

Amateur scouting departments were thrown a curveball the minute the world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No CHL playoffs, Memorial Cup, or U18 World Championships. Massive opportunities for young players have been wiped aside. Heck, we don't even know if this group will have their moment on stage on draft day. It's all completely worth it of course. This is bigger than sport. It's bigger than individuals. It's life and death.

Now, what has also gone by the wayside is the potential for recency bias. There won't be anything recent by the time this draft occurs (whenever that is). What's left is for the talent evaluators to hunker down and pour over old game tape. Looking for new tidbits of information. Checking in on players that they maybe didn't have as many views earlier in the season.

That's exactly what I've been doing during this isolating period.

I've been asked if this will be my final rankings for 2020. It won't be. I'll use the remaining months to foster a greater understanding of the players by continuing to review old games and picking the brains of scouts and execs the world over. If we can't watch them play today, we sure as hell can break down everything they've done to this point.

As always, my assessments are limited. I am but one man who also has a four-year-old son, an eight-month-old daughter, a teaching career, and many writing commitments. However, I'm fortunate enough to have a very patient wife. Additionally, I'm privileged to have several experienced scouts to bounce things off of.

This is not intended to mock up what the selections will eventually be this... summer?. This is how I perceive the player today in conjunction with how I believe they will progress and develop. I'm limited to mostly assessing these players on their on-ice achievements. Knowing these young men as individuals would be telling towards their drive and determination. Something that cannot be understated.

Regarding my method, I place immense value on skating ability and processing speed. Physical attributes are great, but if you can't see the play develop or recognize your options quickly, both offensively and defensively, you'll be destined for an uphill battle. It's hard not to love a creative player with rocket of a shot or incredibly slick puck skills. But those attributes come behind speed and smarts.

Regarding tiers, Tier 1 is a two-player cabin. [Quinton Byfield](#) remains at the top with [Alexis Lafrenière](#) less than a whisker behind. I have been very vocal in my belief that Lafrenière is the better player today. He's the best player in this crop with a bullet. But I cannot shake the feeling that Byfield has the higher upside. I've tried to stay committed to that gut feeling as in year's past I may have fell victim to outside pressures.

I'd argue that Byfield's U18 campaign was equal to or even greater than Lafrenière's U18 season a year ago. And statistically, Byfield produced at a greater rate in both goals and points. It's a big swing to leave the big man at the top, but I haven't been able to convince myself to make the change. Not to say that I won't before we actually see names called.

Tier 2 houses players 3-11, Tier 3 is 12-22, Tier 4 starts to thicken up with players 22-35, and Tier 5 can be the rest.

1. Quinton Byfield, C / 08-19-02 / 6'5 214lbs / OHL

A physical specimen who blends exceptional power to a speed-driven, skill game. His quick hands allow him to maneuver in tight spaces, while the long reach propels his puck-protection. A mammoth of a man at just 17. He's not the best player today, but his upside is too large to ignore.

2. Alexis Lafrenière, LW / 10-11-01 / 6'1 192lbs / QMJHL

A premier, point-producing machine of a forward. Extremely dangerous in one-on-one situations. Scores in a variety of ways. Brings the noise. Will be one of the rare wingers who will dictate everything. A very worthy first-overall pick.

3. Marco Rossi, C / 09-23-01 / 5'9 179lbs / OHL

One of the elder statesmen of the class gives up size but makes up for it in skill. Has the ability to drop-jaws with his puck skills. A duel-threat off of the rush or set up. A monster on the man-advantage. Constant battler with solid defensive ability. Could conceivably be in the NHL next fall.

4. Lucas Raymond, LW/ 03-28-02/ 5'10 165lbs / SHL

An explosive winger who is equally dangerous with his shot or pass. Moves with quickness and handles the puck at a high-level even at top speed. His puck skills are fluid, controlled and capable of embarrassing. Finishes with accuracy off of a quick release. Capable of converting from all over. Possesses that rare trait of *escapability*. The lack of deployment this year has dampened the hype, but his skillset demands attention.

5. Tim Stützle, C / 01-15-02 / 5'11 165lbs / DEL

High-end speed propels this creative pivot. Elite two-step quickness blends into an explosive, puck-possession style. Has good hands but can overhandle it at times. Has shone on every stage put in front of him.

