



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

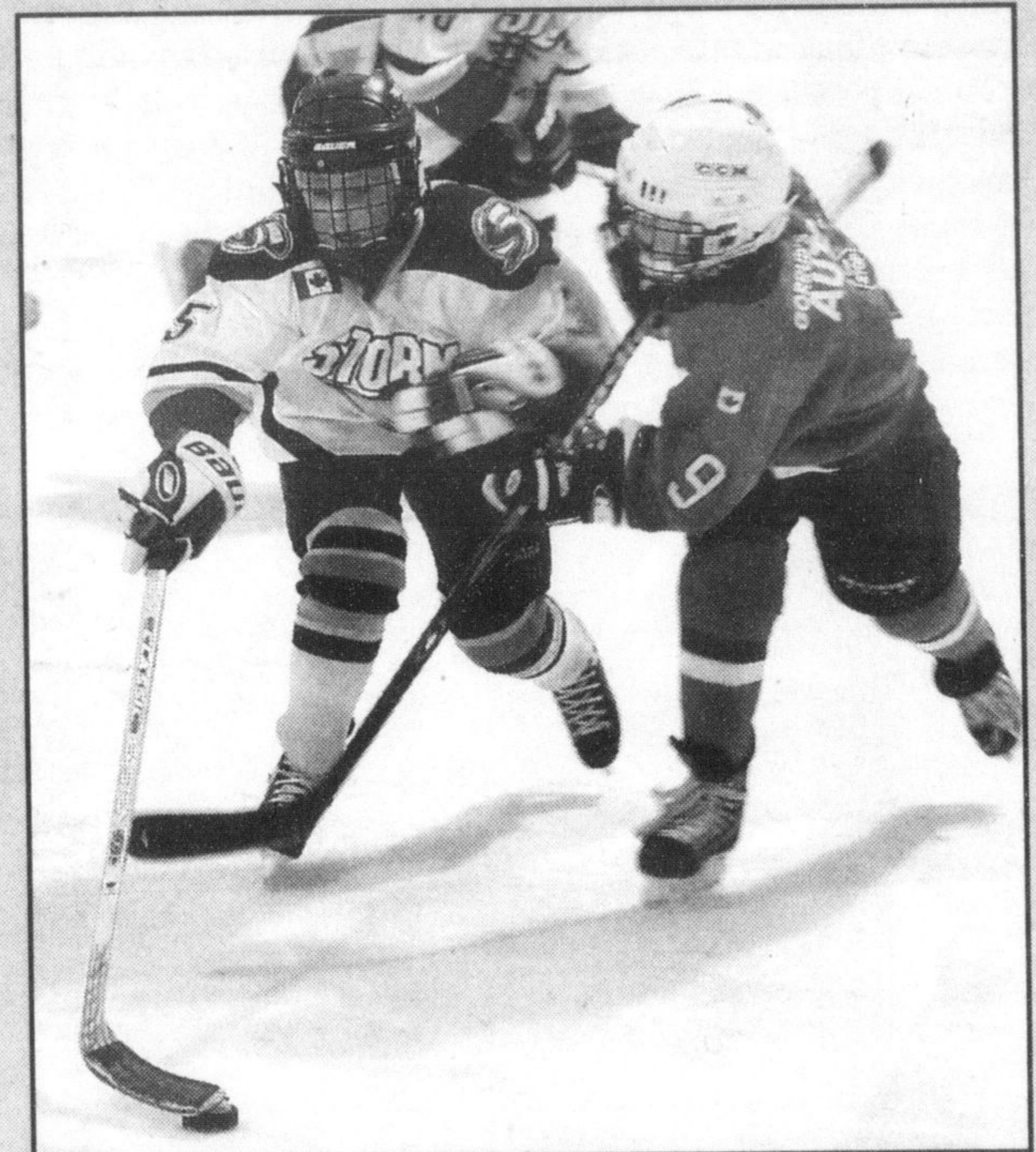
TUESDAY APRIL 9, 2002



Tough finish

Milton major novice Christopher Larkin (at right) battles a Guelph opponent for possession while (at left) fellow Winterhawk Braden Lawther looks on in dismay as Guelph players celebrate a goal en route to a 4-1 win over Milton in the title game of the Optimist Tournament Sunday. Milton's bantams and midgets both won the championship. For full results, see page 25.

