Hockey’s growth across America

In 2006-07, an all-time record of 202 U.S.-born players played at least one NHL game. The number of U.S.-born players nearly matched the 2006-07 total of 259 players from the "big four" European producers of hockey players -- Czech Republic (97), Russia (64), Sweden (53) and Finland (45). Only Canada produced more players for the NHL in 2006-07 (550).

U.S. players comprised 20% of the NHL player population in 2006-07 -- the highest U.S, percentage of all time. Ten years ago, when there were four fewer teams in the League, the percentage of U.S. players in the League stood at 15%.

By decades, the number of U.S. players in the NHL has grown steadily since the 1960s. The figure grew from 10 to 68 in the 1970's; from 82 to 132 in the 1980's; from 141 to 160 in the 1990's and has increased from 166 to 202 in just the past six years. It is notable that, unlike the previous four decades, when U.S. growth was aided by expansion, the current growth has taken place without the addition of new teams.

The beginning of the growth in the number and quality of U.S.-born players competing in the National Hockey League can be informally traced back almost 50 years. During the 1959-60 season, with only three American-born players playing on one of the six NHL teams (Charlie Burns, Gerry Foley and Ken Yackel), the U.S. national team won the 1960 Olympic gold medal in Squaw Valley – an improbable win that would prove to be the catalyst for youngsters to take up the sport.

The importance of the gold medal win on the growth of the game at the grassroots level was clear to then NHL President Clarence Campbell. “The trend of U.S. amateur hockey development was accentuated tremendously by the performance of the U.S. team in winning the Olympic hockey championship for the first time at Squaw Valley,” Campbell said. “This could turn out to be the most important single development if it serves to stimulate wider participation by boys in the United States to the point where they can be considered as a potential source of professional playing talent.”

The influence of 1960 could already be seen by the 1976-77 season as 40 U.S.-born players competed in the League. Over the next 30 years, buoyed by another unlikely U.S. gold-medal win in 1980 at Lake Placid, the number of Americans in the NHL would increase five-fold.

Phoenix Coyotes coach Wayne Gretzky on the growth of U.S. hockey: “The United States has 10 times the amount of people as Canada, and over the last 50 years we can argue that the best athletes in the U.S. have played baseball, football, basketball. What you are finding now is that some of the best athletes are saying: ‘You know what? I’m going to play hockey.’ We are going to get more and more American kids -- more and more California kids; more and more Arizona kids at the age of 15, 16 and 17 that are good hockey players and good athletes who are going to go to places like Western Canada to play junior hockey; they are going to go play USHL in the mid-western U.S. We are going to see, over time, a lot more Americans that will be playing in the National Hockey League.”
In celebration of the growth of hockey in the U.S., USA hockey is presenting *Hockey Weekend Across America*, February 15-17, 2008. The three-day national initiative will include “Wear your Favorite Hockey Jersey to School” theme on Feb. 15; “Bring a Friend to the Rink” theme on Feb. 16; and a “Celebrate Local Heroes” theme on Feb. 17. In conjunction with USA Hockey, several NHL clubs will be celebrating the weekend with their own initiatives.

**Anaheim** – On Saturday, Feb. 16, the Ducks will conduct an autograph session in several Southern California rinks. On Sunday, two youth hockey teams, winners of a holiday toy drive, will face-off in the “TOY-RIFIC” hockey game at the Honda Center before the Ducks take on the Calgary Flames at 5:05 p.m., PST.

**Detroit** – The Red Wings will celebrate Hockey Weekend Across America in conjunction with *Hockey in the Hood 4*. The annual youth hockey tournament features NHL Diversity programs from Detroit, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Columbus, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C. and Alaska. The championship game will be hosted at Joe Louis Arena on Sunday Feb. 17. Youth Hockey Night is February 15 at Joe Louis Arena with special ticket pricing for all youth hockey members (MAHA).

**Minnesota** – The Wild’s celebration began a weekend early with the Second Annual Hockey Day in Minnesota on Saturday, Feb. 9, 2008. The day included 16-plus hours of hockey programming, five full games from three locations and celebrated the game from peewees to pros.

**Philadelphia** – The Flyers will help celebrate with Hockey Week Across Philadelphia (February 11-19) with the theme “I Love Hockey.” Weekly events will range from “Skate with the Media,” community and school events as well as a USA Hockey Night and Youth Hockey Hero presentation at the Flyers’ home game on Feb. 17 against Montreal. The Flyers will help encourage all local youth hockey clubs to participate in “Bring a Friend to the Rink” day as well as “Wear your Favorite Hockey Jersey to School” for all schools participating in the Newspapers in Education (NIE) program.

