

## Charles in Charge

Written by Brendan Ross

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The NHL player's long path to the big leagues is not as easy and enjoyable as one might believe. The journey certainly has its bumps along the road and challenges to overcome and the players who are able to survive, persevere and learn from each challenge will certainly develop the intangibles to become better professional athletes. Each year the NHL entry draft rewards two-hundred ten players for their hard work and effort fulfilling long time dreams of donning an NHL sweater for many kids. That moment when Brian Burke, Ken Holland, George McPhee or some other NHL General Manager calls out your name on stage provides the player who has spent hours upon hours working towards their goal of becoming a National Hockey League draft pick with a sense of satisfaction. The toughest part of that journey towards the NHL draft might just be in the ten months before their NHL eligible draft year. As players enter into this critical year there is an added pressure to maintain that high level of performance under the critical eyes of many important hockey personnel.

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This week, *The Dean's List* profiles a player who has been exceeding all expectations for the past year despite plenty of criticism surrounding his size and skating ability. The QMJHL star is defying the odds in a similar fashion as Francophone star forward Martin St. Louis did before he became an undrafted NHL star.

*The Dean's List* heads to the QMJHL to learn more about a 2012 draft eligible winger playing one-hundred forty miles northeast of Quebec City in the town of Chicoutimi.

### Charles Hudon – Chicoutimi Saguenéens (QMJHL)

The undersized left winger from Boisbriand, Quebec had a strong performance during the recent Subway Super Series scoring one goal and adding an assist for two points. Hudon was the QMJHL's most consistent player over the two games as he was buzzing around the rink creating plenty of opportunities for his team. Hudon fired an impressive nine shots on net and was featured on Quebec's top powerplay unit.

The scouting report on Charles Hudon varies from scout to scout but the consensus is that Hudon has top-six upside and has the ability to become a lethal powerplay option. At five-foot-ten-inches and one-hundred seventy-five pounds there is a warranted concern about Hudon's size and durability at the next level. Hudon currently leads the Chicoutimi Saguenéens with 12 goals, 18 assists and 30 points (+11) through 22 games but the small winger will need to keep that scoring pace up to prove to scouts that he is not just another small high scoring Q star that seems to come through the league and eventually fade away. Charles Hudon is averaging just under four-shots per game indicating that the Quebec star enjoys firing the biscuit and that trend will certainly lead to more points on the gamesheet.

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Due to his size, people tend to compare Hudon to Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis but the truth is that Hudon lacks St. Louis' skating ability and a better comparison might be former Kitchener Ranger and current Buffalo Sabre forward Derek Roy. The biggest knock on Hudon is that his foot speed is average at best and skating ability has become a vital skill set that NHL scouts need to see in the "new NHL". The similarities between Derek Roy and Charles Hudon appear to be more accurate as both players have the ability to create offense for themselves and linemates while only being average skaters. Charles Hudon is determined to improve his area of weakness and trains during the summer with Columbus Blue Jacket Derick Brassard, a player Hudon likes to mimic.

Hudon was drafted sixth overall in the 2010 QMJHL Draft and performed great during his rookie season notching 23 goals and 60 points, including an impressive plus-26 rating, in 63 games of action, on a fairly weak Chicoutimi team. Charles' freshman performance would earn him the QMJHL's Rookie of the Year honours in 2010-11. Hudon has been a highly touted sniper for several years now and there has been no shortage of scouting reports out on the little guy.

Charles Hudon has had a busy year representing his province and country several times internationally in the past twelve months. Last December (2010), Hudon starred for Canada's Team Quebec in the Under-17 World Hockey Challenge leading the team with 5 goals and 11 points in 6 games. Hudon's performance would earn him a roster spot as an underage forward for Team Canada at the Under-18 World Championships in Germany but only received limited ice time (1 assist in 7 games). Hockey Canada has certainly appreciated Hudon's skills as they were quick to name the Chicoutimi sniper to the Ivan Hlinka Team Canada squad this past August. The tournament acts as another scouting hot bed to catch the upcoming 2012 NHL draft class in competitive action. Charles Hudon did not disappoint those in attendance as he led Team Canada in scoring with 5 goals and 9 points in just 5 games. Hudon's dominance at the Ivan Hlinka Tournament was even more impressive considering he outscored the next best Canadian by four points on a roster that features top 2012 draft eligible forwards including Jarrod Maidens (Owen Sound), Andreas Athanasiou (London), and Brendan Gaunce (Belleville).

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While Hudon's skating needs work, *The Dean's List* is very impressed with his ability to create offense with his quick hands and well-developed hockey sense. Hudon has a strong work ethic that scouts have undoubtedly noticed and he is a player that has consistently produced on every team he has competed for. Chicoutimi fans are privileged to watch this offensive catalyst play on a nightly basis and it will not be long until the entire nation understands his full potential.

*The Dean's List* and other scouting services have plenty of areas to examine with Hudon still but his upside and offensive talent is undeniable and that leaves him with the opportunity to dance up the draft rankings as he progresses. Look for NHL teams to snap up the Saguenéens' winger somewhere between the first and third rounds of the 2012 NHL Entry Draft and

*The Dean's List*

has him ranked just outside the first round at this point.