



16-YEAR-OLD GAVIN TURCO OF SUFFERN MAKES IT TO THE NA3HL

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter



Playing youth sports can be more difficult playing professionally. As a professional, all you have to worry about is your career and family (if you have one). As a youth, you are dealing with all of the growing pains and trying to balance the number of hours per day that you have to practice to succeed and move up in the ranks with schooling, taking time with family and friends. Very few are able to make it to the upper levels of their sport. One phenom, Gavin Turco is one of those few.

Turco, who was born in 2010 and raised in Suffern, New York, began playing hockey at the age of five. He was introduced to the game through his father, who also played for Suffern Hockey, beginning a family connection to the program that Gavin proudly continues today. Gavin is the third generation of the Turco family to play for Suffern Hockey, carrying on a tradition in the community where he was born and raised.



Turco taking a shot for Suffern

“Hockey has been part of Gavin’s life for as long as he can remember. As a kid, it was what he imagined himself doing, and as he has gotten older, that childhood passion has developed into a serious goal of seeing how far he can take the game.” His father Jonathan Turco stated.

According to Jonathan, Gavin’s path, however, has been anything but conventional. Gavin stepped away from hockey for two full seasons between the ages of 10 and 12. When he returned, he knew he had ground to make up. The progress he has made over the last three years is a reflection of the time, consistency and work he has put into developing his game.

Perhaps most notably, Gavin has never played AAA hockey. Rather than following the traditional AAA development path taken by many players pursuing junior hockey opportunities,

Gavin has continued to develop through AA and high school hockey while earning opportunities based on his performance. That journey has helped shape one of the biggest lessons Gavin has learned at a young age: consistent effort and hard work are the best ways to reach your goals.

A Different Path

As stated earlier, Gavin took an unconventional path to get where he is today. This path in Gavin’s development is particularly noteworthy because he has continued to progress without playing at the AAA level.

“I’ve never played AAA, so my path has probably been a little different from a lot of players trying to get to this level. I took two years away from hockey when I was younger, and when I came back, I knew I had a lot of work to do. I’ve tried not to worry about what level other people are playing at. I just focus on getting better and making the most of every opportunity I get.” Gavin said.

Last season, Gavin played for the North Jersey Avalanche 15U AA team, where he finished as the team’s leading point producer, recording close to one point per game.



Heading for the puck with the Avalanche

His production with the Avalanche, combined with his performance for Suffern helped demonstrate that Gavin could continue progressing and competing for higher-level opportunities without having taken the traditional AAA route.

Gavin stated, “Playing for the Avalanche last year was a big part of my development. I was able to produce offensively and lead the team in points, but more importantly, I gained a lot of confidence in my game. It showed me that the work I was putting in was making a difference and that I could keep pushing myself toward the next level.”

According to his father, for Gavin, it has never been about the label attached to the team he plays for. His focus has remained on improving, producing and making the most of each opportunity in front of him.

“His progression—from taking two seasons away from hockey, to returning at the AA level, becoming a leading scorer and eventually earning junior hockey opportunities—has reinforced his belief that there is more than one path to reaching a goal.”

Using Setbacks as Motivation

Gavin’s path as well as unconventional had its setbacks. One of the setbacks he faced in his development came during his freshman year of high school. His older brother, Bryson, was a senior at Suffern, and Gavin hoped to make the varsity team and have the opportunity to play alongside him. Gavin didn’t make the team.

“It was a difficult disappointment, but rather than allowing it to discourage him, Gavin used the experience as motivation.” Jon explained.

“Not making the Suffern varsity team my freshman year was tough, especially because my brother was a senior and I wanted the chance to play with him. But instead of letting it discourage me, I used it as motivation. I knew I could either quit or work harder, and I chose to work harder.” Gavin stated.

For Gavin, that experience reinforced the mentality that has driven much of his progress. He realized that there will always be setbacks in life, including in hockey, but how a player responds to them can determine what comes next.

