

## **NHL RELEASES MID-SEASON RANKINGS FOR 2007 ENTRY DRAFT**

### ***Esposito Tops N.A. Skaters; Cann Top Goaltender; Cherepanov Top European***

**TORONTO (Jan. 10, 2007)** -- Montreal native Angelo Esposito, a center for the defending Memorial Cup champion Quebec Remparts of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, is the top-ranked North American skater in the NHL Central Scouting Service mid-season ranking of eligible players for the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.

Trevor Cann (Oakville, Ont.), of the Peterborough Petes of the Ontario Hockey League, is the top-rated North American goaltender, while right wing Alexei Cherepanov (Omsk, Russia) of Russia and goaltender Mark Owuya (Djurgarden) of the Swedish junior league are the top ranked skater and goalie, respectively, in Europe.

Joining Esposito among the top North American skaters are: #2 James Van Riemsdyk (Middletown, New Jersey), a left wing with the U.S. Under-18 Team and a member of the U.S. team that won a bronze medal at the 2007 World Junior Championships; #3 center Sam Gagner (London, Ontario) of the London Knights (OHL), who won a gold medal with Canada at the 2007 World Junior Championships and whose father, Dave, played in the NHL for 15 seasons; #4 Patrick Kane (Buffalo, New York), a right wing with the London Knights (OHL), who played with Van Riemsdyk on the 2007 U.S. National Junior Team; and #5 Kyle Turris (New Westminster, British Columbia), a center with the Burnaby Express of the B.C. Junior Hockey League.

The mid-season ranking features the top 210 skaters and 30 goaltenders in North America and top 170 skaters and 15 goaltenders from Europe.

In addition to Gagner, a number of 2007 top-ranked prospects have family ties to the NHL.

\* #6 ranked Keaton Ellerby of Kamloops (WHL) - cousin of Shane Doan of the Phoenix Coyotes and Montreal Canadiens draft choice goaltender Carey Price, who led Canada to the gold medal at the 2007 World Junior Championships.

\* #9 ranked Brandon Sutter of Red Deer (WHL) - father, Brent, played 17 years in the NHL - uncles Brian, Darryl, Duane, Ron and Rich (along with Brent) totaled more than 5,000 NHL games.

\* #21 ranked Colton Gillies of Saskatoon (WHL) - uncle, Clark, played 14 seasons in the NHL with NY Islanders and Buffalo.

\* #29 ranked Maxime Tanguay of Rimouski (QMJHL) - brother, Alex, plays for the Calgary Flames.

\* #63 Brad Malone of Sioux Falls (USHL) - dad, Jim, drafted by NY Rangers; uncle Greg played 11 NHL seasons; cousin Ryan plays for Pittsburgh Penguins.

\* #76 Blake Kessel of Waterloo (USHL) - brother, Phil, plays for Boston Bruins.

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The full ranking in all categories is available at NHL.com, media.nhl.com and through the League's Public Relations Department in Toronto (416-981-2777) and New York (212-789-2000).

In its 31st year of operation, the NHL Central Scouting Service provides scouting and evaluation of draft-eligible players to NHL member clubs. Headed by Director of Central Scouting E.J. McGuire, NHL Central Scouting employs nine full-time and six part-time scouts throughout North America and works with Goran Stubb of the European Scouting Service and his staff of five full-time scouts to cover prospects playing throughout Europe. Combined, the NHL Central Scouting and European Scouting Service will see more than 3,000 games this season.

Following are bios of some of the top-rated prospects for the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.

**Angelo Esposito, Center, Quebec Remparts (QMJHL)**

**Born: February 20, 1989, Montreal, Quebec**

**6'1", 180 lbs.**

Ranked 1st among North American skaters at mid-season... plays for head coach Patrick Roy with the Quebec Remparts of the QMJHL... through the first 40 games of the 2006-07 season, had 61 points (19-42-61) and ranked sixth in the league in assists... has been selected to the Top Prospects game in Quebec City on Jan. 17/07... was named player of the week on Nov. 16/06 after registering 11 points (4-7-11) in three games... had a six-point game on Nov. 19/06 to help lead his team to a win... was selected to the QMJHL all-star team for the Canada-Russia Challenge in Nov./06 and had three assists in two games... won the Memorial Cup Championship in 2006... awarded the Michel Bergeron Trophy as the QMJHL's Top Offensive Rookie in 2005-06... his favorite NHL player is Tampa Bay's Vincent Lecavalier... speaks three languages fluently (French, English, Italian).

