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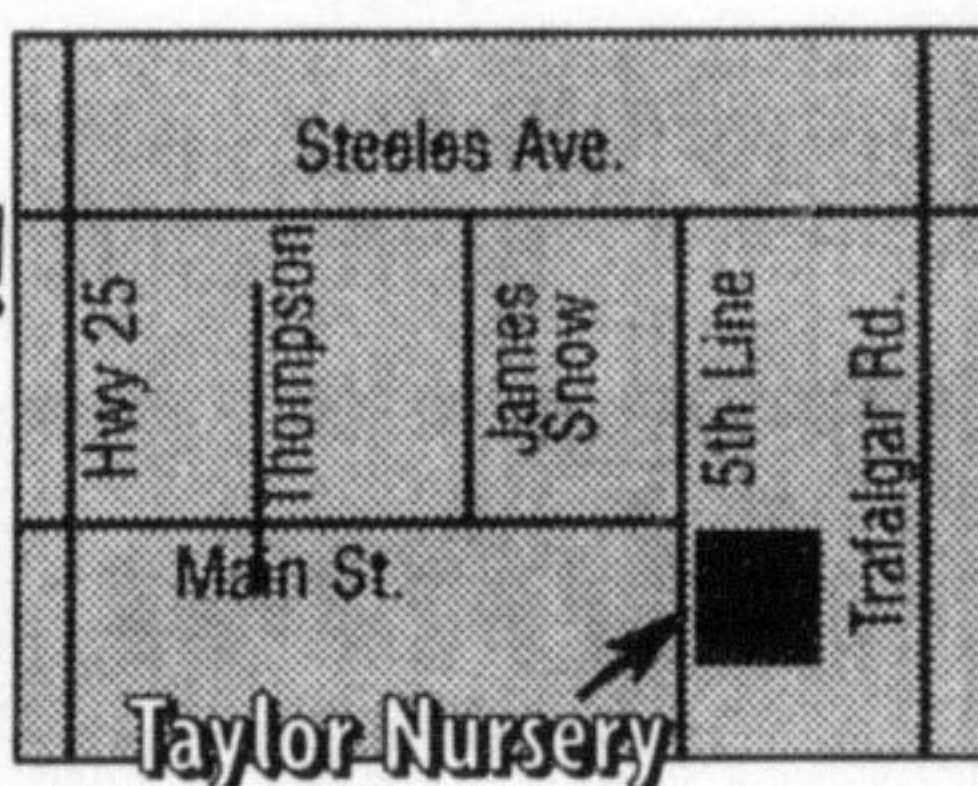
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Merchants blueliner named to Under-17 Ontario squad

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Merchant fans have quickly come to know Rick Janco as a hard-working young defenceman with leadership skills and character beyond his years.

And pretty soon the rest of the country will learn that as well — or at least those who follow the upcoming Under-17 World Hockey Challenge.

