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THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9, 1999



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Fenn-tastic finish

Laura Fenn, 10, of Milton Heights Racing Club clears a set of gates toward a fourth-place finish in her age class during Sunday's Invitational Slalom at Glen Eden.

Merchants close to finest season

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

The Milton Merchants juggernaut rolls on.

Over the weekend the provincial powerhouse secured two more decisive victories and are now winners in 17 of their last 18 outings.

They continue to occupy top spot in the West Conference — enjoying a three point cushion over Bramalea, who just took their fourth loss. At 38-4-3 the Merchants are about to register their finest regular season record of this decade.

Sunday at Ice Sports Arena it was captain Kevin O'Flaherty who fired goal number one and then added a pair of assists to lead his team to a 4-1 decision over the Oakville Blades, who've been plummeling lately and slipped a couple of notches in the standings.

All of Milton's scoring was done in the middle stanza, when they cranked things up and peppered opposing goaltender Carmen Ellsworth with two dozen shots.

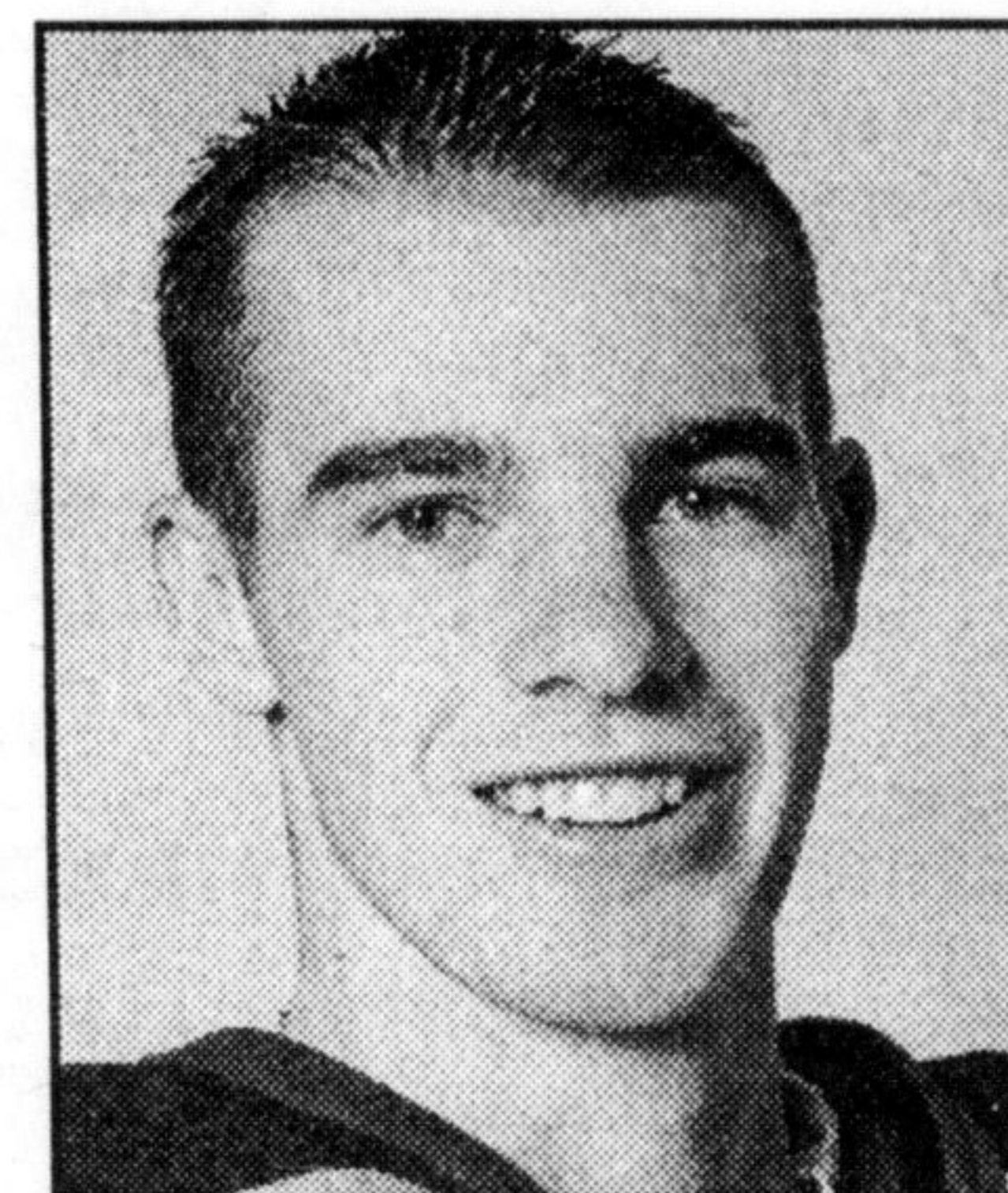
Counterpart Daniel Jacques was challenged 26 times over the course of the evening and thanks to a terrific first half managed to lower his goals-against average to 2.47.

