



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Campbellville's Marcus Dunsford is set to be in McDonald's Olympic commercial with Wayne Gretzky.

Local youth in commercial

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Marcus Dunsford is set to share the spotlight with hockey's most recognizable name.

The Campbellville youth — who sports blond locks and a flair for impressions — will be among several players doing so, as part of an upcoming McDonald's Olympic commercial featuring Wayne Gretzky.

Eight-year-old Marcus survived three rounds of cuts to be part of the commercial, and is one of several non-actors recruited by Miltonian Steve Martin's Elite Athlete Management — a growing sports agency catering to television/film production.

Martin's stepson Justin Riding plays on the same novice house-league team as Marcus. While he doesn't have a speaking role, the local rink rat is among those focused on in the commercial — with a panned-shot of him looking in awe at the Great One.

"It was really cool," Marcus said of the experience. Roughly 120 players auditioned for one of about a dozen spots in the commercial, which was shot over the course of a single day last month at Brampton's Memorial Arena.

Marcus will receive roughly \$1,200 for that day's work.

Father Mark Dunsford said Gretzky wasn't overly talkative with his young co-stars during shooting, but realizes Team Canada's GM was under a lot of stress at the time. "The commercial was shot the week before Canada's Olympic team was announced, so he probably had a lot on his mind."

Marcus said he's never considered acting before, but admits to occasionally imitating those on the silver screen. "I like doing impressions, like Austin Powers," he added.

The McDonald's commercial is expected to begin airing this week or next and will run through until the Olympics.

Merchants secure split over weekend

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The Merchants strengthened their playoff position by getting the better of a team still searching for one Sunday.

Within the confines of Central Arena, Burlington's ongoing hunt for a post-season berth drew one game closer to extinction — as an inspired third-period and exceptional netminding by former Capital Tristan Dassy went to waste.

Brampton's ex-stopper bought his new team enough time to rally from a two-goal deficit — turning back two dozen straight shots, including all 18 in period two — but surrendered another pair down the stretch to fall 4-2.

The Merchants' win, number three in a row on hostile ground, tightened their grip on fifth and kept them within striking distance of fourth-place Bramalea.

Scoring for the first time since mid-December, Michel Bond sank two goals including the game-winner on a short-range deflection. Milton's vertically-challenged centre also assisted on the first of two by captain Dan Bognar and blocked a big third-period slapshot to round out his finest effort in recent weeks.

Replying with goals for the hosts were Dayne Habbib and Steven Johnston.

Milton killed off all seven of its short-handed stints — for its third perfect penalty-killing campaign in four games — and showed a fair amount of spark and defensive structure during the high-tempo evening clash.

Also, Miltonian Ryan McManus rebounded from a substandard replacement gig two nights earlier and made three dozen saves for the victory, which lifted his team's record to 22-16-2-1.

Justin Nattress drew a couple of helpers while fellow blueliner Mike Fox-Higgins, recently acquired from the Mississauga Chargers, successfully completed his first full game as a Merchant. He'd been tossed on two previous occasions, including during Friday's emotionally-charged tangle with top-seated Hamilton.

Milton was up-to-par offensively with their steel town rivals but were rather passive in its own end en route to losing 7-5.

Said general manager Nick Slawson, "I don't think they beat us as much as we beat ourselves. We gave up too many soft goals and didn't make them work to beat us."

Both McManus and veteran counterpart Trevor Battaglia had off nights and were each pulled from the cage — while their defensive unit collapsed on itself far too often.

On the plus side, Rick Carriere — who's been among the league's most entertaining and controversial performers in recent years — continued to push his opponents' buttons and was a major mental distraction to Hamilton through the opening half. But visiting stars Mark Mazzetti and Josh Soares overcame that with four-point outbursts to eclipse the upset-minded Merchants.

Carriere led Milton with a goal and two assists while also scoring were Bognar, Dan Carcillo, Rich Meloche and Tristan Senior.




