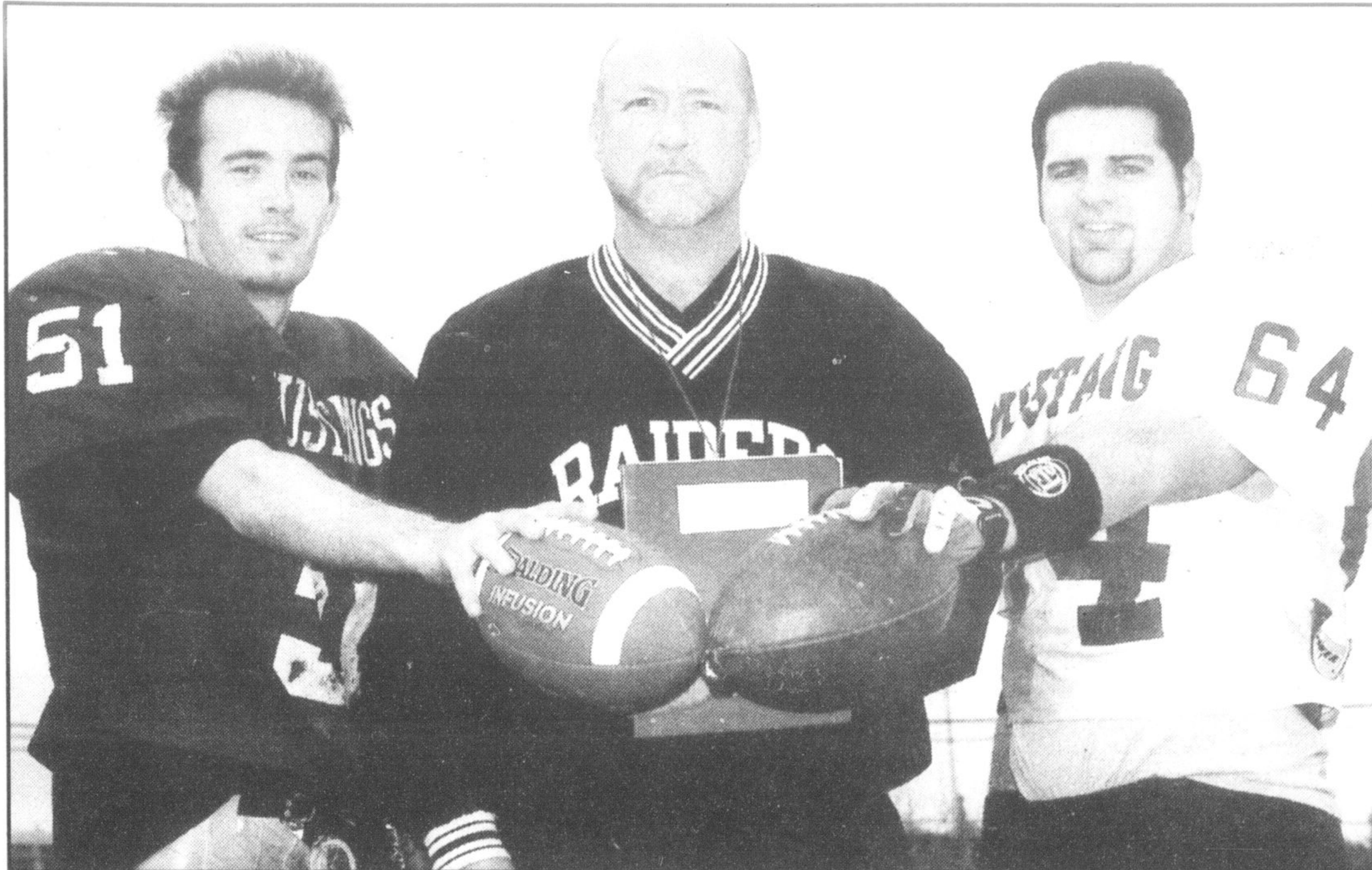


Marauders dead set on improving this season



Coach Barry Emo (centre) and quarterbacks Matt MacPhail (left) and Ryan McGill will look to guide the Marauders to a better season than last year's 0-9 inaugural campaign.

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

0-9? Forget about it.

The Milton Marauders are a new team, with a new head coach, a new attitude, new players, and a new resolve to put last year in the past.

Head coach Barry Emo, a former CFL lineman, is well aware of what happened last season, and is in charge of turning it around. "You've got that aspect of it where you've got a bunch of guys who got their tails whipped. Dealing with a new head coach and new players, it's another growing pain. Hopefully, by the time May 24th (exhibition game) comes around, the character and personality of the team will show itself. They've got to get the monkey off their back."

Not that Coach Emo is preparing excuses ahead of time. Far from it. "If everything comes together it's going to be an explosive, hard hitting football team that's going to surprise a lot of people in this league."

"The drive, determination and heart is there, and if we can develop character this team will win more games than it loses. My desire is for this team to make the playoffs."

Al Collver is the defensive co-ordinator and David Wheelihan is the assistant head coach. Coach Emo says the team will have a west coast style of offense, with a power running game. "The biggest key to success offensively is to force defenses in this league to defend against the whole field. Hopefully the defenses are going to be playing run when we're throwing, and playing pass when we're running."

