



SPORTS

Investors Group
Investors Group Financial Services Inc.
I.G. Insurance Services Inc.
JIM GORDON 69 Main St. East, Suite 3
B.A., F.I.C.B. 875-1771
Financial Planning Consultant

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Turner tops pre-teens across the continent

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Alisha Turner recently gave a lesson at Boston's Harvard University — only it didn't come in the classroom, or even from a textbook.

Instead the local youngster offered a crash course in the finer points of squash en route to a gold medal performance at the United States Junior Olympic Open.

Her Ivy League triumph, in the under-12 girls division, came during the third week-end of December when she beat a field of nearly two dozen top flight competitors from across North America and abroad.

"I was ranked number one going into the tournament and really thought I could win," recalled the 11-year-old Miltonian. "It (capturing the championship) felt great."

The title match featured an all-Halton showdown, with Alisha downing Burlington's Neha Kumar 3-0 (9-2, 10-8, 9-3).

Brief lapse

With the exception of a brief game two lapse she dominated the championship with superior footwork and positioning on her shots.

Said father Ken, "Alisha's very smart on the court. She almost always knows just where to hit the ball."

A similar shutout was earned in the semifinals against Neha Chawla of Oakville. Before that opponents from Hartford and Philadelphia succumbed to the local player's fierce, well-balanced attack.

One week earlier she came up with her

first of two consecutive unblemished tournament efforts and prevailed at the Canadian Jr. Open in Newmarket.

An upstaging of Kumar in the under-12 finale was seen here as well, although not nearly with the same kind of dominance she enjoyed in Boston.

Alisha — battling seasonal illness as much as her provincial rival — needed a 10-9 squeaker in the fifth and deciding game after being pushed to the brink throughout the marathon contest.

"I had the flu and was not at 100 per cent mentally," explained Alisha, whose brothers Jonathan and Richard each finished in the top 20 at both tournaments last month. "That was probably the closest finals match I'd ever been in."

Few challengers

With the exception of these top-level events, genuine challengers in her age group have been few and far between for the local youngster.

Since striking silver at last spring's Canadian Junior Squash Championship at Niagara on the Lake, she's had to play against girls at least two years her senior in order to enjoy real competition.

This experience — plus the obvious confidence acquired from a breakthrough season — should serve her well come April, when she turns 12 and has to move up an age class just prior to this year's nationals in Ottawa.

"Alisha has all the tools to succeed at the next level, she just has to learn not to get down on herself and stay focused on the task at hand," suggested her father.

Alisha and her squash siblings have been competing for five years now. They train at both the Milton Optimist Centre and Club Meadowvale.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Alisha Turner recently won this cup in the U.S. Junior Squash Open at Boston's Harvard University.

Warriors are no match for the Drury Spartans

E.C. Drury's senior boys basketball team stretched their unbeaten streak to three games with a 78-32 annihilation of the White Oaks Warriors Wednesday.

With the issue already resolved by half time, local skipper Kevin Houldcroft spent the balance of the contest liberally rotating his lineup and still didn't lose any ground against his vastly inferior guests.

In fact, the Spartans surrendered just a single basket in the third quarter and only a dozen points through the entire second half.

Bobby Hicks dominated under the boards while up-and-coming rookie Cam Ivens led offensively with 20 points, including a handful from the foul line where collectively the team was quite proficient.

As always, Ross Smith made a definite impact with tremendous hustle and 13 points in the first half to help establish an early cushion.

Sinking a pair of field goals and 14 total points was fellow spark plug Bobby MacDonald.

Wagering is up at all the race tracks

Wagering at Mohawk Raceway and other Ontario Jockey Club outlets around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) increased significantly in 1998 from the previous year.

In fact, when figures from the rest of Canada and the United States are included, wagering through Woodbine's pari-mutuel system reached a record \$1.24 billion, exceeding the 1997 total by \$90 million, or 7.8 per cent.

Drury's supporting cast also showed strongly, particularly Ryan Brooks and Bryan Gent who each grabbed a defensive rebound in the dying minutes of play and combined for a few baskets.

The Warriors' top shooter was Boss Reynard,

who pumped in half a dozen points during the second quarter but was held off the scoreboard from then on — as was 6'5" centre Rick Teal. Drury will compete in the Aldershot Invitational Tournament this weekend.

A total of \$752,719,000 was wagered at Mohawk, Woodbine, Greenwood and approximately 25 Champions teletheatres in the GTA, an increase of three per cent over the \$731,160,000 recorded a year earlier.

Toronto-based fans bet \$443,445,000 on thoroughbred racing and \$309,274,000 on standardbred racing.

Nearly half of all GTA standardbred wagering

— 49.3 per cent or \$152,365,000 — was done at Mohawk and Woodbine.

"It was a remarkable year," said OJC President David Willmot. "It appears that good horse racing — and we had a lot of good horse racing this year — still attracts people in large numbers. Almost a billion and a quarter dollars going through our tote system is testimony to that."

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