

Gysbers keeping NHL dream alive in Finland

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
mhayakawa@yrmg.com

Simon Gysbers would like nothing more than to play in the National Hockey League.

For the last three seasons, the Richmond Hill native and former Stouffville Spirit Jr. A defenceman was on the cusp of making it to the big time, toiling with the Toronto Maple Leafs' American Hockey League affiliate Toronto Marlies.

But with the Leafs electing not to renew his contract after last season, the 26-year-old Gysbers sought a change in scenery to keep his dream alive.

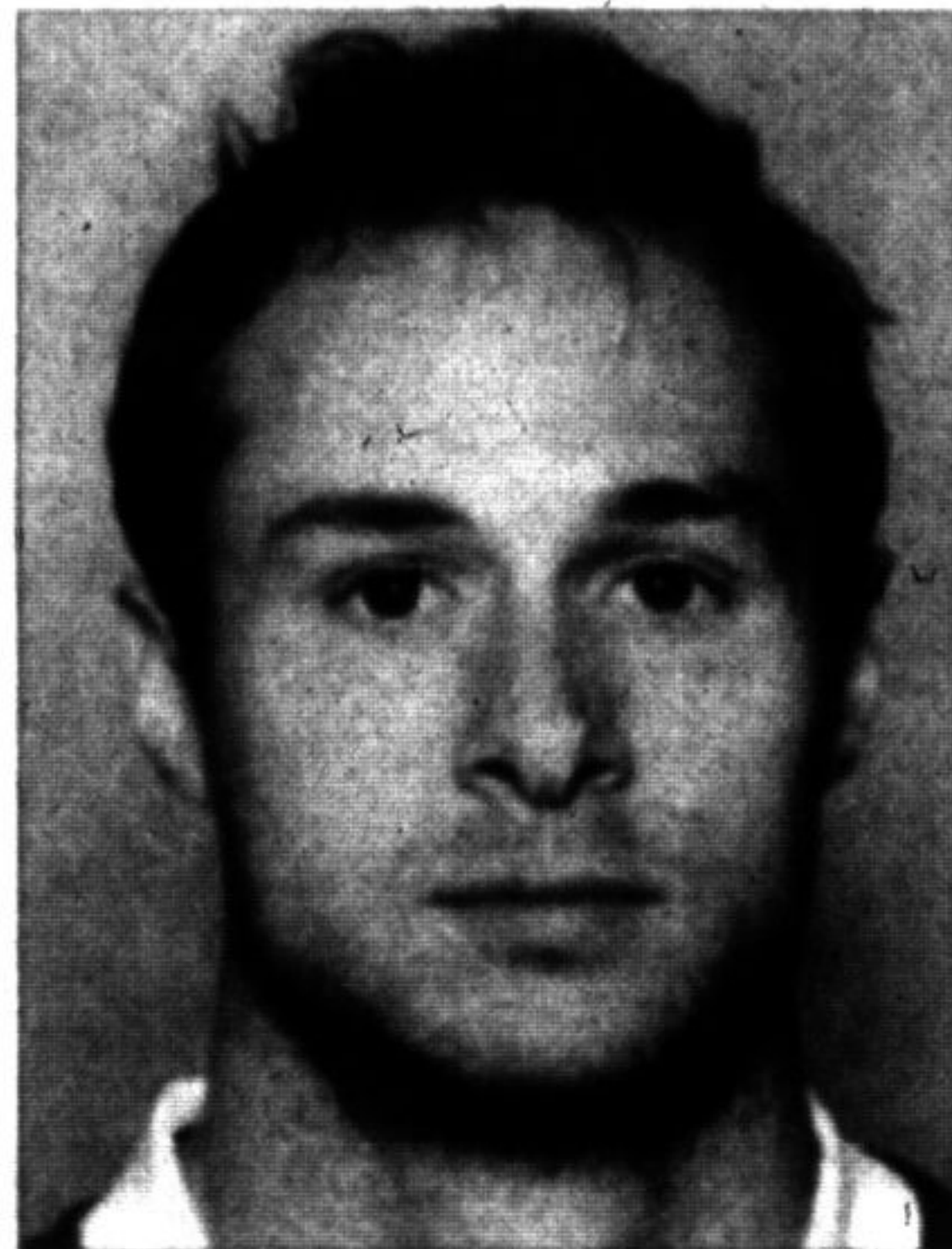
These days, Gysbers keeps up the hope that some NHL team will notice his performance on the ice.

Albeit it's a few miles away, in Tampere, Finland to be exact, where he's now a member of Ilves Tampere of the SM-liiga.

The move came through discussions with his agent last July.

During their interaction they came to the conclusion such a move would enhance his playing career.

Signing a one-year deal with Ilves Tampere, Gysbers said the decision to play far away from home wasn't easy at first.



SIMON GYSBERS: Spirit graduate didn't have contract renewed with Toronto Maple Leafs organization.

"My ultimate goal is to play NHL hockey," he said via e-mail. "Obviously I have to put that on hold for now. But this gave me the opportunity to have a big role on a team and play good quality hockey to improve my game."

