

Sports

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Longtime teammates set to join ECHL

Macdonald and Konkle ink deals with expansion Roadrunners

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Why mess with success? Jarrett Konkle and Craig Macdonald have thrived as hockey teammates since they were pre-teens, and saw no reason why that on-ice prosperity had to end just because they're now done school.

The 22-year-old Miltonians — who flourished with the NCAA's Division 3 Elmira College, finishing one-two in ECAC West Conference scoring last season — recently inked one-year contracts with the expansion ECHL Phoenix Roadrunners.

Hooking up with a minor-league pro team was always a possibility, said Macdonald, but getting a call from the Roadrunners so soon after finishing up with Elmira was a welcome surprise.

"I came home one day and had a message waiting from coach (Ron) Filion," recalled the 6'1", 211 lbs. playmaking centre, who enjoyed a brief tenure with his hometown juniors in 2002 before returning to Elmira. "It took the stress off for the summer and it feels great to be turning pro."

Choosing to leave his options open, Konkle took a little longer to sign with Phoenix. But the prospect of continuing to play with his longtime friend and teammate — in a year-round warm-weather climate no less — was just too appealing to pass up.

"We've had a lot of success together and hopefully that'll continue," said the 6', 193 lbs. winger, who played with Macdonald with the AAA Halton Hurricanes and at a New Hampshire prep school before Elmira College.

The Phoenix-bound locals were models of consistency throughout their college days, averaging a point or more per game pretty much the whole four years — with Konkle amassing 41 points in 26 games last season, just seven more than Macdonald collected in one less contest.



Craig Macdonald (left) and Jarrett Konkle will be side-by-side again this season with the ECHL Phoenix Roadrunners.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

They're no strangers to team success either, having led Elmira to the ECAC championship in 2003.

Konkle and Macdonald got a sneak peak at what the minor-league pro game will be like back in the spring, when they played the last seven games with the Elmira Jackals of the United Hockey League.

"So what are the big differences between the NCAA and pro hockey?"

"The speed and size of the players," Macdonald said. "I think the smallest guy on our roster right now is six feet."

With that in mind, Konkle — the more natural scorer of the two — knows he's

going to have to get stronger around the net in order to keep burying the biscuit.

He said, "That's something I've been working on this summer, trying to improve my stability and balance."

Filion sees a big upside in having the longtime teammates in his lineup, adding, "Even though they didn't play Division 1 they still made their mark in the NCAA in a big way. They have huge offensive skills and should be able to contribute right off the bat. We're excited to have them coming to Phoenix."

While the new Roadrunners are set to join fellow Miltonian Scott Bertoli in the ECHL, they won't face him during the regular season, since Phoenix and Bertoli's reigning Kelly Cup champion Trenton Titans play in different conferences.

Milton's ECHL trio head to camp at the end of the month.

Locally-trained colt equals world record

In only his second lifetime start, Glidemaster equaled the world record for two-year-old trotting colts last Tuesday night at Mohawk.

Driven by Acton's Trevor Ritchie, Glidemaster went wire-to-wire from the outside post position 10 in a sizzling mile of 1:55.3 — matching the standard established by the great Mack Lobell in 1987 and equalled by Kennans Max in 2003 and Ken Warkentin last year.

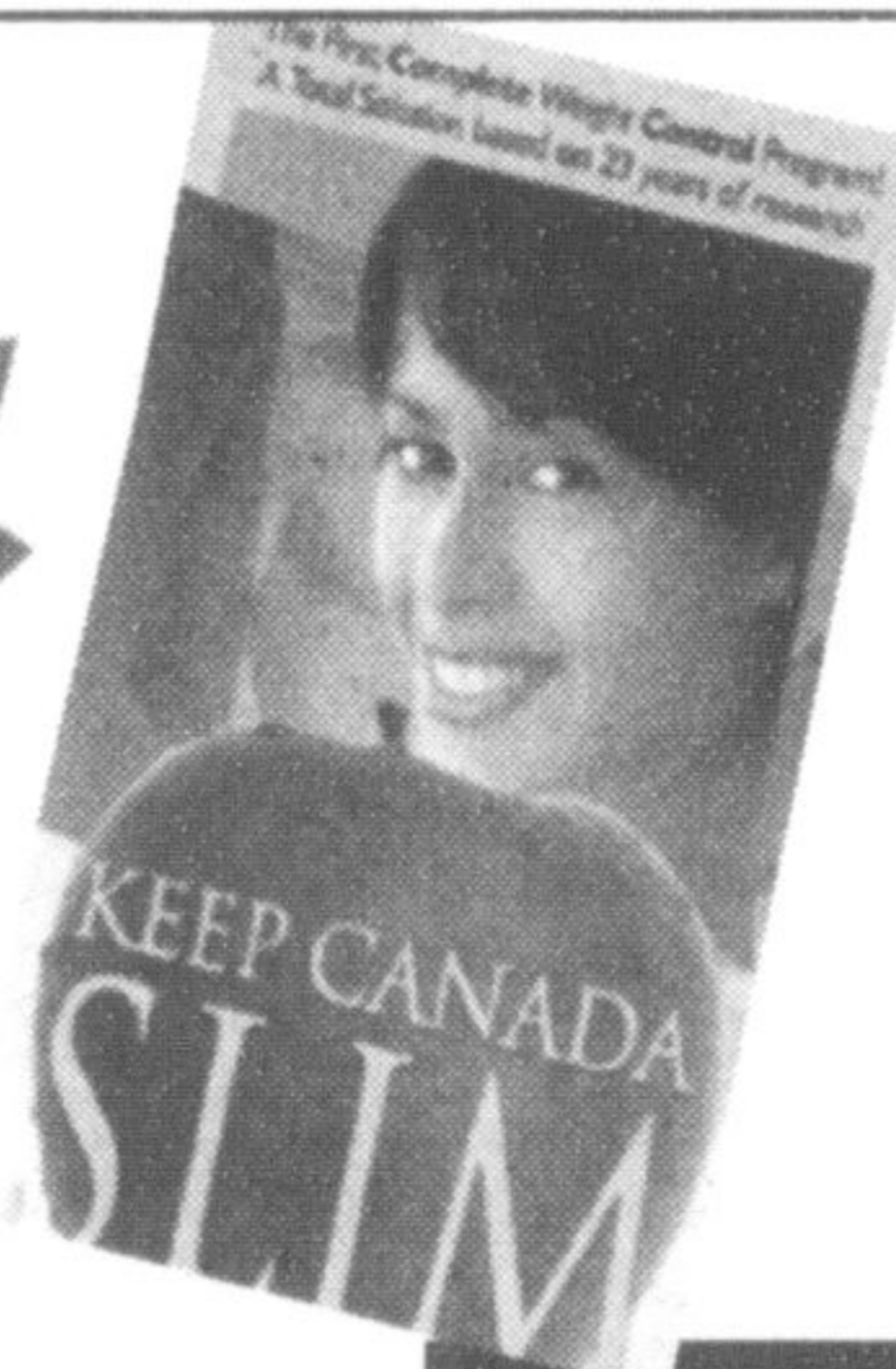
It also lowered Mohawk's track record by one-fifth of a second that was also held by Ken Warkentin.

It was the second victory in as many starts for Glidemaster, trained by Blair Burgess for owners Robert Burgess and Karin Olsson Burgess of Campbellville, and New Jersey's Marsha Cohen.

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