Parker reaches Ontario Under-17’s final camp

Local left winger makes cut at University of Guelph

By STEVE LEBLANC

The Champion

Kevin Parker has reached the innermost sanctum of Ontario’s Under-17 playdowns.

Persevering through stiff competition and an ill-timed injury, the Milton Marauders as they won their first ever football game, 19-7 over the Sudbury Spartans.

After last season’s 0-9 expansion year, Saturday’s victory in their second season opener was that much sweeter. The Marauders had more touchdowns in the first half of the game than they did in total all season.

Two touchdowns on fumble recoveries by Jim Harper, a sensational 45-yard touchdown run by Steve Lubin, and mud-in-your-eye defense were all key factors in the win.

The game got underway at Milton District High School in a driving rainstorm with Sudbury driving the length of the field to score a touchdown on their first possession. That’s as good as it got for them.

Holding onto the ball in the mud and slop was like trying to hold on to a greased pig, evidenced by an incredible 18 fumbles. Sudbury had 12 of them, Milton six. The Marauders were on the ball, however, and recovered nine of the Spartans’ 12 fumbles. Jay MacPhail, Mark Dow and Harper each had two, with Will Gearing, Sheldon McFarlane and Peter Hummell each getting one.

Harper, who came to the team from the junior Burlington Braves, was humble about his two touchdowns on defense, deflecting the credit. On the first touchdown, “Dave Johnson got to the quarterback and made him fumble. I just picked it up and ran it in.”

On the second touchdown, “It was a big snap on a punt. Again, Dave Johnson caused the fumble (in the end zone) and I was the first guy on it.”

On Lubin’s touchdown run, it appeared he was going nowhere, but he slipped the first tackle. “Dan Johnson made a great block, I said ‘thank you’ and away he went to the outside for 45 yards.”

Lubin was approaching the 100-yard mark in rushing before a previous injury took its toll and took him out of the game. “The holes were there the whole game,” said Lubin, giving credit to the offensive line.

He also noted that in conditions that didn’t allow passing, the defense could key on running backs. Normally, with a more balanced attack, the running game would be more effective because the defense wouldn’t know what was coming.

It would be difficult to be more effective than they were. Fullback Sam Brus, whose job is to block and get a couple yards each carry, was breaking through the Sudbury line like a runaway tank in the second half, with first down rampages of 10 and 12 yards. Adam MacPhail, in his kamikaze style, also picked up good yardage.

A lot of players suffered through the Marauders’ opening season. Cameron Antaya, the senior statesman on the team at 42-years-old, was going to retire last year, but refused to alter the wide season. “It felt great. I was just so happy to be on the field when Milton won their first game.”

Quarterback Ryan McGill: “That’s the monkey off our back. After a whole year of getting beat up, it all came together. Centre Andrew Todd and part owner said, ‘It’s been so much hard work, both on and off the field. This win makes the 0-9 season worthwhile. Milton has a proud football tradition. We let it down (last year) but now, it’s back to making Milton proud.”

Mark Dow, who had an incredible season on defense, was as happy as anyone, ending a personal 22-game losing streak, but added a bit of perspective. “The victory is great, but there’s still a long way to go.”

Head coach Barry Enno said the conditions made it tough for both teams, and that the original game plan, which included a passing attack, had to be scrapped. “The team that wanted it most, and most of the team is only as good as its weakest link, but there was no weakest link out there at all.”

Coach Enno didn’t want to point out individuals for praise in this particular game. “In these conditions it was a total team effort.”

The rain didn’t let up from start to finish of the game, but came to a stop not long after its conclusion. Yes, the rain had stopped falling on the Marauders.

Marauders score first victory

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

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