

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH FUTURE SUCCESS IN THE NHL

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INTRODUCTION

There are no known predictors of future success in the National Hockey League (NHL) amongst players drafted in the NHL draft. However, by examining key draft and player development characteristics between players of varying NHL success, we could identify critical time frames and/or performance indicators associated with future success.

PURPOSE: To compare player draft and development characteristics between NHL players of varying levels of career success.

METHODS

Publicly available databases were used to identify players drafted by NHL teams between 2000-2011.

Draftees were first grouped by position:

- Forwards (F): Left and Right Wing, Center
- Defensemen (D): Left and Right Defense

Then classified into 4 success groups (see *Classifying National Hockey League Players Drafted From 2000-2011 Based on Key Performance Metrics*):

- Outstanding (OUT)
- Above Average (AA)
- Average (AVE)
- Below Average (BA)

Goaltenders were excluded from analysis.

Five (5) key development indicators were compared among success groups for each position:

- Draft Pick (DP)
- Age at NHL Draft
- Time from NHL Draft to NHL Debut (seasons)
- Total American Hockey League Games Played (AHL)
- Total NCAA Games Played (NCAA)

Separate MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA (Bonferroni post-hoc) analyses determined significant differences among success groups in development indicators, for each position group.

RESULTS

- 1221 players were included in the study
- Forwards = 798
- Defensemen = 423

Table 1. Age at NHL Draft (years)

Category	Forwards	Defensemen
Outstanding	17.92±0.59	18.78±2.28
Above Average	18.12±0.83	18.00±0.61
Average	18.25±0.63	18.26±1.01
Below Average	18.61±1.66	18.71±2.16

