



# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY DECEMBER 7, 1999

## Merchants sweep series with big rallies

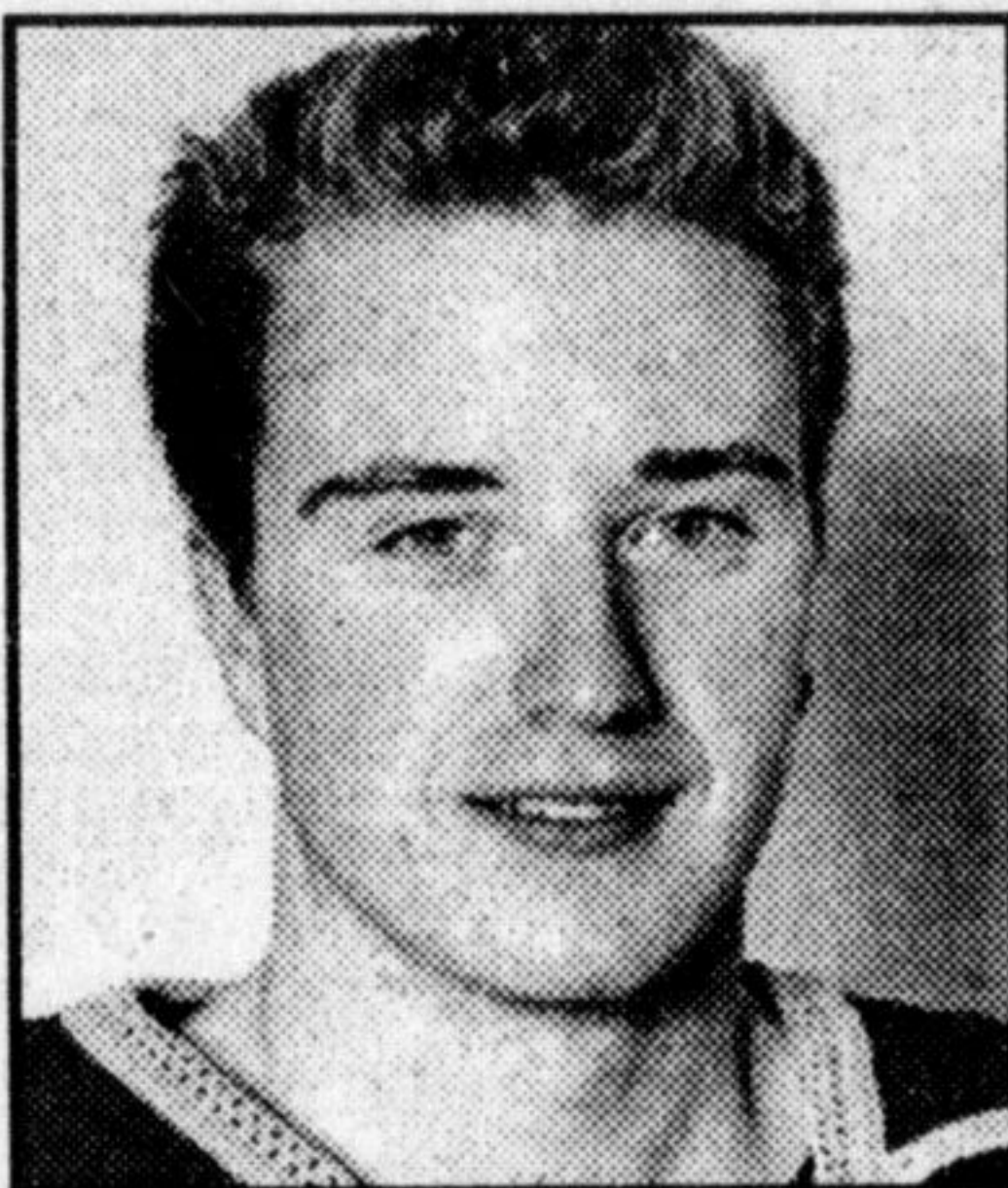
By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The Raiders drew first blood, but the Merchants responded with a knockout blow.

