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BATTLING REDMEN! Acton Redmen Mike Sop (45) and teammate Aaron Byard fail in this attempt to bat the ball away from an Iroquois Ridge opponent during a recent Halton high school Midget Boys' basketball game at Acton High. (Doug Harrison photo)

Hockey hecklers 'frustrate' coach

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

"Being at home is definitely an advantage for us."

Not a questionable remark for a hockey club with just two losses in 12 home dates. Brian Payne's Acton Precision Millwrights Midget Sabres feel rather comfortable playing in front of the Community Centre crowd, even if it includes being pelted with verbal assaults and coins from visiting fans.

However, the local coach says a recent barrage of fights and verbal attacks on home players' families and friends hasn't distracted his club's on-ice concentration and is confident the off-ice antics have been dealt with.

"I don't know if it's the atmosphere or what, but this level of fan rowdiness is new to me. I've never seen anything like this at this level (15 to 18-year-olds)," says the first-year Sabres boss, who coached at the high school level in Windsor prior to moving to Acton last year.

Prior to Christmas, the Acton Sabres Minor Hockey Association was forced to hire a pair of pay-duty police officers to help eliminate the extra-curricular activities.

It worked, but minor hockey can't afford the \$246 per-game fee for pay-duty police.

Payne figures the uncharacteristic happenings – he estimates four or five games worth – have as much to do with architectural problems as they do behavioural. He contends the Community Centre is more conducive to this kind of fan behaviour than most other centres, because the fans are so close to the action. Most arenas, he says, have at least one row of walkway between the glass and stands, so fans are forced to stay back.

"The major source of concern is the taunting of players," Payne points out. "To have fans jeering the visiting team is part of the game, but it has taken away from the game. We have a very good team here.

"The players are very good about it, but are getting sick of it. They like a lot of fans in the stands, the support."

Asked if he feels people are afraid to enter the Community Centre for Midget hockey games, Payne says "if you're a team coming in I could see it."

As for viewing the unruly patrons from the home bench across the ice, Payne admits it has become frustrating.

"The other team gets riled and that gets us riled and it's hard to control your players," he says. "Has it cost us games yet? No. Does it have the ability to? Yes. The OMHA playdowns are in three weeks and we have a team that could get to the final.

"I would like us to get notoriety on the basis of being a second or third-place team which plays good hockey. Hopefully the fans will continue to support the team."

Aqua Duck Pliotas wins two silvers

Acton Aqua Duck swimmer **Julie Pliotas** grabbed silver medals in the 50-metre and 200-metre breast-stroke events at a recent meet in Woodbridge.

Pliotas achieved the feats in the Girls' 15-and-over bracket.

Michelle Addley (bronze, 13

and 14-year-old 50m freestyle) and **Kara MacDonald** (bronze, 15-and-over 50m free) were the other Aqua Ducks to crack a top three finish.

There were 400 swimmers from 16 teams present from as far away as North Bay.

Coaches **Julie Wilson** and **Gerry Ockenden** were satisfied with the overall performance of the team.

"I'm happy to see the swimmers win their awards," says Ockenden, "but what's important is the continuous improvement of their times which showed in the 87

per cent of personal best swims."

Following are the other Aqua Duck results: 13 and 14-year-old Girls – **Jaime MacDonald** (fifth, 50m free and sixth, 50m backstroke) and **Erin Maxwell** (fifth, 50m back and seventh, 100m back).

Boys 13 and 14 – **Steven Potterton** (eighth, 50m back).

Girls' 15-and-over – **Kara MacDonald** (fourth, 100m back; fourth, 50m back and eighth, 50m butterfly) and **Alexis McLeod** (eighth, 50m breast).

Boys' 15-and-over – **Mike Lenizky** (seventh, 50m back).

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