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Putin Grants U.S. Hockey Player Russian Citizenship

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Brennan Menell. **Sergei Savostyanov / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday granted U.S. hockey player Brennan Menell Russian citizenship, allowing him to play for the country's national team.

Menell, 26, is a defenseman from Minnesota who signed a one-year contract with the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) team Dynamo Moscow in September 2022, becoming the third U.S.-born player to ever join the team.

When Menell signed a three-year extension in April, Dynamo Moscow's athletic director told media that the American had expressed interest in obtaining Russian citizenship and playing for Russia's national team.

"He really likes Russia and Moscow, so he's ready to stay for a long time," Alexei Sopin, Dynamo's athletic director, told RIA Novosti at the time.

Menell receiving Russian citizenship "will be good PR for Russian sports," Sopin added.

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The Russian sports daily Sport-Express reported that Menell's paperwork for applying for Russian citizenship was submitted "immediately" after he arrived in the country earlier this month.

The outlet said Menell — who had spoken positively about his time in Russia and dismissed the U.S. Embassy's advisory to leave the country — is "actively" learning to speak Russian.

Menell's new citizenship will also free up Dynamo Moscow's slots for foreign players, which are limited to three per club according to KHL rules.

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