

Rookie Filipek is ready for playoffs with AHL Canucks

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

After an 80-game regular season, Daryl Filipek says he "feels really alive" entering the post-season. One only wonders if his Hamilton Canucks will be tonight (Wednesday) after Game 4 of the first round.

Prior to this season, the 23-year-old rookie defenceman with the American Hockey League (AHL) Canucks had been accustomed to a 30 to 35 game schedule with the Ferris State Bulldogs of the Central Collegiate Hockey Association.

"It was a lot different playing 80 games," admitted the Acton resident on Thursday upon returning from Cornwall down 2-0 in the best-of-seven Southern Division

semi-final against the Aces. The Canucks fell 2-1 on Monday and are skating on thin ice, facing elimination on the road tonight in Cornwall.

"But in college you're only focussing on one game a week. There were a lot of practices in college, but you learn more in games. Here, you have more ups and downs through the year, but you can't let that affect you. You always want to play more games and I got that opportunity.

"And I definitely improved my overall play through the season."

Aside from the long schedule, the biggest adjustment for the imposing 6-foot-2, 205-pounder was adapting to the faster Canadian game and high level of play.

Aided by the strides he made in

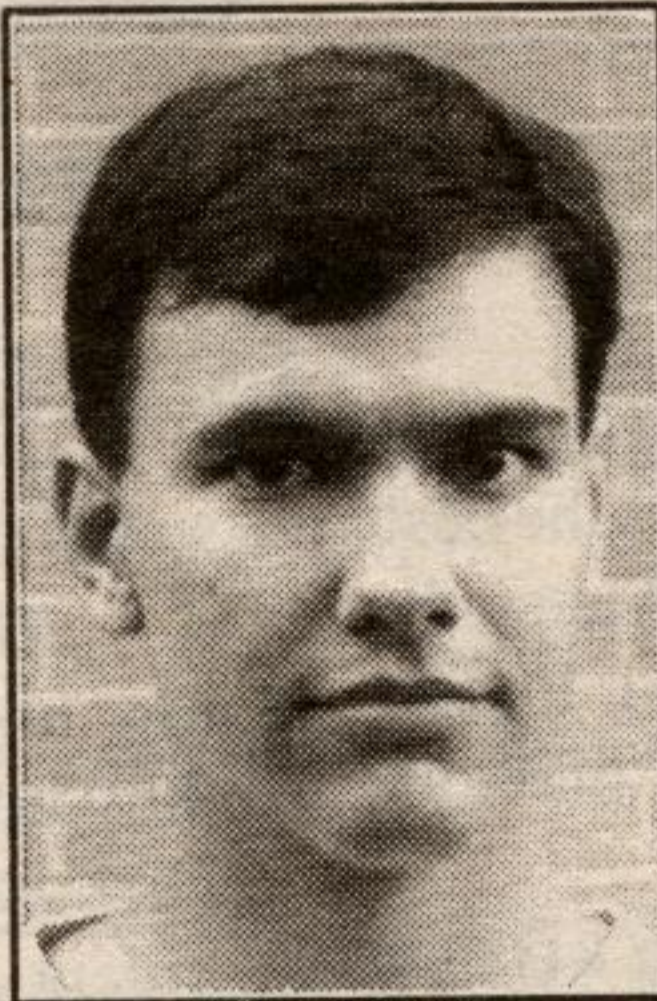
personal skill development with the Bulldogs, the quicker game gave the backliner more open ice than in college to penetrate the offensive zone.

"There's more latitude here. If I want to go (in the offensive zone), I can go. Plus, the forwards are better here at covering for the defencemen," noted Filipek, who scored five goals (two game-winners) and grabbed 17 assists for 22 points in 68 regular season games. "It's a lot more fun without all the restrictions."

And Filipek didn't have many of those, either, except for being sidelined the first two weeks of the season after straining ligaments in his left knee.

"The first 20 to 25 games they (Canuck coaching staff) spotted me shifts, but the ones I got were big and helped me improve," said Filipek, who played 15 to 20 minutes a game this year. "And once I played well I got the chance."

Filipek says he will take it easy once the off-season begins "but not for too long."



