

## **‘Pickard Makes Serious Push in Fulfilling Lifelong Dream’**

Chet Pickard is in a position he has not been in before and the uncertainty of such a position could make many hockey players his age a little nervous and uncomfortable. Fortunately for the eighteen year old netminder who is in his third season in the WHL his calm cool demeanour has not let any expectations or mid-season praise get to his head. This is a great attribute for any hockey player, but even more so for a goaltender who just recently was ranked as the number one goaltender available for the 2008 NHL entry draft. On top of that honor Pickard also took part in the CHL Prospects Game in late January and picked up a franchise record for wins by a goalie (with 34) for the Tri-City Americans who are on a pace to break the single season wins record for the team who is in their 20<sup>th</sup> season in the WHL (a team that this year includes Pickard and 11 other Manitobans, most of them former Winnipeg AAA players). Despite all the success so far this year Pickard has his sights set on bigger personal and team achievements. A short while ago I had the opportunity to chat with ‘Chetter’ as he is known by teammates and get his thoughts on his hockey career as it unfolds.

**Elite:** How would you describe your season up to this point?

**Chet Pickard:** Things came through a little late for me personally, and it took a little time to get completely comfortable. Luckily I have had a really good offensive group in front of me this year, which has made things easier and allowed me to get in a nice groove. I have a chance to break the franchise record for wins and we are right at the top of the standings so things have gone well so far.

**Elite:** There is a really tight battle at the top of your conference, does that change the way you approach each game?

**C.P.:** One really positive thing is that we have had success against the teams at the top and if we continue that success it will leave us in good shape for the playoffs. It is always fun to play in those important games and it mentally prepares the team better for playoffs. My preparation doesn't change much for these specific games.



Chet Pickard took part in the CHL Prospects Game this past January

**Elite:** How do you prepare for games? Goalies have a stigma of being a little quirky or superstitious...does that apply to you?

**C.P.:** No not really anymore. Growing up I was pretty fussy about little things before games but now I pretty much just try to have about a three hour nap. Don't think that it is a superstition, cause who wouldn't like to have a regular 3 hour nap (laughs).

**Elite:** I noticed that you take a lot of shots per game compared to the other goalies you are surrounded by at the top of the statistics with. Is fatigue ever an issue?

**C.P.:** There was a stretch where I played 17 or 18 games straight but I think if the coaches have confidence to put me in for a stretch like that, it lets me get in a nice groove and stay sharp. The more I am in the action the more I feel like I can impact the game.



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*Chet Pickard is in his third season with the Western Hockey Leagues Tri-City Americans*

**Elite:** How is it playing with so many Winnipeggers on the team?

**C.P.:** We have a lot of younger guys and for such a young team we are a pretty close group. It is nice to have Birchy [former Winnipeg Wild goalie Kyle Birch] as a roommate and I think it will be cool to be able to skate with all the guys back home in the off-season.

**Elite:** We don't get to hear too much about the WHL teams in the USA, can you give us some insight?

**C.P.:** The travel schedule is really nice and we get to see a lot of nice places like Seattle and Portland. I like Tri-City because it's not too big or too small...I have definitely enjoyed my time here with this organization.

**Elite:** How did you enjoy the CHL Prospects game in Edmonton?

**C.P.:** It was a really fun experience getting to meet legends like Lanny McDonald, Glenn Anderson and Grant Fuhr. The fans enjoyed the skills competition, but any all-star game is tricky for the goalies.

**Elite:** What's your reaction to the high ranking you received for the upcoming NHL draft? Is it any different for goalies?

**C.P.:** I'm not sure if it's any different for goalies but the rankings are only up to the halfway point. It's obviously a real honour but a lot of my success this year has to be credited to my team. We have a lot of offense and have had a lot of comeback victories this year. It helps a goalie when you know that if one does get by you, you have a team that can respond back. Hopefully the ranking will give me a bit more exposure so if there are more scouts watching I can pick my game up a level and prove why I was ranked where I was.

**Elite:** How do you plan on getting better? What do you need to work on most?

**C.P.:** I think a big part for any goalie is the mental side of the game, but I think that lots of that comes from experience. I also think that with goalie equipment getting smaller goalies have to become more patient, and stay on their feet as long they can so they can make themselves bigger.

**Elite:** What are your short term and long term goals as a hockey player?

**C.P.:** Personally, getting drafted this year would be in the short term, but our team doesn't have a banner up in our rink so it would be pretty special to be part of the first group to get that done, especially in our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the Long term I want to make a career out of playing hockey in the NHL which is what most guys' dream of doing.

Pickard is right in saying that many players dream of playing in the NHL, and some really good ones never get the chance. He has the skills and seems to be getting better with age, but his level headed, clear, and patient approach mixed with his genuinely nice personality is setting Chet Pickard up for success in both the near and distant future.

***-Keep Up the Good Work Chet!***