

Johnston hopes rebuilding year will give him better team

by Michael Boyle

All one needs to do to discover what kind of a season Milton Flyers endured during the 1980-81 campaign, is to look at the final standings.

Eleven points gathered from 44 games doesn't exactly qualify Flyers to call the season productive.

It was a frustrating and trying year for players and management. Disbanding Flyers' tradition of playing older players, the squad went almost completely with bona-fide rookies and second-year players.

Things will be different for the 1980-81 season. Flyers' owner Vern Gooding won't stand for another losing year akin to last year. Neither will coach Doug Johnston or, more importantly, Flyers' faithful fans who endured the campaign in dwindling numbers.

In a nutshell, the 1980-81 edition of the Flyers didn't have enough good players. Coach Johnston, a proven motivator with Oakville Blades and Windsor Spitfires, did his job which allowed a majority of the games to have close scores. But when the crunch came, Flyers lost because the players, plain and simple, weren't good enough.

Where exactly did Flyers go wrong? How will they change the line-up to ensure a better roster?

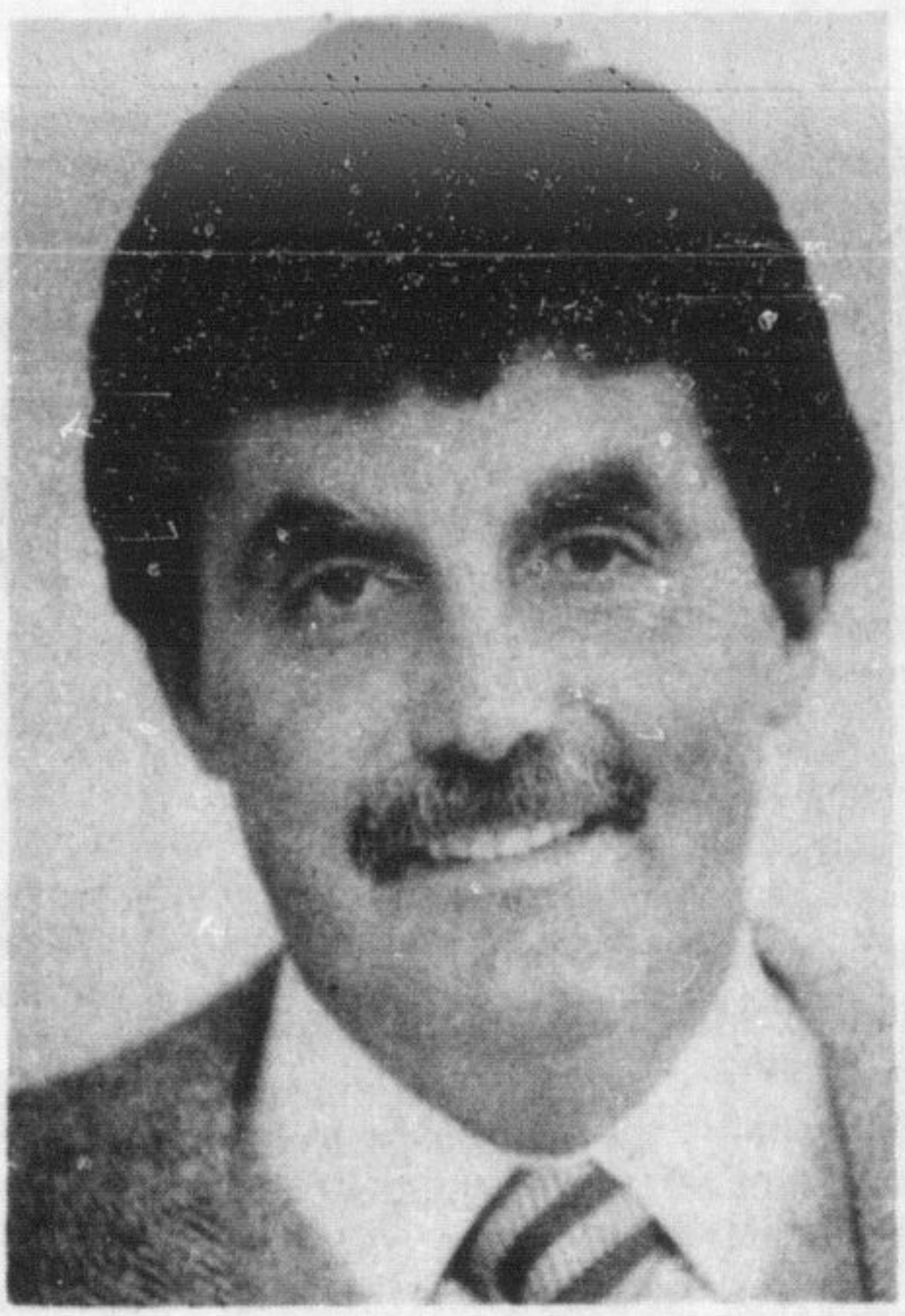
For starters, Flyers began training camp this year with just six veterans of a poor hockey club which finished 11th in the 1979-80 season. Only Ivo Zulian, Blair Phillips, Brett Patterson, Doug Brophy, Marty Venner and Mike Shepherd returned to Flyers. None could be considered outstanding, and Venner, Flyers' holdover captain, didn't display much in the way of leadership and was traded to Oakville eight games into the schedule.

