

Matt Babel shakes off his slumber to steal win

By STEVE LeBLANC
Special to The Champion

Matt Babel woke up from a game-long slumber just in time to keep his Mustangs' dreams for a regional title alive Tuesday afternoon.

Milton District High's top hoopster was a mere shadow of his usual dominating self through most of quarterfinal play against the Blakelock Tigers.

Connecting on just three shots and very few passes in the first half, he was benched for much of the third quarter. The reality check seems to have served him well.

Returning with a vengeance, Babel made three big defensive steals, sank a field goal, made good on two foul shots and amassed nine total points in the last five minutes of play to gain MD a 42-37 comeback victory.

"My head just wasn't in it early on. After bombing these guys (Tigers) in the regular season, I just didn't expect such tough competition today," said Babel.

Also stepping things up at crunch time were Rob McCall and Dave Winter, who each hit a three-pointer and forced a couple of turnovers.

Hindered by foul trouble and a lack of focus, the 'Stangs trailed after each quarter and as late as the three-minute mark. A four-point first quarter marked their worst

start of the season.

Blakelock's height advantage didn't help matters either. While perhaps not at their peak, Sean Postma and Craig O'Neil had major problems under the boards against twin towers Tim Cooper and Velimir Rodinovic.

Babel finished the game with 17 points while Winter had 15.

MD traveled to Burlington yesterday to battle the Nelson Lords. Should they have won, they'll vie for the Halton crown Tuesday afternoon at Sheridan College.

MD midgets trimmed

A lacklustre finish proved to be the midget Mustangs' undoing Tuesday, as they fell 44-42 to the Georgetown Rebels in quarterfinal play.

G'town trailed through all three quarters — by as much as 12 at times — but pulled off a 20-6 final frame, hitting six of eight from the line.

Jim McCollum led offensively for MD with 19 points. Chipping in 10 was Dan Cummings.

In other north Halton battles this week, MD's senior girls volleyball team was out-distanced 13-15, 15-6, 9-15 by Georgetown while the Mustangs' hockey team fell 3-1 to the Rebels in first-round playoff action.

Grad wins bronze medal

E.C. Drury alumnus Chris Denich has wrestled his way to a provincial bronze medal and qualified for the CIAU championships in his rookie season with the University of Guelph.

The 19-year-old grappler dropped a heartbreaking first-round match in overtime to number one seed Bob O'Brien of Brock.

He then faced former national champ Igor Mozetic of McMaster, scoring a three-point throw to even the count and winning in overtime.

Placing second behind Mozetic after round-robin competition, Denich out-pointed Lakehead's Aaron Coutts in the

bronze medal match while Mozetic went on to take gold from Lester B. Pearson grad Ken Spurey.

Joining Denich at the nationals will be fellow Drury grad and Guelph teammate Victor Sprenger, who moved up a weight class to help fill his school's roster.

He too scored bronze with a 2-1 record — losing only to national senior bronze medalist Justin Beauparlant of Lakehead — to earn his second straight CIAU appearance.

Frank Cavallo, wrestling two weight classes up for Guelph, and Grant Heffron of Brock both went 0-2 but showed strongly, losing close decisions to top opponents.

Cheskey to tackle new sport cross-country skiing beckons

Rob Cheskey has conquered a nation and is now ready to take on the world.

The 43-year-old Miltonian, of recent cycling fame, will be switching gears and competing at next week's World Masters Cross-Country Ski Championships in Lake Placid.

A former provincial medalist, Cheskey

will battle skiers from 30 other countries including Holland, Finland, Japan, Australia, Italy and the host United States in the 40-44 year age group.

This will be his first appearance at the world championship.

The international showcase will feature 15, 30 and 50-kilometre races.

Nothing breaks tension like win

After stressing out coach Tony Winiarz with three straight one-goal decisions (two wins and a loss), the single A major peewees decided to salt away their first-round victory with a convincing 8-2 rout of Georgetown last Thursday.

Mike Winiarz engineered the series-ending blowout with a remarkable four-goal output. Adding singles were Blair Britton, Wes McDougall, Thomas Patrick and David Spahich while Chris Strank contributed two assists.

James Kaiser set Milton up for the series win with clutch goaltending that earned them a 5-4 game-three squeaker.

Winiarz tallied twice to kick-start the offence and added a third for good measure down the stretch. Also scoring were McDougall and Mitch Boisvenue.

The north Halton clubs split the first two games by 4-3 and 3-2 scores — each sinking late goals to secure the win.

Patrick provided the heroics in game one with an overtime goal while Britton, Adam Haller and Chris Sato counted the other markers.

Georgetown's winner came with 36 seconds left in regulation time, after Spahich and Connor Sweeney had erased their two previous leads.

The Centric Canada-sponsored crew will now battle the winner of the Newmarket-Port Perry series.

Peewees finish with solid sweep

The AAA minor peewees closed out the regular season last week with a two-game sweep of Guelph.

