

The Acton Free Press

Sports Page

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Cross country skiing step to enjoyment

By Peter McCusker
Many people have stopped singing the wintertime blues and are doing something to take up the bulk of their recreational time, improving their physical condition and saving money. They find all three benefits in the act of cross country skiing.

Cross country skiing was relatively unknown in this country five to 10 years ago, but the activity has experienced phenomenal growth recently.

There is nothing better to put that healthful rosy glow onto your cheeks and experience the great brisk outdoor weather and it is an activity which can demand great physical exertion if you want it to.

The main advantage of cross country skiing is that you can go practically anywhere. There are regulated and mapped out ski areas at parks in the area, but if you so desired you could engage in a touring session on your back lot, or at a friend's farm. You are not inhibited by a lack of steep hills or rolling terrain.

Interested? Read on. A complete cross country ski package can range from \$60 to \$125, depending on how much you become involved, as with any activity. Most sporting goods stores and sport departments offer a basic beginners' package which will provide everything you need to get going.

There are no tow tickets to buy, no great lines to wait in. Purchase or rent the equipment, one or two lessons and you're on your way to a healthier and often enriching experience.

CLOTHING
Clothing worn during cross country skiing should be lightweight and loose fitting. Materials that absorb perspiration are essential because you generate your own body heat and the materials will have to "breathe", keeping you warm and dry.

There are stylish touring outfits one can purchase, with knickers and high socks being the traditional garb.

But a regular sweat-suit will absorb moisture and is lightweight as required. Those who wear downhill ski pants soon discover the discomfort caused by a material that doesn't breathe well. The elastic pant will have to stretch with each stride and this will tire the cross country skier quickly.

Two pairs of socks are recommended because this will aid in prevention of blisters and again, they "breathe" better. The ski



TERRA COTTA Conservation Area has many cross-country skiers using trails. Rockwood is another popular place for cross-country enthusiasts in the Acton area.

boots range in price with the best around \$45-\$55. The top models are usually fur lined and have a steel support in the sole. Some types should be waterproofed before the initial outing.

Light wool hats, toques, and woolen mittens and gloves are other essentials which will add to the comfort and enjoyment of the sport. Being warm and comfortable will also allow you to spend more time on the trail.

CHOOSING SKIS
There are numerous types of cross country skis and the serious beginner will have to study what type is specifically useful to him or her. The two main types of construction are of wood and fibreglas.

Wooden skis vary in price range according to materials used in the ski, the bottom coating if any and what material is added to the edge of the skis. The fibreglas ski is the better. Fibreglas can take the punishment many wooden skis would break under and, as is common with wood, the tips will not break off.

In the past two years, two domestic manufacturers of fibreglas skis have opened in Quebec. The old world crafts-

manship that is needed to produce a good pair of wooden skis is no longer necessary with the manufacture of fibreglas skis.

Fibreglas skis range from \$70 to \$110 a pair and the more active male and female beginners should consider more than the least expensive pair of skis they can find. The good wooden skis or inexpensive fibreglas would do the trick and provide a great number of skiing hours for their dollars invested.

The younger person or anyone who would only be casually participating, would be able to outfit themselves for \$75 or slightly less. The big swing in Quebec is to the fibreglas.

It is important to purchase the right size of ski for your height and weight. The test for choosing the correct ski—once you have decided on wood or fibreglas—is to hold the ski vertically on end and measure with an outstretched arm.

The tip of the ski should come to the centre of your palm, or to the wrist, depending on your weight. If you are a heavily built person the ski should be five cms. longer or if you are light, about five cms. shorter. The type of

cross country you plan to do will also affect the decision. Whether you wish to do light touring, general to heavy touring or even racing, there is a ski designed for the purpose.

If you plan on taking a full day tour it is advisable to get light touring skis. These are narrower than general touring skis but many people start with this ski. They can also be used in racing. The light touring are not as stable as general touring skis.

The skiing expert will choose skis 10-15 inches taller than one's self. The intermediate will generally have skis eight inches taller and the novice-beginner will have to choose skis they will be able to handle—manoeuvre, four to five inches above the head.

As with skis there are two materials commonly found in ski poles, aluminium and bamboo. The aluminium poles are lighter and stronger than bamboo, but are more expensive. The aluminium will not break as easily as bamboo, however, if an aluminium pole bends it will never be bent back into perfect condition.

