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Leaner and lighter Hayward bound for San Jose

Brian Hayward may be playing at his lightest playing weight in five years, but he's not taking the task at hand lightly.

The 32-year-old Georgetown native heads to San Jose this week at a trim 177 pounds, down from his normal 185. The shedding of the extra pounds came the result of a stringent off-season conditioning

program that was aimed at strengthening his back after a herniated disc limited Hayward to only three starts with the San Jose Sharks last year.

But Hayward wants to do more than just prove he still belongs in the NHL after 10 seasons. The five-foot-10 goaltender is in the option year of his contract, and a free agent without compensation at the

end of the season.

"I think I'm in the best shape of my life," Hayward said Monday, a day before he headed back to California. "This is it for me.

"I feel like I've done all I can in the offseason, which is how I want to feel going into camp. Healthwise I've got to come back and prove I still can do it for an

entire season."

Hayward trained up to three-and-a-half hours daily six times a week in preparation for the 1992 season. He put a lot of emphasis on stomach and back training, areas which he admitted he hadn't spent a lot of time on in the past.

"I also hired a physiotherapist who worked on my back and right now it feels great," the articulate Cornell graduate said. "I played in about 10 pick-up games throughout the summer and golfed and experienced no back pain.

"I feel like I've got better range now than I ever have in the last five years."

Hayward's early departure to San Jose means he won't be around for the finals of his Three-on-Three Street Hockey Challenge, which will be held at the Canadian National Exhibition. Hayward began the concept while he was with the Montreal Canadiens, and it has grown to the point where regional tournaments are held across Canada, with the winning teams gathering for the championship event in Toronto.

With Hayward on the sidelines, the Sharks goaltending chores fell on the shoulders of youngster Jeff Hackett, who played well enough to earn a new three-year deal from the NHL club. While Hayward will be aiming to battle Hackett for starting honors, the Georgetown native figures his main competition will come from backup Arturs Irbe, who split his time with the Sharks and the club's IHL affiliate in Kansas City.

Hayward began his NHL career with the Winnipeg Jets before being traded to Montreal before the start of the 1986 season. Hayward was subsequently dealt to Minnesota during the 1990-91 season after expressing dissatisfaction with being Patrick Roy's backup, and was with the North Stars when the team surprisingly made it to the Stanley Cup final before losing to Pittsburgh. Shortly after, Hayward was subsequently picked up by San Jose in the expansion draft. Should this be Hayward's final season, he has plenty of post-hockey options.

"I did radio and television color last year when I was hurt and that was great," said Hayward, a three-time Jennings trophy winner while with Montreal. "I'm also considering going to law school, getting my MBA (Masters of Business Administration) or taking a year off and making 3-on-3 work even better.

"I'd be happy to postpone those options for a few more years, but I'm not even thinking about a new contract. I'm just taking this day by day and focusing on this year."

Kordic's death saddened Hayward

Brian Hayward was saddened by the recent death of former teammate John Kordic, but not surprised.

"John was on this path of self destruction," said Hayward, a teammate of Kordic's for two-and-a-half seasons with the Montreal Canadiens before the troubled forward was dealt to Toronto during the 1988 campaign.

"It's a really sad situation."

Kordic recently died of heart failure en route to hospital after an altercation with police at a Quebec hotel. Unused syringes and steroids were found in Kordic's hotel room.

Reports of drug and alcohol problems hounded Kordic throughout his hockey career. He was reported to have had a cocaine dependency, with a recent Sports Illustrated story reporting that a Canadiens assistant coach walked in on a group, which Kordic was a member, that was using cocaine, and merely walked away.

After the story appeared, former Canadiens coach Jean Perron said the incident took place after Kordic was traded to Toronto.

Kordic also went to a rehabilitation centre for treatment of an alcohol problem.

Hayward said the Canadiens' players had heard the rumors of Kordic's drug problems.

"We were pretty sure he was using steroids because he was huge," Hayward said. "As for the other stuff, we had heard the stories."

