One of the things you'll sometimes hear scouts say is that a player has "good bloodlines."

It means that a prospect is the son of a former NHLer or pro hockey player and the phrase implies that hockey talent is hereditary and passed on genetically.

There are some compelling cases that this could be true: Bobby and Brett Hull, Gordie and Mark Howe, and more recently, Peter and Paul Stastny.

But when you look at a list of the top 100 scorers in NHL history (from 1917 to 2010) you won't find many father-son tandems. If hockey talent is passed on genetically, then it stands to reason that more of the tandems among the top ranks of NHL scorers. Perhaps the hockey talent is passed down through the mother, but if that's the case, it could be argued that siblings from the same mother should be equally talented.

Again, there are some famous cases of this: the Richards, the Espositos, and more recently the Staals – minus Jared. But there are many more cases of brothers of Hall of Fame caliber players who did not make it in the NHL. Mario Lemieux's brother, Alain; Joe Sakic's brother Brian; Paul Kariya's brother Steve; and Wayne Gretzky's brothers Keith and Brent.

So, when I hear the phrase "he has good bloodlines" I don't assume that a player is a lock to succeed. Hockey talent is not hereditary, although there is a case to be made that certain physical attributes, including athletic ability, can be passed on.

What good bloodlines indicate to me is that a player has a good role model for succeeding. Making it in the NHL requires dedication and sacrifice and a lot of talented players don't make it because they're not prepared to dedicate themselves to off-ice training or make the sacrifices they need to make. Sons of NHLers are keenly aware of these requirements and have an edge over equally talented players who are not the sons of ex-NHLers.

Two excellent prospects in the OHL got me thinking about bloodlines. They are worth noting, but they are not a guarantee of success. That said, the road to the NHL is difficult and any edge a player has over his peers is worth noting.

The two players with “good bloodlines” are Tom Kuhnhackl and Christian Thomas. Kuhnhackl is the son of Erich Kuhnhackl, voted the player of the 20th century in Germany. The native of Czechoslovakia was named to the IIHF Hall of Fame and counts among his accomplishments a bronze medal at the 1976 Olympics, four Bundesliga titles and 724 goals and 707 assists in 744 German league games.

Thomas is the son of Steve Thomas, the former Maple Leaf who scored 421 goals in a 20-year career with seven teams.

The Pittsburgh Penguins took Kuhnhackl with a fourth-round pick this past summer while the New York Rangers nabbed Thomas in the second round.

After a slow start to his rookie year in the OHL, Kuhnhackl has started to light up the scoreboard for the Windsor Spitfires.

The lanky right winger plays the point on the power play for Windsor where his good shot and hockey sense have been potent weapons. Kuhnhackl is also a good skater and will improve this as he adds leg strength. He has good hands and good puck skills; just what foes of the Penguins like to hear about their prospects.

With Kuhnhackl, the thing you notice about him is that he is competitive and yet has a comfort in competition that good bloodlines sometimes gives a player. He's able to maintain his cool and perform well under pressure.

He has a comfort in competition that bloodlines sometimes gives a player and is proving that the Penguins might have got a steal in the fourth round. Touted as a first-round talent before his draft year and for much of the season, he didn't get a lot of ice time on his German pro team and played hurt at a key international tournament ; both factors contributed to his stock falling.

Thomas scored 41goals last year, among the highest among draft eligible players in the CHL, but his size made some teams shy away in the first round. Christian is even smaller than his dad, who went by the nickname Stumpy during his NHL days. Steve was 5-11, 185 and Christian is 5-9, 165 – although he could still grow a bit.

Like his dad though, Christian can score goals and is off to a torrid start this year with the Oshawa Generals, who acquired him from the London Knights two years ago in the John Tavares deal.

Thomas is slick and speedy with excellent puck skills and hockey sense. Like his dad, he's a little pit bull and is difficult to contain and a pain in the butt for defenders who often have difficulty stopping him.

Both Kuhnhackl and Thomas are talented prospects who are worth looking at on their own merits. That they have talented and knowledgeable fathers with years of professional and international hockey experience means they have good mentors.

This good advice, and the weight it carries because of the fathers' success, will give the younger Kuhnhackl and Thomas a boost on their path to the NHL.