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NOTEBOOK: FINAL DESTINATION

Erin Pollina | Sabres.com

Apr 19, 2009, 11:49 AM EDT

PORTLAND, ME -- T.J. Brennan may not want to see the inside of another airport for a while, but at least he can say that he is happy with his destination.

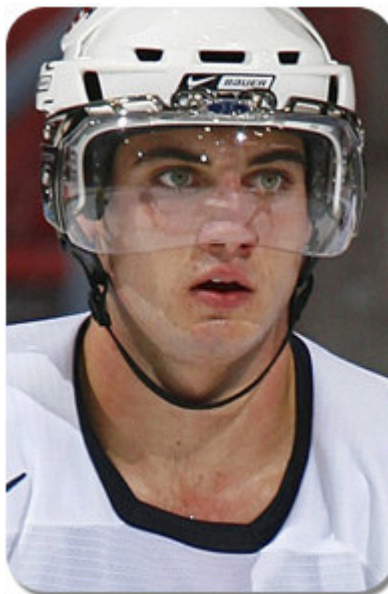
After a series of flights, a few layovers, and a bit of jet-lag, the 20-year-old defenseman landed his first professional contract with the Buffalo Sabres this week.

"It wasn't the best day as far as travel goes, but it's all worth it to be here," Brennan said.

When the playoffs wrapped up for the QMJHL Montreal Juniors, Brennan returned home to Philadelphia, Penn. It was there that he received the call from his agent about signing a deal with the team that selected him 31st overall in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.

And it was in Buffalo where Brennan learned he would immediately join the franchise's AHL affiliate, the Portland Pirates, to gain some professional post-season experience.

"[Sabres GM Darcy Regier] really wanted to get me down here as soon as possible. He said even if I don't get to play, just to practice and see what it's going to take over the summer to prepare and compete in this league would be good for me.



T.J. Brennan (Photo: Getty Images)

"I already knew that it was going to be a great opportunity but he just confirmed it and reassured me of that."

Brennan began skating with the team Friday morning in Providence, prior to Portland's 2-1 loss in Game 2 of the Atlantic Division Semi Finals. Head Coach Kevin Dineen said while the blueliner will likely not play in Game 3 on Sunday, he is close to making his debut with the Pirates.

"He's next in line and we're excited about getting the chance to see him play," Dineen said. "Given practice yesterday we just feel that he might need a few more days to kind of adjust to the speed, size and skill here. But we like a lot of things that we've seen out of him so far."

Brennan was the Montreal Junior's top-scoring defenseman, registering 34 points (5+29) in 59 games.

At 6-foot-4, he is a self-described offensive defenseman and is known for having a hard shot at the point.

In three seasons in the QMJHL with the St. John's/Montreal franchise, he finished with 116 points (37+79) and 234 PIMs in 192 games. He was also named the league's defensive Rookie of the Year in 2006-07 when he scored 41 points (16+25) in 68 games.

"I can't tell you how excited I am to just be here and even practice with the team," Brennan said of joining the Pirates. "From what I've seen in development camp and what I know of the organization, I know that there are a bunch of great guys here and I can't wait to see where I fit in."

Follow tonight's game in Portland with a LIVE Sabres' blog on Twitter. Go to twitter.com/sabresdotcom to keep up with Buffalo's top prospects as they try to gain a 2-1 series lead over Providence in the Atlantic Division Semi-Finals. Game time is 4 p.m.
