

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Sandwiched

An E.C. Drury player gets manhandled by a St. Thomas Aquinas opponent while trying to bring down her teammate during girls rugby play at EC Wednesday afternoon. The host Spartans went on to win 20-5.

Conflict strikes midget Mavs

Team's ability to run competitive program at issue as handful of players denied their release

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Most teams don't experience dissension until the season actually gets underway.

Milton's midget rep lacrosse squad hasn't had to wait that long.

While still 10 days away from opening their 2005 campaign, the Mavericks are divided on whether or not there's enough players to run a competitive program.

Holding the belief that numbers are just too few to do so, a handful of players had requested releases last month in order to try out for teams in neighbouring communities. They've since been denied by both Milton Minor Lacrosse and Zone 8 — with the latter refusal handed down April 28.

While appreciating that everyone is simply 'doing their job' and following the local association's no release policy, Jeff Lecky — whose son Ryan is among those involved — remains clearly frustrated with the situation.

"They say they've got 14 players available, but most of the practices so far have had a dozen or less," he explained. "And when you factor in that one player has a 10-game suspension this year and the lack of commitment last season, there's just not enough (players) to run a midget team properly."

Another team father of one of the five players, who wished not to be identified, agreed with this assessment.

"They (MML) may say there's enough, but we parents know better," he stressed.

"It's a travesty. They're not looking out for the kids but for the league."

JEFF LECKY

However, MML registrar and director Cindy Bennett said that along with the 14 players currently on board, there's a few others expected to come over from Halton Hills.

She remarked, "We have more than enough commitment to run a team. I don't see that there's a problem here."

Mavericks assistant coach Steve Mazzocato echoed those comments, stating, "We've got enough players and everyone's pumped and ready to go. I think we've put the issue behind us."

But Ryan Lecky doesn't believe so. "I don't agree at all. We've had 10 or 11 guys out for the practices and that's just not enough."

Although Jeff Lecky said he's not looking to slam anyone in particular over the issue, he feels his son's chances for advancement in lacrosse are being suppressed with the recent denial for release.

"It's a travesty. They're not looking out for the kids but for the league."

The players involved can still appeal the decision with the Ontario Lacrosse Association.

However, three of the five have indicated that because of the cost involved and slim chance of the ruling being overturned, they don't plan to exercise this final option.

Ryan Lecky remains undecided, stating, "I don't know. I'm not sure it's worth it, especially since time's running out to join another team anyway."

Game 7 heartbreak for Haydar and Ads

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

If Darren Haydar didn't have a deep appreciation for just how much difference one game can make before Sunday evening, he certainly does now.

Last spring Milton's AHL veteran and his Milwaukee Admirals needed a seventh game to finally dispose of the Cincinnati Mighty Ducks in opening-round play — and go on to capture their first Calder Cup.

Milwaukee and Cincinnati would once again take their first-round series to the limit Sunday, only this time the outcome didn't go in Haydar's favour — as the revenge-minded Mighty Ducks capped a huge series turnaround by prevailing 4-3.

So in essence, title defense efforts ended before they really got a chance to begin.

As if squandering a three-games-to-one hammerlock wasn't heartbreaking enough, the Admirals surrendered the game winning goal on a rather innocent looking dump in with just 13 seconds remaining after battling back from a 3-0 deficit.

"We gave them life," said a dejected Haydar Monday afternoon. "They (Cincinnati) grabbed the momentum and ran with it. They took the finesse out of our game and basically played the way they needed to for the win."

While admitting that Brian Finley had a rough ride early on Sunday — giving up three goals in the first six minutes of play

— Haydar felt the Admirals' netminder took a little too much blame for the loss. "The Milwaukee papers ripped him apart, which I'm not sure was completely justified."

The 25-year-old right winger said the series came down to who had the better powerplay on each night — which wasn't his Admirals down the stretch.

He stressed that Cincinnati wasn't taken lightly once a series stranglehold was established. "Anytime you're trying to send a team home for the season that's usually the toughest win to get. We knew they weren't going to quit."

