

April 5 – FOLLOWING an action-packed past few weeks, which included a call-up to the National Hockey League, Carter Hutton's season, has come to an end.

The Thunder Bay native was released from his amateur tryout agreement by the Philadelphia Flyers organization thus allowing him to pursue his options with other clubs in an effort to sign a contract for next season.

With the Flyers tumultuous goaltending situation and serious salary cap issues that left little or no room for Hutton to be signed to make him eligible to play once his ATO had expired.

Now having the experience of dressing for an NHL game on March 28 he is free to work on a deal with any club, including the Flyers, for the start of the 2010-11 campaign.

Another accolade the 24-year-old can add to his list accomplishments heading into negotiations is the fact he was just named a division 1 first team all-star by the New England Hockey Writers Association.

He becomes the first University of Massachusetts-Lowell goalie to earn the award since Duane Roloson in 1994.

Hutton's selection marks the third postseason honour the goaltender earned in his senior year after being named a second team Hockey East all-star as well as taking home the conference goaltending award.

ITALIAN TITLE: Thunder Bay's Joe Tallari will be heading back to North America with a championship to his credit.

Tallari was pivotal in helping his Appiano Pirates claim the title in the Italian second division after leading his squad in playoff scoring with 23 points in 13 games including 11 goals.

The speedy 29-year old forward cracked the score sheet in all but one game in the postseason and also scored in the shootout to decide the championship in the fifth and final game of the series vs. Gardena where Appiano won 3-2.

DRAFT PREP: Joe Basaraba is being asked to show his off-ice skills heading into the 2010 NHL Entry Draft this June in Los Angeles.

The Fort Frances product is one of 100 players who have been invited to attend the NHL Draft Combine May 24-29 in Toronto.

The combine is an opportunity for NHL teams to meet and interview prospects, as well as see them put through rigorous fitness testing.

Basaraba, who was ranked 39th among North American skaters in the mid-term NHL Central Scouting rankings, is set to attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth on scholarship in the fall.

He is in his second season at Shattuck-St. Mary's in Faribault, Minn., skating for the powerful prep team there where he has accumulated 46 points in 52 games.

POSITIVE FINISH: It was a positive end to the season for Trevor Karasiewicz in the Southern Professional Hockey League.

The Thunder Bay native was named the final SPHL player of the week for the regular season for his efforts with the Louisiana Ice Gators.

Karasiewicz scored three times, doled out nine helpers and posted a plus-7 rating in four games to earn the league laurels. He finished up leading his club in overall point production and was 10th overall in league scoring.

AHL BOUND: Now that his Ontario Hockey League season is done Jared Staal will look to improve the fortunes of the San Antonio Rampage of the American Hockey League.

It marks the second straight year Staal has signed an amateur tryout agreement with the Rampage who are the primary affiliate of the Phoenix Coyotes who drafted Staal in the second round, 48th overall, in the 2008 NHL Draft. He played his first game with San Antonio on Saturday, but was held pointless in a 4-3 overtime loss vs. Texas.

Net Shots – April 2010 (continued)

April 12 – MAKING the move to play in the English Elite Hockey League certainly paid off for Mike Jacobsen.

The Kakabeka Falls native played a pivotal role in helping lead the Belfast Giants to the EEHL championship last week.

After skating in Italy the past three seasons the 28-year-old defenceman signed on with Belfast where he topped all blueliners on the club in offensive production and was named to the league's second all-star team.

In the semifinal of the EEHL Final Four vs. the host Nottingham Panthers Jacobsen scored a goal in a 2-1 shootout triumph and then helped bolster his club's defensive corps as they skated to the title defeating the Cardiff Devils, who featured Sioux Lookout's Matt Miller in its line-up, 3-2 in yet another contest that required a shootout to decide the outcome.

FINALIST: Thunder Bay's George Gwozdecky is one of 10 finalists for the Spencer Penrose Award, which is given annually to the top coach in all of NCAA Division 1 hockey.

