

DiPietro fights size concerns

These next eight months or so will be something Michael DiPietro experiences that so few have the chance to soak in.

First off, he's playing for the OHL's Windsor Spitfires, the host club for the 2017 Memorial Cup and the one team that gets an automatic berth into the tournament. Then after that, it'll be time to head to Chicago for the NHL Draft where he could very well hear his name announced on stage.

Until then, it's the season-long grind of the OHL season for the Windsor-area native.

"Obviously, there's some pressure being the hometown kid (from nearby Amherstburg), but I think pressure is really what you make of it," DiPietro said. "You can put all the pressure on yourself, but

DiPietro endured intense scrutiny in 2014-15 prior to being taken in the second round of the OHL draft by Windsor. But now entering his NHL Draft year, the spotlight is much brighter, and he's more cognizant on where his focus lies, on and off the ice.

"I kind of went through it in a smaller version with my OHL draft year and I think I learned from it," explained DiPietro. "I got way too caught up in who was in the stands watching me than playing the game I love. Going into this year, I'm just focusing on hockey and will let everything else take its course. My skill set got me to where I am today and I trust in my skills and ability in what I do on the ice. All the stuff away from the rink, people will talk positively and negatively and I have to keep myself away

DiPietro Report Card

Size/Strength	C
Agility/Flexibility	A
Leg/Foot quickness	A
Puckhandling	B+
Glove Hand	B
Rebound Control	A-
Angles	B
Composure/Poise	A-
Mental Toughness	A

chose for his OHL career.

"I really think he needs this for his independence," Vic DiPietro, Michael's father, said to CBC. "At the beginning of this, we had a little laugh. I told him you've got the greatest thing in the world – I'm only 40 minutes away. And you've got the worst thing in the world – I'm only 40 minutes away."

"It's special to have my parents at every home game and I can actually hear my dad and mom screaming, especially my mom, so it's fun to have them there and it's a great experience," added the younger DiPietro. "I wouldn't trade it for the world, being so close to home. Having friends and family come out and support me, that's very special, too."

Having played hockey since he was five, DiPietro became a goalie at the age of nine.

"When my dad remarried, my step-brother was a goaltender and he stopped a breakaway and the crowd went wild," remembered DiPietro. "I wanted to be like that, be the game changer, be the X-factor, good or bad. Hopefully, I'm on the good side."

Knowing the NHL is now a definite possibility, DiPietro realizes that to get to that level, it's about having an NHL-calibre mindset and attitude.

"I'm a passionate goaltender and you never want to see a goal go in, but the ability for me to shake it off is a quality you need to play in the NHL to give any team an advantage," said DiPietro. "The way Jonathan Quick plays I think best describes how I play. He's not the biggest goaltender in the league, but he plays like he's 6-foot-5."

Aside from winning the Memorial Cup in May, what else does DiPietro want to accomplish in the next several months?

"I want to be the first goalie called when June comes around," he said.

Michael DiPietro File

- ◆ **Ht/Wt:** 6-0/191
- ◆ **Position:** Goaltender
- ◆ **Catches:** Left
- ◆ **Birthdate:** June 9, 1999
- ◆ **Team:** Windsor Spitfires
- ◆ **Scouting Report:** While he may not have optimal size by modern-day NHL standards, we want most of all for our goaltender to be one competitive bastard... and nobody competes harder than DiPietro. Other than his 6-0 height, he's got all the other attributes: great leg quickness and footwork around the crease, rebound control, flexibility, and very fast both side-to-side and down-to-up. Battler who gives teammates confidence and shakes off adversity quickly. Superb reflexes and concentration.

you just have to focus on yourself and just not do too much where you can't handle it. Everyone on the team has their job and I just have to focus on doing my job. The puck always stays the same size; it doesn't grow or shrink. I just have to do my part, let my teammates do theirs and hopefully put a special season together."

Still, the allure of playing in the Memorial Cup, a championship the Spitfires won in both 2009 and 2010, is something that's hard to shake from DiPietro's mind.

"It's hard not to think about, especially when people keep bringing it up," said DiPietro. "Like, everywhere you go in the city, they're talking about the Memorial Cup. There is so much buzz around the city. I'm trying to just focus on the regular season and then obviously, we're already in the Memorial Cup because we're hosting, but we also want to earn our spot there. We're not going to take it for granted where we are in getting the privilege to play in the Memorial Cup already, but we have the mindset to earn our way there. We deserve to be there and we have to prove to everyone that we do."

from it until June comes and I hopefully hear my name called and learn what organization I'm a part of."

Going into the OHL draft, DiPietro knew he'd have plenty of suitors, but knew only one made sense.

"I looked at the teams that really needed a goalie [prior to the 2015 OHL draft] and obviously, it's an honour to get drafted wherever you go, but I wanted to go to a team where I could step in and make an immediate impact," said DiPietro. "I didn't want to spend the year in Junior B. I wanted to make that jump because I knew I was ready. I knew Windsor was a frontrunner for a goalie and when that day came and they called my name, it was obviously special for me and my family. I'm proud to be a Spitfire."

Last year, DiPietro went 16-8-2 with a 2.45 GAA and a .912 save percentage with two shutouts.

And even though the Spitfires' home rink, the WFCU Centre, isn't too far from the DiPietro family home, living with a billet family in nearby Tecumseh is what DiPietro