

Sports & Leisure

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Jans looks to repeat as Canadian squash champion

By **HERB GARBUTT**
Staff Writer

The only thing more difficult than winning a championship is defending it.

Now, after chasing the Canadian women's squash title for six years, Melanie Jans will find out how true the old adage is. Jans began the defence of her national title on Thursday in Calgary.

Jans first picked up the game at the Georgetown Racquet Club when she was 11 and became a dominant player on the junior circuit, winning five national titles at three different age levels. However, once she made the jump to the senior circuit, the national title always managed to elude her. She finished second or third each year since 1993 but finally snapped the string of near misses by taking the championship last May.

"It was a relief," said Jans. "I felt pressure going into it but by the time we started playing I was really relaxed."

With defending champion Heather Wallace retiring and

then getting injured during a comeback bid, Jans went into the tournament as the number one seed. Though that put the pressure squarely on her to win, Jans went in confident and delivered.

"I was feeling a lot faster," she said. "I've been working a lot on my speed and working with my coach a lot. I just felt on top of the ball and hitting the ball, it felt really crisp."

Since winning nationals, Jans has been busy. She was on the Canadian team as squash made its debut at the Commonwealth Games in Malaysia.

Though she was hoping to challenge the world's top players from Australia and England, Jans pulled a hamstring two days before the Games began. The injury hindered her play and she was knocked out in the opening round of play.

"I was really protecting it," Jans said. "It would have been a different story if I was

healthy. I'm a lot smarter about training now, though. When I was a junior I tended to overdue it."

Though the Games didn't turn out as she hoped, the 25-year-old has steadily improved her world ranking and currently sits at 25th in the world, up from 40th last year. She is aiming to crack the top 20 and if recent results are any indication, she's well on her way. Jans was a semifinalist at the Multiple Sclerosis Chicago tournament

and it took, England's Cassie Jackman, ranked third in the world at the time, to end her run.

The national title is not the only one Jans will be defending this year. In July, she and her Canadian teammates will try to repeat as gold medalists at the Pan-Am

Games in Winni-peg.

After dedicating so

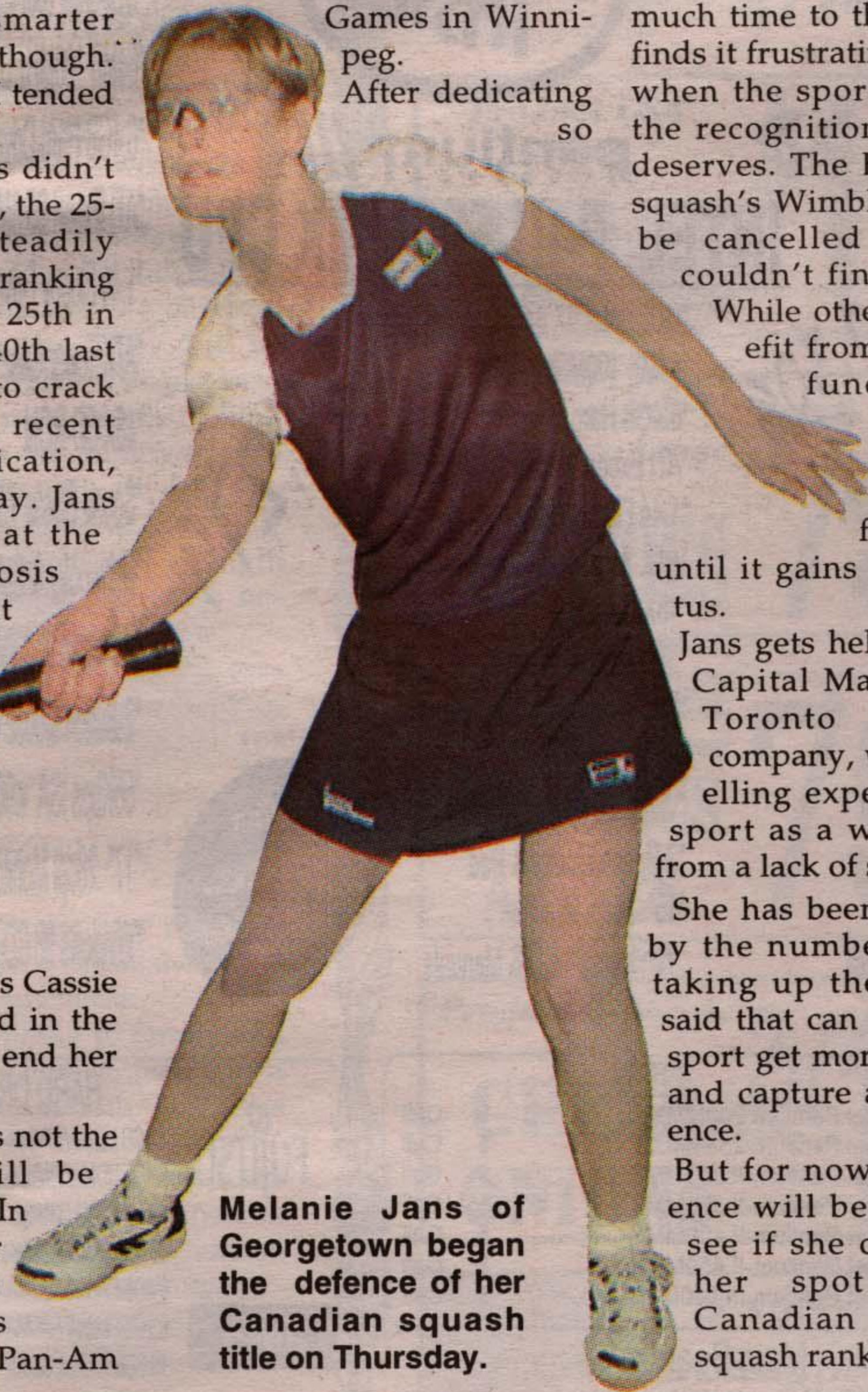
much time to the sport, Jans finds it frustrating sometimes when the sport doesn't get the recognition she feels it deserves. The British Open, squash's Wimbledon, had to be cancelled because it couldn't find a sponsor.

