On the heels of Halloween *The Dean's List* switches its focus to two players emerging from the United States full of first round potential and one of them is ironically dubbed "BOO". Recently, the media has covered the battle between the Canadian Hockey League and NCAA recruitment process as both development leagues battle for top prospects. In this instalment of *The Dean's List* we feature a top American high school prospect and the top defensive prospect coming out of the United States Hockey League (USHL) who both own the skill and potential to become very exciting NHL players.

Cristoval "Boo" Nieves (Kent School, New England Prep School)

Center, 6-3, 185

Please raise your hand if you're an NHL General Manager and would like a six-foot-three-inch center that is a tremendous skater with good foot speed and has above average puck handling abilities. Everyone can lower your hands now. Nieves currently plays for Kent School in Connecticut after moving from Syracuse, New York to further his hockey development. The smooth skating forward has quick acceleration and is surprisingly agile for his lanky frame. At 185 pounds, Nieves could certainly benefit to fill out more but that is likely to come as he matures. Scouts have noticed that with his combination of speed and deft puck handling skills Nieves' opponents often have difficulty keeping him in check as he can beat them one-on-one or simply skate right by them. NHL teams have a lot to be excited about with Cristoval "Boo" Nieves as his physical package projects great NHL potential and the young kid has earned good praise academically as well.

The OHL's Niagara Ice Dogs were impressed with Nieves' production when he scored 30 goals and 72 points (60 games) for the Syracuse Jr. Nationals (AAA)and it was enough to make him their tenth round selection in the 2010 OHL Priority Selection draft. It doesn't appear that Nieves will make the trip north to the OHL but when you have a kid with this type of talent you must take a shot. Last season, Boo Nieves continued his dominance as he tallied an astonishing 43 goals and 18 assists for 61 points in only 23 games playing for Kent School in the New England Prep School league. The play of Nieves earned him an invitation to the Under-18 USA Team that competed in the Ivan Hlinka Memorial Tournament this past August. The Ivan Hlinka Tournament is an event scouts often flock to get a firsthand look at the upcoming draft class. Scouts were pleasantly surprised with the top high school prospect from the U.S. especially after catching a glimpse of this highlight reel goal versus Russia.

Cristoval "Boo" Nieves enters the 2012 NHL Draft discussion as an underrated player – like most USHL players these days but you should see the top high school prospect compete for a first round selection spot. In reality, the U.S. high school program is churning out more elite

talent each season and you can put down the name Boo Nieves as a player *The Dean's List* lik es to rise in the 2012 draft rankings. Cristoval Nieves is committed to the University of Michigan for 2012. Make no mistake, NHL teams should not be scared of drafting the kid termed "Boo" as he's got legit top end potential.

Jordan Schmaltz (Sioux City Musketeers, USHL)

Defense, 6-2, 189

The native of Verona, Wisconsin enters the 2012 NHL Draft as one of the top offensive defenders in a draft class loaded with plenty of quality defensemen. Hailing from Verona, Wisconsin Schmaltz appeared in the International Scouting Services latest rankings as the top American high school prospect (21st). Jordan Schmaltz patrols the blue line for the Sioux City Musketeers of the United States Hockey League and you can often find this elite skater leading the rush on a nightly basis.

With a late 1993 birthday (October 8th), Schmaltz missed the 2011 NHL Entry Draft by less than a month so he's had an extra year of development and it's paying off now. Scouts have been following Jordan Schmaltz for quite some time now. Three years ago, Schmaltz made a bold statement when the 14-year old verbally committed to the University of Wisconsin (NCAA) and that decision caused a media frenzy. Flash forward three years and the eighteen year old switched his verbal commitment to the University of North Dakota. Recently, Jordan Schmaltz found his name in the media once again after the Windsor Spitfires' General Manager Warren Rychel publicly stated that Schmaltz would be better off coming to the OHL to prepare him for an NHL career. The Windsor Spitfires own Jordan Schmaltz's rights in the Ontario Hockey

League but Schmaltz nixed all rumours of him joining the Spitfires when he re-stated his intentions of honouring his NCAA commitment.

With the media frenzy on temporary hold, Schmaltz looks to prove to NHL scouts in his draft year that he belongs in the discussion as one of the top 2012 defensive prospects. Schmaltz possesses an effortless skating stride and has that patience with the puck that elite offensive defensemen use to open up lanes and attack. Last season in his rookie USHL campaign, Schmaltz tallied 13 goals and 44 points in 53 games for the Sioux City Musketeers leading all USHL defensemen. Of those 44 points, Schmaltz earned 30 of them playing on the powerplay. His impressive freshman campaign would earn him league wide recognition as he was named to the USHL's First All-Star Team and USHL's All-Rookie Team. In nine games this season, Jordan has registered on the game sheet six times (3 goals, 3 assists).

The offensively gifted rearguard is learning to improve his defensive game in his second full USHL season and development in that aspect of his game will certainly improve his draft stock. At 6-foot-3-inches, the right-handed Schmaltz should have plenty of suitors come next summer especially among those looking for a big defender who has a great first pass and can lead the rush. *The Dean's List* feels that Jordan Schmaltz is a player who has loads of potential and as a prospect turning plenty of heads already, he could easily challenge for a top ten selection in the 2012 NHL Entry Draft. Schmaltz has drawn comparisons to a younger Scott Niedermayer and that lofty appraisal should definitely tip of fantasy owners looking for some fresh talent on the blueline.

Be sure to follow *The Dean's List* throughout the season as we continue to highlight top prospects from the United States, Canada and European leagues. Boo Nieves and Jordan Schmaltz idolize Zach Parise and Drew Doughty respectively and if they can become half the players of either current NHLer then these enticing prospects will certainly earn fantasy relevance.