

Merchant pair featured in Bell Sympatico Olympic commercial

Carrier, Ovcjak play opposing captains for Canada and Finland

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

A few hours before game time against Oakville Tuesday, David Ovcjak sat down to relax in front of the TV.

What he saw staring back from the screen was a mighty familiar face — well, make that two. Those well-known mugs were his own and that of fellow Milton Merchant Rick Carrier, who're part of a Bell Sympatico Olympic commercial that began airing this past week.

"You only see Rick and I for about a second, but it was really cool," Ovcjak said just prior to Tuesday's 5-4 comeback against the red-hot Blades.

The graduating juniors were approached earlier this month with the opportunity to audition for the commercial — one of three shot for the upcoming 2002 Winter Games — and for both, it was simply a no-brainer.

Said Ovcjak, "Mario (Forgione) came and asked us if we wanted to be in a commercial. I said 'sounds good to me'."

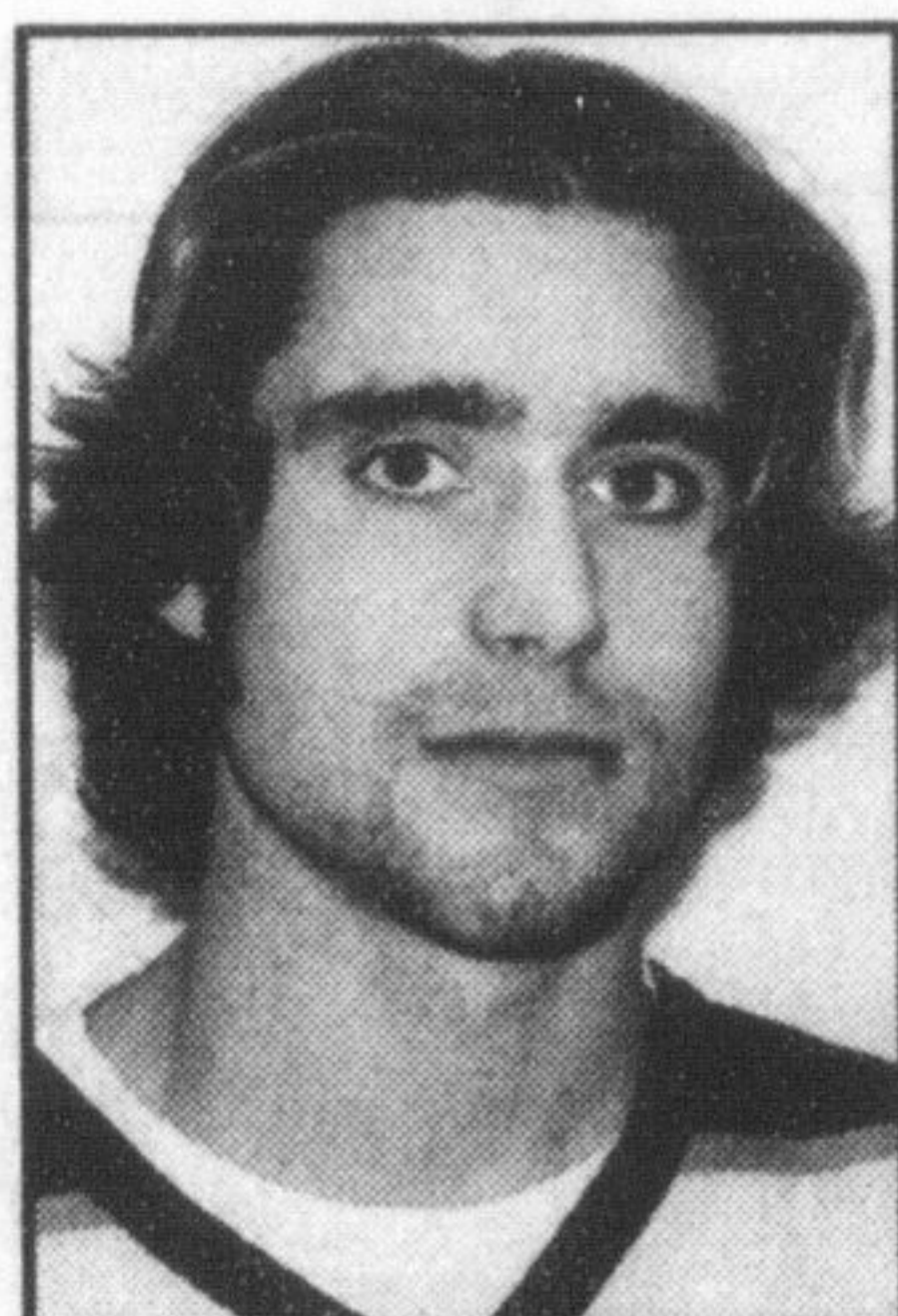
He and Carrier play opposing captains in the commercial — with Carrier winning the face-off that leads to a 3-2 Team Canada victory over Finland. Three different versions of the commercial were shot — with the game being viewed by bar patrons, a youngster in his room and a taxi

driver — although to date only one has aired.

