

Cobras ready to strike; new junior hockey team coming to town

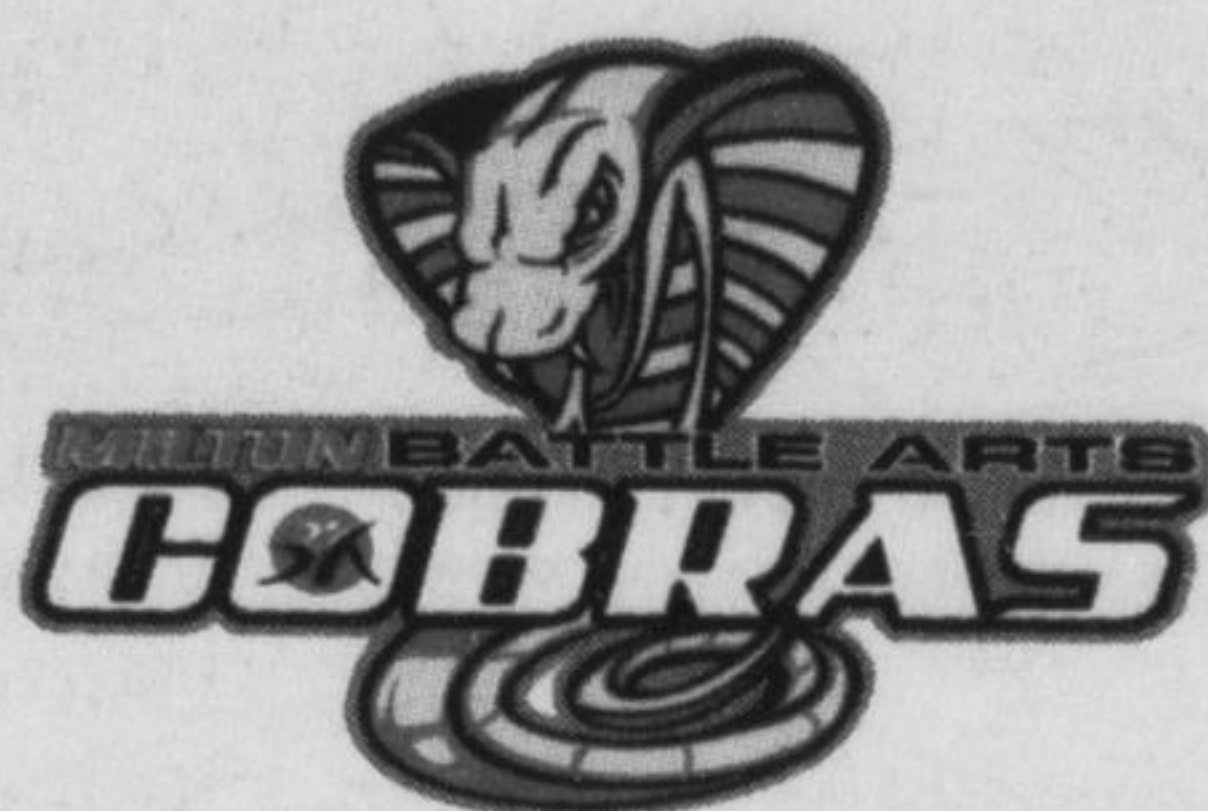
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There'll be some competition for local junior hockey fans' loyalty this fall.

World Wrestling Entertainment performer Santino Marella (aka Anthony Carelli) — who recently moved to Mississauga after living in town for five years — is set to bring the Milton Battle Arts Cobras to John Tonelli Sports Centre for the 2014/15 season.

They'll be part of the newly-established Canadian International Hockey League (CIHL), which will be affiliated with the United Hockey Union and Amateur Athletic Union and start with eight teams — including those in Barrie, Collingwood, Espanola, Batchewana, St. Charles, Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie.

Carelli will serve as owner for the Cobras — offering extra training opportunities at his Mississauga-based Battle Arts Academy, where he's part owner — while donning the general manager mantle will be former IceHawks education advisor Steeve Boulanger.



While admitting it'll be a challenge to build a strong fan-base in a town that already has a junior club, Boulanger says Milton's continuing growth offers great potential.

"It's exciting to be part of something new. Having been an education advisor (with IceHawks) and an intern with International Scouting Services, I'm looking forward to having a bigger role in junior hockey," said Boulanger, a principal at Our Lady of Providence in Brampton, who stressed that there will be a strong focus on academics with his new club. "It's going to be a work in progress (getting fan support). Hopefully we can have some success and prove ourselves to be a valuable option for junior hockey in Milton."

