

Marlies rookie Zach Hyman excelling in every role



By **Mark Zwolinski** Sports reporter
 Wed., Feb. 24, 2016 | 3 min. read



Zach Hyman has been Mr. Everything for the Toronto Marlies this season, and Mr. Under the Radar.

The winger draws rave reviews from his teammates, the coaching staff and GM Kyle Dubas for his two-way play, his ability to make his linemates better, and for his tireless work killing penalties. All of that makes him a solid candidate to be called up to the Leafs but, to this point, the 23-year-old Toronto native has watched his teammates make the short trip.

“I don’t like to use the term two-way player, but he is a player who fits that definition,” Dubas said, as Hyman scored a goal in the Marlies’ 3-1 win over Binghamton before a sellout crowd of 7,851 at the Ricoh Coliseum on Wednesday. “And he’s produced as a rookie without power-play time. He has excellent instincts.”

With thousands of school children on hand for the 11 a.m. game, Hyman continued to show his versatility, working on the Marlies’ top line (with William Nylander and Kasper Kapanen) and on the first penalty-killing unit (with Frederik Gauthier). He has shown the coaching staff a wide range of abilities in his rookie season.

“He’s a guy, no matter what line he plays on or where he plays, he takes care of his line,” Marlies head coach Sheldon Keefe said. “He’s good down low, he gets on the forecheck first, he’s a real workhorse . . . He’s a player who doesn’t get talked about a lot here, but he does a lot of good things for us.”

Hyman’s goal, his 12th of the season, vaulted him into the top 10 in rookie scoring in the American Hockey League. He has played on secondary lines much of the season, but playing with Nylander and Kapanen showcases his ability in the offensive zone, on the forecheck and in front of the net.

That complements his highly skilled linemates, the most-talked about Marlies who should see time with the Leafs after next week’s NHL trade deadline.

“When you don’t have to play a lot of defence, then you’re playing offence and that’s the fun part of the game,” said Hyman, who was taken by Florida in the fifth round of the 2010 draft and was a Hobey Baker finalist with the University of Michigan last season,

Hyman has 32 points in 52 games for the Marlies, who improved to 41-9-4 Wednesday and remain first overall in the AHL. And while there is the possibility of being called up to the Leafs, Hyman refuses to look too far ahead, concerning himself with the Marlies’ potential run toward a Calder Cup.

“It’s fun to watch Leaf games this year and see your friends having success,” he said, “but my focus is on the Marlies and what I can do to help this team win.”



Dubas suggested the fact that the Marlies have already contributed heavily to the rebuilding Leafs roster — 10 of the 20 players dressed against Nashville on Tuesday had played in the AHL at some point this season — should provide additional inspiration for his team.

“It provides a clear message to the players that there is a light at the end of the tunnel,” Dubas said. “Players (not called up yet) should get extra motivation at this time of year. It can be tough at this time ... there’s the trade deadline and there’s players getting called up. Some players will sulk, and you can see it in the way they come to the rink every day, in the weight room ... but others say I’m still close, I’ll keep pushing.”