



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 1998



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

In the swing of things

Brittany Schrader gets a little help on the uneven bars from coach Kathleen Thring at the Milton Springers Gymnastic Club skills day for kindergym participants Saturday morning. Kindergym is the workout program for the youngest club members.

Even uninspired, Milton gets a win

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

In a season ripe with ever changing variables, victory remains the constant for the Jr. A Merchants.

Guessing just how the defending league champs will put another one in the win column has been a tall order this year and often tougher than the team actually scoring the two points.

Their unpredictability reared up again this past weekend.

Milton couldn't have looked any different in games 25 and 26 — which brought the opening half of the 1998/99 campaign to a close — except, that is, after the final whistle when identical celebrations were forthcoming.

Sunday at Central Arena, the Merchants used a defensive gem to knock off Burlington 3-1 and regain sole possession of first place in the West Conference.

Standout performances by Chris Bahen, Matt Bannan and Ryan Carrigan allowed opposing snipers three rebounds all night and only a dozen shots at even strength.

Hopes of a shutout were spoiled with 1:24 left, when Jeremy Wenzel surrendered a top shelf snapshot while his hosts enjoyed their sixth powerplay of the contest.

Until that point the third-year cager had done a great job reading the play and cutting down the angle in a 24-save triumph.

While struggling offensively, the Merchants received an all-inspiring effort plus two goals from Ryan Robichaud. Fourth line centre Ryan Stewart continued to produce as well, drilling a top right corner bullet in the dying moments of the first period to put them on the scoreboard.

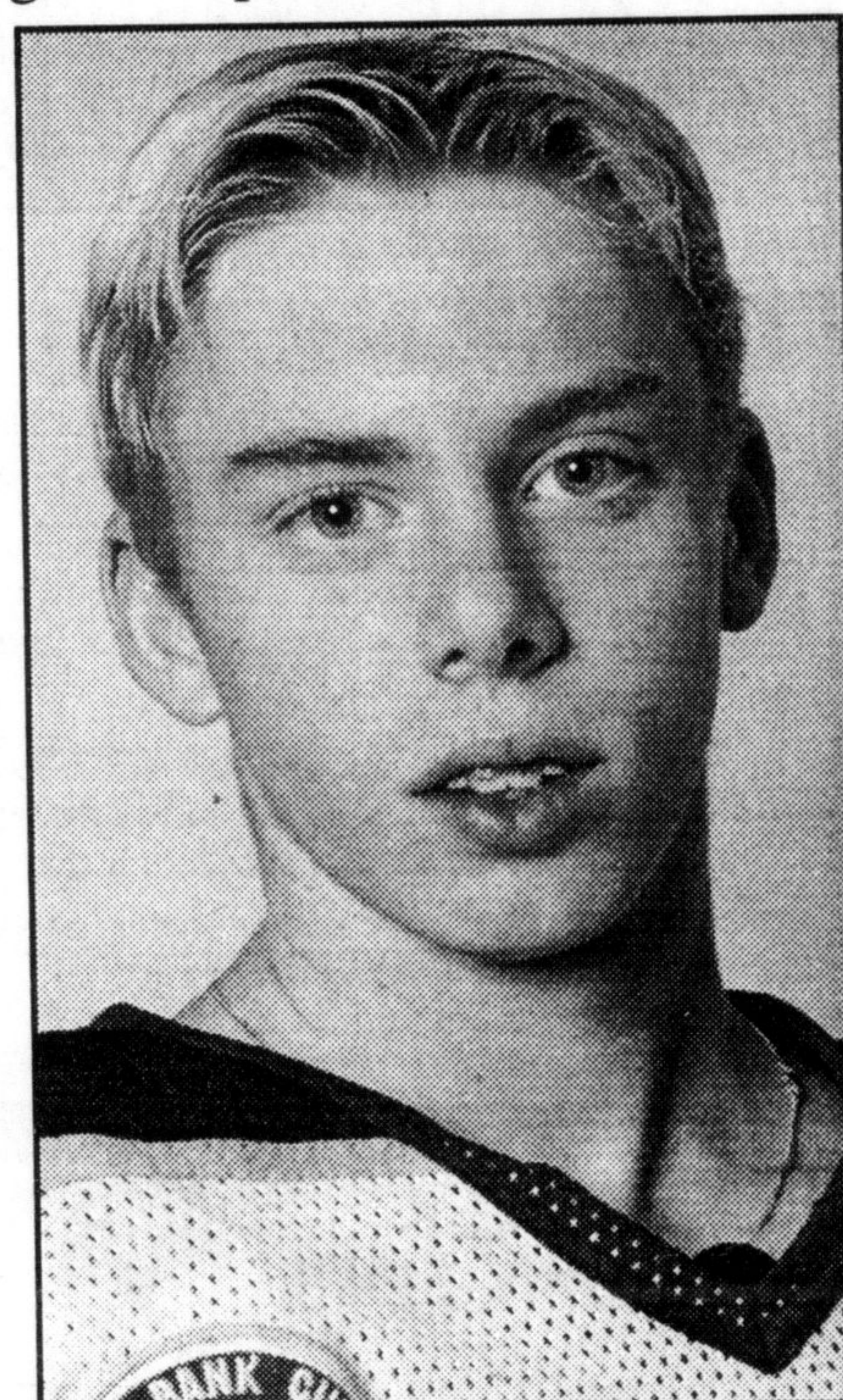
A 16-year-old graduate of the MTHL Toronto Marlies, Stewart is now on a five-game scoring streak and has matched fellow rookie linemate Chris Rowan with 11 goals on the season.

