



MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER/THE GAZETTE
 Marc Bergevin, top row, third from left, Mario Lemieux, No. 27, middle and J.J. Daigneault, No. 15 are seen in this picture taken at a Hockey Pee-Wee tournament in 1978. They all ended up in hockey management after they retired.

Ville-Émard Hurricanes sent three players to NHL

Mario Lemieux, Jean-Jacques Daigneault, Marc Bergevin all played on same team

What are the odds of three boys from the same minor hockey team making it to the National Hockey League?



BRENDA BRANSWELL

And what are the odds they'd all end up in NHL management after they retired?

Mario Lemieux, Marc Bergevin and Jean-Jacques Daigneault played together in the late 1970s for the Ville-Émard Hurricanes in Montreal's southwest district.

As young players, Bergevin and Daigneault could see the buzz created by Lemieux's exceptional skill.

"I was a high-scoring defenceman as a young kid, but often times on the power play I'd stand behind (our) net and go collect my assist at the other end," said Daigneault, now an assistant coach with the Canadiens.

Lemieux would pick up the puck from Daigneault and skate end-to-end, deking everybody along the way.

"He was that good," Daigneault said.

"Back then, he was by far the best player — by far," said Bergevin, now the Canadiens' general manager.

Lemieux went on to become one of the best players in NHL history with the Pittsburgh Penguins, a team he now co-owns. Lemieux was selected by the Penguins with the No. 1 overall pick at the 1984 NHL entry draft, while Daigneault was taken 10th overall that same year by the Vancouver Canucks.

Bergevin, selected by the Chicago Blackhawks in the third round of the 1983 draft, and Daigneault both enjoyed long NHL careers on the blue

line. They shared their recollections last week of playing for the Hurricanes. (Lemieux declined to be interviewed.)

Before he joined the Hurricanes' peewee Double-A team, Bergevin played for his parish team in Point St. Charles.

"The highest level in your parish you could go was A," he said.

Bergevin played left wing with the Hurricanes and, on occasion, on Lemieux's line.

"I've said I just had to go to the net and I had a goal that night," Bergevin joked.

Daigneault was also very good, Bergevin said.

"He was probably the best defenceman at his age in the whole city of Montreal," Bergevin said.

"J.J. was good ... he was better than me. Like I was the least of the three."

Daigneault had always played centre, but didn't make the Hurricanes' Double-A peewee team at that position when he was 9.

Like all kids, Daigneault wanted to score goals when he first started to play for him in peewee, said Ron Stevenson, 79, their former coach.

"But as soon as I saw him skate I knew that his skating style was that of a defenceman because he could skate backwards as well as forward (and had) tremendous balance on his skates," Stevenson said. "So I convinced him to play defence."

Bergevin didn't have as much natural talent on the ice as Daigneault or Lemieux "but he had lots of guts and he worked hard. He would play injured," Stevenson said.

"He was not the kind to go out and fight or anything like that. But he would play hockey tough and if he was hurt he would play anyway. I guess that's why he was so successful in hockey, he stayed so long, because he was tough — a real competitor."

"One thing they had all in common, they were all very nice boys," Stevenson said of his three former protégés. "And they all came from very good families."

"I was really tough with the kids and I really made them work."

RON STEVENSON, FORMER COACH

Stevenson, who was a Montreal police sergeant-detective, made his players work hard in practice with lots of skating drills. His assistant coach, Yvan Gauvreau, was also a police officer.

"I was really tough with the kids and I really made them work," Stevenson said.

"I'm sure it benefitted them in the long run because they learned young to work hard and if they didn't work they didn't play."

If his players were late, forgot their equipment or took bad penalties, for example, Stevenson might have them write lines — something Lemieux had to do and Bergevin, as well, the time he forgot an elbow pad.

"I can't remember the line, but 100 times I had to write it. And my parents made me do

it," Bergevin said.

Both men spoke of their former coach's positive influence on them. Stevenson helped mould their work ethic, said Bergevin, who also credits the coach for how they became "structured."

"He raised his voice a few times. But he was a calm person," Bergevin said of Stevenson, who attended his wedding years later.

"The guys reacted so well when he got mad because he never did," Daigneault said.

"I think as far as forming a young kid, aside from your parents, I think he was probably the best person to have around, the best person to see three or four times a week at practice and at games."

"It was a good program to be involved in as a young kid, coming from tough neighbourhoods," Daigneault added. "We came from tough neighbourhoods that were blue-collar families and having somebody like Ron as well as his assistant coach brought discipline to our young lives that we could carry on."

