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Torres earns high marks from scouts

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Raffi Torres is honoured that the National Hockey League's Central Scouting Bureau has a high regard for his playing abilities.

At the same time though, the 18-year-old Markham native is not about to let the recognition he recently earned alter his mannerism.

In its first player rankings of the season, the bureau projected the 6-foot-2, 205-pound Torres as being the top prospect from the Ontario Hockey League that will be eligible for the next NHL draft.

Amassing 35 goals and 27 assists last season as a rookie left winger with the Brampton Battalion, Torres is well on his way to eclipsing those figures this year with a team-leading 16 goals and 15 assists in 26 outings.

Torres acknowledged the bureau's recent report caught him off guard.

"I didn't know there would be a ranking and I never expected to be rated high," he said. "I've always thought of myself as being a sleeper. But I was pleasantly shocked."

Making Torres' current ranking even more intriguing was the fact that the Battalion did not select him until the sixth round in their first year of operations two years ago.

"I didn't deserve to go any higher," Torres acknowledged of his selection after playing one year of tier two junior A hockey with the Thornhill Rattlers. "I really didn't dedicate myself to the game back then."

Markham Waxers' head coach Russ Herrington, who had Torres during his time behind the Rattlers' bench, felt that OHL clubs were missing the boat. What the OHL clubs overlooked, Herrington said, was his work ethic and feel for the game. This was especially evident during practice sessions.

"We appreciated him more than the scouts because we saw him every day in practice. He did things in practice that made me shake my head. His overall natural skill was incredible. His hockey sense and smarts were what set him apart."

What Torres did in practices back then with the Rattlers has carried over with the Battalion. And it is here where Torres attributes much of his recent success.

"I've been working on my shooting and I might run every day after practice. The practices have been helpful."

Helping to shape the work ethic Torres has adapted was Battalion head coach Stan Butler. And Torres feels thankful to have Butler looking over his shoulder.

"He comes from a big background of hard work and giving it your all and 100 per cent," Torres said of his coach. "He said practice is like going to school and not getting your credits. What's the point in going to school? I took that into perspective."

Along with having the good fortune of playing for Butler, Torres said much of what he's accomplished would not be possible without good linemates in centreman Jeff Bateman and right winger Lukas Havel.

"They've been getting me the puck and the numbers kept coming. They've definitely helped my confidence."

While Torres is pleased that the scouts have a high regard for him, he realizes the recent rankings can change before the end of the season. Torres refuses to let the rankings interfere with his goal of playing in the NHL.

"I'm not worried about going in the first, second or third round. I just want to get drafted and get it over with."



RAFFI TORRES
Markham native earns rave reviews from hockey scouts

Peewee Waxers ice tourney title

Excellent goaltending and solid defence paved the way for the Markham Waxers peewee AAs to win their second tournament of the season in Sarnia recently with a 2-1 win over Caledon in the title tilt.

The Waxers advanced to the final after blanking the Weston Hawks 2-0 in their first outing.

Following a 2-1 loss to Caledon, the Waxers rallied to edge the rival Markham Islanders 4-3 and Tecumseh 2-0 in its semi-final encounter.



Scoring for the Waxers were: Michael Raynor four goals, two assists; Adrian Gallardo and Trevor Lenders two goals, one assist; Michael Storry-Robertson one goal, two assists; Jeff Weiss one goal, one assist; Kyle Fitzpatrick and Michael Peters two assists; Myles Kennedy and Brett Pearl one assist.

Justin St. Germain and Bobby MacCannell each posted a shutout and received strong defensive help from Daniel Murphy, Aiden Dekkema, Chris Brens, Mick Ralph, Tom Chronopoulos and Adam Gouglas.

Minor peewees bring home the gold

The Markham Waxers South Pacific Clothing minor peewee AAA hockey club captured the Tim Hortons Friendship Tournament in Cambridge recently with a 5-0 win over the Grey Bruce Highlanders in the title game.

The Waxers reached the final after defeating Barrie 3-1, Cambridge 3-0 and S.W. Nepean 6-5 in overtime.

Scoring for the Waxers were: Bobby Hill four goals, two assists; Jeremy Whelan three goals, two assists; Daniel Fanizza two goals, three assists; Riley Hill two goals, two assists; Graeme Murphy one goal, three assists; Chris Guspie and Leland Gauley two goals, one assist; Jered Leslie one goal, two assists; Jake Van Allen one goal, one assist; Alex Levy and Adam Bell two assists and Chris Gubb one assist.

Matt Thompson posted the shutout in the final game while Mark Kubicz earned one in the club's second win.

Clippers tie two, lose one

The Stouffville minor peewee AE Clippers took to the ice in the recent Nordiques Minor Peewee A Challenge Cup and came up with two ties and a loss.

The Clippers battled the Markham Islanders and Humber Valley Sharks, the two second-place teams in the Greater Toronto Hockey League, to identical 1-1 draws.



Facing the Erindale Spitfires in their third game, the Clippers suffered a 3-0 loss and were eliminated from further action.

Scoring for the Clippers were: Zach Popper and Ryan LaDuca, one goal; Brad Hulshof and Cash Nicastro, one assist.

Matt Cartwright played well in goal and received strong defensive help from Greg Boyd, who was the club's Most Valuable Player in their loss to Erindale.

A gym dandy effort

Samantha Katz, 10, had a gym dandy performance at the recent Metro East First Provincial Qualifier in Oshawa.

The Academy of Sport and Fitness performer finished first on floor, second on vault and third on beam to finish fourth overall in the Novice One category.



Among other Academy of Sport participants, Chelsea Jackson, 9, finished within the top six in the Pre Novice category.

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