

Larsen's a familiar face during playdowns

The chance to reach a provincial championship begins at the Guelph Curling Club this weekend for men's and women's local rinks and there are plenty of well-known names.

The host club has six rinks entered in the men's division including Greg Balsdon (provincial finalist 2005, 2007) and Andrew Fairfull (provincial finalist 2005).

But a perennial competitor, and a familiar name in several age-group categories, is Guelph's Axel Larsen.

Larsen, reached the men's Ontario provincial finals three times, with his last appearance coming in 1994. He was runner-up that season, losing to a rink with a lineup even more familiar to us: Russ Howard, Glenn Howard, Wayne Middaugh and Peter Corner. Howard was the reigning world champion at the time. Not bad, eh?

Larsen, 60, just advanced to the senior provincial championship for the fifth time last weekend (he won the title in 2001), but is right back playing Tankard playdowns Friday. He will also be taking part in masters (60+) for the first time in early 2008.

"We enjoy competitive curling and have a lot of time on our hands," Larsen says of his rink, with a chuckle.



BRIAN BELFRY
CURLING

This time around Larsen's competitive squad consists of Walter Johnston, Gerry Sundwall and Ken Cox. Long-time lead Kent Carstairs is recuperating from health issues but expected to join the team for masters.

Don't let Larsen's age fool you. He slipped past the young Fairfull brothers in last year's zones to be the B-qualifier, then had a 6-1 lead after five ends on Glenn Howard in the first game of the regional playdowns.

"We had him on the ropes and he made an incredible shot or the game was over," said Larsen.

The Guelph rink was sitting two behind guards when Howard made an "in-off" (throwing his rock so it ricochets off another stone toward the centre of the house) to knock out both of Larsen's stones and score three.

Howard went on to win the game albeit by having to throw his last stone in the 10th, reportedly the only time Howard had to play the whole game

during zones and regionals.

"It was basically a Hail Mary," Larsen said, recalling Howard's great throw. "But I'm sure he would have got through anyway even if he dropped down to B-side."

Larsen doesn't have to worry about meeting any Howards this time around since Russ has since relocated in eastern Canada and Glenn, as Brier champion, has a bye directly to the TSC Tankard being hosted by the K-W Granite Club at the Waterloo Memorial Complex Feb. 4 to 10.

But he still has plenty to worry about just getting out of zones.

"Kids are stronger than us older guys and that's a factor in curling, there's no doubt," Larsen said, alluding to the powerful sweeping that youthful muscles provide.

Besides Balsdon and Fairfull, Larsen faces a field that includes five-time provincial finalist Peter Mellor (K-W), two-time finalist Daryl Shane (K-W), Derek Martin (Elmira), Steve Syzanski (Guelph), Scott Hodgson (Guelph), Rob Nixon (Guelph), John Thompson (Westmount), Scott Lennox (Arthur) and Jeff Beath (Elora).

Larsen doesn't mind the competition, as long as he can still give the oth-

er competitors a good game.

"I wouldn't go if I was going to lose two straight and go home all the time. But you make a reasonable appearance, you never know. You might get hot for a weekend."

Always ready to play, Larsen will certainly give opponents a 'reasonable game' this weekend.

In the women's playdowns the rinks include Anne Dunn (Galt Country), Kelli Rice (Guelph Country), Dawn Sherk (Guelph), Danielle Inglis (K-W), Jen Issler (Guelph), Kathy Ryan (K-W) and Sheri Smeltzer (Fergus).

SENIORS

Beside Larsen, Guelph's Gary Houghton also advanced to the senior provincials where the field will include Wally Morris, Bruce Delaney, Bill Duck, Jim Wright, Bruce Park and Jim Lyle.

Galt Country's Anne Dunn made the senior women's provincial out of Region 3 along with Dale Curtis (Brampton). Cambridge's Laura Davis-Cook plays with Curtis. It won't be a cakewalk for anyone at senior women's with former Hearts champ Marilyn Bodogh and former Canadian champ Joyce Potter among the competitors. Also play-

ing Raja Wysocki, Jan Carwardine, Anne Pearson and Kathy Wilson.

The senior provincials are slated for St. George's Golf and Country Club Jan. 15 to 20.

MUSINGS

- Joe Frans (former teammate for John Morris and Wayne Middaugh) will be playing out of Zone 14 representing Vanastra Curling Club.

- Out of the 32 zone playdowns (for both men and women) all but one are scheduled for this weekend. The exception is Zone 8, where Wayne Middaugh would be playing. Playdowns will take place the following weekend. It greatly helps out Middaugh who otherwise would have had a conflict since the Casino Rama Skins game is on this weekend. Games are broadcast on TSN.
- Galt Curling Club icemaker Damien Villard will travel east once again in men's playdowns. Villard played out of Renfrew last season and made it all the way to the provincials where he surprised prognosticators by posting a 4-5 record.

