



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY APRIL 26, 2002



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

That's using your head

Bishop Reding's Peter Schultz heads the ball past a St. Thomas Aquinas opponent during season-opening senior boys soccer play at BR Wednesday. The Royals blanked their guests 2-0 on the strength of first-half goals by Chris Casa and Paul Szafer plus a solid performance by netminder Allen Lourenco.

Still some room to improve, says local triathlon champion

After two decades of competition, Barnes believes he can still get better

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Can Harry Barnes still get better? The Campbellville triathlete has been competing for two decades now and recently turned 55. So one could argue that he's reached or even passed his peak.

But the multi-time national age-class champ feels that's not the case - and is ready to prove he's still got room to improve when the season opens in St. Petersburg, Florida Sunday.

Constant improvement

"Every year I just keep getting better," he said before heading south last Friday. "If I can improve on the bike like I have in the water the past few years, I see no reason why that (overall improvement) can't continue."

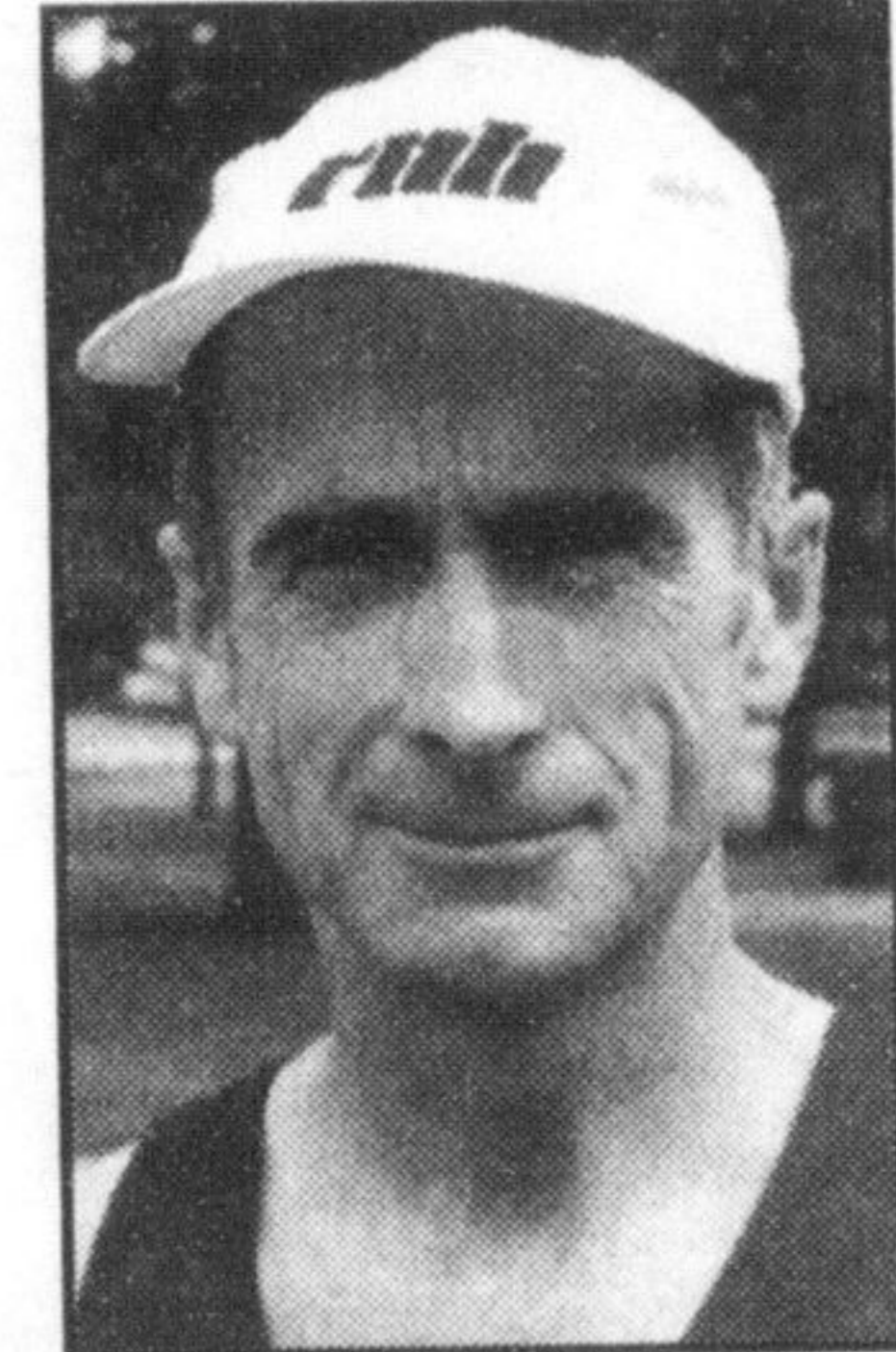
Barnes' current optimism is a stark contrast to his outlook late last summer, following a hectic year that was capped by an eighth-place performance at the world championships in Edmonton.

