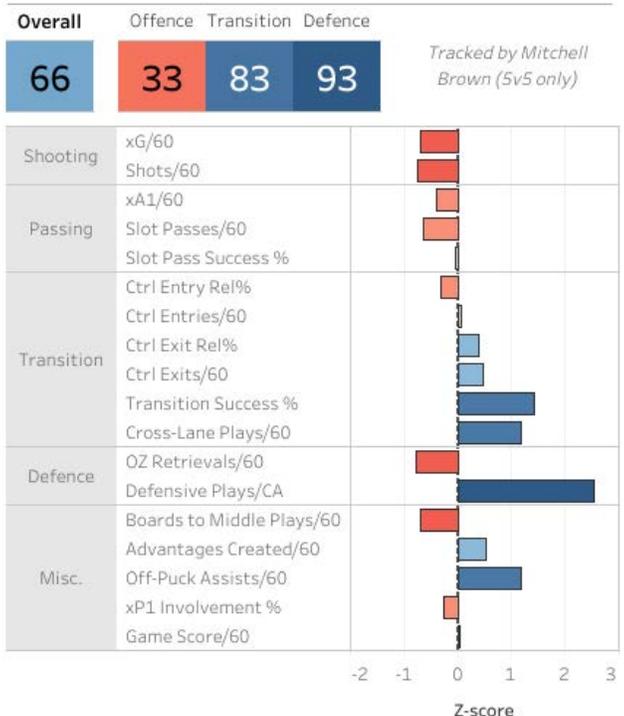
Despite the standout production, Ludtke's game is one of subtlety. He's a proactive, consistent off-puck player, always supporting plays, dispossessing opponents, and sneaking off into space around the slot to use his potent wrist. He uses every limb to win body positioning on opponents, keeping his stick free for deflections and rebounds.

Ludtke brings some down-low playmaking complemented by those physical skills, as well as a play-building style in transition. Instead of forcing 1-on-1s, "he slips pucks inside under pressure, uses changes of pace to beat opponents, and builds plays with give-and-gos and lateral passes through pressure," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a late-March game report.

Despite Ludtke's production, he doesn't get or create many high-danger looks at 5-on-5. Part of that could just be poor luck by the viewer, but his glide-heavy, low-pace game is a factor, too. He flashed some in-motion skills later in the season. Leaning heavier on those

Tanner Ludtke

F | Lincoln Stars | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 100.4



plays will be key for making the NHL. If Ludtke makes it, it will likely be in a fourth-line role, where his defence, physicality, and skill allow him to post positive results.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances at the 2022 World Junior A Challenge



Previewing the 2022 World Junior A Challenge

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Ludtke opened the game with an impressive goal. He took a pass behind his body, knocked it in front, and used his leg to fend off a stick while deking in-tight. That showed handling skill and awareness – and he did it at speed, which I've been waiting to see this season. He showed other skills, too. He slips pucks inside under pressure, uses changes of pace to beat opponents, and builds plays with give-and-gos and lateral passes through pressure. He's physical and a proactive defender. The skating looked more like an issue this game. The edges are weak, suffering from a lack of depth inside his cutbacks and turns – he struggles to separate as a result. Lacks quickness and a powerful acceleration phase, despite his otherwise sound stride form. He looked like a potential mid-rounder. Talented, but low-event and limited by his tools.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Despite Ludtke's scoring, I still don't see much creation ability in his game. He grabbed a bunch of chances in this game, but all at 4-on-4 or 3-on-3, plus the game-tying marker with the goalie pulled. Some of the skills he showed on these plays were notable: handling skill in-tight and his usual off-puck intelligence. When he dashes to the net, he wins body positioning to keep his stick free. He does the off-puck stuff at 5-on-5, but he rarely gets pucks. He also rarely creates quality looks for his teammates. His glide-only handling and set ups limit his adaptability. To his credit, he does have habits that should lead to better offensive creation – the aforementioned off-puck game, the disruptive defence, the delays off the rush, and the down-low passing. Despite his notable production, he still looks more like a mid-to-late rounder than a top-64 prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Two goals for Ludtke. A ridiculously powerful wrister from the outside and a smart off-puck read to reload high instead of rushing the net before unleashing a one-timer that beat the goalie across the net. He had a couple of smart passes – he scans before entering retrievals and has a bit of passing skill. But this was mostly an impressive defensive game. Lack of urgency it seems at times, but he's always in the right position. Poked away a puck on a partial breakaway, supported plays down low, supported high in the offensive zone, and even picked up defensive zone retrievals as the first player back. Textbook posture inside his stride, but he lacks an acceleration phase and quickness. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game. Defence, shooting, off-puck instincts.

David St-Louis: January 16th, 2023 - White vs. Blue - Biosteel Top Prospects Game

Another uneventful performance from Ludtke in a more major event. Inside talented groups like this, he tends to fake in the

background a bit, as he plays a simpler game than what he does with his USHL team. I only saw a few good backchecks and cycle plays from him in this one. He went to the net, but made most of his plays from a standstill, low-pace glide stance.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Ludtke grabbed an assist by whacking away in front of the net, creating a rebound that his teammate cleaned up. Later, he scored an off-the-pass bomb far side on the moving goaltender – a 6-grade shot. But he wasn't much of a factor offensively. He shows some play-building with delays, give-and-gos, and lateral passes to teammates as they move into space. More of a defensive player at this stage. A proactive, intelligent defender. Gets stops down low, pressures high, recognizes switches, tracks opponents across the zone. Grabbed a bunch of break ups in this game. His stride has near-perfect form, but he lacks quickness and pace. Doesn't show any in-motion skill. He looks like an end-of-board candidate. If the pace picks up, he could become a big NCAA scorer.

David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - USA vs Canada East - WJAC

Ludtke is different from many of his teammates. He doesn't generate chances through tools like Bump or Rinzel and doesn't flash higher-end abilities like Finley. He creates offence with his positioning and by stealing pucks from the puck from the opposition. He took a few penalties in this one, however, and has to be careful with his stick. His skating looked like a weakness and overall energy level, too. But his reads on the forecheck and the defensive zone made up for it, somewhat. He jumped on the opposition at the right time, making them lose the puck. I liked his passing game, too.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Ludtke was trying to dangle with zero success. He only handles with his head down and still loses track of the puck. He struggles with the puck tighter to his body. He doesn't really read or manipulate feet, either. But he has other qualities. He makes quick, cross-lane/ice breakout passes to create the advantage. Uses give-and-goes. Proactive, engaged defender who eliminates threats and overwhelms opponents on the backcheck. And the scoring instincts were legit. For his goal, he spun off a defender, freed his stick, then redirected the pass into the top corner on pressure. Really excited to see more. Tools are limited but he looks like an above-average thinker.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Didn't see any significant offensive skill from Ludtke. He lacks handling skill and skating ability. He's upright and, at least in this game, lacked in motion ability. Needs that long glide to set up anything, whether that's passes, shots, or dekes. No dynamic skill. But he's smart. He creates advantages through his transition passing – boards-to-inside passes on breakouts and inside-lane attacks followed by a wide pass as the defence converges. Too late to access some of his passing lanes. Didn't show any advanced passing skill beyond the saucer. A slip pass would help. Didn't look like a pick in this game but I must be missing something.

Mitchell Brown: September 30th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

First viewing of Ludtke this season and I have no idea what his game is. He made a couple of slick, not necessarily difficulty passes leading to chances. Perhaps his best play was fishing a puck out of the scrum, and either whiffing on the shot or passing for a tap-in under pressure. Some off-puck skills, getting open in the slot, overwhelming players along the boards, winning races, and picking up retrievals in his own zone. Moved pucks from battles to the inside, but didn't show much skill in the process. Skating and skills looked average, but hardly appeared in this game. No idea. Lots of time still.

Grade: C



Aaron Pionk

AGE 19.666 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 16, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Ankle Breaker



Raw Talent

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	60	12	24	36	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

In 2021, Aaron Pionk was a productive forward out of Hermantown High. He went undrafted. Flashforward two years, and he could be the first re-entry picked in this year's draft. This time, as a defenceman.

Despite the recent position change, Pionk already looks like an NHL defender. He tightens the gap in the neutral zone to force opponents wide, then he pivots and surfs across for the stop. Pokes just as the opponent exposes the puck and physicality without over-extending make him one of the best play-stoppers off the rush.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that Pionk's a skilled attacker, too. He's good for a gamely dazzling display of puckhandling to beat opponents, usually on his way for a scoring chance. He packs on a bit of deception to his passes, creating more space for his target.

Pionk's still learning the ins-and-outs of the defensive position. It's visible in more complex defensive situations, where he tends to wait for opponents to come to him rather than closing space. Dealing with pressure on the end boards and finding breakout targets was a problem throughout the season, but the flashes – lateral passes through opponents, long-range darts, and short-range passes to start a give-and-go – are enough to believe in his upside.

Aaron Pionk

D | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 109.4



Picking Pionk is a bet that his sharp upward development curve continues; that his recent switch to the position gives him more runway than most prospects. There's a lot of variability in his game, more than many first-time eligibles. He must improve his four-way mobility, too. But it's not too tricky to envision Pionk playing in the NHL one day, perhaps in a bottom-pairing role.

⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"Pionk's good, like his brother. Throw out his age, don't worry about it. In his senior year of high school he was playing forward. He was 148 pounds. Probably deserved to be drafted last year. He had an injury late in the year. He's been really good this year. I think he will go in the third or fourth round. He sees the ice well." – NHL scout, April 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

I still don't see the offensive or transition upside with Pionk. He passes to teammates with more pressure than himself. Instead of weaponizing pressure, he flings the puck to the other side of the defensive zone or off the glass. When he actually looks for a play, it's way off. Mistakes compound easily. Those are atypical for this team's blue-liners. Offensively, he flashes some handling skill, but that's about it. Standard shots and basic passes. The defence was sound. He eliminated threats off-puck, gapped up early, and followed up pokes with his shoulder to kill plays. Skating remains a weakness. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Another quiet game from Pionk. The aggressiveness on the defensive end is the best quality right now. The pivots are weak, which makes him beatable off the rush, but he gets on opponents early, angles, and steps through their hands. Breakouts are volatile. He throws pucks away under pressure and defaults to simple plays if there isn't an immediate option. From the point, he keeps play moving, but doesn't show any standout skill, save for the occasional deceptive feed or flashes of handling skill. The highlight was a shot fake into pass into the slot. A solid play. I don't see a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

At this stage, I find Pionk games more frustrating than intriguing, but there's no denying his ability. He's an NHL skater laterally and flashes high-level breakout ability. He steps inside, draws pressure, manipulates it, and passes through it to an open teammate on the side. Shows handling skill and play-killing ability deeper in the zone. He's just so volatile for a draft-plus-two. He only takes point shots. He throws pucks away with better plays. And the forwards and backwards skating both need work. Same with the edges, as he struggles with acceleration out of his cut backs (they start as a punch turn, but become a heel to heel because he doesn't put enough weight over the inside leg). Rush defence is committing, reaching forward or stopping and letting opponents come to him. The appeal is the unique development curve and family. Not sure that's a pick for me.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

I didn't see a lot from Pionk in this game. Certainly, not even close to enough to distinguish himself, which is the absolute bare minimum for a draft-plus-two skater in the USHL that hopes to be a draft pick. Pionk has some pro-level concepts already baked into his game, particularly in the way that he defends the rush; he gaps up early, takes away the middle with his stick, registers support, and makes calculated physical plays to disrupt entries. He was an adaptable, intelligent puck-mover in this game, too. Offensively, pretty garden variety stuff. Just a couple of low percentage point shots. Not even close to a draft pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Pionk had a solid game alongside one incredible display on puck control. He spun around, then tapped the puck through the defender's legs with one hand on his stick, caught it on the other side, cut back, and fired. He's skilled. On breakouts, he steps

inside, passes through pressure, and occasionally cross-ice. Simple, but effective retrievals that put his team back on the attack quickly. Other than the flashy handling sequence, there wasn't any notable special quality that suggested a draft pick. He's pretty static and simple from the point.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Mostly a point shot and rush defence game from Pionk. He was beaten a couple of times by chasing too far outside the dots, but he closed space early on opponents and trapped them along the boards. He used space when given, but didn't space, save for one weight shift escape down the boards. He takes aggressive offensive zone positioning like the rest of the Black Hawks. Not much to go on in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Pionk's really awkward on the defensive end. He lunges in and often ends up off-balance when skating backwards. Opponents could cook him, but his aggressiveness won out in this game. He also has a nasty habit of turning the puck over immediately after recovering possession. He dekes through opponents but never considers the next layer. That extends to his passing. As such, he makes a cool first play, but it's usually a turnover or a far harder for his recipient. Doesn't scan enough, especially pronounced on retrievals where he doesn't look over both shoulders. He has skill, though. He blends pass receptions into weight shifts and dekes, bringing a bit of vision and shooting skill alongside. Curious to see more.

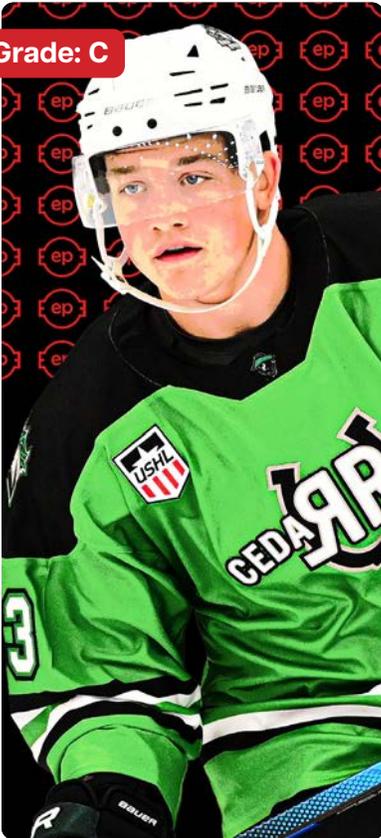
Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Pionk has ideas but he's pretty limited in terms of timing and execution right now. He uses feints in all forms, whether that's stutter steps or handling fakes, but the timing's off. He doesn't let the pressure react first before going to the next move. The skating's also a bit limiting. He's upright through the legs but hunched at the torso. He got opponents early, but struggled in more traditional rush defence situations. Beatable with speed. Variable offensive decision-making, although he tries to create. Lots of well-timed pinches and some awful ones. Not much to go on, given that he missed the third period.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Pionk consistently used space from the point. The ideas weren't perfect, but he moved through pass receptions, stepped into space, and pulled the trigger. A couple of point-of-attack-changing breakout passes got his team moving in the right direction. Fluid, but not explosive. Not really a standout performance, but some interesting qualities.

Grade: C



Eric Pohlkamp

AGE 18.482 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 23, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Hammer



Lethal Shooter

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	205 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	59	16	35	51	0.86

SCOUTING REPORT

Mason Lohrei, Owen Power, Ronnie Attard, Connor Mackey, Neal Pionk, Brandon Montour – these are some of the most recent winners of USHL Defenceman of the Year. Since 2011, nine of 10 winners have earned NHL deals, eight have played in the NHL. Eric Pohlkamp, this year’s winner, looks to be the next.

Pohlkamp’s value comes in two forms: High-impact shots and even higher impact hits. His power beats goaltenders across the net, even from the point. On the power play, he builds play before unwinding, drawing pressure towards himself, passing, then relocating for the one-timer.

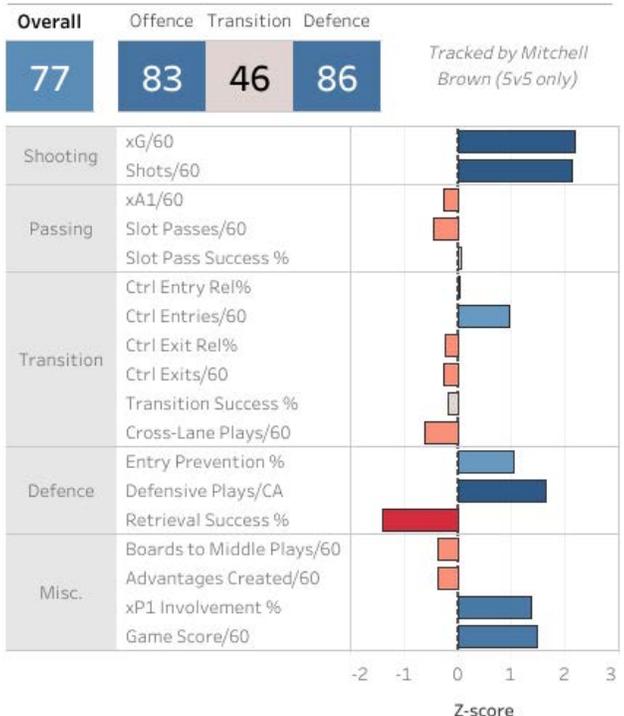
When play comes back the other way, Pohlkamp defends the rush like an NHLer: Tight gap on- and off-puck, poke checks timed just as the opponent exposes the puck, quiet footwork, and thunderous hits. Deeper in the zone, he steers attacks to the outside, then traps the opponent along the boards. A proactive off-puck defender, too.

To translate both of those abilities to the NHL, Pohlkamp will have to improve his skating. Despite mechanical soundness, he’s sluggish and beatable with speed.

Finding ways to better use his shot by sneaking down the weak side and compressing the offensive zone are keys, too. To his credit, he

Eric Pohlkamp

D | Cedar Rapids RoughRiders | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 101.4



makes those activation reads sometimes; perhaps a new environment gives him more opportunity.

Even as a draft-plus-one, Pohlkamp's throwback style is sure to draw NHL interest. While he doesn't have the highlight reel or puck-moving ability of other blueliners, he has a chance to make it a bottom-pairing role.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

The usual from Pohlkamp with a couple of passes after joining the rush mixed in. Booming shot, but prefers to use it from the outside. He spaces the point, flaring wide to make the goaltender have to travel further, a detail which can be applied in a structure that invites more activation. The breakouts remain very limited. He passes into battles; rarely creates an advantage. But he's a projectable rush defender: Tight gap, times his pokes as the opponent exposes the puck, angling, and tons of physicality. The skating will have to improve. Given his frame and already strong depth, there might not be a ton of room for improvement. But it's a worthwhile shot in later rounds. He's solid.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Pohlkamp did two things at an NHL level this game: Defend the rush and retrieve loose pucks. He forced plays wide, then came across for the stop. Led with his stick, followed with his shoulder. Switched off opponents and closed the distance with ease. Wins body positioning and fakes on retrievals, taking the proper route (direction the puck's headed) and using the back pressure to guide him into his next play. The puck is a bit more concerning. He only makes simple plays and doesn't use space. Shows more on the powerplay, but at this stage, he could be finding ways to create opportunities for himself and teammates. Maybe a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Cedar Rapids is a strong neutral zone team, but Pohlkamp's clearly the best defender. He has nearly every quality: Tight gap on- and off-puck, play-killing instincts, angling, quiet footwork, and physicality. He's really only beatable when the opponent has time to build speed before engaging him; they exploit his skating and pivots. Not much power through his c-cuts and pivots. He's not much of a puck-mover, but he has some offensive upside. He compresses the zone, pinches at the right moments, and gets open. Pucks never came, but it's easy to see that activation game coupling with his shot. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Pohlkamp's a two-zone player. The skating might limit his effectiveness defending the rush at the next level, but everything else is here. Physical, never gives up on a play, and gets inside positioning on opponents. Proactive off-puck defence. In the offensive zone, he's a shooter. It's a cannon. Sometimes to a fault, as he misses better plays but could very well just be what he's asked to do. Transition game is limited, partly reads, partly mechanics. Only makes up the board passes unless he has a clear lane to skate. Handles the puck in front in rhythm with his feet, and he lacks the power to separate from opponents with only his feet. He'd be a fine late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Pohlkamp hit the post on a breakaway. He doesn't activate much, but gets a lot out of the times he does. He's more of a one-timer-from-the-point guy. It's a bomb, but it'd be nice to see more creativity. The defence is the most appealing part. He defends the rush like an NHLer. He stays tight to opponents off-puck, ready to jump into the lane for the interception. He backs off at the right moments, but never concedes too much ground, which allows him to angle opponents wide before they can build speed. Steps through opponents and knocks down passes. Lots of play-killing ability. Even handles switches with ease. He's a suffocating in-zone defender – always eliminating threats and pinning opponents at the right times. Lacks some skill, but he's not

too far off. Breakouts are mostly simple play, but there are flashes. With a bit more consistency, deception, and pace, he could make it.

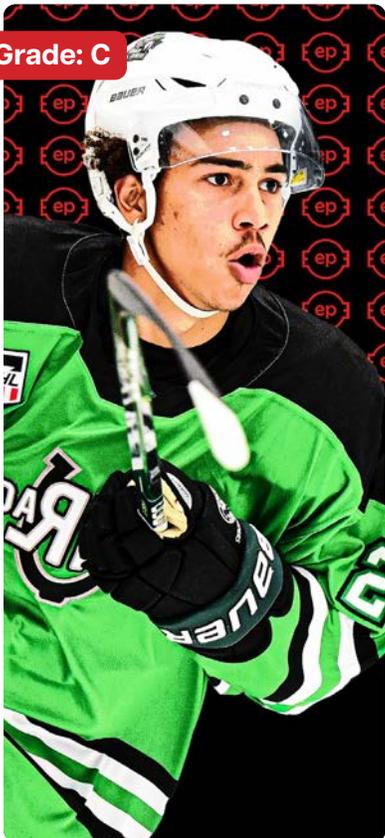
Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Pohlkamp scored twice. A cannon for a one-timer. Joined the rush for a chance early, but he mostly stays at the point, taking pucks in motion before firing. Lacks the edges and depth to separate from opponents, so he can't beat opponents off the point or create/access the best shooting lanes. Still, he shows awareness of his strengths and weaknesses and plays with him. Beyond shooting, rush defence looks like his other NHL skill. He steps up sometimes, but he mostly guides opponents, then comes across for the poke and hit. Matches footwork to contain speedier opponents. The breakouts are an issue; it's a lot of soft plays and passes to teammates with more pressure than himself. A bit of a generic USHL defenceman, but he likely has the skills to play a more active game.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Pohlkamp shoots the puck really hard. A one-timer led to a rebound for a primary assist. He's also a capable rush defender, once getting past the skating. He surfs across, keeps his stick in the middle, and doesn't overskate. Steps into opponents to force dump-ins. Awful on retrievals and breakouts. Loses races by failing to win body positioning and doesn't look, leading to plays straight to the other team. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Grade: C



Zaccharya Wisdom

AGE 18.403 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 21, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1



Got that Dog in him



Motor

Player Info

LW/RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	59	28	20	48	0.81

SCOUTING REPORT

Last season, Zaccharya Wisdom was relegated to a bottom-six role despite strong per-minute production and a physical game. He went undrafted as a result. After a breakout season, perhaps the same mistake won't happen twice. While his production slowed from the 1.2 points per game he averaged through 2022, his impact never wavered.

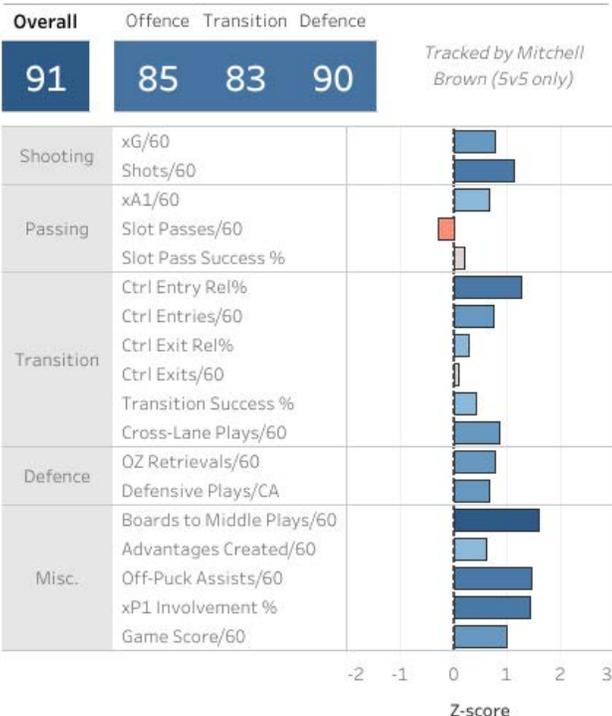
Intelligence, physicality, and persistence – these are Wisdom's NHL attributes. He looks for every opportunity to make contact – big or small – to win battles, secure possession, and keeps his stick free for shots around the net. Where many players plant their feet, Wisdom stays active, moving into space just as the puck arrives.

Give Wisdom an inch, and he goes straight to the net. He reads opponents' momentum and constantly exploits it by cutting on their heels, deking around as they overplay the block, and passing through their feet.

While Wisdom's skating doesn't provide much separation and his hands occasionally fail, he plays a give-and-go, quick-possession style. And he flashes ideas superior to his mechanical ability, such as hesitation moves to freeze opponents. If he improves the tools, those plays will become even more successful, improving his NHL odds.

Zaccharya Wisdom

F | Cedar Rapids RoughRiders | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 88.5



Wisdom has NHL upside, likely in a checking role. But given the flashes of skill and physical runway, there's a chance he could achieve higher. He shouldn't go unpicked this year.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 25th, 2022 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

In the offensive zone, Wisdom makes simple plays: shots when space runs out after racing to the net and low-to-high passes for point shots. There's no nuance to his offensive game, even without the puck. His hands are a potential weakness, with pucks rolling off his stick numerous times. He has a choppy handling style, too. Elsewhere on the ice, he's a big-impact player. A proactive defender, constantly scanning and ready to close distance and force turnovers. He sprints from one puck carrier to the next, forcing a chain of hastened decisions until one results in a turnover. Takes the extra stride to take away sticks. And he supports the play effectively. He could be an NHLer – it depends on skill development.

Mitchell Brown: April 3rd, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Two goals in under 10 minutes of ice time. This was the usual performance from Wisdom, although with more off-puck instincts shown. He didn't just stand around in space, he established positioning on defenders and kept his stick free. He clearly has physical potential through body positioning and his desire to make contact at all times. Defensively potential remains high. But he's a limited offensive player. He barely squeaks past defenders and turns pucks over with poorly set-up dekes. He sprints until he runs out of space. Beat a defender wide but then jammed the puck inside of making the goaltender move laterally. Limited playmaking ability. If he makes the NHL, it's as a checker.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

An incredible display of physicality in this one. Wisdom threw crushing hits along the boards to force dump-ins, reverse hits to create space, and ran into players at full-speed on the forecheck. Involved in every battle, making contact with every opportunity. The skating already limits the impact of his hits – could reduce some of his effectiveness at the next level. He's an aware defender, always scanning with his knees bent, ready to close space. Sprinted on the backcheck without overextending, then grabbed a steal. Lacks patience and creativity in the offensive end, but in transition, he shows a bit of skill to delay, deke through defenders, and find cross-ice options. Off-puck offence: shrunk distance to puck carrier multiple times, but also failed to identify space and missed a couple of scoring chances as a result. Looked like a late-round candidate.

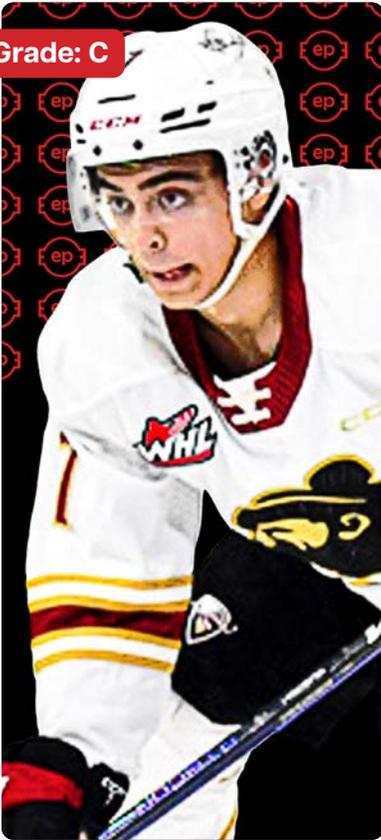
Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

In transition, Wisdom shows patience, awareness, and play-building ideas. He waits for pressure to arrive, then cuts back or spins away to reset the play or create an advantage up the ice. That mentality disappears in the offensive zone, where he takes low-percentage shots at the expense of better plays. He lacks the passing skills to connect through pressure, and while he tries complex handling moves, the puck rolls off his stick. He shows physical ability – hitting, absorbing contact, driving to the inside – and some defensive value through energy and scanning, even if he tends to overcommit. Drives the net with and without the puck, but doesn't show much nuance in how he does it.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2021 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Wisdom's an intelligent player limited by mechanics. He has a hunched over, wide stride and his lack of ankle flexion prevents him from exploding through his manoeuvres. He's also patient with the puck, not forcing plays and spinning away from pressure to build the offence. Cuts inside when possible, earning a scoring chance. Forces dump-outs and turnovers on the forecheck. Threw a couple of big hits, including one in open ice, and he's successful in battles despite his skating limitations. Didn't see any playmaking ability. He's worth paying attention to, even with his limited role.

Grade: C



Ty Halaburda

AGE 17.400 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Motor

Player Info

F	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vancouver Giants	WHL	66	21	16	37	0.56
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	1	2	3	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

Despite being one of several draft-eligible talents on the Vancouver Giants, Ty Halaburda never slipped into the background. He brought the same motor, same energy, and same non-stop pressure style in every single game.

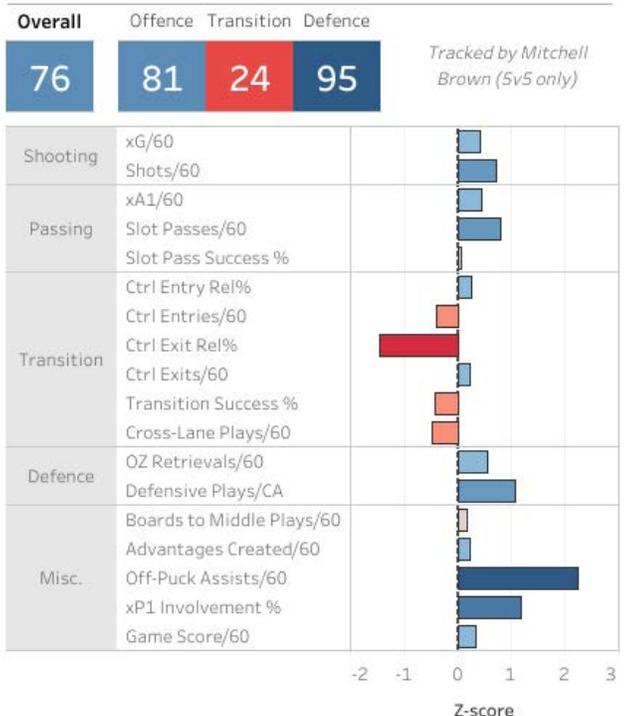
Halaburda never stops working, sprinting on every backcheck, throwing crushing hits, and securing body positioning by taking the extra stride to skate through the hands. Poor decisions abound when he's on the ice, often singlehandedly dismantling the opponent's breakout.

The same urgency appears in Halaburda's offensive game, which is both a benefit and limitation. He instantly turns steals into quick passes into the slot, fires quick shots off the rush, and skates his routes to push the defence back or get open at the front of the net. But he's so focused on rushing pucks ahead that he misses opportunities to set up teammates or cut inside for chances.

Late in the season, Halaburda showed a more proactive passing game – instantly receiving pucks and passing to open teammates, before relocating for the return feed. And when he's given a puck up the middle, he shows better habits. If he builds off those, Halaburda could become an effective bottom-line or depth forward.

Ty Halaburda

F | Vancouver Giants | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 108.8



≡ **LINKS & MEDIA****Meet the Team: Canada's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster**≡ **GAME REPORTS****J.D. Burke:** April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

There's no denying Halaburda's work rate. He shows up every shift, empties the tank, and plays much larger than his 5-foot-11 frame. There appears to be some level of intelligence in terms of how he applies himself physically in board battles too, but mostly Halaburda wins pucks with a strong stick and a never-say-die attitude. There were some interesting moments with the puck on his stick, too. A chip-and-chase play at the defensive blue line into space almost resulted in a clean look the other way. That play also revealed Halaburda's deficiencies as a skater, though. Even an average mover probably gets a breakaway out of that play; instead, Kyle Masters caught up to and neutralized him without much fuss. I don't think Halaburda's feel for the game is sufficient for an NHL prospect either. He lacks a sense for backpressure, has a tendency to tunnel when confronted with numbers, and most of his playmaking can be characterized as hope plays. I want to like Halaburda. Hell, I do like Halaburda's game. I just don't think he has much of a shot of playing in the NHL. Not a player for our board, in my estimation.

J.D. Burke: April 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

This wasn't a particularly convincing performance from Halaburda. Most of his plays with the puck were characterized by straight-line rushes into numbers without an escape plan, almost all of them resulting in turnovers. There were a few opportunities for Halaburda to create through his linemates that were altogether missed because of his propensity to tunnel on entries. Halaburda's best work occurred on the penalty kill. He's an engaged, intelligent defender, always in the right position, and willing to throw himself into the line of fire to keep a puck from landing on-goal. I also saw some strong moments from Halaburda fighting it out at the net-front in the offensive zone and along the boards, but nothing too special. I don't know if he's a pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Halaburda never stops. He's always working. He sprints on every backcheck, past his teammates and then looks to skate through the puck carrier. Really relentless motor, even if he ends up out of position sometimes. He scored with a crafty shovel shot in-tight, one of a couple of chances in the game. But I mostly liked his passing. This was the most projectable his game has looked. He found teammates on the inside, passed immediately. Not especially deceptive and he's still a straight-line attacker in transition. That will limit his playmaking opportunities, unless he develops a stronger give-and-go and delay game. The mechanical limitations still pose an issue. I think he's a pick, but probably not a candidate for our board. Fourth-line projection.

Daniel Gee: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Halaburda followed up yesterday's game with another strong performance. He always rushes up the perimeter, which isn't ideal, but he's slippery and jumps by perimeter stops. Even when Halaburda has middle support he tunnels into beating the next

defender instead of using pass supporters properly. He's a bit of a menace in sustained pressure. On a penalty kill, Halaburda stripped an offensive zone puck on the forecheck and got a sharp angle wrap around shot off -- motor and effort completely surprised the Cougars. Won a massive end board battle late in the first -- he drops low and like a crane, he just plucks pucks out of battles after crashing. Found Lipinski with a centering pass after creating a turnover. Recorded an assist off a retrieval -- between the legs centering pass to the hashmarks. It was a complete showcase of his simple game. Was a force on the penalty kill. Protects into clears and wins battles similarly to what he does on offensive zone retrievals. Anticipated a pass 6-on-5 late. Really sophisticated defensive habits. Looks like a pick for our board -- at the end if we are out of higher upside players.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

A new level of patience from Halaburda. Well, mostly. He's still a straight line puck carrier in transition, but the passes were proactive. He gets locked on his inside edges with the puck in front of his body, and he doesn't have the hand speed to make up for it at this level (and hand speed won't solve it at the next). However, he showed some projectable NHL playmaking down low. He picked up a puck and instantly went backhand to the middle for an assist. In the first period, he didn't force a play, instead cutting back until he drew two defenders, then passed to the middle. The puck left his stick too late, but it was an NHL read all the same. He's a pick this year, but perhaps not a candidate for our board. He has a chance to play if the mechanics improve.

Daniel Gee: February 28th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

It's hard not to love Halaburda's game -- he plays with an incredible amount of pace and battles constantly throughout his shifts, flashes his above average sense constantly. Very simple in transition -- he didn't have a tonne of touches and when he did, it was more forcing pucks offside or working chip-and-chase plays. Drops to a low centre of gravity with limited push off power so he can't really burn around defenders at this level. Regardless, he supports on the weak side and constantly works to win second-chance possessions. In sustained pressure he plants as a screen and then harasses puck retrievers. He attacks low, and gets up and under opponents. Once he wins pucks, Halaburda has good ideas. In the first he worked a wonderful give-and-go with Honzek that resulted in a high-danger. His pressure was so impactful. In the second hit landed a massive hit on the forecheck, separated the puck from the carrier and then passed out to Lipinski, who was able to drag the puck in front for a chance.

Where Halaburda made the most impact was in his own zone. He already possesses advanced habits -- constant scanning, latches onto secondary and tertiary threats, proactively moves into passing and shooting lanes, even pushing calculated pressure on blue-line bobbles. He was on for multiple goals, but they were hardly his fault. On one sequence he was pushing high pressure, read a bumper passing play being set up, drifted down, and stick-lifted the shooting threat, creating a turnover and counter attacking drawing a trip to prevent his breakout. He's limited skill wise, but there's a useful player here. Low ceiling, high floor checker at the next level.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Halaburda's effort on the forecheck led to a goal. He was a nuisance on the backcheck and an effective play-killer in the defensive end. But that was really about it. He's a straight line, perimeter shooter who doesn't have a ton of inside skills or tools. Not an advantage creator. An admirable style, but nothing that suggests an NHL prospect in this game. I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Halaburda's always working. He charges at opponents to force quick decisions. His backtracking is impressive. He comes across the hips and wins body positioning on puck; off puck, he doesn't overextend and stays on the immediate threat. For the most part, his offensive game is pace and shooting. He takes pucks, bursts wide, and fires. He doesn't even look to the slot for better options. In one sequence, he dropped the puck back to a teammate in space, suggesting that he can play a more translatable game. But I haven't seen that in transition yet. He's not an advantage creator and doesn't have the tools necessary to play this game in the NHL. He could be a late-rounder. Interested to see how he develops.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

It's my fourth viewing of the year and there's already nothing new to report on Halaburda. I like his game. He goes all-out every shift. Skates across the hips, wins positioning and the puck in one motion. Skating mechanics aren't perfect (wide, hunched over), but he creates speed differential through his off-puck skating (always moving, reloading) and frequency of crossovers and strides. When given a pass in a favourable position, he takes the middle. When not, he's stuck to the outside, lacking the speed, skill, and vision to find a better way. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Halaburda is an exceptional worker. Goes all-out on every loose puck, with his pace sometimes creating opportunities that wouldn't have been there otherwise. Crushed players against the boards, then won the body positioning battle. The stride's wide, short, and hunched, but he generates significantly above-average speed for the level, complemented with non-stop motion, high stride frequency, and changes of speed. His game falls in the same habits as most junior speedsters: he plays too fast and too straight line. He's always trying to beat defenders wide, even when his speed has created a lane across the front of the defender. It's especially annoying because he's very effective when forced to play in the middle of the ice. He slows down, passes through defenders, and looks laterally for options. A few questionable decisions elsewhere in this game, including a low-percentage shot on a 2-on-1. NHL skills look like pace, shooting mechanics, and work rate. The rest, I'm not sure.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Halaburda was just pace in this game. His work rate shines, using frequency of strides to overcome wide, hunched mechanics. Even with his posture, he effectively manages contact and wins body positioning. First on a ton of pucks, using his off-puck routes (dip acceleration) to create speed differentials. He's best when he shows a bit of patience and attacks the inside early, where he shows vision, handling skill, and a give-and-go game. Mostly, he attacks the outside and sprints until a defender makes a mistake. Didn't really look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Impressive performance from Halaburda, showing a bit of skill everywhere. The shot looks like a clear NHL projection, capable of shooting off either leg with power and control. Elevates elbow and powers through his outside leg shot. Drops his shoulder, perhaps a bit too much, on his inside leg wriester but he also scored with it off the rush. Masks his release with blade deception. Slipped and hooked pucks to the middle for scoring chances and consistently identified teammates across the ice. Underhandle for acceleration, even after a cutback along the boards before setting up a chance – don't see that too much at this level. Wins body positioning then cuts back. Strong off-puck skater, finishing his routes and attacking the net. Doesn't stop inside space, leading to missed opportunities. Stride's wide, very wide. He plays fast, but he's not outracing defenders if he doesn't have the speed differential. Always gets pushed to the outside, leading to turnovers and reactionary dump-ins. The energy on the defensive end is a plus. Interesting prospect. Excited to watch more.

J.D. Burke: December 18th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Halaburda first caught my attention with an assist with a moving deflection on a Justin Lies point shot that resulted in an Evan Toth goal on the rebound. It was a preview of things to come for the industrious Giants centre. His night was defined by centre-lane drives, flashes of great eye-hand coordination and small area skill, and a nose for the net-front. Showed some great supporting instincts in the offensive zone too, offering an outlet to teammates under duress often at just the right moment. Created a great scoring chance with a look-off pass to set his teammate up. Contributed in the defensive zone on a shift-by-shift basis, too. Just a really strong performance on the whole.



Grade: C

Jeremy Hanzel

AGE 19.551 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 27, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2



Hockey IQ



Vision

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	192 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Seattle Thunderbirds "A"	WHL	66	13	35	48	0.73

SCOUTING REPORT

When Jeremy Hanzel debuted in the 2021 Elite Prospects Draft Guide, he was crafty playmaker and activator, but lacked the details of his peers. Flashforward two years, he's now a polished defender without losing the skill that made him so interesting.

He even claimed Seattle's No. 1 spot in the playoffs, averaging more minutes than first-rounders Kevin Korchinski and Nolan Allan.

When Hanzel has the puck, good luck figuring out what's coming next. He fakes passes to shoot, fakes shots to pass, and constantly throws out different handling feints to confuse defenders. Even as pressure leans on him, he keeps up the deceptive act to escape with the puck. Then, he uses the inside, sets up entries with two-line passes through opponents, and constantly activates.

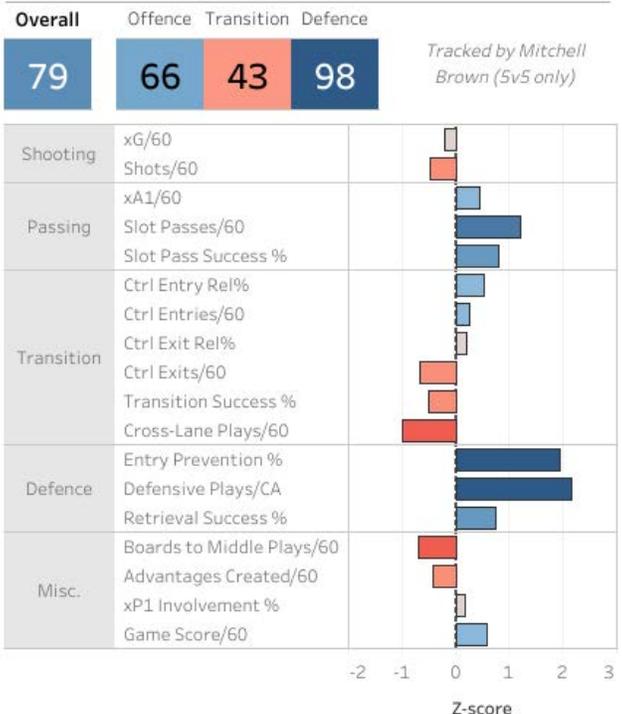
Now, Hanzel's also one of the WHL's best play-killers, a huge step from where he started.

"He's taken another step defensively," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in November. "He's on his check even earlier, without overskating. Proactive. He reads opponents' momentum, pokes away pucks as they expose it, and skates through opponents hands and shoves them into the boards. A better, more powerful defensive skater, visible through his pivots."

Jeremy Hanzel

D | Seattle Thunderbirds | WHL | Draft+2

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 139.1



Without separating speed, Hanzel's margin for error will shrink dramatically against professional players. That means he'll have to lean even heavier on the small-area skill and deception, make quicker decisions, and rely even heavier on his vision and passing skill.

If he does it, he could make it in a bottom-pairing role. Hanzel's worth a pick. And there's always a chance that the highly deceptive playmaker and precise play-stopper eclipses that projection. Intelligence often finds ways.

⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"This kid never gives up. Walked onto that Seattle team, fought for every rung up the ladder. Has great feet, can move laterally, can kill plays. Should've already been a pick, but at 20 he may slip through again and have to fight some more through an AHL deal." - Eastern Conference Scout, June 2023

"I see myself as a two-way dman. I've taken it on to shut down other team's top lines and I think I've done a good job of that this year. I've upped my game in the offensive skill. Rounded out my game completely." - Hanzel, May 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2022 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hanzel's is definitely better than last year from a mechanical perspective, but he's far from quick. His pivots are late and reactionary. But even when he gets the jump, attackers still out-skate him without issue. The core of his projection comes down to playmaking and activation. The activation was back in this game, stepping inside in the offensive zone, then finding teammates in better positions. He manipulates defenders, then passes into the space he just cleared. Looks for give-and-gos, but none worked out in this game. Probably not a pick this year, but he could still be worth the investment. He's an intelligent player who has taken significant strides defensively.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2022 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hanzel's activating less, and his game suffers. Still, there are flashes of the playmaking mind. Consistently moves the puck to teammates with more space than himself. Understands how to create space through delaying and deceiving. Manages space on the PP while keeping the puck moving. The defence is the biggest area of growth. He's better at killing plays early, using contact to prevent entries, and disrupting plays down low. Pivots and skating are still a limiter, but he's closer to finding ways to offset them. Looked like a fringe pick. I still think he's one of the age group's best activators and playmakers, but there's still a ton of work to be done.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Hardly an inspiring game from Hanzel with the puck. He activated less and tried fewer skilled plays. Still, he looks for options in the middle and cross-ice. The defence requires further work, but he's engaging earlier, more often, and more confidently. Better at following his check and eliminating threats off-puck. Lack of activation rendered him ineffective offensively. Not a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 15th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hanzel's best sequences are when he's up the play – he's just activating far less than previous. He had one quality offensive sequence: activate, retrieve, pass into the slot. The way that he combines pace and deception suggests an NHL-calibre playmaker. But if he's not sprinting up the ice, he's not getting those looks in the NHL. His breakout passing is a bit simpler than his OZ passing. Misses inside options and the deception isn't as frequent, but he's still one of the better breakout artists in the league. Skating and defence have both improved. Defence is a strength with potential to become so at the next level, if the

skating comes along. End-of-board prospect.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Hanzel continues to be one of the best low-scoring players I've seen. He activates and pinches at the right times, owns an advanced give-and-go game, and shows NHL-calibre playmaking. In one sequence, he pinched, cut inside, saw an open teammate, then turned his body, look off his target, and then passed. Highly deceptive; most players can learn something from him. Defensively, he's much better this season. It's not just a tighter gap, but he's looking for opportunities to run into players, he dislodges pucks in battles, and instantly steps to the inside lane. He's a draft pick again.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

I might quit watching hockey if Hanzel isn't drafted. The skating still requires major refinement, but he's taken a step and he looks like an NHL prospect. The gap control's tighter with better-timed checks and awareness. Joins the rush with every opportunity, showing the passing skill, vision, and deception to connect with high-value targets. Manipulates defenders; he understands how to turn their feet towards him and cut around them. Drives the inside regularly, both with cross-lane passes and handling actions. Deceives on retrievals before stepping to the inside. Tons of details with legitimate offensive ability. Long-term project but No. 4 upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Returning from injury, Hanzel was Seattle's 6th-most used defencemen in this game. The instincts are still here: The rush activation, the playmaking, the deception. He tries and consistently succeeds in making high-level breakout passes, going cross-ice through layers after stepping inside. His skating's still a problem, lacking depth and outside edge use. Pivots are weak and slow. On check early, killed some plays in the neutral zone. His a long-term projection still looks valuable, but tons of assembly required.

David St-Louis: May 7th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Many of Hanzel's issues stem from poor skating form. I can see a 5-grade for that skill as he does achieve more depth when he gets going, but he spends 90% of the game very upright. He can't get any leverage against opponents, is late to recover (no explosiveness), and poor at boxing out. His backward skating is also problematic, short crossunders and attackers easily move around. The transition game is the best part. Most of the first period, he deferred to teammates on retrievals, unwilling to beat F1 himself (not trusting his explosiveness), and some of his plays looked panicky, but then he started making skate fakes and deceptive passes in periods two and three, hitting not the first option, but the best one and preparing that pass with a lookoff and a change of body angle. I like his multiple scanning on retrievals; if he can add a bit more acceleration, I feel he could really become a transition force in every situation, even when he has his back turned. The passing remains the best thing about his offensive game. Easy distribution on the powerplay: fast, right weight, freezes high D first, but a bit static. He isn't moving or displacing the defensive box. The shot is really bad. No other way to put it. He had trouble even elevating the puck; release point is too far from his body. The skating form is probably a big part of his lack of power on shots; upright stance equals lack of weight behind the release.

Mitchell Brown: April 28th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

I might've underrated Hanzel's skating skills. There's some evasiveness from his punch turn and spins, and he exited two of them with crossovers this game. But he sets everything up off his inside edges, often turning back into pressure then making a desperation play to maintain possession. Too upright through his hips whether he's striding or escaping pressure, which limits his push off power. Established his gaps early and killed a few plays a result, but his off-puck defence remains a problem: late on switch-offs, late to grab his man, overplays the passing lane, and doesn't keep his stick on the ice. Rush activation in this game, getting a give-and-go to gain the zone. No hesitation: he's immediately into the rush without any hesitation, adjusting route and speed as necessary. Manipulates on the regroup to gain the inside lane, using crossovers, eye deception, and attacking an angle to mask his intentions. Not content for point shots, he actively tries to hit teammates moving to the slot with passes,

often set-up with the shot fake. He's good, but a long-term project. Skating's probably an NHL average projection, passing is a half grade above it, and his activation and playmaking are both legit NHL skills. Probably a late-second/early-third type given the uncertainty of the projection.

Mitchell Brown: April 16th, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hanzel's defence remains a work in progress. Good news: he works hard and has some defensive instincts. Keeps a tight gap on the backpedal, but on the regroup/following a turnover, he just concedes the space instead of trying to make it up. No confidence closing space when he has support, presumably from his pivots (crossovers, can't load up, loses speed). Lots of reaching, too. In DZ coverage, he's often too late grabbing his man or letting them slip behind him. Doesn't communicate. Mirroring footwork is lacking -- he tries to follow but ends up conceding space. Less activation in this game, but more offensive skill than in previous viewings. Hit a couple of shot-passes to create scoring chances. Used the threat of the shot to set up a couple of looks on the PP. Stretched the ice with his vision on the exit, and drove plays to the inside when possible. Beats a player, then cuts off their recovery route. Flashed a delay game when carrying the puck himself. He's a pick, but it's going to be a long, uncertain road.

Mitchell Brown: April 9th, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hanzel had some really impressive moments in this game. He joined the rush, looked for the cross-slot pass from the point, and tried to use the inside lane. Most active on regroup and resets in the NZ, where he's comfortable passing against the grain, even when pressured. Closed space quickly in the DZ from pre-scanning and constant adjustment. Those are probably worth a draft pick, but there's a lot of work to be done. He's passive through the NZ, and struggles to handle pucks. He has the right idea, but exposes the puck constantly, and struggles with backhand-to-forehand transitions. Lacks small-area skating skills and evasiveness, but he moves the puck quickly after pre-scanning. Need more viewings before sticking him on the board.

Mitchell Brown: April 2nd, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

More puck management issues in this game from Hanzel. His hands really kill otherwise intelligent and crafty plays. He doesn't protect the puck all that well, exposing it to sticks and doesn't keep his weight over top the puck. But ignoring the turnovers, he pushes plays to the inside, passes through pressure, and shows a bit of escapability. I really think there's something here. His rush defence was great tonight, pivoting and surfing across to angle out the attack. Diffused more complex rushes. Hit and miss DZ coverage, but the fundamentals are sound. He's a pick for me, but a late one.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

What a game. Hanzel scored the game winner, peeling off pressure, working the give-and-go, then cutting off the defender's recovery route and using his bottom hand to get free, then scoring with a bouncing puck. The ability to link all of those details together is rare for a non-big name prospect, especially a defenceman. All game long, his activity in the rush, both joining and leading, stood out. Passive gap through the neutral got exposed all game long, but he closed space and disrupted a few plays. Pre-scans on retrievals, establishing positioning, then moves the puck quickly. Pushes knees over toes, gets hips involved -- pretty much a properly loaded stride. A few tweaks on the extension and recovery are necessary, and he didn't seem to have a ton of small-area skating skills. Need a closer look, but seemed like an easy draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 28th, 2021 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Tough night for Hanzel on the breakout with Portland's forechecking generating turnovers all night. Hanzel's lack of separation skills were pretty noticeable. He's very inside edge-dependent, even with adequate posture, preventing him from linking together skating moves. Even exiting his turns with a crossover would make him a lot more projectable. Lots of activation in this game, as usual: flying up the weakside to get a pass, then delaying to find the trailer and give-and-goes from the point. Sometimes he wanders a bit, but mostly, he's in the right place as an activator. Scanned for off-puck threats, but he's a bit reactionary. He works to get back in position and had a few break ups on recoveries. Overplays the passing lane instead of erasing his man. Tough game, still showed draft-worthy skills in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 27th, 2021 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

There's a ton of refinement required, but Hanzel's one of the best activators in the draft class. He instantly accelerates out of passes to gain positioning on his man, then jumps into the rush. Once he's in, he's committed, showing a bit of playmaking skill to bring the puck to the inside lane. Steps inside before firing, too. From the point, he fills weak side space and dips into space while managing his gap. He's not making Behrens-esque reads to jump behind his man and fill space in coverage gaps, but I wonder if those will come with more experience at this level and better OZP touch habits (he takes too many pucks flatfooted). Establishing body positioning on retrievals and quickly moves the puck, before getting into the play. In transition, he always looks to the inside, often skirting pressure and then hitting a moving target. There's no pop out of any of his turns or spins -- it's one move, stop, and then another move because he lacks depth and he's inside edge-dependent. He problem-solves with his hands a bit too much -- that'll get exposed at the next level. And his rush defence is a problem at this level because he doesn't load up his pivots (all crossovers instead of the mohawk). Some wandering off-puck, letting threats work around him. Definitely a pick, but the layers that he adds over this shortened season will determine where he ends up on the board.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

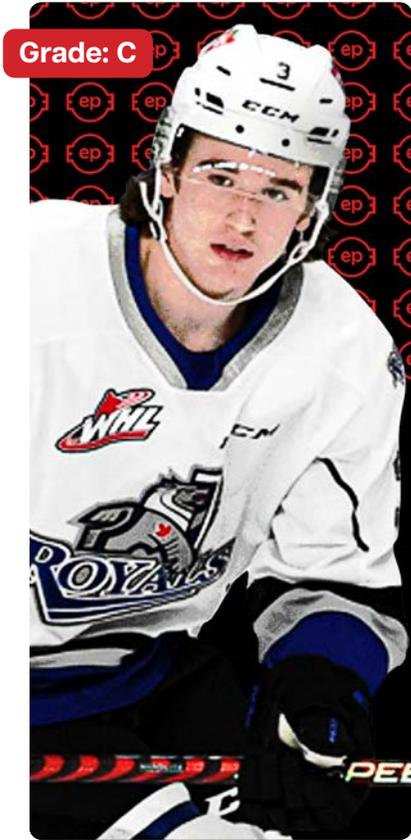
Standout give-and-go game. He takes the pass in motion, makes the next pass in motion, then jumps into the rush. Finishes his routes, too. Always in the middle of the action in transition. Always looks inside first, often making a play up the middle or cross-ice to change the point of attack. Layers on just enough deception to mask his intentions at this level, but he'll need more to fool NHL forecheckers. Doesn't just stick to the points -- jumping into space on the weak side. His shot's pretty awful right now, with that arm completely locked to his feet and getting no downward pressure over the puck. His skating has the basics -- knees over toes, full extensions, and proper hip-knee-toe alignment -- but his lack of explosiveness, push offs in his crossovers, and skating skills on retrievals limit his effectiveness. There's notably inconsistencies in his form, so strength's surely an issue here. Can't forget he was playing AAA last season, either. But the brain's really strong. With more defensive refinement (he has good athletic posture but plays too passively), I think he's a potential bottom-pairing defender. He's a pick, maybe in the late second.

Mitchell Brown: March 20th, 2021 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Admittedly, Hanzel's shot and lack of skating refinement are a bit concerning. He doesn't exit his punch turns with a crossover, killing the effectiveness of the move. He pivots with a crossover rather than a mohawk, and lacks any sort of push off power -- easily beaten to the outside. In-zone defensive errors are a problem, too, as he lets his man slip behind and chases the puck. But his engagement is so impressive. He recovers on mistakes by sheer reaction speed and hustle alone. Once he's in the rush, he stays in the rush. Confidence to hold the offensive zone and look for high-value passing targets instead of endlessly rimming the puck. He steps into space before firing, uses hook passes to beat sticks, and pushes pucks into the middle. This performance doesn't scream NHL draft pick, but his details and vision suggest there's a lot more here than we've seen so far.

Mitchell Brown: March 19th, 2021 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

WHL debut for Hanzel, and it was a good one. Right away, his transition smarts were evident, even with some pace-related turnover issues. He hunts the give-and-go, makes and takes passes in motion, and doesn't hesitate to activate into the rush. It was evident on his goal, where he used two give-and-goes: one to break the puck out, the other to gain the zone and get open for a one-time finish. That mentality translates to OZP, where he slips behind his man to fill space and looks to become an easy passing option. The shot is a major hurdle: he sweeps the puck, doesn't establish distance between his feet, and can't immediately transition into his weight shift. But he used the threat of the shot to distribute, connecting with a cross-slot pass for a chance. Consistent DZ engagement, scanning for threats and adjusting, but he wasn't able to leverage those into any sort of defensive stopping power. Based on this game, he's easily a draft pick. Some of the best activations I've seen from a defender in this class.



Grade: C

Justin Kipkie

AGE 17.134 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw Talent



Play Killer

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'4" Height	190 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	6 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Victoria Royals	WHL	67	8	25	33	0.49

SCOUTING REPORT

It took a few months for Justin Kipkie to find his footing in the WHL, but when he did, he never looked back. By the midpoint of the season, he was playing top-pairing minutes, averaging nearly 24-and-a-half minutes alongside fellow draft-eligible prospect Kalem Parker.

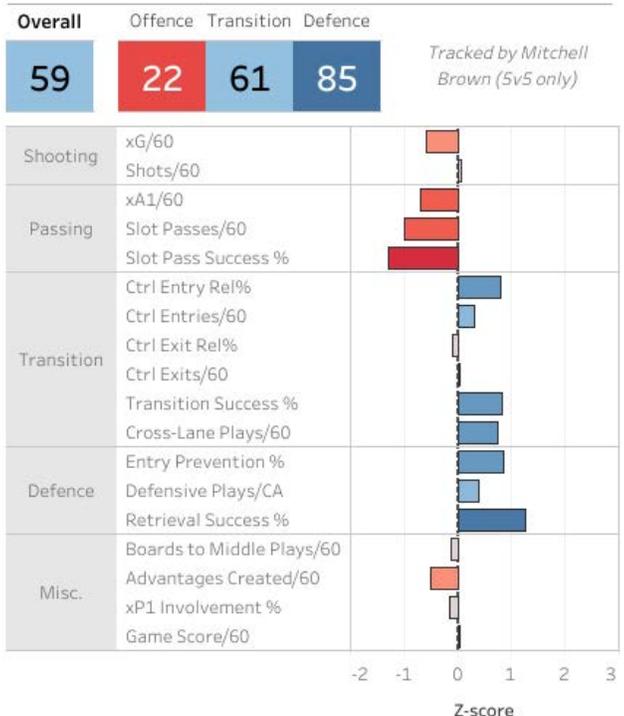
Kipkie's success starts in the neutral zone. "He's one of the WHL's best players at timing his step up with the pass in the neutral zone," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explained in March. "Most players jump into the passing lane; he stays behind his opponent, reaches in to deflect the puck, and then wraps them up."

Primarily a shooter, Kipkie loads up for booming one-timers, walks into space before firing, and occasionally beats defenders off the point with his hands. A dexterous shot allows contortionist-like wristers off tricky passes and under pressure. By positioning himself at the top of the circle off-puck, he's always a scoring threat.

At this stage, Kipkie's mostly ideas, not impact. His lack of edge control and acceleration prevents him from accessing and closing space, while his hands limit access to passing lanes. He has advanced ideas – cross-ice through sticks, cutbacks into passes around forecheckers – but his lack of technical ability limits their success rate. As a result, he only makes plays while stationary.

Justin Kipkie

D | Victoria Royals | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 160.6



Kipkie's development will be fascinating to watch. He has projectable stride mechanics and depth, which suggests that improving the skating will be easier for him than other prospects. He's a bet on skating growth, and the improvements in efficiency and reads that come with it. Perhaps he makes it as a bottom-pairing option.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Another solid game from Kipkie. He has a good dynamic with Parker. He gets on the puck carrier early to force the dump in, then Parker deals with the breakout as Kipkie supports and activates. He's one of the WHL's best players at timing his step up with the pass in the neutral zone. Most players jump into the passing lane; he stays behind his opponent, reaches in to deflect the puck, and then wraps them up. Elsewhere, his defending is a fair bit weaker. In the rare instance where he commanded the breakout, he showed NHL stuff. He looks cross-ice/lane, drew pressure, and passed around/through it. He has ideas in the offensive end, mostly built around his shot. In one sequence, he used the hip pocket pass reception to prepare his deke to the inside, but since he struggles with acceleration, the defenders closed on him. This is a skating projection. He has flashes of projectable form (depth inside the stride), but rarely of speed/edges/quickness. He has some skating skills, but his hips rise dramatically. Can't really get full push off and he struggles with transitions/pivots for the level. Someone's gotta pick him.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Kipkie scored late with a step-in wrister. The shot's an NHL tool. He has some craftiness with the puck, especially on breakouts. He's always looking for teammates laterally; he spots players through forecheckers and also makes clean, controlled plays off retrievals. There's nothing complex here – he's limited by his skating and puck control (especially off the backhand) – but enough to suggest a professional player. Tons of turnovers, but the Victoria struggles with puck support and most of the ideas were sound. With just a bit more mechanical skill, he'd be a pick for us, especially with his proactive, punishing defensive style. Instead, he's more of a depth projection. But he should get picked regardless. I think he's going to score a lot next season.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Kipkie scored a pair of goals, both awkward but perfectly placed shots. The puck explodes off his stick. Lots of noteworthy breakout ideas, too. He looks cross-ice for options, tries to sneak pucks through opponents, and even tries to deceive. While he pushes his knees past his toes and even shows some mechanical polish, he only makes stationary plays. And he's much weaker on his edges, which limits his retrievals. A solid defensive game, though. Timed step ups in the neutral zone with the incoming pass for the stop. Closed space and anticipated passes. More proactive off-puck defence would increase his impact. He might be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Another solid game from Kipkie. He has offensive skill. He set up a goal by activation, waiting for support, then passing back to the point with a quick look off. Takes aggressive positioning in the offensive zone, getting open at the top of the circle. In one sequence, that led to a scoring chance, a contortionist-like wrister off his outside leg. Some pass receptions killed other opportunities, but it's really the breakouts that left the most value on the table. Lots of simple, flatfooted plays. He's an interesting prospect, but not sure about the mechanics. The skating's fluid but weak.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The Jan 3rd and Jan 6th games had me excited to watch more Kipkie, but this was a very poor game. He was fighting the game. Hands and feet crumble when forced to move at the same time. Passed behind his teammates or straight to the other team. Lots of soft passes meant to slice through pressure that failed. The defence was also poor, save for a couple of plays where he closed space early and forced a turnover. Didn't see any offence, overshooting space on his few activation attempts. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Kipkie's solid with the puck. He doesn't try much on breakouts, preferring to keep plays simple, but comes to live in the offensive end. He activates straight down the middle and stays in space. Uses give-and-gos. Always ready to shoot with his hands always positioned in front his body, stick loaded. Pinches to hold the zone without overcommitting, as he did twice leading up to his powerplay assist. The skating's vulnerable off the rush for the same reasons as in the Jan 3rd game report: he lacks power and stability on his edges. But he takes the middle and knows when to step up and when to keep backwards momentum. He could be a pick. Shot's at least 5.5-grade, too.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Kipkie was Victoria's best draft-eligible in this game. A solid performance. He stopped a bunch of rushes in a number of ways: reading the pass and jumping into the lane, pivot and surf to come across, and traditional face-to-face stops. Showed some breakout skill, whether he was using a tight turn escape, deking around opponents, or stepping to the middle before passing wide. He's a bit on the raw side. The stride's not too far off in terms of form, but he generates little power. His edges are weak and he gets ejected out of his outside edge moves. Passes miss. Beatable with speed off the rush, and he can't recover. An interesting game, but the mechanics might prove too much of an issue.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Kipkie showed some rush stopping ability. He confidently closed space in the neutral zone to force dump ins and turnovers. Made a couple of proactive off-puck reads down low. But he didn't get the puck much. The shot looks like an NHL skill, but he wasn't using space. Skating looked significantly below average with an upright stance, a wide turning radius, and lack of stability. Curious to see more.



Mazden Leslie

AGE 17.419 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Toolsy



Raw Talent

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vancouver Giants	WHL	66	12	38	50	0.76

SCOUTING REPORT

Two years ago, Mazden Leslie kicked off his WHL career with a two-goal debut – he’s a defenceman. He looked poised to become a top prospect. Now, he’s an electrifying, toolsy, skilled, but frustrating prospect. The highs suggest a near-limitless player, but lows are deep and regular.

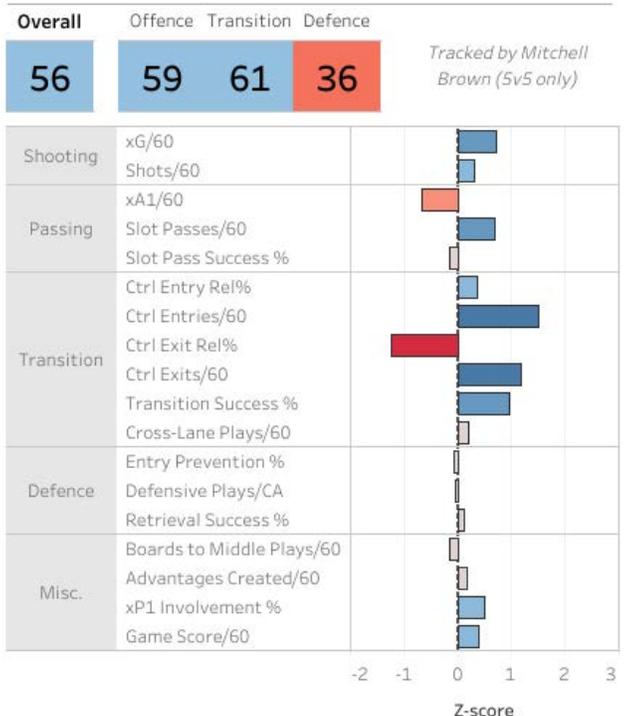
A non-stop activator and occasional manufacturer of offence, Leslie clearly has point-producing potential at the next level. When the puck arrives on his stick, he hammers it past goaltenders, manipulates opponents to create shooting lanes, chains pass receptions with dekes and shots, and occasionally shows high-level playmaking ability.

At the other end of the rink, Leslie’s all-out pressure. He throws crushing hits and erases shots with sprinting closeouts, but also lunges at opponents and constantly overcommits. Better attackers exploit his aggression, putting Vancouver in a disadvantaged position.

Breakouts feature similar volatility, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explains: “On breakouts, he activates up the weak side, uses the middle, and dekes around opponents, until he throws away possession with accessible passes, skates straight into pressure, or refuses to use the space he just created.”

Mazden Leslie

D | Vancouver Giants | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 137.6



When everything comes together, Leslie bulldozes opponents at one end, then creates high-value offence at the other. To make the NHL, he must improve his defensive skating, awareness of space and options, and decision-making. One thing's for certain: A physical, right-shot defenceman will get his chances to play.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

I think I'm out on Leslie. The willingness to carry the puck and activate into the play coupled with the odd flash of handling skill were enough to generate some level of interest on my part, but a complete inability to sequence plays and just abysmal work in the defensive zone suggest to me that he's all flash and little substance. I'm not even sure that the puck carrying will translate at the next level. You watch Leslie live and you really get a sense for just how little feel he has for the game. Even when presented with time, space, and options, he'll enthusiastically skate into pressure and surrender possession. Leslie finished this game a minus-two with four shots on goal. He also took an extremely undisciplined penalty late in the third period that effectively ended any chance of a comeback, if we operate under the delusion that the Giants had one to begin with.

J.D. Burke: April 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

I like the way that Leslie plays philosophically. He's an enthusiastic activator, never shy about carrying the puck up-ice, and always aggressive in the offensive zone. His game is about pushing the pace at every opportunity. My question after a viewing like this one is whether Leslie can build on that base to form a more projectable offensive profile. Mostly, Leslie activates for the sake of activating; there doesn't appear to be any planning or an end goal in sight. You can see this when the puck lands on his stick, and a low percentage play follows in lieu of any deception or play-building. In the defensive zone, Leslie's adequate, albeit unremarkable. He struggles to match opponents footwork along the boards, but is physical and plays with a high motor. In transition, Leslie knows how to diffuse pressure and even displayed some problem-solving skill against numbers, but he struggled to generate many exits as a passer. Looked like a reasonable enough bet at the end of our board, but that is the extent of my enthusiasm.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Leslie remains chaotic. The offence is clearest example. He activates into every rush, but the results are so mixed. Sometimes, he works the give-and-go and then pushes back the defence to create space behind him. He shows vision. Others, he has wide open teammates and decided to flutter a soft shot on net. On breakouts, he activates up the weak side, uses the middle, and dekes around opponents, until he throws away possession with accessible passes, skates straight into pressure, or refuses to use the space he just created. It's the same story on defence. He's physical, confident, and constantly overskates and overcommits, allowing attackers to cut inside on his heels or just completely take himself out of the play. The skating's a bit awkward at times. It's probably more of an NHL average projection at this stage. If he had a bit more deception, vision, or play-building skill, he'd be a second. Instead, he's a late-round candidate.

Daniel Gee: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

This was probably the best offensive game of Leslie's career in the WHL. He scored three, two being simple board-to-middle pucks shot through an immense amount of traffic. He's a great weakside activator -- in the first he dashed down the lane working a give-and-go and potted a one-timer backdoor. Not much of a transition game but he works breakouts in-motion and is a confident puck carrier. Leslie rushed retrieval work and didn't show much manipulation. Showed some delay elements in transition; read a pass on the near boards, intercepted the puck, carried it out of his DZ, executed a stop-up to avoid aggressive pressure and completed the entry. Defending against the rush is a different story. Leslie is turned too easily, creating sub-par gaps. Question how he judges speed and the skating blend needed for success in this area. Breakdowns lead to further issues as he tries to recover. In sustained pressure he was a bit of a mess. On one first period sequence, Leslie scanned a backdoor threat in Hudson Thornton -- he didn't use the information and watched as a cross-crease pass flew by him leading to a goal

against. He has some disruption elements -- stick in release, boxout work, but in general he's slow to react. On a penalty kill in the third he again scanned backdoor but he missed a threat walking into the hashmarks -- leading to another goal against. He's probably a pick for our board but not until later in the order. Needs a lot of defensive development to make it.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Leslie had a hat trick in this game. The first goal was the most impressive. He passed inside, then worked down the weak side and rifled the return pass short-side with textbook form. Scored with a couple of against the grain wristers, first walking laterally and second using space. His activation game looks legit. He anticipates hand offs, proactively fills space, and knows when to commit and when to retreat. The rest of his game is messy. He's a weak defensive skater, getting beat wide a few times because he doesn't keep backwards momentum when closing distance on opponents. He's careless on retrievals. He skates straight into pressure without an escape route. He's physical, slamming players into the ice and always looking to skate through their hands. He gets the odd recovery stop because he has some innate explosiveness. A project pick, but there's upside because the puck skills look like above-average NHL projections across the board.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

A very active, aggressive game from Leslie. As usual, there's a ton of volatility in his play but he showed some exciting stuff. For a chance, he faked on the pressure reception and deked inside. Another time, he skated into pressure, cut back, and attacked the middle. Gets rid of the puck a bit too fast sometimes. Others, he skates until his only option is a low-percentage pass or shot. Lots of blind plays. His non-stop activation gives him more in-game chances to learn what to do with the puck. He's mistake-prone on breakouts, not that he's much different from Vancouver's blue-line in general, but it's still concerning to see him offload the puck with a ton of space. The defence is just aggression. The skating has flashes of quickness but he lacks upper-lower separation. Has NHL puck skills, physicality, and flashes of intelligence. He's a pick, might be an end-of-board for us.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Leslie demonstrates a lot of individual skills, but not much ability to connect them or use them to their full potential. He's an aggressive defender who gets steals with physicality and effort, overcoming committing footwork at times. He fakes one way before going the other. He tries complex breakout passes. He uses space before shooting and consistently jumps into space off-puck. But the decisions are all over the place. In one sequence, he faked out the backpressure, but instead of advancing the puck, he stopped cutback right into them. He airmails pucks when he could hit a teammate cross-ice. He's getting picked, for sure. But where he lands on our board depends on how the ability to anticipate and read pressure develops.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Leslie was joining the rush often early in this game. He doesn't just fill space, he completes his routes to ensure he's always an option. Even created a bit of defensive confusion. He plays too fast with the puck; he's careless and turnover-prone. But he also shows some advantage creation ability, reversing pucks, passing to the inside, and drawing pressure with the intent of beating it. Rush defence's inconsistent in the neutral zone, but he closes space early in the defensive zone and gets the odd stop. Closes distance to shooting threats quickly, often erasing the shot entirely. Angles. No idea what to make of him, but there's NHL upside, for sure.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Leslie's defence has improved so much. Now, he's making up ground instead of conceding it, stepping up then across to angle the attacker. A real strong night defending the rush, accomplishing it in a translatable way. With the puck, I'm still unsure. The skill's obviously there. He deked through a defender, then went between the legs for a shot. Shot's an NHL skill, and he uses space, activates off-puck, and throws in the odd pump fake to secure space for his release. He also defaults to simple plays, stops the puck dead, and doesn't show any notable playmaking or play-building ability. The lack of consistency with the puck might be the result of minutes (Vancouver played with four defencemen for most of the game), but it's also a larger trend. He's a pick, but perhaps a late one.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Leslie had the play of the game. He read the feet of the incoming defender, attacked the space in the opposite direction while waiting for Honzek to get to the slot. Faked the shot, then slid the puck through two defenders for an assist. A great example of planning and manipulation. He doesn't consistently do this, missing opportunities to use those same skills to further his team's offence in place of throwing pucks back into battles. Poor touch habits, failing to take pucks in motion and scanning before reception. He's still improving his breakouts, however. Much better at finding teammates with passes through forecheckers and slowing down instead of making the first play that appears. Defence is volatile. He's too aggressive laterally, chasing down opponents instead of angling, while also backing off too easily. It's a bad combination. He's likely a draft pick, perhaps a third-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

A bit of a quiet game from Leslie. He backs off too easily in the neutral zone, then charges ahead at players to get the stop. It's a gamble that often fails. But he's much tighter in his own zone, especially along the boards where his mirroring footwork shines. With the puck, he didn't try much. Waited for pressure, established body positioning, then made simple plays. Joined the rush a couple of times, but missed plenty of opportunities to become a threat. Mostly just blasted point shots and deferred to his teammates. Still has tools from his mobility, physical skills, and handling, but I didn't see much from him in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

A new Leslie. He's activating regularly, and in highly intelligent ways. He sprints, slows down, cuts around defenders, and pops into space. It's not all perfectly timed, but he's reading the play now. Jumped into space from the point, used give-and-gos to join the play, and shows much more control on breakouts, bolstering the activation game. Scans, deceives, and even uses the middle. Not every play is perfect; he remains a turnover machine on retrievals. But he's creating advantages with his improved breakout skill – suddenly, the turnovers are tolerable. Defence remains a bit of a mess, but the potential's so high. He kills plays early, often, and with a ton of force. He looks to plaster the puck carrier into the boards, then immediately jumpstart the offence. Pretty exciting prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

As expected, Leslie is improving. The breakouts are still an issue, linked to scanning. He just assumes. But he's more patient with the puck than earlier in the season, trying to outwait forechecking pressure or cutting away. Lots of dump-outs afterwards, but he's getting closer. Offensively, he's starting to activate, use his teammates, and make more plays beyond blasting shots. Particularly effectively when joining the rush, showing a bit of play-building ability in the process. Physical but chases and overextends defensively. Chaotic, but there's plenty of upside here.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2021 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Probably the worst performance I've seen in the early season. Leslie plays fast. He takes these huge shots, sprints up the ice, throws hits along the boards, and runs around. But he plays too fast. He never scans, which causes him to lose his check or fail to spot passing options. He throws the puck away on the first sign of pressure. There's zero control to his game: He just goes until he can't. Zero patience. Frustrating to watch because the tools are obviously good. He'll improve.

Grade: C



Jaden Lipinski

AGE 17.786 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 02, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY



Raw Talent

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	198 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vancouver Giants	WHL	66	19	32	51	0.77

SCOUTING REPORT

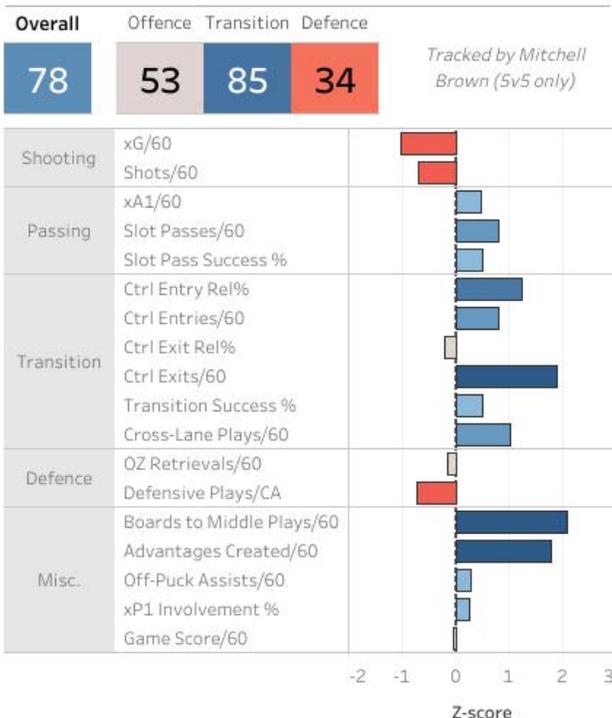
As a 6-foot-3 centre with mobility, point production, and flashes of skill, Jaden Lipinski likely won't have to wait long to hear his name called at the 2023 NHL Draft. His 51 points was good for third on a weak Vancouver Giants squad.

Tools are the appeal of Lipinski. He has a deep bag of skating skills, surveying the perimeter with heel-to-heel skating and separating from opponents with powerful cutbacks. Opponents bounce off him as he drives the inside. And he combines handling and passing skill to hook pucks back into space or pull pucks closer to his feet before releasing.

Those skills combine to make Lipinski a force along the boards. He consistently gets pucks into favourable positions for his teammates by beating defenders with his passes or drives. In transition, he leans heavier on the passing to overcome a lack of power in his strides and crossovers.

But Lipinski's raw and often risk-averse with the puck, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown detailed in a February game report: "He plays with his head down and makes blind plays. He's inefficient and mistake-prone. He plays the off-puck offensive game relatively effectively when he's skating and moving – but sometimes, he doesn't bother skating his routes."

Jaden Lipinski

 F | Vancouver Giants | WHL | 2023 Eligible
 Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 120.8


If a team helps Lipinski refine his mechanics, reads, and defence, he could play in a third- or fourth-line role. But that's a long-term projection. He will need at least another year in the WHL and a couple in the AHL.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Another mostly tough game from Lipinski, but there were a few interesting moments. Lipinski had one play where he took the puck out of a scrum, instantly worked a handling move at the faceoff dot to gain the inside track, and nearly connected with Samuel Honzek for the goal. That would've been a hell of a play if they pulled it off. There was another where he displayed some offensive intelligence or at least a willingness to funnel pucks to the inside; a spinning pass on a retrieval along the boards into the slot to, unfortunately, no one in particular. Mostly, though, I just don't see a legitimate prospect here. Lipinski's perhaps a bit more explosive than I gave credit, but only if there's a lot of runway. That may just be an activity rate thing, too. His mechanical skating form looks pretty grim for the most part. He's so top-heavy, struggles to access his outside edges, and generally just can't perform a crossover. I'm not sure that I see a pathway to an NHL lineup outside of a fourth-line checking role, and I don't think he's distinguished himself to the degree that he's even a high likelihood bet to get there.

J.D. Burke: April 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

This was a tough game for Lipinski. It seemed like he was chasing the play from puck drop to the final horn. His puck touches were few, and I'm not sure that he made much of any of them. There was one intelligent read on a developing odd-man rush, a shot off the goalies pad for a rebound to his linemate, but that was it. His skating and handling looked pretty clumsy throughout, with a couple of particularly laboured pass receptions through the neutral zone. I'm not sure that he looked like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Lipinski remains one of the most interesting skaters I've seen. He has skating skills – heel-to-heel, jab, punch turns, etc. – but struggles with more basic stuff like crossovers and strides. Generates his power from his edge work. He has ideas, but generally makes plays just a bit too soon. He cuts inside, then passes back into the space he exited, but the defender still hasn't started chasing him yet. Makes one-touch plays and understands how to create a bit of space with his off-puck skating. Generally cuts inside when given space, but he doesn't create gaps. Not necessarily physical but has the skills to become a physical presence. Clearly has third-line potential given his edges, ideas, and play-building skills, but without improved foundational skills, reaching the NHL doesn't seem likely. Still, I think he's a fine end-of-board candidate for us given the upside.

Daniel Gee: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Lipinski is just a physical beast. He invites contact across his shifts and actively bulls through traffic. Blends his edges transitionally to pivot his frame in between defenders and find options. Beyond that he did little on the rush. Absorbed a big hit in the first and still pushed the play forward and tried to just run through pressure. In the offensive zone, Lipinski flashed protection skills again. Really nice off puck movement with Halaburda in the crease -- took a centring feed and jammed like hell at the net front. Found soft ice a couple of times and manhandled pressure when it mounted. Seen more skill out of him in past viewings.

Proactive on a first period penalty kill but very resistant to reach even when he has the range to be disruptive. Lipinski relies more on his positioning to clog lanes. Drops extremely low and wide in his stance. Moved well on another second period kill -- scanned and ran to occupy the high slot. Lipinski then read the pass to the left-hand circle, getting his stick on the bumper threat. Just very intense and focused. He's a pick, but a later one. Doesn't have the tools like a Minten last year.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Lipinski faded as this game wore on, but he was impressive through 40. He grabbed an assist with a spinning cross-slot pass from the circle, perhaps missing his preferred target but arriving on his teammate's stick. Consistently, he worked pucks off the boards, whether that was driving to the middle from the corner or stepping off the boards in transition before making the next play. That's where he looks like an NHLer. He surveys, attacks, and flashes a bit of skill. Early in the game, he tried to manipulate an opponent but failed. He struggles to shift his weight inside his glide. More attentiveness on the defensive end could make him a depth piece.

Daniel Gee: February 28th, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

The Giants were under siege for most of this viewing, which meant that Lipinski had to do a lot of heavy lifting not only in trying to halt the Cougars attack, but also try and push play to the other end. In transition he more grinds on pucks than manipulates. Pivots into handle plays were a go-to for him in an attempt to get off the walls, but he found himself running out of room, too perimeter in this game. Lipinski has so much range due to his overwhelmingly tall frame but it wasn't really a factor in creating advantages. He will open his hips to cut more laterally, but the foot speed isn't there for it to be an effective tool to get to the inside. Lipinski has some sense -- off-puck drives through the slot to push back defenders, smart containment on the forecheck to win pucks. Nevertheless, very much keeping his head above water in terms of transition play, trying to bull his way through resistance.

Like Honzek, most of his significant sustained offensive zone contributions were on the power play. He was in the bumper throughout, heeling a weak one-timed shot in the first and tipping another puck shortly after. More defensive contributions for Lipinski than anything. Provides an absurd amount of pressure on the backcheck and on the perimeter of the ice. Supports battles and exploits his range. He's a proactive mover because he processes the subsequent play well. Had one major mistake through -- caught in no man's land in the slot, too far away from the bumper threat. Looks like a C or D prospect in this one -- not sure there is an enormous amount of upside but there is a strong base here that could flourish as the Giants get better and he plays in higher-sense environments.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Lipinski has NHL upside, but his pathway will likely be longer than the normal late birthday. His stride's unrefined. He plays with his head down and makes blind plays. He's inefficient and mistake-prone. He plays the off-puck offensive game relatively effectively when he's skating and moving -- but sometimes, he doesn't bother skating his routes. The upside is the vision and edges. He surveys the zone with an advanced heel-to-heel that shows better weight transfer than his normal stride. He has shockingly refined outside edges, with punch turns, jabs, and two-foot stops. He works pucks off the boards in transition, hitting teammates in the middle to create a clean exit or entry. Spots teammates through defenders, across the slot, and has the skill to connect, even off the backhand. Effectiveness drops when pressured; he must scan more frequently and manage contact better. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Lipinski was the most consistently effective of the many draft eligibles in this game. His work in pursuit shone all game long. He took the extra stride and skated through the opponent's hands to win possession, anticipated passes on the forecheck, and pickpocketed opponents before spinning back into their space to secure possession. Connected several passes from the boards under duress, highlighted by a two-touch pass through two defenders. He occasionally defaulted to low-percentage plays, but was mostly working to cut inside. If the defender gave up ground, he took it. If they didn't, he passed wide to an open teammate.

He's a solid play-builder, but struggles to generate high-danger still. But he's getting closer. Using the same habits that make him successful along the boards in open ice will lead to better offensive results. He could be a late-second, early-third.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Lipinski's a bit bland in his current play style, but it's clear that he could become more effective. There's the edges, of course -- the heel-to-heel, his cutbacks, and how he cuts inside. There's also some handling skill and an understanding of what type

of game he'll play in the NHL. He consistently works pucks to the middle in transition, sometimes delaying to let the forecheck overskate the route or his teammate catch up. He's a play-builder. Probably more of a mid-rounder, depending on his game grows this season.

Daniel Gee: November 13th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs Vancouver Giants - WHL

Like Honzek, Lipinski is huge out there -- imposing frame among more average sized players. He was scattered in terms of his effectiveness, mainly due to blending a bunch of translatable and non-translatable habits together. For instance, Lipinski would execute weight-shifts on his neutral zone carries, but just wilted under pressure because of poor protection (holding the puck in front of his body). Lipinski doesn't understand how to use his frame effectively and needs to put himself between the defender and the puck. He has a delay game -- cutbacks to release pressure. Lipinski is patient as well, delaying until a defender trails into the offensive zone. He had a standout play in the second. Lipinski blended weight-shifts and a handle to the backhand for the clean entry -- he then hooked the puck into a drop-off pass with the Cougars' defenders completely backed off. While he could have attacked even deeper, it was a high level play.

There's definitely some positive off-puck movement during sustained pressure. Getting into open passing lanes and slot occupation, all while reading and processing where the puck carrier is moving. He executed a couple of nasty cutbacks on Riley Heidt to shake off his pressure on a board play, but turned over the puck on a down-low ring. I like his penchant of moving pucks off the boards and into the middle -- a trend that happened a couple of times in this game. In the third he fished a 50/50 puck off the left-hand circle and dragged the puck into the slot. Later in the play he was too slow on a catch-and-release, but did shoot the puck in one-motion on the reception. The tools aren't really impressive at all but he seems above average sense-wise.

He's lost in the defensive zone. Doesn't use range or body to separate pucks, he left his check (Heidt) on two occasions leading to goals against. No four-way mobility and slow stop-and-start mechanics. Hopefully this was a one off against one of the higher offense-producing WHL teams.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Lipinski's stride without the puck looks solid enough: knees over toes, hips engaged, full extensions. It's with the puck where the stride becomes more upright, losing power. The edges are impressive, including how he stops, cuts back, cuts across, and uses the heel-to-heel. Sudden and powerful. Sets his cutbacks up with changes of pace. On the PK, he had a breakaway, then came back and stole possession again. Always involved defensively, using his speed and length to disrupt. Otherwise, he's a bit limited. He misses the best play for low-percentage shots. He's more of a play-builder, making intelligent short-range plays and starting give-and-gos, but he doesn't look like a player who creates much. He could be a late-second, early-third type given his tools.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Lipinski's an interesting skater. The stride's weak and he hunches over when gliding. Doesn't generate much speed. But he gets a shocking amount of speed out of his heel-to-heel, which he uses in lieu of standard strides and crossovers. He's always facing the middle of the ice with his head up, allowing him to consistently work pucks off the boards and find teammates cross-ice. An effective transition play-builder. Offensively, his game is simple. He missed the best play and overskated. Looked like a potential late-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

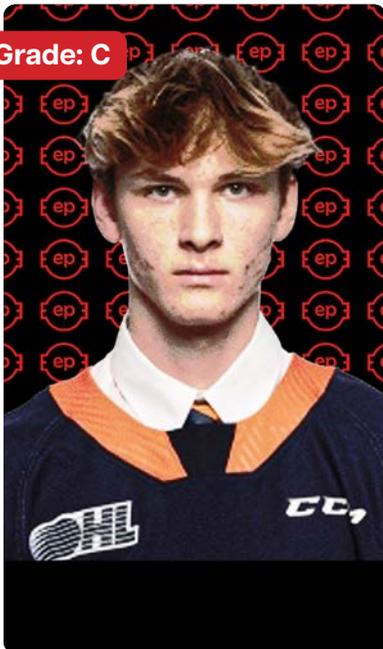
An effective game from Lipinski, who loves the heel-to-heel. He uses it in just about every situation: defensively, offensively, with and without the puck. Even accelerates with it. While that doesn't necessarily work, it means that he's always facing the play. He goes heel-to-heel inside pass receptions, while surveying the outside, and to draw pressure toward himself. Coincidentally, he's also most effective along the boards, slipping checks and escaping pressure. The one-foot stops don't help, and his punch turn isn't exactly developed, but he understands how to draw pressure, when to turn, and how to keep defenders on his back. Then, he looks inside for a teammate on the slot. Passes under sticks and to moving teammates. Give-and-go use. Strong off-puck skating, finishing his routes, backing off defenders, and always presenting himself as a viable option. Overskates and lacks

timing. Grabbed an assist with a low shot for a rebound. Occasionally trapped along the perimeter in transition, but made a slick pass through the skates of a defender after drawing him. Hands failed him several times. No idea what to make of him, but I'm interested.

J.D. Burke: December 18th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Didn't get to see much from Lipinski in this contest as he languished on the fourth line between Julian Cull and Colton Langkow – hard to imagine he even crested 10 minutes. That said, Lipinski played mistake-free hockey, battled hard in all three zones, and even created a scoring chance by sheer will at about the midway point in this hockey game. Lipinski corralled a rolling puck off of the boards and took it to the net with a defender draped on top of him, trying to almost will it over the goal line. Skating looks like it could be a problem.

Grade: C



Nathaniel Day

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'2"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	4	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Flint Firebirds	OHL	32	3.91	.874	0

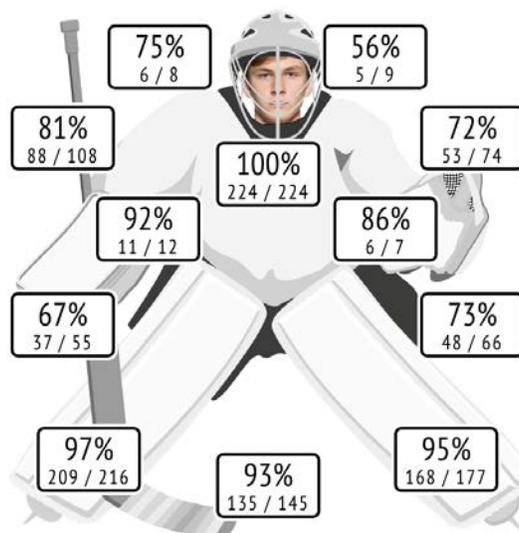
SCOUTING REPORT

Nathaniel Day may be one of the biggest wildcard goaltenders available in the 2023 NHL Draft. His numbers with the Flint Firebirds won't jump off the page at you (.874 in 32 regular season games, .896 in seven playoff games), but he has a number of traits and has shown enough positive signs to garner some interest from NHL clubs.

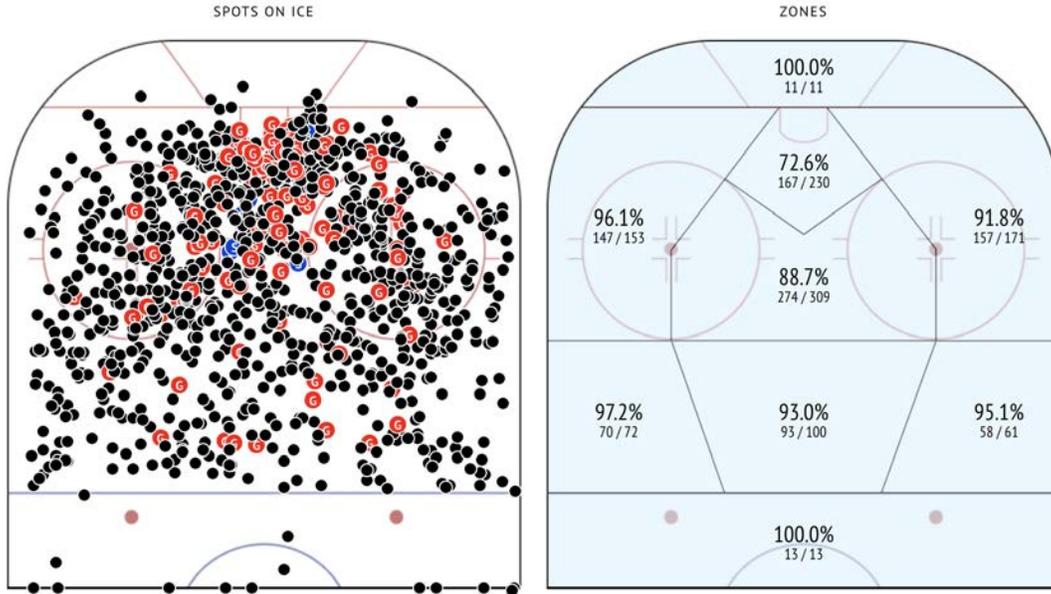
Day displays a lot of patience in a variety of different scoring opportunities. He is solid and composed on breakaways, rarely making the first move. When the puck is worked around the zone, he shows good attention to detail by making micro adjustments with his feet to stay on angle, even when the play around him speeds up.

His wide stance could become more of an issue as he moves on in his career. It forces him to make a lot of lunging moves across the crease on plays that he could otherwise beat on his feet with a confident push. A narrower stance that gives him better access to his edges, combined with the patience that he already has could be a deadly combination. Questions about tracking have also emerged because too many clean shots beat him, which could force teams to think hard about selecting him later in the draft.

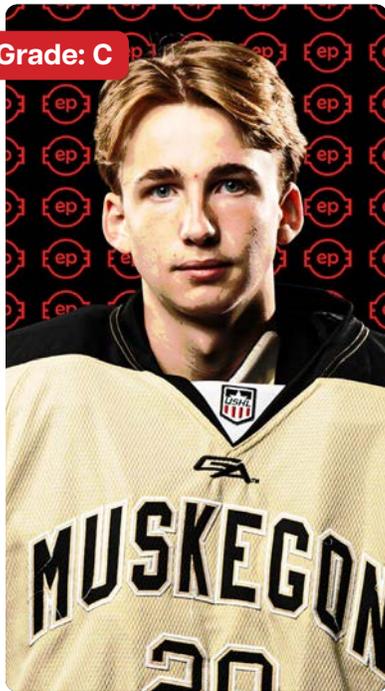
SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: C



Cameron Korpi

AGE 18.307 DATE OF BIRTH May 26, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'4"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	5	5.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Oklahoma Warriors NA	NAHL	16	1.97	.923	1
Tri-City Storm	USHL	21	2.52	.911	1

SCOUTING REPORT

Cameron Korpi is a Western Michigan commit with great size who was able to rebound in a big way in 2022-23 after a rough start to his USHL career. Latching on with the Tri-City Storm, he posted a .911 save percentage in 21 games, and also managed to appear in four playoff games for the team.

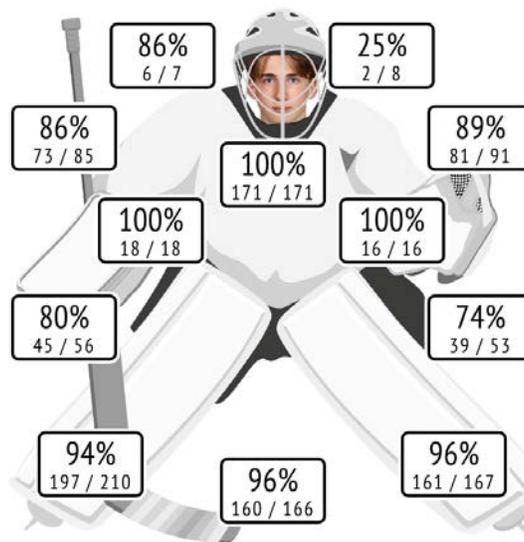
Not only does Korpi have a 6-foot-4 frame that stands out, he takes up even more net visually due to the way he plays. He's the type of goaltender that prioritizes getting on angle first, then worries about depth. When the scoring threat receives a pass and looks up, Korpi is usually already on angle and taking up most of the space in the net.

He applies this awareness to rush chances as well. When there is a singular threat with no passing option bearing down on him, he recognizes it and leaves the back door open. When there are multiple threats, he reels it back and plays essentially right on the goal line. That means if a passing play is completed, he has very little ground to cover to get in front of the shot. With the frame that he possesses, he is able to pull off this approach with fantastic results.

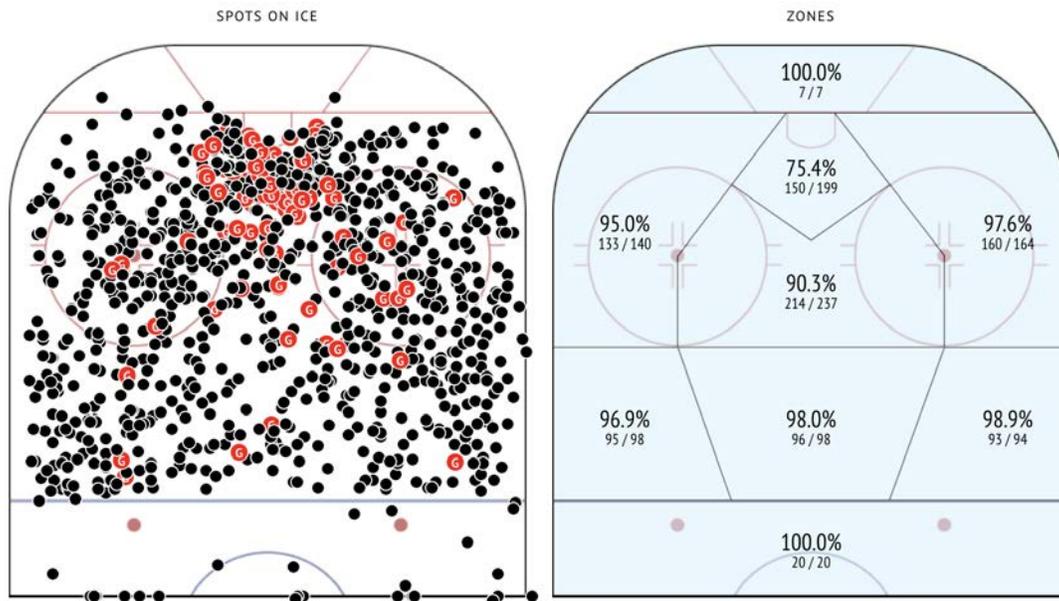
Korpi does come with a lot of the issues you would expect from a bigger goaltender. For example, changing directions on quick passing plays can take a lot of time. He has a lot of moving parts and it takes a ton of strength to stop his momentum and go back the other way. Thankfully, he counteracts that well with above-average edgework while down in the butterfly. Clean transitions out of reverse-VH also help him move more efficiently, and he doesn't linger in the position too long – even though he has more room for error with size like that.

He's not a perfect goaltender by any means, but Korpi provides a frame and unique skill set that you don't normally see from a larger goaltender at his age. A team that has a goaltending coach with a history of developing larger, mobile goaltenders would be wise to take him on as a project.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: C



Lukáš Matěcha

AGE 17.488 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'3" Height	187 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5 Transitions	3.5 Hands
4 Tracking	5 Post	5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
HC Dynamo Pardubice U20	Czechia U20	32	2.54	.918	2
HC Dynamo Pardubice B	Czechia2	2	4.39	.850	0
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	2	1.44	.940	0

SCOUTING REPORT

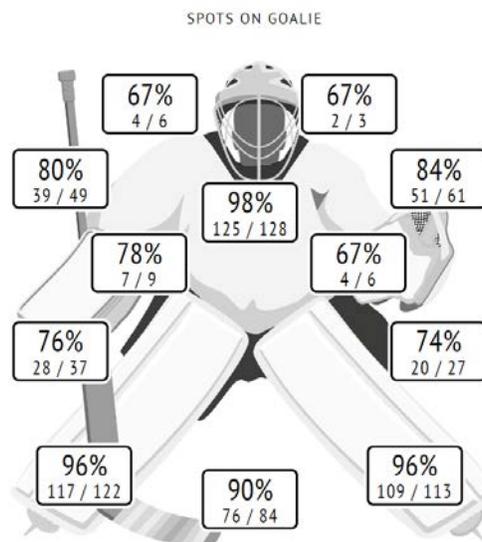
Another good one from the Czechia goalie factory, Lukáš Matěcha is a large goaltender with a game built around quick, efficient routes around the crease. His 6-foot-3 frame makes everything possible by allowing him to play a bit deeper than most goaltenders.

Matěcha's post integration ranks high in this year's draft class. He seals the post well on jam plays, has a decent hinge for rotating when the puck is worked below the goal line, and makes good reads on threats in the slot on low-to-high passing plays.

Matěcha is particularly impressive on second and third scoring opportunities because of his ability to get access to his edges while down in the butterfly.

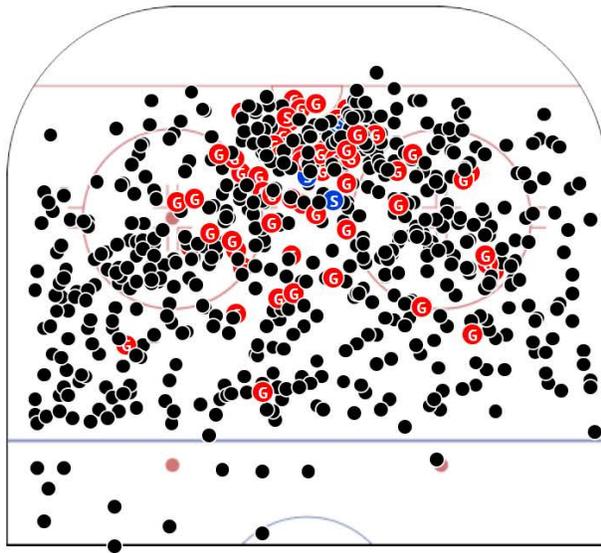
One concern around Matěcha is a tendency to drop his hands into a blocking position on occasion. If he goes down into the butterfly and doesn't have full vision of the shot, his hands tend to slip down near his side instead of staying in a reactive position.

With only a handful of seemingly fixable issues, and a great framework already in place, Matěcha should be an easy gamble for an NHL team somewhere in the middle rounds.

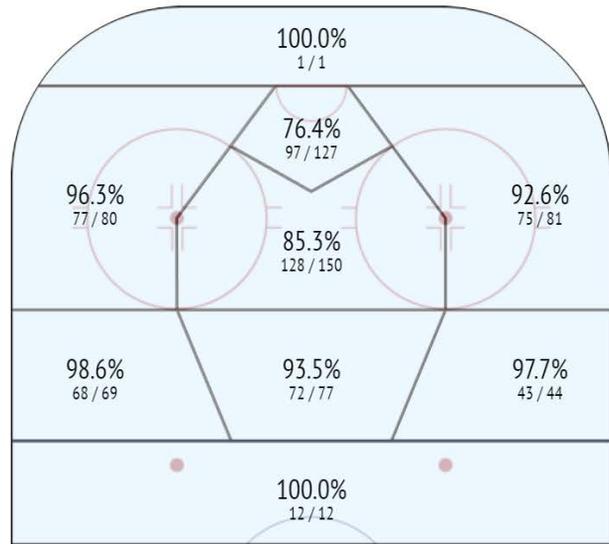


≡ SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES





Grade: C

Quentin Miller

AGE 17.729 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 23, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'3"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4.5	5	4.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Québec Remparts	QMJHL	20	2.11	.911	2

SCOUTING REPORT

Quentin Miller is one of the more interesting goaltenders available at the 2023 NHL Entry Draft. Simply due to the lack of games played under his belt, it's easy to see how the youngster from the Québec Remparts organization could slide under the radar of a few teams.

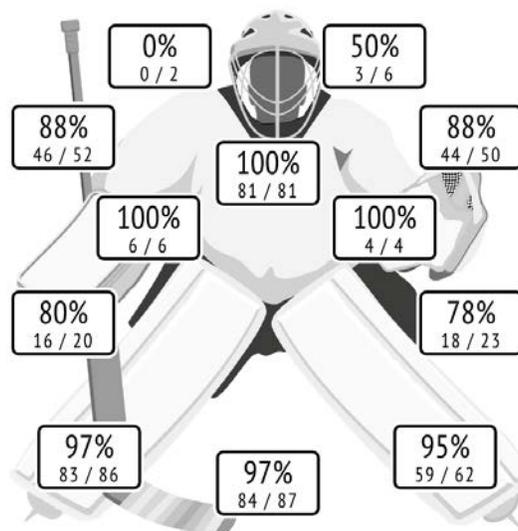
Thankfully, Miller plays a structured game that does not vary much from game-to-game. If you saw him at all in 2022-23, you likely saw a similar version as others that saw him around the same time.

Even though Miller has a projectable frame at 6-foot-3, 181 pounds, it's the mental side of his game that stands out upon first watch. You can tell he is a goaltender that agonizes over minute positioning details and is constantly finding ways to be more efficient. This is a major green flag in terms of finding a goaltender that is able to take instruction from a coach, then implement it successfully into their game.

Miller does come with a handful of flaws, though. He likes to sit very low and deep in his stance while using the reverse-VH technique on the post. This works for him right now because of the fact that he is 6-foot-3, but he could run into some trouble as he faces deadlier shooters down the road. He is also clearly a big fan of the pop-up recovery after making a save. It shows good core strength to be able to get up with both legs at the same time, but that move generally leaves you unbalanced upon gaining your feet and could be a sign that too many rebounds are being punched directly back to where the shot came from.

There's a bit of old-school to Miller's game. To go along with the pop-up recoveries, he also isn't afraid to drop into the VH position on the post every once in a while when the situation calls for it. As Miller gets stronger and learns to use his size more effectively, he has the potential to turn into a very smart, adaptable professional goaltender.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



Grade: C



Carsen Musser

AGE 17.326 DATE OF BIRTH May 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'4"	214 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	5	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	28	3.07	.890	0
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	9	4.11	.863	0
U.S. National U17 Team	USDP	1	7.00	.811	0
USA U18	WJC-18	2	0.75	.947	-

SCOUTING REPORT

A product of the USNTDP, Carsen Musser comes with the size and swagger of a top-round NHL draft pick.

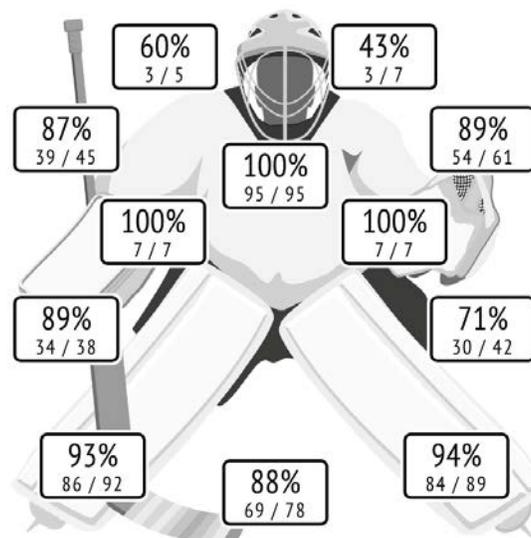
Even though he's still very much in the learning stage of his career, he already uses his frame effectively. He takes a narrow stance on rush chances, which gives him excellent access to his edges. He moves better than you would expect a goaltender of that size to move.

Musser's skating will be an area of focus for improvement as he moves further in his career. He makes big, long c-cuts as he builds backwards momentum – which can lead to delays in his lateral movement. This also applies to his post-integration, as he takes too long while transitioning in and out of reverse-VH. He does display good patience, though, and will rarely be beaten by a fake or delay by the shooter.

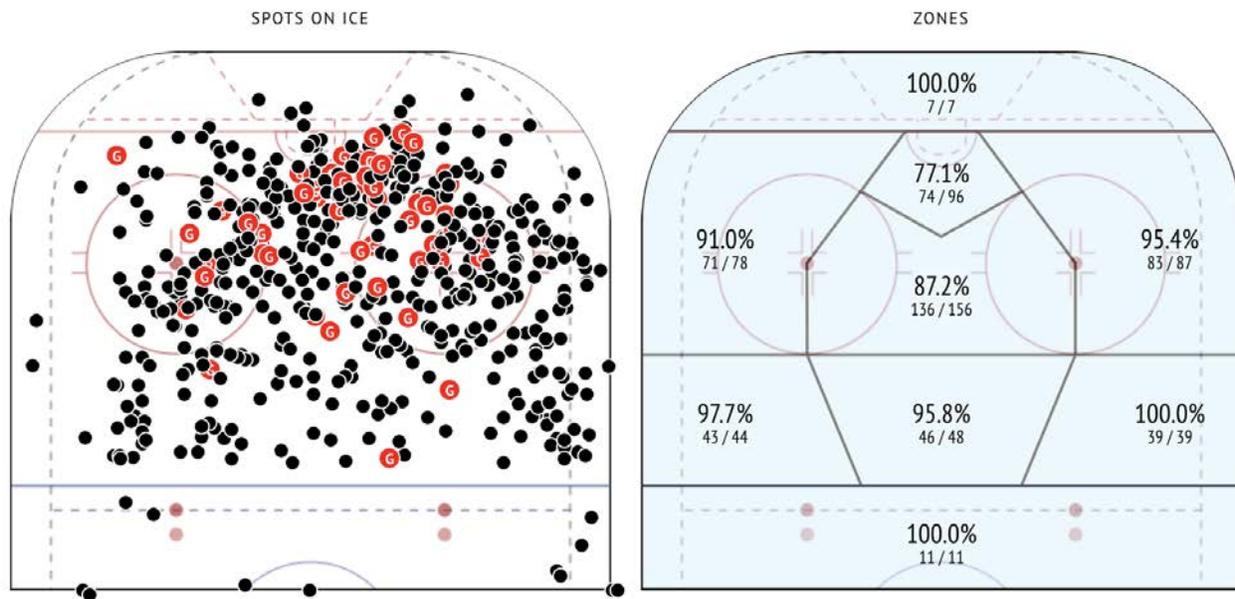
The situational awareness side of his game is another area that will need to see some progression. He sometimes pushes blindly out on low-to-high passing plays rather than having a clear view of the threats in front of the net, and pushing towards them instead. It's not a glaring issue right now, but it's another thing he will have to smooth out as he begins to face more mature shooters.

With the frame that he has, it's not hard to envision Musser as one day being able to put it together as an NHL starter – but he has many areas of his game to improve on before that becomes a reality.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE





Grade: C

Scott Ratzlaff

AGE 17.521 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4.5	4	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	34	2.15	.918	5

SCOUTING REPORT

With a very strong Seattle Thunderbirds team in front of him, Scott Ratzlaff has been one of the harder goaltenders for scouts to get a true read on in recent years.

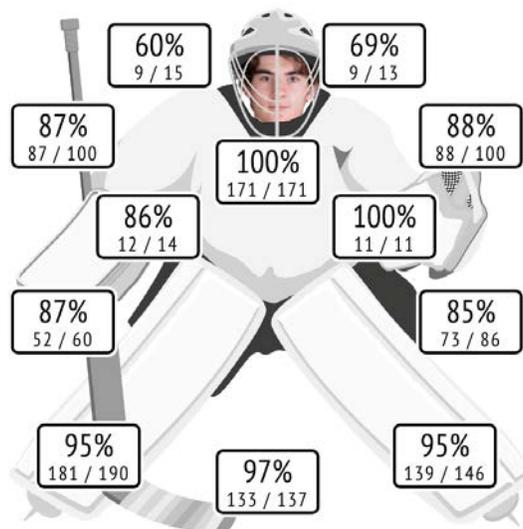
Splitting time with Thomas Milic during the regular season, then not getting an opportunity to play a single minute in the WHL playoffs doesn't help with his exposure. Still, Ratzlaff may have impressed enough scouts to hear his name called at the 2023 NHL Draft.

Ratzlaff can catch shooters by surprise with quickness and a unique approach off the rush. He is very aggressive in terms of the depth that he takes. He remains stoic as the shooter bears down – never showing his hand first. If the puck gets too close, he pounces and makes a move.

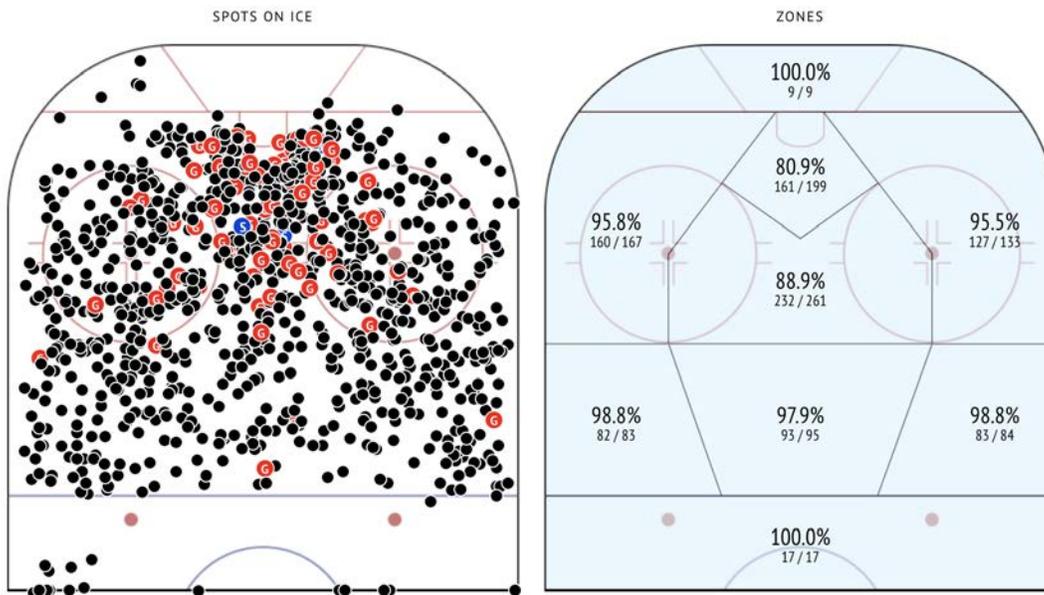
When moving laterally, he is very good at quickly setting his feet and making sure he has zero motion at the time of the release of the shot. He knows exactly how much ground he is capable of covering on his feet, and comes set at the perfect time.

Added to Ratzlaff's mix of skills is his fluid post integration. He routinely gets strong pushes while transitioning out of reverse-VH and doesn't open up many holes while moving, either. Sealing the ice is also not an issue for Ratzlaff, as he displays awesome flexibility on scramble plays, often stretching out with his legs all the way across the crease.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



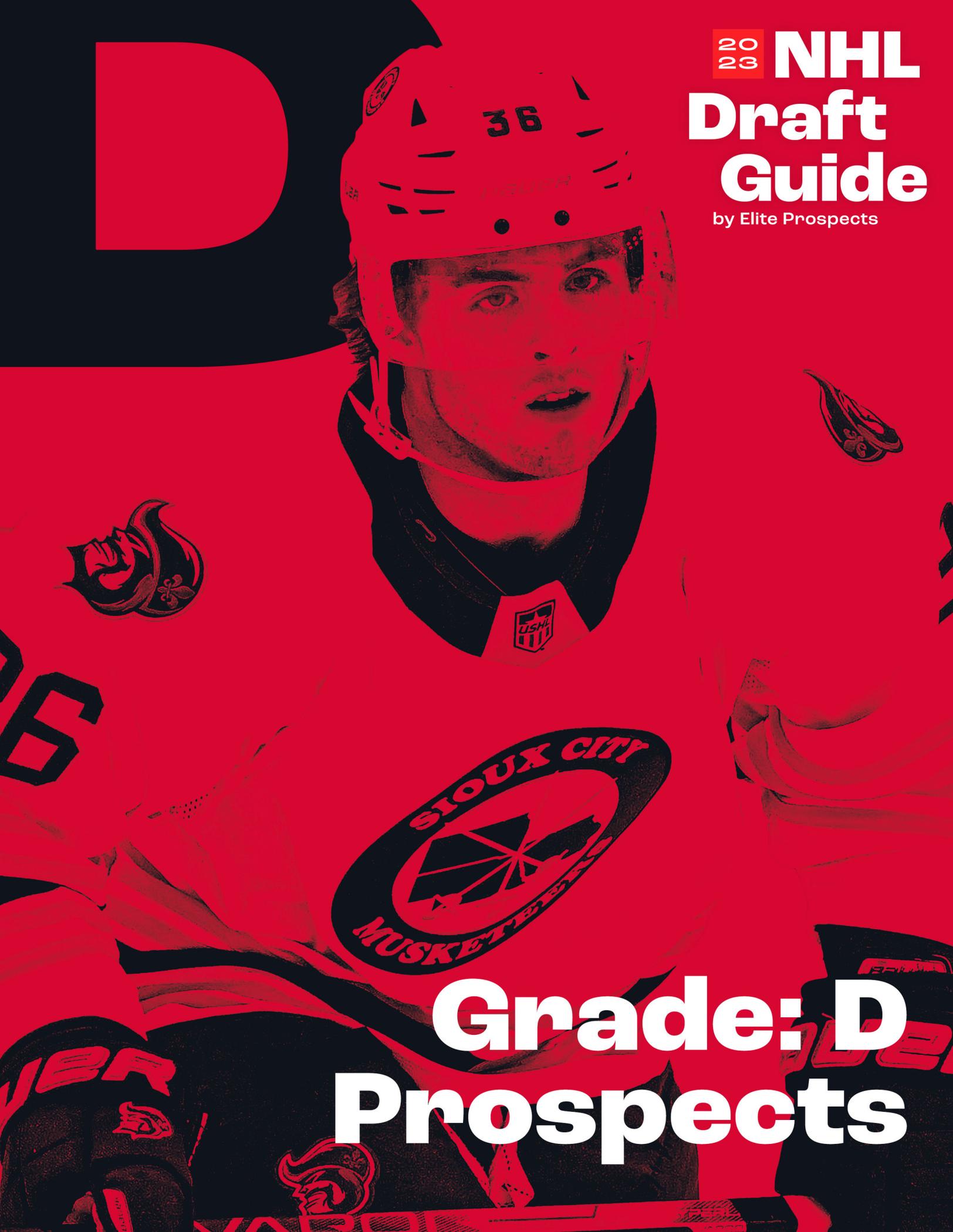
≡ SPOTS ON ICE



20
23

NHL Draft Guide

by Elite Prospects



Grade: D Prospects

Grade: D



Morgan Brady

AGE 17.403 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Spruce Grove Saints	AJHL	44	6	20	26	0.59

SCOUTING REPORT

Morgan Brady's skating form is sound. His knees advance past his toes and his upper body has just the right lean angle over the ice. He can pivot in just one step by opening his hip, conserve his momentum out of turns, and retain a strong balance as he maneuvers, but despite a correct technical form, his stride lacks a bit of explosiveness. It's with his stick work that he makes most of his defensive plays.

There are larger defencemen in this draft than Brady and many with a longer reach, but the defenceman knows how to use his assets to defend in his zone. He engages opponents hard on the boards, pins them there, and separates them from the puck with quick pokechecks.

On the offensive side of the game, Brady plays conservatively. From time to time, if he's given more space, he can spring teammates for breakaways with deep lobs, create breakouts with short passes, and carry the puck down the ice himself, but he's not one to stickhandle or pass his way out of pressure.

At this stage of his career, Brady projects more as a depth piece for an NHL team. To increase his upside, he needs to significantly improve his quickness, stickhandling, and playmaking skills.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

Brady looked mostly like a defensive defenceman in this game, one who uses his reach and skating to defend higher danger areas and make simple passes up ice. He's a distributor, at the point, on breakouts, and in the neutral zone. His footwork is decently smooth at this level, but I'm not sure it's a 5 on our scale. He did try a bunch of fakes at the point, one time, to try and get a puck through to the net, but those feints weren't very effective as they were made in place.

David St-Louis: March 1st, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs Fort McMurray Oil Barons - AJHL

Brady pinned opponents to the wall and showed his more violent side in this one. Flashes of puck protection and puck sealing

on the wall. He attacked down to improve the location of his shot, read the defensive lines to find holes to shoot through, and scanned for pass options. A better offensive performance. I was impressed with his skating, especially his open hips pivot. He can access his outside edge, too, and his crossovers have good form. He doesn't seem naturally explosive, but his posture is good. He has some projectable elements. The hockey sense isn't as good as I previously thought.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs Camrose Kodiaks - AJHL

Some nice short passes from Brady in this game and he also showed his stretch passing ability. He didn't move his feet, however; most of his plays were made at a standstill. He establishes body positioning on the boards. I was surprised by his crossover speed. The skating form is good, overall. His stickwork off the rush also seems like a strength at this level. I see mostly a defensive defenceman.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs Sweden - WJAC

The skating didn't stand out in this game. Brady seems to lack that fast-twitch that would allow him to close his gap with opponents and the puck quickly. The form doesn't seem all that flawed, however. He got the puck stolen from him on retrievals a couple of times; he needs to move the puck quicker. Good stickwork overall. That's a constant at the tournament. He's not elusive on the forecheck.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Canada West vs Canada East - WJAC

Brady can't really evade opponents to make plays and his awareness seems to fail him under forechecking pressure. He gets beat on the wall, on retrievals, and his skill level seems a notch below his competition and teammates. He just needs to make quicker plays. I like his stickwork on the defensive side. He kills plays with his reach and that reach compensates for his footwork at times. Not a lot of offensive potential.

Grade: D



Aiden Celebrini

AGE 17.888 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 26, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'1"

Height

190 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brooks Bandits	AJHL	47	5	16	21	0.45

SCOUTING REPORT

Usually, lower-scoring AJHLers, especially ones who are on the older side of a draft class like the October-born Aiden Celebrini don't project well to the NHL. He might be one exception to the rule though.

While he did play for the powerhouse Brooks Bandits, the coaching staff assigned the power play roles to other defencemen on the team. Celebrini was mostly used as a shutdown defenceman, a penalty killer, and a stabilizing presence at 5-on-5. Those are the roles he could fill at higher levels too, next with Boston University, and eventually, at the professional level if his development goes right. Celebrini has the two main tools of the defensive defenceman – mobility and physicality. He closes down the space of attackers in the neutral zone and engages them quickly in the defensive zone. He's aware. He scans for threats and denies lanes with his stick and defends the net front with his frame.

"He's physical, pinches hard on opponents, defends well in this tournament, and he moves the puck in controlled, clever ways, for the most part: passes into space, quick one-touches, and cross-ice feeds," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in December.

The down performances were rare for Celebrini over the course of the season. Consistent and engaged, he made the same routine passing plays and contributed to the offence of the Bandits when he got the occasion. Right now, Celebrini projects as a No. 6 defenceman, mostly as a shutdown element, but his infrequent backdoor plays and feints at the point give us hope that there is more offensive potential in his game.

LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances at the 2022 World Junior A Challenge



Previewing the 2022 World Junior A Challenge

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

I continue to like Celebrini, but now I'm wondering if that's unreasonable. He doesn't really do anything exceptional, but his defensive footwork is good at this level. He shuts down opponents in transition, doesn't hesitate to engage on them, and seals loose pucks with his body on the boards, allowing teammates to take it. He has some elusiveness and passing ideas, but nothing to write home about offensively in this game.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Brooks Bandits vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Not a very eventful game from Celebrini, but I continue to like his projection as a lower-chance, bottom-pairing NHL defenceman. He showed some offensive flashes in this one. He found teammates on regroup and started give-and-goes and his footwork continues to shine as he defends the rush. He's bouncy and mobile. Not a high-end mover, but still the skating projects as a strength. Maybe he will earn a spot on our board.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Blackfalds Bulldogs vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

Celebrini has some NHL elements, especially defensively. He can close down space and engage opponents on the boards. He treats the puck with care, in general. And he has the skating ability to participate in the offence, to take pucks down the wall, and chain feints and those down-wall attacks. Celebrini lands some nice stretch passes. That's his most reliable offensive play. He's better on regroup, where he has the space to move away from the forecheck than on breakouts or at the offensive blue-line. The hockey sense is probably a 4.5 on our scale, but what's interesting about him is the combo of skating agility and physical skills, and defensive attention. His low numbers in this league are concerning, however. He's a prospect you pick due to his college path, who you give time to develop, and see if he can fill a bottom-line, replacement role in a few years after honing his offensive and defensive skills in college.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs Sweden - WJAC

Celebrini evades, but he doesn't really know what to do after beating the forecheck. He skates up until he meets pressure and then decides on a play. The handling skills don't always follow the feet, but I like that he's trying. He's more of a safer, conservative defenceman usually. I like the physical engagement. He can cut opponents at the hands and steal the puck from them.

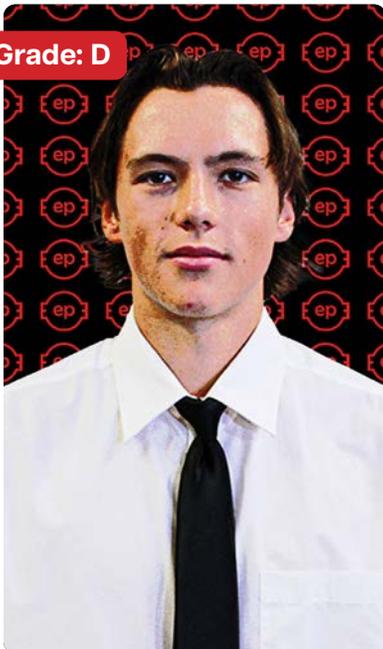
David St-Louis: December 14th, 2022 - Latvia vs Canada West - WJAC

Aiden Celebrini just lacks a bit of skill to be considered a legitimate NHL prospect, but the overall game is worth a long look. He's physical, pinches hard on opponents, defends well in this tournament, and he moves the puck in controlled, clever ways, for the most part: passes into space, quick one-touches, and cross-ice feeds. He can elude forecheckers (one) and come down the blue-line offensively. He has some feints, but they are a bit awkward. If he can continue to improve his tools, he could become a pick. He plays sometimes on the left in this tournament, which can make the play a bit harder.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Canada West vs. United States - WJAC

Every time he was out there, Celebrini made solid plays: difficult passes around two forecheckers, through the middle of the ice, after having evaded them with a giant, separating lateral step; a closed rush defence with great posture and early denial of the blue-line; stretch passes to teammates across the ice; a physical in-zone presence...Surely there were mistakes, but I didn't see them, I didn't register more than a few shifts, however. I need to watch more. The tools look potentially NHL-caliber.

Grade: D



Hudson Malinoski

AGE 18.326 DATE OF BIRTH May 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'1"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brooks Bandits	AJHL	44	16	53	69	1.57

SCOUTING REPORT

NHL teams are always on the hunt for late-bloomers who seem to be on a clear upward curve in their development. Hudson Malinoski fits that profile.

This was only his second year playing top-level hockey. He made the jump from the SAAHL AA circuit to AAA two seasons ago and then joined the Brooks Bandits of the AJHL in his draft year. Malinoski didn't need time to adapt his play to the league; he immediately jumped into the team's top-six and started scoring at a high clip.

The Bandits forward showed a diverse skill set in the AJHL. He found teammates in the offensive zone with precise passes, dangled around sticks, and forechecked with intensity. Although he accumulated more assists than goals this season, it's really the forward's shot that stood out to our team. Capable of both delaying his release and speeding it up depending on his space and the lanes available to him, Malinoski was a consistent scoring threat on the power play. He froze defenders with fakes and then moved around them to fire. He also blended stickhandling moves into his firing motion.

"There are some power forward elements in his game, too. Constant engagement in all three zones and a decently effective off-puck presence offensively," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an April report.

To become more than an NCAA scorer and earn a role in the professional game, he will have to add an extra layer of skill to his game, improve the speed of his reads in transition, and work on his uneven skating stride.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

I only saw a hard worker in this game, someone who hunts pucks on the forecheck and backcheck, creates turnovers and then feeds the puck to his playmaking teammates. There are some power forward elements in his game, too. Constant engagement in all three zones and a decently effective off-puck presence offensively, too. He got a backdoor scoring chance.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Brooks Bandits vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Numerous great flashes from Malinoski in this game. He forechecked hard, as usual, but also connected passing plays and showed deceptive elements in his release. He changed the timing, delayed the shot to manipulate the goalie and faked it to freeze defenders and move around them in order to get a better look at the net. He consistently attacked space, too. The skating looked like an average grade in this one.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Blackfalds Bulldogs vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

I'm not sure about Malinoski's game-reading ability. He keeps the puck a little too long and only seems to perceive the ice one variable at a time. He's not that adaptable in his choices of play. He's skilled, but the sense might be more of a below-average mark. He also skates and handles mostly in one block. His uneven strides affect his handling and makes him less fluid overall in his moves. He can distribute the puck well and carry it across zones at this level, however.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Canada West vs Canada East - WJAC

Malinoski has some skills, but I'm not sure they are supported by hockey sense. His moves feel a bit scripted. He has some power forward elements, but he's better in open ice, when he has space to dangle and where he can use his shot. He scored on a set play on the powerplay, designed to free his one-timer. He took it in stride.



Grade: D

Lee Parks

AGE 17.915 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 16, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vernon Vipers	BCHL	50	23	25	48	0.96

SCOUTING REPORT

Lee Parks came out of nowhere and lept onto our radar with a couple of standout showings at the BCHL Showcase in Chilliwack back in October.

Joining the Vernon Vipers after a strong draft-minus-one season with Salisbury School, Parks found immediate success, leading his BCHL team in scoring with 48 points, good for fourth-most in the league among first-time draft-eligible skaters. What's immediately striking about the right-shot forward's game is how pro-ready it is from a habits and tools perspective.

"A tenacious forechecker whose motor is just higher than most on the ice, he won retrieval pucks so easily," Crossover scout Daniel Gee noted in an October game report. "Sharp cuts leading to swoop-ins and proactive stick work overwhelmed the Rivermen defenders, who frankly struggled in small space." His forechecking is so advanced, and full of pace, that he rarely loses battles on the boards.

With compelling moments on-puck, Parks has some considerable north-to-south skill. He builds speed through his crossovers, adjusts his rush patterns to the inside, and he demonstrates some slick small-area handles, attacking the triangle of defenders. He occasionally flashes delay game elements but struggles to create with a lack of support around him. His hands are above average, able to take even the worst passes in motion.

Parks' defensive value and off-puck game round out his projection. Always pushing close pressure, he gets under sticks, checks pucks away, and backchecks like his feet are on fire. He moves proactively to jump and clog shooting lanes born out of early scanning and processing.

Off-puck, Parks' game is all about support and pressure. A dedicated lane filler, Parks' processing of the developing play allows for well-timed activations and his catch-and-release ability made him a dangerous threat off the pass this season.

"In the first, he floated into the hash marks as a teammate lapped the net, activating into the open lane, and blending a catch-and-release shot right past the goaltender's ear. Not a slouch on the puck either," Gee wrote in a March report.

A Umass-Lowell commit, Parks should be a point producer at the NCAA level – he's too smart and ahead of the curve not to be. His NHL projection is that of a bottom-six forward if things break right, but he could become a middle-six contributor if he can translate properly.

There's some risk that the advantages he leveraged in the BCHL just won't be there in a faster, more skilled league, but he's shown adaptation before, as early as this previous season when Parks made the jump from Prep School right into BCHL success.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances from the 2022 BCHL Showcase

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 4th, 2023 - Vernon Vipers vs. West Kelowna Warriors - BCHL

Parks was the best Viper by a large margin in this viewing, pushing pace, and continued to show he blends above-average tools to create advantages at the BCHL level. A constant disruptor off-puck, Parks pressure pushing, stick work, and ability to get under the hands of defenders paid instant dividends. On his first shift of the game after breaking up the ice on the backcheck he stripped a defender on the blue line, burned up the ice on the right flank, cut inward, and placed a puck just under the glove. He created separation through his crossover use, and blended his edges to adjust inside, all coming after a failed delay and pass sequence shortly before. Parks' transition game was fairly interesting the rest of the way. On one second-period rush, he beat a defender with an inside-outside, triangle-based handle, and split two defenders, but faced too much pressure without supporting elements to pass out of the attention he garnered. His hands are clearly above-average; regularly catches pucks behind his body and even flashes protection habits.

Like past viewings, Parks' off-puck game was nuanced and impactful. Constantly open in pass seams, often backdoor, on the weak side, or in the bumper. In the second he drifted into the middle of the slot, fought through physical pressure and swept a weak shot on net. To find that puck was a feat in itself, and to proactively move into a high-danger area is the reason he scored his second. He plays with so much pace that he is usually first on retrievals -- Parks absolutely explodes from a stop to get in on the boards with position. On one sequence, after Parks tried a jam play in the crease, he corralled another rebound and instantly entered into a one-time shot in the slot -- the execution speed makes him so powerful at this level. He flashes more skill in open ice. On a first-period powerplay, he used eye-line manipulation to fake a pass inside, slipping the puck downhill to the goalline. He can be so crafty at times, handling pucks with speed, passing off and activating into open space to work give-and-go attacks.

Parks is a high-activity rate player on his own end. He pushes a lot of pressure on the blueline, but systematic issues caused a lot of hemmed-in sequences. In the first he even showed some proactive processing, shifting over to block a shot off the left point. He deserves a spot on our final list -- near the end. More blending of habits and tools than some of the other prospects in low-leverage leagues. His projection is bottom six in the NHL --expect him to feast in the NCAA in the coming years.

Daniel Gee: March 10th, 2023 - Vernon Vipers vs Salmon Arm Silverbacks - BCHL

Well, Parks is still an interesting player. A supremely dangerous off-puck threat, Parks pass-supporting habits are already fairly developed. In the first, he floated into the hash marks as a teammate lapped the net, activating into the open lane, and blending a catch-and-release shot right past the goaltender's ear. Not a slouch on the puck either. Parks showed some considerable passing skill north-to-south. On one first-period sequence, he upped his pace on a far-board entry, tuned the defender with his

outside speed, and executed a perfect hook pass to a supporting crease driver -- somehow not converted. Some advanced habits like inside-oriented rush patterns. Parks had multiple on-puck entries where he attacked with a significant amount of pace. On one sequence he built speed through his crossover use, weaved and cut into the middle of the ice, tapping the puck back to a trailer. He doesn't get the pass support one would get at higher levels. For instance, on a second-period foray, he cut inside again but had no pass options so he defaulted into a triangle-located deke that was promptly knocked away. Shows signs of processing plays into the future -- constantly upping his pace to get onto retrievals first.

Mostly a forechecker in sustained pressure. On one shift in the first, he pressured the puck carrier on the near boards, interfering enough with a man to steal the puck on the left-hand circle. Parks fed a teammate for an assist. Same catch-and-release ability flashes in sustained pressure. Too many one-and-done puck touches in the second and third -- just not enough possession or creation -- it's like the nuance that he has in transition just dissipates. Regardless, he is probably a fringe D grade for our board. He'll be a useful pro, but the projection is clearly bottom-six.

Daniel Gee: October 20th, 2022 - Vernon Vipers vs Langley Rivermen - BCHL

We didn't see an overwhelming dominant effort from Parks, but he was clearly the Vipers' best player in this game against Langley. A tenacious forechecker whose motor is just higher than most on the ice, he won retrieval pucks so easily. Sharp cuts leading to swoop-ins and proactive stick work overwhelmed the Rivermen defenders, who frankly struggled in small space. Pro habits define a lot of Parks' game. He had a sequence in the second where he handled a puck low-to-high, cutting hard through the dotted lines and into the slot. Dragging attention he executed a touch pass to the left-hand circle leading to an uncontested and dangerous shot. His play in sustained pressure was frankly eye-popping. On a 4-on-4 shift he dominated possession; driving on the left wing he quickly popped a shot on his forehand. Parks then crashed the end-boards and stole the puck three separate times, one attempt leading to a centering pass and a high-danger in the slot. An advanced defender who scans and moves proactively, Parks put up some great penalty-killing shifts. In the first he read a pass into the slot, shifted, blocked the shot, and cleared the pick. Very projectable habits. His tools in general are not super impressive; he's an above average skater and thinker, but his hands and shot lag behind -- looks like a player who could make the bottom of our board. Will carve up NCAA if that's the route he takes.

Daniel Gee: October 19th, 2022 - Alberni Valley Bulldogs vs Vernon Vipers - BCHL

Parks dropped three primary points in this game, absolutely dominating across most of his shifts. Already playing at an NHL pace and skating at an above-average level, perhaps he plays too fast for this level. He started the game with an amazing give-and-go assist. After Tremblay drew both defenders on the rush, Parks jumped into a blind spot, exploited the reactivity of the defenders after the return pass, and teed up his line mate with an easy goal. He was flexing end-to-end carries, unlocked top-arm handles, and even incorporated stop-ups. Not sure if there is actually a delay game here.

Where Parks did most of his damage was in sustained pressure. He is a buzz-saw of momentum, which helps win an absurd amount of pucks on the perimeter. In a second period power play he jumped on a retrieval, executed a cutback to shake a defender, and passed off the puck. He then walked down the slot, took the return pass and sniped a shot glove side. Later in the second, he recognized Tremblay was going to throw a low-placed shot on net; Parks activated backdoor, corralled a slightly tipped rebound and scored on the empty net. He even fed the bumper on another power play that resulted in a primary assist. Parks is pretty overwhelming when he attacks downhill too -- he places shots for rebounds. An extremely fun player who dominated the Bulldog competition at every turn. Could be a pick for our board if this wasn't a one-off.

J.D. Burke: October 19th, 2022 - Alberni Valley Bulldogs vs. Vernon Vipers - BCHL

Parks put in without a doubt the single best performance of the BCHL Showcase to that point in the proceedings with his five points (two goals, three assists) in the Vipers win over the Bulldogs. Parks has average-to-above average tools across the board and plays an inside-driven, between-checks style of hockey that's sure to translate well to the NCAA next season. The assist on Tremblay's goal was just a perfectly placed pass into space to set up the goal on a give-and-go rush play. Then he picked up a goal of his own only a few short shifts later in the triggerman's role. Showed some skill and pace as a passer on the power play, where he collected an assist with a one-touch pass of a bouncing puck into the slot for the tally. Could very well be a C-grade prospect for us by the time this season is over.

Grade: D



Kevin Bicker

AGE 17.627 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Jungadler Mannheim U20	DNL U20	20	10	11	21	1.05
Adler Mannheim	DEL	1	0	0	0	0.00
Germany U18	WJC-18	6	1	1	2	0.33
Germany U18 (all)	International-Jr	5	3	2	5	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

It's a down year for Germany at the NHL Draft, but Kevin Bicker has a chance to be their brightest star of the year. He's the prospect who most impressed at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup and again at the U18s to close out the year.

Above all, what we appreciate in his game is his motor and his many projectable defensive habits.

"He plays fast, but doesn't overextend," wrote Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown in an August report. "He applies intense pressure, but only after eliminating the puck carrier's options. Comes across the hips to force dump-ins or get the steal."

While his skating mechanics will need to improve – his lack of ankle flexion makes his torso lean over the ice – Bicker still managed to create a few dangerous offensive looks for Germany with his playmaking touch. Deceptive and precise, his passes bypassed defenders and connected with teammates in the slot.

At this juncture, due to his overall below-average skill level, we don't consider Bicker an NHL candidate, but that status could change over the next years as he starts playing in the DEL. His strong off-puck habits and blooming playmaking game could make him a useful forward in the league as soon as next year.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

Bicker has some skills. Are they enough to make him an NHL prospect? I don't know. He doesn't have the necessary awareness of space or pace in his game at the moment. He's just not used to the forechecking and defensive pressure at this tournament. But give him a second of time and he does find open teammates. He skates with relatively good posture, is involved defensively, can make plays around opponents, and is generally aware.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - The Nations Tournament

An interesting game from Bicker. He's limited mechanically in that he lacks ankle flexion in his skating and handles only at his hip, but he makes the most of his mechanics. He plays with a lot of energy, goes to the net, dives in battles and takes sticks away. He has some playmaking chops. He made some deceptive passes in this one and cross-ice feeds, too. He scored by dangling the goalie one-on-one, preparing his move with a feint. I doubt he's an NHL prospect, but he could be an important player for this team at the U-18.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Bicker's been Germany's best skater through their first three games, and he finally found the scoresheet with a goal of his own in this one, fighting through traffic to corral a rebound and snap it home. That was a pretty good snapshot into Bicker's game. The dude just works his ass off on every shift, no matter the score, and always seems to find his way to the puck. You couple that work rate with Bicker's 6-foot-1 frame, and you get some pretty thunderous hits from time to time, too. I'm not sure his skill level rates as high-end by any stretch of the imagination, but Bicker made a few interesting plays in this one, including an area pass and the odd handling move to try and get inside. I'm not sure I've seen enough to label him as a potential draft pick yet, but he's piqued my curiosity.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Bicker's a checker. I respect his game. He plays fast, but doesn't overextend. He applies intense pressure, but only after eliminating the puck carrier's options. Comes across the hips to force dump ins or get the steal. Scored by finishing his route and knocking the puck across the goalie – tricky play at speed. Most of his plays come from second efforts and energy. Not sure I saw NHL skill in this game, but he's a worker, for sure.



Roman Kukumberg

AGE 17.488 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Slovan Bratislava U18	Slovakia U18	3	1	2	3	1.00
HC Slovan Bratislava U20	Slovakia U20	1	0	0	0	0.00
HC Slovan Bratislava	Slovakia	18	0	1	1	0.06
HC Modre Kridla Slovan	Slovakia2	33	5	6	11	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Roman Kukumberg's much more of a defensive player than an offensive one at this stage in his development. This might be the result of playing low in the first two tiers of Slovak professional hockey.

Shifts were hard to come by and puck touches few in those settings, but that didn't prevent him from chipping in to his team's success with his forechecking. Kukumberg pressed the initiative with his above-average, explosive skating stride. He pressures the opposition constantly, getting on defencemen's heels and tracking down opponents in the neutral zone. And he's every bit as energetic and engaged in the defensive zone.

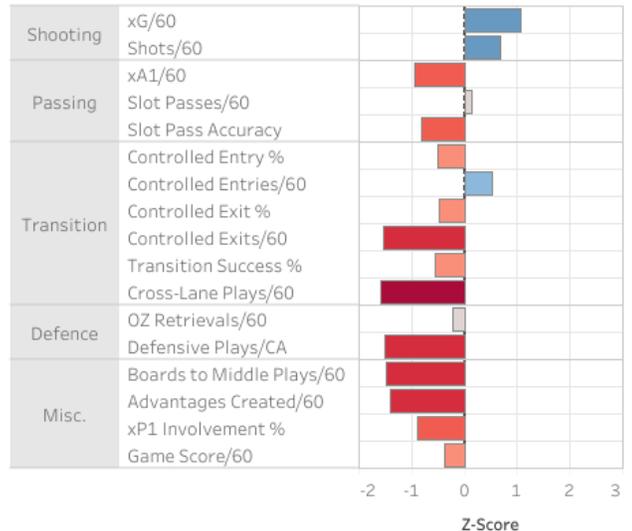
We saw flashes of offensive skills from him against his age group, when, for example, he would cut across the offensive blue line to drop the puck to trailing teammates or cut inside the slot to fire on the net. He plays at a consistently high pace. He receives passes in motion, moves the puck quickly to teammates, and drives ahead to support the next play.

"Displayed some pretty solid habits, like bumping defenders before receptions to establish contact, then spinning away from pressure. The defensive projection seems solid, too." Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen wrote in a March report.

Some doubts about Kumumberg's overall playmaking and scoring ability kept him from our board, but we could see a team selecting him in the later rounds of the draft. His checking game and pace of play will always give him a leg up on his competition for a roster spot. If he gets more minutes and puck touches, his offensive feel could improve. This would make him a better NHL candidate.

Roman Kukumberg

F | HC Slovan Bratislava | Slovakia | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 113.6
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I would describe myself as a two-way forward. This is the first time I'm playing as a centre, so new experiences for me." – Roman Kukumberg, April 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Cam Robinson: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18 Worlds

Kukumberg put an exclamation mark on his tournament resume with this performance. It wasn't some glorious offensive outing, but he was clearly a heartbeat for the team. He was a bundle of energy. The forechecking was driven by his motor and aggressiveness. He was reading plays on the back check and disrupting the US's transition game. Offensively, he was creating with his feet and pace, but moving through space, receiving in-flight and keeping control, even when there were limited options, choosing to maintain possession with a curl back or going wide and attacking the slot area. He was working very hard.

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. USA - U18s

I thought Kukumberg was one of if not the most consistently effective forwards on Slovakia in this hockey game. The motor ran exceptionally high. Kukumberg was forechecking hard, tracking well, and picking up opponents off-puck in the defensive zone. Just a great support game at both ends of the ice. I'm not sure if the skating projects as above average, but the skating habits are a clear plus – taking pucks in motion, skating through passes, etc. Showed some off-puck cunning on one sequence too, sneaking open on the weak side, getting a pass, dangling past a defender, and then taking it to the goal. I'm not sure if this is a player for our board, but I respect the way he plays.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Kukumberg distinguishes himself mostly with his defence at the tournament. That, and his puck management. He's always pursuing the puck, backtracking hard to try and cut plays, and he makes smart passes overall. He's elusive in the offensive zone and he can turn puck steals into offence. I don't think he's a pick at this stage. I prefer Pekarčík's potential, but Kukumberg remains interesting.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

Roman Kukumberg didn't show a lot in this game. He barely got the puck and still spent most of time defending, despite the weaker competition. When he got the puck, he didn't see the best play he could make. He can protect the puck in flight and is reasonably shifty, but I'm not sure we are looking at a future NHLer.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - U18s

An interesting game from Roman Kukumberg, who seems to play with a lot of pace. He attacked down the wing, outskated a defender, and scored. He pressured opponents well on the penalty kill, and even showed passing skills on an offensive zone entry. He broke in, cut laterally, dragging the defender down, and passed between his legs to his teammate. He's a prospect to keep an eye on.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Slovakia vs Sweden - U18s

Kukumberg is a player to watch at this tournament. He barely got the puck in this game, but when he did, he showed that he can make plays at pace, go around defenders, and link with teammates. He was pretty engaged defensively, too. His stick denied lanes and he constantly repositioned.

Lassi Alanen: March 26th, 2023 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HK Dukla INGEMA Michalovce - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg has some physical skills, which combined with the work rate and 5/5.5 grade skating ability make him a pretty formidable force on the forecheck. Displayed some pretty solid habits, like bumping defenders before receptions to establish contact, then spinning away from pressure. The defensive projection seems solid, too. Got a high-danger backhand look early after winning body positioning in the net-front. Just not sold on the skill level, even if there is the occasional solid flash.

Lassi Alanen: March 22nd, 2023 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HK Dukla INGEMA Michalovce - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg finally found the back of the net at the professional level. His teammate intercepted a pass behind the net, the puck bounced to the net-front and Kukumberg was in prime position to score on his second attempt. He actually had some pretty decent plays throughout the game and also did a fine job at driving the play in transition. Flashes of creativity, like using the back of the goal as a passing wall to himself. Still not quite sure about the sense projection. Tends to put himself in disadvantageous positions off the rush, doesn't really display a delay game.

Lassi Alanen: March 21st, 2023 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HK Dukla INGEMA Michalovce - Tipos Extraliga

I'm still not quite there with Kukumberg being a legitimate pick. There are moments where he looks like one, but those moments are not consistent enough, at least currently. Still brings a lot of energy and a strong presence on both forecheck and backcheck. He has the mechanical skating base, too. Sense and skill are both questionable, though. He flashes the occasional playmaking idea, but often lacks in both vision and execution. Could be pushing towards the inside more aggressively. Some relatively projectable elements, but not sure if that's enough.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HKM Zvolen - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg has some of the same qualities with the other Slovakian playing at this level, Juraj Pekarcik. They both have a high work rate and pretty admirable motors, retrieving loose pucks and contributing on the forecheck. Pekarcik might be the more explosive athlete, but Kukumberg's skating stride is clearly better and the overall skating grade likely a bit higher. He did also flash more playmaking skill than he's done in the past, even flashing hints of manipulation off the rush (taking a route that opened space in the middle for a passing lane and high-danger chance). Still mishandling the puck at times on breakouts. Doesn't seem to have that much raw skill, more of an energy winger projection. Might be a pick, but I want to see more games like this first.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HC MV Transport Presov - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg's best play came in the form of gaining the zone via the outside, establishing cycle, then making a really nice give-and-go play with a teammate to get the puck back on the inside for a quality scoring chance. These plays aren't appearing frequently, but they're interesting flashes. Kukumberg competes rather well, goes after loose pucks and gets to the net-front, but he's quite not quick or physically strong or skilled enough to create turnovers consistently. He did give a solid effort defensively, though. Haven't seen any high-level playmaking or handling ideas from him so far.

Lassi Alanen: December 6th, 2022 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HK Nitra - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg set up a nice goal off the rush, receiving the puck on the inside and continuing it with a backhand pass to the net-front for a finish. Otherwise, he was pretty invisible during most of his shifts, playing pretty standard dump-and-chase hockey, with the puck not spending any extra seconds on his blade. Hard to judge the overall package, we'll see whether he gets more ice time in the future. At least the skating looks like a solid grade, probably at least an average one.

Lassi Alanen: December 4th, 2022 - HC Slovan Bratislava vs. HK Poprad - Tipos Extraliga

Kukumberg only played just over five minutes in this one, making his best plays of the game in the first few shifts. Set up a rush chance with a nice reception turned into a pass into space on top of the OZ blue line. Skating looked fine, pushed the pace off puck and forechecked effectively. A couple of mishandlings in transition resulting in turnovers, which is to be expected when you play so little.

Grade: D



Arttu Alasiurua

AGE 17.608 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

5'11"
Height

161 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4
Skating

5
Shooting

5.5
Passing

5.5
Puckhandling

5
Hockey Sense

4
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	2	0	3	3	1.50
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	45	16	14	30	0.67
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	1	2	3	0.60
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	22	8	7	15	0.68

SCOUTING REPORT

Arttu Alasiurua definitely has some qualities worthy of a draft pick. No doubt about that. Despite not getting a lot of help from his linemates, he managed to score at a decent rate during his second season at the U20 level and was a consistent top-nine feature with the national team.

Alasiurua's high-end flashes often came in the form of playmaking. He made some of the better one-touch and spin passes of the season, creating high-quality looks for his linemates often from out of nowhere. He was particularly effective at turning loose puck retrievals and forechecking steals into offence, mostly as a distributor.

Combine those with his handling skill and an underrated release, and you have yourself a pretty compelling package. The skating is a big limiting factor, though, easily grading as below-average on our scale. He also tended to fade into the background too often, which puts his play-driving capabilities into question. He does work reasonably hard, though, and clearly puts a fair bit of thought into his defensive play.

The highs with Alasiurua were high enough for him to warrant getting serious draft consideration in the later rounds, even if he wasn't able to cap off the season like he would've wanted to at the U18s.

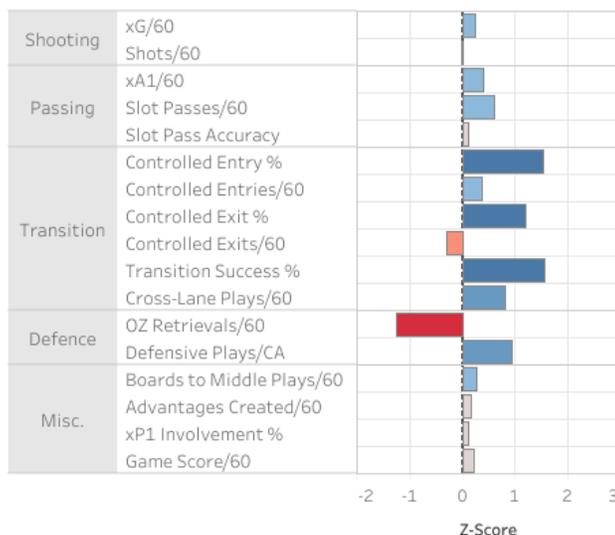
At the very least, he should have a reasonable path to becoming an impactful pro in Finland, especially if the skating takes a step or two. Alasiurua probably projects as a winger rather than a centre at the next level.

Arttu Alasiurua

F | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 166.5

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's Notebook: Four data-driven observations from the U20 SM-sarja

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Alasiurua didn't have the best overall tournament when you account for his role. Until this game, he played exclusively on the top line with Halttunen and Helenius, but was replaced with Kuusla in the middle of the game. He just wasn't quite able to click. It's not that ideas were bad, they were actually solid most of the time. The execution just wasn't quite there and he was turning the puck over too much. Most of his passing plays towards the middle missed by an inch or he wasn't able to handle the puck in transition. The skating is also a hurdle that prevents him from being as effective off-puck as he would like to be. There were a few highlights where the skill level flashed, but overall, this tournament didn't do anything to raise his draft stock.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Remember when I wrote that Alasiurua tends to go long stretches without that much involvement (despite a good work rate), but when he pops, he really pops. Redirected a shot from near the point for a goal, and set up a couple of high-quality looks with his perimeter playmaking game, which remains his biggest strength in my eyes. Based on the highlights, his involvement and impact should be higher than it actually often ends up being. Not sure if it's because of the linemates or mostly because he's often in bad positions to receive the puck in transition. The skating remains a below-average projection, haven't really progressed during the season in that area. The NHL projection is difficult, though I'd be more optimistic if the skating could get a grade higher. I just don't think the sense is high-end enough with his current footspeed and other skating-related limitations, even if the flashes of individual skill and playmaking are impressive.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Alasiurua tends to have these games where he's not getting many touches for long periods of time and is on the outside, but then has some of the better single plays in the game. This was true here. He scored with a nice release from a partial rebound when he recognized empty space on the short side and was able to shoot quickly enough and accurately enough that the goalie didn't have time to relocate. Later on he made a fantastic two-touch spin pass from the end boards to the slot to a moving target - really difficult pass to execute and he did it flawlessly to set up a scoring chance. These kind of fast-paced passes from below the goal line are Alasiurua's specialty. Still, he wasn't consistently driving play. These were solid passes in transition and brought some value in transition defence, but as mentioned earlier, his touches were limited. The skating also hurts how quickly he's able to adjust his positioning to make himself available as a passing target.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

For a game without any points, Alasiurua did have his fair share of chances to convert. Most of them came off individual rush sequences, once beating defender to the outside with a couple of crossovers, then driving back to the middle for a backhand

opportunity. I also respected the hustle defensively on multiple backchecking sequences, and the work rate also remained high the other way. He does have to maintain a high pace to compensate for the skating stride, and even then the problems with the posture do affect his effectiveness. The playmaking inefficiency was also an issue here; he was throwing a lot of blind passes towards the slot, failing to connect and causing unnecessary turnovers.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Not the most spectacular Alasiurua viewing, pretty standard in fact, maybe with a little less playmaking success than previously. He tried the usual behind-the-net slot passes or delaying in transition before passing, but wasn't really able to connect with them. The skating hurts his leverage quite a bit, not allowing him to separate enough to get the passing lane open. That means he relies more on his pure puck skills and smarts, and TPS was able to shut him down pretty well overall.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty standard Alasiurua viewing. The playmaking skill really shows in flashes. Quick adaptations to changing situations, clever drop passes or hand-offs, slips under defenders' sticks and through pressure, strong vision on plays immediately following retrievals due to good scanning habits and skill. The skating stance remains a clear weakness, limiting his speed and mobility. You'd think he's at least a few inches taller than he actually is just because he skates so upright.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Kärpät vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Alasiurua isn't dominating games, but he flashed some higher level skills at least a few times per game. Like in this one, where he combined an offensive zone retrieval into establishing body positioning into slipping the puck to the slot for a scoring chance. Takes pucks in-motion, has some physical skills and the handling and playmaking are intriguing, even if not high-end due to the frequency. The shot is also something that the team plays around; he was the half-wall guy they were trying to pass to when Kärpät was looking for a goal with the goalie being pulled. If he'd improve his skating mechanics, he'd probably make the board. We'll see.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Alasiurua scored the game-tying goal late in the third with a kind of a lucky slap shot that didn't release properly but ended up surprising the goalie. Alasiurua's strengths were visible during multiple sequences. The best play came by way of carrying the puck out of the DZ, dumping it in, hustling for a retrieval and immediately one-touching the puck to an open man in the net-front – a good display of his vision for these kind of passing plays. The offensive tools are pretty good all-around, aside from the skating, which he gets away with at this level but will inhibit him in the future. Probably not a pick, but I have more respect for his game than many of his peers.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Alasiurua scored a beauty to start the game, beating the defender inside with his hands and perfectly placing the puck via five hole from his backhand. That's a play that probably won't work at the next level - there wasn't much of a setup and defender just baited for no reason - but it was great nonetheless. Alasiurua is skilled, no doubt about it. He's easily an above-average handler for the U20 league and shows a fair bit of creativity with his passing. The skating remains a big weak point: very high and hunched over stance, tilts at the hips, lacks ankle flexion. It's pretty hard to justify ranking a player with his skating mechanics.

Lassi Alanen: September 30th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

A two-goal showing from Alasiurua here, hammering in a rebound from the net-front and later scoring with a beautiful snipe from the half wall on the power play. Alasiurua has quite a bit of creativity with rushes, using a lot of drop passes to create space and threatening passes to open up lanes for himself to skate at. Skill level is pretty good. The question really is whether it's high enough to justify a pick with his obvious skating limitations.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Alasiurua's tournament was a bit inconsistent, but he showed a fair bit in this game. He consistently took pucks off the boards and stepped inside. Used slip passes, body positioning, and handling skill. After stepping inside once, he look cross-crease for what could've been a goal. In another sequence, he missed the pass but still fired off a chance. Scored by running the net and shooting between the defender's legs, stick on the ice the entire time. He's a slick player, but the execution was lacking.

Lassi Alanen: February 11th, 2022 - TPS vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Very forgettable performance from Alasiurua who was playing on the wing in this one (which he has done for the majority of my viewings in the U20 league this season). He was fumbling the puck a lot in transition, not displaying the usual handling skill I've seen from him. Offensively, he was mostly neutralized, too, not being able to get to the scoring areas with the puck. Skating is going to be a big issue regarding his projection unless there's going to be big changes. High hips, very limited ankle flexion, very hunched over posture. Compensates for it by hustling a lot, evident in some OZ retrievals, but I does limit his effectiveness both ways.

Lassi Alanen: September 19th, 2021 - Kärpät vs. JYP - U18 SM-sarja

Alasiurua was centering Kärpät's top line in their U18 league win over JYP, adding a goal and an assist. He was probably the most impressive player on the ice. I liked how he was looking to push pace all the time. His hips are quite high and his posture is very hunched over, but his top speed was good for this level of play and as said, he kept his feet in motion all the time. He was making himself a passing option in the middle. I liked his passing plays. He made a couple of intelligent little feeds and did a pretty decent job at running the power play from the left half wall. Notable defensive hustle in one occasion.

Lassi Alanen: August 13th, 2021 - Sport vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja (pre-season)

Alasiurua centered Kärpät's first line and played on the second power play unit. It was probably his first game ever at this level after playing the majority of last season with the U16 team, and he did quite well. Alasiurua's stride form is a work in progress, but his speed was overall fine for this level. His back angle was really hunched over and his hips were very high. Alasiurua's hands were probably the best part of his game. He was able to score a beauty from a breakaway, completely deking the goalie with a nice move. He was able to beat defenders off the rush with his hands and handle in tight, but he also kept his feet moving for the most part. Physically he looked pretty ready for this level of play. Created a high-danger scoring chance off the rush with a nice passing play. Overall, I was rather impressed with Alasiurua's play and I wouldn't be surprised if he skipped the U18 level and played with the U20 team for the majority of the upcoming season.



Grade: D

Emil Järventie

AGE 17.449 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ilves U18	U18 SM-sarja	2	3	1	4	2.00
Ilves U20	U20 SM-sarja	21	8	11	19	0.90
SaiPa	Liiga	15	1	0	1	0.07
KOOVEE	Mestis	19	4	3	7	0.37
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	3	3	6	1.20

SCOUTING REPORT

There's no doubting Emil Järventie's talent. After all, he was already scoring at a respectable rate in the Finnish U20 league in his draft-minus-two season.

This wasn't an easy season for him, though, bouncing between different levels, playing at least 15 games in three different leagues. With Ilves' U20 squad not making it to the upper stage, Järventie played a bit in Mestis, then leaving for a two-month loan stint with SaiPa's league-worst Liiga team before returning back to Mestis and capping off the season with the U18s.

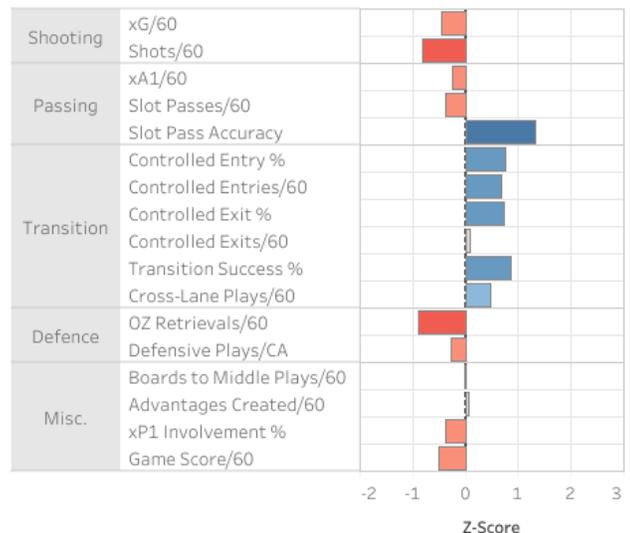
The things that have helped Järventie to score at a high rate in lower levels and internationally are still core parts of his game. He's relatively quick, anticipates openings off the rush and has a mix of handling, shooting, and even some playmaking skills. Neither of them rate particularly highly projection-wise, but the lack of tools isn't also necessarily a problem.

The issues with Järventie's projection come down to a few key things. Currently, his offence revolves around the rush, particularly odd-man situations. In-zone, he's not that big of a threat. Off-puck, he finds pockets of space off the rush but doesn't display the same capabilities during longer cycles. He's also a rather individualistic creator, often looking to beat defenders 1-on-1 with his hands. His physicality projection is also on the lower side and he struggles with the pressure on his back.

Järventie remains talented and there are flashes of NHL-level qualities; it's possible that this season was just a temporary low point in his development curve. He'll likely get picked at some point, but it's likely at a point where we're going to have better options still on the board.

Emil Järventie

F | Ilves U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 122.2
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



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Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Emil Järventie trying to establish himself in 2023 NHL Draft



Each team's X-Factor at the men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I have to use my skating, that's how I get space to score. I can score goals and make good passes." – Emil Järventie, February 2023

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - u18s

Järventie is showing me a different kind of game at this tournament. He's a checker, mostly. He uses his quick skating to get on the heels of opponents and force them into mistakes. He continues to overdangle with the puck (I'm not sure about his playmaking instincts), but if he keeps the same motor and continues to drive the net, maybe he could earn a career down an NHL lineup.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Switzerland vs. Finland - U18s

Järventie was the clear driver on his line, pushing the pace in transition, generating entries with blistering pace and handling skill. He's taking the puck to the inside far more often than he was at the Hlinka earlier in the year, too. That's good to see, because I don't think the skill level is sufficient to project Järventie to a top-six role at the NHL level – though he scored a nice catch-and-release wrist shot goal in this game, to his credit. To that end, the wall game needs to improve significantly for that projection to feel realistic. I don't know if he's a pick for me, but I wouldn't begrudge a team placing that bet in the middle of the draft or later.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - KOOVEE vs. Kiekko-Espoo - Mestis

Against a top team in the league, Järventie didn't have too much to offer. His quickness from standstill wasn't enough to get past the backchecking opponents, being smothered along the boards due to the lack of physicality. He had one quality look from the net-front after a great pass from a teammate and set up one rush look after a slight delay, then passing to the middle. Didn't make any high-end plays or show any high-end skills, though. Resorted to blind passes towards the slot during OZ cycles. Doesn't really bring value defensively at this level either.

Lassi Alanen: December 15th, 2022 - KOOVEE vs. JoKP - Mestis

Järventie had his chances to score, the best ones coming off the rush, including a 2v1 one-timer from a cross-crease pass that he couldn't quite bury. At this level, Järventie's skating can still be an asset off the rush, but it can also be his downfall. He had familiar sequences of individual puck rushing, entering the zone and then looking to shoot from the defender's legs. There wasn't in the way of give-and-gos or similar, more projectable ways to score. He's talented, but I'd like to see a more complete game from him.

David St-Louis: November 26th, 2022 - KOOVEE vs. Ketterä - Mestis

Järventie scored twice in this game, one time with a net-drive and a rebound and a second time by cutting to the middle and firing through a defender. He's quick, despite a skating stance that lacks depth and that has his feet kicking behind him as he moves. He did use his teammates (when they were there) but it's pretty clear that his primary mode of attacking is trying to dangle through the other team with his speed and pace of hands.

David St-Louis: November 10th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Finland - U18 Five Nations

Pace, pace, pace. That's what Järventie brings. He can dangle and cut to the middle of the ice, he looks for teammates, and his quick release also complements his rushes. Again, he looks quick and speedy but the skating mechanics need to be refined. I'm not sure what he is at the NHL level. Players of his type -- pure, lighter rushers -- need to be extremely good at what they do to survive and thrive in the league. There is a lot of uncertainty in his projection, but he's certainly a pick.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022 - KOOVEE vs. Ketterä - Mestis

Järventie showed a better off-puck game in this one, moving to attack lanes at the right time. He had the same pace, the same speed, but I still have trouble projecting his game to the NHL. He's shifty but not all that deceptive. He can retrieve puck, but not really protecting them. He still turns to face defenders and try to dangle through their sticks. He's a player who relied on his tools to create at lower levels and is stuck in this pattern. He has ways to build a more projectable game, however.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - Ilves vs. Ketterä - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie is a playmaker. He has some delay ideas and he looks for the back layers of the attack when possible. He has a bit of the Lambert issue in that he sometimes outskates his support, making it hard for him to link plays. He's a speedster first and foremost and his hands follow his feet quite well too. The puck is mostly always in his hip pocket, in a deceptive position. Due to the less-than-optimal skating stance, I'm not sure I can give his skating more than a 5.5 however.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - Ilves vs. Jukurit - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie continues to have very good skill flashes, but the overall consistent impact is just not there. He flashed once again more delaying off the rush, entering via the middle, delaying and waiting for a passing lane to open, then dishing a cross-seam pass. The ability to release seamlessly in-stride from the inside leg is also noteworthy. But a lot of the game is spent circling outside of the action and trying to force dekes in transition. The play dies on his stick too many times, even if he doesn't have that much talent around him either.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Ilves vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Just a super meh game from Järventie overall. Partly it looked like he was just checked out. His defensive play hasn't been noteworthy at any point and he has taken liberties to create offence in the past, but here he didn't even do that without still providing much in the way of defensive value. A lot of blind exit passes attempts that were cut off, and when he got to attack in the NZ, he went back to his old habits of overhanding and trying to deke every moving target without much success. Basically no offence at 5-on-5 after a few of his would-be shooting opportunities got interrupted.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - Ilves vs. HPK - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie was on the ice for quite a few goals without actually recording any points. If assists were awarded based on the literal definition of the word, he could've gotten one after a nice screen he had on one of the goals. One nice, quick forechecking steal instantly turned into a high-danger shot assist, but otherwise a very quiet game. Mishandled the puck a few times in transition, and again, failed to properly get his linemates involved. It could be the environment, but Järventie really doesn't want to play a give-and-go game in transition. Tried to delay and cut back a few times after entries, but got smothered quite easily by the opposition.

Lassi Alanen: October 14th, 2022 - Ilves vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

A three-point evening for Järventie who added a goal and a primary assist at 5-on-5 plus a secondary helper on the power play. The goal came off the rush after a beautiful cross-slot setup that Järventie rifled into the top corner without much issue. The assist was a beautiful breakout pass all the way to the OZ blue line on the other side of the ice, resulting in a breakaway and a goal. Järventie remains a player who has lots of intriguing offensive gifts, but the struggle is mostly getting to those situations. He's not much of an off-puck guy and though he does have decent speed for this level, he can't really beat defenders outside or outmuscle them, having to rely heavily on outnumbered counter-attacks and PP time. Can shoot in-stride off the inside leg very competently, makes passes in motion.

Lassi Alanen: October 9th, 2022 - Ilves vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie's linemates aren't the strongest, so he has to try to do most of the heavy lifting by himself, but that's probably what he'd try to do even on a different team. Multiple times, he carried the puck out of the DZ, then tried to challenge the defenceman off the rush with the puck exposed in front of his feet, creating unnecessary 1-on-1s and turning the puck over. Some perimeter shots, couldn't really get inside. Not many notable offensive moments overall at 5-on-5. I respect the hustle on a couple of backchecks to prevent the opponent from entering the zone cleanly. But I'd have to see more to be a believer.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Ilves vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

I don't question Järventie's skill level. He's among the very best handlers in this draft class' Finnish skaters, being able to receive difficult passes, pulling off skilled and dexterous moves on regular basis. He knows how to position himself to get the puck near the OZ blue line and make stuff happen off the rush. But does he have many additional avenues to create offence? I'm not sure, at least on 5-on-5. On the power play, he made some slick cross-seam passes from the left flank. He doesn't provide a ton of off-puck value, isn't a high-end shooter (closer to just good) like his brother so he can't capitalize as well off the chances his skill provides off the rush, or a super creative playmaker from the boards. At least he showed some physicality defensively, winning a loose puck by proactively making contact with the opponent to establish body positioning.

Lassi Alanen: September 7th, 2022 - Ilves vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Not a super productive showing from Järventie. He's a player who lives and thrives from puck touches, and they were pretty limited in this one. There were a few nice sequences, entering the zone near the boards, delaying and making a pass to the slot for an incoming teammate, but there were also quite a bit of forcing and over-relying on handling and beating players one on one. At least for this level, he's got a nice acceleration and good quickness, but he wasn't able to put those to use. Off-puck motor was pretty pedestrian, not noticeably good or bad. I'm expecting more from a player of his stature.

Mitchell Brown: August 6th, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Järventie was physical in this one, throwing a hit or two and looking to make contact. The motor comes and goes, with him conceding the odd foot race and retrieval. But he's generally proactively positioned defensively, especially on the backcheck. Follows up broken plays, showing the awareness to make the next play. Used give-and-gos to further the puck. While he achieves a proper knee bend after the acceleration phase, he overuses strides, lacks mechanical refinement, and lacks depth in-tight. Also lacks some awareness of backpressure; he made panicked plays under pressure and didn't establish positioning. Transition game looks weak overall, and he was not a threat in-zone. He's clearly skilled, but this tournament left me with more questions than answers. Good thing it's August.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th 2022 - Finland vs. Canada - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Finland wasn't able to get much going after the first period, but Järventie had his moments. Under pressure, he dropped the puck into space for a high-danger chance. Most players would've shot that or lost the puck. He shows passing skill, an NHL shot, and plenty of handling skill and creativity. The passing skill will need to be bolstered by better scanning habits and awareness. In transition, he defaults to doing everything himself, playing a chip-and-chase game before using his teammates. The upside's high.

J.D. Burke: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

A pretty unremarkable performance from Järventie (especially relative to yesterday's game against the Americans), but I'm willing to cut him some slack given the context – three games in three days, and it seems like everyone on Finland's roster took their foot off the gas for this one. Still, Järventie picked up a deflection goal at the net-front, and viewers were treated to the occasional reminder of his high-end handling skill throughout. His shot is an absolute cannon and I think he does a reasonably good job creating shooting opportunities off-puck, but almost exclusively on the power play. His playmaking lags far behind though, more so for a lack of vision rather than a lack of technical passing skill; Järventie can't seem to pick up the trailer for the life of him. Järventie's played his best hockey in a long time through this preliminary round, but I still have some concerns about the scalability of his game.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Järventie's skill level is high. High, high. The handling fluid, fast, and controlled. He speeds up at the right moments and uses his outside edges while handling. He prefers to slow things down, no doubt, but this extra layer should help him translate this skill to higher levels. He has scoring instincts: he gets open on the inside between checks and times his dashes from the outside to the inside with the play. Can be overwhelmed physically and will concede space. While a skilled passer, he misses the best play on occasion. Shot's still a bomb. Exciting prospect, but there are projection concerns. Probably Finland's best player through the preliminary round after Kiviharju.

Lassi Alanen: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

This was the best game from Järventie I've seen in a while. He was the primary offensive creator, scoring Finland's first goal of the game after a nifty forehand-backhand finish after a terrific feed from his teammate into an open space. Then made two excellent passing plays to set up Uronen for two goals, first entering the zone on PP and drawing in pressure before a cross-ice feed and later utilizing crossovers to gain the zone and making another cross-ice feed through the second defender's stick. Järventie is still overhandling and forcing dekes, but the play selection was noticeably better. His skating has seemingly taken a step in the right direction and he looked particularly quick and slippery on the play that led to the second assist.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

While it's tough to single out just one player from Finland's excellent performance against the United States, there's little doubt that Emil Järventie did most of the damage offensively. He grabbed a couple and two assists, all of the rush. Hell-bent on deking through people last game, he showed much more nuance in this one: delaying off the rush, drawing pressure towards him, then dishing cross-ice. That's the formula for his first assist, punctuated with a perfect pass for the shooter. He sprinted his routes off-puck, leading to his goal, and consistently found space between checks. Effective supporting routes in transition ensured he piled up the puck touches after building speed. And he still showed the individual skill, turning pass receptions into one-touch dekes through defenders, too.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Järventie's clearly skilled. He had moments of 6-to-7 grade handling and similar shooting. The one-timer's a cannon. He hit two posts in a single shift. He also shows off-puck instincts, supporting the play by shrinking the distance or pushing off at the right moments. With the puck, he's a mess. He dekes when he should pass, cutback, or stop in space. He missed an opportunity to start his teammate up the ice by not scanning. The skating looks projectable in moments, knees pushed over toes and hips engaged. But he rarely finds the next gear to separate. Worth watching closer.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2022 - Sport vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie was back with Ilves' U20 team after returning from half a season played in the USHL. He scored from a well-anticipated breakaway with a short-side wrister and also had a primary assist on the PP after his shot's rebound was buried. Playing big minutes at 5-on-5 and on the power play, Järventie is clearly a talented offensive player for the lower U20 league

level, but I wouldn't say he was particularly dominant. He's physically raw and doesn't have high-end speed, which means he's too easily outmuscled off pucks and pretty reliant on his handling to create (the help from his linemates is limited). His skill level is probably above-average and he anticipates offence well (although sometimes sacrificing defence to do so), as well as the shot being a strong point.

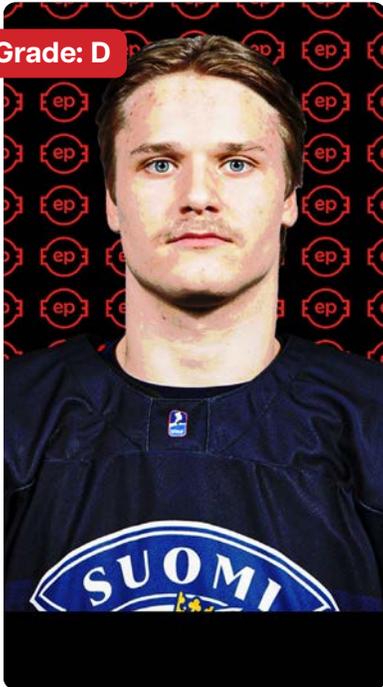
Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2021 - RoKi vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie was skating on Ilves' top line in his last game with their U20 program before leaving to play in the USHL. Järventie's first 40 minutes were pretty rough as his line couldn't get much offence going, but things started to look better in the last period and he was able to score the empty-netter by intercepting a pass mid-air and sliding the puck in from the blue line. Järventie's skating is fine and he's got decent edges, but he's probably not going to be a speedster in the USHL. I liked his playmaking on the power play, playing high on the left side and dishing a couple of nice cross-ice feeds. He was the most talented player on the ice, though, even if his start of the game wasn't that great.

Lassi Alanen: August 21st, 2020 - HPK vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Järventie was skating on Ilves' top line in their pre-season loss against HPK. Only 15 years old, Järventie was the youngest player on the ice but yet was given a big role and received a lot of ice time on the power play. When you watch Järventie play it's obvious that he's skilled. His skating seemed notch below-average for the U20 level, but that's mostly due to his small stature and the fact that he was playing against players four or five years older than him. Järventie showed good hustle away from the puck and tried to push towards the middle of the ice, but the size difference was a big hurdle in many occasions. I'd expect that Järventie plays at the U18 level once the regular seasons start, but he's certainly among the top Finnish players among the 2023 draft class.

Grade: D



Emil Kuusla

AGE 17.677 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	36	18	17	35	0.97
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	13	2	4	6	0.46
Finland U18	WJC-18	3	0	1	1	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Injuries have plagued Emil Kuusla's young career to a significant extent, costing him significant playing time the past three years. Finally, he was able to stay relatively healthy this season, playing at a point-per-game pace with Jokerit's U20 team and being one of the top offensive drivers on his team, also earning him a regular role with the national team.

Kuusla is a feisty winger who – despite the smallish stature – likes to play on the inside. He plays between checks in the slot, timing his movements precisely. There are other pro-style habits, like establishing contact before puck reception or cutting defenders at their hands. A capable playmaker, Kuusla's offensive instincts also extend to passing. At his best, he can slip pucks mid-stride and find creative solutions to beat the defender.

The skating is somewhat of a limiting factor, especially at his size, but he has at least some of the skills and drive to compensate. The lack of explosiveness or high-end top speed do limit his efficiency; in the future, he has to pick his spots to attack the middle better to avoid unnecessary turnovers. Though he can have his moments on the backcheck, his two-way game will also need some work as he moves to the next level.

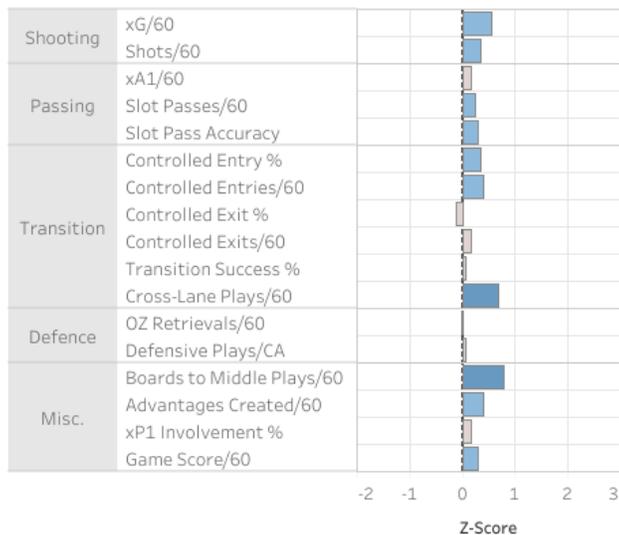
Before the injuries, he was regarded as among the top players in his age group in Finland; staying healthy for consecutive seasons is going to be a big key to Kuusla's development. A lot is going to stand on whether his skating can take steps forward; it already looked a bit better at the U18s where he was very good considering his limited usage on the fourth line. He's a low-percentage bet in the draft, but worse players are definitely going to get picked in the later rounds.

Emil Kuusla

F | Jokerit U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 160.5

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



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Breaking down top prospect performances at men's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship



Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs. Slovakia - U18 Worlds

Kuusla has been really good at this tournament given his limited role after missing the first two games. The coaches seemed to notice that too, as he was moved up the lineup from the fourth line as the game progressed. What mostly jumped out to me was his inside-driven mentality. He was always looking to end the cycle and make a move towards the middle, often succeeding and creating chances for himself and opening space for others and drawing penalties. He was keeping the puck for long stretches of time, but on the fourth line, passing more wouldn't have accomplished much anyway and he had some playmaking flashes after being moved up to play with the top guys. Skating looked better than in my U20 league viewings. High work rate definitely also contributed to that, but even the stride looked a bit more explosive and smoother. He really made an admirable effort and could very well be a candidate at the end of our board.

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Jokerit vs. Kookoo - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla got on the scoresheet by driving wide and partially beating the defender off the rush, then tried to pass to the slot from close range and the puck bounced to the net from the defender's stick. Even on these more quiet evenings, Kuusla manages usually to gain at least a couple of quality looks, and that was the case here, too. The timing around the slot shined on one play where he played really well between the checks and managed to get open at the right time. The turnovers were still there; he's apt at slipping pucks to the inside off the rush, but doesn't have the quickness to beat defenders if there's no clear speed difference when he attacks. The handling is mostly good, but not high-end. His style is direct, which has its pros and cons.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Jokerit vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Not the most explosive showing, but a lot of good stuff from Kuusla once again. Still inside-drive, still flashing good playmaking skill and timing, still being smart off-puck with his OZ positioning and timing to put himself in advantageous positions to score. If he was a sharper finisher, he'd have more goals this season based on the chances, I'd wager. The skating has looked a bit better lately, but it's still slightly below-average projection. Maybe he gets it to a playable level given how much time he's missed over the past three years; you'd want to do the background work on how the injuries have affected that part of his game. I don't know if there are any high-end elements, but the overall skill set is solid. You could swing on a worse player late in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Jokerit vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla's best moments in the OZ usually come from looking aggressively to end the cycle, usually circling the net and then looking for a shooting opportunity or trying to cut inside from near the boards. He got a few looks this way, but also turned the puck over; there's an efficiency problem. The playmaking didn't really show in this one; it's very much a non-frequent skill for him but he's shown quality flashes before. The skating also somewhat hurts his ability to gain the inside. Sometimes he tries to get too cute with the handling, but the most common issue is that he's not explosive enough to beat the defender. I do like the

mindset and he's a solid net-front player, too. There's skill development needed but also some tinkering around decision-making.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Jokerit vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla wasn't looking consistently dangerous, but he had one of the best plays in the game: broke up a play in the DZ near the boards, took the puck to the middle for an exit, then dumped it in, raced for the puck himself and one-touched a pass to the back post for a tap-in as the puck had bounced back from the end boards. Those flashes are intriguing. There were hints of the physical skill despite the lack of size, some playmaking moments. He's still inefficient in transition and careless with some of the touches. The skating is also a tougher projection. The forward stride can look good in stretches, but there's a lack of ankle flexion combined with lack of explosiveness from cutbacks.

Lassi Alanen: January 15, 2023 - Jokerit vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Some quite impressive stuff from Kuusla in this one. He was pushing the pace off the rush and the playmaking really shined in multiple sequences. Gained the middle, then dished a mid-stride backhand pass to his side for a high-danger look. One time made a nice stop-and-go move on his edges together with nice puck control to gain a bit of separation from his defender, then dished a backhand pass to the slot from below the goal line. Then he scored the game-tying goal late in the third, sprinting through the weak side, going to the net and was able to redirect the puck to the net off a hard pass. That was a good example of his willingness to go to the dirty areas and use physical skills to gain advantages despite the smallish stature. He has skills to score in the pros.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

This was the best Kuusla viewing I've had, no doubt about it. He was showing more playmaking prowess aside from his off-puck instincts, craftily getting around pressure and quickly seeing passing opportunities to the slot. He also showed more urgency to gain the inside himself with the puck, even if his quickness does slightly hold him back. Getting his way to scoring locations and open at the right time still remains a strength. Hit the post with a deceptive in-stride release off the rush. There's intriguing elements, but he's still 5-foot-9 and not the fleetest of foot. I can see why he's scoring quite a bit, though.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla does a few things quite well. He's got a knack for establishing body positioning in the net-front, getting his stick open for possible deflections and rebounds. His off-puck timing overall is quite good. There were a few nice quick passing plays in the OZ, too, but they aren't nearly as consistent of a feature in his game. I don't know how good the shot really is, though. Got a few good looks but the releases were quite pedestrian. There's some skill, too, changing angles on entries, but it's not notable either.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla made the most of his OZ touches here. Added a primary helper early in the game with a simple return pass to the point, and a goal later after being late to get back, Kärpät turning the puck over at the point and Kuusla being ready to redirect the eventual point shot, which was a slick piece of work. Was also at the right place on another turnover, getting the puck in the slot unpressured but his shot hit the post. Other than that, it wasn't a particularly noteworthy viewing. The skating stride is choppy and lacks ankle flexion and separation quickness. He has a physical element in his game, finishes his checks and isn't afraid to play a bit dirty. I don't see a pick, at least at this point.

Lassi Alanen: October 13th, 2022 - KalPa vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

Kuusla played a lot here, both at 5-on-5 and on the power play. He struggling to move the puck in transition aside from few occasions, not having enough quickness or skill to beat the pressure and often being just forced to dump it in. Handling looked a bit awkward at times. One high-danger chance after a pretty well-timed move to the inside for a rebound, but failed to convert on his backhand. Kuusla has missed a lot of time over the past years and only recently started his season, so I'll give him time.

Grade: D



Jesse Nurmi

AGE 17.526 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
KooKoo U20	U20 SM-sarja	41	21	29	50	1.22
KooKoo	Liiga	9	0	1	1	0.11
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	18	4	7	11	0.61
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	1	4	5	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Jesse Nurmi might be one of the more polarizing players in the draft class, once you get past the big names in the first round. He's been heralded a lot over the course of the season in the public sphere, but he hasn't impressed our staff to the same extent.

Nurmi has been a highly-touted prospect in Finland for a long time, signing his first pro contract with KooKoo three years ago. He was one of the most productive players in the entire U20 league this season, leading his team with 50 points in 41 games. Nurmi also got a handful of games in Liiga and should be battling for a full-time role as early as next season.

Nurmi's skating has come a long way and clearly improved over the past year, earning himself an average NHL projection from this standpoint. That projection could further improve if he keeps on adding extra gears in the future. There are moments of legit playmaking skill, too.

But while his production was impressive at the U20 level, his underlying metrics paint a significantly different picture about his 5-on-5 contributions. Rarely is there such a difference between the two and it's a definitive red flag.

Despite the flashes and production, Nurmi didn't look like a projectable NHL scorer. Instead, the current projection – especially based on his play at the U18s – is more in the vein of an energy winger who contributes on the forecheck. His defensive play wasn't always the prettiest sight in the U20 league, but there are signs it'll improve.

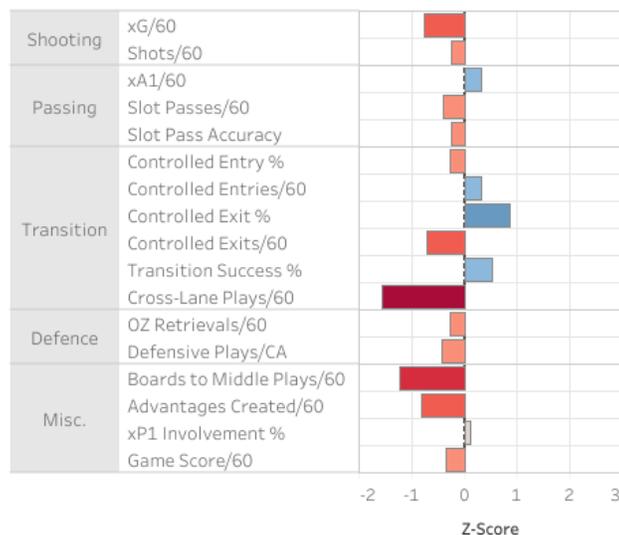
Nurmi has a good chance of going in the middle of the draft, but ultimately, there are likely to be far better options left on the table when that pick comes in. At least, in our estimation.

Jesse Nurmi

F | KooKoo U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 141.3

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



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Meet the Team: Finland's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Scout's notebook: An update on Tuomas Uronen, Jesse Nurmi, and Arttu Kärki

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

I have to give credit for Nurmi's improvement as a skater and energy winger. Wouldn't have seen that development arc happening last season. The skating projection is up to at least average at his point, which is - again - a notable improvement from the past. He had some moments of skill and playmaking off the rush, but I'm still not overly impressed with his total output offensively. He had one excellent chance to score from a rebound but completely fumbled the attempt and couldn't get off a proper release. He was a bit more inside-driven than he's been with KooKoo. Still not sure if the upside and skill level are high enough for him to make our board.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

I only see pace in Numi's game. It's the same thing every time I watch him. He drives inside, pursues the puck, and carries it across zones. I like the skating ability and the energy, but he's not making many plays. I'm not sure about his overall playmaking ability. He could become a checker at the next levels. Maybe something more. I can see some skills in his game.

