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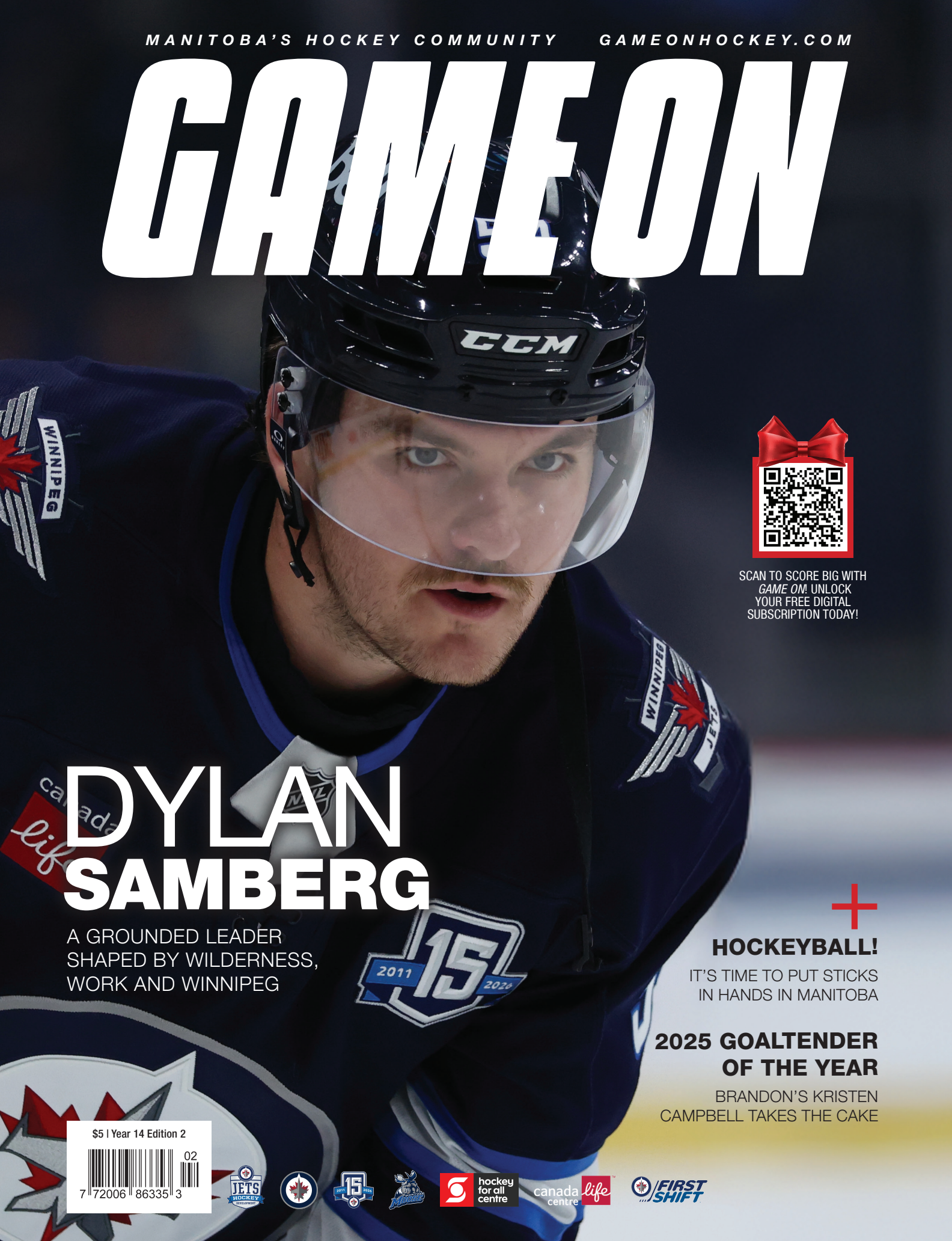

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TAKING IT OUTSIDE

PRINCESS AUTO STADIUM

BY CARTER BROOKS
Photos by James Carey Lauder and Jeff Miller

The Winnipeg Jets and Montreal Canadiens will face off outdoors in an all-Canadian battle in the Heritage Classic from Princess Auto Stadium – the home of the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers – on October 25, 2026.

Playing outside nearly a decade from the date of their last home outdoor contest (October 23, 2016) the Jets will be looking for some long-awaited revenge following their 3-0 shutout loss to Edmonton some ten years ago. The game will be the first such outdoor matchup for the majority of the Jets' roster, and the third Heritage Classic the Jets have participated in. They are 1-1-0 all-time in regular season outdoor games, having beaten the Calgary Flames 2-1 in overtime in the 2019 neutral site contest from Regina.



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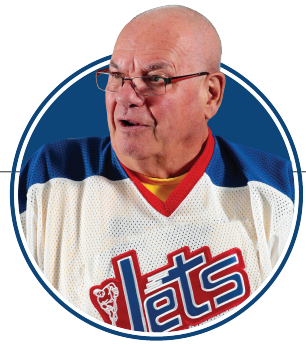
DAVE ELLETT AT THE ALUMNI GAME

The 2016 Heritage Classic took place on a balmy 10°C October day. In fact, it was such a nice day that the game had to be delayed nearly two full hours due to the bright sun and its reflection off the ice. This past October was even warmer, as the October 25th high rose to 15°C by mid-afternoon.

The only Jets currently remaining on the team's roster from that first outdoor game in Winnipeg include now-captain Adam Lowry, Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Connor Hellebuyck. While the Alumni Game featured star-studded rosters including the likes of Wayne Gretzky, Grant Fuhr, Paul Coffey, Jari Kurri, Mark Messier, Dale Hawerchuk, Teemu Selanne, Teppo Numminen, Dave Ellett and Thomas Steen.

"It's so exciting, just the spectacle around it," Lowry reflected. "Whether there's going to be a new jersey or we get to wear the heritage ones. You get to see all the gear and have so many family members and friends come in and get to experience it."

"There's always just a little bit more excitement. It feels like it's a slightly bigger stage, in a bigger stadium, kind of new surroundings. I know we did the one in Winnipeg before, but they are always a blast to be a part of."



THE GOAL

Cole Perfetti's tying goal with 1.6 seconds left to play in Game 7 of the opening round of the 2024-25 Stanley Cup playoffs will likely never be repeated. Joe Daley's Sports & Framing has the definitive souvenir of Perfetti's Manitoba Miracle.



This magnificent, autographed piece of memorabilia is 8" X 10" and features an exclusive photograph (lower left corner) by Game On Magazine's own Carey Lauder.

A limited edition of 100, hand numbered 1-100 and autographed in-store by the Winnipeg Jets' Cole Perfetti it is available only at Joe Daley's Sports & Framing. The unframed, autographed print at 8X10 is $49.99 while the beautifully framed autographed piece is $199.99. It's the perfect gift for every Winnipeg Jets fan.

And we're sorry, No. 91 is not available. Joe gave it to Cole's dad.

Perfetti, 23, was selected in the first round (10th overall) by the Jets in the 2020 NHL Entry Draft.

Growing up in Whitby, Ont., Perfetti played his minor hockey with the Whitby Wildcats and then, as a teenager, enrolled at The Hill Academy while also playing for the Vaughan Kings of the Greater Toronto Hockey League. A scoring sensation, Perfetti was recruited by the University of Michigan but chose to play for the Saginaw Spirit of the Ontario Hockey League.

In his first four seasons with the Jets, the 5-foot-11, 175-pound forward had 49 goals and 129 points in 222 NHL games. Last year he had three goals and six points in 13 playoff games, including the most exciting goal ever scored in Winnipeg Jets 2.0 history.

Internationally, he has played for Canada at the 2019 World U17 Challenge, the 2021 World Junior Hockey Championship and the 2021 World Championship.

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GAME ON MAGAZINE'S 2025
GOALTENDER OF THE YEAR

KRISTEN CAMPBELL

Photos courtesy of Kristen Campbell via Instagram

Kristen Campbell, the Vancouver Goldeneyes' star backstop, is the *2025 Game On Goaltender of the Year.*

Yes, you read that correctly. Campbell, 28, now plays for the Professional Women's Hockey League's expansion club in British Columbia.

The Brandon product was traded from Toronto to Vancouver for a second round pick in a draft day deal, sending the now veteran goalie away from fellow Manitoban Raygan Kirk (who now owns the Sceptres' crease) to Vancouver, where she is working alongside her Team Canada partner Emerance Maschmeyer as the Goldeneyes' last line of defence.

The former Westman Wildcats standout played her post-secondary career at Wisconsin (NCAA Division I) where she won a national championship and multiple WCHA Goaltender of the Year titles.

Campbell took home the gold medal in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, while also earning first-place finishes with Canada at the Women's World Championship in 2021, 2022 and 2024.

This past season she owned a 2.25 goals against average and a .910 save percentage to go alongside her 9-8-3-1 record after going 16-6-0 last year. And she is off to a strong start with her new club in Vancouver this season.

Congratulations, Kristen, from the entire *Game On* Magazine editorial board.



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DECEMBER 2025
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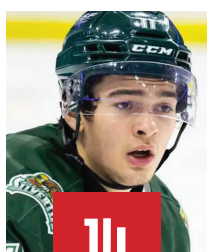

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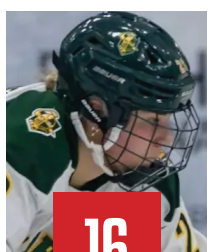

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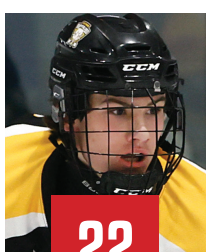

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IN LOVE WITH THE GAME



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COVER PHOTO BY
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GAME ON magazine is published six times per year by:

davis media company

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GAME ON is Manitoba's hockey community. This is where hockey fans will meet the stars of the game here in Manitoba and where our goal is to pay tribute to those who make hockey this province's most beloved sport.
Printed by Linda Averbach of Quantum Graphics.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed by the authors and/or editorial sources contained in *Game On* magazine are those of the respective parties and do not necessarily represent the opinion or views of the magazine or of the publishers. All published work is edited for accuracy, style and clarity. We do accept unsolicited material as long as it refers to athletes, coaches and/or volunteers involved in hockey in Manitoba.

Subscriptions in Canada $45.00 plus GST for one year.

Payment may be made by cheque, Visa or MasterCard to:
The Davis Media Company Inc.
Suite 601, 63 Albert St.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1G4

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YEAR 14 | EDITION 2 | 2025

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A SPECIAL TIME

If you are anything like me, the holidays can be some of the busiest days of the calendar year.

Between family events, work commitments, holiday parties, church, sporting games, practices and tournaments, time for oneself is often put on the backburner.

This holiday season, I challenge you to a few extra minutes of sleep per night, a new personal best on your weight bench or squat rack, an additional walk or two per week, a planned meetup with an old friend and an unplanned, drop-in visit with a family member or two.

Sure, we're all excited for the World Juniors in Minnesota this Boxing Day, but there are surely better things to do with your time than watching the full 29-game slate from your new recliner – no matter how comfortable the sales rep at EQ3 told you it would be.

The Winnipeg Jets have a relatively light schedule over the holidays, with six days between games over Christmas, but the Winter Olympics are also just around the corner. So, more high-level hockey is soon to come – that is, unless playing on a rink 37.8 inches shorter than the official NHL standards becomes too much of an issue and the hockey tournament is called off... it's almost like they'll do anything to keep the first best-on-best competition since 2014 from happening.

Needless to say, North Kildonan's best-on-best will be happening nearly every evening on the outdoor sheet at Gateway Rec. Centre, while Charleswood's best will certainly hit the ice regularly at Roblin Park C.C. Unlike other winters in recent memory, The Forks' Red River Skating Trail should also be open for a lengthy stretch this cold winter season. If you haven't done so yet, dust off the garbage mitts, take a honing stone to the old blades and get out for a twirl on your local ice – don't forget your helmet!

All of that said, be merry and bright. Keep Christ in 'Christmas' and enjoy the holiday spirits with friends, family and loved ones. Be sure to take a few minutes from all the hustle and bustle and enjoy the bonus time you may not otherwise get.



Photo by Megan Miscavish

CARTER WITH HIS SISTER AND NIECE ON THE LOCAL ODR.

From our family to yours, Merry Christmas and happy holidays!

CARTER BROOKS,
Editor-in-Chief



CASH CLARKSON

47

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 6'0"

BORN FEBRUARY 17, 2006 // WINNIPEGOSIS, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: NORWAY HOUSE NORTH STARS (KJHL)

2024-25 SEASON STATS

BEAUSEJOUR COMETS (CRJHL)

28 GAMES

12 GOALS

22 POINTS

Cash Clarkson, a former member of Manitoba's Indigenous Team Manitoba, helped the province win a gold medal at the 2023 National Aboriginal Hockey Championships. After starting the 2025-26 season with the Beausejour Comets of the Capital Region Junior Hockey League, Clarkson joined the North Stars in October and went on a tear. He had 13 goals and 31 points in his first eight games with Norway House and jumped into second place in league scoring. A 19-year-old from tiny Winnipegosis, he played five seasons of U14, U15 and U18 AAA with the Parkland Rangers before playing with the Comets last season. "We made an agreement with Beausejour to get both Cash Clarkson and Madexx Long," said North Stars coach Skylar Tait-Reaume. "Cash is a player who gets in the open areas and is a natural goal scorer. He has nice hands and an elite hockey IQ. He's a 200-foot player who makes his linemates better. He's averaging four points a game and I can't wait to see what he does when crunch time comes after Christmas."



Photos by Kelly Jacobson

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CARTER BEAR

11

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 6'0"

BORN NOVEMBER 4, 2006 // WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: EVERETT SILVERTIPS (WHL)

2024-25 SEASON STATS

EVERETT SILVERTIPS (WHL)

56
GAMES

40
GOALS

82
POINTS

The 19-year-old former star with the Winnipeg Hawks U14 and U15 and Winnipeg Thrashers U18 AAA, was the first-round selection (13th overall) of the Detroit Red Wings in the 2025 NHL Draft. Bear, a proud member of Peguis First Nation, just signed a three-year entry level deal with the Red Wings that will pay him $975,000 per season. Now in his third year in the Western Hockey League, he's an alternate captain with the Everett Silvertips. Elite Prospects describes his game this way: "Bear leaves nothing to chance. No matter the size of the opponent, the score, or the situation, he enters every battle with speed and never concedes an inch. Bear's playoffs-every-night mentality also powers his offensive game. He powers through contact to get to the net, relentlessly battles in the slot for tips and rebounds, and dominates play from the hashmarks and in."

Photos courtesy Images on Ice/Hockey Hall of Fame

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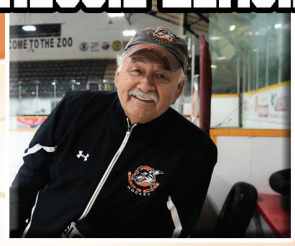

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SARA MANNESS

26

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'9"

BORN SEPT. 26, 2007 // LA SALLE, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: CLARKSON GOLDEN KNIGHTS (NCAA D-1)

2024-25 SEASON STATS

BURLINGTON BARRACUDAS (OWHL)

46
GAMES

51
GOALS

127
POINTS

Sara Manness already has three goals and 15 points in her first 11 games at Clarkson. She was the ECAC and National Rookie of the Month for October and was Player of the Week the week of Oct. 16. A member of Canada's U18 team, she is a highly skilled forward with elite offensive instincts and a complete 200-foot game. She is one of Canada's international stars of the future. After starring at Balmoral Hall, where she was JWHL Forward of the Year in 2023-24, she moved to the Burlington Jr. Barracudas of the Ontario Women's Hockey League and led all scorers with 127 points. Internationally, Manness has represented Canada at the 2024 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship and competed in the Canada Winter Games and Summer Series against the United States. She was named MVP of the 2023 National Women's U18 Championship and helped lead Team Manitoba with nine points in six games at the Canada Winter Games.



Photos by Justin Ber



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TYLER BERNIER

17

DEFENCE // SHOOTS LEFT // 6'0"

BORN JUNE 25, 2006 // WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS (MJHL)

2024-25 SEASON STATS

NORTHERN MANITOBA BLIZZARD (MJHL)

54
GAMES

3
GOALS

12
POINTS

Now in his third full season in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, Bernier was a star with the U18 AAA Winnipeg Bruins before joining the old OCN Blizzard full-time during the 2023-24 season. Last season he helped the Northern Manitoba Blizzard win the Turnbull Cup, emblematic of the MJHL title and played in the Centennial Cup tournament. During the 2025-26 pre-season the Niverville Nighthawks made a deal to acquire Bernier and now the former star with Team Manitoba is playing on the wing near his hometown. A citizen of the Red River Metis Winnipeg Region, Bernier represented Manitoba at the 2024 National Aboriginal Hockey Championship in Grand Prairie, Alta, and helped his home province win a bronze medal. "On the ice, Tyler plays an important and often understated role," said Hayden Yaremko, assistant coach of Team Manitoba. "During his two seasons with the Blizzard, he developed into a reliable, dependable checking-line player and was a key contributor in the team's run to a league championship."



Photos by Nick LaCoste

DID YOU KNOW?

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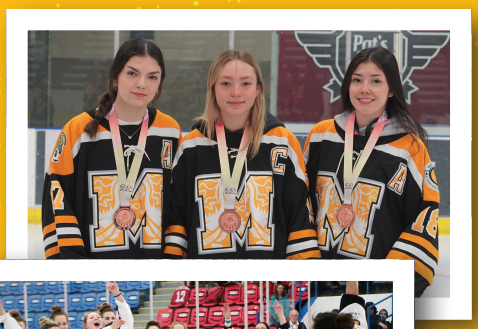
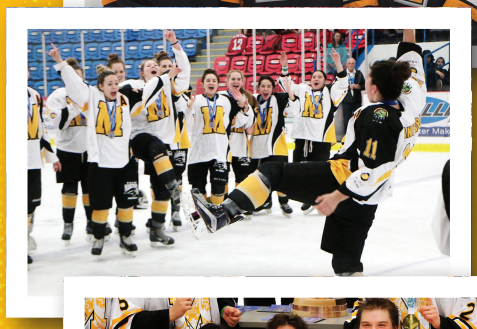
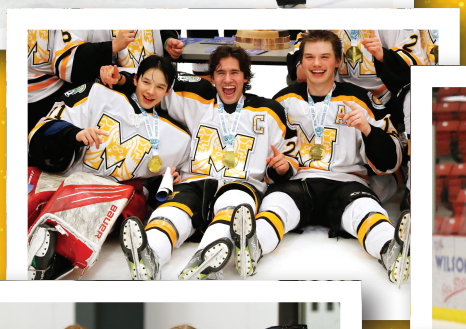




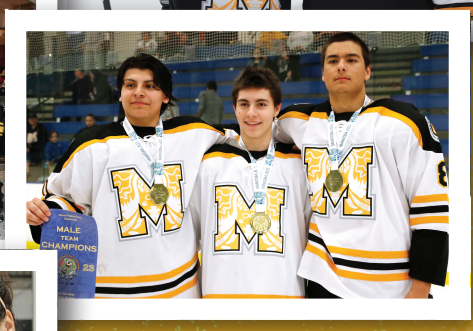
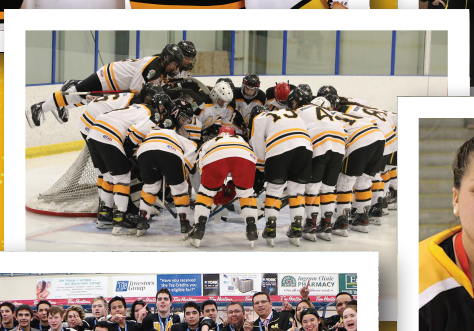




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JORDAN NISHI

6

DEFENDER // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'7"

BORN MAY 28, 2006 // WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: MERRIMACK WARRIORS (NCAA D-1)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

MERRIMACK WARRIORS (NCAA D-1)

14
GAMES

1
GOAL

3
POINTS

Jordan Nishi was an outstanding defender with the Balmoral Hall Blazers. At 5-foot-8 and with plenty of offensive and recovery speed, she turned her three seasons at BH into an NCAA D-1 scholarship at Merrimack College in North Andover, Mass. Last season, however, she was what's known as a "red-shirt freshman." She was a full-fledged member of the Merrimack Warriors, she practised with the team every day and played one pre-season game, but after that she didn't play a game. This year, however, thanks to a great deal of commitment and perseverance, Nishi has played in six of her team's first 10 games, has an assist and has generally played well for a D-1 sophomore. "I chose Merrimack just because of the coaches," said Nishi, a Business Finance Major. "I really thought they had a really good culture and it was just the right fit for me."



Photo by Tammy Stewner

20

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CARSON CARELS

4

DEFENCE // SHOOTS LEFT // 6'2"

BORN JUNE 23, 2008 // CYPRESS RIVER, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS (WHL) // U20 TEAM CANADA

2024-25 SEASON STATS

PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS (WHL)

60
GAMES

6
GOALS

35
POINTS

Carson Carels is living proof that if you play and study at Pilot Mound Hockey Academy, you can go right to the top of the hockey world. Last month, Carels was one of a handful of Western Hockey League players given a "A" rating (a first or second round selection) for the upcoming 2026 National Hockey League Entry Draft. One of the top defencemen in the WHL, Carels is big, strong and fast and played his Prep Hockey at PMHA. He was a member of Team Canada Red U17 (silver medal) and Team Canada U18 (gold medal) and will be an important part of Team Canada's defensive unit at the 2026 IIHF World U20 championships later this month. "Success is not the goal," said Carson's dad Ryan, the head coach of the female U18 team at PMHA, when asked why Carson is good. "It's the result of having the right values. I have five kids, so I've been through this. If your goal is for your kids to make it to the NHL and they don't make it, it becomes a disappointment. What makes Carson so good is that his goal is to be a good teammate, work hard, have fun and enjoy the journey no matter where it takes him."



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SCAN ME



NICK GIASSON

12

WINGER // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'11" // 200 POUNDS

BORN JULY 5, 2006 // WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

2025-26 TEAM: RIVER EAST ROYAL KNIGHTS (MMJHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

FORWARD

17
GAMES PLAYED

1
GOAL

9
POINTS

For first-year head coach Manny Minuk, it isn't always his top offensive producing star to earn his praise and trust. Exhibit A, 19-year-old Nick Giasson. No, the second-year Royal Knights forward is not leading the team in goals or points, but his contributions go much further than pucks behind goaltenders.

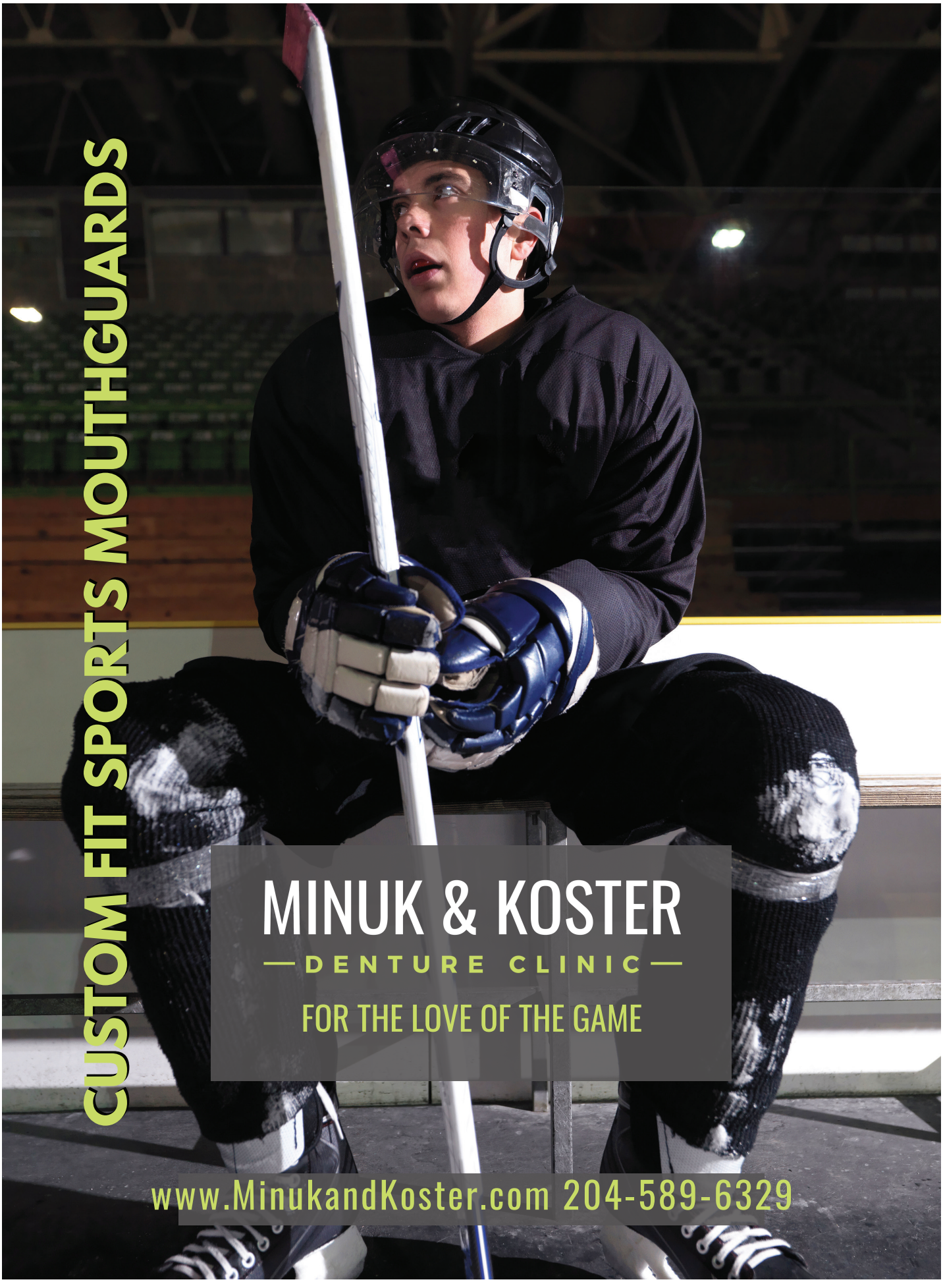
"Nick is a smart, disciplined, and reliable two-way forward, who can play in all situations," Minuk said of Giasson. "He's a hard-working player with a good attitude who chose to play with the Royal Knights after his 17-year-old season with the MJHL's Selkirk Steelers."

