

Price of scholarships worth it, York Region hockey stars say

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

The carrot is free university tuition, room and board.

And there's an opportunity to play their sport at a very high level.

For many minor hockey prospects of both genders, an athletic scholarship from a post-secondary school south of the border is the ultimate prize.

There is, however, a catch.

With a limited number of U.S. universities giving out full athletic scholarships for hockey — worth about \$90,000US for a five-year stay — earning one isn't easy.

There is also increased competition from youngsters in the U.S. who are taking up the game in larger numbers.

So, is it worth the challenge?

"Receiving a scholarship is a great opportunity, I wouldn't change my decision for the world," said Candice Moxley.

The captain of the Niagara University Purple Eagles women's team last season, the 22-year-old Markham native was on a full ride for four years at the Niagara Falls, N.Y., campus. Ms Moxley picked Niagara because it had the business course she wanted and was only two hours from home.

"Hockey can only take you so far because there are no high-paying leagues for (women) to play in after we're done school. And, at some point, you have to be prepared for the real world," she said.

A first-year goalkeeper for the Yale University Bulldogs women's team last season, Shivon Zilis had no regrets going the prestigious Ivy League route, where athletic scholarships aren't given out, but students receive assistance through academic scholarships or financial aid.

An 18-year-old graduate of Unionville High School and a former member of the Aurora Panthers, she said her Aurora coach, former NHL star Mike Gartner, had an instrumental role in directing her towards Yale. Mr. Gartner's son, Josh, is a goalie for the Bulldogs men's team.

"Being on your own and being at an Ivy League school where academics come first, it's sometimes hard to find enough time in a day to do school work," she said.

"You've got to work on self discipline. Procrastination cannot be a part of your vocabulary. But everyone wants you to succeed in any way they can."

When Jon Smyth weighed an opportunity to play hockey and attend Colgate University, it was an offer he couldn't refuse.

"For me, a chance to get an edu-



CANDICE MOXLEY: Markham native captained Niagara University hockey team last season.

cation from one of the best schools in the world drove me (there)," the 22-year-old Markham resident said.

A forward with the Stouffville Spirit junior A club for from 1999 to 2001, Mr. Smyth will be the senior captain at the Hamilton, N.Y., school this season.

"While kids at my age began to jump to the bright lights of the Ontario Hockey League, I was focused on what really mattered to me and I think, at the same time, this is one of the most difficult times for a youngster in hockey," he said.

'There's nothing wrong with a kid like Rick Nash or Jason Spezza going the major junior route. But what happens to the other 98 per cent who don't play a game in the NHL?'

Jon Smyth
Colgate University captain

"Parents and kids struggle with the politics and emotions of draft lists, junior scouts, agents and everything else that distances the kid from why we started to play in the first place."

Mr. Smyth, who has been working out this summer in Philadelphia, loves being a student-athlete.

"As challenging as it is, there are few experiences that offer as much as this. You find yourself in an atmosphere that is, above all else, fun. You learn things away from the rink that make you a better hockey player, and you learn things under great coaches and players that make you a better person," he said.

"There's nothing wrong with a kid like Rick Nash (Columbus Blue Jackets) or Jason Spezza (Ottawa Sena-

tors) going the major junior route. But what happens to the other 98 per cent who don't play a game in the NHL?"

"I love the fact that I have the option to play hockey professionally, enter the work force with a great job, or continue my studies at graduate level," Mr. Smyth said. That is the best thing about college. Whichever option I choose, I am well prepared to head in that direction. I wouldn't want it any other way."

Ms Moxley warns student-athletes to be prepared to work, on the ice and in the classroom. Considering the money schools invest, they expect positive results, she said.

"It is a sense of commitment that is totally different than anything else you have experienced," she said. "You have to commit fully to the team and the goals of the team, always giving it 110 per cent. You practise every day on the ice, work out in the gym every day and have games every weekend."

GRADES CHECKED

"Your grades are monitored to make sure you are doing well in class and if you're having troubles with a subject, you have to get a tutor."

Ms Zilis said a typical week for her was four classes Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During the hockey season, she says the team does weight lifting twice a week. And they are on the ice for around 90 minutes five to six days a week. Games are played on weekends.

Smaller Division III schools do not give out full athletic scholarships but do provide financial help.

Wayne Wilson, head men's coach at Rochester Institute of Technology, a Division III school, speculates players from Canada are enticed to compete at schools like his because of the calibre of play. The team is moving to Division I this season.

"In the U.S., hockey is perceived by the athletes that they want to move up in the ranks. The commitment level is stronger and the fan support is stronger where we might have anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 fans at each game."

Fewer women take the Division III route. Charles Giliberto, executive member of the Markham-Stouffville Girls' Hockey Association and a rep coach for six years, believes women should only accept offers to play for U.S. universities if they receive a full ride to a big school.

The calibre of hockey, economics and value of an education offered at Canadian universities is far superior to what U.S. Division II or III schools can provide, he said.



Stouffville Spirit graduate Jon Smyth will captain the Colgate University hockey team this year. The Markham resident ignored "the bright lights of the Ontario Hockey League" for a shot at a scholarship.

