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Parents irate over cancellation of last week of bantam house league season

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Milton's house league lacrosse season may be over, but controversy surrounding its bantam division rages on.

Coaches, parents and players are up in arms over an 11th-hour decision to cancel the bantams' semi-final and championship final games last week.

The move stems from parents' concerns about the mixing of eight midget-age (15 and 16 year-olds) players — who didn't have enough numbers to make up their own division — into the younger four-team bantam (13 and 14 year-olds) loop.

While Milton Minor Lacrosse President Sue Grant says the mixing of age groups is nothing new — including at the bantam level — some parents took exception to it, citing a safety issue involving the inclusion of midget players.

"My son's a three-time concussion sufferer. I don't need a 15-year-old pounding on him," said parent and past executive member Jeff Lecky.

On June 1, three parents brought their growing concerns to the MML's board — which prompted an inquest into the situation. According to a letter sent to all bantam division parents this past weekend, findings did not support the parents' concerns — or the removal of the midget players, which was being called for.

Explained Grant, "There were 339 penalty minutes assessed in the bantam division during the regular season, and of that 317 were to bantam-age players and 22 to the seven (remaining) midgets."

Furthermore, she read from the letter, of the "four specific injuries where additional attention was required for the player after leaving the floor, three were found to involve two bantam players

and one involved a bantam and midget player."

But Darlene Zulak — who coached one of the four bantam teams and brought the matter to The Champion's attention Friday afternoon — said she witnessed many incidents of over-aggression by the midget-age players.

Lecky recalled a particular case where one of the midgets — playing against Zulak's squad — continually hit high, shouted profanities at Zulak and even advanced toward her when asked to watch the rough stuff.

"The kid was on a rampage, he was out of control," said Lecky.

Zulak verified this incident and said in recent weeks the situation has only escalated — with a number of players being threatened at school.

She said, "I'm really upset over this, it's gotten so ugly. The kids are being ripped apart. It's unfortunate because we're supposed to be here for the kids, not to pit them against each other."

Grant said that MML was expected to hand down a decision on the matter last Tuesday, but before that could happen a parent called the Ontario Lacrosse Association.

While individual associations are within their rights to mix different age players into one division (where circumstances call for it), recent concerns and ensuing OLA involvement sparked the issue of liability — which in turn caused Grant and company to cancel the last week of the season last Tuesday night.

"I love the kids, but it's not worth giving up my house for it," said Grant, who in lieu of the championship finals scheduled a non-contact skills competition for the bantam division at John Tonelli Sports Centre Saturday.

She said simply removing the midget players and finishing out the season wasn't a viable option, since the potential for over-aggression by some of the bantam players could also leave MML legally vulnerable.

Lecky doesn't buy that, stating "All they had to do was remove the midget players."

He took exception to a number of other things about the letter, including the fact that the board didn't mention that the three parents who brought their concerns to the MML were speaking on behalf of four others who submitted letters as well.

Said Lecky, "The letter is so far off in left field, it's annoying. I'm just furious that they would actually 'publitate' something like this."

Also in question now is player releases.

Lecky — who did admit that Grant read the bantam teams "the riot act" about the seriousness of the matter earlier this month — has asked for player releases for his two sons for next season, but has been refused.

"I don't want my kids learning a minor sport under this format. I'm very upset because the kids are the ones that are suffering," he said.

Grant explained that the decision not to release players was made late last fall, long before this season's bantam division controversy arose.

The move was made in an effort to curb the loss of players to nearby centres, which in recent years has hurt both the rep and house league programs in Milton.

"We made the decision not to release players last year. Mr. Lecky can appeal it to the OLA's Zone 8 if he wants to," explained Grant.

