



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Tough G'town makes Milton work for wins

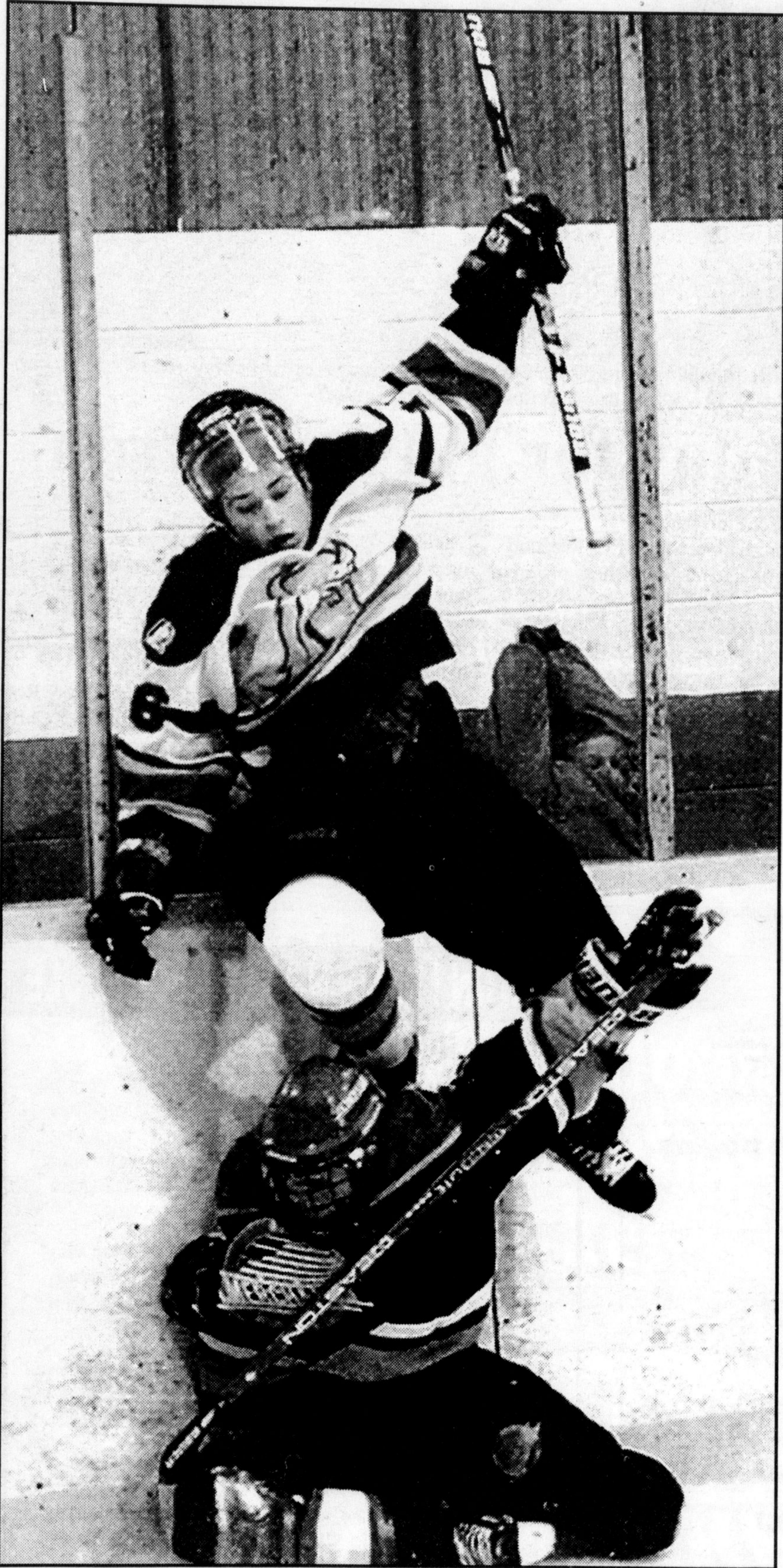


Photo by HERB GARBUTT

Georgetown's Jeff Seeds crashes into Matt Bannan of Milton during game two Thursday. The Merchants lost 6-4 but rebounded with back-to-back 2-1 wins to put a hammer lock on the series.