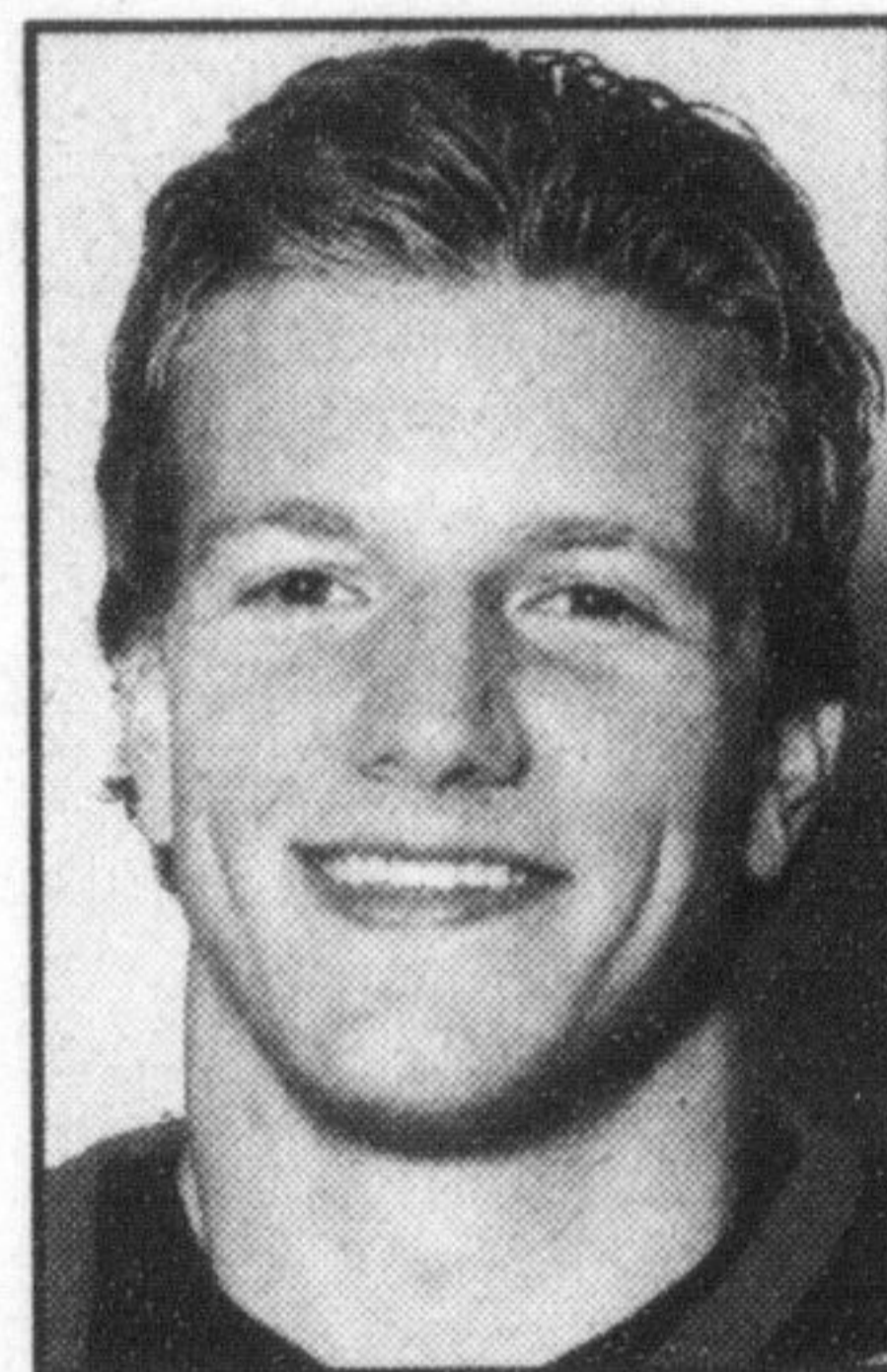
The Merchant duo beat out more than one hundred hopefuls for their spots. Their segment of the commercial, shot two weeks ago, took about 15 hours to film at Brampton's Battalion Centre.

"It was certainly different. It's surprising all the different angles they shoot at and how long it took. They had cardboard cutouts of people that they put in about a million different positions," said Carrier.

But Milton's chief agitator definitely enjoyed the experience and true to his in-your-face nature, came away with an amusing little tale from the audition. He recalled with a smirk. "The director wanted to see us scrimmage and this other guy high-sticked me twice. The second time I had to turn around and ask him (quite firmly) to stop.



