

Rush defenceman set for all-star debut

Brett Mydske excited to rub elbows with childhood idols

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If Edmonton had a beach, it might be the only place you would see Brett Mydske when he isn't working out or improving his lacrosse skills.

"Hawaii is the type of place I could see myself living in because it's got beach, city and jungle all rolled into one place," said the New Westminster, B.C., native and Edmonton Rush defenceman.

Mydske, 22, is in his second year with the Rush after they drafted him in Round 3 -25th overall -of the 2009 National Lacrosse League entry draft and he will be making his all-star game debut this Sunday in Verona, N.Y.

Mydske started playing lacrosse and hockey at age six, but in high school he chose to focus on lacrosse. He's hoping to soak up everything he can while playing against the game's best players.

"Coming into the season and it being only my second year I never thought I would get a chance to play in the all-star game," Mydske said. "I'll be playing with guys I grew up idolizing and if I could accomplish half of what some of those guys have that would be great."

He attended Limestone College in South Carolina on a lacrosse scholarship. He studied criminal justice, but nothing prepared him for the injustice he saw while living in a former Confederate state.

"It was a big culture shock," Mydske said. "I was pretty shocked to see that it was still pretty segregated there. There were Confederate flags hanging in places and Confederate cemeteries."

He took criminal justice because he wanted to become a police officer, but after his lacrosse days are over Mydske said he would like to be a firefighter.

But lacrosse is what the six-foot-four, 205-pound defenceman is most passionate about. He said adapting to the pro style game has been tough, especially since there is less holding and grabbing in the NLL than at lower levels.

"Pick and rolls and the two-man game are the biggest differences I've had to adjust to," Mydske said.

In his first year he adapted quite well and was named the Rush's rookie of the year after leading all Rush defencemen in goals (four), assists (six) and points (10). Mydske also finished the 2010 season second among the team's rearguards with 67 loose balls.

His first two goals came on Jan. 30, 2010, against the Calgary Roughnecks and they helped the Rush to a 14-11 win over their Alberta rivals.

"Defenceman don't get that many opportunities to score goals so I felt like I got that monkey off my back early," Mydske said.

Despite a fantastic rookie season, in which he helped the Rush to within one goal of an appearance in the NLL championship game, Mydske wanted to add some muscle to his game. After playing the 2010 summer season with the Western Lacrosse Association's Langley Thunder, he hired a personal trainer and gained 15 pounds of muscle.

"We focused on Olympic lifting techniques, so lots of explosive exercises, but I never lost any speed despite gaining that muscle weight," Mydske said.

Rush head coach and general manager Derek Keenan said Mydske is one of the most coachable players he's ever had and is a dynamic defender.

"He's a big, strong, engaged kid who knows how to play the game," Kennan said. "His biggest asset that's noticeable this year is his strength. He can guard size, speed, strength and shut down any offensive player. He's a complete player."

The rugged defenceman only has one assist and 12 loose balls so far in 2011, but he will also be representing Canada at the world indoor tournament in Prague, May 21-28.

Mydske and the Rush (2-6) will look to enter the all-star game festivities on a high by knocking off the Rochester Knighthawks (4-4) Saturday night.

"This year we're losing one-and two-goal games," Mydske said. "To get a few more wins we've got to start chipping in more with our transition game."

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