



**Minnesota Wild**  
**Prospect Handbook**  
**Issue 2.0**

“We absolutely loved making the first issue and we hoped you enjoyed reading it as well.

There isn't much else to say but enjoy and share it with others!”

Hockey Wilderness & First Round Bust

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Photo by Chris Jerina

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# International Wild Hopefuls

The WJC is a time for prospects to shine with the best of the best

BY DANIEL CHAN

The Wild continue adding talent to their prospect pool, many of them having experience as key players for their respective countries.

Mikael Granlund was a star in Finland, Jonas Brodin was compared to Kenny Jonsson and Niklas Lidstrom by Detroit Red Wing defenseman Niklas Kronwall, Johan Larsson was captain of the Swedish U20 team in 2011, and Jason Zucker has a combination of three gold medals and one bronze collected from his appearances with the U18 and U20 USA team.

That is quite a collection of prospects to have.

But all great things have to come to an end, and now that every one of them have graduated into the pros and are no longer eligible to play in the World Juniors, who is ready to step up and shine at the international level?

**MARIO LUCIA, D, 6-3,193, NOTRE DAME (CCHA)**

The lanky offensive forward is coming off an extremely successful season in the BCHL after scoring 94 points in just 56 games, 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the entire league. Unfortunately, Lucia suffered a leg injury that put him out for three months. He recently made his debut with Notre Dame, and was named the CCHA Gongshow Rookie of the Week on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. His chances of being named onto the USA roster is still up in the air considering the talent level present and that Lucia was injured for three months, but his quick start is a promising sign.

**CHRISTOPH BERTSCHY, C, 5-10,170, BERN (SWITZERLAND)**

Bertschy is clearly too good offensively for the Swiss junior leagues, scoring 22 points in 13 games last season and 3 points in 2 games this season.

However, in the top league in Switzerland, Bertschy is struggling a bit. Slated as an offensive player, he has only put up two goals and one assist in 24 games.

Perhaps it is because he is only a rookie and is playing behind John Tavares, Joel Vermin and other more veteran and developed players. However, it should not matter too much because Bertschy was tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> in Swiss scoring in the 2011 World Juniors and during this year's World Junior Challenge. He will be relied on to create offense for the always underrated Swiss team.

**JUST MISSING THE CUT**

Defenseman Matthew Dumba and centerman Tyler Graovac were both invited to try out for the Canadian WJC team but ultimately didn't make the final cut. Matt Dumba was the Wild's most recent first round pick and he brings a very unique blend of physicality and skill but his high risk style of play probably would not have served well on the bottom pairing.

Tyler Graovac also found himself



Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

## USA HOPEFUL

**Lucia has only played nine games but has made a good enough impression to be a possible USA player**

in a similar situation as the offensive centerman would have had a tough time beating out Edmonton Oilers star Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and the projected 2013 first overall draft pick in Nathan Mackinnon for a top two center role.

While skilled offensively, Graovac just may not have had the skill-set to be a regular bottom six presence on the Canadian team. They will return to their respective junior teams. —



Photo by Chris Jerina

## Houston Aeros Update

A mid-season update on the Wild's developmental team

BY HEATHER GALINDO

To appreciate the AHL rather than being driven crazy by it, one must embrace the fact that the journey from point A to point B is never ever direct or logical or pretty in a developmental environment.

Even if you have, for instance, a roster stacked with first round draft picks who were superstars for other teams last season, the nature of the development process is that it's circuitous.

Naturally, the Aeros have not been immune to this. But unlike a less gifted team (most any non-lockout AHL team, really) whose progress tends to spike up and down erratically as they find their identity, the Aeros have navigated the path towards improvement with a confident stride.

They started out the season with a bang, scoring loads of goals and, at least on the offensive end of the ice, looking every bit the hyped up team

everyone expected. The problem was, for every 5 goals they scored, they were letting in almost as many, sometimes more.

The Aeros were winning, which looked good on paper, but didn't force the team to learn anything on the defensive end. Porous backend? Well, thank goodness we scored a bunch.

Then came the fateful weekend where top prospects Mikael Granlund and Jonas Brodin were both injured in Oklahoma City. Not only did the team have to shake up its offensive strategy without Granlund's exceptional playmaking and vision while getting defensively weaker without Brodin, but due to other injuries, they were playing every able body.

