

2023 NHL Draft

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Nashville, Tennessee

Connor Bedard

Press Conference



Q. You're finally at this moment. Just what does it mean for you to be selected No. 1 by the Chicago Blackhawks?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, it's an unbelievable feeling to be here with my family and friends and get to hear my name be called and experience that, especially with such a storied organization. Everything I've heard about the city, the people there is nothing but positive. Can't wait for that, and very thankful that the staff, Kyle and Luke, everyone, put their faith in me with that pick.

Q. How excited are you to play with Hall and Foligno?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, I think it's really special. Those two guys have been through everything in the National Hockey League. For me to get to learn from them and obviously they're unbelievable players. Just having those guys to ask questions to and obviously they're going to help the team win a lot of games. It's awesome.

Q. You've been understandably playing it coy the last month or so about where you were going but you've known it was going to be Chicago. What have you done to prepare for that? Have you done research? Have you been looking for places to live?

CONNOR BEDARD: No, I didn't want to jinx myself or anything, so I kind of played it cool, I guess, just doing normal day-to-day stuff. Obviously now I think then you can start looking into stuff and all that, but a lot of people have talked to me about it, and seeing the reaction from fans after everything is unbelievable.

Q. I know you're one foot in front of the other kind of guy, but can you reflect on the journey that brought you here and also who are you thinking about, friends, family that helped you along the journey?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, a lot of family and friends, like you said. For everyone that gets to be here, parents, sister, grandma, cousins, I was thinking a lot about my grandpa right now. Obviously he doesn't get to be here, but keeping him with us, our whole family. It's crazy to

think how many people have helped me and how much fun this journey has been. I was talking about it with my family today and I remember being here seven years ago for a minor hockey tournament, so how things come full circle is incredible.

Q. What's probably the most memorable experience you've had leading up to today in terms of your hockey career, whether it's from your juniors or up until right now? What's the favorite moment you've ever had up until right now?

CONNOR BEDARD: I think that Brandon game after my grandpa passed away was really special, kind of the memory of him. I've been very fortunate to play in the World Juniors U-18s and win gold medals there, so that was really special, but that one for my family and kind of him was really special for me.

Q. What's it like being the face of such a historic franchise, and with one era ending with Toews and Kane and another one beginning with you?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, it's incredible. I can't put into words, growing up, and obviously that was when they were going on their runs and winning the Cups. You see a lot of them, United Center going crazy and all of Chicago getting behind them and Original Six and so much history here. I can't put it into words, and I'm so happy to be part of the Blackhawks organization.

Q. Throughout the season, what kind of communication did you have and what kind of advice and I guess tips and things did the Blackhawks give you and what do you feel like your relationship is with them at this point?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, it's good. During the season you're so busy with playing and stuff, you meet a few people but it's not as much. At the combine I was able to have a meeting with all of them, all the staff, and go to dinner, as well.

Kind of built a relationship there, and it seems like incredible people working there, and for me to get to be a



part of that is so exciting, and like I said, I couldn't be more happy with them putting their faith in me with that pick. I'll be forever grateful for that.

Q. Most 17-year-olds are cap and gown, graduating, going on to college. You're trading it in for an NHL sweater. Have you looked at it from this perspective yet?

CONNOR BEDARD: No, I don't know. It's really hard. It still doesn't feel real, to be honest. It's so crazy. I'm not really thinking about kind of other people's journeys and their lives right now. I have such a passion for hockey, and it's all I really want to do. I'm just trying to kind of take things one day at a time. This is of course a big step in the journey, and very exciting day for my family.

Q. I just wanted to ask you what the community of Regina and the Pats' organization meant to you, the staff, the people there, and your three years in Regina?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, everyone but you was really great (laughter). No, it's been unreal so far. Regina, got drafted as a 14-year-old, young kid, didn't know what to expect. But that city, they take you in as one of their own, and some of the kindest people I've ever met there. The staff and teammates and friendships I've built over there has been unbelievable and I'm so thankful for the past three years to play in Regina.

