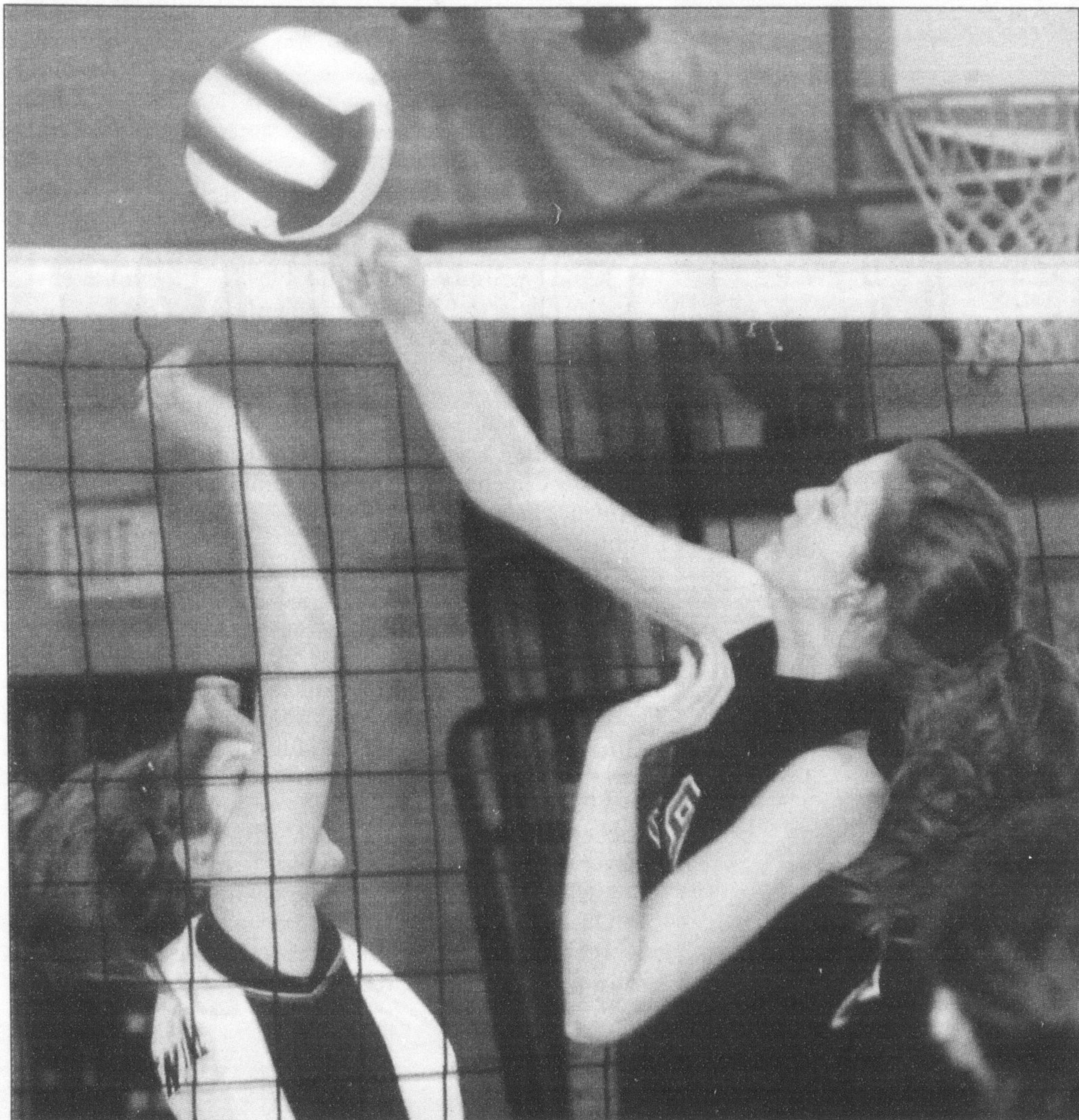


SPORTS

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GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

NET GAINS: E.C. Drury's Tori McCutcheon (right) battles at the net against Maddie Kilbourne of Burlington Central during Monday's Halton AA quarterfinal at E.C. The host Spartans won 25-15, 25-11. Despite an impressive performance at Oakville's St. Thomas Aquinas Wednesday, Drury fell 25-22, 25-23 in the semifinal.

Alilovic's clutch shot puts Reding in finals

Late 3-pointer lifts Royals over Ridge

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

As Tuesday afternoon's final buzzer drew near — and with it the end of his high school basketball career — Al Alilovic's thoughts crept back to his grade 8 season at St. Peter's.

