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TUESDAY DECEMBER 14, 1999

## ✓ Spartans come close, but can't hang on to tournament title

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Winning a title is hard, but hanging onto it is almost always tougher.

The E.C. Drury Spartans learned that the hard way over the weekend, as they failed to defend the consolation crown at their own senior boys basketball tournament.

Despite a gutsy performance and an exciting comeback bid, the host hoopsters wound up surrendering the secondary championship — falling to the Brampton Centennial Bucks 54-52 Saturday.

The single basket defeat capped a double whammy weekend for the locals, who were eclipsed by Orchard Park 43-42 on a rather fluky final buzzer shot in round one Friday. This kept them from going after the more coveted title for the second year in a row.

"It was definitely difficult to swallow," remarked head coach Kevin Houldcroft, of two such narrow losses to open the season. "However, I was pleased with our overall showing."

The Spartans' bench boss was especially happy with the improved defensive play of Cam Ivens and the continued emergence of captain Mike Maynard as a premier scoring threat.

He said, "Mike's the kind of guy who is very generous with the ball. But he's so talented that he should be taking it (to the net) himself more."

Maynard — whose alley-oups and field goals drew rave reviews from spectators in the consolation finals — was a driving force behind the rally against Brampton Centennial.

He scored 10 fourth-quarter points and finished with 22 overall. Along with robust efforts from Ivens and spark plug Bobby MacDonald, Drury managed a great deal of turnovers and matched the winners in terms of speed and play making.

However, rebounding at either end of the court was where the locals fell short and essentially dropped the game.

The Spartans quickly recovered from their tournament opening heartbreak with a couple of decisive wins to reach the consolation finals.

A well-balanced attack, plus sensational second and fourth-quarter performances, helped them topple Humberview 65-47.

From there, they carried the inferior Georgetown Rebels for much of the game before finally pulling away and spanking them 56-35. They outscored their regional rivals 22-4 in the last quarter to engineer the blowout.

Maynard hit double-digits in three of the four games, as did MacDonald. Adam Bisenz, Adam Fredricks and Tim Salvador gave strong supporting efforts over the weekend.

Sitting out with injuries for the hosts were Ryan Brooks and Mike Sinclair.

The Burlington Central Trojans were the grand champions Saturday. They survived a late uprising by Markville to win 51-47.

### Mustang marvelous

The Milton District Mustangs didn't make much of an impact at the tournament, although they enjoyed the distinction of having the top individual performer.

Ian Robinson — a veteran point guard who's still eligible to play junior — led weekend scoring with 94 points in three games, including a high of 37 in round two's 64-60 loss to Burlington's Lord Elgin.

