

Blades push 'Hawks to sixth game with OT win

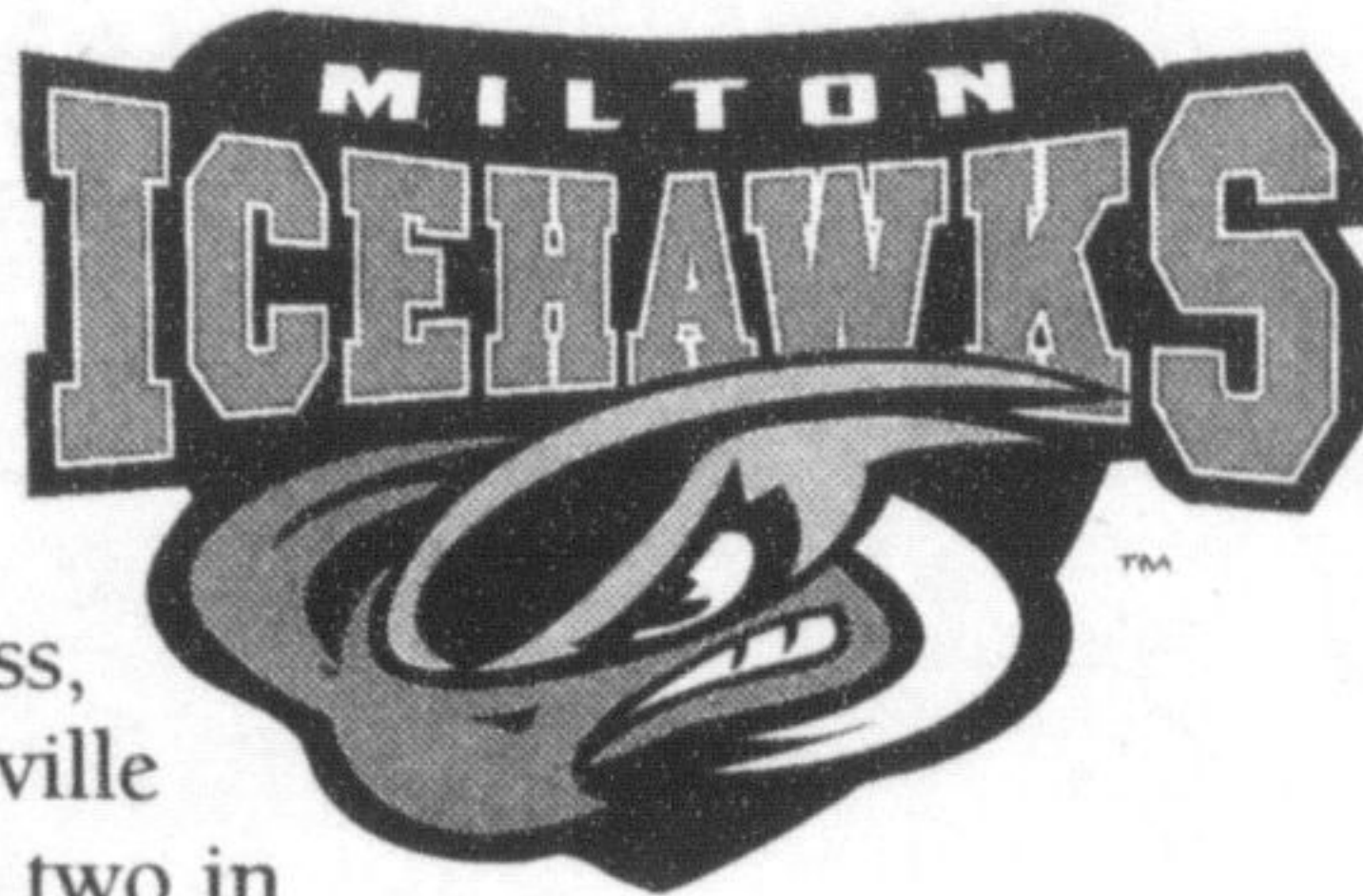
Penalty shot marker sinks Milton at Memorial Sunday afternoon

By Herb Garbutt
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

If the IceHawks can show the same fire they did after Sunday's 3-2 overtime loss, they can punch their ticket to the Western Conference final.

But they might be wise to show that same energy during the game.

