

Spartans roll into Halton final

Girls' volleyball squad extends winning streak to 14

By Herb Garbutt
METROLAND MEDIA GROUP

The E.C. Drury Spartans hope the ending to their Halton high school season is better than the beginning.

The Spartans' senior girls volleyball team dropped its season opener to the Acton Bearcats but since then have been unstoppable. Now just one more win separates them from a Halton championship and a trip to the provincial high school tournament.

Since dropping its season opener to the Acton Bearcats, the E.C. Drury Spartans have been unstoppable. Monday's semifinal win over crosstown rivals, the Milton District Mustangs, extended their winning streak to 14 matches. Even more impressive, they haven't lost a single set along the way, taking 28 in a row.

The semifinal win, a 25-15, 25-9 victory, was much like the Spartans' season — they seemed to gain momentum as the match progressed.

While always in control of the opening set, Drury was even better in the second. The Mustangs, led by Jenna Bray who played a strong game both offensively and defensively, tried to mount an attack but were stuffed time after time by the blocking of Meg Rector.

Meanwhile, Tori McCutcheon and Bri Rector hammered balls around, over, or simply right through, the MD blockers.

"Having three six-footers is nice," said Drury coach Kevin Houldcroft. "I couldn't believe how many they put down and how quick they got them down. You watch them and you just go, 'Wow.'"

Drury closed the match by taking 12 of the final 15 points. And even with the match well under control, the Spartans were clearly gearing up for Thursday's final. With her team up 22-8, Jenn Armstrong made a diving save to keep a ball alive and earn Drury a point.

Despite having the leadership of McCutcheon, who is bound for the University of Central Florida next year, and Meg Rector, who will play Canadian university volleyball next year, the Spartans are still a very young team.

Drury starts three Grade 10s, with setters Nicole Woods and Tasha Brunner being responsible for orchestrating the attack and dishing the ball to the big hitters, including Bri Rector, the other Grade 10 starter.

Incorporating three young players into the lineup may have played a role in the early-season stumble.

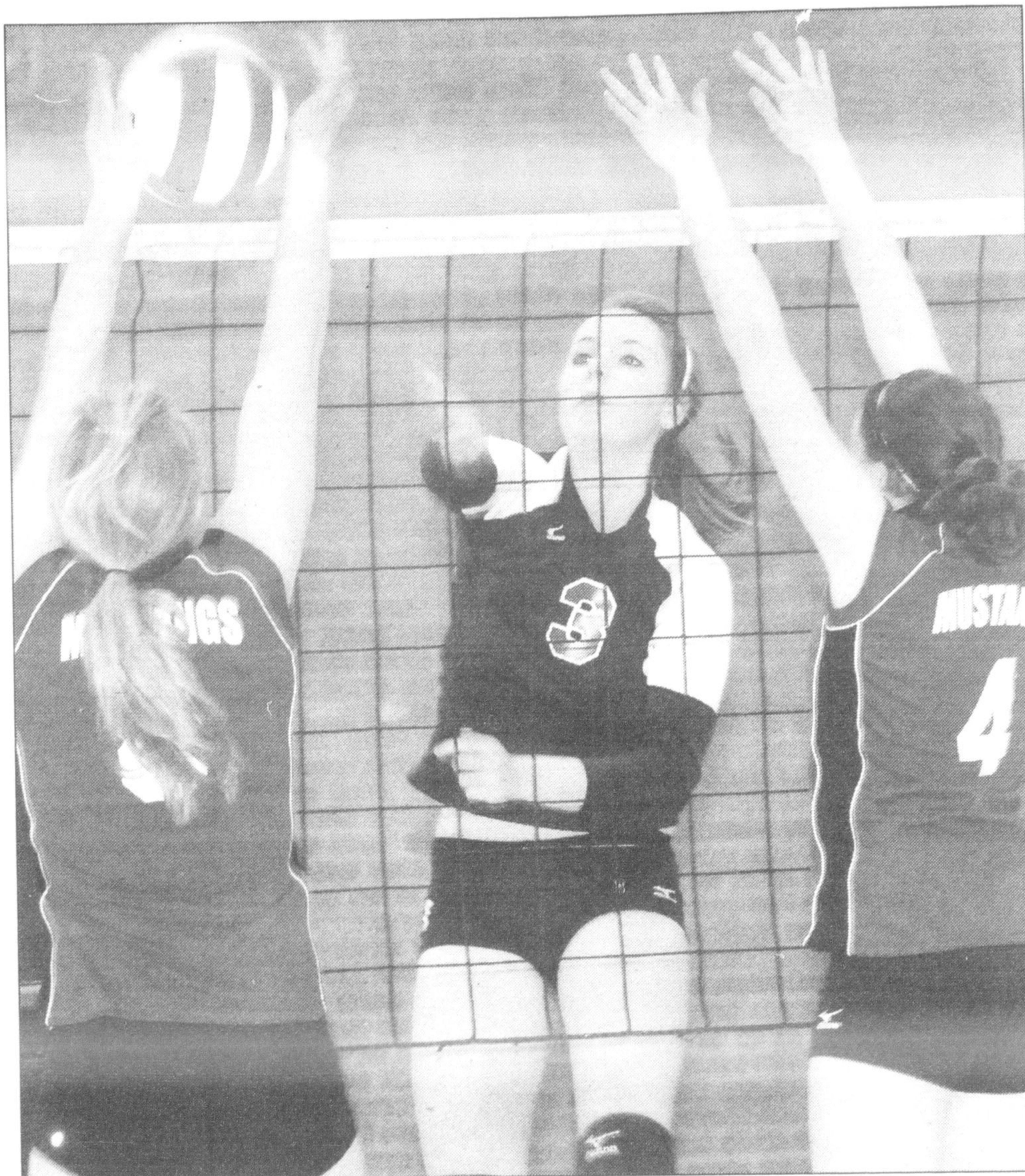
"We just weren't as organized as we could have been," Houldcroft said.

