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## BEAR CUB

The NBA doesn't have a monopoly on high-impact kids. Patrice Bergeron, the NHL's youngest player at 18 years 4 months, isn't earning LeBron numbers, but he is racking up some pretty impressive figures. The French-Canadian Bruins RW has tallied eight points in his first 12 games, helping Boston jump into first place in the East.

The B's knew Bergeron could score when they drafted him in Round 2 in 2003: he averaged a point per game in

the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. They just didn't expect him to do it so soon in the NHL.

"When he showed up at camp, most of us had never seen him play," says coach Mike Sullivan. "We didn't really expect him to make the team." Bergeron's linemate, C Brian Rolston, has been especially impressed with the rookie's passing touch and ability to handle the puck under pressure. "Usually when guys come into the league they

run around hitting people and not playing their game," says Rolston. "Patrice's poise, for an 18-year-old, is scary."

Boston's notoriously nervous fans may be scared that Bergeron's quick start is just a fluke. But RW Marty Lapointe urges them to take the long view: "You have to remember that he's a kid playing against grown men. Just wait 'til he gets bigger and stronger."

They say that in the NBA, too. —STEPHEN CAMELIO

Magazine  
com 8.24  
ember  
4 2003  
US/35.99 CAN/40R



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