

SPORTS

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Ready to get back behind the wheel

Fletcher makes return in Canadian Tire Series tomorrow in Montreal

John Fletcher knows there's far too much outside his control to leave anything within it to chance.

So when it comes to his Dodge Avenger, the 41-year-old Miltonian takes the term meticulous to a whole new level.

Some — like car owner Jim Bray — would probably throw out the phrase obsessive as well.

But that would hardly be used in any kind of derogatory manner.

"Like a lot of drivers, John can be moody. But there's no better fabricator (builder), set-up man or driver," said a rather blunt Bray, whom the local racing veteran has been driving for off and on since the late '90s. "He can do all three, and that's why I put up with his moods."

Never one to leave a single stone unturned when it comes to his car's performance, Fletcher initially questioned his readiness for tomorrow's (Saturday) NASCAR Canadian Tire Series event in Montreal.

That he'd consider pulling out of his only scheduled race this year speaks volumes about his commitment to both Bray and new sponsors London Mechanical and JBM Leasing.

"With John you'll never have a DNF (did not finish) because of workmanship or not being prepared," noted Bray.

Added Fletcher, "Most people would be shocked at how much work goes into getting a car ready, not just before the season starts but between races as well. You put a car through an awful lot and it's an amazing amount of work to keep it going — overwhelming, really.

"This can be a cruel sport, because nothing ever goes wrong in practices — it's always in the race. My philosophy is that there's a thousand different things that could mess me up out there and I have no idea what it could be until I check everything."

Of course the mechanic and car builder's own racing endeavours haven't kept him nearly as busy as in previous seasons — due to a harsh set of circumstances earlier this year.



In the stands

with STEVE LeBLANC



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

IT'S RACE TIME: John Fletcher displays his Dodge Avenger just prior to leaving for Montreal for tomorrow's Canadian Tire Series event.

Marauders to face Oakville in first round

Will clash tomorrow night at Bronte field

After much discussion and debate, the Marauders will be on the road for tomorrow's (Saturday) first-round playoff game.

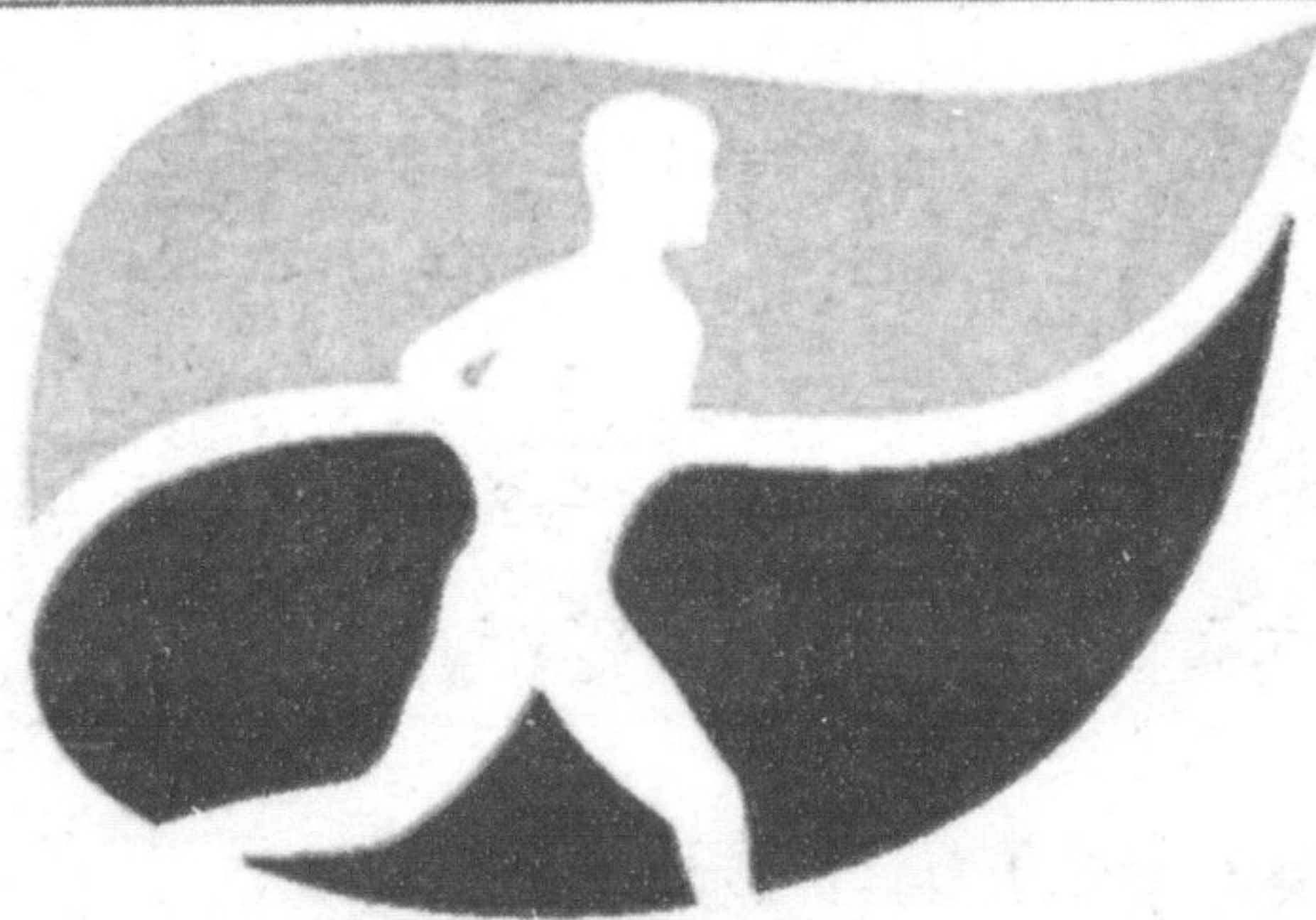
Milton initially looked to have home-field advantage against the Oakville Longhorns, due to the Northern Football Conference (NFC) awarding one point each to Oakville and the Oshawa Hawkeyes for a recent rained out game in Oshawa.

That allowed the 4-3 Marauders to edge 3-2-2 Oakville out of fourth place, with Milton's 24-23 season-opening squeaker (head-to-head play) serving as the tiebreaker after the two Halton teams finished with eight points each.

But the Marauders felt their neighbouring rivals should have got the victory by default over the Hawkeyes — who were unable to provide a back-up field — and thus agreed to have tomorrow's game in Oakville. The game is set for 7 p.m. at Bronte Athletic Field, on Lakeshore Road between Bronte Road and Third Line.

Milton got out to a big 3-0 start this season but struggled offensively down the stretch, being held to a single touchdown in three straight defeats before closing things out with a 20-16 decision over the winless Kingston Privateers.

Should they prevail, the Marauders would likely head to Kitchener next weekend to face the unbeaten Tri-City Outlaws.



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