

Merchants take OT loss to lowly Derbys

Coaches irate with team's second-rate effort in Streetsville

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Could a Merchants-Derbys series actually be a dog fight?

Just a week ago the idea seemed downright laughable. However, there's nothing amusing about how the local juniors have been playing against the team they're currently set to face in the opening round this time next month.

Last Friday's narrow escape over seventh-place Streetsville seemingly represented a low point in the season.

But for those who believed things couldn't get any worse, a rude awakening waited at Vic Johnston Memorial Arena Tuesday night.

A second-period collapse, shaky goaltending and an ill-timed sudden death infraction combined for a 5-4 overtime defeat — the most humbling this year for the championship-minded Merchants.

"Our goaltender should have stepped it up tonight and he didn't. We're giving up just four to six shots a period, and we're still allowing goals," fumed skipper Mario Cicchillo, of a less-than-stellar outing by rookie back-up Alex Evans.

But Milton's bench boss — visibly frustrated and understandably so — found plenty of fault to go around.

After a rare dressing down of his ego-battered charges, he noted, "The go-to guys didn't step it up. Everyone was running around tonight. We try to tell these guys to watch the back end, and they let these guys (Derbys) have a cup of coffee on the back door."

The Merchants seemed poised to bury their hosts from the onset — out-chancing them 24-5 in the opening period and jump-

ing ahead on same-shift goals by Vic Oreskovich and Rich Meloche.

But Milton's attack-mode quickly evaporated at intermission and only returned for a brief span midway through the third, when second-liners Wes Clark and James Duhamel each struck from close range to turn a one-goal deficit into a slim lead.

Derby John Patrio would spoil the victory parade with an upstairs wrister inside the final minute of regulation time, on the team's third shot of the period.

This opened the door to some overtime heroics by Scott Megahy, who capped a three-goal night two minutes into the extra session.

His straight-away deposit came with freshman winger Jon Ornelas in the box for slashing.

Tuesday's setback was only the second league defeat for Milton since early November.

Losing a point for the overtime loss may well have cost the 32-6-1-1

Merchants their shot at overtaking the top-seated

Hamilton Kilty Bees, who've yet to show any late-season cracks and could cement first place with a home-and-home sweep of Georgetown Saturday and Monday.

On a more positive note, Milton could essentially lock up the number two spot — and the second-round home-ice advantage that comes with it — with a win over Georgetown tonight at 7:30 p.m.

Merchant notes: Fans attending tonight's game will have a chance to purchase discounted tickets for tomorrow evening's Hamilton Bulldogs game at Copps Coliseum, where Miltonian Darren Haydar will lead the Milwaukee Admirals into battle. Seats cost \$12 apiece ... Tuesday's 5-4 defeat marked the most goals the club has given up since a 7-5 decision over Brampton November 7 ... The Merchants finish out the week tomorrow evening in Brampton at 7:30 p.m.

