

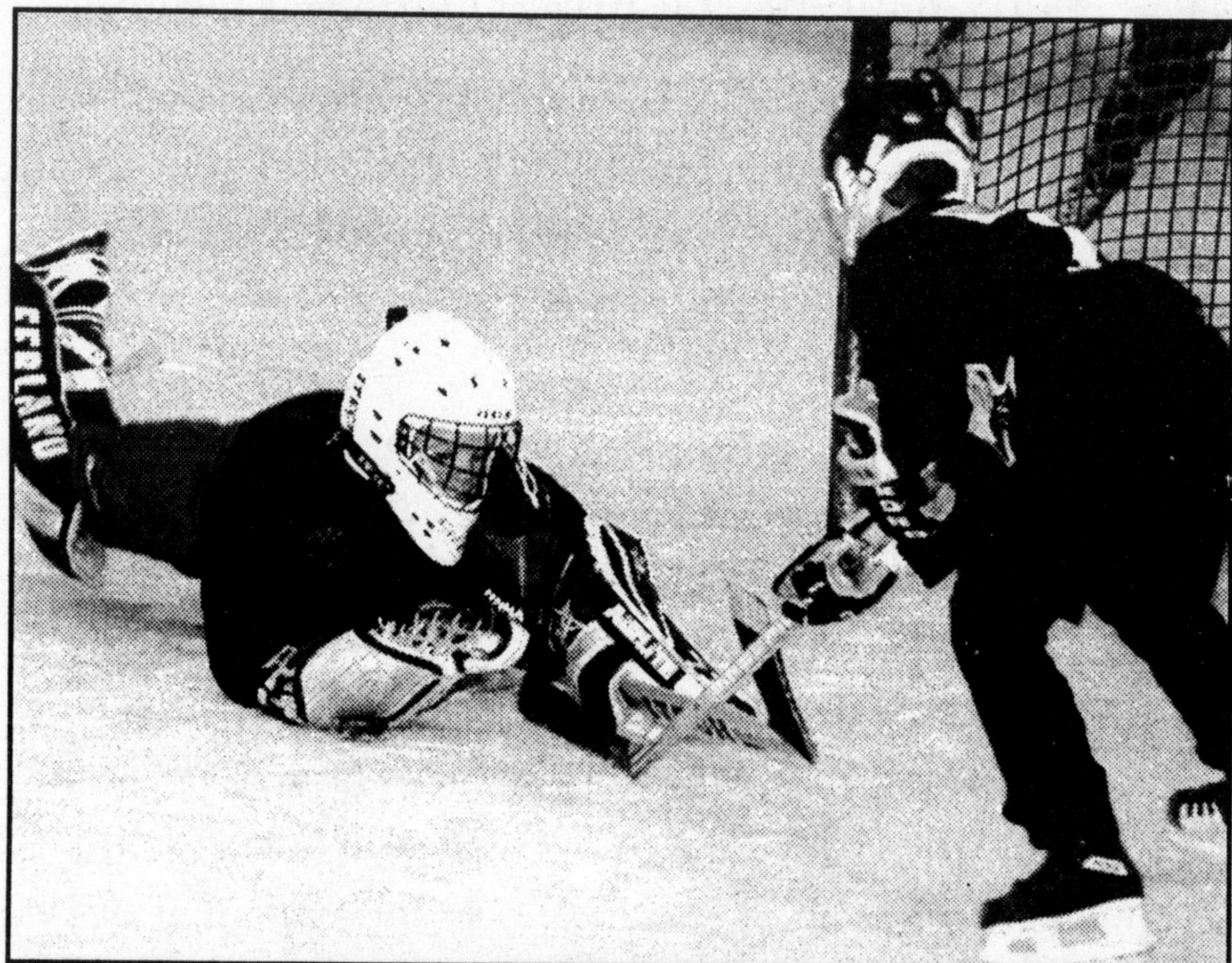


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TUESDAY MARCH 30, 1999



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

House League Day of Champions featured plenty of action including a major novice tilt (at left) in which Austin Noble Insurance tender Nicholas Nevins made a huge diving save to help his team beat Canadian Tire 6-1. Meanwhile in the atom finals (above), Rebekah Lodge battled hard but dropped a 7-2 decision to Becton Dickenson.

Day of Champions full of action

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The outside was hot but the inside of Memorial Arena was simply sizzling Saturday when the Milton Minor Hockey Association held its annual House League Day of Champions.

From dawn till dusk, top teams battled it out in every division — for their family, friends, fans, coaches, teammates and especially for themselves.

The following is a rundown of the day's action. Results are in order of games played.

Peewee

Absolute Transportation 5 J. Michael's Optical 4

Daniel Neelands buried a blueline shot with 2:18 left to go in double overtime to cap what was arguably the most exciting kickoff to championship day in recent memory.

Assisting on the play were Taylor Coulombe and Brendan Gwillam, who delivered the victors' first and final regulation time goals on impressive close-range efforts.

