



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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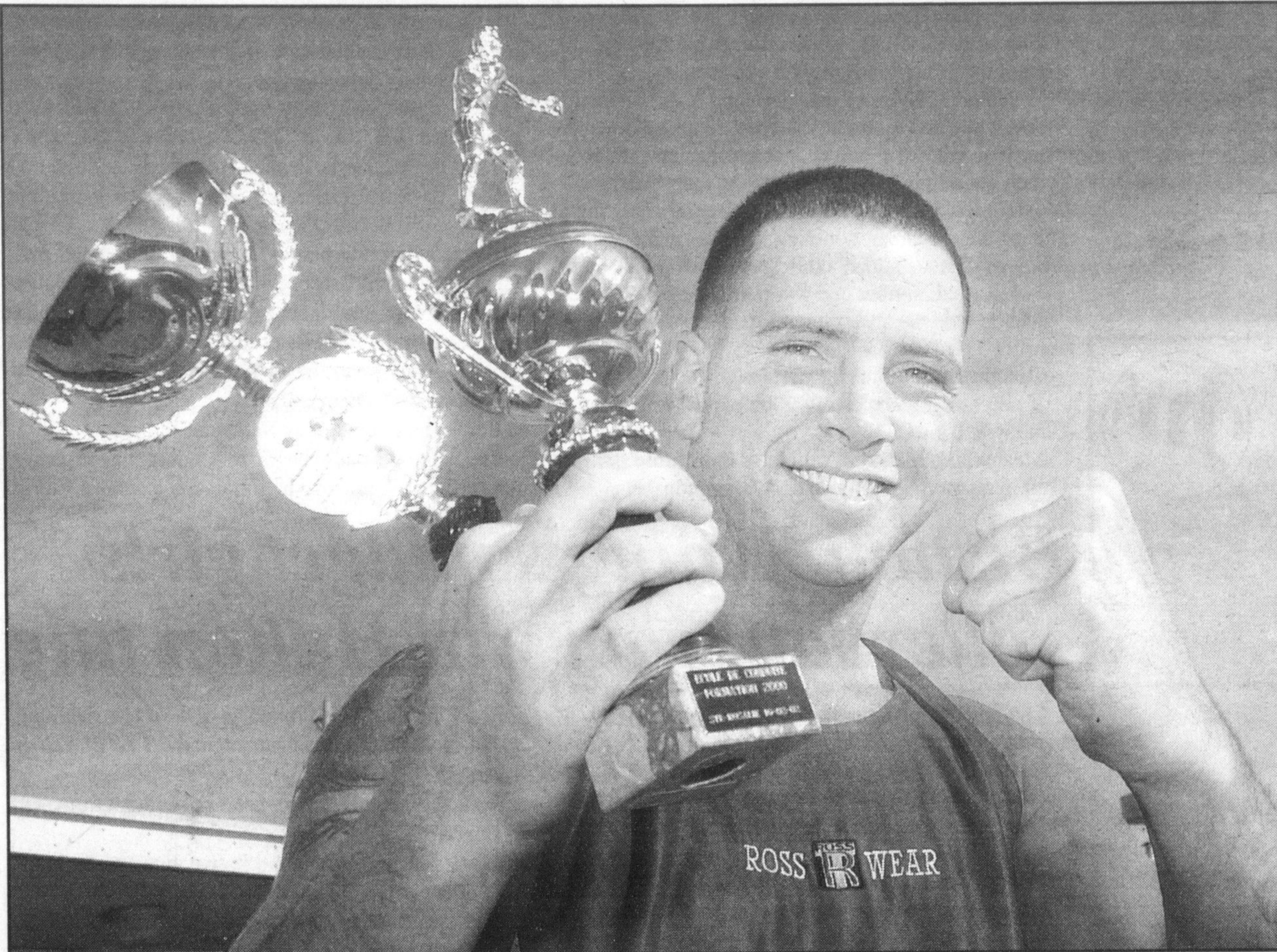


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton boxer Matt Hart Jr. proudly displays the trophies he picked up during a successful showing in Quebec Saturday night.

Bramalea gets by Merchants

Milton eliminated in six games

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Gregg Carrigan brought many playoff series victories to the Merchants.

This past week he helped yank one away — putting the brakes to a potential opening-round reversal of fortune and knocking off his former club.

Bramalea's impromptu head coach and a small accompanying entourage took a team many suspected was on a verge of collapse — with coach, captain and leading scorer all suspended — and saw it through adversity with back-to-back wins.

The latter of these — Wednesday's 5-3 decision at Memorial Arena — gave the Blues a four-games-to-two series triumph over Milton.

While certainly better than two nights earlier when they were whitewashed 5-0, Dave Gagner's Merchants played an evening-long game of catch-up which — unlike most key home-ice outings through the regular season — eventually came back to haunt them.



Under Carrigan, Bramalea looked a whole lot sturdier defensively and sowed things up with three goals in the final frame — including an empty-net series sealer by veteran Rick Varone.

Like the Blues, Milton was back to near full strength for game six and got goals from returnees Shawn Mole and Tristan Senior as well as captain Dan Bognar.

However, a second-period parade to the sin-bin and a lacklustre start kept the local juniors behind for most of the night. Ryan McManus — who took over the starting goaltender's job for the tailend of the season — was razor sharp through two periods, but allowed a pair of goals on just four shots in the third.

Andrew Martin tallied twice for Bramalea while singles were chipped in by Matt Craig and Ross Smith.

Merchants Dan Carcillo and Michel Bond each drew two assists. At Bramalea's Victoria Park Arena Monday, Milton was caught in a defensive trap for much of the night and shut out for the first time this season.

Mike Ella earned the goose egg while Smith stood out with two goals and an assist.

Four goals against in the second period — two each past McManus and replacement Trevor Battaglia — put the game-five verdict to rest.

This week marked the second time in three years that the Merchants have been eliminated in the first round.

Boxer shows strongly in Quebec

Scores yet another unanimous decision

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

A hostile crowd and stiff competition did little to faze local pugilist Matt Hart Jr. Saturday night.

Keeping a recent win streak alive during his first cross-border bout in St. Orsaile, Quebec, Milton's only known active boxer recovered from a first-round standing eight count to score a unanimous decision over hometown favourite Jasmine LeBlanc.

It was his second such victory this month

and lifted his overall record to 4-3-1.

The French fighter held a distinct advantage in height as well as experience, and connected with an early overhand right that dazed Hart Jr.

"I stumbled a bit and got the eight count," he recalled.

But Milton's 24-year-old middleweight controlled the balance of the four-round encounter — utilizing his speed and, unlike last time in the ring, making his opponent pay for a number of mistakes.

Said Hart Jr., "I got in a lot of left hooks and just generally banged him up. He was definitely the toughest competitor I've faced so far, but I was executing my jabs

more this time and also working my angles really well."

One of just two boxers from outside Quebec, Hart Jr. not only won over the partisan crowd but was also named best boxer for the tournament — getting the nod among a group of nearly three dozen participants.

"That was a big accomplishment for me," said the local fighter.

Now 3-0 and starting to turn some heads since switching to the Bramalea Boxing Club in mid-November, Hart Jr. will look to prevail on his old stomping ground at Hamilton's Regency Boxing Club March 23.

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