



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY JANUARY 21, 2003

Merchants take bite out of visiting Hounds

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Fans at Memorial Arena Thursday night got a genuine taste serving of the wild, wild west.

The west part was delivered equally by the hometown Merchants — who just a few days earlier became a co-leader of the Provincial Jr. A League's Western Conference — and Saskatchewan's Notre Dame Hounds, Milton's most westerly opponents this year.

And as for wild — well despite a little jet lag from the touring Hounds, Memorial Arena was transformed into something more closely resembling the O.K. Corral, with enough both-guns-blazing, free-for-all firepower to make even the Earp brothers a little nervous. The much-anticipated exhibition tilt — the first of three on Notre Dame's Ontario swing — ended with an 8-6 decision for the division-leading Merchants.

The highly-entertaining clash attracted a season-high 600-plus fans, who were drawn as much to appearances by Hockey Night in Canada's Ron MacLean and former Maple Leafs great Wendel Clark — a Notre Dame alumnus — as to the on-ice action.

Milton's shoot-out victory was due in large part to a six-goal surge that began in the dying moments of the first period — to wipe out a 3-0 Notre Dame lead.

Said Hounds captain Paul Geiger, "It's a little faster here. They've (Merchants) got some really quick guys, and without the red line you've always got to be watching the guy behind you."

Echoing those sentiments was visiting head coach Rene Lemire. "This (shoot-out) was very uncharacteristic for us. I don't think we've given up this many goals in a game all season," Notre Dame's bench boss remarked. "Milton really took off on us in the second there."

