

Former Sabres enjoy fate-filled draft day

By Bobby Hart

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FARIBAULT — Three former Shattuck-St. Mary's hockey players' names were called Saturday in rounds two through seven of the National Hockey League Draft.

Derek Stepan, picked 51st overall in the second round by the New York Rangers, was the first former Sabre on the draft board Saturday morning. He was followed by David Toews, who was picked 66th overall by the New York Islanders in the third round, and David Carle, who was picked 203rd overall by the Tampa Bay Lightning.

In an interesting twist of fate, Stepan will follow in his father's footsteps with the Rangers. Over two decades

ago, a youngster by the name of Brad Stepan was selected by the organization in the fifth round in the 1985 Draft.

"My dad went to New York, and I get to go to New York now, and it's just kind of ironic," said Derek Stepan, who was reached by phone in his hometown of Hastings Saturday. "I'm just really pumped to get there."

Stepan, who found out about his selection at about 10 a.m. Saturday, spent his day playing golf and mingling with family and friends. He is scheduled to fly out to the New York today for rookie camp.

"It was right where I expected to go and I kind of moved up a couple spots, so it was perfect," said Stepan, who was the 58th ranked North American player for the 2008 NHL Entry Draft.

Stepan led SSM in total points (111) and assists (67), while tying Toews with a team-high in goals (44) as a senior this past season. He is headed to play for the University of Wisconsin next season along with SSM teammate Jordy Murray.

Toews also found a connection with the team he was drafted by. Kyle Okposo, who was a junior at SSM in 2005 when Toews was a freshman, plays for the Islanders. The Toews and Okposo families have a friendship stemming from a connection between David's older brother, Jonathan, who plays for the Chicago Blackhawks, and Okposo. They played together on the SSM prep team and were both top ten picks in the 2006 draft, which had Jonathan Toews as the third pick and Okposo as the seventh.



Stepan



Toews



Carle

"Knowing someone in the organization like (Okposo) will be a really big help for me to make the transition when the time comes eventually," said David Toews, who was reached by phone Saturday in North Dakota, where he will play for the University of North Dakota next season.

Toews spent his Saturday working out with his future college roommate and teammate Ben Blood, a SSM alumnus who was the 120th pick of the Ottawa Senators in 2007.

Even though an injury cut his senior year short, Toews was ranked 79th among North American skaters in the 2008 NHL Entry Draft.

"I really didn't get my hopes up for the draft at all," said Toews, who met with Islanders officials a week before the draft in the NHL combine. "I just kind of sat back and waited to see what happened. I was really excited to get drafted by such a great organization, and I look forward to hopefully make an impact in their organization one day."