

Indiana loves Canada: Pacers draft two Canadians in 2022 NBA Draft

By **Robert Belardi**

Not only did the Indiana Pacers marvel at the talent of all four Canadians available at this year's NBA Draft, the organization's front office stuck to their guns and brought a few of them on board.

With the sixth overall selection, the Pacers selected Montreal, QC native Bennedict Mathurin and then with the No. 31 overall pick, the Pacers went on to select Aurora's own Andrew Nembhard.

For the fourth time in NBA Draft history, four or more Canadians were selected in a single year.

With the seventh overall selection the Portland Trail Blazers took London, ON, native Shaedon Sharpe and with the No. 32 pick, the Orlando Magic snagged Mississauga, ON, native Caleb Houston.

Mathurin, a 6-foot-7 guard out of Arizona is coming off an incredible season. Mathurin averaged 17.7 points, 5.6 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game. He was named Pac-12 player of the year and even made the All-Pac-12 first-team at the end of the season.

The highly touted wing will surely be quite an impact player.

And the same goes for Andrew Nembhard. The 6-foot-5-point guard was named a Bob Cousy Point Guard Award finalist and helped lead the Gonzaga Bulldogs to the No. 1 ranked team in all of the NCAA last season.

When he transferred from the Florida Gators to the Gonzaga Bulldogs, it was seemingly the perfect fit for Nembhard. In 32 games this past season, Nembhard averaged 11.8 points, 3.4 rebounds and 5.8 assists.

With these draft picks, the Pacers will now house four Canadian players on their roster.

Both Mathurin and Nembhard, will join Toronto native Oshae Brissett and Dominican Republic-born guard who was raised in Montreal, Chris Duarte.

So, what comes next for the Indiana Pacers?

According to reports ahead of the 2022 NBA Draft, the Pacers were testing the trade market involving star centre Myles Turner and guard Malcolm Brogdon.

After trading versatile forward Domantas Sabonis in a six-player deal with the Sacramento Kings at the trade deadline last year, it was clear to everyone the Pacers are interested in rebuilding.

The Pacers in the deal received key pieces including point-guard Tyrese Haliburton and shooting guard Buddy Hield.

Turner, who missed the second half of the regular season due to a stress fracture in his left foot, is heading into the final year of his four-year, \$80-million contract.

Brogdon, who suffered with a right-Achilles injury for most of this season, was expected to be on the move last week, as per ESPN senior NBA insider Adrian Wojnarowski.

By selecting Nembhard, it looks more like a sure-fire decision Brogdon will be out on his way with Haliburton expected to run Rick Carlisle's offence and it might be safe to presume Andrew Nembhard will come off the bench to run the second unit.

But then again, anything can happen. If Brogdon ends up staying, it could be a lethal backcourt should he be able to stay healthy.

Nembhard would further enhance his game and he will be able to learn from two very gifted floor-generals.

Out of all of this, one thing is for sure: the Pacers love Canadian talent and it will be exciting to see all four of these players in action next season.