

Sports

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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

The tall and the short of it

St. Peter's defenders Alex Cosme (left) and D.J. Hallyburton tower over a driving Anthony Marziliano of Our Lady of Victory during season-opening boys basketball play Monday. St. Peter's won 42-24 but lost 32-24 to Guardian Angels the following afternoon.

'Hawks give gutsy effort in Hamilton

Key goaltending, fierce finish lead to huge victory

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Call it a sense of purpose, or perhaps a sense of urgency.

Either way, the IceHawks knew time was running out to step up and reassert themselves against one of the conference's elite — and create a little momentum for the fast-approaching playoffs in the process.

Taking that notion to heart at the always hostile Mountain Arena Monday night, they delivered their most inspiring effort in two months — overcoming a shortened bench and penalty-filled first period to topple the third-place Red Wings 4-1.

Milton struck three times in the final 13 minutes to beat a top-six opponent for the first time since early December and improve to 27-17-1-1.

It was also the second win in as many trips to Hamilton.

"The chips were down and we came through. It was a gutsy win for us," remarked Brett Robinson, who sank both the insurance marker and empty net clincher for his fourth straight multi-goal performance.

While perhaps not quite stealing the victory — since his teammates dominated the final frame — Tom Fenton was certainly a difference maker. He weathered an early storm with some big kick saves and turned back 28 shots overall for his most impressive win since joining the local juniors just before the trade deadline.

The fact that he was virtually unbeatable against a top-three rival was certainly encouraging in itself, but even more so since it followed three mismatch wins last

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week — none of which offered a genuine test.

"Yeah it can be a challenge to get up for a big game like this (after a couple of blowouts). You've just got to stay focused, and those first few saves always help," said the 20-year-old cager, who with the lowly Petrolia Jets this year was heavily tested pretty much every night. "This was an important win — a real confidence booster."

Still capable of catching fourth-place Burlington as of last night's trip to Brampton, Milton surrendered a short-handed goal to Dave McNab early in the second before defenceman Casey Gilholm evened things up with a blueline blast through traffic at 9:48.

Jason Dopaco provided the heroics seven minutes into the third with a bottom-shelf deposit on the rush and finished the night with three points, while Mike DeMarchi set up all four goals.

Although down to just 13 skaters by the end of the night — after Jeff Caister was tossed for checking from behind and an ill-stricken Pat Clark left after the opening frame — the IceHawks thoroughly outhustled their hosts down the stretch and out-shot them 18-8 in the third.

All but guaranteed to face Burlington in opening-round play as of last night, Milton has just two games left this season, both at home. Tonight they host Streetsville, and next Friday they close things out against front-running Georgetown. Both games start at 7:30 p.m.

• see TONIGHT's TICKET on page 25

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