



No pain, no gain

Aman Dhaliwal competes in the toe to bar challenge during the CrossFit Open at Milton's Reebok FirePower CrossFit. Wrapping up tomorrow evening (Friday) the CrossFit Open is a five-week series with a different challenge each Friday. *Graham Paine / Metroland West Media Group*

Dodson headed to D-1's Alabama-Huntsville

An all-round sparkplug with the Canadians — who once again finished first in the regular season, capping a 50-12 campaign on March 12 — he finished tied for 10th in league scoring with 24 goals and 40 assists.

He ranked among the CCHL's best in both shorthanded goals and game winners, scoring six of each.

"We all knew Andrew was going to be a D-1 player... it was just where and when," said Canadians owner and coach Jason Clarke, whose captain will join the rebuilding University of Alabama-Huntsville Chargers this coming fall — offering what he feels is the best opportunity to make an immediate impact at the collegiate level. "I think what makes me most proud of Andrew is how he has grown into such a fine young man. His personal growth as a person off the ice is what has allowed him to become the player he is on the ice." Those comments refer to the mental toughness developed from battling back from illness and injury — including a dislocated shoulder and bicep tear that required season-ending surgery in December 2015.

"It was definitely stressful watching the

playoffs, especially with us getting back to the (national) Royal Bank Cup," recalled Dodson, whose 2014-15 campaign saw him sidelined with pneumonia and then suffer a broken hand in his first game back. "I think I came back this season with an extra chip on my shoulder, wanting to prove myself again."

Proving one's self can be a tall order — even under ideal circumstances — when you're part of a demanding organization like Carleton Place.

"It's very structured and demanding," stressed Clarke, whose program includes daily gym work and video sessions, two-hour practices each day and requires players to take at least two university courses. His Canadians lost in the RBC Cup championship final in both 2014 and '15 before a tough 0-3-1 run last spring. "We are developing student athletes, not just hockey players."

That club mindset certainly isn't lost on Dodson.

"I've been very fortunate. They've (Canadians) done a great job preparing us for the next level," said the Carleton Place captain, one of seven players who've committed to NCAA teams — six in D-1

— this season alone.

While playoff expectations are as high as ever this spring, Dodson's been around long enough to not look past anybody.

"I think everyone wants to upset us and will be bringing their 'A' game. We can't take a night off," noted Dodson, who had a pair of assists in Tuesday's 6-3 come-from-behind win to put the Canadians up two-games-to-one on Nepean (at press time) in opening-round play. "Everyone starts the playoffs with zero points — the regular season doesn't matter now. We have to trust in each other and just bear down."

Dodson and Everson could find themselves clashing in the semifinals or finals next month, as Hawkesbury leads Kemptville 2-1 after a 4-3 overtime victory Tuesday.

Returning to the league after a one-year stint out west with Alberta's Lloydminster Bobcats, Everson has committed to New York's Utica Pioneers and finished fifth in CCHL scoring with 17 goals and 53 assists. This year's RBC Cup will be held in Cobourg, giving each Miltonian a chance to play close to home in front of family and friends.

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