

By EDO VAN BELKOM

Don McLaren was a member of the York Yeomen for just one short year, but in that time he created memories that will not be too soon forgotten.

Last year McLaren led all Yeomen in scoring, the OUAA in goal scoring, was named to the league's first all-star team, a CIAU All-Canadian right winger and was also named York University's male athlete of the year. With McLaren leading the way, the Yeomen won both the OUAA and CIAU title for the very first time. Those not too familiar with last year's hockey season might need to be reminded that McLaren scored all three of the Yeomen's goals, in their 3-2 defeat of the Alberta Golden Bears in the CIAU championship game.

This year he is lacing up the skates for the Canadian Olympic team under the guidance of head coach Dave King.

King approached McLaren about joining the Olympic program at the end of the 1984 season (the year McLaren was a member of the Memorial Cup champion Ottawa 67s), but at that time the program was not set to be underway for a full year. King suggested he play a year of university hockey, and taking that advice, McLaren chose York for both its hockey and business programs.

Coach King, who is also the general manager of Team Canada, thinks very highly of the 22 year old Kitchener native. "He's in excellent physical condition and improving in almost every game," King said. "He's good both offensively and defensively and will be a sound international hockey player."

Proof of King's faith in McLaren's ability is the fact that McLaren is used on both the power play and penalty killing units as well as playing a regular shift on the team's top scoring line. At the end of the recent series with the Moscow Selects squad, McLaren was comfortably positioned in third place among the team's scoring leaders with 18 goals and 32 assists in only 30 games. Only linemates Cliff Ronning and Mike Millar have better scoring records.

Although Team Canada's schedule will have them crossing the globe with stops in the Soviet Union, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan, McLaren still has close ties with the city of Toronto and especially York University.

"I love the city of Toronto and I made a lot

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SPORTS FEATURE



Former Yeoman a future Olympian

York's Don McLaren competes on international level



Photos by ROBERTA DIMAIO

DON McLAREN: Wearing number 20 and playing left-wing for the Olympic team, McLaren is the team's third leading scorer.

of friends at York last year in residence," McLaren said. "I really felt as if I was part of the school."

"I miss the Yeomen and I try to keep in touch with some of the guys from the team," McLaren added, noting that he keeps in touch with the York community by reading copies of Excalibur which his girlfriend, a York student, sends regularly in the mail.

With this year's busy schedule, the business program begun at York and now continuing at the University of Calgary (where the team is based) has slowed to a snail's pace, with time enough for McLaren to take just two full courses. But with all the travelling the team is doing, he feels he is getting a very valuable education although different from a purely academic one. "With all the travelling we're doing I feel that I'm learning a lot about the world geographically as well as getting many different cultural experiences," McLaren said.

Playing on the left side of Team Canada's number one line has put McLaren in the unfamiliar position of playmaker. "Playing on the off wing is the European style and it took a little getting used to," said McLaren who shoots right handed and has played right wing for most of his career, including his time with the Yeomen. "I'm playing alongside two excellent goalscorers and as long as I'm contributing, that's good." Ronning, a centreman and Millar the left winger are the number one and two goal scorers on the team ahead of McLaren.

McLaren's progression from the ranks of the Yeomen to Canada's National team hasn't come without its benefits and drawbacks. On the positive side is a full scholarship paid for by Hockey Canada and a specially designed hockey stick that comes straight from the manufacturer with a 4½ lie. There is also large amounts of personal attention that includes such things as a spe-

cial team psychologist, optometrist, nutritionist, special weight training programs as well as some of the best coaching this country has to offer. "Dave King is an excellent coach," McLaren said. "He knows twice as much as most of the other coaches I've had. You can't help but become a better hockey player."