Having scored 10 goals and 28 points in 58 games in his first year with the Steelers, the special teams player brought his talents home to River East, where he has led by example both on and off the ice.

"Besides his ability and good skillset, he always comes to the rink ready to play and with a good attitude," Minuk explained. "He doesn't get down on his teammates or himself and is a good dressing room guy who gets to the rink early and sets a good example in his preparation for games and practices."



Photos by Dave Willson/Ice Wave Media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BREATHE EASY

Years ago, the notion that breath work - or breath control - could be used to enhance athletic performance may have seemed a little "woo woo", but today it's used regularly in the sporting world. From the Kanas City Chiefs, who use visualization and breathing exercises before the NFL playoffs, to Steph Curry, Aaron Rodgers, and even NHLers like James van Riemsdyk and Nick Bjugstad; athletes in nearly every sport are using breath to enhance performance and focus.[1]



"Breath work" refers to exercises that train you to control your breath. It improves lung capacity and oxygen delivery, while reducing "breathing fatigue"; the result is improved endurance and stamina, allowing you to perform better for a longer period of time.[2]

If the physical benefits aren't enough, the mental ones should tip the scale: Reduced anxiety, the ability to regulate emotions and an increased resiliency to stress, to name a few. Imagine a time you've felt fear or anxiety, notice what happens to the body. The heart rate quickens, breath shortens, you may get dizzy or have trouble focusing. We go into fight or flight mode. Now imagine that by simply training your breath, you could gain control over those responses and bring yourself back to center.

Taking this to the extreme, the San Francisco Giants, with the work of a breath specialist, will actually stand on boards of nails or in tubs of cold water, while using breath to maintain control. Obviously, I'm not recommending you go home and stand on a board of nails, but the point is clear, learn to control the breath and gain mastery over the rest of the body.



BREATH EXERCISES

There are so many to choose from, but the following are two of my favorites:

Box Breathing - this one is so effective they teach it to the Navy Seals. Close your eyes and visualize the four sides of a square. Pick a corner, inhale to a count of four, hold your breath to a count of four, exhale to four, hold the breath to four. As you breathe, picture the four lines of the square being drawn in time with your breath.

Diaphragmatic Breath ("Belly Breathing") - Close your eyes and picture your torso as a glass and your breath as water, on the inhale, "pour" breath in, filling your belly, then ribs, then chest, as you exhale "pour" the breath out, emptying from the chest, then the ribs, then the belly. As you breathe focus on the entire cylinder of your torso expanding, not just the front body, but sides and back as well. My preferred method of exhale is through a slightly constricted space at the back of the throat, it will feel textured in the throat like a whisper, or like a quiet Darth Vader breath.

Practice either of these methods for one minute or several, until you feel the body start to calm.

[1] Dodd, R. The Science is Clear: Deep breathing can be a game changer for anyone. Elite athletes agree. *The Athletic* 5 May 2025.
[2] Migliaccio, G. M., Russo, L., Maric, M., & Padulo, J. (2023). Sports Performance and Breathing Rate: What Is the Connection? A Narrative Review on Breathing Strategies. *Sports, 11*(5), 103.

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SHOULDER INJURIES

It's a weekly occurrence in the NHL and has already happened several times with the Winnipeg Jets. Most recently, Evgeni Malkin is out of the Pittsburgh Penguins' lineup and is day-to-day with an upper-body injury. The NHL is vague, for good reason, when disclosing specific player injuries to fans and media.

However, one thing is for sure, upper-body injuries are very common and return-to-play can be the next day, several weeks or even months. Upper-body injuries are prevalent at all ages and levels in ice hockey, both male and female. For the purposes of this column, we will dive deeper into one area of the body that makes up a large percentage of upper-body injuries, the shoulder.

The most common types of shoulder injuries in players aged 5-24 years of age from 2006-2023 are contusions (bruises), dislocation, fracture and strain or sprain. To delve into these injuries further, it's important to understand the anatomy of the shoulder joint and the difference between these types of injuries (Figure 1).

A contusion can occur in any region of the shoulder depending on the location and type of impact. Fortunately, shoulder pads are effective, in most cases, for minimizing the severity and extent of bruising in the shoulder area. The shoulder is the most commonly dislocated joint in the body and occurs when the humerus 'pops out' of the socket formed by the scapula. This injury occurs at the glenohumeral joint (i.e. true shoulder joint) and is more common in players aged 14-24 years of age compared to players 13 and under; most likely due to the introduction of body contact. In players under 13 years of age, fractures of the clavicle (i.e. collar bone) are more common than in older players. Strains or sprains of the shoulder joint occur most commonly at the acromioclavicular joint.

This injury is more commonly referred to as a shoulder separation. A shoulder separation occurs when the ligaments holding the clavicle to the scapula become strained or torn. This can leave a bump on the top of your shoulder and can range in severity from mild to severe. Mild injuries often heal in a week or two whereas more severe injuries can take weeks or months for full recovery. Players aged 19-24 years of age are most susceptible to shoulder dislocations and separations given the physicality of the game and speed, size and intensity of the players competing in University, College and Professional leagues.

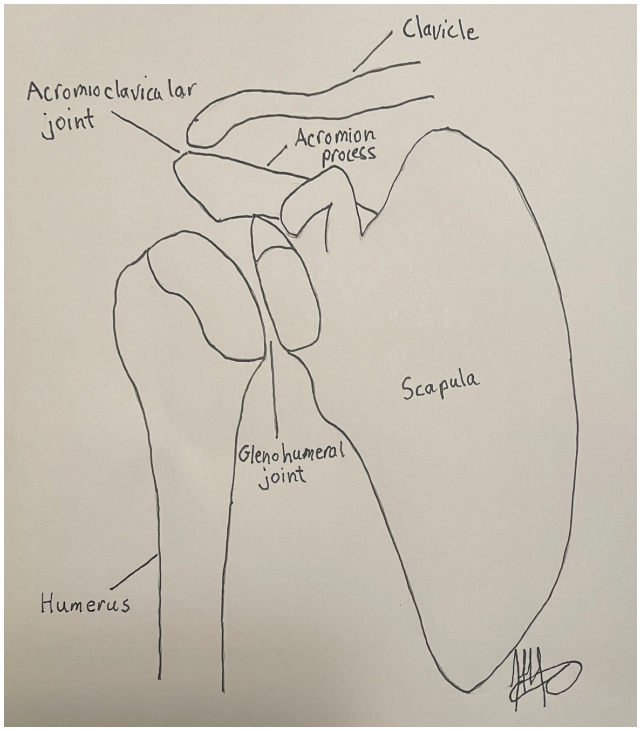

FIGURE 1. SHOULDER ANATOMY. ILLUSTRATION OF THE SHOULDER WHICH IS COMPOSED OF THE GLENOHUMERAL JOINT (I.E. TRUE SHOULDER JOINT), THE ACROMIOCLAVICULAR JOINT (AREA OF SHOULDER SEPARATIONS) AND THE CLAVICLE (I.E. COLLAR BONE).

The shoulder joint is one of the more complex and fascinating joints of the human body. It allows for a large range of motion and many of the sports we play wouldn't be possible without the large amounts of flexion/extension, internal/external rotation, and adduction/abduction that this joint allows.

However, large range of motions come at a cost. The shoulder joint provides very little bone stability and relies on muscles, tendons and ligaments to keep it stable which makes it susceptible to a high percentage of injuries in both contact and non-contact sports.

Keep your shoulders strong and flexible to reduce the risk of injury and keep yourself in the game.

[1] Dinh P. et al. Breaking the Ice: Patterns and Prevalence of Upper Extremity Injuries in Youth Ice Hockey Players Over a 20-Year Study Period. *Hand (New York, N.Y.), 2025, p.15589447251357040.*



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AS TOLD TO CARTER BROOKS

Photos courtesy of James Carey Lauder, Scott Stroh, Rusty Barton, MCI, the Winnipeg Jets and Dylan & Destiny Samberg

HUNTING, FISHING AND HOCKEY EVERY DAY

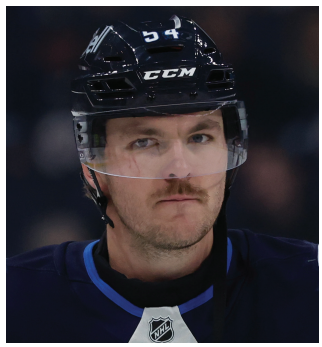
THE WINNIPEG JETS found a diamond in the rough with defenceman Dylan Samberg. An already star-studded team featuring the likes of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi has its Top 3 forwards locked in through the 2030-31 season. The Jets' all-world goaltender Connor Hellebuyck? You know it. He's also signed on for another five seasons. Neal Pionk and Adam Lowry also see their contracts expiring in 2031. Josh Morrissey? Well, he'll be due to sign a big-money extension in a couple of seasons.

But for Samberg, while others opted to agree to lengthy contracts, the up-and-coming shutdown defenceman chose to bet on himself, signing a three-year pact through the 2027-28 season this summer. Now living just 6.5 hours north of his hometown of Hermantown, Minnesota, Samberg has set up shop in a place where he has found everything he needs.

Recently married to his longtime girlfriend, Destiny, Dylan has watched as his life partner has become Dr. Samberg – graduating from dentistry school and taking his last name in marriage. With a baby on the way in early 2026, the already busy Samberg household will grow by another member. And this one will somehow even get more love than the four dogs and cats already comfortably vegging.

Between his time spent hunting, fishing and playing hockey, the soon-to-be 27-year-old is already seeing a change in responsibilities – both at home and on the ice for the Jets. A broken wrist suffered in pre-season action kept Samberg from making his 2025-26 debut until November 13, and his loss was felt greatly throughout the lineup. With his team off to a slower start than expected, his defensive prowess will need to shine through for a team looking to reclaim its spot in the Stanley Cup Playoffs come springtime.

Samberg sat down with *Game On* editor-in-chief Carter Brooks and chatted all about his love for the outdoors, his family, contract negotiations and Winnipeg winters for the Holiday Issue.



DYLAN SAMBERG

HEIGHT / 6'4"

WEIGHT / 217 POUNDS

AGE / 26 YEARS OLD

BORN / JANUARY 24, 1999

FROM / HERMANTOWN, MINNESOTA

POSITION / DEFENCE

SHOOTS / LEFT

DRAFTED / 2ND ROUND, 43RD OVERALL, 2017 NHL DRAFT

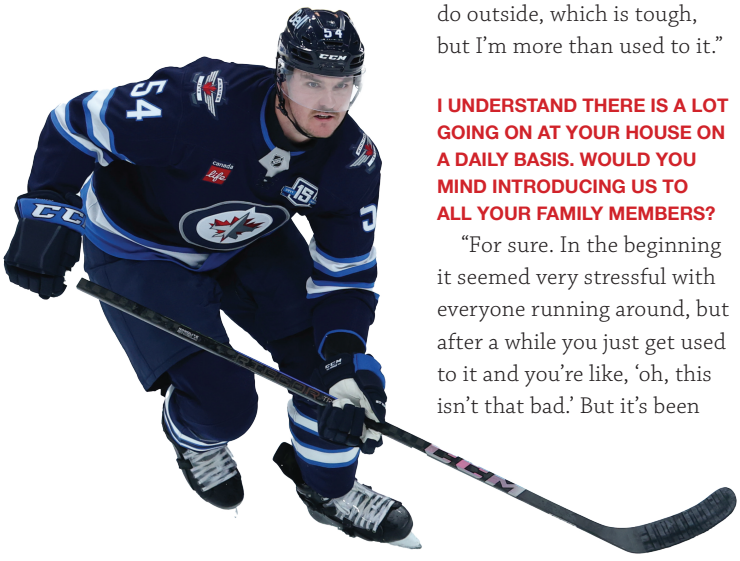


YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PIONK FAMILY STARTED MANY YEARS AGO IN HERMANTOWN. YOU ARE NOW A MAINSTAY ON THE SECOND DEFENCE PAIR WITH NEAL. HOW WILD IS THAT?

"Obviously that story is pretty cool. I knew who Neal was when I was growing up, but he was always older. He was actually four years older than me, so I grew up with a lot of his younger brothers. And then obviously he went on to UMD. I watched him a lot at UMD, and I eventually went there, and now we're playing on the same team here in Winnipeg. So, it's pretty special. They got a great family – all boys. It's a crazy, hectic family. But no, he's been good. He has been instrumental to my success and my growth. I'm really happy to have him as a partner."

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO TRAVEL TOO FAR FROM HOME TO MAKE IT TO WINNIPEG. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT THE CITY AND PEOPLE OF WINNIPEG?

"Well, for one, they really love their sports, which is awesome. Obviously, as you've seen in the playoffs, it feels like you're back home in that small town community vibe. Winnipeg is a decently big city, but it still feels like it's a small town. And it reminds me a lot of home. You got your winter that's really cold with your snow and all. But you're able to ice fish and hunt. It's a perfect spot for me, ice fishing, hunting, and hockey. That sounds about right!"



WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO GO HUNTING OR FISHING? ANY SECRET SPOTS? DO YOU HAVE A SHACK OR TREE STAND SET UP?

"Well, hunting is now over for me. I got a good deer this year, so I'm done with that. But I can't tell you where that is. It's south, but that's all I'm going to tell you. Right now it's kind of that awkward time of the year where hunting season's finishing up, and we're just sitting around waiting for the ice to freeze over on Lake Winnipeg. We usually get a good crew like myself, Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor, Alex Iafallo will go out, sometimes Pionk and maybe a couple other guys sprinkled out throughout the winter. But yeah, that's usually what we do on the off days in the winter. Inside, as Gabriel Vilardi will tell you, Rec Room is a fun spot. He's a big gamer. But other than that, in the winter, there's not much else you can do outside, which is tough, but I'm more than used to it."

I UNDERSTAND THERE IS A LOT GOING ON AT YOUR HOUSE ON A DAILY BASIS. WOULD YOU MIND INTRODUCING US TO ALL YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS?

"For sure. In the beginning it seemed very stressful with everyone running around, but after a while you just get used to it and you're like, 'oh, this isn't that bad.' But it's been great... it's hectic though. We have two cats, Mittens and Charles, and then two goldens, Murphy and Bennie. It can be hectic. There's a lot of food in the house. We constantly have to keep buying more food. But no, the cats... they're pretty easy, they keep to themselves. You've just got to make sure you feed them in the morning and in the evening. They'll let you know when they're hungry. They start yelling at you."



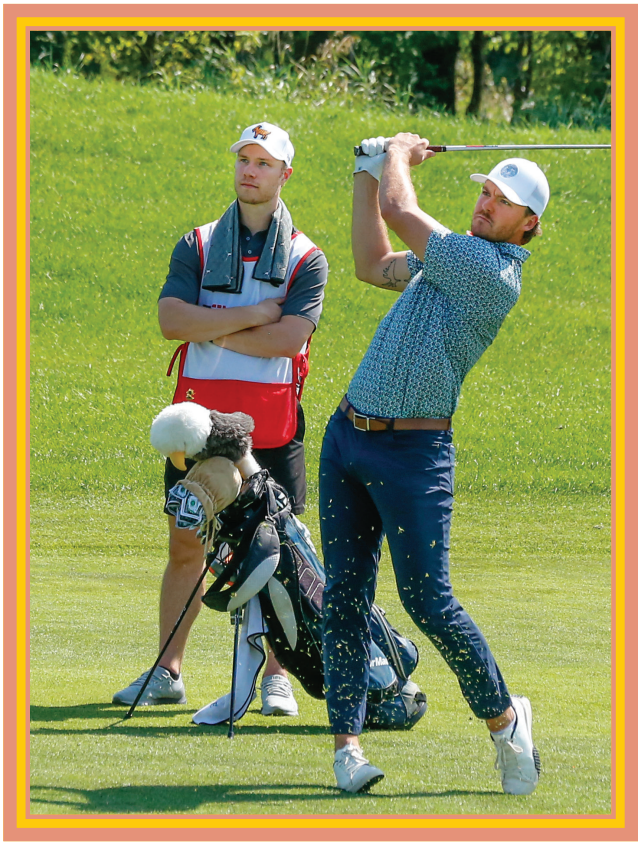
LIFE IS BETTER ON THE LAKE



THE SAMBERG FAMILY: DESTINY, DYLAN, MURPHY, BENNIE, MITTENS & CHARLES.



THE NEWLYWEDS: DYLAN AND DESTINY



DYLAN TRYING HIS HAND AT GOLF AT THE MANITOBA OPEN.

YOU RECENTLY GOT MARRIED. HOW WAS THE WEDDING? HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU IN THAT PROCESS?

"Honestly, not a whole lot has changed. Not much, really. But yeah, it was a good day. I'm thankful that we decided to do it inside. It was at the end of July and I think it was like 98 degrees outside. Thank God we did it inside, but no, it was good. It was special and a couple guys on the team were in the wedding. So that was obviously very special for me. But yeah, now we're moving on to bigger things. We have a baby on the way. Destiny is expecting in mid-February. She goes back home sometimes on the weekends, so now I'm taking care of the four animals myself a lot more."

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A YOUNG HOCKEY PLAYER WHO WANTS TO BE AS GOOD A SHUTDOWN DEFENCEMAN AS DYLAN SAMBERG?

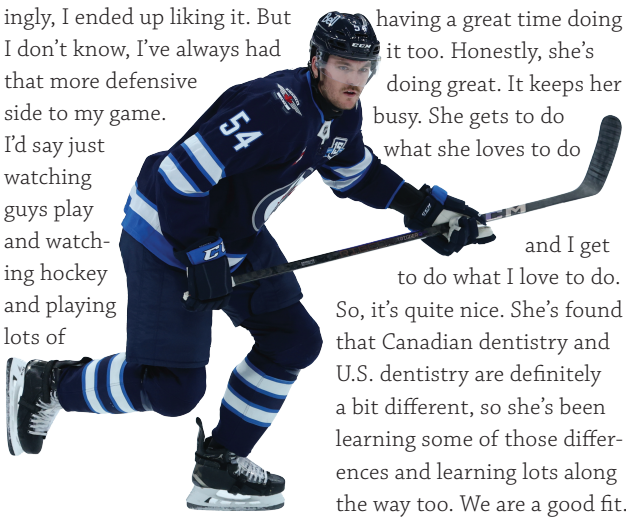
"Honestly, I didn't start playing defence until I was like 13 or 14 years old. I was always a forward then. I think it was like bantam and it sounded like I probably wasn't going to make it as a forward my first year of bantam. There just so happened to be some space on D, so I was like, oh, I'll give it a try. Then, surprisingly, I ended up liking it. But I don't know, I've always had that more defensive side to my game. I'd say just watching guys play and watching hockey and playing lots of hockey helps a lot. I played so many games on the outdoor rinks, which I found really helped. But what I would say is not to only focus on being defensive at a young age. That stuff will come with time. You will learn those abilities."

WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF NEARLY FACING ARBITRATION LIKE THIS PAST SUMMER?

"I'd say, honestly, for me, I'm pretty even keel. It was more of an experience of just getting to know how this entire process works. There's a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes that not a lot of people know about. But no, you obviously never want to go to Toronto. You want to get a deal done right away, but sometimes it works out that way. But it was still very cool to see the process and see how things operate there."

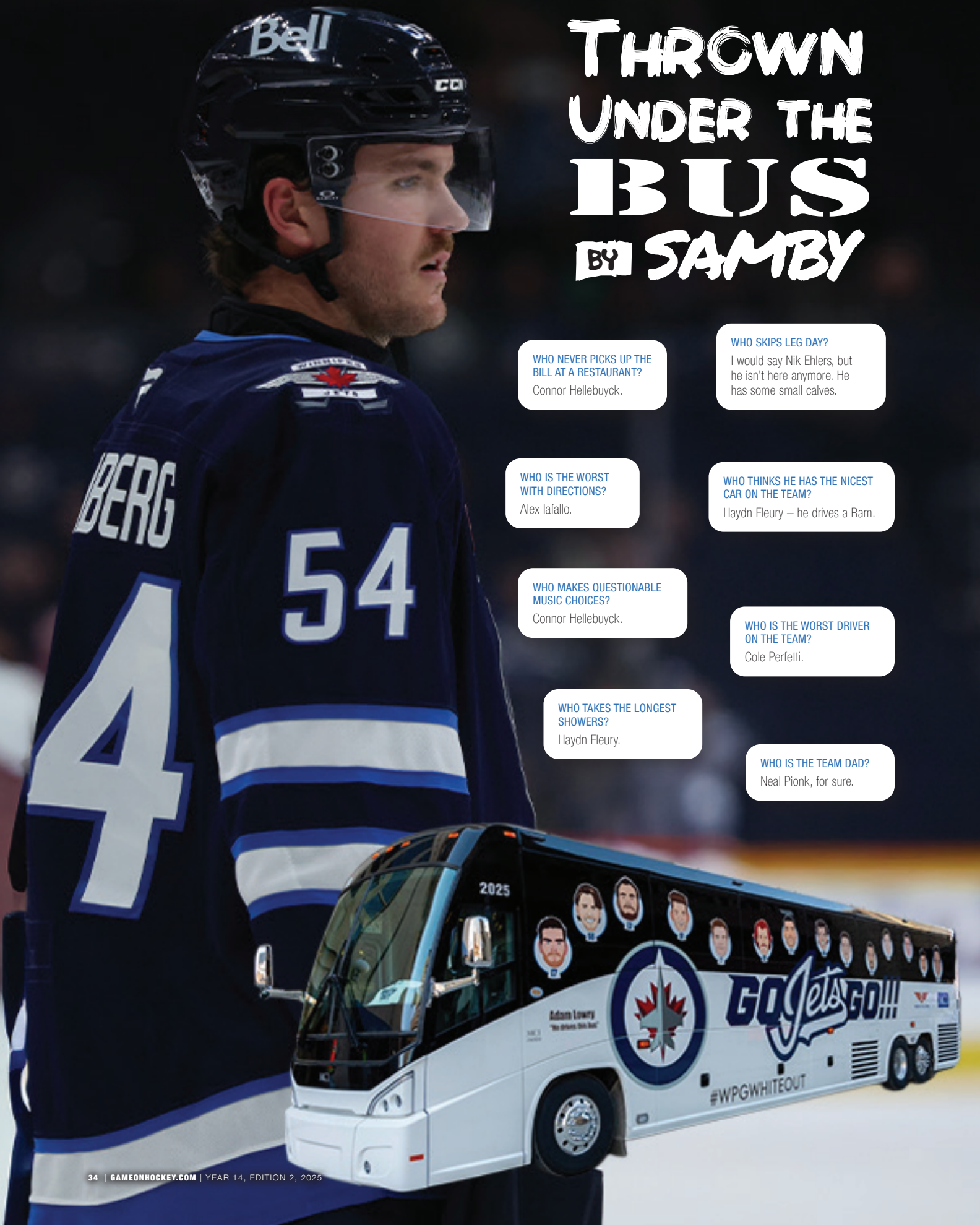
YOUR WIFE, DESTINY, IS A DENTIST. SO, I HAVE TO ASK, WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING THE SECOND SMARTEST, SECOND MOST EDUCATED AND SECOND HARDEST WORKING ONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD?

