

Lizon's Tigres in tough

The Victoriaville Tigres have no illusions about their chances in first-round Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) playoff action this spring.

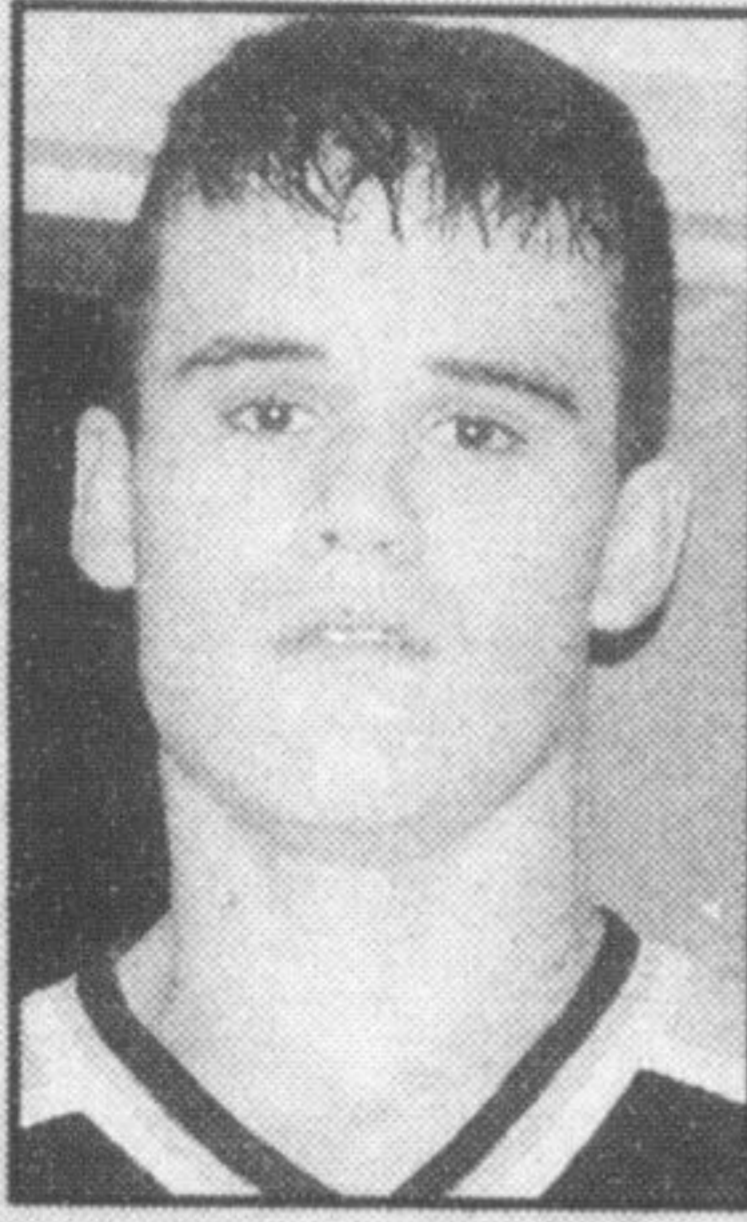
Simply unable to match up in terms of skill or firepower with the Quebec Remparts — who finished 26 points ahead in the regular season and have four players with 30 or more goals — the Tigres know that a physically punishing approach is their only legitimate shot at playing the spoiler.

That's where Miltonian Erick Lizon comes in.

The six-foot-four-inch, 210-pound right winger has been throwing the body and dropping the gloves with equal frequency since joining junior hockey's highest rung at the end of November. He'll have to do more of the same for Victoriaville to even keep things respectable, much less pull off an upset.

"We've got to play in-your-face hockey, throw the body around and get these guys worried," remarked the 19-year-old, who begins post-season play tonight. "A wide-open game will kill us."

From a mental preparation standpoint, Lizon said his 26-36-4-4 Tigres have to remember that it's a brand new season now — as well as the fact that they tied the 38-22-5-5 Remparts twice this year, once in Quebec.



Erick Lizon

"We've got to keep that in our minds," said the towering winger, who spent the first part of the season with the Tier 2 Jr. A Streetsville Derbys.

While limping into the playoffs with just two wins in its 10 eight games, Victoriaville has played .500 hockey overall since Lizon's arrival — a fairly credible feat for a team with little offensive spark.