Sensing defeat midway through the final frame, the Blades switched gears and goaded their rivals into a little brawling.

Half a dozen fights ensued during the tail end of the contest, although none really amount to much. One period earlier it was Ryan Robichaud who provided the only entertaining moment in the extra-curricular activity department.

With his club up 4-0, he accepted Ellsworth's challenge and floored the netminder with a right cross before pummeling an intervening Steve Kinnunen.

Brian Moniz, formerly of Oakville, notched a goal and an assist for the Merchants as did defenceman Dave Csumrik. Also lighting the lamp was Mark Beisel, while Rob Meanchoff collected two helpers.



Kevin O'Flaherty

Spoiling Jacques' shutout bid with 11 minutes left to play was David Mennie.

Two nights earlier at home, Milton laid a 9-1 drubbing on the lowly Vaughan Vipers in front of a near capacity Family Night crowd.

This predetermined blowout featured solid production from the local club's secondary performers, as Jamie Dubrick, Jasen Hopiavuori and Adam Sturgeon all buried the biscuit.

Tallying twice was Geoff Schomogyi, who is now up to 36 goals and sits at an outstanding plus 57.

Other singles went to Meanchoff, Ryan Carrigan and Mike Wheelihan while O'Flaherty amassed a season high four assists.

Milton carried the visitors for two periods before unloading with four goals on 26 shots in the third.

Merchant notes: Ed McGrane, Kevin O'Flaherty and Geoff Schomogyi all sit top 10 in West Conference scoring and each have a shot at hitting 100 points ... Milton now sports a goals-against average of 2.67 ... With just six games left in the regular season, goalie Jeremy Wenzel remains unbeaten ... The Merchants host Brampton Friday and travel to Caledon Saturday.

Waples is Driver of the Year

Randy Waples has a new title to call his own.

Canadian harness racing's total wins leader for 1998 was also chosen as the Driver of the Year.

His coveted O'Brien award was presented January 30 at the Canadian Trotting Association banquet in Mississauga.

The 33-year-old Hornby resident celebrated a career year, driving 452 winners and horses to over \$4.2 million in purse money while competing regularly at the Ontario Jockey Club's Mohawk, Woodbine and Flamboro Downs tracks.

Though Waples didn't triumph in many of the higher profile events, he managed to surpass the 1,000 win plateau, which for a driver only a few years into the sport is an impressive achievement.

In the money department he finished second to Steve Condren, the other finalist for Driver of the Year.

The 41-year-old Miltonian captured the title last year.

He made a strong case for reclaiming the award in 1998 with 245 victories and \$4.5 million in total earnings.

Perhaps his biggest win came aboard the three-year-old filly trotter Image Control in the Canadian Breeders Championship at Mohawk Raceway.

Windsor's Bob McIntosh collected an unprecedented seventh national title as Trainer of the Year while Odies Fame — the Cinderella story of 1998 — was named Horse of the Year.

