

# JT Compher takes next step to achieve goal of winning Stanley Cup



JT Compher, left, played for the U.S. against Canada in the IIHF World Championship on May 21 in Moscow. (SERGEI ILNITSKY / EPA)

By **Heather Rule**  
Pioneer Press

JULY 14, 2016, 3:00 PM

**W**hen the [Chicago Blackhawks](#) won the [Stanley Cup](#) in 2010, Northbrook native JT Compher had planned to go to the celebratory parade with his buddies. But on that day, Compher told them he couldn't go because he had a hockey workout.

Why would he skip such a historic event? His friends tell the story again and again, and Compher's response was something like this, according to his mother Valerie: "I don't want to celebrate them winning the Stanley Cup. I want to win my own."

JT Compher, a 5-11, 195-pound forward, signed with the [Colorado Avalanche](#) this spring, taking a big step toward that climb toward his own Cup.

"This has been my dream since I was a little kid," JT Compher said.

JT Compher bolstered his resume in his junior season as a captain at Michigan, putting up a team-best 47 assists and recording 63 points. His tallied 20 assists as a freshman and 12 as a sophomore.

"I set higher goals for myself," JT Compher said. "It started to click."

One thing that he said helped a lot was the teammates placed on his line around Christmas: Kyle Connor and Tyler Motte. They both scored more than 30 goals this season. Connor finished with 71 points and Motte contributed 57. Both also have signed [NHL](#) contracts.

"To be able to find (chemistry) with two guys of that caliber, that had great years, that made it easier on all of us," JT Compher said.

Highlights for JT Compher and his teammates included winning the Big 10 Tournament and playing in the NCAA Tournament. After the season wrapped, he took a couple weeks to mull over the decision to join the NHL, or stay for his senior season. It was tough, but he also thought professional hockey was the next step to challenge himself and improve.

He's always been the person that everyone leaned on, his mother, Valerie Compher said.

"We told him, at this time in your life, and it sounds kind of wrong maybe, but it's OK to be selfish," she said. "This is your time."

In May, he played in the IIHF World Championship in Russia. He said he was lucky to be one of the college players selected to play on the team and represent his country. He learned a lot about professional hockey and what it takes to play at an elite level, where the speed of the game is faster and players are stronger, he said. The U.S. lost in the bronze-medal game to Russia.

JT Compher was drafted by Buffalo in 2013, then later acquired by Colorado in a trade.

"He's on the right track," said his dad, Bob Compher. "I think he's got the right mindset."

JT Compher just finished the Avalanche prospects camp. This summer he plans to work out and train in Ann Arbor, Mich., before training camp this fall, where his goal will be to make the NHL.

The Compher family couldn't help but get excited when the NHL schedules came out recently. After all, the Avalanche will visit the Blackhawks at the United Center three times.

"That was one of the first things I looked for," JT Compher said.

*Heather Rule is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.*

*Twitter @hhrule*