

Players who finished year have my respect

We've all heard the expression "Winners never quit and quitters never win."

But, what if you're in the same situation as five players from the Milton Marauders who quit that team? Winning was never part of the equation. When they packed in their cleats the team's record was 0-7. At the end of the season they were 0-9 and had been outscored 376-15.

What would you do? Keep on playing or give it up and save yourself the bother?

I can understand someone quitting; it's a personal decision that they believe is best for them, whatever the reason. I can understand it, but I can't respect it because they also quit on their teammates. They certainly weren't doing them any favours by leaving them on their own at the Alamo while they ran for safety.

I've seen most of the Milton Marauders games this season, covering them for The Champion. I make fun of their ineptitude, but the fact of the matter is I still respect them, game after game. If I had thought they weren't even trying I probably would have gone to the editor, Karen Smith, and said forget it, I have better things to do on a Saturday or Sunday and The Champion has better things to put in the sports section. I would have quit, in other words.

I never saw anybody quit on the field, even when they were getting bombarded by their latest opponent. Down by a handful of touchdowns I still saw players giving it their all on every down; I saw



Out in left field

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

players giving up their bodies and lying hurt on the field; I saw players getting mad at themselves for making a mistake. As long as they cared, so did I.

It was a hopeless situation, and yet it wasn't. A lot of us have played or coached on teams that lost every game. I know I have, several times. I never once ever thought of quitting.

For one thing, losing teams can be a lot of fun because there's no pressure, although that's not a popular opinion. But, I didn't just play sports so I could win games, I played because it was fun.

That's not to say losing can't get to you, but you have to take your victories where you can find them. For the Marauders, it could be a rare long gain, an interception, a goal-line stand or a sack.

It's like playing golf. Maybe you can't break a 100 but sometime during your round you're likely to hit a shot that goes just the way you envisioned it. That's what you remember and that's what keeps you coming back. That, and the possibility

of better days ahead.

In football, you continue to play for pride, respect and your teammates. Football, more than most sports, is that type of game. You're together in the trenches and at the end of the day, win or lose, you share a bond with your brothers in arms.

In Milton's last two games of the season there were exhausted players playing out of position to compensate for those who weren't there. Why didn't they quit? Why did they keep on giving it everything they had?

Besides, the Marauders are an expansion team. They were supposed to lose and lose big. There are many examples of terrible teams that got better. My (sort of) stepson, for example, played on a terrible AAA baseball team when he was younger. If they lost 18-3, they had a good game.

But, the players stayed together, worked hard, and gradually got better. Last year, they were Ontario champions. If they had quit, they'd have been nothing.

Sometimes, quitting is the easy choice, sometimes it's the wise choice, sometimes it's the only choice.

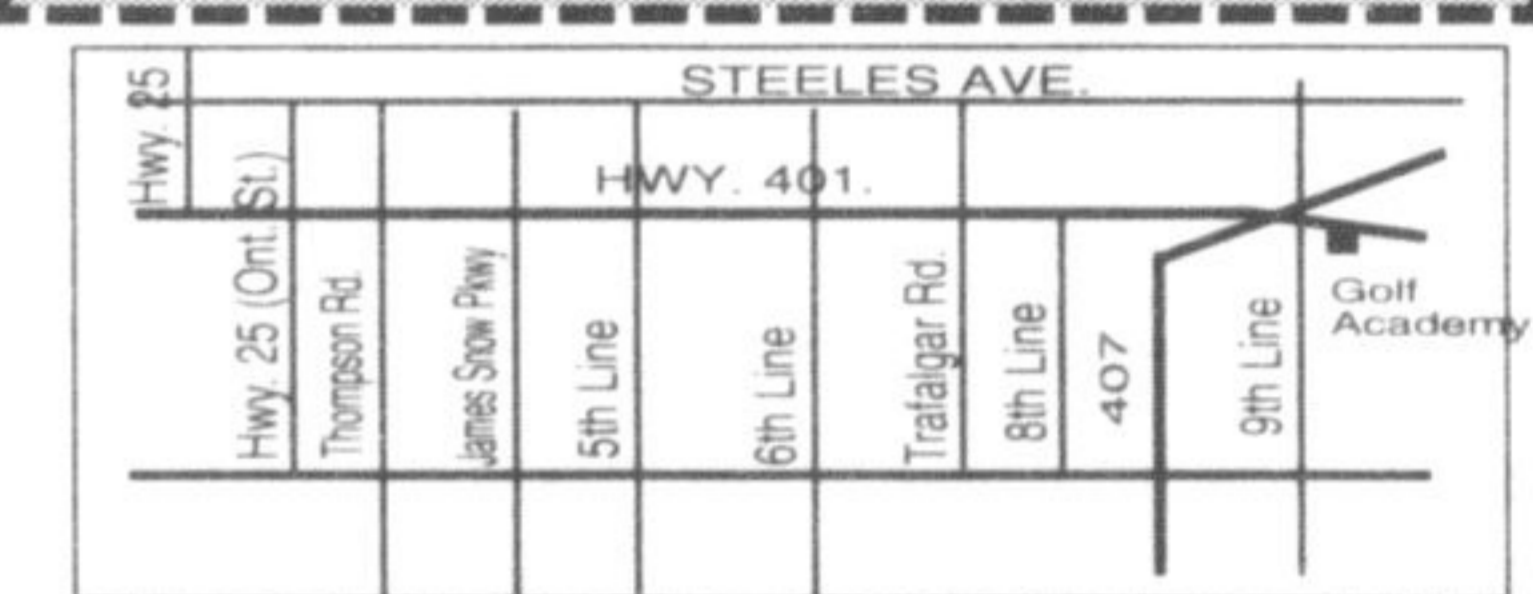
The players in this instance know which one applies to them. For the rest of that team, quitting wasn't an option, despite overwhelming odds almost every time they stepped on the field. They deserve a lot of respect for that, and they have mine.

