

= Chris Higgins ( ice hockey , born 1983 ) =

Christopher Robert Higgins ( born June 2 , 1983 ) is an American professional ice hockey winger who is currently an unrestricted free agent of the National Hockey League ( NHL ) . While playing college hockey , he was selected 14th overall by the Montreal Canadiens in the first round of the 2002 NHL Entry Draft . He finished a two @-@ year career with the Yale Bulldogs , earning ECAC Hockey Player of the Year honors as a sophomore , before turning professional for the 2003 ? 04 season . After two seasons with the Canadiens ' minor league affiliate , the Hamilton Bulldogs of the American Hockey League ( AHL ) , he joined the NHL in 2005 ? 06 . He recorded three consecutive 20 @-@ goal seasons to begin his NHL career before being traded to the New York Rangers in June 2009 . After brief stints with the Rangers , Calgary Flames and Florida Panthers , he joined the Vancouver Canucks in February 2011 . Internationally , Higgins has competed for the United States in two World Junior Championships ( 2002 and 2003 ) and one World Championship ( 2009 ) .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Amateur career ( 1998 ? 2003 ) = = =

Higgins played four years of high school hockey for Avon Old Farms , a preparatory school in Avon , Connecticut , graduating in 2001 . He then opted to play in the National Collegiate Athletics Association ( NCAA ) with the Yale Bulldogs . Higgins also considered offers from Boston College and Harvard University . In 2001 ? 02 , Higgins began a two @-@ year stint with the Yale Bulldogs of the ECAC Hockey Conference . After recording a team @-@ leading 31 points ( 14 goals and 17 assists ) over 27 games as a freshman , he was named the ECAC Rookie of the Year . He additionally received ECAC All @-@ Rookie and Second All @-@ Star Team honors .

In the off @-@ season , Higgins was selected 14th overall by the Montreal Canadiens in the 2002 NHL Entry Draft . He became the first ECAC Hockey player to be selected in the first round of the NHL Entry Draft since Normand Lacombe in 1983 ( the Buffalo Sabres selected him 10th overall ) . Returning to Yale for one more season , he improved to 41 points over 28 games , leading his team in scoring for the second consecutive year . Higgins earned ECAC Player of the Year ( co @-@ recipient with Cornell Big Red goaltender David LeNeveu ) and First All @-@ Star Team honors ; he was also recognized regionally on the NCAA East All @-@ American Team .

= = = Montreal Canadiens ( 2003 ? 2009 ) = = =

Following his sophomore year , he signed a three @-@ year , entry @-@ level contract with the Canadiens on May 22 , 2003 . Higgins made his NHL debut on October 11 , 2003 , registering three minutes of ice time in a 4 ? 0 win against the Toronto Maple Leafs . Struggling to play his way onto the Canadiens ' lineup , he was often made a healthy scratch ( non @-@ dressing player ) in October before being assigned to the team 's minor league affiliate , the Hamilton Bulldogs of the American Hockey League ( AHL ) , by the end of the month . He recorded 48 points over 67 AHL games in 2003 ? 04 , ranking fifth in team scoring . Due to the 2004 ? 05 NHL lockout , Higgins automatically remained in Hamilton and improved to 51 points , ranking third among Bulldogs scorers .

The following season , as NHL play resumed , Higgins made the Canadiens ' roster out of training camp . He scored his first career NHL goal on October 6 , 2005 , against New York Rangers goalie Kevin Weekes during an away game at Madison Square Garden . The Canadiens won the contest 4 ? 3 in overtime . He finished the season with 23 goals , ranking seventh among league rookies , and 15 assists for a total of 38 points .