**James Van Riemsdyk, Left wing, U.S. National Under-18 Team**

**Born: May 4, 1989, Middletown, New Jersey**

**6'3", 200 lbs.**

Ranked 2nd among North American skaters at mid-season... is a member of the U.S. National Under-18 Team... had 43 points (25-18-43) in 25 games through Jan. 10/07... made his U.S. National Junior Team debut at the World Junior Championships in 2007, recording one goal in the tournament (1-0-1)... had 42 points (26-16-42) in 55 games as a member of the U.S. National Under-17 Team in 2005-06... helped lead the U.S. to a gold medal victory at the World Under-18 Championships in Angelholm, Sweden in 2006... was named to the All-Tournament Team at the 2006 World Under-17 Challenge, helping his team win a silver medal... his favorite NHL player is San Jose's Joe Thornton... names Carolina's Eric Staal as the NHL player he patterns his game after.

**Sam Gagner, Center, London Knights (OHL)**

**Born: August 10, 1989, London, Ontario**

**5'11", 190 lbs.**

Ranked 3rd among North American skaters at mid-season... was the youngest member of Team Canada's gold medal-winning team at the 2007 World Junior Championships in Sweden... had 67 points (18-49-67) with the London Knights of the OHL in 30 games in 2006-07 through Jan. 10/07... selected to play in 2007 Top Prospects Game ... leads the

OHL in power-play assists (33) and is tied for first in the league in assists (49)... played for Sioux City of the USHL, totaling 46 points (11-35-46) in 56 games in 2005-06... was named to the USHL All-Rookie Team in 2005-06... was selected to the Western Conference All-Star Team for the 2006 USHL All-Star Game... had 13 points with Team Ontario in five games in 2005-06... his father, Dave, played 15 seasons in the NHL, registering consecutive 40-goal seasons (1989-90 and 1990-91); 719 career points as well as playing for Canada at the 1984 Winter Olympics.

**Patrick Kane, Right wing, London Knights (OHL)**

**Born: November 19, 1988, Buffalo, New York**

**5'9", 162 lbs.**

Ranked 4th among North American skaters at mid-season... had nine points (5-4-9) as a member of Team USA's bronze medal-winning team at the 2007 World Junior Championships in Sweden... through 32 games of 2006-07 had 67 points (26-41-67)... selected to play in 2007 Top Prospects Game in Quebec City... tied for first with teammate Sam Gagner for points by a rookie (67) and tied for third overall in OHL scoring... had 102 points for the U.S. National Under-18 Team in 2005-06, setting a record for points in a season (previously held by Phil Kessel --98)... won a gold medal at the 2006 World Under-18 Championships, leading the tournament in goals (7), points (12) and was named to the Tournament All-Star Team... his favorite NHL players are Atlanta's Ilya Kovalchuk and Washington's Alexander Ovechkin.

**Kyle Turris, Center, Burnaby Express (BCJHL)**

**Born: August 14, 1989, New Westminster, British Columbia**

**6'1", 170 lbs.**

Ranked 5th among North American skaters at mid-season... through 29 games this season, had 37 goals and 60 points... leads the BCHL in goals... won the Royal Bank Cup in 2006 (Canada's national Tier 2 junior championship)... member of Team Canada's Under-18 Team in 2006 -- had a goal and an assist in helping Canada win gold at the Junior World Cup... names former Red Wings' great Steve Yzerman as his favorite player and the one player that he patterns his game after... describes himself as a "playmaker that can also put the puck in the net" and sights his ability to create "scoring chances for my teammates and myself" as his strongest assets.

**Keaton Ellerby, Defense, Kamloops Blazers (WHL)**

**Born: November 5, 1988. Strathmore, Alberta**

**6'4, 194 lbs.**

Ranked 6th among North American skaters at mid-season... in his third season with the Kamloops Blazers of the WHL... has played in 38 games this season, registering 11 points (2-9-11) and has a plus-2 rating... was selected to attend Canada's National Junior Team's selection camp in 2006... selected to the 2007 Top Prospects Game (Jan. 17/07 in Quebec City)... was part of Team WHL for two games in the 2006 Canada-Russia Challenge ... is a cousin of Shane Doan of the Phoenix Coyotes and goaltender Carey Price, who led Canada to the gold medal at the 2007 World Junior Championships... his favorite NHL player is Anaheim's Chris Pronger... names Florida's Jay Bouwmeester and Pronger as the NHL players that he patterns his game after... describes himself as a "defensive defenseman with some offense."

**John Blum, Defense, Vancouver Giants (WHL)**

**Born: January 30, 1989, Long Beach, California**

**6'0", 163 lbs.**

Ranked 7th among North American skaters at mid-season... plays for coach Don Hay with the Vancouver Giants... through the 42 games this season, had a career-high 34 points and ranked second on the team in assists with 28... ranks third in the WHL in plus/minus with a plus 21 rating... selected to play in the 2007 Top Prospects Game... had 24 points (7-17-24) in 62 games with Vancouver in 2005-06... won the WHL Championship in 2006 -- had seven assists (1-7-8) in 18 playoff games for the Giants... names former NHL'er Brian Leetch and New Jersey's Bryan Rafalski as the two players that he patterns his game after... describes himself as a "offensive defenseman" with "good hockey sense"... his favorite NHL defenseman is Los Angeles' Rob Blake.

