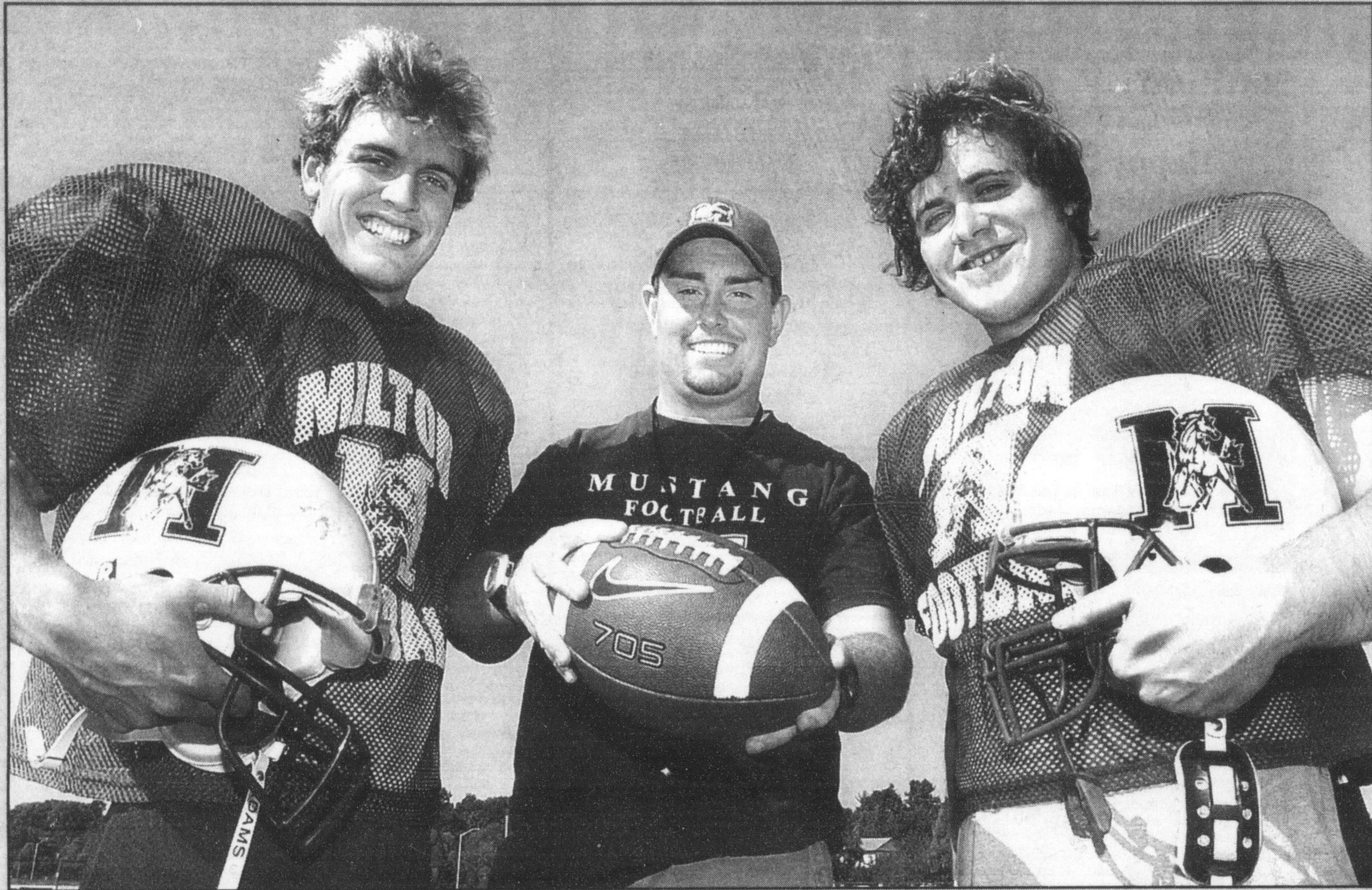


Sports

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'Stangs ready to ride again

Senior Mustang veterans Jay Price (left) and Todd Arruda (right) — a wide receiver and full back respectively — join new senior head coach Rich Grant at practice Thursday afternoon, as they gear up for the upcoming Halton high school football season. The Mustang seniors will host their annual controlled scrimmage pre-season showcase — with opposition coming from Peel Region — at Milton District High School Friday afternoon.