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Nurmi's game is all about the hustle and the energy. He brings it on the forecheck. He gets on opponents and makes them lose the puck and he consistently drives the middle in possession. These plays have value in the NHL, but I've yet to see the necessary layer of skill to make the league. He has some interesting flashes.

J.D. Burke: April 21st, 2023 - Finland vs. Latvia - U18s

This was mostly a pretty quiet game from Nurmi centring Finland's first line, but he had a few displays of really high-end skill. The most impressive of which was a creative behind the back pass to get around defensive pressure and connect with his linemate. Those flashes of high-end skill aside, kind of a nothing game from Nurmi. He has decent supporting instincts in the offensive zone, but he's hardly what you'd call a high-end thinker. Ultimately, Nurmi just doesn't do much for me.

Lassi Alanen: January 13th, 2023 - KooKoo vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi scored at 4-on-4, receiving a bounce in the net-front with good timing, dragging the puck and releasing short side - a pretty crafty finish overall. Pretty much similar viewing to my previous ones. He flashed a bit more delay ability off the rush, but didn't really convert them into slot passes or other notable advantages. Tried to attack on more arcs, but the handling skill isn't as good as his ideas and attempts would require.

The playmaking skill appears in flashes, but lacked consistency and many of his attempts were subpar in execution and as ideas. He'll probably get picked before I'd be willing to do so. Whether he should be on our board, I'm hesitant as well.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - KooKoo vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

KooKoo scored six goals in this one and Nurmi was left without points – not a sight you'd usually expect. He still had some of the better OZ sequences than I've seen in the latest viewings. One particularly nice cross-seam pass after getting the puck behind the net, using the empty space and coming out to a situation where most would've just tried a quick shot/wrap-around. Instead, Nurmi had the vision to spot the striking teammate on the back post and should've gotten an assist but the goalie robbed the poor finisher. Not sure if the actual pass was blind or intended, but I can give him the benefit of doubt in this one. He's still stuck on the perimeter too often, but tried to push to the inside with a bit more aggressiveness. He has enough quickness to do so at this level, but doesn't seem to have the physical skills or the mindset usually. Outside of the offensive end, it was mostly the same: pretty invisible defensively, some trouble connecting plays in transition.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi scored from a breakaway, surprising the goalie with a quick five-hole release. This was pretty much the only offence Nurmi generated through the game, but he did make it count; he's been really efficient with his scoring. The other chance came via similar play, Nurmi sneaking to the OZ blue line, receiving a stretch pass and accelerating from there. The rush patterns don't seem very projectable, though. He doesn't have much of a delay game and doesn't really try to bring the puck inside. A lot of straight line rushes instead. In the OZ, he's late to relocate.

On a team like this, he should be the one doing the heavy lifting. He hustles pretty well on the forecheck, but he's often late defensively to make meaningful impact. He's found ways to score in his current environment, but he'll need to make a ton of improvements to translate it.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

I liked some of Nurmi's off-puck ideas here, mostly as he was driving the weak side to the net, spacing and timing so that he could become a cross-ice passing option at the right time. Unfortunately those routes never got rewarded. The skating improvements from last season continue to be notable, allowing him in part to complete these routes with proper separation. On-puck, it was mostly the same as previously. Not many notable moments, that is. He doesn't really have many 1-on-1 skills off the rush, leaving the puck exposed in front of his feet and trying to deke under the defender's stick as his go-to move. One deflection chance early in the game that was nice but stopped by the goalie.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Not a whole lot to write about Nurmi's performance here. Tappara was clearly the superior team at controlling play at 5-on-5, and Nurmi wasn't able to get his offence going, lacking puck touches. One could argue he could have done a little more to get more of them by not sprinting out of the DZ as quickly, but his teammates also didn't help with their transition play. Skating remains improved from last season, closer to an average NHL projection (4.5 or 5 on our scale). The work rate is also improved. He's forechecking with more urgency and also giving pressure on the backcheck, which he didn't do much last season. In the OZ, he's still staying too much on the perimeter, preferring to circle high to the point instead of trying to cut inside.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

The number of notable plays from Nurmi in this one could probably be counted with one hand. His skating continues to look improved compared to last season, even if his posture is inconsistent and his output seems to be greater than it should be based on his form. One really solid backchecking sequence which showed that exact thing. That being said, the number of puck touches was low, partly because he didn't put himself in a position to receive the puck. He's more of a play ender than a play builder, and when there's nobody building the plays, he's not very noticeable.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi's efficiency in this game was a sight to behold. Basically created three chances at 5-on-5, each one leading to a goal. The first rush was particularly nice, actually handling in his hip pocket this time, beating the first defender inside and then getting a backhand shot off, leading into a rebound and a goal. The other two were well-executed passes off the rush, taking advantage of poor rush defending and counter-attack opportunities. Opportunistic is a good way to describe Nurmi's offensive game. He's not creating at a high volume, but if the opposition makes a clear error, he's usually ready to bounce on it. Questions about the translability of his game and the quality of the tools are still very much relevant, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - KooKoo vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi added a power play tally, getting open in the net-front and hacking in a pass from behind the net. There were a few flashes at 5-on-5, like a creative spin pass on 2v1 to get the pass through the blocking defender and to set up a high-danger chance. He also had a few good moments on the backcheck and while defending the NZ, showing a solid work rate most of the time. Still not convinced about his play driving or the ability to create off the rush or off the cycle when he doesn't have a clear advantage, ie. counter-attack where his team outnumbers the opposition. He's still too easily kept to the perimeter and lacks the skills to take pucks inside more often. Still producing a ton against weaker competition and on the power play.

Lassi Alanen: September 17th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Another bland showing from Nurmi here. Added a primary helper on the power play via a simple pass to the point for a one-timer, but struggled to create at even-strength, being pushed to the perimeter and knocked off pucks. The skating seems to have improved from last season, but it still probably grades slightly below-average on our scale. Some moments of attempting to use his body to protect the puck and initiate contact before puck reception, which was a positive sign. The lack of strength and ankle flexion do hurt him in those scenarios, too. Reliant on his hands to beat defenders 1-on-1, almost always handling in front of the body. Does most of his work on the power play as a playmaker from the half wall, where he is undeniably effective for this level, but it's not very encouraging when projecting to the NHL.

Lassi Alanen: September 10th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi scored an important third period goal with a skilled mid-air deflection of a point shot. Other than that, though, it was a pretty bleak showing. Very little successful play driving, low success rate in transition, very limited output offensively. He looks a bit quicker compared to the previous season, using more crossovers to accelerate, but lacks ankle flexion and the ability to get leverage in puck battles by getting deep enough to cut across defender's hips. Doesn't have much of a physical game, either. One good quick pass in the OZ to set up a chance after a linemate stripped the puck on the forecheck. There's some puck and playmaking skill, but I need to see a lot more at 5-on-5.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Nurmi hasn't done much in this tournament so far. Sure, he had a few nice plays here, getting a high-danger look and making one successful pass from behind the net to the slot for another HD chance. But he's definitely the third-most impactful player on his line. Not showing much in terms of skating, pace or compete. Plays on the half wall on the second power play but hasn't accomplished much there either.

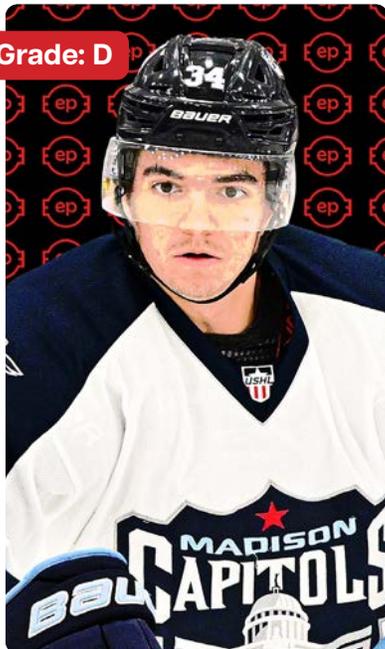
Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2022 - KooKoo vs. SaiPa - U20 SM-sarja

This was probably a better representation of Nurmi's game than my previous viewing of the season, given that the teams were a bit more evenly matched. Nurmi had a couple of eye-popping plays as a playmaker, going up the half wall in the OZ before sending a beautiful cross-ice dish through multiple layers to the activating defenceman, or making a clever one-touch pass in transition to set up a HD shot in a situation where 95 percent of players would have just tried to rip it themselves. The vision is clearly impressive. The thing is that I haven't seen much from Nurmi in other areas. He's not a strong off-puck player, lacks separation speed and more notably any form of strength to win battles or drive play in other ways rather than passing.

Lassi Alanen: October 23rd, 2021 - KookKoo vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Nurmi was kept on the perimeter rather easily in this one. Couldn't get much of anything going with his puck touches, other than a few nice plays on breakouts. Also had one high-danger chance by just happening to receive a beautiful behind-the-net feed to the slot where Pelicans' defenders had just let him be without guarding. Stride lacks ankle flexion and true separation power for this level. Also the difference between team strength was notable and probably had a rather sizeable impact on Nurmi's play.

Grade: D



Finn Brink

AGE 17.444 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW

Position

Left

Shoots

5'9"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Madison Capitols	USHL	26	10	8	18	0.69
Maple Grove High	USHS-MN	31	31	38	69	2.23

SCOUTING REPORT

A candidate for the 2023 Minnesota's Mr Hockey award for best high school hockey player, Finn Brink has been on a tear offensively for the past two seasons.

Playing for his hometown Maple Grove High, Brink amassed over two points per game over a couple of seasons with the school. Diminutive in height at only 5-foot-9, the left-shot forward isn't particularly small, operating at around 180 pounds.

With a large number of touches across any given high school game, Brink tends to come off as inefficient across some of his viewings. Positive habits are often followed up by a poor decision, leading to a mountain of one-and-done sequences – it's a product of him playing too fast. When he lets the game come to him, he presents as a fairly complete player, who constantly looks to create advantages and beat pressure en route to the net.

Brink sprints to get behind coverages, tries to take inside routes, and can pull off a side-step handle to beat pressure. He attacks triangles, slips pucks, and protects in the hip pocket. Brink uses weight-shifts to create deception north-to-south and even flashes a power game on the outside lanes. He can blend his hands to bait aggression and punish overzealous defenders, catch-and-release pucks, and he isn't afraid of playing in harder areas of the ice, leveraging his low centre of gravity and proactive contact. None of his tools are that strong, but he's a complete player, more than the sum of his parts.

The most interesting thing about Brink is his adaptation to the USHL – it's eye-opening at some level. Across 26 games he's scored 10 times, finishing the season with the Madison Capitals scoring at 0.70 points per game. He's tenacious at this level, playing harder in the crease, and supporting teammates constantly. He's also a bit of an opportunist in the USHL, laying in weight to get an opportunity to leverage his functional tools. "In the first after pressuring a defender and causing them to reset in the neutral zone, Brink sunk behind them, got under their stick, stripped the puck and broke free," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a March game report from USHL action. "He had to pop the puck skate-to-stick and snapped a hard shot under the blocker for a goal. Brink's unafraid to split pressure and activate as a weak side option."

Skill-blending like this just isn't all that present in high schoolers playing up a league. Usually, early USHL adaptation is a sign of translatability to higher levels like the NCAA. With what Brink did this year with Madison, it wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility that he comes back next season and replicates his success. We could very well be underrating Brink by not ranking him this year, as he has bottom-of-the-lineup upside if he keeps progressing. He's set to join the University of Wisconsin in 2024.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** April 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs USNTDP U18 - USHL

I don't think this viewing moved the needle for Brink and his possible addition to our board, but it's easy to appreciate his adaptability to USHL hockey and just how fast he accomplished it. Doesn't look out of place across his shifts. He's more of an opportunist, waiting to leverage his functional tools. In the second, Brink was able to score. He followed up an outside drive, tapping a loose puck in the crease through the goalie. His hands flashed at inconsistent times. In the first he slipped a puck through a triangle with traffic, but just dumped the puck in. His crossover speed generation is limited because he just doesn't cross under enough. On one shift he was so focused at generating speed that he ran into his puck-carrying teammate, creating a turnover. He struggled to find soft space in this one, coming alive during on-puck sequences.

He runs a unit on the powerplay, working catch-and-release shots from the high slot. He can one-touch pucks at the top of the umbrella and isn't afraid to work downhill, eating up available space. In the second he walked a puck into the high slot, hooking a pass back to the left wing. Brink crashed the crease but the puck carrier couldn't find anyone. He's honestly a tenacious player in the way he attacks the net.

Contributes on the defensive end of the puck. In the first, he came back and stick-checked a trailer that was set to shoot in the slot. Later in the third, he made a couple of solid pressure-pushing plays swinging across his zone and working perimeter pins. No one tool really pops -- he's like a 4 or 4.5 grade across the boards. He'll do damage in the USHL next season because he's balanced and has adapted so well already but nothing here is exciting enough to justify a spot on our board. I think an NHL projection is a long shot without the development of some separators in the NCAA.

Daniel Gee: March 18th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids Roughriders vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

This was probably one of the better Brink viewings I have had, and this comes in USHL action. Was efficient and plated with pace throughout, he looked polished compared to some of the other high school to USHL players we have looked at over the past few years.

Flashes a lot of translatable habits that combat his relatively short frame. In the first after pressuring a defender and causing them to reset in the neutral zone, Brink sunk behind them, got under their strick, stripped the puck and broke free. He had to pop the puck skate-to-stick and snapped a hard shot under the blocker for a goal. Brink's unafraid to split pressure and activate as a weakside option. Saw pace increases in the neutral zone as well. On one shift he one-hand chopped a puck away, attacked one-on-one, and had a wrist shot saved in pressure. He's all weight transfer with little upper-body downforce when he shoots. Brink flashed a power game in the third; after gathering a neutral zone pass, he cut on his edges off the right wing. He tried to lean into the defender, and won the physical battle, having a sharp-angle backhand shot saved. Took a beating on a couple of entries -- one at the end of the third was particularly bad. Got demolished.

Great in sustained pressure in this one. He tries to manipulate on the boards, with his feet to escape perimeter physicality. Because Brink plays with such a big motor he was first on end-board retrieval in the first, spinning a centred puck into the crease -- he executed so quickly. On the powerplay, Brink was looking to create rebound opportunities -- often would work downhill and chuck low-placed pucks on the net for teammates to jump on. On one downhill foray in the second, Brink faked a shot, and passed across, but it was deflected out -- so there is some thought to use deception. He managed to grab an assist on another man advantage. Brink first jumped on a ringed puck and made a nice pass back to the point. As the play developed he took a pass on the left-hand circle and layered a parallel cross to the other circle, leading to a one-time goal. Just an awesome performance. He wasn't much of a driver in my high school viewings, but you can see the nuance of his game translate here with better players.

Daniel Gee: February 16th, 2023 - Maple Grove High vs Andover High - USHS-MN

Brink lacks an attacking mentality across his minutes, showing flashes occasionally to produce, rather than dominating play shift-to-shift. He has some good ideas on-puck but it isn't on a consistent basis. Combine that with his stride -- short legs, hops

while transitioning into the crossover, slow first steps -- it makes for a tough combination at times. That being said, there's skill in Brink's game that can't be ignored. For example, on a first-period rush, Brink managed to poke a puck away in his crease and break the other way. He entered the OZ in the high slot, popped the puck in his hip pocket, dragged and shot a puck that tipped off the goaltender's shoulder -- he had a clear pass option that was probably the better bet, but he got a high-danger out of it. This was a trend across his transitional attacks. In the third period, Brink upped his pace on near boards and cut hard into the middle after the entry. He elected to take a pretty poor shot, with pass options available. While his stride has issues, he plays with pace. On another rush he worked in with a crossover-latent handle blend, shifting his weight to the inside to pivot a defender. Brink then drove the outside lane, cutting in on the net with a bobbling backhand shot. He occasionally will manipulate when working north-to-south -- deking with the puck one way to bait a pivot, only to cut across the back of the overzealous defender. He did this on one second-period shift but stopped moving his feet, unavailable for the backdoor tap-in.

Brink relies on his above-average support game in sustained pressure to create success. Whether he helping to win pucks off the boards or getting open in a passing lane, it's a constant habit. The tunnel vision wasn't as stark during his in-zone offensive sequences. On one first-period shift, Brink got behind the defence, first on a puck retrieval. He worked hip-pocket protection, and used a cut-back to escape pressure, nutmegging a defender en route to the middle of the ice. He found a puck supporter who nullified the whole play with a poor shot. On another shift, this time in the third, Brink attacked downhill, magnetized three defenders, and found a weakside teammate who failed to score off the reception.

The defensive game was pretty mixed. Brink had a couple of nice stick-work plays. He clamped on a far board puck carrier and then shifted to disrupt a hash-mark-located shot. On another sequence, he was awful -- drifting below the line with three other Maple Grove players, leaving a planted crease threat wide open for a centring fee -- very little awareness on the sequences.

Daniel Gee: December 27th, 2022 - Maple Grove High vs Cretin-Derham Hall - USHS-MN

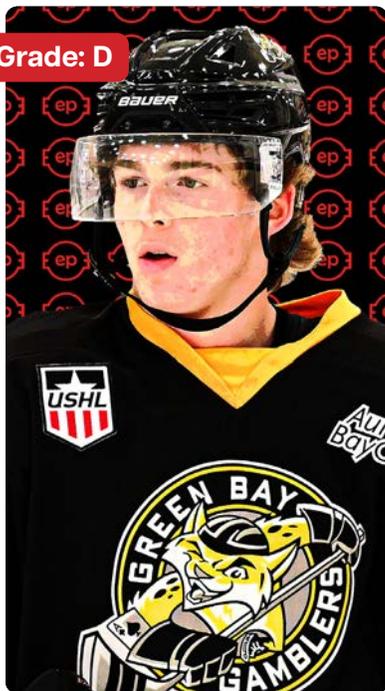
First time watching Brink. He's undersized but skates well and plays at an above-average pace throughout his shifts. He accesses a second gear in transition, but beyond the skating, some of the tools don't seem very separating at the USHS level.

In transition, Brink's game revolves around turning defenders, separating, and attacking the crease. On one of the first shifts of the game, he snuck high up in the neutral zone, got behind the defence, and took a breakaway pass. He took an angle and cut on the net with a backhand, but it was a pretty tame shot. He was a very one-and-done player throughout much of the game; execute something positive and the play just unravels after that. Adjust rush pattern to the inside -- turnover the puck with a messy, pressured handle. Execute a side-step and blend a handle to beat pressure -- weak outside the dotted lines shot. Not sure there is a tonne of planning, which could be one of his biggest issues. Regardless, Brink was able to produce on the rush. In the third, he recorded two assists. On one of the sequences he took a pass on a 2-on-1, but his catch-and-released shot was weak -- crease crashers jumped on a rebound. The decision-making questions were just so constant, though. Why not crash the crease after you just made a nice dropoff after the entry? Why over complicate a possession trying to handle through pressure?

On the flip side, Brink was strong in the offensive zone, within reason. His forechecking stood out; strong edge work to combat shake-offs, a penchant to get to the inside, attacking of opponent's sticks, and the previously mentioned pace advantages made him a bit of a handful. The one-and-done sequences were present here too. On one shift, Brink stole a puck off a stick lift, but immediately turned the puck over. On a late powerplay, he manipulated a defender with a fake that he was going to carry a puck high, only to cut against the grain downhill. Instead of waiting for the lane to open up, or reset, he failed to protect the puck properly and promptly turned it over. He tries to execute too quickly -- probably because at a volume it works well in high school, but it leads to a lot of inefficiencies. For instance, he had a really nice give-and-go sequence with a teammate, working the puck deep, and layering a weakside pass to a teammate. The subsequent shot was weak, but it was a nice play.

The defensive game was inconsistent. Coasts back often -- on one first-period play because he wasn't moving his feet, he just glided back and watched a player only 5 feet in front of him take an uncontested slot shot. He became more engaged later on and helped deflect pucks out of a couple of pass lanes. Overall not sure if he's a pick -- tools just don't pop, but I obviously have to watch more.

Grade: D



Cooper Conway

AGE 17.271 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	163 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	6	0	0	0	0.00
Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	31	46	41	87	2.81

SCOUTING REPORT

Only one first-time draft-eligible skater outscored Cooper Conway's 87 points in 31 games with Andover High in Minnesota high school hockey.

While limited, he's an absolute menace on the forecheck, capable of stringing together crafty displays of playmaking with the puck on his stick. That's how he amassed those gaudy point totals.

Still, at first glance, Conway is predictable, telegraphing many of his plays. He tries to pull off extremely difficult handling moves in transition, making for inefficient touches and activations often taking place outside of the dotted line. He forces hope passes and often runs headlong into intense pressure, a product of a volume of touches.

The Andover-born winger's stride only makes matters worse; short stride length, upright posture, and very limited power generation as he pushes off and flicks his toes mean little separation value at higher levels. These are the cons with Conway.

On the positive side of the ledger, Conway is a pest who takes to the physical part of the game with unmatched relish.

"Conway started the game by upping his pace on the forecheck, absolutely levelling a defender on the end-boards -- a tone-setting, devastating hit," crossover scout Daniel Gee noted in a March game report.

"Conway was hitting everyone in sight and it led to a lot of possession changes. In the first he hammered a neutral zone pick carrier on the redline, killing the transitional attack," Gee noted in another March report.

His playmaking ability verges on special at some points. He brings the full complement of skills to the table. Hard-to-connect hook passes in motion, slip passes under triangles, long layered connections, passes into space – he needs to slow down to actually execute, but when he does, good things happen. Conway even set up fellow draft-eligible Gavyn Thoreson with a slick backdoor pass into space, to win third in the Class AA state tournament. Off-puck, he finds soft space, a relative merchant at the backdoor.

While the junior habits are heavily ingrained and will need to be exorcised as part of his development, Conway's playmaking ability, forechecking value, and physical play should be a strong enough base to produce in the NCAA. His NHL projection is fraught with uncertainty, though.

Will he be too limited against better and faster players to even play the same style? It's a major reason why we couldn't find a spot for Conway on Elite Prospects final board for the 2023 NHL Draft. After a cup of coffee this season with the Green Bay Gamblers, expect him back there next season before he attends Colorado College.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Conway only received a couple of shifts, but they were highly productive. On his first shift, he won a puck, then connected with a spin around pass into the slot. Later, he grabbed a rebound chance, beating the defender off the boards into the slot. Showed some vision and skill, along with off-puck instincts. He lacked awareness of pressure and threw a puck away one time, but it wasn't enough to say whether it was a pattern. An impressive showing for just a few minutes of ice time.

Daniel Gee: March 11th, 2023 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Andover High - USHS- MN

Conway has a lot of junior habits and is too quick to execute, but he showed in this viewing that he's a fairly crafty playmaker and a legitimate physical pest across his minutes.

Flashed his hands a lot on the rush -- most leading to turnovers or dump-and-chase sequences. In the first, he attempted a windmill deke but couldn't pull it off without going offside. He was predictable, and aggression really hurt his ability to carry the puck into the offensive zone. The aforementioned playmaking was interesting in this viewing. Give-and-go passing plays into downhill attacks, and layering -- he showed a lot. In the final seconds of the game, Conway saw Gavyn Thoreson driving the weak side and placing a perfect pass into space backdoor -- massive goal for Andover. He flashed legitimate passing skill; slipped a puck to Thoreson on another play in the second. Understands that he can work middle entries, drop off pucks to more nuanced players like Thoreson, and then drive the net to open space and potentially jump on a rebound.

Conway was hitting everyone in sight and it led to a lot of possession changes. In the first he hammered a neutral zone pick carrier on the redline, killing the transitional attack. This extended into his forechecking and sustained offensive zone play. He's always in a rush -- a great example came in the first. Conway pushed an incredible amount of pressure and hit a man on the forecheck. Recovering the puck, he chucked it immediately into the slot -- no pre-scan or delay elements. Just speed. To add to this, he tried to one-touch off of every pass reception -- all leading to egregious turnovers. To his credit, there are great elements of his game. In the first, he spun and hooked a perfect pass to Thoreson who heeled a puck on the right-hand circle. Later off a dump-in Conway supported a teammate in the near corner, passed it high with a board bank in pressure, shifted to the hash marks and swept in a puck for a goal. Being this engaged in every play is what brings him success.

Felt that he was more reactive in his own end compared to what I have seen in the past. Backchecking efforts wavered, as did disruption efforts. He wasn't even reaching to get his stick into lanes or releases on a first-period penalty kill. Conway brought the physical element, but I wonder if that will even translate -- he's light currently and mismatches will turn against him at higher levels.. More of a negative viewing at the end of the day. There are other high school circuit players who have more tangible upside that we need to rank before Conway.

Daniel Gee: March 2nd, 2023 - Duluth East High vs Andover High - USHS- MN

Okay, I can see why Conway has his fans. This was an elevated performance, where his pace, forechecking value, and goal-scoring were on full display.

Conway started the game by upping his pace on the forecheck absolutely levelling a defender on the end-boards -- a tone-setting, devastating hit. Beyond that, Conway is remarkably inefficient in sustained zone pressure. So many layered pass attempts forced into the middle ice were worked into instant turnovers. Hope passes from the end-boards, failed handles working into the slot -- just poor decision-making and execution. He really only had one on-puck sequence go right. In the second, Conway wheeled the puck high on the far boards. As a seam developed to the inside, Conway cut and released a deceptive pivot shot on the net, arms very

high on top of his stick, scoring. He cut across the crease in the third, but Cretin-Derham Hall's goaltender stayed with him. Seems like he's more of a crease-crasher at higher levels.

On the rush, Conway dominated, scoring three more goals. On a second-period penalty kill, he pushed an absurd amount of forechecking pressure, disrupted the entry, and forced a very bad pass. The puck, now free in the NZ, was available for him to chase, and Conway ended up deking to the backhand for a goal. Some give-and-go work in transition with Thoreson. Conway defaulted into a shooter in this viewing, missing a fair amount of his chances high. In the second he supported Thoreson's end-to-end foray, took a drop-off pass, and scored again on the powerplay. Added another on a backdoor tap-in. While a lot of his success was from his off-puck work, Conway flashed some ability on. He had a sequence where he cradled a pass reception and popped a puck to his other linemate, Casey, who crashed the crease and found Conway again for a tap-in -- Conway ended up being tripped. Overall, looks like a player who can dominate at the high school level, but will be more of a complementary piece as he works into higher leagues. Flashes some on-puck skill but it's far and few between and his sense grade degrades with possession. Bottom-six projection, but could be a useful player. Stride has inefficiencies that are still present.

Daniel Gee: February 3rd, 2023 - Andover High vs Grand Rapids High - USHS

Conway settles into a secondary role on his line on all areas of the ice, mainly looking for Thoreson to do a significant amount of creation across their minutes. He does his job well too. In transition, Conway creates a lot of open ice and space for others to operate in.

In the first he entered the OZ, dropped a puck to Thoreson on the blue line, drove the net to drag attention, and then jumped on a rebound off the edge of the left-hand circle, chopping the puck on net. He's at his best when he defers off the entry; recorded an assist in the third by slipping a pick off the top of the right-hand circle to a slot-cutting Thoreson, who split the defenders and scored all alone. When Conway carries the puck, he doesn't show much ability. Poor rush patterns focused on the outside, and the absence of a stop-up or delay game means he just runs into sideboard seal-offs and angle-out guiding. He will even force passes into the middle to Thoreson, who is not really a pass option (completely enveloped). Some mindless hope passing as well -- missing the proactive scan to actually mental map the ice and just throwing pucks away based on instinct. Flashes of a power game continue to pop up -- one late third-period drive saw Conway drive the left-wing, and chop a puck to a teammate crashing the weak side.

He can't really separate past defenders with his stride -- small steps. He adapts by taking pucks in full stride in the transition. Conway's game is more suited to sustained pressure where he shows smarter off-puck movement and positive retrieval works. In the first, Conway made a smart drift to the hash marks -- a point shot hit his blade and he two-touched a puck on net, crashing after the rebound in pressure. He loves to work behind the net, working back passes against the grain into the slot. While he did this multiple times, in the second he won a retrieval, centred the puck all the way to the point and it led to a goal for. His playmaking is the stand-out tool -- found a linemate with a touch pass to the inside for a one-timer. More inside focused in sustained pressure -- likes to loop high and shoot but ultimately, has issues with getting the shot through. Not dynamic either, so there is limited work in terms of breaking down defenders to open up lanes. Perhaps too limited for our board, but with some development, he could be a contributor at the NCAA level.

Daniel Gee: December 12th, 2022 - Andover High vs Rosemount High - USHS

Conway presented as a very low-paced shooter, who honestly had an interesting game due to some of the tools he pushed throughout. In transition, Conway's stride posture presents some issues immediately. Short upright steps limit everything from his acceleration from a stop to his ability to push power through his push-offs. Because of this, he naturally slows the game down when on-puck. The caveat is that he has some impressive passing and shooting skill to help him adapt at this level. He uses the saucer pass and hunts for opportunities to feather pucks over layers. He hits teammates at insane distances at times, but often is just throwing pucks around as he works back into off-puck shooting spots. There's clear passing skill in his game. Often, Conway exploits the independent movement of his upper and lower body to drop his arms back, to send passes through a clearer lane.

His shot mechanically is strong for the USHS level. Upper body leverage into downforce and a synced weight transfer create significant power on his release. He has a power game -- on one sequence in the second, Conway picked up a puck high in his DZ, surprising Rosemount's defenders, and causing an early pivot. Conway upped his pace, powered past the defenders, and tucked

the puck in the net within pressure. He's sturdy and took runs at puck retrievers in this one.

He was a menace in sustained pressure, where his stride is less of an issue. Conway tries to funnel the puck to the inside if he's on-puck on the perimeter. Layered a nice pass in the first period into the slot. While his off-puck game is pretty weak, he did time an activation through the slot as a redirect-purposed shot came from the point. Conway tried to push a power game in sustained pressure as well. In the first, after winning a forecheck puck, he wheeled along the far boards, powering with one-arm protecting to the inside -- he made a really poor hope pass out of the activation. Leverages his shooting more than anything on the powerplay. In the first, he sniped a shot off the goal line. Not sure how well he can actually catch and release -- failed later in the game on a reception. He kept taking poor goal-line shots after he scored his first -- it was excessive and made me question his sense. Conway tried a lacrosse shot after he grabbed a rebounded puck but couldn't pick the puck up. He was the one to actually set up the shot with a one-touch pass into the slot. Conway recorded another assist, snapping a puck from the right-hand circle to the left-hand circle -- used the threat of his shot to freeze the defenders up and keep the static lane. He could be a fringe player for our board but I have to watch more. He may be too limited to be an NHLer but he does some interesting things.

Grade: D



Larry Keenan

AGE 17.504 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Culver Military Academy Pr.	USHS-Prep	49	11	26	37	0.76

SCOUTING REPORT

There's a rich hockey tradition in Larry Keenan's family. His grandfather of the same name scored the then-expansion St. Louis Blues first ever goal and went on to have a big playoff in their Cinderella Stanley Cup run.

This Keenan, a 6-foot-3 left-shot defender for Culver Academy, represents one of the rawest talents in this year's draft.

His defensive profile is defined by aggression. Always jumping up into the neutral zone and on his own blueline, he sprints to start early perimeter, guides, and then disrupts poorly protected entry attempts with his probing stick. He lacks strength across his entire game, and it's apparent that he needs to become a more powerful defensive skater. Keenan leans heavily on proactiveness to limit chances as an adaptation.

The Ontario-born defender's in-zone sequences are less effective. He will go as far as abandoning checks to jump up and pressure downhill shots, looking almost lethargic physically on the perimeter. He sacrifices superior body positioning too often, struggling to seal off the boards, failing to leverage his size, and bouncing off perimeter opponents.

Nevertheless, Keenan shows some promising habits on the rush. "He always gets in motion before executing his breakouts. Keenan is seemingly unphased by pressure. In the same notion, he also has an awkwardness about him when he handles the puck – whether it's his very upright skating stance that appears to be more on his heels than the balls of his feet or just a lack of strength, he lacks control, especially when activating his hands," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in the February game report.

Despite times when Keenan doesn't look all too projectable, he does have incredible flashes of playmaking and large-ice manoeuvrability. He's even a consistent off-puck activator, jumping into the rush, pinching lower to keep pucks alive, and attacking the weak side.

With manipulation layered upon Keenan's game, both with his feet on retrievals and with his body on controlled north-to-south carriers, it's not hard to see why the defender would be a sought-after commodity when you look at his entire profile – he very well could be a top-four defenceman at the NHL level.

It may require a significant amount of imagination and development work to get Keenan where he needs to be, but he has time to settle into his body in the NCAA when he joins the University of Massachusetts next season.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** March 12th, 2023 - Culver Academy vs North Star 18U - USHS-Prep

Keenan remains a raw prospect, both strength and habits-wise. He almost looks lethargic at times on the perimeter of the ice, upright, and not fully engaged physically or mentally at times. This is mostly present when he is defending against pressure in his own defensive zone. He often works into a superior body position only to allow a forechecker to slip on the inside. In the first, he has a very lax wave at a centring pass, completely reactive and not ready to clog the lane. To his credit, Keenan improved as the game continued. He pushes an absurd amount of aggression at times, abandoning checks to pressure downhill shots. At this level, it's undoubtedly impactful but this won't work at any higher level of hockey.

He's at his best when he plays more contained around the net, working his reach to disrupt possessions. Requires a lot of imagination when it comes to projecting himself as a stronger player. Just like in sustained scenarios, Keenan heavily relies on aggression in transition to create stops. Blue line and neutral zone forays, pinching perimeter puck carriers into the sideboards. This aggression backfired multiple times, however. Keenan lost off-puck threats in his peripheries, creating a pivot-and-chase situation. In the first, he was walked after an aggressive push, unable to push enough physical pressure on the puck carrier. He managed to get back and intercept a cross, but the play was concerning. His anticipation seems fine for this level. In the first, he intercepted a pass and then floated it into space for a teammate to jump on. Later in the second, Keenan made a deft tie-up on a net-front attacker, eliminating the secondary threat. His worst play was on a 2-on-1. Completely missed the timing of the pass, drifted too low, and didn't impact the lane. Very mixed, and a lot of junior habits -- it's something he will have to overcome at UMass.

On the rush, Keenan showed a lot of activation qualities early. He jumped up in the rush on the weakside constantly. On top of this, Keenan flashed legitimate manipulation during his retrieval efforts -- switching the direction of his feet multiple times to shake forechecking pressure. He wheeled multiple in-motion breakouts, deploying saucers, cross-rink feeds, and some poorly integrated hook pass attempts. He builds crossover speed -- the mechanics are fine but he's obviously limited by some strength issues (knees and core not fully engaged). He had an interesting counter-attack sequence in the first. He intercepted a pass on his blueline, weaved through the neutral zone, and sliced through three defenders on the entry, but couldn't cut inside -- Keenan fought off pressure in the near corner and started the cycle.

Some of his decision-making is questionable, but not all that surprising at the prep level. In the second he cut in on a 3-on-2, had pass options, but took a shot in-stride instead. Keenan wasn't very active off the line once sustained pressure was developed. His hands are below average which makes any effort dicey. In the second, Keenan let go a low shot from the middle of the point -- the rebound was potted. Some board-to-middle puck movement as well. Looks like a D prospect -- might not make our board, but I think he's picked in the draft because of his size and the unrealized potential he seemingly has.

Daniel Gee: February 26th, 2023 - South Kent 18U vs. Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

Struggling to fully grasp Keenan's game. He's so physically underdeveloped and tall that the lack of strength really presents itself all over the ice. Projecting him requires blending habits with his future potential frame, which requires a lot of imagination. Keenan didn't spend a lot of time defending the rush, but when he did, he was very aggressive on the line. Stopped multiple entries with disruption and guided to the side boards. In the second he rejected a carry-in, created a turnover, and counter-attacked. In one motion, he deked to the backhand and passed to an open teammate in the slot, who fumbled the puck. His defensive skating appeared to be workable, but there just wasn't a lot of work in this game.

We see more of the strength issues in sustained pressure. He tries to throw his frame around, reverse-hit aggression, but he's often the one losing position. Half-measure seal attempts on the boards are also an issue, albeit he can close off the lanes if he leverages his whole body into the pin attempt. His aggression carries over on the penalty kill -- Keenan made a very aggressive shift on the left-hand circle to contest a shot -- stick just missing the release point.

He plays at a sluggish pace, lacking the power base to really turn and create advantages on opposing defenders. Keenan joins rushes at every opportunity though. There is skill here too. On one sequence in the first he joined a rush, took a neutral zone

pass, worked an entry and two-touched saucered a puck to a net driver. Lacks hip-pocket protection habits -- puck is always in front and susceptible to being knocked away. Not sure how well Keenan can actually read the play at a high level. Some very questionable passing decisions -- hooks to no one, chaos-placed pucks. Limits his upward offensive potential. Keenan shows some activation level in the OZ. Smart pinch attempts to keep pucks alive and forays off the blue line. One attempt had Keenan work a backhand deke through the defender, but he stopped moving his feet. He couldn't get timing right on a couple of one-timed shots, hitting the top of the puck on one attempt. Tools just seem so hampered by again, his strength. Overall he's still interesting, but he's just such a raw prospect, that it will be hard to sell as a pick for our board. A good developing team might have a field day with him though.

Daniel Gee: February 24th, 2023 - Culver Academy vs. Northwood School - USHS-Prep

Looping back to watch this Keenan game (last viewing this season). I'm not sold that there is enough separators here to suggest that he will be a higher-end player given more development time. He remains one of, if not the rawest players eligible for this draft just in terms of his physical makeup and habits.

Keenan is at his best in transition. He always gets in motion before executing his breakouts. He is seemingly unphased by pressure. In the same notion, he also has an awkwardness about him when he handles the puck -- whether it's his very upright skating stance that appears to be more on his heels than the balls of his feet or just a lack of strength, he lacks control, especially when activating his hands. Regardless, he has some nice flashes. In the first he used a cutback to manipulate pressure and walked into the lane of the forechecker on the retrieval. After the eventual exit, Keenan joined the rush, took a pass in the OZ, and tried a clunky inside-outside triangle handle. The play resulted in a turnover, but it showed some more advanced thought on the rush.

He one-touches pucks up north to south and even activates as a weakside option at times. On one third-period shift, Keenan executed a shoulder shimmy manipulation to beat an aggressive forechecker, snapping the puck D-to-D -- he sent that player flying. On the same play, he entered the offensive zone with the puck, but attacked directly into four defenders, leading to another turnover. There was just a tonne of shifts where execution waivered. When set up in the OZ, Keenan showed some solid awareness on the walls and activated regularly. He flashed some dynamism on the line in the second. Keenan executed a nifty handle on the right point, and in one motion, made a backhand cut into the middle of the ice. He ended up taking a low shot with rebound intentions

While defending the rush Keenan was generally strong in this one. He's aggressive in all aspects, from jumping up in the neutral zone, to supporting his teammates. On one first-period sequence, Keenan read that his partner was being taken wide, shifted over and chopped the attempted power move away. He had multiple sequences where he read passes coming from the flanks, dropped to a knee and clogged the lanes backdoor and to the crease, as well. Some mature habits in terms of not puck-watching on one-on-one sequences. In the third, Keenan was beaten badly with a handle, but took the body instead of the puck and eliminated the outside move. He had one static sequence in the first where he misjudged an attacker's speed after an aggressive push, but he's pretty in control in transition. Flashed a bunch of protection habits in sustained defensive zone pressure. Constantly places his body in between the puck and the defender.

There are definitely some sequences where he isn't set into a defensive posture, which means limited probing and pressure pushing. He understands that he needs to attack forwards on the inside when working on the perimeter, but he needs to get stronger. I think at the end of the day he's a D grade for us as he has a pretty nice base, but we can't really push him up any higher because he's missing a separating tool. Think back to Ian Moore and his shooting plus handedness for example.

Daniel Gee: February 19th, 2023 - Pittsburgh Pens Elite vs Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

Keenan is interesting, to say the least. It wasn't the best competition to evaluate him against, but Keenan was a force out there. The first thing that stands out is the potential of his frame -- 6-foot-3, but fairly skinny but there are tonnes of room to add strength over the next few years.

Habits are immature across all facets of the game -- a common theme among high school/prep players. He has some things

down, though; he keeps his feet steady in transition but pushes aggression with his range on the line. So many poorly protected pucks in this game and he leveraged that to knock away possession constantly. Body position is his biggest issue -- lets opponents work inside and can barely battle through pressure on retrievals due to a lack of strength. Regardless, he's always gapped well across his shifts and has some guiding habits to the outside. In sustained pressure, the issues on the perimeter were still pretty debilitating -- he tries to box out and disrupt, suggesting the habits are there. On a second-period PK, Keenan planted at the net but made a readout of his peripherals. Able to interfere with a net front threat but was slow getting to an end-board battle.

Showed more on the offensive side of the puck. He has some activation ideas, but there isn't a tonne of commitment other than some pinch plays on the perimeter. Jettisoned pucks when faced with pressure on the inside. Some board-to-middle movement and shooting. On one second-period shift, Keenan sent a low-placed shot on net, but the seas parted leaving a fairly undisturbed save. Keenan was a force in transition. On the first play of the game, he carried the puck out, handled across the back of a planted neutral zone defender, chipped a puck and jumped past an aggressive blueline push, and shot a hard, in-stride wrist blocker-in. He's adaptable in open ice, working pucks off his backhand against the grain. Spins off pressure activates the backdoor. Should have had another goal there but was too slow on the catch-and-release. Mostly works pucks in motion and has some ability to handle forehand-to-backhand. Joins the rush at every occasion which is a positive. There's a lot of room for Keenan to become a monster if the development goes right. Need to watch more.

Grade: D



Ryan Koering

AGE 17.592 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	3.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Eden Prairie High "C"	USHS-MN	27	6	10	16	0.59
Team TDS Transportation	UMHSEHL	12	1	7	8	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

Advanced defensive habits allowed Ryan Koering to play well enough to gain consideration as a finalist for the 2023 Minnesota Mr. Hockey award, given to the best high school player in the North Star State.

The 6-foot-3, Eden Prairie High defenceman doesn't have much offensive punch, but he sure can lock things down in the defensive zone. That's the part of his game that needs to be emphasized here. Koering is already far too advanced defensively for the high school circuit. While not the fleetest of foot, the Minnesotan defender pushes an aggressive transition game, punctuated by proactive defensive skatings, a disruptive, probing stick, and a penchant to drive opponents to the side boards where he can finish them with physicality.

When worked to the outside, he protects the inside lane, proactively initiates contact, and reaches to poke pucks away. If anything, the aggression is what comes back to bite him. Koering will make daring dashes to overwhelm puck carriers on odd-man breaks, sometimes losing threats activating past his peripheral vision.

This skill extends to Koering's work during prolonged in-zone defensive sequences. "While defending sustained pressure, it's apparent that not only is Koering's tracking well-developed, but the physical nature of his game adds an extra dimension to his play. In the second, he combated a perimeter cutback, containing the player low. After the puck escaped the pin, Koering snapped onto an off-puck threat, eliminating them from the play. On a subsequent shift, he even pivoted to throw a hip on a player trying to work a low-to-high pass, stealing the puck momentarily," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a December game report.

Unphased by pressure, the American defender has some transitional value. His stride is rough – upright posture, small, inefficient steps – and prohibitive crossover work represents a very real set of mechanical limitations. Regardless, Koering works pucks in motion, can slip a puck through a triangle, and execute a lateral side-step weight-shift past an F1. When set up in the offensive zone, he primarily works low, weak shots from the point, looking for tips. He can't leverage any upper body strength. There's an activation element and he tries to eat up open space on-puck, but the offensive tools grade below NHL-average, which is a big reason his production was poor.

Koering has the brain to be a defender at higher levels of hockey, the question is really how mechanically limited he will be as the pace ratchets up and talent pool compresses around him. If he improves his mobility, and can adapt his defensive habits to combat more nuanced attackers, there's a path for Koering to be a bottom-pair or a No. 7 defenceman. He's set to join the USHL's Muskegon Lumberjacks next year, before heading to Colorado College in time for the 2024-25 season.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** February 16th, 2023 - HS Minnetonka Skippers vs Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

Ho hum viewing for Koering who had his moments, both good and bad. He had some significant issues on the defensive end of the puck, mistakes that cost him almost immediately. In the first, he lost his gap, made a lethargic poke, and allowed the pass off. Koering was still not in range to disrupt the next carrier's shot, static, resulting in a clean shot and goal. Later, in the second, he let a secondary threat burn past him through the middle of the ice -- they ended up redirecting the puck in the net. Finally in the third, after scanning a secondary threat activating backdoor, he went to disrupt their screen attempt and tipped the puck in his net. Not ideal. Nevertheless, he still pushed a lot of translatable habits defending the rush. He protected the inside lane like it was a first-down marker. Constant guiding to the outside, physicality on the boards, and strong gap control (beyond that one mistake mentioned earlier).

Koering had an incredible stop in the second. After his partner made an aggressive push high, he faced a 2-on-1. He made a judgment call to pressure the puck carrier early and knocked the puck away before they could send the puck across. He killed a power move in the first period. Koering faced outside speed, so he pivoted early, blended some solid edge work, and as the player dropped their shoulder to drive, he reached and poked the puck free. His feet are always steady, not easily manipulated by handles or speed. Multiple situations where he took the body instead of the puck and ran some subtle interference plays. His in-zone defending was generally strong. Koering had a second-period sequence where he clamped on a secondary threat in the crease, made proactive contact as the shot came through, and prevented a redirect. He had another play in the same period where he essentially sealed off the inside, working up and down to keep a cycle passing play on the perimeter.

He didn't have a tonne of notable transition moments. Koering breaks out the puck in motion and will occasionally work an end-to-end carry if there's space. He floated a two-line saucer pass on one play. His crossovers are so tiny, but he has some ability to open his hips, and side step pressure. It's not something that will work at higher levels like the NCAA +. He once again patterned into just throwing weak, low-placed shots on net, looking for redirects. One notable sequence. Koering dragged the puck to the middle of the ice on a faceoff and drove down the far boards. He dropped his shoulder, and send a blind backhand pass through the slot -- it evaded everyone. Koering then intercepted a loose puck, opened his hips to scan and pushed off to the outside -- he drove the puck into the corner and mishandled it. I questioned if he actually has a plan on the puck, and this was another example of that and his hands failing him. Probably the worst viewing I've had, but he's interesting nonetheless.

Daniel Gee: January 12th, 2023 - Eden Prairie High vs. Holy Family Catholic - USHS-MN

Good performance for Keoring. His patterns in transition and the offensive zone are remarkably similar from game to game. In transition, he is an activator. His teammates found him a lot in this one. In the first, he slung a puck off of the reception forcing the HFC goalie to make a giant push across save. There are occasional flashes that make you pause. On a first-period play, he joined a rush, picked up the puck in the neutral zone, opened his hips to pivot on the entry, popped a puck through a triangle and cut laterally. The play was offside but it was an interesting problem-solving play. Nevertheless, some of the decisions are a bit questionable.

On a third-period controlled exit, Koering nutmegged a defender, turning and driving past them. It created a half-zone four-on-one, and he was on the outside. Instead of passing into space or working a pass-off-pad play, he took a high, perimeter shot on net... I liked some of his sustained offensive zone play. He drags and shoots off the pass reception with a focus of getting more in the middle. He even layers some stutter steps to open up shooting lanes when facing close pressure. I don't think he has much of a plan when he works the puck off the line. On one sequence he walked down the near boards, opened his hips to swivel his body to protect the puck, and then just deferred to another wall-located teammate. No surveying or scanning to find an inside seam; just kind of ran the puck deep into the corner. Besides that, he took a few heavily layered shots from the point. I don't think any made it through but some did create some crease chaos.

Koering's defensive game is extremely nuanced and frankly overdeveloped for the high school level. Despite not being the fleetest of foot and not facing an inordinate amount of threats with speed, he is overly proactive in establishing his gap. On one of his first shifts of the game, Koering read a cross-rink pass in the neutral zone, stepped up and cleared it right back to the

end boards. He's generally always ahead of the play. Doesn't let players sneak past his peripherals. Koering had a remarkable stop on an entry in the first. He read that the puck carrier was cutting across for a high in-zone shot, stepped in front of them and disrupted the release. Aggressive on the line, subtle interference plays, and guiding -- if he was a better skater this is a slam-dunk transitional defender at higher levels. In-zone defending sequences are punctuated by perimeter seals and physicality, but he didn't spend a tonne of time hemmed in his own zone. He's probably a D prospect for our board, but I doubt he makes it on with the glut of players we won't get to rank. Regardless, he's worth watching again to see if these patterns hold.

Daniel Gee: December 10th, 2022 - Duluth East High vs. Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

Koering is a smart player already flush with great defensive habits. This game wasn't competitive, but he did his job limiting chances. Despite being a below-average mover, he's strong defending the rush. In the first, he actually chopped down a pass in the middle of the neutral zone, dropping instantly down to one knee to prevent a cross-crease right after. Off the stop, his linemates went up the ice and scored. He constantly keeps attackers to the outside, and even when he is turned, Koering tends to still guide towards the boards where he can lay the boom. There's a level of processing that is going on to allow him to drop into these lane clogs early. Koering had another shift where he dropped his stick on the ice and blocked a cross-crease. He probes with his stick, but wasn't as aggressive in this viewing. The biggest takeaway is how calm he is under pressure -- legitimately zero sign of panic as forecheckers bear down on him. While defending sustained pressure, it's apparent that not only is Koering's tracking well-developed, but the physical nature of his game adds an extra dimension to his play.

In the second, he combated a perimeter cutback, containing the player low. After the puck escaped the pin, Koering snapped onto an off-puck threat, eliminating them from the play. On a subsequent shift, he even pivoted to throw a hip on a player trying to work a low-to-high pass, stealing the puck momentarily. I felt he was a bit soft at the net front, unwilling to engage or even harass the screen. Later he started to box out more, timing activations off the net to push pressure and contest shots. One of Koering's best reads was in the third on a penalty kill. He read a shot-pass backdoor and proactively took out the threat looking for the redirect. Always a second ahead.

There's some activation value here on the rush. Koering joined multiple transitional attacks, even slicing into the slot on one sequence (the puck pinballed in his feet off the pass). His stride is prohibitive, but he executes tiny lateral shuffles to beat F1s while he is getting in motion. Once set up in the offensive zone, he's a bit limited. The shooting tool is below average. He can whip a low, tippable shot, but there is just no downforce or weight transfer coming from the upper body. He doesn't layer enough deception on-puck at the point. An example is a sequence in the second period -- everyone on the ice knew he was going to make a cross-hash pass because he gave it away with his eyes fixated on his pass target. He has the right idea -- I think back to an off-puck foray into the hashmark (he made a proactive read that a centring pass was coming), but I question if the tools will lead to much at higher levels. His profile is difficult from an upside perspective. Poor skater who has size but a lot of physical growth -- smart, but limited shooting and hands. Defensive defender projection if anything. Maybe one of those USHS players that goes to the USHL next year and layers on their game -- IE Leo Gruba, Joe Palodichuk.

Daniel Gee: December 3rd, 2022 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs. Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

First time getting a look at Koering. He's tall, slight, and doesn't move all that well. The stride is actually pretty scary. He takes tiny, prohibitive steps, barely crossing his feet. Koering struggled to push off laterally, and while he has some ability to work his defensive skating to establish a gap, he didn't face much outside speed in this game. Nevertheless, his habits are strong, he laughs in the face of pressure while on-puck, and he's pretty proactive as a player.

Koering relies on his probing stick to break up possessions in transition. Multiple sequences where he was able to recoil and knock pucks away. He's physical, throwing his hip into perimeter threats and finishing opponents on the endboards. He faced multiple odd-man rushes. The first, Koering completely stopped with a knee and stick down the block to prevent the backdoor reception. The others .. not so ideal. He dropped far too early, leading to easy manoeuvres and crosses, leading to a couple of high-danger chances. It's ironic -- he's dropping down to prevent the pass, but only makes his situation worse by being too proactive in his attempts. He's stronger while under sustained pressure. Tracks activators, chops and disputes loose pucks and protects the middle. In the third, Koering had a sequence where he rejected two-to-three forays into the middle. The premature blocking is still an issue -- he drops so early that better and more patient puck carriers would have a field day. Regardless,

Koering clogs lanes -- in the second he killed a cross-crease with his stick. He flashes a physical element too. As a CDH player tried a cutback in the corner, Koering just eliminated him instead. Secondary threat disruption was hit-and-miss, but it is in his game at some level. He can't leverage his size yet to really box out at the net front.

He's slick in transition -- to an extent. He doesn't care about pressure -- backhand board-bank exits, small hook passes, he gets it out cleanly. Smart weakside rush activations are littered throughout his game. In the third, he joined a rush, had CDH defenders overloaded on the strong side, and essentially had a mini-breakaway when the pass arrived. Unfortunately, the runway and space dissipated because of his stride inefficiencies and he fumbled the shot. His hands are an issue -- has limited touch and control. Don't like the protection habits. Tried to loop the net on one third-period play and just left the puck behind. Once set up in the offensive zone, Koering shows some good pinching habits. The shot is below average -- he set up for a couple of one-timers and it's apparent he has power issues. His top arm is completely locked, and his stick barely receives downforce -- he has a fast wrist fold, but that's because there is just nothing behind it. Some stutter-step manipulation was used on the line but it wasn't a consistent thing. Habits seem fine here -- eats space, walks downhill, and activates to some level, he just doesn't really have the mobility, handling, or shooting tools to create a lot. He is probably not a pick for our board, but he's a fine player for the USHS-MN level. Will watch more -- maybe I am underestimating his tools.

Grade: D



Jackson Nevers

AGE 17.137

DATE OF BIRTH Jul 27, 2005

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW

Position

Right

Shoots

6'0"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5.5

Skating

5

Shooting

4

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

3.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Team SIT Financial Services	UMHSEHL	18	9	8	17	0.94
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Edina High "C"	USHS-MN	28	20	20	40	1.43

SCOUTING REPORT

If you want speed and reckless abandon, Jackson Nevers is your guy. An above-average skater, who constantly flashes a power game, the Edina-born centre scored 20 goals and 40 points across 28 games for his hometown high school club.

"Always off of the same right wing, Nevers was a straight-up monster," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a December game report. "In the second he cut off the far boards, upped his pace, pivoted the defender, popped the puck through their triangle, jumped in front of them in the lane, and snapped a shot top right corner for a goal. Unreal power move. He did it again later in the period, the same move, but he went 5-hole -- a smart placement that was ultimately saved."

Nevers pace is such a separator, one that he's able to constantly leverage for advantages at the high school level. He envelopes puck carriers, gets under their stick, sprints through open lanes off-puck, and he plays in hard areas of the ice. Issues arise when he faces more nuanced defenders.

"Extremely inefficient in transition, nothing really went right. From poor pass receptions to attacks into pressure, to lacking protection, to incredible tunnel vision – he just wasn't good. Just completely ignores pass supporters to send top-of-the-circle or higher shots on net. Even when he drives inside, his hands can't keep up. Not a lot of thought when he does distribute – absolutely handcuffed a teammate with no space trying to work a give-and-go. Just so many wasted touches," Gee noted in another December report.

Constant overestimations of his hands, fruitless forays through immense pressure, a lack of a small-area game, and a lot of low-percentage plays are littered across his minutes.

Nevertheless, even with a lack of nuanced habits, Nevers' effort, strength on pucks, and physicality are game changes for whatever team he is on. Nothing about his offensive game is all that translatable for the NHL game, but there is a path where with adjustments, he could be a bottom-line checker who can impact the game with physicality and straight-line attacking. The right-shot forward has a commitment to the University of Minnesota, but will likely see time with the Waterloo Black Hawks in the coming years.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** March 9th, 2023 - Moorehead High vs. Edina High - USHS - MN

I get why Nevers has his fans at some level. He's so dangerous in transition because of the plus skating ability, physical tendencies, and large-ice manoeuvrability. So many situations in this viewing alone where Nevers was able to dangle the F1, break into the offensive zone with speed, and create something off a simple shooting or passing play. In the first, after picking up a puck, he used an inside-outside move to deke past a stick, and just let the forechecker bounce right off of him... He makes a mountain of poor decisions on-puck -- long perimeter shots, forced passes, but eventually things start to click for Nevers.

In the third, after a carry-in, crossover heavy weave, Nevers took a long shot on the entry. He upped his pace, got to the inside of the puck-retrieving defender, stick-lifted them, and tapped the puck to a downhill attacking teammate. The play showed just how much higher his motor is at the USHS level. On almost the next sequence he deked an aggressive forechecker on the red line, exploded in at a sharp angle and leveraged his above-average shot to squeeze a shot that deflected off the goaltender's arm and wide. The attacking didn't stop; Nevers ended the third with a weakside tap-in goal. Nevers even translated his physical play into scoring in the third. Off a big neutral zone hit, a teammate picked up the turnover over the puck, walked in, deked and scored. The habits suggest none of this will work at the NHL level but maybe he develops more nuance in college? The tools suggest there is some chance of that, despite the sense grade being lower than normal.

Nevers didn't have many notable sequences in sustained pressure -- very much a north-to-south attacker. He had a couple of dangerous slot-activated, well-timed, tip chances. Some awful puck-watching defensive zone sequences. Not a pick for our board, but I would not be shocked if he was selected for the tools and his college pathing at the University of Minnesota. He'll score at the college level.

Daniel Gee: December 29th, 2022 - Edina High vs Rogers High - USHS-MN

Nevers left a poor impression in this viewing. Extremely inefficient in transition, nothing really went right. From poor pass receptions to attacks into pressure, to lacking protection, to incredible tunnel vision -- he just wasn't good. Just completely ignores pass supporters to send top-of-the-circle or higher shots on net. Even when he drives inside, his hands can't keep up. Not a lot of thought when he does distribute -- absolutely handcuffed a teammate with no space trying to work a give-and-go. Just so many wasted touches.

In sustained pressure, Nevers is remarkably simple. He's great in the slot as a screener and tip threat. In this game alone, he redirected a couple of shots in from planted mid and low slot positions. Anything beyond that is disastrous. Triangle handles failing, bad forechecking routes. Skating is possibly an issue. His shoulders bob in the crossover, heel kicks on recoveries, wide recoveries, and his motor was so average. Stays on for double shifts and makes no impact because he's straight-legged so often. Nevers isn't urgent enough defensively other than an occasional hit on the perimeter. Took an egregiously lazy tripping penalty in this one. Was absolutely dominated by fellow draft-eligible Chase Cheslock in transition. No draft if this is a trend, bad first viewing; sense grade is well below average in this viewing and the tools just aren't good enough. Will watch more -- could be a one-off.

Daniel Gee: December 17th, 2022 - Edina High vs Moorhead High - USHS-MN

Despite being a straight-line attacker, with little nuance, Nevers flashed an extremely strong power game across this viewing. To the point where I can see why some like Nevers is liked by some. Always off of the same right wing, Nevers was a straight-up monster. In the second he cut off the far boards, upped his pace, pivoted the defender, popped the puck through their triangle, jumped in front of them in the lane, and snapped a shot top right corner for a goal. Unreal power move. He did it again later in the period, the same move, but he went 5-hole -- a smart placement that was ultimately saved. Were these translatable? Maybe at some level, but the lack of nuance across the rush sequences would easily be turned away against a better defender.

Nevers pace is a separator for him at the high school level -- it's part of the equation of his success in transition. For instance, in the third, he wheeled a puck on the near boards, caught a goalie out of position, and whipped a short-side backhand on the

net to score another goal. He's a strong player -- on one sequence he stick-lifted a puck in the offensive zone on the backcheck, but fell. He got up, checked the next puck carrier, and as a Moorhead player went to hit him in a vulnerable position, Nevers destroyed him with a reverse. On more open ice forays he's easy to read -- telegraphs his shooting and passing. The lack of a manipulation game will limit him at higher levels. He's just very much a north-south attacker, head-first into the fight transition player.

He overestimates his hands in sustained pressure. High-difficulty handles are often knocked away with authority. He takes low percentage shots from the outside, despite garling pass options in softer, more dangerous parts of the ice. Nevers showed some ability to work off the walls and into the middle of the ice. In the second he took a pass through his legs on the left point, worked into a power move, handled past a poke check, and drove into the slot -- the puck was deflected, but if he did this more often, he'd make a lot of impact. One of his shots created a rebound and a goal. Only had one playmaking flash -- after getting the puck on the left-hand circle he made a two-touch pass to the weakside - an amazing feed. His lack of playmaking is obviously more of a function of a lack of scanning or sense issues.

He just about killed a couple of Moorhead players on the back check. He lacks nuance here too, however. Chases, tries to disrupt every touch, but utterly failed to clear a couple of pucks. He tries hard, that's not a question, he just goes about it in the most inefficient way possible.

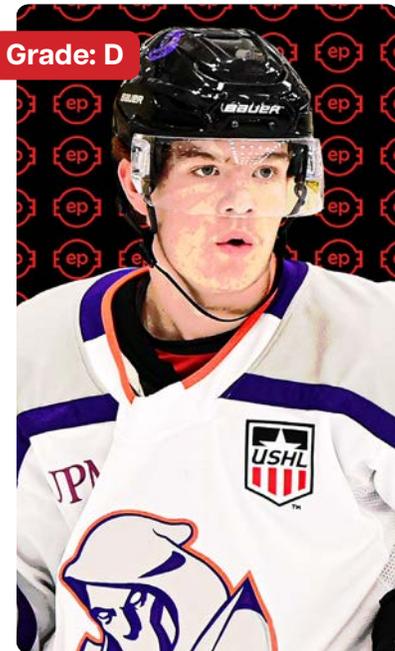
Daniel Gee: November 28th, 2022 - Edina High vs. Holy Family Catholic Fire - USHS-MN

Nevers plays with a tonne of pace and it's a separator at this level. He's constantly sprinting both on and off-puck regardless if it's a good idea or not. Obviously, this translates to a lot fast-break offence on the rush. On one of Nevers' first shifts of the game, he took a pass in-stride, worked the puck north-to-south and worked a smart backpass off the entry. He doesn't have many small-area skills or protection habits. He constantly presents the puck in front of him, and never really works it into his hip pocket when he faces pressure -- so easy to knock away possession. As a result, he runs into pressure often, and a lot of decision-making on-puck just isn't good enough; low percentage shots, jamming up with teammates off-puck, and a lot of turnovers on the majority of his forays.

Nevers has his moments though. One of his best sequences was in the first. After taking a puck on the near boards, he drove a defender wide with his speed, punching inward on the goal line. Nevers actually was able to cut across the net but shot it over in small space. He flashed some playmaking skill, even if he is a bit selfish with his puck touches. On one second-period shift he made a perfect no-look hook pass to a man in the middle of the ice for a high-danger shot. Stripped a couple of pucks into counterattacks. In the third, Nevers worked into a 1-on-2, cut into the middle, but took a shot right off the entry. No nuance or delay game to wait for support.

Tries to push a power game in sustained pressure. Nevers, on one sequence, intercepted a puck on the blue line and dropped his shoulder to work downhill. The puck was easily disrupted, but he still got a weak backpass off to an activator in the middle who failed to score. He has a high level of battle in his game, especially on the perimeter. On one first-period shift, Nevers drilled a defender from behind in open ice, took the puck, cut into heavy pressure and got a five-hole shot off.

Lots of backchecking pressure across Nevers game. He's heavy on his stick in the defensive zone -- lifts and clamps working pucks free. On one second-period penalty kill he managed to steal the puck on two separate occasions and ragged it back to his defenders. He's puck-focused and will have to become more proactive with his scanning, but no one can deny the effort. Regardless, I don't think he's a pick. Tools aren't good enough to support some of his poor decisions on-puck.



Grade: D

Chase Pirtle

AGE 17.523 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Mount St. Charles Acad	NEPACK 18U	9	4	3	7	0.78
Mount St. Charles Acad	18U AAA	47	20	24	44	0.94

SCOUTING REPORT

Like Ottawa Senators' draft pick Cam O'Neill or Philadelphia Flyers selection Owen McLaughlin, Chase Pirtle could be the next in a line of Mount St. Charles Academy players drafted into the NHL.

After a one-game stint with the Youngstown Phantoms and U16 hockey last season, the New Jersey-born forward graduated to U18 hockey, where he put up a respectable 44 points across 47 games. A functional, responsible player who has the occasional flash of playmaking brilliance, Pirtle possesses some draftable qualities NHL teams may have an interest in moulding.

He doesn't possess the cleanest stride; a lack of dorsiflexion in his ankle causes a curved back, his knees rarely bend past his toes, and his chest is firmly pointed at the ground. Still, Pirtle still pushes some strong large-ice manoeuvrability in transition.

"In transition when Pirtle gets on his horse, he can flash some high-level creation," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a January game report. "In the first after executing a shoulder shake, Pirtle wheeled to the near boards to avoid pressure, popped into a power move on the goal line, and hooked a puck to teammates crashing the crease. The power game or attempts at it kept showing up. On a subsequent transitional attack, Pirtle was unable to cut hard enough, working back and drawing a penalty as he fed the point. He's a talented playmaker who is trying to create off the first touch. Give-and-go attempted, slips out of the middle to wing drivers, punch stop-ups to break down gaps and passes into the slot -- struggled with some execution more than anything."

His playmaking pops in sustained pressure; he isn't one to cut off the perimeter, and he tries to play too fast, but a funnel inside off the backhand through a layer? He can execute that with authority.

Mature habits persist across Pirtle's game. A stout, off-puck driver in the middle of the ice, he constantly looks to push defenders back to create space for his teammates. He's physical and aims to get under defenders' sticks on the forecheck.

While Pirtle's individual tools may not be overly impressive, with an Ivy League commitment to Cornell University for the 2023-24 season, there's reason to believe the sum of his parts could create a useful bottom-of-the-lineup player once the NCAA development cycle runs its course.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** February 26th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs. Shattuck St.Mary's - USHS- Prep

Pirtle was okay in this one. He had his moments -- especially when it came to his playmaking ideas and how he blended some handle and protection habits, but he still seems too limited to rank.

The stride remains a limiter at some level. Chest to ground, not seated, knees unable to get over toes. He has some great large-ice manoeuvrability though. On his first shift of the game, Pirtle was able to handle across the net, deke to the backhand and draw a tripping call. His habits are already developed and he looks to create space for teammates. On one first-period shift he passed off, drove the middle, and pushed two defenders back leaving room for his teammate to work a clean shot. He had a creative one-touch passing sequence on a 2-on-2; integrated a hook pass back to a trailer to get a high slot shot off with the defenders retreated. His hands are better than I have given him credit for in past viewings -- he can really string together handles north-to-south. In the second, Pirtle cut across the back of a defender and popped the puck through their triangle, but made a poor decision to hook a pass through a layer. He had a lane to crash through. Like his protection habits -- hip-pocket holds with the ability to pull the puck to the inside. Finds the best pass option quickly.

Mount St. Charles sets Pirtle up as a one-time option off the right-hand circle. He scored in the first after taking a spinning backdoor pass -- an easy backdoor goal. He's fairly perimeter five-on-five, just constantly working puck battles in the lower half of the zone. In the first, he laid a hard hit on the forecheck, and stole the puck, but made an odd decision to not centre the puck. He gets under defenders' sticks which lets him win retrieval races consistently, despite not being the fastest player. On a second-period stick lift, Pirtle slipped a puck into pressure to a rotator on the left-hand circle. He loves to loop the zone, often up to the blue line, only to just pass to another perimeter teammate. No attempts to cut inside. I think he's selected late in the draft but his ceiling is a playmaker or a quad-a guy. Won't have enough separating tools at higher levels, but he could provide a forechecking element if he improves his stride in college.

Daniel Gee: January 8th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs Northwood School Prep - USHS-Prep

Pirtle remains a functionally sound player at the prep level. His stride is an issue for translatability's sake -- knees not fully engaged over pushed over his toes. It's almost prohibitive at times. He didn't generate a whole lot in this game, despite playing most of it. In transition when Pirtle gets on his horse, he can flash some high-level creation. In the first after executing a shoulder shake, Pirtle wheeled to the near boards to avoid pressure, popped into a power move on the goal line, and hooked a puck to teammates crashing the crease. The power game or attempts at it kept showing up. On a subsequent transitional attack, Pirtle was unable to cut hard enough, cutting back and drawing a penalty as he fed the point. He's a talented playmaker who is trying to create off the first touch. Give-and-go attempted, slips out of the middle to wing drivers, punch stop-ups to break down gaps and passes into the slot -- struggled with some execution more than anything.

In sustained offensive zone pressure, Pirtle flashed some great board work. On one first-period powerplay, he executed a downhill feint, cutting high instead. He passed off, wanting a give-and-go pass back in the slot, but didn't receive it. The playmaking continued to show well under pressure. He had a slick backhand off the far boards in the first to the high slot. After the shot, Pirtle picked up the rebound, lapped the zone and dropped off to an attacker. He should have scored on a backdoor play but he failed to catch-and-release quick enough. Not really a separating shooter at this level -- just limited power generation despite being in dangerous spots because of his off-puck movement. He crashed hard on the forecheck, but couldn't win retrieval races. He's interesting, I'd like to see him with higher-end players in the USHL, but right now the tools just aren't separating enough to justify a pick for our board. Will keep watching him but he's a player to revisit next year in a different environment.

Daniel Gee: December 8th, 2022 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs Northwood School Prep - USHS-Prep

First time getting a look at Chase Pirtle. He's a driver at this level but with the level of competition, he is a bit of a challenging read at the onset. He operates at a fairly average pace. Ankle flexibility seems to be the biggest limiter when looking at his stride inefficiencies. This causes a rounded back, and he operates with his upper body a bit compressed, and knees not always

engaged. This affects his handling, but he is generally a functional and confident puck carrier. Pirtle showed early that he can read the play proactively and counter-attack with some pace. In the first he made a perfect anticipation read and intercepted a breakout, slipping the puck to a pass supporter and dashing to the weak side for a mini 2-on-1. He's remarkably adaptable. In the first, Pirtle flipped a puck by pressure, momentarily losing control on the subsequent retrieval. Pirtle then reached and crossed a puck to the goal line to hit a man for a sharp-angle one-timer shot -- the rebound popping out to Montgomery. There is some semblance of a delay game off the entry. On one sequence, Pirtle stopped up, had the entire Northwood defender core frozen and passed off. He understands to attack the back of defenders and even adjusts his rush patterns. He's more physically limited than anything -- nothing about his tool set is very separating when projecting him out. He added a goal in transition as well -- a tap-in on a 2-on-1 that he did well to up his pace for.

His in-zone offensive play was hit-and-miss for Pirtle in this game. He had a lot of sequences where he handled himself into limited room around the boards. The good news is that Pirtle is very good at working pucks out of pressure -- part of this is how developed his physical habits are. Constant proactive contact allows him to win an absurd amount of board battles on the forecheck. The habits are mature -- dropped shoulder, widens stance for better balance, fends off with his arm. He can get a bit fixated, cutting back directly into pressure -- more scanning is required. Playmaking pops in sustained pressure as well. In the first, he made an impressive layered pass across the tops of the circles. The anticipation game that he pushed in transition is present here as well. On one second-period sequence, Pirtle recognized that the defender was going to ring the puck to a supporter high in the zone. He swooped in, cut to the inside, but fired the puck just a tad high. Strong off-puck habits too. Files backdoor set to shoot. Almost scored late in the third, but he couldn't take the reception on the forehand. Pirtle still ended up layering a puck from the near corner to the opposite point. Looks like a potential pick, maybe not for our board, but I need to watch more. Projection is probably a bottom-six centre if anything.

Grade: D



Aron Jessli

AGE 17.879 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 29, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Pickering Panthers	OJHL	52	25	43	68	1.31

SCOUTING REPORT

Nothing really suggested that Aron Jessli could become an NHL prospect before this year. The Norway native wasn't a high scorer at any level. His production stayed close to the 0.5 points per game mark as he moved from the GTHL, Finland's U18 circuit, and the OJHL, but something clicked for the left-winger this season. He suddenly led the Pickering Panthers in scoring with 68 points in 52 games

This offensive explosion didn't come out of nowhere. Jessli has the vision to make plays through and around defenders and he also honed his technical skating and handling abilities over the past years. A deceptive passer and rusher, he uses fake direction changes to beat pressure and slide past defensive lines. And in the offensive zone, his sound skating posture and physical skills enable him to absorb and dish out hits, play a harder game, and neutralize opponents on the backcheck.

"A much more impressive game from Jessli, one that makes me think he could be an NHL prospect with a proper development path," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a March report. "I like the posture. Knees over toes, not too wide, good back angle."

Jessli's flashes of hockey sense, playmaking ability, and his capacity to fight through pressure to get to the net could make him an interesting bet in the late round of the draft.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 12th, 2023 - Pickering Panthers vs Markham Royals - OJHL

Jessli can battle through checks to get open, outspeed defenders and get to the net to receive pucks. I like his skating stride way more than the majority of OJHLer. The posture seems sound. He scored two goals very late in the game in this one, one in an empty net and the other one on a deflection right after. He pursues pucks quite hard and makes second efforts defensively...I didn't see as much of his playmaking game.

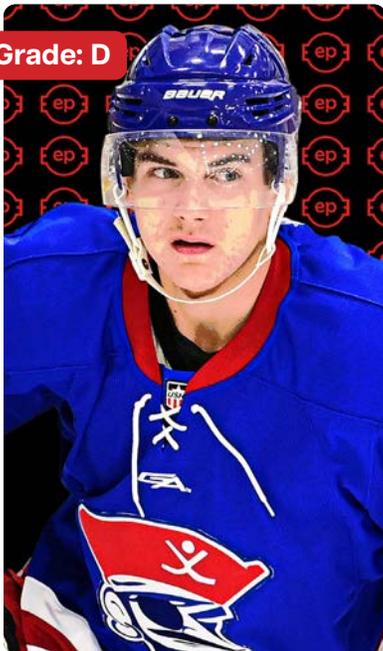
David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Pickering Panthers vs Markham Royals - OJHL

A much more impressive game from Jessli, one that makes me think he could be an NHL prospect with a proper development path. I like the posture. Knees over toes, not too wide, good back angle and it translates to deception. Still, an effective passer, who uses teammates, but I've seen more elaborate rush patterns out of him, gap manipulation, in this one. The hockey sense might reach a 5 on our scale. He's quite physical even if he lacks skills in that department and he skates at the right place, right time. He lost the puck in the wrong spots a couple of times, but I believe in his playmaking. He sees through defensive layers and options behind him. Second efforts defensively.

David St-Louis: February 3rd, 2023 - Pickering Panthers vs Brantford 99ers - OJHL

I like Jessli's vision and passing ability. He made passes through and around defensive lines in this one, constantly used teammates to progress the play, and reached them with indirect (board) passes and lob ones. He has a playmaker's arsenal. He spots open ice and attacks it and can play a sort of cycle game. I'm not so sure about the overall skill level, however.

Grade: D



Davis Burnside

AGE 18.984 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 22, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ohio State Univ.	NCAA	40	14	7	21	0.53

SCOUTING REPORT

Here's a sampling of some of the affiliated Under-20 skaters in the NCAA that Davis Burnside outscored in his freshman year with Ohio State: Isaac Howard, Dylan James, Jack Hughes, and Rieger Lorenz. Those are all first and second-round picks.

So yeah, there's a decent chance Burnside has put himself on the NHL's radar ahead of the 2023 NHL Draft. Just don't count on that scoring at the next level, though. Sure, it augurs well for his long-term NHL prospects, but it's not indicative of the player's ability.

Because there may be enough skill there to score in college – especially when Stephen Halliday is the one setting you up – but it's what Burnside does to improve his team's two-way health that makes him a compelling draw in the later rounds of this year's draft.

An enthusiastic, intelligent forechecker, Burnside launches himself at opponents on offensive zone puck retrievals, making second and third efforts to pry pucks loose from defencemen. The Buckeyes winger tracks well, backchecks diligently, and supports his defenders during sustained in-zone pressure. He's not going to feast offensively, but he's going to set the table for everyone else.

Here's the problem: There are a lot of players who can do that, perhaps even do it better than Burnside, and many of them have more puck skills and cunning as a scoring threat. You'd also want someone with his profile to move a lot better than he does to have any confidence in a bottom-of-the-lineup projection. Especially in a 6-foot-tall frame.

Still, Burnside would make sense near the end of the draft if you're looking for reasonably safe bets to provide organizational depth at some point in their career. He's smart enough, hard-working enough, and mean enough to get there if a couple things break right.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Harvard vs. Ohio State - NCAA Regionals

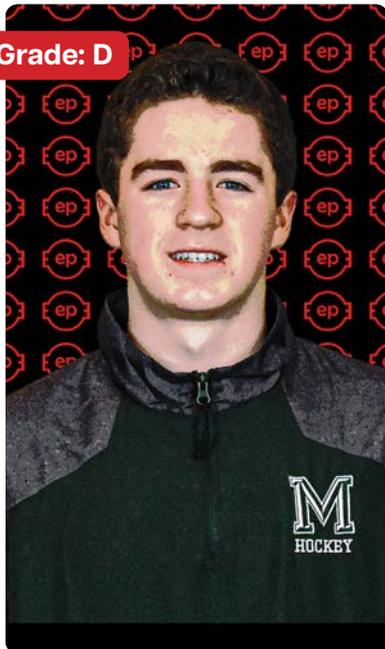
In a game where everything seemed to go right for Ohio State, I thought Burnside was one of their least effective forwards.

There was the one assist, a secondary helper on an offensive zone puck retrieval, but that was about it for offensive moments. Increasingly, I get the sense that all you're going to get out of Burnside is a good-not-great wall game and a high work rate. I've yet to see any particularly compelling skill plays with the puck. His production is such that you probably want to track this player as a potential NCAA free agent down the road, but I'm not in any rush to drop even a late-round pick here.

J.D. Burke: February 16th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Ohio State - NCAA

I'm not sure that I saw a lot of creativity or skill from Burnside, but I thought that his work rate, willingness to seek out contact, and support game across all three zones stood out as distinct positives. That, and Burnside was a willing combatant at the net-front. You go there, and you're going to put up points. Burnside almost picked up a goal on one play, too. Timed his arrival into the slot perfectly to get a one-touch scoring chance sent his way from Stephen Halliday, although he might've had a better look if he'd stopped a step or two earlier. Burnside also completely flubbed a tap-in opportunity at the backdoor. I wonder if his production isn't the byproduct of playing alongside Halliday and Tate Singleton.

Grade: D



Matt Copponi

AGE 19.285 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 04, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Merrimack College	NCAA	37	14	15	29	0.78

SCOUTING REPORT

There's rising from relative obscurity, and then there's what Matt Copponi did this season as a sophomore at Merrimack.

From nine points in a bit role at the bottom of the Warrior's lineup to a top-six staple generating the second-most offence on the team – Copponi took the ball and ran with it, all the way to one of the most productive under-20 seasons in the nation.

How did Copponi make it happen? Well, it's not immediately clear when you glean the tape. There aren't any separating skills in his toolkit. Nothing that jumps off the screen at you, anyway.

"I'm not sure the skill level or the physical tools really popped in this one," EP Rinkside Editor-in-Chief J.D. Burke remarked in a game report. "Copponi isn't necessarily lumbering out there, but he's a bit top-heavy as a skater, and his hands and feet seem to operate in lockstep – kind of a clumsy handler in space."

For Copponi, it's all about being in the right place at the right time, supporting the puck low in the defensive zone and below the hashmarks in the offensive third. Always offering himself as an outlet to his defenceman in transition. Probing for and finding shooting opportunities off-puck, sneaking in and out of his opponents' blindspots to pop open for scoring chances.

Put another way? He's just really damn smart. Copponi operates well within the structure they have in place at Merrimack and doesn't make mistakes. You can set your watch to him.

Is that enough to one day carve out a career as an NHL centre? Well, that's hard to say. Copponi would hardly be the first to make the show with an all-sense build, but it doesn't augur well that there aren't any separating skills or physical tools that have revealed themselves at this level.

If Copponi can add a step as a skater or develop his shot though? You pair that with his feel for the game and willingness to play inside, and you just might be cooking with fire.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA

**Merrimack making its surprising case among NCAA's elite**

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Merrimack vs. Quinnipiac - NCAA Regionals

Copponi was probably one of Merrimack's best forwards in this game, but that's not necessarily a high bar to clear in a 5-0 loss. I'm not sure the skill level or the physical tools really popped in this one. Copponi isn't necessarily lumbering out there, but he's a bit top-heavy as a skater and his hands and feet seem to operate in lockstep. Kind of a clumsy handler in space. Mostly, I thought Copponi stood out for the way that he supported the play. He took smart, well-timed routes off of the puck offensively, and intelligent, proactive steps to eliminate plays in the defensive zone. It's probably not a coincidence that he played as much as he did and escaped with an even rating. I don't know that he's a pick for me, but I can see the argument. He'll play professional hockey.

J.D. Burke: January 27th, 2023 - Merrimack vs. Vermont - NCAA

Not a particularly inspired performance from Copponi, who left virtually no mark on this game – doughnuts across the scoresheet, save for a penalty, a minus-one goal differential, and the one low-danger shot. There were some instances of intelligence away from the puck, particularly supporting his linemates below the hash marks in the offensive zone, but an inability to register shooting opportunities or create passing lanes limited his output. With his scant few puck touches, Copponin collected possession from a standstill, failed to separate from opponents, and often found himself rushed into dump-ins and panicked plays. The tools just don't look all that strong at this level. I'm not sure that we're looking at a draft pick here.



Tyler Duke

AGE 18.159 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ohio State Univ.	NCAA	40	4	8	12	0.30

SCOUTING REPORT

Tyler Duke Truthers are numerous. You just can't count many NHL decision-makers among their ranks. Not yet anyway.

Does that change at this year's draft? Perhaps. Duke acquitted himself reasonably well in his first year at Ohio State, playing a top-four role at evens and featuring in both phases of special teams, amassing 12 points in 40 games, a plus-seven goal differential coupled with a 63 percent Corsi at evens, according to our partners at InStat Hockey.

An enthusiastic offensive activator, Duke's never seen an opportunity to jump into the play that was too good to pass up. Whether it's joining his teammates as they charge up ice or sprinting into the fray from the offensive blue line – he's always on the attack.

The occasional flash of deceptive playmaking and handling skill showed up in his tape, but the ability to sequence these skills to productive ends often eluded him.

It wasn't uncommon to see Duke dangle his way past a forward at the offensive blue line and then rush his way to an uncontrolled play with the time and space he'd created for himself. Just as often, you would see him use cunning and deception to outmanoeuvre one forechecker before trying to outrace another.

And with so underdeveloped a skating stride as Duke's, that hasn't worked particularly well for him to this point in his career. You could just as easily be tricked into thinking he's flying out there, as is often the case with small players who skate with a high activity rate, but a more scrutinous look at the mechanics reveals legion inefficiencies – it's a short stride with a ride recovery and a lack of core engagement.

Simply put: For all Duke's individual skill and posture as an offensive activator, there's a reason it hasn't resulted in gaudy point totals to this point in his career. There's a loose collection of skills and sense, but we've yet to see it cohere into a projectable package.

The same cannot be said of Duke's capacity to defend. He's reactive, prone to launching himself at attackers from a straight line, and holds up about as well as one might expect a 5-foot-9, 179-pound blueliner in puck battles. Nothing short of a complete overhaul of the way Duke plays with the puck will confer him a chance at NHL success.

There are some things to work with here. Duke isn't a write-off, by any means. In fact, I would rate his chances of signing an entry-level deal as relatively high, be it via the draft or college free agency.

Make no mistake though: Duke is a project, and the payoff is likely that of a depth defender. That's a great outcome once you get out of the second round, though.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Harvard vs. Ohio State - NCAA Regionals

You know, there might be something there with Duke. If only he could sequence every part of his game into one cohesive package. Duke aggressively activated into the play, made some well thought-out gambles at the offensive blue line, and mostly took good care of the puck. I'm not sure that the rest of his game held up though. The way Duke defends in space barely works at this level, and I've no confidence it will scale up. Whether it's lunging at opponents from a standstill, committing early with his feet at the offensive blue line, or a tendency to drop to one knee in situations that just don't call for it – it's basically the opposite of textbook form. Duke has good ideas in transition, but the execution is variable. There are some elements of his game that I like, but not enough to invest in a draft pick. The bet you're making is that significant skills development can turn those activations into something, and that you can make him a less reactive defender.

J.D. Burke: February 16th, 2023 - Michigan vs. Ohio State - NCAA

Probably one of my more interesting Duke viewings. He moved the puck well, activated into the play at every opportunity, and made a few big stops in transition. Skating looked a bit better than the 4.5 grade we assigned him in his draft year, too. Had one particularly good play, an end-to-end rush that ended with a look-off to move a stick out of his shooting lane before sending the puck on-goal. From the top of the offensive zone, Duke stepped into space prior to each shoot. I don't know if I saw anything to suggest that Duke warrants consideration even at the end of our board this year, but I'm not going to write him off entirely.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Nothing unusual in this Duke performance. The skating is a weakness and the way he defends won't translate. He plays fast, but he's always a second away from throwing away possession or losing the puck. There's a lot to like about how he plays, but little of it suggests that it'll work in the NHL. It's not as simple as improving his mechanics – he has to alter the way he plays. Ease off the defensive aggression and focus on timing, more focus on building the play instead of making one play and moving on, and consistent use of deception and other skills to become an efficient puck-mover. He's not a draft pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: March 27th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Duke never has all cylinders firing. If one element of his game is working, others aren't. In this game, his activation and shooting were notable. He joined the play, became an option, and fired off several quality looks. One was a goal, a drag wrister high and far side as he stepped inside, taking advantage of a wide and low goalie. He tried several complex breakouts, stepping inside or going cross-lane. He also failed several. He throws the puck away with little pressure. Doesn't manipulate side pressure, just tries to outrace it. And with incoming forecheckers, he rushes the next play. He's a physical defender, but defends by out-powering instead of out-leveraging and out-smarting. His short strides create the illusion of speed, but he's usually losing ground on players. Not a pick, unfortunately.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The Duke of last year resurfaced in this outing. He used the middle, deceived defenders, killed plays, and joined the rush. Fired off a bunch of shots, including a step-in wrister that took a wild hop for a goal. Preceding his goal was an entry followed by a delay to hit a teammate on the other side of a defender. Unfortunately, Duke is still limited by his skating and handling. His base

is extremely wide with the puck. His feet land outside his shoulders in these half-step strides, while he struggles to get one foot over the other for crossovers. Cutbacks are infrequent and don't benefit his game when used (he prefer one-foot stops). When he's just taking strides without the puck, he almost achieves a 90-degree bend. But that's so infrequent. Pucks roll off his stick, and he struggles to move puck across his body when moving. He's not a pick this year, but I remain excited to see what happens next year.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Duke's activation was really strong in this game. It impacted all areas of his game. Offensively, he had a few scoring chances. He shot off the pass, got open on the weak side or as the trailer, and stepped into space before firing. The handling skill and skating still get him into trouble – he understands the speed of incoming pressure and overestimates his abilities, leading to turnovers or hastened decisions. But the activation also keeps his gap tighter if there's a turnover. He grabbed a number of stops by taking away the puck carrier's space immediately. Threw a couple of hits. His defence is all power without timing, but game's where the gap's tighter help improve his case. With Duke, there just might not be enough to work with, especially given his drop off in transition effectiveness. I'm still interested in his game, but he's unlikely to make our board this year.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Duke played with Casey in this game, to which Draft Twitter rejoices. They weren't any good. Duke's style is admirable, but there's not much more going on here. I like how he closes out defensively in the zone, but he's far too passive in the NZ. He doesn't even take the middle away sometimes, just letting defenders use the middle to get him to turn his feet. Solid reactionary defender, so there will be some improvement with time. Feet more like crazy, but poorly. Heels kick, blade strikes the ice inconsistently, lacks ankle flexion and hip engagement, out-toes, struggles to crossover, and relies on his inside edges to do everything. He fakes players out with his head but isn't able to do anything with the puck after that. The hands consistently fail him on pass receptions and I don't see the problem-solving skill or vision to offset it. If he were 6'0", he'd be getting about as much hype as Charlie Leddy.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Sadly, Duke doesn't resemble the player he was last year. The breakout planning, manipulation, and deception aren't there anymore. Randomly delays and then gets stripped. Throws pucks straight up the boards to teammates more covered than himself. The offence isn't any prettier. Doesn't use space or create anything meaningful, and he lacks the handling skill to alter his puck positioning before passing. Just makes the simple, easy play and gets ready to go back on defence. Defensively, he's solid but not translatable. His game's solely about pressure. He doesn't time his engagements at the point of least resistance, which means that he lets attackers slip past him or run through him. The work rate is always high. The skating fails him. Short strides, leans back on his heels inside crossovers, out-toes. He looks fast because of the high stride frequency, but then you realize he's getting dusted by Cameron Lund. Unfortunately, I doubt he's a pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Duke lost his mind late in this game, crosschecking a player in the face after Madison scored. That's an easy suspension. Otherwise, this was more of the same from Duke. He's physical and wins battles at this level, mostly through using his feet. Passive NZ gap, but shows play-killing ability deeper in the zone. He's somewhat deceptive, but lacks the patience to make full use of it. Turnover-prone on breakouts. The skating's not close to NHL-calibre, and the offence is lagging because of the skating limitations, inconsistent deception, and infrequent activation. I don't see Duke as a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 28th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Duke tries a lot of plays, often without success. He takes passes in motion, activates down the boards, and then chucks the puck into the slot. I like the ideas underpinning these decisions, but he's not manipulating the defender in the lane to create the opening. He tries to get involved in the rush, but his feet often fail him. The defence isn't an issue right now: he kills plays early, gets stops deeper in the zone, and doesn't fall for simple deception. Understands how to leverage to win battles, but he's

too dependent on contact alone to win possession. The skating and lack of upside are major issues. He lacks ankle flexion, so much so that he struggles to crossover (leans back and flings his head upwards, too). Wide stride recoveries with occasional significant out-toeing. He's not scoring either. Doubt he gets drafted.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Duke does everything fast and sometimes with a bit of flair on the breakout. Some of his passes are awful, there's no disputing that. He throws the puck away without hesitation, gives up on ideas instead of problem-solving new ones, and lacks the skating to separate consistently. Given him a bit of space, and he'll manipulate a player with his eyes and body before passing straight up the middle. He's a physical defender with some legitimate play-killing instincts (see: the timed engagements). His skating's a problem, especially defensively -- he struggles to accelerate out of his pivots, build speed, and manage distance. I definitely see an argument for a draft pick. He's NHL smart, but the tools are very limiting.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

I like Duke. He tries hard. He wants to be involved in every plays on the ice, but he is already playing at the edge of his skills in the USHL, meaning that the plays he does make, he seems to pull off by the skin of his teeth. He is on the small side and lacks noteworthy abilities. Not a good combo in an NHL projection, although his hockey sense might rank above-average for us at the end of the season. He understands how to create and wants to create offensive advantages. You have to appreciate his constant participation in transition plays, his attempts to beat defenders, activates, and distribute in the offensive zone. He can somewhat evade the forecheck, too. He is pure energy and a good engager at this level (he rammed a couple of opponents in this game). Those elements will keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: October 9th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Tyler Duke is a very good USHL player, but what he currently does won't work in the NCAA, let alone the NHL. The skating's probably the biggest limiter. It's very wide with out-toeing, short extensions, and a wildly uncontrolled recovery. Very few power skating details (doesn't drive his recovering leg forward, push off his inside leg on crossovers, or load his stride with his upper body). His pivots look painful, and his defensive skating is just a series of crossovers until he runs his shoulder into the guy -- way too committing. He's too upright and struggles to get knee-over-knee in his crossovers. He looks like he's jumping when skating. With the puck, he's a bit more projectable: use the inside, deceive forechecking pressure, look for cross-lane options. Decision-making and timing aren't strengths, which also appear in his offensive game, but again, he has details. He looks for cross-ice options, takes when it's given to him, and his shooting mechanics are much better (both hands in front, narrower stance, elbow elevated). Probably a fringe draft pick unless there's a ton of skating improvement or the offence skyrocketed off.

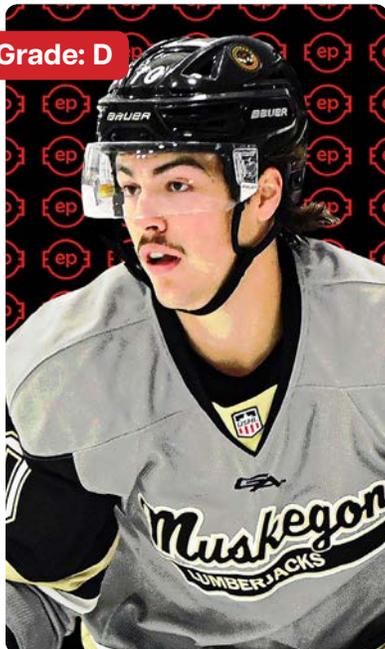
Mitchell Brown: April 17th, 2021 - USNTDP U17s vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Duke has a ton of work to do skating and shooting, but he's clearly an intelligent player who plans plays. Some of the most impressive controlled exits were off his stick, going cross-ice for passes or deceiving pressure. Consistently tried to bring the puck to the inside in the offensive zone. While conceding the zone too easily sometimes, he stays on the puck carrier to angle them out before timing a stick check to dislodge possession. Several strong down-low sequences to strip the puck carrier. Definitely a player to watch.

Mitchell Brown: January 30th, 2021 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. USNTDP U17s - USHL

Impressive performance from Duke. His rush defence was his standout skill in this game. Sometimes too passive through the NZ, but always closed space around the blue-line without committing his feet. Times his checks effectively, both in open ice and along the boards. A strong instinctual defensive player who consistently looks inside or cross-ice on the breakout. Decision-making with the puck is a bit slow, leading to missed opportunities or turnovers, but the base is solid. Tries to be active from the point, but rarely separates. When he did, he created a high-danger chance that eventually led to a goal. Looks like a pick for next year, but is likely dependent on the growth of tools.

Grade: D



Jacob Guévin

AGE 19.663 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 17, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Nebraska-Omaha	NCAA	36	4	14	18	0.50

SCOUTING REPORT

All Jacob Guévin does is generate offence from the blue line. It was true in his pre-draft years in the American prep circuit; it was true during his two-year stay with the USHL's Muskegon Lumberjacks; and it's true of his freshman season with Nebraska-Omaha.

Yet here we are, broaching Guévin's candidacy for the NHL Draft for a third and final time after the right-shot defenceman passed through the last two drafts unclaimed.

The selling points in Guévin's game haven't changed. He's an intelligent, creative distributor from the offensive blue line, particularly effective on the power play. The Mavericks blueliner manages space well and leverages the threat of his shot to create passing opportunities, deceiving his opponents at every opportunity.

Guévin also developed a heightened willingness to activate from the offensive blue line or into the rush as a trailing option in his freshman year. This part of his offensive profile remains a work in progress, but getting involved is the first step.

Speaking of first steps, the most significant knock against Guévin remains the same today as in his draft year – the skating. He's relatively evasive on his inside edges, but a top-heavy forward stride that lacks core engagement limits his ability to keep up with the play, much less separate from opponents.

Then there's the in-zone defence. This part of Guévin's game hasn't progressed much at the college level. It's likely the reason that the Nebraska coaching staff limited him to a bit role with highly prescribed offensive minutes at the bottom of their depth chart.

Guévin fares reasonably well in space, skating at opponents on an arc, taking away the middle of the ice with his stick, and closing when he has the support to make that sort of play. Still, you need to have a baseline level of competence in the defensive zone, and he's not quite there yet.

There's more than enough physical skill and feel for the game at Guévin's disposal to warrant a call at this year's draft, perhaps in the late rounds. Make no mistake though: This is a project pick.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 4th, 2023 - Nebraska-Omaha vs. North Dakota - NCAA

Just a totally fine game from Guévin. Nothing that really moved the needle for me one way or the other. Most of Guévin's best work occurred without the puck. He's just a hard player to beat in space. Guévin closes on forwards on an arc, guides opponents to the outside by taking away the middle with his stick, and suffocates them along the boards. Pretty clinical, textbook stuff. I don't know that he held up as well in body-on-body situations though. Guévin struggles to match opponents feet in the small area game and doesn't fare particularly well along the boards. Guévin made some intelligent reads on the breakout, but the execution wasn't there. Some weak side activations that could've developed into something, but his teammates didn't connect with Guévin on any of those occasions. I don't know that he looked like a pick in this one.

J.D. Burke: January 27th, 2023 - Nebraska-Omaha vs. Western Michigan - NCAA

Kind of a tough game for Guévin, who played a bit role at the bottom of the Nebraska depth chart. He looked particularly rough on the first goal against, just totally swimming out there, flailing wildly as he slid out of frame for a shot block on a play he was several steps behind. He was on the ice for a second goal against later in the game, but I'd hardly describe that one as a bad look for him. Some interesting plays from Guévin in transition, but the skating hasn't come along as I'd hoped it would at college. He identifies the right outlet and connects with pace. I didn't really see much of note from Guévin at the offensive blue line, but this was a 6-1 loss for Nebraska, so perhaps that's not entirely his fault – they just got stomped.

Russ Cohen: December 15th, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Guevin was on fire in this game. His first pass was sharp and accurate. He showed a lot of battle in all zones. The release on his wrist shot is fast and it's accurate. He did lay the body in this game. He had a nice point shot on net that was redirected for the first goal of the game. He got the primary assist.

Mitchell Brown: October 9th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The skating looks the same. He's still an awesome playmaker in the offensive zone. He deceives, uses space, and has the creativity to hit teammates through layers. Shoots a lot, but many of his shots are aimed for the sticks of teammates. His transition game's still limited by his retrievals and awareness of pressure, often turning back into forecheckers and losing the puck. Defensively, he's simply there. I don't see enough improvement to consider him a draft pick.

J.D. Burke: September 25th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

There were some interesting moments from Guévin in this contest, but mostly, it was an awful lot more of the same stuff from last year. He's very high-risk, high-reward, with very little situational awareness -- I.E. a sense for when to tone it down a bit. He was joining the rush at every opportunity. Picked up a great scoring chance by charging into the play as the second wave and weaving past stationary defenders to get the puck to the net. His off-the-puck support was fantastic in the offensive zone. He's still a bit top-heavy, but I think he's starting to get a bit more depth in his stride. Certainly, he was covering ground better than he had last season. Made a terrible read high in the offensive zone that resulted in a breakaway against. I need to see some improvement as a skater to warrant consideration near the end of our board, especially as a re-entry.

Cam Robinson: May 7th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs Chicago Steel - USHL

Guévin logged the normal big minutes in this one. He was not overwhelmed by the Steel's wave after wave of offence, sticking with threats even after they've left his purview. The stick was active and he engaged physically to defend the defensive zone line. Rushed the puck a few times and showcased some improved mobility. Still appears to be below NHL average though. The hunched posture is pronounced. Has patience at the line on the power play but doesn't walk it much - at least not tonight. No glaring errors until OT when he let a forward sit in the slot all by himself to receive a pass and end it. Just a clear brain fart. Regardless, the kid looks like a pick to me.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 23rd, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Guévin was the best defenseman on the ice in this game, along with fellow Muskie Davis Pennington. He's an above average skater with deceptive puckhandling ability, making him a nightmare in transition. He sees the ice relatively well and finds options, but is clearly comfortable with moving through the neutral zone himself with possession. He's good at playing the rush and didn't over pursue outside the dots. He can hold on to the puck a little bit long occasionally and might overhandle in his own zone, but I could see him being a late round pick, especially with the numbers he's putting up this year.

Cam Robinson: April 22nd, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

I liked the effort from Guevin in this one. It wasn't flashy, but he jumped and gain the zone in transition a couple of times but saw the play developing and fell back at the right time. Walked the line on the PP a couple of times to create lanes and get shots through. Led the rush in OT, dropped it back and went to the netfront. Hangout there and was rewarded with the GWG. The skating still looks sluggish North-South, but he's agile and uses the smarts and edges to evade downlow in the DZ. I like the active stick, the constant assessing of space. He's a fluid thinker.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 16th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Average showing from Guevin in a good win for the Muskies. He displayed good skating ability with some shiftiness in his own end to evade forecheckers. Where he had some trouble through this one was his passing. In his own end and through the neutral zone, nearly every time he got the puck he would force a cross ice pass. Sometimes it connected but most times it did not and created a neutral zone turnover and rush the other way. He was utilized on the first unit powerplay, where he did a good job of directing traffic from the top of the umbrella. He defends the rush very well, closing out on opponents early and sealing them off with his body. I'm not sure whether he's a surefire pick, but there are some promising parts of his game.

Mitchell Brown: March 27th, 2021 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - WHL

Playmaking and retrievals are Guevin's two best elements. Passing-wise, he's deceptive with his eyes and body, uses the threat of the shot to set-up teammates, and identifies teammates in better positioning. He doesn't force passes into battles in transition, usually looking inside or finding a teammate in motion. Some projectable retrieval plays, throwing out deception, then cutting back into space and quickly moving the puck. Identifies the next play immediately and gets pressure on his back. He has some skating skill, like double cuts, spins, etc. but his lack of hip engagement prevents him from exploding out of the moves. Edges are a strength, despite that. Stride is weak and he lacks quickness: hips too high, back angle close to parallel with the ice. The defence requires some major work, especially the defensive skating. He's committing and struggles to generate backwards momentum. He stops dead when engaging, so when he's beat, he can't recover. Better off-puck defence than in previous viewings, but it's hardly a strength. Some random low-percentage shots with better plays available. He's probably an end-of-board type.

Mitchell Brown: February 27th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Some clever retrievals from Guevin in this game. Pre-scanned, then quickly moved the puck when possible. When not, used body positioning and cutbacks to escape pressure, then work the puck to an open teammate. Manipulates the F1. His lack of hip engagement will prevent him from finding separation in-tight at the next level, as will his handling (feet dependency). He's low pace in transition too, and lacks some rush activation habits. Defensively, Guevin was beat wide from his poor glide and defensive skating -- within his current limitations, he needs to either stay closer to the middle then pivot and come across, or pivot early and surf. Long-term, he needs to improve the skating and reaction speed. One quality half-ice 2-on-1 situation showed that he can react quickly, gapping up with the pass then mirroring footwork. Lots of horrendous off-puck defensive reads, doubling up, letting plays slip behind him, and not scanning. Some deception and craftiness from the point before dishes, and found space as the trailer. The defensive mind and awareness aren't there, but it's clear that he has some advanced offensive ideas. Probably a late-round player.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Guevin's one of the most interesting skaters in the draft. His posture's close enough, pushing his knees over his toes but lacking

some hip depth. He's a touch inefficient from his unfinished strides with a heel kick. He should have some quickness in the USHL -- he doesn't. He was beat wide at least four times, even with acceptable footwork while driving the play. Not only was he late to pivot, he couldn't recover whatsoever. Lost races for advantages. Angled when possible, but his off-puck defence is mostly puck-watching with his stick off the ice. I have no idea if he's actually a skilled playmaker or if he just tries passes. He tried so many cross-ice passes in all three zones, some with deception, but most of them failed. Three defenders in the lane didn't deter him, predictably, it didn't work. Passes out of the shot fake and uses some eye deception, but he doesn't wait for the defender's reaction to the deception. Lots of patience on the breakout, using changes of pace and delays to wait for lanes to open up. One crafty retrieval play but his upper and lower body stay locked together so he doesn't get any explosion out of his turns. Passing looks like his only NHL skill.

Dylan Griffing: December 18th, 2020 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Guevin was super sloppy in this game. Really needs to pre-scan before his retrievals so he can quickly move the puck to a feasible option because he simply could not handle the pressure he was attracting. He was rushing his passes, not reading the ice well, and overhandling the puck in his own end, which resulted in far too many loose pucks. His skating is average, but he uses pivots very effectively. His rush defense looked solid for most of the game, keeping his body straight in front of his opponent and then aggressively stepping up with his physicality. He got beat hard late on after he overcommitted to Samoskevich keeping the puck on his backhand, so he got crossed-over and it led to a goal against. I struggled to see much value out of him this game.

Grade: D



Marek Hejduk

AGE 18.701 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 03, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Harvard Univ.	NCAA	34	6	7	13	0.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Much has changed since we last broached Marek Hejduk's candidacy for the NHL Draft in the Elite Prospects 2022 NHL Draft Guide.

At the time, Hejduk was a unidimensional dangler, a skilled forward whose game ran entirely through his hands. This profile made him one of the more compelling players to come out of the program, but it also limited his output and efficiency.

The captivating displays of skill were hard to ignore, but with them came turnovers and missed opportunities to create offence through his linemates.

As a freshman at Harvard, Hejduk had to simplify his game to stick around and make an impact. And he did. Relegated to a fourth-line role, the Harvard freshman took to his assignment with aplomb.

"Hejduk's motor runs high, and he's hard on pucks," EP Rinkside Editor-in-Chief J.D. Burke wrote in a midseason game report. "His in-zone defensive reads are mostly sound, and he tracks well through the neutral zone."

This newfound enthusiasm as a forechecker and defensive forward made Hejduk among the most effective skaters in the Crimson's bottom-six. It didn't necessarily come at the expense of his offence either; Hejduk's per-game scoring actually took a small step forward in his first year of college hockey.

One's mileage may vary on the importance or repeatability of this stuff, but it's also worth pointing out how clutch much of Hejduk's scoring was this year, too. Who can forget such timeless classics as his overtime goal with 1.5 seconds left to send

Marek Hejduk

F | Harvard | NCAA | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 81.2



Harvard to the Beanpot Final or two points in two games against Princeton in the ECAC quarterfinals?

There are trace amounts of dog detected within Hejduk, it has to be said.

Whether this growth defensively and as a forechecking presence will result in a selection at this year's draft is yet to be seen, but one could certainly do a lot worse with a late-round pick. Hejduk has legitimate skill, has added a physical dimension, and is clearly coachable and adaptable.

Besides, he's the son of Milan Hejduk. That's gotta count for something.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standouts from the 2023 Beanpot



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster for the 2022 U18 World Hockey

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 24th, 2023 - Harvard vs. Ohio State - NCAA Regionals

Frankly, Hejduk may well have been one of Harvard's most effective forwards in this contest, and I don't even think he played particularly well. Still, only a minus-one in an 8-1 loss isn't nothing. Hejduk's work rate and physicality on the forecheck stood out. I'm not sure that he had enough puck touches to make any judgements on the skill level. The skating looked about average. Probably not a draft pick, but I think he fared decently as a freshman at Harvard. I'll be curious to see what kind of role he takes on as most of their top-six graduates to professional hockey ahead of next season.

J.D. Burke: November 26th, 2022 - Harvard vs. Michigan - NCAA

Kind of difficult to make heads or tails of Hejduk in a game like this one. I'm not sure that he played even 10 minutes of all-situations ice-time and his puck touches were few. The most exciting of the bunch was a partial break in the last minute of regulation that Luke Hughes cut short – can't really give him a hard time for losing a foot race to that player. You have to give him some credit for adapting reasonably well to a new role at Harvard. Hejduk's motor runs high and he's hard on pucks. His in-zone defensive reads are mostly sound and he tracks well through the neutral zone. Skill level looks about average in this setting.

Mitchell Brown: December 18th, 2021 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Solid outing for Hejduk, who usually plays a turnover-heavy game. Everything runs through his hands, which admittedly projects as above-average because of the technical proficiency, control, and set ups. After breaking down a defender, he looks to the inside lane. There's some foresight here, like slowing down to encourage a defender to chase before he chases towards the middle. The lack of teammate use is concerning. Don't see a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Hands are Hejduk's best tool. Top hand in front, some deceptiveness, and he doesn't overhandle. He's not shy about getting inside either. He fakes the outside rush, waits for the pivot, and then cuts back inside. Skating lacks some power, but he's a fast read-and-react decision-maker. Neither the shot nor passing skill stands out. He's not much defensively, either.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

I thought Hejduk's skating looked above-average in this game and I especially liked the occasional changes of speed from him off the rush. He can protect the puck as he carries it and create effective delays to hit trailing options. He stole the puck from an opponent at some point in the game, transitioned it to the offensive zone, and after engaging with an opponent, and seeing no immediate options in the slot, made a tight turn to hit his defenseman coming in with speed, leading to a shot from the middle of the slot. Playmaking seems to be his strength. He is not forcing, but taking what's available, and creating more with patience.

Mitchell Brown: October 9th, 2021 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Hejduk had some moments in this game. Elbow up, pull-in wrister led to his goal. Some off-puck movement and skating sequences to get open, usually in transition. He's a skilled individual creator, flashing mechanically sound handling, change of pace ability, and a touch of creativity. He didn't have so much playmaking, vision, or foresight in any of the game, making him turnover-prone while consistently leaving value on the table. I'm intrigued, at least.



Ty Mueller

AGE 19.553 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Nebraska-Omaha	NCAA	34	12	13	25	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

Skaters who score at the rate Ty Mueller has to this point in his two-season college career are almost exclusively draft picks.

It's just that simple. You look at Mueller's rank in raw and per-game offence, and he's the lone exception in a sea of players who've either heard their name called or walked the stage at the NHL Draft.

That Mueller has managed to keep pace after battling injuries in his sophomore season on one of the more anemic offences in the country just makes it all that much more impressive.

A real jack-of-all-trades-type of player, Mueller brought a little bit of everything to the table for Nebraska. He's a capable two-way forward, with good supporting instincts away from the puck, mostly sound reads with it, and sufficiently fleet of foot. There wasn't any assignment that the 5-foot-11 centre wasn't up to last season.

Still, most if not all of Mueller's physical tools rate as firmly average. There were flashes of quickness and legitimate skill that offered hope for his projection as a skater and handler, but even then, nothing beyond a 5-grade.

There's cause for some level of optimism as a distributor, too. Mueller often displayed intelligence and an ability to identify the best option with the puck on his stick, but a lack of pace or touch undid many of these plays.

Ultimately, one can do a lot worse with a late-round pick than Mueller, but there's a reason he slipped through the cracks in the last two drafts. The lack of any separating skill or an easily identifiable profile makes his projection a fraught one.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: February 18th, 2023 - Nebraska-Omaha vs. Miami (Ohio) - NCAA

Another mostly nondescript performance for Mueller. That is, right up until he went end-to-end, dangled his way past a Miami defender, bounced the puck off the post, and watched as his linemate buried it to give Nebraska-Omaha the win in overtime. Nice little display of speed and skill there. Otherwise, a pretty bland game. I'm not sure any of his physical skills project as

above average at the next level. Maybe his skating? If only barely? Mueller forced a few turnovers on the tracks in this game by catching opponents off guard on the breakout. Some interesting moments off-puck as a shooter, but nothing too special. As a distributor, Mueller has a tendency to stare down his intended targets, is often late with his passes, and lacks any deceptive elements. I'm not sure I see a draft pick here.

J.D. Burke: December 10th, 2022 - Nebraska-Omaha vs. Colorado College - NCAA

Mueller has a generally good sense for where to position himself off-puck in the offensive and defensive zones, but lacks the ability to improvise or create shooting opportunities for himself out of structure. He's built to extend possessions, not finish them. With the puck, Mueller's a relatively intelligent distributor, but a lack of touch and pace as a passer has him misfiring more often than not. He's not particularly deceptive either; if anything, he's the opposite, often staring down his target. You're not looking at a particularly skilled or creative handler here, either. I'm just not sure how you can justify spending a pick on this player. A college free agent? Sure.

J.D. Burke: November 11th, 2022 - Nebraska-Omaha vs. Minnesota-Duluth - NCAA

Mueller picked up a power play goal in the second period, charging down the weak side, collecting the cross-ice feed, and sending it past the sprawled out UMD goaltender. Other than that, it was a pretty rough game. Mueller has some interesting qualities. His skating looks more or less fine mechanically – good depth and flexibility – but lacks quickness. Some of his passing ideas were relatively intelligent, but the timing and execution was off more often than not, resulting in a lot of turnovers and icings. I'm not sure that Mueller plays with enough pace either. He didn't look like a pick in this game. Not even close, really.

Grade: D



Sutter Muzzatti

AGE 19.219 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 28, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C/LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'5"

Height

216 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

4

Shooting

3.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
RPI (Rensselaer Polyt. Inst.)	NCAA	35	7	15	22	0.63

SCOUTING REPORT

The son of former first-round pick and journeyman goaltender Jason Muzzatti, Sutter Muzzatti hopes to take the less-travelled road to the NHL as a two-time re-entry at this year's draft.

The draw here is obvious: Muzzatti is a 6-foot-5 centre with a reasonable amount of skill and two-way diligence who's generated offence at a respectable clip as a freshman with RPI as a 19-year-old. Players with that profile or like profiles often draw at least some level of NHL interest, be it at the draft or as an NCAA free agent.

Of course, the catch is all too familiar for Muzzatti as well. Like many players with his build, his skating form is a significant obstacle, limited by a set of heavy boots, a wide recovery, and a lack of depth. The usual qualifier that he's decently quick with a little bit of runway doesn't even apply here. He's just plain slow – no way around it.

That lack of pace is evident in every facet of his game, too. Muzzatti attempts all of his dangles at a glide, with little deceptive posturing or footwork to set up each manoeuvre. He often identifies the right passing option but lacks the timing or even the touch to connect on many of these plays. Stuck with a shot that registers as a below-average weapon, suddenly one runs out of ways to project the Engineers forward as an offensive threat in professional hockey.

The hope for Muzzatti is that considerable development as a skater allows him to leverage his frame, adequate puck skills, and defensive intelligence and habits to a bottom-of-the-lineup role in professional hockey. It's not a particularly ambitious play at the draft, though, so don't be surprised if Muzzatti has to get there via an undrafted free agent deal.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: February 25th, 2023 - Quinnipiac vs. RPI - NCAA

There are some interesting qualities to Muzzatti's game, his puck skills foremost among them. He picked up RPI's only goal of the game with a moving deflection in the first period on a counter play. Then in the second period, Muzzatti put a Bobcats defender into the spin cycle with a set of inside-out handling moves on the rush, dropping the puck to his teammate for a Grade-A scoring chance. Now the catch is that he handles the puck almost exclusively from a glide – calling it a glide might be

generous given the way he moves out there – and it's not like he's got fast-twitch handling or the most dextrous set of hands. I left this viewing with some concerns about his play selection and touch as a distributor, though. You can see a pathway to professional hockey for Muzzatti, but it's going to hinge on significant development as a skater.

J.D. Burke: January 7th, 2023 - Cornell vs. RPI - NCAA

Muzzatti picked up a pair of power play goals at the net-front – a deflection and then a scramble at the goalmouth that he sent home – but was totally invisible at even strength. The skating stride just so limits him at this level. He can't keep up with the play much less separate from opponents. It's not like he plays at a particularly high pace either. All of his plays with the puck occur from either a glide or a complete standstill. There are times when Muzzatti can't complete a pass to save his life either. I'm not sure I see a draft pick. Certainly not a player for our board.

J.D. Burke: October 21st, 2022 - USNTDP U18s vs. RPI - NCAA

Kind of a tough game for Muzzatti, who was a step or two behind the play physically and mentally for pretty much the entire game. You can maybe live with his lack of foot speed. Not so much the lack of pace. It often takes Muzzatti an extra second or two to register passing options or developing plays, at which point those plays are gone. Compounding matters is the fact that he lacks touch as a distributor – many of his passes are inaccurate or lack the appropriate force behind them. He was physical in this game, but I don't know how much credit he gets for throwing his weight around against the NTDP. I'm not sure that Muzzatti looks like a pick right now, but there's potential down the road as a free agent signing.



Jeremy Wilmer

AGE 19.085 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 16, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'8"	154 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Boston Univ.	NCAA	37	9	23	32	0.86

SCOUTING REPORT

All Jeremy Wilmer does is score. He was nearly a point a game with the program in his first go around; he eclipsed that mark and then some with the USHL's Tri-City Storm last year; and he was one of the most productive freshmen in his age group with Boston University.

Watching Wilmer put up those gaudy point totals has been a pretty fun exercise, too. Legitimate intelligence and creativity reveal themselves in his ability to distribute the puck, often with pace and through defensive layers. Deceptive manoeuvring opens up lanes, and then he has the touch necessary to get the puck to his intended target, often with the perfect weight and in the perfect spot to lead them into their next play.

Though we wouldn't necessarily bank on this part of Wilmer's game scaling up to professional hockey, he's shown some natural skill as a handler, too. It wasn't uncommon to see the Terriers' winger pull off a highlight-reel dangle in his first year at college; I can tell you that much.

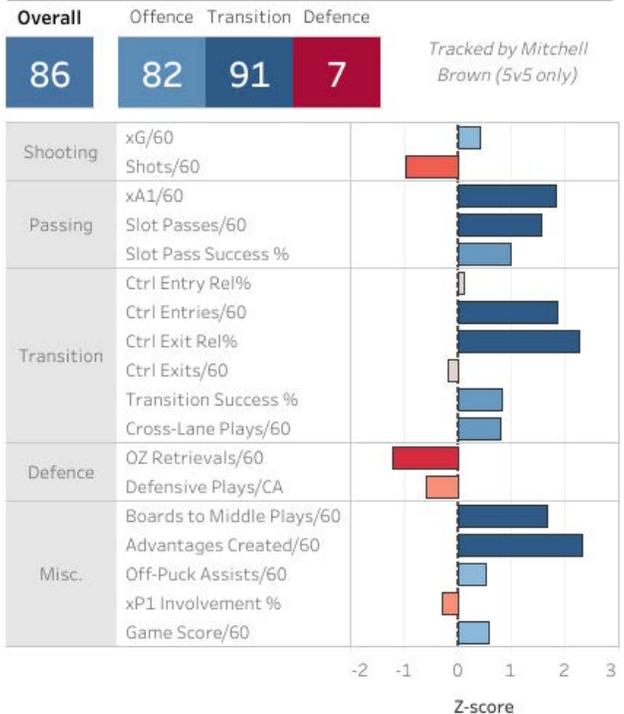
Now, the problem here is that for all Wilmer's cunning as a passer, skill as a handler, and even the development of some off-puck intelligence as a shooter, there are some significant mechanical limitations that still linger in his game.

Foremost among them is Wilmer's skating. He's hunched over, lumbering, and lacks any sort of two-step quickness. Only making matters worse is the absence of any advanced skating habits. Almost all of Wilmer's moves occur on his heels, at a glide, and with his hands and feet operating in lock-step; hard to deceive an opponent from that posture.

Put another way: Everything Wilmer does well at this level comes with an asterisk, and it's the most damning one a player can have when they stand 5-foot-8. You've probably heard this a million times by now, but in the eyes of many evaluators, you can be

Jeremy Wilmer

F | Boston University | NCAA | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 49.0



small or you can have skating limitations, but you can't have both.

The counter to that? That hasn't seemed to matter to this point in Wilmer's career. It's not like a player can't overhaul their stride either. We've seen it happen before. Often, even.

For an NHL team prepared to invest the resources necessary to develop that part of Wilmer's game, he's a worthwhile bet late in the draft. His intelligence as a distributor, natural feel as a puckhandler, and surprisingly strong wall game could translate to an offensively-calibrated NHL fourth line.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 23rd, 2023 - Western Michigan vs. Boston University - NCAA Regionals

Another garden variety Wilmer viewing, albeit with some flashes of pace that have been mostly absent in his freshman season. Wilmer worked the give-and-go a few times to gain the zone, to varying degrees of effectiveness. His assist on Wilmer Skoog's goal was a nice bit of work; Wilmer collected the puck out of a scrum in the corner and immediately sent it low-high to his centre for the catch-and-release goal. Then there were some interesting ideas with the puck that were undone by his lack of mobility or his inability to sequence his hands and feet to set up and execute his handling moves. If you squint, then it's not that difficult to imagine Wilmer working on an offensively calibrated fourth line at the NHL level, but that will depend upon significant growth as a skater.

J.D. Burke: March 17th, 2023 - Providence vs. Boston University - NCAA

Doughnuts across the board on the scoresheet for Wilmer, but I don't know that I would characterize this as a particularly poor performance. There were some flashes of high-end thinking with the puck, a layered set up from the top of the offensive zone to the backdoor for what should've been a tap-in goal among them. Wilmer's skating form is poor as ever – lumbering, top-heavy, etc. – but he's proven a capable forecheck in college anyway. He takes smart lines to the puck, does a decent enough job of getting underneath opponents, and his stick-lifts are lethal.

Still, you couple that poor skating form with the fact that Wilmer takes pucks at a standstill, attempts most of his manoeuvres at a glide (at best), and isn't particularly pacey with the puck, and the projection seems pretty fraught.

J.D. Burke: January 11th, 2023 - UMass vs. Boston University - NCAA

It's the same as ever for Wilmer in the NCAA, where he's continued to put up points at a respectable – albeit, diminished – clip much like he did last season. And as with last season, you saw why NHL teams are reluctant to make an investment in this player. For all his cunning and touch as a passer, he's still too small, not fast enough, and easily kept to the perimeter. The most you're probably getting out of Wilmer is a AAAA player, which is all well and fine for anyone taken in the later rounds, but I think that investment is best made elsewhere.

Mitchell Brown: April 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Nothing new from Wilmer. The shot's a bit better, and he's now leveraging his off-puck instincts into scoring opportunities. That counts. He's always involved in the defensive zone. If given a bit of space, he makes plays off the walls to the middle. Some of his breakout plays are quite advanced: stepping inside, delaying, then hitting a cross-ice pass through a forechecker. Playmaking was mostly short-range plays and poorly timed high-value ones. Didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: April 9th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Wilmer's improvement doesn't seem as stark as the point totals might suggest. Perhaps his shooting mechanics are a bit cleaner and he's physically stronger, which helps his stride a bit. Even then, both likely project below-average still. He's always on his

heels in a wide glide. While he times some engagements well, he lacks the balance to consistently absorb contact. Game largely runs through his hands, which is problematic given the skating limitations. He's a worker on the defensive end, shows projectable off-puck instincts (largely by getting open between checks), and the playmaking should get him points against in the pros. Not sure it results in an NHL player; too many limiting mechanics.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Wilmer's still solid, but it's tough to see a path to the NHL. It's not the size. It's limited mechanical base along with his lack of high-level offence. He's not a manipulator. Instead, he's an intelligent player who generally makes positive plays. He's a strong play supporter, using his off-puck routes to position himself inside space to make the next pass. Of course, he's still a slippery handler, but his preference for a glide to do his best work will limit his effectiveness. He's improved a bit, but in many ways, this is largely what Wilmer was supposed to do. He's been a good USHLer from day one, and I haven't seen the next layer of skill necessary to offset the mechanical flaws.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Fascinating game from Wilmer from a projection standpoint. He didn't bother with the solo rushes in transition. Moved the puck quickly and then got open for a return pass. A very selective offensive performance, too. Took one shot at 5-on-5, a high-danger chance. Then, spent the rest of the game looking for the perfect pass to the inside. Hit most of them. Had a rebound chance, but chose to pass for an even better look. Backhand and slip passes. He's not a manipulator, but he understands how to prolong passing lanes and times his pass with the reaction of the defender. The skating's still the same, unfortunately. He's always on his heels in a wide glide. He can't separate or protect the puck along the boards. He's scoring while taking his playmaking to another level, but it's still tough to see him as a draft pick this year. Perhaps there's more high-level playmaking to come this year.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Wilmer is the same player as last year, which is unfortunate. The skating's still very limiting, even at this level. He gets to the middle, but not in ways that will work in the NHL. The handling is fun. His style of play is admirable. But his wide, hunched base will prevent him from his game at the next level. Not a prospect.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 14th, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Playing on the wing, first few passes missed the mark. Has good skating ability, gets pinned easily and struggles with physicality. Gets incredibly limited minutes with the 18s team. A little bit errant defensively, keeps a wide stride base which inhibits full power on his stride. Decent playmaking ability, setting up his teammate on a 2-on-2 for a goal. Good hands, used some slick dangles to maneuver to the middle from the wing.

Mitchell Brown: February 27th, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

In a game like this, where Wilmer isn't getting the puck a ton, his lack of speed really stands out. His skating's so awkward, like he's tripping over himself constantly. Limited ankle flexion, very short extensions and wide recoveries, significant variance between strides, and his weight's always on his heels. It's really problematic during acceleration, where he tilts his weight back. Extremely inside edge-dependent. He doesn't separate with his feet; it's all hands and vision. And when pressure comes, he's usually just throwing the puck into an area anyway. But, it also highlighted his off-puck instincts: he thinks in give-and-goes, immediately repositioning after passing. He finds space around the slot, occasionally with timed movements with the puck, and he finishes his off-puck skating routes. High defensive motor and a knack for disrupting plays, even if his feet flail in a million different directions while skating.

There's surely quite a bit of potential here, and he's effective with his body despite his lack of ankle and hip flexion, and some general stability concerns. Doubt his high hips battling style will work at the next level, especially with his lack of quickness. Maybe he's just a very low probability third-liner. In which case, he's probably not a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2021 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Wilmer's skating is a concern, to put it mildly. Limited flexion, short extensions, wide recoveries, and sloppy acceleration. Lifts weight and leans on heels when crossing over. He's certainly not an NHL calibre skater, and the path to get there looks tricky given that his issues don't appear to be solely strength related. At this level, he uses preemptive hits and subtle contact to create space, like a puck-between-the-legs spin where he got low on the player, but it was all from his back angle rather than ankle flexion. Deceptive passer and handler, often deceptive on the first touch to create a bit of separation. Lots of look offs and quick transitions into moves, occasionally stringing them together with give-and-goes. High defensive engagement, with scanning, athletic posture, and proactive positioning. If he's a pick, he's a late one. The upside here is probably a third-liner and the odds of hitting it seem very low.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2021 - USNTDP U18s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Wilmer's a tricky projection, but games like these convince me he's not worth writing off entirely despite his total lack of ankle flexion, wide recoveries, and reliance on glides to create. He plays fast until he's forced to make a decision, but he's so effective in his "comfort zone." With shoulder, head, and stick fakes, he opens up defenders, freezes their feet, and moves the puck quickly. Backhand, forehand -- he makes skill plays as a handler and passer. He usually doesn't overhandle, opting for give-and-goes after freezing the defender. He's energetic and involved along boards and defensively, but his success rate isn't particularly high: lack of depth and strength prevents him from leveraging his frame, while he lacks any sort of quickness to escape. He's a late-round player, I think, but I'm intrigued.

David St-Louis: December 19th, 2020 - USNTDP U18s vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

I underestimated Wilmer's pace. He doesn't move fast -- not even up to his potential (which isn't great) -- but he thinks fast. His ability to analyze and make positive plays under pressure stands out. On a sequence, he stole the puck on the backcheck à la Pavel Datsyuk, jumped on the loose puck, but didn't take it immediately. He saw the defender coming at him so Wilmer waited for an extra second, knowing that the D would reach for it. As soon as the stick was extended, Wilmer dragged the puck away and moved around the opponent, creating a 2-on-1 with St-Louis. He lobbed a nice backhand pass over the other defender's stick for a one-timer goal. He also scored as he tried a backhand pass from below the goal-line off a faceoff; the puck deflected on a defender. Quick mental pace of play, but the legs have to catch up to hope for an NHL future. Highly skilled hands (6, 6.5 maybe).

David St-Louis: December 18th, 2020 - USNTDP U18s vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Small, below-average skating and a lack of pace -- makes most of his moves in a glide and doesn't set up his dangling moves with skating patterns. He flashes some creativity. There was one sequence in particular where Wilmer spun on himself to evade a defender on a zone-entry and turned his back to a second one, and while bracing for impact, he managed to backhand the puck to an open teammate in the wide-lane. Rapid execution and superior handling skills. Is it enough? His flaws are pretty massive, but he could make an interesting late-round project.

Mitchell Brown: October 25th, 2019 - USNTDP U17s vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Wilmer's offensive toolkit is really interesting, arguably enough to translate to the NHL despite his lack of size and explosiveness. He's such a deceptive handler, using fakes and weight shift moves to open up defenders before finding his route. He manipulates, reaching out to bait sticks and moving in one direction with the intent of going the other way. He doesn't rely on 1v1 skill, but struggles to make moves in stride. He used his lack of size as a tool, digging underneath opponents' centre of gravity before cutting back the other way.

His scoring tools were second to only Lucius, as he feathered backhand passes into the slot, hit short-range feeds through layers, and made well-timed moves around the goal to clean-up rebounds. He didn't show much finishing ability (low puck patience), but the base is strong enough that goals should come with time. He's certainly not shy of playing on the inside; he seeks play up the interior.

Mitchell Brown: October 19th, 2019 - USNTDP U17s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Wilmer was the U17s' best forward from start-to-finish, leading the team with an impressive 1.15 ixP1/60. He's tiny and not explosive, which immediately will lead to some disregarding him entirely, but I think there's upside here. First, Wilmer's a deceptive handler and manipulates the opposition in transition. He's a bit too deferential, but looks in open direction before going the other -- and integrates his feet and shoulders into the deception. He keeps the puck across his hips, rather than in front of his body, allowing him to immediately transition into passes and rely on creating advantages instead of 1v1 skill. He set-up what should've been a sure-goal with a backhand WARP pass -- again, pulling the puck far enough behind the net that he got the net-front defenders and goaltenders to commit for the wraparound. He pulled off a similarly manipulative pass in the slot, showing shot while off-balance before passing against the grain. A smooth weight shift on the outside leg through a catch-and-release shot generated his best look of the game. Currently, he looks like the most manipulative/deceptive/high-level offensive forward on this roster. He's someone to watch, for sure.

Grade: D



Charlie Cerrato

AGE 17.518 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U17 Team	NTDP	18	6	7	13	0.72
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	37	3	15	18	0.49
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	28	5	11	16	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

The depth of this year's USNTDP forward core meant that Charlie Cerrato finished the season with the U17s. His production benefitted from the move, jumping from 0.49 points per game to a cool 0.72.

Primarily a rush attacker, Cerrato creates by reading defenders and taking what they give him. He sprints past aggressive defenders and cuts inside across passive ones. If defenders pressure him from the side, he passes through them to a teammate up the middle.

Cerrato also brings a refined defensive game, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a January game report: "He cuts off the top, anticipates passes, jumps into lanes to eliminate options, and sprints to capitalize on loose pucks."

There's not much nuance to Cerrato's offensive game and his skating and hands aren't likely to provide separation at the next level. Therefore, finding ways to dictate the actions of defenders, instead of simply relying on what's given, will be key for his development. He flashes some more proactive, manipulation-centric skills.

If Cerrato builds upon those flashes, he could play in a depth role. The University of Michigan, a burgeoning development powerhouse, will certainly help, but a stopover with the USHL's Youngstown Phantoms is likely the next step.

Charlie Cerrato

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 81.9



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Not much change in Cerrato's game since the start of the season. He's a really hard-worker: first on pucks, immediate pressure on the puck carrier, and some anticipation of plays. Most effective at the top of the zone. He has some craftiness along boards, using changes of pace and heel-to-heel steps to skirt pressure before passing. Takes space when given it, whether that's straight ahead or inside. But he's not creative. He doesn't create passing lanes. And he plays too fast. With a bit more patience and mechanical refinement, he might become a fourth-liner. But that's a lot to ask for. Curious to see him next season.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

The usual from Cerrato. He plays fast, to the middle, and brings some defence. He cuts off the top, anticipates passes, jumps into lanes to eliminate options, and sprints to capitalize on loose pucks. Instead of always attacking wide, he tries to fake, then cut inside. He makes simple, effective passes. Doesn't show particularly notable awareness or skill, but he understands how to manufacture runways of space for his teammates. Skating looked better than normal. More crossovers with a proper crossunder and push off – added a little extra to his game.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Left this viewing pretty impressed with Cerrato. He's an exceptional passer and has great habits before he gets the puck. Pre-scans, draws in pressure, dishes. Consistently. Cerrato's probably an average skater but has a high motor, the speed is enough to get him into the zone, then it's usually a lateral pass to support. Excels at seeing the ice through the neutral zone, recognizes teammates' routes and hits them in stride. Some creativity too, a couple of flips to line mates flying the zone. Beautiful slip pass on an odd man rush for a primary. Off the puck, he works hard but not especially smart. He struggles as the high man to locate soft space and sometimes gets caught puck watching and chasing plays into the corner even when it's not his role. The aggression serves him well as a forechecker, especially as F1. There's a lot to like about Cerrato, could sneak into our board but need more viewings to see if he's a play driver or accessory piece.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerrato's fun. He plays fast despite not having much quickness, and he plays to the inside. Always looking to cut inside off the rush, taking full advantage of poorly gapped defenders. Applies intense pressure on the forecheck. Makes simple, effective passes to teammates in scoring position. Tries to beat defenders into lanes rather than prolonging/creating them, but he's aware. He froze up on his best chance of the game and didn't even get a shot off, but otherwise, he was a consistent presence. He's a checker at the next level, but perhaps there's a bit more skill than I've seen so far.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerrato's pretty limited as a skater. All the usual stuff (lack of ankle flexion, drops chest, short strides), and it falls apart quickly. But he has some intriguing qualities. Furthers the play with quick passes, then jumps into the rush and becomes a return option. Especially impressive at finding space high in the defensive zone without cheating, making him a constant threat to stretch the ice. With the puck, he's not all that creative. He's a checker at the next level, it seems.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerrato had some nice plays in this game. He won body positioning, moved high, then deflected a shot-pass for a chance. Later, he connected with a backhand reverse pass from behind the net, catching the other team sleeping. He plays fast and generally understands when and how to cut inside. The skating's not refined: wide, feet kick, doesn't use his outside edges enough. But he's able to anticipate the play and play through contact. Sometimes his plays seem to lack an end goal. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerrato's not exactly toolsy. He lacks some quickness. The stride's weak. But he shows some interesting ideas. He set up a goal by delaying in transition, waiting for his teammate to build speed up the middle. He skates his routes, beating defenders to the net and winning positioning. He adapts, too. Instead of sprinting straight ahead, he slips behind defenders and stops inside space. Looks like a bottom-line candidate.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerrato's a buzzsaw. He sprints from one check to the next, wins body positioning, and fights to get open. Showed a bit of skill in one sequence, too. He read the defender's feet, moved in the opposite direction, delayed, then tried to cut inside. For that sequence alone, I'm curious to watch more.



Grade: D

Ryan Fine

AGE 17.507 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C Position	Right Shoots
5'9" Height	183 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	3.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	63	16	26	42	0.67
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	5	9	14	0.61
USA U18	WJC-18	7	0	4	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing a secondary role on the NTDP, Ryan Fine amassed 42 points, seventh on the team. A fine result. Versatility drives his value, capable of playing up-and-down the line up across various positions with different types of linemates.

Fine identifies his options quickly, whether that's a pass, shot, or deke. He loves to slice through opponents on the backhand, using their momentum against them. Head fakes and stick waves fake out defenders. Quick passes and give-and-gos get his team advancing as a unit, and he's always skating his routes to create space. He keeps the cycle alive and occasionally breaks off the boards with well-timed cutbacks or a slick deke.

With the well-rounded offensive skill comes defence. "Fine brings the heat off-puck, applying pressure and skating his off-puck routes to create space behind him," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote in a February game report. "He turns forechecking into offence by stealing possession and hitting the open teammate."

Lacking a true standout offensive element could prevent Fine from carving out an NHL role, or even hear his name called at this June's Draft.

Developing a more patient, play-creation mindset while adding more speed and in-motion skill will be key to cracking the NHL. He'll get plenty of opportunity and time at Harvard.

Ryan Fine

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 160.1



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Fine was effective. He had some exciting flashes. He read an opponent's feet, then went backhand to deke through them. Well-timed and proactive cut backs allowed him to get inside off the boards. He delays and draws pressure first. He throws away possession under pressure sometimes, but he consistently puts himself in favourable positions. Combine that with his obvious handling skill, and it's easy to see him take a step in a year or two. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A fine night on the forecheck. He applies intense pressure, takes the extra stride, and steps into opponents. When he's the F3, he dips in at the right moment. One of his forecheck steals led to a goal. He tries some advanced handling stuff. He clearly reads opponents' momentum and seeks to exploit it (attacking the space on their heels), but his narrow handling base prevents him from really tricking defenders. More of an inside-edge, in-a-glide handler, too. He throws out head fakes and stick feints, but they aren't especially successful right now. I mostly see forechecking and play-building. Not a pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Not much from Fine in this game. Once, he attacked the defence, went between his legs, and then dropped the puck back for a shot. Otherwise, he wasn't creating much. Not creative or especially patient. Worked on the backcheck for a couple of steals, but his defence isn't much more than effort. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A lacrosse chance from Fine. That was the highlight of his game. He created a chance after getting stapled along the boards. He doesn't manipulate pressure or create space; he just skates into pressure and tries to pop out on the other side. The forechecking and down-low playmaking might give him a chance, and there are flashes of handling skill and play-building. Perhaps he looks better in a bigger role.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Fine has a solid game, being the primary driver on his line. He has handling skill, but it's more reacting to opponents and attacking in the opposite direction of their feet. That is, he reads pressure but doesn't manipulate it to create advantages. Well, mostly. He had some flashes, but he's more effective when he's exploiting gaps, drawing pressure, and passing to the outside. The off-puck game's strong, too. He's proactive and aware. Wins body positioning, gets open, keeps his feet moving. He looked like a pick in this game.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - USA vs Sweden - 4 Nations Tournament

Every report on Ryan Fine looks the same. He flashes skills, but nothing high-end. He makes some good, but not great plays, can complement passing exchanges, but not really create plays that aren't there at first look. He's a complementary forward in this team, a good one, but he's harder to project to the next levels. Maybe when he's free of this star-filled team, we will see him evolve in a role where he gets the puck more.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A fine performance. Fine showed a bit of everything in the tool kit this game. He brought the heat off-puck, applying pressure and skating his off-puck routes to create space behind him. Turned forechecking into offence by stealing possession and hitting the open teammate. Showed backhand skill on both pass receptions and passes, connecting with backhand saucers and between the legs passes. Even showed a bit of patience. He's not deceptive or manipulative, but beats defenders into lanes and has the skill to connect with pressure. The skating looks like an average projection: hopping, upright crossovers, but quick on his

edges along with projectable habits (taking pucks in motion, making plays at speed). He could be a mid-rounder.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fine is capable of playmaking manipulation, hesitation moves to open lanes or delay plays to let teammates get in position. There is some creativity in his game when he's allowed to show it, when he has the puck for longer. He needs to learn to better time some of his passes. I liked his engagement away from the puck in general in this one. The tools look average.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Fine had a solid game, bringing a bit of value in all three zones with and without the puck. The highlight was his assist: gain zone, delay, hit the through pass to a teammate driving the net. It was a quick manipulation play. Otherwise, he mostly makes simple offensive plays. He dekes through opponents as reactions, but settles for top-of-the-circle shots. He plays fast and he's quick edge-to-edge, but his upright, hopping crossovers don't generate enough speed to push back defenders. Not sure he's a pick, but he's an interesting player.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

The thing about Fine: He's as slippery as they get. He gave 20-plus-year-old defenders fits trying to contain him below the hash marks, often exploding past them and towards the net for scoring chances. He actually picked up the game's first goal on one such play, stealing a puck from a Wisconsin defender, dangling his way to the net front and going high on the backhand for the goal. I only wish Fine had that same sort of enthusiasm for the defensive zone. Just a total no-show through the first two thirds of the sheet.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fine's a fun player. He set-up a chance with off-puck skating, created a breakaway, and passed for a power play goal. Always finished his routes, dragging defenders with him to the net – not exactly common in this game. Not much offensive impact otherwise. He stays around, waits for possession, and then makes a simple play. A few low-percentage shots with other options available. Didn't show the same energy on the defensive end. Doubt there's much here for draft purposes, but perhaps he's something down the line.

David St-Louis: November 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs. USA - Five Nations

Good game from Fine, who showed his crossover rushes multiples times. He gained the offensive zone for Team USA by carrying pucks in and kicking them wide to teammates. He also used his speed to escape defenders on the walls and catch opponents on the backcheck. He's elusive, aware, and relatively skilled in the handling department. He could be a mid-round pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Fine dangled around a defender, then pushed the puck back into the middle to shoot around a stick for his goal. He's not exactly mechanically refined, but he plays fast, attacks the middle, and has a bit of patience to his game. Zero passing skill shown in this game. Didn't get a create read on his game.

Grade: D



Kai Janviriya

AGE 17.455 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'6"	139 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	54	6	14	20	0.37
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	4	7	11	0.48

SCOUTING REPORT

The points didn't flow for the blue-liners on this year's NTDP. Kai Janviriya, one of the team's flashiest players, only grabbed 20 points in 54 games. He zips across the ice, cutting away from pressure, stepping into opponents, and setting up teammates.

In top form, Janviriya steps into space, spins away from pressure, and looks for teammates around the slot. He connected with some of the best passes of the season – cross-slot passes for deflections, look off dishes to the far post, and fake shot passes to teammates walk into space. He activates off-puck, creeping down the weak side to become a shooting threat.

Consistency is the issue for Janviriya; he simply doesn't get premium touches regularly, and he's volatile with them. "He uses space, but not completely, and he doesn't make the best play from those positions," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote. "He tries to escape with his edges, but he doesn't sell his moves fully to prepare the escape."

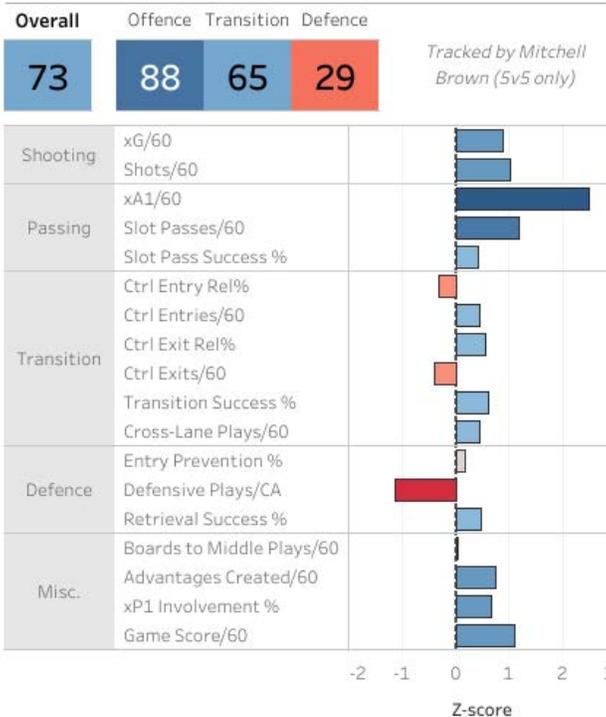
Breakouts are also an issue for Janviriya, defaulting to dump-out and safe plays whenever pressure arrives. Those plays limit his opportunities up the ice.

Despite Janviriya's rush defence and physical style, he's not likely to hear his name called at this year's draft, given his size and lack of production. But he should become a free agent candidate at Boston University, a school that has let smaller, offensive-minded defencemen cook. But perhaps one last USHL season will be best.

Kai Janviriya

D | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 171.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Janviriya is cool to watch – with his fake shots, backwards mobility, and activation mindset. But he's not as effective as he could be. He uses space, but not completely. And he doesn't make the best play from those positions. He tries to escape with his edges, but he doesn't sell his moves fully to prepare the escape. And when he does, he lacks the acceleration to separate. He's a bit more polished defensively. He gets low and inside opponents' hands. A bit passive through the neutral zone but eats up a lot of ice. Not a pick this year, but he could become a prospect in the future.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Janviriya scored a shorthanded goal off the rush, capping off a solid night. He had another look earlier in the game with a deflection off the rush, and a smart, but nearly failed pass was put in the back of the net, too. Uses space and looks for teammates before shooting, which was a change from what I've seen from him previously. The rush defence was solid, too. He gets overwhelmed at times, but if he's on his check early, he eliminates options and times his engagements. Maybe he doesn't have quite enough skill to make the NHL, but I've liked his growth throughout this season.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Janviriya had one offensive play. He stepped in, cut back, and then passed through the defender that chased him to the point. Otherwise, he accomplished little. Mistakes abounded as he tried to beat opponents with his skating and threw pucks away when he couldn't. At this stage, he's best as a defender. Overwhelmed by pressure and speed at times, but he manages opponents by getting on them early and checking their stick. Not a pick this year, but he could become one in a year or two.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Nothing new on Janviriya. He's an effective off-puck rush defender. On his check early, he steps up to intercept passes or skates through their hands just as they receive the puck. He can kill plays at a pro level once he gets better at making up distance and defending 1-on-1s against opponents with momentum. But I don't see much offence or breakout skill from him. There's the odd sequence where he passes through pressure, but it's mostly up-the-boards plays that leave some value on the table. Curious to see if he goes back to the USHL next season. Think that might be best for his offensive development. Because there's definitely NHL skill here.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

When Janviriya has the gap already closed, he's effective. He gets inside opponents, knocks them off balance, and outsmarts them in the battle. When he has to close the distance himself, he has difficulty managing speed. Lunges forward and gambles on plays. Lacks the explosiveness to close on opponents suddenly. The breakouts are simple. The point play was very quiet in this game. He refused to make a play, even with space. Not an impressive game for any of the NTDP blue-liners. He didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Janviriya has the vision. He set up a goal by passing from the far corner of the offensive end to the far post for a deflection goal. Don't see that too often. Consistently, he looks to build the offence through distribution into the slot. The rest of his game isn't quite as effective. He struggles with back pressure, defaulting to simple plays if he's not overwhelmed and dispossessed. He's passive defensively. And he only makes simple, straight ahead plays on breakouts. Even offensively, he doesn't so much open lanes as much as he reads what's in front of him. If it's closed, he lacks the skills to pry them open and forces plays that aren't there. Tough to see his game translating to the NCAA based on this game.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Janviriyia is always moving to create space for himself and teammates. He slides with pucks on first touch, forces the opposition to move to match him, and opens up passing lanes. He's hard to catch when he acquires momentum, and he knows where to look for teammates driving the middle of the ice. The offence shine, but at his size, I'm not sure how well his overall game translates to the pro level.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

One of those "the less said, the better" performances, but that's not the job so... Anyway, this was a pretty rough outing from Janviriyia. He defaulted to safe, glass-and-out plays on seemingly every retrieval, and on the ones where he didn't, panicked into the worst possible decisions when faced with any semblance of forechecking pressure. Lack of scanning had him out of the play on more than one occasion, including one neutral zone sequence where he was lucky to not get burnt. Need to see a lot more if he's going to land on our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Janviriyia joined the rush and wristed a puck past the goaltender. He missed a couple of times to sprint the ice. In general, his performance had a lot of missed opportunities. He passed when should've skated the puck, forces pucks straightahead, and got caught in the neutral zone. He's not creating advantages and the offence only appears in spurts. Didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Janviriyia had a couple of fun plays, including a flashy sequence from the point where the hands and feet sent a bunch of different signals to the incoming defender. From there, he attacked across, changed pace, then passed to a teammate in the slot. The playmaking only appeared in spurts; he preferred to take outside shots. Breakouts were an issue. He wasn't scanning much, preferring to make the first play he saw with little success. Defence was a bit better, he angled and skated through opponents' hands to win positioning. Didn't look like a pick, but there were some intriguing elements: shiftiness, handling, and play-planning from the point.

David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Another fun performance from Janviriyia: quick passing plays and even some physical engagements. He can seal opponents on the puck and leverage his lower center of mass -- that's a good thing for his NHL projection even though I'm not optimistic. His skating is above-average, too -- another good element and his thinking/processing, too. On retrievals, he executes perfectly a lot of the time: spins on forecheckers, frees his stick and the puck, and lets a teammate make a play on it. That's an advanced, selfless plays that we mostly see at higher levels. At this level, most defencemen in those situations prefer to rim pucks to cover teammates. Janviriyia creates advantages for his team, better conditions for the next teammate who gets the puck. I really like what he brings. Is he a high draft pick, a draft pick? We'll see.

David St-Louis: October 28th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP vs - USHL

Why does all the best USNTP offensive defencemen have to be under 5'9". It's too bad because Janviriyia has some legitimate first-round skills. He made one of the most creative dangles at the blue line I have seen this season, going forehand, backhand to move the puck twice under the stick of an opponent. This wasn't a show of skill just to show skill; he was in a pinch and had no other choice but that dangle. He showed fast processing all game, identifying the next or anticipating it before he got the puck, defender well overall, staying with his man off the rush. He also made leading passes into space for teammates. Some of his feeds were risky but I liked his ideas overall.



Grade: D

Will Vote

AGE 17.562 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
5'7" Height	159 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	61	16	29	45	0.74
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	22	7	9	16	0.73
USA U18	WJC-18	7	1	6	7	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Given Will Vote's stature and lack of high-end speed, he might not get drafted at all. That would be a shame, as there's a lot to like about this hard-working, crafty winger.

Vote's passing skill features prominently in most games. He receives pucks, instantly knows the next play, and moves it, hooking, slipping, or saucing pucks if necessary.

Along the boards, he bypasses battles with quick passes and even quicker sprints to the inside. And he always skates his routes, creating space for his teammates when he's not rewarded with a scoring chance.

There's also an off-puck element to Vote's game. He's a disciplined, non-stop worker on the defensive end, applying pressure but never overextending. As he enters battles, he gets low, knocking opponents off balance and winning inside positioning. If he's second, he uses his feet to trap players along the walls.

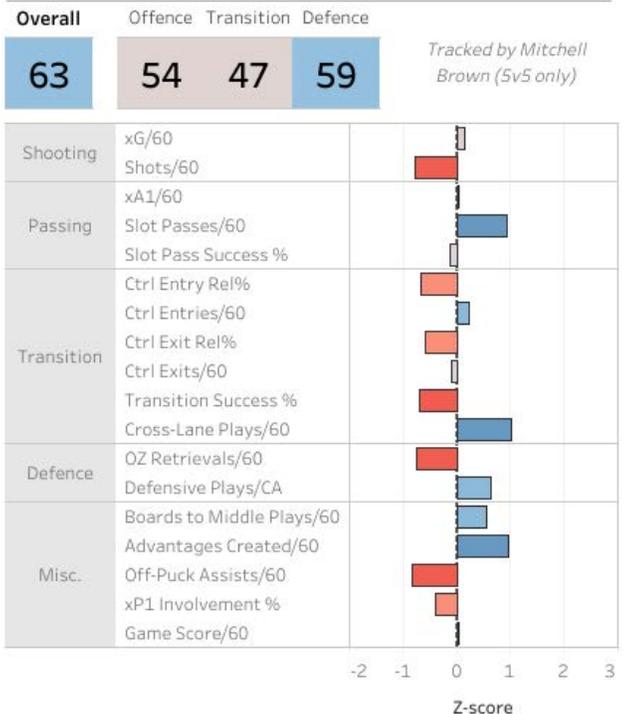
A lack of dynamic skill, like manipulation, deception, and high-speed handling, limited Vote to more of a secondary scoring role. But players with this level of work rate and intelligence often find ways to improve.

Even if he goes undrafted, this won't be the last time you hear his name.

Will Vote

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 135.9



≡ **LINKS & MEDIA**



Meet the Team: Team USA's roster at the 2023 U18 World Hockey Championships



USHL Stock Watch: Zeev Buium establishing himself as a top defenceman in 2024 NHL Draft

≡ **INDUSTRY CHATTER**

"I'm a really good two-way player. I take pride in the offensive zone and the defensive zone. I can make a lot of plays, and I can score goals. I really shine in big games. I work hard in the corners. I just do anything I can to help my team." – Will Vote, April 2023

≡ **GAME REPORTS**

David St-Louis: April 23th, 2023 - USA vs Finland - U18s

Will Vote is a great passer. He locates teammates quickly and then finds them the puck. He's always looking to move the puck inside from the walls with passes and he uses hooks and slips to do so. He understands gap manipulation. He drives ahead, pushes back the defence, and then drops the puck to teammates. I doubt he's a pick, but there are many skills in his game.

J.D. Burke: April 22nd, 2023 - USA vs. Norway - U18s

I'm not seeing anything special from Vote in any of these games, but he's taking to his role as a support player alongside two supremely talented players in Cole Eiserman and James Hagens with aplomb. He's the first man on a lot of loose pucks, battles like hell on contested retrievals, and has made a couple awesome look-off passes through traffic to set up Eiserman's one-timer. I'm not sure if he moves well enough or is skilled enough for a player that size to be a pick.

J.D. Burke: April 20th, 2023 - Latvia vs. USA - U18s

This was a mostly fine if unremarkable game from Vote, but he left without a single point and had one embarrassing moment that directly contributed to the Americans' one goal against. James Hagens had the inside lane on a loose puck in the neutral zone and Vote accidentally checked him to the ice, paving the way for the Latvian breakaway. Aside from that, the odd flash of handling skill in the small-area game. He mostly took on a support role alongside Hagens and Cole Eiserman. Not much of note, one blunder and some flashy handling moves aside.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Vote scored with a quick wrister off the pass. That was about it. He's a hard-worker who brings pace, but he's especially skilled or creative. A straight-line player who misses lanes and space. I didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Vote connected with a pair of passes for chances, including a backhand pass for a chance. He was mostly quiet, however.

Works hard, but doesn't create lanes or space. He plays fast, but doesn't use his pace to his advantage by gearing down or tricking opponents. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Joey Padmanabhan: March 8th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A nice game for Vote, who did a little bit of everything in this game. Some nice offensive sequences where he attacked defensive triangles before finding an outlet or firing a shot. Unafraid to get looks on net, sometimes to a fault, didn't always successfully get pucks through screens. Worked give-and-goes nicely with teammates in the offensive zone, looked to move off the puck immediately for return passes. Skills looked sound, the skating stride is about average, the hands are really impressive. Nice defensive acumen too, got time with Nelson on the kill. Won't take you out of your seat but does little things right, could be someone late on our board.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Vote has a solid defensive game. Just involved everywhere. He backtracked above opponents, stole pucks, and close space at the top of the zone. Nothing worked offensively. He missed passes, played too fast, and couldn't generate any meaningful offence. He's always trying to gain the middle, but didn't do anything when there. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but I appreciate his game.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Vote had a solid game. Applied non-stop pressure and came across the hips to win possession on the forecheck. Instantly moves the puck to an open teammate. Even under pressure, he found teammates. Scored a deflection goal after getting a one-time chance, the sprinting the net. He's a smart, high-pace off-puck player. He spins off checks, wins positioning, and instantly attacks the middle. Not sure about the puck skills.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Vote turned forecheck and steals into more offence. He drove inside consistently and scored with a deflection goal. He also hit teammates with stretch passes between defenders. He took pucks from the wall to the middle of the ice. A few bad decisions. Not sure if he's a pick despite everything. The dynamic qualities and skills aren't interesting enough at his size.

J.D. Burke: January 13th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Wisconsin - NCAA

Vote picked up the first goal of the game, driving the net for a rebound on a shot-pass from Oliver Moore and snapping it home. Real fearlessness on that play – Vote had to work through a lot of contact for that puck. Then he mostly faded into the background. Vote's play selection cost him on a few occasions, one in particular where he settled for a low percentage shot with a linemate easily accessible for a legitimate scoring chance if the pass got there. I don't know, I wasn't left with much of an impression in this viewing, for better or worse.

David St-Louis: December 31st, 2022 - North Dakota University vs. USNTDP U18s - NCAA

Constant flashes of skills from Vote. He can link passing plays, dangle through a stick or two, pass through opponents, attack pockets of space, and attract before passing. But he also fades in the background. And at 5-foot-7, I'm not sure he's showing enough right now. We'll see.

Joey Padmanabhan: December 17th, 2022 - USNTDP vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Vote is fun, he's incredibly skilled and smart offensively. Started off the game with a beautiful slip pass on a 2-on-1 that led to a goal, later had a nice setup where he made a cross ice pass to the back door out of the mohawk that almost led to another goal. The issue is his size. For a winger as small as Vote, he can't get off the wall quickly enough. Too often he gets angled and pinned, or a D would pinch down on him at the wing, and he couldn't really do much about it. This seemed to be a pattern in

the game. Then, just to make me eat my words, he finished the game with a power play goal where he got positioning in front and jammed home a rebound. There's a lot to like with Vote, could be a fringe player on our board.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Vote had one of the best plays in the game, turning a fake shot into a backhand drop feed for a one-time goal. Otherwise, it was a quiet game. He's mostly just an agile, slick player. Cuts around pressure, makes simple plays, keeps the puck moving. Nothing advanced. Mechanics looked average. Curious to see more.

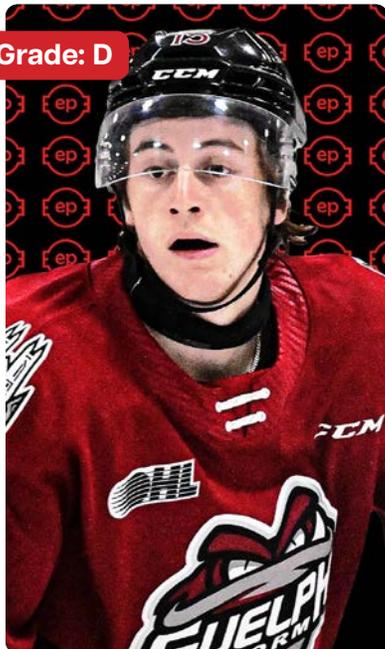
David St-Louis: November 4th, 2022 - USNTDP vs Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A lot of display of skill from Vote in this one. He clearly has some playmaking instincts and abilities. He delays, changes speed, and challenges defenders to buy time to let teammates attack the lane and then hits them with pin-point passes. He can move around defenders rapidly after reception and stretch a pass through two zones to a teammate, but he also overdangles a bit. He sees plays develops and spots pucks into space for teammates -- that should be his game.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Vote wasn't exactly an effective puck-carrier in this game. He was kept to the outside and didn't have any ability to manipulate defenders to create lanes. But, he shows some NHL skills with a bit of space. He delays to increase the distance between himself and defenders, passes through them, and hits teammates moving into the slot. A bit of defensive value. He's interesting enough.

Grade: D



Braeden Bowman

AGE 19.225 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Guelph Storm "A"	OHL	54	33	39	72	1.33

SCOUTING REPORT

The OHL doesn't have an official Most Improved Player Award, but it should. Braeden Bowman would've been on the short list.

Last year, he was solely a shoot-first winger. This past season, he became one of the OHL's best quick-possession playmakers, improved the defence, and became an even bigger scoring threat.

Without foot speed as an advantage, Bowman keeps his touches short, precise, and frequent. A powerful one-timer and snappy catch-and-release shot provide the finishing touch on plays.

He also builds plays by hanging onto the puck just long enough to draw pressure before hitting the open teammate. In transition, that creates fast-break opportunities. In zone, the vision turns medium-danger looks into tap-ins.

Tying these skills together is Bowman's off-puck game. He doesn't settle for good-enough lanes; he moves constantly to ensure he's always a great option. His proactive positioning extends to the defensive end, and his motor earns stop-after-stop on the backcheck.

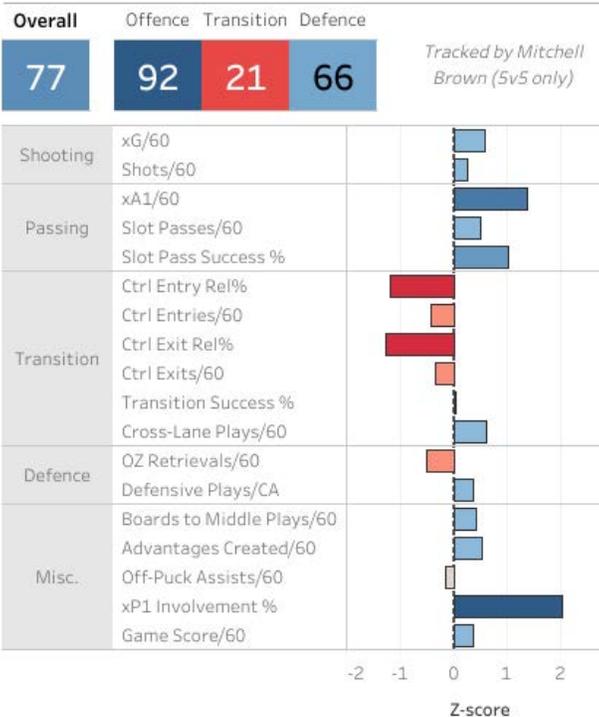
Bowman's skating and hands don't provide much separation in the OHL. As such, he's not a play-creator or dynamic threat.

As a draft-plus-two, he likely has a bit less runway than other prospects. But his refined play selection and defence give him a chance to play.

Braeden Bowman

F | Guelph Storm | OHL | Draft+2

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 97.0



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 24th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Bowman's a short possession player. There's no needless handling; the puck arrives and it's gone within a second or two. Knocked down tricky passes and completed the next play, including a pass into the slot while falling. He's more of a shooter. Scored with a two-touch shot from his back foot, his defining shot. Has the two-touch skill from his inside leg, too. Gets open inside space for quick shots, but didn't adjust to the lanes in this one. It's not hard to see why he plays the quick touch game. He lacks individual skill – skating, handling – but he tries to bring defenders toward him before passing. A solid defensive game, too. There's a chance he makes it, but the mechanics might prove too limiting. Maybe a late-rounder for a team.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

The handling and skating both proved costly for Bowman at times, but he also showed intelligence and awareness. He worked play to the middle on the pass reception and under pressure. In one sequence, he instantly took a puck off the boards and cut inside, leading to a chance up the ice. Connected with open teammates. Got open inside space and adjusted to lanes. The shooting and passing both looked like 5s at best, but the intelligence above it.

Mitchell Brown: March 10th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Not much from Bowman, save for his work on the powerplay. Connected with a one-touch cross-slot pass from the goal line for an assist. A consistent factor defensively, too. He's aggressive, but controlled. Closes space without overextending. Touches are short, but effective. Passes laterally, then relocated for the return feed. Doesn't look like a pick, but he's solid. The mechanics will have to improve to get to the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

A quiet game from Bowman, whose mechanical limitations were visible throughout the game. An upright skater who lacks explosiveness and pace. When he can't find a quick passing option, his game defaults to up-the-boards passes and clearances. Not much creativity. Showed a bit of a give-and-go game and play-building skill to work pucks laterally. Strong backtracking to get above the puck, force dump-ins and poke kill the attacker's momentum. Didn't show anything noteworthy for draft purposes.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Bowman's somewhat limited – he doesn't create advantages for himself or beat defenders – but he's smart off-puck. Defensively, he gets above the puck and angles attacks to the outside. Offensively, he gets open by staying in space or even behind opponents (as he did for his first goal, a very cool bit of off-puck creation). He doesn't really create shooting lanes. He fires from where he's given the puck, unless there's a clear path to the net, and he's not creative inside his release (no angle changing or faking). But he is patient, hanging onto the puck for that extra half second for lanes to materialize, his primary way of setting up teammates. Look off and shot fakes in open ice, but he's not manipulating opponents. He looked like a late-round candidate. Lots of work to be done but he could be an above-average hockey sense projection.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Another solid showing from Bowman. Grabbed an assist with a pass from the corner, perfectly timed to get across the slot. Showed one-touch and backhand skill under pressure, along with some deception when he had the puck for longer. Prefers to pass in transition, avoiding carrying when possible, although when he's forced to, he sets up opponents on angles. Not much defence in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Bowman is a draft-plus-two but was really impressive in this game. A bunch of scoring chances. Drove the net with the puck, hammered the post with a catch-and-release wrister under pressure, and used give-and-gos to create shots. Deked around a stick for a backhand chance, although the hands and skating looked more like weaknesses. He's not dynamic with the puck, but an effective short possession player. Could become a solid pro.



Grade: D

Alexis Daviault

AGE 17.247 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	176 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sarnia Sting	OHL	30	2	5	7	0.23
Erie Otters	OHL	41	2	13	15	0.37

SCOUTING REPORT

Last season, Alexis Daviault was one of the OHL's better rookie defencemen. His playmaking, the star of the show, was impressive for an OHL blueliner of any age. A big draft year seemed inevitable. But after a slow start and a trade to a basement team, there are more questions than answers in his game.

Daviault hasn't lost the will or skill to create. Rare is a shift where he doesn't activate in some capacity, whether that's using the weak side, becoming the trailer, or trying to beat defenders from the point. He's also a creator, faking shots to pass and faking left before going right.

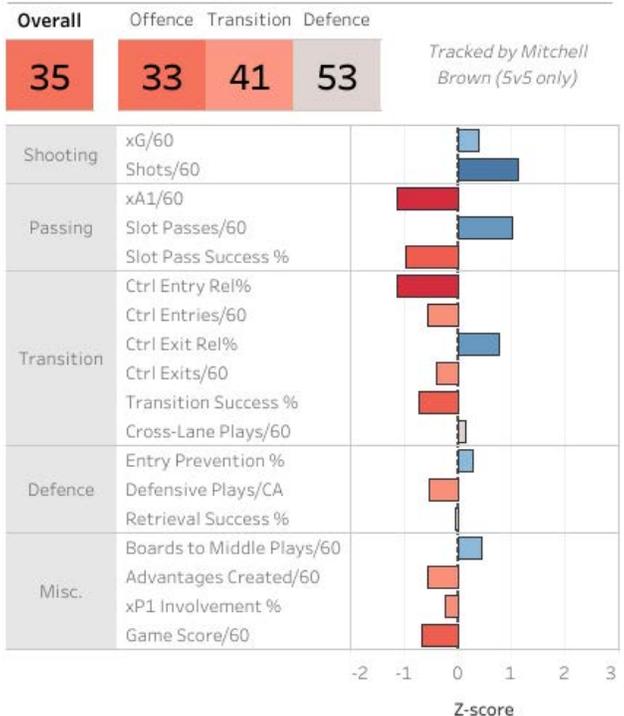
The lack of production comes from Daviault's breakouts and pace. "He rides his heels and glides around waiting for options to open," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in January. "When he's under pressure, he chips the puck or flings it into a battle further up the boards. Doesn't adapt to passing lanes (i.e., lacks a slip pass)."

To Daviault's credit, his defence improved throughout the season. He looked more aggressive, but less committing later in the season.

Still, offence will be Daviault's primary ability moving forward. He makes NHL-calibre offensive plays, but he ups the pace and develops his skating. A point-per-game season seems likely over the next two years as Erie improves.

Alexis Daviault

D | SAR/ERI | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 153.5



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 24th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Daviault has a better defensive game in this one. He stayed on his check and grabbed a trio of rush stops at the blue line. He overcommits with his feet and lunges forward. With the puck, he's still limited by his breakouts. Lots of simple plays and uncontrolled plays with space and options. He activates often, using the weak side, becoming the trailer, and stepping into space before making the next play with the puck, but those opportunities are few when he struggles to get the puck out of his zone. A bit of deception, but only at low speeds. Not an NHL prospect at this stage, but he could become one.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Daviault can't connect a pass when activating these days. He tries plays, but even the simpler ones miss their mark. He's awkward at times, preferring to glide and lean on his heels over moving his feet. From there, he manipulates opponents. When he's actually forced to move his feet, he shows more projectable skills with high crossover integration and changes of pace. The defence is messy. He grabbed stops off the rush, but also cheated his gap a lot. Backed off too easily. More aware opponents would've just faked dump and kept skating. He's not a pick this year but there are still reasons to believe he could become one in the future.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Daviault has exciting flashes, but that's it. He uses space from the point, joins the rush with give-and-gos, and shows some beginnings of playmaking. Better teammates would certainly convert more of his plays, but he's also limited by his breakouts. A lot of simple plays. This was a better defensive game than normal. Tight gap, few crossovers, kept attacks wide and closed out along the boards without overcommitting. Doesn't look like a pick this, but he's worth following in future seasons.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

An ugly game from Daviault. He tried to get into the play but didn't create anything. Only simple plays with the puck and a non-factor defensively. He moves the puck effectively on the powerplay, but that's about it for this game. Stride was laboured and didn't generate any power from it. Not a factor.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

The highs are still NHL-calibre from Daviault. He's a non-stop activator who effectively uses the weak side and becomes an option. From the point, he's always using space. In one sequence, he stepped in, faked the shot, deked into space, and fired off a chance. His shot looks projectable, predominantly upper-body but he really elevates that top arm and morphs his release to the situation. The limiters remain the rest of his game. He dumps pucks out with options and doesn't have much ability to escape the forecheck. Gets the occasional stop in transition but he also drifts too far high and wide away from the puck, allowing free passage if the puck gets through. Doubt he makes our board, but he's way more skilled than most players with his scoring profile.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Daviault flashes NHL skill. He manipulates opponents along the end boards, shoots off the pass, and looks for teammates in the slot over firing point shots. Everything just happens at such a low pace. He rides his heels and glides around waiting for options to open. When he's under pressure, he chips the puck or flings it into a battle further up the boards. Doesn't adapt to passing lanes (i.e., lacks a slip pass). Showed a bit of defensive value in this game, but nothing that suggested an NHL player.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

In the offensive end, Daviault's effective. He always uses space, stepping in for shots or trying to compress the defensive

structure. He uses his shot to create offence, shooting for deflections, turning shots into passes, and keeping pucks low. Getting to the offensive end isn't easy for him. He threw the puck away like crazy on breakouts, missing passing options, forgoing passes altogether, and making no-chance plays. Lacks patience to escape or beat pressure. The defence wasn't much better: passive, disengaged, and easily beat off the boards. He tightens things up a bit when defending the cycle. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Barrie Colts vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Daviault clearly has the skill level to be a top-end OHL defenceman and a capable pro. In spurts, he manipulates opponents to access teammates, funnels play to the inside, slips pucks through opponents, and creates advantages. Then, he throws the puck straight to the other team with a soft pass or makes a basic play with options. It's not just him on this Sarnia team, but the contrast between the highs and lows are pronounced. Seems like a player who would benefit from a different environment. Not much to make a projection with.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

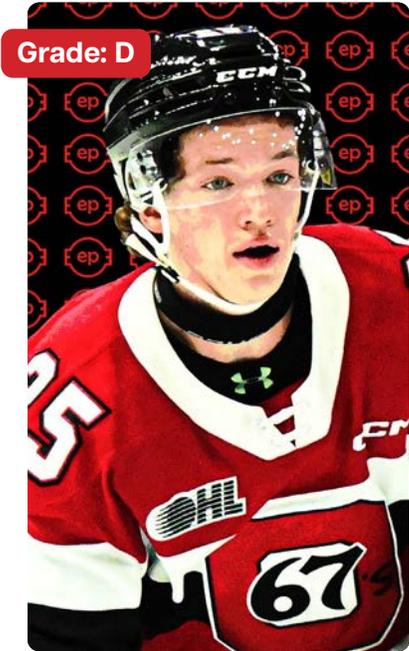
Didn't see any of the playmaking from Daviault in this game. He was mostly a somewhat effective transition player. He stepped to the middle and passed through pressure. A few lateral passes that showed vision. But he was also turnover-prone under pressure, lacking the patient to escape or beat pressure. Defensively, he had one impressive off-puck gap sequence, but mostly backed up too easily. Much better in-zone where he matches the opponent's footwork and keeps them to the outside. Retrievals were a bright spot in this game, but I'd hardly call it a notable outing. Didn't see NHL upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 12th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Daviault has a lot of intriguing qualities, but he struggled with execution in this game. A couple of shots for deflections – well-placed, but low-value plays considering the traffic and the options available. Joined the rush, then passed cross-slot for his only notable offensive play at 5-on-5. In transition, he waits for pressure, then cuts back. Punch turn was powerful and allowed for escape. Outside edges are quite developed. Changes pace – fast cut, slow glide, acceleration, then pass. That type of stuff will work in the NHL. Defence requires a lot of work. He concedes the zone by backing up early, then hunches over and places his stick on the ice. That kills his backwards momentum – attackers took advantage. He's not lunging forward, but he still getting beat without providing any friction. Tries to engage and angle along the boards with limited success. Could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

Daviault connected with a step-in look-off cross-slot pass for a tap-in. That's enough to get my attention. A high-end pass, even if the weight was a bit much for his recipient. Minor stuff. Activated from the point, joined the rush, and avoids low-percentage shots to use space or build the play. The rest of his game lagged in this outing. Very beatable off the rush with a passive gap complemented with the standout over-extending and chasing. Threw away pucks on retrievals (limited scanning), skated into pressured, and flipped pucks out with options available. The offence looked exciting. He'll be worth watching next season.



Grade: D

Brad Gardiner

AGE 17.529 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ottawa 67's	OHL	68	19	20	39	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

With nine goals through 13 games, it's safe to say Brad Gardiner started the season on an absolute heater. While he scored just four goals and 18 points in 2023, his detailed game and hot start should be enough to make him a draft pick.

Gardiner's best off the puck: Getting open inside space, supporting plays down low, winning inside positioning on opponents, and applying pressure. When the puck arrives, he passes to an open teammate and relocates for the return feed, occasionally adding a bit of flash to his touches.

But the off-puck game doesn't have to be the only way that Gardiner impacts the game. He has an NHL shot, launching pucks from tricky positions.

While he's rarely putting the finishing touches on plays, he sets up teammates with hook and slip passes in transition. And his off-puck game makes him a tricky opponent to pin down around the net.

In most of our viewings, Gardiner rarely used these skills. Instead, he settled for low-percentage plays. His hands failed often, unable to corral passes and handle with his feet moving. Perhaps it was just sample size.

Regardless, Gardiner's off-puck game and flashes of skill give him a chance. His production could take a step next year with more opportunity.

Bradley Gardiner

F | Ottawa 67's | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 112.6



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Gardiner's mostly a support player. He gets open, pressures puck carriers, and anticipates changes in coverage. He's solid. But I didn't see any notable puck plays in this game, save for a 5-grade wrister from the half wall. The tools aren't notable otherwise and he doesn't get the puck much. Deferred in transition and didn't advance the puck when given space. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Gardiner was mostly a support player in this game. He's proactive off-puck, anticipating actions and capitalizing on poor plays. Always above the puck. In the defensive zone, he supports down low and gets inside on opponents. He shows some skill in transition with quick passes around defenders. Very little in the way of puck skills and offence, however. Didn't look like a pick, but he has potential.

Lauren Kelly: February 24th, 2023 - Ottawa 67s vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

Gardiner was a positive for Ottawa in this game. He didn't stand out on every shift, but he made his moments with the puck count. He won the puck after a battle in the corner, walked to the slot and roofed it for Ottawa's second goal. Drove the net on the rush, retrieved loose pucks in the neutral zone before cutting back and starting the rush. Had another scoring chance after hopping on a loose puck. A couple of turnovers after cutting back on zone entries. There could be a draft pick here, albeit a late one.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Flashes from Gardiner. Some smart plays, cutting back when options closed, hooking pucks to the middle in transition, and working the give-and-go. Grabbed a chance with a turnaround shot. Mostly an off-puck player: he gets open in space, wins battles, provides down low support. A bit of physicality in this game. Building off that will be key. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but there's upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Nothing interesting shown in this game other than a 5-grade shot from the outside and some hard work on the backcheck. He applies pressure and closes space on opponents. No playmaking or passing skill shown. His few touches were straight line carries that resulted in nothing. Didn't see anything that suggested a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Gardiner had a pair of high-danger looks but wasn't much of a factor in this game otherwise. He lacks pace and standout skills. He tries to delay and build the offence but players close on him before he can make decisions. Tried a look off pass to the slot, but there was never actually anyone in the slot. Not much defence or physical skills either. Didn't look like a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Another game where Gardiner doesn't get the puck much, despite his off-puck game. Again, it really seemed like the issue was more his game with the puck that prevented additional touches in a shift. Only makes simple plays. He forecheckers effectively (a steal led to a pair of chances), he skates his routes, and plays a give-and-go style when given an obvious option. Puck in front, hands in rhythm with feet. Mechanics are limited. Didn't show upside in this game, but he should be a solid pro with additional skill refinement

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Gardiner's impact on this game was quiet, but he had some moments. He's best along the boards in the defensive zone: sealing off defenders, looking back up the ice, and not forcing the immediate pass. It didn't result in much counter strike offence in this game, but it should in the future. Hands failed him in the neutral zone, carrying the puck in front of his body in a glide. Opponents reached back on him and applied pressure and he couldn't find separation. No change of pace game. Nothing going in the offensive zone. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 21st, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Another quiet game from Gardiner. He didn't get the puck much. He gets open, skates his routes, and supports plays, but his touches never build to anything. They are dump-ins and simple plays that don't advance the play. There were flashes on the breakout. He tried to cut inside and pass up the middle, but the hands failed him. Struggled handling on the backhand. I didn't see an NHL outcome for him.

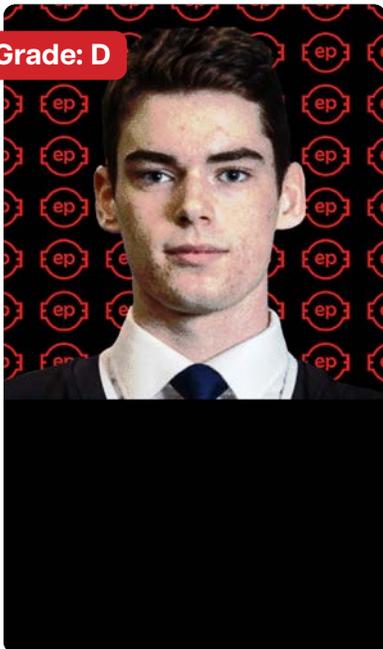
Lauren Kelly: November 20th, 2022 - Ottawa 67s vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Gardiner turned the puck over in the neutral zone for his first notable play of the game, but he was a lot more positively consistent as the game wore on. He plays between checks, stickhandles through traffic and under pressure, uses his frame to protect the puck, and also isn't afraid to throw his body around. Good puck control breaking out up the ice, and he shows advanced offensive ideas but lacks the execution at times to pull those plays off - whiffing on pucks at times, or passes through tight seams that aren't quite on target. Curious to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Gardiner barely touched the puck in this game, but he grabbed a secondary assist by working a puck high. This was mostly a forechecking game. He anticipated plays and jumped in lanes. Skilled looked below-average, but he didn't get many opportunities. Time to watch more.

Grade: D



Jacob Julien

AGE 18.008 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 12, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
London Nationals	GOJHL	22	19	22	41	1.86
London Knights	OHL	40	9	7	16	0.40

SCOUTING REPORT

Jacob Julien started the year playing Junior B. Already passed over last season, he was lightyears from the draft radar. But after a couple of call ups to the London Knights, it became clear there was something here. He stuck around after the third shot, proving to be a capable checking line centre with the skill to reprise that role in the NHL.

In case that wasn't clear, persistence defines Julien's game. He never gives up on a play. He always takes the extra stride to get next to the opponent and skates through their hands to win body positioning. Well-timed pokes and stick lifts eliminate threats in his own zone.

While Julien's defence drives his game, there's offensive upside here. By entering every touch with a couple of scans, he quickly advances pucks to the next teammate. He slips pucks under sticks, hooks them around, and adds a bit of deception to keep defenders guessing. A give-and-go style and willingness to drive the net make him an effective off-puck attacker, too.

Unsurprisingly, Julien's a raw player. Weak strides and limited edge control fail to provide him with separation. While he looks for physical play, he doesn't have the stability to absorb contact and get pucks off the wall. He's also not a shooting threat.

For a patient team, Julien could be an interesting late-round pick. With lots of graduating talent up front, he should get an opportunity to play top-six minutes next year. With his playmaking, pro style, and defence, he should have a breakout campaign.

Jacob Julien

F | London Knights | OHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 38.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** May 2nd, 2023 - London Knights vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

No offence from Julien but a really impressive defensive effort in limited minutes. He always takes the extra stride to get next to the opponent, skates through their hands to win positioning, and ties them up around his own net. Persistent, never giving up on a play. He can't really absorb contact right now because of the skating, but that doesn't stop him from trying. He could become a checking centre in the NHL. He has to score next season though.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. London Knights - OHL

Julien has skill. He scored a between the legs goal next to the net, showed more passing skill, and understands how to build the offence. His off-puck game is solid. He supports down low, anticipates passes, and closes out with force. He'd benefit from staying inside space across the ice, dipping back to build speed or getting open between defenders. He has the skill to play a checking role in the NHL, no doubt. It just comes down to skating and his ability to absorb contact.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A really impressive game from Julien. He showed clear NHL passing ability. He went across the slot, hit teammates with look off passes, pre-scanned before his touches, and spotted teammates across the ice. Hook and slip passes. Always disrupting on the backcheck. Some physicality and willingness to make contact. The shot looked like a weakness, the skating definitely is. He lacks depth and stability. Opponents out-leveraged him with basically zero effort. To play in the NHL, he will have to fix that. But he might do it. Could be an interesting late-rounder, especially given all the graduating talent in London.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

An assist and a trio of chances for Julien. He's not much of a shooting threat, however. Doesn't generate much down force – limited power. He also handles with his head glued to the puck. Still, he's aware of his options and shows both vision and passing skill. Between that and the defence, he could be a pick, even as a low-scoring re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Julien was London's best draft-eligible forward, despite his clear limits as a skater. He's upright and generates little power. The edges don't provide much separation. But he was involved. He used give-and-gos, skated his routes to create space for behind him, and set up a goal with a steal into a pass under two sticks, scanning as he turned around to find his teammate in the slot. A pull-in saucer pass showed some adaptability. And he was a force on the forecheck. He could become a big scorer next season.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

Julien only received a few shifts in this game, but he made the most of them. He resets under pressure, plays a give-and-go style, and spartans his routes to the net. Doesn't force shots, instead looking for teammates. One pass was too hard and he didn't show any in-motion skill. Disciplined defensively. Worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. London Knights - OHL

A solid game for Julien, who has probably earned a spot on this team. He's patient under pressure, cutting back or finding an open teammate on the other side. Set up a chance off the boards by scanning, waiting for the lane to open, then connecting. Takes pucks off the boards and attacks the middle in transition. Not a ton of touches, but solid stuff. The defence could be a strength, with his persistence, willingness to engage, and anticipation. Worth watching more.

Grade: D



Angus MacDonnell

AGE 17.348 DATE OF BIRTH May 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

172 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sarnia Sting	OHL	33	12	5	17	0.52
Mississauga Steelheads	OHL	31	17	7	24	0.77
Canada U18	WJC-18	7	1	4	5	0.71

SCOUTING REPORT

A blockbuster trade sent Angus MacDonnell to the rebuilding Mississauga Steelheads, where the first-round OHL pick adapted quickly, averaging over half-a-goal per game in his new home.

MacDonnell's got that dog in him. He never quits on a play, throws himself into opponents, and backs down from no one. That mentality shines brightest on the forecheck, where he wins pucks then instantly attacks the middle. If he can't get to the net himself, he passes off, then battles around the net for positioning. There, he grabs rebounds and deflections, even while falling.

The motor appears defensively, too. He's always disrupting opponents with stick lifts, slashes, and picks. He scans, eliminates threats, and makes the extra effort to get stops when things go awry.

While MacDonnell flashes playmaking in spurts, his inaccurate feeds limit the effectiveness. His upright stance skating limits his power and agility, which makes precision that much more important going forward.

If MacDonnell leans more heavily into the abrasive side of his game, tightens the defence, and improves the playmaking, he could earn a checking role in the NHL.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 29th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

One hell of a goal from MacDonnell, collecting a pass at the net-front, turning, and firing it past the outstretched Swedish goaltender all in one fluid motion. Super impressive stuff. That one display of skill aside, MacDonnell mostly caught my attention for what he did away from the puck. He was physical on the forecheck and offensive zone puck retrievals, tracked well, supported low in the defensive zone – typical bottom-six centre stuff. I'm not convinced he's a pick, but credit where it's due for a solid game.

David St-Louis: April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs Canada - U18s

MacDonell had one of the best goals of the tournament. He's pure energy -- when he's not fading into the background. He rammed an opponent on the wall, allowed his team to gain back the puck in the offensive zone, and then beat his coverage to the net. He slammed the rebound in while taking a hit. Pure will. If he could play with that pace and intensity for all of his shifts, he would get drafted quite high.

Lauren Kelly: March 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

MacDonell was all speed and violence in this game, but his puck skills left something to be desired. A spinorama no-look pass missed its intended target (the defender at the point), and went all the way down to the other end of the ice and eventually became a goal against. His speed was a little out of control on rushes, and he put himself offside on one occasion and nearly tore himself in half trying to stay onside on another sequence. Took a tripping penalty just as the previous penalty they were killing expired. Was stopped on a backhand shot on the doorstep. I didn't see a draft pick in this one.

Lauren Kelly: March 1st, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

MacDonell wasn't much of a factor in this one. Took a hooking penalty trying to stop the rush from going back the other way. Then he got injured in the first period, left holding his arm after an awkward collision with a teammate. He did return the following period, but the only other notable play he had after that was a pass across on a 2-on-1 that missed his teammate. Not a draft pick based on this game.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

In this game, MacDonell was somewhere in between the players he was in my last two viewings. He beat a defender wide and cut to the net before being stopped on a partial breakaway. Scored the tying goal on the powerplay, delaying to change the angle, dragging the puck and then ripping it from the hash marks. First in on the forecheck and definitely doesn't shy away from contact. Still not sure what to make of him as a player, but there's more offensive potential for sure.

Lauren Kelly: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

This viewing was the polar opposite of last night's game. MacDonell was pressuring all over the ice, covering defenders, picking off passes in the neutral zone, setting up his teammates for scoring chances. He scored twice in this one, delaying before releasing in the slot to tie the game at three. Buried a rebound from one knee on the goal line for the fourth goal. Impressive physical presence as well. I'm still not sure if he's a pick, but there was a lot to like out of this game.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

MacDonell wasn't noticeable much early on in this game, aside from a heavy takedown of a player by the benches. Then he scored a pretty one-timer from the faceoff dot on the powerplay. But he missed pass receptions, wasn't a factor in transition, and didn't get much of an opportunity to create when he did find open space. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

Lauren Kelly: January 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

I don't think MacDonell is a pick just based on this game. He pushes pace, he works hard along the boards, and pressures carriers on the penalty kill, but he really didn't make much of an offensive impact. He tried to attack the inside on one sequence and was stopped at the offensive blueline. He has a tendency to kick his heels up when he skates. There weren't too many notable moments for him in this one.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

MacDonell had a few chances but it was an especially encouraging game otherwise. I like his off-puck movement, from how he

times his movements into space to getting open between defenders. He delays in transition instead of just sprinting forward. But none of his ideas resulted in much. Didn't take advantage of the space created, missing opportunities to cut inside or find a teammate. Didn't look like an NHL prospect.

Mitchell Brown: October 12th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

At this stage, MacDonell isn't scoring but I'm quite intrigued by his game. He has a lot of projectable offensive qualities. Handling skill, pace, and off-puck game all stand out. Scored a goal by getting space between defenders, then skating backwards towards the net behind two defenders for a deflection. Perfectly timed. Recovers loose pucks and looks inside. Deceives when unpressured, faking the pass high and passing into the slot. Makes the extra pass in scoring position. Outside edges: two-foot stops and punch turns. Uses both effectively to escape pressure. While he doesn't use those skills to delay in transition, he's patient enough to let the middle-lane driver get ahead of the play after gaining the zone. Passes are often off, he throws away pucks in transition, and ends up behind the play defensively. These are workable. I think he's going to score a lot soon.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

MacDonell kept trying to deke through everyone with varying degrees of success. He's clearly a skilled, creative handler but he's a bit dependent on his hand speed rather than using the set-up to beat the defender. His best plays were the give-and-gos and off-puck movement. A bit of timing and definitely anticipates space. A bit of an edge in this game, running into defenders and coming across the hips to slam their stick into the boards, freeing possession. Inefficient performance, but he has an interesting collection of skills.



Grade: D

Luke McNamara

AGE 17.540 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C Position	Left Shoots
6'2" Height	174 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	67	8	19	27	0.40

SCOUTING REPORT

While Luke McNamara's production stagnated, his game didn't. The 2021 OHL Draft's 15th overall pick showcased upside through vision, transition attacks, and inside play, all while averaging under 13 minutes per night.

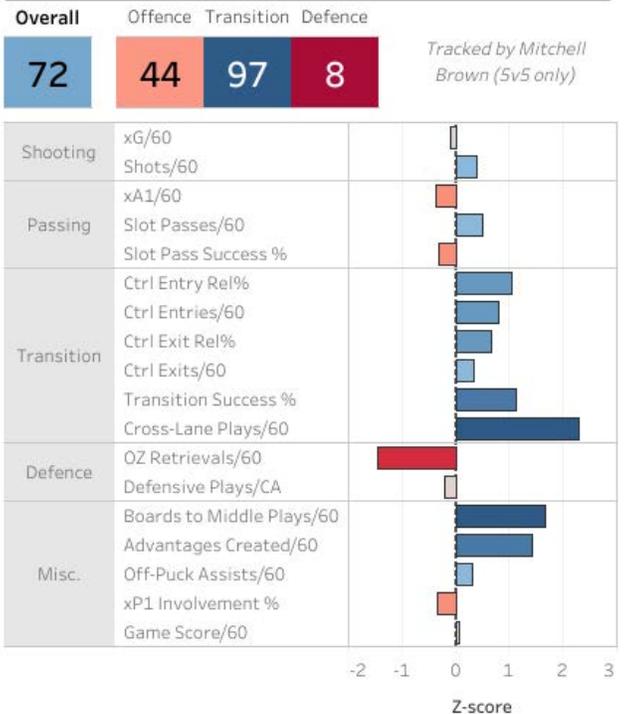
McNamara's an intelligent passer with an emphasis on building his team's offence. He passes through opponents, relocates for the return feed, delays for support, stays open inside space for one-timers, and connects with teammates as they rush the net. Rather than forcing plays up the boards, he uses weaving rushes and give-and-gos to keep defenders guessing. And he links all these together in a single sequence.

