As you drive towards the border-town of Sarnia, Ontario you will begin to hear several strange noises. First, Sarnia is the largest city on the shores of Lake Huron and its home to numerous refinery plants lining "*Chemical Valley"* rumbling throughout the day and night to produce the oil our world craves.

Secondly and more recently, ever since 2010 Sarnia has acclimated itself to a new sound buzzing throughout the streets as a new "*big wig"* came to town. On June 29th, 2010 the Sarnia Sting organization used their 2nd overall pick in the 2010 CHL Import Draft to select Russian sniper Nail Yakupov after the WHL's Prince George Cougars used the first overall selection to nab Slovakian defenseman Martin Marincin . From the moment Yakupov scored his first OHL goal and then proceeded to celebrate by jumping into the end boards he won over the fans of Sarnia. "Yakupov"- a name foreign to most casual North American hockey fans at the time he was drafted into the OHL has quickly become a term scattered throughout social media and the world of hockey. Recently, Yakupov has more than Sarnia Sting fans buzzing as tweeters can often be found signing their favourite NHL team up in the #Fail4Nail campaign in anticipation of the his arrival to the NHL. But, hold up! There is another potential hockey star residing in Sarnia and he deserves some of the spotlight as well.

The Dean's List series actually debuted on the front pages of Dobber Hockey with an article dedicated to the talented Russian about a year ago titled *Nail Breaking Through*. However, it may surprise some people that *The Dean's List* has as much praise (or more) for the player who was selected 1st overall in the 2010 OHL Priority Selection draft two months prior to Yakupov becoming Sarnia Sting property – Alex Galchenyuk.

Living in close proximity to Sarnia, *TDL* has had the privilege of following and scouting Alex Galchenyuk for an entire season before he experience the devastating knee injury in a 2011-12 pre-season game that would leave him sidelined for most of this season. Alex Galchenyuk (or @AGally94 as he has become known on twitter) has shown a lighter side of his personality as he interacts with fans throughout his draft year via twitter as well as his

NHL.com draft blog.
Alex's injury has left many scouts twiddling their thumbs as they await his return to the ice to catch this skilled centreman in action. For those who have yet to watch number 94 compete, today is your lucky day.
The Dean's List
is here to give you an inside glimpse of what an NHL team will receive if they opt to select Alex Galchenyuk from the Sarnia Sting.

Alex Galchenyuk

Sarnia Sting, OHL

Born: February 12, 1994 Milwaukee, WI, USA

Position: Centre Shoots: Left

Height: 6-1 Weight: 185

2011-2012 OHL Statistics: N/A

Entering the 2011-2012 OHL Season, Alex Galchenyuk and Nail Yakupov were coming off tremendous rookie seasons scoring 83 and 101 points, respectively. The freshmen duo were both named to the OHL's 1st All-Rookie Team and shared team rookie of the year honours last season. Coming into their draft season, Galchenyuk was expected to challenge his teammate Nail Yakupov for the first overall selection in the 2012 NHL Entry Draft before banging up his knee. Depending on if teams were paying attention last season during their visits to Sarnia's RBC Centre there is a very good chance that most NHL teams did their homework and understands the potential that Alex Galchenyuk possesses. The knee injury has likely kyboshed Galchenyuk's hopes of unseating Yakupov as the top NHL pick but 'Gally' is still a candidate to become a potential Top 10 NHL Draft pick. The 2012 NHL draft class has had an opportunity to pass Galchenyuk in the rankings but it has not looked like many players have improved their stock enough to surpass the Galchenyuk at this point.

The Sarnia Sting have missed Galchenyuk's presence and some might say he's even more valuable to their success than Nail Yakupov provided everything he does for the team. General Manager/Coach Jacques Beaulieu has been forced to juggle the lines and work the trade phones to replace the injured Alex Galchenyuk and it's a task that is virtually impossible.