• Messages can be left for Brian Belfry at 894-2231, ext. 2613, or by e-mail at bbelfry@therecord.com.



Argos Mike Clemons, shown at yesterday's news conference, will quit as head coach to become the chief executive officer.

CFL

Meet the new Pinball

Clemons gives up head coach duties to become chief executive of Argonauts

TORONTO

He pondered opportunities in government and television as well as the business sector but Mike (Pinball) Clemons wasn't ready to sever his 19-year tie with the Toronto Argonauts.

Clemons did the expected yesterday, stepping down as Toronto's head coach to become the CFL team's chief executive officer. The Argos also appointed Brad Watters, who had served as chair of the 2007 Grey Cup committee, as the franchise's chief operating officer.

"There were some lucrative opportunities that were posed to me... but ultimately this is where my heart is," Clemons said at a packed news conference. "What a journey it has been."

"I'm not here to sort of hold a position to say that I'm still associated with the Toronto Argonauts. I am here to do a job. CEO is a fancy term but for me all it means is this — coach and empower ownership. That is what my job is, to coach and empower ownership in our front office."

Clemons, 42, will head up Toronto's management team, serve as its governor on the CFL board and oversee the club's football operations, which is headed up by GM Adam Rita. The Argos will hold a news conference tomorrow to unveil Clemons' replacement as head coach, who sources say will be defensive co-ordinator Rich Stubler.

The affable Clemons, whose warm, outgoing personality and tireless com-

munity work have made him one of Toronto's most popular athletes, replaces Keith Pelley as the face of Toronto's management team. Pelley served as Argos president for four years before leaving last week to become president of the CTV-Rogers consortium that will broadcast the 2010 and 2012 Olympics.

Argos co-owners David Cynamon and Howard Sokolowski were thrilled to install Clemons and Watters at the helm of their team.

"Brad's skill-set complements Michael's and we're confident that this new executive time is the best there is," Sokolowski said. "We're lucky to have them both."

Watters, the former president of the Ottawa Renegades, will manage Toronto's day-to-day business operations, including marketing, corporate partnerships and sales. "To come to an organization that's this successful and this established and to go into something that has such history and not start from the ground up, really, it's a privilege for me to do that."

Clemons' future with the organization was the biggest off-season question facing the Argos, but his decision to step down as coach was hardly a surprise. The overwhelming sentiment this year was that a big reason why Clemons decided to stay on through the 2007 campaign was the allure of trying to win a Grey Cup on home turf.

Clemons joined the Argos in '89 as a running back and kick returner after

being released by the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs. Clemons earned the "Pinball" moniker from former Toronto head coach Bob O'Billovich for his ability to bounce off potential tacklers.

Clemons played 12 stellar seasons in Toronto, being named the CFL's outstanding player in '90 and being part of three Grey Cup championship teams ('91, '96 and '97). He retired in 2000 as pro football's career leader in all-purpose yards (25,402) to reluctantly become the Argos head coach after John Huard was fired.

Clemons left coaching following the '01 season to become the Argos president. But he found himself back on the sidelines late in the '02 campaign after Gary Etcheverry was fired in September.

Clemons enjoyed plenty of success as a head coach, amassing a 68-55-1 regular-season record with Toronto (second behind O'Billovich with 89) and being a finalist for CFL coach of the year between 2002 and 2006. In '04, he led the Argos to the Grey Cup, becoming the first black head coach to win the league championship.

But Clemons never aspired to be a career head coach because of the time it forced him to be away from his wife and three daughters as well as the discomfort cutting players caused him.

"I loved the guys and being able to take a group of players and mould them and teach them they could accomplish more than they thought they could," Clemons said. "But I hated to cut guys and I hated to lose more than I liked to win so that was a bit of a challenge."

• The Canadian Press

NFL

Suspects denied bail in Taylor's slaying

MIAMI

Three men were held without bail yesterday in the killing of Sean Taylor, placed on a suicide watch and described as extremely distraught a day after thousands mourned at the funeral of the Washington Redskins star.

Charles Wardlow, 18, Jason Mitchell, 19, and Venjah Hunte, 20, appeared briefly by video from Miami-Dade County jail, where they will remain after Judge John Thornton Jr.'s ruling. They were wearing special garments designed to keep them from using the clothes to make a noose.

Taylor died Nov. 27, 24 hours after he was shot in his home a few kilometres from where he grew up. Police say he was a victim of a botched burglary.

The three suspects and a fourth one, Eric Rivera, 17, all were indicted by a Miami-Dade grand jury yesterday on charges of first-degree felony murder and armed burglary. Rivera's lawyer said he was to be transported to Miami-Dade for a court appearance today.

"I think he's in disbelief over what occurred," lawyer Wilbur Smith said.

