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MEDIA RELEASE

Scottish piper SFU's 'Sidney Crosby'

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When the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band heads to Scotland for the World Bagpipe Championships this week they'll be bringing a little Scottish ammunition – piper Robert Mathieson.

The acclaimed former pipe major of rival Scottish band The House of Edgar Shotts & Dykehead – with five world championships under his own belt – came out of retirement as pipe major earlier this year to become a piper with SFU's band.

"This is huge in the piping world," says Pipe Sergeant Jack Lee. "It would be the equivalent of the Canucks signing Sidney Crosby."

Mathieson says he grabbed the opportunity after a conversation with SFU Pipe Major Terry Lee, following his retirement as pipe major with Shotts & Dykehead last fall.

"I'm thrilled to have Robert, a living legend, join our band," says Terry, whose relationship with the fellow pipe major goes back to the early 1980s.

"I asked him what he was planning to do next, and whether he'd consider coming to Canada to do something fresh," says Lee. "At the same time, I was aware of how we could take advantage of the ideas and creativity he could offer."

It didn't take long for an answer. "Terry asked me, 'would you fancy a turn with us?' It took me all of two seconds to decide," Mathieson says, calling SFU's band "a serial tour de force" in the pipe band world.

Since late spring he has made three trips from Scotland to perform and teach with the band. “This isn’t about being parachuted in for the world championships,” says Mathieson, who, at 52, has been piping for four decades. “I’m here to join the band. I’m in it for the long haul, not just for the one season.”

Mathieson, from Hamilton, Scotland, is one of several new band members and one of two Scots in the band. Drummer Gordon Lee of Kirkcaldy, Fife, is a regular prizewinner and finalist in world solo drumming championships. Another European drummer, Ian Lawson hails from Armagh, Northern Ireland.

The SFU band – with Mathieson in town – is finishing up its practice schedule before heading for Scotland later this week. Practice continues next week in Stirling, Scotland before the world championships in Glasgow on Saturday, Aug. 13.

The championships will be streamed live by the BBC at www.bbc.co.uk/worlds

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