



# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY AUGUST 29, 2003



## ✓ New arena nearing completion

Construction on Milton's new arena — seen here through an artist's conception — is just slightly behind schedule heading into the holiday weekend. Hockey and skating groups are expected to assume occupancy of the two-pad arena by the start of October. The Milton Sports Centre also includes three meeting rooms, a banquet hall and gymnastics facilities. Among those using the new arena will be Milton Minor Hockey, the AAA Halton Hurricanes and the new girls hockey program, which will be affiliated with the nearby Halton Hills Twisters.

## ✓ Forgione targets ECHL club

*IceHawks owner looks to expand his hockey stable*

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

So what's next for Mario Forgione?

Well, now that he owns teams at the two highest levels of Canadian junior hockey — including the Tier 2 Jr. A Milton IceHawks — the next logical step would be acquiring a semi-pro franchise.

And the auto parts manufacturing magnate says that's exactly where his interests lie these days.

While he hasn't abandoned hopes of taking over the financially-ailing Toronto Argonauts, Forgione revealed earlier this week that his sports/entertainment consortium's attention is currently directed at a couple of American-based semi-pro clubs — with the most viable option residing in the East Coast Hockey League (ECHL).

**"Our chances are 50/50 for acquiring a team this hockey season. I'd say within two years we'll definitely be in the ECHL."**

**MARIO FORGIONE**

"Our chances are 50/50 for acquiring a team this hockey season," he suggested, while keeping tight-lipped about the specific organizations being targeted. "I'd say within two years we'll definitely be in the ECHL."

Forgione began building his hockey empire in the spring of 2001, when he bought the then Milton Merchants from longtime owner Brad Grant. Acquisition number two came this past spring in the form of the Mississauga IceDogs.

The hockey enthusiast stresses that he has no plans to sell either team, regardless

of his possible future involvement in the ECHL or CFL.

Regarding efforts to buy the Argos, Forgione said his management team is still developing its purchasing strategy and that there's no rush or urgency on his part — especially with autumn approaching and his interests shifting back to Canada's favourite pastime.

"We're not in a big hurry. It's not a matter of acquisition at all costs."

The IceDogs takeover, he said, has gone quite smoothly so far and that while there's as yet no official affiliation between his two hockey stable-mates, the IceHawks should benefit from the ownership connection.

Added Forgione, "Things have been going well. I think we've been doing a good job grooming people on the management side of things."

Forgione's IceHawks play an inter-squad game tonight and kick off the regular season at home against Georgetown September 12.

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## Sr. Sox aim for Ontario three-peat

*Begin provincials tonight*

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

Can the Senior Red Sox pull off a provincial hat-trick?

The answer to that question will begin taking shape tonight, when they square off against host Courtwright in round one of the double-knockout Ontario 'B' championships.

Milton has reigned supreme at the 'D' and 'C' level provincials over the past two summers and is no doubt hungry to keep that title run alive.

While each year's tournament has held a little something different from the last — as this weekend's showcase is sure to do — manager George Moore says there's one underlying theme that links all events of this magnitude.

"It's always a marathon," stressed the local seniors' skipper. "There's a lot of ball to play. The key is if you can get on a good run."

The Red Sox head into the nine-team tournament with nearly a full complement, missing only work-committed veteran Nick Aalbers plus newcomers Andrew Coe and Murray Lovett.

Stalwart Matt McCandless, a standout at the last two championship drives, remains questionable with a recently-sustained groin injury. Available to fill the gaps are a few junior call-ups, the most capable of whom these days is solid slugger Jordan Jeans.

Meanwhile, Milton has all half-dozen of its pitchers ready to go — including reliable workhorses Adam Finkbeiner, Josh Campbell and Ian Zettle.

If victorious in round one, the Red Sox will battle the winner of the North Woodslee-Oakville clash. They've beaten both teams this year.

Among other opponents standing in their way is two-time Ontario 'B' champion Kendal.

Moore expects many of the clubs in Courtwright to be more seasoned than his own. However, when it comes to high-stakes experience, Kendal might be the only team that measures up to Milton.

"I think we match up well with anybody and have a very good chance," he said. "We're definitely going down there with the intention of winning it. The key is to get enough hits to go with our defense and pitching."

Another determining factor will be Milton's ability to put a rather ego-bruising first-round COBA playoff loss to Erindale behind them.

Remarked Moore, "I think we've wiped that out. We just got caught napping (against Erindale), but we're ready to go now."

Ontario 'B' gold would be a suitable conclusion to a Senior Red Sox season that has already been marked with the team's first winning record in league play since 1980.

The provincials run through until either Sunday or Monday, depending on the weather.

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