

# Things not exactly rosy in IceHawks' nest

*Recent request for trades and six-game losing skid combine for rather bleak scenario for local Jr. A club*

The IceHawks' 9-6 loss to the last-place Mississauga Chargers Saturday night could easily be seen as the low point of this season.

However, the worst may be yet to come.

Addressing recent fan forum reports, three Milton players — who wished to remain anonymous — have confirmed that there have been some requests for trades, and that things are far from rosy with the team.

"There's definitely some problems here," said one player.

Speaking to the reasons behind the less-than-harmonious situation, two players said it's at least partly to do with co-owners Dean Pielt and Rob DeVincentis each having a son on this year's roster — feeling those personal interests have been put ahead of the overall good of the team.

Said one player, "We all know what the problem is."

Asked about this ongoing criticism and the trade requests — which if not accommodated may see some players walk out altogether — Pielt said it's to be expected in today's Tier 2 Jr. A scene.

"We were prepared for this," said the co-owner, president and general manager of the IceHawks, one of many teams that are owned, managed or coached by parents of players. "Pretty much all teams at this level, and even some in the OHL, have to deal with this at some point. It's (criticism of teams owned by parents) an easy target."

Of course the ownership situation wasn't the



with STEVE LeBLANC

*In the stands*

only factor given by players.

One current player told the *Champion* that part of the problem lay with coaching, while recently-departed forward Connor McMonagle said his sole reason for leaving was "the coach."

Any problems with regard to that may now be rectified, as first-year skipper Bill McDougall has left the club for what's simply being described as personal matters.

Pielt did say he may return in another capacity.

McDougall's brother, Rob, and Joe Simon — recently coming on board after a stint with Streetsville — are now at the helm, with young assistant Bryan Gent still in the mix.

Even with a handful of regulars out nursing minor injuries, surrendering nine goals to the basement-dwelling Chargers this past weekend certainly gave Milton fans reason to cringe.

This pushed the IceHawks' (13-14-3) current losing skid to six games, and left them just one point ahead of Brampton for sixth place in the MacKinnon Division — having sat fourth just a couple of weeks ago.

Now the number one man between the pipes — with Dillon Branco dealt to Hamilton last week — Steve Zoffranieri clearly struggled in his most recent road trip, and received little in the way of defensive support from a short-staffed blueline.

Milton had particular trouble with Chargers' top gunner Adam Bevilacqua, who amassed four goals and set up a fifth.

For the IceHawks, third-year veterans Allen Petretic and Jamie Hawkrigg each tallied twice and added an assist, while Kevin Caister stood out with a goal and three helpers.

In a far more expected defeat, Milton kicked off the weekend by falling 6-1 to the second-place Georgetown Raiders Friday at Memorial Arena.

Ryan Stroz scored the lone goal on a deflection midway through the second period, breaking a shutout streak that lasted close to five periods.

The IceHawks fended off a blowout — holding their neighbouring rivals to one goal in the second half of the night — but with their thinned out ranks and a real lack of intensity were never in a position to secure an upset victory.

Making the night even worse, rookie defenceman Matthew Prinsen — already on injury reserve — was involved in a freak (though fortunately minor) car accident in the parking lot and will now be out a little longer than expected.

Milton has a rare road game this Friday, visiting Burlington for a 7 p.m. start against the third-place Cougars. Sunday they host the Seguin Bruins of the Phillips Division. Game time is 3:30 p.m.

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## Was always willing to help young players

• from CANADIAN on page A18

Ridley, who moved to Burlington after he retired from teaching, was intensely loyal to Canadian players. In 1999, he campaigned for the Jays to draft a power-hitting catcher he had scouted in New Westminster, B.C.

"Byckowski and I got kind of loud about it, but we couldn't convince them," he told the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune last year.

Nineteen picks later, the Minnesota Twins took the player he wanted — Justin Morneau, who went on to become the American League MVP in 2006 and was the runner-up this past season.

Though his work with major league teams earned Ridley a higher profile, he gained even more admirers at the lower levels, where his abilities shone through. Ridley could spot a flaw in a player's swing as he walked by the diamond.

He would always stop to offer encouragement and advice to players of any age.

"There's a fraternity in baseball," said Craig Bedford, whose son Brad played in Georgetown on a national bantam championship team Ridley helped coach in 2007. "Whenever you find somebody who loves the game as much as you, you're attracted to them."

Maybe that's why, as Elliott said, whenever Ridley visited a diamond "there would be a lineup like he was

Santa Claus."

"A lot of people didn't realize we had this amazing baseball guy right here," Bedford said. "I consider my son's association with him as totally fortuitous. It was a gift."

It was a gift Ridley shared with as many people as he could.

Ridley is survived by his daughter Shannon and sons Jeremy and Shayne. A wake will be held Saturday at McKersie-Kocher Funeral Home, 114 Main St. E.

