

SPORTS

SPORTS EDITOR: STEVE LeBLANC e-mail sleblanc@haltontsearch.com

Bonnici goes out on top with selects

Leads team to first league title

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

One of the measures of a truly good coach is knowing when a team has gone as far as possible under his direction.

That often under-appreciated notion is not lost on Louis Bonnici, who this past season was involved with three different soccer squads. Among them was the Under-18 select boys, who'd be only too happy to have him back as head coach next year.

But after seven seasons at the helm, the 54-year-old Miltonian — who played just one summer of organized soccer growing up — feels that it's time for a change.

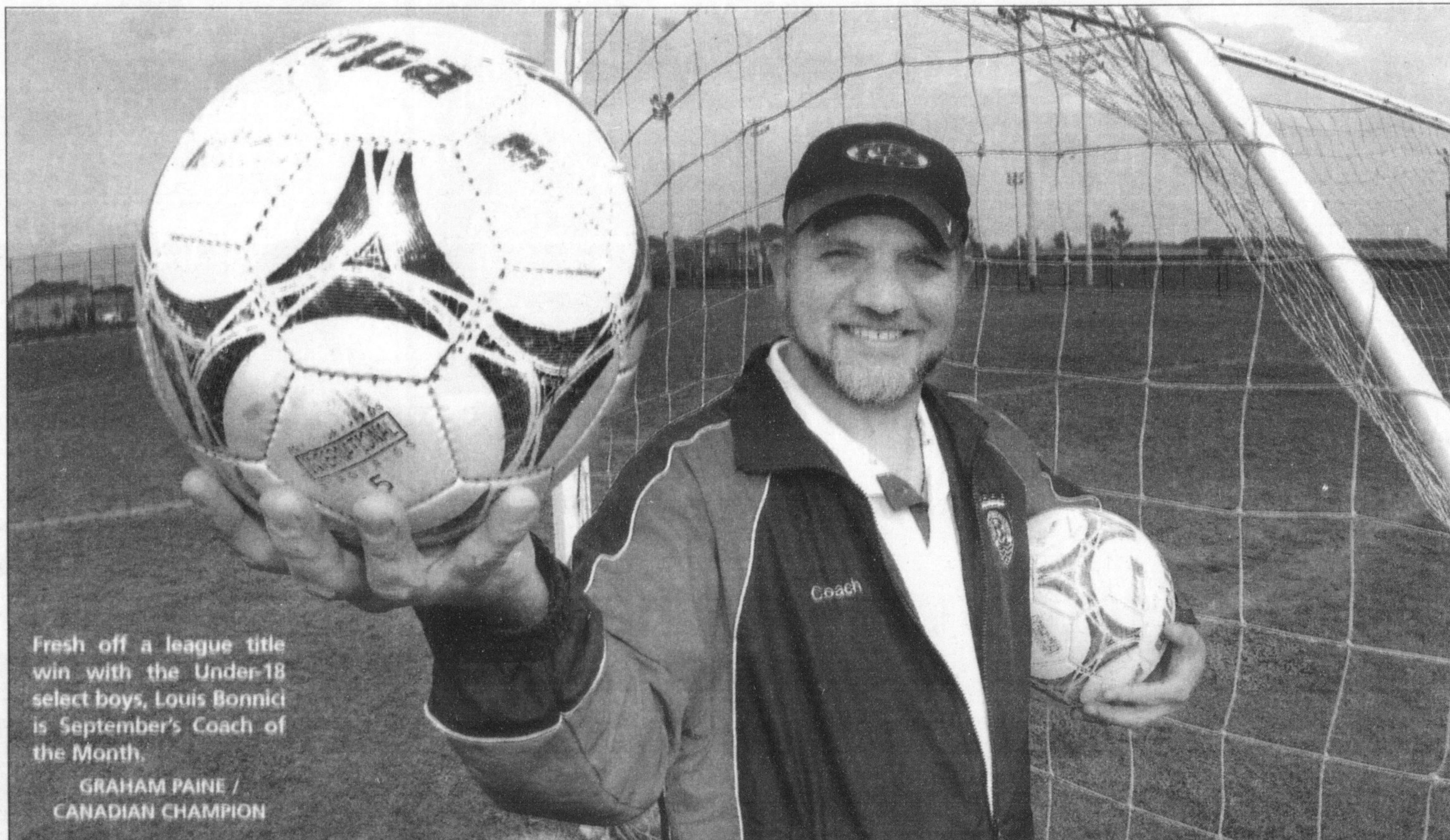
"I can only teach them so much. Now I think it's time someone else come in with fresh ideas," said September's Champion Coach of the Month, who's pretty much decided to move on to full-time rep coaching duty next summer. "They'd probably be better off now with a new coach."