That was how the action unfolded in both halves of this past weekend's emotionally charged home-and-home showdown between the two top teams in the Ontario Provincial Jr. A Hockey League's West Conference.

Milton — delivering what could very well prove to be a watershed moment in their season — climbed out of an early hole each evening to earn the sweep and reclaim sole possession of first place.

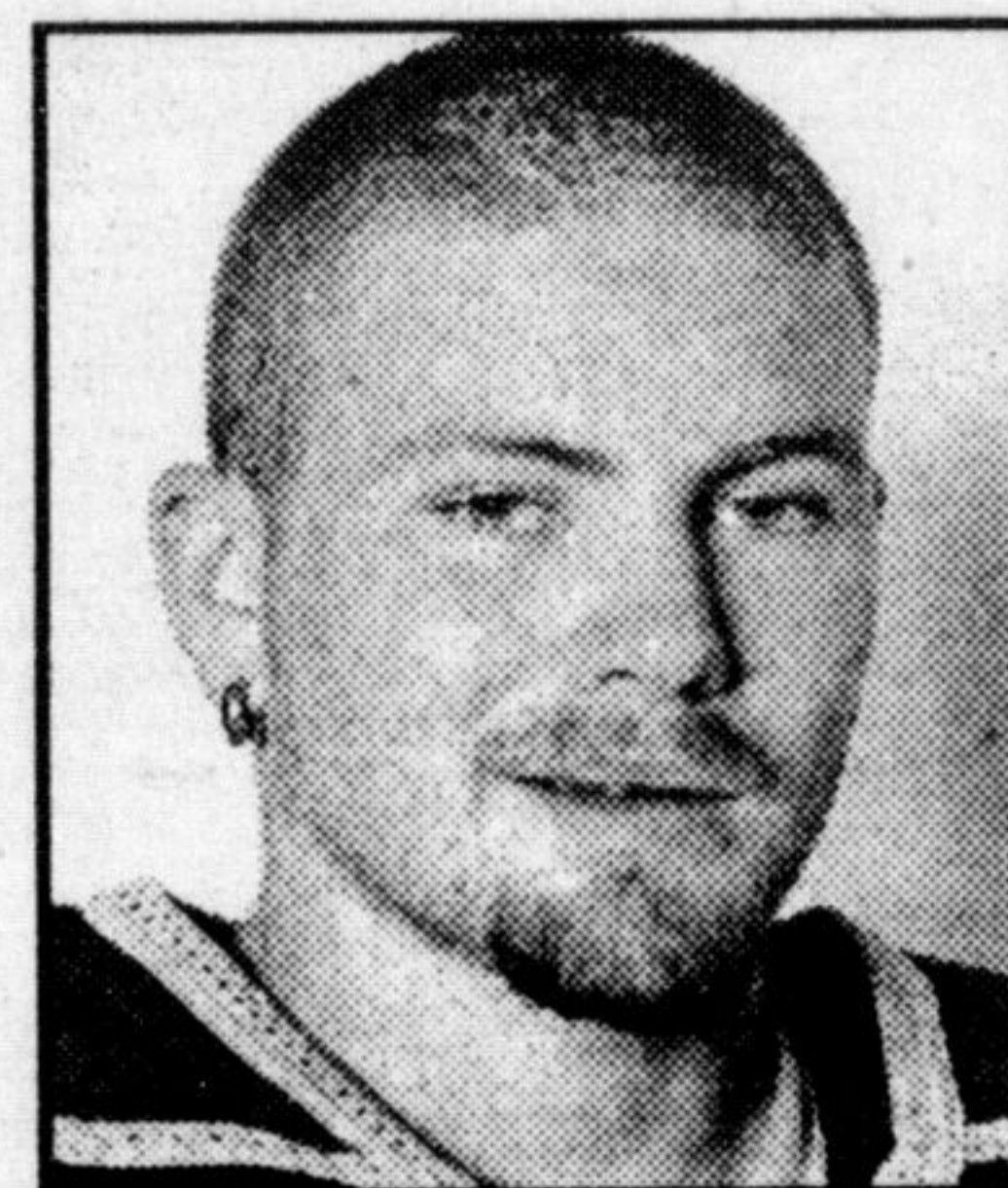


Joel Cameron

They squeaked by 3-2 Friday at home and then triumphed 6-3 Saturday on the road to move four points ahead of their regional rival.

"We played really honest hockey this weekend," said coach Marty Williamson, whose team is unbeaten in nine games and now stands at 21-4-1-3. "We dominated over the last two periods of both games and didn't get sucked into their antics."

Georgetown led by two goals after period one of each contest — 2-0 Friday and 3-1 Saturday — but from that point on their momentum and offense were completely crippled.



Ian Malcolm

That was mainly the doing of Joel Cameron Friday.

The Merchant goalie gave his first legitimate masterpiece of the year, stopping 34 of 36 shots to steal the victory for his team. His efforts were highlighted by dynamite glove work and a 14-save performance in the second period.

Remarked Cameron, "It was by far my best game. I was the most focused for this one and could really see everything out there."

Phil Barski led the uprising — figuring in all three goals.

The Merchants scoring leader notched two of them himself, including the game winner which came less than a minute into the final frame.

Beating Raider Jeff Hladysch for the tying tally was steadily improving defenceman Chris Kerr. Milton's last two goals came on the powerplay — as did the second one by Georgetown.

