

Orangeville native Merrill coming to Rock in blockbuster trade

According to a release from the NLL's Toronto Rock, the Rock and recently-relocated Connecticut-based franchise have completed a blockbuster deal pending league approval. The trade involves the Rock acquiring superstar transition player Brodie Merrill along with a 2nd round pick in the 2015 NLL Draft in exchange for forward Mike Burke, defenceman Craig England, Toronto's 2nd round pick (17th overall) in the upcoming 2014 NLL Draft, Toronto's 1st round pick in the 2015 NLL Draft and Toronto's 2nd round pick in the 2016 NLL Draft. The Philadelphia Wings recently relocated to Mohegan Sun Arena in Connecticut.

"I'm very excited but it's bitter sweet leaving behind some great teammates and great people in the Wings organization," said Merrill. "It was an honour to play for the last 3 years for the Wings. However, it's always been a dream of mine to play for the Rock. It's all a bit surreal right now and I can't wait to get started."

Merrill was originally selected first overall by the Portland Lumberjax in the 2005 NLL draft and was named the NLL's rookie of the year and defensive player of the year in 2006. Brodie's brother Patrick was also a first overall pick (2002 by Toronto), making them the only two siblings in NLL history to each be selected with the top pick in the NLL Draft.

Along with his individual honours in his rookie season, the 6'4" native of Orangeville, ON also won the NLL's transition player of the year award in 2009 and 2010.

Following his four years with Portland, Merrill spent two years in Edmonton with the Rush and played the last three seasons of his nine-year NLL career with the Philadelphia Wings. He has captained the Wings for each of those three campaigns.

The loose ball legend sits 4th all-time in league history with 1683 loose balls. He trails Jim Veltman, John Tavares and Geoff Snider on the all-time loose ball leaders list.

"You don't get an opportunity to get an elite player like Brodie everyday," said Sanderson. "This is another trade in which we had to give up some significant assets, but when you have a player like Brodie in play, you have to take advantage of the opportunity."

The 32-year old Merrill is also coming off of last month's FIL World Championship win with Team Canada. It was his second world title as he also won the gold medal in 2006 breaking a 28-year drought between championships for Canadian lacrosse.

In the outdoor game, Merrill is regarded as one of, if not the greatest defender ever to play the game. He played NCAA lacrosse at Georgetown University and was a Tewaaraton Award finalist, given to the top player in the country, in each of his last two seasons. In his senior year at Georgetown in 2005, he was named the NCAA's defensive player of the year.

Merrill joins a long list of Toronto Rock players who graduated from the Orangeville Junior A Northmen program. He made one Minto Cup appearance in 2000 as the Northmen won the Ontario championship but fell just short in the Canadian Junior A final.

The younger of the two Merrill brothers will now have a chance to play with his older sibling Patrick for the first time in the NLL.

"The chance to play with Patrick is extra special to me," said Merrill. "Playing together has been something we hoped would happen. It's going to mean a lot to us."