

Oak Park

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Decision to return to high school hockey paying off for MacEachern, Rice

By Mike Moore
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OAK PARK — His heartstrings tugged in two different directions.

The time had come.

A decision had to be made.

This may not have been a return-to-school or break-the-bank type of deal, heard about so often within the realm of athletics, but Mackenzie MacEachern, a Troy resident, was faced with two choices, and each brought about a world of opportunities few have been or will be blessed with during their high school hockey careers.

“You never want to tell someone what to do in that situation, but I think he knew what we were hoping for,” Birmingham Brother Rice junior Thomas Ebbing said of MacEachern, a standout player who had an offer to join an elite junior level team or return to the Warriors for his senior season. “We may have campaigned just a little bit to get him back.”

With unfinished business still to tend to, namely the quest for a state title, MacEachern elected to forego juniors and return to Rice for one final season, bringing a sense of joy to all within the Warriors’ program.

The joy hasn’t subsided.

“Mac’s the kind of kid you love to coach,” Rice headman Lou Schmidt Jr. said. “He’s so talented and skilled, but at the same time, he’s such a great person. He listens to everything and applies it with such ease. All he’s done throughout his career is get stronger and better as a hockey player.”

Asked to comment on the season MacEachern is having this winter, Schmidt just laughed.

“He’s putting up stupid numbers right now,” he said with a laugh. “I mean, there’s maybe two games this year where he’s been shut down, if you can call it that. But the consistency and dominance he’s played with have been incredible.”

At press time, and while leading Brother Rice to a 12-4-0 overall record and seven-game win streak, MacEachern had scored 23 goals and dished out 25 assists.

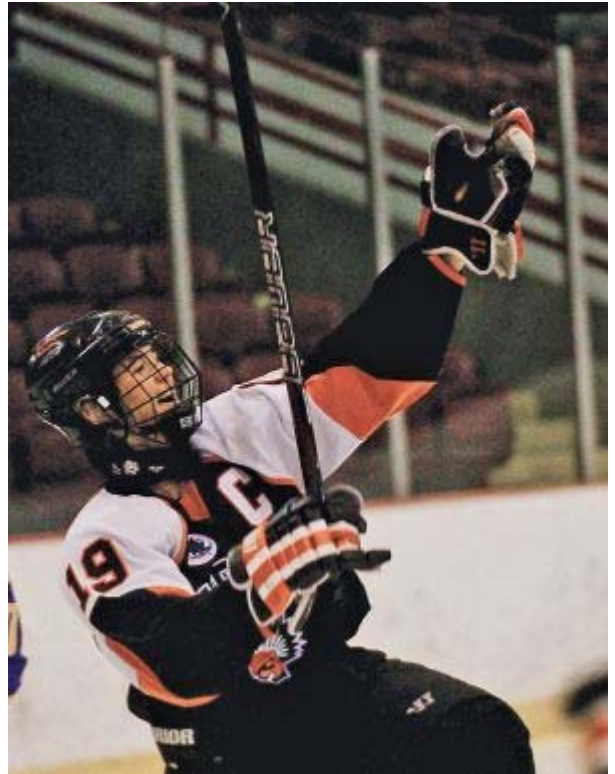


Photo by Patricia O’Blenes

Passing up on the chance to play juniors this year, Rice senior Mackenzie MacEachern returned to the Warriors for his senior season. At press time, he had 23 goals and 48 total points while helping the Warriors to a seven-game win streak.

His 37 points in 13 Michigan Interscholastic Hockey League games is good for the conference lead by a 13-point margin.

“He’s so down to earth, the type of kid every parent would want to have,” Warren De La Salle coach Dan Barry said following a 6-2 loss to Rice on Feb. 1. MacEachern scored three goals in the game.

Barry, who’s faced MacEachern the past few seasons in MIHL play, also had the privilege of coaching him this past summer.

“He’s phenomenal,” Barry added. “No matter who we put out there against him, he makes everyone on his team better. He sees the ice so well. He’s a playmaker who can score, but (also) who can set up a goal with such ease.”

MacEachern takes the praise in stride. He said he’s been somewhat surprised at the scoring numbers he’s put up this year, only because he feels teams homing in on him more than ever.

“This year’s been a lot of fun,” he said simply. “We’ve got a great team here, and we’re all united in the same goal. We didn’t like how last year ended (a loss in the Division 2 final). We want to get back there and finish what we started. That’s really all I’m focused on.”

Listed at 6 feet 2 inches and 175 pounds, MacEachern hardly resembles a bruising type of player. But his speed and puck awareness seem to set him apart.

In the De La Salle game, his first goal came on the power play when he positioned himself perfectly to the side of the net for a rebound. But that game was hardly his first multiple-point affair.

Schmidt said he could think of at least three games where he’s had five points, and in a 9-1 win against Wyandotte-Roosevelt Jan. 24, MacEachern finished with one goal and five assists.

“With him, you expect the best every night,” said Ebbing, who also resides in Troy and is a lifelong friend of MacEachern’s and line mate the past few seasons. “He contributes so much on and off the ice. He’s a guy a lot of kids look up to.”

MacEachern’s hockey future remains as bright as ever.

He’ll play at least a year of juniors after graduating and has already committed to play collegiate hockey at Michigan State University.

“He’s a coach’s dream,” Barry said. “That is, unless you’re coaching against him. That can be a nightmare.”

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