Photos by
GRAHAM PAINE



Haydar's stellar season ends in heartbreak

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

It was the double whammy Darren (Mini) Haydar's family, friends and fans feared most.

Milton's most prolific scorer had a shot at two crown jewels last week — the NCAA's national championship and the Hobey Baker — but both slipped through his fingers.

Hopes for the team title were dashed Thursday afternoon during the semifinals, when his New Hampshire Wildcats delivered two dismal periods and were hammered 7-2 by the Maine Black Bears.

Then on Friday, Haydar was edged out of university hockey's top individual honour — as Minnesota defenceman Jordan Leopold got the nod over him and St. Cloud State's Mark Hartigan.

Leopold's Gophers went on to eclipse Maine 4-3 in overtime at the Xcel Energy Centre in St. Paul, Minnesota Saturday evening for the national championship.

Focused much more on the disappointment that came Thursday, Haydar said bowing out in the

semifinals would have been a lot easier to accept if UNH had offered a respectable effort.

That — he admitted — was far from the case.

"It's disappointing," said Haydar Sunday morning from St. Paul. "We had this kind of disappointment in 1999 as well (when team lost to Maine in finals) but this is tougher to swallow because we just didn't play our game."

The Hobey Baker runner-up couldn't pinpoint just when the semifinal clash got away from his Wildcats — although it was sometime during second-period play, when a 2-1 lead evaporated and the momentum swung sharply in the Black Bears' favour.

Said Haydar, "Right from the start (of second period) everything went against us. We just weren't at our best."

The Wildcats — who had beat Maine for the Hockey East title three weeks earlier — looked poised to reach the finals early on when Steve Saviano's shorthanded goal put them ahead 2-1 just before first intermission.

But Maine scored twice in the second to take the lead and dismantled their conference rivals in the third with another four goals.

As for the Hobey Baker Award, Haydar said he wasn't nearly as disappointed at coming up short. He added, "Individual awards are nice, but hockey's a team game. That's why I play it."

The fact that he everything possible to win the award probably has something to do with this acceptance. Haydar's 2001/02 accolades were enough to fill any accomplished player's resume — and then some.

He led the nation in both points (76) and points-per-game (1.95), posted a career-high 17-game point streak, was named an MVP at three different tournaments, was Hockey East Player of the Month for November and December, was the Hockey East Player of the Year and had two-point efforts in both the Hockey East championship game and the quarterfinals of the NCAA tournament.

But as usual, the local star focused on UNH's accomplishments.

"I think so," said Haydar, when asked if he'll be able to look back fondly on this season rather than with disappointment at the way it ended. "We won the Hockey East title and finished 30-7-3. That's pretty good."