DARYL FILIPEK



POTENT PEEWEES: These top Peewee players were honoured at the annual player awards night at the Legion on Friday. Back row, from left, are Gerald Millian (Most Improved), Greg McMillan (Best Defenceman) and Joey Zinke (Point Leader). Front row: Matt Wilson (Most sportsmanlike) and Chris Scully (Outstanding Goalie). (Doug Harrison photo)

The Acton Minor Hockey Association



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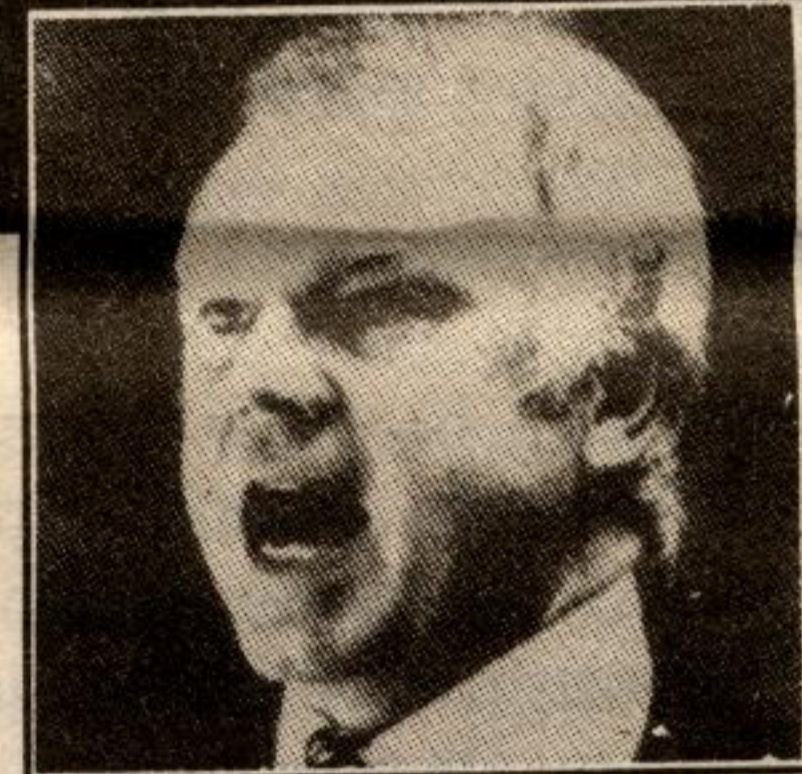
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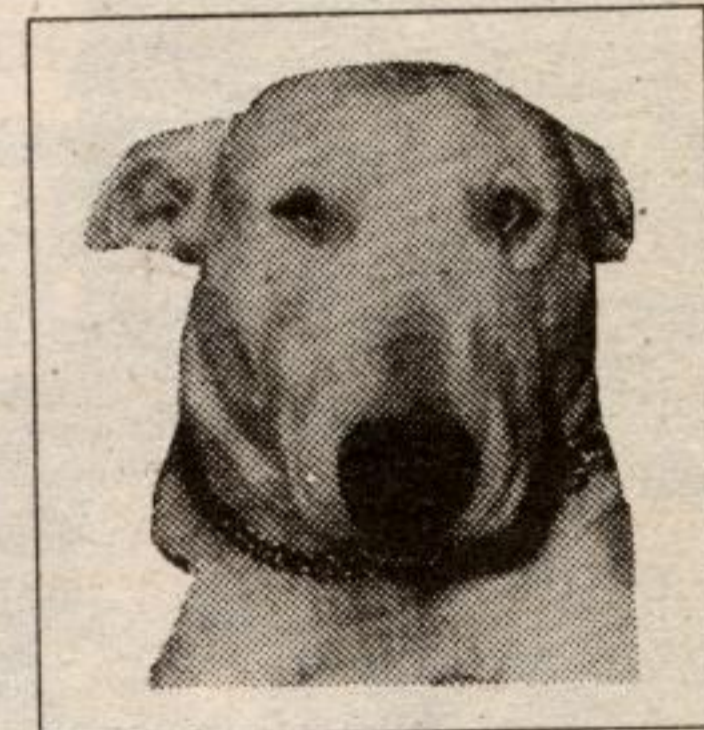
I'd cried a river ...

Danny Gullivan didn't know it, but he made me a very sad guy and it is one of my favourite stories. Back in 1953, I was playing for THE DARTH VADER of hockey, EDDIE SHORE, with the SPRINGFIELD INDIANS.

The coach, PAT EGAN, and I had a disagreement (actually I broke my stick over his shoulder in a practice and he got upset ... no sense of humour), so the next day he was happy to give me a letter to say I was sent to a lower minor league team called the THREE RIVERS LIONS in QUEBEC.

I asked EDDIE SHORE where THREE RIVERS was and he said "go through VERMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE and when you hit the CANADIAN border turn right!" (Funny man, eh?)

I'll finish the story next week!



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