

SPORTS: Stouffville's Sam Carrick has long-term plans to play in Toronto

Leaf fan happy in blue and white

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Sam Carrick revealed his favourite National Hockey League team is the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Likewise, the Maple Leafs held the 18-year-old Stouffville resident and second-year Brampton Battalion forward in rather high regard.

The two concerns laid the groundwork to what they hope will be a long-lasting relationship down the road when the Leafs chose Carrick with their fifth round pick (144th player overall) during the National Hockey League's two-day entry draft in Los Angeles Saturday.

"It's great," the six-foot, 188-pound Carrick said from his Los Angeles hotel room Monday.

"The Leafs were my favourite team growing up. I always watched them on television.

"It was in the back of my mind they (Maple Leafs) might pick me. But I didn't want to say anything in case I got chosen by another team."

Amassing 21 goals and 21 assists in 66 regular season contests this past OHL season with the Battalion, Carrick heard the pre-draft gossip he might not get chosen until the later rounds.

But entering the draft, he said

the Maple Leafs appeared to show the most interest in his services.

"I met the Leafs twice, once during the season when Mike Palmateer (Leafs scout) came to watch one of my games and then after the season I went to their practice facility and did a fitness evaluation," said Carrick, who was a York Region Media Group all-star while playing for Stouffville Secondary.

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Biding his time in the Staples Center stands with his immediate family, Carrick acknowledged he felt a bit antsy after watching several of his playing cohorts reach the draft podium well before him.

Upon hearing his name, Carrick said it felt like a big weight was removed from his shoulders.

"When I heard my name... whew. It couldn't have worked out better," he said. "I've been looking forward to this day. It's a great feeling to have it over with and know where my hockey future is going."

Also having Stouffville ties with Carrick, long-time Maple Leafs assistant coach Keith Acton couldn't have been happier to see the club select him.

"There are always a few boys I ask our scouts about prior to the draft each year," he said from Los Angeles. "Sam obviously this year was wondering where he would end up. I was so happy to see how thrilled and excited Sam and his family were after the selection."

Acknowledging he is a few years from making an NHL roster and citing he still has three years of OHL eligibility remaining, Carrick knows what he has to do.

"I have a lot of work to do on my game to make the team. I know that I have to work on my speed and skating and to get bigger physically to muscle guys," he said.

The younger brother of Jake Carrick, a 19-year-old forward with the OHL's Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds, Sam's joyous occasion came on the heels of seeing a younger brother, Trevor, 16, chosen by the Mississauga-St. Michael's Majors in the fifth round of this year's OHL priority selection.

The youngest brother, Josh, played for the Toronto Red Wings AAA minor bantams last season.