They fought back from a pair of one-goal deficits to

Rep Hockey

gain a 3-2 victory in their initial tilt. Kyle Quincey fired the winner with 31 seconds remaining. His team enjoyed a man-advantage at the time.

Evening the count earlier on were Marcus Goencz and Danny Syvret, while each assisted on the other's goal. David Cianfrini and Daniel Powers turned in robust efforts as well.

Halton didn't escape the night completely unscathed however, as Chad Henry suffered a season-ending broken collarbone.

Ian Boileau and Rory Johnston split the goaltending duties in a follow-up 2-0 shutout over Guelph — with Johnston seeing a little more rubber during the second half of the game.

Rock-solid defence was provided by Tim Jaspersen and Nat Wicken, who made a noteworthy return after a long layoff from a broken leg.

Goencz and Syvret registered the goals, with Brett Robinson picking up two assists.

The Hurricanes finished the regular season with a 20-8-8 record and now battle Oakville in first-round, best-of-five playoff action.

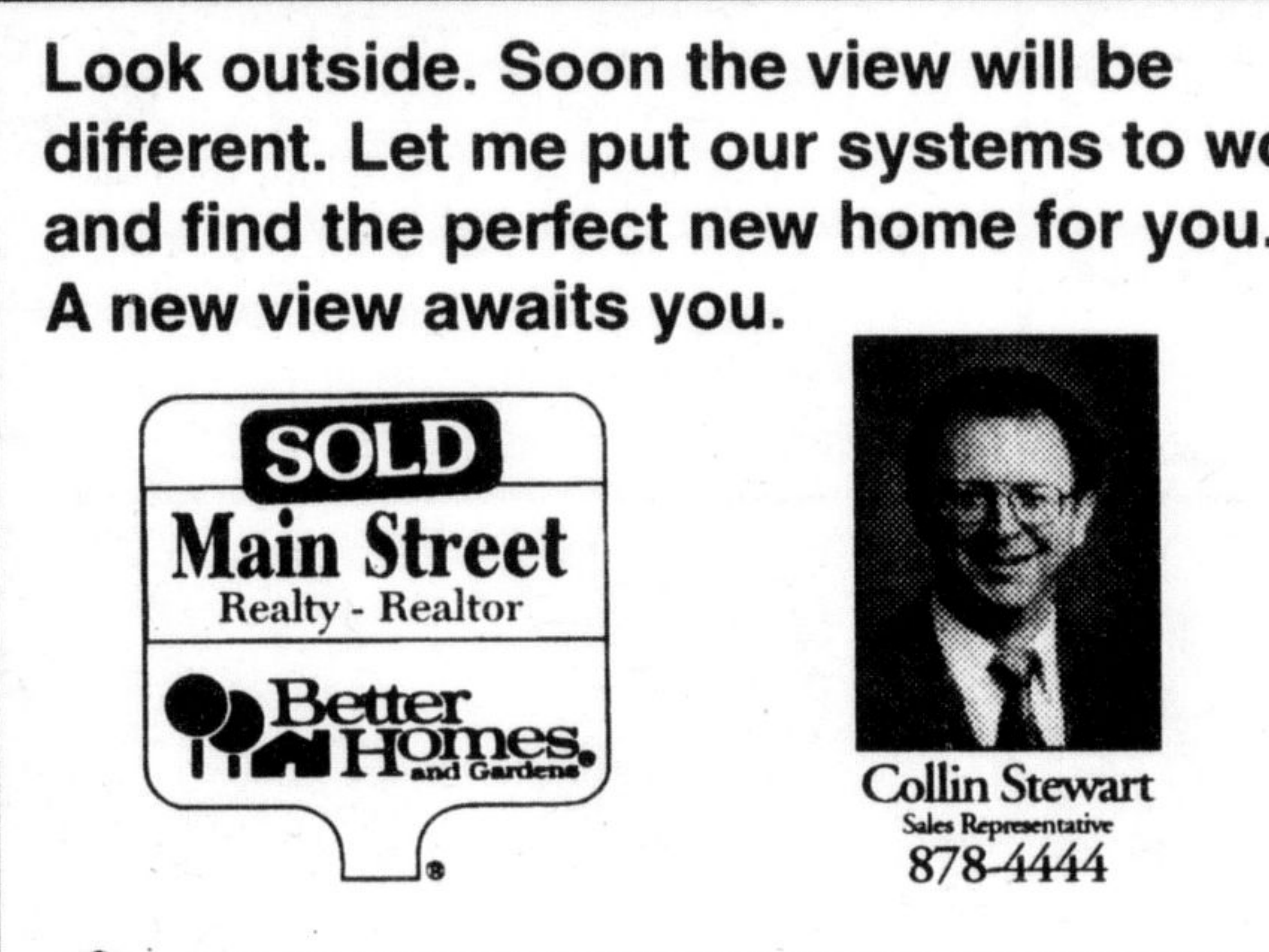
Midgets rally to tie

The Halton Hurricane AAA midgets got off on the wrong foot in their OMHA playoff opener at Gordon

• see COMEBACK on page 20

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