

*(Editor's Note: NHL clubs will soon begin the free agent signing frenzy as the U.S. college season comes to a close. Here is Red Line's list of the top available free agents, followed in parentheses by their class year in college.)*

**1. Danny DeKeyser/LD — Western Mich. 6-3/193.**

**07 Mar 90 (Jr.)** This big junior defender is perhaps the most NHL-ready prospect among the college free agent collection. He plays a simple, defence first, stay-at-home game. DeKeyser is also highly mobile and a strong all-compass skater. He's not flashy at the offensive end, but moves the puck well and gets it to the right spots by making good decisions. Efficiently gets the puck out of the zone with crisp outlets. He's physical and wins the battles down low, keeps the crease clear, and plays with a bit of a nasty edge. Outstanding penalty killer who blocks a ton of shots.

**2. Nate Schmidt/LD — Univ. of Minnesota. 6-0/194.**

**16 Jul 91 (Jr.)** Perennial Red Line favourite was twice ranked in our top 100 for the NHL draft. Has a ton of heart and plays every shift as if it were his last. Not the biggest dog in the fight at just 6-0/194 pounds, but hurls his body with reckless abandon and never gives up on a play. Exceptionally physical, punishing open-ice hitter who loves to initiate contact. Mean, nasty disposition and hits to hurt and intimidate. Very strong skater with speed and agility. Gets overaggressive and has tendency to force the play offensively. Has been a terrific PP quarterback throughout his career, making sound decisions in puck distribution and taking charge. Love the passion and intensity he brings every shift.

**3. Greg Carey/LW — St. Lawrence. 5-11/195. 05 Apr 90 (Jr.)** Terrific natural sniper has a knack for always getting open and just buries his chances. Superb hands and a rocket release. Always has stick on the ice ready to receive passes and shoot in one motion. Reads off his centre (Flanagan) beautifully and has unspoken communication - anticipates and knows where to be. Stocky and well built; gets good leverage in corner battles and is willing to get dirty for his chances. Terrific offensive instincts - will score at any level.

**4. Antoine Laganiere/LC — Yale. 6-4/215. 05 Jul 90 (Sr.)** This long-limbed centre has made steady improvements to his game the last four years and has great reach and puck protection ability. We've always felt his vision and playmaking ability were his strongest suits, but for such a big guy he needs to be stronger on the puck. While he shows good lateral movement and a long stride that eats up ice, his overall footwork can get sloppy - needs to clean up his edge work.

**5. Eric Hartzell/G — Quinnipiac. 6-4/188. 28 May 89 (Sr.)** Big netminder has been the backbone for #1 ranked Quinnipiac all year. His size is the first thing that sticks out as he covers a lot of net with that massive frame alone. Plays a traditional butterfly style, and with his long legs that basically eliminates the lower half for shooters. He moves effortlessly in net and also recovers well to get set for 2nd shots. Will come out at times to challenge shooters and is very sound in his technique work.

**6. Ryan Walters/LC — Nebraska-Omaha. 6-0/188. 30 Jul 91 (Jr.)** Intelligent and competitive pivot with a high hockey IQ made huge strides defensively this season. Has slick east-west moves and is instinctive at the offensive end - able to slip through cracks to get himself to open ice in scoring territory. Not a dynamic skater, but keeps his feet moving and is constantly sliding away from coverage. Strong in puck pursuit; reads developing plays and anticipates puck movement.

**7. Kyle Flanagan/LC — St. Lawrence. 5-9/177. 30 Dec 88 (Sr.)** Very crafty, traditional playmaking centre shows great chemistry with any linemate due to his intelligence and anticipation.

Superb vision and great passing touch - can feather delicate saucers through traffic off either side of the blade. Quite small and fully maxed out physically, but he is aggressive and unafraid of traffic. Little buzzer is a real pest on the forecheck - gets on defenders quickly and causes lots of mistakes. Diligent, but gets overpowered defensively.

**8. Andrei Sustr/RD — Nebraska-Omaha. 6-8/220.**

**29 Nov 90 (Jr.)** Towering puck-moving blue-liner is one of the best passing defencemen in collegiate hockey - zips it hard and accurately on the tape. Smooth skater despite being so lanky. Calm and poised - never seems hurried. Sees the ice well and makes good decisions. Strong on the power play - creates shooting lanes and gets pucks on net. Reach is his best defensive asset and he effectively clogs up the middle and forces pucks to the perimeter. Huge behemoth plays a finesse game though, and we wish he had more of an edge.

**9. Chris McCarthy/RW - Vermont. 6-1/190. 30 Jul 91 (Jr.)**

Has been stuck on a bad team with little help up front, and d-men who have trouble springing him in the transition game. But he's got a nice size/speed combo, and is able to create his own offence barreling off the wing with speed, or driving the crease area hard. Underrated, and plays a solid all-around game - fundamentally sound.

**10. Jared Coreau/G-L — Northern Michigan. 6-5/200.**

**05 Nov 91 (Jr.)** Has taken the huge netminder a long time to develop, but has finally come on the last two seasons. Was a beanpole and stylistic mess during his draft year, but has filled out a bit and cleaned up some of his technique work. Smooth and athletic. Faced a ton of shots each game due to the lacklustre team in front of him, but always found a way to keep them in it and displayed strong mental focus and an ability to steal games.

**11. Drew Leblanc/LC — St. Cloud. 6-0/185. 29 Jun 89 (Sr.)**

Would have been signed a year ago had he not broken his femur 10 games into the 2011-12 season. A creative and cerebral pivot with a lot of hockey sense. More of a playmaker than a scorer and he makes those around him better. Has soft hands and exceptional puck-protection skills. Lacks explosive feet but he anticipates the game so well he still gets there fine. Is both mentally and physically mature.

**12. Pat Mullane/RC — Boston Coll. 5-11/190. 31 Jul 90 (Sr.)**

Another perennial Red Line favourite, back to his prep days with Avon. Smart player simply makes a lot of little plays that don't get noticed - picking up men in front of the net, making neat little passes that spring the transition game, or angling a guy in the corner to help his defencemen. Strong in D-zone responsibilities with good hockey sense. Plays bigger than his size. Great body control. Has a knack for being in the right place at the right time. Not going to wow anyone, but has potential to be a steady 4th line pivot.

**13. Eriah Hayes/RW — Minnesota State. 6-4/210. 07 Jul 88 (Sr.)** A big and physical winger with a scoring touch. Has taken another step in his development by adding a mean streak. Throws his powerful frame around and plays a heavy physical game in the corners and along the walls. A presence in front of the net on the power play and boasts a good, hard shot. Not elegant on his feet and needs to get stronger on his edges, but he's a functional skater with a deceptive outside burst.

**14. Steven Whitney/RW — Boston Coll. 5-7/162. 18 Feb 91 (Sr.)** Has done nothing but constantly make plays for four seasons. Very small, and his whole game is predicated on his speed and shot. Outstanding acceleration and great at changing speeds. Shows a great release while skating at top speed; excellent snap shot and also a great 1-timer. Even at his size, plays a feisty physical game with edge, and has a wide competitive streak that allows him to win battles. Size is obviously the major drawback, but he should at least become a quality AHLer.