A month into the 2006 ? 07 season , Higgins suffered a sprained left ankle during a game against the New Jersey Devils . At the time of the injury , on November 4 , 2006 , he was leading the Canadiens with eight goals . Sidelined for 6 weeks , Higgins was limited to 61 games , though still

managed to match his previous season 's points total with 22 goals and 16 assists . Set to become a restricted free agent in the off @-@ season , Montreal re @-@ signed Higgins to a two @-@ year , US \$ 3 @. @ 4 million deal on June 25 , 2007 . Prior to the start of the 2007 ? 08 season , Higgins was named an alternate captain for the Canadiens . He went on to have a career season with personal bests of 27 goals , 25 assists and 52 points . On November 11 , 2008 , Higgins recorded his first NHL hat @-@ trick in a 4 ? 0 win over the Ottawa Senators . However , his points total decreased in his fourth NHL campaign with 23 points over 57 games .

= = = Rangers , Flames and Panthers ( 2009 ? 2011 ) = = =

Coming off what was the lowest statistical season of his career , he was traded by the Canadiens , along with Ryan McDonagh , Pavel Valtenko and Doug Janik , to the New York Rangers in exchange for Scott Gomez , Tom Pyatt and Michael Busto on June 30 , 2009 . A restricted free agent at the time of the trade , he agreed to a one @-@ year , US \$ 2 @. @ 25 contract with the Rangers six days later . He scored his first goal with the Rangers on November 3 , 2009 , against the Vancouver Canucks , his team 's lone marker in a 4 ? 1 loss . His offensive struggles continued in New York ( he recorded 15 points in 55 games ) and he was subsequently traded to the Calgary Flames on February 2 , 2010 . Higgins was dealt , along with Ale? Kotalík , in exchange for Olli Jokinen and Brandon Prust . He scored his first goal with the Flames on March 9 , an empty netter , in a 4 ? 1 win against the Detroit Red Wings . Two days later , he suffered a foot injury that sidelined him for the remaining 14 games of the regular season . Splitting the season between New York and Calgary , he had eight goals and 17 points over 67 games .

Becoming an unrestricted free agent in the off @-@ season , Higgins signed a one @-@ year , US \$ 1 @. @ 6 million deal with the Florida Panthers on July 2 , 2010 . He had considered re @-@ signing with Calgary , but cited new Florida Panthers General Manager Dale Tallon 's experience as a strong factor for joining Florida ( Tallon was largely responsible for assembling the Chicago Blackhawks team that won the Stanley Cup the previous season ) . In December 2010 , he was sidelined four games with a Staphylococcal infection in his foot , an injury that was misdiagnosed first as " skate bite , " then a spider bite . Higgins later missed an additional seven games the following month with a hamstring injury .

= = = Vancouver Canucks ( 2011 ? 2016 ) = = =

With the Panthers out of playoff contention late in the season , the team began trading away numerous veterans and core players . At the NHL trade deadline , on February 28 , 2011 , Higgins was dealt to the Vancouver Canucks in exchange for defensive prospect Evan Oberg and a third @-@ round draft pick in 2013 . The Canucks had reportedly been interested in a different Panthers player , but with a minute left until the trade deadline , Panthers Assistant General Manager Mike Santos called the Canucks back and offered Higgins . In 48 games with the Panthers , he had recorded 11 goals and 23 points . Injured with a hand injury at the time of the trade , he did not debut with the Canucks until March 10 . He scored his first two goals as a Canuck on March 27 in a 4 ? 1 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets . He completed the season with 13 goals and 28 points in 62 games between Florida and Vancouver . While Higgins played the majority of the regular season with the Canucks as a bottom @-@ six forward , by the playoffs , he was playing on the second line centred by Ryan Kesler . Entering the post @-@ season as the Presidents ' Trophy champions , the Canucks held the first seed in the West . After eliminating the Chicago Blackhawks , Nashville Predators and San Jose Sharks in the first three rounds , the Canucks advanced to the Stanley Cup Finals . Facing the Boston Bruins , the series went to a seventh game , which the Canucks lost 4 ? 0 . Following the Canucks ' defeat , it was revealed that several Canucks players had been playing with injuries , including Higgins . His injury occurred in the second round against the Predators , when he blocked a shot with his skate , breaking his foot . Over 25 playoff games , Higgins recorded four goals and eight points . Three of his goals were game @-@ winners , tying him with Geoff Courtnall ( 1994 ) for the most in a single playoff season by a Canucks player .

