

Some reasons why it all came crashing down

It's all over but the crying. The Jr. A Merchants' season, which held such promise just a couple of months ago, has come to a crashing halt.

Or rather it fizzled out, with little fanfare or excitement.

Milton may have survived until mid-April but if all they have to show for this year's playoff run is a semifinal win over Collingwood — who were certainly talented but far from a powerhouse — then their 1998-99 campaign can hardly be

classified as a success.

The question is, how did things go so sour so quickly?

There's no clear-cut response, but nonetheless here's a few suggestions on why the club came up short, in no particular order of importance;

Lack of leadership

It was pretty apparent how vital inspirational leader Shane Sullivan was to the 1997-98 team's successes, but perhaps

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his value wasn't truly recognized until this year, when he was gone. Try as a few players might, nobody seemed able to

ignite that desire and intensity at crucial times the way Sully did.

In fact efforts in this area seemed to vanish altogether down the stretch, with Milton's bench showing no signs of life at key points during both the conference and league finals.

Veterans like Kevin O'Flaherty, Ed McGrane and Ryan Robichaud had looked like suitable replacements for Jeff Haydar, Steve French and Mark McPhail but in the end it

was difficult to figure out just who was steering the ship.

Coaching

This spring was not Marty Williamson's finest hour behind the bench. Milton's head coach stuck too close to last year's strategy — with constant line shuffling and fairly equal play for all four forward units — even when those tactics were proving fruitless.

Benching struggling stars like Geoff Schomogyi and Ryan Eby for a game might have helped fire them up. Instead they kept getting new linemates, which just seemed to make the problem worse.

Getting a new lease on life through the wild card should have been Williamson's ticket to redemption. However, his failure to make tough choices — like sitting a couple of disinterested players in the rematch and replacing Jeremy Wenzel earlier in game three — played at least some part in the Merchants' demise.

No follow through

Milton held the momentum at several points in both rounds against Bramalea but didn't know how to maintain it.

David Csumrik's overtime winner in game three of the conference championship and their convincing 6-2 win in game four of the league finals should have been catalysts, but weren't.

The Merchants scored back-to-back wins just once after beating Georgetown in round two and never really got into any kind of groove.

They enjoyed some bad breaks along the way but just as much good fortune — yet couldn't capitalize on it, unlike last year's club, which

made the most of every chance they got.

Coughing up multi-goal leads through games against Bramalea and Collingwood demonstrated a lack of finishing ability as well.

Inconsistent offence

Consecutive 2-1 squeakers over defensively challenged Georgetown marked the beginning of what would be a hot and cold post season for local gunners.

Whenever one forward started to step things up, there was always someone else waiting to fade into the background. Perhaps the biggest surprise was Schomogyi, a member of the elite 40-goal club during regular season play, going scoreless over the last dozen games of the season.

Milton scored only 16 goals in the league finals and six of them came in game four. When Csumrik — a defenceman — and third-line winger Mark Beisel do half the scoring in a league championship series, there's a problem.

The only thing more inconsistent than the Merchants' overall offence was their powerplay production, which was red hot at times and stone cold at others.

Few success stories

Darren Haydar's 70-goal, 140-point season and Sullivan's transformation from goon to team leader were things last year's team seemed to rally around.

With the exception of Wenzel going undefeated through regular season play — quite the feat actually, but somehow not as inspiring — the Merchants didn't have

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Impressive 5 k time cut

It's been a stellar spring for up-and-coming track and field competitor Sloane George.

The nine-year-old member of Athletiques International Club began this month by trimming more than a minute from her 5000 metre time with an impressive 28:26.4 effort in the Burlington Road Race April 2.

She was the top nine-year-old female finisher at the event while taking third place and the accompanying bronze in the 10-and-under girls division.

A similar medal found its way into her trophy case last weekend as she took third spot in the Ontario Minor Track Association's Road Race Championships at Brock University.

Success this time around came in the 1,500m. She clocked in a 6:46 — just 20 seconds behind the winner.

Anyone interested in joining Athletiques International Club, is asked to call Bruce Burton at (905) 827-8725.

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 April 13 - Tim-BR Mart Tuesday†
 April 14, 15 - Bell Mobility Magnet Schedule Night*

April 16 Baltimore Orioles, 7:05 pm
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April 17 Baltimore Orioles, 4:05 pm
Honda Jr. Jays Saturday Pennant Day****

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NOVICE	Mon. Apr. 19	6:15 p.m.	C. Wells
MINOR ATOM	Mon. Apr. 19	7:15 p.m.	I. Dunbar
ATOM	Mon. Apr. 19	7:30 p.m.	P. Larose
MIN. PEEWEE	Tue. Apr. 20	7:25 p.m.	J. McLeod
PEEWEE	Tue. Apr. 20	7:40 p.m.	G. Leblanc
MIN. BANTAM	Mon. Apr. 19	8:30 p.m.	M. Quincey
BANTAM	Mon. Apr. 19	8:45 p.m.	D. Syvret
MIDGET	TO BE ADVISED		
FIVE TRYOUTS BOOKED PER TEAM			
Cost:	MIN. NOVICE/NOVICE	\$10./tryout	
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	MIN. PEEWEE/PEEWEE	\$11./tryout	
	MIN. BANTAM/BANTAM	\$12./tryout	

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