Fax all of your team reports and sports story ideas to Steve LeBlanc at 878-4943, or drop them off at 191 Main St. E.

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Flamboro Downs hosts top pacing fillies tonight

Ontario's top two-year-old pacing fillies head for Flamboro Downs tonight for their sixth straight week of provincial stakes action.

Leading the talented fillies into their third Gold Series Elimination is reigning Gold Final champ The Patriot, who overcame sloppy conditions at Rideau Carleton Raceway last weekend to post her third victory in five provincial starts.

"Earlier in the night the track was rated off four seconds and when she raced it was off two seconds," recalled trainer John Kopas. "They'd had rain for most of the day, heavy rain, and it wasn't a real good racetrack, but she seemed to handle it very well."

The Campbellville resident adds that the Albert Albert daughter recovered easily from her 1:57.4 effort in the slop and he expects her to deliver another solid performance from post three in tonight's second race.

"There could be a Precious Delight or an Odies Fame pop out of the woodwork in August, but at this point I think my filly has shown she's competitive with what's out there right now," remarked the veteran horseman.

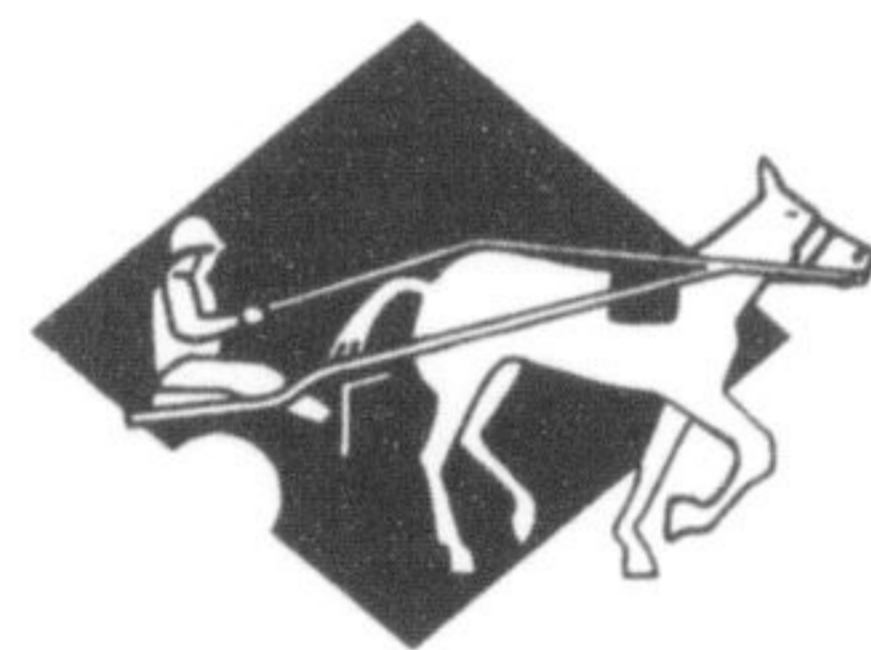
"And I'd be the first to admit I thought she'd be a nice filly, but I never thought she would do what she has done. She has been a very pleasant surprise."

In addition to her Gold Final victory, The Patriot has posted wins in a Gold Elimination and a division of the Trillium Series. She finished third in the first Gold Final at Woodbine Racetrack from post 10 and was second in the elimination round at Rideau Carleton from post eight.

"You really don't know what you've got until you've started them a couple of times," Kopas said. "But the first indication I had was the first day we qualified her and she paced her last quarter in :27.2."

Breeders Glengate Farms of Campbellville and Suvretta Stables of Toronto share ownership on The Patriot, and Keith Oliver handles driving duties for the winner of \$139,832.

"I think Keith is a real talent, and I don't



Hoof Beat

with SANDRA SNYDER

think he gets the recognition he deserves yet," said Kopas of his regular reinsman. "I feel very comfortable when he is driving one of mine, he's very astute out there."

Oliver and The Patriot will face a field of seven in the second race tonight. They'll include three Gold Series regulars, three fillies making the leap up from the Grassroots level and one newcomer to the Ontario Sires Stakes scene.

Division leader Northern Harmony, who was undefeated until the July 26 Gold Final at Rideau Carleton, will make her bid for a fifth victory from post five in the sixth race. Bill Robinson of Hagersville trains the Run The Table filly for Gerie Tucker of Montreal, Sampson Street Stables of Old Forge, Pennsylvania, Don Bray of Newcastle and Angelo Dinardo of Etobicoke.

The other Elimination goes postward as the 10th race on Flamboro Downs' 3 p.m. program.

The top three finishers from each Elimination will return to the Dundas half-mile August 9 for their third \$130,000 Gold Final.

DENTURE ADVENTURE



by **GARRY TRENTON**
Denturist

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