Raider goals, deposited four minutes apart in the first period, were posted by Mike Knoepfli and Tristan Fairbairn.

They outchanced Milton for much of the night but just couldn't find the net after their opening outburst.

Saturday Georgetown rode an even greater high early on, potting two goals in the final minute of period one to go up 3-1.

But once more, their house of cards came crumbling down.

This time around, it had more to do with their opponents' suffocating defence and team work than stellar netminding, although Cameron certainly offered a credible performance.

Also, Milton's big guns were able to produce where their counterparts couldn't.

Sniper Ian Malcolm banked his 21st and 22nd goals of the year and Barski scored on the powerplay to extend his point-getting streak to 11 games.

Meanwhile, division scoring leaders Stace Page and Jeff Seeds were held off the scoresheet Saturday and finished the weekend



Photo by HERB GARBUTT

Merchants' Phil Barski (right) battles for possession with Raider Corey LeClair in Georgetown Saturday. Milton won the game 6-3 and swept the home-and-home weekend series.

with just one assist apiece.

"This was a tough two games for us. Milton was the better team in four of six periods and that's why they came up with the wins," admitted Seeds. "But I don't think this will make or break anyone's season. We'll come back hard the next time. There's always another day."

Rounding out the Merchants' hit parade Saturday were Dan DeLong, Rob Martin and sophomore rearguard Adam Sturgeon — who deposited an ice-length empty netter for his first marker of the year.

He was the last regular player on the club to break the goose egg in the goal column.

