

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

**SAYING GOODBYE:** Photos of Ilko Nourkov (left) and Mario Llanos form part of the memorial in the school's cafeteria.

# Reding students celebrate lives of classmates killed in crash

By **Stephanie Hounsell**  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

If there's dancing in heaven, Mario and Ilko are moving to the beat.

That was a sentiment expressed again and again as students took to the podium Wednesday afternoon at a celebration — not a memorial — of the lives of Mario Llanos and Ilko Nourkov, who were both killed last month as a result of a car crash.

"Boys, we will all see you again and when we do, you better be dancing," said Liam Hope.

In a seemingly fitting tribute to the two 17-year-old friends, the commemoration was anything but typical, with the Bishop Reding (BR) cafeteria pumping out Euro music and filled with students holding light sticks.

The celebration was part laughter, part tears for the 150-or-so young people who turned out to honour their fallen classmates.

On the wall were two large banners bearing hundreds of signatures. "Blessed are Mario and Ilia, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," read one of them.

For sale were jerseys imprinted with Mario's and Ilko's numbers — both were members of the school's senior boys soccer team.

A slide show projected photos of the boys with friends, having fun, often with each other.

Poems were read, prayers were said and many students spoke from the heart about what they'll remember of the two lives that were cut short.

Mario's girlfriend of a year-and-a-half, Kayla Mallais, asked the question no doubt still lingering in minds: Why?

But she moved on to speak of happy memories, sharing the way she and Mario came together and what made their relationship special.

"Mario used to say we were so perfect for each other because we were so different," she said, adding, "I personally will always remember Mario's smile, which stretched from ear to ear."

Determined, straightforward and honest were words Kayla used to describe her boyfriend.

"We loved each other very much and I'm happy to say I had the opportunity to love someone so amazing."

She also spoke of the strong friendship Mario and Ilko shared.

"Whether it was through a smile like Mario's or laughter like Ilko's, we'll always remember... these two boys," Kayla said.

Taking his turn up front, Krzysztof Staskowiak, who said he considered Mario and Ilko his best friends, spoke of how difficult the past few weeks have been.

"You can close your eyes to things you don't want to see, but you can't close your heart to things you don't want to feel," he said.

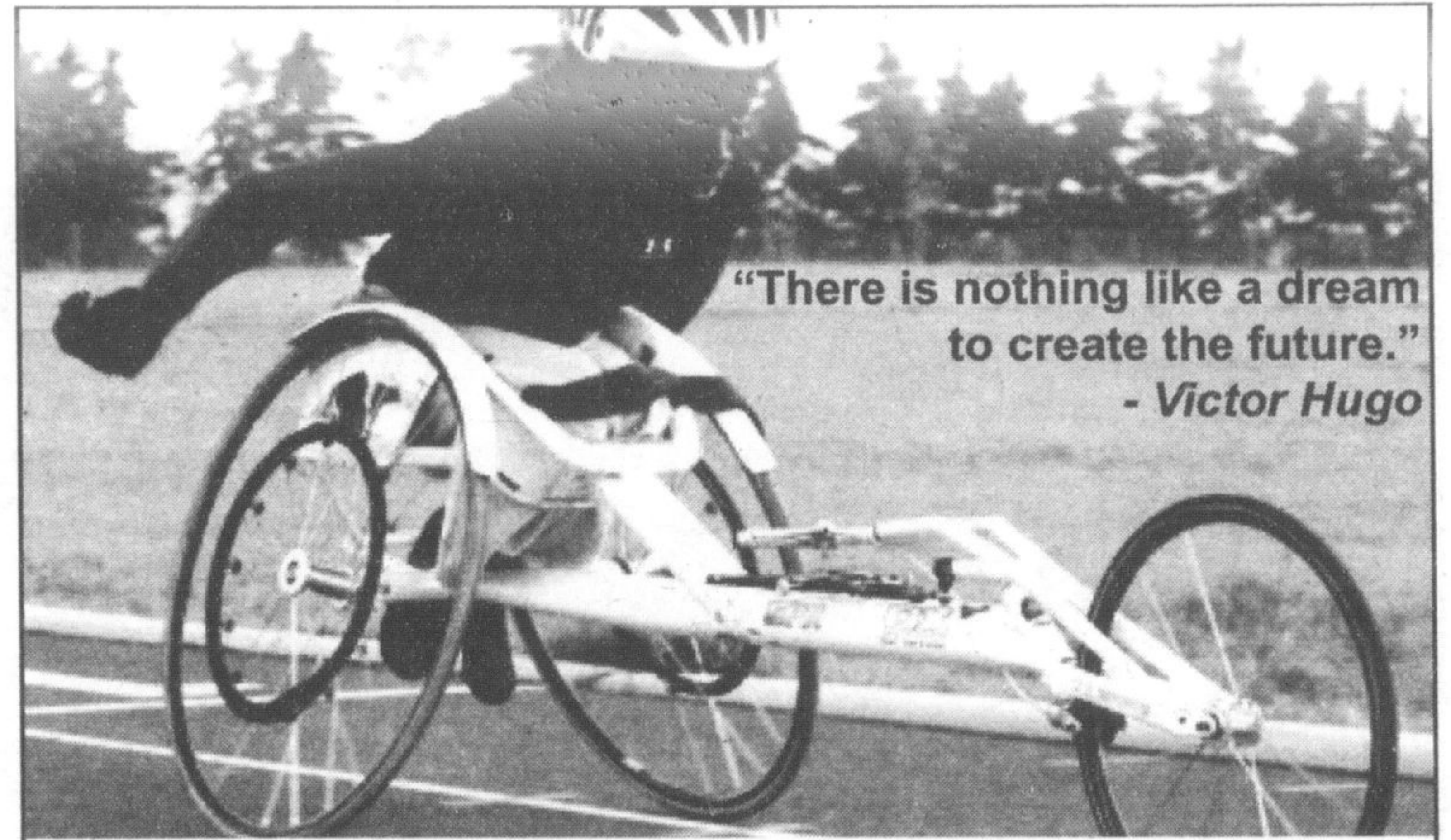
Krzysztof described Ilko as always having his own opinions and not being easily influenced by others. His strong personality allowed him to make his own choices and stand by them, he said.

