



## NASHVILLE YOUTH HOCKEY GETS STRONGER

*- Nashville Jr Predators and Thunder AAA Hockey Club merge to create more opportunity for youth hockey participants –*

Nashville, Tenn. (December 20, 2018) – The Nashville Jr. Predators and Thunder AAA Hockey Club announced today that the two entities will merge together and operate under the Nashville Jr. Predators Hockey Club emblem starting in 2019. This merger affords children a clear path from learning to skate to participating in Tier I AAA hockey and every level in between.

"Hockey in Tennessee and the Southern Amateur Hockey Association (SAHA) region is only getting stronger with the merger between the Nashville Jr. Predators and Thunder AAA Hockey Club," said Danny Butler, General Manager of Ford Ice Center. "With two new sheets of ice at The Ice Center in Bellevue opening in the Fall of 2019, youth hockey players will have additional opportunities to participate in hockey programs and receive valuable ice time with elite coaches."

Growing the game of hockey in Tennessee and surrounding states, is a very important initiative of the Nashville Predators. For every new hockey family that is created, provides more opportunity for life-long Nashville Predators fans. "With the newly formed Nashville Jr. Predators, there will be more spots available for kids who want to play, learn to play the game and compete on several different levels," said Nat Harden, Senior Vice President, Tickets / Premium Sales & Youth Hockey. "More tournaments will be hosted at Ford Ice Center, which will create additional revenue for the surrounding businesses in Antioch, Bellevue and across Middle Tennessee."

The Nashville Jr. Predators will enlist Total Package Hockey as the administrator of all hockey operations and coaching. One of the main driving forces behind the merger is to help families take advantage of one of the best development programs in the country that does not require them to move.

"We are extremely grateful for the positive leadership and growth of the game in Nashville, Huntsville, and Atlanta from the Nashville Predators. The NHL-backed Little Preds program being ran in each market is introducing the game to the next generation of players and is critically impacting grassroots growth of hockey. We would also like to thank the Nashville Jr Predators Board for their support in this merger. By working together, teams at the Tier I level will immediately be more competitive on the national stage, which will alleviate the pressure often felt by some families to move. In turn, this will increase the number of players that are drafted and/or tendered by junior hockey programs and commitments made to NCAA Division I

schools, while playing youth hockey in the Nashville Jr. Predators Hockey Club. Perhaps the most important part of this new program is the addition of the Nashville based AA teams that will provide more development options for players” said Nathan Bowen, CEO of Total Package Hockey. “We have a long history of providing outstanding positive mentors and we look forward to staffing the Jr Preds with world class professional coaches and managing the day-to-day operations of the hockey club in a professional, cost-effective and efficient manner. “

“The Nashville Predators continue to do an outstanding job growing the game for players at all levels of hockey and they support this next step in creating a clear path for youth hockey families to follow. Our board unanimously supported this merger in the long-term best interest of hockey in Nashville. We also recognized that consolidating the two clubs only strengthens every level of play for the kids. Adding the AA program creates one homogenous development program for every player. They can begin in the Little Preds program, move along to House League, Preds Select A, now AA and lastly AAA. A family can now come into the game, develop here in Nashville until they are ready physically and mentally for junior hockey.” stated Nashville Jr Predators President Matt Goudy.



Thunder Jr. Preds and Thunder Alum, Andrew Sinard now plays for NCAA D1 Miami of Ohio and attended the 2017 Nashville Predators Prospect

Total Package Hockey held these same responsibilities for the past 15 years with the Thunder AAA Hockey Club. During that time, the club provided a path for student-athletes to develop and advance to junior hockey while living at, or close, to home. The program became a member of the prestigious Tier I Elite League, the only national Tier I Youth Hockey League in the country that produces the most junior, college and professional players in the country.

#### Thunder AAA Hockey Club Player Advancement Summary:

- 4 NHL Draft Picks or Signed
- 45 NCAA DI Commits
- 56 NCAA DIII Commits
- 39 USHL Drafts, 2 Tenders
- 16 NAHL Drafts, 61 Tenders
- 19 OHL Draft Picks
- 4 International (2 NTDP, 2 Hlinka/Gretzky)



Thunder Alum Nathan Krusko, Currently playing at Harvard

Former alumni include Mitch Eliot who signed just last week with the Vancouver Canucks, Nic Dowd from Huntsville Alabama, now with the Washington Capitals, Bjorn Krupp from Atlanta Georgia who played with the US National Development Team Program and now with Grizzlies Wolfsburg in the DEL, Nathan Krusko from Atlanta Georgia at Harvard University and national honors student, Andrew Sinard from Nashville Tennessee who is a freshman at Miami of Ohio playing NCAA DI and attended Nashville Predators Prospect camp in 2017.

Former coaches for the Thunder AAA Hockey club include:

- *Chris Luongo – Current AC Michigan State Spartans, USA National Development Team Program, Team USA World Championships,*
- *Scott Gordon – Current HC Philadelphia Flyers, Team USA World Championships and Olympics, Former Assistant with the Toronto Maple Leafs and HC New York Islanders*

- *Jim McKenzie – Current Scout Las Vegas Golden Knights NHL and Muskegon USHL*
- *Steve Briere – Current Goalie Coach Toronto Maple Leafs NHL, Fargo Force USHL, Topeka RoadRunners NAHL*
- *Uwe Krupp – Current HC Sparta Praha DEL and Team Germany World Championships and Olympics*
- *Karlis Zirnis – Current AC University of Alaska Fairbanks, Shreveport Mudbugs NAHL, Team Latvia World Championships and Olympics,*
- *Darren Eliot – Current Detroit Redwings NHL and Atlanta Thrashers NHL*
- *Danny Geoffrion – Former player Montreal Canadiens and Winnipeg Jets*
- *Jay More – Former player Nashville Predators*
- *Jay Leach –Former NCAA DI Maine Black Bears and Washington Capitals NHL*
- *Paul Flache – Former associate head coach Flint firebirds OHL*



***Chris Luongo***

For more information about the NEW Nashville Jr. Predators program, please contact Jordan French at [jfrench@jrpredators.com](mailto:jfrench@jrpredators.com) or Keith Rowe at [keith@totalpackagehockey.com](mailto:keith@totalpackagehockey.com) and visit [nashvillejrpredators.com](http://nashvillejrpredators.com).