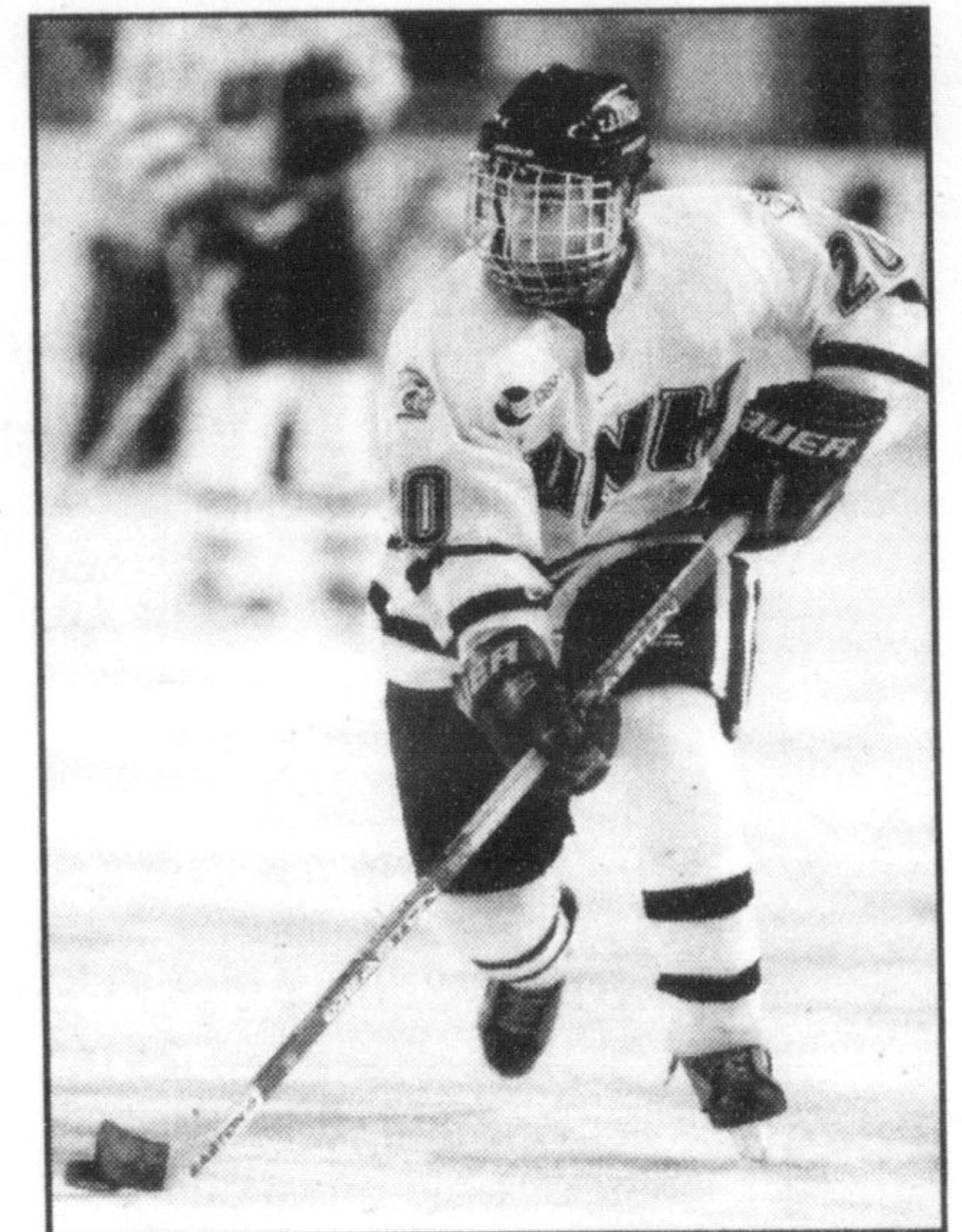
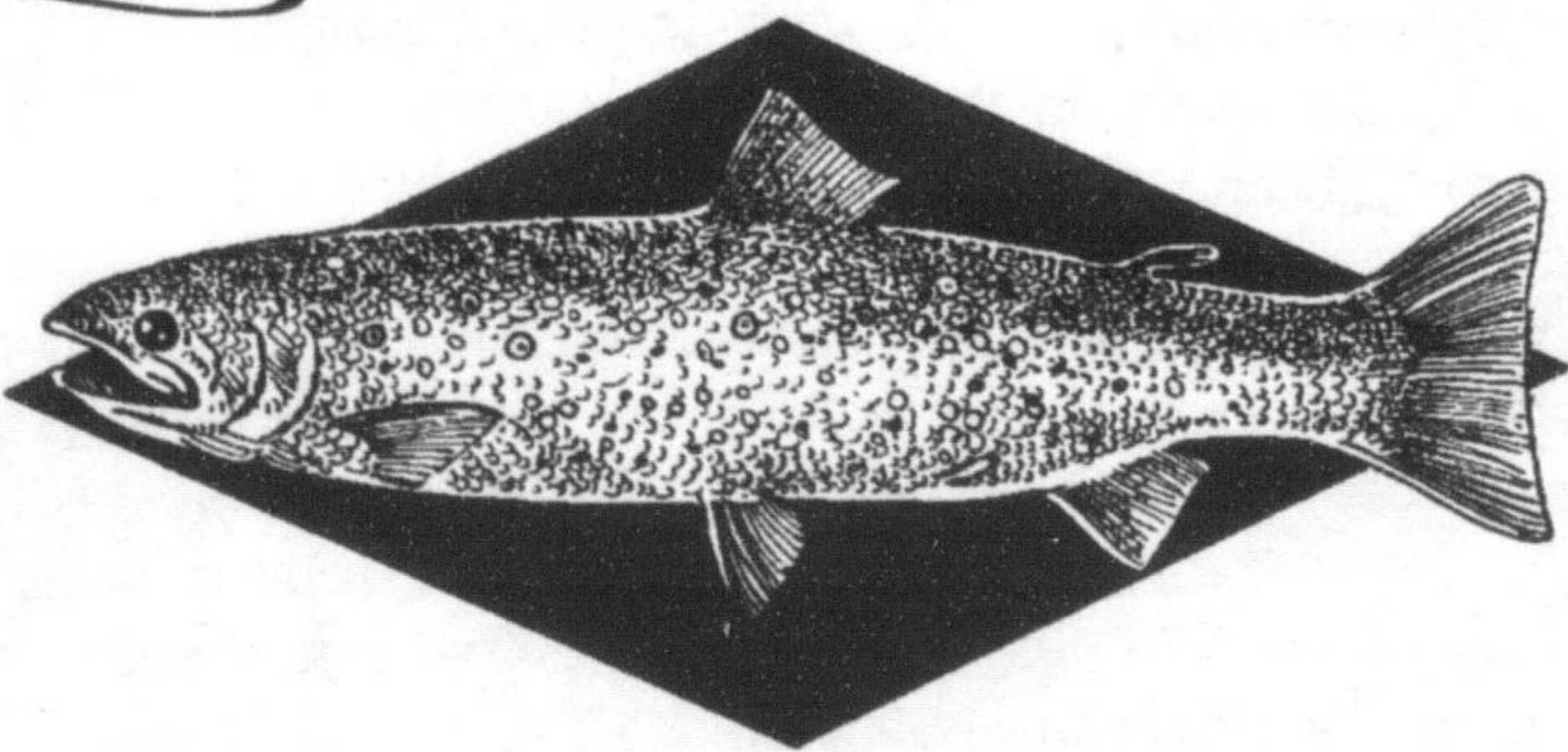


