

Sports

sleblanc@haltonsearch.com



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Taking the plunge

In her first competitive diving meet, 11-year-old Lorelei Stolpmann recently placed fourth out of 18 competitors in her 12-and-under division at the Halloween Invitational in Buffalo. The Campbellville youth is part of the Burlington-based GATquatic Diving Club.

Longtime rivals now university teammates

Rogers and Alphonso playing for Lakehead

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Dan Rogers and Shandor Alphonso have traveled a similar hockey path for several years.

So perhaps it's only fitting that the latest stretch of their on-ice careers now intersect, with the 21-year-olds currently competing for Thunder Bay's Lakehead University.

Being teammates is certainly a departure for the duo, who spent three years as rivals in the OHL and continued that trend last season in the Provincial Jr. A League's Western Conference — where Rogers' Georgetown Raiders disposed of Alphonso's Milton IceHawks in the division semifinals on the way to winning the All-Ontario Dudley Hewitt Cup.

"Being teammates is great," said 5-foot, 11-inch, 172-pound Alphonso, last year's IceHawks captain and leading scorer with 22 goals and 57 points. "We've known each other for quite awhile and it's fun to play together now."

An alternate captain and workhorse defenceman with the championship Raiders, Rogers added that a mutual admiration between the two junior graduates has made the switch from adversaries to allies an easy one. "Shanny and I have always respected each other out there," said the Milton native. "We always played each other tough but fair."

For Rogers, the jump to university hockey has been a little harder than it likely would have been at most other schools, since the Thunderwolves' blueline unit is stacked with veterans. However, the 6-foot, 200-pounder has managed to work his way into the Lakehead lineup more often than not this season — due in no small part to his versatility.

"Because we've got an excess amount of defenceman I told the coach early on that wherever they needed me to play was okay by me. I've been a fourth-line winger a few games, which is pretty much what I played the first year with Owen Sound (Attack)."

Alphonso has also had to resume the role he played in the OHL — with the Sudbury Wolves — as he now finds himself as a third-line centre, which means a lot more grinding and less scoring than he was used to in Milton.

Lakehead coach Pete Belliveau said the two newcomers have certainly adjusted well to their new surroundings. "We've been quite happy with both of them. Shandor is really strong on the puck and Dan has a lot of toughness and grit. And both play with great intensity."

Along with playing different roles this season, university hockey has meant a number of other adjustments for the opponents-turned-teammates, not the least of which are 7 a.m. practices — practically unheard of at any other level of hockey.

"It was tough at first, but by now we're use to it," said Alphonso. "The good thing about it is by mid-morning the rest of the day is yours, except for classes that is."

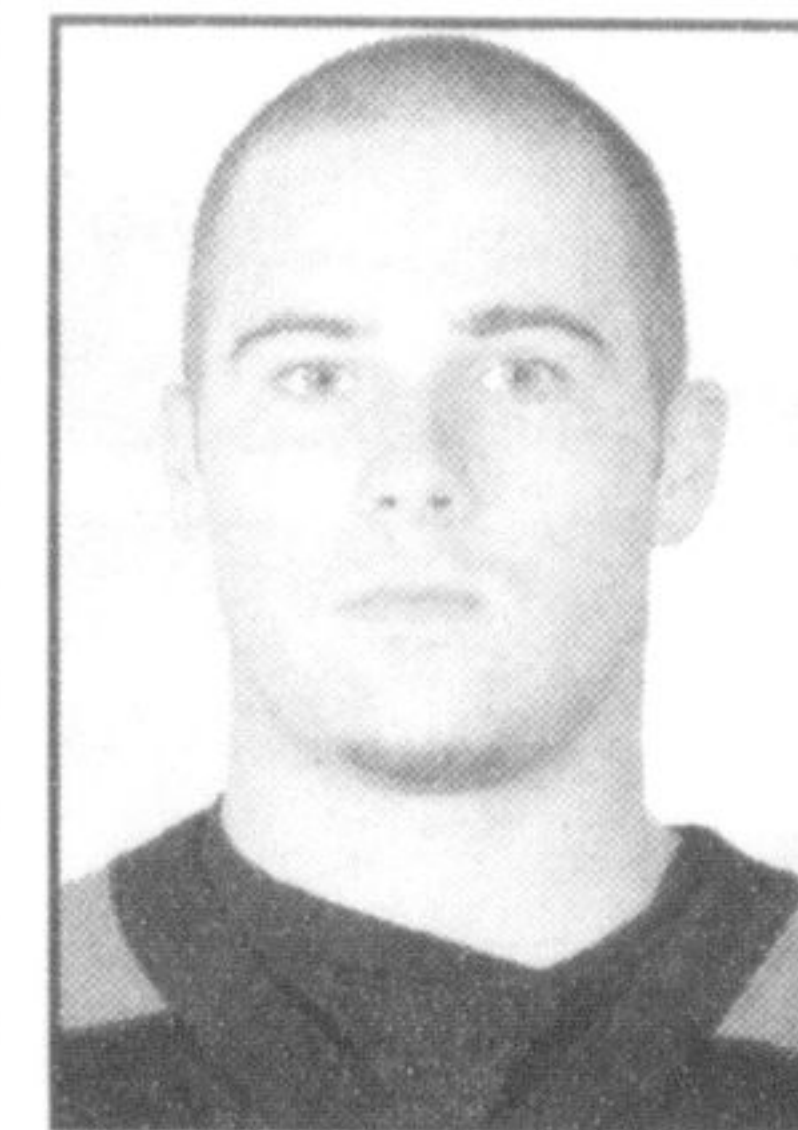
And while both he and Rogers enjoyed their fair share of lopsided victories at Tier 2 Jr. A last season, there's rarely a 'gimme' win at the university ranks. Remarkably Rogers, "It's kind of nice though, knowing you have to play hard every night. Those blowouts last year weren't much fun."

