

OHL draft pick Andersen commits to Sarnia

By **Jim Stewart**

Country Day School Cyclone Matthew Andersen has had an eventful spring.

In late-April, the Grade 10 "lifer" at CDS and Barrie Junior Colts U16AAA defenseman was drafted by the OHL's Sarnia Sting in the ninth round.

The amiable resident of Aurora disclosed the best part of being drafted: "Sarnia was the team I wanted to get drafted by. I did shed some tears when my name came up. It was nice to get the good news with my brothers, mom, and dad around me. I hugged my brother, Jake, who has helped me so much along the way."

A sturdy defenseman for both the Cyclone and the Colts, who went #177 in the draft, Andersen was pleased by the future opportunities that await him with Sarnia.

"The Sting is mostly comprised of older players right now, but I will have my shot on the dance floor."

It's evident that Andersen has impressed at every level of hockey, including his year's skating for the Country Day School Cyclone.

CDS Hockey Head Coach David Drake said he was pleased that his top defenseman was drafted by the Sting.

"I am so happy for Matthew. His work ethic and hard work have really paid off."

Coach Drake noted Andersen's traits as a leader on his Cyclone hockey team: "His dedication, his commitment; he's an unbelievable teammate." Most memorable for the Cyclone bench boss "were Matthew's end-to-end rushes. He scored some big goals this season and was an important figure for us on our power play. It was Matthew's decisive goal that helped get our team into the playoffs."

Getting to the playoffs was not only Andersen's goal at CDS, but his team goal with the AAA Barrie Junior Colts.

The best part of his final AAA season was "making the OHL Cup, beating Sarnia—a Top 8 team" and winning a play-in game to compete. Our team got closer due to the experience and we achieved our goal of playing in the OHL Cup as brothers."

In looking ahead to his next hockey season, Andersen signed late last week to play Junior B hockey in Sarnia as a stepping stone to the big OHL club.

"For now, my goal is to play Junior B with the Sting's affiliate team, the Sarnia Legionnaires. I've attended their camp and I like the Sting's motto "A Community Like No Other'."

Andersen described Sarnia Sting General Manager Dylan Seca as "a great guy who believes in building community; he invites you into the community and really connects with his players and their parents. Community has always been important to me."

While Andersen is focused sharply on his future and his growing connection to the Sting hockey community, he was also reflective about the good times he has had at The Country Day School—a "lifer" as he refers to himself since he has attended the prestigious private school from JK to Grade 10.

"The best part of attending CDS for 12 years is the support you have from the teachers. It's a community and it's always felt like home for me. Having my dad (Athletic Director John Andersen) and my brothers here—it's always been comfortable. The teachers at CDS understood me, especially during COVID when I was struggling with online learning."

He reflected fondly not only on the help he got from staff to weather the COVID storm, but he also offered warm memories of playing Soccer at CDS since Grade 4 and building friendships, winning a softball championship [for CDS] in Grade 6, and playing basketball both in Junior School and during the intramural lunch time programs.?

For Andersen, helping out with the Intramural Program and participating in it at noon hour is ?a way to let go and enjoy myself. Last year and this year, I have been helping out with the Intramural Lunch Sports Program.?

As Summer 2023 approaches, Matthew Andersen is closing one chapter in his life after twelve years at The Country Day School, but starting the next chapter in Sarnia where his potential as an OHL defenseman will be realized after a developmental year with the Legionnaires.