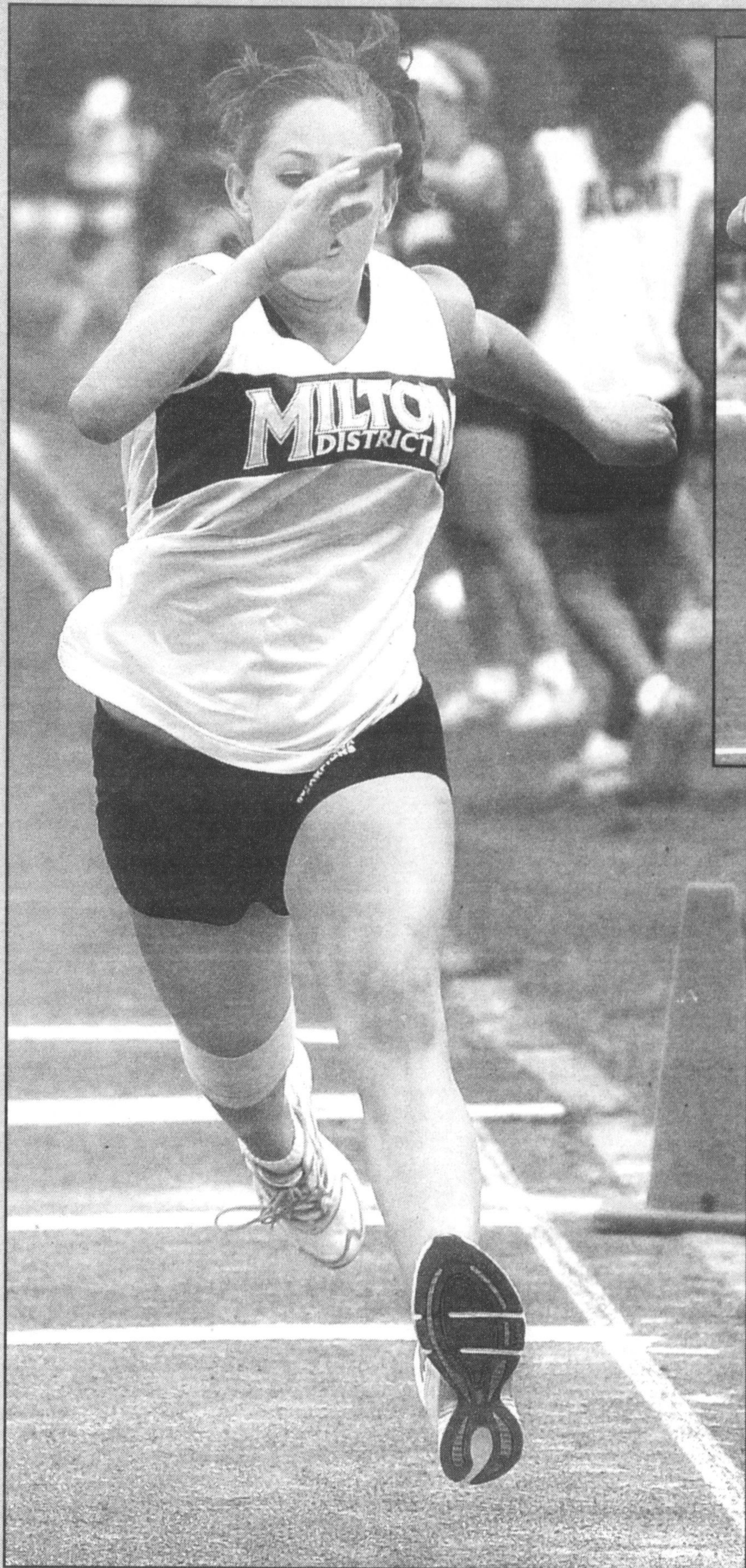


Sports

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Golden leap

Milton District High School's Natasha Brancier leaps to first-place honours in senior girls triple jump competition — delivering a winning effort of 9.52 metres — during Thursday's Halton/GHAC track and field championships at Nelson Stadium in Burlington. Joining Brancier in qualifying for the South Regionals in St. Catharines Wednesday and Thursday were Margaret Coulson and Sahaj Patel. Margaret took second in the midget girls long jump and third in the midget girls triple jump, while Sahaj was third in the midget boys high jump and fourth in the midget boys triple jump. For Bishop Reding track results, see page 30.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Royals reach Halton finals

Have chance to defend title tomorrow at Nelson

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

The Royals are championship bound once again. Delivering a fundamentally fierce performance at Maplehurst Ball Park Thursday afternoon, Bishop Reding's boys baseball team put itself back in the Halton finals — outdueling Burlington's Notre Dame Irish 3-1.

Manager Joe Jurus admits that in terms of drama, this year's semifinal victory wasn't quite on par with the Cinderella shocker administered to the Lester B. Pearson Patriots last spring.

"We kind of expected to win more than last year. It's more relief than elation this time," he said after the lightning-quick triumph, that lasted a mere 72 minutes.

But Jurus was every bit as pleased with this effort — and for good reason. Facing yet another Toronto Star Top-10 ranked adversary for passage to the regional finale, the Royals were exceptional in the field — though not quite flawless — and got the big-game pitching needed to advance. "P.J. McColl was outstanding for us today and we had a lot of confidence playing here," stressed Jurus, referring to an unbeaten spring at Maplehurst.