The poles should reach from the floor to fit snugly into the underarm. There are also

fibreglas and steel poles available.

FOOTWEAR
The cross country skier also has a choice in footwear. The general and light touring classifications are also applicable, with the general touring boot being heavier and higher at the sides, used with a Kandahar binding or heel cable.

The light touring boot is not as strong but is more flexible and rises to just below the ankle. The light boot has an extended toe and is used with a toe binding. Remember to wear two pair of socks when being fitted. Some people will say the \$10 bindings are just as good as the expensive ones.

Bindings are not sold on the skis. Again, materials vary. Two major materials used are the anodized steel, considered the best, and a PVC plastic binding which is new, or coming on the market. The plastic binding is expected to stand up better in colder temperatures and will be less expensive than the metal.

WAXING
Waxing may be the most crucial step taken in preparation for an outing. It is an art form and when preparing for competition, it becomes a task which requires a great deal of experience and expertise.

The initial step in proper waxing is to make sure your skis are clean! Skis that have been carried on car racks and exposed to carbon from exhaust, road salt, rain and everything else need to be cleaned upon arrival at your destination.

Whenever possible, clean and wax your skis indoors,

simply because warm wax is much easier to apply. Most waxes are color coded for use on different types of snow. For wet snow, packing snow, above freezing point, a soft wax is used on the bottom of the ski. If the snow is dry, below the freezing point and will not pack when grabbed in the glove, a hard wax is used. That's basically it. Generally soft wax is coded red, green or yellow and hard wax is blue.

Remember, soft wax can be applied over top of hard wax but soft wax must be removed before a hard wax is applied. The expert will carry several types of wax with him and competitors will have a select mixture prepared moments before the race is to begin. Wax in one direction, from tip to tail. Smooth the wax in with a cork or the palm of your hand. If snow sticks to the bottom of your skis you have waxed too soft. As a rule, the colder the conditions, the harder the wax.

The low cost sport can be done anywhere but those who are heavily involved will tell you to join a club. A novice doesn't need lessons to enjoy the scenery and participatory aspects of the sport. The axiom is—if you can walk, you can cross country ski. Of course that is a simplification of the action, however, the stride and co-ordination of cross country is very much an exaggerated walking stride.

The beginner will have to get used to having feet longer than normal and lifting the heel, but not the ski, from the snow. The basic stride differs from the walk in that you thrust forward rather than lift. Those who have had

cross country skiing will find it easy to swing the arm to a full extension with the opposing foot thrust. A definite step must be taken. You don't shuffle your feet when you walk properly and so you shouldn't when first attempting to cross country ski.

Basically, that is it. There are movements for climbing steep grades and coasting downhill and these skills would be introduced in early lessons.

When making a turn on cross country skis, one steps the turn starting with the foot on the side in which direction you wish to turn. When you start to turn to the right, the right foot is stepped to the right and the other foot-ski is brought to a parallel with a right ski. Continue in this manner until the desired amount of turn is reached.

Cross country skiing was invented by the nomadic tribes of northern Asia with the purpose of transporting people up the mountains, across plains and down valleys. There are more than 100 cross country ski resorts in the province and prices at parks run from \$1 to \$3 for a day's skiing.

BRONTE CREEK
Locally, Bronte Creek Provincial Park offers a wide selection of groomed cross country ski trails. There are five trails outlined in a pamphlet issued by park authorities. The length of the trails varies from half a mile to three miles.

The Bronte Creek Logging trail is through an 80-year-old bush which is being selectively logged to provide firewood for the Spruce Lane Farm. There are few large

mammals living in this area of the park due to the high plant canopy which does not provide adequate cover. This logging trail may be skied on its own or serve as a link between Farm Row Trails and the Mice, Men and Maiden's Blush Trails.

The Mice, Men and Maiden's Blush Trail is the best in the park in which to view wildlife. Officials call this area a bird watcher's paradise with Blue Jays, Cardinals, Chickadees and Flickers. This trail is 1.2 miles in length. The Ravine Edge Trail follows the scenic ravine for half of its 1.5 mile length. Officials caution skiers to remain at least five feet from the ravine edge. Loose snow on the edge or an overhang could prove dangerous and as their pamphlet reads, "could give you a closer look than you want."

