

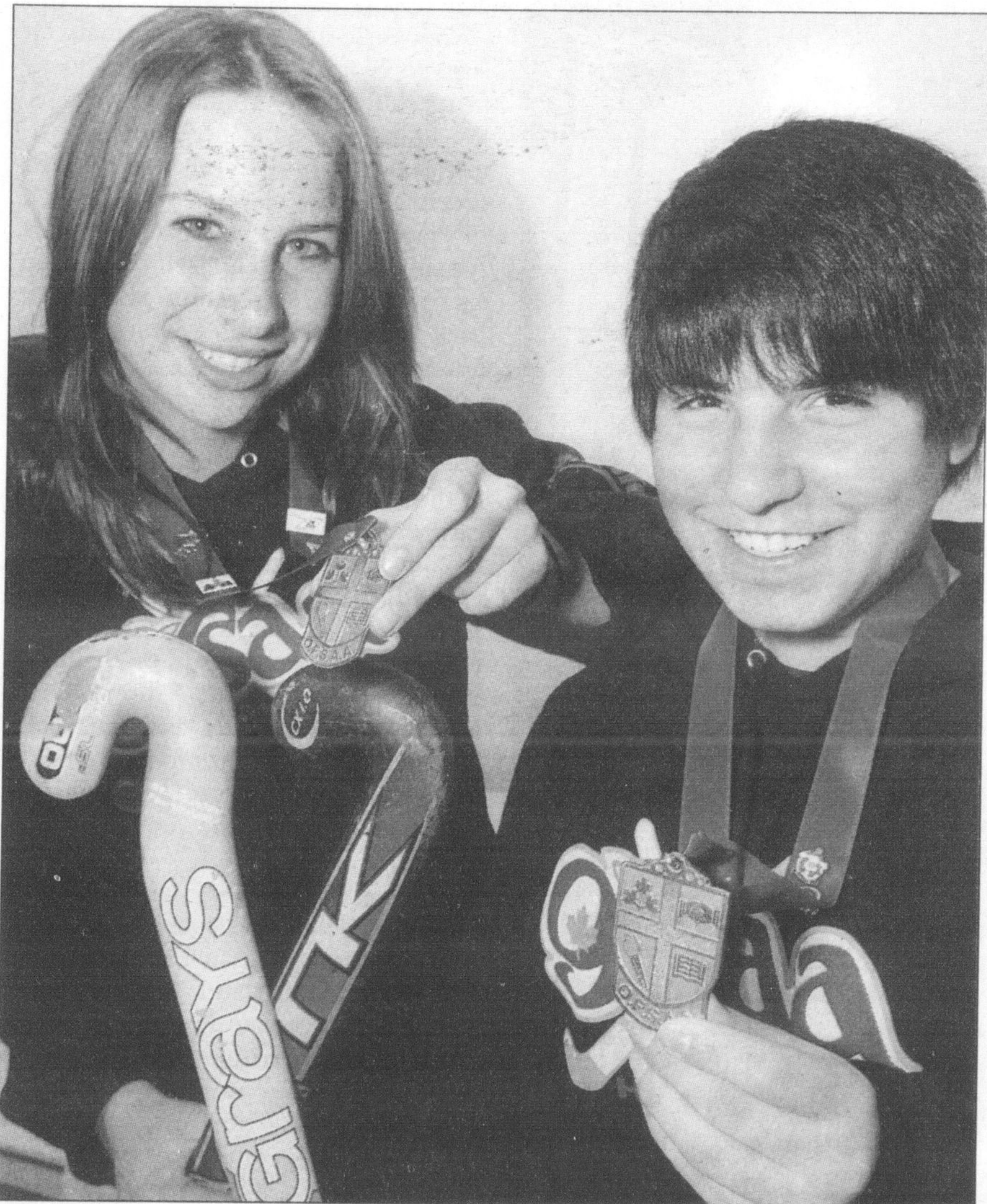
SPORTS

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Locals aid Eagles' flight to OFSAA gold

Mott and Kennedy anchor defensive efforts in SJK's unbeaten run to provincial crown

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF



Hannah Mott (left) and Lexi Kennedy are all smiles in displaying their OFSAA gold medals.

The St. John's-Kilmarnock Eagles soared to provincial high school field hockey supremacy earlier this month — thanks in no small part to the efforts of a couple of rural Miltonians.

Anchoring the defensive side of things, ninth grade goalie Lexi Kennedy and graduating sweeper Hannah Mott were instrumental in the Guelph-area private school's OFSAA title drive at L'Amoreaux Park in Scarborough, where the Eagles went 6-0 and clinched the senior championship with a 3-2 overtime victory against Kitchener's Forest Heights Trojans.

The deciding goal came with just 10 seconds remaining before penalty flicks, and was no doubt the emotional highpoint of both local players' field hockey careers.

"It was amazing, very exciting," recalled 14-year-old Kennedy, who gave up just four goals in the six games at OFSAA and made a few do-or-die saves in both the gold-medal game and semifinals versus Waterloo's Bluevale.

An OFSAA veteran, Mott said this year's Eagles went into the provincial championships with a lot more confidence — compared to the squad that didn't advance beyond preliminary play last fall — and showed just why they were the number one seed.

