

Young Bucks Report 2009-10: A Look at the SCHL's junior-aged prospects

Overview: It's time for what I hope will become an SCHL staple. With the ongoing World Junior Championships, I thought it would be appropriate to pen a little write-up on each team's young bucks/prospects. The only stipulation is that players should be **20 years of age or younger**.

Tycoons:

Oscar Moller: Former Chilliwack Bruins sniper was shipped to Manchester prior to the start of the regular season before coming back up to the Kings. Tenacious, skilled center seems destined for a third, or possibly second-line role on the Kings.

Drayson Bowman: Surprise pick by the Tycoons in this September's SCHL draft has been hampered by injuries in his first season of professional hockey. Nonetheless, he remains a bona-fide NHL sniper given his repertoire of shots and finishing ability.

Dmitry Kulikov: Russian youngster made the big squad out of camp and has not looked out of place. Already sports a howitzer from the point and slick skating ability. Like most young defensemen, needs to tidy up his defensive play.

Jawas:

Evgeny Gratchev: Former Brampton Battalion star has played relatively well in his first season of professional hockey. Good size, strength, and skill set. Remains a top prospect for the Jawas.

Bullets:

Tyler Myers: Teams have to be kicking themselves for passing up the lanky, skilled defender. Averaging just less than 25 minutes a game on the Sabres. However, it's his offensive output that has surprised most scouts. Often compared to Zdeno Chara, Myers is a silky smooth skater who makes astute decisions both at regular strength and on special teams.

Flash:

Josh Bailey: 2008 first rounder has struggled a bit, but has come on lately after being reunited with fellow youngster and Flash teammate Kyle Okposo. Possesses great playmaking ability and a high hockey IQ which should enhance the Flash' already deep crop of forwards.

Zach Boychuk: Former Lethbridge Hurricanes speedster has had an up-and-down introduction to the pro game while toiling for Albany in the AHL. Nonetheless, looked good in a brief November call-up to Carolina. Definitely on the horizon.

John Carlson: Powerful all-purpose rearguard has looked impressive in his first full season of AHL seasoning with 24 points in 29 outings. Great skating, shot and size from this first rounder. Not far from a full-time job with the Caps.

Luca Sbisa: Sent back to junior after failing to register a point in 8 contests with the Ducks. Needs to work on this defensive awareness and intensity, but the talent is there.

79ers: N/A (Come on Ash, forget your Zbenek Michaleks and Eric Coles and draft a young stud)

Vanguard:

Lars Eller: Cut by St. Louis out of camp, the Danish-born, Swedish trained center has been impressive in the minors and sniped his first goal in the 'show' during a 5 game call-up. The talent is there, but more seasoning is needed.

Heartbreakers:

Ryan Ellis: Don't let this zit-faced, pre-pubescent looking defenseman fool you. He's a dynamo offensive defenseman who can run a powerful with his eyes closed. Compares nicely to Brian Rafalski. Astute selection by the Heartbreakers. Time will tell if he becomes more than a powerplay specialist.

Gryphons:

Matt Duchesne: Talented youngster with a sublime skillset started slowly, but has come on recently. Just a matter of time before he becomes one of the key cogs for an already packed Gryphons forward core.

Michael De Zotto: Came out looking like Bobby Orr, but has been colder than Snag, Yukon in the winter. Perhaps the most telling stat in his bi-polar rookie campaign is his – 14 rating. Still, coach Torts has faith in him and why not, with his level of skill.

John Moore: First year OHL rearguard impressed out of camp, but was a surprise cut by the US junior team. Did the Gryphons jump the gun on this guy or will they farm him for four years?

Kilts: N/A

Triads:

Sam Gagner: It's hard to believe the 20 year-old is already in his third NHL season. Has tempered expectations a bit with his inconsistent play, but there's no denying his skill level.

Jakub Voracek: Czech sophomore has impressed with his vision and smarts. With Gagner, represents the future of the Triad's forward core.

Goldminers:

Erik Karlsson: Last year's top defenseman at the WJC has experienced growing pains while splitting time between Binghamton and Ottawa. Should benefit from more seasoning, but this slick Swede will be a mainstay on Hesse's blueline and hype machine for years to come.

Shrubdogs:

Jacob Markstrom: Talented Swedish 'tender is currently leading the SEL in GAA and save percentage. Tall, confident ace is one player who could knock Canada from another gold at this year's WJC. Looks like a stud in the making.

Brahmas: N/A (see 79ers)

Tornadoes:

Mikael Backlund: One of the "diapers" on the Tornadoes roster. Has been mediocre for the baby Flames in Abbotsford. Can he harness his top shelf-talent? Time will tell, but you can be certain the Tornadoes will give him time to develop.

