



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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BMX siblings ride high at nationals

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Gold, silver and bronze rained down for Milton's Branciers late last month at the 2000 Canadian BMX Championships in Crabtree, Quebec.

The local siblings — who both sustained serious injury earlier this summer in Iberville, Quebec — marked their return with medal-winning performances at the combined eastern national/national competition.

And in the process, both qualified for next year's world championships in Kentucky.

Having broken both her wrists last time out in Quebec, 13-year-old Natasha admits she was "kind of sketchy" heading into the recent showcase.

But any nervousness she felt quickly turned into confidence — and by close of the weekend championships her only emotion was that of pure joy.

Sensational showing

That's because she managed a second-place finish in the opening day's eastern national main event and followed that up with overall victory in the national main event August 27.

As if this wasn't special enough, her second day's triumph came against a female rider from Alberta who earlier this year finished sixth at the world championships in Argentina.

"I'd finished second to her all weekend (before the national main event) so it was nice to finally beat her," said Natasha, who's only in her second full season of racing.

Not wishing to re-injure her wrists, the teen rider stuck close to the ground — going slow over the jumps — during both her preliminary and main event races.

The conservative approach didn't seem to hinder her much, however, as she took strong second-place efforts the whole way through until her national finals win.

Meanwhile, older brother Alex, 15, enjoyed a bronze-medal sweep in Crabtree — finishing third in both main events.

"I was pretty happy with my performance. I had some good gates all weekend," said Alex, who'd suffered a broken collarbone and a couple of cracked ribs during his first trip to Quebec this season.

Quick out of gate

Strong starts were a major contributor to his third-place finishes, although somewhat adverse weather conditions may have cost him the silver or gold.

A rather windy weekend, he said, curbed the smaller riders' altitude and velocity over the jumps.

"You go over a jump and the wind would push you right back. This definitely gave the bigger guys an advantage," explained Alex, who was one of the smallest competitors in his age class.

The Branciers' medal-winning efforts helped lead the Milton Track 2000 team — rounded out by local riders Bradie Johnston, Josh Sproul and Sue Lyons — to a second-place finish in the team competition.

Alberta's stacked Powerlite team captured the title, but had stiff competition from the local contingent, who were only a dozen points back for the runner-up spot.

Milton Track 2000's team is sponsored by Brancier Jeweller, Quality Inn and Spokes'N'Slopes.

The Branciers closed out the season this past weekend at the Grand Nationals in Kentucky. Results were not available due to holiday press deadlines.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton's Alex (left) and Natasha Brancier enjoyed a hefty hardware haul at the recent Canadian BMX Championships in Crabtree, Quebec.

Merchants net pre-season shutout over Hamilton

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
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The 2000/01 Jr. A Merchants probably won't be making quite so many puck deposits as some of their recent predecessors.

Keeping the rubber out of their own net on the other hand, appears to something the local club will be fairly successful at this coming season.

At least if initial pre-season results are any indication.

Milton has allowed just two goals in as many exhibition tilts so far, and none during its latest showdown in Hamilton Wednesday.

Glenn Walsh marked his first time back in steel-town as an opposing head coach by whitewashing his former team 5-0. Veteran Joel Cameron and 20-year-old hopeful Frank Doyle — who backstopped Guelph's Jr. B squad last year — split the netminding duties in the shutout victory.

"I think we'll be pretty solid in our own end this season," said Nick Slawson, Milton's director of hockey operation.

Protecting this year's netminding tandem — which may include promising sophomore Anthony Marshall, who's currently trying out with the OHL Brampton Battalion — is a blueline that while still without a powerplay quarterback is quite sturdy and experienced.

Joining veterans John Nadalin and Steve Schentag plus a returning Mike McGrane are newcomers Rick Janco, Chris Rook and Chad Vindin.

Rook — a 5'11", 185 lbs. 20-year-old who'll attend the University of Waterloo this year — toiled with Couchiching last season and now gives the Merchants a fourth defencemen with Jr. A experience.

Meanwhile, 5'9", 185 lbs. Vindin, 18, has played two years at the lower junior ranks with both Erin and Orangeville. And while ex-Marlie midget Janco lacks experience, he makes up for it in mobility and size — with a 6'1", 190 lbs. frame.

Milton's offense remains a much bigger question mark. Even

with capable veterans Elliot Altberg and Dan DeLong plus highly gifted newcomer Flavio Fagonia, this year's club isn't that deep up front.

"I think we're better (offensively) than we were a couple of weeks ago, but there's still some holes to fill," admitted Slawson.

Signing on Wednesday night was 17-year-old Vince Laise — another Toronto Marlie — while fellow midget Marlie Tyler McLellan and Scott Malcolm (Ian's 17-year-old brother) of the Mississauga Senators are among others who've impressed the coaching staff so far.

Veteran James Coleman — not known for his scoring touch last season — tallied twice against Hamilton Wednesday. Also lighting the lamp were ex-Marlie Kevin Arruda, MacLellan and Fagonia, who sank a beautiful top shelf goal in the final frame.

Tonight Milton is at Mississauga's Iceland Arena to face the Chargers at 7:30 p.m. while Friday they host the Georgetown Raiders at 8 p.m.



Dear Bob,

A note to say thank you to you and all of the staff at Georgetown Toyota, for assistance in parting with my "beloved" Toyota Camry after 13 years of service. Now that I am on my own, after fifty-five years, my needs are slightly different and the Tercel '99 just seemed to fill the bill. This takes some adjustment on my part, but I'm sure I'll "make" it. Having lived at "Nab Hill" for these 55 years, I need transportation, and when I am unable to provide my own, major changes must take place — so far so good!

Thank you to the service (trustworthy as I call them) department and all.

Sincerely,
Marion MacNab



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