*SDOITS

sleblanc@haltonsearch.com



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton forward Jonathan Ornelas (left) and defenceman Ryan Bernardi keep an eye on Burlington's Spencer Churchill while IceHawks goaltender Jamie Flury watches the play during Milton's 7-3 victory over the Cougars Sunday afternoon at Memorial Arena. The IceHawks also edged Brampton 5-4 in overtime Friday evening and have lost only once on home ice since mid-November.

IceHawks continue home-ice supremacy

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Two more home games, two more victories.

Milton's juniors continued their success at Memorial Arena this past weekend, knocking off a couple of lower-echelon opponents — one with a little overtime drama, the other in dominant fashion.

Having lost just once in their own barn since mid-November, the IceHawks kicked things off with a 5-4 sudden death win over Brampton Friday evening.

Brett Robinson provided the heroics, deflecting a Mike DeMarchi shot past Capitals cager Ryan Dickie 2:10 into the extra session to punctuate a three-goal night.

Fellow Bramalea Blue-turned-IceHawk Adam Pileggi tallied twice and drew an assist on goal number four.

Their combined efforts helped Milton prevail on

a night when structural defects — particularly evident in the defensive zone — allowed the visitors to erase a pair of two-goal deficits and steal a point for the overtime loss.

Steadily-improving blueliner Ryan Bernardi picked up a couple of helpers in the narrow win, which lacked any kind of physicality or playoff-like intensity.

In net for the win was Thomas Lee.

Dump Cougars

Two days later, the IceHawks offered their family day fans something a little more up to par in toppling the Burlington Cougars 7-3.

Returning from a short hiatus, Jamie Flury was a bit rusty between the pipes early on, but was gen-

erally steady in earning the victory.

Brad Snetsinger capped an impressive weekend with two goals, while chipping in singles were Bernardi, Dean Strong, Ryan McInerney, Julian

Sarraino and Jonathan Ornelas — whose team-leading goal total now stands at 35.

Milton coughed up an early lead with some less-than-stellar play, but quickly fortified its efforts to turn back the Cougars.

The IceHawks are now set to face the Mississauga Chargers — led by former Milton skipper Rick Bince — in first-round play, starting this weekend.

Before that they'll close out the regular season tonight in Streetsville.

IceHawks skipper's suspension doubled

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

The news just gets worse for the IceHawks.

First head coach/general manager George Dupont was suspended eight games for early-season hazing rituals he maintains were no different than the annual rookie initiation that's gone on with the team for many years.

Now the Provincial Jr. A League has doubled his time in the stands, since Dupont coached three games into his original sentence — believing that an appeal afforded him a stay of suspension.

Ontario Hockey Association President Brent Ladds said Friday morning that ignorance of the appeal process is not an excuse, that Milton's skipper "should have been cognizant of the rules."

In addition to the IceHawks losing their coach for another eight games — unless a Saturday appeal hearing changes things — they also lose one point for their overtime loss to Mississauga January 16.

That was the first game Dupont coached while under suspension. Although he coached the next two nights, points for wins over Buffalo and Oakville won't be taken away — since Buffalo didn't file a proper protest and Oakville declined to file one altogether.

Further disappointed by the extended suspension, Dupont could now be out until the West Conference final — assuming Milton makes it that far. Still believing the league "manipulated the facts to support their decision", he expressed little optimism that the appeal hearing will reduce the suspension.

"Odds are it'll be difficult," said Dupont, whose team will finish fourth in the division. Hoping that the issue doesn't become

bigger than the team, he re-emphasized the fact that Milton has the best on-ice record since the midway mark of the season — and is clearly the most improved club since the start of the year.

"We've got a no-excuse policy here," stressed Dupont, whose head coaching reigns have been temporarily turned over to assistant Rob Wilson. "We can't start finding reasons to lose."

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