

Enforcer likes his chances with Islanders

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NHL rules stipulate a player must sit out a full year of professional hockey before returning from retirement, but Brandon has since played with St. Jean of the LNHA, a semi-pro Quebec league known mostly for its fighting.

So, when the Islanders invited Sugden to camp this summer, four teams blocked his reinstatement bid, based on playing in that league. They have since relented.

It's "not a second chance", Brandon says, always able to laugh at himself.

"More like a 15th chance," he said Monday, between on-ice sessions.

Brandon has a troubled past, including being suspended for life by the East Coast Hockey League in 2001 after he threw a stick into the crowd, a decision upheld by other pro leagues

until an arbitrator overturned it in 2003.

He's tried to stay in shape during his breaks from pro teams by skating with junior teams in Stouffville and Newmarket.

'My father is like me, he has a lot of faith, and I have a family to feed at home.'

Brandon Sugden
NHL prospect

A fifth round draft pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1996, Brandon has yet to play a game in the NHL, but was a feared enforcer with the Syracuse Crunch of the American Hockey League from 2003-06.

"I think I've got a good chance, I really do," said Brandon, who is tough as nails but as polite as a choir boy.

"They want a legitimate NHL

tough guy and I know that I can handle myself with anybody in the NHL. I've just got to prove that I can move around and skate up and down the wing and be a good fourth line player."

"I'm being realistic here, I'm not going to sit out a year at 30, it's not an option. My father is like me, he has a lot of faith, and I have a family to feed at home."

He hopes to play in at least one of the Isles' four remaining exhibition games and has every intention of being on the roster when the team heads home to Uniondale, N.Y., for the regular season next week.

"I really do like my chances," he said. "Considering I haven't been at a real practice for two years, I don't feel out of place at all. I just want to make the best of this chance."

— with files from durhamregion.com and Torstar News Service



PHOTO COURTESY SYRACUSE CRUNCH

Enforcer Brandon Sugden while playing in the AHL for Syracuse in 2006.

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