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1984

ENTRY DRAFT

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1984 NHL DRAFT PICK



Al Iafrate

Selected in first round
No. 4 overall by Toronto Maple Leafs
Born March 21, 1966



Position: Defense
Height: 6-3 **Weight:** 190

BEFORE THE DRAFT

Last Team: Belleville (OHL)
Birthplace: Dearborn, Michigan (USA)
Hometown: Livonia, Michigan



PRE-DRAFT STATISTICS

Year	Team	League	GP	G	A	TP	PIM
1981-82	Detroit Adrays	Mich. AAA	--	--	--	--	--
1982-83	Compuware	Mich. AAA	66	30	45	75	90
1983-84	Team USA	Int'l	61	4	17	21	28
	Belleville	OHL	10	2	4	6	2

PRE-DRAFT AWARDS AND HONORS

Olympics: 1984 (seventh place)
USA Hockey Midget Championship: 1983 (Compuware)
Miscellaneous: Ranked by NHL Central Scouting Bureau as No. 5 overall prospect for the 1984 NHL draft. ... Rated in *The Hockey News* draft preview issue as No. 3 defense prospect for the 1984 NHL draft. ... Joined Belleville (OHL) for remainder of 1983-84 season and 1984 playoffs after playing for Team USA in 1984 Olympics at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. ... Teammate of future NHL players Kevin Hatcher and Shawn Chambers with Detroit Compuware in 1982-83. ... Belleville's first-round pick, No. 6 overall, in 1983 OHL priority selection.

NHL CAREER

Debut: October 11, 1984 (Toronto at Minnesota)
Numbers: 33 (Toronto); 34 (Washington); 43 (Boston); 43 (San Jose)
Stanley Cup: Never won. **Playing Status:** Retired Sept. 1, 1998

CAREER NHL STATISTICS

Years	Teams	GP	G	A	TP	PIM
1984-1998	Toronto, Washington, Boston, San Jose	799	152	311	463	1,301

CAREER NHL PLAYOFF STATISTICS

Years	Teams	GP	G	A	TP	PIM
1986-1998	Toronto, Washington, Boston, San Jose	71	19	16	35	77

NHL AWARDS AND HONORS

NHL All-Star Second Team: 1992-93 (Washington)
Sporting News All-Star Second Team: 1992-93 (Washington)
Hockey News All-Star Second Team: 1989-90 (Toronto)
All-Star Game: 1988, 1990 (Toronto), 1993, 1994 (Washington)

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SNAPSHOT '84

Total Selected:	250
Forwards:	142
Defense:	88
Goaltenders:	20
Major Junior:	110
Tier II/Jr. B:	16/9
College Players:	23
High School:	47
Midget:	4
U.S. Junior B:	1
Canadian:	145
Euro-Canadian:	2
USA Citizens:	62
U.S.-Born:	63
European:	41
Reached NHL:	102
Stanley Cup:	20
Hall of Fame:	1
All-Star Game:	18
Year-end All-Star:	7
Olympians:	31

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NHL Hardest-Shot Champion (SuperSkills Winner): 1990 (96.0 mph) (first winner), 1993 (105.2 mph), 1994 (102.7)

NHL Records: Hardest shot in a Superskills competition (105.2 mph on Jan. 21, 1994, in New York's Madison Square Garden), most goals by a defenseman in one playoff game (3 for Washington vs. N.Y. Islanders on April 26, 1993, shares record)

Toronto Records: Most goals by a defenseman in one season (22 in 1987-88, shares record)

Washington Records: Most goals by a defenseman in one playoff game (3 vs. N.Y. Islanders on April 26, 1993)

Toronto Playoffs Assists Leader: 1988 (4, tie)

