

Sports

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Heartbreaking finish to opening weekend

IceHawks' disallowed goal nixes comeback in G'town

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

There's nothing like a little controversy to rekindle an old rivalry.

Such was the case during the IceHawks' first legitimate challenge of the new year at Georgetown's Alcott Arena Saturday evening.

With 2:35 remaining, newly-acquired defenceman Mike Gershon of New Jersey appeared to have potted his second goal of the night and evened things up at 3-3 on a goal-mouth scramble.

But much to either the surprise or downright disgust of many in attendance, the would-be equalizer was waved off and the short-staffed Raiders' narrow lead held up for the duration.

The contentious finish will no doubt fan the flames of animosity between North Halton's heated rivals, who've met in the play-offs the past two years and are both likely to remain among the Western Conference's top four clubs.

But while the disallowed deposit was a bitter pill to swallow, a blatant breakdown in defense was just as much to blame for the IceHawks' defeat.

"We gave up 19 shots in the second period alone, which is more than we have in most games so far," noted assistant coach Robb Wilson, who still has a relatively young blueline unit with three 17-year-olds and one 16-year-old. "We played relatively well overall, but a few mental errors hurt us. It was our first true test of the year and the younger guys got to see this league's real talent and what it takes to be a winner."

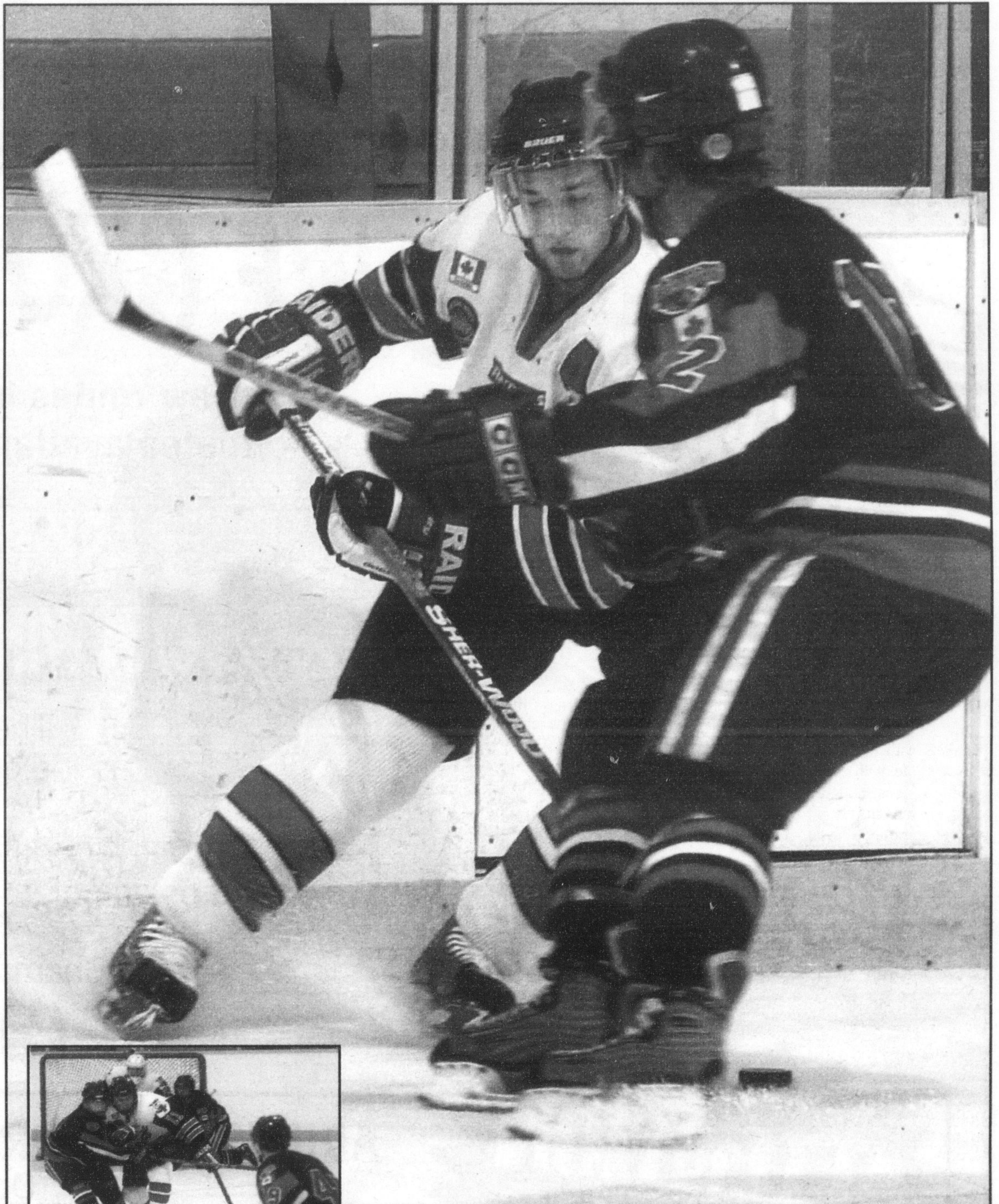
Despite missing cornerstone forwards Matt Sweazey and Kevin Harvey, Georgetown delivered an effective forecheck and enjoyed exceptional goaltending from former Sarnia Sting John Barrow — who took round one over IceDog-turned-IceHawk Doug Groenestege. Returning Raider Jay Sprague's upstairs backhand midway through the third period stood up as the game winner, while Mike Gurtler, Nick Harloff and Mike Nelson each had two-point nights for the victors.

Scoring for Milton were Gershon and fellow newcomer Stefan Legein of the Toronto Red Wing minor midgets, who jumped all over a blueline turnover and undressed Barrow to even things up at 2-2.

At Memorial Arena Friday, the IceHawks kicked off regular-season play much the way they closed out their exhibition schedule — in potent and dominant fashion. They picked visiting Buffalo apart from start to finish in posting an 8-2 decision for veteran cager Thomas Lee, who faced just 17 shots overall and a mere three in the final frame.

Milton's big line of captain Adam Pileggi, Brett Robinson and Shandor Alphonso combined for a dozen points — with Robinson enjoying the lion's share of production with two goals and three assists. Native Miltonian Matt Price — centering the third line — also tallied twice, netting his first Jr. A marker on a huge short-handed break with Legein.

IceHawk notes: Milton reacquired the Provincial Jr. A League rights of enigmatic winger Ryan Silveira from the North Bay SkyHawks last week and then dealt him to Oakville in exchange for Jason Dopaca, who had 25 goals and 28 assists last season. The 20-year-old winger debuted as an IceHawk Saturday.



Photos by HERB GARBUTT

IceHawks captain Adam Pileggi (above) looks to collide with Georgetown's Tyler Leggo while his teammates (at left) pressure Georgetown goalie John Barrow during Saturday's 3-2 loss at Alcott Arena.

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