"Oh, I know. I know. She'll be the first one to tell you that, too. But yeah, she's definitely way smarter than I am. And she loves that. She's doing what she loves and is having a great time doing it too. Honestly, she's doing great. It keeps her busy. She gets to do what she loves to do and I get to do what I love to do. So, it's quite nice. She's found that Canadian dentistry and U.S. dentistry are definitely a bit different, so she's been learning some of those differences and learning lots along the way too. We are a good fit."



Thrown Under the Bus

BY SAMBY



WHO NEVER PICKS UP THE BILL AT A RESTAURANT?
Connor Hellebuyck.

WHO SKIPS LEG DAY?
I would say Nik Ehlers, but he isn't here anymore. He has some small calves.

WHO IS THE WORST WITH DIRECTIONS?
Alex Iafallo.

WHO THINKS HE HAS THE NICEST CAR ON THE TEAM?
Haydn Fleury – he drives a Ram.

WHO MAKES QUESTIONABLE MUSIC CHOICES?
Connor Hellebuyck.

WHO IS THE WORST DRIVER ON THE TEAM?
Cole Perfetti.

WHO TAKES THE LONGEST SHOWERS?
Haydn Fleury.

WHO IS THE TEAM DAD?
Neal Pionk, for sure.

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FIL-NATION COMING TO WINNIPEG

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by James Carey Lauder, Carlos Lopez, Jonathan Kozub, Scott Taylor and Jonathan de Castro

FROM JUNE 26-28, 2026, FIL-NATION WILL PARTNER WITH HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE TO PRESENT AN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SHOWCASE OF FILIPINO HOCKEY RIGHT HERE IN WINNIPEG.

Davide Sattler, the general manager of the hockey for all centre wouldn't mind if the international hub for Filipino hockey in 2026 was right here in Winnipeg.

As Sattler continues to grow the game within Winnipeg's Filipino community, thanks to the hard work of First Shift Ambassador Ron Cantiveros, a new partnership is beginning to take shape.

And while Sattler and Cantiveros strive to get more youngsters into hockey at the grassroots level, this new partnership with a sporting group known as Fil-Nation, might just help the Philippines bolster its national team program while creating more Filipino players right here in Winnipeg.

It will be a Summer Showcase of Filipino hockey.

"We're working with Fil-Nation and they're bringing the top players of Filipino descent from across North America to Winnipeg from June 26-28," Sattler explained. "This is an effort that started in the Philippines with their basketball team in the 2010s to improve their sporting landscape. At the time, they started to recruit North American-born or descendant Filipino players to help support their sports programs and to build Filipino pride. It was so successful with basketball that they decided to do it with hockey, too.

"So, in terms of hockey, they've got great players from all across Canada and the United States and they're using this to bring them together at the U16, U18 and adult level, to learn about what it could take to play for the Philippines at an IIHF event.

"So essentially, we're trying to make Winnipeg the home of Filipino hockey in North America."

Fil-Nation is run by 38-year-old Filipino-American hockey coach Jonathan de Castro. A former goaltender, de Castro is now the head coach at Columbia University in New York and the goaltending coach for the Long Island Gulls elite U18 program. He was also the head coach of the Philippine National Team in 2017-18.



FILIPINO GOALTENDING COACH JONATHAN DE CASTRO AND THE MAN BEHIND FIL-NATION



IN JUNE OF 2025, HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE HOSTED TO THE FILIPINO HOCKEY JAMBOREE



COACH RON CANTIVEROS WITH HIS FIRST SHIFT STUDENTS



HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE GENERAL MANAGER DAVID SATTLER



WINNIPEG EMPERORS TEAM MEMBER AND FIRST SHIFT AMBASSADOR ALLAN CHAN GETTING EQUIPMENT TABLES READY AT FIRST SHIFT



FIRST SHIFT AT FILIPINO HERITAGE NIGHT JAN. 13, 2024



FIRST SHIFT AT FILIPINO HERITAGE NIGHT JAN. 13, 2024

"After I was let go, I coached around Europe for a little bit and then came back to North America," de Castro explained. "I always had this idea of trying to finish what I started, in a way – finding the best Filipino players around the world and putting them together as a national team. We tried it in 2022 in Las Vegas, and it didn't go the way that I had planned.

"We didn't have support of the local market. We didn't have support of the local population, the local youth programs, or even the NHL team in Vegas, the Golden Knights. So, I shelved the idea for three years, and then finally someone came up to me and said, 'You know, you should try to do it in Canada.'

"I thought, OK, well, Toronto is crazy expensive, Vancouver is pretty far west. Where's a good spot to do it? And then Allan Chan, member of the Winnipeg Emperors and First Shift Ambassador, said, 'Just do it in Winnipeg."

SOME SKEPTICISM

At first, de Castro was skeptical.

"I said to Allan, 'Are you sure?' de Castro said with a laugh. "And Allan said, 'Yeah, trust me.' And then he kind of broke down the demographics of Manitoba and the demographics of Winnipeg, and I was like, you've got to be kidding me? And I did some research on the Jets and First Shift and hockey for all centre, and I thought, 'You know what? This is a no-brainer.'"

For de Castro, there was no better place in North America to hold his camp. From cost of operation to location in the centre of the continent to local demographics, Winnipeg was perfect.

"We looked at everything," de Castro said. "From an expense standpoint, it was perfect. It's central and it's easy for everyone to get here. It's not far from Minneapolis so U.S. players can get there and I just said, let's give it a shot. Alan brought it up to Dave (Sattler) and Dean (Court) over with True North, and they jumped all over the idea. So basically, we're going to create the first-ever showcase of its kind for Filipino hockey.

As Sattler pointed out, the showcase will have a number of components.

"I like to call it a quadruple-headed monster," said de Castro. "The first head of the monster is bringing the community together. Playing hockey as a kid in New York, I had four or five other teammates that were of Philippine descent. We used to think, 'Wouldn't it be awesome if we played for the Philippines one day?' I remember the day I got the job as coach, I told my friends, 'This is crazy, but it's real. This is the stuff that we talked about when we were kids, and now, we have the opportunity to do.' So, the first part is to bring the Filipino community together and there will be a competitive aspect to it."

For de Castro, the LATAM Cup in South Florida and the Dream Nations Cup in New Jersey are two competitive events he would like to emulate.

"These are tournaments that are recognized and sponsored by the NHL," de Castro explained. "They bring together teams from Israel, Lebanon, Greece, Latin America and the Caribbean. So, some people in our community came to me and asked if I could put something together like that for the Philippines? I always knew I could do it, I just never had the platform to find the talent. Now I have the second head of the monster.

"I knew where all the players were, and when I got the platform, I knew I could basically pull out the Bat Signal and get all the guys to be ready to go play in a tournament. We're using this event in Winnipeg as a flagship event, maybe not as a formal tryout per se, but just to see where the talent is.

"Then, we'll put together a roster based off the tournament. We'll need roster guidelines and then find out who's eligible to play in these tournaments. Can we use American League guys, NCAA Division I guys, things like that. There are other showcases across Asia that have asked us to ice teams, as well. We're going to use this Winnipeg event again as a beacon to get Filipino-heritage players on the ice with players who are actually from the Philippines."

COMING TO WINNIPEG

The third head of his monster is to bring the Filipino national team to Canada to train as a unit.

"I can't guarantee that the whole team would be able to come to Canada," de Castro admitted, "but a number of the top players on the Filipino mens and womens programs have committed to coming to Winnipeg next June. The captain of the team said he was coming and E.J. Seabrook, who is an alternate captain, said he was coming. Manny Deleon said he was coming. These are guys who have ties to Georgia and New Jersey,



FORMER TEAM PHILIPPINES GOALIE HANNA PAGDATO OF WINNIPEG



TEAM PHILIPPINES FORWARD LARISSA PAGDATO OF WINNIPEG

respectively, that are looking to help boost the profile of the event, not only in the U.S. and Canada, but also in Europe and back home in Manila.

"Then the last head of my quadruple-headed monster is just to show out for the community, to bring the Filipino community of Winnipeg together in a forum to watch some of the best athletes play the sport that they love too. And we want to pay attention to the culture. We also want to do a banquet where we have cultural food, cultural dances, music, the things that should be showcased after the event is over on that Saturday or Sunday night before we all leave on Monday.

"We are looking to make this a flagship event for hockey, not only with the city of Winnipeg, but also within the province as well. I had no idea that there were that many members of our community in cities outside of Toronto and Vancouver. I've been to Winnipeg twice since we started doing this, and the presence our community has in the city is bewildering."

Not surprisingly, de Castro has grown an attachment to Winnipeg.

"It's really fascinating," he said. "I feel this attachment and because of that, I want to make sure that the community can come see this too. You're going to have members of the Philippine national team, the coaching staff, the administrative staff, and then some guys from our team, all in Winnipeg together. I have about five or six NCAA Division I hockey players committed to this. We've asked a ton more, but we have five guys who have already said, 'Yeah, we're coming.'

"It's just so crazy to see the dynamic and the love for the sport, but also, how strong the community is. I haven't been to a Filipino Heritage Night game for the Jets yet, but I'm definitely going to next season."



FORMER TEAM PHILIPPINES FORWARD JORDY WYANT OF WINNIPEG

PAGDATO ON THE TEAM

It's interesting to note that Winnipeg's Larissa Pagdato is currently playing for Team Philippines at a Four Nations tournament in Thailand.

Her commitment to the team started in 2020, when three Winnipeg women, including Larissa, played for Team Philippines at an IIHF qualifying tournament in Asia.

At the time, the organizers for Team Philippines were interested in Larissa, a forward with the Northern Stars in the Manitoba Women's Junior Hockey League. They invited her to play in the Women's Union tournament in Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"She told them she also has a sister who plays goal for Mount Allison University in New Brunswick," said her dad, Larry. "They said it was a perfect fit, as they needed another goalie for their tournament. So, my two girls and one of their friends, Jordy Wyant, headed overseas to join Team Philippines."

Hanna, then 20, and Larissa, 23, – who were both born in Winnipeg – travelled with their father to Dubai for the tournament. The Fort Garry products were joined on Team Philippines by Hanna's former RINK Hockey Academy teammate Jordy Wyant, who was playing for Saint Mary's University in Minnesota at the time. A number of awards were collected by the three Manitobans -- each player took home a Player of the Game trophy, Wyant was the highest scoring player in the tournament, while all three were selected to play in the all-star game following the closing ceremonies.

So, obviously Manitoba has already had a presence on Team Philippines.

"This event will be all about connection," said Sattler. "Because we've been doing such great work with Ron (Cantiveros) and the Filipino community here, we're also going to have a grassroots side of things, where we're going to focus on U7, U9, U11 and U13.

"And when you consider that June is Filipino Heritage Month, all the pieces for what we hope will be a successful event are falling into place."



U18 AAA WINNIPEG THRASHERS 15-YEAR-OLD DEFENCEMAN JACE GUEVARRA



IN LOVE WITH THE GAME

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by James Carey Lauder

JACE GUEVARRA'S DAD, DENNIS, WAS NOT A HOCKEY PLAYER, BUT HE ENJOYED THE GAME AND MADE SURE HIS SONS HAD A RINK IN THE BACKYARD. FROM THAT TINY ODR TO THE FREE SKATES AT THE ST. ANDREWS CC ARENA, JACE IS NOW A 15-YEAR-OLD DEFENCEMAN WITH THE U18 AAA WINNIPEG THRASHERS WITH A VERY BRIGHT FUTURE.

Dennis Guevarra was born in Winnipeg to parents who arrived here from the Philippines in 1970.

He wasn't brought up to be a hockey player, but he enjoyed the game.

"I was the first generation of our family born in Winnipeg," he explained. "When I was in grade school, maybe Grade 4 or 5, I realized that a lot of my friends played hockey. I didn't know it until then. And, you know, they were obviously big into it. So, I went out and watched a game and thought it was a really cool sport.

"Then my dad got into watching the Winnipeg Jets on TV and we started watching hockey together. But I never played."

It's incredible to think that even though Dennis himself never played the game, he has raised two boys who are both outstanding players.

His oldest, Rohan, was the leading scorer in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League and had committed to play NCAA D-1 hockey in 2026-27 at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, when he decided to move to the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Blackfalds Bulldogs, the top team in the BCHL's Interior East Division.

His youngest son, Jace, is a 15-year-old defenceman with the U18 AAA's Winnipeg Thrashers who has three goals and 19 points in his first 20 games at U18. The Thrashers are 18-1-1-1 and in second place behind the powerhouse Winnipeg Wild in the Manitoba U18 AAA League.



WHERE IT ALL STARTED: ST. ANDREWS COMMUNITY CENTRE ARENA

"Rohan was probably four years old when I started building that rink in the backyard and got him on skates," Dennis recalled. "And then when he was six, all of his friends were playing hockey, and he asked when he was going to start playing hockey. That's when we said, OK, I guess we're putting him in hockey.

"Getting him started was a confusing process. You've got to register him here or register there and then find out what rink he's part of so you can register him in the right place. The process is very confusing for anyone who hasn't done it before."

It's one of the things hockey for all centre general manager David Sattler and his First Shift Ambassadors Allan Chan, Ganni Maan and Ron Cantiveros want to streamline and make easier for people new to the sport – especially for new Canadians.



However, as Dennis admits, it was easier for Jace than his older brother.

"They both started at St. Andrews Community Centre," Dennis explained. "Jace was like a lot of kids in Manitoba. His older brother was playing and he wanted to play, too.

"They would have the free skates at St. Andrews Arena and Rohan would always want to go and so I would take Jace along. He was probably two years old at the time, but we got him into hand-me-down skates.

"After I carried him around for a few times, he picked it up pretty quickly. He was a good skater when he was quite young, and we got him



into Timbits hockey when he was five. By then, he could skate circles around all the other kids and he already had stick-handling abilities. He could actually shoot the puck. He was way ahead of everybody else. He's always had the skills."

By his own admission, it didn't take long for Jace to fall in love with the game.

"I've been playing ever since I was really young and I just fell in love with it at an early age," said Jace, who had 12 goals and 18 points in 30 games with the Thrashers U15 AAA team last season.

"I started at St. Andrews Community Centre, just playing Timbits and then moved up to A1 and was always a pretty successful player. I was always a bit more athletic than many of my teammates. I used to play basketball in school, but now I just focus on hockey.



"After minor hockey in St. Andrews, I played for the AA Rebels for Lord Selkirk/Seven Oaks. Then I moved up to U15 AAA Thrashers."

Jace was 13 when he started playing with the U15 AAA Thrashers. Now with U18 team, he doesn't even turn 16 until April 21, 2026.

For his coach, Reece Cretton, Jace is one of those rare players who can even make a U18 AAA team at 15.

"Obviously it's not easy for a 15-year-old or for the youngest age, the minor age, to be able to play in the U18 league," Cretton explained. "Every team has a few exceptions that are talented enough or skilled enough or what have you, to be able to crack a lineup. When you look at our team, Jace is one of three players at his age that were able to secure a spot on our team. So yeah, no doubt he's got the talent to get himself there for sure. He's a highly skilled hockey player. His skating is elite.

"His quickness, his reaction time, those jump off the charts at you. His first step, his first read is exceptional. So, you notice those things instantly and they catch your eye and you're drawn to it and then you get to watch the rest of his game develop from there."

With all this speed and skill, it's no wonder he has big hockey dreams

"My plan is to play college hockey in the States," he said. "But really, all I ever wanted to do was play hockey at the highest possible level I could. It's great that we can now play in the Western Hockey League and still play NCAA D-1 hockey, so my immediate goal is to hopefully play next year in the MJHL and then move to the BCHL or the WHL before going to college."

He's represented by family advisor Cliff Mander at CKM Sports Management in Vancouver.

A little undersized at 5-foot-10, 165 pounds, he still hasn't hit a major growth spurt yet. He should get bigger. In the meantime, he makes full use of his skating ability, quickness and superb stick-handling skills to make up for any perceived lack of size.

"I play left defence and I'm a little undersized, but I can usually make up for it with my skating," he said. "Kind of like a Josh Morrissey-type."

When he's not playing hockey, he likes to stay active, play sports with his friends and work out at the gym. He's also an excellent student with an average above 85 percent.

"Whenever I'm not playing hockey, I can usually be found working out," he said. "Or studying."

Coach Cretton believes he has a bright future.

"You never know how players develop," Cretton cautioned. "But does he have the trajectory, the skill set to continue to pursue hockey? Absolutely. Are there things to work on in his game – just like every other player? For sure. But his raw talent and capabilities make him a special player, and his future will depend on where he wants to take it and how he wants to pursue it. It's up to him."



CONNECTION

BY CHRISTINA KLYSH
Photos by Jonathan Kozub and Darcy Finley

WINNIPEG JETS' UKRAINIAN HERITAGE NIGHT HELPS NEWCOMERS CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY



The highly anticipated Winnipeg Jets' Ukrainian Heritage Night is returning Jan. 6 after its successful launch last season.

"Manitobans easily celebrate their Ukrainianism," said Yury Kruk, one of the ambassadors for the Jets' Ukrainian Heritage Night and coordinator of Folklorama's Ukrainian Kyiv pavilion. Last season's game highlighted Ukrainian food, music and dance and celebrated the community and its contributions. A highlight for Kruk was the Jets' Ukrainian Heritage logo that incorporated Ukrainian embroidery, the Ukrainian Coat of Arms and the colours of the Ukrainian flag, which was designed by Ukrainian newcomer Andrii Sobchuk.

"Everybody that's Ukrainian is super proud to be wearing that," said Kruk. "Many Ukrainians who are second, third generation have forgotten how to speak Ukrainian, but they'll still celebrate a lot of the traditions and cultures. Anytime they can celebrate being Ukrainian, they're all over it."

Manitoba has one of the largest Ukrainian populations in Canada with Ukrainian hockey fans going back generations to Jets 1.0 days.

"Hockey's always been ingrained in the Ukrainian community here," said











Kruk. "All of us who grew up here and our parents and grandparents have stories of playing hockey on the street or a frozen pond."

Manitoba's Ukrainian community has grown significantly in the last few years due to the war in Ukraine. The Jets' Ukrainian Heritage Night was a way to welcome Ukrainian newcomers and celebrate the culture, while also helping to close the gap between new and multigenerational Ukrainians in Manitoba.

"It definitely had a very positive impact by helping to build a bridge between the newcomers and those of us that have been here for a while," said Kruk.

The game was also an opportunity to introduce Ukrainian newcomers to Canadian culture, with many attendees experiencing a professional hockey game for the first time. The support of friends and sponsors allowed many newcomers to attend who otherwise would not have had the opportunity – especially those just settling into their new Canadian life, providing welcome connection during a stressful transition.

"They were probably a bit familiar with the idea that hockey existed, because hockey exists in Ukraine and under the old Soviet Union, but most of them have probably not played or been involved in it," said Kruk. "It was interesting to see how they adapted to and enjoyed the game, considering the language barrier for some, but they quickly caught on to what the game experience is like."

WINNIPEG JETS UKRAINIAN HERITAGE NIGHT RETURNS JAN. 6

An outcome he hopes will come from Ukrainian Heritage Night is getting more Ukrainian newcomer youth and their families involved in hockey, whether it be through programs like the NHL and NHLPA's First Shift program, which makes hockey affordable, accessible and fun for families new to the sport, or a neighbourhood street game.

"As they acclimate to living in Manitoba, it gives them something to do and look forward to in the winter and helps them connect with others in their community," said Kruk.

The first Ukrainian Heritage Night has already made a lasting impact. Funds raised from the game's Ukrainian Heritage jersey auction will support grassroots and cultural initiatives in the Ukrainian community. Attendees at this summer's Ukrainian Kyiv pavilion were already asking Kruk for the date of this season's Ukrainian Heritage Night, and he still sees Ukrainian newcomers wearing their toques with the Ukrainian Heritage Jets logo that they were gifted at the game.

"I remember seeing half those toques being worn by Ukrainians in July," laughed Kruk. "They understand that a logo often doesn't change, and for it to be Ukrainianized, that was a huge and proud moment for them."

Fans can look forward to Ukrainian food, music and performances at this season's Ukrainian Heritage Night game on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. when the Jets face off against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Tickets are available at winnipegjets.com/tickets.

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LEAN INTO IT

In my work across high-performance sport, mental health and physical training, I've witnessed one truth repeat itself over and over: stress is not the enemy. In fact, when approached intentionally, stress can be one of our greatest teachers. It's not something to avoid, run from or fear. It's something to embrace, because it is often the very thing that shapes us into stronger, more resilient versions of ourselves.

We live in a world that frequently labels stress as harmful or dangerous, something to be eliminated at all costs. And yes, overwhelming, chronic, unmanaged stress can absolutely be damaging. But that is only one side of the story. Just as muscles grow stronger by being challenged, so do our minds. The tension, discomfort, and pressure we feel in demanding moments are signals that we are engaging in situations that have the potential to transform us.

The key is not to eliminate stress, but to build the skills to handle it. In physical training, this concept is straightforward. If you want to get stronger and better conditioned, you apply stress to muscles and energy systems. You lift heavy weights or work at high enough intensity to be challenged, to push your threshold. Then, with recovery and consistency, that muscle or energy system adapts. It becomes more capable, more resilient. No one expects strength or conditioning to develop through rest alone.

Building mental and emotional resilience in psychology works the same way. When we encounter mental and emotional challenges like anxiety, conflict, doubt, fear or performance pressure we engage the mental and emotional systems responsible for coping, regulating and problem-solving. Avoiding these experiences may feel comfortable in the moment, but long term, avoidance shrinks our world and undermines our confidence, whereas leaning into challenges activates our capacity to adapt.

Stress forces us to discover skills we didn't know we needed. It pushes us to organize our thoughts under pressure, to breathe through discomfort and to stay present when our instincts tell us to retreat. It sharpens our decision-making and strengthens our emotional regulation and tolerance. These are not traits we are born with; these are traits built through repetition, just like physical strength.

But leaning into stress does not mean embracing chaos. It requires intentionality. It means developing tools that help us engage with stress safely: breathing, grounding, self-talk, visualization techniques, self-awareness, emotional literacy, support systems and the ability to break challenges into small, manageable steps. With these skills, stress stops being a threat and becomes a stimulus for growth.

Think about the moments in your life that shaped you the most. They were likely not the easy ones. They were the moments that stretched you, frightened you or demanded something new from you. They were the challenges that forced you to rise.

We grow where we are challenged.

If you never push your limits, you'll never discover your potential. If you never face discomfort, you'll never learn how strong you truly are. Stress is not the problem, our relationship with it is. When we learn to lean in, rather than pull back, stress becomes a tool, not a threat.

My invitation to you is to not run from the hard things. Step toward them. Build the skills. Trust the process. Embrace the stress that's calling you to grow.

Remember, on the other side of that challenge is improved resilience and a more confident version of yourself.

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REC HOCKEY IN A FUN STRESS-FREE ENVIRONMENT AT HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE



JHD

BY CHRISTINA KLYSH
Photos by Jonathan Kozub

PUTTING THE FUN IN FUNDAMENTALS

NEW HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE SPRING PROGRAMMING HELPS PLAYERS DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS IN A FUN, STRESS-FREE ENVIRONMENT



After successfully launching this fall, hockey for all centre is extending their Winnipeg Jets Rec Hockey program to spring 2026.

"This program is great for families that want their kids to have the chance to play games and be on the ice as much as possible without the additional practices and travel costs that are usually associated with spring hockey," said David Sattler, manager of hockey for all centre.

The 10-week program starting in April consists of 20 sessions of 22-minute games for U7, U9 and U11 players. With equally balanced teams and half-ice 3 vs. 3 and 4 vs. 4 games, every player will have a lot of ice time to develop their skills in a game-like setting.

"Players will get to touch the puck more, which will be better for long-term player development," said Sattler.

The set weekly sessions allow participants to play other sports and know their schedule weeks in advance. They can also request to play on a team with a friend, no matter which area of the city either participant lives in.

"It's about keeping hockey light and fun," said Sattler. While hockey for all centre offers programming for elite players, they also make sure to offer a wide variety of programming for beginners and youth looking to develop their skills while having fun.

Taylor and Morgan Wabick coached the Winnipeg Jets Rec Hockey program this fall. With sessions focused on scrimmaging, coaches were on the ice to help out, encourage teamwork and make sure the games flowed smoothly. Taylor and Morgan have found the program to be a really positive experience for both players and coaches.

"Seeing the kids enjoy themselves, skate with confidence, and make new friends is incredibly rewarding," said Taylor. "They are always so excited, fist bumping their teammates, talking about goals, passes and good plays. Even when they're tired, they're still smiling and cheering each other on. It really shows how confident they're becoming and how supportive they are of one another, which has been awesome to watch."

