

Silas hopes for birthday to remember

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Is there a better way for a Canadian kid to celebrate his 18th birthday than to be drafted into the National Hockey League?

That's the scenario expected to play out this Saturday at the Staples Center in Los Angeles when Georgetown South resident Stephen Silas will sit in the stands with his family, awaiting his name to be called out by one of the 30 NHL clubs before the seven rounds are completed.

The 6-foot-1, 190-pound defenceman is listed in the 60th spot amongst North American skaters in the most recent NHL Central Scouting rankings and was one of 100 top prospects invited to the league's Scouting Combine last month in Toronto.

"It's something I've dreamed about all my life and there isn't a day that goes by that you don't think about getting drafted, and now it's here," said the Grade 12 Christ the King Secondary School student.

"Once I found out the draft was in L.A., I thought it might be around the day (of my birthday) and then my mom told me that it was. It's like, what a way to spend it. It will be fun to be there to watch the first round on Friday night, and then I'll hopefully be called on Saturday."

Silas was interviewed by seven teams at the com-

bine in Toronto and has been in contact with almost all of the clubs at some point, although he was a little disappointed that his favourite organization, the San Jose Sharks, haven't been one of the front-runners.

"The teams that we've mostly spoken with are Colorado, Pittsburgh and the (New York) Islanders," he added.

"They all said the same thing. They're really interested in me but they can't promise you anything because of trades or whatever might happen. All it takes is one team to like me and the way I'm looking at it is that it's only going to happen once, so let's just have some fun with it."

Silas finished second in scoring this past season with the Ontario Hockey League's Belleville Bulls with four goals, 45 assists and 61 penalty minutes, competing in all 66 of the team's regular-season games.

A superb skater who can play a shutdown role or anchor the power play, Silas has dedicated himself to a strict off-season training regimen and diet, in order to increase strength and be able to handle the speed and strength of pro forwards.

"Everybody wants to get bigger and faster but there are a lot of things to improve on, like my skating," he said.

"I've put on eight pounds since I came back (from the under-18 Worlds in Belarus), but there's not really

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Stephen Silas will be at the Staples Center in Los Angeles this weekend, hoping his name is called in the NHL Entry Draft. He currently is ranked 60th amongst North American skaters by the NHL's Central Scouting. Submitted photo

Local teen eager to represent Guyana in Gold Cup

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Most young soccer players sitting at home watching the World Cup on television from South Africa this month can only dream of one day suiting up on the international stage.

But thanks to her Guyanese bloodlines, Georgetown teenager Justine Rodrigues is proudly wearing the colours of her father Rick's homeland and has been a starting defender for the Lady Jaguars in their quest to earn the eighth and final berth in the Women's Gold Cup later this year in Mexico.

Should they make it that far, they would face the likes of the U.S. and Canada in the tournament, which doubles as a qualifier for

next year's World Cup in Germany.

First though, the Guyanese must get past Cuba in a two-game aggregate score play-off for the third and final Caribbean berth in Gold Cup playdowns, with the opening leg set for Saturday in Havana. The second game is slated for July 3 in Guyana's capital city, which strangely enough is also called Georgetown.

"What's really ironic is that Rick was born in Georgetown, Guyana, I was born in Georgetown, Ontario, and now she's playing for Guyana, so I guess it comes full circle for Justine," said mom Debra.

The 16-year-old Rodrigues has been a star midfielder and forward for the past few years with Brampton-based Brams United teams, winning three Ontario Cup titles, and

was a standout this spring for Georgetown District High School's senior Rebels.

It turns out that a second cousin of Rick's, Mark Rodrigues of Pickering, is the Guyanese Football Federation women's technical director, and in early 2009, he was recruiting players of Guyanese descent to play for the country's newest national side, drawing mostly from Canadian-based college and university players.

She was invited to play in an exhibition tournament at the Turks & Caicos in Guyana's international debut featuring other Caribbean teams in which she scored twice, and even though she was the youngest player on the roster, Mark Rodrigues felt that her team-tallest 5-foot-7 frame would be

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JUSTINE RODRIGUES

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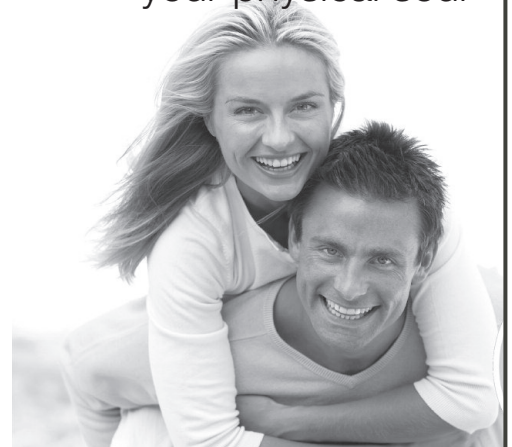
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