From that point, the tide shifted

### SOMETHING MISSING

**Injuries have forced some consistency but without the help of many Wild's top prospects**

just enough to put the Aeros on the losing side of the equation, often having to try and dig out of an early hole after lackluster starts. While still scoring points, the Aeros were rarely able to bridge the gap left by poor defensive play. It wasn't pretty, but it was necessary.

The injuries forced some line-up changes and call-ups from the ECHL and CHL, which allowed Head Coach John Torchetti to rotate through some healthy scratches. Suddenly the Aeros were fairly consistent, allowing only one or two goals rather than four or five.

Add to that, Justin Fontaine and Jason Zucker both continue to be red hot on the score sheet, as well as the return from injury of Jarod Palmer and Kris Fredheim. Both Palmer and Fredheim are underrated contributors, with Fredheim generally more consistent on the blue line than his more highly touted peers and Palmer bringing a heart-and-soul mentality to the ice.

In net, Matt Hackett has gotten the overwhelming majority of the starts and has taken the brunt of the statistical blow from the high goals against numbers despite playing well.

There was concern that this roster might be too small to stand up to the abuse of the pro game, and given the early rash of injuries, perhaps that concern is valid. But the Aeros power play, especially on the road, has been so prolific, the man advantage is perhaps their best deterrent.

With more than half a season remaining, more challenges will come along that send the Aeros back into uncharted territory, but if they've proven anything, it's that they have the resources to find their way back. —

**14 WINS**  
**14-8-1-3 Record**

WHO

IS

TYLER

GRAOVAC?



# IT WAS JUST SO MUCH FUN

## THIS IS THE LIFE I WANT TO LIVE ... I JUST LOVE IT

### - TYLER GRAOVAC

BY DANIEL CHAN

For any other 18-year old, it was prom weekend, and it was a time for celebration. A time to celebrate the next stage of one's life and the next step to one's true calling.

Some had more reason to celebrate than others.

For Tyler Graovac, it was a time for friends and watching the Minnesota Wild call his name in the seventh round of the 2011 NHL Entry Draft.

"The build up of watching the fourth round, fifth round, sixth round go by, and see the seventh round pop up was just ... the amount of thought that went into my mind, it was mind blowing."

It is hard to describe what the draft means to Graovac as he struggles to put it into words. When asked what his most memorable hockey experience was, he replied "being drafted by Minnesota for sure. I mean, how can anything top that?"

But when a player knows he isn't going on the first day with the cameras rolling and inevitable fan hype, the experience can sometimes be even more worrisome.

However, the Wild decided to use its last pick on the Brampton native and it

was a decision that has had Graovac hopeful for the future.

Unfortunately, the seventh round tag also comes with a slew of skeptical fan comments, which is a quite common reaction to late round picks. It is an understandable reaction to a player that very few know about.

However, is it fair? Probably not. But this matters little to Graovac.

"I just love it, this is life I want to live, I just love it."

His first post-draft season didn't inspire much enthusiasm throughout the Wild fan community. He scored 27 points in 50 games, which was a slight improvement but was riddled with inconsistency.

But on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, Graovac scored a hattrick against the Erie Otters, which raised a few eyebrows and caught him some attention.

However, it seemed like a symbolic feat as he wouldn't stop scoring.

He soon went on a nine game scoring streak, with 11 goals and 4 assists. He has already beaten his career-best in goals scored with 18 goals, as well as beaten career-best in points with 30 points only halfway through the season.

## GRAOVAC'S FACTS AND STATS

As of December 17<sup>th</sup> 2012

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GP	G	A	PTS	PIM
26	18	12	30	6

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### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Drafted by Minnesota Wild, 7<sup>th</sup> round 191<sup>th</sup> overall in the 2011 NHL Entry Draft
- Represented OHL in the 2011 and 2012 Subway Series
- Won the Ottawa 67's Academic Award in 2010
- Invited to the 2013 Canadian WJC Selection Camp

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*For a bigger center, he moves very well and has a solid extra gear. He's also a guy who won't hurt you being on the ice because he's a smart player and plays in all three zones. In particular, his defensive game did make strides this year and he looked more active in engaging away from the puck and trying to win battles in the corners. He saw increased time on the PK and was a factor there.*

- Brock Otten from  
OHLProspects via First  
Round Bust

To read the full article, click the link [here](#)



Photo by Terry Wilson/OHL Images

## LATE ROUND SURPRISE

**Graovac has made strides to show he is a prospect that is a valuable asset for the Wild**

His offensive outburst has caught the eyes of Hockey Canada, as he was given the opportunity to play in the Subway Super Series with Team OHL against the Russians. While he was invited to play the previous season, this time around, he was able to play in both games in Sarnia and Guelph.

