

## Ferlin's Progress Continues at Cornell

The Jacksonville native is helping put Florida hockey on the map

By Larry O'Connor

**Brian Ferlin** made sure his path to becoming a Division I player and an NHL prospect carries a made-in-Florida seal of distinction.

Where other players may have left at an early age to play for elite hockey programs in the north, the Cornell University (ECAC) freshman and Boston Bruins' fourth-round pick remained home. The route he chose required sacrifice.

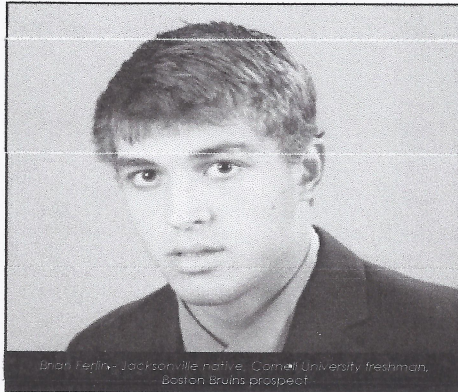
"It takes a lot more commitment to play in Florida with all the travel and stuff you have to go through to excel," said Ferlin.

When he played Pee Wee and Bantam with the Florida Jr. Everblades, the Ferlin family vehicle left some serious tire tread on the state's highways. On Fridays, his father, **Mark**, would drive him five hours to Fort Myers where Ferlin would stay overnight and practice two hours on Saturday and Sunday. One weekend a month was usually spent at an out-of-state tournament.

"Looking back on it now, my parents (Mark and **Sherry**) are probably happy with the way it turned out," he said. "At the time, it probably seemed crazy to some people that my dad was still willing to drive me to all those places."

Ferlin returned to his hometown, playing for the Junior B Jacksonville Ice Dogs during his freshman and sophomore years of high school. He came full circle, having started with the Jacksonville Storm Mite program.

Ferlin's big break occurred with the United States



Brian Ferlin, Jacksonville native, Cornell University freshman, Boston Bruins prospect

Hockey League's (USHL) Indiana Ice, making the squad after an open tryout. In his second season in 2010-11, the 6-foot-2 forward emerged as a league all-star, exploding for 25 goals and 48 assists for 73 points in 55 games. He had just 16 points in 2009-10.

"More than anything, I wanted to prove to myself that, being from Florida, these guys aren't that much better," Ferlin said. "Once I made the team, it took me awhile to get used to the speed and higher level of hockey."

Cornell coach **Mark Schafer** took note of Ferlin's offensive output and offered him a scholarship. Bruins scouts also came away impressed and selected

him 121st overall in June.

Ferlin credits Hockey International's **Brett Strot**, who had been his trainer since age 10, for his development.

"Since he was a young boy, he had the mindset that he really wanted to become an elite hockey player," said Strot, also a coach with the Tampa Bay Juniors of the new EJHL South. "He was very committed early, dedicated and focused. It's paid off."

Through Strot's tutelage, Ferlin developed the speed and stamina to play at a higher level. Those attributes served Ferlin well as both Jr. Everblades and Ice Dogs teams earned trips to USA Hockey's national championship tournaments.

Ferlin's journey is indicative that Florida players can make sizeable strides without leaving the state, Strot boasted.

"I give him credit for staying at home and developing and working on his game," said Strot. "I think players, if they're in the right program, there's no question that they can stay at home."

At one point, one of Ferlin's teammates on the Jr. Everblades left the state to play junior hockey in Syracuse. Ferlin considered making a similar move, but opted to stay put.

"I guess I just wasn't ready at the time to move from my family, because I was only 15 years old at the time," said Ferlin. "It was more of a family decision to stay back, but it turned out to be a good decision with the way everything worked out."

"It's proven now: You can live in Florida and excel in hockey." ●