SPORTS

Men's Hockey:

MULDOWNEY
CHOOSES ONE MORE SEASON IN STORRS



Joey Muldowney from the UConn Huskies Men's Hockey Team. Muldowney returned for another season with the Huskies to continue developing before moving toward a career in professional hockey. PHOTO COURTESY OF @JOEY_MULDOWNEY ON INSTAGRAM

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Becoming a professional hockey player is every young player's dream.

Each year, some of the top players in college hockey must decide whether to turn professional and sign a contract or return to college, bet on themselves, and keep developing.

University of Connecticut star forward Joey Muldowney faced that decision after last season. A sixth-round pick of the San Jose Sharks, Muldowney was coming off a strong junior season in which the Lake View, N.Y., native recorded 17 goals and 29 points. Despite his success, Muldowney surprised many by returning to UConn for his senior season.

So, why did Muldowney return to Storrs?

UConn Head Coach Mike Cavanaugh believes Muldowney understood the value of returning for another season.

"I think Joey understands the importance of a college degree," Cavanaugh said. "You'd have to ask him, but I think he understands how special UConn is for him. Also, some of it came down to — I'm not sure San Jose necessarily made him an offer that made him want to leave. But again, I think he could answer that question probably better than I would."

For Muldowney, the decision to return was also about continuing to develop rather than rushing into professional hockey.

"Last year, I wasn't unsatisfied with my season, but I also knew I had more, especially when I look back at my sophomore season," Muldowney said. "I've never been a player to rush into the next step. I made Des Moines (USHL) at 17, and I decided to go back to Nichols for my senior year because I didn't want to rush it. I wanted to take the year and develop, make sure I was ready to go."

Muldowney has continued to develop throughout his UConn career, and Cavanaugh has seen his game expand beyond his offensive production.

"He's more defensive-minded as well as an offensive threat," Cavanaugh said. "I think Joey's always played a 200-foot game. When he came here as a freshman, he was playing on the line with Ryan Tattle. They were more of an energy line at that point. They metamorphosed into something a little bit more than that, and then Joey took off his sophomore year. He had that season where he scored 29 goals, and you're not going to be able to do that every single year."

Cavanaugh emphasized that Muldowney affects the game in so many different ways. He plays in all situations, so he's a guy that a lot of the younger players on the team can look up to.

"Throughout my career, I've seen guys leave too early. I've never seen anybody stay too long, so it always helps the maturation process." Cavanaugh said. "He's going to be thrust into a real leadership role now. He's the team captain, so that's another area where he can grow and develop, and I think it'll only benefit him."

Muldowney will play a major role for the Huskies this season, both on the ice and in the locker room. As UConn's captain, he will be relied upon to lead a team with high expectations while continuing to develop his game for the next level.

Once the season ends, Muldowney will again have the opportunity to sign with San Jose. If he does not sign with the Sharks by August 15, he will become a free agent and can sign with any team in the National Hockey League.

However, for now, Muldowney's focus remains on UConn. The Huskies will face one of the nation's top teams when they take on the Penn State Nittany Lions on Friday, Oct. 9, at the Toscano Family Ice Forum.



Joey Muldowney from the UConn Huskies Men's Hockey Team during media day. The star forward decided to return to the team for another year of development. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNMHOC ON INSTAGRAM