While effective off the rush, McNamara's scoring tools lack. It starts with the skating, limited by a hunched stance and a lack of power. He struggles to make plays in motion, and he's not deceptive enough to play the lower pace against pros. Occasional flashes of fluidity with the puck, alongside some shooting skill, appear.

McNamara's a bet on development. The Saginaw Spirit are the OHL's best development team these days. There's little doubt that he's improved. He has NHL-calibre vision and off-puck reads. The skating's the key, both for finding more scoring success in the OHL and making the NHL.

Luke McNamara

F | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 117.1



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

McNamara didn't get out there a ton, with Saginaw going all-in on their top two lines. It's not hard to see why. Sometimes, the speed just seemed too high for his current skating ability. But he has the brain to keep up. He works pucks east-west and builds the offence. Delays where many push ahead. A slick curl-and-drag shot led for a chance. He's solid. I think he gets picked late and the production takes off next season. But without skating improvement, the NHL will be tricky to reach. Looks like a depth prospect.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

McNamara continues to impress. He worked the give-and-go off the boards for a chance, attacked the inside on the heels of opponents, and pulled a puck out of a battle instantly turned it into a chance. He's fluid in moments, especially with the puck. The ideas are the selling point though. He anticipates, gets open, moves pucks laterally, skates his routes, and always presents his stick. He's a play-builder, and his off-puck movement gives him some finishing ability. A bit more awareness and skating growth would go a long way. He skates like he's running with that pronounced heel kick and upright stance. Probably a 3.5-to-4 projection. He could be an end-of-board candidate. I believe in Saginaw.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

McNamara has potential. He has relatively advanced ideas with and without the puck, capable of linking them together. Gets open in space, stick loaded the shot. Moves pucks laterally. Delays instead of engaging in needless races. A lack of scanning and awareness along the boards stands out as issues, as does the skating. The lack of deception's also an issue, or maybe it's pace. Either way, pucks leave his stick too late. Improve those, and he could become a pro.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

McNamara wasn't all that noticeable in this game. On the few instances where he handled the puck, it took him too long to decide what to do with it and he was eventually stripped of possession. Not a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

The best draft-eligible in this game. McNamara has a lot of intriguing qualities. He showed a delay game and used give-and-gos to create. Found the trailer, looked cross-slot, attacked the middle off the boards, and instead of dumping the puck at the end of his shift, he deked around a defender and fired a drag shot. Smart play. Lacks some in-motion skill, but lack of deception and pace were more concerning. He stares at his eventual passing target, even angling his body towards them, long before the puck leaves his stick. Too obvious. The strides are there, using two-foot stops, punch turns, and jabs, albeit not at a high level. With an elevated stance, he has to really dig in deeper to make his moves. Still, he looked like a potential top-75 player in this game. Lots of skill, defensive value, and a clear path to improvement.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

The same as usual from McNamara. His reads stand out. His skating lacks, but he doesn't lean on it. He plays a give-and-go game based around skating his routes, lateral passes, and quick possessions to break through pressure. He did all three in the sequence leading to his goal, an awkward but impressive display of awareness and intelligence. He could be a late-rounder. It really comes down to how much the mechanics improve throughout the season.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

A really involved offensive game from McNamara. He had a couple of chances, scored, and set up an even better look. Plays a give-and-go game, started with lateral passes through players. When he's carrying, he uses crossovers and works the dot lane. Aware, gets pucks off the boards, and builds the offence. The limitations are more mechanical. He can't access all the lanes he

sees because he requires a glide to make plays. Not deceptive. Lacks stability. He could be a late-rounder. He has an NHL mind.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

An effective game from McNamara, showing a bit of puckhandling skill, shooting, and vision. At least twice, he read the opponents' feet, gained the middle, and then fired off a chance. He's a solid off-puck player, too. He gets above the puck, works to get open. The issues are more mechanical. He's always in a glide and doesn't have much in-motion skill. Not adaptable either. Doesn't look like a draft pick but he has flashes.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

A quiet game from McNamara. He didn't show the same level of skill or vision that I saw in this previous game. The skating was more of an issue. He occasionally gets the jump on players but mostly ends up chasing. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Skating doesn't look like McNamara's strong suit. He struggles out there. So upright and doesn't generate much power. But he's effective regardless. Always looking for an inside-lane option off the boards. Spaces the offensive zone and skates his routes. Give-and-go style. He has potential as a shooter, too. Takes passes with his hands already set, drops his weight into the ice, and changes the angle a bit. Curious to watch more.



Grade: D

Oliver Peer

AGE 19.523 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 09, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

RW/C Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	165 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6 Skating	4.5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Windsor Spitfires	OHL	63	22	45	67	1.06

SCOUTING REPORT

Looking for a player on a rocket ship to the moon? Look no more. Oliver Peer was undrafted into the OHL and scored just nine points last year. This year, he more than quintupled his production, becoming one of the OHL's most dynamic rush threats and capable play-killers.

Peer isn't just fast; he's deceptive. He drags defenders across the ice with a mixture of crossovers and weight shifts, then pushes off and accelerates around them with ease. Opponents that take away the first play are quickly met with an explosive cutback and crossovers.

With hands to match and a lateral passing game, he has the skills to beat opponents off the rush in the NHL.

More than just a rush creator, Peer has a knack for getting open inside space. As soon as Windsor loses the puck, he sprints back to disrupt the puck carrier.

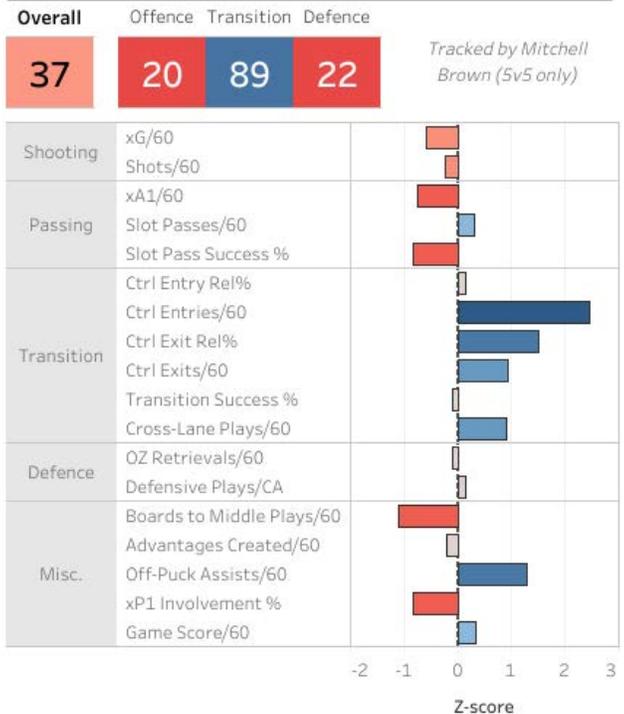
To make the NHL, Peer must better harness the opportunities his skating creates. Right now, he's settling for low-percentage shots and easy-to-hit passes, missing the higher-value opportunities that his rushing game opens.

He lacks physical skills, like skating through the hands of back pressure and winning body positioning along the boards.

Despite his age, Peer looks more like a long-term project. An overage year as a go-to creator will benefit his game significantly. He has NHL speed and handling – that gives him a chance to make it.

Oliver Peer

F | Windsor Spitfires | OHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 63.6



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 10th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Lots of plays from Peer in this game. He plays fast, mixing crossovers and weight shifts to misdirect opponents before pushing off and beating them with speed. The edges are refined, sinking deep into his cuts and punches for the explosive exit. Skating should be an advantage for him at the next level. Hands, too. The hands match his foot speed, beating opponents off the rush. Maximizes his odds by setting up defenders on angles, but understands when to play the give-and-go. He's mostly a shooter off the rush. Skates in, pulls the trigger, ignoring teammates in better positions if there's a defender between them. Better at playmaking when in-zone, but the passing skill fails him. Benefit from improving the off-puck reads; he's unaware of backpressure and gets tied up as a result. Consistent motor, however.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Peer's defence continues to shine, but he didn't show anything with the puck this game apart from one scoring chance and one off-puck net drive to create some space for a shooter behind him. He's a hard worker. Always backtracking to get above the puck or for the steal possession himself. Intelligent forechecking, too. But I don't see NHL skill.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

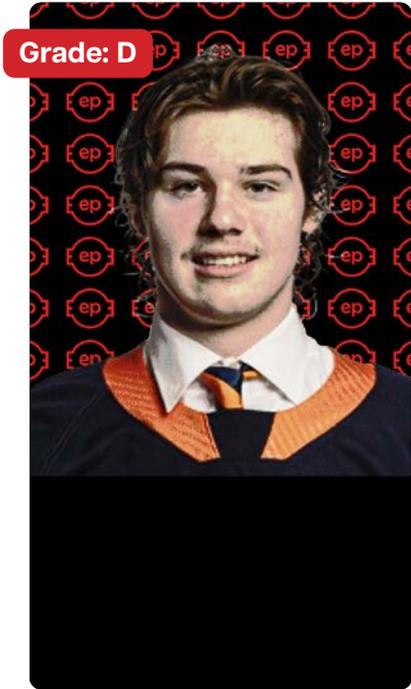
Peer stole the puck on the penalty kill, gained the zone, delayed, shot, and the rebound was put in for an assist. That's pretty much his game. He plays fast, working give-and-gos when necessary, and gets open off-puck. An NHL puck pursuer. Aggressive, closes out fast, gets break ups where many players go for the block. Don't see much offence, however.

Mitchell Brown: January 26th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

An impressive game from Peer. The speed was a factor all game long. He burns up the ice with crossover rushes, attacking defenders at angles before pushing laterally and winning the outside race. Mostly looks to shoot off the rush, but shows a bit of vision to drop pucks back into space. Dokes through opponents at speed when necessary, although he prefers use the weight shift and crossover combination to keep opponents guessing. Some off-puck instincts and awareness around the net, too. He stays between defenders, presenting his stick to shoot immediately. Non-stop pressure on the forecheck and backcheck. Flashes a give-and-go style, but he's too reliant on his speed, leading to a bunch of turnovers. Old for the class, but he could still be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Peer plays a fast give-and-go game. He attacks the inside, passes wide, rushes the net. It's how he grabbed a primary assist. Actively defensively, but few stops. Mostly just pressure and support. Didn't show any handling or shooting skill. Curious to watch more.



Grade: D

Blake Smith

AGE 17.945 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 05, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'4" Height	201 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	4 Shooting	4 Passing
4 Puckhandling	3 Hockey Sense	6 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Oshawa Generals	OHL	19	1	1	2	0.11
Flint Firebirds	OHL	41	0	6	6	0.15

SCOUTING REPORT

As the NHL moves towards more speed and skill, towering physical presences are forced to develop new skills. Blake Smith's a good example. Just a decade ago, his game would've likely been significantly different.

Smith's an overpowering physical presence and a fluid skater. A deep, clean stride and powerful crossover close distance on opponents fast. His defensive skating – knees bent, chest up, and c-cuts and heel pushes over crossovers – steadily guides opponents into the boards, right into a heavy shoulder.

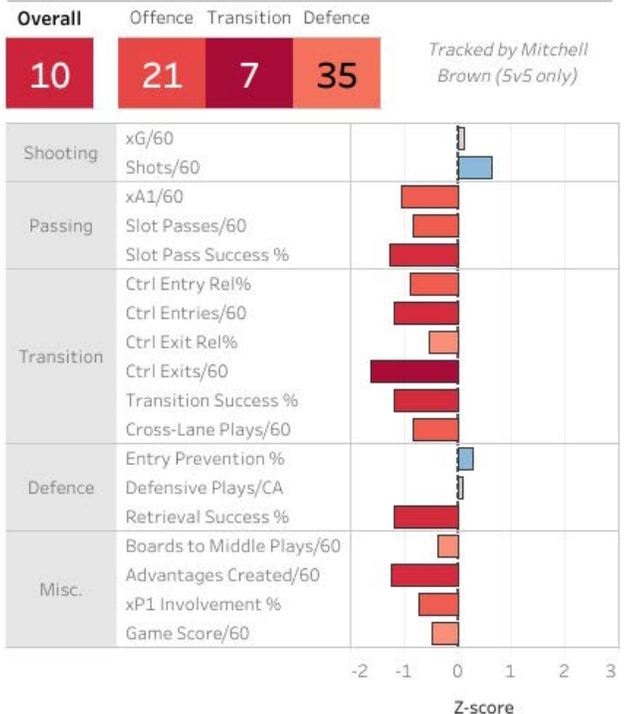
There's also some skill in Smith's game. "He can make and take passes in motion, uses space before shooting, looks for teammates in the slot when given space, and even tries some creative plays," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown detailed.

"None of [those skills] lead to much at this stage," Brown continued. "He's unaware of options and overly optimistic when he is. Defence has similar holes, as better attackers can pull him out of his athletic posture to cleanly beat him. He needs to win body positioning on opponents when going into the boards and around the net more often."

As such, Smith's a long-term projection. His mobility, size, and desire to make plays give him a chance, especially if the reads, awareness, and puck skills take a step or two.

Blake Smith (FLNT)

D | Flint Firebirds | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 100.0



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Smith has tools and he can play Flint's offensive zone structure mostly fine. He activates, uses space before shooting, and tries to hit teammates in the slot with passes. The shot's more of a 4-to-4.5, lacking the upper-body movement and lower-body flexion of a projectable NHL average shot. His passes miss their mark and he doesn't try plays on breakouts. He's mobile, though. He keeps his knees bent and his chest up. He flashes a near-perfect stride without the puck from a depth standpoint. But he mostly looks good at defence, rather than actually excels at it. He loses retrievals because he doesn't establish body positioning, he bites on feints for entries against, and he overcommits. If a team takes him, it's because of the size and mobility combination. Not much else, at least right now.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Smith's interesting because it's not as simple as the size plus a little bit of skating. He can make and take passes in motion, uses space before shooting, looks for teammates in the slot when given space, and even tries some creative plays. The shot and hands are a below-average projection. He's a vulnerable defender. Prone to getting manipulated, despite his relatively advanced defensive posture for this level (chest up, knees bent, few crossovers, wide stance). He overcommits but shows some corrective ability. He's not a pick for us, but I wouldn't be surprised if a team picks him.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

The combination of skating and size is why a team might take Smith. He has projectable defensive posture: knees bent, wide base, chest up, and he uses c-cuts and heel pushes over crossovers. He's fluid with pro-habits with the puck, highlighted by in-motion pass receptions and passes. None of these lead to much at this stage. He's unaware of options and overly optimistic when he is. But there was a slick backhand pass through multiple forecheckers for an exit. Something to build off. Better attackers can pull him out of his athletic posture to cleanly beat him. Backwards crossovers could be an issue. Defence definitely is. He needs to win body positioning on opponents when going into the boards and around the net more often. Long-term.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

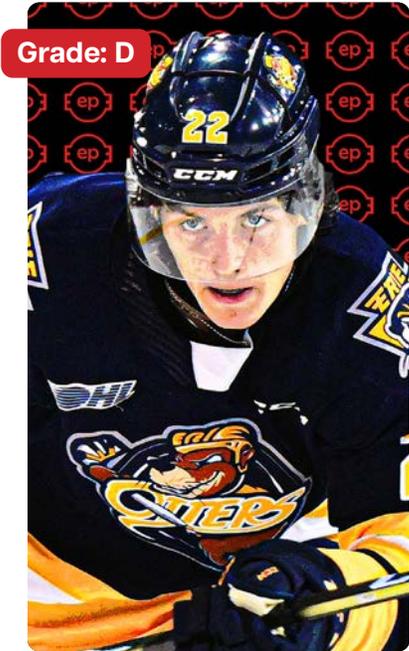
Just a solid game from Smith. One of his several breakups off the rush led to a breakaway the other way. Keeps his knees bent and doesn't over-extend. Some physical in open ice to step up and kill plays, but not along the boards. Nothing with the puck, however. Skill looks too limiting. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Some serious low-event hockey whenever Smith stepped on the ice. He's tall and reasonably fluid as a skater. Crossovers lack depth and extension, but the stride gets close. He has ideas – like taking a pass inside crossovers and then going up the middle under pressure or splitting the forecheck with a pass up the rink while moving. He lacks the hands and accuracy to take full advantage of his ideas. There's not much defence there right now. He's sometimes physical but only when second to battles. Doesn't establish body positioning. Thwarted a couple of entries by taking away the middle and swooping across. His size and skating combination might entice a team, but I didn't see NHL qualities in this game.

Lauren Kelly: October 15th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Unless you intentionally focused on him, Smith was generally unnoticeable on the ice. He's a mobile, calm defender who makes good puck decisions under pressure, sending teammates up the ice on the breakout with clean passes. He closes gaps well defending the rush, keeping opponents to the boards. Didn't see much from his shot, just a typical wrist shot from the blueline. Crosschecks players in front of his net to clear traffic for his goaltender. An overall safe performance, but not sure if I see draftable qualities yet.



Grade: D

Spencer Sova

AGE 18.682 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 10, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info		Player Grades		
D	Left	5.5	5	5
Position	Shoots	Skating	Shooting	Passing
6'1"	185 lbs	5	4	5
Height	Weight	Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Erie Otters "A"	OHL	68	16	23	39	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

With 14 goals and 28 points through the first half of the season, Spencer Sova looked like a slam-dunk pick as a re-entry. After all, this is a prospect with NHL tools across the board. But the points dried up in the second half, recording just 11 in the 36 games that followed, and questions linger with the 2020 OHL Draft's eighth overall pick.

Sova has the look of an NHLer. He's a fluid mover, escaping pressure with an arsenal of turns and cuts. Hands that match allow him to deke through opponents, and his feints open passing lanes.

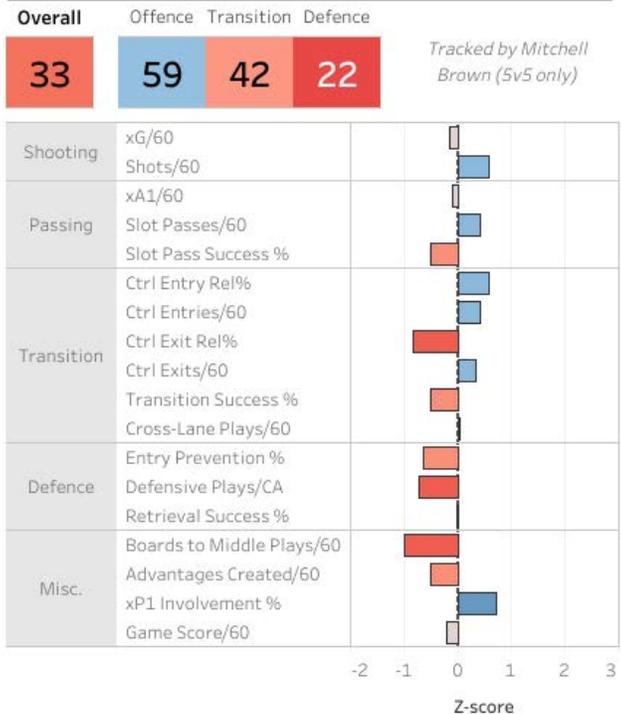
The rush defence looks NHL-calibre, with a wide, deep base, few crossovers, well-timed pokes, and a heavy shoulder for those who try to slip past along boards.

Even as a draft-plus-one, Sova's game lacks refinement. With those tools, he has play-creation potential, but he's mostly taking point shots and making simple breakout plays for turnovers. His mobility, handling, and built-in deception mean that he creates better lanes, but he doesn't use them consistently.

As such, Sova remains one of the OHL's most interesting players. There's clear NHL potential. His tools are worthy of a top-three-rounds pick, even as a re-entry. A development plan focused on reading and creating space could help him become one of those players who everyone wonders how he slipped through the draft.

Spencer Sova

D | Erie Otters | OHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 162.7



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Sova set up a tap-in on the powerplay by walking into space and faking before passing. He's deceptive at 5-on-5, too. But it doesn't result in much. He moves pucks too quickly, but also skates into pressure. He's more of a defender. Passive gap but projectable defensive skating. He keeps attacks wide and engages at the right moments. The skating's the only clear NHL ability. Maybe he gets picked late.

Lauren Kelly: March 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Sova was solid in this one. Kept his head up on breakouts, activated from the point, wanted to join the play a lot more than he did (turnovers meant he had to circle back to prepare to defend the rush). One-timers and point shots were stopped, but there was a nice sequence where he dangled through the middle of the ice and got a backhand shot off while falling. Took pucks from the boards to the middle with surprising efficiency, which led to scoring chances. Defended the rush decently well. I don't know if there's enough here to warrant a pick as he's a re-entry, but there are definitely a lot of positives to his game.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

The majority of this game was a nothing performance. Sova's there. He makes basic reads, jumps into the play sometimes, takes point shots, and plays passive defence. There were exciting moments, however. He used space from the point, showing 6-grade edges (two-foot stops, deep punch turns, heel-to-heel skating, in motion skill) as he evaded pressure. Stepped into pressure, escaped out the backdoor. For the most part, his moves result in more point shots. It seems like a lack of planning and awareness of options. Still has potential, but the first-half production likely overstated just how big of a step he took.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Sova looks great. He's smooth and deceptive, faking out incoming pressure, using cutbacks and tight turns that look like NHL-calibre, and getting inside opponents. But it rarely advances the puck. On the powerplay, he faked, faked, faked, and then blindly dropped the puck to the other team for a goal against. He dumps the puck out or skates into pressure even after creating options. Lots of blind plays. He has skill, but I still don't see an NHL outcome.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Sova's production has cooled and it's not hard to see why: He just doesn't do anything notable with the puck. It's a lot of point shots or passes to where his teammates are, not where they are going. Blind plays on breakouts, but he's toolsy. He can escape pressure with projectable cut backs, he's physical, and flashes some handling skill. But I don't see anything that suggests a pick as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Sova activated and set up a chance in front. He won positioning on opponents and checked them off the puck. Showed a bit of handling skill, skating, and deception. The backwards crossovers were powerful, instantly providing separation. But the decisions were poor. He passed into battles, coughed up the puck without pressure, and missed open passes. Not sure if he's a pick, despite the skating and physicality.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Sova has tools. He's a skilled skater and handler, twisting and turning as opponents force him to take evasive action. He joins the play, makes skilled plays down low as a handler, and has become a reasonably solid rush defender. The physical play helps hide some of his weak defensive skating and over-aggression. But he doesn't take control of the game. He makes simple plays unless forced to do otherwise. He's not a play-builder or a playmaker, settling for low-percentage plays unless, again, the opposition

removes the easy play. The tools suggest an NHL prospect, but the execution's far behind.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Sova faded throughout this game, but the early stages were a reminder of just how impressive the tools are. He fakes out incoming pressure, cuts away, attacks the middle, dekes around defenders with ease, and activates into the play. Some of his plays were quite complex, manipulating opponents to create lanes. Then, he returned to flinging pucks away with options. The tools are clearly there to get picked this time around. Need to see more.

David St-Louis: April 28th, 2022 - Finland vs Canada - U18s

Sova couldn't catch up to Kemell at the end of the game, but otherwise, I thought he was Canada's top defenceman for long stretches at the tournament. He tries to make plays, seems reasonably aware, and active offensively. He has some creative patterns, but no inherent creativity (he moves in predictable ways, but his movements still create something and involve teammates into the offence). His rush defence was a strong point, but his in-zone one requires a bit of work. He's physical. Average sense and average to above-average tools are enough to get drafted quite high in this draft, especially since he has the mobility.

Lauren Kelly: April 24th, 2022 - Canada vs. Germany - U18s

As big of a weakness as Canada's blueline was at this tournament, I actually thought Sova didn't look too bad overall. Quarterbacked Canada's five-minute major penalty early on in the game, and demonstrated good awareness of his teammates with good distributions. Solid skating abilities, especially on the wider ice surface. Head up on rushes with the puck. Finds space to open himself up for one-timers. Breaks the puck out effectively. Could benefit from scanning more on retrievals (especially against more skilled opponents, maybe it wasn't costly in this game simply because it was Germany?).

He was kind of all over the place early on, jumping up into the play, and sometimes he was too deep in the OZ to get back to defend a rush in time (again, because it was Germany, it didn't cost him). I actually thought his rushes really benefited from the wider ice, it gave him more space to accelerate and maintain puck control. I wonder if that rushing ability will translate back to the narrower ice in the OHL... that was something I didn't see a lot of in my Erie viewings. A mid-round pick isn't out of the question.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2022 - Canada vs. Team USA - U18s

His technical ability stands out, especially his skating. Perfect posture or close to, which creates a stable pocket in which he can handle the puck, making up for his lack of handling precision somewhat. Smooth puck distribution, a lot of stretch passes attempt, supports the offence, moves laterally to try and create passing lanes. He caught up to Cooley in a straight-line race at some point. Cooley isn't the fastest, but this still suggest that his skating is above-average.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Erie Otters - OHL

When Sova goes for skate, the tools shine. He pushes his knees past his toes, keeps the puck in his hip pocket, and shifts his weight to deceive the defender before pushing across. But these rushes very rarely result in anything. And his puck decisions are mostly poor. He throws pucks away constantly, whether that's with a failed pass of a retrieval or a dump-out to no one. Doesn't look to the inside unless there's zero pressure, and doesn't have the short-range breakout passing game to offset it and become more of an activation-focused player. I don't see the upside.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Sova was involved offensively all game, showing some manipulation skills, through movements and passing. He gave the puck to teammates, creating give-and-gos to improve the location of his shot and attacked down the wall. His constant movement on the blue-line opened up opportunities. I wouldn't qualify Sova as a high-end thinker of the game; most of his decisions under

pressure are learned patterns or first-option plays and he also made a few questionable choices during the game, but the tools look potentially above-average and the aggressiveness and confidence matters. The defensive game was hit and miss. Effective off the rush (surfing, aggressive gapping) and looser in-zone. Still, he could leverage his positive elements to become a bottom-pairing NHL defender.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

More of the same from Sova with two exceptions. One was the best play of the game. He faked the shot before touching the puck on the pinch. After skirting around the defender, he faked a play to the front of the net, wrapped around, delayed, and set-up a cross-slot shot. That level of patience and awareness didn't appear at any other time. But he showed a bit more aggressiveness with the puck on breakouts. Establish positioning on back pressure, then skates through their route while attacking the inside. The skating's a bit of an interesting one. Moments of near-mechanical perfection but it falls apart quickly and his average posture is too upright. The moments of puck skill and vision give me optimism, but he's still largely a tools and a bit of defence projection. End-of-board candidate, at most.

Mitchell Brown: March 12th, 2022 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Every time I watch Sova, I ask myself "what does he do?" The answer is not usually not much. And in this game, he did nothing. He has some tools (mobility). Some defensive potential through his defensive skating and rush defence. But he's still conceding the zone too easily. And with the puck, he's risk-averse to the point where he's just giving the puck to the other team. Doesn't scan. Just throws possession up the boards to the other team. Can't read pressure, let alone manipulate it. When he tries to actually do something with the puck, he's just going for a skate – no end goal, no passing, no planning, no greater idea to advance the play. Didn't look like a candidate for our board in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Sova's more interesting than I've given him credit for. He shows the beginnings of great ideas. Controlled activation down the weak side, inside lane use on the breakout, and clever passes into the slot after a fake shot. Extends OZP with his activation. However, those are limited by frequent poor decisions. For example, he steps inside, then immediately passes to the boards to a teammate more covered than himself – turnover. He blasts needless shots with space to make a better play. Beat a few times off the rush, but the rush defence could become a strength: quiet feet, takes away the middle early, times his engagement. Maybe a late-rounder. Needs to develop both skills and sequencing.

Lauren Kelly: February 16th, 2022 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Sova looked all right in this one, but there are some things that need to be fine-tuned in order to make him a successful defenseman at future levels. He has good body positioning defending most rushes but his skating affects how quickly he can get there. He activates from the point but only on power play opportunities, and only showed passing skills quarterbacking a unit (no shots from the point). He had one shot from the outside off the rush that handcuffed the goalie. Overall I liked his play away from the puck a lot more than when he had it, and I feel like he's got a package that warrants a draft pick. Just not sure how high a team would take him.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Give Sova space, and he shows patience, awareness, and a bit of creativity. He advances the puck while keeping his options open, never committing to a play. Take it away, and throws the puck up the boards. It's true in the offensive end, too. He activated a bit more than in previous viewings, but didn't do anything with it apart from one shot. On one hand, handling pressure is a must for the NHL. On the other, he clearly has tools that could be refined to being a positive player with defensive pressure. Defence is probably his best skill now: he angles, he hits, and times his engagements well. I don't think he's draft-worthy based on his play right now. But like every OHLer, he didn't play last year.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. Sarnia Sting - OHL

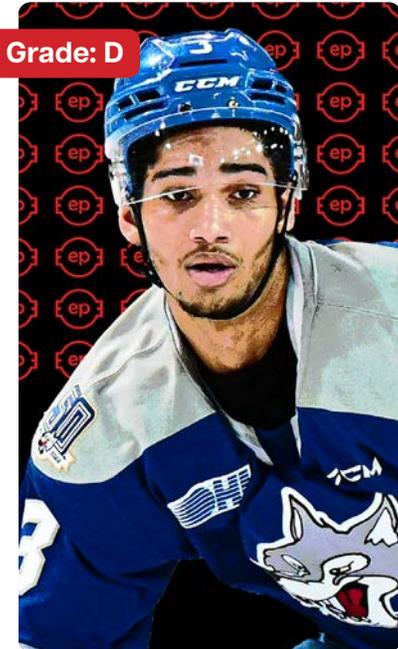
Best game I've seen from Sova so far, but it wasn't all that productive. He tried to make plays with the puck in the OZ, grabbing a scoring chance and nearly setting up one up after going around the net and just missing his teammate's stick. That didn't translate to transition. He's too passive. He either needs to start activating or making plays instead of deferring to his teammates every time. The rush defence could be a strength in the future. Doesn't crossover too early. Looked to angle and disrupts the puck carrier at the right time. I don't think he's a draft pick for us, but I can see why a team would bite. There are tools and ideas, waiting to be linked together with activation, skating refinement, and confidence.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2022 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Defence was Sova's best dimension in this game. He guided attackers to the perimeter before forcing the dump in along the boards. Engages at the right times in the DZ, disrupting shooters and grabbing the odd well-timed steal. Scans for threats off-puck. A mess with the puck. He rims every puck up the boards and doesn't get open for a pass to the inside. Even when given a bit of space, he skates to the boards and hammers it off the glass and in. Didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2021 - Erie Otters vs. London Knights - OHL

Sova threw a lot towards the net without much impact. He's not a particularly crafty shooter. Most of them were get puck, lean over inside leg, and fire immediately, without or with teammates in the shooting lane. Occasionally slick with the puck, particularly in the NZ on regroup or with a passive NZFC, but that doesn't translate to high pressure situations like the breakout. Closed space at the right times on occasion, but mostly backed up too far. Brings a physical element and some in-zone play-killing ability along the boards, but he's a reactionary off-puck defender. I didn't see the upside in this game.



Grade: D

Djibril Touré

AGE 19.282 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 05, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

D Position	Right Shoots
6'7" Height	203 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	4 Shooting	4 Passing
3.5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	6.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves	OHL	57	5	11	16	0.28

SCOUTING REPORT

Djibril Touré took the scenic route to the OHL. He went unclaimed in the QMJHL Draft. By the time his first year of NHL draft eligibility rolled around, he was still playing AAA in Québec. Then, he went to the CCHL, before finally landing in Sudbury as a free agent.

Six-foot-seven players don't move like Touré. A deep stance enables powerful strides and crossovers, sharp turns and cutbacks, and speed to burn. He flies past forecheckers then joins the rush.

If he can't outrace pressure, he twists and turns away from it before finding an open teammate. He attacks the inside, using give-and-goes and weaving rushes to beat opponents.

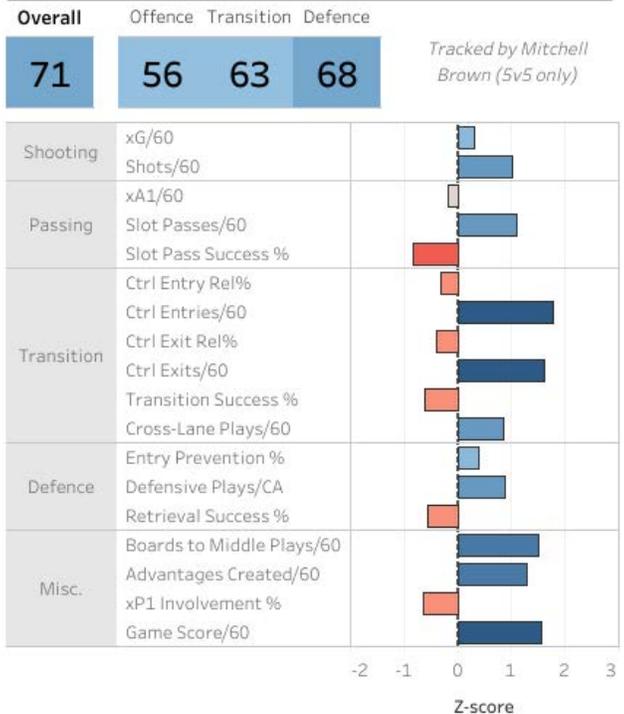
Despite Touré's age, he's a raw prospect. He's highly inefficient. Some of the sources are a lack of scanning, poor reads under pressure, and hands that can't keep up with his feet.

On the defensive side, he gets stops with pokes and hits, but struggles to manage speedier, more creative attacks.

Surely, Touré's mobility, instincts, and, of course, stature will interest teams. He still has a lot of filling out to do, which means the skating will only improve. And while he's already 20, this was only his first OHL season. Lots of work, but lots of time. He's one of the draft's most interesting prospects.

Djibril Toure

D | Sudbury Wolves | OHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 98.7



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Toure was undisciplined in this game but was still one of its more effective players. He makes quick passes to open teammates, but also slows down to let plays develop while hiding his intentions. Defensively, he steps in opponents and gets a lot of stops when providing support. He has some ideas offensively – activate, give-and-go – but he's limited by his hands and awareness of space. The NHL outcomes are limited but teams value size, especially with this level of mobility.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Toure's skating posture lacks consistency but he flashes proper depth. He has skating skills and isn't shy to use them: heel-to-heel, two-foot stops, punch turns, and in motion passes. The crossovers aren't fully there, largely because of the variable depth, but he integrates them into his rushes effectively. Pulled away from opponents with his speed, but he lacks handling skill to match. Activates and uses the weak side. More of a shooter than a passer, although he tried one advanced play after joining the rush. Shot's a below-average projection – doesn't get much on his shots, release lacks speed. Defence isn't really much of a factor. He gets stops by closing distance and making up ground opponents when skating forwards. That's about it. Lacks awareness on retrievals (doesn't scan or deceive). A long way to go. Maybe a team takes him late but I don't see an NHL outcome.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Pressure leads to Toure making panicked plays. Gives away possession. Doesn't scan. Misses his targets when he tries and lacks pace with the puck. The intrigue remains the tools, defensive engagement, and activation. He sinks into a projectable stride, pushing his knees past his toes and engaging his hips. Keeps his chest up about as much as one would expect for a 6'7" player. Joins the play and shows some intelligence to stay in space. He's a project, but I wonder if a team takes him late.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Toure should generate some interest. He's tall and has skill, even if he's raw. He's a 5-grade skater, pushing his knees past his toes and showing a surprising amount of edge control and skills. High crossover integration, as he showed on a couple of rushes where dusted opponents. Went end-to-end for a chance, setting up defenders with crossovers and shifting his weight. Makes in motion plays, too. Activates regularly. The hands are a limiting factor and the decisions are inconsistent. The defence is mostly stick-in-lane, but his length and skating earns stops at this level. Retrievals are basic. He's a late-rounder, but I see a team picking him.

Mitchell Brown: December 16th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Another game at forward for Toure, mostly. Missed his outlets on the breakout and threw the puck away under pressure. There was some play where he stepped off the boards and passed in motion. Looked better on the defensive end, closing space on opponents quickly and grabbed a stop.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Toure played forward in this game. Not sure he had the puck more than 15 times. But he did grab a scoring chance and set one up with a backhand pass into the slot. Showed some off-puck reads to get open and tried to win inside positioning around the net. Didn't look like a pick; didn't show the same level of skating I saw earlier.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Some seriously exciting moments from Toure in this game. In one sequence, he skated back into his own zone while watching the F1. Just as they closed in, he made a sudden, power stop and accelerated while bringing the puck across his body. Another

time, he cut back, waited for the F1 to engage, then cutback the other way and led the rush. His fluidity as a skater and handler really stands out at this level, not just for a player of his height. He has a lot of great ideas in transition beyond the carrying: he uses the middle, goes cross-ice, delays at the right moments. He has a lot to clean up offensively (shooting mechanics, passing decisions), but he gets into the right areas. A double re-entry, but there might be something here.

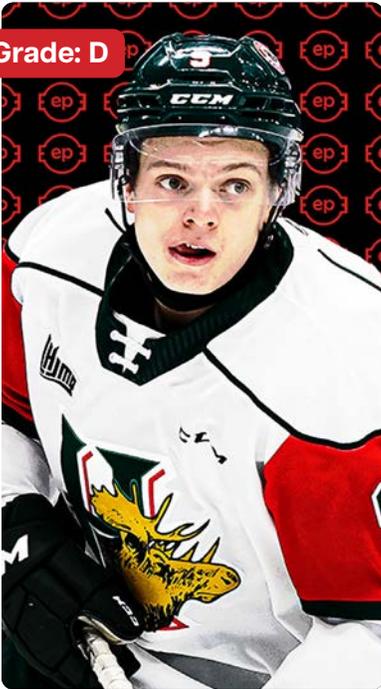
J.D. Burke: October 29th, 2022 - London Knights vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

This was a pretty tough game for Toure, who looks like an exceptionally raw prospect, even relative to the OHL. Every part of the game just looked so agonizingly difficult for Toure. What should have been easy breakout plays wound up bouncing off of his teammates skates and into the hands of their opponents, and these weren't particularly ambitious passes either; it's just that Toure placed way too much force on the puck and put it in spots where his teammates couldn't corral it. This clumsiness extends to Toure's skating stride, too. He's so top heavy that his chest is practically parallel with the ice, and the heel kick is wildly inefficient. He's a reactive defender, but he mostly fared well once he closed on his opponents. As the game wore on, Toure showed a heightened willingness to activate into the play, even taking some intelligent off-puck routes. I don't think you can draft a player like Toure at this stage in their development, but he bears monitoring.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Toure's a draft-plus-two who doesn't have any history of scoring, but he tries stuff. He uses crossovers, punch turns, two-foot stops. He plays fast and tries to create off the rush. Does he? No. He skates into pressure and doesn't show much awareness of options. He's also very limited in terms of puck skills. The shot's a sluggish sweep. But he gets the way defensively and shows some play-killing ability. He could be worth watching in the future.

Grade: D



Attilio Biasca

AGE 19.499 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 18, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Halifax Mooseheads "C"	QMJHL	60	24	35	59	0.98
Switzerland U20 "C"	WJC-20	5	2	2	4	0.80
Switzerland U20 (all) "C"	International-Jr	12	4	6	10	0.83

SCOUTING REPORT

The World Juniors can alter a prospect's fate for better or worse, especially an undrafted one. And we may see it happen for the better with Attilio Biasca.

It's likely that, as a third-year QMJHL player, his production of a point-per-game would not have been enough to earn him consideration at the draft, but his performance at the tournament in December could convince scouts to give him a chance.

Acting as the captain of Switzerland, Biasca lined up strong performances to help his team earn upset victories against Finland and Slovakia. He consistently generated scoring chances off the rush by leveraging his straight-line speed, his strength in 1-on-1 situations, and his shot. He showed that he could beat goalies cleanly from high-danger areas.

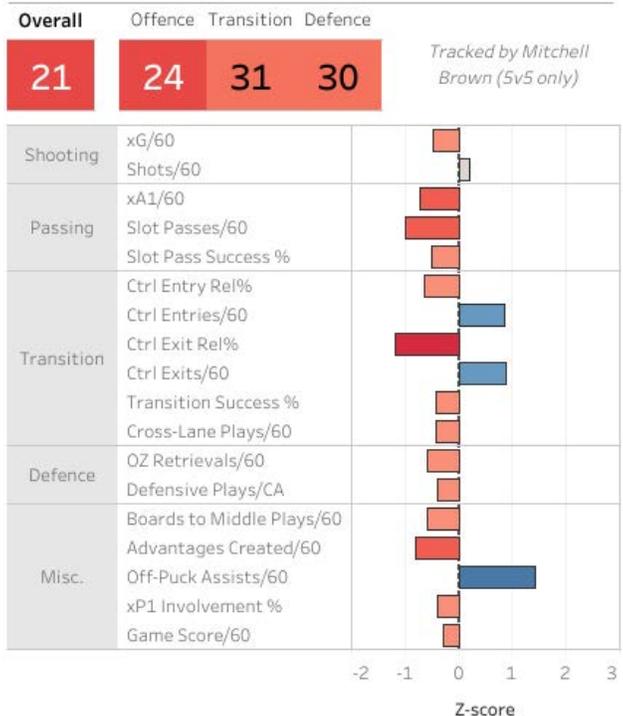
Basically, all of the abilities that have made him a pillar of the Halifax Mooseheads over the past two years translated well to the world stage. They made him a threat to score against some of the best NHL prospects.

"Every chance he gets, he challenges defenders, pushes them back with his speed, or charges through them," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report.

The winger lacks the tactical acumen and the playmaking skills to become an NHL scorer, but if he further develops his motor, speed, and physicality, he could become a useful role player for a franchise. Perhaps he can be a role player who pressures the opposition into mistakes on the forecheck.

Attilio Biasca

F | Halifax Mooseheads | QMJHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 89.6



≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Mostly still a straight-line driver. Biasca has to accumulate pace to be effective. If you get him the puck while he's driving down the wing, he can take it to the net, but he rarely leverages his speed advantage, his bulldozing qualities to create better opportunities for teammates. Incorporating delay plays, cutting back on entry to hit the back layers of the attack would work very well in a creative offensive team like the Moosheads.

Mitchell Brown: April 29th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Biasca's a tank. He charges through contact. Even when tries to play with more finesse, he still ends up running over opponents. But he's not especially effective. He shows better habits when stationary, like on the breakout, where he passes laterally, delays, and spots teammates through layers. As soon as he gets a puck in motion, he just tries to beat opponents wide. Don't really see an NHL prospect here, but he's solid.

Mitchell Brown: March 19th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Biasca mostly charges ahead with the puck. He doesn't use his teammates all that much, but it's not for a lack of vision. He set up a couple of plays in this game, including a cross-crease chance off the rush, passing behind the nearest defender. Sniped one for himself off the rush on the powerplay. He doesn't have much creativity with the puck, settling for outside lane, single-speed (full speed) speed attacks. With more nuance, he could tank his way to the NHL, but that given his age, that seems unlikely.

David St-Louis: February 24th, 2023 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Victoriaville Tigres - QMJHL

Quiet game from Biasca overall. He's still hyper-inside-driven. Every chance he gets, he challenges defenders, pushes them back with his speed, or charges through them. I'm not sure he has the playmaking talent necessary to earn an NHL role down the line, but his combination of speed, physicality, and his emerging passing game is enough to get him drafted this year. He's a good project for an NHL team with a strong development program, who could really teach him how to best use his assets.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2023 - Rimouski Océanic vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Biasca scored by going what he does: Rushing the net. It's his game. He shows a bit of nuance, connecting with a backhand pass into space that eventually led to a goal later in the game. Right now, he's mostly outside speed, defence, and off-puck awareness. He wants to get the inside, but he doesn't have any any effective strategies other than driving wide or barrelling through them. Delays, cutbacks, fakes, and cuts to the inside will be key for him to find scoring success against pros.

David St-Louis: January 2nd , 2023 - Switzerland vs. Czechia - U20 WJC

This tournament will have opened some eyes to what Biasca can bring. He was one of the most dangerous elements of Switzerland throughout the event. His speed, alone, was hard to handle even for top defenders like Simon Nemeč, who got dangled on a speed difference at some point. He created steals and turned them into breakaways and showcased his shot. He's a checker projection with bonus skill on top. He probably deserves a draft pick this time around

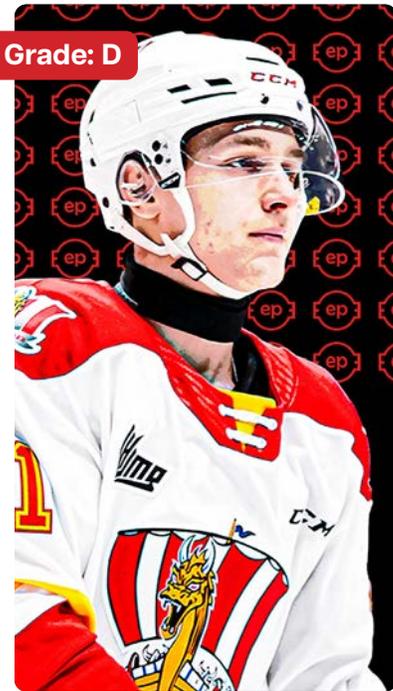
David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Biasca could become a draft pick. He has checking speed and can really turn the corner on defenders to attack the net. He wins loose pucks with his quickness and physical skills and has seriously improved his passing ability. He spots options behind him now and builds scoring chances with teammates. I also liked his off-puck game in this one, his ability to pop open in space to become an option for teammates in the slot.

If he plays in the NHL, and it's not the most likely outcome, it will probably be as a fourth-line, supportive player, but his tools, especially his burst, are worth a longer look this season, especially since he seems to keep improving.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Attilio Biasca is not the player I remember from his draft year anymore. He was fast then, but now his skating is on another level compared to everyone on the ice. He carves it with crossovers, gets on opponents instantly on the forecheck, and at his size, he's intimidating. He can run around or through teams, but he also developed his passing over the past couple of years. He now makes drop passes to teammates and tries give-and-goes. He's more projectable than he ever was.



Niks Feņenko

AGE 18.077 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 18, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

6	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Baie-Comeau Drakkar	QMJHL	56	6	31	37	0.66
Latvia U20	WJC-20	6	1	1	2	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Niks Feņenko's talents were mostly hidden with the Baie-Comeau Drakkar in his draft-minus-one season, one of the weaker formations in the QMJHL.

The Latvian defenceman played well for the Drakkar as a first-year European import, scoring 40 points in 62 games, and he became one of the best shutdown defenders in the league near the end of the season, but teams prioritized other CHL blueliners over him on their draft list. But this season, under the spotlights of the World Juniors, Feņenko may have convinced some scouts to give him another long look.

"Against a strong team like the US, Feņenko really put on a defensive clinic," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report. "His defensive mobility and footwork are still the best part of his game. He matched attackers, pushed them out, and neutralized sticks."

Feņenko can go stride for stride with the majority of players in this draft class. He can reroute himself with an abrupt weight shift and a crossover, close on attackers before they can move the puck, and defend the slot with his stick and body. But while his defensive game is more advanced than most defencemen in the draft, Feņenko's offence has yet to bloom. His skating remains his only playmaking tool. He goes as far as his feet can carry him with the puck. When he meets a defensive wall, he can't always see past it and make a positive next play.

There are more defensive specialists than offensive ones on NHL blue lines, but to reach a bottom-pairing role and avoid spending all of his time defending, Feņenko will have to improve his offensive instincts and handling skills.

LINKS & MEDIA



10 data-driven observations from 2023 World Junior Championships



Each team's X-Factor at the 2023 World Juniors

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Fenenko has added some new puck-moving tricks, like stopping abruptly to let forecheckers overshoot and open lanes to the middle of the ice, but he remains mostly a defensive defenceman, a great one at this level. His mobility serves him very well: He closes neutral zone gaps quickly, adjusts his positioning to cut passing lanes and pick up attackers early on their way to the net, boxes out, rotates ahead of the play, and takes care of sticks. That mobility added to his defensive reads and care could get him drafted. I just wish he would show just a little bit more offensive instinct.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

I cling to Fenenko's flash of puck-moving skills, but while he does have those skills, they are not supported by reads. The sense looks like a below-average grade in year 2 of his evaluation. He does make some plays through opponents and he can carry the puck up, but I'm not sure he can combine awareness, evasive moves, and activations at a high enough level to thrive in the NHL. The tools are interesting. He has some reach, four-way mobility, and some physicality. I'll keep an eye on him.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Fenenko is just a little too mistake-prone at this moment. He shows more skills, more evasive maneuvers, he's overall more offensively involved, but also loses the puck in key moments. He's more physical than last year, too. I'm not sure about the offensive instinct. The defensive potential is clear, but he's more of a reactive/corrective defenceman than someone who anticipates movements and kills plays ahead of time. A bit less projectable. He's mostly a tool projection.

David St-Louis: December 26th, 2022 - USA vs Latvia - World Juniors

Fenenko scored in this one with a floater from the point that found its way to the back of the net. Against a strong team like the US, Fenenko really put on a defensive clinic. His defensive mobility and footwork are still the best part of his game. He matched attackers, pushed them out, and neutralized sticks. His puck plays are mostly limited, but his mobility does help him create some transition and offensive plays. He could be a pick as a re-entry. I'm not sure yet if he's a potential NHLer.

David St-Louis: May 1st, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Fenenko still hasn't developed offensive skills. He's not comfortable with the puck on his stick and looks to offload it as quickly as possible, but, he's making an offensive impact with his skating and pressure anyway. He pinches at the right times, pressures at the right times, and makes it very hard for the opposition to generate offence. He's proactive defensively, on top of his check, taking stick away...A ton of great shutdown element, that coupled with his mobility and great posture and relative range, still makes him an interesting prospect.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2022 - Baie-Comeau Drakkar vs. Québec Remparts - QMJHL

Fenenko really fades in the background if you don't look for him -- the mark of defensive defenceman, but also of prospects who don't bring as much value to the game. he can distribute the puck, pin, shadow, and pokecheck attackers, and he's decently pro-active in his zone. The skating is above-average...Are these skills enough for a draft pick? The comparison with Isiah George is interesting here. They both have defensive potential, but George is showing way more in terms of puck skills at times, and his tools are even greater.

Mitchell Brown: April 23rd, 2022 - Baie-Comeau Drakkar vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Fenenko had one of the best plays of the game, a give-and-go for a goal after working laterally across the neutral zone. He had many ugly plays, too. He was beaten late in the game by crossing over the outside too early, allowing a breakaway. While he made a couple of crafty plays off the boards on retrievals, he mostly just passed pucks to teammates more covered than

himself. Apart from the one gaffe, he was mostly solid on the defensive end. He's not suffocating, but he switches and stays engaged off-puck. Eliminates threats. Angles the cycle up and away. Might be an interesting mid-to-late rounder.

David St-Louis: April 21th, 2022 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Fenenko wasn't as on-point defensively in this game, but the errors were mostly caused by his partner. He's a weird offensive player. Clearly doesn't have comfort with the puck. Clearly doesn't see plays develop. Clearly is afraid to try them, too. But he also activates really low in the zone away from the puck; he attacks the slot to support plays and fire shots on net, and his low activations also helps him be in good positions to kill rushes and pinch. He mostly flipped pucks out of the zone on breakouts.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Not a lick of puck skill shown in this game, gave for one handling sequence that ultimately failed. But Fenenko's already quite the defender. He gaps up early, angles, and kills plays of switches. Gets stops inside the puck carrier's puckhandling and times his stick checks well. Proactive off-puck. Pinches at the right moments and uses that to establish his gap on the backpedal. Didn't see anything else. Throws away pucks when faced with pressure head-on.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2022 - Baie-Comeau Drakkar vs. Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

There are a lot of improvements in Fenenko's game. He's much more confident. He closes out harder, takes advantage of mistakes, skates up ice with the puck, looks to pass it up ice, too, not just to his partner, and he passes with deception too. The handling grip is a bit unusual, super-high, and it limits his precision and affects his mechanics. He's a bit chaotic still, but Baie-Comeau doesn't offer a lot of offensive support. He's a player to keep an eye on.

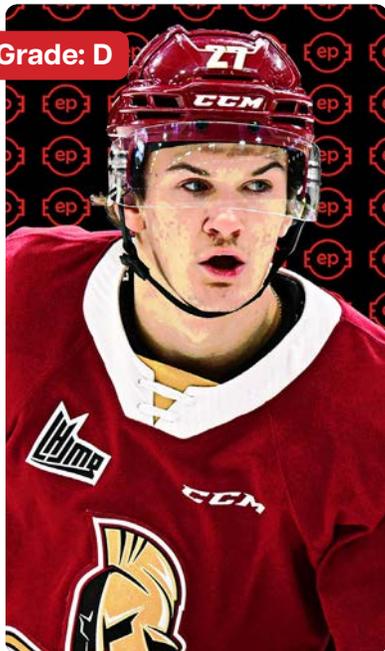
David St-Louis: December 16th, 2021 - Latvia U20 vs Hungary U20 - WC-20 Div 1

Fenenko has the skill to make plays, but he doesn't. He panics under pressure and flips the puck out and when he does risk moving around an opponent or moving to find a passing lane, the precision and timing of the play is often off. It's like he never developed that facet of his game.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2021 - Gatineau Olympiques vs. Baie-Comeau Drakkar - QMJHL

Fenenko has interesting tools. His skating could reach NHL average and he's a decent handler, but he plays too safe to really evaluate the extent of his skill. He is afraid to make plays. He defers to teammates in puck-moving situations. He did pick up 3 assists this game, but they were all simple breakout passes that fortunately turned into assists for him. He didn't do anything special to create an advantage for his team. I don't think he can do it at this level, let alone the next.

Grade: D



Joseph Henneberry

AGE 17.737 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 20, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

6'2"
Height

183 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4.5
Skating

4.5
Shooting

5
Passing

4.5
Puckhandling

4.5
Hockey Sense

5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Acadie-Bathurst Titan	QMJHL	59	18	18	36	0.61

SCOUTING REPORT

The Acadie-Bathurst Titan finished last in the standings and didn't host a lot of NHL talent, especially past the trade deadline. Some nights, however, Joseph Henneberry made the drive to Acadie-Bathurst worth it.

With his NHL frame and physical abilities, the Titan centre can rush the net, battle for positioning there, screen goalies, and get his stick on rebounds. His playmaking ability projects well to the NHL.

Driving through the neutral zone, he launches unexpected skillful passes to teammates. These timely feeds help his team break through defences and establish their presence in the offensive zone.

"He has some finesse, deception, and hook passing skills," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in one of his game reports. "These three elements make him a good play connector on a line."

Henneberry's game remains relatively simple. In his third year of eligibility, he looked more like a role player than a play-driver in the league. Adding another layer of skill to his game and increasing his production would improve his status as a prospect and give him a better chance to play some NHL games.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Acadie Bathurst Titan - QMJHL

I see some decision-making issues here. He's inside driven and battles hard on the wall. He follows his check defensively and is engaged in the game, but he isn't making a lot of advanced offensive plays, mostly forcing pucks on net. I'm not sure about his ability to anticipate and process open spaces and lanes. I'm sure he could become a great Junior player, but I don't see the NHL potential as much now.

David St-Louis: January 6th, 2023 - Val D'Or Foreurs vs. Acadie-Bathurst Titans - QMJHL

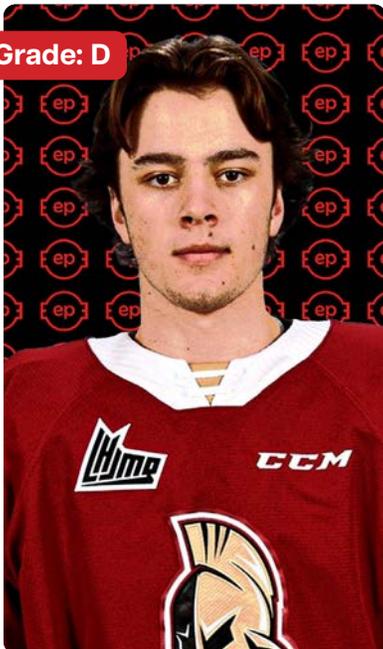
A better game from Henneberry that made me think he has more potential. He goes to the net and wins retrievals, but he's not

only a physical player. He has some finesse, deception and hook passing skills. These three elements make him a good play connector on a line. He's not really creating all that often, but he can leverage and enlarge advantages. He's inside driven and, with a better defensive game, could earn a professional career. Long-shot NHLer.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Acadie-Bathurst Titans - QMJHL

I didn't see an NHL prospect in this game. Henneberry has a lot of passing ability and he can handle in tight spaces, but his high-stance skating and the lack of agility that it brings will continue to limit him at this level and at the next ones. He doesn't always ID the next play before getting the puck, but he was an effective net-front presence, scoring from an in-tight deflection on the powerplay. Maybe if the skating develops.

Grade: D



Ty Higgins

AGE 17.970 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 26, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Acadie-Bathurst Titan	QMJHL	68	13	28	41	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Born in September 2004, Ty Higgins is one of the elder statesmen in this year's draft. Because of it, we expected a little more from the defenceman than many of his peers.

He delivered in some ways. He broke the 0.5 point-per-game mark that we set as a benchmark for CHL defencemen and showed many interesting offensive skills in the process. He showed he could add deception to his passes, especially in the neutral zone. With head and body fakes, he dragged defenders out of passing lanes, opened them up to feed passes through them, and then drove ahead to support the next offensive play.

"I could see an NHL team picking him, but the skill game is a little too far behind the NHL curve at this stage for me," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a report.

While he managed to elevate a struggling Acadie-Bathurst Titan offence in many of his shifts, his flawed skating strides make us doubt that he would be able to do the same at higher levels. Adding more agility would remove some of the pressure put on his stickhandling skills. It would improve his rush defence – he wouldn't have to reach for pucks with his stick as much – and also free him to execute more complex maneuvers.

Ultimately, we didn't see enough from Higgins this year to warrant consideration for our final board, but he's someone to monitor in the coming seasons.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 12th, 2023 - Acadie Bathurst Titan vs. Saint John Seadogs - QMJHL

Defencemen rarely score hat-tricks, but Higgins showed how its done in this game. He constantly attacked the space in front of him, the inattentive Saint John defence, and got shots through, beating the goalie. He activated up ice every chance he got, moved the puck quickly, and then attacked high-danger areas. He pinches hard on pucks on the walls and defended decently well for the most part. He's not very mechanically fluid, however. If he had a bit more skill, maybe we would make room for him on our board. And the defensive game needs work. Better awareness of surrounding threats and more control in his rush

defence (using straight pokechecks instead of long sweeping ones that are easy to evade) would make him more effective.

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Acadie Bathurst Titan - QMJHL

Higgins has some interesting elements. He participates in most plays, has a physical element, and he looks for attacks to the middle of the ice and the slot. His defensive game is mostly based on reaching as he lacks the skating fluidity to gap up early and match the footwork of attackers, but he's a good engager at this level. I could see an NHL team picking him, but the skill game is a little too far behind the NHL curve at this stage for me.

David St-Louis: December 30th, 2022 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Acadie-Bathurst Titans - QMJHL

Higgins's skating is probably a 4 on our scale. He moves in one block which makes it hard for him to retain his balance inside tighter turns; he loses speed when executing those. He doesn't have enough agility to consistently keep up and move ahead of the play. Constant deception in his passing especially on regroup; he fakes with his head and shoulders and then hits teammates in stride, a lot of hesitation moves (good one). The shot looked mechanically flawed, again coming from a high-stance skating. His rush defence was overall solid.

Grade: D



Jan Šprynar

AGE 17.551 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	60	23	17	40	0.67
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	8	3	2	5	0.63

SCOUTING REPORT

For a time this season, Jan Šprynar was on our projected final board. We thought he would fit right in at the tail end of it alongside some of the other incomplete, but unique talents of this draft class, but his play over the last couple of months made him fall out of favour with our team.

Šprynar has one main talent – scoring. He's that forward who likes to come in late in the offensive zone to take advantage of a pushed-back defence and find space in the high slot. He prefers remaining high on the forecheck, too, as the F3 presence, as this puts him in a great position to profit from a turnover. If his team manages a steal, he's right there in a one-timer position.

In terms of playmaking, Šprynar did pull off give-and-go plays and some deceptive passes, but not enough of them to project him as a play-driver.

His lower pace of play hid his skating ability this season. When he turned on his motor, Šprynar became an effective forechecker himself. His physical skills started to resurface. He stole pucks from opponents himself and drove the net with them. These flashes gave us hope that he could earn a career as a checking presence who provides secondary offence in the professional game, but the defensive engagement lacked consistency.

At this stage, it's hard to see an NHL future for Šprynar. It's more likely than not that he becomes an European scorer.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 19th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Victoriaville Tigres - QMJHL

Šprynar isn't scoring as much in these latter months and that's an issue because scoring should be his main thing. He can somewhat engage physically and create passing plays, but he's mostly that F3, high floating forward in the offensive zone who waits for opportunities to release in the slot. That might be why his ice-time has fluctuated. His skating remains a bit limiting. The higher end skills are still there, mainly his shot, but they don't warrant a draft pick unless the numbers accompany them.

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2022 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Šprynar is pretty low-paced at times, making it hard to evaluate his stride. I liked his urgency on the forecheck and backcheck in this one. He has a shooter mentality and the skills to score in the pro game (getting open, releasing from difficult positions, create short passing plays to get himself in a position to use his shot...) and he's pretty inside driven. I think he will make our board, but not ready to rank him just yet. I need more viewings and a better picture of the whole class.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Blainville Boisbriand - QMJHL

Very interesting game from Šprynar. I'm still unsure if he's an NHL prospect, but the qualities are numerous. He's involved on the forecheck and backcheck (could have a bit more urgency), makes intelligent passing plays, shows awareness, and he has that off-puck, sneaky shooter mentality. He's capable of finding space and putting pucks in the back of the net. I like his shot mechanics. The skating looks like a below-average projection, but maybe it's just the low pace of play that makes it seem that way. He has some physical skills and at 6-foot-1 that is also a projectable qualities. A little more pace would do wonders for his game.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Québec Remparts vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

A bit of the same story for him. He's a low pace attacker who functions better away from the puck, when he's allowed to find space. But against a team like the Remparts, his occasions to float into space are reduced. The skating looks like a 4.5 grade (below-average); mechanics are decent, but there's a lack of ankle flexion and he pretty much skates in one block. I like how he uses give-and-goes to progress the play. The sense could be an above-average projection.

David St-Louis: February 12th, 2022 - Baie-Comeau Drakkar vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Šprynar couldn't connect with his teammates all that much in this one, apart from the powerplay. He got a pass from Coughlin and one-timed it to the back of the net, contorting his body in the process to get power behind the shot and release instantly. He has some skill, but it's his insane-driven nature that showed up in this game. He consistently drove the net, with and without the puck. I'm not sure about the skating grade, but he plays with energy. Some passing ideas like give-and-goes, too.

Mitchell Brown: August 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Šprynar started the game with a forecheck steal, then hooked a puck back into space for an assist after waiting for the second player to commit. Forechecking was a consistent theme of the game, finding success by anticipating passes and guiding players into support. Pre-scans on retrievals, then makes quick passes to escape. Plays a skilled game, but overly reliant on his inside edges and handling skill. Nothing major, but he must develop more of an off-puck, give-and-go style to find success at the next level. Showed some defensive ability, too. There's NHL ability here. I suspect he scores plenty with Rimouski this season.

Grade: D



Nikolai Khvorov

AGE 18.227 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 24, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5.5	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Omskie Krylia	VHL	7	1	5	6	0.86
Omskie Yastreby	MHL	45	7	30	37	0.82

SCOUTING REPORT

When we looked at NHL Central Scouting's final board, we were surprised to see Nikolai Khvorov left off their European list. Few players in the MHL could match his playmaking talent. And while he's a re-entry, he's one of the younger ones available.

"He's a player who thrives off connecting with his teammates and building plays off of that, but the chances of getting the puck back after a pass on this team are much lower than when he's on the MHL," Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a December report after watching one of his VHL games. "This both limits Khvorov's playmaking habits and heightens them in a way."

He scored at a decent pace in the MHL for Omskie Yastreby – 37 points in 45 games – and he kept that pace in the playoffs, too, but his offensive talents were partly hidden by his lack of chemistry with teammates in the MHL. In a different system, one that puts more emphasis on quick passing plays, his point totals would have likely shot up.

More often than not, Khvorov is his line's playmaker. He sends passes into space for teammates at just the right time and with just the right weight, allowing them to pick up the puck without breaking strides. His stickhandling skills also complement his passing game quite well. He can open up defenders and make them turn to create passing lanes to teammates and he consistently drives the middle to attract the defence on him and open space on the wings for others.

"He's very intelligent, uses timing to his advantage, and changes pace really effectively to become an ice general," Griffing wrote in an October report.

Often stuck on the periphery during games, especially VHL ones, Khorov will need to add strength and develop his physical skills to become more of an inside driver.

Still, his NHL-projectable skating and puckhandling make him a good choice in the seventh round, especially because Khvorov has the flashes of hockey sense to go along with those tools.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Dylan Griffing:** January 28th, 2023 - Omskie Krylya vs. Buran Voronezh - VHL

Outside of a primary assist, Khvorov was pretty quiet in this one. Less than nine minutes of ice time, so not a lot of chances to touch the puck and touch the puck he didn't. I still think he is a late-round option, but this game wasn't one to use to bolster that point.

Dylan Griffing: December 21st, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Molot Perm - VHL

Khvorov picked up his third assist in three games. Like Timur Mukhanov, he's a player who gets into really good scoring areas, but just cannot finish them. Overall, this performance felt like he was limited by a lack of chemistry on his line. He's a player who thrives off connecting with his teammates and building plays off of that, but the chances of getting the puck back after a pass on this team is much lower than when he's on the MHL. This both limits Khvorov's playmaking habits and heightens them in a way. He was still making smart, basic, connecting passes and not seeing the puck back on his stick for the rest of the play, which sucks, but in the offensive zone, he was holding onto the puck for longer, really surveying his options to make the most of his possessions.

Dylan Griffing: December 10th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Mamonty Yugry - MHL

Khvorov returned to the MHL and had a pretty good game. His playmaking is so good – perfectly weighted passes mixed with great timing. Still struggled with holding onto the puck for too long, trying to really get the most out of every puck touch and do too much on his own, but the flashes of that dominating playmaking really overpowered the bad decisions. He had two assists and a goal, but created so much beyond that. One of the best players in the MHL right now, would've liked to see a longer VHL stint.

Dylan Griffing: December 6th, 2022 - Omskie Krylya vs. Dinamo St. Petersburg - VHL

Despite this being his debut with the Wings, Khvorov looks the part of a VHL regular. In his first shift, he had a very nice deke to open up space for a breakout pass and that set the tone for this game. He's very intelligent, uses timing to his advantage, and changes pace really effectively to become an ice general. Picked up a primary assist on a 2-on-1 and had a few chances to score through his shot. Reads more like a playmaker, the shot wasn't quite as effective, but the dual threat capability is there. Good on the defensive side of things, as well. These last three viewings have really painted him in a positive light, looks like a late-round pick for me.

Dylan Griffing: October 10th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Khvorov can truly dominate this level at times. He's an agile puck carrier with a nice set of hands, so he can really bounce around guys and find space from nothing. The playmaking habits are pretty high end, attacking through the center of the ice more in this game which was nice to see. I thought he was getting stuck in the perimeter too much last season and some viewings from earlier this season, but here he was much more aggressive to attack the inside and enhance his offensive threat. He disappears for long periods of time, though, which is a little worrying. His defensive game was pretty weak and he wasn't making enough effort to get the puck, I thought. Needs to work on being more active throughout the full game and not only showing off his abilities in flashes.

Dylan Griffing: September 5th, 2022 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk - MHL

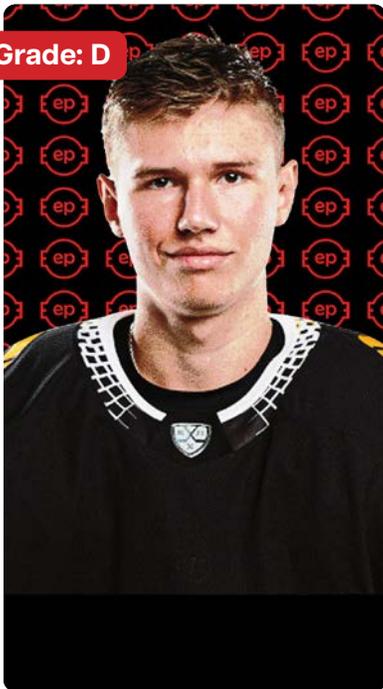
I do regret not taking a closer look at Khvorov last season, because he looks to be a pretty interesting player this season. His skating improved a ton and he is more apt with working with the puck with pace. He's still primarily creating from the perimeter, but he's scanning more and really pushing the inside attacks through his passing. Clearly a pass-first type of player, but I did like how quickly he gets the puck off his stick with his shot. He had a wide open net after receiving a pass, but I'm not really sure he committed to shooting it or passing it to his teammate near the crease, so he ended up just sending it wide of the outside

post and wasted that chance. Nice skill and puck protection ability, provides good value to him creating from behind the red line. Probably worth more viewings this season.

Dylan Griffing: September 11th, 2021 - Omskie Yastreby vs. Ladya Togliatti - MHL

Really over reliant on keeping the puck in the perimeter for most of this game. Showed flashes of skill, but overall lacked deception, not willing to engage 1v1, and kept the puck far away from his body, which would have resulted in possession being lost more than it did if he was playing against a team with any sort of defensive wherewithal. Passing and vision were positives for him, but they just weren't into high value locations at 5v5, meaning a lot of passes going from the right wall, through the slot, and to a teammate standing at the left wall. Poor skating habits, taking a bunch of small steps before exploding and just looked clunky and lacked agility.

Grade: D



Anton Maryshev

AGE 17.715 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 28, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	163 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Almaz Cherepovets	MHL	29	2	6	8	0.28
Khimik Voskresensk	VHL	4	0	0	0	0.00
MHK Spartak Moskva	MHL	23	1	11	12	0.52

SCOUTING REPORT

Anton Maryshev played the facilitator role in MHK Spartak Moskva this season. His game lacked the flash of top prospects, but his tools kept us watching and taking notes.

He defended the rush well, with a strong posture and his stick extended in front of him, denying space. He guarded the slot better than most in the defensive zone, battled for pucks on the walls, and moved them to the next open teammates. Occasionally, in the offensive zone, we saw him pull off feints and skating moves to create better looks at the net and fire, but mostly, he distributed the puck around the zone.

"He should have the tools to be more productive on breakouts and offensively," Elite Prospects Dir. European scouting Lassi Alanen wrote in a January report. "The skating looks good enough and he's flashed skill in the past."

We hoped to see Maryshev leverage his many NHL-calibre tools, his skating and handling, to increase his offensive output as the season went on, but it didn't happen. Next year, when he returns as a more mature player, he should start scoring up to the level of his potential. He's too mobile not to turn into a better offensive driver against younger opponents.

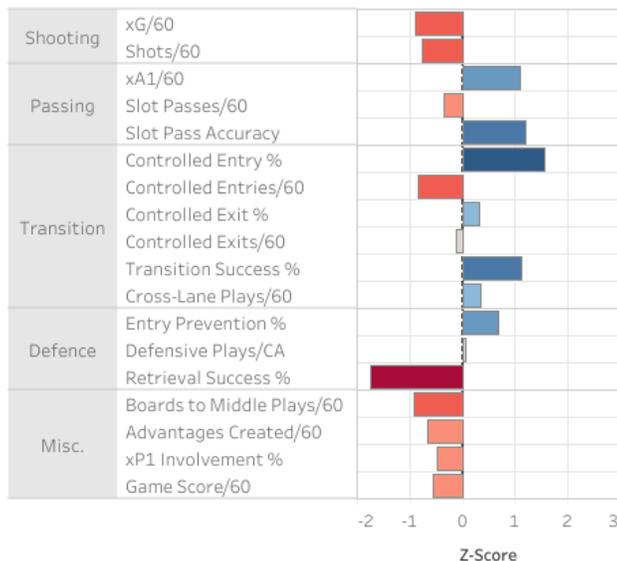
As for his NHL future, it seems quite uncertain right now. The tools project well to the league, but his inconsistent reads at both ends of the ice and passive playstyle suggest that he might not have the command over the game needed to turn into a useful NHLer. If Maryshev can improve his puck-moving and add more flavor to his game, he will improve his status as a prospect.

Anton Maryshev

D | MHK Spartak Moskva | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 68.45

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 31st, 2023 - Loko vs. MHC Spartak Moskva - MHL

Maryshev had one really interesting sequence: He took the puck off the wall, dangled through the forechecked, and created the zone exit. I want to see more flashes like this because, while he projects as a steady, mobile defenceman at the next levels, he lacks a bit of special at this stage. His reads are inconsistent, defensively and offensively. Improving his defensive awareness, scanning more for threats behind him would help him make a greater impact on games.

David St-Louis: February 25th, 2023 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. Russkie Vityazi - MHL

Maryshev needs to move the puck faster in his zone. He tries to play with it too much under forechecking pressure and it costs him in this game. He's mobile. I like his rush defence posture. It's controlled, not too much reaching overall. He battles for pucks and has some decent passing ideas in the offensive zone. I'm not sure about the hockey sense overall and he's a bit vanilla at this stage. I want to see him take charge a bit more.

David St-Louis: February 18th, 2023 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

I like Maryshev's overall tools. He's a better skater than most of the other defencemen I've watched in this league. Good control over the puck. He attacks down, moves into space if it's available, and can link passing plays to an extent. I saw some fakes before making passes. He helped his teammates on defence, but his gap was a bit loose, especially near the net.

Lassi Alanen: January 21st, 2022 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. MHC Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

This was the best overall showing I've seen from Maryshev. He was a lot cleaner in transition, hitting his teammates through pressure with very good feeds, using the middle lane a lot on his breakouts. His quick feed through the middle after a DZ breakup ended up resulting in a breakaway goal and a primary assist for the man himself. The activation in the OZ was again way more visible, almost always taking advantage of a chance to jump into the play through the weak side. Even if he didn't really accomplish much, I thought that the ideas behind the activations were solid and they'll bare fruit eventually. Mobility on the rush defence remains an asset. Some of the defensive reads might be a bit iffy, but made less mistakes overall. One really slick pass in the OZ to the middle, resulting in a secondary helper. I might have been to quick to write him off, he's an interesting player to monitor during the second half of the season.

Lassi Alanen: January 4th, 2022 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg - MHL

Another mediocre, not very inspiring performance from Maryshev. He should have the tools to be more productive on breakouts and offensively. The skating looks good enough and he's flashed skill in the past. The activations weren't nearly as big a part of his game than in my first viewing. He was mostly just pushing the puck back deep from the blue line aside from a few blocked shots. Passing accuracy on breakouts was iffy, doesn't show much in the way of manipulation or deception. Decent rush defender who can use his feet and stick to break up a decent number of plays, but isn't an overall strong defensive player, I don't think. Probably not a pick, given that he's also on the older side of things.

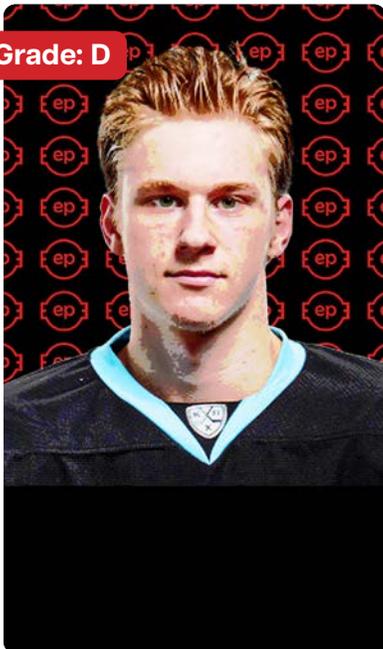
Lassi Alanen: December 18th, 2022 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. MHK Krylia Sovetov Moskva - MHL

Maryshev wasn't nearly as interesting in this one, unfortunately. The handling looked quite a bit worse, having issues with puck control in the DZ. It was a weird game in that he wasn't really tested at all on the breakouts aside from a few occasions, and those occasions didn't go too well. The skating is probably a 4.5 projection overall, didn't really show any notable skating skill or quickness. Reaches quite a lot defensively, but makes it work from time to time. Then again, one defensive sequence sent him sprawling uncontrollably on the ice and a high-danger against was the result.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - MHC Spartak Moskva vs. MHK Krylia Sovetov Moskva - MHL

Maryshev had some pretty interesting moments. Clearly has some offensive skill, like deceiving the opposition at the point, curl-and-dragging the puck to avoid his shot getting blocked, activating into the play quite often and aggressively, both in-zone and off the rush. Did draw a penalty after a DZ faceoff by cutting back on a forechecker, then trying to gain the middle for an exit. Some nice stickwork while defending the rush, too. Still not sure how good the tools are and how smart he truly is, but he's a player worth watching more.

Grade: D



Vadim Moroz

AGE 18.822 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 20, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Dinamo Minsk	KHL	39	5	9	14	0.36
Dinamo-Shinnik Bobruysk	MHL	10	2	6	8	0.80
Belarus (all)	International	2	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Vadim Moroz's production in Belarus' junior league stood out in his draft year. He scored 48 points in 27 games, but as he barely played internationally, he stayed off many NHL teams' radar. His KHL performance as a re-entry this season may have changed that.

Few players his age score as much as he did in the top Russian league. Playing an average of 11 minutes per game for Dinamo Minsk, he finished fifth in U20 scoring rate in the league.

It's the forward's great habits that earned him his KHL opportunities at a younger age than most. He reloads above the play ahead of turnovers, hunts the puck on the forecheck, and attacks the middle of the ice every chance he gets. With his 6-foot-2 frame, he can seal the puck from opponents on the walls, protect it, and extend his team's offensive zone presence. And he did show passing skills in transition. He spotted teammates quickly and moved the puck to them before the defence could collapse on him.

As his overall skill level looked a notch below some of the ex-NHLer on Dinamo Minsk, it seems more likely to us that Moroz will become a middle-six KHLer, more than an NHLer, but if he can continue to develop his handling and playmaking, he could attract an NHL contract in a few years.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Dinammi Shinnik vs. Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

Another strong performance. Moroz is older and mostly a great checker at this level -- we have to take this into account when projecting him, but he's got all the right habits. Stick on puck on the forecheck. Intensity. He attacks middle space when he sees it, creates offence from the walls, uses teammates, links passing plays in transition. Tools look like 4.5s however (except physical), so maybe he doesn't make it to the NHL, but he's a projectable pro for sure.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Dinamo Shinnik - MHL

A really strong game from Moroz who showed many pro translatable elements. He played the net-front, rushed there in the offensive zone, forechecked well (prioritized body positioning), pursued pucks hard on the backcheck, reloading, played a stop and start game defensively, always on his man, good puck management overall...Strong habits and a layer of skill, too. He can evade attackers, seems to know his next play well in the offensive zone, but he lacks deception. His feints are pretty rudimentary. I see him more as a good two-way forward than an offensive driver. Skating posture is sound, however, and at 6-foot-2, that's a real positive.

David St-Louis: October 29th, 2022 - Vityaz vs. Dinamo Minsk - MHL

The contrast with Ryan Spooner here was quite striking. Moroz works hard, but he lacks the NHL qualities, the skating and handling skills to make plays at this level yet. He's just a beat too slow in terms of processing and execution. I like the defensive engagement for the most part, however.



Magomed Sharakanov

AGE 17.929 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 11, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'1" Height	201 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5.5 Skating	5 Shooting	4 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
MHK Dynamo Moskva	MHL	44	7	25	32	0.73

SCOUTING REPORT

Magomed Sharakanov is one of the better skaters in this 2023 Russian draft class. Agile and quick, he can follow and stop attackers off the rush, pinch on them as they receive passes, and strip the puck away from them in the defensive zone with just a couple of steps.

While he lacks anticipation in his defensive end, his skating helped him correct some of his mistakes this season.

“Just a pretty solid defensive game in general, keeping the inside closed off, active stick, and good gap control when defending the rush,” Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a September report. “He does get caught turning the wrong way at times and his footwork needs work, but the ground is there to build off of.”

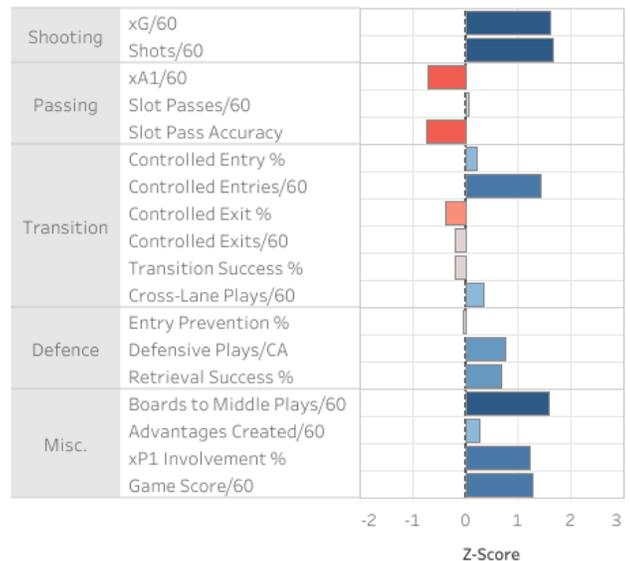
His game is based on his mobility. It's by far his most used tool. A highly aggressive puck-mover, especially in the first months of the season, Sharakanov tried to beat a defender with most of his puck touches. With skate fakes and body feints, he would freeze them, accelerate up-ice, and rush the puck in the neutral zone. He used the same techniques in the offensive zone to create shooting lanes.

Unfortunately, Sharakanov's highly active and aggressive game isn't supported by hockey sense. We liked his creativity but questioned his reads in most of our viewings this season. Most of the time, his move lacked planning. He rarely adapted to the changing defensive pressure or to the support of his teammates.

“Rushes when he doesn't need to, only scanning over one shoulder, and trying so many low-percentage passes,” Griffing wrote in a November report. “The flashes of good are so good, though. Activating and dominating when skating through the transition, deceptive movement, and good hands. He's a project, going to take a LOT of time and patience, but this player has a lot of promise.”

Magomed Sharakanov

D | MHK Dynamo Moskva | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 80.00
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



While we did see progress in his risk management during the season, Sharakanov will need tactical and awareness development before he can aspire to an NHL role.

≡ GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 1st, 2023 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. SKA-1946 - MHL

About the same type of game from Sharakanov. He matches attackers quickly off the rush, plays aggressively, and stands up to them. He has that physical side to his game, but his defence is mostly based on his above-average skating ability for the league. I still see it as above-average in terms of NHL projection. But it's hard to judge in a league that is on the slower side in general. The hockey sense grade is more of a 3.5-4 for me, however, as I don't see processing, just a player who looks to move the puck quickly to the next open teammates. He won't create advantages at the professional level. He's a bit too attracted by the puck defensively; developing his reads there would help his projection as a shutdown defenceman.

David St-Louis: February 2nd, 2023 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Dinamo Shinnik - MHL

Sharakanov skates well. It's a 5+ for me. He's fluid, can match attackers, and escape forecheckers. The hockey sense seems below average overall, no real planning behind his plays, but the feet make up for it, to an extent. He activates up ice and down the wall and finds better plays because he creates separation and time and space for himself. Good stick work overall. He needs to be faster in his decisions on retrievals and to take charge a bit more. He only defers to others, only tried D-to-D passes under pressure. A candidate for our board still because of the skating and the indications that he can be physical and attentive defensively.

Lassi Alanen: December 29th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. SKA-Varyagi St. Petersburg - MHL

Sharakanov does interesting stuff. Manipulated forecheckers on retrievals with his feet, gets his shot through the opponents with angle-changing release and did a few cool NZ rushes. The skating doesn't seem particularly noteworthy on surface, but he's got sneakily solid top speed. Could be a 5 grade. The hands could grade even higher. Has pulled off some impressive moves in my viewings. He's just very inconsistent and has serious decision-making flaws. Opts for the right play in transition just about 50 percent of time, fails to scan properly on retrievals and cuts into pressure, doesn't maximize his chances in the OZ nearly as often as he could and just fires from the point non-stop. Could be a late candidate for our board, probably a C grade.

Dylan Griffing: November 1st, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

Sharakanov is so frustrating, but so fun. He gets time for himself to be creative, but the decision making is so inconsistent. Rushes when he doesn't need to, only scanning over one shoulder, and trying so many low-percentage passes. The flashes of good are so good, though. Activating and dominating when skating through the transition, deceptive movement, and good hands. He's a project, going to take a LOT of time and patience, but this player has a lot of promise. A B grade for me.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. MHK Krylia Sovetov Moskva - MHL

Sharakanov was as trigger-happy as defencemen come, recording 11 shot attempts at 5-on-5 alone. Most of them were pretty basic point shots, some had more idea behind them than others (deflection possibilities). A few nice puck rushes up the ice resulted in a couple of better looks, though he wasn't really pushing for the high-danger areas. Transition play was a bit hit-and-miss, deferring to simple dump-out attempts a few times when he could've just cutback and establish better position. Wasn't challenged much on retrievals but completed the ones he had with good success rate. Defensive play seemed pretty solid.

Dylan Griffing: October 14th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

This was a really good game for Sharakanov. Playing against one of the best teams in the league, he was more reserved with the puck, making smart decisions with his passing and not trying to dangle every player on the ice. His defense stood out here,

using his physicality to outmatch any player who came after him. Retrievals are just so slick. While he wasn't trying a ton with the puck, he wasn't afraid to activate from the point and use his hands and shot to create a chance or two for himself. Finding the balance of what he should do with the puck is going to be his biggest test this year. He's clearly confident and good enough to be pulling creative things off, but he has to stay reserved enough to not make silly decisions and this game was a good step in the right direction.

Dylan Griffing: October 3rd, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Almaz Cherepovets - MHL

Sharakanov's defensive workload in this game was very minimal, with Almaz playing a rush-only style, most plays were broken up right at the blueline. This gave him plenty a chance with the puck and it was a questionable performance. If there's one thing you can't knock him for, it's his confidence. Dangling guys in tight, had a pretty sweet end-to-end rush, and trying just the most outrageous plays. The effectiveness and efficiency are things that can definitely be questioned, but the willingness to try things and fight against pressure gives off positive vibes. Really shot heavy in this one, including his first goal of the season. His shot is fine, not very deceptive or adaptive, but he has a strong release. Nine shots is a bit much, especially from where he was shooting from, but Dynamo were dominating the offensive zone, so his rebounds and off-target shots turned into chances anyway. His passing is just so bad right now. Clearly not scanning for danger, he passes to teammates as they're being closed down, leaving them with very few options other than turning the puck over. If there was a stat for forcing your teammates into giving the puck away, he would rank near the top.

Dylan Griffing: September 27th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. MHK Spartak Moskva - MHL

First game since March for Sharakanov and he is absolutely back doing his thing. First shift of the game, he absolutely dumpstered the F1 with a toe drag and then shot up the ice for the solo entry. His goal is clear – embarrass as many players as possible. He has the skill to really make people look silly, his hands are well above average, super creative, and dynamic. So deceptive on his retrievals, creates so much space from nothing. The elephant in the room is his passing. He just isn't completing plays at a consistent rate at all. Really needs to simplify this aspect of his game, he's trying way too many spinning and backhand passes to try to beat the forecheck and it just isn't working. Looks much stronger than last season, using his body a lot more than I've seen in the past. Just a pretty solid defensive game in general, keeping the inside closed off, active stick, and good gap control when defending the rush. He does get caught turning the wrong way at times and his footwork needs work, but the ground is there to build off of. We'll see how he progresses through this season, but first game of the year was definitely promising.

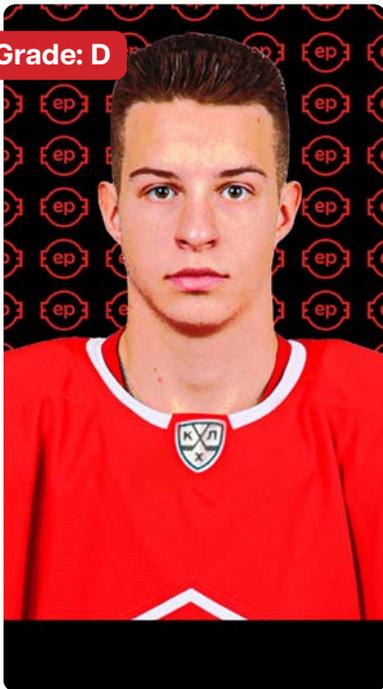
Dylan Griffing: March 26th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. SKA-1946 St. Petersburg - MHL Playoffs

Sharakanov has a lot of interesting details in his game. He dominates retrievals, deceptive and quick. Activates often and can really explode into space. Scored a nice goal in this one, activating off a give-and-go and keeping the puck through traffic before putting it into the back of the net. Pretty solid defensively with good gap control.

Dylan Griffing: March 3rd, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

I really like this player. There are clear flaws, he is a player that is certainly going to make coaches hate him at times and be very frustrating to watch, but he is just so deceptive and dynamic and creative and everything fun in the game of hockey. It's just going to come down to how well he can culminate all of his positives together to become a dominant puck moving defenseman with a nice amount of offensive upside. Right now, he is struggling to balance creativity with intelligence and it leads to plays where there are clearly better options available, but he opts to try something silly.

Grade: D



Nikita Susuyev

AGE 17.605 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Spartak Moskva	KHL	8	2	0	2	0.25
Khimik Voskresensk	VHL	3	0	1	1	0.33
MHK Spartak Moskva	MHL	38	11	17	28	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

In a March game against Krasnaya Armiya, Nikita Susuyev took the puck from one corner of the offensive zone to the next. With a defender on his back, he cut around the net, got his head up, and looked for an option in the slot. Seeing no available teammate, he cut back the other way, attracted a second defender, spun away from his coverage, and slid the puck to one of his now-open teammates in front of the net.

This one sequence highlighted almost all of the forward's qualities: His elusive moves, feints, puck protection ability, awareness, and passing skills.

Susuyev can break through defences, play keep away in traffic, and drive the net with possession. When compared to some of the top prospects in this draft, his skills don't look as dynamic and game-breaking, but they project better to the NHL game than many of the other forwards included in this draft guide.

"Susuyev really moves well. I like his posture and handling, at his hip in a deceptive posture. And he always makes defenders hesitate." Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a January report. "He doesn't complete many plays, but he looks skillful as he attacks."

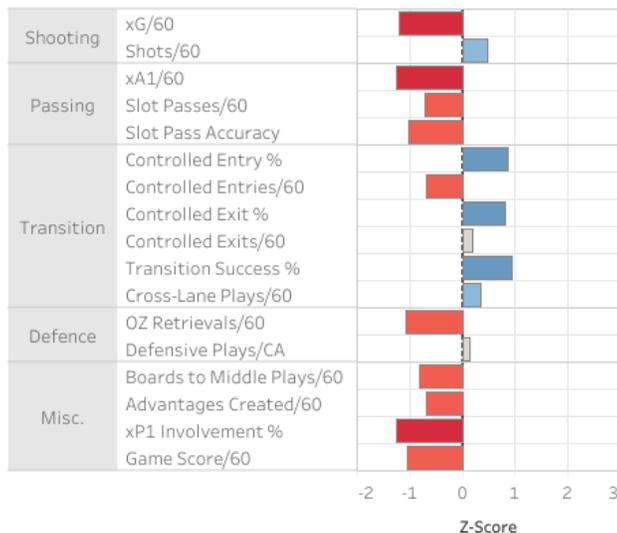
At this stage, we see Susuyev more as a talented junior player than a future top-nine NHLer. The more advanced plays, like the one described above, remain infrequent in his game. For now, we project his hockey sense as below NHL average. But if Susuyev continues to develop his technical abilities, adds power to his cutbacks, develops his vision even more, and learns to better manipulate the defence off the rush to open up scoring chances, he could set himself on an NHL path.

Nikita Susuyev

F | MHK Spartak Moskva | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 67.12

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** February 13th, 2023 - MHK Spartak Moskva vs. SKA-1946 Saint Petersburg - MHL

Susuyev moves like a skill player, with good posture, elusive, shimmy moves. He baits pokechecks to try and freeze defenders and win more ice. He made some good transition plays, skated to loose pucks, and battled for them, and even showed awareness. I liked his scanning movements to map out his space before receiving. That said, despite his overall good mechanics, he didn't make any advanced offensive plays. He gets by on technical ability mostly and a higher effort level than his competition.

David St-Louis: January 4th, 2023 - MHC Spartak vs. SKA-Varyagi - QMJHL

Susuyev really moves well. I like his posture and handling, at his hip in a deceptive posture. And he always makes defenders hesitate. He doesn't complete many plays, but he looks skillful as he attacks. That counts for something. He scored by rushing the net. He does that, too. He uses delays after entering the offensive zone to connect with teammates. Some playmaking ideas, a projectable skill level, and a decent pace of play. He could be a pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 18th, 2022 - MHK Spartak Moskva vs. MHK Krylia Sovetov Moskva - MHL

This was the best Susuyev game I've seen this season, even if it was anything special. At least here he was generating a bit offence, getting into shooting situations from top of the circles and adding a secondary assist in the process. He does miss the best play quite frequently and prefers to hang on to the puck for too long. He was fine defensively. The skating projection could be average, but the hands are probably below it. Handles in front of the body instead of in the hip pocket, leaving the puck exposed off the rush. The rush patterns are pretty basic aside from the occasional cut to the middle if he has enough space to do so without manipulation. Probably still not a pick.

Dylan Griffing: December 1st, 2022 - MHK Spartak Moskva vs. Russkie Vityazi Chekhov - MHL

I'm just not sure if I see it with Susuyev right now. There are certainly some things to like about his game, good skater, pretty good passer, pretty skilled. He just isn't putting any of it together. He's a player who skates with the puck until he can't anymore and that's when he makes his move. On multiple occasions, he entered the zone with possession and attacked the first defender he saw head on, immediately losing possession. Skating with the offensive zone set, he slowly circled the zone until he was closed down and then he would try to pass it out or skill his way into space. While that worked, albeit inconsistently, it's just not a projectable trait. He lacks the dynamic stickhandling and smarts that would allow him to take advantage of situations where he's drawn defenders toward him. Because of this, he defaults to low-percentage plays that just aren't working for him. The tools are enough to give him some value, but he's a shot in the dark pick for me.

Dylan Griffing: November 27th, 2022 - Spartak Moskva vs. Traktor Chelyabinsk - KHL

Susuyev notched his first two goals in a KHL uniform in this one. Slid into the backdoor to receive the final pass with an open net in front of him after a nice passing move from Spartak and a breakaway after causing a turnover giving him a 2-on-0 and his second goal. Wasn't too involved offensively outside of that, clearly more confident after the second goal to try to get a third, but kind of just getting whatever chances came to him, not really driving anything himself. Created some trouble for the other team defensively. He's a reactionary defender, not proactively moving into positions to break up plays, but he waits for the play to come to him and gets his stick involved. Looks like a pretty good skater, as well.

David St-Louis: October 17th, 2022 - Almaz vs. MHC Spartak - MHL

Susuyev sometimes has the puck on a string in traffic. He goes through sticks and somehow finds the puck back through traffic to make the next play. I'm not sure about the hockey sense but the skills are quite legitimate. He battles for possession, drives the net, pursues the puck on the forecheck...He plays with pace. He scored by going down the wing. He faked the defender with a change of speed, went around him, made a pass to the slot, and somehow the puck got back to him on the other side of the cage. He one-timed it in.

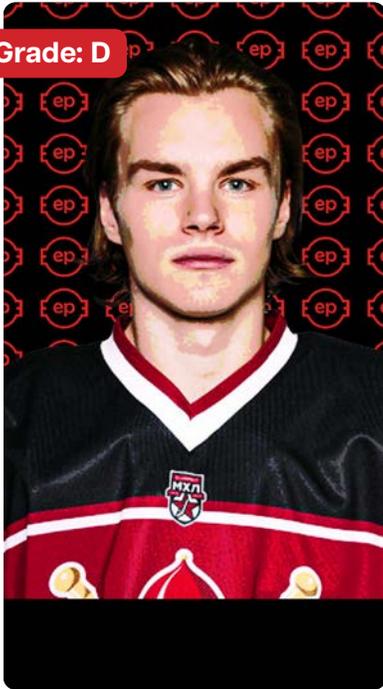
Lassi Alanen: October 13th, 2022 - MHK Spartak Moskva vs. HC Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Susuyev could've scored here, having quite a few chances to do near the net-front but failing to finish them. Some decent off-puck instincts and play around the slot. Not really a fan of his playmaking, though. A lot of low-percentage passes being thrown towards the net without much purpose or pre-scanning. He also doesn't seem to make plays in-stride, always entering a glide and on his inside edges. It was a better viewing than the first one, but I haven't seen enough things to be excited about to have him on our board.

Lassi Alanen: September 27th, 2022 - MHK Spartak Moskva vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

A pretty uneventful game from Susuyev. Seemed like every time he entered the zone, he just started gliding and got smothered along the boards, even if he later tried to do a quick change of pace. Not the best puck protection habits and got outmuscled quite a lot. Skating looked fine overall, but didn't stand out. Some odd off-puck routes here and there. Didn't seem like a particularly interesting player.

Grade: D



Stanislav Yarovoy

AGE 19.058 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vityaz Moscow Region	KHL	45	9	7	16	0.36
Ryazan-VDV	VHL	3	0	1	1	0.33
Russkie Vityazi	MHL	5	5	7	12	2.40

SCOUTING REPORT

Stanislav Yarovoy is an enigma.

He played regular minutes in the KHL for Vityaz and scored 16 points in 45 games in the KHL this season, a high total for a 19-year-old player. He also dominated the MHL when the club sent him down in between his KHL apparitions.

But few would have predicted such an evolution after he spent parts of the 2020-21 season, his first year of eligibility at the draft, playing in Russia's U18 league. He only scored eight points in 30 games, playing an average of 15 minutes in that setting.

Something happened over the offseason that transformed Yarovoy into one of the more interesting re-entry forwards in this draft.

While he's not necessarily creative, Yarovoy already understands the professional game well. He applies defensive details, forechecks, and backchecks with intensity, and positions well defensively. Aware and engaged, he stays above the puck when needed and supports teammates in timely ways.

And he has enough handling ability to receive, handle, and pass the puck under and above defensive sticks, enough speed to separate from KHL defenders and create space for himself, and enough shooting skills necessary to catch and release pucks before the goalie can get set.

His overall skill level will need to improve a bit more if he wants to become a candidate for a full-time NHL role somewhere down the road, but as he seems to be riding a clear upward curve in his development, we could see a team betting on Yarovoy in the latter rounds of the draft.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 5th, 2023 - Vityaz vs. Lokomotiv - KHL

Not as good of a game for Yarovoy. The skill level looked a notch below where I thought it was a couple of weeks ago and, at

his age, it matters a lot more. He's a D+2. The decisions weren't as good either. But, he remains an interesting overall prospect, a bit of an unknown. I like the intensity on the forecheck and backcheck.

David St-Louis: January 29th, 2023 - Vityaz vs. Metallurg - KHL

A good performance from Yarovoy. He played with pace and attacked the middle constantly. His ability to make plays in traffic is probably why he earned the bumper spot on the powerplay. Decent defensive positioning. His skating looks like an advantage at this level, but it's a slight one. He showed he could outspeed defenders to reach passing lanes. I liked his playmaking ideas overall. We have to keep in mind that he's a D+2, but in some ways, he looks like a late-bloomer. Is he skilled enough to make the NHL? Not sure.

David St-Louis: January 18th, 2023 - Sochi vs. Vityaz - KHL

A really impressive performance from Yarovoy. His skills look NHL-caliber (average, maybe not high-end), but the reads and defensive engagement could make him a prospect. He comes back hard on the backcheck and turns steals into more offence. He hits the better play in rush offence. And has a sense for where and how to move in the offensive zone to get scoring chances.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2023 - Krylya Sovetov vs. Russkie Vityazi - KHL

Yarovoy doesn't look nearly as skilled at the MHL level...which is a bit weird. The skating and handling look like below-average projection, when at the KHL level, they looked more NHL caliber. The plays weren't nearly as advanced in this game, despite the 3 points. I liked that he pursued the puck and attacked inside.

Grade: D



Elliot Ståhlberg

AGE 17.466 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Färjestad BK J18	J18 Region	3	3	2	5	1.67
Färjestad BK J18	J18 Nationell	1	1	1	2	2.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	7	1	0	1	0.14
Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	35	9	12	21	0.60
Färjestad BK	SHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	1	0	1	0.14

SCOUTING REPORT

While Elliot Ståhlberg's season didn't start the way he'd hoped after getting cut from Sweden's Hlinka Gretzky Cup team, he finished strong and has put himself in position to potentially hear his name called at the 2023 NHL Draft.

Ståhlberg recorded nine of his 21 points in the last eight games at the J20 level, earning a spot in Sweden's bottom-six at the U18s. He also suited up for a couple of SHL games and while he didn't get to play a single shift just yet, that's likely to change as soon as next season.

It's not a surprise Ståhlberg ended up making the U18 national team over more skilled options. He was well-equipped for a checking role due to his skating and motor, which are quite clearly his greatest tools. He combines a strong, long stride with four-step explosiveness and ability to turn on a whim.

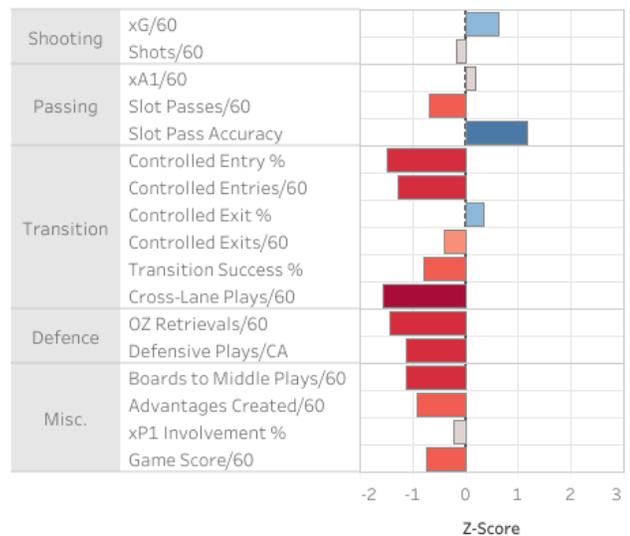
Every so often, he was able to combine that skating with handling skill off the rush to pull off plays that made him look like a potential candidate for our board.

There was a clear gap between the consistency of his offensive output compared to the better draft-eligible forwards in the league, though. He could take advantage of open passing lanes more often, but wasn't creating any playmaking lanes. As such, he doesn't project as more than a checker at the next level.

But between Ståhlberg's skating, competitiveness, and flashes of skill, he could prove us wrong in the future.

Elliot Ståhlberg

F | Färjestad BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 71.03
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ LINKS & MEDIA

**Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster**

≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 30th, 2023 - Sweden vs. USA - U18s

Elliot scored a goal for Sweden in this gold medal game. He buried a wrister from the top of the circles. Other than that, he competes and skates well but rarely retrieves the puck or drives offence. He has good puck skills and speed but none of his tools are over average. He is at best a 4th liner but the most probable projection is an SHL bottom six forward.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

Elliot has trouble keeping up with the pace at this level. He can skate the pace but loses his handling skills and also makes bad reads. He hasn't been a contributor in any of the first three games in this tournament. He works hard, but not smart. Stock is falling. Is he even a pick?

Jimmy Hamrin: March 11th, 2023 - Färjestads BK vs Almtuna IS - J20 Nationell

Elliot's skating stands out in this game and is his best weapon behind the three points he scored. He has long and powerful strides and can make quick turns. His stickhandling one-on-one is decent, but his overall hockey sense doesn't impress. He is more of a power forward who relies on his first instincts rather than a planner with awareness. For him to be a good bottom six prospect I would like to see him break up the play more.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg seems to have one or two impressive moments per game, but then he fades to the background for the rest. Here, he scored off the rush after completely taking an opposing defenceman to lunch, pulling the puck across his body as the defender reached, went inside and managed to ram the puck into the net. He also set up one high-danger chance after intercepting a pass below the net and having an open lane to pass to the slot. I still don't think he's a particularly noteworthy playmaker, but he does take advantage of it most of the time if he gets an opportunity. Then again, he made one really bad passing decision in the net-front when he should've just been selfish. The interesting stuff just isn't consistent enough for me to push him to our board.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg had a partial breakaway chance, using his speed to cut to the middle in the NZ, cleverly put himself in the perfect position for a stretch pass, which he used to split the defence but failed to score with a backhand move. Otherwise, it was just a pretty uninteresting showing. He can connect plays quickly from time to time, but the hands very much struggle to keep up with the feet and when he runs out of space, he doesn't really have the tools or ideas to deal with that. I didn't see anything

particular defensively either. The skating speed is pretty much the only calling card.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg looked like just a guy in this one for a change. I respect his explosiveness and skating speed, although there's a room for cleaning up when it comes to his mechanics. He's more of a straight-line speedster. He can make the odd passing play off the rush or in the zone, but doesn't really create many advantages. Prefers to play dump-and-chase style that suits his strengths, but couldn't really make it work and failed to establish possession on retrievals for the most part. Maybe I'm not rating his skill level highly enough, but I just haven't seen much to indicate in that direction over these past viewings.

Lassi Alanen: October 30th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Quite clearly a better showing from Ståhlberg here. His playmaking looked quite a bit better. It wasn't just taking advantage of easy openings, but he actually saw a few more difficult passing plays and executed on them with great effect. Also got a breakaway chance by speeding up the middle and caughting the defence off their guards, using his quickness to get an advantage and was also able to hold it. He's still a bit one-dimensional in transition and not much of a problem-solver in that way. Could be an interesting player to look out for, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg found his way to the scoresheet after a pretty terrible defensive job by Södertälje, completely forgetting him to the net-front where he received a behind-the-net feed and had a lot of time to bury it. Also had one really nice play off the rush where he embarrassed a defender 1-on-1 with a slick move and got a high-danger look as of result. Otherwise, he looked like a pretty basic forechecking guy. He was quick in spurts and the top speed looked solid, too, but the skating stride was very weird-looking, didn't fully complete his pushes, aggressive heel kick. The handling didn't really pop aside from the one rush play.



Grade: D

Boston Buckberger

AGE 19.293 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 01, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
5'11" Height	172 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	5.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lincoln Stars "A"	USHL	62	9	36	45	0.73

SCOUTING REPORT

Boston Buckberger took the scenic route to the USHL. He played his first season of draft eligibility in Saskatchewan's AAA league. Then, was a 0.5 point-per-game blueliner on the AJHL's top team. This season, he joined the Lincoln Stars, where he was a top-five point and assist-getter among USHL blueliners.

One of the craftiest blueliners in this draft guide, Buckberger creates by outthinking the opposition. Instead of rushing the net, he stays inside space, making smaller movements to ensure he's a passing option. He tricks opponents with head fakes and lateral movement, faking shots and passes before doing the inverse.

Buckberger's also one of the better defenders in the USHL. "Always gapped up by the red line, forcing dump-ins and getting stops before the opponent builds speed," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in March. "In-zone, he funnels and tracks players up high."

Skating's the primary hole in Buckberger's game. His crossovers barely qualify as such, he's beatable with speed off the rush, and struggles to generate momentum through his edges. His breakouts suffer, which are a key skill for a primarily offensive defenceman.

While this is Buckberger's last chance to get drafted, it won't be his last chance to generate NHL interest. He heads to Denver next season, a school known for getting the most out of their activating, skilled blueliners.

Boston Buckberger

D | Lincoln Stars | USHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 116.8



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Buckberger has advanced activation ideas. He uses give-and-gos across the ice, even from the point. Always looking for a quick passing play to beat pressure – the perfect solution to his more limited skating ability. He looks to the slot for options, but also completes indirect plays and pinches down at the right moments. The defence is a strength for this level. Always gapped up by the red line, forcing dump-ins and getting stops before the opponent builds speed. In-zone, he funnels and tracks players up high. Breakouts remain an issue. They lack the same level of planning and precision as his touches further up the ice. Lots of passes into battles. Best when he's above the play, gets the puck in motion, and starts a passing play in open-ice. Not a pick, but a cool player who should become an effective NCAA player.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Buckberger's skating was exploited all game. Opponents had no issue beating him in a straight lines down the boards or attacking him up the middle. He struggled to generate speed with his backwards crossovers and especially pivots. The breakouts continue to limited his ability to get into the rush. But when he does, he shows an NHL mind. He fakes shots before passing, uses space before making the next play, starts give-and-gos, and skates his routes to create space for his teammates. He's creative, but everything has a clear end goal. If it weren't for the skating, he'd make the board this year. We'll see how his NCAA career goes. Should be fun to watch.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Buckberger's so dangerous as an activator. He joins rushes, starts give-and-gos, and skates his routes, backing off defenders and whacking away their sticks to create space. Deceives with the puck, especially with the play in front of him. Set up a goal with a walk-in shot-pass for a deflection and joined the rush for a pair of quality chances. Shot could be an NHL tool and the passing is for sure. Lacks the skating to really escape pressure on breakouts and retrievals. He also doesn't make passes quick enough, leading to turnovers and missed opportunities. The skating means he's probably not getting picked, but he's going to be a great NCAA player and generate interest as a free agent.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Not a ton from Buckberger other than a couple of stops off the rush where he got on the opponent early. Joined the rush. He remains shifty and creative. He works laterally, deceiving opponents and creating lanes. Well, when his feet allow it. Too often, he doesn't cover much distance with his skating – in all directions. Doubt he's a pick, but he's interesting. Curious to watch him in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

The skating is an issue. Buckberger's hips rise and tilt back when he goes to crossover, basically killing his momentum – with and without the puck. It limits his escapability and quickness. But he's such a smart player. He activates into every play and takes the right space. He manipulates opponents, deceives constantly, and always scans. He slows down to draw pressure, then speeds up to make the next play. Steps into space faking the shot, then passes after the defender commits. In one sequence, he successfully turned the defender's feet four times, but his escape was limited by his own feet. He's a smart, proactive defender, too. Gets on his check early and keeps attacks wide. Beatable on retrievals because of his skating. He might not be a pick, but he could become a really solid NCAA scorer.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

If Buckberger's skating was a grade better, he'd certainly be a pick as a re-entry. He'd also probably be scoring a boatload. He manipulates opponents. Not just a little bit, but a lot. He understands how to fake, when to fake, and the opportunities his fakes create. Reads the feet of opponents and he's able to adapt to unexpected reactions. He keeps the puck moving from the point,

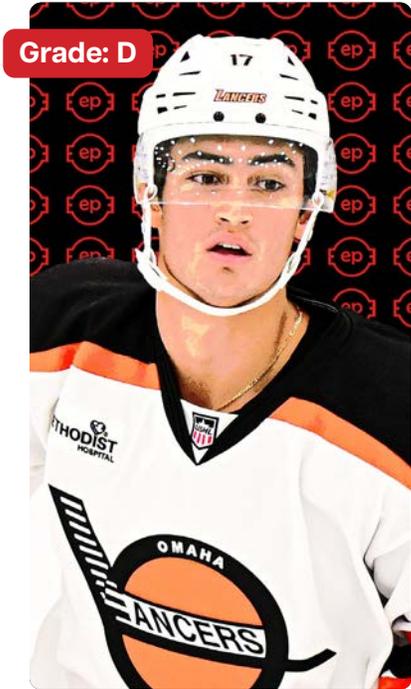
shoots for deflections, and tries to jump in to create better looks. He's even a projectable defender in terms of reads, getting on his check early, angling, and getting inside positioning. But he can't move well enough to take advantage of his many skills. He leans back through his crossovers. His strides lack a powerful recovery and consistent depth. He has so many skating skills and can even make plays in motion, but he rarely shows any sort of quickness or power. An impressive player, but a long way to go. Probably more NCAA free agent than pick.

Mitchell Brown: September 30th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Best player on the ice. Buckberger's an aware, active player. The skating's upright; he lacks control over his edges and power through his crossovers and stride. But he's deceptive and scans constantly. Looks over his both shoulders before entering retrievals, then deceives with toe cap deception and feints. Threw the puck away once or twice, but nothing that suggested a lack of awareness. Activated often, mostly for point shots. Missed opportunities to get inside, but that's likely a consequence of his skating. Lots of potential as an activator and creator. I think he scores a lot this season. Worth checking in.

Mitchell Brown: November 15th, 2020 - Prince Albert Mintos vs. Saskatoon Blazers - SMAAAHL U18

Even in AAA, Buckberger doesn't have many standout tools. But his habits are refined and beyond his league. He's always scanning, with and without the puck. Throws out fakes on retrievals and when hunting down his preferred passing lane. Risk-mitigation footwork while defending the rush helps him overcome a lack of strength. Completes passes and maneuvers in motion. Some offensive creativity, pulling the puck around a defender to change the angle and shift his weight and activating into space. Weak skater. Lacks flexion, can't engage his hips at all, tons of chatter through his turns and limited push-off through pivots. Doesn't load stride properly from his lack of depth and over-rotation. Lands on inside edges with knees caving inwards. Occasionally flashes better mechanics to suggest it's strength-related, but needs to improve extension length and heel-kicking recovery. Lacks consistent downward force on shots. He clearly has some talent and strong habits that create NHL intrigue, but given the uncertainty around his projection and relatively low upside, is he really worth a pick?



Grade: D

Andon Cerbone

AGE 18.425 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	157 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Omaha Lancers "A"	USHL	21	6	8	14	0.67
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	43	18	31	49	1.14

SCOUTING REPORT

Despite a solid season, Andon Cerbone went unpicked in his first year of eligibility. After a slow start with the Omaha Lancers this year, he was traded to the Youngstown Phantoms, where he became one of the USHL's deadliest playmakers.

Cerbone links off-puck movement with playmaking like an NHL player. He gets open inside space and scans for options. As soon as the puck arrives, he already knows the next play. For him, that's usually a pass into or across the slot, manipulating opponents first to open the lane when necessary. Handling skill and creativity enable flashy, intelligent moves to advance the puck.

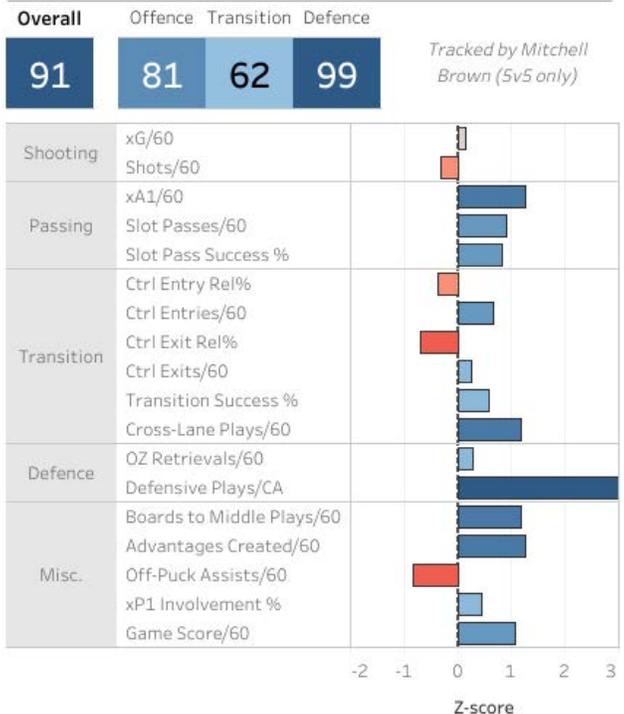
With the playmaking comes Cerbone's defence. He might be the USHL's best backchecker. "He's always above the puck, getting interceptions and stops on entry attempts against," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown highlighted in February. "If he can't, he keeps the attacker to the outside, leading to a stop deeper in the zone."

Despite these skills, Cerbone's a long shot to get drafted. It's not just his stature, but his lack of separation skills. His skating doesn't provide much separation at this level. Even if he wins the body positioning battle, he's still overpowered by most opponents.

But Cerbone's intelligence, high skill level, and defence should make him a dangerous NCAA scorer. He heads to the University of Michigan, a program that should put him in a position to succeed. Perhaps he becomes a top college free agent in a few seasons.

Andon Cerbone

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 71.8



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Cerbone's exciting to watch. He tries stuff and stays in the play. Failed a pass but seamlessly converted it into a deke through a defender for a chance. Scored with a backhand-forehand move way out in front of his body. The fanciest play was a full-body hesitation move. The defender followed, anticipating the spin. He stopped, loaded the back leg, and accelerated into space. He's a proactive defender, too. The playmaking didn't appear much in this game – he failed some passes by forcing them into closed lanes. But he remains worth tracking in future years.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Cerbone remains a fascinating player. He's talented. He has handling skill and vision. He gets open inside space. But he's limited by his lack of separating skills. He's disruptive and gets stops, but he struggles to get inside positioning on opponents. As such, he struggles to get play off the boards and create high-value offence, as he did in this game. Likely a high-scoring NCAA player in a few years, but NHL future seems unclear.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Just if Cerbone has a bit more in the way of separating skills. He's a playmaker with tons of skills. He instantly knows the next play once receiving the puck, looks inside options, deceives opponents, uses space before passing, and manipulates opponents. Also a strong defender. Gets a ton of break ups across the ice with proactive positioning. Understands he doesn't speed as an advantage, so he chips pucks into space after getting the defender's feet moving in the wrong way. But even when he does, opponents can catch up to him. He gets squeezed out plays easily, even at this level. He could be a late-rounder, but his chances of making it are slim at this stage. Lots of runway, however.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

The best player on the ice. Cerbone set up a goal with a steal at the point, cutting back after gaining the zone, and dropping the puck into space. He scanned inside the cutback – not something that most USHLers do. In general, he's highly aware. He gets open in between space and immediately advances the play. Sometimes, that's a shot. More often, he finds a teammate in even better positioning, passing through opponents when necessary. Defensively, he's always above the puck, getting stops at the either blue-line as a result. A bit limited as a skater – opponents easily keep him wide. The shot's a below-average projection with his hands staying too tight to his body. And he's easily overpowered physically. He tries to win body positioning but with limited success. With no separation tools, the odds are slim. But there's a chance he becomes a big-time NCAA scorer. The vision and off-puck game are clearly NHL skills, potentially above projections.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Cerbone lacks speed and physical skills, which muddies the projection. But he has talent. He understands how to get open off-puck, how to build the offence with passing, and deceives opponents to create lanes. Not accurate in this game, but the ideas were sound. Has a bit of handling skill and flash, too. Not a pick this year, at least not based on these two viewings. But he could become a player down the road.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Not much offence from Cerbone, although he extended his point streak to six games. He made a one-touch pass into the slot and passed through opponents to moving teammates in transition. This was more of a defensive performance. He's always above the puck, getting interceptions and stops on entry attempts against. If he can't, he keeps the attacker to the outside, leading to a stop deeper in the zone. The same concerns as last year – inefficient and lacks power as a skater. But he could be worth following. Especially if the production keeps up.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Cerbone remains one of the most interesting prospects in the USHL. The hands are clearly NHL-calibre, even if he's too reliant on the same move. It's the mechanics that are impressive, and the way that he sets his moves up despite having skating limitations. Some of his passes, particularly plays along the boards to teammates in the slot, have similarly deceptive set-ups and high completion rates. Everywhere else, he's inefficient and has difficulty finding space. Creates this weird dynamic in his game where he'll flip between puck dominant and completely unable to get possession for shifts at a time.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Inefficient, but effective performance from Cerbone. Just when it seems like he's too straight line and lacking creativity, he beat a defender with a one-touch deke to gain the middle. Hovered around the right areas, lacking timing but still earning a chance. Passing was the best part of his game. He looked for teammates on the inside from the boards, connecting several times. Not deceptive, but moves pucks quickly, showing an awareness of options before or during the pass reception. I don't know if the tools are draftable, but I've seen enough skill to keep watching.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2021 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Cerbone lacks the depth to properly crossunder. His turns and cutbacks are weak and limit his ability to separate. He's also a highly creative stickhandler. He went forehand-backhand-forehand through the triangle twice in this game. In the best when, he attacked at just enough of an angle to keep the defender's feet moving, baited the reach, went under, and tapped the puck back underneath and grabbed it on the other side. Smooth motion, lots of top hand movement, and executed with speed. Created a scoring chance with a crafty pass into the slot after a forecheck steal, layered with a bit of deception. He looked like a draft pick in this game.

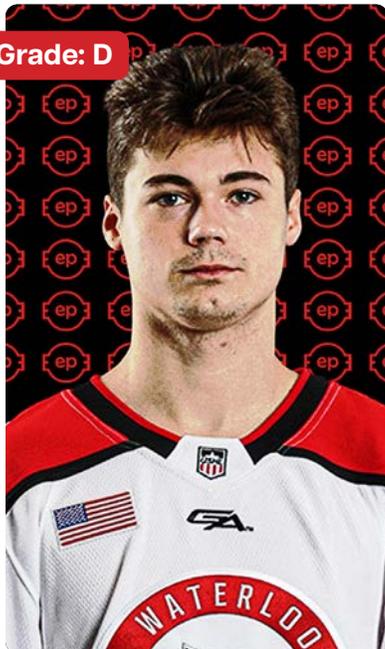
Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Cerbone faded through this game in a big way. He started out attacking the inside in transition, working the give-and-go, and finding pockets of space from which to shoot. He set up a quick transition chance, too. Then, he just fell apart. He's too basic with the puck sometimes, and usually too unsure about what to do next. Lacks decisiveness. I didn't see a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2021 - Chicago Steel vs. NTDP U18s - USHL

Cerbone wasn't fantastic by any means, but he showed some interesting offensive ability. He's mostly just a connector at this stage, but has the patience to wait for lanes to open and the timing to ensure the puck gets through. Very simple transition play in this game, mostly passing and some straight-line individual efforts. A bit of off-puck movement to get the puck back, but wasn't consistent. I don't think he's a draft pick based on this game, but it's easy to see how he could become one.

Grade: D



Gennadi Chaly

AGE 17.066 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	192 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	41	8	6	14	0.34

SCOUTING REPORT

Ignore the points, Gennadi Chaly's here to create offence. The ultra-aggressive, endlessly confident blueliner doesn't have any restraint, and for that, we salute him. He's truly one of the 2023 NHL Draft's most exciting players.

In the offensive zone, Chaly's always doing something. He pinches down the boards, activates down the weak side, and refuses to settle for low-percentage plays. Give-and-goes bypass pressure, while non-stop fakes and dekes allow him to walk straight through defenders. The aggression translates to the defensive end, with an overwhelmingly tight gap and physicality.

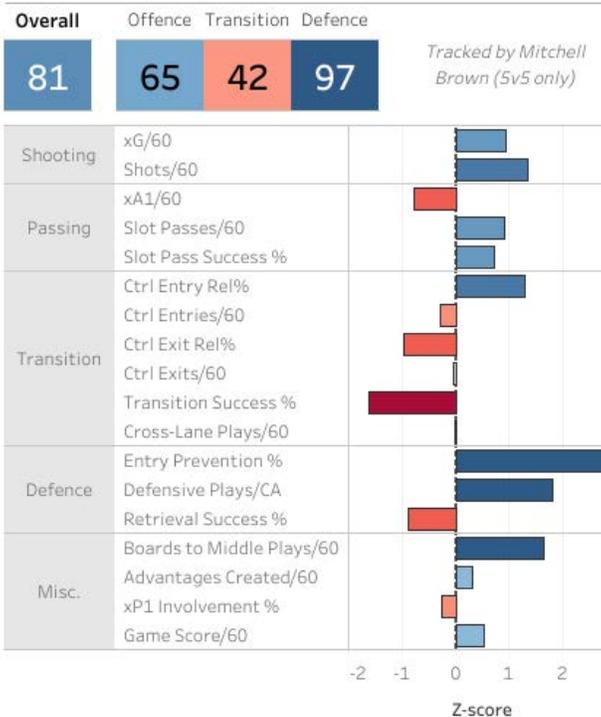
With such aggression comes drawbacks, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explains, "There's no restraint or foresight to his game. He charges straight at opponents, overcommitting constantly. On breakouts, he flings pucks into space blindly. Doesn't manipulate opponents in any zone, but tries to deke or pass through them regardless. Turnovers abound."

Confidence is tough to teach – it's a skill in itself. There's no denying that Chaly has plenty. Picking his spots better, developing more nuanced defensive skating, and using the space his activation instincts and skill creates before making the next move are the keys.

For players like Chaly, it's all about striking a balance without losing their core skills. It's a delicate balance, especially given the extremes in his game. It's tough to project him to the NHL, but another year in the USHL should provide answers.

Gennadi Chaly

D | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 70.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Chaly didn't look any more refined in this late-season viewing. He's still the same all-in, hyper-committing defender and non-trier of plays. There's no restraint or foresight to his game. He charges straight at opponents, overcommitting constantly. But his willingness to engage and pace means he kills plays. On breakouts, he flings pucks into space blindly. Doesn't manipulate opponents in any zone, but tries to deke or pass through them regardless. Turnovers abound. He scored with a one-timer when moving backwards, and the hands could be an NHL skill, provided he works on the set ups. He has an interesting play style, but probably too raw to be a pick at this stage.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Another cool game from undeniably one of the highest event prospects around. Every shift has something – good, bad, everything in between. The good: the patience under pressure, aggressiveness from the point, passing ideas in the offensive zone, and physicality. He jumps into every play, draws pressure before passing, and hits teammates moving into the slot with quick passes off the boards. Tries more advanced plays, like give-and-gos off the point. The activation game combines with his defence – gap's always closed. That means he gets stops in the neutral zone, forcing dump-ins and reaching in as the opponent receives the puck. But take that away, and he's a mess. He pinches for no reason (once leading to a goal against), charges at opponents skating towards him, struggles to pivot (too many crossovers, limited push off from the back foot) and handle speed, and doesn't show much vision or skill on breakouts. The tools might not be good enough to justify a pick with his current playstyle, but he's interesting. Could surprise given his confidence and aggressiveness.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Certainly the most noticeable of the many draft eligibles in this game. Chaly took Waterloo's offensive zone structure and pushed it to its limits. He keeps plays in front of him, but basically compresses the offensive zone so much that he ends up near the corner. He has activation ideas with the puck, too. He manipulated an opponent by dragging them wide before attacking the middle, used a give-and-go to get a chance, and stayed in space while activating. There's also some defence here. He turns that aggressive offensive zone positioning into a tight neutral zone gap. He angled opponents wide and closed out with force. Lots of concerning stuff, however. Mindlessly skated at opponents when defending the rush at times. Wandered a lot when joining the play. Tried to deke through opponents by digging heels into ice and failed. Not explosive or especially quick. He's an interesting prospect. Curious to see more.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Chaly is impossible to miss. He's always doing something; good, bad, in between. He jumps into the play constantly. Sometimes, he holds the zone, then hooks a puck into the slot. Others, he gets too far ahead and gets dusted. And the other other times, he tries to dangle through everyone in a slow glide and turns the puck over. There's no projectability to his defensive game. He charges at opponents. He has no recovery gear. But he has a legitimate offensive mind alongside some advantage creation in transition. Fun player, but a big-time project.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Chaly's aggressive. He does everything with full commitment, good and bad. Sometimes he ends up on the right side of the play, but he also killed Sioux Falls' breakout several times to hold the zone. Lots of activation, whether that's sprinting straight up the middle for a point-blank chance or using the weak side. He looks cross-ice and to the middle in transition, rarely settling for the easy play. Well, except on retrievals. He doesn't look, he just flings the puck into areas and hopes for the best. Lots of blind plays in general. Not especially quick. Need to watch more.



Grade: D

Ryan Conmy

AGE 17.896 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 23, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
5'10" Height	185 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	60	33	29	62	1.03

SCOUTING REPORT

Quietly, Ryan Conmy just had one of the USHL's strongest point-producing seasons in recent memory. His even-strength per-minute scoring was second among non-USNTDP first-time draft eligibles, beating Jayden Perron, Tanner Ludtke, and everyone not named Gavyn Thoreson. It's not hard to see why.

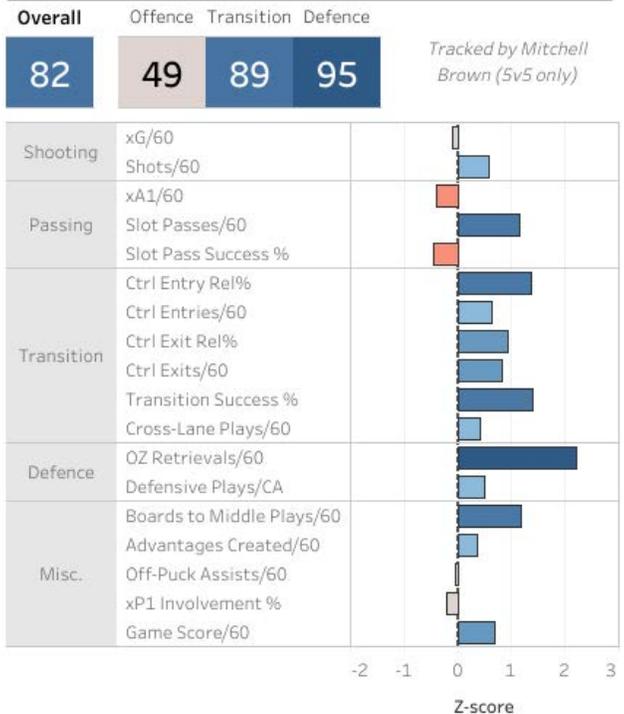
Conmy's a precision shooter, crafty playmaker, and inside lane attacker. Give him any gap, however small, and he instantly cuts inside, slipping around opponents as necessary. He enters every board battle with a couple of shoulder checks to plot his escape. If he can't handle through traffic, he connects with a backhand or slip pass through opponents.

When Conmy's not on the puck, he's getting open and creating space. He dips behind defenders and sneaks around traffic to pop into space as the shot comes. With well-timed dashes to the net, he creates space behind him. And he gobbles up every loose puck with a two-metre radius, cementing his 200-foot player status.

Conmy will need to add deception and improve the play selection to keep his offensive impact high in the NCAA, and to become an NHLer. The skating, which starts off with full depth but quickly deteriorates throughout his shift, must take a step, too. But the base – inside play, well-rounded skills, off-puck value – would make Conmy a fine upside swing in the mid rounds of the draft.

Ryan Conmy

F | Sioux City Musketeers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 86.0



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Conmy makes plays off the boards consistently. He breaks free from the defenders with inside cuts or passes to the middle. Drives the net without hesitation, getting low and trying to skate through the opponent's hands. Lots of forechecking ability, pushing attacks wide if he couldn't get the steal. Showed a bit of off-puck offence, too. Despite his ability to read lanes and make decisions, he's not adaptable. He stepped inside, drawing two defenders, but then forced a shot when could've set up a quality look for a teammate. Missed the best play several times. And he's not creating lanes. He could be a late-rounder because of his mindset, but he looks more like a potential NCAA free agent down the board.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Conmy's producing a ton this season, but his impact on games remains mostly in the details. He cuts inside under pressure, once drawing a pressure. He wins battles, then looks to the middle for teammates open in the slot. Has a bit of skill to connect, but he's not manipulating opponents to create lanes, or even deceiving to prolong them. Lacks speed. The stride falls apart fast, going from near-full knee bend to limited flexion as he drops his chest to the ice and elevates his hips. He didn't look like a pick in this game, but surely there's more high-value offence in his game given the production.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Conmy had some impressive plays on the powerplay, zipping the puck around and sniping one far side with an outside leg wrister off the pace. That could be an NHL skill. Didn't show the usual pace or inside play in his game. Passes were simple, straight ahead plays and he wasn't much of a factor off-puck. It can be hard to get into a good rhythm in these USHL games with 20 skaters – only so much ice time to go around., especially on a well-built team like Sioux City. Quiet games happen.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Conmy had a solid game. Scored a goal by beating the defender wide, driving the net, then sliding the puck five hole. He's very inside-driven. Always looks to attack the inside in the offensive zone, even with heavy pressure. Has the backhand pass skill (backhand, slip) to make plays off the boards and he enters battles with a quick shoulder check to find options. Not quick, but he achieves a full knee inside his stride. Much more upright through the rest of his skating, which could make him a below-average projection. A bit of defence, too. He could be an end-of-board candidate. Not dynamic and tools lack, but solid.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Conmy had a solid game, especially down the stretch. He's an intelligent off-puck player, dipping behind defenders, skating his routes and taking the opponents' sticks, and getting open in the high slot. Nearly scored with a sequence that combined the first two. He has a one-timer and general shooting skill, able to adapt to passes and fire with control from compromised positions. Elsewhere, the game seems a bit harder for him. He has a bit of delay game and vision, but his passes miss their mark. A reactive, passive defender in this one. Skating looked like a 4-grade in this one. He lacks flexion, elevating his hips with incomplete extensions and a pronounced heel kick. Looks more like a late-rounder, but has enough qualities to make him a consistent watch.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Conmy showed an inside-driven game along with a bit of shooting skill. He supports plays high and low, dipping off the radar or skating behind defenders when possible. Looks to shoot through and defenders. Takes pucks off the boards and attacks the net. Shot wasn't noteworthy. Unaware of backpressure at times and inaccurate passer; not much playmaking or vision shown. The energy on the backcheck and forecheck were pluses; he angled an attack wide. No deception or manipulation ability shown, which when combined with the lack of passing, isn't an encouraging sign. Still, his inside game and off-puck instincts are interesting.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Conmy was mostly an off-puck player in this game. He moved to get open, supported the puck, chased down loose pucks, won battles, and intercepted passes. Inaccurate with the puck, but he showed solid ideas to spot teammates in the slot. Didn't prolong the lane, however. Lacks quickness. Had an opportunity to engage a defender but settled for a low percentage shot. A bit of defence, but that was about it. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Grade: D



Matthew DiMarsico

AGE 18.690 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	59	25	21	46	0.78

SCOUTING REPORT

While Matthew DiMarsico's a second-time eligible, this was only his first USHL season. And what a first season it was, recording 25 goals and 21 assists in 59 games and showcasing a full toolkit that suggests NHL potential.

DiMarsico's a gritty shooter, capable of powering through contact, beating opponents with slick moves in-tight, and getting open around the net for one-timers. Crossover-heavy rushes keep defenders guessing his next move, and he flashes passing skill and vision to set up chances when pressured by overzealous opponents.

As soon as the Green Bay Gamblers lose the puck, DiMarsico goes to work. He supports battles, disrupts puck carriers, and hammers plays into the boards to win secure possession.

To translate the offence to the NCAA, DiMarsico must add a bit more in ability, handling especially. A bit more patience and scanning for options will help, too.

Even if the skill doesn't translate to the next level, he will provide substantial off-puck value. He should become a top-six scorer in the NCAA in a couple of years, and could develop into an NHL regular.

Matthew DiMarsico

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 92.6



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A monster game on the forecheck from DiMarsico. He grabbed first steals and instantly passed to the slot, once creating a

chance. He's proactive on the backtrack. Anticipating turnovers, supporting high, and jumping into lanes. He has projectable offensive habits, too. Takes the middle when given space, looks for teammates off the boards, and gets open inside space. One cross-slot pass from the top of the zone was an NHL play, showing skill I haven't seen him before. The tools are average to below it, but his brain, physical skills, and forechecking could make him an NHLer in a depth role. A fine late-rounder for a team.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

DiMarsico brings some physicality, defence, and play-building. He stepped into opponents and created turnovers with pressure at the top of the zone. Reads feet, doesn't commit too early. In transition, he steps inside or passes to the middle upon reception. Consistently created space for his recipient, except in the offensive end. There, he passed into pressure, missed options, and didn't show much foresight. Didn't look like a pick, but perhaps there's more offence here.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Many of DiMarsico's plays are incomplete. He passes without looking first, passes to teammates with more pressure than himself, and lacks accuracy. There's little foresight or planning to his game. But he has tools and skill. He beats defenders with speed (crossover rushes), he's physical, and he looks to get pucks off the boards instantly. Not a great off-puck offensive player at this stage, which means his touches lack (especially when combined with Sebastian's lack of in-zone creation). But he could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Something happened just about every time DiMarsico stepped on the ice. He was in total command of the game for stretches. He grabbed four points, with the three really impressive plays. He drove off the boards to the net front for both goals. First, he did it without the puck, beating the defender back to the net front and getting a high deflection. Second, he drove the net and worked across the crease for the backhand finish. Grabbed an assist with a hip pocket fake before faking to the net driver. A nasty deke back through his own legs under pressure wasn't just flashy, but helped him escape pressure. He sees teammates through layers and instantly peels to the inside. Some physicality. He's not much of a transition puck carrier and the skating lacks some refinement (most of his plays are inside extended glides). There's real potential here. Wouldn't be surprised if a team picks him late.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Most of DiMarsico's entries failed. He just goes straight at opponents until he loses the puck or dumps it in. But he showed a bit of vision to set up a chance from the behind the net, won battles on the forecheck for steals, and supported plays off-puck. Physical. Didn't show any NHL skills, but I've seen better.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

DiMarsico was a factor all game long. Strong in pursuit, not biting on feints and pushing the puck carrier into the boards. Anticipated plays. Showed offensive skill, too. Went between the legs on a pass reception before using a crossover-heavy rush to gain the zone. Pulled the puck around the defender for a chance. Sets up his moves in lengthy glides; he's not a dynamic skill player, at least in this game. And he's limited by poorly timed passes and a lack of scanning. But there are passing reads. He spots teammates in the middle along the boards and generally doesn't leave much value on the table. Hands and skating were limited. Not quick. He could be a late-round pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

DiMarsico scored a tap-in goal but didn't accomplish much else with the puck. He didn't look before his passes, making plays based on assumptions, with predictable results (turnovers). He turned a scoring chance into a giveaway by not scanning in the third period. Forced a few plays. But there was also some defence and transition skill. He looked cross-lane for options. Worth another look.



Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Not much ice time for DiMarsico, but he was among the game's best players in the offensive zone. Found space at the top of the slot and followed up plays for chances. Followed up plays, gathering his own rebound for an additional look and set up teammates for follow up chances. Showed shooting ability off either leg and off the puck. Straight-line player in transition, but a hard-worker. Looks like he's poised for a big season as a re-entry. Curious to watch more.

Grade: D



Ty Hanson

AGE 17.403 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'9"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	54	4	21	25	0.46

SCOUTING REPORT

By mid-December, Ty Hanson was regularly skating 20-plus minutes a night in the USHL, not an easy task as a rookie. By season's end, his 22:01 per night was sixth in the league, his steady defensive approach earning him that role.

In top form, Hanson looks unbeatable off the rush. He closes his gap as early as possible while maintaining backwards momentum. He backpedals to the middle, forcing the attack wide, then comes across with a well-timed poke and a heavy shoulder to win possession. Those skills translate deeper in the zone, and he proactively eliminates off-puck threats, too.

But with big minutes often comes inefficiency. Hanson's no different. Too often, he flings pucks into battles, dumps the puck out with passing options, and doesn't look for teammates before shooting.

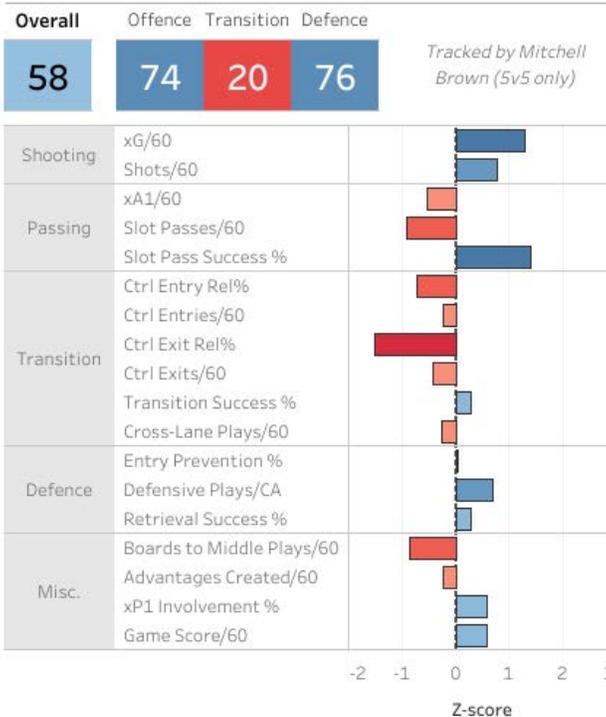
However, the solutions already exist in his game. He activates and uses space, occasionally creating lanes. Sometimes, he instantly recognizes a high-value target on the breakout and connects with precision and timing. As he grows more comfortable in the USHL, perhaps those plays appear more often and drown out the poor ones.

To reach the NHL, Hanson's skating will have to improve, too. He's beatable with speed, especially off the pivot.

Given his stature, he's not likely to hear his name called, but don't be surprised if this once big scorer with Hermantown High takes a significant step in the offensive zone next season. That'll generate interest.

Ty Hanson

D | Sioux City Musketeers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 119.7



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Speedy attacks led to difficulty for Hanson in this game. He was easily outraced down the perimeter, but he tried to get back in the play. Physical, stepping into opponents and using his free limbs to slow down attackers and get them on his back. He has play-killing potential because of his willingness to engage. Grabbed an assist with a double-deflected point shot and he used space off-puck, getting open at the top of the dots. Nothing super interesting for NHL purposes, but he looked like a pro-level player.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Hanson plays a lot these days. He's solid. Defence is where he's best. For the most part, he gets the early stop. Gets on opponents early, forcing them wide or jumping in as they receive pucks. He's beatable with speed, which appears when he's forced to back off (when respecting players ahead of the play, for example). The pivots are the culprit. In-zone, he scans and eliminates threats. Pace lacks at times. Breakouts lack awareness and creativity. Not creating lanes. His best plays are taking what's available. But his average usually doesn't advance the puck, either tossing it into another battle or to a teammate with more pressure than himself. He doesn't look like a pick, but perhaps he takes a step offensively in the next couple of seasons.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

After February 18th's standout rush defence performance, Hanson was clearly beaten a couple of times, once by pivoting the wrong way. Early in the game, he led the rush and set up a high-danger chance for his defensive partner. A solid read where many players shoot or panic pass; he slowed down and waited for Brown to skate his route. The breakouts are just flashes. He has moments where he instantly recognizes a far-lane pass and connects. But he mostly just makes simple plays up the boards into battles. Not much patience, even when he scans and (presumably) sees that he has space to make a play. Not a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Hanson's first period was one of the best I've seen this season from any USHL prospect. He broke up four plays off the rush, one directly leading to a goal. He kept backwards momentum when engaging face-to-face. Closed the gap at the offensive zone blue line, even as the last player back, then matched and angled the attack across to force the dump-in. Physical, kept a tight gap off-puck (to kill plays when the opponent beat the first layer), and won inside positioning. A clear NHL game when it came to the defending the rush. What happens next is variable. He throws pucks away under pressure, only making up-the-boards breakout passes. Keeps play moving the offensive zone, but doesn't read, let alone dictate, the feet of incoming defenders, which means he rarely creates. Still, he could be a late-rounder if that rush defence keeps up.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Hanson has potential. When forwards work high, he activates low. He gets on his check early, anticipating the pass and getting inside positioning to prevent acceleration. He, in flashes, uses space in the offensive zone. He pinches down the walls and keeps the puck moving instead of stopping it. But he's not consistent with his offence skills, settling for low-value plays with better options and his short-range, panicked breakouts only limit his touches up the ice. Aggressive gap turned overly committing once. Didn't look like a pick in this game. Keep watching.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

An inefficient game from Hanson. He has some ideas with the puck, trying to move pucks through forecheckers to create advantages on the other side. Flashes deception in spurts. Jumps into the play and pinches down the wall to hold the zone. Some exciting defensive sequences, getting on players early and forcing the dump-in. Didn't show much offence or skating, and there were lots of soft breakout plays. Not establishing body positioning, weak passes up the boards, and early passes with time and space. Not really a performance that suggested a pick, but more of a player who become something down the line.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Hanson showed the beginnings of a lot of exciting skills. In the offensive zone, he activates, moves laterally, and uses space. He fakes shots and receives passes with his feet moving. Generally moved the puck after getting the defender to bite. He's not explosive, but he's smooth and has the ideas to create a bit of offence at the next level. A solid night defending, too. He (mostly) kept attackers to the outside and closed space early to get the stop. Skating's an NHL projection. He has the depth output, only limited by mechanical inefficiencies. Maintaining that depth through his edge work could make it above-average. Looks like a pick.

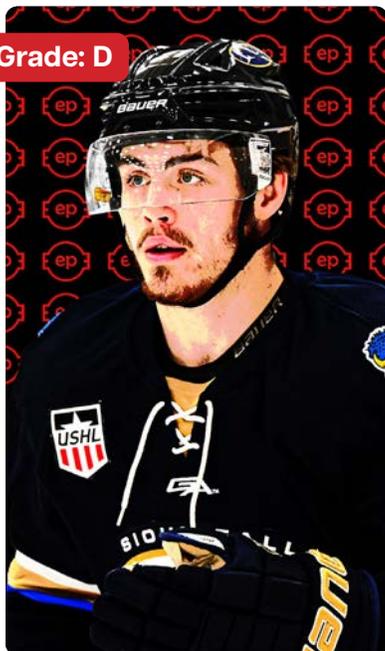
Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Another impressive game from Hanson, even if his plays didn't connect. He tired a couple of look-off passes in transition, once creating a 2-on-1. Joined the rush regularly, usually up the strong side or trailer. Keeps attacks wide with stickwork and defensive skating, but doesn't always close space quick enough to get the stop. Lacked a slip pass, which would have helped him connect on some of his better ideas. Lots of exciting individual components.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

First game of the tournament for Hanson, and it was a good one. He activated down the boards, showed playmaking ability, and killed plays in the neutral zone by pivoting early and coming across. A couple of his best ideas started with activation, either pinching or faking the shot, before passing to the inside. Some of them didn't connect, but not for a lack of timing or passing skill. Nearly scored by dangling from the corner to the net-front for a chance. Few minutes and fewer opportunities to gauge his skating, but it looked closer to a strength than weakness relative to his peers here.

Grade: D



Sam Harris

AGE 18.923 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 14, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	56	30	26	56	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

The Sioux Falls Stampede haven't done much scoring in Sam Harris' time there. They were the USHL's worst offence last season, and the third-worst this past one. But that hasn't stopped this power-playmaker from filling the net.

Harris looks to punish opponents with and without the puck. Without it, he throws crushing hits, subtle nudges, and always gets in the way. With it, he does those same things while manipulating opponents to create lanes to the net. He prefers to slow down, drawing defenders towards him, then passing to the open teammate in the slot.

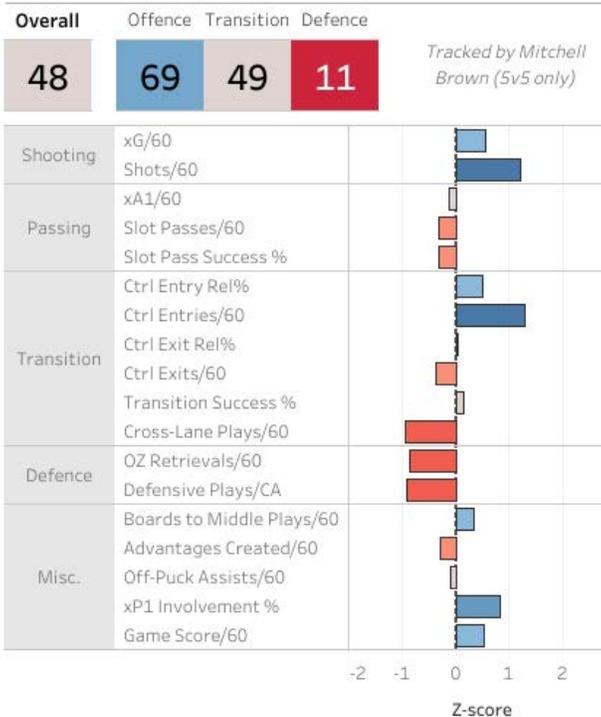
That lane creation ability also serves Harris' scoring game, creating access to the slot off the rush, while his physicality earns him space around the net.

With speed and agility as weaknesses, Harris usually makes his plays inside a lengthy glide. When defenders don't allow that, he lacks the pace and adaptability to overcome. Well, he did for most of the season. A late-season viewing that showed more distinct variation in pace and in-motion skill suggested improvement.

If Harris builds off that, he shouldn't have much difficulty bringing his scoring to the NCAA. To reach the NHL, the upright, heavy skating and puck skills also must improve.

Samuel Harris

F | Sioux Falls Stampede | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 90.4



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris continues to have exciting flashes. This game, he manipulated an opponent with a crossover rush, changing the angle on the defender three times before attacking the inside and drawing a penalty. Scored a tap-in at the post. There's more variation in his pace than in my earlier viewings – he's actively gears up and down, instead of always down. Some off-puck instincts and physical, as always. He's a real hammer out there. Runs into opponents, shoves them to the ice, and is always involved in battles.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris was pretty clearly Sioux Falls' best player in this game; the play driver on their first line, alongside Chris Pelosi and Maddox Fleming. The skating looks pretty grim – Harris is knock-kneed, top-heavy and doesn't generate a lot of power – but weaving rush attacks and a delay game allow him to work around those deficiencies, at least at this level. An ability to absorb contact and use it to separate allowed Harris to create some pretty interesting plays off of the boards, too. Harris' assist was pretty interesting. He collected a bank pass off of the wall, skated past the defender opposite him, and then furnished a no-look pass into the slot for Pelosi to finish. I think the mechanical limitations as a skater and handler probably keep him from our board, but he'll have a decent college career at Denver. I could see him being a late-round pick for some team, too.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Harris had the puck a ton in this game, but didn't get much done. Sure, he shows handling skill and patience, deking through opponents, cutting inside, and extending his possessions as he outwaited pressure. But these plays didn't show any foresight. He deked inside, only to get swarmed on the other side. He handled when there were clear passing options. The backhand shelf goal was cool, and there some play-building skills shown early in the game with give-and-gos and lateral passes through opponents. But he didn't look close to a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris was looking to punish every opponent. He threw crushing hits, shoved players to the ice, and threw an elbow at everyone who skated near. He also had a bunch of scoring chances, getting open for one-timers and wristers at the top of the slot and driving the net for a pair of shots in-tight. The best skill remains the vision. He delays in transition then sets up teammates with precision passes to the inside. One time, he even cutback, attacked the middle, beat a defender with a give-and-go, then passed across the crease – a great display of linking different ideas together. The skating and hands will keep him off our board, but he'd be a smart late-rounder for a team. More upside here than the usual 2003 prospect.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris is one of those players very effective inside a largely limited base. He manipulates opponents, delays, and finds the best play. But he's only a straight-line, two-speed player – slow and slower. He weaponizes his low pace effectively, drawing defenders with fakes and a glide before ripping the puck into the slot. But he doesn't have the skating or movement to manipulate opponents who aren't playing his game. He has more potential than the usual decent-scoring re-entry because he clearly understands more nuanced parts of the game and has the skill, but he needs to learn how to control defenders to create the situations he relies on. I like his physical game and off-puck instincts. He sprints his routes and collides with defenders to create space behind him. Really interesting re-entry. Gotta think he makes the guide.

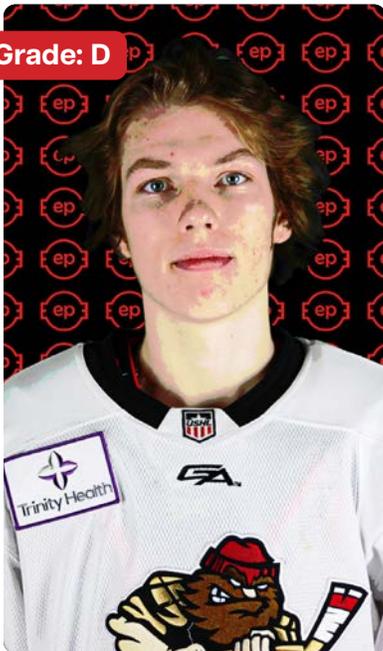
Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris had some impressive power play sequences. He plays the net-front and goal-line. He moves between supporting and scoring positioning, showing skill in both areas. The highlight was a cross-crease pass through two defenders, faking first to prepare the lane. At 5-on-5, he showed a bit of shooting skill and off-puck awareness. Not much of a playmaker, but he created a lane with a stop-and-start. Perhaps that's more of his game. Curious to see more.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Harris had a solid game, highlighted by a perfect backhand pass on the fake wraparound for an assist. The timing was perfect, like the textbook example. He showed some patience and awareness in transition – mostly playing in straight lines, but understanding when he was about to lose space. More of a shooter at even-strength, firing off a chance and taking a couple of low-percentage plays with some options. The defence was solid. Mechanics looked below-average in this game. Curious to see more.

Grade: D



Ty Henricks

AGE 17.216 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'5"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Fargo Force	USHL	28	6	3	9	0.32
Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	19	3	7	10	0.53

SCOUTING REPORT

Ty Henricks enters the 2023 NHL Draft as a bit of an unknown. The towering winger averaged just over 10 minutes per game with the Fargo Force, before getting shipped to the Muskegon Lumberjacks. His minutes and production increased, but his season was cut short due to injury.

Work rate is Henricks' standout skill in the USHL. He immediately recognizes danger and sprints to eliminate it. On sheer will, he catches up to opponents then overpowers them with his stick work and a heavy shoulder into the boards.

While most of Henricks' offensive work comes off the forecheck, there are flashes of more. Off the rush, he reads gaps. He cuts back as defenders close in before passing to the trailer. If opponents back off, he cuts inside before firing or awaiting support. He even has a bit of handling skill, alongside with a bit of deception and a knack for spinning off checks.

At Henricks' current skating ability, many of those plays fail. He lacks the speed to maintain distance from opponents and the edge work withstand contact along the boards. For a team invested in skills development, Henricks could be a solid late-round find.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Henricks left the game in the early second with an injury. But he was having a solid game before then. He showed some passing

Ty Henricks

F | FGO/MUS | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 63.0



skill off the backhand and a change of pace game to beat defenders. Didn't lead to any offence, lacking the speed and vision to make the next play, but he only got out there for a few shifts.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

The usual big motor and flashes of skill from Henricks. Watching him off-puck is fun. He never quits on plays, always sprinting to get back and charging at opponents to force turnovers. The flashes were a deke in the neutral zone, reading the defender, and a cut inside at 5-on-5 before dropping the puck back for an assist. He takes advantage of obvious gaps. The skating (upright, which limits stability, edges, quickness) and lack of consistent offensive impact are limiting, but his motor gives him a chance to surprise.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A checking game from Henricks, apart from a couple flashes along the boards where he snuck away from defenders with the puck. That's not a sustainable strategy – he's such an upright, sluggish skater that opponents usually match him. Still, the defence is solid. A bit late sometimes, but always worked to get back in the play. Physical and tied up opponents. Curious to see him next year. Maybe there's more offence here; there are flashes of it when given space.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Henricks flashes some handling skill in spurts, just as he did in the neutral zone to beat an opponent to the middle. Then, he crushed the player who stepped up. Otherwise, he's quiet with the puck. Simple plays with no real play-building or value added to his touches. The defence was stellar though. Really impressive. He backtracked above the puck, angled, forced plays wide. Proactive off-puck coverage. Didn't look like a pick, but he's interesting.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

There are times where Henricks just can't get anywhere. He blew a 2-on-1 by simply being too slow. He can't separate with his edges at all because there's so little knee bend. But he has skill and vision. He dekes opponents, preparing the move first with a quick fake. He crosses his reads and pulls pucks in to adapt to passing lanes. A bit straight-line, which keeps him to the outside. With his level of skating, more proactivity in his routes and passing is necessary. Doubt he's a pick this year, but there's a chance he gets a contract as an NCAA free agent.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

An active from Henricks. He scored with a quick handle into a wrister after forcing the turnover. Beat a defender wide for a high-danger chance off the rush. But the most impressive play was a drive off the boards, cutting back as the defender stepped into him, before handling through traffic. He's so upright that he can't actually separate from decent defenders – they just skate into his legs and knock him off balance. But he's an incredible worker. I know the USHL is full of them, but this guy really goes for it. As soon as his team's about to lose the puck, he hustles back and tries to overwhelm the puck carrier. Really impressive stuff. Doesn't look like a pick, but it was nice to see a hard-working player get rewarded with a goal and some chances.

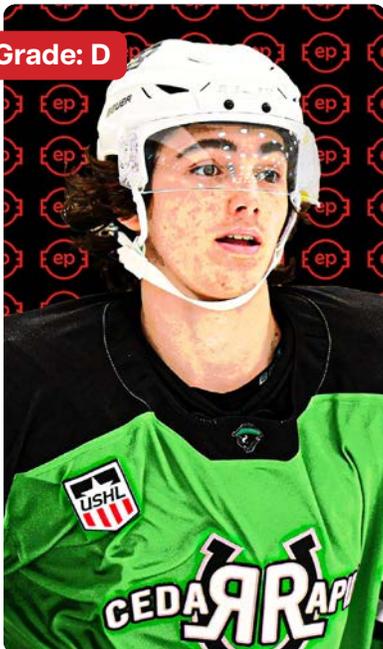
Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Henricks barely played in this one. One overpowering backcheck and a scoring chance off a steal were the highlights. He's a weak skater, but surprisingly fluid in spurts. More of a worker than a skilled player. Didn't see much here.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Henricks is tall with some defensive value. I mean, he spent the entire game in his own zone, so have to consider the defence with that caveat. But he worked hard, grabbing a stop on a close-out and overwhelming an opponent on the backcheck. That was it. Nothing of note.

Grade: D



Dylan Hryckowian

AGE 18.326 DATE OF BIRTH May 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	61	26	39	65	1.07

SCOUTING REPORT

The Québec to USHL pipeline has picked up in recent years; Dylan Hryckowian's another name to know.

Last year, he was playing Prep as first-time NHL draft eligible. This year, alongside Salisbury linemate Ryan Walsh, he stepped into the USHL and instantly became a top player. His even 3.0 even-strength points per 60 beat out notable prospects like Jayden Perron, Danny Nelson, and Tanner Ludtke, along with all but three of the USHL's 31 NHL-drafted prospects.

With a bottomless gas tank and breakneck pace, Hryckowian overwhelms opponents in all three zones. Defensively, he's a puck-winning machine with non-stop pressure and a keen eye for vulnerable opponents. Offensively, that speed burns defenders off the rush and along the boards, where he always looks to attack the inside. But he's not overly reliant on it, understanding when to lean on opponents, cut back, and wait for support.

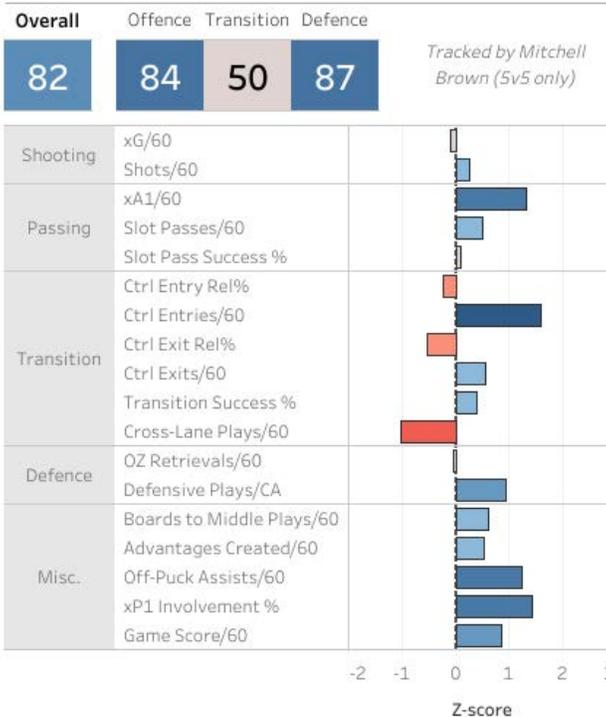
The pace is mental, too. Hryckowian doesn't just get open and support plays; he bounces between various positions across the ice, positioning himself to always impact the play. A give-and-go style that blends the on- and off-puck pace drove his scoring this season – a highly projectable way to score against all levels of competition.

At this stage, Hryckowian's skating lacks some refinement, with his feet flailing as his depth varies. Perhaps that means that his speed won't be as much of an advantage against better competition. Similarly, he's not a manipulator or dynamic play creator, which could prove costly if the pace loses some of its effectiveness.

Next season, Hryckowian will join his brother Justin, also a Québec-to-USHL alumni, at Northeastern University. Justin was a

Dylan Hryckowian

F | Cedar Rapids RoughRiders | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 97.8



top-six scorer from the hop. Dylan could do the same. If he doesn't get picked this season, he will feature prominently in the Elite Prospects NCAA Free Agency guide for years to come.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Just about every Hryckowian viewing is the same, and that's great. He's a consistent presence with his pace, playmaking, and defensive value. Give-and-go style. Skates his routes to push back defenders, gets open inside space, and applies non-stop pressure as the F1. Play fast with the puck, but knows when to cut back and find the trailer. Prepares his cutbacks by leaning on opponents first. Opens passing lanes by drawing defenders before passing. The skating breaks down, but he's always the fastest player on the ice. Convinced that the skating could be an NHL projection, despite the flailing. He could be a fine late-rounder. Not a dynamic talent, but Cedar Rapids doesn't create much offence. Maybe there's more here.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

The best player on the ice. Hryckowian has NHL speed, playmaking, and defensive value. Reads the play, immediately puts the pressure on if he's not already there to disrupt the pass reception. Deep, consistent stance through strides, crossovers, and turns with full extensions. It breaks down, but the skating could be an NHL tool. He outraced opponents with ease. Set-up a chance on 2-on-0, slipped a puck inside for a high-danger look, and drove the net off the boards. He could be a pick as a re-entry. Lots of reason to believe in his upside, even if he's not as dynamic as he could be with his tools.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Yet another impressive game from Hryckowian. His speed's a constant weapon. He forces turnovers and beats opponents, but also shows craftiness. When he's about to get cut off, he cuts back, usually after leaning on the opponent first to create a bit of space when they separate. Scored after challenging a defender with speed, then going back across to shoot under their stick and beating the goaltender far side. Numerous steals on the forecheck, often set up with a hit, and leading to offence twice. Inside-driven, give-and-go style, and brings value across the ice. He could be a mid-to-late rounder, even as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Hryckowian has a really advanced off-puck game. Name a play, and he executes: Moving screens, sprints to push back defenders, stopping inside space to get open for a pass, intense pressure as the F1, proactive defensive zone coverage. Solid. He has some skill, too. Connected with a backhand pass off his back. Plays fast, but understands the slow game, too. Maybe the mechanics aren't quite good enough to play his game at the next level, but he might be the best prospect on this Cedar Rapids team. Need to watch more.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Another solid off-puck game from Hryckowian. He skates his routes. One time, he took two defenders with him, creating a scoring chance. Gets open between defenders, adjusting to stay in lanes. Flips between supporting and scoring position with pace. Those reads extend to the defensive game, too. With the puck, he was more of a play-builder than creator, which is fine. He cuts inside when given space, cuts back as defenders lean on him, and keeps play moving along the boards. Not much open ice skill shown. Didn't look like a pick, but definitely going to score in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A masterclass in reading space from Hryckowian. Give him an inch, and he instantly cuts to the inside. He also creates space by leaning on defenders, then cutting back as they lean in. Deep cutbacks with his weight ready to go straight into the acceleratory

crossovers. His rush patterns are a strength, setting up defenders at angles with high crossover integration. An aggressive F1, but he really thrives when he's supporting, getting open and dipping into space when necessary. He could be a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Hryckowian plays inside space. He doesn't charge forward; he stays between defenders. With the puck, he always takes advantage of the gap. He cuts inside on passive defenders and cuts back on more aggressive ones. Plays a give-and-go style, once leading to a high-danger chance for himself. Absorbs contact. Not a manipulator or manufacturer of high-danger offence consistently, but shows a lot of NHL qualities in this game. A play-builder and runway creator. Curious to watch more.

Grade: D



Joe Palodichuk

AGE 19.553 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Fargo Force "A"	USHL	44	8	21	29	0.66

SCOUTING REPORT

Two years ago, Joe Palodichuk featured in the 2021 Elite Prospects Draft Guide as a mobile, but unrefined activator out of the Minnesota High School circuit. Now, he's one of the draft's most dynamic offerings on the back end, even as a double re-entry.

Agility is Palodichuk's game. Name a skating skill, he has it: Heel-to-heel, punch turns, tight turns, and dynamic lateral crossovers. The agility feeds his dynamic puck-rushing game, with constant changes of direction and speed to deceive defenders as he strings exits into entries.

Along the blue line, Palodichuk drags defenders in one direction, hits the brakes, then accelerates in the other. He avoids point shots, preferring instead to shift away from opponents while looking for teammates around the slot for deflections or one-timers.

More of an experimenter than precise play creator, Palodichuk's dynamism is likely to taper a bit as the margin for error shrinks against better competition. He's not much of a breakout passer, either. But there's good news: He's developed the rest of his game.

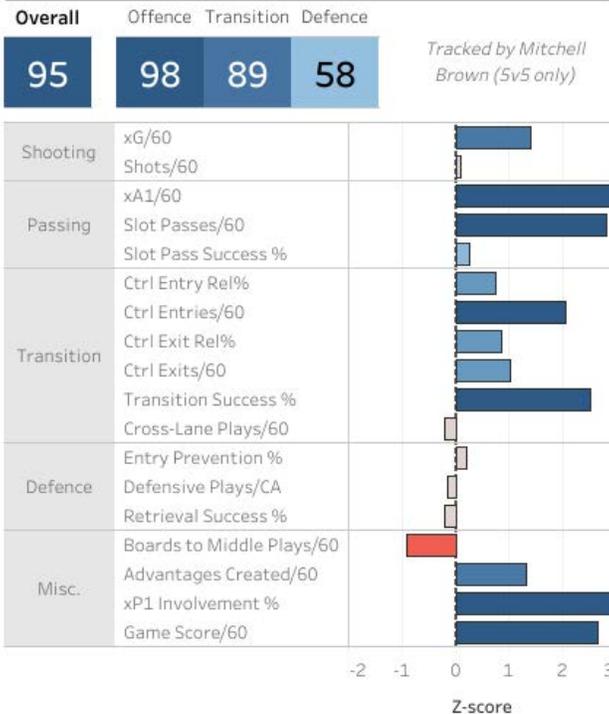
"He's improved defensively since his draft year," detailed Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown in February. "He's an alert off-puck defender, anticipating and eliminating threats. Ties up opponents and wins body positioning. He steps too far outside the dot lane, but he closes space on opponents fast. It's not a projectable way to defend the rush, but the individual skills are."

As Palodichuk develops his defence and breakout passing, expect his stock to rise. If he doesn't get picked in his final year of eligibility, he should become a top NCAA free agent in a couple of years.

Joe Palodichuk

D | Fargo Force | USHL | Draft+2

Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 65.1



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Another dynamic, but volatile game from Palodichuk. From the point, he's always moving. He overlaps with his partner, dekes opponents, passes into the slot, uses space before shooting, and works laterally to find open lanes. Edge-to-edge quickness provides some escapability, turning his feet one way before the other, especially on breakouts. Passes up the boards, then sprints the middle for the return pass. Delays inside space. He doesn't consistently find the best, or even a positive play on breakouts. A lot of touches either just hand off the pressure to a teammate or worsen the condition of the puck. That has to improve. The defence is variable. In single variable situations, he angles and gets stops. More complex, and he backs off until he can't anymore. He could be a late-rounder. There's some long-term upside here.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

A dynamic game from Palodichuk. He was activating constantly, manipulating pressure when possible. He stepped towards the defender, then accelerated into open ice. Prepared his escapes with look offs and fakes. Escaped with heel-to-heel skating and quick crossovers from stops. He's not the most mechanically refined skater – his feet kick, his depth varies – but he has skills, including deceptive double cuts and punch turns. Played too fast. His hands failed him on several occasions, which prevented him from creating high-danger offence. The defence has improved over the years, it seems. He still over-commits (veers too far wide off the rush especially) but he's generally a proactive defender with some play-killing instincts. The big question looks like the breakouts and ultimate upside. The breakouts show far less nuance than the offensive zone play. He skates into pressure and lacks awareness of his options. He's worth watching more this year.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

This was a game of big moments for Palodichuk. He created a pair of chances with passes from the point. He pre-scanned, received the puck in his hip pocket, and even showed a bit of deception. Used space from the point. Killed rushes at the blue-line. In-zone defence was a bit weak; he was late or blew his coverage entirely. He was also responsible for a goal against by skating into the player coming out of the box. He lacks awareness on breakouts, skating into pressure and lacks the high-level ability to manipulate opponents. He didn't look like a pick, but he's worth checking on occasionally.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Palodichuk had some really exciting flashes. He was very active from the point, combining backwards crossovers and lateral mobility to keep defenders guessing. Even used stops and starts to manipulate defenders before attacking space. Not creating much high-value offence with his activation game, but he's consistently creating favourable positions. A bunch of projectable rush stops, too. On breakouts, it often seems like he lacks a plan, skating straight into pressure or beating one opponent only to get overwhelmed by next layer. In 1-on-1s, he used weight shifts and handling fakes, freezing defenders. Interesting performance. Curious to watch him more.

Mitchell Brown: May 25th, 2021 - Bismarck Bobcats vs. Minnesota Wilderness - NAHL

Palodichuk didn't play much in this game, but it didn't matter: he really stood out. His retrievals are too basic without any deception, but he's so crafty when he gets the puck. Little slip pass through a defender for the inside lane breakout was the highlight. Another saw him use a pivot turn to encourage the forechecker to reach, before flying up the ice for a zone entry. Shot's wonky, but he's clever with it. Takes pucks in motion and reads the next play in advance. Some poor first touches, including one on a retrieval. Zero rush defence ability in this game: stick in hands, gliding backwards without much pushing to match speed. He can't angle as a result, but shows better posture once he closes the gap, or rather, the attacker closes the gap for him. Reactionary and late to checks, but he works hard -- it's scanning and processing that limits him. Shockingly weak athletic posture, too. Perhaps not an exciting prospect, but his potential is obvious as a puck-mover. Maybe bottom-pairing with significant defensive improvement.

Daniel Gee: May 22nd, 2021 - Minnesota Wilderness vs Bismarck Bobcats - NAHL

Limited minutes in the first two minutes against the Wilderness but this was a less-than-flattering game.

While Palodichuk's skating is translatable in every sense, his defensive habits present in USHS viewings lead to issues at the NAHL level. On multiple shifts, especially late in the third period, he let changes in speed disrupt his gap and static feet leaving him in vulnerable, outreached positions. On consecutive sequences he read the inside slip pass, but failed to get his stick down to fully block the inside passing lane. Like in previous viewings, Palodichuk is essentially reading the developing play, but failing to execute, with one of the rushes leading to a mini breakaway. On other transitional defending sequences, probed heavily with his stick, which made it difficult for him to poke pucks free (when he is completely stretched out and reaching). Palodichuk did guide quite a few entries wide, but better puck handles can exploit the gapping. He basically incorporated no physicality in these transitional plays. Under sustained pressure, Palodichuk was anchored to the net, consistently boxing out attackers, leveraging their sticks from below, and battling to interfere with their positioning. He's so willing to occupy shooting lanes when the puck is cycled high -- sometimes screening his goaltender to some extent. Palodichuk is very easily magnetized to the puck carrier when he's activated off the net; to the point where he starts to activate into blocking stances or move out of lanes while puck-watching -- this is something that happened at the USHS level too. He doesn't really leverage his plus-lateral mobility as much as he should; there was one play in the third where he was able to dash to the near boards, beating out everyone on the retrieval. Essentially his battle level is high, and mobility can be an asset, but his decision-making defensively has me questioning his sense.

Offensively he was quite limited. His most notable sequences included a transitional opportunity in which he activated on the rush, through the Wilderness' slot, taking a pass, extending his reach to protect the puck and firing a sharp angle shot off the left-hand circle at some daylight on the short side. Transitionally Palodichuk was strong in limited minutes. He one-touched a pass right up the middle of the neutral zone and really stretched some of his exit passes out.

Pretty intriguing player who obviously has some improvements that need to be worked out on the defensive end of the puck.

Daniel Gee: March 9th, 2021 - St. Thomas Academy vs Hill-Murray - USHS MN

Palodichuk was slotted in as Hill-Murray's number one defender and played in essentially every situation. Palodichuk's game was solid, but was not without some mistakes, particularly when it comes to some defensive mishaps and offensive habits.

Defensively, Palodichuk presented as a defender who is able to leverage his plus four-way mobility to explode laterally, while also maneuvering extremely well backwards. Through crossover heavy drives, Palodichuk was able to regularly pivot and react to net driving defenders who changed their pace as they attacked through the dotted-lines, -- his ability to close space was a real asset. On multiple occasions, Palodichuk did extremely well at locking down sticks in his crease on St. Thomas transitional attacks, limiting the effectiveness of slot-oriented passes arriving from the perimeter of the ice. The biggest issue with Palodichuk in this game was an element of inconsistency that existed. While defending against puck carriers, Palodichuk was occasionally far too crossover heavy, making him susceptible to chase attackers after they made sharp cuts to disrupt his gap. What's strange is that this habit wasn't present on most shifts -- he had many sequences where he gaped up using his mobility, keeping his feet steadied. Another inconsistency in his game was processing; I felt in some situations, Palodichuk recognized the developing plays far sooner than most players on the ice. Two plays come to mind; the first was a diving neutral zone block that prevented a breakaway (opposing player sneaked behind coverage). The second, (which is actually a couple of similar plays) were sequences of sustained-defending plays where he read the cross-crease pass and blocked the attempts. He also had a fair amount of defensive mishaps; one in particular was a failure to recognize the heavy pressure being applied to his partner on the far boards -- Palodichuk floated further to the near boards, failing to defend the slot or recognize the present danger of the situation -- it led to a turnover and a goal against. He also made a very questionable activation in third while penalty killing; he swung aggressively from the front of the net to the puck carrier on the left of the crease, leaving the crease open, allowing for an easy one-timed goal.

Offensively, Palodichuk was a difference maker, scoring a goal and an assist. His shot mechanics worried me in the first half of the game. He often activated his one-time shot too early, which didn't allow full range of motion (he had to reach). He also lacked

weight transfer, had his arms tucked, and his follow-through was stunted. As the game progressed, his mechanics improved somewhat. On his goal, he made a great large-ice drive to deke through two neutral zone defenders – after multiple rotations he connected on a one-timed pass, getting his arms in front of his body, dropping to one knee to beat the goalie five-hole. Later in the third, his primary assist sequence started with a defensive stop and a board-out pass – he followed as the trailer, releasing a shot from the high slot - his rebound was put in. His arms were out front, he was balanced, and he transferred power through one leg. Palodichuk had some questionable habits offensively. He struggles with pass precision as pressure mounts and takes inefficient shots– I need to see more games to evaluate that further. Manipulation off the point was limited, but his movement and activations were dynamic and he found open space. I think his skating is translatable but other factors like his hands (which created a lot of turnovers from failed dekes) and factors of inconsistency need to be worked out to blend better.

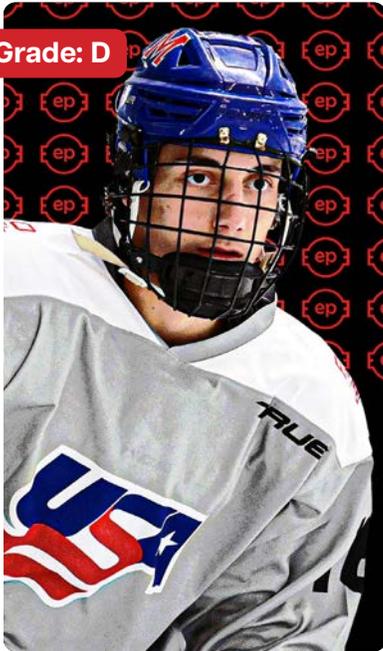
Daniel Gee: January 30th, 2021 - Hill-Murray vs Edina High - USHS-MN

Three assist effort for Palodichuk against Edina High. This game presented a fairly positive reflection of his passing ability but there are still question marks about defensive zone decision making.

Palodichuk was supremely inconsistent defensively in this game, particularly with his use of aggression. Palodichuk typically tried to push pressure on transitional puck carriers, especially if they entered on the perimeter of his defensive zone, often overextending to incorporate his stick or body to create resistance. In a couple of sequences, passiveness plagued him; at the end of the second, his gap got out of control, and he collapsed deep into his zone, resulting in a block. (outreached stick and everything). Under sustained pressure Palodichuk was equally aggressive and inconsistent. He often bit hard on shot attempts, flinging his body in the way of pucks, even going as far as laying down to stretch out and stop a cross-crease pass. At the end of the second, one shift defined Palodichuk's habit of biting too early. While defending a sustained pressure, he left his check on the net front to aggressively pressure and attempt to block a shot on the left-hand circle, effectively allowing a quick inside pass to the crease and a jam play. While this decision-making did lead to some monstrous blocks throughout this game, it's shocking how he essentially bites on the first read he makes (because he is somewhat proactive in his processing). He constantly pushes overloads -- I think because it works to create turnovers at the HS level. In isolation, Palodichuk was fairly physical on retrievals and battles below the goal line -- there were a couple of interference checks that stood out, to the point where he was starting stuff after the whistle -- generally great battle level. His retrievals are pretty basic; he absorbs pressure and executes rings rather than manipulate forecheckers with cutbacks and manipulations.

Transitionally, this was a much more positive game than my previous viewings. He had some really nifty outlets cross-crease to create quick transitional attacks. He slipped the puck past forecheckers, facilitated off his backhand into open spaces, and had an incredible one-touch outlet in this game. His carry attempts were limited but he showed some large-ice manoeuvrability, particularly on his weight shifts. He's a plus-skater and his crossover weaves create a lot of deception. While exerting sustained pressure he recorded two assists, but this was a relatively weaker area of his game if we are talking about translatable skills. His shot is way below average, even at the high school level. In particular, he doesn't leverage his body over his release, and executes one-timers much too early -- his shots have arcs to them. In the third, one of these shots was tipped in at the crease. He activated often, moving deeper to add options to his half-board teammate to pass to -- his edge work is so dynamic that he has the maneuverability -- it just didn't result in the impact I would have thought. He's an active pincher as well. I think he gets drafted this year; his skating is a great base to build off and the decision-making in transition can be corrected with coaching as he progresses. He needs to improve his shooting mechanics though.

Grade: D



Christopher Pelosi

AGE 17.529 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Janesville Jets	NAHL	24	10	7	17	0.71
Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	43	13	6	19	0.44

SCOUTING REPORT

After a hot start in the NAHL, Christopher Pelosi got the chance to move up to the USHL. He quickly earned a top-six centre role and never looked back.

Pelosi is a nightmare around the net, combining shooting skill, hand-eye coordination, and overwhelming physicality. He wins body positioning to free his stick for chances as defenders desperately reach in. Even when there's a defender in his face or he's off-balance, he still gets the shot off. And somehow, he's always the first guy to the loose puck or to apply pressure on the backcheck.

There's more to Pelosi's game than just net-front presence. He has the patterns and ideas of a skilled forward, including weaving rushes to move defenders, deceptive passes to the inside, and a desire to beat opponents 1-on-1.

Right now, those ideas usually remain exactly that. He makes the ensuing move before fully deceiving the defender, overuses his hands, and hurries his passes. These aren't uncommon issues. There's always the chance that these are the product of adapting to the USHL and playing on the league's third-worst offence.

While the production wasn't there, Pelosi would make for a fine mid-to-late round selection. He has skills of those hard-nosed, gritty lower-lineup forwards that always receive extra shine in the postseason.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 15th, 2023 - Omaha Lancers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Pelosi was a menace around the net. He gets inside positioning on opponents, constantly battling with his stick and full body. He grabbed a couple of chances by winning the battle, and then once while falling. Recovered the loose puck on that last play, then passed inside for a chance. Two-touch shooting skill, even under pressure. He'd benefit from detaching the net-front defender more. A solid defender, too. Elsewhere, he's far less refined. He has the patterns of a skilled player, but not the execution. He looks for passing options and tries to deceive, but the timing's off and play selection's poor. He has a couple of paths to the NHL: (1) leaning heavier on the hard skill stuff and making it as a depth piece, or (2) developing his reads and play selection to become more of

an NHL regular, hard skill forward. Either way, he should get picked. Would be a decent mid-to-late rounder.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Pelosi's like an extra defender out there. He's really proactive on the backtrack. He backs out of the zone early, gets above the puck, and angles attacks wide. Shows a similar attention to detail in the defensive zone. With the puck, it's just flashes. He makes the occasional play off the boards in transition and skates his off-puck routes. Dropped a puck back after skating into a defender, creating a chance. Weaving rush patterns. Maybe a late-rounder.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

This was a pretty good game for Pelosi, though I don't think any one part of his game stood out as elite or NHL projectable. Just a good sense of where to be, when to be there, and a willingness to engage opponents physically. I'm not sure that his skill level is suited to the first line, but Pelosi made a few good plays with Sam Harris. Certainly, he didn't seem that out of place. The best tool in Pelosi's kit is his passing skill. He connected with Harris on the rush a few times, often sending saucer passes through bodies and sticks. There was a pretty crafty bank pass through numbers that caught my attention, too. I don't know about Pelosi's feel for the game though. He can connect with his linemates well enough when the play is directly in front of him, but there isn't really any play-building or a give-and-go game or a delay game or anything all that advanced there. Like I said, passing skill, not instincts. I'm sure that Pelosi will have a good college career, maybe even show enough to be an NCAA free agent, but I'm not sure there's enough there for our board.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

A quiet game from Pelosi. He set up a goal late and grabbed a couple of break ups in the defensive end. He cuts off the top without overcommitting and overwhelms opponents with pressure. Puck touches were just basic reads. He advanced the puck, but never improved the never touch save for his assist. Didn't look like a pick.

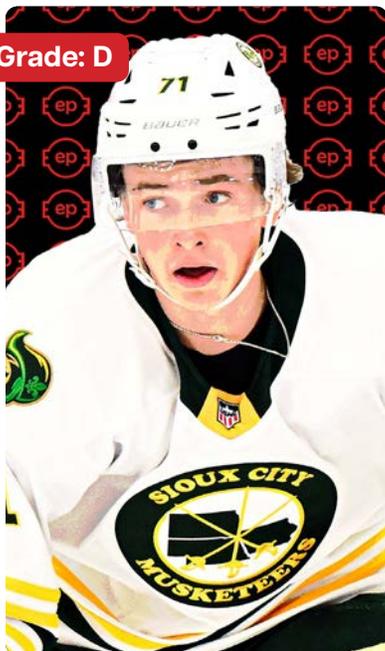
Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A standout game from Pelosi. He scored twice, once with a tap in after rushing the net off the draw and once with a quick deke in-tight off a rebound. Where many players default to the net front, he stays in motion, sneaks to the far post, and tries to get positioning on opponents. Also showed some playmaking and open-ice skill. He passed through an opponent for a chance, sent a perfectly-timed cross-slot pass on a 2-on-1, and sent a nasty backhand pass to no one in particular. The latter could be a theme here – some of his passes lacked a purpose. Crossovers-heavy rushes and always attacked opponents at angles. And he grabbed stops on the defensive end through his energy and anticipation. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Madison Capitols vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

There are a lot of projectable habits in Pelosi's game. He's a proactive backtracker and generally well-positioned in the defensive zone. Where many players stride forward with the puck, he uses crossovers. He passes to the slot instead of continuing the cycle, makes the extra pass, and tries to connect with teammates as they drive the net. He's also a physical and aware net-front presence – grabbed a deflection in front after clearing the opponents crease. So, he has the patterns, but the reads were suspect. He's inaccurate, doesn't use the space defenders give him, and lacks timing on his plays (usually too early). Not the prettiest skater (wide, lacks a bit of flexion) but he has some jump. He could be a pick.

Grade: D



Benjamin Poitras

AGE 17.162

DATE OF BIRTH Jul 18, 2005

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	61	14	23	37	0.61

SCOUTING REPORT

With COVID-19 leading to the cancellation of the GTHL's 2020-21 season, some prospects took their games south. Ben Poitras was among them, but unlike others, he stuck around.

It turned out to be the right call, since earning a commitment to Northeastern, a successful USHL rookie season, and the No. 80 rank among North American skaters in NHL Central Scouting's ranking.

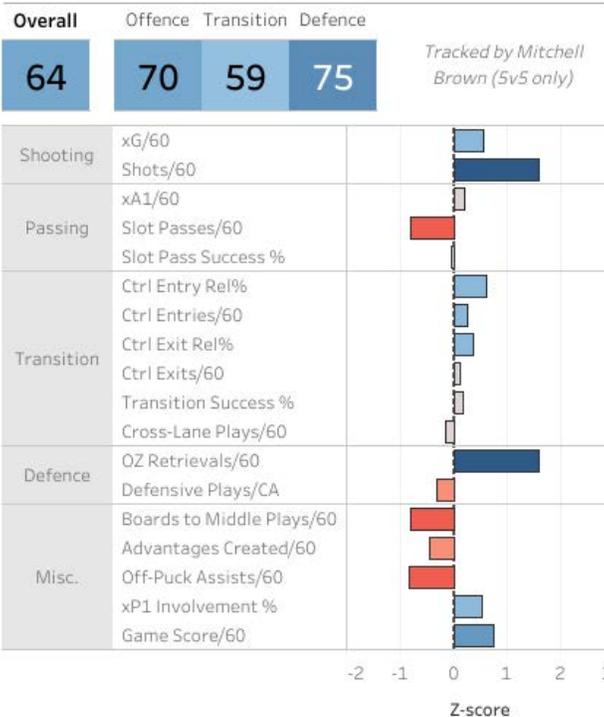
Poitras begins every shift as if he was shot from a cannon. He zips around the ice, charging at opponents to force turnovers and engaging in every puck battle around. Once the puck arrives on his stick, he's a shooter. He loads up over his outside leg, pulling the puck in towards his feet, launching the puck towards the net and around defenders. Always positioned between defenders, he gives himself space to shoot, but his one-timer and two-touch release mean he doesn't need much.

The shoot-first mentality comes with trade-offs, as Poitras often settles for low-percentage looks. It's not for a lack of skill, however. He has passing skill and flashes of creativity to hit teammates when pressured. Scanning more often and involving his teammates on the rush will be key for his development.

With the forechecking and shooting, Poitras has NHL potential. But it will be tough to use those skills with improvements as a passer. If he does it, he could become an effective depth piece.

Ben Poitras

F | Sioux City Musketeers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 87.7



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A bit of everything from Poitras, but nothing that suggested an NHL player. He worked hard on the backcheck to get above the puck. Threw a couple of hits to win possession. Got open around the top of the slot, stick ready to shoot off the pass. Cutback when space ran out and looked through the defender for teammates. Didn't show much skill. Rarely made a clean play, he didn't get open in the slot, and didn't show any playmaking. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Poitras showed in-zone vision on one shift, making a pair of plays under pressure to a teammate arriving in space. That's the type of stuff he'll have to lean on heavier moving forward. Even in this game, he's far too happy to skate straight down the boards into pressure (turnover) and shoot from the outside (also a turnover). The shot's an NHL projection, but that's the only NHL tool I see. He's an energetic forechecker, so perhaps there's a future for him in a checking role.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

A busy game from Poitras, throwing a bunch of pucks on net and bringing his usual forechecking game. He's a high-pace, physical forechecker that forces turnovers with direct routes and occasional angling. The outside leg wrister is clearly an NHL tool, but he overuses it. Doesn't let plays develop before firing and doesn't create space for his shot. When he tries to deke, his attempts fail because he doesn't try to manipulate the defender first. He could be a checker in the pros.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Poitras has an NHL-calibre wrist shot off his outside leg. He really digs front foot in and elevates the top arm. It's a great base to add more shooting skills and variations. He has a bunch of individual components. He flashes some hands, off-puck awareness to get behind defenders, forechecking, and physicality. But it's rarely sequenced. He doesn't scan before advancing the puck, leading to blind plays and turnovers. Touches are few for him as a result. If he had a bit more vision or play-building skill, he'd have a shot. Otherwise, don't see many NHL outcomes for him.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

A quiet game from Poitras, especially compared to yesterday's. He mostly chipped pucks in, recovered loose pucks, anticipated passes, and threw pucks into the slot. The passing decisions were good, but his timing and accuracy were off. Scored with an outside leg wrister into the top corner, stepping into space on the powerplay. A clean release and likely an NHL shot. Not much to go on. Still lots of season left.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A stand out game from Poitras, the best forward on either team. He showed a diverse offensive skill set. He fired off tricky one-timers and two-touch wristers for chances. Skated his off-puck routes and fought off opponents to keep his stick free (used his feet to fend off a stick on his goal). Attacked with pace, but also knew when to cut back and find a better option. Made the early pass on a 2-on-1 for an assist. Not a manipulator in this game, but he reads takes and takes advantage. And he was a weapon on the forecheck. He forced turnovers by eliminating options, intercepted passes, and ripped pucks off opponents. He's worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Poitras had a couple of flashes. He connected with a cross-ice pass under pressure to set up a breakaway. Also showed a give-and-go game and off-puck instincts to get open around the net. Puck never arrived, but he looked like a player who could score this season. Plays with pace, uses his teammates in transition. Settles for low-percentage shots, but it could've just been the game. Curious to watch more.