Cody Hodgson: Would have been on a lock for the WJC, but has experienced pain and numbness in his back since sustaining a pre-season injury with the Canucks. Could possibly undergo surgery, which would delay his development even more. Nonetheless, the Tornadoes have a stud on their hands.

Brayden Schenn: Luke's younger brother has used the force with Memorial Cup hosts Brandon. Talented all-around center is one of the future pieces for the Tornadoes. Think Mike Richards without the cheapshots.

Magnus Paajarvi-Svensson: Talented Swedish winger is enjoying a breakout third campaign in the SEL. Looks like a poor-man's Peter Forsberg, which is in no way derogatory.

Zach Bogosian: Brawny, first rounder has had an inconsistent sophomore season, but will be a mainstay on the Tornadoes blueline for years to come.

Express:

Jamie Benn: Victoria native has impressed in his rookie season averaging 15 minutes a night. Owns a great shot and excellent hockey sense. Great pick by the Express.

Jordan Schroeder: Minnesota sophomore has oodles of offensive flair, but needs to work on his defensive play. Just a pure offensive talent. Still a few years away.

Joe Colborne: This pick was a bit of a head-scratcher on draft day as the lanky Alberta-born center is a few years away from getting a look with the Bruins. However, he has the size and skill to be a good power forward down the road.

Thomas Hickey: Shipped away by the Flash prior to last year's protection date, Hickey was mediocre with Manchester before undergoing surgery that will keep him out of the lineup for four months.

Horses:

James Van Riemsdyk: Came out flying out of the gates, but has hit the wall recently. Skilled power forward is just scratching the surface of his potential.

Nazem Kadri: Skilled, silky smooth center impressed with Toronto in the pre-season and again upon returning to junior. Compares nicely to Scott Gomez.

Scott Glennie: Has been mediocre on a loaded Wheat Kings squad. Nonetheless, Glennie has all the skills to become a well-rounded power forward with a good touch. Trust the Horses to farm him until he reaches his potential.

P.K. Subban: Dazzled at last year's WJC and has been steady with Hamilton (AHL) in his first pro season. Remains a good prospect, but his end-to-end rushes and "Subbian" spin-o-ramas won't fly at the NHL level.

Spartans:

Colin Wilson: 2008 first rounder has struggled mightily with Milwaukee and Nashville. Still remains an elite power forward prospect, though.

Nikita Filatov: Many predicted a productive rookie campaign for the talented Russian. This problem is Filatov was playing for a prospect killer named Hitchcock in Columbus. After realizing his coach is a cock, Filatov has returned to the KHL for the remainder of the year. I see a trade down the road for the talented youngster.

Eric Tangradi: A surprising pick by the Spartans on draft day. The powerful winger has had a slow start to his professional career. Looks to be a drop at the end of the season.

Assassins:

Drew Doughty: What can I say about Doughty? Already an elite NHL defenseman and Olympian at age 20. Sean has to be doing cartwheels when this guy takes to the ice.

Jordan Eberle: Has lit it up once again in junior and on the international stage for team Canada at the WJC. Elite sniper just needs to work on his consistency and speed. Should be in Edmonton full time next year.

Alex Pietrangelo: Has been in and out of the St. Louis line-up for much of the year. Looks to have a key role on Canada's blueline at the WJC. Great prospect still in need of more seasoning.

Devils:

Steve Stamkos: Has skyrocketed into the upper echelon on NHL snipers. Precocious talent just missed being selected for team Canada, but remains an unbelievable talent. The Devils have a solid core of elite prospects.

Evander Kane: Former Vancouver Giant has impressed in his rookie campaign with the Thrashers. Great mix of speed, grit, and skill.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson: Described as a poor man's Lidstrom, Ekman-Larsson is still a few years away from getting a sniff of NHL action.

Millionaires:

Mikkel Boedker: Shuffled between San Antonio and Phoenix for much of the season. Great Dane needs more time to develop, but the wait should pay dividends.

Angelo Esposito: Former Pittsburgh first rounder has struggled with four points in twelve games in the AHL. High skill level, but his commitment and focus remain areas of concern.

Victor Hedman: Think Chris Pronger with a Swedish accent. Hedman's has done exactly what was predicted—played a solid all around game. A mainstay on the Millionaires blueline.

Regime:

John Tavares: First overall pick has been slumping of late but has played exactly as advertised for the lowly Islanders. Has showed great chemistry with one of the great names in hockey, Matt Moulson (pronounced Molson, nice!)

Kyle Turris: Former Burnaby Express and Wisconsin Badger has been decent with San Antonio of the AHL. Too early to write off, but Turris is in serious need of muscle mass and weight. Should earn a full-time role in Phoenix next year.

Jonathon Blum: California surfer dude is quite an impressive offensive defenseman. The problem is he is playing behind a very deep Nashville defense corps. Hit or miss type prospect.

For the SCHL, I'm Jon Osama Grossman