He was able to play with the best of the OHL and even scored a great looking goal in the 2-1 loss on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

“I was able to play in [the Super Series] last year as well, and it was one of the best games of my junior career. This year, I was lucky enough to play in both games, and I was given the opportunity to kind of shine a little bit for both games in

Guelph and Sarnia. Hockey Canada gave me two opportunities to show my stuff, and I thought I did the best I could.”

But if there was something to be impressed by Graovac’s play this season, it isn’t just his statistics but his determination.

During the Subway Super Series, Graovac still had his commitments with the Ottawa 67’s.

Before the first OHL game in the Super Series on the Thursday, Graovac played on the previous Tuesday and Wednesday in Belleville and Ottawa, finally packing his bags to Guelph to play against the Russians.

And let’s not forget another game on the 11<sup>th</sup> in Niagara just before the

second Super Series game on the 12<sup>th</sup> in Sarnia.

It became a five game adventure in six nights, one that tired Graovac but one that he simply loved.

“After the fifth and sixth, I was pretty bagged. It was exhausting but it was just so much fun.”

So what happened? What exactly sparked this offensive run?

According to Graovac, it just seemed liked things started to fall in to place.

“It has to do with a lot more opportunity this year. I mean I had a couple struggles the last couple of seasons, just with a couple injuries, a couple of illnesses last year. This year, I’ve been able to kind of put my game altogether and become a com-



Photo by Terry Wilson/OHL Images

## SUPER SERIES

**While Wild fans might not notice him, Hockey Canada indeed has with two seasons to the Super Series**

“I set a lot of goals for myself this summer, and I’ve trained real hard to just be the best that I can be, be a complete player. Because, not only Minnesota, but every NHL team, looks for not only for a centerman that can shoot the puck and score, but can he play defensively as well? Can he play on the PK, can he play on the powerplay, can he play 5 on 5?”

So what is the next step for the talented centerman?

“Getting a call from Calgary is a goal of mine and getting an opportunity to play for Canada is huge.”

Well, he got that call to Calgary, but unfortunately did not make the final cut. But he will return to Ottawa with greater confidence and drive.

So while he continues to work for a successful season and battle an uphill battle to the NHL, Wild fans should be comforted with the knowledge that their last pick in the 2011 NHL Entry Draft was spent on player who not only has the hockey skills, but is also a kid who is enjoying his life as it unfolds and who plays hockey because he loves to play. —

# 18

GOALS

Tied for 17<sup>th</sup> in the Ontario Hockey League

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Leads the Ottawa 67s with goals

plete player and with the more ice-time I’m getting, it gives me more confidence, and I worked real hard this summer also, and I think that has a lot to do with it.

What injuries exactly? He lost some time during his draft year with a broken forearm. He also lost some time during the 2011-12 season due to a broken jaw and mono-nucleosis. He was out for six games this season with a lower body injury.

Wild fans are too used to the injury bug, watching their starplayers and prospects fall one by one.

One such prospect that has had unfortunate recurring injuries is Tyler Cuma, another Ottawa 67 Wild draft pick. Cuma continues to battle and fight for a spot on the

Wild roster and is one person that is giving a helping hand to Graovac.

“He was my captain in my first year in the league with Ottawa, so I know him pretty good. I roomed with him during prospects camp, I’ve known him for about 4-5 years now, he kind of show me the ropes a bit my first year in the OHL, taken the next step ahead going into prospect camp, and introduce me to some of the older guys.”

But ultimately, his current progression is due to his maturity, which is obvious in his voice. He wants to play for the sake of playing hockey, and understands he needs to take little steps to get where he needs to be.

