

MICHAEL PEZZETTA



From DEL to the NHL: Toronto Welcomes Pezzetta to the Maple Leafs By: Joseph Pupo

It is every hockey player's dream to play at a professional level. For Canadians young and old, hockey is what brings communities together and for many players at the professional level, they are a product of their community. Although De La Salle is part of the Greater Toronto Area, those who have attended and those who have been connected to the school as a parent, alumnus or alumnae, past and current staff know that De La Salle is one of the many communities that helped shape our young people and from time to time a good athlete. For Michael Pezzetta (DEL 2016) one of the newest members of the Toronto Maple Leafs and former player for the Montreal Canadiens, it is the school community and the school motto of "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve" that resonates with him today.

Michael visited the College during the summer of 2024 and had a chance to speak to Brother Domenic and reconnect with many other staff members. Michael sat down with us and shared his experiences and journey.

Michael began at De La Salle in Grade 9. Ms. Carreco still remembers the interview – his brother Stefano (DEL 2013) was already a student at the College. Ms. Carreco, very impressed with Michael and did wonder why Michael would not go elsewhere, in particular, another place that was built on its hockey reputation. Ms. Carreco vividly recalls the interview:

"Michael interviewed with me in his Grade 8 year. He came from St. Fidelis Catholic School and had an older brother, Stefano, attending. It quickly became apparent that Michael was an excellent athlete, especially in hockey, and explained how he had represented Team Canada in a Juniors tournament. When asked why he would come to Del, especially if he had such a promising hockey prospect, he replied: 'I want to come to Del for the academics, my hockey career is taken care of?..."

Michael was accepted and his commitment to academics and sports were exemplary. Of course, the rest is history. Michael was a strong student and he enjoyed math and science. As a Grade 9 student, he was friendly, outgoing, and immediately connected with his peers. He has remained in touch with many that were part of that 2016 graduating class and spoke about how closely knit they are as a group. Michael places much of his success in life to De La Salle and the people that surround him – especially the many teachers like Mr. Byrne and Mr. Calder to name a few.

Michael has a true appreciation for the students that attended De La Salle. He knew they were talented, hardworking, and empathetic – in short, he was surrounded by family. Like any family, his peers, teachers and administrators supported his dream to play in the NHL. Upon signing with Sudbury, Michael moved a step closer to his dream. However, he knew the importance of a strong education and he knew DEL would provide a level of instruction that would more than prepare him for university.



Upon joining the Sudbury Wolves, Michael was expected to attend the local high school. He recalled a situation that made it clear to him and his family that once he finished his season, he would need to continue to take courses at De La Salle if he were to be properly prepared for any post secondary institution. While in a grade 11 math class, as he smiled telling the story, he realized much of what was

being taught, he learned in Grade 9 at De La Salle – Michael recounts how his math teacher thought he was cheating on tests because Michael was, on many occasions, scoring perfect. Despite his success at the local school, Michael knew that he had to find a way to take his core courses at De La Salle – he knew if he did not do that, he may not be as well prepared for university he knew that he must surround himself with people who wanted to learn and do well.

Michael's perseverance and hard work as a student was emulated on the ice. Michael's work ethic, attitude, and his willingness to learn translated to success as a player. His grit and determination endeared him to fans of les rouge, blanc et bleu and this appreciation is sure to continue with Leafs fans during the upcoming NHL season. Michael recognizes the opportunity he has been given, and he has the experience.

Playing hockey in the NHL has not changed who he is – he attributes this to his his parents, family, and the school. He says the school taught him how to treat people - he learned the importance of respect. Michael, as

an athlete with a regimented schedule, talked about how the school's structure was important in developing the necessary traits to rise through Montreal's system. More importantly, he attests his emphasis on values that have defined him, not just as a player, but a person.

Michael's journey has led him to the NHL and he continues to work towards the completion of his Business Degree when time permits – usually in the off-season. When asked what he would like to impress on DEL's current students he offered the following advice: "Enjoy every day; appreciate the challenges; and stay close to your peers because these will be lifelong relationships." Advice that will go a long way if followed by our current students. Advice coming from a good person and hard worker. Michael's affinity for De La Salle is most appreciated and Michael Pezzetta needs to know that we appreciate and support him as he is living his dream.

