

Sports

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Marauders reach league championship

Collision course with Longhorns set for Saturday

By **MURRAY TOWNSEND**
Special to *The Champion*

The Battle of Halton is about to become World War III.

The Marauders will face the perennial powerhouse Oakville Longhorns for the Northern Football Conference championship after they defeated the Tri-City Outlaws 19-10 Saturday afternoon at Milton District High School.

Just two seasons ago, the Marauders failed to win a game, and last season they won just two.

"It's an incredible feeling," said head coach Barry Emo. "I can't say enough about these guys. It's a testament to every single one of them, even the ones not playing today. They work hard every day in practice, and they make the players in front of them that much better. There's so much talent and depth, different guys step it up each week.

"After Sudbury (the second loss) the players started to come together and be a family and became committed to winning."

Saturday's game resembled a smash-up derby. Every running back on both sides paid heavily for the not-so-simple act of rushing the ball. Last week, it was Steve Lubin carrying the mail for the Marauders, this week it was Jon Nedeljkovic, and while he accumulated 75 yards, there weren't many tackles that you couldn't feel from the sidelines.

The Outlaws feature league-leading rusher Richard Messam, and he showed why early in the contest after Tri-City recovered a fumbled punt on the Milton 31-yard-line, and on the next play took it all the way for the touchdown.

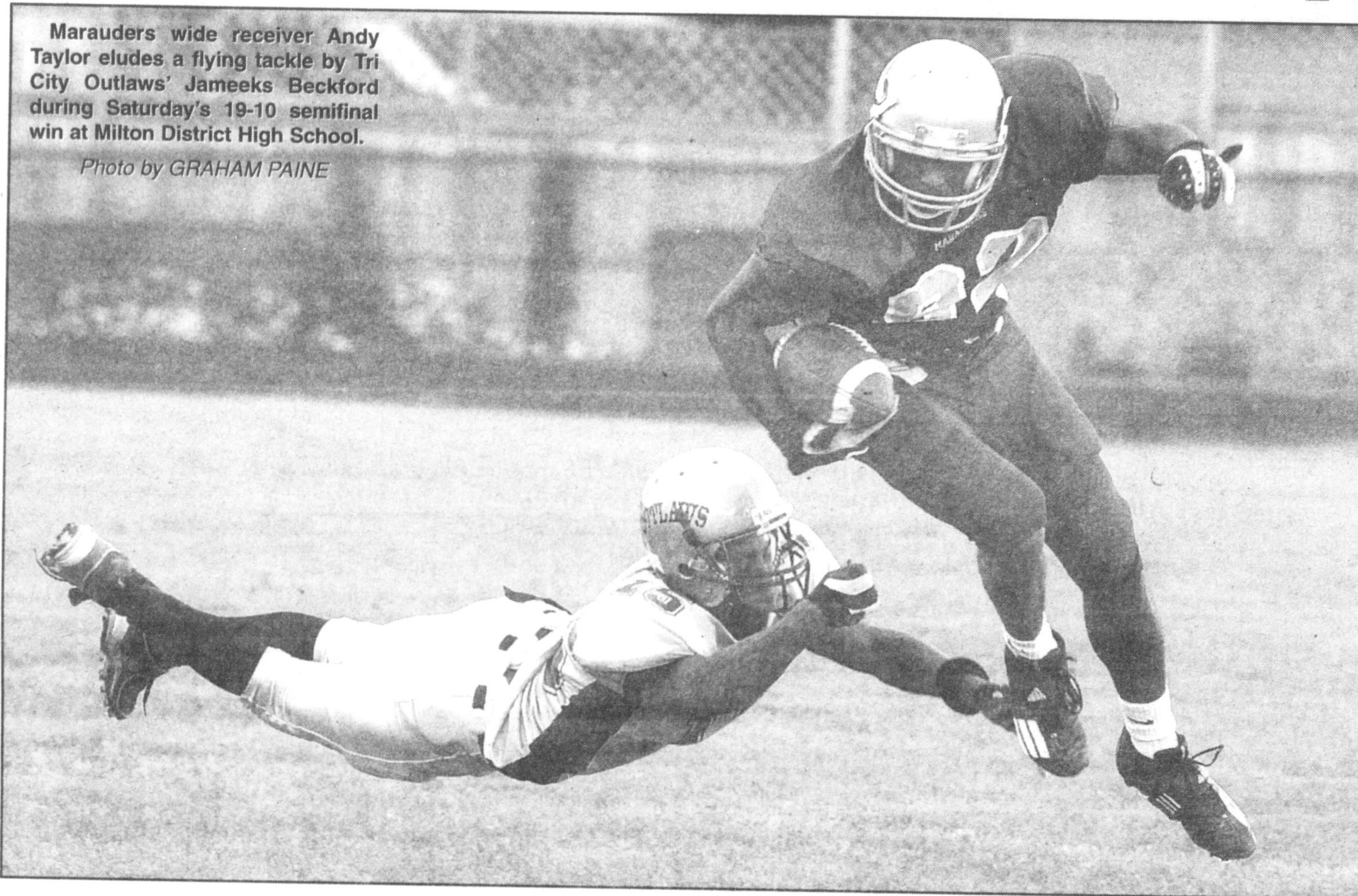
That was the end of that as far as the Marauders were concerned. Emo said they made an adjustment, and Messam was only able to get 16 yards on 11 carries the rest of the way.

