



# SPORTS

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FRIDAY MARCH 16, 2001

## Merchants get thumped 6-2 in third game

*Merchants lose first at home in seven games, but they still lead series 2-1*

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

The plan was simple — generate more offense and put a stranglehold on Brampton.

But in hockey, like all other forms of battle, a successful strategy doesn't always ensure victory.

The Merchants came face-to-face with that harsh reality in the third installment of their Western Conference finals Tuesday. In front of another near-capacity crowd at Memorial Arena, Milton went with an extra forward and managed almost as many scoring opportunities as games one and two combined.

However, in the spirit of less is more — or vice versa in this particularly case — the regular season champs made their fewest deposits of the series and were thumped by the Capitals 6-2.

### Punchless powerplay

Joel Cameron's first brush with mediocrity in exactly a month and a punchless powerplay conspired against the hosts, who as of last night led the best-of-seven showdown two-games-to-one.

The Milton netminder once again faced a barrage of shots early on — but this time around couldn't quite weather the storm, allowing five goals in a little over eight minutes.

Back-up Richard Fournier stopped the bleeding through the last two periods, but that wasn't enough to turn the tide.

The Merchants gave a satisfactory team effort overall but were a disappointing 1-for-11 with the man-advantage and couldn't sustain much momentum against the revitalized Capitals — who returned to their hard-hitting and aggressive nature following an uninspired weekend.

As expected Tuesday, Brampton's Danny Gould put the brakes on a recent slump and stoned his hosts two dozen

times for the win. Also to no surprise was the increase in extra-curricular activity between these bitter rivals.

Capitals' Vito Montesano highlighted — or rather low lighted — the confrontational play midway through the final frame when he began chopping away at winger James Coleman and then lost control during an ensuing run-in with workhorse captain John Nadalin.

Earlier on Brampton's Jason Visser earned a checking-from-behind ejection — that temporarily sidelined defenceman Chris Krieg — while clutch and grab tactics were employed by both team throughout the night.

Nadalin — bruised and battered from a great deal of ice time and attention from opponents — made a nifty set-up on goal number two by playoff scoring leader Andy Rozak.

Milton's first tally, his fourth in six games after an initial post-season dry spell, was delivered by Rick Ferrioni.

The Capitals got a pair of goals from Kenny Sousa and singles from Jesse Rycroft, Dave Thompson, John Winstanley and Tony Zanoski.

Shots on net were considerably closer in game three — favouring Brampton 30-26.

The series continued beyond press time last night in Brampton. The Merchants host game five tonight at 8 p.m. If necessary, game six will be played in Brampton Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

**Merchant notes:** Tuesday's loss was the first in seven home games for Milton ... Winger Andrew Francone was back on the top forward unit after being dropped down to the fourth line in game one and a healthy scratch for game two. He showed slight improvement in both puck-handling and skating from a thoroughly unproductive round two campaign against Mississauga ... Andy Rozak has points in 14 of 15 playoff games and has had multi-point performances in nine of them.

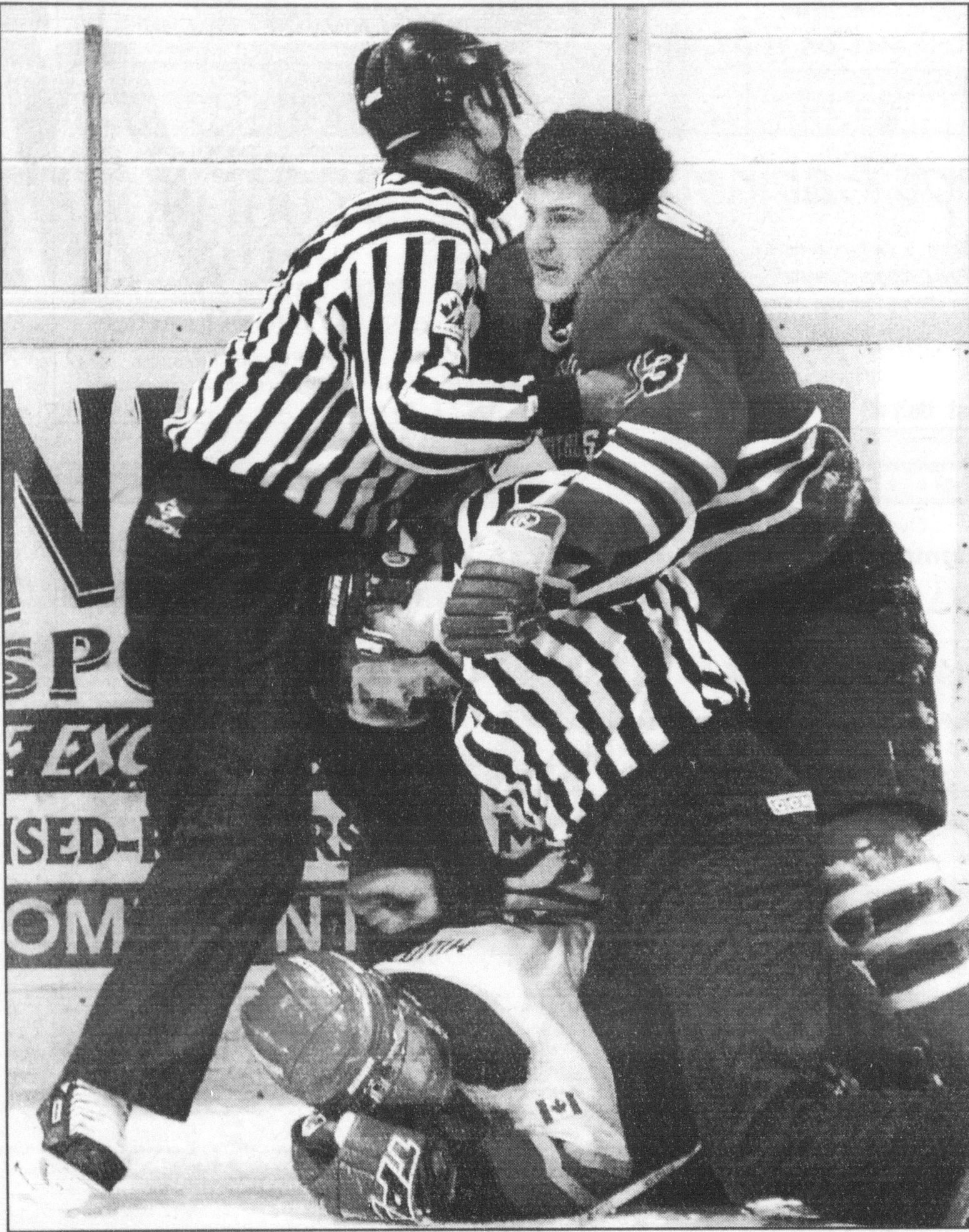


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Merchant John Nadalin and Brampton's Vito Montesano get into a scuffle during the third game of the series in Milton Tuesday.

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