The low-stress, supportive environment has made the program enjoyable for both parents and participants.

"The kids enjoy that it feels more like a casual game with friends rather than a formal practice, which makes it something they genuinely look forward to each week. Parents have mentioned that their kids come home talking about the games, the goals they scored and the new friends they've made," said Morgan. "Many families have also shared that they like the flexible, low-pressure environment and how welcoming it feels for every age and skill level."

The Winnipeg Jets Rec Hockey program is a great alternative for youth hockey players and their families who are looking for a lighter hockey load in the spring.

"It gives players a break from the structure and intensity of minor hockey while still keeping them on the ice," said Taylor. "It allows players to stay active, keep their skills sharp, be creative and enjoy the game in a more relaxed, flexible environment."

For players who want to focus on learning or developing certain skills, Sattler recommends the Next Shift program. Formally known as the 3 vs. 3 program, sessions are divided equally into skill development and fun games.

"If you have experience playing games and you're comfortable out there on the ice, you can sign up for the Winnipeg Jets Rec Hockey program and play games all spring. But if you're wanting to hone your skills and improve on your skating or your stick handling, but still scrimmage, then the Next Shift program is probably the option for you," said Sattler.

Registration for the Winnipeg Jets Rec Hockey and Next Shift programs will open on Dec. 22 at hockeyforallcentre.com.



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DANNY ZHILKIN,
MANITOBA MOOSE



BY FRANKIE BENVENUTI
Photos by Darcy Finley and Jonathan Kozub

ZHILKIN BREAKING OUT WITH MOOSE

Danny Zhilkin continues to develop into a key player for the Manitoba Moose as they cruise into the middle stages of the 2025-26 regular season.

Through 97 games prior to this season, Zhilkin amassed 17 points (5G, 12A), owning a 4.3 shooting percentage. The first two seasons in the American Hockey League were a grind for the Moscow, Russia native, as he battled through injuries, but things have come a little easier in 2025-26.

The speedy Zhilkin set a new career-high in goals with his fourth of the season on Nov. 15, just 15 games into the campaign. He's also on pace to skate past his career high in points by tallying nine points (5G, 4A) through his first 21 games while shooting a more efficient 10.6 percent.

It didn't just happen overnight; Zhilkin's progress has been years in the making. A particular focus coming into the season was more belief in his ability on the ice.

"I knew that I needed to play with a ton of confidence this year and use my skill more," he detailed. "It started with rookie camp in Montreal. I was lucky enough to score a goal against Minnesota in the preseason with the Jets, too, and that kept my momentum going."

Zhilkin scored twice, including the game-winner against the Montreal Canadiens in front of a sold-out crowd at the Bell Centre in the Prospect Showdown, before scoring his preseason tally on home ice. Though the games ultimately mean nothing in the standings, Zhilkin says making good things happen in an NHL sweater does wonders for your confidence.



DANNY ZHILKIN OF THE MOOSE SCORES AGAINST THE CHICAGO WOLVES

"It was huge," he said. "Confidence does a lot for you as a hockey player, so having those pucks go in for me helps me play with a ton of confidence."

Zhilkin's performance early in the season did more than just kindle extra confidence within himself. His play generated plenty of trust from head coach Mark Morrison. The third-year pro finds himself playing in all situations for the Moose with time on the power play and penalty kill.

"He has been excellent," Morrison said, courtesy of Illegal Curve. "He has solidified himself as a number one centreman in the American Hockey League. Game in and game out, he shows his speed and his willingness to take the puck to the net. His defensive game is good, his body positioning is good. He continues to take steps forward, and that's what he has to do."

At even strength, Zhilkin has centered a line between Jaret Anderson-Dolan and rookie Colby Barlow. Together, they've been productive and established good chemistry.

"(Colby) is a rookie, but I don't think he plays like one," Zhilkin said of Barlow. "He's got a ton of skill and a ton of poise, and he manages the puck very well. The three of us play good hockey together, and we're hoping to continue that throughout the season. It's been fun to play with those guys."

Manitoba's season continues to roll on. The Moose posted an 11-8-2-0 record through the opening 21 games of the season. Those 24 points granted the antlered ones second place in the Central Division at the beginning of December while looking to gain some separation from the cluttered middle of the pack.

The Moose already showed themselves capable of stacking wins, sticking together six consecutive victories from Nov. 8 through Nov. 22. It has the group feeling good about themselves on a nightly basis, showing up to the rink with total belief they'll land on the right side of the scoreline.

"It's huge," Zhilkin said of the club's early success. "Management did a great job signing big players this past summer and gave our roster a huge, huge boost. It's been going well so far."

As Zhilkin continues to raise his game at the AHL level, he's reminded of the ultimate goal: playing in the NHL with the Winnipeg Jets. The third-round pick in the 2022 NHL Draft has had a taste of wearing the Jets' logo on his chest, but never during a regular season game.

That NHL debut remains one of his big goals to check off, but Zhilkin knows his good start to the season is only that: a start.

"When I use my tools, my speed, my skill, and showcase my two-way game with face-offs and be good in a D zone as well... I think that's when I shine the most," he said. "Those are the things I have to do consistently."

Danny Zhilkin and the Manitoba Moose face off against the best the American Hockey League has to offer all season long at Canada Life Centre. Visit moosehockey.com for schedule, promotions and ticket information.



ANOTHER GOAL FOR DANNY ZHILKIN

2025-2026

THIRD JERSEY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 2 | 2PM

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 29 | 2PM

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 30 | 2PM

FRIDAY
DECEMBER 12 | 7PM

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 14 | 2PM

SATURDAY
JANUARY 31 | 2PM

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 1 | 2PM

MONDAY
FEBRUARY 16 | 2PM

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 22 | 2PM

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 18 | 10:30AM

SATURDAY
MARCH 21 | 2PM

SATURDAY
APRIL 4 | 2PM

SUNDAY
APRIL 12 | 2PM

29 BRAYDEN YAGER



39 COLBY BARLOW



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HOCKEYBALL

PLAY HOCKEYBALL

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Hockeyball and the hockey for all centre

HOCKEYBALL HAS BECOME WILDLY SUCCESSFUL ON CANADA'S WEST COAST, BUT IT'S JUST GETTING STARTED HERE IN WINNIPEG. FOR THE BEAUDIN FAMILY, THE FOUNDERS OF HOCKEYBALL, A BRAND-NEW WINNIPEG MARKET OPENS A WIDE ARRAY OF POSSIBILITIES.

David Sattler wants to get, "sticks in kids' hands."

With that, the general manager of hockey for all centre likes the idea that Hockeyball just might find its way into Manitoba's schools.

"Ball hockey is not played in schools much anymore, if at all," Sattler noted. "Being in the heart of Canada and with Canada's national pastime being hockey, we need to get sticks in young people's hands. And the easiest way to have mass change for that is through schools.

"Working with school divisions and PE classes, we need to find a way to get floor hockey or ball hockey back into the schools. To me, if we didn't play volleyball in schools, it's unlikely there would be volleyball clubs, right? So, at some point, if you stop playing hockey in schools, you don't introduce anyone new to the sport. And it doesn't just have to be on the ice. To grow the game, we need sticks in hands."

That's why Hockeyball could possibly be a way to make that happen.

Hockeyball has combined all the best features and elements of the most popular off-ice hockey games -- floorball, ball hockey, street hockey, gym hockey, Dek hockey and mashed up parts from other team sports like soccer, basketball, lacrosse and futsal to develop what Beaudin believes is, "the next wave of mass hockey participation."

The game is ideal for all ages of play in schools, whether it's elementary school, high school or post-secondary school. It's great for club play, pre-school and even for corporate team building outings. Canada's Sport for Life has endorsed Hockeyball's variant of hockey.



TATIANA RAFTER
WITH DAVE BEAUDIN



JETS-BRANDED HOCKEYBALL

"All you need is our modified lightweight stick and a ball," Beaudin said. "It's super safe for any environment and it is also the ultimate gateway activity to learning everything there is to know about ice hockey."

Hockeyball has decided to go all in when it comes to getting those sticks into Winnipeg's schools.

The Beaudin Family, Norm, Dave and Greg, the developers of Hockeyball, will soon announce the hiring of Winnipeg's Tatiana Rafter, a graduate of the University of British Columbia, a coach and a retired player who played professionally in the Zhenskaya Hockey League (Russia) and the former USA Hockey Olympic Development League.

"The plan is to bring on Tatiana to lead the schools' program," said Greg Beaudin. "We have sticks and equipment kits with Jets logos on them and the job will be to get them into every school. Tatiana could lead the team of instructors and educators that oversee that program. After all, for all those hours that a young player is not on the ice, Hockeyball is a great tool to help players get better and quicker.

"The other aspect of her job will be to create an environment and a community in Winnipeg to bring Hockeyball tournaments, festivals, jamborees, even birthday parties and team building practices. We've been doing this in Vancouver for some time and we're pretty active on the coast, with our truck and trailer. We drive around, open up the hatch and play, teach or run a tournament. She will oversee the commercial element to that and will probably have to hire a group of young people to help her.



TATIANA TAFTER WITH HER SON, JACKSON, ONE OF HOCKEYBALL'S NEWEST PLAYERS

"She's a very smart person and could wear a few different hats. This theme and growing the game, getting kids in the game, getting more girls playing, and reaching out to young athletes who might not be able to afford to play -- the ones who are outside the system and trying to get into the sport – will be a goal. She's a good bridge to that. There aren't many people that have her experience around the game."

Hockeyball also has a relationship with the national Sport for Life program.

"Sport for Life will play a role in delivering the equipment, the education and the training, so that these sticks just don't go out into the wild without control or purpose," Beaudin said. "Sport for Life is going to ensure that this program sticks and is sustainable. We want to ensure that teachers and sport rec leaders aren't just presented with a new stick to play ball hockey with. They have to learn how to play the new way -- safe, inclusive, accessible."

Sattler is happy that Hockeyball is attempting to make its mark in Winnipeg.

"If someone has a stick and a ball or a puck, they're playing hockey," Sattler said. "That's a big thing. To have Hockeyball and Sport for Life getting into schools is positive. It's important to get sticks in hands."



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MAISIE DUFFIN IS OFF TO A GREAT START AND SO ARE THE POLAR ICE

MWJHL
MANITOBA WOMEN'S JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

Polar Ice



PATROLLING THE ICE

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Scott Stroh

Maisie Duffin, University of Manitoba criminology major, wants to become a member of Canada's Military Police one day.

At least, that's the long-term goal.

In the meantime, she wouldn't mind winning the Manitoba Women's Junior Hockey League scoring title on the way to helping Polar Ice win its first MWJHL championship since 2018.

And who knows? A month into the 2025-26 season, she was the league's leading scorer and the Polar Ice, a team that took a couple of seasons off during the pandemic, was hanging around second place in the MWJHL standings a third of the way through the campaign.

Her short-term goals are certainly within reach.

"We had some rough seasons, the past two years, as (effectively) a new team, and this year we've just kind of all worked really well together," Duffin said. "I have a lot of faith in our team."

For Polar Ice head coach -- and Glenlawn Collegiate hockey coach -- Dave Benediktson, having Duffin in his lineup is a blessing. Especially when one considers that there wasn't much interest in her during the league tryouts back when she arrived in 2023.

"It's funny, but going three years back now, I coached in the high school league, so I just happened to know that four seasons ago she had 27 goals playing high school hockey at Beliveau," Benediktson explained. "And I knew that no one else knew that, so I got her in the third round, and she's been our top one, two or three players ever since."

Maisie was born in Southampton, England and came to Canada just before her second birthday. Like so many young players, she wanted to play because an older sibling was playing.

"I started skating when I was three, and I started playing hockey at four," she said. "I was born in England, and so my family had no idea about hockey at all, but my older brother, Will (now the assistant hockey coach at Beliveau), wanted to play, and because I wanted to be exactly like my brother, I wanted to play hockey, too. But my parents had no idea about hockey whatsoever. They didn't know what equipment they needed or even how to sign my brother up. Fortunately, my brother had some friends that were playing, so we figured how to get him signed up. Then, when he started playing, I wanted to play so I started hockey when I was four.

"I played boys hockey until I was about 12 and then started playing girls. I played high school hockey from Grades 9 to 12 at College Beliveau



MAISIE DUFFIN MOVING THE PUCK

and then I came right to the junior league. Dana Poulton told me the story of how they drafted me. She said that the other coaches believed that because I was coming right out of high school and hadn't played AAA, I wasn't exactly considered as good as a AAA player. Dana said the coaches knew the other teams wouldn't choose me first, so Dave and the coaches felt confident in having me picked later on."

Turns out, she was better than everyone expected.

"She was at Beliveau, and I was at Glenlawn, but I'd heard a lot about her, and I checked her stats before the draft," Benediktson said. "We are so glad to have her. She's scored some huge goals for us in big games. Getting her in the third round of the draft is an amazing story.

"And now, in her third year in this league, she's probably in the Top-10 of players in the league, and she's definitely one of our best, that's for sure."

A former 9A champion and Winnipeg High School Hockey League Division II champion, she is accustomed to both winning and to contributing to her team's success.

In her MWJHL rookie season of 2023-24, she had 14 goals and 17 points in all 24 games, but her team struggled to a 4-20-0 record. Last season, she had 15 goals and 28 points in all 25 games as the Ice improved to 9-15-1. This year, she was leading the league in scoring with five goals and 11 points in her team's first eight games, as the Ice got off to a 5-2-1 start.

"I really can't do anything without my whole team," she said modestly. "And I have great linemates. This year I've been playing pretty regularly with Serena Reeb and Mackenzie Loureiro, so that helps, too, playing with good linemates. They're great. We're really good at getting the puck to each other and making plays."



MAISIE DUFFIN.

Benediktson is not only her coach but also a fan of Duffin's play. He calls her style a combination of "laid back and very fast."

"She's extremely fast," he said. "And the puck never leaves her stick. The great thing about her is she gets the puck out of our end, right to their end, every single time. There are a couple girls on our team that can do that, her and Chiara Wilson, and maybe Serena Reeb.

"But it's very seldom that you get those types of girls, players who help your defense knowing that they can get the puck into the opposition's end and keep it there. Duffin is that kind of player."

When she's not playing hockey, she's studying, working part time in a pet store or working out.

"I'm pretty active," she said. "I like to go to the gym, and I really enjoy running. I'm planning to train for a triathlon this summer and for the half marathon, so I'll start getting to training for that soon."

In the meantime, she's got some business to attend to on the ice.

"Even since my first season, we've always been super close as a team," she said. "It's not really like you have certain groups on the team, like some teams do. We're just a really close, we all talk all together, and we're all friends.

"And I do believe this team is good enough to win it all this season. One hundred per cent!"


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KATIE DORSCH
POLAR ICE

ALWAYS A GOALIE

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Todd Pederson

Even as a youngster, Dauphin Kings' puck-stopper Bryson Yaschyshyn never had any doubts about becoming a goaltender.

"My dad, Chris, played for the Winkler Flyers and I know my parents took me to public skating when I was very young," Yaschyshyn, 19, said. "They told me, 'It might be tricky. It's not easy to go out there and just skate around like all the older kids,' and they threw me on the ice, and away I went. I was ripping around there and kind of caught them off guard. I was already able to just kind of go and do it, so that was kind of unique.

"I played all my minor hockey in Morden, but as I got older, I wanted to have a bigger role in the game. I knew that being a goaltender was a big role. So, I kind of stepped into it that way. I probably started playing net in novice, U9. Started out taking turns, but I knew I wanted to be a goaltender. I definitely would ask the coaches for more turns in net if the other people didn't want to. I was still playing goal and being a skater when U11 came around, and I was still playing both at that time, but when U13 came around, I just went into net and stayed there."



Yaschyshyn spent his U15 years with the AAA Pembina Valley Hawks and then moved up to the U18 AAA Hawks as a 16-year-old. Although COVID killed his second-year as a U15 player after only three games, he stepped in with U18 Hawks and played 23 games in the 2021-22 season. In 2022-23, he played another 23 league games and had a goals against average of 2.80 and a save percentage of .923, then in 2023-24, he played 27 games for the Hawks and had a 2.47 goals against average and save percentage of .931.

"I had some success with the Hawks," he admitted. "I had a tough first year, but in my next two years there, I gained some confidence and had some fun."

He played a couple of games with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Winkler Flyers in 2023-24 and 2024-25, but early last year, he was dealt to Dauphin and has been a rock between the pipes. In 10 games last year, he had a 2.93 GAA and an .888 save percentage. This season his numbers are better across the board.

"Getting traded was different, for sure," he said. "I always wanted to play for the Flyers. I always went to those games, and in Timbits, we played at the intermissions. And my dad played for the Flyers back in the day, so it was great putting our name back on the Flyers jersey. Ultimately, it didn't work out there, but I was fortunate to end up in a really good spot here in Dauphin."

Yaschyshyn is represented by Hayden Yaremko's Argonaut Hockey Group and works closely with Argonaut advisor Carson Cherepak, a former Kings goalie.

"It's really nice working with a goaltender as your advisor," Yaschyshyn said. "Carson just understands the game. Being a goalie as opposed to being a skater, it's like playing a completely different sport. Carson is aware of that difference and he's also a great guy."

Bryson calls himself "a farmer type," and is interested in taking agriculture at the university level. He plans on starting university online next year but wouldn't mind playing hockey at the USPORTS or NCAA level.

"I'm looking at going into agriculture, maybe some business," he said. "We'll see how things turn out and what opportunities open up in the next couple of years. Right now, I'm just going to enjoy my time in Dauphin and play as well as I can."



MORDEN'S BRYSON YASCHYSHYN, DAUPHIN'S FIRST STAR

WOZ!

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Darryl Gershman

It's hard to imagine anyone has had a better start to their 2025-26 hockey season than Sophie Woznesensky.

"Woz," as she's called by her friends and teammates, has already helped Team Manitoba to a fifth-place finish at the National U18 Women's Championship in Newfoundland and Labrador, jumped out to a Top-5 spot in the Manitoba Female Hockey League U18 AAA's scoring race and led her team, the Winnipeg Ice, to a 9-0-1 start and a slight hold on first-place over the defending champion Eastman Selects.

For Ice head coach Eugene Kaminsky, the 16-year-old Woznesensky is an integral member of a very good team.

"She's a prototypical power forward, but with skill," Kaminsky said. "It's interesting, we were listening to a podcast this morning, and they were talking about Rick Nash, and I went, yeah, that sort of reminds me of what Sophie's like. She's big, skilled, good hands, great shot, can take abuse, can hand out abuse and is just an all-around good hockey player – a really good hockey player."

That's high praise coming from a man who has coached some of the finest female players ever to play in Manitoba. Of course, it's also not surprising.

After all, Woz is already a member of U18 Team Manitoba and yet did not turn 16 until Nov. 19. While she is still uncommitted, multiple university programs on both sides of the border have been in touch. There is no doubt she can play.

"Playing for Team Manitoba was an incredible experience," she said. "The atmosphere in the Newfoundland rink was unreal. Although we finished fifth, we competed strongly against some of the top teams in the country. Our quarterfinal matchup with Team Atlantic was close and we were right there with them. It was amazing to see how quickly our group came together and built such strong chemistry in a short amount of time."

Team Manitoba assistant coach Aaron Kaatz was impressed with her performance.

"Her participation at the U-18 Nationals showcased not only her skill but also her dedication, focus, and drive," Kaatz said. "She approached every game with professionalism and determination, leaving a strong impression on coaches and peers alike. It was clear that she has the mindset of a player destined for great success, and she continues to set a standard for effort and excellence.

"Her passing was particularly impressive, consistently connecting crucial breakout plays with accuracy and timing. She demonstrated





HIGH-SCORING SOPHIE WOZNESENSKY OF THE WINNIPEG ICE







excellent awareness by finding open options while keeping the puck safe from opposing defenders. Her skating was another standout aspect of her game. She maintained speed and control during rushes, while also transitioning quickly when possession changed, allowing her to support both offence and defence effectively. Additionally, her puck protection skills showed composure and smart decision-making. She controlled the puck under pressure, whether chipping it along the boards or retaining possession in the offensive zone, demonstrating a clear understanding of the importance of maintaining control."

She is still grateful for the opportunity to have played with some of the top players in the province.

"Representing my province and playing with such a talented group of players who made each other better on and off the ice every single day was amazing. I'm so grateful to have shared that experience with them—it's something I'll never forget."

It's very likely she'll get another opportunity next year. In the meantime, she's playing on an Ice team that has a good shot at winning its third championship in four years.

"We've made a lot of progress," said the Grade 11 student at River East Collegiate. "Each game and practice brings us closer, but we're still

pushing to get better and stronger as a team."

"I played girls' hockey until my last year of U15," she explained. "That was a turning point in my career."

That season, she joined the U15 AAA boys' Winnipeg Thrashers — an experience she described as one of her best. Competing in full-contact hockey helped her become a tougher, faster, and more well-rounded player, shaping her on-ice character and competitiveness.

After scoring three goals and 17 points in 32 games with the Thrashers during the 2023-24 season, she had 18 goals and 38 points in 32 league games with the Ice in 2024-25 and was named MFHL U18 AAA Rookie of the Year.

"The coaching was amazing, and I made some of my best friends that year," she said. "After that season, I tried out for the Winnipeg Ice and made the team. I was honoured to receive Rookie of the Year, and I'm really excited to be back again this season."

Coach Kaminsky appreciates the fact that Woznesensky is a curious player who not only wants to improve her own game, but also wants to make her team better.

"This is her second year with us and she's just a fantastic teammate," said Kaminsky. "She's very coachable and asks good questions. She's

always looking to get better. And she asks good questions not just for herself but for everyone on the team. 'What needs to be done here?'

or 'How do we do this?' For instance, she recently asked about the forecheck, 'Where exactly do you want us to be?' It seems obvious, but

it was a good question. She's always looking to improve her game. You can tell she's a hockey player. She's not a person who plays hockey.

She's a hockey player."

This season, she jumped out hard on the forecheck. Through her first 10 games, she had four goals and 13 points and was just three points behind league-leading scorer Ivy Perkin of Westman.

"She's almost secretly becoming a dominant player in our league, and in the province. She's getting better and better every time she plays." Kaminsky added.

"We've talked about this, but there are aspects of her game that we know she's going to have to get better at. And she acknowledges that, and we're looking forward to seeing that progress throughout this year and obviously next year. And next year, I would venture to say she'll probably be one of the more dominant players in our league. She's sort of on the cusp of that right now, but definitely I would see that happening next year."

She would agree that she fits the description of a power forward. The great-niece of former 6-foot-7 Winnipeg Blue Bombers defensive lineman Lyall Woznesensky, she's 5-foot-8 and unafraid of the dirty parts of the ice.

"Power forward? I would think so," she conceded. "I'm always trying to generate offence. I love making plays for my line mates, but scoring is a big part of my game too. I'm always scanning for options around me."

When she's not playing hockey, she loves to play golf. She works in the back shop at Pine Ridge and plays whenever she can. She admits that she even keeps score on occasion.





SOPHIE WOZNESENSKY OF TEAM MANITOBA

"I love being outside — wakeboarding in the summer and rollerblading whenever I can," she added.

When she's finished high school, her goal is to play NCAA D-1 hockey but admits she's not sure what she wants to study.

"I don't know what I want to do," she said with a laugh. "Maybe be a veterinarian. I just know that I want to play hockey somewhere in the States. At least, right now, that's the plan."

Can't argue the fact that the plan has unfolded quite successfully, so far.

"Looking ahead, she has the talent and drive to become an exceptional player at the highest level," added Team Manitoba assistant coach Aaron Kaatz. "Her combination of strength, skill, and hockey sense gives her the ability to make a major impact on the ice. As she continues to grow and refine her game, there's no limit to what she can achieve, she has the potential to dominate in every area, influence the flow of play and become a truly dynamic and game-changing presence for any team.

"Her performance at Nationals was just a glimpse of what she is capable of achieving. With her work ethic, talent, and passion for the game, she is on a trajectory to become a standout player, inspiring teammates and making a lasting mark on the ice. The future is incredibly bright, and she has all the tools to turn her potential into extraordinary results."

REAPING THE BENEFITS

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Danny Truong

Jack Speechley is using the Capital Region Junior Hockey League.

And not in a bad way.

Like so many other good young Manitoba hockey players, he knows the National Hockey League isn't in his future. However, he still loves to play, and he wants to play competitively.

However, he also wants to study at the university level and even work at a potential career in the trades.

That's where the CRJHL comes in.