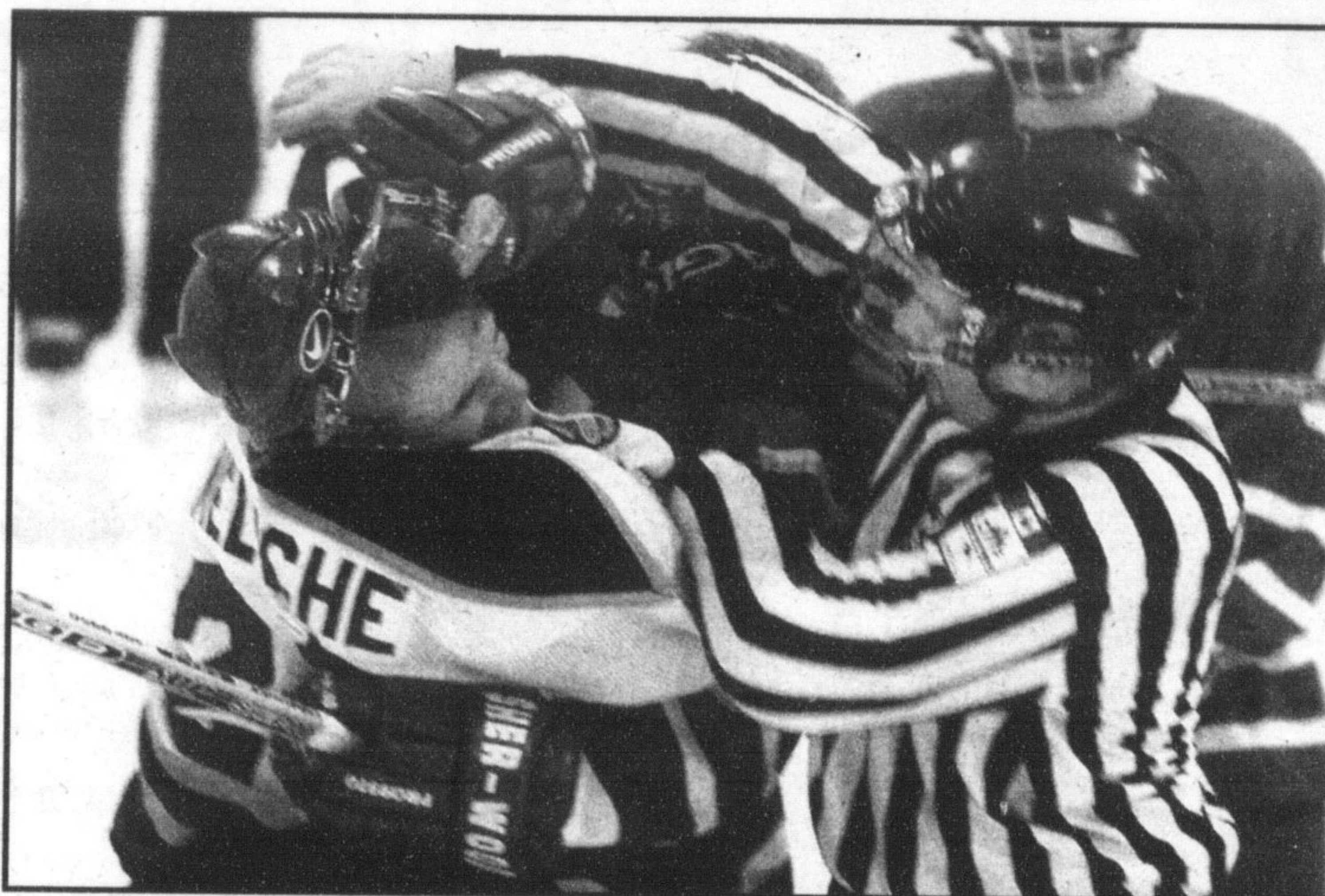
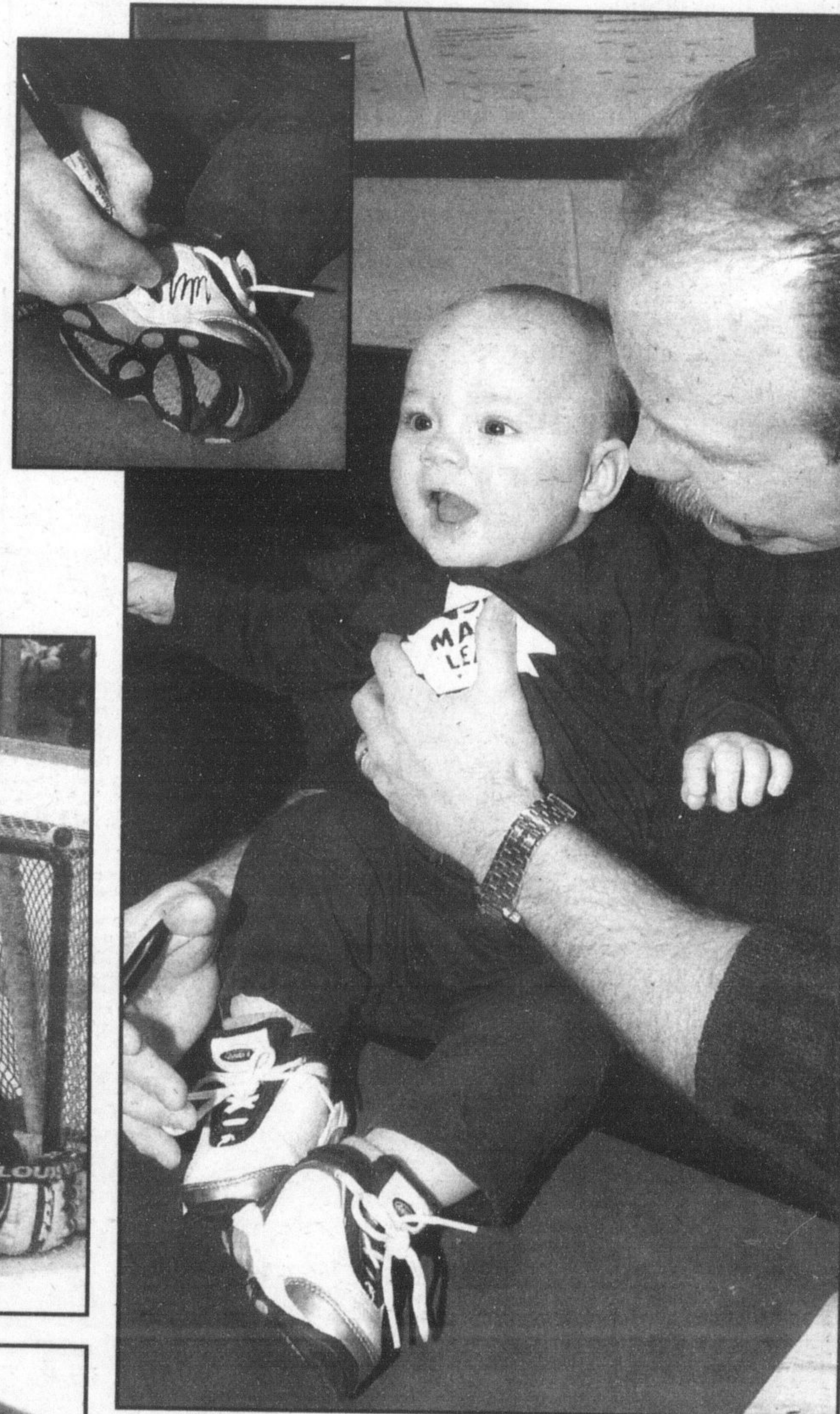
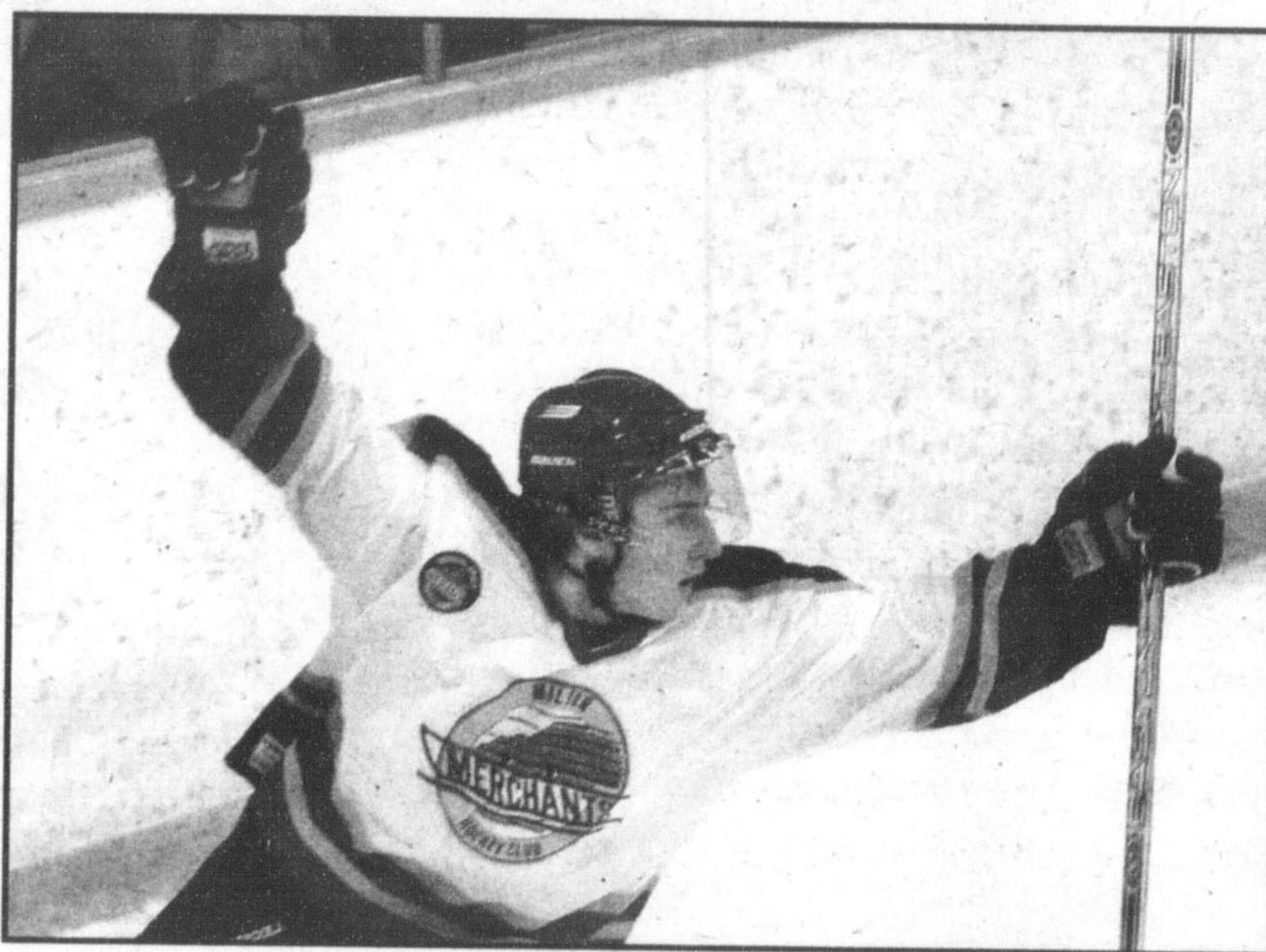
Fourteen different players lit the lamp in the explosive seesaw battle, which was highlighted by a shorthanded breakaway deposit from standout Merchant Scott Ransom — who along with Rick Janco topped the scoring with a goal and two assists apiece.

