



BACKSTOPPING THE 'BLADES Has Become a Family Business

By Alex Reed

It's common place to see a younger sibling idolizing his older brother. The little guy desires to be included in everything his older brother is taking part in. The fact is the older sibling, whether he may know it or not, plays a very influential role in the eyes of his younger brother.

This brotherly admiration could be found in Blyth, Ontario, a small town of nearly 1,000 people which has produced some talented goaltenders – two of which have played for the Florida Everblades.

Justin and Anthony Peters' hockey path has taken them both through Southwest Florida and the Everblades organization. Justin appeared in 32 games with the Everblades from 2006-08 which helped guide him to hockey's highest level, the National Hockey League. Justin has appeared in 80 NHL contests split between the Carolina Hurricanes and the Washington Capitals. Justin enters the 2016-17 season poised to earn a spot with the Arizona Coyotes who signed him earlier in the summer. Last season, Anthony Peters concluded his first professional season with the Everblades, and for the second straight year he has earned an American Hockey League contract with the Charlotte Checkers.

So how did two guys from a small farming town in Ontario decide on a career in stopping pucks? For Justin, it was the gear that made it seem like the perfect fit.

"It was the equipment that drew me into the position," said Justin. "I just loved the glove. I was always trying one on every chance I got. I bugged my dad until he let me try it. Anthony and I would rotate between player and goalie at first, before we both made the full-time switch."

For younger brother Anthony, the reasons were pure admiration of his big bro.

"I grew up idolizing Justin, so it just seemed right."



"I was pretty much trying to be like him," said Anthony. "I grew up idolizing Justin, so it just seemed right. We are also from a town of 1,000 people and no one really wanted to be goalie, so that played a part as well."

For the most part, the two got along well growing up. Justin didn't pick on Anthony very much. However, both agreed that all changed when the two were competing against one another.

"I would consider myself a nice big brother," said Justin. "We always were really competitive though. And still are. We had many great battles playing road hockey. No matter what we were doing it was always competitive. I'm a few years older, and Anthony was tough enough to keep up with me and my buddies."

"He was way too good of a big brother for how much of a pain I was as a younger brother," said Anthony. "I was always stirring the pot and pushing his buttons. When we played sports, he would never be allowed to lose because he would change the rules, or call for a redo or whatever reason he could make up that day. He would rough me up while playing sports, but never beat on me."

With Justin set to be playing out west this season and Anthony set for action in the east, the two brothers will be thousands of miles apart. However, that doesn't keep them from staying in touch.

"We talk every day," said Anthony. "I watch almost all of his games. I am kind of a super fan. I'm always trying to learn and bounce things off of him. Obviously it's one thing to talk about it, but when you can actually go out and do it yourself I am then able to really see what he was trying to say. It is a huge help to have your big brother/best friend do the same thing you do for a living."

One of the more memorable games Anthony watched was when Justin made his NHL debut on February 6, 2010 with the Carolina Hurricanes and earned a 34-save victory. It was a night that was both special and emotional for the family.

"That was such a cool feeling," said Anthony. "It felt like we were all right there on the ice with him. I remember when he called me and said he got called up. We both broke down to tears on the phone. Coming from such a small town, it seems like such a pipe dream, but he made it a reality and that was pretty special."

On March 7, 2015, in Greenville, South Carolina, Anthony Peters made his professional debut with the Everblades following a productive career at St. Mary's University in Halifax. Anthony admits to nerves prior to that first game.

"I was excited and nervous at the same time heading into the game. Being a goalie you let the game come to you, so I just tried to stay composed and have some fun."

"Being a goalie you let the game come to you..."



The Peters brothers from left to right: Alex, Anthony, Justin

Oh and what fun it was for the Everblades that night, as Anthony turned aside all 32 shots faced en route to the 3-0 shutout victory in his professional debut.

Anthony carried his late season momentum into the 2015-16 season recording 27 victories, three shutouts and a 2.20 goals-against-average. Despite the attractive numbers and a productive rookie campaign, Anthony ended the season with a little more to be desired.

"I feel it was a good first step, but definitely not satisfied. I learned a lot throughout the season, and was fortunate to be on a great team with great teammates. I tried to get better every day, and I came to the rink to give my team a chance to win."

His winning mind-set was noticed by Everblades Associate Coach Tad O'Had.

"Anthony competes, and he gives his team a chance to win every night," said O'Had. "On a number of occasions, he's been able to make key saves late in games that kept us in it."

On November 29, 2015, Peters received extra attention around the hockey world, in a rather chippy game in Loveland, Colorado against the Eagles. Already leading 5-1 late in the third period, the Eagles decided to stir the pot a bit, which led to several fights. However, the most notable match up on the fight card that evening featured Anthony and fellow goaltender Kris Lazaruk. Anthony fought gallantly and came away with the decisive victory, but stated that goalie fights have no place in the game, although sometimes a game such as that can escalate quickly.

... the physical play "runs in the family"



Following Anthony's pugilistic endeavor, many of the Everblades faithful proclaimed that the physical play "runs in the family." This claim was quickly diverted by Anthony as he pointed fingers toward his brother.

"He is the only tough one. He has a few screws loose."



"He (Justin) is the only tough one. He has a few screws loose. I am more like a little dog who barks and can't do much damage, he doesn't bark at all, which I think makes him scary. He's had some good fights in his day and would be considered a heavy weight as far as goalies are concerned."

While two solid goaltenders have emerged from the Peters family, the youngest brother of the family, Alex, is an established defenseman entering his final season in the Ontario Hockey League. The 6-4, 215-pound blueliner was selected by the Dallas Stars in the third round of the 2014 NHL Entry Draft. Anthony has great praise for his younger brother.

"He (Alex) is the best athlete in the family and should be an Olympian."

While Anthony is confident Alex will be working hard in his overage season in juniors, it was Anthony himself who spent much of his summer in Halifax preparing for the upcoming season. As it turns out, Anthony has the same trainer as NHL stars Sidney Crosby, Brad Marchand, and Nathan MacKinnon.

"We all skate together," said Anthony. "They are some of the best players in the world, and to see it first hand every day makes for a really cool environment to be in."

Anthony will be the first to admit that he's not one to set goals, as he just tries to "go out and stop every puck." If his determination and abilities mirrors that of his older brother, then Anthony will soon be following in Justin's footsteps in the years to come.

"Anthony takes pride in his preparation," added Justin. "He comes to the rink every day ready to get better and help the team win."