Stevenson enjoyed coaching minor hockey.

"You know what police work is like, you're not exactly dealing with nice people," said Stevenson, who investigated rapes, kidnappings and other major crimes. "And then you end up with hockey ... dealing with nice people, nice kids."

Stevenson recalled how Lemieux, who was a dominant player, got hassled by some parents. In peewee, if Lemieux wanted to get a soft drink or hot dog after the game, Stevenson would dispatch a few other kids with him to report back if there was an incident.

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Canadiens take second look at Jarred Tinordi

Defenceman called up from Hamilton



DAVE STUBBS

WINNIPEG

Jarred Tinordi got the call in Hamilton about 10 p.m. Tuesday night.

"Pack your bags," he was told, "and get to Winnipeg."

Two games from the end of the NHL season, with six games of big-league experience beneath his large blades, Tinordi is back with the Canadiens — and the proverbial puck is on his stick to stay with the Habs well beyond Thursday's game against the Winnipeg Jets.

"I definitely didn't expect this," the 21-year-old said Wednesday of the summons, freshly off the MTS Centre ice on which the Canadiens had just run through a spirited, even bruising 75-minute practice.

"But it's definitely a good surprise."

Tinordi, 6-foot-6 and 210 (at least) pounds, will be in the lineup Thursday. There will be no word from head coach Michel Therrien until after game-day morning skate on who comes out in his place.

And if Tinordi performs well, it's possible — perhaps likely — that he'll see action in the playoffs which begin next week.

Tinordi was one of the so-called Black Aces, among eight American Hockey League Hamilton Bulldogs called up to the Canadiens this week. The group, now a gang of seven, is skating in Hamilton after their season's end with head coach Sylvain Lefebvre and Bulldogs staff before reporting to Montreal on Sunday.

"(Lefebvre) just told us to look at (the call-up) as a good opportunity," Tinordi said. "It's special to be around Montreal during playoff time. Whether you're playing or not, you're excited to be there. But obviously you're hoping to get a chance to play. So you work hard and wait to see what happens."

Tinordi, the Canadiens' first pick (22nd overall) in the 2010 entry draft, got dirt beneath his fingernails Wednes-

day in a Canadiens practice that was long on physicality.

There were several drills of one-on-one, two-on-two and at even strength that emphasized rugged contact along the boards in battles for the puck.

With veterans Andrei Markov and Francis Bouillon both given the day off, Tinordi spent a good portion of the practice paired with long-idle Tomas Kaberle, 35 times this season a healthy scratch who might yet see action depending on Therrien's strategic rest plans for Markov and Bouillon.

It's a physical edge that Therrien hopes, even needs, from Tinordi, who was emailed travel details Wednesday night and was on an early morning flight from Toronto to Winnipeg less than 12 hours later.

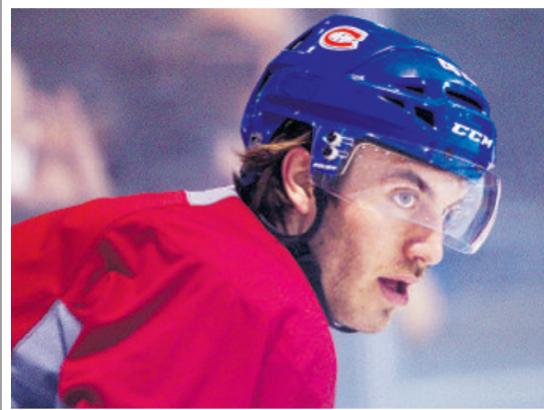
Tinordi had a six-game audition with the Canadiens last month, earning an assist in his maiden NHL match in New Jersey. But his 14:48 on the ice that night tailed off to 11 minutes and change his next three games, then down to 7:35 and finally 6:47 before he was returned to the Bulldogs.

"When he started with us, he was doing good," Therrien said of Tinordi's first go-round. "The excitement of taking your first step in the NHL is always there."

"After that, he lost a little bit of his confidence. We want him to be more physical. That's part of his game. He has to make sure that, for a big kid like that, he has to be a presence. We told him that (upon Tinordi's demotion to the Bulldogs) and he was more a presence on the ice in Hamilton to finish the year."

"We're giving him an opportunity (Thursday)," Therrien added. "It's up to him to take it. We believe in the young man. He skates well, he makes a good first pass and he could be a good presence."

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JOHN KENNEY/THE GAZETTE FILES

"I definitely didn't expect this, but it's definitely a good surprise" Jarred Tinordi says of being recalled by the Habs.

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