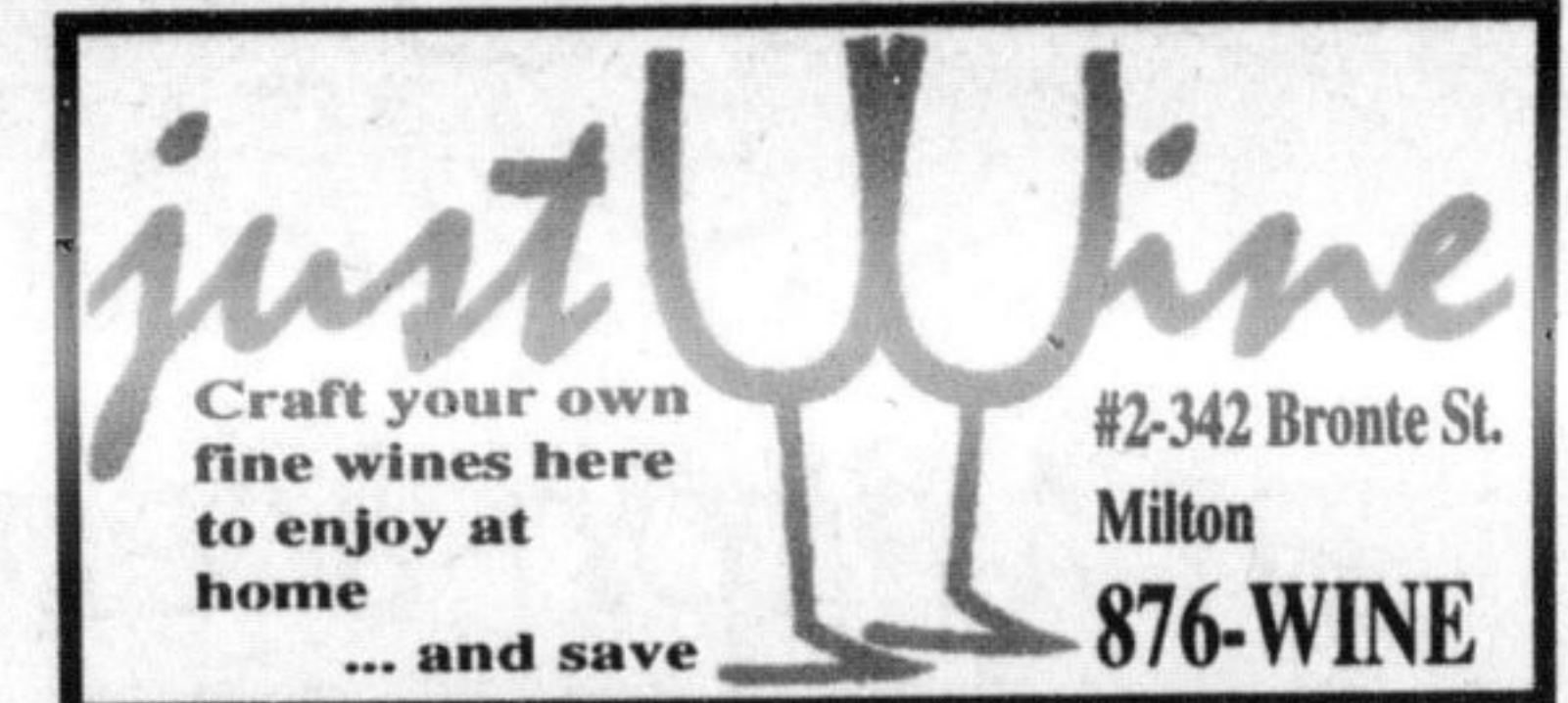




SPORTS



THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY MARCH 21, 2000



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Tyler Lafontaine celebrates a second-period goal against Essex Sunday at John Tonelli Sports Centre. His A major novices won 3-2 and took a 3-1 points lead in the OMHA finals.

A major novices edge Owen Sound Rattlers

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

There's nothing like coming home to rediscover one's winning ways.

Milton's A major novices can certainly attest to that. After giving up a late goal and settling for a tie in Owen Sound Saturday afternoon, the local boys returned to town and reacquainted themselves with victory lane Sunday.

Within the confines of John Tonelli Sports Centre, Doug Riding's team scored as early as humanly possible and then battled the rest of the way to trim the Rattlers 3-2.

This put them up three points to one in the OMHA championship series, which continues in Owen Sound Saturday.

