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St. Louis is not your typical hockey hotbed. Players such as Cal Heeter are looking to disprove that belief.

Heeter, born in St. Louis Missouri on November 2, 1988, was inked to a two-year, two-way contract last week by the Philadelphia Flyers. He played for The Ohio State Buckeyes throughout his four-year college career. Before that, Heeter was a member of the St. Louis Junior Blues in 2005-06. He then moved on to play for the Wichita Falls Wildcats and the St. Louis Bandits, both of the North-American Hockey League (NAHL).

Most notably for St. Louisans, Heeter attended the Christian Brothers College High School (CBC) where he was the starting goaltender his sophomore and junior year. Heeter won the Mid-States High School Championship as the backup in 2004 and as the starter in 2005.

Heeter left CBC his senior year to pursue better opportunities in Wichita Falls, Texas. He attended Rider High School while playing for the Wildcats to get some experience in the NAHL.

“It was a tough decision for me [to leave CBC],” Heeter said in a telephone interview Sunday afternoon. “I liked that school, the team and the guys that I had been playing with so much. I felt like it was an opportunity that I had to take to leave and try to further my career at a different level.”

Heeter was only away from St. Louis for the duration of the NAHL season; he returned to St. Louis to receive his high school diploma in the Spring of 2007. He could no longer attend CBC, so Heeter finished his senior year at Ritenour High School, where his father, Jack, teaches business classes.

Cal moved on to play for the St. Louis Bandits, also of the NAHL, after graduating from Ritenour. He found even more success there, winning the Robertson Cup Championship as the

NAHL Champions.

“It was fantastic for us to be the league champions and win in St. Louis, who actually hosted the tournament that year,” Heeter said. “It was great to play in front of all of our fans and win. A lot of my best friends were on that team; a lot of guys that I still talk to along with some guys that I played [against] in college. It was a good year for me.”

Heeter moved on to play for The Ohio State, where he accumulated 39 total wins spanning over four seasons, ranking him ninth in Ohio State goaltending wins history. His career .915 save percentage and 2.58 GAA also rank him third in team history in each statistic. He was a five-time Central Collegiate Hockey Association (CCHA) goalie of the week and was also a national player of the week honoree. He was the Buckeyes team MVP his junior year.

Heeter was humble when asked about where his success stemmed from in his four-year tenure with the Buckeyes.

“I honestly can’t say enough good things about how great Ohio State has been. [It was] 100% what I wished for when I came to college. It’s an amazing university as far as hockey goes. The tradition of Ohio State hockey is second to none. It’s got amazing resources compared to any other college. I can’t say enough good things about it. I haven’t had one negative experience here whether it be with other students, teachers, faculty, coaching staff or whatever. They’ve been absolutely great to me.”

Still, Heeter does not attribute all of his success to his coaching and teammates. A lot of the credit goes to his father… and the hometown St. Louis Blues.

“My dad was coaching before I started playing. Francis Howell North [was] where he coached for awhile and once I got a little older, he was the coach of some of my teams as I grew up.

“My dad was a huge influence. He was always a big fan and he played when he was younger. We had Blues season tickets when I was growing up and those were obviously big factors in me getting started.”

Heeter said that former defenseman and current Blues Vice President of Hockey Operations Al MacInnis was his biggest NHL influence growing up.

“I’ve met him before. He’s an extremely humble guy and an absolute class-act. He’s the perfect example of what an NHL player should be.”

While Heeter plans to model himself after MacInnis off the ice, he holds the few St. Louis products currently playing in the NHL in a high regard as well.

Brandon Bollig (Chicago), Chris Butler (Calgary), Cam Janssen (New Jersey), Paul Stastny (Colorado) and Joe Vitale (Pittsburgh) make up the headliners of NHL performers that played the majority of their young careers in the St. Louis area.

“I’m not that close of friends with any of them but I played with Vitale and Bollig so both of those guys I am still pretty close with. They’ve been great teammates and great guys down the road. I can definitely appreciate what those guys have done. It’s great to see what Vitale has been able to accomplish this year, playing a ton of minutes. Bollig just had some of his first NHL experience. Stastny and Janssen have been in the league for a number of years. [Both are] great players as well.”

In net, Ben Bishop has been the brightest spot for St. Louis talent. He was traded to the Ottawa Senators around the NHL trade deadline and has posted a 2-0-1 record since that time, adding a .926 save percentage and a 2.27 GAA. Bishop recently signed a one-year, one-way contract that will give him the opportunity to stay in the NHL through the 2012-13 season.

Right on Bishop’s heals is Mike McKenna, also in the Senators organization. McKenna currently plays for the Binghamton Senators of the AHL. He has posted a 13-17-1 record this season, recording a .919 save percentage and a 2.89 GAA.

“I’ve definitely looked up to those guys who are a few years ahead of me now; seeing them have the success that they have been able to have has been great. Hopefully, I can follow in their footsteps with the example that they have set for St. Louis hockey players.”

Heeter is expected to challenge for the starting job next season for the Flyers' AHL affiliate, the Adirondack Phantoms. Currently, Jason Bacashihua and Michael Leighton make up the goaltending duo for the Phantoms, but both are set to become unrestricted free-agents on July 1. Still, Heeter is taking this opportunity in stride and is approaching this the way that he has always been known to do; play the best that he can while not expecting any favors along the way.

"It all comes down to the way that I perform in training camp. Nothing is guaranteed."

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