That's certainly open for debate, but what's beyond question is that the select boys have come an awful long way under his tutelage. Struggling for much of the previous two seasons, they lost just two games this past year — despite being primarily an Under-17 aged squad — and sent Bonnici out a champion with a 4-2 victory over Oakville in league title play Monday night. This comes about a month after the boys won their only tournament since their first year together.

"Even when we'd lose horribly, Lou stuck with us, so now that we've won it all it should make him happy to see how far we've come," said Steve Jackson, one of 10 players still around from the original team seven years ago.

Added Bonnici, "It feels really good to see them go out on top. They really outshone everybody this year."

That was due in large part to an unparalleled commitment to clean, skilled play rather than rough-housing — something the seasoned coach has



Fresh off a league title win with the Under-18 select boys, Louis Bonnici is September's Coach of the Month.

GRAHAM PAINE /
CANADIAN CHAMPION

always been a staunch advocate of.

"I've tried to teach them that with enough skill you can beat anyone who faces you, and that's what they did this year," said Bonnici, who stressed that he's had a lot of support from assistants Richard Madge and Dave Haringa, as well as from the parents.

According to those same moms and dads, they couldn't have asked for a better coach for their sons.

"He's a role model who through his dedication and commitment leads the team by placing emphasis on fair play and team work," stated a nomination letter by parents Bernie Jackson, Denise Cooper and Diane Vermette. "With a smile and words of encouragement, Lou has and continues to teach life lessons that will stead the boys well throughout their lives."

Bonnici said that despite taking players from their pre-teen years to adolescence, it's never really been difficult to motivate them.

Andrew Baynton — one of the team's original players — figures there's a simple explanation for that.

"If we did something wrong, Lou corrected us, but he was always more encouraging than critical."

Magic-al finish to great year

Under-12 select girls win league championship on penalty kicks

Milton's Under-12 select girls have added the crowning jewel to their championship-rich season.

Caked in mud on a rain-soaked Lions Sports Park Monday night, the CIBC-sponsored Magic punctuated their highly prosperous 2006 campaign — which had already included three straight tournament victories — with the Peel-Halton title.

That final piece of hardware couldn't have come in more dramatic fashion, as the hosts eclipsed Brams United 3-2 on penalty kicks after battling to a scoreless stalemate through regulation and two five-minute extra sessions.

Christine West, Vanessa Consiglio and Jessie Saliba dented the twine, while goalkeeper Danielle Vella denied two Brams United shooters on bottom-corner strikes and the last visiting kicker booted it wide to solidify the championship for Milton.

"We've got some pretty good shooters on this team and a strong goalie, so I was fairly confident