"It's pretty tough to do what I'm doing and try to play in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League," said Speechley, 20, one of the North Winnipeg Satelites' leading scorers. "Right now, I'm in my third year at the University of Winnipeg. I was in education but now I'm taking business courses. And right now, I'm kind of doubled-up. I'm going to university in the morning and then, in the afternoon I've been doing a carpentry apprenticeship as well, so I'll probably just keep doing that. Maybe one day, I can start my own carpentry business."

Speechley is in his third season with the Satelites, although he did have a six-game stint with Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League's St. James Jr. Canucks at the start of the 2024-25 season. The 2023-24 CRJHL Rookie of the Year, is off to a terrific start this season. Last year, he had 10 goals and 26 points in 29 games with North Winnipeg, but this year, he already has nine goals and 17 points in just 11 games and is second in the league in scoring.

"Although he's not wearing a letter on the front of his jersey, he's really stepped up this season and has been a positive and mature vet for the first-year guys," said Satelites head coach Murray Monkman "He's just a solid human being that every team needs, but hates to play against because he's aggressive and plays a full 200-foot game.



JACK SPEECHLEY AT BILLY MOSIENKO ARENA



COACH MURRAY MONKMAN AND JACK SPEECHLEY



JACK SPEECHLEY HAVING A PRE-GAME CONVERSATION WITH HIS SATELITES TEAMMATES

"I would call him a straight-up power forward. He hit the gym really hard this summer, and you could tell just by the way he's skating that he's in great shape. He's about 6-foot-2, probably 195 and he put on a lot of good muscle mass this off-season. So, it's definitely helped with his game. He's so much more powerful than he was last year."

Speechley joined the Satelites in 2023 after a couple of successful seasons of high school hockey at John Taylor Collegiate.

"I grew playing AA, always one level beneath the top," he explained. "Then I played high school hockey at John Taylor, and it was great, really fun. In Grade 11, we were in C Division, and we went to the finals and lost and then, in our Grade 12 year, right before the season even started, I was playing football and hockey and I broke my leg. So, I missed the end of the football season and the first half of the hockey season.

"When I came back, we were in the middle of the pack and that's how we finished the season, but then we just went on like an absolute run and ended up winning B Division. That was pretty exciting.

"Our goalie was Connor Murphy who plays for the (St. James Jr.) Canucks. In the championship game, we won 1-0 and Connor made 35 saves to get the shutout. It was crazy."

Speechley comes by his hockey skills honestly. His younger sister Ella was a star with the MFHL U18 AAA's Winnipeg Avros and is now a freshman playing at the University of Windsor.

"Yeah, I guess I came from a hockey family, but my dad never played," Jack said. "But when I was four, he signed me up for Timbits at Assiniboia West and I loved it and just kept playing. It was always a lot of fun for me."

It should be a lot more fun for Speechley and the Satelites this season. The year Speechley joined the team, the club's longtime owner and president, Cliff (Moses) Malzensky, a man who was beloved in the junior hockey community, passed away in mid-September. Since then, it's been a tough road back for the Satelites. The team was already struggling when Malzensky died but went 7-19-1-3 in Speechley's rookie season and then 3-26-0-1 last year.

This season, they started 3-7-0-1, but Coach Monkman believes they're definitely improving.

"When Jack joined us, we had lost Mosey and we needed to completely revamp the organization," Monkman said. "Speech has been one of those guys, right from Day One who has helped us rebuild.

"He's been with me now for three years and he's a leader and a complete hockey player. We haven't had many 21-year-olds the last two seasons, because we re-tooled the operation two years ago. So, this year, we have eight or nine 20-year-olds that have been together for the better part of the last two or three seasons, and so Jack and his teammates see this season as an opportunity for us to do well and go deep into the playoffs. I think he'll take full advantage of this opportunity.

Indeed. Plus, all the other opportunities – both on and off the ice -- that playing in the CRJHL can provide.



SPEECHLEY IS NOT AFRAID OF THE DIRTY PARTS OF THE ICE


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BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Kelly Jacobson

LIVING THE NORTHERN LIFE

WINNIPEG'S CEDRICK PUFFALT LOVES PLAYING FOR THE OCN STORM. NOT MANY BIG CITY KIDS CAN MAKE THE TRANSITION TO SMALL-TOWN HOCKEY IN THE NORTH BUT FOR THIS FORMER KJHL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AND DEFENDING KJHL CHAMPION, LIFE IS GOOD IN NORTHERN MANITOBA.

Back in 2023-24 Cedrick Puffalt was the Keystone Junior Hockey League's Rookie of the Year.

However, not all top rookies have the work ethic and staying power to become long-term stars. Cedrick Puffalt is different. He took that Rookie of the Year Trophy, and used it as incentive to become a better hockey player.

Last year, in Season 2, he scored 26 goals and 54 points in 33 games and was among the league's top scorers. This season, he's off to a tremendous start. He has 13 goals and 24 points in his team's first 13 games and is fourth in league scoring on a team that has jumped out to an 11-2-0 start.

"Ceddy is a great kid," said Storm head coach Ethan Constant. "He's a very passionate kid, especially towards hockey. He always wants to get better and he's very committed to all aspects of the game. The sky's the limit for him."

Puffalt, who was just named the Keystone Junior Hockey League's Player of the Month for October, has travelled a long way to live his hockey dream.

Born in Winnipeg, he eventually moved just outside of town to tiny Warren, to play hockey and ultimately finish high school.

"I started skating when I was three years old and played minor hockey in St. James (Winnipeg)," explained Puffalt, a proud citizen of the Red River Metis. "From there I moved to Warren and played Interlake Lightning AAA, both U17 and U18.

"Then I was with the Selkirk Steelers for a little bit before moving to Kenora in the Superior International Junior Hockey League. That didn't work out, so I made my way to the Keystone Junior Hockey League's expansion team in Waywaysecappo and I was there for half a season and then I had someone from OCN reach out to me and tell me that I was going to play there, so I got in contact with the general manager, Nelson Cote, and he told me all about OCN and the local community. I thought it would be a good fit, so I tried it out for the rest of that first year and enjoyed it. I've been here two-and-a-half seasons now and I'm really liking it."





THE STORM'S CEDRICK PUFFALT, THE KJHL PLAYER OF THE MONTH FOR OCTOBER.



PUFFALT CARRIES THE 2024-25 KJHL CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY.

Puffalt started that 2023-24 season with the Wild, leading the team in scoring during what has been described as, "a challenging first half of the season."

He was then dealt at the trade deadline to the Storm and picked right up where he left off. Contributing offensively for both squads he was a valuable teammate that helped out on the powerplay as well. He finished the regular season with 22 goals and 38 points in 35 games.

"Offense is easily the best part of his game," said Constant. "When that puck touches his stick, there's absolutely nobody who can touch him. He definitely has that Junior A kind of speed and explosiveness that you see at that level."

For Puffalt, it's been fun in OCN for a couple of reasons. For one thing, he gets plenty of ice time and has been able to do what he does best – score goals and set them up. He's also been playing on a very good team and was a big part of OCN's championship season in 2024-25.

"It's great to be able to go out and play on a good team with solid ownership and coaching," he said. "And Ethan's a very good coach. The coaching staff are all really good guys, and the ownership and management put everything into the team. It's a great atmosphere.

"I also like how The Pas is a little quieter than Winnipeg and you get to know everybody in the community a little more. In a small town like this, everybody comes together and they all know each other, especially the hockey team.

"That's one of the reasons for our success. We've had many of the same guys here over the past couple of years and it's good to start becoming close with them on and off the ice. I would say we're a really close team."

In the off-season, Puffalt loves to spend time on the golf course. He also helps run a summer camp with some of his friends back in Winnipeg. During the season, he spends plenty of time in the gym and takes childhood education courses from Robertson College online.

"I graduate in May of 2026," he said. "Ultimately, I want to be a gym teacher, but I also want to play college hockey – doesn't matter if it's in Canada or the United States – and get my education degree. I look at what I'm doing right now as a bit of a preliminary to getting my education degree."

Puffalt, who plays on a line with 2024-25 scoring champion Drew Peters, calls himself, "a playmaker first." Coach Constant, meanwhile, believes he has plenty of upside and might just have a brighter future than most 19-year-old Jr. B players.

"There's a lot of potential with him and every year we've had him on the roster, he's just gotten better," said Constant. "He's a really good hockey player and a really good person and he has the potential to make the jump to Jr. A. He has all the tools, I think he just has to put it all together.

"Once he figures that out – how to make the best use of some different parts of his game – he'll make that jump, no problem."

FUELLING THE KJHL

Photos by Kelly Jacobson

Ken Munro spent nearly 10 years coaching with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Swan Valley Stampeders.

He was a guy people could depend on.

"I was an assistant coach with Del Pedrick and Guy Vestby and also with Leonard Strandberg when he was here," explained Munro, a proud member of Sapotaweyak Cree Nation. "I coached, off and on for 10 years, about five years full-time, and then coached minor hockey."

It was Munro's hockey history, his love for the game and his role as Senior Indigenous Relations Specialist, External Relations at Federated Co-operatives Ltd., that led him directly to the Keystone Junior Hockey League, an exciting Jr. B hockey league based in Northern Manitoba that is fuelled by five First Nations: Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Peguis First Nation, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake Band) and Norway House Cree Nation.

"We have our Western Nations Gas Bar brand, a retail fuel brand that Co-op has developed specifically for First Nations," Munro said. "So, I looked at the KJHL and felt it was a perfect venue to promote Co-op and Co-op products and to just be a partner. For a lot of the kids who play in this league, it's their NHL and I wanted to help. I reached out to the president, Mr. Fontaine, met with the board and because Co-op is about community, it was a really good fit."

Indeed. And the KJHL is certainly excited about the relationship.

"This collaboration marks an exciting milestone for the KJHL, a league made entirely of First Nations hockey teams dedicated to developing young athletes across Northern Manitoba and beyond," said Marcel Fontaine, KJHL president. "We're thrilled to have partnered with Western Nations Gas Bars, Fuelled by Co-op in promoting Junior Hockey in Northern Manitoba. This partnership will help strengthen the opportunities for our players, support the growth of First Nations hockey, and enhance the overall experience for our communities and fans.

"While the KJHL is proudly comprised of First Nations teams, the league welcomes players from all backgrounds and communities across Canada. Young men from every race and region come together through the KJHL, united by their passion for hockey and the spirit of teamwork. The sponsorship from Western Nations Gas Bars, Fuelled by Co-op will help support league operations, community engagement initiatives, and player development programs."

While Western Nations Gas Bars, Fuelled by Co-op will help the league in a number of different ways, their first major commitment was to the KJHL All-Star game held on Dec. 13, in Thompson.

"The jerseys had the Western Nations and Co-op logos on them, and we presented the MVP trophies," explained Munro. "each player received a gift bag in their locker room stalls as a way to enhance the experience for them. It's good for us to be a part of that."

It was a great weekend, and obviously both organizations share a commitment to empowering youth and fostering community pride through sport. The KJHL continues to play a vital role in promoting hockey throughout Manitoba's northern First Nations, offering young athletes the chance to compete at a high level while staying connected to their culture and communities while also welcoming new players from across the country who share a love for the game.

This was a match made in Hockey Heaven.



SANDY TATUINEE, NCN FLAMES

HUTTON FOSTER, OCN STORM

BRANNIGAN FERLAND, NORWAY HOUSE NORTH STARS

BRODY MCPHERSON, PEGUIS JUNIORS

JAYDEN BLACKSMITH, CROSS LAKE ISLANDERS,



FORMER WHL PLAYER KARSON KING
OF THE STONEWALL JETS



ALL THE RIGHT REASONS

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Duncan Hasker

Stonewall Jets captain Karson King would make a great poster boy for the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League.

After all, there was a time when King might have had a future as a professional hockey player. Back in 2019, he was selected in the sixth round (111th overall) by the Swift Current Broncos in the Western Hockey League's 15-year-old entry draft. He was a big scorer with the U15 AAA Interlake Lightning at the time and finished that season with 21 goals and 41 points in just 35 games. Like so many kids his age, he'd earned the right to give serious consideration to a hockey career.

Then, after the COVID season of 2020-21 shut almost everything down, he packed up and moved to Swift Current to try his hand at the WHL. During the 2022-23 season, he had 11 goals and 20 points in 50 games with the Broncos and at 18, he was certainly good enough to be a regular in the "best junior hockey league in the world."

But King had a problem. He was too self-aware. He knew exactly how good he was and while he loved the game, he had become cognisant of the fact that maybe the National Hockey League was not in his future.

"I was being realistic with myself," King said recently. "I was hemming and hawing about me and the coach and how that, sometimes, we didn't see eye to eye. I guess I felt a little behind, too.

"I just came to the realization that there wasn't much more of a future for me going down the hockey path, so I guess I kind of wanted to come home and just work and get an education. I was me just being a little more realistic with myself.

"I wouldn't say I regret my decision by any means. In fact, I was pretty happy with the decision. I'm still playing competitive hockey here, so I'm getting the same thing out of it. Probably more. I'm also working and moving up in my career path. I'm in refrigeration and I've finished my Level 1 and hopefully soon, I'm going to start Level 2."

Make no mistake, King, Stonewall's 6-foot-1, 210-pound high-scoring power forward is a very good hockey player. In fact, his coach, Pat Power, thinks he's one of the best players in the MMJHL. Power believes that King could definitely play in the WHL right now.

However, at 18, getting a good start in life was much more important. That's why King abandoned his NHL dream after the 2023 season and came home to join his buddies on a team that just might challenge for the MMJHL championship this season.

"Karson is definitely the leader of our team and that's why he was named captain this year," said Coach Power. "He's a guy who didn't wear a letter the last couple of years, but that being said, he's always led by example. And he leaves it all out there.



"He's 21, an overage player in the league this year, and having that maturity definitely makes a big difference for us. He competes every night and that's all, as a coach, I could ever ask for. He's also very smart on the ice. He sees the ice well. In my opinion, probably has an NHL shot."

Interestingly, Power didn't bring King to Stonewall. King was already there when Power joined the team as head coach. However, when Power was a scout for the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's OCN (now Northern Manitoba) Blizzard, he convinced the brass at OCN to select King in the first round (seventh overall) in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's 2019 entry draft.

"Yeah, I actually drafted him to OCN before he took off to the Western League," Power said. "He went to the Western League at a time when COVID was about to kick in, so all that crap with COVID kind of made a mess of everything and really set back a lot of good young players. Eventually I moved on from OCN to help out down south here and we've found our way back together here in Stonewall the last couple of years. I'm super happy to have him."

"He's a really good player and we've had guys like him in this league over the years. Recently there was Rory Neill with St. James who had played in Calgary and came back to play with his friends. Karson's in that group."

"And by coming home and playing in the MMJHL, he's got an opportunity to do all the work necessary to complete his trade. The schedule works for him. That's one of the great things about our league. Once you come to the realization that you're not going to play in the National Hockey League, there's no sense riding the bus all day. I think that was one of those things for Karson, right? He was kind of finished in Swift. He wasn't feeling it. He came back and kind of dabbled in Portage a little bit (he played six games with the Terriers in 2022-23), but then just realized that there are bigger things in life. He wanted to come home and play with his friends and get ready for the future."

King grew up in Warren and calls himself "a farm boy."

"I grew up on a farm," he said. "We aren't that big; it's more like a hobby farm now. We were bigger, but we couldn't really keep up with the bigger operation, so we just have hay right now."

King played all of his minor hockey in Warren and then jumped to U15 AAA in Interlake when he was 13.

"I probably started skating when I was around four years old, and just fell in love with it," he recalled. "I played all my minor hockey in Warren, and at a pretty young age people noticed that I was doing a lot better than expected, so my mom and dad figured I should put a little more time into it, so I played a lot of spring hockey growing up. I played Boys of the North with Larry Bumstead coaching over at the Iceplex (hockey for all centre).

"Then I started playing AAA with Interlake and everything fell into place. I got drafted there to Swift Current and I was lucky enough to play a full season as a 16-year-old. Then I just decided to come home and play in Stonewall with a few of my buddies."

This season, he's playing on a team with his buddies that could challenge the powerhouses in St. Boniface, Transcona, Charleswood and River East for a shot at the Jack McKenzie Trophy.

"I think we're all pretty confident with this team," King said. "We've got a lot of 21-year-olds, and a good core of local guys too, which helps. It's nice to have local players playing, and the city guys help too.

"I think the coaches have done a good job building the team over the last couple of years. It's just a matter of getting all the pieces to fit."

It's rather interesting that two of the team's stars are both 21-year-olds from the area – Peyton Bateman from Stonewall and Karson King from Warren.

"We grew up playing together," said King. "Ever since minor hockey we've had a connection. We generally play on the same line. We'll bounce around with other guys, but for the most part, it's me and him with Gavin Holod as the third member of the line. It's kind of a top-heavy line so we're putting up a lot of points."

No kidding. Through the Jets first 16 games, Holod had six goals and 20 points to lead the team, Bateman had nine goals and 19 points (second), and King had eight goals and 17 points (third).

Coach Power certainly believes in his team.

"I think our team's good," Power said. "I think this year our depth is definitely something that we haven't maybe had the last few years. I looked on the roster, and we've got guys contributing from that so-called first line right down to our fourth line, per se. We have guys that can play in all situations. I think that's definitely a huge improvement compared to the years before."

When King isn't playing hockey or working, you can usually find him with a fishing pole or hunting rifle.

"I enjoy being outdoors," said King, who plans to play senior hockey with his hometown Warren Mercurys next season. "Lots of hunting, fishing, all that kind of stuff. We usually go on a moose hunting trip every year or two. The MMJHL is such a great league for things like that. You can work or go to school and have time to do the things you love to do and still play competitive hockey with your friends. And the league's gotten way better over the last few years, I find. For me, this is the place to be."

MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE



DYLAN JAQUET,
ST. VITAL VICTORIAS

The MMJHL is a 10-team junior hockey league operating in and around the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The intent of the league is to provide a program for talented and competitive hockey players to continue their education or begin their careers. Players aged 17 to 21 years compete annually for the Jack McKenzie (league founder) Trophy.

WWW.MMJHL.CA



PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS ASSISTANT COACH MARK KLASSEN

COACHING HOCKEY & SELLING GRAIN

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Duncan Hasker and Rusty Barton

Mark Klassen knew Chris Unger "in passing" from the agriculture business, but interestingly not from the hockey business.

Now, the two ag experts will start working together as hockey coaches.

Back in the first week of December, former Twisters player, Braeden Beernaerts, was relieved of his head coaching duties and replaced by Unger, a one-time defenceman and former member of the Pembina Valley Hawks and the Selkirk Steelers.

Unger is an agronomist and a man Klassen, a grain trader, has met professionally.

"I've met him in the ag industry in passing, but the first time really sitting down with him was at practice this week," said Klassen. "We'll see how things go, but so far my role hasn't changed."

Klassen, who had been asked to join the coaching staff this season had history with the former head coach. Back when the Twisters won the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League championship in 2019, Beernaerts and Klassen were teammates.

"Mark's hockey mind and positive attitude have been a fantastic addition to our coaching staff," said Beernaerts recently. "The players really respond to him, and he relates well with the all the players."

As the Twisters, under general manager John Mintenko, continue to rebuild after aging-out so many players following their successful 2023-24 season, Beernaerts turned to a solid hockey mind and a close friend to get the good ship Twister back on course -- a 28-year-old ex-Twisters' player who also has plenty of coaching experience.

"I guess I started out like any other kid, just skating around on the outdoor rinks," Klassen said. "I played all my minor hockey in Carman and we had a pretty good team growing up. I got the privilege of playing with some pretty good players. Our U15 AA team won the provincials and then I went and played some high school hockey before playing U18 AAA with the Pembina Valley Hawks and we ended up winning a provincial championship there in my Grade 12 year.



COACH KLASSEN ON THE BENCH

"Then I went to Saskatchewan to play Jr. A, but things didn't work out the way I wanted them to in Yorkton, so I came back and got a call from James van der Velde. He asked me to join a bunch of our buddies with the Twisters so I said yes and came home and played with James and Braeden.

"My first year back we went to the finals and lost to Stonewall," he continued. "That was a good year. The second year was decent again and we lost to Stonewall in double or triple overtime in the final game. It was another great series.

"I missed my third season due to injury and then in my fourth season came back and we won the championship. I was pretty lucky and pretty blessed with a decent career."

Klassen had some solid seasons with the Twisters. In the championship season of 2018-19, he had seven goals and 24 points in 41 regular-season games and then had a goal and seven points in 17 playoff games. In 113 MMJHL games, he scored 27 goals and accumulated 85 points.

He loved playing in the MMJHL. It gave him an opportunity to study at the University of Manitoba and still play competitive hockey.

"Whenever we had exams and if we needed a day off to study, we could just tell our coaches, 'Hey, sorry, I gotta miss this practice, I have an exam tomorrow,' and it would be no problem. The league is built around university or guys with jobs, and it was awesome. It's a great league."

Since his playing days ended, he's spent a lot of time coaching his hometown Carman Beavers of the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League.

"I've spent the last four years coaching in Carman," he said. "When this opportunity came, I said to Braeden, 'I would love to help you out if you'll have me.' It's been a great experience so far this year. Braeden and I think very much alike, so it's been great.

"And I've been having a lot of fun in Carman, as well. I've had the privilege of coaching with my dad over the last few years, and my brother plays on the team. I'm very busy right now."

When he's not at a rink in southern Manitoba, Klassen works as a grain trader for Parrish & Heimbecker in Winnipeg. An agriculture business graduate from the University of Manitoba, he's built himself a near-perfect life.

"I'm not quite a farm guy, but we lived outside of town," he explained. "And my grandparents owned a farm, so I grew up helping a bit on the farm. But my parents both worked jobs in town. I have a lot of great memories of growing up in Carman.

"These days, when I'm not coaching or working, I pretty much just watch hockey with my buddies," he said with a laugh. "That's the life I've got. I got married, and we're living in LaSalle, so it's close to everything for me. The Beavers, in senior hockey, only have 18 games, so it's a small schedule, but my maximum drive would be like 30 minutes. It's about 50 minutes to Stonewall, but we don't play there that often, so it's great.

"I also try to make as many Jets games as I can so it's pretty much a life of selling grain, watching hockey and coaching hockey. It's pretty good."

THREE-TIME MMJHL CHAMPION

PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS

ARE PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE
MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE



MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

BIGWAY FOODS

MORRIS BIGWAY FOODS IS A PROUD SUPPORTER OF
THE PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS AND
THE MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

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THE CHURCHILL HOCKEY ACADEMY'S GRADE 8 GIRLS' GROUP. TOP ROW FROM LEFT: ELLA SIMCHUK, KHLOE LINE, SOPHIE SAURETTE, JORDANNE BOUCHARD, LEAH RAKOWSKI, MILLA COUTU, DERYN RAKOWSKI, VICTORIA OLIVER, MARIN MANTOWICH, MARY JANE PERSON, JUDE BRUETSCH, PAYTON ROLLASON. BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT: TARYN MOISEY, LILLIAN WANG, ELLA MANITOWICH, ANDI WILSON, ZAHRA MAJKUT, ADLEY HARRISON, KENLEIGH STARKELL, NICOLE ANDREYEV, MAYA RACH.

BY JIM BENDER
Photos by James Carey Lauder

GROWING STRONGER

THE CHURCHILL HOCKEY ACADEMY CONTINUES TO GROW AT EVERY LEVEL, BUT THE GRADE 8 GIRLS PROGRAM IS ENJOYING THE MOST POPULAR SEASON IN ITS HISTORY. THIS YEAR, 21 YOUNGSTERS ENJOY EARLY-MORNING PRACTICE SESSIONS AT SOUTHDALE ARENA.



Zahra Majkut loves attending the Churchill Hockey Academy so much that her parents make the trek from St. James to Southdale Community Centre in South St. Vital to drop her off to attend the sessions around 8-8:30 a.m. After her session with the instructors there, a school bus picks her and others up to take them to Churchill High School to attend Grade 8.

Afterwards, Majkut joins a carpool to take her to a friend's house in the Tuxedo-Charleswood area where her parents pick her up to either take her to practice with her Ice Blue Winnipeg AAA U15 team or take her home to prepare for a league game that night.

Majkut, 13, is a goaltender who lugs her heavy equipment to all of those stops.

"This is my second year (at the academy)," Majkut said. "They have really great coaching (for goalies). They have Byron Spriggs for goaltending. He runs lots of camps in the summer, too.

"It has helped a lot. I think I've developed a lot. I've got lots of little skills that I wouldn't get in my regular practices, and I like the hard shots because I don't get enough hard shots at my regular practices."

Majkut is just one of 21 Grade 8 girls attending the hockey academy – the most it has ever had.

