

## Milton wins Silver Tankard

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Steve Oldford is hardly a stranger to the Ontario Silver Tankard title — having won it twice before, as well as in the mid-'90s, when it was known as the Governor General's Cup.

However, the seasoned curler hardly had a 'been there, done that' reaction to his latest provincial championship triumph, which came earlier this month in Ajax.

"This one's just as satisfying or more, for a couple of reasons," said Oldford, one of the two skips for Milton's winning entry for the Silver Tankard, in which each club has two rinks, with their collective scores determining who wins. "First we didn't decide to put a team in until just a few days before the playdowns started, so to win it again was great. And we had three first-timers and I got a lot of enjoyment from seeing them win."

With Oldford leading vice and brother Dave, second Matt Lillie and Jeff Thomas and Ken Armstrong skipping a rink with vice Craig Thomas (Jeff's father), second Dave Ellis and lead Al Haringa, Milton put the finishing touches on its second provincial title in four years with a 12-10 decision over Chatham's Kevin Daniel and Robert Stafford.

Armstrong and Stafford battled to a 6-6 draw, while Oldford upstaged Daniel 6-4 — highlighting the win with a three-point fifth end.

"That's the thing about the Silver Tankard, you have to keep things close even if you're down because it's about the combined score," said Armstrong, who helped lead Milton to victory in 2006 as well.

Added Oldford, "It's definitely a unique event. You've got to be aware of how the other team's doing because that can really affect your own strategy."

Case in point was the championship's seventh end, when Armstrong suffered his only major hiccup of the final weekend — giving up three points that put Daniel ahead. Realizing he needed a big end of his own to counter this, Oldford set aside caution and managed his second multi-point round on the way to victory.

"You've got to know when to go for it and when to hold back," he said.

Crucial decisions weren't exactly necessary for the semifinals, with the eventual champs enjoying their only embarrassment of riches of the

otherwise highly-competitive Silver Tankard playdowns.

Up against members of the national senior championship team from Ottawa, Oldford beat Bruce Delaney by two points, while Armstrong decimated Rick Bachand 13-0.

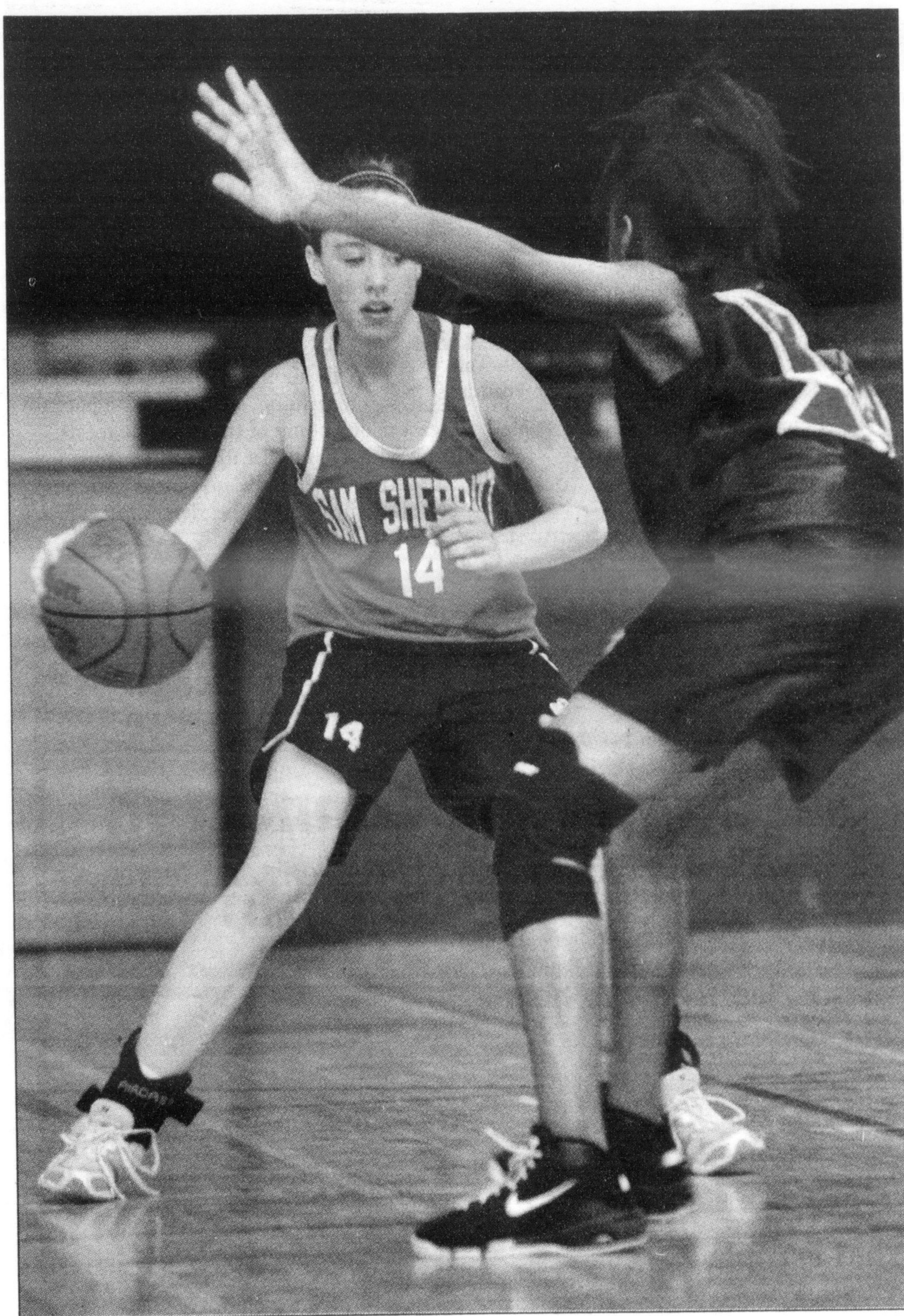
"Something like that never happens," said Armstrong, who went up 2-0 right away and scored a double-takeout in the second end that served as a catalyst for the blowout. "Once they fell behind they started taking high-risk shots and needless to say it didn't work. It was just one of those games where everything was working for us and nothing was working for them."

Oldford said that despite having three new members, Milton enjoyed good chemistry throughout the 16-entry playdowns.

"We had a great run and beat a pile of good teams," added Ellis, who's been part of four Silver Tankard teams and was the vice on the Bill Craig-skipped local rink that captured the Ontario Colts title last month.



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