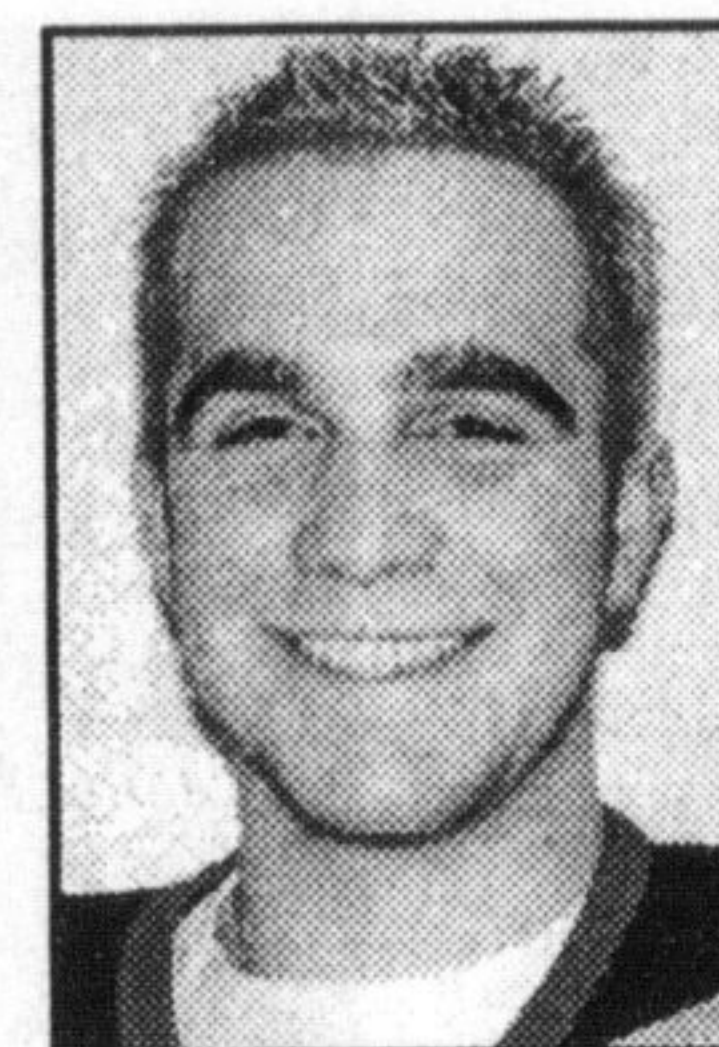
The 16-year-old blueliner is among seven former GTHLers, and one of three ex-Toronto Marlboros (including one-time Merchant hopeful Rick Nash), who've been named to Team Ontario for the holiday tournament.

"It feels great. Actually I was getting a little nervous because it was coming pretty close to the deadline (for choosing the team)," said the 6'1", 210 lbs. rearguard, who got the call about making the squad last Wednesday.

Janco — who saw an awful lot of ice time and showed strongly during the Merchants' blueline injury rash early this season — feels competing in the Under-17 World Hockey Challenge will be a major confidence booster.

Not that he hasn't already enjoyed a healthy dose of that since becoming a Merchant.

"The guys in this league are faster and bigger, so you've got to learn to move the puck quicker and be



Rick Janco

ready to play with more toughness," he said.

The Merchants' youngest defenceman certainly has no shortage of the latter — but it's his less tangible qualities that have most impressed head coach Glenn Walsh.

"Rick's heard a hundred times over that he has tremendous character, that's one of his defining attributes. He's willing to do

whatever it takes to succeed," remarked Milton's bench boss.

"Sometimes it's easy to forget that he's a 16-year-old. He'll probably, almost certainly, be a star in this league in the coming years."

Added captain and defensive anchor John Nadalin, "He's given us a lot of depth on the blueline for such a young guy. He's got great composure and has fit right in here."

Janco is the second Merchant defenceman in four seasons to play for the Under-17 squad. Matt Bannan did so in 1997/98, and helped Ontario beat the Czech Republic 3-2 for the gold.

This year's tournament will be held December 27 to January 4 in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

AA major bants enjoy scoring surge in victory versus Arthur

Milton's A major bantams flexed their collective scoring muscles en route to doubling Arthur 8-4 Sunday.

The Action Utility Winterhawks enjoyed 2-1 and 4-1 period leads on the way to victory. Netminder Corey Clarkson stood tall down the stretch to preserve the win.

Sam Tomlinson enjoyed the lion's share of the scoring pie with a whopping four goals and four assists. Tallying twice and adding a pair of helpers was Ian Kornack.

Greg Pepper had a goal and two assists while also denting the twine was Derek Blanchard.

Sunday's win was the second in as many days and followed a 4-2 triumph over Caledon.

Tomlinson scored twice in this one while singles were contributed by Blanchard and Pepper. Once again it was Clarkson delivering some credible cage work for the 'Hawks.

Before that, the local lads split a two-game stretch — toppling Arthur 6-1 and losing to Acton 5-1.

