

Nick Kiriakou's a regular after two years at York

# Third time lucky for Yeoman

By EDO VAN BELKOM

Over the last three years Nick Kiriakou's hockey career has followed a path that has taken him from being a team discard to potential all-star, with determination and perseverance paving the way.

The 21-year-old York Yeomen centre is finally a regular after two attempts to crack the line-up failed and an American scholarship to Colgate University fell through.

Kiriakou first tried out for the Yeomen in 1984, the season the team won both the Ontario and Canadian Championships. Despite that year's team being full of rookies, Kiriakou was told to return to the Wexford Raiders of the Metro Junior B League (his former team) and work on his defensive play.

"When I didn't get the scholarship and then I couldn't make York I thought Wow! What happened?" recalled Kiriakou, a third year economics major.

So he went back to the Raiders and while honing his defensive skills led the entire league in scoring, and was named team MVP.

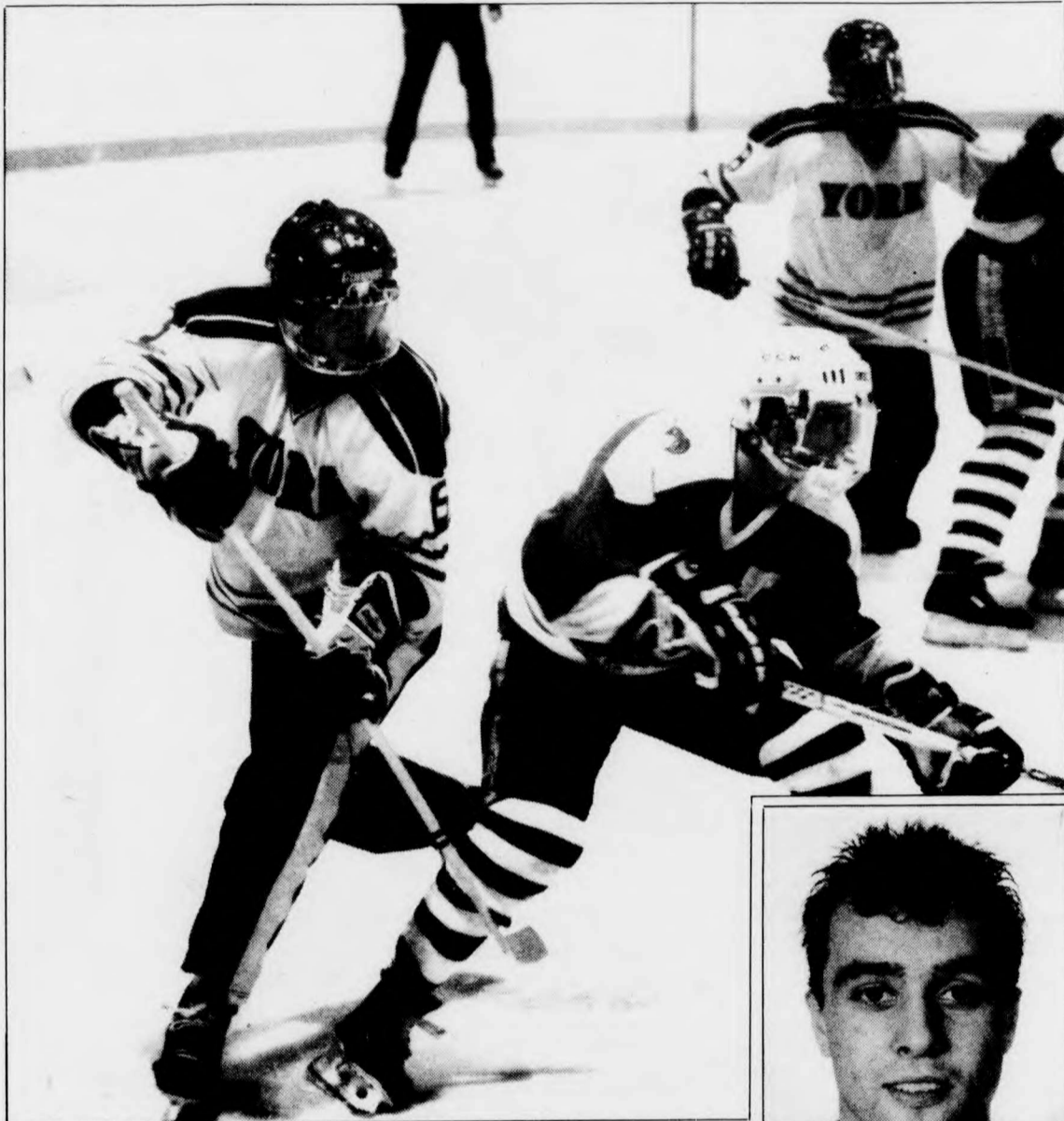
The following year Kiriakou returned to the Yeomen training camp and earned a spot on the team, albeit a temporary one. After early success putting points on the board, his fortunes took a turn for the stands.

Ten games into the regular season an ankle injury forced him out of the line-up and he never regained his status as a regular. The team kept on winning and had an abundance of centres.

