



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY JANUARY 16, 2001

Demoralizing déjà-vu for hapless Merchants

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

Can anyone say déjà-vu?

When the Merchants last battled Brampton and Hamilton in succession, they scored one measly goal and came away with a winless weekend.

Just over a month later the local juniors have relived the painful ordeal and handed over first place to the defending regular season champion and weekend sweeping Georgetown Raiders.

An 0-for-15 powerplay whitewash was largely to blame for the offensive drought, that was capped by Saturday's 5-0 goose egg in Brampton. This prompted a lengthy post-season skull session, during which head coach Glenn Walsh invited his charges to do a little soul searching.

"I asked them if they really believed that they were a 5-0 (losing) team to Brampton ...," said the local bench boss. "If they were ready to take a run at a championship or if they'd let this (loss) affect their psyche."

Answers to that question will begin taking shape tonight when his team travels to Bramalea's Victoria Park Arena. But one thing that's already abundantly clear is that in order to enjoy any kind of playoff prosperity, Milton has to start producing with the man-advantage.

At practice Sunday, Walsh devoted considerable time to working on the powerplay — which had held such promise at one time but for the most part this season has been rather pitiful.

Remarked Milton's skipper, "We've got to rectify stations and generate more shots."

Many missed opportunities

The 24-12-4-1 Merchants came up short in both these areas against Brampton Saturday. Four powerplays were squandered in the first period alone, which set the tone for a long night and demoralizing defeat.

Coming off straight losses earlier in the week, the Capitals were hungry for a win and used their tiny ice surface to physically dominate Milton.

Meanwhile, Danny Gould — Brampton's meal ticket between the pipes — was rock solid, turning back 28 shots for the shutout.

The victors lit the lamp in the opening and closing moments of periods one and two to grab the upper hand. From there, they potted a backbreaking third tally early in the final frame before a minor skirmish broke out between the adjoining benches.

Brampton would go on to score with a two-man powerplay and added insult to injury with a shorthanded marker inside the last minute of play. Capital John Winstanley delivered a hat-trick while Jeff Hristovski and Kenny Souza added singles.

At home against Hamilton Friday, Milton took its third loss of the year to their sturdy steel-town rivals — getting out-muscled and eventually edged 2-1.

Defenceman Chris Rook — sinking his first this season — made the lone deposit for the hosts, beating Kilty Bee Bryan Strongman on a partially screened blueline floater seven-and-a-half minutes into the third. This evened the count, but only served as a prelude to heartbreak — as Hamilton's Ryan Lahie went five-hole at the 12:50 mark to net the winner and spoil a terrific performance by veteran goalkeeper Joel Cameron.

From a quality shots standpoint, the Merchants were thoroughly out-chanced on the night — which marked the return of young defenceman Adam Sturgeon and the debut of ex-Burlington gunner Rick Ferroni. Both joined the team just prior to the trade deadline Wednesday.

Milton's lost weekend put the brakes on a six-game win streak, during which the then offensively potent club buried the biscuit three dozen times and scored no less than four on any night.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Merchant captain John Nadalin gets hauled down while trying to clear the puck while goalie Joel Cameron races back to his net during Friday's home game against Hamilton, which ended in a 2-1 defeat for the local juniors.

Peewees open playoffs with big win

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

Milton's A major peewees sure know how to make a good first impression.

Kicking off their opening round provincial playoff series in fine style at John Tonelli Sports Centre Sunday evening, the Docs & Dents Winterhawks potted four unanswered goals en route to toppling Ancaster 5-2.

The win was the third this season against the Avalanche and snapped a two-game losing skid for the local lads.

Eric Bortlis provided brilliant cage work through game one of the best-of-five series, especially during the second period when he turned back about a dozen shots in a span of three minutes.

He gave up a couple of late powerplay markers, but by then a comeback was out of the question.

Meanwhile, the hosts notched all but one of their goals within a nine-minute time frame in the middle stanza. Stephan

Kays deposited the winner, catching the bottom left corner on an authoritative snapshot.

Enjoying the lion's share of the scoring pie with two tallies — including one while the locals were shorthanded — and a pair of assists was Ryan Mitchell.

Dale Thring had a goal and two helpers while also standing out with three assists was Matt Mantin. Michael Good was the other marksmen.

Defensively, David Debren and Field Burgoyne did a credible job clearing the front of the net and denying the visitors during one-on-one battles. Their efforts — plus those of the entire blueline unit — restricted opposing attackers to just a single shot through the first period.

Milton's 4-for-6 penalty killing campaign also played a role in the win.

The best-of-five clash continues in Ancaster Saturday. If victorious, the 'Hawks will have a chance to sweep the following Sunday, January 28 at Tonelli Arena. Game time is 7 p.m.

2001 COROLLA CE Plus

Lease for

\$236

+ tax
per month for 48
months. Lease
includes freight &
P.D.F.

with \$2750 down

- Canada's best selling 4 door sedan
- Power door locks
- Advanced 125 HP VVT-i engine
- Air Conditioning
- Automatic Transmission
- AM/FM stereo with CD
- 60/40 split folding rear seat
- Remote keyless entry

Financing up
to 36 months
3.9%



Model #BR12EP-B

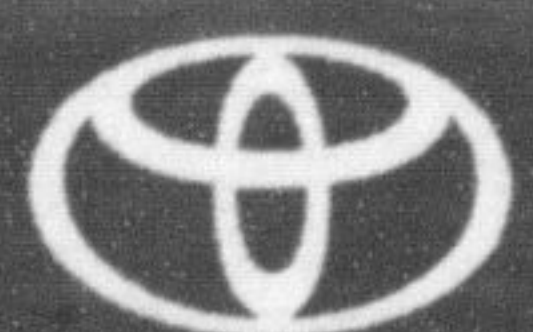
MSRP \$18,085.00



GEORGETOWN TOYOTA SALES

15 MOUNTAINVIEW RD. N., - GEORGETOWN 877-2296 Tor. 874-4276
WEBSITE at www.haltonhills.com/toyota or E-MAIL at toyota@aztec-net.com

Voted
Georgetown's
Favourite
Automotive
Import
Dealership



*Based on 48 mos. walkaway lease. First payment, security deposit due on delivery. **Based on 96,000 km additional charge of \$0.07 if applicable on 2001 COROLLA CE Plus.