

High school baseball teams still vying for playoff spots

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Milton's three high school baseball teams will all wrap up regular season play with .500 or better records.

But that won't necessarily guarantee them all a playoff spot.

With fewer games this season and only the top four finishers in Halton's Volpe Division advancing to the Tier 1 playdowns — local players will still be jockeying for position during season-ending play this afternoon.

And in a couple of cases, a loss today could be doubly damaging — in essence, ousting that club from regional championship contention.

MD guaranteed a spot

Only Milton District (4-1-1) was ensured a Tier 1 spot heading into battle today against cross-town rival E.C. Drury. MD gave up a valuable point in the race for first by squandering a four-run lead and tying St. Thomas Aquinas 6-6 Wednesday.

However, they squeezed past Iroquois Ridge 2-1 May 14 to stretch their winning streak to four games and guarantee themselves a playoff berth. Jarrett Konkle was the star that day with four shutout innings on the mound plus a run and an RBI.

E.C. (3-2-1) will likely need a victory today to make the Tier 1 playoffs and with Mustang Michael Volpe returning to the mound after a spring vacation in Hawaii, the Spartans will have their hands full.

Wednesday's 1-0 defeat to Iroquois Ridge — with an unearned run scored in the bottom of the sixth — could very well prove to be their undoing this season, after a strong start of three wins in five games.

"That one run could be very costly," said manager Larry Jaroslowski.

The Spartans' latest victory came in commanding

fashion, as they trounced White Oaks 18-1 May 14. Jon Gleed and Chris Holmes — whose batting average is a whopping .824 — had home runs in the blowout. Gleed and James MacDonald pitched particularly well against Iroquois Ridge.

Meanwhile, Bishop Reding (4-2) has done especially well without much of a pitching staff this year — but were still battling for a playoff spot before today's home game against Loyola.

A 13-1 annihilation of White Oaks Wednesday pushed their record to 4-2 and kept them in the hunt for a top four finish. Conan O'Brien delivered a masterful pitching performance in that one — striking out 10 batters and allowing just two hits over four innings.

He also stood out offensively with three hits and three RBI.

Two days earlier the Royals won a wild seesaw battle over T.A. Blakelock 15-14. BR rallied from a six-run deficit in the final inning to finally prevail after coughing up an 8-1 cushion earlier in the afternoon.

MD and EC will lock horns today at Brian Best Park while Reding will host Loyola at Maplehurst. Both games start at 3:30 p.m.

Summer hockey

The Golden Horseshoe Hockey League is once again offering summer leagues for both minor and men's non-contact hockey.

Competition begins next week and games are played in both Oakville and Burlington.

The minor league program is open to players seven to 16 years of age while individual and team entries will be accepted for the men's league.

To register, obtain an application form or for more information, call (905) 332-0757.

Surprising finishes in the Gold Series Eliminations

A foggy evening in Campbellville prevented Mohawk Racetrack fans from seeing every inch of the Gold Series Eliminations for three-year-old trotting colts on Thursday, but it did not affect views of the surprising finishes to the two races.

In the opening Elimination Mohawk fans sent last year's cross border superstar Banker Hall off as the heavy favourite and were amazed to find him at the rear of the field as the colts turned for home.

The winner of \$607,412 went off-stride while making a bid for the lead at the half-mile point in the race and faded to ninth, leaving the door wide open for Bionic Ballad, who had settled for second behind Banker Hall in a May 8 qualifier.

The colts moved off the starting gate together and when Banker Hall went off-stride driver Mike Saftic of Milton knew Bionic Ballad was in a perfect position to score the win.

The duo continued through the fog and emerged in the stretch as the clear leaders, coasting home to a one-and-three-quarter length victory in a personal best time of 1:57.3.

"The trip went perfect for him. Banker Hall looked like he was making the quarter pole move and then he made a break around the half," said Saftic. "He (Bionic Ballad) looks a little bigger and stronger. He had a good year last year."

Budd Thorne trains Bionic Ballad, who earned \$129,017 at two for owner-breeder Alana Toth of Sudbury and Earl Lennox of Orton. Liberty Balance delivered a steady effort to finish second and Bradmeister earned the third-place share of the \$48,571



Hoof Beat

with **SANDRA SNYDER**

purse. Fourth and fifth-place finishers Brontsky and Fifty Pound Trout will also return to Mohawk Friday for the \$100,000 Gold Series Final.

In the second elimination, favourite Royal Pocket kept his mind focused on the task at hand and romped to an easy three-length victory in 1:57.3 for owner-breeder Anthony Nicols of Fraserville.

The win was the gelding's sixth of the season and established him as a force to be reckoned with on the Ontario Sires Stakes scene. Unraced at two, Royal Pocket is trained by Steve Nichols and has been driven to all his victories by Phil Hudon.

