

Cats take sleepy looking Merchants

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

The Jr. A Merchants have been king of the jungle for quite a while now, but Sunday night they were devoured by something at the lower end of the food chain.

Looking for their fifth straight win and 18th this season, an unsuspecting, unprepared Milton crew fell 5-3 to the sub-par Burlington Cougars at Central Arena.

"It's just one of those things that happens, that you have to learn from," remarked veteran defenceman T.J. Lee of the week-ending upset.

His comments refer to largely non-existent checking and defensive efforts. Generous giveaways led to four second-period goals for the Cougars — including two while they were short-handed.

While not shying away from responsibility, Lee suggests recent blowouts over Georgetown and Vaughan have done little to challenge Milton's top-notch blueline crew.

He added, "Those type of games just make everyone think offensively rather than defensively. We've got to get back to basics at practice this week."

Burlington's big break came in the last six seconds of the middle frame, while Milton was enjoying their third powerplay.

Playing hot potato on a final rush, Matt Bannan

and Mark McPhail coughed up the puck to Stephen Tait — who walked in and planted an upstairs blast by David Cinelli at the buzzer.

Tait had sank a shorthanded goal 11 minutes earlier as well, but this dying seconds score was the one that put their guests down for the count.

Milton's comeback efforts were unproductive until the final four minutes of play. By then, David Mennie had padded Burlington's lead and all but locked up their ninth season win.

The Merchants pulled Cinelli for the extra attacker shortly after Steve French drew them within two at 15:55. Bannan got off a couple of well-aimed blasts, but neither found their way to the net.

Also scoring for the home team were Ryan Wilson and Chris Sebastian, who was absolutely stellar at both ends of the ice.

Goaltender Matt Collaton and defencemen Ken Mair and Mike Smitko gave standout performances as well.

Lee and Rich Williams lit the lamp for Milton, with Ron Baker assisting on both.

The loss was Milton's third this year, next to 17 in the win column.

In a predetermined blowout two nights earlier, the Merchants spent the night padding their stats against the basement dwelling Georgetown Raiders.

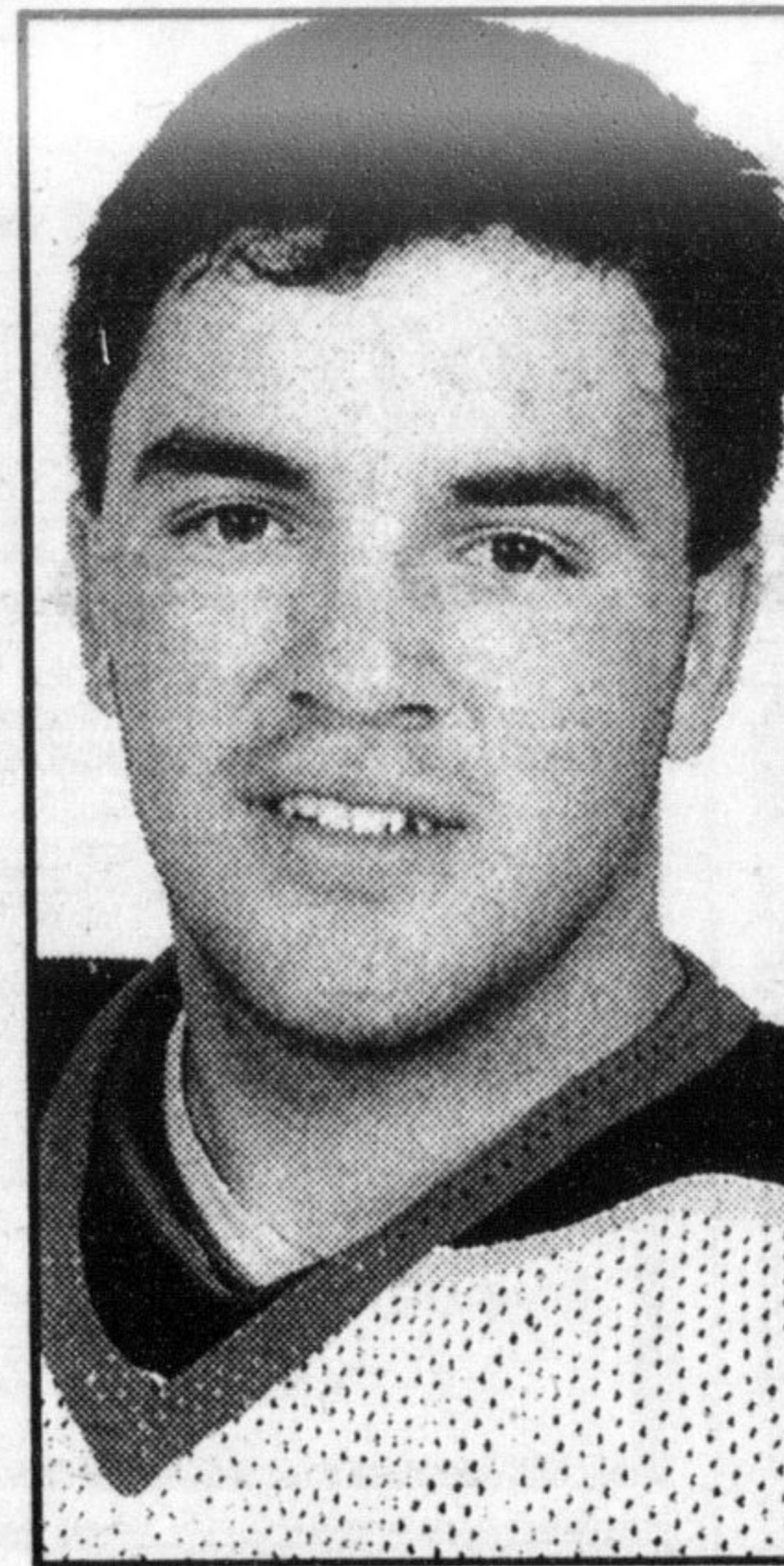
They scored five times, on 26 shots, in the open-

