



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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✓ Ford shoots for another Founder's Cup medal



Photo by HERB GARBUIT

Miltonian Jason Ford (right) battles an Akwesasne opponent for possession during regular-season play with the Halton Hills Bulldogs. Ford is hoping to become the first local player to win Founder's Cup medals with both north Halton Jr. B lacrosse teams when Halton Hills hosts the national championships later this month.

Former Maverick now an assistant captain with national host Bulldogs

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Jason Ford's probably getting a little impatient by now — and for good reason.

Sidelined with knee injuries for both the 1999 Founder's Cup finals with the Mavericks and last month's OLA Mid-West Division finals with the Halton Hills Bulldogs, Milton's 21-year-old lacrosse player has just one more championship opportunity remaining in his Jr. B career.

It starts August 21, when Halton Hills begin hosting the 2002 Founder's Cup — and for a now healthy Ford, national competition can't start soon enough.

"Oh yeah, I'm ready to play. Basically it's my second chance," he said, referring to missing the gold-medal showdown against the eventual champion Edmonton Miners three years ago. "It's more or less an unfinished business situation for me."

While the Founder's Cup is familiar territory for Ford, his role with this year's Bulldogs will be quite different than that with the '99 silver-medal Mavericks.

Leader with Bulldogs

Now a seasoned veteran and assistant captain as well as a play-making spark plug, he'll be among those looked upon to make an overall contribution toward Halton Hills' national title drive.

Leadership wise, he's already come through big time — according to general manager Mike Hancock.

"With the injury of our captain, Jason has emerged as a true leader on this team. He's exceeded all of our leadership expectations since we put the 'A' on his jersey at the start of the year," explained the Bulldogs' GM. "He's been a great influence on the younger guys. They know he's been through this before and that he's got some unfinished business to settle."

Halton Hills' current hiatus mirrors that of the '99 Mavericks — who had a month-long break after being knocked out in the

second round by Spartan. The Bulldogs were eliminated by Elora in round two, and by the time Founder's Cup play starts will have gone five weeks without competition.

But staying 'game ready' hasn't been a problem for Ford, or for that matter any of his younger teammates. Said Halton Hills' #66, "They're pretty psyched. It hasn't been too tough keeping them motivated."

Modesty notwithstanding, Ford has been a reassuring presence all year for the Bulldogs and helped guide them to their best regular-season record ever.

Offensively, he's been a key factor as well — finishing fifth in team scoring with 13 goals and 27 assists in 21 games.

Hopes for strong showing

Ford hopes Halton Hills can muster up some of the gutsy play the Mavericks did three years ago that resulted in back-to-back upset wins over Elora and the Green Gaels to reach the finals.

"Milton had a lot of heart," he recalled. "But a championship repeat is something he could definitely do without."

Said Ford, "Edmonton will be back this year and from what we've heard they're every bit as strong as when we (Milton) lost to them in the finals. However, this Halton Hills team has all the talent in the world and I think our chances are very good."

The Bulldogs begin Founder's Cup play at 8 p.m. August 21 against Calgary. The tournament runs through until August 25.

Milton's John Tonelli Sports Centre will be an alternate site for the national showcase, with games scheduled for August 21 at 12 p.m. and August 21, 22 and 23 at 7 p.m.

Meanwhile, former Maverick Kaegen Sherriff will also have a shot at Founder's Cup gold. Recently traded to Spartan, he recently went on a two-points-a-game tear through the playoffs to help the Warriors reach the OLA finals — which began last night against the Green Gaels — and qualify for the national championships.

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