



Minnesota Freshman Standout Logan Cooley Wins Jim Johannson College Player of the Year

By Heather Rule, 05/31/23, 12:30PM MDT

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Cooley led the NCAA with 38 assists this past season



Logan Cooley was a young tyke in Pennsylvania when he became part of Sidney Crosby's Little Penguins Learn to Play Hockey program.

"I just remember having so much fun on the ice," Cooley said. "It was my passion from there."

That passion turned Cooley into one of the best college hockey players in the country. Following his freshman season with the University of Minnesota, Cooley was named the 2023 recipient of the Jim Johannson College Player of the Year Award.

"It's awesome," Cooley said. "It's something that I've been working toward. Obviously, you want to have as good of a season as you possibly can. To even get my name put into that, it's truly an honor. It means so much to me."

Cooley put up 22 goals and 60 points this past winter during his freshman season as a center with the Golden Gophers. His 38 assists were the most of any NCAA player in the country and his 60 points ranked second. Cooley, a Hobey Baker finalist, and the Gophers were one win shy of capturing the NCAA national championship, losing 3-2 in the title game to Quinnipiac at this year's Frozen Four.

The college player of the year award honors a recipient annually who is recognized as the top American-born player in NCAA Division I men's college hockey. The award has been presented annually since 1994 by Bauer Hockey but was renamed in 2019 for the late Jim Johannson, a University of Wisconsin standout and longtime USA Hockey executive.

Recent winners of the award include last year's winner, goaltender Dryden McKay (ECHL), and NHL players Cole Caufield (Montreal); Jack Eichel (Vegas) and Johnny Gaudreau (Columbus). Cooley said that seeing these "other top, high-end players be selected" and then winning the award himself means a lot to him and his family.

Cooley, a Pittsburgh native, is the first winner selected from Pennsylvania, which is truly an honor, he said.

"I think to kind of pave my own little way here and continue to make a name for the state and the city of Pittsburgh, it's pretty special," Cooley said.

His 38 assists rank third, and his 60 points rank fifth, in Minnesota history for a single season by a freshman. He was the Big Ten scoring co-champion with 36 points in Big Ten play, making the All-Big Ten First Team and All-Big Ten Freshman Team, along with being named a Big Ten Freshman of the Year finalist.

The 19-year-old describes himself as a two-way player who has solid skating abilities and a hockey IQ that allows him to see the ice well.

Like a lot of players, he holds high expectations for himself. He came into the year wanting to make strides in his game, which he thinks he accomplished beyond the stats sheet as he got stronger while also wanting to produce at a higher rate.

The Gophers (29-10-1) were 16-1-0 when Cooley scored a goal and 27-5-0 when he registered a point. Prior to Minnesota, Cooley spent two seasons with the USA Hockey National Team Development program. That's where he first played with Minnesota teammate Jimmy Snuggerud. That duo played on a line together with Rhett Pitlick for



the first two weekends of the 2022-23 season before coach Bob Motzko swapped Matthew Knies.

The Knies-Cooley-Snuggerud line was a forced to be reckoned with throughout the rest of the season. That line had everything, Cooley said, from speed, size, competitiveness, scoring ability “with Snugg’s shot” and overall good chemistry.

“We were always trying to find a way to get better individually,” Cooley said. “Each game, we were seeing what we could do better.”

Cooley, Snuggerud and Knies were 1-2-3 on the team’s scoring leaderboard this past season, scoring 38% of the team’s goals (21 each for Snuggerud and Knies to go with Cooley’s 22). They all had the goal to help bring the top-ranked Gophers a national championship and came as close as possible.

The Gophers defeated St. Cloud State 4-1 to win the Fargo Regional and advance to the NCAA Men’s Frozen Four in Tampa.

“It’s everyone’s who play college hockey dream to one day reach the Frozen Four and win a national championship,” Cooley said. “It was really unfortunate, the way it ended for us. But just the whole experience ... it was a great atmosphere.

“Even though we lost, there was still so much to learn from it.”






The Arizona Coyotes selected Cooley at No. 3 overall in the first round of the 2022 NHL Draft. Cooley was the first American-born player off the board in the draft and was also the second-highest pick in Minnesota history; Erik Johnson was taken No. 1 overall in 2006.

While Cooley watched Gopher teammates like Brock Faber (Minnesota) and Knies (Toronto) make their NHL debuts just days after the Frozen Four this spring, Cooley recently announced that he will return to the Gophers for his sophomore season. Playing in the NHL is certainly on his radar for the future, though.

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