

Forsberg Standing Out

Written by Russ Bitely

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Just recently I had the pleasure to watch some live action at the World Junior Evaluation Camp in Lake Placid, NY. Some of the top international Under-20 players from the United States, Sweden, and Finland descended upon this quaint, Adirondack village for a week. The majority of the participants in competition had already heard their name called at the NHL podium in the last two NHL Entry Drafts, although many scouts were still on hand to view the handful of 2013 draft eligible players.

One particular player that not only caught my eye during the games but also in practice was the sensational Swedish forward Filip Forsberg.

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The characteristic that strikes you first in his game is creativity. He displayed his slick puck moving skills with his keen vision on the ice and stick handling abilities too.

On Tuesday morning, Team Sweden had a warm-up morning skate prior to their match with Finland later in the day. Forsberg was one skater that elected to stay on the ice after the 50-minute session to work on his game. Albeit in a very fun, care-free style against his Swedish teammate he stayed on the ice. These two native Scandinavian went back and forth several times all-around the rink in various 1-on-1 situations.

You could see his artistic thoughts and offensive instincts shine threw as the puck was like a yo-yo on his stick. In an empty Herb Brooks Arena, you could hear their laughter from above as they attempted to 1-up each other with a more impressive move each time.

Although each Swedish player at the evaluation camp was extremely talented, you could see that Forsberg always hand the upper hand against his counterpart as the confidence and determination displayed brightly. The toe drags, the spin moves, the quick stop-n-starts, and extreme hand-eye coordination were all prominent as Forsberg entertained the very small crowd and some other teammates with his proficiencies and on-ice humor.

It wasn't until he faked in being injured with a stick to the face did he exit the Olympic-sized ice surface.

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He then truly showed his two-way playing ability and flashes in the afternoon game versus Finland. First, he dazzled the spectators on hand by taking a pass in the neutral zone then eluding one defender at the offensive blue line, driving the puck wide on his off-wing while slipping the puck between the defenseman's stick and skates, to then finally finding an open teammate out front of the net for the goal.

His powerful and accurate shot was next to be exposed on the very next shift as he received the feed on a 2-on-1 in the slot area and then simply sniped the shot top shelf, glove-side quickly on a release the goalie had no chance at all in stopping.

The 2012 first round draftee of the Washington Capitals brings many assets to the table. In addition to being a dynamic offensive player with his creativity, stick handling, skating, and shooting he also is endorsed with paramount hockey sense. Like many 17-year olds, he could certainly increase his strength and consistency and that will come in time.

He signed his three-year entry level contract last month yet the Caps will continue to develop this gem in the right manner as he will not even turn eighteen until two days from now. Thus, North American hockey will most likely have to wait another year before Forsberg visits their NHL city.

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Forsberg is again set to play in the Swedish Elite League for Leksand and join Team Sweden for another shot at gold at the World Junior Championships in December.

Whether Forsberg is flipping pucks for fun or fame, he is an NHL prospect that should impress in days to come.