



Feature Story

A homegrown pro: Sauk Rapids' Nate Raduns

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Let's Play Hockey Columnist

In December of 2000, a rough old man looked at an inexperienced hockey announcer, pointed at the Sauk Rapids high school hockey roster, and made a bold statement. "Wait until you see that kid, he's something special." That hockey announcer was me. The "kid" he was referring to was Nate Raduns. Now nine years later, it's safe to say that old man knew what he was talking about. Raduns didn't disappoint then and he hasn't since.

Since that winter evening, Raduns has played for the USA National Development team, the St. Cloud State Huskies, and this past November, the small-town "kid-made-good" even sharpened his skates with the Philadelphia Flyers of the NHL. Like I said before, the man in the press box that day was right on.

"I have just tried not to get too far ahead of myself," stated Raduns, when asked about his journey from Sauk Rapids to the NHL. "In high school, I wasn't really thinking a whole lot about college. I played a couple of years away from Sauk Rapids (while in high school). I developed a lot and started getting recruited by colleges. When you're in college, you just focus on that. I just try to take it day by day, do my best that day, and hope things works out."

That philosophy on the game has steered the Minnesota native from the then-Rum River conference, all the way to the pros. After starring at Sauk Rapids, Raduns left the Storm after his sophomore season, opting to take his game to the next level by playing for the USA National Development U-18 program.

Then as a high school senior, Raduns moved south, playing for the River City Lancers of the USHL for one season. To this day, when asked about leaving his high school team behind, Raduns calls the decision tough, but necessary.

"It really was a no-brainer," mentioned Raduns. "Towards the end of my sophomore season (with Sauk Rapids), I wasn't as happy as I thought I should've been. I decided to make the move and it really

opened up a lot of doors for me. I started to get recruited by different colleges and things took off from there.”

He had options, but Raduns was looking for one school in particular – St. Cloud State. Growing up just a short drive away from St. Cloud, Raduns had always dreamt of being a Husky. After receiving, and accepting a scholarship from St. Cloud, his dream became reality.

“I always went to SCSU hockey games, probably from middle school all the way up,” stated Raduns. “I followed them since I was a little kid. Talking to Craig Dahl (former St. Cloud State head coach), I just felt comfortable with the program.”

When it was all said and done, Raduns played four seasons with the Huskies, playing in 143 career games, scoring 19 goals and adding 31 assists. Still, after finishing off his senior season, Raduns remembers sitting at home in the summer of 2007, wondering where he was going next. He wouldn’t have to wait long.

Searching for a home, Raduns remembers receiving a call from the San Jose Sharks, inviting him to their rookie camp. Unsigned and unfamiliar with the professional game, Raduns beat the odds and immediately made a name for himself, playing his way right into an AHL contract.

“I didn’t really expect to get a call from San Jose. I had decided I was going to go and play wherever I could for a year and see what happens,” remembers Raduns. “It was a big break for me to get that opportunity and I seized it.”

And he’s never looked back. As a member of the Worcester Sharks of the AHL, Raduns played in 56 games, scoring 27 points. How good did he play during his rookie campaign? Consider that during his entire college career, Raduns scored 19 goals. Last season with Worcester, Raduns scored 12. In fact, he scored a goal in each of first four professional games.

After one season with Worcester, Raduns signed a two-way contract with the Philadelphia Phantoms. It didn’t take long for Raduns to make an impact there either.

Just four months after signing with the Phantoms, Raduns received a phone call on Nov. 4, 2009, that changed everything. The call came from the Philadelphia Flyers. Their next game was against the Ottawa Senators and they wanted him in the line-up. With just over a year of experience under his belt as a pro, Raduns had made it to the top. Yes, something special indeed.

“That’s what you hope for. I definitely wasn’t expecting it. I thought I was playing well at the time, but you don’t expect something like that,” remembers Raduns. “You call people close to you and tell them. I was definitely excited but I was participating with the team the next day. They keep you so busy you really don’t have a lot of time to be nervous.

“When you’re a kid, you picture yourself (in the NHL) out on the rink with the jersey on, but you don’t realize how much really goes into it,” continued Raduns. “When you throw in film sessions and practice and stuff like that, you realize that’s it’s actually a pretty big production.”

In all, Raduns played one game with the Flyers before being sent back down to the Phantoms three days later. It was a brief glimpse at the next level; a glimpse that Raduns hopes will last longer next time.

“There are two months left in the season. I’m just trying to focus on my role on the team, trying to do my best to help the team make the playoffs. That’s really all I’m focused on right now,” said Raduns. “If you have made it this far, the scouts and management, they notice if you’re doing the little things. All I can do is do my job and hope things will continue to work out.”

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