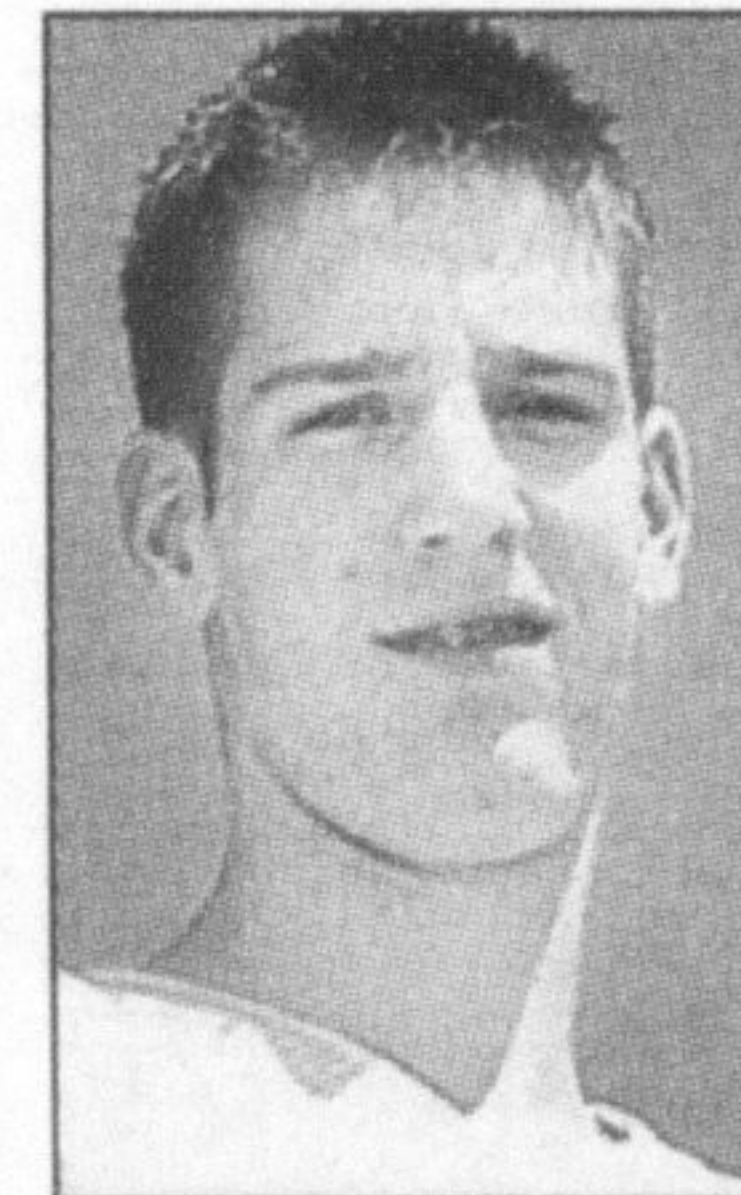
To say the least, the memory of missing the regional championship by the narrowest of margins was far from pleasant.

Refusing to let déjà vu rear its ugly head, Bishop Reding's six-foot-six-inch star cager drained a long-range jump shot with just three seconds remaining to give the hosts a 49-47 victory over Oakville's Iroquois Ridge Trailblazers in the Halton AAA semifinals.

Touching off a massive celebration by players and fans alike, Alilovic's defeat-defying three-pointer put the finishing touches on what was arguably the most exhilarating win ever at BR —

with the lead changing hands half-a-dozen times in the last quarter and far too many pulse-pounding moments to mention.

"I'm feeling really good right now. This is probably my best moment ever (on the court)," said the jubilant hero, whose clutch swish capped an uncharacteristically modest 11-point game in which he was held to just a couple of baskets until the final five minutes of play. "I didn't want my high school career to end the same way (as grade 8), and the other graduating guys sure didn't want it to be over either."



Al Alilovic

While Alilovic stamped the Royals' ticket to the regional finals — a feat all the more impressive given that BR only made the jump to AAA this season, after three straight trips to the AA championship — it was Lee Mathé who paved the way for advancement.

Reding's 2005/06 Senior Male Athlete of the Year delivered a standout two-way performance that included a team-high 18 points and numerous rebounds at both ends. He also hit four straight free throws in the second half, completing a 6-for-6 showing at the line, and came up with a huge tip block with under a minute left to play.

Helping highlight the emotionally-charged finish was 11th grader Stephan Gray, whose late field goal was the first of three go-ahead shots for the Royals in the final 90 seconds.

BR led for all but two minutes of the first half and got some solid play from Lance Codner, Matt Sewell and Aaron Alston, who finished with 10 points.

The Royals took on the unbeaten Nelson Lords of Burlington yesterday afternoon in the Halton championship at Oakville's Sheridan College. See Tuesday's Champion for full results.

Marlin boys enjoy hefty haul at CRCs

The Marlins dominated 14-and-15-year-old boys competition at the recent Central Regional Championships at Etobicoke Olympium — collecting a baker's dozen medals.

Leading the way was John Steadman, who secured provincial qualifying times in all five of his events and was golden in both the 100-metre freestyle and backstroke. His overall age-class points title victory was rounded



out with silver-medal swims in the 50 and 200m freestyle and a bronze in the 400m freestyle.

Alex Davis turned back all challengers in the 200m individual medley (IM) to highlight his four-medal campaign, which included silvers in the 100 and 200m backstroke and a 50m freestyle effort that was good enough for bronze.

Showing strongly in 200m competition,

Brent Burke finished second in both the freestyle and IM at that distance. He added third-place honours in the 400m freestyle and reached the finals in two other events.

Completing a Milton sweep in the 200m IM with bronze was Paul Zielinski.

Also reaching event finals for the local club were Tam Kilbourn, Chris Leeder and Larissa Ruiz.

The Marlins return to Etobicoke next weekend for the junior provincials.



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