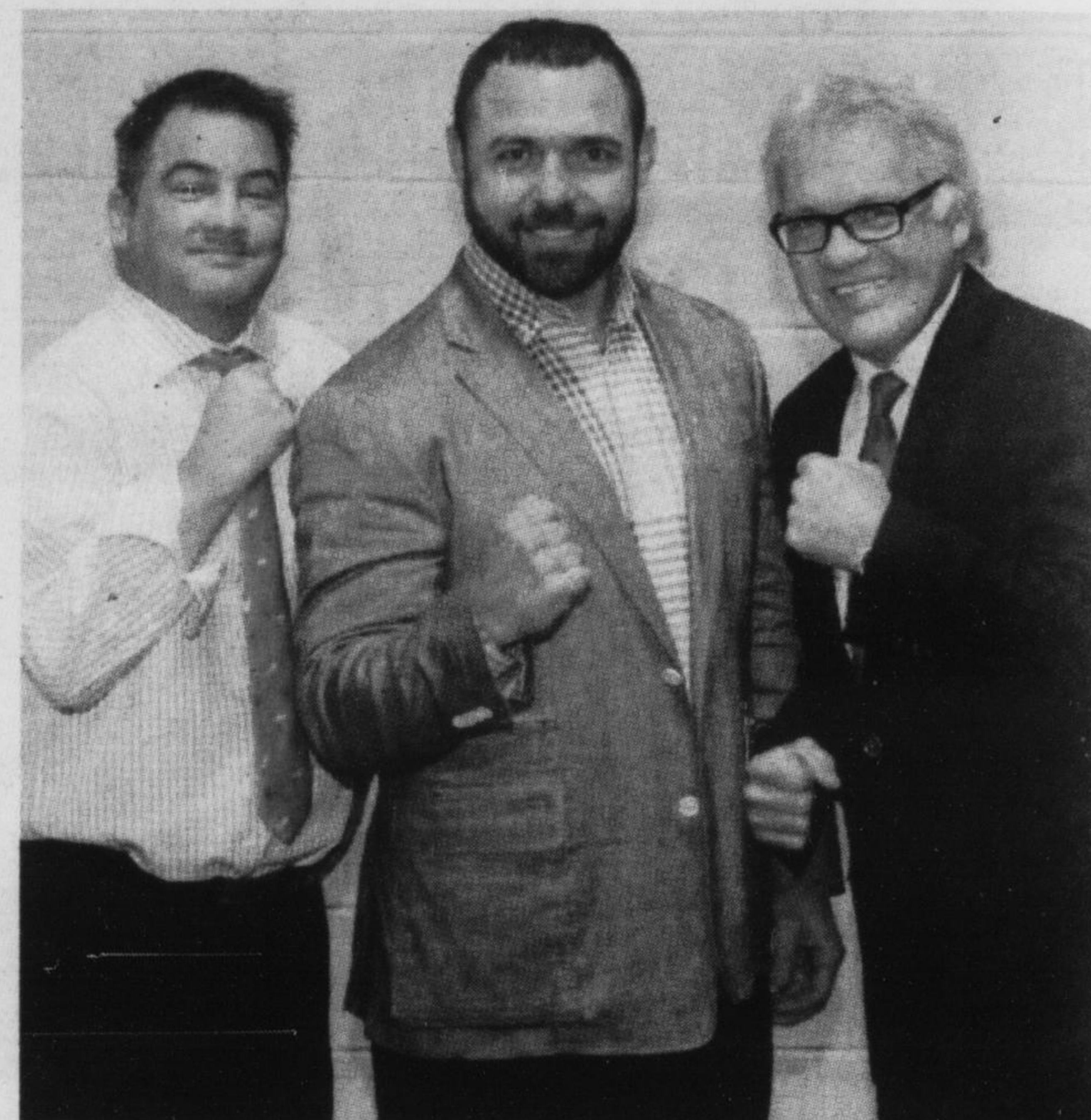
The recent addition of Dennis Maruk — one of three ex-NHLers who'll be coaching in the CIHL this coming season — should add some credibility to the Cobras, said their GM.

Assisting Maruk will be former IceHawks star defenceman Jeff Caister, who recently finished up a four-year pro hockey career — in Europe and the ECHL — following his NCAA days with Wayne State and St. Lawrence. The Cobras will play their home games on Saturday nights — tentatively starting at 8 p.m. — and will have a 44-game schedule for the inaugural season.

While CIHL teams can have up to a dozen international imports, Boulanger said the Cobras will look to have as much hometown talent as possible on the roster.

A prospects camp is set for Tuesday to next Thursday at Milton Sports Centre, with the main camp to start in mid-August.

Players interested in trying out are asked to contact Boulanger at GM@miltonbattleartscobras.com.



Owner Anthony Carelli (centre) joins with GM Steeve Boulanger (left) and head coach Dennis Maruk in announcing the addition of the Milton Battle Arts Cobras to the Canadian International Hockey League. *Submitted photo*

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