

Prospecting with Rebels



Left: Kayle Doetzel works out in practice Tuesday.

Right: Mark McCoy makes a deflection attempt during practice.

by RANDY FIEDLER/Advocate staff

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They're not part of the active roster, but Red Deer Rebels prospects Marc McCoy and Kayle Doetzel are soaking up some valuable experience nonetheless.

The future Rebels were summoned to Red Deer last week by head coach/vice-president of hockey operations Jesse Wallin and will be here through to the conclusion of the Rebels' season. Both will continue their high school education through correspondence courses.

"We brought them in to experience the (Western Hockey League) playoffs, to get a taste of what the playoffs are all about and to get them accustomed to the team," Wallin said Tuesday, less than 24 hours after his squad grabbed a 3-0 Eastern Conference quarter-final lead over the Edmonton Oil Kings with a 3-1 win at Rexall Place.

"We hope and expect that both of these guys can step in here next season."

McCoy, who will be 17 in May, opened the 2010-11 season with the Rebels but was re-assigned to the midget AAA Edmonton Southside Athletics after one game.

The six-foot-two, 175-pound forward made the most of his demotion, scoring 12 goals and collecting 37 points in 30 regular-season games and picking up six points (2g,4a) in six playoff contests.

As well, he was named to the Alberta Midget Hockey League North Division first all-star team and was a second-team all-star at the prestigious Calgary Mac's tournament during the Christmas break.

"That was pretty cool," said McCoy, in reference to his Mac's all-star selection.

"It was obviously an honour. Lots of great players have been named to the all-star teams there."

McCoy suffered a slight knee injury late in the Mac's tournament and wasn't able to play in the championship game, which the Athletics won over the Saskatoon Contacts.

But he continued to excel once returning to AMHL regular-season play, helping the Athletics finish first in the North Division.

Unfortunately, Southside was knocked out of the playoffs in a North semifinal, falling 3-2 to Sherwood Park in a best-of-five set.

"We had a first-round bye in the playoffs and that left our team a little bit slow going into the second round," said McCoy. "But overall it was a fun year.

"I think my skating improved the most over the season and I got a lot more confident with the puck as a player who could play in more situations, like on the penalty kill and power play."

McCoy is thoroughly enjoying his time with the Rebels. He and Doetzel are practising with the club, but have been confined to the press box during Red Deer's three post-season games to date.

"It's been pretty exciting, a good experience to see what it's like through the playoffs, to see how the atmosphere changes from the regular season," said McCoy.

"It's a good experience and hopefully I can take some of it and put it in my game next year.

"Hopefully I'll get the opportunity to be here next fall and make the most of it."

The Edmonton product, who was selected by the Rebels in the fifth round of the 2009 WHL bantam draft, is an aggressive, physical player.

"That's always kind of been his game. He's a big, get-in-your-way kind of guy," said Wallin.

“He’s got a good shot and he’s a bull on the ice. He’s tough to play against and he’s strong in the corners and in front of the net.”

Doetzel, a Rosetown, Sask., product who was selected by the Rebels in the first round of last year’s bantam draft, suffered through an injury-riddled midget AAA season with the Saskatoon Contacts. In fact, broken ribs and back problems plagued him at the Rebels spring prospects camp in June, and he was unable to participate in training camp in August due to similar ailments.

When he was able to suit up with the Contacts, Doetzel eventually broke his wrist. When he returned from that injury, he sustained a separated shoulder.

“It was a pretty bad year for injuries. Hopefully they’re behind me now,” he said.

The six-foot-two, 190-pound defenceman was impressive during his brief playing time, scoring four goals and adding four helpers in 14 regular-season games in Saskatoon. He got into one playoff game.

The Contacts were recently defeated in the SMAAAHL final by the Prince Albert Mintos and Doetzel was on his way to Red Deer shortly after.

“I was excited and surprised to get the call to come here. It’s exciting to be with the guys for the playoffs,” he said Tuesday. “While I’m here I’m just going to work my hardest to try and get up to the tempo these guys are at.”

As a future Red Deer rearguard who won’t celebrate his 16th birthday until June, Doetzel knows there’s plenty of room for improvement in his game.

“I have to work on basically everything. The main thing I want to bring to the team is just being a good defenceman,” he said.

“Kayle missed a large amount of playing time this season due to injuries. There was an opportunity to bring him in and get checked out by our doctors and also keep him going and progressing,” said Wallin. “We also want him to enjoy the playoff experience and get acclimated to Red Deer a bit.

“With Marc, same thing. He started the season with us and was very close to making our team. Now he can see what the WHL playoffs are all about and learn what it’s like being a Red Deer Rebel.”

- Rebels winger John Persson limped off the ice Monday night after being struck knee-on-knee by Oil Kings defenceman Adrian Van de Mosselaer, who was penalized for the third-period incident.

Persson returned for two more shifts and should be able to start Thursday’s fourth game at Rexall Place.

“I’m not sure what his exact status is,” said Wallin, “but he felt reasonably fine after the game. The hit more or less just jarred him.”

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