The University of Denver Pioneers bench boss has won this award twice previously earning his first honour back in 1993 while serving as coach at the University of Miami-Ohio and picked up his second in 2005 the same year he led Denver to the NCAA Frozen Four championship.

Gwozdecky, the only person in NCAA history to win a national title as a player, assistant coach and head coach on the ice, was recently named Western Collegiate Hockey Association coach of the year for the fourth time.

NATIONAL HONOUR: Hope Fullum of Thunder Bay was recently honoured by the American Collegiate Hockey Association as one of two nation-wide recipients on the Community Playmaker Award.

The junior who plays defence for Robert Morris Eagles also served as one of the team captains this season.

The former Thunder Bay Queens defender was recognized by the ACHA for her work in organizing the RMU Pink in the Rink event to raise money for cancer research.

Fullum also just missed out on being named to the ACHA All-American team for a third straight season in a campaign where she set personal single season highs in goals, assists and points.

PROSPECT: The National Hockey League's Central Scouting Service released its final draft rankings this past week with one area athlete cracking the list.

Joe Basaraba of Fort Frances was tabbed 54th overall among North American skaters heading into the 2010 entry draft this June in Los Angeles.

It was also announced earlier that he was one of 100 players invited to the NHL Draft Combine next month in Toronto where prospects will go through rigorous fitness testing as well as interviews with team personnel of NHL clubs.

Basaraba is in his second season playing for the Shattuck-St. Mary's prep team in Faribault, Minn., and is set to join the University of Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs hockey program on scholarship in the fall.

ADDITIONAL ACCOLADES: A couple of other individuals were recently recognized for their on-ice success.

Sara Brady of Thunder Bay picked up the Brock University women's hockey rookie of the year laurels.

A graduate of the Thunder Bay Queens program, the concurrent education major just wrapped up her first season of OUA women's hockey playing for the Badgers.

Meanwhile Chad Richard of Beardmore earned a spot on the Northern Ontario Jr. Hockey League second all-star team.

The forward with the Blind River Beavers recorded 49 points in just 37 games scoring 27 times and dishing out 22 assists.

Net Shots – April 2010 (continued)

April 19 – ONE key constant to any teams' success in the playoffs is solid goaltending.

Well, Drew Strandberg is certainly providing that early on in the North American Hockey League postseason.

The Thunder Bay native has been exceptional between the pipes so far for the Traverse City North Stars in this his final season of junior hockey.

Strandberg is a perfect 5-0 in the playoffs allowing only three goals in 300 minutes of action and is sporting a stingy 0.60 goals-against average along with a stellar .973 save percentage.

He started off by backstopping Traverse City to a three-game sweep of the Janesville Jets in the opening round including posting back-to-back shutouts in the final two contests leading the Michigan-based squad to the first playoff series triumph in their five-year history.

The former Superior International Jr. Hockey League top goalie award recipient continued his strong play over the weekend posting two victories in the second round of the NAHL's postseason leading the North Stars to wins over the Motor City Metal Jackets handing them their first pair of setbacks in the best-of-five battle for the North Division title.

Of note, another Thunder Bay native also skates for Traverse City in Kelin Ainsworth.

The craft forward has three playoff points to date including scoring the game-winner in the series opener vs. Motor City.

SCHOLARSHIP: Another NAHL netminder from the area in Ryan Faragher has also shown he has the skills to make a difference.

The Fort Frances product has committed to attend Dartmouth College of the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference on scholarship in time for the 2011-12 school year and season.

Faragher is yet another top goalie award winner in the SIJHL and was also teammates with Drew Strandberg in their major midget playing days with the Thunder Bay Kings.

In his first year with the Bismarck Bobcats, Faragher was third in the NAHL in both goals-against average at 2.17 and save percentage at .921. He was also fourth league-wide in wins with 23 and was knotted with Strandberg for second overall in shutouts with four.

Faragher won his only playoff start to date making 43 saves as Bismarck completed a sweep of the Albert Lea Thunder.