• for related story, see page 28

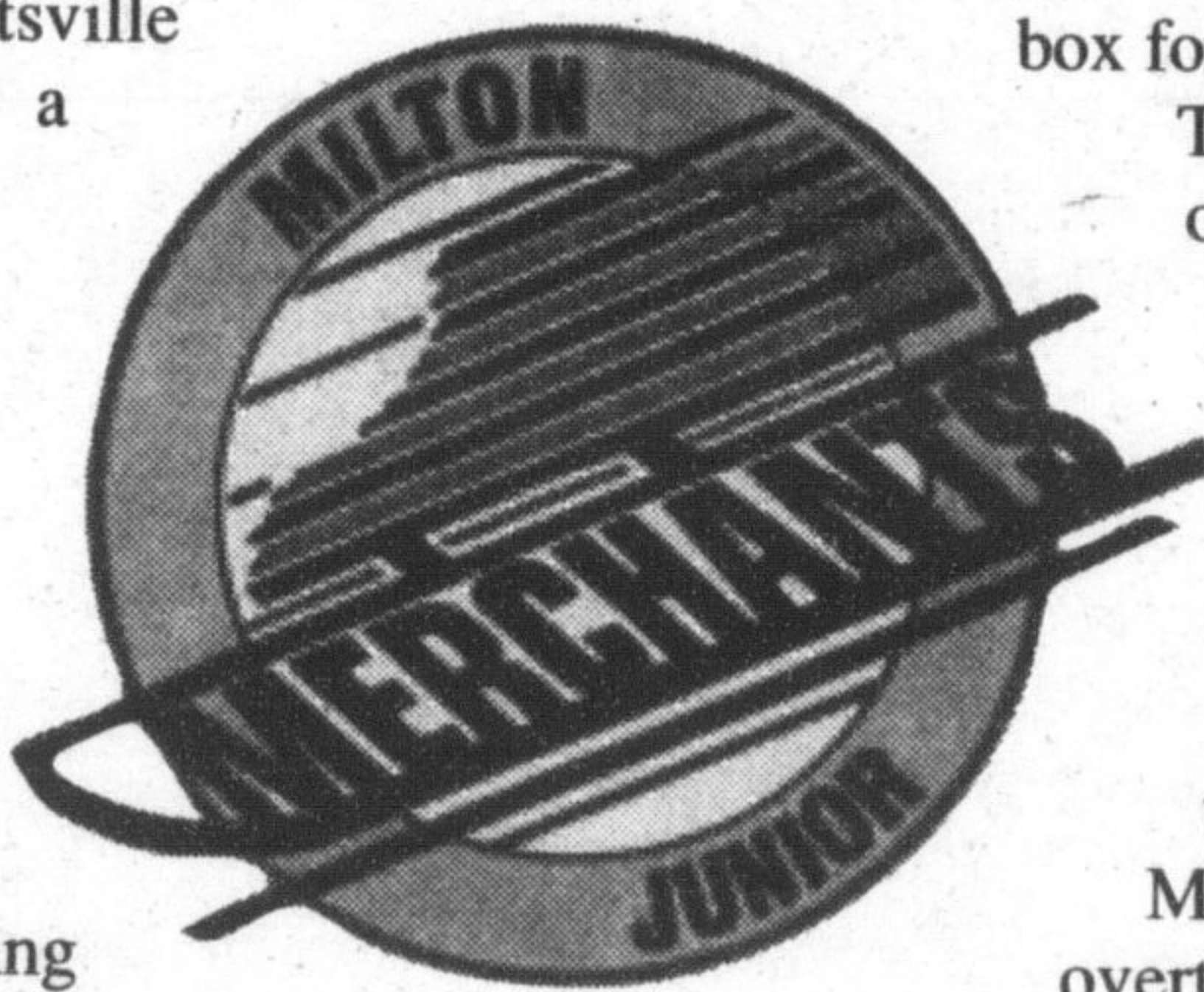
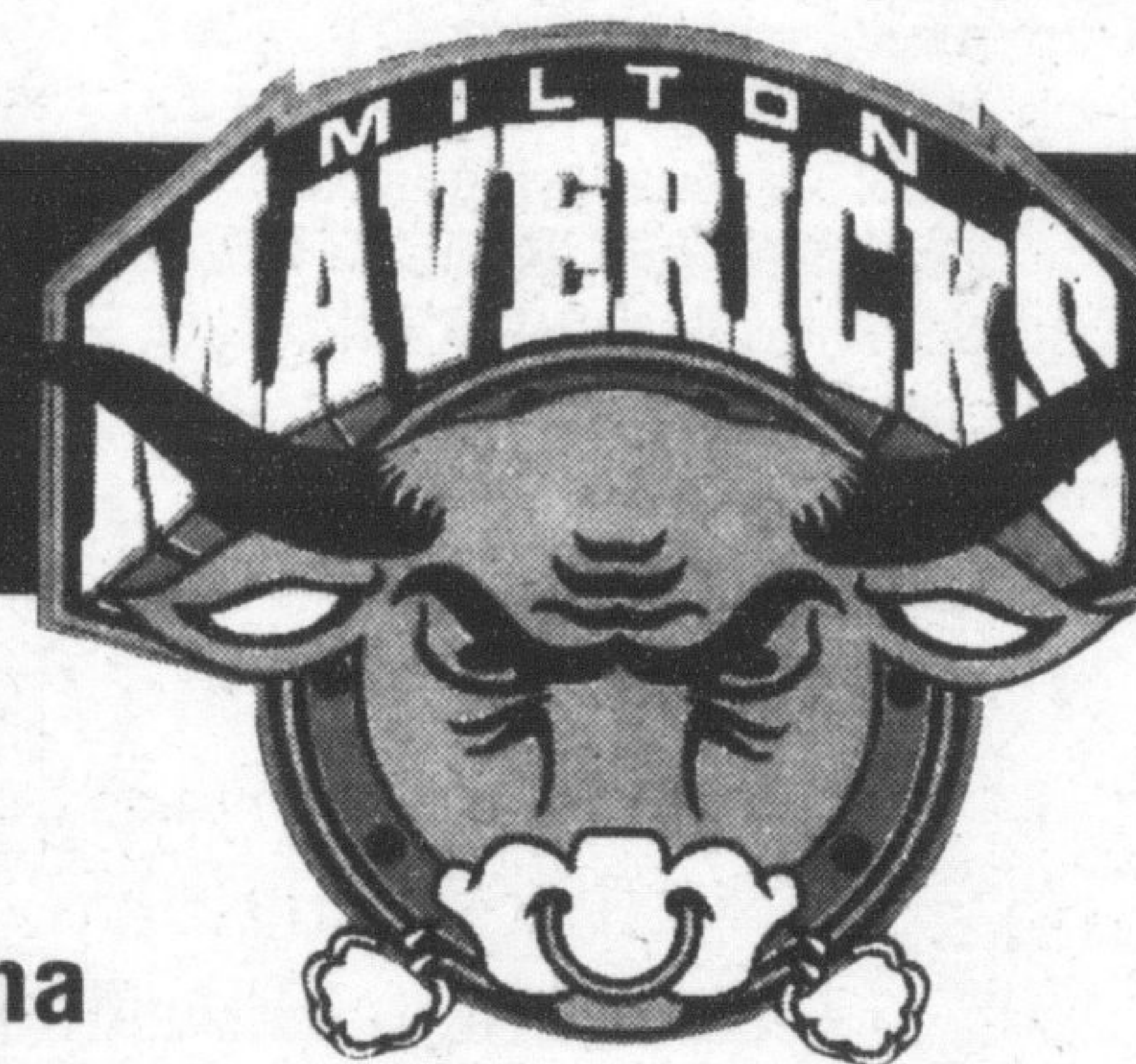