“  
**Graovac is 6-4 but has put on 30 pounds, now 20, since being drafted. Playing his way into legit prospect territory**  
— TSN Bob McKenzie

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WILD  
PROSPECT  
HANDBOOK  
SCOUTING  
REPORTS

MATT DUMBA, CHARLIE COYLE,  
JOHAN LARSSON

# MATT DUMBA

## DEFENSE

6-0 182LBS

1<sup>ST</sup> ROUND PICK

ETA: 3-4 YEARS

#2 OFFENSIVE  
SPECIALIST

## OFFENSIVE SKILLS

Sees the ice very well ... great vision and makes strong, accurate passes ... is able to move laterally and quickly to find the passing and shooting lanes ... a good arsenal of shots, including a powerful slapshot ... not elusive but can make quick stick plays ... a very specialized defenseman; does not possess the ability to create plays in-tight or control the flow of the game but will be a team's powerplay wizard due to his mobility and shooting ability.

## HOCKEY SENSE

Does not possess a large amount of poise ... struggles under pressure ... this flaw can led to bad turnovers, which is his greatest flaw and the one of biggest concerns ... has a great understanding of the offense and how to create scoring opportunities ... sees the breakout very well ... reads the play and can anticipate upcoming plays quickly ... will have to develop some calmness to his game in order to find success in the NHL

## PHYSICAL ABILITY

Makes every hit count and hurt ... uses his size well and is a very well built athlete ... looks for the hit and likes to use his body more than his stick when stopping rushing opposing forwards ... can deliver highlight hits because of his ability to anticipate and good explosive strength from his legs.

## DEFENSIVE SKILLS

Has good gap control and always gives rushing forwards trouble when they enter the zone ... always plays the body ... very active in the defensive zone ... gives forwards trouble physically and never lets them off easy without facing physical pressure ... needs to learn when a quick stick play is better than taking the body; add more defensive tools to his arsenal

Photo by Dave Brunner

## SKATING

Very mobile and great first steps ... has jump to his stride ... strong balance ... low center of gravity ... tons of energy ... quick acceleration and top speed allows him to separate from others ... mobility and truck-like build makes him a dangerous presence every time he is on the ice



Photo by Chris Jerina

# JOHAN LARSSON

**RIGHT WING, 5-11 198LBS**

**2<sup>nd</sup> ROUND PICK**

**ETA: 1-3 YEARS**

**TOP-NINE ALL SITUATIONAL FORWARD**

Captained Sweden to the World Junior Championship Gold Medal, a testament to his leadership qualities ... a relentless, hard working player with positional flexibility ... high end work ethic; sweats all over the ice and seemingly never tires during his shifts ... has tremendous value, as he plays well in all three zones ... a player you can play in any situation.

## SKATING

Strong skater, although his upper body has a rigid quality when he strides ... deceptive speed, but doesn't own a separation gear ... good on his edges

## PHYSICAL ABILITY

Plays with intensity and tenacity ... when he hits, he uses all of his body to make contact and makes each contact count ... combine his athleticism, his stocky build, hockey sense, and his intensity, Larsson makes a great forward on the forecheck; a player that can hurt you physically but can also capitalize on

those turnovers

## OFFENSIVE SKILLS

Has a solid selection of offensive skills but doesn't possess a standout offensive trait, leading some questions to his overall offensive ceiling ... makes crisp tape to tape passes ... can use his body to protect the puck and can drive hard to the net, but isn't one that dominates with size or strength

## DEFENSIVE SKILLS

His hockey sense makes him reliable in his own zone ... understands how to pressure opponents ... plays the body and his tenacity helps win puck battles

## HOCKEY SENSE

Good vision ... great anticipation skills and reads the play extremely well ... this ability to read plays and react accordingly makes him an effective player in all three zones and makes him a versatile player in any situation

## UNDERRATED WINNER

**Larsson has one of the most impressive resumes amongst Wild prospects, but remains relatively unknown**



Photo by Chris Jerina

## FROM WATERS TO THE WILD

**Picked up from the Brent Burns trade, Coyle plays a Wild style game, making him a good bet to wear the Wild jersey**

A big bodied player who plays all 200 feet of the ice surface ... gives an honest effort every shift, owns a great work ethic on and off the ice ... has positional flexibility; can play wing and center ... not a dynamic presence on the ice, nor will he generate a ton of offense of the rush, but can play in high tempo skating type contests and the slow-it-down physical games too ... his consistent, complete game has been lauded by Aeros Head Coach John Torchetti this season.

### SKATING

Skating continues to improve since his Draft Year; his initial burst can still improve, but Coyle does a good job of moving his feet in order to get up to speed ... strong on his skates, enabling him to excel in puck battles and protection along the walls.