Milton goalie Zach Kleiman shattered his stick over the boards after allowing the winning goal on an overtime penalty shot, and several IceHawks exchanged heated words with their Oakville opponents after the game. The post-game fireworks showed the frustration of a team that just five days earlier was in command of the series with a 2-0 lead and spotless record at home.



Now, with Sunday's loss, the Hawks headed to Oakville last night having dropped two in a row at home and holding a less-than-comfortable 3-2 lead in round.

It wasn't that they lost but how they lost that upset the IceHawks.

"It's a cheap way to end a game, especially in overtime," said defenceman Jeff Caister, whose second-period goal capped Milton's comeback from a 2-0 deficit.

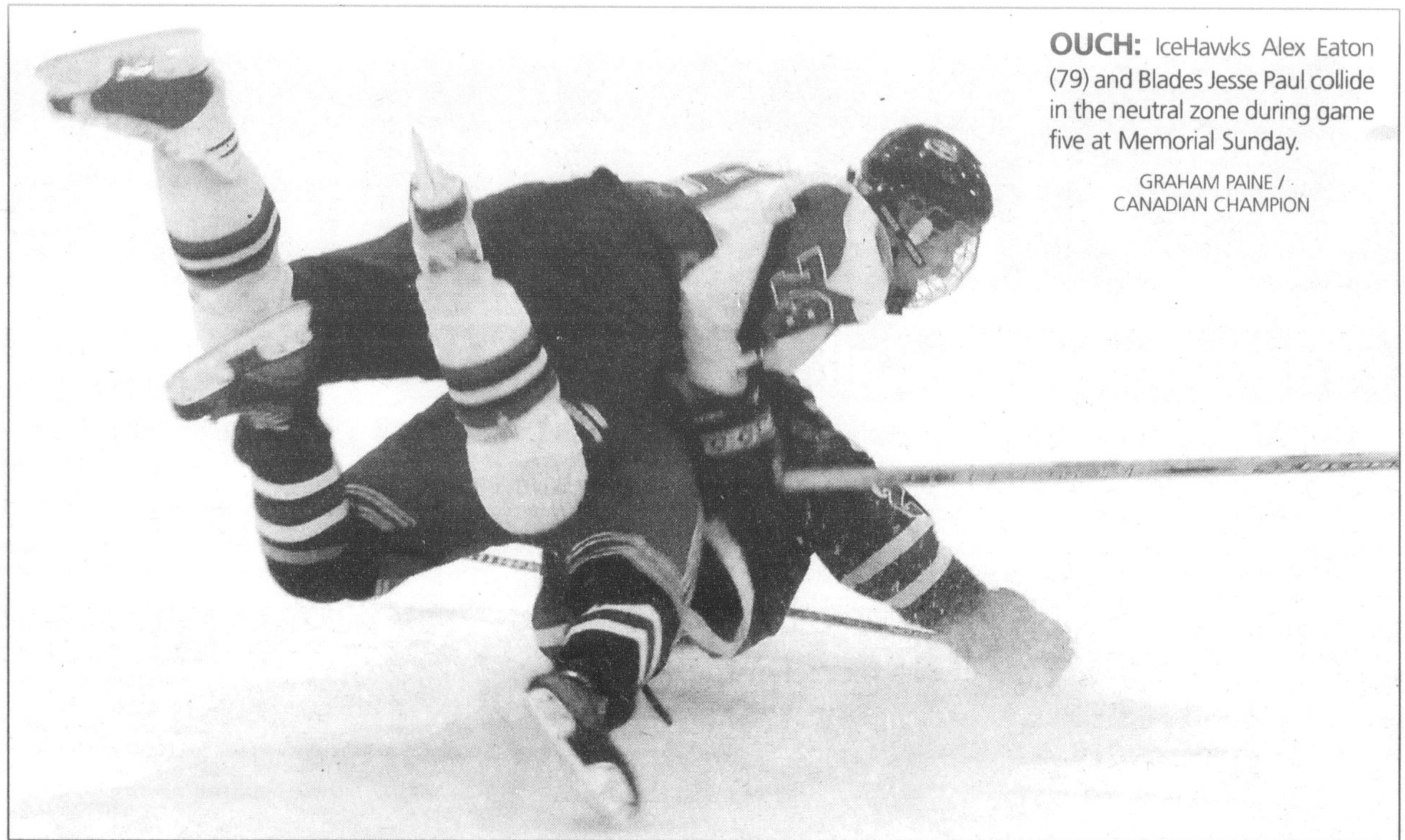
Referee Glen McBryde called the penalty shot when the IceHawks' net was dislodged by one of their defencemen during a scramble in front of the Milton net. The IceHawks maintained it was an accident, the result of players jostling for a loose puck in the crease.