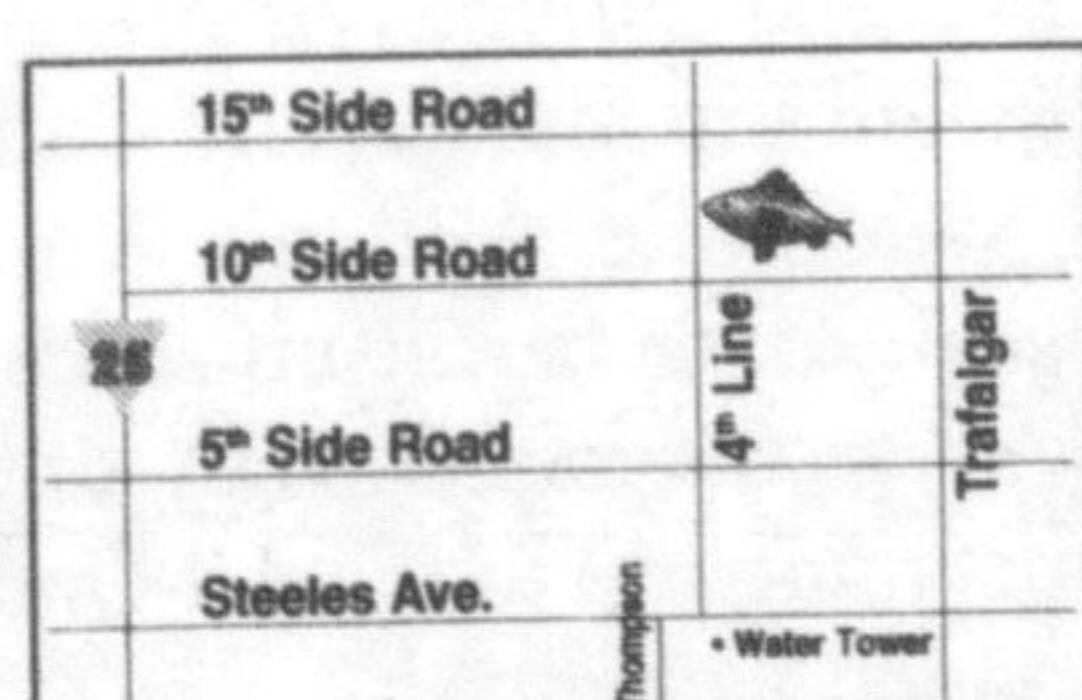
Photo courtesy of UNH

Darren (Mini) Haydar's senior year ended with a disappointing semifinal loss to Maine Thursday.

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