ing period alone and used the balance of the contest to establish their superiority in an 11-2 blowout.

Baker led the way with a hat-trick and two assists while Kevin O'Flaherty scored two goals and set up two more.

Returning from a knee injury, Troy Walczak also tallied twice while Ryan Taylor and Milton native Andrew Sandziuk scored for Georgetown.

Merchant notes: Mike Hurst had his wisdom teeth removed last week and sat out both weekend games ... Former Milton assistant coach Jay Anderson was fired as Georgetown's bench boss Wednesday night. Ex-Capitals skipper Frank Carnevale is the leading candidate for the vacant position ... Milton hosts the Mississauga Chargers Friday and travel to Georgetown Saturday, for a 7:30 p.m. start.



T.J. Lee



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Penalties cost Truckers

Jamie Webb struck for two goals recently in Orangeville, but his Halton Lift Truck AA major atoms were struck down in their bid for a league victory.

The hometown Crushers mustered just enough to beat their guests 3-2. All of their scoring was done on the powerplay, as 20 minutes in penalties proved to be Milton's undoing.

Taking the brunt of the hard-fought battle was Winterhawks goalie Corey Clarkson, while David Tielemans assisted on both of Webb's tallies.

It was Daniel Lynch's turn to shine in Milton's next game at home. He potted a pair of goals and paced his club to a 3-3 stalemate with the Georgetown Raiders.

Matt Reed fed him a breakaway pass for his initial score while he went end-to-end for the other.

Matt Lenardon and Robbie Wilson set up Nathan Keith's opening tally.

Working the cage was Robert Smith, who received ample defensive assistance from Mark Galick, Justin Deshaw and Tim Warmels.

Bants hold on for a win against G'town

Despite a late-game scare by Georgetown, the Spectrum Airways AA major bantams were able to hold on for a 4-3 win Thursday at Memorial Arena.

The visiting Raiders erased a three-goal deficit before Jordan Jeans notched his second of the game to seal the deal.

Assisting on his first tally while posting one of his own was Bryan Shaw. Matt Ventura also dented twine and Mike Austen, Dave Kornack and Sean Mahoney drew assists.

Earning the win between the pipes was Josh Arnold, who turned aside seven of eight third-period shots.

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