

## Local hockey player signs with Syracuse Orange



By Nate Smelle

Every young hockey player dreams of one day playing professionally. For most, these aspirations remain a dream. For a more select group of players, those who are truly committed to achieving greatness in the sport they love, opportunities can arise for that dream to become a reality. As a result of many years of hard work and perseverance one such opportunity has presented itself to Peyton Armstrong of Bird's Creek. Recently, Armstrong was offered a full four year scholarship to play with the NCAA Division-1 Syracuse Orange women's hockey team. According to the terms of the contract, she said all of her expenses such as tuition, food, living, books, fees, all hockey related expenses, equipment etc. will be covered. Eager to hit the ice with her new team, Armstrong said she plans to move to Syracuse in August of 2024 when she begins receiving the scholarship. Over the years, Armstrong said she has had the opportunity to work with several amazing coaches, who she thanked along with everyone who has encouraged her to pursue her dream. "I have met so many players that will now be lifelong friends, and I am so thankful for all the help I have received from family, friends and sponsors along the way," Armstrong said. "I started my hockey career in Bancroft, and now I am moving away to play the game I love, it seems like a dream come true. With the new women's professional league starting up there is more opportunity to continue to play after university and hoping I will earn a spot on one of those teams when I am done." Armstrong told Bancroft This Week that she was first in contact with the team after a tournament in September. Speaking with them again over the phone a couple weeks later she said they next invited her to tour the campus and rink where the Orange play. At the end of the tour, Armstrong said she sat down with all the coaches. This was when they offered her a spot on the team, she said. "At first, the thought was to go in August of 2025 and take a gap year in high school, but that changed to next year," explained Armstrong. "It was super exciting and a big relief. It was awesome to be able to share that moment with my mom too, because she has been my driver over all these years, so her being there was very special. We did not even put the car in drive and I called my dad right away, because he was patiently waiting by the phone for the call. He was super proud of me." Armstrong said she made the decision to join the team a year earlier after talking with the coaches again last week. On Friday, Nov. 24, Armstrong left Kingston for Syracuse along with her mom Melissa and younger sister Quinn to sign and deliver the papers. Once she handed over the signed papers, she said they had a chance to watch her new team play. While Armstrong is still undecided regarding what she wants to study at university, she is planning to speak with an academic advisor in the near future to help her go through a few courses that she is interested in, and narrow it down. Until she moves to Syracuse next August, Armstrong said she is going to continue to play with the Kingston Jr. team this season to try and help them win the championship. "I'm focusing on really pushing myself and getting myself ready for the next step as it will be a big change," said Armstrong. "I'm able to talk with the athletic trainers at Syracuse which will also help me prepare off ice and over the summer to become stronger and more fit for the new pace of hockey." Having taken a huge step forward in her quest to play professional hockey, Armstrong plans to keep pushing until she reaches her goal. When asked what advice she has to offer young hockey players hoping to follow in her footsteps, Armstrong replied, "Never give up on your dreams. Being recruited and signed so late compared to other people my age it was very stressful not knowing if I was going to get what I worked for. At some point my

mom and I thought we had missed the window for a Division-1 opportunity. I didn't give up though and came out ready at the beginning of this season to get noticed at one of the largest scouted tournaments. I just focused on being the best I could be for myself and for my team, and that's when Syracuse noticed me.??Always know you can do anything you put your mind to and push yourself,? she added. ?I had Tori Howran to look up to as a role model and hope some other little girls can look at my experience and journey and say they can do it too.?