That's certainly not the case any longer.

Drury will face the St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders in Thursday's final. Aquinas is on a winning streak of its own, winning nine straight since losing back-to-back matches to Acton and Drury in December.

The Halton senior girls' final will be

played at 1 p.m. at Sheridan College in Oakville.



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

SPIKING SPARTAN: E.C. Drury's Bri Rector spikes the ball past Milton District Mustang defenders Tori Pickering (left) and Lyndsey Innes in Monday's Halton senior girls semifinal. The Spartans posted their 14th consecutive victory, 25-15, 25-9 to advance to the Halton championship game Thursday at Sheridan College in Oakville. Drury will face Oakville's St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders.

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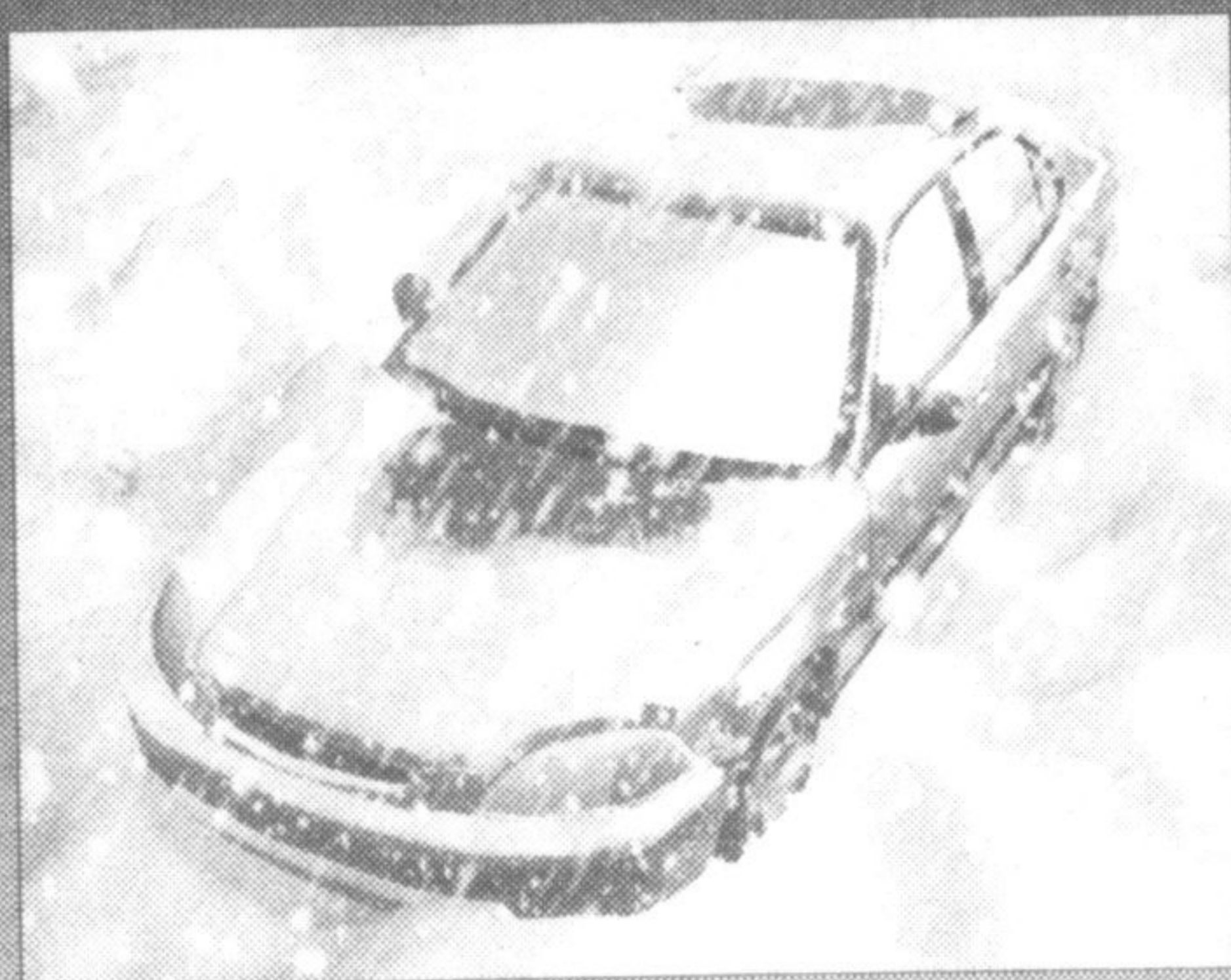
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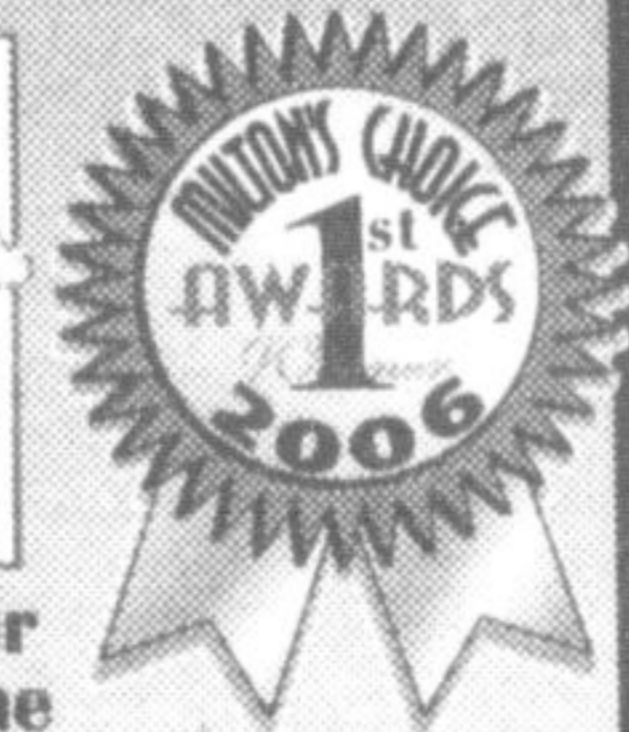