And while the Tigres' chances of advancing are slim at best, their Milton forward won't be too broken up about a short-lived playoff run.

After all, he wasn't going to see a lengthy run in Streetsville either — and was never expected to reach the Major-Junior ranks in the first place.

"I think I did pretty good this season, especially after sitting out last year. Hey, 13 fights and 11 points — that's a decent half-season."

Reid and 67s look to corral Barrie Colts in first round

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

Elgin Reid's second season in the OHL has featured more of just about everything — points, fights, ice time, you name it.

The proverbial icing on the cake now would be a little more playoff success. Needless to say, Milton's 18-year-old defenceman is hoping for a longer run than last spring, when his Ottawa 67s buckled under and dropped their first-round series to Brampton in seven games.

Standing in their way now are the Barrie Colts, who hosted game one last night and have home-ice advantage tomorrow evening as well.

However, the 67s won three of the four meetings between the two teams in regular season play — including one at the Molson Centre — and headed into the playoffs having lost just once in their last eight games.

"Yeah, we're on a good roll — especially after being so inconsistent for most of the year," noted the six-foot, 180-pound blueliner, who finished the year with a goal and 13 assists after registering just a single helper as a rookie.

Logging a great deal of playing time since returning from a shoulder injury in late December, Reid now

finds himself on the ice for crucial situations on a nightly basis.

"Killer (coach Brian Kilrea) has me out in the final few minutes a lot nowadays, and overall I think our defense has been really tough in front of our own net. Opponents think twice about getting in there to create traffic."

And when he's not standing guys up at the blueline, Ottawa's 2003 first-round draft pick has been standing up for teammates — namely with his fists.

"It's not that I want to become known as a fighter, but if one of my teammates in trouble I'll step in there," said Reid, who's had a handful of slugfest since returning from sickbay, including one against Barrie's B.J. Crombeen March 4. "Hey, it's part of the game."

The Eastern Conference's highest scoring club this season with a 244 goals, 34-26-7-1 Ottawa had no trouble lighting the lamp against Barrie this year — doing so 17 times in four games.

"We've got to drive the net hard and take advantage of our opportunities," stressed Reid. "And we can't take anything for granted if we get a lead (like last year). We've got to realize that it's a whole different season and every team thinks that because they made the playoffs they've got a shot at the Memorial Cup."



Elgin Reid

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Peewee 'Canes continue OMHA medal run, thanks to locals' efforts

Halton's AAA peewees added to their seemingly endless OMHA medal haul last weekend, securing bronze at Georgetown's Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena Sunday morning.

That makes five straight years that the Hurricanes have ended their OMHA run in victory — capturing either gold or bronze. And as always, a local contingent factored heavily into their prosperity.

While Brandon Denham was still out nursing a sprained ankle, fellow Miltonians Jake Davis and Michael Sgarbossa showed strongly all weekend — including during Halton's 2-1 bronze-medal triumph over Oakville.

Sgarbossa set up the initial tally late in the second period, while he and Davis — linemates all season — helped preserve the narrowest of leads with a couple of shifts in the final two minutes of play.

The host Hurricanes scored just a minute-and-a-half apart and then hung on to nip Oakville for the second time in as many encounters at the five-team tournament.

Overall, the two local forwards combined for 10 points in Georgetown, getting on the scoresheet in each of four round-robin games — resulting in 4-3 and 4-2 decisions over Oakville and Niagara and identical 4-2 losses to Markham and eventual champion York-Simcoe.

"They were an intricate part of our success and showed lots of hustle all weekend, just like they did throughout the year," said

head coach Al McCrae. "And Brandon (Denham) certainly played a big role for us before his injury. We really missed his size and versatility this weekend."

