

## Tkachuk catching up to dad

Keith Tkachuk was selected 19th overall way back in the 1990 Entry Draft and played more than 1200 games in the NHL.

Matthew Tkachuk is a strong bet to earn bragging rights over his old man when it comes to draft selection.

The younger Tkachuk, a probable top-5 pick in this summer's NHL Draft, is putting up dad-like numbers this season with the OHL's London Knights, but it's impossible to predict how that will translate to the NHL, if and when he makes it there.

If grit and determination are part of what makes a player NHL-calibre, Thachuk is well on his way, though.

"Hockey is my first passion and something I've always wanted to do since the first time I saw my dad play," Tkachuk said.

points per game and also played for Team USA during the World Junior Championship.

"Things are going well and I think I've gotten better as the year has progressed," said Tkachuk. "I think playing at World Juniors definitely helped me confidence-wise, being able to showcase my talents against the best players in the world. From a team standpoint, the team here in London has done a great job of jelling together and playing Coach [Dale] Hunter's system and we're playing well at the right time heading into playoffs."

Tkachuk said Hunter was a major factor in committing to London.

"A big reason involving my decision was the fact that Coach Hunter is the coach here and you see how many players he's

### Tkachuk Report Card

<b>Size/Strength</b>	<b>A+</b>
<b>Skating</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>Shot/Scoring ability</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>Puckhandling</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>Hockey Sense</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>Competitiveness</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>Physical play</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>Composure/Poise</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>Defence</b>	<b>C+</b>

Tkachuk has also played at the USA Hockey All-American Prospects Game and at the CHL Top Prospects Game. Throw in World Juniors and winning gold last spring at the World Under-18 Championship, and Tkachuk rarely has time to breathe.

"Yeah, I've been really busy this year, but it keeps me on my toes and I always heard that your draft year is busy," noted Tkachuk. "It's all been positive, it's all been good and right now, I'm enjoying it and I just hope I can keep it up. It's one of those things where you just have to realize that you're being looked at every game and you can't take a game off. You have to be 100 percent every game and you have to be fully committed to your team and your team only."

And even with his offensive play speaking volumes, Thachuk said he's been working on improving his skating and his 200-foot game to hopefully become a more well-rounded player.

"I think [my skating] has come a long way since the beginning of the year and it still needs some work, but things are looking positive and I'm going in a positive direction," Tkachuk said. "I've also been working on being responsible defensively. I think my offence speaks for itself, but I think my play in the defensive zone has improved a lot."

With the NHL Draft in Buffalo now just a little more than three months away, Tkachuk looks back on playing for the NTDP as the time the light bulb went on for him.

"I think with the NTDP, seeing all the guys that went through there before me that now play in the NHL, that was the first time I really had the pro atmosphere and was when I first saw the NHL as a legit possibility," Tkachuk said. "I'll go from here when that happens, but right now, there's not one thought on my mind about the [NHL scouting] combine or which team I might be with. It's all about this team right here and that's where it should be."

## Matthew Tkachuk File

- ◆ **Ht/Wt:** 6-1/198
- ◆ **Position:** Left Wing
- ◆ **Shoots:** Left
- ◆ **Birthdate:** December 11, 1997
- ◆ **Team:** London Knights
- ◆ **Scouting Report:** The prototype of a modern power winger. Has great size and strength, and wins every puck battle around walls and corners. Makes power moves to the net. Has outstanding vision and playmaking skills. Has a real mean streak if you get him riled up, but would prefer to beat you with perfectly timed and placed passes or a wicked snap shot. Dominant force can take over games. Will hit, fight, score, and is one of the most competitive bastards you'll ever find.

"I could only see myself playing hockey."

Growing up in St. Louis while Keith was playing for the Blues, Tkachuk said having an NHL father was a treat, but that was just the tip of the iceberg.

"It's a unique experience for sure," Tkachuk said. "I grew up and was also fortunate to have a few NHL guys live in my house – David Backes, Philip McRae, Lee Stempniak – and to just be able to see how they went about their routines, with my dad, you can always say it was the 'same old, same old,' but when you see the commitment of these younger guys, you really open up your eyes a little bit, I guess, and it makes you realize how hard these guys work. From that point forward, I wanted to make myself the hardest worker if I want to make the NHL and that's one of my main goals right now, to outwork everybody."

After two seasons with the U.S. National Team Development Program, Tkachuk reneged on his NCAA commitment at Notre Dame and signed with the Knights, the team that selected him in the 2013 OHL draft. In London, he's averaging nearly two

produced and sent to the next level," said Tkachuk, who turned 18 in December. "It's a first-class organization as well and they do a great job with their players here. The fans here are so passionate and they love their hockey up here in London. That's some of our motivation as well, to make them happy and keep them coming. As long as we're playing good, they're happy and as long as we're winning, the town is happy. That's all that matters – team success."

Playing this season mostly on a line with Mitchell Marner and Christian Dvorak, Tkachuk said it's hard to compare his overall skill set to that of his father.

"I think there's some similarities, but it's a different era that I'm playing in now than when he was playing," explained Tkachuk. "Back then, there was a lot more physical play and a lot more 'in-your-face' stuff and now, it's more of a skill game. I definitely have to be able to make plays and showcase my skill a lot more now, but he played that physical game and I have a little of that as well."