Compiling six assists in the club's first 11 outings, Gysbers noted the style of hockey is a bit different from what he was accustomed to during his time with the Marlies, where he

had four goals and 15 assists in 54 AHL games last season.

The biggest adjustment, he said, was in playing on the larger European ice surfaces.

"The game is focused a lot more on puck possession and for me as a defenceman, it took me a few games to get used to positioning on my own end as well as the neutral zone on the wider surface," he said.

In comparing the calibre of play from what he was accustomed to while with the Marlies, Gysbers feels it bears a similarity.

"People often think it's less physical over here, but the Finnish league has a lot of physical players and a focus on hitting," said Gysbers, who played four years of NCAA hockey at Lake Superior State after three seasons with the Spirit.

Taking up residency in the third-largest city in Finland, Gysbers said he was able to adjust quickly to his new surroundings away from the ice.

The biggest hurdles though, are the language and winters, which can be long.

"The language barrier is the biggest thing I have to adjust to, but even that isn't so bad because most

people can speak English, which is great.

"The winters are long here, though. There is about only about four to five hours of daylight from December to February, so that will be an adjustment," he said.

'People often think it's less physical over here, but the Finnish league has a lot of physical players and a focus on hitting.'

Should Gysbers have a good season, he hopes it will catch the attention of any European scouts working for an NHL team.

"Playing in Finland is giving me the opportunity to grow as a player and that's what I need.

"I will always have the dream to play in the NHL. It's been my goal since I was young and it still is."

Minor hockey house league players get help with skills

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association will hold a series of skill development clinics for an eight-week period starting Oct. 20.

Under the direction of senior instructors Steve Smith and Mark Sullivan, the clinics are designed for players ages six to 12 registered in the association's house league.

To be held at the Stouffville Arena, Pad B, the sessions will run for one-hour periods starting with those between the ages of six to eight starting at 10:15 a.m. every Sunday and nine to 12 year olds at 11:15 a.m.

The cost of the program is \$160.

A maximum of 20 players per program will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

As well, a four-week specialty program for defencemen will be available for house league and rep players between the ages of six to 12.

This session will run from Dec. 1 to 29 (excluding Dec. 8) at the Stouffville Arena, Pad B starting at 9:15 a.m. Registration fees for this session are \$100.

Smith's resume includes coaching in the association and Markham Waxers AAA organizations, as well

as being an instructor with Total Hockey Skills and the Markham-Stouffville Stars.

Sullivan is a former Stouffville Clipper who skated in the Ontario Junior Hockey League with the Stouffville Spirit before playing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association at The State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

Players may register for these clinics through the association's hockey office at 905-642-2835.

Sivabalasingham aces award

Gajan Sivabalasingham's exploits on the fairways as a member of the University of Waterloo Warriors men's golf team this season haven't gone unnoticed.

The 19-year-old Ballantrae resident and third-year member of the Warriors' golf team was named the school's male athlete of the week for the period ending Oct. 7.

A third-year math and business major, Sivabalasingham fired back-to-back rounds of one-under in the 36-hole Waterloo-Laurier Invitational to capture the individual silver medal last weekend.

Sivabalasingham opened up with a round of 71 at Rebel Creek before bettering that score with a 70 at Grey Silo the following day to lead his Warriors to a team silver medal.

More golf honours for Brunton

Henry Brunton has earned numerous honours in the golfing profession.

But whenever the Stouffville resident is recognized by his peers for the work he's done in heightening the profile of the sport, it makes honours even more special.

Brunton is being recognized by Golf Digest in its November issue as one of three PGA of Canada Professionals to be listed among the top teachers selected from the United States and around the world.

Brunton also made the list in 2011-12.

"The honour is special because it is based on peer voting," said Brunton, who runs a golf academy out of Eagles Nest Golf Club in Maple. "To be recognized by Golf Digest is an honour."

In earning the recognition, Brunton said he was caught by surprise when informed of the good tidings earlier in the week.

Along with Brunton, the two other PGA of Canada Professionals chosen included Bruce McCarroll, who instructs at Beacon Hall Golf Club and Lambton Golf Club, and Derek Ingram, current Canadian men's national team coach.

THIS WEEK
ONLINE

yorkregion.com

SERIES

The Big 5-0



Will you vote next year? Check out our Big 5-0 section on municipal elections.

BREAKING NEWS



Use your mobile phone to stay up to date with the region's top stories.
▶ bit.ly/biMoJP

POLICING ISSUES



Check out our special report on the OPP trying to get more women to join

AROUND THE WEB

- ▶ @yorkregion
- ▶ @vaughaneditor
- ▶ @stouffeditor
- ▶ @dlkyorkeditor
- ▶ @csimonwrite
- ▶ @Simonscribbles
- ▶ @KimZarzour
- ▶ @AmandaPersico
- ▶ @YRMGphotog
- ▶ @journo_jez
- ▶ @tkibble

▶ go to facebook.com and search "YRMG on the Town"

▶ pinterest.com/yorkregion

FLYERS

INSERT FOR
Sat., Oct 12, 2013

CROSSFIT CRUX

No one delivers results like we do!

To find out more about how to reach your target market and get the same great response from your flyer distributions as these customers, call us today! *Selected areas only.

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

visit save.ca

905-294-2200