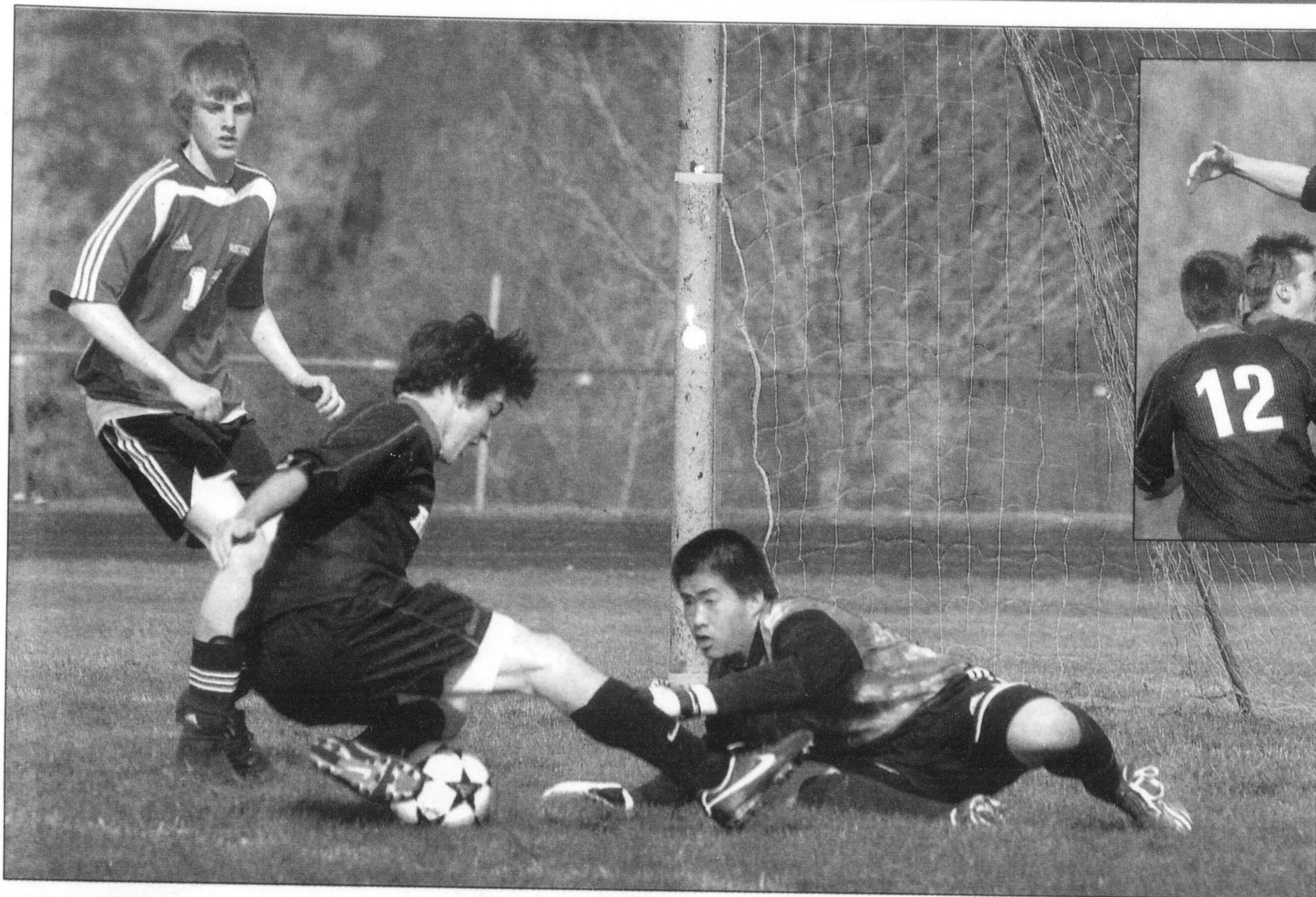


SPORTS

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LAST-MINUTE HEROICS: At left, Bishop Reding's Matt Fratarcangeli battles away against Milton District netminder Silas Sham en route to scoring the lone marker — with under a minute remaining — in season-opening junior boys soccer play at MD Monday afternoon. Above inset, Reding teammates mob Fratarcangeli after his game-winning deposit.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

Sr. Red Sox skipper cautiously optimistic

Milton kicks off '06 campaign tomorrow at Brian Best

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

May is traditionally a stressful month for George Moore, and this year is no exception.

Heading into season-opening play tomorrow at Brian Best Park, the Senior Red Sox skipper said that at this time of the season — like always — the only certainty is that there's still plenty of uncertainties.

They generally stem from player availability — mostly over job commitments — which leaves Moore and company in wait-and-see mode each spring.

"Generally we don't know where we stand until around the Tillsonburg Tournament," said the veteran manager, who

led the Red Sox to the OBA 'B' championship last season, following their best regular season in more than two decades. "We'll know a lot more in three weeks or so. I hate the first part of the season, it's so unnerving with all the unknowns."

What's already clear is that Milton has some big holes to fill in its outfield, with the retirement of Nick Aalbers and the expected loss of Jeff MacLeod, who's looking to crack the Frontier League ranks with Washington.

