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## Former Yale Matt Cohen Has His Eyes on the NHL (Although Sweden Wouldn't Be Too Bad Either)

by AG

When hockey defenseman Matt Cohen arrived at Yale in 2003, he was the first Bull Dog to ever have played for the U.S. National Team Development Program in Ann Arbor, Mich. By the end of his senior year, the New York native had been named captain of Yale's team, won the Malcom G. Chase award for sportsmanship, and secured a spot with the Trenton Devils of the ECHL premier "AA" hockey league. Two years later, Cohen now also plays with the Lowell Devils of the AHL, and loves every minute of pro hockey -- perhaps except for the long bus rides. BroBible caught up with Cohen recently to discuss the difference between college and minor league hockey, the girls of Sweden, and why you can often find him pre-game "walking the ice."

**BroBible:** *You recently wrapped up your second year playing in the ECHL/AHL. How did having a year under your belt help you this season?*

**Matt Cohen:** Helped a lot. You're used to playing the longer season, you know the competition better, you're a bit smarter, most of all you have more confidence, which is key.

*What is the biggest difference between playing Division I college hockey and playing in the minors? Have you had to adjust your game at all? How has your game developed in the past couple years?*

**Cohen:** The game is a lot more controlled in the minors. There's more emphasis on being in the right place at the right time. My game actually suits the pro style a lot better, so I didn't have to change much. That's probably one of the reasons why I've had more success as a pro.

*You grew up in New York, so we're assuming you're a Rangers fan. You were only nine years old in 1994, but did you follow the team that year? What's it like now playing for a Devils-affiliated team?*

**Cohen:** I watched every game in '94 and am a big fan. I still have my '94 Stanley Cup champions hat. I have a lot of respect for how the Devils play the game and run their organization, but it would be great if Glen Sather started scouting on BroBible and gave me a deal.

*Describe what your game day is like from waking up to the drop of the puck. Do you have any pre-game superstitions or rituals? Any favorite pregame meals?*

**Cohen:** Wake up around 8:30 for pre-game skate at 10. The skate lasts for only about 30 minutes; then I take some one-timers with a buddy of mine after the

skate, stretch, and head home. Pre-game meal at 1, nap for about an hour, shower, put on my suit, drink a protein shake or eat a bar, and head to the rink. The most interesting thing I do before a game is probably walking on the ice before warm-ups. I guess I like to get a feel for the building and the ice and visualize a bit what I want to happen. The boys always give me shit for it. I'm kind of superstitious about it, so I've had to do it in front of a couple packed buildings when the fans were let in early. Can be a little embarrassing.

*What's on your pre-game playlist?*

**Cohen:** My playlist varies, but Nonpoint's "In the Air Tonight" is a staple as are a few 3 Doors Down songs. I also like to get some rap going, but it depends on my mood. *Could you ever see yourself playing in Europe? What have you heard about the competition over there?*

**Cohen:** Sure. There are some very competitive leagues across Europe, the best of which are populated by NHL-caliber players. The running joke around the locker room is that everybody wants to get to Sweden before they hang 'em up to find a tall, blonde girl to marry.

*The hockey season is long and you play a lot more games than you did in college. How taxing is it on your body and what kind of off-season and in-season workout routines do you do to prepare and stay in playing shape?*

**Cohen:** Extremely taxing. You play around 80 games, a lot of the time it's three games in three nights or four in five nights. It can be rough, especially when you toss in travel before and after games. Sometimes you bus all night, get in at four in the morning and have to play that day at 4 p.m. Mentally and physically that can be just brutal, but at the end of the day you're getting paid to play a game and nothing's really that bad.

**Cohen:** I train pretty hard in the summer. There is a guy named Ben Prentiss who runs a gym called Bodytuning in Connecticut, where a lot of good minor-league and NHL guys train. He's a wizard and I just do what he says. He does a lot of strongman stuff, pushing sleds and lifting tires and stuff. In season, it's once or twice a week, light weight, if there's even any time.

*Do you enjoy the travel aspect of the season? Favorite city you've visited?*

**Cohen:** The first trip of my career I spent 10 hours in the top bunk driving over night to Cincinnati. It felt like it was about 100 degrees up there and I was pretty sure at any moment I would fall and break my arm or something. I almost quit on the spot. Favorite city would be Norfolk, Va., or maybe Biloxi, Miss. Good bars and casinos at the latter but it's no Vegas.

*What current NHL player would you say your game most closely resembles?*

**Cohen:** Probably someone like Brad Stuart from the Wings, or a poor man's Bruce Driver from the Rangers' '94 team back in the day.

*Any NHL playoff predictions? Who's your team to take the Stanley Cup?*

**Cohen:** Red wings look unstoppable, but I love Chicago's game and they're going to be scary in a few years if they can keep their guys.

*Lastly, what are your plans for this summer and this fall?*

**Cohen:** I work for part of the summers to try to get some extra cash and experience for the resume, in case hockey doesn't pan out. After that, I just work out, skate, and hang out with friends until training camp in September.

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