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THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Mike Rusk poised to score ultimate goal as NHL draft pick

By MURRAY TOWNSEND  
Special to The Champion

SOMETIME THIS SATURDAY, Milton's Mike Rusk will take yet another step toward fulfilling his dream of playing in the National Hockey League.

He'll be in Quebec city along with hundreds of other draft eligibles waiting for his name to be called. He won't have to wait as long as some because the league's Central Scouting Bureau has him listed at around 83rd spot in their rankings of North American players.

Add in Europeans, and 18-year-old Rusk, who played defence last year with the Guelph Storm in the QHL, could go somewhere in the middle rounds.

Or he could go even higher.

The Central Scouting Bureau is a secretive branch of the NHL that ranks the players and provides scouting reports to the teams. Around this time, they also release some of that information to the media.

An NHL scout was kind enough to go through some of his report: "Good skater, both forwards and back... good fluid skater... good shot from the point... tends to pass off to teammates instead of shooting (that's okay, said the scout because it shows he's not selfish)... not overly physical but angles the man out of the play..."

### Gained weight

The media report adds a number of other factors, all of them positive. Good timing when passing... can stickhandle into open to make the pass... steady play in his own end... good coverage in front of the net... can carry puck out of danger... good poke-checker... always in the game... good work habits... adjusts well to game situations and seldom makes bad plays.

Not able to find any weakness, the scout reported that, "It looks like he's going to have to fill out some."

His size is listed as 6-1, 175 pounds.

But, that's kind of like those bumper stickers that say, "I'm fat, but you're ugly, and I can lose weight."

Rusk can put on the weight and he has. More on that later, but he's now closer to 6-2 and weighs in at 190 pounds.

That alone could move him up in the draft rankings, maybe quite a bit. "If that's true, I'd like to see that," said the scout of the weight increase.

Rusk has been interviewed by a number of teams including San Jose, Toronto, Vancouver and Pittsburgh, and will be talking to Winnipeg before the draft. The two that Rusk thinks are most interested are San Jose and Pittsburgh.

Rusk doesn't care where he goes. "Any team will be fine. I just want to play anywhere."

Born and raised in Milton, Rusk played minor hockey here until he was about 12 before moving to a rep team in Mississauga. Later, he played Tier 2 hockey for Muskoka. "Just to get away and try handling things on my own."

### Second round OHL pick

Last year, the Guelph Storm made him the first player selected in the second round of the OHL draft.

"That's the highest we've ever selected a defenceman," said Guelph general manager, Mike Kelly. "We saw qualities in him that we obviously liked, both technical wise and personality wise. He's a kid with big-time potential. Based on what he gave us last year we haven't been disappointed. He's going to be an outstanding junior player and probably



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE  
Mike Rusk has a clear goal and this weekend's NHL draft could make it a reality. The Milton native is hoping to be picked up by an NHL team and has been working most of his life to get there.

an excellent pro."

Rusk earned 18 points for Guelph in his rookie year, three goals and fifteen assists, along with 82 penalty minutes. He's not really a defensive defenceman but in his first OHL season he concentrated more on keeping the puck out of his own net. He patterns himself after his idol, Ray Bourque of the Boston Bruins, who's well known for being able to play at both ends of the rink.

"Next year, I'll go more for offence. I'll shoot for around 60 points and try to be among the top five defencemen in scoring."

Guelph GM, Kelly doesn't think there's

much standing in his way, echoing and expanding on some of the Central Scouting reports. "He's an outstanding skater and can see the ice as well as anyone in the league. His shot is very quick, very heavy and very accurate. If there's anything lacking, it might have been strength."

Rusk, however, has some strengths that will overcome the lack of perceived strength. It's called determination and character.

"He was only a rookie," said Kelly, "but one that had a lot of respect from his teammates, including the veterans."

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## Dubien earns spot on national team

Damien Dubien has pitched his way onto the Canadian national baseball team for the second year in a row in a bid to represent this country at the 1996 Olympics.

The former E. C. Drury High School student is attending Duquesne University in Pittsburgh on an athletic scholarship.

He repeated last year's success at a tryout camp over the weekend, being chosen among nine out of 16 pitchers looking for a spot on the team.

As a member of Team Canada the 20-



year-old left Canada yesterday headed for Rotterdam, Netherlands, to play in the World Harbour Tournament. The team will be back in Canada to meet the American national team at SkyDome on July 7.

The summer's schedule will also include the World University Games at Buffalo, N.Y., and another match-up with team U.S.A., this time in Alabama. The season's highlight will be the world qualifier in Nicaragua.

## Hanley wins at Sauble Speedway

Junior Hanley sizzled to victory at Sauble Speedway in the recent GM Goodwrench Tour's TNT Roofing 100.

The Campbellville native started 15th and took the lead from Dave Whitlock just before the half-way mark with an impressive inside move on the back stretch. The win at the tight quarter mile oval was his fourth in seven starts.

"During qualifying last night, I had a vibration in the rear end and spent a good part of the night searching for the problem. All I could find was a warped crown gear — it didn't do it today, so I guess that was what the problem was," the two-time defending GM Goodwrench Tour Champion said.

Chevrolet pilot and 1992 Bosch Rookie of the Year, Kim Wallace of Peterborough was second after starting last in the 22 car field, with Shelburne, Vermont's Kevin Lepage crossing the line third. Lepage, who was also in a Ford, challenged Hanley for the lead around the 60th circuit, but found that he had used up his tires to get the second place. He elected to pit on a lap 63 caution for fresh right side rubber.

Hanley came second to Brampton's Bill Zardo Sr. at Flamboro Speedway on June 11. Both drivers have had considerable experience at the local track but that day it was Zardo who would win the 100-lap event.

Until he ran out of brakes with less than 10 laps remaining, Hanley had chased the leader over the last quarter of the event.