

Merchants on pace with last year after thrashing lowly Blues 10-5

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

The similarities are quite impressive — especially when first considering the differences.

The Merchants' 2000/01 contingent is much younger and less experienced than its predecessor.

And when it comes to man hours lost to injury and suspension, the team is so far ahead of last season it's almost absurd.

Yet heading into last night's game against top-seated Brampton, Milton sported the same number of wins (14 out of a possible 21) and points (31) as they did at this time last year.

"That's a little surprising, but then a lot of these younger guys who normally wouldn't have gotten a chance have been stepping it up and making the most of their opportunities," said captain and durable defensive anchor John Nadalin, when looking at why the team's been able to equal the strong start they had last year.

The fifth year Merchant also pointed to both a better dressing room atmosphere and work ethic, stating "We've got more chemistry and there's a lot of guys who'll go the extra distance for you."

These comments followed the Merchants' 10-5 drubbing of Bramalea Tuesday.

After a somewhat shaky start, the local juniors fortified their efforts and spent the final two periods exploiting the lowly Blues' severely flawed defense.

Assistant coach Dan Sales was pleased with the win, but quickly pointed to the 41



shots against his club in stressing that there's room for improvement.

"You can't give up that many shots and expect to win a lot of games," he explained.

"Obviously tonight it didn't hurt us because our skilled players are better than their skilled players."

Sales said the team's strong start isn't all that surprising, but certainly impressive given all the injuries throughout the past two months.

He added, "We've got some character guys here who've stepped it up. (Dan) Bognar has filled in nicely on the blueline and (John) Nadalin has just been a rock for us back there."

Scoring surge

But Tuesday it was all about offense — at least through periods two and three when the two sides combined for a whopping 13 goals.

Milton's hit parade — their biggest this season — was led by a one-goal, three-

assist output from power forward Ian LaBrash.

Rookies Kevin Arruda and Vince Laise also stood out with two goals and an assist each.

Andy Rozak and newcomer Jason Harshaw had three-point nights as well, with a goal and two assists apiece, while also lighting the lamp were Nadalin, Elliott Altberg and Scott Malcolm.

Penalty shot

Bramalea notched the first and final goals of the evening — on a shorthanded effort, the second against Milton in as many games, and a penalty shot in the last minute.

Goaltender Joel Cameron turned back three dozen shots to lift his season win total to 10.

Merchant notes: Left winger Jeff Whiteside — picked up from Simcoe's Jr. C team — saw his first action as a Merchant Tuesday. He registered an assist on goal number nine ... Steve Schentag could be back by the end of the month while fellow injured defenceman Chris Rook is expected to return sometime in December ... Milton's home-and-home series with Brampton continues tonight at Memorial Arena. Game time, as always, is 8 p.m. Among those toiling with the top-seated Capitals this season is Milton area native Jon Gleed, one of several locals playing in the league this year.

