



Oct. 5 – The Philadelphia Flyers will rely heavily on a core of Northwestern Ontario hockey talent as they try and put an end to a 35-year dry spell that has seen the club not hoist the Stanley Cup since 1975.

Led by their youthful captain in Kenora's Mike Richards and anchored on defence by first-ballot hall of famer Chris Pronger of Dryden and up and coming Sioux Lookout product Ryan Parent, the Flyers have been impressive early in the National Hockey League campaign.

Showing no signs of coping with off-season surgery on both shoulders the 24-year old Richards has two goals in as many games in a pair of Philadelphia victories.

"My shoulders are doing fine," said the versatile centre earlier. "Everything has gone well."

Fine indeed as Richards potted the game-winner against New Jersey Saturday and was named the contest's first star. He also scored in the season opener on Carolina to earn the game's second star.

Pronger, who turns 35 later in the week, has also fit in very well with his teammates after being acquired in an off-season deal with Anaheim. He has already recorded two assists and sports a self-assured optimism early in his tenure with his new club.

"I'm just one of a handful of new faces on the Flyers, but for the most part it's the same team with the same concepts," said the former Hart Trophy winner. "The core group is there so it should be okay. I'm not too worried about."

As for Parent, he is looking to do his part as well as the 22-year old D-man aims to play his first full season in the NHL. He picked up an assist Saturday setting up the opening goal against the Devils.

With the area trio in its line-up, it marks the first time in the team's 41-year history that three players from the region have played on the squad at the same time.

The last time this happened in the NHL level was during the 2002-03 campaign when Greg Johnson and Bill Houlder of Thunder Bay along with Cameron Mann of Balmertown were members for the Nashville Predators.

Fully aware of what Pronger brings on the ice, Richards knows that his arrival adds additional sand paper to a Flyers roster that already boasts more than enough grit.

"He's definitely going to make it a lot tougher to play against that's for sure and our team with him on the blueline is a threat," said Richards. "He can move the puck, plays physical and is a force out there."

Richards said Pronger, who was already appointed assistant captain, is a boost as the games get tighter.

"I think that's what we needed on our back end. He's one of those guys you feel intimidated by when you're moving up the ice. . . . He's one of those guys teams think and talk about before the games."

Heading into their home opener Tuesday against Washington, Richards knows with Pronger's style of play, he will be an instant fan favourite in the City of Brotherly Love.

"His game will suit the fans perfectly. There is no question they are going to love him in Philly," he said.

After 35 years, they'll also love another Stanley Cup title in Philadelphia.





NATIONAL WOMEN'S UNDER-18

Team Ontario Red squad that will represent the province at the eight-team event.

Schreiber's Jenna McParland returns for a second consecutive year to compete as a forward on the Red team while Meggan McLeod makes her debut as athletic trainer on the club.

The 17-year-old McParland also skated for Team Ontario Blue at the 2007 event held in Kitchener.

She is currently plays for the Toronto Aeros of the Provincial Women's Hockey League.

McLeod, a kinesiology graduate from Lakehead University, is currently in her fourth season serving as athletic trainer for the Fort William North Stars of the SIJHL.

Both McParland and McLeod took part in a Team Ontario orientation camp held over the weekend in Caledon, Ont., as a prelude to heading west next month.

Ontario has won the gold medal in each of the previous five under-18 championships.

A number of local athletes have played for Ontario at previous U-18 events including Katie Weatherston, Haley Irwin, Brittany Francis and Caroline Krisciunas.

NICE WEEK: It was an impressive week for Lakehead product Walker Wintoneak.

Skating for the Saskatoon Blades of the Western Hockey League the 20-year-old power forward racked up nine points in just three games last week.

Wintoneak opened with a goal and setting up the winner in an 8-4 win over Kootenay and followed that up with a goal, three assists and first star honours in a 6-3 road victory at Red Deer.

He then completed his successful week in style adding another three points including assisting on the tying goal in the last minute of play in regulation and burying the game-winner in overtime as the visiting Blades rallied to defeat Lethbridge 3-2.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING: 10 games into the Ontario Hockey League season Jared Staal of Thunder Bay leads all area players in scoring.

The Sudbury Wolves forward is tied for sixth in assists with 10 and is knotted for 17th in overall OHL point production with 13.

Over in Sarnia Kale Kerbashian has six points in as many games to sit in second in scoring on the Sting while Zach Harnden is tied for third in points on the Kingston Frontenacs roster with seven including four goals.

Up in the American Hockey League Thunder Bay native Taylor Chorney is off to a solid start with the Springfield Falcons.

His five points in four games leaves him tied for second in scoring among AHL defencemen.

In NCAA collegiate action Carter Hutton had a perfect start to his senior season. The University of Massachusetts-Lowell goaltender kicked out all 24 shots he faced to shutout St. Lawrence 3-0 in the opening game of the Ice Breaker Cup tournament in Omaha, Neb., on Oct. 9.

Hutton's efforts in the championship contest the following evening were not enough however as his River Hawks fell 4-3 to the hometown UNO Mavericks.

OVERSEAS: Thunder Bay's Jeff Maronese has returned for a second stint to play in Germany.

The 23-year-old defenceman recently signed on with EHC Timmendorf of the German Regional League. Maronese played on a rival club in the GRL for parts of last season. His new club is off to a solid start sitting near the top of the 11-team loop with a 4-1 record early on the year. He also made an impact in his first game scoring once and chipping with two assists helping his new squad to an 8-1 victory.

Oct. 12 – THE region will be well represented at the upcoming Canadian national women's under-18 hockey championship Nov. 4-8 in Surrey, B.C.