"How could we build a hockey club with just six players," explains Johnston. "I wish the coaches before me would have started building a team."

"Next year, we'll have as many as 17 players coming back. If I can get 12 returning players, then that's what I'll call a nucleus on which we can build."

"Each year it's good to have four or five players come and go. Roger Neilson (former coach of Peterborough Petes) always said, 'six in and six out.'"

Most good players who finished the season are able to return. Leading scorer Gord Cornell, named the league's rookie of the year, is exploring Major A possibilities with Peterborough and the new entry of



Johnston: Won't endure another year like this one.

Belleville. Both centres are close to Cornell's Lindsay home.

In addition, forward Richard Griffiths is looking into American university scholarships, and goalie Shepherd attends school on a semester basis and will miss half the year.

But the rest of the players simply aren't good enough or old enough to move to a higher calibre of hockey or qualify for hockey scholarships.

On the bright side, Johnston has been approached by some players and parents of other players currently with other Jr. B teams in the area. His attitude and coaching experience will draw some good players to the team who might not otherwise be inclined to play with Flyers.

It's a trump card Johnston is earnest to play, although he won't disclose any names.

Certainly the defensive aspect of the team needs a vast overhaul to be competitive.

In goal, Flyers have a good one in 15-year-old Paulo Zulian. He still has a year left of minor hockey. Although Zulian's goals-against average approached eight per game, he was named the top goalie of the south-west division of the Central Ont.

League. He has a bright future in junior hockey and is considered by many scouts to have an outside chance at a career in the professional ranks.

After Zulian, it's somewhat thin. Shepherd will play just half a season. Flyers' third goalie throughout most of the year, Rick Landry, seemed to have good potential but quit when he discovered he was a third-stringer. Johnston doesn't like quitters, but should he find himself short of goalies next year, may ask Landry to return. Johnston said an import goalie is one of his priorities.

"The defence was, at best, terrible. 'What we had this year on defence wasn't adequate,' adds Johnston. 'We need some help on defence.'

"My concept of a defenceman is a little different than most coaches. I want two rugged types of defencemen. They need to be aggressive with good skills. I want defensive-minded defencemen."