Cogliano heading new class

Woodbridge's Andrew Cogliano is the most famous York Region resident with a new one this fall.

Oak Ridges' Simon Gysbers has one guaranteed for next season.

It's the 'scholly' or the full ride, better known as the hockey scholarship to a U.S. school.

Cogliano, a first-round draft choice of the NHL's Edmonton Oilers this summer, will attend the University of Michigan this season.

He earned his scholarship playing for Toronto's St. Michael's Buzzers of the Ontario Provincial Jr. A Hockey League.

Other York Region players in the Provincial league starting scholarships this fall include Vincent

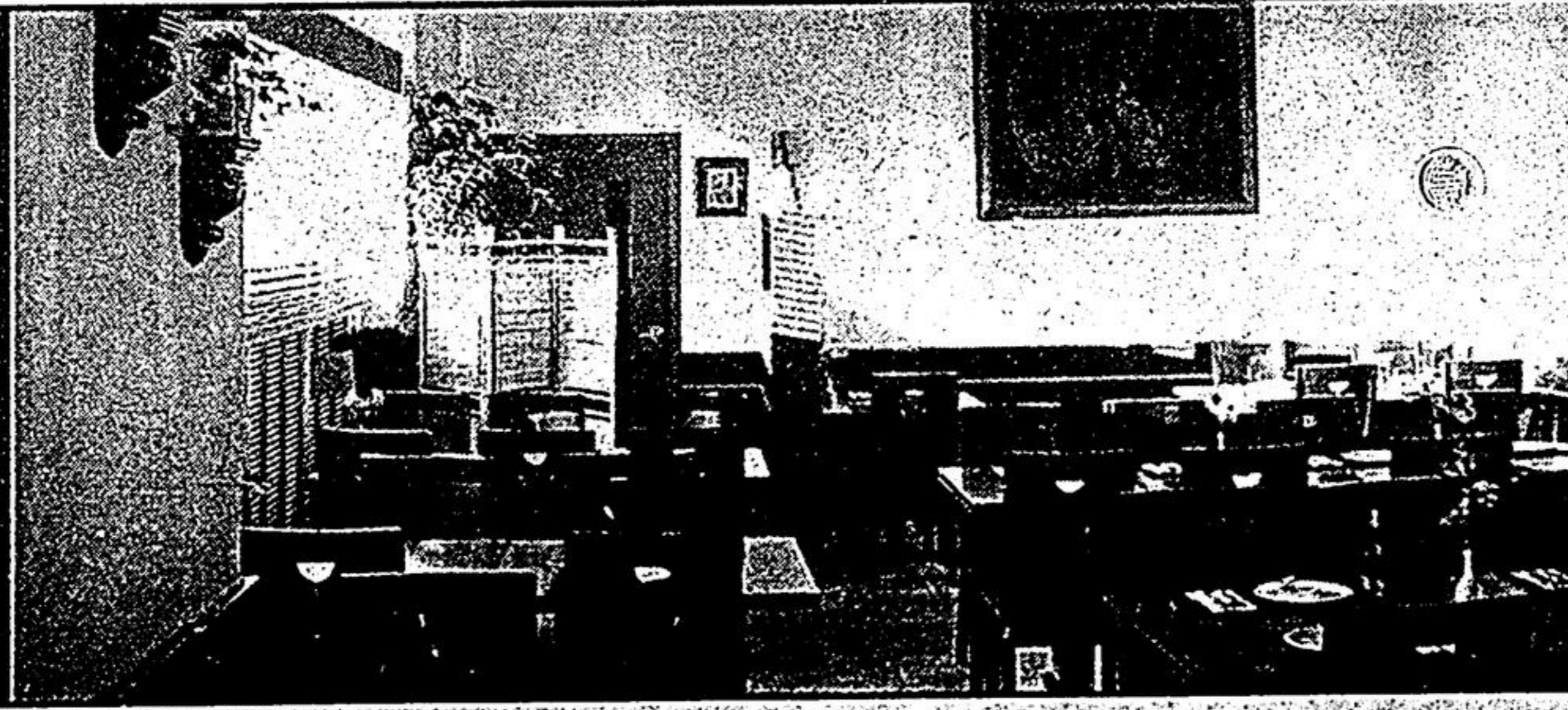
Rocco, who played for the Vaughan Vipers, attending Niagara University near Buffalo and Markham Waxers graduate Nathaniel Brooks, who will play for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Simon Gysbers, a third-year defenceman with the Stouffville Spirit of the Provincial league, has committed to attend Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., in 2006.

Windsor-area native Jeric Agosta of the Aurora Tigers will attend Nebraska-Omaha on scholarship next year.

Source: members.aol.com/hockey/recruits/Recruit05.htmh

Stars of Tea Cuisine
Simply the Best.



16th Ave.
Hwy 404
Woodbine Ave.
Lunar Ct.
Marden Ave.
Hwy 7E.
3150 Highway 7 East, Unit 1
Markham, Ontario L3R 5A1
905.946.9466