

Learning from the best

New Twisters' program draws top instructors

By Herb Garbutt
METROLAND WEST
MEDIA GROUP

Geraldine Heaney is demonstrating stick-handling techniques, stressing the importance of keeping your head up.

She looks straight ahead at the 30-or-so players gathered around her on the ice at John Tonelli Sports Centre as she slides the puck back and forth with her stick.

None of the players staring intently back at her — the oldest being 10 — were even born when Heaney played in her first of three Olympics in 1998.

They may not know the person showing them how to keep control of the puck using their skates has three Olympic medals, two of them gold, or that she was among the first women elected to the International Ice Hockey Federation Hall of Fame.

But they do know she can help them improve their skills.

So after Heaney finishes her demonstration, they begin circling the ice, heads up, sliding the puck left and right.

The Twisters Performance Hockey School is the latest effort by the North Halton Twisters Girls Hockey Association to help players develop their skills, a fundamentally important concept that is often overlooked because of the scarcity of ice time.

"I coach a team, so I know there's a lack of ice time, so when you practise it's usually breakouts and systems," Heaney said.

"Something like this is great because they can get out and, instead of (practice) being all team concepts, they can get a chance to learn skills on their own."

Adam Bennett, a former pro hockey player and the Twisters' director of player development, said his goal in setting up the program was simple: find the best instructors available.

"I went right to the top. I was shooting for the stars," he said of the program that runs from October through January. "And all of them, without hesitation, said 'I'm on board.'"

Heaney leads one clinic each month for players from novice through to

midget. Skating instructor Cindy Bower, who has worked with several NHL teams and players, conducts two and Tim Turk, who works with Montreal Canadiens' prospects on improving their shot and puck skills, leads the month's other clinic.

Shannon Moulson, Ryan Taylor and Brent Reilly — all capable of running a clinic on their own, Bennett added — round out the staff. A weekly goaltending clinic, run by Mike Lociciero, also helps netminders hone their skills.

"You're not going to find a better group of instructors," Bennett said. "And that's going to give our kids a foundation for the future."

Twisters coaches also participate in the clinics, allowing them to gain knowledge from the instructors that they can use in the future.

Both Bennett, who played three seasons in

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STICKING TO IT: Above, former Olympian Geraldine Heaney helps Katelynn Krafczek with her stick-handling. Inset left, Heaney runs through a drill with a group of young Twisters.

McGovern helps make history at Fenway

Sean McGovern helped make history at one of baseball's most historic parks Monday.

No the 16-year-old Miltonian didn't hit one over the Green Monster. In fact he didn't swing a bat at all.

Instead McGovern and his Taft Prep School teammates were busy upstaging Connecticut rival Avon Old Farms 9-5 in a high school exhibition hockey game that served as a prelude to the NHL's New Year's Day Winter Classic between the hometown Bruins and Philadelphia Flyers.

