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AIC Ice Hockey Freshman Forward Reggie Millette is Skating toward Success

SPRINGFIELD, MA – American International College (AIC) hockey, the three-time Atlantic Hockey Conference champions, has scored again recruiting freshman forward Reggie Millette while providing access and opportunity in the fulfillment of a dream.

Millette's journey to AIC has been one filled with challenges. "After learning of his story, and all the adversity he has gone through to become a hockey player, I knew he was the kind of person, the kind of student-athlete we wanted on our team," said Head Coach Eric Lang. "Reggie has the most unbelievable 'it factor' of any player we have ever recruited." Lang estimates there are fewer than fifteen black student-athletes playing NCAA DI hockey in the country.

Growing up in a single parent household in Jacksonville, Florida, where he moved from house to house and sometimes slept in the car, Millette and his sister Kiandra traveled to and from Fort Wayne, Indiana periodically to live with their grandmother who worked as a mechanic for the city while his mom dealt with personal issues. Millette took to the ice for the first time in figure skates, and at age seven began speed skating.

Within a couple of years, hockey entered his life on the outdoor rinks where he joined other youth, learning how to stop and to catch passes. Said Millette, "They let me know I needed shorter skates." With little available money, the financial wherewithal for his grandmother to pay for indoor arena practice time and outfitting was out of reach, until an anonymous donor provided rink time and Millette's first set of gear, including "a lefty and a righty" stick, not knowing which he was.

When his mother relocated to Toledo, Ohio, Millette followed and began playing with the Toledo Cherokees, a local youth league, where he was spotted by a scout for the Pittsburgh Penguins who reached out to Rick Scero, a coach for AAA hockey in Plymouth, Michigan.

Initially, Millette traveled to Michigan to play summer hockey. Knowing of his life circumstances and desire to play, empty nesters Rick and Christine Scero offered to have Millette stay with them. "While I didn't want to leave my mom again," Millette says, "I wanted to play hockey at a higher level." At just twelve years old, he left to live with the Sceros.

After aging out of AAA hockey when he turned seventeen, Millette went on to play junior league hockey in Austin, Michigan, and Dubuque, Iowa, where he continued to advance his skills while learning valuable life lessons. Living on his own for the first time gave Millette a new-found appreciation for having had a stable home with the Sceros, whom he calls mom and dad.

Two years ago, AIC Head Coach Lang heard about Millette from Dubuque coach Oliver David. "He spoke about Reggie like no other player," Lang recounts. "We recruit with our ears before our eyes, and what I

heard was this was a young man of character and integrity, who was an excellent teammate. Reggie checked all the boxes. At AIC, we are looking *at* a player, not *for* a player.”

Lang’s conviction that Millette should be a Yellow Jacket was sealed when they met. “Reggie had all the DI attributes we look for. When things get tough, Reggie’s not going to shy away.”

The best part, according to Lang, was how “unbelievably important it was to Rick and Christine to be a part of the recruiting process, making the right choice as a family for Reggie.”

During the all-important decision-making visit to AIC, Millette said, “I wanted to be brought along and not be left behind. I liked that AIC was a diverse community. Everyone knows everyone. And the other players [on the team] were encouraging. The diversity was a bonus.”

Having graduated high school three years ago, Millette is a twenty-one-year-old, first-year scholar-athlete. The AIC Plan for Excellence (APEX), a comprehensive approach for undergraduate students designed to develop a solid foundation for a lifetime of personal and professional success, has helped him hone his time management skills, enabling Millette to make the Dean’s List in his first semester. “Dad will be happy,” he says.

While juggling an ambitious schedule on and off the ice, Millette is now working with his family to create a nonprofit to help other inner-city youth find and develop their passion. “For us, it’s hockey,” he says, “but the goal is to find something you love. There’s always a way to make a difference.”

For more information about American International College, including its many programs that provide access and opportunity in a diverse higher education environment, visit aic.edu.

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Founded in 1885, American International College (AIC) is a private, co-educational, doctoral granting institution located in Springfield, Massachusetts, comprising the School of Business, Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, and the School of Health Sciences. AIC supports and advances education, diversity, and opportunity for its students and the community.

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