

# SPORTS

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## Another year, another title for Dutil's Winterhawks

*AE White atoms sweep Whitby for OMHA championship.*

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Christian Dutil probably isn't going to start putting money down on his Winterhawks ending each season in triumphant fashion.

But it's becoming a pretty safe bet all the same.

Winning their last seven games and 14 of 16 throughout the playoffs, Milton's AE White atoms captured their second Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) championship in three years — with a Tri County title squeezed in between.

"We definitely battled very hard all year. We are surrounded by champions!" said Dutil, whose team swept the Whitby Wildcats in three games for its latest taste of post-season success. "Our team staff has been key in preparing our players on and off the ice throughout the season. I want to thank all of them for the commitment and passion they had toward the success of our group."

While dominant for much of the regular season and playoffs, the Winter-

hawks showed they can thrive under pressure as well — winning each of its OMHA final contests by the narrowest of margins.

The last of those came in rare comeback, with the soon-to-be champs battling back from a pair of two-goal deficits to prevail 4-3.

Timothy Kozmenko provided the heroics with just under five minutes remaining, burying a rebound off a Joseph Russo shot for his second winning goal in as many games.

Elise Gelinas was between the pipes for the series-clinching win, while Kozmenko, Nolan Bower and Ethan Simick found the back of the net in the second period to help spoil the Wildcats' bid to prolong the series.

Drawing the other assists in the final contest were Christian Bejjany, Cody Catherwood, Ethan Horton and Ann Dutil.

With nothing short of perfection ensuring victory in the championship series opener, Gelinas turned back all 14 shots to edge Whitby 1-0.

Dutil set up Catherwood for the game winner less than a minute into the



Milton Winterhawks photo

The atom AE White Winterhawks celebrate their OMHA championship win.

third.

From there, Luca Mule was rock-solid but not overly tested in net — with the Winterhawks' defence limiting their guests to a dozen shots — for a 2-1 win.

Kozmenko's first of back-to-back game winners came with 9:05 left to play, with assists recorded by Russo and Anthony Rimonti.

Simick also scored, with

Landon Patrick setting him up.

With a strong nucleus of players back from last spring's Tri County title win, the Winterhawks won five of their six preliminary round contests before upsetting the top-seated Oakville Rangers — their toughest opponent all year and many people's pick to win it all — in a four-game quarter-final clash.

They'd go on to sweep the Tecumseh-Shoreline Eagles in the semis, capping the series with a decisive 7-3 win.

Said Dutil, "Each kid continued to grow and improve throughout the year, individually, but also more so as a team. A key moment was certainly defeating Oakville."

"This team had not lost in the regular season. Once

we won that series, I knew we had a great chance for the championship."

Making up the rest of the championship squad were Jameson Marino, Carter Metson, Liam Mathers, Simon Baynton, Zakariya Evers, assistant coaches Colin Catherwood, Paul Bower and Mark Gelinas, trainer Konstantin Kozmenko and manager Pete Marino.



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