Other O'Brien winners were as follows:
 Two-year-old pacing colt — Island Fantasy,

Three-year-old pacing filly — Armbro Romance,

Older pacing mare — Jays Table,
 Older pacing horse — Red Row Tie,

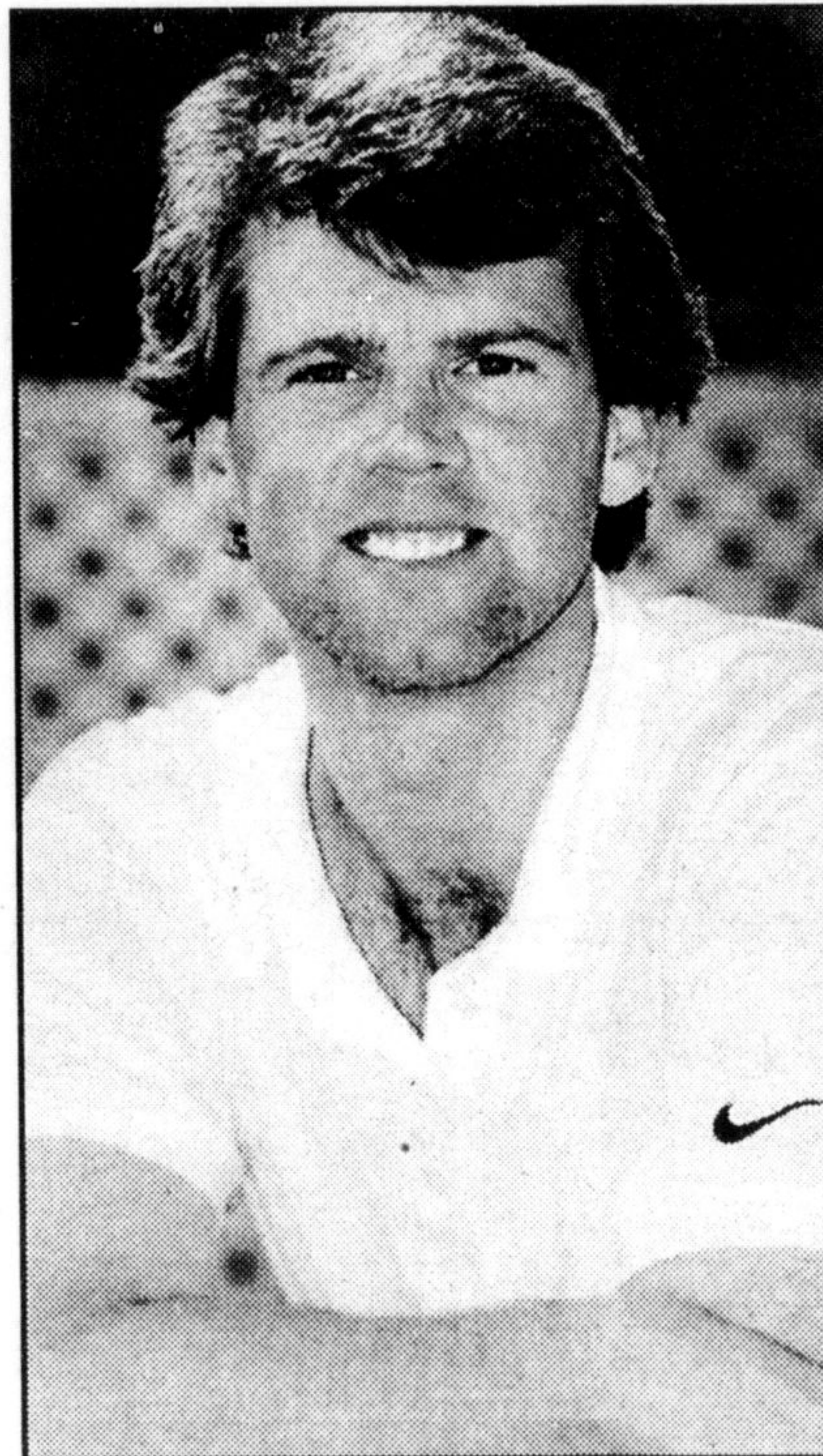
Two-year-old trotting filly — C.L. Brightness,

Two-year-old trotting colt — Armbro Scorpion,

Three-year-old trotting filly — Image Control,

Three-year-old trotting colt — Stormont Tuscany,

Older trotting mare — Kewpie Doll B,
 Older trotting horse — Glorys Comet,
 Brood mare — Lou Macs Glory.



Randy Waples

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