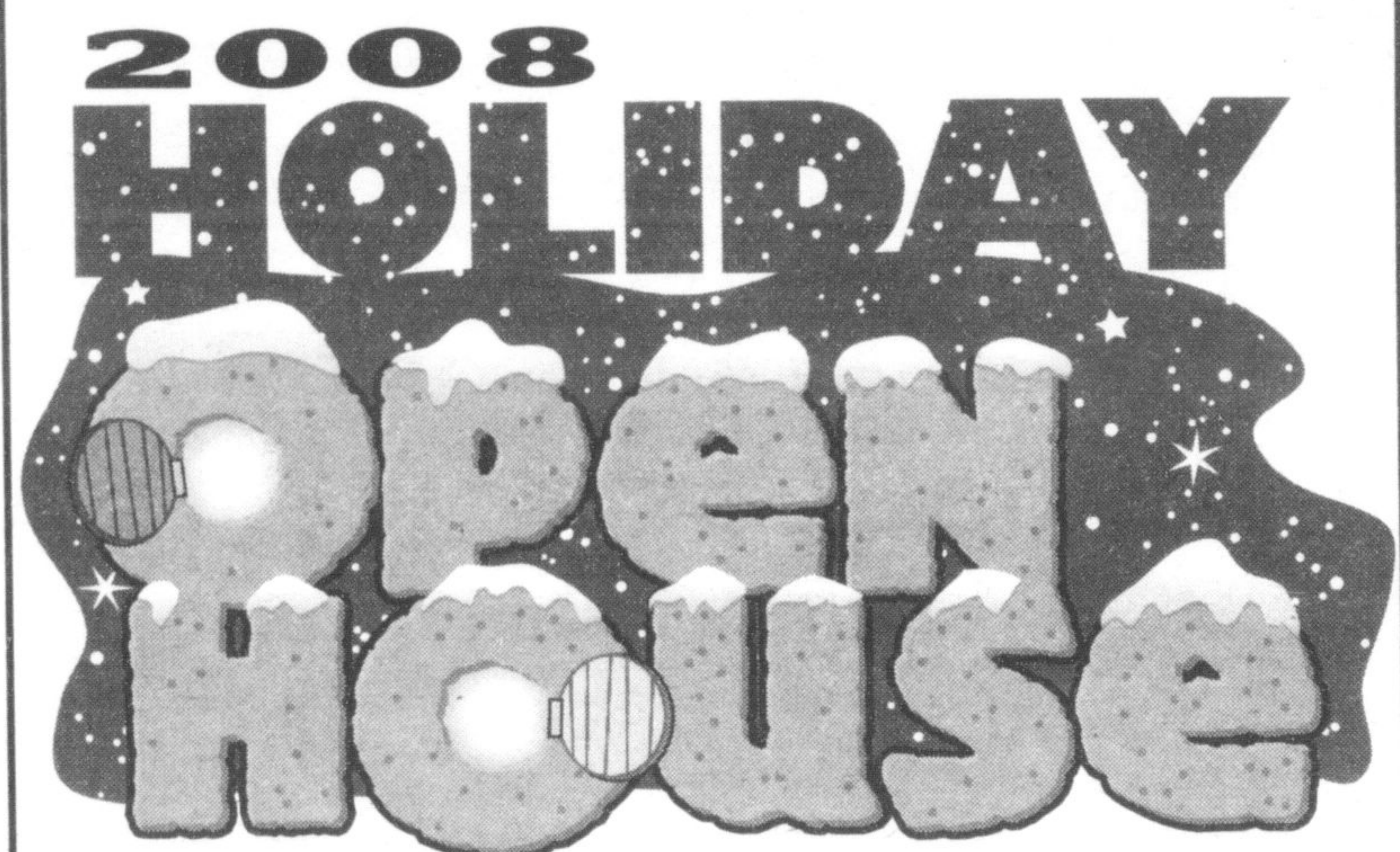
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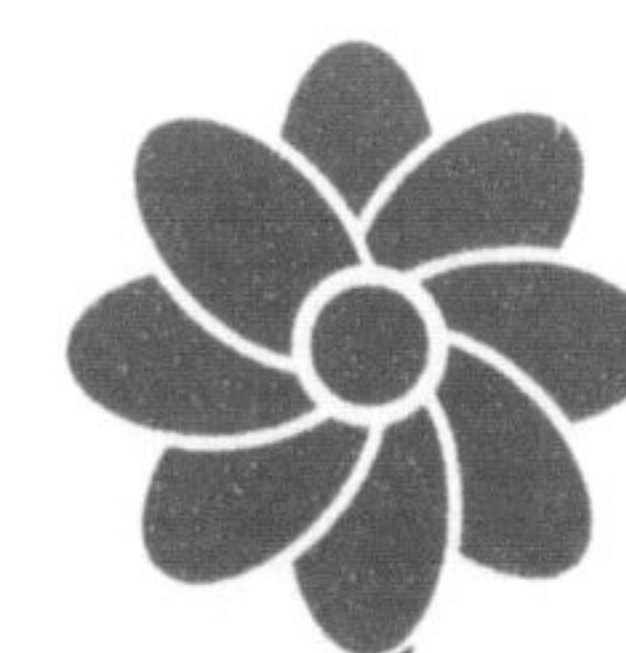
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A 10-week instructional volleyball program for girls ages nine to 12 will be held each Sunday at Tansley Woods Community Centre in Burlington starting in January. Each session will include 45 minutes of instruction and 45 minutes of three-on-three games. Sessions are as follows: 12:30-2 p.m. (ages nine-10); 2-3:30 p.m. (ages 11-12).

The Volley Girls House League for girls ages 13-16 will also start in January at Trinity Christian School in Burlington. Games for players in Grades 7-8 play run from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and for players in Grades 9-11 from 2-4 p.m.

For more information, call 905-333-0019 or visit [www.haltonvolleyball.com](http://www.haltonvolleyball.com).