

Pietrangelo humbled as next Blues captain

By Jake Courtepatte

King City recently earned another Olympic gold medal in Rosie McLennan. One week later, the township earned an NHL captain. 2014 Olympic champion Alex Pietrangelo has been named the new captain of the NHL's St. Louis Blues, entering his seventh season with the team as a staple top-two defenceman.

During a press conference following the announcement, Blues' General Manager Doug Armstrong said Pietrangelo has the skills to captain a team both on and off the ice.

"He's 26 years old, he's an elite player in our game, he logs a lot of minutes and he's well-spoken," Armstrong said. "He can cross-pollinate through the locker room with married guys to single guys, older guys, younger guys and that's very important for a captain. He has to be able to get the pulse of everyone. We just thought that where we're at now, what we've done this summer of transferring ownership of this team to that mid-to-younger 20 group, he's the natural leader for that."

Pietrangelo has quietly made his case as one of the most dominant defenders in the game since being drafted by the Blues fourth overall in 2008, most recently notching 37 points in 73 games last year. Despite a long list of accomplishments in his young career, including a gold medal from the Sochi Games in 2014, he said he is humbled to join the list of former Blues captains.

"Humbling is a good word," Pietrangelo said. "I'm excited, I'm nervous, I think it's every emotion you can come up with. This group of guys who have worn the 'C' have carried themselves in a way that I want to carry myself. They still to this day carry themselves in a great way."

The summer of 2016 has been a whirlwind season for Pietrangelo, who married his fiancée Jayne in July before building a house in his hometown of King City. He attended Villanova College for several years, and still skates with Villanova staff when at home. One more challenge lies ahead on the international stage for Pietrangelo before donning the 'C' in October, the World Cup of Hockey coming up later this month.

"It's been a busy summer, getting married and all that. I had to flip the switch pretty quick," Pietrangelo said. "It's a little different having to play a month earlier than normal, but definitely excited to start the season. It's certainly going to be a fun tournament."

The team hit the ice last Monday in Ottawa to open Team Canada's training camp. Pietrangelo will be joined by his Blues teammate Jay Bouwmeester in the tournament held at the Air Canada Centre, as well as many of the familiar faces he won Sochi gold with in 2014.

"You're in Toronto, you're in the Mecca of hockey, too," Pietrangelo said. ". . . If you can put it on your resume again to represent the country, it's a good feeling for one, to get named to the team, and hopefully to win it all."

"For me, I've played with a lot of these guys at the Olympics, so to be able to reunite with most of them and have the opportunity to do something special again as a group, that's a good feeling and it's going to be some of the best hockey I've ever been a part of. I'm lucky and privileged to be named to that team."