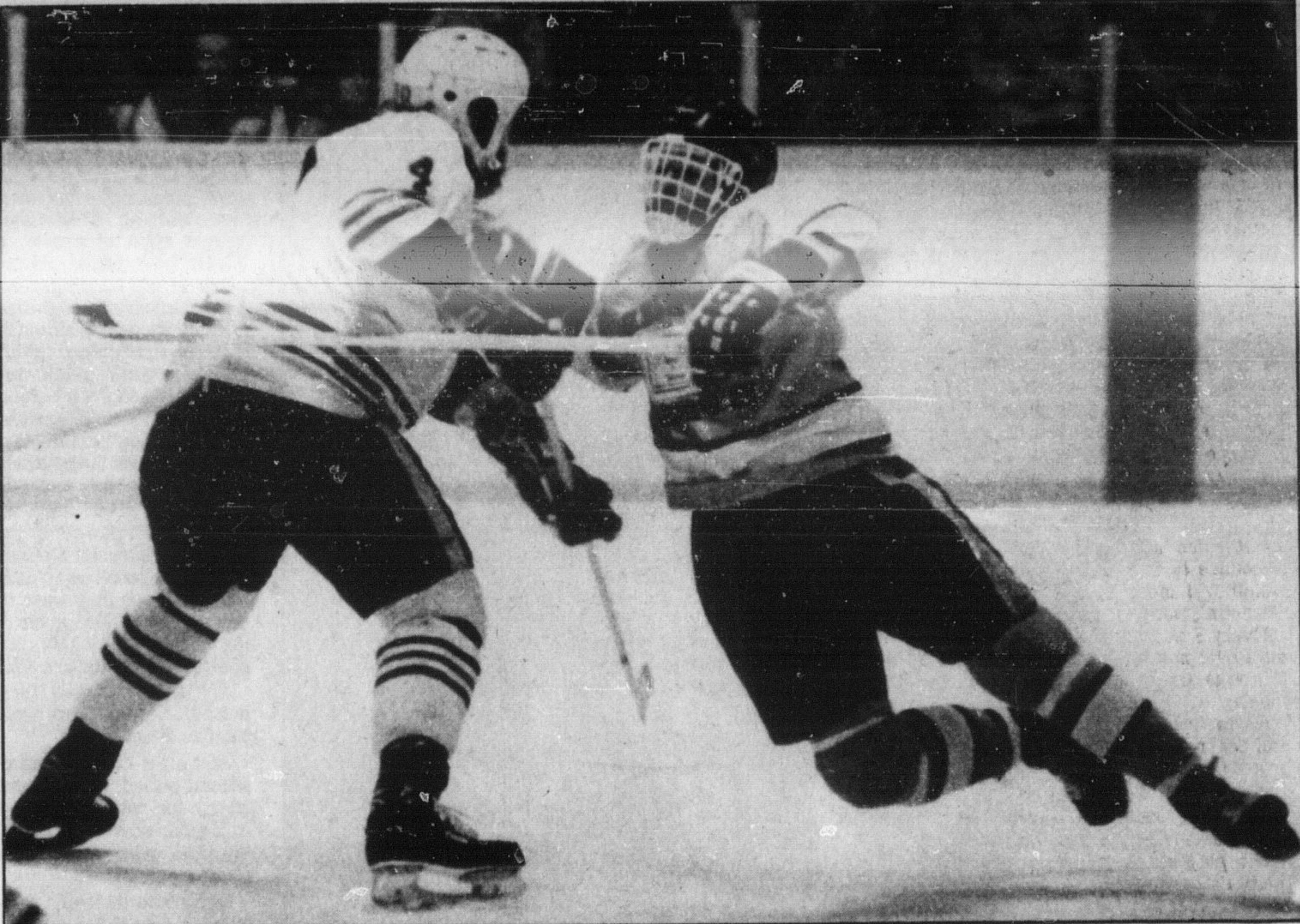
"We lost a lot of games because we didn't control our own corners. You can't have that on your team and still win. We have to control the corners. Here the forwards could have helped. They could have been better backcheckers."

Flyers finished the year with young John Turner, 15, Joe O'Grady, Patterson, Phillips, Dave Pilote and Tom Granger on defence. The betting is for just Turner, and perhaps Phillips and Pilote to make the team next year.

The team itself lacked leadership on the ice. Except for Cornell no player seemed able to assert himself on the ice. The year of experience may give the players more confidence next year but many will have to improve greatly.

On the plus side, several players from within the minor hockey system will be eligible to play and some will help. Johnston said he was impressed with the play of major midgets Doug Powers, Derrick Neelands and Jim Poulton, minor-midget scorers Bob Landry, major bantam Mark Haskett and minor bantam Tim Pollen who despite his young age will, no doubt, attend training camp if he doesn't sign with another team. This appears to be Pollen's last year of minor hockey in Milton.

The combination of all factors has Johnston setting his sights at fourth place for next year. Action Sabres proved this year just a few adjustments are necessary sometimes to make a dramatic climb in the ever-changing Junior B League.



Steady as a rock: Milton Aero Jim Robertson meets Rockton defenceman Ross Bussell head on and like all players who run into Bussell, Robertson comes out

second best. Rockton scored two shorthanded goals including the winner just 15 seconds into overtime to beat Aeros 3-2 Thursday in an entertaining contest.