Q. You played in the Western Hockey League as an exceptional status player. Now you're here. How did your time in the Western Hockey League help you develop on the ice, off the ice, and bring you to this moment?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, it's been so huge for me. So far the last three years, it's been everything I've ever wanted from a development standpoint, and it's such a tough league. You're going in every night and you're challenging yourself. For me that was the biggest thing is playing against guys older than me and stronger, faster a lot. It's helped me so much, and we've had such great coaches, such great staff there, so I've learned a lot.

Q. In terms of your adjustment from the WHL to the NHL level, what do you think you'll have to do to have such an impact in the NHL?

CONNOR BEDARD: It's hard to say. I've never played a game there or anything. I think for me it's having a good rest of the summer and trying to prepare myself as best I can to try to make the team. It's really hard to say what I have to do to play well there because it's different and I've never experienced that. Obviously as the best player in

the world, it wouldn't be easy, but I'm going to do whatever I can this summer and moving forward to try to have an impact in the league.

Q. For years you've been praised for your potential. When you wear that NHL sweater now you're going to be judged on your production. What about your makeup and background tells you you're ready for that pressure?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, I mean, I've had kind of a gradual growth of exposure and pressure, like you said, for the last five, six years, so I think that's been good for me. It wasn't kind of an overnight thing. I'm not focused on outside expectations. I'm going to be focused on my teammates, coaches, family, everyone there, the staff and trying to win hockey games and try to be the best player I can be.

Q. Did the Blackhawks tell you at the combine that you were going to be the guy, and since they drew the No. 1 pick, I know you were teammates and juniors with some of the members of the Blackhawks' prospects and organization. Have you had any contact with them, too?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, I mean, the meetings are private, and I'll keep that as a private thing, but really good talks with them, and like I said before, seemed like great people. It's crazy that there's four or five guys, and actually Logan Nijhoff is part of that organization, as well, an old teammate and good friend of mine. They kind of texted me a bit, but I think I'll talk to them a lot more tonight now that it's official.

Q. It seemed like people were cheering at Regina. Did you even get to hear your name get called?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, I heard it a little bit. Obviously it was a loud cheer which was exciting. Shows kind of the passion of the fans. To see the turnout tonight, someone told me the number, I kind of forget right now, but it's unbelievable how many people came, made the trip. Just to see the support I've gotten already, it's been 30 minutes, it's incredible.

Q. You talked about Nate Danielson a couple times at the combine here. Seems like you guys are close. He just went ninth to Detroit --

CONNOR BEDARD: Did he? Nice.

Q. Wondering what your friendship is like with him and how you'd describe him?

CONNOR BEDARD: Oh, that's great. I'm super happy for him.

Yeah, we first met when I was 15, he was 16. We were just at a camp together, training or something in Toronto, and we hit it off right away. We have a lot of fun together. He's my roommate here, and he's awesome. He's someone that I'm really close with, and to be able to be here with him and a lot of friends and obviously hear the news that he just got taken is so incredible.

Super happy for him, and he's a special player and a great person.

Q. What does it mean to you, and a lot has been written about your humility. What does it mean to you to have the kind of support in a city that really is sports crazed and thirsting for a winner?

CONNOR BEDARD: Yeah, it's great; I don't have to say no to signing anything Chicago right now. It's great. Like I said before, to see the passion of them and just how that city gets behind all their teams. They have a lot of sports teams and of course the Blackhawks is a big one. Just seeing the support so far, yeah, it's hard to kind of describe or put into words, but it's a great feeling.

Q. I'm curious, are you the type of person who likes to set specific individual goals, and what might those be for your rookie season if that's the case?

CONNOR BEDARD: Right now it's more kind of just having a good rest of the summer, training and getting better, ready to get better, and going into camp, trying to have a good camp and make the team. I think if all that goes well, then kind of start setting some goals there. I like to set a few goals, but personally right now it's just have a good summer. I'm really excited for development camp here and getting to know some people, so it's all about making the team in September.

Q. Your first NHL face-off might be against Sidney Crosby; have you thought about that yet?

CONNOR BEDARD: I was trying not to look at the schedule. Some people were telling me; I didn't want to look too hard into it. But man, like I said, if I'm able to make the squad come October, childhood idol, ever since I can remember. That would be unbelievable. It's a little bit of time away. I think I'll kind of dream about it now, but hopefully that comes.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