Add in the departure of young catcher Evan Jeans — leaving due to work — and a broken hand that'll keep Reese Davies out until mid-June, and the Red Sox could be

hurting big time in the speed department as well.

However, there's just as much cause for optimism — given that just about everyone else is back from a team that's still fairly young and has been steadily improving over the past several years.

While Brent Kostal's nagging shoulder injury and job have forced him to pack it in, the Red Sox have beefed up their pitching staff with the addition of Guelph

Junior Silver Creek graduates Adam Boyle and Adam Spiers — a cousin of MacLeod — bringing their number of hurlers up to eight.

Furthermore, the acquisitions of Kitchener's Pat Cropf, Mike Winter of Waterloo and Brent Teboekhorst's brother

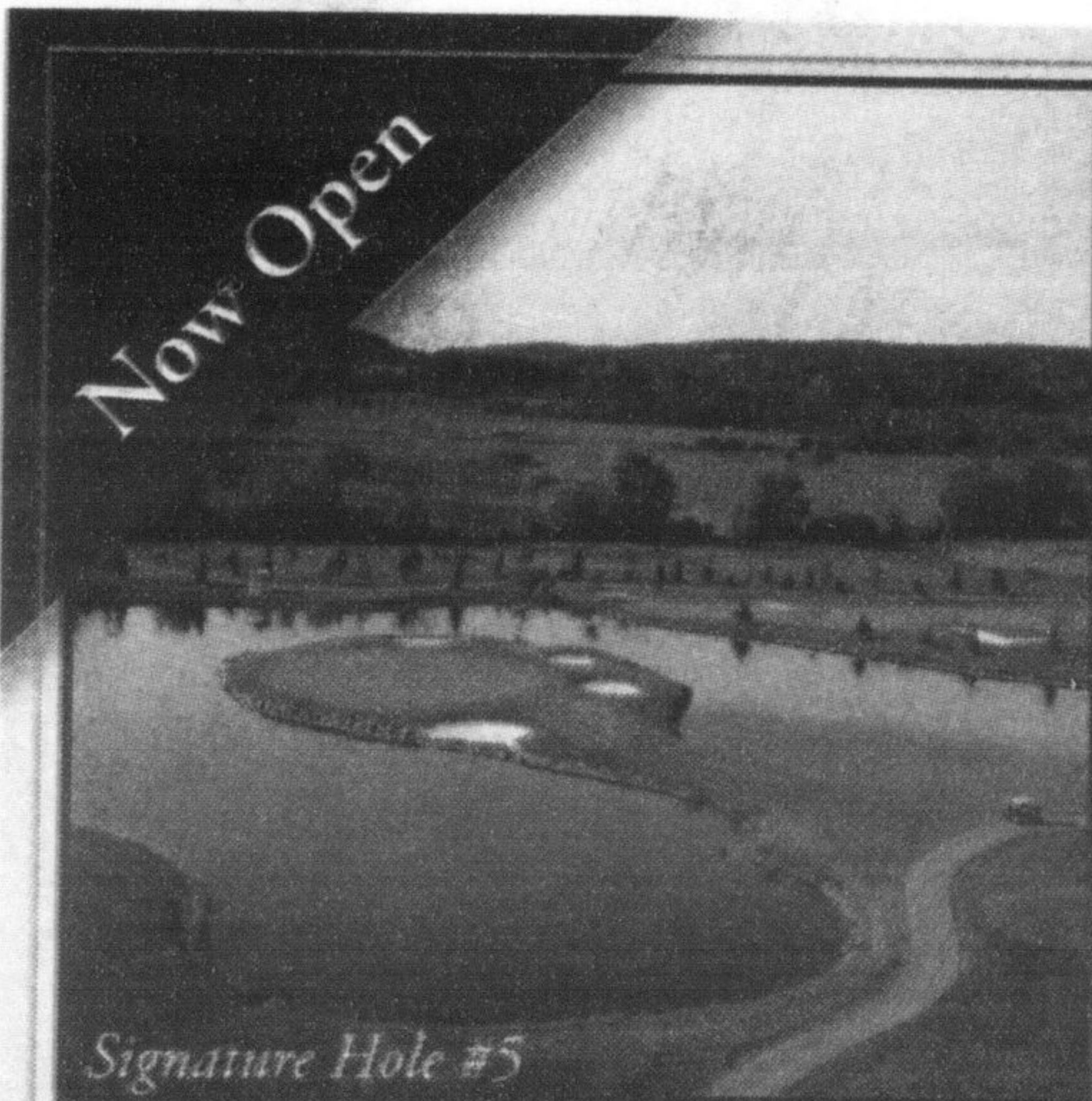
Dave give Milton three guys who seem capable of adding some spark to an often hit-and-miss offence.

The possible return of outfielder Dwayne Johnson could help strengthen the Red Sox' plate pop as well, while Reese's kid brother Curt is set to come over from the Georgetown juniors and will provide depth behind the plate and in the outfield.

So the question now is, can Milton equal last year's successes — and maybe even improve on them?

"With all the additions and deletions, it's really hard to say if we'll be at the level we were last year," said Moore. "I really don't know right now."

The Red Sox begin their season-opening doubleheader at 10 a.m. tomorrow against Erindale, and face Etobicoke at 3 p.m.



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