

Lightning, controversy mar Sox' homecoming

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Milton's midget baseball team had hoped to continue its winning ways during a recent homecoming to Maplehurst Ball Park.

But instead, the locals' return was marred by late-inning heartbreak one night and a preemptive end to competition the next.

The Red Sox were within a single hit of a major comeback victory against the Erindale Cardinals Sunday evening when controversy reared its ugly head.

Having rallied in the final inning to tie the game 8-8, James MacDonald lashed out grounder that sent home a hard-charging Kevin Cooper.

What followed was a somewhat questionable double play. Cooper was tagged out on his slide to the plate — which in itself wasn't really debatable — but was then deemed to have run the catcher, and deliberately interrupted a subsequent throw to first.

So MacDonald was called out as well and the see-saw showdown finished — with Paul Duff stranded at third base — in a time-limit stalemate.

"The rule is that Cooper should be ejected but the runner at first be safe," explained manager Herlo Hatje, who didn't believe there was anything wrong with the slide at home.

Milton had battled back from a two-run deficit in their final at-bat — with Andrew Pepper driving in the equalizer. MacDonald and Michael Volpe each had a pair of hits and two RBI.

Splitting the pitching duties down the middle, and

dividing the runs against equally as well, were Duff and MacDonald.

Monday night the team was showing strongly and holding its own against the second-place Mississauga North Tigers.

That is, until lightning delayed and eventually ended the proceedings just one inning shy of a regulation complete game.

Trailing 2-1 at the intermission — which was followed up with a restart by the umpires and a quick cancellation by Milton Minor Baseball past president Mike Johnston — the hosts were certainly looking good defensively and enjoying a solid performance from reliever Chris Dumencu.

Starter Ryan Harper worked a three-up three-down opening frame before giving up two runs in the second.

Neither hurler had seen much mound work this season — but were thrown in after a busy weekend schedule that left the Red Sox extremely thin in the pitching department.

Milton's lone run in the null and void game was scored by Dumencu. Pepper's RBI single drove him in.

A tough homecoming aside, Hatje is definitely pleased with the team's efforts this season. Given their youth and lack of previously proven pitchers, he said an 11-8-2 regular season record is more than credible.

The Red Sox, 5-2-1 over their last eight outings, had just half-a-dozen games remaining in league play prior to last night's trip to Brampton.

At Maplehurst Monday, they'll host the Mississauga Majors. Game time, as always, is 7:30 p.m.

Swimmer shines at national meet

Jennifer Porenta persevered through an ill-timed fever and powered her way to a little junior national success last weekend in Etobicoke.

The Milton Marlin Aquatic Club's 15-year-old star, hot off an exceptional provincial campaign earlier this month, struck silver in the 50-metre freestyle Saturday night during the Canadian Junior Long Course Swim Championships.

Her 27.08 performance was a scant .04 seconds shy of a personal benchmark, established at the provincials the previous weekend in Thunder Bay.

Porenta was third after the

preliminaries and cranked it up a notch for the finals.

She was even more impressive in the 100m freestyle. At least from a personal standpoint — as she shed about half-a-second off her individual record and took sixth spot overall with a time of 58.85.

Fellow Marlin Kristen McIlroy made the consolation finals in the 200m backstroke — eventually finishing 22nd.

Porenta will look to continue her strong season this weekend in Montreal at the Eastern Cup and then wraps things up with a trip to the senior nationals in Winnipeg, August 3 to 6.

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Casual Breeze on a roll

For the seventh straight time this year three-year-old trotting filly Casual Breeze simply overwhelmed her peers and captured a \$100,000 Gold Final at Toronto's Woodbine Racetrack Monday night.

In spite of racing with sight in only one eye and in spite of a storm that temporarily halted racing and left the track rated one second slower than normal, the King Conch daughter once again circled the field at the three-quarter pole to reach the winning post one-and-a-half lengths in front.

Although she had post one, trainer-driver Tom Durand took the filly off the gate slowly and settled on the rail in eighth. At the halfway point in the mile Casual Breeze was a distant 11 lengths behind the leader, but she closed the gap to four at the three-quarter mark and employed a snappy :27.3 final frame to secure the 1:56.4 victory.

"The break (due to a storm and driver/trainer vote to continue to race) helped her a lot. She seemed to be much more relaxed. Maybe I'll use those tac-

tics again next time she races," said Durand. "Her best racing style is from off the pace and tonight was the perfect trip for her."

Durand's father Ron of Port Dover and brother Jonathan of Burlington share ownership of the filly, who has now banked just over \$600,000 in her career.