"Once the Grade 7s come here and they experience what it's like, then they're telling their friends and saying, 'Oh my God, we love the Churchill hockey academy, it's so great,'" said head instructor Matt Varnes. "Then, we get the influx. Last year, we had 53 total kids in the Great 8 hockey academy and this year, we now have 60 (including boys). We lost a couple and we also gained a couple. We had 12 girls last year."

WORD OF MOUTH

"You get a couple of really good players, and they all want to go where that really good player is," Varnes said. The word gets out quickly to families in the community.' Then, we offer an open house, like an open skate and kids can go online and register at our open skate."

The 60 Grade 8 girls and boys are split into three



HEAD INSTRUCTOR MATTHEW VARNES



GOALIE ZAHRA MAJKUT



ADLEY HARRISON



NICOLE ANDREYEV

groups at 9:00 a.m. – two on the ice with the third in the weight room and attending health sessions. Afterwards, they shower, change and catch the 10:30 a.m. bus to take them to school.

Adley Harrison first started attending the Churchill academy because her brother, Avery, went there when he was in Grade 7.

"He had a really good time and my parents loved the program," said the Winnipeg Avros Black centre/right winger, now in her second year. "They loved being able to drop us off in the morning and us being on the ice."

Avery is still attending the academy.

"It's a really great program and it's a great school," Harrison said. "The thing I like about the Churchill Academy is I like meeting new people and I like being able to play against people from different areas and being able to play against them and with them, and being with boys and pushing myself, and just being able to be with my friends on the ice."

That instruction has already made her a better player.

"I've learned just to be myself and just have fun, and I've learned to be creative and just go with it," she said. "I'm doing really well. I'm having fun with the (Avros) team and the coaching. I think, right now, we have a really good team and we're all super nice and nobody's like, rude and raw. We're just out there to get better and have fun."

MAKING BETTER PLAYERS

Although Adley was in the Top 10 of scoring in the league before Christmas, her education has not suffered.

"My grades are really good this year," she said. "My teachers are really good teachers, and they explain everything really well. So, I feel like I'm understanding more and I feel like I'm doing really well."

All 12 of the kids in her French class also attend the hockey academy.

Nicole Andreyev, 13, is enjoying her second year at the academy as well.

"I heard really great things about it from my brother (Daniel) because he went there in Grade 7 and 8 and he really enjoyed it," she said. "So, I wanted to go. I love it. It's a great program, a great educational system. The culture is amazing. I've made so many new friends and the coaches are really inclusive and nice, and I really enjoy it there."

Andreyev, who plays defence for the Winnipeg Avros Red, believes that instruction has also made her a better player.

"I've learned so many new hockey skills -- on and off the ice," she said. "We do workouts a lot and it's been amazing. We've learned how to do specific exercises and movements. We've learned lots of hockey skills and it's built up our confidence. We do specific units, like our passing and our shooting, and just working on different types of shots and passing. It's just been great.

"I've improved so much. The coaches really individually help each player grow and develop in different ways. It's been an amazing experience for me."

Andreyev competed at the War of the Roses tournament

with Team Manitoba in Edmonton last spring.

Like Harrison, Andreyev has also done very well at school, getting awarded for the best overall average in Grade 7, as well as academic awards for English and science, and was averaging 96 percent in all of her classes this year. Andreyev is also captain of the school volleyball team and plays for the University of Manitoba Bisons U13 team.

NOBLE AMBITIONS

Fraternal twins Leah and Deryn Rakowski are also enjoying the hockey academy in their second year at Churchill..



LEAH RAKOWSKI



DERYN RAKOWSKI



KENLEIGH STARKELL

"The best thing about it is probably how we do different skill sessions, depending on which ice we're on, because you're learning everything throughout the year and you get a lot better through going to Churchill," said Leah, an Avros Red forward. "I've noticed that I'm doing a lot better since I started going to Churchill."

Leah, 13, has noble ambitions.

"My dream is to make it to the (Professional Women's Hockey League), but I'll have to keep growing, keep progressing," she said.

"I like it," said Deryn, an Avros Red defence. "I like being on the ice early in the morning because it makes me happy and it helps me focus in school. Also, it makes me a lot better – so much better. Just my skills in general -- my edge work and my shooting and my stride work has gotten a lot better since last year."

Lillian Wang, 13, also chose the Churchill academy last year because she heard good things about it.

"I wanted a little bit more of, like, training camps and stuff, but they were all conflicting with my hockey, so I just decided to give Churchill a try, and it was a really good decision," said the Avros Red forward. "I think it's a really fun place. When I wake up, I always just want to be there and it's fun to just interact with my friends and just talk to my coaches and go out on the ice.

"I've learned a lot about passing and saucing the puck. I've learned a lot about zone entries and I've learned a lot more about shooting."

Kenleigh Starkell, 13, also returned for her second year.

"I wanted to get better and advance my skills," said the Avros Black forward. "I like the people there. I like the coaches. I like the environment. It's also really fun. We learn skating technique. We learn about shooting, passing, stickhandling."

Like other Grade 8 students at the hockey academy, Starkell also excels at school, earning a Distinguished Honours nod in Grade 7.

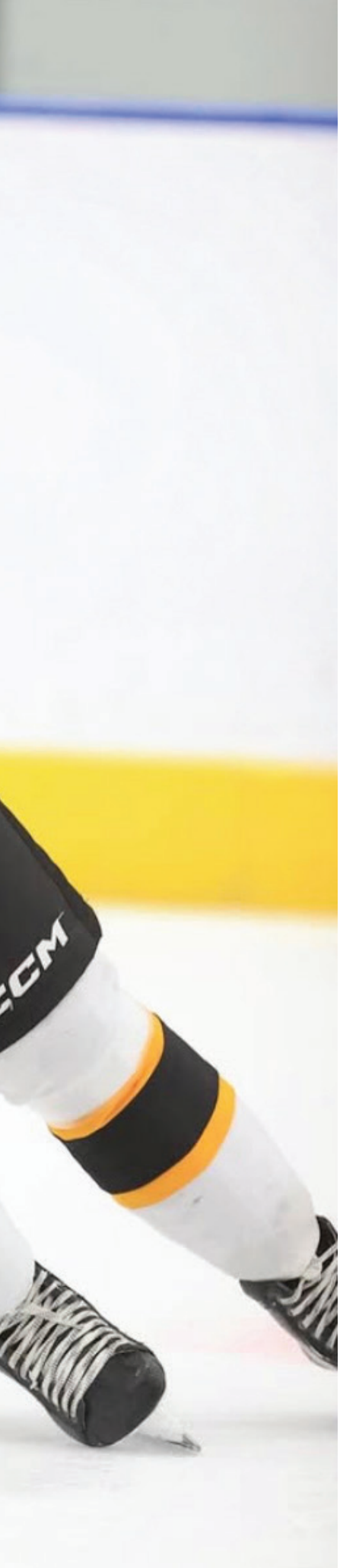
"The success of the Churchill Hockey Academy comes from strong coaching, structured skill development, and the exceptional work ethic of its athletes. The girls' commitment—showing up early, pushing themselves, and embracing every challenge—drives their steady improvement and builds confidence, discipline, and lasting connections.

"Our Grade 8s—so many of them are so talented," said Varnes. "I bet at least three-quarters are playing AAA right now, competing with older players and doing very well." With its positive culture and focus on growth, Churchill continues to help young athletes reach their potential both on and off the ice."

For further information about the Churchill Hockey Academy, go to *https://www.churchillhigh.ca*



KALE NICOL



MINING NICOL IN WESTMAN

BY PAUL EDMONDS
Photos submitted by Kerri and Kurt Nicol

It might be a small factory on the western prairies, but lately it appears to be operating at full production and in overtime.

In fact, the hockey business in the Westman area of the province seems to be an expanding industry, particularly in the region's hub city.

The latest off the assembly line of elite Brandonites is Kale Nicol, a 13-year-old with the U15 AAA Brandon Wheat Kings and a phenom that is absolutely shredding the provincial competition.

It's not just the points he's putting up, but the way he's doing it as a minor-aged player in the 14-year-old dominated Winnipeg U15 AAA Hockey League.

"He's a great player and a great kid," said veteran U15 Wheat Kings head coach Dave Lewis. "And everybody feeds off of that.

"I've seen a lot of great players and their egos sometimes get in the way, but not Kale. He's a coach's dream."

Just prior to Christmas and the holiday season commencing, the Wheat Kings were the only club in the 15-team league without a loss of any type, with Nicol pacing the entire loop with 45 goals and 74 points in only 15 games.

It's an extraordinary canter that already has the centreman on every Western Hockey League's scouting list, even though his draft year isn't until 2027.

In fact, the spotlight on his talent and skillset is nothing new.

Four years ago, he represented Manitoba at the Brick Invitational Hockey Tournament (9-2-11, 6 GP) as a minor, and last spring was part of a collective of players from Western Canada that formed a team called WestCan Prime. They went on to win the 15th annual U14 World Selects Invitational tournament in Finland.

Nicol was named the tournament's most valuable player, finishing atop the scoring with 15 goals and 25 points in eight games





KALE AND HIS BROTHER REID

in what he called "an awesome experience."

"He's got an elite level shot," said Lewis. "It would be comparable to most junior players already. It's lethal all over the ice. It's hard and accurate. It's next level."

And at just five-foot-six and 165 pounds, Lewis adds his size isn't a detriment and between his skating, compete and hockey IQ, it's a complete package of hockey assets that is unmatched for his age.

"He can really play a power game. Most guys can't physically match up with him. Teams will key on him and double team him, but he has such great hockey IQ if he knows that somebody is open he has no problem making a pass to a teammate. If he can't score, he'll pass to somebody that can."

What is more amazing about Nicol's story thus far is that he's not the only one in his house that's performing at an elite level for his age.

His older brother, Reid, is also a blue-chipper with the U18 AAA Brandon Wheat Kings. At just 15-years-old he's leading his team in goal scoring (21) and second in points (31) in only 14 games prior to the holidays.

For Reid, the start of this season is an extension of his phenomenal first year in the Manitoba U18 AAA Hockey League last year, whereas an age-advanced forward, he poured in 35 goals and 58 points in 48 games.

Coupled with his six-foot-one and 194-pound frame, the Everett Silvertips jumped at the chance to call his name last May at the 2025 WHL Prospects Draft in the first round (5th overall).

The older Nicol now follows in a growing list of recently highly touted, first round WHL draft picks from the City of Brandon that includes: Calen Addison (2015), Clarke Caswell (2021), Cole Temple (2022), Jaxon Jacobson (2023) and - likely just over a year from now - his younger brother, Kale.

"I've been lucky to be around a lot of good hockey players over the last 30 years



A YOUNG KALE NICOL

and work with them," said Lewis, a retired teacher, who also coached Reid at U15 AAA and has also worked with current and former NHLers like Zach Whitecloud, Nolan Patrick, Micheal Ferland and Matt Calvert.

"Those two boys love to play and they love to get better. They show a lot of the same skill levels and attitudes that I see with the guys that are playing professional hockey, so I think their future is very bright."

For the Nicol family, hockey and skating run deep. Both grandfathers (Marv Robinson and Terry Nicol) played junior hockey for the Brandon Wheat Kings, while mom, Kerri, was an elite-level figure skater and dad, Kurt, a former hockey player and motorcross racer.

On their property just south of Brandon they build an impressively large outdoor hockey rink each winter, a pursuit the boys both help in assembling and maintaining. It's also complete with an outside shooting area and there's also an indoor shooting set-up in the garage, too.

It's a busy homestead, especially with all the hockey that's played, which often includes friends and teammates wheeling around on the homemade ODR as well.

According to Kale, the two brothers have a great relationship, almost as best friends. They push and support each other and often watch video together of each other's games.

"We're on it," said Kale.

And while the passion for the game is genuine, it's all with a focus to getting better, something Kale admits to benefiting from when it comes to competing against his older brother since they were able to walk, or skate.



KALE PLAYING AT THE WORLD SELECTS INVITATIONAL IN HELSINKI

"He's played a big role in my hockey career," said Kale, a Grade 8 student at Western Canadian Hockey Academy, a private school in Brandon that focuses on elite hockey and golf programs, while Reid is a Grade 10 student at Vincent Massey High School.

"We're competitive. We push each other."

And while the brothers have played together on a few teams over the years growing up, their concentration now is with their respective current clubs.

This is especially relevant for Kale, whose objectives this season are quite clear and noble.

"Number one would be to win the championship with our team," he said. "We're off to a pretty hot start so hopefully we can keep it up. To hang a banner up in our rink would be pretty nice."

And what about a scoring title in the Winnipeg U15 AAA Hockey League?

"I do think of stuff like that a little bit," he said. "I'm pretty humble though, so if didn't get it that would be fine."

As the path has already been blazed by his older brother, it appears that next year Kale will be eager to crack the U18 AAA Wheat Kings as an age-advanced player - just as Reid did last season.

It's a move that Lewis believes is the right one for his player.

"There's no benefit to Kale staying at U15 next year," he said. "He's ready for that level. The funnel gets pretty tight as you work your way up, but he has all the intangibles. And he has an opportunity to play some pretty good hockey as he gets older."

So, as Kale Nicol moves along in his career, that little hockey factory in Westman will likely keep the assembly line moving along, too.



A PERFECT RUN

BY CARTER BROOKS
Photos by Taylor Lachance and Dylan Asmundson

The 2025 U16 WHL Cup really couldn't have gone much better for Team Manitoba.

A national tournament that sees provincial talent from western Canada compete in a round robin styled event while showcasing its participants to scouts from across North America, the biggest takeaway for the 80 players involved is bragging rights. And once again, Manitoba finished atop the pack.

Of the 20 players making up Manitoba's roster, five hailed from the RINK. And serving as one of the team's coaches at the tournament was RINK's U17 head coach Jeff Borse. His second such tournament, to which he took part in the selection process and rode the wave with the group of players throughout the October 22-26 event in Red Deer, Alta.

"It was a really special group of guys," Borse told *Game On* of his experience with the team. "I think that it's something that will go down in the memory banks of these kids for a long time. Just how well we were able to prepare the fellas, let them loose, and then watch and reap the rewards for it, and kin of run the table, if you will."

From the gruelling 116-participant spring evaluations, to the Top 40 camp, to the September Series, to the final 20-man roster, the process of picking the perfect group to represent Manitoba at the annual fall spectacle seemingly went without a hitch – at least according to Borse.

"I was actually the only member of the coaching staff that was coaching this age group, so I definitely had an inside edge on what most of these kids brings to the table," the RINK coach said. "The negative side of this is that at the end of the day, we did have to release a couple guys who were also RHA players. We had to think more so about what is best for Team Manitoba, versus some of the players I was more familiar with or had worked with before.

"The hardest part of making the team is how the coaches want to create the team, which isn't vocalized or made public," he added. "It was pretty well-balanced, a lot of similar players with high-end skill. A few checkers and role players, but it's really what the

coaches are after and that's how we differentiate. You know, this guy is normally a first-line player, but can he play fourth line for us. How does that affect him? There were some pretty long debates between coaching staff to see who the best fits would be."

Borse's boys put up a 3-2 win over Alberta in their opener, before thrashing British Columbia 6-2 the following day. They throttled Saskatchewan 11-2, setting the stage for a semi-final rematch with their neighbouring province, to which the Manitobans won 4-0. Then, in the final it was another lopsided affair, with Manitoba finishing its perfect tournament with a 6-1 final over British Columbia.

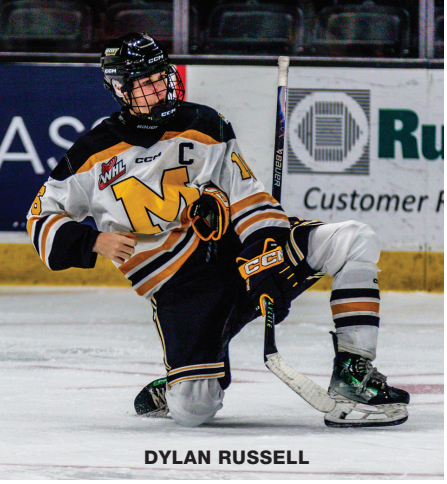
"The first game is always the eye-opener," the veteran coach said. "Like, can we compete as a team with these other provinces? How do we match up? With teams like Alberta having 18 first and second round draft picks, that was one of those holy crap moments. That game against Alberta set the tone. We did a good job as a coaching staff, making adjustments, showing video, having meetings. Then games against B.C. and Saskatchewan were really hard-fought. Our captain and U18 RINK forward Dylan Russell did a great job leading the team. He did so with a calm demeanor and really helped reassure the guys we were going in the right direction."

Joining Russell on the provincial team was Athens Shingoose, James Stanton and Graham Gard, also of the U18 team, as well as Brady Filmon from the U17 Prep squad.

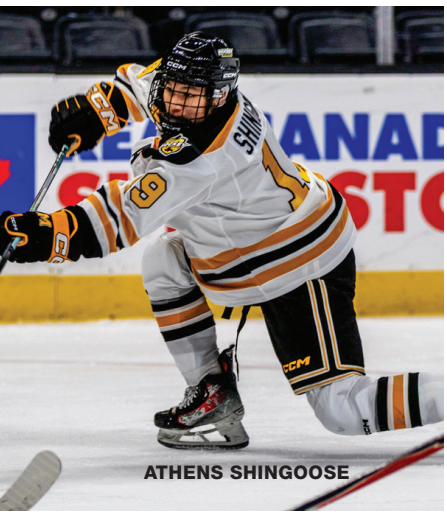
Let's meet those players below – as described by Coach Borse:



COACH
JEFF BORSE



DYLAN RUSSELL



ATHENS SHINGOOSE



BRADY FILMON



GRAHAM GARD



JAMES STANTON

DYLAN RUSSELL – FORWARD (RED DEER REBELS – FOURTH ROUND, 76TH OVERALL)

"We called Dylan our Swiss Army Knife. He's a forward with the RINK, a similar position there too, where he can be a centre or a winger. We utilized him all throughout the lineup, whether it was on the first line, the fourth line, power play or penalty kill. That's just the type of player he is. He's a leader amongst leaders. Just a very bright individual who's got a good future ahead of himself."

"He's got a good package with him where he can get into corners and muck it up, or he can be offensive and put up some points. He's responsible in his d-zone and there's a lot of attributes to his game that I like. Sure, he gets the goals and assists, but he did a heck of a job making sure that puck stayed out of our zone so we could get those chances to put pucks in the net on the other side."

ATHENS SHINGOOSE – FORWARD (PRINCE ALBERT RAIDERS – FIRST ROUND, 16TH OVERALL)

"Athens has always been a goal scorer and he sure was at this tournament; he really produced. He's a very good skater, which he was able to use to his advantage and speed up the game and transition really well."

"He has a knack for the net and a certain selfishness for that, which is what you want with those sorts of players, you don't want them looking off opportunities. So, when it came, he took advantage and he was able to pot a few. He really drove the offence in the group."

BRADY FILMON – FORWARD (PRINCE ALBERT RAIDERS – THIRD ROUND, 62ND OVERALL)

"So, we used Brady as a winger, off and on on the power play as well. He worked through the first, second, and third lines, depending on what we needed. He's a good skater and has these bursts of speed that can get some defence backed up on their heels. And on top of that, he can also make plays."

"But what we relied on from Brady was pushing the pace. Getting the play up the ice, defending hard, and then getting back up the ice and kind of getting these guys on their heels and make them work 200 feet every shift. He did a real good job. We challenged him to work in the corners and muck it up. He did a great job of doing that, which aided with a lot of the offence."

JAMES STANTON – DEFENCEMAN (MOOSE JAW WARRIORS – THIRD ROUND, 60TH OVERALL)

"So, there were a couple guys ahead of him, but James was a very good, steady, defending penalty killer, who knew his role and filled it well. He shut down some of their top-end guys, moved puck north and blocked some big shots. He is a very understanding player of what his attributes are and where his success comes from. And he played to it, as well."

"Being a role player, especially in these environments where you might not be getting the top-end minutes like you normally would, James did a really good job of encouraging players, you know, being a cheerleader of sorts when he wasn't on the ice. He did a good job keeping the boys motivated going forward, and we needed that."

GRAHAM GARD – FORWARD (LETHBRIDGE HURRICANES – FOURTH ROUND, 87TH OVERALL)

"Graham, we utilized him as a third or fourth line guy. And man, he played his role to a T. He's a big fella. Just a big, heavyset kid. He loves the grind. He loves getting into the chaos and creating battles and working pucks up and down the walls."

"We used him as a penalty killer. He started to thrive once he understood about being patient and not being too aggressive and hungry to get after it – sitting and waiting for chances, he did a real good job as a penalty killer out there.



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50 Things to Do This Winter in Manitoba

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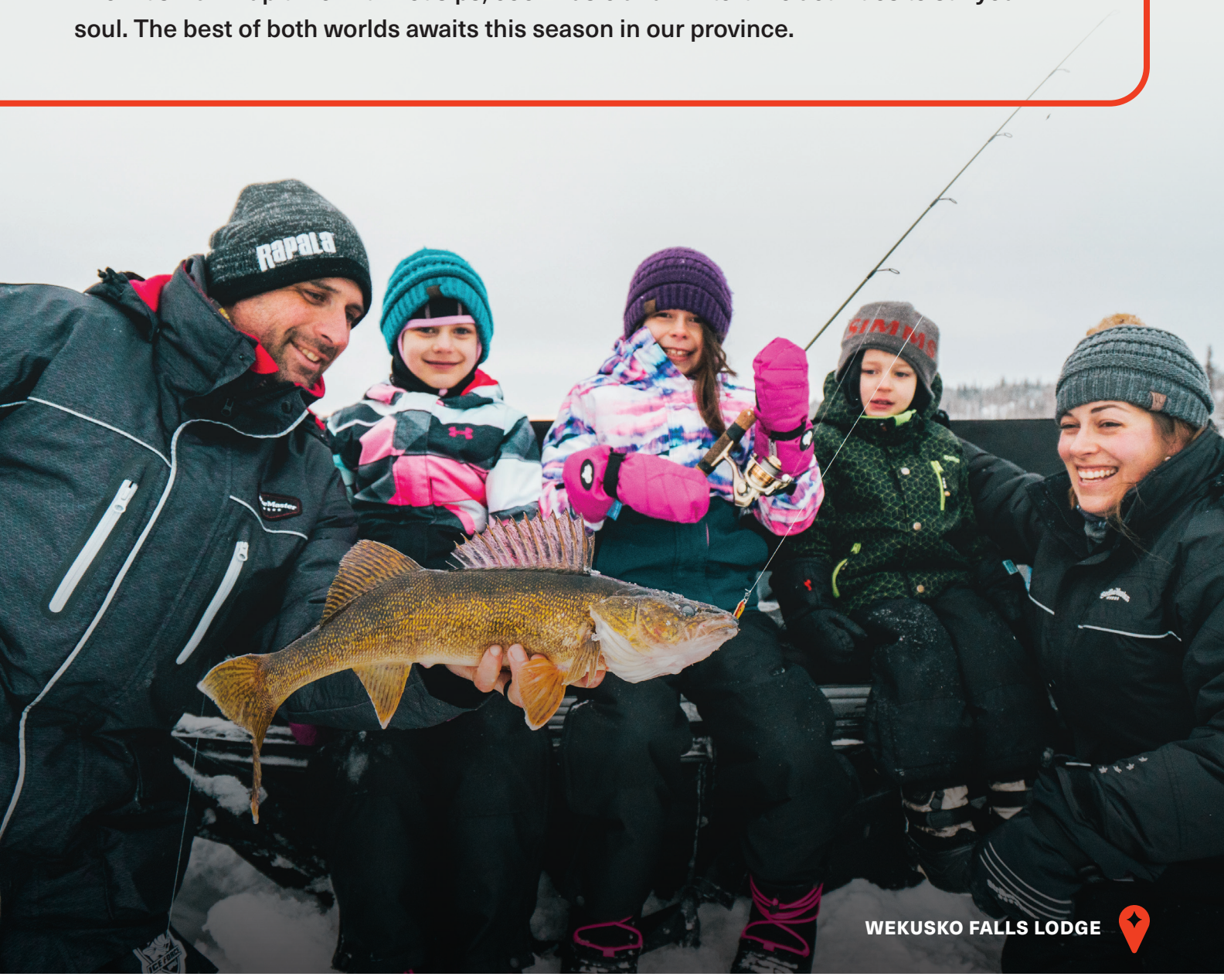
Whether you slide into skis, lace up skates, drop a fishing line or hop on a snowmobile, our wide-open spaces make it nearly impossible to resist the call of the great outdoors. Then it's warm-up time with hot sips, cool music and wintertime activities to stir your soul. The best of both worlds awaits this season in our province.



Soak, Sip and Savour the Season

1 Dip your toes in the warm waters at **Klar So Nordic Spa** at Elkhorn Resort in Riding Mountain National Park. The steam room feels like heaven after a dip in the cold plunge pool!

