



Jiří Tlustý celebrates a goal with his Carolina teammates, Canadian Eric Staal and Russian Alexander Semin.

FROM THERE ON, IT WAS JUST HOCKEY, HOCKEY, HOCKEY.

# THE ICY RIDE

## From Bohemia to Carolina: Jiří Tlustý's long journey to the NHL

**May and June is championship season for hockey leagues around the world. In the NHL, the top teams will fight for the Stanley Cup and there are the World Championships in Sweden and Finland. I went to Kladno to talk to Jiří Tlustý about his road to the NHL.**

Jiří caught the eye of scouts\* for the Toronto Maple Leafs, who drafted • him in 2006. After getting some experience playing junior hockey in Canada, he made his NHL debut (= first game) for Toronto at the age of 19. He even scored two goals in his first NHL game! In 2009, he was traded to (= exchanged for another player) the Carolina Hurricanes, where he still plays today. During the NHL lockout • in fall/winter 2012, Tlustý played for his "home" team in Kladno with his idol Jaromír Jágr.

Now back in Carolina, he is having the best season in his young NHL career, with 19 goals (29 points) in his first 41 games (as of April 17).

### Did you always want to be a hockey player?

Actually, I wasn't thinking about being a hockey player. I was just a normal kid growing up in a small village close to Slaný. My dad used to play hockey, so he wanted me to try it but my mom didn't want me to. Then I went to school and I was a kind of a hyperactive (= very active) kid. So my mom told my dad that he should take me to practice and see if I could get tired.

### And then you found out you were pretty good at it, right?

That was the first year when they were teaching us how to skate, how to handle the puck. After our second game, the coach



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came to the dressing room and said I showed the biggest improvement of the kids there. From there on, it was just hockey, hockey, hockey. It turned my life around.

#### When did you move to Canada then?

I was 17, turning 18. I signed a deal with Toronto and played in their training camp and then went to the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds • and I played juniors.

#### How long did it take to feel comfortable in Canada?

It took me about three and a half months to understand what they were trying to say. And after the first season (in juniors) I could speak English. I had a great host family •; they were always trying to help me.

#### How did you learn English?

I didn't take any classes, just talked to the guys on our team and tried to learn. Also whenever I got an email or a text message, I put it into Google Translate and it helped me to pick up (= learn) the words.

#### Was it easy to adjust to (= get used to) life in Toronto?

It definitely wasn't easy, living on my own in a huge city like Toronto when you are 18 years old and 7,000 km away from home.

#### Playing in Carolina must be quite different from Toronto.

Toronto is a beautiful big city, but I really like Carolina. It's kind of calm and southern

people are really nice. They don't even play hockey so I don't have to talk about hockey all the time. And the weather is always nice there, too.

#### You've played in Europe and North America.

##### What's the biggest difference on the ice?

European ice is way (= much) bigger than North American and so you have more space, you can make more moves. North American hockey is faster because the ice is smaller... you have to be always ready. There's more hitting and more competition.

##### What is the most difficult thing for a pro (= professional) hockey player?

The training and competition. When you get to training camp there are two or three guys fighting for each spot\*. The competition is really on a high level.

**Nathaniel Patton (USA)**



The Stanley Cup has been given to the champions of the NHL since 1926. After a team wins the cup, the names of the players are written on the trophy and each person can spend a day with the cup. European players often take it home to their native countries, others have used it as a drinking glass for beer or champagne, and once it even fell into a swimming pool! The Montreal Canadians have won the most Stanley Cups, 23 in total.



## DUMP IT!

**Thomas Todd** grew up in a Canadian hockey family and played junior ice hockey for three years. He now lives in the Czech Republic and teaches for 'Heads Up Hockey English' – how to talk to other players and coaches. Given the aggressive nature and the speed of the game, miscommunication can lead to mistakes and serious injury.

#### What do hockey players say?

The best example would be the name of the school itself: heads up. It means "pozor, bacha". When you hear your teammate shout this, you know you are in danger and so you should be very careful. Another good example is "dump it", which means that your team is under pressure or tired and you should clear the puck (get the puck away from your zone) no matter what.

More at: [www.englishworks.cz](http://www.englishworks.cz)

## → TASK

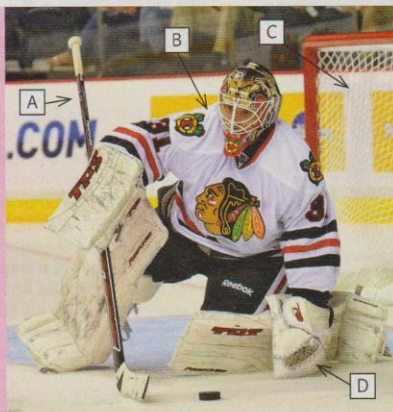
Complete the sentences with the words given below. Then use them to describe the picture.

**GLOVE** **GOAL/NET** **GOALTENDER** **STICK**

An ice hockey player uses his **1** \_\_\_\_\_ to shoot the puck into the **2** \_\_\_\_\_.

The **3** \_\_\_\_\_ (or goalie for short) tries to save/stop the puck using his pads (= chrániče) and **4** \_\_\_\_\_.

Solutions on p. 3



## 🎯 CULTURE POINTS

**lockout** – generally it means when employees are not allowed to work. The employers actually "lock" the doors until they have agreed on working conditions. Recently, the NHL had a lockout when the owners and players couldn't agree on a contract. Players were not allowed to train with their NHL clubs. In early 2013, the two sides agreed to a new contract and to play a shortened 48-game season (instead of the normal 82 games). When the players or employees refuse to work, it is called a **strike**.

**The Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds** – are one of the top junior clubs in Canada. It is common for young players to gain experience in junior hockey before graduating to the professional levels. They can play junior hockey until they are 20 years old.

**host families** – provide food and accommodation for junior hockey players, who usually travel far from their own homes and families. They are usually arranged by the team and a good host family is very important in the player's daily life.

## GLOSSARY\*

**he caught the eye of scouts** – talent "hunters" were interested in him (zaujal hľadače talentů). It is usual for North American sports teams to hire people to "scout" or look for possible talent in youth leagues.

**spot** – here it refers to a place on the team. Professional teams can only have 23 players at one time. Those who are not chosen for

the NHL team will go to the lower league to try and improve.

## LANGUAGE POINT\*

There are various meanings of the word "draft". Draft can be a flow of air into a room, or a rough/not finalized version of an essay, report, document, picture, etc., or an act of joining the army. The NHL draft is the ceremony in which young players

are "drafted", or chosen, by the 30 NHL teams. After a player is drafted, he becomes the "property" of the team that drafted him and he is not allowed to sign a contract with any other team until he is 27 years old.

## BRE X AME

**autumn** (BrE) x **fall** (AmE)  
**mom** (BrE) x **mom** (AmE)