**Karl Alzner, Defense, Calgary Hitmen (WHL)**

**Born: September 24, 1988, Burnaby, British Columbia**

**6'2", 209 lbs.**

Ranked 8th among North American skaters... was a member of Team Canada's gold medal-winning team at the 2007 World Junior Championships in Sweden... helped Canada win its third straight gold medal with six consecutive wins and only seven goals against... had 28 points (5-23-28) in the first 33 games of the 2006-07 season... an assistant captain with the Hitmen... selected to the 2007 Top Prospects Game... was selected to Team WHL for the 2006 Canada-Russia Challenge... had a plus-14 rating and 24 points (4-20-24) in 70 games in 2005-06... was Calgary's Scholastic Player of the Year in 2005 and 2006... won a gold medal with Canada at the 2005 Under-18 Junior World Cup... played his minor hockey for the Burnaby Winter Club and was named the B.C. Minor Hockey Player of the Year in 2002... says he patterns his game after Anaheim's Scott Niedermayer in the defensive zone and Detroit's Nicklas Lidstrom in the offensive zone... describes himself as a "stay-at-home defenseman, slowly evolving to do more offensively"... favorite NHL defensemen is Scott Niedermayer.

**Brandon Sutter, Center/Right wing, Red Deer Rebels (WHL)**

**Born: February 14, 1989, Huntington, New York**

**6'3", 170 lbs.**

Ranked 9th among North American skaters at mid-season... is an assistant captain with the Red Deer Rebels this season ... had 18 goals, 23 assists and 41 points in the first 43 games of the 2006-07 season ... selected to play in the 2007 Top Prospects Game ... was selected to Team WHL for the 2007 Canada-Russia Challenge ... won the Junior World Cup as a member of Team Canada's under-18 team -- was one of only three team members that were under-agers... his father, Brent, played 17 years in the NHL... Brent along with brothers Brian, Darryl, Duane, Brent, Ron and Rich totaled more than 5,000 NHL games, won six Stanley Cups and scored 2, 922 points... favorite NHL player is Calgary's Jarome Iginla... describes himself as a "power forward."

**Tommy Cross, Defense, Westminster High School (Connecticut)**

**Born: September 12, 1989, Hartford, Connecticut**

**6'3", 195 lbs.**

Ranked 10th among North American skaters at mid-season... is in his first year with Westminster High School of the CIAC... had 15 goals, 35 assists for 50 points in 22 games played in 2005-06 with Simsbury High... was named Connecticut's Hockey

Player of the Year in 2005-06... was a member of the 2006 U.S. Under-18 Junior World Cup Team... also plays baseball and was an All-Conference Baseball Selection in 2006... describes himself as "a play-making defenseman, who takes care of his own end first and then looks to be involved in the offense"... his favorite player is Detroit's Nicklas Lidstrom and picks him as the person that his offensive game is patterned after.

**Trevor Cann, Goaltender, Peterborough Petes (OHL)**

**Born: March 30, 1989, Oakville, Ontario**

**5'11", 180 lbs.**

Ranked 1st among North America goaltenders at mid-season... has played 39 games this season with the Peterborough Petes, recording 17 wins and 17 losses (17-17-0)... his .912 save percentage ranks in the top ten in the OHL... was the youngest goalie selected to attend Canada's National Junior Team selection camp in 2006... recorded a shutout with 23 saves for Team OHL at the Canada-Russia Challenge in 2006... backstopped Canada to a Junior World Cup title with the under-18 team in 2006 with a .67 goals against average and a .967 save percentage -- had a shutout in the final game against Team USA and allowed only two goals in three starts... his favorite NHL goalie is Toronto's Andrew Raycroft.

**Alexei Cherepanov, Right Wing, Avangard Omsk (Russian Super League)**

**Born: January 15, 1989, Barnaul, Russia**

**6'0", 183 lbs.**

Ranked 1st among European skaters at mid-season... has played 28 games for Omsk of the Russian Super League in 2006-07, registering 19 points (10-9-19)... he was named Top Forward at the 2007 World Junior Championship, collecting eight points (5-3-8) and leading Team Russia to a silver medal... his five goals in six games tied for first in the tournament... as a 17-year-old in 2005-06, he tallied 12 points in 34 games with Omsk... names NY Rangers' Jaromir Jagr and Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin as his role models.

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