Pepper and Tomlinson each potted a pair in the win while between the pipes was Aaron Clarke. Ian Kornack also scored while Pepper made the lone deposit against Acton.

Rep Hockey

Close, but no cigar

Milton's AA minor novices came within a heartbeat of advancing to the playoff round at last weekend's Pickering Tournament.

In arguably their strongest performance of the year, the local lads kept pace with Belleville throughout the final round robin clash — but were eventually trimmed 2-1.

Brandon Haggart scored the lone tally while stand-out efforts were given by Zakk Collins, Lauren Kelly, Brendan Farrell and Richard Monk.

The Collins Sunoco Winterhawks split their first two games — outdistancing London 3-1 and then falling to Barrie 4-0. Gary Klutt tallied twice in the win while also scoring was Jake Cochrane. Trevor Rae-Hunt stood tall between the pipes.

In recent league play, Milton was bombed 10-3 by Oakville and downed 5-3 by Georgetown. Collins had a couple of goals in both games while singles were chipped in by Haggart and Monk.

Marlins continue to make waves

The Milton Marlins continued to make waves last weekend — delivering some impressive results at their second meet of the year in Burlington.

Leading the way was Aaron Fraser, who delivered a near clean sweep — winning five of her six events and striking silver in the other.

The gifted swimmer's golden performances came in the 100m and 200m freestyle, 100m and 200m butterfly and the 100m breaststroke. Her second-place showing was in the 200m breaststroke.

"She's worked hard so far and it's showing," said Marlins coach Emil Dimitrov.

Teammates Rachel Robinson and Michelle Claessens battled it out in the breaststroke events, with Rachel taking first place by way of a finish judge's decision as they were tied time wise in the 200m race.

Michelle, however, took top spot in the 100m event with Rachel close behind for second. In the 200m individual medley, Rachel grabbed second while Michelle was just one place back.

Erynn Mayes exhibited newfound determination, placing second in the 200m backstroke and third in the 100m freestyle.

She also swam to top-10 finishes in three other events.

Also showing strongly was Jamie Robinson, whose efforts in the 200m breaststroke were good enough for the bronze medal. She also placed top 10 in the rest of her races, while also coming away with top-10 efforts were Jennifer Claessens, Jacqueline Clarke, Laura Prusha and Tara Anderson.

Fax all of your team reports and sports story ideas to Steve LeBlanc at 878-4943, or drop them off at 191 Main St. E.

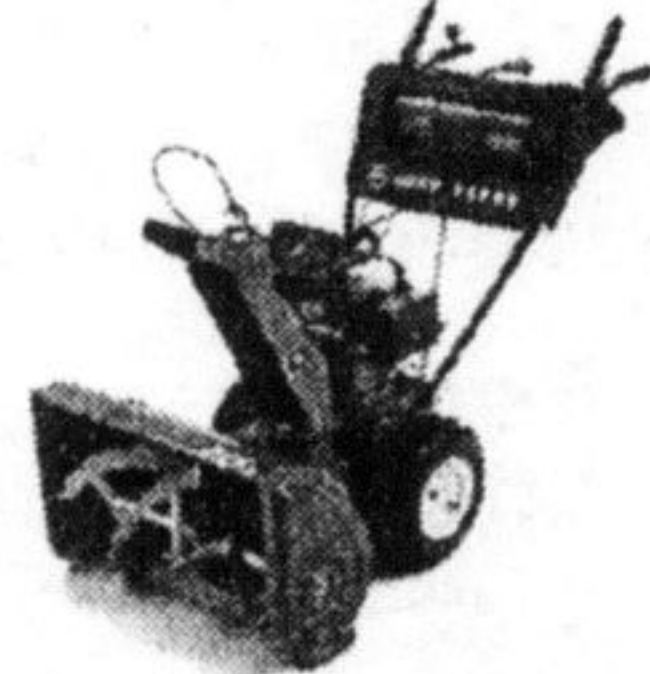


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