



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY APRIL 6, 2001



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Merchant fans (above) look on as (at right) James Coleman battles in front of the Couchiching net during game six at Memorial Arena Monday. Milton lost 5-4 and was eliminated from semifinal series play in six games.



Merchants eliminated by Couchiching

Milton drops three straight on way to semifinal exit

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

It's been said good things come in threes. The Merchants, however, found a devastating loophole to that theory — one which denied them access to the innermost sanctum of Ontario Provincial Jr. A League playoffs. Unable to douse the immense firepower of the north conference champion Couchiching Terriers, Milton dropped three straight games — equaling its longest losing streak this season — for a heartbreaking semifinal series exit.

The local club's departure was finalized during game six at a

packed Memorial Arena Monday. Like the preceding two tilts, an edge in shots on goal just didn't spell success — as once again a second-period letdown had grave consequences.

The Merchants gave up three goals in the middle stanza — including the eventual winner with just a few seconds remaining — and were trimmed 5-4.

"Couchiching's an explosive team that converted on the turnovers that we couldn't," said general manager Nick Slawson. "But overall we had a great year and accomplished a lot." Andy Rozak capitalized on the hosts' only power-play six minutes into the contest while also making first-period deposits — with an upstairs backhand and doorstep rebound respectively — were Shane Remenda and Dan Bognar.

Unfortunately, Milton couldn't sustain its offensive pressure

over the balance of the evening and inside its own blueline allowed the visitors a bit too much room to maneuver.

This proved costly early in period two as Terriers' top gun Jason Pinizzotto — who shook off a temporary dry spell with three assists in game five the previous afternoon — walked in uncontested and potted two by Joel Cameron.

Then David Wrigley connected on a lengthy wrist shot at 19:44.

The Merchants weren't quite done yet, as checking line centre Dan DeLong buried a goal-mouth scramble exactly four minutes into the final frame.

However, this only served as a prelude to heartbreak — as Couchiching provided a strong enough measure of defensive zone coverage to hang on for the victory.

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