

SPORTS

Bachelu following family footsteps on and off the ice

By Matthew Gourlie
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Ellis Bachelu is following in his family's footsteps on two fronts.

The 17-year-old is in his rookie season of junior hockey and his first semester at the University of Regina.

When he isn't playing for Fort Knox in the Prairie Junior Hockey League, Bachelu is attending classes in the Faculty of Arts and majoring in police studies.

"I have a couple of family members who work (in the police force), so it seemed like a good choice," Bachelu said.

The defenceman from Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation spent the previous four seasons playing for Notre Dame in Wilcox. Bachelu's uncle, Riel Thomson, also played hockey at Notre Dame for two years. After leaving Notre Dame, Thomson spent four years in the SJHL and played two games with the Prince Albert Raiders in the WHL.

Bachelu wears Thomson's No. 2 in his honour. "He was one of my biggest inspirations as a kid," Bachelu said. "He was my role model, I guess, for hockey. When I was a kid, he was my idol, so I knew he went to Notre Dame and I wanted to go there too."

Bachelu played one year of bantam and three years of midget hockey at Notre Dame. While the school is famed for its hockey program, Bachelu found it was a great fit for his academic aspirations as well.

"They want you to be the best you can be, not only on the ice, but in school. They put a lot of focus on both. It's a great place for schooling," said Bachelu who played his minor hockey in Montmartre.

Heading into the season, Bachelu had expected to play for the Revelstoke Grizzlies in the junior B Kootenay International Junior Hockey League in B.C.

"In July, I went out to Revelstoke to their camp and I ended up making their team, but I decided



Ellis Bachelu (2) made his home debut for the Fort Knox of the Prairie Junior Hockey League in Saturday's 2-1 win over the Saskatoon Royals. Photo credit: Linda Aspinall

I wanted to pursue school and play hockey at the same time and that wasn't really an option there. So I decided to stay in Sask.," he said.

Bachelu and his 16-year-old cousin Cain Thomson both went to camp with the SJHL's Melville Millionaires and then attended Fort Knox's camp together. Thomson will play midget AA in Melville this season.

"It was a good experience, it was my first junior A camp," Bachelu said of his time in Melville. "It was a big jump coming from AA. The speed of the game was pretty fast, but I didn't feel too slow or

behind. It was a great experience with the coaches and the personnel there."

So far Bachelu has dressed in two of Fort Knox's first three games. They have four returning defencemen and Bachelu is settling in well on the blue line.

Fort Knox general manager Jarrod Williams didn't know what to expect from Bachelu when he arrived at camp. Given the reach of the Notre Dame program, Williams notes that it's hard to know where their players are from.

"He kind of fell onto our doorstep at camp," Williams said. "Coming out of the Notre Dame AA program, if you look on their stats page there's no hometowns, no dates of birth. There's no information."

In fact, Bachelu was incorrectly listed as a forward on one web site.

"Unless you see them at a Sask First tournament or talk to someone from the team, you don't know if they're from Nunavut or Saskatchewan," added Williams. "He's a guy that's from our area and he flew under our radar because he was playing at Notre Dame for the last four seasons. He was right under our nose and we didn't know who he was."

When he did arrive at camp it didn't take long for Bachelu to make an impression.

"He showed up and after the first session, we talked to him in the room, found out where he was from and where he had played and we ended up signing him," Williams said. "His skating ability alone and his skill set — compared to some of the returning guys and our signed guys — he was right there with that group. If you can skate and play with that group, you can play in the league."

Bachelu would love to make the jump to junior A at some point — a return to Notre Dame has obvious appeal — but for now he is adapting to a busy schedule of first-year classes in Regina and hockey in Fort Qu'Appelle.

"It is busy, I guess, but I would much rather be busy than not," Bachelu said.

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