



# SPORTS



THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Milton looks like shoe-in as national title site



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Maverick veterans Graham Darling, Andrew Hartholt and Jimmy Leworthy Jr. will get their shot at national lacrosse competition next August when Milton hosts the Jr. B Founder's Cup.

By STEVE LeBLANC

*The Champion*

Move over Merchants, you're not the only ones capable of getting to a national championship.

The Jr. B Mavericks won't even have to leave town to do so next August, at which they'll likely host the Founder's Cup.

As of now, Jim Leworthy's lacrosse team has won the right to put on the tournament.

The only way they could lose it is if a more attractive proposal comes in from Alberta — who hosted the event just four years ago and isn't even expected to make a bid.

Ontario is the only other province eligible to host the Founder's Cup in 1999. Milton's proposal beat out those of Guelph, Oshawa and Wallaceburg at the OLA vote September 13 in Scarborough.

They won majority approval from the 13 other Jr. B teams in the league, who each had a vote.

"Their presentation was very well put together," said Mike Hancock, assistant general manager of the Georgetown Bulldogs. "The other bids had a little more glitz and glamour, but Milton's had more substance."

"It seemed to cover just about everything."

Jim Leworthy said he's overjoyed about the prospect of hosting the national championship — an honour bestowed just four years into the club's existence.

Making the presentation to OLA teams was Mavericks' GM Dave DeCaire, the driving force behind the push to bring the tournament to town.

In addition to Milton being so centrally located — both provincially and nationally — DeCaire felt it was the personnel available that put his club ahead of the other bidders.

A number of service clubs and minor sports associations have already committed to helping run the tournament.

"Having the bodies is really the main thing. With enough people you can always surpass the previous event and create a barometer for the next host," he said. "This helps make the tournament better and better."

Legwork for the Founder's Cup bid included everything from arranging player accommodations at the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf dormitory, to securing food donations from local supermarkets, to ensuring that a fair schedule could be mapped out for either a four, six or eight team tournament.

"As well, if Tonelli Arena isn't enough we can also use Acton Arena which is just up the road," said DeCaire. "Of course we'd love to be able to use Memorial Arena, but that's not really possible that late in the summer."

DeCaire said he's had plenty of support from past Founder's Cup hosts as well as from Oshawa, who've offered specific ideas from their own proposal to Milton.

Mavericks' captain Andrew Hartholt said he was thrilled about Sunday's decision, particularly since next season will be the last in his, Jimmy Leworthy Jr.'s and Graham Darling's junior careers.

"But this also puts the pressure on us players. Now we've got to step things up and do even better," Hartholt said.

## This exchange rate still favours the Canadians

By STEVE LeBLANC

*The Champion*

The Milton Merchants may want to consider implementing their own cross-border exchange rate this season.

Because if goals continue to be honoured at face value, games against their new U.S. opponent — the Niagara Scenic — aren't likely to be too competitive.

Initial indications of this came Friday at Memorial Arena. Despite blowing early opportunities and contending with a rash of penalties, the defending provincial champs enjoyed a 9-1 cakewalk to start their 1998/99 campaign.

With the exception of two impressive-looking tallies and Matt Bannan's

Campbell, opening night held little excitement and no suspense from the midway mark on.

"They (Milton) have their act together, but then we only showed up for half a game," said visiting head coach Matt English.

### Not up to speed

Be that as it may the Niagara bench boss is going to have to get used to the fact that his current crop of players, perhaps the latest installment to the West Conference's Have Not Club, simply can't keep up with the Merchants' speed.

The only bright spot of the night for his team was when — in one fluid motion — veteran centre John Bombard won a faceoff to the right of

with a bottom shelf wire.

