

= Nathan Walker =

Nathan Walker (born 7 February 1994) is an Australian professional ice hockey player currently playing for the Hershey Bears of the American Hockey League (AHL) and a prospect for the Washington Capitals of the National Hockey League . Walker , who was born in Wales , grew up in Australia and first played ice hockey there . He moved to the Czech Republic in 2007 in order to further his career , and joined the junior program of HC Vítkovice , a member of the Czech Extraliga . He first played for the senior team in 2011 , becoming the first Australian ice hockey player to play for a professional senior team in Europe . Along with HC Vítkovice , Walker was loaned to several lower @-@ level Czech teams .

In 2013 Walker signed with the Youngstown Phantoms of the junior United States Hockey League , moving to North America for the first time . He attended the training camp of the Washington Capitals in 2013 and signed with their AHL affiliate Hershey . Walker represents Australia internationally , and first played for them at the 2011 IIHF World Championship Division II tournament , where he helped his team win their group and earn a promotion to Division I for the following year . Passed over in the previous two NHL Entry Drafts , Walker was selected by the Capitals in the third round of the 2014 NHL Entry Draft , the first Australian selected in an NHL draft .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Australia and Czech Republic = = =

Walker began playing hockey at age six and by thirteen he was in a league with players as old as twenty and able to outplay them . During the 2007 season he played in both the under @-@ 14 and under @-@ 16 leagues . During 14 U14 games he recorded 77 goals and 25 assists for 102 points , a record for the league ; the second leading scorer had 70 points in 24 games . Walker had similar numbers in the U16 league ; he scored 69 points in 16 games to again lead the league in scoring , with the second highest total was 53 points in 20 games .

As Walker was dominating the local competition , he began to look for other options . In 2007 his coach Ivan Manco , who came from Slovakia , arranged for Walker to tryout for HC Vítkovice in the Czech Republic , where Manco knew one of the coaches . Walker impressed the team enough to be given a place on their under @-@ 18 junior team . In 2009 ? 10 he recorded 42 points in 28 games for the U18 team and earned a chance to play for the U20 team . He also returned to Australia during the Czech offseason and played for the Sydney Ice Dogs of the Australian Ice Hockey League .

On 9 October 2011 , Walker made his debut for the senior HC Vítkovice club in the Czech Extraliga , making him the first Australian to play professionally in Europe ; he was also the youngest player in the Extraliga . HC Vítkovice was invited to the 2011 Spengler Cup and in their first game against Canada Walker scored the only goal for Vítkovice . He became the youngest player to score in Spengler Cup history and was named player of the game for Vítkovice . With the conclusion of the 2011 ? 12 Czech Extraliga season , HC Vítkovice loaned Walker to HC Olomouc of the 1 @-@ národní hokejová liga , the second @-@ highest league in the Czech Republic , on 20 February 2012 . Walker played 34 games in his first season in the Extraliga , scoring four goals and five assists for nine points . He played a further two games with HC Olomouc , recording an assist .

As a result of his play in the Extraliga , Walker began to be noticed by the National Hockey League (NHL) . In the NHL Central Scouting Bureau 's January 2012 list of draft prospects , Walker was listed as the 21st best European @-@ based skater for the 2012 NHL Entry Draft , the second highest Czech @-@ based player on the list . Walker was listed as the 25th best European skater in the NHL 's final list of prospects for the 2012 Entry Draft . He was not selected in the Entry Draft , but was invited to participate in the Washington Capitals development camp in July ; however NHL rules required that Walker participate in the 2013 NHL Entry Draft before he was able to sign with

any team .

== North America ==

During the 2012 ? 13 season Walker appeared in twenty games with HC Vítkovice and recorded one assist ; he was loaned to Hokej ?umperk 2003 for three games , where he also had one assist . After six years in the Czech Republic , Walker signed a contract on 8 January 2013 with the Youngstown Phantoms of the United States Hockey League , a junior ice hockey league in the United States . He made his debut for the team on 11 January against the Chicago Steel , recording a goal . After four games with the Phantoms , in which he recorded six points , Walker was named to the USHL / NHL Top Prospects Game on 23 January 2013 ; he replaced his teammate , who was ill . Walker played 29 games for the Phantoms during the regular season and recorded 27 points (7 goals , 20 assists) . His 20 assists were good enough for fifth on the team , even though Walker only joined the team midway through the season . His season ended early due to an injury suffered in a game on 5 April where Walker broke a bone in his neck as a result of a hit from behind ; as a result he missed all the Phantoms playoff games .

Upon the conclusion of the season Walker returned to the Czech Republic to train , before heading back to Australia . In July he was invited to once again attend the Capitals development camp , scheduled for September . He performed well enough to remain with the team and attend their full training camp as one of 40 players . However , due to an overlooked rule , the Capitals were unable to sign Walker ; as he had started the 2012 ? 13 season in Europe and then moved to North America , and was under 20 years old , he would have to enter the 2014 NHL Entry Draft before being allowed to sign an NHL contract . Instead , on 24 September Walker signed a contract with the Capitals ' American Hockey League affiliate , the Hershey Bears . He made his debut for the Bears on 5 October 2013 against the Adirondack Phantoms , becoming the first Australian to play in the AHL . During Walker 's third game with the Bears , on October 27 against the Norfolk Admirals , he scored his first goal and recorded his first professional point .

The 2014 NHL Entry Draft was the third and final NHL draft that Walker was eligible for , and he was selected in the third round , 89th overall , by the Capitals . In doing so , Walker became the first Australian to be selected in an NHL draft . On 25 July 2014 , Walker was signed to a three @-@ year entry @-@ level contract with the Capitals . Partway through the 2014 ? 2015 season Walker was reassigned to the South Carolina Stingrays of the ECHL . After a two @-@ game stint with the Stingrays , where he recorded two points , Walker was brought back to Hersey . Reassigned to South Carolina again in January , Walker was injured in a game on 28 January when he tore his ACL , ending his season . At the time of the injury Walker had appeared in 28 games for the Bears , where he scored 4 points , and a further 6 games for the Stingrays , also recording 4 points .

== International play ==

Walker first played for the Australian men 's senior team at the 2011 IIHF World Championship Division II Group A tournament which was held in Melbourne , Australia . Australia won the tournament and was promoted to Division I Group B for the 2012 World Championships . Walker finished the tournament with four goals and two assists for six points , tied for third overall . He was also recognised by the tournament coaches as the best player on the Australian team .

Walker represented Australia again at the 2012 World Championships . Playing in Division IB , Australia finished last in the group and was relegated to Division IIA for 2013 . Walker scored two goals during the tournament .

== Personal life ==

Walker was born in Cardiff , Wales to Wayne and Kerry ; he also has an older brother , Ryan . When Walker was two , his family moved to Sydney , Australia . Wayne played rugby league , leading to Nathan playing for the Cronulla Sharks junior team until the age of 15 . Ryan , his older

brother , also played hockey representing Australia in the national under @-@ 18 squad . Ryan had to quit hockey after he was injured during a game in the United States . While in the Czech Republic Walker learned to speak Czech , Slovak , and some Russian .

Walker first played ice hockey in Australia at the age of six , after watching his older brother Ryan play . Due to a lack of ice hockey broadcasting in Australia , Walker was also inspired after watching The Mighty Ducks film series and Mystery , Alaska , all of which are based around ice hockey .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

= = = International = = =