The longest trail at Bronte is the Field and Forest Trail. It touches along the ravine twice and meanders through woodlots of various ages and tree varieties. There should be plentiful wildlife in this area including deer, rabbit and mouse.

The Field and Forest Trail is "Strictly roughing it" as there are no washrooms or garbage facilities yet.

Bronte Creek Park is easy to reach from Milton as one drives directly south on Highway 25 which is Bronte Rd. or down Tremaine Rd. which becomes Burloak Dr. The park is just north of the QEW.

MOUNTSBERG
To the West of Milton is Mountsberg. Mountsberg has a groomed cross country trail and has rental equipment

available at modest prices. A complete package for the day would cost you \$5. The 1300 acre park is located west of Campbellville, six kilometers. The trails at Mountsberg are designed for the novice-beginner and are not particularly challenging to anyone with a great deal of experience. There are bird feeders and plenty of deer in the park. It's a good place for the beginner or family.

The public cross country skiers are invited to use the park at Glen Eden although their ace is for downhill skiing. The Glen Eden hills are visible from Highway 401 and located at Kelso Park. The park is located on Milton's doorstep. Follow Steeles Ave. west to the First Line or Town Line and turn right, heading north. There are signs posted to direct you to the park which is only three or four miles out of town.

GET GOING

It is always a good idea to carry a knapsack on your back when setting out. This would be useful when shedding clothing and for carrying a vacuum bottle containing coffee, tea or hot chocolate.

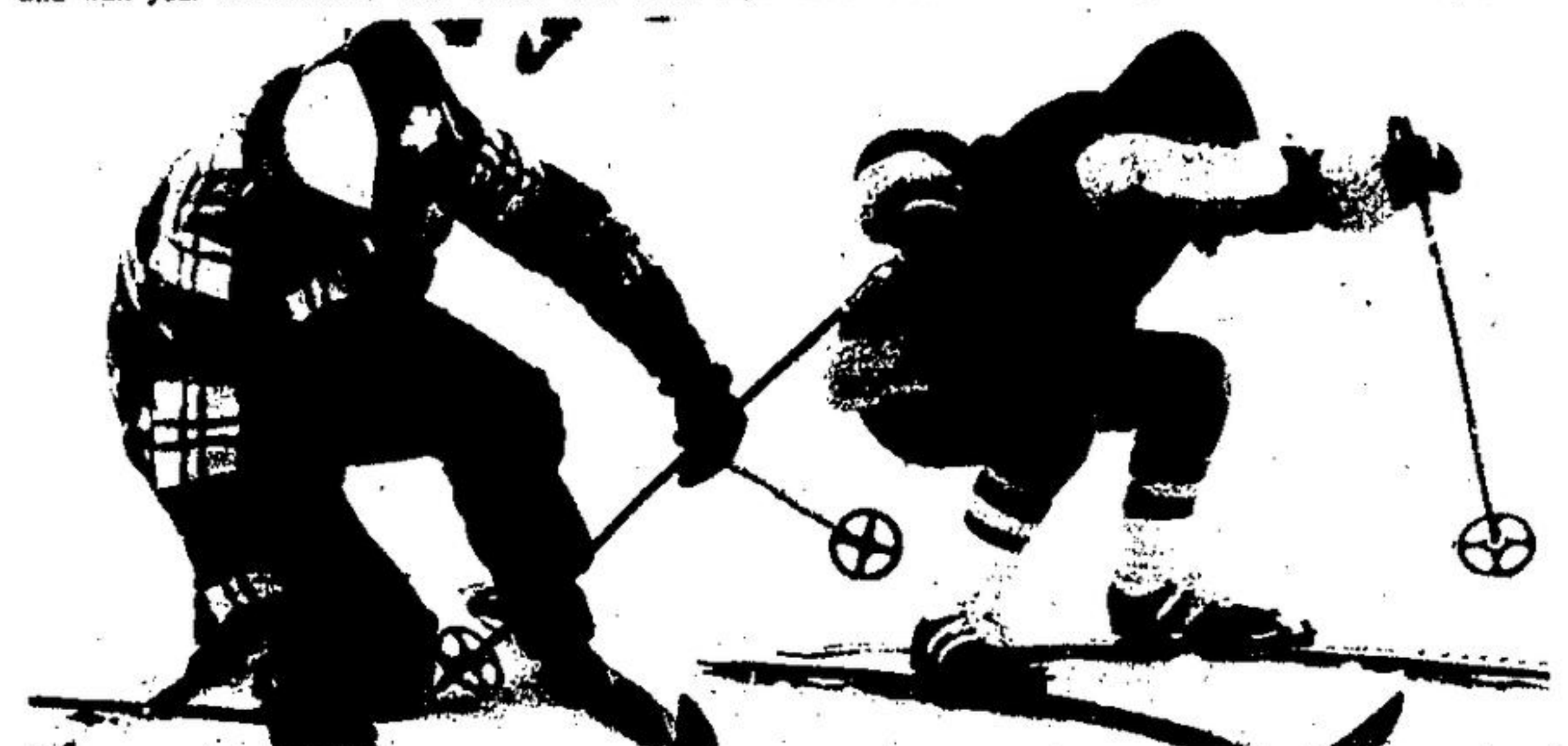
Pack a lunch and include energy foods such as raisins, nuts and chocolate in the sack. Carry extra wax and know the only clothing taboo is denim jeans. Denim jeans provide little leg room and too much material around the ankle, tripping even the best skiers. They absorb moisture easily and freeze readily.

