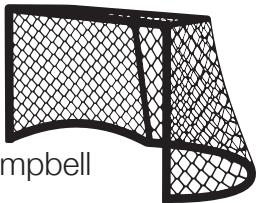




Sacrifice for success



words & layout | Carly Campbell

Sitting in class, Jonathan Russell, then a junior at Grosse Pointe South High School in Michigan, received a text that he had been drafted 25 overall in phase two of the United States Hockey League draft. He was going to play for the Des Moines Buccaneers. “It really is the top league to play in before you go to college or without losing college eligibility,” Russell said.

Originally born in Colombia, Russell was raised in northern Michigan. Having a father who played college hockey, the sport was introduced at an early age. “My dad tried to put skates on me when I was two and I would skate around on our background rink,” Russell said.

He played on various teams growing up. Johnston is the fourth high school in four years for Russell. Freshman year he played for his original high school team. Sophomore and junior year he played for teams in Michigan leading to his senior year when he was drafted. “My dad moved away from home at 16 so he kind of understood but it was tough on my mom” Russell said, “My brother moved away at 16 for hockey so I think it was tough for her to let me go too, but I think she’s just proud of me and I couldn’t be more thankful for the opportunity,” Russell said.

Although he was excited to be drafted by the Buccaneers, he was unsure of moving to Iowa. “Coming to Iowa was a big change and I didn’t really know what to expect,” Russell said. “I looked up some of the facts like pigs outnumber the humans, four to one and you know, it’s a really nice community. I really can’t complain.”

While playing for the team, he stays with a host family arranged by the Buccaneer’s organization. “Most of our housing billet families have generally been season ticket holders or people who have been involved in the hockey community in the area,” Buccaneers general manager Dawn Pentico said.

Players range in age from 16-20. “It’s kind of a wide range, you get lots of maturity levels,” Russell said. “You get lot of little guys who haven’t grown into themselves yet and you get lots of men.” Russell is one of four students at Johnston who play for the Buccaneers.

For the players still in high school, they attend practice in the morning and go to school in the afternoon. Russell has a few more credits to earn before he can graduate from Johnston. “One year I took a few classes during the summer because each school asks for different things,” Russell said. “I need one more English credit to graduate from my school in Michigan but here they ask for some, unique, requirements. They’re making me take P.E. because I guess you need P.E. every year here.”

After he graduates in May, he will continue playing out his two-year contract with the Buccaneers as long as he does not get cut or traded. “We try very hard to develop our high school players (as they tend to be the younger members of the team) to avoid trading them,” Pentico said.

After that he will attend Harvard University in the fall of 2017. Harvard got in touch with Russell last year when he was playing in a showcase tournament out East. He toured a few other schools but decided on Harvard. “Once I stepped foot on campus and met the coaches I knew it was where I wanted to spend the next four years,” Russell said. “I honestly don’t know how it all works. I just do what the coaches say. They took a look at my ACT score and GPA and they were good enough as long as I keep it up. They have players come in with really high ACT scores to bring the team average up.”

Most college hockey players are older than typical college athletes due to them signing contracts similar to Russell’s. “College hockey is a little different than most sports in that sense,” Russell said. “There aren’t very many true freshman players. Usually the player need a little more time to mature before they go to college.”

Russell looks forward to playing with Harvard and then the potential of signing with a professional team after his four years of college hockey. But until then Russell is thankful for the opportunity to train and learn in the league he is currently at. “It’s very fast, very skilled, very high level hockey. You have to keep improving because someone can take your spot in a second. You can’t take your foot off the gas pedal for a minute,” he said.

The rink

Blue Line
Center Line
Face-off circle
Goal line
Goal
6 feet wide
4 feet wide
98 feet
107 feet

The gear

Gloves
Thin leather on palm/fingers, more padding on outside.

Skates
Short blades allow for quick turns

Helmet
Includes a clear visor. Some have face mask.

Stick
Maximum length 5'3" Stick length can vary by position.
12.6 in.

The game	Game	Penalties	Off-sides	Icing
Team 20 players plus three goalies for men No more than six on the ice including goalie	Three 20-minute periods A 10-minute, sudden death period if tied Shoot-out decides the winner if neither scores	Penalty periods can last from 2.5-10 minutes A player can be ejected for fighting	If puck passed across two lines to a teammate If a player on the attacking team crosses the blue line ahead of the defending team	If a player sends the puck from their side of the center line past the other teams goal line untouched Play then resumes with a face-off

Hockey Leagues

Major league professional hockey

- Considered the premier professional hockey league.
- National Hockey League (NHL)
- 30 total teams

Minor league professional hockey

- Typically considered “farm teams” due to their affiliation with a major league team. These teams develop the players and then send them up to a higher level team.
- American Hockey League (AHL)
 - Considered the highest level of minor league hockey
 - AAA level
- East Coast Hockey League (ECHL)
 - Players typically promoted to the AHL from this league
 - AA level
- Federal Hockey League (FHL)
 - Players typically promoted to the ECHL from this league
 - A level

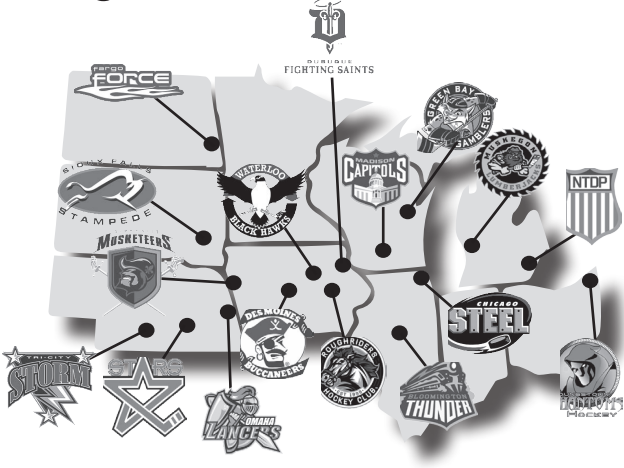
College

- For players currently enrolled at a college or university.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
 - Divided into three divisions for school of different sizes
 - Division one considered highest level of college hockey
- American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA)
 - Teams offer no athletic scholarships
 - Typically schools receive far less university funding

Junior league

- For athletes ages 16-20 who wish to keep college eligibility.
- United States Hockey League (USHL)
 - Tier 1 level
 - Considered the highest level of Junior league hockey
- North American Hockey League (NAHL)
 - Tier 2 level
 - The second highest level of Junior league hockey
- Metropolitan Junior Hockey League (MJHL)
 - Tier 3 level
 - One of 11 leagues at the tier 3 level

United States Hockey League teams



Top Division 1 schools

