

Small town dreams

Foxwarren friends give Chris Low the desire to make NHL

Chris Low knows what it takes to make it to the NHL. Low, a 19-year-old forward with the Prince George Cougars, grew up with NHLers Pat Falloon and Mark Wotton in tiny Foxwarren, Manitoba and his uncle Ron is the coach of the Edmonton Oilers.

Low spent his younger years idolizing both Falloon, who plays for the Philadelphia Flyers and Wotton, who splits his season between the Vancouver Canucks and Syracuse Crunch. Now he spends his summers on the golf course with them soaking up as much as he can about how they made it to the "show."

"They tell me I have to work on my strength," he says. "Strength is so important in the NHL. They also tell me to work on my skating. I can always get faster."

He works on his strength during the summers, helping his dad out on the family farm when he's not on the links with his buddies.

He also has to work a little bit on his golf game. As a Western Leaguer, he has nothing on the pro players who make golf



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TONYA HARTZ/FREE PRESS

kind of like a second sport during the summers.

"My game is pretty erratic," he says with a laugh. "I'll shoot even par one day and blow up to 10 over the next."

As long as he can

remember, Low has wanted to play in the WHL and move on to the NHL.

Both Wotton and Falloon did that, and it was a big deal considering they came from a town of less than 300 people in western

Manitoba that is quickly making a name for itself as one of the best little hockey towns in Canada.

Because they did it, Low believes he can too.

"They played in the western league," he says about Falloon and Wotton. "I could have gone to college like a lot of people told me to, but they're telling me that if I want to make it I should play in the Western League too."

Low has been in the league for three years. He broke in as a 16-year-old in Swift Current and then got traded to Brandon. He was part of last January's blockbuster deal that sent Alexandre Vasilevskii and Mike LeClerc to the Wheat Kings in exchange for himself, defenceman Ian Walerton and a player to be named later who turned out to be Colin Cloutier.

Going from a Memorial Cup contender to a Western League pretender was-

n't easy for Low to handle at first, but he's happy to be a Cougar now.

"I like it here," he says. "I like the city. The fans are great here. Just look at them come out to every game."

He's enjoying himself as one of the team's unsung heroes.

He usually plays with grinders like Geoff Lynch, Shawn Gendron or Cloutier. He plays the same way every night. Hard.

"I'm not worried about recognition," he says. "I'm happy as long as the team gets the two points."

Low was a prolific goal scorer back in his minor hockey days in Foxwarren, but finds that touch hard to come by in the WHL. Because of that, he's had to learn to concentrate on other parts of the game.

"If I'm not scoring I want to make sure I work in my own end and set guys up."

Bantams aim for home win

When the season began, coach Grant Williams told his Farr Fabricating Bantams that the key to success would be found in Alberta. That's where they would find the competition to make a provincial run possible.

And his goal was modest: "play .500 at all of our Alberta tournaments."

But a funny thing happened, the team wants to win - no matter which province they're living in.

Over the holidays, the bantams travelled to Edmonton and won the first two games beating St. Albert 4-2 and Edmonton Knights of Columbus by a 6-0 score.

They lost in the semis and went on to win the B-final. And even though they achieved the .500 goal, Williams says there was still some disappointment.

But they'll take the experience they've gained to prepare for next week-end's White Spot Tournament, which the host Farr Fabricating bantams want to win.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

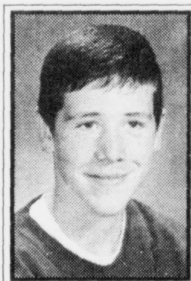
Alan Preston

Grade 7 • Heritage Elementary

Alan Preston is an outstanding citizen at Heritage Elementary. His warm and friendly attitude towards both staff and students make him a pleasure to be around.

Alan plays an active role in many areas of the school program. He is an honour roll student and an enthusiastic participant in extra curricular activities. Alan has been a regular participant in Volleyball, Cross-Country, Relays and Basketball. As well he is actively involved in the school choir. Alan has represented his class on the Kids' Council and this year has been the chairperson for this group. He is also a member of the Recycling Club and helped organized our Charity Dance to raise money and food for the Salvation Army.

Outside of school, Alan plays PeeWee hockey, minor basketball and floor hockey with the Community Association.



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