Ah, the AHL. That long-dependable source of spring excitement for those fans who chose to cheer for losers. But following an American league team has more advantages than just seeing that scrub you hated in 20 games in the show now be the main attraction. You also get to see the next generation take their first steps into the pro game. Here's who's swam since jumping into the pro pool.

7. Bobby Sanguinetti, D Hartford Wolf Pack (New York Rangers Affiliate)

2 GP, 0-0-0, -2, 5 SH, 0 PIM

Well, at least he's doing his job. A noted powerplay specialist throughout junior, the Trenton, New Jersey native was taken 21st overall in 2006 on the strength of a 65-point campaign. After 53 points this season, the 6'1, 174 rearguard debuted with New York's AHL club, going pointless in his first game. Looking to make an impact, Sanguinetti unfortunately made himself noticed on the wrong end of the ice last night. Despite hammering five shots from the point and making numerous nice plays with the puck, the Worcester Sharks bulged the net twice with Sanguinetti on the ice. Not expected to be a rock in his own end quite yet, the 19 year-old appears to have no problem translating his offensive game to the pros. It'll take some tough learning, but the future PP QB will be on New York's top man-advantage unit in three years.

6. Claude Giroux, LW, Philadelphia Phantoms (Flyers Affiliate)

1 GP, 0-0-0, -1, 1 SH, 4 PIM

Giroux had a big night last night, posting a goal and two assists, and earning first star in a 7-2 victory. Too bad it was the wrong Giroux, an AHL scrub named Alexandre. As for Claude Giroux, whose Phantoms were on the wrong end of the lopsided loss, he didn't look too out of place either. While pointless and a -1, my personal choice for Calder contender was more than fast and strong enough to keep up, outskating his peers every shift. The slight winger also showed his dirty side, earning some respect with two high sticks. If the 2006 first rounder performs well again tonight against Wilkes-Barre, it'll tough to argue that Giroux doesn't belong.

5. Jamie McGinn, LW, Worcester Sharks (San Jose Affiliate)

1 GP, 0-1-1, +1, 1 SH, 4 PIM

Earning the second assist on the game-winner in the aforementioned Hartford/Worcester tilt, winger Jamie McGinn was part of the reason Sanguinetti had so much trouble. Chosen 36th overall by the Sharks in '06, McGinn joined Worcester after a stellar 46-goal, 89-point season with the Ottawa 67s. Physical, smart along the boards and generally looking mature beyond his years, McGinn, fourth liner Grant Stevenson and 21 year-old up-and-comer Torrey Mitchell combined to form a solid line. On the ice against Binghamton tonight, look for McGinn to pot his first goal as a pro.

4. Trevor Lewis, C, Manchester Monarchs (Los Angeles Affiliate)

3 GP, 1-0-1, +2, 5 SH, 0 PIM

Playing in the USHL prior to the 2006 Draft, 6'1, 192 lbs centreman Trevor Lewis seemed to be eyeing a career in the NCAA. However, after being drafted 17th overall by the Kings, Lewis instead chose the Ontario League and Owen Sound, and had a successful rookie season, posting 73 points in 62 games. Out of the playoffs, the 20 year-old's next stop has been Manchester, where's faired better than most expected. Scorer of the second and winning goal in his second pro game, Lewis coincidentally earned second-star honors. Starring on a line with Matt Moulson and Gabe Gauthier, Lewis has fit right in, providing the same grind-and-battle style the Monarchs specialize in. A spot in camp will be hard to come by with so many prospects, but the future top-six forward has the shot arsenal, skating ability and shot to play with the best very soon.

3. Jack Skille, RW, Norfolk Admirals (Chicago Affiliate)

6 GP, 3-3-6, +3, 23 SH, 0 PIM

Weird stat of the day: Skille's PPG rate in the AHL is higher than his scoring rate in the NCAA. Bet he'd have scored more if he pumped 23 shots on goal every six games in the NCAA like he has far in the AHL. Known to play up to his competition, Skille hasn't looked out of place in the pro game, at times dominating with his shot, speed and overall strength. After going pointless in his debut with Norfolk on the 24th, the 6'1, 209 lbs right wing posted two secondary assists and five shots in a 6'2 victory over the Phantoms. Skille then bulged the twine for three goals in his next two contests, almost willing the Ads to a comeback in a 5-3 loss on the 31st. Skille has more than a hope of making the Blackhawks out of camp, and should he get top-six ice time with a natural playmaker, a Calder Trophy is a possibility.

2. Bobby Ryan, RW, Portland Pirates (Anaheim Affiliate)

4 GP, 3-2-5, +1, 7 SH, 4 PIM, 1 PPG

It took Bobby Ryan an entire calender year to score two goals at the AHL level. A bust? Hardly. After scoring eight points in 19 games with the Pirates in last season's AHL playoffs, Ryan returned to the OHL for 2006-07. After scoring 102 points in 63 games but coming no closer to a Memorial Cup, Ryan jumped to the pros for good on March 31st, and hasn't looked back. After registering two assists in his game back with Portland, Ryan has strung together three straight games with goals. All in all, the 6'1, 220 lbs sniper has amassed an impressive five points in four games. With a big playoffs in the cards. Ryan will come into Ducks camp next year looking for a job. He'll likely struggle in the same way Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry did, only to return full-time to the NHL midway through 2007-08.

1. Brian Elliot, G, Binghamtom Senators (Ottawa Affiliate)

6 GP, 2-3, 4.38 GAA, 0.889 Sv%

Okay, bear with me here. I understand that that's almost 4 and a half goals a game he's allowed. And he stopped 88.9% of shots. And he's won a third of his games. But any other goalie would have a GAA of 6 or more. Thrown into the fire on the 23rd, Elliot simply wasn't

ready for a 40 shot, 6-goal blitzing at the hands of the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. He was slightly more ready for a 33-save performance the next night. All in all, the 9th round selection from 2003 has had to face 37+ shots in four of the six games he's started. But the workload has only made him better. Elliot refused to be the fool on April 1st, earning 1st star in a 4-1 victory after making stops on 38 of 39 shots. It was a repeat performance on the 4th, where Elliot again was first star in a 4-1 victory, this time stopping all but one of 41 attempts. The 21 year-old has so far opened the first week of April with a 2-1 record, 2.14 GAA and 0.947 Sv%. Elliot has all the tools to follow the career path of current Senator Ray Emery in becoming a star starter.