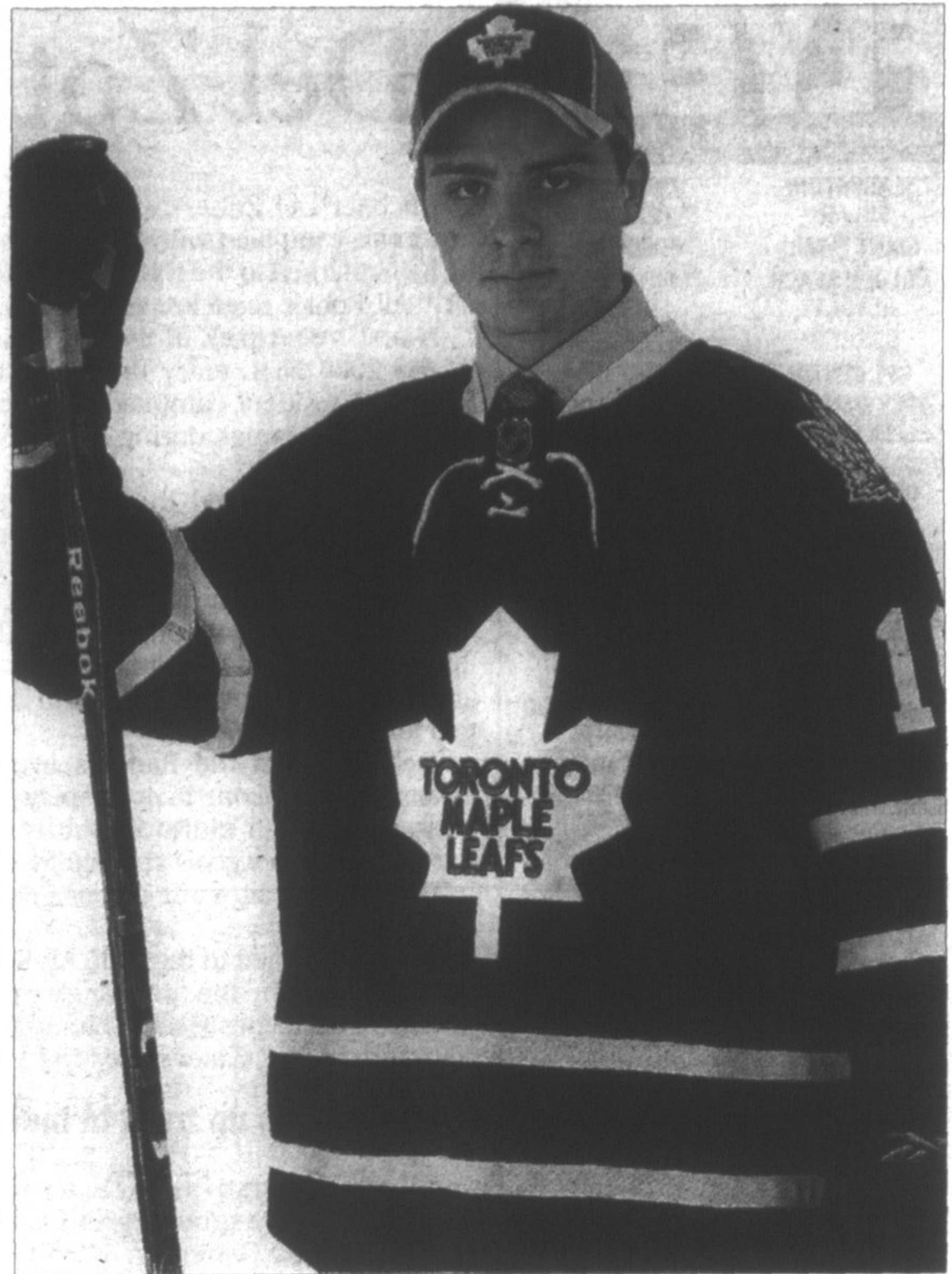
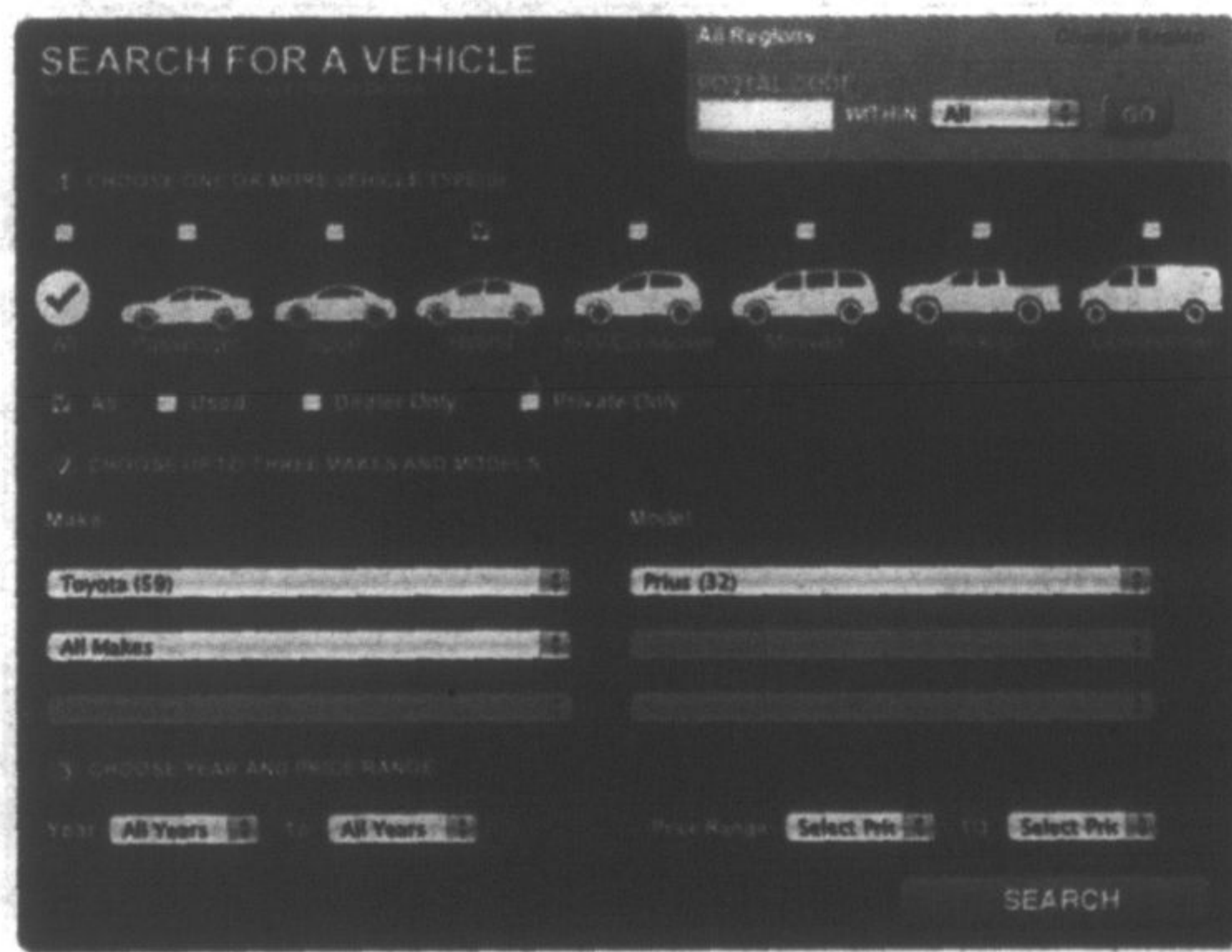


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Stouffville's Sam Carrick poses in the uniform of his favourite team after being selected by the Leafs during the NHL draft in Los Angeles Saturday.



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