Tyler Lafontaine delivered arguably the quickest goal of any local team's playoff campaign, bursting in off the very first face-off and slipping in a bottom shelf shot a mere 11 seconds into game two.

From there, the Sandstone Transport Winterhawks would combine timely offense and responsible defense — not to mention some crafty

cage work — en route to their triumph.

Backstopping Milton was Adrian Eppinger. He was especially sharp in the middle stanza, during which he turned aside half of the 18 shots he'd face overall, and made a final glove save in the dying seconds of regulation to preserve the win.

Wade McGinnis netted the eventual game winner five minutes into the third period on a wide angle wrist. Also scoring was Brad Mazzocato, while assisting on the first two tallies was Kris DelNin.

Single helpers went to Mazzocato, John Cragg and John Riding.

A perfect penalty killing effort, three-for-three while shorthanded, was another contributing factor in the victory.

The previous day, the championship finalists tied 2-2. Eppinger guarded the net in this one as well while goals — both coming in the second — were registered by DelNin and Jordan Haggart.

Should they win in Owen Sound Saturday, Milton will have a chance to clinch the title at home Sunday.

Game time is set for 2 p.m. at Tonelli Arena.

Major peewees roll over Essex

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Milton's A major peewees decided not to tempt fate a second straight time.

After escaping with an overtime victory at Memorial Arena Saturday night, they used a move across town — to a much more cozy John Tonelli Sports Centre — to fortify efforts at both ends of the ice for game two of the best-of-five OMHA championship finals.

Sunday's wholesale improvement allowed them to jump out to a comfortable lead and go on to topple the Essex Ravens 5-1.

The Action Utility Trailer Winterhawks — one of two local teams currently vying for the OMHA title — are now just one win away from clinching the series.

But they won't have the luxury of doing so at home, since the last three games of the series will be played this coming weekend in Essex.

Coach pleased

Skipper Eric Ellison knew this would present problems if his squad didn't come away from the initial leg of the series with a lead.

Needless to say, he was certainly relieved when the boys stepped things up in game two and put a stranglehold on the Ravens.

"The boys gave a much better effort. All three lines were playing like they should," remarked Ellison.

"I'd say we were kind of fortunate (to win) Saturday. Getting that first goal and showing stronger early on really helped today."

Mark Strazdins was exceptional between the pipes in game two, particularly under heavy fire in the opening frame when he made some superb pad blocks.

Leading up front with a goal and two assists was captain Steve Ellison.

Kyle Thomas potted the game winner, tucking one in the short side less than a minute into the second period with help from Ellison.

Meanwhile, Milton's other scorers were Phil Foley, Jake Madansky and Jay Price — who provided rock solid defense, as did Sam Tomlinson.

The 'Hawks led 1-0 and 4-1 by periods. They outshot Essex 25-24.

Whyte knight

The previous evening at Memorial, Cory Whyte pulled double duty as both the star and hero to lift his team to a 6-5 decision.

Capping a four-point performance, he led a three-on-none rush and slipped in a backhand fake for the winning goal 2:37 into sudden death.

For much of the first half the locals looked timid and punchless on the way to falling behind 4-1.

But a goaltending change and ill-timed infractions by their guests helped turn the tide.

Mike Sanders delivered some great clutching cage work down the stretch while his teammates amassed three power-play goals on a lengthy man-advantage to set the stage for an exciting comeback.

Whyte's two tallies were complimented by singles from Ellison, Foley, Johnny Murphy and Greg Pepper.

Foley, Whyte and Craig Stover each had a pair of helpers.

Game three of the series will be played in Essex Friday.

If necessary, games four and five are set for the following two days.

Milton is currently on a six-game win streak, that goes back to the fifth and deciding game of their quarterfinal series with Orangeville. They swept Belleville three straight to reach the finals.

Historic road race Sunday

There's still time left to sign up for the annual 'Around the Bay' road race, which is scheduled for Sunday in Hamilton.

'Around the Bay' is one of the oldest running events anywhere in North America — enjoying a 106-year history.

Race memorabilia dating back to the turn of the century will be on display and available for perusal by all those who sign up at the Running Company, 118 Thomas St., in Oakville.

This year's race, which features both 5 km and 30 km runs, is expected to draw upwards of 3,000 participants.

Registration for the event can be done in person or by calling the Running Company's Greg McKinnon at 815-1952.

Race entries will be accepted up to tomorrow at 7 p.m.

The Running Company also hosts a number of clinics for both beginner and advanced runners.



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