

Former Saints goalie suits up for Canada West



By Jake Courtepatte

The MVP of the 2014-15 St. Andrew's Saints hockey season donned the red and white in December's World Junior A Hockey Challenge.

Aurora's Matthew Galajda joined the Victoria Grizzlies of the British Columbia Hockey League last season after two stellar years with the Saints varsity program, posting league-high numbers in both years.

Backstopping the Saints with a .928 save percentage in his first full season in 2013-14, Galajda actually improved upon his numbers the following year, posting a .938 in almost forty games played.

Galajda was named the team's Most Valuable Player in March of 2015 after leading the Saints to their third straight CISAA Championship.

A solid season and a half with the junior A Grizzlies landed the goaltender a spot on Team Canada West, in the World Junior A Challenge in Bonnyville, Alberta. Featuring some of the best young talent in the world, the World Junior A Challenge has become a staple for major junior scouts as well as NHL Central Scouting to catch a glimpse of the game's future stars. Since the first Challenge in 2006, more than 260 NHL draft picks have played in the tournament, including over thirty first round picks.

Entering the tournament as a favourite after winning gold four times in the last decade, Galajda emerged as Canada West's starting goaltender, beating out Logan Drackett of the Alberta Junior Hockey League's Calgary Canucks.

Backstopping his team to a 6 ? 2 win over Team Switzerland in their first preliminary matchup, Galajda hit a roadblock when meeting with the high-scoring Russians, who evened the Canadian's record with a 5 ? 3 win.

A loss to the Czechs in the quarterfinal game sent Canada West to the fifth-place game, where Drackett was given ice time and the Canadians won handily.

The United States shut out Canada East in the tournament final.

Despite the results, Galajda completed the tournament in the top three statistically among goaltenders.

It is just the latest in a string of accomplishments Galajda has added to his resume in the last few years, having accepted a

scholarship to play D1 hockey in September with the NCAA's Cornell Big Red next year.

Galajda says he is thankful for the "perfect environment" SAC provided, one that included supportive teachers, teammates, and of course, parents. He credits SAC's Hockey program and coaches David Manning, Geoff Brennagh, and Joel Morrissey for preparing him well for the opportunity.

He added that strength and conditioning coach John Murray was "a key factor" in preparing him for the next level.

Galajda played his minor hockey in the AAA Markham Waxers system.