

## MacNeil makes move to join New Zealand pro beach tour

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Local beach volleyball standout Jake MacNeil is putting his studies at the University of Windsor on hold in order to pursue a career in the sand on the professional tour in New Zealand.

The 19-year-old was approached during the summer by a coach from New Zealand, whom MacNeil had met at the 2014 World Youth Olympics in Nanjing China, to see if he'd like to join the pro beach tour and play with a native Kiwi, Nate Moore.

It wasn't an easy decision, MacNeil noted, since the Lancers placed fourth in the OUA championships during his first year, in which the human kinetics major was named to the league's All-Rookie Team.



JAKE MACNEIL

But Windsor coach James Gravelle understood completely that MacNeil's preference is to play the beach game and wished him all the best, as did his Lancer teammates.

A few Canadian universities told MacNeil

during the recruitment process they didn't want him playing outdoors during the summer and that figured largely in his decision to choose the Lancers.

"I can always go back to Windsor if it doesn't work out, but you're not going to get many opportunities to play professional beach volleyball in a country like New Zealand," said MacNeil, who captained the Georgetown Rebels to a silver-medal performance at the 2013 OFSAA quad-A indoor championships.

"It's a really strong tour with a lot of FIVB-calibre teams and they get a lot of fans out for the tournaments. If I play well and have some success I should be able to cover my expenses while I'm there. I just love the lifestyle."

Having embarked for the Southern Hemisphere on Oct. 17, he's been staying with a family in Auckland whom his mother Kelly lived with for three years while she was playing fast-pitch at the club and international level in New Zealand in the early 1980s.

"It's like I'm getting three summers in a row, which I'm looking forward to because I'm not a big fan of winter, so I'll just skip out on the snow for a while," he said.

"I can get out and do some surfing and fun stuff like that, but I'll be doing a lot of training and hopefully learn a lot more from a bunch of coaches down there."

MacNeil has enjoyed success on the beach with London's Andrew Richards as partner the past couple of years, having traveled to Portugal, Puerto Rico, California, Cuba and B.C. together for major events.

He and new 17-year-old partner Craig Ireland of Beamsville placed fifth among the top senior men's teams in the country at this summer's Canadian beach championships in Toronto.

MacNeil plans to return home in the spring to compete on the Ontario Volleyball Association circuit and help coach the Georgetown Impact beach volleyball program for another summer.



One of the top goalies in the Ontario Hockey League this season for the Owen Sound Attack, local native Michael McNiven has earned selection to represent Team OHL in the CHL's Canada Russia Series contest in Owen Sound on Thursday, Nov. 12. Photo by OHL Images

## McNiven faces Russians on home front

An excellent start to his second season with the Ontario Hockey League's Owen Sound Attack has resulted in another invitation for Georgetown's Michael McNiven.

The 18-year-old goalkeeper was named to the Team OHL roster for the CHL Canada Russia Series next month and has been tabbed to play in front of the hometown crowd alongside Attack teammate Thomas Schemitsch in Owen Sound Thursday, Nov. 12.

Team OHL will also play the Russians in Windsor on Monday, Nov. 16.

The series includes two games in the West-

ern Hockey League prior to both OHL dates, and ends with two contests hosted by the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

Signed as a free agent by the Montreal Canadiens last month, McNiven has posted a 6-2-1-1 record in 11 starts with the Attack this season with a 2.21 GAA and a .931 save percentage, ranking him fifth among the OHL's Top Goalies category.

The former Georgetown Jr. A Raider was also selected to play in the 2015 CHL Top Prospects Game in January in St. Catharines as an injury replacement.

## Raiders have close company

With three of their next four games against West Division opponents, the Georgetown Raiders have an opportunity to open up some breathing room in tight quarters.

What had been considered by some to be the Ontario Junior Hockey League's weakest division in the past couple of years, the suddenly wild West has four teams within three points of each other atop the standings, with the 10-5-2-0 Raiders tied with

Buffalo for first place.

Georgetown has a road game Friday in Milton against the 5-13-0 IceHawks followed by the Halloween hosting of the Burlington Cougars Saturday at the Alcott Arena at 7:30 p.m.

Last week, the Raiders skated to a 1-1 tie against the visiting Toronto Jr. Canadiens and lost 4-2 in Toronto to the St. Michael's Buzzers.

**Sat. Oct 31, 2015**  
7:30 pm at Mold-Masters Sports Plax  
**Georgetown Raiders**  
**vs.**  
**Burlington Cougars**

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