

## **Canadian Press**

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/hockey/nhl/brayden-yager-time-with-crosby-1.7421396>

### ***Canadian world junior captain Brayden Yager on 'mesmerizing' time with Crosby 'You try to be a sponge and learn as much as you can,' says Yager***

Joshua Clipperton · The Canadian Press

Brayden Yager was the new face in town.

The Pittsburgh Penguins were holding training camp in September 2023. Sidney Crosby made the youngster feel right at home.

"He's one of the best, if not the best, players to ever play the game," Yager said of the superstar captain with three Stanley Cup rings and two Olympic gold medals. "You get a kid that comes in and he's talking to you like you're just another one of the boys. For him to treat people the way he treats people is unbelievable.

"You try to be a sponge and learn as much as you can. It was pretty mesmerizing."

Subsequently traded to the Winnipeg Jets for fellow top prospect Rutger McGroarty after the winger refused to sign in the Manitoba capital, Yager is looking to use some of the tools he gleaned from Crosby as he captains Canada at the world junior hockey championship.

"To wear the Maple Leaf is what you dream of," said the 19-year-old centre. "With a team full of leaders, it's such an honour."

"The biggest thing for me with Sid was just watching him," Yager added later. "Leads by example with everything he does. It's all about the team."

The Saskatoon product has taken that to heart at the under-20 tournament in the nation's capital, where Canada will meet Czechia in Thursday's quarterfinals.

Yager, who had two goals and five points at last year's event when the country finished a disappointing fifth after a loss to the Czechs, has embraced a shutdown role at the event with one assist as attention turns to the knockout round.

Selected with the 14th pick at the 2023 NHL draft, Yager had 35 goals and 60 assists for the Western Hockey League's Moose Jaw Warriors last season. The six-foot, 170-pound centre added 27 points (11 goals, 16 assists) in 20 playoff contests that ended with a third-place finish at the Memorial Cup.

Yager, who has 12 goals and 22 assists in 23 WHL appearances in 2024-25, was getting ready for another camp with Crosby and the Penguins with the trade came down in late August.

"A bit of a shocker," he said. "But that's just your 'welcome to pro hockey' moment. It's a business."

After the dust settled, any angst turned to excitement knowing Yager would be a lot closer to home with the Jets.

"The guys were unbelievable," he said. "The coaching staff and management were all great and super welcoming. Made me feel like I belong there."

There's also no ill will towards the Penguins.

"Still have my draft jersey," he said. "That's one of the most special nights of my life. Will always have that hanging up, but most of the Pens swag is collecting dust."

Canadian forward Berkly Catton, who grew up with Yager in Saskatoon, said his teammate's willingness to do the dirty work on a big stage speaks volumes.

"You could put him in any position possible and he's gonna find success — it's just the way he is," said the 19-year-old Seattle Kraken prospect. "That's why he's the captain. He'll do anything for the team, anything to win."

"It's a credit to him. He's leading."

Shipped by Moose Jaw to the Lethbridge Hurricanes in a blockbuster WHL deal just before heading off to join Canada's under-20 national team last month, Yager already had those qualities. His brief time with Crosby, who texted him after the trade to Winnipeg to wish him well, cemented that resolve.

"You see the work ethic," he said of No. 87. "The compete in for practice and in games is second to none. And a great person off the ice."

"Makes everybody feel like they're part of the team."

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<https://www.tsn.ca/video/domino-s-that-s-hockey-what-each-canadian-team-needs-to-change-in-2025%7E3055597>

***Domino's That's Hockey: What each Canadian team needs to change in 2025 (VIDEO)***

The calendar has flipped to 2025 and it's time to make some New Year's resolutions. TSN Hockey analyst Martin Biron joins Domino's That's Hockey to share what each Canadian club needs to change in 2025, and which team has the best shot of bringing the Stanley Cup back to Canada.