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## Hockey dead? Not in Milton

"Hockey is dead," reports a glum radio announcer early on a Sunday morning.

It was the day after there had been optimism that the NHL season would be saved despite being officially cancelled earlier in the week.

At the Milton Sports Centre, or the Ertneec Strops Notlim, depending on which way you're driving, weary-eyed parents are leaning wherever they can, clutching their coffee cups and wishing they could have had just one more hour of sleep.

On the ice, a team is practising its passing, going end to end. One of the players finishes off his turn in style, scoring despite the fact the goalie is preoccupied. A goal is a goal and he raises his stick in triumph.

Maybe somebody on that ice is the next John Tonelli or Darren Haydar. Probably not, but each one of them has imagined himself scoring a goal in the NHL or carrying the Stanley Cup around the ice. None of them has imagined what it would be like to have that privilege, and to receive money for it.

On the other surface, little guys burst onto the ice. It doesn't matter to them what time it is, they've been waiting for this, possibly for a week. Some of them had a hard time getting to sleep on Saturday night because they were so excited



Out in left field

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

about playing.

A check of the dressing room assignments at the front entrance reveals a full schedule for the day, including games in the Halton Twisters girls hockey league. Even some of them dream about playing in the NHL, but for most of them just playing hockey is good enough.

Hockey's not dead here.

Over at Thompson Arena, a group of men are playing shinny. Everybody is wearing different jerseys. These guys get up early just for the opportunity to pay money to half-play a game. No referees, no scores.

Hockey's not dead here, either.

At Tonelli Arena, the men's Sunday morning oldtimers league is underway. They have uniforms and referees, but when they score a goal it's no big deal, and most don't even bother to celebrate. Just playing is good enough.

Each one of them would have gladly given up whatever jobs they

had during their lifetimes if they'd been able to play in the NHL instead. Each one of them would pay money just to sit on an NHL bench during a game, just once.

Nobody told these guys that hockey is dead. For some of them it hasn't been dead for more than 50 years.

On a Tuesday night, at a juvenile playoff series north of Toronto, half the town turns out to cheer on its team, and half the visiting team's town shows up to cheer on its team.

None of these players will ever play in the NHL and it doesn't matter to them one bit. This is their NHL. They just love to play and it shows every time they go on the ice and give everything they've got.

When the game is over and one team is eliminated, players from both sides line up for the customary handshake. Fans from both sides stand and cheer them off the ice.

Hockey's not dead here, or anywhere. That's because lawyers and greedy union heads don't have the power to kill it. It's not something you can negotiate or take to court. It's not up to them.

It's up to the people of Milton, and Ontario, and all across Canada to decide, and according to those who matter the most, hockey is alive and well.

## Minor atoms drop series opener

The glass slipper may be about to fall on the minor atom AA Winterhawks' Cinderella playoff run.

Having won three straight five-game rounds to reach the OMHA semifinals, Milton now has the rather unenviable task of facing neighbouring powerhouse Georgetown Raiders — who dominated regular-season play and looks poised to deliver another championship run.

At least that appeared to be the case Tuesday evening in Georgetown, where despite a credible effort — including solid cage work and a big five-on-three penalty kill — the Winterhawks were toppled 6-1.

