



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2002

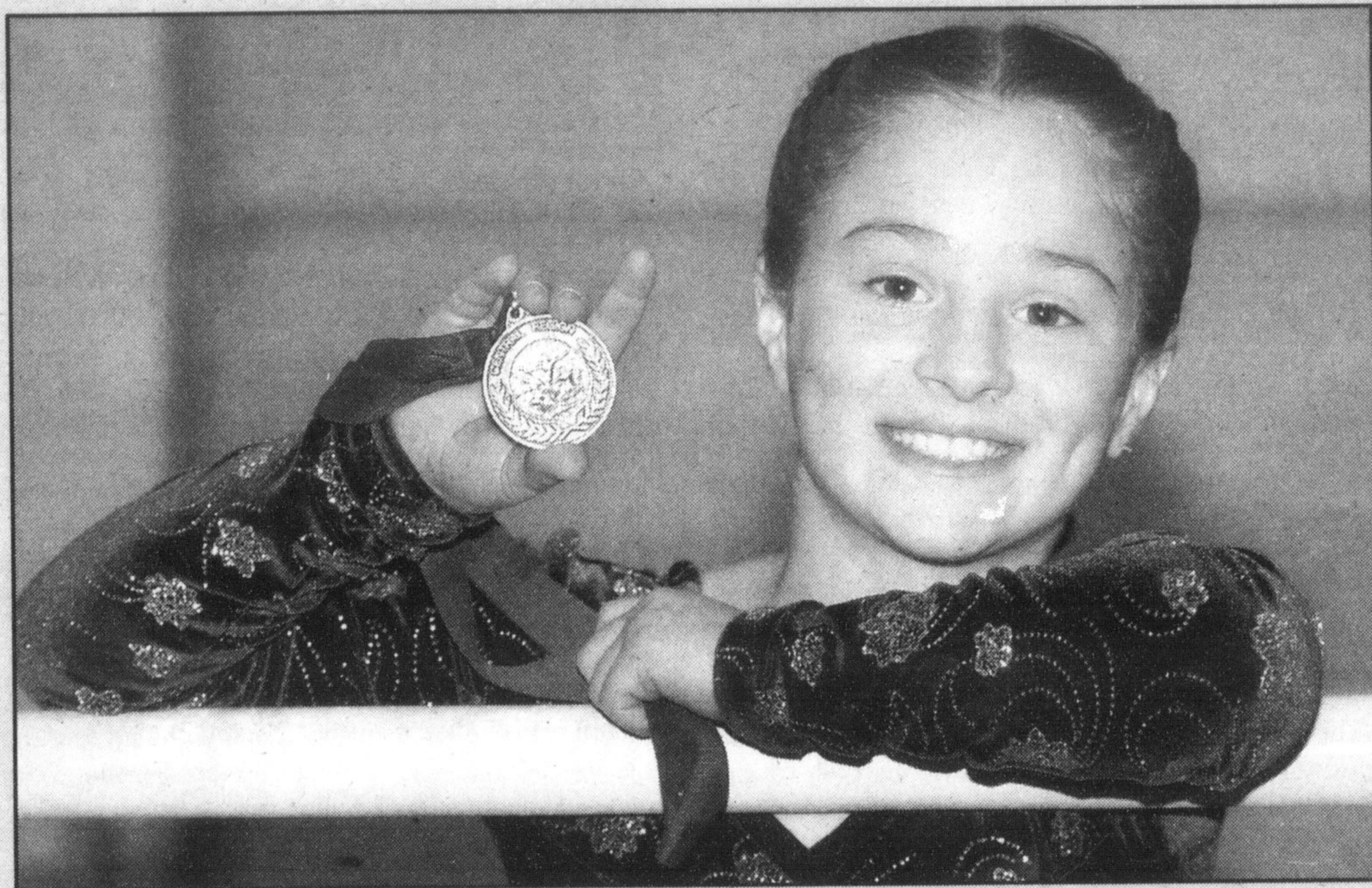


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Eleanor Pineau-Levman displays the gold medal she won at a recent provincial qualifying meet in Oakville.

New Springer golden after topnotch effort in Oakville

Eleanor Pineau-Levman raised the bar — or rather mastered it — in recent gymnastics competition.