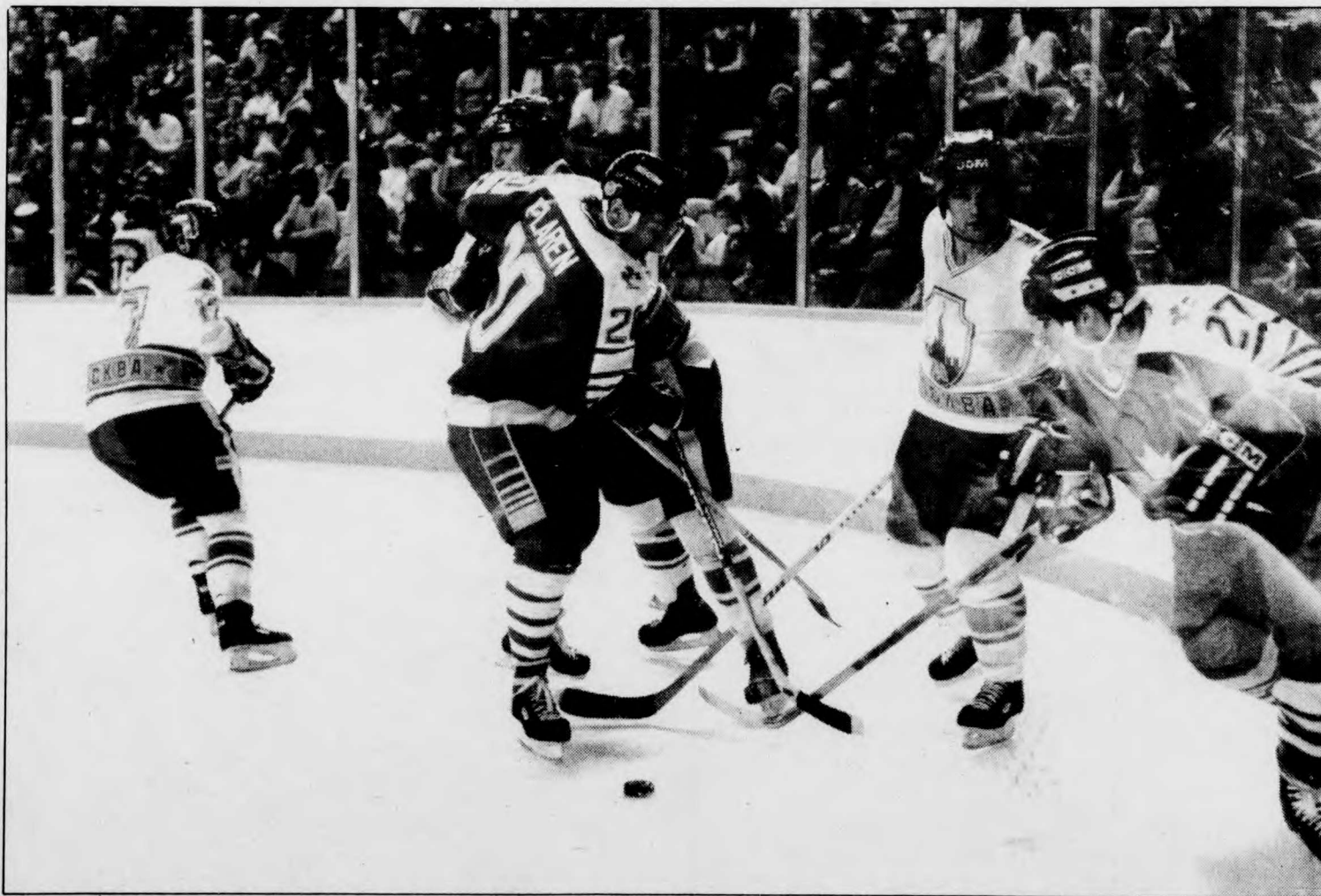
On the negative side is a strain on McLaren's personal life which includes long distance relationships with family and friends and the obviously large monthly long distance phone bills. The heavy schedule also puts a damper on the team member's social life. According to McLaren there is 'zero' time for a social life. "I spend all my extra time studying and I live in grad residence, so it's usually pretty dead." McLaren spent last year among the inmates in residence at Stong.

There are still three years to go before Team Canada takes to the ice in Calgary's Saddledome for the 88 Winter Olympics and there is talk that there will still be a number of personnel changes before the final team is set. But McLaren is confident that he will be a member of the team that finally goes for the gold. "I think I'll be there, I'm doing fairly well right now. I'm on the top scoring line, but the key is to keep developing. Everyone on the team is improving," McLaren said.

At present McLaren is considering continuing his education over the summer here at York, and hasn't ruled out the possibility of playing professional hockey in the NHL in the near future. McLaren was drafted by the Vancouver Canucks but had been given his release and he said he has had some feelers in the past from the Edmonton Oilers, but added that he has lost faith in certain big league teams. "I'd have to see what team is interested in me and see what kind of security they'd offer. I'm taking things from year to year and if I decide anything it would have to be at the end of this year."

Whatever McLaren decides, he is in a good position for a NHL career. A total of 16 players that were on the Olympic team in 1984, are either currently playing in the NHL or had try-outs with big league teams following the games in Sarajevo. And with the tremendous amount of exposure the team will get leading up to and during the 1988 games in Calgary, McLaren is sure to have more than a few conversations with big league scouts and general managers.

But for now McLaren is a part of Team Canada whose ultimate goal is to capture the Olympic gold for the host country in 1988, and in McLaren's words, the capturing of that prize would be "a dream come true."



CORNER MAN: McLaren and linemate Cliff Ronning have their own version of a summit meeting with three members of the Moscow Selects at a recent game at the new Copps Coliseum.