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Territorial dispute

Milton Winterhawk Colin McNabb and this Caledon counterpart both go down after exercising some physical presence along the boards during 'AA' minor atom action at Memorial Arena Saturday afternoon. Milton was defeated 6-1. For more rep hockey results, see page 28.

2003 LACROSSE REGISTRATION



**Sunday, Jan. 12th
Saturday, Jan 19th**

8:00am-4:00pm @ Tonelli Arena

*A copy of a birth certificate is required for all new registrants

LACROSSE "THE FASTEST GAME ON TWO FEET"

**For Registration Information
Please call 905-876-0463**

Coaches & Assistants Needed!

Please stop by and complete an application if you can help out.

Please e-mail your team reports or sports story ideas to sleblanc@haltonsearch.com, or fax your reports to (905) 878-4943.

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WINTER HOUSE LEAGUE PROGRAM

Location: Bishop Reding H.S. - Boys & Girls
Session Dates: Tuesday & Thursday/ 1hr Sessions each
Time: 7:00-8:00 pm (Ages 7-10)
 8:00-9:00 pm (Ages 11-14)
Fees: \$110 for first child in a family,
 \$100 for each additional
DATES: REGISTRATION JANUARY 14TH 2003.
 Play Commences JAN.14TH - MID MAR./03

MAIL FORMS & FEES
 PRIOR TO START TO:

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
 PLEASE CALL:

Milton Youth Basketball
 420 Main St. E., Suite #558
 Milton, ON L9T 5G3

Phone: (905) 691-1675
 Fax: (905) 875-4684

Or bring Registration Forms & Fees on Tues. Jan. 14, 2003, & come ready to play.
 Make cheque payable to MILTON YOUTH BASKETBALL
 Note: Administration Fee of \$10.00 to apply for cancellation once program starts

Weekly House League Schedule

Milton Minor Hockey Association

MILTONWINTERHAWKS.COM

Tonelli Arena		Memorial Arena			
NOVICE					
Jan 11	2:00 p.m.	Goodlife Fitness Red vs Goodlife Fitness Green	Jan 11	7:00 a.m.	Brian's Auto Repair vs Towne Dental Group
	3:00 p.m.	Goodlife Fitness Black vs Goodlife Fitness Blue		8:20 a.m.	Sears vs Nadalin Electric
				9:40 a.m.	Shopper's Drug Mart vs Austen and Noble
BANTAM					
Jan 12	4:00 p.m.	Millweld Enterprises vs Presse Law Office			
	5:15 p.m.	Industrial Light and Electric vs Home Cinema Video			
	6:30 p.m.	Dream Car Garage vs Canadian Tire			
	7:45 p.m.	Brian's Auto Repair vs Docs and Dents			
MIDGET					
Jan 10	7:30 p.m.	Chudleigh's vs Nu-Tech Recruiters			
	8:45 p.m.	Gus Mowbray Ltd vs Scooter's Snack Shack			
Jan 12	9:00 p.m.	Absolute Transportation vs Brian's Auto Repair			
SENIOR					
Jan 13	7:35 p.m.	Milton Chrysler Dodge vs Total Team Image			
	8:53 p.m.	Key Centre vs High Five Photography			
	10:11 p.m.	Kwik Kopy vs Johnson Controls			



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