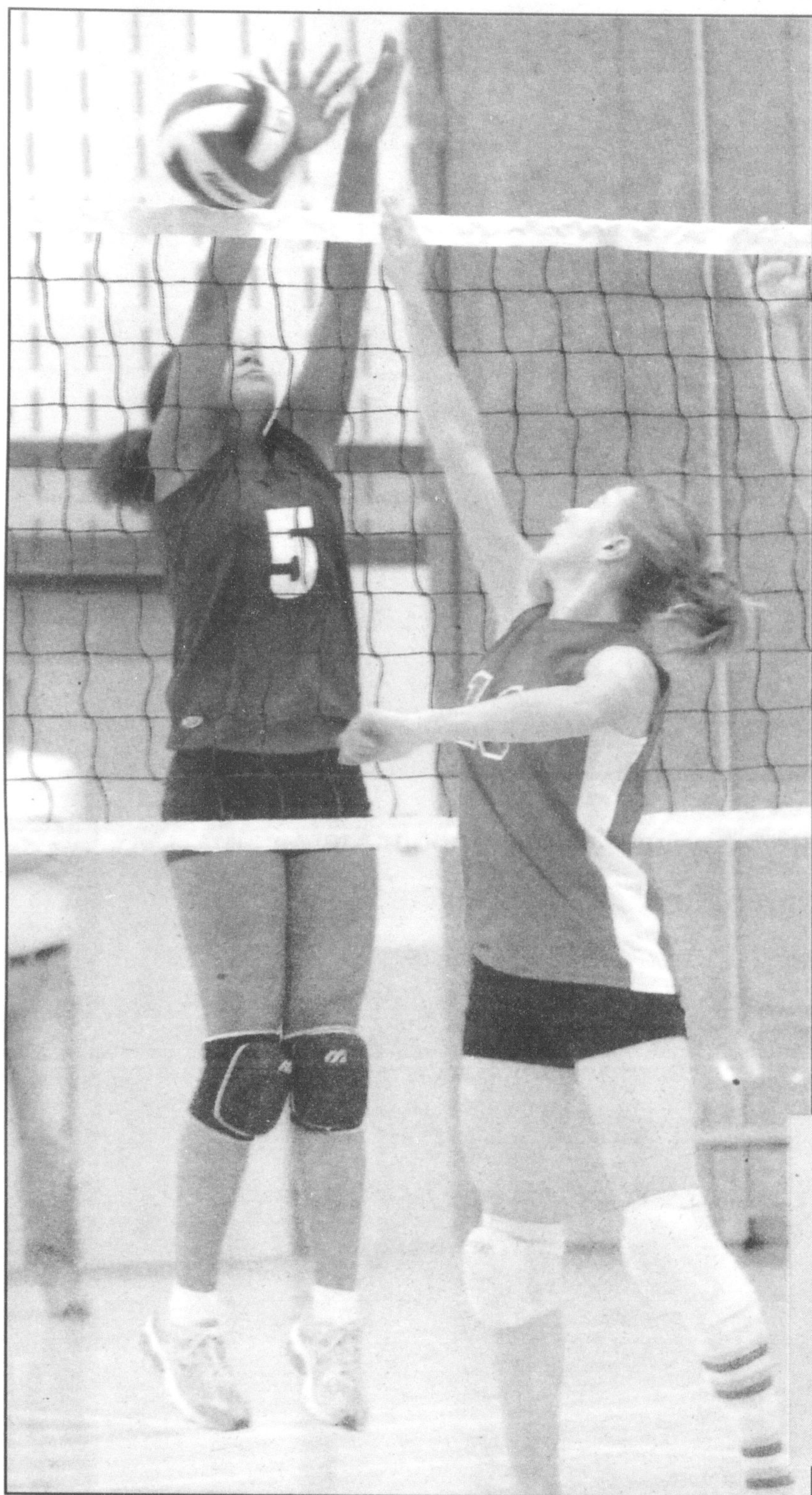


Sports

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Dupont takes temporary position with Pensacola

