



Ryan McLeod, who plays for the Mississauga Steelheads, was recently drafted by the Edmonton Oilers.

# Recently drafted Ryan McLeod has strong ties to Edmonton Oilers

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He may have grown up far away from Edmonton, but Mississauga's Ryan McLeod can point to a lot of ties he has to the Edmonton Oilers, the team that selected him a few weeks ago in the 2018 NHL Draft.

One of them is Matt Cairns, a friend of his and fellow Oilers prospect, who helped him get out of a bind when he had to go straight from the draft in Dallas to Oilers development camp.

"(I went) right from Dallas Sunday morning to go to Edmonton and I had no way of getting my bag, so he brought it with him," said McLeod, Edmonton's second-round pick (40th overall) in the draft on June 23.

McLeod was drafted by the Oilers after recording 70 points (26 goals and 44 assists) in his hometown Mississauga Steelheads in the Ontario Hockey League.

The Oilers also have Malton native Paul Coffey on board as a skills development coach and he was at their development camp from June 25 to 28, coaching McLeod's team during end-of-camp scrimmages.

Coffey coached Cairns and McLeod's older brother,

Michael, with the Toronto Marlies up until they graduated from minor hockey in 2014. Ryan, one year younger than his brother, also played for Coffey occasionally when he was called up to his brother's Marlies team.

On top of all that, the McLeods are close friends with another well known Mississauga hockey family, the Stromes. The families have a tradition where they decorated each others' garages whenever one of them is drafted into the NHL.

Ryan Strome, the oldest of three brothers in that family, was traded to the Oilers last year, and when McLeod was drafted by the organization, Strome immediately reached out to congratulate him.

"We were texting back and forth, so it was really nice to hear from him," McLeod said. "Obviously he was watching the draft and I'm sure he's happy for me."

Even though McLeod grew up in Toronto Maple Leaf territory, he says his favourite player as a child was former Oilers captain

Ryan Smith. That made being drafted by Edmonton even more special for the Mississauga teen.

In previous years, NHL teams would wait a week or two after the draft before holding their development camps. A number of teams held camps immediately after the draft last year and more teams adopted that method this year.

Although it felt like a roller-coaster ride going straight from Dallas to Edmonton, McLeod preferred it that way.

"I think I'd rather have it right after draft so all of those nervous or excited feelings, you can get them out right then and know what you're going into," he said. "I was really happy to go in there, figure out what they want from me and what the rink is like."

McLeod will try to make the cut with the Oilers when they go through their rookie and main training camps in September, but if he's sent back for another year with the Steelheads, he said he hopes to be more of a leader and a dominant player in the OHL.

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