

Tough time of year for aspiring hockey players

With all the spring hockey tryouts either done or finishing up, there are a lot of disappointed and heartbroken hockey players.

It's difficult when somebody tells you that you're not good enough to play on a particular team. Even more difficult when you think that you are.

Most of the time, kids know where they stand at a tryout, even if their parents don't. The only objective person in the rink is the coach, even though it's safe to say that they frequently make mistakes.

I was only cut from a team once, but it was an odd situation. I failed to make the minor midget team in my home area, but thought I hadn't received a fair shot, partly because I had missed one of the tryout nights. So, I went out for the older midget team and made it, the only underage player on the team.

There are all kinds of stories about big-name players being cut and still making good. The most famous example is Michael Jordan getting cut from his high school basketball team.

Kelly Hrudey, who had an excellent NHL career, and is now a broadcaster with Hockey Night in Canada, was cut every single year he tried out, all the way up to midget.

He was ready to hang up the pads until a last place team called him and asked him to play, mostly because they didn't have anybody else.

That team ended up winning the provincial championship and he was playing major junior hockey the next year. One phone call was the difference between an NHL career and no more hockey.

Funny how things can work out, or not work out. My (sort of) stepson, a goalie over six foot tall, was recruited by a AAA

team and received a few exploratory calls from other clubs.

He was happy playing AA in his hometown, but the AAA coach was quite persistent, and the young fella had AAA experience just the year before, so he decided he would go out for that team.

The coach made several calls, talked to him outside the dressing room after games, and went to a number of playoff contests.

The situation looked good, so he decided not to try out with the other AAA teams. But, then he was cut. The coach had obviously found somebody else he liked better, but by then it was too late to go out for another team.

AAA coaches are rarely surprised at tryouts, if they're good coaches, so he knew ahead of time that he was going to cut him. One more phone call might have earned him a place on a different AAA team. For that matter, one phone call by me might have done the trick, as well.

But, that's the way it goes, and the coach showed a lot of class by calling him afterward and explaining the situation and thanking him for coming out. Something he didn't need to do.

All that was fine and good until he went back to his AA team, which was armed with a new coach and goalie evaluators for the tryouts.

Not to worry, he had only lost a couple of games the season before, most of those in the OMHA semi-finals when he had played all the games and his team couldn't score. His number one status was secure. Or so he figured.

The evaluators determined through their drills – most of them ridiculous, things that never happen in a game, such as stopping 40 pucks in two minutes with shots from



Out in left field

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

each side – that he wasn't good enough to be one of the two goalies, to the shock of most everyone. Worse, the new coach couldn't even tell him himself, sending a trainer to do the dirty work.

Within a week, he went from possibly getting on the list for the OHL draft to having his goaltending days ended. He wasn't about to go down to A, so he's putting away the pads and is going to play out in houseleague unless something else comes up.

Everybody has their own story. In a lot of cases, being cut has ended up helping them. On that same midget team I played

on, the following year, one player was cut but was kept on the team to play in practices or if somebody couldn't make a game. I never saw anybody work as hard as that guy.

By the end of the year, he was playing all the time, within two years he was one of the top scorers in the Provincial Jr. A league, and a couple years after that he was playing professionally in Europe.

There aren't that many players so talented that they didn't have to work hard to get where they are.

If you get cut, the best thing is to use it to your advantage. You have the motivation to prove the team that didn't pick you that they were wrong, and you have the motivation to prove to yourself that you can get better.

You can't always count on getting a fair shake, the same in anything we do in life.

The bottom line, no matter how you look at it, is if you want something bad enough, don't give up.

Fax all your team reports and sports story ideas to Steve LeBlanc at 878-4943, or drop them off at 191 Main St.

Soccer camp on again

Milton youngsters are once again invited to take part in the Kick-It Soccer Camp this summer at Lions Sport Park.

The camp runs from July 16 to 20.

Open to boys and girls aged 6 to 13 years, Kick-It Soccer Camp features all-day clinics and costs \$95 per child for

full-day instructions, \$70 for morning lessons and \$60 for afternoon lessons.

Each camper receives a t-shirt and soccer ball. To register, or for more information, call 1(905)335-5679 or e-mail camp organizers at hoopcamp@home.com.

"The business that considers itself immune to the necessity for advertising sooner or later finds itself immune to business."

Derby Brown

GAMBLING PROBLEM?

