

Leg chop likely ends postseason promise

One nasty swing of the stick has removed all but the faintest hopes for a dramatic division championship series — and all but guaranteed the continuation of a dynasty.

For those who haven't heard, Bramalea has sustained a crushing blow in their bid to dethrone the Jr. A Merchants.

Disaster struck two weeks ago when Blues' leading scorer Mike Cammalleri suffered a fractured leg from a slash in a game against Oakville.

This essentially brought his dream season to a grinding halt. Recovery time is estimated at four to six weeks, while word now is the University of Michigan (where he's accepted a full scholarship) wants him to forget the slim possibility of a playoff return in order to protect their investment.

Not only was a talented young player hurt by this two-handed chop. So were area hockey fans, who eagerly anticipated a Milton-Bramalea West Conference finals.

Sure it may still happen, but almost definitely without the lustre and intensity that these clubs displayed in their seven-game clash two years ago.

Assuming the Merchants are at peak efficiency, you can throw competitiveness out the window as well.

Cammalleri had figured in exactly 40 per cent of his club's scoring, with 31 goals and 103 points. Without his zip and creativeness, the Blues really don't stand a chance.

Of course they've still got Kyle Amyotte — who's always productive and frequently outstanding — but now he'll be the chief

Up front



with STEVE LeBLANC

focus of the three-peat minded Merchants and will no doubt be suffocated by defensive coverage throughout the potential series.

Bramalea has other quality gunners like Anthony Aquino and Chris Sebastian, but none who seem capable of elevating the team like Cammalleri and Amyotte have this year and were expected to do in the post-season.

And if the Blues don't pose a serious threat to Milton's title defence, who does?

Brampton, Burlington and Oakville have occasionally given them a run but aren't well-round or determined enough to be more than a nuisance when Milton bears down and has its collective game face on.

Face it fans, a cakewalk to the West Conference crown is not only possible but highly probable. Thank goodness that Rayside-Balfour is still waiting in the wings.

New playoff format

This season's playoff run will feature a couple of changes, which may not amount to much for the Merchants but are nevertheless worth mentioning.

Firstly, the late stages of the Provincial Jr. A playdowns will feature a "lucky loser" — or so it has become known around local hockey circles.

Essentially, one of the teams defeated in the three conference finals will return as the fourth entry for the semifinal round.

This will be the club with the best winning percentage in the post-season. Though likely unnecessary, the scenario favours an opportunistic Milton team that has earned a total of five series sweeps during their last two playoff runs.

The new format doesn't sit well with many coaches and fans, who don't believe in second chances. Who can blame them? Once a team loses they should hit the golf course, plain and simple.

It's one thing to employ this system if no other options are available, but you've got Rayside-Balfour who'll be long since done their Northern League playdowns (which comprise two measly rounds) by the time the Provincial Jr. A semis roll around and could easily be slotted in as the fourth entry.

But of course, that would make too much sense. Instead the Provincial League victor will have to play more than twice as many games as Rayside. So much for fairness.

Also, first round play this year will be trimmed back to a best-of-five.

Finally, a move in the right direction. These initial, lengthy mismatches were always boring and often mind numbing to watch. But since the Merchants will likely earn a sweep either way, one less game isn't that big a deal.

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MILTON MINOR HOCKEY SCHEDULE

HOUSE LEAGUE DIVISION

Pre-Novice Feb. 13		
7:00 am - 8:00 am	Red Lobster 1 vs. Red Lobster 2	Tonelli Arena
8:00 am - 9:00 am	Bruce Hood Travel vs. Little Firemen	Tonelli Arena
9:00 am - 10:00 am	White Timbits vs. Red Timbits	Tonelli Arena
10:00 am - 11:00 am	Green Timbits vs. Black Timbits	Tonelli Arena
Atom Feb. 13		
3:00 pm - 4:15 pm	Absolute Transport vs. Becton Dickinson	Tonelli Arena
4:20 pm - 5:35 pm	Clarke's Golf vs. McCuaig Insurance	Tonelli Arena
5:40 pm - 6:55 pm	Ross Dixon Financial vs. Rebekah Lodge	Tonelli Arena
Pee Wee Feb. 13		
7:00 am - 8:20 am	Docs and Dents vs. Prudential Vendex Realty	Thompson Memorial
8:30 am - 9:50 am	Absolute Transport vs. Michael's Optical	Thompson Memorial
10:00 am - 11:20 am	Key Centre vs. Brian's Auto	Thompson Memorial
Minor-Novice Feb. 14		
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm	Hunt Plymouth vs. Loblaws	Tonelli Arena
4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	ReMax vs. Shoppers Drug Mart	Tonelli Arena
Major-Novice Feb. 14		
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Gold Connection vs. Austin Noble	Tonelli Arena
6:30 pm - 7:30 pm	Gorrud vs. Canadian Tire	Tonelli Arena
Bantam Feb. 14		
6:00 pm - 7:20 pm	Wimpy's Diner vs. Milton Dodge Jeep	Thompson Memorial
7:20 pm - 8:40 pm	Marmac Tailer Services vs. Knuckles	Thompson Memorial
8:40 pm - 10:00 pm	G.D. Controls vs. Charlie Fitzwhiskey's	Thompson Memorial
Senior Feb. 15		
7:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Avanti Auto vs. Kentucky Fried Chicken	Tonelli Arena
8:40 pm - 9:40 pm	Gus Mowbray Heating vs. Culligan	Tonelli Arena
9:50 pm - 10:50 pm	Ross Dixon Financial vs. Goodlife Fitness	Tonelli Arena

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