"His expression to me was that 'I can't believe this kind of thing happened.'"

Lawyers said all the men were agitated and jail officials confirmed those denied bail were under suicide watch.

"He's very distraught," said Hunte's lawyer, Michael Hornung. "He's scared."

Hornung said Hunte was the only one of the suspects with a valid driver's licence and behind the wheel at least part of the time. He said Hunte did not have a gun and did not know his friends' plans.

"Just a bunch of friends that evening said they were going to the East Coast and he went along," Hornung said. "He had no idea whatsoever what was going on." Hunte is co-operating with police, his lawyer said.

Probable cause affidavits for Mitchell and Rivera said the two confessed to participating in armed burglary. According to the reports, Mitchell and Rivera admitted entering the home and said someone had a gun and shot Taylor, but they didn't identify who.

• The Associated Press

WATERLOO REGION SPORTSFILE

Hockey for breast cancer this weekend

Shiny and shaving. That's the theme of Hockey for Hope, a tournament featuring 15 women's teams from across southern Ontario.

The women, ages 19 and over, hit the ice at the Aud in Kitchener this coming weekend to celebrate women's hockey and raise money for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Each team will play four games and one player, Christine Smith, will shave her golden locks, if she personally raises \$2,500 or more for the foundation.

The tourney is being hosted by the Kitchener-Waterloo Women's Recreational Hockey League.

For more information, visit hockey-forhope.ca

• ANOTHER SHOT FOR BUJOLD

Kitchener's Mandy Bujold will have an opportunity to regain the senior boxing title she lost over the weekend in Richmond, B.C.

After receiving several cautions from the referee, Bujold lost 22-7 to Christie Gervais of Quebec in the 50 kg championship bout.

According to her coach, Rick Cadilha, Bujold was cautioned four times in the first round for breathing and exhaling too loudly. Then in the second round, she was deducted two points for holding.

Bujold's opportunity to regain her title will come in the box-offs and Canadian team selection in Windsor in late January.

Despite her setback, Boxing Canada named Bujold rookie of the year for accomplishments that included a gold medal at the Pan American Games.

• TWO WINS FOR WILDFIRE

The Waterloo Wildfire recorded two wins and a loss over the weekend in National Ringette League games.

The Wildfire scored wins of 6-4 and 3-1 over BLL (Bourassa, Lanaudiere, Laval) on Saturday and Sunday at the Mose Springer Arena.

Jodie Hannen, Lindsey Vivian and Brittany Rieck scored for Waterloo in the 3-1 win.

Vivian also scored twice on Saturday, with single goals going to Katie Dawson, Shelly Kraemer, Tara Gross and Hannen.

The Wildfire also lost 11-4 to the Montreal Mission.

• OUA HONOURS LOCAL PAIR

A pair of Waterloo Region products earned athlete of the week honours in the Ontario University Athletics conference.

University of Waterloo Warriors

freshman guard Cam McIntyre registered 54 points in a pair of weekend wins over York and Laurentian.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate grad unloaded seven three-point bombs in his 37-point outing against York.

Laurentian University's Darrah Bumstead, of New Hamburg, was similarly honoured for her 38-point performance in a pair of weekend victories over Laurier and Waterloo.

Bumstead, a Waterloo-Oxford graduate, notched a career-high 21 points in a victory over Laurier on Friday night. She finished her weekend with a combined 21 rebounds.

• HAWKS CLIMB THE CHARTS

The women's hockey team at Wilfrid Laurier University has jumped a notch to No. 3 in the national rankings following a 2-0 victory over the University of Toronto Blues last weekend.

The four-time defending Ontario champs from Laurier are now alone in first place in the 10-team Ontario conference, one point up on the Blues.

Meanwhile, the University of Waterloo male hockey Warriors have dropped out of the Top-10 rankings this week after a brief, one-week appearance at No. 10.

• CHEERS FOR LAURIER

Wilfrid Laurier's cheerleading team captured first place in the female division at the recent national university and open championships in Brampton.

Chris Janovich and Alison Chong of the University of Waterloo took first place in the partner stunt competition.

The Warriors were third in the coed team division for their fifth consecutive top three finish. UW finished behind Queen's University and the 22-time defending champion Western Mustangs.

In the women's tumbling competition, UW's Kate Montagano finished first while her teammate, rookie Cassandra Jung, finished third.

• MARTIAL ARTIST RECOGNIZED

Cambridge teen Vicky Mason has been recognized for outstanding achievement in Chinese traditional martial arts.

Mason, 15, of the Atado School of Defensive Arts in Kitchener, has been awarded the most valuable athlete in her discipline among 3,000 students from across the country, as recognized by the National Canadian Kung Fu Fellowship. She will participate with a national team at the 2008 international Kung Fu Federation Championships.

• Compiled by Record staff