

Royal-ly suspenseful tournament win

Bishop Reding seniors pull out overtime victory in Halton All-Catholic Coaches Memorial final

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Their championship celebration had already been put in jeopardy, and the Royals had no intention of letting it be squashed altogether. Having surrendered a five-point advantage in the final 48 seconds of the fourth quarter last Thursday, Bishop Reding's seniors would mount another seemingly comfortable lead in overtime — only to have it narrowed to a nail-biting 74-73 on a couple of St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders' threes. Opportunity would strike with just two clicks of the clock remaining, as Jalen Mason was fouled and promptly nailed both his free throws.

A moment later fellow Grade 11 player Dom Mitchell-Williamson delivered a redirect tip of a Hail Mary

Aquinas pass to clinch a Reding victory at the Halton All-Catholic Coaches Memorial Basketball Tournament at Jean Vanier Secondary School.

"It was probably our most complete game. We couldn't get over the hump at times, but we persevered," said head coach Dan Seixeiro, whose team headed into the exam break tied for first with Aquinas in league play at 10-1, with their lone defeat — 58-56 to the Raiders — coming with a depleted lineup. Added Mason, "It feels good to be the No. 1 team and prove we are the team to beat. If we see them in the playoffs, we'll be ready. We know we can beat them now."

While noting that a couple of mental mistakes kept his Royals from putting the game away earlier, Seixeiro was pleased with how his team delivered on some second-half ad-

justments.

"They made good decisions on the offensive side and pushed the clock."

Mitchell-Williams came up with a season-high 25 points — providing a fierce one-two punch with offensive cornerstone Aryan Sharma, who finished with 27 — while 10th grader Angelo Kelava provided key rebounding and outside defence down the stretch.

Pablo Villa and Mason chipped in 13 and 12 points respectively in the tournament finale, which qualified Reding for the all-Catholic Ontario showcase in St. Catharines Feb. 9-11.

Keeping themselves atop the regional pecking order despite a major player turnover this season, the relatively young Royals reached the final of the recent Saints Invitational in Cambridge before winning the all-Catholic Halton title for a second straight year.

— with files from Herb Garbutt



St. Thomas Aquinas' Jeff Mattina is denied by Bishop Reding's Jalen Mason (left) and Hope Agbolosoo during the all-Catholic Halton final last Thursday. *Graham Paine / Metroland West Media Group*

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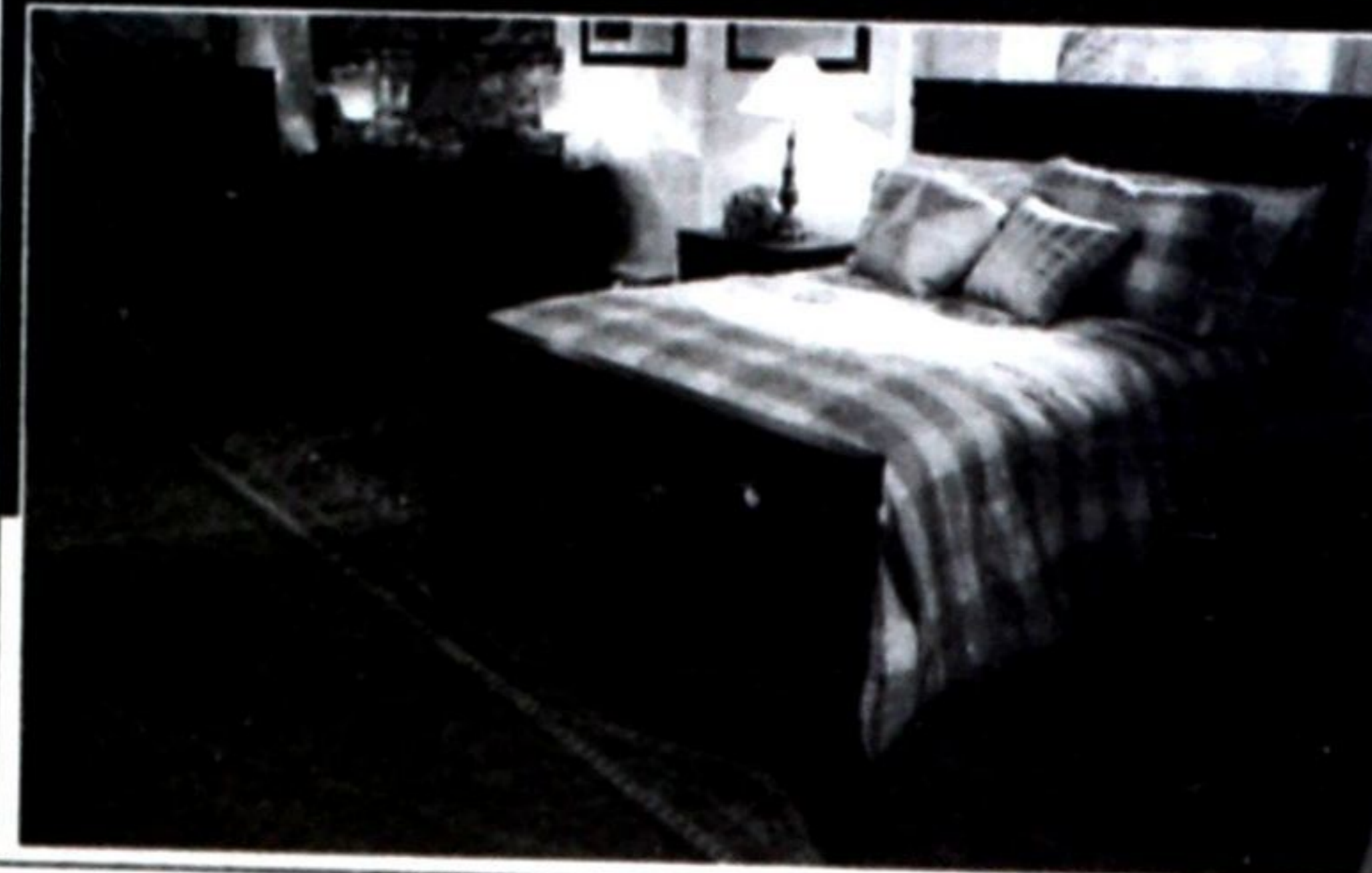
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