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Q&A from NJP

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Covering New Jersey Ice Hockey

PLAYER PROFILE

This edition features

BISHOP EUSTACE SENIOR GOALTENDER

NICK CASELLA

Tell us about yourself? What grade are you in? What are your hobbies or interests?

My name is Nick Casella and I'm a senior at Bishop Eustace Prep in Pennsauken, NJ. My interests are mainly just hockey and spending time with my family and friends.

How long have you been playing ice hockey? Tell us what youth teams and levels you played?

I've been playing ice hockey for about 6 years now. I began playing for the Jr. Phantoms and have moved around from teams such as the Mercer Chiefs and the Hollydell Hurricanes. This year I play for the Jaguars out of the Igloo at the midget major AA level.

How did you get started playing?

My mom signed me up when I was six for a local roller hockey recreational league.

What was the most exciting game you have ever played in?

The Delbarton game where we came out with a 1-1 tie was the most exciting game I've ever played in. Hopefully this year a state final matchup will eclipse that game.

What opposing forward was the toughest that you faced this past year?

Ryan Mara from Saint Augustine was probably the toughest forward I faced this past year. He and I go back a while and I wish him the best of luck playing in the EJHL this year.

Can you tell us who will be the standout players for BE at each position next season?

I don't think we have any standout players this year because our team is very deep. I have confidence that every line that we roll this year will be able to put the puck in the net. Our defense again looks strong this year and as long as they continue to clear rebounds and push everything to the outside, we should do very well.

The BE team looks stacked with talent this year. What will be the barometer for success?

Sometime in the summer, Coach Primeau and Coach Green had a meeting with the senior class this year. We were asked to write down what our goals were for the upcoming season. Everybody had "make it to the state finals" and others (including myself) had "win a state championship." Anything less than making it to the finals this year would be a complete waste of talent.





Do you have a hero?

My mom is probably my biggest hero.

It's been fun to watch the rivalry unfold over the past few years between Eustace and St. Augustine. Both teams have been incredibly successful and have represented South Jersey in the finest way. The teams face off in the first league game of the season. Do most Eustace players already have December 12th circled on their calendars?

Definitely. I've never personally defeated St. Augustine in the two seasons I've played against them. Everyone at Eustace is very confident this year about winning both games.

You distinguished yourself as one of the elite goalies in NJ high school hockey this past season. What do you hope to accomplish in your Senior year?

This year is looking to be a great finish to my high school hockey career. This year I hope to help establish Eustace as an elite hockey program in the state and the country as we face off against Lawrenceville again and other out of state teams such as Upper Canada College.

Can you tell us what it is like to play for Coach Green?

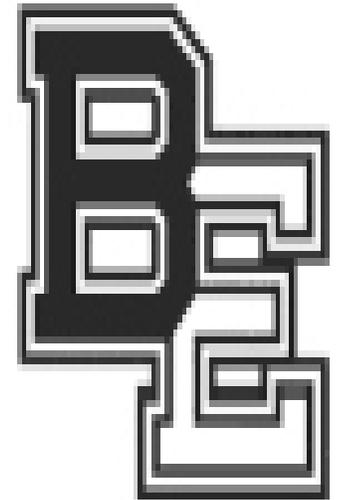
Coach Green is definitely different from other coaches. He's really helped me develop into a great goaltender and he's a lot of fun to be around (most of the time).

Having a hockey legend like Keith Primeau as one of your coaches must be an exhilarating yet intimidating experience. Describe the dynamic of learning from a future hall of famer.

Having coach Primeau at Eustace is a great experience. While his hockey knowledge doesn't affect me directly, I know every player in the program continues to learn from him and become a stronger player because of his instruction. I think all of the seniors and juniors have become accustomed to being around Coach Primeau and while we all respect him, we like to joke around with him and talk to him about his past hockey experiences.

Can you tell us about your experiences with Roller Hockey?

Roller hockey was a huge part of my life for the longest time. I stopped playing for a few years when high school hockey and club hockey began to take up more of my time. I recently just started playing again as I played with a last minute thrown together team at the AAU nationals in Feasterville. We actually placed 3rd in the highest division and I'm definitely excited to play again this year.



Is there an NHL goalie that you try to model yourself after?

I try to model my play after Marc-Andre Fluery of the Penguins but I feel that I have a unique style that I've developed over the years that can't really be compared to anyone else.

What is the best team that you have played against in your High School career?

Last year my club team played the Junior Canadians 16u AAA team and we lost by a large margin. They were the best team I've ever played against. Regarding high school teams, last year's Delbarton team was the toughest team to play against.

Where do you plan on attending college? What do you plan to study?

I'm currently looking at many schools and keeping my options open. My main interest lately has been in Drexel University and their Business and Engineering course.

Do you plan to play hockey in college?

Hockey will not be the main focus for my college career. If the opportunity presents itself, then I will definitely play.

Is hockey still fun?

Hockey is always fun and will always be fun to me.

If you could script the next few years, what would happen in regards to your hockey career?

I would love to just play D3 college hockey or D1 club. I know my limitations with hockey and only intend to focus mainly on my college education.

How do you think the team will match up against some of the other Gordon powers such as Delbarton and Bergen Catholic this season?

Both Delbarton and Bergen look to return a strong team. I think Delbarton will not be able to fill the shoes left by Infante, Nerbak and others even though they return players such as Ambrosia, Agostino and Velischek. Bergen also looks good with Kim and others.

You are complimented by another great goaltender at Eustace, Kyle Van Osten. You currently compete against one another in 18AA Club hockey and probably are on the two best teams in NJ at that level. Are you rivals?

Kyle and I do have somewhat of a rivalry between us but it is a very friendly rivalry where we push each other to do better. It's great that we're both on the two top teams in our division and we both can't wait to play each other this year.

What will Eustace need to do well to make it to The Rock next season? Do you think you will get there?

I believe if we just stay focused and come out hard every game, there will be nothing to stop us from reaching the state finals.



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