DENTURE ADVENTURE



by **GARRY TRENTON**
Denturist

OLD AGE IS GOLDEN

There is nothing the matter with me,
I'm healthy as can be,
I have arthritis in both of my knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze,
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to be on the street,
Sleep is denied me night after night,
But every morning I find I'm all right,
My Mem'ry is falling, my head's in a spin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my "get up and go" has got up and went,
But I really don't mind when I think with a grin,
Of all the grand places my "get up" has been.
Old age is golden, I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed,
With my ears in the drawer, "my teeth in a cup"
My eyes on the table, until I woke up;
E're sleep comes o'er me, I say to myself:
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Junior Mystics wrap up spring with split

Milton's junior girls fast-pitch team closed out spring in roller-coaster fashion — with two very different outcomes on the field last week.

The Mystics began with what was arguably their most impressive win of the season Tuesday, limiting Townsend to just a handful of hits en route to prevailing 5-1. Lindsey Harrold went the distance on the hill. She gave up no walks and enjoyed rock-solid defensive support to pick up the victory. A 4-for-4 clinic by Sarah Mooney highlighted

Milton's 13-hit performance.

Cate Kennedy came through with a couple of hits, while snagging a blistering line drive at third base was Sherylene Leslie. The Mystics evened the count in the third inning before forging ahead with two-run fourth and fifth frames.

Two nights later at Six Nations, Milton had all sorts of trouble against an explosive senior-level opponent on the way to being humbled 16-3.

The Mystics actually took a 1-0 lead into the

third inning, at which point host batters faced Kennedy for a second time and started exploiting her pitching in rather fierce fashion.

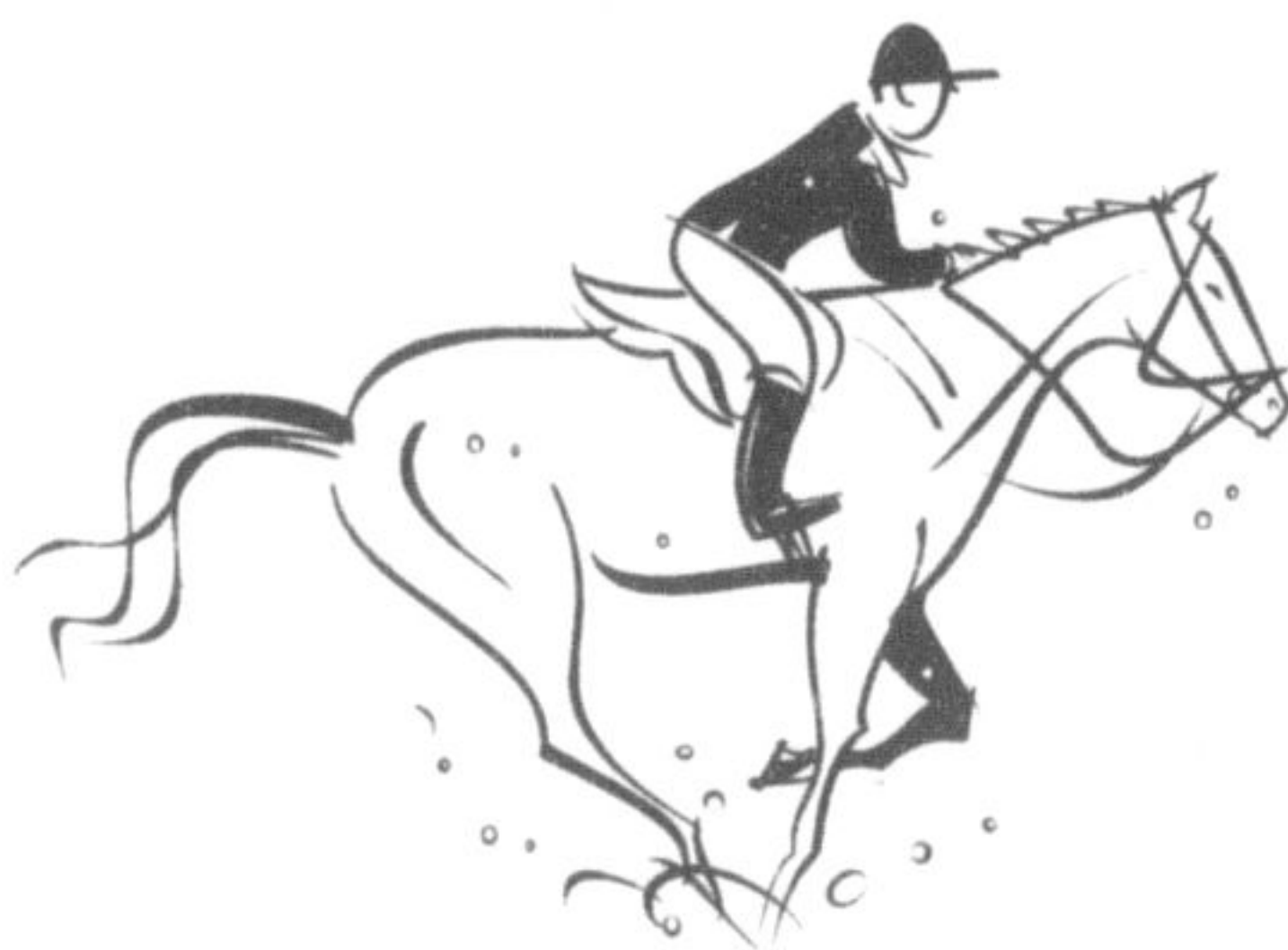
Six Nations put things out of reach with a nine-run fifth inning. Mooney drove in two runs, while Alicia Taylor recorded the other RBI.