6. Alexander Holtz, RW / 01-23-02 / 6' 183lbs / SuperElit

An elite shooter who can finish from all around the offensive zone. Anticipates well and gets his body into a position to fire. Owns above-average speed and puck skills to go with the killer instinct. Future first PP triggerman.

7. Jamie Drysdale, RHD / 04-08-02 / 5'11 165lbs / OHL

A fluid, puck-possessing rearguard who plays with terrific pace. Has his head up at all times, and can bomb outlets the length of a football field. Uses his brain to get a jump on bigger opponents. Offensive ability to spare. He'll devour minutes in the NHL.

8. Cole Perfetti, C / OHL / 01-01-02 / 5'10 185lbs / OHL

A highly productive pivot who can set it up almost as well as he can finish it himself. Has nice puck skills to go along with high-end intelligence. Lacks the two-step quickness to be considered a locked-in future star, but he's not far off.

9. **Anton Lundell, C / 10-03-01 / 6'1 183lbs / Liiga**

A polished, two-way centre who already brings the full package. His patience with the puck allows him to distribute the puck with more efficiency. Boasts an elite brain to support his well-rounded style. Super safe.

10. **Seth Jarvis, RW / 02-01-02 / 5'10 172lbs / WHL**

Speedy, creative winger who thrives off of the rush. Was downright dominant in the final 40 games of the WHL season. Converts at a high-level thanks to his IQ and willingness to get greasy. Will transition extremely well.

<blockquote class="twitter-tweet"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">Deep Dive: Seth Jarvis' Strong Second-Half Thrusts him Into Elite Company for #2020NHLDraft @eliteprospects @EPRinkside https://t.co/CqfL5IPfcC pic.twitter.com/2UXBa4d7I3</p>— /Cam Robinson/ (@Hockey_Robinson) March 19, 2020</blockquote> <script async src="https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script>

11. **Yaroslav Askarov, G / 06-16-02 / 6'3 163lbs / VHL**

Hits all the markers – size, composure, puck-tracking, elasticity, and a competitive fire. Was very good in the VHL as a 17-year-old – something we never see.

12. **Jake Sanderson, LHD / 07-08-02 / 6'1 185lbs / USNTDP**

A raw defender who oozes potential. His game seemed to transform as the season wore on. Has all-around upside, including untapped offensive skills. Someone will fall in love early.

13. **Rodion Amirov, LW / 10-02-01 / 6' 168lbs / KHL**

An impressive two-way winger. Competes for every puck and tends to win thanks to his balance and strong core. Makes the subtle plays that add up. Still searching for that separation speed.

14. Noel Gunler, RW / 10-07-01 / 6'1 176lbs / SHL

For whatever reason, Sweden has shied away from including Gunler on their national teams, but wherever this kid goes, he produces. Owns one of the most lethal shots in the draft. A great mind for finding soft spots. Skating could still be improved.

15. Dawson Mercer, RW / 10-27-01 / 6' 172lbs / QMJHL

Intelligent, play-creating winger. Makes the hard plays, but can also dazzle with his puck skills. Two-step quickness already showing improvements. Wears opponents down.

16. Emil Andrae, LHD / 02-23-02 / 5'9 183lbs / SuperElit

Creative, shifty, and intelligent. Throw in strong edgework and deceptive speed and you've got the recipe for success for an undersized defender. Can dance out there.

<blockquote class="twitter-tweet"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">Emil Andrae 🧐 #2020NHLDraft pic.twitter.com/RtOoL6qodm</p>— Anton Johansson (@antonj85) November 19, 2019</blockquote><script async src="https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script>

17. Zion Nybeck, RW / 05-12-02 / 5'8 176lbs / SuperElit

Speedy, competitive winger who can terrorize on the forecheck despite his size. Plays bigger than he is. Can make plays in-tight. A duel threat. One of my favourites.

18. Jack Quinn, RW / 09-19-01 / 5'11 176lbs / OHL

It's not too often we see a draft-eligible OHLer pop 50 goals. Quinn did it despite his season ending abruptly thanks to Covid-19. He accomplished this while playing on a stacked 67s squad, but played his 5v5 minutes away from Rossi. He's nearly as old as you can be for the class, but his release is legit.

19. Mavrik Bourque, C / 01-08-02 / 5'10 165lbs / QMJHL

The type of player who sees the game a step ahead of most. A duel-threat offensive catalyst who thrives on the man-advantage. More strength and speed would be nice.