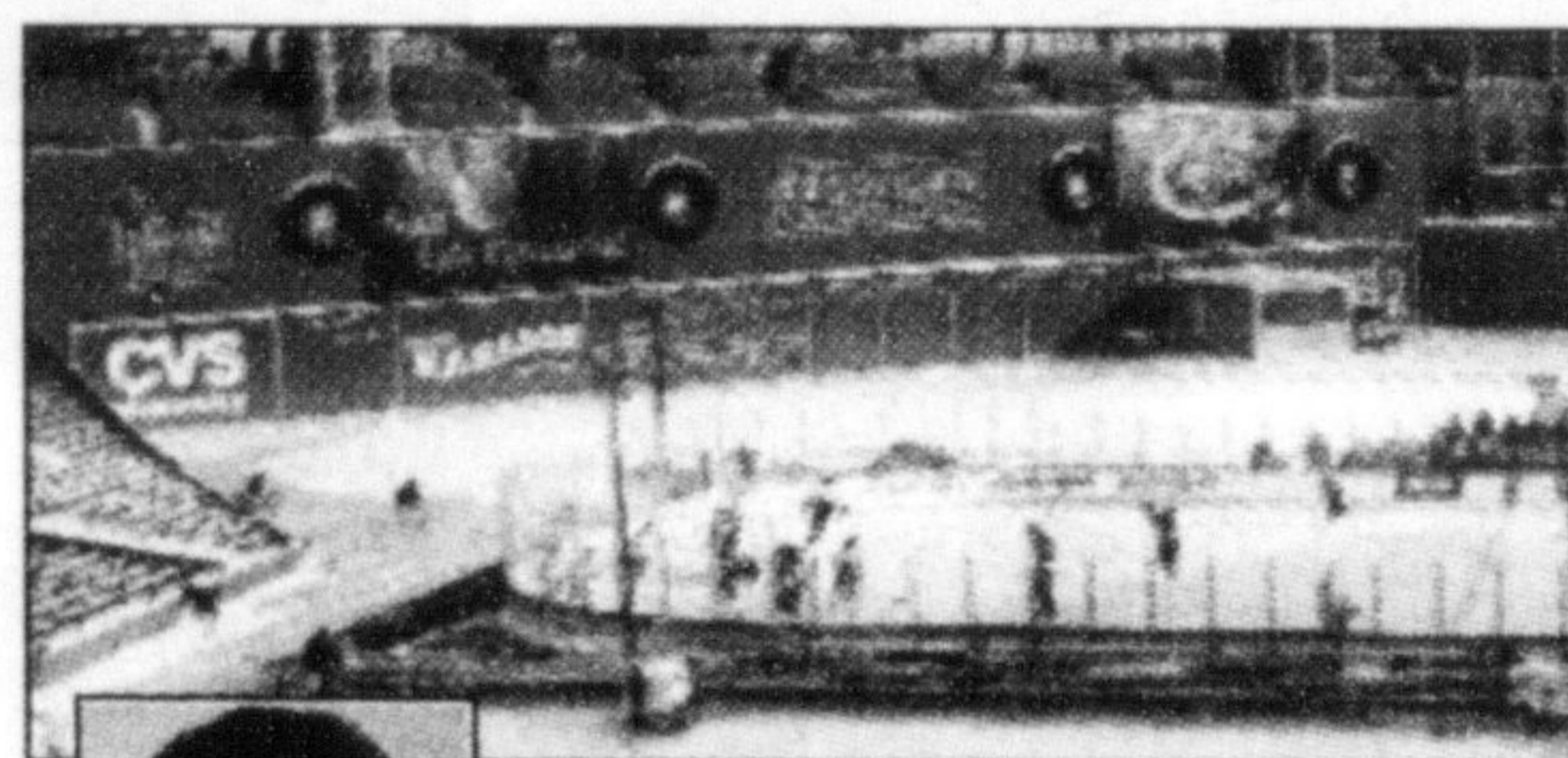
Thus McGovern — a former standout

with the Halton Hurricanes — was the first Canadian to play hockey at Fenway.

He not only competed, but scored a great-looking goal early in the game's second half, breaking down the right side and deking a defenceman before burying a shot to make it 5-3 Taft.

McGovern also drew an assist in his school's victory.

The Milton centre still has another year left of high school, but has already drawn interest from a number of NCAA Division I schools.

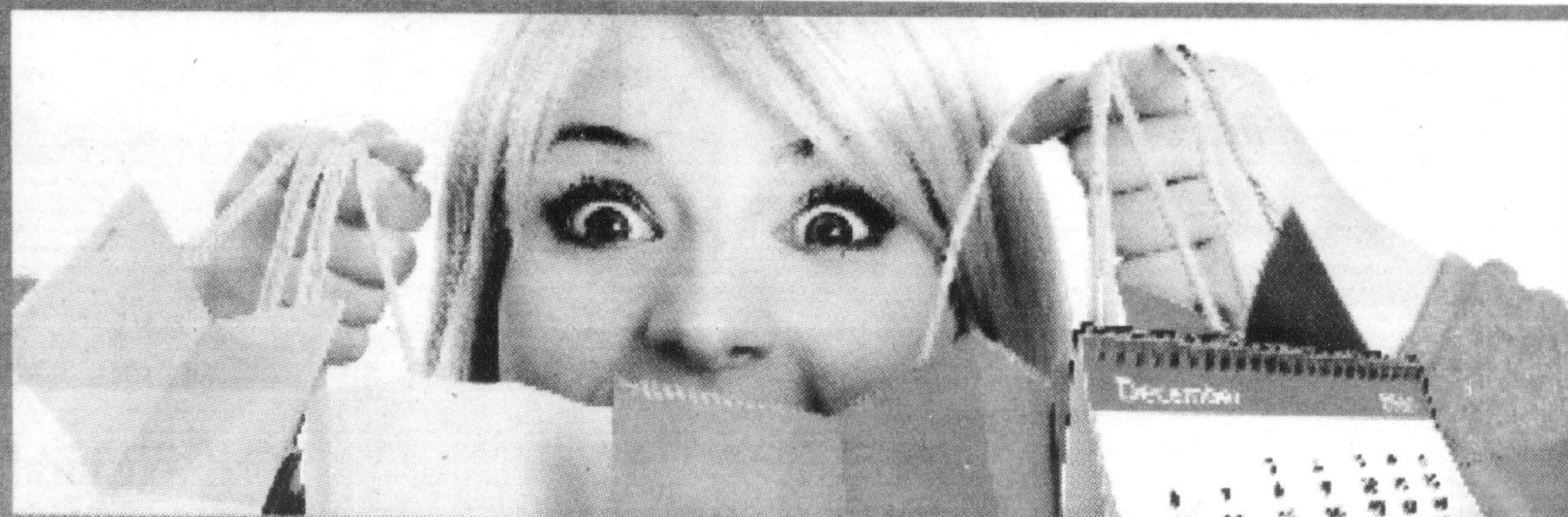


HOCKEY HISTORY: Sean McGovern and his Taft teammates compete at Fenway.

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