



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Merchants can't lock up first place against Blues

By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to The Champion

The battle for first rages on. The Merchants had a chance to lock up top spot in the West Conference Sunday, but instead suffered through a power failure and fell 3-1 to Bramalea Blues.

This kept Brampton's hopes for stealing first in the Jr. A loop alive, with just a week remaining in the regular season.

Milton now holds a slim one-point lead, which they'll look to stretch to three tonight at home against Oakville.

The Capitals could take over first if Milton loses and they win their last two outings against Bramalea and Vaughan.

Offensively challenged throughout the afternoon tilt at Victoria Park Arena, the Merchants needed a two-man advantage in the second to spoil Jason Gaggi's shutout bid.

They failed to capitalize on eight other powerplay opportunities and a total of 35 shots.

Despite speculation that late-season line changes are the cause of recent scoring lapses, skipper Marty Williamson believes a lack of mental focus is to blame.

"I don't think the shuffling is the problem. They're struggling mentally and deviating from the system," he said.

Blues captain Kyle Amyotte proved to be Milton's biggest nemesis Sunday, as he has all season long.

He figured in a pair of first-period powerplay goals — just four minutes apart — and sank an empty net insurance marker in the dying moments of the game.

Scoring for his team were Mike Henderson and rookie of the year Mike Cammalleri. Milton's lone tally came from captain Jeff Haydar with assists drawn by Ron Baker and Kevin Crowe.

Bramalea sophomore Dave D'Amizio turned in a robust performance and helped neutralize newly acquired Merchant defenceman Raitis (Razor) Ivanans.

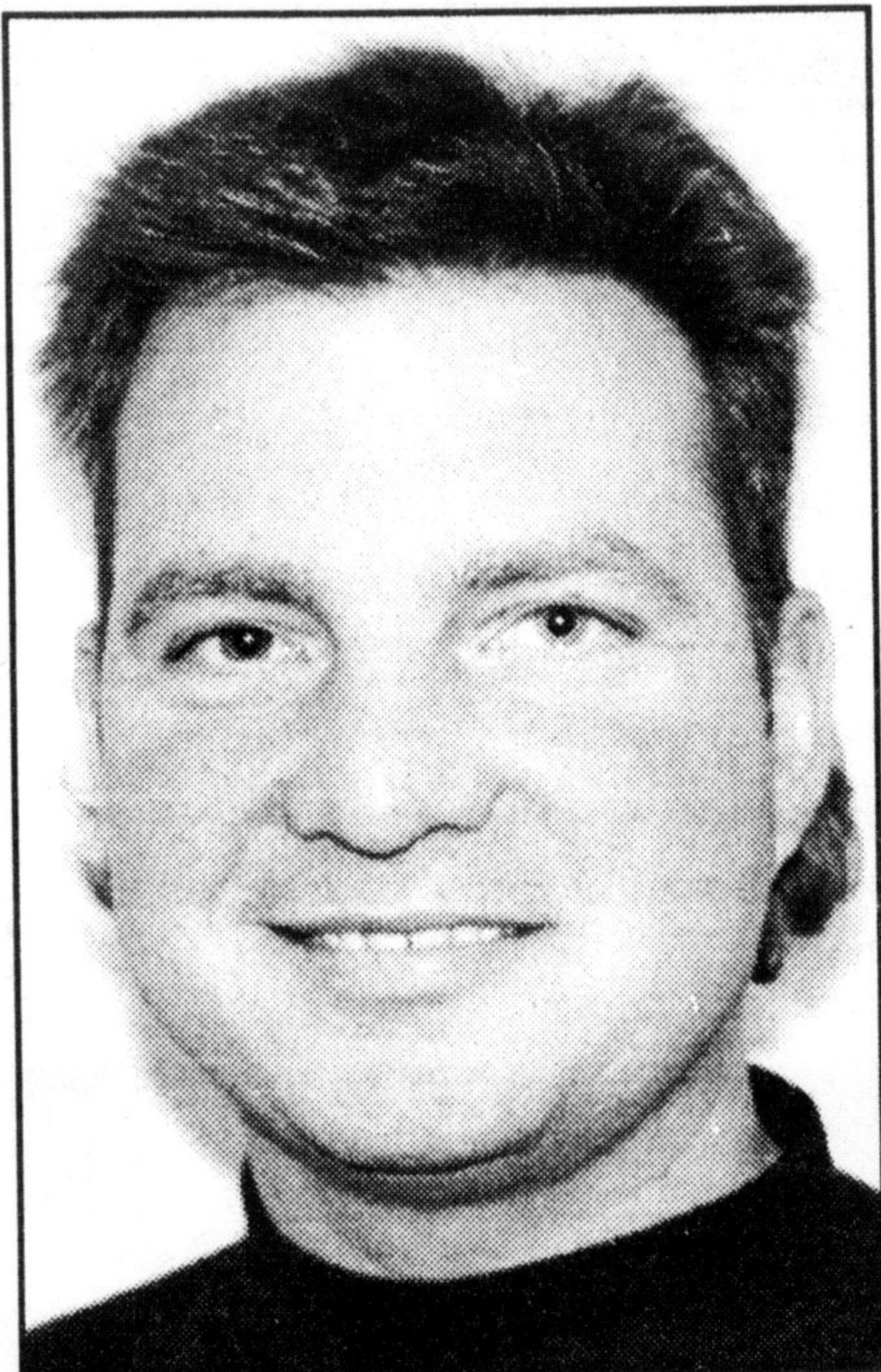
The Blues did a great job clogging up the passing lanes and blocking Milton shots while shorthanded.