Agreed veteran catcher Tim Kirk, "This is my favourite field. I'm not sure everybody feels that way, but I love this place."

Much like last year's semifinal upset over Pearson, Tuesday's victory didn't feature a whole lot of plate pop for the repeat-minded Royals. But their six-hit effort proved to be enough, as stellar defense and four shutout innings by McColl — a rookie southpaw who's certainly living up to pre-season promise — combined to keep Notre Dame at bay.

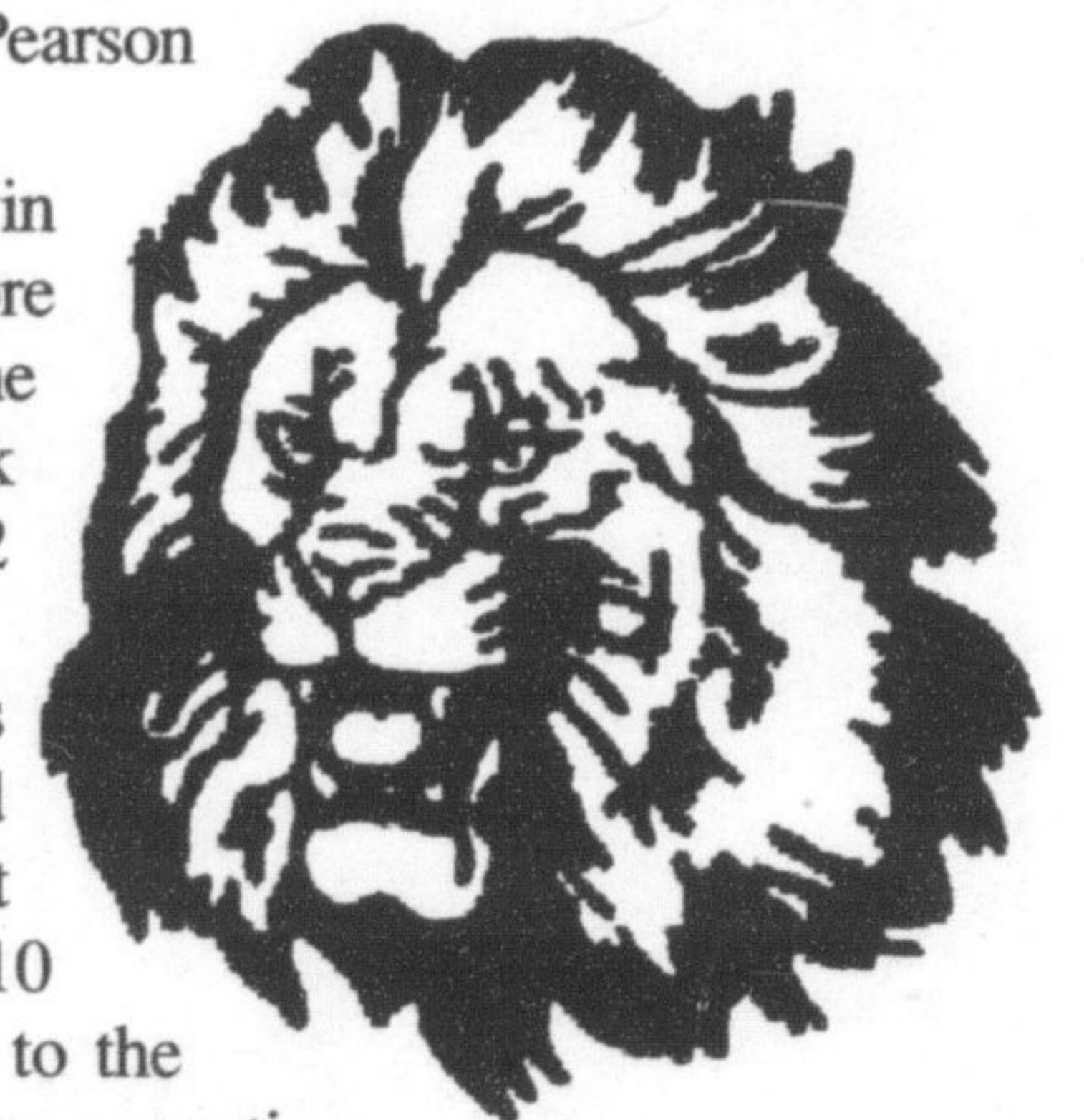
Ace hurler Liam Tennant worked the last three frames and punctuated the win with a pair of strikeouts. Offensively, he drove in Marcas Gray in the opening frame, while standout slugger Nick Mazzorato figured in the other two runs — cashing in Reg Taylor and then scoring himself on a double by Jamie Pedra.

The Irish capitalized on the hosts' momentary defensive lapse to score their lone run in the fifth. Otherwise they were more or less handcuffed — managing just one hit and a pair of walks.

Working the infield corners to sheer brilliance, Mathé brothers Sean and Lee made half-a-dozen outs to highlight the fielding end of things. Tennant also stood out at shortstop before offering rock-solid relief for McColl.

Still unbeaten on the year at 6-0-2, Reding heads to Burlington's Nelson Stadium tomorrow afternoon to battle the Burlington Central Trojans for Halton supremacy. Game time is 2:30 p.m.

If victorious, the Royals will get a chance to defend their GHAC crown as well in Hamilton Friday.







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