

# SPORTS

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**UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL:** Bishop Reding's Joey Melo (#10) collides with Kevin Kim of King's Christian Collegiate Cavaliers during Halton 'AA' semifinal action of senior boys soccer Wednesday afternoon at Reding. The host Royals steamrolled to a 4-0 decision and advancement to this afternoon's regional championship in Burlington against Oakville's St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders, who beat E.C. Drury 4-0 in the other semifinal. Adam Stjepanovic scored two goals for BR, while brothers Joey and Andrew Melo added one each. Milton District's senior girls qualified for today's Halton 'AA' finals with a 3-0 win over Acton yesterday. Scoring for the Mustangs in the semifinals were Elizabeth Clark, Jill Posavad and Fiona Sinanan.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

## Dawgs net OBA title on last-second shot

*Thrilling finish clinches Tier 2 gold for juveniles*

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Championship victories don't get any more exciting than this.

Establishing a new benchmark for edge-of-your-seat thrills that may never be equaled within local rep basketball circles, Malik Diaz-Mercurius sank a jump shot off the back board with a mere two seconds left to give his Madd Dawg juveniles the OBA Tier 2 title in London Sunday afternoon.

"I don't think Hollywood could have written a better ending," said the jubilant 16-year-old point guard, whose clutch basket cemented a 68-67 triumph over the Scarborough Blues. "I still don't know what happened. I just broke in and shot."

Added co-coach Zac Alilovic, "I've never seen anything like that (finish) before."

The Madd Dawgs' hopes for provincial gold had looked rather bleak just three weeks earlier, when offensive anchor Al Alilovic severely twisted his left ankle in exhibition play.

But the six-foot-five-inch standout managed to make it back in time, and — despite having missed three weeks of practice and not being at 100 per cent mobility-wise — was no worse for wear when it came to his scoring touch.

His best efforts were reserved for quarterfinal play, when he drained five three-pointers and 21 points overall to fuel a 57-49 decision over the Richmond Hill Riders.

"We told Al not to be too aggressive in terms of driving to the net, but he



The juvenile Madd Dawgs celebrate their OBA Tier 2 title win.

was still making his outside shots and getting the rebounds," said Alilovic, who led this year's team alongside Paul Field and Ken Schildroth.

A few defensive adjustments — primarily with regard to guarding the low post — would allow the Madd Dawgs to exact revenge for their lone round-robin loss in the semifinal.

Able to neutralize the London Gold Medal's twin towers in the rematch, Milton booked passage to the championship with a commanding 63-42 win. Exceptional defense, particularly from Steve Ples, was complemented by double-digit scoring by Alilovic, Diaz-Mercurius and Brandon Greenwood — who stood out with 18 points in the quarterfinal.

From there, the Madd Dawgs had all kinds of trouble containing Scarborough all-star Dedo Josph in the title match — and were down by seven points with five minutes remaining.

With OBA gold hanging in the balance and playing with a sense of urgency, the local juveniles would draw within striking distance on a number of late fouls — narrowing the gap on possession turnovers after their opponents failed to capitalize at the line.

In a nail-biting final few moments of

• see JUVENILES' on page A17



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