Miscellaneous: Was first U.S.-born player ever selected by Toronto in the first round of an NHL draft. ... Was Toronto's youngest rookie in 1984-85. ... Played left wing for Toronto at times during 1984-85 season. ... Paired on defense with Bill Kitchen for Toronto in 1984-85. ... Missed part of 1984-85 season with bruised knee, an injury suffered during Toronto's Feb. 16, 1985, game vs. New Jersey. During this time, he contracted the flu, and he did not return to action until Toronto's March 2, 1985, game vs. N.Y. Islanders. ... Came to Toronto's 1985 training camp weighing 241 pounds -- 20 pounds over his playing weight. The Maple Leafs held him out of their first two preseason games, which led to a dispute between lafrate and the Maple Leafs coaching staff. During this time, he left the team for one day, claiming he had to take care of a family problem. ... Missed start of 1985-86 season with fractured cheekbone, an injury suffered in a fight during Toronto's Oct. 2, 1985, preseason game at Buffalo. He did not make his 1985-86 NHL regular-season debut until Toronto's Oct. 23, 1985, game vs. Pittsburgh. ... Missed part of 1985-86 season with strained neck an injury suffered during Toronto's Jan. 29, 1986, game vs. Washington. He did not return to action until Toronto's Feb. 16, 1986, game vs. Vancouver. ... Missed remainder of 1985-86 regular season with bruised kidney, an injury suffered during Toronto's April 1, 1986, game at St. Louis. He did not return to action until Game 1 of Toronto's first-round playoff series at Chicago on April 9, 1986. ... Was one of only two Toronto players (with Wendel Clark) to play in all 93 of Maple Leafs' regular-season and playoff games in 1986-87. ... Missed part of 1987-88 season with head injury, suffered during Toronto's Jan. 2, 1988, vs. Buffalo. ... Missed part of 1987-88 season with sore back, an injury suffered during Toronto's Feb. 4, 1988, game at Philadelphia. ... Was Toronto's only representative at NHL All-Star Game in St. Louis on Feb. 9, 1988. ... Missed part of 1988-89 season with cut on hand, an injury suffered during Toronto's Dec. 9, 1988, game at Detroit. The injury required four stitches. ... Missed part of 1988-89 season when he left team and returned home to Detroit on Jan. 15, 1989, to address marital and personal problems. He was granted a formal leave of absence from the team, and did not return to Toronto until Feb. 2, 1989. He returned to the lineup until Toronto's Feb. 11, 1989, game vs. Philadelphia. ... Paired on defense with Brad Marsh for Toronto in 1989-90 and 1990-91. ... Missed remainder of 1989-90 season and entire 1990 playoffs with ruptured ACL in right knee, an injury suffered when he became entangled with Mike Hough with 1:51 remaining in the third period of Toronto's March 24, 1990, game at Quebec. The injury required season-ending reconstructive surgery on April 9, 1990. ... Finished eighth among NHL defensemen with 63 points in 1989-90. ... Was Toronto's nominee for 1989-90 Masterton Trophy. ... Missed Toronto's 1990 training camp and start of 1990-91 season while recovering from his April 1990 knee surgery. He did not make his 1990-91 NHL regular-season debut until Toronto's Oct. 10, 1990, game vs. Quebec. ... Clashed with teammate Gary Leeman during his final season in Toronto because Leeman had taken to dating lafrate's

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ex-wife. ... Missed remainder of 1990-91 regular season and start of 1991 playoffs when he took a leave of absence due to "emotional exhaustion" on March 30, 1991. He did not return to action until Game 2 of Washington's first-round playoff series at N.Y. Rangers on April 5, 1991. Washington refused to elaborate on why lafrate had left the team, but adamantly denied that drug or alcohol abuse was involved. ... Missed part of 1991-92 season with eye injury, suffered during Washington's Feb. 18, 1992, game at San Jose. ... Won Washington team SuperSkills competitions for hardest shot (96 mph) and fastest skater during 1991-92 season. ... Missed remainder of 1992-93 regular season with pulled left hamstring, an injury suffered when he twisted to avoid being hit in the face by the puck during Washington's April 10, 1993, game vs. New Jersey. He did not return to action until Game 1 of Washington's first-round playoff series vs. N.Y. Islanders on April 18, 1993. ... Scored 25 goals for Washington in 1992-93, helping Capitals (along with Kevin Hatcher and Sylvain Cote) become first team in NHL history to have three defensemen with at least 20 goals. ... Finished second among all NHL defensemen with 25 goals in 1992-93. ... Missed part of 1993-94 season with sprained right knee, an injury suffered during Washington's Dec. 21, 1993, game at Philadelphia. He did not return to action until Washington's Jan. 1, 1994, game vs. Tampa Bay. ... Missed part of 1993-94 season with re-aggravation of right knee injury, suffered during Washington's Jan. 1, 1994, game vs. Tampa Bay. ... Scored two goals in his first game with Boston, on March 22, 1994, at Quebec. ... Had off-season surgery to repair torn cartilage in his chronically injured right knee on May 18, 1994. ... Represented by agent Rick Curran during his playing days in Boston. ... Missed part of 1996-97 season with broken toe, an injury suffered during San Jose's Nov. 12, 1996, game vs. Hartford. He did not return to action until San Jose's Dec. 4, 1996, game at Dallas. ... Missed part of 1996-97 season with bruised toe, an injury suffered during San Jose's Dec. 7, 1996, game vs. Tampa Bay. He did not return to action until San Jose's Dec. 21, 1996, game at Pittsburgh. ... Missed part of 1996-97 season with back injury, suffered during San Jose's Jan. 22, 1997, game vs. Los Angeles. He did not return to action until San Jose's Jan. 29, 1997, game at Edmonton. ... Missed remainder of 1996-97 season with sciatic nerve damage in back, an injury suffered during San Jose's Feb. 5, 1997, game vs. Los Angeles. The injury required season-ending surgery on March 6, 1997. The surgery was performed in Los Angeles by Dr. Robert Watkins. Following the surgery, lafrate had another operation to remove his appendix. ... Missed San Jose's entire 1997 training camp and start of 1997-98 season while recuperating from March 1997 surgery. He did not make his 1997-98 NHL regular-season debut until San Jose's Dec. 1, 1997, game at Calgary. ... Missed part of 1997-98 season with left knee injury, suffered during San Jose's Dec. 21, 1997, game at Anaheim. The injury required arthroscopic surgery on Dec. 28, 1997, and lafrate did not return to action until San Jose's March 24, 1998, game vs. Los Angeles. He scored a goal in that game. ... Left unprotected by San Jose for 1998 NHL Expansion Draft. He was claimed by Nashville on June 26, 1998, but never played for Predators because he was a Group III unrestricted free agent at the time, and the Predators were unwilling to exercise the \$1.8 million option on his contract. ... Signed one year, \$300,000 incentive-laden contract with Carolina as a Group III unrestricted free agent on July 14, 1998, but never played for Hurricanes because he determined that his left knee could not make it through Carolina's 1998 training camp, let alone an NHL season. The deal would have been worth \$3 million if lafrate had been able to play the entire 82 game schedule in 1998-99. ... Attempted brief comeback during 1998-99 season, but

