

Go-karter quickly building successful track record

McLaughlin tears up Waterloo Regional Kart Club circuit

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Robbie McLaughlin is at least seven years away from getting his driver's licence, but that hasn't kept him from having some fun behind the wheel.

And an awful lot of success as well.

Recently completing his second season on the Waterloo Regional Kart Club circuit, the nine-year-old go-karter finished first in the 15-race cadet class series for seven to 10-year-olds. However, Robert will be pushed back to second because racers are required to drop their worst two placings — which allows Waterloo's Lane Zardo to squeeze by him for top spot.

"He (Lane) actually had a disqualification for using illegal fuel in one race that he doesn't have to drop, which doesn't really seem fair," explained father Robert McLaughlin, who raced motorcycles across North America in his younger years and now acts as his son's coach and mechanic.

"But those are the rules we've got to live by, and Robbie still had a great season."

About as consistently successful as any racer at any division in Waterloo, Robbie won six of the 15 races — including his first two back in the spring — and had five other top-three finishes.

"Control is my main strength — at least that's what other people say," remarked the young go-karter.

Added dad, "Robbie's pretty cautious out there. He won't do anything reckless to overtake someone. However, if he gets out in front you're not going to get past him. He's just a very smooth racer and people who seem to know about the sport say he's got lots of ability."

Robbie's second-place series finish matches the runner-up placing he delivered back in August at the Canada Crystal Cup in Shannonville (near Belleville) — where hopes for a strong showing were rather bleak from the onset.

Recalled Mr. McLaughlin, "We actually got there late and he didn't have a chance to practice. Robbie only qualified second last but did unbelievable in the main event. We were really surprised."

The father and son each stress that the sport is more rewarding since they get to work together as a team. But for the older McLaughlin, that added enjoyment is occasionally tempered with a little guilt.

"There's been a few times that I've let him down, not having the kart in peak shape," he said.

But you won't hear Robbie complaining — especially not when both dad and grandfather, another Robert, are there at the track every week to cheer him on. "It's cool having them both there," said the local youngster.

Robbie's recent success means he'll be pushed up to the junior restricted division next season, which will pit him against much older racers.

But then he was among the youngest competitors last season when he cracked the top three at the Octoberfest Grand Prix championships at Kitchener's Bingham Park.

Robbie McLaughlin shows off one of his many go-karting trophies.

Photo by
GRAHAM PAINE



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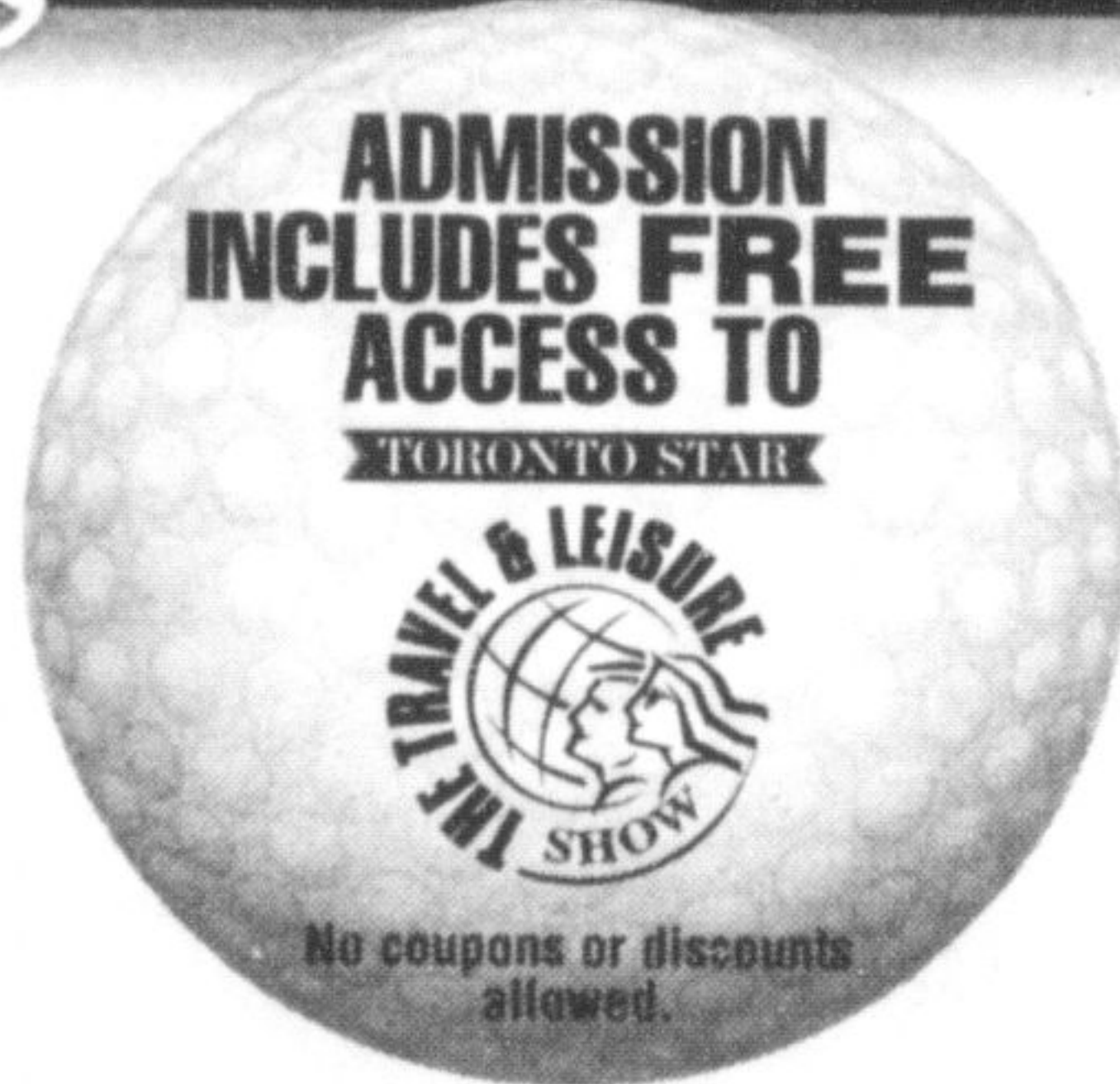
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AE2 atoms finish out October on a high note

Milton's AE2 atoms have certainly turned a corner after a rather lacklustre season start.

The Winterhawks have won their last three outings to improve to 4-2-1 — with their latest win coming in a 4-2 decision over visiting Elora Thursday night.

Corey MacDonald tallied twice to continue a productive stretch, while singles were chipped in by Matthew Bergman and Quinn Krueger.

One night earlier in Caledon, Milton flexed its scoring muscles to dump the Hawks 8-2 — thanks largely to two-goal

efforts from Bergman and Krueger. Rounding out the hit parade were Michael Bergman, Dillon Carter, Corey MacDonald and Jesse MacDonald.

The Winterhawks kicked off their winning run with a 4-0 whitewash of Acton October 22. Anthony Henein stood tall between the pipes for the shutout, while Carter, the MacDonalds and Liam Duplantis lit the lamp.

The AE2 atoms will look to keep things going tomorrow night in Elora. Thursday at 6:30 p.m. they take on Caledon at Milton Sports Centre.

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