



# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY JANUARY 3, 2003

## Turner squashes Canadian opposition, again

*But teen's bid for pre-holiday championship sweep falls a little short at Yale University*

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

*The Champion*

For Alisha Turner, December is usually spent squashing competition on both sides of the border.

However, a jump to under-17 play this season threw a proverbial monkey wrench into her recent bid for a traditional pre-holiday championship sweep — which was nixed two weeks ago at New Haven's Yale University.

Unable to match a gold-medal performance delivered at the Canadian Junior Open, Milton's 15-year-old squash ace was denied a follow-up title win, with a semifinal elimination at the United States Junior Olympic Open.

Her final four defeat to Quebec's Genevieve Lessard came in heartbreaking narrow fashion — with each individual loss in the 3-1 decision by just two points or less.

"It was anybody's game, it was so close," Alisha recalled of the 8-10, 7-9, (9-7), 9-10 defeat.

While not making excuses for herself, the local teen did point out that she was among the youngest competitors at the meet — and faced opponents with a considerable advantage in terms of both size and speed.

Nevertheless, Alisha reached the semifinals in

impressive fashion with three straight match victories — including a huge second-round comeback over American Leena Newfield, who seemed poised to triumph over scoring 9-1 and 9-2 victories. But Milton's representative shook over her sub-par start and battled back to take the next three games (10-8, 9-3, 9-3) before outlasting Manitoba's Tara Chawla 3-1 (9-5, 9-5, 6-9, 9-1) in the quarterfinals.

One weekend earlier in St. Catharines, Alisha turned back all challengers at the Canadian Junior Open for the fourth time in five years — with a near-perfect performance at the White Oaks Racquet and Fitness Club.

Following three convincing sweeps to reach the championship finals, her attempt at an overall white-wash was dashed by Manitoba's Ashley Malenchuck — who posted a 9-6 decision in game two to knot the match at one win apiece.

But Alisha fortified her efforts to win the next set 10-9 and then cemented her title drive by thrashing her western rival 9-1.

Said the national champ, "It was just my focus (that won it for me). I was really mentally prepared."

The Canadian title and strong showing down south are another step toward the local teen's ongoing quest to secure an athletic scholarship to the NCAA.

"The Ivy League would be nice," she added.



Alisha Turner proudly displays the Canadian championship medal she recently earned in St. Catharines.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Stars hit town for Chamber's first Sports Celebrity Dinner

Miltonians will have a chance to do a little stargazing next month at the Chamber of Commerce's Sports Celebrity Dinner.

The inaugural event — scheduled for January 21 at Granite Ridge Golf Club — will feature an impressive line-up, including keynote speaker Bobby 'Golden Jet' Hull.

Fellow Hall of Famer Marcel Dionne, former Maple Leafs great Borje Salming, Argos star running back turned coach Mike 'Pinball' Clemens, Hall of Famer harness racing driver Ron Waples and Geraldine Heaney of Canada's gold medal

Olympic hockey team will round out the all-star cast. "We're really excited about the line-up," said Sandy Martin, executive director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

The night will include a 6 p.m. autograph session, followed by a dinner — which should include time for a question and answer period.

Proceeds from the event will allow the Chamber to expand its scholarship fund for the local high schools and Milton's Junior Achievement program.

Tickets cost \$125 plus GST. To reserve a seat, call (905) 878-0581.

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