Being a Junior B player on a team loaded with Junior A talent didn't help matters either. (When former Junior A players began to dominate York's roster, the Junior B skaters—once the backbone of any contender in the league—were suddenly reduced to second class citizens.) Kiriakou watched the rest of the regular season and playoffs from the press box.

He admits that university hockey is a lot different from Junior B and the switch took some adjustment.

"The speed of the game is a lot quicker at this level and there's more emphasis on positional



**CALL ME SPIKE:** Yeoman centreman Nick Kiriakou is playing regularly after improving his defensive skills in Junior.

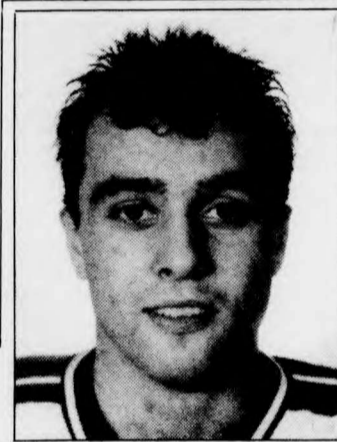
play," Kiriakou said. "The hitting is the same, but checking is tighter. You have to take the man out all the time and finish your check."

This year Kiriakou finally cracked the line-up, playing solid hockey between former Junior A Belleville Bulls Brian MacDonald and Brian Small. Kiriakou is one of the team's top scorers and left winger MacDonald is consistently in the top 10 of the league.

"I think I've changed. I feel a

difference in myself after a year in the OUA. I have more confidence, I'm a lot stronger (190 lbs after gaining 10 pounds on a summer weight program). I know I can play in this league," he said.

This confidence in Kiriakou's play is echoed by Yeomen head coach Dave Chambers. "Nick didn't have the experience with tough checking because it's not that tight in Junior B. But he's come along really well. He always



ROBERTA DI MAIO

had great offensive skills but now he's playing good two way hockey."

With Kiriakou's place on the roster established he has a brighter outlook on the chances the number one ranked York has at the Canadian title.

"We play as a team and win as a team," Kiriakou said. "As long as our head don't get too big, we work hard and play our game we'll win a lot of games."

# Thirteen proves to be lucky number for Blues

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main target of coach Bain's verbal antics throughout the game, had 14 points—3 of 16 from the field.

Paul Carson, the sports information officer at U of T, said "both teams played their best tonight, fortunately the Blues were able to hang on for the win." He suggested the victory was a product of "team work."

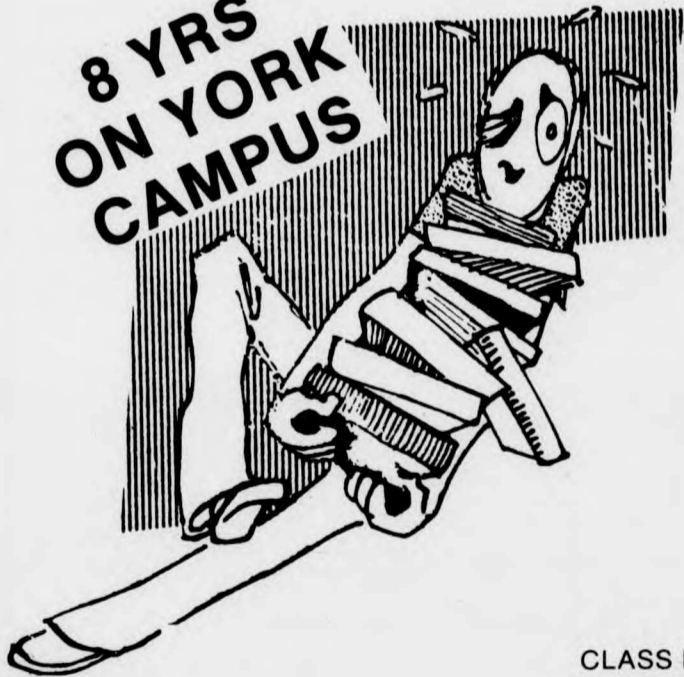
Coach Chapman, elated with the win, agreed with Carson. "All our players played well tonight, both starters and supporting players," Chapman said. "We came into the game as obvious favourites and I'm not surprised at all by our margin of victory. York had a difficult time penetrating our defence in the first half but really came on strong towards the latter part of the game. Don't get me wrong, York is by no means out of it. They had a tough loss against Ryerson and now they're 2-2 in league play. York is still a definite force in the league," Chapman concluded.

Coach Bain felt that York "came out flat in the first half and when you do that, there is an obvious psychological hurdle to overcome. Nobody expected us to win tonight but I thought we had a chance. Some people predicted we'd lose by as much as 25 points but our players played their hearts out tonight. Of course I'm disappointed we lost but I always tell the players to take it one game at a time and I truly believe we can bounce back."

On York's 13 year dominance over U of T, he said: "I told my players to forget about all that, to just go out there and play their game."

Last Friday night the Blues were able to do what no other Toronto team has done for the past 13 years—beat York. For the record on January 8, 1987, the Blues prevailed over the Yeomen 81-74. The tables were turned, but for how long? Check the sports pages in 13 years and we'll see.

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