If you or someone you know needs help with a gambling problem, please call the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-888-230-3505, or in your community:

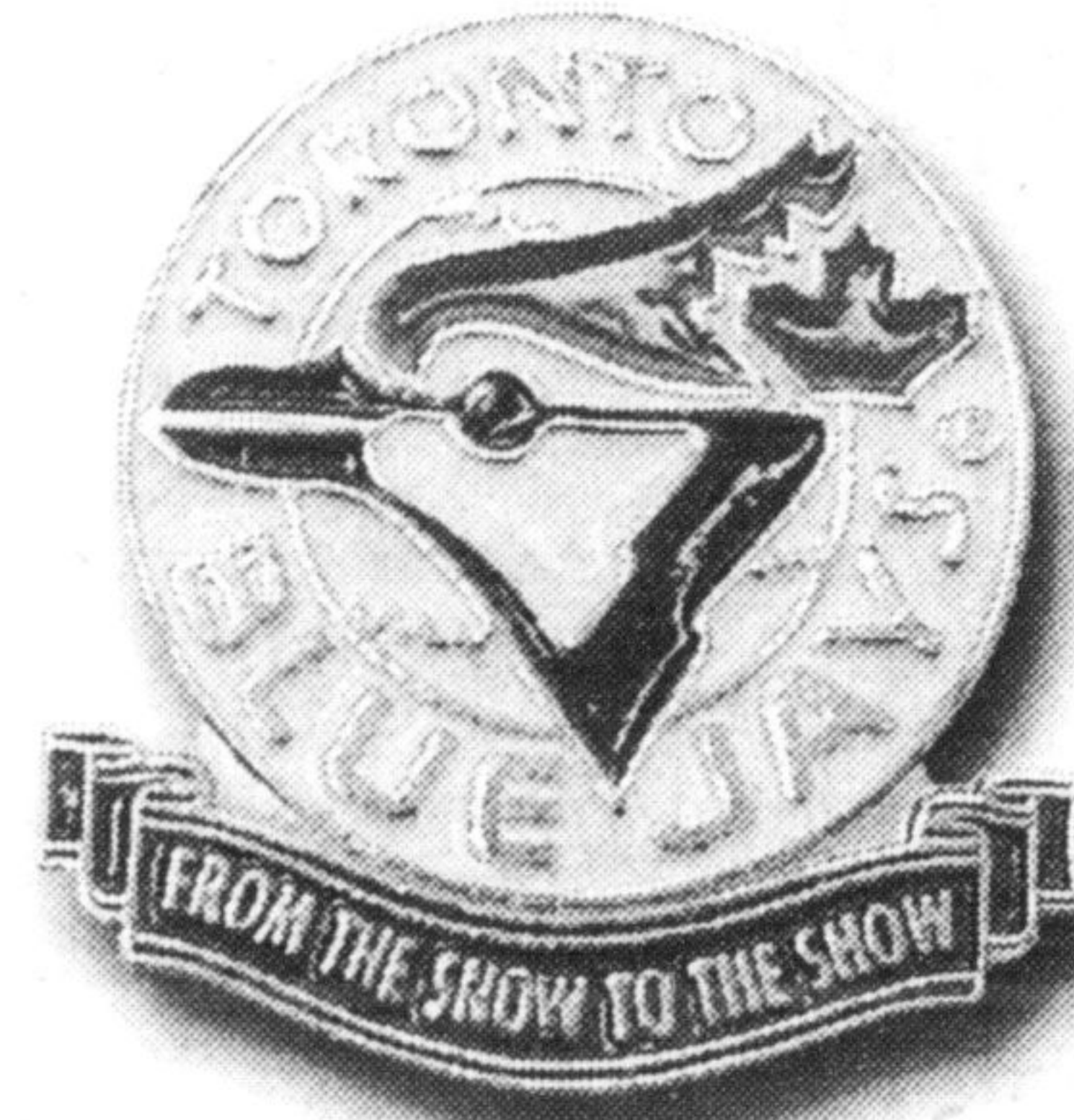
Simcoe Outreach Services

Barrie 705-726-7062

Toll Free 1-800-263-5060

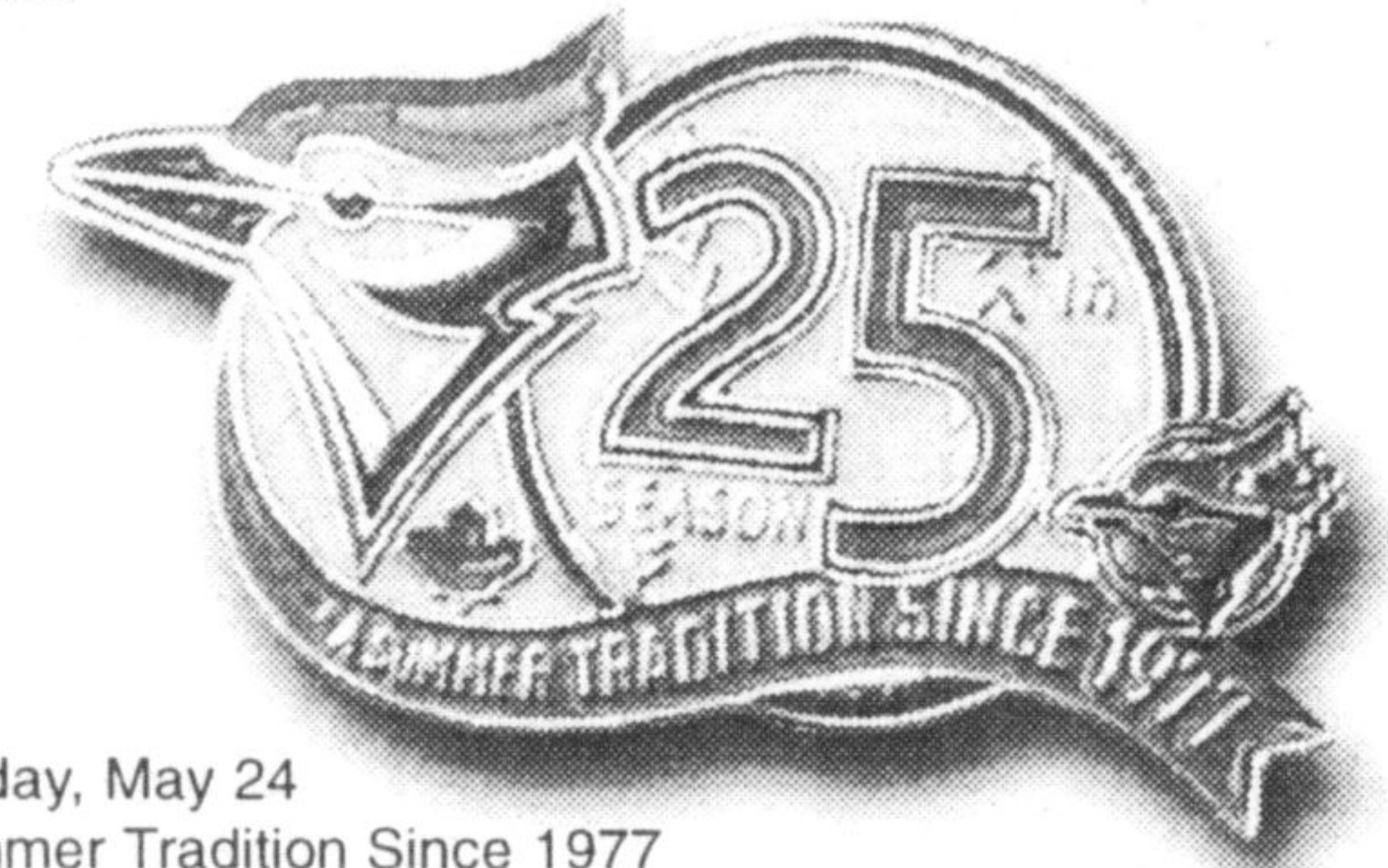


Start your collection Monday. Finish it Thursday.



Wednesday, May 23
From the Snow to the Show
Pin #2

Monday, May 21
Turn Back the Clock
Pin #1



Thursday, May 24
A Summer Tradition Since 1977
Pin #3

Monday, Wednesday and Thursday we take on the White Sox. Monday, to celebrate Victoria Day and the Jays vs White Sox 1977 Opening Day, both teams will be wearing vintage uniforms. Each night, the first 15,000 fans through the gates will receive a different Blue Jays 25th Anniversary Season commemorative pin card depicting a great moment in Blue Jays history. Collect 'em all.

VICTORIA DAY, MONDAY, MAY 21 • 4:05	WEDNESDAY, MAY 23 • 7:05	THURSDAY, MAY 24 • 7:05
The Jays and White Sox will be wearing their vintage uniforms. The first 15,000 fans collect the first commemorative pin card. 70's music and entertainment, and a post-game fireworks show!	The first 15,000 fans collect the second commemorative pin card. Enjoy 70's music and entertainment!	The first 15,000 fans collect the third commemorative pin card. 70's music and entertainment continues! On Panasonic Power Thursday, there's \$25,000 in products to be won!
		Panasonic.

Call, purchase online, or visit the Jays Gate 9 Box Office!

Purchase online:
 BLUEJAYS.COM

FANPHONE
416-341-1234
or press *JAYS on your
Rogers' AT&T Wireless Phone

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