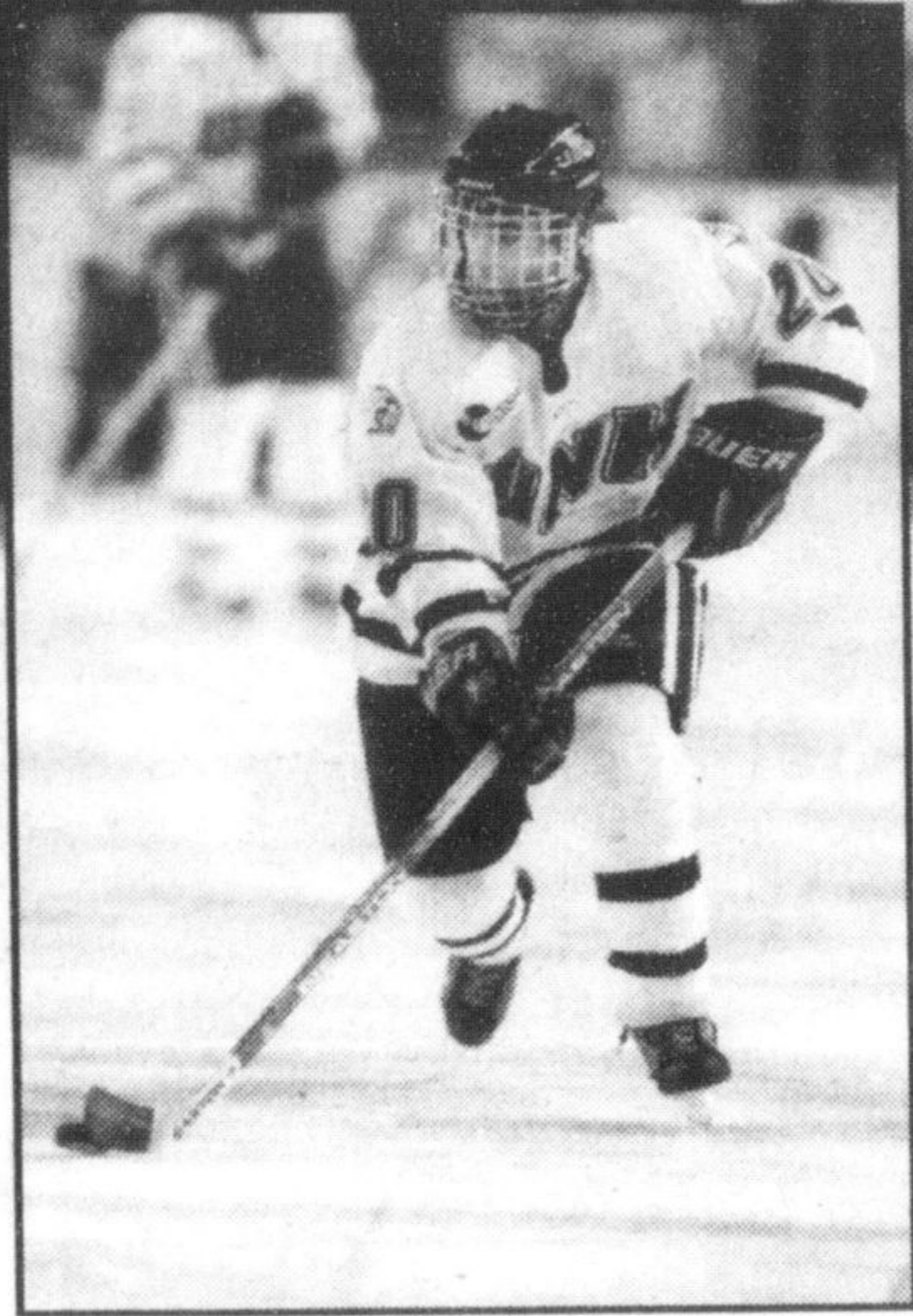




SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY APRIL 5, 2002



Photos courtesy of the UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Will he be Hobey Haydar?

Miltonian Darren Haydar is one of three finalists for the coveted Hobey Baker award — the recipient of which will be announced this afternoon at the NCAA Frozen Four Tournament in St. Paul, Minnesota. Unfortunately, Haydar won't be gunning for the NCAA's national title tomorrow night, as his New Hampshire Wildcats faltered down the stretch of yesterday afternoon's semifinal clash with the Maine Black Bears and were defeated 7-2.

Big Haydar's CHL Jackalopes suffer opening-round exit

Upset loss follows great regular season

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Anyone who's ever laced up a pair of hockey skates knows that 'the playoffs are a whole different season'.

Jeff Haydar is no stranger to this old adage — but probably has a newfound respect for it right now, following his Odessa (Texas) Jackalopes' surprising first-round exit this past week.

The Miltonian's Central Hockey League team finished first overall in the regular season — with an outstanding 47-11-6 record to win the Governor's Cup — and were no doubt expecting a lengthy playoff run this spring.

But El Paso had other ideas, and knocked off the heavily-favoured Jackalopes in the best-of-five opening round.

The series went down to the wire in Odessa Tuesday and it looked as though the hosts would prevail when Haydar buried an upstairs slapshot on first-period two-on-one break.