The Milton Springers' new competitive team member captured gold on bars during the second of three provincial qualifying meets held late last month in Oakville.

This marked a six-spot improvement over the nine-year-old's debut performance in Burlington. The Level 1 Pre-Novice competitor also secured sixth-place honours on the vault.

Pre-Junior Julie Gagnon, 11, kept herself in provincial contention with her second straight top-six overall finish — thanks in large part to a bronze-medal effort

on bars.

A sixth on floor, seventh on vault and eighth on beam combined to strengthen the preteen's bid to be part of this spring's provincial championships.

Jaimi Fellows struck silver on beam and overall cracked the top-six among two dozen Level 1 Juniors.

The 12-year-old finished fifth on both bars and floor to keep her provincial hopes alive, after placing seventh overall in Burlington.

Age class teammates Christina Chimonides and Stephanie Deumer weren't quite as successful in the all-around scoring, but did manage top-four finishes in individual events.

Deumer — who missed the first qualifier — claimed the silver medal on bars while Chimonides, recovering from a recent ankle sprain, was fourth on the vault.

The Milton Springers will now turn their attention to preparing for the club's annual Gymstrada showcase, scheduled for February 24.

The third and final provincial qualifying meet will be held late next month in Brantford.

Top six finishers in each division at the end of the three qualifying meets advance to the provincials — with a select group of runner-ups able to compete for back-door entry at the 'Super Qualifying Meet'.

Merchants, Blues' playoff rivalry set to resume tonight

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The Merchants and Bramalea Blues are certainly no strangers when it comes to the playoffs.

In fact, no other teams in the Provincial Jr. A's Western Conference have had more post-season series in recent memory — a handful in six seasons to be exact.

All five went at least six games, with two — both won by Milton — going the distance.

And if the single point separating these two teams in the final standings is any indication, the latest showdown

— beginning tonight at Bramalea's Victoria Park Arena — has the potential to be just as competitive as any of its predecessors.

"I think we match up pretty evenly," Milton GM Nick Slawson said.

With no national championship to shoot for this year, the league's playoff schedules are far less condensed than usual — which could favour the battered and bruised Blues, who finished out the regular season in somewhat of a tailspin due in part to a few minor injuries.

But Bramalea has home-ice advantage this time around and haven't been beat by the Merchants in their own barn this season. Nevertheless, both Slawson and Milton head coach Dave Gagner feel more comfortable starting the playoffs on the smaller ice surface of Victoria Park.

Said Gagner, "I think we showed Sunday (in Mississauga) that we don't like the big rinks."

And Slawson believes his club could have a slight edge between the pipes — that is, if Trevor Battaglia can offer a repeat performance of last year's second round gem against the Merchants.

Then toiling with Mississauga, Battaglia gave up just 17 goals in five games against Milton and his consistency in net was about the only thing keeping the series competitive.

"If Trevor can play like he did against us last season, I think we'll have the edge."

Defense could be another story.

Milton has run hot and cold in its own end through the lion's share of the season — and as a result Gagner has

been forced to tinker with his forward units, probably more than even he would like.

"The lines will be swayed more to that end. We need a (defensively) reliable guy on each line," Milton's skipper stressed.

Finding the right fit in that regard should go a long way toward neutralizing the well-conditioned Blues, who always seem to have enough left in the proverbial gas tank for third-period play.

"The goals have usually come when we've need them. It's holding a lead that's going to be the challenge," said Gagner. Added Slawson, "We're going to have to keep it real simple in the back end and just create pressure."

Bramalea will start the series without captain Alex Ward, who's finishing out a seven-game suspension sustained late last month. Otherwise, all other players for both teams are available for first-round play.