The Merchants were physically outmatched against their Saskatchewan foes, but showed a little more spark overall and worked the big outlet pass to full advantage.

"It was great to play with that type of atmosphere (near capacity crowd). We came out a little slow, but overall I think we showed we can play with top teams in other leagues," said Vic Oreskovich, one of eight scorers for Milton Thursday.

Also denting the twine for the Merchants were Wes Clark, James Duhamel, Brad Efthimiou, Ryan Silveira and Rob Ricci — who ignited the turnaround at 18:49 of the first by burying a wide-angle rebound. Cody Spicer delivered the lion's share of the goal-tending, while rookie Alex Evans worked the last 17.19 minutes to put the finishing touches on the victory — stopping all eight shots fired his way after the hosts drew within a goal.

Thursday's comeback victory plus an 11-3 blowout over Brampton the following night pushed the Merchants' home-ice win streak to 18. Overall, Milton is 22-1 at Memorial Arena this season.



The Merchants' much-anticipated exhibition clash with Saskatchewan's Notre Dame Hounds featured plenty of on-ice action as well as an appearances by Hockey Night in Canada's Ron MacLean and former Maple Leafs great Wendel Clark. Above, the ex-NHL autographs the running shoe of 10-month-old Alex Killingbeck. At top right, Merchant Scott Ransom celebrates his shorthanded goal in the second period while Vic Oreskovich (centre) battles in front of the Hounds' net. At right, Milton's Rich Meloche tangles with an unidentified Notre Dame player in one of the night's rougher moments.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