Grade: D

Ben Robertson

AGE 17.992 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 18, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info		Player Grades		
D	Left	4	4.5	5.5
Position	Shoots	Skating	Shooting	Passing
5'10"	183 lbs	4.5	5	4.5
Height	Weight	Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks "A"	USHL	61	3	42	45	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

On a blue line that featured several notable prospects including a first-round pick, it was Ben Robertson who led the way in scoring. At even strength, he was the USHL's most productive blueliner, recording 29 points and 0.48 points per game.

A patient, shifty playmaker, Robertson uses heel-to-heel skating, hesitation moves, and deception to create. He slows down, draws pressure, then passes throughout or dekes around it.

When opponents attack him with speed, he reads their momentum, fakes, and slips out the back door. Between those skills, the one-touch feeds, and non-stop activation, the game flows through him for shifts at a time.

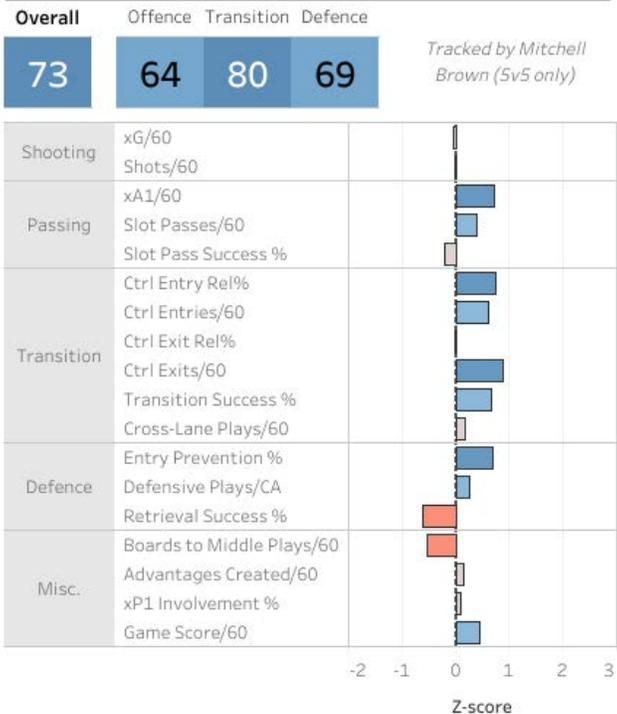
Throughout the season, Robertson's gap control and breakouts consistently improved, but work remains. He loses too much speed through his pivots, leading to issues defending. He struggles with pucks on the end boards, largely because he lacks pace and outside edge manoeuvres. Improving his skating will also help him absorb contact.

Given the limitations, Robertson's more of a late-round-type than the top-three rounds prospect the flashes and production suggests. Alongside the skating, Robertson needs to manipulate opponents more often.

He has an NHL mind; intelligence often finds a way. Perhaps he could become a bottom-pairing playmaker after a few years at Cornell.

Ben Robertson

D | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 116.9



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Robertson has exciting flashes, but the baseline is low. In this game, he set up a defender at an angle, toe-dragged around them, and fired. Later, he activated up the weak side for a scoring chance. He shows some first-touch vision, passing immediately as his teammates rush the slot. But he's also forechecked into poor plays without much difficulty. Doesn't use his outside edges. Even when turning, he only uses his inside edges. He struggles to separate. And there's not much defensive value in this game right now. Didn't look like a pick, but the flashes are intriguing.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Robertson's game is easy to appreciate. He reads and exploits opponents' momentum constantly. They turn their feet, he instantly recognizes and moves in the opposite direction. He lets plays develop before moving the puck. A couple of examples: a heel-to-heel into a punch turn before passing up the boards and a delay off the rush before connecting with the saucer pass through layers. There's some defensive ability here, too. He pokes away pucks at the point of least resistance and checks opponents just as they reach for the puck. He's clever. It allows him to get stops despite often being at a skating and physicality disadvantage. And those were the issues in this game. He struggles to maintain momentum through his pivots, doesn't have the depth (shin angle) to explode off his edges, and doesn't create the lanes that he relies on to make plays. Without high-level plays – manipulation, for example – his NHL odds seem slim. But the chance that he develops new ways to beat pressure could make him worth including on our board late.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Robertson set up the overtime winner with a quick pass but this was a quiet game overall. The skating's an issue. His feet fly everywhere. Lacks depth, consistency, and outside edge manoeuvres. The skating also makes him vulnerable off the rush. He steps up on opponents, but struggles to maintain speed through pivots. Panics under pressure and throws pucks to the other team. A couple of advantage-creating passes on the breakout showed some skill, but that was about it.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Robertson grabbed an assist by shooting for a deflection. He mostly made simple plays – point shots and forward passes in transition. The skating was a weakness. He lacked depth, dropping his chest as his hips elevated. Once, he overskated and nearly got beat up the middle. Not much of note in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

This game marked a step up in, well, everything for Robertson. He killed plays off the rush by getting on his opponent early. Some reaching, some chasing, but he showed play-killing instincts. Lots of transition touches, passing through opponents, using the middle, and delaying under pressure for options to open. A give-and-go entry led to a chance. Faked opponents shoulder shakes and look offs to create a couple of passing lanes. Both were impressive. For the best one, he read the defender going to the boards, stepped inside, then passed to the middle for a deflection. He's only an inside edge creator right now. All of his fakes, plays, and moves come off his inside edges, often with one leg off the ice. He's not a dynamic skater and only makes plays at low speeds. As such, the odds are against him with high-end manipulation ability or better breakouts, but he has a chance because of the intelligence.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Some stops off the rush from Robertson in an otherwise tough game. He tries to be evasive, but he only uses his inside edges. He fakes off his inside edges, then turns off his inside edges, and then accelerates off his inside edges. He can't really sell his feints, and even if he does, he can't separate from pressure. All the ideas are there, but perhaps the skating is just too limiting. Or maybe it's just these first few viewings. The defence was tighter and more proactive, too. Worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

This Robertson game was more like the September 25th viewing. The defence and breakouts were weaknesses, but the offence was solid. He struggles with faster moving attacks. He can't generate the power from his pivot to keep up and he's not a proactive off-puck defender. The breakouts are just simple plays with space and panicked plays without. But he shows real craftiness with the puck at the point. He moves pucks instantly, recognizing the option and delivering with precision. Set up a chance with a one-touch pass under pressure at 5-on-5, showing that it's not just a powerplay ability. He uses space. He wasn't deceptive in this game; he doesn't create lanes. But he gets every ounce of what's available. I'd pick him late. Think there's a chance that players like him and Lucas St. Louis find ways to leverage their intelligent into greater impact as the competition demands it.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A bit more from Robertson on breakouts. He found options cross-ice and connected, skating into the lane when necessary. But so many plays failed. They missed their target or were just poor decisions. Struggled with back pressure on retrievals, failing to secure body positioning. A couple of break ups off the rush showed play-killing potential, but he wasn't a factor in-zone. Late and reactive. The offence didn't appear in this game. Didn't look like a pick, but I'm still hanging onto that first viewing.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Some fun stuff from Robertson in this game, always looking to activate and create off the point. Turned a pinch into chance with a well-timed heel-to-heel as he worked into the slot, used a hesitation move to set up a shot when working laterally, faked a D-to-D pass before accelerating down the boards, and set up a scoring chance from the top. In those plays, he showed deception, awareness of opponents' momentum, vision, and some handling skill. They also highlighted mechanical concerns. He doesn't generate enough power, both in flight and from a stop, to separate from opponents at this level, even ones that he deceived. Not much value on values or defence. He's worth watching this season.



Grade: D

Jake Rozzi

AGE 18.636 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 27, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	61	18	29	47	0.77

SCOUTING REPORT

Jake Rozzi first caught our attention last season with his unique passing game, even though he found the scoresheet just 17 times in 55 games. This season, he found his scoring touch, and as such, it's time to highlight one of the USHL's most fascinating prospects.

Rozzi's one of the best quick-possession passers in the prospect sphere. He feathers pucks through tiny openings, backhand and forehand, with pressure and without – within a split-second of receiving the puck. If the lane isn't quite open, he fakes then passes. He bypasses board battles by finding a teammate working up the ice.

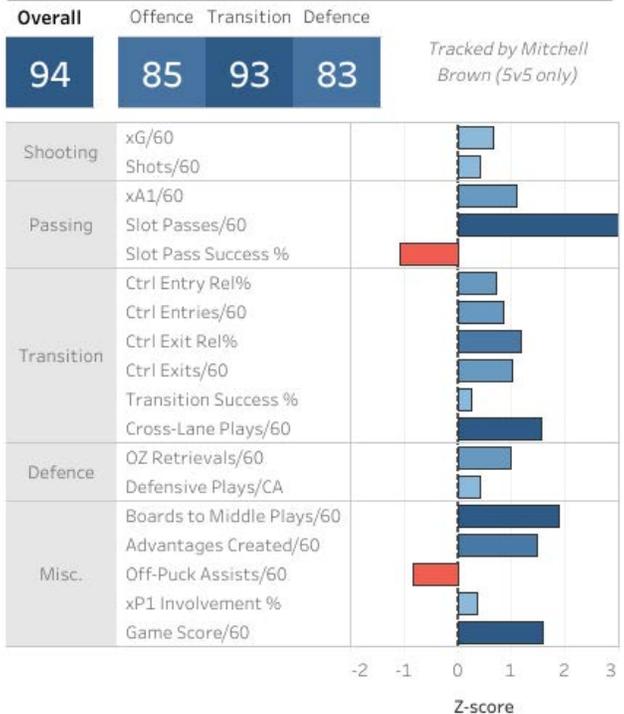
He makes these plays in all three zones, no matter the situation. At least once per game, he slices through the opposition with passes several times without holding the puck for more than a few seconds total.

While Rozzi's become a bit of a scoring threat and capable defender this season, the limitations in his game are numerous. He can't separate with his feet, struggles in battles, and doesn't show much handling skill unless it's to create a passing lane. Without more tools at his disposal, he's too dependent on his standout skill, leading to turnovers.

So, Rozzi isn't likely to get picked this year. But the uniqueness of his game makes him worth following in the future. Players with his intelligence have surprised before. Maybe he's next.

Jake Rozzi

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 115.0



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Another impressive game from Rozzi. He feathers pucks into lanes, even under pressure. Backhand off the boards and through sticks. Passes through pressure for entries and breakouts. One of the best short-possession passers I've seen this season. He also has smart set-ups to 1-on-1s, skating at an angle or just off-centre to bait the defender to crossover or reach in. Deceives opponents. But he's limited by his skating and hands. Wide base and lacks quickness. Even when he beat the defender, he lost control of pucks. A specialist but his passing's so notable that I think he becomes a big NCAA producer.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Rozzi showed a bit more puck-carrying ability in this game. He attacked the middle, deked through opponents, and faked players before passing. The star remains the quick-touch playmaking. Gets pucks off the boards to bypass battles. Fakes shots and then passes, highlighted by a really convincing one where he flexed his stick as he stared at the goalie. Some of his passes just missed, but better pass receptions would've turned them into chances. He could be an end-of-board candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Rozzi didn't get many shifts, but he remains a smart player. He delays and passes through pressure. Patient and aware of his options at all times. Not much of a shooting threat and he doesn't have much separation ability. Lacks quickness and physical skills. He could be a late-rounder, but more likely an NCAA free agent candidate in a couple of years.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Another standout game from Rozzi. This was a masterclass in quick-possession passes. Knows his options when the puck arrives on his stick. Sometimes, he passes immediately to the open teammate. Others, he delays just a split-second to wait for his target to skate their route. Deceives across the ice when given a bit of space, faking passes or looking off his eventual target. Creates high-value offence consistently. Gets open in scoring position between defenders. The issues are the mechanics. He struggles generating speed, but he's not as easily overmatched as Cerbone physically. Still, he requires an existing advantage to create, otherwise, his game falls apart. In the right situation, he should become a solid NCAA scorer and solid free agent candidate.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Rozzi's talented, despite the skating limitations. He's mostly a perimeter player at this stage, surveying the offensive zone from the outside, claiming open space, and setting up teammates. Give him a bit of space, and he's lethal. He deceives opponents and looks across the slot for options, just as he did for his assist. Take the space away, and his game becomes far more limited. He can't absorb contact and he rushes his plays. Intelligent forechecker (angles, times) and gets open between defenders. He could become a solid free agent option in a couple of years.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Rozzi stole possession, passed into the slot for chance, then popped around the net for the putback. Scored with a deflection on the powerplay in the third period. Didn't show much creativity, but he spotted teammates in scoring position and connected. Got open in space and moved after passing. Made plays through opponents. A bit straight-line and lacking pace in transition. Should be a pro.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Rozzi's ideas were sound. He looked to the slot for teammates instead of trying to burst through players himself, but most attempts failed. Didn't really adapt to lanes, but his teammates didn't do him many favours either. A solid defensive game, however. He closed out to grab a few stops and even proactively swooped down low to support the play. Didn't see draftable

skill in this game, but he looked like a potential NCAA free agent candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

An impressive game from re-entry Rozzi. He scored a rebound chance, set up by his off-puck sprint to the slot from the corner, skating in front of the defender and keeping his stick free. The passing was just as impressive. He found options before the puck arrived, instantly connected. Passed through opponents in all three zones. Proactive defence. Looks poised for a big season.

Mitchell Brown: April 16th, 2022 - Omaha Lancers vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

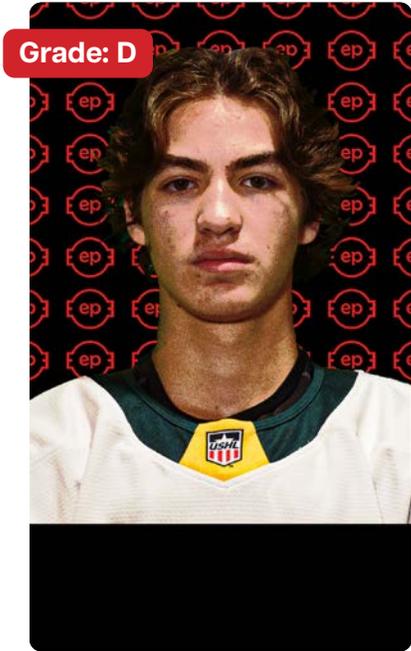
Rozzi was a factor all game long. He set up middle-lane entries with quick passes off the boards, once leading to a chance. Attacked the middle himself and passed cross-slot off the backhand. He times his passes just as his teammate arrives – but he's never too late. The skating's limiting, with a high stance and a lack of quickness. Opponents overcome space on him. He doesn't create space for his shot and doesn't create lanes. But he reads plays quickly. Should become a big USHL scorer, but the lack of mechanical ability likely means he goes unpicked this year.

Mitchell Brown: November 20th, 2021 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Another solid game from Rozzi, grabbing a primary assist with a backhand pass from behind the net. Timed the pass perfectly. Instead of passing immediately, he waited a split-second for the defender to chase as his teammate arrived into the slot. Some off-puck instincts shown, too. At this stage, the mechanics – skating, handling, shooting – seem too limiting to justify a pick. He's also only playing a depth role. I'd like to see him in a bigger role.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Few minutes for Rozzi but he created offence. Turned a steal into a chance by walking off the boards and beating the defenders into the lane, rather than forcing a pass through. A quick delay from the corner allowed his teammate to walk into the slot, then he connected for a chance. Limited by his skating and hands. Doesn't show much in motion skill. But he clearly has playmaking ability.



Grade: D

Kaden Shahan

AGE 17.312 DATE OF BIRTH May 24, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	55	20	11	31	0.56

SCOUTING REPORT

Kaden Shahan first appeared on the radar at September's USHL Fall Classic; his energy and work rate caught the eye of Elite Prospects USHL scout Joey Padmanabhan. As the season wore on, Shahan steadily improved, convincing us of his NHL upside.

A one-man play-killing machine, Shahan combines a bottomless motor with anticipation. He steps into opponents to win possession, angles opponents into support when possible, and jumps into passing lanes for interceptions.

In the offensive zone, he collects loose puck after loose puck, then instantly turns, fires or sets up a chance.

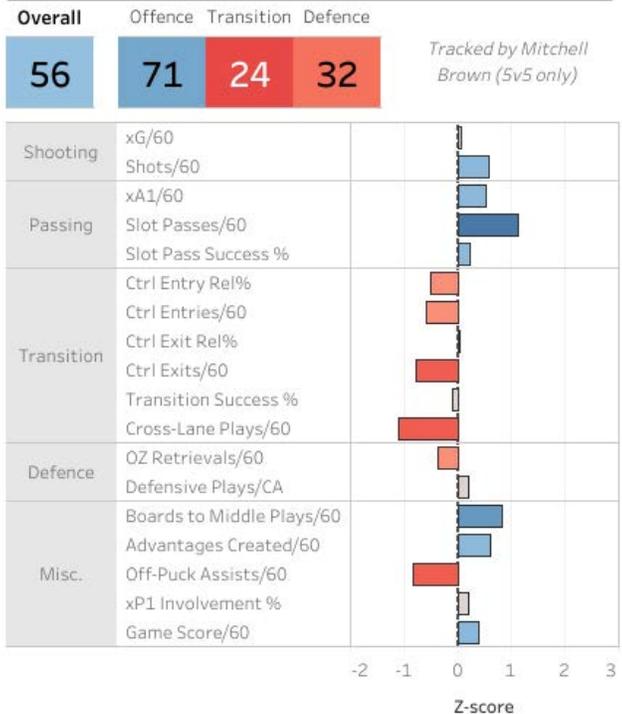
Throughout the season, Shahan showed more nuance to his puck game with occasional passes through pressure, a give-and-go style in transition, and non-stop inside drives after beating opponents.

While the lack of puck skills and creativity remained concerns, those are the skills necessary to play his high-pace checking game in the NHL.

By leaning heavier on the quick, but advantage-creating touches, Shahan could earn a checking role in the NHL. Shahan is committed to UConn, a school with a lengthy track record of turning players in Shahan's archetype into valuable professional players.

Kaden Shahan

F | Sioux City Musketeers | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 81.8



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances from the 2022 USHL Fall Classic

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A solid game from Shahan. He showed a bit of nuance to his puck game. Set up a game by keeping the defender's stick out of the passing lane with a quick series of handles down the board. He cut inside off the boards. Showed a bit of a delay game to invert pressure and wait for support. Defensively sound with a high motor. Instant threat recognition allowed him to get to the jump on a couple of players for stops. He's a bit limited in terms of handling. Doesn't scan enough and only handled while gliding. He could be a late-rounder. Lots of improvement here.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

This was a different game from Shahan. More controlled, more aware, but the same high-pace, energetic game. He set-up a chance with a backhand pass off the boards. And more impressively, he showed a give-and-go game. Involved his teammates in his rushes, beating opponents and allowing him to fire off a chance. Tied the game with a one-timer. Maybe he's a pick after all.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Shahan's easy to appreciate. The motor's always there. It allows him to single-handedly extend offensive zone time, going from retrieval to support to net-front at the right times. One steal directly led to a rebound chance for him. And he makes the quick pass off the end boards in front. But there's not much creativity or diversity to his game. He's glued to the outside because his game is just charge straight ahead. He doesn't read space or use his teammates effectively off the rush. A simple give-and-go would improve his effectiveness. Not a pick, but he's a solid player with a chance to surprise in the future.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Shahan's a really impressive worker. Non-stop. Feet always moving. He's physical, but doesn't chase. Gets above players, skates through their hands. It's easy to project him to the professional level as a result. He should become an AHLer. More? That's harder. I don't see much handling, vision, or shooting skill. Gets stuck on the perimeter often with straight-line, single-speed carries. Don't see a pick here, but he's worth a couple of more looks down the stretch.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

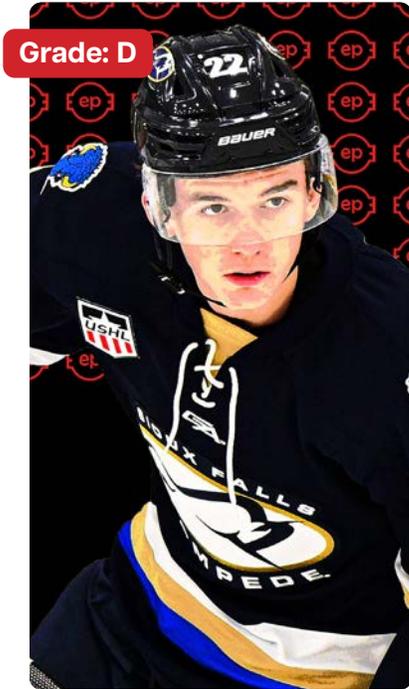
Shahan grabbed an assist with a cross-slot pass. Wasn't a tricky pass, but a smart read to support the battle then circle high. Really aggressive with the puck along the boards. He drove the inside instantly, whether he was pulling pucks out of the battle or receiving a pass. Not a ton of creativity or skill shown, but his assertiveness drew a penalty. The tools are average to below it, including his shot, skating, and handling. Plays too fast with possession and forces shots. Interesting player; the type of prospect that usually improves a lot throughout the season.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Shahan was on the ice for a ton of offence in this game, and was involved in most of it. Five shots and five shot assists speaks to that. Generated a lot of his offence by provided short support off the rush. Set up a deflection with a quick pass to the middle. Fired off a couple of scoring chances. Mechanics are awkward. He fumbles pucks and receptions; doesn't show much in motion or backhand skill. Shot lacks power and a notable weight transfer. Plays a bit too fast and he's very straight-line/single-speed with the puck. A bit of physicality to his game. Doesn't look like a pick, but he should become a solid NCAA scorer.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Shahan missed the entire third period, but he was solid this game. His work on the penalty kill in the late-first/early-second stood out. Applied non-stop pressure and outrace opponents. He's a hard-worker overall. He plays a determined, high-pace defensive game, creating turnovers and forcing poor plays. With the puck, he didn't show much. He plays a straight-line, full-speed-ahead game that limits his options. Missed some of his passes and didn't show any deception or nuance. The skating's a bit wide and lacks refinement, but he sinks into a deep stride with powerful, driving recoveries that allow him to outrace opponents at this level. Worth keeping an eye on him.



Zack Sharp

AGE 17.466 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'1" Height	174 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	4 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	37	4	2	6	0.16
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	20	1	5	6	0.30

SCOUTING REPORT

After an impressive Hlinka Gretzky Cup, Zack Sharp looked poised for a big USHL rookie season. Instead, he recorded just 14 points in 62 games split between two lower-table teams. But the lack of production wasn't for a lack of trying or even skill for that matter.

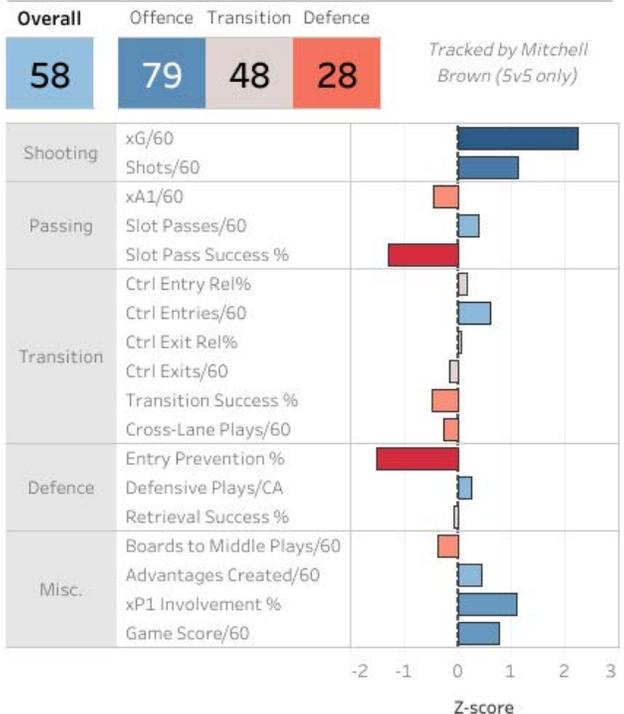
Sharp is an activator, never passing up an opportunity to join the play. He flies up the weak to become a lead pass option, sprints the middle to take a forward's role, and becomes the trailer. With the Sioux Falls Stampede, the activation primarily served his playmaking. With the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders, he leaned heavier towards shooting from those positions. In both situations, he draws pressure before moving the puck and generally chooses the right play.

The rest of Sharp's game is volatile. He has the deep stance, stick work, and physicality of better rush defenders, but lacks the gap control to kill plays in the neutral zone. Occasional deception appears, but he struggles to create lanes and space for himself. That's a problem on breakouts especially, where he usually passes into a battle or dumps the puck out with better options.

As such, Sharp's opportunities to use his skills are limited. But if he becomes more confident, playing a tighter, more aggressive style, the NHL won't be too far off. He heads to Western Michigan, where a full four-year career seems likely.

Zack Sharp

D | SF/CR | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 130.9



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

A frustrating game from Sharp. Did the activation stuff, earning a chance or two. He has a lot of translatable habits, whether that's going to where the puck's ahead on retrievals and establishing body positioning before touching the puck or resetting when side pressure arrives. But he doesn't do anything with those beneficial positions. He still passes into battles, throws away possession, and doesn't use the middle or the weak side. The activation game is definitely an NHL ability, but he won't be able to use it without improving his breakouts and decisions under pressure. Maybe a late-rounder, but he seems more like a re-entry candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

An impressive game from Zack Sharp, who activated constantly. He had three high-danger looks through his activation, all in different ways. Followed up a broken play for the first one, activated down the weak side in-zone for the second, and then forced an opponent high to create a before jumping into the rush for a 2-on-0. Transition touches are hit-and-miss, able to manipulate opponents and create lanes, but lacking the same skills under pressure and accuracy in all situations. Pivots are late and weak, but his in-zone defending – off-puck, pins, mirroring footwork – were strengths in this game. Still doesn't score at all. I'm still intrigued, but without better skating, consistent breakouts, and improved skill, his activation game won't be enough to make the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Sharp has a lot of individual components that suggest an NHL prospect. He makes an effort to fight through pressure on breakouts, cutting back or trying to pass through it. He activates consistently. He earns stops at the blue-line by protecting the middle before swooping across. But flashes of notable skill are few. Perhaps he's just one of those players who has the habits and intelligence, but the skill level comes up just short. He could flip the script on that by becoming even more patient and deceptive, finding ways to manipulate defenders to create favourable situations. He could be a late-rounder, but I suspect he's a re-entry candidate next year.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

First game with the new team for Sharp. Didn't activate much, but brought physicality and proactivity to the defensive zone. Breakouts are weak when there's a bit of pressure. He passes to teammates with more pressure than himself. Doesn't create advantages for himself or teammates under pressure. Evasive, but only uses the edges as a reaction to opponents. Didn't look like a prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Three times, Sharp jumped into the rush, got the puck, drew the defender, then passed into the slot. None connected, but he's looking for plays under pressure instead of defaulting to no-chance shots. A cutback will help him get more from those positions by allowing him to shake pressure and find the trailer. Similarly, his breakouts have to improve. He passed into puck battles constantly. There's no foresight to his breakout game. It limits his opportunities to get up in the rush. But he also flashes vision and ideas when further up the ice, like scanning before receiving a puck on the half wall and instantly passing cross-ice. Some defence shown in this game through late stops off the rush. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Yet another game where Sharp outplayed Strbak. Am I going crazy? Anyway, Sharp was heavily involved in the play. He jumped into the rush, anticipating space before his forwards and uses the weak side. Took control of the game with give-and-gos. Passed laterally to build the offence. Nearly created a couple of chances after passing to the slot. A bit of deception wouldn't have secured those lanes. A solid defensive performance, too. He has play-killing ability deeper in the zone after steadily eliminating

options. Given that he's flashed early play-killing ability before, I wonder if his passive gap is more of a skating limitation than reads. Even showed some in-motion ability, with a pass reception and wrister inside backwards crossovers. He could be a late-rounder, but more likely looks like a breakout candidate.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Another game where Sharp outplayed his more hyped teammate. Early on, he jumped into the rush and set up a chance. On breakouts, he looks to the middle and across the ice for outlets. Draws pressure. Now, he's not creating lanes or showing much deception, which means that more pressured situations lead to turnovers and simple plays. The defence is variable. Keeps a tight off-puck gap, enabling steals with the pass reception. But he backs off too easily when faced with the puck carrier. He closed space deeper in the zone with some success, but his skating leaves him vulnerable. He could be a late-rounder, if there's a bit more pace and technical prowess in his game than what I've seen in the USHL so far this season.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Sharp was one of the best players in this game. The offence is a bit frustrating; it's mostly point shots and he struggles to open lanes. But everything else was impressive. He closed the gap early, forced dump-ins, and grabbed stops deeper in the zone. The breakouts weren't advanced, but there were quick passes through forechecking pressure. Identified targets quickly. Retrievals were a constant issue for him, however. Threw pucks away and didn't use the deception that made him successful at the Hlinka. Maybe a late-rounder. Skating, particularly depth and doing stuff in motion, appeared more as weaknesses.

Mitchell Brown: September 30th, 2022 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

I'm expecting a lot from Sharp this year after the Hlinka, especially as a passer. He showed some legitimate skills. They didn't appear in this game. He passed too early, showing an inability to recognize options and draw pressure. Still has the habits: moving through pass receptions, deceiving on some touches, and passes in motion. Jumped into the rush a couple of times, once leading a shot. No notable skills to get inside, advance possession, or create a better look. Defence was passive and his skating's beatable. Lots of crossovers with limited push-off and a narrow base. Didn't see much upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sharp activated a bunch this game, joining the rush and moving in from the point. Scored off a rebound by proactively into space. Anticipates space, pinches at the right moments, and always presents his stick. Deked off the boards, showing handling skill and awareness. Made plays up the middle in transition.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sharp had numerous impressive plays in this game. Defensively, he gapped up early, stopped plays in the neutral zone, and communicated. Even when he was beat, he recovered. Deceptive on retrievals, using double cuts and shoulder fakes, although sometimes poorly timed. Several look off passes, spotting his teammate before skating into the lane while looking up the boards. Slick cross-slot pass from the point showed some playmaking, although he also fumbled pucks and missed activation opportunities. He's one of the most interesting prospects in this tournament so far. Great ideas, skilled, and some defensive value.

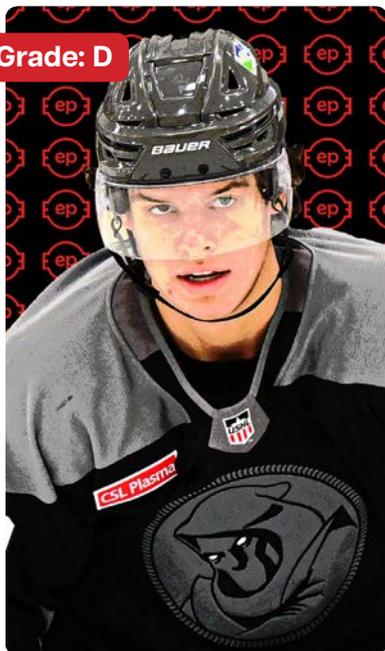
Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sharp started the game well but faded in the second and third periods. He's clearly best when activating. He finds space up the weak side, as the trailer, and blends his activation into gap control. When moving, he gets early stops, pushes attackers to the perimeter, and neutralizes off-puck threats. When he's passive, his game crumbles. Pressure deterred him from making puck plays, despite mechanically sound handling form and passing skill. Too early to judge, but that could be something to watch in the USHL.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Sharp had some moments in all three zones this game, but especially in the offensive end. He faked a shot before passing to the inside, slip pucks underneath sticks, and deked off the backhand to the middle. His best plays didn't amount to much, but the decision-making was sound. It's clear that he has offensive upside. Wasn't beat cleanly in transition, although he wasn't especially proactive about gapping up and killing plays early. Germany's forecheck wasn't firing in this game, so he didn't get much opportunity to show breakout skill. Worth keeping an eye on.

Grade: D



Brandon Svoboda

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	59	16	10	26	0.44

SCOUTING REPORT

On a loaded Youngstown Phantoms squad, Brandon Svoboda wasn't tasked with much offensive creation. But the highs were just as impressive as the bigger names around him, making him a solid candidate for mid-round pick.

The standard Svoboda games goes something along these lines: Battling around the net-front, getting open inside space, hard work on the forecheck, proactive defence, and one display of exciting passing display.

Some of the plays he pulls off are complex, passes that require vision, confidence, and manipulating the defender to create the lane. He also has a powerful outside leg wrister, narrowing his stance and putting his body weight behind the shot.

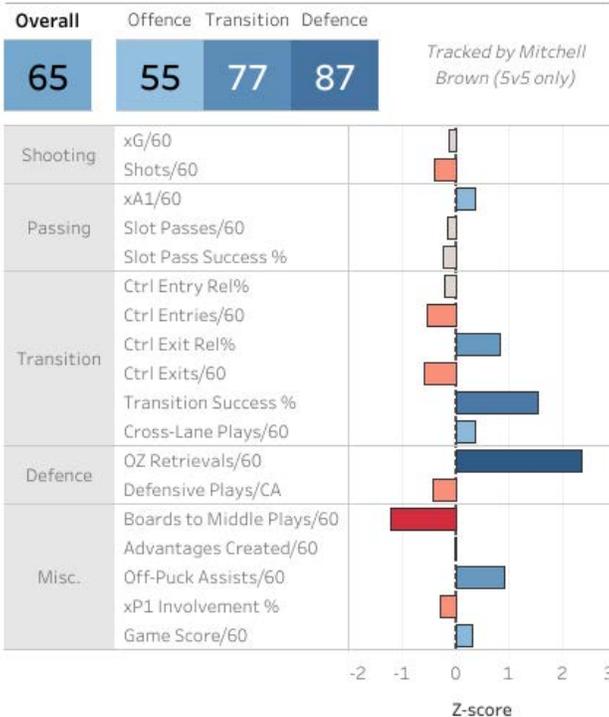
At this stage, it's hard to project Svoboda to the NHL. He's just so raw. He lacks puck protection ability, failing to win body positioning and keep defenders on his back.

Underdeveloped edges fail him when pressured. Decisions don't occur fast enough, he lacks quickness as a skater, and he's not especially adaptable.

Given that, Svoboda's a long-term projection. But with clear NHL abilities, perhaps a patient, development-focused team could nab a capable bottom-six forward.

Brandon Svoboda

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 116.2



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

A high activity game from Svoboda. The highlight was a nasty one-touch backhand pass into space – just a bit more on it, and it would've been a chance. He stole pucks on the forehand and attacked the middle. Rushed the net off-puck and fought off pressure for a chance. If he has a stronger physical game, he'd be productive at this level. Right now, he struggles to get inside positioning and passes opportunities to put defenders on his back. He's skilled with ideas, but not adaptable. He claims space, but misses better opportunities, like a pass into the slot. Missed a tap-in by not keeping his stick on the ice. Exciting flashes, but he has a long way to go before becoming a capable USHL scorer. He'd be a fine late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Svoboda continues to show puck skills and ideas. Ripped a clean outside leg wrister, hands in front, elbow up, locking out that bottom arm, and really driving his chest through the shot. He makes quick passes to teammates. Grabbed a rebound chance. He's late to space and the high-level playmaking flashes weren't there in this game. I think he takes off a bigger role.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Svoboda continues to show ideas, but he was inaccurate in this game. Rushed his plays and missed his passes. He's a reasonably proactive defensive player, but doesn't show any notable skill beyond the passing. Stride looks NHL-calibre with full knee bend and chest up, but he lacks edges and crossovers. Barely played in this game. Not sure he's a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

From an ideas perspective, Svoboda's exciting. He tries to manipulate opponents to create passing lanes and has the skill to connect through tiny openings. He goes back through his own body, uses the backhand, and slips pucks through lanes. The limitation is that everything takes too long. Pucks leave his stick too late and he's not an adaptable player. The forechecking's a plus and he found some separation with the skating. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Svoboda had a couple of smart reads along the walls to win battles, created space off-puck, and showed a bit of skill to set up teammates, but nothing exciting. The skating really lacked in this game, which was back-and-forth for lengthy stretches. He's upright when not inside his stride, lacking power and quickness for the level. A consistent presence on the backcheck, but without more flashes of skill, he won't be a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Svoboda had the best pass of the game. He stepped off the boards inside backwards crossovers, selling the shot to everybody on the ice, then slid a look-off slip pass cross-slot for a one-timer. That was one the best passes I've seen from a USHL prospect this season; the type that I'd love to see from Will Smith and Ryan Leonard. He was also a force on the forecheck and showed play-building skills with quick lateral outlets. The skating lacks, but that single pass will keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Svoboda grabbed a rebound chance, but his off-puck reads were more of a problem in this game. He stays next to opponents instead of pushing off into space. He lacks pace in his decisions off-puck and patience with it. The defence was a strength in this game, from his down-low support to angling on the backcheck. Skating looked like a bigger problem than in previous viewings, the crossovers especially. He could be a late-rounder.

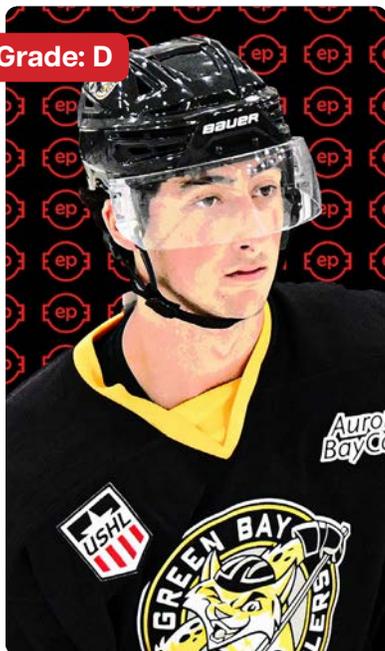
Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Svoboda wasn't quite as involved in transition as in the last viewing, but he showed a lot offensively. He passed through opponents, connecting with teammates around the slot. Got open inside space. Fired off passes. Deked through an opponent off the pass reception, drove the net, grabbed a chance – an impressive display. The shot could be a 5.5, with his hands in front, elbow up, and really driving through the shot. Looked like a mid-rounder in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Svoboda had a solid game in limited minutes. Scored with a sick backhand redirection as he moved through the slot. The stride's mostly there. He pushes his knees past his toes and achieves a full knee bend. The edges are unrefined and crossovers don't get much crossunder, but the base for NHL-calibre skating is there. Showed a bit of passing in open-ice in the offensive zone and along the boards on breakouts. He's worth following.

Grade: D



Nicholas Vantassel

AGE 18.411 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 18, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'4"	196 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	62	19	18	37	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Of the USHL's many re-entry talents, the 6-foot-4 Nicholas Vantassel might have the best hands of the group. In fact, he has some of the best hands in the USHL, period.

The towering winger uses his full reach to handle the puck, reaching out across his body before pulling the puck all the way across the other side to beat opponents. He beats goaltenders across the post, instantly pulls pucks from the boards to the post, and shows some finesse in-tight to capitalize on loose pucks and tricky passes.

The hands also feed into Vantassel's passing, able to access tricky lanes through and around opponents. It's also where the flaws start to appear. He lacks accuracy and timing on his passes, even when he's given space to operate. The skating stands out as an issue, lacking the depth, edges, and quickness to beat and fend off opponents.

While Vantassel's older for the draft, he's a long-term project. The hands are NHL-calibre, and his passing ideas aren't far off. But there's a lot of work to be done before he'll become an NCAA point producer. Still, he's worth a shot late in the draft.

Nicholas Vantassel

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 103.3



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The usual from Vantassel. He handles the puck fluidly, handling while reaching out away from his body or tight to it. When given

a bit of his space, he beats defenders. When not, he doesn't have the passing, puck protection, or skating to find separation or create space. He tries to get pucks off the boards instead of needlessly continuing the cycle. Disruptive defender, but reaches. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but I've seen better. He has

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

VanTassel is big and dekey. He dangled around traffic a couple of times, using his full reach and backhand to beat players. Grabbed a chance, but this was more of a passing game. He looked inside for options and flashed some advanced deliveries. The issue is the lack of set up. He skates down the boards until he gets pinched out. He passes to covered teammates. The puckhandling at his size will earn NHL attention, but until he learns how to get defenders on his back, get inside, and change pace, the hands won't provide an advantage. Could be a fine mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

One of Green Bay's several interesting re-entries, Vantassell showed the highest level of offensive feel. He spots teammates in the slot, hooks pucks through layers, leans into opponents before cutting back, and sneaks away from defenders into space at the right moments. His timing lacks as a passer and he's inaccurate at times, but a couple of his passes should've been received by his teammates. He's slow and lumbering, despite his almost sound stride form. A much weaker skater with the puck. A project pick. Late-rounder for a team. He has intelligence and skill, but there's a lot of work ahead to assemble.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A solid game from Vantassel. He showed some handling skill and off-puck instincts. Scored off a rebound, but should've had two more. He missed a tap-in, but followed up and jammed the puck back to the front of the net, showing off the hands tight. He's more of a passer, however. In transition, he looks to slow the game down, deceive opponents, and pass through/around them to moving teammates. The highlight was a forehand-backhand move around the opponent directly into the pass for a high-danger look. The combination of handling and vision will surely entice a team, even if skating is significantly below average.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Vantassel is big, plays lots, and works hard on the forecheck and backcheck. Heavily involved in the neutral zone, getting above the puck to push opponents wide and taking the extra stride to engage. Mechanically, he flashes a near-adequate stride with his knees past his toes, but he's very awkward at times, especially when accelerating. Some board skills and hands in-tight. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

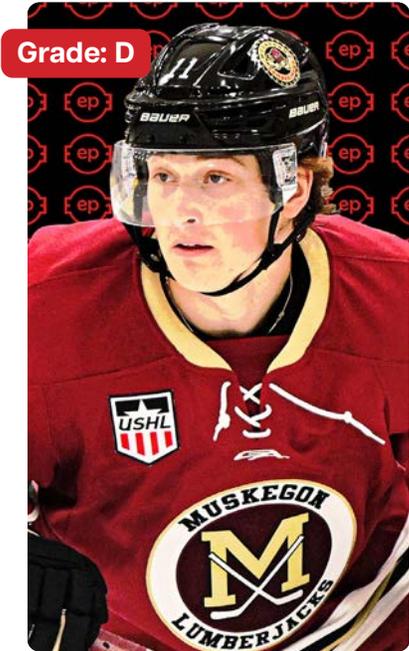
Vantassel scored by getting open on the weak side and rushing the net, showing a bit of handling skill in the process. He used a quick one-touch deke to beat an opponent on the pass reception, then walked down the middle for another chance. Powered through checks, then cut back. In one sequence, he used the cut back to find a teammate in the slot. Not much of a puck carrier at this stage, but he shows a bit of in-tight skill in those sequences. Perhaps it comes as his skating becomes more fluid and consistently deep. Looked like an interesting late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

For the most part, Vantassel just makes basic plays. He keeps the puck moving, low to high, high to low, but doesn't show much vision or skill. Except when he does. For an assist, he took a backhand pass along the boards and instantly cut inside. Lumbering but has flashes of a projectable stride, getting low and keeping his chest up. Drives the net, but relatively unaware of backpressure, leading to his best chance of the game being a contested shot on what should've been a clean break. Worth watching more, if not for only that assist.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

One play caught my eye: A rush where Vantassel, instead of shooting immediately, handled the puck and tried to go across the goaltender. It failed, but the rebound was put in. He showed some patience in the neutral zone; not delaying, but slowing the game down as he waited for support. Those were smart plays, because despite sinking into a relatively sound stride, he's a glide-only puck carrier. The lack of speed is concerning, but the edges could prove crippling. Doesn't use his outside edges at all. Maybe it's a one-off, but his success within this major limitation (skating) has me curious to watch more.



Grade: D

Ethan Whitcomb

AGE 18.342 DATE OF BIRTH May 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW Position	Left Shoots
6'4" Height	192 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5 Shooting	5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	53	24	24	48	0.91

SCOUTING REPORT

Among the USHL's many re-entry candidates, Ethan Whitcomb showcased the highest level of play creation and skill, albeit inconsistently. The 6-foot-4 winger brings a rare combination of finesse and power, waiting to be unlocked by better habits.

Whitcomb has many individual NHL components. He fluidly dekes through opponents upon receiving passes, and even manipulates their feet first. Inside-driven, he drives the net, but knows when to cut back or pass for a better look. He has the vision to spot teammates through layers and the creativity connect. And he's always looking to win body positioning on opponents.

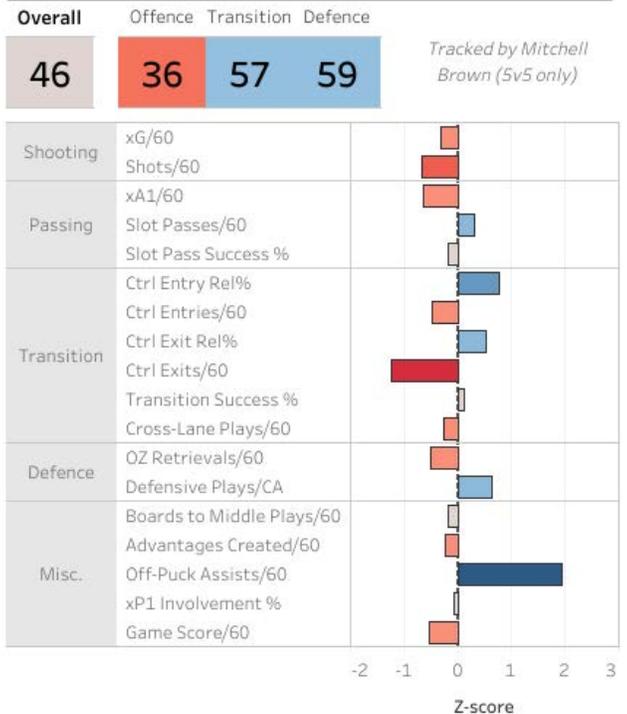
So, why isn't Whitcomb ranked? Skating and play selection. He's upright and on his heels, so even though he's agile off both his inside and outside edges, he struggles to find much separation.

While he manipulates opponents to create lanes and looks to set up teammates, he lacks timing, pace, and accuracy – not to mention consistency. He struggles to get open at times.

As such, Whitcomb will join the Nebraska-Omaha Mavericks next season as a skilled, but raw player. In time, he could become a top NCAA free agent. An NHL future seems far, but it's not out of reach. He certainly has the skill.

Ethan Whitcomb

F | Muskegon Lumberjacks | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 120.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Whitcomb continues to have exciting flashes. In one sequence, he made a pass off the boards for the breakout, passed to the slot for a chance, and then followed up the rebound for a goal. He has vision and the passing skill to access lanes. Puts defenders on his back, seals off pressure, and looks for teammates in better positioning than himself. But he lacks quickness and many of his ideas fail. Didn't show more advanced skills like deception or manipulation. Didn't look like a pick, but he's intriguing.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Whitcomb scored with a slick wrister inside crossovers, subtly changing the angle in the process. He has a lot of skill flashes, where it's that shot, the handling, or passing. But none of the manipulation, high-level reads that I saw earlier in the season. Instead, this was more of a quick-possession transition plays and defensive game. Most of his passes missed the mark and he couldn't solve defensive pressure with his hands. But he was disruptive on the backcheck, earning a couple of stops where many players would've coasted. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

It's just flashes from Whitcomb, even in wide-open games like these. He showed off some slick hands in-tight, dangling under a stick on the reception for a high-danger chance. Created a chance by faking on one way on the retrieval, drawing the defender up the boards, then passing back into that space for a walk-in chance. He's also physical and a hard-worker defensively. He doesn't give up on plays, skates his routes, and creates some havoc around the net. He has a few NHL skills; perhaps he's a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Whitcomb showed a lot of defence and physicality in this game. He stepped into opponents and backtracked without overcommitting. Grabbed a couple of steals along the walls before overcoming a deficit of space to intercept a cross-slot pass. The offence was more muted, but he showed ideas. He drew pressure to pass through. He stepped inside before cutting back. He deked around and through sticks and skates. Delayed for the trailer, cut inside off the rush, and masked his intentions with a look off. Few plays connected, but that's the USHL at this point. He'd benefit from making plays quicker (when he draws pressure, then often gets inside before the puck leaves his stick). The skating's a weakness with limited depth, power, and agility (although he tries). He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Whitcomb showed a lot of individual components, but didn't make an impact with them. He has skill – handling, shooting, passing, and skating. Achieved proper knee bend at the beginning of his shift, but that quickly fell apart. He supports plays, looks for contact, and tries to make skilled plays through opponents. They mostly failed. Lacked pace. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 4th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Another impressive game from Whitcomb. He lacks depth, but he has legitimate skating skill. He uses pivot turns and heel-to-heel skating (even returning that front leg back on his outside edge), punch turns and two-foot cuts. Backhand skill, both as a passer and handler, allow him to escape along the boards when opponents think they've closed space on him. He easily dangles around sticks, manipulating the opponent with the skating skill, before accelerating into space. He reads defenders, sometimes even multiple at once, which creates several scoring opportunities. If his teammates could receive a pass, he would've set up a few high-danger looks. Scoring instincts, too. He stays in space and then fires with two-touch wristers and one-timers. Along the boards, he wins positioning first, deceives opponents, and cuts inside as soon as possible. He has the full skill set, skating

development pending. Tough environment in Muskegon, too.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Whitcomb's a project, but an interesting one. He's lumbering and low-pace, but he tries more advanced stuff. He uses the heel-to-heel to change pace on defenders, cuts to the middle in transition while keeping both of his feet on the ice, and cuts back instead of rushing plays ahead. He has vision and awareness of his options, only limited by poor pass preparation (doesn't adapt to lanes). He spots teammates through layers and delays to manipulate opponents. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Some exciting flashes from Whitcomb. He has a full skill set, even if the tools lack. He manipulates incoming pressure with his hands and weight shifts. He fakes before cutting back, creating more space for his escape. Doesn't force rushes ahead, instead finding the trailer. Tries to deceive with his feet (double cuts and pivot turns). He has hands that keep up – when he's not forgetting about the puck entirely. Showed vision to spot teammates through defenders, but could get the puck through the defender. But that could just be a one-off – he successfully beat pressure with passes in the neutral zone. The skating's so upright, with limited push off power and stability. But he has lots of interesting qualities. Time to watch more.

Grade: D



Brayden Edwards

AGE 17.729 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 23, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	68	10	18	28	0.41

SCOUTING REPORT

Last season's trade from Winnipeg to Lethbridge gave Brayden Edwards his first opportunity inside a WHL's team top-nine. He thrived, scoring 0.65 points per game, the fourth-highest rate on the team.

Through 50 games this season, Edwards wasn't able to replicate that level of production, recording just 13 points in his first 50 games. But he found the production down the stretch, grabbing 19 points in 22 games, highlighted by a standout series against the Moose Jaw Warriors and a four-assist game against the Red Deer Rebels.

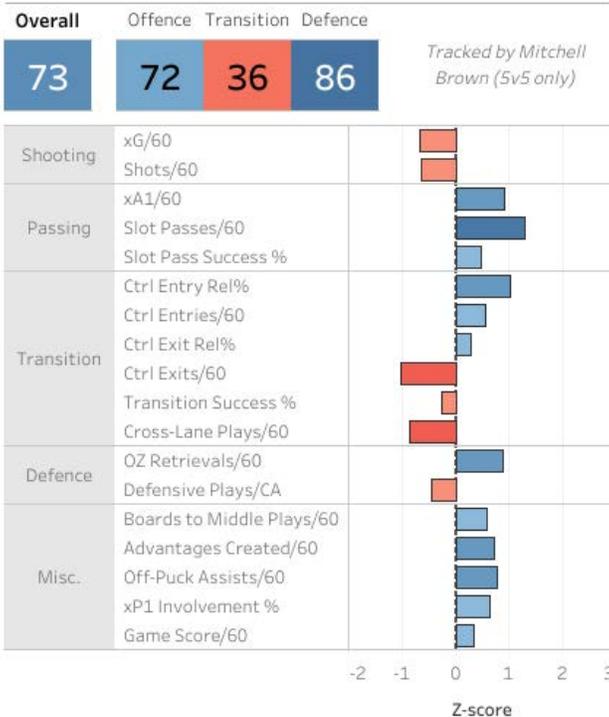
First and foremost, Edwards is a playmaker. He has an NHL-calibre arsenal of passes: slipping pucks under sticks, saucing them over, and hooking them around. Increasingly towards the end of the season, he started using deceptive setups to mask his intentions and scanning for options instead of passing based on assumptions.

Edwards is also a defensively-sound centre, eliminating threats, supporting battles, and shadowing top opponents in key situations. He offsets a lack of speed with proactive off-puck movement and keeping his possessions quick and controlled.

Given Edwards lack of production and dynamic skill, he's not likely to hear his name called this June, but his playmaking, defence, and growth suggests a prospect poised for a breakout 2023-24 season. Developing more physical skills – puck protection mechanics, vision under pressure – will help Edwards take the next step.

Brayden Edwards

F | Lethbridge Hurricanes | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 125.8



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 5th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

The best Brayden (and draft eligible) in this game, Edwards showed shooting, passing, and handling skill. The highlights were the passes, as normal. He sent a rather ridiculous saucer pass over two sticks for a chance, set up with a look off. He deked around traffic before passing through layers, peeled away and didn't force pucks through lanes when possible, and always looked laterally for teammates with space before carrying the puck himself. He's scanning way more than he did earlier in the season – it's paying off. Involved in the defensive end all game long. The skating looks like a 4 projection. He leans back and rises through his crossovers. His hips stay high through his stride and he drops his chest to the ice. He has legit skill, but the tools might prove limiting. Not a pick this year, but he could become a prospect down the line. Excited to track his growth next season.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Another skilled game from Edwards. He's impressive off the backhand. He connected with a nasty backhand pass through a defender for a high-danger chance, deked to the middle off the backhand, and laid a puck into space off the backhand for a shorthanded assist. The touch on his passes really stands out – one of the best in the WHL. They land flat right in front of their target, never too hard. He's a proactive defender, not scoring much, and doesn't have many other skills beyond the passing and defence. But he could be a solid late-rounder. Looks like he will take off next season.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Edwards can pass the puck. He made several standout passes, including a nasty backhand pass under a defender's stick for a point-blank look. Can really work through defenders, when the hands and feet allow it. The skating's rough (rises through his crossovers, failing to generate momentum); the hands are choppy. But he has the right ideas and understands that he's best served as a quick-possession passer, especially off the rush. Scored a goal with a one-timer from the top of the slot. He's not scoring and he's older, but he continues to intrigue. Feels like a breakout candidate for next season. Not convinced he's a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: January 27th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

A lot of turnovers in transition from Edwards. He gets rid of the puck too quickly, which is a considerable contrast from his offensive zone playmaking. He doesn't have the skating or handling skill to find much separation, and he doesn't really have any physical skills at this stage. He has vision, off-puck defensive value, and off-puck offensive value but it's tough to see a path to the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Edwards has patience and vision. He spots teammates through defenders without forcing passes through. If he was a bit more deceptive, a bit more adaptable, he'd find a lot of success as a playmaker. He's also a bit limited by his skating. It doesn't provide much separation. He's upright and can't link one maneuver into the next. The defence is solid. He's not a pick, but he's a solid player.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

A solid game Edwards, mostly impressive as a playmaker along the boards. Spotted teammates early, moved the puck quickly, adjusting to the lane when necessary. The skating's upright, most notable through his crossovers where he's almost leaning back. He's not much of a puck carrier or manipulator. Lots of straight lines. He's a solid off-puck defender. He's probably not a pick this year, but he should take off next season.

Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Edwards isn't much of a transition player, but he makes an impact at both ends of the rink. He's a sound off-puck defender and brings some intelligent off-puck offensive positioning. He's more playmaker than shooter, looking to work pucks off the boards to the middle. But he doesn't look first. He threw away three pucks in solid positions because he didn't scan first. He has some passing skill – backhand and slip plays – but without better habits, they won't lead to much offence at this level.

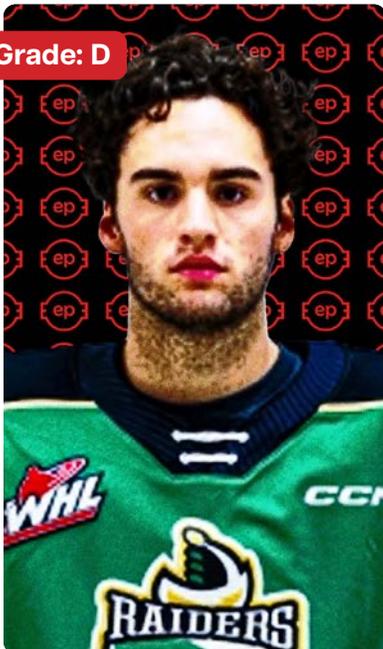
Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

A bit of a chaotic game from Edwards. He wasn't able to achieve much but showed some skill, whether that was a nasty two-touch pass reception from behind his body to his hip pocket or non-stop pressure on the forecheck. Bounced from one check to the next. He's more playmaker than shooter, although he shows some ability to get open. He throws a ton of pucks to the inside, but he doesn't look before. Lots of blind plays. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but he should become a productive player next season.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Edwards and Wormald formed an effective duo in this game. Edwards is more reversed away from the puck with a tendency to disengage. Still, he showed both shooting and passing skill. Slipped away from defenders into the slot for a couple of scoring chances. Worked pucks along the perimeter, drawing defenders, then passed to teammates open inside space. He also outright beat defenders into the passing lane when possible. Hook pass use. Effective heel-to-heel skating, turning to face the play, deceive, and receive passes. Not deceptive or especially creative, but he showed enough skill to keep me watching.

Grade: D



Terrell Goldsmith

AGE 17.342 DATE OF BIRTH May 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	218 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	7
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Prince Albert Raiders	WHL	58	3	6	9	0.16

SCOUTING REPORT

15 years ago, Terrell Goldsmith would be discussed as a top-two rounds prospect in the draft. After all, he's tall, physical, and detailed defensively. But make no mistakes: There's still potential for him in today's game.

Always looking for contact, Goldsmith earns his stops through crushing hits, well-timed pins, and subtle nudges to disrupt opponents. He closes on opponents in the neutral zone and steadily guides them into the boards before going for the puck. In-zone, he boxes out opponents and eliminates threats.

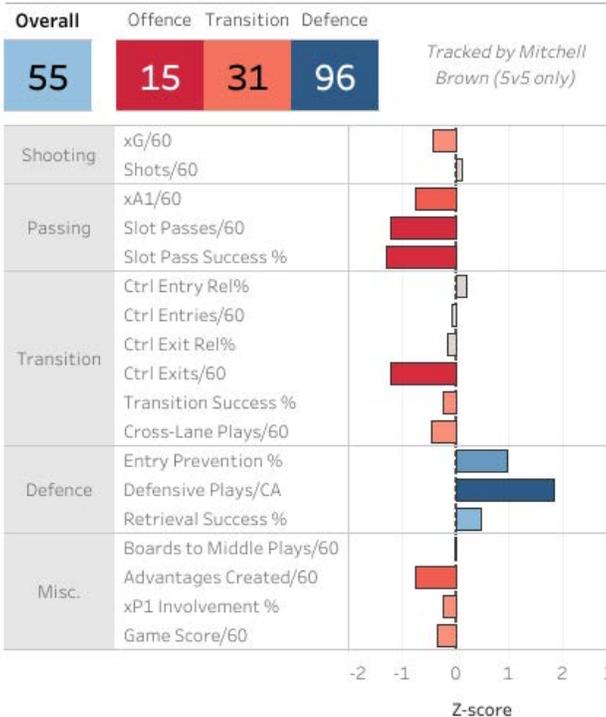
Goldsmith has skill, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explains: "He moves through every pass reception and tries to make plays with his feet moving. He uses space before shooting and doesn't force plays up the boards. Under pressure, he delays and looks over both shoulders before making a decision."

At this stage, Goldsmith's execution lacks. He lacks the handling skill to make full use of his ideas. He's limited a bit by his environment, which doesn't present the passing options that he looks for on both breakouts and inside the offensive zone.

With a bit more pace and improved mobility, the defence should become above-average for the professional level. To make the NHL, the puck skills will have to improve. But Goldsmith's a solid late-round candidate, given his ideas with the puck and ultra-physical style.

Terrell Goldsmith

D | Prince Albert Raiders | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 76.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 7th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Goldsmith doesn't get many points because there's nothing for him in this structure, but that doesn't stop him from trying. He steps into space in the offensive zone, drawing pressure before moving the puck. Deceptive with the puck and fakes shots before passing. He doesn't get any opportunities to connect with teammates moving into the slot, but he looks for them. The breakouts are limiting. He offloads the puck too early, doesn't show much vision. Defensively, he's a tank. Opponents hit him, they bounce off. Physical, perhaps overly so, but he shows some more projectable habits, like angling. Eliminates off-puck threats somewhat proactively. He's a long-term projection because it's not clear what he is, but there are lots of interesting flashes that might appeal to a team.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Goldsmith scored the overtime winner by intercepting a pass, going backhand across the slot and rushing the net for the rebound. Honestly, this was a pretty impressive performance. He moves through every pass reception and tries to make plays with his feet moving. Uses space before shooting and doesn't force plays up the boards. Delays under pressure and looks over both shoulders before making a decision. He tries to deke around opponents. He's a solid defender, too. Physical, engaged, proactive, and gets inside opponents. It's really the mechanics that are limited for the WHL. He's sometimes fluid as a skater, achieving proper knee bend and generating notable power through his backwards crossovers, but he's clumsy with the puck. He gets more upright, pucks roll off his stick. He can't access lanes. Shot originates from the hip and requires significant load up. Didn't look like a candidate for our board, but I could see a team taking him.

Mitchell Brown: November 27th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

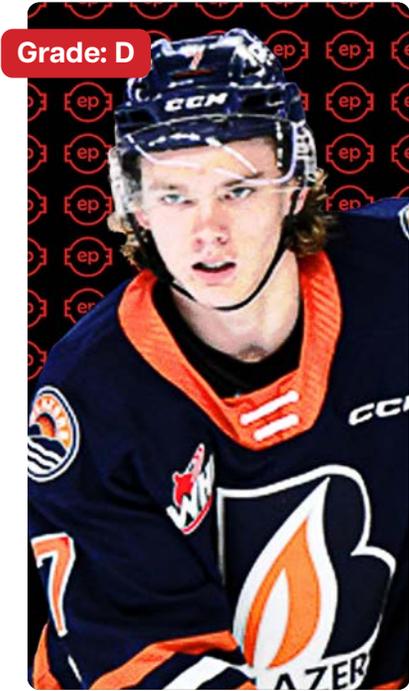
Goldsmith threw a massive hit for an interference penalty. The physical is how he defends. He doesn't just step up on opponents; he shoves them into the boards, wins positioning on retrievals, and eliminates them around the net. The puck skills are limiting, but it's not for a lack of trying. He tries to fake opponents and create advantages. Stepped inside off the boards then passed up the middle for an advantage-creating breakout. Decisions are poor off retrievals, however. From the point, he fakes before shooting, shooting for a deflection for an assist. I don't think he has the execution to be a pick at this stage, but his ideas and physical might lead to a team picking him late.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Goldsmith showed skill defending the rush. He angled opponents, poked the puck away, and won body positioning. Gets on his check relatively early, despite the skating limitations. Quick plays off retrievals and eliminates off-puck threats semi-regularly. More miss than hit on breakouts, but he tries. I respect it. He tries to reverse play, pass to the inside, and pass through opponents. He fights pressure, but he also has to fight his own hands. As such, he doesn't look the part of a pick right now, but that he wants to create suggests some long-term ability.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Goldsmith's an ideas prospect. He has solid, if not good ones. He deceives on retrievals, joins the rush, and tries to further the offence with skilled passes. But he's so limited mechanically. The stride lacks ankle flexion, his edges lack control. He's upright with changing depth and width from stride-to-stride. No power from his crossovers in any direction. When he tries to feint the cutback, he's immediately thrown off balance. Many of these are also scripts. Doesn't show the awareness of pressures (turns back into the pressure he just tricked) or of routes/space (doesn't adjust or adapt to become an option). Defence is limited by his skating, but he wants to kill plays early.



Kaden Hammell

AGE 17.512 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Right Shoots
6'2" Height	181 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	5.5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kamloops Blazers	WHL	36	5	5	10	0.28
Everett Silvertips	WHL	31	3	13	16	0.52

SCOUTING REPORT

Although Kaden Hammell has yet to translate the offence that made him an exciting prospect entering the WHL, he hasn't lost the skills. His production improved after a mid-season trade to the Everett Silvertips, albeit at the expense of some of his effectiveness in transition.

Of Hammell's numerous skills that project as NHL-calibre, it's the inside edges and passing skill that stand out the most. Off his inside edges, he evades pressure while handling the puck and looking for options. He hooks pucks around sticks and slips them under, turning the opposition's forecheck on its head. With Kamloops, he consistently looked cross-ice for options and occasionally manipulated forecheckers.

Hammell's defensive game should become a strength, too. He already tightens the gap earlier than most, taking away the middle before guiding the attacker into the boards for a stop.

This season, Hammell's decision-making waned under pressure in all three zones. He also lacks the outside edge skills characteristic of evasive NHL breakout artists, which led to turnovers at this level.

Though, even if the NHL isn't his future, he should still become a capable professional player. There's still a chance for more, given the passing skill and flashes of offence.

Kaden Hammell

D | KAM/EVT | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 165.4



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 26th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Another solid game from Hammell. He's turnover-prone but he has reads, skill, and awareness. When many players dump the puck out, he finds an outlet. He's patient but also plays with pace. A bit too dependent on making plays up the boards. Defensively, he's an assertive and relatively controlled skater. He keeps his crossovers few, takes the middle away early, and closes space laterally. Some physicality and he didn't over-extend. The puck game's just simple plays. He has the odd flash of vision or awareness of space, but it's mostly scripted or obvious plays. Without the offence, he's probably not making it. He's not a pick for us, but he has potential.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

A really tough game for Hammell. The skating looked like a clear weakness in this game. Committing footwork and weak edges make him vulnerable to speed. Didn't make plays in motion, leading to turnovers and missed opportunities. Didn't show any of the craftiness on breakouts that I've seen from before. From the point, he threw pucks on net, shooting for the occasional deflection. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

I've seen Hammell a bunch by now and I'm still struggling to figure out his skating. His backwards crossovers are sometimes above-average, with full extensions. He's skilled off his inside edges. While there are flashes off his outside edges, he seems more unstable and requires a lower speed to use them. His defensive skating has moments where it looks like a strength, where he builds backwards momentum, angles, then uses heel pushes to come across. But there are times where he's unstable and committing. Think figuring that out is really the key to his projection. He's aware on the end boards, capable of slipping pucks through opponents. Turnovers, but his ideas are often sound when he's not defaulting to simple plays under pressure. No offence to speak of save for an easy pass that led to a breakaway goal. I don't think he's a pick for me.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Hammell has sound ideas, but turnovers plagued his effectiveness. In one rush, he escaped pressured by resetting, then faked a dump in to gain the inside, before setting up a shot. That was a projectable play. He regularly looks to cutback and reset, but he skates back into pressure or panics once he sees the next forechecker incoming. It's especially pronounced on the retrievals with back pressure. He'd also benefit from advancing the puck instead of resetting sometimes. This was a simple performance in the offensive and defensive zones. He had a couple of stops, anticipated the play and eliminated off-puck threats, and made basic plays from the point. Using the space that the opposing team gives him would help him create more offence. Didn't look like a pick this year, but he could become a prospect down the line.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Hammell had some strong transition plays. He shows a bit of patience before moving pucks, waiting for his target to arrive in space and for defenders to fly past. Doesn't consistently manipulate pressure, but always looks to move pucks through forecheckers and cross-ice. Defensively, he was solid. Angled, killed plays later in rushes, kept attacks wide, and made intelligent reads off retrievals. Didn't show much upside, but he could be a solid pro.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

All the same stuff from my previous four reports applies, whether that's the relatively basic offence, some defensive value, and the occasional flash in transition. Hammell was less effective in transition in this game, defaulting to simple plays. Skating didn't provide the same amount of separation compared to previous viewings – projection concern. He lacked depth and timing on his skating evasive moves to separate. Didn't look like an NHL prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Hammell does the scripted OZFOW plays and uses space before shooting – that’s about it offensively. But his transition game continues to show a lot of interesting elements. He draws pressure, passes through it, uses the middle, and delays at the right moments. Doesn’t get locked into a low-pace game, understanding when to turn it up to access passing lanes. Lots of crafty passing deliveries, such as flicking pucks into space for his teammates to skate into. The stride’s limited, but he’s nimble on his edges with flashes of some real separation ability off his inside edges. I lean towards his skating being more of a weakness at the next level, but edges are often a better shine of incoming improvement than stride form. Defensively, he’s there. He does everything at an effective, but not noteworthy level. Chases sometimes; plays more proactively other times. I have few answers based on this game. I guess that’s why I keep watching this team.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Very little offensively from Hammell, save for a handful of point shots and scoring chance after leading the rush. He mostly just fired with little regard for his teammate’s positioning. Missed opportunities to further the play. However, he showed a different mindset in transition. He consistently beat the F1, using a variety of skills: cutbacks, delays, and adaptable passing. He created advantages through cross-lane/ice passes, using the middle, and seeking to beat pressure with the pass. But he also beat a defender only to pass to a teammate with just as much pressure; there’s some lack of foresight. Defensively, he was solid. Anticipated switches of coverage, deflected shots, and killed plays outright. Eliminated off-puck threats when needed. Skating lacks depth, but he has lots of skills, including a punch turn over either leg and well-timed heel-to-heel skating. Moves through pass receptions into space. Looked like a second-round-type prospect.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Hammell’s stride lacks but his edges are quite effective. He finds separation with cutbacks and well-timed heel-to-heel skating. Strong delay game in transition, drawing pressure, spinning away, then passing to the open teammate. Yet, he doesn’t lack pace. He attacks openings when they’re there. Not exactly creating the best play on many of these, but that he already has such strong habits (scan, delay, use inside, move through passes and pass receptions) should allow him to become a better creator later in his WHL career. Fills space off the rush, leading to a chance that hit the post. Otherwise, his offensive game is simple: take space when possible, but only to further the sequence for another teammate. Doesn’t take many risks. Looked like a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

When Kamloops wins an offensive zone faceoff, Hammell’s the most dangerous player on the ice. He fakes out incoming pressure, pushes the puck into space, then looks inside for a chance or a teammate around the net. Hook and slip pass use. In a non-faceoff setting, he didn’t create as much. To his credit, he did connect with a stationary pass from the far corner of the zone for a high-danger chance. Elsewhere, he mostly struggled to find separation and create. The skating’s upside and edges are weak. He generates little power, with opponents falling for his trickery but managing to recover to get the stop. Misses opportunities to cutback or delay for support. One quality rush highlighted his ability to fake out pressure, skating towards the forechecker, then skating into space. Doesn’t overhandle, pushing the puck into space during his acceleration phase. Crushed a player along the boards to kill an entry, and kept a tight gap. Defensive skating seems vulnerable; he’s upright and on his heels until he lunges. Wasn’t exposed in this game. An interesting game. He’s worth watching a lot this season.

Grade: D



Quinn Mantei

AGE 17.397 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brandon Wheat Kings	WHL	67	2	23	25	0.37

SCOUTING REPORT

Back in 2020, the gap between Lukas Dragicevic, Tanner Molendyk, and Quinn Mantei wasn't wide. They were all top prospects for the WHL Draft. Over the years, the gap expanded, but Mantei remains an intriguing prospect.

Mantei's value is in the flashes. He instantly takes pucks to the middle, draws pressure, beats forecheckers into lanes, and finds the open teammate.

Along the way, he occasionally dekes through opponents and leads the rush himself. A robust, but high-pace defensive game kills plays across the defensive zone.

Offensively, Mantei's has moments of skill, including one-touch shot-passes to deflections, lateral movement to create a shooting lane, and weak side activation to become a shooting threat.

The next step comes with skill development, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote this season: "He also misses many of these passes, randomly reverts to safe plays with options, and since he's not manipulating opponents, he lacks the skills to solve more aggressive pressure."

If Mantei does it, while improving the defensive skating, he could become a depth player. He has the tools to make the NHL.

Quinn Mantei

D | Brandon Wheat Kings | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 112.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 7th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Getting past the turnovers, Mantei had a solid game. He showed a bit more puck carrying than usual. For one rush, he attacked the inside while skating through the hands of back pressure, deked in, and then fired – although he could've continued forward for a high-danger look instead. Shows some evasiveness from the point. Not explosive, but fluid with the lateral crossovers and stops. All of his point work is just for point shots, however. That could just be a product of Brandon being Brandon, being he doesn't use space at all when given it. On breakouts, he remains ideas. There are good ones, passing through forecheckers with short-range passes and stepping inside around pressure before hitting a teammate with speed. His timing's off, he panics under pressure sometimes, and he lacks accuracy. Tools look just below NHL average, save for the passing. Not a pick for me, but I can see a team valuing the flashes.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Against a weak Edmonton team, Mantei didn't accomplish much. He shot for a deflection and got it – his most noteworthy offensive play at 5-on-5. In transition, he didn't show those skills that I've seen from him earlier. He offloaded the puck instead of looking to spearhead the offence. Defence is a mixed bag. He clearly has some defensive instincts. He traps players along the boards and gets his stick inside the opponent. But he's so upright that he struggles to generate momentum backwards. Ends up on his toes and can't close the distance on opponents. He's always there to be beaten, just getting by because he can time his stick checks effectively. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Mantei scored the late-game go-ahead goal by staying in deep at the end of the powerplay. Smart read. It was the usual performance from him. He has moments in his own third of the ice, anticipating plays, intercepting passes, and then immediately looking cross-ice for a teammate stretching the ice. Doesn't manipulate, but beats defenders into lanes and show some real advantage creating skills. He also misses many of these passes (by passing on the heels of his target), randomly reverts to safe plays with options, and since he's not manipulating opponents, he lacks the skills to solve more aggressive pressure. Flatfooted off the rush a couple of times, conceding the zone as a result. He's not scoring, either, and it's not easy to believe in Brandon's development anymore. Not sure he's a pick, but he has the skills and tools to be a mid-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Mantei had some real flashes on the breakout in this game. He drew the F1, then beat them into the passing lane. Slipped pucks under sticks and went cross-ice under pressure. The offence appeared in spurts, too. A one-touch shot-pass to the net front nearly created a chance. A give-and-go entry through a defender created an opportunity. Rush defence looked more like a strength this game. He stayed balanced, didn't overextend, and forced attackers to the outside, stopping a dynamic Jagger Firkus rush as the highlight. He's mobile, fluid from edge-to-edge, but not explosive. He lacks a bit of lower body flexion. The hands look like an average projection. But he could be a late-rounder. Intelligent, even if mistake-prone.

Mitchell Brown: November 2nd, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Mantei's not scoring at all, which isn't too surprising given the Wheat Kings' recent history. Still, he showed some good stuff in this game. He consistently joined the rush, using space before shooting and distributing to teammates in better positions. Cuts inside, too. On breakouts, he stepped inside, passed cross-ice, and made a couple of in-motion plays. Nothing advanced, but the habits for greater impact are there. Defensively, he kept attackers wide by taking the middle early then angling. Could become a prospect down the line.

Daniel Gee: October 12th, 2022 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Mantie was the Wheat Kings number one defender in this game against the Cougars -- a role made apparent by his usage and minutes across the game.

A fluid skater, especially backwards through his crossovers, his transitional defending was one of the strongest parts of his game. Constant gap control, Mantie's defining play of this game was a second period sequence where he protected the centre lane. He pivoted perfectly to angle the Cougars' attacker to behind the net. Mantie even hooked away a puck on a 1-on-1 sequence. Cleared a bunch of dangerous rebounds through his processing. While Mantie tends to stop moving his feet during sustained sequences (one even led to a reaching tripping penalty), he had some great stops in this one. In the third Mantie just got his stick on the backdoor rebound tip-in -- it was a late read, but he got across in time to disrupt Ryker Singer's stick. On a subsequent play he intercepted a hook pass Heidt sent into the slot and even checked his stick in the crease. In general he's a super active scanner who locks onto secondary and tertiary sticks. He becomes very reactive as shifts go on -- fatigue has a large effect.

As a puck transporter Mantie didn't accomplish a whole lot in this viewing. A lot of uncontrolled clears. He tries to get in-motion and uses the boards well, but there's nothing extraordinary here. Used a punch-turn in the neutral zone to escape pressure in the third -- which is interesting in its own right. In the offensive zone he rarely activates. On the one shift he did, he couldn't redirect a slot puck in one-touch, allowing Brennan to set. Places shots low from the point, but other than that a very vanilla player offensively. Not a pick for our board, but there's a pro path if he goes all in on improving conditioning and in-zone defending.

Mitchell Brown: October 7th, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

It's tough to think of a WHL team that gets as little from as many high draft picks as Brandon. Mantei, unfortunately, might be another one. He has a lot of intriguing qualities: walking the blue line to open shooting, surfing across for defensive stops, cross-ice vision on breakouts, and rush activation. But he doesn't do any of them regularly, preferring to play a low-risk, no-reward game like the rest of this team. Sure, he lacks some of the finer points of activation and some skills, but he should be far more effective at this stage. He's solid defensively, identifying threats, eliminating their sticks, and anticipating passes without leaving his assignment. Oh and lots of point shots. That's it at this stage.



Deagen McMillan

AGE 17.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
6'1" Height	201 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	5 Passing
4 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Americans	WHL	65	17	30	47	0.72

SCOUTING REPORT

One of the WHL's most improved players, Deagan McMillan's success in a largely middle-six role should earn some NHL attention. He was among the draft classes more successful per minute scorers, recording a higher even-strength points per 60 than Brayden Yager and Nate Danielson, two first-round prospects.

Simply put, McMillan's an advantage creator. He moves the puck at the right moments and keeps Tri-City on the attack. Which is the perfect style for him with skating as a weakness in the WHL.

Where most carry, he finds a cross-ice passing option. Where most deke, he looks for a quick pass through the defender. By pre-scanning, he instantly turns steals into passes into the slot and he packs on a look off or shot fake to misdirect defenders.

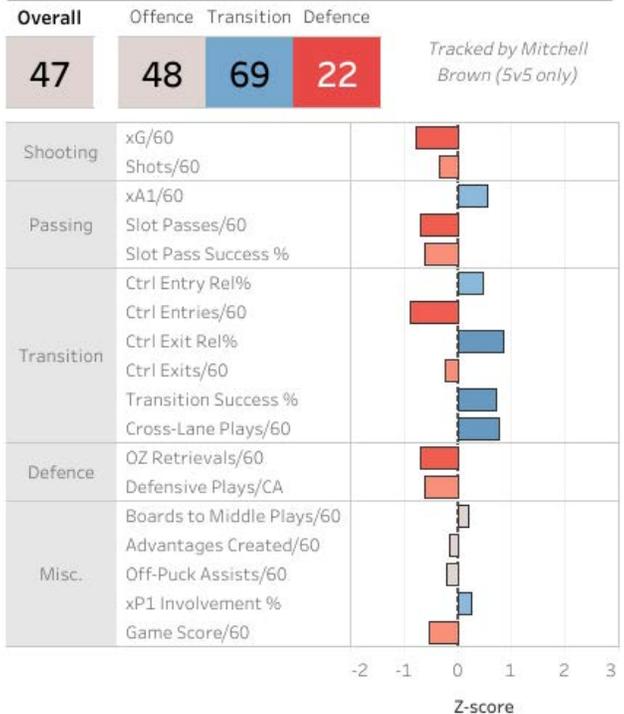
While McMillan's not much of a goalscoring threat, he could become one. He has the right ideas, attacking the inside on passively gapped defenders and sprinting for return passes after creating an advantage.

The keys for McMillan will be mechanical growth and sharpening his execution. The skating – with its elevated hips, lack of quickness, and weak edges – is the obvious one, but his shot and hands will require refinement to take the next step.

Without significant mechanical growth, McMillan likely won't make the NHL, but his passing skill, vision, and defensive value make him worth a shot late in the draft.

Deagan McMillan

F | Tri-City Americans | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 107.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 20th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

McMillan grabbed a chance in this game, getting open inside space before deflecting the puck. He brought his usual forechecking and defensive effort. He scans, anticipates, and closes lanes. Drew a penalty by attacking the inside off the rush. He sees passive gaps and takes advantage, but doesn't create them. Passes missed the mark in this game. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The skating's so limiting. McMillan struggles to generate any sort of functional speed, even for this level. Which makes his impact that much more impressive. He scored with a turnaround wrister, grabbed a couple of steals on the forecheck, and was a monster on the backcheck. He consistently connects with quick-possession passes to the middle, even under pressure and off the backhand. He creates advantages on a team that struggles to do so. Lots of runway as a WHLer, but his upright stance, limited power, and underdeveloped edges limit his NHL potential. Not a pick this year, but he could get there.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

McMillan was the most impressive draft-eligible player in this game. Created a chance off the forecheck, scanning before engaging, lifting the puck carrier's stick, and instantly sweeping the puck cross-slot for a chance. Lots of crafty passes, including slip passes and quick lateral plays to moving targets. He's too deceptive at times, forgoing the extra look to hold a passing lane, leading to turnovers. The skating's highly variable thanks to lower-body flexion that rises and falls dramatically through his strides and crossovers. The shot looked more like a weakness than strength (from a mechanical level), but he had the right ideas, cutting inside before firing and getting open inside space. And he was a force in the defensive end, angling attackers, ripping away possession, and contesting shots that most players would try to block. He looked like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

McMillan had a pair of chances, including one at the top of the hash marks after getting open behind the defence. His breakout passes – off the boards, to the middle – initiated several offence sequences. He also missed the mark a couple of times and wasn't especially involved defensively. Without standout tools, the defence has to be there consistently. But I like what he's brought as a passer in previous viewings.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

McMillan's tools don't really shine and he didn't do much in transition, with his play landing somewhere between floating and supporting. Still, he had moments of intelligence and creativity. The best was a look-off slip pass from behind the net for a point-blank chance, a brilliant execution of a skill commonly used off the rush. Consistently spotted teammates in the slot and fed the puck to them. He's a proactive passer, too. He doesn't try to handle through traffic, making the early pass instead. He'd benefit from drawing pressure towards him first. Curious to watch him more.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

McMillan has real potential as a passer and defender. He's smart. He moves pucks early and to the middle, passing through opponents when necessary. It's best on the breakout or down low in the offensive end. He creates advantages and stays in space for the return pass. Energetic, disciplined defender, too. The skating's variable and weak at times. Not sure he's a pick this year, but he clearly has potential.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

McMillan grabbed an assist by walking off the boards, fending off pressure, then hooking the puck back into space. It was

awkward and highlighted his mechanical limitations, but also showed his vision and awareness. Otherwise, it was more of a shooting game. Fired off a two-touch one-timer and tried a drag shot. Nothing special from an execution standpoint, but both were better than his standard wrister where it's bit more sweepy. He has a lot of potential as a defender. He scans and he's relatively engaged, but he also doesn't overextend or needlessly chase. He subtly, but quickly eliminates options and forces poor plays up the ice. The skating – high and lacking edge control – stands out as an issue and the hands didn't look much better, but there's definitely top-line WHL forward potential with pro upside.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Another game where McMillan defending a lot but it's tough to fault him for it. He was solid defensively. Not necessarily a play-killer, but he understands where to position himself. Mostly a shooting performance, getting open in space and pulling the trigger. Took a couple of low-percentage shots that would've been better as passes. He's not quick, so the delay game will be key. The crossovers are really weak with limited push off from the under leg. Not playmaking or physical skills shown in this game. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

A lot of defending in this game, but it wasn't McMillan's fault. He was everywhere, running into opponents, proactively supporting down low, and getting involved across the defensive zone. Impressive game. He only had the puck a few times. He makes smart, proactive passes to bypass defenders and delays to avoid needless footraces. Understands gaps and how to exploit them, but he didn't create any. Set up a breakaway in the third period with a diving backhand pass. The tools look below-average, which limit his odds this season. But he's worth watching.

Daniel Gee: September 24th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Much better game for McMillan for who recorded an assist and played a complementary role to Jean Jr.. A better pressure pusher in this one, he rejected three exits in a row by simply occupying a lane. The third even led to a laboured backhand in the slot that dribbled on net. Later in the first, on the first PP unit, he made a smart shift higher in the slot to open the pass lane and let a very weak shot off in the bumper. No downforce, placement, or power, it was more of a sweep than anything. That shot was blocked, but the rebound bounced right back to him. He took another weak shot which saved, placed 5-hole -- had time to set up better shooting mechanics but opted to get the puck on net as quick as he could. . Not a projectable shooter at all, but he's always in the bumper set to shoot. Beyond that he showed some protection ability on a farboard walk downhill. Protected with his arm, lost the puck behind the net, but continued to pressure, actually stripping the puck from Kmec and jamming the puck on net. Still struggled to handle in small spaces and is a deferrer in transition. One notable play had McMillan enter through the middle and make a nice pass off a spin to the left-wing. Backpressure waned in this game but he made a fairly effective defensive play on Ziemmer, working his superior body positioning to angle him towards the boards and preventing a perimeter shot. Still don't see a lot here. Not a pick currently. I think he'd struggle to get any minutes on a deeper team that wasn't going through so many injuries etc. Keep in mind he only played around 13 minutes in this one.

Daniel Gee: September 23rd, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Did not look like a player playing their 45th WHL game -- more so their first. While McMillan's minutes were limited, he was a non-factor in almost every way. Low stride frequency plagues his game; not enough pace or motor to even be an effective pressure pusher. A puck-watcher in his own end, he reacts with the movement of the puck carrier, meaning he's easily manipulated. He had an egregious bad defensive play where he failed to pressure Heidt (half-hearted shift into his vicinity) as he stopped-up after an entry, allowing a pass across to the backdoor for Hudson Thornton to lean into. His best sequence of the game was an interception he made on a low-to-high pass, contributing to an exit. MacMillan's offensive game is painfully simple. Essentially an off-puck activator who plants in the slot no matter the pressure waiting for a tape pass. In sustained situations he just acts as a netfront. He has no identity or separating tools as it stands. It's the first game of the season but he appears to have limited qualities that indicate he's worth a pick.



Grade: D

Cole Miller

AGE 17.611 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
6'4" Height	174 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	5.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	61	10	9	19	0.31

SCOUTING REPORT

Adjusting to the WHL hasn't proven easy for Cole Miller, once a first-round pick in the league.

Let's start with the good: the tools. He could become an NHL-calibre skater by maintaining his depth consistently and already has a diverse arsenal of shots. He generates power off either leg, drags pucks around sticks before firing, and one-times pucks under pressure. There's passing skill here, passing under or around sticks, set up with a bit of deception.

Miller understands the off-puck game, too. He gets open inside space, stick loaded for the shot, and he's a consistent defensive presence.

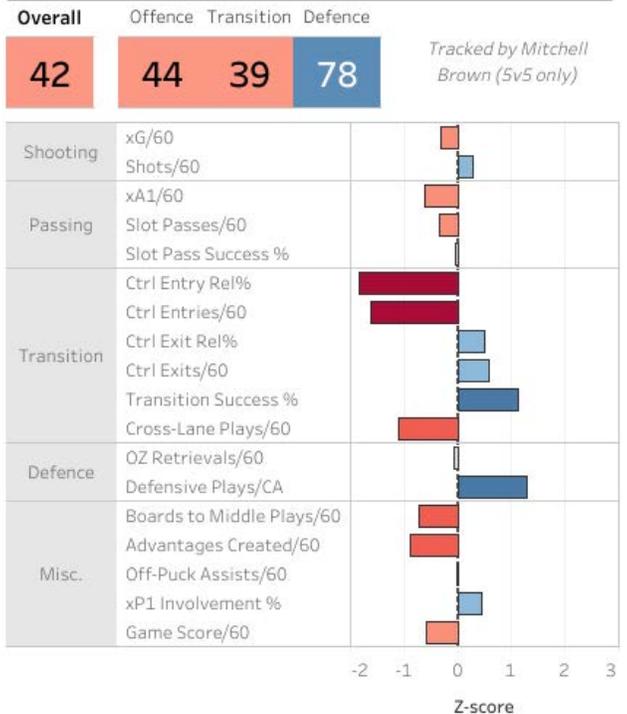
"His backtracking, support, effort, and habits are all pro-calibre." Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown detailed in a February game report. "It's impressive watching him work away from the puck; how quickly he anticipates play coming back up the rink and gets in position."

Being on the WHL's lowest scoring offence team certainly doesn't help, but Miller could also find more offensive success by improving his reads.

He shoots with better passing options and passes in a better shooting location, and doesn't use space before making the next play. His tools should make an option for teams later in the draft. He has a chance to make it in a depth role.

Cole Miller

F | Edmonton Oil Kings | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 81.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

The usual from Miller. He could bring legitimate defensive value to a professional lineup. His backtracking, support, effort, and habits are all pro-calibre. It's impressive watching him work away from the puck; how quickly he anticipates play coming back up the rink and gets in position. He has tools, too. Showed a bit of playmaking, including an aerial pass for an assist. The issue remains the lack of awareness of space with the puck. He's unaware of his options or unable to take advantage of space. That's the baseline for being able to hang in the NHL. But he could get there with his tools (4.5-5 skating, 5 shooting, flashes of 5 puckhandling). Worth keeping an eye on.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Miller's a player of contrasts. On breakouts, he delays, waits for supports, looks cross-ice, and generally tries to make a play. On entries, he doesn't bother, preferring way-too-early dump-ins that leave him no opportunity to recover the puck. He doesn't read space or lanes, but he has skill. He can shoot at a much higher level than most WHLers, able to fire off either leg and owning a really quick outside leg release. He has passing skill. But he doesn't use space. Defensively, he's smart and proactive. Always working to get above the play. Angles attacks wide. Pins opponents to the boards. He could be a pick for a team, but he's not making our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Miller has tools. He pushes his knees past his toes, engages his hips, and accelerates through passes and pass receptions. Not a perfect skater, but he has a projectable base. He also scored with a one-timer from the slot, beating the goaltender across the net. Gets open inside space. But that was about it for offence. He's careless with the puck, offloading possession immediately without looking first. Worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Miller's defence is already refined for a player at this stage. Such a proactive backchecker. Always above the puck, then he angles attacks wide. Down low support and reads rotations. On the forecheck, he finds opponents weak points, applies pressure, then pounces. Created a couple of looks with passes immediately following the steal. He gets open in the high slot, as he did for a one-time chance. Showed a diverse skill set, using a clean drag shot, a hook pass, and a give-and-go. Mechanics are limiting but it's more the reads. He takes low percentage shots with teammates available and doesn't show much ability to create or even prolong lanes. He could be a pick for a team, but not likely for us.

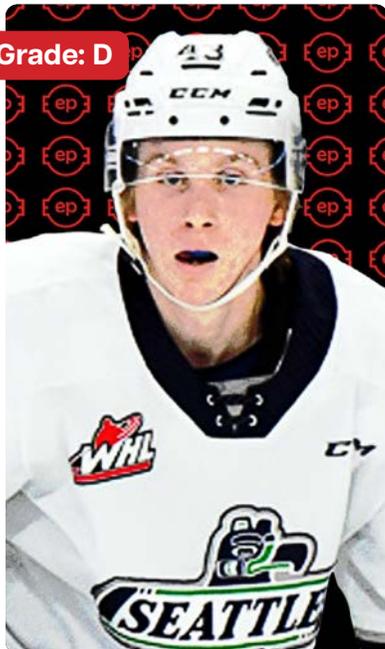
Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Miller looks the part of an NHL prospect. He pushes his knees past his toes and engages his hips when striding, which isn't common for a player with his frame. The edges are more limited, but he has a projectable base. The other NHL skill could be the shot. He can shoot off either leg with control. He keeps his hands in front of his body. He also has skills around his shot. He gets open in space, creates space by getting under opponents, etc. Don't see a ton of scoring instincts, but he understands the beginnings. And this was a really solid defensive game. He was proactive on the backcheck and very disruptive. A couple of passes missed the mark, but he tried to build the offence instead of forcing play ahead. He could be a pick. Not for us, but for a team.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A really quiet game from Miller. He has some tools, notably the skating and shot. He pushes his knees past his toes and generates momentum through his stride. Edges and crossovers aren't quite there, but he could be a 5 projection. One solid backcheck. That was about it for this game.

Grade: D



Sawyer Mynio

AGE 17.378 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	68	5	26	31	0.46

SCOUTING REPORT

As the Seattle Thunderbirds loaded up for a Memorial Cup run, it seemed like Sawyer Mynio would have to fight for ice time. Instead, his role only shrunk by a few minutes and his game improved. How did he do it? It's all in the details.

Mynio's a capable rush defender, steadily smothering the opposition by forcing attackers to the outside and matching their footwork. He quickly switches from one puck carrier to the next, keeping the pressure on. By locking onto opponents, he eliminates them from the play entirely.

On breakouts, Mynio's equally detailed. He avoids dump-outs and low-percentage plays, preferring to look for passing options cross-ice or up the middle.

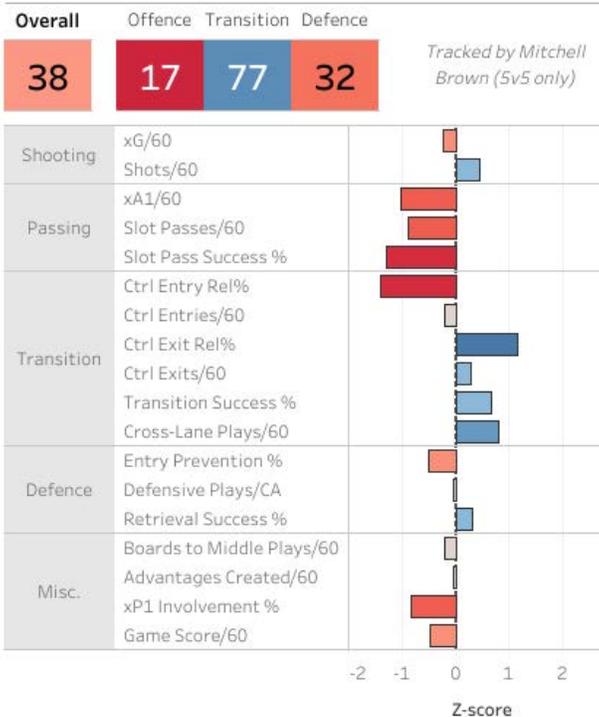
Striking the right balance between patience and pacy, he's rarely forced into poor decisions. He draws pressure and spins away from it before hitting a teammate building speed.

In the offensive end, Mynio beats defenders into shooting lanes by taking passes in motion. While he doesn't show much playmaking or activation, that skill should lead to more offence as his role demands it.

To play in the NHL, Mynio must improve his stride, edges, and puck skills. More offence would help his case, too. But his detailed game gives him NHL potential. He'd make for a solid later round selection.

Sawyer Mynio

D | Seattle Thunderbirds | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 116.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** April 18th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Mynio was okay in this blowout win for the Thunderbirds. Quiet transitionally, his retrieval work stood out as an issue. He doesn't have a manipulation element. Opting to just tank the physicality of the forecheck than escape the pressure. I think his best asset in transition and in sustained pressure is his activation habits. He's always joining rushes, working downhill off the blueline. In the second, Mynio took a slip while traveling down the weakside, his catch-and-release saved on the play.

His stride is very average, but Mynio did a great job getting back on a 2-on-1, forcing the puck carrier to spin off, before he could send the cross. He refused to commit to aggression throughout a lot of this game. His gap was manipulated constantly off the entry -- stop-ups and delay elements being the worst. When Mynio had his gap, he was effective, however. In the first, facing a one-on-one, he predicted a toe-drag into the middle, shifted across laterally taking the body and completely stayed in front of the attacker. Just a supremely smart play. While he didn't spend a lot of time defending in zone, Mynio was also strong at protecting the inside lane in pressure. On one first period shift, he shadowed Wheatcroft moving up and down the wing, preventing any access to the middle. Mynio was also fairly proactive in terms of shifting into shooting lanes and committing to the block. His processing is clearly above average. If anything, Mynio will be more mechanically limited at higher levels when he faces more pace and higher skill sets. His skating and edge work will need to take a step to combat the jump at higher levels.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Mynio was mostly shooting in this game. He took pucks in motion, stepped inside, took a quick shot. The feet aren't especially quick, and he doesn't use space vertically (i.e., stepping towards the net). There's more exciting stuff from Mynio in the other two-thirds of the rink. He makes quick passes through pressure to open teammates and he kept a tight gap without overcommitting. Retrievals stood out as an issue. He used one-foot stops and then swiped at the puck instead of especially body positioning and keeping both feet on the ice. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Mynio had some flashes in this game. He did the Seattle breakout thing, where he takes space, skates at incoming pressure, pushes wide, and then looks for a lateral pass for the entry. Holds the zone with well-timed pinches down the wall. A physical side to his game, looking for the big hit and following through on opponents to get the break up. Mostly a shooter in the offensive zone. He tries to fake and work laterally but his upright stance really limits his quickness. Didn't see a path for him to the NHL in this game but he's worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

A really quiet game from Mynio. Poor decisions off retrievals kept him playing defence on a couple of occasions. Mostly panicked plays under pressure on breakouts, giving the puck away or not using available options. The skating, with the upright stance and lack of proper push offs and extended c-cuts, hampered his ability to defend the rush and escape with possession. Still showed a bit of offence. He hammered a puck for a deflection, getting an assist. Moves on pass receptions. Didn't look like a pick in this game, but the base for a breakout season is there.

Mitchell Brown: January 31st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Mynio showed some edge work I haven't seen from him before. He had one sequence where he circled the offensive zone in a relatively heel-to-heel before shooting. In another, he deked around a defender, complete with a weight shift, for a chance inside the circle. Not really a passer in the offensive zone, other than basic plays. But he showed a bit more in transition. Some more advanced ideas under pressure, looking laterally for teammates. The defence was more of an issue than normal. Beat off the rush a couple of times, although he looked better on retrievals. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Another game where the breakouts were working for Mynio, although with a few more turnovers and inaccurate passes. He has the right ideas. He draws pressure, fakes it out, passes through/around it. He created advantages, or at least, he has the potential. Seattle encourages their defencemen to take control of the breakout like this. With better skating, Mynio could become a real threat off the rush. The defence was a bit of physical play mixed with variable gap control. Liked the shooting game, though. Quick shots while moving laterally, moves his feet as the puck arrives. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

An impressive game from Mynio, especially on defence and transition. On breakouts, he drew pressure and looked cross-ice for options. Connected with a bunch of passes through the forecheck, creating space for the recipient. The skating's a potential issue; an upright stance and a lack of quickness might limit his ability to pull these plays off consistently. On the other hand, he also cut back instead of forcing plays forwards when given the opportunity. A bit passive through the neutral zone but closed space at the blue line and grabbed a trio of stops. Retrievals highlighted some poor habits, he reached for pucks and didn't manage backpressure effectively. More limited in the offensive zone. He's not a passer, like at all. Just shots. He's interesting.

Daniel Gee: October 29th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Mynio was pretty poor throughout this game; low activity rate and a frankly lazy stride being a culprit of a lot of his issues. Limited heel-pushes or even crossover integration here.. Nevertheless, in transition, Mynio has some good moments when he pushes aggression; rejected multiple perimeter entries and even broke down an attack in the slot with a well-timed pokecheck. Unfortunately, he saw little immediate results out of these stops -- multiple fumbles and mishandles put him back on his heels. He also struggled mightily with timing activations, often too deep to help on counter attacks. In one sequence in the second he had to drag a trailing threat down to the ice to prevent a drop-off chance. In sustained pressure he was fairly passive once again -- especially when clogging lanes. Mynio had a pretty rough second period sequence where he allowed a dangerous cross-crease pass -- stick and posture not ready to make a stop.

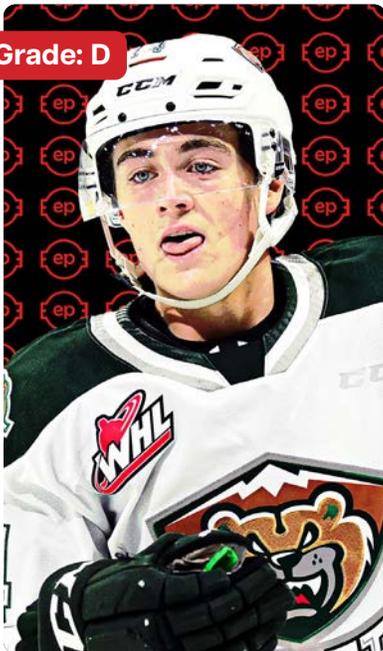
The highlight of his game was a long-bomb outlet in the third that created a dangerous 2-on-1 chance. He's a slow puck retriever that lacks pro-habits (feet manipulation, cut-backs, protection); it ultimately hurts his transition efficiency and volume of opportunities. His play in the offensive zone wasn't much better. While Mynio connected on a far-board to slot pass (the chance failed due to a fumbled catch-and-release), I didn't like his shooting habits -- even if the attempts were limited. In the third he absolutely drilled a shin on a predictable shot off the top of the left-hand circle -- no manipulation to open a lane, no attempt to handle past a static defender -- rough sequence. I don't think he's a pick for our board -- he's mechanically limited and doesn't have enough already established pro-habits to overcome it at higher levels.

Daniel Gee: October 28th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Mynio operates at a low pace, which isn't exactly ideal, but there are some draftable qualities in his game. There wasn't a lot of noticeable transition play but he has some solid retrieval habits. Scans, pops into a wide base to add balance. His edges are below average and there isn't much manipulation happening though. Fumbled a two-touch pass in the third, but recovered nicely to drive out of the zone (protecting with his off-arm) to escape slightly and hit a neutral zone teammate. Better in sustained pressure, Mynio activated very deep on a sequence in the first, just tipping a shot wide. Tries to handle on the blueline -- had a nice curl-and-drag into the middle. In the second, Mynio looped the zone and fed a centering pass into the slot, leading to some chaos and crashing.

Lacks projectable habits on the defensive end of the puck. In the first half of the game, he operated with a very passive stick. Often in range and gapped, he almost never disrupted releases or pressure the puck carrier with his reach. He became more aggressive as the game went on and was able to knock away a couple of perimeter entries (read the play early and committed). Struggled when an attacker worked the puck in his feet, allowing him to not only turn Mynio but enter a clear lane through the hash marks. No 4-way mobility here really -- doesn't fully engage his knees and his hips sway heavily as he pushes side-to-side. The passiveness with his stick extended into sustained defending. Despite being in range of Koehn Ziemmer, he didn't reach out to disrupt his shot, leading to a goal against (on a rebound. Despite this, he is a remarkable penalty killer -- at least in this game. On a second period kill he constantly activated into a shooting lane on the near boards and blocked/deflected two different shots on goal. So proactive here. Don't think he's a pick for our board based on this game but I have to see more.

Grade: D



Austin Roest

AGE 18.649 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 22, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW/C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Everett Silvertips "A"	WHL	60	32	46	78	1.30

SCOUTING REPORT

What a difference a year makes. Last season, Austin Roest scored 32 points in 59 games. He more than doubled that this season, making him one of the top re-entry options in this year's draft class.

Roest isn't one for flashy plays or lengthy possession sequences. Instead, he plays a pro-style quick-touch game. He moves pucks to open teammates, slipping them through defenders when necessary.

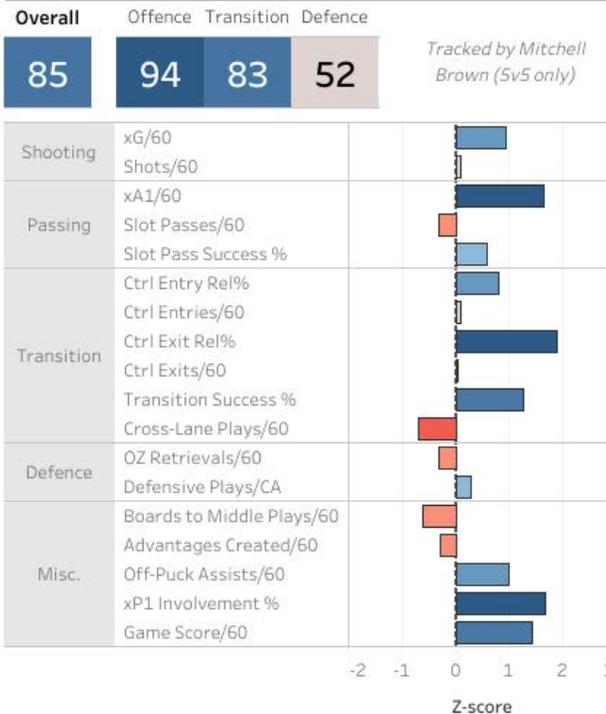
Short-range passes through a defender are his most common play-creation tactic across all three zones. After passing, he skates his route, setting picks and taking sticks along the way to create space for teammates in his wake.

There's no shortage of defensive value with Roest, either. "He's a consistent threat on the forecheck," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a February game report. "He doesn't just sprint; he angles and times his engagements. It's visible on the backcheck, too."

While Roest has the intelligence to play in the NHL, the skill level might prove limiting. He has flashes of deception and inside play, but prefers to keep plays along the boards and misses opportunities to create high-value offence. Either way, he should develop into a capable professional player in a couple of years.

Austin Roest

F | Everett Silvertips | WHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 109.7



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 26th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Roest picked up a pair of goals, one deflection and one breakaway. He's a key part in Everett's offensive zone play, where he tracks down loose pucks and passes to the point before rushing the slot. Rinse and repeat. A short-possession, quick-pass transition game alongside a pro-calibre defensive game. But I'm not sure about the skill level. In this one, he only made basic plays and didn't show many layers. He's a pro, but perhaps not a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Roest beat an opponent wide, then toe-dragged inside for a quick chance. That was the highlight, showing a level of handling skill I haven't seen from before. But there wasn't much else in the offence department. It was mostly a strong off-puck performance. He wins battles, gets above the puck, gets open in space, and angles attackers to the outside. He's likely a pro but not sure if he has NHL upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Roest sees space and takes what's given to him. In the offensive zone, he won't break the puck off the boards himself, but wins his battle and moves the puck high. If there's a huge swath of space, he takes it to the net. He's an effective distributor at this level, overcoming a lack of layers with quick reads, short-range plays, and always skating his routes and taking sticks to give his recipient a bit more space for the shot. Created four shots off faceoffs. Highly involved in the defensive end. Not dynamic, not a lane creator. Tools look like below-average projections across the board, but he's intelligent enough to become a useful pro.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Roest looks the part of a re-entry pick, even if a late one. He's a big piece of Everett's soul-crushing in-zone offence. He's a consistent threat on the forecheck. He doesn't just sprint; he angles and times his engagements. It's visible on the backcheck, too. And his positioning across the ice suggests a player who will keep getting touches in the professional ranks. He works down low, gets speed under the puck, spins off defenders and frees his stick in the slot, and jumps into slot from the perimeter at the right moments. The supporting positioning directly led to three points. The skill's what I'm unsure about. Need to watch more.

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

A much quieter game than last night -- this was more of the Roest I saw last season. Regardless, he started the game off with a bang. Stripping a puck off of Wheatcroft after he attempted a poor handle, Roest attacked off the right wing with speed and snapped a shot through a Cougar defender's triangle beating Young high -- it was such a smart play to use the defender as a screen and the in-stride shot was equally as impressive. The rest of his transitional play was muted; a second period knife through the middle of the ice, led to a hope pace placement through an empty lane was the only other notable play. His defensive play was generally strong in this one. Great early first backpressure forced a TO -- on the same play he activated deep in his own zone and forced the puck carrier to the outside. Huge backchecking efforts defined his game. In the second he had a heroic penalty kill shift where he completely forced Hudson Thornton back below his goal line with his forechecking pressure, leading to about 30 seconds lost on the odd-man advantage. I don't think he's a pick for our board, but he might get drafted due to the production this season.

Daniel Gee: January 6th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Roest is a much better player than last when I saw him roughly a year ago -- especially when it comes to his habits. He's added an extra layer of deception when on-puck. He started the game with a nice handle to the inside, while popping his skates into 10-2 to disrupt the gap of a defender. He has a delay game that I don't quite remember him having in his draft season. Subtle stop-ups on entries allowed him to hit trailers effectively instead of running pucks into the boards. He was even one-touching pucks to promote a fast transition. He scored on a play in the first; Roest raced to open ice above the circles and took a weak shot through an immense amount of layers; smart selection and off-puck positioning. Liked some of the passing skill as well

-- integrates slips and layering. He forces passes though -- a product of having a tonne of touches. In the third he faced limited pressure exiting the near corner, and fed a teammate backdoor for a tap-in -- they heeled it wide. Roest actually overpassed at times; he had a wide open shot in the hashmarks and tried to find a teammate crashing -- a puzzling decision. Stride looks a bit better -- extends to a higher degree, more ability to access his edges, but in general I feel his tools are still painfully average. Maybe he's an AHL contributor after his WHL career, but he won't be able to do the things he does in Everett at higher levels.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Roest is on fire right now, but wasn't a game that suggested gaudy point totals. Instead, he played a simple game: making the early pass, extending the cycle, and applying pressure on the backcheck. There were a few slick offensive plays, such as delaying to wait for his teammate to skate the lane for an assist and some off-puck routes that created lanes for his teammates. But that was about it. A simple player who seems to be festing in a huge role. Didn't look like a re-entry candidate.

Mitchell Brown: November 2nd, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Roest can't stop scoring, even in games like this, where his impact's minimal. Left with a couple of points, but he was clearly the tertiary piece on his line. He glides around, waits for the puck, then moves it, but never seems to take control of his fate. Once he gets into a lane, he finished his routes and creates space, but actually getting into the space is a bit of a challenge. Passes were off the mark, and he's not looking to create with them. Liked the defensive energy and timing on his engagements. But that was about it.

Daniel Gee: December 29th, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George - WHL

Roest may be more limited than I thought. While he pushes pace transitionally, working skill-based passing plays into the middle of the ice, he failed to generate chances in this game. Much of his on-puck carries are poorly protected (puck presented in front of his body) all perimeter based. If he can't force a fist option, he tends to run the puck into a turnover on the end-boards. In sustained pressure, he is a proficient battler, winning retrievals and crashing on the forecheck. Surprised a lot of cougars again with his peripheral based swoop-ins while forechecking. Roest tends to float into the bumper looking for tips/rebounds. The passing skill doesn't really materialise in these sequences. Roest was caught puck-watching in his own zone on one third period shift -- to the point where his goaltender was yelling audibles at him to take his man. He works hard though -- on a penalty kill in the second he had a great pickpocket high in his zone leading to a clear. He's adaptable, always on top of misplayed pucks. Not sure if there is enough here to justify a pick.

Daniel Gee: December 28th, 2021 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Roest had a muted start to this game, showing little individual tools. As the game reached the second period, Roest looked like a different player -- a true secondary scoring threat on a Silvertips team devoid of its usual talent. Constantly playing in hard areas around the crease and end-boards, Roest's pace was pretty apparent in this game. His stride sacrifices power for foot speed, his extensions and recoveries more of a half-effort than anything. Ability to read pressure off his back was inconsistent -- sometimes he would pop right back into pressure, other times, his cut-backs allowed for some escapability. Roest was a constant soft-area activator when he wasn't supporting puck battles -- he shuffles and bounces around into open lanes. He just missed a one-timer, in the slot in the last minute of the game. There was one standout one-puck carry in the third. Roest wheeled around the net, cut inside the slot, and shot. Mechanics were underwhelming -- lack of power was apparent, release suspect, but I need to see more.

Roest did most of his damage transitionally. In the first, there was a lot of panic in his puck-touches. This disappeared in the later periods. Rush patterns were typical perimeter based in this viewing; on the plus side, he completed multiple slips to teammates driving the middle -- one leading to a goal in the second. He had an insane inside-rush carry attempt in the third, slipping by an aggressive defender, completing an inside-outside deke and ending the play with a shot at a sharp angle. Roest's ability to anticipate play is honestly near the top of his best attributes. Multiple d-zone blue line steals and pro-active pressure plays. Super dedicated defensively in this viewing. He pushes a tonne of high pressure; intercepting pucks in lanes, swooping in on puck carriers laterally giving them a false sense of reality. Essentially always forcing a quick play. Intrigued for sure, but I am not sure how he projects at the moment.

Grade: D



Oren Shtrom

AGE 17.964 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 28, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	7	0	4	4	0.57
Everett Silvertips	WHL	17	2	5	7	0.41

SCOUTING REPORT

A couple of years ago, Oren Shtrom was tracking as a potential top-64 pick in the draft. His intelligence and well-rounded skill set made him a standout as a draft-minus-two player in the WHL. Unfortunately, an injury cut his season short just 24 games in.

First and foremost, Shtrom's an advantage creator. Where many players rely on individual skill, he draws pressure to pass through it. A give-and-go style, proactive off-puck positioning, and a delay game combine to consistently create time and space for himself and teammates. Never one to settle for the low-percentage plays, he prefers to attack the inside, driving the net or spinning off a check before passing inside.

Along with the space creating skill, Shtrom brings defensive value and physical skills. He has a knack for poking pucks away at the right moments. He turns to get defenders on his back and skates through their hands before peeling off the boards.

Shtrom's production hasn't taken off, which at his stature means he's not likely to get picked this season. But if he improves his tools – skating and handling, especially – he could become a big scorer in a year or two.

GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: January 7th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

An even quieter game for Shtrom in this one. There's legitimate flashes of higher-end sense in Shtrom's game -- a play in the second was an example of that. A beautiful delay and handle allowed Shtrom to punch-turn away from pressure, making a play into the middle of the ice. The issue is he is physically limited by his tools. He threw multiple hope passes in this one -- off of endboard retrievals and the perimeter of the ice. Some one-touch passing in transition and off-puck filing to high-danger areas. He had a slick handle in his defensive zone -- popped the puck through a defender's legs to get clear of the pressure. Clearly not a pick for our board but he could be a good WHLer in years to come.

Daniel Gee: January 6th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs Prince George Cougars - WHL

Pretty bland performance by Shtrom who saw demotion to the fourth line about halfway through this game. He flashed high-end ability -- in the first he made a perfect board bank that sent a man in with limited pressure. Later in the game he drilled a Cougar on the near boards, stripped the puck and chipped it into the middle -- no pass reception but that was on his teammate. Shtrom lost a lot of physical battles -- he tries to leverage strength on his stick instead of incorporating his body into plays. He has pace but it is often misguided and without direction (ex. Reactionary in defensive zone while pressure pushing). Not impressed with his skating -- waddles side-to-side in his forward stride and has limited pick-up from stride-to-stride. Firmly a F-grade for our board.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

Shtrom struggled with backpressure in this game. The pinching blue-liner kept cutting off his exit, and instead of resetting, he forced plays up the boards. Entries weren't much better. There were moments of intelligence, like cutting back, deking inside, and passing to a moving teammate. Always involved defensively, working to get above the puck carrier, angling plays wide, and disrupting the puck carrier. Offensively, he didn't get anything going with the puck, other than his usually off-puck stuff. He clears passing lanes, gets open between defenders, and effectively supports the play. A crafty double cut in the corner could've shook pressure, but he didn't check to see if the defender actually fell for the deception -- he didn't. He didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 2nd, 2022 - Everett Silvertips vs. Brandon Wheat Kings - WHL

Shtrom was one of the best players in this game. Scored by reloading high, sprinting down the middle, and one-timing a pass into the back of the net -- an NHL goal. Assist was even more impressive: stole possession, poked the puck through a defender's legs, deceived the defender while he waited for his teammate to arrive in space, then passed off the backhand. A few other sequences highlighted his physical skills, getting pressure on his back, timing cutbacks, and quite literally shaking pressure. One sequence led to a crafty pass into the slot, that only didn't result in a chance because his teammate was late to recognize the play. Shtrom did the usual stuff in transition and defensively: he angles, works hard, and looks to draw pressure before passing through it. He has an NHL brain. The skating's worrying. He doesn't get enough depth; his strides lack power and his edges only provide separation because of his timing and puck protection. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 11th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Shtrom had a lot of interesting qualities: pre-scanning on retrievals then moving pucks to the middle, one-touch/quick possession passing skill, give-and-gos, and a change-of-pace game. Creates advantages with his passing, but his teammates rarely take advantage. He's also prone to offloading the puck too early, and lacks the quickness and handling skill to escape pressure with the carry. He's an effective physical player through body positioning and keeping defenders on his back, but doesn't take advantage of it much. An intelligent support player, getting open in the slot between defenders. Anticipates passing windows, intercepting pucks and closing them down. Not dynamic; tools might be too limiting. Curious to watch him this season -- there are real flashes of NHL intelligence.

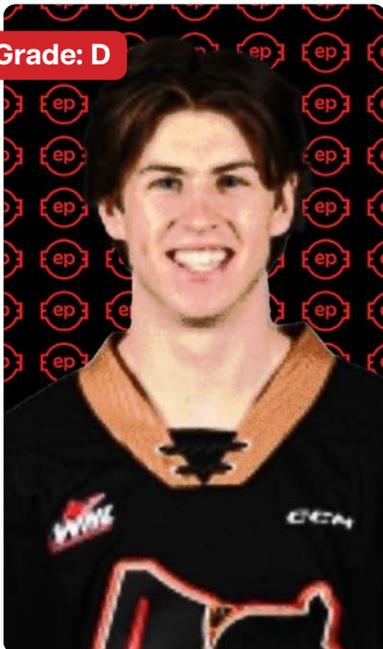
Mitchell Brown: November 20th, 2021 - Winnipeg Ice vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Shtrom checks off a ton of boxes in the decision-making department. There's the detail reads: well-timed stickchecks and engagements, give-and-goes in transition, and off-puck movement and support in OZP. But there are high-level reads here, too. He draws pressure towards him, then passes -- like in the NZ where he got four players headed in his direction and spun around for a quick pass open inside lane. He makes subtle adjustments in his passes to increase their odds of getting through, and he generally times his passes at the right time. He's more of a skilled skater than a mechanically sound one, using the heel-to-heel and punch turns (at the right times, too), but his stride is short and lacks ankle flexion. Hands are problem, with an over-and-down motion that operates in rhythm with his feet. He's too passive with the puck at times. Definitely one of the more interesting players from the WHL for 2023. He clearly has an NHL brain, but the mechanics require lots of work.

Mitchell Brown: November 6th, 2021 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Shtrom's an intelligent player let down by his skating and handling. He attacks the inside at the right times, times his engagements to steal possession, and identifies space. Where many players stand around the net, he flares wide and looks to move into space as he anticipates a passing lane or rebound. Reads incoming pressure and establishes body positioning at the right times. His stride is too short with a lack of ankle flexion. Hands and feet work in rhythm, with his handling hindered by an exaggerated over-and-back motion. He's an NHL thinker without the primary tools to accompany it. Strength will help the skating, but the hands will need to follow.

Grade: D



Oliver Tulk

AGE 17.655 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'8"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Calgary Hitmen	WHL	68	24	36	60	0.88

SCOUTING REPORT

Despite being a top prospect entering the WHL, it's taken a while for Oliver Tulk to show his full skill set.

In the first half of the season, he was mostly a straight-line, single-speed attacker. When he could zip past opponents, he showed NHL skill, but more often than not, his rush patterns led to turnovers or locked him to the outside.

That started to change down the stretch, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a March game report: "He's become way more proactive as a passer. He gets the puck, moves it instantly, and relocates. Spots teammates through layers and has the skill to connect under pressure."

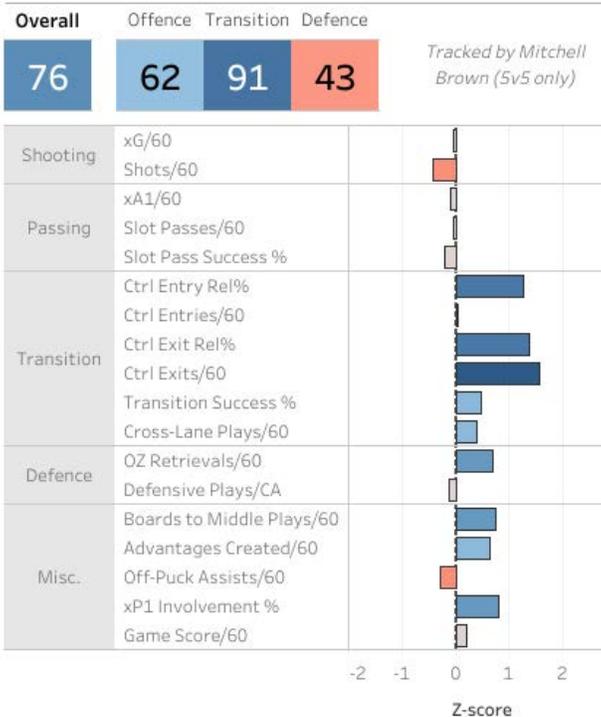
The give-and-go game better suits Tulk's skill level, as he's not a dynamic skater or puckhandler. Instead, he's an adaptable passer, morphing the release point of the pass to the lane to ensure the puck gets through, and an NHL-calibre shooter off the pass. And he's an overwhelming pressure machine, taking the extra stride to skate through the hands of the opponent instead of reaching.

To take the next step, Tulk must develop a stronger delay game while weeding out of the hurried, low-percentage plays. If he does it, he could become a top scorer in the WHL, and the NHL will be within reach.

Oliver Tulk

F | Calgary Hitmen | WHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 125.5



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

A bit of mixed game from Tulk. The motor's always there. The physical skills are consistent. He gets low and skates into the hands of opponents. An intelligent off-puck player across the ice. The issue has been the puck game. This game, he was mostly back to the straight-line, single-speed plays that keep him to the outside. To his credit, there were a couple of advantage-creating breakout passes under pressure. Not a pick this year, but I think he has a 90-plus point season in his WHL future if he learns figures out to better maximize his skills.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Another strong performance from Tulk, who has really seemed to turn a corner lately. He's way more proactive as a passer. He gets the puck, moves it instantly, and relocated. Spots teammates through layers and has the skill – backhand, slip – to connect under pressure. He's a possible NHL-calibre shooter alongside scoring instincts and intelligent positioning (especially visible when he pushes off defenders at the perfect moment). High activity rate away from the puck. There are issues, however. He doesn't look before making plays too often, leading to no-percentage shots with viable options and spin-around passes to no one. He's not a manipulator or especially aware of how to react to the momentum of his opponents. Even if he can figure out the latter, he could become a top WHL scorer.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

An impressive defensive game from Tulk, even if he got crushed in shot share. He outworked opponents and anticipated their next attack. Grabbed a couple of open-ice stops by meeting the puck carrier at the time of reception. With the puck, this was more of the usual from Tulk. He tries to outrace defenders with limited success. He doesn't deceive or change pace. He's best when he gets the puck in a favourable position as he's both shooting threat and clever passer, but it crumbles when he has to be the primary puck carrier. He's solid, but tough to imagine he's a pick this year. He could become one down the line, given his work rate, off-puck game, and flashes of high-end offence.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Tulk grabbed a powerplay assist with a fake shot pass reception, circling back, then firing a look-off cross-slot pass for the one-timer. That was it for his offensive impact in this game, but his reads were so much better than normal. Previously, he's been a sprinter. He skates in straight lines, ignoring anything that isn't directly ahead of him. In this game, he used weaving rush patterns, made proactive transition passes, and even delayed instead of pushing forward. He looked like a potentially dynamic WHL scorer. That's a big step. Maybe not a pick this year, but if he keeps adding nuance to his game, he'll be worth a pick as a re-entry.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Tulk's an easy player to appreciate because of his motor and determination. He takes punishment to make his plays. And this was a more nuanced game than usual. Where he normally sprints, he made proactive passes. Not a delay game, but a proactive give-and-go style. He even manipulated pressure with a head fake before getting a clean entry. There results speak for themselves. He created more scoring chances than normal, both for himself and his linemates. Turnovers were down; more of his rush attempts were completed. This was the Tulk I've been waiting to see. He could score a ton next season if he keeps this up.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Tulk's consistent. He's always working. He sprints from one check to the next, scanning for threats along the way. Cuts through the hands of opponents and even throws the odd reverse hit. All-out on every race for a loose puck. The skill's on there in spurts. He forces plays. Doesn't deceive. Doesn't alter puck positioning pre-pass to get underneath or around the opponent's

stick. But he has the right ideas, save for when he sprints and misses the trailer. He has scoring instincts, too. He slips around defenders, wins inside positioning, and pops into space at the right moments. Not sure this is his year, but he's always impressive.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Discipline aside, this was the usual from Tulk. He's a worker. Takes the extra stride to come across the hips, win positioning, and secure possession. He sprints from one assignment to the next. Lots of pressure combined with anticipation – gets lots of steals. With the puck, he's close to a breakout. He's a straight-line attacker with no delay game and a tendency to skate into coverage instead of taking advantage of gaps. But he also has scoring instincts, down-low playmaking, and a physical element that helps him get pucks off the boards. Perhaps this won't be his year, but there's upside here.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Tulk scored with one of the best plays of the game, starting a give-and-go on the powerplay, repositioning high, and one-timing the return pass far side around the goaltender. Understands how to get open, how to reposition inside space, and how to weapon that into offence, earning him a pair of scoring chances at 5-on-5 along with the goal. Flashes an NHL shot, especially the one-timer. Adaptable and powerful. Grabbed an assist by bursting wide, faking the shot, and feathering a backhand pass into the slot. He's limited as a playmaker otherwise, though. It's mostly because of his rushes. They are always wide lane, single-speed plays that rarely feature any lateral movement. Even when he gains the zone, he's stuck to the outside (not a manipulator). But he flashes better habits on the breakout, and he's a really sturdy defensive player. Works hard to win positioning, supports down low, and backtracks like a pro already. If the skating and hands were a grade higher, he'd be a pick. But with barely average projections in both, he faces an upward climb unless the puck game is better than I saw in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Tulk's ice time slipped in the third period but he was quite effective in this game. He's very straight-line, single-speed with the puck, but also shows several projectable elements. Gets open between defenders, constantly adjusting his positioning to the passing lane. Takes pucks off the boards, gets inside, and passes to teammates around the slot. Always comes across the hips to win possession and seal off back pressure. Timing and anticipating on the forecheck leads to steals. He's roughly average mechanically, which makes it an uphill battle for him. But he's solid. Needs to show more dynamic qualities to get drafted, but he'll be a good pro.

Grade: D



Logan Wormald

AGE 17.093 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lethbridge Hurricanes	WHL	66	22	22	44	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

Logan Wormald was one of the WHL's many standout producers as a draft-minus one player, scoring 0.69 per game in his rookie year. He looked poised for a big season.

Unfortunately, that didn't happen. His production dropped a tick to 0.67 and, for most of the season, his game remained limited by the same issues.

First, the reasons to believe in Wormald's upside as a pro player: He has goalscoring upside. Where many players tie up around the net, he stays open between defenders, stick loaded for a blistering one-timer. He turns tricky passes into catch-and-release shots, even under pressure, and he can rip pucks off the rush.

Defence is also a strength of Wormald's. He's a buzzsaw. He sprints from one check to the next, but rarely overextends. His proactive off-puck reads combine with that motor to make him a disruption machine.

Wormald's game is limited in the same ways as many junior scorers. He's predictable. "He plays too fast, charging down the boards with the puck with better options," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown wrote in an April game report. "He doesn't put himself in positions to make defenders move their feet laterally. Lots of blind plays, too."

While there were flashes of passing skill and pro-level rush patterns from Wormald, these were few and far between. His shooting skill, work rate, and defensive instincts give him more runway than many late-round flyers. With better puck habits, he could take off next season.

Logan Wormald

F | Lethbridge Hurricanes | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 96.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 5th, 2023 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Wormald has a lot of qualities: off-the-pass scoring ability, off-puck offensive reads, non-stop puck pursuit, and proactive defensive zone positioning. He plays fast. But this season seemed mostly stagnant for him as a creator. He plays too fast, charging down the boards with the puck with better options. Doesn't put himself in positions to make defenders move their feet laterally. Lots of blind plays, too. Given his tools and work rate, he'd likely be a pick with more playmaking. There's nothing wrong with being a shooter, but shooters have to create opportunities with deception, weaving rushes, give-and-gos, and use the threat of the shot to set up other opportunities. Without, he's simply too inconsistent with the puck. Perhaps a team takes him late, but he tracks as more of an AHL scorer, even with several NHL-calibre skills.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Wormald grabbed an assist by taking a cross-slot pass and stepping away from the defender to prepare the lane. The rest of the game was classic Wormald. He plays too fast. He sprints ahead and misses opportunities to create with passes. The defence is a strength. He's proactive and engaged; he eliminates lanes down low and sprints back high to contest shots. He could be a late-rounder. He will pop next season; that might be more his time for draft purposes.

Mitchell Brown: January 27th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Wormald was everywhere in this game. He's a buzzsaw, bouncing from one opponent to the next. He keeps the puck carrier wide without overextending and then jumps in for the steal. Always annoying people around the net. A lot of shooting skill shown in this game: one-timers under pressure and an in-stride wrister off the pass. He's a straight-line attacker in transition. But he did show a bit of vision and skill, connecting with the trailer with a slip pass. He doesn't play with much control, but the shooting skill and motor will keep me watching.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Wormald's a straightforward player, but he has a skill. The shot's the best example. His one-timer is blistering, he can two-touch passes and turn them into top-shelf goals, and he understands how to get open. He's not a manipulator or even much of a playmaker, which limits his creation. He gets stuck to the outside in transition and he's easily defended unless the defence is passively gapped. But his motor and defence are both potential strengths. And he flashes more proactive playmaking when his teammates are up in the play. Could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Wormald has some nice plays, mostly from the perimeter. He stayed wide to get open, then made the best play once the puck arrived on his stick. Once, it was a tricky one-timer. Another, it was a quick pass to the trailer for a chance. Always stays between checks, moving around and behind defenders with his stick ready for the pass. He has a bit of skill along the boards, getting defenders on his back, receiving pucks in his hip pocket, and cutting back as the defender leans on him. Sometimes, he chose the wrong play, but the base is there. Transition game is variable, with pressure zapping his effectiveness. Won't go through defenders, leading to dumps out or neutral plays. He's a hard-worker on the backcheck, but his reads are mostly reactionary. Skating could be a problem, lacking depth and quickness. He could be a late-rounder. He's going to score a lot soon.

Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Wormald's limited by his transition game and playmaking. So many blind plays and straight-line attacks. Opponents easily read him because he actively takes away options from himself. It's frustrating. But he has skill and a high work rate. He nearly scored with a tricky inside leg one-timer and he shows some creativity as a passer. Always working in pursuit; he takes the extra stride and steps into the opponent's space. Doesn't just stop high, either. He proactively works down low and reads the play. He has details, but the tools and lack of dynamic skill are issues. Doesn't look like a pick for us.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Wormald scored a powerplay goal by reading the slot opening, dashing in, and one-timing puck far side. He generally understands how to get open in all situations. A smart support player and a hard-worker. But he didn't show any other skills. He rushes straight into traffic. No patience, vision, or skating skills shown. He's predictable and easily kept to the outside. Plays too fast with the puck. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Impressive performance from Wormald, even if he wasn't creating high-danger offence. Always looks to make a play inside after winning possession, whether driving play himself or passing. Uses his teammates at the right moments. Hand-eye coordination to knock down tricky passes, including a waist-high pass that led to scoring chance while falling. Consistently positioning between defenders, staying in space while taking away defenders' sticks and clearing the passing lane. Shot lacks power and control, but he shoots in stride and one-times puck inside his feet. Underhandle. Stride's limiting. Lacks hip engagement and drops his torso to the ice. Lacks power and edge control. Some poor plays related to a lack of scanning in this game and a preference for out-speeding. High motor, always engaged on the backcheck and forecheck. Looks for contacts, tries to win body positioning, and anticipates interceptions. Tools might be too limiting, but he's an intriguing prospect.

Grade: D



Patriks Bērziņš

AGE 19.047 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 30, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	5	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Danbury Jr. Hat Tricks	NAHL	15	3.67	.920	0
Tri-City Storm	USHL	16	2.66	.890	1
Latvia U20	WJC-20	6	2.47	.914	0

SCOUTING REPORT

Patriks Bērziņš is a 20-year-old Latvian goaltending prospect with a commitment to the University of Maine for the 2023-24 season.

After strong appearances internationally, he was able to work his way into 16 games at the USHL level and finish the year as the Central Scouting's 22nd-ranked goaltender in North America.

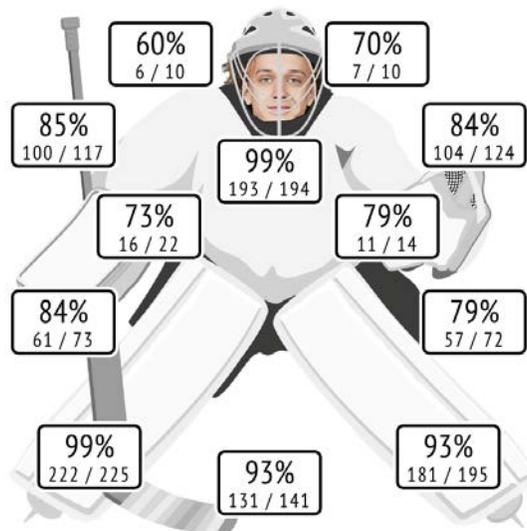
A strong skater with good command of his edges, Bērziņš excels when the puck is worked around the zone. He has good attention to detail in terms of his positioning, and rarely falls behind the speed of play.

He's predominantly a skate-on-post goaltender when the puck is worked below the goal line. This benefits him with very strong pushes and transitions out of reverse-VH, but it could lead to some awkward post seals and goals that squeak in at the side of the net.

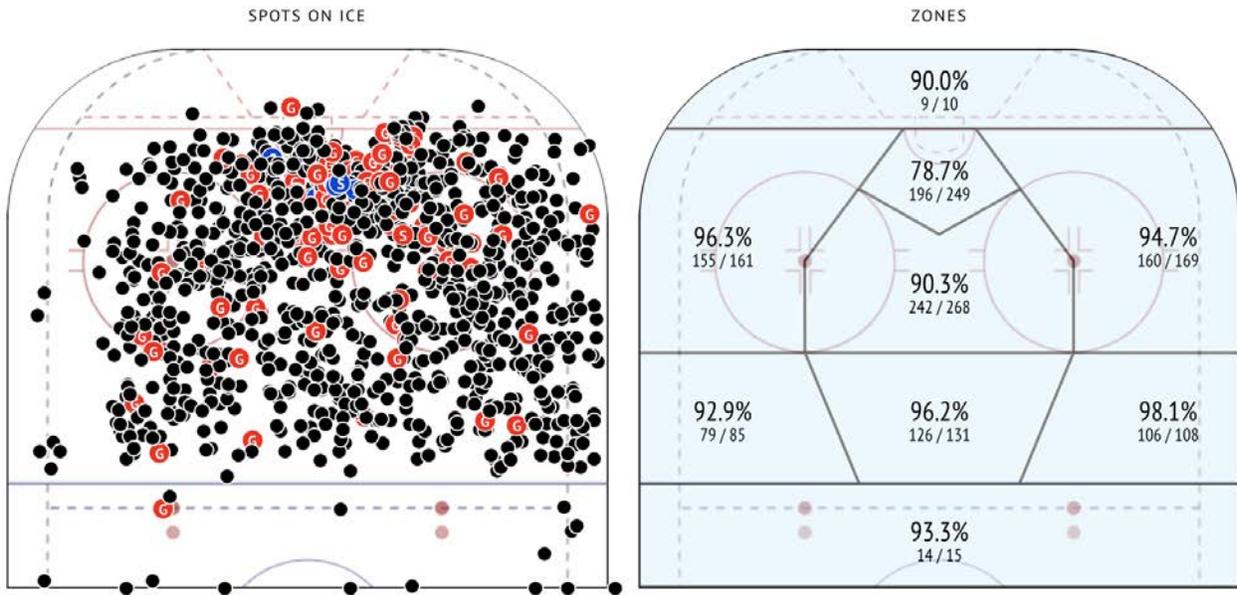
Bērziņš still plays a fairly loose and aggressive style. As a 19-year-old you would like to see more maturity in his game at this point, but it's clear he believes the aggressive style works for him. If a team selects him, they will learn very quickly to protect against back door options when he is in the net.

A few years playing NCAA hockey will be wonderful for his development, but it will take a lot to go his way to elevate from becoming simply a professional-calibre goaltender to an NHL goaltender.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: D



Ian Blomquist

AGE 19.468 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 29, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

G	Right
Position	Catches
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	3.5	5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Västerås IK J20	J20 Nationell	5	3.18	.892	0
Västerås IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	17	2.97	.904	1
Sweden U20 (all)	International-Jr	2	2.00	.929	0

SCOUTING REPORT

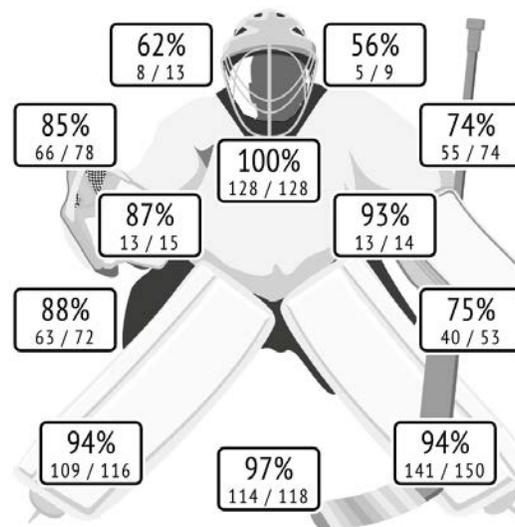
Ian Blomquist is a 20-year-old, full-right goaltender that has been trending upwards while playing for Västerås IK of HockeyAllsvenskan.

A goalie with good size, the extra few years of development have really helped his game in terms of being able to understand and use his frame effectively. When it all comes together, Blomquist looks like he could be a very calm and capable professional goaltender. Up to this point, he hasn't been able to show that version of himself consistently enough though.

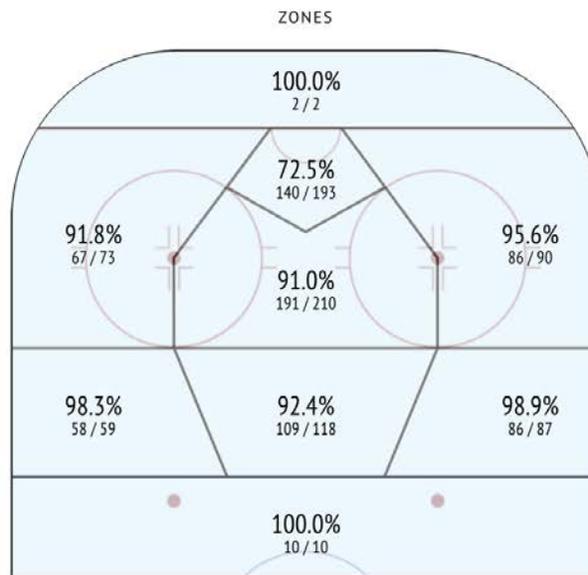
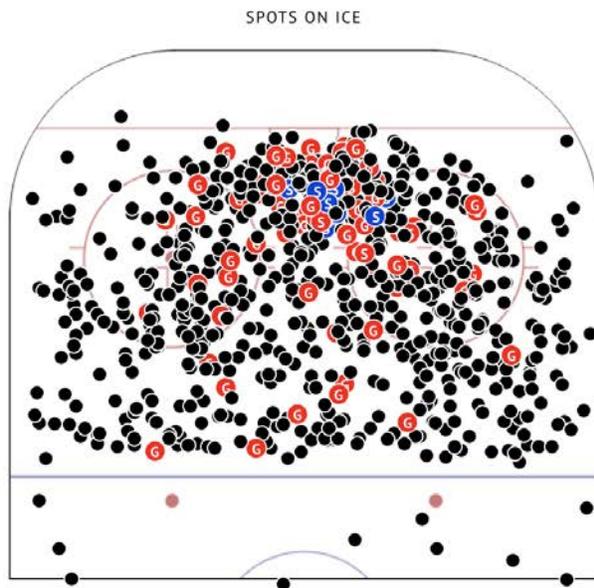
Blomquist is still marred by a few bad habits that he cannot seem to shake. He loves to employ the overlap technique off the rush, and is constantly sliding outside of the frame on plays that force him to move laterally. This means he is searching for his posts a lot when the play is worked below the goal line, and his overall post integration can be incredibly sloppy as a result. During scrambles, he can never seem to get his foot in the right spot on the post. That also means he can't seal properly and it can lead to goals that just squeak between the arm and post. It can lead to a quick downward spiral.

Playing in a bit of a disjointed environment recently, Blomquist routinely showcased his ability to make a big first save. It was saves two and three in the sequence that he usually required some assistance that his defence wasn't able to offer. With his size and the abilities that he has shown in flashes, it would be a shame for a goaltender like Blomquist to fail to develop some consistency – and that's the risk that a team drafting Blomquist would be taking.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: D



Charlie Robertson

AGE 17.455 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'2"	161 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	3.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	5	3.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
North Bay Battalion	OHL	21	3.17	.892	3

SCOUTING REPORT

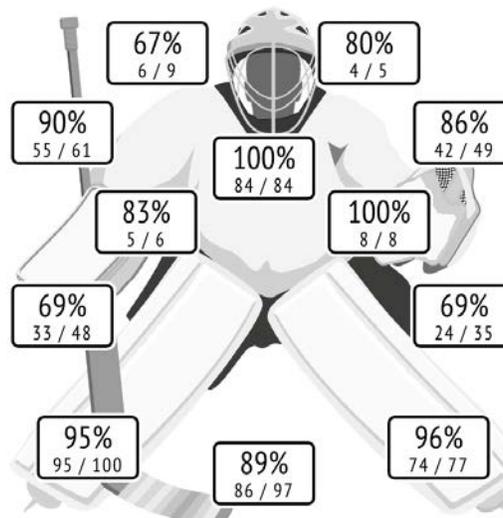
With only 21 appearances in the regular season for the OHL's North Bay Battalion, the viewings were few and far between for Charlie Robertson. Despite the lack of overall game experience, Robertson managed to turn heads with his raw ability.

Although Robertson can get a bit aggressive and slide-happy when the game speeds up around him, that shouldn't be a major concern because he is able to bail himself out with his edgework and skating ability the majority of the time. With age and more game experience, one can hope that he develops the patience he will need at the next level.

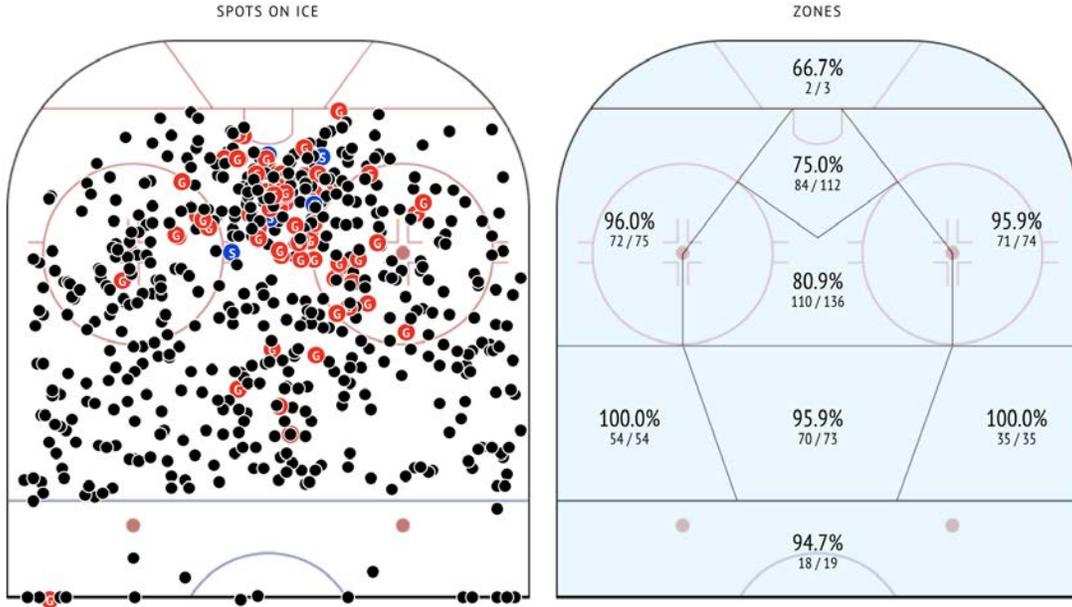
Robertson's not afraid to pull off a bold move when the timing is right. He reads plays well and is right more often than not when he makes an aggressive movement. At times he can be a bit slow moving across, but is good at reading when he has time to take more depth on a shooter that is bearing down. He does allow some frustrating goals on clean shots through the armpit and under the arms. On the flip side, he's above average on sharp-angle plays by rarely being caught flat along the goal line. Robertson has an excellent hinge to stay on angle, and is very situationally aware.

Getting quicker and stronger is a priority for every young goaltender, but it especially rings true for Robertson. His style of play relies on it, so any team drafting him will be very motivated to see him play as many games as possible next season. Robertson would give a team selecting him in a later round great low-risk, high-reward value.

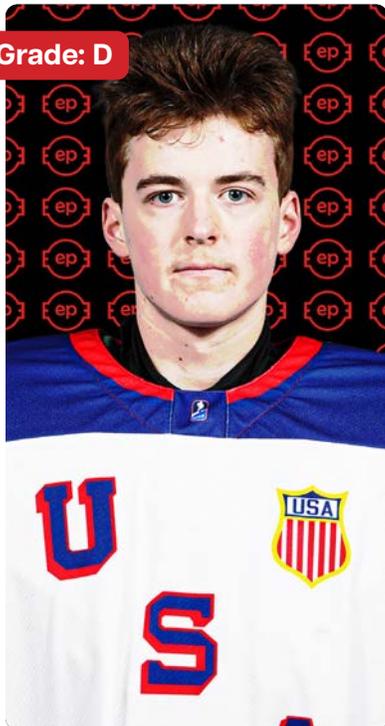
SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: D



Hampton Slukynsky

AGE 17.205 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4.5	3.5	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Team Sanford Power	UMHSEHL	10	2.51	.939	0
Warroad High	USHS-MN	30	1.47	.941	9
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	1	0.00	1.000	0
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	2	0.00	1.000	0
USA U18	WJC-18	1	0.00	1.000	-

SCOUTING REPORT

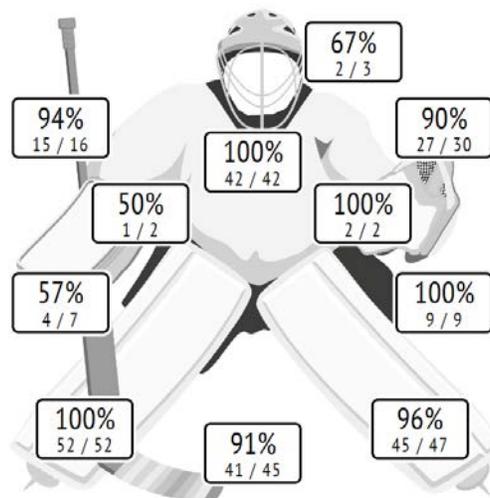
Hampton Slukynsky isn't a goaltender that you will see at the very top of many draft lists in 2023, but he is a fascinating study and a possible long-term project worth taking on.

He plays with a lot of enthusiasm, and has a fairly aggressive style to match. You will normally see him set up with his heels well outside of the crease on rush chances. He catches many shooters by surprise with just how explosive he is laterally. His flexibility also comes into play, taking away the lower portion of the net with ease while sliding across.

Playing high school hockey, it's always tough to get a read on a goaltender based on the level of competition. There is some concern around some of his technical details, like footwork around the post and his post integration. His post seals also leave a lot to be desired, but hopefully that can improve as he gets physically stronger.

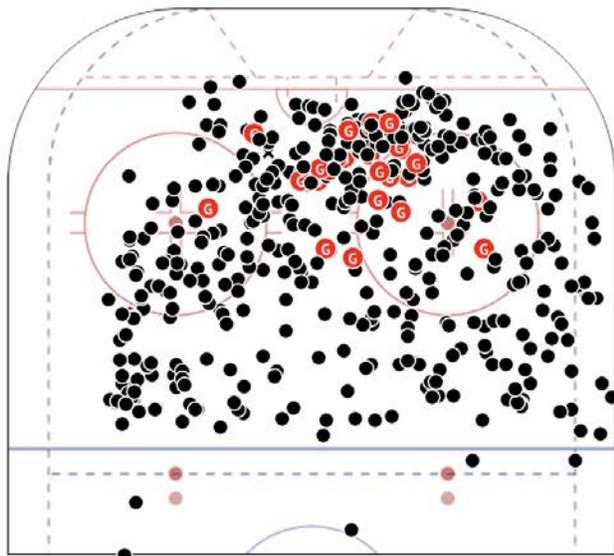
It will take years of developing for Slukynsky to make it as an NHL goaltender, but the framework is there. Like many goaltenders, he has the raw ability, but his dynamic approach to playing the position is what sets him apart.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

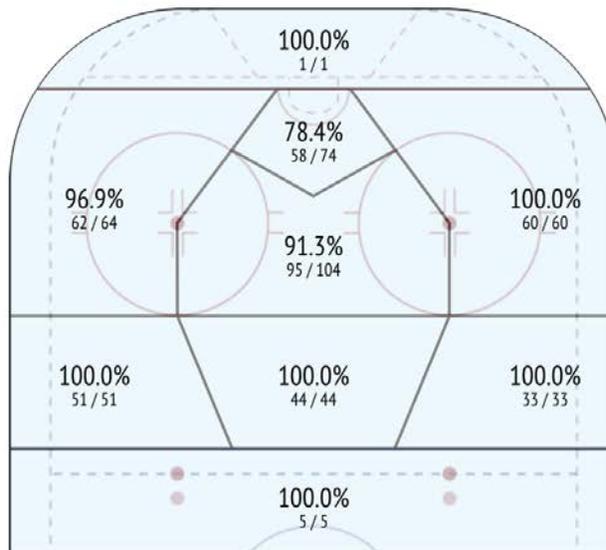


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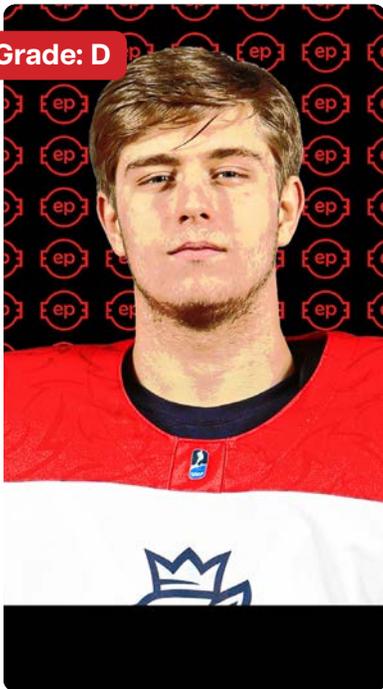
SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES



Grade: D



Jan Špunar

AGE 18.296 DATE OF BIRTH May 30, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'3" Height	185 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	4.5 Transitions	3.5 Hands
3.5 Tracking	4.5 Post	5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Portland Winterhawks	WHL	31	2.61	.908	0
Czechia U20 (all)	International-Jr	1	5.00	.815	0

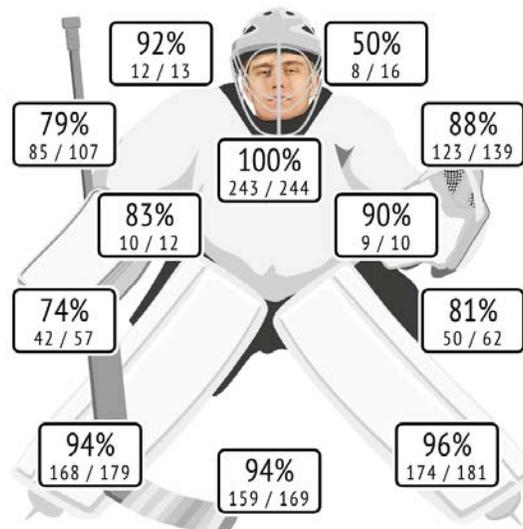
SCOUTING REPORT

A year of development in North America exposed Jan Špunar to a new region of scouts after spending 2021-22 entirely in his native Czechia. He used the opportunity to post a .908 save percentage playing 31 games for a strong Portland Winterhawks team in the WHL.

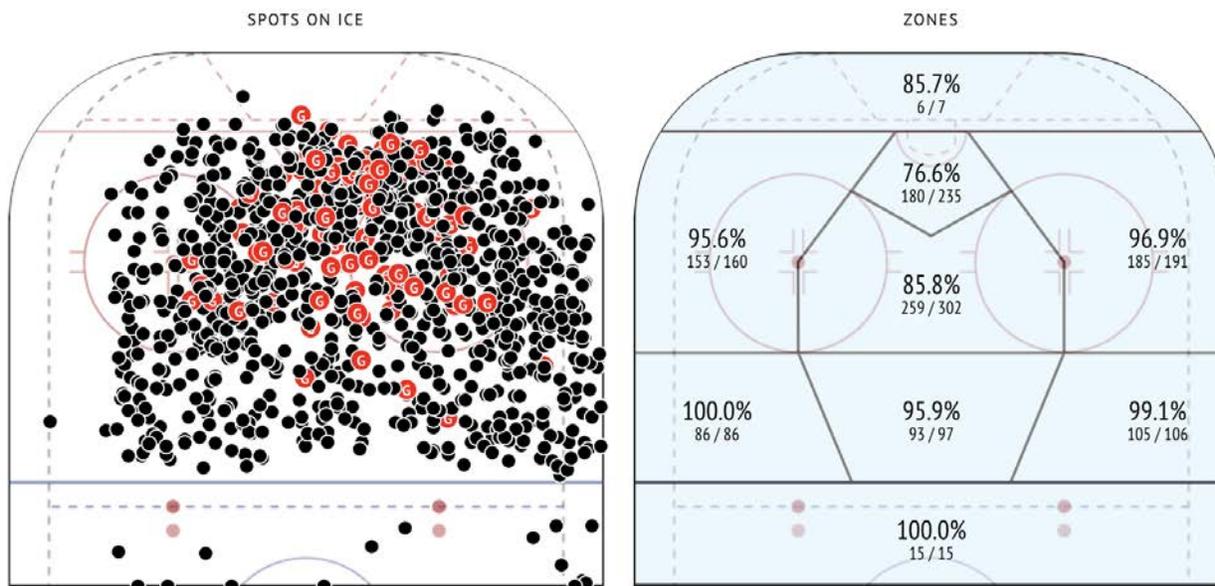
Špunar plays beyond his years in terms of situational awareness. He positions himself smartly, utilizes his size, and leans on his technical foundation to get by. He's rarely beaten over the shoulder on clean shots, and takes away the top half of the net effectively when using the overlap.

He certainly gets the most out of his abilities with the way that he plays. Distressingly, those abilities are the major question surrounding Špunar. With a game built around split-second play-reading and positional decisions, will he be able to continue playing that way against quicker opponents?

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: D



Tomáš Suchánek

AGE 19.381 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 30, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

G

Position

Left

Catches

6'2"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

4.5

Transitions

5

Hands

5

Tracking

3.5

Post

4

Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Tri-City Americans	WHL	46	3.05	.912	1
Czechia U20	WJC-20	7	1.52	.934	1
Czechia U20 (all)	International-Jr	8	1.69	.924	1

SCOUTING REPORT

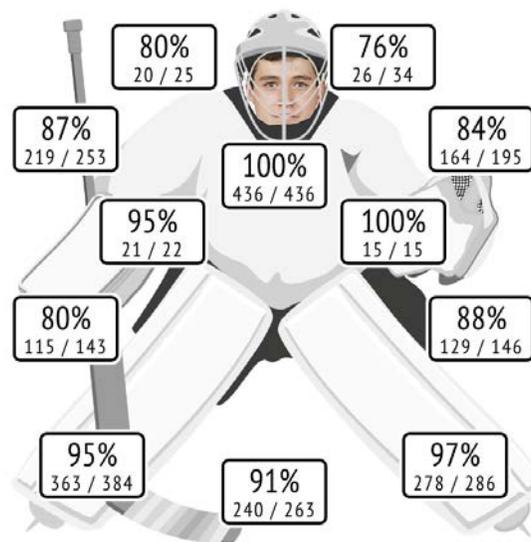
The 20-year-old Tomáš Suchánek played the hero for Czechia at the 2023 World Juniors. His brilliant .934 performance had armchair GMs around the globe demanding an inquiry into why he wasn't drafted previously, despite having been available. Backing it up with a strong season in the WHL, Suchánek saw his stock rise even more.

Suchánek plays more of a rhythm-based style than you would expect for a goaltender that measures in at 6-foot-2. That means his approach is aggressive, he takes a lot of depth on the rush, and relies on his play-reading to make the right move instead of sitting back and letting the play come to him. That does mean you see some unfortunate ups and downs in the quality of his play.

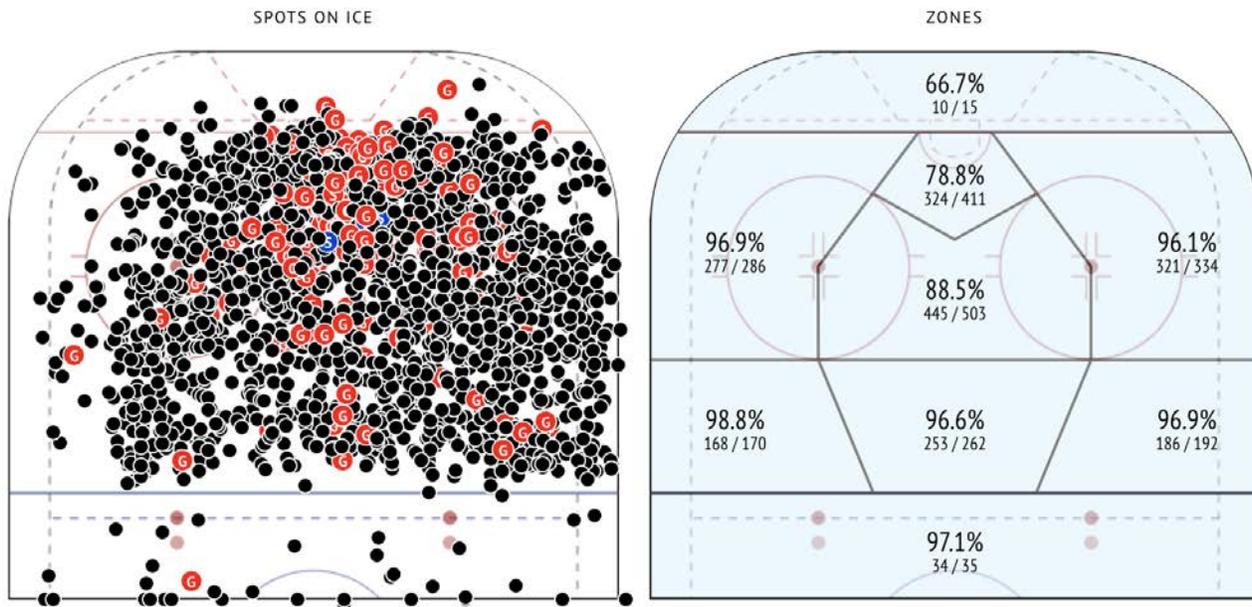
Excellent hand discipline and reactions set Suchánek apart from the rest. He really excels in this area, and cuts off many pucks before they even have a chance to rise above his shoulder. You would like to see some more refinement to his technical game, being an older potential draft pick. His post integration and footwork around the crease could both use some work.

Suchánek seems to have the tools and attitude for improvement, making him a very low risk, potential high reward goalie for a team late in the draft.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: D



Visa Vedenpää

AGE 17.348

DATE OF BIRTH May 11, 2005

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G
Position

Left
Catches

6'2"
Height

170 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4
Skating

4.5
Transitions

4
Hands

4
Tracking

5
Post

4.5
Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	2	2.50	.923	0
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	31	-	.886	-
Finland U18	WJC-18	1	2.00	.905	-
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	1.76	.905	0

SCOUTING REPORT

Visa Vedenpää is an exciting young goaltender in the Kärpät development system in Finland.

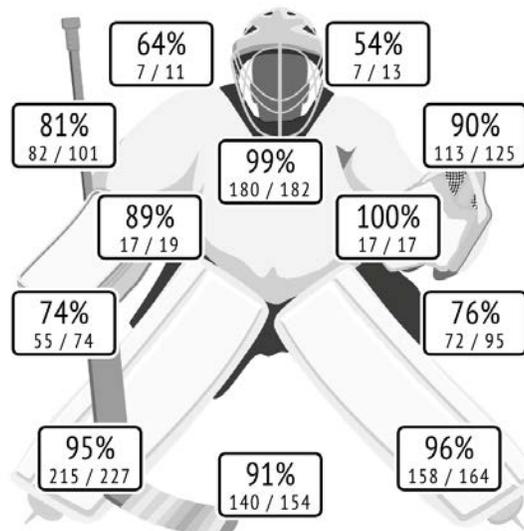
Playing with good instincts, he reacts well to broken or quick-developing plays. His strong technical base puts him into position to do that, because he stays within the frame and is rarely caught out of his net. He plays with moderate depth, with his heels generally at the top of the crease on plays off the rush.

Vedenpää doesn't have a particular attribute that stands out above the others, which could be seen as a red flag for some scouts. His skating ability might be his weakest aspect.

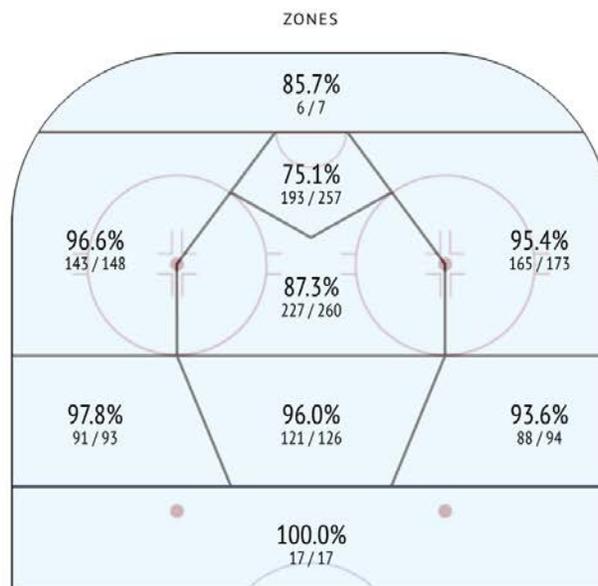
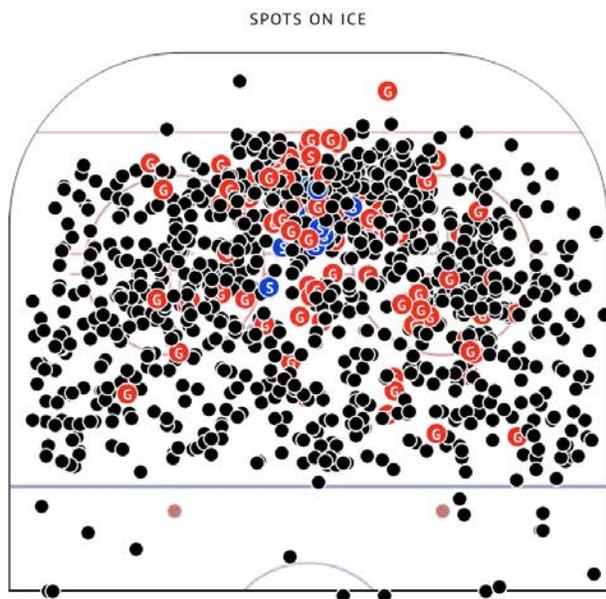
He likes to employ a high stance when the puck is worked around the zone, which is normally fine, but his choppy skating movements cause his head to move up and down far too much. This alters his eye-line as the shot is released, and could be leading to some tracking issues.

Vedenpää is a goaltender that certainly has some room for improvement, but a big year of development is coming up for him. An NHL team that sees promise in Vedenpää's overall skill set could take a shot at him and hope that a good summer, and some pro games under his belt are the recipe to taking his game to the next level.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



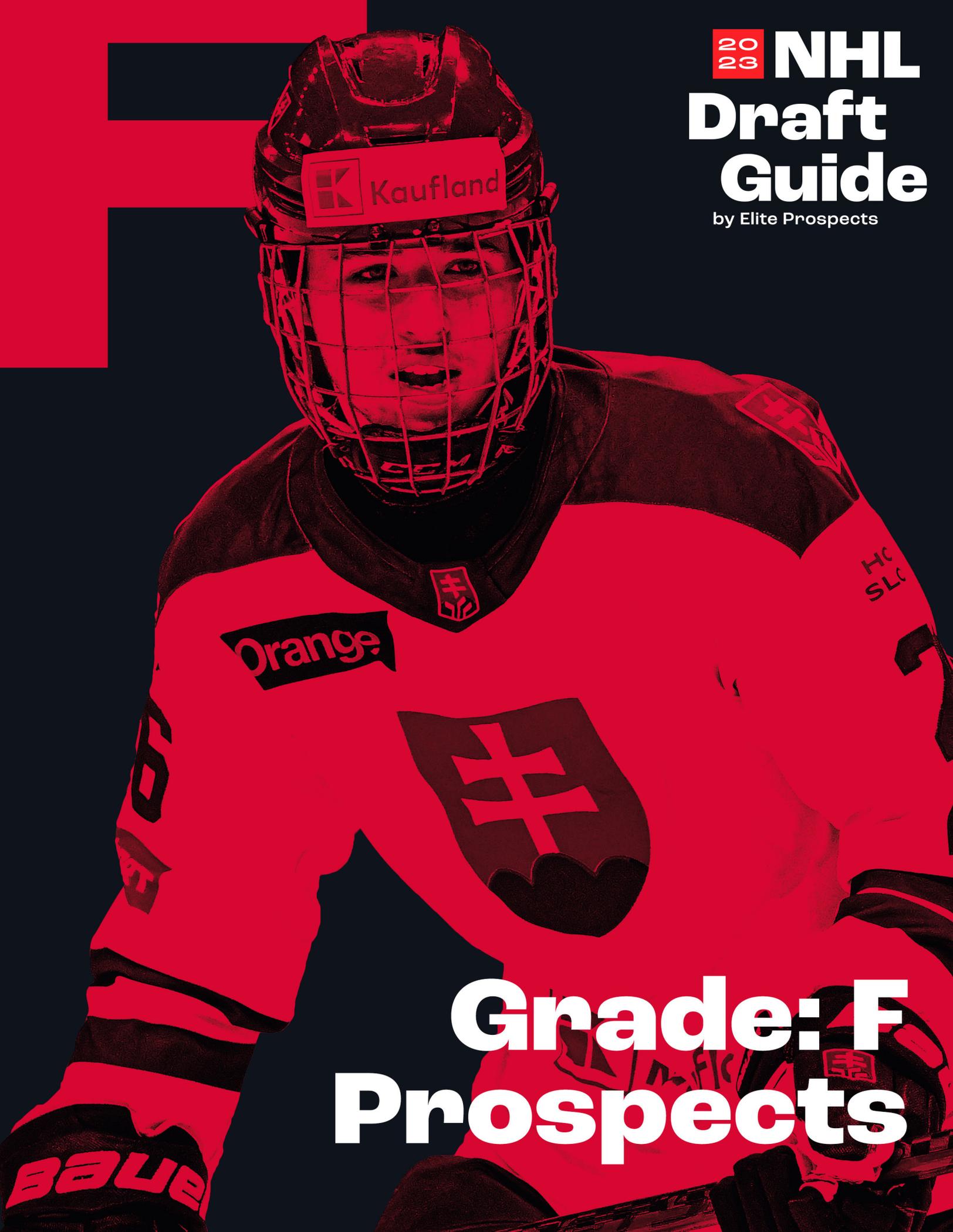
≡ SPOTS ON ICE



20
23

NHL Draft Guide

by Elite Prospects



Grade: F Prospects

BAUER

HC
SLC

Grade: F



Sam Court

AGE 18.690 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brooks Bandits	AJHL	52	13	59	72	1.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Sam Court was the Brooks Bandits' offensive driver from the blue line last season. His chemistry with some of the team's top scorers, like Aiden Fink and Hudson Malinoski only grew stronger as the season went on.

It also translated to International tournaments. Not only did Court score 72 points in 52 games in the AJHL, but he also put up seven in six games at the World Junior A Championship for Canada West.

The defenceman's prime offensive role helped him develop his offensive instinct during the season. He became better at timing his pinches in the offensive zone, at evading forecheckers low in the defensive zone, and at faking defenders at the point with shoulder and skate movements to get shots and passes through.

Court kept the puck in control of his team in the offensive zone. He looked for the next pass option up ice and connected with it, demonstrating in the process an ability to see through defensive layers and spot teammates for deflections and one-timer around the net.

"He tried hard defensively, too, stick on puck and quick rotations," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an April report. "He looked engaged. I'm not sure if his skills are projectable, however."

Although Court showed many offensive talents in the AJHL, we have some doubts about his overall technical ability. His wide skating may prevent him from translating his offensive game to the NCAA. It's also likely that the 19-year-old defencemen, a re-entry in this draft, benefited from his environment – from his team's high talent level and numerous set plays. We want to see him translate his creative game to the NCAA before projecting him to an NHL role.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 25th, 2023 - Spruce Grove Saints vs. Brooks Bandits - AJHL

As usual, Court was all over the ice, hyper active in all three zones. He skates a bit wide, which reduces his agility, but he still manages to make plays offensively. He made some creative passes, moved to find and create lanes to teammates in the slot,

pinched hard on opponents in the offensive zone, and constantly improved the location of shot. He tried hard defensively, too, stick on puck and quick rotations. He looked engaged. I'm not sure if his skills are projectable, however.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Brooks Bandits vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Court is hyperactive, but I'm not sure he's creative. He's mostly good at hitting open teammates and following set plays. He scans on retrievals, plays defence aggressively, takes hits to make plays, and constantly move along the offensive blue line, but his skating is a clear below-average projection. It's wide and he's not very agile. I don't really see an NHLer.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Blackfalds Bulldogs vs. Drumheller Dragons - AJHL

Court is more effective at this level than Celebrini, but I'm not sure it will stay that way. He made lob passes in this one, rotated well around the ice, attempted give-and-goes with teammates, and pinched hard in the offensive zone. I like his motor, but his skills feel a bit capped at this level of play. The hockey sense is more of a 4.5-5 than an above-average mark. Still, he has a lot of modern offensive patterns in his game and he's willing to participate in plays. That's projectable.

David St-Louis: December 16th, 2022 - Canada West vs. Sweden - WJAC

Court played at the point on the powerplay, like he usually does with his team. The chemistry with Fink continued. He faked before most of his passes, made short movements, short slides along the blue line to try and create a shot or low-pass opening. His handling is not traditional. His top elbow is very elevated. I saw some good transition play. Not sure the mechanical ability and sense support an NHL projection. I feel he's more of a good Junior defenceman, who works well with his teammates than a prospect.

Grade: F



Owen Beckner

AGE 17.548 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Salmon Arm Silverbacks	BCHL	53	17	33	50	0.94

SCOUTING REPORT

Instead of taking the major junior route, Owen Beckner opted to play in the BCHL with the Salmon Arm Silverbacks to retain his NCAA eligibility.

In that setting, the 6-foot-2 centre put together a wonderfully productive draft year, scoring nearly a point per game, landing him third among BCHL draft-eligible players and tied for tops on the Salmon Arm Silverbacks. Beckner even helped push his BCHL club to the third round, where they ran into the buzzsaw Penticton Vees.

Inconsistent from viewing to viewing, there were times this season when Beckner looked like a play-driver. Large-ice manoeuvrability on the rush, triangle-based handles, delay elements, weight shifts, and even protection elements into power moves utilizing his frame – he looked dynamic on the rush. Conversely, there were viewings where Beckner looked behind the play, pushing a relatively low motor, going long stretches without even touching the puck.

“Beckner goes extremely long stretches without touching the puck,” Crossover scout Daniel Gee noted in an April game report. “Part of this is a pace issue – he really only revs up his motor when he has possession. This means he’s behind the play, especially in north-to-south track meets. The stride itself is prohibitive – missing a toe-flick to really power off his edge, recoveries are wide, and he mechanically degrades early in his shifts.”

The Victoria-born forward didn’t inspire much enthusiasm with his 5-on-5 play under sustained pressure. Fumbled pass receptions and failed catch-and-release shots limited his impact off the pass. There are some brilliant playmaking moments where Beckner showed layering, completing cross-crease and cross-hash passing plays. His frame helps him win battles and outmuscle defenders at the BCHL level. Whether it’s a positive or a negative, Beckner does come alive on the power play, layering deception as works downhill attacks on the left flank.

Beckner’s defensive habits may be the factor that gets him drafted. A robotic scanner, he scans the ice like an owl seeking out prey, his head constantly on a swivel. His tracking is outstanding, he switches so others can activate, and he targets sticks with disdain.

There wasn’t enough here to justify a spot on our board but it would be shocking if Beckner wasn’t selected given the positional value and the flashes of pro habits. He won’t drive play at higher levels, which will most likely impact his projection, but he could

be a contributor at the AHL, possibly rounding out as a utility fourth liner in the NHL.

Beckner is committed to Colorado College and has the option to return to the BCHL or hop over to the USHL and join the Tri-City Storm, who selected him in the fourth round of the Phase II USHL entry draft.

≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances from the 2022 BCHL Showcase

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 4th, 2023 - Salmon Arm Silverbacks vs Prince George Spruce Kings - BCHL Playoffs

Beckner goes extremely long stretches without touching the puck. Part of this is a pace issue -- he really only revs up his motor when he has possession. This means he's behind the play, especially in north-to-south track meets. The stride itself is prohibitive -- missing a toe-flick to really power off his edge, recoveries are wide, and he mechanically degrades early in his shifts. Unfortunately, he didn't flash the same dynamism in transition that I saw back in March -- basically, no controlled carry attempts other than a foray he had in the second. Beckner activated his inside edges, attempted to use some body manipulations and took a hard wrist shot in-stride off the top of the left-hand circle. He scored in this game and it was a high-end play. Off a first-period rush, Beckner cut off the left-wing off-puck, and shifted net-front, timing the activation with a point shot, tipping the puck home.

In sustained pressure, he had trouble creating 5-on-5 -- fumbled multiple pass receptions. Beckner was able to float into a pass off the far boards, leading to a one-touch shot that went well high. His frame helps him win battles on the perimeter -- he won a massive battle of that rebounded puck in the near corner, leveraging his strength to get under the puck. Skill pops when more ice opens up. On an early powerplay, Beckner walked downhill, loaded a shot, and hit a backdoor teammate with a perfect layered pass. Beyond that, a pretty quiet effort despite the production. He doesn't really create enough advantages and the creativity is just null. Too much inside-edge gliding to be a true contributor on every shift.

Was strong on the defensive puck end of the puck again -- continues to be scan robotically to mental map his DZ. Targeting a stick in the third and created a turnover, drives opponents wide, and covers for activating defenders. There is a significant amount of awareness here. F-grade for our final board but I wouldn't doubt some success at Colorado College.

Daniel Gee: March 4th, 2023 - Salmon Arm Silverbacks vs Cranbrook Bucks - BCHL

This is the best viewing of Beckner that I have had -- more puck touches, which in turn allowed him to access more of his tools. His large-ice manoeuvrability shocked me in this game. In the first on a zone exit, Beckner executed a nice backhand deke past an aggressive defender, weaving and entering on the right wing. He delayed but couldn't find support and dumped the puck in. On another third-period sequence, Beckner attacked far boards to near boards on an entry, beat a defender with a triangle-located handle, and attempted to power on the net. He protected with an outreached arm, popped the pick into the centre and created a significant amount of chaos. Saw some weight-shift use later in the game -- you can tell he wants to work give-and-goes just by his lane filling and pace increases, but it's hard to execute reliably at this level and just leads to empty crease crashes with no attempted pass back.

Looks like a different player with the man advantage. In the second he floated downhill off the far boards, stick set to shoot, timed his entry into a seam and wired a one-knee leveraged shot for a goal. He's hard on pucks and on the perimeter -- in the first, he stripped a puck away on the far boards that devolved to another one-time chance. He should have had another goal on a second-period powerplay -- slow on the catch-and-release backdoor; the extra half-second allowed the goalie to get across. Outside-edge use on cutbacks on the boards -- just so much more engaged than at the showcase.

Really developed defensively -- deep in the zone constantly helping win pucks into breakouts. Robotic scanner always mental mapping. Beckner rejected a dangerous puck in the hash marks just because his tracking and coverage were so thorough despite the success of this viewing. I doubt he's a pick for our board. He has size, the tools flash, he's producing, and the supporting cast around him can waiver, but he's not dynamic enough and the stride is pretty poor -- lacks a tow flick so there is little to no explosion, wide recoveries create shorter and shorter stride lengths, and his knees are rarely engaged fully. Looked like a D-grade in this one.

Daniel Gee: October 20th, 2022 - Salmon Arm Silverbacks vs. Coquitlam Express - BCHL

Beckner had a better game -- recorded an assist and was far more involved across all three zones, but his lack of pace was still quite evident across his shifts.

A collection of pro-habits gives Beckner an edge. In the first, he made a nice touch-pass exit, that allowed Brandon Santa Juana to break in on a power-move, behind the Express defence. Later after an off-puck shift to the backdoor, Beckner shifted to the net front completely screening the goaltender, leading to a point-shot goal. He was funnelling to the inside as well, but completely botched a catch-and-release shot in the slot -- bobbled the puck. Beckner is still frustratingly simple in sustained pressure. He lacks a manipulation element which means his shots are not only telegraphed but just straight-up inefficient. Out of all this are flashes of skill, however. In the first he executed a cutback behind the net to shake a defender, hooking a pass through the crease (no teammates picked up on it). Other than that he's a simple net front crasher who can send the occasional cross-crease through layers.

A more impactful defender in this one, he cleared multiple rebounds preventing the scoring chances. Beckner absolutely manhandled a puck carrier in transition, first stick-lifting and then physically running the puck carrier into the boards. I don't see a pick here for our board. Doesn't have enough tools to overcome his stride. (no extension, small heel kick in recovery, no power from push-offs). He's a hard worker, but practically everyone is as skill funnels upward.

Daniel Gee: October 18th, 2022 - Powell River Kings vs. Salmon Arm Silverbacks - BCHL

Beckner came into this game as one of the top scorers in the young BCHL season. Unfortunately, a top-heavy stride and a low pace of play limited his effectiveness across this game. Beckner produced next to nothing in transition because of these deficiencies. On top of this, he is missing some fairly essential pro-habits; no semblance of hip-pocket protection or higher-end handling ability. By virtue, most of Beckner's activity in this game came in sustained pressure. He plants as a net-front -- an odd way to use a player whose best asset is his playmaking. Beckner executed a bunch of cross-hash, cross-slot passes in this game. On a first-period power play, he layered a feed through multiple Kings' defenders, only to have his teammate botch a catch-and-release shot. His best play was later in the third; attacking downhill on the power play, Beckner crossed the puck to the weak side. After resetting, he two-touched a pass to a teammate, slipping a feed with a goalie swimming -- he's a magnet on-puck so his layering is even more dangerous. This was a rough viewing but he appears to be missing the separating tools beyond his passing to project up. Will see what tomorrow's performance is like.

J.D. Burke: October 18th, 2022 - Powell River Kings vs. Salmon Arm Silverbacks - BCHL

It took Beckner a solid two periods to generate much of anything offensively in this contest. Up to that point, I think the only notes I had for him were a pair of lines on his physicality on the forecheck. Eventually, though, as Beckner found his legs, I started to understand why he entered the BCHL Showcase with some name value. He's clearly a skilled passer with the ability to get pucks past sticks and around bodies. He flashed the odd bit of deception on the power play too, holding defenders with his eyes before dishing the puck out of frame; Beckner picked up an assist on one such play. I didn't see enough to warrant consideration on our board, but it's early, and he's a player worth tracking as the season goes on.

Grade: F



A.J. Lacroix

AGE 17.392 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chilliwack Chiefs	BCHL	53	19	25	44	0.83

SCOUTING REPORT

The combination of a 40-point draft-minus-one season with the BCHL's Chilliwack Chiefs and a strong showing at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup earned A.J. Lacroix a decent amount of cachet coming into his draft year.

Then, as his draft year continued, the New Jersey born centre's hype slowly diminished. While he finished strong, scoring at over a point a game clip in the playoffs, Lacroix's regular season fell well short of expectations.

Disjointed and unable to properly manoeuvre through pressure in transition, Lacroix is both limited mechanically and by his patterned habits.

"Lacroix operated almost exclusively on his inside edges transitionally in this game. It limits his dynamism and handling, and without an exceptional sense grade and a poor stride, it just hurts Lacroix's pro projection." crossover scout Daniel Gee noted in a February game report.

Gee went on to give some examples: "Protection habits come and go; in the first off a near board carry in, Lacroix tried to drag through a triangle, easily chopped away from a defender. Later on a right-wing carry, he popped the puck into his hip pocket, dragged inward, but stopped moving his feet allowing pressure to form, leading to a no-option drop-off pass."

Often enveloped by backpressure and too comfortable on the perimeter, Lacroix has periodic flashes where he effectively blends his tools together. He can split defenders, attack triangles, and work inside to attack the crease in tight, but he didn't flash this ability enough across our viewings.

A fairly basic off-puck player in sustained pressure, he mostly worked the bumper looking for redirects, flaring to the half-boards for one-timers. Lacroix understands the importance of working into open seams, but his ability to catch and release and dial in his one-time shots nullifies his opportunities more often than not. He's a hard worker, keen on attacking puck-retrieving defenders on the forecheck, but his stride is so prohibitive that he can't really get inside and work superior body positioning consistently.

Lacroix possesses some defensive value, both from his high in-zone pressure pushing and anticipation within passing and shooting lanes. There's just not enough certainty across his profile that there is an NHL projection here.

He's a bit ahead of the curve because of the sheer volume of BCHL games under his belt already, so Lacroix is attending

Michigan State next season. Still, he will need to make some significant adjustments to his habits to even score in the NCAA. He seems more like a potential NCAA signing in a handful of years than a draftable prospect.

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The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 28th, 2023 - Alberni Valley Bulldogs vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Lacroix barely showed anything in this one. His stride is so prohibitive to the style of play he pushes (forechecking, energy, pace). He's not seated, doesn't land under his body, and heel kicks. Just not a tonne of power or acceleration value.

Struggled to make an impact in transition. Enveloped by backpressure, and poor protection of the puck in front of his body -- not a great combination. Lacroix was also far too perimeter on-puck, with little indication that he was thinking about an inside activation. In the second, Lacroix was able to stick lift the puck carrier and create a turnover in the neutral zone. From there he drove wide but ran out of room, the inside lane protected. He took a low shot through a defender's triangle that missed. He is missing a manipulation element. On a third period 2-on-1, he loaded a shot, telegraphed it with his eyes, and fired the puck on net. No need to protect the lane or cheat. Lacroix does flash some heightened ability -- but it was rare in this viewing. In the third, after taking a neutral zone pass, he danced through a seam and split two defenders. He slipped the puck through the defender's triangle, cut into the slot, and released a shot off-balance. It was the standout play of the game for him. I like him better as an off-puck driver in transition. Lacroix had a great sequence in the second where jumped forward in a passing lane and then planted backdoor, somehow not scoring on the cross-crease pass. There weren't a whole lot of sustained offensive zone moments for Lacroix. He couldn't get to the inside of defenders on retrieval races which limited his forechecking value. On the powerplay, he is a bumper/net front shot option. Nowhere near enough movement to constantly stay in an open pass lane. He's a major penalty killer for the Chiefs. He provides some disruption value, but he also puck-watches at times. Willing to jump into lanes and push high pressure. Still not a pick for us. Too limited.

Daniel Gee: February 11th, 2023 - Cowichan Valley Capitals vs Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Lacroix operated almost exclusively on his inside edges transitionally in this game. It limits his dynamism and handling, and without an exceptional sense grade and a poor stride, it just hurts Lacroix's pro projection. Protection habits come and go; in the first off a near board carry-in, Lacroix tried to drag through a triangle, easily chopped away from a defender. Later on a right-wing carry, he popped the puck into his hip pocket, dragged inward, but stopped moving his feet allowing pressure to form, leading to a no-option drop-off pass. Outside the dotted line shooting on some transitional attacks, inward cuts and shooting into heavy congestion on other shifts. One of Lacroix's better sequences on the rush was in the third; poked a puck past a defender on the point, created a 2-on-2, and cut into the slot on the entry -- he hit a trailer on the left flank but they bobbed the reception. Drives the net hard off-puck -- probably when he is the most effective.

Floats and plants as a bumper threat in a lot of his offensive zone sequences. Understands how important it is to keep moving into open pass seams -- the pass support he pushes was superb. Frustratingly resistant to shooting on the pass reception

though. In the second, instead of slinging the puck on the net for a high-danger chance, he made a two-three touch pass out of the slot... Lacroix does some interesting things on-puck, though. In the first he took a reception in the slot, punch-turned and split two defenders, shooting low for a pass-off-pad play and a huge rebound creation. He called the game in overtime -- off a 2-on-2 rush, Lacroix took a low shot from the outside, and a teammate just checked as they jumped on the rebound. Off that sequence, Lacroix won a retrieval and passed from the hash marks to a teammate's backdoor for a chance. His linemate ended up stealing the puck and fed Lacroix for a one-touch shot and goal.

Some great anticipation plays in the defensive zone. On a 4-on-3 in the first, he read the pass and the subsequent shot and clogged the lane. Overall not a pick for our board; tools, and sense aren't separating enough, but I will watch more to be sure. He was more of a shooting threat during early season viewings.

Daniel Gee: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Lacroix was once again the driver for the Chiefs, potting a goal and an assist. In the third, after he had his pocket picked in the slot, Lacroix reset with his linemates, attacked the crease hard, and tapped in a puck off a rebound. He had multiple chances on the power play -- a primary shot option on the left-hand circle, he still had trouble dialling in his one-timer properly. In the third, instead of blasting another attempt, he instead slipped a pass to the goal line-planted teammate, who jammed in the puck -- a solid adaptation and a change in patterns. His motor was very high throughout this game; on one shift he stripped a puck on a potential 3-on-1. On another, he attacked a rebound and had a fanned shot saved. Issues with moving pucks off the wall were present -- he strikes me as a better off-puck threat. Someone who can drive the net, exploit an above-average motor, and get open for shooting attempts. He lacks the handling, set-up, planning, and straight-up willingness to be daring enough to beat a player and work into the dotted lines. He was a pace monster on the defensive end of the ice tonight. Almost an insane level of pressure pushing. Seems more like a D-grade for our board. Middle six-projection -- I think his separators like his motor and shot will diminish a lot at higher levels.

J.D. Burke: October 19th, 2022 - Penticton Vees vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Beginning to suspect that Lacroix is a JAG (Just A Guy). I just don't think the skill level is enough to warrant consideration even at the back of our board. That's not to say that Lacroix didn't put in a strong performance for the Chiefs in this hockey game, though. He was one of if not their best player, finishing with a goal and an assist. The goal wasn't anything special -- Lacroix showed up a sent a tap-in past the sprawled goaltender. The assist was fine enough though. Lacroix turned a faked shot into a pass to the backdoor of the goal for a tap-in play. You wouldn't guess it based on the way the Chiefs offence funnels shots through Lacroix, but that's where I think his ability lies -- in his passing skill. While not overly deceptive, Lacroix consistently displayed an ability to find teammates through layers and the passing skill to connect. He's at his best on the rush or on counter plays, and consistently picks up the trailer. His work rate was high as ever in this one though. No denying Lacroix works his ass off, and I think he provides real defensive value as a result. Still, the hands are average at best, the shot isn't nearly as potent as the Chiefs seem to believe it to be, and the passing skill is maybe above-average at best. Not seeing it.

Daniel Gee: October 18th, 2022 - Wenatchee Wild vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

While the stat sheet will show that Lacroix flexed against the Wenatchee Wild, he had a very disconnected game, seeing most of his better plays at the start and end of the match.

An early string of power plays saw a lot of 5-on-4 ice for Lacroix who was set up as a primary shooting threat on the right side. He absolutely wired a shot to the top corner that was saved, miraculously. Beyond that, timing and contact were issues -- too many scuffed shots. He truly needed a lot of opportunities. He eventually got his goal, another bomb on the power play that he placed in the top corner. Mechanically his shot is probably 5-grade when the mechanics and timing line up. When they don't, it's decidedly below average -- especially in the power category. Lacroix barely had any possession time in the offensive zone 5-on-5. He was constantly looking to leverage his shot. He was layering the puck nicely on a couple of sequences. An east-to-west layered pass in the second comes to mind. Does have some hope-passing habits though.

