



## **There Are No Guarantees**

By Bill Gosse

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Anyone can take a drive and see throngs of people at baseball diamonds and soccer fields. Anyone can peek into gyms and see summer basketball leagues going strong. The scenes offer proof a high percentage of kids are taking advantage of sports-related activities.

Reaching the professional leagues or college athletics is never a guarantee. Large sums of money and hours of practice can put one on the path to success, however success is never guaranteed nor entitled.

Billy was introduced to hockey at age 6. Because he was not from a hockey family, he took a few lessons.

He loved playing and quickly learned the game. Based on Billy's enthusiasm, it was no surprise he dreamed of playing in the NHL. Even if he never made it, his parents wanted to give him a chance.

Costs were high, but his parents jumped right in. Second thoughts never surfaced and they did whatever it took, even if it meant side jobs.

Billy quickly rose through the ranks of youth hockey to the AAA level, which is a stepping stone for those who want to pursue hockey at the junior, college and professional levels. Members of these teams compete in some of the premier tournaments, where scouts represent prep schools, junior and college hockey programs from both Canada and the United States.

Billy's play at the AAA level earned him an opportunity to play juniors. For a youth hockey player aged 16-20, juniors is one step away from a college scholarship.

Juniors started a chapter of his life living away from home three-quarters of the school year and took him to cities like Detroit, Toronto, Springfield, Ill. and Traverse City, Mich. Host families, coaches, and his hometown high school guidance counselor would be important to Billy's academic and athletic success.

Billy's family, especially his little brother, missed him tremendously, but he was focused on his dream. They attended as many games as possible, but it was hard not being there daily.

Division one scholarship offers trickled in, but they weren't what Billy had hoped for.

Was Billy doing everything necessary? He had received such high praise as he progressed. Were his coaches talking him up?

During his final year of juniors Billy suffered an injury, forcing him to miss part of the season. The scholarship offers disappeared.

Time had flown by. The love of the game, strong family support and maturation beyond his years helped Billy pursue a dream. He turned out to be a great kid.

Proper perspective insured enjoyment along the way.

That was the only guarantee.