Mean ± Standard Deviation

RESULTS

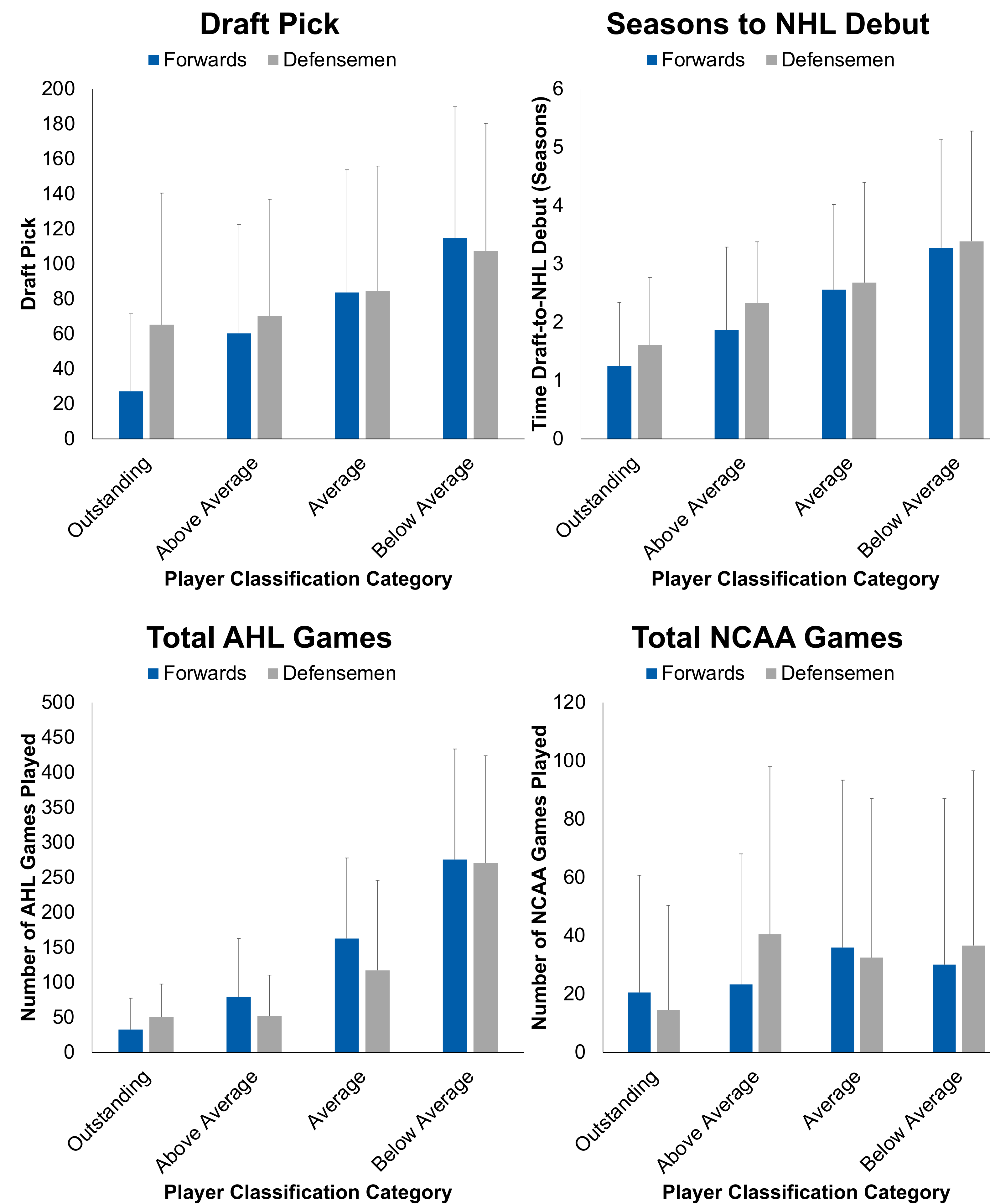


Table 2. Comparing Forward's Success Categories – ANOVA Results

FORWARDS					
Category	Draft Pick (DP)	Age at NHL Draft	Time Draft-to-NHL Debut (Seasons)	Total AHL Games Played	Total NCAA Games Played
OUT vs. AA	0.02*	1.00	0.12	0.18	1.00
OUT vs. Avg	p<0.00 [†]	0.43	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	1.00
OUT vs. BA	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	0.27
AA vs. Avg	0.04*	1.00	0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	0.36
AA vs. BA	p<0.00 [†]	0.01*	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	1.00
AVE vs. BA	p<0.00 [†]	0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	1.00

OUT = Outstanding, AA = Above Average, AVE = Average, BA = Below Average
*Significant at the p<0.05 level, [†]Significant at the p<0.01 level

Table 3. Comparing Defensemen's Success Categories – ANOVA Results

DEFENSEMEN					
Category	Draft Pick (DP)	Age at NHL Draft	Time Draft-to-NHL Debut (Seasons)	Total AHL Games Played	Total NCAA Games Played
OUT vs. AA	1.00	0.59	0.76	1.00	0.56
OUT vs. Avg	1.00	1.00	0.04*	p<0.00 [†]	0.94
OUT vs. BA	0.05	1.00	p<0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	0.46
AA vs. Avg	1.00	1.00	1.00	p<0.00 [†]	1.00
AA vs. BA	0.04*	0.18	0.01*	p<0.00 [†]	1.00
AVE vs. BA	0.02*	0.09	0.00 [†]	p<0.00 [†]	1.00

OUT = Outstanding, AA = Above Average, AVE = Average, BA = Below Average
*Significant at the p<0.05 level, [†]Significant at the p<0.01 level

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Those drafted from 2000-2011:
- OUT Forwards, **not** Defensemen were drafted earlier during NHL draft
- No significant differences in NCAA games played between groups

CONCLUSION

- OUT and AA NHL players are drafted higher, reach NHL earlier, despite similar games played at NCAA level compared to AVE and BA NHL players
- Certain players achieve key physical, technical, and/or tactical skills within the first 1-2 seasons post-NHL draft, that increase chance of a successful NHL career

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Physical, technical, and tactical development of hockey players prior to the NHL Draft, as well as within first 1-2 years post-NHL Draft is critical for future player success.
- S&C coaches, practitioners, should aim to identify player weaknesses and optimize an individual's training.
- See *Classifying National Hockey League Players Drafted From 2000-2011 Based on Key Performance Metrics*. (Location: Milano III-IV, Date & Time: Friday, July 14, 12:30 – 2:00pm)

For more information about this study or the research group, please use the QR code

