

Single-A and additional entry tykes deliver championship sweeps

42. the regular season with a 21-2-1 run and finished first in the round robin (7-0-3) before securing the first-ever championship at the tyke AA Tier 1 level.

The Winterhawks clinched the title with a 4-1 win in Burlington, jumping ahead and sealing the deal with two third-period goals by Noah Race.

Ryan Cunha and William Eggleton scored two minutes apart late in the first — both going top shelf — while Anthony Russell was rock solid between the pipes. Aidan Cormack assisted on the first two goals.

A tykes (Tier 4)

Milton's A tykes had proven they could secure and maintain the upper hand on Halton Hills.

But could they come from behind to prevail?

The Winterhawks answered that in championship fashion in Acton, rallying from a 2-0 deficit to edge the Thunder 3-2 and clinch a Tri County Tier 4 title sweep.

The three-game victory was especially sweet after Halton Hills had beaten them twice in round-robin play.

Ethan Perras turned the tables on the hosts with two goals just 40 seconds apart in the second period.

That set the stage for Zachary Purdie — who assisted on the first two goals — to pot the winner midway through the third period. From there, Liam Edmonds capped a rock-solid series with some dynamite saves down the stretch to preserve the narrow lead.

Standing out with assists on all three markers was Roman Giannuzzi, while also helping set up the winner was Hunter Roy.

Strong backchecking and overall defence factored heavily into the championship-clinching decision.

Talent pool deep: rookie

43. contribution as well, with four goals and four assists for the 5-9 Rock. "It's what I take pride in, providing energy for my team and helping create chances."

O'Connor talked about how deep the talent pool is in the NLL going into the season opener. Three months later, that's something he has even greater appreciation for. "Pretty much everyone's an all-star in their own right at this level, so you really can't take a single shift off. There's no one you can take it easy against."

And with many weeks featuring just one game for the NLL's nine teams, O'Connor is quickly learning the vital importance of mental preparation.

"Having just that one game on some weekends can be good and bad — good because you spend all week getting ready for just that one battle, and it's great if you win. But if you lose you've got that whole next week to think about it and can't wait to play that next game."

While noting his first-year Miltonian could stand to add a little strength in the off-season, Lovell said he's been quite pleased with O'Connor's overall progress this year. "He's still a work in progress in terms of learning how to play defence at this level, but he's receptive to the importance of getting better in certain areas."

O'Connor certainly agrees that there's room for improvement, but is feeling good about the initial groundwork he's laying with the Rock.

"Things are going well and I'm enjoying being able to contribute to this team. There really hasn't been any hiccups so far, and I'm learning a ton."

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AE tykes (Tier 6)

Payback is never as sweet as when forged on the championship stage.

Just ask the additional entry tyke Winterhawks.

Losing two of three round-robin games against Woolwich, Milton turned the tables when the title was on the line — pulling off three low-scoring victories to sweep the Tri County Tier 6 final.

Buoyed by a 2-1 overtime win to kick off the best-of-

five series — with Colin Day providing the heroics — the Winterhawks never looked back and clinched the championship with a 3-1 triumph.

Lucas Miliopoulos put Woolwich away with a pair of third-period goals, with the game winner coming while his team was shorthanded. Nathan Preyma, Gavin Williams and Adam Gaudet assisted on his clutch goals, while Ben Kuhner set up Tyler Clark for the initial tally. Standing tall between the pipes was Elliott Dorsett.

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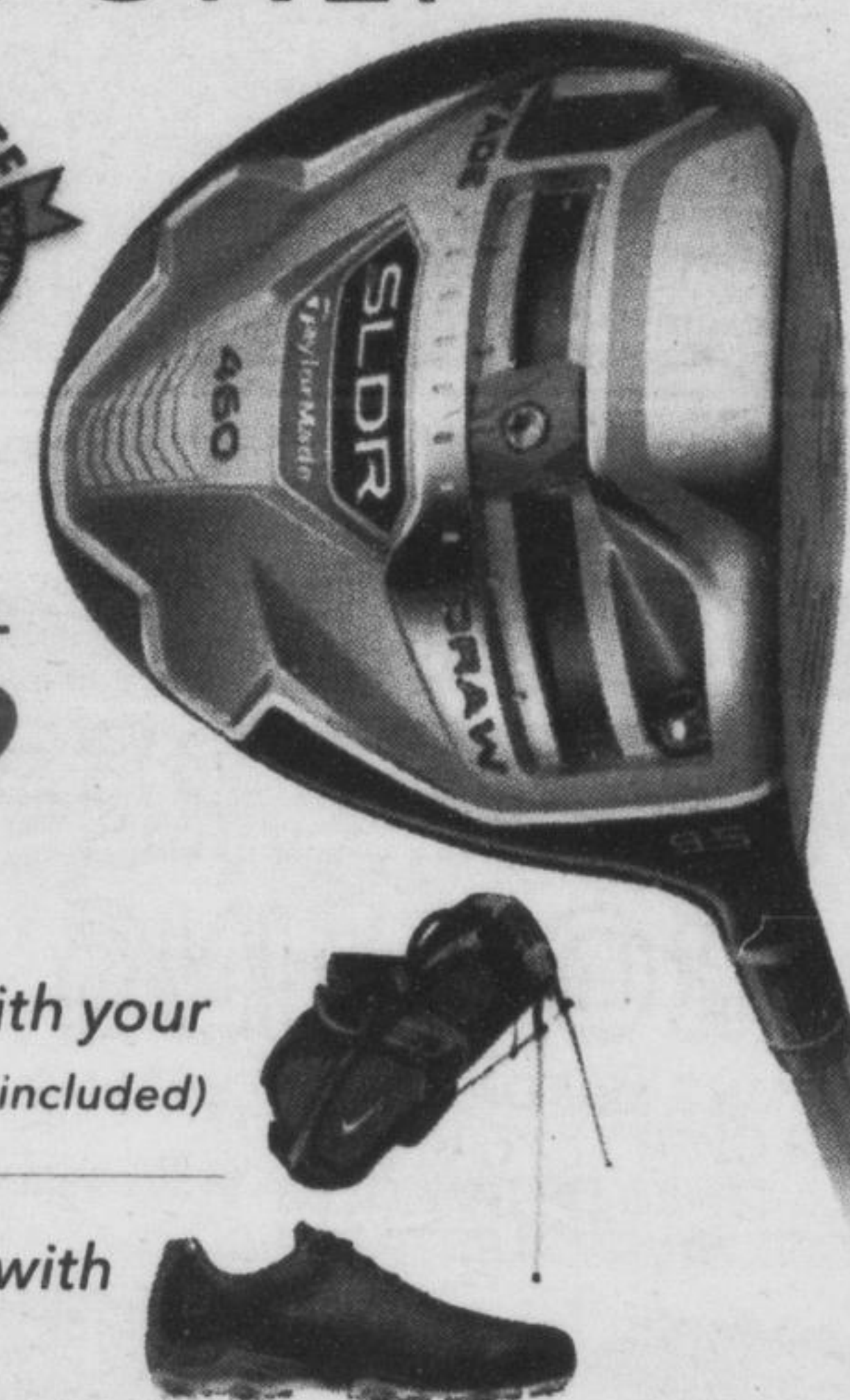
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