

Macdonald already making impact with Merchants

Milton's lone local boy shines early on

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Craig Macdonald has certainly taken the scenic route to playing for his hometown junior hockey club.

But now that he finally is, the all-purpose forward has made a direct beeline into the spotlight with the Merchants.

At the tender age of 14, Macdonald made a not too surprisingly unsuccessful bid to time the local junior squad, which at the time was laden with seasoned stars and destined for provincial championship gold.

Since then, his on-ice talents have pretty much been showcased south of the border — first at a prep school in New Hampshire with fellow Miltonian Jarrett Konkle and last year with Division 3 Elmira College in Western New York. But in an effort to keep his options open and hopefully make the jump to the NCAA's Division 1, Macdonald has put his post-secondary education on hold for his final year of junior eligibility.

If early-season results and recent school performance are any indication, the move should pay huge dividends.

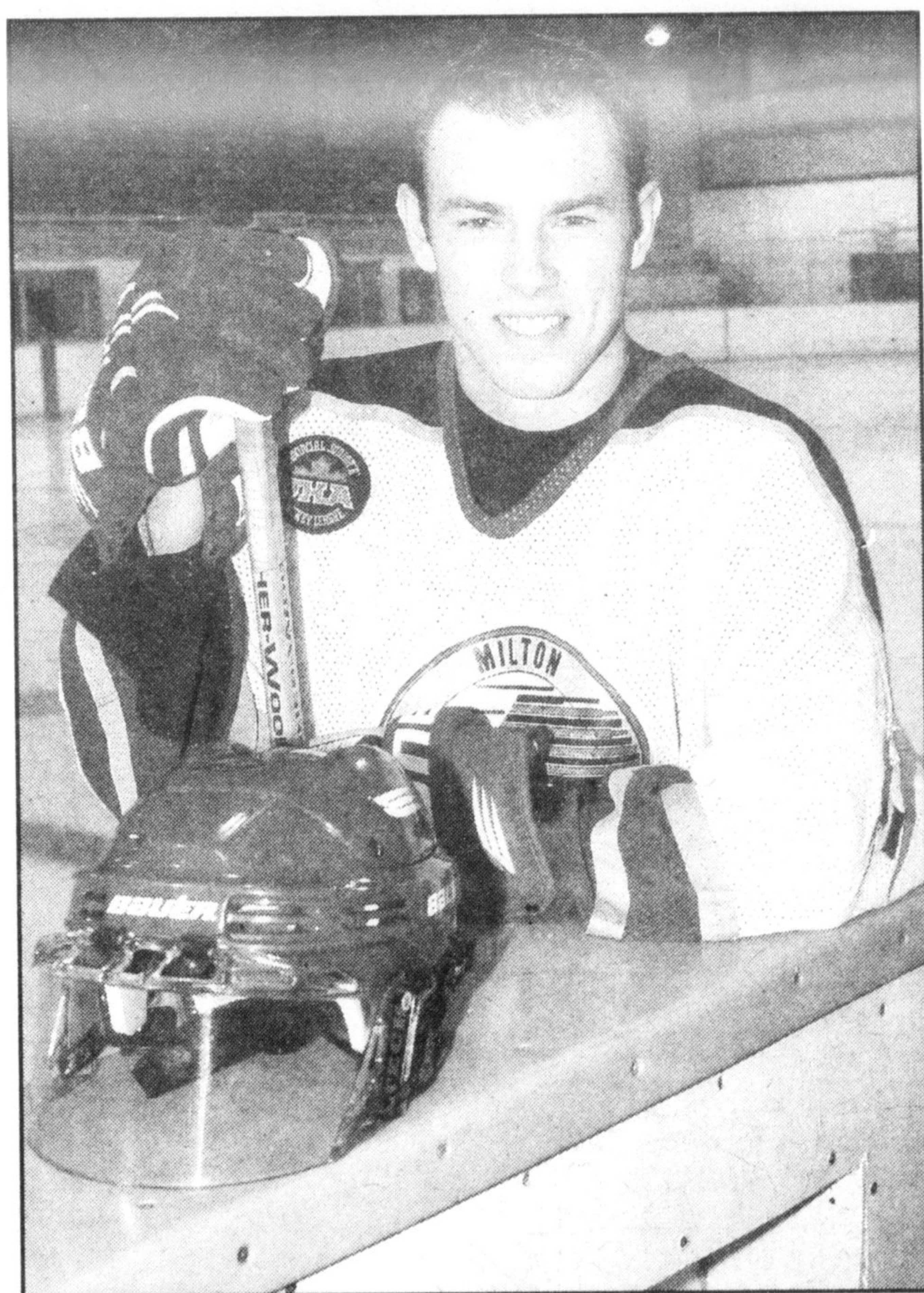
Merchant bench boss Mario Cicchillo said in pre-season that his 6'0", 205 lbs. left winger was too good to be playing Division 3 hockey. And 15 points in eight games has served only to strengthen that claim. A definite Division 1 player. "He's definitely a Division 1 player."

