

Outstanding Oakville goalie turns back a last, best effort

Minor atom fans couldn't have asked for a more exciting series than the Milton-Oakville battle last week.

But Martin Larkin's single A crew could have and should have enjoyed a better ending to the best-of-five quarterfinal showdown.

Despite outplaying the Rangers through most of the OMHA series, the Docs & Dents sponsored crew managed just six goals in four games.

Their lack of output was due largely to crafty cage work by Brad Wagner. The Oakville tender held the Winterhawks at bay for the first three games and was perfect in the series clincher Saturday at Memorial.

His flawless netminding — which included some grand larceny saves against Scott Collard, Anthony Perruzza and Creighton Reid — was needed as counterpart Carl Chan stood on his head as well, surrendering just one goal in the last 10 minutes of play.

"It was a pretty evenly matched game, with most of

the play in the neutral zone," said Larkin, of his club's final OMHA bout. "Up until then I thought we outplayed them. We just couldn't score."

The Docs & Dents skipper suggested that things could have gone the other way in game four had spark plug Elgin Reid been operating at full capacity instead of battling the flu.

Turning in rock-steady defence were Nathan Grenke, Jeff Kitchen and Kevin Parker.

Milton staved off elimination Wednesday in Oakville with a 2-1 game three triumph. Big goaltending by Michael Binnington plus goals by Matt Chuchmach and Kyle Hearn kept the series alive.

Prior to this the Rangers edged them 5-3 in game one and 2-1 in a game-two overtime clash.

Added Larkin, "We were probably the better team overall, but they (Oakville) really muscled us off the puck at times.

"They played us very hard."

Big confidence boost for Amy

Annual journeys to the nationals are becoming old hat for Amy DiPalma, but this year's trip will come complete with a whole new brand of confidence.

The Milton rhythmic gymnast's days as the long shot vanished into thin air last weekend when she earned a second-placing ranking for June's Canadian Championships in Vancouver.

She did so at Elite Canada in Toronto. The invitation-only qualifying tournament saw eight of 14 junior and senior competitors earn Team Canada status as well as byes through the provincials.

"I was really happy with my performance," said 14-year-old Amy, a third-year junior. "I did better than expected and beat a couple of girls, like my friend Roxyleana Prus, that I never had before."

Her strong overall finish Saturday came on the strength of vast improvements in ribbon. She earned second-place honours in this event as well as in hoop.

She ran her rope and ball routines to third and fourth respectively, conceding first overall — to Mississauga's Mary Sanders — by less than two points.

Equally impressive the following day in individual competition, Amy took silver in ribbon, bronze in rope and top five scorings in hoop and ball.

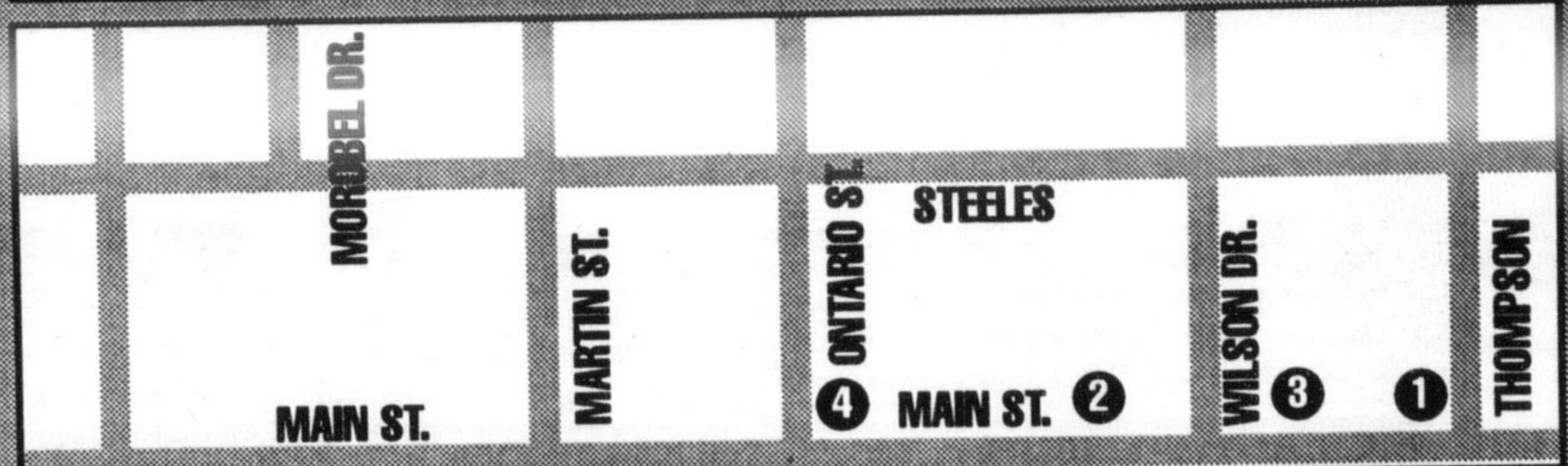
The Etobicoke Olympian gymnast hopes her Elite Canada performance will set the stage for a successful Canadian Championship campaign.

Said Amy, "Last year I only finished 18th. This time I'm hoping to crack the top three, which will allow me to compete at the Pan-American Games this summer."



Amy DiPalma

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