

# Summer is ending, but snowmobiles already?

Late summer. There's a bit of a snap in the morning breeze and more than the odd leaf has started to turn crimson in the early September air.

People's thoughts have started to turn from baseball and pool parties to hockey and winterizing their home. But is it really time to take out the snowmobiles?

For Joe Baratto and about 130 other enthusiasts scattered over North America, the snowmobile season never ends. When the snow melts and the weather turns warm, they just take to the water. Snowmobiling on water is what these guys do in their spare time.

"Now there's a circuit," said Baratto, a charter member of the International Watercross Association. "We race in Wisconsin, Michigan, Quebec, all over. It's just like any other race circuit. There's about 60 of us at any race and there is a points system."

According to Baratto, this weekend's competition in Milton is the final race of the season with the overall winner still to be decided. But isn't this an odd way to spend your spare time?

"We get a lot of strange looks from people when we tell them what we do on the weekend," said Baratto with a laugh. "They look at us like we're nuts."

But isn't speeding around a lake at speeds approaching 60 mph a little dangerous?

"It's actually safer than snow-



**As I See It**  
with JEFF PASQUALE

mobiling during the winter. When we fall off the machine we land on the water, but in the winter you can run into a tree or land on ice."

Seeing one of the snowmobiles sink to the bottom of whatever body of water they happen to be racing on isn't an uncommon sight. It also isn't cause for panic.

"Each machine has a long rope with an empty plastic jug attached to it," explained Baratto. "When the snowmobile sinks, the jug floats to the top so we know exactly where it is. There are pontoon boats with winches attached that bring the snowmobile back to the surface. You empty the gas, dry off the plugs, fill her up and off you go. It doesn't take more than about 10 minutes."

These machines are built for speed. He's been clocked at 63 mph, but Baratto estimates he could do about 80 mph given a long enough straightaway.

"Some people will buy a snowmobile from a dealer and then alter it for racing. What I do is try and find an aluminum frame and build from there. The rule for the racing is you can only have snowmobile parts on the machine, but we go for high per-

formance stuff." With a cost of \$4,000 to \$5,000 to get a machine ready for the water, this sport isn't for those without total conviction.

"We've gone through three engines so far this year, but we've got to try and stay competitive."

The two classes the pros run in are oval circuits and drag racing. There are also novice classes open to anyone who hasn't done this before.

Those interested should head out to Kelso by 9 a.m. tomorrow (Saturday) morning to register.

It will cost spectators \$6 to watch the races held both Saturday and

Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., but isn't it worth it?

**Here and There:** A big thanks goes out from Les Wilson to the Milton District Hospital for putting on a super mixed slo-pitch tournament recently. The Milton Merchants of the Central Ontario Jr. B Hockey League hit the ice for the first time this season tonight at Milton Memorial Arena when they host the Grimsby Peach Kings in an exhibition match at 8 p.m. Their first regular season game is Friday Sept. 29 in Burlington and the first home game is Friday Oct. 6 against one of the new teams in the league, Peter-

borough. Gary Ford, the coach of the Merchants last year, has caught on with the Georgetown Raiders for

this season as an assistant coach to former teammate Peter Sturgeon. Ford was instrumental in getting the

Acton Sabres Jr. C team to switch their affiliation from the Merchants to the Raiders for this season. We wish Gary all the luck in the world

in his new position. The Milton Merchants are looking for local families to board some out of town players for the hockey season. For more information call Merchant coach Rick Binca at work at 828-6618, or at home at 241-1427.

## Selects win two in Oakville

The Milton girls under 12 select soccer team recently travelled to Oakville to take part in a select soccer tournament. The team went undefeated in the round-robin portion of the event before bowing out in the semi-finals.

Milton opened the tourney with a 6-1 drubbing of Dundas. Tamara Vaughan led the attack with three goals while Melissa Weatherhead, Lesley Ashby and Karen Murray added one each.

The second game saw Weatherhead score the lone goal of the game to give Milton a 1-0 win over Oakville. The first blemish on Milton's record came in their third game when they were held to a 1-1 draw by Brampton. Vaughan did the damage for the locals.

The semi-final match saw the selects come up against a tough Brantford squad and lose 4-2. Vaughan scored both of Milton's markers.

Sharing the goaltending duties during the tourney were Danielle Winter and Alison Primok. Both played very well.

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