

SPORTS

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'It's a dream come true': Sharma

Bishop Reding basketball standout commits to University of Western Ontario

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"Aryan Sharma's grandfather may hail from the land where cricket is number 1, but was only too happy to help foster a passion for another sport during one overseas visit.

"He built me a net (outside the house) while he was here from India when I was eight," recalled the now 17-year-old Miltonian. "It's been a fixture ever since. I've spent countless hours practising my shot on it and my friends and I have had so many pickup games out there."

With a deep-seeded love for basketball as far back as he can remember, the six-foot-five, 180-pound Bishop Reding standout would often lose track of time while shooting hoops in his driveway - or on the courts of nearby St. Peter or Chris Hadfield schools.

Said Sharma, "My friends would go home and I'd still be out there around nine or 10 (at night). I wouldn't have my phone actually on me so my parents would have to drive by and bring me home."

That all-consuming fo-

cus has met with plenty of individual accolades and team success - and is now about to take Sharma to the university ranks.

A well-rounded small forward who excels in the classroom as well as on the court, he recently committed to the University of Western Ontario Mustangs after a lengthy recruiting period that included serious consideration of a few other schools - like McGill and York - with strong health sciences programs.

"It's a dream come true (signing with Western)," said Sharma, offering thanks to both coach Marko Juricic and his wife Marcie from the Halton Basketball Club/UPlay and Bishop Reding's Dan Seixeiro with helping him prepare for the next phase of basketball, adding "I couldn't be here without them."

Noting that a strong balance between academics and athletics made Western the ideal fit for him, the honours student boasts a basketball resume that includes back-to-back Ontario Cup D1 wins with his club team, a trip to OFSAA in Grade 11 and a slew of

tournament wins and all-star nods.

Last summer was especially prosperous, with Sharma leading the UPlay Halton team to LeBron James Classic Tournament gold - netting 37 points in the final - and being the team's top scorer in a second-place finish at the CNIT Invitational.

Said Western head coach Brad Campbell, "Aryan is an athletic forward who can score and pose mismatch problems for opponents. My initial thoughts (of watching him play) were what a great athlete he was and how he can impact the game in different ways."

Having coached Sharma since he was 11, Juricic stressed that it's not just his physical prowess and scoring touch that make him a great addition for the Mustangs.

"With my teams I've tried to promote and build a culture of togetherness, trust and accountability, but most importantly hard work. Aryan immediately embraced this philosophy. He understood that this would make him the best player he could possibly

be."

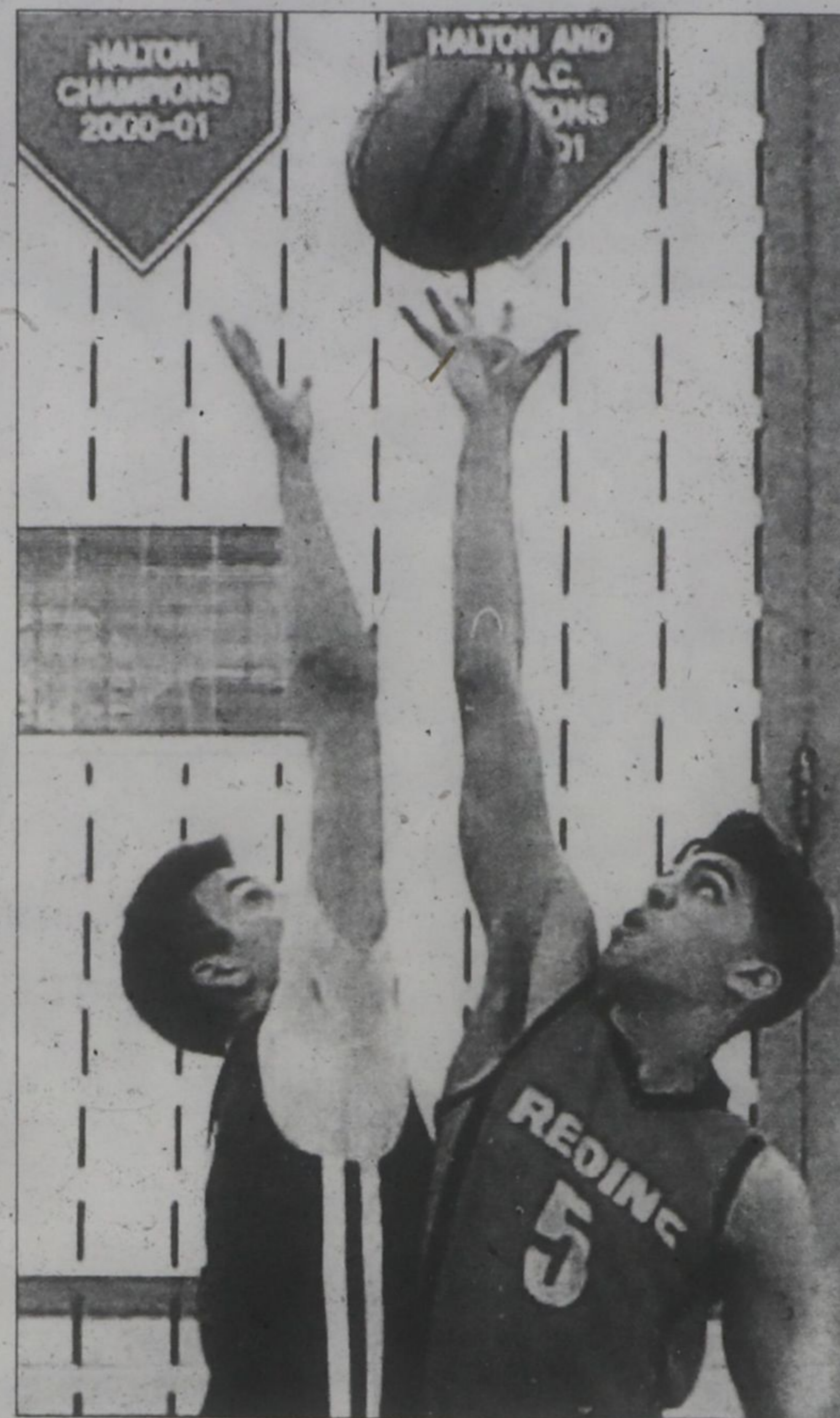
While a natural on the court from day one, the soon-to-be Reding graduate - who averaged anywhere from 25 to 35 points during his high school tenure - said he's made significant strides in his leadership and basketball IQ over the past year or two.

His incredible work ethic - however - has never needed much development.

"I'm the most competitive person I know, and not just in basketball," admitted Sharma, who always carries a \$25 Superman coin - a gift from grandpa - while in practice or competition, and must always be the last guy to take a shot in the pre-game warm-up. When he's not dominating on the court he's helping give back to the sport as an assistant with the Under-14 Milton Stags. "I'm just not going to stop or settle."

Though joining a team that'll have pretty much everyone back from a 16-9 (second best of OUA West) season, Sharma is optimistic about his chances of getting some significant playing time right away.

Campbell also believes



Bishop Reding photography class

Aryan Sharma (right) competes with the Bishop Reding Royals this past season.

that's within reach.

"The transition for incoming high school players can be tough, but with Ary-

an's combination of size at his position and skill we think he can be an immediate impact."

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