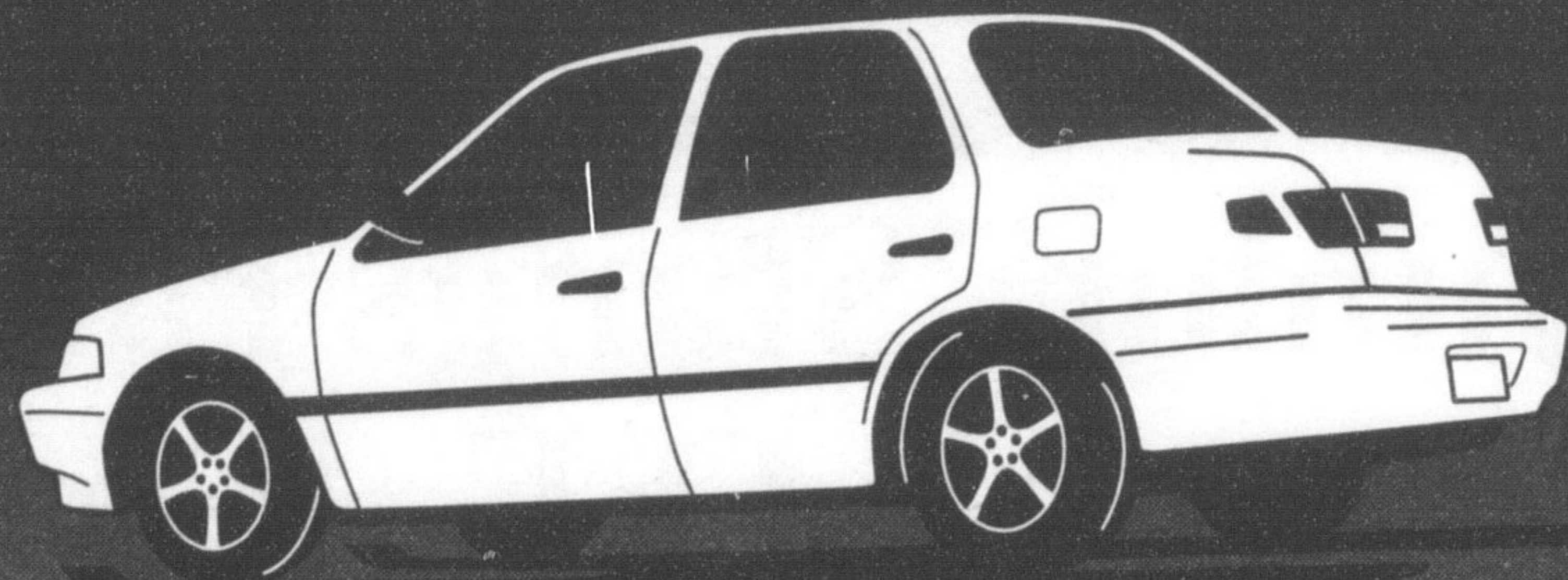


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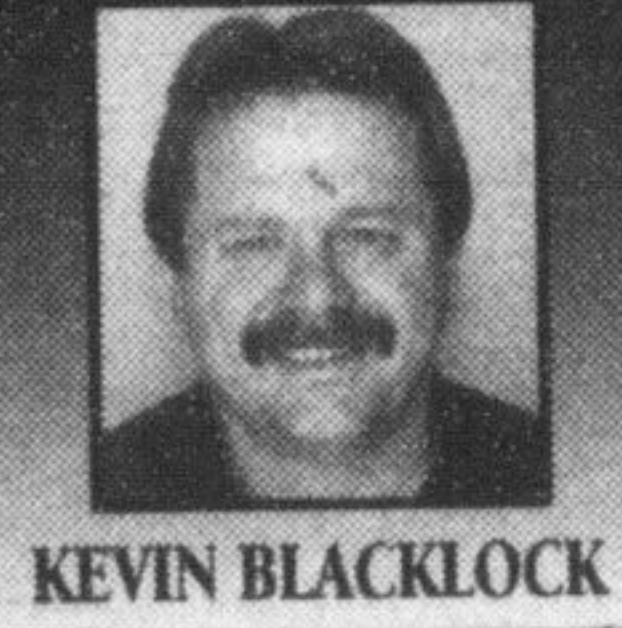
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Merchants win only once during lacklustre weekend

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The Merchants had to look outside their division for victory this past weekend.