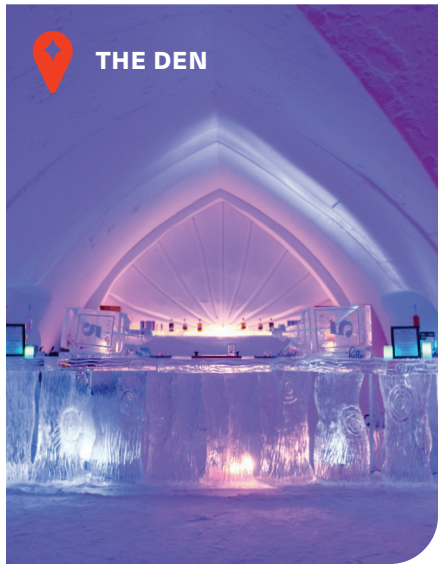


2 Do brunch on a lazy weekend! Check out **Pauline** for Florentine eggs benedict, **Clementine** for chorizo verde tostada and **Danny's All Day Breakfast** at The Forks.

3 Sample zero proof cocktails at swanky stops in the Exchange District including **Rosé Coffee & Wine** for an espresso martini and **Patent 5 Distillery** for the Razzle Dazzle.



4 Book it to the best bakeries for winter warm-ups like cinnamon buns at **Tall Grass Prairie Bakery**, applejacks from **Goodies Bakery** and homestyle donuts from **Gunn's Bakery**.



5 Dine at **The Den**, a cavern made entirely out of snow, hosting a world-class dining experience in St. Adolphe catered by some of Manitoba's finest chefs.

6 Shop Winnipeg's Indigenous boutiques including the new **Anishinaabe Girl** and **Teekca's Boutique** for handmade gifts and custom creations. Have a snack and cocktail at **Sharecuterie**.

7 Stroll Osborne Village for an afternoon of retail therapy and sweet treats at the iconic **Baked Expectations**.

Bright Lights and Winter Nights in Winnipeg

8 Lace up and cruise the **Nestaweya River Trail** at The Forks. Not a skater? You can walk, ice bike or cross-country ski instead.





9 Warm up inside the collection of **Warming Huts** and see what winners of the annual art and architecture competition have created along the Nestaweya River Trail at The Forks.

10 Gear up and climb the **ice tower** in St. Boniface with a little help from your friends at the Club d'escalade de Saint-Boniface.

11 Mugs, bowls and platters from the potter's wheel await as you learn the art of hand-built pottery. **Workshops** happen at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

12 Did you know that the first floor of **WAG-Qaumajuq** is always free to visit? Shop, eat and view nearly 5,000 stone carvings in Ilavut, the glass vault.



13 Update your wardrobe in The Exchange with warm winter wear from **Canadian Footwear**, vintage treasures from the **Clothing Bakery** and slow fashion from **Simone Rose** and **Anne Mulaire**.

14 Fly high and have some fun at Winnipeg's indoor trampoline and adventure parks including **Flying Squirrel**, **Fun Park** and **The Rec Room**.

15 Explore Indigenous art and culture with visits to **Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art**, the **HBC Museum Collection** at the **Manitoba Museum** and the **Indigenous Perspectives gallery** at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

16 Rent a pair of snowshoes from **Wilderness Supply** then hit the **trails** in Winnipeg and beyond.

Festivals and Fairs, oh my!

17 It's Canada's largest festival dedicated to contemporary art and music. Grab a ticket for **Winnipeg New Music Festival** from January 21–29.

18 Take in the exquisite Royal Winnipeg Ballet performance of **T'əl: The Wild Man of the Woods** on tour this January and February.

19 Sample over 250 entries in the **Winnipeg Whiskey Festival**, March 6 and 7. Join a workshop to increase your knowledge of the spirit.

20 Dog sled races, sparkling ice castles and plenty of Northern hospitality abound at the **Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival** in The Pas in February.

21 Workshops and screenings entertain multimedia lovers at **Freeze Frame's International Film Festival for Kids** in March.

22 See world-class show jumping, heavy horse competitions and top-notch live entertainers at the **Royal Manitoba Winter Fair** in Brandon over spring break.

23 **Winterupption** is your excuse to leave the house for hot music and art this January. The multi-venue festival transforms several Winnipeg neighbourhoods into hub of live music, performance, and connection over six days.


NORTHERN MANITOBA TRAPPERS' FESTIVAL

24 Make it Morden for the annual **Multicultural Winterfest**. Ice carving, skating and plenty of indoor performances along with delicious food await.

25 Get your fill of piping hot pea soup, savoury tourtiere and maple syrup rolled in snow at **Festival du Voyageur**.



PHOTO: FESTIVAL DU VOYAGEUR

Northern Lights and Winter Wonders

26 Look way up under the auroral oval to see winter's most colourful show in Churchill. The **northern lights** shine brightest in February and March. Book dinner at Dan's Diner, a pop-up restaurant during high season where panoramic windows and skylights overhead offer optimal aurora viewing.







27 Experience the raw beauty of the north by booking a night's stay on the ice in the **Aurora Pod at Bakers Narrows Lodge**. Enjoy activities like snowmobiling, ice fishing, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing (rentals available) by day, then stay up late and marvel at the spectacular northern lights.

28 Skate under twinkling lights at Wasagaming's outdoor rink, tucked among the towering trees behind the visitor's centre in **Riding Mountain National Park**.

29 Pull up a stump for storytelling and toasted marshmallows over the campfire at **FortWhyte Alive** on weekends. Learn to ice fish or rent cross-country skis or a fat bike and hit the trails.

30 Manitoba is home to The Guinness Book of World Record's largest **Snow Maze**! Snow sculptures, a snow mountain for tobogganing, bonfires, a giant luge run, snow games and hot chocolate make for a great day in St. Adolphe.

31 Spend the day at **Birds Hill Park** where the resident deer population is in no short supply along the hiking, biking, snowshoe and cross-country ski trails.

32 Be a birder! Take part in the Global Bird Count, February 13–16. Check in with **Nature Manitoba** for the details.

Winter Road Trips and Hidden Gems

33 Visit the town of Arborg for a skate on the Icelandic River, treats from the **Arborg Bakery** and a cozy stay at **Our Tiny Hideaway**.

34 Escape to an eco-luxury glamping pod at **Navigate Pinawa**, located across from the historic Old Pinawa Dam.

35 Winter camping is a thing! Head to Riding Mountain National Park for your choice of **oTENTiks**. Or stay overnight at **Turtle Village**'s cute casas, conveniently located within the Wasagaming campground.

36 Book an overnight winter glamping and dogsledding adventure with **Harness Adventure Mushing Co.** You'll slumber in a queen bed inside a winter-walled tent with a wood stove to keep you warm.

37 Get away to Falcon Lake with a beautiful boreal stay at **Falcon Beach Ranch**, **The Hotel at Falcon Lake** or **Falcon Trails Resort**.

38 Delightful Dauphin is waiting, with a soak in the hot tub at the **Best Western Plus Dauphin** after your day of retail therapy with stops at **Hippie Mama Gifts** and **The Prairie Corner**.

39 Call a dome your home during a weekend at **Wild Skies Resort**, where the new wood-fired sauna is waiting to take away winter's chill.


TURTLE VILLAGE


HARNESS ADVENTURE MUSHING CO.

40 Dine inside the Spruce Hut on **Lakehouse's** patio this winter in Wasagaming. Start with the Manitoba charcuterie board to kick off your culinary adventure.

41 It's a waterpark wonderland! **Lakeview Hecla Resort** (Hecla Island), **Days Inn** (Steinbach), **Canad Inns Destination Centre** (Brandon), **Best Western Plus** (Dauphin) and **Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott** (Winnipeg) all have wet and wild indoor fun.

42 Keep your swing in check with some virtual golf at **The Golf Dome**, Stonewall's **The 19th Hole** or the new **Happy's** in West St. Paul.

43 Brandon's **Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba** is always free and open to the public, with a gift shop stocked with irresistible treasures. While in Brandon, skate **the Oval** and explore downtown.

Heart-Pounding Winter Fun

44 Load up the sled and head for **Buffalo Point Resort** where the groomed and treed trails await avid snowmobilers. Stop for lunch at **Fire & Water Bistro**.

45 Burn off some energy at the **Hylife Back Forty Multi-Use Trail Park** in Neepawa. It's open for fat biking, walking, tobogganing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. In town, sample Filipino treats at **Lola's Bakery**.

46 Do some Manitoba downhill skiing with visits to **Mystery Mountain Winter Park** in Thompson, **Holiday Mountain Resort** in La Riviere or **Asessippi Ski Resort** near Russell.

47 Go for a cross-country ski, snowshoe or fat bike ride along one of the nearly 130 kilometres of winter trails at **Riding Mountain National Park**.

48 Head to Beausejour to see the fastest racers on tracks and skis at the **64th Canadian Power Toboggan Championships** in March.







49 Do **The Floppet**! Held at **Falcon Ridge Ski Slopes** on March 7, the Floppet ski race winds through the boreal forest of Falcon Lake, providing stunning views and plenty of fun.

50 Drop a line at an ice fishing derby. Hot chocolate and big prizes await at **Riverton Ice Fishing Derby**, **Gimli Ice Fishing Derby**, **Winter Fish Off** at Falcon Lake or the **Jimmy Jackfish Ice Fishing Derby** in The Pas.



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TEAM MANITOBA'S ATTICA SOBERING ALONGSIDE CAPTAIN LINNEA MISNER WITH THEIR NAHC GOLD MEDALS IN KAMLOOPS.

A DYNAMIC PRESENCE

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos by Nick Lacoste, Lucas Rotondo and Darryl Gershman

Dale Bear knows he's a very fortunate hockey coach.

Bear, who has been head coach of the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council's Indigenous Female Team Manitoba for more than a decade, is coming off a 2025 gold medal-winning National Aboriginal Hockey Championship tournament in Kamloops, B.C. Over the last four tournaments, Manitoba has won two golds, a silver and a bronze medal and is always one of the most dominant teams at the event. Bear himself has four gold medals, two silvers and three bronze medals since joining Team Manitoba as an assistant coach in 2015.

According to Bear, however, the key to Manitoba's consistent success at the NAHC is not so much the coaching – although the coaching is quite good – but the fact that Manitoba always has outstanding players.

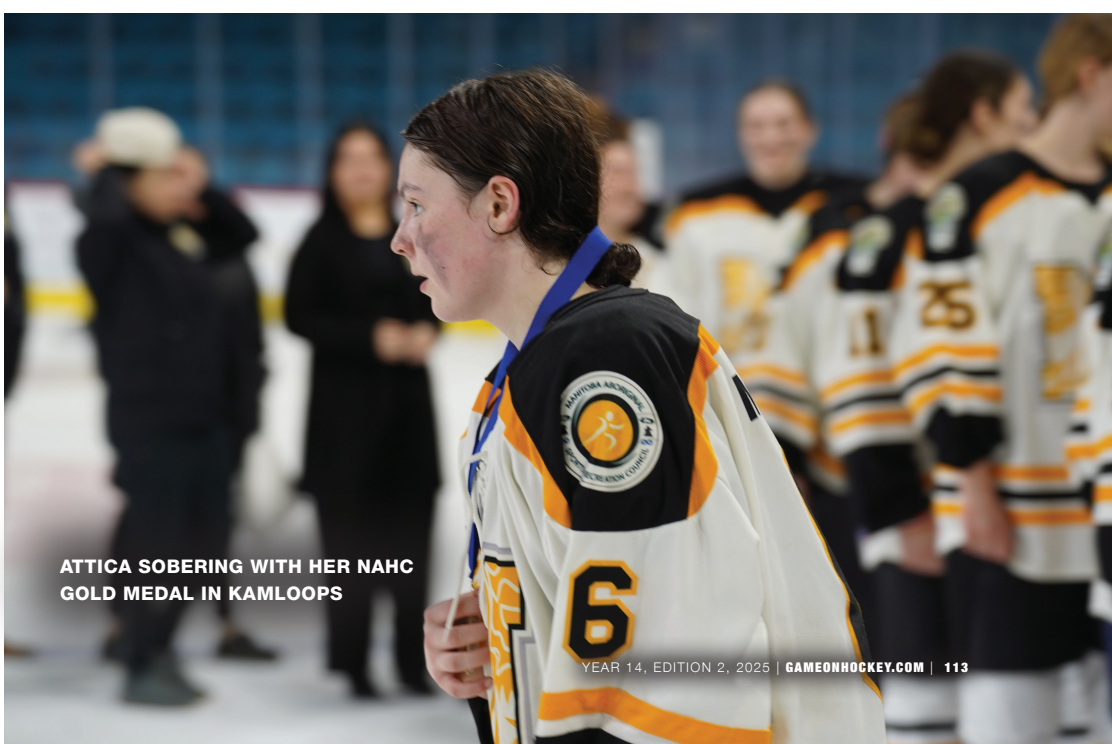
And one of the young stars of that 2025 championship team was defender Attica Sobering. Not surprisingly, her presence just adds to Bear's good fortune.

"She is one of the most well-rounded players I've ever coached," Bear said. "She knows every part of the game and she's strong at pretty much every aspect of it. It's crazy how good she is. It's like they say, she can do it all. I bet you if you put her in net, she could be a goalie, too.

"You know what the best part is? She's only 16, so I'll have her on the roster in 2026 and 2027. This is a Grade 11 player who has already committed to play NCAA D-1 at Cornell. She just loves the challenge and there aren't many girls with as much intensity as her. She's going to give you that intensity on every shift."

A REMARKABLE 2025

Sobering has had a pretty remarkable 2025. She finished her first season on the U18 Prep team at the RINK Hockey Academy in Winnipeg, won gold at the



ATTICA SOBERING WITH HER NAHC GOLD MEDAL IN KAMLOOPS



TEAM MANITOBA'S ATTICA SOBERING TOP, FOURTH FROM RIGHT GIVING THE NO. 1 SALUTE

NAHC, and played on Hockey Manitoba's Provincial U18 team that finished fifth at the National U18 Championships in Newfoundland in early November.

In fact, Sobering's assistant coach with Team Manitoba, Aaron Kaatz, had high-praise for the 5-foot-7 defender from Thompson.



"Her participation in the U-18 Female Nationals highlighted her dedication, skill, and competitive drive," Kaatz said. "She consistently demonstrates a level of focus and intensity that sets the tone for her teammates and shows the leadership qualities of a player ready to make an impact at the next level.

"On the ice, she brings a strong competitive edge, battling for loose pucks, applying smart pressure, and making plays under pressure. Her defensive instincts are exceptional, using both her stick and body effectively to disrupt plays, control passing lanes, and maintain strong positioning. These skills not only help shut down opponents but also create opportunities for quick transitions and offensive support. She has also shown a willingness to jump into the play, timing her involvement to contribute to the attack and create scoring chances from the back end. Her confidence and game sense make her a dynamic presence in every shift."

PLAYING BOYS HOCKEY

Sobering grew up in Thompson, played boys hockey for most of her life and has had very little problem adjusting to life in the big city.

"I played all my first 13 years of minor hockey in Thompson and then played one season with the Norman Northstars, the boys AAA team," she said. "I played boys hockey, every year except one, I tried girls' U15 AAA in Thompson, but the team folded so I went to the boys' team the next season. Then I moved down here to Winnipeg for better opportunities, came to RINK and everything has turned out really good."

In between, she played at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships and at the National U18 Championships and has high praise for the NAHC.

"That is definitely one of my favorite tournaments and one of my favorite teams to play with," she said. "It's a short-term competition, so you can feel the pressure on you, but the coaches are amazing.

"They are supporting and uplifting and they make me feel seen and validated. I just loved every second of playing at the NAHC and the team was just awesome. Just got to know all of them and it was just awesome. The competition was amazing, a lot better than I expected and it was just super fun. I feel like our team had so much belief in each other and that's what really helped us and pushed us to get that gold medal. It was awesome.

"I just loved the coaches. They're awesome. I haven't known them very long, but they've been supportive non-stop. They're not just my coaches, they're like my friends. I feel like I can talk to them about anything. I'm really excited about playing in 2026."

Sobering's day-to-day coach at the RINK is Ed Mauro, an experienced coach from Ontario who took over the RINK's female U18 Prep team in 2023. He calls Sobering, "a high-skill player."

"She played boys hockey and that's how I first saw her play," Mauro explained. "She's a really talented player. Right now, with a scholarship to Cornell, she's learning how to play at the next level. The next two years she will have to put the work in to be prepared.

"She's a high-skill player who has a lot of talent. If we can just tap into the right avenue, she's gonna be a dominant player at university."

Mauro believes it was beneficial for Sobering to have played boys hockey for as long as she did. In fact, Mauro feels that having some experience

playing male hockey is good for female players.

"Yes, one hundred per cent," he said. "If they are not able to be age-advanced, I think they should. The female game is growing at a phenomenal rate and I've found that at the younger ages, the best female players are not being challenged enough. Girls that have played boys hockey, are just a little more advanced. You can see it with a 16-year-old player like Attica."



ATTICA SOBERING WITH THE RINK HOCKEY ACADEMY

A LAW SCHOOL FUTURE

As much as she loves hockey, Sobering is getting ready to play NCAA D-1 hockey for so much more than the game itself. Although only in Grade 11 at Shaftesbury High School, she's already planning to go to law school. Her mom. Melissa, is a para-legal so the profession has always been part of Sobering's young life.



"Yes, right now I'm thinking about law. I want to be a lawyer," she said. "And I'd like to stay in sports, so maybe something like a sports lawyer would be a goal. It's a good job, obviously and it will definitely set me up for a successful life.

"But I'm also thinking about playing in the PWHL one day. That's my dream."

She's off to a pretty good start. She loves playing at the RINK and with all the amenities that come with the program, from Testify Performance to the Canadian Sport School Hockey League, it's a perfect place to get the experience required to be successful at the next level.

"The coaches are awesome, super supportive," she said. "Anything I need help with, they're there. They're very open to talking.

"And then the facility is what really drew me in. I mean, we skate every day and work out every day. We get the nutritionist and mental health coach, so it's a great routine. I just love everything about it."

Both Bear and Mauro brought up an interesting point. Sobering is so skilled offensively that perhaps she'd be more successful as a forward. After all, last season, as a 15-year-old defender, she had nine goals and 25 points in 29 games. This year, she already has four goals and 14 points in RHA's first 10 games. She also had two goals and three points in five games for Team Manitoba at November's U18 Nationals. She can score.

"My coach (Mauro) talked to me non-stop last year," she said. "He was really trying to push me to go for it, but I just love the defensive part of the game. I mean, I can join the play. I can break the puck out and be the quarterback. But I'd like to think of myself as a very offensive defenceman, and I just love that part of the game.

"Although, I've thought about being a goalie. At the end of the season last year, we had a little fun game, so I decided to get into some goalie gear and do a little switch. I think I killed it. I'd like to think that the only thing holding me back from becoming a goalie is the cost of all the goalie equipment."

According to Coach Kaatz of Team Manitoba, Sobering has a bright future.

"Looking forward, she has the potential to become an elite two-way player at the highest levels," Kaatz said. "Her combination of competitiveness, skill, and hockey IQ gives her the ability to influence the game in every zone. With her work ethic, leadership, and drive to compete, she has all the tools to become a dominant and inspiring presence for any team she represents.

"Her performance at Nationals is just one glimpse of the impact she can have in the future. By continuing to build on her strengths and embrace every opportunity for growth, she is positioned to make a lasting impression in the game and reach her full potential as a standout player and leader."



BLAZERS HEAD COACH
AARON KAATZ

BREAKING THE ICE

BY JENNIFER PAWLUK
Photos by Darryl Gershman and James Carey Lauder

BALMORAL HALL IS INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY STARS.

Women's hockey is more than a game. It's a movement. Across Canada, young girls are lacing up their skates with dreams of playing at the highest levels: first in collegiate arenas, then under the bright lights of professional leagues.

Balmoral Hall School understands those dreams need role models, resources, and a roadmap to success.

This year, the Winnipeg girls school celebrates its 20th season at the highest levels of junior women's hockey in North America, most recently with the Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL).

When a young girl sees someone who looks like her hoisting a championship trophy or signing a pro contract, it changes everything. Today's stars, whether competing in U SPORTS, NCAA tournaments, or skating in the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), are paving the way for the next generation. They prove that women's hockey isn't just a niche sport; it's a thriving, competitive and inspiring career path.

The Blazers' legacy, including alumnae Bailey Bram, Jenelle Kohanchuk, Taylor Woods, Kati Tabin, and Corrine Schroeder, is a testament to the growth of the sport at the grassroots level.

HOW WE CARRY THE DREAM

Inspiring the next generation isn't just about cheering from the stands. It's about investing in development programs, advocating for equal resources, and amplifying the stories of women who've made it to the top. It's about mentorship with collegiate and professional athletes who can share their advice, encouragement, and connections. It's about challenging stereotypes, ensuring that every girl who dreams of hockey knows her dream is valid.

This is the sprit in which Balmoral Hall School has inherited the role of hosting the annual Female World Sport School Challenge (FWSSC), a long-standing tournament formerly organized by St. Mary's Academy.

"When you consider the impact of hosting a tournament like this one," shared Bryan Williams, interim director of hockey, "Balmoral Hall School has been at the heart of growing the game here in Manitoba for a long time, even before any of today's student-athletes were born. Right now, this is their moment. For them, and for those to follow, FWSSC is a tradition we're pleased will continue on home ice at Hockey for All Centre."





LILY SPURELL

SHINING STARS TO LIGHT THE PATH

Defence Emilie Bonin, 15, is one of seven former SMA Flames who is looking forward to playing in the tournament again following a move to the Blazers.

"I'm excited," said the 5-foot-9, Grade 10 student. "I played in it last year and there were a lot of things that go on. It's not just games and it's real inclusive for everyone, too. This year, there's a skills competition and a banquet at the end."

The Blazers' head coach Aaron Kaatz believes Bonin has a bright future.

"She's a great, strong, smooth-skating defence," he said. "She's very, very smart. You can see that she can read plays very well and makes good first passes – everything that you want with a good defender on your back end. I like to say she's a very good two-way defence, where a lot of them are usually either a defensive defenceman or offensive where we kind of get both sides from her. We utilize her in a lot of different situations, whether it's powerplay, PK, offensive zone trying to generate something or defensive zone if another team is trying to push. We can easily rely on her because she's strong in all areas.

"The ceiling can only continue to increase because she's going to get better and better each and every year. So, by her Grade 12 year, I can imagine her being a top, top defence in our league."



EMILIE BONIN

Once she graduates, Bonin hopes to be playing hockey at a university either in Canada or the United States.

Along with Bonin, the other former SMA Flames who joined the Blazers this season are: Payton Henwood, Jakiah Curle, Kaitlyn Harvey, Hudson Bradley, Sasha Coutu, and Kate Chuback.

Chuback, however, is a unique case. She started playing for St. Mary's in Grade 9.

"Then, I left and I played on a team in Florida when I was in Grade 10 and 11," she said. "I was looking for someplace new after St. Mary's, so I decided to go to a showcase event in Florida. Then, I kind of just connected with the coach and it was, like, new opportunities. So, I decided I would just try it out and it was great the two years I was there."

Chuback, 17, actually attended St. Mary's while commuting to join the Florida team to different showcases in Detroit, Washington, Ontario, and Florida.

"I just met them there and sometimes practised with them, but not too much," said the high-scoring, 5-foot-6 forward. "It was fun. It was a really cool experience, but I just wanted to come home when I was in Grade 12 and just stay and play.

"At Balmoral Hall, I just love the girls and the team. I have a better connection with them. I have support from the school, and I also like the coaching. It's more hands-on. Our coaches are supportive and very detailed in what we do. And I just really love it. And it also appeals to be in Winnipeg, which is a big, big plus."



KATE CHUBACK

WORKING HARD TO SUCCEED

Chuback has become a leader amongst the close-knit Blazers.

"She came to us with a lot of skill and a lot of offensive talent and that has been on display here this year," Kaatz said. "She's always in and around the net. She's got a great shot and she's got good vision. She can make good plays. She's got a really good work ethic. So, that is something that is great to see. She helps out and kind of drives the bus for us because she kind of helps control momentum.

"(She's) a great team player, as well. No matter what the situation is, if we need to rely on her and get something done, she's willing to step up and be able to do that. Nothing is outside of her comfort zone, and she's willing to do whatever it takes to help get the team to where we want to go. So, it's been great having her here. It's a big relief whenever she gets the puck and we're always hoping and expecting that it's going to be a goal. That's the type of player she is; she can be a game-breaker for us."



Chuback is so good that a number of Canadian and American universities had recruited her before she committed to University of British Columbia.