Friday night the Merchants had an easy time with Mississauga and hammered out an 8-2 decision for their 40th season win.

While not exactly spectacular — even with an eight-point outburst — Milton's powerplay produced three goals, a high over the past several weeks.

Eight different Merchants lit the lamp including supporting cast members John Nadalin, Rich Williams and Jasen Hopiavuori.

Darren (Mini) Haydar sank number 66, on a tic-tac-toe rush with Kevin O'Flaherty



Marty Williamson

and Jeff Hutchins, who both scored as well.

Other goals were registered by Baker and Troy Walczak while Ivanans was a plus two in his Merchants debut, with assists on Walczak and Williams' tallies.

Milton lost Shane Sullivan for two games in the third as the instigator in a brawl with Chargers' loose cannon Ryan Digby.

Daniel Jacques was steady in the cage for both outings this weekend.

Merchant notes: Matt Bannan and Mike Wheelihan represented Milton in last Wednesday's Future Stars Game in Bramalea ... Nathan Gillies has verbally committed to Union University while Mark McPhail is talking with Ohio State.

Bus goes to running date in Peterborough

Milton and area runners competing at the upcoming Peterborough Half-Marathon February 22 may want to get in on a transportation offer by The Running Company.

The Oakville-based business is organizing a bus to take participants to and from the 20th annual race.

Seat reservations and full information can be obtained by contacting The Running Company's Steve McKinnon at 815-1952.