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Milton Merchant stars returned to action and renewed the club's winning ways.

Daniel Jacques, seeing his first playoff games this past weekend, provided phenomenal goaltending to trim Georgetown with consecutive 2-1 decisions.

Meanwhile, captain Kevin O'Flaherty — returning from a battle with strep throat — buried both goals in Sunday's victory.

These efforts put the team back on top in the best-of-seven West Conference semifinals.

The defending provincial champs enjoy a 3-1 stranglehold on the series and host game five tonight at Memorial Arena.

Said Jacques, "After being out for a while it was nice to come back and make an impact. Of course it really doesn't matter who's in net, just that we go with the guy that's hot and win the game."

Sunday at Gordon Alcott Arena in front of 1,500 screaming fans, the veteran tender turned aside 27 of 28 shots while O'Flaherty scored 3:25 into the contest and again midway through the third period to deliver the win.

The go-ahead marker came on a nifty bottom shelf deke that caught Raiders' Jeff Hladysch going the wrong way.

Lead number one was established with an upstairs deflection on a long distance centering pass.

Assisting each time was Geoff Schomogyi, who tops playoff production with five goals and a dozen total points.



Daniel Jacques

Milton's key to success in round two remains with their ability to neutralize the Raiders' first line, which includes league scoring leader Stace Page and feisty former Merchant Jeff Seeds.

They have done so three times and — not surprisingly — triumphed in each case. Their only post-season glitch so far came in game two when substandard defence and discipline resulted in a 6-4 loss.

Seeds tallied twice and added a pair of assists to send Georgetown on the way to victory — their first against Milton in the playoffs since 1992.

"I just hope they (the Merchants) don't take it personally," said Seeds after his team's win. "I'm just doing whatever I have to do. It's the same way I played with them."

One night later at home the Merchants needed Jacques' inspired cage work plus a two-goal effort by rugged winger Rob Meanchoff to escape with the win.

Georgetown demonstrated superior forechecking and positional play throughout the contest. Their lone tally came off the stick of call-up Ryan Hotham.

Meanchoff's winner came by way of a somewhat fluky upstairs wrister — which visiting goalie David Digironimo was completely unprepared for — with seven minutes left to play.

Merchants' skipper Marty Williamson said he expected a serious challenge from Georgetown, but admits back-to-back low scoring games have come as a surprise.

"It's a credit to them. They're hanging in there and not going away easily," he said.

"This reminds me of last year's series with Oakville. They're battling us hard and I think this will help our team down the road."

Merchant notes: If necessary, game six will be played Thursday in Georgetown while game seven is set for Friday at Memorial Arena.

Both tilts would start at 8 p.m. ... Milton has allowed one goal or less in six of their seven playoff games and sport an overall goal-against average of 1.43.

Bittersweet battle for title

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Fate rolled out the red carpet for E.C. Drury's Kevin Heffron, then quickly yanked it out from under him.

That's how the 17-year-old must have felt after Thursday's OFSAA Wrestling Championships in London — where he enjoyed perhaps the shortest title reign in high school history.

The Spartans' star grappler initially struck gold with a 6-5 decision over Chris Rous of Brampton Centennial in the 54 kilogram finals.

No sooner did referees signal Heffron as the winner than his opponents' coach protested the match, contending that the buzzer

was sounded prematurely and a fraction of a second still remained on the clock.

Video replay supported the claim and forced sudden death, which went in Brampton Centennial's favour until Spartans coach Larry Jaroslowski successfully argued that the winning point was delivered out of bounds.

After another lengthy wait for both competitors and one more overtime clash, Heffron finally surrendered the title and settled for his second silver in as many provincial championship appearances.

He's only the second Drury grappler to ever capture two OFSAA medals.

"Waiting for the protests to be decided on was frustrating. I was

pacings back and forth the whole time," said Heffron, who came within a heartbeat of capturing Drury's second OFSAA gold. "I actually wasn't as disappointed with the protest as with losing on the mat.

"Afterwards Brampton Centennial's coach came over and gave me one of their team gold medals, which was a pretty classy move."

Heffron's performance and the drama that surrounded it highlighted a stellar showing for the Spartans, who came away with three individual medals and another second-place team finish.

Drury enjoyed their highest point total ever at provincials, 123 com-

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