

Sports

sleblanc@haltontsearch.com

✓ Marauders dump Sudbury in playoff opener

Milton off to league semifinals

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

It just keeps getting better for the Milton Marauders.

Shortly after disposing of Sudbury 24-3 in their first round playoff clash at home, they learned they'll also host the NFC's semifinals.

Saturday's game started slowly for both teams at Milton District High School. Sudbury got on the board first on with a field goal, carrying that 3-0 lead well into the second quarter.

Milton's first touchdown was set up by a John D'Ovidio fumble recovery at the Sudbury 34-yard-line. Slippery Steve Lubin broke one for 20 yards, added a couple more runs, and then at the two-yard line short-yard specialist Wayne Sliwinski came in. That's like trying to stop a Mack truck by setting up a row of folding chairs — and it was quickly 7-3 Milton.

The last minute of the first half was the Jason Nunez Show. In a span of 22 seconds, he intercepted two passes off of NFC Hall-of-Fame quarterback Paul Gauthier and ran them both back for touchdowns. One was a 55-yard return and the other was 35 yards.

Nunez led the league in interceptions for the second straight season, and has five in the last two weeks, running four of them back for touchdowns. A lot of his interceptions appear as if he's the intended receiver, but that's not luck as he's suggested in the past, especially when it happens every week. "They abused us the first time," said Nunez of their regular season meeting against Sudbury, a 36-29 loss. "You study tendencies and learn from your mistakes. We called the right coverage. You're always evolving, from game to game, and even within the game."

The only other Milton score was a 27-yard field goal by Len Watkins, although

the argument could be made that there was no need to score any more or they might have.

Instead, they kept the ball on the ground, running out the clock, with much of those duties falling to Lubin. He totaled 158 yards on the game, 104 of them in the first half. He broke for several big-gainers, and several times turned nothing into something.

"Every time you get more than five yards it's because of the offensive line and the receivers (blocking downfield)," said Lubin. "I'm just one guy out of 12. When everybody works together that's the result."

