



SPORTS



Georgetown defenceman anxious to return to Windy City

Bennett making best of demotion

Adam Bennett is shaking his head these days.

The Georgetown native still isn't sure why he was sent down to the Chicago Blackhawks' International Hockey League affiliate in Indianapolis recently. When the six-foot-four, 208-pound defenceman was at the Hawks' training camp, team officials kept lauding praise on his play.

Then he got the news to start packing for Indianapolis.

"Things are kind of confusing right now," he said recently, shortly after settling into an apartment in Indianapolis. "I had a great camp and they sent me down with a great report card, the kind you'd be proud to show your parents."

"But in this case, that doesn't count. Maybe it's my impatience that tells me I should be in Chicago right now. There's got to be a time when you take the next step, and I felt that was this year for me."

"Maybe there's a reason for this and I'm just not catching it. I guess the lesson to be learned is that patience is a virtue."

Bennett and his teammates at Indianapolis got off to a flying start in last weekend's season opener, taking a pair of road wins from the Fort Wayne Komets.

Playing in Indianapolis is nothing new for Bennett, Chicago's first-round pick in the 1989 NHL draft. He spent all of last season there and was with the IHL club late in the 1990-91 campaign.

But Bennett had high hopes of remaining with the NHL club, especially after being called up for the Blackhawks run to a berth in the Stanley Cup final against the eventual champion Pittsburgh Penguins.

He stuck to an off-season training program that, Bennett felt, put him in the best physical condition possible. However, even the best workouts didn't fully prepare him for the mental rigors of camp.

Bennett's chances of making Chicago's opening-season lineup appeared good when veteran defenceman Keith Brown got hurt. It was a similar situation in last year's Stanley Cup semifinals, when Brown sustained a separated shoulder. Then-coach Mike Keenan, now the Blackhawks' full-time general manager, told Bennett to be ready to play, but the former Raider star never saw the ice.

History then repeated itself during training camp.

"When you're told something like that, you hold a person to his

word," Bennett said. "Now this is two big letdowns, which I guess shows you can't be handed anything."

Bennett also concedes his inexperience and contractual situation (being on a two-way deal) played a role in his being sent down.

"There is a lot of politics involved, which is frustrating," he said. "I think it came down to numbers and contracts."

"It's cheaper to send a guy like me, who is on a two-way contract, down to the minors than it is to send someone who is on a one-way contract and still have to pay him."

"It's really disappointing to go to the IHL because I really thought this would be my year to stick. They (team officials) had said they wanted to give some of the younger guys a shot, but a lot of us were sent down."

"It's almost like Chicago wants someone to step on the blueline and play consistently, but then they really don't give you the chance to do that. When you're young there is an adjustment period needed and I don't think they are giving that to the young guys. There's a lot of teaching to be done, but how can you fit into their system if you're not there to learn from it?"

Bennett's latest setback hasn't soured him on pro hockey. On the contrary.

"I think there's a bright light at the end of the tunnel," he said. "I think I opened a few eyes in Chicago and if anyone gets hurt or problems do arise they won't have any questions about calling me up."

"This was the first camp that I actually felt good about myself. I knew what to expect, which really helped because I wasn't timid and there was no hesitation."

Still, Bennett plans to make the best of his current situation.

"I've had a couple of talks with the coach here and they plan to give me a lot of ice time," he said. "My goals are to stay fit and healthy and prove that I deserve to be with the big club."

"I'll work on my consistency and aggressiveness, and I'm always looking to improve my skating and puck control. With the playing time I'm expecting to get, I should be able to work on all those things."

Yet, for all of the disappointment Bennett has about playing in the IHL, he does admit he's luckier than most.

"I'm still making a living playing hockey and it's still fun," he

said. "It's nice now to be settled in and have a place I can call home and relax in."

"Indianapolis is a nice city and this is still pro hockey."

But don't figure, even for a minute, that Bennett is content in

the minors.

"This is not what I want," he said emphatically. "I was the hungriest when I was at training camp and that was when I really looked forward to stepping on to the ice."

"I'm still hungry to play my

best, but now it's for me to get back to Chicago. I want Indianapolis to do well and I want to be a big part of something like that, but my feelings is that I want to play well because I want to get back into the NHL."



The plates on Adam Bennett's Corvette may indicate 1989 was his year (actually when he was drafted in the first round of the NHL draft by the Chicago Blackhawks), but the Georgetown native will have to wait just a little bit longer to return to the NHL. After being called up by the Hawks during last year's playoffs, Bennett began the 1992-93 season with Chicago's IHL affiliate in Indianapolis.

Hamilton nips bantams 3-2

By Wendi Goodhew

Over the past week coaching staff Jack Moon, Ron Crane, and Chris Goodhew Sr. have been working with the Minor Bantam team.

Saturday saw Georgetown come up against a strong Hamilton team in Georgetown which proved to be an exciting game right to the last minute of play.

The score remained 0-0 at the end of the first period. Both teams had many scoring chances but just couldn't put one by either netminder. In net for Georgetown was John Moon who played awesome, he made saves even the best of the NHL would have found tough.

At 8:54 in the second period Ken Armstrong made one of his deadly slapshots from the blue line and

Jamie Bottomly was right there waiting to add the finishing touch when he drove the rebound by Hamilton's stunned goalie, giving Georgetown a 1-0 lead.

Hamilton answered Georgetown's goal with one of their own at 0:25 of the second period. Hamilton took the lead in the third period at 8:06, then just one minute later at 7:06 Chris Goodhew saw his chance and spun one into Hamilton's net from the blue line, tying the game at 2-2.

Georgetown found themselves playing short for most of the third period when they drew a series of penalties. Hamilton capitalized on this and with just 2:27 left on the clock they scored to make it 3-2 for them. Georgetown fought back and just missed a few times but the

clock ran out.

Up front Fraser Thom, Wes Burke, and Derek Downey played a good game hustling and working hard. Mike Walinga picked up an assist on Goodhew's goal. David Kalbarski, Rob Pilgrim and Steve Markham had some good moves and Gary McNeily just missed a couple. Defensively Dave Welburn and Trevor Crane helped kill some penalties and had a couple of good rushes. Ryan Norman and Ken Armstrong played a strong game. Spare goalie Dave Pearson kept the spirits up on the bench.

This team meets Brampton Oct. 17 at the Alcott, with a few more practises and a few games to get used to playing together this team may be the Cinderella team to watch for in the future.

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