Two individuals have been selected to be part of the



Oct. 19 – Successful beginnings with new teams were in order for a number of area coaches and players as the Central Hockey League kicked off its season over the weekend.

Thunder Bay's Bill McDonald, who serves as associate coach of the first-year Allen Americans, added to more victories in his already successful career, as his side swept a pair from the Arizona Sundogs for the first two wins in franchise history.

Among the other local connections on the team are defenceman Erik Adams of Thunder Bay, forward Nathan O'Nabigon from Longlac and former Lakehead Thunderwolves goaltender Chris Whitley.

Bruce Ramsay, a protégé of McDonald, was victorious in his coaching debut with the Tulsa Oilers on Oct. 16 as his new side defeated Derek Landmesser's Mississippi River Kings 6-3.

Thunder Bay native Colt King scored twice, including the game-winner, in his first game in a Rapid City Rush uniform as they got by Missouri 3-2 in their home opener.

King also chipped in with another marker in his second game as the Rush swept the two-game set from Missouri.



AMONG THE ELITE: Dryden's Chris Pronger will soon be joining a couple of area standouts among the elite in all-time scoring in the National Hockey League.

Pronger requires just nine more points to move among the top 250 point producers in NHL history.

The Philadelphia Flyers defenceman has scored 611 points in his 15-year career on 143 goals and 468 assists.

He will be looking to join Terrace Bay's Charlie Simmer who sits 180th overall in points with 711 in 712 career games where he scored 342 times and set-up 369 others.

The top area NHL point-getter in history is hockey hall of fame honoured member Alex Delvecchio, who ranks 32nd overall.

The former Detroit Red Wings legend had 1,281 points in 1,549 games on 456 goals and 825 assists.

PUCK STOPPERS: A pair of goaltenders from Thunder Bay have been solid in net early in their respective junior hockey seasons.

In the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League, Micheal Mitchell of the North Bay Trappers leads the 8-team loop in wins with nine heading into a home contest played last evening vs. Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

The 18-year-old Mitchell, who sports an overall 9-3-0 record, is third in the league in both goals-against average at 2.40 and save percentage at .923.



Drew Strandberg has also been solid posting an impressive 6-1 record in his last seven starts for the Traverse City North Stars in the U.S.-based North America Hockey League, registering a solid 2.26 goals-against average and .917 save percentage in that span.



SCORING TOUCH: After a slow start to the Ontario Hockey League season following an impressive NHL training camp with the San Jose Sharks, Luke Judson is starting to find his scoring touch.

The Emo native had goals in each of his three games with the Belleville Bulls last week.

He opened with a renowned Gordie Howe hat-trick against Oshawa on Oct. 14 with a goal, assist and a spirited scrap while earning first start laurels in the process.

Judson then tacked on another marker in a road loss on Friday to Guelph before wrapping up his week notching another tally and setting up the winner in overtime as the Bulls handed previously unbeaten Kitchener their first loss of the season.



Oct. 26 – WHILE the National Hockey League's Central Scouting Service preliminary rankings for the 2010 entry draft won't be released until next month, some area talent is already drawing attention from the scouts.

Joe Basaraba of Fort Frances was tabbed as an 'A' ranked prospect on the NHL CSS player to watch list released last week. This is an early season listing comprised of draft eligible players of non-major junior or college North American leagues or programs.

According to the criteria set by Central Scouting, an A rated prospect is defined as a must see player who is predicted to be a potential first or second round draft selection in the upcoming 2010 draft.

Basaraba, who despite being a first round draft choice in the 2008 Ontario Hockey League draft, spurned the OHL to join the highly-touted Shattuck-St. Mary's prep school program in Faribault, Minn., last season.

The 17-year-old forward is averaging just under a point-per-game early in the campaign at Shattuck.

Basaraba earlier committed to attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth on scholarship in the fall of 2010.



AROUND THE NCAA: Saturday was big day for a number of Thunder Bay athletes playing collegiate hockey in the U.S.

Former Thunder Bay Queens standout Kathleen Bortuzzo notched her first collegiate goal for Niagara University helping the Purple Eagles to a 2-1 road win vs. Quinnipiac that featured yet another ex-Queens' player in Stacey Kmill in the Bobcats line-up.

Setting up that Bortuzzo marker was another local product in Jacqueline Spring who assisted on the tally.

Elsewhere in NCAA women's action Saturday Minnesota Golden Gophers co-captain Brittany Francis potted the game-winner and doled out an assist as they thumped visiting St. Cloud State 7-0.

A pair of local goaltenders were also victorious for their respective men's teams on Saturday.

Paul Karpowich made 30 saves and earned first star laurels backstopping Clarkson to a 4-1 home ice win over St. Lawrence in front of a sell-out crowd.

Also picking up a win was Thunder Bay's Carter Hutton as he helped his UMass-Lowell River Hawks to a 3-1 victory over Northeastern.

One player who did not see action over the weekend was city product Travis Oleksuk, who has been sidelined the past five games for the UMD Bulldogs with a knee injury.

The sophomore forward is hoping to return this weekend when UMD hosts Karpowich and the rest of the Golden Knights in a two-game set at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Centre.



IN THE SPHL: The start of the Southern Professional Hockey League season over the weekend saw Trevor Karasiewicz impress in his debut with his new club.

The Thunder Bay native scored once and dished out three assists leading the Pensacola Ice Flyers to a 6-2 victory over Louisiana Oct. 23 in the first-ever game for the franchise.

Also on the Pensacola roster is Lakehead product Jesse Baraniuk who was named captain of the Ice Flyers just prior to the start of the campaign.

The other area player in the SPHL this season is Mike Bulawka of Red Lake who is a forward for the Knoxville Ice Bears.