

SPORTS

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DANIEL HO / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

LEARNING FROM A PRO: St. Louis Blues sniper Brad Boyes, who lived in Milton until he was five and learned to skate on a backyard rink in Dorset Park, demonstrates a puck-handling drill as local youngsters look on during the NHLer's recent visit to his father's Front Line Hockey School at Milton Sports Centre.

Cager rises to occasion

Alexander dominates at Under-18 Americas

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Kayla Alexander's first taste of international basketball was awfully sweet.

Emerging as a standout at last week's FIBA Americas Under-18 Championships in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the 17-year-old Miltonian helped fuel the national junior women's squad to a 4-1 showing that clinched second place in the six-team event — and a subsequent berth to next summer's Under-19 Worlds in Thailand.

"I thought I did pretty well and as a team we worked well together. We had great chemistry and that transferred onto the floor," said the six-foot-four-inch centre yesterday (Tuesday) morning, having just arrived home. "It (tournament) was a big eye-opener in terms of what's needed to compete at the next level, especially against the Americans."

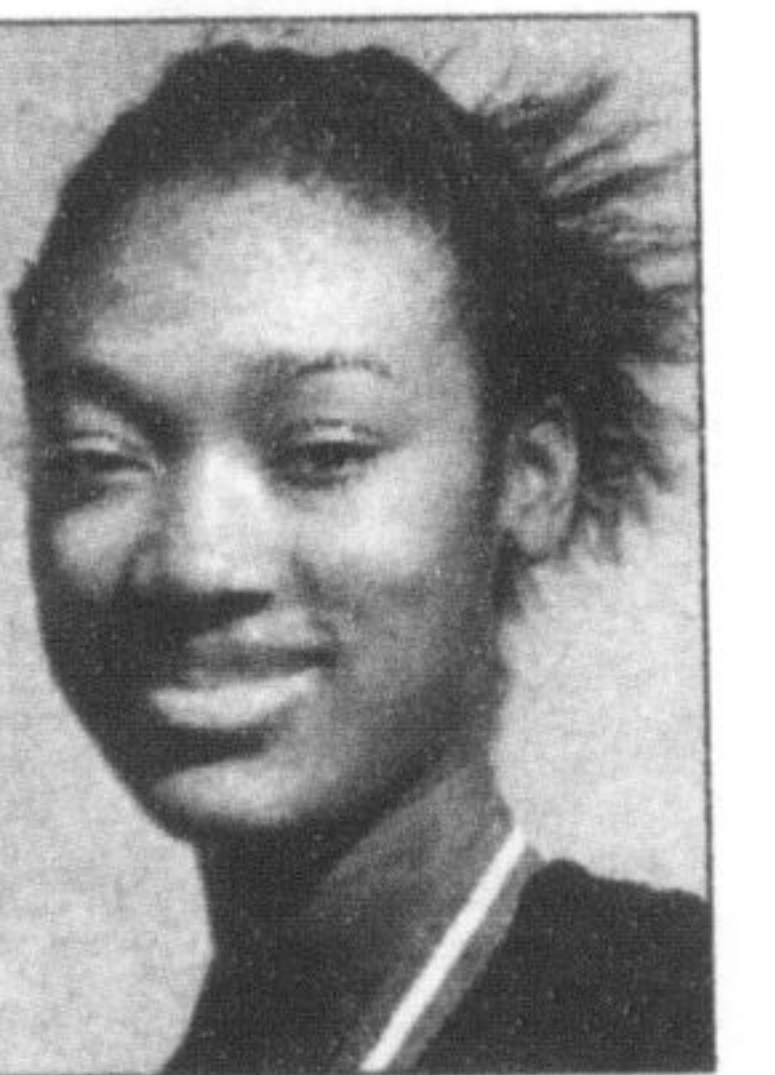
Alexander set the tone for a productive run right away, with nine points and a game-high 12 rebounds in last Wednesday's 67-47 triumph over Brazil. From there she'd continue to dominate — especially on the boards — and lead Canada to victory in three of its next four games, losing only to the powerhouse United States 72-56 Thursday.

