

## Cross-town clash

Milton District's Mike Goencz (above) pushes an E.C. Drury opponent into the boards, while (at right) an MD player gets upended by an EC counterpart during boys hockey action at Memorial Arena Thursday afternoon. The Mustangs won the cross-town clash 4-2, with an empty netter sealing the narrow victory. Sam Tomlinson was the afternoon star with three goals, including the game winner. MD's other goal was scored by Jay Price. Lighting the lamp for Drury were Kyle Thomas and Andy Seto.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



## NHL's Heritage Classic fun to watch, although...

That outdoor hockey game in Edmonton was supposed to remind us of simpler times when we played outside just for the fun of it.

It mostly looked to me like an indoor game played outdoors with players making millions of dollars in front of more than 60,000 fans.

It was fun to watch, but slightly different from our childhood memories of playing hockey outdoors.

I lived in Weston near the Humber River, which actually used to freeze over in those days. A tributary created a pond a little ways away from the river, sheltered by the bluff on one side and trees on the other three sides.

It was perfect. There were even fallen trees we could sit on to tie our skates.

The game started in the morning and ended when it got dark. The only breaks were when people would grab their shovels and clean off the snow.

There was absolutely no structure to the game and scoring a goal seemed to be the least of anybody's worries.

Usually, you could tell which side had the territorial edge while you were putting on your skates and you went to the other team.

There could be 10 or 15 players on a team. It didn't matter. The nets were somebody's boots, so when they went home, we had to recruit new boots or pile some snow.

There were rarely any goalies, because nobody wanted to stand around in the cold.

There was only one basic rule and nobody ever broke it unless by accident: you didn't raise the puck because nobody was wearing equipment.

There were no fights or disagreements. Nobody kept score. Nobody ever got hurt. You just played and played and played.

To a kid, it was kind of like being in a candy store where everything was free. You could have as much as you wanted.

Sadly, that pond was bulldozed over one day.

Even sadder, structured hockey was starting to take over. Kids had tournaments and games on Saturdays and Sundays, which left little time to go out and have



## Out in left field

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

fun playing a game with no referees or coaches, myself included. Some kids weren't allowed to play because their parents felt it would make them tired for their "real" games.

When I was a teenager, there was an outdoor artificial rink not far from where I lived. It was a decent size, with small boards around the edge, which was flooded by a manual ice cleaner.

It was a rink for pleasure skating only, but when it closed at night it was besieged by hockey players. It was lit by nearby streetlights, but it was plenty good enough. Friday and Saturday nights it was packed, but not the other nights.

Often, I'd be the only one there on a weeknight. I didn't care. I'd go anyway, sometimes every night. I could skate and stickhandle and play for hours, never really wanting to leave.

I wish kids today could experience the joy of hockey outdoors the same way many of us did. You just don't see it anymore. When there was once a backyard rink or two on every block, nowadays it's rare to find one anywhere.

Part of the problem is that it's difficult to keep a rink or pond frozen for long nowadays. You put all that work into it and a couple warm days and it's all gone.

Hockey, skating, and outdoor ponds and rinks are part of what makes us Canadian.

For many of us it provided some of our fondest childhood memories.

Too bad it hasn't been something we could successfully pass on to our own children.

## Minor atoms nipped by Ancaster

After rallying to tie the game with two quick goals, the Milton minor atom AA Winterhawks surrendered a marker late in regulation and fell 3-2 to the Ancaster

Avalanche last Tuesday. Eric Schroder and Nick Garcia scored 60 seconds apart for Milton to square the affair 2-2 midway through the third period before the

Avalanche recorded the winning tally. Matthew Hunter collected two assists for Milton with Schroder and Garcia also adding helpers.

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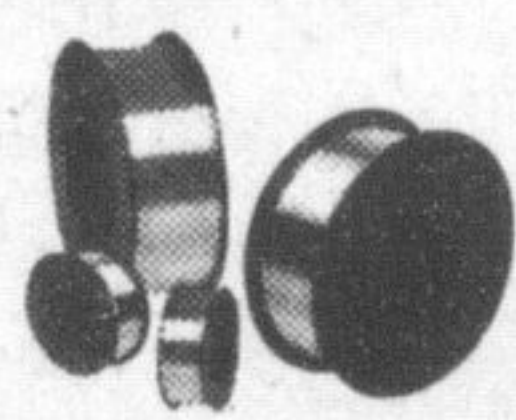
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