Brett MacLean has a knack for scoring goals. And since coaches need those to win games, the 22-year old Port Elgin native will no doubt find his way to the NHL one day. It's just a question of when.

Currently skating with the AHL's San Antonio Rampage, MacLean has already earned himself two NHL games in his young professional career and he actually scored a goal in his first ever game with the Phoenix Coyotes, a powerplay marker during a 6-3 win over the Los Angeles Kings on December 29, 2010.

MacLean's goal that night was similar to one he's scored countless times over the past seven years, since he was drafted 11th overall in the 2004 OHL Draft by the Erie Otters. He crashed the net and banged the puck past an overmatched goalie, which in this case was Jonathan Quick.

Traded to the Oshawa Generals on November 30, 2005, his scoring prowess became the stuff of legend in his final OHL season (2007-08) when he the led league in goals with 61 in 61 games. The summer before his goal-per-game season, MacLean was drafted by Phoenix in the second round, 32nd overall.

Fast forward three-and-a-half seasons and MacLean has tallied an impressive 70 career AHL goals for San Antonio since he arrived as a rookie for the 2008-09 season and is on pace to score 30 again this season.

Ray Edwards, now in his first full season as San Antonio's head coach after he led the Rampage to a 30-23-3-6 record in 2009-10 as the team's interim head coach, told **PROSPECT PRESCRIPTION**
that MacLean has a
knack
of being around the net, finding the puck and most importantly, putting it in the net.

"He's got quick hands, he's got soft hands," says Edwards. "And he's a big body so he's strong enough to protect the puck and get himself in a position where he can get off a shot. That's the one thing that you notice right away is his natural ability to score."

Edwards says scouts are quick to point out that MacLean isn't the fastest skater, but he says if "Mac" wants to get to a puck first, he'll get there.

"He's not overly quick and he doesn't have that separation speed but the way I look at it, if Mac wants to get there or if he wants to be the guy that's the first to the puck or show a burst, he will. It's just a matter of if he wants to do it or not.

"He's a bigger guy, 6-foot-2, and he doesn't have dynamic skating ability, quickness or agility but he can move. And when he wants to move or win a race to the net, he does it."

Edwards says MacLean's first few years with the Rampage were spent on the left wing, but now he has him skating on the right side.

"As an organization, we decided we wanted to get him on his right side because obviously with the philosophy and the identity of our organization, defence is real important so we've got him back on his right side, just more from a defending standpoint," explains Edwards. "I really haven't seen a difference offensively. Defensively, he's been very good, very good at getting pucks out. And once he gets the puck, he's able to protect it. When he goes up to the Coyotes, he has to get pucks out. He can't turn the puck over, so we decided to put him back there."

Edwards says MacLean is ‘right at the cusp’ of playing full-time for Phoenix but as long as the franchise has its ownership issues, the Coyotes can’t really afford to give young players a chance to develop with the big club.

“There’s a need to win. And while there are two or three guys that we have that are right there on the cusp of playing, we’re not really afforded the luxury of giving someone like Mac 10 games up there just to see where he is,” says Edwards. “The standings matter because the team badly needs to win.”

But whether it’s next season or the one after, Edwards says MacLean, who he compares to Todd Bertuzzi and Tomas Holmstrom, will score and score often when he gets to the NHL.

“There’s nothing that I’ve seen that’s shown that he can’t score goals there. Every level he’s played at, he’s been able to score,” says Edwards. “But up there, as you know, we’re talking about a secondary game. He’s got to be able to win battles and races and block shots and all the other stuff and that’s what we’re trying to drill into these guys down here. Down here, he’s a power play guy, he’s an offensive guy and he plays with offensive players but we still need him to have that secondary stuff because when he gets up there, that’s what he’s got to do first.”

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