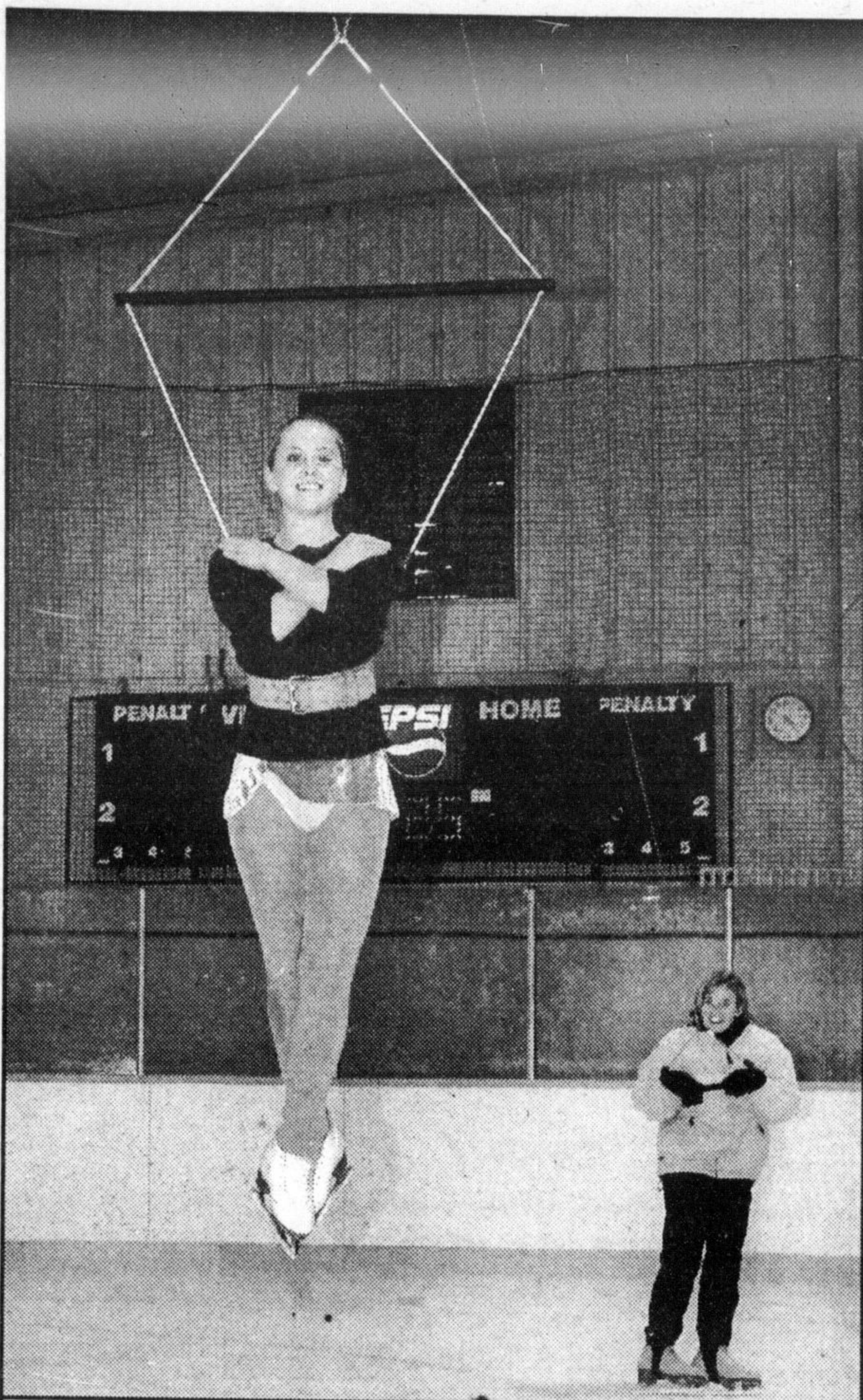


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

✓ We have liftoff

Milton Skating Club's Tiffany Richmond tries out the new jumping harness at John Tonelli Sports Centre while coach Nancy McDonnell-Lemaire steadies the lines. The apparatus was donated by Sargent Farm.

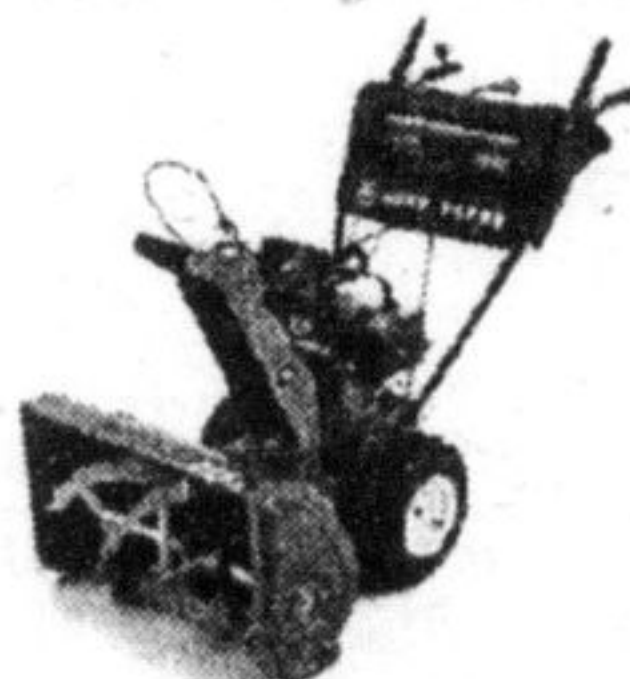


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Jiu-Jitsu results are impressive

