

Reed Takes The Road Less Traveled

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Jake Reed – Photo by Julie Whelan Photography

For some young hockey products, the path is simple: get drafted to an OHL club, player Junior B or jump to Major Junior, and then hope to find a professional, or college team to sign you.

For others, including Chatham's Jake Reed, there's an extra step, Major Midget AAA hockey, but it definitely doesn't mean the final destination won't be the same.

Reed, who played 'AAA' for the Minor Midget Chatham-Kent Cyclones last season, went unselected in the OHL draft, and chose to play Major Midget 'AAA' with the Windsor Jr. Spitfires this season to further his development; and according to his coach, former Chatham Maroons star Kyle Makaric, Reed is definitely on the right road.

"Jake is an important piece for the team," says Makaric. "He is a character guy that the players love having in the room. Jake plays both forward and defence, and has contributed offensively at both positions. He is a tenacious forechecker and swings momentum in our favour with big body checks."

The Spitfires are currently first in the Alliance standings, and Reed, who had the chance to play Junior this season, but wanted to assure he played as much as possible this season, is happy with his decision to develop in Major Midget.

“Playing Midget this season has been great and I can do it again next year, but Junior hockey would be my goal for next season,” says Reed, who is Windsor’s top scoring defenseman. “I will be working very hard in the spring and summer to be quicker and stronger. I did have a chance to play Junior this year, but I’m very happy with where I am right now.”

While two of Reed’s OHL drafted teammates from last season in Chatham, James McEwan and Brendan Johnston, are currently playing Junior B with the Chatham Maroons, and have seen OHL action this season, the Major Midget route has proven successful for others in the past looking to play college hockey, or in the OHL.

Chatham Maroons captain Michael Verboom, who recently committed to play NCAA Division I hockey with Mercyhurst University, took the Major Midget ‘AAA’ route, playing a season with the Chatham-Kent Cyclones in 2010-2011 before stepping into Junior B.

Unfortunately for many local hockey players, Chatham-Kent hasn’t fielded a Major Midget entry since, forcing them out of town to London, Windsor, and Sarnia.

According to Makaric, he anticipates Reed will be able to take a similar path as Verboom, stepping into a Junior roster and succeeding very soon.

“As for future plans, in the short term I would love to see him play for the Chatham Maroons next year, as I am a former Maroon myself,” Makaric said of the Chatham product. “With his hockey talents and his dedication to school work, and being bilingual, there is no reason that Jake can’t be a good 4 year Junior player and then play college hockey either here or in the States.”

Despite his long term goals, Reed is focused on the here and now. His team, the Windsor Jr. Spitfires are in first place, and he hopes they’ll be in contention to not only win an Ontario title, but to challenge for a Telus Cup title this April in Moose Jaw, Alberta.

“I have not really thought about next season too much. Right now my team is focused on being the best Midget team in our league and then playing in the Telus Cup.”

Windsor’s regular season will conclude February 2, 2014, when they host the Lambton Jr. Sting.