20. Connor Zary, C / 09-25-01 / 6' 174lbs / WHL

A puck-possession pivot who clicked well above a point-per-game this season. Great speed, deft puck skills, and equally dangerous with the shot and pass. An elder statesman.

21. Dylan Holloway, C / 09-23-01 / 6' 192lbs / NCAA

A powerful, two-way pivot. Boasts a heavy release which he uses to draw defenders before expertly distributing. Made a nice impact at Wisconsin as a true freshman. Strong overall package.

22. Kaiden Guhle, LHD / 01-18-02 / 6'3 187lbs / WHL

Strapping blueliner with great mobility and a keen eye for defending. Has the potential to be a minute-muncher down the line, albeit with a somewhat limited offensive ceiling. Safe.

23. Willam Wallinder, LHD / 07-28-02 / 6'4 192lbs / Allsvenskan

Large and in-charge. A lot of upside. Quality feet. Quick outlets. Not afraid to jump into the rush. Looked competent in a pro league as a young '02.

24. Topi Niemelä, RHD / 03-25-02 / 6' 163lbs / Liiga

Won't often wow you with his offensive creativity, but blends intelligent reads with effective transitions. Headly player with a lot of upside. A modern, two-way defender with a very high floor and untapped potential.

25. Roby Järventie, LW / 08-08-02 / 6'2 185lbs / Mestis

A big, gun slinging goal-scorer. Can finish from out high and is deadly in the slot area. Was far and away the best U18 player in Mestis history this past season. Very young for this crop so there's loads of space to grow.

26. Brendan Brisson, LW / 10-22-01 / 5'11 179lbs / USHL

A finisher by nature, but the intelligence and wherewithal to draw opponents and make a nice play. An assassin on the PP from the right circle.

27. Jérémy Poirier, LHD / 06-02-02 / 6' 192lbs / QMJHL

Toolsy defender with above-average skating and elite puck skills. Transitions extremely well with his feet, but can skate (and pass) himself into trouble at times. Swims around in the high-risk, high-reward waters.

28. Jan Mysak, C/LW / 06-24-02 / 6' 176lbs / OHL

A poised, intelligent forward who anticipates the play as well as anyone in this class. Has already added better speed to his package and will look to continue that trend. An underrated finisher.

29. Helge Grans, RHD / 05-10-02 / 6'3 192lbs / SuperElit

Smooth-skating, transitional defender. Enjoys activating off of the rush and owns a big point shot. Isn't as advanced defensively but has the physical tools to get there. Can make questionable decisions with and without the puck. Someone may jump early.

30. Jacob Perreault, C/RW / 04-15-02 / 5'11 198lbs / OHL

A versatile pivot who uses a heavy release to create space to distribute to his wings. Good hockey sense with sharp cuts. Can get lost in the shuffle at times.

31. Marat Khusnutdinov, C / 07-17-02 / 5'9 165lbs / MHL

An impactful, all-around centre. Excellent play-driver who already boasts strong defensive ability. Plenty of runway ahead of him.