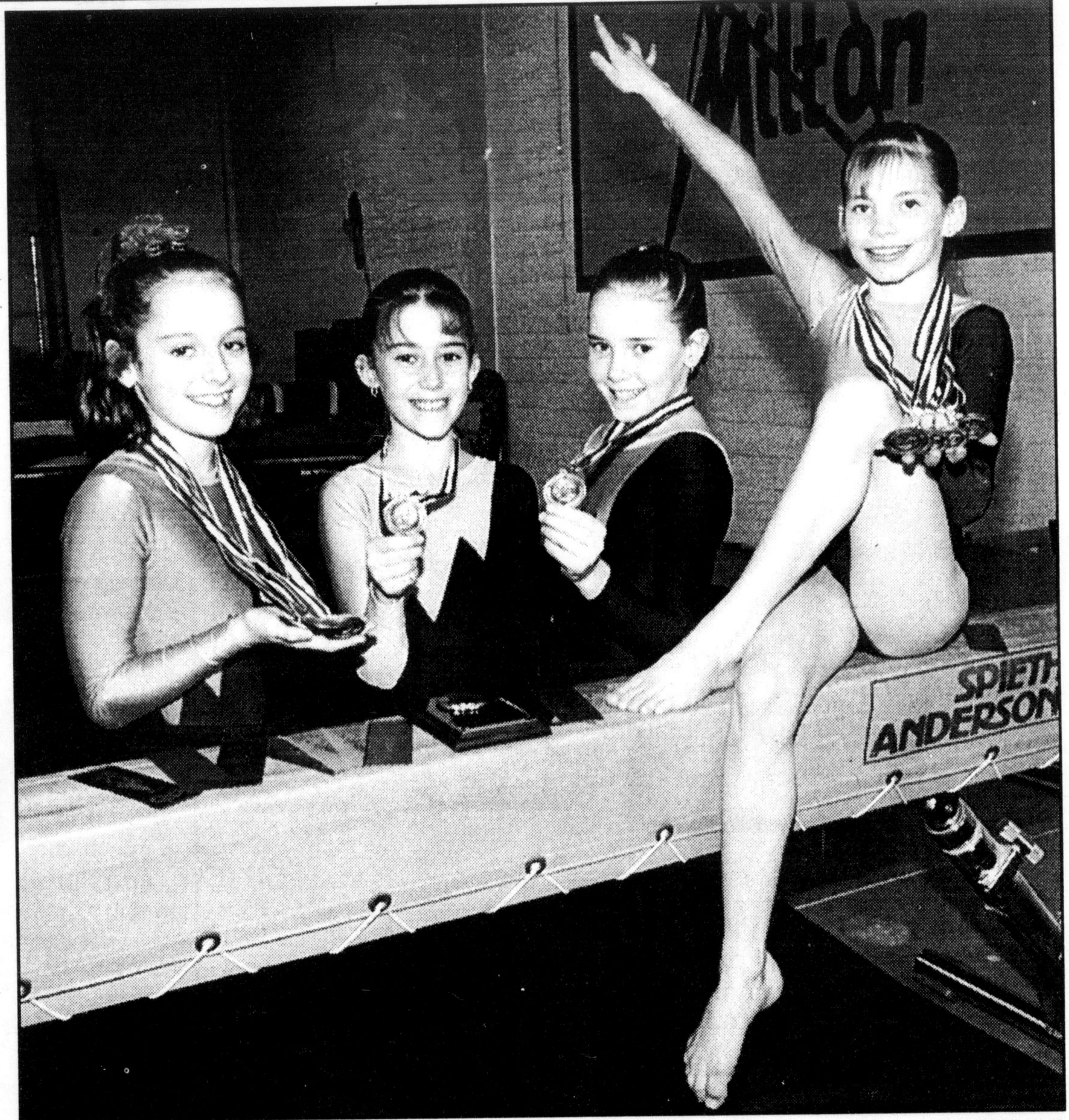


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Happy Milton Springer gymnasts (l-r) Kristen Deumer, Christina Shipowick, Amy Williams and Ashley Quinn showed off their medals on the weekend.

Quinn strikes double gold

The Milton Springers Novice 1 team enjoyed a gold rush recently in Oakville, with Ashley Quinn acting as top prospector.

The 10-year-old gymnast struck gold on both bars and her floor routine. Coupled with silver-medal showings on beam and vault, she reached the top of the podium again in the Novice 10A overall standings.

Her efforts led her squad to a first-place team finish at the second Central Region Provincial Qualifier.

Age-class teammate Kristen Deumer was close behind with second-place marks in the all-around — due mainly to bronze-medal performances on floor and vault.

Fifth-place finishes on bars and beam contributed to her success.

Christina Shipowick turned in a solid beam routine and beat all challengers. She also earned fourth on floor as well as in the overall scoring.

Vaulting her way to 10B division gold was Amy Williams, who added fourth and sixth-place marks on floor and bars respectively.

Eleven-year-old Heather Gibb captured bronze with

her newly polished "half on, half off" vault in the Pre-Junior 1A class.

She also gave impressive performances on bars and floor, for fourth and fifth place scorings.

Teammate Valerie Massel hung on to her beam routine for a no-fall effort which garnered fourth place in the Pre-Junior 1B division.

Striking silver on bars in the Junior 1A loop was 13-year-old Alicia Robinson, whose vault and floor routines netted fifth place marks.

Well-rounded Alexis Stoffels, 12, had a solid day in all events — with fifth place finishes on vault and floor, and sixth on bars and beam as well as in the Junior 1B all-around.

Teammate Christine Chadwick was awarded fourth for bars and vault.

Veteran Springer Vicki Chlischczyk reached the podium with a bronze medal in the Open 2 beam event.

She placed fourth for floor and fifth for vault. The team's third and final qualifier is slated for next month in Guelph.

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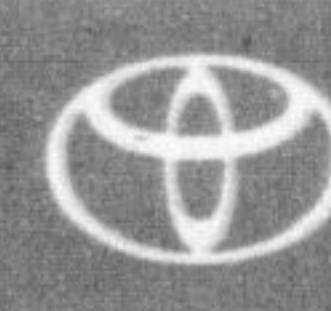
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