What follows is a position by position summary at the half-way point of training camp. Not all players are included.

Quarterback

The job is still up for grabs, with returnee Ryan McGill, Matt MacPhail, and Dustin Blair, who was with McMaster last year, vying for the starting position.

Running Back

Coach Emo says the team is deep at this position and he has been impressed by what he's seen. At halfback, former CFLer Rohan Galloway has "good feet and good moves and can break loose." Steve Lubin also has breakaway speed, while Adam MacPhail is the "go-to guy when you need to fight for two or three yards."

Sam Brush is the "consummate full-back," according to Coach Emo, while Sean Faulkner is tough, has good speed, and can break one loose.

Receivers

Although some of the receiver spots haven't been solidified, among those impressing Coach Emo are Eric Snyder, who has "good speed, runs patterns well, and has good hands;" Marco Pereira, a defensive back who's making the transition to slotback; and tight end Dan O'Hara, a "key component with his physical presence."

Offensive Line

This is the most critical position on the team, according to Coach Emo, a former offensive lineman. "Running backs can't open holes by themselves."

At the tackles are Craig Robertson and Norm Collver. Joe "Tree" Blanchard, making the transition from defense, and Craig Lasiok, who had a tryout with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats this year, are at guard. Andrew Todd, who has been injured for much of training camp, is "one of the smartest centers in the league."

Linebackers

The linebackers are going to "physically dominate most teams," according to Coach Emo. They are Mark Dow, Peter Hummell and David Joseph. They have "great intensity, are excellent at coverages, and play the run really well."

Defensive Line

Stu Gilbert can become one of the "best defensive linemen in the league," according to Coach Emo. Jay MacPhail "can dominate at defensive tackle," and at 356 pounds, Justin Nyholt will be a force in the middle, and with his "heart, drive and determination, won't back down."

Defensive Backs

Two big additions come over from the Belleville team. Rayon Walker and Spider Sheldon bring pure speed and experience, according to assistant coach David Wheelihan, who is also excited about Will Garrett's return from university. Jim Harper and Mike Ward also add experience to the mix.

Kicking

Stephan Linder will be one of the best kicker/punters in the league. Last year, he was the kicker for St. Francis Xavier University. He will be a key part of the offense, according to Coach Emo.

Sports Shorts

It's once again time to get in gear for the 2003 Milton Triathlon.

This year's event will be held June 1 — as always, at Kelso Conservation Area.

Part of the Subaru Triathlon Series, Milton's season-opening competition will once again include races for those of all skill levels.

For the beginner, there's a Try-A-Tri introduction featuring a 375-metre swim, 10-kilometre bike, 2.5-kilometre run course.

More skilled or ambitious athletes will want to tackle either the 1km swim, 30km bike, 7.5km run triathlon, or the 2km run, 30km bike, 7.5km run duathlon.

Event organizers are still looking for volunteers, and any non-profit group that gets 10 or more people together to help out will receive a small portion of the proceeds.

To sign up as a volunteer or participant in any of the three races, or for more information, call Harry Barnes at 1 (519) 823-2173 or e-mail him at hbarnes2411@rogers.com.

The Halton Invictas Football Club of the Ontario Varsity Football League will begin their season on May 23 at 8 p.m. in Cambridge.

The home opener will be at Burlington's Nelson Stadium against the Brantford Bisons on May 31 at 7 p.m.

Three more graduates of the Invictas program were taken in the CFL draft this year, including Joe McGrath from the University of Miami, St. Mary's Joe Bonnaventura and Kojo Aidoo from McMaster University. This brings six former Invictas in the past two years that have been picked up by CFL teams.

Due to upcoming repairs at Nelson Stadium, two home games have been moved to McCrae Field in Wentworth, Hwy. 8, two miles north of Hwy. 6. All previously purchased tickets will be honoured at McCrae.

The Invictas are still registering players. For more information, visit www.haltoninvictas.com or call Jack Crawford at (905) 639-5992.

The Heartbreakers, an adult hockey team based in Winnipeg, are looking for players to participate in a recreational tour to Germany, Switzerland and Austria next season.

While team members are responsible for their own travel expenses, the club provides uniforms and makes all the arrangements — leaving the players to focus on the games. Players throughout Canada have participated in the past and are once again welcome to get on board for next season's excursion.

The team is filled on a first-come, first-serve basis and will play five non-contact games during a 10-day swing through Europe.

Those interested in participating are asked to call team manager Dave Springett toll free at 1 (866) 449-0640, or visit the team's Web site at www.heartbreakers.ca.

The Golden Horseshoe Touch Football women's recreation division begins June 3.

New and experienced players interested in playing this season should contact Sue at (905) 383-6460.

Games are played on Tuesdays in Burlington from June to August.

Players interested must register before May 23. The entry fee is \$100 per player.

The Ringette Association of Burlington is holding early registration for both girls' and women's ringette.

Females four-years-old and up are encouraged to sign up. Early registration will be held June 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Burlington's Appleby Ice Centre.

For more information, visit www.eteamz/rab.com, or call Kelly at (905) 681-0135 or Eve at (905) 335-3196.

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