Minor hockey

NOVICE

Little Firemen 3
White Oaks H.L. 2
Jay Mallory fired two goals and added an assist to pace Little Firemen to the narrow win in the first game of the round-robin playoffs.
White Oaks had fought back from a 2-4 disadvantage to draw even before Trevor Crawford scored the winning goal in the last minute of play to provide the difference.
Ryan Weaver played well in goal for Little Firemen while teammate Sean Bahr picked up an assist during the game.
White Oaks' goals were scored by Robbie Crowe and John Finley. Assists were gathered by Mike King, Kevin Davidson and Terry Truman.

Man's World 3
St. Clair 6
Shaun Linder's three-point game complemented the shutout goalkeeping of Peter Downs to pace Man's World.

White Oaks' goals were scored by Darren Delorey fired two goals while Linder added a single to supply Man's World attack. David Fowler and Linder picked up two assists apiece.

J. D. Currie P.H.G. & Htg. 4
Scannell Movers 3
Craig Cyr and Dave Wilson contributed three points apiece to lead Currie to the win.

Cyr recorded two goals and an assist while Wilson picked up a goal and two assists. Dylan Reynolds scored once while assists went to Mike Byers, Mike Devlin and Evan Kelly for Currie.

Corey Howitt scored twice for Scannell while Paul McAughy added a single and Jason McGuire picked up an assist.

ATOM

Speed Queen 1
Lions Club 0
Scott Mitchell's shutout performance put down the Lions' roar to spur Speed Queen to the win.

Roy Venerus scored the only goal Speed Queen needed.
Mitchell Real Estate 8
Mowbray 2
Kevin Elkins' five-point game ignited Mitchell Real Estate to the lopsided victory over Mowbray.

Elkins netted three goals and added two assists while Stephen Schaffer also scored three goals to pace the potent Mitchell attack.
Scott Mele and Steve Zikman chipped in with single goals while David Eaton, Neil Sneyd, Gary Colling and Greg Wright added assists.
Brian Roach and Andrew Champagne scored for Mowbray with Robert Mason drawing the lone assist.

Blue Cab 3
Pro Hardware 1
Two goals in the last minute of

the game allowed Blue Cab to steal the victory over Pro Hardware.

Warren House, Jeff Day and Frank Landry scored singles to back the outstanding goalkeeping of Blue Cab's Brent Currie and Bill Murphy.

Assists went to Patrick Penman, Mark Brady and Landry.
Nicky Robaluck scored Hardware's lone goal from Brent Rach.
Milton Upholstery 4
Credit Union 2
Mark Elsieley's two goals helped

Upholstery to the win.
Scott Devlin and Greg Doer added singles while assists went to Mark Banks and John Dobbie.
Todd Thompson scored twice for Credit Union while assists went to Dan Nolan and Richie Gerrard.

I.W.A. 7
Miltonwe Real Estate 1
Phil Pumphrey's three goals helped lead I.W.A. to the one-sided victory over Miltonwe.

(Continued on Page B5)

Aeros' backs to the wall . . .

(Continued from Page B1)

effective Friday although he didn't figure in the scoring. His appearance allowed Rockton to play with three regular lines. Until then, Rockton had been going almost exclusively with two lines.

It was a different story in Rockton, Thursday. Aeros played probably their best game of the series but lost when Rockton scored two short-handed goals including the winner 15 seconds into straight time overtime for the margin of victory.

The winning goal was a heartbreaker by Milton standards. Poised on the power play to start overtime, Aeros couldn't get untracked from the opening face-off. The puck was shot behind Aeros' goal. Dumesnil fished it out and, attempting to pass in front, watched it bounce off the skate of Aeros' defenceman Marty Seeds into the goal past a surprised Mark Fisher.

Starting Fisher was a surprise to many observers who expected to see the hero of the second game, Pat Devlin, between the pipes. But Aeros' coach John Hall has been alternating goalies all season, when possible, and saw no need to change at this time. Fisher faced 41 shots in the game and was effective, especially in the final frame.

Aeros dominated the overtime period. Milton took seven shots at Katchanoski while Rockton actually managed no shots at Fisher except for the goal.

"The boys knew they were in a hockey game tonight," said Elliott, watching sweat roll off all his players. "Milton played well, maybe the best we've seen them play."