Lacroix's transition play was spotty to say the least. In the second, Lacroix carried the puck out of his zone and bumped a pass

to Wiebe who was already in stride. The key was Lacroix already dragged defenders to open the lane. Smart play. Later though, Lacroix had an awful third-period rush – no route adjustment and limited protection. He’s an average skater who suffers from their hips being tilted forward. The knee bend degrades over his shift. Didn’t love his defensive zone play either – reactive, constantly behind the play, and missing secondary threats. On a penalty kill in the second Lacroix did not tie up a Wild player planted in the crease for a rebound resulting in a goal. While there was an expectation for more out of Lacroix, he’s clearly a step above frankly everyone we have seen this weekend. He’s probably a pick for our board, but it looks like he’s more of a D-grade in this class.

J.D. Burke: October 18th, 2022 - Wenatchee Wild vs. Chilliwack Chiefs - BCHL

Lacroix picked up a pair of goals in this contest (one of them an empty-netter), but I didn’t come away from this viewing all that impressed. So much of the Chiefs offence runs through him, and it can hardly be said that he made the most of those touches; or rather, that he made enough of those touches in a setting like this one to match with his cachet. Lacroix did almost all of his damage on special teams, where he was the triggerman for the Chiefs first unit. His shot looks decent enough for this level, but I don’t think it’s much more than an average tool. Still, it proved sufficient to pick up a goal in the third period on what felt like his 10th attempt on the night. Where Lacroix really distinguished himself was with his sense. He may well have been the first player to support the puck at either end of the ice in the first two days of action at the BCHL Showcase. He also made a crafty pass in transition, drawing a pair of defenders towards him in the centre lane to create an opening on the left wing, where he slid an area pass for an incoming defenceman for a clear lane to the net – that was a hell of a play. The skating form concerns me. Lacroix is about as top-heavy as they get. I don’t think his skill is much more than average. But his sense stands out at this level. Probably not a player for our board.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lacroix hasn’t popped in this tournament yet, but there’s a solid base. He shows a variety of passing skills (slip, hook, backhand), uses give-and-gos, and has a powerful shot that he can fire off either leg. Falls into the background a bit because of his transition game. He’s a straight-line attacker with some skating limitations, significantly hampering his effectiveness. He gets kept along the boards without issue. He has a physical game – body positioning, hitting, and cutbacks to put pressure on his back. That will need to appear off the rush for better success. NHL qualities with the standard junior game.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Lacroix’s skating doesn’t look any different from last year. He still lacks ankle flexion and tends to drop his chest over top of the puck. But he’s still the same crafty playmaker. He slips pucks under sticks, waits for pressure to arrive before passing, and looks cross-slot for options. The latter play led to his assist. Mostly a straight-line puck carrier without a change of pace game in transition. Still, he’s an intelligent player with skill. Will require lots of work, but he has NHL qualities.

Grade: F



Samuel Barčík

AGE 17.485 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	192 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HKM Zvolen	Slovakia	38	0	2	2	0.05
HKM Zvolen U20	Slovakia U20	18	3	11	14	0.78
HK MSK Ziar nad Hronom	Slovakia2	7	0	0	0	0.00
Team Slovakia U18	Slovakia2	2	0	1	1	0.50
Slovakia U18	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Samuel Barcik didn't play much in front of the scouts at the U18s, hopping over the bench for a modest 12 minutes a night across his seven games for Slovakia, but his shutdown qualities remained quite evident.

Years ago, players like him were coveted at the NHL draft; defencemen who can skate with opposing forwards, match their footwork well enough and deny space with their reach and stickwork. Prospects who execute these plays well still get drafted every year. And Barcik might, too. He got ranked 60th overall on NHL Central Scouting's list. Such a high spot does suggest NHL interest.

At the tournament, though, we didn't see him execute enough passes or controlled plays to consider him for our board. Most of the pucks he retrieved low in the defensive zone ended up rimmed back up the boards or chipped out. He didn't contribute to the offence enough.

To become an effective professional player, Barcik will need to become an even better shutdown element, by developing his skating and defensive reads, and significantly improve his puck-moving game.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - u18s

I continue to only see Barcik as a defensive defenceman in this tournament. He battles on the wall for pucks, pins opponents, hits them, finds back the puck, and then rims it around the boards to teammates.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Not sure I see NHL abilities in Barcik's game. He skates with a high stance, but it's mostly his puck management that lacked quality in this one. He got the puck stolen from him in this game. He's physical, however, an engager. He can create space around the

net and push back against attackers.

David St-Louis: January 17th, 2023 - Sloven vs. Zvloven - Tipos Extraliga

Barcik's combination of skating ability, size, and physicality is intriguing, but he needs to learn to make plays with the puck and to read the ice better. He's not a puck-mover or a playmaker and not that much of a handler either.

Grade: F



Adam Cedzo

AGE 17.559 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'10"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Oceláři Třinec U20	Czechia U20	39	23	23	46	1.18
HC Frýdek-Místek	Czechia2	5	0	0	0	0.00
Slovakia U18	WJC-18	7	3	5	8	1.14
Slovakia U18 (all)	International-Jr	7	3	4	7	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Adam Cedzo played a big role for Slovakia at the U18s. Slotted next to Dalibor Dvorský on the team's top line, he helped his team defeat Germany and Finland, and go toe-to-toe with Canada in the Bronze Medal game.

After finishing as one of the top draft-eligible scorers in the Czech U20 league, with 46 points in 36 games, Cedzo continued to prove that he can score at the U18s. He put up eight points in seven games against some of the top players in his age group.

His pace is the best part of his game. He carries the puck quickly, takes advantage of mistakes, and supports teammates well in the offensive zone. He can shoot off passes and find teammates in high-danger areas by threading the puck through the defensive box. His intensity stood out at the U18s. In the latter half of the tournament, he blocked shots, forechecked with energy, and always tried to pierce through defences before they could get set.

That said, Cedzo needs to work on his technical skills before he can aspire to an NHL role. Developing his skating stride and adding more deception to his playmaking game would help him remain a top scorer as he transitions to Czechia's top league.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Finland - U18s

A very intense game from Cedzo. He blocked shots, drove the net (and scored that way), created passing plays off the rush by using his speed and then delaying upon entering the offensive zone. But again, while I appreciate the effort, I'm not sure he's an NHL prospect. The skill level, from his shot to his skating mechanics, need work for him to compete at the highest level. And he's not all that aware of his space on that stage. He gets surprised by defenders and the overall pace of play feels high.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Germany vs Slovakia - U18s

Cedzo works with a pace advantage. He outskates others, gets to advantageous spaces, and then makes plays. Flashes of playmaking skills in this one: He found Dvorsky in the middle of the slot with a pass and completed a couple other cross-ice ones. He rushed the net and worked to get the puck back. The skill level seems on the lower side overall, even if the speed is more than fine at this level.

David St-Louis: April 8th, 2023 - Oceláři Třinec vs. Jihlava - Extraliga Junior

Cedzo looks like a dominant player at this level, but I doubt it translates. He lacks the finer handling skills, the skating mechanics, and especially the off-puck sense to really make an impact in the NHL. He's a little puck focused. He did score three points in this one and showed a nice catch-and-release ability.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Cedzo's scored twice, both started by getting open in space. The power play goal was the best one, where he spun around the goaltender and beat the race across the net. There are flashes of playmaking skill, mostly in small-area play, and he's an outrace player through-and-through. Missed opportunities to make a positive play, and the skill level likely projects below-average across the board. Doubt he's a prospect, but there could be more here that I haven't seen in August hockey.

Grade: F



František Dej

AGE 17.545 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

201 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Slovan Bratislava U18	Slovakia U18	3	2	0	2	0.67
HC Slovan Bratislava U20	Slovakia U20	8	4	3	7	0.88
HC Slovan Bratislava	Slovakia	6	0	0	0	0.00
HC Modre Kridla Slovan	Slovakia2	24	8	13	21	0.88

SCOUTING REPORT

František Dej rose through the ranks of Slovak hockey faster than most. That's probably due in large to his 6-foot-4 frame. He's much, much further along physically than most of the peers in his age group.

This season, he played a few games in Slovakia's first and second-tier professional leagues. In that second league, he scored 21 points in 24 games with HC Modre Kridla Slovan, which is pretty solid for a draft-eligible skater.

In terms of international play, the forward impressed us more at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup than at the U18s, as one can see from our inventory of game reports. We appreciated his passing skills at the summer tournament, but those didn't show up as often in the end-of-season one. Maybe it was the higher level of competition there or the lack of chemistry with teammates, but during the U18s, we mostly came to see him as a physical forward, someone who uses his size and reach to disrupt plays.

Dej's skills don't seem NHL-calibre at the moment. He needs to increase his pace of play and learn to make more of his plays at this higher speed. Working on his skating would help him achieve that.

Dej's frame and his ability to use it to crush opponents on the boards and steal pucks from them will keep him on the radar of scouts as he continues to develop.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Dej is pretty much just a physical presence in this tournament. He battles on the board and uses his reach to disrupt plays. I have yet to see real flashes of offence.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2023 - Slovakia vs. Germany - U18s

Reach. That's Dej's primary quality. It helps him steal pucks from opponents and win them on the wall, and around the net. He drove there multiple times in this game. He also got a hooking penalty when he overused that reach. He had a few good playmaking moments, but I'm not sure about the overall skill level.

David St-Louis: April 23rd, 2023 - Slovakia vs Canada - WJ18

Frantisek Dej doesn't seem to have NHL-caliber skills, at least that's my read from this game. He took a couple of shots from a poor angle, and missed other passing targets. I liked that he engaged players physically when he had a chance, but he should learn to better use his stick in some defensive situations than going for the body directly.

David St-Louis: April 21st, 2023 - Slovakia vs Sweden - WC-18

I only really saw flashes of Dej in this game. He faded in the background more than Pekarcik, but his retrievals helped his team. He constantly raced to loose pucks to get body positioning on them and move them to teammates. He knows how to use his size. He managed to transform one of those retrievals into a pass to the slot. There is something there, but I have to watch more.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

Centring Slovakia's third line in this contest (and for much of the tournament), Dej was pretty clearly their best forward. The skating is rough, and I don't think that Dej helps matters with his exceptionally low pace approach, but there's some definite passing and handling skill. Dej managed to create a pair of scoring chances on the rush as a distributor, the overtime winner among them. Really thought well of his work in the defensive zone, especially on the penalty kill. At one point, Dej contested a pass at the top of the defensive zone and made a second and third effort to knock it to the neutral zone, where his teammate collected possession and went in for a scoring chance. The skating and pace could prove prohibitive to an NHL career, but he's worth keeping tabs on as a potential late-board player.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - Switzerland vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Dej set up the overtime winner by driving wide, drawing two defenders, then passing back to his teammate waiting in space. It was a low-pace sequence, but one that showed both vision and awareness. While the skating's limited, he showed handling skill and vision in other sequences, too. He created a scoring chance after stealing possession with a pass under a stick, and connected with a cross-ice three-line pass for a zone entry. He requires a glide and space to his work, and given his lack of other skills, might prevent him from becoming a prospect entirely. But he's worth another look.

Grade: F



Matteo Kočí

AGE 17.274 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

159 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HC Energie Karlovy Vary U20	Czechia U20	36	7	13	20	0.56
HC Energie Karlovy Vary	Czechia	7	0	2	2	0.29
Czechia U18	WJC-18	5	0	0	0	0.00
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	27	3	4	7	0.26

SCOUTING REPORT

Matteo Kočí kept the Czechia's blue line afloat in some games at the U18s.

Acting as the team's transition motor, he carried the puck across zones, attacked space to find passing lanes, and fired shots on net. When his team lost control of the puck in the offensive zone, he closed his gap quickly with opponents and neutralize their transition plays.

The Czech's offence was sometimes disjointed at the tournament, especially when it faced stronger defences, but Kočí distributed the puck well overall on breakouts, regroups, and at the point.

Our Central Europe regional scout Marek Novotny also appreciated Kočí's play in the Czech Extraliga, especially on the defensive side. Here's what he wrote in a February report:

"He's very alert and aware of his surroundings. He doesn't give anything to the other team for free, he's always there, trying to disrupt the opponent, pushing them, trying to make them lose the puck."

Confident and willing to take some risks, Kočí performed well at various levels and tournaments this season, but he needs to refine his technical ability before we can project him to an NHL role.

As an example, at this stage, Kočí struggles to shift his weight or twist his upper body away from his lower one as he maneuvers. Adding more agility and fluidity would open up his offensive game and help him match and shut down quicker attackers.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 27th, 2023 - Czechia vs. USA - U18s

Kočí was pretty much the only Czech defender who wasn't under water for the entirety of this hockey game. In fact, most of my

notes for Kočí were distinctly positive. He played a tight gap in the neutral zone, even stepped up to make a couple of big stops. Kočí picked up one of Czechia's scant few scoring chances by activating into the rush and beating a defender to the inside with an inside-out dangle for a relatively clean look. Interesting player.

David St-Louis: April 27th, 2023 - US vs Czechia - WJ18

Kočí tried to create more offensively than many other defencemen on this Czechia blue-line. He carried the puck out and attacked the net himself. He stretched the puck to some of his forwards... He did lose it attempting breakout plays a couple of times, but it was good to see some confidence out of him against a strong formation. He wasn't as good at applying his team's tight, slot-regroup formation, however. I'm not sure he's an NHL candidate overall, but maybe a player to keep an eye on for the future.

David St-Louis: April 22th, 2023 - Germany vs Czechia - WJ18

A pretty good performance from Kočí. He skates in one block (no upper and lower body separation, no weight-shifting ability) so that limits his agility a bit, but he contributes to the offence. He attacks down, shoots on net, uses available space, and has a decent rush defence game. He establishes body positioning on retrievals, but can't turn these retrievals into good plays.

Marek Novotný: March 5th, 2023 - Karlovy Vary vs Kometa Brno - Extraliga

Kočí jumped into action in the Extraliga and was impressive. He looks bigger on the ice than he really is. He plays physical hockey, but he's not your typical aggressive defenseman. He thinks a lot about his game, scans the zone around him defensively, disrupts passing lanes, and has solid range that he can use to pokecheck. I liked that he doesn't leave the opponent much space and isn't afraid to clear the environment around the goalie. He's poised and it surprised me even more when he played like that against men.

Marek Novotný: February 19th, 2023 - Karlovy Vary vs Dynamo Pardubice - Extraliga

I'm just thrilled with his game. The young defenseman is the definition of what you want from a defensive zone player. He's very alert and aware of his surroundings. He doesn't give anything to the other team for free, he's always there, trying to disrupt the opponent, pushing them, trying to make them lose the puck. He uses the boards for passing very well, he is calm and fast skater who is not afraid to carry the puck. He is willing to block shots. Kočí is a versatile and smart defenseman. Worthy of a late-round draft pick.

Grade: F



Santeri Elo

AGE 17.304 DATE OF BIRTH May 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
TPS U18	U18 SM-sarja	10	3	4	7	0.70
TPS U20	U20 SM-sarja	26	4	3	7	0.27
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	7	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Having earned opportunities with the national team during the past two seasons, Santeri Elo mainly spends his draft-eligible season with TPS' U20 program.

Mostly playing in a checking role both with his club team and internationally, Elo's projection likely aligns with that station. He brings a solid motor, helping his skating output to exceed some of the kinks in his stride.

There were some other flashes in the games that I saw, including a few nice playmaking sequences and deceptive offensive zone retrievals. It's possible that more offense is on the way with time, but the skill level looked quite limited this season, which is reflected in the point totals. There were some issues with puck control and a lack of anticipation; often he seemingly only started to think about his options when the puck landed on his stick.

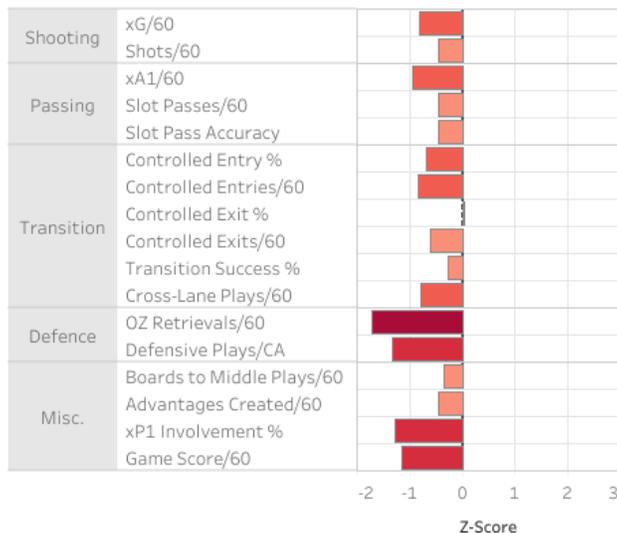
Nothing about his game really stood out as having NHL potential. If Elo carves out a career in the professional ranks, it's likely going to be in a more of an energy role.

Santeri Elo

F | TPS U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 76.41

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: March 10th, 2023 - TPS vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Elo just looks like a pure forechecker at this level. The skating output seems a tad bit better than the mechanics (the stride itself is a bit short and choppy) and he was able to open up his hips and circle the OZ for one decent shooting opportunity. With

the puck, he tried to just play as simply as possible, and still managed to turn it over once in a critical spot. The instincts and processing power don't seem that great. Doesn't really anticipate the play, starts to think about his options when he gets the puck. Don't see a draft pick here.

Lassi Alanen: December 18th, 2022 - TPS vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Not a particularly effective game from Elo. Had a couple of carry-ins, but couldn't really convert them into anything. One nice backhand pass to the middle from the boards. Applied pressure pretty well on the forecheck, but mostly just reaching instead of actually engaging with the body. Skating continues to look fine, isn't the issue why he's not producing at this level yet. Not sure how good the off-puck instincts are, seemed to just buzz around in the offensive zone when he didn't have the puck.

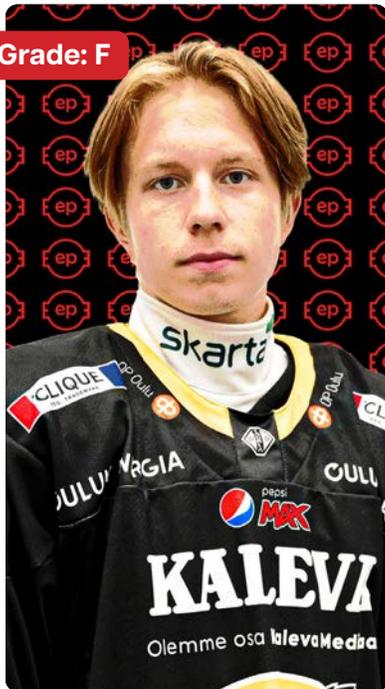
Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - TPS vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Is Elo more than a forechecker? He has some flashes, like when he made a pretty nifty weight shift deke to turn the defender's feet before exploding in the opposite direction to get his shot off. He has some details, like giving false information with his body language on retrievals to get separation from the defender. Mostly, he was just chasing the play on the forecheck, though. The skating is at a good enough level, but the skill is a question mark, even if there's some interesting moments.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - TPS vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

Elo had a few nice plays throughout the game despite a hesitant start where he lost control of the puck unpressured in the NZ. He flashed some playmaking touch in tight, passing from the boards to the middle through pressure for a scoring chance. Skating looked pretty decent, the posture didn't stay the same for the whole game but further strength development should take care of that.

Grade: F



Elias Jansson

AGE 17.425 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	3	3	6	9	3.00
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	39	6	13	19	0.49
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Elias Jansson came to the attention of scouts by being the highest-producing player in his age group at the U18 level last season. His following rookie campaign at the U20 level wasn't anything special, but he did have a few solid point streaks and at least flashed that he could be a top player with the team in the future.

Jansson's game is mostly about offence, though he did have at least some solid defensive moments mixed in. There were instances of creative playmaking and poise with the puck in order to open up lanes to the middle.

Our best viewings of him also came late in the season, hinting that he could have a big season next year. The skating is going to be something he'll need to sort out to become more dangerous, as his current mechanics and high posture have proven to be a hindrance even at this level of play.

The issues with the skating stance also affect his physical game a lot as he's easily pushed to the side on puck battles and doesn't get the leverage needed to gain body positioning on defenders.

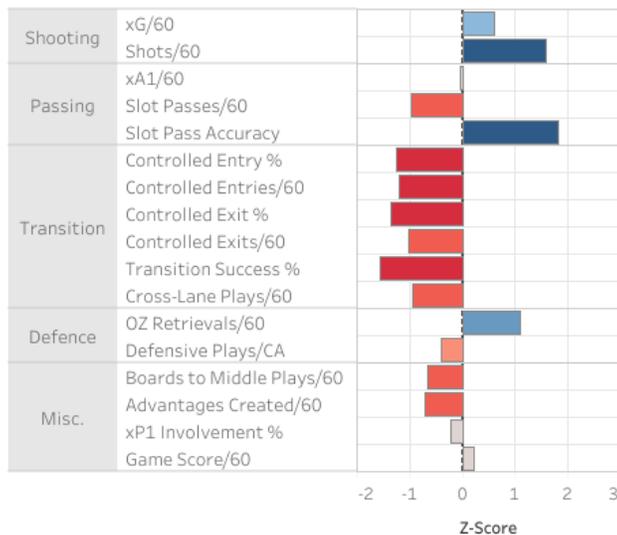
If these areas improve in the upcoming years, he has at least hinted to have the talent level to play in the professional ranks. With the current concerns related to the skating and physical play, the other skills just aren't at a high enough level to justify Jansson as a draft pick at this point in time.

Elias Jansson

F | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 132.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Lassi Alanen:** February 18th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Probably the best offensive viewing I've had of Jansson this season. He was getting open in the net-front at the right time for multiple scoring chances from behind-the-net passes and also made a couple of nice passing plays off the rush, mostly by hooking pucks to the inside. Unfortunately couldn't convert any of his chances and looked a bit frustrated because of it. There are some concerns about his upside in the professional ranks. The skating posture remains problematic and not only inhibits his skating, but also his physical game. He has a tough time getting leverage on the opposition and often gets pushed to the outside quite easily. A lot of wasteful plays in transition, too. There are definitely weak points he needs to work on to make in the pros.

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Jansson's best play of the game came early. He had the patience to fake out the first defender off a broken rush play, then cut to the middle and looked to hit the post with a short-side wrister. There are flashes of skill, but it's not consistent enough. The skating posture remains high and the stride tends to break down as he tries to power down. Didn't do much play-driving in transition and opted for low-percentage shots instead of trying to pursue something better (aside from that formerly mentioned play). Don't see a draft pick, but he could explode next season at this level. The production has already been pretty solid this season.

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Jansson scored a pretty one here, circling the OZ, coming down from the point and releasing a nasty inside leg wrister to beat the goalie top-shelf short side. Had a few other scoring chances as well. I still don't see a player interesting for a NHL draft perspective, though. The skill level isn't high enough, especially given the skating worries. But I liked how he defended the rush and in-zone, paying close attention to his man and breaking up a few plays along the boards in the NZ.

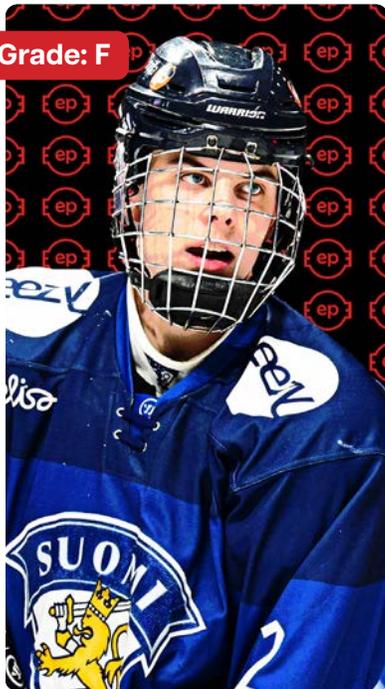
Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Jansson has some flashes of skill here and there, but seems to struggle with the pace of play a bit, combined with the skating stride that's going to need a lot of work in the future (tilts at the hips, aggressive heel kick). It really hurts his leverage in puck battles especially, not being able to gain body positioning when others can just get lower and gain leverage over him.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Jansson was skating on the third line together with fellow 2023 eligible Arttu Alasiurua. The two had some chemistry, particularly on the power play where Jansson was playing the bumper role and got a few looks from the slot. He also had a partial breakaway that he couldn't quite bury, but it showed a decent level of quickness to separate from the defender. Stride looked pretty rough at times, though, a lot of mobility development required. Some decent playmaking ideas, but not a whole lot of puck touches at 5v5.

Grade: F



Jimi Junkkari

AGE 17.567 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 20, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Pelicans U18	U18 SM-sarja	3	0	0	0	0.00
Pelicans U20	U20 SM-sarja	35	1	5	6	0.17
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	0	1	1	0.20
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	17	0	2	2	0.12

SCOUTING REPORT

There wasn't much growth in Jimi Junkkari's production over the past two seasons he spent with the Pelicans' U20 team, going from 0.11 to 0.17 points per game.

That part of the game has never been Junkkari's calling card, though. Even if he was making a concerted effort to get more involved in that phase of the game as the season wore on.

A regular fit with the national team over the past two years, Junkkari is at his best on retrievals and when he gets to manoeuvre in his own end against pressure. He started to get more involved with the offensive side of the game as the season progressed, mostly in the way of rush activations and supporting the play as the trailer. There's definitely still a learning curve he needs to go through to get his timings down.

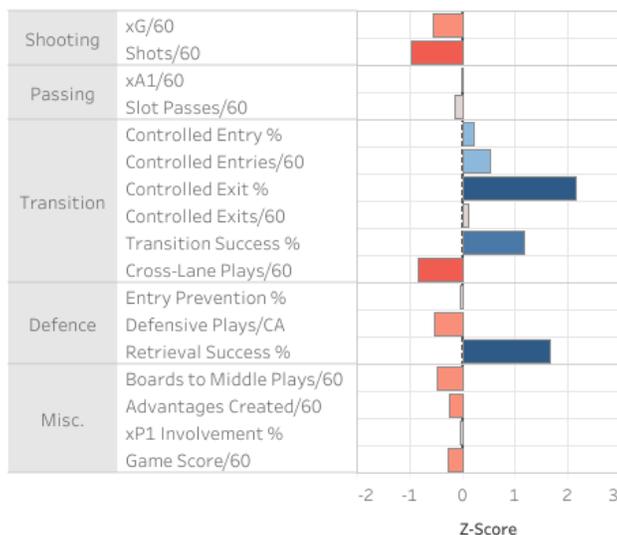
While the tools aren't particularly noteworthy across the board and the lack of production is a big-time concern for an NHL prospect, Junkkari could end up being a late-round candidate for some teams. There's just not enough upside to justify a spot on our board.

Jimi Junkkari

D | Pelicans U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 116.2

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Kookoo - U20 SM-sarja

Junkkari's game has somewhat opened from the early season. He's trying more stuff, trying to be more involved in the play and be less conservative. At times, it can produce some solid results. He was more willing to step inside from the point, faking to get

into a better shooting location instead of a simple throwaway shot. The newly-found eagerness to get involved did backfire once, as he had sprinted up the ice too early, his teammate turned the puck over and the opponent ended up scoring. I generally like what he's trying to do, though, even if he doesn't really have the skill level to really take advantage of the positive situations he could end up in. The defence was a bit so-so with some of the reads, but as a 1-on-1 defender, he was mostly solid and - like in the previous viewings - mostly completed his retrievals honourably, making smart one-touch plays to maintain possession while winning the race for body positioning.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

A pretty complementary to my previous viewings of Junkkari, nothing really that new. He activated to join rushes and sometimes filled the role of the F2 as the middle-lane driver, but couldn't really accomplish anything noteworthy while doing so. The offensive skill just doesn't seem to be there, even though he did end up scoring his first goal of the season with a point shot. There was one play where he did a solid job at gaining the zone through the middle, but once he had accomplished it, he opted for a weird dump-in play instead - just a really odd play overall and tells you about his confidence with the puck. It's not all negative, though. He had a couple of nice retrievals where he used physical skills to maintain possession. The defence is probably pretty projectable, too, though he's not a big-time play-killer and doesn't really get tested off the rush in his current system. Skating remains at least slightly below-average projection, even if you give him leeway due to recent height growth and still having a lot of room to fill out his current frame.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

Junkkari had more offensive flashes here. One particular play comes to mind where he took advantage of a hand-off, beat his man outside at the point, took the puck to the middle and got a scoring chance from the top of the circle. I'm still questioning if there's much upside, though. The offensive impact isn't consistent enough to compensate for the lack of true defensive value. At least in transition he was slightly better and especially clean on retrievals, though he didn't face too much pressure. Doesn't have the dynamic qualities you'd hope for in a prospect of his profile.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Pelicans vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Junkkari's fundamentals are pretty solid, but there's just nothing that really grabs you about his game. The mobility and edges are smooth and his gap control off the rush can be a strength, though he's somewhat over committal with his crossover usage. He activates through the middle in the OZ and sometimes jumps on the rush to drive through the middle lane to create space. In the OZ, he just doesn't get a lot of touches, in transition he's not really creating many advantages and defensively, he lacks stopping power and can get outmuscled along the boards. He's a bit bland.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - Pelicans vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

I liked Junkkari's mobility with the puck in his own end. The skating could project around average with more development, maybe slightly below. The footwork seemed relatively smooth all-around and so did the handling. Didn't really leverage those skills to a great extent. Had opportunities to carry the puck out, but often chose to cut back and defer. Good pinches, forced quite a few dump outs and sometimes managed to extend OZ time by making a stop. Joined the rush a few times and wasn't hesitant to keep himself deep in the OZ, not in a hurry to return to the point. Didn't really get puck touches in the OZ, though.

Grade: F



Kalle Kangas

AGE 17.619 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'4"	196 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	42	1	8	9	0.21
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	0	2	2	0.40
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	20	1	3	4	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

Kalle Kangas didn't have the most productive season with just nine points in 42 games, but there are some elements in his game to like. There's a reason Jokerit's U20 team played him north of 20 minutes a game for much of their playoff run to the league finals.

At his best, Kangas can move the puck efficiently under pressure and operate well on the breakout, using his size and reach to absorb contact on retrievals before making a play and occasionally join the rush as a trailer. There are flashes of good overall sense for the game, even if that aspect of his game got exposed a bit at the U18s.

While defending the rush, Kangas concedes the blue line most of the time and gives up a lot of space for the opposition to work with. When he tries to gap up, he tends to overcommit with his weight too early and gets caught on his heels too often.

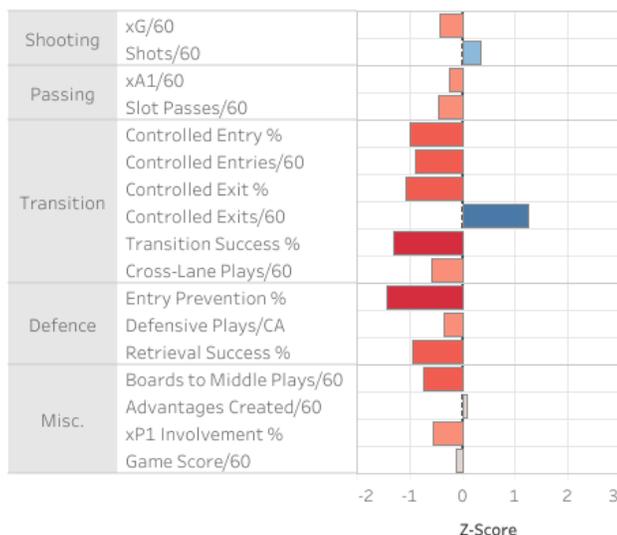
Kangas could be a late round project pick for a team who values the combination of size and flashes of intelligence, but there were ultimately far more compelling cases for the end of our board. It's just that there needs to be a lot of mechanical refinement, and even that might not be enough.

Kalle Kangas

D | Jokerit U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 115.1

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

Kangas did improve as the tournament went on and this was his best showing at the event by a decent margin. He didn't do

anything earth-shattering, but was able to keep a tighter gap while defending the rush, make a few defensive plays while also being way more consistent at moving the puck and - most importantly - avoiding unnecessary turnovers. Overall, he was still Finland's weakest defenceman if you look at the whole tournament. I'll give him leeway in that he started as the 7th defenceman and was clearly cold in the shifts that he got, not passing quickly enough and making some plain bad reads especially with the puck.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - Jokerit vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas had a few offensive looks in this one, once activating down the middle to create an odd-man rush and subsequent high-danger chance. Another possible look came by pinching the offensive zone so he was at the top of the circle when he received the pass for down low. It's still hard to project him in any sort of offensive role, but adding more activations could be the way to improve that projection. The mechanical refinement does play a big role in that, though, as his stride needs to get more efficient for him to be able to play a more active style. The rush defence does concern me, and he doesn't have the defensive projection you'd think for a player his size either. He's been better in transition than most of his draft-eligible peers at this level this season, but he's not a high-level breakout artist either. I don't see a draft pick here.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Jokerit vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas remains a player who does have some interesting ability, but the overall package just might not be enough to justify a draft pick. The lack of production is one thing, and it's not like he's being unlucky given how little he's involved offensively. Mechanical refinement will be required yet not guaranteed. He's starting to trust his skating a bit more, often not dumping the puck out where many would've, instead taking the extra strides to gain the DZ blue line. Rush defence remains a weak point, though. He continues to concede way too much space for the opposition and gets caught on his heels occasionally. Liked some of the small-area passes he was able to execute on breakouts to advance play.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas continues to have one or two good moments per game but fading out to the background for the majority of his shifts. Still conceded quite a lot of space off the rush, not sure if he's just not trusting his skating. Doesn't seem to be system-related either. He flashes ability on the breakout to draw in the forechecker and pass through pressure, but he often gets away with just simple D-to-D passes with the lack of forechecking pressure against most teams at this level. Took another holding penalty along the boards.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas had one really nice play in this one, having patience to protect the puck in the DZ corner, then taking a few strides and dishing out a pretty cross-ice outlet pass for a breakout through layers of pressure. Otherwise, it was mostly passive rush defence, some breakups along the boards and not much else. Compared to what I remember from last season, his rush defence has gotten a lot more passive and he gives up a ton of space for the opposition with his loose gap control.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. HPK - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas does the odd projectable thing, always drawing in the pressure in the DZ before passing D-to-D. There's not much else that really stands out, though. The retrievals weren't as clean here, didn't do much pre-scanning and got caught by the incoming pressure. The passing accuracy was lacklustre on the breakouts and once again, his only offensive contributions were slap shots from the point. I can't really say that he's a strong defensive player either, dropping to his stomach when there's no need to and making some other questionable reads. He has the physical skills to break up the odd play, though. Not enough to be worthy of a pick.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. JYP - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas is pretty reactionary defensively and can get lost when there's multiple variables or switches of coverage. In 1-on-1

context, he did pretty fine in-zone at smothering opponents along the boards, but took a penalty doing so. Breakouts weren't that good (a lot of simple dump-outs in the face of pressure), but the retrievals were completed with a good success rate. Didn't really do anything notable offensively. Doesn't trust his skating or hands to beat pressure, so is forced to hammer stationary shots from the point.

Lassi Alanen: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kangas wasn't particularly great in this one. He receives the majority of the blame for Germany's lone goal, fumbling the puck at the start of the third period in a bad time. Kangas' offensive game consists mostly of point shots and his handling needs a lot of work, as well as his skating. I've liked his brain in most of my viewings, but he often defers to his partner, making it harder to get a sense of his upside. Some solid rush defence moments, some not so good ones.

Mitchell Brown: August 2nd, 2022 - Finland vs. Germany - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Kangas had moments of intelligence with the puck, particularly delaying and resetting rather than forcing plays. The skating needs a lot of work, but he's thin and shows some fluidity in moments. The skating was most visible defensively, where he lost foottraces, lacked power through his pivots, and overused crossovers when defending the rush. The latter led to him taking a penalty. Don't see a ton of upside here, but there's a chance it's masked behind his lack of mechanical refinement. Worth spending a bit of time watching him this year.

Lassi Alanen: December 8th, 2021 - Lukko vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

Kangas played a reasonably sound game here, also scoring his first career goal at the U20 level with a point shot. What stood out was how he used his size and reach in transition, gapping up early and aggressively to force the opposition to dump the puck. Skating looked like it could reasonably be NHL average projection-wise. I also mostly liked his puck touches under pressure, solving it by making effective D-to-D passes. This didn't result in many exits for him specifically, but it helped his team to get out of the zone eventually. Offensive game didn't look anything special, a few point shots here and there. Can kill plays along the walls with his physical tools. I'd want to see more offensively to rave about his potential, but he could turn into a good playkiller who also plays competently with the puck.

Grade: F



Peetu Kiukas

AGE 17.526 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
SaiPa/Ketterä U18	U18 SM-sarja	6	0	3	3	0.50
SaiPa U20	U20 SM-sarja	39	5	15	20	0.51
Ketterä	Mestis	2	0	0	0	0.00
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	8	0	3	3	0.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Peetu Kiukas follows in the mould of a smaller yet decently mobile puck-moving defenceman who just doesn't have any standout tools that would warrant a selection on the draft day.

He did generate offence at a decent clip in the U20 SM-sarja, but the vast majority of the points came when SaiPa's U20 team didn't end up making the upper stage, which led to significantly weaker competition during the second half of the season.

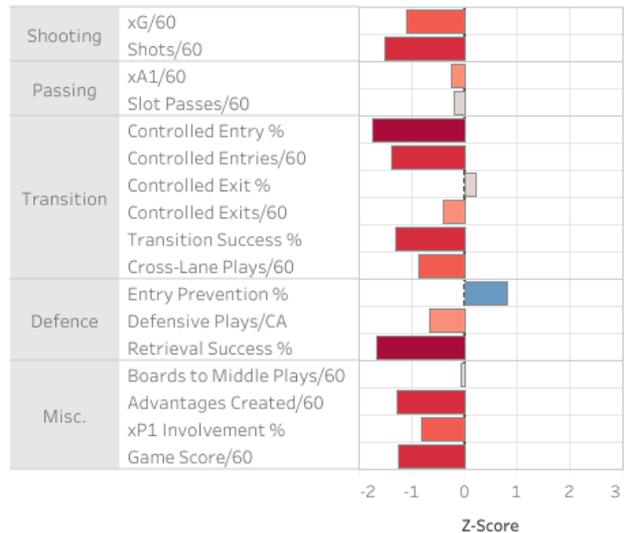
Kiukas' edges and smooth footwork remained consistent throughout the season, even when his team was overmatched during the first few months of play. His rush defence was also surprisingly effective, leveraging the skating to force dump-ins and create the occasional breakup.

In-zone, it was a different story, and that's one of the areas Kiukas need to address to have a hope of making it at the professional level. Right now, both his positional awareness and play-stopping ability rate below-average and same goes for the retrievals. With the puck, he wasn't able to find ways to create too many advantages on the breakout.

While his activation timings weren't always perfect, they were still a positive overall and something he can leverage further in the upcoming years. Ultimately, there's just not enough to consider him a noteworthy NHL prospect at the moment.

Peetu Kiukas

D | SaiPa U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 62.33
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - SaiPa vs. HPK - U20 SM-sarja

Kiukas was a bit more involved in the game here as SaiPa played against weaker competition, but I still don't see that much interesting stuff. His rush defence is pretty solid overall, gapping up well enough to force dump-ins and break up a few cross-ice breakout pass attempts. In-zone defence is still on the weaker side, but he showed a bit more physicality. I just don't see particularly skilled puck-mover. Handled the puck poorly on few occasions, and failed to find separation against forecheckers. Could be a Liiga player in the future but not sure if there's upside for anything more.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - SaiPa vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

The skill disparity between these two teams was pretty large, and Kiukas wasn't really able to shine as of result. It would be cool to see how he'd do in a better environment, but oh well. He should still look better even on this roster if he'd be a particularly interesting talent. The footwork is mostly fine and he can do some cool stuff on his edges, but the majority of his shifts are just in-zone defending where he can't really do much.

Lassi Alanen: October 23th, 2022 - SaiPa vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Kiukas broke up a few plays off the rush when KalPa tried to employ longer stretch passes, swatting the forwards' sticks just as they tried to receive the puck. In-zone, he's still very much in trouble against bigger and quicker players, lacking stopping power. Some decent maneuvering around pressure, a few nice cutbacks, but wasn't really creating advantages on the breakout. A few activations here and there, but the timing was a bit off. The edges are pretty smooth overall.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - SaiPa vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Not sure if I saw anything noteworthy from Kiukas here. He's smallish defenceman with some skating ability and decent posture, but lacking meaningful quickness. Not that he showed any, anyway. He played pretty laid back game and couldn't really make any impact defensively as SaiPa got caved in pretty hard and will probably continue to get caved in against the upper-half teams on most nights. He just doesn't have any stopping power at this stage, but didn't do anything interesting with the puck either.

Grade: F



Tom Leppä

AGE 17.126 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 31, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

179 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Jokerit U20	U20 SM-sarja	45	19	12	31	0.69
Finland U18	WJC-18	5	2	1	3	0.60
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	22	3	4	7	0.32

SCOUTING REPORT

After authoring a productive draft-minus-one at the U20 level last season, Leppä followed that rookie campaign up with another solid year on Jokerit's U20 squad and as a mainstay on the Finnish national team, primarily as their fourth-line centre.

While Leppä has decent offensive touch – mostly in the form of clever net-front play and off-puck timing –, his projection is likely that of a defensive bottom-six centre who takes care of the business in his own zone, extending possession in the offensive end and cycling the puck effectively while occasionally chipping in on the scoresheet, too.

The significant hurdle in the way of his NHL future is going to be the skating, which rates as clearly below-average, especially in terms of the mechanical standpoint.

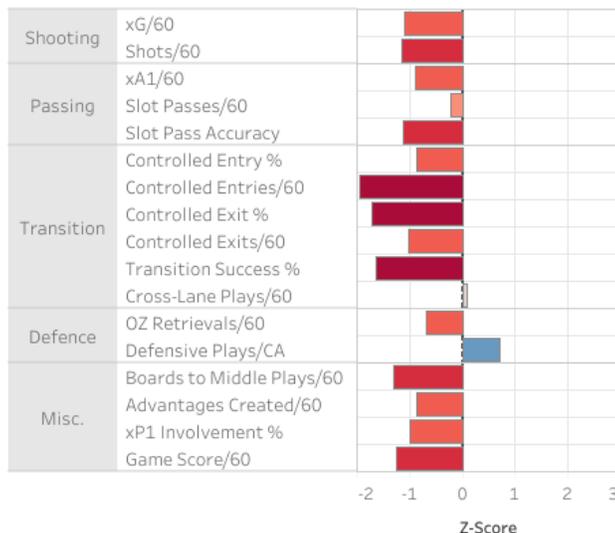
Leppä is committed to taking his talents to Penn State University in the future, which should serve his development well. I wouldn't be shocked if a team ended up snatching him in the later rounds, even if there ultimately weren't enough upside to justify a spot on our board.

Tom Leppä

F | Jokerit U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 83.34

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: April 27th, 2023 - Finland vs Slovakia - U18s

To be honest, Leppä did his job throughout the tournament. This was arguably his least-visible game and also the one where he played the least minutes, only just around nine minutes in total. Skating form remains grim, but it wasn't as big of an issue as I

thought it could've been. The work rate compensated a bit, in addition to him maybe having a bit more speed than I previously gave him credit for. Turned some forechecking sequences into scoring chances, was able to keep the play alive and extend OZ possession, even scored two goals. Still don't think he's a pick, but this was a successful tournament for him in my books.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Leppä was a big part of Jokerit's win, scoring the game-tying goal late in the third, being in his office in the net-front and hacking away an incoming pass as the defence kind of just forgot him there open. He also got a primary helper on the eventual OT game-winner, though it was just a simple drop pass. I still don't think he's a particularly interesting player for the draft. Skating rates as clearly below-average and he doesn't have much in the way of notable skill. His pass attempts to the slot were inaccurate and often not planned with pre-scanning, no hints of manipulation or deception. He could still score quite well from rebounds, net-front and the occasional off-puck goal off the rush, but even at this level, his game is quite significantly limited. He brings some defensive value but also tends to take a lot of minors, mostly again because of the skating limitations.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Jokerit vs. Jukurit - U20 SM-sarja

Leppä continues to not do that much, especially offensively. He did get a few chances as the tertiary threat and provides some net-front presence, but the skill and skating just don't impress, especially the latter. He's fine defensively, but the lack of quickness and agility limit him there as well. One specific entry sequence showcased his mechanical limitations pretty well when he tried to make a cut to inside, but lost his balance and control of the puck.

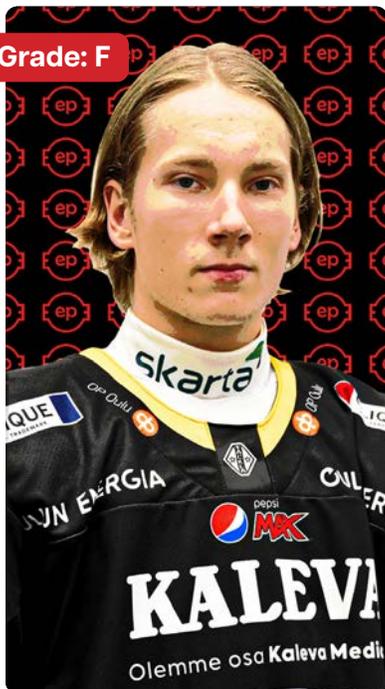
Lassi Alanen: October 1st, 2022 - Jokerit vs. HIFK - U20 SM-sarja

Reading my previous report, I don't know what has happened from last season or if I've just made a previous misevaluation, but Leppä's skating stride looked like a huge problem here. There was barely any bend from the knees or the ankles, leaving his posture one of the worst I've seen from draft-eligible skaters this season. He's still somewhat explosive, but it's not going to matter much unless the posture improves a ton. Made a few good off-puck plays defensively, but was really invisible offensively aside from one nice drop pass after OZ interception.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2022 - Jokerit vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Leppä played in a quite decent role, both at 5-on-5 and on the penalty kill and was on the ice protecting the lead late in the third when Ässät was trying to score without a goalie. Leppä's two-way centering was quite solid indeed. He was helping his defencemen well down low in the DZ and made some well-timed off-puck plays. Also effective on the forecheck, not afraid to engage physically to separate. Got a high-end chance late in the game after a quick 3v2 counter-attack and set up similar breakaway chance earlier in the game. Transitional play was more hit and miss, with quite a few dump-outs with better plays available. Skating looked fine, clearly a pretty good athlete.

Grade: F



Janne Peltonen

AGE 17.485 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'3"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	6	1	2	3	0.50
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	40	3	6	9	0.23
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	11	2	2	4	0.36

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing top-four minutes at the U20 level this season, Janne Peltonen's improvements over the course of the past two years earned him a three-year pro contract with Kärpät.

Having been a regular fit with the national team this season, most of Peltonen's value comes from his defensive game.

As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen noted in a recent game report, "[He] concedes too much space off the rush and sometimes lunges forward in ill-advised times, but the reach and the solid defensive work rate do help his case."

Peltonen occasionally also flashes some skill in transition, mostly as a passer. There's a notable lack of offensive upside, though. Peltonen is trigger-happy from the point, but rarely tries to make a move to improve his shooting location and doesn't show notable passing skill in the offensive zone.

The tools aren't that impressive from an NHL perspective either. Although his skating stride improved slightly over the course of the season, it still rates as at least slightly below-average and the same goes for his handling.

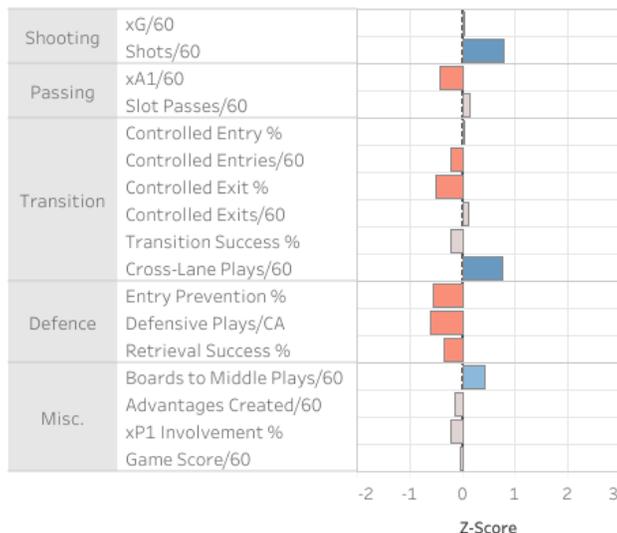
Given his 6-foot-3 frame, he could generate interest in the later rounds, but Peltonen ultimately failed to show enough promise to make our final ranking.

Janne Peltonen

D | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 121.2

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Lassi Alanen:** February 4th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Peltonen can flash some skill in transition, mostly by maneuvering around pressure, using his body to swoop to the middle before making an outlet pass or having enough patience to wait for an opening in the middle. The tools are a limiting factor as his handling lets him down at times and causes turnovers and he doesn't really have the quickness to beat players consistently enough. His poise has increased, though, and he's not as eager to just get rid of the puck as fast as possible. Offensively, I haven't really seen anything interesting. It's just a barrage of point shots of different variety and none seem particularly dangerous. Concedes too much space off the rush and sometimes lunges forward in ill-advised times, but the reach and the solid defensive work rate do help his case. Still not seeing a pick here, but he could have a good pro career.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

Peltonen's skating did look a bit better here from a projection standpoint. There were moments where he used his outside edges to a solid effect, and the forward stride has arguably gotten a bit better. Still probably a below-average projection, though, and does require further development that could come with added strength. There were a few nice plays made in transition, using the formerly mentioned outside edges to cut to the middle for an entry or connecting with his centre on a breakout pass. But I don't see anything that really grabs my attention. The defensive game is pretty projectable given how he uses his reach to block shots and interrupt plays and has a physical dimension to his game, even if he lacks the footwork to be a high-end play-killer.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty much in line with my previous viewings, nothing spectacularly new. Peltonen doesn't really have any NHL projectable tools (besides the size and the reach, duh). The skating is going to need a lot of work to get to NHL average. He's quite lanky and lacks strength, so maybe that changes with weight training in the future. But it's also that his handling is quite uncomfortable most of the time, there's no noteworthy passing or shooting skill and while he's fine in his own end, there are going to be prospects available late in the draft with more projectable defensive games. He makes the odd solid play on breakouts (gets the middle, then makes an outlet pass in-stride), keeps the play alive in the OZ or gets his stick in the way of a shot attempt, but that's about it.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

A lot of minutes yet again for Peltonen and Pieniniemi on the top pairing, both at evens and on the penalty kill. I'm still not sure if I see much with Peltonen in terms of NHL potential. The skating rates at least slightly below-average and so do the hands. His maneuvering under pressure was better in this one, but he's mostly deferring to his partner instead of being the one who created the advantage himself. Keeps a pretty loose gap off the rush, doesn't really have that killer instinct defensively. In-zone, he's fine in 1-on-1 situations but once again, only contains the opponent instead of breaking things up. A few activation attempts in the offensive end to create a passing option in the middle when the forward was cycling up high.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

A lot more measured effort from Peltonen overall here. It's not like he necessarily shined, but he didn't also jump out in a negative light as much as in the previous showing. It probably also helped that he got to play with Emil Pieniniemi - the top draft-eligible defenceman on the team - who took care of most of the difficult duties with and without the puck, and Peltonen was just there to play along. His puck skills seem to rate below-average. Not confident to handle under pressure. The passing accuracy was quite a bit better, though, and he hit some nice breakouts to the middle to beat pressure. Pelicans also played a lot of passive NZ trap and didn't challenge as much, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Let's just say that this wasn't a pretty game to watch from Peltonen. Kärpät won the game convincingly, yet Peltonen was

seemingly on the ice and a contributing factor to every goal against. The third goal was particularly bad, as he committed his weight way too easily to the outside and got completely embarrassed as the attacker went inside instead, scoring from the ensuing partial breakaway. Peltonen's struggles continued on breakouts where he had trouble moving the puck from under pressure. The skating lacked separation gear, the passing accuracy was poor.

Grade: F



Dominik Petr

AGE 17.378 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lukko U18	U18 SM-sarja	8	2	7	9	1.13
Lukko U20	U20 SM-sarja	18	1	0	1	0.06
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	15	2	8	10	0.67
Czechia U18 "A"	WJC-18	5	2	2	4	0.80

SCOUTING REPORT

Few prospects saw their draft stock tank as hard as Dominik Petr his this season.

Already a full-time fit with Czechia's U18 team as an underager and looking like a surefire draft pick, Petr missed the first months of his draft-eligible campaign recovering from an injury suffered at the 2022 U18s, only returning to play in late November.

At no point was he able to establish himself properly with Lukko's U20 team though, only adding a single point in 18 games. The word "rough" would be an understatement, even if he still produced decently well with the national team.

Petr's skating mechanics project as clearly below-average and he doesn't have that much quickness either. There were occasional hints of puck skills off the rush and the odd clever passing play to the inside through layers, but that's about it. His play in transition was really inefficient and the skating also limited the defensive impact. Simply put, Petr struggled mightily in league play this season.

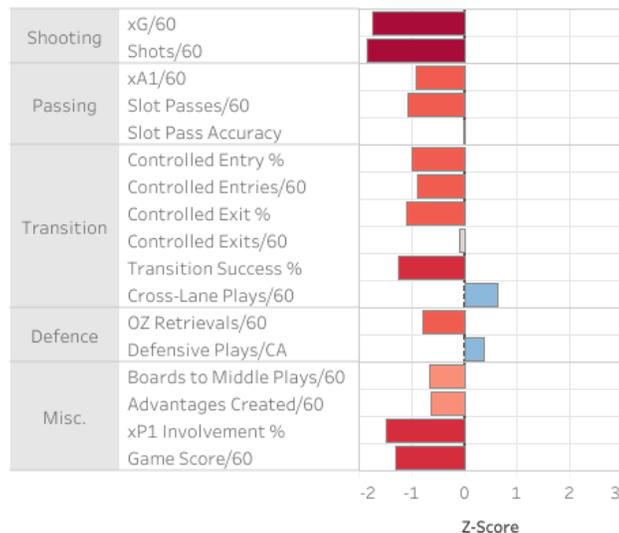
It's difficult to be optimistic about Petr's NHL chances at this point, and getting back to being a legitimate NHL prospect would require a massive bounceback. It's not impossible given what he's shown in the past, but we wouldn't be comfortable making that bet after a year like this.

Dominik Petr

F | Lukko U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 10 | Minutes Tracked: 130.5

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Czechia's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster



Meet the Team: Czechia's roster for the 2022 U18 World Hockey Championship



The 3 Stars from Day 1 of the 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup

≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: February 24th, 2023 - Lukko vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

Something monumental happened: Petr finally got on the scoresheet after going pointless at the U20 level for a long, long stretch. He was the beneficiary of a fantastic play from his linemate to set him up for a short-range breakaway and Petr was able to beat the goalie with a move to the backhand. Also had another highlight with a give-and-go passing play to the inside to create a quality look for another teammate. Those were only two flashes, but they were among the best plays he's made so far this season in my viewings. Seemed a bit more confident, showing the hints of the skill level by making a couple of nice dangles off the rush, even if he wasn't able to convert them into actual offence. The skating is going to be a big limiting factor unless the mechanics get better. He doesn't have a crazy output to compensate either and his acceleration with the puck looked rough on multiple situations.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Lukko vs. KooKoo - U20 SM-sarja

I'm still going into these games with the hope that Petr is turning a new leaf and starting to look like the prospect we thought he was a few years ago. It's just not happening. He was used in a more of a checking role, had a couple of hints of the underlying skill but didn't really convert it into anything meaningful. Clearly doesn't have much confidence in his abilities currently with how timid he looked at times with the puck and how much he deferred and tried to play as simple as possible. The checking projection is also tough given how much mechanical refinement there has to happen.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - Lukko vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

This season has been a rough one for Petr who is still hunting for his first point at the U20 level. The skating continues to be all over the place and a below-average projection, he's having to resort to uncontrolled plays in transition and isn't connecting with his passing attempts in the OZ when his line gets to establish a cycle. He's not looking even close to being a draft pick in these viewings.

Lassi Alanen: December 17th, 2022 - Lukko vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

I'm just not seeing anything that interesting with Petr. He did mostly fine job at tracking his man in the defensive zone and has the reach to intercept plays from time to time. There's some playmaking skill, but it only really shows in transition at this stage, and even there it's not that consistent. In the offensive end, he's just forced to the perimeter and struggling to find his way to the inside or into any sort of scoring chances. Hard to write anything more since there just haven't been much to write about in these viewings.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Lukko vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Petr had a chance to play higher in the lineup in this one, logging over 20 minutes of ice time in total. Not much changed from the previous viewings, though. He had a few nice passing plays on entries, making backhand feeds from the middle to the boards in-stride, but that's about it. Lacked separation speed off the rush and was shut down during in-zone sequences, couldn't find passing options in the slot or gain the middle himself. The skating looked a bit better compared to when he was just returning from the injury, but not by much – it's still a below-average projection.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - Lukko vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Nothing noteworthy really happened with Petr here. The skating quickness remains an issue, some odd off-puck routes (cutting in front of his own puck-carrying teammate). Couldn't handle his way through the blue line on entry attempts and the dump-ins didn't work either. Provided some defensive value, intercepting a cross-lane pass to the back post on one rush. Played down the middle in this one but only got bottom-six minutes.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - HIFK vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

This was Petr's second game back from an injury that kept him away for months, so I don't want to make any strict observations, but he wasn't that good here. Struggled to move the puck out of the DZ, most often getting caught flatfooted by the pinching defenceman. The skating looked like a below-average projection. A few shots off the rush, but nothing more offensively. Just a pretty invisible showing overall.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

I don't have anything new or interesting to say about Petr's game. He wasn't good in this game. He's clearly an intelligent off-puck player, but lacks the anticipation and foot speed to occupy those spaces at the right moments. Sweden's defenders just held him out of space. He's occasionally slick as a handler, mostly when he already has the advantage and he's a in glide. Instead of trying to outrace defenders, he resets or cuts back. Don't see any scoring tools from him.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Petr has some mechanical issues, but he's clearly an intelligent player. He times his movements into space, anticipates passes and shots in the defensive zone, and angles on the forecheck. He missed the odd play because of his limitations – dropping his head to look for the puck or lacking the handling skill to pull off the move he tried. But he also has plenty of smart ideas, like resetting or cutting inside early instead of trying to outrace players.

Mitchell Brown: August 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Petr seemed limited in terms of skating and puck skills, but he's clearly an intelligent player. He's always open, finding space between checks, circling high and reloading into the slot, and timing dashes to the net. He really leans on his heels to make puck plays, and when he doesn't, he tends to bobble the puck or throw it away. Could play a secondary role deep in a lineup.

J.D. Burke: August 6th, 2021 - Czech Republic vs. USA U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

Petr got the Czechs on the board early with a one-timer goal off of a won faceoff on the power play. It was one hell of a shot, too. Played honest, reliable hockey throughout, contributing low in the defensive zone, never cheating, and making smart off-the-puck reads. Tracked well through the neutral zone and neutralized a lot of rush chances by taking the right man at the right moment to disrupt developing plays. Showed some skill as a handler, often stacking deception onto his first touch. His game is subtle, but there's skill and maturity there beyond his years.

J.D. Burke: August 4th, 2021 - Czech Republic U18 vs. Russia U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

Mostly a quiet contest for Petr in this hockey game, though he did pick up the Czech's final goal by driving the centre lane at just the right moment to pick up a Sale feed and bury it. Regularly found teammates through traffic as a passer. Stayed on top

of the puck and played defensively diligent hockey for the most part. Not sure he moved the needle substantially one way or another but that's hardly an indictment given his age.

J.D. Burke: August 3rd, 2021 - Czech Republic U18 vs. Finland U18 - Hlinka-Gretzky Cup 2021

The Czechs loaded up all of their youngsters, the draft-minus-one and draft-minus-two players, onto their third-line, and Petr was its centre. He didn't seem out of place or overmatched by the competition, most of it comprised of much older, more physically advanced players. Made a fantastic behind-the-back, against the grain feed on the rush to set his linemate up for a scoring chance in this contest. In general, that was kind of his calling card in this contest: Making fantastic passes through sticks and bodies to set his linemates up for shooting opportunities. Won pretty much all of his puck battles along the boards, too.

Grade: F



Eero Prihti

AGE 17.444 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

190 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

3.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ässät U18	U18 SM-sarja	8	4	8	12	1.50
Ässät U20	U20 SM-sarja	35	1	6	7	0.20
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	6	0	1	1	0.17

SCOUTING REPORT

Following in the footsteps of other puck-moving defencemen who've recently come out of Ässät's junior program, Eero Prihti played most of the season at the U20 level, contributing seven points in 35 outings. He also appeared occasionally with the national team during the first half of the season.

Prihti had some promising flashes of transition ability over the course of his draft year, even if he still tended to dump the puck out too often. He shined with his decision-making on retrievals, but struggled defensively, overplaying his hand and giving up the middle too frequently while lacking physical strength to make stops regularly.

His offence mostly consisted of stepping to the outside to send the puck towards the net, although the production at lower levels suggests this area of Prihti's game could take a noticeable leap forward next season.

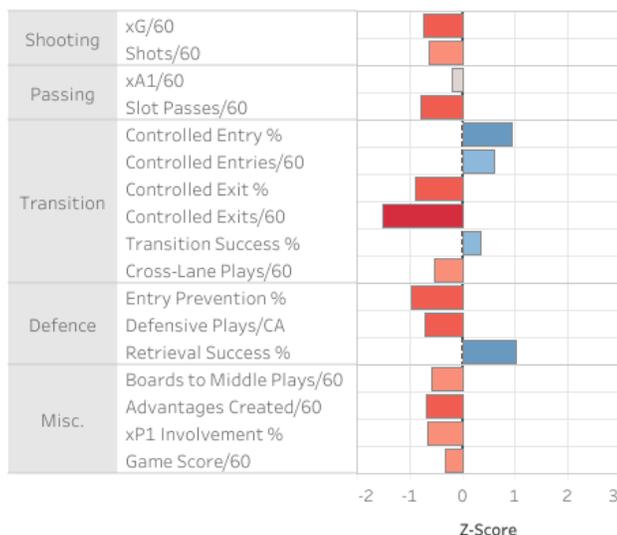
Prihti will almost certainly go undrafted, but with time, there could be a path to becoming a reasonably successful pro in Finland.

Eero Prihti

D | Ässät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 70.05

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Ässät vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Prihti has flashes that make me believe he has solid puck-moving abilities but he chooses to play very conservatively for the most part. It's hard not to when he beats pressure with enough quickness and elusiveness, then passes through the second

pressurer. But on the other hand, he tends to try to just rim the puck out of the zone when he could try to do more. Defensively, it's still troublesome for the most part, even if he did break up a few plays when players tried to beat him outside and he had gapped well enough to smother the opponent to the boards. I don't see much meaningful offence.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Ässät vs. Kärpät - U20 SM-sarja

Prihti's defensive game remains pretty shaky. He overcommits on angles, then gets beaten with a cutback or a simpler move to inside. The rush defence looked worse than in my previous viewings, conceding more space than previously. I guess he just needs to find a middle ground, play a bit more aggressively but scan better to prevent the odd-man rushes and threats deep in the NZ. Offensive game is mostly about stepping outside and firing point shots.

Lassi Alanen: November 5th, 2022 - Ässät vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Defensive reads seem to be an issue with Prihti. I don't mind his footwork and gap off the rush, but he does tend to let players lurk behind him, which causes odd-man rushes. In the defensive zone, he can overcommit in one direction, leaving him exposed if the puck-carrier just cuts back on him. Some decent puck-moving throughout, but not anything particularly high-end. I don't see a pick here.

Lassi Alanen: September 25, 2022 - Ässät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Prihti had some nice moments of puck control and breakout ability under pressure. I mostly liked his skating and handling, both looked to be on a fine level for this level. He wasn't particularly quick, but pretty mobile in all directions. Defensively, he wasn't really able to stop plays but contained the cycle pretty well. A few positional errors off the rush did end up costing Ässät quite a bit, though. One resulted in a goal against, another in breakaway.

Grade: F



Benjamin Rautiainen

AGE 17.260 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ilves U18	U18 SM-sarja	4	5	0	5	1.25
Tappara U20	U20 SM-sarja	30	10	15	25	0.83
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	1	4	5	1.25

SCOUTING REPORT

Benjamin Rautiainen is a great example of someone arguably being more skilled in many ways than some of the prospects who have a lot higher likelihood of getting picked in this year's draft.

Despite already being a full-time player with Ilves' U20 squad in his draft-minus-one season, Rautiainen somehow didn't appear at the U20 level before switching to the neighbour team Tappara, with whom Rautiainen ended up playing very productive hockey for the second half of the season, including being one of the top players during their postseason run ending in a championship.

Playmaking is Rautiainen's defining strength. He's a particularly crafty passer off the rush, employing strong timing and frequently using hooks and slips to avoid opponents' sticks. He was responsible for some of the better passing plays we saw from a draft-eligible prospect at the U20 level this season. There's also intriguing moments of handling skill and some finishing touch around the net.

There are clear translatability concerns, though. The skating is a below-average projection overall, and though Rautiainen isn't tiny, he doesn't have a ton of physical skills and that side of the game is likely to always cause him problems. He also wasn't much of a play-driver, instead being mostly an offensive zone specialist. And even there he relied on the deck being already somewhat stacked in his favour.

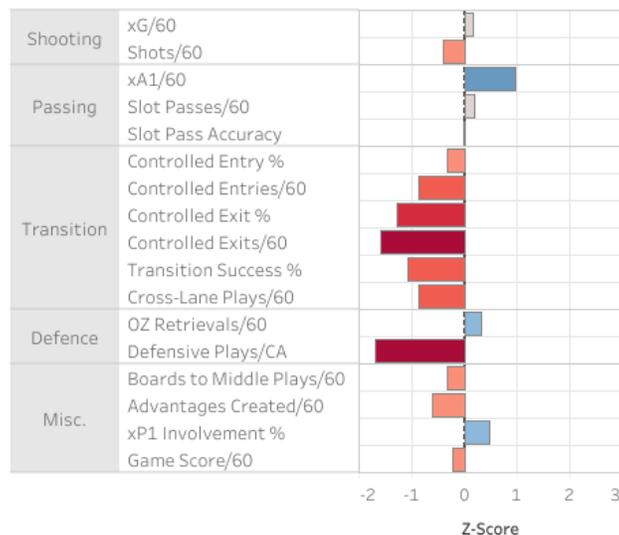
While he's a long shot to find an NHL home at the draft, he could really pop in the following seasons. He's got the talent to become a productive professional in Europe, given that he's able to get stronger and improve his skating at least a little bit.

Benjamin Rautiainen

F | Tappara U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 163.3

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: March 7th, 2023 - Tappara vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

For my money, Rautiainen was Tappara's best forward in their first quarterfinal match versus KalPa. He was the most consistently dangerous offensively at 5-on-5 despite not recording any points in the process. The offensive instincts off the rush were there, anticipating possible openings and creating advantages for his linemates in the process. His puck protection game actually stood out here, especially for a small and physically underdeveloped player. Was able to keep the pressure on his back and cut back on the defender a couple of times with great effect. Had a couple of individual chances from the net-front, not shying away from that area despite the ramped up physicality due to the playoffs. He's still very, very long shot as an NHL prospect, but given how well he's played since moving to Tappara, he's on his way to being a very interesting Liiga prospect.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Tappara vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen is seemingly peaking at the right time just as the playoffs are rolling around. The playmaking continues to be the most intriguing quality. Set up multiple high-danger chances off the rush with nice feeds; nothing particularly deceiving or manipulative but nailed the timing on them to dodge sticks and skates on his way. The handling is solid, he just doesn't have the small-area quickness or physical skills/strength to separate consistently in in-zone setting, which means he's pretty reliant at creating off the rush aside from the quick playmaking. Showed some nice edgework while walking the point, but the skating is still a hurdle he's going to have to overcome to make it in the pros. Clearly talented and skilled, but I still can't really consider him a legit candidate on our board, even if he's arguably outperforming at least some of his more highly-touted peers.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Tappara vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen scored right off an OZ faceoff, intercepting opponent's bad clearance attempt and then beating the goalie just over the blocker far side from the slot. That was a nice one, but arguably even better were the few high-danger looks he set up from below the goal line. The first one was particularly nice as he chained it straight into an forechecking steal on retrieval, almost like he had eyes on his back. These kind of highlights tell you about Rautiainen's playmaking skill being on the higher side among all draft-eligibles in Finland this season. I still have a hard time seeing him as a legit NHL prospect, but he could really explode next season.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Tappara vs. Kiekko-Espoo - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen tends to have the occasional brilliant moments, like when he set up his linemate after drawing in both defenders towards his side of the ice, then recognizing the lane and executing a really nice backhand pass for a high-danger look and a goal. The lack of quickness and strength are limiting factors and he's not much of a play-driver at this level just yet, though, making the NHL projection very hard. And he's not consistently turning out offence either. But the occasional moments of vision and skill are intriguing from a Liiga perspective at least.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Tappara vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

This was pretty much an off-game for Rautiainen. Nothing seemed to go his way and he drifted a lot outside of the action. The skating is going to be an issue going forwards. The stride tends to break down especially when he tries to power down, and even when it doesn't, it's not that projectable (high stance, lack of ankle flexion, wide recoveries). Didn't get the puck in advantageous spots and got hammered along the boards when trying to enter the zone. I've seen a lot better from him.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Tappara vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen scored twice from the net-front, first off a pretty behind the net pass and second off a rebound. He also had another quality look from a cross-ice pass off the rush. He wasn't driving the play that much, looking for opportunities to strike off the puck instead. Defensively, he was pretty ineffective as well. The skill level is higher compared to the average U20 league draft-eligible, but I don't think he'd be a realistic candidate for the board, unless he has a massive second half of the season. Very much situationally dangerous player at this point.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Tappara vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen overall quickness is probably better than last season, but his stride still has a lot of quirks, ie. hips stay high all the time, a lot of forward lean from the upper-body (strength related most likely) and a lot of inefficient upper-body movement as he skates holding onto the stick with both hands almost all the time. There's clear playmaking skill, though, demonstrated with quick passes from tight and clever little give-and-go attempts. Some solid off-puck instincts, too. Probably not a pick but he could become a top scorer at this level in the near future.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Tappara vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen started the season at the U18 level with Ilves despite being at the U20 ranks for majority of last season, and then decided to make the switch to Tappara, a better team where he's been put to their top-six right away. It's hard to see what Ilves was thinking, since Rautiainen looked actually pretty good here. Got a primary helper after intercepting a stretch pass in the NZ, started a counter-attack and slipped a pass to the middle right at the blue line as he was getting hit by the defenceman. Got a high-danger look late in the game with a sneaky weak side timing off the rush. Rautiainen is clearly a crafty and skilled player and I'd say that his skating has improved from last season. Fought through contact pretty well a few times, but was also separated from the puck pretty easily a couple of times.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2021 - RoKi vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Rautiainen was centering Ilves' second line in their closely-contested win over RoKi and he saw some ice time on the penalty kill, too. It wasn't the best performance from Rautiainen who was Finland's top center at the most recent U17 national team tournament. He had a few flashes at the end of the game, showing good elusiveness in the corner, but couldn't convert anything into offence. His off-puck positioning was pretty bad most of the time and his motor was rather low, often being the last man back to the defensive zone. Skating looked a bit awkward at times.

Grade: F



Niklas Seppänen

AGE 17.633 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

4.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	18	0	4	4	0.22
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	26	2	3	5	0.19
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	0	1	1	0.25

SCOUTING REPORT

Niklas Seppänen was one of the three draft-eligible defencemen to play substantial minutes with Kärpät's U20 team this season, also splitting time at the U18 level. He also appeared a couple of times internationally, though he was overshadowed at every turn by his more highly-regarded teammates and didn't end up making the cut for the U18s roster.

As far as the NHL is considered, Seppänen is an extreme long shot. There's just nothing that really stands out about his game. He's fine defensively, both in-zone and against the rush, but not a monster play-killer. He can make the odd crafty pass on breakouts, but often followed them up with icings and turnovers even while relatively unpressured; consistency was a missing factor. In the offensive zone, he didn't flash anything particularly interesting and only added four points in 18 regular season outings at the U18 level.

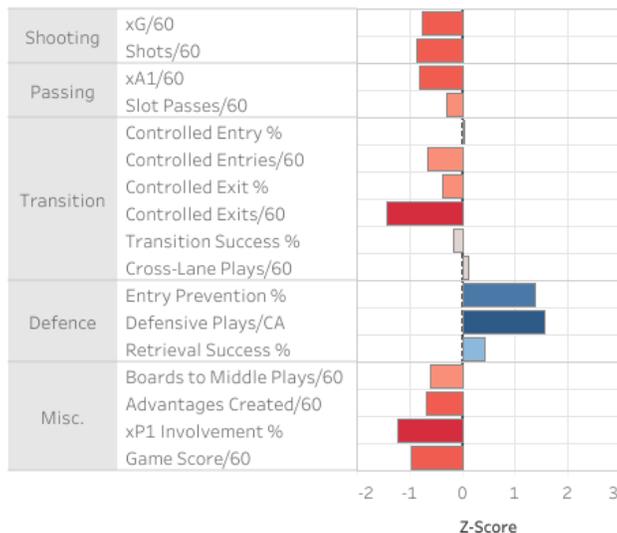
There might be a path for Seppänen to become a solid pro in Liiga if he adds a bit more quickness and starts to show more confidence and ability with the puck, but there's nothing that indicates that he's an NHL draft pick.

Niklas Seppänen

D | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 77.59

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

Peltonen can flash some skill in transition, mostly by maneuvering around pressure, using his body to swoop to the middle before making an outlet pass or having enough patience to wait for an opening in the middle. The tools are a limiting factor as

his handling lets him down at times and causes turnovers and he doesn't really have the quickness to beat players consistently enough. His poise has increased, though, and he's not as eager to just get rid of the puck as fast as possible. Offensively, I haven't really seen anything interesting. It's just a barrage of point shots of different variety and none seem particularly dangerous. Concedes too much space off the rush and sometimes lunges forward in ill-advised times, but the reach and the solid defensive work rate do help his case. Still not seeing a pick here, but he could have a good pro career.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Jokerit - U20 SM-sarja

Peltonen's skating did look a bit better here from a projection standpoint. There were moments where he used his outside edges to a solid effect, and the forward stride has arguably gotten a bit better. Still probably a below-average projection, though, and does require further development that could come with added strength. There were a few nice plays made in transition, using the formerly mentioned outside edges to cut to the middle for an entry or connecting with his centre on a breakout pass. But I don't see anything that really grabs my attention. The defensive game is pretty projectable given how he uses his reach to block shots and interrupt plays and has a physical dimension to his game, even if he lacks the footwork to be a high-end play-killer.

Lassi Alanen: December 16th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. KalPa - U20 SM-sarja

Pretty much in line with my previous viewings, nothing spectacularly new. Peltonen doesn't really have any NHL projectable tools (besides the size and the reach, duh). The skating is going to need a lot of work to get to NHL average. He's quite lanky and lacks strength, so maybe that changes with weight training in the future. But it's also that his handling is quite uncomfortable most of the time, there's no noteworthy passing or shooting skill and while he's fine in his own end, there are going to be prospects available late in the draft with more projectable defensive games. He makes the odd solid play on breakouts (gets the middle, then makes an outlet pass in-stride), keeps the play alive in the OZ or gets his stick in the way of a shot attempt, but that's about it.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

A lot of minutes yet again for Peltonen and Pieniniemi on the top pairing, both at evens and on the penalty kill. I'm still not sure if I see much with Peltonen in terms of NHL potential. The skating rates at least slightly below-average and so do the hands. His maneuvering under pressure was better in this one, but he's mostly deferring to his partner instead of being the one who created the advantage himself. Keeps a pretty loose gap off the rush, doesn't really have that killer instinct defensively. In-zone, he's fine in 1-on-1 situations but once again, only contains the opponent instead of breaking things up. A few activation attempts in the offensive end to create a passing option in the middle when the forward was cycling up high.

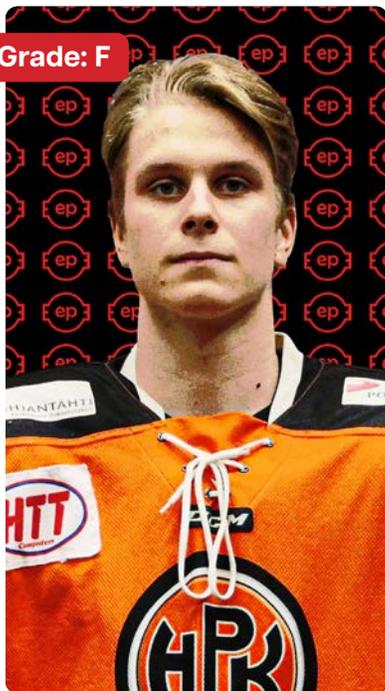
Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Pelicans - U20 SM-sarja

A lot more measured effort from Peltonen overall here. It's not like he necessarily shined, but he didn't also jump out in a negative light as much as in the previous showing. It probably also helped that he got to play with Emil Pieniniemi - the top draft-eligible defenceman on the team - who took care of most of the difficult duties with and without the puck, and Peltonen was just there to play along. His puck skills seem to rate below-average. Not confident to handle under pressure. The passing accuracy was quite a bit better, though, and he hit some nice breakouts to the middle to beat pressure. Pelicans also played a lot of passive NZ trap and didn't challenge as much, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Let's just say that this wasn't a pretty game to watch from Peltonen. Kärpät won the game convincingly, yet Peltonen was seemingly on the ice and a contributing factor to every goal against. The third goal was particularly bad, as he committed his weight way too easily to the outside and got completely embarrassed as the attacker went inside instead, scoring from the ensuing partial breakaway. Peltonen's struggles continued on breakouts where he had trouble moving the puck from under pressure. The skating lacked separation gear, the passing accuracy was poor.

Grade: F



Niklas Talvikunnas

AGE 17.608 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'4"

Height

203 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HPK U18	U18 SM-sarja	17	5	3	8	0.47
HPK U20	U20 SM-sarja	20	2	3	5	0.25
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Having moved up the levels at a quick pace because of his advanced physical stature, Niklas Talvikunnas bounced between the U20 and U18 circuits in his draft year, earning a couple of games with the national team in the process.

The 6-foot-3 defenceman had some interesting moments, making defensive stops in-zone with his size and reach. There were also occasional flashes of patience and sound decision-making with the puck, but in rather limited quantities.

Talvikunnas has serious mechanical limitations from an NHL perspective – both as a skater and as a puckhandler – which could potentially limit his defensive impact at further levels. His current style of defending is also conducive to a lot of minor penalties.

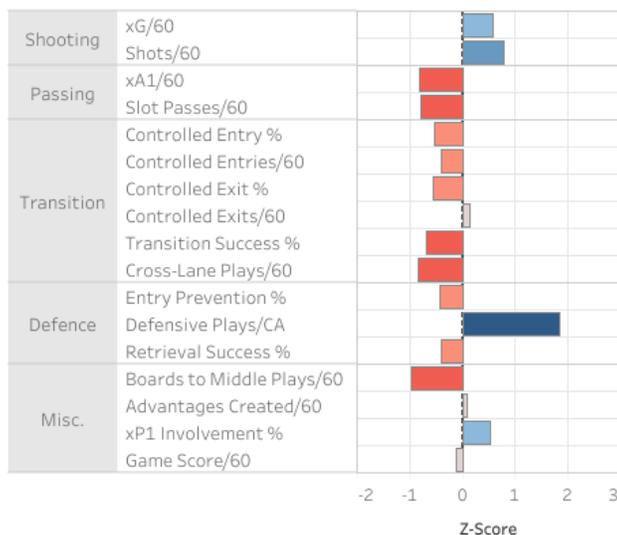
With his frame, a pro career in a more defensive role could be in the cards for Talvikunnas given there's further mechanical development. Even so, there doesn't seem to be enough upside to justify using draft pick on him.

Niklas Talvikunnas

D | HPK U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 57.44

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2022 - HPK vs. SaiPa - U20 SM-sarja

Talvikunnas came pretty close to scoring off the rush from his own rebound, but the goalie made a really solid save to prevent it. He was also more involved in the OZ overall, at least in the way of leaving the point and wandering pretty freely, even

sometimes to below the goal line. Not the strongest defensive instincts. He breaks up plays mostly because of his size and reach, but the skating limitations and poor reads make me question how much defensive upside he does have at the next level. Really inconsistent on breakouts. Flashes some passing ability but then makes some really poor passing decisions and struggles on retrievals.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - HPK vs. Ketterä - U20 SM-sarja

Another game where Talvikunnas made a few good plays, using his reach to disrupt a rush chance, then moving the puck through two forecheckers on his backhand. The abilities with the puck are just very inconsistent. Another scenario saw him back up in his own zone with the puck, then pass it directly to the opposition. There's really no deception or manipulation, just mostly trying to survive with the puck. Offensively, he went for a one-timer when he could've easily just received the puck and gained a ton of free space and maybe even reach the slot before shooting or passing. Defensive style seems to be conducive to taking a lot of penalties.

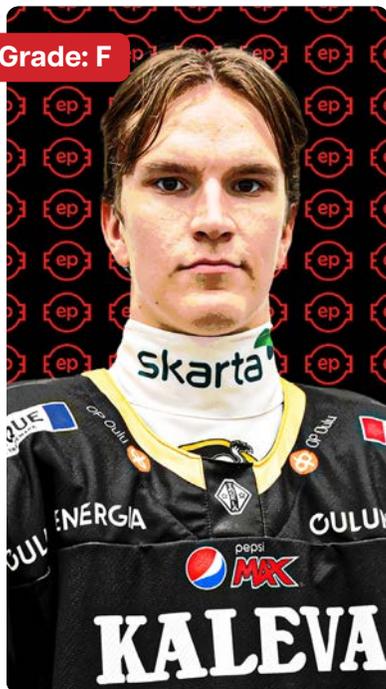
Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - HPK vs. TPS - U20 SM-sarja

Talvikunnas can have some decent moments here and there. I don't think his hockey sense is that bad. He can make good decisions, even under pressure. But there's pretty clear tool limitations related to his mobility and handling. Still doesn't seem that comfortable holding on to the puck for long periods of time, even though he had a few carry exits in this one compared to pretty much zero longer puck touches in the first viewing. Still concedes too much space off the rush. I don't see enough for him to be considered for our board, but could he be a late-round pick for some team? Maybe, depending on how much growth there is in his game during the rest of the season.

Lassi Alanen: October 21st, 2022 - HPK vs. Ilves - U20 SM-sarja

Talvikunnas looked huge out there, and it seems like they've bumped his measurements up to 6-foot-4 and over 200 pounds recently, which seemed about right. Played very simple game, moving the puck with one or two touches almost every time. Didn't really look comfortable handling it, because some of the passing choices were just sub-optimal, though sometimes they were the right or at least a solid play. Conceded quite a lot of space off the rush, but outmuscled opponents away from scoring chances a couple of times. Point shot had a ton of power behind it – not a surprise.

Grade: F



Otso Ylitalo

AGE 17.696 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'3"

Height

176 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4

Passing

4

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kärpät U18	U18 SM-sarja	11	4	8	12	1.09
Kärpät U20	U20 SM-sarja	28	1	2	3	0.11
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	3	1	0	1	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

A few years ago, Otso Ylitalo was named the MVP of the first big national team camp for the '05-born age group. Since then, his progress has somewhat stagnated.

This season, he only managed three points in 28 games with Kärpät's U20 team and made his only international appearance at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup.

Ylitalo might be a case of a player dominating over his peers early on due to his physical maturity. He's got a pro frame and decent speed, but struggled to consistently generate offence at the U20 level.

There's a clear lack of finesse in his game, reaching to his handling and his transition play. His best plays of the season were mostly solo rushes and outside lane drives.

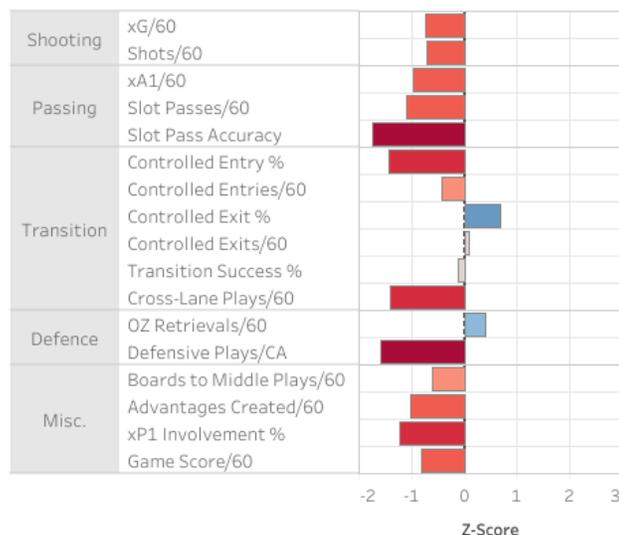
There's a chance Ylitalo's offensive game gets more diverse in the upcoming seasons, but he's got a lot of work to do to become a scorer, even at the U20 level. He could have a pro future in a checking role, but he'd be an exceptionally long shot as a draft pick.

Otso Ylitalo

F | Kärpät U20 | U20 SM-sarja | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 93.38

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: February 17th, 2023 - Kärpät vs. Kookoo - U20 SM-sarja

Ylitalo was able to set up one quality chance off the rush by hooking the puck to the middle from the boards to beat the

defender. Not a whole lot else to write home about. Even the skating has some rather notable issues concerning his mechanics and agility, which could limit him even more in the future. There's a clear lack of finesse in his game that not only affects his offence but also his ability to connect plays in other areas of the rink. It's not a coincidence that he's barely scored at this level this season. Seems like someone who previously benefitted from being physically mature compared to his peers, which helped him to peak early.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Ylitalo doesn't seem to be clicking with his linemates. Quite often, he doesn't seem to be on the same page and play at the same pace, which limits his touches in the offensive end. Handling breakouts along the boards was an issue and he turned the puck over quite a bit, unable to advance the play. He's not creating advantages with his off-puck play either. I don't see him as a pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 9th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Tappara - U20 SM-sarja

Ylitalo was mostly a solo rusher in this one. A couple of times, he was able to get the puck to the OZ while outnumbered as the rest of line was going for a change and establish some sort of pressure. Didn't create any meaningful offence aside from low-percentage shot attempts. Something strikes me that he was abusing his straight-line speed and physicality at lower levels, because there's seemingly little finesse in his game. Doesn't really know how to handle himself on breakouts, lack of scanning makes it more difficult as well.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Ässät - U20 SM-sarja

Ylitalo flashed his speed in the last shift of the game as he crossed the dot-line to the middle for an entry, sneaked in between the defenders and managed to get off a decent backhand shot. Also had a rebound chance from the net-front earlier in the game. Ylitalo doesn't strike me as a high-level thinker, though. He's chasing the play instead of being ahead of it. Exposed the puck in critical spots so he couldn't make a play and was stripped instead. Seems like his ways of creating offence aren't very projectable at this stage, so the future projection seems to be mostly as a forechecker.

Lassi Alanen: September 30th, 2022 - Kärpät vs. Lukko - U20 SM-sarja

Ylitalo looked like mostly a checker in this one. He has the pro frame and he moves pretty well for his size, could likely project as an average skater reasonably. Not sure if I buy the sense, though. Made some odd passing decisions, like going for a drop pass for nobody. Some of the off-puck routes weren't exactly conducive to creating chances either. We'll see how he progresses.

Grade: F



Hunter Anderson

AGE 17.384 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

2	6	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Shattuck St. Mary's	USHS-Prep	54	59	56	115	2.13
Des Moines Buccaneers	USHL	3	1	0	1	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

To say that Hunter Anderson ripped up the Prep hockey circuit would be an understatement. A member of the prestigious Shattuck St. Mary's hockey program, the California-born forward led all prep players with 115 points across 54 games. Anderson's shot may be one of the best in the draft, allowing him to score over a goal per game this season.

Crossover scout Daniel Gee broke down a sequence in a January game report, "His shot is a standout tool. In the second, Anderson read a battle win on the far boards, looping into a weakside activation. On the reception, he found himself very in-tight off the left wing but still lifted the puck with essentially no room top shelf. He went as far as adjusting his top hand higher so he could release the puck in that meagre amount of space."

Able to change the angle of his release, curl and drag past static lane cloggers, and pick the smallest of spots, Anderson's shooting talent backs up the production. He can absolutely rip a puck off a pass reception, transferring his weight fluidly through a lightning-quick wrist fold. An underrated playmaker, the Shattuck winger leverages one and two-touch passes to promote fast puck movement. He has some advanced ideas; finds teammates in soft ice with regularity, working give-and-goes, but can default into hope passing too often with the mountain of touches he gets throughout a given game. Anderson required his teammates to do a lot of the harder perimeter work because, beyond his shot, he's mechanically limited.

The caveats of Anderson's game are immense. A small player, standing at 5-foot-9, the Manhattan Beach product is also a poor skater – a brutal combination for projectability. His knees are rarely engaged enough, he creates no power off his toe flick, and he doesn't extend off the push-off. To make matters worse, his crossovers are even more prohibitive; a devastatingly inefficient hop and an upper body that is always falling backwards mean little north-to-south ability. The mobility issues impact his entire game, from his involvement on the forecheck to his ability to create resistance on the backcheck.. He looked out of place, behind, and barely able to tread water in his brief USHL appearances this season.

Nevertheless, as part of the University of Denver's recruiting class for 2023, Anderson will be joining the NCAA sooner rather than later. His projection is fraught with hurdles, as he can't really play outside of the top-six. If he can improve his skating, the offensive instincts and separating shooting tool is there to leverage.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Daniel Gee:** February 26th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs. Shattuck St.Mary's - USHS- Prep

Undoubtedly one of the better Anderson viewings I have had this season. He's a limited player due to his below-average, short stride length, but he has a myriad of details across his game that are interesting at some level. Right off the hop he scored on the rush. After Nehring worked a puck free and sent a cross on a 2-on-1, Anderson slung the puck off the reception, top-arm unlocked, easily cashing the puck on the wide-open net. He understands how to slip into soft areas of the ice and set to shoot -- there was one powerplay where he had virtually a guaranteed goal but the puck carrier tunneled into shooting (despite the wide open pass lane). His shooting is the separator. On one third-period rush, Anderson worked hard on the backcheck, stealing the puck on his own blue line. He turned the puck over on a subsequent pass but re-intercepted the puck, attacked through the middle of the ice, and sent a tricky curl-and-drag wrister low off the goaltender's pad. He always adjusts his rush patterns into the middle, eating up any space he can get. Sometimes it's ill-advised -- on one shift he basically walked the puck into the whole 5-man Mount St. Charles until.

In sustained pressure, Shattuck does everything they can to leverage his shooting. He's not overly involved in the forecheck as a result. His sense seems to be above average for the prep level. On one shift he predicted and recovered a ringed puck, instantly feeding a teammate activating through the slot -- they bobbled the puck on the reception. On the same shift, he redirected a Nehring pass on the net by virtue of his off-puck positioning. Anderson wired a one-timer on a first-period powerplay, aimed low off the bottom of the right-hand circle. An impressive shot mechanically. He can two-touch passes, and work pucks free on the perimeter with his stick work. Anderson was even more impactful in his own end -- more so than previous viewings. On one shift he read a pass to the slot and proactively moved into the shooting lane for the block. He did virtually the same on a second-period penalty kill. I don't know how he will be able to operate at higher levels with how prohibited his stride is -- if he can recover some efficiency, then there's a player here, but right now I'm sceptical.

Daniel Gee: February 7th, 2023 - Shattuck St.Mary's vs. Mason City Toros - USHS-Prep

This was a poor outing for Anderson who looked like a complementary player, too reliant on teammates to do hard puck retrieval work. His stride looks more and more like a major issue for his translatability. Stride length is just so short that it basically caps the pace that he can operate at. The thing is, a lot of his other tools are so impressive at times. In sustained pressure, he is more of a passive supporter looking for off-puck passes so he can leverage his shot. The staticness of the powerplay leans into his skill set. In the second he made a smart goal-line one-touch to the bumper for a high-danger pass. On a couple of plays later, Anderson was floating backdoor, processed a point shot that bounced off of Nehring, and sniped a shot top-shelf -- a one-time, opportunistic blast. Funnel pucks to the inside and finds teammates through pressure. Anderson had a second goal in the third. After a Mason City breakdown, he had the puck alone backdoor, one-touched a puck to a supporting teammate, and then eventually converted the return. The goaltender had no chance on the 2-on-0.

Tunnels into shooting in transition. On one early sequence he had two net drives but shot the puck high instead of working something that could capitalise on a rebound. He files the weak side and sneaks into the middle behind coverages often. He did this in the second and got a tricky short-side shot off. Can default into hope passing if there aren't obvious options. Tried a triangle handle but just couldn't execute in this one. His hands are good though and actively invites pressure and baits aggression. In the third he handled to the backhand around a defender, lifting the puck over their stick, and in one-motion shooting. This was all to get an inside seam to a better shooting location. So disengaged and straight-legged defensively. Doesn't backcheck to the point where it is frustrating to watch. Will need to be a lot harder to play against to ever make it, despite his tools. Regardless, his tools make him interesting and worth watching further this season, especially in the USHL against better competition.

Daniel Gee: January 15th, 2023 - Culver Academy vs. Shattuck-St. Mary's - USHS-Prep

Only played around 12-13 minutes in this rematch against Culver Academy. Despite that, Anderson is growing on me. He built up more proactive speed in this game -- a habit that will be required to have any transitional impact at higher levels. In the first Anderson built up speed with a wheel through the neutral zone, entered the OZ, popped the puck into his hip-pocket, and dragged past a defender right into a pass. The off-puck supporter was tied up but it was a beautiful attempt. He was trying to work give-and-goes, filing well off-puck. He was productive in sustained pressure -- a battle win on the far boards allowed

Anderson to feed a puck high into a point shot goal. Later in the first Anderson dominated a shift by taking a pass high in the OZ, cutting to the inside, protecting the puck at his hip, and unleashing a shot just high. On the same play he filed backdoor, took a pass on the end boards, one-touching the puck back into the slot for another primary. Didn't find enough sequences to leverage his shot like my last viewing -- but he essentially missed 1/3 of the game.

Didn't like his defensive effort. Straight-legged backcheck, no effort to track a secondary threat. Drifts to the perimeter in sustained pressure and is so lax at occupying lanes or pushing pressure. His short stride is still scary, but it's clear he's adapted through his handling and skill blending to somewhat overcome it. Regardless, Anderson is a player we need to watch more, as he could be an end-of-the-board player for us.

Daniel Gee: January 14th, 2023 - Shattuck-St. Mary's vs Culver Academy - USHS-Prep

Anderson is decidedly undersized and has a myriad of stride inefficiencies, but he was an ever-present threat in this game against Culver Academy. His shot is a standout tool. In the second, Anderson read a battle win on the far boards, looping into a weakside activation. On the reception, he found himself very in-tight off the left-wing, but still lifted the puck with essentially no room top shelf. He went as far as adjusting his top hand higher so he could release the puck in that meagre amount of space. His other transition sequences were hit-and-miss. For instance, in the first, he took an impressive backhand reception into an entry, but couldn't work past a defender, leading to a TO on the sideboards. Anderson has some handling skill -- attempted a toe-drag to the inside on one first-period play but was taken out by a defender. Touch passes dominate his playmaking efforts. Nifty tap-back disrupted the opposing defender's gaps at times. Anderson has some nice weight-shift habits to help combat his sluggish foot speed, but he still hops heavily in the crossover. Attempts to the inside failed more than one would like for this level of hockey. He cooked in sustained pressure, particularly in open space on the powerplay. A one-touch pass to a backdoor teammate produced his first assist. Later he layered a cross-crease that initially failed but bounced to a teammate for an easy goal. Anderson scored on a power play, absolutely roofing a pick from the goal line coming out of the far corner. The precision and release are special. Looks like a pick if you can get over the hurdles of his size and pace issues -- pretty big hurdles at that.

Daniel Gee: December 29th, 2022 - Fargo Force vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

Looped back to watch Anderson in the USHL (watched all the high school viewings first). Right off the bat, the skating looks so prohibitive at this level. The mechanics are abysmal and it shows. His knees are rarely engaged, push-offs in turn are limited, no extensions whatsoever, and the foot speed is just poor. His crossovers actually reduce his acceleration as he hops before every attempted cross, all while falling backwards. It's such a shame because the rest of his tools would interact so much better if he were a better mover. There were numerous times when he was behind the play, just because he's that mechanically limited by his skating. Nevertheless, Anderson scored in this game, a beautiful off-puck activation backdoor into a catch-and-release sling top shelf. The shot is special as seen in other viewings -- 6 grade at the very least. He can't really push any forechecking pressure so it's key that his off-puck game is strong, letting others work retrievals.. In the third, Anderson showed this, catching and releasing another puck on the left-hand circle. He looked timid on the puck in sustained sequences, especially on the powerplay where Des Moines set him up as a primary shooter off the right-hand circle. He looked timid at times, not the forceful executor he is at Shattuck. For instance, on one play in the first, after walking down the right flank, he made an odd decision to send a blind backhand to the middle of the point -- no defenders there. On a sequence right after, after taking a cross from the left point, Anderson made a quick one-touch immediately into pressure in the slot -- the bumper teammate completely covered. It's obvious that Anderson has vision, but the execution to complete the layered efforts just doesn't exist.

Transition play is a bit of an adventure at the USHL level. A lot of desperation funnels to the slot from the outside as he faces gapped pressure. Slips, two-touch backhand usage, but like in sustained pressure, just limited execution. Anderson had a couple of great off-puck supporting plays. He was wide open on a 2-on-1 but the pass didn't get through. The skating issues, particularly his ability to work laterally or move in different directions. On his first shift of the game, Anderson was too slow to clog a pass lane to the bumper, allowing a fully leveraged one-time shot and a goal. Later he was walked around multiple times in the neutral zone with no resistance. Finally, Anderson had probably one of the worst backcheck sequences I have seen from a prospect this season. He gave up before the blueline, flared off as his man trialled into the slot and wired a rebound in. Just had no capacity to keep up at all. He's probably not a pick for our board. He showed better at the prep level and some of his tools are special, which is why I gave him a D-grade, but I just don't know how he can translate if there aren't serious improvements to the myriad of mechanical inefficiencies with his stride.

Grade: F



Cayden Casey

AGE 17.940 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

2.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
North Iowa Bulls	NAHL	13	4	3	7	0.54
Des Moines Buccaneers	USHL	17	2	4	6	0.35
Andover Huskies	USHS-MN	30	21	57	78	2.60

SCOUTING REPORT

There's something to be said for a play-connecting centre who can set the table for his wingmen, and Cayden Casey has been that player for the Andover Huskies in his draft year.

The main pivot between fellow first-time draft-eligibles Cooper Conway and Gavyn Thoreson, Casey managed to flash playmaking value, racking up almost two assists per game in the Minnesota high school circuit.

While the Elk-River-born forward isn't much of a play-driver, he's mastered the art of pushing play north-to-south at the high school level. A dogged supporter in his defensive end, Casey is often the early catalyst to Andover's transitional attack. Five-foot pop passes through seams, cross-ink breakout passes to create odd-man attacks, and off-puck drives pushing opposing defenders back, all created an impact through his game this season. On-puck, he struggles to push a more nuanced game, often attacking into pressure and issues timing off-puck seam entries.

Limited mechanically, Casey's stride represents one of the most significant limiters to his future translatability. "His recoveries are incredibly wide, to the point where he lunges as he lands and flicks out [off his toes]. His crossovers are prohibitive, upper body bobbing violently. This fundamentally limits him at this level," crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in an April game report. These stride inefficiencies were even more prohibitive during Casey's USHL action this season.

There are some more nuanced give-and-go attacking sequences and slot funnels in Casey's game, but beyond more basic-level plays like acting as a net-front screen that can swing out backdoor, there isn't a lot here to suggest he'll garner NHL interest.

If he's able to turn the flashes into demonstrable habits and improve the stride, he could be a bottom-line option for an NHL organization. If not, developing into an NCAA contributor seems well within his range of outcomes. A recruit of St. Lawrence University, Casey is set to join the New York-based school this upcoming season.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: April 8th 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Casey's stride is terrifying. His recoveries are incredibly wide, to the point where he lunges as he lands and flicks out. His crossovers are prohibitive, upper body bobbing violently. This fundamentally limits him at this level. In transition he was clunky edge-to-edge, but wanted to file the weakside constantly. In the third, after breaking in on the weakside, he was able to sneak in behind an overload to the strongside. He took a long slip pass, deked and pivoted to the backhand and scored in tight. Beyond that, there is nothing else on the rush. Behind the play a lot of his limited minutes

He had more tangible shifts in sustained pressure. Nevertheless, his play just showed how limited he is. Casey tried to get in on the forecheck but regularly was late on the retrievals and failed to seal off the ring outs with his body. He has some great off-puck movement sequences, but on-puck he just chucked everything on net. In the third he planted backdoor on a powerplay. As he anticipated a pass, Casey stick lifted the lane-clogging defender, and then shifted to softer space in the bumper when the pass didn't come. He succumbed to manipulation a couple times while trying to push pressure -- mainly by the defenders feet and changes in direction. Called for a high-slot one-time shot -- found it a weird decision.

Overshot on the backcheck and chased heavily. Delay elements destroyed him because of the stride, allowing an inside pass in the first. He had an egregious puck watching shift. Instead of covering the threat floating in the crease, he stared down the puck on the end boards and was reactive as the puck was centred - goal against. He provided some disruption high in the defensive zone, but not a great overall viewing. He's clearly not a candidate for our board. Too limited and doesn't move well enough.

Daniel Gee: March 11th, 2023 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Andover High - USHS- MN

Another fairly limited viewing of Casey. He doesn't possess a lot of power via his push-offs, and is straight-legged too often across his shifts. Also lunges heavily. Forechecking sequences are lethargic. Relies on Conway and Thoreson to do some of the harder retrieval work. Looks more like a connector than a drive at the high school level. He's mastered the 5-foot pass which is key for his role on the line. Little pops through seams allow for Thoreson and Conway to work some of their more separating tools. Casey is always trying to work the puck north-to-south which also helps the line function. Whether he is poking the puck through pressure or sending long-distance feeds to create odd-man breaks he does contribute at some level. He had a nice play in the second. After taking a neutral zone slip pass, he worked into a shoulder shimmy, got the defender to pivot, and fended off the player with one arm as he attacked downhill. Casey was able to shove a one-hand pass backdoor off the power move. Felt he wasn't ready on a couple of shot-off-reception plays. Rushes some of his touches in transition -- lacks the nuance to delay or shoot when net-crashing linemates are in better positions. His biggest contribution to this game was in the dying seconds. He drove the slot, acted as a decoy and took a couple of defenders, allowing Conway to hit Thoreson backdoor for the late lead.

In the cycle, Casey showed some more advanced ideas. On one sequence in the first, he executed a give-and-go into the slot, but his one-touch shot was clogged. He plants as a net-front screen -- it's honestly where he is most useful as he will drift to the backdoor as play fairs more downhill. I felt he had issues getting into softer ice. It's almost as if his processing of the play was just a bit behind. He was moving where the puck just was too often. Casey recorded an assist off a puck he threw on net. The rebound was tapped in.

Wasn't a fan of the backchecking efforts on this one. He chased too often (processing mentioned earlier). He needs to exploit the size advantage at the high school level more -- he does to an extent in the crease, working boxouts and battling, but there's nothing extraordinary here. It would be good to see him in a different environment, maybe away from the other draft eligible to see more on-puck sequences. Right now he's a no-draft for me -- not enough separators at this level.

Daniel Gee: March 2nd, 2023 - Duluth East High vs Andover High - USHS- MN

Limited throughout, Casey played third fiddle to Thoreson who was the play driver across their minutes and Conway to a lesser extent. Question some of his decisions on-puck when attacking on the rush. In the second he tried to spit the defence to get to the net; guided to the side of the net. Attacks into pressure and instead of delaying or manipulating, he just accepts the

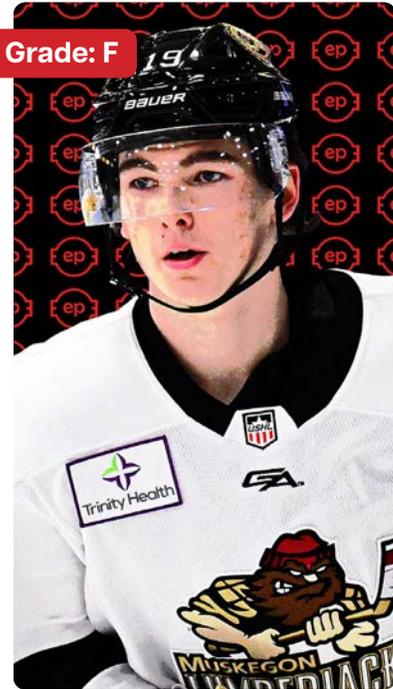
resistance. Even on a wide drive where Casey used a stutter manipulation, it just resulted in a contested in-stride shot. Didn't recognize the timing to jump into an available pass seam -- an issue when it comes to his off-puck scoring potential. The volume of passing and attacking plays at the high school level means that despite the poor habits, he still gets opportunities -- in this game particularly, he heeled multiple one-touch shots. Some thought to work give-and-go attacks, but overall, a lot of issues in transition. A better player in sustained pressure, Conway has some useful habits. He's big and protects at his hip pocket, but a lot of his forays off the walls didn't materialise. Plants as a net-front threat looking for redirects and shots off of pivots. He scored off a rebound clear-up after Thoreson made a beautiful pass. Good positioning at the backdoor. Has to settle passes and load before shooting -- it was such an issue in this one.

Casey is the better defensive player on his line. Amazing reads to disrupt and push pressure when under a sustained cycle. Gets his stick in the release of shots and flexes his physical profile on the perimeter. Overall, I just don't think he creates enough at this level to translate effectively to the professional game.

Daniel Gee: January 17th, 2023 - Blaine High vs. Andover High - USHS- MN

This wasn't really a needle-moving viewing for Casey. His best asset in transition is his off-puck work. He's always seemingly available on the weakside -- an option for Thoreson or Conway to hit if their own forays are over pressured. His on-puck work is a bit rough. He fails to protect the puck, presenting in front of his body on controlled entries. He plays with a heightened pace, but cutbacks as soon as he faces a scenario he can't manoeuvre, often deferring off to his linemates. This caused some missed opportunities -- on one first-period rush, he had a weakside option streaking, but he cut back to delay the next action. He had his moments when he stayed more on the inside. A triangle-based slip to Conway in the middle, and an assist late in the third after he floated a pick to the side of the net. Struggles with catching and releasing off the reception.

Casey is limited when it comes to puck skills, but he supports his line at an adequate level. He's simpler than Conway and Thoreson, and by virtue of that, he compliments them well. He reads pressure off his back fairly well, which aids in the cycle game they push occasionally. In the second after cutting back on the endboards he let go a pivot shot that created a surprise chance. He scored on an off-puck play. Thoreson won a retrieval and found Casey wide open in soft ice, in the slot. Casey deked around a goalie poke-check, had him swimming and roofed the puck. Flashed some playmaking ability too -- At the end of the third he set up a beautiful centering pass to the slot. I think he's too limited for a pick for our board.



Grade: F

Joseph Connor

AGE 17.460 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 31, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C Position	Left Shoots
5'10" Height	170 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5 Shooting	3.5 Passing
5 Puckhandling	3.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Yale Jr. Bulldogs 18U AAA	18U AAA	11	5	5	10	0.91
Muskegon Lumberjacks	USHL	12	1	5	6	0.50
Avon Old Farms School	USHS-Prep	28	21	23	44	1.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Joseph Connor is always taking the initiative and pushing play forward, constantly moving his feet to pressure opponents and create advantages.

A hard worker who plays at a single pace, the Amherst, New Hampshire-born forward helped lead Avon Old Farms to the EPSAC Elite 8 Championship, lighting up the scoresheet with 44 points across 28 contests.

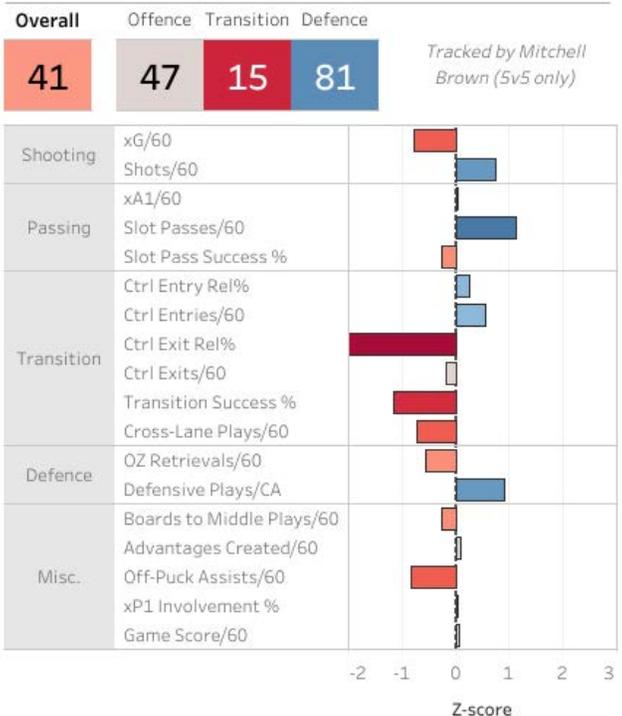
There's having a high motor and then there's Connor. He's rocking a Supercharged 5.2-Litre V8. That's bound to generate a fair bit of NHL interest.

"Connor's motor was unreal in this game. It was such a separating factor for Avon Old Farms, that it generated opportunity after opportunity as The Hill School had practically no answer for the pace," crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a March game report. "Connor's stride is choppy and mechanically inefficient, but he's adapted by just moving his feet nonstop to create speed. This was ever-present on the forecheck, where Connor just pushed constant pressure. He was blowing up players in the neutral zone and causing poor breakouts just by rushing defenders."

While this high-pace approach often pays instant dividends at the high school level – and frankly, should scale up to any level of hockey, to some degree – the lack of nuance in Connor's game offers pause. He plays too fast, overshoots through pass seams off-puck, and patterns into the same manoeuvres off of every touch. Once his opponents get a read of his game, Connor's outside power moves are pushed to the outside, leading to inefficient, telegraphed actions.

Joe Connor

F | Muskegon Lumberjacks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 56.0



The lack of creativity and dynamism suggests that Connor's upside is relatively limited; possibly a bottom-line checker in the NHL. That said, he's already enjoyed some success with the USHL's Muskegon Lumberjacks and is set to return next season. If he can learn to slow down his game a bit and incorporate his teammates more, our enthusiasm for his potential may well grow in time.

It wouldn't be a stretch to consider his moments of poor decision-making being a byproduct of simply thinking too fast. He may not be able to leverage a catch-and-release shot cleanly or flash outer-worldly small-area ability, but that isn't the focal point of his game – his forechecking and defensive value is. With a commitment to Northeastern University in 2024, Connor will be in a strong environment to stretch out his development at the NCAA level.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Connor's a hard-worker who plays fast. He takes the middle and tries plays at full speed. They often fail. He's too early to passing lanes and doesn't set up defenders before trying to play through them. Showed better off-puck instincts, reloading high for a chance. Nothing advanced – he overskates and doesn't time his movements. Looks more like a college scorer than an NHL prospect in this game.

Daniel Gee: March 31st, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Connor's play is highlighted by his motor, but he's still a fairly limited player when it comes to his tools. There's a lot of effort on the forecheck, but he was constantly manipulated by puck-retrieving defenders. Nevertheless, pressure at this level does pay dividends. Connor had most of his success off-puck, in situations where he was able to swoop in on a rebound, or contest a battle, or support a teammate. He flashes some habits that will help him at higher levels. On one first-period shift after stick lifting a puck away in the neutral zone, Connor crashed the net off-puck, jumped on a rebound, got low, won body position, and started the cycle. He was crushed but escaped and filled the slot shortly after. On his next shift, he roughed up a defender on the forecheck, read that a defender was going to work a reverse ring, swooped in on the near boards, and backhanded a puck to a teammate's backdoor -- they couldn't catch and release the puck cleanly, nullifying what was a great play. Even further, in the third, Connor pressured a puck carrier on the blue line, forced a bad pass into a turnover, and his teammate chucked the puck on the net from a distance. The puck deflected off of Connor and in as he crashed the blue paint. I can't see him producing in any other way at higher levels.

Connor had a wasted game in transition, failing to score on numerous breakaway chances. His stride is barely passable for the USHL -- knees not engaged, small stride length, limited extensions -- relies on volume. He has to actively cheat high, slipping behind defenders to create enough distance off the reception. In the first he made a pretty smart read off a 50/50 battle, working high early. Connor took the stretch pass off the backhand, worked in alone and had a forehand shot saved on a cut across the crease. Later in the third, ahead of the play once again, he deked to the backhand far too early, allowing the goalie to come across, effectively handcuffing himself into a contested shot -- just an odd decision. Shortly after he made a nice rush-pattern adjustment to the inside, had a screened shooting lane, but passed the puck off to a driver on the left wing. He makes weird decisions on puck -- no-look backhand passes to covered trailers, etc. If he had more small-area ability and manipulation habits, he would be able to translate these opportunities into scoring. Strong defensive game in this one. Always scanning and trying to disrupt in his one zone. In the first, he dropped down and stick-lifted a weakside activator -- a really smart read. Later he timed another stick-check in the hashmarks when he thought a pass was coming through. He was physical on the backcheck, forcing a couple of puck carriers to the outside. Not a pick for our board, but you have to appreciate that he at least tries to make an impact within his skillset.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Connor missed the net on his two best chances of the game, but both took some skill to get there. First, he rushed the net at the right time. For the second, he waited for the defender to reach then toe-dragged around them. He's not a playmaker. He doesn't look for his teammates or try passing lanes. But he's an incredible worker. Feet moving, always looking to press opponents. He occasionally creates some space for a teammate by passing through a defender off the rush, but I'm not convinced those are intentional plays. Seems like a late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Connor created turnovers with pressure. He skates at opponents, leading with his stick, and follows through his shoulder. Offensive, he uses space before shooting for chances. But I don't see a creative player. He's just charging straight-ahead. He doesn't change pace, create angles, or uses his teammates effectively. Looks like a checker at this next level, but I've been burned by players with this motor before.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Connor does stuff way too fast. He doesn't look before making some of his plays. He dumps pucks out with time and space and tries to force pucks through lanes. But he also showed some projectable skill and ideas. He faked a shot before passing and created a chance with a cross-slot pass through a defender, timed perfectly as the lane opened. Recognized time and space running out as he sprinted up the boards and passed to the inside. Skill seems limited at times, with his hands failing to catch a pass or shoot instantly. He's a forechecking machine with defensive value. Skating could be more of a weakness than strength. A solid game from Connor. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Connor grabbed an assist by sprinting full speed ahead before hooking the puck behind for the trailer. Grabbed a couple of chances after cutting inside. The work rate and motor are definitely NHL-calibre. But he has limitations. He plays too fast and misses opportunities. Not deceptive and not a lane creator. Opponents read his intentions and kill the play. He'd be a fine late-rounder because of the motor and skill level, but there's a lot of work to be done on his reads.

Daniel Gee: March 10th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Connor barely showed anything in this viewing other than pace, which was even diminished at this level. He was at his best in transition, but looked disjointed. On a first period rush he made a pretty deft slip forward, but his linemate moved out of the original lane they were filling. Connor managed to score shortly after. Filing on the weakside off-puck, he crashed the net, potting the rebound after the puck bounced around in the chaos. His off-puck game is practically his only creation tool across his limited minutes. He crashes the crease hard looking to work free loose pucks. On a third period shift he snuck behind the defence, broke free, and ended up redirecting a deft pass on net for a high-danger.

The off-puck game was starkly different in sustained pressure -- he frankly struggled to find soft ice across his shifts. He was more of puck retriever than anything, clamping hard on sticks, working pucks free and sending centering passes into the middle. Connor didn't win enough battles, though -- physically he's small for this level (In HS it's not an issue). He had one noteworthy play. After supporting a man in pressure on the forecheck, he took a pass, cut inside slightly and got a quick shot off -- low chance of scoring, but it was something.

Connor made some bad mistakes in his own zone. Two failed clears resulted into a lot of sustained pressure. He needed to be harder on the puck. Not a pick for us, but I will watch more USHL games to make sure.

Daniel Gee: March 5th, 2023 - Cushing Academy vs Avon Old Farms - USHS-Prep

Connor's stride is just so inefficient; heel kicks, short recoveries, a lack of a power-generating toe-flick -- there are just a lot of issues here. To combat this, he flashed his hands and pace ad nauseam, regardless of what the situation called for. Much of Connor's game is telegraphed, relying on speed to really create breakdowns. For instance, in the first, Connor baited a dump-in but dragged the puck on his backhand to beat a defender. He instantly activated into a power move but did nothing to sell a shot, easily having his backhand saved. His set patterns are so predictable that even Cushing's defenders could recognize what he was typing to do. Take a pass in stride, deke to the backhand to try and move a defender laterally, into a power move -- happened multiple times in this game. He had a sequence where he adjusted his rush pattern inside, threw the puck in his hip pocket to add a protection element, dragged to the backhand, causing the defender to fall, only to take a zero-per cent shot from a sharp angle...

In sustained pressure, Connor's game is grindy, perimeter-based, and hectic. He loves to walk pucks out of end-board retrievals high in the zone, allowing him to cut into the dotted lines and into shooting opportunities. Almost all of his major changes came from disguising his release by pivoting into the shot. A peculiar habit to say the least. In the third, he assisted on a game-winning goal with one of these shots -- rebound potted after a significant amount of chaos. Beyond that, the shot isn't overly impressive. He lacks precision, fumbles pass receptions too often and isn't an overwhelming supporter off-puck. Not a pick for our board but I can see why some may like him -- there is a bottom-line archetype here if he improves his skating and decision-making.

Daniel Gee: December 3rd, 2022 - The Hill School vs. Avon Old Farms - USHS-Prep

Wow. Connor's motor was unreal in this game. It was such a separating factor for Avon Old Farms, that it generated opportunity after opportunity as The Hill School had practically no answer for the pace. Connor's stride is choppy and mechanically inefficient, but he's adapted by just moving his feet nonstop to create speed. This was ever-present on the forecheck, where Connor just pushed constant pressure. He was blowing up players in the neutral zone and causing poor breakouts just by rushing defenders. His skill and habits are very questionable, however. Off-puck he fails to time activations into lanes, often enveloped in layers. The pass-supporting habits just aren't there. Connor lacks the tools to be a dynamic carrier, leading to scenarios where he just becomes completely enveloped in pressure. He had one sequence in the second where he carried the puck in with speed while his linemates worked to create space pushing the defenders back, he made a sharp cut, but took too long to execute and was checked -- Connor's teammate picked up the puck luckily.

He's more intent on being a retriever in sustained pressure, working high-motor forechecking sequences, winning pucks, and developing a cycle. The lack of hockey sense hurts him here too, though. Connor works under pressure a lot requiring significant teammate support. He had over 8 shot attempts miss the net, sacrificing any semblance of precision for power. Connor shoots in low-danger areas on a non-stop basis. In open space on the powerplay, he loves to walk downhill of the right-hand circle. Connor even scored off a two-touch shot -- bar down off from that very spot late in the game. He finally started to leverage lower-placed shooting at the end of the game, leading to a couple of rebounds and an assist. Extremely disruptive on the defensive end of the puck as well. His projection is no more than an energy player but he's interesting at some level because he's so tenacious across all his shifts. Have to watch more, but he seems pretty limited right going forward without major changes to the way he operates in the offensive zone (less 100% motor sequences and more nuanced play).

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - United States vs. Slovakia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Connor had a couple of plays, powering to the net on a 2-on-1 and moving into the slot with perfect timing for a backhand deflection. Also tried to deke on a 2-on-1, losing possession and killing the play. Strides lack extension. Too upright. Limited power. Game is mostly just straight-line pace and sprinting. Didn't see much to suggest an NHL prospect this tournament.

Mitchell Brown: August 3rd, 2022 - United States vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Connor's poor tournament continues. He took a needless retaliatory penalty, for one. But he also struggled with the puck. He attempted to stretch the ice constantly, but struggled to take pucks clearly or put them into his hip pocket. He's an excellent worker, coming across the hips for steals, throwing hits, and making plays from the boards to the middle, but plays too fast.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Connor's a high-pace, energetic forward with flashes of more exciting skills. While he prefers to sprint to create, he also created a chance by slowing down and baiting the defender's stick before passing. Pulled a puck out of mid-air while cutting inside, then got a chance, too. The stride lacks depth: hips elevated, feet flailing, lack of push off power. But his frequency's high. He plays fast and takes direct routes to stay involved in the play. I'm intrigued.

Mitchell Brown: August 1st, 2022 - Finland vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Connor's a high-pace, energetic forward with flashes of more exciting skills. While he prefers to sprint to create, he also created a chance by slowing down and baiting the defender's stick before passing. Pulled a puck out of mid-air while cutting inside, then got a chance, too. The stride lacks depth: hips elevated, feet flailing, lack of push off power. But his frequency's high. He plays fast and takes direct routes to stay involved in the play. I'm intrigued.

Grade: F



Ethan Gardula

AGE 17.545 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cushing Academy	USHS-Prep	32	18	33	51	1.59
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	9	2	3	5	0.56

SCOUTING REPORT

With a return to prep hockey, Ethan Gadula was able to massively bolster Cushing Academy in their pursuit of an EPSAC Elite 8 Championships. Despite the Ashburnham-based school coming up short in the championship game against Avon Old Farms, Gardula's impact was worthy enough of Cushing Academy's offensive MVP award, scoring 51 points across 32 games.

The Princeton-born forward won't push the most nuanced play, but eye-line manipulation is a major part of his repertoire. Gardula will regularly sell a pass with his eyes, only to leverage a deceptive wrist shot in transition. When set up in the offensive zone, Gardula will even reset high, load a downhill shot, freezing defenders enough to send a pass to the weak side. This layering of deception was powerful across his prep and USHL games, but overall, he struggled with execution while on-puck. Gardula is daring in what he attempts, slips, hooks, layering, and even passes into space, but a negative blend between his hands and skating ability represents a major hurdle in his projection.

"Garula plays at a low pace and the stride is an issue – curved back, limited volume of push-offs, knee blend isn't quite there, hips tilted forward. It's a difficult combination. He [also] struggled with his touch throughout – bobbled pucks into execution errors were a constant in transition." Crossover scout, Daniel Gee remarked in a February game report.

Unable to work edge-to-edge, he's adapted to opening his hips, 10-to-2, to add some lateral ability. Unfortunately, this opens him up to being exploited at higher levels.

The left winger works hard, pushing a strong motor across his shifts. Even if his efforts are diminished by his inefficient stride, it shows he's more mechanically limited than anything. He already possesses strong protection habits; reads pressure off his back, proactively gains superior body positioning, and initiates early contact.

If he can expand on some of his tools, getting them closer to the NHL average, Gardula could be a bottom-line winger. A strong start with the Sioux City Musketeers at the conclusion of his prep season is another sign of hope. With a commitment to the University of Connecticut in 2024, Gardula will have time to layer on his development, but his tools are too limited in their current form to confidently push an NHL projection.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A bit of a quiet game from Gardula. He was a consistent presence on the backcheck and breakout, however. He stole possession and made plays through opponents back up the rink. Adjusted to a pass to shoot from his feet, but he should've used the space instead. Makes basic plays elsewhere. Didn't look like an NHL prospect because of limited tools, but he's new to the USHL.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Gardula scored the first goal as part of Sioux City's late-game comeback, but it wasn't an eventful game. He had a couple of lengthy possessions that resulted in nothing and got lucky on a pass into the slot. He doesn't create lanes, preferring to out-pace opponents into space. But without much foot speed or edge-to-edge quickness, his plays often fail. The motor and willingness to try plays at this stage in his USHL career bode well, however. He could have a big season next year.

Daniel Gee: March 17th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Gardula's stride is an even bigger problem in the USHL. It hurts him to a high degree in transition. Even getting on a puck leads to a lot of developed pressure that just wouldn't exist if he was quicker. It's like he's just treading water at times. In the third on a perimeter dash up the boards, he executed a cutback to avoid the guide to the outside and just threw a puck cross-ice into open space -- not a teammate in the frame. His best on-puck sequence was in the third. Gardula jumped on a loose puck on the far boards, and worked a 2-on-1, drifting in slowly. He looked pass with his eyes and released a surprise shot.

He's considerably better off-puck. Gardula files into open space well, but he overshoots, leading to suboptimal receptions (on the backhand, from behind). He managed to score off a broken play. Deeper in the OZ, as the puck was exited, a teammate intercepted the puck, fed an open Gardula on the left-hand circle, and in one motion, he slung the puck top-right corner with insane precision. Stepped up a couple of times in his own zone, blocking a couple of shots. He works hard but has mechanical limitations. Not a pick for our board. The issues he had in Prep hockey are just worse at this level.

Daniel Gee: February 18th, 2023 - Kimball Union Academy vs. Cushing Academy - USHS-Prep

Gardula plays at a low pace and the stride is an issue -- curved back, limited volume of push-offs, knee bend isn't quite there, hips tilted forward. It's a difficult combination. He struggled with his touch throughout -- bobbled pucks into execution errors were a constant in transition. For instance, in a second-period give-and-go, Gardula executed too slowly, leading to the return pass being blocked. He has some protection ability to help offset some of the movement issues. In the second he took a puck on the right wing, protected in his hip pocket, connecting with a net-driving teammate through a small seam -- high-danger chance out of it. On the same play, Gardula looped the net to get backdoor, presented his stick and tapped the puck home. Some thought to place pucks into open space and attack the weakside but he doesn't up his pace enough to get involved in every attacking sequence. He was so behind on one rush that a hook pass back to him as a trailer just wasn't feasible.

In sustained pressure, Gardula is pretty engaged on the walls. He fights a lot of pucks out of pressure into sustained passing plays. He understands that he has to shield with his back and gain body positioning when he initiates these wall battles. Initiates proactive contact regularly on the forecheck. The execution speed issues are present here as well, though. On one first-period shift, Gardula knocked a point shot down but failed to pivot and shoot before behind enveloped. On a late 5-on-3 with space, he teed up a one-timer after looping the near boards, crashing on the rebound. Beyond that, not much else other than a couple of downhill shots. Not sure there is much here that will translate at all to the NHL.

Daniel Gee: February 15th, 2023 - Cushing Academy vs. St. Mark's - USHS- Prep

At first glance, Gardula seems limited. A lot of pucks died on his stick in this game -- rough handling sequences, attacking into pressure, forcing paces into pressure; it was a rough game in totality. Stride and pace are limiters.

In transition, Gardula uses 10-and-2 edges to slip pressure on the perimeter. For example in the first, he took an outstretched

puck in the defensive zone, opened his hips to beat pressure on the exit, and slipped a puck to the red line that was intercepted. Multiple instances of Gardula just losing control of pucks -- pushing it too far forward, leaving the puck behind as he adjusts his rush pattern inside. He flashes some manipulation use, especially with his eyes. In the third, Gardula took a drop-off pass on the left wing, and made a perfect cross, attacking downhill staring down the net. Resulted in an incredible save.

In sustained pressure, Gardula was at his best when supporting the pass. He's always working on getting into soft areas of the ice, assisting in a perimeter battle, or taking attention to create space. On one shift, he supported an end-board ring, popping into 10-and-2 to scan pass targets. Gardula ended up feeding the left point and crashed the net after, retrieving the puck again and restarting the cycle. His playmaking popped up here as well. On one shift in the shift, he recovered a puck on the left point, executed a hard pass to a teammate on the right-hand circle working downhill and they hit the post. He had everyone static when he released the pass and exploited his ability to independently control his upper and lower body to hit a clean lane.

Some of Gardula's more advanced pass attempts (hooks and slips) died immediately -- whether he was forcing the pass or just not reading the pressure, it made him a bit inefficient. He does react quickly to the developing play -- there's definitely some level of proactiveness. At the end of the third, while working downhill, he made a no-look slip pass to the right-hand circle, resulting in a one-timer. He managed to get the puck back in the slot and popped a backpass through his legs on net where two teammates crashed. He struggled to get any type of shooting opportunities. Nevertheless, on one of his few shots, he walked a puck off a faceoff in the high slot and let the puck go through a heavy screen, again opening his hips to cut into the middle of the ice. Doesn't look like a pick for our board -- the playmaking is nice at some level, but his touches were too inefficient at the high school level. Will keep watching him though.

Grade: F



Blake Montgomery

AGE 17.367 DATE OF BIRTH May 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

181 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4

Passing

4

Puckhandling

3.5

Hockey Sense

6.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
New Jersey Rockets	NCDC	5	0	1	1	0.20
Mount St. Charles Acad	18U AAA	52	9	24	33	0.63
Mount St. Charles Acad	NEPACK 18U	12	3	1	4	0.33

SCOUTING REPORT

Every draft offers its fair share of tall, light, and exceptionally raw prospects, and Blake Montgomery is one such candidate in the 2023 NHL Draft.

The 6-foot-4, 181-pound winger generated a modest amount of offence this year, 33 points in 52 games with Mount St. Charles Academy, a triple-A club that has contributed a number of prospects to the draft over the last few seasons. While the numbers aren't ideal, Montgomery's minutes were also modest, this being his first full season at the U18 level.

The younger brother of 2021 Carolina Hurricanes draft pick Bryce Montgomery, Blake has an almost unlimited range when he extends his arms and pops the puck in his hip pocket. Combine this with a long, projectable, albeit awkward stride, and he already has some physical separators that would translate through higher-level leagues. The rawness of his game requires a lot of imagination, but it's easier to envision a future for Montgomery when much of the inefficiency in his game is due to execution issues, rather than a lack of creativity or skill, or even poor decision-making.

"He remains a bit awkward in transition. Nevertheless, when someone his size is setting up a hip-pocket hold and handle you take notice. Unfortunately, Montgomery struggled mightily with execution north-to-south. He failed handle after handle attempt. Slips through triangles were deflected, and pops through legs were kicked away initially. He lacks control -- on one play in the second, Montgomery was able to wheel in a hip-pocket hold, driving wide on the left wing, only to lose the puck behind him as he worked behind the net," crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a February game report.

The Maryland-born forward's issues are not all that surprising – especially considering his physical growth in recent years. With some time to settle into his frame, and gain weight, which could be up to 40 pounds if you compare with his older brother, you may have a completely different player down the road. One that even could contribute to the bottom half of a lineup. Drafted by the Lincoln Stars in the 2023 USHL Prospects Draft, Montgomery has time to work on creating a more harmonious blend between his tools, before attending the University of Maine in 2024-25.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: February 26th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs. Shattuck St.Mary's - USHS- Prep

The most I have seen Montgomery play in a viewing and it's against Shattuck of all opponents. Regardless, this was a good look at the hulking forwards' game against better competition.

He remains a bit awkward in transition. Nevertheless, when someone his size is setting up a hip-pocket hold and handle you take notice. Unfortunately, Montgomery struggled mightily with execution north-to-south. He failed handle after handle attempt. Slips through triangles were deflected, and pops through legs were kicked away initially. He lacks control -- on one play in the second, Montgomery was able to wheel in a hip-pocket hold, driving wide on the left wing, only to lose the puck behind him as he worked behind the net. He recorded an assist in the third. After working a breakout in-motion, he crashed the middle and the puck carrier scored with the newly opened space. Montgomery had a breakaway late off a defensive stop -- puck bounced over his blade as he loaded a shot. He tried to chip and chase a lot of pucks -- too many for this level.

In sustained pressure, he telegraphs a lot of his actions. You know he's loading a shot downhill, or passing off a perimeter walk. He doesn't layer any manipulations across his game. Like his teammate Pirtle, he struggled to penetrate the dotted lines. On one sequence he detached from a screen, drove around the net, and leveraged his frame to protect the puck, but kept lapping the zone, unable to find a seam or handle past pressure to the middle. Montgomery's defensive sequences were hit-and-miss-- he should be able to push far more pressure with his stick but his motor is just average for the Prep level. Not a pick for our board. Tools and sense don't interact well enough right now. Size alone isn't compelling enough.

Daniel Gee: January 8th, 2023 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs Northwood School Prep - USHS-Prep

Montgomery looks like he's setting into his size -- enormous out there at 6-foot-4. With that, there is a level of awkwardness to his game. His best asset right now is his range, especially when he's handling the puck in transition or protecting in motion. On one first-period rush, Montgomery was able to use his reach to fend off pressure, entering on the near boards in a hip-pocket hold, avoiding a bunch of poke-check attempts. He took a perimeter shot but completely missed the puck. A lot of his touches just ended up failing. A third-period handle to the inside one-on-one was knocked away, a first-period foray saw him pick a puck up in-stride only to be enveloped by backpressure. Montgomery's best sequence on the rush was in the third. He burst out of the defensive zone, lengthening his stride. He worked into a power move, dropping his shoulder, eventually one handing a puck backdoor. Should have been a goal, but his teammate missed the puck.

There was some better use of his size in sustained pressure. On a first-period powerplay, Montgomery got under a defender and disrupted enough for a teammate to support. Some very questionable on-puck decisions. On the same shift just mentioned he carried a puck to the mid-point and took a bad shot, blocked only feet in front of him. Lacks a plan on-puck -- in the first after attacking deep on the near boards, he tried a cutback but paused, and was pinned. Struggled to take a pass reception in the slot -- a centre from the near corner. Even fumbled a pass on the blueline on another sequence. He's really at his best when he tries to blend power elements. In the second he tried to work a puck into the middle of the ice, leveraging his reach and protection habits, but the pressure was too much. Just too much work here to justify a pick, but down the line, he could be a useful NCAA player.

Daniel Gee: December 8th, 2022 - Mount St. Charles Academy vs Northwood School Prep - USHS-Prep

First viewing of Montgomery. Bigger than most on the ice, his 6-foot-4 frame is an imposing factor on every play at this level. That being said, Montgomery wasn't a play driver in this game, more of a support element for Pirtle. Nevertheless, he's definitely interesting. On a first-period play, Montgomery sliced through the neutral zone, slow-motion handled through a seam, extended his long reach, and bumped a pass to an open man on the right flank. The skill and the physical blend of tools were impressive, but he only shows it in flashes. In the second he took a drop-off pass, unlocked his top arm and got off a deft handle to the inside, all while protecting by dropping his shoulder -- Montgomery was stopped on the breakaway, a jam play out of a handle. He frankly has some great ideas. Slip-pass attempts and subtle stop-ups show that there are some delay game elements in his game. So raw, however.

Montgomery exploits his size advantages along the boards in sustained pressure. Hip-pocket holds make it almost impossible for smaller players to handle. He's his own worst enemy though; runs into pressure constantly and works himself into a limited amount of room. Montgomery had a strong shift in the first. He picked a puck up high in the OZ, he delayed a pass but fumbled the execution. Pirtle recovered, sent a pass to the goal line and the rebound popped out to Montgomery for an open-net bid. Much of his sustained sequences follow a pattern. High-end handle, split pressure, 10-and-2 edges to beat defenders laterally, then a bobble or an execution error. Decision-making is pretty similar to a lot of high school/prep players... will have to watch more to get a better grasp.

Grade: F



Blake Steenerson

AGE 17.381 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'4"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Team Twin Cities Orthopedics	UMHSEHL	20	14	15	29	1.45
Minot Minotauros	NAHL	11	1	3	4	0.36
Maple Grove High	USHS-MN	31	21	27	48	1.55

SCOUTING REPORT

It's hard to miss Blake Steenerson when he's on the ice. In the Minnesota high school hockey circuit, he looks like a man among boys.

The 6-foot-4, 194-pound winger managed to leverage this size for a productive draft-year season with his home town Maple Grove High, where he scored 48 points over 31 games. While his frame dominates his profile as a player, he has more dimension than that, with some pretty major caveats. Watch any Maple Grove High game and you will notice a Steenerson large-ice handle, punctuated by his ridiculous reach.

"He's an enthusiastic handler for lack of a better word," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a December game report. "Unlocked top arm, working the puck across his body, Steenerson loves to attack defenders one-on-one in transition. He protects and sets up in the hip pocket, he works the puck inward – just always loses control in this one."

Steenerson attempts to be crafty, slipping pucks through triangles, trying to beat opponents one-on-one, across their backs, all while attempting give-and-go slot attacks.

Unfortunately, these forays only happen in moments, as Steenerson is limited by his stride. While he can stretch out his push-offs to create brief separation, the 18-year-old's posture presents too upright, lacks power off the toe flick, and doesn't appear to actually cross his feet when cutting on his edges, falling backwards in the process. Execution errors, such as slow catch-and-release shooting, poor placements, and static feet kill opportunities. He lacks the separating tools to execute consistently at the high school level.

Steenerson is really at his best when he pushes a heavy game on the forecheck. When he bares down, he absolutely hammers opponents below the goal line, making retrieval plays a nightmare for opposing defenders. The problem is getting there in time, an issue that will only get worse as he graduates to higher levels of hockey. Maple Grove-born forward could be a bottom-line player in the NHL, or contribute to an AHL club someday, but right now, the interaction between his skating and other tools seems too prohibitive to overcome.

Drafted by the Tri-City Storm in the 2023 Phase II Draft, Steenerson will most likely spend some significant development time in the NAHL and USHL before leaving for the University of Vermont in a couple of seasons.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: March 24th, 2023 - North Iowa Bulls vs Minot Minotauros- NAHL

Steenerson didn't show much more than what I saw in previous viewings. His presence on the ice is obvious, but he was behind the flow of play a lot of the time. Nothing really went right. In transition, Steenerson had trouble getting off the wall, while on-puck. Handles failed and he just faced too much pressure, unable to leverage any speed. For example, in the third, he took a pass in stride but was instantly guided to the sideboards. He had to throw a weak shot on net to avoid an instant turnover. Steenerson wasn't set to shoot on a couple of off-puck forays as well. In the second he was surprised by a pass in the hash marks, taking it off his backhand. He popped into a 10-and-2, spun off the immediate pressure and sent a weak backhand on net. A catch-and-release shot or a one-touch shot would have been much better options.

Steenerson played a heavy game on the forecheck again. Absolutely destroyed a man clearing a puck on the end boards. He flashed his hands on one second period in-zone sequence. After picking the puck up on the near boards, Steenerson dragged inward but ran into the end boards, unable to access the inside lane. Worrisome that he can't do it at this level. I don't know if there is enough skill here to justify a pick -- he's big, physical, and can be an impactful forechecker, but you need a better interaction between sense and tools to make the NHL. Worth checking in on him when he's at the University of Vermont, maybe the NCAA development track takes him to another level, but I won't push for him on our final board.

Daniel Gee: March 18th, 2023 - Minot Minotauros vs St. Cloud Norsemen - NAHL

It's not a doubt that Steenerson is a hard worker, but the stride is just so prohibited. His knees are barely bent in the cross-over, he falls backwards, and his stride can only be described as stiff. To combat this he operates in short pace-increase bursts, especially in transition. He scored off some nice off-puck movement. After filing through the slot, Steenerson pivoted, took a pass in the hash marks and got off a hard shot past a screen. His off-puck game is his best asset in transition. Weakside files, transitioning into some punishing physical forechecking sequences. He had a couple of devastating hits at the beginning of the game. On-puck he's pretty limited. Steenerson often stops moving his feet, making him an easy target for aggression, and his handling efforts (with his insane range) are almost null. In the cycle, Steenerson possesses some great supporting habits -- the physical element is ever-present and he's a perfect net-front screen at this level. One of his screens resulted in a goal in the first, the defender and goaltender were so intent on moving him out of the way. His ability to win pucks back was impactful and kept numerous pressure plays alive. His best sequence in sustained pressure was at the end of the third. Leaving a net-front screen, Steenerson dropped his shoulder, won body position on a retrieval battle, and cycled the puck high, activating into another blinding screen. There's a defensive element to his game as well. When Steenerson guides on the backcheck, he's usually successful. He overshoots at times and it's a product of his uncontrolled stride, but in general, he is trying to make an impact. More of a neutral viewing -- I can see why some may like his upside but he won't make our board. Will watch another to make sure.

Daniel Gee: February 11th, 2023 - Rogers High vs Maple Grove High- USHS-MN

Steenerson was very good in this one working more proactive movement than I have seen in the past. By virtue of this, the massive forward was more involved across all areas of the ice, despite having stride length issues and a lack of power through his push-offs -- among other inefficiencies. Defaults into chip-and-chase handle plays in transition -- especially when faced with aggression in the neutral zone. There is some leveraging of his reach. In the first, he chipped by a defender, stepped into their lane, and connected a perfect cross-crease backdoor. Not sure his shot is anything in its current form. On a 2-on-1 in the first, Steenerson shot a very weak shot on net, arms completely compressed to his body, unable to leverage his weight to create power through downforce. Think his protection habits are underdeveloped -- probably due to the fact he's just bigger than everyone. He plays hero ball too much at this level -- in the first he made a wide drive 1-on-5 and got a wrap out of it. Steenerson doesn't show a lot of projectability as a puck carrier in transition -- even when he attempts changes in direction on the entry he runs himself into areas with limited space.

Some of Steenerson's habits in sustained pressure are solid. A first-period low-to-mid carry, cutting into the middle through defenders represented a really dangerous play -- the issue is he placed the shot right into the crest of the goaltender. Much of his play is telegraphed and he tunnel visions onto his own stick -- you can see his eye-line pointing at the ground. His best

sequence was in the third. After he stripped a puck on the forecheck, Steenerson leveraged his release to find a man in the slot, which resulted in a goal after a drop-off to a trailer. He is too limited for a ranking but his size is probably interesting to some. Better HS players probably won't be ranked so his chances of being on our final board are nil. Interested to see him in the NAHL.

Daniel Gee: December 27th, 2022 - Maple Grove High vs Cretin-Derham Hall - USHS-MN

It's hard to miss Steenerson out there, he looks like a grown man playing against children due to his hulking frame. Unfortunately, this means his centre of gravity is very high, and while it isn't leveraged against him at this level, it's a concern. Even though he can stretch his stride length out to cover distances, he has some major skating issues. Clunky edge-to-edge, he doesn't fully crossover his feet. Steenerson has a very upright posture and lacks power off his push-offs -- it's all concerning. Past the skating, Steenerson is a pretty commanding presence at this level. He's an enthusiastic handler for lack of a better word. Unlocked top arm, working the puck across his body, Steenerson loves to attack defenders one-on-one in transition. He protects and sets up in the hip pocket, he works the puck inward -- just always lost control in this one. The tool and decisions were fine but the execution waned. Files well off-puck -- often multiple defenders gravitate towards him. Works pucks in motion, give-and-goes, and can separate when he really activates mechanics. There are good habits here. Steenerson had one real shot in this one. He slipped a puck under a sliding defender with a handle and snapped a hard shot on the net unopposed. It was a weak attempt but he showed throughout that he could leverage that frame into power by pushing a ridiculous amount of downforce.

Doesn't use his reach in the defensive zone -- frustrating because he could disrupt the release of so many shots. He pressures with his frame and scans off-pick threats but in general, he is a reactive mover -- does he access that information? I don't know if he's a pick due to the skating but his size + skill combination could be interesting to some. Will have to watch more.

Grade: F



Teddy Townsend

AGE 17.036 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

5'10"
Height

165 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

5
Skating

5
Shooting

4.5
Passing

4.5
Puckhandling

4
Hockey Sense

4.5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Eden Prairie High "C"	USHS-MN	27	14	25	39	1.44
Team TDS Transportation	UMHSEHL	20	14	25	39	1.95
U.S. National U18 Team	USDP	1	0	0	0	0.00
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	5	0	1	1	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

Teddy Townsend is one of the more recognizable names on the Minnesota high school hockey circuit. After destroying the Upper Midwest HS Elite League with 39 points across 20 games, Townsend returned to his hometown Eden Prairie High, a team he captained, and continued to produce, scoring at a 1.4 point-per-game pace.

Still only 17-years-old, Townsend's September 2 Birthday makes him one of the youngest prospects in the 2023 NHL Draft.

Agile on his edges, and capable of dragging any poor pass into his wheelhouse, Townsend attempts to be inside-driven on every rush, working weight shifts, independent upper and lower body passing, and sharp cuts into the dotted lines.

"His hands are much better than I thought. Puck-on-a-string sequences, triangle inside-outside handles, and even some edge and side-step handles with speed," Crossover scout Daniel Gee wrote in a January game report. "Townsend was using curl-and-drag shooting to get past screens as well."

The issues really come after Townsend creates the initial advantage to enter the offensive zone. Odd decisions, attacks into immense pressure, and a monstrous amount of one-and-done plays limited the Eden Prairie-born forwards game.

"A lot of Townsend's decision-making issues surfaced in sustained pressure," Gee noted in a January report. "There were a lot of sequences where he would execute, and create an advantage, only to throw the puck away haphazardly."

His habits changed from viewing to viewing, making Townsend somewhat of an enigma across the season.

Nevertheless, Townsend's shooting tool is at least NHL average. An unlocked top-arm, weight-transfer through his lead leg, and purposeful pin-point placements are scattered across his game. His motor stands out as well, especially on the backcheck, and on perimeter board battles along the boards. The question becomes, can a player who lacks a plan on-puck operate at higher levels? Defenders and structure only gets better in higher leagues. His size could also be a prohibitive factor, Townsend standing at 5-foot-10, 165 pounds. His projection is more in the realm of a college scorer than one in the NHL.

Conversely, Townsend is young and practically eligible for next year's draft, and if you can argue that some of his immature habits

will clean up over time, his projection looks a lot more positive. Add in a University of Minnesota commitment and there could be a path to becoming a bottom-line wing at the NHL level.

≡ GAME REPORTS

Daniel Gee: February 16th, 2023 - Minnetonka Skippers vs Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

Townsend was quiet for most of this game but got better as the game progressed. Nevertheless, this viewing didn't inspire confidence that he's a player for our board. Not a dynamic player on the rush, he struggles with planning and execution. For instance, in the first, he filled a lane off-puck but didn't up his pace proactively to get into an open seam. In the second he used a change in direction on an exit to beat a defender but lost control of the puck shortly after. Even when he took a lead pass, he couldn't separate, so he protected in his hip pocket and deked to the backhand, but couldn't raise the puck on a flailing goaltender. He's probably too mechanically limited to pull off what he wants to do. Townsend tried to power by another defender in the third but was easily taken out on the boards with a guide. Townsend had one strong rush sequence. In the third, he beat a defender with a triangle deke to the inside -- as he cut into the middle of the ice, the lane was sealed so Townsend pivoted and worked the puck back to a trailer, preserving the possession.

Didn't accomplish much in sustained pressure. He sometimes runs himself into the boards, limiting the operation space he has. His game is a lot of one-and-dones plays. Steal a puck, and turn it over immediately with a poor decision. Townsend had a scoring chance in the second. He won a 50/50 battle on the boards, walked out of the pressure, and wired a shot off the goaltender's glove. Lacks translatable habits like a delay game and the tools aren't impressive enough to take him places. Too inconsistent across viewings to justify a pick for our final board.

Daniel Gee: January 10th, 2023 - Eden Prairie High vs Holy Family Catholic Fire - USHS-MN

Probably the best viewing I have had from Townsend. With much more nuanced play across all three zones, Townsend created more advantages and was an offensive catalyst for Eden Prairie throughout.

While Townsend lacks the manipulation habits and the delay game to really do a lot of damage at this level, his tools act as a legit separator among other high school players. This is apparent in transition, where Townsend did a lot of damage. In the first he made a fairly smart supporting drive, taking an entry pass into a 2-on-1. He pivoted his upper body to move the puck away from the clogged lane (independent upper and lower body control) and set up a high-danger cross-crease pass. On another first-period rush attack, Townsend sniped a perimeter shot, arms unlocked, weight-transfer through his lead leg, and pinpoint placement. Not translatable at all but he flashed legit shooting skill. He actually nearly scored on a third-period catch-and-release play; took a dropoff and the shot deflected off the paddle. His hands are much better than I thought. Puck-on-a-string sequences, triangle inside-outside handles, and even some edge and side-step handles with speed. Townsend was using curl-and-drag shooting to get past screens as well.

A lot of Townsend's decision-making issues surfaced in sustained pressure. There were a lot of sequences where he would execute, and create an advantage, only to throw the puck away haphazardly. Take a third-period sequence for example. Townsend protected the puck well and stepped around a defender to attack downhill. He was able to corral the bouncing puck with a skate-to-stick play but instead of delaying or pre-scanning a pass option, he took a poor shot that was pressured and blocked. Another example game in the first. Townsend upped his pace and got inside on the forecheck. He handles in small space, escaped from a scrum of pressure, and then instead of funnelling or delaying a pass, he took a bad sharp angle shot. Just example after example of tools creating and sense destroying. He had one really nice playmaking flash in this game. After a four-way manoeuvre on the far boards, he crossed a pass to the high slot for a one-time chance. Looked more like a pick throughout -- a lot of defensive effort on the backcheck and some exciting flashes of tools but I'm not sure he will make the final board.

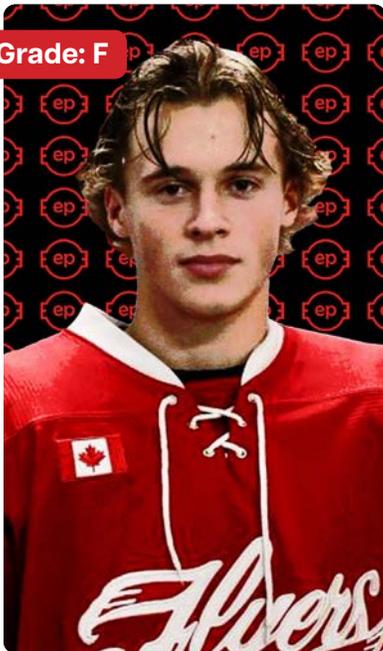
Daniel Gee: December 10th, 2022 - Duluth East High vs Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

This was a five-assist effort for Townsend, who was decidedly better than my last viewing on December 3rd, but still presents a lot of worrisome habits. He didn't generate a lot in transition. Rush patterns devolve to the outside and he chipped too many pucks in -- should be able to do more at this level. Nevertheless, Townsend, while on a 3-on-1, was able to pull the puck behind his body and fed a teammate backdoor for an easy tap-in. Smart to avoid the defender's attempt at clogging the lane. There's some ability to manipulate the defender's triangle. In the third he was able to work through and around a defender, blending a touch pass to a teammate who one-timed a puck on the net. It was a daring play. In sustained pressure, Townsend doesn't show a tonne of translatability.. His possessions regularly die to physical mismatches along the perimeter. He attacks the middle but has little success making it through the pressure. He's not super-threatening off-puck because his catch-and-release ability is far too slow. Townsend has some protection habits, but it's tough for them to really impact his play when he is constantly being driven into the boards. Even when Townsend cuts back to escape, it's usually without a scan, leading to situations where he works into even less space. I don't love the stride mechanics -- his activity rate is not there at all the time. He's probably an F grade for us but we will need some more viewings and crossover on him.

Daniel Gee: December 3rd, 2022 - Cretin-Derham Hall vs Eden Prairie High - USHS-MN

Townsend is about as inside-driven as you can be at this level. He has great habits on entries, popping weight-shift manipulations, and working sharp cuts off the walls in an attempt to get to better shooting locations. The issue is what he does after the dotted-line activations. Multiple instances of poor decisions handles into pressure, and frankly, just a lot of dead puck touches. He has some protection skills, especially when he powers off the wings into net front attacks -- one arm fend offs, proactive speed to create an early pivot. His best play was in the third; a power move off the right wing allowed Townsend to cut in front of the net but he was held as he went for the far-side tuck. Some delay game elements such as cutbacks to disrupt the gaps of defenders but he's far more likely to try and beat defenders with one-on-one handles making him inefficient. When set up with pressure Townsend often attempted to bull his way through pressure -- this meant that for much of the game, he just wasn't a great pass supporter off-puck. He straight up tried to run through a defender who sealed off his end-board ring -- this barely flies at the USHS level. He was positioned as a one-time threat on the powerplay. His only notable shot was weak due to Townsend reaching to make contact instead of reacting dynamically with his feet to get the puck into his stance. He pushed some nifty passes into the slot from behind the net. A third-period backhand shot led to a shot in the high slot. He's agile on his edges and it allows for a lot of adaptability in high school, but I question a lot of his overall impact in this viewing -- the ability to translate these habits against better competition is another issue. His tools seem average here.

Grade: F



Connor MacPherson

AGE 17.540 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Leamington Flyers "A"	GOJHL	43	28	35	63	1.47

SCOUTING REPORT

After spending their entire minor hockey years on the same teams, Ryan MacPherson and Connor MacPherson joined the Leamington Flyers of the GOJHL in preparation for an NCAA career. Just like they did at previous levels, the twin brothers quickly started driving the team's offence. In both years they spent in the program, they finished as its top scorer.

Coming through the minor ranks, Connor MacPherson was the more highly touted prospect of the pair. He also earned a higher spot on the North American Central Scouting list, finishing at 128th overall compared to his brother Ryan's 211th.

There isn't a wide gap in talent between the two players, but Connor's scoring skills give him a slight edge. The winger can release at the net in between two strides, with a powerful weight shot that launches to the top of the net. He possesses some physical skills and the cycle game to go with it. His passes are simple, but they keep the puck in control of his team in the offensive zone. His give-and-goes enabled him to beat defenders and get possession back in a scoring area, where he could use his release.

At this stage, it's hard to project MacPherson to the NHL due to the lack of technical ability in his game. His skating and handling skills lag behind other players we have on our board, but his short passing game and his shot will still add offensive punch to the New Hampshire Wildcats next season.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 9th, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs Stratford Warriors - GOJHL

A good performance from Connor. Good positioning in the early parts of the game. He battled on the boards, showed better handling mechanics (I liked a couple of dangles he made instantly upon receiving the puck), and he cut inside constantly, as usual. His stride remains high, but at this level, it's more than enough to outspeed defenders. He scored by driving the net, protecting the puck, and going to his backhand. Good spacing in the offensive zone, a shooter mentality.

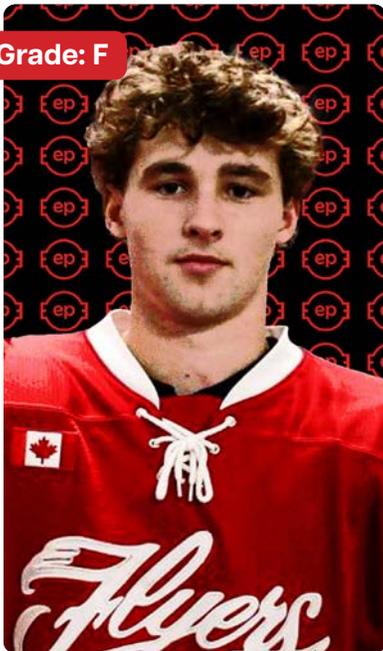
David St-Louis: March 30th, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs St. Marys Lincolns - GOJHL

An impressive shooting performance from Connor. He made a few easy passes, cycle plays that helped keep the puck in control of his team in the offensive zone. He cut back against pressure to evade it. And he fired some pucks almost in stride with a good weight transfer. He's pretty inside driven in general and tries to manipulate defenders with his movement. I'm not sure I see NHL skills, however.

David St-Louis: March 22nd, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs Lasalle Vipers - GOJHL

Connor was the more physical presence on his line in this one, the shooter in transition and in the offensive zone. He seemed to draw more straight-lines than his brother and more hard skills, too. His handling and skating skills both seem to project as below-average, unfortunately, but I saw some signs of projectable sense. passing quicker and repositioning quicker inside space would help open up his offence (even more).

Grade: F



Ryan MacPherson

AGE 17.540 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

6'0"
Height

176 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4
Skating

4
Shooting

5
Passing

4
Puckhandling

4.5
Hockey Sense

4.5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Leamington Flyers "A"	GOJHL	49	25	36	61	1.24

SCOUTING REPORT

After spending their entire minor hockey years on the same teams, Ryan MacPherson and Connor MacPherson joined the Leamington Flyers of the GOJHL in preparation for their NCAA career. Just like they did at previous levels, the twin brothers quickly started driving their team's offence, finishing as top scorers over the past two seasons.

Ryan MacPherson, who plays centre, supported plays lower in the zone and started the breakouts. He acted as the connector, the passer who deceived defenders and moved the puck quickly around them. He ensured that the puck transitioned smoothly from the defensive zone to the offensive end.

We appreciated his physical skills during the season. MacPherson rarely let the opposition escape cleanly with a loose puck. He battled for them and tried his best to seal them away from the opposition with his body.

While he will probably become an effective college player and maybe even become a useful professional player, the lack of technical ability in his game hurts his NHL projection. During his four years in college, Ryan will have to develop his overall skills if he wants to earn a shot at the NHL.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: May 9th, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs Stratford Warriors - GOJHL

MacPherson positioned well defensively in the first part of the game, when his team wasn't yet dominating and they needed to stop the other team's chance of taking an early lead that they could have transformed into a victory. He battled on the boards, made some nice passes, but could have shot instead of overpassing or trying to find his brother when he was himself already in a good position. He did beat the goalie one-on-one on a breakaway. I liked his skating more in this game. His form improves when he acquires more speed, which is encouraging.

David St-Louis: March 30th, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs St. Marys Lincolns - GOJHL

Ryan once again looked more like a playmaker in this one. I appreciate his physical skills and rotations. He moves well and

makes sure to establish body position on loose pucks on the boards. That's not automatic with many DY forwards, but he does it. He slows down to manipulate defensive gaps in transition and battles net front. I see a lack of mechanical skills still.

David St-Louis: March 22nd, 2023 - Leamington Flyers vs Lasalle Vipers - GOJHL

Ryan looks like the connector on his line, the passer, but that's probably just a one game impression. Because looking at stats split, both brothers seem to alternate between playmaker and scorer. I liked Ryan's supporting game, his ability to put the puck into space for others, and to reposition to give another pass option. He attacked inside constantly, broke through the defensive formation, and showed some deceptive capabilities. The handling and skating mechanics seem like clear below average projection, even if there are signs of hard skills and hockey sense.

Grade: F



Giacomo Martino

AGE 17.381 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	161 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
St. Michael's Buzzers	OJHL	52	33	35	68	1.31

SCOUTING REPORT

Giacomo Martino, the younger brother of Dallas Stars prospect Ayrton Martino, finished as the top scorer on his OJHL team last season. Headed to Northeastern in his draft-plus-one, he will be able to help the Huskies's offence, especially after they lost some of their top-end talents over the past two years.

Martino's potential mostly owes to his tools. At the OJHL level, with his skating ability, he could break free of defenders, get to the slot, and unleash precise shots. They would often ring off the post and in. He also showed a talent for moving away from the puck to consistently get the puck from teammates in prime scoring areas.

However, Martino could take a little while to adapt to the NCAA. While his skills are above-average in the OJHL, they will become more middle-of-the-pack in college. The winger needs to develop his finer mechanics, like his ability to blend in skating and handling moves to cleanly receive pucks and immediately make something of them. Developing his awareness under pressure would also help him score at a consistent rate in college.

Right now, Martino's game doesn't project well to the NHL, but with some tactical development, he could become an interesting free-agent target for teams later on in his NCAA career.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 17th, 2023 - Wellington Dukes vs St. Michael's Buzzers - OJHL

Not as eventful as a game for Martino. He played the system well, showed a finer touch on a few passes...The main highlight was a catch-and-release shot off a cross-ice pass. I like his skating posture overall, but he wasn't all that pacey in this game. The tools remain interesting.

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - St. Michael's Buzzers vs. Mississauga Chargers - OJHL

Martino just lacks a bit of mechanical refinement. He can't accomplish all of his ideas. One example: instead of dragging the puck around a defender to shoot it, he simply tried to push it past the defenders, slide it between his feet to get it back the

other way, where he had no space to shoot. He had trouble receiving some passes cleanly and instantly making something out of them in this game.

David St-Louis: January 23rd, 2023 - St. Michael's Buzzers Cobourg Cougars - OJHL

A great game from Martino. He played with pace, made plays under defensive sticks, fought to get pucks back, pulled off catch-and-release shots, and generally moved the puck smartly. I saw some rush patterns out of him and give-and-go attempts. He came back on defence to cut passing lanes.

Grade: F



Aiden Dubinsky

AGE 18.384 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 28, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Univ. of Minnesota-Duluth	NCAA	29	0	5	5	0.17

SCOUTING REPORT

It seemed like Aiden Dubinsky was destined to hear his name called at the NHL Draft after a strong draft-minus-one with the USHL's Omaha Lancers. Instead, a draft year that fell well short of expectations with the Tri-City Storm left him at the dance without a partner, and an only okay freshman year at Minnesota-Duluth means that he's likely to be in the same spot when the 2023 NHL Draft rolls around in Nashville.

Dubinsky is a jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none type of defenceman, adequate in nearly every facet of the game but lacking any defining quality or set of skills on which to build an NHL career as currently constructed. There are signs of above-average sense from the Bulldogs' blueliner, particularly in the way he moves the puck, but this is sometimes undone by a lack of handling skill. The same is true of his work in the offensive zone, where he makes the occasional weak-side activation but lacks the ability to convert or make something of these plays.

For Dubinsky to make much hay at the NHL Draft or as an undrafted free agent somewhere down the road, he'll need to add a step or two as a skater and become a little more skilled with the puck. There's a projectable, solid base in place as a defender, but he'll need to improve his play with the puck – no way around it.

GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: February 3rd, 2023 - Western Michigan vs. Minnesota-Duluth - NCAA

The Bulldogs have Dubinsky playing on their second pair alongside Derek Daschke and getting some secondary looks on the power play. The lack of any separating skills continues to limit his effectiveness at the NCAA level, but every now and then Dubinsky will layer a bit of deception onto a puck retrieval or seek out space in the offensive zone in such a way that makes me wonder if there wasn't more sense there than I originally gave credit. In a similar vein, Dubinsky had a play in the third period where he launched the puck into a sea of Broncos skates from the other side of the ice to try and force them into a too many men penalty – really strong awareness on his part. I'm not going to hold the lack of offence against Dubinsky on a Bulldogs team that doesn't seem all that potent, but man, I'd love to see him add a step. That might make him a more interesting player for our purposes.

Mitchell Brown: April 9th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

A solid game from Dubinsky. Not sure if the activation is structural or instinctual; I lean structural because he opportunities to join the rush and tends to make his best plays in more repeatable situations. Still, he shows a bit of playmaking, deception, and timing when he's in the play. Generally uses space before shooting, although he's not manipulating defenders or deking around them to get better positioning. Simple on breakouts and misses opportunities to create advantages up the ice. The core of his projection remains rush defence: risk-mitigating footwork, angling, and well-timed pokechecks. Not enough upside to justify inclusion on our board, but I suspect he's a mid-to-late rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2022 - Omaha Lancers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Impressive outing from Dubinsky. He kills plays in the neutral zone as usual, but then activated up the ice. Used the inside on a couple of breakouts, showing patience to outwait pressure. From the point, he looked for simple plays and weak side activation. The latter proved beneficial, as he received two chances from it. None of the tools are notable. I don't see a draft pick, but he's improving.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Dubinsky doesn't build the play. Really, he doesn't even give his teammates a chance. He's a shooter. He blasts away without any thought. Even simply shooting for deflections or using a shot-pass would benefit his game. He needs to start passing in offensive zone play, if it's just a simple D-to-D pass, to create better opportunities later in the sequence. The breakouts are still bad. He puts himself in the right positions but then throws the puck away. Doesn't delay or manipulate. The rush defence looks projectable enough. He pinches at the right moments, mostly to shoot immediately. He's a play-killer on both sides of the puck. Not a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 2nd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Dubinsky's play belows his skill level at times. He blasts shots from the outside, missing relatively easy-to-hit teammates in far better positioning. He has skill, visible on the retrievals and in open-ice, but he defaults to the simple play. When he activates, he shows more awareness and confidence. But he doesn't give himself many opportunities to do it because he stops pucks dead. The rush defence is certainly a plus, but I didn't see anything to change the projection from the last viewing.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

On a team where everyone works plays to the middle, makes passes in motion, and activates, Dubinsky stands out because he doesn't do those things. Mechanical limitations persisted in this viewing. He's a capable rush defender who doesn't over-commit and timed his step-ups with the pass. Otherwise, he manages distance while angling the play to the perimeter. Don't see an NHL player; not enough outside the rush defence.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

About as quiet of a performance as I've seen. Dubinsky didn't do much offensively, defensively, or in transition. From the point, he's flatfooted and reactionary, limiting his touches and time and space when he gets the puck. Sometimes slick on retrievals with body positioning and a bit of deception, but he rushes the next play. Too simple. Give him a bit of space in neutral zone, and he'll hit a cross-ice pass. Didn't see anything to suggest a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Dubinsky has some awful sequences defensively and with the puck: getting beat wide, unaware of pressure, deferring when he has the space. But there were some draft-worthy moments. In one sequence, he cut inside and turned that into a cross-lane breakout pass under pressure. Another, he looks outside and then went cross-ice. Limited mechanically at times, his hands and feet are locked in rhythm and he keeps that top hand in the same position at all times. It doesn't just limit the effectiveness of

his moves, he requires a certain set of conditions (forechecker's feet already turned in the wrong direction) to feel confident in them. Scored with a crafty activation sequence: activating for the shot, recovering his rebound behind the net, then working back across the ice to an open pocket for a one-timer. An impressive sequence of foresight and reading the play. Looked like a fringe draft pick in this game.

J.D. Burke: September 24th, 2021 - Tri-City Storm vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

He barely saw the ice in these two contests at the Fall Classic, and frankly, it was easy enough to understand the coach's hesitation to play him given what happened during his scant few shifts. Poorly defended a 2-on-1 in this game in such a way as it might as well have been a 2-on-0. Always makes the safe play, the rim or the glass-and-out zone exit, if the first read is taken away. Didn't show much pop as a skater. Nothing exciting here.

Grade: F



Bennett Schimek

AGE 19.422 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 15, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Providence College	NCAA	37	11	9	20	0.54

SCOUTING REPORT

If you score like Bennett Schimek did in his freshman season, that's going to attract a certain level of attention. Twenty points in 37 games on a team where offence was hard to come by, good for the fourth-highest mark on Providence?

Oh yeah, that'll do it.

That most of those goals occurred within a few feet of the crease is only going to make scouts that much more enthusiastic about Schimek's long-term prospects. You know, you've gotta go to the dirty areas to score, and so on.

That's the entry point to understanding Schimek's game, and it's a good one at that. He's not exceptionally skilled – his handling, shooting, and passing all grade out as below-average on our linear 1-to-9 scale – but the work rate, the fearlessness, and the propensity for placing himself at the right place, at the right time have combined to make him an effective middle-six forward in college.

How well will that skill set scale up to professional hockey? Well, that's another question entirely. If the advances in draft and prospect analytics have taught us anything, it's that you have to distinguish yourself from your peers at lower levels to have a chance at carving out a fruitful NHL career. I don't think even the most charitable review of Schimek's work to this point in his time at college would lend itself to fitting those parameters.

There are, of course, exceptions to that rule, but there were usually signs along the way – something like flashes of high-end skill or sense showing up from time to time.

In Schimek's case, you're looking at an opportunistic scorer with a high motor but a lack of discernible high-end, separating skill. Any projection to the next level is one that places him in a bottom-of-the-lineup role or as organizational depth, but he lacks the speed that is usually required of players of that station.

There may yet be a path to the NHL for Schimek in some capacity, but he'll most likely travel that road with a free agent contract a year or two down the road, assuming he keeps on scoring at Providence and maybe adds a gear as a skater.

≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: March 11th, 2023 - Providence vs. Northeastern - NCAA Tournament

There just isn't anything there. Schimek's too passive away from the puck, too apprehensive with possession, and too limited mechanically. There isn't a foundation of skills or sense on which you can build an NHL player. Not that I can see. You might be able to squint and imagine a scenario where he's an adequate bit of organizational depth or a call-up option, but not with the skating stride as currently constructed – short strides, wide recoveries, lack of core engagement. Credit where it's due for a productive freshman season, but I'm not sure how Schimek made it happen.

J.D. Burke: February 18th, 2023 - Providence vs. UMass-Lowell - NCAA

I don't know that I would characterize this as an especially poor performance by Schimek, but that's only because I don't know that he made much of an impact on the game period. Sure, he was lucky enough to be at the net-front when a low percentage shot by his linemate bounced off of the goalie's chest and right to him for the easy five-hole goal, but that was one of maybe two or three times I noticed him at all in this hockey game. Everything seemed so laboured for Schimek – no shot, handling move, or pass that he couldn't make look agonizingly difficult. The skill level is clearly below-average, almost right across the board. He works hard though. I have to give him that much. Schimek covers for his defencemen, goes low into the defensive zone to offer support/a numbers advantage, tracks well, and backchecks hard. I'm not sure that I see a pick here, but substantial skills refinement could result in an AHL contract or perhaps an entry-level deal somewhere down the road.

J.D. Burke: October 21st, 2022 - Providence vs. Denver - NCAA

There just isn't much of a there there. Schimek flashes potential as a support player from time to time, hanging above the puck and forcing turnovers, working hard on offensive zone retrievals, and covering defensively for his linemates, but you don't really notice him for the most part. When Schimek is at his best, he's launching himself at opponents along the boards and fighting for positioning at the net-front. His motor runs high, no doubt about that. There just isn't much skill or creativity with the puck there. Schimek's a clumsy handler, not particularly skilled or cunning as a passer, and his shot looks about average, if that. I'm not sure there's a pathway to the NHL for Schimek.



Grade: F

Salvatore Guzzo

AGE 17.414 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW Position	Right Shoots
5'11" Height	168 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5 Shooting	4 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	59	17	12	29	0.49
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	8	4	12	0.52
USA U18	WJC-18	7	2	2	4	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

While Salvatore Guzzo lacked the consistent impact of many of his teammates with the Program, his highs were right up there with Beckett Hendrickson and Danny Nelson, the players landing inside our second round.

Guzzo's a shooter. He receives pucks off the rush, leans over his inside leg, and lets the pucks fly. He has a tricky release, hiding the incoming shot inside a quick handle or angle change.

Most of his chances come through his off-puck reads. He stays between defenders, pushes off into space for one-timers, and sneaks behind defenders before rushing the net.

Cleaner pass receptions and gaining body positioning on opponents are two key skills that Guzzo will need to post bigger goal totals.

At this stage, Guzzo's not much of a transition puck carrier or playmaker. There are small flashes. Building upon those, while refining his defensive game could give him a chance to make the NHL down the road.

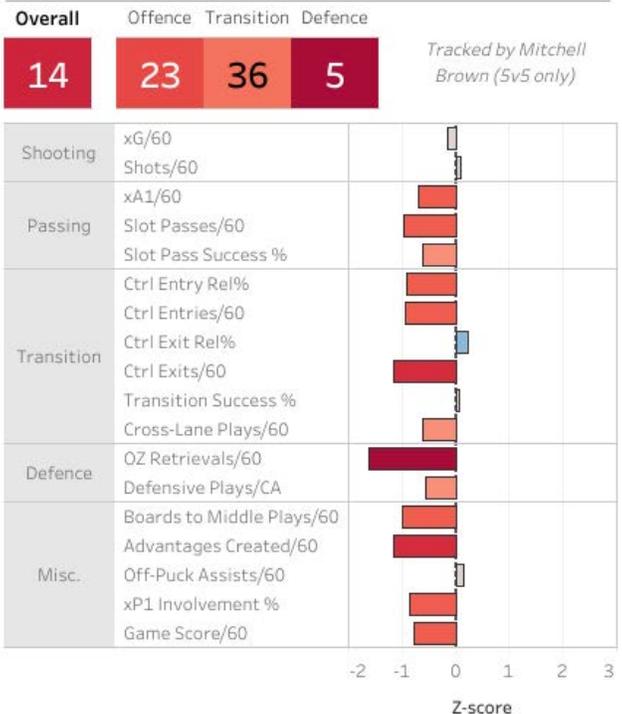
GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Guzzo scored with a low, far-side wrister off the rush. A bit of an awkward shot. Didn't show much else. He's skilled, but upright and lacks pace in his decisions. The defence was solid, however. He eliminated threats and grabbed a couple of steals by

Salvatore Guzzo

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 137.0



making the extra effort. Not a draftable player, but I'm still curious how he looks in a different environment.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Guzzo sniped one off an interception. His shot's a bit awkward, but he places it in tricky spots for the goaltender. Gets open around the slot and provides some defence. Not a puck handler or playmaker. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Guzzo fumbled a high-danger chance early, but that would be the only miscue as a shooter. He had a big game, showing a bunch of skills. He beat his check off the boards to get open in the slot. He fired instantly off the pass, but also added in a quick handling fake as a change of tempo in one sequence. Build the offence with smart passes in transition. He tries to dangle through opponents, but he's not reading the opponent's feet or using their momentum against them. Still, there's upside here. He has shooting ability, off-puck instincts, and handling skill. Building that into a sequenced, comprehensive game could make him an NHL. Looks like a solid late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

An inside leg wrister off the rush for Guzzo. That's mostly his game right now. If he gets a bit of space, he fires. He gets open behind defenders, but his teammates rarely spot. Lacks pace and skating ability with the puck. He's in a tough spot given those things. Curious to see how he looks next season.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Guzzo didn't play much, and it often seemed like none of his plays were working. Some of that was his own doing. He left value on the table with some of his shot/pass/carry decisions, which normally wouldn't be too much of an issue – but his touches were few. However, he had one exciting play. He went heel-to-heel along the boards to face the incoming defender, dangled through them, then set up a chance. That's exciting play that suggests there's potential here.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A lot of looks for Guzzo in this game. He scored by picking up a loose puck inside a heel-to-heel, then beating the goaltender back across the post. His off-puck game is the biggest driver right now. It's about how he gets open. He skates behind defenders, around them, and shows some timing to arrive space, especially inside the circles. He struggled with pass receptions and failed to establish body positioning, killing a couple of his best looks. Clean that up and work on achieving proper skating depth consistently, and there's NHL potential here. He looks more like a college free agent than a draftable prospect.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Guzzo was effective as an off-puck threat and passer in this game. Only simple reads, but he made them at speed. Moved into the slot at the right moment, cut inside, and skated to push back defenders. Won pucks and passed them to open teammates. Not a notable defensive performance, but he showed some intriguing qualities in this game. Worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another hard-working defensive game from Guzzo, but a bit more skill this time. He set up a pair of chances in open ice, making quick plays to the open teammate. Fired off a couple of chances. Shot looks average, but his ability to get open around and behind defenders was impressive. Better linemates would've got him the puck more.

Mitchell Brown: September 25th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Few offensive plays from Guzzo, but a really standout defensive performance. He pressured shooters, checks opponents' sticks for break ups, and eliminated the top of the zone without cheating. Impressive motor. Curious to see more.

Grade: F



Carter Slaggert

AGE 17.534 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	172 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	3.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
U.S. National U18 Team	NTDP	62	4	8	12	0.19
USNTDP Juniors	USHL	23	0	2	2	0.09
USA U18	WJC-18	7	1	0	1	0.14

SCOUTING REPORT

The Slaggert family has a development plan: Chicago Mission growing up, then the USNTDP, before joining their father at the University of Notre Dame.

Carter is the next Slaggert to take that path, and his growth this season has him poised for a solid NCAA career.

By the end of the season, Slaggert was one of the Program's best defensive players. He backtracks like a pro, getting on his opponents fast, angling them into the boards, and checking their sticks. That attention to detail extends across the ice, whether he's piling up the steals on the forecheck or earning stops on the defensive end.

Most of Slaggert's offensive value comes through creating turnovers and skating his routes. He sprints to the net. If defenders follow, he creates more space elsewhere on the rink; if they don't, he gets open in the slot for a chance.

While Slaggert's puck skills are limited – and, consequently, his offensive upside – he showed a bit of open-ice playmaking and deception late in the season.

Perhaps Slaggert's not destined for the NHL, but his work rate, improvement, and flashes of skill suggest he has future playing professional hockey.

Carter Slaggert

F | USNTDP U18s | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 13 | Minutes Tracked: 129.1



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A really effective forechecking game from Slaggert. He skated straight at opponents and took them into the boards. Motor's always working when in direct pursuit, although his off-puck reads need work. With the puck, he has some flashes. He tries plays, but lacks the handling (to access lanes) and deception (to keep lanes open). Struggles with defensive pressure, easily forced into poor plays when opponents take a step towards him. Pass receptions and shooting mechanics are below-average, and will likely prevent him from scoring much at the next level without improvement.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Slaggert with another solid game. Late, he drew a defender with the fake shot before passing to the slot for a high-danger look. In a glide and lots of space, but he has vision and awareness when given opportunities. Skated his routes, earning a high-danger chance as a result. The skating and shooting both lack. The shot's especially powerless with a lengthy release. Some play-building in the neutral zone, taking pucks to the middle before passing back into space or passing to teammates working up the middle. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Slaggert was the driving force on his line, arguably the NTDP's best in this game. He's a straight-forward player on the puck, but a detailed one away from it. Backtracks like a pro, gets opponents fast on the forecheck, angles, and steps into them. With the puck, he has ideas. He takes advantage of passing gaps by cutting inside. He hits the teammate driving the net. And he gets open for rebounds and passes, albeit not with much pace or timing. As soon as pressure arrives, his game falls apart, lacking the skill and tools to separate or make the next play. Adding layers will be key to his success.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Slaggert didn't get out there a ton because of a misconduct in the second. He wasn't a factor when he did. Late to space and struggles with the puck. Battles and definitely a worker. But he didn't show NHL skill in this limited viewing.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Slaggert connected with a one-touch pass to the slot for a chance, anticipating Fine's dash to the middle because he looked before receiving the puck. He mostly caused chaos down low and around the net. He battles for positioning, gets inside opponents, and occasionally escapes with possession. A bit of smart off-puck movement could make him a bit of a scoring threat in the future; he spaces the zone and converges in the slot as the play demands it. Not a creator, but a solid player. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 2nd, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Maybe Slaggert has offensive zone playmaking after all. It's only inside space in a glide, but it's clear that he sees options. Doesn't have a ton of skill, but he timed his passes with the nearest defender's movement. Not a factor in transition. He's easily kept to the outside and doesn't have any in motion skill, or even much skill from a glide. Not a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

A couple of chances for Slaggert in this game. In general, he shows some off-puck offence that I've haven't seen from him before. He moves, gets open, skates his routes to completion. That was about it, but he's solid enough. Maybe he becomes more of an offensive player in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A bit of offence from Slaggert, a couple of low-danger shots and a pass to the slot. The shot's not a weapon; limited weight transfer, no power, no control. Shows a bit more skill in transition as a passer. He gets the pucks, slows the play down, then passes. Lacks in motion skill. Proactive on the backtrack, not effective as an in-zone defender. He'll have to take a serious step defensively to become a viable player in the NCAA. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 27th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Slaggert completed a couple of smart plays in transition – a pass through an opponent for a breakout and stepping in off the boards before making the next play. But he didn't show any offensive skill. Pressure leads to turnovers. Puck pursuit was strong, but wasn't a factor in his own zone. Tools looked like 4-grade projections across the board.

Grade: F



Matthew Andonovski

AGE 17.507 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D
Position

Left
Shoots

6'2"
Height

201 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

3.5
Skating

4
Shooting

4
Passing

3
Puckhandling

4.5
Hockey Sense

4.5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kitchener Rangers	OHL	67	0	16	16	0.24

SCOUTING REPORT

Early in the season, Matthew Andonovski was regularly playing around 20 minutes per night. As the Kitchener Rangers loaded up, his role steadily decreased, but it remained a positive season for the second-year blueliner. He often formed a formidable pairing with fellow 2023 prospect Hunter Brzustewicz, with whom he shares many similarities.

Like Brzustewicz, Andonovski regularly activates into the play, prefers passes over point shots, draws pressure before passing through it, and makes quick-possession plays to hit teammates moving into space. When given a bit of space at the point, he steps inside before pulling the trigger or finding a better-positioned teammate. With the offensive reads comes some defensive value, largely through trapping players along the boards.

Currently, Andonovski's limited by a lack of quickness, constant fighting with the puck, and a tendency to cut back or pass into pressure. Consequently, his effectiveness varies significantly from shift-to-shift and he fails to complete his more advanced ideas.

If the mechanical ability improves, perhaps Andonovski has the reads to make it in a depth role.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Andonovski activates and looks for the same plays as Brzustewicz. He spots teammates in the slot and uses space before

Matthew Andonovski

D | Kitchener Rangers | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 118.0



shooting. On breakouts, he looks up the ice and through opponents for options, cutting back when nothing opens. But a bit of pressure leads to him cutting back into pressure, chipping pucks into battles, or getting stripped as he processes his options. Fought the puck and struggled keeping possession. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Andonovski is sort of Brzustewicz-lite. He tries the same breakout plays. He slows down to draw pressure but also makes quick-possession reads to moving teammates on the inside. He's more vulnerable to pressure than his teammate, both from mechanical and scanning limitations. There's a physical element to his defence. He closes on opponents with force and looks to pin them into the boards. But he's vulnerable to speed off the rush. And there was no offence to speak of. With that said, he has tools and flashes. He could be a breakout candidate.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. London Knights - OHL

Andonovski played a lot in this game and was on the ice for a bunch of goals for. He wasn't directly involved in any, but he tries more complex stuff in moments. He uses the middle and looks to make quick plays after recovering possession. Sometimes, he tries to stretch out the possession. They fail. The skating's cumbersome and his hands are sluggish. Really though, it's a lack of timing on his reads and poor scanning. Improve that, and he has to become a solid pro.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Andonovski walked into space down the boards, faked the shot, then passed cross-slot for a chance. That was an exciting read, but again, his mechanics let him down in this game. He'd probably be a legit prospect if he either the hands or skating were a grade higher. He has ideas, tries advanced plays, and activates, but it just so rarely results in anything. Maybe next year.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Essentially the same as the Dec 6 game. Andonovski tried stuff, albeit at a lower volume, and failed most of it. His hands are the biggest limiter. Jumped into the rush for a scoring chance. Shot's weak; he keeps his hands too close to his body. A somewhat solid defensive player, even if the gap control lacks. He eliminates threats off-puck when obvious. Not a prospect at this stage.

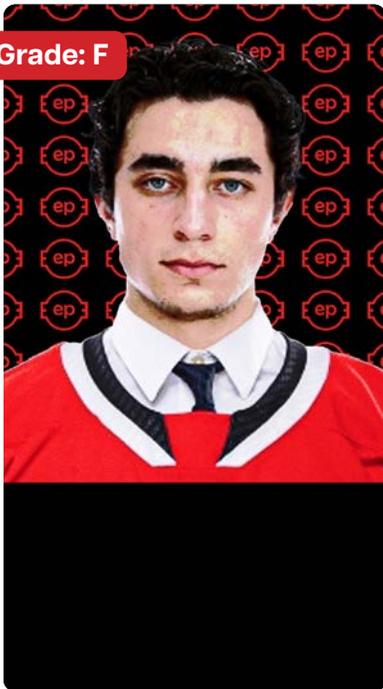
Mitchell Brown: December 6th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Andonovski plays at a pretty sluggish pace, but he has ideas. He steps inside, passes through forechecking pressure, and activates. Or at least, he tries. He's inaccurate and mistake-prone. The mechanics fail him. Poor (unpressured) pass receptions killed plays, including his best look of the game. Given the skill level, it's tough to imagine him in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Andonovski was out there a lot, but didn't accomplish much. Low pace with the puck and struggled to handle it even when barely moving. Didn't get a read on his ideas. But his retrievals were solid. Trapped players along the boards when second; made quick bump plays when first. Not much to go on, despite the minutes.

Grade: F



Alexander Assadourian

AGE 17.145 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 24, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'8"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sudbury Wolves	OHL	32	3	5	8	0.25
Niagara IceDogs	OHL	34	9	24	33	0.97

SCOUTING REPORT

A mid-season trade and full-time switch to forward led to Alexander Assadourian quadrupling his production to a near point-per-game clip.

With endless energy and a crafty off-puck game, Assadourian is the engine on his line. He quickly eliminates threats, forces attackers wide, and goes all-out on the backcheck to force turnovers. He constantly builds speed underneath the puck and moves through the pass reception, before starting a breakneck passing play. Then, he rushes the net, battling with opponents along the way.

Assadourian's pace creates lanes to the inside, which he quickly exploits with a quick cut or deke. Otherwise, he's more of a simple offensive player, settling for immediate, but low-percentage plays that leave some value on the table. His hands can't quite keep up with his feet, and he moves the puck too early.

By learning to draw pressure before passing, Assadourian could become one of the OHL's top playmakers. He has the pace, off-puck instincts, and vision to do it. While he's not likely to be a pick this year, perhaps he earns attention in a year or two.

GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Assadourian's skating looked better in this game compared to my previous viewings. He easily matched footwork of attackers along the boards, overcame deficits of space to win races, exploded through his punch turns, and showed some serious edge control – stops instantly. Doesn't get much flexion through the stride. Output is better than the input, for sure. Set up a powerplay goal with a cross-slot pass, but he remained most effective as an off-puck/quick-possession player. Plays a give-and-go style, starting sequences with impressive off-puck routes and non-stop movement. Always building speed underneath the puck. Passes wide, sprints the middle, and rushes the net. He plays too fast and fights the puck constantly; he needs to learn how to draw pressure. Doesn't look like a pick, but a breakout candidate for next season.

Mitchell Brown: March 5th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

A really quiet game from Assadourian despite getting regular shifts. Lacked some energy, falling behind the play consistently. A couple of backchecks to force turnovers were the highlight. Didn't show any skill. Just straight-line, single-speed attacks. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 7th, 2023 - Niagara IceDogs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

The same as the January 21st viewing. Assadourian isn't really effective offensively. He plays tries without scanning first, missing better opportunities along the way. He's inside driven and occasionally pulls a puck around a defender to gain the middle off the rush or drive the net from the corner. He's an off-puck player, bringing value through his defence and supporting reads. He reloads, overlaps, exchanges. Constantly building speed under the puck. A bit of quickness but he's far from mechanically sound. Doesn't look like a pick, but his off-puck intelligence should lead to better results as Niagara improves.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Assadourian plays fast, especially off puck. He zips from check to check. His routes are smart. He overlaps, resets, and builds speed underneath the puck. He gets pucks in motion and either speeds up or cuts back. He's a proactive off-puck defender – highly attentive and aware, lots of scanning. Physical and looks to get inside. But I don't see any skill, one slip pass aside. He fumbles pass receptions, struggles to handle with his feet moving, and doesn't have the outside edges to escape. He didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 11th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Assadourian rips around the ice, always moving his feet. He has positive ideas, too. He cuts inside under pressure, adjusts to passing lanes, and quickly moves pucks to open teammates instead of taking on opponents himself. Showed a bit of a delay game in transition, although his cutbacks lacked the depth to escape. At speed, the handling skill dissipates a bit. Moved up from the fourth line in the third period. This could be his breakout opportunity.

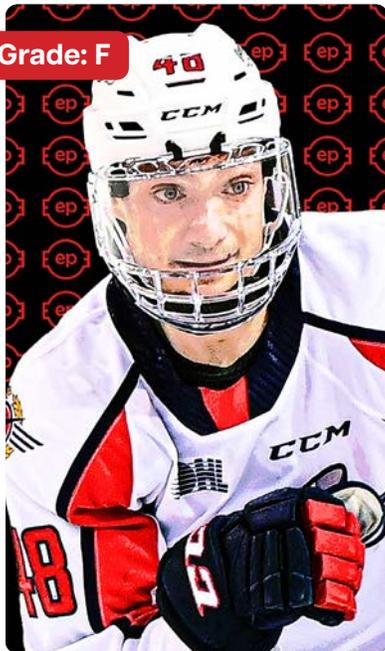
Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Assadourian's quite the worker, not all unlike his teammate Delic. He's always moving, bobbing in and out of space, always presenting his stick. Sprints out of his passes. Actually, he's always sprinting across the ice. Limited offensive zone touches, but also didn't accomplish much with the ones he had. One slick backhand pass showed some vision, but the rest of his touches were hurried plays that left value on the table.

Mitchell Brown: October 31st, 2021 - North Bay Battalion vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Assadourian just goes. He's involved in every play, trying to disrupt plays, get open, and bring pucks to the middle. Shows some legitimate timing as he dives into the slot, arriving into space at the perfect time with his stick loaded to shoot off the pass. Spins off pressure and gets the inside. And he doesn't just pass immediately. He steps into space first, showing a level of patience and awareness that very few players have at this stage of their development. It's very early into his OHL career, but the early signs are exciting.

Grade: F



Alex Christopoulos

AGE 19.477 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'10"	198 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Windsor Spitfires "A"	OHL	68	49	25	74	1.09

SCOUTING REPORT

It wasn't until Alex Christopoulos' third season that he found his scoring touch in the OHL, particularly the 2022 Playoffs. It hasn't left him since, finding twine 50 times between the regular season and playoffs.

Christopoulos racks up the chances with quick strike offence off the rush and intelligent off-puck positioning around the net.

At least once per game, he flies the zone at the perfect time, takes the lead pass, outpaces opponents with a powerful stride, and gets a high-danger look. In-zone, he sneaks away from opponents, positioning himself between defenders ready to shoot immediately.