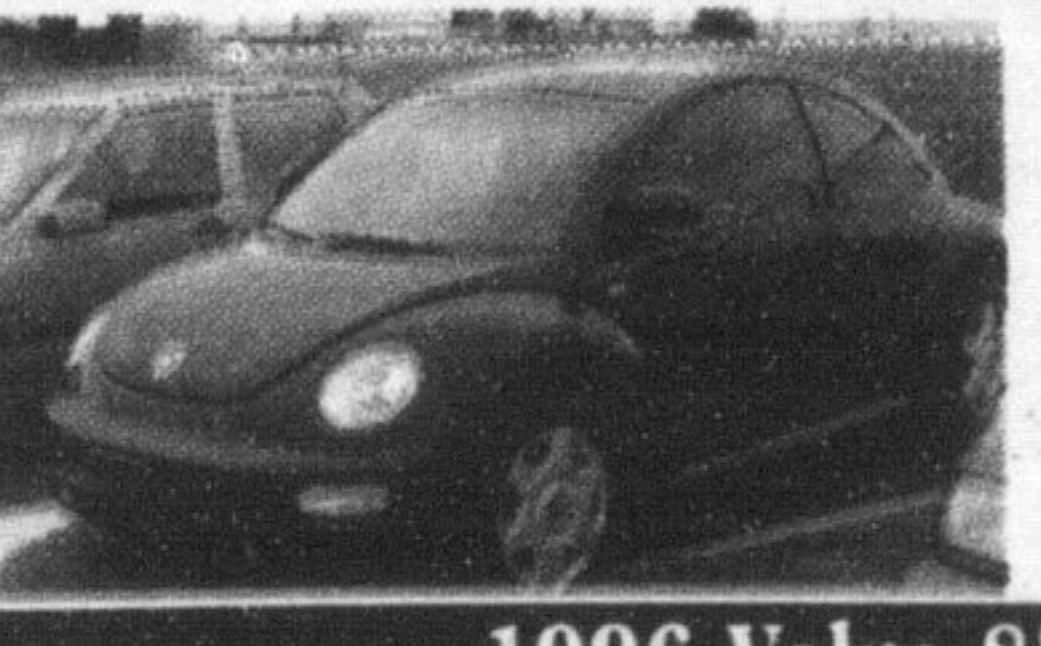




Milton can keep their hopes for a top-four finish alive with a win in Bramalea tonight. Game time is 7:30 p.m.

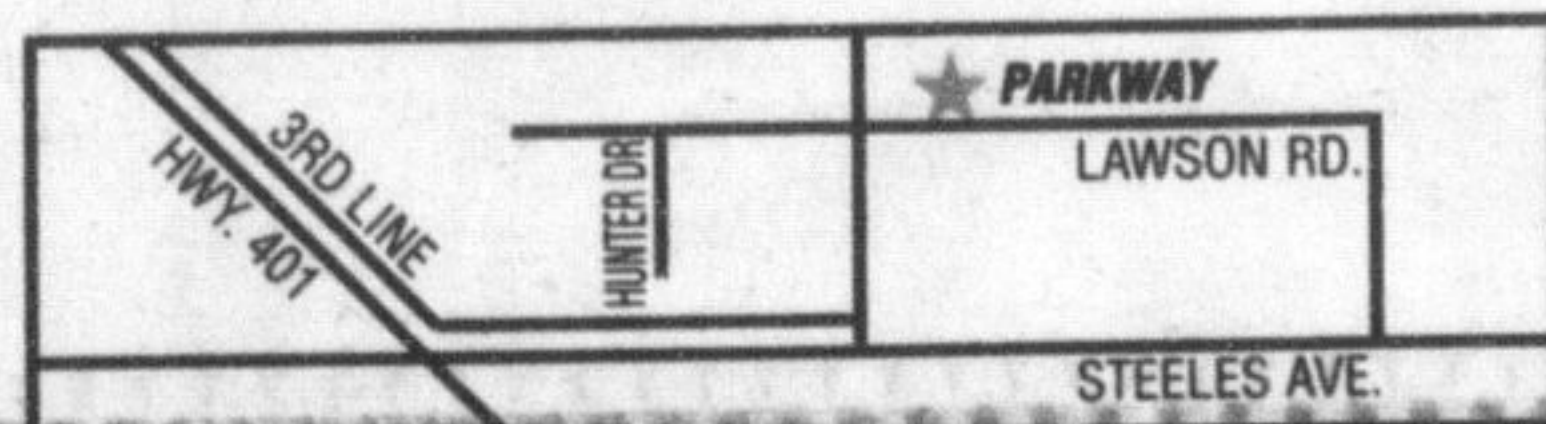
Merchant notes: Kevin Arruda, who's been out since early October with a broken ankle, has been placed on injury reserve for the remainder of the season ... Michel Bond was on the ice for all six goals scored in Burlington ... Milton has one card left to make a late-season addition ... Jake Vanderbreggen was released at the cutdown Thursday.



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