MILTON VS MISSISSAUGA

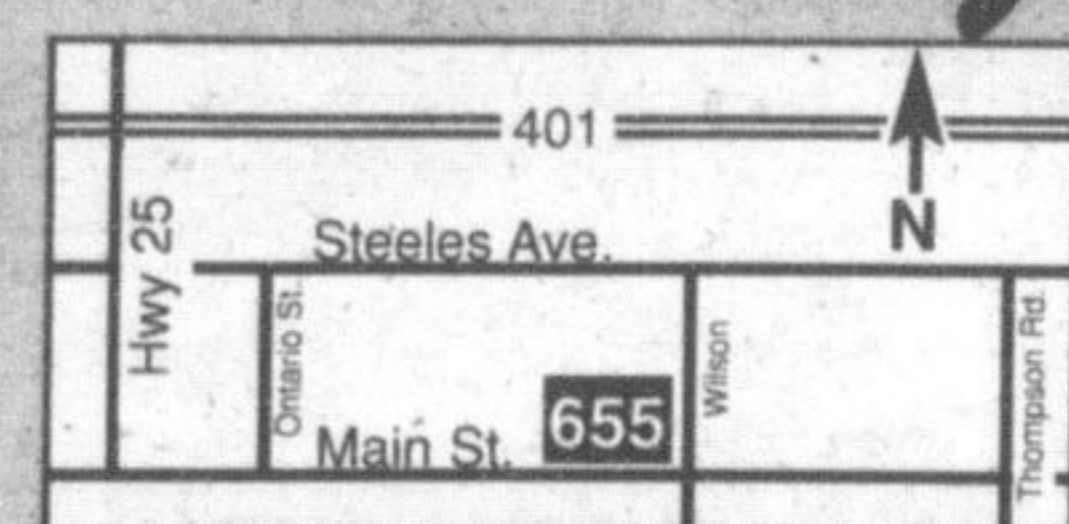
Friday, January 24 @ 7:30pm

Game at Memorial Arena - Thompson Road

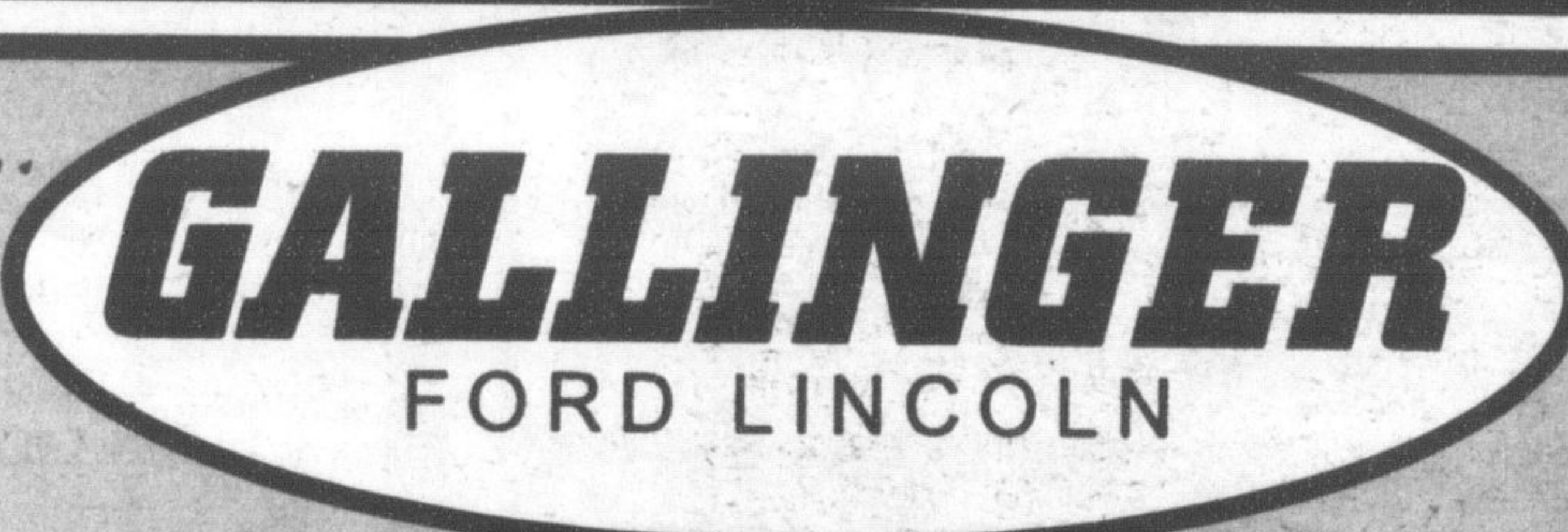
Join us for
the Gallinger
Ford Lincoln
Shoot to WIN!
Friday, Jan. 24

Thanks
Gallinger
Ford Lincoln for
your support

SHOOT TO WIN A 2 YEAR LEASE ON A 2003 FORD FOCUS



Get Up and Go to...
655 MAIN STREET EAST.
MILTON



Focus in on
our Shoot to
WIN!

905-875-FORD
3 6 7 3



Visit us at www.gallingerford.com
or email: greatdeals@gallingerford.com

A Tradition of Value & Trust since 1967