

## Minor hockey is losing its popularity among youngsters

Where is minor hockey headed? Hockey is the greatest sport in the world and is just about the most exciting thing a youngster can be involved in, but many are missing out on the fun. It seems the dream of becoming a superstar every child starts with fades quickly, for a variety of reasons.

Registration in minor hockey is steady among beginners but from then on it starts to decline. The dropout rate is exceedingly high at all levels after the first year, and has another large jump after midget age.

There are many reasons for the decline, among them; the game is too rough and parents don't want their kids to get hurt; the game is too costly, or there is no convenient place to play. Any of these can force a child out of hockey.

Then there is the ongoing problem of persuading quality coaches and referees to become involved. Who are we kidding? Just getting coaches and refs to do the job at all is a task in some areas — never mind their quality.

You can't blame people for not getting involved, considering the amount of nonsense sometimes associated with many positions. If it isn't an irate parent causing a scene, then it's a player acting up because he feels he isn't getting enough ice time. Occasionally, it's an opposing coach who lets his own ideas influence the game, usually for the worse.

Referees have their own problems, one of which is dealing with the ongoing rule changes. The changes are in the best interest of the game and deal with the evolving face of the sport, but they add to an already complicated text on how the game is to be played.

Oddly though, interest in hockey at the seniors level is at an all-time high (some refer to it as 'oldtimer' hockey but those of us who play it still have a dream). This involvement is great but is, in fact, adding to the problems of minor hockey. Many of the older players might well have turned their talent and experience to coaching but are too busy playing two or three times a week to devote any time to the youngsters.

Of course there are many other things young people can, and do, get involved in, but we need to create a desire for the game in the youngsters of today. We should help them get interested in the game at an early age and stay with it, without wandering away from a good education. And I'm serious about the education.

The fellowship, the team play, the joy of winning and learning to deal with losing all help develop character. With the variety of challenges presented in this day and age, it's a must that kids don't miss out. Learning from the experiences in hockey should be a crucial part of growing up.

My hat goes off to all the many volunteers who give of their time and of themselves to work with the teams — without them there would be no minor hockey. Let's hope the good people who are willing to get involved and assist will continue to be welcomed with open arms, while those who are there to act out their personal shortcomings will fall by the wayside.

I am sure this will go a long way towards making the game more fun and attractive to the young people of today. After all, that's what hockey is supposed to be at all levels, competitive and fun. Let's not lose sight of this.

### Calling the Shots

with BRUCE HOOD



## Juvenile reps stay at .500

By JEFF PASQUALE

The Milton Sandstone Transport juvenile rep hockey team is in a rut.

After starting the season with a record of 1-1-1, the Truckers went out and split their next two games, a 3-1 loss at home to Orangeville Saturday and a 4-2 win in Acton.

"In the Orangeville game we outplayed them, outshot them and lost," said coach Barrie Elliott. "We had the better of the play but sometimes things like that happen."

### Pearson scored

Jamie Pearson scored the lone marker for Milton. Jim Murray was between the pipes.

In the win over Acton, Pearson, Rob Mifsud, Colin Grieves and Kyle Hasselheldt did the damage, but once again Elliott said the score didn't reflect the play.

"We got an early 3-0 lead but Acton got two quick ones in the third period before we got the insurance goal," he said. "We outshot them 40-15 but just couldn't put the puck in the net."

### Steady goaltending

One area Elliott thought was steady going into the season was the Trucker goaltending. With Murray and Mark Harrison between the

pipes, he had two experienced net-minders.

"They just haven't been getting enough work," explained Elliott. "The other team doesn't get any shots for a long time and when they finally do, we're not ready for it. It's just a matter of concentration."

### New signings

In an effort to shore up the short-handed squad, Elliott has signed a couple of players, Jim Speck, who last year was with the Milton District High School Mustangs, and Doug Poulton, a former E.C. Drury Spartan.

"Jim's going to Georgian College in Barrie and will give us some real toughness on defence. Doug can put the puck in the net. He's a goal scorer."

Elliott will find himself short of the full complement of players for at least three more games as Paul Allen still has to serve the three final games of a five-game suspension he received for face mask pulling.

Milton hosts Acton Saturday before travelling to Hespeler.

"I still feel we're going to be so much better than we currently are. I think the added ice time will help. We just need to get some practising in," said Elliott optimistically.

