

# Merchants suffer winless weekend versus Raiders

*Offense sputters through both halves of home-and-home series*

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

*The Champion*

Quality scoring chances were in short supply and goals even more so for the Merchants this past weekend.

As a result, the defending Western Conference champs came up winless in their home-and-home exhibition series with neighbouring Georgetown.

Unable to lit the lamp through the third period of either contest, Milton was edged 4-3 at Memorial Arena Friday and then settled for a 2-2 stalemate in Georgetown Saturday.

On the bright side, rookie netminder Sean Samuel shone in four straight periods of work and turned back some quality stuff in game two.

Meanwhile, newly acquired winger David Ovcjak — who seems capable of filling the void left by outgoing power forward Andrew Francone — buried the biscuit twice and helped set up veteran Shane Remenda's potential game winner Saturday.

Other goals were provided by Dan Carcillo and Wes Martin.

Remenda finished the weekend with three points while chipping in single helpers were Michel Bond, Pat Devlin, Vince Guiducci Chris Krieg and Scott Malcolm.

A lack of powerplay punch and overall finish factored into the winless weekend — a first in quite some time against the Raiders.

Only 10 Merchant forwards had been signed on for regular duty at press time yesterday, although general manager Nick Slawson wasn't overly concerned with that — stating that a strong affiliation with the Toronto Young Nats organization should help the club get over its initial hump, which includes six games in 10 days.

Milton finished up its pre-season schedule last night in Vaughan.

Regular season play begins this Friday at home against the Burlington Cougars. Game time, as always, is 8 p.m.

**Merchant notes:** Former Merchant Adam Sturgeon has been traded from the OHL's Sudbury Wolves to the Belleville Bulls ... Defenceman Ian Robertson, a late cut at this year's training camp, will skate for the Guelph Jr. B squad this season ... Veteran Kevin Arruda missed both weekend games with a stiff neck.



Merchants goalie Trevor Battaglia keeps one eye on the puck and one hand on the net to stop it from tipping over while teammates Scott Malcolm and Chris Krieg maul with Georgetown's Mason Drew during pre-season play at Memorial Arena Friday. Milton lost the game 4-3 and settled for a 2-2 tie the following night in Georgetown.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Vaive set to drop puck at Merchants' home opener

The wait to nearly over sports fans.

The Merchants' 2001/02 season — which comes complete with a new set of owners for the local junior club — kicks off at home this Friday.

And helping get the year underway will be a couple of special guests, including former NHLer Rick Vaive — the first Toronto Maple Leaf to score 50 goals in a season — who'll make the official season-opening puck drop.

Joining Vaive in the spotlight will be Diane Clemens — wife of Toronto Argonaut player turned coach Pinball Clemens — who'll sing the national anthem.

The Merchants will also have a number of draws for great prizes at both the opener and throughout the season.

Also, Milton will be offering five-game

passes to make things more affordable to their regular supporters.

"We want to make each home game an event for the community," said Ken Chase, who took over ownership of the team alongside fellow Oakville businessman Mario Forgione and former NHLer Dave Gagner.

The Merchants will play host to Burlington Friday and have a rather hectic start to the year — with six games in their first 10 days including. This stretch will be capped by three games in 40 hours during the annual College Weekend.

"The schedule is definitely more severe than we'd anticipated," said general manager Nick Slawson.

"But we've got a lot of enthusiastic new guys in the lineup and hopefully they'll be able to give that little extra at the start"

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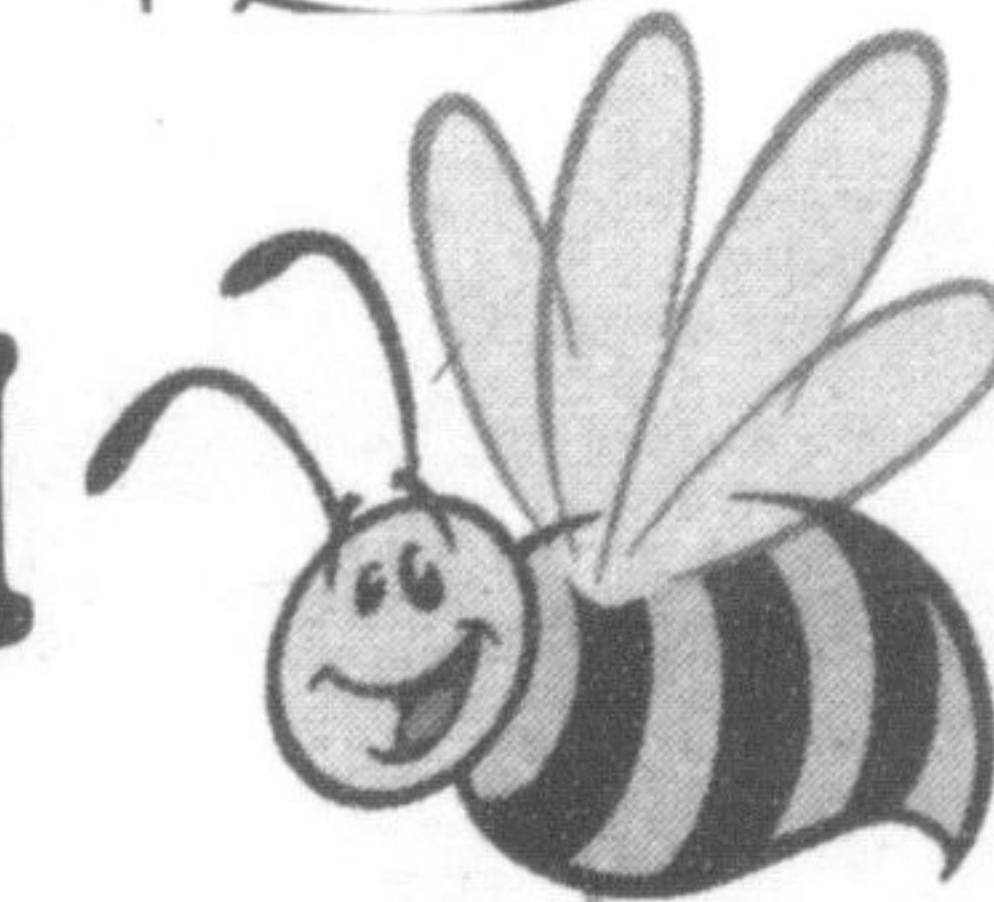
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