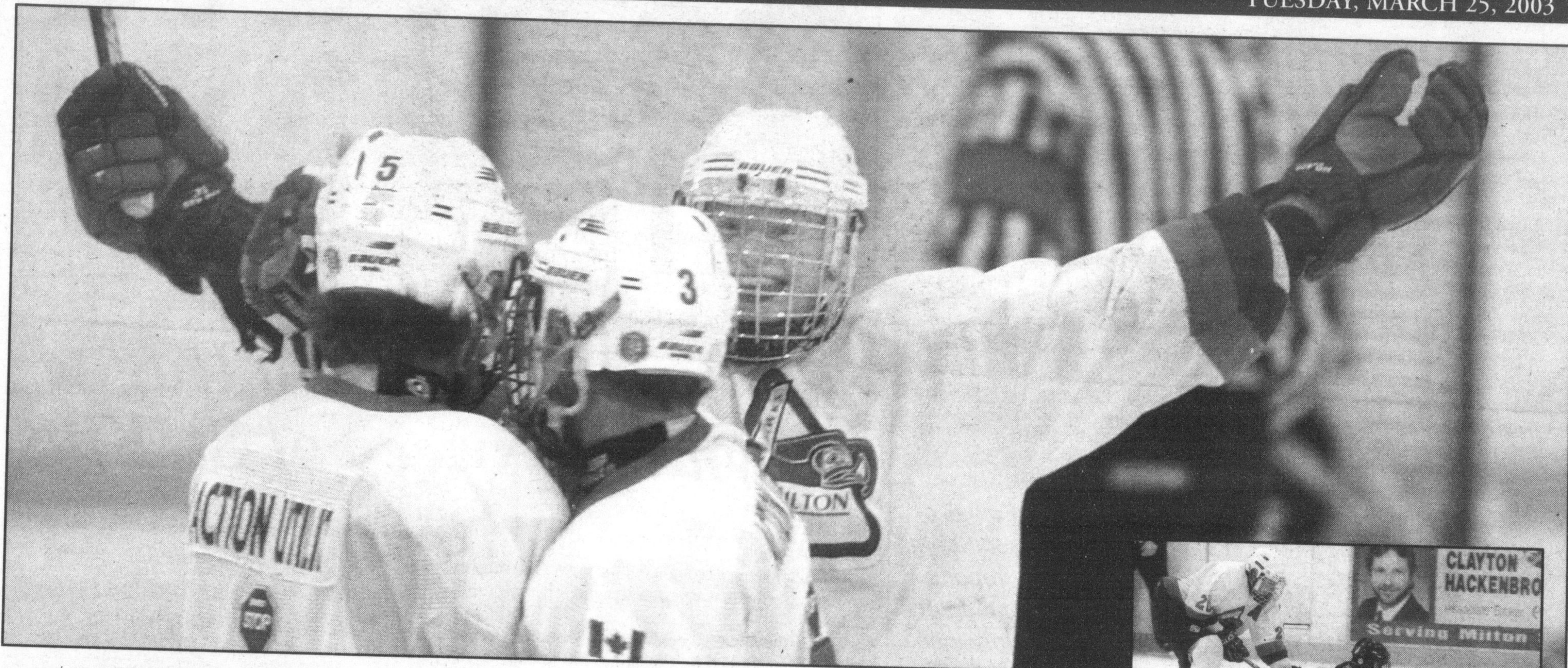




# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2003



Milton 'A' midget Phil Fley (with arms out-stretched) celebrates Nole Coutrouzas' second-period goal while (inset right) Ian Kornack takes down a Tecumseh opponent during game two Sunday at Memorial Arena. Milton won 4-1 to take a three-points-to-one series lead.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## 'A' midgets within sight of OMHA title

By STEVE LeBLANC  
The Champion

A non-stop parade to the sin-bin this past weekend did little to impede the Milton A midgets' ongoing march toward OMHA gold.

Despite playing more than half of their two-game home stand shorthanded, the Action Utility Winterhawks allowed visiting Tecumseh only one powerplay goal and collected three of four possible points to draw within striking distance of the title.

Now halfway towards overall victory in the six-point championship series heading to Tecumseh Friday, Milton was quite undisciplined through spans of both games — and didn't get any slack from the referee at others.

But the championship contenders seemed to feed off the obstacle — particularly during an 11-minute penalty to Derek Blanchard in the series opener Saturday night.

Winterhawk penalty killers held their opponents to one measly deposit during that prolonged stretch, after Blanchard went absolutely berserk on a visiting forward late in the second period and got himself ousted for the balance of the weekend.

Coupled with an exceptional effort from goaltender Tim Johnston, Milton's near-perfect penalty kill was enough to ensure a 1-1 tie — that was almost looked upon as a victory, at least of the moral variety.

"I think giving up just one goal during that 11 minutes was more of a confidence boost to us than it was to them," said head coach Chris Brennan, who described weekend officiating as

highly inconsistent. "I think we've got them frustrated now."

The latter comment refers more to game two Sunday evening, when the Winterhawks were assessed 34 penalty minutes — coming within a minor infraction of sidelining Brennan for game three — yet managed to prevail 4-1.

"We've got all the confidence now that we can beat these guys," Milton's bench boss added.

Johnston offered another topnotch performance and got a little more offensive support — particularly from Dan Lynch, who set up captain Kyle Strong for the first goal and then scored himself on a doorstep deposit to make it 2-0.

Nole Coutrouzas and Harley Mouscos would sink second and third-period bullets to help cement the win, while Tecumseh was effectively neutralized for pretty much all of their powerplay time.

Assists went to Nic Cashmore, Phil Foley, Ian Kornack, Brett Taylor and Chris Whiting.

Saturday night it was Lynch making the lone deposit eight minutes into the game. Mouscos set him up with a dynamite back pass made on his knees. Johnston turned back close to four dozen shots in the series opener, including nine in a 10-minute sudden death session that solved nothing.

Milton now needs a win and a tie to clinch the OMHA title. Games three and four will be played in Tecumseh Friday night and Saturday afternoon. If necessary, game five will be played at Memorial Arena Sunday at 8 p.m.

Besides missing Blanchard for most of the weekend, the local midgets were also without Tim Anderson, who's out with a concussion.

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