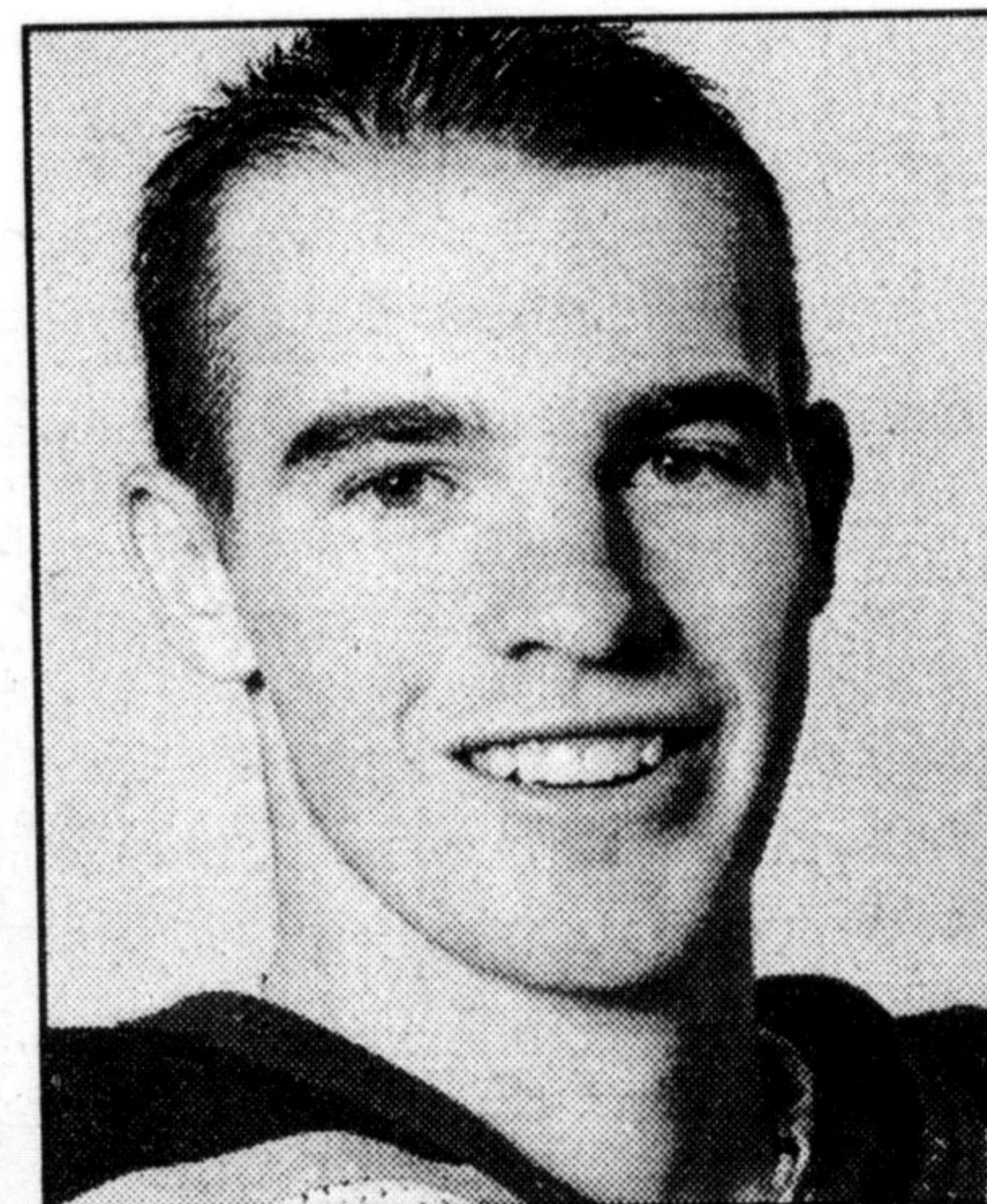
Capitalizing on the first of many Scenic defensive lapses, the hometown crew notched two shorthanded goals just 20 seconds apart to break things open midway through the game.

Scoring the latter of these was newly appointed captain Kevin O'Flaherty, who carried a defender into the slot and roofed a short-range wrist shot in truly picturesque fashion.

### Great-looking goal

While certainly better looking than his double-overtime winner against Oakville last spring, O'Flaherty couldn't quite bring himself to put Friday's score atop his best goals list.

"When you're already up by three



Kevin O'Flaherty

(as a game-winner in the playoffs)," he noted. "However, I did get better wood on it than I could have ever

Milton's other standout goal came off the stick of Ryan Eby, who after amassing four assists over two-and-a-half periods drilled a bullet into the top right corner with 4:13 remaining to end the hit parade.

Mike Wheelihan showed strongly with a pair of second-period goals while other singles were registered by Mo Alvarez, Ryan Carrigan, Ryan Stewart, Adam Sturgeon and Carter Trevisani.

A genuine challenge awaited Milton two nights later at Mississauga's Iceland Arena where the opposing Oshawa Legionnaires — their Prospects Weekend opponent — battled back from a three-goal deficit before eventually losing 7-5.

The Merchants were lifeless in the

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