

Held hostage by drugs

Recovering addict shares frightening tale of dependency

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Waiting to address the audience at Milton District High School, Paul Christie sits hunched over with his head down as the highlights — ah, make that lowlights — of his life are read out.

For those looking his way, an air of remorse and guilt is readily apparent.

And for good reason.

Over a two-decade span — one that serves as a truly frightening cautionary tale — Christie was shot, stabbed, repeatedly jailed, deceived pretty much everyone who cared about him and often found himself begging for food and

“Every time I drank or did drugs, bad things happened.”

Paul Christie



CLAUDIO CUGLIARI / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

SPREADING HIS MESSAGE: Paul Christie recounts his two decades of drug addiction with Milton parents.

waking up in ditches.

Behind each of these horrible turns was a substance abuse problem, something he now battles to keep kids from ever having to suffer through, doing so via his out-

reach website (paulchristie.ca) and regular in-school visits with both students and parents.

“I ruined my life and my family’s. That’s what drugs do,” said the award-winning anti-drug

advocate to a group of a dozen attentive parents — having spoken to Grade 9 and 10 students at Milton District earlier in the day. “Every time I drank or did drugs, bad things happened.”

And those bad things started early.

Already drinking and using marijuana on a regular basis by the time he was 15, despite coming from a good home, Christie and some friends broke into a couple of homes during a beach party. He blacked out at some point in the night, and when it was all over the million-dollar houses were burned to the ground and he was under suspicion for arson.

Arrested a year-and-a-half later — once he was 17 and no longer a juvenile — he was unable to properly defend himself because of his hazy recollection of the night. So while firmly believing he didn’t actually set the fires, Christie received 20 months for each count when his ‘buddies’ testified against him.

By that time he’d graduated to heroin, often shooting up in school — flushing the needles down the toilet before heading off to class.

Along with starting to use drugs early, Christie knew early on that he was an addict.

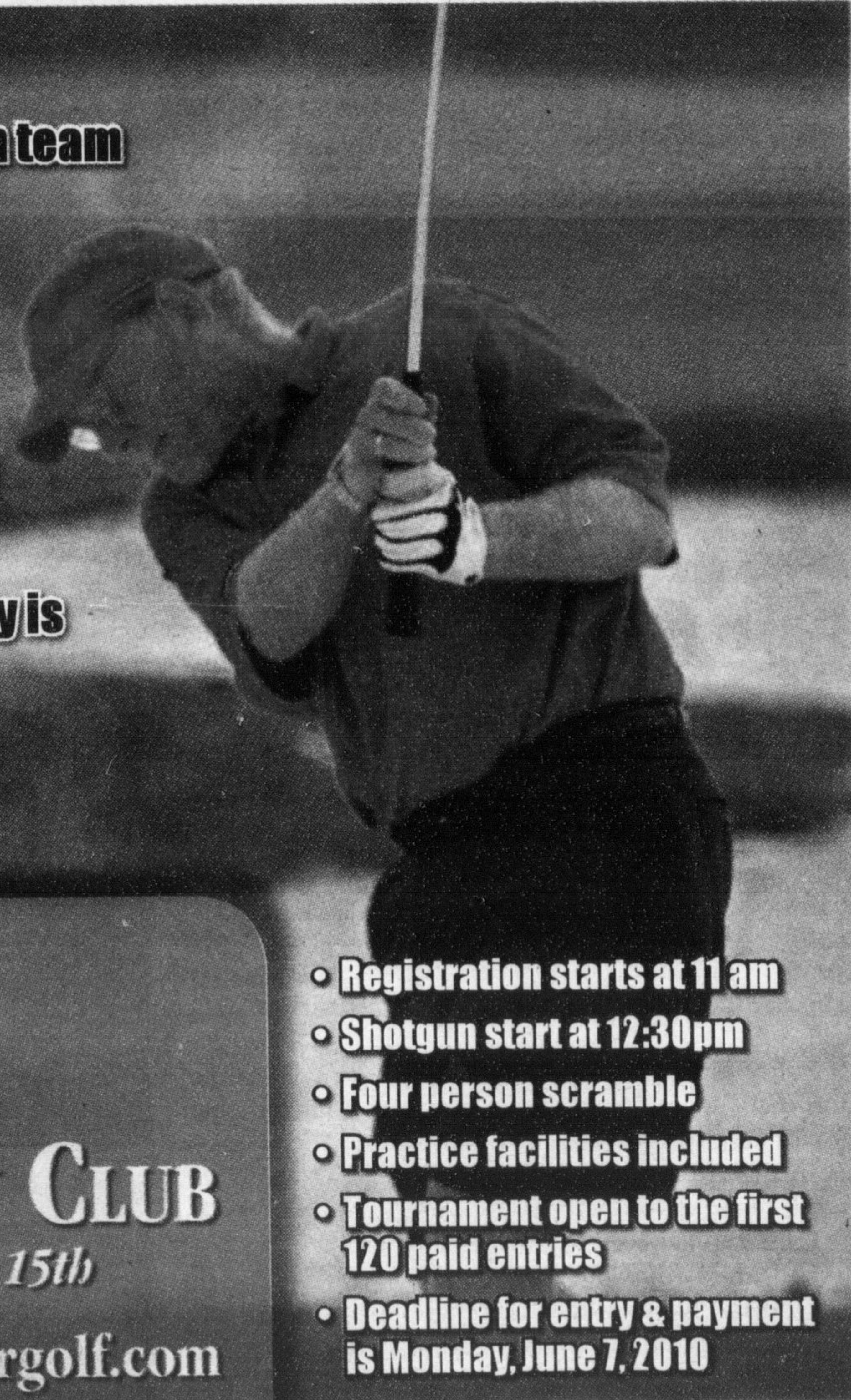
“It wasn’t long before the drugs weren’t fun anymore. That’s one of the things I really try to get through to the kids today,” he stressed, adding that

• see CHRISTIE on page A20

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