

Sports

sleblanc@haltonsearch.com

'Hawks behind eight ball after OT loss

Milton surrenders lead in final minute of pivotal game two showdown

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

George Dupont's comeback could be short-lived, unless his IceHawks can turn things around in short order.

With his suspension now finished, Milton's head coach returns to a rather unenviable situation tomorrow night in Georgetown. Not only does his team trail the defending conference champion Raiders two-games-to-none, but is no doubt reeling from Sunday's 5-4 overtime heartbreaker at Memorial Arena.

Milton looked poised to even up the second round series — thanks to an incredible third-period natural hat-trick by Wes Clark — before disaster struck with half-a-minute left remaining.

That's when IceHawk-turned-Raider Phil Sbrocchi capitalized on his former team's most costly breakdown to date and set up John Wheaton's clutch equalizer.

From there Georgetown's Trevor Blanchard would slip one past

Jamie Flury 8:19 into the extra session to put an early hammer-lock on the division semifinals. Clark had a couple of golden opportunities in overtime, but was absolutely robbed by Matt Harpwood on a breakaway and cross-ice redirect.

Milton IceHawks vs. Georgetown Raiders *(best of seven conference semifinals)*

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|---------|-----------------------------|
| Game 1 | Georgetown 2, Milton 0 |
| Game 2 | Georgetown 5, Milton 4 (OT) |
| Game 3 | Feb. 25 at G'town (8:00) |
| Game 4 | Feb. 27 at Memorial (7:30) |
| •Game 5 | Feb. 28 at G'town (7:30) |
| •Game 6 | Feb. 29 at Memorial (3:00) |
| •Game 7 | Mar. 3 at G'town (8:00) |

• if necessary

The IceHawks are now saddled with a towering task — having to win four of their next five games, including at least two at hostile Gordon Alcott Arena. And with top sniper Jonathan Ornelas a question mark for tomorrow night — having been hurt on a hit from behind in the series opener — the outlook for such a turnaround is quite bleak.

However, Dupont isn't pushing the panic button just yet.

"I think we should have won games one and two," Milton's skipper said, referring to a couple of 'lucky' breaks for the heavily-favoured Raiders. "I'm not sure we have to do a heck of a lot different. If we can stick to our game plan and keep playing the way we have, the law of averages dictates that we'll start getting some of the bounces."

The IceHawks sure didn't get any of those with the man-advantage this past weekend. An 0-for-12 powerplay whitewash was by far the biggest stumbling block to victory — both on Sunday and Saturday evening, when they were stoned 2-0.

Otherwise, Milton has measured up quite well to its bigger and more experienced rivals — both in terms of effort and execution.

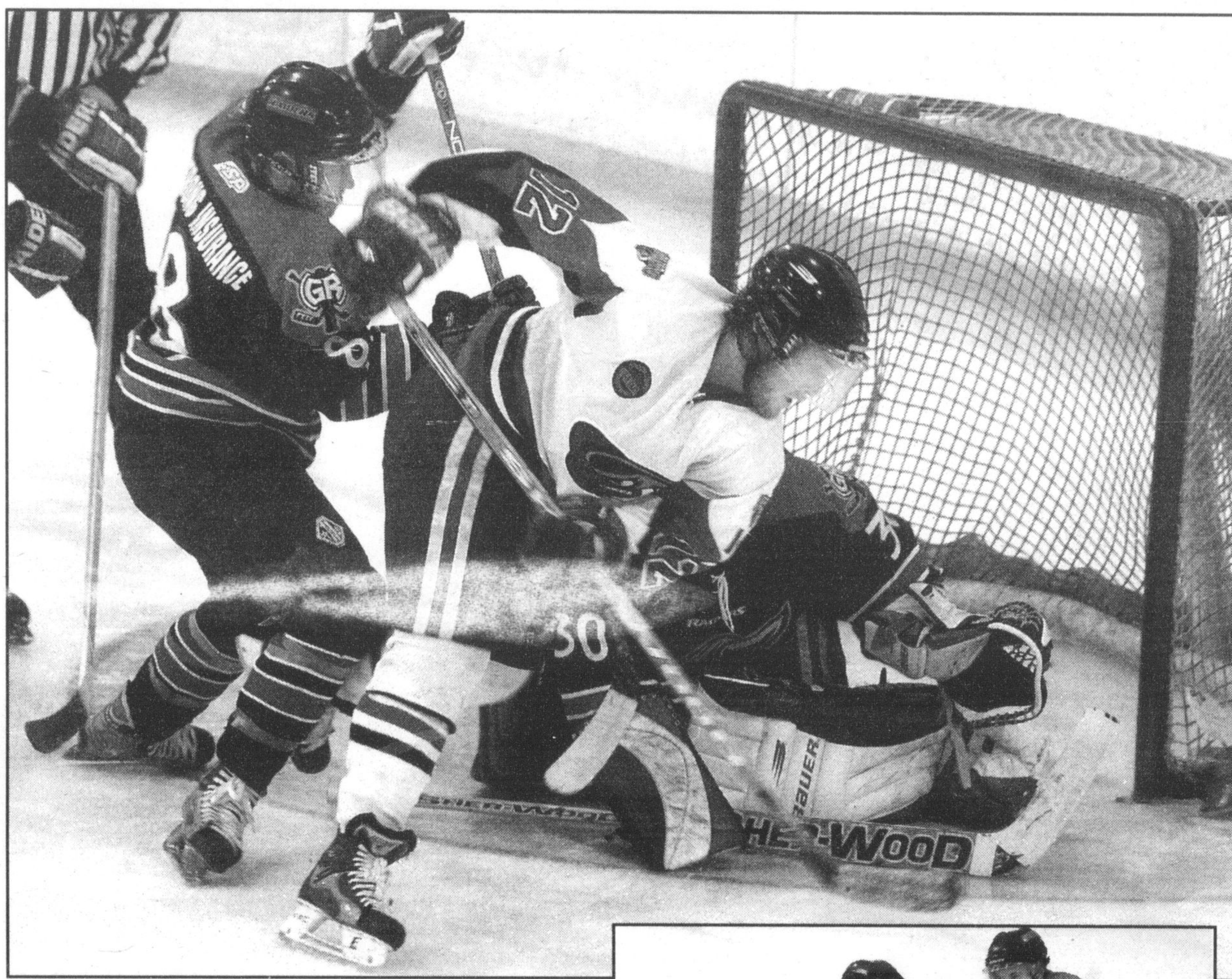
Remarkably Dupont, "(Mike) Sansom stepped it up today (Sunday) and Clark definitely brought his game to a new level. If we can just get these guys to continue playing like that and have a few others raise their game a little, we should be okay."