Almost any other type of slacks will do, but the woolen knickers and long socks are best.

EXERCISE

There is only one other sport better for the cardiovascular system than cross country skiing, and that is long distance bicycle riding. The skier also uses his/her whole body and muscles in the action, from the shoulder and neck to the ankles and toes. An active cross country skier will burn approximately 540 calories every hour, compared with an adult normally functioning around 73 calories an hour. So if you are heavy or would like to get into trim, cross country skiing will certainly provide an outlet for the extra energy you want to spend.

It can be done alone or with a group of friends or family. Since you can't stop winter, or speed it up by sitting on your posterior in front of the boob tube, try cross country skiing.



THIS WAY DAD! Eight-year-old Wendy Baker and father Gary Baker of Hamilton were out with the family to Mountsberg, Wednesday enjoying the cross country ski trails. The sport and recreation has grown tremendously in Ontario over the past two years.

Minor bantams ousted from Etobicoke tourney

Acton minor bantams topped London last Wednesday 5-1 at the Etobicoke International tourney but were eliminated from the tournament later in the same day when Kitchener sneaked in a final period goal to take a 1-0 win.

Acton had moved into the consolation rounds of the

week long tourney when they were edged 6-5 by York Mills in a two game, total point opening round series.

The Kitchener goalie was the main reason for the loss Wednesday as he was brilliant in the nets and, according to bantams manager Will Duval, in the running for the best goalie of the tourney.

Acton outplayed Kitchener most of the game but could not beat their netminder.

Playing two games in one day hurt the bantams as they skated their legs out from under themselves by the final period of the game.

The Kitchener marker came when a clearing pass

from behind the Acton nets was intercepted and passed out in front of the goal, where Jeff David deflected it past Acton goalie Tim Shields.

Five minors were called in the game, two of them going to Acton.

Better luck
The bantams were luckier in the first game, when their

superior play was good for the 5-1 win. Score stood at 1-1 after the first two periods, but a tough checking game by the Acton squad finally wore London down to allow the four final period goals.

London took a 1-0 lead early in the first period but Mark Duval tied it up before the buzzer sounded with a goal from Gord McArthur. The two teams were scoreless in the second period.

The Acton shooters broke the game open in the third frame with McArthur being the first to connect. He got the puck from Andy Valvoda and Jeff McNabb.

Duval jumped in a second point four minutes later and the score was 3-1. Tim Ferguson picked up an assist on the marker.