changed mind in early January 1999, opting to remain in retirement. ... Considered making a comeback prior to 2001-02 season, when he contacted Carolina about coming to training camp. He was listed on Carolina's 2001 pre-training camp roster as a free agent tryout. But nothing actually materialized, and Lafrate remained in retirement.

Major Knee Problems: Lafrate missed the entire 1995 and 1995-96 seasons recovering from off-season surgery to his left knee. The knee had been giving him problems throughout the 1993-94 season, and by the end of the year, it was clear to Lafrate that he needed surgery to repair torn cartilage. The surgery was performed on May 18, 1994, just one week after Boston's season had ended. At the time, it was uncertain when Lafrate would be ready to play again. At the start of training camp in 1994, the Bruins, wanting Lafrate back in the lineup as soon as possible, asked him to skate for five minutes so they could get a sense of how his knee was doing. Lafrate became angry at the Bruins for suggesting he needed to skate, and he refused to do so. He then left training camp on Sept. 10, 1994, saying he would go home to Michigan until his knee was healed and did not care if the team paid him or not. Boston general manager Harry Sinden said Lafrate was out of line to suggest that the Bruins would have asked him to skate before he was ready, but he chose not to discipline Lafrate for going home to Michigan. Within weeks, however, a stalled labor negotiation led to the prolonged NHL lockout of 1994-95, which left Lafrate in limbo for months. At one point, head coach Brian Sutter was quoted in *The Hockey News* as saying "Only Al knows where Al is." During the lockout, in early November 1994, Lafrate caught another bad break, when he slipped on an exercise machine and hurt his right knee. Although the injury was minor, it required additional surgery. Later in November, the Bruins officially suspended Lafrate without pay, even though as an injured player he had been entitled to his salary during the lockout. The Bruins cited his having left the team as the reason for his suspension. After the lockout ended, the Bruins were prepared to welcome Lafrate back, but he instead chose not to show up, leaving the team on hold. On Jan. 18, 1995, Lafrate met with Sinden and assistant general manager Mike O'Connell to resolve the conflict. The sides reached a new level of understanding, and Lafrate went back to Michigan after the meeting to continue rehabilitating his left knee. He told the Bruins he planned to return to Boston soon. On Jan. 31, 1994, Lafrate made his return, and the Bruins officially ended his suspension, even though he was still undergoing rehab and had no idea when he would be able to play again. On Feb. 6 and Feb. 8, Lafrate skated to test his knees, but remained non-committal about a possible return. By early March, Lafrate was skating 2-3 times per week for periods of up to 30 minutes, and it appeared he was ready to make a comeback. But by the end of the month, it was clear Lafrate wasn't ready to return, and on April 4, 1995, he had season-ending arthroscopic surgery on the right knee, which had been swelling up whenever he skated. Lafrate's surgeon, Dr. William Clancy, said Lafrate would require at least four months to recover and hoped he could return for the team's 1995 training camp. Lafrate returned to Michigan in late April to begin another rehabilitation program. Despite the injury problems, Lafrate re-signed with Boston on July 20, 1995, accepting a one-year deal worth \$900,000. As part of the deal, Lafrate agreed to follow a team-ordered rehabilitation program, rather than the self-selected one he had used the previous year. But in September 1995, just after Boston opened its training camp, the Bruins learned that Lafrate had a loose piece of cartilage in his right knee. The right knee had swelled up during two consecutive skating sessions in two days, and an MRI showed the extent of the leftover damage in the knee. At that point, Sinden declared that the team would have to accept the

