

MARKHAM PLAYER EXPECTED TO BE CHOSEN IN FIRST ROUND AT CALGARY SADDLEDOME JUNE 24

# Torres pumped over NHL draft

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

There isn't a day that has gone by over the last few weeks that Raffi Torres hasn't envisioned what could happen in Calgary June 24.

It is highly anticipated a National Hockey League club representative will step up to the podium at the Canadian Airlines Saddledome and announce the selection of Torres at this year's entry draft.

The 18-year-old Markham native isn't expected to wait long to hear his name being called over the public address speaker.

"Every night before I go to sleep I think of (the draft). It gets you pretty pumped up," Torres said. "To me, it'll be getting a chance to go into the draft and be drafted. The first round will be on television. It'll be pretty exciting."

The NHL's Central Scouting Bureau predicts the Brampton Battalion left winger will be a high first-round selection.

Torres earned that right after amassing a team-leading 91 points (43 goals and 48 points) with the Battalion this past season in the Ontario Hockey League and 62 the year before.



Raffi Torres, above, is touted as a top pick in the NHL draft later this month. At right, Torres (centre) muscles his way through the opposition in Brampton Battalion play.

In addition to generating plenty of points for the Battalion, Torres has some intangibles going for him, said Bob Tindall, head of player development for the Boston Bruins.

"His character and work ethic will carry him a long way," Tindall said.

The rumour in hockey circles is that Torres will be in the upper ech-



elon of draft picks. This also proves his performance has improved since the day the Battalion took him with its sixth-round pick two years ago in the OHL draft from the Thornhill Rattlers tier two junior A squad.

"I'm really a laid-back and humble person. Inside, it's a boost of confidence for me (to be drafted in

the first round). But I think I've worked pretty hard to go in the first round."

Since the hockey season concluded two months ago, Torres hasn't taken any chances. On returning to his Markham family home from his Brampton hockey season residence, Torres has been a regular visitor to the gym to add bulk to his 5-

foot-11, 193-pound frame.

And with NHL teams hoping to get one last look at potential prospects prior to the draft, Torres recently took part in the NHL's Top 90 fitness testing in Mississauga.

Part of that program had prospects go through interviews by teams that might draft them.

Over two days, Torres was interviewed by 19 NHL clubs.

"I had to answer the same questions, like what would you do with one million dollars and things like that. I thought that I handled myself OK," he said.

As for which NHL team he would like to play for, Torres said it doesn't matter. All he wants is the opportunity to fulfill a dream that started about three years ago when he was with the Rattlers.

However, Torres said he won't be disappointed if he stays to play OHL hockey with what could be a strong Battalion team next season.

"I don't think my goal is to make the NHL next year," he said.

"But I believe in the adage that if you work hard good things will come. I've put hours in the gym and I think I've worked hard to get where I am and to be a good person on and off the ice."

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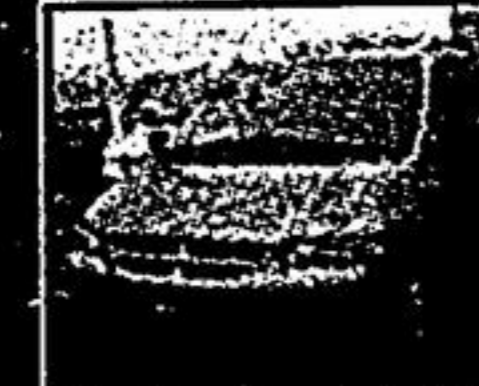
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