

Past Player Profile:

How old were you when you started skating, and what got you started?

I started skating in Waterloo, Iowa at 4 years old. First played organized hockey in Hermantown, MN at 5 years old. I'd say my dad got me started in hockey.

When did you know you were hooked on hockey?

I think I was hooked on hockey right away. My parents always tell me I was obsessed going to watch my dad's games with the Waterloo Blackhawks from a very young age.

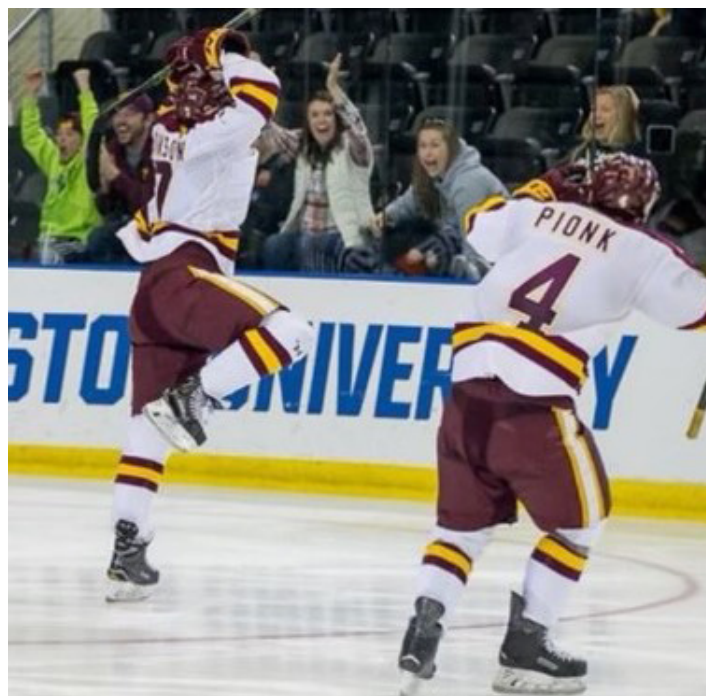


What was your favorite rink you ever played in, and why?

Favorite rink I've ever played in is the Bell Centre in Montreal. Great environment with a ton of history.

What can you tell us about where and how often you rink ratted as a kid?

I rink ratted at the outdoor rinks in Hermantown, MN. We also flooded a rink at our house in Hermantown. I'd say I rink ratted outside of practice a few times a week.



What do you remember about playing in Selects, and what are your favorite memories of doing so?

My favorite memory about Selects was playing for the North team and having one of the best records in tournament history!



Q & A with Neal Pionk



What would you tell the players in Selects today to focus on while playing in the festival?

My advice would be to have fun with it! You're playing with really good players in a fun tournament from players across the state. Enjoy it!

What is your favorite hockey memory?

My favorite hockey memory is winning a gold medal in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia at the World Junior A Challenge.



What do you believe separates the good players from the great players?

The separation comes in a combination of a special set of skills and an extraordinary work ethic.

How often do you keep in contact with the players from your youth?

Some of the guys I played with in Hermantown are my best friends to this day!

You've worn many jerseys from high school, college, Team USA and as a professional. What can you tell us about the different levels of pride you feel/felt as you reached different levels?

Each level comes with a different sense of pride. At Hermantown and UMD you represent your school. In pro you represent the city you play for and with a national team you represent the country you are from. All pretty cool experiences.