Now sitting at 3-3 in conference play after last weekend's split with Laurier, the Thunderwolves recently fell out of the CIS' top-10 after sitting fifth three weeks ago.

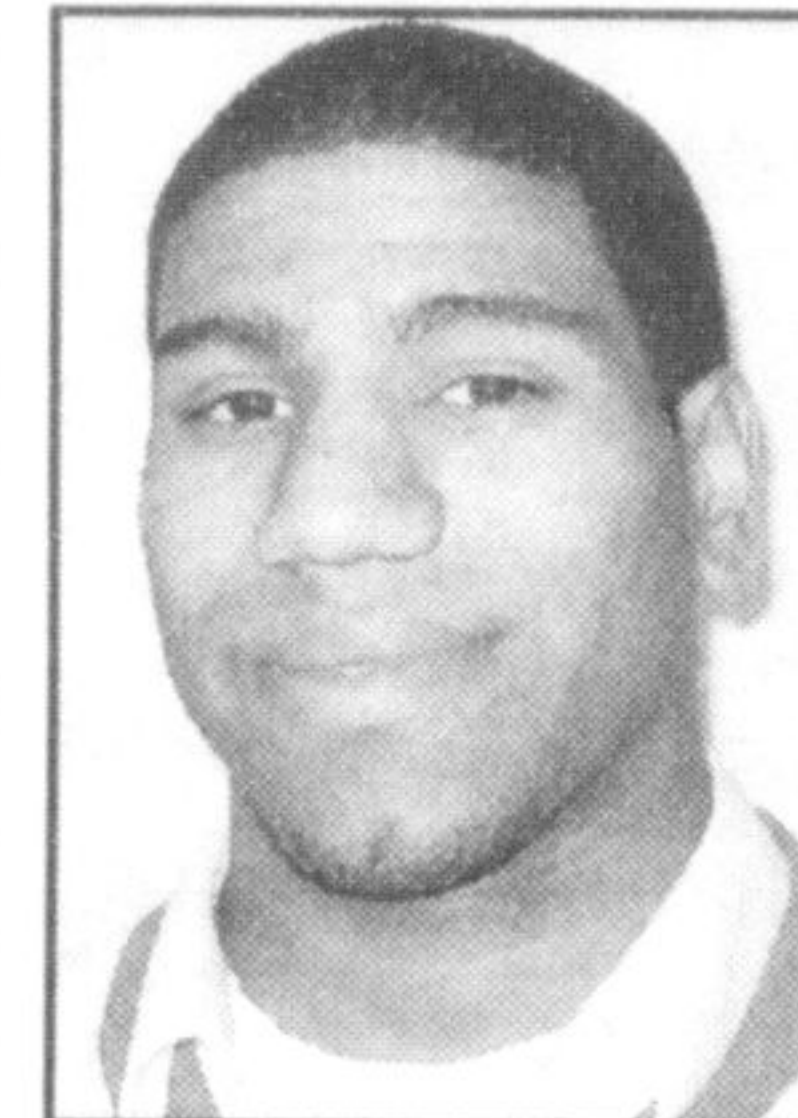
They'll have a shot at putting themselves back in the national rankings this weekend, when they host a two-game set with the 10th seeded York Lions.

Lakehead came agonizingly close to reaching the nationals last spring — dropping the final hurdle to Western in overtime. Having lost just two players from that squad, the Thunderwolves appear capable of making another strong run to the Canadian championships.

"With Ontario able to send three teams (to nationals) I think we've got a good chance, especially with so many guys in their last year and wanting to go out on a strong note," said Rogers.



