

Matt Cruickshank: Once a Wolf, Always a Wolf



2010/2011 was my OHL draft year and I played defense for the Grey Bruce Highlanders (Minor Midget). Even after recording 22 goals and 30 assists, I was still not selected in the OHL draft. However, three of my teammates were selected in the draft. This was very upsetting and although it took away a lot of my confidence in myself and my hockey ability, it never entered my mind to quit, unlike several undrafted players that I knew and had played with for years!

In the summer of 2011, I was fortunate enough to move to Waterloo due to a job offered to my father. I was not selected by any Jr. B organizations for the 2011-12 season, which was a disappointment. After the Waterloo Siskins' tryouts, I found myself being warmly welcomed by a prestigious Major Midget AAA team, the Waterloo Wolves.

Spending the season with the Wolves organization was the best decision my family and I had made in my young hockey career. In the 2011-12 season we went 30-0-2, finish-ing 1st in the league. After personally recording 7 goals and 20 assists in 20 games (mononucleosis kept me off the ice for a while), I was offered OHL tryouts with three teams. After a week of grinding it out at the Barrie Colts camp in summer 2012, I was selected as their 6th defenseman. Although I had been offered the Ontario boy dream to play in the OHL, my family and I decided to reject the offer and consider the NCAA hockey route.

In 2012-13, I played the first part of the season with the Cornwall Jr A Colts in the CCHL but then decided to move back home to Waterloo to be with my family. After not touching the ice for over a month, I ended up joining the Waterloo Siskins. After a very rough and slow start, I began to find my game and finished the season and playoffs on a high note with my former Wolves' teammates and friends Ryan Doucette, Jimmy Soper, Darren Huck, Danny Hanlon and Christian Mroczkowski . At the end of the season I was asked to tryout with the OHL Owen Sound Attack. I attended the camp and was asked to stay with the team however, once again, I did not have a good feeling about the OHL or the education package being offered so declined and left camp before losing my NCAA eligibility!

Currently, I am back with the Cornwall Jr A Colts in the CCHL and enjoying every second of it. Blessed to be playing top minutes and recording 5 goals and 5 assists in the first 21 games is more than I could ask during this time in my career. And just when I didn't think things could get much better, I received a phone call from Hockey Canada inviting me to the Team Canada East hockey tryouts being held in Oakville. After recovering from the shock of the phone call, I began to prepare for the opportunity of a

lifetime. Following four days of hard work and competing, Hockey Canada finalized the roster down to 22 skaters. Being selected as one of those 22 was an honour and a feeling that words cannot explain. Announcing the news to my proud parents and loving family was emotional and one of the happiest moments of my life. The next two weeks I spent being a member of Team Canada in the World Junior A Hockey Challenge in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Wearing the red and white jersey in front of over 2000 screaming fans all dressed in red was an experience of a lifetime. Sharing the ice with many NHL draft picks and NCAA D1 committed players was an honour that would never have been a part of my hockey career if I had not had the opportunity to play with the Waterloo Major Midget AAA Wolves.

Some important notes about the 2011/2012 Major Midget Wolves

- Every player on the team was offered a try-out with a Junior hockey club at the conclusion of the season
- 7 players from the Wolves were offered try-outs with an OHL club
- 5 or 6 players were invited to CCHL Jr A camps in eastern Ontario
- I was able to choose between several OHL team camps, and try-out with 2 different OHL teams
- If you play Major Midget in Waterloo, you have the unrestricted option of playing for any Tier II Jr A team in Ontario the following season. Tier II Jr A is the #1 Canadian feeder league to NCAA
- My parents say it was probably the most enjoyable year of hockey for them

— Matt Cruickshank, 2011-2012 Waterloo Wolves alum

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