The Mystics were hoping to fare better against Six Nations' other squad when they wrapped up a lengthy road trip last night. Tonight they host Fort Erie at Lions Sports Park at 8:30 p.m.

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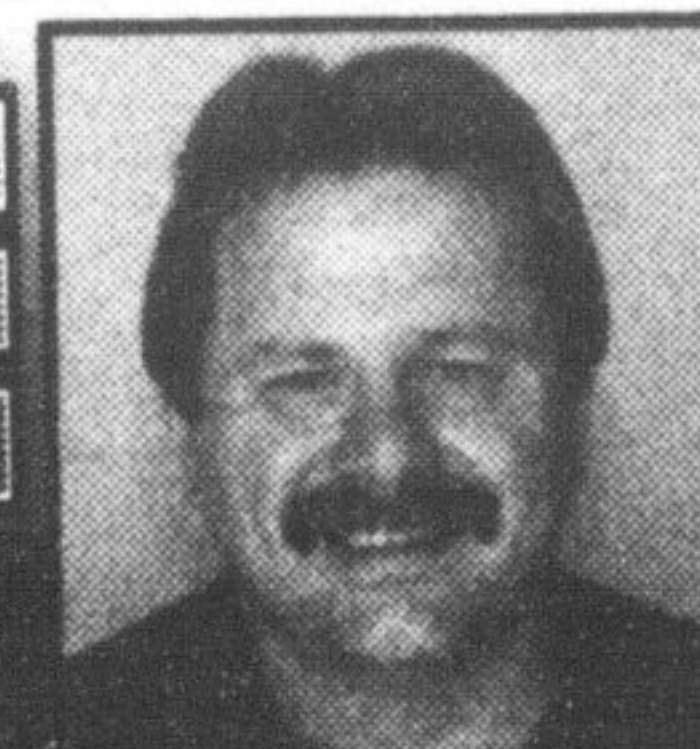
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KEVIN BLACKLOCK

Mountain bike camp slated to run in July

Local mountain bikers are once again getting in gear to honour one of their fallen peers.

Milton and area racers are preparing for Rory's Camp in memory of Rory Dick — one of three E.C. Drury High School teens killed in a car-train crash September 28, 2000.

The second annual camp is scheduled to run July 9 and 10 at Hilton Falls Conservation Area.

The weekend program is open to racers of all skill levels and offers competitive mountain bike training from expert riders.

For sign up or for more information, call (519) 853-0357, e-mail cwdick@sympatico.ca or visit www.rorycamp.8k.com.