"I'd love to have another game against them (U.S.). I think we could give them a better run."

Proving she can thrive amidst hectic high-stakes play (five games in as many days), Alexander finished in a three-way team tie for top overall scorer — amassing 58 points — and was by far the most effective rebounder among the Canadians. She averaged over 10 boards a game, including a tournament-high 14 in what was described as a "monster" performance during Saturday's 78-65 win over Puerto Rico, which clinched Canada's berth to next year's worlds.

She'd net 16 points in that victory and hit double-digits in two others, highlighting her productive week with an 18-point effort in Friday's 72-53 rout of the host Argentinians.

The local cager now has her sights set on the Canadian Under-17 championships in P.E.I. August 19 to 23, when she'll look to secure her third national title in four years.



Kayla Alexander

Offensive lineman makes first start in CFL

O'Meara in for Blue Bombers' first '08 win

Matt O'Meara's wait is finally over.

After four-plus years, the six-foot-five-inch, 285-pound Miltonian — who turns 26 next week — saw his first start in the CFL Thursday night at Winnipeg's Canad Inns Stadium.

In the wake of his Blue Bombers' recent rash of injuries, O'Meara assumed right guard duty.

"It felt great to get in there," said the offensive lineman, who found out he'd be playing at the start of last week. "I knew I was ready, but at the same time I was pretty nervous and there were some question marks going through my

mind. Hey, I haven't played a full game in so long."

But the former McMaster Marauder said his anxiety eased up just before game time, allowing him to help the hosts secure their first win of the season — a 32-28 decision over the Calgary Stampeders that was clinched with some last-minute heroics by back-up pivot Ryan Dinwiddie in front of a crowd of 26,882.

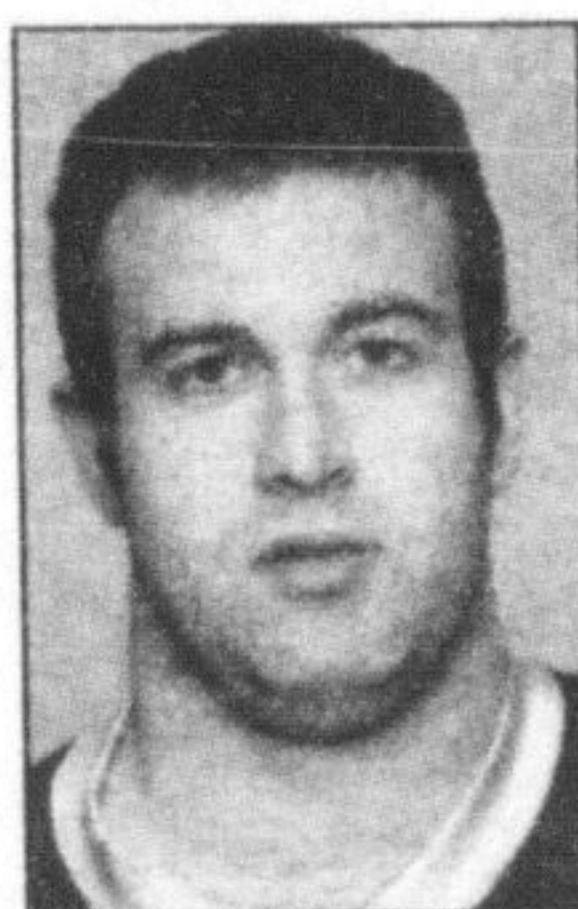
"Being in there for the win was great. Personally I think I played fairly well. I did some good things and

there are some things I need to improve on. You always want to get better."

Prior to this season, O'Meara had only seen special-teams play with the Saskatchewan Roughriders, who traded him to Winnipeg in May 2007 for a fifth-round draft pick.

He dressed as a back-up for two regular season games last year and all three Blue Bombers' playoff contests, including the Grey Cup against his former team.

Should he remain in the lineup this week, O'Meara will square off against fellow Miltonian Mike O'Shea, whose Argonauts play host to Winnipeg Friday at the Rogers Centre.



Matt O'Meara

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