Brett Robinson joined Ornelas on the sidelines after being banged up in game two, while top-scoring Raider Ryan DeMonte was out Sunday as well, due to internal strife from the night before.

With Milton's scoring drought threatening to spill over into a fifth period Sunday, Sansom blasted one into the bottom right corner just a second before the initial break to cut an early Georgetown lead in half. He and fellow rookie Julian Sarraino have done a fairly credible job standing up to their physical superior opponents so far.

Jason Fortino and Adam Pileggi each drew two assists Sunday, while John Winstanley tallied twice for the Raiders.

Georgetown's game one goals were delivered by captain Vince Laise and Ross Smith, who contributed a pair of helpers the following day.



Milton IceHawk Adam Pileggi (above) is denied by Georgetown goalie Matt Harpwood after breaking free of defenceman David Brooks (at right) during game two action at Memorial Arena Sunday afternoon. Milton led until the final minute of regulation, but wound up losing 5-4 in overtime. Former Milton blueliner Phil Sbrocchi chipped in a goal and an assist for Georgetown in the narrow decision.

Photos by **GRAHAM PAINE**

Reding cagers bounced by Lords

Bishop Reding's senior boys basketball team capped 2003/04 play with what can best be described as a roller coaster playoff run last week.

The ride came to an end at Burlington's Nelson High School Wednesday afternoon, when Royals were ousted 72-52 by the older and more seasoned Lords.

Reding came out flying in the quarterfinal showdown and held a 15-0 lead at one

point. But that scoring prowess would eventually disappear, as would hopes for an upset victory.

The Royals trailed by a couple of baskets at half time and then faded down the stretch.

However, co-coach Mark Freeman stressed that a lengthy playoff run was never really expected from this year's young squad — that has just about every-

one coming back next season, and a few players eligible for 2005/06 play.

"Our goal this year was to make the playoffs. Anything beyond that was gravy," he explained.

Standing out offensively against the Lords were Al Alilovic, Marcos Gray and Zac Ward. Fueling Nelson's convincing win with a 26-point performance was reliable all-star Rory Tufford.

At home last Monday, Reding highlighted its season with a 59-56 overtime decision over Burlington's Assumption Crusaders in opening-round play.

Matt Mastrangelo provided the heroics, stealing the ball at half court and draining a three-pointer with about 15 seconds remaining. Before that, Lance Codner made good on four free throws to help erase an early extra-session deficit.

Recalled Freeman, "Assumption had a couple of regulars back from injury and really came to play. But we stepped it up defensively and pulled it out."

Sean Mathé led overall in the first round with 19 points.

EC reaches quarterfinals

And then there was one.

Eight Milton teams began high school playoffs last week. Now only E.C. Drury's girls hockey team remains in the championship hunt — having eclipsed Burlington's Aldershot Aces 3-2 Thursday afternoon at Memorial Arena.

The narrow win — delivered with a third-period blueline deposit by defenceman Katie Wollaston — earned the Spartans passage to today's quarterfinals in Burlington.

Candace Anderson backstopped Drury to victory against Aldershot, weathering a few late storms to preserve the lead, while denting the twine early on were Laura Lighthall and Liane Zablotny.

Jennine Loose and Amy Azzopardi drew assists in the first-round decision.

The Spartans will be the overwhelming underdogs this afternoon, going against the undefeated Notre Dame Irish, who've given up a measly three goals in nine games this year.