Suspended IceHawks coach/GM in Florida during appeal process

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

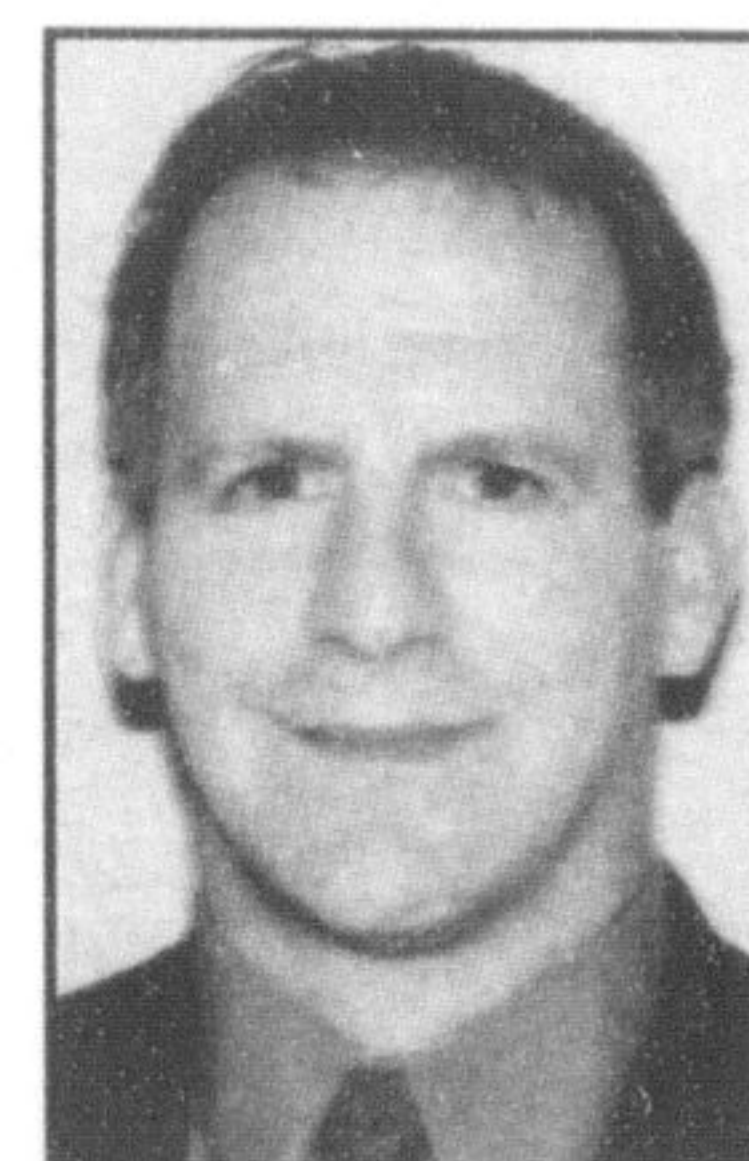
George Dupont is back behind the bench, though not with the IceHawks.

Hit with a season-ending suspension earlier this month for what the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) ruled as the paying of two players in contravention to their status as amateurs, the Milton head coach and general manager has taken a temporary assistant coaching position with the East Coast Hockey League's Pensacola Ice Pilots — who are also owned by Mario Forgione.

Announced Saturday, the move comes in the midst of an appeal by the IceHawks, who are not only fighting Dupont's suspension but have also put forward their own complaint to the OHA about other teams utilizing the same recruiting practices that they're now being punished for.

Forgione said bringing Dupont down to his Florida-based club was done to benefit both him and the IceHawks.

"To be perfectly candid, George is going through a rough time right now and we felt it was best to get him out of that environment," said Forgione Sunday after-



George Dupont

noon, speaking for an incommunicado Dupont.

"At the same time, it wasn't helping our players (in Milton) to have that distraction."

With the OHA ruling, Dupont is prohibited from coaching at any level in Canada.

Said Forgione, "George's future is very uncertain right now and it's been very tough on him."

Joe Washkurak — a former Mississauga IceDogs assistant coach with experience both coaching and scouting — remains Milton's interim skipper.

This isn't the first professional coaching tenure for Dupont, who spent two years with Tupelo of the Western Professional Hockey League — winning the Governor's Cup in 2000-01 with a league-best record of 46-20-5.

Dupont's season-ending suspension — plus a \$12,000 fine against Milton — was the result of an investigation sparked by a complaint from the Streetsville Derbys, who have filed a subsequent protest that could award the eight points the IceHawks have earned in four wins over Streetsville this year to the Derbys. The matter will be dealt with following the IceHawks' appeal.

Forgione maintains that neither his team nor Dupont did anything wrong in regards to the two players in question, stressing that the OHA ruling was based on a technicality rather than the spirit of the issue.

Net gains

Milton Storm's Jelaina Whitney blocks a tip at the net by a Georgetown Impact opponent during Saturday's 14-and-under McGregor Cup at Bishop Reding. Milton lost to Georgetown 25-21, 25-22 and wound up ninth among a dozen of the province's top-tiered teams. Whitney and Bri Rector had 15 kills each on the day, while Devon O'Connor and Ginny Switzer turned in some strong setting and great overall play was delivered by Lauren Furik. The Durham Attack took top honours, beating Windsor's South County Bandits 15-8 in a championship tiebreaker.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE



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