Coulombe and Andy Seto rounded out their scoring. Replying with a pair for J. Michael's Optical was Jonathan Collins while Jerry Coops and Matthew Delaney chipped in singles.

The lead changed hands four times in this nail bitter, that featured rock-solid netminding at either end.

Backstopping Absolute Transportation was David Van Der Vliet while Jonathan Pacheco was between the pipes for J. Michael's Optical.

Beginners

No scores or individual stats were kept here, but this initial hockey program provided some of the most entertaining moments of the day, as four teams — all sponsored by Tim Hortons (affectionately called Timbits) — competed in two half-ice games.

Playing with desire and enthusiasm rather than skill or strategy, these rink rats got their first taste of what will likely be years of enjoyable minor hockey for most of them.

Little things like individual stats, awards and even who was winning didn't seem to interest these youngsters — who played simply for the love of the game.

Even taking the occasional tumble didn't seem to bother them — after all, they didn't really have too far to fall.

Pre-Novice

Bruce Hood Travel 4 Red Lobster White 3 and Red Lobster Black 3 Little Firemen 0

Further results from these entertaining exhibition contests were not available.

Minor Novice

Hunt Plymouth Chrysler 4 Loblaws 0

A flawless performance by goaltender Kaitlin Shuvera and hat-trick by sharpshooter Kieran Farrell highlighted Hunt's convincing victory.

Also scoring for the winners was Tyler Lafontaine while Ryan Stevens picked up an

assist.

Ben Stonehill provided solid cage work for Loblaws and kept his teammates within striking distance until the bitter end.

Major Novice

Austen and Noble Insurance 6 Canadian Tire 1

Canadian Tire kept pace through the early going but eventually succumbed to their opponents' well-balanced attack.

Alex Davis led with a pair for Austen and Noble Insurance, with singles added by Taylor Callahan, Jeremy Hamilton, David Majka and Josh Mandryk.

In net for the victors was Nicholas Nevins while Bo Roberts-Laing guarded the cage for Canadian Tire — whose lone tally, from Tyler Gordon, snapped the shutout with just 90 seconds remaining.

Atom

Becton Dickenson 7 Rebekah Lodge 2

Rebekah Lodge fell behind early and — despite a valiant effort — rediscovered just how merciless Becton Dickenson can be with the upper hand.

Matthew Lalonde's tally with three seconds to go in the opening frame proved to be the back breaker. Teammate Mitchell Rathy tallied twice with singles deposited by Chris Carmichael, Ben Connelly, Clayton Holman and Jessie McConnell.

Scoring for the Lodge were Lisa Brown and Marc Coulombe. Eric Bartlis was in net for

• see MILTON on page 27

Merchants up 2-1

Semi-final series so far a real nail-biter

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Victory may not be a constant right now for the Merchants, but high drama certainly is.

Games one, two and three of their semi-final series against Collingwood have all been decided by a single goal. As if this wasn't exhilarating enough, overtime has been needed to declare a winner in the last couple of tilts.

Milton, which is now acting as the league wild card and led the best-of-seven showdown 2-1 before last night's tilt at home, prevailed in the initial sudden death clash Friday at Memorial Arena.

Their 4-3 triumph was capped 2:16 into the extra session when David Csumrik — who had sank the club's equalizer just four minutes earlier on an explosive rush — delivered a centering pass from behind the net that ricocheted off a defenceman's skate and bounced past veteran tender Jonathan Forest.

His overtime heroics, which have been presented twice so far in the playoffs, helped the defending provincial champs overcome a near third-period collapse — that saw them squander a 2-0 lead and almost cough up the win.

Collingwood's late rally was spearheaded by captain and scoring leader Rene Dorval, who tallied twice and added an assist.

His team capitalized on their final two man-advantage stints. Meanwhile, Milton's powerplay reached anemic status. They blew a double minor, a 5-on-3 opportunity in the final frame and went 0-for-9 overall.

Scoring the Merchants first two goals of the night — within a second of each other in periods one and two respectively — was Ed McGrane, who's now buried the biscuit nine times in post season play.

Showing a little of the magic that earned him all-star recognition this year, he connected on a dazzling wide angle upstairs backhand while being closely guarded late in the first.

• see MERCHANTS on page 21



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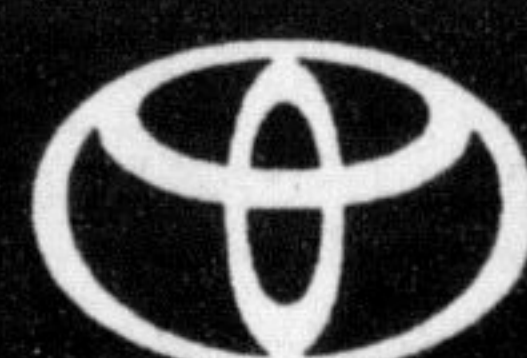
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