



Battling for possession

Milton Magic's Selesté Ayala (right) chased down Melissa Tougher of Saltfleet during U15 League Cup semifinal play last week. Milton fell 6-0.
Michael Ivanin / Special to the Champion

Armstrong and new partner find instant chemistry on the beach volleyball court

Performance at the U16 provincials that — as the number two seed among 32 teams — Armstrong and Torres eked out a 21-19 championship clinching win to reign supreme.

Both victories came in the age group's highest division/tier.

"We lost a couple of sets along the way, but we were mostly pretty decisive," said the 5-foot-7 local volleyball standout, a defensive specialist who helped her Hurricanes prevail at both the provincials and eastern nationals this past spring. She reached the U14 beach volleyball provincial quarterfinals with a different partner last summer. "Neither of us is really tall, but we're scrappy out there. I think our biggest strength is just that we trust each other. We make the other look good on the court. It's (straight provincial championship wins) exciting. I never thought this was possible. I'm so grateful and hope-

fully this is a springboard to more success."

Armstrong admits she was far from a volleyball enthusiast when introduced to the game in Grade 4 phys-ed.

"I hated it."

But aversion couldn't mask potential, and a year later she found herself recruited onto the Chris Hadfield School team.

"I've loved it ever since," said Armstrong, whose recent inclusion at the High Performance Centre camp in North Bay no doubt buoyed her confidence for the golden sweep that was soon to come on the provincial beach volleyball scene. "I've got so much passion for the sport and just want to keep getting better."

Hurricanes Technical Director Gaby Jobst can certainly attest to that.

"Haley is very driven. She's constantly trying to better herself and find ways to improve her game.

The first thing I noticed about Haley was her work ethic. She doesn't accept mediocrity. She's very aggressive and competitive."

Taking pride in her well-rounded play, Armstrong sees her recent beach volleyball experience — and success — paying dividends on the indoor court.

"With just the two players (on the beach) it definitely improves your mobility and ability to read the play. With so many more reps, it makes you faster on your feet."

Armstrong will look to add to her summer medal haul this weekend, when she and Torres return to Ashbridges Bay Park for the Canadian U15 championships.

"I think we've got a chance (to win) — or come top three at least."

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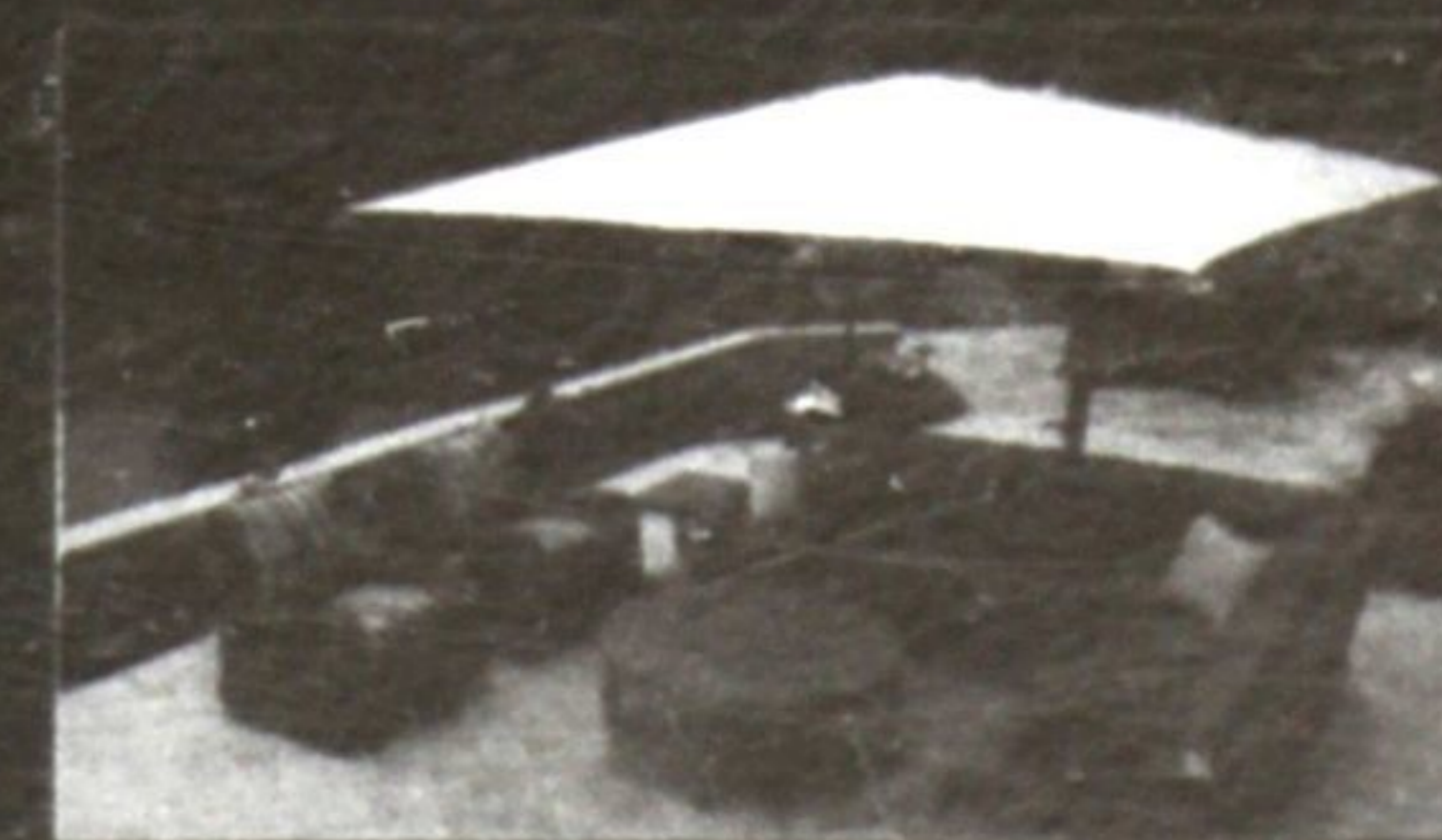
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