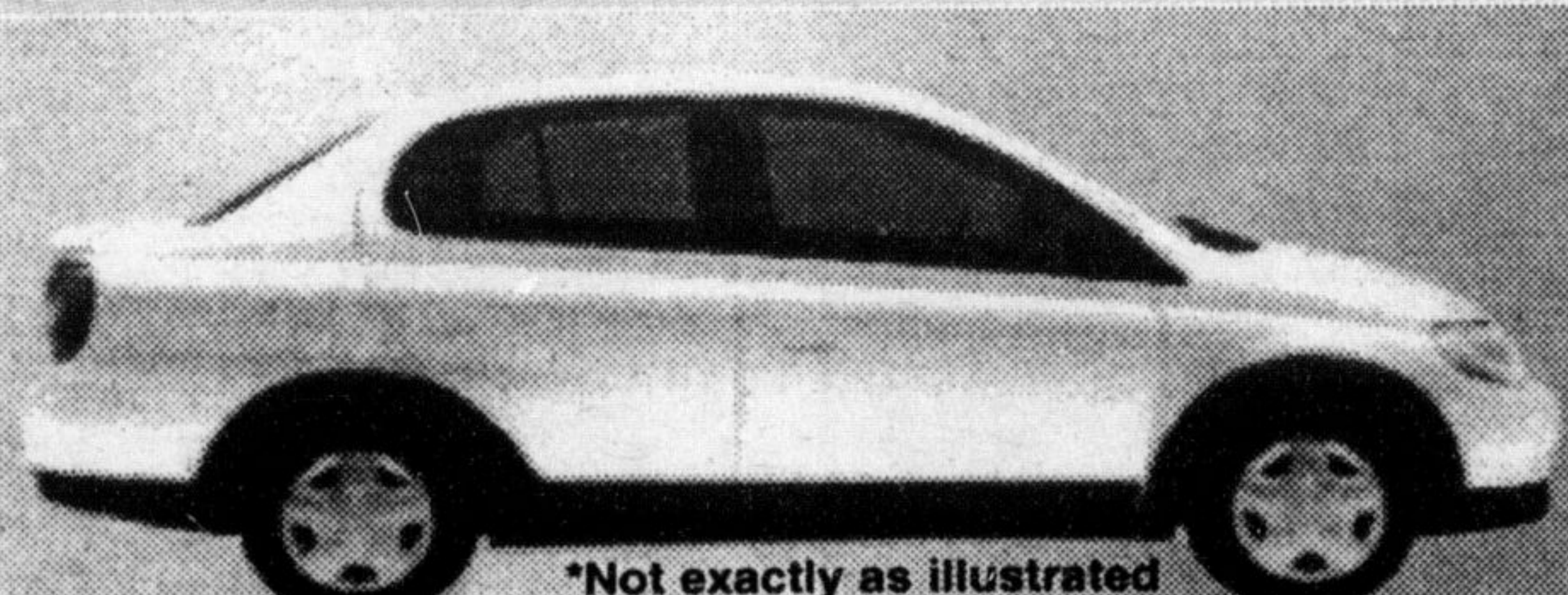
Special teams play proved to be a major factor. Georgetown capitalized on only one of 14 powerplays while the Merchants

went 3-for-9 and added a shorthanded goal. The Raiders responded to their two losses by firing bench boss Jay Anderson.

Milton's next challenge comes tonight in Bramalea. Game time is 7:45 p.m.

**Merchant notes:** Barski now has exactly 50 points and sits top three in West Conference scoring ... Defenceman David Csumrik has left the team to deal with some family matters. It is unknown when or even if he'll return ... Centre Jeff Petherick was released recently. His card, plus those of fellow castoffs Mike Clarke and Luc Lamothe, were handed in during Wednesday's initial cut down. Captain Chad Blundy was moved over to a Jr. C card and one empty card was also handed in ... Of Milton's seven losses, only one has come at home ... The Merchants host Buffalo Friday and travel to Burlington Sunday.

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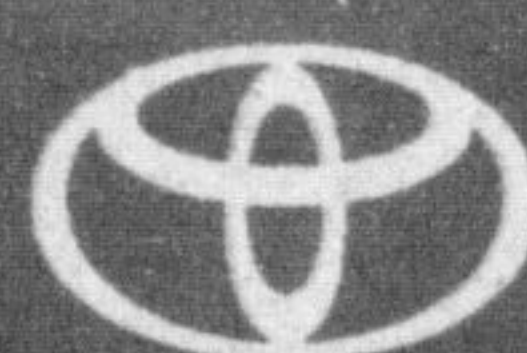
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