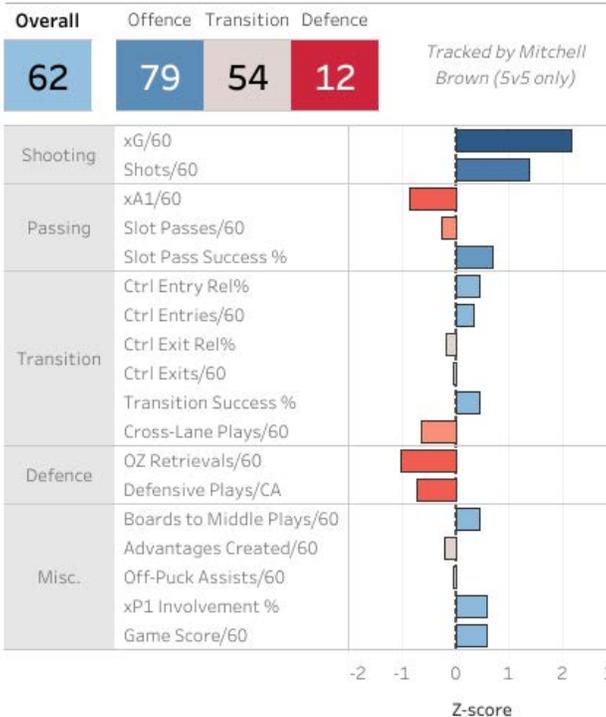
When Christopoulos isn't filling the net, he's creating turnovers with non-stop pressure, intercepting passes, and supporting battles.

Puckhandling and playmaking aren't Christopoulos' game. He's a unidimensional offensive player. That could hold him back from the NHL. If he doesn't get picked, he's a solid bet to earn a contract if the goalscoring continues.

Alex Christopoulos

F | Windsor Spitfires | OHL | Draft+2

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 86.0



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Christopoulos plays the off-puck game like a pro. He doesn't just stay inside space; he actively works and adjusts to the lane

to ensure he's option. He faded high, rushed into the slot, and pushed off defenders all at the perfect moments. He whiffs on a couple of high-danger chances, including a tap-in. The one-timer's clean otherwise. Not a playmaker, but he's a hardworking defensive player. Not explosive, pushes his knees past his toes and generates enough power to keep up with most players. His pressure earned steals and drew a penalty. He looks like a solid professional player, but the puck skills will prove limiting, especially without a playmaking component.

Mitchell Brown: March 10th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Hat trick for Christopoulos. A couple of goals by getting behind the defence off the rush; that's how he does most of his damage. Sniped one by walking off the boards. High pace player. Tried the occasional pass, but rarely amounted to much. He's a simple player: work hard, stretch the ice, shoot as soon as possible. Maybe there are more layers that I just haven't seen yet, but he doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Windsor Spitfires - OHL

A solid game from Christopoulos, racking up chances in the usual way. Grabbed a breakaway by sprinting above the puck, rushed the net at the right moments, and popped into space. Fires off the pass. Showed more of a transition game, starting give-and-gos and passing plays with his teammates. Nothing advanced, but solid plays that should allow him to score in the professional ranks. Impressive motor, high pace as usual. Doesn't look like a draft pick, but has enough qualities to believe he should become an AHL scorer.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Christopoulos had a trio of breakaways in this game. He outraces Bertucci once, but the other two were crafty off-puck reads, flashing across the defence before dipping in just before the puck arrived. Elsewhere, he attacks the net from the boards and gets open in the upper slot. Not a creator, but he makes the clear passes to his teammates. Not a transition handler or passer, however. Upside seems more AHL bottom-six forward than NHL one.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Christopoulos brings a motor and off-puck shooting. He's a hard-worker, involved in every off-puck play. He sprints for loose pucks, applies pressure on the forecheck, and creates turnovers with pressure on the backtrack. Barely handles the puck. He mostly makes quick possession plays, then relocates. He's solid enough, but doesn't seem like an NHL pick.

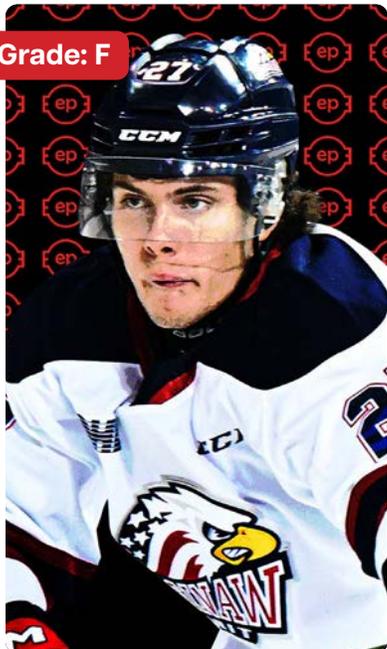
Mitchell Brown: January 26th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Christopoulos scored by working across the net and firing with backwards momentum. Continues to show off-the-pass shooting skill. Give-and-go game off the rush, although he could benefit from hanging onto the puck just a split-second longer to ensure his recipient has more space. Bottomless gas tank, although he chases a lot. Doesn't seem like a pick, but his off-puck instincts are a huge advantage at this level.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Christopoulos had his chances but that was about it. He's a nonfactor in transition, but his work rate on the defensive end forces the occasional poor decision. Not a playmaker. He gets open inside space and fires. Puck skills and edges looked limited, although he achieves a full knee bend inside his stride. Didn't look like a pick as a re-entry.

Grade: F



P.J. Forgione

AGE 17.841 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 12, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

205 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

4

Passing

4

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	53	7	8	15	0.28

SCOUTING REPORT

One of the OHL's surprise players in 2021-22, P.J. Forgione made the OHL just months after being selected in the sixth round as a re-entry. While he didn't quite achieve the same success this season, he remains an intriguing prospect because of his activation game.

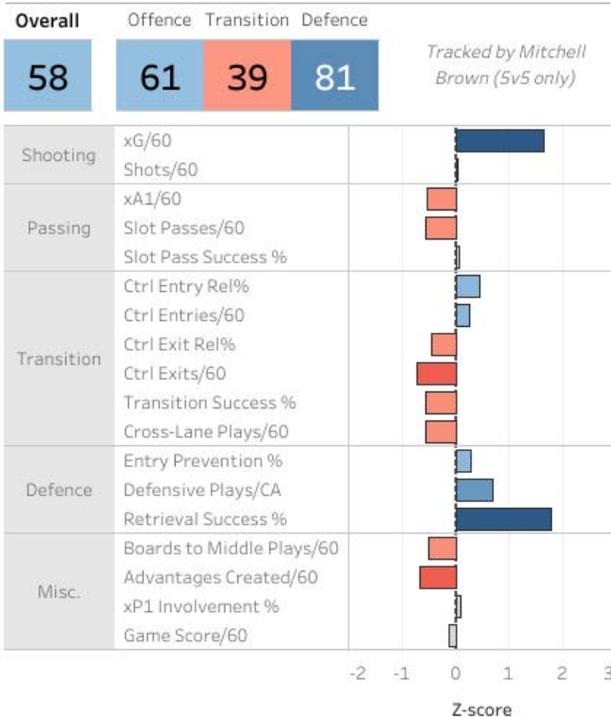
Hater of point shots, Forgione prefers to step into space before firing, creep down the weak side, or shake opponents to gain the middle. He doesn't read opponents' momentum; he dictates it with lateral movement and quick fake to get his preferred lane. He jumps above his forwards on breakouts to become a lead pass option, too.

At this stage, Forgione's almost exclusively an activator. He has some play-killing instincts, but he tends to gamble by lunging in. If he misses, he's out of the play. There's also a lack of passing in his game, whether that's shooting or offloading the puck on the breakout with better options available. He flashed better skills last season, and his retrievals are consistently strong, so the solution's already exist in his game.

With better breakouts and defence, Forgione will likely make full use of his activation game in the OHL. That would be a shame. From the point, he's one of the draft's most interesting prospects.

PJ Forgione

D | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 114.6



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Forgione came to play. Activating constantly, whether he was leading the rush himself or getting ahead of the play for a quick

pass. He uses space and skates his routes. Grabbed his gamely scoring chance by walking into space from the point, but it wasn't the best play. He could've faked first or passed for a better opportunity. The defence was an issue in this game. He crosschecked opponents instead of keeping his stick on the ice and was promptly beaten. Zero recovery ability. And he's prone to making panicked, blind plays when he thinks there's pressure. Sometimes, he has more time than he thinks. He has potential. I can see a team taking him in the fifth or beyond, and it'd be justifiable. Not a pick for us, but a little bit of mechanical improvement will raise his game significantly.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Forgione is best above the play on breakouts, where he can take a puck with time and space to find the next play. From there, he generally finds the best one, spotting teammates through layers. With immediate pressure, that evaporates. He only makes short-range, low-risk plays. It's effective on end-board retrievals, but that's about it. He has some point-getting upside at this level because he uses space before shooting, but he's not a playmaker. He misses better plays when he shoots. He will probably take off next season, but without mechanical improvement and breakouts that better make use of his activation game, he likely won't make it.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A really quiet game from Forgione. He makes simple plays on breakouts with occasional activation. Didn't see any notable offence. He has some play-killing instincts when the skating's not a factor. He reaches in at the right moments (although that's another issue), and he makes simple, effective plays off retrievals. Solid, but he doesn't look like an NHL prospect at this stage.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Forgione wasn't good in this one. He lost battles behind his own net, was overzealous defending 1-on-1 and shoved the player into the boards (lucky he didn't take a penalty), and took a delay of game penalty while his team was already on the penalty kill. Didn't show too much offensively. I wouldn't draft based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Forgione is mostly an activator who gets the occasional reachy stop. He walks in off the point before shooting; he uses space better than most defensive prospects. But that's his only trick. He's not a passer and he's not really effective on the breakout. To his credit, this was a solid night on retrievals. Took pucks under pressure and moved them immediately. Not complex, but showed awareness of his options. Suffers from the classic passive gap, but closes space by reaching issue. But he shows some play-killing instincts. There's some runway here. He could be a late-rounder for a team.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Forgione's not effective on breakouts right now. He makes passes up the boards to teammates with more pressure than himself. But he could be. He reads the feet of opponents at the blue-line – even manipulates sometimes – to jump into the play. This game, he skated laterally, drew the defender, then accelerated back the other way for a scoring chance. If he's able to read, react, and create on breakouts, he could play. He has skilled, some agility, and kills plays off the rush. Some over-extending mixed with a passive gap at times, but nothing major. Looked like a late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Forgione had three scoring chances in this game, none better than activating off-puck for a deflection goal in front. The activation was proactive all game. He doesn't wait for opportunities, he creates them by jumping into space and becoming an option. The missing link for his game is skating and breakouts. He makes simple plays on the breakout; he doesn't start give-and-gos or try to activate with the puck. Rush defence was solid in spurts, overcommitting others. He's not dynamic and he's at the older end. Have to focus more on his game.

Mitchell Brown: December 8th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Every Forgione game looks roughly similar: intelligent activation, an NHL shot, stays in deep after joining the play, and a lot of simple plays on the breakout. He has many modern NHL qualities, largely from the activation and shooting. Understands how to use space. On breakouts, he defaults to simple plays and passing to his partner, even if there are options to advance the play. The NHL activation game starts on breakouts, Forgione isn't there yet.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Forgione was not good. He backed up too easily in transition, only getting stops because of his reach and timing. Better attacks would've exploited the gap. Breakouts were inconsistent, mostly because of the ideas. Lots of simple plays with better options, but he also showed an ability to deceive and create under pressure. Interesting. Same thing offensively. He has a bit of handling skill that resulted in little. His off-puck activation appeared a couple of times, but none of the reads were advanced. The base of skills is looks potential NHL-calibre, however. Need to watch more.

Lauren Kelly: October 14th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

A solid showing for Forgione in this game, demonstrating capable defensive skills consistently. Good gap control defending the rush, shadowing puck carriers in the defensive zone, decent skating mechanics and good defensive skating, using his physicality to keep players to the boards and away from dangerous areas of the ice. Scans on retrievals. Offensive abilities were just flashes in this one - he picked up an assist on a point shot that was tipped, but his goal was nicer - activating off the point, stickhandling around a player, and then firing a shot from the top of the circle. Power and timing of the release looked NHL average. Didn't take too many offensive risks (especially when on the ice with Pavel Mintyukov) and he didn't play too many minutes either, around 15 in this game. Will be interesting to see how he continues to develop this season. There's lots to like here.

Grade: F



Sebastien Gervais

AGE 17.430 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	68	10	14	24	0.35

SCOUTING REPORT

The Saginaw Spirit are one of the CHL's best drafting teams. Sebastien Gervais is a great example. He was drafted in the 12th round, then immediately made the Spirit out of camp. His production stagnated this season, but he remains the same intriguing prospect.

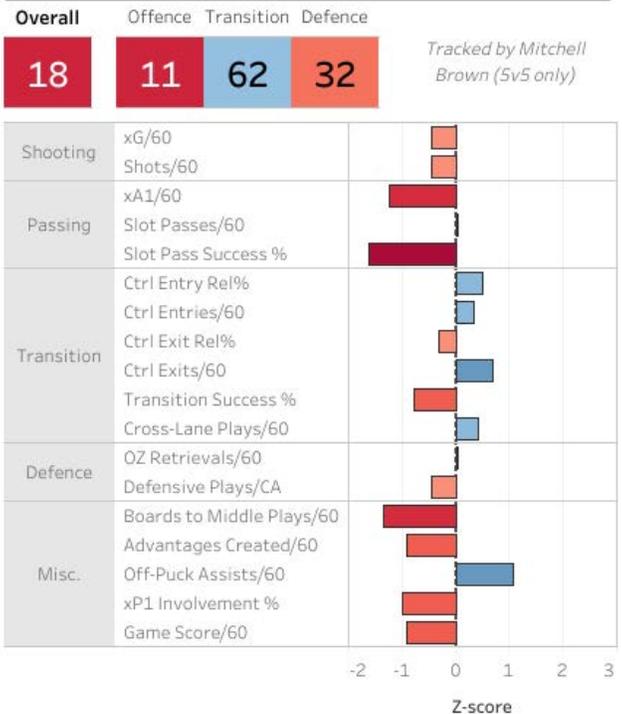
No one outworks Gervais. He never stops moving and never gives up on plays. He sprints for every puck, fearlessly engages in every battle. When many high-motor players battle for the sake of it, he wins inside positioning and spins off checks just as the puck comes near, creating rebound and deflection chances.

Gervais is more than just a worker. "He has a bit of playmaking potential, too," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote in March. "It's not fully formed, but he slips and hooks pucks through defenders and clearly knows where to move the puck. He even tries to manipulate opponents to create lanes. Inaccurate and his timing's off."

If Gervais taps into the skilled side more while improving his skating, he could enjoy a breakout campaign next season. That'll earn NHL interest.

Sebastien Gervais

F | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 105.2



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Gervais had four chances in this game, largely in the Gervais fashion: outworking everyone. He never quits moving, never gives

up on plays. He showed some craft, using an angle on a defender to prepare the shooting lane, manipulating their stick, then firing around their feet. So, he clearly has more advanced stuff. That's an encouraging sign moving forward. Build off that, and there's a chance he makes it in a depth role.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Gervais puts in the work. He's always moving. Non-stop pressure. Runs into people at full speed. Fearless. He has a bit of playmaking potential, too. It's not fully formed, but he clearly knows where to move the puck and even tries to manipulate opponents to create lanes. Inaccurate and his timing's off. That should improve. A textbook inside leg wrister off the rush showed some shooting skill, too. Skating-wise, he lacks upper-lower separation. Doesn't bring his shoulders back as a counterforce to his cutbacks and turns which means he either falls when he gets deep or can't get deep enough to actually create distance. Doubt he's a pick this year, but like everyone on Saginaw, he'll be worth watching in future seasons.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Gervais continues to show some passing skill. He hooks pucks into space and tries to hit teammates through layers. Pace and scanning are both limited, which prevents him from connecting with these ideas across all three zones. He's a physical presence; a checking forward who understands how to create offence with it. Where many battle for the sake of it, he tries to get inside positioning and spin off. He should become an important offensive piece over the next two years, but this likely isn't his year to be picked. Tools are below-average projections and he's not creating offence consistently.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Gervais' skating is rough. 4, 4.5? Maybe? He's hunched over, there's no acceleration or separation gear, and he kicks his heels. It doesn't stop him from getting in on the forecheck or trying to pressure puck carriers, though. He scans and shoulder-checks, but he struggles with identifying pass options on breakouts and is closed off easily. He pressures defenders into turnovers and plays with an edge. He's unafraid of contact and drew a penalty as he came down the wall with the puck. But he was pretty much invisible in the third period (not sure I even saw him on the ice more than a couple of shifts), and he was demoted off the first line in favour of other teammates taking his spot. It just wasn't his game.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Gervais is just a cool player. Creative, he is not. But he's a chaos creator away from the puck. His work at the net front – constant movement and battling – direct to his defender deflecting a teammate's point shot into the net. When not battling, he spins away then works high for deflections and support. Showed a bit of passing skill on simple reads, going under and around sticks. But there's not much creativity or vision shown on these sequences. Plays a solid game, not sure if I see NHL upside.

Lauren Kelly: December 29th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Gervais showed a lot of positive attributes in this game. He pressured puck carriers, worked hard on the forecheck, laid a couple of hits along the boards, and fed off his linemates well. He had a good scoring chance in the first period off the rush, trying to one-touch a pass from Joey Willis into the net. On rush patterns, he would try to drive the net to back defenders up. Good engagement, providing good support in his own end, and consistently scanned. Deflected the Greyhounds' fourth goal past his own goalie trying to block a shot, but there could be something here.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

A strong off-puck game from Gervais. The usual motor but he seemed more proactive. He pressured opponents into support, skated his off-puck routes, and created chaos around the net. Where he previously skated straight ahead, he was setting up his teammates with lateral passes. None of his passes into the slot connected, but he was trying to create chances, too. A solid game from Gervais. Doubt he gets picked, but I think he'll be a much bigger offensive piece next season.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Gervais' motor shines, but that's really about it. He doesn't manipulate opponents, anticipates openings, or show much skill. He can't create shooting or passing lanes. Lacks the skating and skill to really capitalize on open ones. A determined defender, for sure. He also showed a bit of a delay game in transition, waiting for support and playing keep away. Doesn't look like a pick, but he's worth checking on.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

Shot out of a cannon. Gervais just goes. He sprints for every loose puck, swings his stick at every puck carrier. He never quits on plays, but he's also chasing a lot. He's late to recognize threats. Not especially skilled. He missed opportunities to use his teammates, especially in the neutral zone. The skating lacks refinement. Could be a weakness. He didn't look like a pick, but his energy caught my eye.

Grade: F



Ethan Hay

AGE 17.666 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Flint Firebirds	OHL	64	17	11	28	0.44

SCOUTING REPORT

Offence wasn't easy to come by for Ethan Hay, tasked with a more defensive role on a team full of dynamic attackers. And he thrived, especially towards the end of the season. The production followed with six points in seven games in the playoffs.

Hay's a projectable, determined defender. He makes the smaller plays: Eliminating sticks, supporting down low, and angling attackers. When necessary, he makes the big plays, whether that's a diving poke check, shot block, or crushing hit.

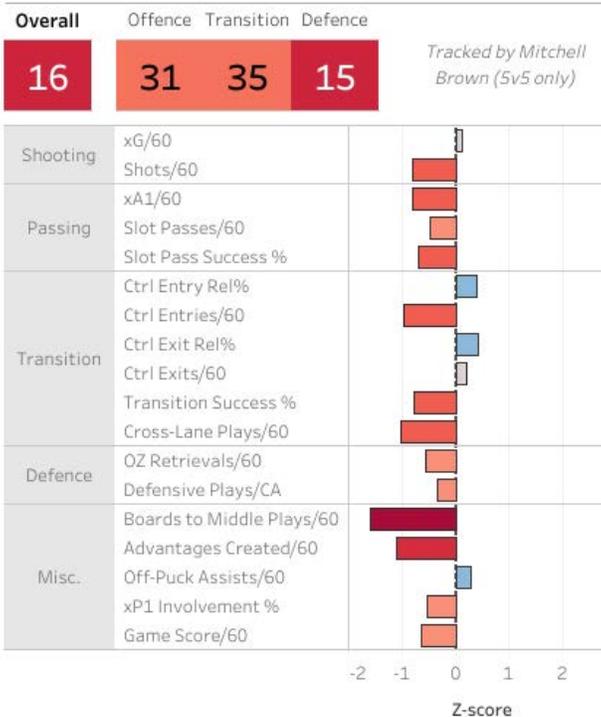
With the puck, Hay plays a straight-forward game. He gets open inside space, shoots off the pass, and relocates. Although he doesn't get many transition touches, he generally opts for quick passes to open teammates. He hits teammates just as they arrive in space.

Hay has the defence to play in the NHL, but he's limited by a lack of in-motion skill and creativity. Those will have to improve to make it. He should get lots of opportunities next season, as a couple of top-line spots will be open.

Ethan Hay

F | Flint Firebirds | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 121.5



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

One big defensive play after another. One shift, it's a diving interception. The next one, he's subtly eliminating an opponent before

skating the puck to end Saginaw's zone time. He's so disciplined with his positioning and routes. Never cheats. With the puck, he's alright. He gets open in the slot and can fire off the pass, but lacks the handling skill and adaptability to create space for his shot. No playmaking shown. He's solid. Not a pick for us but I'd understand it as a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Hay grabbed three chances in quick succession in the third period, doing largely what he does: battling for positioning and getting open. The playmaking had moments, too. He moved pucks early to his teammates, letting them walk into space. Lots of simple plays, but stuff that will lead to success at other levels. Lacks creativity and tools, but he's a strong defender. Really disciplined on the forecheck and backcheck. Knows when to back off and when to dip in. Anticipates and communicates. Not an NHL prospect, at least not based on my viewings, but he has pro potential.

Mitchell Brown: March 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Hay really put in the work on the backcheck. He grabbed a few steals and helped force just as many dump-ins with his backtracking. A solid off-puck player in general, getting open high in the zone, skating his routes, and tying up opponents, even in the offensive zone. With the puck, he struggles at times. He's not deceptive and lacks pace; opponents easily read his passes and pick them off. Lacks in-motion skill. I think there's a chance he scores next season, leveraging his off-puck instincts and motor into a far greater offensive impact. If he does, he's worth another look. Right now, I don't see much NHL upside.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A defensive forward. Hay's backtracking and awareness consistently shines. But he's not an offensive player, at least not yet. He shows a bit of vision to hit teammates as they work into space, but he doesn't create lanes. Lacks patience with the puck and throws away possession under pressure. Doesn't look like a pick, but I continue to see pro upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Hay shines without the puck. He's proactive. He eliminates threats, closes passing lanes, and detaches from his check at the right moments. Supports the play across all three zones. Impressive work rate on the backcheck. With the puck, he's a bit limited. He pulls off the odd pass through the forecheck on the breakout, but he only skates in straight lines when carrying himself. Not a playmaker or puckhandler. But he can skate at this level, pushing his knees past his toes and overcoming opponents with high stride output. Form could be a 5 projection. Not a pick but I appreciate his game. High attention to detail off the puck.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Hay's limits as a skater and puckhandler were visible in this game, but this was a solid performance. He was looking for teammates off the boards instead of just putting pucks back in the corner. Grabbed an assist with a faceoff win. He's an effective off-puck player, linking supporting position with scoring position. Gets open high in the offensive zone, and turned a tricky pass into a decent look. The primary issue is the lack of tools. Drops his head and enters a glide whenever he goes to handle the puck. He has some skill within that, but he gets easily overwhelmed or pressured into poor decisions.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Didn't see much from Hay. Pressured into turnovers, plays with his head down. Not aware of his options and lacks in motion skill. The tools look below-average across the board. There's some defence here, but it's more anticipation than overwhelming pressure. He didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Another defensively-sound game from Hay. He's a hard-worker who supports down low, anticipates threats, and applies pressure

on the backcheck. Not an overwhelming presence, but he's consistently in the right spot. Not much offence, although more than the last game. He gets open in space, usually high in the zone. Turned a retrieval into sustained offensive zone pressure and another into a chance with a pass of the backhand. The skating, hands, and skill are all below-average projections. Likely not a pick, but maybe the defence leads to more offence down the road.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A quiet game from Hay. He was involved defensively. He's somewhat proactive on backtrack, getting above the puck and occasionally coming back deep to support plays down low. With the puck, he's a classic straight-line player. No crossover integration, changes of pace, or creativity. The best offensive play was a read off the boards, skating into space with his stick under the defender's so he could immediately shoot off the pass. Not much to go on.

Grade: F



Matthew Mayich

AGE 17.734 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 21, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'2"

Height

187 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Ottawa 67's	OHL	64	5	17	22	0.34

SCOUTING REPORT

For much of the season, Matthew Mayich played top-pairing minutes on one of the CHL's top teams. While the Ottawa 67s addition of Pavel Mintyukov ate into his ice time, he remained a capable, well-rounded option.

Mayich has a lot of modern defenceman qualities. He doesn't force point shots, preferring passes and activation. In transition, he doesn't settle for dump-outs or low-percentage plays. Instead, he delays letting opponents fly by, then finds a teammate across the rink for an exit. Flashes of deception keep opponents guessing.

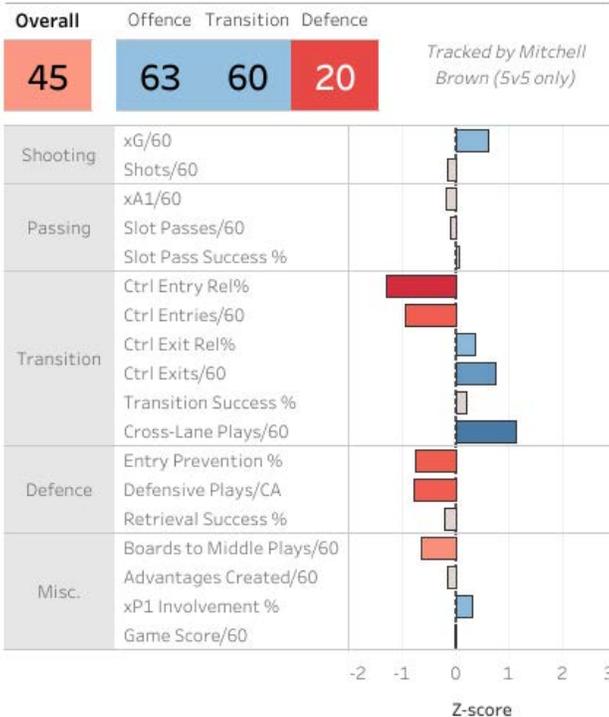
If there's one standout quality in Mayich's game, it's physical play. He throws crushing hits, wins body positioning on retrievals, and pins opponents to the boards. In the neutral zone, he angles attackers wide and forces dump-ins.

Despite flashes, it's tough to rank Mayich's puck game as NHL-calibre at this stage. He lacks the in-motion skill and rapid-fire decision-making needed to make plays at the next level. Consequently, the defence will likely become his dimension. By improving the gap control and skating, he could make it in a depth role.

Matthew Mayich

D | Ottawa 67's | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 135.7



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Mayich is sort of the defence version of Foster. He's not necessarily a creator, but he's patient and aware, allowing him to access

passing lanes in situations where many plays have already dumped the puck out. He's still mistake-prone, but he has the skills to become a positive on the breakout in the future, especially because he's already looking to make plays through forecheckers and shows a bit of deception.

He's flatfooted too much. The defence is bland, but he gets stops by closing space at the blue-line. His point play has a bit of activation and shooting skill, taking pucks straight into his pocket ready to shoot and taking space off-puck to become a threat. He doesn't look like a candidate for our board, but he has some qualities that should interest teams in the later rounds. Could be a depth option.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Mayich takes aggressive positioning in the offensive zone, collapsing into the top of the slot, prepared to shoot. It led to a scoring chance, where he took the puck across his body for a solid pass reception. He's mostly a simple player with the puck, however. Lacks in-motion decision-making, but he makes his decisions quick when given a bit of space. Some defence, but nothing noteworthy. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Lots of offensive zone time for Ottawa, and Mayich was a big factor. His proactive activation – weak side off the point and off the rush – led to zone entries, chances, and sustained zone time. Took a bunch of a shots, but he was also looking to pass into and across the slot, showing vision. He can't manipulate opponents, defaulting to a glide and handling the puck in front as soon as he looks for the next play, which limits the completion rate. He looked like a late-rounder in this game. Still patient, but not necessarily creative or skilled under pressure.

Mitchell Brown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Mayich was involved offensively. He joined the rush, turning a fake shot into a pass for a high-danger look. A great play. His aggressive positioning was a factor all game. He dips in at the right moments to hold the zone and when he has to back off, his gap's already closed. Lots of potential as a neutral zone play-killer as the skating improves. In-zone, he seals off pressure, keeps his stick on the ice, angles the odd attack. Turnover-prone under pressure, especially off the end-of-boards. Not a pick for us, but he could become a depth option down the line.

Mitchell Brown: February 3rd, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Mayich didn't do much in this game. He slows the play down and looks for easy outlets. Not much creativity shown. He offloads the puck when pressure arrives and doesn't show much play-building skill. But he does have ability. In one sequence, he beat forecheckers into the lane and connected with a backhand pass up the middle. Still, he's more of a defensive player. He angles opponents off the rush and when closing space along the boards. Uses his shoulder to win battles and traps the feet while pinning opponents to the boards. Not a pick but he's solid. Could become something down the line.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Ottawa 67's vs. London Knights - OHL

A quiet game from Mayich, spending a lot of time defending. Threw a couple of big hits and skated through opponents' hands. Once winning possession, he made simple, but smart plays. Reversed pucks, delayed, and stayed calm under pressure. Nothing deceptive or manipulative, but solid. He's not quick or a skilled skater, but the addition of the physical game makes him an interesting late-round candidate. Wonder if a team picks him.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Flint Firebirds vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

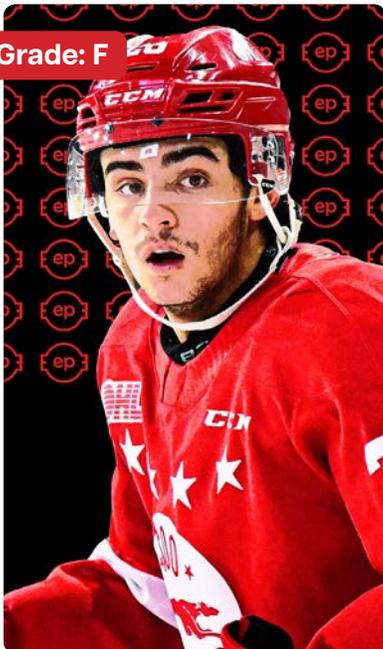
Mayich had a breakaway coming out of the box. More importantly, he used space from the point. He stepped in before shooting, activated off-puck, and kept pucks moving. Doesn't deceive or open lanes; it's just vertical, step-in stuff. Still, that's a solid base from which to add new skills. Doesn't force plays. On the breakout, he's mistake-prone but tries stuff. Delays, goes cross-ice.

Inaccurate and low pace, lacking the ability to access some lanes that he tries. A standout night defending the rush, going four-for-four, keeping attacks wide, and getting stops early. Not many physical skills at this stage, but he tries to keep opponents pinned to the boards. He could be a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Oshawa Generals vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A lot of defending for Mayich. He chased a lot, losing the body positioning battle around the net and unable to make up the distance as the puck went into the corner. A couple of stops, but nothing too interesting. Skating could be a limiter, and he's low pace in general. He cuts back into pressure, but also slows the play down a lot. Lets pressure arrive, but never moves his feet. Scans a lot of retrievals going back for pucks, looking over both shoulders regularly. Grabbed a chance by using space off-puck. Didn't look like a pick.

Grade: F



Marco Mignosa

AGE 17.425 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	154 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Soo Greyhounds	OHL	68	10	27	37	0.54

SCOUTING REPORT

Unranked by NHL Central Scouting and without gaudy point totals, Marco Mignosa isn't likely to hear his name called in Nashville. But he's one of the OHL's most distinct players, with a clear path to become a top scorer, and subsequently, an NHL pick.

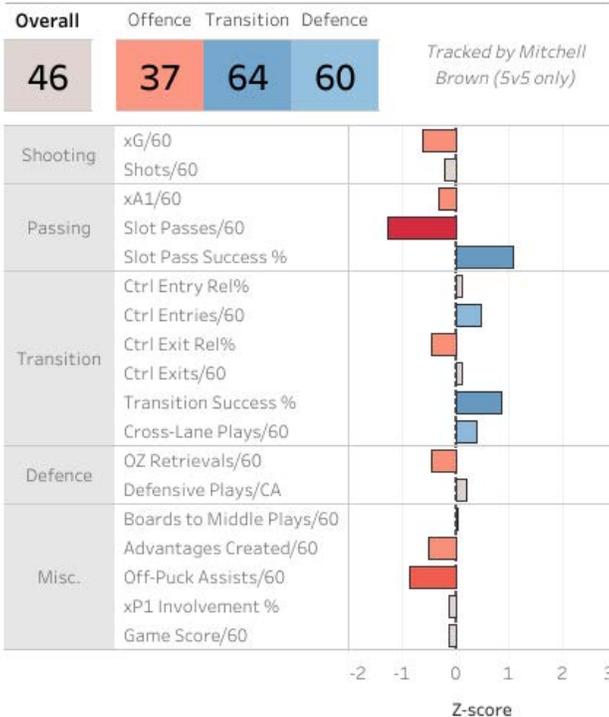
Right now, Mignosa's part-defender, part-play-builder. Where many players cheat, he's either battling or an easy-to-hit option. In transition, he strings exits into entries with passing lanes punctuated by drawing pressure first, creating more space on each ensuing touch. Then, there's his physical game, winning body positioning and instantly cutting inside.

Between those three abilities, there's little doubt that Mignosa could soon become a top scorer in the OHL. To do it, he will have to add a bit more layers to his game, whether that's deception, in-motion plays, or speed. He's not also much of a shooting threat.

While it's too soon to project Mignosa to the NHL, file him under the breakout watch category.

Marco Mignosa

F | Soo Greyhounds | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 106.2



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Mignosa supports the play like a pro. When many cheat, he's all the way in or all the way out – either a battler or an option.

Proactively supports higher in the zone and backtracks with some serious force. Stepped into opponents to secure body positioning and the hand puck in one motion. More of a play-builder, getting pucks in space and moving them after drawing pressure. Uses the backhand and drives the net when necessary. If his skills – deception, pace, mechanical ability – were just a bit better, he'd be a pick. Looks like a re-entry candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 15th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Mignosa's a bit of the opposite of Cloutier. He has better habits – take the middle, work the give-and-go, stay in space off-puck – but he only makes plays inside a lengthy glide.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Mignosa's effective, despite the skating being closer to a weakness than strength at this level. He's upright, but doesn't lack stability. He fights through checks, even maintaining control of the puck as he fends off backpressure. Showed handling skill to walk off the boards and a bit of playmaking to set up two shots on under pressure. The second one showed a bit of deception and patience, too. He skates his routes, plays fast, and brings that same energy on the backcheck. He looked like a late-rounder in this game. Upside limited by tools, but he has some runway as a pro.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - London Knights vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Mignosa cut inside off the draw for a scoring chance, his only notable offensive play at 5-on-5. More active on the powerplay, keeping play moving and stepped into space for a chance (that probably should've been a pass). More of a play-builder and defender at this stage. He effectively plays the lateral game – quick passes to build the offence, often through opponents. A consistent presence on the backcheck. Didn't look like a pick, but a solid candidate for a breakout season.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Mignosa's straight-line puck-carrying led to a few turnovers in transition (save for one rush where attacked the middle early) and the defence wasn't quite as impressive as normal. But he showed a bit as a playmaker, passing laterally early to give his target a bit of space upon reception. Down low, he stepped off the boards and found teammates stepping off from the point. The skating, shooting, and hands looked like below-average projections. Lacks in-motion skill but he's effective when fighting pressure – sturdy. He's not a pick, but he could become a prospect down the road.

Mitchell Brown: December 28th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

A really solid game from Mignosa, turning his defensive awareness and stick work into a bunch of zone entries, give-and-gos, and a few scoring chances. Wins body positioning and skates into opponent's space. Creates a bit with his passing, dropping pucks into space and laterally, but his teammates didn't do him any favours. Low pace and lacks in-motion skill. He might have NHL intelligence, or close to it, but the mechanics will prove limiting.

Lauren Kelly: November 25th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

There were portions of this game where I actually thought Mignosa was a defenceman, mostly because he was back defending the rush on several sequences. The gap control was rough, but I'll cut him slack there because that's not his position and kudos to him for trying. Offensively, he's a crafty puck carrier with good stickhandling abilities and delays to survey passing options - sometimes he could delay for too long, and seams would close. Forced a turnover in the offensive zone and sent a no-look pass to the slot. Drew a penalty. Decent showing overall, but I need to see more.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

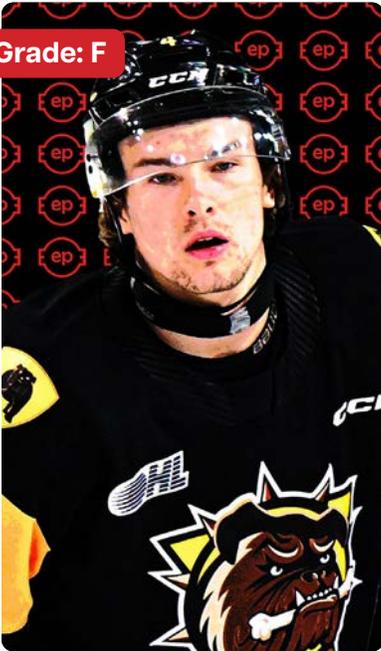
The Soo controlled this game when Mignosa was on the ice. He wasn't directly involved in his team's transition efforts, but showed more skill as a supporting player. He dipped in as the F3 for a rebound chance and kept pucks moving instead of firing

from the outside. Shot's a bit strange, with his upper body tipping back and starting with the puck way behind his feet. Not much passing shown. But he's such a proactive off-puck player. Doesn't look like a pick at this stage, but he has potential.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Guelph Storm vs. Soo Greyhounds - OHL

Mignosa set up a chance with a quick pass in space and fired off a trio of shots. Supports the play effectively. He reloads high, proactively covers for his defencemen, gets open inside space. The supporting reads lead to a chance and prevent chances at the other end. That was about it, however. The skating seemed like an issue, lacking lower-body flexion and generating little power. The bigger issue is the inability to make puck plays with his feet moving.

Grade: F



Lucas Moore

AGE 17.274 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Right Shoots
5'10" Height	174 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	65	3	25	28	0.43

SCOUTING REPORT

After the Gavin White trade, Lucas Moore claimed a top-pairing role and never looked back. He's one of the draft's better skaters and most robust defencemen, which makes him one of its most intriguing late-round options.

Moore skates the diagrams from the textbooks, with picture-perfect lower-body flexion that enables powerful strides and crossovers, explosive cutbacks, and sudden turns. The skating drives his physical game, with his low stance allowing him to win leverage on opponents in battles and send them flying with thunderous hits.

Despite the tools, Moore's still developing the finer skills, with and without the puck. While he occasionally connects with a long-range breakout pass or crafty shot-pass for a deflection, he usually keeps it simple – too simple. He needlessly reverses pucks, dumps them out, and passes up the boards with better options.

Of course, projection's just as much about the flashes as the baseline. Different coaches will demand different things, and Moore's mobility means he has the means to adapt. Still, tightening up the gap, developing the puck skills, and adding more transition tools will be required to find success in the NHL.

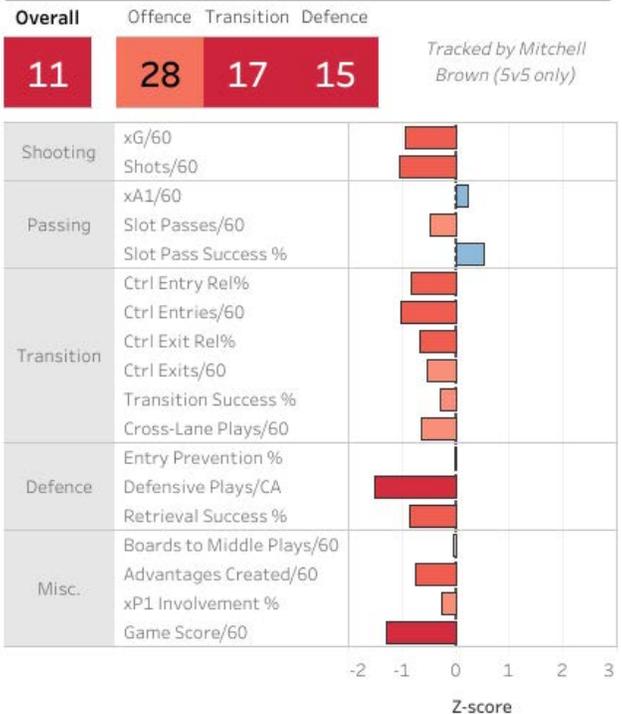
GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 2nd, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

There are some interesting qualities to Moore's game. He showed an ability to handle forechecking pressure, scanning for

Lucas Moore

D | Hamilton Bulldogs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 155.0



opponents and shaking them with deception on each retrieval. Eventually, though, Moore seemed to always reverse the puck rather than going through his reads and connecting with teammates further up ice. On one of the rare occasions that he pushed the limits, it just about sent his teammate to the hospital – it was among the more egregious suicide passes I've seen this season. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Moore connected with his teammate with a layered pass through bodies and sticks from the defensive blue line to send them in alone for a breakaway. Real land of contrasts game from him in transition. Moore's work at the offensive blue line was mostly unremarkable. I'm not sure about how well he'll hold up physically as he moves up into professional hockey, too. I don't know that I'm seeing a pick here, but he's an interesting player.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Another quiet performance from Moore. The skating's clearly a strength and he's physical. Seals off opponents and skates through their hands. That's it though. Doesn't show much defence otherwise. He's passive and beatable. Gets rid of the puck too early, failing to weaponize space. Not a factor offensively. A forgettable game.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Moore remains a frustrating prospect. He has tools. He achieves perfect lower-body flexion when striding forwards, maintaining most of his depth through crossovers and cuts. He has legitimate quickness, and he knows when to slow down to draw pressure. Connected with a shot-pass from the point for a deflection (moving target) and grabbed an assist with a similar play earlier in the game. The rush defence was too passive and his pivots lack the power of players with similarly strong posture. And the breakouts are poor. He doesn't look, reversing pucks or passing straight to the other team with options. Mistakes compound quickly, with multiple turnovers or poor reads in sequence. Don't think he's a pick this year, but the skating and flashes are intriguing.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Moore can really skate. He accelerates with a highly developed heel-to-heel and achieves textbook lower-body flexion when striding. The output isn't quite at the same level as the input, however. The puck game is also limited. He mostly reverses pucks and flings them off the glass with better options. His skating provides opportunities to slip away, cut back, and take the middle, but he doesn't. Not creating advantages. He's a solid defender, however. Tightening the neutral zone will make him a bonafide play-killer at this level. He's physical, times his engagements, and stays locked onto his check.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A frustrating game from Moore. He only makes simple plays. With an ocean of space at the point, he prefers to shoot immediately or pass to his partner, who immediately shoots. Never steps towards the net. On breakouts, it's all simple plays again. Chips when he could pass to the inside, reverses when he could advance the play. He tries to draw the first forechecker on occasion. And he showed better offensive habits in this game, as he moved through his pass receptions. The defensive stick is a selling point, but a passive gap kept its impact on the game infrequent.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Moore absolutely belted an attacker after they passed, somehow not picking up a penalty in the process. He looks for the big hit. He also understands how to engage; he gets low, traps the opponent's feet, and pins them to the boards. That was about it though. The skating looks like a potential above-average projection because of his form: Knees-over-toes, hips engaged, chest up. But he's not explosive. Not a pick, but a breakout candidate for next year.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

In this game, Moore showed two attributes: point shots and defensive stick work. He has a real knack for getting his stick in the way at the right moment. He doesn't over-extend or chase, instead staying balanced and letting opponents skate into his space. A tighter neutral zone gap would earn him more stops. Offensively, so many point shots. He doesn't use space. He rips pucks

with his head down. Doesn't move his feet through receptions. And he didn't show much breakout skill. Might be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

So, Moore can really skater, especially forwards. He pushes his knees past his toes, engages his hips, and keeps his chest up. It's textbook posture. He has flashes – a quick play off the boards to the inside, a shot-pass for a deflection, and some physicality. But he's inconsistent with his reads. Doesn't use space, hurries plays, and generally plays too aggressive. He doesn't look like a pick, but he could become one in a year or two with his skating and abrasive style.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

The defensive stick was working for Moore in this game. He grabbed at least four break ups with well-timed pokes, reaching across opponents or simply poking at the player's stickhandling. The rest of the game was messier. He drifted too far wide when defending the rush and dropped on the ice when he could've engaged. Most puck touches were simple. He didn't create advantages, look laterally, or show any play-building. But the shot, especially the outside leg wrister, looked NHL-calibre with his head up, hands in the right position, and a quick release. Activated a bit. He could be a late-rounder.

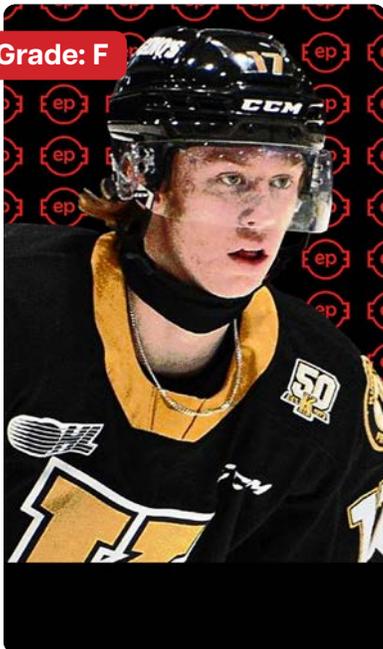
Lauren Kelly: December 2nd, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Moore was Hamilton's strongest draft-eligible in this game. Scans in the defensive zone, laid out to block multiple shots, slides out to intercept passes on odd-man rushes and was successful in doing so, good keep-ins at the offensive blueline, and scored a goal from the half-wall on the powerplay, showcasing a quick release. Odd sequence where he went back for a retrieval and stickhandled to escape pressure with only one glove on. Played both special teams. If he's a pick, he's a late round candidate at the moment. But there could be something here. He's worth keeping an eye on, I think.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Moore wasn't much of a factor in this game with the puck. He made a couple of plays that eventually led to goals, but it's simple passes and point shots. Patient under pressure, but play selection and timing lacks. Pucks missed their targets. The rush defence could be a strength, especially when he got on opponents early to force the dump in. Didn't look like a pick, but the stride looked NHL-calibre. Worth watching.

Grade: F



Owen Outwater

AGE 17.696 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kingston Frontenacs	OHL	62	16	25	41	0.66

SCOUTING REPORT

The Kingston Frontenacs look poised to reach powerhouse status next season. If they do it, Owen Outwater, a top prospect entering the OHL, will be a driving force.

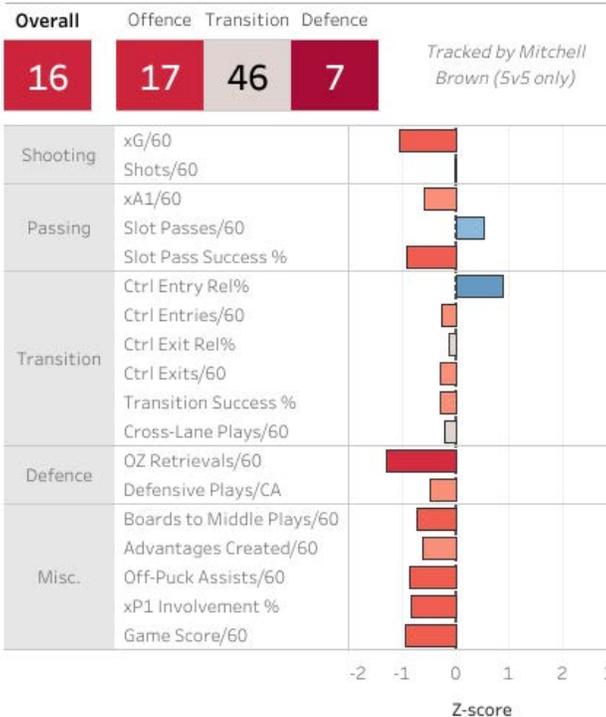
Outwater's a skilled, defensively responsible centre. He backtracks above the puck, then turns to guide play to the outside. Well-timed close-outs generate turnovers across the zone. From there, he's more of a playmaker, looking to pull defenders in before passing to an open teammate driving the net. Intelligent supporting reads and an aversion to throwing away the puck in transition round out his skill set.

Despite the soundness, Outwater's not a particularly nuanced offensive player. Pucks leave his stick too late, preventing access to lanes. He's not deceptive and struggles to create space to use his shot. Creativity's limited, preferring to play in straight lines at a single speed.

Of course, Kingston was a tough situation this year, especially for a player who missed his entire 15-year-old season. Given his pedigree and style of play, it wouldn't come as a surprise if he looked like a more creative, layered offensive player next season. That would put him on an NHL track.

Owen Outwater

F | Kingston Frontenacs | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 102.7



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater tries to be a playmaker and he showed a bit of skill in this game. Early on, he skated at a defender, drawing them

across, then passed back into the middle for a chance. Dragged a puck in-tight for a high-danger chance. He tries more advanced passes but he's always late to the lane, and he's not especially deceptive. Lacks pace in every facet of the game. The support game and defence should become strengths at this level. He's active and aware, showing a bit of play-killing ability. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A solid game from Outwater. He was moving the puck effectively in transition, working plays laterally and even using his hands to get around defenders before passing. Strong, determined backchecking and backtracking with over-extending. Supported the play and arrived in the right spots at the perfect moment on the defensive end. Shots a bit of shooting skill off the outside leg. He made quick passes off the boards to the inside, leading to his late-game assist. Where many players look to handle, he spotted a teammate in a better position. There's not much creativity to his game. Tools are average-to-below-average projections. Not sure he's a pick this year, but this game suggested he's going to become a solid OHL scorer.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Barrie Colts vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater tried to be a playmaker in this game. Hooked a puck under a stick for a high-danger chance, albeit it was lucky that the puck arrived there. He overpassed from scoring position. Showed some shooting skill, but only from the outside. He's not creative or adaptable, but the most pressing issue is that lack of pace. Pucks leave his stick too late or not at all because he won't make a play. He's an intelligent support player, but that's the only way he impacts the game regularly here. Not a pick this year, but his pedigree means he will be worth keeping an eye on next season.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Mostly a straight line, low efficiency game from Outwater. He plays to what's immediately in front of him. He doesn't adapt to lanes, manipulate opponents, or exploit gaps (say, for example, he doesn't cut inside when the opponent backs up too much). There's no creativity to his game. He just skates, delays, looks for options, and by then, he loses the puck. Doesn't make plays in motion. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater's defence continues to impress. Gets above the puck, provides support, pressures at the right moments, and creates some turnovers. With the puck, he's limited. He turns with his inside leg off the ice, locking him on an arc because he doesn't try to two-foot cuts/jabs. Only comfortable with the puck at low speeds and he's indecisive. No creativity. Even when he has accessible, high-value options, he defaults to chips or clearances. Doesn't look like a pick, which is a considerable fall from where he was two years ago.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Outwater was mostly a defensive player in this game. He's aware and energetic. Didn't get many stops. With the puck, he only makes simple plays. Passes up the boards, straight-line carries, low-percentage shots or passes to the point. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater had some defensive flashes. He has a somewhat projectable stride, pushing his knees past his toes and engaging his hips a bit. He uses that to make up ground on opponents and eliminate options. With the puck, he pulls the trigger inside space but lacks the handling skills to adapt his shots. The passes mostly failed. In one sequence, he had a no chance of hitting the teammate in the middle. But if he delayed, other options were opening. Always rushed in the offensive end. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

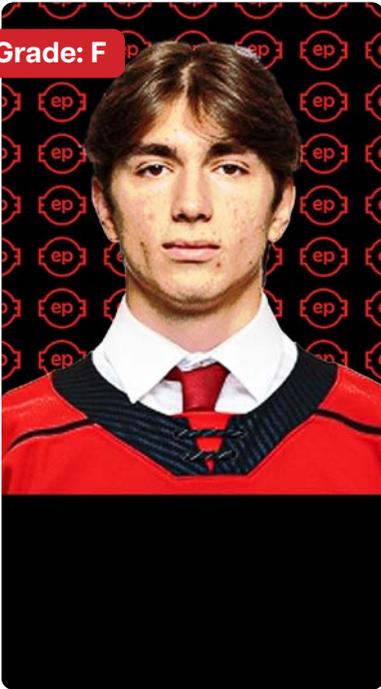
Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Sarnia Sting vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater brings defensive value through proactive support, or he's just extremely passive as the F3. Either way, he prevented a breakaway by being up high early and showed some play-killing ability in his own zone. With the puck, he's very limited. He tried a few plays, but they were all poorly timed or the wrong choice. He takes too long to make decisions, passing after lanes close. He can't open lanes, or he's just unaware. In one sequence, a pump fake or a quick delay would have created a pass to the slot with zero chance of an interception. Instead, he took a low-percentage shot. Doesn't look like a pick.

Lauren Kelly: November 13th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Outwater plays a simple game. He supports, scans, and makes simple plays in the DZ. Doesn't hesitate to shoot, whether it be a wrister or a one-timer. He has flashes, but didn't show too many advanced offensive passing ideas. Reliable player in his own end, but I'm not sure that's enough to warrant a draft pick at this stage.

Grade: F



James Petrovski

AGE 17.093 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	3.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Flint Firebirds	OHL	16	0	4	4	0.25
Owen Sound Attack	OHL	49	4	15	19	0.39

SCOUTING REPORT

After a bit of a slow start to his OHL career, James Petrovski was shipped to the Owen Sound Attack in a mid-season deal. His minutes went up, his production with it. Now, he could be a late-round find for a patient team.

With Petrovski, it's all about potential. He's a fluid skater, smoothly moving from edge to edge and transitioning from backwards to forwards and back again while handling puck. He surveys the offensive zone with heel-to-heel skating and beats opponents with crossover-laden rushes. Patience and deception appear as he looks to break through the forecheck and start the offence.

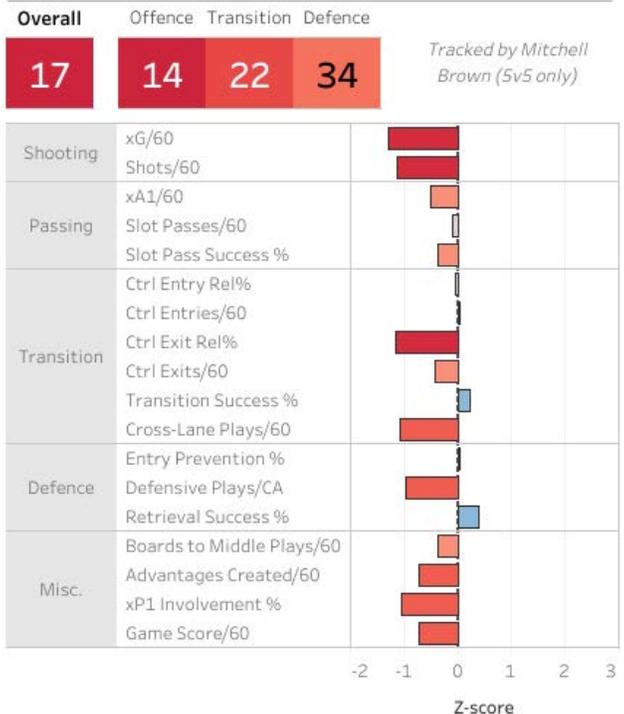
When Petrovski builds speed, the fluidity dissipates and the puck game becomes more of a weakness. He's not much of an offensive creator as a result, but he has ideas, whether that's shooting for deflection or walking into space.

Despite the skating and stature, Petrovski isn't much of a physical player. That's an issue. He has to tighten up the off-puck defence, engage with his body to win battles, and scan for threats and options more often.

Therefore, he's a long-term project; not one with a clear NHL outcome at this stage. But as one of the youngest players in the draft, perhaps he proves us wrong.

James Petrovski

D | Owen Sound Attack | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 101.5



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 8th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. North Bay Battalion - OHL

Petrovski showed a lot with the puck. He's fluid, going from edge-to-edge and transitioning from pivots to backwards crossovers to heel-to-heel while handling the puck. Steps out from behind his net and draws pressure on breakouts. Went for a couple of skates, one time using a crossover-heavy rush up the middle before driving wide. He looks laterally for options sometimes, too. He doesn't get a full crossunder and he loses much of the fluidity as soon as he builds speed. But he tried stuff – that counts. Scanning remains an issue, on- and off-puck. Blind passes and doesn't identify off-puck threats. Opponents slip around him and he overplays passing lanes instead of eliminating the player. He'd benefit from involving his body more in his defence, too. Could be a late-rounder. More likely a camp invitee or a re-entry prospect.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

The second-best Petrovsk* in this game, Petrovski has his moments. He pinched down the boards while much risk, then kept the puck moving. A consistent defensive presence. Stepped into opponents, skated through their hands, and got his stick in shooting lanes without overextending. The puck skills looked limited, especially on the breakout. He only makes simple plays – passing straight ahead or getting rid of the puck entirely. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Petrovski tries stuff. He jumps into the rush, often above his forwards, and shows some low-pace breakout skills – deceiving opponents, delaying, and drawing pressure before cutting back. He lacks quickness and the fluidity disappears when he starts moving. He had a solid defensive game, however. Grabbed a couple of stops with his length. The off-puck defence stands out as a weakness, as does the defensive skating. A bit of gambler with his tendency to step straight at opponents. He's probably not a pick, but his skating, flashes of skill, and size might interest a team in the later rounds.

Mitchell Brown: January 12th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Erie Otters - OHL

Petrovski isn't much of a factor in games, but he could be. For one, he's fluid and tries to create. In one sequence, he worked off the point with backwards crossovers into a quick deke, before cutting back and setting up a shot. His shots are rarely for goals – they are basically passes – and his shot isn't really a weapon anyway. Flashes patience, deception, and vision on the breakout to prolong passing lanes as he waited for support. Sluggish off stops, which limits his effectiveness defensively. Weak off-puck and beatable. Rush defence is stepping up and reaching. I don't see much of a path to the NHL, but he could surprise next year.

Mitchell Brown: January 11th, 2023 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Niagara IceDogs - OHL

Petrovski has moments. He lets pressure arrive, then spins away from it. He's a fluid lateral and backwards skater, linking together crossovers, heel-to-heel skating, and cutbacks. At his size, that's sure to draw some NHL interest. He's not much of a physical player or defender, apart from flashes when the assignment's obvious. No offence to speak of. Looks like a toolsy prospect, but that's about it.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

A more eventful game from Petrovski. His point play was solid. Nothing exceptional, but he shots for deflections, stepped off the boards, took pucks in motion, and used space off-puck to become an option. Low pace on breakouts – if he played a bit faster, he would've been able to make a controlled play instead of dumping the puck out. But he's tall and a fluid skater, capable of transitioning between different skating skills with ease and he tries to get into the play. Retrievals, defence, and physical skills look like average-to-below-average projections. Blind plays, lacks pace, doesn't use his shoulder much.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Owen Sound Attack vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL



Not many shifts for Petrovski in this game. Or notable plays for that matter. The passes missed their mark and pressure caused poor decisions. Without pressure, he skated the puck out and passed to his teammate off the boards. That was about it for skill plays. He's a fluid and skilled skater but not an explosive one, lacking depth. Grabbed a couple of stops on the defensive end but immediately gave the puck away. Didn't look like a prospect.

Grade: F



Olivier Savard

AGE 17.668 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	62	3	5	8	0.13

SCOUTING REPORT

While Olivier Savard predominantly played a depth role on the Saginaw Spirit, his skill set and reads suggest a player bound for success in the OHL and potentially beyond.

With creativity and patience, Savard breaks down the forecheck better than many of the draft's top prospects. He steps into pressure before cutting back, creating the escape route. He slows down to bait the forecheck before hitting the gas, one of many ways he deceives. There's the edge work, how he evades opponents with spins, turns, and cuts.

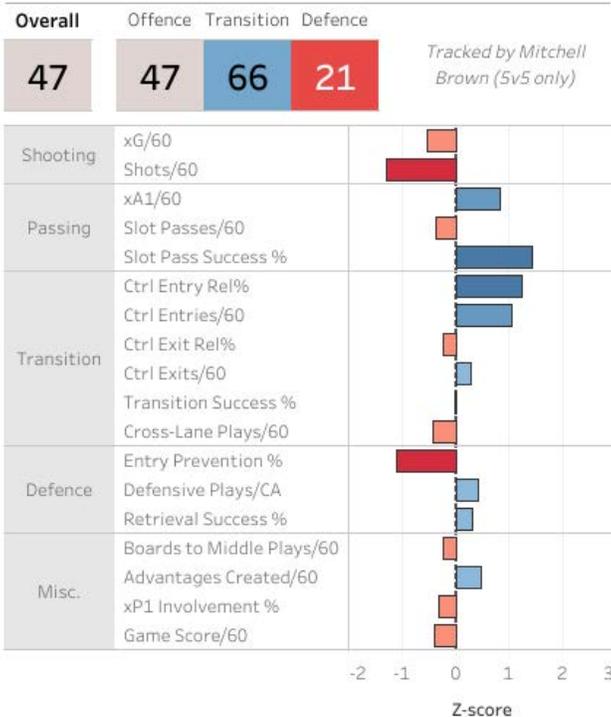
Savard also activates from the point, jumping into space after beating defenders with lateral skating. Both the activation and breakouts aren't constants from Savard – his upright skating stance and lack of pace prevent it. But his creativity in transition was noted by our team throughout the season.

There's also not much defensive value in Savard's game right now, save for aggressiveness. The good news is that he's in arguably the OHL's best development team. If he goes unpicked, he will still be worth watching because of the exciting highs.

Olivier Savard

D | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 90.1



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Savard didn't get out there much, but he was heavily involved in the play. Constantly jumped into the rush, using the weak side

especially well. He sees plays developing and works to become an option. That's about it from this game. But the potential for him to become a top-pairing OHL defenceman is there. NHL upside? Not convinced.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

A really active game from Savard. He was trying stuff, activating tons, and showcasing skill. The stuff that worked: a shot-pass after waiting for the defender to commit, deking around opponents up in the play, and killing plays along the boards in his own zone. Pinched at the right moments. He ran into trouble on breakouts because he takes too long to make plays. Lanes close by the time the puck leaves his stick. Then, there was also the Makar-esque lateral movement from the point plays that failed because he can't generate enough momentum from his stops. There's runway here, given his flashes of handling skill, activation game, and defensive potential. Probably not a pick this year, but he could become one.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

A ton of turnovers from Savard, but I generally liked his ideas. He steps into pressure before cutting back, passes through pressure, and tries to draw pressure before moving the puck. The mechanics are limited. He's smooth, but not explosive and too upright. He can't separate from forecheckers when he tries to use outside edges. And he takes too long to make plays. Several turnovers were good ideas but pass left his stick too late. The defence is an issue. He's aggressive, but he doesn't load his push off leg in his pivots. Doesn't look like a pick, but he has a lot of time over the next two seasons. He will improve a lot.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Savard struggled a bit in this game. Hemmed in a couple of times in his own end, a giveaway at the offensive blueline led to him conceding a penalty shot as he tried to get back to stop a breakaway. Jumped up into the play a fair bit, playing down low and trying to facilitate passes to key areas. He was decent at killing plays off the rush, or at least pushing players to the boards and forcing them into battles. Not sure there's a pick here, but he's interesting at least.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Savard stepped up for a hit to kill a play, but it was a quiet night otherwise. He's just so passive on the breakout. He made simple passes or offloaded possession on a team that doesn't do much of either. Threw pucks away on retrievals and didn't show any escapability. He didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Savard barely played at 5-on-5 in this game. Not much success with the puck. He passed to no one and flung pucks away with better options. Not better defensively. He did have one sequence, where he joined the rush, followed up a pass, and backhanded the puck on net. No notable skill shown other than the read to get up into the play. But everyone on Saginaw does that. Hopefully, the second half is better.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

A much better defensive game from Savard than my last viewing. He was on his check earlier, killing plays and forcing dump-ins. Pivoted early to angle. The pivots and stride are limited by a lack of depth and power, leading to difficulty closing distance. Simple retrieval game but moved pucks at the right moments. Barely involved offensively, but he tries to create advantages with his breakouts. He's worth watching more.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Saginaw Spirit vs. London Knights - OHL

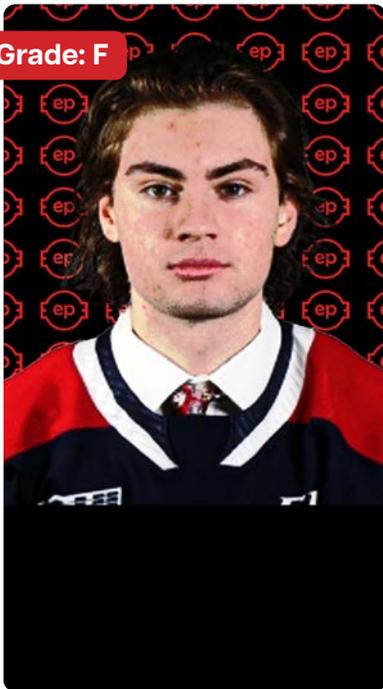
Savard's defence was messy. He kept conceding the zone without any friction, just backing up until he was forced to engage then missing. The gambling style will only lead to more issues at the next level. A quiet game offensively, but showed vision and passing skill in spurts – expect to see more of that this season given how Saginaw plays. Breakouts were solid, but low volume.

He draws pressure, deceives in open-ice, and looks for the open, moving target. Quick, simple plays on retrievals followed by a dash to the inside to become a return pass option. Worth watching him more.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2021 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Kitchener Rangers - OHL

Savard was awesome in this game. So many great transition details. He steps inside, uses his eyes, body and puck positioning to deceive forecheckers, and shows tons of patience. Looks for options cross-ice after drawing the forecheck towards him. He's a fluid handler who doesn't overhandle, allowing him to make plays as they open. Then, he joins the rush. Finishes his routes, becomes an option, and creates some havoc. He's a bit hectic defensively with scanning issues, but shows some play-killing ability deeper in his zone. Lots of stuff to like; he looked like a notable prospect for 2023.

Grade: F



Nic Sima

AGE 17.460 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 31, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
North Bay Battalion	OHL	17	2	3	5	0.29
Saginaw Spirit	OHL	44	4	7	11	0.25

SCOUTING REPORT

A mid-season trade brought Nic Sima to the Saginaw Spirit, where he fit in almost immediately. Sure, he barely scored, but he also played a depth role. There, he improved consistently throughout the season.

Sima plays a give-and-go style with the occasional crossover rush that gets the defender moving in the wrong direction. He attacks the inside, drops pucks back into space, rushes the net to create space behind him, and sets picks. He slips away from defenders to get open in the slot. But it's his defence that might be the most consistent part of his game. He deters shots with pressure, pushes attacks wide on the backcheck, and supports down low.

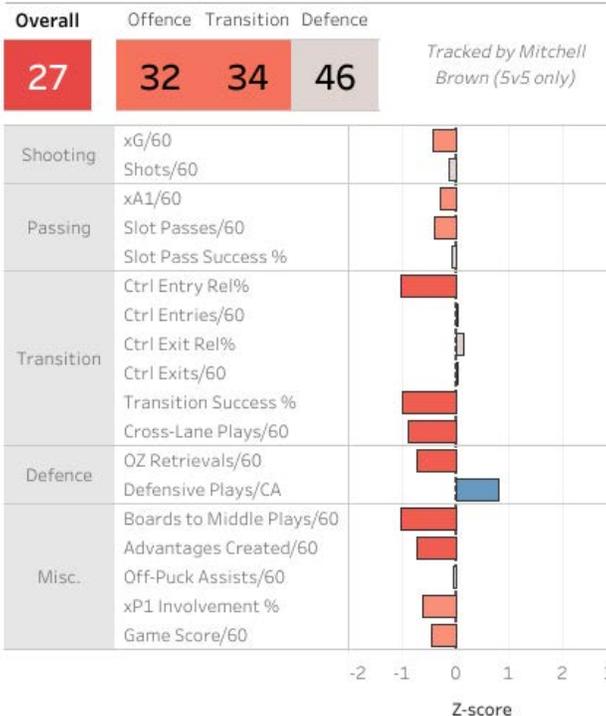
While Sima plays the Saginaw Spirit style, he lacks the tools to make full use of his ideas. He lacks lower-body flexion, handles the puck in front of body rather than in his hip pocket, and struggles to make plays with his feet moving.

Those are likely enough to keep Sima out of NHL discussion for now, but intelligence and development are always worthy of attention. He could become a top-six scorer in the OHL in a year or two.

Nic Sima

F | Saginaw Spirit | OHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 84.1



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Very little ice time for Sima as Saginaw tried to close out the series. While McNamara made the most of his opportunities, Sima

struggled. Whiffed on his best touch of the game. A few wide-lane attacks that were quickly choked out. He's predictable when he's not playing that give-and-go, weaving style. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Sima's not unlike his linemate McNamara, limited by skating but he has ideas. Sima's even more limited, requiring a very upright glide to make things happen at speed. He only handles the puck in front of his body. Always on his heels. But he plays the Saginaw way. Lots of east-west passing in transition and give-and-go hockey. He's never putting the finishing touches on plays, and he's often chasing. I think he has potential in the OHL, but likely not an NHL prospect.

Mitchell Brown: March 4th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Sima was pretty involved in this game, especially as a puck carrier. His stride has flashes of fluidity and he tries to use weight shifts and crossovers. He's not quick, but he can confuse weaker defenders. Sometimes plays a bit too fast but generally tries to play more of the slow game. He attacks the middle, drops pucks back, and looks for the trailer. A really impressive night on the defensive end, too. He was always above the puck, ready to push attackers wide and force dump-ins. Not a pick, but he could become a solid OHL scorer next season.

Lauren Kelly: February 20th, 2023 - Saginaw Spirit vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

Sima's skating is a bit odd - he's tall, and he keeps up with play, but the stance is wide and he's hunched over, lacking acceleration and good edges. He was pushed off the puck on a breakout, and left the puck behind in the neutral zone a couple of times on the rush. He still finishes his routes and exposes defenders by changing weight to get them off-balance. But I don't think he's a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 8th, 2023 - Erie Otters vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

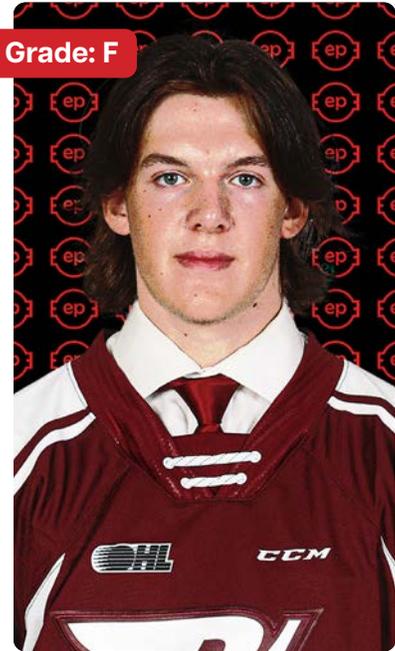
Sima really struggles to skate at this level. He doesn't get deep enough and his push offs are behind him, rather than laterally. He's barely an OHL-calibre skater. It's a limiter here, but he has reads. He gets open in the slot, as he did to clean up a rebound. He tries more complex passing plays, such as forehand-backhand around a stick. The defence was strong, keeping above the puck on the backcheck and pushing attackers wide. Didn't look like a pick, but definitely a player to watch over the next two seasons.

Mitchell Brown: December 29th, 2022 - Soo Greyhounds vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Nothing interesting from Sima, save for a pass into the slot for a chance. Skates his routes and brings a bit off-puck value. Not a creator. And the skating's weak. Doesn't engage his hips and his chest collapses towards the ice. Strides behind him. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 25th, 2022 - Sarnia Sting vs. Saginaw Spirit - OHL

Sima had a solid game. He was all over the place on the forecheck. Lots of pressure and earned himself a trio of loose puck recoveries. Not much passing skill shown in this game, playing more of a shooting game. He skated his routes, once getting an awkward breakaway chance. Didn't look like a pick, but his forechecking stood out.



Grade: F

Konnor Smith

AGE 17.858 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 06, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'6" Height	209 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	4 Shooting	4 Passing
3.5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	6 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Peterborough Petes	OHL	65	3	12	15	0.23

SCOUTING REPORT

Every draft class has a bunch of tall, low-scoring defencemen who don't impact the game beyond the occasional hit. Konnor Smith isn't one of them. He's a defensive stalwart in the OHL, with some potential as a puck-mover.

When defending the rush, Smith keeps his knees bent, head up, and the crossovers to a minimum to steadily guide attackers to the outside. Frighteningly physical, but also aware, he's always diffusing threats. He's an attentive off-puck defender, finding success with well-timed stick lifts and shoves.

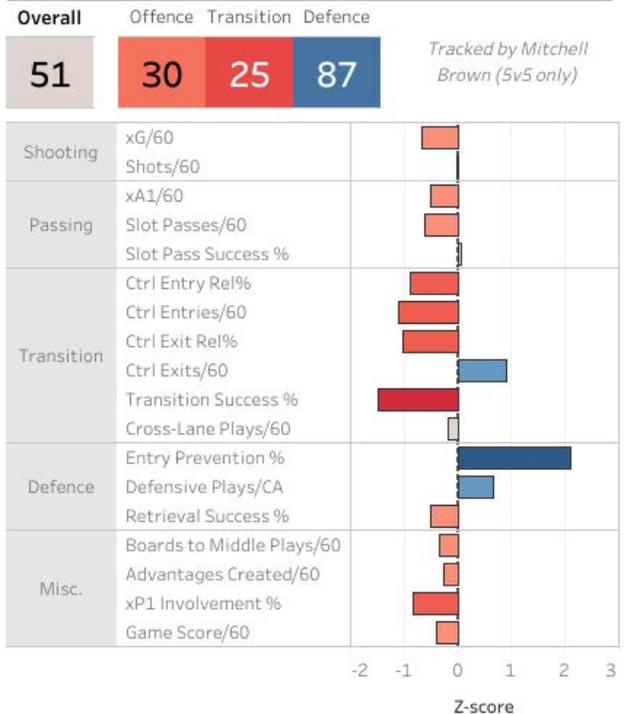
While forechecking pressure compromises Smith's puck game, he tries plays. He looks cross-ice for breakout options, even drawing a forechecker before passing on their heels to the middle. Activation features regularly, and he uses space before shooting. Even adds in a quick head fake to keep a lane open.

"Skating and hands fail him when pressured, but his stride isn't too far off," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote. "It's really the edges and defensive skating; the lack of lower-body flexion and inability to generate power from stops."

If Smith improves the mechanics, he could play in a bottom-pairing role in the NHL. Teams value players in his archetype. But if he builds off those flashes of puck skills, perhaps there's a chance he could move the needle a bit.

Konnor Smith

D | Peterborough Petes | OHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 129.4



⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"This kid never gives up. Walked onto that Seattle team, fought for every rung up the ladder. Has great feet, can move laterally, can kill plays. Should've already been a pick, but at 20 he may slip through again and have to fight some more through an AHL deal." - Eastern Conference Scout, June 2023

"I see myself as a two-way dman. I've taken it on to shut down other team's top lines and I think I've done a good job of that this year. I've upped my game in the offensive skill. Rounded out my game completely." - Hanzel, May 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 4th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Most towering defencemen in Smith's mould don't make much of an impact on their game. The allure is tools, not effectiveness. That's not really the case for Smith, who has a strong defensive game. He keeps attackers wide, gets inside early, and manages risk effectively (few crossovers, for example). He tries plays on the breakout and shows a bit of skill, going cross-ice inside backwards crossovers or looking inside for a quick outlet. The hands are very rudimentary and he can't handle and move his feet at the same time. Just a shooter in the offensive end. He'd be a fine late-rounder for a team, but has a long path ahead. Needs to develop the puck skill, mobility, and reads significantly.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Ottawa 67's - OHL

Smith really struggled in this game. Pucks bounced off his stick. Passes missed their mark. Any time he's forced to the backhand, he ends a glide, widens his stance, and reaches way out. Easily forechecked. Only makes plays up the boards. Defensively, he sets his feet and lets opponents come to him. He has some play-killing ability with his length, but it's more of a weakness than a strength at this stage. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Oshawa Generals - OHL

Smith can defend at this level. The skating's a problem, both mechanically (he struggles to generate power with an upright stance) and habit-wise (he tends to plant his feet and let opponents come to him instead of stepping up and pivoting). But he anticipates plays and proactively gets in lanes, which allows him to get stops. Not a manipulator, creator, or pacey player, but he occasionally deceives or skates into a lane before passing. Not a candidate for our board, but he has pro upside.

Mitchell Brown: February 23rd, 2023 - Windsor Spitfires vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Smith's solid. Not the usual big blue-liner for this level. He tries plays and even creates advantages. Draws a forechecker before passing on their heels for the breakout. Passes cross-ice and laterally to hit moving targets. A proactive activator in the offensive zone and uses space before pulling the trigger. Physical, aware, and eliminates off-puck threats. The skating's not a strength; he commits too easily, lacks depth, and struggles with transitions. Likely not an NHL player, but he has legitimate pro upside. He'd be a fine late round pick for a team.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Smith stepped up with McCoy missing most of the game. He joined the rush, kickstarted plays with smart passes up the boards, and even showed a bit of deception from the point. Kept the puck moving offensively and even jumped into space for a chance, a part of his game I haven't seen before. Physical but often too committing. Skating and hands fail him when pressured, but his stride isn't too far off. It's really the edges and defensive skating; the lack of lower-body flexion and inability to generate power from stops. Nothing suggested an NHL player, but some pro qualities.

Mitchell Bown: February 16th, 2023 - Ottawa 67's vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Smith had a few memorable shifts with McCoy, where they're proactive pinches and blue-line holds kept Peterborough on the attack. Where McCoy keeps the puck moving, Smith stops it dead. He takes pucks flatfooted and only really looks to shoot. The hands fail him as soon as the feet move, and vice-versa. He's big, physical, and tries hard – there's some play-killing ability here off the rush – but he's very limited mechanically for this level. Doesn't look like a draftable prospect.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Smith had a shift on the penalty kill where he just prevented the entire opposing team from accessing the puck by getting his body in the way to kill a bunch of time. It was an impressive physical game. He ran players over, pinched at the right moments, skated through the hands, and even kept pucks moving off end boards. He's not skilled and lacks handling ability. Skating's only a bit better, lacking edges and power. But he's a solid player. Could become a pro.

Mitchell Brown: January 16th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Peterborough Petes - OHL

Smith had a solid game on the breakout. He can't make plays in motion, but he spots teammates through pressure. Not making plays to the middle or creating true high-end advantages, but he has some timing to his deliveries, giving his teammates a little extra space. He's easily forced into poor decisions and struggles on the backhand. Defence was solid, but his skating made him vulnerable. Upright, unstable, lacks edge control for the level. He didn't look like a pick, but there were interesting components to this game.

Lauren Kelly: November 18th, 2022 - Peterborough Petes vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

At 6'5, Smith's skating is an issue. He plays a physical game, but he's slow. Not just in movement, but in decision making too. He delays too long when trying to make plays with the puck, he's beat off the rush, and his execution lags behind. He's not really a puck mover or a puck distributor, or an effective shutdown player in his own end because he's constantly late arriving to the play. I don't see a draft pick.

Grade: F



Florian Xhekaj

AGE 18.219 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 27, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Hamilton Bulldogs	OHL	68	13	12	25	0.37

SCOUTING REPORT

Just like his older brother Arber, Florian Xhekaj wasn't drafted into the OHL. Instead, he had to prove himself in the GOJHL, a Jr. B league, before generating interest. He did, and once he earned his spot in the OHL, he continually improved.

Around the net, Xhekaj looks like a professional player. He doesn't just plant himself in front; he moves his feet, presents his stick, and detaches from defenders just as the puck comes through. Tricky one-timers and high-skill deflections are his scoring tools, complemented by those off-puck reads.

While Xhekaj's not a puck carrier at this stage, he's an effective passer in transition. He builds plays with lateral passes, hits teammates driving the middle, and occasionally adds in a bit of deception to prolong lanes.

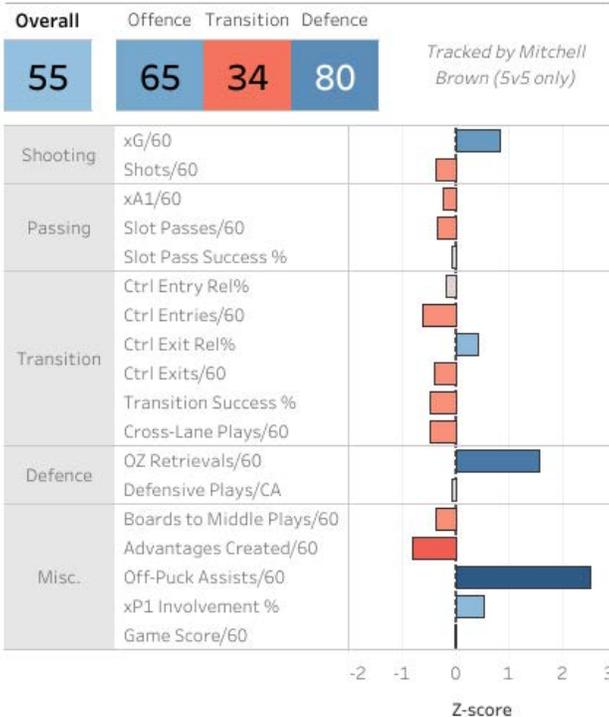
Physicality is also part of Xhekaj's game, looking for big hits and trying to absorb hits. To bolster his NHL odds, he will need to improve his puck protection game through better edge work, improved hands, and better timing on cutbacks.

As a draft-plus-one with little scoring, Xhekaj doesn't have the profile of an NHL draft pick. But his development curve might interest teams late. Given the reads, off-puck game, and energy, he's likely to become an OHL scorer next season.

Florian Xhekaj

F | Hamilton Bulldogs | OHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 121.8



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 17th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Xhekaj scored with a one-timer on the far side and grabbed another chance with a deflection in front. Understands how to get open, whether that's in the slot or away from defenders. Ties up and disengages as the puck comes near. Not much of a puck carrier but he has some play-building skills, mostly through lateral passes. Looks for teammates through layers and hit a couple. Limited mechanically. Chased the play a lot. Didn't look like a pick but he has professional upside with his off-puck game.

Mitchell Brown: March 2nd 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

Xhekaj's motor enabled a scoring chance in this game, sprinting on the forecheck where many players retreat. He's a clever off-puck player. He ties up, disengages, and moves into space at the right moments. Scored with a slick deflection and set up a goal with a look-off cross-slot pass on 3-on-1. His crossovers are steps, he can't change directions or shift his weight much with the puck. Only tries plays with space. Otherwise, he's getting rid of the puck. But he shows a bit of passing and vision to change the point of attack in transition. A very limited player mechanically. The intelligence could be an NHL projection – it could be hidden by the mechanics.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Sudbury Wolves vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Xhekaj was mean in this one. Threw a pair of massive hits along the boards in his own zone. Loves to step off the boards just as the opponent leans in to him. He doesn't create space with contact or show board skills, however. That prevents the physical grade from being higher than a 5. With the puck, he's limited. Tools are the culprit, but he has some ideas without pressure. Hits teammates and looks back for the trailer. Grabbed a point blank chance by arriving late off the rush. Nothing that suggested much upside at the professional level.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A much better game from Xhekaj, who was a bit more decisive with the puck and tried plays in transition. Took pucks along the boards and passed to teammates up the middle. Created a few advantages. Snuck behind the defence for a breakaway chance that he shovelled into the blocker – didn't try to make the goalie move. Rang the post with an outside leg wrister off the rush that showed a bit more shooting skill. He's sometimes physical, but he doesn't have much puck protection ability because the skating and handling don't enable him to absorb contact and escape with possession. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Xhekaj had a perfect one-timer chance, decided to deke the goalie instead and failed. Took another puck under pressure and decided not to force play, instead cutting back and passing to the point. Not much skill shown. He's such an upright skater and lacks handling skill. Patient, but the lack of pace stands out. Threw two massive hits, including a reverse hit on an opponent. Not much upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kingston Frontenacs vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

A lot of defending for Xhekaj in this game. He wasn't especially physical in this game, passing up opportunities to step into players. Showed a tiny bit of skill. Hook a puck back into the slot for an easy assist and fired an outside leg wrister off a steal. Went coast-to-coast and passed into the slot, but that highlighted his skating. He lacks depth and weight shift ability. His crossovers upright and he tips back when accelerating. He'd benefit from changing pace and slowing down instead of forcing plays ahead. Didn't look like a pick. But a professional player? Yes.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Peterborough Petes vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Some exciting flashes from Xhekaj, showing a delay game and even some manipulation to set up teammates. He delayed, cut

inside, then adapted to a lane to connect cross-ice. He waited for his teammates to skate their lanes before advancing the puck. Looked inside and cross-ice for entry passes, starting give-and-gos when possible. Physical and consistent reads on the defensive end – although his motor came and went. Always battling around the net, and when not, he stays in space. Limitations are tools – skating and hands (pucks bounce off his stick and struggles to move and handle) – and reads. He doesn't adjust to lanes and takes too long to make decisions. Still, an interesting game. Pro potential.

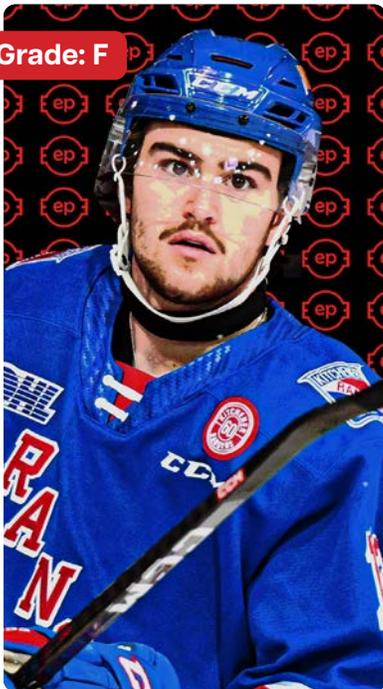
Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Hamilton Bulldogs vs. Kingston Frontenacs - OHL

Not any plays of note, other than the off-puck work. Xhekaj skates his routes and battles around the net. Works hard away from the puck. Wins body positioning and steps in opponents sometimes. Some defence, mostly through pressure, not reads. Not much of note in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2023 - Oshawa Generals vs. Hamilton Bulldogs - OHL

Nothing too interesting from Xhekaj in this game, other than the puck pursuit. He was everywhere, despite skating limitations. Applied pressure and created turnovers. Created a scoring chance with a quick, easy pass. Not really a standout performance, but he might be worth checking in on.

Grade: F



Adam Židlický

AGE 17.630 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW/RW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4

Passing

4

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kitchener Rangers	OHL	30	5	7	12	0.40
Mississauga Steelheads	OHL	32	4	8	12	0.38
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	8	3	2	5	0.63
Czechia U18	WJC-18	5	1	0	1	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

There was considerable intrigue around Adam Židlický coming into the season. The son of former NHLer Marek Židlický, Adam was a surprise standout as a rookie with the Kitchener Rangers.

But after failing to find his scoring touch, he received a fresh start with the Mississauga Steelheads, where his game picked up a bit.

Defence, physicality, and pace are constants in Židlický's game. He scans for threats, ties them up, locks onto his check, and switches coverage when necessary. Where most players reach, he takes the extra stride and skates through the opponent's hands to secure possession. Then, he's off to the races, barrelling straight to the net.

While Židlický moved away the single-speed, straight-line dashes down the boards throughout the season, he's still not a creative player. He can't create lanes and gets stuck to the perimeter as a result.

While skill development is necessary, his path to the professional level will be through developing his skating, defence, and physical skills. He'll have to take his checking game to new heights, in addition to finding the back of the net more often.

GAME REPORTS

Lauren Kelly: March 1st, 2023 - Guelph Storm vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

I don't know if I can put this into words properly, but Židlický just looks like a man playing against boys. Maybe that's not exactly the right comparison, but he kind of just looks like a pro player. His skating stance, his ability to attack, his positioning, it's all there. The thing that concerns me is that he's not really dominating this level of play at all. He struggles to gain the middle. He fell over trying to skate for a loose puck to start the odd man rush. He anticipates well, but the execution just really lags behind. He has a good understanding of how to create plays and where to go to generate offence or disrupt plays defensively, but he just can't execute the way it seems he wants to. The tools are the biggest limiter in that regard. And because of it, I don't know what that means for a long-term projection.

Lauren Kelly: February 11th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

If last night's game was proof that Židlický isn't a pick, well, he looked like an NHL player in this game, let alone a pick. Takeaways in the neutral zone, pressuring defenders shorthanded before picking pucks off them and creating scoring chances, beating defenders back on retrievals by recognizing they're slowing down and cutting inside, and was stopped on a clean shorthanded breakaway. He protects the puck well in spite of a smaller frame, supports defensively, is an excellent forechecker and his effort level in battles is unquestionable. On the other hand, he took an unnecessary slashing penalty and he still can't gain the middle while he has possession, and is often forced to the boards. His tools limit his upside, but he could be a late-rounder.

Lauren Kelly: February 10th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Owen Sound Attack - OHL

Skating is the biggest issue with Židlický. He has no separating speed, so he'll expose holes in defending coverage but can't pull away for odd-man rushes or breakaways. Stole the puck and tried to get in alone on the breakaway but couldn't shake his man - though he did end up drawing a penalty. His passing abilities are hindered by a lack of pre-scanning - he moves pucks to the slot, but there aren't any teammates there to receive his passes. Really struggled to clear the puck out of his own end, going for the air-mail pass to the NZ, but whiffs on those clearing attempts. Wasn't a pick based on this viewing.

Lauren Kelly: January 15th, 2023 - Mississauga Steelheads vs. Barrie Colts - OHL

I didn't have 'Adam Židlický Michigan attempt' on my 2023 scouting bingo card, but he pulled it out of his arsenal in the middle of the second period and almost scored with it, too. But his overall game isn't that highly skilled - he's a straight-line rusher, throws his body around, goes after puck carriers, supports defensively, protects the puck, cuts back, but he's limited as a playmaker - he can't thread the needle through tight seams, and relies on short passes to teammates up the ice and in the offensive zone. Drew a penalty, but also took one. This was an overall good game from him, but I question the upside a bit.

Lauren Kelly: December 18th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Mississauga Steelheads - OHL

This was an up-and-down game for Židlický. He struggled with his carries, losing pucks while under pressure and without. But he also slipped in alone on a breakaway by beating the defence to the inside and drew a penalty. He uses his frame very effectively, shielding players from pucks. Drew a second penalty using his speed coming down the wall and being knocked over. Doesn't back down from physical play. He's a straight-line rusher, and he demonstrated a couple of advanced offensive concepts, but struggled with execution. He's probably a pick, but likely a mid-to-late rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Guelph Storm - OHL

Židlický had one of the best plays in this game, completing a two-touch backhand pass while falling for an assist. However, this wasn't too different from his performances at the Hlinka. He's a straight-line sprinter who challenges defenders to a race to the net. He often loses, forcing him into low-percentage shots or turnovers. There's no subtlety to his game beyond the occasional flash of a crafty breakout pass or a play from the boards to the middle. He's a third-liner for his Kitchener team, and I have my doubts that he'll become a big scorer at this level. Relies on an advantage that he doesn't even have (speed). Appreciate the physical stuff, however.

Lauren Kelly: October 21st, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Sudbury Wolves - OHL

Židlický played barely ten minutes (9:59) in this game, and he just really wasn't that noticeable when he did take to the ice. He was kept to the outsides on OZ carries for the most part, but when he was able to break through and take the puck to the net, he picked up an assist. I didn't notice him in any negative way either, which was good. Filip Mesar's arrival has pushed him down the depth chart and is probably the reason his minutes tanked in this viewing. Hopefully he still gets decent playing opportunities as the season continues.

Lauren Kelly: October 16th, 2022 - Kitchener Rangers vs. Flint Firebirds - OHL

Zidlicky plays a style that NHL coaches are just going to love one day. Blends speed with physical play along the boards. Hard worker in battles and on the forecheck. Relatively mistake-free and doesn't overcomplicate his puck possession. He doesn't take too many risks offensively. He gets to his top speed quickly, but he's selective with when he uses it and isn't running all over the ice with no rhyme or reason. Threw a couple of open-ice hits to separate players from the puck. I'm not too sure he's going to be an offensive catalyst at future levels (he went pointless in this game and didn't get many scoring chances), but I'm fairly certain there's an NHL draft pick here.

Mitchell Brown: August 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Zidlicky played his role perfectly. He played a secondary role on the top line, showing pace, physical potential, and a bit of skill in the process. He defaults to sprinting, but had moments when he delayed, waited for the defender to react, then hit the gas. Physical and looks to establish body positioning. The overreliance on single-speed creation cost him a couple of opportunities. NHL ability seems to come through his motor and pace. Maybe a fourth-liner. Interested to see how he develops in Kitchener.

Grade: F



Alexis Beaulac

AGE 17.756 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'4"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Shawinigan Cataractes	QMJHL	56	2	8	10	0.18

SCOUTING REPORT

When we made our scouting list at the start of the season for the QMJHL and got to the Shawinigan Cataractes, we identified Jordan Tourigny as the prospect to watch in that team, but the more we watched them, the more our attention was drawn toward another player on their roster – Alexis Beaulac.

If an NHL team wants to draft a large, shutdown defenceman in the latter rounds of the draft, Beaulac represents an interesting option. While he didn't show as diverse of an offensive skill set as Matteo Mann, the other lengthy QMJHL defensive prospect of the 2023 draft class, in many games, Beaulac was the more effective stopper of the two.

An effective skater for his size, Beaulac can impact a large area of the defensive zone. With his reach and a couple of steps, he can neutralize passing lanes, pokecheck the puck away from unsuspecting attackers, and take away the stick of slot shooters. Becoming meaner would facilitate the defenceman's transition to higher-level hockey – coaches love this attribute in their shutdown defencemen – but at least, Beaulac already shows a penchant for physical play. He can clean the front of the net and immobilize attackers on the board.

Beaulac knows what he is and what his role should be. This is both a quality, as he rarely attempts plays outside of his lower skill level and offers more reliability to his coaching staff, but also a knock against his projection. If he continues to play more conservatively, it's doubtful that he will develop stronger puck-moving and offensive abilities.

So while Beaulac has the tools of the shutdown defenceman trade, an NHL development team would have to help him develop the puck skills and the anticipation needed to fill such a role in the top league. He remains a long-term project.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 7th, 2023 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies -QMJHL

Beaulac is interesting as a shutdown prospect. He plays with a mean streak, is physical on the boards and around the net, and he can defend odd-man rushes with his reach. He stays on his safe, adapts a safe, risk-mitigating gap, and defends middle attacks. I don't think he will make our board due to the lack of upside, but I could see him having a long professional career.

David St-Louis: March 24th, 2023 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Beaulac moves decently for his size, but like for other larger defencemen, his pivots can be a bit problematic. He lacks mechanical abilities overall and is prone to errors. He could get more power out of his shots. He's a long-term project. I could see a team drafting him based on his natural gifts, but he will require the help of a strong development team to help him read the ice better.

David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Beaulac's range and skating ability are an interesting combo. He's far behind other defencemen in this draft class in terms of reads and habits, but I could really see an NHL team drafting him in the late rounds -- as a project. He can carry pucks out, link passing plays, and kill plays with pokechecks from far away.

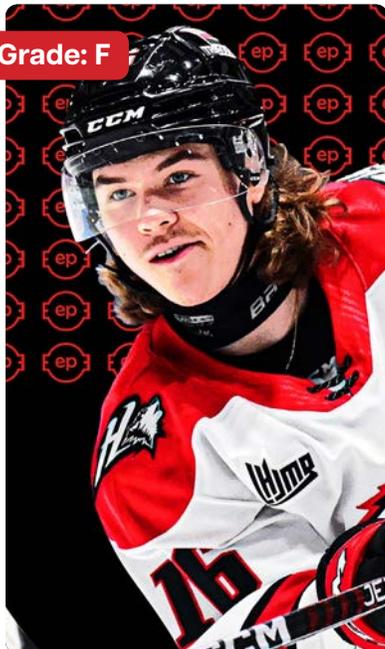
Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Beaulac was a non-factor in most of this game. Not really a rush defender or transition threat. He makes simple plays with the puck and backs off without. Much better inside defensive zone coverage, where he eliminates off-puck threats by guiding them away from the net. Didn't show any puck skills, save for one play along the boards. Didn't look like a prospect.

David St-Louis: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

This is Beaulac's first QMJHL season. It shows in certain parts of the game. He doesn't always manage the puck well, but he uses his stature better than most prospects his age to defend the rush and protect the puck from opponents in the defensive zone. He managed an excellent zone exit by shielding the puck with his body from the goal line to the corner and then one-handing it to a teammate up the wall. He might be a prospect, but he requires a closer look. His mobility is good for his size.

Grade: F



Daniil Bourosh

AGE 18.419 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 15, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	6	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rouyn-Noranda Huskies	QMJHL	66	41	29	70	1.06

SCOUTING REPORT

This is how we presented Rouyn-Noranda Huskies forward Daniil Bourosh in last year's draft guide:

"Bourosh built his game around his shot. Every play he makes, every pass, and every route he takes toward the offensive zone, they all serve one purpose – getting open to fire from the faceoff circle. When he does reach that spot, every puck that touches his stick is immediately fired on net."

After revisiting his game this season, Bourosh remains more or less the same player. His production shot up, going from 44 points in 67 games to 70 in 66, in large part because he became a better version of himself; an even better shooter and net-front scorer. He stickhandled through more defenders to get to the net, pulled off even more tap-in goals at the far post, and one-timed even more pucks from the faceoff circle.

We observed some improvements in his playmaking, specifically his awareness. He bounced pucks off teammates. These give-and-goes enabled him to increase his scoring chances and make up for his persistent skating issues.

His mobility is still the main obstacle standing between Bourosh and an NHL career. The forward continues to move in one block, with little upper and lower body separation. The lack of fluidity in his mechanics limits his overall agility, quickness out of turns, and crossover length and power generation. His lack of speed also makes it harder to project him to a secondary checking role, as he won't be able to catch up to professional defencemen as well as QMJHL ones.

Bourosh has some NHL projectable offensive skills, but to solidify his upside, he will at least have to improve his skating by a full grade.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

Bourosh scored at the end of the game by picking up a rebound. He goes to the net and he protects pucks along the walls. He has those harder skills, but the quickness is still missing. He can't really transition from one facet of the game to the next all that

quickly and can't really escape pressure on the walls unless he's given the necessary space and enters battles with momentum. Many of his plays are made in glides and at a standstill. I like his playmaking now. More slip passes under the stick and better awareness.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Daniil's skating hasn't really improved since last year. He's still moving in one block, hunched over, and with barely any ankle flexion. It's too limiting. I doubt he has an NHL future, but he could become a great EU scorer. He has the shot for it. And his playmaking seems to have improved. He dangles around sticks and reaches teammates with passes and he's strong along the boards.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

I see some real playmaking improvements in Bourosh's game, more give-and-goes and one-touch plays to teammates. He puts himself in even better positions to shoot now with his improved passing game. His skating hasn't really improved. It severely limits his agility and even his playmaking range (he has to contort himself to make some plays), but he's strong and is also becoming better at spinning off checks on the boards. He's an interesting prospect, but the skating remains a large flaw at this stage. I'm not sure how much defensive value he has, too.

David St-Louis: May 1st, 2022 - Victoriaville Tigers vs Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Bourosh is still hyper-focused on shooting. He's at his best on the powerplay, where he has the open ice to create passing plays and install himself at the faceoff circle, his favorite spot. There he can hit one-timers. The mechanics of his shot, especially his footwork, remove some precision from his shot. The agility is very limited. He turns in one-block, no lateral hip hinge and he constantly has to catch himself.

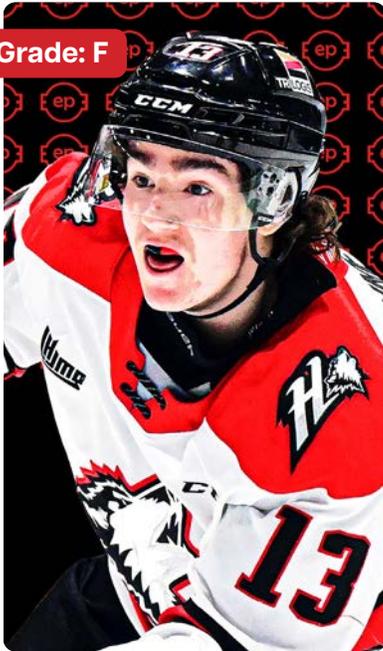
David St-Louis: February 27th, 2022 - Gatineau Olympiques vs Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Bourosh has some physical and shooting talents. He can bait pokechecks, drag the puck around it, and fire somewhat precisely on net. But he forces so many plays that I'm not sure he will become efficient enough to score highly even at this level. The skating is a giant limiter. He has no four-way mobility, can't fluidly pivot or crossover. He's a straight-liner.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2022 - Blainville Boisbriand vs Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Bourosh is purely a shooter. He's entirely focused on the net, sending every puck down the ice toward it. His game is all straight lines, probably due to a lack of agility and peripheral vision. He has some tricks in his bag, like toe drags, to beat defenders and he can hold his own on the boards and finish his check. The skating is a 4 grade for him and the hockey sense, too, probably.

Grade: F



Benjamin Brunelle

AGE 17.274 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rouyn-Noranda Huskies	QMJHL	67	8	15	23	0.34

SCOUTING REPORT

This season was Benjamin Brunelle's first in the QMJHL. We have to keep that in mind when evaluating him, as it usually takes at least a year for most prospects to get acclimated to the higher pace of play of the league, especially younger ones, like him. Brunelle played this first season through and through as a 17-year-old.

Considering the circumstances, he fared well overall with the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies. He contributed offensively in a bottom-line role and added a physical touch to the lineup.

Brunelle is at his best on the back wall of the offensive zone and near the net. He can take pucks from the first area to the other, by leveraging his imposing 6-foot-3 stature and his physical skills.

The forward's role and lack of ice time in certain games hid some of his softer skills, like his stickhandling. Brunelle can make plays in stride and distribute the puck well in the offensive zone.

As he matures, gains experience, and earns higher roles in the lineup, his numbers should jump up.

Right now, however, it's a little premature to call him an NHL prospect. His high stance in his forward strides and the lack of diversity and anticipation in his offensive play limit his projection to higher-level hockey.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 18th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

I like Brunelle's frame and harder skills. He forechecks well and with intensity. He protects pucks. He lacks the speed and the mechanical refinement to make better plays. His skating stance is high and wide.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

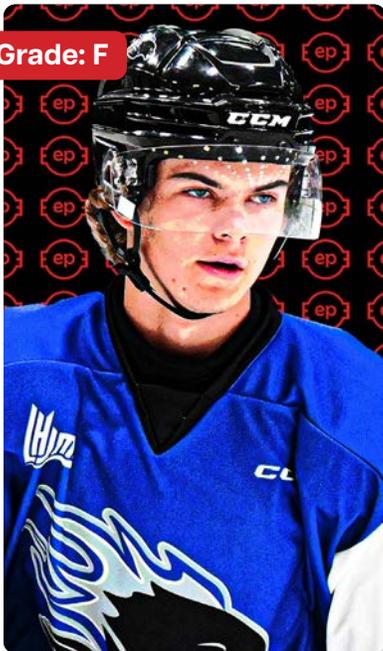
Brunelle pretty much only made cycle plays in this game. He was strong along the boards and managed a couple of more

skilled plays, like an in-stride release, but I don't see NHL abilities really in his game. His skating seems a bit limiting, a bit like Burosh. It's high, wide, and hunched over. He was positioned well defensively for the most part and applied pressure on the forecheck.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

Brunelle had a nice sequence where he dangled around a couple of sticks in the slot and fired on net. He brought the puck from the wall to the middle of the ice. His stride is high and lacks ankle flexion, just like his line-mate Verdon. I don't see a lot of NHL qualities in his game, besides the wall and pressure game.

Grade: F



Cole Burbidge

AGE 17.055 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	161 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Saint John Sea Dogs	QMJHL	68	19	31	50	0.74

SCOUTING REPORT

Cole Burbidge has his fans in the scouting community. A few evaluators see him as a potential late-round steal who could bloom over the next few years in the QMJHL and become one of the league's better scorers. Some aspects of the forward's profile certainly suggest as much.

In his first year in the QMJHL, Burbidge finished as the second leading scorer in the Saint John Sea Dogs with 50 points in 68 games, a respectable production inside a rebuilding team. Only Brady Burns, an overager, managed to score more. Burbidge's August Birthday also makes him one of the youngest players in the draft and as he has a light 6-foot-1 frame, he probably has more room to grow than most players in the draft.

All these factors make him look like a potential late-bloomer. We did take that into consideration when evaluating him.

At this juncture, his skating form lacks refinement. His strides lack depth and consistency. This facet of his game projects as significantly below average in the NHL, but despite its many inefficiencies, the forward can still traverse a neutral zone quickly, at times, with a combination of crossovers and forward strides. And while the puck sometimes gets away from him in more complex moves – partly because of his unstable skating posture – Burbidge can complete more advanced passing plays. He can use deception to thread pucks through the defensive box.

"He attacks the net and makes some nice plays at the half-wall on the powerplay, but his technical ability looks a bit limited at the moment," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a December report.

At this point, the forward is a little too raw to be considered an NHL prospect, but his status may change over the next couple of years, if he manages to refine his mechanics, add strength, and develop his playmaking even more.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 19th, 2023 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

I see flashes of playmaking in his game, but they are only that, flashes. He might pop over the next years, as he develops

physically because he seems to not have grown into his frame yet. I like his inside-driven playstyle, otherwise. The skating remains quite limiting.

David St-Louis: March 2nd, 2023 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

His skating looked better in this game. He seems naturally explosive despite a form that is far from efficient. He drove the net and showed poise with the puck. Burbridge is scoring decently this season inside a weak team, but I'm not sure he's an NHL prospect. He lacks overall skill.

David St-Louis: December 28th, 2022 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

Burbridge tries to play a physical game, but despite his above-average height for the league, he lacks the necessary strength at the moment. He attacks the net and makes some nice plays at the half-wall on the powerplay, but his technical ability looks a bit limited at the moment.

Grade: F



Charles Côté

AGE 18.205 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 02, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'6"	192 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	62	4	17	21	0.34

SCOUTING REPORT

Charles Côté is a late-blooming talent in the QMJHL. This season was only his second one in the league and only the first in which he played more than 60 games. So while he's a re-entry at the NHL draft – he was passed over last year – he's not a typical one.

It's not unusual for 6-foot-6 defencemen like him to require more development time. His July birthday also makes him one of the youngest draft-plus-one players available in the class. In other words, his game still contains untapped potential.

Côté completes his strides and moves with more fluidity than most players his size. His skating still projects as below NHL average, but he can win many of his races to the back wall to retrieve pucks, after using his long stick to force attackers to dump them past him off the rush. His imposing stature tends to make attackers choose those chip plays against him, instead of attempting a difficult dangle through him.

The defenceman's shutdown game is far more developed than his offensive one at this stage. He's at his best on the penalty kill, defending the front of the net, and on the walls of the defensive zone, where he can stop and contain the opposition's attack. But if the puck gets to him at the offensive blue line, Côté can sling-shot it back down. He seems better able to use his weight to add power to his shot than most players of his size. And he can also find open teammates around the slot.

The development goals of Côté are the same as many of the other larger, shutdown defensive prospects. He needs to continue to work on his mobility and develop his pucks skills. Improving his defensive rotations would make him an even bigger asset in the defensive zone. At this stage, he remains a long-shot NHLer, but his physical gifts will always give him a leg up on some of his competition.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 19th, 2023 - Rimouski Oceanic vs. Victoriaville Tigres - QMJHL

Côté is more fluid than I remember. He still pivots with short crossovers and I don't think he will ever become this agile shutdown force, but he is figuring out the defensive game at this level. He positions well, denies space with the stick, and he pressures

opponents on the boards. Just these three things, at his size, make him effective. The issue is that his lack of skating ability forces him to give a lot of space to attackers through the neutral-zone, space that they then use to fake him upon entering the defensive zone. A feint one way and an explosion the other way and he's beat.

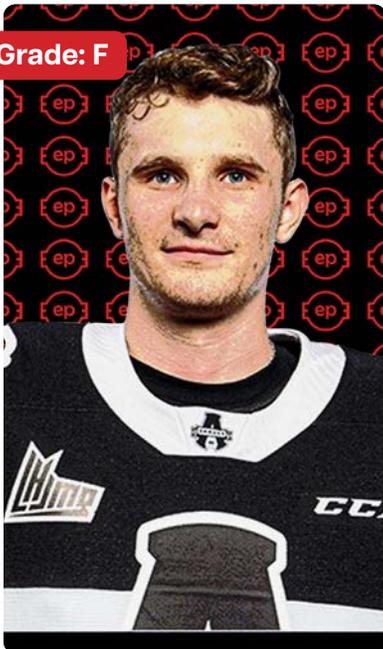
David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Charles Côté improved in a few key areas since last year. His puck plays are a bit better, backed by more awareness and slightly better coordination. And his skating seems to have improved, too, slightly. He's still mostly a player who takes up space, a defensive defenceman whose best attribute remains his height and length and stick work.

David St-Louis: February 16th, 2023 - Québec Remparts vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

Côté had some nice puck-moving moments in this one. His abilities with the puck, overall, are pretty limited, but if you give him a bit more space, he can connect passes and even toe-drag around forecheckers. There is potential there. And he's an effective skater for his stride. His long pushes carry him up and down the ice and there isn't any big mechanical flaw there. Both the handling and the skating are getting below-average grades for sure, but for a 6-foot-6 defenceman, these abilities still stand out.

Grade: F



Jonathan Fauchon

AGE 18.674 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

165 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

5

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

4

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Blainville-Boisbriand Armada	QMJHL	53	25	40	65	1.23

SCOUTING REPORT

After the departure of Philadelphia Flyers prospect Alexis Gendron, the Blainville Boisbriand Armada lacked a clear offensive driver. Thankfully, Jonathan Fauchon, a third-year QMJHL player, stepped up.

After only scoring 31 points in 64 games last season in his first year of draft-eligibility, Fauchon more than doubled his production this season as a re-entry. He led the team with 65 points in 53 games. That's 13 more than his next closest teammate.

Fauchon possesses all the elements necessary to continue scoring at a high clip in the QMJHL. He can dangle around defenders and deceive them. His vision stands out on the power play; he seems to always know where his outlets are. If he continues his rapid offensive development, his stickhandling, passing, and shooting skills should all become NHL-calibre in a few years.

We do have some doubts about his capacity to handle the physical side of professional hockey, though. At this stage, Fauchon's skills mainly shine in open ice, not along the periphery of the ice where most NHL plays occur. His abilities to resist contact, hold on to the puck against defensive pressure, and escape that pressure will have to improve before we can project him to the top league.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 4th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Acadie Bathurst Titan - QMJHL

I don't think I'm looking at an NHLer. Again, it's mostly because of the lack of mechanical refinement and also because while the playmaking is effective at this level, it lacks the special elements (manipulation, deception...) that would make it work at higher levels. He's aware, but his play under pressure needs to improve -- more escapability, more abilities to handle contact, and more holding the puck. The skating and stickhandling have the same rhythm off the rush, which limits his agility and deceptiveness there.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

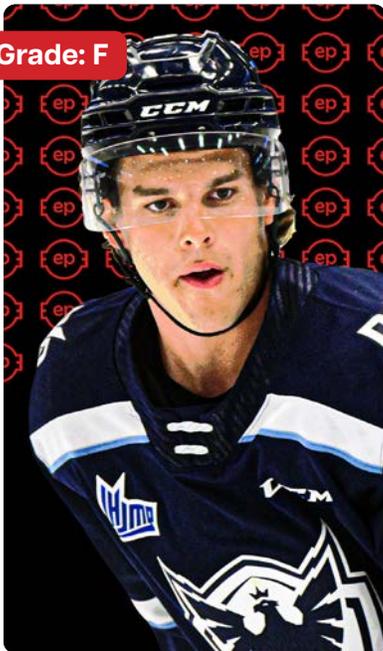
Some nice playmaking sequences from Fauchon in this one. He constantly uses teammates, shows himself aware, tries give-and-

goes, and seems to see through defensive layers. I'm not sure he's skilled enough to fill such a playmaking/quarterback/half-wall powerplay role at higher levels due to his skating stride (a below-average projection), but he has the processing to play it at this level. He played the penalty kill, too.

David St-Louis: November 16th, 2022 - Blainville Boisdubriand Armada vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Fauchon is an interesting Junior player, but I don't see the NHL potential there despite the scoring. It comes down to a lack of high-end technical ability. He can manipulate defenders, sneak around them and steal the puck, play with pace, and rush the puck, but he lacks strength, and physical skills, and while his handling skills are good at this level, he controls with a very high grip that could limit his execution at higher ones. I need a bit more to be convinced of the potential of a smaller draft overager. We'll see if he keeps scoring. The playmaking ability is interesting.

Grade: F



Justin Gill

AGE 19.636 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 27, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sherbrooke Phoenix	QMJHL	68	44	49	93	1.37

SCOUTING REPORT

When evaluating Justin Gill, it's impossible to ignore his environment. Before the 2022-23 season, he didn't break the point-per-game mark in the QMJHL, but suddenly, in a top-end offensive team this season, his numbers shot up to 93 points in 68 games. Playing with Ethan Gauthier, one of the best facilitators in the league, and Joshua Roy, a top scorer, for stretches did help his scoring.

But, in many ways, Gill also looks like a late-bloomer. It took him a little longer than most to reach major junior. It's only last year, in his second season of eligibility, that he started becoming an offensive threat.

His puckhandling and playmaking skills improved again this season. In some games, he even looked like the top offensive driver on the team.

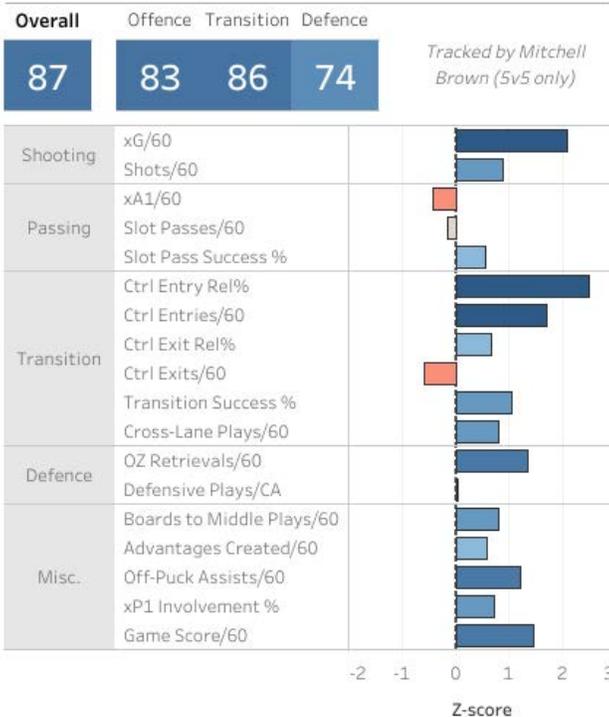
He developed a talent for getting the puck out of defensive pressure with quick passes and for orchestrating rush chances by making scissor plays with his creative teammates.

"He links many plays on the first line of the Sherbrooke Phoenix, by passing under and around sticks, with hooks and slips," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in an October report. "He uses his teammates constantly and could become even better at it with a little more scanning."

So while Gill's environment did influence his scoring, it also helped him develop his offensive creativity and skills, to the point where he now deserves consideration at the NHL Draft in the later rounds. If a team can help him add even more speed and agility and solidify his off-puck play, he could turn into a useful depth scorer.

Justin Gill

F | Sherbrooke Phoenix | QMJHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 99.0



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 29th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Gill wasn't effective in this game. He's inaccurate and late to lanes at times. He plays the structure, chipping in pucks, winning races, and getting open behind the defence, but there's nothing that suggests an NHL prospect, at least not in this game. More variety to his game off the rush would help, although I've seen better rush patterns from him before.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

A solid transition game from Gill. He cuts back to hit the trailer, advances the puck if there's space, and anticipates teammates rushing the net. Weaving rush patterns and easy-west passing help him to overcome skating limitations. He anticipates plays off-puck, getting open at the right moments and intercepting plays. But I don't see much creation ability. He makes the clear reads, plays fast, understands the off-puck game. Without better tools, that's probably not enough to make the NHL.

David St-Louis: February 5th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Rouyn-Noranda Huskies - QMJHL

Gill has a lot of good offensive instincts, like rush patterns and off-puck movements in the offensive zone, but maybe not the NHL projectable technical ability to capitalize on them. He skates in one block with a bit of a lack of agility and while he can settle hard passes and make plays through opponents, he's not a soft handler. From an older player like him, I also want to see a bit more physical engagement. He's a player a team could draft and develop because the foundation is relatively strong, but I would select other players in the QMJHL before him. Maybe a late-round flyer at the draft.

Mitchell Brown: January 8th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Gill didn't achieve much in this game, save for his work on the powerplay. He plays fast, but he's the classic speedy junior scorer. A waterbug, zipping across the ice, but lacks dynamic skills. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

David St-Louis: November 25th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Gill prepares plays well. He has some skill; he can make plays through defenders, slide the puck between their stick and skates, and reach teammates even from difficult spots. I'm not sure if he's talented enough to play a playmaking role in the NHL, but some of the flashes are impressive. I like how he passes to space, in front of teammates to allow them to skate into it and to lead them to the right spots.

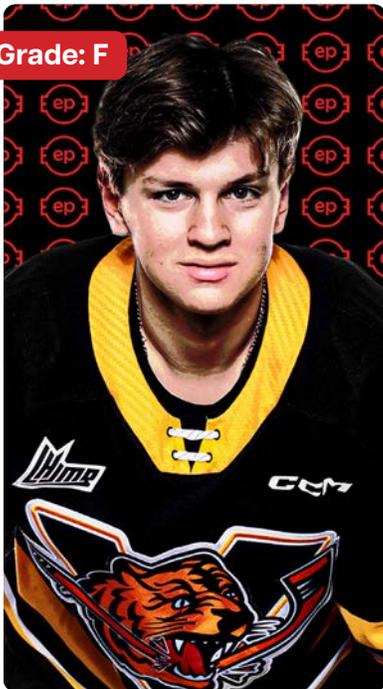
David St-Louis: November 8th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Gill looks like the driver on Sherbrooke's top line in many of his shifts. His awareness of play around him is impressive. He knows the tendencies of his line-mates and where to find them with the puck. His mechanics looked smooth enough in this game. He seems to have projectable skating and handling. I probably didn't see him at his best and still felt like something was there.

David St-Louis: October 10th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

Gill's playmaking is the best part of his game. He links many plays on the first line of the Sherbrooke Phoenix, by passing under and around sticks, with hooks and slips. He uses his teammates constantly and could become even better at it with a little more scanning. He also has the speed to create turnovers. He's an older player in a very favourable situation, playing next to two of the top QMJHL players, but he remains an interesting prospect.

Grade: F



Maël Lavigne

AGE 17.592 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Baie-Comeau Drakkar	QMJHL	38	4	11	15	0.39
Victoriaville Tigres	QMJHL	31	7	11	18	0.58

SCOUTING REPORT

Drafting Maël Lavigne is a gamble on physical development. At 6-foot-3, the Victoriaville Tigres forward has the frame to play a power role in a professional league, but right now, he lacks the strength and the weight to make use of his physical gifts.

This season, he scored some of his goals around the net, but mostly by positioning himself inside space and one-timing pucks in.

He picked up the rest of his points with his passing ability. Lavigne is aware. He maps out the ice well. He knows where his outlets are and uses them instantly when under pressure. At this stage of his career, he acts as a facilitator on his line. He's naturally explosive, but he lacks the advanced rush patterns and deception that characterizes high-end play-drivers.

There are also some defensive abilities in his game.

"He positioned well, cut lanes with his stick, communicated with teammates, reloaded, and switched at the right times," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a February report.

His ability to follow a system, his projectable skating stride, and passing skills could interest some NHL teams, but for us, Lavigne is the type of prospect you watch develop and fill out before using a draft pick on them. He still has to earn more minutes and show that he can produce at a higher level in the league before he can earn the status of a legitimate NHL prospect.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 4th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs Drummondville Voltigeurs - QMJHL

A good game from Lavigne. He made a few nice passes. It's clear that he's aware, but mechanically limited. He can't really shift his weight all that freely. He needs to work on that to develop more quickness out of turns and agility. He has some handling skills. And he manages the puck well.

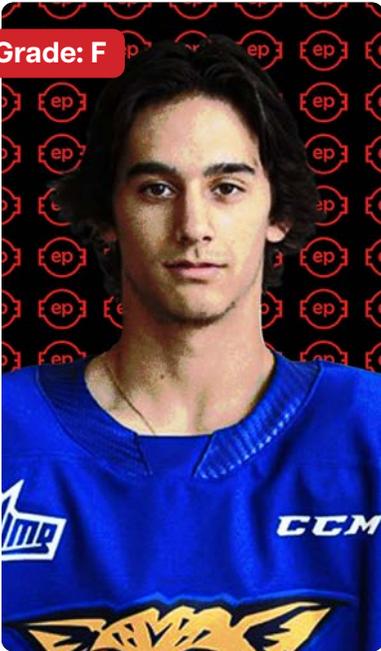
David St-Louis: March 10th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Not a very eventful game for Lavigne. He positions well defensively, but his skating remains an issue at this level. It projects as below NHL average. He battles for pucks and skates to the net. He could become a good Junior player, but I don't think there is NHL potential there.

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

A good performance from Lavigne. He clearly cares about the defensive side of the game. He positioned well, cut lanes with his stick, communicated with teammates, reloaded, and switched at the right times. His skating stride is more functional than most players his stride. He threw away some pucks, but also showed an instinct for offensive zone movements. He scored twice, once near the net, and another time in a 2-on-1.

Grade: F



Yoan Loshing

AGE 18.545 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 29, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C Position	Left Shoots
5'9" Height	154 lbs Weight

Player Grades

6.5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	5.5 Passing
6 Puckhandling	5.5 Hockey Sense	2.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	57	33	30	63	1.11

SCOUTING REPORT

We try not to have favorites, but it's hard not to root for some prospects. Yoan Loshing is one of those exceptional junior talents that we're really pulling for to make it at the next level.

The 5-foot-9, 154-pound winger is one of the fastest prospects in this draft class and also one of its most elusive threats. He can shift around defenders in the neutral zone, shake them off with a hard cutback upon entry, and then cut alongside the offensive blue line. And he also developed manipulation skills to go along with his skating tools. His fakes keep defenders at a distance from him and Yoshing easily exploits the extra space with his manoeuvrability.

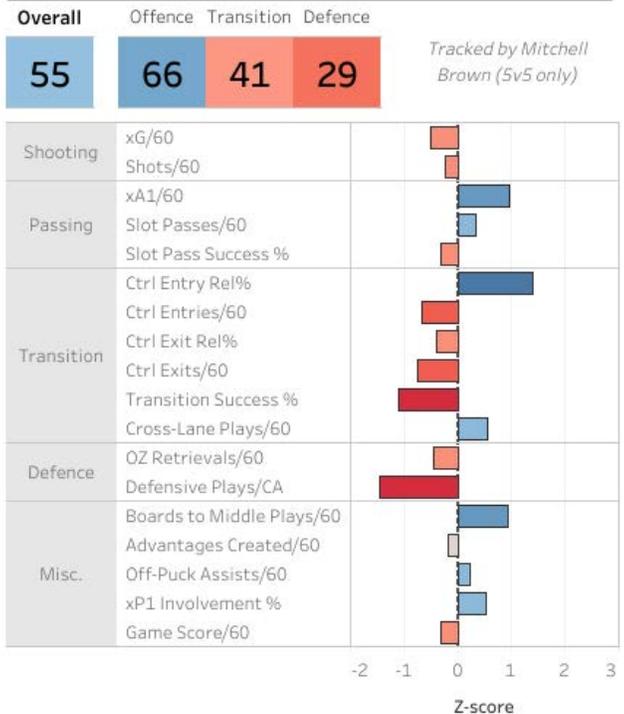
The winger's playmaking improved significantly since last year, too. His passes became more precise and deceptive and he broke the 30-goal mark, too.

Unfortunately, while Loshing can somewhat resist and evade contact at this level, larger defenders can easily bring him to a stop and shove him away from the puck. Wall battles are an automatic loss for him against many opponents. And they will only become more difficult at higher levels.

Loshing is very skilled, but his open-ice skills and sense don't fully make up for his lack of board skills – yet. If he isn't drafted by an optimistic NHL team, the winger will remain high on our scouting list next season.

Yoan Loshing

F | Moncton Wildcats | QMJHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 63.1



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 19th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Loshing sniped one off the rush then disappeared the rest of the game. He tried plays, but nothing connected. Lots of passes and carries into opponents, failing to use space. Doesn't manipulate opponents or create opportunities. Didn't look like a prospect in this game, but it was a tough one for Moncton.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Loshing continues to be interesting. Again, not sure necessarily from an NHL perspective, but mostly as a dominant Junior player. He has pretty much every play you would want out of a speedster: outskating defenders, cutting back against them, eluding them in tight spaces, using give-and-goes, and even downshifting and controlling his speed to become an off-puck option. He's in a low scoring team, but if he could put up more production as a D+1 and if his 5'9" size could be confirmed (he looks a bit smaller than that), it would help me consider him as an NHL candidate.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Acadie-Bathurst Titans vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Loshing is one of the most dynamic attackers in the QMJHL. His speed creates turnovers on the forecheck, breakaways, odd-man rushes, it helps him pop open for teammates, and create passing lanes on the powerplay. His skating is a clear above-NHL average projection. And he also has the technical ability to handle and make plays at high speed. He's engaged and aware, constantly finding teammates on first or second touch of the puck. I really like him as a Junior player, but I'm not sure if he's a candidate for an NHL career. Maybe. He's a bouncy ball, in the sense that he recovers from contact well due to the maneuverability of his skating, but he can't engage on anyone defensively or hold off contact to create. He's a pure open ice player. We'll see.

David St-Louis: April 26th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Loshing is showing he can protect pucks. His skating is a weapon to separate from opponents, but also to resist contact, to slip in front of them, steal the puck, and bounce away. Loshing's puck protection mechanics are refined: outside edge use, counter-lean on the opponents, keeps feet moving, attacks inside after bouncing away from opponents. This gives me hope that he's going to figure out the NHL game -- to an extent. He's not an efficient player. He throws too many pucks at the net, hoping one of his shot gets in, and he's not a creator, although he can show some deception.

David St-Louis: April 24th, 2022 - Acadie Bathurst vs Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

There aren't many players who look like Loshing in the NHL. He's fast, elusive, and pacey, a fervent user of crossovers off the rush. Everything he does, is at way too much speed. It's his competitive advantage and I wonder what will happen to his game in the pros, where he won't have the same massive speed difference. I don't like his choices of play most of the time, but he also flashes a processing speed and a speed of decision in difficult situations that matches the rate of his feet at times, too. He's probably a pick, due to the significantly above-average skating and the ability to make plays at that speed, but the uncertainty associated with his game -- the size and the overreliance on open ice speed differential -- might keep him lower on our board.

David St-Louis: April 16th, 2022 - Rimouski Oceanic vs Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Rough game from Loshing. His decisions with the puck weren't great, lots of missed opportunities. He doesn't have a clear plan in mind...and forces a lot of suboptimal ones. He's all speed and not much else at this point and I don't have a lot of confidence in his NHL future, especially because he's so far behind the curve defensively, too.

David St-Louis: April 15th, 2022 - Québec Remparts vs Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Loshing still plays with a lot of pace. He strides into and out of passes. He's dynamic, trying to make every play at high speed.

His passes are deceptive, too, and he uses teammates to create space for himself. I didn't like his powerplay patterns, however, as he tried the same drag shot over and over again during the game.

David St-Louis: February 15th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Loshing plays with a ton of pace and speed. His short stick allows him to keep a tight control over the puck even under pressure and his processing and handling skills to hit tiny seams through defenders. He stripped a lot of pucks from opponents in this game, but I wouldn't call him a committed defender, as he's mostly ahead of the game. I like the second efforts to get the puck back after his team loses it, however. He's poisy, confident, skilled (maybe above-average even), and he uses teammates. He also has an understanding of rush mechanics, of false gaps....A lot of interesting elements.

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2022 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Loshing is a pretty light forward. He loses most shoulder to shoulder engages, but his passing game makes up for it (underhandling, fast ID of targets, anticipation); he uses teammates well to create scoring chances and his speed and elusiveness allows him to avoid close quarter battles as much as possible. I'm not sure if his game is that projectable to the NHL, but the skating, the handling, the passing, and even his sniping ability on the powerplay definitely makes him a pick. He also has decent defensive positioning and just needs the awareness to go along with it.

David St-Louis: December 18th, 2021 - Moncton Wildcats vs Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Loshing is all about speed and executing fast. Some of his skills project well to the NHL (skating and handling) and I like his ability to steal pucks and support plays in all three zones. He understands rush mechanics (how to enlarge gaps) and can make plays through defenders. All of this is probably enough for him to become a draft pick, but he lacks finishing ability. He has no ability to adapt to pass or fire off of them because he doesn't scan for the goalie's position and aims too high. He has some deception.

Grade: F



Preston Lounsbury

AGE 17.427 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 12, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	163 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Moncton Wildcats	QMJHL	58	11	17	28	0.48

SCOUTING REPORT

Generally, a prospect's production is a good indication of their value to a team. That's not always the case, though. Especially on some of the weaker teams in the CHL. Because despite not lighting up the scoresheet, Preston Lounsbury deserves some praise for his work this season.

His hockey sense is undeniable. He understands many of the inner workings of the game: how to break defences and manipulate gaps off the rush by moving ahead or behind teammates, how to manage the puck well, and when to reload back defensively.

He also understands that he has to attack high-danger areas to earn goals and that a good forecheck often leads to those high-danger chances.

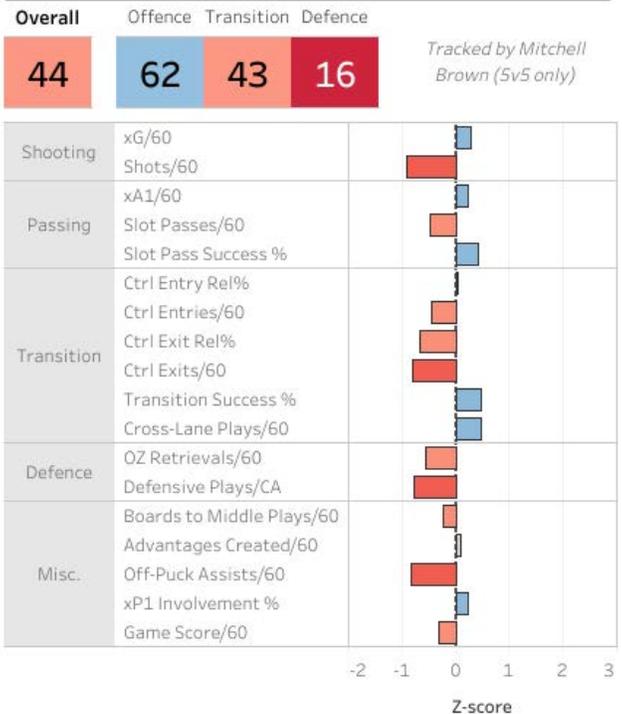
He's really engaged defensively, actively trying and getting out of his way to break plays and helping teammates.

Unfortunately, his skill level seems too low to project him as an NHL prospect at this stage. His stickhandling skills and the abilities that are derived from that skill, like his passing and shooting, all received below-average grades from our staff.

Lounsbury's strong, collective, and detailed game remain interesting, though. And he's definitely a prospect who we will keep an eye on as he develops over the next few years.

Preston Lounsbury

F | Moncton Wildcats | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 55.8



≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** March 19th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Lounsbury is really interesting. I'm not sure about the skill level, but he makes such good plays on the ice that I keep watching. He's really engaged defensively, like actively trying and getting out of his way to break plays and helps teammates. He pushes back defenders off the rush to create space for them, understands rush patterns, where to pick the puck when he has speed, he rushes the net, establishes body positioning, fights for pucks...And there's a general feel for positioning in his game. I like him. Not sure if he's a pick, but he's doing a great job.

Mitchell Brown: March 19th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Lounsbury wasn't a factor, save for his intelligent off-puck skating and defence. He skated into a defender, creating space behind him, leading to a goal. Intelligent positioning, but doesn't show any notable ability to get to the inside, create off the rush, or set up his teammates. More of a hard-working, off-puck player that play creator at this stage. Doesn't seem like a pick.

David St-Louis: February 20th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Lounsbury just lacks a bit of skill and scoring. If he was a 0.8 ppg forward with an extra layer of technical ability, he would definitely feature on our board. I like his decisions, his usage of space and teammates, and his defensive game. He's always at the net, always trying hard in every facet of the play. He will become a valuable Junior player.

David St-Louis: February 18th, 2023 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Lounsbury is an interesting prospect. He doesn't look highly skilled, but he has the right ideas on the ice: He moves the puck into space, uses teammates, controls his skating to stay inside space, shows a bit of technical ability, attacks the net...He even helps defensively. Is he an NHL prospect? Not sure, but he could become a great Junior player, a much more productive scorer.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Sherbrooke Phoenix vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

A pair of goals from Lounsbury and a relatively solid game. The energy's consistent. He sprints on the backcheck, supports down low, and closes lanes. He makes simple, but effective puck plays. Passes through opponents, tracks plays and gets open around the slot, and crashes the net. Stays in space off-puck. He doesn't open lanes or try more advanced plays, at least not in this game. Didn't look like a pick, but a solid pro scorer, for sure.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

A solid offensive game from Lounsbury, even if the transition game wasn't working. Grabbed an assist off a rebound and consistently found ways to get open. Beat defenders to the net for a scoring chance, winning body positioning along the way, and nearly won the game with an in-stride wrister in overtime. I still don't see NHL upside, but he's solid. Lots of runway because of his intelligent game.

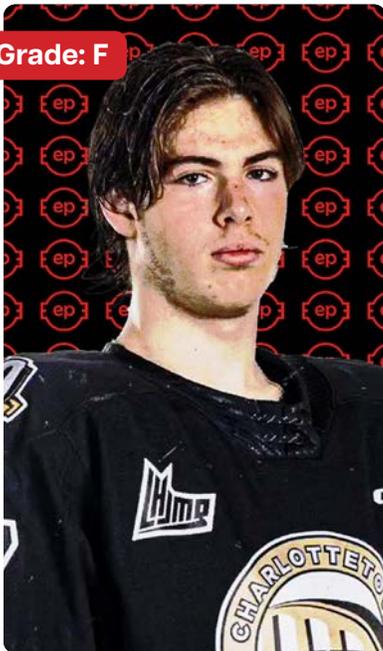
Mitchell Brown: October 16th, 2022 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

More pace and off-puck effectiveness from Lounsbury, alongside a pair of assists. Basic plays, freeing pucks and getting to the net, but solid. Nearly scored by batting a puck out of mid-air after reloading into the slot. In general, his off-puck game is the driving factor here. He gets open and works the give-and-go. Some flashes with the puck – stepping off the boards and passing after drawing pressure. Not an NHL prospect at this stage, but a solid player.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Moncton Wildcats vs. Sherbrooke Phoenix - QMJHL

Moncton was just awful team-wide, but Lounsbury made a couple of plays. The highlight was a one-touch backhand cross-slot pass for an assist, showing awareness of options. Motor was a plus. Takes the extra stride on the backcheck, supports plays down low, and gets open inside space. Not really much for evaluative purposes in this game, but a solid start.

Grade: F



Lucas Romeo

AGE 17.479 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 24, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	198 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Charlottetown Islanders	QMJHL	64	15	15	30	0.47

SCOUTING REPORT

If an NHL team drafts Lucas Romeo, it will be because of a few specific flashes this season: The give-and-goes he pulled off to get to the front of the net, his slip passes in transition, and his occasional dangles in the slot.

Because, otherwise, Romeo looked behind the development curve of most QMJHL top prospects.

Inexperience likely slowed him down this season. This was only his first season in the QMJHL. Before that, he played in the GOJHL with the Welland Jr. Canadians. The transition to major junior can prove difficult for many players, even older ones, but the forward handled it well overall. He put up 30 points in 64 games playing for a relatively weak Charlottetown Islanders team, whose main scorer only managed 51 points in 68 games.

Romeo may never become a high-end tactician or playmaker, but at 6-foot-3, he has a natural size advantage over his peers. And on top of having a long reach, he also moves and handles relatively well.

If he can develop the strength and flexibility necessary to get even lower in his skating stance and if he can learn to leverage his physical skills more often, he could become a top-scorer for this Islanders team next year and put himself on a path to a professional role.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 25th, 2023 - Halifax Mooseheads vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

Romeo flashes some interesting ideas, like give-and-goes, but he mostly distinguishes himself with his pressure game, at least in this one. He stole pucks on the forecheck and made plays out of it. His passing game is mostly based on sending pucks into space for teammates. He's not creative, but decently effective. I like the size and skating combination. I don't see an NHL prospect, however.

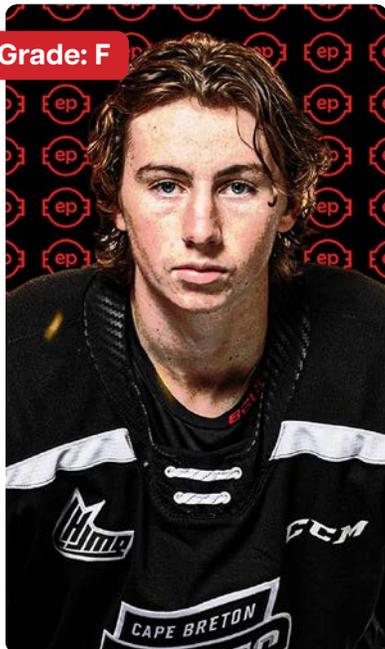
David St-Louis: March 19th, 2023 - Saint John Sea Dogs vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

Romeo is not scoring enough to be a real candidate on our board especially because he doesn't display evident skill. His size and sound overall skating form for someone with his stride makes him somewhat interesting, still, but he's a long-term project. He wasn't a scorer at other levels before the QMJHL. He didn't make many plays in this game, but did score from a loose puck that came to him in the slot.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

Romeo's frame is a useful tool sometimes. He can protect the puck with it and engage opponents physically. He plays with a bit of a mean streak sometimes. His game is based mostly on simple plays, however. I didn't see a lot of flashes of NHL translatable skills. He drove the net and fought through checks.

Grade: F



Cam Squires

AGE 17.430 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	161 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cape Breton Eagles	QMJHL	67	30	34	64	0.96

SCOUTING REPORT

Cam Squires's statistical profile is enticing. He has NHL size, but also a lighter build, suggesting that he might have room for growth than other draft-eligible forwards. And he showed year-to-year scoring development; his production with the Cape Breton Eagles almost doubled this season.

The Eagles forward understands the playmaking game – that deception works best against defencemen, that the players who have the most space are the ones behind him on the attack, and that he can hit these rush trailers with abrupt changes of speed and turns.

"He's an intelligent player, one who can intercept opposing plays and transform them into offence, make imaginative passing plays, fakes, and who can find openings in goalie's coverage," Elite Prospects lead scout David St-Louis wrote in a report in January.

With his passing skills and offensive sense, Squires should help the Eagles continue their ascent up the standings, but these qualities, on their own, won't be enough to carry him to an NHL role. To become a better NHL prospect, the forward will need to add more ancillary skills, like a better puck protection game and more agility moves.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 1st, 2023 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Squires is a passer first and foremost. He picked up three assists in this one and they were nice. Some fakes followed by behind-the-back passes and precise feeds, ahead of teammates, inside space. His awareness is mostly a positive, but he also misses better plays he could make. I still see him more as a Junior scorer than an NHL prospect, however. I like his hockey sense, but don't think it's high-end. His skating will really have to improve for him to translate his playmaking to higher levels. Adding some physical skills would help, too.

David St-Louis: February 10th, 2023 - Shawinigan Cataractes vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

Squires lacks the technical ability necessary to project to the NHL. He can't chain plays in movement due to a very wide stride that

lacks depth. He's a passer who links plays and positions well overall. He could become a good Junior player, a productive one, but I doubt he ever moves well enough to reach the highest level. Learning to shoot in stride more fluidly would open up his scoring.

David St-Louis: January 21st, 2023 - Cape Breton Eagles vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

We have to look past Cam Squires's skating. Right now, his hunched-over form and wide stride limit how much we can project him to an NHL role. But he's an intelligent player, one who can intercept opposing plays and transform them into offence, make imaginative passing plays, fakes, and who can find openings in goalie's coverage. He has the offence and adding just a bit more speed and agility would certainly unlock it even more.

David St-Louis: October 13th, 2022 - Charlottetown Islanders vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

Squires has some really great ideas. He makes more complex plays than many of his teammates, especially off the rush. He cuts laterally and uses the back layers of the attack. He tries to veil his plays. His connection rate isn't all that high, or at least it wasn't in this game -- he made a few blind passes -- but the hockey sense seems to be a positive.

Grade: F



Maël St-Denis

AGE 17.337 DATE OF BIRTH May 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

183 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rimouski Océanic	QMJHL	46	9	15	24	0.52

SCOUTING REPORT

Maël St-Denis manages the puck well and that allowed him to act as the facilitator on his line for most of the season. His short-passing game in transition and his drives inside the dots in the offensive zone helped his team maintain possession of the puck and create scoring chances.

Despite his strong play for the Rimouski Océanic this season, it may be too early to call him an NHL prospect. We came to admire his work rate and positional play, but didn't see enough skill in his game to project him to the league. That said, his progress over the past seasons still is worth noting.

Like many, St-Denis missed a year of hockey in 2020-21 and had to make an immediate jump from Bantam AAA to the QMJHL because of it. He performed well in a depth role for the Océanic in his first major junior season, and this year he became one of the drivers in their lineup, taking on big minutes and playing on both special teams units.

Over the next two seasons, St-Denis should become one of the better two-way forwards in the league. He could draw the attention of NHL teams over the next few years by adding a layer of his skill and developing his checking game even more.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - Victoriaville Tigres vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

I only see a hard-worker with occasional playmaking flashes. He could really become a strong QMJHL forward and score as an overager by driving inside and linking passing plays off the rush, but nothing about his game, except his positional play, really stands out to me at this moment. He makes the easy plays, forechecks, pressures, and gets some offence out of that formula.

David St-Louis: February 17th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand vs Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

St-Denis checks well. He pursues the puck, applies pressure to the opposition, but he is a bit off in his offensive movement. He doesn't put himself in the best positions to receive passes and, as a result, didn't complete many plays. His skating is NHL projectable. He would be able to keep up with the play in a defensive role, the only one he projects to at this moment.

Grade: F



Anton Topilnyckyj

AGE 17.696 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Right

Shoots

6'2"

Height

174 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Charlottetown Islanders	QMJHL	67	2	11	13	0.19

SCOUTING REPORT

This was only Anton Topilnyckyj's first real season with the Charlottetown Islanders, after spending the majority of last year playing in Midget AAA. Considering his lack of experience, he fared well on the team's blue line.

Used for long minutes on the penalty kill most games, Topilnycky showed he could kill plays in multiple ways.

He knocked the puck away from attackers as they crossed into his space and intercepted passes with a quick defensive stick. And with his larger frame, he boxed out opponents and pinned them to the walls. As he filled the demands of the Islanders' coaching staff well, he could see his ice time increase next season and it's not out of the question that he could become one of the better shutdown defencemen in the QMJHL over the next couple of years.

To reprise his shutdown role in the NHL, however, Topilnyckyj will need significant skating development. Size and strength aren't enough to earn a player an NHL role. All of the modern defensive defencemen also possess the mobility necessary to quickly close their gaps with opponents. They can also contribute offensively from time to time.

Topilnyckyj can fire from the blue line, but he needs to develop his passing ability and breakout skills to add more points to his sheet.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 11th, 2023 - Charlottetown Islanders vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Some interesting elements in Topilnyckyj's game in the defensive end and in his neutral zone defence. He closes his gap quickly, anticipates some passes, and makes the simple next play. He pinches and boxes out. He lacks agility but knows how to use his reach. The lack of puck poise hurt him in this game. I don't really see an NHLer, unless he can improve his retrievals and puck plays under pressure.

David St-Louis: January 27th, 2023 - Blainville Boisbriand Armada vs. Charlottetown Islanders - QMJHL

His reach is definitely an asset. And i think I underestimated his lateral mobility. He pivots mostly with crossovers, but he can sway from side to side to close opposing lanes off the rush. He's a good rush defender at this level. He needs to make quicker decisions in possession, however, and that often means becoming more aware of options.

David St-Louis: October 13th, 2022 - Charlottetown Islanders vs. Cape Breton Eagles - QMJHL

I like Topilnyckyj's engagement and effort. He defends well on the penalty kill, boxes out opponents, and makes some effective, timely stops. His lack of agility, coming from his weight always being centred between his two feet, limit his range as a defender, however. And he didn't seem to offer a lot offensively in this one. He needs to work on his mobility, especially his four-way range, to become a potential shutdown NHLer.



Grade: F

Emmanuel Vermette

AGE 17.348 DATE OF BIRTH May 11, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicoutimi Saguenéens	QMJHL	58	17	22	39	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

Emmanuel Vermette could become an important player for the Chicoutimi Saguenéens over the next handful of years.

He has the hard skills necessary to win in the playoffs. He hunts the puck on the forecheck and will go through opponents' hands to get to it and he doesn't hesitate to land hits and battle for possession if necessary, too.

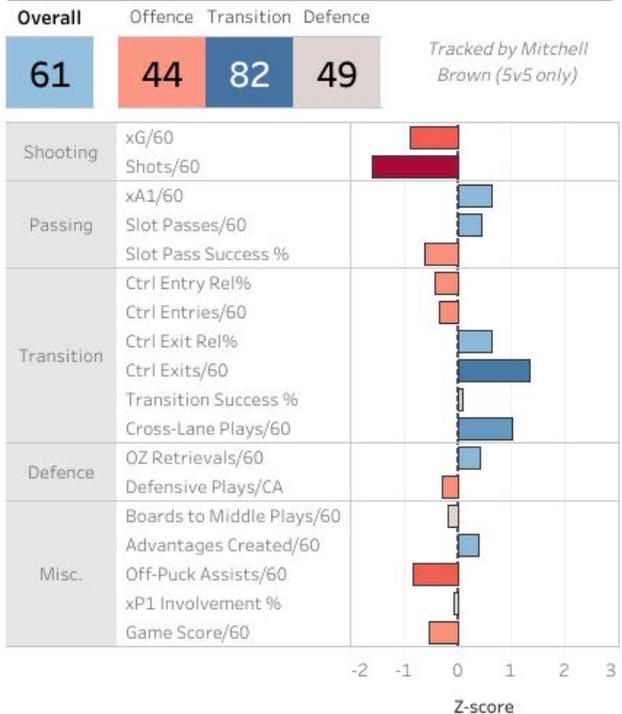
What prevented him from making our draft list is the lack of translatable offensive skills. Vermette is a dangler. He can slide the puck under the stick of a defender one way and then back the other way, but most of his plays are made either at a standstill or in a glide. His feet constantly move on the forecheck, but they often stop in offensive sequences.

"He scans, eliminates options, and timed his pokes well," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown wrote in a January report. "Lots of skilled breakout passes in the game, working pucks off the boards to the inside or vice-versa. Haven't seen much skill outside of that, however."

His shot, net-front game, and forechecking could earn a professional contract, but at the moment, it seems unlikely he will reach an NHL role, unless he manages to significantly improve his skating and playmaking.

Emmanuel Vermette

F | Chicoutimi Saguenéens | QMJHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 53.0



≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** April 24th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Rimouski Oceanic - QMJHL

When Vermette doesn't get the puck, the only aspect of his game that really shines is his forechecking. He pursues pucks hard and hits. I'm not sure he has the speed to play such a checking role at higher levels, however, as he mostly skates in one block with a high-stance. There is a lack of agility there. The handling skills are a plus.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Moncton Wildcats - QMJHL

Vermette had a solid outing defensively. He worked to get above the puck to attackers wide, stepped through opponents' hands on the forecheck, and timed his checks. Anticipates plays and keeps his feet moving. Nothing offensively. The hands failed him a couple of times, and he only set up his plays in straight line glides. Blind passes to no one. The transition passes weren't here in this game, either. Tools looked below-average. Didn't look like a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Vermette has some exciting flashes. In this game, he stole the puck, passed to the outside after creating a lane for his teammate, then faded into space for a tap-in goal. This was a sound defensive performance in general. He scans, eliminates options, and timed his pokes well. Lots of skilled breakout passes in the game, working pucks off the boards to the inside or vice-versa. Haven't seen much skill outside of that, however. He glides around the ice to make his plays and I haven't seen noteworthy handling, skating, or shooting skill.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Rouyn-Noranda Huskies vs. Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Vermette had the best play of the game. He skated past the net, then two-touch a backhand pass through two defenders for a high-danger look. Awareness, pace, and patience. Set up another high-danger look shortly after with another pass that took awareness of options under pressure. Very involved defensively, highlighted by a pair of strong backchecks that kept the attacker wide, before coming across the steal. More intelligent breakout passes in this game, although his game becomes straight-lined in the neutral zone. Not a ton of in motion skill or notable off-puck instincts. Looked like a potential late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Shawinigan Cataractes - QMJHL

Vermette had a couple of standout breakout passes, hitting teammates moving up the middle when he was pressured along the boards. That was it. He's a flatfooted handler over-reliant on outside speed. No in motion skill shown in this outing. No vision, defence, or anything notable other than the occasional flash of a physical side. Didn't look like an NHL prospect.

David St-Louis: December 10th, 2022 - Drummondville Voltigeurs vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

I mostly see a dangler. That's what Vermette has shown for the most part since the start of the season. He can go through the triangle of defenders or spot the puck behind them and fetch it. He has some passing skills, some slick handling moves that help him solve defensive pressure, and he's scoring enough to keep himself in the conversation for our board.

David St-Louis: December 2nd, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

Despite a high stance, Vermette can protect the puck quite well with his frame and hands. He can hold on to it on the walls of the offensive zone, slip away, and pass the puck, with his forehand or backhand, to supporting teammates. He finds solutions to closed lanes by spinning on himself or using that backhand. He's relatively adaptable, not forcing plays that aren't there. I'm not sure if the mechanics are good enough to lead to an NHL career, however.

David St-Louis: November 11th, 2022 - Chicoutimi Saguenéens vs. Halifax Mooseheads - QMJHL

I like Vermette due to the flashes of skills. For the most part, he fades in the background of games, but then, a couple of times per game, he flashes some more advanced ideas, like a spin pass from the back wall that bypasses a defender and hits his teammate right in the slot, or a breakaway shot that hits the top part of the net. If those flashes become more frequent, we will have no choice but to include him on our board -- as long as he also shows progress in his skating.

David St-Louis: November 5th, 2022- Rimouski Oceanic vs Chicoutimi Saguenéens - QMJHL

Vermette has some skill. He can link passing plays and create scoring chances by playing keep away from the opposition and finding teammates in the slot. He seems reasonably aware. I'm not sure about the skating form, however. He seems to move in a high-stance, one that limits speed and agility.

Grade: F



Ivan Anoshko

AGE 17.940 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 07, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

5'10"
Height

168 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4.5
Skating

4
Shooting

5
Passing

4.5
Puckhandling

5
Hockey Sense

5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Dinamo-Shinnik Bobruysk	MHL	53	21	32	53	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Ivan Anoshko is a gifted distributor who knows how to connect with teammates both off the rush and in the offensive zone. He spots teammates running behind the back of defenders and hits them with precise passes just as they get open.

"One of the best games he's had this season," Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in an October report. "Really nice delay game on his playmaking, good habits, and quick scans. Low pace playmaker, but showed off his motor off-the-puck and proved that he does have speed when he wants to use it."

Anoshko racked up points with Dinamo-Shinnik Bobruysk this season mostly because of those higher-level passing skills. That, and his net-front game. But while Anoshko's playmaking, awareness, and slot drives made him a dangerous offensive threat in the MHL, the prospect didn't add a lot of other projectable dimensions to his game during the season.

A low-pace attacker, Anoshko struggled to match the tempo of some of the better formations in the league. He lacked the speed and the anticipation to play his give-and-go game against these teams. To translate his scoring to the KHL over the next few years, both his skating form and stride rate will have to improve and his off-puck instincts, too.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: February 23rd, 2023 - Dinamo-Shinnik vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

A few really nice passes from Anoshko here. He keeps a high level of awareness under heavy defensive pressure, can find outlets, and often the best ones. He sees through defensive layers, knows when to delay and wait for an option, and when to move the puck quickly. The skating looked more projectable and he went to the net.

David St-Louis: February 19th, 2023 - Dinamo-Shinnik vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

Anoshko's playmaking is way more advanced than the rest of his game. His passing instincts are on point. He can slip pucks through defenders, make give-and-goes, and he always seems to spot teammates. But the skating is mechanically flawed even if the speed is fine. And he doesn't provide much outside of the playmaking. No real physical skills or shooting threat.

Dylan Griffing: October 29th, 2022 - Dinamo-Shinnik vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

I'm not convinced there's much here outside of the production against other very bad MHL teams. The playmaking traits are fine, he applied good back pressure, and there were glimpses of his skating looking solid. Just not exactly good enough to keep up against a team like Dynamo Moskva. Barely got the puck, didn't really make himself available for passes either. One notable pass across the slot where he was completely unmarked to an open teammate for a near goal. Outside of that, he threw some hits and that was about it.

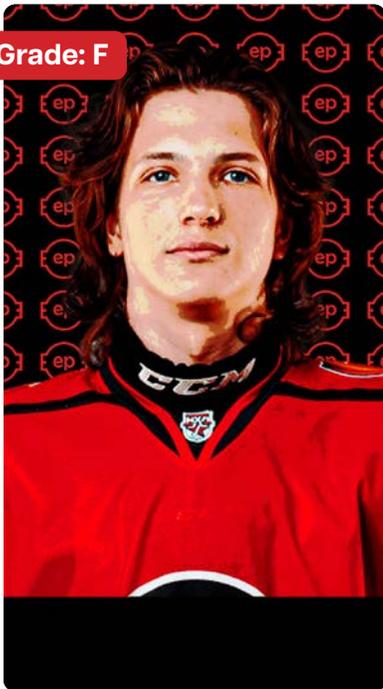
Dylan Griffing: October 4th, 2022 - Dinamo-Shinnik vs. Krylya Sovetov Moskva - MHL

First real test of the season for Anoshko and his squadron, playing against a gold division side for the first time this year. One of the best games he's had this season. Really nice delay game on his playmaking, good habits, and quick scans. Low pace playmaker, but showed off his motor off-the-puck and proved that he does have speed when he wants to use it. His finishing ability is a major work-in-progress, he had a handful of golden opportunities and squandered them all. This makes him pretty one dimensional, even if he's getting the high danger shots off, he's not able to finish them off. Besides his playmaking, most of his tools are pretty average to below average. Skating, hands, and defense are all just fine.

Dylan Griffing: September 12th, 2022 - Dinamo-Shinnik vs. AKM Novomoskovsk - MHL

Really bland game, he barely touched the puck and not much good was happening when he did have it. Struggled to control it, not very creative and his skating is very limiting. Clearly more of a power play guy than an even strength guy, struggles to find the space he needs to distribute effectively at 5v5, but there were glimpses of good plays on the power play. Not good enough to hide the ugly.

Grade: F



Nikita Ishimnikov

AGE 17.403 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'3"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Gornyak-UGMK	VHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	41	11	7	18	0.44

SCOUTING REPORT

Most NHL teams covet size because of the belief that it matters more in the postseason, when the games tighten up and rush offence diminishes. Nikita Ishimnikov's draft year aligns with that perception, going from 19 points in 43 games with Avto Yekaterinburg in the regular season to six in seven in the playoffs.

Ishimnikov's physical attributes are what valued him the 43rd spot in NHL Central Scouting's European list. The Russian defenceman can use his length to shut down passing lanes, either with pokechecks or by going down on the ice to block them. Due to his frame, he projects as an effective engager on the boards and in front of the net.

But while we did see him distribute the puck well at the top of the offensive zone and fire bullets on net when the opposition afforded him space, Ishimnikov's overall puck skills remain limited. The forecheck often pressured him into uncontrolled plays low in the defensive zone. Partly due to his lack of handling skills and awareness, he couldn't corral and move the puck quickly enough off the walls.

While we do think that Ishimnikov could become a useful presence on a KHL blue line, perhaps as a shutdown defenceman, we doubt that he will have the necessary puck-moving and mobility skills to play the same game in the NHL.

GAME REPORTS

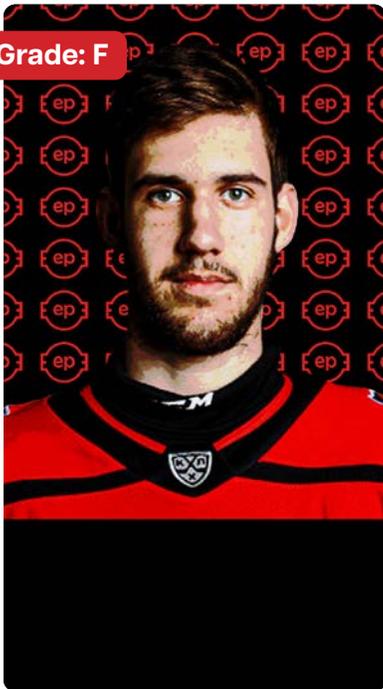
David St-Louis: March 7th, 2023 - Sputnik vs. Avto - MHL

He scored the only goal in this game with a nice catch-and-release shot. He took the puck, stepped away to find a lane, and then fired it in around a screen. He panics a little too much under pressure. The forecheck can make him throw the puck away. He goes down a little too fast in his defence. He's much better at moving the puck on the powerplay and low in he offensive zone. Overall, both the tools and sense seem below average.

David St-Louis: December 7th, 2022 - Avto vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Ishminikov acted mostly like a conservative defenceman for the first two periods of the game, but then, in the third, he started carrying pucks up and even attacking the front of the net to capitalize on chances. A few missed passes and I'm not sure about his overall ability to see the ice. The skating looks like a 4.5 grade. He ran out of solution against the forecheck. Not the best performance overall.

Grade: F



Artyom Kashtanov

AGE 17.767 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 09, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

6'6"

Height

190 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

3.5

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

6

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Gornyak-UGMK	VHL	4	0	0	0	0.00
Avto Yekaterinburg	MHL	43	15	25	40	0.93

SCOUTING REPORT

At 6-foot-6, Artyom Kashtanov is one of the larger forwards available in the 2023 NHL Draft. His measurements and high production this season for Avto Yekaterinburg will give scouts a reason to consider him for their board and follow his development.

Like many players of his size in their draft years, however, the winger lacks a bit of coordination. He can't easily blend a catch into a dangle and a slip pass, for example. At this stage, Kashtanov is more of a one-play-at-a-time forward and his hockey sense also projects as below NHL average in his prime. But the way he can already stickhandle around MHL defenders and link passing plays at his age is encouraging for his development.

Over the next few years, he could become not only a fierce board and net-front presence but also a good enough playmaker to translate his talents to the KHL. Getting there will require a lot of focused technical work, however, as his skating stride is far behind top players of his age. He lacks quickness out of turns and overall agility.

"Good release on his shot and good enough hands to get around guys at this level, but over-reliant on his reach advantage," Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing in a September report.

Kashtanov is a project for an NHL team that wants to play the long game and that really believes in its development team.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: March 7th, 2023 - Sputnik vs. Avto - MHL

Uneventful game overall. Kashtanov has a bit of skill, but he lacks the finer hand and feet coordination to reliably beat opponents. He's lower-paced and mostly a net-front forward at this stage. He also needs to become better at separating from defenders away from the puck to become an option.

David St-Louis: December 7th, 2022 - Avto vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Kashtanov's skating popped more in this game than others. He ran around defenders with his long strides, all while using his reach to keep the puck away from them. He made mostly simple plays, but I liked that he constantly attacked inside. He played very conservatively, too, as the F3. He was so high that I thought he played defence for a few minutes in the first period. He pursued the puck on the forecheck, but I would have like him to position better offensively to give options to teammates.

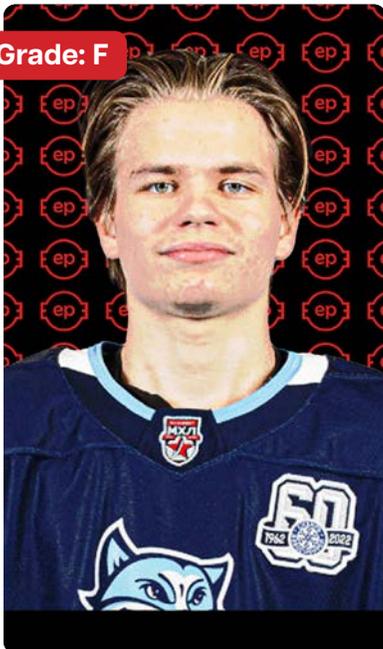
Dylan Griffing: September 27th, 2022 - Avto Yekaterinburg vs. Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk - MHL

Kashtanov looks the part of a generic, big, MHL forward. Not mobile, super slow on turns. Good release on his shot and good enough hands to get around guys at this level, but over reliant on his reach advantage. Don't think he's a pick.

Dylan Griffing: August 6th, 2022 - Avto Yekaterinburg vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - Friendly

This is a large player with pretty sweet hands. I have a feeling his production is going to be very high this year given the competition he'll be up against through his pure size and skill combination.

Grade: F



Yegor Klimovich

AGE 17.340 DATE OF BIRTH May 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	159 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	3	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	3
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sibirskie Snaipery Nov.	MHL	36	19	30	49	1.36

SCOUTING REPORT

Context is critical when trying to make sense of Yegor Klimovich's draft year. No one piece more so than the environment in which he played.

The MHL has two conferences and two tiers within those conferences. It's divided first geographically, with Western and Eastern Conferences, and then by Gold and Silver. You can probably take a pretty good guess at what those metals suggest about the level of competition in each setting.

Klimovich? Well, he played in the Eastern Conference, in the Silver Division – the weakest division in the weakest conference. Even with that context in mind, his 49 points in 36 games in the 2022-23 season is nonetheless impressive. Especially after only potting nine points in 52 games in his draft-minus-one season.

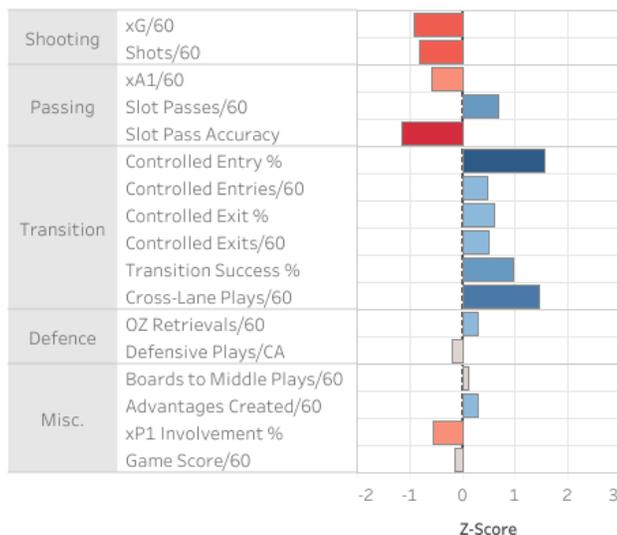
"Klimovich is one of the hottest players in the MHL right now and it really comes down to how quick this little fella is," Russia regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in a September report. "It's rare to see a speedy player in this league use that pace for anything more than offence, but he was a menace away from the puck, applying heavy pressure on the forecheck and making life very difficult for the Chaika defenders."

Klimovich scored mostly by outworking and outpacing the opposition this season. He drove down the wing, beat the opposition wide, and created scoring chances for himself – or he attacked straight through the opposition with a combination of dangles and skating moves.

Unfortunately, we didn't see enough flashes of hockey sense in his game. Especially at his size, Klimovich's tools won't be enough to earn him a long KHL career let alone an NHL one. Unless he reworks some of his skating mechanics – he lacks ankle flexion –

Yegor Klimovich

F | Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 88.52
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



he will lose his pace advantage at higher levels.

“The main thing that is going to hold him back is his size, BUT, luckily, he comes from a hockey family, so we have the information on his father (6-foot-3), his brother and teammate Ivan (6-foot-2), and his other brother Alexander (6-foot-4). So, unless he got all the short genes, Yegor shouldn't be 5-foot-9 for too much longer!” Griffing wrote in a September report.

Unfortunately, we didn't see enough flashes of hockey sense in his game. Unless he does grow, Klimovich's tools won't be enough to earn him a long KHL career let alone an NHL one. Unless he reworks some of his skating mechanics – he lacks ankle flexion – he will lose his pace advantage at higher levels.

⌵ GAME REPORTS

Lassi Alanen: February 14th, 2023 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. MHK Molot Perm - MHL

There are moments where Klimovich can dangle through traffic with the puck, use his edges to cut back and evade pressure while chaining together some cool moves with his hands, but he's just quite inefficient and not-at-all a play-driver. He's almost always the last man back in his own zone and likes to hang out in the NZ while looking for stretch passes or counter-attack openings. Then there's the fact that he can be evasive at times, but the quickness and speed isn't as good as it'd need to be to make his style work given his small stature and lack of physical skills. He's too easily forced to the perimeter and doesn't have the high-end playmaking instincts or the shot to create offence from those areas. I don't think he's a pick.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. Loko-76 Yaroslavl - MHL

Klimovich showed his handling skill with the goal he scored, receiving the puck in the slot after a turnover by the opponent, getting to attack 3-on-1 and having the patience to fake a shot before sweeping the puck to his backhand for a nifty finish. Aside from that, it was mostly similar to previous viewings. He was a bit more effective in transition and with his passing game in the OZ, having better timing while also having more space to work with. The skating is still at least a slightly below-average projection, even if he grows a bit and develops physically. There's no getting around the fact that his shot is a weak one, easily below-average grade. Even when he gets enough space to use it, it lacks both power and accuracy. I don't see a realistic path to the NHL unless there are big, big improvements.

David St-Louis: December 7th, 2022 - Avto vs. Sibirskie Snaipery - MHL

Very intense game from Klimovich. He's a hard worker who forechecks constantly and turns steals into immediate scoring chances. He positions well defensively, cuts passes, and blocks shots. The offensive ability seems limited overall. He only scores by outworking. The pace is low and the off-puck reads or the anticipation isn't there on the offensive side. He needs to scan more when retrieving a puck to avoid sending it right back to the other team.

Dylan Griffing: November 4th, 2022 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. Reaktor Nizhnekamsk - MHL

As fun as Klimovich is, his draft value is pretty low. Not zero, but low. He was invisible for the majority of this game, decision making was very inconsistent, and he just wasn't completing many plays. The positives came through his speed and pace changes. The delays to allow plays to develop and attack dangerous areas with his playmaking was pretty solid. He picked up a primary assist to his brother with a play just like that, enter the zone with speed, slow down and back up to the blue line, and wait for a teammate to streak to the net front. He's fast, but he still grades out to an average to below-average skater due to weak mechanics. Physicality and lack of defense also brings his value down a lot. Comparing him to Ovchinnikov, I can't see him getting the same chances in the KHL as soon as Ovchinnikov did, he just isn't able to read and adapt to his surroundings and is too reliant on pace. Shot in the dark for the seventh round sounds right up his alley.

Lassi Alanen: October 14th, 2022 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. HC Stalnye Lisy - MHL

Klimovich had a few playmaking moments here and there, some give-and-go ideas, stickhandling sequences and so on. But he's just not making a big impact at 5-on-5 due to the lack of strength and quickness. The stride lacks ankle flexion and he's just not able to find separation to pass or shoot when he tries to. He's probably pretty talented, but the physical limitations are hurting his effectiveness a lot in all three zones, although I respect how he was able to stifle a couple of rushes by the opposition.

Lassi Alanen: October 12th, 2022 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. HC Tolpar - MHL

I didn't see much from Klimovich. I thought that he didn't have that much quickness or speed for an undersized winger. When he tried to protect the puck or cut back off the rush, he was quite easily contained and couldn't get his stick free for shots or passes to the slot. There were a few nice playmaking ideas, but he couldn't execute on them. Looked like the third-most effective player on his line. In transition, his entries were often enabled by him having enough empty space with three opposing forwards already on his back. He wasn't creating any real advantages himself. Could've just been an off-game.

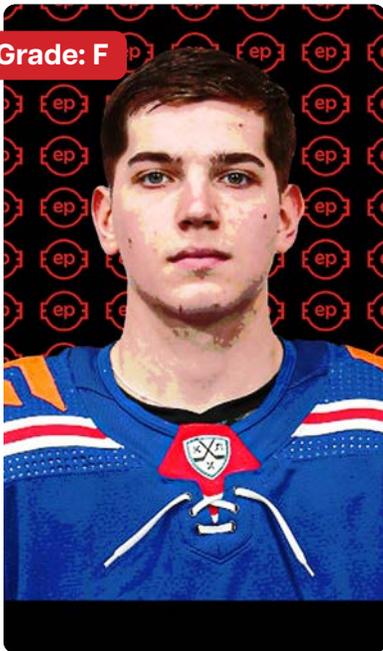
Dylan Griffing: September 29th, 2022 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. Chaika Nizhny Novgorod - MHL

Klimovich is one of the hottest players in the MHL right now and it really comes down to how quick this little fella is. It's rare to see a speedy player in this league use that pace for anything more than offense, but he was a menace away from the puck, applying heavy pressure on the forecheck and making life very difficult for the Chaika defenders. With the puck, he's so dynamic and skillful. Quick scans and passes, assesses danger well, and is able to adapt to pressure and make the most of any situation. Again, the main thing that is going to hold him back is his size, BUT, luckily, he comes from a hockey family, so we have the information on his father (6'3"), his brother and teammate Ivan (6'2"), and his other brother Alexander (6'4"). So, unless he got all the short genes, Yegor shouldn't be 5'9" for too much longer! His shot is pretty weak, as well. He sets his feet before he shoots and struggles to shift his weight. More of a pass-first player anyway and he has some finishing ability, but shooting from anywhere besides right at the net front is an issue.

Dylan Griffing: September 4th, 2022 - Sibirskie Snaipery Novosibirsk vs. Krasnoyarskie Rysi - MHL

Here's the obligatory small, speedy, fun, Russian forward. Bonus points for playing for a terrible team. It's going to be a long road for him to be at the level to play against men – size holding him back big time – but the speed and skill and playmaking ability are really promising. He picked up three assists in this one, so he's already a third of the way there from equaling his point total from 52 games last season.

Grade: F



Nikita Nedopyokin

AGE 17.485 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 22, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

5'10"
Height

187 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4
Skating

4
Shooting

5.5
Passing

5.5
Puckhandling

4.5
Hockey Sense

3.5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	37	14	18	32	0.86

SCOUTING REPORT

Nikita Nedopyokin has a penchant for flashy plays. There's creativity in his game, especially with the puck, but the conditions have to be just right for him to cook. He needs a bit more speed than the opposition, a bit more time and space. It's why his skills surface more on the power play than at 5-on-5.

Truthfully, we found him more effective away from the puck than with it in many of our viewings. He's often better as an offensive complement, not directly involved in the attack, but on the periphery of it. In those situations, his game becomes simpler, more streamlined. He drives the net, positions himself to get open, and when his team loses possession, he jumps on defenders to retrieve it and quickly gets it out of traffic with precise passes.

"High motor, getting right up on the puck carrier on the forecheck with a head of steam," Russia regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in an August report. "Played out of pressure very effectively, pre-scanning and utilizing creativity to make passes while being given little to no space to do so."

It's by developing this other side of his game, his forechecking and small-area skills, that Nedopyokin will carve out a role for himself in the KHL. Instead of dangling through sticks off the rush, his stickhandling skills would be better used to steal the puck from opponents and move it quickly to teammates.

At this stage, despite some of his interesting tools, it's difficult to imagine Nedopyokin making his way to the NHL. He needs to become better at applying the details of the game and he needs to add strength and improve his acceleration before we can reevaluate his upside.

GAME REPORTS

David St-Louis: April 8th, 2023 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Omskye Yastreby - MHL

Nedopyokin was more of an off-puck player in this one. He attacked space, got the puck, and fired on net. Some slip passes. He overplays a bit when he gets the puck, but he did try a kind of spin pass/shot that deflected off the stick of a teammate and went in. I also appreciate some of his details, like when he faked one way before taking the puck the other way on a retrieval,

creating separating with a defender. I'm not sure I'm looking at an NHL prospect, however, maybe just a skilled MHLer who lacks the tactical refinement needed to translate his offensive flashes to the next levels.

David St-Louis: March 22nd, 2023 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo M - MHL

Nedopyokin flashes some skills in this one. An interesting performance. He drove the net, picked up a rebound, and scored, skated behind defenders, got the puck in stride, and tried to dangle the goalie, and he made a few slip and skillful passes. He dangled through the defence himself, too. Not sure he's a pick, but there is more there than I previously thought.

David St-Louis: March 21st, 2023 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo M - MHL

Not a great game from Nedopyokin in terms of projection. He's not that aware as a player. He can complete passing plays, but overused feints in situations where he didn't need to. He rushes himself, too, the mark of a player who is challenged by the pace of play. He needs to become better at moving away from the puck.

Dylan Griffing: September 28th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Almaz Cherepovets - MHL

I think there's a good amount of tools with Nedopyokin, but putting everything together is a struggle. The main issue I saw here was a serious lack of acceleration and top-speed. He has this ability to make highlight reel plays, but it's usually a play that you turn into a GIF and just leave out the conclusion, because it just feels like most of them end in turnovers. He tries to beat the same defender twice, uses nice moves, but for naught because he isn't really making any space for himself. Strength is a major issue, as well.

Dylan Griffing: September 7th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL

Nedopyokin certainly wasn't driving anything this game. Barely on the puck, and when he was, he wasn't hanging on to it for very long. Pretty ugly shot – had a clear lane to the net after a terrible giveaway and decided to shoot it first time rather than anything else. Really needs to become more consistent instead of just a player who comes and goes in flashes.

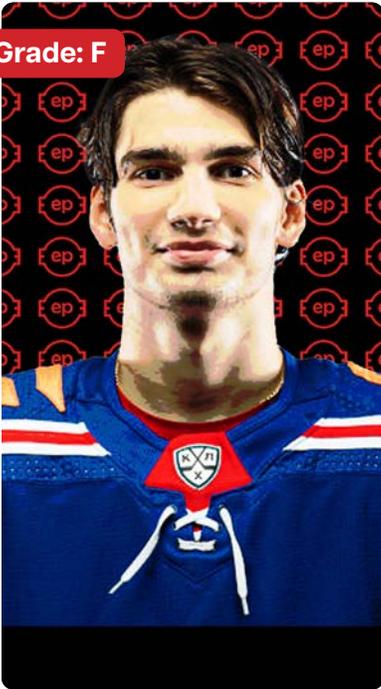
Dylan Griffing: August 5th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - Friendly

I really liked this performance. A lot of skill and intelligence to be an aggressive offensive threat, even in limited minutes. High motor, getting right up on the puck carrier on the forecheck with a head of steam. Played out of pressure very effectively, pre-scanning and utilizing creativity to make passes while being given little to no space to do so. Picked up two points (goal and assist) on the power play, as well.

Dylan Griffing: September 21st, 2021 - SKA-Varyagi vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Nedopyokin didn't really display enough of anything in this game to garner any interest from me. He had flashes of playmaking qualities – passing out of pressure and patience – but, overall, he was just a connector and his execution was weak. Defense is maybe the strongest part of his game, made some good reads and plays on the boards. Shot and hands are not good. Struggled to pick up loose pucks and control passes a lot, overhanded, and just isn't dynamic enough for his attempts to matter.

Grade: F



Ivan Remezovsky

AGE 17.600 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'1" Height	163 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	3.5 Shooting	4 Passing
5 Puckhandling	4 Hockey Sense	5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
SKA-Neva St. Petersburg	VHL	3	0	1	1	0.33
SKA-1946 St. Petersburg	MHL	45	0	13	13	0.29

SCOUTING REPORT

We often hear that the best defensive defencemen are the ones that play a quiet game. The less you notice them, the better they are. Ivan Remezovsky seems to fit that billing. He aims to be a solid contributor who doesn't make mistakes.

Remezovsky has shutdown potential. He's a hard-worker with flashes of play-killing ability off the rush through mobility and awareness. On retrievals, he gets inside opponents before slipping away with a quick cut back.

The more the season progressed, the fewer chances Remezovsky seemed to take with the puck. He relied on his partner and forwards to make the plays, to carry the puck out and across the neutral zone, while he acted as a safety net a few steps behind.

"Doesn't turn the puck over a ton, but the defensive zone passes are not ones that create advantages, often passing to pressured targets," Elite Prospects Dir. of European Scouting, Lassi Alanen wrote in a November report.

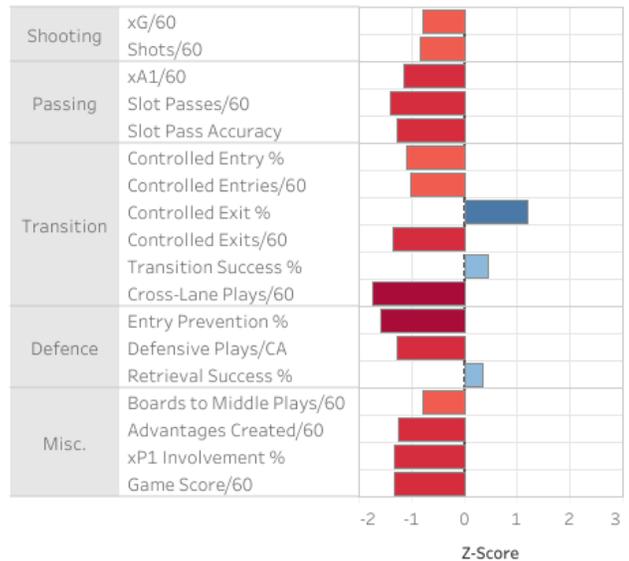
As a team, we value defensive defencemen. You will find a few of them in our top-64, but those defencemen need to be able to make plays with the puck, and more importantly, they have to act aggressively.

At this stage, Remezovsky backtracks too much against the rush and gives too much space to the opposition. If he could improve his footwork and learn to use his size to engage opponents quicker, his game would project a lot better to the professional level.

It's not enough to be mistake-free. Remezovsky has to at least learn to create turnovers that his team can capitalize on.

Ivan Remezovsky

D | SKA-1946 St. Petersburg | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 4 | Minutes Tracked: 65.36
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** March 1st, 2023 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. SKA-1946 - MHL

Maybe Remezovsky projects as a defensive defenceman at the next levels. He has the size and the footwork is decent. He defends with a lot of short crossovers and steps, but he puts in a lot of effort so he manages to not fall behind the play. His skating stance is high. He needs to get lower in his strides; that would help him match attackers. He battles for pucks, fights in tight spaces, but I'm not sure about his puck plays. A lot of simple D-to-D passes. No advantage created.

Dylan Griffing: January 7th, 2023 - SKA-Neva St. Petersburg vs. Izhstal Izhevsk - VHL

Very, very basic performance from Remezovsky. Simple passes, nothing high-end even close to being attempted. Sheltered minutes, so he wasn't required to do much defensively, and when he did, he looked about his usual self. Not very effective in any particular area of the ice. Textbook definition of 'a guy'. Don't see a pick here.

Lassi Alanen: November 28th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. HC Loko Yaroslav - MHL

Remezovsky had clearly put some thought to his gap control, which was quite a bit better here compared to all of my previous viewings. Actually forcing dump-ins and not backing down so low to his own zone when defending the blue line. Still, almost exactly the same things were evident in other areas. He's not making many defensive stops, gets caught on his heels quite often, can somewhat maneuver under pressure with passing, but doesn't truly create advantages and doesn't do a whole lot offensively. Not a pick, I don't think.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. HC Loko Yaroslav - MHL

Remezovsky remains the blandest player imaginable. Doesn't stand out on the ice in any way. Not necessarily saying he's the worst prospect ever, just doesn't contribute much in any zone or aspect without also sucking very noticeably. The NZ defence is just plain bad, though, as he conceded a ton of space, and opposition took full advantage, scoring off the rush on one occasion where he ultimately had almost backed to the lap of the goalie. Doesn't turn the puck over a ton, but the DZ passes are not ones that create advantages, often passing to pressured targets. Loves the blind backhand pass, too. Just not a player I'd be interested in drafting.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. AKM Tula - MHL

Remezovsky is just super bland. Even on a stacked team like this, he just doesn't take advantage of the opportunities. Although on the other hand, you could argue that in this team, his job is to be more of a defensive guy. The point is that he's not a particularly good defensive player either. The gap control was slightly better than in my previous viewing, but he still concedes way too much space. The skating or handling aren't really that noteworthy. Didn't do much offensively aside from the few point shots he got. Did fine on retrievals and breakouts, but the passes were mostly simple and again, playing for a powerhouse helps in those departments quite a bit. I have a feeling he'd struggle a lot more on a weaker team.

Dylan Griffing: November 14th, 2022 - Russia U18 vs. Belarus U20 - Cup of the Future

I really no longer think this player is interesting. Benefitting from playing with Gulyayev, he basically gets the day off on the offensive side of things. Mostly just simple, d-to-d passes, let him do all the work, maybe jump up off the blueline every once in a while just to take up some extra space. Threw in some very low percentage breakout passes just for the sake of it. Defensively, he's a trainwreck. Gap control is not in his dictionary, he gives up space like there's no tomorrow. A Belarusian skated right at him into the slot and didn't even need to make a move to get past, Remezovsky just backed up, waited too long to get his stick into an area that could disrupt the play, and then just let him by. I don't see him being worth a draft pick right now, there's no area where he truly excels consistently, it's all just flashes that are becoming more and more rare as he keeps playing more.

Lassi Alanen: September 28th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. HC Almaz Cherepovets - MHL

Remezovsky pretty clearly benefits from playing for a power house. I don't think he was the driver on his pairing. Weak rush defender, concedes a lot of space. His cutbacks had pretty solid power behind them, but the overall skating stride is a below-average projection. Completed the simple passes in transition with solid accuracy. Tried to jump on the rush a couple of times but didn't get the puck or accomplish much. Didn't like his defensive reads that much. One badly defended 2v1. Didn't look like a particularly interesting player overall, but who knows.

Dylan Griffing: September 4th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

I no longer think this player is interesting. It's clear that the flashes I liked from him are not descriptive of how he actually plays. No gap control... at all. I think a player could skate directly at him with no pace and they could back him up all the way to his crease. No creativity, makes longer passes if they're clearly available, but opts for a d-to-d pass more often than not (which was, honestly, better for his team because he iced the puck/gave away possession on almost every stretch pass).

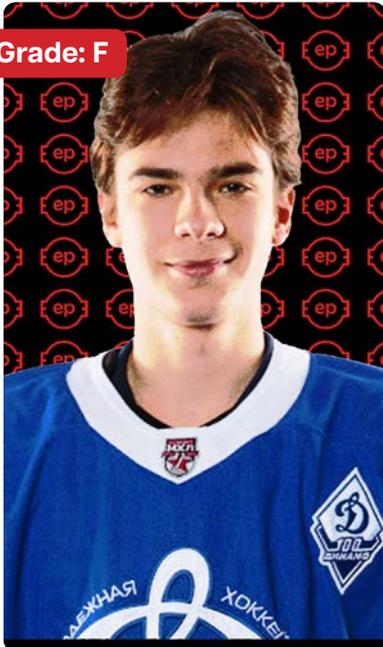
Dylan Griffing: March 23rd, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. MHK Dynamo Moskva - MHL Playoffs

This is an interesting player for sure. Super shifty and agile, strong retrievals, and utilizes his reach to its full capacity. He is pretty creative at the point, activates at good times and has the hands to get around guys. Explosive skater and he only needs a little bit of room to get up to his top speed. Lack of physicality is the main thing holding him back now, it'll be interesting to see how that develops in the offseason.

Dylan Griffing: March 8th, 2022 - SKA-1946 St. Petersburg vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

It's hard to see his game progressing more if he doesn't learn how to use his size and take up space on defense. Not proactive at all, gives up the inside lane often, and doesn't have much of a physical presence. Breakouts were pretty weak, as well. Skating looked good and there were flashes of skill, but, overall, he wasn't smart enough to make the most of what his hands and feet were doing.

Grade: F



Yegor Rimashevsky

AGE 17.619 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	198 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
MHK Dynamo Moskva	MHL	29	13	13	26	0.90

SCOUTING REPORT

We struggled to evaluate Yegor Rimashevsky this season, mostly because his low motor masked his offensive skill. He was rarely fully engaged in any of our viewings, especially in the defensive zone.

To say he cheated for offence would be an understatement. Rimashevsky often started his course toward the opposition's end before his team had even regained possession of the puck. His early breakouts were a way for him to manage his main weakness, his skating ability. Rimashevsky needed to move ahead of the play to create rush-scoring chances for himself.

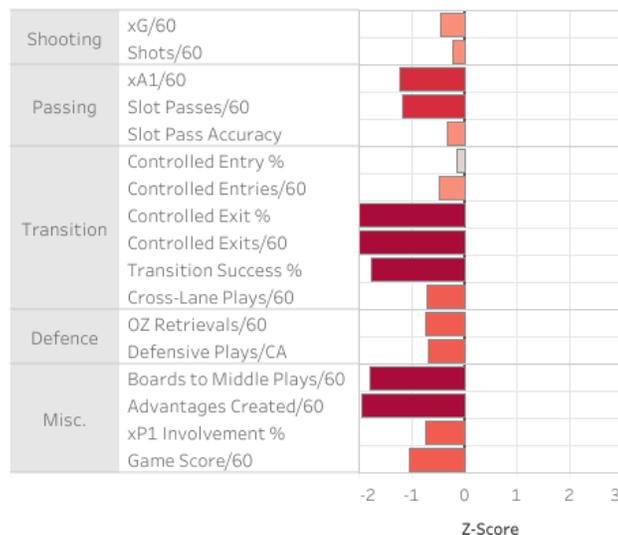
When he couldn't get a momentum advantage, he relied on his off-puck instincts, one of the more developed aspects of his game. Capable of anticipating the flow of the play and positioning himself well to support it, he got many shooting chances from the slot this season, and at his best, he also turned into a decent playmaker himself.

"He struck me as a purely off-the-puck, one-touch shooter for a while, but then he switched gears and showed that there are some good playmaking habits hidden in his game," Russian regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote. "He is constantly putting pucks toward high-danger areas and was pretty accurate in doing so."

To put himself on an NHL track, Rimashevsky will have to improve his skating and handling skills and his overall effort and pace of play.

Yegor Rimashevsky

F | MHK Dynamo Moskva | MHL | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 68.08
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****David St-Louis:** February 2nd, 2023 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Dinamo Shinnik - MHL

Rimashevsky is only interested in the offensive game. He cheats a lot and the effort is not really there defensively. He doesn't manage the puck well either. But he does provide some offensive tools. He scored with screened powerplay shots. And passes the puck well overall. I'd like to see him skate a bit more. It would help his offensive generation.

Lassi Alanen: October 14th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. HC Krasnaya Armiya - MHL

At least Rimashevsky scored here. It was a pretty nice goal, cutting in front of the defender off the rush to gain the middle and then firing short side to beat the goalie in-stride from his inside leg (though the defender defended the rush as badly as one can). There's some shooting skill. But overall, it wasn't an encouraging performance. The tool limitations are real, though his handling looked a bit better here. Doesn't bring much in the way of defensive value or playmaking skill, pretty individually focused off the rush. The compete level is notably pretty lacklustre, too. I don't think he's a pick based on what he's shown so far.

Dylan Griffing: September 27th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. MHK Spartak Moskva - MHL

I think I've lost all hope since my first viewing from this season. There's no desire for getting the puck, super passive, lacks problem solving abilities, lacks hands. He had one notable play where he drove to the net, but he was barely clinging onto the puck the whole time and then couldn't even get a shot off by the end of it. Not even trying to make anything happen for the most part. Puck was on and off his stick, whether it was a turnover or a simple pass, there was just nothing that stood out that this player is bringing any value to his line.

Lassi Alanen: September 27th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. MHK Spartak Moskva - MHL

I don't see it with Rimashevsky. He's big and has some off-puck value offensively (maybe?), but his tools seem below-average across the board and he's not going to be a two-way force either, at least based on what he's shown so far. A few passing plays off the rush, but mishandled and turned the puck over multiple times. Weak effort on puck battles for a player with his frame.