Milton School of Jiu-Jitsu members kicked, punched, blocked and grappled their way to some impressive results at their own tournament held October 29.

The following are the local students' placings from the three-tiered competition — which included sport jiu-jitsu, grappling and duo kata.

Sport Jiu-Jitsu

Juniors Group 2: 2nd Zachary Boychuk

Juniors Group 3: 3rd Alex McNeilly

Juniors Group 4: 2nd Ben Seguin, 3rd Scott Freer

Juniors Group 5: 2nd Neryhs Hall

Juniors Group 7: 3rd Taylor Prestidge

Juniors Group 8: 1st Shannon

Laing, 2nd Ashley Robinson, 3rd Justine Smith

Juniors Group 9: 1st Daniel Kelsh, 3rd Chris Taylor

Juniors Group 10: 1st Derek Baily, 2nd Gary Laing

Juniors Group 11: 2nd Adam McDonald

Grappling

Juniors Group 1: 2nd Zachary Boychuk, 3rd Danta Duncan

Juniors Group 2: 1st Cole Sirois, 2nd Sophia Civiero, 3rd Mitchell Wiesner

Juniors Group 3: 1st Scott Freer, 3rd Tyla Campbell

Juniors Group 4: 3rd Katherine Danielli

Juniors Group 5: 2nd Ryan Cochrane

Juniors Group 6: 1st Jessica Notman, 2nd Taylor Prestidge

Juniors Group 7: 3rd Graeme Taylor

Juniors Group 8: 1st Justine Smith, 2nd Ashley Robinson, 3rd Shannon Laing

Juniors Group 9: 1st Gary Laing, 2nd Daniel Kelsh

Juniors Group 10: 1st Matt Knock, 2nd Derek Baily

Duo Kata

(self defense demonstration with two-member teams)

Group 1: 1st Tyla Campbell and Danta Duncan, 2nd Alex McNeilly and Scott Freer, 3rd Samantha Kelsh and Cole Sirois

Group 2: 1st Nerhys Hall and Nasha Brownridge, 2nd Daniel Kelsh and Gary Laing, 3rd Keegan Guidolin and Jeff Mountain.

Yankee Paco retired from racing

When the entry box for the three-year-old trotting colts for the Canadian Breeders Championships closed Tuesday morning at Mohawk Racetrack and a horse by the name of Yankee Paco wasn't entered, many were surprised.

"He's officially retired," said trainer Doug McIntosh.

"He could have raced this week, but in the best interest of myself, Dr. Ivey, Tom Crouch of Kentuckiana Farms and the shareholders, we decided it was time for him to move on to his new career

as a stallion. If he would have raced this weekend and advanced to the final, his schedule would have been set back three weeks. As a group, we really thought he had nothing left to prove."

Yankee Paco, who became the first Canadian-sired horse to win the prestigious Hambletonian earlier this year at the Meadowlands, will remain at McIntosh's farm near Wheatley, Ont. until early next week.

He'll then travel to Kentucky for a sperm count test and roam in the

bluegrass until the end of the year. In early January he'll be shipped back to Canada to begin his stallion duties.

Yankee Paco will stand stud for a fee of \$10,000 (Cdn.) for the 2001 breeding season.

Yankee Paco retires with \$1,486,197 in earnings and a mark of 1:53.2.

His last race was at Mohawk where he was an impressive winner in the \$250,000 Ontario Sires Stakes Super final November 4.