

**(Colo.)-Top pick MacKinnon eager to lead Avs turnaround**

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DENVER (AP) — Growing up, Nathan MacKinnon admired the game of his idol, Sidney Crosby. He even had posters on his wall of the Pittsburgh star.

Now, the 17-year-old MacKinnon gets to carve out his own identity after he was the first pick of the draft by the Colorado Avalanche on Sunday.

Much like Crosby eight years ago, MacKinnon will be counted on to turn around a franchise, one that finished last in the Western Conference in 2012-13 and missed the playoffs for a third straight season.

No pressure, MacKinnon insisted.

To ease MacKinnon's transition into the NHL, new Colorado coach Patrick Roy has already decided he's going to pair the rookie on the third line with Jamie McGinn and Steve Downie. That way, MacKinnon can be mentored by the veteran players.