The other elimination winner, Super Pleasure daughter Welcomebacktrotter, moved from seventh to second down the stretch to take home one quarter of the \$100,000 purse on behalf of owners Ken and Sheryl Ann Parke of Bridgewood Meadows in Orton.

Casual Breeze will now have nine days to rest and continue the battle to restore sight to her right eye, which developed fungal keratitis after a relatively simply scratched cornea became infected.

The sophomore trotting fillies will make their next Ontario Sires Stakes stop at Windsor Raceway Wednesday, when the filly will once again put her impressive win streak on the line.

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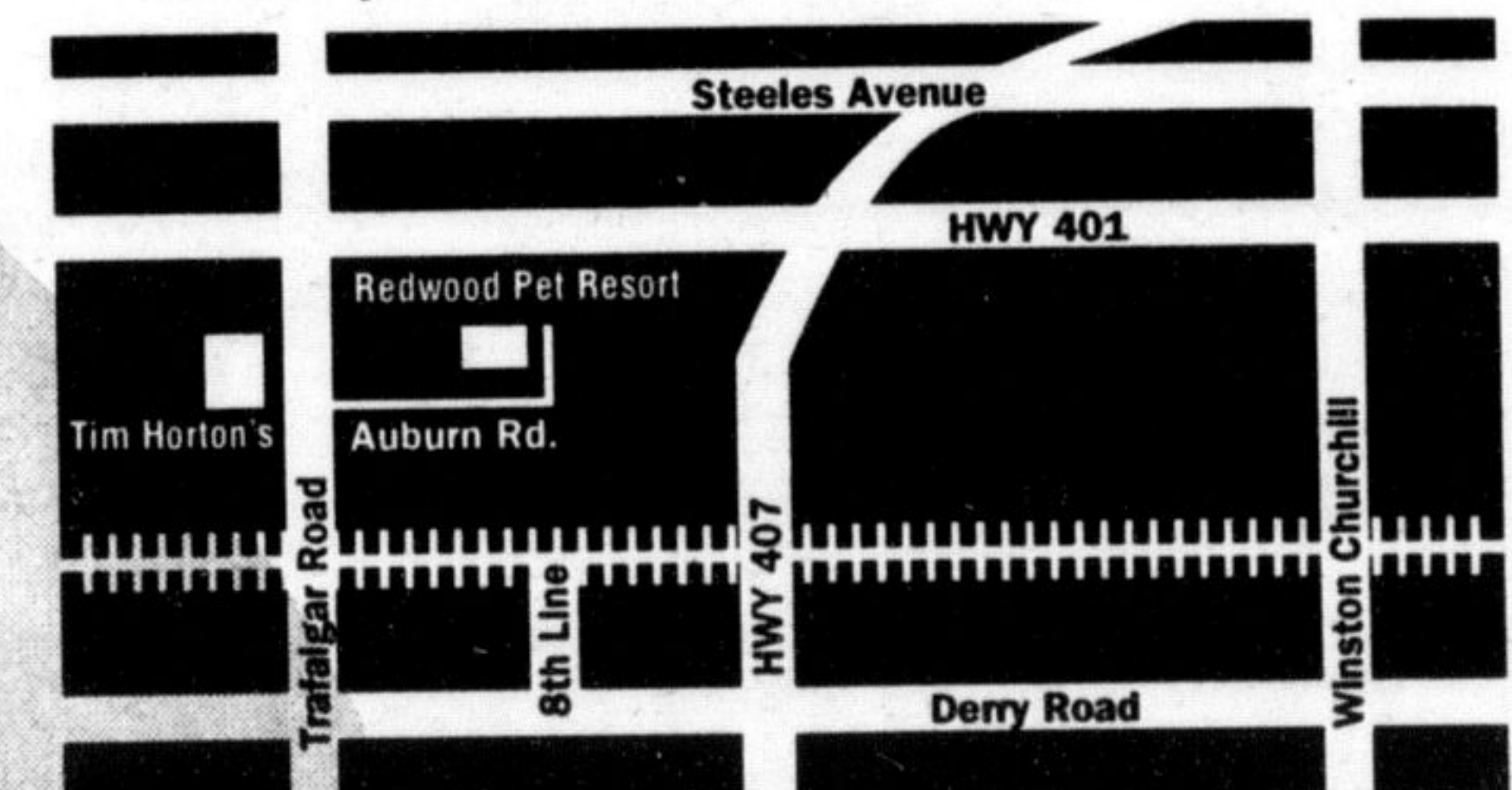
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