"For one, my brother goes there as he used to be part of the golf team," Chuback said. "Also, the schooling is great. It's in Canada. I think that was a big thing, too. There's a lot of false narratives on going to Canada for girls' hockey, but honestly, it's the same high-level competitiveness. I just feel more comfortable in Canada, and the team is great. It's real strong this year, so I'm set for next year."

Chuback is also looking forward to playing in the FWSSC tourney in January again.

"I'm really excited about that," she said. "I haven't played in it since Grade 9, but it was a really cool experience. It's a great spotlight for girls' hockey in Winnipeg as far as exposure. It's great for young girls, too, who can come and watch all of the teams that they could potentially be on."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Mark your calendars for January 22–25, when the Blazers along with eight other teams will compete for the title of 2026 FWSSC champion at Hockey for All Centre, and until then follow @bhblazershockey for updates.

"I'm also really excited about playing in the tournament," added returning Blazer Lily Spurrell, 17, when asked about playing in her first FWSSC. "I'm really happy that we're hosting it. I think it will be a great opportunity for us as a team to show our skill and definitely have some fun and face some challenges like the skills competition."

The 5-foot-3 defender, who calls Clarenville, Newfoundland home, welcomed her new teammates with open arms.

"They have helped our team tremendously," Spurrell shared. "We've gained a lot of good players coming from St. Mary's. Some of the (Blazers) girls were already very close with them and that made the adjustment a lot easier, and we all formed a connection at training camp. We all became very good friends and it's really beneficial to have them on our team this year."

"They all have varying skill sets or strengths," said Kaatz. "They really help complement the team to try different things."

Regarding his first opportunity to coach at the FWSCC tourney, Kaatz believes its true prestige lies not in the victories, but in the opportunity to ignite passion for the game.

"It's about creating opportunities for girls to dream big," he said. "Twenty years ago, playing professional hockey seemed impossible for most girls. Today, it's a real goal.

"The future of women's hockey is bright, but it depends on us as parents, coaches, educators, communities, and fans to keep the momentum going. Let's show the next generation that the ice belongs to them, too."

—with files from Jim Bender


PILOT MOUND
BUFFALOES
PILOT MOUND
HOCKEY ACADEMY



GENERAL MANAGER NICHOLE COLLINS HAVING LUNCH IN THE DORMS. THANKS TO COLLINS, PILOT MOUND HOCKEY ACADEMY IS ABOUT TO GROW ONCE AGAIN

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Pilot Mound Hockey Academy

GROWING

BACK IN 2015-16, PILOT MOUND STARTED ITS HOCKEY ACADEMY WITH ONE TEAM THAT WAS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN SPORT SCHOOL HOCKEY LEAGUE'S PREP PROGRAM. NOW, THE LITTLE HOCKEY ACADEMY THAT COULD IS BECOMING A POWERHOUSE AS IT PREPARES TO ADD TWO NEW TEAMS THAT WILL EXPAND NOT ONLY ITS SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA COMMUNITY BUT ALSO THE GREAT GAME OF HOCKEY.



THE PMHA DORMS AT NIGHT



DINNER IN THE DORMS

Nichole Collins is well aware of the fact that if a business isn't growing, it's falling behind.

The general manager of the Pilot Mound Hockey Academy also knows that in order to keep building a successful academy and also provide as many players as possible with the opportunity to stay at the school and watch their own hockey dreams expand, that more opportunities need to be added.

Right now, PMHA has four teams – U15 Male Prep, U17 Male Prep, U18 Male Prep and U18 Female Prep. Pilot Mound has long wanted to expand that roster of teams, and now, with Nichole at the helm, it appears that new U15 and a U17 male teams will soon be added.

"We will still have our Prep programs," Nichole explained. "These two teams are a hybrid, considered as varsity or AAA calibre in other leagues. We are just awaiting confirmation of acceptance of these two new teams into the CSSHL for the 2026-27 season and are very excited to hit the road with 40 more student athletes wearing the Buffaloes logo.

"With the addition of two more teams, our academy becomes a complete hockey development pathway for male student athletes, enabling them to stay at PMHA from Grades 8-through-12," Collins continued. "This broadens our ability to place a student athlete on an appropriate team based on their skill level and where they are in their own individual hockey development journey."

"For example, there are always smaller players on the U15 Prep team that aren't quite ready to jump right to U17 Prep because it's faster, the players are bigger and it's a big jump. So, this new U17 team is the perfect next step. The student athletes will receive the exact same hockey development experience and will continue to develop and move forward based on their own individual progression level. The two extra teams provide more options for families to stay at PMHA and continue to play at their own pace and on their own level."

For the GM, one of the most important aspects for the expansion is that by adding two teams, more young people will be able to stay in the Pilot Mound community and that makes good business and community sustainability sense for everyone in the area, not just PMHA.

"What we've seen in the past is that some of the student-athletes who weren't ready to step up from U15 Prep to U17 Prep either had to go back to their home organization or to another academy that offered these programs," Nichole said. "They've had to leave our program, and we don't want to see that anymore. We want to keep them here. We want to keep them in the same school and as part of the PMHA family. So, we're pretty excited to have these new teams joining us so we can complete that pathway for every young student-athlete who wears the Buffs logo."



NICHOLE COLLINS IN THE TEAM LOCKER ROOM.



THE PILOT MOUND GYM AND TRACK



THE U18 LOCKER ROOM

"The CSSHL has had these divisions within their overall league for years and we're excited to now be part of every division in the premier league in Canada. All six teams will have the exact same hockey development experience on and off the ice, the same number of hours on the ice, in the gym, the same pathway to graduation and the same citizenship development and community volunteering requirements. We are super excited to have 120 student athletes be part of this amazing opportunity for personal growth and to be part of our PMHA family."

This will be an ideal situation for every stakeholder involved.

"I think we're in a good place in the league now," Colllins said. "We've worked hard over the last couple of years to increase the quality and breadth and depth of our teams, as well as our seat at the league table. We will always strive to keep improving, because if you aren't growing you are standing still, and we aren't even close to done with that growth of quality and reputation yet."

Although everyone at Pilot Mound is excited about the pending expansion, it's not quite as easy as just starting up two new teams and sending the student-athletes out to practice and play. Collins has indicated they will ice the U17 team next season and the U15 team in one-to-two years.

As well, this means that at PMHA, two new coaching staffs will have to be hired and new dormitory space will have to be constructed for what is essentially, 40 new players. Oh, and this type of expansion doesn't come cheap, either."

"We have to start recruiting, marketing and getting our coaching staff in place," Nichole said. "We hope to have that done in the next couple of months so the coaches can get to work on recruiting the team. Of course, we've got student athletes on the U15 Prep team that are ready to move up.

"In the meantime, we are currently preparing for construction on the dorm expansion. We will break ground, ideally, on April 1, 2026, as soon as it thaws enough to start building a new wing on the dorms, which are designed for three wings and six total dorms. We hope to have everything ready for a Sept. 1, 2026, move-in date then we'll plan the third expansion thereafter."

This is obviously a huge undertaking.

"We're also looking at our staffing needs," she said. "Everybody's excited and on board, but we've also been waiting for this for a long time. It's a little scary to jump into, but we know it's the right move -- scary meaning that it's growth and we've learned to embrace that feeling with excitement and pride."

"It's also the right move for player retention because we've had to send so many kids away or home because they weren't ready for this jump from U15 Prep to U17 Prep. These two new teams will keep so many more student-athletes in the community, in the school, in our academy, and as part of the PMHA family. We're super excited for that."



THE OLD LOCKER OF TEAM CANADA'S CARSON CARELS

WESTERN MARBLE GRANITE & TILE:

We're building more than just beautiful surfaces. We're investing in young hockey dreams.

In Manitoba's dynamic landscape, Western Marble Granite & Tile stands as a pillar of quality and craftsmanship, renowned for providing premium stone surfaces that elevate homes and businesses.

However, beyond their commitment to exceptional materials and design, the company, under the leadership of President and CEO Jeremy Mathison, harbours a deep-seated passion for community enrichment, particularly within the realm of youth hockey.

For Mathison, who is also the owner of Western Marble Granite & Tile, hockey transcends the boundaries of a mere pastime. He sees it as a powerful force for fostering community spirit, instilling invaluable lessons of dedication and teamwork, and providing a platform for young athletes to cultivate their skills and aspirations.

This philosophy is deeply embedded in the ethos of Western Marble Granite & Tile, driving their commitment to supporting the development of aspiring hockey players within the region.

While the company's expertise lies in transforming spaces with exquisite stone, their impact extends far beyond the countertop. Western Marble Granite & Tile actively champions youth hockey initiatives through various avenues. This often includes financial contributions that help to offset the rising costs associated with equipment, ice time, and travel for young players and their families. By alleviating some of these financial burdens, Western Marble Granite & Tile ensures that more children have the opportunity to participate in the sport, regardless of their economic background.

Furthermore, their support can extend to sponsoring local teams and leagues, providing essential resources that contribute to the overall quality of youth hockey programs. This might involve helping to fund coaching development, ensuring access to adequate facilities, or supporting tournaments and events that showcase the talent and dedication of young athletes. Western Marble Granite & Tile's involvement often goes beyond mere monetary donations, fostering a genuine connection with the local hockey community.

Through these multifaceted efforts, Western Marble Granite & Tile contributes significantly to the vibrant tapestry of the local hockey community, nurturing the next generation of athletes and fostering a culture of teamwork and dedication that extends beyond the rink. The company's commitment underscores a belief that investing in youth sports is an investment in the future, building stronger individuals and a more connected community.

Western Marble Granite & Tile's dedication to both their craft and their community paints a picture of a company that understands the importance of giving back. Their support for youth hockey is a testament to their belief in the power of sport to positively influence young lives, mirroring the same dedication to quality and excellence they bring to their work.

In Manitoba, Western Marble Granite & Tile is building more than just beautiful surfaces; they are helping to build dreams on ice.



JEREMY MATHISON, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF WESTERN MARBLE GRANITE & TILE AT THE WMGT RINK AT WINNIPEG'S HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE.

Photos by James Carey Lauder

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Business is rock-solid for Western Marble, Granite & Tile, which laid its foundation in 1977 as a small family-run business. Since 2013, the company has flourished under new owners, who are proud to maintain its personal approach to doing business. With its continuous growth, comes a new showroom and indoor warehouse. This new showroom allows customers to shop for materials in comfort with the use of state-of the-art technology to see their project come to life! The production facility has expanded, allowing its industry-leading turnaround time and quality to increase and improve even more. Offering one of the largest showrooms in Manitoba, the space is stacked with display racks. Stone samples are available for customers to sign out and take home. That way, clients can see first-hand how the selection will look under their own lighting and in their own space. For added convenience, hundreds of tile sample boards can also be signed out and returned. The showroom features a computer station where customers can browse an extensive inventory and receive a 3-D rendering of their project. As well, customers can browse through thousands of in-stock granite slabs, which are all entirely unique in flow, grain and colour.

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PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

It's the Holiday Season and there is a lot going on. I picked up our photographers' notebook off the floor of hockey for all centre last week and it looks like there are gifts for all the good little girls and boys.



1.

1. *Game On* was thrilled to be a part of the unveiling of the brand-new Winnipeg Victorias mural on the side of the World-Famous Palomino Club near Portage and Main in downtown Winnipeg. The Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame and artist/designer **Jen Mosienko** did a superb job honouring Winnipeg's three-time Stanley Cup champions.



2.

2. **Rio Pierre** committed to play NCAA D-1 hockey at Robert Morris University last year, but she made it official in October, signing her letter of intent to join fellow Indigenous Team Manitoba medal-winner, Linnea Misner, and play for the Colonials next season.

3. Just after completing shoulder surgery that ended his 2025-26 season (out six-to-seven months) with the WHL's Swift Current Broncos, Winnipeg's **Peyton Kettles**, 18, signed a three-year, $2,625,000 entry level contract with the NHL's Pittsburgh Penguins. Kettles was selected by the Pens in the second round (39th overall) of the 2025 NHL entry draft.



3.

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Scott Stroh, Darryl Gershman, Scott Taylor, James Carey Lauder, the Winnipeg Jets, hockey for all centre, the NCAA, Images on Ice/Hockey Hall of Fame, Andy Larocque

4. Winnipeg's own **Rowyn Street**, 16, the captain of the Rink Hockey Academy Winnipeg, is the leading scorer in the U18 Female Prep Division of the Canadian Sport School Hockey League. Up to the end of November, this former member of the U15 AAA (boys) Winnipeg Wild, had 17 goals and 38 points in just 16 games.



4.

5. **Denton Mateychuk** of Dominion City, the 21-year-old defenceman with the Columbus Blue Jackets, just returned to Winnipeg and was the best Blue Jacket on the ice. Although his team lost 5-2 to the Jets, Mateychuk saw 21:07 minutes of total ice time and was plus-one with two shots and a blocked shot. He has a great career in front of him.



5.

6.



6. St. Adolphe's **Avery Pickering**, the Balmoral Hall grad and 5-foot-10 sister of Pittsburgh Penguins' 6-foot-5 defenceman Owen Pickering, is having another outstanding season at NCAA D-1, No. 12-ranked Colgate University. The Molecular Biology Major and two-time Academic All-American, is a junior defender who has three goals and eight points in her team's first 16 games of the campaign. A brilliant student, her plan is to get a biomedical engineering degree and then, perhaps, go to medical school. It's not like she won't have options.



7.

7. **Ben Roulette**, the former captain of Indigenous Team Manitoba and a gold medal winner at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship in Winnipeg in 2023, is the leading scorer in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League through November. Roulette, who hails from Rivers, MB, has led his Waywayseecappo Wolverines into playoff contention in the West Division. He had 13 goals and 35 points in his team's first 25 games.

8. Winnipeg's **Hudson Thornton** is a freshman playing 22 minutes a night for the NCAA D-1's Bemidji State Beavers. However, he took a long road to get there. The former star at the RINK Hockey Academy played three seasons with the WHL's Prince George Cougars and then played a year of pro hockey with the ECHL's South Carolina Stingrays and Orlando Solar Bears, before returning to school this fall. It's a hockey journey that is taken only rarely.

9. Last year at the University of North Dakota, Winnipeg's **Jayden Perron** had 10 goals and 19 points in 31 games. This year, after jumping into the NCAA's transfer portal and arriving at the University of Michigan, Perron (a 20-year-old junior) already has five goals and 16 points in just 16 games and is on pace for a point-a-game season. Sometimes, you just need a change of scenery.



8.



9.

10.



10. Cypress River's young superstar, **Carson Carels** of the WHL's Prince George Cougars, leads a group of seven Manitobans on the National Hockey League Central Scouting Bureau's list of top draft eligible players. Carels, who will represent Canada at the 2026 World Jr. Hockey Championship is listed as an 'A' Prospect, meaning he should be selected in the first or second round of the 2026 NHL Entry Draft. **Brek Liske** of Beausejour (Everett, WHL) is a 'C' Prospect while **Kaden Allan** of Hamiota (Spokane, WHL), **Zach Lansard** of Ste. Anne (Regina, WHL), **Josh McGregor** of Brandon (Swift Current, WHL), **Peyton Shore** of Winnipeg (Red Deer, WHL) and **Daxon Yerex** of Oak Bluff (Swift Current, WHL) are all listed as 'W' Prospects.

11.

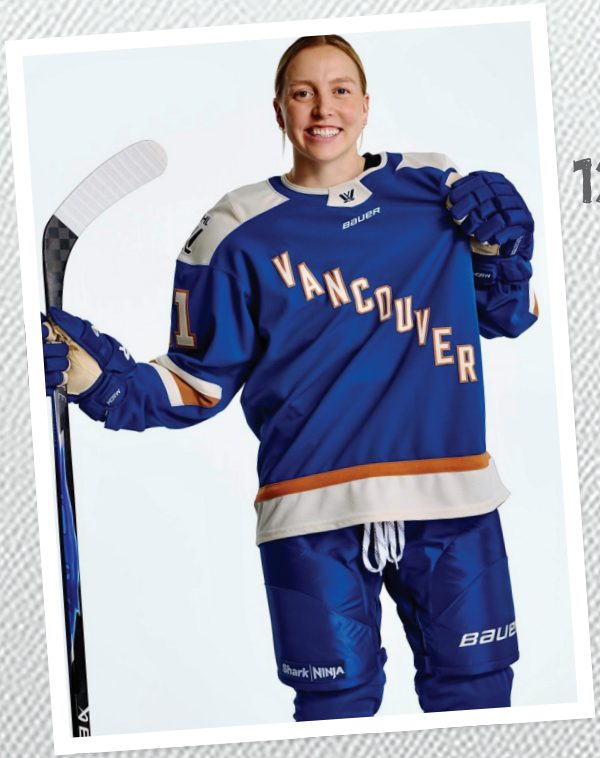


11. Winnipeg's **Seth Jarvis** continues to be one of the best forwards in the NHL. Jarvis returned home to Winnipeg on Nov. 21 and had a goal and was plus-one in 20:18 of total ice time as he led the Carolina Hurricanes to a 4-3 win over the Jets. Then, in the rematch a week later, he had a hat-trick as he led the 'Canes to a 5-1 victory. Jarvis had 15 goals in his first 25 games this season.

12. Deloraine's **Ashton Bell**, 25, a member of Canada's National Women's hockey team has found a home in Vancouver. Bell, who grew up playing for the MFHL U15 AAA and U18 AAA's Westman Wildcats (two-time league MVP), was drafted out of the University of Minnesota-Duluth by Ottawa (eighth overall) in 2023. Last June she was selected first overall by the Vancouver Goldeneyes in the 2025 PWHL Expansion Draft and then signed a two-year contract extension in August. She was named the team's inaugural captain prior to the start of the season.

13. In the summer of 2025, Winnipeg's **Kyle Bettens** went into the NCAA transfer portal and moved from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, where he had spent three seasons, to Northern Michigan University. He has three assists in 15 games this season. This year, Bettens joined Oakbank's **Caiden Gault**, as the two Manitobans on the Wildcats roster. Next year, there will be six more. Lac du Bonnet's **Benson Hirst** (Moose Jaw Warriors, WHL), Lorette's **Avery Laliberte** (Waterloo Blackhawks, USHL), Shoal Lake's **Cole Hunter** (Waywayseecappo, MJHL), Winnipeg's **Brody Green** (Steinbach, MJHL), Oakbank's **Reece Gault** (Victoria, BCHL) and Winnipeg's **Owen Warnick** (Victoria, BCHL) have all committed to NMU. Of course, the Wildcats' head coach is **Dave Shyiak** from Flin Flon.

12.



13.



14.



14. Last month, **Chantal Larocque**, an honored member of the Manitoba Indigenous Sports Hall of Fame, played for +35 Team Canada at the World Masters' Ball Hockey Championship in Bratislava, Slovakia and brought home a silver medal. The USA beat Canada 2-1 in the final, as Larocque scored Canada's only goal and was named Player of the Game. She finished as the tournament's leading scorer, with four goals and 10 points. Her dad, **Andy Larocque**, was one of Canada's assistant coaches.



LOWRY LOCKS IN FOR LIFE

The Winnipeg Jets have made their intentions known: Adam Lowry will be a Jet for life. On November 19, general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff and his crew officially finalized the contractual agreement with Captain Lowry on a brand new, five-year extension running through the 2030-31 season, which will expire when Lowry is 38 years of age.

The deal features an annual average value of $5 million, totaling $25 million over the course of his five-year agreement.

"I'm thrilled to be staying," Lowry said. "Winnipeg was the only team I really wanted to go to, I want to stay with the same organization. I had the privilege of playing here my whole career and I want to finish my whole career here."

Set to become a free agent this coming offseason, Lowry's camp opted to continue working on the contract through the season after not coming to an agreement this past summer. One would have to think that the captain's ability to get back into the action and continue producing in his typical form following offseason hip surgery played a role in the timing.

Having missed the team's first 12 games as he continued rehabbing his hip, the 32-year-old centre made his debut on Winnipeg's third line for its season-long, six-game road trip beginning November 4 in Los Angeles. Lowry scored his first goal of the season against the Columbus Blue Jackets on November 18 and signed his new contract 24 hours later.

"Winnipeg is a great community and Manitoba is a great province, so to have that support, to get to represent the city, it's truly an honour," he added. "If you ask anyone in here, playing in Winnipeg is special. The fans and the community is what makes it special."

Selected 67th overall in the third round of the 2011 NHL Draft, Lowry was named team captain in advance of the 2023-24 season, and has gone on to help Winnipeg to a league-best 120 wins and 250 points, while owning a league-low 2.4 goals against average per game.

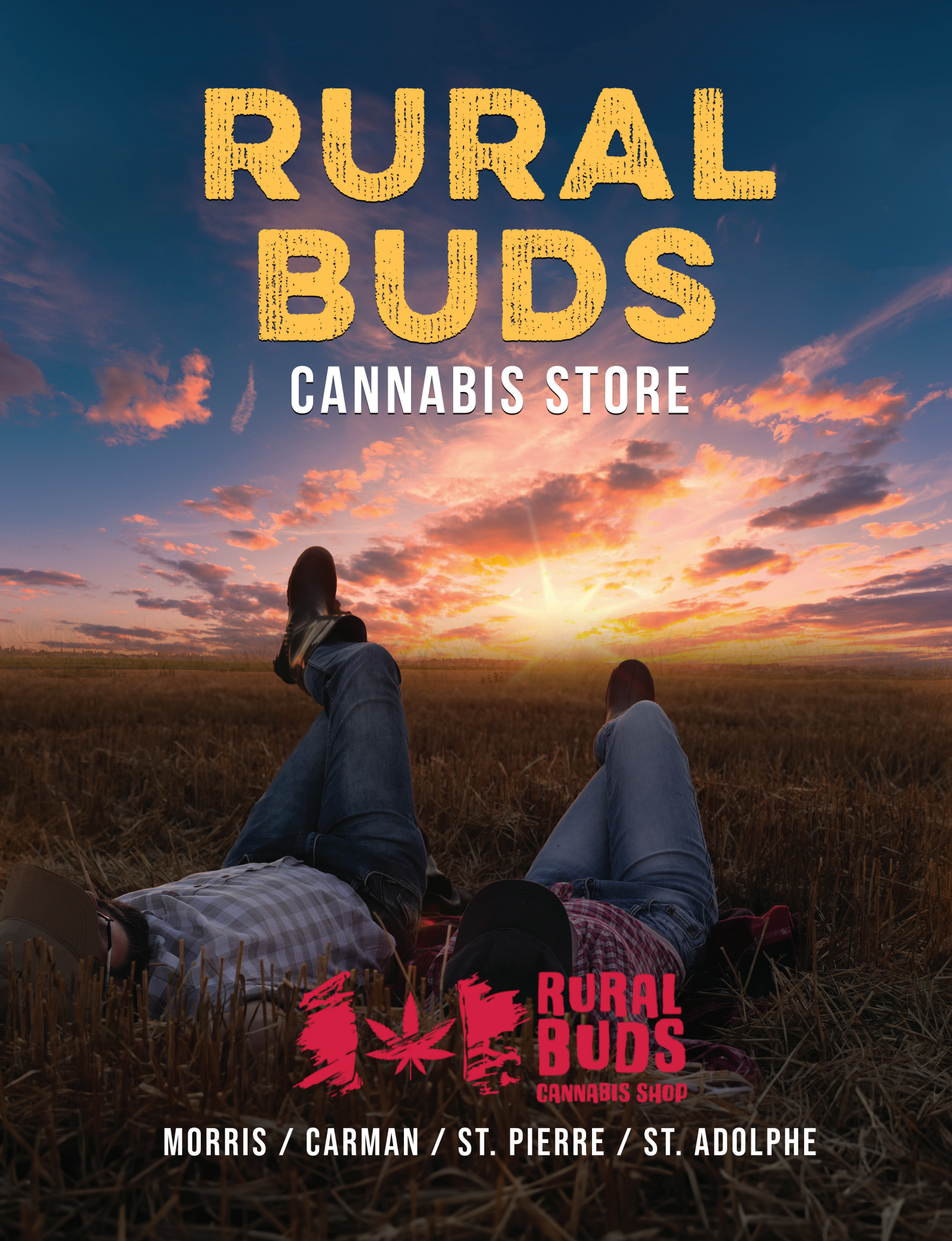
Lowry produced at a career-best rate last season, scoring 16 goals and putting up 34 points in just 73 games. He has averaged 35 points over the past three seasons. He also matched a career-best four playoff goals last spring.

In 782 games for Winnipeg, Lowry has 122 goals, 276 points and 420 penalty minutes, plus an additional 15 goals, 24 points and 37 penalty minutes in the postseason.



ADAM AND CARTER SHARE A LAUGH MID-INTERVIEW IN LOWRY'S STALL

Photo by James Carey Lauder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