"A couple of weeks ago against Brampton coach (Marty) Williamson put me on the penalty killing unit and that really boosted my confidence," he said. "It feels great to be scoring again."

For the most part, Stewart's recent surge has provided key goals in tight games. Friday at home however, his third-period marker was just another nail in a 9-4 coffin the Merchants built for basement dwelling Mississauga.

On a night where losing was almost a non-issue, Milton abandoned all but their scoring game and more or less sank to their opponents' level.

Offensive depth shone through with nine different locals denting the twine and a total of 14 collecting points.



Ryan Stewart

Goals went to Bahen, Bannan, Robichaud, Rowan, Stewart, Mark Biesel, Carter Trevisani, Mike Wheelihan and captain Kevin O'Flaherty — who sits top five in West Conference scoring with 55 points.

Milton exploded with five goals in the opening frame, four within a six-minute span. Former teammate Rich Williams sank a pair on the powerplay to pace the visitors' offence.

Guarding the net for the Merchants was Daniel Jacques, who now has 10 wins.

Merchant notes: Milton remains unbeaten on the road and sports a goals-against average of exactly 3.00 ... Homegrown sophomore Mike Wheelihan is now up to 14 goals and 35 assists while boasting a club leading plus-minus of 33 ... The Merchants are in Streetsville tonight and host Hamilton Friday. Saturday they travel to Alcott Arena to face the Georgetown Raiders, who are playing .500 hockey for the first time in more than five years.

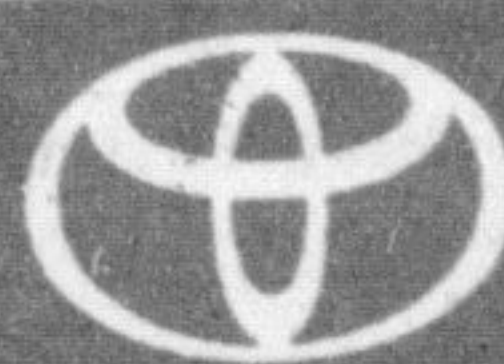


LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dear Kevin Wood:

At this very early stage of my recent purchase of a "SIENNA" van, I must comment on comfort, quality of workmanship, and well thought out seating arrangements. Everything seems to be of good fit and the vehicle is peppy and quiet. With a "5" star rating for safety, and having grandchildren to ferry about, I think I have made an excellent choice. I do not normally write letters of this nature, but having test driven other models, I think this choice was the best.

Sincerely, Robert E. Groom



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