likelihood that Lafrate would not make it back during the 1995-96 season. Some of Lafrate's teammates even wondered if his career was over. Lafrate, however, said he would continue his rehabilitation and vowed to come back. He also opted not to have any further surgery. By early December 1995, the relationship between Lafrate and the Bruins took another turn for the worse when Lafrate's agent, Rick Curran, filed a grievance against the team, claiming it had not paid Lafrate's salary or health insurance premiums. The Bruins argued that Curran had no case, because the torn cartilage in Lafrate's right knee was not hockey-related. The NHL determined that the dispute would have to be resolved by a league arbitrator on Jan. 31, 1996. In the weeks before the scheduled hearing, Lafrate got in trouble for damaging a shop window during a scuffle and had to pay for the damage -- adding to the increasingly negative image of him that was building in the media. The hearing went ahead as scheduled on Jan. 31, but was not completed in enough time and had to be delayed until March due to scheduling issues. Meanwhile, Boston continued to withhold Lafrate's salary, based on the Bruins' argument that his injury was not hockey-related. In mid-February, Lafrate skated for the first time in months and reported no problems with his right knee. By early March, Lafrate was practicing with the team again and appeared to be on track for a comeback before the end of the 1995-96 season. On March 15, 1996, the NHL resumed Lafrate's grievance hearing -- just two days after the team declared he was less than two weeks away from a return to the lineup. However, problems with the knee continued, and the Bruins began to hope that Lafrate would be back in time for the playoffs, if not the end of the regular season. Lafrate continued to tell the Bruins he wasn't ready to resume playing. Finally, just days before the playoffs, Boston coach Steve Kasper decided it would be unwise to bring Lafrate back after such a long absence. He also worried that Lafrate's return would affect team chemistry, so he told Lafrate to wait until the 1996-97 season before attempting his comeback. Lafrate, however, was set to become an unrestricted free agent, and the Bruins had little intention of re-signing him. By the end of Boston's playoff run, Lafrate's salary grievance was still unresolved. Sinden told *The Hockey News* that the team would make Lafrate a qualifying offer if it won the grievance, but would make no effort to keep him if it was forced to pay out his entire 1995-96 salary. On May 20, NHL arbitrator George Nicolau sided with Lafrate, saying the Bruins owed him his entire \$900,000 salary for 1995-96. The Bruins wanted to appeal the decision, and it was clear they did not want to repeat their error of the previous year by qualifying him for a new contract before the June 30, 1996, deadline. This would enable him to become an unrestricted free agent at age 30. To avoid losing Lafrate for nothing in return, Boston traded him to San Jose in exchange for Jeff Odgers and a 1996 fifth-round draft pick on June 21, 1996. The Sharks pledged not to rush Lafrate, who had endured seven knee operations, back into action. That pledge was unnecessary. He made it through training camp, and resumed his career with San Jose. On Oct. 5, 1996, he played for San Jose against the N.Y. Islanders. It was his first NHL game since May 11, 1994. He had an assist in that game, giving San Jose a 2-2 tie with 16 seconds left in regulation.

NON-NHL CAREER

Post-Draft Teams: None

World Championships: 1998 (12th place)

NON-NHL AWARDS AND HONORS

Miscellaneous: Turned down invitation to play for Team USA in 1987 Canada Cup. ... Hosted weekly radio rock 'n' roll show on

Washington's WXZL FM 103 during his playing days with Capitals. ... Was an avid motorcycle rider during his playing days. ... Worked as a hockey instructor, running clinics throughout U.S., after his retirement.

Personal: Nicknamed "Wild Thing" and "Alley Cat." ... Full name is Albert Anthony Iafrate. ... Distant cousin of ex-NHLer Dino Ciccarelli.

HOW HE GOT AWAY

TRADE: Toronto traded Iafrate to Washington in exchange for Bob Rouse and Peter Zezel on January 15, 1991.