The call presented Oakville's Brendan Taylor with the opportunity to win the game for his team, and he did so, going to his forehand to beat Kleiman for the winner.

The IceHawks, who only lost four times in 53 games coming into the series, have now dropped two of their three.

Despite being handed their first loss in 28 games Wednesday, they still might have been a little too comfortable at home. Milton only showed a real sense of urgency befitting the country's top-ranked team in the second period, after falling behind 2-0.

Milton dominated the period, firing 20 shots at Oakville's Marc Stuart as they erased Oakville's lead. Unfortunately, through the other 46 minutes of play, the Hawks only managed 12 shots.



OUCH: IceHawks Alex Eaton (79) and Blades Jesse Paul collide in the neutral zone during game five at Memorial Sunday.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

"We didn't have the greatest first period," said Caister, who scored seven minutes after Chase Langerap pulled the IceHawks within one. "We played harder in the second and really battled back and had all the momentum. But we didn't play well in overtime."

That's not to say they didn't have their chances to win it. In the third, one puck squirted past Stuart and sat tantalizingly inches from the goal line. However, Oakville's Vitaly Linochkin outraced Kevin Morrison to the puck and swatted it away. "It's definitely startling," Caister said of the second straight loss at home. "It shows what kind of team they are. They're a good team and we knew that from the last few

times we played them (in the regular season). They have tons of confidence going home but they haven't beaten us there. I think that gives us a psychological edge. We have to go there and win and that's what we're going to do."

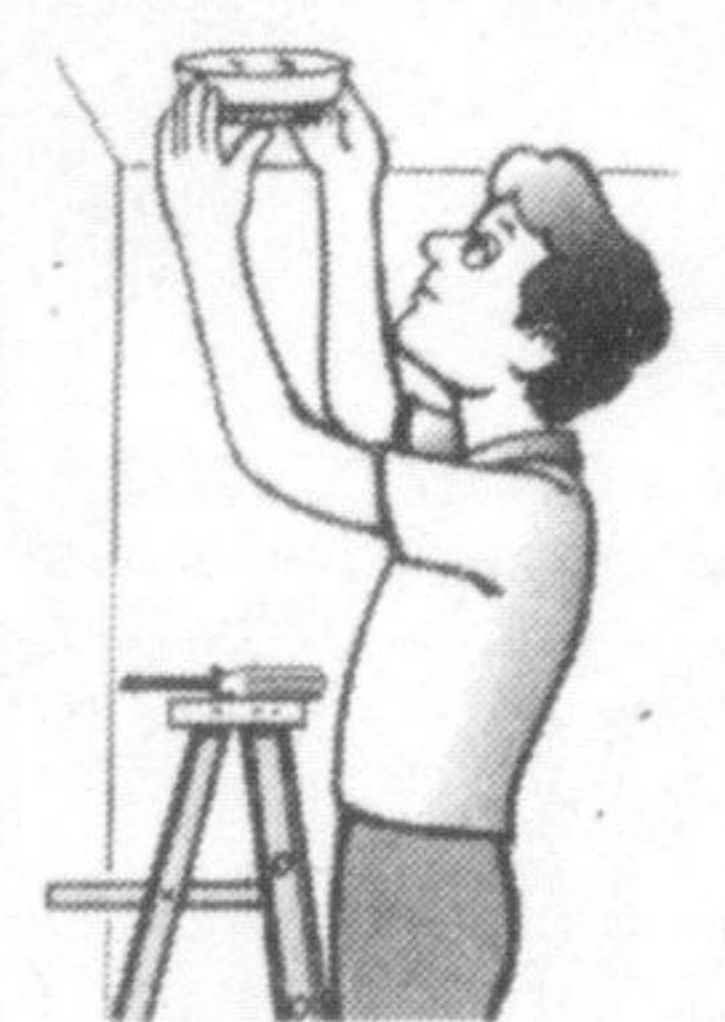
The win sent the series back to Oakville's Dominion Twin Rinks with the Blades getting a third opportunity to tie the series in front of a home crowd. Though they failed in their first two attempts, Taylor said it's different this time.

"This is do or die so hopefully we can prolong it," the overtime hero said.

If necessary, game seven will be played tomorrow night at Memorial Arena, starting at 7:30 p.m.

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