Rick Carrier



David Ovcjak

"I had to apologize to the director afterward, but I guess he liked what he saw (from me)."

Ovcjak also enjoyed the commercial — the second he's been part of in the past two years. His first was for an Internet company in 1999, while the towering winger has been on a movie set as well, as a security guard during the filming of Sylvester Stallone's *Driven*.

"It's really surprising how long it takes just to shoot a 15-second spot," he said.

The Merchants and other players in the commercial were recruited by Miltonian Steve Martin's Elite Athlete Management — a growing sports agency catering to television/film production.

Cagers in tough

The Milton Madd Dawgs' minor bantams came up winless in all three games at the recent Huntsville Hurricane Tournament — losing to Kingston,

Huntsville and Plainsville. Aaron Hnatiw stood out with a dozen points against Plainsville. They will look to fare better this weekend in Guelph.

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HOUSE LEAGUE RESULTS

Weekly House League Results

DATE	DIVISION	TEAM	SCORE	TEAM	SCORE
JAN 19	PEEWEE MAJOR	TOWNE DENTAL GROUP	5	SCOOTERS SNACK SHACK	4
		BRIAN'S AUTO REPAIR	5	ROSS DIXON FINANCIAL	7
	PEEWEE MINOR	DREAM CAR GARAGE	3	CANADIAN TIRE	2
		PRESSE LAW OFFICE	3	HOME CINEMA	3
JAN 20	NOVICE	GOODLIFE RED	2	GOODLIFE GREEN	4
		GOODLIFE BLACK	8	GOODLIFE BLUE	5
		SHOPPERS DRUG MART	4	NUTECH RECRUITERS	1
		BRIANS AUTO REPAIR	8	AUSTEN NOBLE INSURANCE	5
JAN 19	ATOM	GUS MOWBRAY	4	SEARS	4
		GALLINGER FORD	5	LION'S CLUB	4
		BRIAN'S AUTO REPAIR	6	MCCUAIG INSURANCE	4
JAN 18 & 20	BANTAM	BRIAN'S AUTO REPAIR	12	ROGERS AT&T	6
		SUNNY OASIS	6	BEN QUIP LTD.	0
		CENTRICUT	7	NUTECH RECRUITERS	4
JAN 21	SENIOR	DOCS & DENTS	6	MILTON CHRYSLER DODGE	5
		KWIK KOPY	8	JOHNSON CONTROLS	5
		KEY CENTRE	9	KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN	8
					Matt Lillie-Hat Trick

Provincial Jr. A league won't get shot at Royal Bank Cup this season

Canada's largest junior hockey league will not compete for a national championship this spring.

The Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) announced last week that the 36-team Provincial Jr. A Hockey League (PJHL) will not have a representative in either the All-Ontario Dudley Hewitt Cup or the national Royal Bank Cup.

Though rumours had been circulating for several weeks regarding the league's withdrawal, it was only made official January 16 — much to the disappointment of many within the PJHL.

Decision disappointing

"It's much to my chagrin that a 12th-hour accommodation couldn't be made," said Merchants GM Nick Slawson.

"I think there's always going to be a question mark as to if the province's best team was represented at the Royal Bank (Cup)."

The PJHL's withdrawal comes on the heels of this season's addition of the Superior International Junior A League. Under Canadian Hockey Association (CHA) rules, the Thunder Bay-based loop had the right to inject itself into the Dudley Hewitt Cup/Royal Bank Cup picture — even though its a first-year league and from a quality of competition standpoint, is not considered on-par with the PJHL or Northern Ontario Jr. A League.

Said Slawson, "From what I've been told, it's (Superior league) equivalent to juvenile hockey. I don't think they pose a significant challenge."

With the addition of the Superior league, PJHL officials felt that due to time and financial restrictions, their league would be unable to adjust its schedule to accommodate another series.

Therefore, the Northern and Superior league winners will battle for the right to represent Ontario at the 2002 Royal Bank Cup in Halifax.

Said Ontario Hockey Association President Brent Ladds, "The conclusion to this recent scenario is truly regrettable. The Royal Bank Cup is a great sponsor and their national championship a tremendous event. Our first choice would have been to be there."

While Slawson understands the reasoning behind last week's announcement, he had hoped the PJHL would 'suck it up' and find a way to stay in the national championship picture.

Future uncertain

He added that while the PJHL is examining the situation for next year's Royal Bank Cup, there's no guarantee the CHA will welcome the league back.

"I think we've weakened our position by dropping out," he said. "The CHA may not choose to have us next year. But that's a drastic step and hopefully it won't come to that."

On the plus side, the 2002 PJHL playoff schedule won't have to be as condensed as in previous years — when seven-game series were often crammed into a 10 or 11 day period.

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