**Phoenix** – The Coyotes have expanded on "Wear Your Favorite Jersey to School" and made it "Wear Your Favorite Jersey to Work Day." Corporate sponsors and season
ticket holders are being asked to spread the word in their office and the business that comes up with the most employees wearing a hockey jersey will win a special prize from the team. Another contest will be held with local schools to see which school can have the most kids wearing hockey jerseys. The winner will receive a visit later in the season from the Coyotes. Phoenix players with ties to USA Hockey -- Peter Mueller, Mike York, Keith Ballard and Matt Jones -- will make stops at local schools to visit kids participating in “Wear Your Favorite Jersey to School Day.” In conjunction with the Arizona Amateur Hockey Association, the Coyotes will host Youth Hockey Night on Saturday, Feb. 16 and will offer special ticket prices to USA Hockey members.

Pittsburgh – The Penguins will celebrate the occasion starting on Wednesday, February 13 when they host Boston at Mellon Arena. A ceremonial puck drop will feature Penguins General Manager Ray Shero, USA Hockey VP Youth Council Chair Dave Klasnik and local youth hockey players while Team Pittsburgh U-10 Girls will play during intermission. The Penguins will make a donation of autographed Penguins memorabilia to rinks hosting South Hills Amateur Hockey Association (SHAHA) and Northfield Amateur Hockey Association (NAHA) tournaments for promotional use in “Bring a Friend to the Rink” day.
**U.S. Impact on the NHL Draft**

National Hockey League history was made in the 2007 Entry Draft when right wing Patrick Kane (Buffalo, New York) and left wing James van Riemsdyk (Middletown, New Jersey) became the first U.S.-born players to be selected first and second overall in the NHL Entry Draft.

In all, 63 U.S.-born players, representing a record 30% of the total, were selected in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft this June. The previous high was 28.2%, set last year. The percentage of U.S.-born players has risen steadily since 2001. The U.S. is the only country that has experienced an annual percentage increase in players drafted during each of the past four years.

A record-tying 10 U.S.-born players were among the 30 players selected in the first round of the 2007 NHL Entry Draft, matching the total from 2006.

A breakdown of 2007 Entry Draft selections by birthplace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Players</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>211</strong></td>
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</table>

Kane became just the sixth U.S.-born player to be selected first overall in the NHL Entry Draft. The others were: Brian Lawton (1983, Minnesota), Mike Modano (1988, Minnesota), Bryan Berard (1995, Ottawa), Rick DiPietro (2000, New York Islanders) and Erik Johnson (2006, St. Louis).

Defenseman Jonathon Blum, a native of Long Beach, Calif., and member of the 2007 Memorial Cup-champion Vancouver Giants of the Western Hockey League, became the first California-born and trained player selected in the first round of the NHL Entry Draft. Blum, claimed by the Nashville Predators with the 23rd overall pick, played minor hockey with the California Wave before moving to the WHL.

Since 2001, 15 players have been drafted from the state of California. Only five states in the U.S. have had more: Minnesota, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan and Illinois.
U.S. Hockey Fast Facts

GONE NATIONAL: From just fewer than 200,000 USA Hockey members in 1990 to almost 600,000 members today, hockey in the United States has truly gone national. USA Hockey members represent all 50 states and range in age from two to 80. They are part of 12 districts, 34 affiliate associations and approximately 3,000 local member programs.

ON THE RISE: Adult hockey reached the 100,000-member mark for the first time ever in 2006-07. The 103,533 registered adult members at season’s end represented a growth of over 36% in just the last two years.

590 TEAMS ON CAMPUS: Ice hockey is recognized as a varsity sport at 217 NCAA Division I, II and III schools that make up 23 conferences. On the non-varsity side, there are an additional 373 teams in five divisions of the American Collegiate Hockey Association.

GIRLS AND WOMEN: The number of girls and women playing hockey in the United States continues to grow. USA Hockey membership in the girls'/women’s sector has more than doubled (103%) in the last 10 years to 57,549 in 2006-07.

HOCKEY IS FOR EVERYBODY: USA Hockey’s Disabled Section has four disciplines – Standing/Amputee, Sled, Special and Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

JUNIORS EVERYWHERE: Junior hockey, for those aged 20 and below, is as popular as ever in the United States, with 179 teams operating in 14 leagues around the country.

WORLD STAGE: Team USA has captured six world championships in the last four years, including a junior, a women’s, two inline and two men’s Under-18 titles. The U.S. also boasts four Olympic/Paralympic gold medals (men – ’60 & ’80, women – ’98, sled – ’02).

HOME SOIL: The number of U.S. players in the NHL has increased five-fold over the past 30 years. An all-time record of 202 U.S. players (20% of the NHL) played at least one NHL game during the 2006-07 season. In 1976-77, a total of 40 U.S. players played at least one game in the NHL.

EXTRA EXTRA: USA Hockey Magazine is the most widely circulated hockey publication in the world. It reaches over 430,000 homes and recently appeared on newsstands in the United States and Canada.

ON THE POND: The 3rd Annual Labatt Blue USA Hockey Pond Hockey Championships will take place in Eagle River, Wis., as part of the three-day Hockey Weekend Across America celebration. An expected 120-team field will compete in nine divisions on 18 rinks on Dollar Lake.