Milton Merchants Vs. Bramalea Blues (best of seven West Conference quarterfinals)

Game 1	Fri. Feb 8	at Bramalea (7:45)
Game 2	Sun. Feb 10	at Milton (4 p.m.)
Game 3	Tues. Feb 12	at Bramalea (7:45)
Game 4	Fri. Feb 15	at Milton (8 p.m.)
•Game 5	Mon. Feb 18	at Bramalea (8 p.m.)
•Game 6	Wed. Feb 20	at Milton (7:30 p.m.)
•Game 7	Fri. Feb 22	at Bramalea (7:45)
• if necessary		

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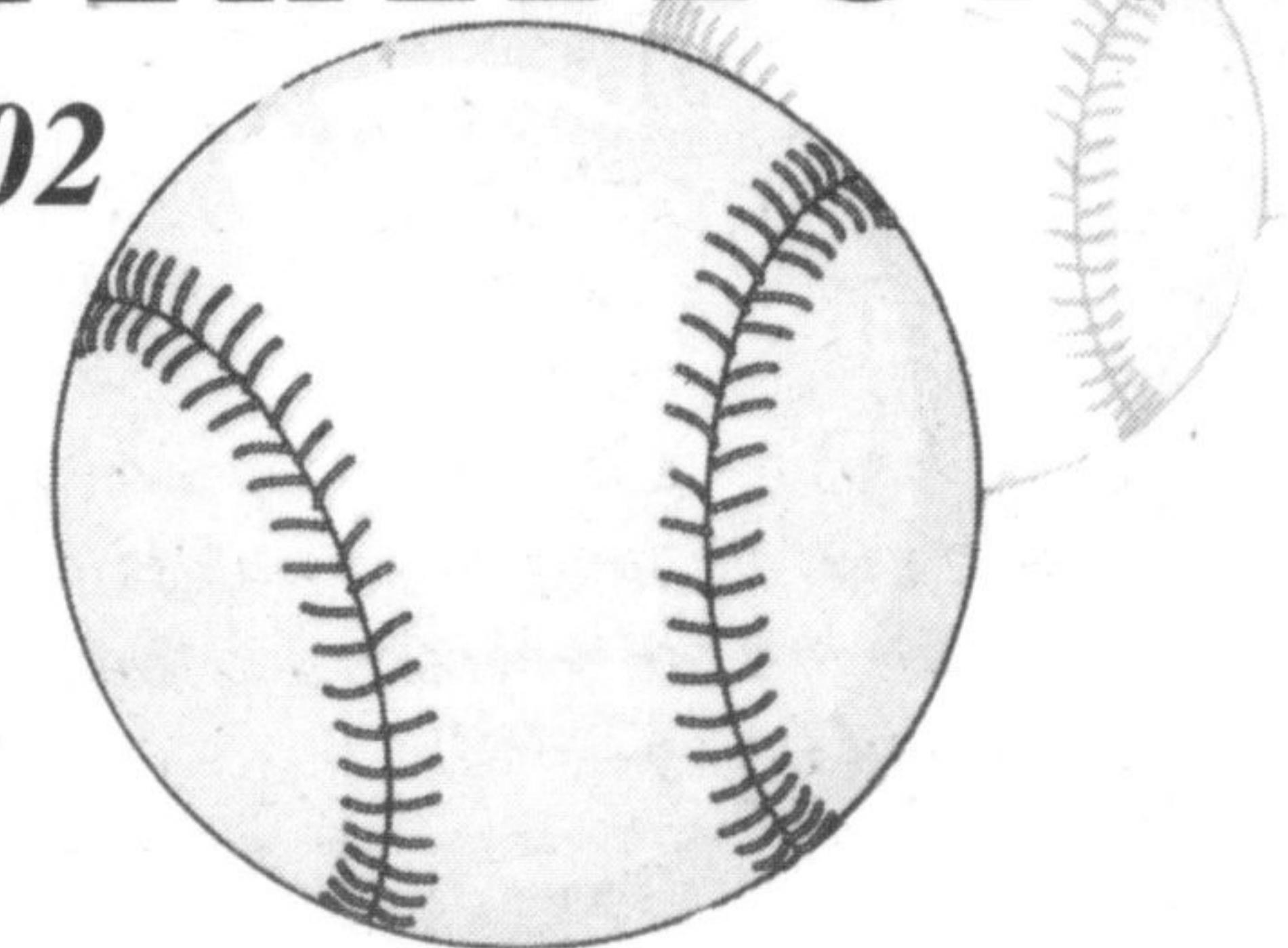
Softball for girls born 1982-1992

Location: Milton Mall

Friday, Feb 15 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

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