"We played a lot stronger and just had a great

team dynamic," explained the 17-year-old, who provided an effective last line of defence for Kennedy throughout the season to aid in the team's unbeaten season.

On the surface, the SJK's OFSAA triumph might seem like the ultimate Cinderella story — since its high school student body is a miniscule 170, less than a 10th the enrollment of many big-city schools.

Looking beyond the numbers, however, the Eagles' recent victory is anything but surprising. Something of a rarity in southern Ontario, SJK has a strong field hockey program within its affiliate elementary school, so the sport is almost second nature by the time players reach their teens.

So to suggest a grade nine player like Kennedy is a rookie is far from the truth. Fact is, she's already been competing for five years — longer than most her age ever will.

"Our school lives and breathes field hockey. It's the big sport," said Mott, who's been playing for seven years.

While Kennedy will be bidding farewell to her seasoned sweeper next year, she may not have to do so with the OFSAA trophy. Three quarters of the Eagles are set to return, including star sniper Jessalyn Walker of nearby Rockwood — who amassed a dozen goals at the provincial championships.

Suggested Kennedy, "Yeah, we should do well again next season."

O'Shea and Argos ousted by Als in East final — again

An all-too-familiar roadblock has once again kept Mike O'Shea and the Toronto Argonauts out of the Grey Cup.

For the second straight season and fourth time in five years, Milton's 36-year-old linebacker and his Boatmen were beaten by the Alouettes in the East Division final Sunday afternoon in Montreal — losing 33-24.

While keeping themselves in the hunt with three late touchdowns — two on completions by replacement quarterback Michael Bishop and the other a Ricky Williams goal-line leap with 2:03 left to play — the Argos had all sorts of problems putting up points early on and wound up fighting the clock as much as their archrivals.

A Damon Duval 44-yard field goal

with 51 seconds remaining sealed Toronto's fate.

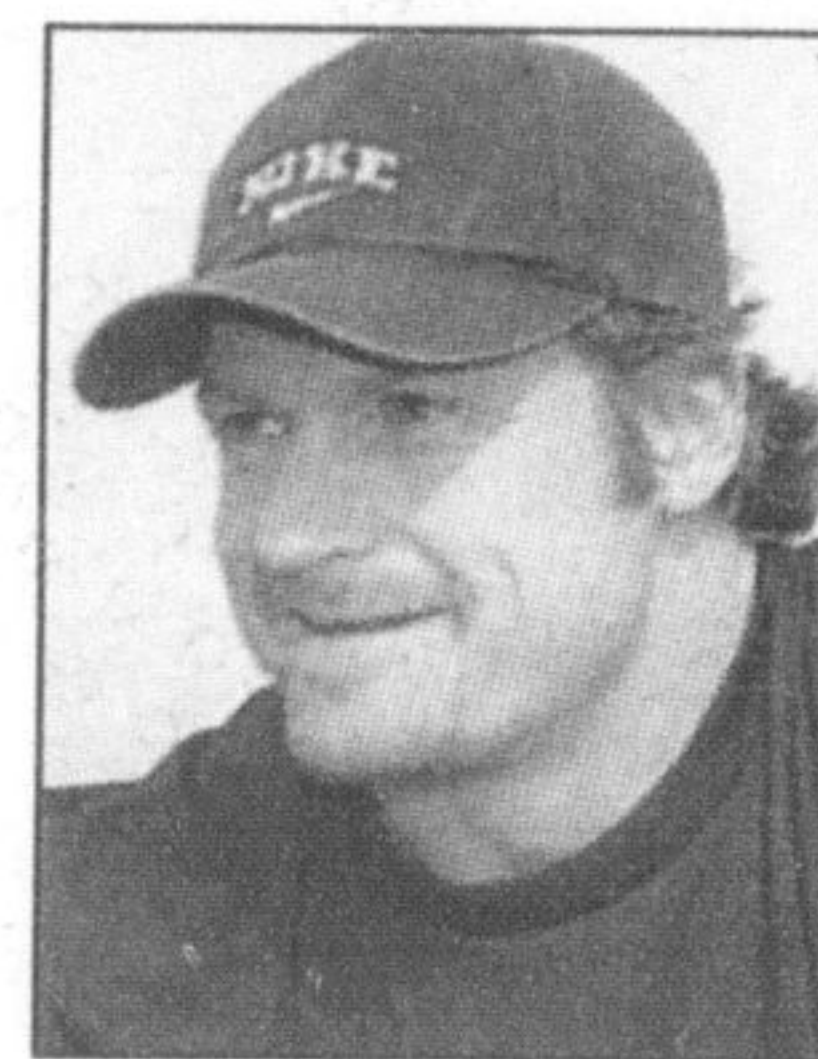
O'Shea got into a rather nasty altercation with teammate Arland Bruce III in the third quarter, following a Montreal interception that was brought back 78 yards for a touchdown that made it 23-3 Als.

Although presumably feeling the major was conceded too easily, O'Shea

refused to comment on the exchange after the game.

Recently hitting the 1,000 tackle plateau — reached by only two other players in CFL history — he was among the leading Argo tackles on the day to help keep comeback hopes alive.

The 14-year league veteran has won three Grey Cups with Toronto, the most recent coming in 2004 in Ottawa.



Mike O'Shea

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