During the off @-@ season , Higgins re @-@ signed with Vancouver to a two @-@ year , \$ 3 @.@ 8 million contract on July 1 , 2011 . The deal was agreed upon prior to his scheduled unrestricted free agency . During the season , Higgins struggled with two bouts of Staph infection , one in December 2011 and the other in February 2012 . He missed a combined 11 games as a result of swelling and suffering from severe side effects to the associated medication . Though he missed time , Higgins also played through the adverse reactions for several games following both bouts with the infection . Through the first half of the season , he often played on the second line with Kesler and David Booth ; the trio were dubbed the " American Express Line , " as they were all born in the United States . Towards the end of the season , he was consistently placed on the team 's third line , a defensive shutdown unit with fellow two @-@ way forwards Jannik Hansen and deadline @-@ acquisition Samuel Pålsson . Used in both roles over the campaign , Higgins was often recognized as the team 's most consistent and hardest @-@ working forward . On the last day of the regular season , he was accordingly awarded the Fred J. Hume Award , voted by fans as the team 's " unsung hero . " Appearing in 71 games , Higgins recorded 43 points ( 18 goals and 25 assists ) , his highest total in four years and fifth among team forwards . On April 2 , 2013 Higgins signed a four @-@ year , \$ 10 million extension with the Canucks .

During the 2015 ? 16 season , on January 12 , 2016 , Higgins was put on waivers after unsuccessful attempts to trade the winger . He cleared waivers the next day and was sent down to the Utica Comets , the AHL affiliate of the Canucks . On March 19 , 2016 , Higgins was recalled by the Vancouver Canucks after multiple injuries occurred on both the Canucks and Comets rosters .

In the off @-@ season , on June 27 , 2016 , Higgins 's tenure in Vancouver ended when he was placed on waivers by the Canucks for the intention of buying out the remaining year of his contract .

= = International play = =

Higgins played in back @-@ to @-@ back World Junior Championships during his college career . First appearing in 2002 , he recorded four goals and two assists over seven games . He helped the United States qualify for the quarterfinal , where they were eliminated by Russia 6 ? 1 . The following year , Higgins matched his points total with three goals and three assists . After losing their semifinal to Canada 3 ? 2 , the United States lost by the same score to Finland in the bronze medal game .

Higgins made his first international appearance for the American men 's team at the 2009 IIHF World Championship . He scored his only goal of the tournament in a 4 ? 3 overtime loss to Switzerland in the qualifying round . After losing their semifinal game to Russia , the United States lost the bronze medal to Sweden by a 4 ? 2 score .

= = Playing style = =

Listed at 6 feet ( 1 @.@ 83 meters ) tall and 203 pounds ( 92 kilograms ) , Higgins plays mostly in the style of a power forward . He is known as a two @-@ way player with good skating , capable of contributing offensively while remaining defensively responsible . He has alternated between playing the wing and center positions . Early in his career , he was compared to Dallas Stars forward Brendan Morrow .

= = Personal = =

Higgins grew up in Smithtown , New York , the second eldest among five siblings . His father , Robert , is a New York City firefighter and his younger brother is a New York City police officer .

Higgins played on minor hockey teams with former Canadiens teammate Mike Komisarek and former Flames teammate Eric Nystrom , both of whom he remains close friends with . He was a student of Lithuanian hockey coach Aleksey Nikiforov at hockey camps in his teenage years . Though he grew up on Long Island , Higgins was a Montreal Canadiens fan as a child , following after his father ; his favorite players on the team were goaltender Patrick Roy and captain Kirk Muller

Higgins left home to join the high school hockey program of Avon Old Farms in Connecticut . Following his high school graduation , Higgins was enrolled in Yale University for two years , majoring in political science while playing on the school 's hockey team .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

= = = International = = =

= = Awards and honors = =