### PHYSICAL ABILITY

Not a predatory physical presence, but finishes his checks and will knock players off of the puck.

## CHARLIE COYLE

**CENTER, 6-2 210LBS**

**1<sup>ST</sup> ROUND PICK**

**ETA: 1-3 YEARS**

**TOP-NINE ALL SITUATIONAL FORWARD**

### OFFENSIVE SKILLS

Possesses good vision, allowing him to find open teammates in traffic ... soft hands give him touch on his passes and a heavy wrist shot, which is he beginning to use more often ... tends to be too self-less with the puck, passing up scoring chances in order to distribute the puck ... offensive upside isn't super high, but enough is there to project him as a top-6 offensive player.

### HOCKEY SENSE

Strong intangibles; has very high hockey IQ, and shows leadership qualities- leads by example on and off of the ice.

### DEFENSIVE SKILLS

His willingness to play in all three zones give him very high value, as he can be used in any situation, including special teams ...

# Inside The Goalie Guild

The Wild always find goaltending talent within their pipeline, who is next up?

BY JUSTIN GOLDMAN

Thanks to some timely performances during his first NHL recall last season, **Matt Hackett** proved to the Wild organization that he had the skill set and potential to have a solid long-term career. The genes are in his blood – his uncle Jeff Hackett was a very solid NHL goaltender in his own right.

Hackett's style is a combination of natural dexterity, good instincts, and strong positional play. He's a visibly confident goalie that brings some flair to the crease, and isn't afraid to challenge shooters with aggressive angles. He has active hands and does a good job of tracking pucks and utilizing reflexes without relying solely on his size.

Matt also brings a high level of competitiveness on a nightly basis, yet still stays fairly controlled with his emotions and athleticism. Combined with his size, he has the assets needed to evolve into a starting NHL goalie. But he'll need to be patient with the development process since Josh Harding is signed through the 2014-15 season.

One major area Hackett needs to work on is moving the puck. His confidence making outlet passes or finding open targets isn't where it needs to be, but it's something he has identified as an area he wants to improve this season. You can [read more about Hackett and his goals for the season](#) on The Goalie Guild.

**Darcy Kuemper**, the 2011 WHL Goaltender of the Year, stormed into the pro ranks and dominated the ECHL last season as a rookie. It only took him six weeks to earn a recall to Houston, and he played well enough to stick in the AHL for the rest of the season.

Unfortunately, Kuemper's development was slowed by a serious shoulder injury last March, but he recovered effectively over the summer. For a sixth-round draft pick, he has clearly overcome the optics of being a career minor-leaguer, but even though he has legit NHL upside, he's still a few years away from being ready for that level.

Kuemper brings terrific size combined with an athletic mindset that doesn't force him to make too many



Photo by Chris Jerino

## STUCK WITH TALENT

**Kuemper is a winner but will need to battle against other talented goaltenders in the Wild system**

blocking saves. He gets to the top of his crease when squaring up to shots, and has a positive presence both on and off the ice. He also has good patience on his skates, and he stays very upright in the butterfly, so he builds a very solid wall.

Bigger goalies like Kuemper often take a little longer to develop, and since the Wild are in no rush, he can be brought along slowly and properly. You can [read more about Kuemper and his skills](#) on The Goalie Guild.

**Johan Gustafsson:** For a goalie drafted 159<sup>th</sup> overall in 2010, Gustafsson is a tremendous skater, and like most Swedish prospects, has a wide stance, an extremely wide butterfly, and thrives by moving less and playing deeper in the crease. He is very tough to beat down low, and his ability to seal the ice while sliding laterally is one of his strongest traits.

Because he's so solid along the ice, the biggest obstacle Gustafsson will face when transitioning to the AHL will be shots above the waist. He'll need to improve his patience on his edges, so as to not drop early and get burned up high. He does have good hands, but the gloves are not active like you see with most North American goalies, so his hand positioning might need some work when he comes over from Sweden.

If you'd like a better understanding of Gustafsson's game, [read about his game](#) on The Goalie Guild. You never know how a dominant goalie in the Swedish Elite League will perform in the AHL, but once he gets settled and has a few years of high-level minor-league hockey under his belt, the sky is the limit for this kid. —

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COMMENTS?

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