Lassi Alanen: September 21st, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Russkie Vityazi - MHL

Rimashevsky looked like an off-puck guy with not very inspiring tools. Skating projects as below-average and the handling didn't really impress either, fumbling some easy touches. He got a few high-danger chances from the net-front that he could've and should've converted. One really bizarre passing attempt on a breakaway/2v1 where the defender was 100% committed to taking away the passing lane, but he still tried to put the puck through his stick instead of shooting.

Dylan Griffing: September 17th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - MHL

Basically the polar opposite of my last report. I don't think Rimashevsky did a single thing this game besides turn the puck over. Very rarely touched the puck. His whole line did stink this game, so nobody was really driving the bus too hard, but at least Yegor Chernyshov was trying to get things going. Rimashevsky was hanging out behind plays, taking really weak routes, and failed to connect passes. Hands and skating don't allow him to escape pressure and he gets closed down along the boards pretty easily. Floated around the defensive zone, as well. Going to need to see way more than this going forward.

Dylan Griffing: September 12th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

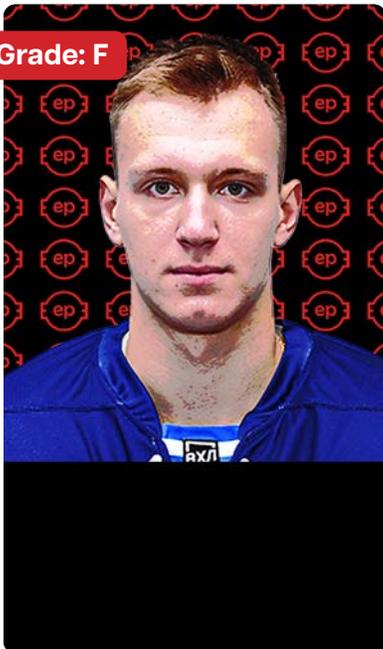
While the limitations are clear, weak skating (looked like a 4) and hands (probably a 4.5), Rimashevsky was doing a lot of good things in this game. He struck me as a purely off-the-puck, one touch shooter for a while, then switched gears and showed that there are some good playmaking habits hidden in his game. He is constantly putting pucks towards high danger areas and was pretty accurate in doing so. Patient and willing to let defenders get close despite his lack of dynamic skill, using a simple move

to shift the puck onto his backhand and send a pass towards the slot. He did overuse his backhand for passes and became predictable and started to cause some turnovers, but the danger he brings with a mix of his shot and high danger passes is really intriguing. Skating concerns are real, though, but he is really skinny (154lbs), so adding on some weight should help that out in time.

Dylan Grifing: August 7th, 2022 - MHK Dynamo Moskva vs. Krasnaya Armiya Moskva - Friendly

Rimashevsky was just a complementary player to two high-skill forwards. A lot of planting himself at the netfront and trying to tip shots on goal. Nothing really impressed me here.

Grade: F



Yegor Smirnov

AGE 17.625 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C

Position

Left

Shoots

5'10"

Height

163 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4

Skating

5

Shooting

4

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

3

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Almaz Cherepovets	MHL	46	20	21	41	0.89

SCOUTING REPORT

Paired with one of the MHL's better playmakers in Mikhail Ye. Ilyin, Yegor Smirov had many occasions to showcase his shot this season, the best tool in his arsenal. The end result was 20 goals in 46 games this season.

It's off the rush that his shot shines the most, when he's allowed to come in behind the defence and attack high-danger areas as his teammates drive deep in the offensive zone. He catches drop passes and beats goalies. At times, Smirnov also showed that he could outskate the opposition down the wing and create shots for himself.

"Smirnov seems to bring the most value as an off-puck scorer," Russian Regional scout Dylan Griffing wrote in November. "The skating and hands both hold him back so much from being a true offensive threat."

We found Smirnov a little unidimensional, however, this season. To score at the next levels, he will need to develop his playmaking. The passes he does attempt at this stage often get intercepted due to his lack of awareness and decision-making issues.

At this stage, although he showed he can score in the MHL, he doesn't look like an NHL prospect. Both Smirnov's tools and reads will have to improve significantly for him to translate his scoring to the VHL and KHL.

GAME REPORTS

Dylan Griffing: November 27th, 2022 - Almaz Cherepovets vs. MHK Dynamo St. Petersburg - MHL

Smirnov seems to bring the most value as an off-puck scorer. The skating and hands both hold him back so much from being a true offensive threat. Playmaking habits weren't really there in this one. Probably just a solid MHL player, not a true prospect.

David St-Louis: October 17th, 2022 - Almaz vs. MHC Spartak - MHL

I don't see an NHL prospect. He lacks physical skills and the decision-making needs to improve. Many bad choices of play in this one. He's a player who outskates the opposition in straight lines or brings the puck back in transition, delaying instead of

making plays under pressure. Some dangerous turnovers. At this stage, the tools are not interesting enough to compensate for the decisions.

Dylan Griffing: September 18th, 2022 - Almaz Cherepovets vs. Loko Yaroslavl - MHL

Smirnov is definitely limited by his skating, but his hands also don't look all that useful. There's also a lack of size thrown in there, so not off to a hot start. There were some signs of a playmaking threat, pretty deceptive through his passing, but his puck control was bad and he was basically clinging onto possession for dear life every time he had the puck. He wasn't doing a ton offensively, but his shot off the rush was pretty nice. I don't really know what this player is or what he will be, but he's probably not going to be a guy who gets his name called on draft day.



Grade: F

Vilmer Alriksson

AGE 17.573 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 18, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'6"	214 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Djurgårdens IF J18	J18 Region	9	4	5	9	1.00
Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	43	12	9	21	0.49

SCOUTING REPORT

The success that Elmer Söderblom has enjoyed in recent years should help create a market for Vilmer Alriksson in this year's draft. After all, the 6-foot-6 winger outproduced his natural comparable at the J20 level at the same age, with 21 points in 43 games for Djurgårdens.

For someone his age and size, Alriksson is already a capable skater. He already seems to check most of the boxes related to ankle flexion, hip usage, and stride depth, though his skating remained a bit inconsistent throughout the season.

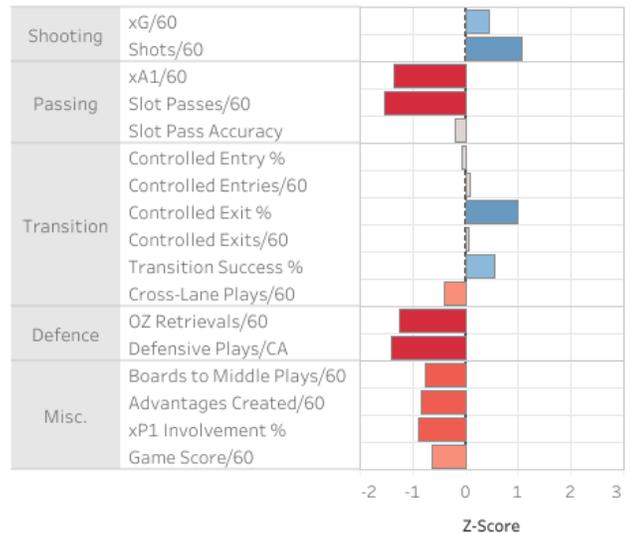
His playing style doesn't exactly fit his stature; his game flows through his skill more than his physical strength. While there's still a clear lack of finesse, he usually had at least one or two impressive moments per game, beating defenders with body fakes off the rush or flashing intriguing shooting skill from in tight.

To become a legitimate NHL prospect, Alriksson needs to add more meat around the bones. Currently, he's far from being a play-driver and relied a lot on his linemates at getting him the puck in favourable positions. He needs to learn to use his frame to his advantage more regularly; right now, he's actually not that good at puck battles. There's also a lot of room for improvement defensively.

While we didn't see him as a pick, Alriksson will probably hear his name called during the second day of the draft.

Vilmer Alriksson

F | Djurgårdens IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 96.28
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

No, I don't see a player in Alriksson at this moment. It is hard to tell if he has big body coordination issues but his skills don't connect with his feet and he is often slow to make plays. He loses the puck easily in transition and I don't see him using his frame to get advantages either.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Vilmer scored another goal in this game and a couple of good looks in addition to that. I like his off puck positioning. He finds open space in all three zones that helps him drive an attack. He can't really prevail on that though due to often poor stick handling ability. His small-area skills are not impressive and he had trouble receiving passes in motion. He needs space to be dangerous.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Vilmer had an okay but not great performance on this gold medal loss. He was a tough player to handle when he came with speed seeking the inside. He had some nice pausing moments with the puck too tricking opponents. His pace isn't always great but at this level, when gets a starting lane to work up the speed it is a weapon. It is always hard to know with big players like this if they have much more room to get the coordination together and a late bloom. He does not provide play driving, pre-scanning, spacing or playmaking at the moment though.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Vilmer looks enormous out there. He must be close to 6'7. He was the least skilled player on a skilled line. He had some strong forechecking moments with intercepting passes and closing space for his opponents. He also retrieved the puck on backchecks.

When he comes with the puck and with speed, he has good control and makes some skilled dekes in close space. He also possesses a good shot. He also made some bad passes and had trouble controlling the puck and his balance at times.

Vilmer is not a driver but interesting due to his size and okay puck skills. He lacks high speed and his body movements are too slow to make plays most of the time.

Lassi Alanen: February 26th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Pretty much in line with my previous viewings of Alriksson. Ended up scoring on the power play after whiffing on the initial shot from the back post but being able to recover the puck and tuck it in with the second attempt. It's kind of a small capsulation of his overall game, too: a lot of unrefined stuff mixed in with moments of intriguing ability. Inconsistent is a good word to describe it. Did a good job as a puck-carrier in transition, but really struggled to move the puck forward with passing. Didn't pre-scan nearly enough, which led to him not having the processing speed or problem-solving skills to get through the pressure. He's huge, but needs to learn how to use that size as an advantage. I wonder how high the sense grade should be.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Alriksson found his way to the scoresheet after Örebro's defence forgot him in front of the net. Credit to him for having the patience to receive the pass calmly from below the net, then move it to his forehand and then smartly shooting far side just over the blocker; many would've just panicked there. Maybe he has a bit more scoring touch than I previously gave him credit, although I think I rated his shot fairly decently even before this viewing. Alriksson still remains a very long-shot project, but also someone who has at least some intriguing moments. It's a mixed bag in almost every aspect. He can do impressive stuff with weight shifts and fakes in 1-on-1 situations, or overhandle and leave the puck exposed in front of him without having the handling skill to pull that play style off consistently. He's not a grinder by any means, instead closer to a skill forward in terms of archetype. He'll have to improve his off-puck game defensively to be useful at the next level. Probably wouldn't use a pick on him at this point, but he could pop off

next season. He'll probably get picked this year, though, based on the frame, solid skating and flashes of offensive ability.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Watching Alriksson can be a trip sometimes. It's clear that he requires a lot more finesse and refinement. It shows how awkward he can look when picking up loose pucks or how he handles when pressured along the boards. But then again, he does have some really intriguing moments for a player his size. Like how he can down the wall off the rush, duped the defender with a body fake that he'd be cutting inside, but went outside instead, all in one surprisingly smooth motion and completely beat the guy 1-on-1. Also impressed how he was able to pull a puck into his body and shoot in - again - one smooth motion. There's definitely some unlockable potential here, even if he's not dominating these games and makes a lot of errors, too.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Alriksson drifted outside of the action for the majority of this one. He did find the back of the net during a delayed penalty, fumbling a bit on the cross-ice pass reception but eventually getting a shot off that ended up slipping in under the goalie's arm. The last two games haven't been as impressive as the first one was. He's not doing much in terms of play-driving, doesn't have that noticeable defensive impact despite the huge frame. Actually, he often takes bad angles and doesn't really use his body that well in battles. I guess it's all about projecting with someone like Alriksson. If you think he'll be able to develop the more detail-oriented things in his game, he could be a reasonable bet to make.

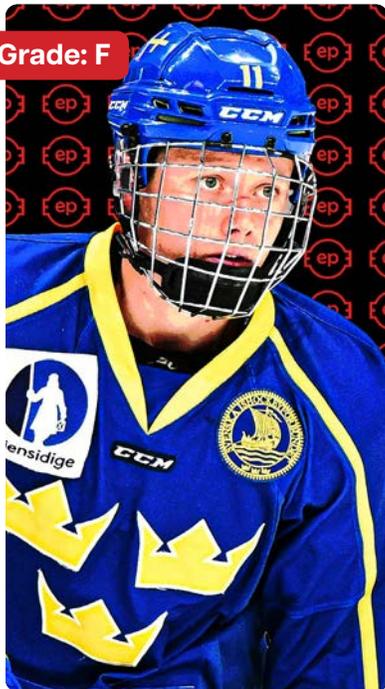
Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Alriksson's offence might benefit a bit from playing with Djurgårdens system. Just by existing in the OZ and doing a somewhat decent job at getting open, he got a few quality scoring opportunities without doing that much heavy lifting. There was a clear lack of finesse like in my first viewing; pucks bounced from his stick, he fumbled them in tight space, etc.. But he also has moments of decent skill and actually overhandled a bit on a few occasions. Skating didn't look quite as notable as it did in the first viewing but I don't think the stride is a blocker between him and the NHL, if we expect reasonable improvement over time. He could just be getting used to his new height, which could mean his skating and handling will take a step or two in the near future.

Lassi Alanen: October 9th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

For a 6-foot-6 forward, Alriksson actually looked like a pretty competent skater. He had ankle flexion, was able to get enough depth on his posture most of the time and had pretty decent quickness, too. There were a few skilled moments, too, where he used subtle weight shifts to beat players off the rush to gain the zone. Added a primary helper by passing to the middle off the rush for a one-timer goal. There were a few awkward moments. He could've easily added a goal early in the game off a 2v1 pass that was perfectly fine, but he somehow ended up missing the puck completely. A few other occasions where a more capable handler could've easily maintained possession. It's probably to be expected for a player at this size at this age, though; developing hand-eye-coordination is going to take a while longer. Ran over his opponent at least two times. Based on this, he's probably very likely to get drafted by someone, and I wouldn't hate it, at least solely by this one game. Could be a worthwhile project.

Grade: F



Kalle Carlsson

AGE 17.540 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

6'0"
Height

181 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

4.5
Skating

5
Shooting

5
Passing

4.5
Puckhandling

5.5
Hockey Sense

4
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Örebro HK J18	J18 Nationell	4	1	1	2	0.50
Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	44	11	24	35	0.80
Örebro HK	SHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	9	1	1	2	0.22

SCOUTING REPORT

The leading scorer on one of the top regular season teams at the J20 level this season, it was actually the defensive play of Kalle Carlsson that first caught the eye of our scouts.

When he was playing down the middle, he scanned a lot in the defensive zone, supported his defencemen below the goal line, and stuck to his targets, pinning them along the boards and disrupting potential shot attempts with his stick. This often seemingly came at the cost of his offensive output, especially off the rush.

In later viewings, though, he was playing more on the wing and wasn't able to replicate that defensive impact. There were some great highlights offensively, even if the performances were really inconsistent.

At his best, Carlsson looked like an above-average playmaker and a deceptive handler. Other times, he was barely visible and struggled to create due to a lack of quickness and skill. This duality is well-documented in our game reports. A big portion of Carlsson's production also came on the power play where he often manned the right half wall.

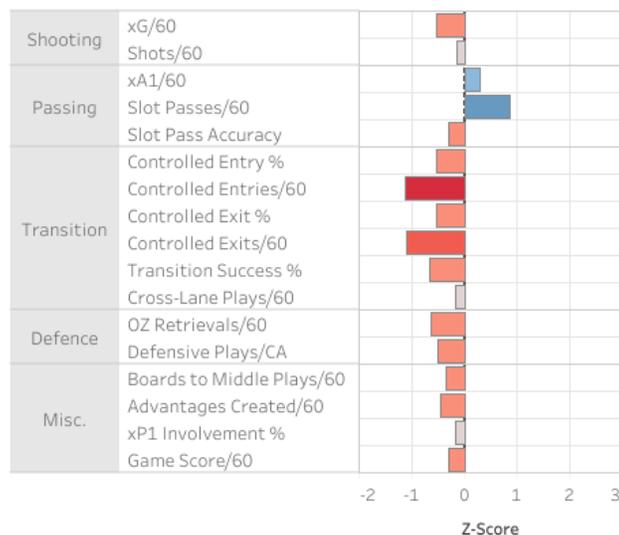
Concerns about the consistency and translatability of Carlsson's offence kept him from our draft board this year. If you're betting on him replicating his best highlights more regularly and becoming a more explosive skater in the future, he could be an interesting option in the later rounds.

Kalle Carlsson

F | Örebro HK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 133.6

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Gold medal game. Kalle worked hard all game. Strong forechecking limiting time and space for the opponents. He also showed some play driving. He was strong on the puck and created some scoring chances, he also played a good puck supporting game.

He lacks a clear inside drive and tries more from the outside. He can't really open up space with his hands nor his skating either. At this level, he can transport the puck quite well but lacks an extra gear to accelerate with.

I would not push to pick him in the draft. There isn't enough translatable offence or defence. The defence would benefit from better skating and pure strength.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Kalle had an inconsistent performance in this game. He looked like he didn't have much to offer at all the first half but halfway through he took action and drove play.

I like his decision-making with the puck. He makes fast plays and shows playmaking abilities. He took the puck to the middle a couple of times. He is aware of the surroundings and processes the game well.

I don't like his skating. He lacks explosiveness and the stride is inefficient. He is kind of soft too and looks easy to play against. Offensively, he doesn't manipulate well either.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Carlsson failed to recapture what he did in the previous viewing, as this was another way quieter game. The OZ playmaking wasn't really there, being forced more on the perimeter and having trouble separating from the defenders. Looked like someone who is going to rely quite a lot on off-puck timing and positioning to have success, especially at the next level. Skating remains at least slightly below-average projection. Having played on the wing in all of my 2023 viewings, he's not having a similar defensive impact that I remember him having in viewings where he played centre. Probably still not a pick.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Well, this was nothing like the previous 2023 viewings of Carlsson I had. He was actually cooking all game long in the offensive zone, showing way more playmaking than in the past (maybe aside from that one game earlier in the season) and also notable skill with the puck. Scored after intercepting a careless drop pass on the forecheck, baited the defender to drop to one knee to block, pulled the puck across his body and scored with a nice backhand shot. Recognized passing lanes quickly and executed fast, pulling off multiple one-touch passing sequences for shot assists. Had more deception in his handling and overall OZ play, not only in the play that ended up netting him a goal but in other sequences, too. Smart puck-moving and positioning offensively. Rarely you see a player turn in such a different performance from the previous viewing. Maybe this was just an outlier.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

I don't think Carlsson has been good in the 2023 viewings I've had so far. Like, not at all good. Really struggled in transition in this one, and as of result had trouble managing any sort of offence either. It was both lack of quickness, translatable rush patterns and skill holding him back, depending on the sequence. Then, when he finally had space and a potential 3v1 rush, he fumbled the puck as he crossed the blue line and couldn't get his pass off properly. He just hasn't been very good lately, I don't know what else to tell you.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 27th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Kalle had a solid game, not too eventful but also made stuff happen. Early in the game he looked more like a passenger than a driver but the longer the game went the more active he was. He had some good zone entries but did not turn them into scoring chances. He is smart and plays a good support game, skates close to the puck and in passing lanes. He is also playing strong defensively, scans the ice well off the puck. He can show off some skill and had a few good behind the back passes on the power play to open up space. His skating is average. He can travel with the puck and move laterally but lacks explosiveness and is not a strong rush attacker.

His development has not really kicked off this season after an impressive D-1 season. His impact and scoring is actually less than last season which I can't get my grasp around. I don't see NHL upside, but he is a smart player. He will be a pro in Sweden at least.

Lassi Alanen: January 21st, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Carlsson had a pretty uneventful showing here overall. I didn't see basically any play-driving; very few puck touches in transition. Resorted to dump-outs on few occasions where he could've tried to make a better play. Set up one scoring chance later in the game with a nice backhand feed from the boards, but was mostly just looking for openings as an off-puck option. Seems like his production has been quite heavily skewed towards the power play this season, which isn't that encouraging given that his 5-on-5 output has been quite mediocre. Skating looks like about 4.5 grade on our scale. He'll probably become a pro but haven't seen enough to justify a pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Carlsson had more offensive flashes than he did in the previous viewings. Set up a goal with a beautiful behind-the-net two-touch pass to the slot. It's a play that he's tried quite a bit in my viewings but hasn't really had much success with it, often just turning the puck over. This time, he hit the timing perfectly, though it still was more of an instinctual pass rather than driven by scanning. A few other nice playmaking moments, delaying off the rush, drawing in pressure and slipping the puck to the middle. Defensive game remains a strength, too. The skating probably projects at least slightly below-average, though. He might have a bit more skill than I thought before, but I'm still skeptical about him as a pick.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Once again, Carlsson's attention to the defensive side of the game was the highlight here. He has most of the details down to a strong degree. He's always scanning in the DZ, sticking to his targets, taking good routes, disrupting shot attempts, pinning down along the boards. Once the game progressed to the third period, he started to show a bit more offensively, making a few nice passing plays to the middle after delaying off the rush, timing his movements near net-front for a rebound chance, etc.. I don't think there's necessarily NHL upside, though.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Carlsson definitely paid a lot of attention to the defensive side of the game. He was always playing the F3 role in offensive end, staying high to retain the ability to get quickly back to the defence and not allowing the opponent to have odd-man counter-attacks. In the DZ, he was supporting the defenders low and rarely was able to have impact off the rush, always coming in as the trailer. He had a few chances here and there, flashing the ability to shoot in-stride. I don't think that the skill level was that notable, though.



Grade: F

Mai Crnkic

AGE 17.449 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW/C Position	Right Shoots
6'0" Height	183 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4 Puckhandling	4.5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Almtuna IS J18	J18 Region	2	1	3	4	2.00
Almtuna IS J20	J20 Nationell	15	6	1	7	0.47
Almtuna IS	HockeyAllsvenskan	5	0	0	0	0.00
Brynäs IF J18	J18 Nationell	9	4	5	9	1.00

SCOUTING REPORT

One of four Slovenian draft-eligible skaters who played in the J20 Nationell this season, it was a busy draft year for Mai Crnkic. He played at three different levels between J20, J18 and even getting a couple of games of HockeyAllsvenskan experience. There was also a mid-season change from Almtuna to Brynäs' program where he finished the season with 10 points in 23 games with their J20 squad.

Crnkic is a crafty, offensive-focused forward with positional versatility. He identifies options, moves pucks quickly, gets open inside space, and has a clean curl-and-drag wrister that makes him a threat from mid-range. In transition, he looks inside for higher-value options.

But with his current game and results, it's hard to see Crnkic as an NHL prospect. He lacks a standout quality in his game, posting below-average results at the J20 level in pretty much every category. He's not particularly imposing as a finisher or a playmaker and the skating is also very much still a work-in-progress.

As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen noted in a game report: "Rounded back, couldn't properly engage his hips, lacked ankle flexion. The stride could be improved with further strength development, but probably still a below-average projection on our scale."

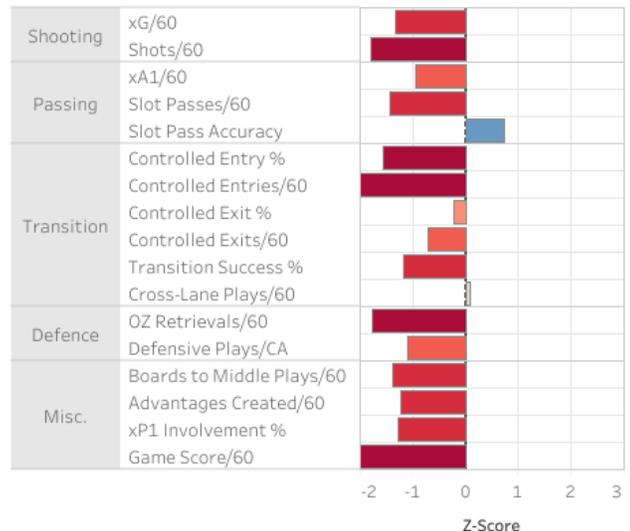
At previous levels, Crnkic has shown more offensive pop and even defensive value due to his hustling. Crnkic could be a top player at the J20 level as soon as next season. Crnkic

Mai Crnkic

F | Brynäs IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 88.38

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: March 26th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. HV71 - J18 Playoffs

I thought he would show more at the J18 level but it was mostly on the power play where he showcased his skills. His hockey sense didn't look as impressive as in earlier views. He missed some gaps and missed to get into some open spaces. Still, he shows good awareness in other sequences. He took defensive responsibility when needed. He also often shows patience with the puck and often finds a good play. He will need to learn how to play faster though. He is a top 6 forward type with a good understanding of the game but with limited tools. A long term project if he is going to reach any higher level.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Crnkíč flashes the occasional skill, like the nice curl-and-drag wrister he launched off the rush, using it to get the puck inside on a defender before shooting. He can connect the odd play in transition by finding his centre in the middle for an entry or an exit, though often when the pressure is immediate, he fails to execute since he needs one or two touches to survey the field (lack of pre-scanning). The skating stride remains an issue; lacks ankle flexion, inconsistent upper-body. Not particularly explosive or quick, so the skating projection on our scale is a below-average one, despite the improvements he could probably reasonably make on the ice and in the weight room. There's some off-puck smarts, but not anything that's particularly noteworthy. That's the main issue with Crnkíč as an NHL prospect: there's just not any standout skills.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Crnkíč's active pursuit of the net-front was finally rewarded in this one, as he deflected a point shot for a well-earned goal. Could've added another one later a point-blank chance in the slot, but his one-timer placement was pretty bad and was rather easy save for the goalie. I'm still not sure I see much upside with Crnkíč; he might be better served playing at the U18 level, to be honest, even if he has scored a bit between his time with Almtuna and Brynäs. He just doesn't seem to deal well with the pace and pressure at this level. He's reactionary with the puck, only starting to think what to do when the puck hits his stick instead of having a constructed plan at that point, which leads to turnovers. His handling is just so-so and the skating stride is probably at least slightly below-average for this level at the moment. I just don't see what's the selling point with him as a potential pick.

Jimmy Hamrin: January 27th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

Crnkíč is a pretty smart center that lacks physical tools to be successful. I like some of his patterns with the puck. He scans for the best option and can hold on to the puck and sees various options. He is a decent passer, but lacks high-end stickhandling. He also positioned himself well without the puck, supporting plays. He could do a better job at pre scanning and to plan play. Now, he seems to improvise when he gets the puck. He really needs to get both faster and stronger to be able to translate to higher levels. Too many holes in his game to be considered a pick at this year's draft.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

This viewing continued with the trend of my previous Crnkíč viewings. He didn't really have any standout moments in this one either. Seemed to struggle with the pace of the play a bit. Not necessarily due to skating, but maybe more of a processing issue. He did set up one quality chance after getting a bouncing puck and having a clear line to use for the pass, but even that wasn't really that impressive of a play overall. I can respect his defensive hustle on some backchecking sequences, although when he really tries to power down with the skating, the problems with the stride mechanics come even more visible. The usual OZ sequence included cutting back on pressure - at times successfully - then returning the puck to the point.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Not a very visible effort from Crnkíč overall. He set up a couple of point shots here and there, made a few cross-lane passing plays in transition. But I didn't see him making a single play in this one that would've grabbed my attention in a real sense. Usually was the last forward to enter the OZ, didn't really get many puck touches in high-danger areas. The skating continues to likely

project as below-average. There's probably more than I'm seeing based on these viewings, could be just a sampling issue. But so far, haven't found myself excited about his game.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Crnklič seemed to start the game as a centre but then moved to the wing from approximately the second period onwards. He ended up scoring out of a faceoff from what looked like a pre-planned set play, which ended up leaving him open in the slot and he placed his shot smartly just above the blocker. Had a few other chances to score, too. Tried to take the puck to the inside a couple of times off the rush, exploiting bad rush defence by the opposition but couldn't quite connect with his passing plays. The skating stride looked like a below-average one. Rounded back, couldn't properly engage his hips, lacked ankle flexion. The stride could be improved with further strength development, but probably still a below-average projection on our scale.

Grade: F



Hugo Hell

AGE 17.019 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	176 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4.5 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Färjestad BK J18	J18 Region	4	0	0	0	0.00
Färjestad BK J18	J18 Nationell	2	1	0	1	0.50
Färjestad BK J20	J20 Nationell	46	3	11	14	0.30

SCOUTING REPORT

Hugo Hell already made waves last season, playing in a full-time capacity with Färjestad's J20 team as one of the youngest players in the league. This season, he was the sixth-most productive draft-eligible defenceman at the J20 level, but didn't appear in any international event.

Hell's skating mechanics are pro-calibre. He has a good amount of ankle flexion, depth and a consistent upper-body. Even if the output doesn't quite match the technique due to lack of explosiveness, that could very well change in the future with further physical development.

Hell's most interesting flashes came through activation, whether that was in-zone or off the rush. He looks for give-and-go opportunities at the point and joins rushes through the middle as a trailer option.

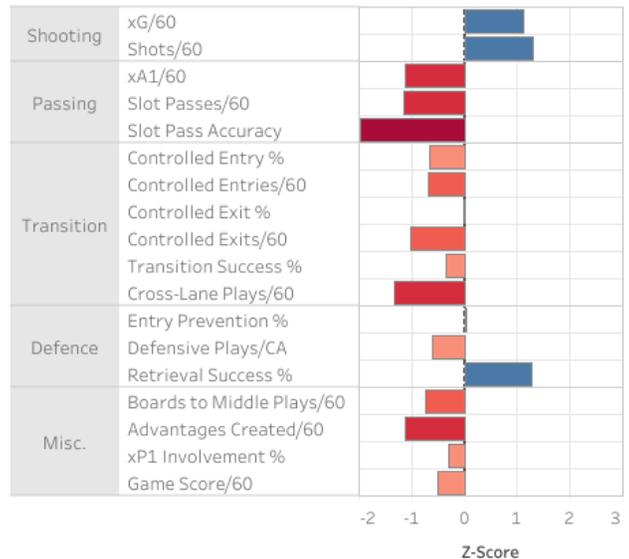
There's also a clear purpose behind these plays; he's not just headlessly skating without a plan. This is evident given his sense of timing and how he chooses his spots to attack. There's a good chance these plays will turn into actual production next season.

Defensively, Hell is not very polished. He tends to lunge himself forward and get caught on his heels, limiting his effectiveness as a rush defender. There's also issues with his in-zone positioning and reads. While he completed his retrievals with a high success rate, Hell tended to struggle at moving the puck in transition, aside from the occasional flashes of skill.

While Hell didn't make our board, he could get consideration in the later rounds, especially given how he won't turn 18 until September.

Hugo Hell

D | Färjestad BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
 Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 92.39
 Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Lassi Alanen:** February 5th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Still not sure what to make of Hell. Some of the tools are pretty interesting, mostly the skating and if he could add just a bit more explosiveness in the future given his already-honed skating stride. There was one sequence where his top speed actually looked pretty formidable already. He tends to get caught on his heels, though, which limits his effectiveness against the rush. Some of the defensive reads remain problematic, but he should have most of the tools to become more effective in the future. The offensive skill only shows in flashes, but the flashes are pretty interesting. He's got a better offensive sense than most of his peers ranked in the similar range, even if the execution errors keep him from truly being a strong producer at this age.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Hell managed to be a bit more efficient defensively in this one. At least for the most part; he still made a huge error in deciding to double commit to an opponent, lunging himself forward, partially blocking his partner's effort to make a stop, leading to a very unnecessary breakaway for the opponent. Aside from that very dumb play, Hell's rush defence was a bit tighter compared to some of my previous viewings. As seen, he can still be prone to lapses but the overall trajectory seemed positive. The skating projection likely remains average given how solid the stride form and posture are, even if he's currently not that quick. There continue to be some offensive flashes like give-and-go plays from the point. One really nice and hard breakout pass through the middle, but also prone to making panicked decisions under forechecking pressure. He's managed to handle retrievals at solid completion rate, though.

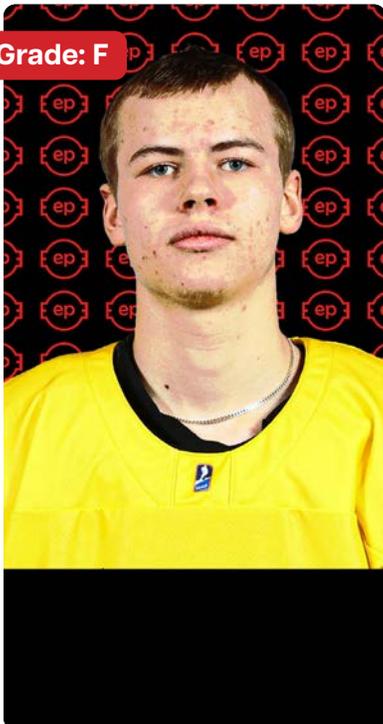
Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

Hell's skating stride looked quite good here for the most part. The posture and mechanics aren't quite matched by the output, though. There's good ankle flexion, knee bend, consistent upper-body but he's not that explosive or fast. Continues to struggle a bit defensively, especially off the rush as he concedes a lot of space for the opposition. When he's positioned better at the start, he can actually do pretty well and has some understanding on how to angle and defend with his stick. Best offensive moments came by squeezing the zone from the point, meaning when he got the puck he could step into space to fire and be near the top of the circle, increasing his odds. Flashes ability to shoot in-stride from the inside leg. One of the youngest players in the draft, leaving him with more development leeway than the majority.

Lassi Alanen: October 29th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Hell's most interesting moments came by the way of activation, both in the offensive zone and off the rush. It wasn't happening every shift, but there were enough flashes that I think it could become a key part of his game, if it isn't already. Looked for the occasional give-and-go near the point or drove the middle lane as a trailer and got a scoring chance as of result. Not sure about the tools, though. Some handling errors, too. Defensively, he was a bit lost a couple of times and made some weird decisions in when he decided to engage, ie. letting a man walk to the net-front as he was too fixated on the other forward and didn't adjust and cover for his partner.

Grade: F



Axel Hurtig

AGE 17.266 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'4"	203 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rögle BK J18	J18 Region	2	0	1	1	0.50
Rögle BK J18	J18 Nationell	6	0	2	2	0.33
Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	34	2	6	8	0.24
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	0	1	1	0.14
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	13	0	2	2	0.15

SCOUTING REPORT

Axel Hurtig's defensive presence and physicality made him a mainstay with Sweden's U18 team despite middling production at the J20 level. He came in clutch when it mattered the most too, scoring three goals in six postseason games as his team took down the league championship with Rögle.

That said, Hurtig's career prospects in the professional ranks will come at the back of his defensive game. He's a big, towering presence, being able to smother opposing forwards along the boards with ease. He's not a fun opponent to have once the play settles in the corner, and his rush defence arguably got a bit better as the season progressed, too.

A lot of refinement will be needed if Hurtig wants to break out as a legitimate NHL prospect. His skating and handling are both a below-average projection due to high stance, lack of quickness and finesse with the puck. These caused him to struggle quite a bit in many areas of the game, including on breakouts and retrievals. His reads and decision-making also left to be desired in many situations, both offensively and defensively. And even when he had the right idea, his mechanics often let him down.

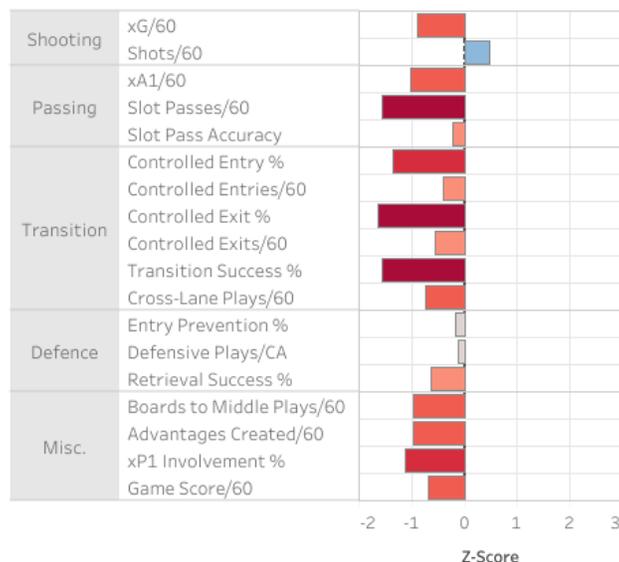
While we weren't enamoured with Hurtig's skill set, there's a chance he gets picked in the later rounds as a potential bottom-pairing option. To get there, he'll have to improve both mechanically and with his reads. It's not impossible, but a lot of projection for limited upside, which is why Hurtig didn't land on our board.

Axel Hurtig

D | Rögle BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 138.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Meet the Team: Sweden's 2023 U18 World Hockey Championship roster

≡ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"A defensive general who plays a simple and strong defensive game. A defenseman who is incredibly solid and defensively strong." – Rögle BK J20 head coach Max Bolin

≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 10th, 2023 - Leksands IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Won a gold medal after a competitive performance. He blocked many shots and battled hard in front of the net and along the boards. He showed good rush defence too. Offensively, he activates and wants the puck. He shows very little skill though and lacks the ability to scan for options. He also throws away the puck easily under pressure. One of those times led to a goal against. He moves decently and has a big frame. He could get interest in the late rounds.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Axel is a big guy and he had a solid game. Played mostly with Willander. Hurtig had good gap control and defended the rush well. With the puck, he played inconsistent and threw away some passes when he was pressured and had some unforced errors too. He was also a bit slow to activate and put pressure on the opponents himself. He has a low paced aura in his game.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Hurtig got to play in a pairing with Tom Willander in this one, which meant his line wasn't crushed as badly as it probably would've been otherwise given the strength of the opposition. As of result, Hurtig looked a bit better than in some of the previous viewings, but it still wasn't great. Still struggled a lot at moving the puck with control. Low panic threshold, lacks tools to create advantages against forecheckers aside from the occasional solid outlet pass. His rush defence looked a bit more aggressive and his gap a bit tighter, forcing a few extra dump-ins as of result. Still haven't seen anything noteworthy from him on the offensive side of things. He'll probably get picked somewhere given his size and pedigree, but I don't see NHL potential without clear mechanical and sense improvements.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Even when Hurtig has the right idea, his mechanical limitations often get in the way of productive play. Like when he waited out the F1 patiently, skated the puck out himself but fumbled it unpressured so he couldn't gain the OZ for an entry. He's got a solid slap shot from the point that goes hard, but doesn't really have anything in the way of offensive creativity or flashes of playmaking ability. Some of the breakouts were better compared to my previous viewing and his retrievals seem to be a relative strong point as he shoulder checks pretty consistently and seems to get his stick in the way and move the puck to a teammate even when he's seemingly losing the footrace. There's still problems with the defensive gap and reads. Skating posture is high,

doesn't get much engagement from the hips, hurts his mobility.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Hurtig doesn't really strike out, at least in positive ways. Really struggled to move the puck efficiently. He's not comfortable at handling the puck for longer periods of time, doesn't really have the skating chops to create advantages for himself. Instead, he's forced the pass at ill-advised timings and lacks precision to connect with even simpler outlet feeds. And it's not like he brings that much defensive value either, being on ice for two goals against here where he could've played out the situation better. Tried to activate to get himself involved into the play a couple of times without much success. Didn't look like a pick in this one.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

This was quite clearly the best Hurtig showing I've had this season at the J20 level. He scored at 4v4, getting a loose puck, entering the zone, beating the defender wide, then driving the net and finishing five-hole. His screen in front of net also resulted in another goal a few shifts later, making use of the activation through the middle that he's done a few times per game. His on-puck play was a bit cleaner overall. Still struggles under pressure on breakouts and retrievals, but less than in previous showings. Could have more defensive upside than I previously thought. Still not sure if he's worth a pick.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Still having hard time seeing Hurtig as a potential pick. He's big, he can be physical along the boards and chip in occasionally while defending off the rush or while creating space by driving through the middle. He's not a bad skater, but still pretty comfortably projects below-average. Doesn't seem like a particularly capable handler either, has trouble when pressured and often just tries to throw the puck away and hope it'll get picked up by his teammate and not the opponent. Scanning in the DZ was fine and his 1-on-1 in-zone defending is pretty solid, but more complex situations cause more trouble.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

This was a bit better than the previous viewing of Hurtig, but only marginally so. He struggled a lot on retrievals even when he had the clear upper-hand, allowing forecheckers to pass by him and get to the puck first. Part of the reason seemed to be the skating, but part of it was just poor fundamentals and habits. Did a better job at defending the rush, playing more aggressively and keeping a better, tighter gap. Broke up a few plays near the boards in the DZ. Still not a fan of his on-puck game. Decision-making and execution are both currently hindering him.

Lassi Alanen: October 7th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

I don't see much appealing in Hurtig's game. Low panic threshold, tends to opt for uncontrolled plays on breakouts. Skating projects as below-average, lacked quickness to break up plays defensively despite having the size and the reach. Offensively, he had a few point shots that went through the forechecker but didn't do anything particularly noteworthy. Low panic threshold at the point, too, and handling looked quite uncomfortable most of the time. We'll see if this was an outlier game, but I wouldn't consider him a pick candidate based on this.



Grade: F

Daniel Alexander Jenčko

AGE 17.682 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C/LW

Position

Left

Shoots

6'0"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Malmö Redhawks J18	J18 Region	6	5	3	8	1.33
Malmö Redhawks J18	J18 Nationell	2	0	0	0	0.00
Malmö Redhawks J20	J20 Nationell	41	11	12	23	0.56
Slovakia U18	WJC-18	7	2	2	4	0.57
Slovakia U18 (all)	International-Jr	6	3	6	9	1.50

SCOUTING REPORT

The Malmö Redhawks were one of the lowest-scoring teams in the J20 this season, which makes Daniel Alexander Jenčko's 0.56 points-per-game mark a pretty solid accomplishment. Also among Slovakia's top scorers internationally at the U18 level, Jenčko's skating and pace stood out the most from his toolkit.

He's naturally an explosive athlete, and even though we had some mixed reviews about his mechanics, he could still reasonably project as an NHL-average skater. He's already clearly strong for his size, and further physical development will only make him more consistent and harder to knock off pucks.

Offensively, Jenčko lacks finesse and the capacity to make higher-level reads, but also flashes some intriguing skill that can be used as a base to build upon. He takes advantage of his quickness by outracing defenders to loose pucks, attacks with crossovers off the rush and had legit moments of shooting skill, including a well-executed curl-and-drag wristers.

However, his hands weren't often able to keep up with his feet, resulting in fumbled pucks and turnovers. Employing a straight-forward style, he often skated into trouble without the skills or the planning to get out with possession.

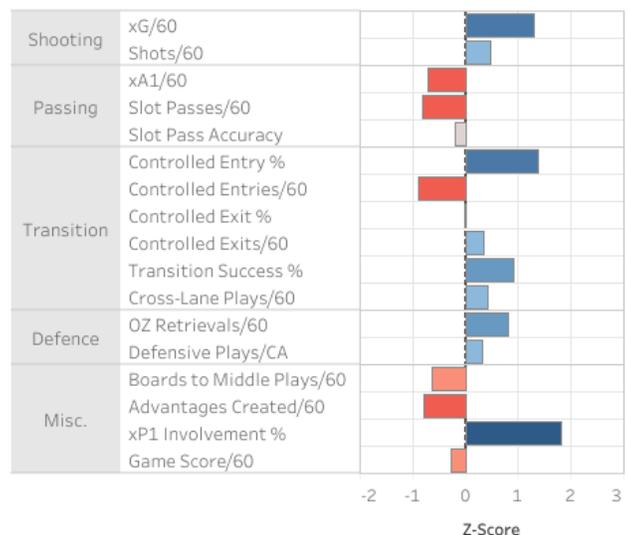
Jenčko's skating and defensive hustle could open him doors in the professional ranks. If he builds upon the flashes of shooting skill, refines his handling mechanics and starts attacking the inside more aggressively, he could be an interesting player to keep tabs on as the years progress.

Daniel Alexander Jencko

F | Malmö Redhawks J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 76.49

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 21st, 2023 - Sweden vs. Slovakia - U18s

Daniel had a good performance. He showed nice hands and scanned with the puck on his stick. He had some strong passing plays from outside and in. He made an assist on a goal from strong board play and passing into the slot from behind the net. He had a solid checking game as well and delivered some big hits too. He is small in size but shows strong balance. His speed would be better if he worked on his skating technique.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 8th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. IK Oskarshamn - J20 Nationell

Daniel is quick forward with nice hands. He is explosive and shows good puck control. His stride work takes some energy but he is naturally quick. He receives the puck with ease and is a good passer. Offensively, he looked passive and watched the game more than acted and made stuff happen. Defensively, his checking game was good. He created a scoring chance of a breakup. He works hard. In size, he is small and he plays kind of soft. He doesn't show much inside drive with the puck. A late round candidate.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

This was on the more uneventful side of Jenčko viewings. He did pick up a nice primary helper, recovering a puck behind the net after a bad turnover by the opposition and quickly connecting with a teammate in the slot for a one-timer goal. There just weren't other sequences as notable. A lot of time spent chasing on the forecheck or playing in-zone defence. Could become someone with solid on-ice impacts defensively at the next level, especially if he hones in on his transition carries. He already connects his passes in transition with solid percentage, but the carries are still hit-or-miss since he doesn't have the handling skill required at higher speeds to match his feet and the fact that he puts himself in unfavourable situations. I could see a team picking him up in the later rounds as a project, but I don't really see enough upside to push him over some of the other players that I like more and who will be available in similar range.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Jenčko's skating is a solid asset, but there's a lot of mechanical refinement needed to be done overall. The handling just looked plain bad here, fumbling the puck in almost all of his transition attempts where he tried to use the skating to gain the zone. The feet and hands are just not in sync (and I'm not meaning that they're working independently in a good way, rather than the latter can't keep up with the pace of the former). The skating and solid defensive work rate allowed him to make a few stops defensively, but he didn't really have any notable offensive moments aside from one rush chance after driving the middle lane, getting the puck from the boards after an entry and then firing from the faceoff dot. I'd need to see more to justify a draft pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 7th, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Jenčko had a bunch of quality scoring chances in this one, amounting to two goals and over a goal worth of xG. The goals were pretty similar, coming from solid finishes after great cross-ice setups, once off the rush and once after a bad OZ turnover. There was another play where Jenčko was first to a loose puck after a bad fumble by the opposing defenceman, getting a partial breakaway as a result. He also flashed some shooting skill aside from the goals, including a pretty solid curl-and-drag attempt that hit the post. The skating could reasonably project as NHL average. The posture is solid and he's shown good crossover usage, some outside edge skill, too. I'm not sure about the offensive sense. The way that he deferred to his teammates multiple times in transition where he had more space than the players he tried to pass to. Didn't have the necessarily aggressiveness of confidence to challenge players 1-on-1 when he probably could have. Not sure about the playmaking skill overall.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Jenčko had a couple of interesting flashes. He looked a bit more explosive than previously, using it to drive players wide or just

beat them to the inside in-zone in some pretty impressive sequences, drawing two penalties in the process. These might not be the most projectable ways to generate your offence at the next level, though, and there's some clear holes, too. The handling seems pretty inconsistent and there are times where he just skates into trouble, not planning his plays properly and instead trying to just push the play up at any cost.

Lassi Alanen: November 2nd, 2022 - Malmö Redhawks vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Jenčko's skating posture looked pretty solid overall. Pretty consistently solid ankle flexion, very consistent upper-back, good knee bend, etc.. Not sure if the output was quite as good, though, and everything looked like he's already pretty mature physically, so there might be limited room for growth in the future. I was also pleasantly surprised with some passes in transition, having the patience to wait and find a teammate with a cross-lane feed. Obviously it didn't work out all the time, as there were also some careless passes, too. On the offensive side, he looked more like an energy checker who creates breakups and retrieved pucks, but didn't really show much in the way of offensive skill. We'll have to see whether those things come in the future viewings.

Grade: F



Olle Karlsson

AGE 17.499 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 17, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Örebro HK J18	J18 Region	20	4	13	17	0.85
Örebro HK J18	J18 Nationell	9	2	2	4	0.44
Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	24	2	2	4	0.17

SCOUTING REPORT

It was a rollercoaster draft year for Olle Karlsson who went back and forth between Örebro's J20 and J18 teams, equally splitting his time on each blue line. He capped off the season with a strong performance in the J18 playoffs, playing a significant role in their championship run.

Karlsson looked like he belonged at the J20 level. Though he was evidently raw physically, he used solid four-way mobility to angle out attackers off the rush and maintained a solid gap control through most of the viewings.

The inability to make stops physically started to hurt him once the opposition managed to establish a proper cycle, but he was able to compensate with a good defensive stick.

Though Karlsson made the occasional clever pass from under pressure to help his team start a rush, he tended to have more moments of trouble than success on breakouts. While agile, he didn't often have enough quickness to beat forecheckers with his feet and had to resort to low-value plays like dump-outs.

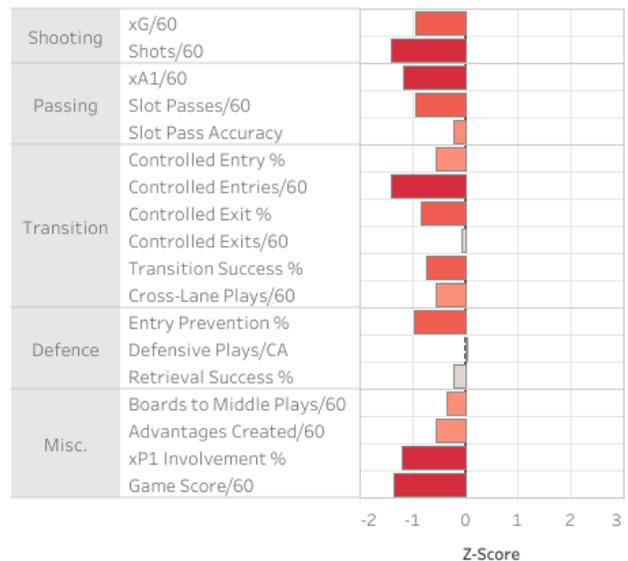
His offence didn't blossom at the J20 level either, though his point totals from lower levels suggest there could be more to come on that front. In the meantime, we ultimately didn't see enough from Karlsson to warrant serious draft consideration.

Olle Karlsson

D | Örebro HK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 80.31

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Lassi Alanen:** February 26th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Another Karlsson viewing where he didn't really stand out in any meaningful way. The rush defence hasn't been as good as it was in some of my earlier viewings; he's getting caught flatfooted more often. Though he still had a few breakups here and there, but also sequences where he probably should've been able to make a stop but let the forward go through him or beat him to the outside. His recovery speed is often fine, but one of those times the opposing team was able to manufacture a rush goal after going around him. I'm not convinced about the offensive upside, either. He's not shown anything else aside from simple plays from the point.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Karlsson actually managed to net his first goal at the J20 level, finding the back of the net with a throwaway shot from pretty much the lowest-percentage angle possible near the point that somehow managed to sneak through. He actually had a much better chance earlier in the game via a pass after turnover bounced to him the slot, but couldn't get a proper release off. I didn't really see any new patterns. He can probably become pretty solid defensively given his mobility and already pretty good defensive stick and some defensive instincts in terms of when to strike and where to position. The puck-moving has been really hit-and-miss. He makes some really nice small passes into space from under pressure, but doesn't really leverage his skating on the breakout and turns the puck over a lot, often deferring to basic dump-outs. Haven't seen any offensive creativity in these games, either.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

I'm not really sure if I see anything that would set Karlsson apart from your average mobile defenceman of his age. He's agile, not particularly quick but could reasonably get to - at least close to - an average NHL stride with further strength training. He can make the occasional clever, small feed to get himself and his team from under forechecking pressure. Haven't seen much puck-rushing from him and there are also a lot of dump-outs and ill-timed passing attempts on breakouts. Doesn't really stand out offensively, didn't log any shot contributions in this one. Can break up the odd play with active stick work and using the skating to shadow his man, but lacks stopping power along the boards. I'd need to see more flashes with the puck.

Lassi Alanen: December 7th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Karlsson has been bouncing between the J20 and J18 levels to start the season. I thought he looked like he could hang at this level regularly. There were some solid moments of skating skill and decent rush defending. Gap control was pretty solid throughout, though he wasn't also challenged that much. Physically still pretty much under development, couldn't really stop plays once the opponent got the establish a cycle. One nice sequence in the OZ where he was able to maintain possession after recovering the puck after a shot, then was able to turn it into a short pass to the inside, eventually leading to a goal. Not sure if there's NHL upside, but he could be someone to take a closer look at throughout the season.



Grade: F

Kristian Kostadinski

AGE 17.323 DATE OF BIRTH May 20, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'5"	214 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	6.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Region	6	1	7	8	1.33
Frölunda HC J18	J18 Nationell	9	0	2	2	0.22
Frölunda HC J20	J20 Nationell	43	2	8	10	0.23
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	14	0	2	2	0.14
Sweden U18	WJC-18	5	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

If you're looking to add some size to your system, look no further than Kristian Kostadinski. The 6-foot-5 defenceman was a mainstay with Sweden's U18 team this season, in addition to regularly logging over 20 minutes per night with Frölunda's J20 program.

While Kostadinski's play didn't impress our staff in the first half of the season, he started to show some signs of promise in our later viewings. Most notably, he improved on retrievals and breakouts by starting to shoulder-check and scan his surroundings more frequently. He showed more poise with the puck, although he often wanted to keep things as simple as possible. His gap control also got a bit tighter and he was able to punish opponents along the boards with his physicality.

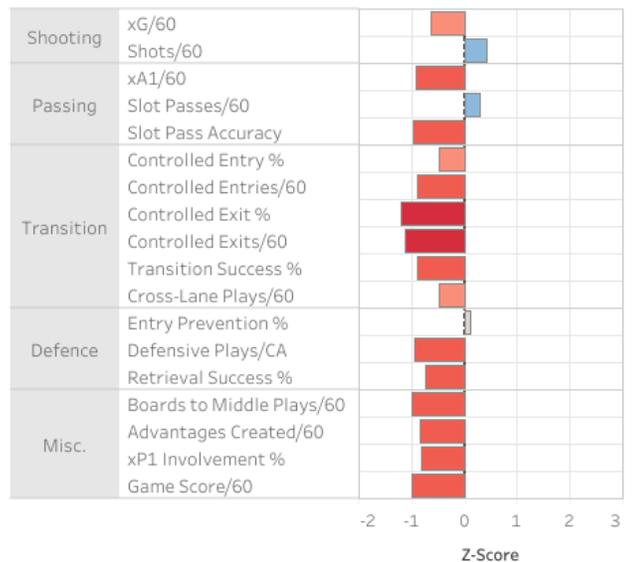
Even with better habits, though, Kostadinski still has a long way to go if he wants to earn a regular shift in the professional ranks. He's still very limited by his below-average skating and handling, even if he's likely got a bit more developmental leeway in these areas due to his size. Some of his defensive reads also left to be desired and his style of defending often resulted in penalties.

Kristian Kostadinski

D | Frölunda HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 151.5

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



Even if he becomes a more fluid skater and a more competent handler, he's likely going to become a fringe bottom-pairing option at best. Still, Kostadinski is someone whose progress we're going to monitor in the upcoming years.

≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** April 25th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Germany - U18s

Kostadinski wasn't highly tested by the Germans but he still had trouble with the pace. He skates quite well on a short straight-line distance but has trouble with moving in other directions, especially switching from forward to backward on the rush. He seems to know where he is supposed to be but easily loses his balance and technique when forced to make quick turns. His passing is also quite good if he has time and while he struggles when he is tightly checked. His puck control close to his feet is not impressive either. If he can sort out his mobility and technical flaws, I think this is an interesting player long term.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Kostadinski showed good patience with the puck. He varied his play and showed that he could see more than one option. He had time and space to do so too at this level. I don't see the skill for this at higher levels. His handling isn't impressive but at least he showed good sense with the puck in this game.

His skating looked poor though and turning from backwards skating to forward isn't pretty to watch. He fell one time that directly led to a break away goal for the other team. You can't just be big anymore. He needs to work on both his skating and stickhandling technique to become a professional player.

Lassi Alanen: March 12th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

I don't see Kostadinski as a pick. There's just not enough things to get excited about aside from the size and the reach. I'll give him that he's been improving his retrievals, becoming a bit more aware and adding more patience. On breakouts, he can make the odd good read and passing play, even if he doesn't have much upside as a puck-carrier. Sometimes, he does just panic and pass blindly to the middle for a terrible turnover, but my estimation is that they're becoming fewer, at least at this level of play. Offence revolves around his shot from the point, which has snap behind it but isn't a particular threat. He has started to dabble a bit into activations off the rush, also making the occasional switch-off play along the boards. Skating is probably a 4 grade, same goes for the handling. Doesn't really fit into our drafting ideology.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Kostadinski has flashes of willingness to experiment more from the point. The usual play is just to step outside, then fire in the hopes of a possible deflection, but he had a few plays where he showed some hesitation, then tried to pass to the inside. He lacks refinement in many areas, this included. Many of the passes missed their intended target and had too much power behind them for being reasonable. His NZ defence was a bit better, he angled plays more effectively towards the boards and stepped up a couple of times when he saw an opportunity to do so. The default play is still to concede a lot of space first, then try to use his reach to get in the way of a possible rush shot. Not sure how to grade out the skating exactly, but it's definitely below-average projection to some degree, mobility being the key issue. Some defensive issues concerning positional play and reads.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Many of the same tendencies from previous viewings were here. Kostadinski isn't much of an advantage creator at this stage. He can log a lot of ice time without being too noticeable, not in a good or bad way. His line did get scored on, but he had a hard task at trying to defend a 3-on-1 odd-man rush, though admittedly not doing a very good job at trying to do so. Still scans quite often on retrievals and breakouts, but lacks technical skills and pace in his decision-making. There's also a lack of quickness that hurts his ability on closeouts, leaving him reliant on just trying to leverage his size advantage and play near the grey area. His boxouts in front of the net are solid, I'll give him that.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Kostadinski logged a ton of ice time in this one, including over 20 minutes at just 5-on-5. He found his way on the scoresheet

after a magnificent play from his teammate Otto Stenberg, who set him up for an open look from the top of the circle and Kostadinski ended up finding enough space high on the far side. His shot is a weird one. Probably ties into his handling issues, but he often doesn't seem to be in full control of the puck when he shoots, leaving the attempts being somewhat weird-looking and inaccurate. It's the pace of the operations that is the biggest problem with Kostadinski alongside with the mechanical rawness. On retrievals, he scanned both sides, but the second one was so late that it basically happened as he got the puck, and he couldn't make the pass quickly enough and got stripped. When he's challenged more on breakouts, similar issues appear. The mobility and handling are both below-average projections. I liked how he cut back on pressure in the NZ on one re-group, then dished a cross-ice pass to the other side for a clean entry, but that was pretty much the only impressive play he made with the puck (aside from the goal). Obviously he's big and rangy and can create breakups just with sheer force. His play style does lead to a lot of minor penalties; his play-killing isn't exactly refined. The upside is likely a fringe bottom-pairing option and even then, there's refinement needed both from mechanical and hockey sense perspectives.

David St-Louis: December 12th, 2022 - Sweden vs Latvia - WJAC

Kostadinski lacked the speed/acceleration to make some closeouts. He's tall, has range, and can play physical (he laid a couple of hits) but the mobility will have to come if he is to become an NHLer. It seems unlikely, however, considering he wasn't all that comfortable with the puck, panicking and looking for the most immediate outlet, often an uncontrolled play.

Lassi Alanen: November 23th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Kostadinski remains big, physical defenceman who makes the odd simple positive play with the puck, intercepts some of the passes to the net-front and breaks up the odd play behind the net. Aside from that, I don't see much. Skating, handling are both issues. While his breakouts were a bit better than in my previous viewings and he showed a bit more poise with the puck, he still has big trouble at maneuvering under pressure in either zone. Not a player I'd use a pick on, but he's probably going to go relatively high anyway.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Another lacklustre performance from Kostadinski. He's really struggling to make controlled plays when there's any sort of challenge or forecheck going on. Fumbled one easy puck completely, resulting in a high-danger chance against. Skating and handling both rate below-average. But I don't think he's that effective defensively either. Sure, his presence and physicality can be effective, but more often than not, they don't really result in anything meaningful. And if he creates a breakup, he's likely to turn the puck over anyway. You really need a lot of imagination if you're going to draft this player.

Lassi Alanen: October 25th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

I have a very hard time seeing Kostadinski as a pick. Struggled to move the puck when pressured and even his dump-out attempts were mostly unsuccessful. The skating is a big issue and especially showed when he tried to defend against the rush, getting beaten both to the inside and wide. Sure, he's big and physical, but also seems to take a lot of unnecessary penalties and doesn't really have enough quickness defensively to be a true playkiller. Offence consisted of a couple of point shots, but he was clearly the least involved player in that area when he was on the ice. Puck skills rate pretty comfortably below-average.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Frölunda HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Kostadinski can be a pretty awkward skater at times. Tripped up on his own feet during a rush defence sequence, lacks mobility, etc.. Probably grades out as below-average on our scale. He did make some nice passing plays throughout the game, though. Some quality cross-lane breakouts through pressure, one nice feed to the slot from the boards in the offensive end. Defensive game looked quite reactive and he didn't have quite the quickness to make stops effectively despite the huge frame and reach. Also took a very dumb boarding penalty.

Grade: F



Anton Ohlsson

AGE 17.907 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'1"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Brynäs IF J20 "A"	J20 Nationell	45	14	20	34	0.76
Brynäs IF	SHL	3	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U19 (all)	International-Jr	4	1	1	2	0.50

SCOUTING REPORT

There hasn't been much hype around Anton Ohlsson coming into the draft despite putting together a pretty solid overall resume.

He already played the majority of his games at the J20 level last season and was the second-most productive player on that same Brynäs team this season, helping him to earn a couple of games in the SHL. He also made his international debut in February.

There were times when Ohlsson looked like a potential late-round bet, mostly due to the playmaking skill. It's not a coincidence we evaluated passing as his best tool. Some of the passing lanes he saw from time to time were quite impressive and he was also able to execute on them quite regularly. He has a competent delay game, able to cut back and then find the trailer or slip the puck to the middle. One could make the argument that he'd have scored more on a different team.

If you leave the playmaking aside, there's not much else to suggest Ohlsson is a worthy pick. He's decently smart, but lacks high-end awareness or anticipation. Skating and handling both get slightly below-average grades, too.

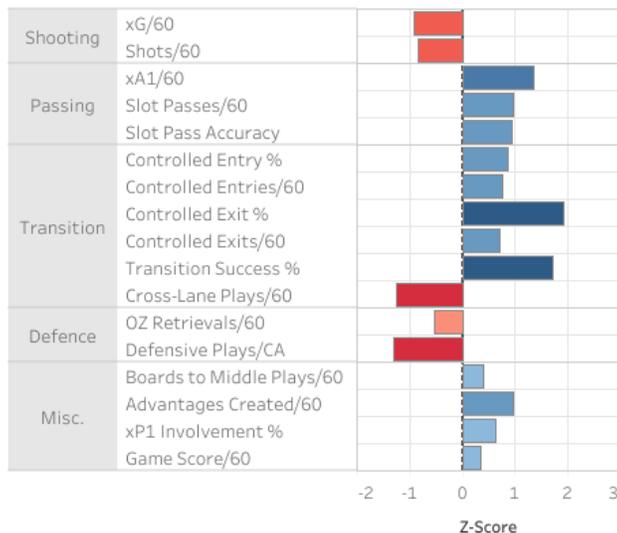
He's also on the older side for this year's draft. Worse players will likely get picked in the latter half of the draft, but we ultimately didn't find room for Ohlsson on our board.

Anton Ohlsson

F | Brynäs IF | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 81.42

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** March 18th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Linköpings HC - J20 Nationell

Anton became the hero by scoring the game winner in the last minute of the game. It was a play where he found a gap in the middle on the rush and finished with a nice wrist shot from the slot. Other than that, this was a low-event game for Ohlsson even though he played over 21 minutes. He works hard but is not a strong board player and rarely retrieves the puck. He did set up a few scoring chances but he lacks high-end tools. His speed is below average and stickhandling is average at best. He can't open up space with his hands or manipulate space. He doesn't have the puck as much as needed to use his playmaking skills. I can't see him being a pick in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: March 3rd, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

A pretty mediocre showing from Ohlsson here. Didn't really get his usual playmaking going on, was forced to just cycle on the outside or try to get the puck to the net with low-percentage shots. The skill level doesn't seem that high at the end of the day, mishandled the puck multiple times in scenarios where he shouldn't. He did a fine job at finishing his routes off the rush, but wasn't able to establish body positioning consistently enough, so the pass attempts weren't fruitful. Work rate is around average. Doesn't really rate as a particularly stout defensive player in my viewings. Likes to reach with his stick instead of taking the extra stride to prevent an entry, for example. Probably not a pick, though I've seen worse draft-eligibles ranked from Sweden.

Jimmy Hamrin: February 10th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Finland - U20 Four Nations

Ohlsson has decent 4-way mobility which helps him to receive the puck and to quickly make a play. He isn't a fast player though and his speed is below average. He didn't get much going offensively but he worked hard defensively and was trusted to play 3 on 5 and did a good job. He forechecked well but didn't have any luck breaking up plays. In this game, I didn't see anything that I would be able to sell to an NHL upper management to use a pick on.

Lassi Alanen: January 31st, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Ohlsson's playmaking skill seems legit. He had multiple impressive sequences in this one, actually surprising even me (who has the benefit of seeing everything from a clear angle) with some of the lanes he was able to find. One particular play where he used the threat of the shot but slipped the puck cross-ice instead. Another quality scoring chance that he set up from behind the net earlier in the game that had the goalie completely out of position but somehow his linemate couldn't convert. I feel like on a team like Frölunda, Ohlsson would easily have produced more so far. The finishing talent just doesn't seem to be there with his teammates most of the time. It's debatable how much else there is with Ohlsson, though. He's not that dynamic, not the biggest shooting threat (despite the flashes of in-stride shooting ability). Hard to get a read on his handling. He does make some smart plays with his stick, tapping the opponent's stick in the middle of handling, etc.. But the handling also looks a bit awkward at times, not very smooth. The skating is probably a 4.5 grade on our scale. Maybe a worthwhile bet to make in the later rounds.

Lassi Alanen: January 14th, 2023 - Brynäs IF vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Ohlsson continues to flash some intriguing abilities. He has a solid delay game off the rush with puck, showed it off by cutting back on pressure, then slipping a puck to the middle lane for a high-danger chance. Connected with a teammate in the slot multiple times in this one; the playmaking overall looked quite solid. The skating is a bit puzzling; at times it can look up to an average NHL projection based on his quickness and some solid crossover-heavy acceleration patterns through the neutral zone, but I'm not quite sure if I'm at that point with the overall stride mechanics and other skating fundamentals. He's not a particularly skilled handler, but there's pretty legit-looking passing skill, adapting the angles and being comfortably from the backhand, too.

Lassi Alanen: November 26th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Ohlsson had a couple of looks at 5-on-5, mainly off the rush. He has some skill, and he also flashed some quickness and decent acceleration patterns. Flashed the ability to shoot in-stride, and also had a few moments of craftiness with the puck. Overall,

though, it wasn't a particularly noteworthy performance. There weren't really any flashes of similar interesting playmaking skill compared to the previous one. Not creating advantages as consistently. He did end up drawing a penalty in a rush sequence where he tried to beat the defender to the outside, and had enough quickness to gain leverage so the defender ended up tripping him.

Lassi Alanen: November 4th, 2022 - Brynäs IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

I feel like Ohlsson should've walked away from this game with a point or two, but was ultimately held off the scoresheet. Had a bunch of scoring chances for himself and also set up multiple high-quality ones for his linemates. His own chances came from pretty meticulous off-puck positioning, understanding space and how to employ it, playing between checks, delaying without the puck off the rush to create room for a pass. The playmaking skill was arguably more exciting, though. Some gravitational elements, knowing how to draw in defender off the rush, then pass to the inside. Executed his key passes with a high success rate. Skating had a few quirks; he didn't really complete his strides fully, especially with the right leg, lacked a bit of ankle flexion, hips stayed rather high. He's a worthwhile player to keep tabs on as the season progresses despite being on the older side for this class.

Grade: F



Hugo Pettersson

AGE 17.375 DATE OF BIRTH May 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'0"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HV71 J18	J18 Region	5	3	2	5	1.00
HV71 J18	J18 Nationell	2	1	1	2	1.00
HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	45	12	15	27	0.60
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	16	2	1	3	0.19

SCOUTING REPORT

Among the players who failed to make our final ranking, Hugo Pettersson produced some of the best single-game performances our team scouted at the J20 level. His overall bottom line suffered from a couple of dry spells early in the season, but he was still a regular fit in the Tre Kronor internationally, even if he played a bit role at the U18s.

As mentioned earlier, Pettersson had games where he looked like a pick. In these viewings, he drove the play aggressively, consistently created quality looks off the rush and flashed high-level playmaking skill.

Even during quiet games, Pettersson's shooting usually stood out, both in terms of volume but also the skill. He's got a particularly projectable catch-and-release wrist that he used to regularly beat goalies from mid-range.

Unfortunately, there were also many games where Pettersson's overall output left a lot to be desired. He maintained a high shot volume, but often left value on the table as an undiscerning shooter content to fire the puck from low percentage spot, frequently off the rush and directly after entering the zone. We can attribute some of this to a lack of quickness and the lack of strength to maintain possession along the boards.

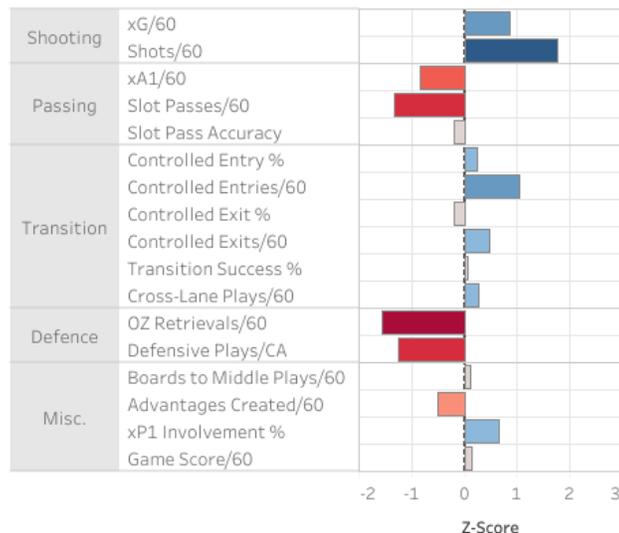
Pettersson's small-area game will have to improve greatly if he wants to break out in the professional ranks. He could really pop at the J20 level next year, but we ultimately didn't see enough to warrant a spot on our board.

Hugo Pettersson

F | HV71 J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 135.3

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"His physical status is off the charts. An amazing guy in practice. Has one of the best shots in the league." – HV71 J20 head coach Partrik Andersson, January 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 20th, 2023 - Canada vs. Sweden - U18s

Even though Sweden had a fairly good game winning 8-0, Pettersson did not impress. He had a hard time getting into the right positions to use his shot even though he played over 5 min on the PP. He worked hard on the forecheck and won some battles but that was probably the most value he brought to the game. He is a physically strong shoot-first forward but he lacks to understand how he needs to play to get those looks. He isn't proactive and when he gets the puck it takes him a second too long to make a play. His timing to support in transition wasn't good either and he had few puck touches throughout the game.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 31st, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Hugo is strong on the puck and he covers the puck well. He has strong balance and is strong in physical battles. Hugo has a dangerous shot and he scored from outside the circles with a clear view for the goalie. Hugo has decent handling skills. He can't manipulate or control space with either his hands or senses. He isn't an explosive skater that can beat opponents with pure speed. His vision, both with and without the puck, isn't impressive. I can't see a pick in him and if so, it's in the 7th round. He has tools but can't execute on a regular basis because his reads and proactiveness is lacking.

Lassi Alanen: February 3rd, 2023 - HV71 vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

I have a hard time seeing Pettersson as a pick in these three previous viewings after an unquestionably great game. He's just not moving the needle that much when he's on the ice. The playmaking flashes haven't been there at all, pretty much solely focusing on opportunities to get the puck in space in the NZ, enter the zone and try to fire quickly. When he tried to establish OZ possession, he was always outnumbered and outmuscled along the boards. Maybe you could say that in a different environment, his skill set could be unlocked more, but the projection is overall very tough based on the majority of the tape.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2023 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Another very quiet game from Pettersson. They did play against the best team in the league, and from what I've seen, he's not exactly a player who thrives in situations like these. He is a rather predictable player to defend. He's never seen a shooting opportunity he didn't like, often just firing right away after entering the zone. He does have the cutback move in his backpocket, but didn't really work here. He doesn't really have the quickness or strength to pull off the brute force approach he tried to use off the rush for the most part. When he doesn't have space, his effectiveness goes down big-time.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2023 - HV71 vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

After a strong showing in the previous viewing, Pettersson returned my expectations back to the original level with this one. Just coasted on the outside for the majority of the game. When he got puck touches in transition, he either failed on his entry attempts or launched shots from low-percentage angles. His line had real trouble establishing any sort of sustained OZ pressure, so the few contributions all came off the rush. He flashes the ability to evade pressure with a cutback, but often just turns around and shoots instead of looking to pass or gain a better shooting position. The lack of speed and strength were both issues.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - HV71 vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

A lots of really good stuff from Pettersson in this one. He took things into his own hands, being the driver of the offence for his

line, which hasn't been the case in all of my viewings. Entered the zone, delayed, dropped the puck to a teammate, relocated towards the slot, got the puck back and launched a beautiful catch-and-release wrister to beat the goalie high on the glove side. There were more flashes of legit playmaking skill, too. One superb pass off the rush to the middle that he completely hid with his body language and eyes; didn't see that sort of deception from him previously. He still struggles a bit with the pressure, doesn't have advanced puck protection details or strength. Hugs the puck too much sometimes, once turning the puck over at the top of the OZ blue line as the lowest man, but really hustled hard on the backcheck and was able to intercept a partial 2v0 pass by diving with his stick as the spear. Skating stride is choppy and hurts his projection, but he'll need to be looked at more seriously than I thought before. Easily the best game I've seen from Pettersson this season.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

This was probably the best game I've watched from Pettersson this season. He was shiftier than in previous viewings, actually creating more advantages himself rather than just relying on being an off-puck guy on his line. The skill level is probably a bit higher than I previously thought and he has some playmaking chops, too, even if he's mostly just taking advantage of the opportunities that are in front of him rather than manufacturing the best play. Still a shoot-first mindset, I'd say.

Lassi Alanen: November 23rd, 2022 - HV71 vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Pretty much in line with my previous Pettersson viewings. He was a bit better at managing pressure along the boards in the OZ, keeping the pressure on his back without folding under physical contact and doing a better job at extending the play. Still, mostly an off-puck player in the offensive end, lurking and then striking a few times per game off turnovers and such. Did a bit more work in transition than in previous viewings, but nothing too noteworthy. Still don't really see the pick value here.

Lassi Alanen: October 30th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Pettersson's value comes mostly down to his knack for getting open off the rush or in the slot (mostly the former, though he did get another high-danger scoring chance after the opponent turned the puck over in the DZ and he received the puck in prime scoring location). He can make the occasional crafty feed and connect plays, but he's not creating that many advantages himself, mostly taken advantage of what comes his way. Skating rates as at least slightly below-average, and the skill level doesn't seem that special, nor is he a high-end finisher. Probably not a pick.

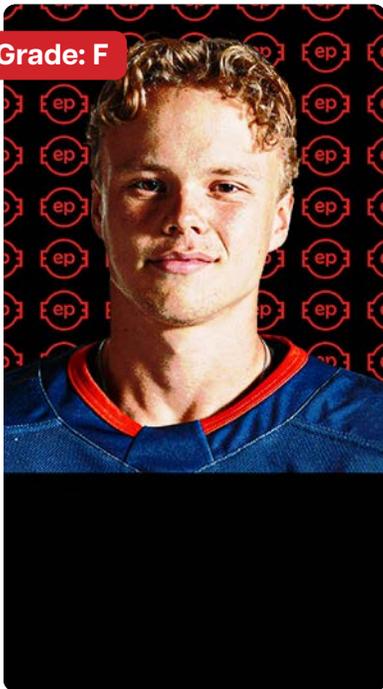
Lassi Alanen: October 9th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

I don't know if Pettersson is much of a play driver. Got multiple scoring chances at evens, but with smart timing off the rush (coming down the weak side, becoming a passing option at the right time and releasing from the faceoff dot) or by being in the slot as a target when his teammate intercepted a terrible breakout pass by the opponent. Doesn't do much defensively most of the time, but then one time laid a massive open-ice hit in the neutral zone. Couldn't really do much off the cycle when pressured along the boards. Playmaking is a question mark.

Lassi Alanen: September 24th, 2022 - HV71 vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Pettersson has some sneaky skill. He's on the smaller side and physically very much in development, but he didn't hesitate to attack the middle off the rush from the boards, beating a defender a couple of times doing so. Scored off the rush with one-timer after a cross-ice pass during a 3v2 situation. Had another rush chance by smartly adapting his skating route to delay and then accelerate to receive the puck in-motion. The flashes were nice, even if he wasn't dominating. The skating looked fine, probably close to 4.5 on our scale. You'd hope he'd have a bit more quickness for his stature. Didn't really contribute defensively and drifted outside of the play when he didn't have the puck.

Grade: F



Elis Rix

AGE 17.422 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Region	15	8	10	18	1.20
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Nationell	14	9	9	18	1.29
Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	28	2	5	7	0.25

SCOUTING REPORT

Elis Rix's pro-ready frame and decent historical production at lower levels helped him generate some draft buzz early in the season, but he ultimately failed to establish himself as a full-time fit with Växjö Lakers' J20 squad, instead playing half of the games at the J18 level.

The 6-foot-2 winger had the occasional impressive moment, often by beating defenders to the inside off the rush with slick moves. He also got a fair share of quality looks from the net-front, but lacked the finishing touch to actually convert them into goals; Rix only scored twice in 28 games at the J20 level.

In terms of actual play-driving, Rix wasn't yet ready to deliver. He was often ineffective in transition aside from the occasional breakout pass to the middle, fumbling a lot of rather easy pucks. The skating also likely projects as at least slightly below-average tool given the lack of ankle flexion.

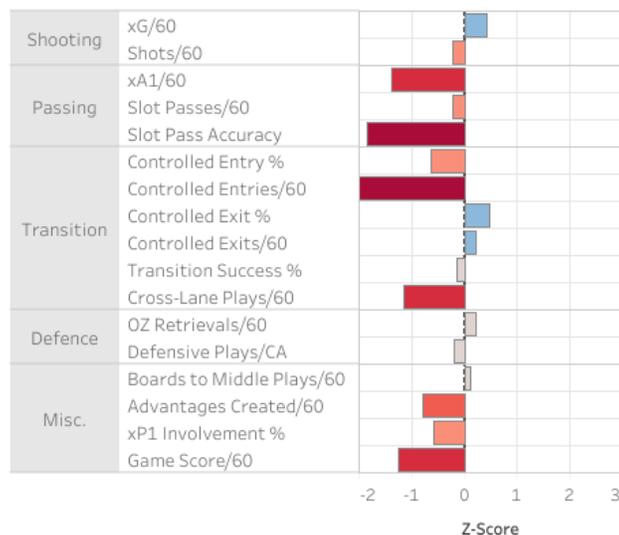
There's a chance that Rix is a late-bloomer and his development takes off in the upcoming years, but picking him at this stage would require a lot of projection and imagination.

Elis Rix

F | Växjö Lakers HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 72.13

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: March 25th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers vs. Västerås IK - J20 Playoffs

Elis has the size and skating ability to become a player. He had some really good efforts in this game where he took the puck to the net with speed and strong puck protection. His stick handling is inconsistent and sometimes he loses the puck too easily

and can also miss a simple pass. Other times he made some nice passes into open space to create a scoring chance. He likes to attack on the rush and often seeks a chance to take off in his own zone which leads him to miss coverage in his own end. His mind often looks to be at offense even in his own end. I wouldn't rule him out late in the draft. The size and speed makes him interesting.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 1st, 2023 - Växjö Lakers vs. Malmö Redhawks - J18 Nationell

Elis had a good game. He scored two goals early in the game and looked poised all game long. He is a big sized forward that skates well. He covers and travels well with the puck. The hockey sense doesn't impress and he doesn't strike me as a planner or a scanner. He plays to his instincts and needs room to create. I didn't see any evidence that he is aware of space when he plays. A typical raw talent with physical tools but needs to learn the game better.

Lassi Alanen: December 10th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Rix doesn't seem to have almost any finishing touch. He's had quite a few chances to score and here he had the best after being left completely open in the net-front and receiving a very sneaky cross-crease pass from behind the net, but whiffed on the shot attempt completely. On the other hand, his playmaking from the boards was a bit better in this one, actually finding the best play a few times and using his body effectively to carve up space in tight.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Not really much to write about here. One scoring chance for Rix from yet another behind-the-net feed from a teammate. I guess his timing to get open was good, though. Other than that, very invisible for most of the game. Struggled to complete passes off the rush, handling projects as below-average. Had the puck in prime location off the rush after a great feed from a teammate, but didn't have enough separation quickness and then fumbled a spin pass attempt. He has the frame and okay stride overall, but that's about it.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Rix was clearly the third-most involved player on his line – not a great sign. He can make the odd nice pass in transition (from the boards to the middle) and can get some quality looks if his teammates set him up for them, but he's not the one who creates the advantage. Best play of the game was carrying the puck through the middle for an entry and then releasing pretty dangerously from the top of the left circle. Could've prevented a goal if he scanned more frequently in DZ. He's a player who's going to be all projection, as he's not producing much at all at this level currently.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Rix did have his fair share of scoring chances in this one. Could've buried one after being five seconds on the ice, coming straight to the slot and receiving a pass from behind the net that he ended up missing on. Had another similar chance later in the game and another one off the rush after picking up a loose puck near the faceoff dot. Other than those, he was very invisible. Skating stride still lacked ankle flexion, made a couple of easy handling errors (although also one nice deke for an exit).

Lassi Alanen: September 7th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Rix made one really nice play off the rush, attacking the defender in an arc, beating him to the inside with a nice move, and even tried to set up a free goal with a cross-lane pass but Frölunda defender was just able to lift the stick so Rix' linemate couldn't get the shot off. Obviously it was basically a breakaway so Rix could've looked to shoot himself, but the pass choice was reasonable as it would've been a guaranteed goal hadn't the defender made the hero play. Otherwise, Rix didn't do much noteworthy. He did net a secondary assist, but didn't make any high-end plays anywhere. Some solid passing on breakouts to beat pressure and get the puck to the middle. Skating stride lacked some mechanical refinement. Maybe a player to keep an eye on this season?



Jacob Sagadin

AGE 17.463 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 30, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C Position	Left Shoots
6'0" Height	181 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Region	8	1	5	6	0.75
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Nationell	4	1	0	1	0.25
Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	39	4	10	14	0.36
Växjö Lakers HC	SHL	1	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18	WJC-18	7	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	12	0	1	1	0.08

SCOUTING REPORT

Jacob Sagadin's production at the J20 level doesn't exactly align with most NHL prospects, but he was still able to establish himself as a bottom-six fixture on Sweden's U18 team in his draft year, even holding down a bit part at the U18s in Switzerland.

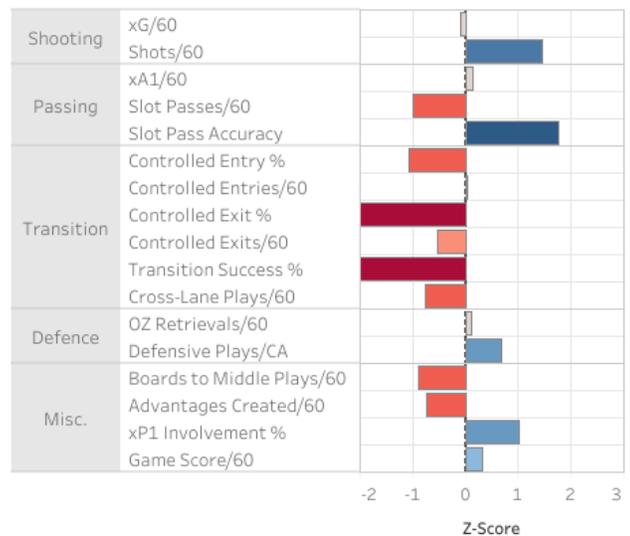
Most of the time, Sagadin looks like a potential energy forward for the SHL. He works hard without the puck, pursues the middle to draw pressure to himself while creating space for his linemates and retrieving loose pucks after dump-ins and shot attempts. While his stride tended to break down later in shifts and games, he compensated with his work ethic and remained useful in most situations.

Later in the season, Sagadin started to have more promising moments offensively, including the occasional quick pass from the boards to the slot, although he's still got a strong shoot-first mentality.

In the end, Sagadin doesn't have any high-end tools and lacks upside as a potential draft pick, but he could turn into a fringe bottom-six option if everything breaks right.

Jacob Sagadin

F | Växjö Lakers HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 74.31
Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** April 29th, 2023 - Sweden vs. Canada - U18s

Sagadin played in a limited role but brought energy to the team. His forechecking is incredibly tenacious and he chases the puck carrier like a predator chases food, even when the score is 7-2 when a minute left. His speed and pace keeps up well at this level. He didn't provide much value with the puck though other than a few good zone entries.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 22nd, 2023 - Västerås IK vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Playoffs

Jacob is fun to watch but not an NHL prospect. His intensity and work ethics are terrific. He is an explosive skater with a stride that looks so angry like it's trying to hurt the ice. He can support play in transition but as soon as he gets the puck he just starts to skate in a straight line to get an offensive zone entry. Everything he does, he does at full speed, which isn't only a good thing. He created a goal though by winning a board battle and taking the puck towards the net. Close to the net he makes a quick pass into the slot to the scorer. Sagadin has an offensive drive and can beat opponents with speed and tenacity but long-term he is a bottom six energy player.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Sagadin has seemingly found a new level during these past few viewings. He's still not scoring much, but the performances are actually very solid overall and he - in all likelihood - should have gotten a point or two in this one. He just plays really fast, and can overwhelm opponents off the rush if he gets to attack with space. Fought really hard for pucks all the time, outworking defenders to gain the zone or maintain possession in the OZ. Flashes of some playmaking ability, though it's not consistent. Still a shoot-first mindset overall, I'd say. The shot just doesn't seem like a particularly good weapon at this point, unfortunately. If some team picks him in the last rounds based on these 2023 viewings, maybe they could have a potential bottom-six grinder if everything breaks right.

Lassi Alanen: January 6th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Probably the best game I've seen from Sagadin so far. He wasn't dominating by any means, but was actually turning more of his forechecking and off-puck sequences into actual scoring chances, including one particularly nice one-touch pass near the end boards to the slot for a scoring chance. It was hard to tell if he just got lucky and the puck bounced from his stick at the right angle or whether he tried that pass, but I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt here. Still not sold that the skill level is particularly noteworthy, but he could turn into a useful player at the next level given his work rate and defensive value that he can bring with his backchecking and willingness to take the extra stride.

Lassi Alanen: November 25th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Sagadin seemed to play most of the game as a centre but then also seemed to take some shifts on the wing. Nice forechecking steal in one of the first shifts of the game, and he was also able to make the pass to create a high-danger chance to follow. Unfortunately there weren't any really notable offensive moments afterwards. Sagadin seems like a pretty basic forechecker/energy forward whose hands can't really keep up with the feet and the pace that he tries to push. Sometimes the sheer pace and pressure results in a positive thing or a chance, but often times it's a bit counterproductive. I don't see a pick here, at least based on these two games.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Sagadin looked like more of a grinder type. Worked hard off-puck, tried to get to the middle and draw pressure, retrieved pucks on dump-ins, backchecked relatively hard. The stride did break down quite a bit as the shifts continued, probably at least a slightly below-average skating projection overall, unless further strength development does wonders. Heavily reliant on his inside edges. Had a few scoring chances when he got the puck with space to step into off the rush or when his linemate connected with him in the slot, but I didn't see much in the way of concrete skill or off-puck instincts. Will have to see how he progresses over the course of the season.

Grade: F



Lukas Sagranden

AGE 17.630 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 28, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'8"	159 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Örebro HK J18	J18 Region	4	3	2	5	1.25
Örebro HK J18	J18 Nationell	5	6	2	8	1.60
Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	38	6	14	20	0.53
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	11	1	3	4	0.36

SCOUTING REPORT

Bringing a lot of energy and punch in a 5-foot-8 package, Lukas Sagranden put together a good season with Örebro's J20 squad and finished the year with a championship at the J18 level. While he didn't make the cut for the U18s, he appeared in most other notable international events.

Reaching the NHL at his size and without high-end offensive tools will always be an uphill battle for Sagranden, but there are reasons to believe he'll be able to carve out a good career in the professional ranks in Europe.

His skating grades out slightly above-average on our 1-to-9 linear grading scale. As Elite Prospects Dir. of European scouting Lassi Alanen pointed out in a game report, "He's just really explosive, the first steps are really good and he's able to maintain the speed well. He's mostly a straight-line attacker, but the stride mechanics are pretty solid and there's certainly room to add more crossovers and line-changing attacks."

Sagranden is not all about the speed either, regularly flashing intriguing playmaking skill – even if the overall output wasn't anything special – and also being rather crafty with his small-area handling.

There seemed to be a clear lack of shooting talent, though; he definitely had the chances to add more than six goals in 38 games at the J20 level.

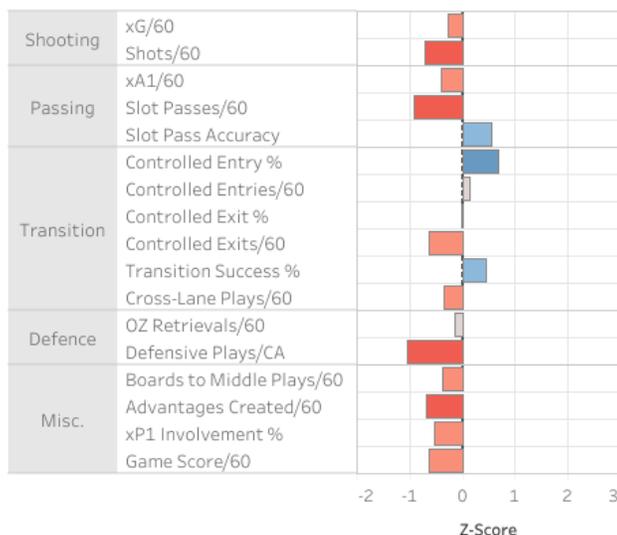
While we didn't currently see Sagranden as a draft pick, he should have the talent level to become a top scorer in the juniors and eventually graduate to further levels.

Lukas Sagranden

F | Örebro HK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 111.5

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Lukas is a good skater with strong lower body balance. He has a strong motor and can make quick turns when he skates with the puck but lacks the ability to vary his pace while carrying the puck. He doesn't show any scanning habits. He works hard and is a dangerous player to give space in the offensive zone. He doesn't have the skills to create space for himself on a consistent basis. I wouldn't pick him in the draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs AIK - J18 Playoffs

Small sized forward with a lot of intensity to his game. He plays at full speed constantly, with and without the puck. He wins puck battles, retrieved the puck on multiple occasions.

He has some nice stickhandling skills too. He can deke an opponent one-on-one and shoot while skating forward. He has a nice wrist shot.

He needs to be better at reading plays and to vary his pace. He has a strong motor but he gets tunnel vision at times. Away from the puck, he reads the forecheck quite well and is good at finding open space to be playable in the offensive end.

Lassi Alanen: February 2nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Pretty much in line with the previous Sagranden viewings. The playmaking hasn't showed that much since the first games I watched, though, so I probably overestimated it a bit earlier in the season. Like he always does, Sagranden had chances to score, again using his skating and anticipation to get odd-man rushes going, but the shot just seems pretty poor and there's a clear lack of finishing talent around the net, too, from what it looks like. Could also be just very unfortunate puck luck, but that seems unlikely at this point. Relatively smart in transition, but sometimes just skates into unfavourable situations when relying too much on the speed. For being listed at 5-foot-8 and 161 pounds, he's relatively strong on his feet, but even with the above-average skating, I think he's a hard projection to the NHL.

Lassi Alanen: January 27th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Another game where Sagranden had plenty of chances to put the puck in the back of the net, including a breakaway chance, but couldn't convert. He did get a secondary assist when his line was able to score from a 3-on-1 rush, but the lack of finishing talent seems pretty notable. The speed off the rush is going to net him chances regularly, and he knows how to get pucks in advantageous spots when he has built up a speed advantage. Brings value on the forecheck and backcheck, and has flashed playmaking skill, but I'm not sure if it's enough for him to be considered a pick.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Sagranden continues to have interesting moments in flashes. The skating is the main weapon, having the explosiveness and top speed to get to loose pucks first and push the pace off the rush, also to backcheck effectively and force dump-ins or create breakups. The finishing talent doesn't seem that good, but the playmaking is better, although we didn't really see it that much in this one. He's got delay game off the rush, not trying to abuse the speed to the outside all the time but cuts back quite often and looks for the trailer. One really nice sequence where he entered down the middle, turned the defender's feet to the outside but then deked to the inside, beating him cleanly and getting a high-danger look in the process.

Lassi Alanen: October 23rd, 2022 - Örebro HK vs Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Sagranden is actually a pretty interesting prospect. I underestimated the skating in my previous report, I think it could reasonably project as above-average. He's just really explosive, the first steps are really good and he's able to maintain the speed well. He's mostly a straight-line attacker, but the stride mechanics are pretty solid and there's certainly room to add more

crossovers and line-changing attacks. Used the quickness and speed to get to a dump-out puck from a clear disadvantage, dropped his shoulder and was able to take the puck inside for a high-danger look. He's not just a speedy winger, though, but also demonstrated good skill and playmaking habits in this one. He used the speed advantage to gain the zone, then delayed slightly and hit the trailing forward in the slot. Also mostly made really good decisions on breakouts, using the middle with well-timed passes to his centre. There could be something here, though it's a bit weird that he's not producing more based on these games.

Lassi Alanen: October 8th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Sagranden set up a few quality chances off odd-man rushes. The passes themselves weren't anything special, just solidly executed obvious feeds to the middle. Also had a breakaway chance after a well-read interception of a D-to-D pass at the top of the blue line, having enough quickness and speed to separate. Skating looked pretty solid overall, not particularly noteworthy but probably close to an average projection at least.

Grade: F



Ian Scherzer

AGE 17.203 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 03, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

6'0"
Height

181 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

5
Skating

4.5
Shooting

4.5
Passing

4.5
Puckhandling

4.5
Hockey Sense

4
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Rögle BK J18	J18 Region	1	1	0	1	1.00
Rögle BK J18	J18 Nationell	7	3	4	7	1.00
Rögle BK J20	J20 Nationell	30	3	4	7	0.23
Austria U20	WJC-20	6	1	3	4	0.67

SCOUTING REPORT

Ian Scherzer made his presence known during the World Juniors when he added four points in six games with Austria. His second season in Sweden with Rögle was less spectacular as he only added seven points in 30 outings with their U20 program.

Scherzer's single-best tool is – without a doubt – his skating, which projects as at least NHL average and he had some moments where one could've argued for even a slightly higher grade.

The rest of the skill set is far less projectable. He often sprinted up the ice immediately when he received the puck, then ran into trouble and didn't have any solutions for advancing the play from there. Handling errors were common at the J20 level and he rarely flashed offensive skill either.

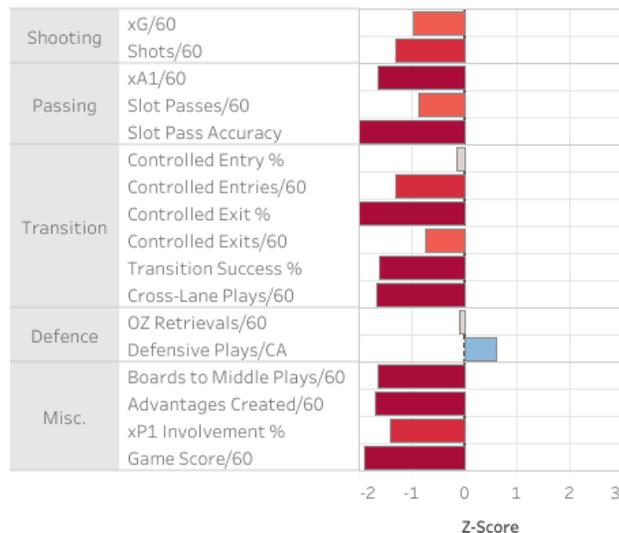
Given his skating and motor, Scherzer could rise up to the professional ranks as a bottom-six energy forward. There's a chance he shows more offensive skill in the upcoming years, but at the moment, there isn't enough there to get excited about his NHL prospects.

Ian Scherzer

F | Rögle BK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 89.11

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: March 4th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J18 Nationell

Scherzer brings energy with his skating. He had the puck more at this level and drove the play more through transition. In the

offensive zone, he rarely opened up space. Most often the space shrunk as he just skated into the opponents. He could seek the inside but he lacks the hands and hockey sense to give himself a good chance to do something with it. Scherzer is a bottom six prospect, who can bring speed and energy. He was quite successful on the forecheck in this game.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 3rd, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Scherzer is a good skater. He has good speed and smooth mobility. The skating isn't above average though and he needs to use energy to keep a high pace. He shows okay puck control but plays simplistic. It looks like he has had a lot of puck in his upbringing and is used to carrying the puck a lot. When he gets the puck, his instinct seems to be to take full action and drive. His puck skills don't look good enough to make big solo plays either. He really needs to develop a better sense of the game if he is to develop into a pro player. His skating is good enough though. All-in-all he didn't have the puck much in this game, and when he had, he didn't make many plays.

Lassi Alanen: February 19th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Pretty much in line with my previous viewings of Scherzer. The skill set isn't very interesting from an NHL perspective, and he has some big issues preventing him from being a more effective scorer at this level. There were a few very awkward scenarios where I feel like he could've and should've gotten a scoring chance, but he always ended up mishandling the puck, failing a pass reception or something similar. I see why people might have more time for him than I do, given that his skating projects at least average or maybe even slightly above-average and that he tries to play with a lot of pace, competes hard, goes to the net for rebounds, etc.. At least there were a few better plays in transition where he made a subtle pass instead of trying to bang his head against the wall (or more appropriately the defensive formation in this case).

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

I have a very hard time seeing Scherzer as anything other than a pure energy guy/grinder. When he gets the puck, he's always going 100 percent immediately. So many sequences where he exploded, carried the puck out of the zone but then ran out of solutions and got stripped in the NZ. The rush patterns aren't dynamic enough and he's also not so quick that he could just outskate opponents consistently to the outside without any other threats and while being outnumbered. I haven't really seen any playmaking skill over the course of all of my viewings at this level. I don't see a pick here.

Lassi Alanen: January 19th, 2023 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

For the amount of ice time Scherzer received, he didn't accomplish much. Again, the transition issues were visible. There was one situation where he tried to move the puck to the NZ with a one-touch pass into space using the boards, but there wasn't literally anyone there and he was also unpressured; a massive issue with awareness. Doesn't seem to scan his surroundings much at all on breakouts. Spent a lot of time on the defensive end as of result. Lacks strength to box out players consistently. He's relatively slippery along the boards despite the lack of strength, but couldn't really convert it into meaningful offence.

Lassi Alanen: October 22nd, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Scherzer scored again, finishing his route to the back post and receiving a tap-in pass from his teammate from a quick counter-attack. Overall, it was a pretty much on par with the previous viewing. He always plays fast, tries to provide value with his skating and does a decent job at it in some aspects. He was able to retrieve the occasional dump-in, backchecked relatively hard. The hands and decision-making aren't always able to keep up with the feet, though. He hasn't shown any notable playmaking and struggled a lot in transition with limited space. Didn't show much poise, often just dumped the puck out or in whenever he was getting closed in on. Physical rawness is a limiting factor.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Rögle BK vs. Frölunda HC - J20 Nationell

Scherzer scored off the rush, employing the open space on the weak side, receiving the pass, stepping to the top of the circle and beating the goalie with a solid release far side. Scherzer's calling card to play at this level is quite clearly his skating, which

could reasonably projects as at least slightly above-average, at least based on quickness and top speed, solid ankle flexion and posture overall. He wasn't a pure straight-line attacker, either, mixing in some crossovers on few lane-changing entries. He did lose his balance a couple of times without any contact. The most notable sequence showing his speed was when he was able to make a potential odd-man rush into a 2v2 despite starting from a pretty big disadvantage but was still able to catch up. The best scoring chance aside from the goal came when he was able to gain some separation along the end boards, saw the empty space in front of the net and went for it with a wrap-around attempt. I just didn't see any notable skill or playmaking in this one, looked like a pretty typical high pace energy forward. Maybe there's more coming.

Grade: F



Albert Schioldan

AGE 17.197 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
HV71 J18	J18 Region	9	3	3	6	0.67
HV71 J18	J18 Nationell	2	0	1	1	0.50
HV71 J20	J20 Nationell	43	5	8	13	0.30
Denmark U18	WJC-18 D1A	5	5	3	8	1.60
Denmark U18 (all)	International-Jr	3	0	0	0	0.00
Denmark U20	WJC-20 D1A	5	1	2	3	0.60

SCOUTING REPORT

Two years ago, Albert Schioldan and Oscar Fisker Mølgaard both decided to make the jump from Denmark to HV71's junior program. While the latter has since separated himself as a true top prospect, Schioldan has also generated some notoriety as a pick, potentially later in the draft.

While Schioldan's production was on the meager side, there's reason to believe it'll increase in the upcoming years. He was already flashing the ability to beat defenders 1-on-1 and gain the inside using his feet and hands, generating scoring chances at a slightly above-average rate for a draft-eligible playing at the J20 level. With better finishing talent, it's plausible he could've doubled his goal total.

While Schioldan showed ability in flashes, he also fumbled a lot of easy pucks in transition and opted for plays too difficult for his skill level. He lacked a delay game off the rush and failed to showcase any high-level playmaking ideas. You have to give it to him for his work rate, though, as he was consistently breaking up plays in the neutral zone and creating turnovers with his motor.

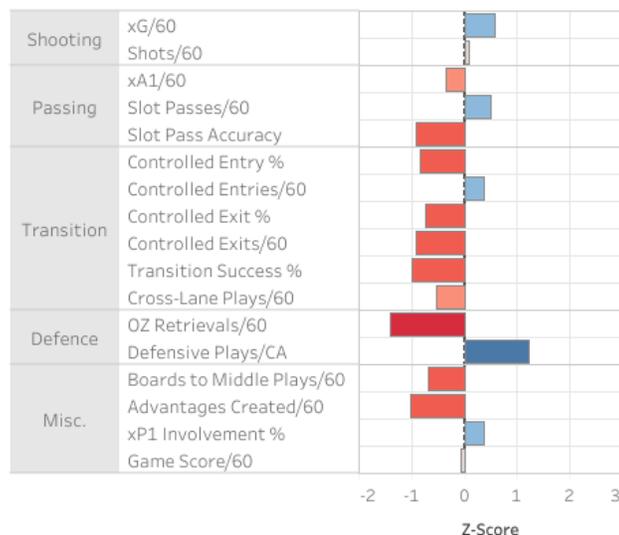
While there doesn't seem to be any NHL-level skills right now, it's also just his second season in Sweden; Schioldan could have a steeper development curve compared to some of his peers.

Albert Schioldan

F | HV71 J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 105.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 30th, 2023 - Sweden vs. USA - U18s

Elliot scored a goal for Sweden in this gold medal game. He buried a wrister from the top of the circles. Other than that, he competes and skates well but rarely retrieves the puck or drives offence. He has good puck skills and speed but none of his tools are over average. He is at best a 4th liner but the most probable projection is an SHL bottom six forward.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 23rd, 2023 - Sweden vs. Czechia - U18s

Elliot has trouble keeping up with the pace at this level. He can skate the pace but loses his handling skills and also makes bad reads. He hasn't been a contributor in any of the first three games in this tournament. He works hard, but not smart. Stock is falling. Is he even a pick?

Jimmy Hamrin: March 11th, 2023 - Färjestads BK vs Almtuna IS - J20 Nationell

Elliot's skating stands out in this game and is his best weapon behind the three points he scored. He has long and powerful strides and can make quick turns. His stickhandling one-on-one is decent, but his overall hockey sense doesn't impress. He is more of a power forward who relies on his first instincts rather than a planner with awareness. For him to be a good bottom six prospect I would like to see him break up the play more.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Färjestad BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg seems to have one or two impressive moments per game, but then he fades to the background for the rest. Here, he scored off the rush after completely taking an opposing defenceman to lunch, pulling the puck across his body as the defender reached, went inside and managed to ram the puck into the net. He also set up one high-danger chance after intercepting a pass below the net and having an open lane to pass to the slot. I still don't think he's a particularly noteworthy playmaker, but he does take advantage of it most of the time if he gets an opportunity. Then again, he made one really bad passing decision in the net-front when he should've just been selfish. The interesting stuff just isn't consistent enough for me to push him to our board.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg had a partial breakaway chance, using his speed to cut to the middle in the NZ, cleverly put himself in the perfect position for a stretch pass, which he used to split the defence but failed to score with a backhand move. Otherwise, it was just a pretty uninteresting showing. He can connect plays quickly from time to time, but the hands very much struggle to keep up with the feet and when he runs out of space, he doesn't really have the tools or ideas to deal with that. I didn't see anything particular defensively either. The skating speed is pretty much the only calling card.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg looked like just a guy in this one for a change. I respect his explosiveness and skating speed, although there's a room for cleaning up when it comes to his mechanics. He's more of a straight-line speedster. He can make the odd passing play off the rush or in the zone, but doesn't really create many advantages. Prefers to play dump-and-chase style that suits his strengths, but couldn't really make it work and failed to establish possession on retrievals for the most part. Maybe I'm not rating his skill level highly enough, but I just haven't seen much to indicate in that direction over these past viewings.

Lassi Alanen: October 30th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Quite clearly a better showing from Ståhlberg here. His playmaking looked quite a bit better. It wasn't just taking advantage of easy openings, but he actually saw a few more difficult passing plays and executed on them with great effect. Also got a breakaway chance by speeding up the middle and catching the defence off their guards, using his quickness to get an

advantage and was also able to hold it. He's still a bit one-dimensional in transition and not much of a problem-solver in that way. Could be an interesting player to look out for, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Färjestad BK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Ståhlberg found his way to the scoresheet after a pretty terrible defensive job by Södertälje, completely forgetting him to the net-front where he received a behind-the-net feed and had a lot of time to bury it. Also had one really nice play off the rush where he embarrassed a defender 1-on-1 with a slick move and got a high-danger look as of result. Otherwise, he looked like a pretty basic forechecking guy. He was quick in spurts and the top speed looked solid, too, but the skating stride was very weird-looking, didn't fully complete his pushes, aggressive heel kick. The handling didn't really pop aside from the one rush play.

Grade: F



Filip Sitar

AGE 17.214 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
AIK J18	J18 Region	13	12	14	26	2.00
AIK J18	J18 Nationell	2	2	1	3	1.50
AIK J20	J20 Nationell	40	17	16	33	0.83
Slovenia U18	WJC-18 D1B	5	3	8	11	2.20

SCOUTING REPORT

Slovenian forward Filip Sitar made the jump to Sweden early in his youth career and was familiar with that circuit well in advance of his draft year. At the J20 level, he was AIK's third-highest scorer with 17 goals and 33 points in 40 games and already made his debut with their HockeyAllsvenskan team, too.

While there's a lack of standout tools, Sitar is a smart cookie. Most of his production can be attributed to his awareness and positional play without the puck. He completed his off-puck routes and popped in the slot just in time to finish passing plays or to whack at rebounds. There were even hints of some shooting skill in tight.

Then there are the rather solid defensive fundamentals, including consistent scanning habits, smart positioning and diligent defensive stick.

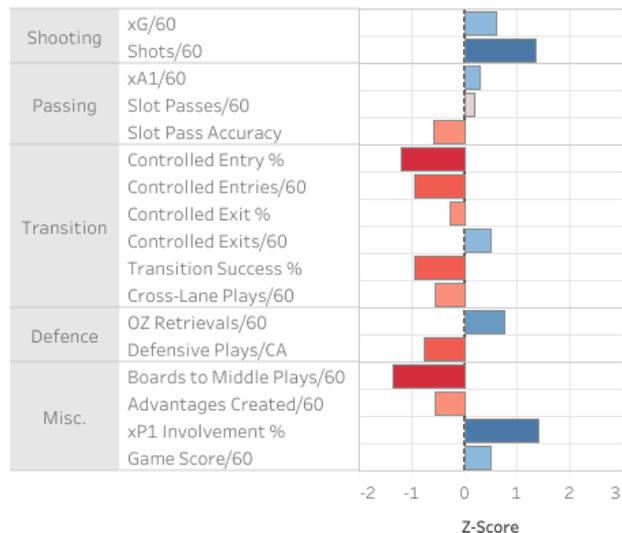
While there are reasons to believe Sitar's game could translate to the professional ranks given further physical development, the tools or the offensive upside just don't seem to be worthwhile from an NHL standpoint. The skating grades out as below-average and we didn't see any indication of high-end skill or playmaking ability.

Filip Sitar

F | AIK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 85.54

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - AIK vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Absolutely a smart player. He processes the game and is positionally sound. He was back at centre in this game and played a

solid two-way game. He scored a lucky goal but he didn't impress me offensively. He is "soft skill" in the sense that he has nice puck control but no real attack mentality. He was continuously pushed to the outside and a lot of his controlled entries didn't lead to anything. His lack of high pace doesn't help. His crossover technique is good but his stride is short. He plays at the same pace all the time and lacks extra gear. Not a player I would push for to draft.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

A tough game for AIK. Sitar had a good off-puck game where he showed good reads and defensive plays. He won pucks high up the ice and created turnovers. Offensively he had some looks but not that much. He was left unused on the left circle on the power play.

At this level he looks quick but can't really use his skating as a weapon. He is kind of soft as a player too and played much of the game in the perimeter area.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 30th, 2023 - Frölunda HC vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

Sitar looked comfortable as an offensive driver at this level. His skating looked quite good with good ankle flexion and a decent stride. His hands were his best weapon. He showed that he could create space and had some good manipulating moves, especially on the power play.

As for translatable patterns, I don't think he is explosive enough. He didn't seek the inside enough and created mostly from the outside. His playmaking from the outside and in is probably his best asset.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2023 - AIK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Not many new conclusions to be drawn from this. Sitar scored off the rush, attacking the net as F2, getting his stick open and deflecting the puck with his backhand after a shot pass. Completing his off-puck routes like this and making himself available in scoring locations is a big reason behind Sitar's production this season, at least based on what I've seen from him. I just don't think there's enough interesting tools or skill to consider him a legit NHL prospect at this point. The vision seems quite average to below-average. Misses the best play at times and uses a lot of shots from outside instead of trying to improve his location. Continues to cycle unnecessarily at times. When he tries to look for a pass to the middle, he's often intercepted because he's either passing too late or doesn't have the passing skill to get past sticks and skates of opponents. We'll see whether a team sees him as a worthwhile project in the later rounds.

Lassi Alanen: January 30th, 2023 - AIK vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Sitar is a quite bland as a prospect. It's not a compliment, but not necessarily all bad. He's smarter than many of his counterparts in this range, whether it's due to his off-puck movement, timing around the net-front and slot, routes offensively and defensively. He just doesn't have much that really captures your eye if you're not paying a close attention. He had his share of scoring chances here, too, including a pretty open look from the slot that he somehow managed to shoot wide. Lacks separation speed, which hurts his success rate in 1-on-1 situations.

Lassi Alanen: January 20th, 2023 - AIK vs. MODO Hockey - J20 Nationell

Probably the best viewing I've had of Sitar so far. He stood out quite a bit more than previous, quite simply because he had more puck touches, both offensively and in transition. Some playmaking flashes in the way of cutting back after an entry, then finding the trailer in the middle. I don't think the playmaking skill is that high-end by any means, but it's not completely obsolete either. Also set up a partial breakaway chance with a nice entry pass to the middle lane. Some other highlights in transition, too, mostly via smart passing. Liked his defensive awareness yet again, scanned his surroundings quite a bit on the backcheck and while covering his man in-zone. There's no high-end attributes or physical tools, but he could be a future pro based on his playstyle.

Lassi Alanen: December 3rd, 2022 - AIK vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Sitar rarely stood out on the ice. When he did - the few times in this game - he was usually in a scoring location at the right time to receive the puck at the end of a passing sequence to finish it. Got a one high-danger chance off the rush this way, delaying to make himself available as a partial trailer and gain distance from the defenders, stretching the attack deeper. Also had a few defensive moments, covering up for his lack of quickness with some solid positional play and solid defensive stick. Can't say that I've seen that much NHL upside in my viewings so far, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - AIK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Sitar scored with a really nice wrister, receiving a bouncing puck near the OZ faceoff dot, quickly adjusting the puck before launching a missile that beat the goalie high short side; there was only a super small opening for the puck and Sitar found it. He had a couple of other scoring chances, mostly by the way of off-puck timing. Knew when to pop in and out of the slot, when to delay off the rush to become an available trailer option. On-puck creation wasn't anything special; a couple of solid cross-lane passes in transition, some basic passing during OZ cycles. Skating stride looked quite choppy, including a pretty aggressive heel kick. Probably a below-average skating projection overall. Appreciated his defensive reads on few plays, backchecking to prevent a scoring chance or taking away a few high-danger passing lanes with smart positioning. Seemed like someone who primarily scores and excels due to his brain rather than physical tools.

Grade: F



Svante Sjödin

AGE 17.000 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	176 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Örebro HK J18	J18 Region	8	5	7	12	1.50
Örebro HK J18	J18 Nationell	4	4	3	7	1.75
Örebro HK J20	J20 Nationell	38	8	5	13	0.34
Örebro HK	SHL	4	0	0	0	0.00
Sweden U18 (all)	International-Jr	2	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

If a player's motor corresponded to their offensive output, then Svante Sjödin would've definitely contributed more than 13 points in 38 contests with Örebro's J20 team. He also sipped a cup of coffee at the SHL level and played on their J18 team.

Sjödin's work rate should allow him to transition to the professional level sooner rather than later. He was helping his defencemen down low as a centre, then sprinting up the middle to make himself an option in transition, finishing his off-puck routes consistently and recovering loose pucks to maintain possession in the offensive end. He attacked the net relentlessly off the rush as the F2, scoring multiple goals by sheer will and a grain of good luck.

His skating could also be an NHL-level tool; he's quick from standstill and his top speed also gets a good grade from our staff.

The upside with Sjödin does seem rather limited, though. He distributed the puck rather competently in transition, but failed to make an impact with his playmaking in the offensive zone. There's a clear lack of high-end ideas and his finishing skills also rate below-average on our scale. Sometimes his all-out pace seemed to hurt him; developing a delay game off the rush could be a step at becoming more dangerous offensively.

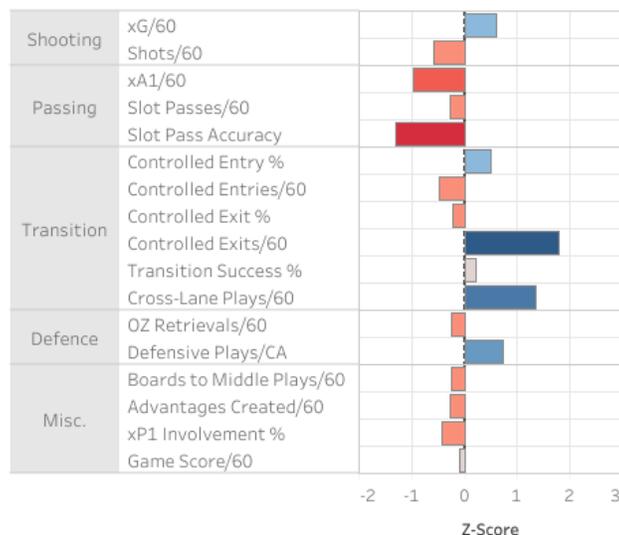
Picking Sjödin would partly be a bet that his age grants him more developmental leeway; had he been born a day later, he wouldn't have been eligible in this year's draft. Ultimately, while we had respect for Sjödin's game, there simply wasn't enough offensive skill to justify a placement on our board this year.

Svante Sjödin

F | Örebro HK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 73.39

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

Svante is hard to play against at this level. His hard forechecking game and speed gives the opponents diminishing space to get out of their own end. He works hard in all three zones and is strong physically and on the puck.

As a player he is clearly a bottom six player if you translate his game to higher levels. His speed north-to-south is above average. He has an effective and powerful stride. His puck skills are simplistic and he lacks the ability to drive play and offensive zone entries other than with his speed. He has an inside drive and does not shy away from the physical play. His game away from the puck is solid. He gives puck support and seeks open spaces offensively.

I would consider drafting him in the late rounds. The skating, inside drive and work ethics are the selling points.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. AIK - J18 Playoffs

It is too bad Svante can't score, because he could be a really good two-way centre if he could. His skating is above average and top speed borderline elite. He works hard all over the ice and won many puck battles by fast skating and good stick checking.

He created chances offensively with his speed, cut inside and had open shots in the slot but couldn't score. He shows a good motor and intensity.

Defensively, he looks solid positionally but could have been more effective if he anticipated the plays earlier. He is effective at this stage due to his speed but on higher levels that won't be enough.

His stickhandling lacks space awareness and manipulation. He is a simple minded player offensively.

Lassi Alanen: March 5th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

It's a bit funny that the two goals Sjödin has scored in my viewings, both of them came via him driving the middle off the rush and redirecting a puck with his skate after a pass to the middle was made (at least that's how it looked to me, though it wasn't 100 percent clear). He did have two high-danger chances aside from that, though, both from the net-front. It's probably not a coincidence that this happened as he started to make more timely peeks to the slot instead of staying as much stationary in front of the net. I'm still not sold on the offensive upside, but if he starts to hone his off-puck timing and skills (he already fights for body positioning), he could probably score a bit in the professional ranks. And he'll bring value on the defensive side of the puck and also in transition given his skating and work rate.

Lassi Alanen: January 28th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Pretty quiet game from Sjödin here overall. He did have a few moments in transition and defensively. He clearly takes his centre duties serious defensively, competing well for body positioning in the net-front, taking away passing lanes, shadowing his man and supporting his defenders down low. I still don't see much offensively, though. He's often taking the role of the net-front guy, and got a scoring chance from one rebound, but often stays too stationary and doesn't time his movements to the slot. Not sure how much upside he has as an off-puck scorer. Still, probably going to be a useful piece to have in a bottom-six at the pro level, but is there upside for more? Maybe, but it's going to require development.

Lassi Alanen: January 15th, 2023 - Örebro HK vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

Once again, Sjödin did a lot of good stuff in transition. The skating is a projectable asset, at least in the context of European pro leagues. The first steps are explosive and he's starting weave in some crossovers and subtle feints to make his puck-carrying game even better, too. Got one partial scoring chance after basically just going end-to-end through the middle, splitting the defence but then when it came time to make the final play, he kinda fumbled the puck and couldn't get a proper shot off. The

offence overall was, again, pretty limited. He does a lot of good things to extend cycles, hounding for pucks and outworking defenders regularly on retrievals, but I haven't seen enough in the way of playmaking or shooting skill.

Lassi Alanen: November 18th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Sjödin has some interesting qualities. He's rather quick, especially for a standstill, retains a high work rate on both sides of the puck and can drive play rather well in transition, receiving pucks in the middle, then distributing them to his wingers for clean entries. I just haven't seen enough OZ skill. He's made the occasional clever pass towards the middle, but doesn't really create advantages with his skating or skill in the OZ. He has a projectable path to becoming a pro, though.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Örebro HK vs. Södertälje SK - J20 Nationell

Sjödin found his way to the scoreboard by driving the middle lane of the rush (something he did throughout the game as F2 to a good degree) and deflecting the puck with his skate for a goal that ended up being allowed; good things happen when you go to the net as they say. I found myself admiring his work ethic throughout, playing pretty competently as a centre in his own end, then always sprinting up into the play, creating space by finishing his routes and recovering loose pucks in the OZ after point shots. One really nice pass to the slot after one of those recoveries, too; maybe there's at least decent playmaking skill there. On the other hand, he had at least two situations where he could've had a scoring chance had he been a bit more aggressive and looked to shoot himself, instead circled behind the net and tried to pass in both situations. Player profile looked like that of a grinder/energy forward. If he shows more skill in the next viewings, maybe he's someone to consider?

Grade: F



Jakub Štancil

AGE 17.433 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	6.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Region	4	2	2	4	1.00
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Nationell	4	2	2	4	1.00
Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	35	11	6	17	0.49
Växjö Lakers HC	SHL	8	1	0	1	0.13
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	18	5	4	9	0.50
Czechia U18	WJC-18	5	0	1	1	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

Jakub Štancil's second season in Sweden could be characterized as a relative success. He already scored his first career SHL goal and appeared in a handful of games while being one of Czechia's top producers with the U18 national team.

If Štancil is going to carve out a career at the pro level, it's likely going to happen on the back of his motor and physicality. At 6-foot-3 and already over 200 pounds, Štancil can bulldoze his way through defenders to pick up loose pucks and create havoc on the forecheck.

To compensate for significant flaws in his skating stride, he tries to outwork his opponents and often did so successfully. Štancil also has a heavy shot and can occasionally beat goalies from the half-wall with a big one-timer.

There's just not that much else to his game, though. As mentioned, his very upright skating posture and lack of ankle flexion limit him a lot, including preventing him from properly accessing his outside edges. His handling skill also projects as below-average, hurting his effectiveness in transition and forcing him into a dump-and-chase style.

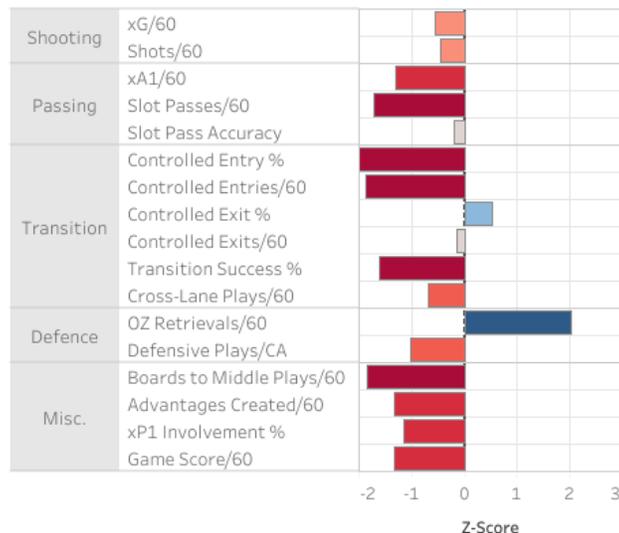
If Štancil is going to hit the NHL, it's very likely going to be as a fourth-line grinder, and even that is going to require serious mechanical refinement.

Jakub Štancil

F | Växjö Lakers HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 117.0

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



⇩ INDUSTRY CHATTER

"I'm not the fastest, but I think that I have a good shot, good vision, and I play a hard game." – Jakub Štancl, April 2023

⇩ GAME REPORTS

Jimmy Hamrin: April 27th, 2023 - USA vs. Czechia - U18s

This was a solid performance by Štancl. The USA had most of the puck and Czechia attacking models were rush attacks and as soon as they won the puck - They took off in full speed. This fitted Štancl's game well. He really is a smart checker and read the passing lanes and broke up multiple plays. His skating is not a weapon but he kept well with the pace of the game. He tried to beat an opponent by speed once but was easily shut down. He had some nice passing plays on the rush and even if his below average puck handling prevents him from driving the play he could create give-and-go situations with his linemates on the rush. Short puck touches makes his game more effective than when he tries more skilled plays. I don't see an NHL player but at least he looks like a decent rush attacker with a strong forechecking game.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 11th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Štancl didn't have much happening for him in this game. He read the game away from the puck well and broke up the play a couple of times. He also drew a penalty. Other than that, there wasn't much value he provided. He leans too much forward in his skating technique and it also limits his chances to smoothly receive the puck. He skates with a quick and long straight-line stride, but it doesn't look easy for him and his four-way mobility isn't smooth. His puck skills and scanning habits did not impress either.

Lassi Alanen: March 4th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

Štancl was quite clearly the third-most impactful forward on his line - not a particularly good sign. The skating issues limit his ability to enter the zone with possession, leaving him very dependent on dump-ins. Haven't seen any of the cross-ice entry passes that we saw from him earlier in the season either. The posture also hurts his handling, which also still rates as below-average projection-wise. He can do work on the forecheck still, but even there he can't really be as effective as he could potentially be if he was quicker and especially a bit more mobile. Didn't have any shots or shot assists at 5-on-5, which tells you a lot about this performance.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Štancl does many important things. He retrieves pucks in the OZ, gets deep in the forecheck, engages physically, contributes on the backcheck. I just don't think the skill level is enough to justify a draft pick. The skating needs to come a long way for him to play in the NHL in a checking role, too. It's possible given that he looks like an explosive, pretty good athlete, but he also seems already pretty developed physically; I don't think it's a strength issue.

Lassi Alanen: January 29th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Štancl scored a very Štancl goal in this one, driving the middle off the rush, stopping in the net-front and ending up getting the puck from below the goal line to hammer in as the goalie was mispositioned. Stride mechanics remain problematic, stuck on his inside edges, but the output remains solid for this level because he competes hard for every puck. Skates hard to create space, skates hard to forecheck and backcheck. Respectable stuff all-around. I still don't see much offensive upside, though. Still looks like a potential future fourth-liner, but that's likely the ceiling.

Lassi Alanen: December 2nd, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

This was the most potent game offensively from Štancl. Didn't see much in the way of individual skill or playmaking, but his play in front of the net netted him multiple high-danger rebound chances and he ultimately ended up burying one of them. His forechecking is also a big-time strength, at least at this level. High work rate, takes the extra strides to close in physically. Still not sure about

the upside. The puck skills rate below-average and the skating stride has pretty clear flaws, even if the output remains pretty solid. Will still hinder his offensive capabilities (which are already limited) at the next level. I see the value he brings to the table, but I probably wouldn't be the one drafting him. Screams like a fourth-liner to me.

Lassi Alanen: November 20th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Färjestad BK - J20 Nationell

Štancil found his way to the scoresheet by receiving a turned-over puck in the slot and firing it top-shelf short side - a pretty crafty finish. Added another goal with a half-wall one-timer, but it was mostly due to the awesome deception behind the pass that made the goalie slip a bit and to be way too late for the shot, which pretty much hit dead-center in the net. Aside from those plays, it was mostly the same as in previous viewings. Dumping pucks in, chasing the play a lot on the forecheck, creating some steals on the way but not really creating much offence. The lack of footspeed was evident when he could've had a breakaway if he was a bit quicker but got shut down by the backcheck. I don't see notable skill. He plays fast and very much north-south, so there's probably someone taking him in the middle rounds.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Štancil capitalized quite well on Örebro's errors on breakouts, intercepting a few passes and being in the right place at the right time. One of those interceptions he turned immediately into a pass to the slot - maybe an indication of him having more playmaking skill than I previously thought? The projection into anything other than fourth-line depth guy is still going to take a lot of imagination. He does good things off-puck, contributing to Växjö's goal by blocking out the defender and creating shooting space for his linemate. In transition, it's been pretty brutal. Very few controlled attempts.

Lassi Alanen: October 15th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Štancil seems like a fourth-liner at best. He moves the puck very quickly almost exclusively, deflecting pucks in deep and then hustling to get them back. His work rate is high and he provides quite a bit of value on the forecheck, but I haven't seen much skill from him offensively. Can connect plays with one or two-touch passes. The skating projects as below-average. A hard player to justify ranking based on these viewings, even if he's probably getting picked in the middle rounds.

Lassi Alanen: September 24th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Štancil seems like a player who's going to advance to pro ranks quite quickly despite not being the most skilled player at this level. He plays with a lot of pace, makes his decisions quickly and advanced the puck in transition, including an in-stride cross-ice feed for an entry. Mostly he was looking for dump-ins to the other side of the ice and forecheck the puck back, and his line had some success doing so. One high-danger chance off the rush off a nice drop pass into an outside lane drive to inside. The skating stride is a bit rough, even if the output is probably better than the form. The recovery is wide, he's very locked on his inside edges and he hunches over quite a bit. One big hit on the forecheck.

Mitchell Brown: August 5th, 2022 - Sweden vs. Czechia - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Štancil cleaned up a rebound, shifting his weight before receiving the puck and firing top corner. Drew a penalty by stealing possession and powering through the check on his way to the net. He has some power elements to his team through physical and skating. Skills had moments in this game, including a deke around a defender that will never work at another level. He's too reliant on his inside edges. Didn't see upside, but he came to play. Could be a checker.

Mitchell Brown: August 31st, 2022 - Czechia vs. Finland - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

Štancil scored the tying goal with 30 seconds left, a perfectly placed shot over the goaltender's shoulder. He opened the game with a shorty, taking pass in the corner then driving across the net on the backhand, subtle fake to open the goaltender. He's a straight-line player without much manipulation ability or creativity. Plays a direct, physical game. But the upside seems limited overall. Worth paying more attention to.

Grade: F



Lucas Stockselius

AGE 17.340 DATE OF BIRTH May 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW/C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	192 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5.5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Djurgårdens IF J18	J18 Region	6	1	3	4	0.67
Djurgårdens IF J18	J18 Nationell	1	0	1	1	1.00
Djurgårdens IF J20	J20 Nationell	45	3	22	25	0.56

SCOUTING REPORT

Among the Swedish draft-eligible skaters still flying under the radar going into the 2023 NHL Draft, Lucas Stockselius flashed some of the better moments this season.

Interestingly, he added 25 points but only three goals in 45 regular season games with Djurgårdens' J20 squad, then matched that goal total in the playoffs in just six games.

What Stockselius lacks in physical tools, he makes up for with his hockey sense. He's a clever play connector in the offensive zone and in transition, slipping pucks to teammates in tight areas near the boards and regularly setting his teammates up for quality chances and overall success. His head stays up as he scans for potential passing lanes and threats, which also extends to the defensive side of the game. He's positionally aware and breaks up or intercepts a surprising amount of plays this way.

It's very hard to overlook the concerns related to his weaknesses, though. He's far from a dynamic operator, with his skating lacking both in terms of the output and mechanically. The wide and short stride combined with the lack of outside edge usage already limited his game at the J20 level.

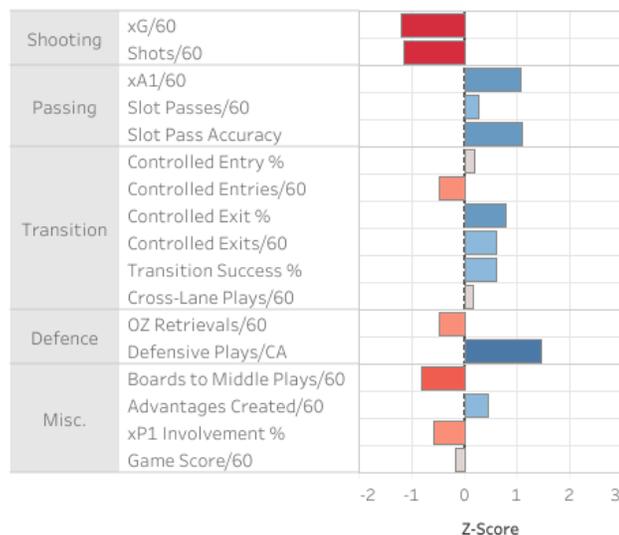
He should have the brain to cover for those weaknesses, though, and we believe could end up having a good career in the professional ranks, but the concerns were ultimately enough to keep him from making our final board. Still, he's a player that teams might want to keep tabs on.

Lucas Stockselius

F | Djurgårdens IF J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 113.4

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** April 10th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Timrå IK - J20 Playoffs

I believe that Stockselius has shown progress during the season. His skating looked worse early on. Still, he needs to play at a higher pace to reach higher levels. The pace issue is in his whole mobility and stick handling as well. I don't see him stepping in at a pro level next season. I do believe that he will be a top point producer in J20 next season though.

His selling point is his positioning and fast processing. He had a goal and an assist and played his best hockey of the season in the playoffs. He also has the size to cover the puck well. His body movements need to be quicker though and I wouldn't draft him.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 9th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Rögle BK - J20 Playoffs

Lucas had a quiet game. He played well defensively and competed well. He was far down low a bit too often thought to be a threat offensively. He also struggled a lot with space. He makes fast plays but was often tightly checked and lacked weapons to handle that. His smarts showed mostly off the puck in good supporting plays and reading passing lanes.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 8th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Örebro HK - J18 Playoffs

This was not a good game for Lucas. He was pushed to the outside and didn't show tools to get the puck to the inside very often. His skating inefficiency makes him a perimeter player and his smarts and playmaking doesn't work when the space is tight and he couldn't find ways to open it up. He was a non-factor 5v5.

Jimmy Hamrin: April 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J18 Playoffs

Lucas had a good game. He centered a line that had a massive puck possession all game. Lucas is first and foremost a playmaker. He can control the pace and slow down the play to find openings. In this game he had many setups from outside and in. He showed a knack of opening passing lanes through the slot.

A clear weakness in his game is his skating. He skates with short strides and lacks lower-body centered balance. His lack of speed tends to make him a perimeter player.

Lucas has a good offensive hockey sense. His off-puck play to anticipate the right spots to go to is good. He gives good support and is also aware of options with the puck.

The skating limits his potential. He will be a good player but I can't see a fitting role for him at the NHL level at this point.

Lassi Alanen: February 25th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Leksands IF - J20 Nationell

This was probably the quietest game I've watched from Stockselius. Aside from one pass interception near the end boards turned into a slot pass and a quality scoring chance, he didn't really have any notable moments. The lack of quickness, short stride and lack of outside edge usage hurt him off the rush, being smothered along the boards multiple times during entry attempts. Struggled to make controlled plays during in-zone play, too, which has usually been a strength for him. He's probably not a pick, but I don't think this was necessarily a good indication of his game, as it was an outlier among the viewings I've had.

Lassi Alanen: February 18th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

I have quite a bit of respect for Stockselius game and his smarts. Without the most dynamic skill set (average skater and handler for this level), he's managing to have an impact using positioning, smart puck-moving, give-and-gos and physical details. He's not that strong, getting outmuscled out of pucks a few times, but knows how to establish body positioning off-puck when it matters, netting him a well-earned goal in this one after sprinting towards the net-front from the corner, getting ahead of the

defender and putting his stick out for a deflection goal after his teammate recognized the opportunity for a shot pass from the point. We also see the occasional flash of more higher-end passing skill, like a beautiful spin pass into space from the boards that was really accurate and sharp. I don't know if he's a pick, but his profile is somewhat interesting and different from most of the other draft-eligibles I've watched in Sweden.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Luleå HF - J20 Nationell

Stockselius remains on the smarter side. He connects plays consistently, moves the puck in transition with smart cross-lane passes, extends cycles with passes to space, deals rather well with back pressure, gets to the net-front with good timing for possible rebounds and deflection opportunities. Despite not recording any primary points, he was on the ice for a multitude of 5-on-5 goals for, setting up the conditions needed for his team to score. One really nice scoring chance setup off the rush. Loves the shot fake into a scooping pass to his right side. He's not dynamic or quick, though. He's also not scoring a ton, which is a bit surprising considering how he's looked in my viewings.

Lassi Alanen: January 7th, 2023 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Växjö Lakers HC - J20 Nationell

Stockselius' smarts are impressive. What he lacks in tools, he somewhat makes up for with playmaking and smart positional play, both offensively and defensively. One really, really nice backhand pass after a rebound that should've been a goal, but looked like the pass receiver was as surprised about the fact that Stockselius came up with that passing lane as I was. The tools just aren't NHL calibre, I don't think. He's probably a slightly below-average to average skater at this level and isn't able to get much power behind his cutbacks. Limits his offensive ceiling, too.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Mora IK - J20 Nationell

If nothing else, Stockselius has pretty legit vision. He's successful at coming up with possession from tight areas, knowing who is available and slipping pucks to them from under pressure. Added a beautiful primary helper after a bad turnover by the opposition, leaving him open in the slot but having the patience to go for a final pass to the back post to pretty much guarantee a goal. Keeps his head up, scans actively with and without the puck, which seems like a big reason for his playmaking success. The skating doesn't impress as much, seems like 4 or 4.5 on our scale. He can connect plays, and seems to have legit playmaking skill, but is it enough? We'll have to watch more.

Lassi Alanen: October 2nd, 2022 - Djurgårdens IF vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Stockselius got quite a bit done throughout the game. He's got a wide stride and base and didn't strike out as particularly quick or fast, not able to beat defenders to the outside. But he made up for it quite well with some solid positional play, both offensively and defensively. Flashed some nice handling and small-area playmaking near the boards, scanned pretty often before and after puck reception. He was also able to break up a few plays in transition, showing decent understanding of defensive angling and willingness to engage physically.

Grade: F



Joel Svensson

AGE 17.419 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C Position	Right Shoots
6'1" Height	183 lbs Weight

Player Grades

5 Skating	4.5 Shooting	4.5 Passing
4.5 Puckhandling	5 Hockey Sense	4 Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Region	2	1	1	2	1.00
Växjö Lakers HC J18	J18 Nationell	2	2	1	3	1.50
Växjö Lakers HC J20	J20 Nationell	22	6	6	12	0.55
Växjö Lakers HC	SHL	3	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing games at three different levels, Joel Svensson's season was a bit all over the place. He missed chunks of time here and there, which seemingly stifled his progress after a productive draft-minus-one campaign at the J18 level.

Svensson's skating and awareness of space are his two strongest attributes. He's most effective when reading gaps and exploiting them, whether that's by making a quick pass to a moving teammate or driving the net around a passive defender.

Given all the time he missed, it was tough to get a proper read of his game. He's not especially dangerous in any particular situation, and apart from his projectable skating form, none of his tools project as NHL-calibre. That's also evident in the tracking data where Svensson grades out rather poorly compared to the average draft-eligible forward at the J20 level.

Svensson's best moments came in the rare moments where he plays with pace and created loose pucks on the forecheck.

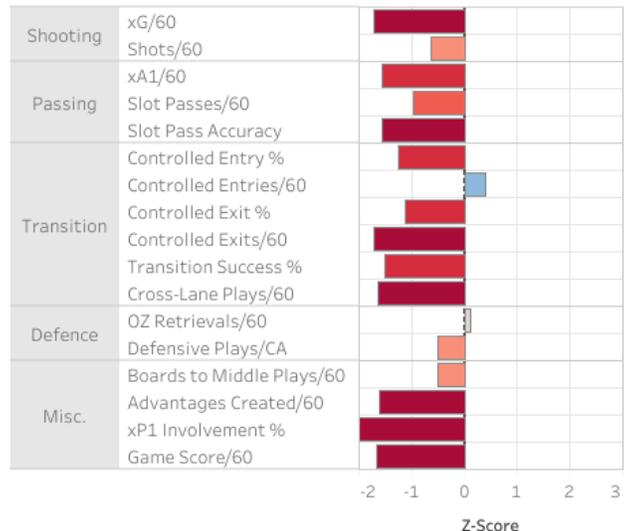
There's a chance that his game looks different in the future when he stays healthy for longer periods of time, but we didn't see enough this year to warrant a spot on our board.

Joel Svensson

F | Växjö Lakers HC J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 83.47

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** March 11th, 2023 - Luleå HF vs. Växjö Lakers - J20 Nationell

Svensson's pace is too low to drive play. He skates at the same pace and is slow in body movements too. His puck skills look decent and he had some good playmaking in the game. His vision is quite good too. He scans well but doesn't seem to act on it consistently. He played as a centre, but was at times positioning himself too far back in the attacks and left a gap in front of him and came too far from the wingers. The compete level isn't high enough and he lacks intensity. There weren't many exciting sequences by Svensson in this game. I think he will fit better at senior level though where others than can bring the intensity and can trust his brain more. If he doesn't get faster, stronger and more intense himself, the risk is that he won't reach the highest levels.

Lassi Alanen: February 4th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Svensson's best moments come from rush attacks, when he gets to attack defenders wide with a speed advantage, then drop his shoulder and try drive to the net. Had one such occasion here, but couldn't get his shot off cleanly. Other than that, he was - again - rather invisible on the ice. Had a few completed transition plays, but didn't have a big impact offensively or defensively. The skating could be the best of the tools, but likely an average projection at best. I don't see a pick here, but maybe he'll be able to blossom in the future and become an effective pro.

Lassi Alanen: January 29th, 2023 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Skellefteå AIK - J20 Nationell

Svensson missed quite a bit of time after my previous viewing, so one can cut him some slack as this was just the second weekend he's played after returning. But I still have a hard time seeing any particularly interesting qualities. He's a fine skater, does decently well on the forecheck, can make the odd solid passing play. I just don't see the attributes required for being a high-end playdriver or scorer. He can take advantage of openings, but rarely manufactures them by himself. Doesn't have particular physical tools, misses passing opportunities, the shot isn't anything noteworthy.

Lassi Alanen: October 28th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Örebro HK - J20 Nationell

Svensson found his way to the scoresheet with a 4-on-4 goal, taking advantage of space in the middle to cut to the top of the faceoff circle and then beating the goalie with a smartly-placed shot. Had another quality chance after a well-timed give-and-go attempt in the OZ where he fought for body positioning, but his catch-and-release wrister wasn't able to beat the goalie. I can't say that I'm that fond of Svensson's overall game, though. He was better off the cycle than previously, maintaining possession with better success, but I still haven't seen any standout tools or smarts. Maybe I'm missing something, we'll see.

Jimmy Hamrin: October 27th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers vs. Örebro HK - SHL

I like it when young players that aren't super talents get to play on the fourth line to start their SHL career. They then get to play with players that match their skill-level but also help them with the dirty work. Svensson got 5 minutes in this game and I liked what he was able to do. He scanned and connected well on plays. He supported plays and had also had a couple of shots. He should have a good understanding of the defensive game. He has the most trouble in puck battles where he was clearly outmatched physically.

Lassi Alanen: October 16th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Malmö Redhawks - J20 Nationell

I can't say that I saw a draft pick here. Svensson had a few better chances than he did in the previous one, playing big minutes for Växjö, this time on the wing. The different position did allow him to be more involved offensively, but I don't really see any interesting tools. One quality chance after he beat the defender to the inside when he had a speed advantage off the rush following a stretch pass. Could've had another quality look from the net-front but fumbled the puck unpressured. He did ring the post once with a shot from the top of the circle. The shooting mechanics don't look very threatening; it's more of a sweeping motion than push-and-pull one. Skating isn't bad, but necessarily a strength either. Didn't make the best play with the puck that many times, didn't show any high-end offensive smarts.

Lassi Alanen: September 25th, 2022 - Växjö Lakers HC vs. Linköping HC - J20 Nationell

Svensson wasn't that visible in this one. He didn't really seemingly have any standout tools in his disposal. The skating looked fine for this level, probably still a slightly below-average projection grade on our scale. Made a few small-area passes in the OZ and had a few shot attempts at 5-on-5, but nothing that really stood out. He seemed to take his centre duties seriously and was always down low to support his defencemen, never cheating for offence. One nice high-danger shot interception with a backcheck. But I really didn't see anything that would suggest he'd be a particularly interesting player for NHL draft purposes.



Grade: F

Petter Vesterheim

AGE 17.959 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 30, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C/W	Left
Position	Shoots
5'11"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	5	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Mora IK J20	J20 Nationell	41	12	27	39	0.95
Mora IK	HockeyAllsvenskan	12	2	0	2	0.17
Norway U20	WJC-20 D1A	5	2	5	7	1.40
Norway (all)	International	4	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

Petter Vesterheim had a successful first season in Sweden after working his way through Norway's junior ranks. He led Mora's J20 team in points and already got a solid chunk of experience in HockeyAllsvenskan as well.

Based on our viewings, Vesterheim's production can be attributed to three things – playmaking, off-puck movement, and pace. In the offensive zone, he keeps his feet moving, darts in and out of the slot and plays between checks to maximize his odds of getting the puck in a scoring position.

He's a rather shifty skater, regularly mixing in heel-to-heels and effective cutbacks to evade pressure and keep defenders on their toes. While he doesn't see and execute on every passing opportunity, he hints at having a pretty good vision and technical passing skills.

However, Vesterheim didn't stand out as a play-driver. While he completed his passing plays in transition with a good success rate, he wasn't taking full advantage of his skating chops and often let others do the heavy lifting.

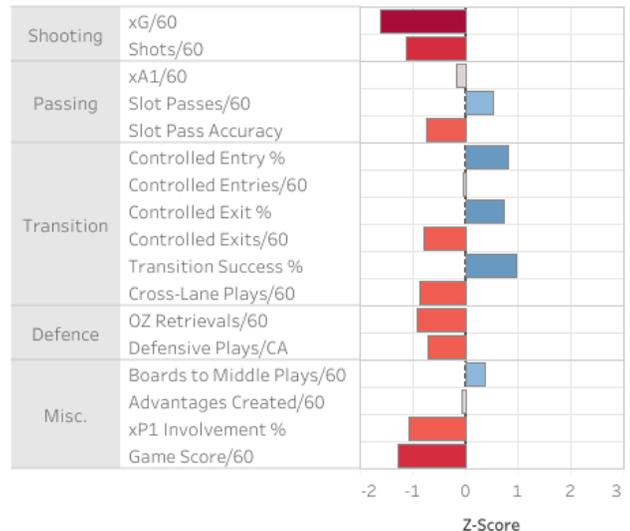
While Vesterheim definitely has a path to becoming a useful piece in the professional ranks through skating, pace and decent handling skill, there ultimately didn't seem to be enough offensive upside to warrant a spot on our board. Given he's only spent one year in a top developmental environment, there's a chance for rapid improvements over the next few years. He's a player to keep an eye on.

Petter Vesterheim

F | Mora IK J20 | J20 Nationell | 2023 NHL Draft

Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 82.03

Data tracked by Lassi Alanen (@lassialanen) | 5v5 only



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Jimmy Hamrin:** April 1st, 2023 - Modo vs. Mora IK - HockeyAllsvenskan

Petter played on the 4th line in this semifinal game. He got a decent amount of ice time and played the full game. He looked quick and explosive. He had some rushes where he was close to get through but no high quality chances. He worked hard and created a couple of retrievals. On one occasion, he stole the puck on the back check and started an attack.

He played simplistic with the puck and didn't take any chances. He didn't show any ability to open space with playmaking or stick handling. He could open up with his skating for his teammates though. He could drive to the net to open up space behind him. All in all, he doesn't show any high quality patterns. He is quick and works hard but neither hockey sense or puck skills stands out.

Jimmy Hamrin: March 22nd, 2023 - Timrå IK vs. Mora IK - J20 Playoffs

Petter is a good skater, at least average. The stride could be longer but he has good ankle flexion. He is quick on short distances and can make quick turns with the puck. He travelled a lot with the puck and used good crossover technique to accelerate up ice.

His puck skills were decent. He controlled the puck well close to his body but he didn't really stand out. He made some good setups on the power play but didn't create much offence overall. He used his skating and hands to be deceptive with the puck along the left side on the PP. He showcased his shot a few times and looked to have a good wrist shot.

Overall, he worked hard with intense. I wasn't that impressed with his defensive play though. On one of the goal against he forechecked too deep which led to an easy long pass to create the turnover that led to the goal. He didn't create retrievals or break-ups. He looks to be physically well developed and doubt that there is much more room to grow there.

I don't see enough upside to make me believe that he has value as a pick in the draft.

Lassi Alanen: January 22nd, 2023 - Mora IK vs. HV71 - J20 Nationell

Vesterheim played a key role in Mora's win, as his rush shot/shot pass was redirected in for the game-winning goal late in the game. It was probably the best overall performance from him I've seen this season. The playmaking flashes are there. He's not consistently taking advantage of every single opening and can miss the best play, but also flashes the ability to delay or execute quickly on passing plays to the slot. The skating was notable strength here, too, being able to carry the puck out from under pressure a couple of times, changing lanes and mixing in crossovers to add quickness and deception. I still don't see any high-end skill though. Vesterheim's defence seems pretty pro-ready, too, scanning pretty well, keeping his targets identified and covered and intercepting a few key passes towards the slot. Is he going to be on our board? I don't think so, but there's path to becoming a useful pro at least.

Lassi Alanen: January 8th, 2023 - Mora IK vs. Rögle BK - J20 Nationell

Still not sure if I see a pick in Vesterheim, especially given his age. The skating is the best single tool, being able to use crossovers to accelerate through pressure and having a solid top speed. The edges are solid, too, being able to access his outside edges pretty well. Probably an average grade overall on our scale. Aside from the occasional playmaking flash and off-puck pace, I just don't see that much offensive skill or play-driving overall. He's not really breaking up plays defensively, either, though he has the motor to shadow and keep up with forwards pretty well.

Lassi Alanen: November 19th, 2022 - Mora IK vs. Djurgårdens IF - J20 Nationell

Vesterheim's offence seems to mostly come from his off-puck pace and the occasional playmaking flash. He's consistently keeping his feet moving and making well-timed movements to the slot, getting a high-danger chance off one of them in this one.

The playmaking didn't really net him anything here, but he came pretty close with one attempt from behind-the-net, showing at least the vision and quick smarts to try the play that was definitely the right one to try. I just don't know if he's a consistent offensive driver. The skill level seems limited; including mishandling the puck a couple times off the rush. He's also very old for this draft. We'll see.

Lassi Alanen: October 11th, 2022 - Mora IK vs. Timrå IK - J20 Nationell

Vesterheim had a few flashes of intriguing ability. One particularly nice setup late in the game, retrieving a puck, waiting for the defender to close in on him before shaking him off his back, then passing to the slot for a grade A chance. The skating looked quite solid overall; maybe a bit more shifty than necessarily fast. Some nice heel-to-heel action on few occasions. Didn't do a whole lot of play-driving in transition. Still, worth to watch more.

Grade: F



Chris Able

AGE 17.863 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 04, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicago Steel	USHL	62	2	18	20	0.32

SCOUTING REPORT

The Chicago Steel's style of play has changed over the years, but one thing has remained constant: Their blue-liners activating, facilitating, and creating. While Chris Able didn't find the scoresheet much, he makes the classic Steel blueliner plays, and could find his scoring touch in the NCAA.

In the offensive zone, Able's a passer. He takes pucks in motion, then starts working laterally. As the defensive structure shifts, he passes to the open teammate. Well-timed pinches and sneaky weak side activation keep the Steel's offence clicking.

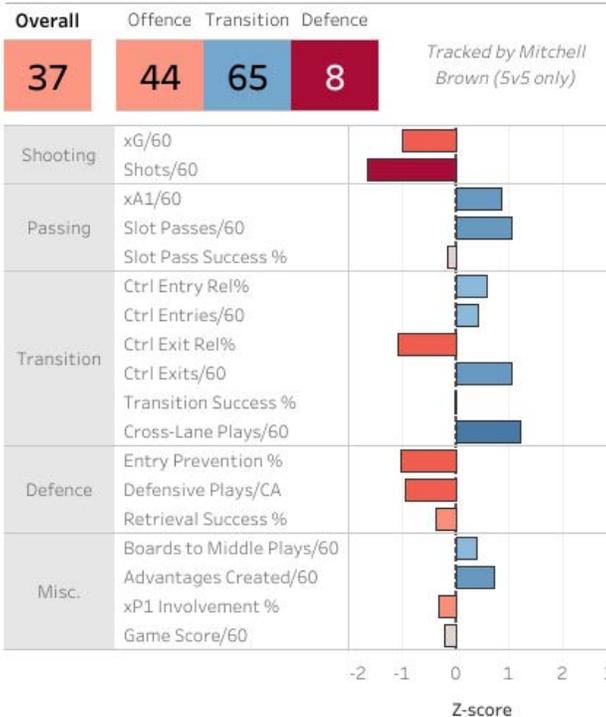
Through the season, Able's breakouts and defence improved. He's hindered by his skating and hands, but that doesn't deter him from trying more complex plays with a fair amount of success. Defensively, he proactively eliminates threats, but struggles to defend against speed.

Because of the lack of tools, Able's likely not an NHL projection at this stage. But his detailed game should lead to success at Ohio State University. Don't be surprised if he pops up in the Elite Prospects NCAA Free Agency Guide in a few years.

Chris Able

D | Chicago Steel | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 116.4



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Able set up a goal with an easy pass late in the game. That was about it. He's mistake-prone on breakouts, missing outlets, skating into pressure, and offloading the puck without much pressure. Makes the system reads – activation, passes – but not

advanced. Cooked a few times off the rush. Didn't look like a prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A solid game from Able, scoring a goal by driving the net off the boards and create a bit of offence through the game. He activates down the boards and holds pucks instead of forcing them into lanes. Not making the best play, but lots of positive plays that kept the offensive zone. He's a bit limited in terms of hands, skating, shooting. Opponents catch up to him as he fights the puck. Loses pucks on the reception. The defence is committing, but he has some off-puck ability through eliminating sticks. Could become a play down the road, if the mechanics take a step or two.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Able tries stuff on breakouts sometimes. That's the most exciting part of his game. He looks laterally for options and occasionally uses the middle. He jumps into the play. Currently, he gets his stops. But he plants his feet and reaches, which is a great way to get beat at higher levels. Didn't see much upside in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

More defensive value from Able in this game. He kept attackers to the outside and earned a couple of stops at the blue line. He reaches forward and he lacks corrective ability, but he's a reasonably attentive off-puck defender. More of a details than tools player, which means he's probably not an NHL prospect at this time. But lots of players like him become sought-after NCAA free agents.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

Another solid offensive game from Able, setting up a chance with a pass into the slot and some more details, like in motion pass receptions and weak side activation. The breakouts looked better. He connected with teammates cross-ice, delayed when necessary, and found teammates through opponents. Not much skill shown. His skating lacks power, and he fights the puck more than handles it. Doesn't look like a pick, but I wouldn't be surprised if he becomes a prospect down the road. He has the details to score in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Able recorded a primary assist by moving on a pass reception, then to passing to Hagens who beat the remaining defenders himself. Right now, his game is mostly offensive details, like in-motion pass receptions, faking shots before passing, and lateral movement to bring opponents towards him before passing. Occasional flashes on the breakout, looking cross-ice for options and drawing pressure. But doesn't manipulate opponents. Not much of a defender, either.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Able wasn't a factor outside the offensive zone. But inside of it, he was impressive. He worked laterally across the top, finding teammates in the slot for a pair of medium-danger looks. He builds plays with his vision over point shots. He activates, too. Didn't show anything else, but an interesting game.

Grade: F



Seth Constance

AGE 17.888 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 26, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Storm	USHL	58	1	15	16	0.28

SCOUTING REPORT

Points and Seth Constance didn't get along this season, but as a 6-foot-2 right-shot defender with a commitment to Northeastern, he's likely to earn some looks.

Constance has the details and habits of a more productive defenceman. He moves through pass receptions, uses space before shooting, and joins the play. An engaged defender, he fights for body positioning, eliminates off-puck threats, and showed risk-mitigating, but aggressive rush defence late in the season. He keeps it simple, but effective on retrievals with quick short-range passes and reversals.

Plays are just too infrequent to project Constance to the NHL at this stage, but those details should lead to more success in the future as he grows in confidence. A couple of times, he even showcased some lane creation ability.

Leaning heavier into those flashes supplemented with a more physical, aggressive defensive game should make Constance a formidable NCAA defender.

Seth Constance

D | Tri-City Storm | USHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 105.8



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 28th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Constance wasn't a factor in the offensive zone, but this was a solid game everywhere else. He grabbed a few stops off the rush

by making up distance, pivoting, and surfing across. Didn't overextend or overskate, grabbing a trio of stops. He made a couple of plays into space on the breakout to beat pressure. Passes are straight-ahead, simple plays, but he was able to create space for his recipient on most of them. The lack of skill means he's probably not a pick, but I've come to appreciate his game.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Constance was moderately effective in this game except on breakouts. He makes simple offensive reads, point shots and D-to-D passes, but he keeps play moving with pinches and short touches. Lacks the skills to beat defenders or open lanes. Retrievals were basic, but sound. He won body positioning and moved the puck on the first touch, and once, threw a massive hit. Tracks his check, eliminates their stick. Not much stopping power off the rush, and he's too passive. The breakouts are the main hole, however. He doesn't create advantages. Passes to teammates with more pressure than himself. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Nothing from Constance in this game. He made a couple of quick plays of retrievals, but that was it. Struggled to manage pressure, didn't show any notable skills, and wasn't a factor in the offensive zone.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs Tri-City Storm - USHL

Constance set up a goal by activating, faking a play to the net, then passed cross-slot. It was an obvious play, but he sold it well. That was about it, however. He only made basic plays from there on. Not much play-stopping ability. Skating was vulnerable off the rush.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Only flashes from Constance. He makes the odd smart pass through or around a forechecker to an open teammate and uses space before shooting. But he's more a collection of habits, rather than impact. He moves through pass receptions and makes the system reads, but not much more. Doesn't look like a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Apart from one awful display of rush defence, this was a decent game from Constance. He leaned in and killed his momentum, letting Conmy rush the net. But he killed plays further up the ice by making up the distance and angling. Activated. Once cutback and found a chance at the top of the slot. Nothing complex, but he kept play moving. And there were some forechecker-beating, short-range passes that started the breakout. Doesn't look like a pick, but he's interesting.

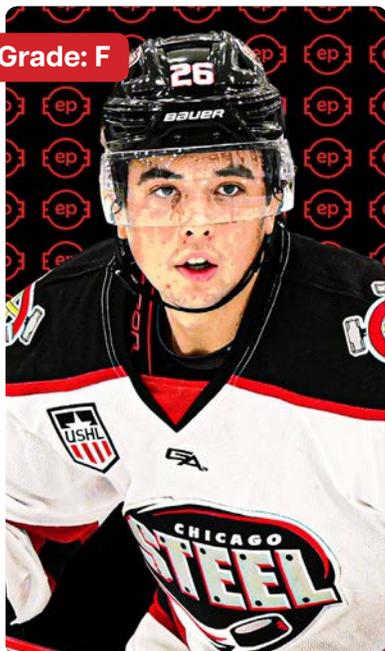
Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Breakouts are a major issue for Constance. As soon as pressure arrives, he flings the puck away. It was especially apparent along the end boards, even when he had a bit of time. Some value defending the rush, getting on opponents early and surfing across. Showed some offensive skill to move through pass reception, fake, and shoot, but his plays consistently left value on the table. He had more valuable options than just an easy pass away. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 3rd, 2022 - Tri-City Storm vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Constance had a couple of plays in this game, highlighted by manipulating an opponent's stick to create a passing lane on the breakout. He froze just long enough to bait the reach, then passed on their heels. Not much offensive or defensive impact. Curious to see more tough. A bit of a tough game for a lot of Tri-City's blue-liners.

Grade: F



Michael Emerson

AGE 18.723 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 26, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicago Steel	USHL	60	30	34	64	1.07

SCOUTING REPORT

Each of the last few seasons, at least one Chicago Steel player has gone from depth player to top-line scorer the following season. Last year, it was Sam Lipkin. The year before, it was Josh Doan. Michael Emerson was this year's version, going from seven points to 64.

Part-power shooter, part-off-puck finisher, Emerson's game revolves around his shot. He fires off either leg, inside crossovers, or from compromised positions. Along the boards, he absorbs contact before attacking the inside. Off the puck, he slips away from coverage at the perfect moment and presents his stick for a catch-and-release shot.

Emerson also shows some playmaking and handling skill in spurts. He beats opponents with flashy moves and sets up teammates from behind the net. He's more of a read-and-react player, lacking the manipulation skills to create lanes. Without skating as an advantage – he lacks depth and consistency as a skater – finding ways to create more space for himself will be key.

Despite Emerson's age, he's likely a four-year player at North Dakota. In time, he could fill the net and put himself on an NHL path.

Michael Emerson

F | Chicago Steel | USHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 99.3



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Mostly an off-puck game from Emerson. Not defensively, but offensively. He makes the system reads, jumping into space and

keeping his feet moving. But he also times his plays. He detaches from his check at the perfect moment, freeing his stick and preparing to shoot. Not a passer or factor off the rush. Makes simple plays and then gets open. If he had a bit more defence or quickness, he could be a mid-rounder. Looked like a long shot in this game.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Emerson showed a bit more skill than normal. There was passing skill – a backhand saucer for a chance, for example. There was handling skill, as he showed on his between-the-legs shot, along with a couple of quick moves around defenders in transition. But the core of his game remains off-puck. He pushes off defenders as the puck comes near, often in creative ways. He fades to the far post instead of pushing high into space. Gets open around the net front and has the skills to get inside positioning on opponents. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Not much connected for Emerson, but this was a solid game. He opened it with a big hit to force a dump-in. Set up a few chances with quick passes into space, even showing some one-touch vision. Puck movement, in general, was strong. He makes the system reads, but also delivers pucks at the right moment and to the right option. Missed a pair of tap-ins by being too far in the crease. Didn't show much off-puck ability although he has much more than usual. Skating lacks depth, power, and stability. He could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Not much offence in this game for Chicago, but Emerson was consistently effective. He scored by rushing the net off-puck and deflecting the cross-crease pass. Takes passes and shoots in motion, albeit awkwardly. Gets open around the net off-puck. Shows a delay game off the rush and uses space when necessary. Some power elements to attack the inside, once leading to a chance. There's upside here, masked by his mechanics. The skating's a hole, there's no way around it. But he's an intelligent player with skill. Don't see much playmaking or defensive value. Could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

A really impressive game from Emerson, picking up four scoring chances at even-strength, each in different ways. He gets open off the rush and in-zone, dipping behind defenders, spacing the zone, and rushes the net as the situation demands it. Wired a couple of catch-and-release wristers. Handled the puck a lot, but only in straight lanes in a glide. Still, he showed awareness of options and stepped on the gas when necessary. He could be a pick as a re-entry, especially with the down-low playmaking and forechecking game he showed.

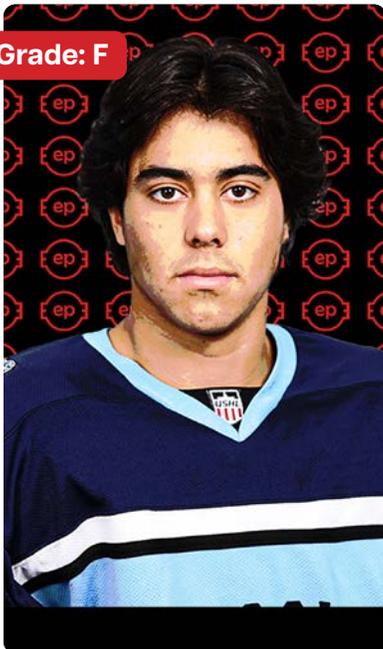
Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

More of a playmaking game from Emerson. He set-up a chance with a cross-slot pass off the rush, kept plays alive along the boards, attacked the middle, and found open teammates for shots. The skating's probably limiting, but it's early in the season. Like the off-puck game, too. He gets open at the right moments and has some off-the-pass shooting skill.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Emerson showed a lot of individual ability in this game. He deked around a defender for a high-danger chance, albeit awkward. Fired off a couple chances off the rush after a lengthy carry. He's a very weak skater, always riding his heels and inside edges. But he showed enough shooting skill and puck skills to intrigue as a re-entry.

Grade: F



Antonio Fernandez

AGE 18.932 DATE OF BIRTH Oct 11, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
5'9"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	3.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Lincoln Stars "A"	USHL	58	12	28	40	0.69

SCOUTING REPORT

Every draft guide needs some room for fun prospects, however unlikely that player getting picked might be. Second-time eligible Antonio Fernandez is one the fun players with his fast, activation-focused game.

Fernandez joins every rush with aplomb, flying up the ice ahead of his forwards, becoming the trailing option, or dipping off the radar on the weak side. It's off the rush where he creates most of his offence, capable of rifling pucks past goaltenders and setting up teammates rushing the net. From the point, he works laterally, waiting for defenders to overcommit before dashing into space.

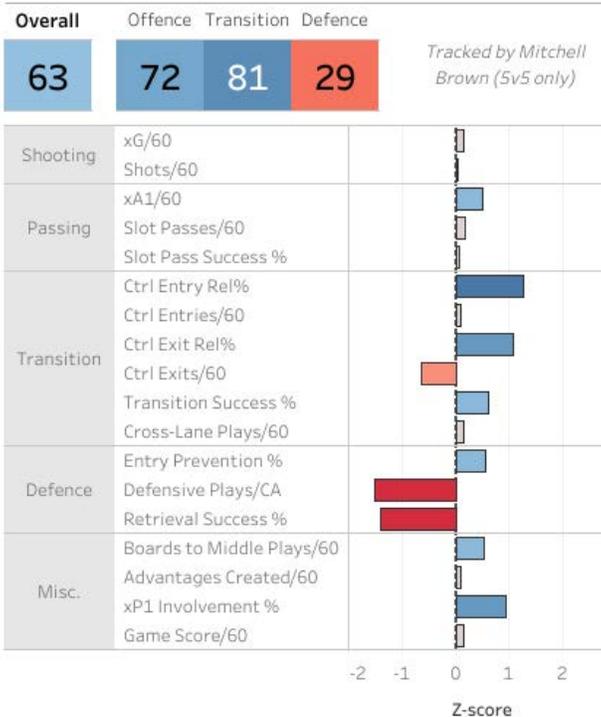
The rest of Fernandez's game facilitates his activation game. He gets on opponents early to force neutral zone turnovers, and he's always looking for the give-and-go off the boards to start the rush.

Fernandez heads to Colorado College next season, where his willingness to activate into the play could earn some attention. Improving his ability to fight off contact and manipulate opponents are key development areas over the next few seasons.

Antonio Fernandez

D | Lincoln Stars | USHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 109.7



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Lincoln Stars - USHL

Another solid game from Fernandez. He's involved in every rush. Darts into space, gets open, and has the breakout skill to create

opportunities consistently. He uses the middle, passes through opponents, and stays in motion. Grabbed a high-danger chance. From the point, he's a bit more limited. He does stuff too fast, trying to fake not waiting for the opponents' reaction before accelerating. He has some play-killing ability by gapping up early and pushing attacks wide. The stride's probably a below-average projection without much lower body flexion, but his quickness is an advantage at this level. Doesn't look like a pick, but he has pro qualities. Curious to watch him in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: March 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

The usual from Fernandez. He activates constantly, works laterally from the point, and, in flashes, shows advanced breakout ideas. He uses the middle and passes through opponents. Not a manipulator, but he creates advantages for his teammates. Didn't see any offensive zone playmaking, which will be a requirement for him as he advances the ranks. Not shy to engage defensively. He steps up on opponents and wins inside positioning, but is often overpowered or overcommitting. Not a pick, but I wouldn't be surprised if he has a high-scoring NCAA career.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A dynamic game from Fernandez, involved in every rush. He jumped into the play as the trailer, as the middle-lane driver, and primary puck carrier. Usually made positive plays once receiving the puck, including pass into the slot to his trailing blue-line partner for a high-danger look. Pinched down the boards, gapped up early, and killed a couple of plays off the rush. On breakouts, he delays, looks inside, and works pucks laterally. Conceded a breakaway goal against because he wasn't of the opponent behind him. Costly, but livable given how much he creates. Not much physical skills shown, however. That probably keeps him off the board.

Mitchell Brown: January 13th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

Fernandez is evasive and deceptive. He doesn't just cut back or work laterally, he fakes one way before moving the opposite direction. Opponents have difficulty tracking him across the ice. It enables him to create passing lanes, whether for a zone entry or on the powerplay. Always activating into the play. Shows some handling skill to navigate pressure and access passing lanes. The breakouts and defence were problems in this game. He skates straight into pressure and passes to teammates with more pressure than himself. Overpowered on retrievals and lacks explosiveness. The shiftiness hides it with the puck, when it's clear when he's in a footrace for a retrieval or skating to get back into the play. Not a pick, but an interesting player who combines edges, handling skill, and a change of pace at a high level.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A standout game from Fernandez. He controlled the game at stretches, including a 4-on-4 shift where he circled the offensive zone before gaining the middle for a shot. While he doesn't have the same level of offensive zone play as Buckberger, his breakouts are much stronger. He skates to the middle, dragging forecheckers with him, before passing to an open teammate. Similar difficulty as the November 5th game along the end boards, but he was strong defensively. On opponents by the red line, forcing dump-ins and poking away pucks. Steps into opponents and skates through the hands. Fluid, but lacks explosiveness, and as such, he's probably not a pick as a re-entry. But he could make some noise in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: November 5th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux City Musketeers - USHL

Fernandez set up a chance by jumping into the play off the draw and passing for a deflection in the slot. High pace player. He moves through passes and pass receptions, always looking to get the jump on the nearest opponent as he gets into the play. Shows a bit of patience with the puck, but struggles on the end boards. Opponents overpowered him and forced turnovers. Might be worth watching this season.

Grade: F



James Hong

AGE 17.814 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 22, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	57	15	10	25	0.44
South Korea (all)	International	3	0	0	0	0.00

SCOUTING REPORT

After a solid draft-minus-one, James Hong looked poised for a big draft year on the exciting Waterloo Black Hawks. That didn't materialize, but his motor and physicality stood out, as well as his clear path to becoming a big scorer in the USHL.

Hong never quits on a play. He sprints for every loose puck and engages in every battle he finds. Turnovers abound when he's on the forecheck. Opponents who try to step into him are often met with an intercepting shoulder. He bulldozes through contact without much difficulty, even overpowering bigger, faster players.

Throughout the season, Hong developed a more controlled puck game, focusing quick passes and occasional cutbacks to escape pressure. Still, he's not an especially creative or skilled player. His hunched stride limits his ability to convert power into speed, and his aggressive, over-the-top handling skill hinders his puck control. He shows shooting skill and passing skill, but he doesn't get many opportunities to use them.

If Hong refines the puck skills and skating, he has a chance to surprise, perhaps as soon as next season when he takes on a bigger role in the USHL.

James Hong

F | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 100.2



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

A tanky performance from Hong. He drove the net for a high-danger chance, fighting off a defender along the way. Later, he shoved

a defender to the inside and passed to the middle-lane driver for a chance. His change of pace game has improved. He slows down and waits for support instead of forcing every play forward, but still recognizes a vulnerable defender. The tools – skating, handling – aren't NHL-calibre projections. But he's such a hard-worker that it'd be foolish to write him off. Worth keeping an eye on over the next few seasons.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Hong would be much better with even a slight improvement in skating and handling. He handles the puck with such aggressiveness – always lifting his blade off the ice and hitting the puck too hard. He tries to make plays, like cutting back under pressure or deking around it, but he can't handle the puck when moving or it rolls away. He's an excellent worker – non-stop pressure. And he powers through contact like nothing. More proactive passing would help his game, too. He has vision, but he doesn't make the early pass off the rush or start give-and-gos. He has potential because of the clear growth and the physicality, but the skill level might always prove too limiting.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Hong generated more offence on the penalty kill than 5-on-5 this game. He's determined without the puck. Applies pressure until he forces a turnover or poor decision. Plays fast, sometimes too fast. But he was better at putting himself in favourable positions in this game. Cut back after the sprint, which created a couple of passing lanes. He's limited by his puck skills, but that change should allow him to generate more offence at this level. He has some off-puck offence through his motor, too.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Hong had a trio of high-danger chances. Tipped a shot before getting a rebound unpressured and was later open in the slot for a chance. Shoots off the pass without dusting off the puck first. Passing is all simple plays. He passes to the point or straight ahead. Lacks vision, a change-of-pace game, and handling skill. But he's an impressive worker. He's a buzzsaw, going from one check to the next and disrupting the puck carrier. Not a pick, but he could become something down the line.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Hong was a worker in this game. He overwhelmed opponents with his pace and constant stick work. Forced poor decisions. Scanned and eliminated threats. He had a couple of plays, mostly quick passes in transition. Also passed to teammates more covered than himself. Didn't show any notable skill otherwise. Didn't look like a pick, but plays a style that could lead to more scoring success soon.

Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

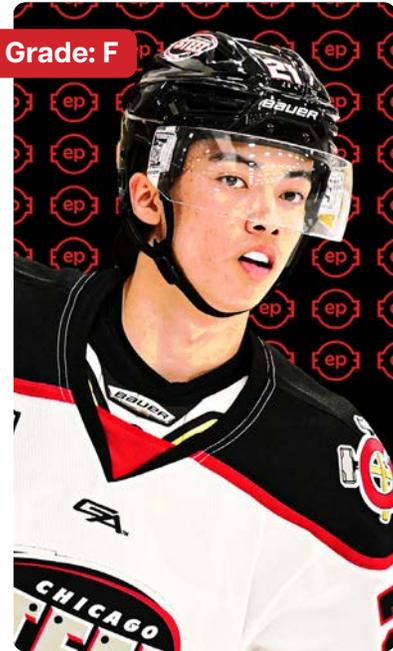
Fourth line duty for Hong. He whiffed on his best look of the game, sending the puck wide. Missed the net on his second-best look of the game. Both awkward upper body-dependent wrists where his shoulders tipped too far over his base. A snappy one-timer in the third period showed that he has a bit of shooting skill, however. He's a worker. He's involved in battles and pursuit. He spaces the offensive zone and stays between defenders. Not much else, however. Real candidate to score more in a bigger role, but likely not an NHL pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Hong's a hard worker who puts himself in favourable positions. He gains the zone, then cuts back. He gets open inside space. But he didn't achieve much. Lots of missed plays and low-value reads. Hunched and lacks power as a skater. Didn't look like a pick.

J.D. Burke: September 24th, 2021 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Big fan of what Hong did with the puck in this contest. Showed some real deceptive abilities, albeit mostly from the perimeter, deploying the mohawk to widen his frame of view. Changes speeds. Gets inside. Was willing to take a hit to make a play.



Grade: F

Cameron Johnson

AGE 17.797 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 28, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	146 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Chicago Steel	USHL	62	6	19	25	0.40

SCOUTING REPORT

There was a substantial amount of excitement around Cameron Johnson entering the season. The versatile forward led his BCHL team in scoring as a draft-minus-one, out-pacing a pair of NHL draft picks. It was the fourth-best scoring season among his age in the past decade. Sure, it was his 17-year-old season, but that's still a serious accomplishment.

The USHL proved to be a tricky adjustment. Johnson's straight-line, single-speed rush attacks and overreliance on pace was easily snuffed out. His touches were few, points were hard to come by. But Johnson made enough adjustments this season to believe he still has NHL upside.

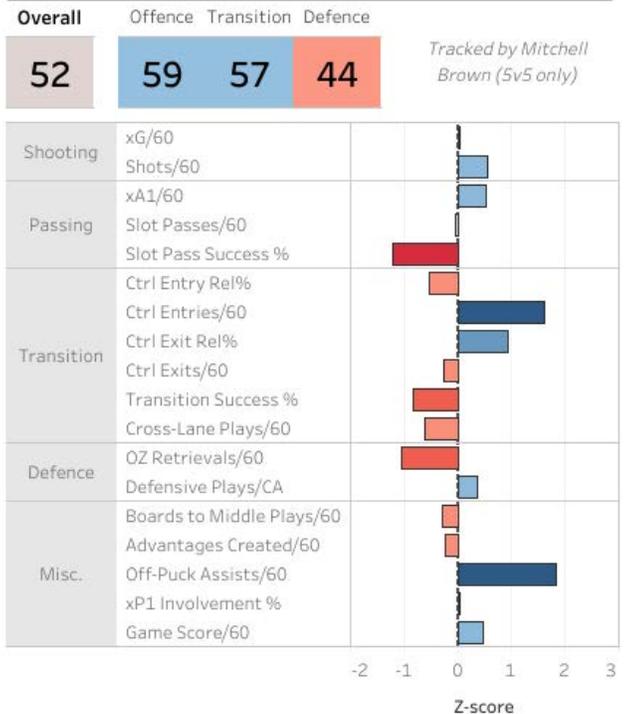
Johnson's a well-rounded player. He applies non-stop pressure to the puck carrier, basically teleporting from one check to the next. Always disrupts opponents, looks for crushing hits, and kills plays frequently, annoying everyone who gets in his path.

As the season wore, Johnson diversified his rush patterns, cutting back when pressure arrived and using weaving rush patterns that kept defenders guessing. When given a bit of space, he showed deception to work pucks through passing lanes. He has a knack for getting open around the slot, where he fires dangerous off-the-pass wristers.

Building upon those developments while improving the skating could make Johnson a solid NCAA player. This won't be the last you hear of him.

Cameron Johnson

F | Chicago Steel | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 101.2



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Johnson continues to show skill despite his lack of production. He gets open in the slot, fires off the pass, and builds plays with his passing in transition. A versatile defensive player. Basically teleports to opponents to apply pressure and then supports down low. Kills plays on the backcheck. Highly disruptive and always uses his body. Annoys everyone. The skill level remains the limitation. He doesn't threaten plays or show much creativity. Can't create high-value offence as a result. Skating's chaotic, feet flying everywhere. Lacks depth and quickness. Not a pick this year, but he could still become a prospect.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Johnson remains a fun, but limited player. Launched a player into the boards on his way to the blue-line. He shows vision in spurts to locate teammates around the slot, but he lacks the skill and patient to connect. Poor deke sets ups – straight lines and single speeds. No deception or dynamic posture. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Johnson was mostly a liability with the puck. He threw away possession a ton. He also had flashes. He skated up the ice, faking out a defender before gaining the zone. Passed off the boards through two defenders for a chance – a bit lucky, but a solid read. Not much defensive value in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A real quiet one from Johnson. He wasn't his usual pesky self. Not involved in much and certainly didn't create much. Sure, his touches were few, but he didn't create further opportunities. Not a lot of supporting reads or intelligent transition plays. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: December 9th, 2022 - Chicago Steel vs. USNTDP U18s - USHL

The best Johnson viewing yet. He showed puck protection, passing, and a much better rush patterns than at the start of the season. Instead of charging straight ahead, he cut back. He even faked plays before stopping. Set up a goal with a goal with a pump fake into a cross-slot pass for a one-timer. The hands failed him a few times, he also powered through defenders while handling, just like he did for a shot in the second period. He was his usually pesky self, too. Not sure about the ultimate skill level, but he's a pest, defends effectively, and continues to show a more nuanced game with each viewing. Consider me a fan.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Another game with clear progress from Johnson. He still gets forced into the odd up-the-boards race, but he knows when to delay, when to cut inside, and when to pass. The combination of skating and handling might prevent him from ever being a true positive in transition in the NHL, but he might not be a negative. In the offensive zone, he's a pest and a strong off-puck player. He skates his routes, pushes off defenders into space, and battles for inside positioning. Works pucks off the boards and steps inside. He's not dynamic, but he understands the game he'll have to play in the NHL. Could be a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Johnson's game seems to get more nuanced with every viewing. In this game, he wasn't forcing plays straight ahead. He started delaying, taking the middle, and finding teammates moving into space. He's not all that effective in transition – he lacks the tools and skill to create consistently. But he's an effective off-puck player. He skates his routes, wins battles, annoys people, and gets open. Looks like a late-round candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

A real pest, Johnson drew a pair of penalties, outworked the opposition, and showed a bit of skill. He basically goaded the opposition into penalties, and he's not shy about going down a bit easily. It worked. An aggressive off-puck player: he sprints directly at the opposition, engages, and tries to punish them with cross checks or a hit. Directness means he's occasionally beat by more skilled opponents. Off-puck play fits with the Steel way, always in motion to sneak into space, draw defensive pressure, and screen the goalie. Offensively, his game's simple. He tries to outrace defenders and pull the trigger. Passing was a last resort in this game. Not creative in the least, but an intelligent off-puck player. Maybe a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Top-line duty for Johnson. Showed handling skill to beat defenders in-tight. In one sequence, he faked the shot, then pushed the puck into space before pulling it around the defender's feet – an effective, flashy play. Doesn't force plays in the offensive zone, leaning on simple touches that keep the offence moving. Didn't show much vision or creativity as a passer, and looked similarly ineffective away from the puck. Didn't see a ton from him in the outing.

Grade: F



David Klee

AGE 17.351 DATE OF BIRTH May 10, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks	USHL	57	3	10	13	0.23

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing on a deep team comes with drawbacks, especially for younger players. For David Klee, it meant playing just under 10 minutes per night, despite having the skill level to find scoring success in the USHL.

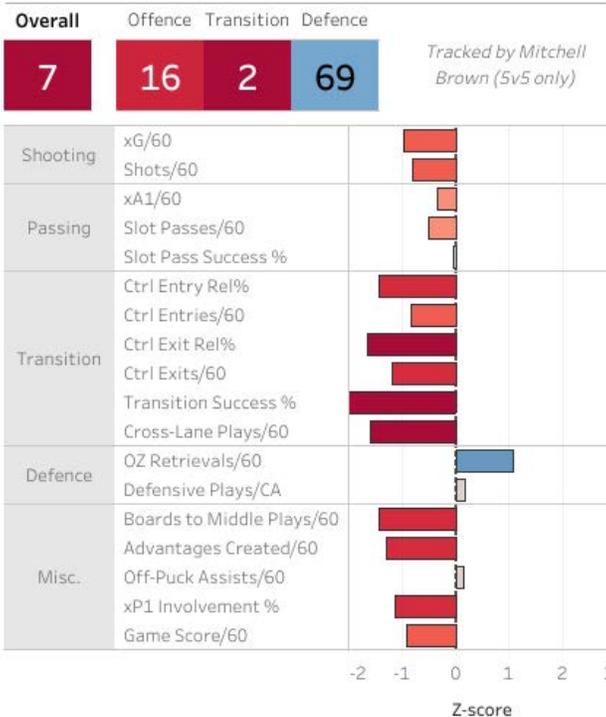
Look no further than Klee's hands. He doesn't just have the toe-drag down; he reads the opponents' feet and goes in the opposite direction, and then skates back into their space to prevent the reach-around. In spurts, he creates chances by feathering a backhand pass through an opponent or slipping it around.

Klee's skating and rush patterns limit his offensive opportunities at this stage. Straight-line, single-speed rushes are a common way that he turns over the puck before gaining the zone. But, this season wasn't a lost cause by any means. His defence improved throughout the season, to the point where it's likely a strength with pressure and anticipation.

While Klee's committed to North Dakota, another season in the USHL where he gets the opportunity to develop his offensive skill set should be the priority. If he doesn't get picked this year, he has the skill to earn attention next season, provided the points start flowing.

David Klee

F | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 68.8



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Klee deflected a couple of pucks on net for chances. For the first, he couldn't receive the pass, which prevented it from

becoming a high-danger opportunity. The lack of hip engagement and variable depth prevent him from making the most of his brain. He skates off-puck routes and even shows a bit of timing to arrive in space. Pre-scans along the boards and finds options, but he lacks touch. Didn't look like a pick; too limited by the tools. But he has long-term potential.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Klee fanned on his best look of the game, a high-danger chance off the rush. Didn't get out there much, but flashed some puck-getting ability and vision off the rush. Quick plays off the boards to the middle and anticipates passes coming back up the other way. That's his game right now. He probably looks better in a bigger role.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

The offensive skill that Klee showed early in the season didn't appear. He's just a straight-line, single-speed puck carrier who doesn't create lanes or adapt. Simple plays. An effective checker with puck pursuit, pressure, and physicality, but that's about it at this level.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Kind of a pesky game from Klee, who made his presence felt mostly on the forecheck and in the defensive zone. He even threw the odd hit from time to time, one particularly dangerous, dirty one in the neutral zone among them. There were some flashes of relatively advanced skill from Klee in this game, too. He's a surprisingly dextrous handler for someone with his profile; there was one really slick set of moves from Klee as he led a 2-on-1 up-ice that ultimately didn't amount to much. I'm not sure that he's a particularly explosive skater – looked about average, for the most part – but the use of the heel-to-heel and other inside-edge manoeuvres to evade pressure caught my attention. I don't think Klee registers as someone for our board or even a draft pick, but he's an interesting player. I wouldn't be surprised to see Klee's scoring go up with a more sizeable role.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

A checking game from Klee. His backchecking and forechecking led to some offence. He funnelled opponents into support when couldn't get the stop. The tools looked below average, and he didn't show any of the vision or handling skill I saw earlier this season. Not much in this game.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Klee deked into the zone for a chance with a toe drag, keeping his head up during the set up timing the deke as the opponent skated into him. Smart play. He also anticipated a couple of passing plays off the rush and connected, leading to chances. He's limited by his skating – he's upright, unstable, and lacks quickness – but he completes top-line USHL plays in a depth role. He could become a prospect in the future. A breakout candidate.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Klee has skill and forechecking ability. He set up a chance by after winning the puck on his second or third effort. Scored with a one-timer in the slot. He shows some handling skill and vision, too. The effort is really the impressive part, more so than the reads. Skating has a long way to go (on heels, limited flexion), and he's only playing a depth role. Probably not a pick but he looks like a breakout through these initial viewings.

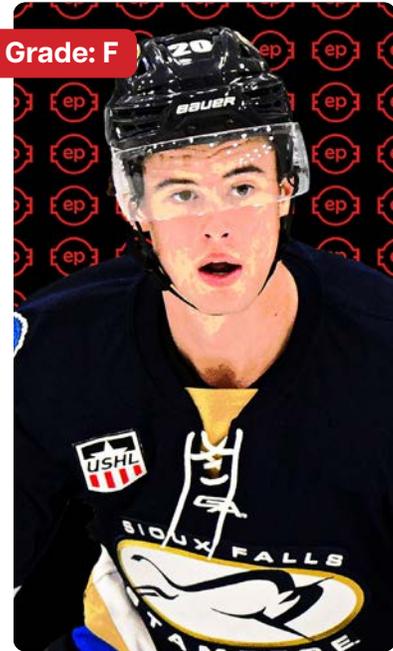
Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

A quieter game from Klee. He was nuisance on the forecheck and weaponized the steal a couple of times. Supporting reads along the boards and shows some awareness of pressure, cutting back as defenders lean in. Not comfortable managing contact because he's so upright; he rushes his moves and lacks acceleration. The puck placement through his cutbacks is solid, though. It's in the hip pocket and he pushes it into space. Not much shown, but most of the first period wasn't available. He could

become something down the road.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Fourth-line duty for Klee, but he was solid. He made a couple of standout offensive plays. He deked around a defender before dropping the puck back into space. He made quick lateral passes for entries. Passed and shot under the sticks of opponents. Slip and backhand passes. Used the heel-to-heel to survey. Stayed involved away from the puck in both ends of the rink, even if the reads came late. The skating's upright and he lacks pace in general, which prevents him from making full use of his skill. He's interesting. Curious to see more.



Grade: F

Will McDonough

AGE 17.244 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 18, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	194 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Sioux Falls Stampede	USHL	59	12	13	25	0.42

SCOUTING REPORT

Any discussion of Will McDonough starts with context. He didn't score much, but he played a third-line role on the USHL's third-worst offence. At least once a game, he showed NHL-calibre skills and ideas.

McDonough takes advantage of passive defenders by cutting inside, blending the cut with the weight transfer for the shot.

Against better defenders, he slows down, inviting them, then passes to an open teammate. If they get too close, he turns back, throws a reverse hit, and starts the cycle.

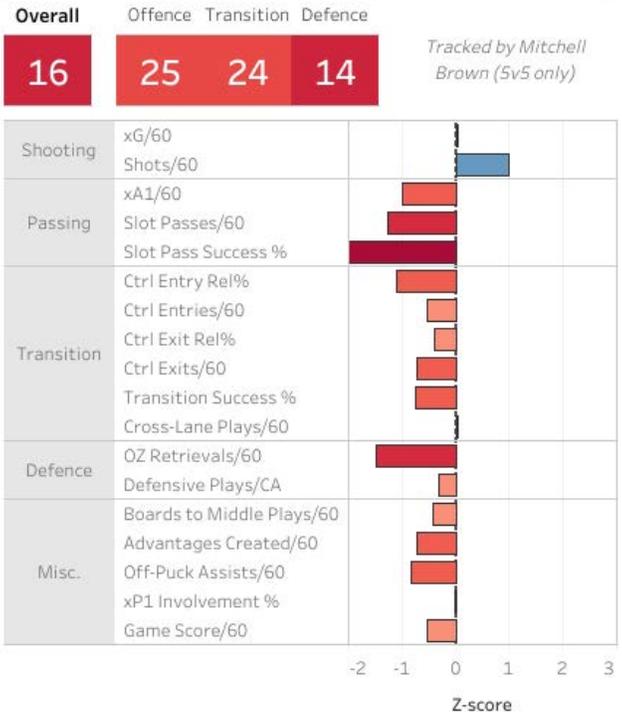
Speaking of hitting, McDonough's always looking to crash into opponents. He slams them into the boards, forcing dump outs and occasionally steals. From there, he grinds it out as he finds a passing option or cuts inside for a chance.

While the team explains some of the scoring woes, McDonough's skating is often the culprit. Opponents beat him to pucks, even when he has the head start. He lacks the depth to accelerate out of his cutbacks and turns, which also limits his effectiveness inside contact.

Without improvement, points will always be tricky for McDonough to find, and as such, the NHL might be out of reach. But if he does it, he has the mindset, physicality, and intelligence to carve out a depth role.