32. Roni Hirvonen, C / 01-10-02 / 5'9 163 / Liiga

33. Theodor Niederbach, C / 02-25-02 / 5'11 172lbs / SuperElit

34. Hendrix Lapierre, C / 02-09-02 / 6' 165lbs / QMJHL

35. Thomas Bordeleau, C / 01-03-02 / 5'9 179lbs / USNTDP

36. John-Jason-Peterka, LW/RW / 01-14-02 / 5'10 181lbs / DEL

37. Daniel Torgersson, W / 01-26-02 / 6'3 205lbs / SuperElit

38. Martin Chromiak, LW / 08-20-02 / 6' 181lbs / OHL

39. Vasili Ponomaryov, C/LW / 03-13-02 / 6' 176lbs / QMJHL

40. Ryan O'Rourke, LHD / 05-16-02 / 6'2 181lbs / OHL

41. Lukas Cormier, LHD / 03-27-02 / 5'8 170lbs / QMJHL

42. Tyson Foerster, C / 01-18-02 / 6'1 194lbs / OHL

43. Ty Smilanic, C / 01-20-02 / 6'1 170lbs / USNTDP

44. Justin Sourdif, C / 03-24-02 / 5'11 165lbs / WHL

45. Braden Schneider, RHD / 09-20-01 / 6'2 209lbs / WHL

46. Ozzy Wiesblatt, RW / 03-09-02 / 5'10 182lbs / WHL

47. Ridly Greig, LW / 08-08-02 / 5'11 159lbs / WHL

48. Kasper Simontaival, RW / 01-11-02 / 5'9 172lbs / Metis

49. Sean Farrell, LW / 11-02-01 / 5'9 179lbs / USHL

50. Lukas Reichel, LW/RW / 05-17-02 / 6' 170lbs / DEL

- 51. Jean-Luc Foudy, C / 05-13-02 / 5'11 168lbs / OHL**
- 52. Luke Evangelista, RW / 02-21-02 / 5'11 165lbs / OHL**
- 53. Veeti Miettinen, RW / 09-20-01 / 5'9 159lbs / Jr. A SM-liiga**
- 54. Brett Berard, LW / 09-09-02 / 5'9 152lbs / USHL**
- 55. Anton Johannessson, LHD / 03-26-02 / 5'9 154lbs / SuperElit**
- 56. Eemil Viro, LHD / 04-03-02 / 6' 168lbs / Jr. SM-liiga**
- 57. Joni Jurmo, LHD / 04-19-02 / 6'4 190lbs / Jr. A SM-liiga**
- 58. Calle Clang, G / 05-20-02 / 6'2 176lbs / SuperElit**
- 59. Colby Ambrosio, C / 08-07-02 / 5'9 165lbs / USHL**
- 60. Jake Neighbours, LW / 03-29-02 / 5'11 201lbs / WHL**
- 61. Emil Heineman, LW / 11-16-01 / 6'1 185lbs / SuperElit**
- 62. Sam Colangelo, RW / 12-26-01 / 6'2 205lbs / USHL**
- 63. Daniil Guschin, RW / 02-06-02 / 5'8 161lbs / USHL**

- 64. Antonio Stranges, C/LW / 02-05-02 / 5'10 179lbs / OHL**
- 65. Jaromir Pytlik, C / 09-25-02 / 6'3 196lbs / OHL**

- 66. Ty Tullio, C / 04-05-02 / 5'9 161lbs / OHL**

- 67. Justin Barron, RHD / 11-15-01 / 6'2 192lbs / QMJHL**

An offensive rearguard who can create at a high-rate during even-strength play. Brings plus-speed and awareness to the offensive side of the game. Off-puck and defensive zone play needs more polish.

- 68. Nick Malik, G / 04-26-02 / 6'2 174lbs / Czech2**

- 69. Alexander Pashin, LW / 07-28-02 / 5'7 154lbs / MHL**

- 70. Dylan Peterson, C / 01-08-02 / 6'4 192lbs / USNTDP**

- 71. Jack Thompson, RHD / 6'1 172lbs / OHL**

Loves to engage in the rush and push the pace of play. Has looked more than competent working on the top unit in Sudbury. His shot is a real weapon.

- 72. Joel Blomqvist, G / 01-10-02 / 6'1 205lbs / Jr SM-liiga**

- 73. Michael Benning, LHD / 01-05-02 / 5'9 170lbs / AJHL**

- 74. Will Cuyille, LW / 02-05-02 / 6'2 201lbs / OHL**

- 75. Oskar Magnusson, RW / 01-31-02 / 5'10 165lbs / SuperElit**

76. Oliver Suni, RW / 02-13-02 / 6'2 187lbs / OHL

77. Tristen Robins, C / 10-15-01 / 5'10 174lbs / WHL

78. Alexander Nikishin, LD / 10-02-01 / 6'3 196lbs / KHL

79. Theo Rochette, C / 02-20-02 / 5'10 159lbs / QMJHL

Loves having the puck on a string. Quick. Agile. Smart. Needs time and strength, but hey, who doesn't?

80. Gunnarwolfe Fontaine, LW / 09-16-19 / 5'10 176lbs / USHL*

81. Luke Tuch, LW / 03-27-02 / 6'2 203lbs / USNTDP

82. Juuso Mäenpää, C / 04-29/02 / 5'7 141lbs / Jr. A SM-liiga

83. Karri Aho, LHD / 09-06-02 / 6'1 179lbs / Jr. A SM-liiga

84. Shakir Mukhamadullin, LHD / 01-10-02 / 6'2 170lbs / KHL

85. Carter Savoie, LW / 01-23-02 / 5'9 192 lbs / AJHL