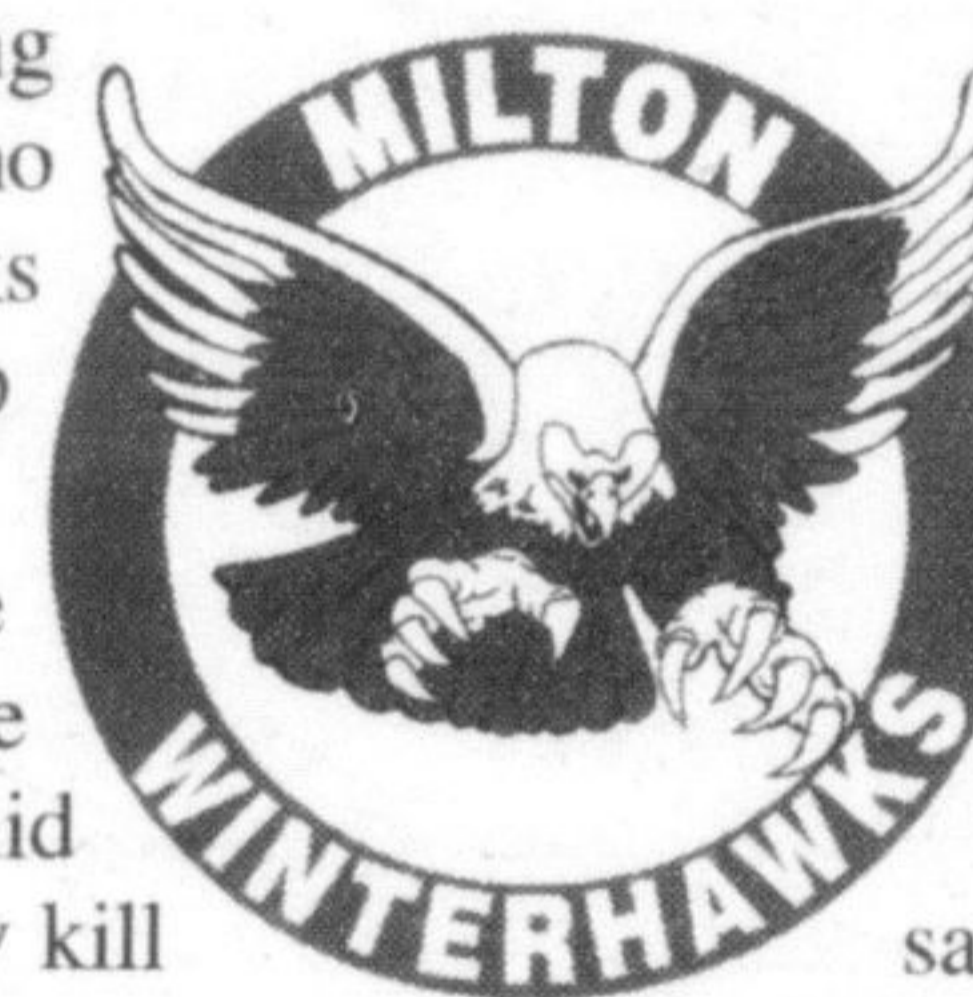
"They're a very good team. They've been beating some AAA clubs this year," said head coach Jeff Rudd, whose local charges took do-or-die fifth game tilts

against Caledon, Flamborough and Orangeville after a 13-13-2 regular season. "But just to get to this point (semifinals) is big. We're really proud of the guys."

Drew McMillen spoiled the Raiders' shutout bid with a mere 13 seconds left, using a backhand to bury a goal-mouth scramble. Teammates Tyler Ganly and J.R. Sanderson were each denied on the breakaway by a rock-solid and sizable Georgetown tender.

Counterpart J.J. Schaap saw a lot of rubber on the night and came up with some big saves to keep things respectable.

Milton hosted game two last night, while game three goes tomorrow afternoon at Georgetown's Alcott Arena. If necessary, game four will be played at Milton Sports Centre Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.



## Big finish earns tie for AE2 atoms

There's nothing like leaving things to the last possible moment to create a little drama.

Milton's AE2 atoms did exactly that Tuesday evening, scoring twice in the final 13 seconds of play to eke out a 2-2 tie with a stunned Hespeler.

J.J. Stimson notted things up with a measly two ticks left on the

clock — thanks in large part to a centre ice faceoff win by Andrew Smith — after Tanner Briggs drew within a goal 11 seconds earlier.

Both were goal-mouth scramble deposits, with the first set up by Zach Wadham.

Tristan Kivac was beaten twice in the opening frame but stood tall through the duration of the night.

The stalemate all but guaranteed the Winterhawks a berth into the Tri County finals. They sit first at 4-0-2 and will close out the round robin March 15 in Acton.

The AE2 atoms are now just two games away from matching their season high eight-game unbeaten streak, including four straight shutouts in December.

## Skaters show strongly at Oshawa meet

The Milton Skating Club delivered some impressive efforts recently at the Oshawa Invitational, including four first-place finishes and nearly a dozen other top-three showings.

Results are as follows:

**Pre-Preliminary Ladies 1:** Sophie MacLellan and Serena Gill (tied for 1st), Athena Zorzi (2nd), Kendra Wilcox, Dana Hamilton and Rebecca Cherry (tied for 3rd), Colleen Collins, Jennifer Collins and Courtney Whetham (tied for 5th), Jasmine Beaulieu (7th)

**Pre-Preliminary Ladies 2:** Melissa Cherry (2nd), Cadence Baker (3rd), Christina Austen (8th)

**Pre-Preliminary Ladies 3:** Jenna Wilson (3rd), Erin Roegenburg and Lindsay Mindenhall (tied for 4th)

**Pre-Preliminary Mens 1:** Daniel Nikolich (2nd)

**Preliminary Ladies:** Victoria Smith (2nd), Julie Cenedese (4th), Katie Preisner (7th), Samantha Nikolich (9th)

**Junior Bronze Ladies:** Amanda Austen (1st), Kendra Paguaga (2nd), Rosslyn Schultz (5th), Meghan Greaves (7th)

**Senior Bronze Ladies:** Danielle Clarke (1st)

**Senior Silver Ladies:** Lisa Petrie (3rd), Meghan Umphrey (8th)