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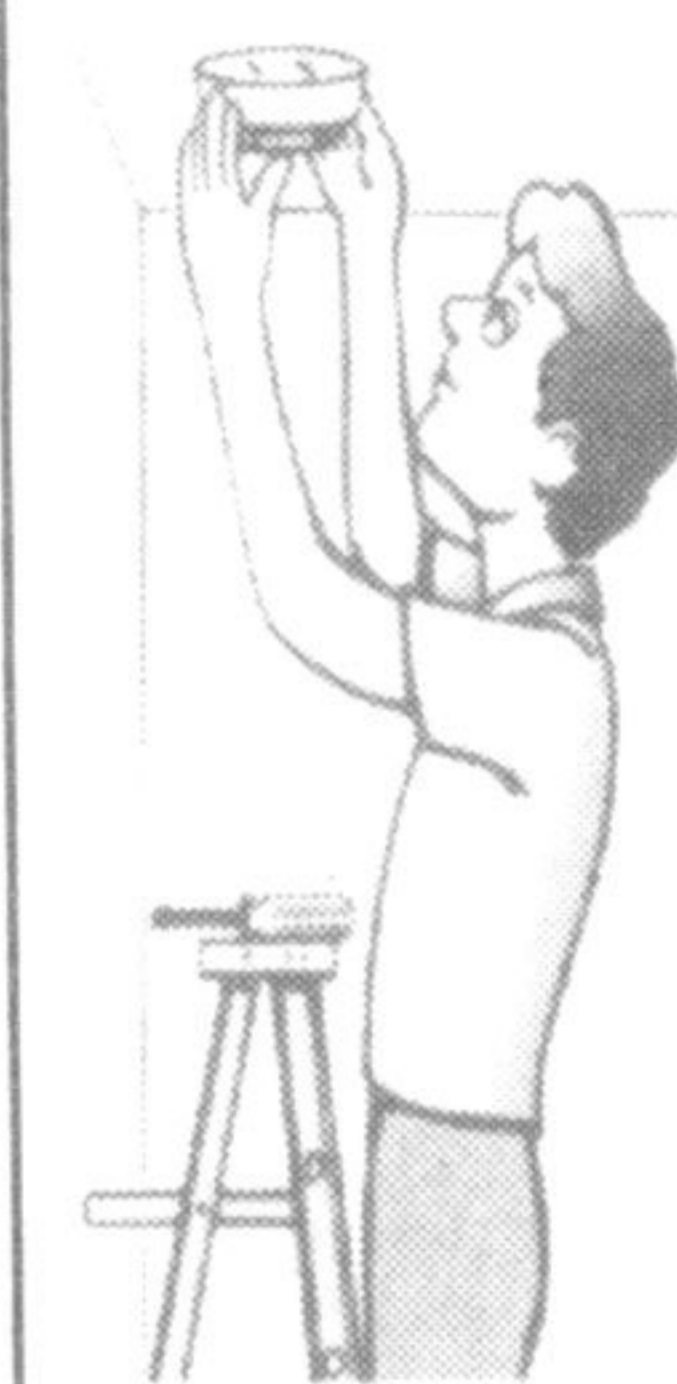
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