

Mallach ready to take on world at Deaf Hockey Championships

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Admittedly surprised when his then seven-year-old son Brandon asked to start playing hockey, Tim Mallach whole-heartedly welcomed the request — yet wondered about a potential obstacle.

Not the one many people might expect, however.

"When Brandon was three we took him to a skating class, but he became very upset," recalled the elder Mallach, part of a Deaf Milton hockey family that includes Brandon, now 18, and 16-year-old Brittany. "He didn't want to skate at all."

Brandon probably doesn't even remember that initial aversion to skating, but certainly doesn't forget the support network that's made his success in competitive hockey possible.

With a Deaf grandfather who tended the net in B.C. in the late 1940s and a father who played in Scarborough in the '70s, Brandon is quick to acknowledge that his path was made a lot smoother than it might otherwise have been.

"Without their (grandfather and father) support, I probably wouldn't be playing."

Among the opportunities that would have denied him is the chance to represent his country, which the hard-nosed winger will do at the end of the month.

Making the cut during a three-day tryout at Ryerson University's old Maple Leaf Gardens digs



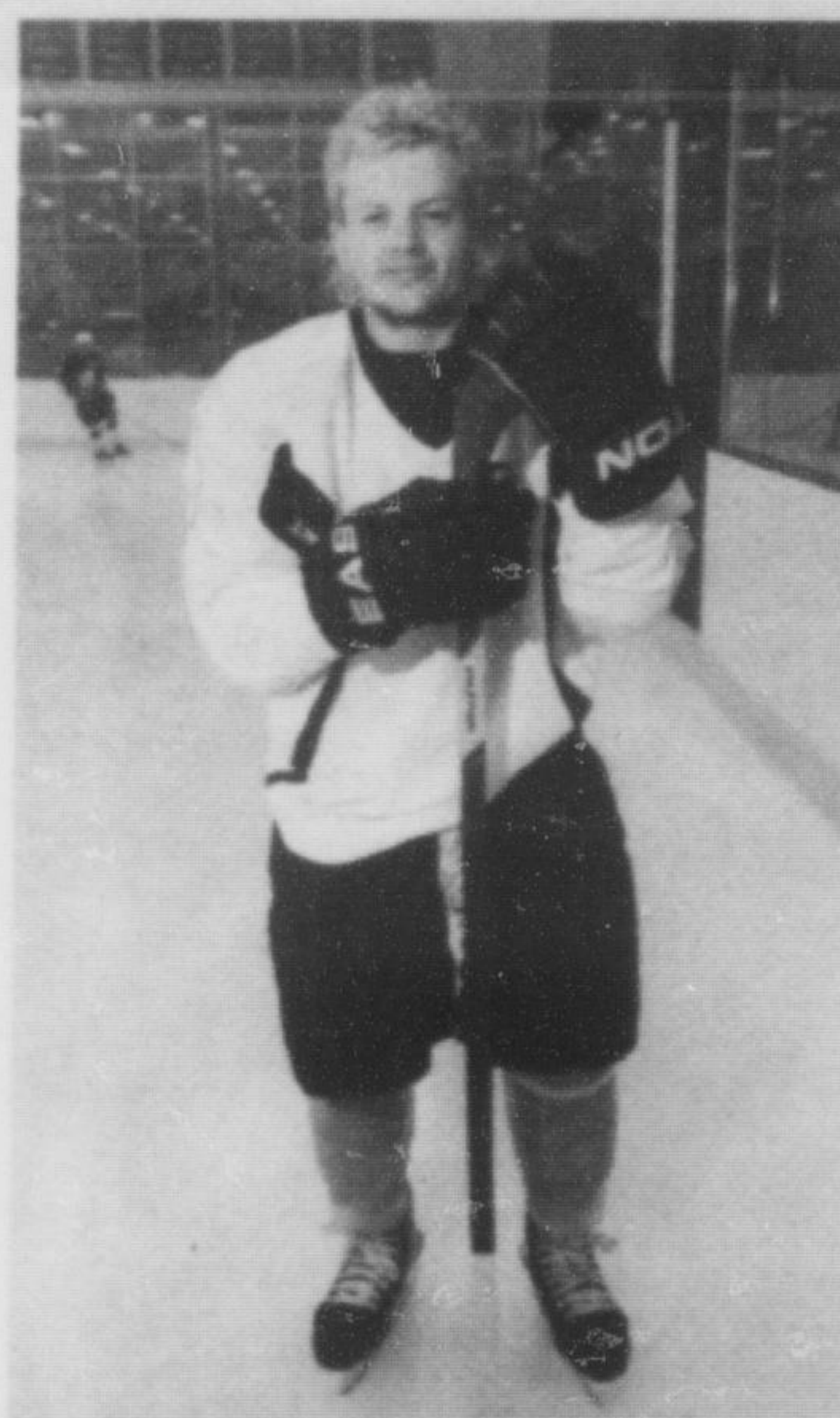
Brandon Mallach gets in some practice at the Milton Sports Centre prior to heading to Finland to represent Canada at the World Deaf Hockey Championships.

Nikki Wesley / Canadian Champion
(Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

last summer, Brandon will don the red and white for Canada's Deaf men's team for the five-team world championships in Vantaa, Finland March 30 to April 7.

Ironically enough — given his early dislike of it — Brandon's skating was among the attributes that stood out to national Deaf coach Donald McKee.

"Brandon also has superior hockey sense, which will help him make the adjustment to the Olympic size ice in Vantaa," remarked McKee, who plans to have Mallach play with twin brothers Jesse and Cody McIntyre from Brucefield. "He's not huge in stature, but he loves to play a physical game."



Somewhat resembling a young Bobby Clarke — with his flowing locks and aggressive play — Brandon figures heightened vision has helped him compensate for a lack of hearing on the ice.

To that end, opponents will never catch him with his head down.

"I keep my chin up all the time!" quipped the local winger, who helped Ontario's Deaf junior team to national championship gold three years ago in Montreal.

While not suggesting there haven't been challenges over the years, Brandon has never felt that being Deaf has defined him as a player.

"My dad said I could anything and not to worry about any Deaf issues," said Brandon, whose early development — as well as that of Brittany — was often aided by having his dad as an assistant coach. "So I just focused on learning how to play and improving my skills."

Learning when to keep his speed in check — not over-skating the play — Brandon was a key member of the triple-A Halton Hurricanes for two years after a strong double-A stint with his hometown Milton Winterhawks.

Most recently he was a late-season call-up with the Fergus Jr. C Devils, collecting six regular-season points and a couple more in a short-lived playoff run.

He's since been found playing a noon-hour pick-up game at least twice a week at Milton Sports Centre in preparation of his world championship debut.

"I'm very proud to be able to represent Canada," said Brandon, who'll begin the international tournament against the U.S. "I think this shows I can play, and I've got to thank the hockey organizations that gave me the opportunity to play and develop."

A schedule of games is available at [www.wdihc2013.com](http://wdihc2013.com) and you can watch games live at <http://wdihc2013.com/en/live/>. Steve LeBlanc can be reached at sleblanc@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @MiltonOnSports.

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