

Marauders edge rivals in season-opening barnburner

Beat Longhorns with late TD

By Murray Townsend
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

The Battle of Halton took a surprising turn in Oakville Saturday when the new-look Milton Marauders shocked former coach Barry Emo and the Longhorns with a thrilling 24-

23 opening night victory.

It was a tale of two games — or maybe two and a half. For most of the first half the Marauders were dominant. They came out of the gate pumped and took advantage of a flat Oakville team.

On their first possession a punt was fumbled by the Oakville returner and Roger Tomlinson pounced on the ball on the 10-yard line. Four plays later kicker Mitch Martell's field goal put Milton ahead.

In the second quarter Milton moved down the field methodically with a power running game. Sean Faulknor broke off a 28-yard run, and then finished it off with a seven-yard touchdown. Midway through the second, quarterback Brandon Nikoforuk connected with Aaron Elliot for a 30-yard major to give the Marauders a stunning 17-0 lead just before half-time.

With 22 seconds remaining Oakville went to work. Up to that point they'd only earned one first-down that wasn't the result of a penalty and couldn't run or pass effectively against the Milton defense.

All-star quarterback Tommy Denison was unable to play for Oakville but all-star receiver Vaughn Swart caught a 40-yard bomb from former Marauder pivot Josh Spanik and then with seven seconds remaining caught a one-yard touchdown pass.

The Longhorns took advantage of that momentum into the second half. After a 25-yard field goal, and with Mark Demerling in at quarterback for the Marauders, another former Marauder — Wayne Sliwinski — intercepted a pass for a touchdown and just like that it was knotted at 17-17.

The Longhorns were temporarily stopped when Dennis Lyght intercepted a pass in the end-zone, but on their next possession Oakville took a 23-17 lead, again on a reception by Swart. A time count violation pushed the Longhorns back

10 yards for the extra point kick, and in what turned out to be the key play of the game, the extra point was missed.

With just a couple minutes remaining in the game, Damien Hannaford came up with a great kick-off return — taking it to midfield.

Then Milton's third quarterback of the game, Kelly Hughes, took over. He broke off a 22-yard run and then took it in for the major. Martell was sure-footed for the extra point to give Milton the 24-23 edge — which stood up through the dying moments of play.

Faulknor, who was one of the original early years Marauders before they started to win, returned to the fold after four years away from the game and was the first half offensive star. "I had that itch to play again," said Faulknor. "After watching George (Baiden) last season, I just wanted to play alongside some of these guys."

He had to be helped off the field once and was clearly exhausted by the end of the game.

"That was age (32) and time off creeping up on me," he quipped.

Head coach Ken Lashley couldn't have asked for a better start to the season.

"I knew we would be better," he remarked.

He added that not having to face Denison had a major impact on the game. Another factor was that the team was fired up after hearing talk that the Longhorns were going to beat them by 50 points. "We played above our heads and they played down some. And then add in whatever part emotion plays. We just played the best game we could possibly play — at this point. And we're going to get better."

The Marauders' home opener is set for tomorrow (Saturday) at 3 p.m. at Milton District High School against North Bay.



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5	SOUTHSIDE 2	6	3	3	0	6
6	NEW LIFE "A"	7	2	4	1	5
7	BOSTON	5	2	3	0	4
8	HOLY ROSARY	7	2	5	0	4
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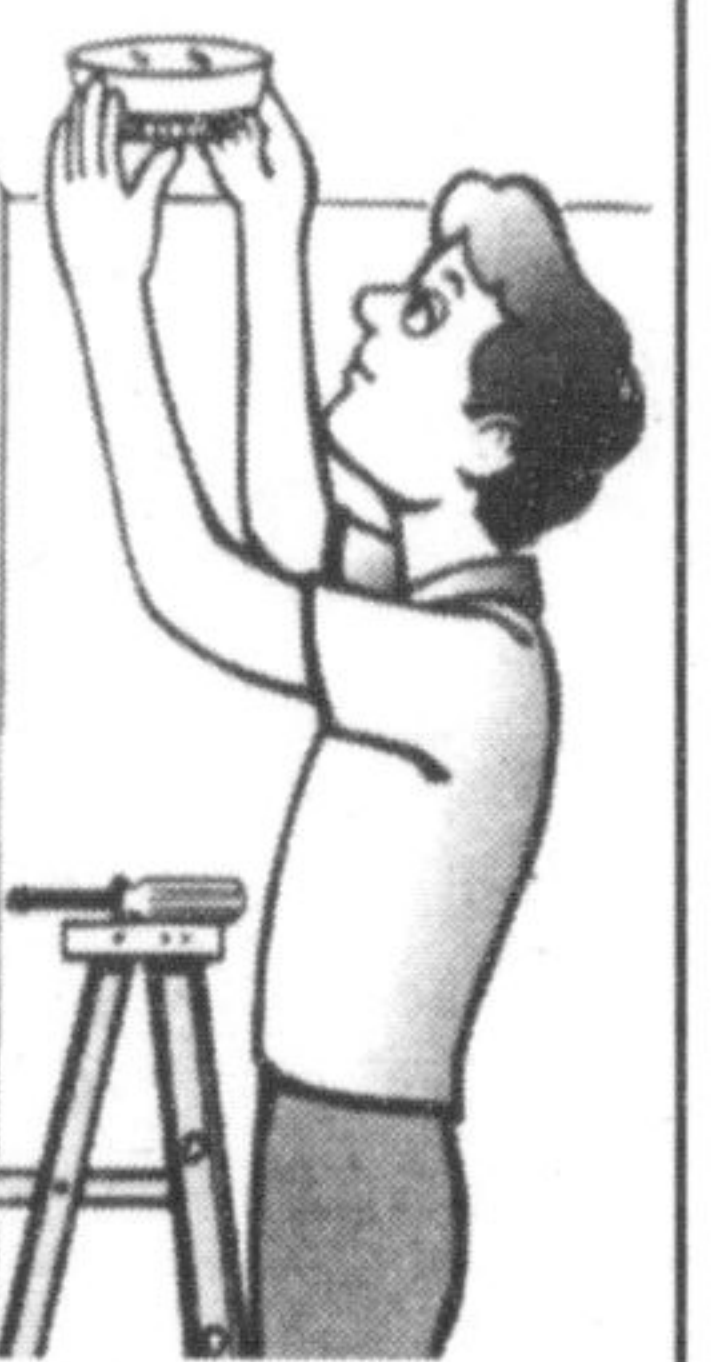
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