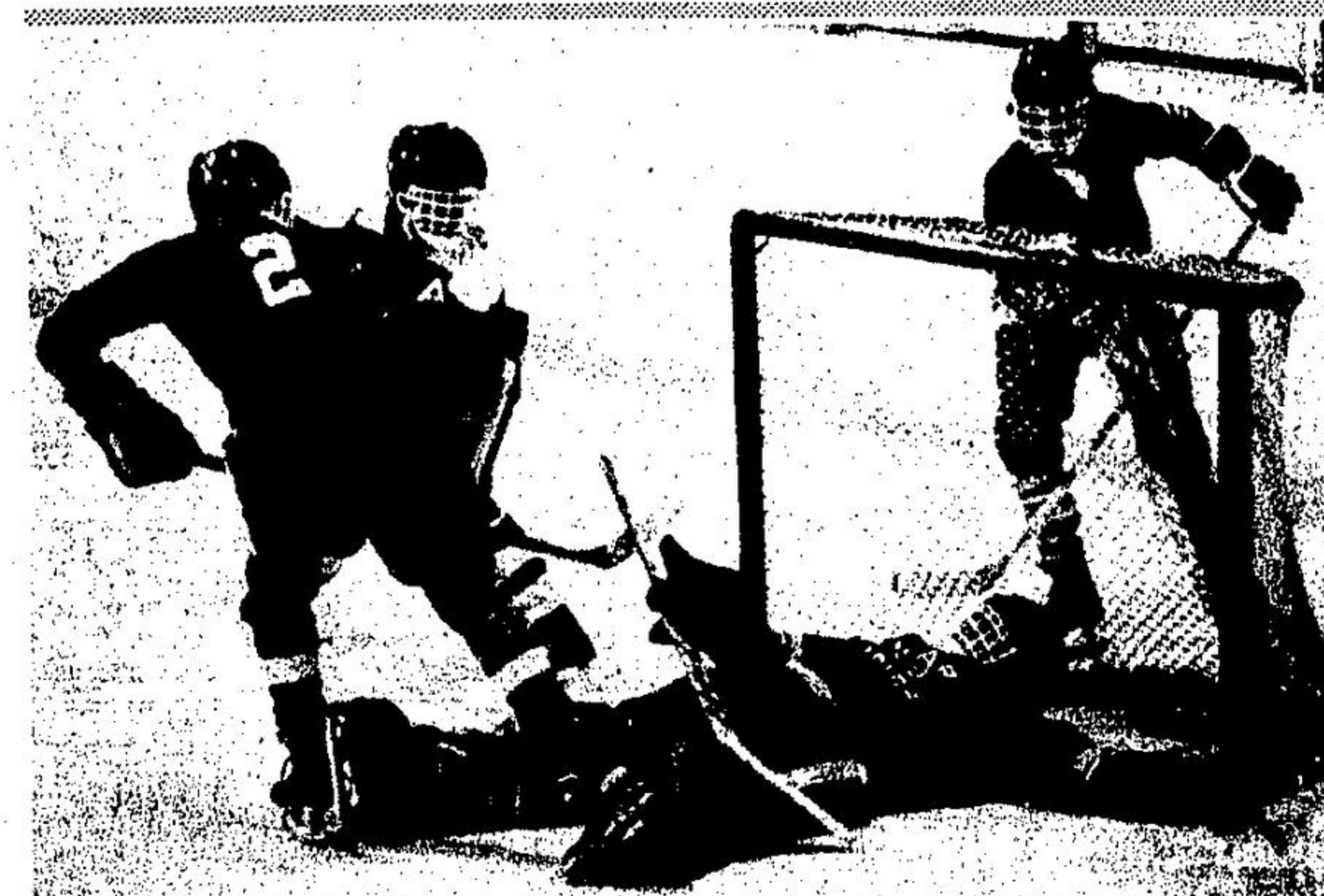
Rob Vermeulen fired home an unassisted effort late in the period and Duval completed his hat trick less than a minute later to account for the final tally.

Acton were hit by five penalties in the game while London collected only two.

The bantams have a sparkling 14-1 record in Wellington Waterloo play this season, their only loss coming at the hands of Orangeville.



JUVENILE'S ART CURRIE pushes puck in past sprawled Fergus netminder Bryan Povey in last night's win at the arena. Currie also plays on Acton Sabres as an affiliated player. Minutes later Jeff Shields, a former Sabre, waltzed the length of the ice to pop in a solo effort over Povey. Shields was promptly criticized by manager Mike Kinal, who would rather see a good team effort than individual heroics.



Down . . .
. . . and out