

Papineau key part of

Papineau,
Justin

Bulls' future

Ottawa native already starring for young team

By Paul Svoboda

The Intelligencer

When the Belleville Bulls used their first pick at the 1996 OHL midget draft in Kitchener last spring they not only landed a top-flight talent, they also got a first-rate family man.

Justin Papineau, 16, was initially disappointed when the Bulls nabbed him with the 11th overall pick. A 31-goal scorer in Tier II

for the Ottawa Senators last season, Papineau wanted to play at home. He didn't even attend the draft.

Papineau didn't have a college scholarship deal waiting on the side. He didn't want to stay in Ottawa just to have an instant shot at a Memorial Cup with the highly ranked Ottawa 67's.

"I wanted to stay close to my little brother and sister," he says. "They're seven and 11 and me moving away has been hard on them."

Papineau makes daily phone calls to his siblings. And he tells them he's enjoying his rookie OHL season immensely.

"It's been really good and peo-



Justin Papineau

ple here have been very nice to me," he says.

Papineau has been a solid addition to a young, rebuilding Bulls lineup that features 10 first-year OHLers. In 13 games he had 11 points off three goals and eight

assists before being sidelined with a groin injury.

An offensive player who tries to emulate the moves of his hockey hero, NHL superstar Mario Lemieux of the Pittsburgh Pen-

guins, Papineau is learning quickly that life in the OHL — even for a finesse player — can be rough.

During a recent brawl in Windsor, the 5-foot-10, 160-pound Papineau was accosted by Spitfire rookie Kip Brennan — 6-foot-2, 200 pounds. He received a two-game suspension.

"The speed and size differences (from Tier II to OHL) are not as bad as I thought," he says, "but I've got to toughen up a bit and play more aggressively."

With only a handful of returning veterans in the Bulls lineup this season, Papineau knows this is a Belleville team for the future. Still, he says it's a club that can make some noise this year.

"We've got a lot of rookies and we all know each other and it's really easy to jell," he says. "We got off to a rough start but now we're losing games by a goal. Later in the season, we could come on."

Papineau refuses to set any definite personal goals.

"I just want to take it game by game," he says. "You never know what's going to happen."

Meanwhile, Papineau's groin is being treated on a day-to-day basis. He hopes to play Saturday night when the Bulls make their first home ice appearance since Oct. 19, against the Kitchener Rangers, but his status is currently questionable.

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Nov 8/96