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Minnesota: Players ‘R’ Us

In Central Scouting’s Final Rankings of North American players, released yesterday, there were 29 players listed from the state of Minnesota. That’s more than three times as many as the next two states on the list – Massachusetts and Michigan, each of which have nine.

We have theories about why Minnesota is so successful, and we believe it starts with the state’s eschewing AAA hockey – and its attendant pressures -- in favor of community-based hockey. In a town setting, players are less likely to be pigeon-holed and more likely to gain confidence playing in all situations and, if they are good enough, eventually becoming top prospects. Minnesota players certainly seem less rushed than players elsewhere. Every year, a number of Minnesota kids get drafted, often quite highly, who a couple of years earlier were virtual unknowns. Somehow, they arrive. And it’s hard to argue with the numbers.

An NHL scout in Minnesota we talked to claims that the Fall Elite League, instituted six years ago, has been a huge help. “Before,” he said, “you’d notice the late bloomers emerge in the second half of the season. Now you see them emerge earlier.”

“The proximity of the USHL and the chance for the better Minnesota kids to play there before and after (their high school season) has helped, too.”

“Last year,” he added, “there were a lot of very high end kids from Minnesota. This year, there are not a lot of high end kids anywhere – not just in Minnesota. Basically, it’s a bad draft with a lot of ‘good’ players.”

Here, then, are the U.S. players on Central’s list, arranged by state. It’s true that some players listed under one state may have spent their formative years elsewhere, but we believe this number to be statistically insignificant.

Minnesota (29): #11 **Ryan McDonagh**, #22 **Mike Hoeffel**, #23 **Patrick White**, #38 **James O’Brien**, #56 **Nico Sacchetti**, #65 **Jake Hansen**, #86 **Drew LeBlanc**, #92 **John Lee**, #95 **Joe Stejskal**, #109 **Nick Larson**, #116 **Ben Blood**, #118 **Jordy Christian**, #130 **Taylor Mattson**, #132 **Jeffrey Foss**, #136 **Joe Beaudette**, #140 **Tyler Kieffer**, #144 **Tyler Johnson**, #149 **Andrew Conboy**, #152 **Baylor Dieter**, #176 **Brandon**

Martell, #179 Brennan Vargas, #186 Brandon Bahnemann, #189 Cade Fairchild, #197 Matt Reber, #203 Brian Schack, #209 Justin Braun, #7-G Mark Guggenberger, #10-G Reid Ellingson, #12-G Kent Patterson.

Massachusetts (9): #63 **Matt Marshall, #87 Andrew Glass, #100 Paul Carey, #113 Cameron Lanoue, #138 Josh Franklin, #143 Barry Almeida, #165 Joey Lavin, #206 T.J. Syner, #22-G John Muse.**

Michigan (9): #37 **Ben Ryan, #81 Ian Cole, #101 Aaron Palushaj, #114 Corey Tropp, #134 Tristin Llewellyn, #167 Matt Rust, #1-G Jeremy Smith, #9-G Brad Phillips, #18-G Brian Hogan.**

New York (7): #2 **Patrick Kane, #21 Nick Petrecki, #34 Kevin Shattenkirk, #66 Nick Palmieri, #173 Ryan Hayes, #184 Justin Vaive, #210 Ryan McKiernan.**

Connecticut (6): #12 **Tommy Cross, #16 Max Pacioretty, #70 Drew MacKenzie, #89 Nick Bonino, #119 Jack Downing, #133 Ben Smith.**

Illinois (5): #27 **Billy Sweatt, #32 Ted Ruth, #158 Billy Maday, #161 Tommy Wingels, #11-G Scott Darling.**

Wisconsin (3): #97 **Travis Erstad, #99 Blake Kessel, #207 Josh Turnbull.**

Pennsylvania (3): #25 **Colby Cohen, #93 Eric Tangradi, #105 C.J. Severyn, #19-G John Murray.**

Ohio (3): #122 **John Albert, #200 Carter Camper, #15-G Josh Unice.**

New Jersey (2): #3 **James vanRiemsdyk, #29 T.J. Brennan.**

California (1): #17 **Jonathon Blum.**

Colorado (1): #36 **Drayson Bowman.**

New Hampshire (1): #78 **Paul Thompson**

Oregon (1): #199 **Brad McCabe.**

Missouri (1): #208 **Patrick Maroon.**