



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Hardware haul for Hogarths

Scott and Tammy Hogarth of Fighting Griffins Martial Arts pose with their latest flood of trophies, captured recently at the AmeriKick Nationals in Atlantic City. Tammy took first in weapons and traditional forms while Scott was first in open forms, second in weapons and third in traditional forms.

Second chance

Merchants get new lease on life

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The Merchants lost the battle but could still win the war.

One night after surrendering their West Conference title to the Bramalea Blues — which topped them four games to two — Milton got a brand new lease on life.

It came by virtue of the now much cherished wild card seat, given to them after Collingwood trimmed Couchiching 4-3 Tuesday in game seven of the central division finals.

Milton was the conference loser with the best playoff winning percentage, which is how they advanced.

This sets up a Milton-Collingwood clash, which began last night in Collingwood and continues this evening in Milton. Game time is 8 p.m.

In the other semifinal showdown, Bramalea faces the eastern champion Pickering Panthers.

"It'll be the biggest nightmare for this league if we're given a second chance," promised head coach Marty Williamson Monday at Victoria Park Arena, after his club dropped a 3-2 game six decision to the Blues.

The Merchants no doubt have motivation going for them now, but in order to turn opportunity into prosperity it'll take a lot more creativity and physicality than has so far been brought to the table.

Both were in short supply through the previous round, particularly in the finale. Milton refused to carry the puck all evening, instead relying on the dump and chase as well as long cross-ice passes through the neutral zone which quickly became predictable and manageable by the Blues.

Efforts in their own end — despite a lack of pressure on the blueline, where all three goals against were scored — were far more impressive.

Milton's defencemen afforded their hosts only 17 shots on Jeremy Wenzel,

who made some big saves through periods one and two.

Netting the game winner at the 10:20 mark of the third was Scott Neil. Captain Kyle Amyotte assisted on the play to cap an awesome performance which included a powerplay goal and some topnotch penalty killing.

"This feels great to finally beat these guys," said Amyotte, a fourth-year player in the league. His well coached, well disciplined hockey team prevented the Merchants from pulling off a conference championship three-peat.

"Not once did we ever figure that having Mike (Cammalleri) out would kill our chances. Everyone else just stepped up and made it happen."

The Merchants evened the score twice down the stretch and received a lot more fan support, despite being in Bramalea's barn.

Still, it never quite seemed that the visiting crowd's energy transferred to the bench.



Marty Williamson

Scoring Milton's final equalizer was Chris Rowan, whose wide angle snapshot squeaked through Nathan Marsters' pads and over the goal line.

Before that rearguard Chris Bahen banged in a cross-ice redirect at 13:04 of the second — just moments after their fifth powerplay had expired.

The defending provincial champs went 0-for-14 with the man-advantage in the last three games of the series.

The Blues were almost as ineffective, going 1-for-13.

Scoring leader Ed McGrane picked up two assists in game six.

Bramalea's other goal, delivered midway through the first, was registered by Darryl Baker.

Game three of the Milton-Collingwood series is set for Sunday in Collingwood at 7:30 p.m. while game four will be held Monday in Milton at 8 p.m.

If necessary, game five will be Tuesday in Collingwood and game six would be played Wednesday in Milton.

A seventh and deciding game is slated for next Friday in Collingwood.

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