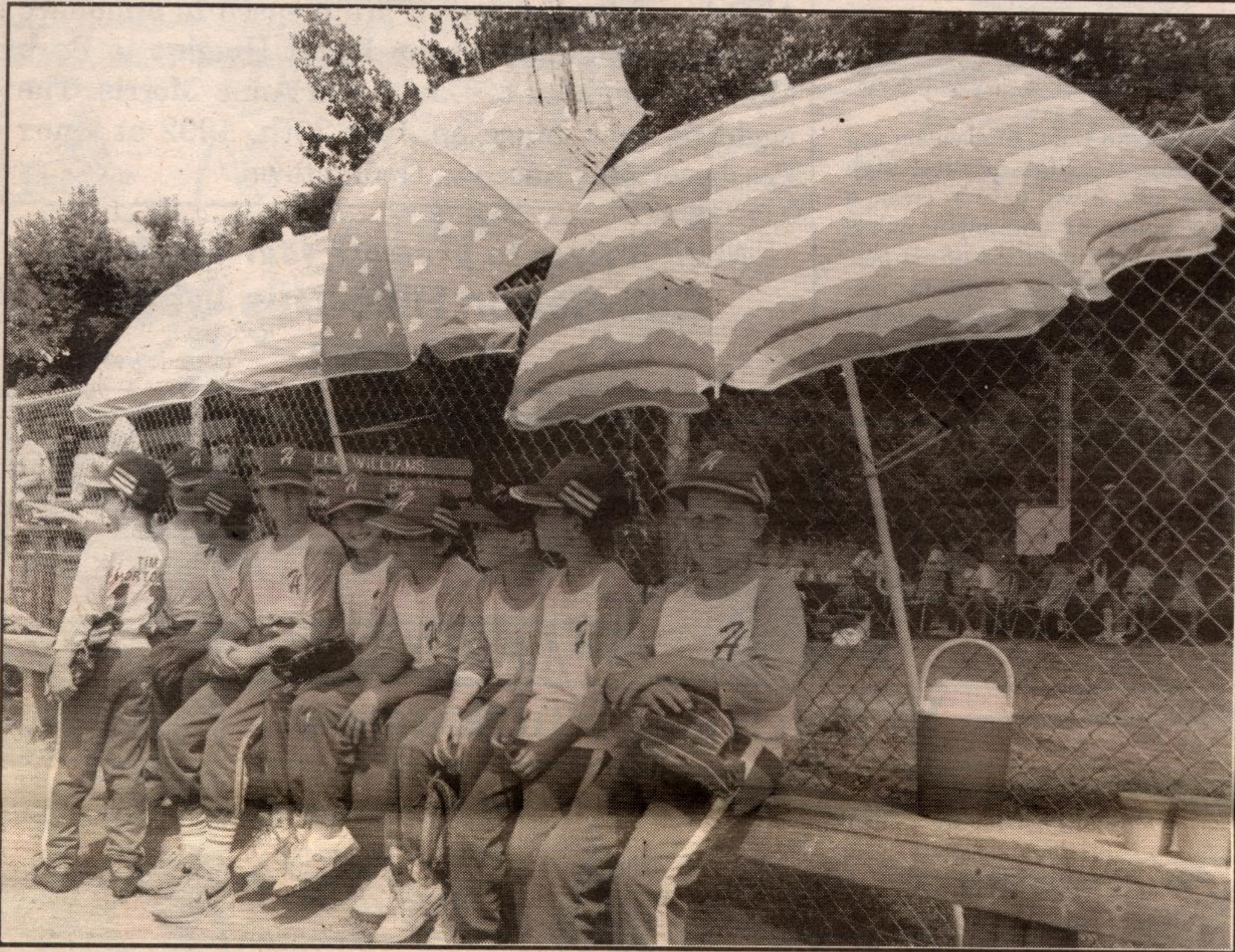
Hayward received a surprise phone call from Kordic when Hayward was a member of the Minnesota North Stars after being traded during the 1990-91 season.

"John was at a rehabilitation centre in Minnesota and told me he had come to grips with his father's death and that he had licked his drinking thing," Hayward said.

Hayward said the issue of drugs in hockey will be discussed by the NHL Players' Association this fall.

"I think the NHLPA has to take control of this and police itself," Hayward said. "I have no problem with random testing, but it has long been an issue that has been given up during contract negotiations.

"Hopefully now something can be done."



Riding the pines under the shade of umbrellas, boys from the Hornby squirt baseball team took advantage of any shade offered before their championship match with Acton. Acton went on to beat Hornby, with Glen Williams finishing third in the tournament.
Photo by Jamie Harrison

OBA chief ump dies in Georgetown

Graham Smith feels Dick Willis leaves some big shoes to fill, in and out of baseball.

Willis, the long-time umpire and chief for the Ontario Baseball Association, died at Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital last week. He was 72.

"Dick had that incredible ability that when he spoke to you he made you feel like you were the most important person," Smith, the umpire and chief for the Georgetown Baseball Association who knew Willis for 17 years. "I went to see him in the hospital last Monday, and for the short time we talked, he was the same way.

"Baseball will miss Dick, but so will a lot of people on a personal note because he was an amazing person who you could count on no matter when or where you needed him."

Willis spent a lot of time working with local umpires, and even

donned the chest protector and mask to work behind the plate. Both in the past few years a variety of health problems limited Willis's involvement.

"I remember years ago a ball game in Georgetown when the visiting team didn't want to use Georgetown umpires, so Dick was called and he came to the park," Smith said. "When Dick got behind the plate the visiting coach asked him if he was going to favor Georgetown.

"Dick said 'The definition of an umpire is to be an impartial arbitrator. Play Ball.'"

"That was the end of the discussion."

But Smith also remembers fondly the first time he met Willis 17 years ago.

"Dick was a deeply religious man who had a tremendous singing voice," Smith said. "Shortly after moving to Georgetown we were

attending Holy Cross church and Dick was leading the congregation in song.

"There were no instruments and this voice just carried in the church. It was something.

"What I really appreciated about the man was that he had a broader perspective on issues than most because of his religious beliefs. He was always able to look at things and make decisions that benefited all instead of a select few.

"When I first met Dick I stood in awe of the man, but once I got to know him that developed into respect because you wanted to get close to the man because that's the way he made you feel. I'll miss him."

Willis is survived by his wife Marge, sons Tim and Dick and his wife Dianne, daughter Kathleen and her husband Robert Pinchin, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



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