

SPORTS

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Georgetown resident Condotta on the rise with Raiders



Eamonn Maher/photo

Local native Lucas Condotta (centre) poses before practice with his Georgetown Raiders' teammates Andrew Cordssen-David (left, 6-foot 5) and Jacob Payette (6-foot-7). The 5-foot-5 Condotta has earned a regular spot on a veteran-laden Raiders' blue line and he'll get a chance to play against his older brother Lucas and the Markham Waxers this week.

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Upon first spotting Jaden Condotta skating with the Georgetown Raiders in the warmup, one might imagine the diminutive defender could be confused for the minor hockey kid chosen to bring out the Canadian flag for the national anthem.

Kidding aside, the five-foot-five, 130-pound rookie's play this season has shown he not only belongs in the Ontario Junior Hockey League, but has next-level potential, according to Raiders' head coach and general manager Greg Walters.

"He's a unique player and his hockey sense is very high for a 16-year-old," said Walters of Condotta, who has six assists this season and is one of just three Raiders who have played in all 27 games.

"We have a special player on our hands. Jaden makes plays under pressure, sees the ice extremely well and his stick in D-zone coverage is exceptional. He's very good right now and he'll be a high-end player if he grows like his brothers did. The sky's the limit."

The Grade 11 Christ the King Secondary School student said he's grown a couple of inches this year and that four seasons of playing a year ahead of his age group at the AAA level in the Greater Toronto Hockey has helped him keep his footing among the redwoods. He also picked up two assists in three appearances as a call-up of the Raiders last season.

Condotta usually plays in defending-league-champion Georgetown's third defensive pairing and is seeing more ice time now that veteran Andrew Cordssen-David has moved up to the forward lines.

"Playing against the big guys doesn't bother me because I've been doing it my whole life," he added.

"If guys are trying to run me, I just play my game and don't worry about it. Just try not to make mistakes and I'll be successful."

Former NHL defenceman Dale De-Gray, now general manager of the Ontario Hockey League's Owen Sound Attack, was impressed enough with Condotta's efforts as a minor midget with the Toronto Titans to select him in the fifth round of this past spring's draft.

Condotta fared well in the Attack's rookie camp and was invited to attend the club's main group in August, although at this stage in his career he's leaning toward taking the NCAA route.

"You keep your options open, but I'm a late bloomer and that's probably a better place for me to develop than the OHL," he said.

"(The Attack) want me to grow and develop here in Georgetown and I think I'm doing that. I just think school is a better fit right now."

The Condottas are well known in GTA hockey circles.

Twenty-year-old brother Lucas is in his final OJHL campaign and is putting up all-star stats as captain of the Markham Royals with 17 goals and 25 assists in 28 games.

The six-foot-two, 205-pound forward recently committed to the University of Massachusetts-Lowell RiverHawks for next season.

Twenty-three-year-old brother Matteo, at six-foot-two, 215 pounds, played three seasons in the OJHL with Orangeville, Pickering and Hamilton.

Dad Joe, who coached the Bramalea Jr. A Blues at one point and his three boys in minor hockey, is the godfather of Dallas Stars' star centre Tyler Seguin. The Condottas hosted a Stanley Cup party in Georgetown in 2013 after the Brampton native won the NHL championship with the Boston Bruins.

As for imminent family matters, Jaden and the Raiders are set to travel to Markham Friday to take on Lucas and the 15-10-1-2 Royals in their lone regular-season meeting this year.

Jaden said he's been looking forward to the contest for weeks and isn't concerned that big brother might run him over.

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