Burnout hit the ageless wonder with such force that it had him contemplating retirement.

He recalled, "I think the mental stress just caught up with me. I was really considering packing it in."

But Barnes maintained a minimum training regiment throughout the fall and gradually rediscovered his passion for the sport.

"If you stop (training) altogether you can lose your edge pretty quickly, so I just did the basics for a while," said Barnes.



Harry Barnes

"Now I feel rejuvenated. You've always got the head games going on, thinking 'Am I ready?', but otherwise I'm in good shape."

Improving on recent results - which have repeatedly placed him atop the best age-class triathletes across the country and near the top of his global competition - will depend greatly on his biking efforts, which were a little off the mark last year.

"I seemed to be a step behind on the bike. But at one time I wasn't much of a swimmer either and have gotten a lot better. So now I've got to make that same type of improvement on the bike."

Expects stiff challenge

While moving up an age class this season will mean leaving some of his top rivals behind in the 50-54 men's division, Barnes expects his new loop to be every bit as challenging.

He stressed, "If you don't think that, you're in trouble."

Following Sunday's St. Anthony's Meet in Florida, Barnes will act as coordinator for Milton's Subaru Triathlon at Kelso Conservation Area in June and then turn his attention to the provincial championships later in the month.

From there, he'll look to medal at the nationals before ending the season at the worlds - which this year will be held in Cancun, Mexico.

"This year's site works in my favour," said Barnes. "Those hot races really suit me."

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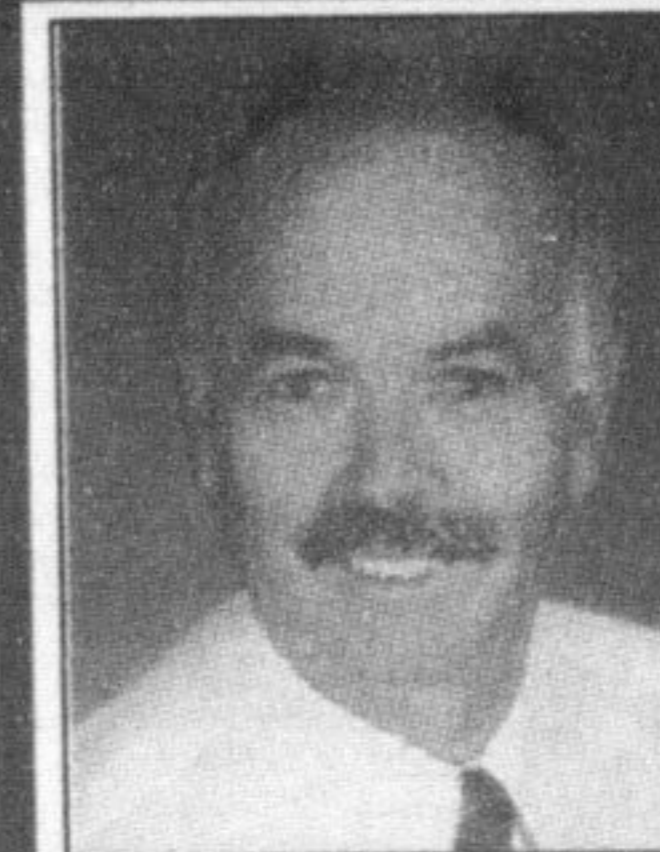
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