That strength translated into a real leadership on the soc-

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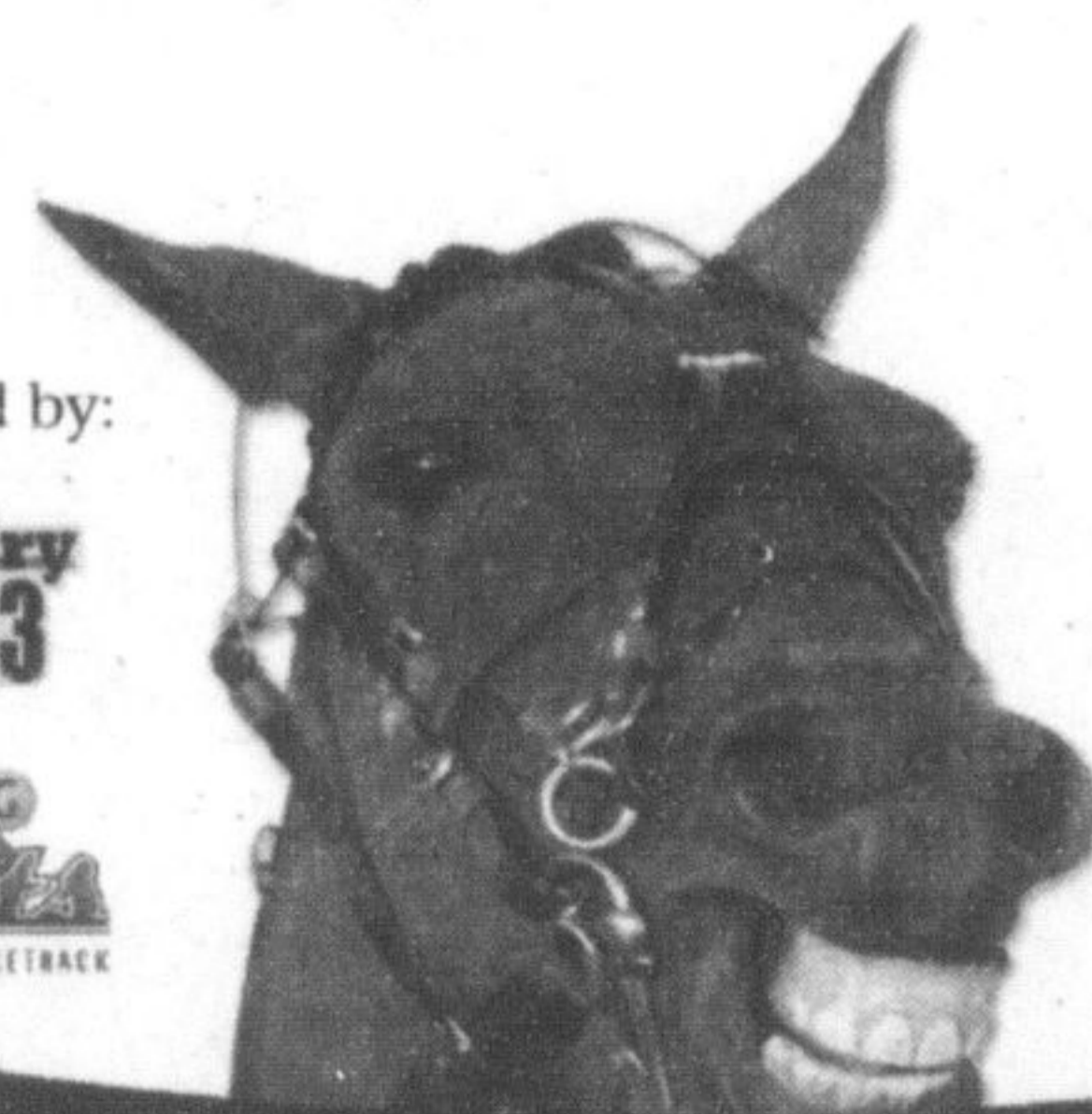


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