Will McDonough

F | Sioux Falls Stampede | USHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 80.0



≡ LINKS & MEDIA



Standout performances from the 2022 USHL Fall Classic



The 2022 Hlinka-Gretzky Cup Preview

≡ GAME REPORTS

Joey Padmanabhan: April 22nd, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A pretty underwhelming showing from McDonough. Just turnover after turnover. He's not especially agile or explosive but still tried to drive wide around guys in transition, only to be poked away. All shot attempts were from the perimeter and seen easily by Fargo's goaltender. A few nice relocations without the puck into quiet pockets of space, but that was maybe the only bright part of his night. A tough performance altogether.

Joey Padmanabhan: April 21st, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

A good performance for McDonough in what was a thumping for the Stampede. Great transition looks, albeit in glides. Finished hits hard on the forecheck and was able to grind with the puck below the goal line, creating space with his size, turning back, and finding outlets; this feels like it could be an identity at higher levels. One miscue where he lost his man at the backdoor defensively. A nice no look backhand dish in the third to a teammate on the backdoor that got shutdown. Another nice sequence where he worked through the triangle to get a quality shot from the inside. Looked like a late-board candidate in this game.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Tri-City Storm vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Nothing new from McDonough in this game. He's solid, but severely limited by his skating and occasionally his skill level. He has ideas. He looks for the trailer as defenders close space on him. When given a bit of space, he attacks defenders at angles and attacks the middle. The highlight was a smooth pull of the boards to the slot for a chance. He doesn't create lanes, at least not yet, and he's inaccurate as a passer. But there's long-term potential here even if the skill level improves.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

McDonough's stat line (four assists) would leave you with the impression that he had the game of his life, but I thought he was just fine. Now, granted, the video cut for one of his two primary helpers, but I can't say that I saw any particularly advanced flashes of playmaking intelligence or skill. Maybe the odd bit of one-touch passing on the power play and the odd attempt to connect through layers, but nothing too special. McDonough also displayed a willingness to take the puck inside, for which he deserves some credit – that was how he picked up his first helper. The skill level doesn't really pop though. I'm not sure I would rate McDonough's offensive instincts as high-end either. He could be a good college player, but I'm not sure this is someone we need to consider for our board.

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Tri-City Storm - USHL

McDonough's skating continues to cost him. He created a breakaway chance that was quickly killed by a faster moving

opponent. Gets stuck on the outside, and since he doesn't have much of a passing game to solve pressure, he can't gain the middle unless there's a clear lane. But he understands how to read gaps. He cuts inside on passive defenders, as he did for his called back goal. He delays on opponents closing the distance. Brings some defence, too. Doubt he's a pick this year, but he has enough intelligence and skill to make him worth watching in future seasons.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

McDonough had his chances in this game. He gets across the slot, most effectively at the top of the circle when he doesn't have to time his movements. The off-the-pass shot could be an NHL skill, and he has some passing skill. Set up a breakaway for an assist. The skating remains an issue. He has no acceleration phase, which means every stop-start puts him behind the play. To his credit, he has some of the skill necessary to offset it – off-puck offence, play-building in transition, and proactive defence. But none of them are high-level enough to enable consistent offensive success right now. Not a pick, but he could become one in the future. Worth tracking.

Joey Padmanabhan: January 2nd, 2023 - Sioux Falls Stampede vs. Des Moines Buccaneers - USHL

A pretty uneventful game for Will McDonough. He's a simple player, the puck is on his stick and off his stick. Tried to make some advanced passes, a couple of backhand slips, one of which connected. A few nice touch passes from the wall to teammates in motion. Beyond this, there wasn't a whole lot to judge. Got a nice step on a guy wide and shovelled the puck to the net for a decent chance. One good defensive play where he tracked down a rebound and cleared it from his net. Clearly the hands and skating are advanced enough where he can use them to create offensively. He's a role player who makes simple plays and doesn't show any flair or rely heavily on a particular skill set. That's fine, but probably means he won't end up in our rankings.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Lincoln Stars vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

McDonough continues to do very cool things at very low volume. He nearly scored by faking shot and cutting inside across the defender; it would've been perfect had he kept the puck a bit closer to his body (making the cut and subsequent shot easier). Off the rush, he attacked the middle to collapse the defence, then passed laterally. Showed some give-and-go passing and off-puck instincts. Open inside space and rushed the net after the right moments. The mechanics looked below-average and he didn't show any notable physical skills. Not a pick based on this game.

Mitchell Brown: November 4th, 2022 - Sioux City Musketeers vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Turnaround wrister for a chance, that was it from McDonough in terms of notable plays. He's a hard-worker but he was chasing a lot. The transition game was poor. He wasn't moving the puck quick enough. Ended up with outside lane attacks that led to dump-ins and turnovers. No creativity shown. Didn't look like a pick.

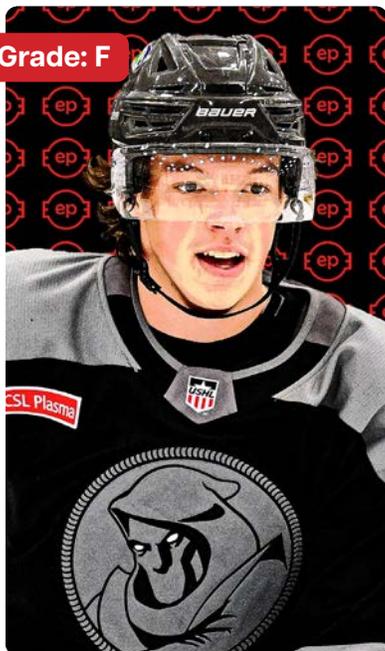
Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

McDonough has some solid ideas in transition. He's not really a puck carrier, instead preferring to make passes to the middle and across the ice. Backhand and slip passes. He has skill. But it didn't translate to the offensive end in this game. A perimeter player through and through. Missed opportunities to cut inside or pass for a better look. The mechanical foundation's relatively weak. Doesn't look like a pick but he could become a player a down the road.

Mitchell Brown: July 31st, 2022 - Germany vs. USA - Hlinka Gretzky Cup

McDonough turned a 3-on-1 into a 2-on-1 by skating in a straight line instead of passing. Still scored. But he's mostly a simple plays guy. He doesn't deceive or do anything to manage pressure. But he makes the basic plays decisively. Mechanical foundation might not be solid enough to justify using a high pick on a player like that.

Grade: F



Matthew Perkins

AGE 18.652 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 21, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C
Position

Left
Shoots

5'11"
Height

174 lbs
Weight

Player Grades

3.5
Skating

5
Shooting

5
Passing

4
Puckhandling

5
Hockey Sense

4.5
Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Youngstown Phantoms	USHL	60	15	29	44	0.73

SCOUTING REPORT

Making a second straight appearance in the Elite Prospects Draft Guide, Matthew Perkins adjusted to the USHL without much hassle, and even showed some new wrinkles in his game.

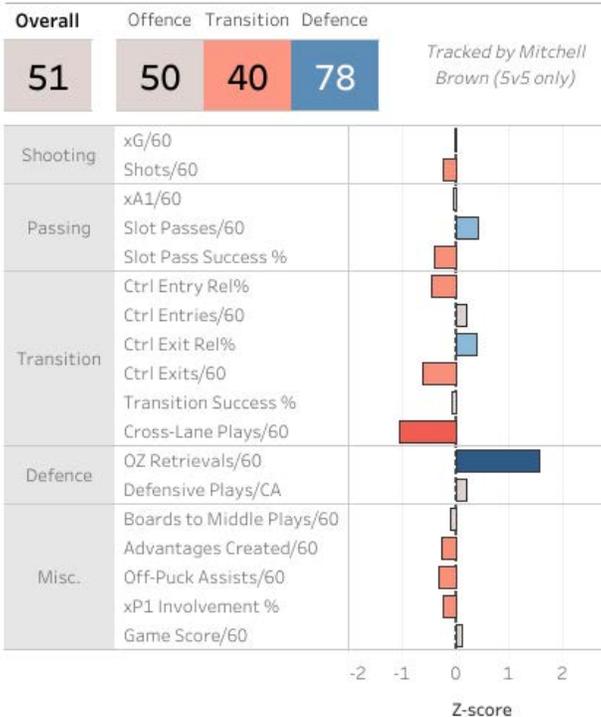
Awareness and intelligence drive Perkins' game. He gets open for chances, skates his routes to create openings for teammates, and pickpockets opponents. Instead of relying on overwhelming pressure, he uses subtle nudges and well-timed pokes and stick lifts to win possession. From there, he looks to the slot for a pass, connecting off either side of his blade.

While Perkins' handling and wide, hunched stride prevent him from separating from opponents, he moves the puck at the right moments, leads teammates into space with area passes, and plays with a focused give-and-go style.

The lack of separation tools remains a concern, however. Without improvement, reaching the NHL will prove difficult. But as history shows, small improvements pay big dividends for high IQ prospects. Perhaps he's more NCAA free agent than draft pick, but either way, Perkins will appear around these parts again.

Matthew Perkins

F | Youngstown Phantoms | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 11 | Minutes Tracked: 126.9



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Chicago Steel vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Nothing new in Perkins' game. He's not really a puck transporter or especially creative player. The skating and hands are lacking,

but he's NHL smart. He steals pucks from opponents not with overwhelming pressure, but with subtle nudges and perfectly timed stick lifts. He waits for lanes to open without lacking pace. He has backhand passing skill and leads teammates into space. Showed all of those skills on his primary assist. A hard-worker. Doesn't seem like a candidate to get picked this year, but he has the intelligence to surprise if the mechanics come along.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Perkins scored with a drop-knee one-timer on a 2-on-1, hammering the puck into the top corner. Showed one-touch passing skill. That's his game. He skates his routes, gets open, plays off his teammates effectively, and moves pucks at the right moments. Skating and handling are weak, but he could become a standout in the NCAA free agent market. Solid player. He has a real chance to make it if the skating improves a half-grade (maintaining depth constantly, better crossovers).

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Perkins remains most effective as an off-puck player. He gets open in space, skates his routes to completion, and sets picks to create space. Proactive on the defensive end. He supports plays, closes lanes, and gets the jump on loose pucks because of anticipation. More limited with the puck. He lacks handling and skating skill. Skating could be 3.5-to-4. Wide, hunched, lacks flexion. Limited power. A solid all-around player. He should become a solid pro, but I don't know if he's an NHL player with his current mechanical ability.

Mitchell Brown: March 16th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

Youngstown has a few interesting re-entries. Perkins is among them. He's a very limited skater – wide stride, high hips, dropped chest, limited power on his recoveries. Pass receptions and puckhandling are tricky for him, with his changing skating depth. Constantly fighting the puck. But he's smart. Plays within his limitations, passing early and hitting teammates as they move into space. Gets open around the net, as he did for his deflection goal. Smart defender with physicality. He's a solid all-round player. Should become a good professional player.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Limited by a wide, hunched stride, Perkins has developed other ways to create. He fakes the wide drive before cutting back or cutting inside. Patient and aware, he delays for the support. Cuts back and finds the activating defenceman. He's a hard worker, too. The tools might prove too limiting to find scoring success against pros, but his intelligence gives him a chance.

Mitchell Brown: February 17th, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Perkins scored with a deflection on the powerplay, set up a chance from behind the net, and kept play moving. In this viewing, he was mostly a support player. He keeps pucks moving and gets open become an option, but doesn't create much on his own. Not one to pass through opponents or create lanes, but he identifies opportunities quickly. Tools looked below-average. If he can improve the skating and hands, he should become a productive college player in the right situation.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perkins turned a steal into a high-danger chance, reading the puck carrier, ripping away possession, and going straight to the net. Gave the goalie trouble with a look-off wrister off the rush, changing the angle before firing far side – a clever shot. Showed a bit of passing skill in transition, hitting teammates with speed as they worked through the neutral zone. Lacks individual skill and skating. Doubt he's a pick as a re-entry but he's an intelligent player. Could become an NCAA free agent candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Perkins was mostly a shooter in this game. Solid off-puck game – getting open in space and reloading – but he created most of his shots off the rush. He used crossovers and drove wide on opponents. Could've set up a chance on a 2-on-0 but instead shot

into the pads. Didn't show much playmaking ability apart from one fake shot into a pass that failed. Skating's a clear weakness. He's upright and lacks edge control. Plays fast and uses crossovers, but his crossunder push off is limited. Doesn't look like a pick.

David St-Louis: April 9th, 2022 - Flin Flon Bombers vs. Humboldt Broncos - SJHL

The skating lacks ankle flexion. The high-stance limits agility and speed, but he makes a good use of the occasional crossover to compensate and generate some momentum. The handling skills might be a 5; he can go through defenders at this level, but there is a distinct choppiness to it. The best thing about Perkins's game is his passing-and-repositioning game, the off-puck movements, the relative anticipatory capabilities at this level, and timing. He came down the funnel in the offensive zone at the right time to get the puck from below the goal-line and fire on net. He also goes to the net and support defensively. Not sure there is enough skill in his game to include him on our board, but I can see an NHL prospect still.

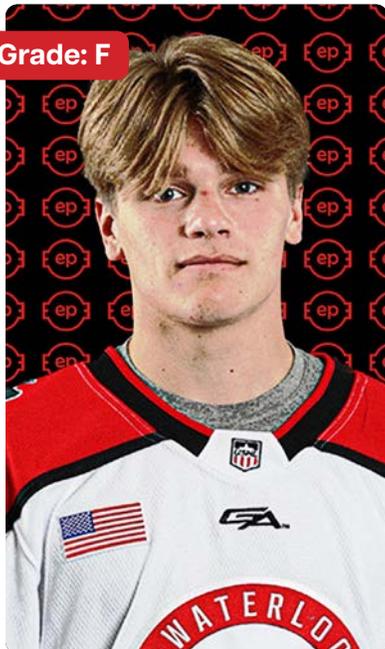
David St-Louis: March 11th, 2022 - Humboldt Broncos vs. Kindersley Klippers - SJHL

Perkins has the right ideas on the ice, but the execution is not up to a projectable level. The high-stance skating affects his handling stability; the puck bounces off his stick quite often and he has to rely on large motion to move it around the opposition, but he does keep a relatively high awareness inside his moves. He's capable of finding teammates at the end of it with lobs or passes through legs and he has some creativity, trying between-the-legs shots and long saucers into space for teammates.

David St-Louis: February 26th, 2022 - Battlefords Northstar vs Humboldt Broncos - SJHL

Not a very projectable performance from Perkins due to his very low pace of play, floating style, but he showed some interesting elements. His off-puck game is on point at this level, in terms of anticipation and timing. He scores by supporting plays and seeing them happen a beat before others. His habits are more refined, too, in terms of positioning. He establishes body positioning on retrievals and has the awareness to instantly hit teammates and makes give-and-goes to try and beat defenders. I don't see an NHL prospect, due to the average tools at best, but maybe someone who will be scoring in college in Year 3 and 4.

Grade: F



Garrett Schifsky

AGE 19.441 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 08, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
5'9"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Waterloo Black Hawks "C"	USHL	57	28	24	52	0.91

SCOUTING REPORT

On a Waterloo Black Hawks team stacked with NHL talent, the consistent Garrett Schifsky earned attention night-in-and-night-out in his last year of draft eligibility.

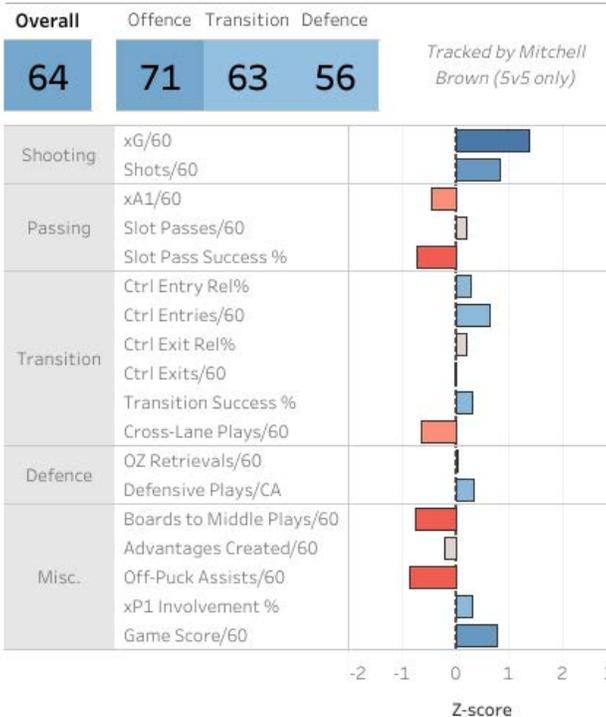
There's little doubt about Schifsky's game: He's an off-puck player, leveraging his motor, timing, and instincts into offence for himself and teammates. He turns proactive defence into breakouts with quick passes, then sprints for the return feed. With short, but frequent touches, he beats defenders while getting his teammates involved in the rush.

From there, Schifsky goes to the net. He battles for inside positioning, whacks away at loose pucks, and spins off checks to get free higher in the slot when possible.

While Schifsky connects with the odd flashy pass, he's not much of a playmaker or puck carrier. He's a hunched skater who doesn't generate much power. But his off-puck game, work rate, and physical skills suggest a future NCAA signing. His off-puck game should fit in nicely with the University of Michigan next season.

Garrett Schifsky

F | Waterloo Black Hawks | USHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 104.9



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints - USHL

The usual from Schifsky. A playmaker, he is not. But he's a smart off-puck player. Excels when he can play off his teammates,

keeping his touches short and frequent. Arrives to the net at the right moment, spins off checks, gets open higher in the zone. Plays fast, which means he occasionally overwhelms opponents in transition. Given his current skating ability, that pace likely won't be an offensive advantage in the NCAA. But his physical style and off-puck game should make him a solid player. Could become a free agent candidate down the line.

Mitchell Brown: April 14th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Omaha Lancers - USHL

Another impressive game from Schifsky. He scored with a give-and-go off the rush, kicking the puck wide, staying in space, and tapping the return feed in feed. The second was a deflection goal in front. He plays the off-puck game like a pro. It's not just the physicality and defensive zone play; it's the offence. He exchanges with his teammates, battles in front for positions and detaches at the pucks comes through, and skates every off-puck route. The skating and hands are weak. The stride lacks depth, dropping his chest to compensate and his feet flail. Likely a 4 grade. Not convinced he gets picked, but he should become a solid free agent in a few years.

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Fargo Force vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Schifsky's a bit like Cole Knuble. He's smart and plays fast and physical. Always looking for the inside lane. He cuts to the middle on pass receptions, spins off checks, and works for body positioning on opponents. Steps into opponents to create a bit of space. Not much of a playmaker or transition puck carrier. Should become an effective NCAAer. Not sure about the upside beyond it.

J.D. Burke: April 7th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

This was a really strong performance from Schifsky, who plays exceptionally fast for a skater with such a mechanically odd stride. Schifsky is top-heavy, fails to engage his core through his forward stride, and his crossovers are more like hops. The activity rate is so high though that it barely even matters. He's explosive in short bursts, and even managed to force a few turnovers on the tracks by catching Stampede defenders off guard with his speed. Schifsky flashed some advanced ideas as a playmaker too, routinely taking pucks from the wall and trying to funnel them to the inside. He even flashed a give-and-go game off of the rush at one point, too. Mostly, though, I was impressed by the way Schifsky played away from the puck. Schifsky plays with a high off-puck pace, repositioning off of each shot/pass and routinely sneaking into defender's blindspots. I don't think the skill level or the production is sufficient for Schifsky to make our board or even be a pick, but this is certainly someone to monitor as an NCAA free agent.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Fargo Force - USHL

Nothing new to report in Schifsky's game, but he continues to look like a potential NCAA free agent. He's a smart off-puck player. He really understands the nuances of positioning – getting open between checks, sneaking behind defenders, and repositioning instantly after passing. That mostly serves his shooting game. With the puck, he's limited. Straight line, single speed, lacks quickness. But his off-puck game gives him a chance to make it down the board, provided the skating improves.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Schifsky set up an entry and chance with a give-and-go, then rushed the net for the rebound. That's his game. Quick passes, lots of sprinting, lots of getting open. Wins body positioning, skates through the hands after taking the extra stride, and always working as the F1. A pro style game. Skating and hands were both significantly below average in this game. Lacks depth, quickness, and puck control. Looks more NCAA free agent signing than draft pick at this time.

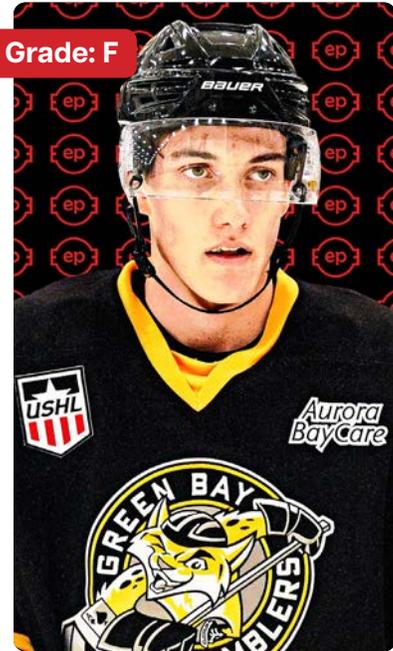
Mitchell Brown: October 29th, 2022 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Waterloo Black Hawks - USHL

Schifsky's solid. Always in the right spot off the puck. He pushes into space, engages opponents, and skates his routes. He showed some down low vision and hard skills, too. He wins body positioning by skating through the hands of the opponent. A big hit and several other smaller, intelligent plays to win possession. Very straight-line, single-speed with the puck. Skating's a

massive issue. Doesn't engage his hips at all, then collapses his torso on the ice. Wonder how much of the physical skills will aid him in the NCAA.

Mitchell Brown: October 21st, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Sioux Falls Stampede - USHL

Schifsky was pretty involved throughout this game. He's a smart off-puck player, reloading constantly. Opponents have a tricky time getting in his way, and when they do, he spins off at the right moment. The skill level didn't really shine in this game. A couple of exciting passing ideas, but the mechanics failed. His off-puck intelligent, puck protection, and Michigan commit make him worth watching a bit more.



Grade: F

Eli Sebastian

AGE 18.326 DATE OF BIRTH May 19, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	185 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	4
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Green Bay Gamblers	USHL	62	17	31	48	0.77

SCOUTING REPORT

St. Andrew's College has been an NHL draft pick producing factory lately. While Eli Sebastian's name went uncalled last season, the Saints alum had a breakout season in the USHL, earning some NHL attention.

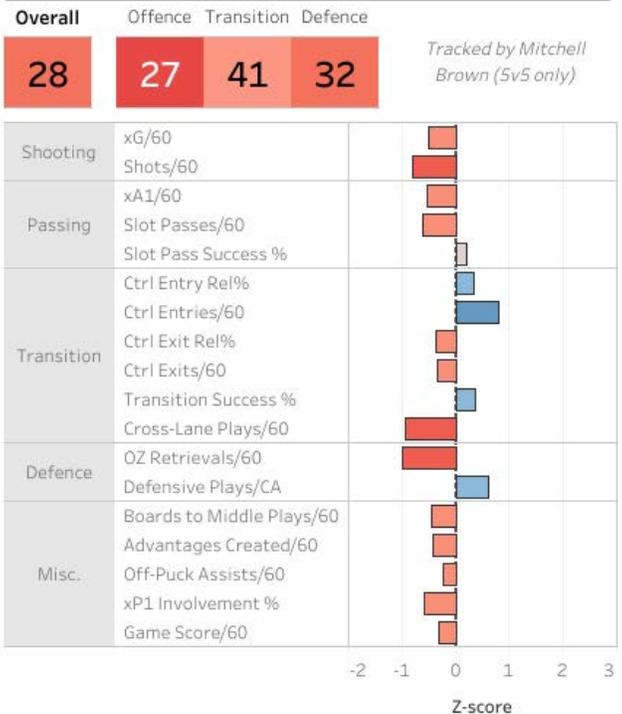
Right now, Sebastian's game is mostly flashes. He plays fast, attacking defenders at full speed with powerful crossovers and quick hands. He dekes through opponents, cuts inside under pressure, and has all sorts of crafty deliveries to connect with teammates. That pace translates to the defensive end, applying pressure, eliminating off-puck threats, and supporting battles across the ice.

To turn those offensive flashes into better impact, Sebastian will have to use his teammates more often and develop a change of pace game. More successful transition touches means more offensive zone time to let those skills – handling and creative passing – shine.

Sebastian heads to Northeastern next season, where he will have plenty of time to refine his game. He'll surely complete some highlight reel plays, too.

Eli Sebastian

F | Green Bay Gamblers | USHL | Draft+1
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 112.0



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2023 - Dubuque Fighting Saints vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

The flashes from Sebastian are exciting, but the baseline's pretty bland for this level. That's fine. He grabbed a high-danger

chance, pulled off a spin backhand deke at the top of the zone, and brought his usual defensive value. He plays fast, but without much foresight. Skates into traffic, doesn't use his teammates enough in transition, and doesn't deceive. Doesn't look like a pick, but he has some runway because of his flashes and tools.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2023 - Youngstown Phantoms vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Sebastian plays with pace and brings defensive value. He covers players off-puck, proactively works down low, and gets above the puck on the backtrack. But there wasn't much offence shown in this game. He skated straight at opponents and killed plays before they could start. A couple of lateral passes in transition showed more proactiveness, but he wasn't creating advantages with them. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Chicago Steel - USHL

Sebastian was an effective puck carrier in this game. He used weaving rush patterns with frequent crossover use, getting a proper crossunder and beating opponents with his speed. Not much of a passer or play-builder and he's a bit too dependent on speed, but the dynamic potential is here. Effective defence. He just doesn't create much offence at this stage. He could become a player down the road.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - USNTDP U17s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Right now, Sebastian doesn't make a ton of plays, but he has the potential. The flashes are exciting. He connected with a between the legs pass of the boards for a chance, turned a shot into a pass into the slot for an assist, and tries to take on opponents 1-on-1 with speed. But he traps himself with the puck and lacks patience in transition. Doesn't let plays develop. As a result, scoring chances and passes for chances are hard to by for Sebastian. He has the skill, but can't get into the right positions. More skilled than the usual draft-plus-one prospect, but has a lot of work to do before being able to make full use of it.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - USNTDP U18s vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

A different game from Sebastian, showing a dynamic puck carrying game in transition. He attacked opponents on angles, beat them with speed, passed through teammates, and repositioned. Created a couple of chances, one with a shot and one with a pass off the boards. Nothing high-value or especially creative, but it was good to see the more advanced rushes lead to something. A consistent presence on the backcheck and forecheck, too. Doesn't look like a pick, but he could be a prospect down the road.

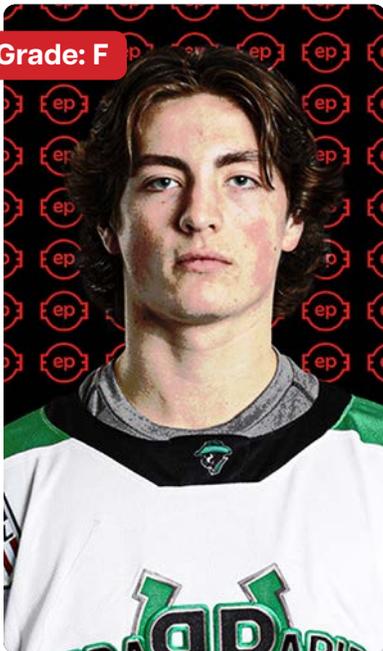
Mitchell Brown: November 12th, 2022 - Green Bay Gamblers vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Sebastian scored with a quick wrister from the hash marks. Nothing too fancy, but shot it far side immediately. Relied on outside speed, beating a defender once for a chance. He's a predictable, straight-line attacker who looks easily pushed out of games and lacks the playmaking to find other solutions. He did, however, show a bit of defence with proactive down-low positioning and a couple of steals. Tools looked like average-to-below-average projections across the board. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 14th, 2022 - Muskegon Lumberjacks vs. Green Bay Gamblers - USHL

Sebastian had some fun flashes of skill in this game. He scored with a wrister going back against the grain. Zipped the puck around on the powerplay, showing a bit of deception. Some proactive backtracking and defensive positioning, too. He had a delay game alongside some advanced passing ideas, but his passes often missed the mark in this game. He's worth paying attention to this season.

Grade: F



Ryan Walsh

AGE 19.060 DATE OF BIRTH Aug 25, 2003 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+2

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'1"	174 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders	USHL	61	30	49	79	1.30

SCOUTING REPORT

The USHL's second-leading scorer was Ryan Walsh, a double re-entry. Despite his age, this was Walsh's first year in the league, having played Prep at Salisbury School with current linemate Dylan Hryckowian. Together, they formed a dynamic rookie duo.

Details, details, details. Walsh's game is all about the details. Offensively, he's always open, and when he can't be, he skates into groups of defenders to create space for a teammate. He wins body positioning around the net, plays a give-and-go style, and never hangs onto the puck for too long.

Walsh's detail-oriented approach transfers to the defensive end, too. There's no quit in his game. He takes the extra stride to win body positioning, gets above the puck to push attackers wide, and eliminates off-puck threats inside defensive zone coverage.

Despite Walsh's production, there aren't many dynamic qualities to his game. He's more a quick-possession facilitator than dynamic play creator. If the skating and handling take a step, he could be a solid late-rounder. If not, his NCAA-friendly style should generate some interest as a free agent over the next few years.

Ryan Walsh

F | Cedar Rapids RoughRiders | USHL | Draft+2
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 96.5



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 21st, 2023 - Des Moines Buccaneers vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Details, details, details. Walsh skates his routes to completion, attacks the middle when given space, always takes the extra

stride on the backcheck to secure positioning, and anticipates plays on the forecheck. Fights for body positioning across the ice. With the puck, he misses the best play but usually makes a positive one. He skates into defenders then drops the puck back, creating a bit of space. Skating lacks refinement, especially for a draft-plus-two. That might prove too limiting when paired with the lack of standout skills. Looks more NCAA free agent than draft pick but maybe a team picks him late.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks - USHL

Walsh's motor is impressive, especially on the backcheck. Never gives up on plays. But he didn't do much with the puck. He had a catch-and-release chance, that was it. Not much playmaking or creativity. But he barely touched the puck. Not much to go on.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

A detailed game from Walsh. A pair of steals led directly to offence. He times his pokes like a defenceman, preferring to get inside the opponent rather than reach. Often knows the next play as soon as he recovers possession – that's his game. He works hard, advances the puck, stays in space, and advances it again. He's not manipulating or showing notable vision, but he's generally making positive plays. The off-puck game led to a few scoring chances in front. Scored late with a one-timer from the top of the circle. Despite his production, he's more of a complementary piece on this team. That's not an insult; he understands the finer points of that style necessary to succeed in the professional ranks. Perhaps a team picks him because of that. If not, he should become a top NCAA free agent in a couple of years.

Mitchell Brown: February 24th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Youngstown Phantoms - USHL

Walsh is filling the back of the net, but this was another quiet game. Mostly floated around and didn't show much urgency. When the puck arrives, he either shoots immediately or goes for a quick skate before passing. He's not creating lanes or setting up chances. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 7th, 2023 - Madison Capitols vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Another fairly quiet game from Walsh, who mostly digs for pucks and advances play forward for Hryckowian and Wisdom. Gets open inside space, quickly moves the puck once getting it. A proactive, emerged defender. Barely gets the puck in transition, with his two wingers handling those duties. Didn't see any NHL ability in this game.

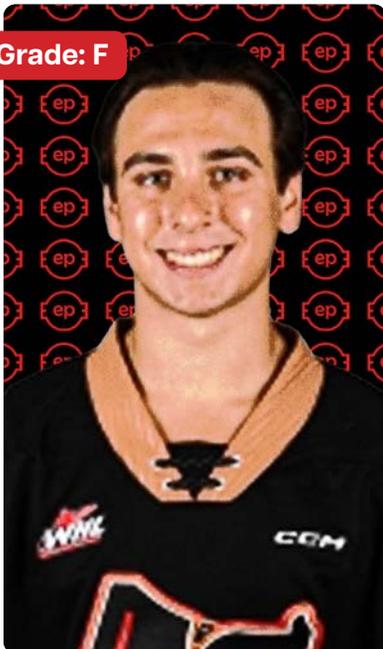
Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Cedar Rapids RoughRiders vs. Madison Capitols - USHL

Despite leading the team in scoring, Walsh looked more like the tertiary player on his line with Hryckowian and Wisdom. He's mostly the facilitator. He takes the middle when it's obvious, but keeps his touches short. He drops pucks to open teammates, serves as the link between his two high-motor linemates. Builds speed on curves with his crossovers, enough to beat opponents at the next level. I don't see NHL upside at this stage; he's old and lacks higher level skills.

Mitchell Brown: November 26th, 2022 - Waterloo Black Hawks vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders - USHL

Walsh motor and pace were constants in this game. He stepped into players on the backcheck to secure possession and attacked defenders with his feet moving, often inside crossovers. Most keeps the touches short, with catch-and-release shots and quick touch passes to teammates as they move into space. He could be something.

Grade: F



David Adaszynski

AGE 17.310 DATE OF BIRTH May 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	168 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Calgary Hitmen	WHL	64	12	15	27	0.42

SCOUTING REPORT

There are hard-working players, and then there's David Adaszynski. Every shift, he sprints from check to check, forcing dump-ins, turnovers, and nabbing steals. He gets low, driving his body in front of the opponent to secure body positioning and put his team back on the attack.

While Adaszynski's offensive impact was mostly limited this season, there were flashes of pro-level skills and upside. His hands are his strong tool, deftly controlling pucks through and around opponents with his feet moving. Where many flashy handlers just rely on their hand speed, he uses the opponents' momentum against them, attacking the space they are exiting.

To take the next step, Adaszynski must rely more heavily on his passing game, using the handling skill to not just beat opponents, but to clear and create passing lanes. In spurts, he draws defenders before passing.

Similarly, he's not much of a shooter at this stage and his game suffers from breakdowns as he pushes his mechanics beyond their limits with his pace.

While Adaszynski isn't likely to hear his name called in June, his combination of motor and puck skills gives him lots of runway. Don't be surprised if he's among the WHL's better scorers in a year or two.

David Adaszynski

F | Calgary Hitmen | WHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 100.7



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Not a ton of ice time for Adaszynski but he's always noticeable. Intense player. He sprints for every puck, applies non-stop pressure, and supports down low in the defensive zone. Skates through opponents' hands. Flashes some handling skill in transition, using a hesitation move to open up a defender, beating him wide, or trying to. The skating continues to be a limitation. He struggles to find separation. Not much of a playmaker and his shot wasn't a threat in this game. Not a pick, but seems like a breakout candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Adaszynski cut inside off the boards for a chance and kept the motor running high all game long. His best sequence was a give-and-go entry, where he drew the defenders towards himself before passing. That play alone suggests that he has more upside than many prospects. He's aware. But the tools fail him, he plays too fast, and he misses options. I think he takes off in a year or two, but he's not a pick this season.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Adaszynski's motor was working all game long. He never stops. Relentless in pursuit and there's some craftiness to his footwork and reads. The shot looked more like a below-average projection, but the hands looked like a 5-grade. From the point, he received a pass, faked one way, then attacked down the boards. Uses the heel-to-heel to survey and keeps deceptive posture with the puck. Despite this, he's not much of a passer. He makes basic reads but can't prolong or create lanes. The skating's a problem, too. He's wide and lacks lower-body flexion, although he has skills and integrates crossovers into his rushes effectively. Some off-puck offence shown in this game, but more of the basic stuff: rushing the net off the boards, spacing the rush, getting open high. Not a pick this year but the potential's there to become a prospect down the line.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

This was another solid game from Adaszynski. The breakouts were solid, I don't really care about the turnovers. He spotted teammates working up the middle, took the puck off the boards if necessary. The highlight was reading the forechecker's feet, then deking around them to reset and take the inside. Burst down the outside with speed for an in-stride wrister that looked close to an NHL shot. He has puck skills and the ability to make plays when moving. Just wish there was more vision and playmaking. He ends up on the perimeter a lot and doesn't try to manipulate defenders with weaving rushes. Not a pick this year, but clearly has potential.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

An impressive game from Adaszynski; a menace on the backcheck. He had several relentless backchecks, overcoming deficits of a space with strides and then skating through the hands to seal off the puck carrier. It was a solid offensive performance, too. He showed puckhandling skill and a bit of craft, using a change of pace to beat a defender wide and another adjustment play to access a lane. Not a manipulator, but he recognizes lanes and moves pucks at the right moments. He looked like a pick in this game. Maybe there's some long-term upside here.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Another game where Adaszynski wasn't involved in Calgary's offence at all. He's a worker, zooming from one battle to the next. He gets involved, provides support, and generally gets open in the right spaces. But I didn't see any of the handling or skill that he showed earlier. Not really a game with much to go on.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Adaszynski grabbed a first-period scoring chance by stealing the puck from a falling defender before going in alone. His motor stands out, as does his defensive skating. He doesn't charge at opponents; he angles them. He's not much of a factor in transition or the offensive end. Limited passing, but he showed vision and skill in one sequence. He hit the defender with a pivot turn before accelerating, then found a teammate in the high slot. Not sure if intentional. But it was another flash of skill that he doesn't show consistently.

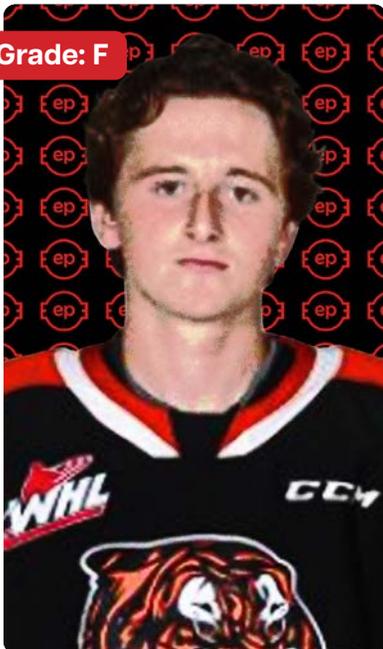
Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

A quiet game from Adaszynski outside the usual high motor. He skates his routes and spaces the offensive zone, but he struggles to get open inside the slot. A lot of perimeter play. Not much creativity. The skating lacks refinement; he's hunched and wide. He doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Adaszynski was largely a non-factor in this game, save for a break up that led to a chance and some determined backtracking. He has some flashes of handling skill, but not pace. He fakes out incoming pressure by opening up the hips and slowing down. Lacks the acceleration and in-motion skill to truly separate with these plays. All of his rushes were outside lane attacks. Nothing too interesting there. Hunched stride, lacks depth. Not a creator; more of an exploiter from the outside lane.

Grade: F



Reid Andresen

AGE 17.381 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 29, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

5'8"

Height

146 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

5

Skating

4

Shooting

5

Passing

5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

3.5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	68	7	28	35	0.51

SCOUTING REPORT

Reid Andresen was a top prospect entering the WHL. The high-pace playmaker was one of the most exciting blueliners in a deep WHL group, but translating those skills has been a bit tricky so far.

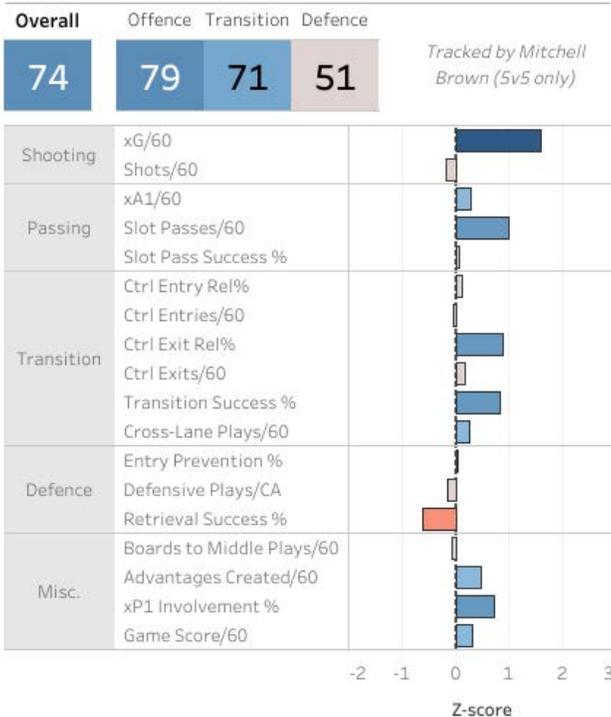
A shifty, inventive player from the point, Andresen spins, cuts, and dekes around opponents. Never shy to join the play, he creates options for his teammates. When the puck arrives on his stick, he's a powerful one-time shooter and a crafty quick-touch passer. Through the season, he became more deceptive, allowing access to trickier, higher value passing lanes.

Andresen's aggressive approach appears defensively. He gets on opponents early, angling them into the boards and cutting through their hands to win possession. Speedier opponents overwhelm him, and he tends to wander ahead of his check in the neutral zone.

Given Andresen's stature and lack of top-level production, he's not likely to be a pick this year. But as he continues to develop his breakouts, deception, and offensive game, he should become a top WHL blueliner – which should lead to NHL interest down the road.

Reid Andresen

D | Medicine Hat Tigers | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 104.3



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Lots of great moments from Andresen. He jumped into the play plenty, leading to a couple of opportunities. His goal: weak side

activation to create 3-on-2, then he staying in space for the quick wrister. Proactive and stays in space. A bit of a quiet game as a passer. He tried to manipulate a defender but the puck left his stick just a bit too late on his only notable pass attempt in the offensive end. Liked the rush, for the most part. He pivots and surfs across. He keeps opponents in front of him and steps up when the pass comes. Caught flatfooted and above the play a couple of times. Should some play-killing deeper in the zone, too. Not a dynamic performance, but lots of interesting qualities. Should become a big scorer in the WHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A dynamic game from Andresen, activating into the play constantly. Shifty from the point, using heel-to-heel skating and inside edge work to work laterally. He avoided point shots and looked for passing plays instead. Deceived to prolong lanes. Tried one-touch plays and quick possession plays. Without immediate pressure, he shifts his weight, masks his intentions, passes through opponents, and joins the rush. With it, he tends to offload pucks a bit too quickly. Not all of his passing plays are effective. He passes to teammates with more pressure than himself and his deceptive plays miss their mark. Defends the rush effectively in single-variable situations – keeps attacks wide and angles. Not a pick this year, but he could become one with more control in his game.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Andresen had a bunch of fun plays in this game. He took pucks off the boards, spun around pressure, then passed to a teammate on the perimeter. Lots of cross-lane passes, beating pressure while changing the point of attack. Consistently created off retrievals, scanning and moving play to the middle when necessary. Very little offensive or defensive impact. Could be something here, but it doesn't seem like this will be his year.

Grade: F



Brady Birnie

AGE 17.022 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 07, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'7"	141 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	6	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	2
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Swift Current Broncos	WHL	68	18	21	39	0.57

SCOUTING REPORT

Just a few years ago, Brady Birnie was one of the WHL's most exciting prospects. He stood at just 5-foot-6, 120 pounds, but his handling skill and motor allowed him to punch above his weight. By the time his draft season was over, he amassed 138 points in 34 games, leading to the Swift Current Broncos picking in the first round.

Adjusting to the WHL hasn't been easy for Birnie. His thin frame has led to difficulties in puck battles, while his skating hasn't provided the same separation it once did. But for a two-month stretch in the middle of the season, he scored at a near point-per-game pace, showcasing the skill.

Birnie instantly turns passes into dekes and curl-and-drag wristers. He elevates the top arm, narrows his stance, and drives his entire body weight through the shot – pucks explode off his stick. There's passing skill to navigate lanes and puck protection skills give him a chance in every battle.

To reach the next level, Birnie must develop better habits in transition. He tries to charge straight ahead without any changes of direction or pace. In today's WHL, that's a low-percentage play. Turnovers abound and his offensive opportunities decrease as a result.

Similarly, getting stronger to better absorb contact and maintain a deep stance through his strides, crossovers, and cuts. Birnie's likely not an NHL prospect at this stage, but his high skill could make him a re-entry pick or free agent signing down the road.

Brady Birnie

F | Swift Current Broncos | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 76.1



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** January 31st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

The Birnie viewings are getting better. He scored with a nasty drag wrister into the far corner, picking the puck up prepared to shoot instantly. He skated his off-puck routes, sprinting past opponents and collapsing at the net as the play advanced. Showed a bit of three-zone value. He won loose pucks on the forecheck, created chaos, and ripped away possession on the backcheck. Not dynamic, but he looks like he's breaking out.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

It's January and every Birnie report reads the same already. He's talented. A powerful wrister, really elevating that top arm elbow and powering through his shot. He has passing skill and vision from the boards, but none of the passes connected (threw pucks too far ahead of his opponents). Showed more board skills than last game. This time, he waited for pressure to arrive before cutting back, which created a chance. Attacked the middle instantly. Well-timed pokes and sprints towards opponents led to steals and forced errors. The skating's an issue, lacking depth and power. This doesn't look like his season, especially given his stature. But he's becoming an effective WHLer.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Birnie still struggles to beat defenders in transition. He just skates straight ahead until they eliminate his space. As a result, every other neutral zone touch seems to fail. It's a shame, because he's a skilled and intelligent player once he actually gains the zone. He slow up and looks to find the trailer or the player cross-ice. Furthers possession by starting passing plays (instead of forcing a play immediately to the high-value target, he passes a teammate in better position). The playmaking off the boards led to a couple of chances, but he needs space given to him. Doesn't try to manipulate feet, and when he deceives with his edges, he doesn't wait for the reaction of the opponent first. In general, he's involved on the backcheck and supporting down low. Skilled, but this doesn't look like his year.

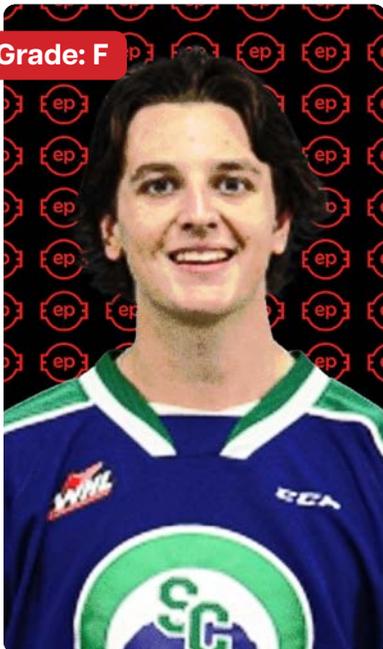
Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

For the most part, Birnie's just a worker. He charges at the puck carrier, coming across the hips to win possession. Gets above the puck. Jumps into passing lanes and cuts off the top. He plays a straight-ahead game with the puck, skating until he runs out of space, which is often given his average skating. But, he also has moments of real skill. A slick outside leg wrister from a tricky position and a sound one-timer showed potential NHL shooting skill. Detaches the top arm elbow from his side and really powers through his shot. I bet his game looks a lot different with more patience in transition. Right now, he's not getting many prime touches, partly because of the team, partly because he dead-ends himself with the puck.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Birnie scored a shorthanded goal. He has moments of real skill: weight shift to freeze defenders before cutting inside, look-off passes to the middle, spinning hook passes. Many of his ideas lack scanning, so they fail. But he's also limited in transition, where he plays a straight-line, single speed game that keeps him glued to the perimeter. He needs runways of space to create, but can't create them himself. Tools aren't notable, with an unrefined stride and edges that lack power. Worked defensively, getting above the puck before coming across the hips. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Grade: F



Grayson Burzynski

AGE 17.282 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 04, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D

Position

Left

Shoots

6'4"

Height

212 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

2.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

5

Passing

4.5

Puckhandling

4.5

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Swift Current Broncos	WHL	59	5	7	12	0.20

SCOUTING REPORT

At first glance, there's nothing eye-catching about Grayson Burzynski. He played bottom-pairing minutes on a bottom-table team, didn't score, and went unranked by NHL Central Scouting, despite his stature. As such, he's not likely to get drafted, but he could become a prospect in the future.

A transition specialist, Burzynski always steps off the boards before making plays to draw pressure and potentially weaponize it.

Instead of forcing plays straight ahead, he works laterally, then passes through the forechecker that fell for the bait. Then, he activates, where he quickly moves pucks as they arrive on his stick.

Every other part of Burzynski's game is highly unrefined. His upright, weak skating prevents him from separating from opponents or closing the gap without reaching. He reads attackers and anticipates their next move, but his lack of speed prevents him from getting the stop. Against better forechecking teams, he's pressured into poor decisions.

As such, there's a ton of work ahead of Burzynski. To reach the professional ranks, his skating must improve significantly, but any gains he makes will elevate every other part of his game even more.

Likely not a pick this year, but his standout breakout mind will make him worth tracking in future seasons.

Grayson Burzynski

D | Swift Current Broncos | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 5 | Minutes Tracked: 50.3



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Burzynski had one of the best plays of the goal, gaining the zone with a give-and-go before collapsing to the net to create space behind him. His activation reads are strong, in general. He knows when to go, when to stay back. Even more aggressiveness would help. Vulnerable off the rush because of the skating; he's really upright and his edges are underdeveloped. Not much push off. But he read attackers along the boards, anticipating their cutbacks before pressing them into the boards. He needs space to let the skill shine; otherwise, it's a quick up-and-out play. Doubt he makes our board, but he could be a late-round flyer. Lots of interesting elements that would benefit from skating improvement.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Burzynski barely played in this game. He didn't have much of an outing. The skating's so much of an issue that even when he successfully eliminates the puck carrier's options, he's liable to getting beat wide. The breakout skills were only visible in spurts, hitting a couple of smart passes to open teammate that facilitate breakouts, but he struggled making plays with back pressure. Reversed or threw pucks into battles. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Burzynski showed off more good ideas with the puck. He delays, resets, uses the middle, deceives, and activates. Understands how to create advantages. Times his passes well, hitting moving targets and slipping pucks through defenders. The rest of his game's a massive work in progress. Didn't contribute offensively, taking pucks flatfooted and only making basic plays. Defensively, he's engaged but easily beat. The skating's the culprit. Lacks depth. Pivots kill speed and his acceleration's just his stride, which is weak. Always on his heels. Worth watching more because of the transition skill.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Burzynski has a lot of interesting qualities. He uses the weak side to activate into the play, both off the rush and from the point. Combines with the activation with a tight gap in the neutral zone. On breakouts, he deceives with his eyes. In one sequence, he worked up the boards while his teammate flew up the opposite side, masking his intentions before firing the long-range dart for an assist. Otherwise, the offence was limited. Skating's even more limiting. He lacks depth, with a stride plagued by limited push off power. His pivots kill his speed and can't recover. Always on his heels. Some interesting qualities in this game. Worth watching more.

Grade: F



Matteo Fabrizi

AGE 17.482 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 23, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'5"	234 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Red Deer Rebels	WHL	67	5	7	12	0.18

SCOUTING REPORT

Points and Matteo Fabrizi didn't get along this season, but at 6-foot-5, 234 pounds, and with a bit of skill, he's likely to generate some NHL interest.

Along the boards, Fabrizi's a formidable foe. He doesn't just run over players; he mirrors their footwork to guide them to the boards, closes the distance, and pins them. Off the rush, he closes space at the blue line and follows his stick with a thunderous check.

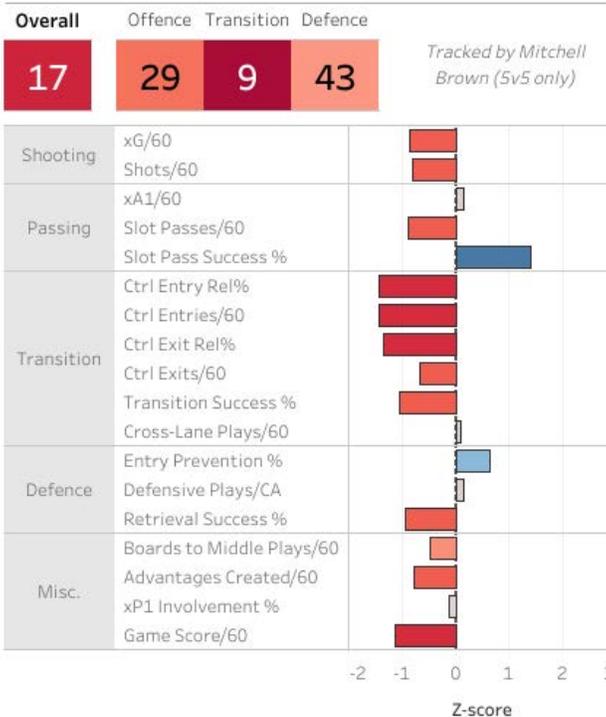
In the offensive end, Fabrizi has more skill than the numbers suggest. He moves through pass receptions with his head up, shoots like an NHLer with wrists off either leg, and occasionally sets up a teammate after faking the shot.

Right now, linking those areas has proved tricky for Fabrizi. His skating makes him vulnerable to speed off the rush and limits his escapability with pucks along the boards. As a result, he makes simple plays that often lead to more defending.

Given his improvement this past season, this year's version of Fabrizi won't likely be next year's. To make the NHL, the puck skills and skating will have to take a significant step. But he's trending up.

Matteo Fabrizi

D | Red Deer Rebels | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 110.5



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 31st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Nothing new in Fabrizi's game. He's an alright player for this level, but it's really about the potential. He's somewhat fluid and has

ideas, but the execution's just too weak at this stage. If he improves the skating and makes better use of his habits (in motion pass receptions, using space before moving the puck), he could become a solid re-entry candidate.

Mitchell Brown: March 24th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Fabrizi looks like the same player as earlier in the season. He's engaged, but lacks the mobility to make full use of his aggression. Some positive offensive habits – using space, scanning, in motion pass receptions – but not much skill to back it up beyond the shot. Breakouts are limited, save for the odd read where he spots a teammate through the forecheck. Doesn't adapt to lanes and easily pressured into poor decisions. Lots of potential here, given his habits. Probably a late-rounder if he gets picked. Wouldn't be surprised if he has a big season next year.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Fabrizi has some memorable plays, mostly on the defensive end. He mirrored footwork and stayed locked to opponents. A particularly memorable battle against Geekie, who eventually got the upper hand because Fabrizi's stops and edges couldn't keep up. He has some projectable offensive habits, mostly centred around using space. He's mostly a shooter, although he moved the puck around a bit more. Nothing advanced, but perhaps there's potential for offensive growth. Breakouts were panicked and forced, but he made some intelligent pass through a forechecker that led to a breakout. More of that, and he'll be a solid WHLer. NHL upside? Not convinced, but he has potential.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Fabrizi continues to improve. The highlight of this play was a pass reception into a quick cross-slot pass for chance. Earlier this year, he shot that. He keeps his head up and tries to move through his pass receptions. Uses space on the point. He's a formidable defender along the boards, where he can wrap opponents, but struggled in open ice. Attackers beat him with skating alone. Even when he won races, he still handed the puck straight to the opposing players. And his breakouts are limited unless he has time and space. If he has a bit, he flashes advanced ideas – use middle, cross-ice, etc. If not, he defaults to the simple play. His game's all over the place right now, but there's potential. Not a candidate for our board.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

A solid game from Fabrizi. He showed a bit of skill in this game. He had his head up through pass receptions and didn't force plays to the net. Looked for teammates on the inside and even beat an opponent before driving the net. Some effective retrievals, winning positioning before bumping the puck back to his partner. Turn stops into offence by leaving pucks in space for his teammates. Nothing advanced, but he's improving.

Mitchell Brown: December 2nd, 2022 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Fabrizi walked off the point and fired a step-in wrister for an assist. Again, it was a clever shot. That part of his game should lead to some offence eventually. He's simple on breakouts, moving pucks up to the boards and never really changing pace. But there were moments where passes through a forechecker to a teammate on the other side, showing a bit of vision. Defensively, he closes space at the blue line and looks to follow his stick with his shoulder. Committing footwork and a sometimes passive gap will be exploited against pros, but here, he's able to get stops. He'd benefit from taking the middle away earlier. Not sure if this is his year, but there's enough to keep watching him.

Mitchell Brown: November 8th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Fabrizi can really rip it from the point. That looks like his NHL tool. He's also reasonably fluid, defends the rush effectively, and makes simple, effective plays off retrievals. Red Deer runs a lot through their defencemen on the breakout – lots of carries, more than passes. Fabrizi doesn't do that. He passes to his partner and disengages. There are moments, stepping inside and passing cross-ice to a teammate moving with speed, but those are few. He didn't look like an NHL prospect in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Fabrizi scored with a step-in wrister, masking his release inside his crossovers before jumping on his inside leg for the shot. Otherwise, he contributed little with the puck. Doesn't activate into the play, missing opportunities to support and increase options. Defers to his teammates on breakouts. Doesn't create any advantages with his touches. Takes pucks in motion, which might lead to more impact later. Much better defensively, where he closes space at the blue line to force dump-ins. One-and-done defender, lacking the skating to correct mistakes, but he didn't get turned around in this game. Second on pucks on retrievals and failed to use his body to shield possession. Moments of intrigue, but he didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Grade: F



Emmitt Finnie

AGE 17.219 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 27, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

C	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kamloops Blazers	WHL	64	9	26	35	0.55

SCOUTING REPORT

Relegated to a depth role on a top team, Emmitt Finnie didn't get as much time to shine as other prospects. That didn't stop him from finding success, showcasing awareness and skill throughout the season. Late in the season, his hard work paid off with a 21-points-in-15-games stretch.

Few prospects combine awareness and work rate like Finnie. Always in the right place, he consistently influences the play even without the puck.

A non-stop engine powers him up and down the rink, making up space to poke away pucks on the backcheck and force turnovers on the forecheck. He enters every battle with a couple of shoulder checks to find options and has the skill to connect.

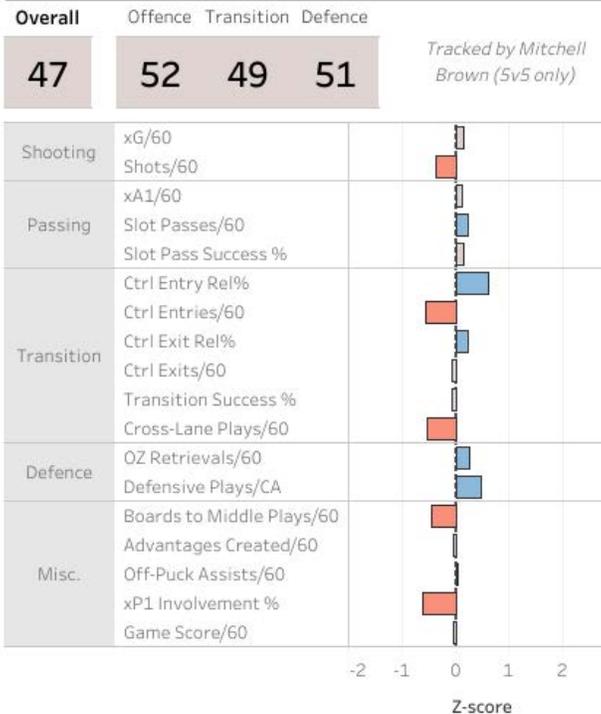
In spurts, Finnie showed NHL skill. He slipped pucks around opponents, fired off dangerous chances under pressure, instantly took pucks off the boards to attack the inside, and played a clever give-and-go game to link exits and entries.

Finnie doesn't have many dynamic qualities, lacking quickness, agility, and handling skill. But more time in the weight room will certainly help with skating, making him more effective in contact and faster to loose pucks.

If those flashes of skill are a sign of what's to come next season, he could become a plus-point-per-game scorer and earn interest as a re-entry. A breakout candidate.

Emmitt Finnie

F | Kamloops Blazers | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 80.5



≡ GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

I'm not sure that I see any separating physical skills in Finnie, but the motor is always running and it's not like he's critically deficient in any one regard either. Perhaps his best skill in this playoff series has been ability to always be in the right place, at the right time. That was how he picked up his goal in this one, sneaking away from the Giants defenceman at the net-front as their breakout failed, collecting the puck with time and space, and beating the goalie with a quick handling move and a shot. That brings him up to four points in three playoff games. Finnie's assist was pretty slick, though. A retrieval turned into a pass through layers to Logan Stankoven for the easy goal. Mostly, Finnie looks to me like a support player. He's not driving play at this level, by any means, but Finnie knows where to be, what to do, and how to support the play. I don't see him as a pick. Not yet. But he's intriguing.

Mitchell Brown: March 25th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

So, Finnie's finally scoring. That's good to see. Right away, his awareness stands out. He's always scanning, with and without the puck. He's usually positioned in the right space, gets open inside space, and he's quite the defensive player. He forces turnovers with non-stop pressure and works to get above the puck. Attacked the middle consistently, worked the give-and-go, and even showed some creativity and skill. He instantly pushed pucks into space during the pass reception, allowing him to outrace opponents in transition. He tried a cross-slot backhand pass through a defender. Scored by providing the moving screen, then beating the goaltender across the net for the rebound. He doesn't manipulate opponents or show much handling skill. The skating remains an issue. He should score a lot next season, though.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Finnie's skilled. He used a hook pass to gain the zone, timing the pass perfectly. He understands how to get open inside space. Adaptable shooter, capable of firing off the back foot and off-balance, as he did in a third-period shift for a pair of chances. He's not throwing hits, but he's always looking to win positioning. If he can't, he traps the opponents' feet. Lacks the skating/strength to absorb contact. Skates through sticks and traffic to create some chaos. Hands looked like a weakness, as did the skating. He whiffed on shots and pass receptions. The skating lacks polish and power. He has talent – seems like a breakout candidate for next season.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Finnie was on both sides of serious collisions in this game. He's not shy about running into opponents or taking hits to make the next play. He keeps his head up and feet moving with the puck on his stick. Turns the physicality into steals. Gets open inside space. Moves the puck at the right moments. Keeps play moving forward, perhaps too much so. No creativity or standout moments with the puck, just small plays that suggest a pro, but necessarily an NHLer.

Mitchell Brown: January 28th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Just flashes from Finnie, showing off-puck instincts, some playmaking, and anticipation. Set up a chance by passing cross-slot through a defender after nearly losing the puck. Sees plays developing and generally makes a play to keep the puck moving, but he's not creating the best plays. The puck skills are limiting. He can't access the lanes he sees because he's always fighting the puck with an aggressive over-and-down handling motion that's locked in rhythm with his feet. Doesn't adapt to lanes. But he could be a player down the road.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Finnie barely got the puck, but he set up a couple of shots when he did. For the most part, he's a solid play selector – he doesn't plays that aren't there, but still knows when to move the puck early. Perhaps he leans a bit too close to the risk averse side, but I think there's some serious scoring potential in the WHL with his work rate and awareness.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

Finnie set up a chance off the boards, but this was purely a defensive performance otherwise. His motor never stops, getting inside positioning on opponents who get a head start in the race. Pushes attackers to the outside. Didn't look like a pick, but he's solid.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kamloops Blazers - WHL

A quieter game from Finnie offensively, but he showed more value elsewhere. Plays fast, direct, and with a bit of edge. He gets inside opponents and battles for positioning. Set up a chance down low by cutting back and chipping a puck into the slot under pressure. Spots teammates working laterally off the rush. Very limited from a mechanics standpoint. So upright that his cutbacks stop him dead. That's a problem. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Not much ice for Finnie, but he was heavily involved in Kamloops' offence when he stepped on the ice. He created a couple of shots with his motor with smart, simple passes. Walked off the boards when given space, didn't force plays, and scanned for options before touching the puck. A couple of chances from the outside, but he understands how to support plays. He'd benefit from detaching from defenders, pushing off into space for better looks. Limited for a skill perspective. He's worth watching more.



Grade: F

Kooper Gizowski

AGE 17.364 DATE OF BIRTH May 05, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'9"	170 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4.5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	3.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Spokane Chiefs	WHL	65	11	15	26	0.40

SCOUTING REPORT

With 11 points through the first 11 games, Kooper Gizowski appeared poised for a breakout campaign, in his draft-year no less. But he cooled off considerably through the season, finishing under half-a-point-per-game. Still, he's an intriguing breakout candidate for next season.

Gizowski can rip pucks off the rush and brings some scoring instincts around the slot. While he looks to shoot first, he shows passing skill to connect with teammates through opponents.

He's also a solid defender with an unrelenting motor; his non-stop pressure creates turnovers and forces poor decisions.

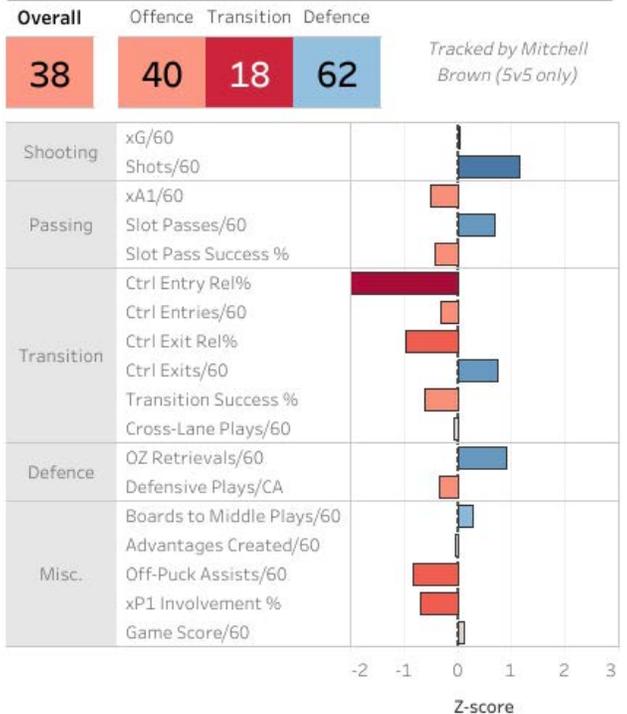
A couple of improvements could turn Gizowski into a big scorer in the WHL. "He's a straight-line, single-speed puck carrier who doesn't use his teammates especially well," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown wrote. "As a result, his rushes only have three outcomes: dump-in, turnover, or shot from the boards."

Second, he's prone to getting boxed out around the net, which limits his opportunities to score. By working on timing his movements and getting inside positioning, he will keep his stick free more often.

Solutions already exist in Gizowski's game. He shows vision and patience on breakouts, for example. By repurposing that skill to the offensive zone while developing his play inside contact, he could post some big scoring numbers in the WHL soon.

Kooper Gizowski

F | Spokane Chiefs | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 72.1



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 24th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Gizowski made a well-timed dash to the slot, getting around a defender in the process, to wrist a puck past the goaltender. That was really it for notable offensive plays. But he showed some transition skill. He pressed the middle, then pushed back wide. Moved pucks through opponents to gain the zone. Some play-building. Limited minutes. Tools and vision looked like potential issues.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Nothing new from Gizowski. It's the same report over and over. I think he's a reasonably skilled shooter, but he's limited by his inability to create shots for himself off the rush and get open around the net. He's better when supporting higher, adapting to lanes without having to fight defenders, but that greatly decreases his chances of scoring. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

The same as usual from Gizowski. He understands how to get open in the high slot, when to rush the net, makes some clever plays on the breakout, and applies non-stop pressure in pursuit. The skating's a limiter, as are the hands. He doesn't show any nuance to his rush patterns. It's all straight-lines, single-speed plays that result in turnovers. He's not a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: February 11th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Gizowski's a shooter who struggles to get opportunities to use his shot. The first issue is the rush patterns. On the breakout, he shows a bit of vision and play-building skills. Elsewhere, he's a straight-line, single-speed puck carrier who doesn't use his teammates especially well. As a result, his rushes only have three outcomes: dump-in, turnover, or shot from the boards. He doesn't manipulate or create lanes. The second is the off-puck game. He's a worker but struggles to get open around the net. Prone to getting boxed out and lacks timing. He tracks plays high and gets open in the upper slot, but it's tough to score from there. I don't see a pick, but has the tools and work rate to suggest he'll become a scorer in the WHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 10th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Spokane was down a forward but Gizowski still sat a lot. He's a hard-worker, always sprinting on the backcheck and applying pressure. The nuances of the defensive game aren't consistently there, but effort and play-killing ability are more important for projection purposes. He doesn't engage his hips when skating, resulting in a high, unstable stance. He makes the occasional obvious pass, but he's mostly a perimeter player – skate until space runs out. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Gizowski's scoring tear to start the season is long over, but I thought he showed some interesting qualities in this game. He was clearly aware of his teammates and options, then showed the skill to connect. He passed through defenders and off the backhand. Understands how to build the play – hit the middle-lane driver, wait for support, move plays off the boards. But his timing's a bit off and he's not adaptable. Forces plays into closed lanes. He's not deceptive or especially skilled at prolonging lanes. He has some scoring instincts around the slot. Doubt he's a pick this year, but gaudy point totals should be there sometimes in the next two seasons.

Mitchell Brown: December 3rd, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Gizowski has moments as a passer, but he can't create lanes. If there's not a clear lane available, he takes a low-percentage shot from the outside. He's a straight-line attacker who doesn't create advantages for himself or teammates. Not a game to remember, save for his energy and physicality on the forecheck.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Gizowski barely played at 5-on-5, despite leading his team in scoring at this stage. But there were some moments in his sub-8 minutes of time. He popped into space off a faceoff for a chance. Earlier, he set-up a chance off another faceoff victory. Scripted stuff, but he can execute. Delayed after gaining the zone, shows vision but lacks the timing and tracing to deliver the puck. Skating lacks depth and power, but he's strong and controlled on his inside edges. Some defensive effort, but again, he barely played. Not much to go on.

Grade: F



London Hoilett

AGE 17.581 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 15, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
3.5	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Calgary Hitmen	WHL	61	12	5	17	0.28

SCOUTING REPORT

Points weren't easy to come by for most Calgary Hitmen; rookie forward London Hoilett was no exception. But there's little doubt that he should've earned a better fate on the scoresheet – he was one of Calgary's best forwards this season.

Best as an off-puck player, Hoilett impacts the game with his positioning, motor, and quick-possession plays. He never quits on a play, always keeping his feet moving to close space.

He wins inside positioning on opponents, then instantly attacks the slot. Where many engage in the net-front battle, he pushes off into space, getting open for an NHL-calibre one-timer or catch-and-release shot.

With the puck, Hoilett shows some play-building skill with lateral passes through opponents, even off the backhand. He has positive ideas, but is often limited by his mechanics, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitch Brown explains: "Strides are short, he stops his crossovers early, he cuts back as soon as he sees pressure, he doesn't scan, and prone to mechanical breakdowns with possession – all hallmarks of playing too fast."

Improving the skating, handling, and puck protection will be key for Hoilett's success at the professional ranks. He's not likely to hear his name called, but could pop up in future seasons.

London Hoilett

F | Calgary Hitmen | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 97.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 31st, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Red Deer Rebels - WHL

Hoilett's motor is ridiculous. Some crazy sequences in this game. He just sprints, overcoming a lack of mechanical ability with sheer will. He's also intelligent. He tries to build plays with lateral passing, skating into open lanes when necessary, and understands who to support the offence. He's a checker, but only for now. He should become a productive forward in a year or two when the mechanical ability improves. Could become a solid pro, but he's just too limited by the hands and skating, for now.

Mitchell Brown: March 17th, 2023 - Calgary Hitmen vs. Lethbridge Hurricanes - WHL

Hoilett scored a tap-in, set up with a lateral pass to the inside and dash to the net. There's a lot to like here, even there's virtually no production. He's an intelligent passer and off-puck player. He sprints his routes, works the give-and-go, creates advantages, and gets open in the slot. Always working, always battling for positioning. He's a proactive defender, too. It's just the mechanics. The hands and feet fail constantly. He plays too fast – transiting from one thing to the next before completing the first thing – only exacerbating his mechanical limitations. He's worth keeping an eye on, but he's not a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

At least three times, Hoilett's poor pass receptions killed the play, including a high-danger opportunity. He fumbles pucks constantly; they just deflect off his stick instantly. Combine that with the skating, and he's pretty limited at times. But that's not for a lack of trying. He has incredible work rate. He overwhelms opponents with non-stop pressure and anticipating. He understands how to create offence, getting open inside space, working transition pucks through defenders, and attacking the middle. Really, he's just limited by his mechanics. He could become quite the WHL scorer with improved skating and hands.

Mitchell Brown: February 19th, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Hoilett is better than the production suggests. He's an intelligent and sometimes creative player who has the work rate to overcome mechanical deficiencies. The bad: chaotic skating and handling style, fumbles pucks, strides lack depth with a wild heel kick, knees cave inwards, and edges are under-developed. The good: he looks cross-ice for passing options, skating all of his routes, outworks opponents on the backcheck and forecheck, times his engagements, anticipates the next play, and gets open. He showed more patience in this game, delaying in transition off the rush to create gaps. If that's a sign of what's to come, he's going to score a lot soon.

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Twice, Hoilett turned a steal straight to offence. First, he went backhand through pressure for a point-blank look. Later, he made a simple pass into space for his teammate. Either way, he often knows the next play immediately after recovering possession. He works pucks laterally and understands how to get off the boards. Skates his routes and engages around the net to create lanes around the offensive zone. The motor and reads are the most impressive parts of his game. The skill level's the limiter. He has the passing reads but not the skill; he can't adapt to lanes or manufacture them. Plays too fast and skating/hands are highly underdeveloped relative to the level. Still, I think he pops in a year or two as the mechanics improve. Not a pick, but worth keeping tabs on.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Red Deer Rebels vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

The more I watch Hoilett, the more I believe he has upside. He has an exceptional motor. One of the best I've ever seen. He sprints every route, always engages physically, gets involved in every play. But he's so much more. He tries to build the offence with give-and-gos and quick lateral passes. Lots of passes successfully change the point of attack and he stays in space to get open for the return feed. He splits away from defenders to get open. However, he's limited by his mechanics. Limited lower-body flexion. Strides are short and incomplete. Crossovers lose speed. He doesn't scan enough and he doesn't have the tools to consistently beat pressure. But, what if he could? That's a legit prospect. Long way to go, but he might beat the odds.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Two goals for Holett, both projectable one-timers. He anticipates the play, moves into the right space, and then adapts his hands and feet to the pass. Fires comfortably off his backfoot. Leverages forechecking and work rate into offence, instantly moving pucks inside or starting a give-and-go to get off the wall (as he did for his second goal). Stops in space instead of sprinting ahead. But he's relatively limited mechanically right now. Everything's so frantic. Strides are short, he stops his crossovers early, he cuts back as soon as he sees pressure, he doesn't scan, and prone to mechanical breakdowns with possession – all hallmarks of playing too fast. Until he gets comfortable playing inside contact and drawing pressure, he'll have a hard time taking full advantage of his shot and scoring instincts.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Holett charged ahead with the puck, skating straight into opponents and losing possession. He plays too fast. When he's forced to play a slower game, he's impressive. He works pucks off the boards to his teammates, starts give-and-gos, and looks cross-ice for options. Intelligent off-puck player in all three zones, evidenced by his supporting positioning and knack for arriving into space at the right moment. If he learns how to manage pressure, he could be a legit prospect. Lots of interesting pieces.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Holett was one of the best players in this game. He plays too fast for his skill level, with his hands and feet unable to operate separately, but he has many, many great ideas. He cuts inside, manipulates opponents with changes of pace and lateral movement, effectively works pucks off the boards to the middle, and stops inside space (usually just above the hash marks) to get open for shots. Incredible work rate. Chased down the puck carrier and ripped away possession several times, bouncing from one hit to the next in the process. Yeah, he's worth keeping an eye on.

Grade: F



Carter Kowalyk

AGE 17.189 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 08, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'3"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Edmonton Oil Kings	WHL	63	3	5	8	0.13

SCOUTING REPORT

Playing on the WHL's most inept offence won't lead to many points, but that didn't stop Carter Kowalyk from trying.

He doesn't settle for low-percentage plays from the point, preferring to take on defenders with his hands, look for teammates around the slot as passing options, and using space off-puck to keep the Edmonton Oil Kings' offence flowing.

Or at least, Kowalyk tries to do those things. Right now, his upright skating and hastened decision-making limits his effectiveness. He moves pucks too early and struggles to separate from opponents. Those are also the primary source for Kowalyk's turnovers on the breakout, despite otherwise creative ideas when given space.

As Kowalyk develops the puck skills, skating, and continues to experiment, his defensive game will be where he makes his greatest impact. He flattens opponents off the rush, wins body positioning along the boards, and always looks to step up on opponents. A tendency to skate straight at opponents makes him beatable, or now.

But Kowalyk's worth tracking as a potential depth player, and his physical style means a team might be interested in the later rounds.

Carter Kowalyk

D | Edmonton Oil Kings | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 123.3



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: February 4th, 2023 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Kowalyk didn't do much offensively in this game. His team doesn't help, but he was a turnover machine in transition. Struggles to

manage pressure with his skating and handling combination. He needs time and space to make decisions. If he doesn't get it, he offloads the puck immediately. Despite the turnovers, his defensive effort was solid. Grabbed a trio of stops off the rush in normal fashion: stepping up at the blue-line. Vulnerable but his range and physicality help. He's not a pick this year, but he has lots of room to grow given the flashes of more projectable stuff.

Mitchell Brown: January 22nd, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

A really active, involved game from Kowalyk. It starts on the point. He was looking to beat defenders with his hands and skating, moving to the middle, faking, then accelerating down the boards. It failed because he's too upright (limits his reacceleration) and he doesn't wait for the defender's reaction. In general, he's comfortable in space and tries more complex stuff when defenders are coming towards him. When there's backpressure or side pressure, he tends to default to dump outs and other turnover-generating plays. Brings a robust, physical defensive style that's a bit limited because of his skating and also his ultra-committing defensive skating that sees him skate at opponents. Got dusted once by gliding straight at a player. Probably not a pick this year, but he has some runway.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Prince George swarmed Edmonton and Kowalyk's breakouts didn't help. He defaults to low-percentage plays when pressured. Ended up chasing a fair bit. He leaves a lot of value on the breakout. Let attackers slip behind, or couldn't generate the speed needed to keep pace. Despite the mismatch in talent in this game, he still tries to make stuff happen in the offensive zone. He activates and looks to keep pucks moving. Used space and moved through his pass receptions. With better hands and skating, he could really take off in the WHL.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Kowalyk plays a physical style and has some reads. He moves through his receptions and steps into space. Looks for deflections from the point. He's patient – but to a fault, and gets caught. He's an upright skater, lacking the depth and upper-lower separation to really explode from his more evasive outside edge skating moves. Hands also fail him. Pressured into poor decisions. Defence could be an element he brings to the next level. He's best as a supporting defender, where he can read the opponent's options before closing with force. Didn't look like a pick but this was a solid game.

Mitchell Brown: January 1st, 2023 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

A really quiet game from Kowalyk. He does the usual stuff. He takes points shots, activates into the play on occasion, tries to keep attacks to the outside, and shows a bit of physicality to kill plays. Moves through pass receptions and keeps his head up, but his hands and skating both continue to be limiting factors. He bobbles pucks with a stiffy, choppy style. I like his ideas though. He has a lot of runway, more than most players in this archetype. Add in the physicality and I wonder if a team takes him late.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Kowalyk barely stepped foot on the ice at 5-on-5 in this game. His work on the penalty kill was solid. He showed some physicality and aggression. Activated into the rush after passing and made a couple of slick plays off retrievals to slip past pressure. Only advanced the puck up the boards though, save for one pass where he went back behind his net and looked away from his eventual target. The mechanics looked weak: upright stance and choppy handling. Doubt he's a pick but he's worth watching.

Mitchell Brown: October 12th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Everett Silvertips - WHL

Everett out-shot Edmonton 107-28 (seriously), but the game was tied through 40. Kowalyk couldn't move the puck, aside from one play from the boards to the middle to start the breakout. Threw away possession on breakouts, failed to manipulate incoming pressure, and didn't identify passing options. He was actually pretty solid defensively in spurts, getting stops and breakups along the boards. Mirrored footwork and kept a couple of attacks to the outside. A nothing game in terms of evaluation, but there are some intriguing qualities that ensure I'll keep watching.

Grade: F



Harrison Lodewyk

AGE 17.542 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
5'10"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Prince Albert Raiders	WHL	66	7	11	18	0.27

SCOUTING REPORT

There might not have been a prospect with a more volatile role than Harrison Lodewyk. One night, he played top-six minutes. The next, he played a fourth-line role. His ice time dropped throughout the season, playing nearly four fewer minutes per game in the second half of the season, despite his three-zone effectiveness.

Lodewyk's a hard-working defender and projectable puck carrier. A mix of crossovers and weight shifts ensure he's always attacking defenders at angles. After getting the defender's feet moving, he looks for a give-and-go, often with a quick lateral pass before rushing the net for the return feed. Along the way, he swipes away sticks and wins body positioning.

Consistency lacks in Lodewyk's game. Sometimes, he's cutting inside off the rush; others, he won't take clear lanes. He doesn't let the defender fully commit to him before passing, which kills many of his rushes before even touching the blue line. A more consistent physical game will certainly help him earn steadier minutes, too.

As such, Lodewyk is more of a WHL breakout candidate than NHL prospect at this stage, but his motor and give-and-go game give him a chance to surprise in a couple of years.

Harrison Lodewyk

F | Prince Albert Raiders | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 6 | Minutes Tracked: 72.8



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 7th, 2023 - Brandon Wheat Kings vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

A nothing game from Lodewyk. He makes the occasional play in transition – lateral passes through opponents that give his

target space. That's the core of his game. He doesn't use space or have in-tight skills. Pucks roll his stick and he can't handle in motion. Doesn't take opportunities to cut inside or draw pressure before passing. Doesn't look like an NHL prospect, but a more consistent motor could make him a solid WHL scorer.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

A tough one for Lodewyk. He wasn't one the ice for any offence. His puck-rushing game remains the most exciting part. Late in the game, he went end-to-end, mixing in crossovers and changes of direction to create a bit of space down the perimeter. Taking one more step towards the defender before changing directions would help him create more space. Tons of failed entries in this game, failing to use space, use his teammates, or simply not being aware of pressure. The motor wasn't great in this game either. That'll be key for making the pros. There's a chance he surprises in a year or two, but he's not likely a pick given his limited role and lack of production.

Mitchell Brown: January 14th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Edmonton Oil Kings - WHL

Lodewyk showed many pro qualities in this game, but none that suggested an NHLer. He's a runaway manufacturer, pressing the middle and drawing defenders before passing to an open teammate who can step into space for a shot. Takes sticks to clear lanes. He doesn't force plays through closed lanes, preferring to reset. On the forecheck, kept high positioning and swooped in for the angle at the right moment, earning a couple of steals. Skated through the puck carrier's hands to win possession. Limited by his hands and feet; everything is locked together.

Mitchell Brown: November 27th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Solid game from Lodewyk, inefficiency aside. He cuts inside off the boards for a chance, one of several looks. Rush patterns remain intriguing. He doesn't attack opponents straight-on, preferring layer in his crossovers and weight shifts to fake opponents. Generates power with his crossovers; some separation ability at this level, especially once he figures out how to really sell a play. Hard worker and skates his routes, but he doesn't use his teammates enough. Takes low-percentage shots with teammates available, forces rushes when he could beat more defenders with a pass. An interesting prospect, but likely not an NHL pick at this stage. Worth watching in the second half.

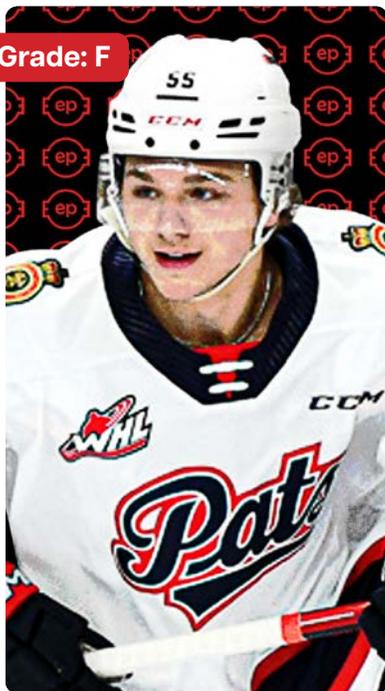
Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

While Lodewyk didn't have a hand in much offence this game, he's noticeable. He's always working. Skates his routes, skates through the hands of opponents to secure body positioning, and throws the odd hit. The skill's more limited. He handles the puck too hard and struggles with the puck with his feet moving. Doesn't show any notable off-puck instincts or playmaking. Doesn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Lethbridge Hurricanes vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Lodewyk didn't get many opportunities to shine in this game. Was barely out there. He was noticeable, however. He attacks the net, plays with pace in transition, and works the give-and-go. Lots of crossovers in his rushes to shift defenders passing around them to the open teammate. A little detail, but one that suggests at least some deeper understanding of the game. Tools look below-average across the boards, but his pro style and pace are interesting.

Grade: F



Sam Oremba

AGE 17.655 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'2"	196 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4.5	4	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Seattle Thunderbirds	WHL	2	0	2	2	1.00
Regina Pats	WHL	63	10	14	24	0.38

SCOUTING REPORT

Just a couple of years ago, Sam Oremba was a top player in the age group, scoring 75 goals in 31 games in his WHL draft year.

The reason? His shot. He pulls pucks towards his feet to shoot through defenders, turns tricky passes into smooth on-and-off wristers, and even shows the off-puck instincts to get chances. He's also a capable forechecker and defensive player.

Oremba's production hasn't translated to the WHL because he's mostly a one-tool player at this stage. He's not much of a puckhandler or puck-carrying threat.

Apart from the occasional play along the boards, the playmaking's limited, too. As such, he's solely an off-puck player – which isn't easy to do at any level. If the timing's just slightly off, the puck doesn't arrive. And that happened a lot this season.

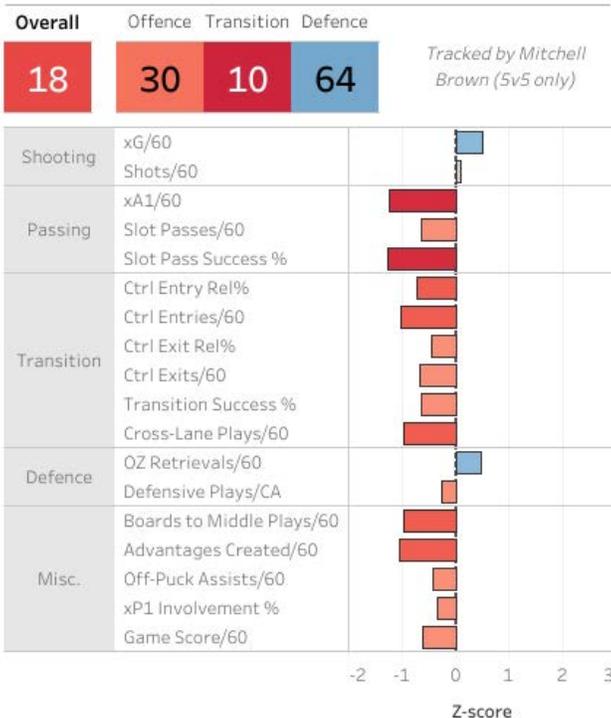
Developing a more proactive passing game while improving his rush patterns should facilitate a return to the goalscoring. But to make the NHL, he'll have to produce while improving the tools.

Oremba's not likely a pick this year, but his stand out shot and pedigree mean that a breakout always seems imminent.

Sam Oremba

F | Regina Pats | WHL | 2023 Eligible

Games Tracked: 12 | Minutes Tracked: 163.8



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: April 8th, 2023 - Saskatoon Blades vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A tough game from Oremba, struggling to keep up with the pace of the game. He consistently threw pucks away under pressure. His straight-line, solo rushes result in dump-ins and turnovers. No chances to get open and use his shot because he was never in the offensive zone as a result. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: March 18th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Moose Jaw Warriors - WHL

A solid game from Oremba, especially away from the puck. Proactive defence, backtracking deep and jumping into passing lanes. Turned the forecheck into a high-danger chance with a steal and drive. He showed some down-low playmaking off the end boards, setting up a Bedard goal. He lacks timing on his deliveries and many are hope passes. Still, it's nice to see him get rewarded for his effort. He's not a pick this year, but he could become a big scorer in the future.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Oremba continues to show some NHL qualities in spurts, but he remains limited. The forechecking and backchecking give him a chance to become a solid pro. He's aggressive, physical, and shows a bit of ability to angle. Down low, he shows vision and passing skill, limited only by his timing and scanning. Passes rarely leave his stick at the right time, always too late or too early lanes. He has some off-puck instincts, but wasn't able to get open inside space. Predictably, the shot didn't appear as a result. He's not a pick, but he has qualities that could make him a big WHL scorer.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Oremba scored after a pair of chances in tight, a well-deserved goal. He was a presence on the forecheck and backchecking, sprinting at players to force poor plays and stepping into them. Not angling or anticipating, but the pressure works at this level. Fumbled a tap-in. The playmaking appears only as a last resort. He has skill and vision down low, but since he's not proactive, the plays didn't connect. It's also an issue in transition, where he can't build plays or even gain the zone with much effectively. Not a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Oremba had a pair of chances after getting open in space. Set up one with a pass off the boards when working high, taking a peek over his shoulder before going backhand. Physical and engaged on the defensive end, he killed plays and flattened a couple of opponents. Still need to see more transition passing from him. It feels like a massive hole; he just doesn't much offensive zone time as a result.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Oremba had a couple of grab and rip wristers, including one for a chance. Whiffed on another look outside the slot. The forechecking was a plus, winning races to pucks and ripping possession from opponents. Otherwise, a quiet game. The off-puck game wasn't working for him. Ended up late into space and didn't present himself for teammates. He's not much of a puckhandler or passer, which means his impact can be completely eliminated. A classic one-tool junior player who could explode if given they figure out the rest, but have to see it first.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Oremba was an effective checker in this game. He won battles, worked to get above the puck on the forecheck, anticipated passes, supported the puck effectively. Not a puck carrying threat. He's a perimeter shooter because he lacks the rush patterns to beat defenders and gain the middle. The playmaking isn't there to offset it. The shot's why he has a top pick in the WHL Draft, but he struggles to use it at this level.

Mitchell Brown: November 17th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Winnipeg ICE - WHL

Oremba's solid, but I don't know if this is his year to score. He has a lot of interesting qualities based around puck protection, shooting, and off-puck movement. In one sequence, he showed all three: won the battle, timed a sprint into the high slot, shot off the pass for a scoring chance. Adjusts his top hand to shoot pucks inside his feet. Off-puck, he's best when reloading and skating down the slot; otherwise, he lacks the timing and movement to consistently find space in the WHL. The puck protection becomes down-low playmaking on occasion. The skating's more of a weakness and he's not a skilled puck carrier. Too straight-line and only plays at one speed. Probably not a pick this year, but he could become a player down the line.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Oremba set up a goal with a pair of passes from behind the goal line. He's also an intelligent off-puck player, getting open, presenting his stick, and winning positioning. Follows the play effectively, but rarely dictates it. He has the tools to become more of a driver, but he defers to his teammates instantly. Didn't look like a draft pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

No Bedard minutes for Oremba, but he has a solid outing. Takes pucks in motion, then attacks the middle. Shot's probably the best skill, but he lacks the details to consistently use when the puck. He circles instead of driving, prefers to take low-percentage shots instead of using space, and gets pushed to the outside easily. Away from the puck, he anticipates space, gets open, and presents his stick. Anticipation translates on the forecheck. Limited impact outside the offensive zone, offloading pucks too early in transition and disengaging defensively. Curious to see how he develops, and if he refind his scoring touch.

Grade: F



Marcus Pacheco

AGE 17.444 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 06, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

RW	Right
Position	Shoots
5'11"	163 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4.5	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Kelowna Rockets	WHL	62	10	13	23	0.37

SCOUTING REPORT

Marcus Pacheco was a utility player for the Kelowna Rockets. Predominantly used in a third-line role, he brought energy to every game and played a bit on both special teams. His scoring totals weren't noteworthy, but there's reason to believe they will skyrocket next season.

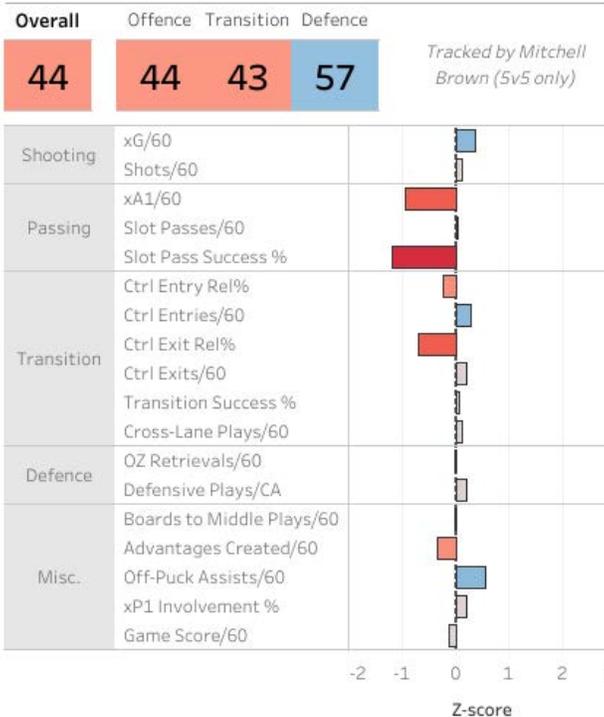
There are no shifts off from Pacheco. He sprints up and down the ice, antagonizing the puck carrier with non-stop pressure, jumping into shooting lanes, and pushing back defenders with net drives. But he also knows when to slow down, showing a give-and-go game, an understanding of how to get open inside space, and flashes of exciting skill.

Pacheco connects with teammates as they move into space, passing through opponents when necessary. He flashed high-level skills, such as pump fakes to create lanes and deception shooting skill.

To take the next step as a scorer, Pacheco will have to start creating and adapting to lanes consistently, whether that's more deception or using a slip pass. He's not likely to be a pick this year, but his motor and flashes of skill suggest he could become one in a couple of years.

Marcus Pacheco

F | Kelowna Rockets | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 97.6



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Everything's coming together for Pacheco it seems. He had a pair of high-danger, off-the-pass chances, both of his own doing. He used give-and-gos, skated his routes, stayed inside space, and showed the skill necessary to convert high-speed pass

receptions into chances. Showed the skill in open-ice, too. He dangled around opponents, created space with quick pump fakes, and delayed instead of charging ahead when space was gone. Spots teammates in high-danger areas. The issue remains the lack of a slip pass or any sort of ability to adapt to lanes. With it, he'd be a pick. He's a robust defensive player, intelligent off-puck threat, and he's flashing exciting stuff in a tough situation.

Mitchell Brown: February 18th, 2023 - Portland Winterhawks vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

More skill from Pacheco than usual. The goal was a look-off wrister on the penalty kill. He gained the zone, stopped, then rifled the puck just as the defender stepped up to close the distance. He's an abrasive, proactive defender. Players struggle with motor. He takes the extra stride, swipes at their stick constantly, and works for body positioning. He's not dynamic or tootsy, but he could become a prospect down the line.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Pacheco's always a factor without the puck. He works to get above the puck, skates through the puck carrier's hands to win possession, and cuts off the top at the perfect moment to close a lane or get possession. This was the best offensive game I've seen from him. Nothing too creative, but he showed awareness. He read an opponents lunge, then deked inside around them. He sprinted his routes, creating space behind him. Quick passes in transition created advantages for his recipient, especially on the breakout. A lot of entry passes, too. In one sequence, he could've set up a scoring chance by pulling the puck towards his own feet before passing; instead, he passes straight into the only defender. Developing the puck skills will be key. He looks poised for a breakout production-wise.

Mitchell Brown: December 10th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Pacheco's solid. He wins battles, backtracks without overcommitting, and gets the occasional steal. Advances possession after the steal. Shows a bit of shooting skill alongside some creativity as a passer. He hits teammates moving to space and delays to wait for the lane to open. He's not creating the best play, but he generally makes a positive play. Doubt he's a pick this season, but he should become a big scorer in the league soon.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Pacheco started on Kelowna's second line, but didn't accomplish much. He worked away from the puck, but threw pucks into traffic, only tried low-value plays, and didn't show creativity or skill in transition. A very basic game. Didn't look like a prospect.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Prince George Cougars vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Pacheco didn't play much in this outing. It was a disaster in terms of entries; he kept throwing pucks away despite having options. On breakouts, he's more patient and aware of his options, but that could just be structure. Skates his off-puck routes, pushing back defenders or going straight to the net for a chance. He works defensively, but he's mostly chasing. Skating, hands, and passing lack, but he has skills to become an effective WHLer.

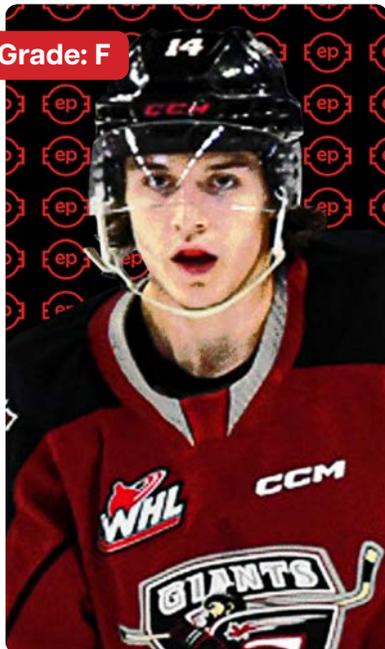
Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Pacheco didn't accomplish much in this game beyond perimeter shooting. The shot doesn't stand out for the level, but he has some creative ways of releasing the puck and masking his intentions. Game didn't seem proactive at all. Lots of reactionary plays after losing space or skating into pressure. Tools remain average, at best. Keep watching.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Pacheco was active as the bumper on the PP. He moved lots, won positioning, fought for loose pucks, and popped into space at the right moments. Rewarded with a catch-and-release goal. At 5-on-5, his impact was a bit more muted. Drove pucks off the boards to the inside. A couple of in-motion backhand passes with a look off to keep the lane open. Tools seemed average and he struggled to position himself for touches, but it's early. Looks like an interesting player.

Grade: F



Ethan Semeniuk

AGE 17.403 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 21, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW/RW

Position

Right

Shoots

5'11"

Height

170 lbs

Weight

Player Grades

4.5

Skating

4.5

Shooting

4.5

Passing

3.5

Puckhandling

4

Hockey Sense

5

Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Vancouver Giants	WHL	54	12	10	22	0.41

SCOUTING REPORT

The Vancouver Giants were chalk-full of draft-eligible talent this season, with at least a few likely to hear their names called during this June's draft. Ethan Semeniuk doesn't have the skill of his draft-eligible teammates, but his intelligence and work ethic made him a consistent factor.

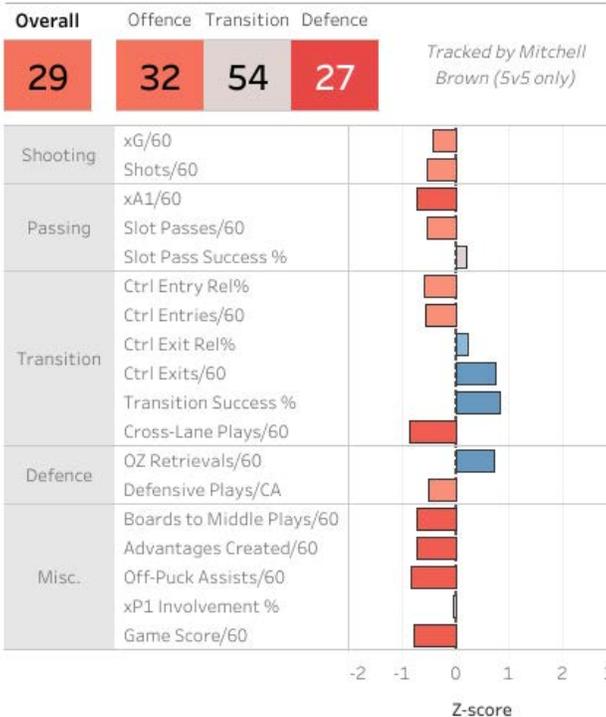
The defence is where it shines the brightest. "He anticipated passes, won races, and funnelled the puck carrier into pressure," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote. "A bit of physicality and non-stop pressure on the defensive end, too."

There are gamely flashes of skill, whether that's an NHL-calibre two-touch wrister or hip pocket deception into cross-slot pass. Give him a bit of space and options, and he consistently showed that he has the extra layer of skill to freeze defenders.

Building off those, while eliminating the straight-line rushes and refining the puckhandling, will significantly bolster Semeniuk's odds of becoming a pro-calibre talent.

Ethan Semeniuk

F | Vancouver Giants | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 103.4



GAME REPORTS

J.D. Burke: April 4, 2023 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

There just isn't a there there with Semeniuk. No discernible skill nor any high-end instincts at any end of the ice. He's about a replacement level WHL player with about replacement level WHL skill. Semeniuk can support the play reasonably well, often placing himself in the right place at the right time. He's diligent defensively. Hell, I'd even rate him as an about average skater.

You need to show a lot more than that to be a pick, though.

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

The usual from Semeniuk. He's a solid worker who anticipates the opposition's next move. A perfect pass reception into the hip pocket allowed him to deceive the defender before going cross-slot – an effective, skilled play. He's mostly a straight-line attacker. Not much creativity or skill apart from that one play. This probably won't be his year, but players of his archetype – defensively-sound, hard-working forward with flashes of skill – often pop in the next two years.

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

Semeniuk took a penalty on a backcheck that prevented a chance. Not too egregious; it actually shows his awareness to get back into the play after his defender lost his check. The rest of the game was mostly forechecking and pursuit. He's a hard-worker with a bit of anticipation, but the puck skills are limited. He whiffs on passes, struggles handling in motion, and misses play-advancing opportunities in transition. Admirable style, but this probably isn't his year.

Mitchell Brown: February 20th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Semeniuk scored with a two-touch wrister aimed top corner. An NHL shot. Was feeling it on the forecheck. He anticipated anticipates, won races, and funnelled the puck carrier into pressure. A bit of physicality and non-stop pressure on the defensive end, too. He's just very limited with the puck right now, apart from the odd flash. He makes simple plays, only playing in straight lines. He's an outside lane shooter without creativity or diversity. He's predictable and easily defended. Combine that with the tools, and there's probably not much NHL upside here. Still, his motor and flashes mean he's worth tracking throughout his career.

Mitchell Brown: November 18th, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

I don't know if Semeniuk's a legitimate NHL prospect, but I like his game and attention to detail. Passed a puck off the goalie's pads for a short-handed assist. He sprints around the ice, applying pressure and pushing back defenders to create space for his teammates. Generates lots of turnovers and poor decisions. He's limited with the puck – works, but limited quickness, creativity, or handling skill – but perhaps there's just enough to carve out a depth role.

Mitchell Brown: October 30th, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Calgary Hitmen - WHL

Semeniuk was effective in this game. Nothing too fancy, but effectively supported the play. Positioned himself between checks, prepared to shoot off the pass. Skating his routes to create space. Connected short-range passes instead of skating into traffic himself, leading to a couple of opportunities down the ice. He's a strong worker, too. Didn't see much upside, but he's worth watching more this season.

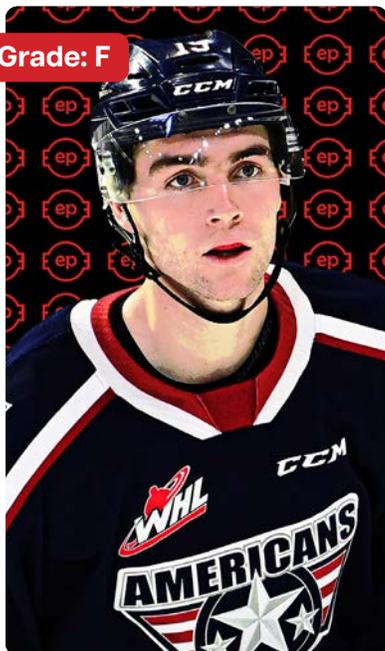
Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Semeniuk put the work in on the backcheck, sprinting back to attack the puck carrier and kill entries against. Scored with a deflection. That was about it. Didn't show any particularly notable skills – he's a straight-line, simple play attacker. Some intelligent off-puck reads and positioning, but nothing that suggests it will be an advantage in the NHL. Didn't look like a prospect.

J.D. Burke: December 18th, 2021 - Vancouver Giants vs. Prince George Cougars - WHL

There's such an urgency to the way Semeniuk plays the game, one that serves as a bit of a double-edged sword. I found myself admiring his strong skating habits that had him completing every play in motion – shots, passes, pass receptions, etc. There's often little or no hesitation to his game. The problem, which is relatively common for players at this stage in their development, is he's a relatively easy forward to contain in spite of all of this. Semeniuk takes on opponents in a straight line, without changing speeds, and without a real plan of attack. It's a competition of skills on every zone entry and one that he often loses. Even so, Semeniuk managed to create his fair share of chances in this hockey game, including one east-west feed through traffic on the rush that would've resulted in a Giants goal if not for a 10-bell save by the goaltender. Overall, a pretty strong performance.

Grade: F



Jake Sloan

AGE 18.589 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 13, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

C	Right
Position	Shoots
6'4"	214 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3	4.5	5.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	5	5.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Tri-City Americans	WHL	58	20	35	55	0.95

SCOUTING REPORT

Jake Sloan's upward trajectory continued this season, scoring nearly a point-per-game clip while making some key improvements.

Playmaking is the name of Sloan's game. He has legitimate NHL passing skill, capable of feathering passes under sticks, over them, and even multiple at a time. Occasional deception freezes defenders, and the passing lane with it. He works the give-and-go regularly and always looks for teammates on the inside instead of forcing plays up the boards.

In a different era, the towering playmaker wouldn't have slipped through the draft. But skating's at a premium, and he's still significantly limited by it.

Speed is a weakness, edges are too. And while his size means opponents occasionally bounce off him, his lack of depth makes him vulnerable to getting out-leveraged by smaller opponents.

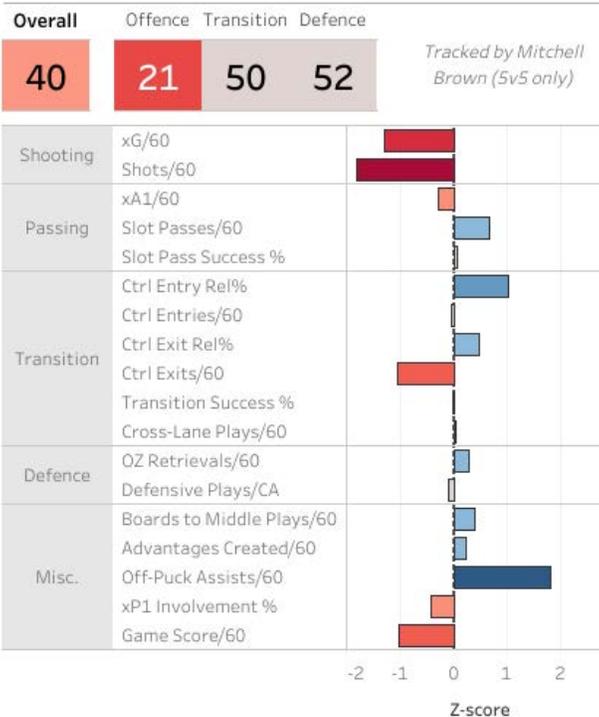
But Sloan's improved; that's why he's appeared in his second Elite Prospects Draft Guide. Now, he's trying more plays with his feet moving. They aren't always successful, but there's been a clear effort to improve the skating and pace. And he's also a capable defender, as Elite Prospects Dir. of North American Scouting Mitch Brown explains: "He's proactive on the backtrack and in defensive zone coverage. Especially strong along the wall, where he entices players to attack him wide and then rips the puck away."

If Sloan continues on this path, he could explode next season. To become a legitimate NHL prospect, he'll need to take another significant and uncommon step: Combining his passing and improving mechanics to create gaps, instead of relying on exploiting already existing ones.

Jake Sloan

F | Tri-City Americans | WHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 9 | Minutes Tracked: 127.3



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** February 18th, 2023 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Sloan's just a passer and lacks some key skills, mostly around making plays in motion and under pressure. He slips pucks under sticks, saucers them over, and spots teammates through layers. His teammates can't take full advantage of his passing. Otherwise, he'd be a big scorer at the level. But without skating improvement and improved pace, he's going to have a hard time becoming much more.

Mitchell Brown: February 14th, 2023 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

A disappointing game from Sloan. I've come to expect a lot of passing skill from him. I've seen him hook pucks around sticks, slip them under, and deceive opponents to prepare the lanes. Not much of that in this one. More trying to beat opponents himself without much success, although he had one awkward, but effective rush in the second period to gain the zone. He wasn't a factor offensively or defensively. Skating's a significantly below-average projection. Not sure he's a pick this year.

Mitchell Brown: January 18th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Sloan's still a strong passer, this game was a great reminder. He was hitting through passes, perfect saucers under pressure, and backhand dishes through traffic. He has the full passing toolkit, save for one thing: he struggles to prepare lanes. He can't deke and move his feet at the same time. Only porous defenders fall for his tricks, which limits his creation only already open lanes. But that he's trying to keep his feet moving and make plays is encouraging. He's also become a strong defender. He's proactive on the backtrack and in defensive zone coverage. Especially strong along the wall, where he entices players to attack him wide and then rips the puck away. The skating's a 3.5. But he has some Ben King in him. There's a chance he really takes off next season as he becomes even better at playing the low-pace, exploit-gaps game.

Mitchell Brown: November 23rd, 2022 - Kamloops Blazers vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Liked the defence in this game. Sloan was backing out of the offensive zone early to stay above the puck and push attackers wide. He succeeded, mostly. Proactive down low supporting reads led to a pair of steals. But he couldn't get anything going offensively. His skating meant he was constantly chasing the plays. The passes missed their mark. Not an encouraging game.

Mitchell Brown: October 15th, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

More of the same from Sloan. He continues to show more urgency with the puck. He makes plays faster, but not necessarily with more accuracy. It's going to be an adjustment curve. He's clearly aware of his options, though. He connected with a bunch of lateral passes in the neutral zone, giving his recipient time and space as they skated into the offensive end. A bit of off-puck awareness, too. Really strong defensive game on-puck. Curious to see how he develops throughout the season. The tools remain limiting.

Mitchell Brown: October 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Portland Winterhawks - WHL

Sloan going undrafted last year was a bit of a surprise, given that he's huge and has flashes of skill. This game marked a bit of improvement over last season. He was playing with way more pace. He read plays instantly, attacked the middle, and took advantage of poorly gapped defenders. He showed all the same passing skills and vision as last season, too. The lack of physical pace – skating, in-motion ability – remains a problem. To get picked as a re-entry, that will have to improve more.

Mitchell Brown: April 1st, 2022 - Tri-City Americans vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Sloan has passing skill. He connects off the backhand, uses give-and-gos, slip passes through defenders, and makes quick plays off the boards. The shot's a problem and his first touch when moving kills plays before they start. He also doesn't have many physical skills despite his size. Along the boards, he tries to establish positioning sometimes, but opponents easily use his high

centre of gravity against him and pin him to the boards. In front of the net, he better at establishing positioning to keep his stick free, but it's far from a strength. He's a solid off-puck defender who eliminates threats, but a lack of pace gives him true stopping power. He's not a candidate for our board, but there's a bit of upside here.

Mitchell Brown: March 26th, 2022 - Spokane Chiefs vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Sloan's not just slow, he's low pace. He never seems to have the extra gear necessary to pull away pressure, win the battle, or get the stop defensively. Lacks physical skills, too. Limited hand skills and coordination, losing pucks without much pressure but he has moments of fluidity. However, he's a skilled passer. He slips pucks through defenders, completes passes off the boards, and even adds in a bit of deception at times. While he lacks the foot speed to make use of it, he supports plays by shrinking distance to the puck carrier and always presenting his stick. It falls apart in front of the net, where he plants his feet and doesn't establish positioning on players. Tough to picture him in the NHL.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2022 - Kelowna Rockets vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

A simple game from Sloan, making little impact on the game beyond the occasional pass. Identified options and connected, but none of his plays required much skill. In one sequence, he cut inside and then tried a backhand pass that was far too late – either delaying to wait for the middle lane drive or making the early pass would've been the best play. He doesn't show any board skills either. Didn't look like a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: December 14th, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Blowout game, this one. Sloan showed that he has a bit of vision, completing the return pass on a teammate's give-and-go twice on the powerplay. Then, he started a give-and-go of his own scoring chance, accelerating out of the pass and then behind a defender. He's lumbering, but there's a bit of finesse to his game. He doesn't just sprint, he slows down, cuts inside, and makes quick passes. Mechanically, his shot is limited. He heels one-timers and sweeps pucks toward the net. Didn't look like a draft pick, but he's close. There's some skill here.

Daniel Gee: November 20th, 2021 - Tri-City Americans vs Prince George Cougars -WHL

Out of the major draft eligible Tri-City players in this game, Sloan put together the most productive game out of his cohorts, who were caved in shots wise for most of the game.

A rather low paced player in all situations, most of Sloans better sequences happened in sustained offensive zone pressure. Net-front plants, end-board supporting plays and ring passing facilitation makes the core of his game very simple. Lack of intensity and motor is apparent -- especially off-puck as he moved to pressure Cougar defenders. On one shift he was able to pull a puck out of a corner battle, cutting to the far-boards before sending a low pass into the middle (at least he's somewhat inside-oriented). Handling, passing, skating are all below average. He baulked on a sure goal in the second; planted on the right-hand circle, a Cougar turned over the puck tape-to-tape. With time, Sloan placed an awfully weak shot off of Gauthier's pad (with the 5-hole completely open). He at least drew a penalty on the subsequent retrieval play. A relative non-factor in transition, he attempted, and predictably failed a few chip-and-chase plays. Sloan did make a nice file down the wing in the second, taking a pass from the end-boards and bumping the puck cross crease for a primary assist -- basically predicated on the work down by a teammate below the line. Scored a rather innocuous weakside sharp-angle shot that Gauthier didn't see. I can't see how any of this translates -- he's big at 6-foot-4, but doesn't leverage the size much. He is a static player who has trouble upping his pace, and as mentioned, lacks separating individual skills.

On the defensive end of the puck, Sloan was relatively impactful. He scans frequently, working his stick to eliminate options, timing checks and pokes with a focus on pushing ply to the outside. He had a great penalty killing sequence in the second where he shifted to the slot to cover a secondary threat. Saved a goal in the third with a well-timed stick-lift. Positive part of his game for sure.

He's firmly a F-grade prospect for out board right now. Needs to further develop individual tools, increase pace, and leverage his size to change that projection -- tall order.

Daniel Gee: November 19th, 2021 - Tri-City Americans vs Prince George Cougars -WHL

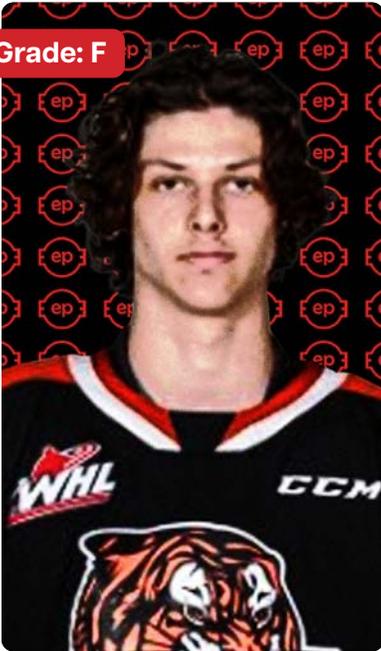
Sloan was slotted in as the first-line centerman and played a tonne, but was not really used in an offensive role, with limited PP minutes. Sloan's frame, 6-foot-4, is the most interesting part of his player profile - take that as you will. A low-to-average pace skater in all scenarios, Sloan doesn't really possess much individual skills that separates him at the WHL level. In sustained pressure attacking sequences, Sloan's mismanagement of the puck was lucky to not result in goals against. On multiple occasions, the big-centre sent no-look rings up the near boards creating turnovers and putting teammates in bad positions. A lack of scanning being the major culprit here. On one play he didn't scan, passed back to the point, where a Cougar exiting the penalty-box was able to pressure the Tri-city defender and create a 3-on-1 -- they went offside. Sloan's work is done primarily in the crease and on the side boards. He gets in there, digs for pucks and rebounds out of point shots, and looks for redirect opportunities. In the third off a broken play in the near corner, Sloan took a pass in the slot and sent a dribbling shot through the 5-hole to chase Brennan. In a subsequent play, he executed a great forehand tip that rang off the post. Other than that, a pretty quiet game -- couldn't layer passes, handle bouncing pucks, or really string plays together. He was even a bit passive in battles below the goal-line. To illustrate his passing mishaps, Sloan had a carry-in activation, 2-on-2. He sent a waist high pass to his teammate who was off-puck...

Defensively Sloan saw some penalty-killing minutes. As the high-slot man, he was fairly good at pushing pressure with his long reach -- especially at the points. Made a proactive scan in the first where he rotated and tied up a net-front stick. Sloan probably isn't a pick based on how little tools he has -- he might do some damage as a net-front presence. Like Melynk he has barely played WHL hockey -- only 22 games.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2021 - Seattle Thunderbirds vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Didn't see anything from Sloan that suggests an NHL prospect. There was the inception of board play -- turning as pressure arrived -- but he lacks the feet and hand skills to do anything with it. The most interesting play was a zone entry where he cut back instead of driving, then passed to create a scoring chance. Cut across the front of defenders for a short shot, but lacks the outside edges to cut sharply. Plants himself in front of the net, not showing any scoring instincts. Lacks the handling skill to adapt his puck positioning to the passing lane. Didn't look like a prospect.

Grade: F



Hunter St. Martin

AGE 17.258 DATE OF BIRTH Jun 13, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

LW	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	154 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

5	4	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
5	4	4.5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	61	8	14	22	0.36

SCOUTING REPORT

Low-scoring and unranked by NHL Central Scouting, Hunter St. Martin isn't likely to be a draft pick this summer. But with multiple big league-calibre skills, he's poised for a breakout season.

St. Martin combines a near-perfect stride with a give-and-go style. He knocks tricky passes straight into his hip pocket, immediately makes the next pass, then relocates for the return feed. First-touch handling skill allows him to beat aggressive defenders, even off the backhand.

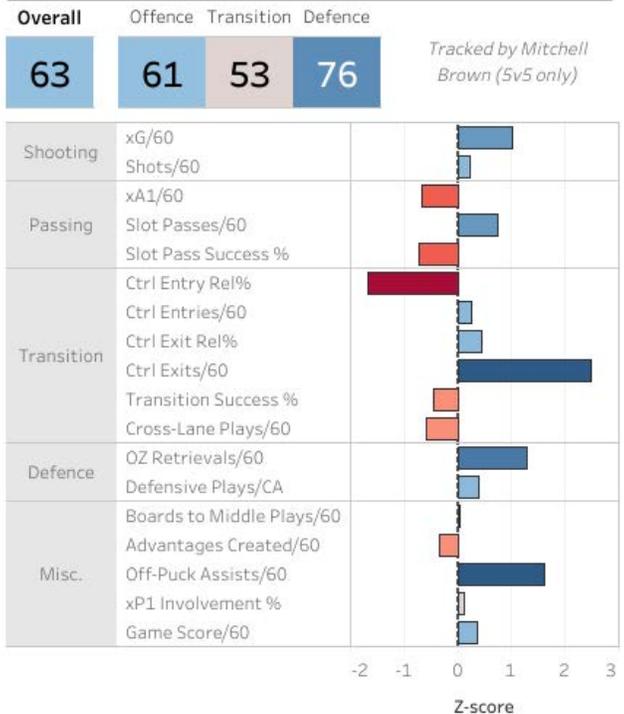
With the skill comes St. Martin's motor. He always gives himself a chance by sprinting on the backcheck, driving the net off-puck, and closing out to the point with speed.

The lack of production's a relatively simple explanation: St. Martin lacks separation ability and scoring tools. He struggles to absorb contact, lacks explosiveness off his edges, and can't beat opponents with his hands in open ice. Passes are imprecise and he doesn't morph his pass to the lane.

Still, these are common issues for players beginning their major junior career. Even minor improvements – a bit more strength, a bit more quickness, and a bit more accuracy – would make St. Martin one of the WHL's most improved players.

Hunter St. Martin

F | Medicine Hat Tigers | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 82.9



≡ GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

St. Martin was everywhere in this game. He overcomes a lack of separation skills with direct routes, intelligent off-puck positioning, and a give-and-go style. Grabbed a chance by turning an interception into a give-and-go. Grabbed a goal by slipping away from coverage and whacking a puck out of mid-air twice around the net. Consistently faded into space at the right moments. Engaging back pressure will help get more clean looks. He dumps the puck a lot but also shows some vision to find teammates on the flanks. Attacks the inside with possession, demonstrating a bit of passing skill in the process. The skating's average in terms of output and the hands might be just below. Lacks scoring tools but he seems to have potential through his reads.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A lot of plays from St. Martin in this game. He chipped a puck into space, recovered it, and fired off the rush. A bunch of impressive first-touch plays, including knocking a puck from behind into his hip pocket with his feet moving and a first-touch deke under a stick for a chance. The stride's an NHL projection: knee past toes, hips engaged, and shin and back angle parallel. It's beautiful. The crossovers and edge work lack depth, and his hands aren't nearly as effective when it's not inside a first-touch play. But he has other skills. He sprints every route, gets open behind defenders, and defends effectively with his motor and anticipation. He's not scoring, but he probably will in the future. A projectable base.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

St. Martin brought energy in the defensive zone, coming across the zone to disrupt shooters and never giving up on a play. But he couldn't get anything going offensively. Skated into defenders with no ability to escape. When he tried to fake opponents, he didn't get their feet moving before continuing – turnovers. Stride looks like an NHL projection, but he lacks depth through his edges. Not explosive. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 27th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

St. Martin showed more playmaking ideas in this game. He looked for the trailer and tried to hit teammates as they drove the net. But he lacks adaptability and passing skill – a slip pass would be game-changing for him. He has handling skill, using the back of the net to deke through an opponent and knocking down tricky passes. The stride's clean: knees over toes, hips engaged, chest up. He has individual lots that suggest an NHL prospect, and even brings an energetic style, but he lacks refinement. Doesn't seem like a pick this year, but he's worth watching in the second half.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

St. Martin has skill. He dekes through opponents, handles pucks in tight, and handles in motion. Combines the skill with a high work rate. Collides with opponents, keeps his feet moving, and applies pressure on the back. One steal led to a high-danger chance after rushing the net. Despite his skill, he's not consistently effective. He's a straight line player; doesn't set up defenders at angles, which limits the effectiveness of his handling skill. No playmaking shown to offset it. Curious to see his growth.

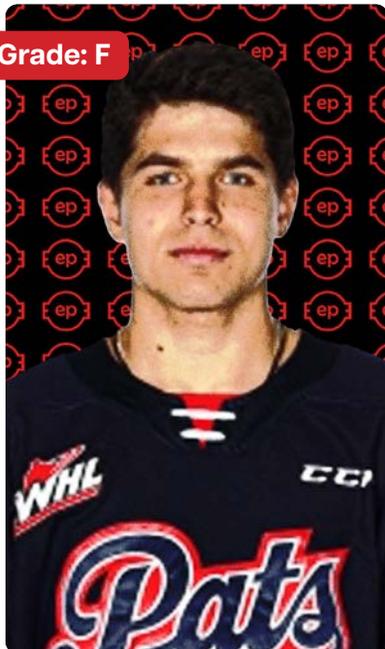
Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

St. Martin had another solid game, including a breakaway chance. He's not a burner, but his pace overwhelms opponents. Applies immediate pressure. High stride frequency allows for some separation. Inside-driven. Some first-touch skill shown in this game, but he's not much of a puckhandler otherwise. Imprecise. The work rate makes him interesting enough.

Mitchell Brown: October 11th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

St. Martin had two breakaways in this game, converting on the shorthanded one with a wrister. A real knack for stealing pucks. Disrupted plays but cutting off the top, anticipating passes, and jumping into lanes. Immediately connected with a look-off pass into the slot after one steal. His game's mostly straight-lines, single-speed attacks without much creativity. Net-focused with the puck. Didn't look like a prospect in this game, but he had an impact in a limited role.

Grade: F



Borya Valis

AGE 18.438 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 08, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+1

Player Info

LW	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	4.5	5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Regina Pats	WHL	55	20	28	48	0.87

SCOUTING REPORT

Spending most of the season alongside Connor Bedard is an easy way to look good, but Borya Valis wasn't just a passenger next to the draft's top prospect. He was a reliable set-up man, disciplined defender, and scoring threat.

Give Valis a bit of space, and he takes the puck straight to the net. He slips away from defenders for chances at the top of the slot, too. Even more impressive as a passer, he sets up chances with quick plays off the boards and deceptive feeds through opponents. He enters every battle with a couple of shoulder-checks, mapping out his options.

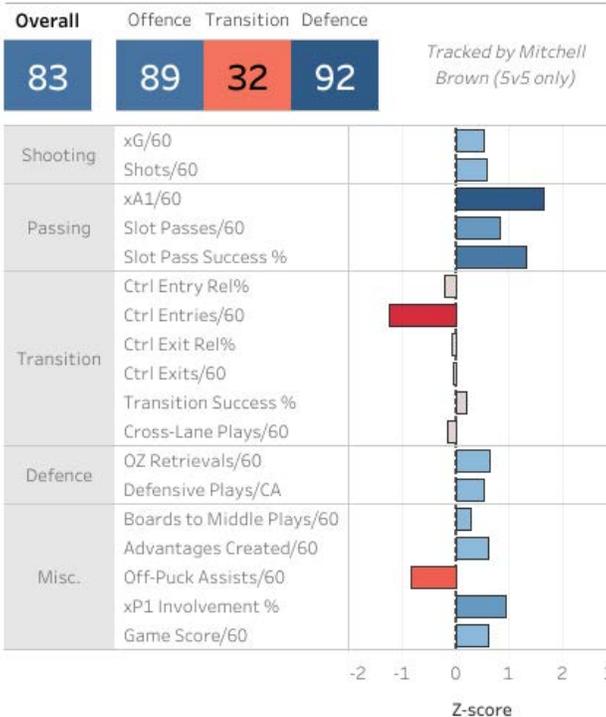
Valis isn't a dynamic puck carrier, scoring threat from range, or speedy attacker. Instead, his path to the NHL will be leaning more on the physical skills, like net drives, puck protection, playmaking off retrievals, and winning inside positioning on opponents.

With a sound defensive game, Valis has the off-puck game to earn the trust of a coaching staff. He doesn't project as an NHL quite yet, he consistently showed pro-level upside, perhaps as a point-producing AHLer. If the tools improve, Valis could surprise.

Borya Valis

F | Regina Pats | WHL | Draft+1

Games Tracked: 8 | Minutes Tracked: 113.7



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 3rd, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Valis has an interesting play style. He's patient, but very aggressive. Give him space, he'll instantly claim it, especially if it's a lane

to the net. He sprints and heads straight to the bank without hesitation. If not, he delays and waits for support. Not creating space, but he understands how to read it and play off his teammates. Gets open inside the slot, reloading high or wide before dashing into space. He's an effective player at this level. With a bit more mechanical ability or better ability to create space, he could become a solid pro.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

As usual, Valis was looking for Bedard. He tries some optimistic passes, but that's not an issue for now. Bedard receives everything. He set-up a goal with a cross-slot pass, then looked for the same play a couple of more times later in the game. He's patient with the puck, but he also takes space as soon as it's given. He has some hard skills, too. Not dynamic or a space creator, and he's not scoring much given the context. But he should become a pro.

Mitchell Brown: January 21st, 2023 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

A quieter game from Valis. He showed more physical, stepping into opponents and winning battles. His skating limits his effectiveness, however. There was a near-chance with a toe-drag around a defender before getting too tight to the net. A couple of smart straight ahead passes, too. Not much creativity shown, but some vision and awareness of his options. Doubt he's a pick, but he's solid enough to become a pro.

Mitchell Brown: January 20th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Swift Current Broncos - WHL

Even without Bedard, Valis still shows skill. He's a passer, combining awareness with skill. He pre-scans before every battles, hangs onto possession when necessary, and finds the quick pass for the escape. A weapon on the forecheck, too. He's aggressive with the puck, driving the net before firing. Not a dynamic skill player. He's a straight-line player who doesn't show much creativity, but he has pro upside for sure. Might even be worth a late-rounder.

Mitchell Brown: November 13th, 2022 - Regina Pats vs. Saskatoon Blades - WHL

The same as usual from Valis. He's not afraid to try plays and often chooses the right play. He's more passer than shooter, but has a knack for arriving in space at the right times. Gets open behind the defence. The passing skill could be NHL-calibre. He hooks pucks back into spot and pre-scans before entering the boards. Skating might be a 4. That's the limiting here, alongside the hands.

Mitchell Brown: November 9th, 2022 - Edmonton Oil Kings vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Another impressive game from Valis, who consistently found ways to further offensive sequences in his limited touches. He set-up a goal by pre-scanning on a retrieval, spotting a team across the rink, and connecting before defenders could close the lane. Scored at the end of the powerplay with an awkward wrister off the pass. Doesn't get the puck much because Bedard eats up the prime touches, he supports, keeps play moving, and creates a bit of space with his off-puck movement. Looks like a solid pro candidate.

Mitchell Brown: October 8th, 2022 - Swift Current Broncos vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Alright Borya Valis, you have my attention. What a game. Valis played with Bedard, and did everything one could hope for. He set up chances, including a one-touch pass to Bedard for a tap-in. Passed, then skates his routes, taking away opponents' sticks when possible. He drove the net, got open inside space, and won battles on the forecheck. He's a re-entry and a bit limited by his skating and puck skills, but might be an NHL thinker. Worth watching more.

Grade: F



Josh Van Mulligen

AGE 17.140 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Right
Position	Shoots
6'2"	181 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	3.5	4.5
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4.5	5
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Medicine Hat Tigers	WHL	68	1	8	9	0.13

SCOUTING REPORT

Sub-0.2 point-per-game defencemen don't get drafted much these days – usually, there just isn't enough upside. But Josh Van Mulligen isn't a player short on creativity.

The intrigue lies in Van Mulligen's flashes. When given a bit of space, he fakes opponents before passing through them, creating space for his recipient. He jumps into the rush, looks for teammates around the slot, and occasionally beats opponents with a quick spin or deke.

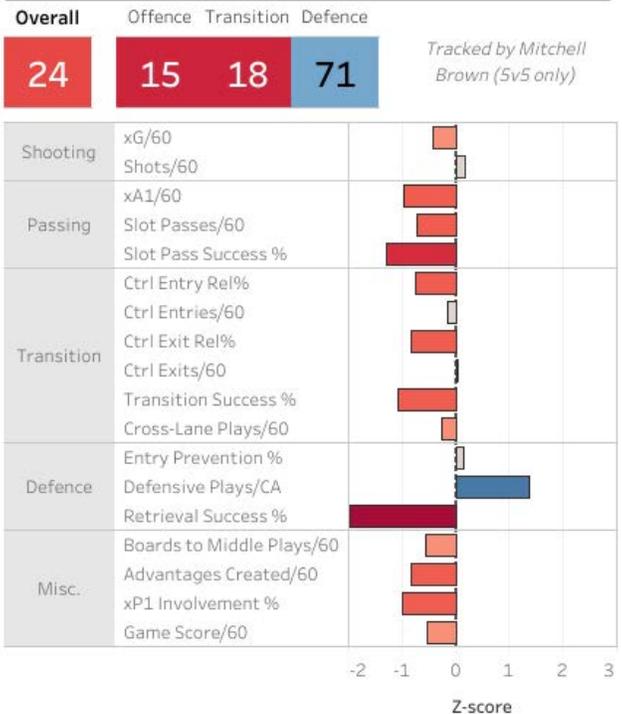
When play comes the other way, Van Mulligen has powerful, fluid backwards crossovers to build speed. He closes on players quickly, forcing dump-ins and lining up destructive hits.

To take the next step, Van Mulligen needs to up the pace and develop awareness of opposing pressure. A tighter gap and winning body positioning more often will earn more stops and start to play back the other way faster.

As a 6-foot-2 right-shot defenceman with an edge and flashes of skill, there's a chance of a late-round swing on Van Mulligen. As a Medicine Hat becomes a WHL powerhouse over the next couple of years, he will likely become a big piece.

Josh Van Mulligen

D | Medicine Hat Tigers | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 80.8



GAME REPORTS

Mitchell Brown: March 1st, 2023 - Winnipeg ICE vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

A quiet game from Van Mulligen. The rush defence was solid, but he's a bit passive at times. Leaves gaps for opponents to

exploit. Not skilled with the puck, with each grade likely projecting as below average. The skating's fluid, but not explosive. He has the occasional idea, like skating towards pressure before passing around it, but he lacks pace and awareness of pressure. Doesn't seem like a draft pick.

Mitchell Brown: February 22nd, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Regina Pats - WHL

Van Mulligen has flashes. His backwards crossovers are fluid with handling the puck. But he struggled with the puck and defensive skating in this game. He dropped his head when handling on the backhand, leading to a blind pass up the middle. Sluggish decisions led to poor passes. He defends by planting his feet and letting opponents come to him – easily beaten. The hands and shot look like below-average projections. Didn't look like a pick in this game.

Mitchell Brown: February 5th, 2023 - Regina Pats vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Van Mulligen has some powerful backwards crossovers. He ate up space to kill a half-ice 2-on-1, forcing the pass before getting the turnover. Full extension with pronounced counterforce. Uses space in the offensive zone, but doesn't create. Lacks skill. And while he's a solid play-killer because he can close on players quickly, he overcommits in space. Panics on retrievals – limited scanning and poor play selection. Didn't look like a pick.

Mitchell Brown: November 27th, 2023 - Prince Albert Raiders vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Some exciting flashes from Van Mulligen in this game. On breakouts, he faked opponents and drew them in before passing through them to an open teammate. When given a bit of space upon reception, he consistently created something. Jumped into the rush a couple of times, once getting a chance after he skated the middle. Tried some plays in the offensive zone – a spin around pressure and a shot-pass – but both failed because he failed to read the feet of the defender. Somewhat physical, but also didn't win body positioning on retrievals. An ideas player without a ton of technical ability. Doesn't look like a pick, unless there's a big second half.

Mitchell Brown: November 19th, 2023 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Prince Albert Raiders - WHL

Van Mulligen's all over the place. He has moments of fluidity, especially backwards and laterally, but struggles with the puck. He didn't handle while moving and struggled with pass receptions. Mostly quiet feet when defending the rush, but gives up too much ground to opponents. Physical, but only as a reaction. Offensively, he takes point shots and looks for one shot pass. No creativity or lane creation ability. Didn't look like a pick, but there are intriguing qualities.

Mitchell Brown: November 11th, 2022 - Moose Jaw Warriors vs. Medicine Hat Tigers - WHL

Van Mulligen threw a big hit at the blue line, the highlight of his game. The rush defence was the strongest part. Beat a few times, he kept opponents wide and forced dump ins. Some off-puck defence, boxing out opponents and tying them up. No timing or advanced defensive instincts, but solid. Sluggish off stops, lacks shooting skill, and doesn't show any notable ideas in the offensive zone.

Mitchell Brown: October 11th, 2022 - Medicine Hat Tigers vs. Seattle Thunderbirds - WHL

Van Mulligen barely got out there. Mostly just turned the puck over under pressure and chipped it in the neutral zone. One play where he fluidly cut back, turned around, and then passed showed some ability to break pressure – but he could've found a better outlet if he looked before the puck left his stick. Not much defence. Worth watching again.

Grade: F



Austin Zemlak

AGE 17.551 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

D	Left
Position	Shoots
6'0"	187 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	5	4
Skating	Shooting	Passing
4	4	6
Puckhandling	Hockey Sense	Physical

Team	League	GP	G	A	P	P/GP
Victoria Royals	WHL	56	3	5	8	0.14

SCOUTING REPORT

A couple of years ago, Austin Zemlak was the Victoria Royals' defenceman of the future. He was a commanding presence in the Prep circuit, controlling the flow of the game of OHA Edmonton. That made him a top-10 pick into the WHL. But adjusting to the WHL has proven tricky, with several of his teammates with lesser pedigrees claiming bigger, more productive roles on the Royals.

Now, Zemlak is mostly a physical, punishing blueliner with flashes of skill. "He overwhelms opponents, beats them down, runs over them, and follows every poke check with a shoulder," Elite Prospects Dir. of North American scouting Mitchell Brown wrote in an early 2023 game report. "His aggressiveness makes him a potent play-killer at times."

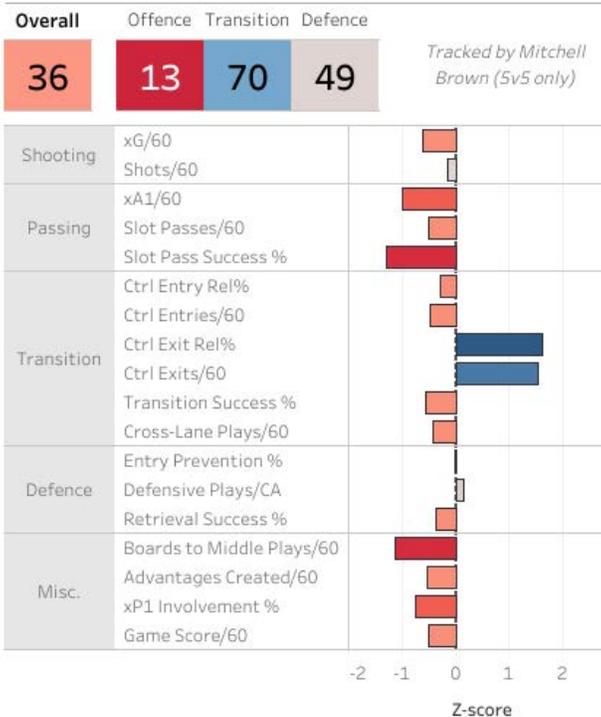
Reining in that aggression while developing more power and edge control could make him a pro-calibre play-killer. With the puck, Zemlak's game is more ideas than execution. He rarely dumps the puck out, preferring to pass to teammates up the boards, and occasionally, draws pressure before passing up the middle. When he connects, he accelerates to join the rush.

Connecting has proven tricky on a disorganized Royals squad, and there aren't many offensive opportunities to go around. Zemlak's shot, a skill that created offence back in his prep days, remains potent, but he gets so few opportunities to use it. He's not much of a playmaker, either. There are flashes with Zemlak – a quick pump fake before shooting or a look-off pass to give his recipient a little extra space – but without improved skating, those will likely go unused.

Zemlak's physical style and preference for controlled plays might entice a team late in the draft. But without building upon those flashes with the puck, he's more likely to become organizational depth than an NHL player.

Austin Zemlak

D | Victoria Royals | WHL | 2023 Eligible
Games Tracked: 7 | Minutes Tracked: 103.8



≡ **GAME REPORTS****Mitchell Brown:** March 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Vancouver Giants - WHL

Zemlak's a predictable player at this stage. He doesn't really dump the puck, preferring to make passes but he telegraphs them. Opponents can read his passes well in advance, and he's prone to panicky plays under pressure. He has some ideas – cutting back and looking to the middle – but he's limited by his lack of deception and poor acceleration. He pushes his knees past his toes and engages his hips in stride, but lacks the edge control, acceleration, and stability to make skating an NHL projection. Right now, he's mostly a sometimes skilled shooter from the point and an always physical presence. Just a nasty player in every battle, but his edges and pivots make him vulnerable. I think he's more WHLer than NHLer.

Mitchell Brown: February 26th, 2023 - Everett Silvertips vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Zemlak was involved in the offence again, just like yesterday's game. He jumped into the rush several times, making in-motion passes to get moving. Uses the middle and weak side. On breakouts, he found a couple of teammates through the forecheck, creating advantages. Not consistently, but enough to suggest he still has potential as a puck-mover. The skating remains a problem. He achieves a full knee bend through his strides, but he's slow off the stop and generally lacks quickness. The edges fail him. And he plays more of a reactionary defensive game that makes him vulnerable. His physicality and non-stop aggression could make him a pick for a team. But he's a depth projection at this stage, at best.

Mitchell Brown: February 25th, 2023 - Prince George Cougars vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Zemlak was the best of Victoria's numerous draft-eligible in this game. He can really shoot the puck. It's not just a powerful slap shot, he keeps his hands in front ready to shoot without the puck, allowing him to wrist pucks toward the goal as soon as they arrive on his stick. Physical defensive performance, timing his engagements and closing with force. A couple of exciting transition plays, too. He made passes in motion, masked his intentions with a look off, and gained the zone with a give-and-go. There were also issues. He doesn't open shooting lanes before firing, which prevents him from making use of his best tool. On retrievals, he's turnover prone. The committing defensive skating exposed him several times, and he lacks a recovery gear with weak pivots. Still, it's surprising that he doesn't score more, at least based on this game. This isn't his year, but he's worth a look next season.

Mitchell Brown: January 6th, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Spokane Chiefs - WHL

Zemlak's game is all physicality. He overwhelms opponents, beats them down, runs over them, and follows every poke check with a shoulder. His aggressiveness makes him a potent play-killer at times, but vulnerable against more skilled attackers. For example, he drifted too far wide to defend a rush, which the attacker instantly read and dangled through him for a chance. With the puck, he has ideas but not results. He ends up skating into pressure without escape plans and passing pucks to teammates with more pressure than himself. He joins the rush and makes the occasional smart passes through a forecheck. That's it. The mobility's going to prove to be an issue, too. He's sluggish through his transitions and pivots. Upright and lacks outside edges. Not a candidate for our board, but his physical style and flashes of skill might encourage a team to bite.

Mitchell Brown: January 3rd, 2023 - Victoria Royals vs. Tri-City Americans - WHL

Zemlak has a big shot, a physical style, and some interesting breakouts ideas. He looks for teammates up the middle or cross-ice, rushing the forward when necessary. When in the play, he looks for passing options over shooting. Most of his plays fail; he's inaccurate and lacks the adaptability to adapt his passes to the lane. He also only skates in straight lines, which limits his ability to control the feet of defenders. Defensively, he's just a physical player. He's sometimes proactive, but very committing with reaching stick checks and crossovers. He's not a pick this year, but he's interesting.

Mitchell Brown: October 22nd, 2022 - Vancouver Giants vs. Victoria Royals - WHL

Zemlak didn't play much and when he did, he wasn't effective. Made one slick breakout where he waited for pressure and reversed the play. Otherwise, just an uninteresting performance. Deferred to his teammates, didn't activate, didn't close space, and only made basic plays with the puck.

Mitchell Brown: October 5th, 2022 - Victoria Royals vs. Kelowna Rockets - WHL

Zemplak has some interesting skills. Moves through pass receptions with his head up, scans regularly, and tries to create advantages by moving pucks through forecheckers (and often to the inside). Capable on the backhand and forehand, and stays in motion when making passes. Some rush activation, although never amounted to much. Sometimes passive, but mostly an astute rush defender who gaps up at the red line and pushes attacks wide. Nothing offensively – just didn't get the OZ time. Curious to see more.

Grade: F



Zachary Bowen

AGE 17.392 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 25, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'2" Height	181 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4 Skating	4.5 Transitions	3.5 Hands
3.5 Tracking	4 Post	4 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
London Knights	OHL	26	3.10	.899	1

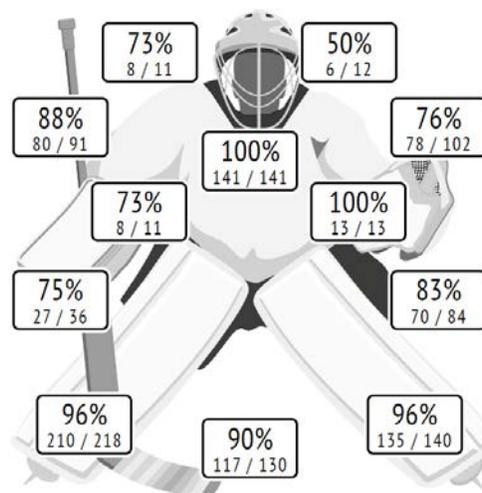
SCOUTING REPORT

A tough goaltender to get a read on with limited appearances in the regular season and a terrific team in front of him, Zachary Bowen was thrown into the spotlight during the playoffs for the London Knights. He ultimately wasn't able to capture the OHL championship, but he was able to impress scouts ahead of the 2023 NHL Draft.

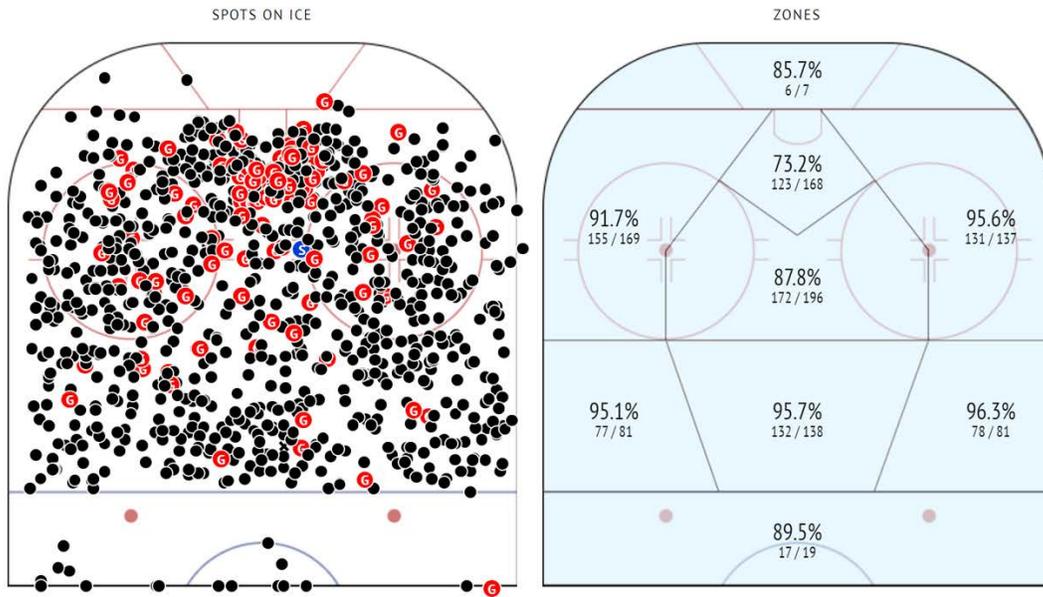
Bowen is a goaltender that is never truly out of a play because of his ability to battle. He takes a lot of depth off the rush and plays with his heels at the top of the crease. This leaves a lot of room back door, which is likely a conscious choice due to the strength of the team he plays on. His post-integration is solid, as are most of the technical details of his game, which will make it easier to apply changes to his approach down the line.

He does have a tendency to get too wide in his stance when shooters bear down on him 1-on-1. This leaves him susceptible to being beaten by dekes because he doesn't have full access to both of his edges and can get caught with a quick lateral move by the shooter. Bowen may be the type of goaltender that scouts will want to watch for at least one more year before taking the leap and drafting him.

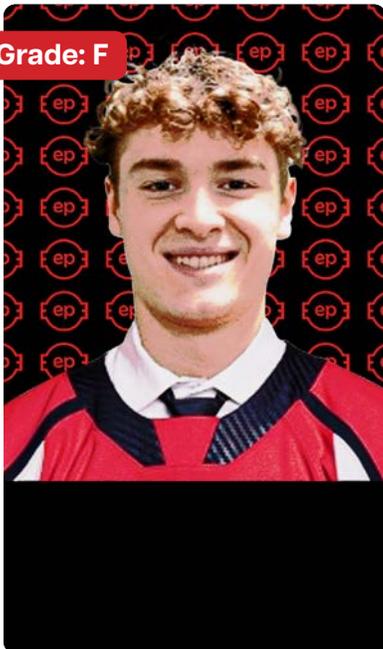
SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: F



Joey Costanzo

AGE 17.140 DATE OF BIRTH Jul 26, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'0" Height	168 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	4 Transitions	3.5 Hands
4 Tracking	4.5 Post	3.5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Windsor Spitfires	OHL	40	3.03	.901	1

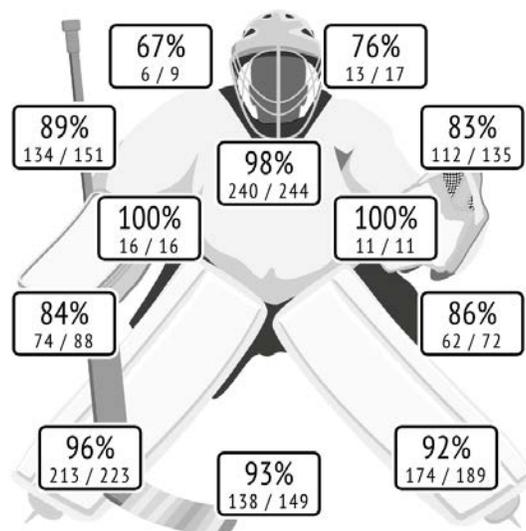
SCOUTING REPORT

Joey Costanzo was able to take some strides this past season after receiving a fresh start with the OHL's Windsor Spitfires. Whether he played well enough down the stretch to get drafted in 2023 remains to be seen.

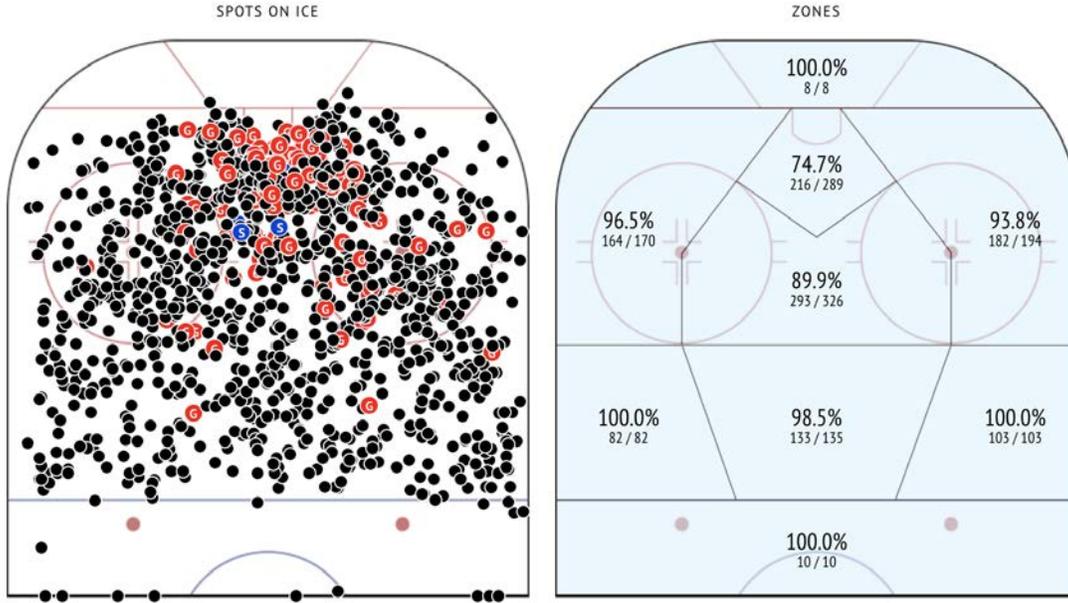
Costanzo refrains from taking a lot of depth off the rush, which shows either a lack of trust in his defence, or a lack of confidence in his skating ability. While his skating does require some work, he displays solid patience on his edges and can wait out most OHL shooters. Rebound opportunities and scramble plays can also become nightmare experiences, as he tends to kick at the puck and forget about his hands.

If Costanzo can build on his patience, which is a rare trait for a young goaltender, he could blossom into something more than what he's shown so far. That will need to happen in order to reach the NHL at some point in his career.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: F



Adam Dybal

AGE 17.036 DATE OF BIRTH Sep 02, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	165 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	3.5	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
HC Energie Karlovy Vary	Czechia U20	44	1.85	.942	8
Czechia U18 (all)	International-Jr	9	4.27	.845	0

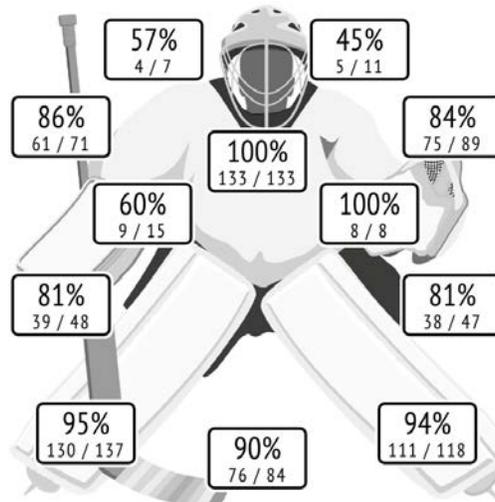
SCOUTING REPORT

A September birthday, Czechia's Adam Dybal is just sneaking under-the-wire for eligibility in the 2023 NHL Entry Draft. An average-sized goaltender that plays with a lot of energy, Dybal overdoes it at times with excess movement, especially with his hands and feet while moving laterally. He doesn't pay the price for it often at the level he plays at, but he will at the professional level.

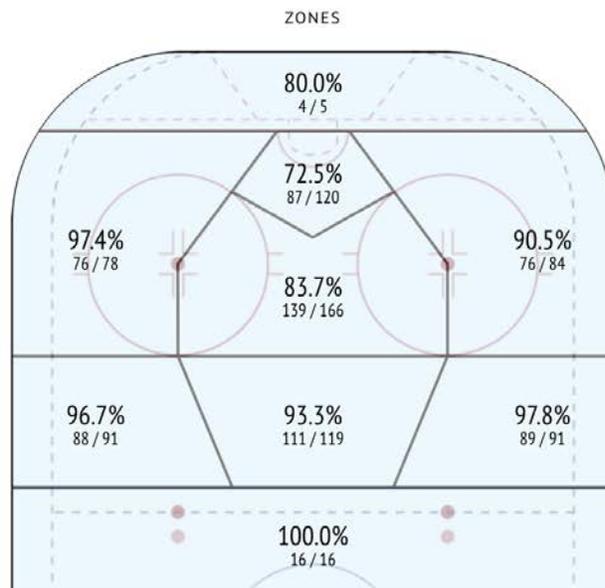
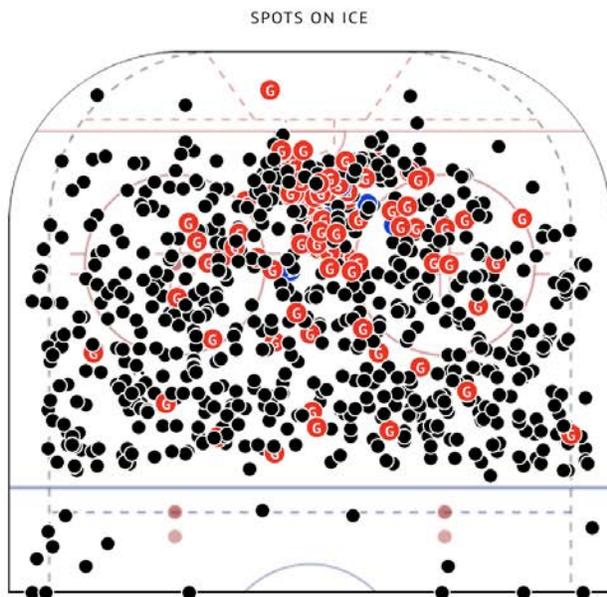
Dybal's stance also contains a lot of excess movement. He's constantly bouncing up and down, changing his eye level, and making it more difficult to track the puck upon release. He also chooses to look both above and below screen attempts, making for even more head movement.

There are certainly areas of Dybal's game that he will need to focus on as he prepares for professional hockey. His effort can't be questioned, and that will have coaches excited to work with him. They'll be hoping he makes it through those issues and becomes an NHL option one day.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: F



Rudy Guimond

AGE 17.326 DATE OF BIRTH May 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'3"	179 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4.5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	4	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Taft School	USHS-Prep	28	-	.940	-
Yale Jr. Bulldogs 18U AAA	18U AAA	17	-	.939	-

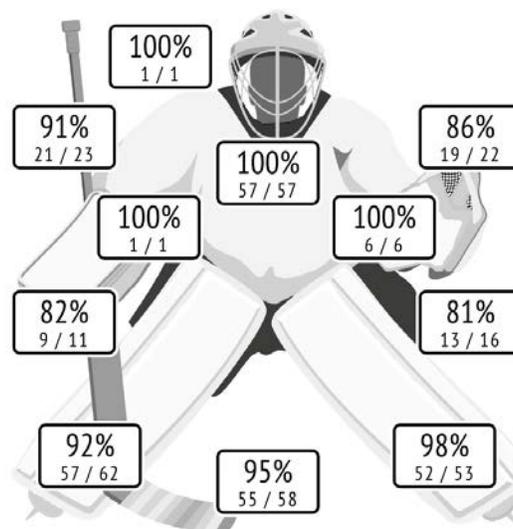
SCOUTING REPORT

With a long-term commitment to Yale in his back pocket, Québec-born Rudy Guimond decided to go the American high school route in 2022-23. Guimond's 6-foot-3 frame was an incredible advantage in this league. He generally keeps his routes short around the crease by keeping his depth fairly shallow, even off the rush. He has trouble building backwards momentum at times, and is prone to awkward footwork around the post - leading to some questions about his overall skating ability.

Playing a style that uses his size effectively is still a work in progress for Guimond. You don't have to hit your spots as frequently, or as precisely, when you're playing against inexperienced shooters who are likely facing one of the largest goaltenders that they have ever seen. It may be a rude awakening when he reaches the next level.

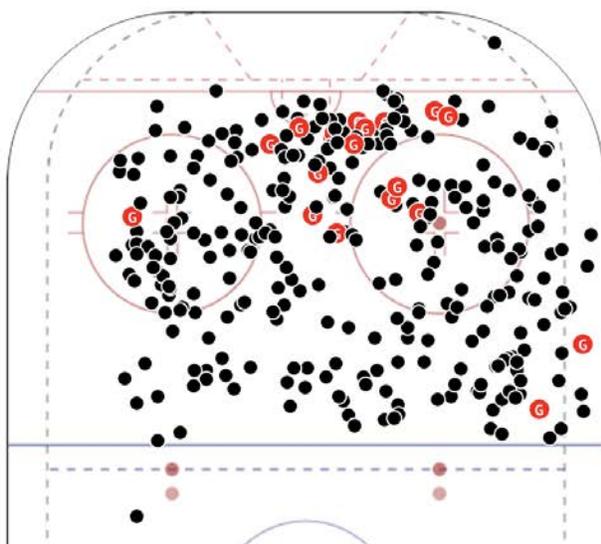
There isn't much doubt that Guimond can rectify a lot of his issues. Improving his skating will be the biggest wildcard. With his size, even just cleaning up his crease movements and post integration would go a long way to him reaching another gear. Things tend to spiral when he realizes he is a step behind the play, which means cleaning up his footwork is imperative to reaching his full potential as an NHL goaltender.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

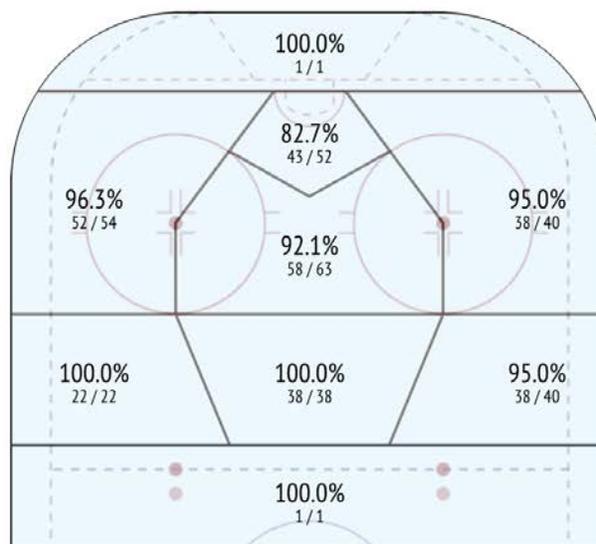


SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES



Grade: F



Daniel Héroux

AGE 17.668 DATE OF BIRTH Jan 14, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'2"	190 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	4	4.5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	3.5	4.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Kimball Union Academy	USHS-Prep	33	-	.934	

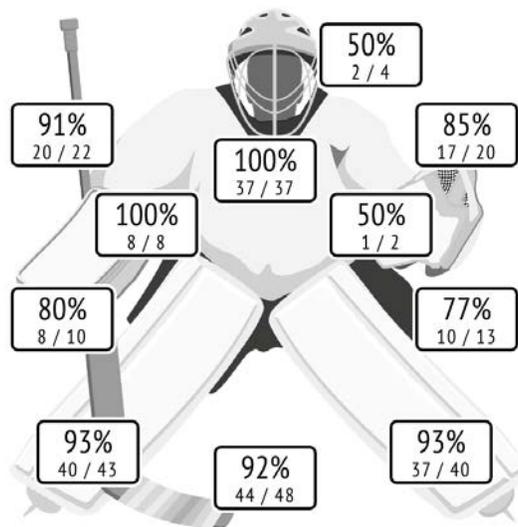
SCOUTING REPORT

Daniel Héroux is a Canadian goaltender that plied his trade in the American High School circuit, electing to play for Kimball Union Academy. He stands with a somewhat hunched-over stance, his hands held high, and his stick off the ice. As he moves, it's clear that he is very aware of his head movement. He keeps his eye line level, even during rapid skating movements around the crease.

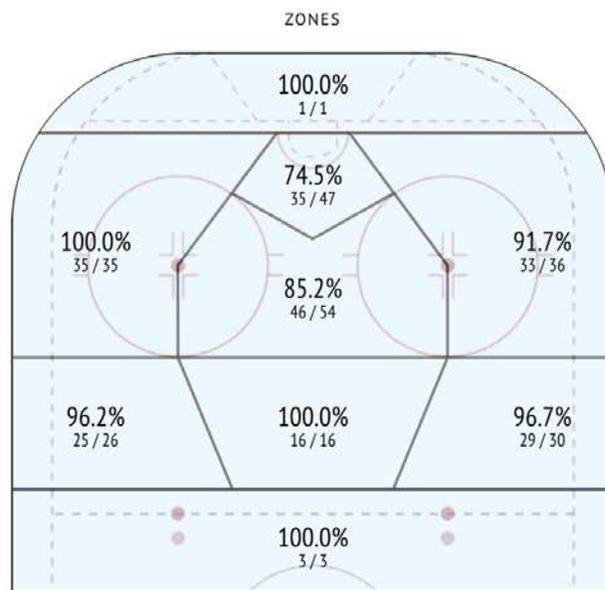
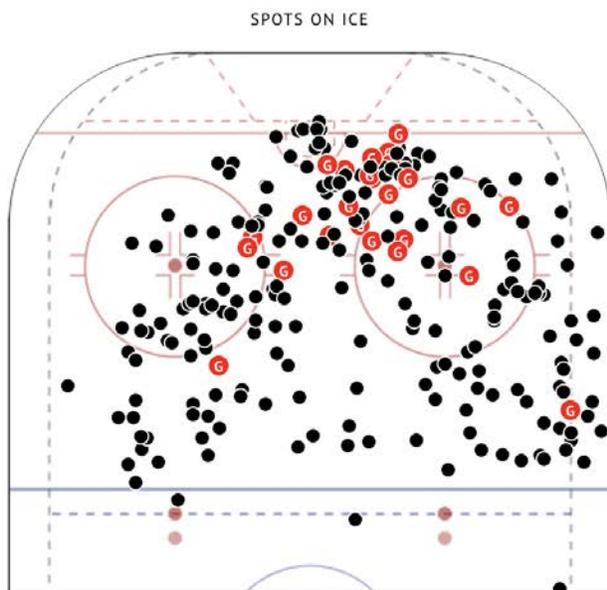
He is adept at covering the lower portion of the net, electing to use the paddle down on scramble opportunities. This does leave him susceptible to being beaten over the shoulder, but he has decent enough size to counter it. In a display of rare patience and maturity for an 18-year-old goaltender, he doesn't overuse the reverse-VH technique. He actually prefers to stay on his feet more often than you would normally see a goaltender from this generation.

Another good sign to Héroux's game is that he is able to make saves on opportunities with multiple scoring chances. He does not give up easily and makes many saves on second and third chances. Figuring out the root causes why he's having to make so many saves on second and third chances will be imperative if he wants to become a reliable NHL goaltender one day.

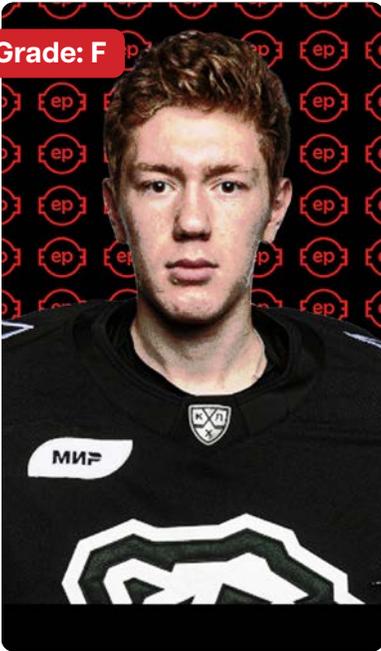
SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: F



Ruslan Khazheyev

AGE 17.819 DATE OF BIRTH Nov 20, 2004 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'4"	201 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4.5	3.5	5
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	3.5	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Belye Medvedi Chelyabinsk	MHL	23	2.38	.923	2

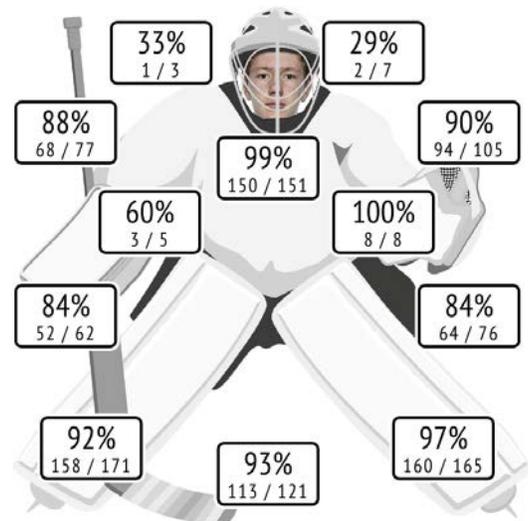
SCOUTING REPORT

With fantastic numbers in Russia's MHL, Ruslan Khazheyev is a goaltender that will generate a lot of interest around the 2022-23 NHL Entry Draft. Khazheyev has a nice foundation built on strength and speed, but still has a long way to come in terms of the way he thinks and reacts on the ice.

Most goaltenders that measure in at 6-foot-4 play a more conservative style, but not Khazheyev. His game features a lot of movement, and unfortunately, a lot of guessing. It can be frustrating to watch a goaltender with a frame like that sliding out of the net on a consistent basis. He can also be caught drifting forward when he locks in on a shooter, forgetting to set his feet before the release of the shot.

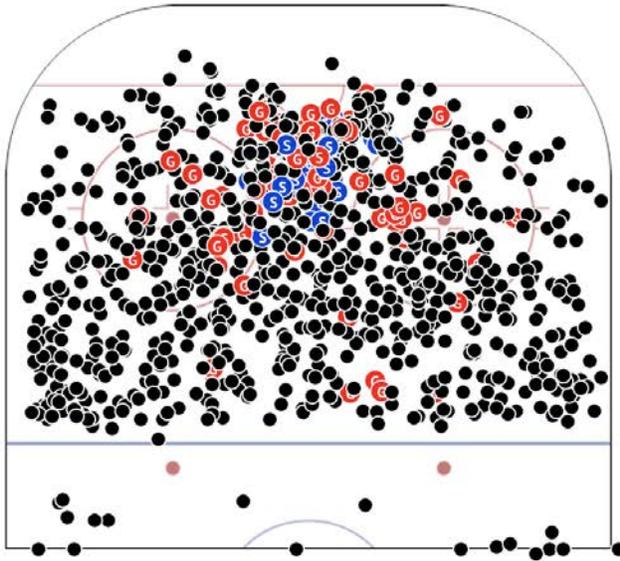
Khazheyev predominantly uses skate-on-post while in reverse-VH. He will get strong pushes off the post, but can get caught moving side-to-side because his hinge on the post isn't great and he is slow to rotate. Ironing out those issues will take a lot of work, but it's necessary if he wants to reach the NHL. Figuring out a playing style that allows him to be aggressive but use his size more effectively will make the biggest impact.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

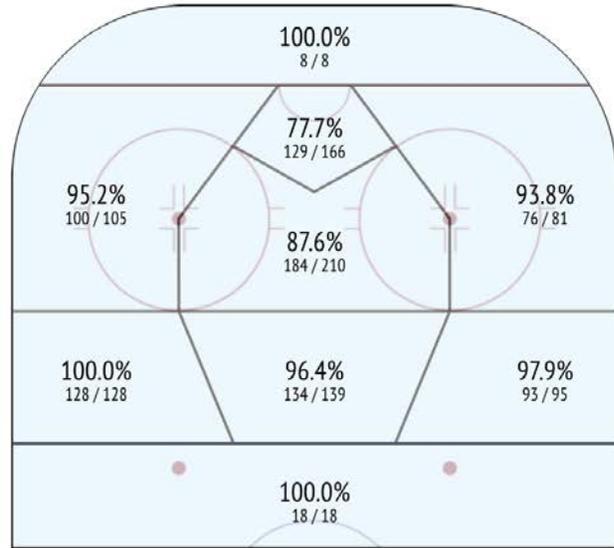


≡ SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES



Grade: F



Max Lundgren

AGE 20.455 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 03, 2002 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY+3

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'5"	229 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	3.5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
4	4.5	4
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Des Moines Buccaneers	USHL	41	2.65	.913	4

SCOUTING REPORT

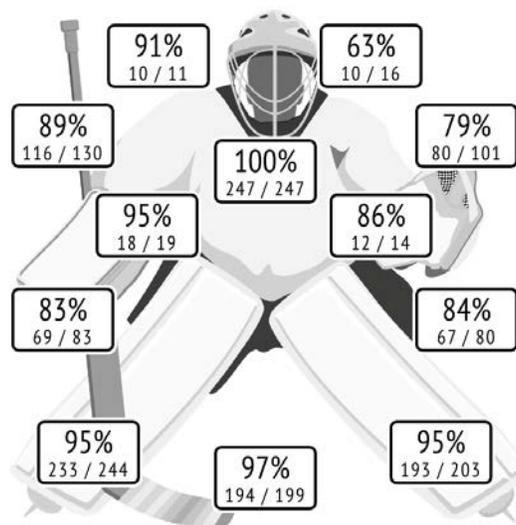
Max Lundgren spent his first full season in North America in 2022-23 as a 20-year-old playing in the USHL for the Des Moines Buccaneers. He fared well against the younger competition, as he should have, and is garnering a lot of interest because of his size.

At 6-foot-5, Lundgren certainly delivers in that aspect. He presents to shooters with a very wide stance and base, which doesn't always work for getting access to his edges. Luckily, if they do shoot low at the five-hole, he is very good at taking away the lower portion of the net. He loves to slide right out at shooters to take away their time and space, which is a very successful tactic right now, but he will have to be careful going forward against older, more patient competition.

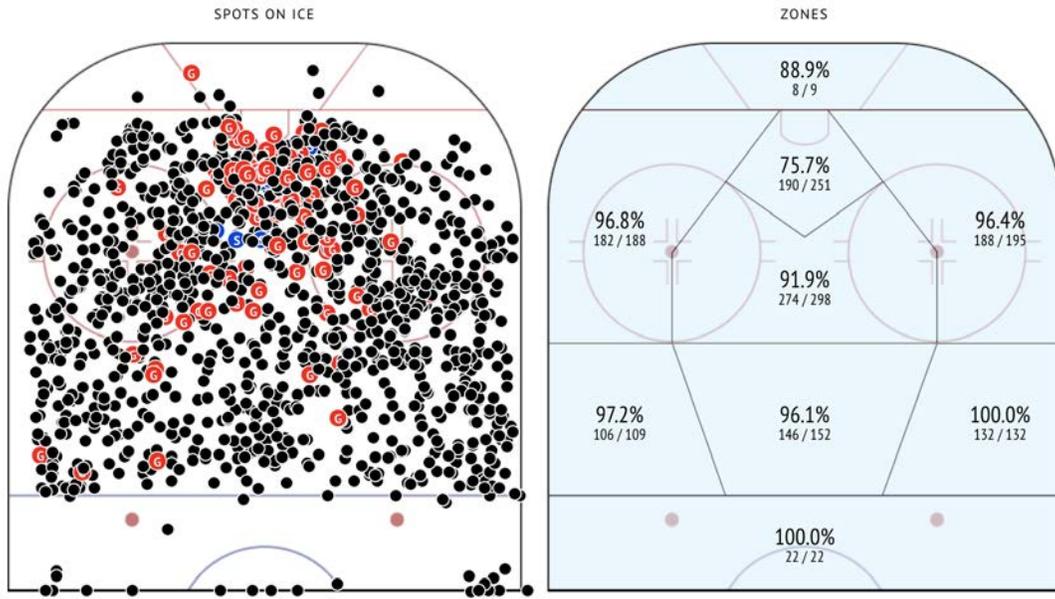
Lundgren can also be a tad slow while moving laterally. This is likely just his size slowing him down, but it could also be a symptom of poor play-reading. He has a lack of balance in the butterfly, which leads to second and third effort saves generally consisting of falling to one side and flailing arms.

Lundgren could get to an NHL level at some point, but it is going to take some immediate adjustments to his game when he becomes a professional.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE



Grade: F



Cooper Michaluk

AGE 17.521 DATE OF BIRTH Mar 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'1" Height	172 lbs Weight

Player Grades

3.5 Skating	4.5 Transitions	3 Hands
3.5 Tracking	4.5 Post	5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Spokane Chiefs	WHL	37	4.30	.879	0

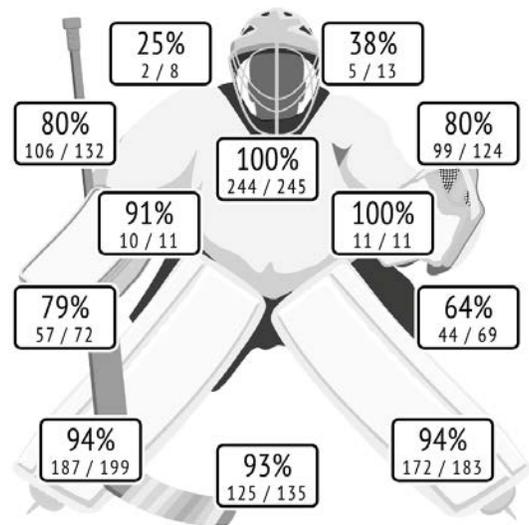
SCOUTING REPORT

Cooper Michaluk is a goaltender with good size and raw ability. At 6-foot-2, he's about NHL league average in height, but needs to learn how to use his frame more effectively to be able to make the next step in his game.

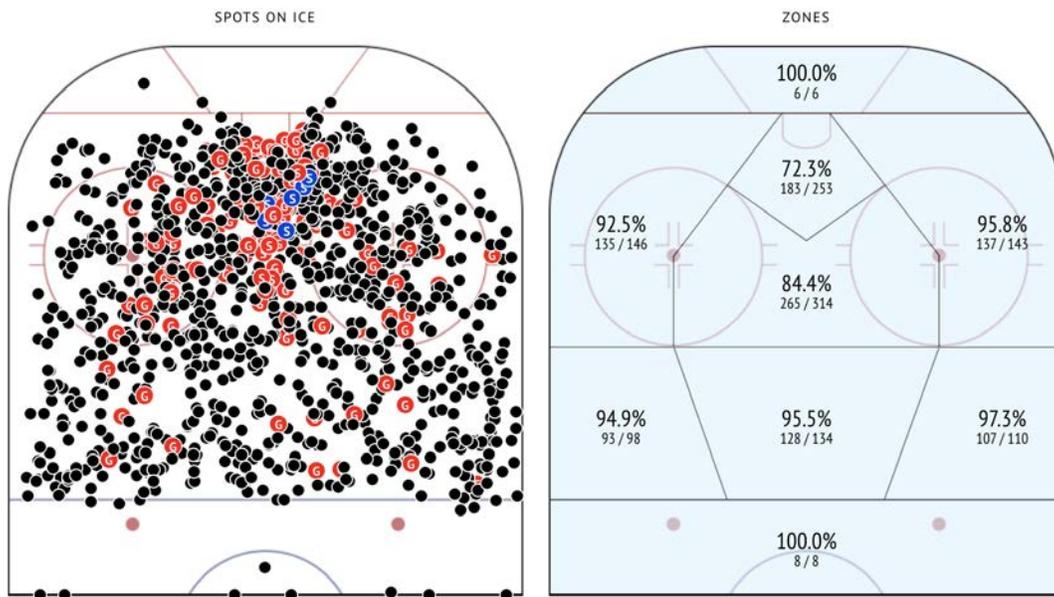
Michaluk takes away the lower portion of the net quite well. He has long legs and excellent flexibility. Even shooters with long reaches have trouble getting the puck around his legs when he stretches out. He tends to keep his hands tighter to the body while in his stance. Projecting over the puck by having his hands out front more could prevent him from being beaten over the shoulder as often. He plays with a lot of depth and backwards flow off the rush. Frustratingly, some counter-rotation with his arms during lateral movement prevents him from being as quick as he could possibly be from side-to-side.

As Michaluk matures, a few things need to happen in order for him to be seen as a potential NHLer. His core strength will need to improve in order to stay tight and within the frame of the net, and he will have to improve his situational play-reading, which can only come from experience and playing time.

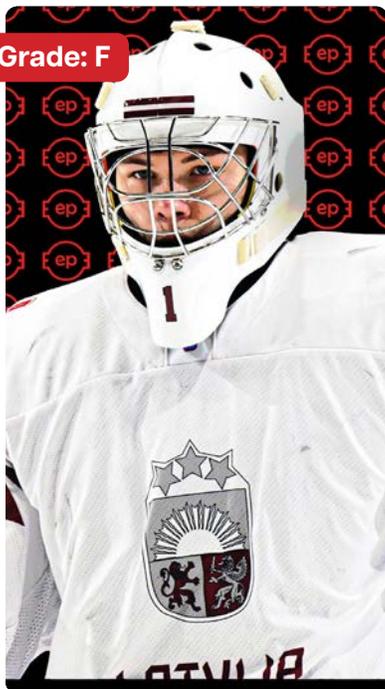
SPOTS ON GOALIE



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Grade: F



Aksels Ozols

AGE 17.597 DATE OF BIRTH Feb 09, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	154 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

4	3.5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	4	4.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
HS Riga 17	Estonia	11	4.41	.892	0
HS Riga	Latvia	17	2.98	.898	0
Latvia U18	WJC-18	5	4.15	.883	-

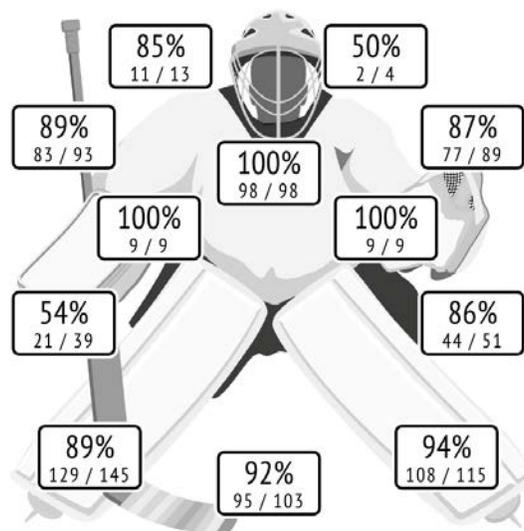
SCOUTING REPORT

Aksels Ozols is a Latvian netminder who took the reins as the starter for their U18 squad in 2022-23. Ozols has good instincts for recognizing threats on the ice and often makes saves by positioning himself smartly. Since he is an average puck-tracker, that positioning becomes even more important to any success that he has.

His post-integration and play down low in general is very raw. He will need to have stronger seals, and will need to be able to transition quicker from post-to-post if he wants to keep up with the pace when he plays at a higher level. A slightly odd fingers-up glove hand positioning also makes it slightly awkward for him to get to low shots on the glove side.

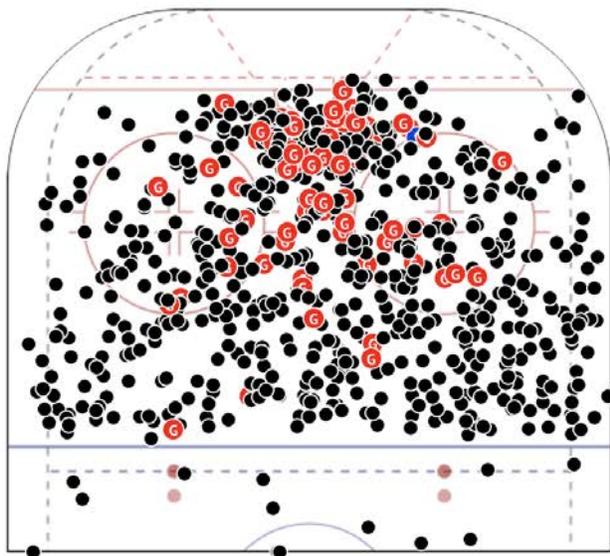
If Ozols can build off that strong positioning and develop more quickness to his game, there's a chance you could see his name pop up down the road as an option for an NHL team.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

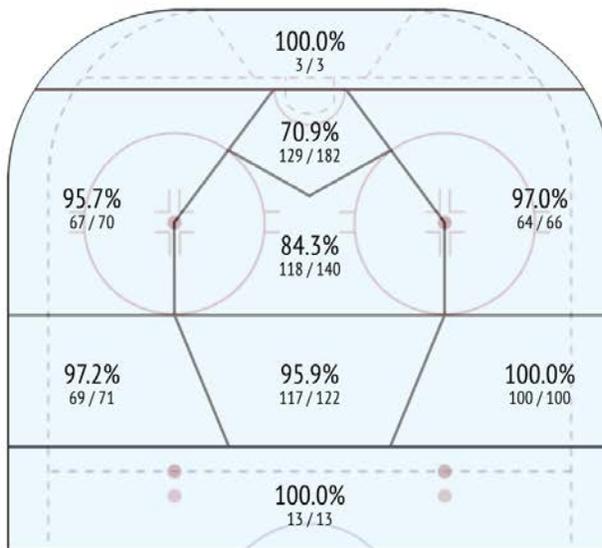


≡ SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES



Grade: F



Samuel Urban

AGE 17.375 DATE OF BIRTH May 01, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G	Left
Position	Catches
6'1"	183 lbs
Height	Weight

Player Grades

3.5	4.5	4
Skating	Transitions	Hands
3.5	4.5	4.5
Tracking	Post	Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
Team Slovakia U18	Slovakia2	14	4.51	.897	0
Team Slovakia U18	Slovakia U20	3	2.02	.935	-
Sioux City Musketeers	USHL	4	2.80	.918	0
Slovakia U18	WJC-18	6	3.74	.908	-
Slovakia U18 (all)	International-Jr	6	2.14	.911	0

SCOUTING REPORT

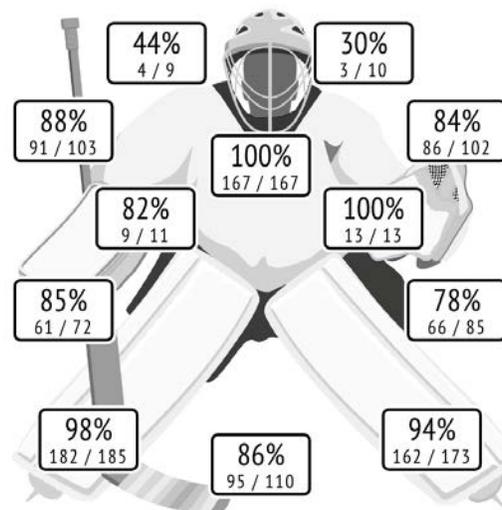
Slovak netminder Samuel Urban is one of the more polarizing goaltenders of the 2023 NHL Draft.

On the one hand, the technical aspects of his game are very polished. He does a lot of the little things right – such as sealing up the post and smooth transitions out of reverse-VH. On the other hand, questions about his ceiling linger due to his below-average size and strength.

Urban is achieving success right now because he is very aware of his limitations. He stays within himself, doesn't try to push the gas pedal too hard, and often falls back on his technical foundation to make saves. You won't see him make any desperation moves unless it is absolutely necessary.

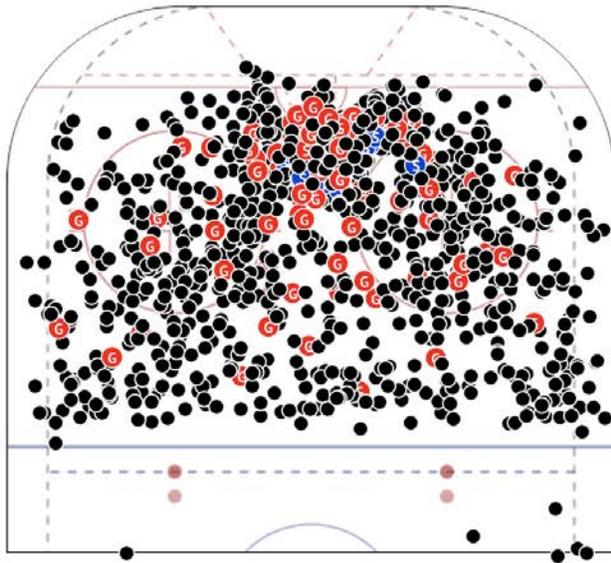
He is a good enough skater to get by, but the cracks begin to show as the game speeds up around him. A big step is needed in terms of his physical ability in order for Urban to continue his success at the next level.

SPOTS ON GOALIE

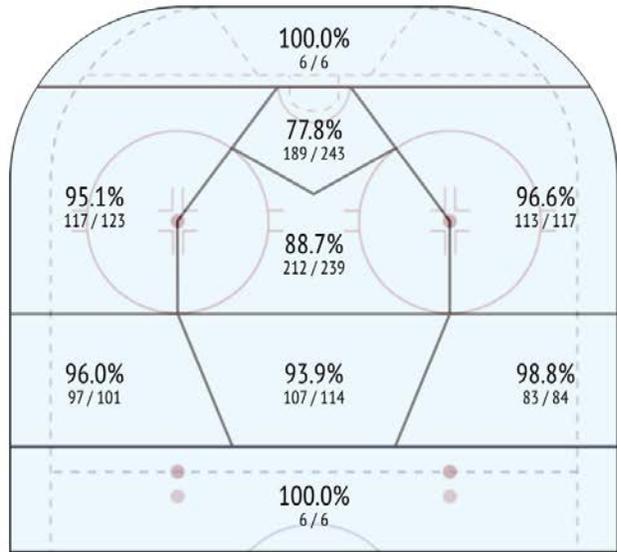


≡ SPOTS ON ICE

SPOTS ON ICE



ZONES



Grade: F



Noa Vali

AGE 17.408 DATE OF BIRTH Apr 19, 2005 DRAFT ELIGIBILITY DY

Player Info

G Position	Left Catches
6'0" Height	154 lbs Weight

Player Grades

4.5 Skating	5 Transitions	3.5 Hands
3.5 Tracking	4.5 Post	4.5 Depth

Team	League	GP	GAA	SV%	SO
TPS U18	U18 SM-sarja	1	0.00	1.000	1
TPS U20	U20 SM-sarja	29	2.38	.912	3
Finland U18	WJC-18	1	2.00	.867	-
Finland U18 (all)	International-Jr	4	1.23	.937	1

SCOUTING REPORT

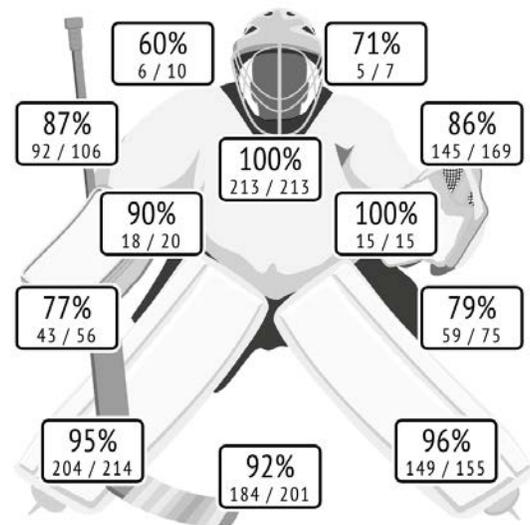
An undersized goaltender out of the TPS system in Finland, Noa Vali plays a game built on speed and quickness. When watching Vali, prepare to see a lot of bouncy movement and sliding around the crease. Vali would not be considered a goaltender with a ton of patience, and will hopefully be working hard at becoming a goaltender that beats passes on his feet.

What Vali lacks in size, he makes up for in flexibility. He's able to get his limbs across to make some surprising saves while stretching out, which is especially necessary when he employs the overlap technique off the rush - with the extra ground back door he's needed to cover.

There is some concern with his size because of how low he tends to stay in his stance. When the puck is moved from a low-to-high position, he doesn't adjust how low he is and stays locked in that position. He's also prone to lingering in the reverse-VH position for far too long, which is incredibly problematic for allowing sharp-angle goals over the shoulder.

If Vali is able to work through some of these issues, he does have tantalizing speed that could play at the next level. Working through those issues is imperative to ensure that his ceiling is an NHL starter, rather than simply a starter for a team in Europe.

SPOTS ON GOALIE



≡ SPOTS ON ICE

