

'AA' atoms one win away from Tri County title

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

The AA major atoms have certainly been giving fans a lot of bang for their buck.

Just three nights after scoring in the last minute of regulation time to eclipse Caledon, Milton one-upped the excitement level at Memorial Arena Monday evening — delivering an overtime victory to take a two-games-to-one lead in the best-of-five Tri County championship finals.

Scott Stover once again stole the show — something he's had an uncanny knack for doing this season — with a picturesque fore-hand fake that completely handcuffed the opposing goaltender less than a minute into sudden death and allowed the hosts to prevail 3-2.

The game-winning deposit came only a few minutes after the highly reliable sniper banged up his knee on a rather scary blue-line collision. Stover also buried a close-range snapshot late in the first period to kick-start his second multi-point performance of the series.

The Wallace Pontiac Buick Winterhawks surrendered a two-goal advantage following a particularly prosperous start — with just four shots required to notch a pair of tallies — but kept themselves in a position to win with a couple of successful penalty kills and another credible netminding effort by Taylor Prestidge.

Captain Matt Jessup was another evening standout — both on defense and while the locals were shorthanded — while also offering spirited play were Matt Fratarcangeli, Tyler Lafontaine and Jeremy Price.

Mark Thomson put the hosts ahead five minutes into the game with a low wrister. Brian Hunter and Wade McGinnis set up the overtime winner, while first-period assists went to Brayden Abraham and Matt Elliot.

Caledon connected on a lengthy shot through traffic in the dying moments of the opening frame and then evened the count exactly two minutes into the second on a bottom-shelf snapshot.

The balance of the night featured tight defensive play and a couple of unconverted powerplays for either side. Prestidge weathered two concentrated storms early on and overall turned back 22 shots — seven more than his Caledon counterpart.

During game two in Caledon Sunday, Milton gave a decent showing but were upstaged 3-1. Prestidge made about two dozen saves to keep things interesting. This marks the Winterhawks' only defeat in 11 Tri County playoff games.

The major atoms had an opportunity to clinch the series in Caledon Wednesday night. However, the game-four showdown ran beyond The Champion's holiday weekend press time.

Also playing beyond that deadline were Milton's AA minor novices — who as of Wednesday evening were tied at one game apiece with Orangeville in their own best-of-five Tri County final.

Milton trio lead 'Canes to bronze

Can anyone say *deja vu*?

For the second straight season, Halton's AAA major novices toppled the York-Simcoe Express to secure a medal at the OMHA championship tournament.

Unfortunately, the Hurricanes couldn't quite duplicate last year's golden performance and had to settle for the bronze — shading York-Simcoe 4-3 within the friendly confines of the Brampton Sports and Recreation Centre Sunday morning.

And like they have on most occasions over the past two seasons, a local trio powered the medal-winning victory. Brandon Denham pulled double duty in the third-place clash — acting as both star and hero.

His latter role was delivered inside the final three minutes of play, when he went coast to coast to sink the go-ahead goal. Earlier on he set up goals two and three.

Michael Sgarbossa also stood out with a goal and two assists. His tally came with less than a minute to play in the first period — which erased York-Simcoe's initial lead.

Meanwhile, fellow Miltonian Scott Dermott offered a gritty two-way effort to help clinch the bronze. While held off the score sheet in their weekend-ending contest, he led the trio overall with six points. Sgarbossa had a handful of points while Denham finished with four.

Halton had a tough time in the round robin and managed just a single win, beating Stoney Creek 3-2 — thanks to a three-point gem from Dermott.

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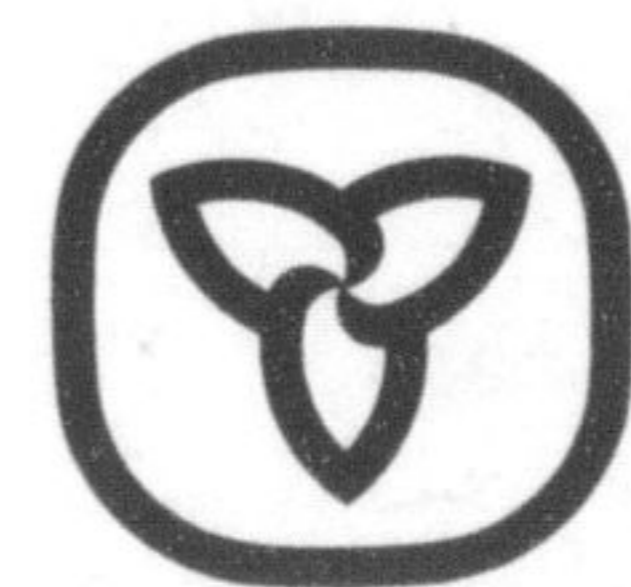
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