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Sports

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IceHawks dominant in closing out Burlington

Milton outscores Cougars 13-2 in final two games of series

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The Milton IceHawks may have left the door open for an opening-round series turnaround, but they slammed it shut awfully quick.

Rebounding from last Tuesday's 3-2 setback at Central Arena, Milton fortified every aspect of play this past weekend — and finished off Burlington in the process with two convincing wins to take the playoff series in a rather efficient five games.

While Sunday's 6-2 victory officially eliminated the Cougars, many could argue that a 7-0 whitewash two nights earlier effectively put things away for the IceHawks — who as of last night were still awaiting word on whom they'd face in the Western Conference semifinals.

"I think some of the guys were a little tired in game three after that triple overtime win, but we used the time wisely following the loss and came back focused," remarked captain Shandor Alphonso, who drew five assists over the weekend, including four in the clincher. "We set the tempo early (this weekend) and took it to them."

Added head coach/general manager George Dupont, "We initiated the play and supported the puck well on defense. Basically we did all the little things you need to be effective in the playoffs."

Eager to show game three was merely a bump in the road, the IceHawks came out firing on all cylinders at a hostile Central Arena Friday — winning just about all of the one-on-one battles and completely wiping out their hosts' even-strength attack.

Tom Fenton turned back 17 shots for the shutout, but his flawless cage work was far from necessary, as his teammates mounted a 3-0 first-period cushion and never allowed the shellshocked Cougars to recover.

Mike DeMarchi and Brett Robinson each tallied twice, while enforcer Chris Bain also stood out with a goal and two helpers. Rounding out the scoring were Louis D'Avino and Matt Price.

At a jam-packed Memorial Arena Sunday, Milton exploded early once again and outmuscled the Cougars at just about every turn — easing up just long enough to allow a pair of goals before clamping down defensively and sealing the deal.

Kevin Morrison sank his first two of the playoffs, while Bain, DeMarchi, Ryan Bernardi and Jason Dopaco chipped in singles. Among those recording assists was young forward Akim Alou, who saw spot duty alongside fellow Marlie call-up Cody Goloubef.

Depending on last night's seventh and deciding tilt between Hamilton and Brampton, Milton will face either Georgetown or Oakville in second-round play, which is scheduled to begin Friday or Saturday.

The IceHawks head into round two having won 11 of their last 12 games, and haven't lost at home in more than a month.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton IceHawks' forward Jesse Jenish got the better of this collision with Burlington Cougars' Chris Downey during Sunday's Provincial Junior A Hockey League playoff contest at Memorial Arena. Milton downed the Cougars 6-2, claiming the first-round series in five games.

Downtime comes at good time for 'Hawks

The IceHawks still didn't know whom they'd be facing in the Western Conference semifinals as of last night.

What they did know is that they weren't in any hurry to get things started again — not after a physically-punishing series with Burlington that left them with several key injuries.

Regular season and playoff scoring leader Mike DeMarchi — who notched half-a-dozen goals in five games against the Cougars — was the latest to go down, taking a knee-on-knee hit from Dave Cianfrini late in the first period Sunday.

This marked the third straight game in which the IceHawks sent a player to sick bay, with defenceman Jason Fortino suffer-

ing a concussion last Tuesday and winger Adam Pileggi reinjuring his ankle during an unfortunate tie-up in the offensive zone Friday.

While Fortino will likely begin the next round against either Georgetown or Oakville, DeMarchi and Pileggi are expected to miss the first few games — at least.

Ailments aside, the IceHawks head into the conference semifinals with some definite momentum from two decisive wins this past weekend, and weren't playing the preference game when looking ahead to their two possible opponents.

"Given that we had more success against Georgetown this season, one would think we'd rather face them, but ultimately you

have to beat both to win the West," noted head coach/general manager George Dupont. "Does it really matter if you lose in the semis or finals?"

Captain Shandor Alphonso said that whomever his team takes on next, prosperity will depend on delivering the same aggressive attack that allowed Milton to wrap up round one so handily.

"We can't worry about what the other team's doing. We've just got to come to play hard each night and not lay back."

Regardless of whether the IceHawks play Georgetown or Oakville in the second round, Milton will host the series' second game Sunday at Memorial Arena, beginning at 3 p.m.



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