Success at Suffern

“That work began to pay off. Gavin earned his opportunity with Suffern and developed into a top nine forward contributing to one of the most successful high school hockey programs in New York.

Suffern captured its third consecutive New York State Division I championship last season, giving the program six state championships in total.

For Gavin, being part of that success carries additional meaning because of his family's history with Suffern Hockey.

"Being the third generation of my family to play for Suffern is something I'm really proud of. I grew up hearing about Suffern hockey and watching my family be a part of it. Being able to wear that jersey myself and continue the Turco tradition means a lot to me."

On Suffern's Championship Culture

Gavin explained, "Being part of a program that has won three straight state championships, with a total of six is special. You learn pretty quickly at Suffern that nothing is given to you. There's a standard that the players before you established, and every day you have to work to live up to it and hopefully leave the program even better for the guys coming after you."

The one thing about this is that success like this also comes with expectations. Gavin has learned that being part of a winning tradition isn't simply about what previous teams accomplished—it's about maintaining the standard they established.

Earning an Opportunity at the Next Level

In life, opportunities will find you if you work hard and develop greater skills. This was ultimately true for Gavin. As he continued to develop and produce, opportunities at the junior hockey level began to follow.

"He started receiving invitations to NA3HL (North American Hockey League) Futures Camps and Main Camps, giving him opportunities to compete against talented players from different development backgrounds and gain exposure to the next level of the game. This year, Gavin attended the New Jersey Titans Main Camp. His performance there ultimately led to an opportunity within the organization, and he signed with the New Jersey Titans NA3HL team for the upcoming season."

The signing represents a significant step in Gavin's development, especially considering the path he has taken to get there.

On Signing With the New Jersey Titans



He stepped away from hockey for two seasons between the ages of 10 and 12. He returned to the game without going the AAA route. He didn't make his high school varsity team as a freshman. He continued working, became the leading point producer for the North Jersey Avalanche 15U AA team, earned a role with a state championship Suffern program and began receiving invitations to NA3HL camps.

Now, that progression has resulted in an opportunity with the New Jersey Titans organization.

"Signing with the Titans means a lot to me because it shows that the work I've been putting in is starting to pay off. At the same time, I know this is just another step. I want to keep working, keep getting better and prove that I belong at this level." Gavin said with a smile.

For Gavin, reaching this point without ever playing AAA hockey is another reminder that a player's development doesn't have to follow one specific path.

Student-Athlete

Gavin's commitment isn't limited to hockey. He is an outstanding student with a 3.9 GPA and will enter his junior year of high school this year. One thing about being involved in extracurricular activities whether it be sports or academic ones, balancing academics with hockey, training and travel requires discipline and time management. Gavin has tried to approach the classroom with the same consistency he brings to the rink. It seems that Gavin has mastered the balance.



"Hockey has been what I've wanted to do since I was a kid, and as I've gotten older, I've realized how far I want to take it. I try to bring the same mindset to school that I bring to hockey. Whether it's working towards good grades or improving on the ice, I've learned that being consistent and putting in the work every day gives you the best chance to reach your goals."

Looking Ahead

Gavin sees the signing with the New Jersey Titans as a major accomplishment, but he doesn't view it as a finish line. It's the next opportunity. Gavin remains proud of his hometown, his family's connection to Suffern Hockey and the opportunity to represent a program with six state championships, including three consecutive Division I titles. His journey to this point has also taught him that development isn't always a straight path—and that a player doesn't necessarily need to follow the same route as everyone else.

He succeeded in his hockey dream, even after missing two seasons. He accomplished this by working harder to make up for the missed time.

"Over the last three years, he developed into the leading point producer for the North Jersey Avalanche 15U AA team, earned a significant role with a championship Suffern program, began receiving invitations to NA3HL camps and ultimately earned an opportunity with the New Jersey Titans NA3HL team." Jon said.

Now his focus is on continuing that progression. For Gavin, the formula remains simple: stay consistent, work hard, succeed in the classroom, continue developing on the ice and earn whatever comes next.

We look forward to Gavin's continued success with the NJ Titans.