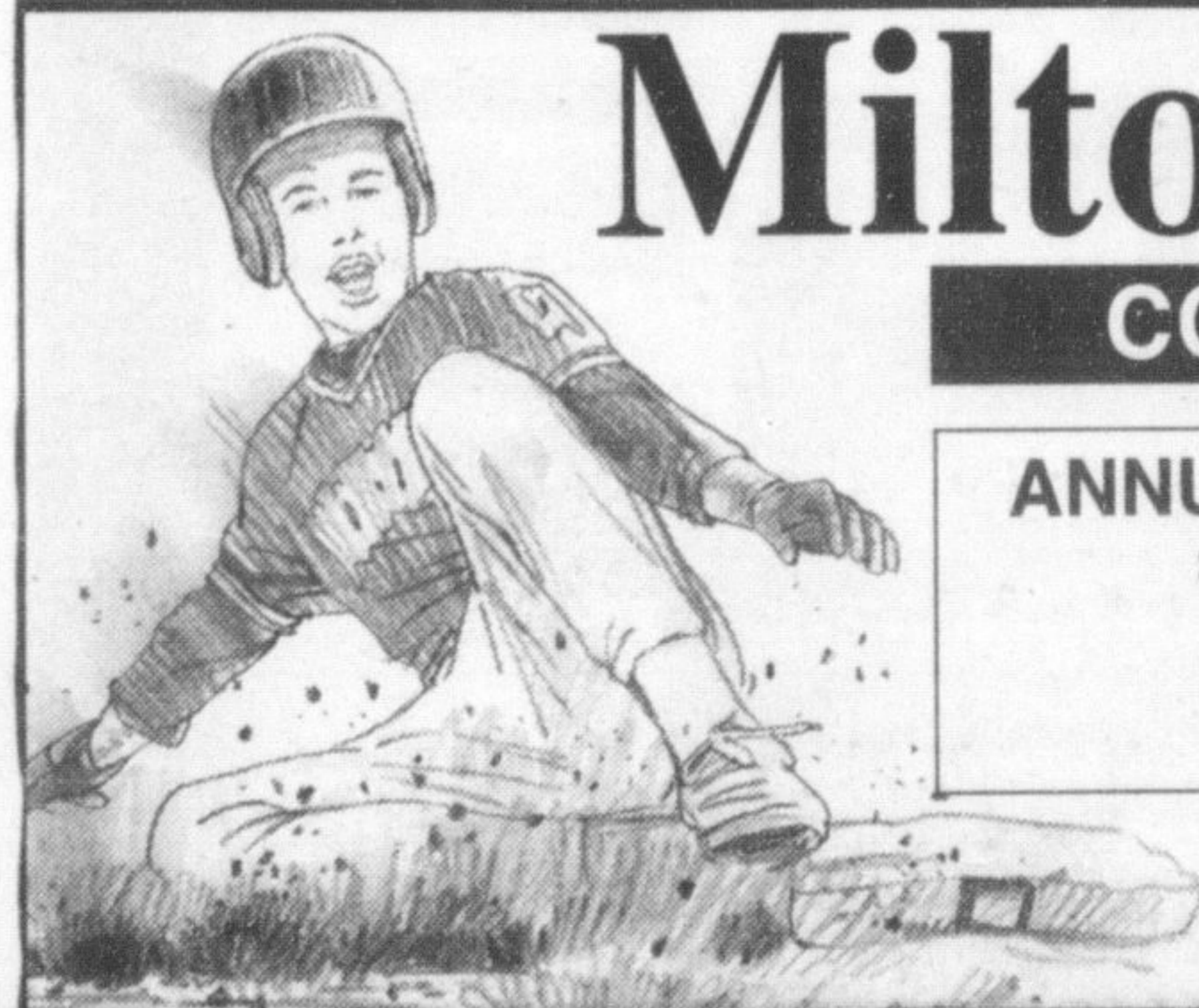
heading into the penalty kicks," said head coach David Saliba. "With the rain, mud and an eventual win, it was one of those games the girls won't soon forget."

Stamping their ticket to the league final one week earlier with a 1-0 decision over Erin Mills — thanks to Rebecca Hinton's late deposit — the Magic were turned back on a number of quality scoring chances against Brams United.

But Vella was every bit as uncharitable with the visitors in a back-and-forth clash that was highlighted with a huge goal-line denial by left-side defender Courtney Johnston.

Despite an abundance of tournament success, the Magic's Peel-Halton title win was far from a given — as they ended up just fifth in regular-season play. Distancing themselves from that mid-pack finish, the girls won three of four play-off games on the way to securing league gold.

They won't spend much time basking in the glow of Monday's title win, however, as tryouts for next year's Under-13 squad will be held Sunday from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at Boyne Community Centre on Britannia Road. New players are welcome to come out.



Milton Minor Baseball Association

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Saturday, October 14, 2006
Milton Sports Centre
Meeting room #4.
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