

Haydar just 'enjoying moment' in AHL

Milton star not worried about when next call-up to Nashville will come

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Darren (Mini) Haydar is getting a little antsy these days — but not for the reason many might think.

During a Wednesday afternoon interview, Milton's NHL hopeful misunderstood what was being asked by "Are you getting tired of playing the waiting game?"

His response — while not the one expected — was a clear indication of just where his focus lies.

Evidently his impatience has to do with when his AHL Milwaukee Admirals are going to start enjoying some sustained success rather than when he can expect to find himself in the NHL.

"It's been frustrating. Every time it seems like we've (Milwaukee) turned a corner, we fall back," said the star winger, who made a couple of one-game appearances with Nashville in November and December. "We haven't put it all

together yet."

When the 'waiting game' question was clarified to mean the time before his next call-up to the Predators, Haydar simply said, "Oh — that's out of my control. I can't think about that too much or it'll affect my game here (in Milwaukee)."

"I've got to concentrate on where I am now. Besides, I've got a lot of time left. Hopefully I'll get more of an opportunity (with Nashville) next year." It's that attention to the moment that has allowed the Merchants' all-time leading scorer to maintain his star status since his jump from the NCAA to the AHL.

While Milwaukee has been plagued by inconsistency in recent weeks — not enjoying a win streak longer than two games since the start

of January — Haydar hasn't missed a beat in terms of individual success.

Heading into tonight's home game against Cincinnati, he sits first on the team and tied for fifth overall in scoring with 24 goals and 39 assists in 56 games. He's currently the AHL's top-producing rookie, while his plus-23 rating is among the best in the league.

"Positioning has been my biggest improvement this year," said the 2002 Hobey Baker finalist, who among his many season highlights was a two-goal effort at the All-Star Game — just a few hours after undergoing a root canal. "I'm not running around as much and that makes it easier (to capitalize on scoring chances)."

Despite having played about twice as many games as he did at this point last year with New Hampshire University, Haydar says he hasn't 'hit the wall' yet.

"Everybody gets a little tired around the 50 to 60-game mark, but

that's hockey," he said. "You've just got to find ways to recuperate each week."

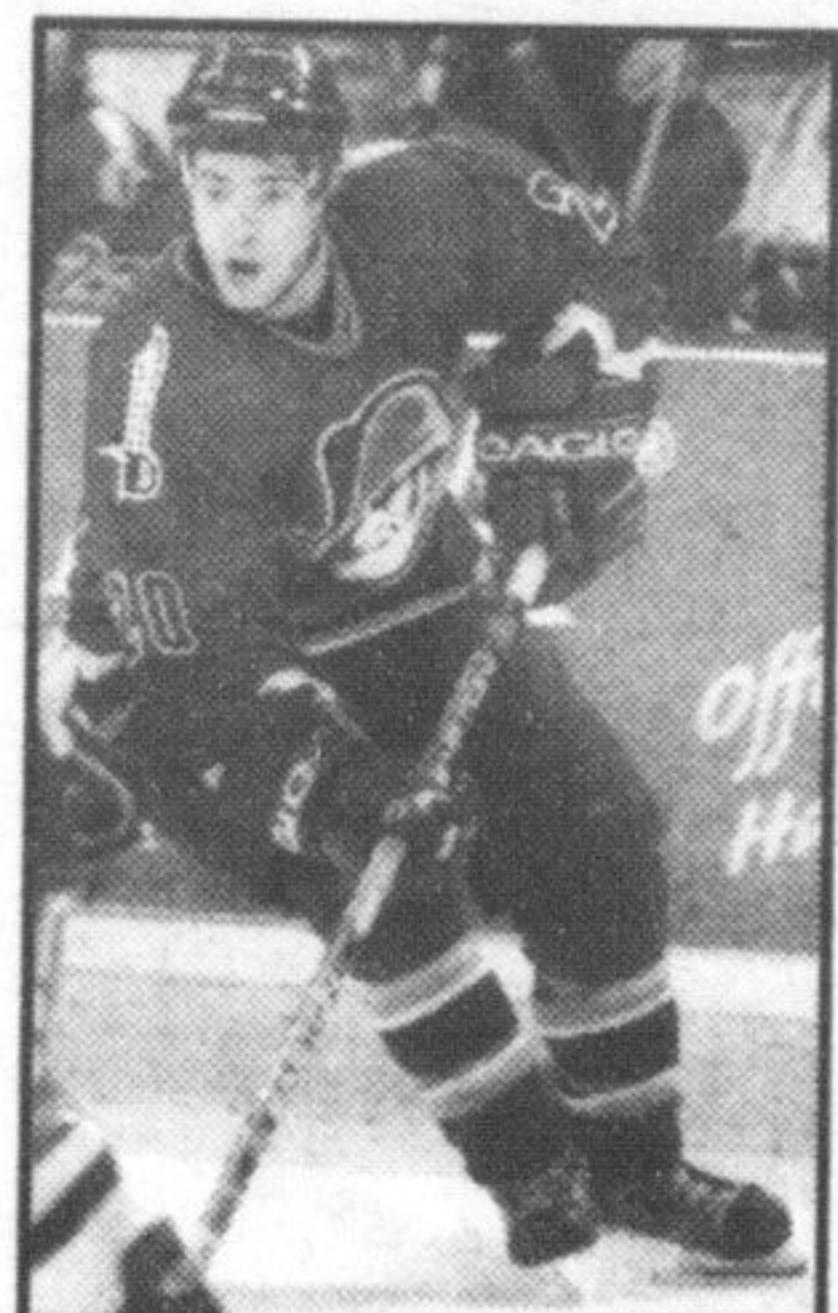
Milwaukee is in the midst of a big stretch against many of its division foes and has a golden opportunity to move up the standings. They currently hold the eighth of 10 playoff spots in the Western Conference with a 24-21-12-4 record, after trimming Houston 3-2 Wednesday night.

Haydar would like nothing better right now than to help the Admirals secure a post-season berth — something they failed to do last season.

Beyond that, he'll just enjoy the moment and take whatever comes.

And what should eventually come — according to Nashville assistant general manager Ray Shero — is a sustained stay in the NHL.

"His time and opportunity will come," Shero recently told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "Right now, he's really enjoying the moment here. He's got the vision, he's got the hands, he's just got the instinct to make plays with the puck. This has been a great story for Milwaukee."



Darren Haydar

'A' peewees still perfect

Milton's A major peewees drew a step closer to clinch a berth to the Tri County finals by doubling up Arthur 4-2 Tuesday night.

Parker Mott proved to be the great equalizer, as the Liebert Canada Winterhawks were out-shot 35-20 but still managed to pull out the victory and improve to 3-0 in round-robin play.

Confident from a recent 8-1 shellacking of Orangeville — highlighting by a Daniel Lewandowski hat-trick — Milton came out strong with Jordan Haggart scoring on a set-up by Kyle Johnson and Duffer Black.

Two goals in the final minute of the second period gave the local lads a lead that would stand up the rest of the way, with Brad Mazzocato adding a little insurance at crunch time. Lewandowski and Eric Gottwald scored goals two and three.

The A major peewees took on Fergus last night and battle Acton tomorrow afternoon.

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