During College Weekend play at Mississauga's Iceland Arena Sunday, Milton salvaged a rather uninspired three-games-in-as-many-days stretch by rallying to eclipse the Northern Conference Markham Waxers.

This followed a pair of two-goal defeats to the West's Brampton Capitals and Georgetown Raiders. While ending the weekend on a high note and lifting their season record to 3-2, Glenn Walsh's Merchants no doubt have a number of things to address before continuing a four-game road trip in Oakville Friday.

First and foremost is team defense — which was mediocre at times and downright horrible at others.

The following is a rundown of the defending conference champions' lacklustre weekend, in order of games played.

Brampton 3, Milton 1

Trevor Battaglia delivered a second straight stellar performance on home ice, although his crafty cage work wasn't supported by much in the way of either intensity or structured play.

Milton managed to stay fairly composed during a few minor skirmishes, but was physically dominated and offensively punchless for much of the night Friday.

David Ovcjak's shorthanded goal late in the second period offered a glimmer of comeback hope, although one measly shot on eight minutes of powerplay time in the final frame certainly squashed that.

The Danny Gould-less Capitals still appear to be quite sturdy and won most of the close-quarter encounters. Veterans Jeff Hristovski, Kenny Sousa and David Thompson did the scoring while turning in dynamite goaltending was newcomer Tristan Dassy.

The Merchants were caught in their own end through much of periods one and two — due in large part to poor breakout attempts and careless passes in the neutral zone.

Rookie Dan Carcillo escaped injury during a third-period knee-on-knee collision.

Georgetown 8, Milton 6

Heading into battle at Georgetown's Gordon Alcott Arena Saturday, Walsh probably wouldn't have believed that his club could score six times and still lose to the rebuilding Raiders.

But a non-existent defense and subpar netminding allowed for what may turn out to be one of the biggest upset losses this year for Milton.

Georgetown scored three times in the final nine minutes to seal the deal and overall were led with a hat-trick from promising sophomore Ryan Busby. For Milton, Ovcjak tallied twice to extend his regular-season scoring streak to four games while chipping in singles were captain Kevin Arruda, Dan Bognar, Justin Booth and Jason Harshaw — now back from the East Coast League's Cape Breton Screaming Eagles.

Rookie Sean Samuel was chased from the net after giving up four goals in the first half.

While the absence of injured veterans

Chris Krieg and Rick Janco left the visitors' blueline a bit thin, a second-rate effort by the remaining rearguards was much more of a stumbling block Saturday.

Milton 6, Markham 4

Veteran Shane Remenda drove into the slot and banged in a scrambling puck with under three minutes remaining to lift his team past the Waxers.

The game-winner marker — his first of the year and certainly the most dramatic one so far for the club — highlighted a late surge for the offensively disjointed Merchants.

Milton scored three times in both the first and final frames but was rather punchless for rest of the morning clash at Iceland Sunday.

Arruda delivered the team's second hat-trick of the year — joining rookie Rich Meloche in that department — while Harshaw cemented the win with a last-minute empty netter. Meloche also lit the lamp while Harshaw and Bognar each had three assists.

Battaglia was between the pipes and stopped about three dozen shots for his third win as a Merchant. Milton coughed up a three-goal cushion before rallying to win.

Milton was a little better defensively Sunday.

Be sure to check out all of the action at this weekend's annual SKD Old Stars hockey tournament at the Milton Memorial Arena.

Milton Lacrosse Association Annual General Meeting

is being held on Tuesday, October 2nd, 2001 at 7:30pm in the Milton Legion Hall (upstairs) for the purposes of Electing 2002 Board of Directors and amendments to the M.L.A. Constitution and By-Laws.



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