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Juniors shaky in home opener; rule the road

BY DOUG HARRISON

The Acton Tanner

Home-court is a word the Acton Junior Girls' volleyball outfit may live and die by throughout the 1993-94 season.

The early season mystery is whether it will be home-court advantage or disadvantage.

Score last Monday's action at home a pleasing split.

The team, though, is carrying the label of Road Warriors after last Wednesday's trek to Burlington

Central High.

Bob McKay's troops swept their Burlington opponents 15-10, 15-8 and 15-11 in upping their record to 2-0. Acton sits atop the Richardson Division standings heading to the Christmas break.

"Not playing at home," were the first words from the second-year Acton volleyball coach's mouth on Thursday when asked what the key to victory was.

"It can be a distraction and a concern, especially for the young

kids. They were really rigid at first."

That would be last Monday, when the locals opened the season at Acton High against the Lord Elgin Lancers.

"I think we can play a lot better," said McKay after Game 1. "I gave the girls three days off after a major tourney and we came out flat ... It's tough to open at home."

So Wednesday, with their serving improving and a better presence on the court, Acton seemed more like a surging team that won't soon worry where they play.

Aside from the terrorizing serving of a Central player who quickly erased a comfortable 9-1 Game 1 lead to 9-8, and an 11-2 rout in Game 2 to 11-8, Acton owned the hardwood floor.

"We were clearly the better team when the day was finished, though," McKay commented. I felt good about our accomplishments. We're now going into the New Year with confidence and the thought that we can win. I'm very, very encouraged."

McKay noted the strong play of Shelley Hand, Shondra Stroud and setter Jackie Jahn.

Last Monday, Acton started flat against the Lancers, but left the Acton High gym pumped up.

Combining Heather Trotter's 6-foot frame (excluding stretched arms) at the net and Hand's explosive spikes, the locals nipped the Lancers 16-14 in Game 3 for an entertaining season-opening win.

Miscommunication by Acton prolonged the match and helped

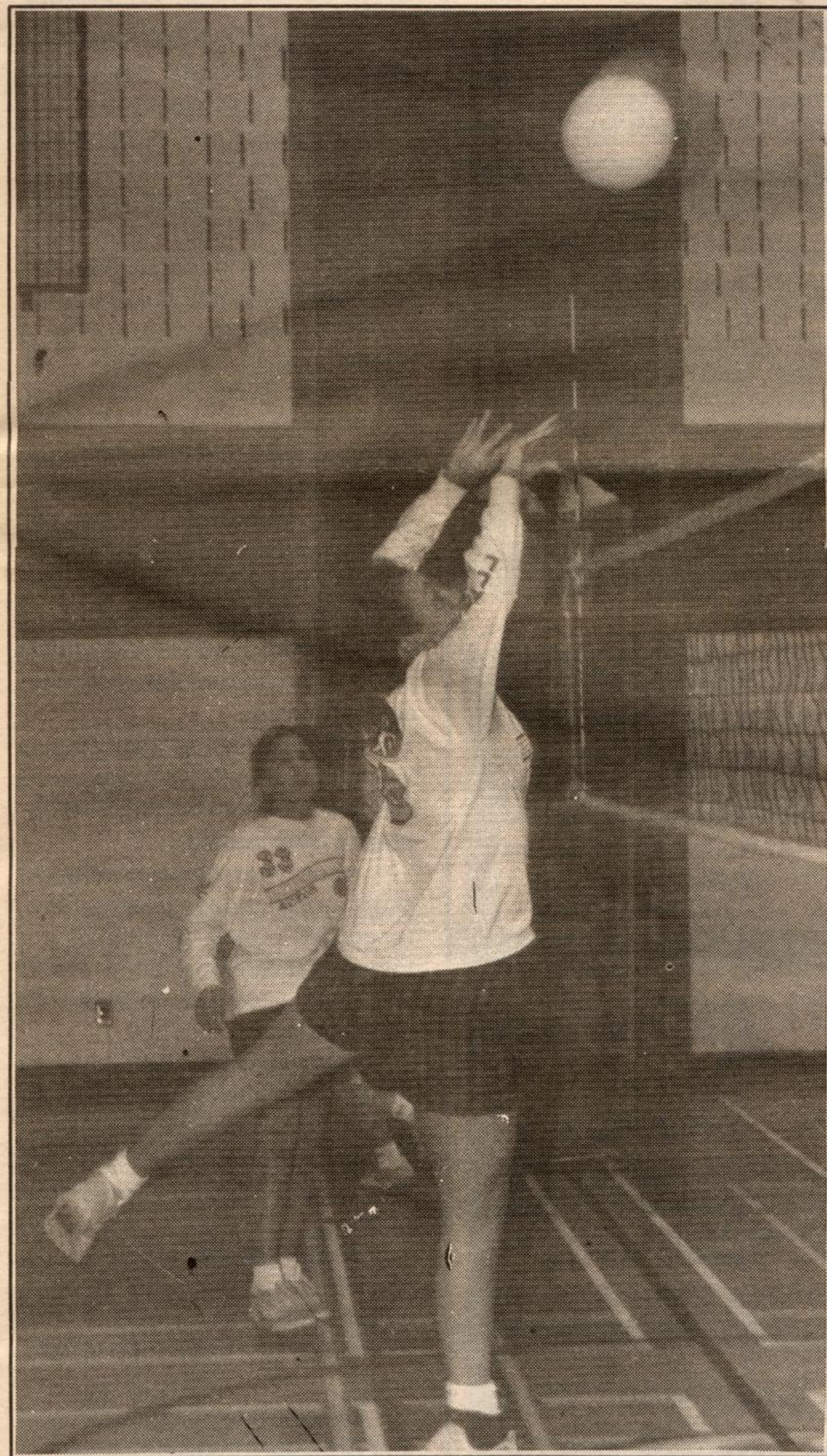
add to an already tense affair.