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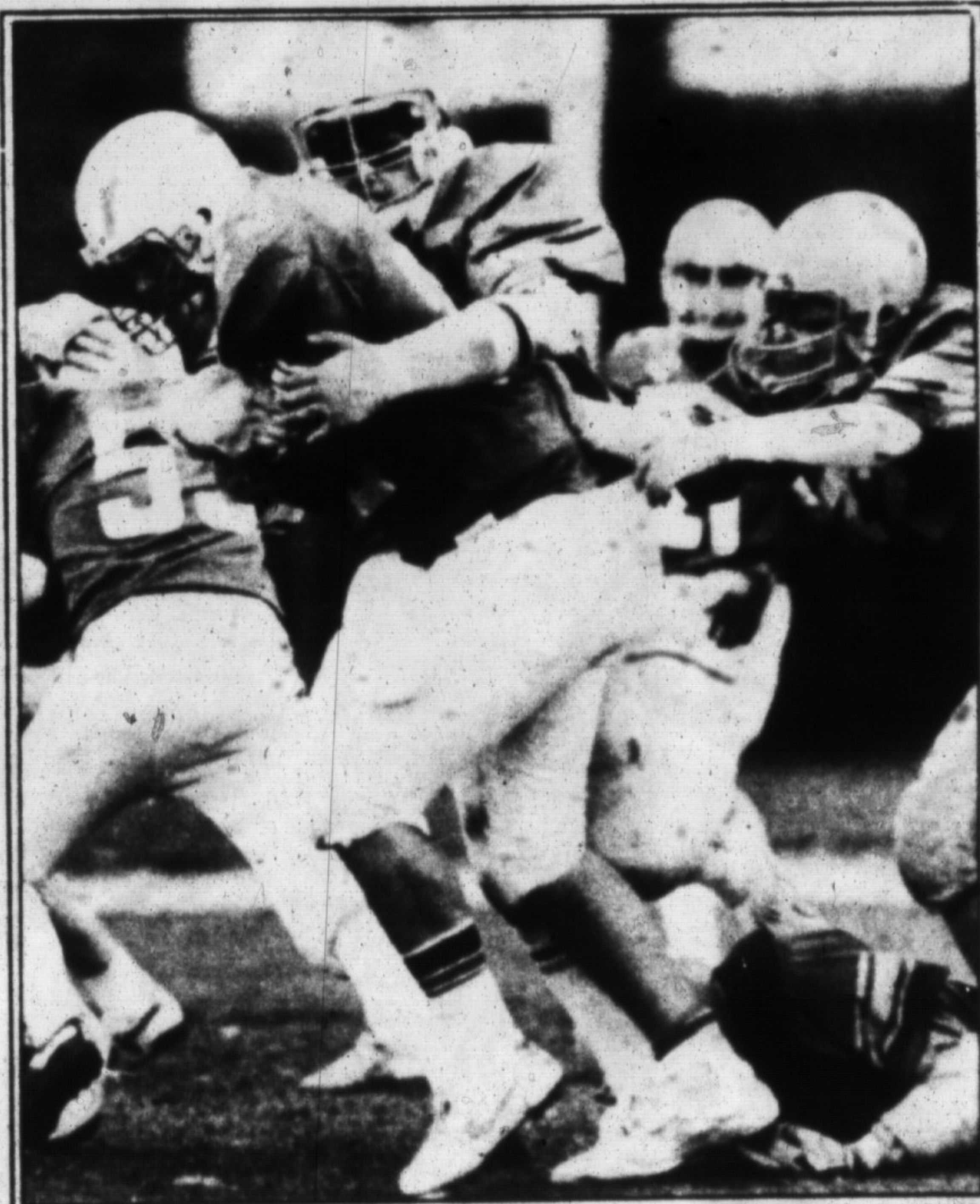


Photo by JON BLACKER

### Grinding our yards

Milton District High School junior football running back Bill King grinds out the yardage in a 34-0 playoff win over Burlington Central Wednesday. Milton now plays Georgetown in the semi-finals.

## Senior Mustangs win Scarborough tourney

After a disappointing campaign, the Milton District High School senior girls' basketball season ended on a high note as they took the title in the Cardinal Newman Secondary School Tournament last weekend in Scarborough.

Milton opened the tourney with a 62-30 shellacking of Toronto's Notre Dame. Wendy Pos was the high scorer in a game which gave the Mustangs little trouble.

The second game was nearly as easy as Natalie Clarke led the Mustangs to a 50-30 win over the host Cardinal Newman team.

The final was against Huron Heights, and Milton came out on top of a low-scoring game, 38-23. Clarke was the high scorer in the contest

with 14 points. Milton's Geraldine Bergman was named the tourney's MVP.

Coach Berrie Brown is optimistic about the squad's chances in the Halton league next year.

"Our team finally gelled for this tournament," she said. "It took a while for the team to get the system down, but they played much better later in the year."

Most of the experienced players will be back next year, as well.

"We're only losing one player next year so if we can add a couple of the juniors to the team, we should be fairly strong. Our main problem this year is we just couldn't put the ball in the basket. Our defence was pretty good."