Dan Rogers



Shandor Alphonso



Clarke's Golf

www.clarkesgolf.com

ONLY UNTIL DECEMBER 5

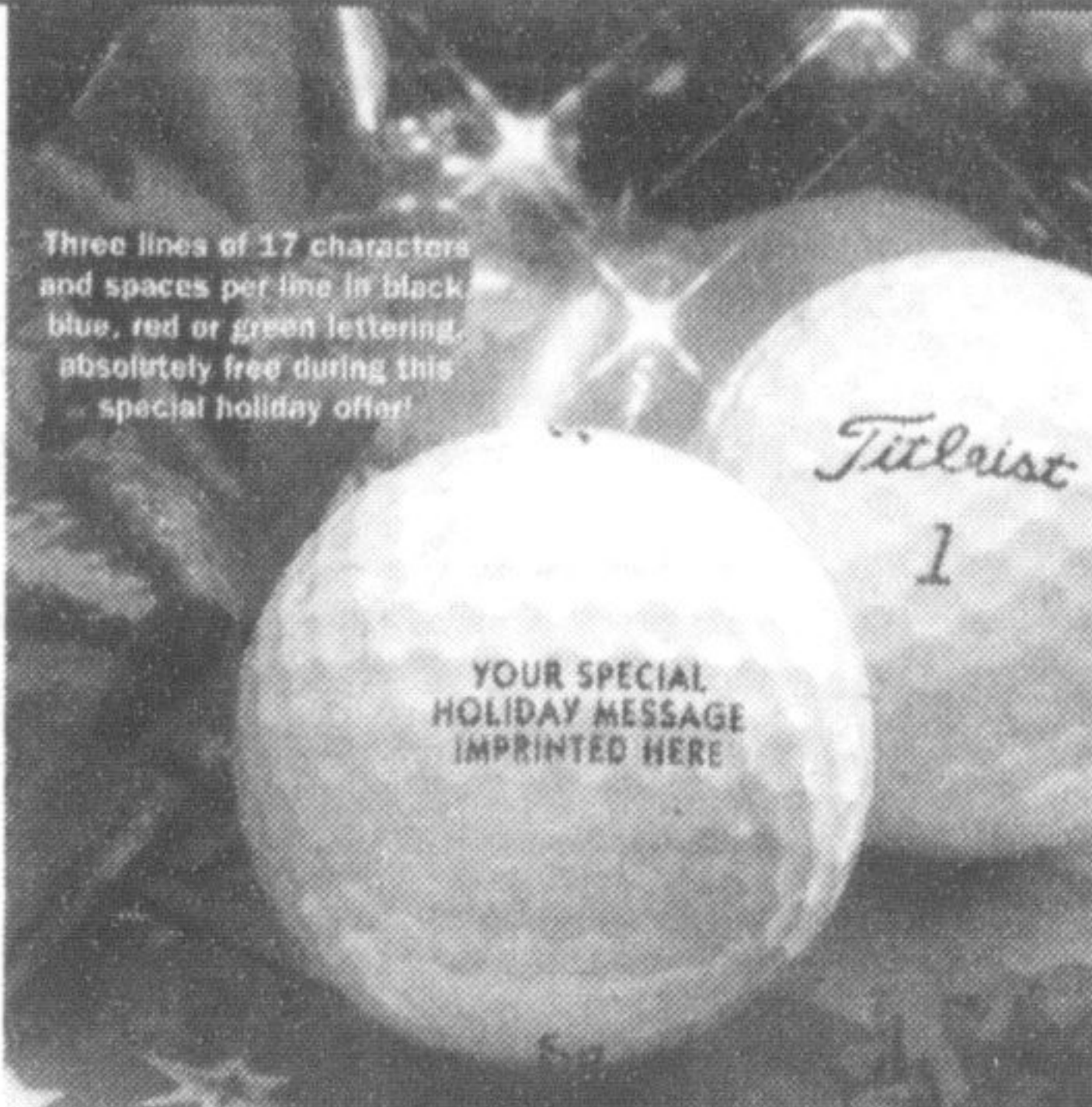
FREE PERSONALIZATION

One Dozen Minimum Order

Titleist
#1 ball in golf.®

See Clark's Golf for details!

Three lines of 17 characters and spaces per line in black, blue, red or green lettering, absolutely free during this special holiday offer!



YOUR SPECIAL HOLIDAY MESSAGE IMPRINTED HERE

Map of Macdonald-Carter Freeway area showing locations in Milton, Ontario.

Ends December 5, 2005.

Footjoy
Titleist
Cobra

18 Thompson Rd., Unit 7&8, Milton

905-878-1818

Callaway Golf
Taylor Made



Book your corporate lunch & dinners with us!

Leave Your Christmas Party Worries With Us!

YUK YUK'S

COMEDY DINNER THEATRE

Book your New Year's Eve Party Today!

D.J. Plays Classic Retro Rock

\$39.95 +tax

SAT. NOV. 26

SAT. DEC. 10

All-U-Can Eat!

All-U-Can Laugh!

All-U-Can Dance!

EAST MEETS WEST GRAND BUFFET DINNER

YOUR COUNTRY FAVOURITES + AUTHENTIC CHINESE FOOD

COMEDY SHOW & DJ DANCE

\$39.00

per person (plus taxes)

Fireside Lounge
The Dining Room
EMAIL: info@mohawkinn.com
WEBSITE: www.mohawkinn.com

MOHAWK INN
Est. 1967

9230 Guelph Line, Campbellville
(905) 854-2277

In A Beautiful Country Setting

Weekly rates available.
Only \$59.00 per night