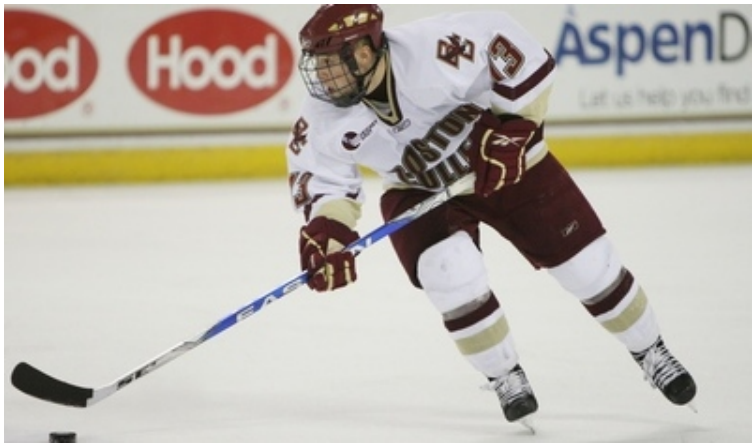

Preseason success isn't always a good indicator of regular season success, however, for prospects it's one of the few times to make a significant impression. This week we look at four more prospects that have had outstanding training camps/preseasons. Two have likely earned themselves a permanent NHL roster spot. Three of the four prospects last week were well known prospects. This week's players are more obscure and in some cases have come out of nowhere.

Mathieu Perrault, C, Washington

Perrault, 23, has been around for a long time. He's a proven AHL point per game player and has already played 56 games for the Capitals over the last two seasons. Despite that, he wasn't supposed to make the team, especially the top six. He made it though and will centre the second line between Alex Semin and Troy Brouwer when the Capitals host Carolina on Oct. 8th. At 5'9, 170 pounds, Perrault's size has always been an issue. Size aside, he's a skilled centre with good vision and passing ability.

This could be the breakthrough season for Perrault as 2009 first rounder Marcus Johansson's poor camp gave him an opportunity which he pounced on. Bruce Boudreau rewarded Perrault with a roster spot after Perrault had an excellent camp. Perrault's preseason stats were especially good with 2 goals and 5 points to go along with +4 in four games. He was a first and a third star in two of the four games he played. Dobber has him pegged for 38 points this season. If he can stay healthy and Johansson continues to struggle, 45 points isn't out of the question.

Cam Atkinson, RW, Columbus

At 5'8, 175 pounds and a 6th round pick in 2008, it would have appeared that Atkinson had his work cut out for him to make Columbus this season. He has a decent pedigree as he was a Hobey Baker finalist in 2011 after leading the NCAA in goals, something he has done for the past two seasons. With only five AHL games, it was expected he would spend at least half a season in the minors before making the jump, however, his camp and preseason forced the Blue Jackets' hand. Atkinson's camp was so good he forced Derrick Brassard out of the top six. Atkinson saw decent power play time against Nashville in Columbus' first regular season game on Oct. 7th. Unfortunately for Atkinson, he appeared overmatched defensively and finished a team low -2 against the Preds. His camp has earned him a good look so he'll get at least 10 games to prove himself. A sniper, Atkinson has hands of gold and the potential to score close to 20 goals if things go his way. Too many more games like the one against Nashville will assure him some time in the AHL this season to work on his defensive game.

Craig Smith, C, Nashville

Smith was originally committed to Wisconsin for 2011-12, but decided to forgo his junior year in the NCAA. That decision, and his incredible camp, threw a wrench into Nashville's preseason. Smith, a 4th rounder in 2009 had help from Blake Geoffrion's wrist injury which gave him some ice time and a chance to show his skills. Smith started slowly in his first two preseason games, but kept getting ice time and came through Sept. 28th with 2 assists in a 4-1 win over Washington. He followed that up with the winning goal and a first star performance in a tough 2-1 win over Carolina.

There was really nothing to indicate that Smith would make Nashville this season. He represented the USA in the World Championships and acquitted himself well, but it's surprising he made Team USA given his lack of experience. He had only one high scoring season for Wisconsin prior to making Team USA laden with established NHL players. Smith scored once in his first NHL game and led the Preds with 5 shots in just over 13 minutes of ice time. Look for him to flirt with 40 points. He should stick with the Preds and could garner some Calder consideration.

Roman Horak, C, Calgary

He was supposed to be at least two years away coming into camp, however, despite not scoring much in preseason; Horak impressed Calgary enough to give him an NHL roster spot. The 6'1, 180 pound centre has to fill out considerably although the laid back Czech is not likely to fret about his size. One of the things Coach Brent Sutter likes about Horak is that he takes things in stride and is not likely to be overwhelmed playing in the NHL. That laid back attitude is likely to be tested when Calgary hosts Philadelphia and Jaromir Jagr on Saturday. A fellow Czech, Jagr was the ultimate hockey star when Horak was growing up.

Horak has only one good scoring season of junior hockey on his resume, so it's likely he'll

spend some time in Abbotsford to add some strength and round out his game. He's certainly earned his spot as he outpaced both veteran Matt Stajan and highly touted prospect Paul Byron to make the team. If he can gain some muscle and manage 45 points between Abbotsford and Calgary, look for him to play a full NHL season in 2012-13.