The holiday season has rolled around and with it brings a time for…wait for it…great World Junior Championship hockey. For *The Dean's List*, the best gift that the big fat man in the red suit can give us is competitive talent filled hockey games, especially in a year with an NHL lockout. As always, Santa rarely disappoints those who have been good for the entire year and hockey fans have been *very* good as we patiently await the return of NHL hockey. As a reward for our loyalty, the big man has flown hundreds of the world's top hockey prospects to Ufa, Russia to set the stage perfectly for an amazing 2013 World Junior Championship.

This week, *The Dean's List* focuses on the names competing for their respective countries that

are draft eligible for the 2013 NHL Entry Draft as they use the World Junior platform to catapult themselves up the draft rankings. In a tournament usually dominated by 19-year-old players, it is often a tough task for those draft-eligible players to earn the ice time and opportunities to really showcase their skill set. However, the 2013 draft class features several key names that will be leaned heavily on by their coaching staffs to fill a key role and hundreds of scouts will be watching closely.

Without further ado, *The Dean's List* breaks down, by nation, the notable draft eligible players to watch in the 2013 IIHF Under-20 World Junior Hockey Championships beginning December 26th.

Important to Note: Many of the nations have not finalized their rosters and several of the names below could still get released. As a result, check back after December 26th to see the edited list.

CANADA (2012 WJC Bronze)

Nathan MacKinnon, C (Halifax, QMJHL) – the consensus top pick (for now) in the upcoming draft, MacKinnon is an elite skater with exceptional vision and plays a very projectable pro-style possession game. It will be interesting to see how Team Canada uses him in this tournament.

Jonathan Drouin, LW (Halifax, QMJHL) – Drouin has, arguably, played better than his teammate MacKinnon showing scouts his ridiculous on-ice intelligence and playmaking abilities. Considered a top five prospect right now, Drouin could elevate his status even higher with a strong tournament but will have to do it playing a secondary role.

Others to Watch: JC Lipon (overage F)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Names to Watch: Matej Beran (overage F), Jakub Vrana (2014 draft prospect), Matej Machovsky (overage G)

FINLAND (2012 WJC 4th Place)

Aleksander Barkov, C (Tappara, SM-liiga) – arguably one of the most anticipated players for this tournament. Using elite vision, slick puck skills and his overall hockey sense, Barkov could compete with Sabres' prospect Joel Armia as Finland's top scorer. Potential top 5 selection.

Artturi Lehkonen, RW (KalPa, SM-liiga) – potential first round pick does everything well and features a powerful and accurate shot. Lehkonen will be watched closely after leading the Finns last year at the Under 18s last year.

Rasmus Ristolainen, D (TPS, SM-liiga) – big projectable top 15 defenseman has the ability to log big minutes and shows well in a number of areas – skating, physicality and a good point shot.

RUSSIA

Valeri NIchushkin, C (Chelybinsk, RUS) – big rangy skilled pivot that competes hard and shows a willingness to drive the net and unleash his wicked shot. Potential top-10 pick.

Notable Cuts: Nikita Zadorov (D), Bogdan Yakimov (C)

SLOVAKIA

Marko Dano, C/W (Slovan Bratislava, KHL) – potential late round project type of prospect that plays physical and owns good hockey sense and a heavy shot. He can be a bit individualistic at times but that could help him on a team that will need his offense. Looking to make a name for himself.

Martin Reway, C/W (Gatineau, QMJHL) – off to a strong debut in the QMJHL, Reway is producing at over a point-per-game. Smart player with great feet, good hands and playmaking skills makes him a player to watch.

SWEDEN (2012 WJC Gold)

Linus Arnesson, D (Djurgarden, Allsvenskan) – solid and well-rounded defenseman with good wheels. Projected as a mid-to-late round pick

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Jacob De La Rose, C/W (Leksand, Allsvenskan) – potential first round versatile forward who employs strong skating and a heady north-south style into his game.

Elias Lindholm, C (Brynas, SEL) – potential top 10 draft prospect with an above-average defensive and offensive game who is producing some impressive Swedish numbers for a draft eligible.

Jesper Petterson, D (Linkoping, SEL) – a mid-to-late round offensive defenseman that balances his offensive skills nicely with his willingness to get physical. Petterson is a player to watch in this tourney as his draft stock could rise.

Alexander Wennberg, LW (Djurgarden, Allsvenskan) – rising potential first round fast skating forward with a strong cerebral game and valuable puck skills.

Others to Watch: **Emil Djuse** (D), **Viktor Arvidsson** (RW), **Nick Sorensen** (RW)

SWITZERLAND

Mirco Mueller, D (Everett, WHL) – the big framed Swiss defender will attract scouts and Mueller has stepped up his game in the absence of former 2nd overall pick, Ryan Murray, for the Everett Silvertips. Switzerland will lean heavily on this defenseman both offensively and defensively. He has a chance to elevate his draft stock substantially.

Others to Watch: **Lukas Frick** (D)

USA

Seth Jones, D (Portland, WHL) – a generational type of defenseman that will battle Nathan MacKinnon for first overall. Plays a complete game at an elite level and will be one of USA's top defensemen as he showcases his elite feet, pro-shot and exceptional hockey IQ. Could surpass MacKinnon with a (likely) standout WJC performance.

Ryan Hartman, C/W (Plymouth, OHL) – skilled feisty winger with strong hockey sense will likely fill a bottom six role for the Americans. Potential 1st or 2nd round forward.

Others to Watch: **Cole Bardreau** (F/W)

TDL NOTE:

Germany and Latvia have several undrafted players who could receive draft day consideration but *TDL* has none of their players on its current “To Watch” list.

Previous Posts from Brendan Ross:

- **The Top 30 for 2013**
- ***The 2013 WHL Class***

Please continue to follow *The Dean’s List* series as we track the 2013 NHL Entry Draft prospects. Follow on Twitter @RossyYoungblood as he covers the #2013WJC for @DobberProspects