

JUNIOR DUCKS MAKING MORE HEADWAY INTO JUNIOR HOCKEY

The Anaheim Jr. Ducks' pipeline to junior hockey is growing wider. At least seven players who played this past season for the Jr. Ducks will join five 1998 birth years that were in the club during the 2014-15 season in juniors this fall.

This marks the first season the organization is sending players to the British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL) and Western Hockey League (WHL). Three Midget 18U AAA players – defenseman Julian Timba and forwards Andre Ghantous and Jack Sitzman – made BCHL teams. Four members of the Midget 16U AAA team - defenseman Slava Demin, forwards Cooper Haar and Rory Herrman, and goaltender Carl Stankowski – also earned roster spots on junior clubs. Haar and Herrman are '99s, while Demin and Stankowski are 2000s.

“We’re proud of them as an organization,” Jr. Ducks director of player personnel Alex Kim said. “There’s a process and they’re going through it. “These young men made it happen. They never expected it, they just kept working hard to move one step closer to their goal of playing college hockey.”

Timba, who had a combined 28 points – including eight goals – in CAHA and Tier 1 Elite Hockey League play, is headed to Salmon Arm, while Ghantous (55 combined points, 23 goals) and Sitzman (43 points, 22 goals) will play in Trail. All three played this past season for Coach Larry Barron. “(New 18U AAA coach) August Aiken is a BCHL alumnus and helped several of the players get opportunities,” Kim said. “It expands our network as an organization, plus it’s a West Coast league closer to home. It’s a big step for our club.”

Five of their former '98 teammates are entering their second season of juniors. They are forward Patrick Choi (Boston Jr. Bruins/USPHL Premier), forward Justin Dixon (Tri-City/USHL), forward Jack Gates (Janesville/NAHL), goaltender Timothy Huxen (New Jersey/EHL Premier) and defenseman Chad Sasaki (Wenatchee/BCHL). Dixon was part of Tri-City's Clark Cup championship team. “The success rate with the '98s is very high,” Kim said. “It’s good see.” Demin (14 combined points, five goals) also will play in Wenatchee, while Haar (31 points, 13 goals) is headed to Bismarck of the NAHL and Herrman (50 points, 23 goals) made Green Bay of the USHL. Stankowski, who went 11-4 with a 1.87 goals-against average and .935 save percentage in the Tier 1 league, has signed with Seattle of the WHL. Herrman sealed his spot with a strong week at the USA Hockey Select 17 Festival in early July. “There were four of their 99s there, and they were only going to take three,” the Arizona State commit said. “It was a great honor that I was one of them.” Dixon (UMass-Amherst), Gates (Colorado College) and Sasaki (Colorado College) also have made college commitments.

-- Chris Bayee