IN THE FINALS: Yet another local product will have an opportunity to play for a title in a European league.

Mike Kompon of Thunder Bay made a statement for his Munich side helping punch their ticket to the championship of the German Bundesliga.

He was an offensive force firing a natural hat-trick in the first period while adding yet another goal and an assist later on in the semifinal series deciding victory over Ravensburg. That squad featured another Lakehead native in its line-up in Jeremy Adduono.

Kompon currently shares the league-lead in playoff goals with eight and is just five points shy of the overall scoring lead despite playing fewer games than those ahead of him.

Kompon and his number two seed Munich teammates kick off the finals later this week when they tangle with top-ranked Schwenningen.

TEAM USA: Thunder Bay native Taylor Chorney has been named to the initial roster for the United States at the upcoming IIHF World Hockey Championship in Germany.

Selected by the Edmonton Oilers in the second round, 36th overall, of the 2005 NHL entry draft the defenceman split this season between the Oilers and the AHL collecting four goals and 12 assists in 74 total games.

Net Shots – April 2010 (continued)

April 26 – THE wait as to which organization Carter Hutton will play for next season is over as the Thunder Bay native has agreed to terms on a one-year, two-way deal with the San Jose Sharks of the National Hockey League.

Hutton, 24, inked the deal following a recent meeting with Sharks head scout Tim Burke. He had mulled over offers from other NHL clubs, but chose the Sharks citing they provided the best opportunity.

Because of his age, the agreement can only be for one year due to stipulations in the league's collective bargaining agreement. He would then be eligible to become a restricted free agent the following campaign should he so choose.

It had been a hectic past few weeks for Hutton who made the jump to the professional ranks following the completion of his award-winning collegiate career at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

He then signed an amateur tryout agreement with the Philadelphia Flyers American Hockey League farm club, which eventually led to a call-up to the NHL where he dressed as back-up for the Flyers March 28 game vs. New Jersey.

Should Hutton start next season in the AHL he won't have to travel too far from where he resided the past four years as the Sharks AHL affiliate is based in Worcester, Mass., a mere 40 miles from Lowell.

CZECH MATE: While there was much hoopla around Dominick Hasek helping his club capture the playoff crown in the Czech Republic national league, the title also has an area connection to it as well.

Aaron MacKenzie of Terrace Bay was also a member of the team in Pardubice that swept Vitkovice in four straight games to win the championship.

It marks the third European championship a player from the area has been a part of already this season. Mike Jacobsen (Belfast-English Elite) and Joe Tallari (Appiano-Italian Serie A2) are the others.

MacKenzie, 28, joined Pardubice midway through the season helping bolster their defensive corps after spending last season in the AHL as well as a stint in the NHL with the Colorado Avalanche.

MARKED IMPROVEMENT: Thunder Bay product Luke Cain was recognized at his schools year-end awards banquet this past week.

The sophomore forward who plays NCAA division one hockey at Union College picked up the men's hockey team's most improved player award.

Cain, who missed the majority of his freshman campaign after breaking his leg in a game, produced 11 points, including seven goals in 29 contests. Two of the seven markers he tallied were game-winners for the Dutchmen who compete in the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference.

AROUND THE OHL: As the Ontario Hockey League nears the end of their season a number of players from the region have been recognized by their clubs for the on-ice efforts.

Luke Judson of Emo and Thunder Bay's Kale Kerbashian are their respective team nominees for the OHL's outstanding player award.

Judson led the Belleville Bulls in goals this season and was earlier named team captain. Kerbashian meanwhile paced the Sarnia Sting in point production.

Over in Sudbury, the Wolves recently doled out their team awards with Justin Sefton of Thunder Bay being named the club's rookie of the year. He was also part of the Team Ontario squad that won a silver medal at the most recent world under-17 hockey challenge event.

Sudbury also announced that former Wolves standout Taylor Pyatt has been chosen as the next inductee to the Wolves Wall of Fame. Pyatt played three seasons with the OHL club from 1997-2000 where he averaged just over a point per game.