Tied 14-14, Hand whacked the ball deep in the Lancer end for the lead. Joy Christopher then ended matters as her hard serve handcuffed an opponent that brought a rousing cheer from both the Acton bench and bleachers.

McKay juggled his lineup for Game 2, as a more tentative group took to the floor. It showed as the visitors mounted 5-0 and 9-4 leads before winning 15-6.

In a crazy third game, Acton was down 2-0, stormed into the lead at 4-2 and then had it slip away when the Lancers went on top 6-5.

With the game knotted 14-14, Trotter came up with a crucial block to give the ball back to her teammates and the rest is history.



BALANCE ACT: Shondra Stroud of the Acton High Girls' Junior Volleyball team returns a shot against visiting Lord Elgin last Monday at Acton High. Acton won their home and season-opener 16-14, 6-15 and 16-14. (Doug Harrison photo)

Missed baskets hurt Midgets

Luck wasn't on the Acton High Midget Boys' basketball team's side in their 69-34 home-opening loss last Wednesday to Burlington Central.

Part of the reason for the 35-point difference was the exceptional play of a Central hoopster who racked up 17 of his 19 points in the first half. Another reason was that Acton missed the net when they had shots.

"That's partly the magic of turning our practice play to the games and getting open," explained Acton coach Harvey Melon after the game. "Our jump-shooting has to improve."

Acton hit their stride in the second half. Perfect timing as their hot-shooting opponent was relegated to the bench for most of it.

"In Midget ball, once a game gets settled (one-sided), coaches from both teams give all their players equal court time," said Melon.

Acton guard Chris Young led his team with 10 points. David Ham counted eight, while Jamie Birrell chipped in with five.

Last Monday, Acton lost their season opener, a 42-39 seat-squirmier in the last minute at Burlington's Lord Elgin High.

The visitors were in comeback gear from the beginning as the Lancers held a 15-5 lead after the

first quarter.

Despite the 0-2 start, the locals showed character and a good work-ethic in the well-played game, Melon stated.

Rob Huisman scored 12 points for Acton. Young contributed eight points, while Birrell registered six.

"We have to average 15 to 20

more points a game," argued Melon. "It's hard to win games with less than 50 points."

Melon is confident his team will be rewarded soon for the energy they're putting out.

A good start would be Game 1 of 1994, slated for M.M. Robinson Jan. 5.

Proplastex streak hits double digits

The Acton Proplastex Atom II rep team should continue with their two-line format.

The locals surrendered a paltry two goals in three Tri-County Atom D-Division games against Fergus, Arthur and Elora.

The three wins raised their win streak to 10 games.

D.J. King scored twice in Elora on Sunday and Chad Greenwood turned aside all shots in Acton's 3-0 win that bumped their record to 12-5-4.

Jeff Payne, who assisted on King's markers, scored the other.

Other assists went to Darren Banks with two, Ryan Turpin

and Kurtis Bosch.

Greenwood lost his bid for a shutout late in Saturday's 3-1 victory over Arthur at the Community Centre.

Payne, David Iacocca and Ryan Turpin, who wired a hard wrist, scored for the locals.

Jeff Schouten, Jamie Warren and Jared Hornick had helpers.

Schouten, converted from the wing to centre, scored the hat-trick as Acton downed Fergus 4-1 on the road Thursday.

Stephen Monaghan had one.

Banks and Iacocca led with two assists each, while singles went to Monaghan and Turpin.



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