

MacLean looks back on stellar AHL rookie season

By JESSE GRASS

The San Antonio Rampage's season has come to an end, and with it Brett MacLean's first season the American Hockey League. While constantly learning more and more each time he touched the ice, the Port Elgin

native said he enjoyed every second of his time with the Rampage this season.

"My first year of pro hockey was very exciting I enjoyed it a lot and I learned a lot of things from the older guys on the team," the 20-year-old said. "You only get one rookie year so I think you have to enjoy it and soak it in and have fun with it which is what I tried to do."

MacLean didn't let the pressure get to him as he finished fifth in total points for the Rampage, with 40 in 74 games, and also finished second in goals with 21; just one shy of the team leader Jeff Hoggan's 22.

"I was very pleased with my stats for the year," he said. "Scoring 20 goals in this league is a tough thing to do, especially at 20 years old, so I am very happy with how I did and also proud of my accomplishments. I think going into the year 20 was my goal and I am happy I achieved that."

On a team with a losing record, the Rampage finished in eighth with 78 points (two points shy of the Iowa Chops for seventh), MacLean's hard work paid off as he finished with a plus-five rating. He was one of only five regular players with a plus rating.

"I learned how to play the pro game and a more complete game this year," he said. "I worked on my defence and the little areas of the game that didn't matter as much in junior and that this is a job and you have to compete every-day because there is someone out there trying to take your spot."



Brett MacLean

Bulldogs.

"It was awesome to play in Toronto and Hamilton and have some friends and family be able to come watch me play," he said. "It's much easier to get excited for (games close to home) and it was a lot of fun."

He did not disappoint his fans as he scored three goals (one being a game-winner) and added an assist during the two games.

"It was a great feeling to score with them watching," he said. "I think those two games were some of my best games of the year so it was nice to do that with friends and family there."

While this season is complete, and MacLean will have a few weeks off to relax, he said his off-season will consist of hard work to stay in shape so he can continue to improve with the Rampage.

"I think I need to continue to get bigger and stronger to help me against the older guys and be able to win battles for pucks," he said, "and also work on my skating and continue to get quicker which will help me have a better chance at getting to the NHL."

While a number of players from the Rampage had a chance to play with the Coyotes in the 2008-09 season, MacLean is hoping he will get his shot next season.

"It would be awesome to get a chance to be called up," he said. "Right now I know I have set myself up pretty good for next year, but I have to continue to work on my game and prove to them I deserve to be there."

"I'm still young and I know I will get my chance at some point, but for now I just have to be patient, work hard everyday, and when I get my chance I have to make the most of my opportunity."



Above, Miles and Brett MacLean used the resistive-responder technique while training Friday

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Cassidy wins fastest wheelchair race on the planet

Port Elgin's Josh Cassidy stormed to his second major UK road race victory on Friday at the 10th annual Tyne Tunnel 2K International. In the fastest wheelchair race on the planet, Cassidy hit in excess of 46mph on downhill section of the road tunnel under the river Tyne in North East England and completed the grueling climb out of the 2km course in an astonishing 4.04.3, 17 seconds outside the course record. He finished ahead of last year's winner, double Beijing gold medalist, David Weir of Great Britain who completed the course in 4.13.3. South African Ernst van Dyk, the 2007 Tunnel 2K winner, took third place with a time of 4.23.0. The Tunnel 2K gold medal triumph follows Cassidy's win in the prestigious Virgin London Marathon in April this year.

Speaking after the race Cassidy said "This year had the toughest competition in years, and so it was great to come out on top. I was pleased to have a clear win, and also setting a personal best."

"Cassidy won Tunnel 2K in 2008 in

the absence of fellow titans Weir and van Dyk so he wasn't hot favorite to win," said race promoter, David Burdus. "However, his incredible uphill performance and power across the finish line has silenced his critics. Josh is much loved here in the UK and is a deserving winner."

Cassidy, an accomplished illustrator and artist, was commissioned by Burdus to create a stunning new graphic image of the River God Tyne blowing wheelchair racers through the Tunnel to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the race. Prints were handed to the race sponsors and winners with their prizes. Cassidy also took part in the UK Great North Run half marathon against a strong international field on Sunday Sept 19, placing second, just six seconds behind David Weir who finished in 44.49.1. Spain's Raphael Botello Jimenez finished in third in 47.23.0.

Cassidy continues to stamp his authority on the world road racing circuit and can be next seen teamed up with sponsor, Simon Storage, in the Berlin Marathon on Saturday.



Cassidy won gold as he crossed the finish line of the Tyne Tunnel 2K Race.