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A blue banner advertisement for Suffolk University Boston. On the left is the university's logo, which includes a shield with a book and a torch, and the text 'SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY BOSTON'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'MAKE YOUR MOVE— TRANSFER TO SUFFOLK' in white, with 'REQUEST INFO' in yellow below it, followed by a yellow right-pointing arrow icon. On the far right of the banner is a partial image of a smiling woman's face.

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From Cicero-North Syracuse to Syracuse Crunch: love of hockey reunites friends behind pro bench

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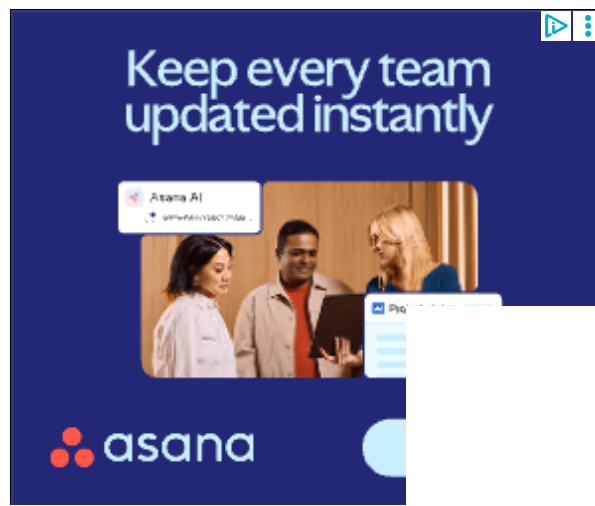
Noah Koenig, far left, was a stick boy for the Syracuse Crunch. Isaiah Pompo is in center and Gehrig Sarosy is far right. Megan Cahill



By [Julianna Schwindt](#) | [Contributing Writer](#)

Syracuse, N.Y. — Syracuse Crunch goaltender Kristers Gudļevskis pulled up to Crunch stick boy Noah Koenig’s house on a winter Sunday a few years ago.

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Gudlevskis was there to pick up Koenig and his friends to play pond hockey. Although Gudlevskis was the top goalie prospect for the Tampa Bay Lightning at the time, it wasn't uncommon for him to spend time with Koenig and his friends.

Gudlevskis played for the Crunch during the 2013-14 season and the 2015-16 season. The Crunch drafted him out of Latvia, and the language barrier made it hard for him to make friends.

Koenig, a high school student at Cicero-North Syracuse at the time, wasn't used to players paying much attention to him and the other stick boys.

"He would stay after games and hang out with us, whether that was like, play ping pong or just hang out and talk," Koenig said. "That's the one guy who I can look back on now and say, 'Wow, that was really cool, the relationship that we had.'"

Relationships like the one he had with Gudlevskis, his fellow stick boys and the equipment manager at the time are what inspired Koenig to get his degree in sports management from Niagara University.

This summer, the Crunch promoted Koenig from assistant equipment manager to head equipment manager. He plans to use what he learned from his teenage years as a stick boy to his new role.

"When I was a stick boy, having that relationship with the head equipment manager at the time made you as a younger kid feel important and useful," Koenig said. "You weren't taking up space and just kind of, there's a favor. So I'm going to keep that relationship with them."

When it came time to hire an assistant equipment manager, Koenig knew exactly who he'd want to help him. He thought back to summer nights during his teenage years, waking up his best friend's little brother, Holden Sarosy. They wanted him to play goalie for them in basement hockey.

"We would drag out the games and make them so long, like maybe two hours long," Koenig said. "And we'd just be like, 'Oh no, one more, don't worry. This is the last.'"


Sarosy remembers being bribed with chocolate milk. He was a good sport about it, Koenig said, putting on all the goalie gear and letting his brother and Koenig shoot tennis balls at him.

Sarosy started as a stick boy when he was nine. His dad, Jim Sarosy, is the chief operating officer of the Crunch.

"I remember always wanting to be involved from a young age and filling bottles and doing little things," Sarosy said. "I tell people I get to play with hockey equipment all day. It's a pretty fun job."

Sarosy, 23, also went to C-NS, studied sports management at SUNY Cortland and continued helping the Crunch on school breaks. He was shocked when he got the call offering him the assistant equipment manager job.

"I didn't know the job was opening up, and then they ended up calling me," Sarosy said. "That's a hard one to pass up. I tell everyone I have two goals in my life: to work with my dad and work with my brother. I'm excited to cross one of those off the list."



Koenig and Sarosy hope the bond they built as kids — they both played hockey for the Northstars — and the experience they gained as stick boys will help them in their new roles.

“(It taught me) just to work hard and keep working hard,” Koenig said. “There’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes in sports in general, things that as a fan that you overlook and you don’t necessarily see. It’s such a small world and everybody knows everybody. And just to have that ability to create those relationships and build those over the course of the season or two is one of my favorite parts.”



Holden Sarosy, right, with older brother Gehrige, left, and former Tampa Bay general manager Steve Yzerman. Megan Cahill

Sarosy looks forward to working with Koenig, who he always looked up to as a kid.

“I’ve always kind of followed him around,” Sarosy said. “I know he trusts me too. So he’s going to take a lot of input from me too, and I’m just excited to get working. It’s fun working with somebody you’ve known your whole life.”

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Koenig and Sarosy both played hockey growing up and hope to one day work for the NHL. This job is another step toward their dream.

“It’s super fun, but obviously you just pick up so much,” Sarosy said. “Who wouldn’t want to get to hang around a pro hockey team all the time, right?”

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