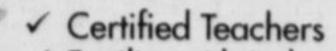
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Facing Canada 'weird but enviable position'

recruited by a league teammate last summer to try out for the Italian squad.

Unlike the other six teams in the women's division, Italy — without much presence in the street hockey realm — is made up of Canadians with Italian heritage as opposed to players from the actual country.

With just enough time to recover from a knee injury before February's tryouts, Mangotich survived three rounds of cuts in Malton — among a field of roughly 50 capable hopefuls — to crack the 14-member contingent that will kick off the international showcase against Canada Monday.

Said the Team Italy winger, "It'll be a weird but enviable position. It's going to be the only time I don't want Canada to win," said the gritty winger, a reliable scorer who admits she spends a bit too much time in the penalty box — something she attributes to the tenacity developed trying to hold her own against her brothers. "Most of the team are either my teammates or opponents (in league play).

We've had a lot of practices and exhibition games so we've bonded into a pretty tight family... especially with the Italian heritage thing in common."

SPORTS

Mangotich figures her team will be the oldest one in Switzerland in terms of average age, but also feels the overall conditioning is high enough to make a solid showing.

And while holding no illusions about reigning supreme in a field with Canada, the U.S. and Czech Republic, she doesn't expect Italy to be a pushover either.

"I'd say we should finish around the middle of the pack," said Mangotich, who'll swing over to Italy after the championships to join her father for a quick family vacation. "The Czech Republic team is basically their Olympic hockey team that just plays street hockey to stay in shape (for ice hockey). So they're going to be pretty good... and of course Canada."

Steve LeBlanc can be reached at sleblanc@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @MiltonOnSports.

Minor bantam Mets reign supreme in Guelph

Donning their rally caps when it mattered most, Milton's A minor bantams outdistanced the host Guelph Royals in the championship showdown of the Rival Series Tournament.

The Mets were down 4-1 early in the finals before fortified pitching from starter Braydon Rightmyer and some timely hitting allowed them to outdistance the Royals 9-5.



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