



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY JUNE 9, 1998

League is largest

Size does matter.

Provincial and Metro Jr. A teams were officially thrown together Thursday to create what promises to be the most competitive league in Canada.

Now titled the Ontario Provincial Junior Hockey League, it's the largest league at any level across North America.

The merger — which followed two months of negotiations — was initially conditional upon Metro cutting loose their three American franchises: Syracuse, Pittsburgh and Niagara.

As it turned out Pittsburgh was the only team dropped from the 36-team loop, set to be realigned into three conferences.

Joining the Milton Merchants in the West are the Caledon Canadiens and the Niagara Scenic. Burlington, Bramalea, Brampton, Georgetown, Hamilton, Mississauga, Streetsville, Oakville and Vaughan comprise the rest of the division.

Instrumental in the merger was Merchants owner Brad Grant, who doubled as the Provincial Jr. A board of governors chairman during the negotiations.

Brantford is doubled by Milton

Road warriors is a term that's becoming appropriate for Milton's bantam lacrosse team.

Last week in Brantford they won their third consecutive away game, doubling the Posse 10-5 to remain unbeaten after week three of the regular season.

Jordan Lumb was rock-solid in the cage, restricting the hosts to two goals or less in each period.

Enjoying the biggest slice of the scoring pie with four goals was Kyle Goertz while Clem D'Orazio tallied twice. Chipping in singles were Jon Ram, Rick Gallinger, Ian Robertson and Josh Vanderbreggen.

Kevin Corbin was the key set-up man with four assists.

The Traders Custom Brokers-sponsored crew sat at a near perfect 4-0-1 after the win.

Their biggest victory of the season so far came in a 4-3 decision in Owen Sound, once again with Lumb standing tall in goal.

Craig Hodgson and Michael Novak recorded two points each in the win.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Jason (left) and Todd Bouwman are cruising to success in the competitive field of BMX racing. The brothers both cracked the top 10 in their 1998 debut last month.

Trio has very few opening day jitters

Talk about making a good first impression.

A trio of local riders — rookies on the National Bicycle League (NBL) circuit — all cracked the top 10 recently at their initial competition of the year.

Alex Brancier, 13, enjoyed the best results of the three with age-class main draw finishes of second and third at the Great Lakes Nationals in Pontiac, Michigan.

The W.I. Dick School student's impressive debut came on the strength of his innate instinct for clearing jumps.

"It felt really good to do so well," said Alex, who'd been riding a BMX for a couple of years before diving into official competition this spring.

A couple of his fellow Wildcats, brothers Jason and Todd Bouwman, helped

complete the strong representation by Milton.

The younger of the two, 11-year-old Jason took the runner-up spot on the first day of racing and followed up with a fifth-place effort.

Todd, 13, managed sixth and eighth place finishes. He said he was pretty scared the first time he negotiated the course at Track 2000 in Drumquin but that now it feels great to get out there.

He added, "It's both as hard and as fun as it looks."

Jason can attest to the first part of that comment.

Just a few weeks into the season and he's already sustained his first injury — a hyperextended left knee courtesy of a spill during a clinic Sunday morning.

• see LOOKING on page 21

Three goals against Mavs in one minute

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The Jr. B Mavericks' sparkle is starting to fade.

Friday night a solid yet far from spectacular performance cost them a 12-11 defeat to the Guelph Regals. The loss, just the first this year at Tonelli Arena, makes Milton losers in three of their last five games.

While this rough patch isn't likely to cost them their Founder's Cup playoff spot, it has put a cramp in the momentum built up over the first half of the season.

The Mavericks — now 11-4 and second behind Owen Sound — should have had enough of that momentum to prevail Friday, especially after taking a 4-0 lead in the opening 12 minutes.

But in one of the worst single-minute showings in team history, they stood by and watched the Regals answer back with three in the closing 24 seconds of the first.

Two of the goals came with under 10 clicks left on the clock.

Milton enjoyed a two-goal lead well into the final frame as well but faltered once again. Held scoreless over the last 11 minutes, they relinquished the tying goal at 15:40 and the game-winner with 90 seconds remaining.

Guelph's hero was Paul Richter, who punched one through the five-hole with a long range sidearm. He also played one of the starring roles with four goals overall. Pat Martin, Jason McGarr and Josh Beecraft helped fuse a robust attack while Josh Marcoux — recently traded by Georgetown — caused a number of key turnovers down the stretch.

