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'Hawks bolster lead with triple OT win

DeMarchi's golden goal clinches marathon clash

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Running on empty one moment, walking on air the next.

With his shortstuffed charges fighting back exhaustion more than four hours after beginning game two against the visiting Burlington Cougars Sunday, IceHawk Mike DeMarchi buried a wrist shot past Chris Rowan 8:43 into triple overtime — giving the hosts a 5-4 victory and two-games-to-none hammerlock on first-round play.

"This feels awesome. Scoring one in triple overtime, what could be better?" said the jubilant marksman, whose golden goal was set up by Chris Bain and Jason Dopaco. "I've never been involved in anything this long. It's pretty tiring."

Milton IceHawks vs. Burlington Cougars (best of seven opening round)

- Game 1 Milton 3, Burlington 2
- Game 2 Milton 5, Burlington 4 (3OT) tonight at Burlington (7:30 pm)
- Game 3 Friday at Burlington (7:30 pm)
- Game 4 Sunday at Memorial (3:00 pm)
- Game 5 Feb. 21 at Burlington (7:30 pm)
- Game 6 Feb. 22 at Memorial (7:30 pm)
- Game 7 Feb. 22 at Memorial (7:30 pm) if necessary

Given that Burlington hosts the next two contests — including tonight's third tilt — game two could almost be looked upon as a must-win situation for either team, at least from a morale standpoint. Noted DeMarchi, "This helps us a lot. We really didn't want to go into Burlington tied 1-1."

However, head coach George Dupont didn't really see it as a make-or-break encounter, considering that his IceHawks took two of three games at Central Arena this season — including one in sudden death.

"It's going to be a tough series regardless of where we're playing, but of course this puts the pressure on them," he said.

Down to three lines as forwards Adam Pileggi and Matt Davis continue to nurse minor injuries, the IceHawks were no doubt going on fumes by the end of game two.

However, they matched the Cougars shot for shot until DeMarchi sealed the deal just 1:19 shy of the longest game in franchise history — which came on April 21, 1998 when defenceman T.J. Lee sank a blueline shot to clinch game four of the All-Ontario finals against Rayside-Balfour.

Milton had four one-goal leads erased before finally vanquishing their regional rivals, with DeMarchi depositing a blueline blast in the second period as well and Ryan Bernardi, Jesse Jenish and Brett Robinson rounding out the scoring.

Tom Fenton faced two more shots than his equally-sharp counterpart — 49-47 overall — including two dozen straight after surrendering the final equalizer eight minutes into the third period.

Each team had two powerplay opportunities through the extended extra session, with Bernardi nearly scoring on a shorthanded breakaway on the Cougars' first man-advantage.

Two nights earlier, Fenton and company nursed a one-goal lead for 17:22 to take the series opener 3-2.

The IceHawks capitalized on two of seven powerplay opportu-



Above, the IceHawks celebrate Mike DeMarchi's triple overtime winner Sunday. At right, goalie Tom Fenton and defenceman Casey Gilholm deal with traffic in front of Milton's net.

Photos by KEN KERR

nities and would have enjoyed more success with the man-advantage had it not been for some downright masterful saves by Rowan — particularly during an extended special-teams stretch in period two.

Captain Shandor Alphonso's rebound backhand with 3:29 left in the second stood up as the winner, with Bernardi and Matt Price also denting the twine. Price had a golden opportunity to make it a multi-goal night early in the third, but was denied on a penalty shot.

In addition to getting Pileggi and Davis back in about a week, the IceHawks still have Toronto Marlies APs John Tavares and Sam Gagner available for five games apiece.



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