"He's the best horse I've ever driven. He was under wraps," said Hudon.

"It was a tough trip because I was outside. I thought I'd sit out there and keep him trotting to make the final. The last final (Tie Silk) he made a little break, so I'm talking to him a lot now."

Hudon and Royal Pocket were chased home by second choice Northern Bailey, but that colt placed last after making a break during the stretch. As a result, Tie Silk winner Ozzie In Action and Malpeque Bay moved into second and third place.

Also advancing to Friday's final — in spite of making breaks during the mile — were Coldspot and Emmitt.

Golf tournament June 18

Port Nelson United Church will host its annual Mixed Golf Classic and Silent Auction at Granite Ridge Golf Club Monday, June 18.

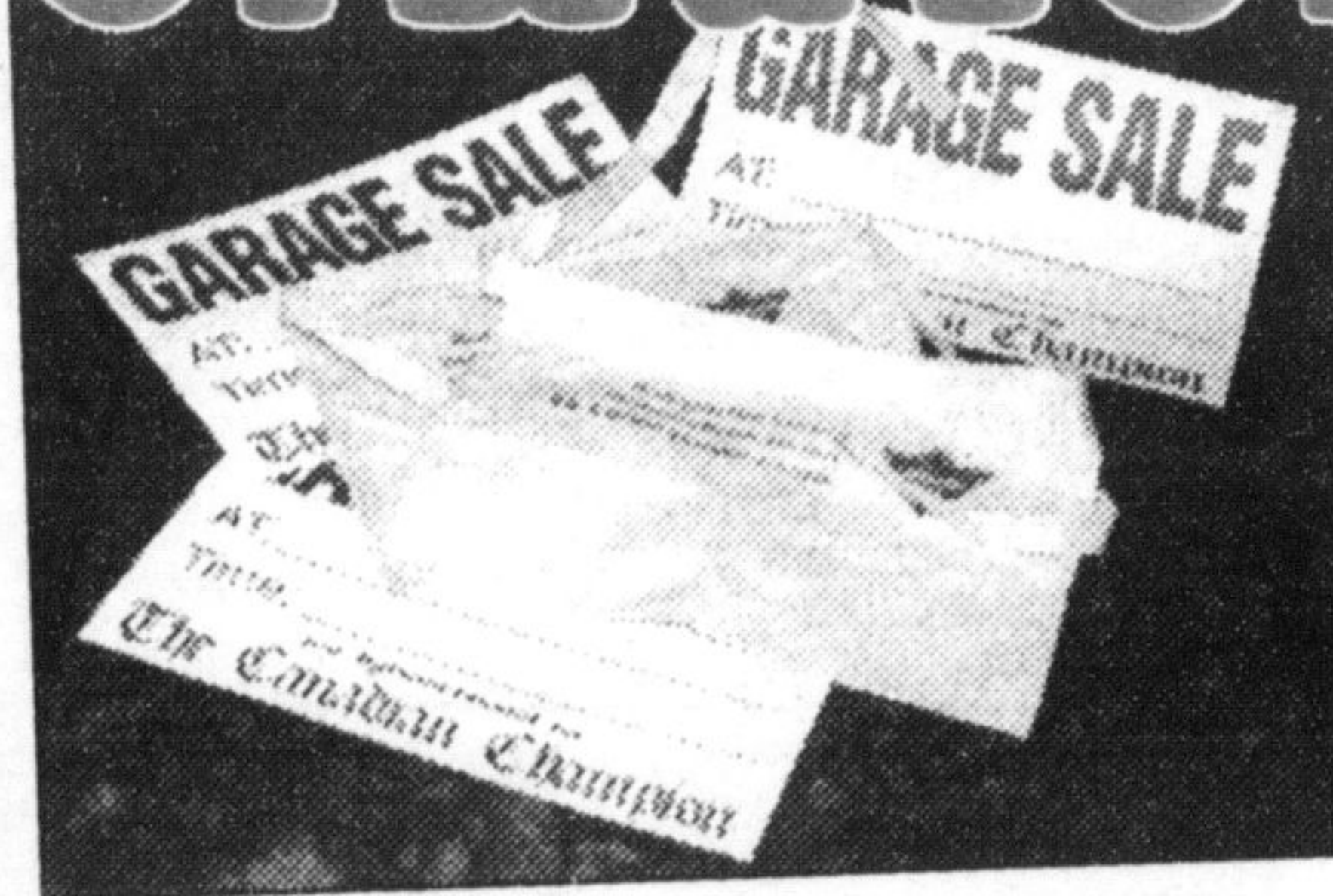
Tee times for this four-person scramble tournament are between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The \$90 fee includes 18 holes of golf, dinner and prizes.

Proceeds will go toward the purchase of an inclined platform lift at the rural church.

To reserve a spot, call Ken Candlish at (905) 681-7540.

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