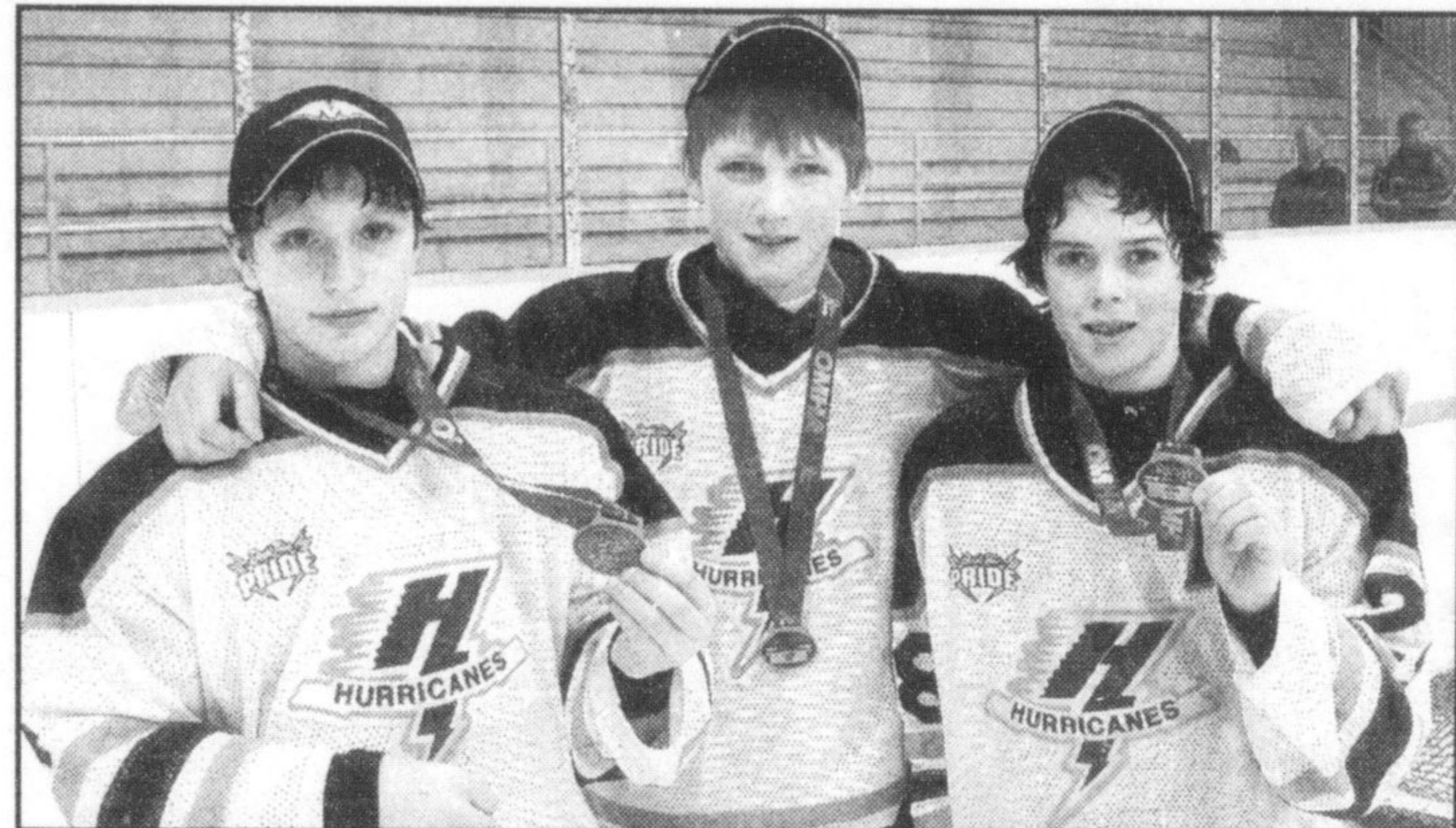
Sunday's bronze-medal win highlighted a thoroughly impressive season that saw the Hurricanes go 30-2-4 during the regular season, thanks in part to 88 and 87-point campaigns by Davis and Sgarbossa respectively.

Splitting his time between the wing and defence, Denham was no slouch in the scoring department either, collecting 45 points while offering a substantial physical presence.

Said assistant coach Rob Davis, "These are three top-level athletes."

The Hurricanes now have three OMHA bronze medals to complement their two golds — the latest of which was secured last year with a 3-2 nail-biter over host Whitby.

"We seem to end every year in victory, whether it be for gold or bronze," said McCrae. "We're perennial



Miltonians (from left) Michael Sgarbossa, Brandon Denham and Jake Davis celebrate their OMHA bronze-medal win with the peewee Hurricanes.

contenders."

Meanwhile, the atom Hurricanes — who include goalie Kevin Entmaa and gritty forward Liam Robinson of Milton — will look to add to the organization's success this weekend at their own OMHA championships in Whitby.

They advanced to the tournament with a rather surprisingly efficient five-game win over powerhouse Hamilton earlier this month.

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