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'AA' midgets net second straight sweep in OMHA playoff action

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

The Milton AA midget Winterhawks were odds-on favourites to win the third game of their series against Oakville on Super Bowl Sunday, and that's exactly what they did.

The 4-0 victory gave them a sweep and put them into the OMHA quarter-finals against the winner of the Brampton and Georgetown series.

A 2-1 win in Oakville on Friday night on goals by captain Connor Sweeney and Scott McLaughlin in front of netminder Kyle Goertz, set the stage for the Super Bowl day sweep.

After the opening kick-off, or face-off, the two teams took turns feeling each other out, meaning that nothing much happened until midway through the period.

That's when Milton started turning it on in the red zone.

The line of Julian Ricci between McLaughlin and Paul Szafer, blitzed the Oakville net over and over. Ricci had three good chances on one shift, while Szafer seemed to have several chances every time on the ice.

In fact, in the last half of the first period, they only needed one side of the ice. Szafer finally popped one in on a power play after Ricci kept the puck in at the point and passed it in the corner to James MacIntosh. He spied Szafer waiting calmly alone by the side of the net and sent him a perfect spiral.

The unofficial scoring chances at the end of the period were Milton 12 and Oakville 0. The shots were 17-2 for Milton.

Milton goaltender Jason Strong may have been watching the Super Bowl in a small television hidden in his glove, because he didn't need to watch the hockey game.

The hustle and second effort by Milton made it appear as if they were playing a last place team, although Oakville finished only two points behind Milton in the regular season standings. Milton was 19-7-2, while Oakville was 18-8-2.

They buzzed the Rangers' defensemen and took the puck off them with regularity. Whenever Oakville even threatened to come close to the Winterhawks net, the Milton defense built up an invisible wall to keep them out.

Close early on

The only worrisome part was that Milton only had a 1-0 lead at the end of the first period when they could have been up 7-0. At this point, the odds were 2-5 that Milton would score more goals, 3-1 that Strong would fall asleep in net, 10-1 against Oakville scoring, and 3-1 that a hustling Chris Coates would score a goal.

Coates was the Winterhawks version of Charlie Hustle, although unlike Pete Rose, Coates presumably wasn't betting on the game.

Oakville did turn it on some in the second period, and during one flurry, the unofficial scoring chances jumped from 15-0 to 15-4, forcing Strong to earn his shutout.

Ricci put an end to that when he broke through some tacklers and went in alone, tucking a backhand upstairs.

Late in the period, Coates, Kyle Burrell

and Adam Rutz broke up the ice after a Milton penalty ended, and while Oakville put up a valiant goal-line stand, they kept banging away until Rutz finally put it in.

The score at the end of the second period was 3-0, the same score at the time that St. Louis was leading New England in the Super Bowl.

Milton led in shots 32-8 and mostly cruised the rest of the way in a defensive shell. They scored their other goal when Rutz made a perfect pass to Burrell on a two-on-one.

The bookies were set to pay off on the Coates odds when he found himself alone in front of the net, deked the goalie out of the way, but then plastered a backhand between the uprights, over the net. No points were awarded.

An observer might have given the game pucks to Szafer, Ricci, and Coates, but coach, Arnie Parcels would have given it to the entire team, especially in the series. "We outworked them one-on-one in all three games."

That was the gameplan: "Outwork the other team every shift and win the little battles. Everything else takes care of itself."

The tight discipline of the Winterhawks was also a factor, which is non-negotiable, according to Parcels. "That's the rule if they want to play on this team. It's the difference between winning and losing. Discipline is doing the right thing."

That might have been exactly what the New England Patriots were saying after their surprise Super Bowl victory.

Caswell fuels comeback victory for 'A' midgets

Caps rally with last-minute deposit for the win

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Josh Caswell has played both the star and hero this season for the additional entry midget Winterhawks.

Saturday night he combined the two and flourished in the dual role — scoring three goals including one inside the final minute of regulation to eclipse the visiting Georgetown Raiders 4-3.

With 47 seconds left, he buried a rebound wrister to cap the team's most important — and arguably most exciting — comeback this season.

It even upstaged last Monday's 3-2 rally and put the local lads ahead two games to one in their best-of-five opening round series.

"I was just hoping the goals would eventually come," Caswell said, referring to his squad's vast misfortune on close-range opportunities earlier in the night. "It was one of my best games of the year."

Caswell also credited his team's overall perseverance — which was rewarded with three goals in the third period, including two with less than five minutes remaining.

Added head coach Jim Kosmalski, "This just shows how big these guys' hearts really are. They never gave up."

Caswell initiated the third-period rally with an impressive blueline takeaway and well-placed wrister to draw within a goal of the revitalized Raiders.

Moments later he hit the left post on a wide-open net situation, and many in attendance probably wondered if this near-miss

would come back to haunt Milton.

"I was hoping that it wouldn't," recalled Caswell.

The equalizer would come four minutes later on an upstairs backhand from Andrew McMaster.

Tim Anderson and Dustin Smith assisted on the play, while setting up the winning marker were Thomas Patrick and Barry Kosmalski — who provided the game-two heroics in Georgetown.

Fierce finish by 'Hawks

A 13-2 shots on goal edge during third-period play was perhaps the strongest indication of the hosts' determination to rally.

Meanwhile, hometown puckstopper Tim Johnston saw a lot more rubber earlier in the night.

After giving up two goals in the first four minutes, he turned back 16 shots including a dozen straight in the second period to help turn the tide.

Caswell sank his team's initial goal on a short rebound and won a number of crucial face-offs that resulted in key scoring chances.

He also offered some inspired penalty killing, as did defencemen Kosmalski and Tyler Hamill.

The Winterhawks went into last night's game-four tilt looking to dispose of their regional rivals at Georgetown's Gordon Alcott Arena. If necessary, game five will be played at Memorial Arena Saturday at 8 p.m.

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