

Provorov is quick study with RoughRiders

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ivan Provorov is like most 16-year-old kids in Iowa. He gets up early and dives into his classes, but there's a twist.

He does his schoolwork by himself. There's no school and no teachers in the room. And although he speaks English, it's all in Russian.

Provorov, who is from Yaroslavl, Russia, has moved here to play for the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders in the United States Hockey League. Some of the younger RoughRiders are attending school here, but Provorov is working on his own.

"I'm doing my Russian school on-line," he explained Monday after practice at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena. "I think it's better for me to get done with it in three hours, and then I can work more on my hockey."

Provorov works on his studies from approximately 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., with classes in Russian, math and the other "regular" subjects in Russia, he said. He's a senior in the Russian school system and will have to pass final exams this spring to graduate.

He might want to play college hockey in the United States next year and has talked to Penn State, Yale and Cornell University so far. And just like everybody else, he would have to take a college entrance exam before enrolling.

Provorov said he knew a few basics about the English language when he moved to Pennsylvania several years ago to play for the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Knights in the Atlantic Youth Hockey League, but he did not speak English at the time.

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"The first three months it was kind of hard," he said, "and then I got used to it."

He spoke with his parents in Russia almost every day. His father visited a few times, but otherwise he was a young teenager in a foreign land trying to do the best he could.

Provorov certainly excelled at the sport he loves during his two years in Pennsylvania. He collected 42 goals and 55 assists in 51 games, was named the top defenseman in the league last season and helped Wilkes-Barre/Scranton win the AJHL title and the U16 national championship.

He joined the RoughRiders this season and has made a favorable impression on Coach Mark Carlson.

"He's a tremendous person," said Carlson. "Works hard. Good teammate. Personable. Respectful. He's been great in all those regards.

"Hungry to get better. Wants to improve," the coach said. "In addition, he's got tremendous ability and strength on the ice."

Provorov is 6-feet tall and weighs 200 pounds. He's staying with a host family and will turn 17 in January, midway through the season.

He's been playing hockey for as long as he can remember. "I got my first skates for my fifth birthday," he said. "I tried them on and liked it."

The RoughRiders open the USHL season Friday night at Lincoln, Neb., and will host Sioux Falls in the home opener Saturday night.

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Provorov is making a big jump from the Atlantic Youth Hockey League to the USHL, where he'll be playing against guys who are several years older and more experienced, but from all accounts he's made a smooth transition so far.

"It's a lot different," he said. "The game is faster, more physical. It's tougher."

He's looking forward to the start of the season. "I'm very excited. I think we're ready to go," he said. "I'm ready, too."