

Final game in Vernon for Major

University of Maine-Orono recently announced Vernon minor hockey graduate Bruce Major has been awarded a four-year hockey scholarship.

Major joined Richmond Sockeyes, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, this season after spending the 1983-84 campaign with Vernon Lakers. Sockeyes battled to a tie with Lakers in their only appearance at the Civic Arena this season, in December.

Major will lace up his skates for the final time in Vernon, Thursday night, when he leads the Coastal Division Team in the BCJHL All-star Game. Special guest at the game will be the great Gordie Howe, but a lot of eyes will be watching Major.

Following is a column written earlier this month by Larry Mahoney, of the *Bangor Daily News*, in Maine. Obviously the college is excited about signing Major.

University of Maine-Orono hockey coach Shawn Walsh likens him to former New York Rangers-Boston Bruins great Jean Ratelle. His general manager, Ken Roker, said he reminds him a lot of Peter McNab, the former Boston Bruin now playing for Vancouver.

The young man being talked about is 6-3, 180-pound center Bruce Major, who plays for the Richmond Sockeyes in the British Columbia Junior Hockey League and who has announced his intentions to attend UMO next fall.

"We expect Bruce to get drafted this year," said Roker. "Last year, we had a player off our team drafted in the fourth round by Edmonton and another who was drafted in the fifth round by St. Louis. We feel Bruce, with a good second half, might eclipse those (draft positions)."

Major has had an exceptional first half for the Coastal Division Sockeyes with 27-37-64 in just 31 games. Major, who is his team's leading scorer, was a unanimous choice as a Coastal Division All-Star.

"Bruce has natural offensive skills you can't teach someone," said Walsh. "He also possesses very good work habits both on the ice and in the classroom. And he is a great kid. I like the thought of having Bruce Major in our locker room for four years."

"He possesses an excellent sense of the game and his strong suit is his ability to control the puck in the offensive zone," said Roker. "He is an excellent hockey player who is very, very coachable. Not many hours of his day are wasted. He is either on the ice, lifting weights, or he has his face in a book. He is a very serious young man who takes the goals he sets for himself very seriously. He also has a mild confidence about him."

"He's a very impressive individual," added Roker.

Roker said Major graduated from high school as a honor student when he was 16 but has decided to upgrade his marks even more this year.

"He is quite a student," said Roker.

Major said he talked to representatives from nine different schools and Roker pointed out that among the schools on the list were defending NCAA champion Bowling Green, Northern Michigan, Michigan State and North Dakota.

"He is a player of high demand," said Roker.

Major chose Maine for several reasons.

"The basic reason was the interest Shawn has shown in me," said Major. "I've been receiving two letters a week from him and he calls me all the time."

Major also stressed that "he couldn't ask for anything more out of a college than I will receive at Maine."

"I'll have a chance to play right away and the school is really good scholastically," said Major, who hasn't had a chance to visit the school yet.

Major also talked with some of the Black Bear freshmen from British Columbia recently, including his former junior hockey teammate Dave Wensley, and "they all told me how good coach Walsh and his assistants (Jay Leach and Mike Piette) were."

When discussing his one-ice attributes, the articulate 17-year-old talked about his weaknesses first.

"I've got to work on my skating and my checking ability, particularly in our end," said the humble youngster who said his strengths are his passing, puckhandling and scoring ability.

Roker said major had expressed a desire to improve his skating this year along with his transition from offense to defense.

"His skating has improved," said Roker. "He's such a big man, he doesn't look like a fluent skater. But he gets there in a big hurry and he is very powerful. As for his transition from offense to defense, he doesn't give himself enough credit. He has managed to conquer that very well."