Galchenyuk is a strong centre with excellent puck protection skills and these types of players are rare in hockey. NHL teams covet responsible skilled centreman to build their forward corps around and it is these qualities that add tremendous value to Alex Galchenyuk's draft stock.

The former Chicago Young American's star (38GP-44G-87P) is a dependable forward with good positional bearings, a quick stick and good offensive and defensive instincts proving that he can be trusted and counted on playing in all situations. In the opinion of *TDL,* Alex Galchenyuk is atop the list for the best well-rounded forward prospect in the entire 2012 NHL Draft class. Teammate Nail Yakupov and fellow CHL'er Mikhail Grigorenko have higher upsides but Alex Galchenyuk's offensive weaponry is not far off and he projects to become a

less risky prospect (assuming his knee rehabilitates fully). Galchenyuk showed in his first year of major junior hockey that he's become an unselfish player who elevates his game, offensively and defensively, when his team needs him the most – a quality scouts should take notice in.

Galchenyuk's vision, stick wizardry and ability to operate in traffic are elite attributes and they complement his masterful playmaking skills perfectly. Alex's sturdy frame and strong stick makes him difficult to knock off of the puck and a force to deal with in the offensive zone often resulting in more space for his linemates. Galchenyuk does not possess lightning quick feet but there are few concerns (pre-injury) with his skating as he operates with good speed and agility. Galchenyuk projects to be a playmaker first, shooter second but the young lad owns a lightning quick-release and accurate shot that keeps opponents honest. Last season, Sarnia fans would often find themselves in awe as Galchenyuk stick handled through several opponents and then saucered a pass over to his buddy Yakupov for the one-timer goal. Former NHLer turned player agent, Igor Larionov, described Alex Galchenyuk as a Marian Hossa type of player and it is a very accurate comparison.

The Dean's List has a lot of good things to say about Alex Galchenyuk and from a NHL team's perspective he could become the best player of this draft class. Galchenyuk's knee injury has certainly set his progress back and it is one of the few criticisms scouts have about Alex. With modern technology and medical advancements, the knee rehabilitation will most likely work itself out but teams will be cautious and observing closely when the top prospects enter the 2012 NHL Draft Combine for further testing. To add to his intangibles look no further than some of the praise Galchenyuk has received. Following his rookie season, Alex Galchenyuk was awarded the Sting's Commitment to Conditioning Award showing that he values fitness and preparation. Take a quick look at Galchenyuk's draft blog and you will notice the dedication he has to becoming a consummate professional through a strong work ethic. Sarnia Sting Assistant Coach Trevor Letowski had high praise for Galchenyuk following his rookie season, "Alex has a great motto in that he wants to get better every day. He's got a special attitude and he's going places. He's very determined." Letowski continued, "He (Alex) plays the game more like the North American style. He's good defensively and worried about his own end. But as everyone saw (last year), he's gifted offensively as well."

The Dean's List has been persistent in our view that Alex Galchenyuk should not slip past the 5th or 6th-position in this draft even with missing time due to injury. Galchenyuk is a player who recorded 31 goals and 83 points last season registering at least one point in over seventy per cent of his games. Of Galchenyuk's sixty-eight games played, Alex had twenty-six multipoint games including two four-point efforts. Besides being able to put the puck into the back of the net at will or setting up a teammate for a highlight reel play, Galchenyuk has a special combination of well-rounded skills with very few flaws in his game leaving us to believe that he's a rare breed among today's best prospects.
The Dean's List
ranks Alex Galchenyuk fifth among all draft eligible players but as he returns to action in early March and goes through the NHL combine,
TDL
has reason to believe that he will improve his draft stock even more.

2012 NHL Draft Mid-Term Rankings:

The Dean's List – 5th

TSN's Craig Button – 5th

International Scouting Service – 18th

NHL Central Scouting Service – LV (Limited Viewing)

Footage:

{youtube}M5tWK459ZXo{/youtube}

{youtube}Gy2yFvs4dOQ{/youtube}