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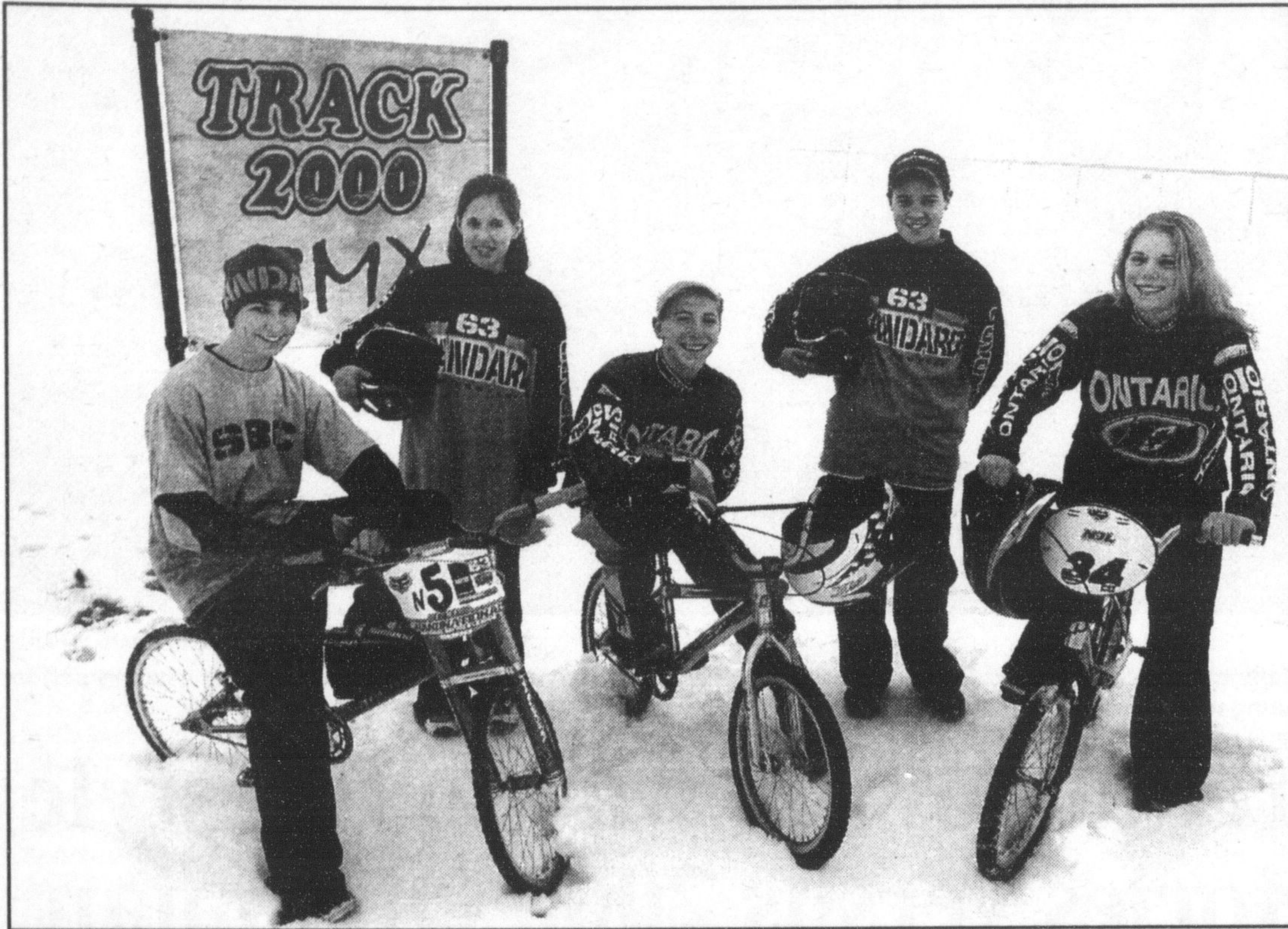


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton BMXers ready to ride

Milton's Track 2000 was recently announced as a site for the 2001 War of the Stars North American tour. The local track will play host to thousands of riders over the weekend of June 23 and 24. Among Milton-area racers slated to compete are (from left) Alex Brancier, Natasha Brancier, Mike Mills, Jason Bouwman and Brenne Mills.