Photo by
GRAHAM PAINE

Fierce competition makes decisions tough

New player signings a bit slower this year for IceHawks

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Player signings have been a little slower than usual this pre-season for the IceHawks.

However, George Dupont stresses that's actually a good thing. "The decisions haven't been slower as much as tougher," explained Milton's head coach/general manager, who had signed just three new players and still had at least half-a-dozen spots to

fill as of The Champion's holiday deadline Friday afternoon. "There's been some guys pushing for jobs that we really didn't expect to."

While the IceHawks have lost last year's top three gunners in NCAA-bound Jon Ornelas and Wes Clark, and captain Dean Strong — who's joined British Columbia's Vernon Vipers — Adam Pileggi and Brett Robinson should be able to fill much of that offensive void.

Dupont also expects significantly higher production out of Mike

DeMarchi this season.

What's of much greater speculation is how tough Milton will be up front — a question that will revolve heavily around newly-acquired winger Shandor Alphonso.

Now an over-age OHLer, having spent three seasons with the Sudbury Wolves, the 20-year-old brother of former Georgetown Raider Aaron Alphonso brings a solid 5'11", 195-pound stature — as well as experience and leadership.

The Orangeville native collected 25 goals and 48 assists over his three-year Major-Junior tenure with a 15-goal, 21-assist campaign in 2002/03 representing his most productive season.

"He should be able to put some points up in this league, although he's more of a well-rounded player, not unlike an Ornelas," explained Dupont, who signed the older Alphonso Friday. "He'll definitely add a physical element. He's someone who can finish his checks."

The IceHawks' bench boss says the biggest need right now is a seasoned defenceman to help stabilize a blueline corp that has three 17-year-olds — and perhaps a 16-year-old come opening night.

Said Dupont, "We could probably use another winger, although we've got some depth up front."

Though keeping tight-lipped about the details, Dupont said he had a significant deal in the works late last week and was also interested in finding a replacement for ex-assistant coach Jeff Battah — who recently headed west to pursue a goaltending coach position with Lethbridge, Alta.

One name being tossed around these days is former Milton captain John Nadalin, who began coaching two years ago and has already had some success with the local AA bantams.

The IceHawks wrapped up their exhibition campaign beyond press time Friday night against Brampton and kick off the regular season at home versus Buffalo Friday. Game time, as always, is 7:30 p.m.

Junior Mystics denied provincial medal for second straight season

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

The Junior Mystics' recent provincial championship campaign could best be described as demoralizing déjà vu.

Mirroring last year's performance at the tier two showcase, the local ladies placed fourth — with a lack of finish costing them bronze.

In a rematch clash with Napanee — whom they'd outdueled 6-3 the previous day — the Mystics left 10 runners on base, including six in scoring position, and were toppled 6-2.

This eliminated them from the double-knockout playoff round.

"We actually out-hit them, but just

couldn't follow through," said manager Roy Harrold.

Milton erased a 2-0 deficit before being eliminated, with a solid pitching effort by Tiffany Steadman keeping things respectable.

While the Napanee loss marked the Mystics' official exit, it was an extra-innings defeat at the hands of Grimsby that was essentially their demise.

Tied 3-3 going into the eighth inning, Milton loaded up the bases and came heartbreakingly close to clearing them — as a deep fly ball by Jamie Aishford was snagged by a speedy right fielder to end the rally.

Moments later Grimsby would score the

winning run and hand crafty hurler Eryl Morgan her toughest loss of the year.

The Mystics would stave off elimination with a 6-0 whitewash of host Townsend before bowing out to Napanee. Lindsey Harrold earned the shutout, as well as her second win in as many days.

En route to the playoff round, Milton went 3-1 in preliminary play — dropping a 6-4 decision to Waterloo before rebounding with victories over Napanee (6-3), Townsend (8-4) and Alexander Park (9-0).

Lisa Landoni highlighted the round-robin ending blowout with a two-run homer, while Shannon MacKenzie, Kate Moore and Kerri Race swung hot bats throughout the tournament as well.