Courtesy of USA Hockey
10 Great Moments in U.S. Hockey History

1960 – U.S. Olympic team defeated Canada (2-1), the Soviet Union (3-2) and the Czech Republic en route to its first-ever Olympic hockey gold medal in Squaw Valley.

1967 – NHL expansion added six new franchises -- California/Oakland, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and St. Louis -- doubling the League’s size to 12 teams.

1980 – Known as the ‘Miracle on Ice’, the U.S. Olympic team won the gold medal in Lake Placid. 13 members of the U.S. team went on to play in the NHL -- Bill Baker, Neal Broten, Dave Christian, Steve Christoff, Jim Craig, Steve Janaszak, Mark Johnson, Rob McClanahan, Ken Morrow, Jack O’Callahan, Mark Pavelich, Mike Ramsey and Dave Silk.

1983 – Brian Lawton (Brunswick, New Jersey) became the first U.S.-born player to be selected first overall in the NHL Entry Draft when the Minnesota North Stars drafted him in 1983.

1988 – On August 9th, the Edmonton Oilers traded Wayne Gretzky to the Los Angeles Kings, jump-starting the growth and popularity of hockey, not only in Southern California, but also throughout the U.S.

1994 – The New York Rangers, led by captain Mark Messier, captured a thrilling Game Seven victory over the Vancouver Canucks to win the Stanley Cup in New York on June 14.

1996 – The U.S., led by Brett Hull, John LeClair and Mike Richter, defeated Canada and won the first World Cup of Hockey.

1997 – Joe Mullen became the first U.S.-born player to score 500 goals on March 14. Mullen has since been joined in the U.S. 500-goal club by Mike Modano (522) and Jeremy Roenick (504).

2004 – The U.S. won its first World Junior Championship with a come-from-behind 4-3 win over Canada. 15 members of the gold medal-winning team have played in the NHL during the 2007-08 season -- David Booth (FLA), Matt Carle (SJ), Jake Dowell (CHI), Patrick Eaves (OTT), Dan Fritsche (CBJ), Ryan Kesler (VAN), Greg Moore (NYR), Brady Murray (LA), Patrick O’Sullivan (LA), Zach Parise (NJ), Drew Stafford (BUF), Brett Sterling (ATL), Mark Stuart (BOS), Ryan Suter (NSH) and James Wisniewski (CHI).

2007 – Mike Modano took over the all-time U.S. points lead, eclipsing Phil Housley, with his 1,233th career point -- a shorthanded goal at San Jose on November 7.
**TOP 10 ALL-TIME U.S.-BORN NHL SCORERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>PIM</th>
<th>D.O.B.</th>
<th>BIRTHPLACE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modano</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1297</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>1265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housley</td>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1495</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>1232</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roenick</td>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullen</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>RW</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leetch</td>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaFontaine</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>1013</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tkachuk</td>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>LW</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1029</td>
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<td>475</td>
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<td>1600</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>944</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broten</td>
<td>Neal</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>569</td>
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*Statistics updated through Feb. 11, 2008*

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**Dallas Stars Mike Modano on the state of U.S. hockey:** "Just comparing (U.S. hockey) since I’ve been around I think the growth, the expansion, with teams in cities that we never thought in a million years that we’d have hockey in, they have kind of flourished and have made a big impact in the game. The development of kids in Florida, Texas, Phoenix, and California, I think you never would have mentioned those cities or those states within the sport. So it’s been great, it’s been nice being in Texas and having a little bit of an impact on the development of hockey down there, and the growth of it. It’s been great to see.”

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**Chicago Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane on U.S. hockey stalwarts Joe Mullen, Phil Housley and Mike Modano:** "I remember when Joe Mullen scored his 500th goal," Kane said. "I was about 10 or 12 then and I wanted to be an American who scored 500 goals in the NHL. I learned a lot when Phil Housley was my coach at the World Junior Championship. We had a really interesting power play and it worked. He knows what he’s talking about... Mike Modano turned the USA on to loving hockey. Mike is one of the first people that come to mind when you think about American hockey. He’s always been one of my idols.”

**Kane on the face of U.S. hockey:** "These guys (Mullen, Housley, Modano) are the face of USA Hockey. Hopefully, I'll be part of a generation, with Jack Johnson, Phil Kessel, Eric Johnson and a lot of other good players, who can carry that torch. We were talking about the 2010 Olympic team last night. Team USA should be really good and I hope I'm part of it. Scott Gomez and Chris Drury will be the leaders by then. We'll have a great team whether I'm on it or not.”

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**Northeastern University head coach Greg Cronin on recruiting U.S. players (Boston Globe, Feb. 4, 2008):** "It used to be all the kids were from New England, Minnesota, and Michigan. If you heard a kid was playing in California, St. Louis, or Dallas, you kind of chuckled, because it was a novelty. Now, we're looking at (recruiting) a kid from Colorado, and another from California."