



Clockwise from top left, Winterhawks' Quinn James takes part in the trick shot competition. Mike Webb and daughter Emma play a giant foosball game. The Twisters' C novices get their photo taken with the Stanley Cup. Fans take in Rogers Hometown Hockey co-host Tara Slone's hot-stove chat with former Maple Leafs Darcy Tucker and Darryl Sittler. Slone and Scotiabank's Quinn Waller (far right) present \$7,500 cheques to Twisters and Milton Minor Hockey Association presidents Lindsey Oliver and Malcolm Kelly. *Franki Ikeman / Special to the Champion*

# Milton takes national stage via Hometown Hockey

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Having just announced Scotiabank's Legacy Fund donations to the Milton Minor Hockey Association and North Halton Twisters, Tara Slone departs the stage to a waiting group of eager fans — smartphones in hand ready to snap some photos.

One of them presents her with a rather amusing picture of herself and a mascot from years ago.

This type of interaction — said the Rogers Hometown Hockey co-host — isn't just special, it's humbling.

"To see the commitment to the community means a lot," said Slone, referring to the 25,000 pounds of food Milton Minor Hockey collected for the Salvation Army in conjunction with the much-anticipated visit from Rogers Hometown Hockey. "If not for these authentic experiences, this (job) would be a grind. I'm so indebted to them (fans)."

Milton Sports Centre's parking lot was transformed into a hockey village this past weekend — complete with an appearance by the Stanley Cup.

Hundreds lined up to get their photos taken with hockey's holy grail, including longtime fan Betti Fairley.

"I saw it at the old hall of fame at the Ex (Canadian National Exhibition), but haven't seen it since," she said. "Oh my... that must have been in the '60s."

Enjoying an early photo session with the Cup were the Twisters C novices, whose eyes lit up as they packed around and smiled at a throng of snapping smartphones.

"I was so happy, I've never seen the Stanley Cup before," said Ava Lounsbury.

Added Twisters President Lindsey Oliver, "This is really exciting and it's great exposure for the Twisters."

Mike Bolt — one of the Keepers of the Cup — said the reactions from young and old hockey lovers alike never gets old.

"They're like a kid in a candy store, and it's (Stanley Cup) candy for every hockey fan."

Among Rogers' Sunday evening broadcasting package was a tribute video to four-time Stanley Cup champion John Tonelli — recently inducted into the first class of the Milton Sports Hall of Fame — and a segment with Slone riding the velodrome as part of her

Hometown Hockey 'Must' feature.

"I was terrified," admitted the Hometown Hockey co-host, who made it up the track with guidance from Olympians Steve Bauer and Monique Sullivan. "I've done a lot of different things, but rarely something that frightening. It's pretty intimidating."

Part of a 24-stop coast-to-coast tour, Rogers Hometown Hockey featured a Mardi Gras-calibre celebration of Canada's game — with everything from a hockey circus show and giant foosball games to autograph signings with former Maple Leaf greats Darryl Sittler, Rick Vaive and Darcy Tucker.

Modern-day star Connor McDavid also got into the autograph act — sort of — through a virtual autograph signing area in the Rogers' Fan Hub.

"I didn't know what to expect. This is quite impressive," said Harry Niemi, who has three sons playing hockey. "There's lots of neat stuff for the kids."

Not to mention those who felt like a kid again while exploring the makeshift villages and participating in numerous activities.

"I'm having a ball... except for the freezing," quipped Richard Johnston, taking in the fes-

tivities with good friend Kevin MacLennan, whom he met when their boys starting playing hockey together.

Added MacLennan, "This is great seeing people coming together, the community aspect of it."

Part of Saturday's slate of events was presenting sponsor Scotiabank's \$7,500 donations to Milton Minor Hockey and the Twisters, which followed a Hometown Hockey jersey unveiling by the Winterhawks 'A' atoms — the top collecting team during the association's food drive.

"To see all this come together, it's overwhelming," said MMHA President Malcolm Kelly.

Calling the opportunity to be part of that type of presentation a privilege, Slone said she, Ron MacLean and the Hometown Hockey crew (including Miltonian Rod McLachlan) have two key objectives at any given stop along the tour.

"One is that everyone that comes out has a good experience, and from the broadcasting side we hope when people see the package they say 'Yes, they did good by us'."

For more photos, see page 44

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