Admitting he's got added motivation now as the only homegrown Merchant, Macdonald has been a model of consistency so far this season — with a goal in each of the first five games and points in all but one outing. However, Milton's quiet leader is quick to point out that he's got a lot of help these days — in particular regular partners Meloche and Vic Oreskovich. He added, "They're great to play with. Rich is really talented and Vic is awesome and he's only an '86. I can't wait to see what he'll be like in a couple of years."

While Macdonald now leads team scoring and is a strong candidate to finish top 10 in the Western Conference points race, he also brings a well-rounded game to the table — not unlike former Merchant captain Jeff Haydar, whom he grew up just three doors down from.

Last Monday in Hamilton marked a prime example of his two-way value. Part of the first-line penalty kill, he helped neutralize the Kilty Bees on two of three short-handed stints before assisting on a big third-period goal to aid in a come-from-behind 3-3 tie. Said Merchants' GM David Brown, "He's a complete two-way player, a complete leader. There's definitely a lot of (school) interest around him."

But while looking forward to resuming his college career, the Merchants' newest local standout is certainly enjoying the present — stating, "It's been great so far, it's really a good fit here this season."



Merchant Craig Macdonald (at far left and left) has been a welcome addition to the team this year with an impressive two-way game. He currently leads team scoring with 15 points.

Photos by
GRAHAM PAINE

Mustangs edged

Friday afternoon's steady downpour wasn't the only thing that dampened the Milton District High School senior football team's week-two performance.

A Lester B. Pearson touchdown inside the final two minutes of play spoiled the host Mustangs' victory party. The 17-14 defeat - which was capped with Taylor Coulombe's last-second field goal attempt being blocked — dropped the local seniors to 1-1.

While Pearson's winning major was delivered with an end-zone pass, weather conditions kept both squads grounded for much of the contest. The Mustangs nursed their slim lead for an entire half before finally being vanquished. A huge kick-off return in the last minute-and-a-half by Todd Arrudda - who delivered the first touchdown on a huge 60-yard dash - put them in a position to tie it up.

Brandon Byers scored the other TD, his third of the season, to complete an effective second-quarter drive and put the hosts ahead 14-9. Coulombe made good on both convert kicks but was denied on the field goal — which was just the opposite of his week-one efforts against T.A. Blakelock.

Pearson connected on a two-point convert after securing the winning touchdown and also scored a safety in the opening minutes of play Friday.

MD's defense was sturdy for the most part and forced a couple of turnovers to factor into a thoroughly entertaining afternoon. The Mustangs begin a two-game road trip Friday against Burlington Central.

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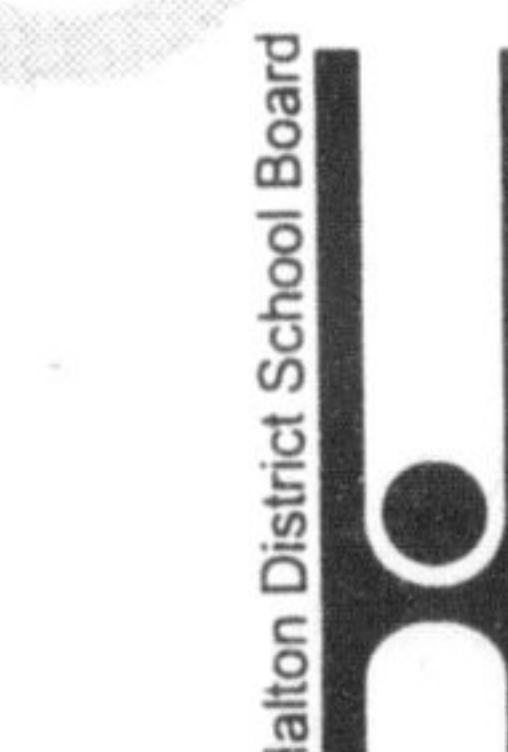
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Correction due

A sports story in Friday's Champion contained outdated information.

It was reported that Scott Bertoli had landed a tryout with the AHL's Milwaukee Admirals, which was originally true. However, due to the high number of contracted players been assigned to Milwaukee from Nashville, including fellow Miltonian Darren Haydar, Bertoli was sent back to the ECHL's Trenton Titans before the Admirals' camp began Friday.

The Champion apologizes for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.