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Canadian seniors prepare for life on the big stage

2:09 PM, Jun 23, 2011 | [comments](#)**Written by**
The Sports Network TSN

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Toronto, Canada (Sports Network) - It's taken a while, but Canada seems to have finally found a consistent pipeline of basketball talent that's ready to make a splash in the NCAA.

Canucks such as Tristan Thompson and Cory Joseph from the University of Texas and Robert Sacre from Gonzaga University became fairly well known names after all three were featured in the 2011 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament.

The incoming class of freshmen will feature even more Canadian talent with McDonald's All-Americans Myck Kabongo going to the Longhorns, Kyle Wiltjer heading to University of Kentucky and Khem Birch joining Pittsburgh.

Due to their All-American status, the trio is the country's most well-known prospects, but the list doesn't end there.

Playing in Canada's national high school basketball showcase this year, the All Canada Classic, were 6-foot-2 point guard Kevin Pangos and 7-foot-4 center Sim Bhullar, two prospects who will also be playing Division I basketball in the fall.

Pangos will be joining Sacre at Gonzaga and even though he never decided to head to the United States to play high-level prep ball, he's confident that he's ready for anything that awaits him.

"[College] is the next big step. It's the next challenge for me," Pangos said after 2011 All Canada Classic. "I've done a lot in Canada and I've accomplished a lot [over here] but now it's on to the bigger stage in the NCAA and I'm hoping to make some noise.

"Not that many people know about me down there and if they do they might underrate me a little bit so I'm just hoping to play my game and get better as the years progress and achieve all my goals."

Being underestimated is something that the Holland's Landing, Ont. native is used to as he's always been told he isn't athletic or strong enough to play and that seems to have suited him just fine because he's always used it as motivation to get further in his basketball career.

Bhullar, on the other hand, is a young man who's never had any

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problems being taken lightly as he's always been the largest guy out there.

Committing to play at Xavier University, the Toronto native who played prep ball at Huntington Prep High school in Huntington, WV, is hoping his time spent in Cincinnati will give him the pipeline to a dream as big as he is.

"I just want to get better," the big man said. "Hopefully I can get good enough to be drafted into the NBA."

It's a goal shared by Pangos, who chose Gonzaga mostly because of the reputation that Bulldogs head coach Mark Few has when it comes to grooming point guards.

"Hopefully I'll do well with Gonzaga and then maybe get drafted and play pro somewhere."

That "somewhere" could be the NBA or it could be in Europe. In either case, it's possible that Pangos and Bhullar may have just played their last game in Canada.

There aren't many options at home for the pair to play professionally and although there is a new league being formed in the name of the National Basketball League of Canada, the history of pro and semi-pro basketball leagues north of the border hasn't been a successful one, with most of them folding after a short period of operation.

Despite the odds being stacked against him, Pangos doesn't want the All Canada Classic to be the last time he plays in his home country.

"I hope to play for the [Canadian] senior [men's national] team one day and I definitely hope to play on Canadian soil again."

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