While other sports benefit from government funding, Jans said that is unlikely to happen for squash until it gains Olympic status.

Jans gets help from YMG Capital Management, a Toronto investment company, with her travelling expenses but the sport as a whole suffers from a lack of sponsorship.

She has been encouraged by the number of women taking up the sport. Jans said that can only help the sport get more competitive and capture a larger audience.

But for now, Jans' audience will be watching to see if she can maintain her spot atop the Canadian women's squash ranks.



Melanie Jans of Georgetown began the defence of her Canadian squash title on Thursday.



Medalists (front, from left) Steven Wasylyk, Trevor Rahim, Tyler Yahiro, (second row) Gregg Thibodeau, Brad Johnston, Scott Boyd (third row) Bredon Boyd, Jillian Wasylyk, Virginia Madarasz, Stephanie Douma, Crystal Braid, Andrew Poirier, Greg Presant, Michelle Douma, (back) Nicole Rahim, Mike Hughes, Kevin Douma and Dave Douma.

Three firsts at Best of the Best

Tae Kwon Do school strikes gold at tournaments

Halton Hills Tae Kwon Do struck gold three times at the Best of the Best Tournament at Centennial College.

Trevor Rahim, Dave Douma and Greg Presant each won a gold medal in patterns at the event, which attracted more than 300 competitors. Presant added a silver medal in sparring.

Andrew Poirier was also a double medalist, taking the silver in sparring and bronze in patterns. Mike Hughes won a bronze in sparring and just missed out on another medal, placing fourth in patterns.

The club also had a successful tournament in Cobourg, bringing home 28 medals. Rahim, Hughes, Crystal Braid and Joe Gushue each won gold in both patterns and sparring. Michelle Douma and Dave Douma were each first in pat-

terns and third in sparring. Nicole Rahim took first in sparring and was fourth in patterns. Also earning gold medals were Jillian Wasylyk, Stephanie Douma and Kevin Douma, each in patterns.

Other results from the Cobourg tournament were: Scott Boyd (silver in sparring and patterns); Steven Wasylyk (silver in sparring and bronze, patterns). Poirier (silver in patterns and fourth, sparring). Brendan Boyd (silver in sparring); Gregg Thibodeau (silver in patterns); Virginia Madarasz (silver in patterns); Greg Presant (silver in sparring).

Tyler Yahiro (bronze in sparring and patterns); Samantha Ronaldson (bronze in patterns); Brad Johnston (fourth in sparring and patterns).

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