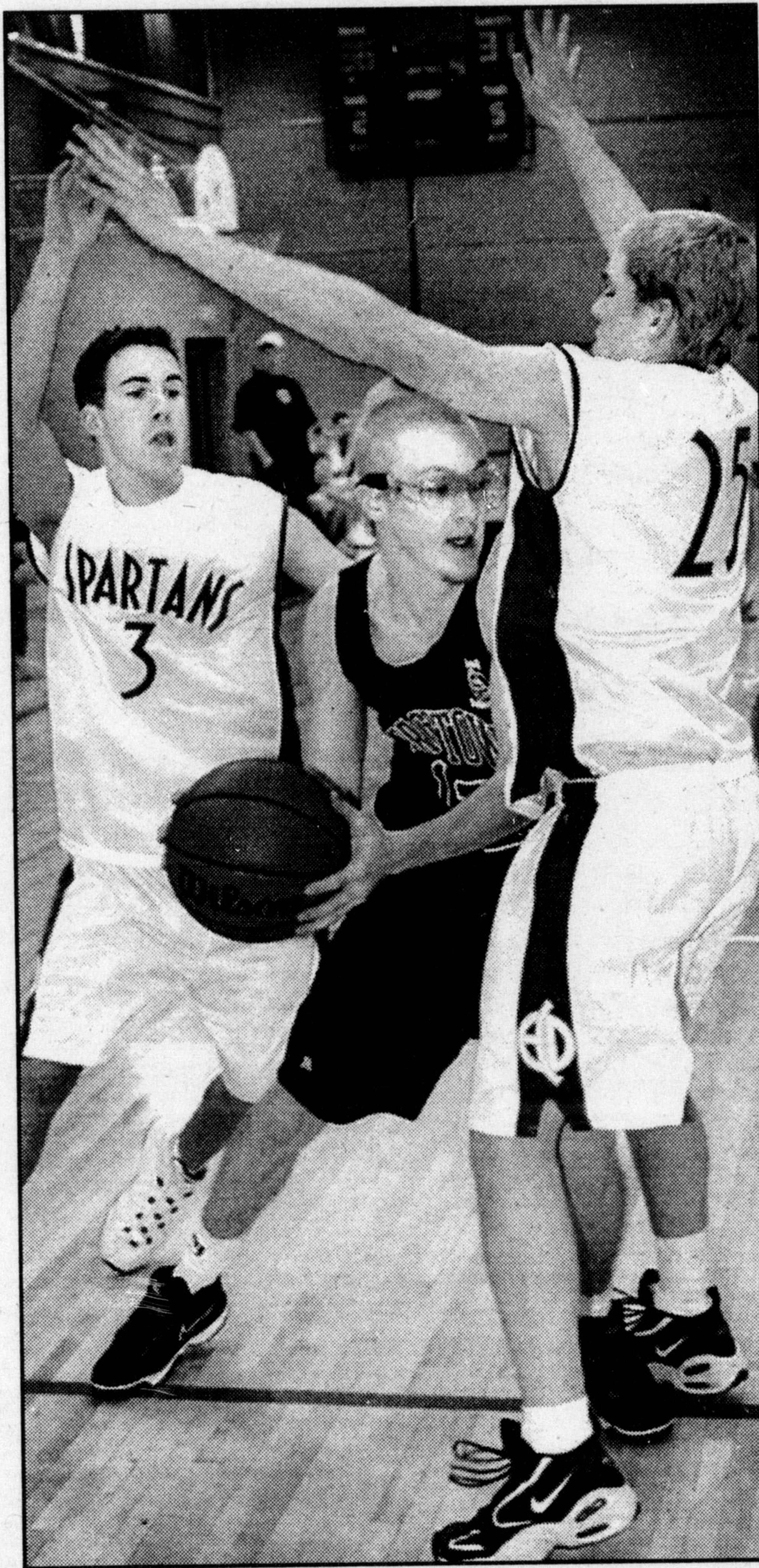


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Spartans Mike Maynard (3) and Bryan Gent (25) cover Georgetown Rebel Scott Graham Saturday in tournament play. E.C. won the game but lost in the consolation finals.

The 17-year-old sank 33 points in the team's only victory — a 64-62 decision over Woodlands in which he had 16 points in the opening quarter alone — and netted two dozen points in a 75-44 first round humbling by Westdale.

Robinson averaged 31.3 points a game on the weekend, which was tops this year.

The Mustangs and Lord Elgin exploded for a whopping 59 combined points in the opening quarter of their contest — also a high for the 16-team tournament.

## Merchants fall flat in 2-1 loss

By STEVE LeBLANC

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Central Arena continues to be a rather uninspiring venue for the Jr. A Merchants.

The West Conference front-runners have been notoriously lacklustre during trips to Burlington. And this season the problem is only getting worse.

Last time out they gave an especially poor performance and were spanked 6-2. On Sunday, Milton looked to avenge their previous pounding and delivered a fairly decent effort.

Unfortunately, they forgot to pack their scoring touch and were shaded 2-1.

This marked the local club's first defeat in a dozen games and cost them a golden opportunity to gain another point on second-place Georgetown, who tied Oakville Saturday.

The loss came without skipper Marty Williamson, who was out nursing the flu. Assistant Glen Walsh picked up the head coaching reins in his absence.

The Merchants (23-5-1-3) came extremely close to being shut out — something they haven't experienced since game two of the 1998 Royal Bank Cup when they were blanked by the eventual national champion South Surrey Eagles.

Sniper Ian Malcolm finally spoiled Cougar Matt Cifelli's goose egg with just over four minutes left to play, stepping into the slot and burying an upstairs wire.

This came after two dozen other shots were turned aside and a half-dozen powerplay chances were squandered. Joel Cameron was rock-solid between the pipes — making 29 saves — to keep his teammates within striking distance.

Burlington's Trevor Trussler sank the game winner about seven minutes into the third period while the host's initial tally was deposited by Frank Curto.

Both goals came on blatant miscues by visiting defence-men.

At Memorial Arena Friday, Milton battled through another low scoring affair and stoned the basement dwelling Buffalo Lightning 3-0.

Highlighting this one — which featured robust efforts from both sides — was the first ever junior shutout by rookie cager Anthony Marshall.

