

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

# SPORTS

## Carrick's promotion to Leafs was no joke

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When Sam Carrick received a text early Saturday with a picture of the Toronto Maple Leafs' locker room with his nameplate on a stall and a message saying his equipment was being sent to the Air Canada Centre, he thought it was a joke.

But when the 22-year-old Stouffville resident received a phone call with the same message from Maple Leafs' assistant general manager Kyle Dubas, he realized it was for real.

For Carrick, a six-foot, 207-pound centre, the call to the big league fulfilled a lifelong dream for the fifth-round draft pick of the Maple Leafs in the 2010 National Hockey League draft. He had been playing with the Leafs' American Hockey League affiliate Toronto Marlies' club.

In fact, there were occasions when he had some doubts if he would make it to the NHL.

**"I just took a moment to look around and think about everyone watching this game like my parents and even my grandparents. It was a pretty cool feeling."**

**Sam Carrick**  
on his first NHL game

The key, he said, was to put in an honest day's effort and be persistent.

"There's ups and downs throughout your career," he said in an interview on Leafs TV. "Two years ago, I was playing in the East Coast League (with the Idaho Steelheads in 2012-13 season). The biggest thing was that I went in there and put my head down and worked hard just to get up to the American Hockey League. Once I got to the American Hockey League, I wanted to do what I had to do to get noticed.

"It's been a long road so far from where I was a couple of years ago to where I am now."

After getting called up, which came largely as a result of a hand injury incurred by veteran Leafs' forward Joffrey Lupul, Carrick had

little time to soak in the moment as he was inserted into the Maple Leafs' lineup later that night in a 3-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks.

Before making his long-awaited NHL debut that night, Carrick arrived at the club's morning skate a little late.

Although he lives close to the Air Canada Centre, he was celebrating his mother's birthday in Stouffville the night before.

"It's pretty surreal," said his mom, Jane Carrick. "With Lupul being out of their lineup it just didn't add up. But Sam must be the type of player they (Maple Leafs) wanted.

"I'll never try to understand the way the Maple Leafs think but I won't complain," she added with a laugh. "He was excited."

During the playing of the national anthems, Sam tried to absorb the atmosphere and thought about those immediate family members who supported him along the way.

"I just took a moment to look around and think about everyone watching this game like my parents and even my grandparents. It was a pretty cool feeling," he said.

"My mindset going in was that I wanted to give out a few hits and even if I got hit once or twice myself that was fine by me. That's what gets me into the game and I just kept on rolling from there."

As a bonus, the play for the most part during that initial shift was in the Blackhawks' end of the ice.

"You definitely don't want the puck in your zone to start with," he said.

Carrick made his AHL debut with the Marlies late in the 2012-13 season after completing that campaign in Idaho. He played a full season with them last season and had 14 goals and 21 assists in 62 regular season tilts and added another five goals and four assists in 14 postseason games.

Carrick was quick to notice there's a big difference in the calibre of play, especially in the pace of the NHL game.

But he was quick to accept it's a natural progression in his learning curve.

After taking a couple of shifts during Saturday's contest, Carrick feels he's not out of place and hopes



TORSTAR PHOTO/DAVID COOPER

Sam Carrick (53) played in first NHL game for the Toronto Maple Leafs in their 3-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks at the Air Canada Centre Saturday. The Leafs play the Colorado Avalanche tonight.

to remain a fixture with the Maple Leafs for the remainder of this season and the foreseeable future.

He's with the Leafs on their trip to Phoenix and Denver this week.

"It's a fast game, the fastest game I've been a part of, no doubt," Carrick said. "But once you get more confidence and comfortable, the game slows down a bit and the puck doesn't bounce off your stick so much. From there it's just a matter of keep on going."

Carrick first played in the house league of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association.

He starred in the Greater Toronto Hockey League and at Stouffville District Secondary School before playing Brampton (now North Bay) of the Ontario Hockey League.



BOB HASSARD

### 'STOUFFVILLE NIGHT IN CANADA' RECALLS HASSARD'S '1ST' GOAL

Stouffville wasn't the host town for Rogers Hometown Hockey broadcast last weekend, but it spent some time in the limelight.

Host George Stroumboulopoulos led off the Hockey Night in Canada broadcast Saturday referring to the 62nd anniversary of a goal scored by Bob Hassard of Stouffville - the first in the very first nationally televised hockey game.

Hassard, who died in 2010, was a member of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Strombo then introduced Stouffville's Sam Carrick who was playing his first NHL game that night, also for the Leafs.

Carrick didn't score but his team won 3-2 over the Chicago Blackhawks.

The Hassard and Carrick family homes were about two blocks apart in east-end Stouffville.

- Jim Mason