



ON THE ATTACK: Barrie Colts centre Michael Sgarbossa takes on the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors in first-round OHL playoff action Saturday. While the Colts were eliminated that night — in a 4-3 game-five marathon that ended in triple overtime — Sgarbossa had another multi-point outing and wrapped up a strong freshman campaign with three goals and three assists in the playoffs. Teammate and fellow Miltonian Josh Brittain, a third-year winger, had a goal and two assists against the Majors.

SHARON BAMFORD / METROLAND MEDIA GROUP

Leg injury puts kibosh on great rookie season

ECHL all-star blueliner recouping from surgeries

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Elgin Reid knows all about the highs and lows of hockey. Currently, he's deeply immersed in the latter.

The 22-year-old rural Miltonian returned home recently to continue what could be a lengthy recovery from his most serious injury to date — one that, more than likely, has brought his first full season of pro hockey to a premature conclusion.

"We were in Trenton and it was a pretty routine play. I spun off this one fore-check and made a break-out pass when this other guy came in to fore-check and hit his knee into my left thigh. At first it just felt like a charley horse, so I skated off and figured the pain would subside in a few minutes," recalled the rookie defenceman of the East Coast Hockey League's (ECHL) Wheeling Nailers. "The trainer took a look at it and you could see it was swelling up big time. Within two minutes I was in agony and that night I couldn't sleep the pain was so bad."

Facing the same type of injury that forced Cam Neely into early retirement, Reid found himself under the knife twice within a week-and-a-half of the unfortunate collision — first to drain the fluid and repair the damage, and then to undergo a skin graft since with minimal fat on his legs the initial surgery's incision couldn't be closed properly.

"It's pretty much all muscle there and the doctor said this was one time when being in shape wasn't really a good thing. It's kind of weird."

Reid is hardly a stranger to injury — with both shoulders having taken a severe beating throughout a lengthy and at times prosperous OHL career — but this will mark by far his longest stretch on the sidelines.

"A lot of times with my shoulder it was just a case of giving it some rest. This (leg) is a whole different level of injury," said the six-foot, 185-pound blueliner, whose chances for a return to action this spring — even if Wheeling goes deep into the playoffs — are iffy at best.



Elgin Reid

The fact that the injury came in the midst of a productive rookie year in the ECHL makes it even tougher to swallow.

Following a strong camp with the Nailers' American Hockey League affiliate Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, Reid got off to an impressive start in

Wheeling and continued to deliver a big two-way game as the season went on — earning him a trip to January's all-star showcase in Reading, Pennsylvania and a spot on the league's all-rookie team, which was announced Wednesday.

"It's frustrating how a routine play can turn into a nightmare like this. But that's part of the game — more so for some of us than others," said the 2005 Memorial Cup participant, who had 13 goals and 21 assists in 47 games with the Nailers and sat at a plus-13 at the time of his injury. "It's tough dealing with this, but one thing I've learned is that feeling sorry for yourself only makes the rehab time longer. You've got to stay positive."

And Reid does have cause for optimism, with a full recovery expected and the knowledge that he can be an impact player in pro hockey.

"I think I've proven I can play at this level (ECHL), and deserve a shot in the AHL."

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