



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

While Todd Black (sliding into third) has been lost to overage, the Jr. Red Sox are heavily-loaded this season and appear capable of their strongest campaign since returning in 2000.

Milton's Jr. Red Sox appear ready for a breakthrough in '02

Team has most depth in recent memory

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Is Milton's junior baseball team set for a breakthrough?

All signs point to yes heading into the final few weeks before 2002 play begins.

Led by Glenn Turner, the Red Sox have enjoyed two mediocre seasons since returning to the junior scene — but appear ready to step things up this year.

One thing for sure is that the local boys of summer won't be hurting for players. All but two members of last year's contingent are eligible to come back while a handful of midgets — fresh from a provincial championship run — will be moving up.

"We never had any problem fielding enough players last year and fortunately things are shaping up that way again," said Turner, who'll guide the tier-two team alongside Mike Cosby, Mike Nevins and Frank Hume.

"If anything we've got too many players. There's 21 eligible to play and we'll probably only carry 18. And it'll be a challenge finding playing time for all of these guys."

Pitching looks great

Milton's skipper is especially optimistic when looking at his pitching ranks — which could include as many as a dozen hurlers this year with the addition of first-year juniors Kevin Cooper, Ryan Harper and Michael Volpe.

Throw Adam Ahearn, Andrew Coe, Matt Dickson, Nole Kent, Jeff MacLeod and Ian Moszczak into the mix and the Red Sox might just have the deepest pitching unit in the league — let alone their tier-two loop.

And Turner doesn't see any holes in the field either.

Midget graduate Evan Jeans will likely join Mike Austen for a highly dependable tandem behind the plate

while guys like Taylor Lawton and Harper — when he's not on the mound — have been reliable both defensively and at the plate.

The only question mark right now — besides just when area weather will allow for on-field practice — is Nate Perrott. The heavy-hitting clean-up man injured his wrist at the tail end of last season and as of now there's concern over whether or not it's completely healed.

Last season for many

Milton isn't just stacked this year, but should have incentive on its side as well — since more than half of the players have only one more season of junior eligibility.

"Hopefully (timing) that will motivate them," said Turner.

"For many of these guys, it's their last kick at the cat. And the midgets played at a pretty high level last year that I'm not too worried about their ability to move up."

So what does this season hold in store for the junior Red Sox? Well, according to Turner it should include a first-place finish in the tier-two division.

Beyond that, beating Orangeville — who've blocked this group of players' provincial championship campaign for three years running — would likely be priority number one.

"That's certainly a big goal. They're in our division this year so we'll be seeing them many more times, which should help," said Turner.

The Red Sox will once again play the lion's share of their games on Sunday afternoons at Brian Best Park, and have a number of double-headers scheduled this season.

Their season starts around mid-May. Indoor training camps will be held for the next three Tuesdays starting tonight at Martin Street School, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Camcracker prevails in Spring Pacing showcase

Camcracker came from off the pace to post a 9-1 upset in the \$116,500 Spring Pacing Championship in 1:50.2 on Saturday at Mohawk Racetrack.

Mike Saftic drove the winner for owners Aubrey Friedman of Burlington and Brian Nixon of Centerpoint, New York. It was career win number 25 for the six-year-old son of Cambest and the first place prize of \$58,250 upped his 2002 bankroll to \$157,125 and career earnings to \$565,929.

"Everything went perfect tonight," said Saftic. "We wanted to race him from off the pace and hope for some honest fractions. I thought I was second best as Gallo was the man, but this horse had beaten Gallo before."

Leaving from post six, Saftic had Camcracker pacing sixth along the pylons all the way to the three-quarter mile marker as False Alarm rushed out to the lead — hitting the quarter in :26.4.

Approaching the half, heavy favourite Gallo Blue Chip popped out of the pocket and took the lead, reaching the half in :54.4 and three-quarter point in 1:22.4.

False Alarm came out of the two-hole and took over the lead midway down the stretch and appeared to be the winner, but Camcracker came with a flurry in the final sixteenth to get up for the quarter-length victory.

After finishing fourth in the opening leg, Camcracker did not compete in last week's second leg.

"He was sick in the opening leg (finished fourth) so we gave him the week off and he came back well," said trainer Mark Harder, of the former \$75,000 claimer. "He's an

honest horse who tries right to the wire each race."

False Alarm — with Tony Kerwood driving — was the runner-up. Perfect Son was third in rein to Rick Zeron. Camcracker paid \$20.50 to win. The exactor was worth \$210.30 while the triactor returned \$909.70.

Up next for Camcracker is the opening leg of the Classic Series at Dover Downs this coming Monday.

Race favourite Gallo Blue Chip, the richest pacer of all time, had an off night Saturday and finished seventh.

Said driver Mario Baillargeon, "He wasn't himself tonight — he was dull."

Trainer Mark Ford admitted that Gallo was dull prior to the race, but more often than not he still races well when feeling that way. Ford planned on having Gallo scoped after the race.

Whosurboy, LCB and Armbrro Positive also competed while Royalflush Hanover was a late scratch.

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