

Carrick pleased to get call to join Marlies

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Sam Carrick feels like he's been given a new lease on life.

And rightfully so.

Especially once the 21-year-old Stouffville resident made his debut earlier this month in the American Hockey League as a member of the Toronto Marlies.

A fifth round draft pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs in the 2010 National Hockey League entry draft, Carrick was promoted to their AHL affiliate after beginning this season in Boise, Idaho, as a member of the Idaho Steelheads of the East Coast Hockey League.

Receiving his fair share of ice time and collecting one assist in his first five games with the Marlies, Carrick is enjoying his time with the Maple Leafs' top affiliate team.

"It's been awesome ... it's been great. It's really boosted my confidence." the six-foot, 207-pound forward said.

Carrick's arrival with the Marlies might have come sooner were it not for a combination of factors.

One was the NHL lockout, which created a domino effect in which

plenty of new and existing minor league players were forced to look at unfamiliar places for on-ice employment.

At the same time, the Marlies, who came off a season in which they lost in the Calder Cup final, did not make many changes to their squad.

Carrick was caught in the middle. "I thought that I had a good camp," he said of his time at the Marlies' training camp earlier in the season. "But they said I needed to develop my game more.

"For a lot of the new guys coming in like myself, we had to find other places to play. The Marlies said they would send me somewhere to the East Coast Hockey League."

After spending a couple of days at home after training camp, Carrick got the call to report to Idaho.

Helping to ease his transition to life in Boise and the ECHL was the presence of former Marlie and Maple Leafs' forward Ben Ondrus.

Starting the season on the club's third line, Carrick made considerable strides in his game and eventually worked his way up to the first line and was utilized on special teams.

Logging time in 50 games with the

Steelheads, he amassed 15 goals and 21 assists.

"Everything was great in Idaho," he said. "It was a good situation for me."

Taking careful note of Carrick's progression were the Marlies, who eventually made the call to bring him up.

Carrick conceded the call caught him a bit off guard. At the same time, he'd always held out hope the call was going to happen.

Since joining the Marlies, Carrick said he's sort of starting out all over again in terms of being forced to make some adjustments to his game after he was just getting acclimated with the tempo in the ECHL.

"The game (in the AHL) is a lot faster and the players are a lot stronger. But I'm getting used to it."

While Carrick doesn't know if he will remain with the Marlies for the rest of the season, he hopes his performance on the ice will warrant it.

"It's up to me as to how well I do," he said. "We'll see what happens."

For now, he's relishing his time in the AHL.

"It's been a lot of fun, I'm enjoying it."

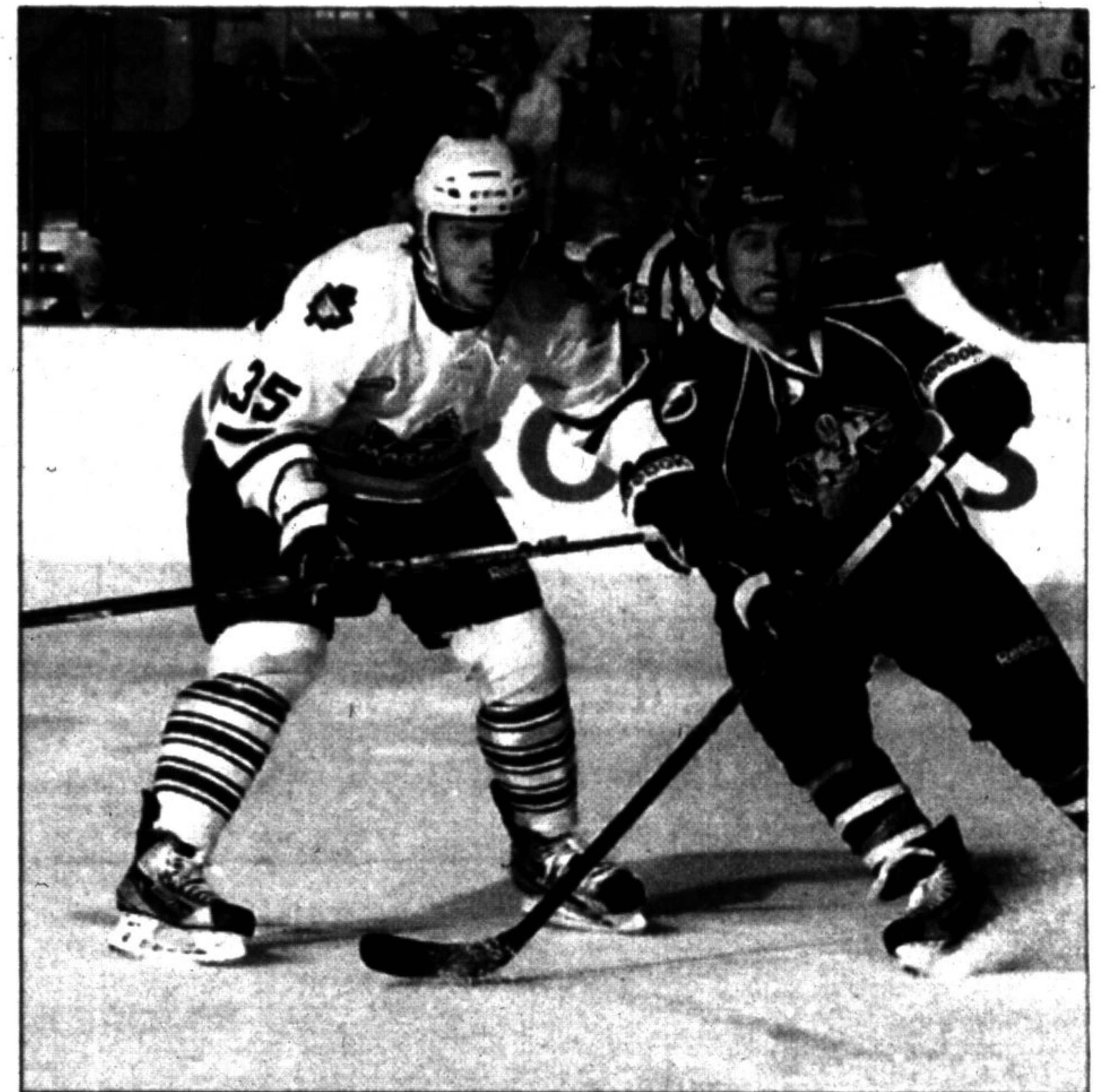


PHOTO GRAIG ABEI

Stouffville native Sam Carrick recently donned a blue and white jersey for the Toronto Marlies.



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