

# Armstrong's Olympic Finns ready to take on Canada this afternoon

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
*The Champion*

Milton's Ken Armstrong will be routing against his own country this afternoon during round three of Olympic men's curling competition.

But don't chalk that up to a lack of patriotism — he's just got a vested interest in the opposing Finns.

The Finnish five are longtime friends of his, going back several years when they first crossed the Atlantic in search of the best competition this planet has to offer.

In need of an event organizer and general liaison, they quickly acquired the services of Armstrong — who as a player has secured several provincial titles and knows the national curling scene like the back of his hand.

"If you want to play at a top level, you've got to come to Canada," explained lead Jari Laukkanen, who competes alongside former school-mates Tommi Hati, Ville Makela, Markku Uusipaavalniemi and Pekka Sarrelainen. "Ken does all kinds of things for us. He's really taken the pressure off so we can just concentrate on throwing rocks."

For that reason, the Olympic hopefuls upgraded Armstrong from team coordinator to coach for their journey to Salt Lake City.

Recalled Armstrong back in November, "I nearly fell out of my chair when they made the request. It still hasn't sunk in quite yet."

Even as the group was preparing to head south Friday, Milton's Olympic skipper said the magnitude of their excursion hadn't quite hit him.

"It hasn't really been weighing on me yet. I think it'll be different once we actually get there," he said during a telephone interview from Calgary Thursday.

Team Finland had just wrapped up a competitive swing out west and, according to their coach, looked good in their final tune-up for the 2002 Winter Games.

Said Armstrong, "Some countries got there early and would-



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

**Miltonian Ken Armstrong (centre) is coaching the Olympic Finnish men's curling team, which will take on Canada in the third draw this afternoon in Salt Lake City.**

n't have the same amount of practice time, so we may be at an advantage that way."

Regardless, Team Finland went into yesterday's first draw against Denmark as a legitimate contender to medal — having claimed world championship bronze in both 1998 and 2000.

"That's what we're aiming for (a medal)," said Laukkanen.

Beating Canada this afternoon would be a huge step toward that end.

"It's going to be a big test," stressed Armstrong. "Hopefully we'll be 3-0 and they'll be 0-2 at that point."

Today's Canada-Finland showdown is scheduled for 4 p.m. Preliminary men's curling action continues until Monday. Bronze and gold-medal matches are set for next Friday, Feb. 22.

Ten teams are competing in the men's division.

# Minor peewees behind eight ball

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
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The AA minor peewees' moment in the sun appears to be over. Recently, Milton salvaged a rather dismal season with an impressive first-round series upset over neighbouring Georgetown.

Delivering another spoiler performance, however, just doesn't seem to be in the cards — especially with the top-seated Burlington Eagles providing round-two competition.

On the verge of elimination heading into game three last night, the Lafarge Winterhawks have kept things somewhat respectable and earn modest praise from opposing fans.

In hindsight, that may be as much as anyone could have hope for going into battle against a highly gifted team that lost just five games all year and were well rested from an opening-round bye.

Saturday afternoon at Memorial Arena, Milton was placed on the endangered species list — getting manhandled through the second half and eventually vanquished 7-1.

The Winterhawks had a handful of powerplay opportunities but just couldn't penetrate the visitors' tight defensive web. Cole Madansky was the only one to do so at even strength, burying a low wrister midway through the game after taking a big lead pass from Craig Howse.

Milton's lone marksman had a few other scoring chances but couldn't pull the trigger. Overall, his team was afforded just a dozen shots on net — less than half the number fired at hometown puckstopper Lucas Reid.

He held the opposition in check through first-period play — with a huge shot block from Ryan Bauer and overall solid defense from captain Mike Hannah — but was unable to keep the floodgates shut through the balance of the contest.

Burlington took control with consecutive cross-ice deflections just moments apart early in the second and maintained the upper hand en route to tightening its grip on the best-of-five series.

The Winterhawks managed to keep things closer in game one — losing 4-1. Nick Nevins was between the pipes while the lone deposit was made by Mike Vipond.

If able to stave off elimination last night, the minor peewees will return home to face Burlington Thursday at 8:30 p.m.

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