Despite the low score, the game wasn't played between the blue lines. Both teams had several good chances.

Rockton started on the right foot when Barry Martinelli scored a power-play goal midway through the opening frame. At the halfway point of the second period, Tom Butt evened the score on a goal assisted by Mike Penwarden and Doug Heslip.

With just over four minutes left in the period, Aeros had a big opportunity to go ahead but blew the chance and instead Rockton scored to take a 2-1 lead.

Rockton's Dumesnil was assessed a double minor and facing four minutes of powerplay, Aeros could have seen up a big win. However, Aeros could not mount much on offense and instead Evans scored a shorthanded goal from just in front of the goal to install Rockton into the lead.

Midway through the third period, Aeros' Steve Bronizewski took a pass from the corner in front of the net and slipped it home to force overtime.

In extra time, Aeros pressed hard but couldn't finish off their plays near the goal. Milton finished with 43 shots on goal.

The fifth game will be played Thursday in Rockton with the sixth match back here at Memorial Arena Friday, if necessary.

Arrows: In what must be considered a surprise, fourth-place Dunnville Mudcats knocked off second-place Paris 29ers in four consecutive games. Mudcats won the fourth game 8-5 in overtime Sunday afternoon in Dunnville with two goals scored into an empty net.

Dunnville bombed in the latter half of the schedule, save for a win in the last game of the season to a depleted Rockton roster. Mudcat coach Vic Porter, a former Paris coach, apparently knew how to beat his former team although Paris was slipping badly at the end of the year and was considered ripe for any team.

The championship series will begin a week tomorrow (Thursday) at the earliest. The site will depend on the outcome of the Rockton-Aeros series.

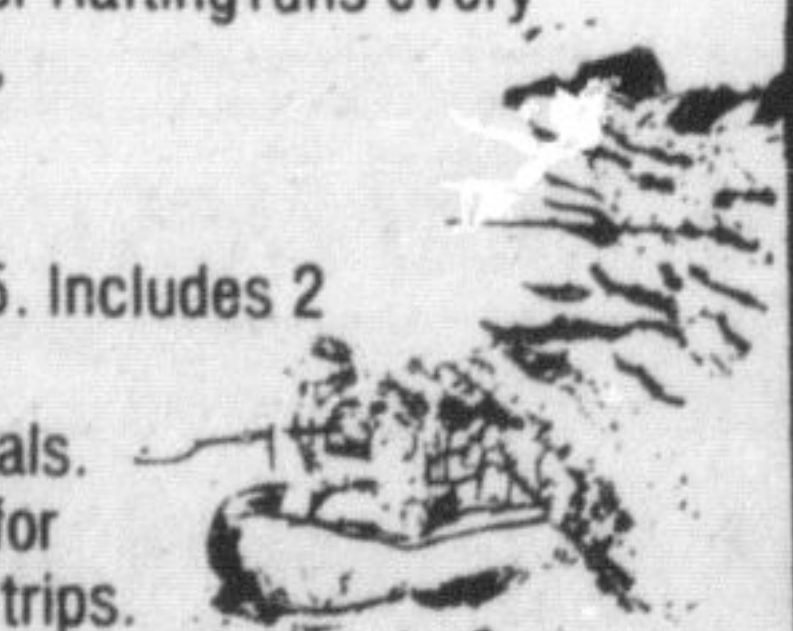
Raiders lead

If anyone thought Georgetown Chrysler Raiders would cakewalk past Orillia in the opening round of the Ontario Major Intermediate 'A' Hockey League semi-final they were mistaken.

Orillia has proved to be tough lately and the opening two games of the best of seven series were no exception, although they lost by scores of 7-3 and 4-3.

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AROUND THE HOUSE



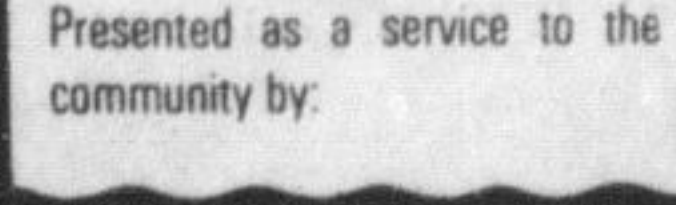
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