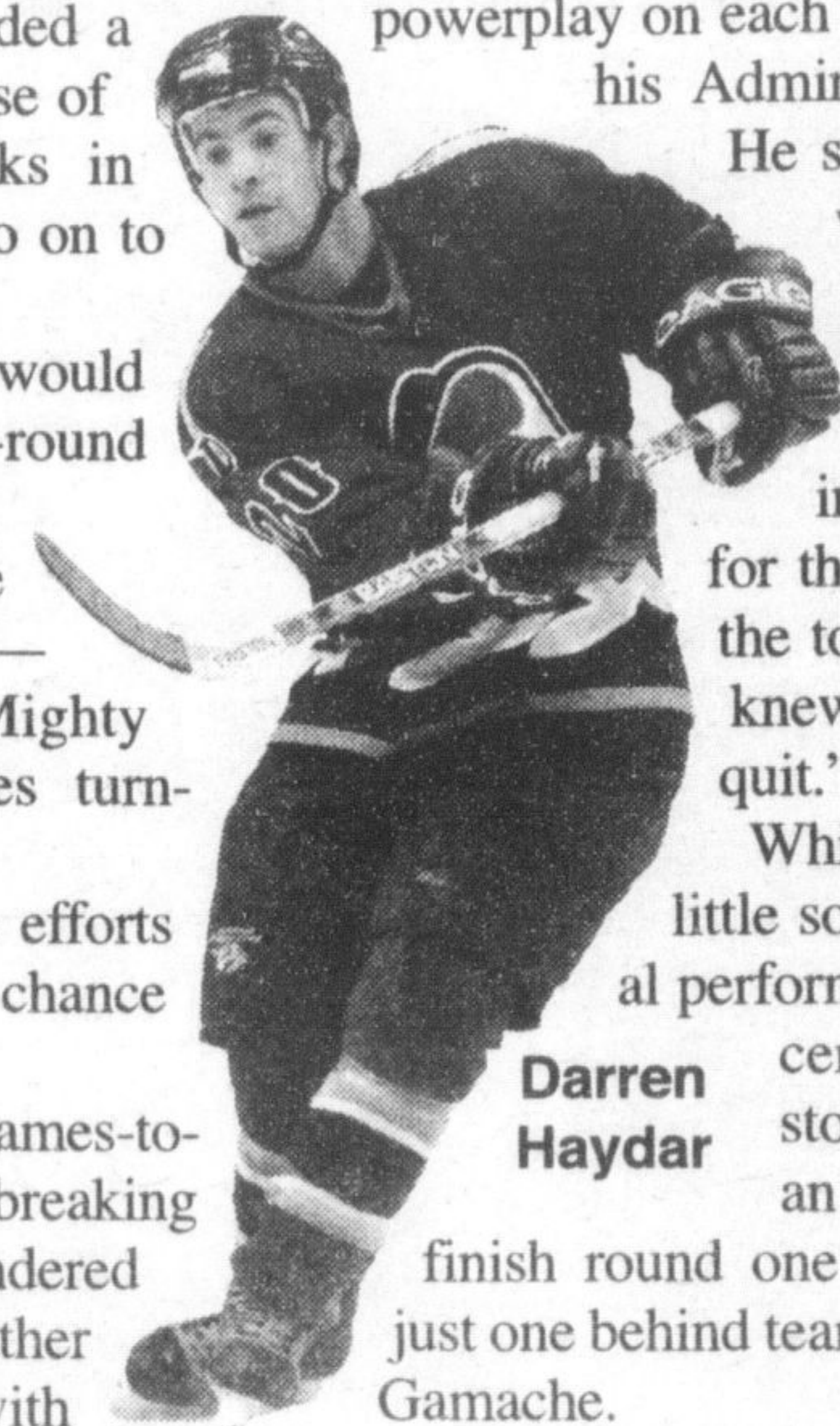
While no doubt offering little solace, Haydar's personal performance in the series was certainly credible. He stood out with a goal and an assist in game seven to finish round one with seven points — just one behind team scoring leader Simon Gamache.

"I didn't know what to expect coming back from the ankle injury, but I actually felt rejuvenated and pretty good," he said.

Meanwhile, fellow Miltonian Scott Bertoli and his ECHL Trenton Titans evened their league semifinal series with Alaska at one game apiece by blasting the host Aces 7-1 Wednesday.

The 28-year-old left winger assisted on the first goal.

Game three is in Trenton tomorrow.



Darren Haydar

Sr. Sox' skipper cautiously optimistic about year ahead

George Moore feels that if everything falls into place, his Senior Red Sox could be better than last season.

That's certainly something to get excited about, given that the 2004 squad reached COBA's final four and fell just short of winning the Ontario 'B' championship.

But with a number of 'up-in-the-air' scenarios still facing his team heading into tomorrow's season-opening doubleheader, the Red Sox skipper is holding his encouragement in reserve.

"There's so many things I just don't know about yet," said Moore, whose charges begin with games against Etobicoke and Erindale tomorrow afternoon at Ninth Line Park. "I should have a better idea of what's what in about three weeks."

Among the biggest unknowns right now centres around whether or not the local seniors will have access to the half-dozen potential junior APs who, with no Milton team to compete on this summer, have gone to Etobicoke.

COBA is expected to hand down a decision on this fairly soon.

Also, Moore had expected to get a few graduates from last year's juniors, but currently has a commitment from only Evan Jeans — who'll fill at least some of void left by outgoing catcher Sean Bush.

Milton loses fellow starters Chris Coughlin and Todd Devlin to work commitments, while reliable slugger Jeff MacLeod is trying out with a semi-pro club in Medicine Hat, Alberta and may not be available until late summer — if at all.

Remarked Moore, "Those are some big

shoes to fill."

A few other players — including catcher Ryan Davison — may only be available on a part-time basis, leaving the Red Sox somewhat lacking in the depth department for now.

However, Milton's manager points out that his pitching staff will be significantly stronger than last year. Reasons behind that outlook include the fact that Nathan Tami will be back full time — and should be one of the league's few effective closers — while up-and-coming hurlers Matt Dickson and Mike Grabauskas have another year under their belts and are likely to toss more 'effective' innings this season.

Crafty veterans Ian Zettle, Adam Finkbeiner and Brent Kostal help rounded out a pretty credible unit.

"Hitting is another area where the experience really comes into play," explained Moore. "With Nick Aalbers back this year and Taylor Lawton once again hitting the ball well we could be better at the plate, although that's something I'm always concerned about."

The Red Sox will have a few new faces in the lineup as well with Marc Sgrignoli of the Intercounty Guelph Royals and Waterdown's Kip Keith, plus coaching duties will be aided by Scott Gadd and Moore's brother Gerry.

Milton continues an extended season-opening road trip Monday night in Oakville and is back at Brian Best Park May 23 for a Victoria Day double-header against Clarkson.

