



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2000



Photo by GEORGE BESHIRI

Merchant Ian LaBrash goes after Capital Derek Conter during a second-period fiasco in Brampton Thursday. Milton lost the game but split the home-and-home series by winning the following night.

✓ Merchants split two-game showdown with Brampton

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The Ontario Provincial Jr. A Western Conference penthouse sported dual occupancy prior to the biggest home-and-home clash of the season.

And when the smoke had finally cleared from the emotionally charged and much anticipated showdown, neither tenant had been able to evict the other.

Glenn Walsh's Merchants were temporarily knocked out of top spot during the initial battle in Brampton Thursday — losing a three-ring circus affair 6-4 — but promptly climbed back into a first-place tie by doubling the Capitals 4-2 at home the following night.

Milton has a game in hand on their chief rivals and could assume sole possession of the division lead as early as tonight, when they host Bramalea.

But if last week's results as any indication, Merchant and Capital fans had better settle in for a lengthy seesaw feud for first between these two teams — who right now are on a collision course toward the conference finals.

"Certainly we'd like to be one of the two teams

there," said Walsh Friday night, after his team delivered its strongest statement of the year. "And Brampton's displayed that they're a very good club and solid defensively."

The Merchant skipper's last comment definitely holds a lot of merit, but during round two it was his own team's blueline unit that took on a starring role.

Led by workhorse captain John Nadalin, Milton held the gritty visitors to a season low 18 shots — and just nine over the final two periods when the game was still up for grabs.

Said durable rearguard Chad Vindin, "We just concentrated on winning the one-on-one battles and maintaining our intensity. That was the main thing."

Milton scored high marks in both departments. That — plus two-goal efforts from feisty centre Elliott Altberg and flashy winger Shane Remenda — was enough to erase an early 2-0 deficit and rally for the two points.

"I think patience and control were the big things tonight. We did a good job of minimizing their quality opportunities after giving up those two early goals," added Walsh.

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✓ Bishop Reding wins senior gridiron title

By **MURRAY TOWNSEND**
Special to The Champion

The trophy may not have been all in one piece, but it belongs to Bishop Reding anyway, as they defeated Loyola 7-0 at Ivor Wynne Stadium on Thursday to capture the Halton Division I championship.

The windy, cold conditions turned the game into a defensive battle almost from the outset. But, while the almost 800 students and parents who showed up to support the Royals were freezing in the stands, the Bishop Reding defense was boiling over.

Ivan Bosnjak served notice on the first series that he was going to get cozy with the Loyola players. In fact, the Loyola fans who chanted, "Where'd you park your tractors?" needed only look down on the field where Bosnjak was ploughing through their line over and over again and into their backfield. He had three sacks on the game, a stack of big tackles, and caught three passes on offense, as well.

Dynamite defense

Loyola was three-and-out on their first series, a scenario that would become very common for them. They just couldn't penetrate the wall of Bishop Reding defenders. Dave Kornack stopped a ball carrier for a loss, Chris Casteller made a big tackle on a third down play, Matt Ishoy hurried the Loyola quarterback, and Chris Dumencu, Greg Boesveld, Mark Antonelli, Luke Antonelli, Maciej Hatta, Rusty Parsons and Ryan Taylor all made big defensive plays. Those are big plays with stars beside them, not just regular ones. The oddity was, that with everybody playing so well, star linebacker/fullback Mike Long didn't need to be as dominant as usual.

The Royals were able to move the ball on offense and get first downs, despite not putting many points on the board. Jodie St. John had some nice completions in the difficult wind, including a 29-yard strike to a wide-open Kyle Grant, one of several receptions for him. He also completed passes to Andrew Pepper, Long, Bosnjak, and Mark Antonelli.

The Royals lone touchdown was set up by a 30-yard run by Onel Martino, who received added attention most of the game by Loyola, who were aware of his big-play capabilities. On the sixth play of the drive that started at the mid-field stripe, Long

rumbled into the end zone from the four-yard line.

Stefan Linder made a sensational play in the third quarter that in retrospect may have been a game-saver. A high snap sailed over his head, but not only was he able to run back and recover the football, he managed to still get a tremendous punt away. Instead of the Royals being stuck defending deep in their own zone, he backed Loyola all the way down to their own 15-yard line.

A strange series of events ended the game. With just over two minutes remaining Loyola was faced with a fourth down and five. Instead of going for it, they punted the ball, which was a surprise to almost everyone.

Perhaps their thinking was that the defense could hold the Royals. St. John might have taken that personally, because he made a key play when Bishop Reding got the ball, running for 10 yards and a first down with a minute and a half remaining.

But, then with 43 seconds left and Bishop Reding on a fourth down and three yards to play, instead of punting, they went for it and were stopped. Coach Joe Jurus explained that thinking after the game, saying that the swirling winds played a hand in that decision.

Comeback falls short

That gave Loyola one more shot at the end zone and on a fourth and 18 with 20 seconds left, a long bomb slipped through the hands of a receiver, giving Bishop Reding the ball and the game.

Bosnjak may have been the only Bishop Reding player or fan whose heart didn't stop on that play. "I wasn't worried at all. Even if they had caught it we would have stopped them on the next play."

Long, another player who plays both offense and defense, said that the defense was the key for both teams, and that much of that work was done before the game even started. "We watched a lot of film," he noted, and also gave credit to Loyola, noting, "Their defense prepared well for us."

St. John suggested that swirling winds were a problem for both offenses, and that Loyola had picked up on some of their offensive tendencies. That was a key on his big first down on the last minute and a half, suggesting that Loyola was expecting them to go left, so they went right.

Coach Joe Jurus, who called St. John the

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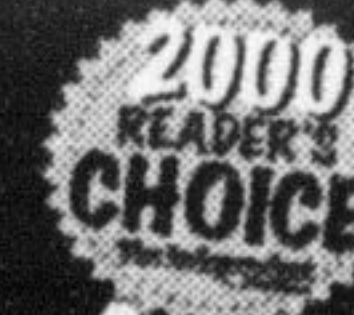
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