



# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY MARCH 22, 2002



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Golden girl

Milton Skating Club's Ashley Cupples proudly displays the first-place trophy she recently earned at the Central Ontario Sectional Interclub Championships. See story on page 26.

# Haydar powers Wildcats to Hockey East championship

By STEVE LeBLANC

*The Champion*

Two down, one to go.

Darren (Mini) Haydar's New Hampshire University Wildcats crossed another item off their to-do list Saturday night at Boston's FleetCenter — capturing their first-ever Hockey East title with a 3-1 victory over arch-rival Maine.

And UNH's senior captain — who in recent years has become a highly dependable under-pressure performer — fueled the championship win by assisting on both third-period goals to cement the tournament finals.

Saturday's triumph put the brakes on a six-game playoff losing skid against Maine.

"It's exciting," said Haydar, who one night earlier collected a couple of points to beat UMass Lowell 4-3 and ended the weekend as the Hockey East Tournament MVP. "It took four years but we finally did it. We (seniors) knew it was our last chance and we had to make our best attempt.

"At the start of the year we had three goals: one to win the regular season, two to win the Hockey East title and three, obviously to win the national championship. We're two-thirds of the way there."

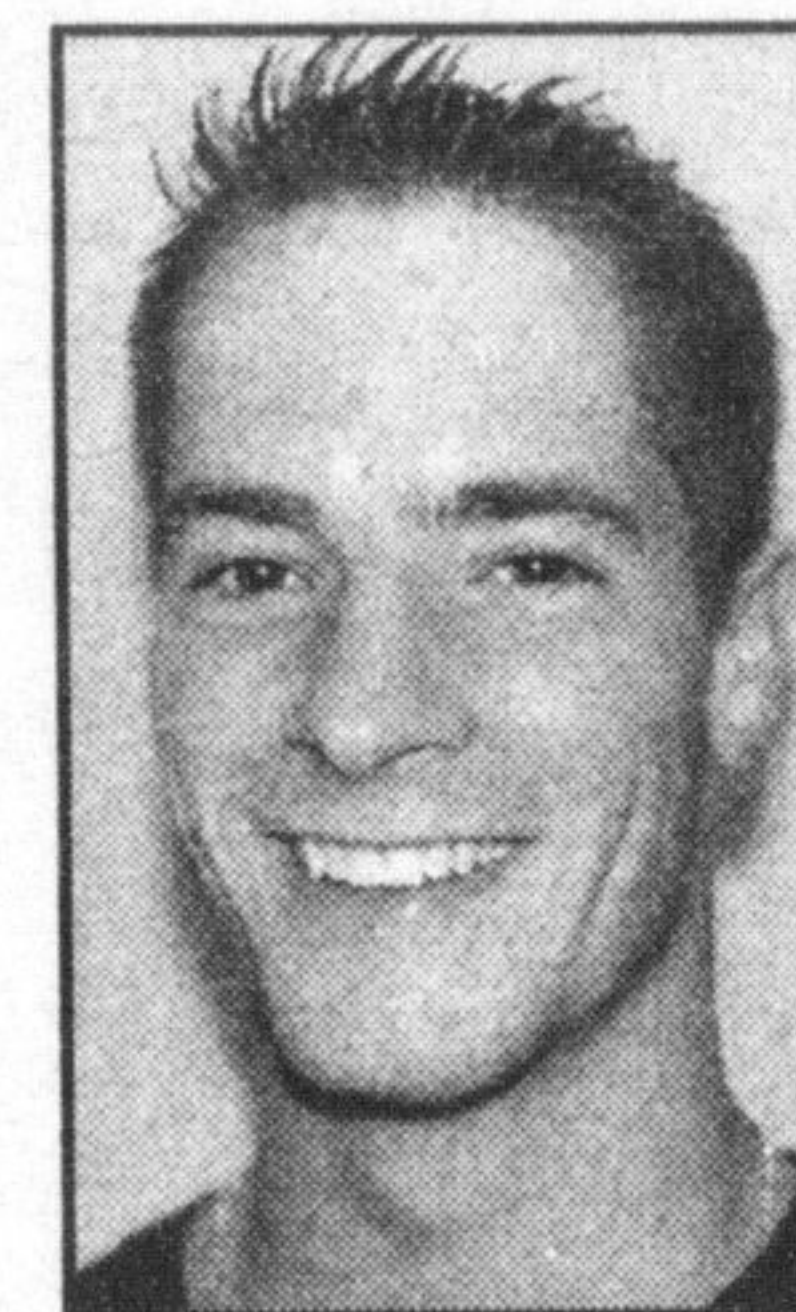
According to the former Merchant, New Hampshire went into last weekend's final four feeling very little pressure — despite being the number one seed.

Recalled Haydar, "We kind of took a reverse look at things and said 'We've never won this thing before, so we've got nothing to lose'."

Showing just why he's now officially in the running for the coveted Hobey Baker Award, Haydar delivered picturesque passes to teammates Sean Collins and Steve Saviano for the game-winner and insurance marker respectively.

His efforts on the go-ahead goal were particularly impressive, as he won a crucial corner battle while UNH had the man-advantage and shoveled it out to an incoming Collins — who made no mistake with a top-shelf wrister.

Saviano scored in similar fashion to punctuate a big forecheck turnover initiated by Haydar — who sits second in the



Darren Haydar

nation's points race with 74.

He said, "Obviously I've had a good year, but individual success comes from team success. We all work hard and I seem to be taking all the credit."

Modesty aside, the local sniper is arguably the biggest reason why New Hampshire sits on the verge of a trip to next month's Frozen Four.

All that stands in the team's way is a Sunday afternoon victory over either Cornell or Quinnipiac, who'll do battle during the NCAA Tournament's opening round tomorrow in Worcester, Massachusetts.

While he's come up short in both cracks at the national title since joining UNH, Haydar's Wildcats now go in as one of the favourites — and are 6-1-2 against their potential opponents.

That record includes an early-season win over Denver, who up until this month held top spot in the national rankings.

"They're a tight defensive club, so we've just got to work hard down low and not make any mistakes," said Haydar of a possible New Hampshire/Denver match-up.

If successful Sunday, UNH will advance to the Frozen Four in St. Paul, Minnesota April 4 to 6.

## Get your votes in now for Mini

Miltonian Darren (Mini) Haydar is among 10 NCAA stars in the running for the coveted Hobey Baker Award, and local fans can help put him over the top.

The finalist who receives the most fan votes — which can be cast at [www.hobeybaker.com](http://www.hobeybaker.com) — receives one judging point toward the coveted title.

Haydar is among the favourites to take the honour, having sat top three in NCAA Division 1 scoring all season.

He currently sits second with 74 points — four of which were collected during last weekend's Hockey East championship drive.

The Hobey Baker Award winner will be named at the Frozen Four Tournament on Friday, April 5.

### Mini's Hobey Baker Bid

- Leads the nation at 1.97 points per game average
- Posted career-high 17-game point streak
- UNH 17-2-0 when Haydar records at least one goal
- Named MVP of the Badger Showdown
- Named MVP of the UNH Conference Classic
- Hockey East Player of the Month for November
- Hockey East Player of the Month for December
- Named Hockey East Player of the Week three times
- Named MVP for Hockey East playoffs



## Milton Minor Baseball

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from 9am to 4pm at Tonelli Arena

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