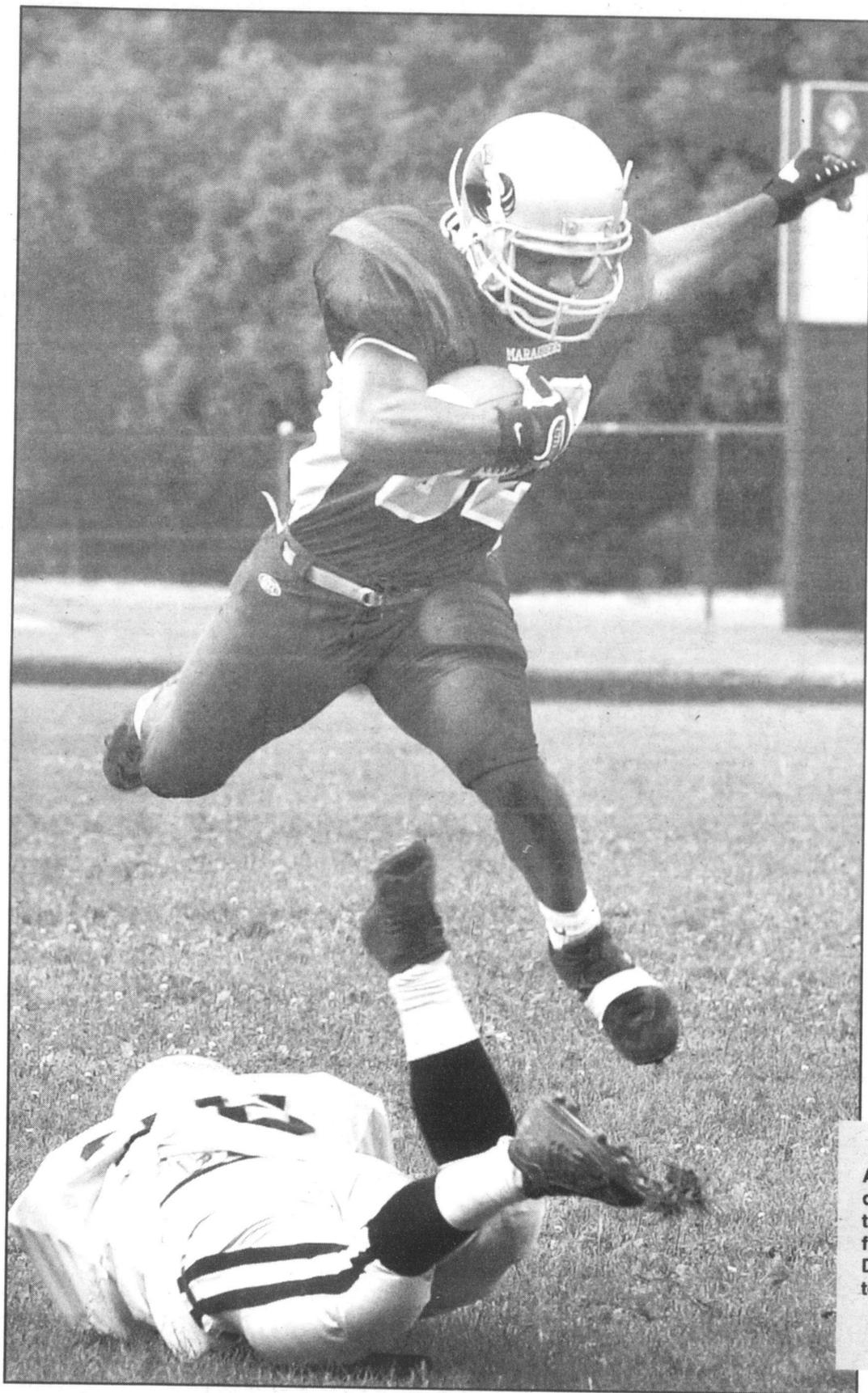
Coach Barry Emo felt the Marauders executed their game plan nicely, accumulating 268 yards on the ground, with Jon Nedeljkovic also picking up some nice gainers. "They have a small defensive line and small linebackers, and we thought we could wear them down by pounding it at them."

The Spartans, who fired their head coach a couple days before the game without any public explanation, made little effort to get back into the game in the second half, at least in the traditional sense. Some of it may have been the result of two of their wide receivers suffering injuries, but they just stopped throwing the ball, preferring, with little success, to try to run the ball against a defense that chews up opposing running backs and spits them out. At the same time they helped the Marauders by eating up the clock, defying all logic.

Milton had a couple other chances to score, including once where they fumbled on the Sudbury goal line after a 57-yard punt return by Andy Taylor, which didn't sit well with Emo. "We can't get down to the one or two yard line and not score."

Emo noted that they also can't keep relying on their defense to put the points on the board, and that the offense needs to crank it up for their next playoff game. "We've got to polish the rough edges, and the only way to do that is with more practice. We'll be ready."

The Marauders will host Tri-City Saturday at 4 p.m. at Milton District. The Oakville Longhorns, many of whom were present on Saturday — perhaps anticipating round three in the Battle of Halton — play North Bay in the other semifinal, after the Bulldogs shocked second-place Oshawa 13-12.



Milton Marauders wide receiver Andy Taylor leaps over Sudbury defender Kim Labrosse, eluding a tackle during Saturday afternoon's first-round playoff game at Milton District High School. Milton won 24-3 to advance to the NFC semifinals.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

**MILTON YOUTH
THEATRE PRODUCTIONS**

Registration for Season 2 (Sept - March)
at the Milton Fairgrounds: Thursday August 12 -5:00pm to 8:00pm -
6-19 years old

Come to see our Variety Show • **FREE** • at the Milton Fairgrounds
Entertainment and BBQ Thurs. Aug. 12 at 6:00pm

DRAMA • MUSICAL THEATRE • IMPROVISATION • VOCAL
Spots are filling up fast!

Call Director Kim Belvedere 905-875-7674 for more
information or visit our website www.miltontheatre.ca