Merchants settle for tie in Buffalo

Milton's 4-0 lead disappears

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

The Merchants got their point across in Buffalo Monday.

Only problem was, they should have earned more than one.

However, a 4-0 hammerlock went up in smoke — as penalty trouble, fallen players and a disjointed offensive effort conspired to stave off victory.

Before a small but spirited crowd at West Seneca Arena, Milton coughed up one of its biggest leads of the season and had to settle for a 4-4 stalemate with the fundamentally sound Lightning.

The visiting juniors, who gained a valuable point in their bid to remain division front-runners, had things well in hand through first period play — scoring three times and restricting the hosts to a mere six shots against goaltender Richard Fournier.

Reversal of fortune

But then their house of cards came crumbling down.

Defenceman Chris Krieg sustained a nasty cut to his wrist. Forward Dan DeLong left the game due to illness. A rash of minor infractions resulted in two goals against. A handful of players were banged up in fairly high impact collisions. A punchless powerplay failed on three occasions.

Collectively, this allowed for a major reversal of fortune that was capped with the tying tally being sunk inside the final five minutes of regulation time.

On the plus side, the Merchants' retooled top two scoring units continued to produce.

The first line accounted for three

markers, two of which were deposited by recently promoted rookie Kevin Arruda.

The diminutive forward — who scooped up the top freshman award last week and is second on the team in goals — potted number 19 and 20 in the opening frame before setting up Andrew Francone.

Rozak back in form

Andy Rozak assisted on all three goals while Francone came away with helpers on both by Arruda.

Meanwhile, Rick Ferroni finished up a nifty pass from linemate Flavio Faggioni about a minute into the game.

Also assisting on the play was Frank Fazio — who along with checking winger James Coleman offered robust performances for much of the evening clash.

Buffalo's Nick Watroba tallied twice while the hosts got singles from Jeff Rasmussen and Lee Stempniak.

The 27-13-5-1 Merchants, who're unbeaten in their last four games after dropping three straight, sit two points ahead of second-place Georgetown with three games remaining in regular season play.

Merchant notes: Kevin Arruda has six goals in his last three games ... Left winger Ian LaBrash and defenceman Adam Sturgeon finish up suspensions this weekend ... Should West Conference standings remain as they are, the Merchants will open the playoffs against Bramalea. Milton has won all but one game against the Blues this season ... Milton will host Mississauga tonight and will look to cement first place tomorrow in Georgetown. Game time is 7:30 p.m.

Another milestone for E.C. Drury

There are few wrestling honours E.C. Drury High hasn't claimed.

And now there are even fewer — following Saturday's Ontario Junior Wrestling Championships in London.

Former Spartans Kevin Heffron and John McCart became the local school's first provincial gold medalists with unblemished performances at the tournament.

McCart dominated the heavyweight division, pinning three straight opponents to win his sixth provincial age class crown in seven years.

In the finals, he defeated Ottawa's Devon Nicholson.

Heffron also secured three consecutive wins including a technical superiority victory over Western's Sean Ross. Despite numerous regional and national titles, this was his first championship on the Ontario stage.

Meanwhile, fellow alumni grappler Chad Merritt had to settle for bronze after a disastrous start. Leading 8-0, Drury's 2000 OFSAA champ slipped while attempting a potential-winning throw and was pinned.

He then battled back to take four straight matches to grab third — capping his remarkable recovery with a close-fought decision over fellow Spartan Rory McDonell.

Chris Holmes, also in his first junior championships, showed strongly and finished fifth, dropping tightly-contested gold and bronze semi-final matches.

The Drury contingent helped the Guelph Wrestling Club retain its provincial team title. The two will co-host an all-age group open meet at E.C. Sunday.



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