

2022 NHL Draft

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Juraj Slafkovsky

Press Conference



JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Thank you very much, and it's just an unbelievable moment for me, for my family and for everyone who supports me and also for the whole Slovak country. We needed something like this, and it's also a special night for me because Simon Nemeč was second, and well, I didn't expect it.

Q. (No microphone.)

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Yeah, it was a pretty big surprise for me. We had meetings, but you don't get to know almost anything from that meetings. I still can't just guess when I was waiting for this, but yeah, now it's reality.

Q. How would you describe the meetings that you had with the Canadiens in the lead-up to the draft? I know you said you don't know anything about what's going to happen, but what did you learn about them as an organization?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: So I was pretty surprised, like they knew me very well. Like they knew almost everything, how I play, what I do on the ice. I think, yeah, it's a really good organization, and the important thing is that they know what they want, and I know what I want. It's just good for me that I -- it's good for me that they picked me.

Q. I know this isn't in your control, but over the last three years people around here have been hearing about Shane Wright, Shane Wright, Shane Wright. Now that it's you, how do you deal with that kind of pressure that comes with that, people saying, why didn't they pick Shane Wright?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Now basically I just focus on myself more and of course I've seen all the rankings and he was No. 1. Yeah, well, I just tried to do my job as best as I can, and I'm happy that I got this for that.

Q. It was reported that Geoff Molson was part of the meeting today; can you confirm that, and what was your reaction when you saw that the team owner was in the room today?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Yeah, it's true, and yeah, I was shocked. They said that he wants to be a part of the meeting, so I was actually also happy for it that he was there. We didn't talk, but I think it was good that he was part of it.

Q. Can you just generally describe that final meeting and what did you make of it when you meet the team that picks No. 1 like six hours or so before the draft?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Well, I can say it was supposed to be two days ago, so it just changed. But yeah, like basically I would say it wasn't something special. They asked me some things they already did, and we just talked for, I don't know, 20, 30 minutes, and then they said, yeah, good luck, we like you, and I didn't know.

Q. Some of the fans were booing a little bit but you were just waving and smiling like you didn't care at all. How did you feel at that point?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: I take everything into -- I think it's that hockey is their passion as well as mine, and maybe some of them didn't like me, but I will do everything that I will play good for this team and that they will actually maybe like me one day. (Laughter).

Q. With your meeting yesterday with the Canadiens, were there any questions they asked you that surprised you? Was it only about hockey or were they asking questions about your personality and other things, also?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: No, it was basically all just about the hockey. Nothing special.

Q. Is there anything you think you might have said that maybe convinced them that you were their guy?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: No, I just tried to be myself, and I think that's important.

Q. With Simon Nemeč going second overall after you, what do you believe the reaction and I guess the significance of this will mean to your home land of



Slovakia?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Yeah, I think out of 5 million people, at least like 4 are up and they are cheering for us. At the end of the day that's important. We are from Slovakia, and we represent the country, and I'm just happy that this happened to us.

Q. How would you describe your reaction when your name was called and you get up on stage? It's not often that the home team of the draft has the first pick. How can you describe the way you were greeted?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Yeah, I think I didn't even hear my name called. I just heard "Slovakia," and then I was like shocked, and I didn't even listen anymore. I was just like shaking. I had goosebumps. Yeah, unbelievable moment for me.

Q. Over the course of the last few weeks, you said you looked at all the rankings and what have you. To what extent were you watching sort of the public discourse, who's going, because you've been gaining momentum for a few months now. How important is it for you to be sitting there right now and having sort of followed it trending towards you the last few weeks?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: Yeah, like I said, it's a great feeling, and it's really important to me, but as well I know that it's just first step, and it's just beginning of my career. I hope it will go good, and I just can't wait to go back to work and just play for Montreal.

Q. Kosice is not that big of a place but there's several NHLers that have come out of that town. What's going on in Kosice that's cranking out so many NHLers, and what can you say to the people back home right now?

JURAJ SLAFKOVSKY: I think it's our conditioning coach. He's doing a great job. (Laughter). Saying hi to him.

Well, I don't know. I'm just happy that I'm from Kosice, and yeah, I was growing up there, and then I moved. But yeah, Kosice will always be in my heart, and I'm happy that I'm from there.

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