



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Haydar seems ready for challenge of AHL

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Darren Haydar's offensive consistency will no doubt be his greatest ally in a now burgeoning quest to crack the NHL.

But a big-picture perspective is high on the list as well. It would certainly be easy for the 2002 Hobey Baker finalist to get excited about a five-goals-in-three-games exhibition campaign with the American Hockey League's Milwaukee Admirals.

But the Nashville Predator hopeful and AHL freshman won't allow himself to get carried away with a little pre-season success.

"A lot of (AHL) teams weren't finalized yet, they were still waiting for guys to be sent down," remarked Haydar, who officially made the team Wednesday and begins regular season play tomorrow night against the San Antonio Rampage.

Nevertheless, Haydar's exhibition efforts — highlighted by a hat-trick in an 8-1 rout of the Chicago Wolves October 2 — have definitely been well-received by head coach Peter Horachek.

Said Milwaukee's first-year bench boss, "Darren's making the progression to the AHL pretty well. He's got good instincts offensively and he's working hard. We're pretty pleased with him."

Horachek expects the former Milton Merchant star to begin the year at right wing — where he's presently toiling on the third line — but says a move back to his main university post of centre isn't out of the question.

"I can see using him in a number of dif-



Darren Haydar

ferent situations," the Admirals' skipper added.

Last Friday, Haydar capped a productive pre-season stand with a third-period goal to help dispose of the Grand Rapids Griffins 4-2. That pushed his exhibition scoring streak to three games and marked the fifth consecutive pro hockey contest in which he's lit the lamp — having potted a goal in each outing of Nashville's two-game pre-exhibition clash with Columbus last month before being assigned to Milwaukee.

So what's the key now for NHL-minded Haydar?

"It's going to be about opportunity. There's a lot of guys here in the same boat as me. It's about who's given the chance and what they do with it," he stressed. "It's about getting myself in the right spots at the right time."

A Royal court clash

Bishop Reding's Nicole Gooding dribbles past this T.A. Blakelock opponent during senior girls basketball play in Oakville Thursday. The Royals were edged 36-34 and fell to 1-1 on the season.

Photo by BARRIE ERSKINE

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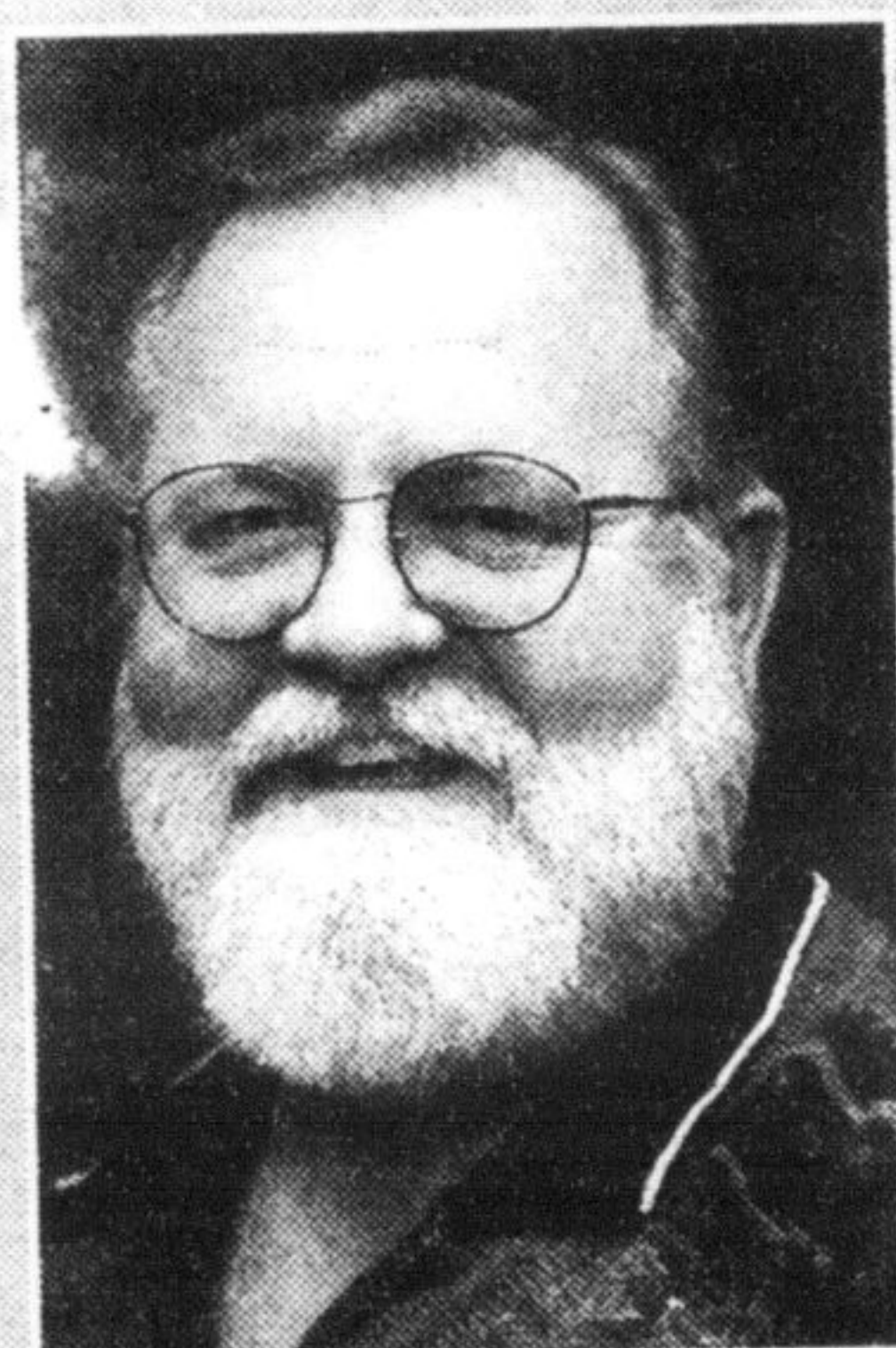
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