

Denham among first round Hobey Baker Award nominees

Milton winger enjoying prosperous senior season with Atlantic conference-leading Robert Morris Colonials

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

With rumblings that one of his teammates would likely be a first round nominee for the Hobey Baker Award, Brandon Denham woke up last Wednesday (Jan. 20) expecting a hearty offering of praise to be on his to-do list.

That congratulations wound up going both ways.

"We had heard (Zac) Lynch was going to be a nominee and is very deserving for everything he's accomplished in his college career. It caught me off guard to find out I would also be a nominee along with Zac and Greg (Gibson)," said the surprised and appreciative 23-year-old Miltonian, a point-a-game senior winger with the Pittsburgh-based Robert Morris Colonials who's among the 63 first-round names up for the NCAA's player of the year — with this initial list compiled by coaches. Phase two voting, to get down to the top-10, can be done until March 6 at



Brandon Denham

www.facebook.com/TheHobey. "Obviously it's a huge honour to be nominated for such a prestigious award."

Denham attended his second and third NHL development camps last summer in Pittsburgh and Winnipeg, admitting the experience "didn't hurt" his confidence heading into a final season of collegiate hockey. But that was only part of the experience's value.

Said the 6-foot-4, 220-pound assistant captain, "What they (camps) did do is make me realize what things I could work on to become a better player, and I think I've improved in some of these areas."

Denham's 2015/16 numbers would certainly suggest that.

Sitting tied for 12th in NCAA D-1 scoring with 17 goals and 13 assists in 26 games, he had three points in opening-weekend play — including the Colonials' first goal of the season in a 5-3 win over Air Force — and his longest pointless streak has lasted just two games.

"I think the biggest improvement in my game this year is my patience with and without the puck," noted the soon-to-be business administration graduate, who currently holds a 3.82 GPA and has been on the Dean's List for every semester he's been at Robert Morris U. "I'm willing to stay in plays more or hold on to the puck a little longer, and it has allowed me to make more plays." Of course being a senior on a team with championship potential — having reached the Atlantic Hockey semifinals last spring after claiming the conference title in a rags-to-riches 2013/14 season — has certainly offered heightened incentive for Denham. "This being the last kick at the can as a Colonial has definitely amped up the pressure and the want level to go out with a bang," said the Robert Morris forward, whose team sits 12-4-4 in conference play and 15-7-4 overall — sitting just outside the NCAA D-1 Top-20 rankings. "We have been there before (Atlantic champions) and everyone in our locker room believes we can do it again. Anything less than the trophy will be a disappointment to this group of guys."

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Brandon Denham is delivering a point-a-game senior year with the Robert Morris Colonials. Photos courtesy of Jason Cohn / RMU Athletics

Winter Market fun at TERRA

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