The Outlaws are another team that has learned you just can't run against the Milton defense. Even more impressively, the Marauders did it without linebacker Wayne Sliwinski, who left the game after

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Marauders wide receiver Andy Taylor eludes a flying tackle by Tri-City Outlaws' Jameeks Beckford during Saturday's 19-10 semifinal win at Milton District High School.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE



Dermo returns to Jr. IceHawks' fold

Strong and Battah pursue opportunities out west

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The IceHawks have welcomed back a prominent executive member and bid farewell to both their captain and an assistant coach.

Returning to the fold is David Dermo, who left last September due to fundamental differences with head coach/general manager George Dupont in terms of vision for the Jr. A club.

However, the two started seeing eye to eye and mending fences as the season wore on, and officially came to terms for Dermo's second go-around in Milton — now as the IceHawks' director of operations and marketing — this past week-end.

"I'm extremely happy with the conditions under which I'm coming back," said Dermo Sunday afternoon.

Added Dupont, "Dave always had value in this

league and to have a Milton guy with the connections will definitely benefit the club."

The move is no doubt a surprise to many Provincial Jr. A League followers, considering Dermo was quickly snatched up by the neighbouring Streetsville Derbys last fall and most recently helped them secure the Royal Bank Cup bid for 2006.

But Dermo said he wasn't interested in the full-time commitment promoting and organizing the national championship tournament will require over the next two years — and that despite a productive stint in Streetsville, his heart has always been in Milton.

Game day operations will comprise a major portion of his responsibilities this season, while he'll also resume work with the IceHawks' scholarship program.

Dermo's return comes on the heels of the depar-

ture of both captain Dean Strong and assistant coach Jeff Battah — both of whom are heading west this season.

With help from his uncle, who has a number of contacts in the British Columbia Jr. A League, Strong has hooked up with Vernon. Somewhat disheartened about not landing a scholarship this past spring, the workhorse centre requested a change of scenery and was given his release earlier this month.

"Basically Dean felt he could get more exposure in another league and we respected his decision," said Dupont.

Meanwhile, Battah has accepted a goaltending coach position with Lethbridge, Alta. after two seasons as an assistant with Milton.

The IceHawks started training camp last night and begin exhibition play Friday at 7:30 p.m. at Milton Sports Centre against the Burlington Cougars, who host game two of the home-and-home weekend series Sunday afternoon at Central Arena.

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