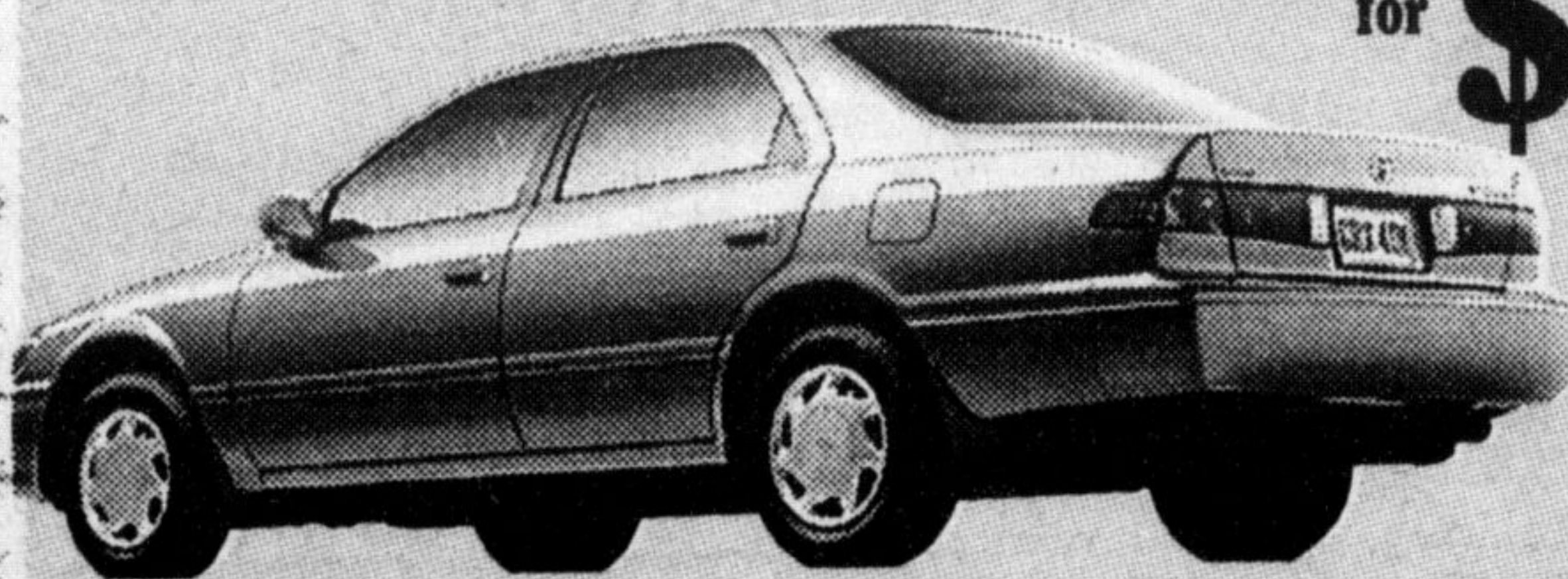
The third-stringer turned back-up stopped all 25 shots fired his way. Now with three starts under his belt, the lanky netminder remains unbeaten with a goals-against average of exactly 2.00.

Buffalo showed a lot of hustle and continues to be quite competitive for a last-place club. Rookie Merchant Richard Peverley scored his team-leading fifth game winner 8:12 into the second period, while Phil Barski and Ryan Carrigan added insurance in the final frame.

The shutout victory, their first since the season opener against Mississauga, marked the return of injured veteran Ryan Eby. Milton was a perfect 10-for-10 in penalty killing over the weekend and went 104 minutes last week without giving up a goal — their longest stretch of the year.

**Merchant notes:** Defenceman David Csumrik has joined the OHL's St. Michaels Majors. Milton still retains his rights at the tier two level ... Rob Meanchoff is expected to return later this month ... The Merchants are in Streetsville tonight and finish out their 1999 regular season schedule at home against Oakville Friday.

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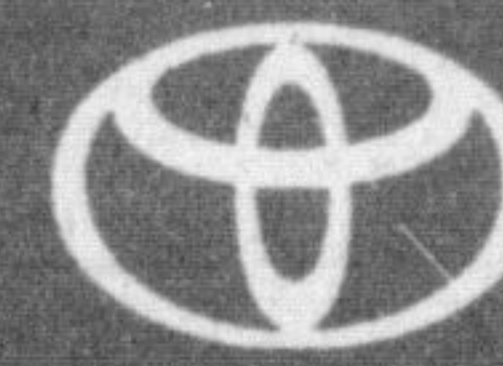
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