The Mavericks' loss was that much more disappointing seeing as goaltender Andrew Dowdell came up with one of his best efforts in recent weeks.

A little more protection in front of him — as witnessed the previous week in a 12-10 victory over Owen Sound — would surely have tipped the scales in favour of the home team.

As usual captain Andrew Hartholt anchored the offense for Milton with four goals and two assists while Cory Leigh and Graham Darling each tallied twice.

Bryan Jackson showed strongly with three assists. Picking up two helpers apiece were Russ Fleming and Jimmy Leworthy Jr.

Maverick notes: Andrew Hartholt is just eight goals away from surpassing last year's benchmark of 55 while Cory Leigh will surely triple his 1997 total of 13 before the season's end ... Milton will travel to St. Catharines twice this week to face the Spartan Warriors. Their first trip is tonight (Tuesday) ... Saturday they host Wallaceburg at 8 p.m.

Cold wind blows

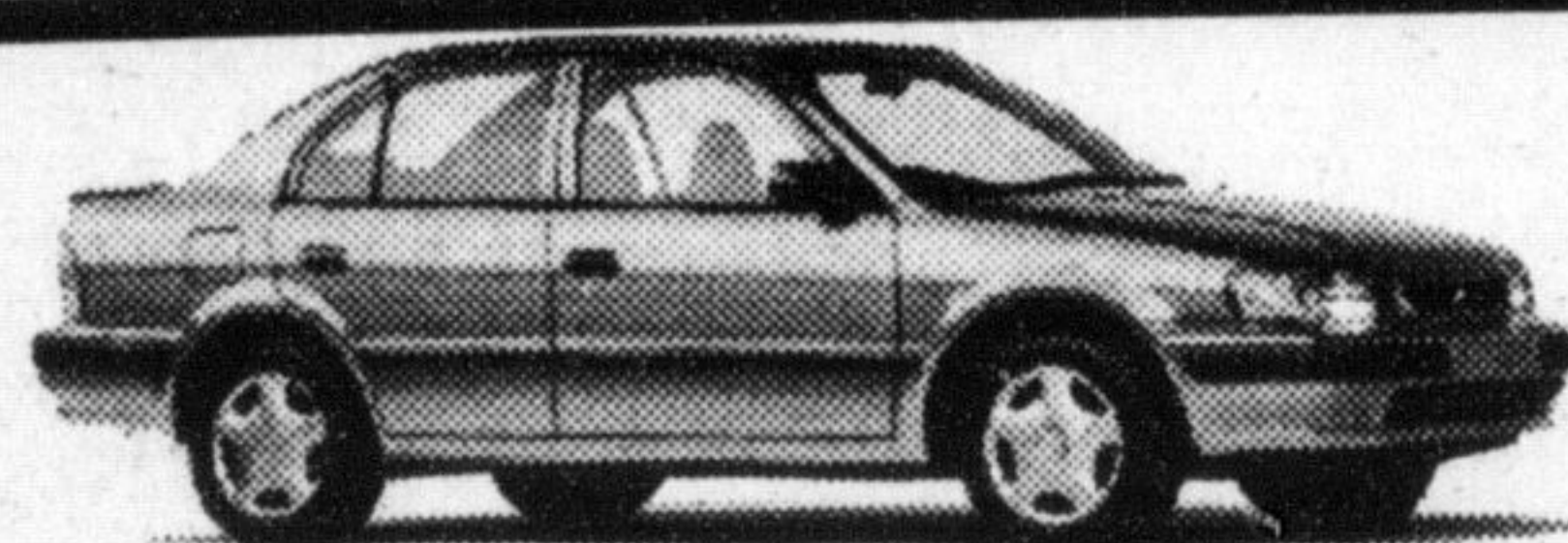
The under-12 Magic had their season opening jets cooled in more ways than one.

Not only did Milton have to contend with bone chilling winds that blew up north but also the ice cold poise and prowess of Owen Sound.

The elements proved insurmountable as the Tim Hortons sponsored crew was doubled 6-3.

Robbie Wilson spoiled Owen Sound's shutout bid with two quick goals in the second half while Mark Boycott closed out the scoring in the dying minutes of play.

Turning in a steady if not spectacular performance in net was Jamie Webb.



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