With a nickname like “Boo” you would think people might have second thoughts about you. Well that is definitely not the case for Cristoval Nieves. A nickname that his parents gave him as a youth, this young hockey prodigy has been drawing NHL scouts over the hills and to the woods of New England rinks for the last two seasons.

The Baldwinsville, NY native has been honing his game under the watchful eye of former NHLer and Michigan Wolverine alum, Matt Herr, at the Kent School (CT). Nieves is set to embark on his collegiate career this fall in Ann Arbor under legendary coach Red Berenson (the same coach Herr played for in the mid-late ‘90s and won two NCAA national titles).

There have been questions if Nieves made the proper decision for his career by returning to 25-game schedule of his prep school. But the decision paid off, as Nieves jumped up four positions on the Central Scouting Services (CSS) rankings from the mid-term point in January to their final grades in April. Nieves was originally slotted in at 31st but impressed enough scouts to find himself inside the top 30 for North American skaters (he was ranked 27th). This may be a bit of a surprise after a sub-par season by Nieves’ standards – he scored just four goals in 18

games, along with 25 assists.

All along Nieves knew going back to Kent for his senior year would pay dividends, as Herr followed the same path in his own career at the Hotchkiss School (CT), and of course at Michigan. Nieves has remarked that Kent would take his game to the next level with superior coaching.

What scouts and coaches are drawn to in his game is his skating ability. Standing at 6-3 and 185 pounds, Nieves still has that explosiveness in his stride along with being very agile and balanced. He plays a strong and physical game along the boards which is something he has developed in his tenure at Kent. The vision, playmaking, creativity, and hockey sense are aspects that have been there since the younger days with the Syracuse Stars.

Nieves made a good choice in joining the Indiana Ice of the United States Hockey League (USHL) back in March for a few weeks to please scouts. In a league which is considered a step up from the New England prep circuit, Nieves managed to post respectable numbers in 13 games played – two goals and 10 points.

Knowing that Yost Arena would be his home in the fall, Nieves went back to Kent to finish out his schooling to be on track for graduation.
Some have compared his game to Joe Thornton, while Nieves himself prides himself on the play of current New Jersey Devil star, Zach Parise. If Nieves continues on his current path of hard-nosed style, utilizing his quickness in skating and shot release, “Boo” may find himself playing for Lord Stanley someday too.