



# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

**HARVEY'S**  
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420 Main St.



MARCH 30, 1997



**"We didn't play with the structure we have over the past few weeks. We were real spotty in the neutral zone and on defence."**  
.....  
**GREGG CARRIGAN**

## Not there yet

## Merchants finally lose one in series

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

Special to The Champion

Spectators at Victoria Park Arena Tuesday witnessed a rare and unexplained phenomena that could rival Haley's Comet or the recently visible Hale-Bopp.

For the first time in two months, the Merchants suffered defeat. The 4-3 loss, courtesy of the Bramalea Blues, marks the only blemish on Milton's 11-1 playoff campaign.

It also brought an 18-game unbeaten streak to a halt and prevented a West Conference finals sweep.

Making their last stand, the Blues showed enthusiasm for the first time in the series and finally got a decent performance out of goalie Bobby DaCosta. The Merchants by contrast weren't mentally sharp and spent much of the evening fighting the puck with mid-ice turnovers and blown scoring chances.

"We didn't play with the structure we have over the past few weeks. We were real spotty in the neutral zone and on defence," commented president Gregg Carrigan, whose club led the best-of-seven showdown 3-1 at press time. "We haven't practiced since the series began and that was evident tonight (Tuesday)."

Milton was hit with a double-whammy in game four. In addition to losing the tilt, Jeff Haydar sustained a lacerated right pinkie late in the second. The 19-year-old lost the end of the finger and will be out for one to two weeks.

The local forward had come to the forefront as of late, scoring goals and winning face-offs

• see **A LACK** on page 16

# Ridley twins steal more than bases

*Pair proving to be quite a hit in first year at Ball State*

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

Special to The Champion

**T**WO ADDITIONS TO THE National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have college pitchers seeing double this season.

After a stellar high school campaign with the Milton District Mustangs, including last year's Bob Prentice/Blue Jay Cup championship team, 19-year-old twin brothers Jeremy and Shayne Ridley are together again at Ball State University (BSU) in Muncie, Indiana.

Although freshmen in a talent-rich program, both are seeing significant playing time with the Cardinals in the highly competitive Mid American Conference (MAC).

Second-year head coach Rich Maloney initially told Jeremy he would platoon at second base with sophomore Matt Bullock, but his office started him in 10 of their first 13 games.

The Miltonian has swung a hot stick near the bottom of the lineup with a .350 batting average that includes two doubles and a home-run against the University of North Carolina.

"I've stolen five bases so far as well. Speed is something we (Shayne and I) focused on in fall ball and now the coaching staff is basically giving us the green light," said Jeremy, who along with his brother enjoys a partial scholarship at BSU. "Coach Maloney is now telling me that the starter's job could be mine if I keep producing."

Consistency in the field will determine Jeremy's status this year. Maloney said the rookie has "good infield actions" in his pre-season report, but will need regular testing to mature.

Power and versatility will be keys to Shayne seeing major action this spring. The more offensively sound of the two, he's been pulling designated hitting duty so far and could spend games at third-base and in left-field, as well as at his long-time position of shortstop.

Described as "an outstanding hitter" by his new coach, Shayne should see plenty of at-bats as a rookie, but will have a hard time upstaging defensive stalwart Jason Murray at short.

He's currently hitting around the middle of the lineup. Although he still hasn't launched a long ball yet, he has five doubles, five stolen bases and a solid .320 average.

Shayne said he has a lot more confidence than



Photo by **STEVE LeBLANC**

Shayne (left) and Jeremy Ridley have wasted no time proving themselves in the NCAA. The twin brothers are making big contributions with Ball State University in Indiana.

**"Coach Maloney is a gambler. He's a great baseball teacher and one of the main reasons Jeremy and I decided to come to Ball State."**

**SHAYNE RIDLEY**

he thought he'd have at this point in his university career.

A strong performance by both brothers in fall ball could be the reason for this, or perhaps last summer's explosive run with the Hamilton Blue Jays. Along with pitching sensation Pat Lynch, they led the Junior team to a fourth-place finish at the Connie Mack World Series in Farmington, New Mexico.

The Ridelys' contributions have helped BSU to an impressive 9-4 start. This early success,

which includes a five-game win streak, should serve as momentum for upcoming conference battles with Toledo and Bowling Green.

"We're getting about 10 hits a game, so our offence is obviously sound. What we need now is consistency in our pitching," explained Jeremy.

Having taken over at BSU last spring, coach Maloney will be looking to take his Cardinals from mid-pack dwellers to MAC champions.

Last year, the team finished 16-14 in conference play and just missed grabbing the last playoff spot.

Shayne believes a high-risk, offensive-minded approach will help BSU get over the hump.

"Coach Maloney is a gambler. He's a great baseball teacher and one of the main reasons Jeremy and I decided to come to Ball State," he said.

"We're going to have our hands full with teams like Kent and Ohio, but I really think this team is capable of being conference champions."

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