But that would be the only goal his team scored and was eventually overshadowed by El Paso's third-goal uprising in the final frame.

"They (El Paso) scored on a weird bounce early in the third. That got the ball rolling and they just came on strong for the rest of the game," Haydar said of Tuesday's 3-1 defeat.

"To have done so well in the regular season and then lose in the first round is certainly disheartening."

Odessa also enjoyed a third-period lead

during game four in El Paso Saturday but failed to deliver the knockout blow. Overall, Haydar had a goal and an assist in the series.

Said Haydar, "We just couldn't put them away."

Among those who successfully blocked his Jackalopes' playoff run was goaltender Jeff Levey — who played for the University of New Hampshire, where

Haydar's younger brother Darren is wrapping up an incredible senior season as the nation's leading scorer.

Big Haydar made a rather successful transition to the semi-pro ranks this season and was a key factor in Odessa's 47-11-6 record — by far the best in the five-year history of the club.

A consummate all-purpose performer with plenty of grit, the 25-year-old centre was a first-line penalty killer and was

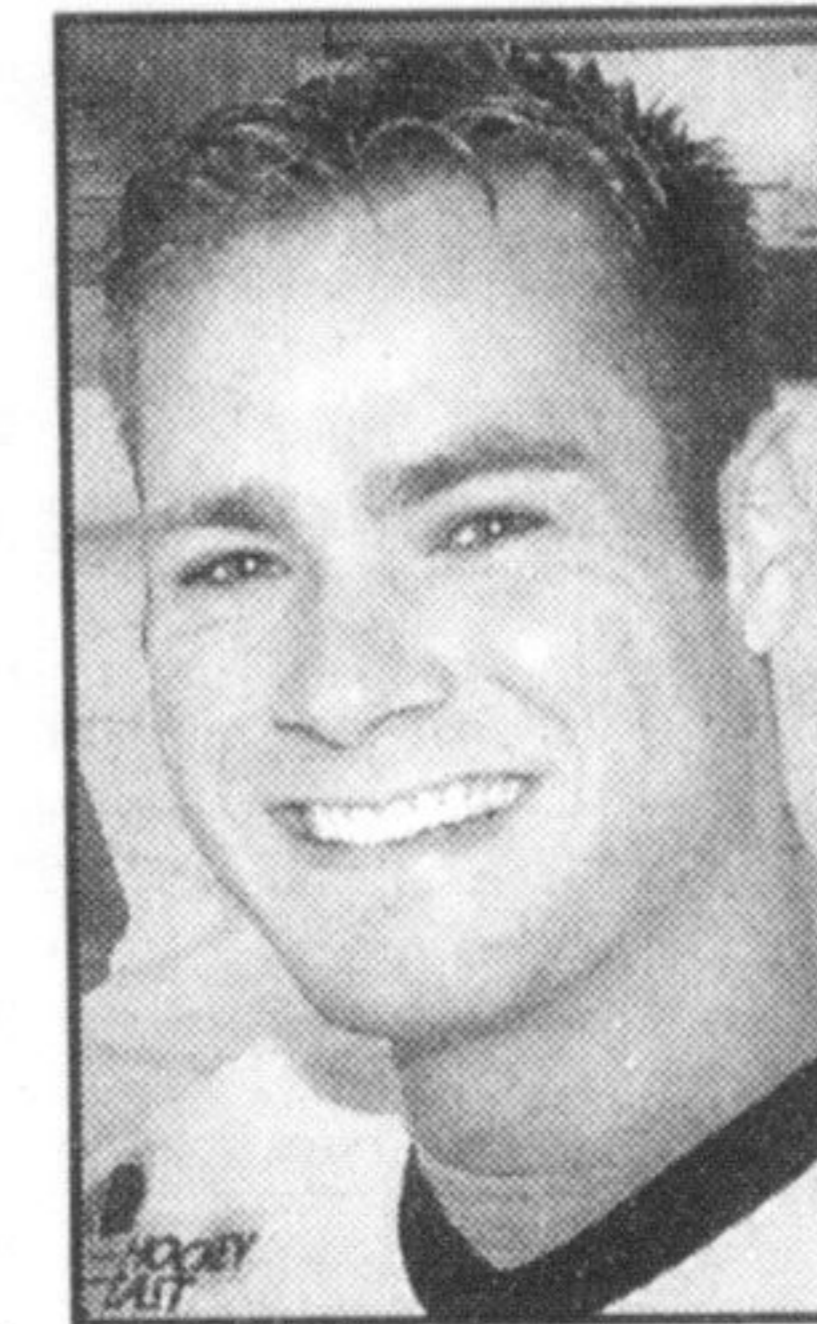
called upon for most important faceoffs in the Jackalopes' end.

Offensively, he contributed 14 goals and 13 assists.

"This being my first year and not knowing what to expect, I thought I did pretty well," said Haydar, who captained the Milton Merchants' 1998 All-Ontario championship drive.

Now Haydar will take the next few months and decide whether or not he wants to continue his tenure in the CHL.

"I'm definitely glad I gave it (semi-pro hockey) a shot, but you're not going to get rich at this level," he said. "I've got some decisions to make about my future. I tried it for a year. Anything after this is just gravy."



Jeff Haydar

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