

IceHawks end first weekend in credible fashion

Narrow loss to Raiders 'something to build on'

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Looking ahead to a fall in which growing pains will be in ample supply and victories likely won't, the rebuilding IceHawks will have to embrace any source of encouragement they can get their hands on.

With that in mind, there was at least a certain amount of optimism upon departing Georgetown's MoldMasters Sportsplex Saturday night.

"This is definitely a building block for us," said goaltender Tayler Dunn, following a 4-3 loss to the less-than-stellar but far more seasoned Raiders.

One of just three 20-year-olds on Milton this season, Dunn — a Burlington resident who competed in his native Australia last year — had good reason to feel positive about the narrow defeat. Still fighting an ear infection the night before during home-opening play, he wasn't exactly up to snuff in a 9-4 rout at the hands of the fairly solid Brampton Capitals.

Much better against Raiders

Eager to distance himself from the beating, he weathered a number of storms in Georgetown — particularly in the second period, when he made two huge glove saves and stopped 18 of 20 shots — to give his young charges a shot at upsetting the Raiders.

"I woke up feeling a lot better today, and that really helped," noted Dunn, who recorded 41 saves overall in his first test on the road.

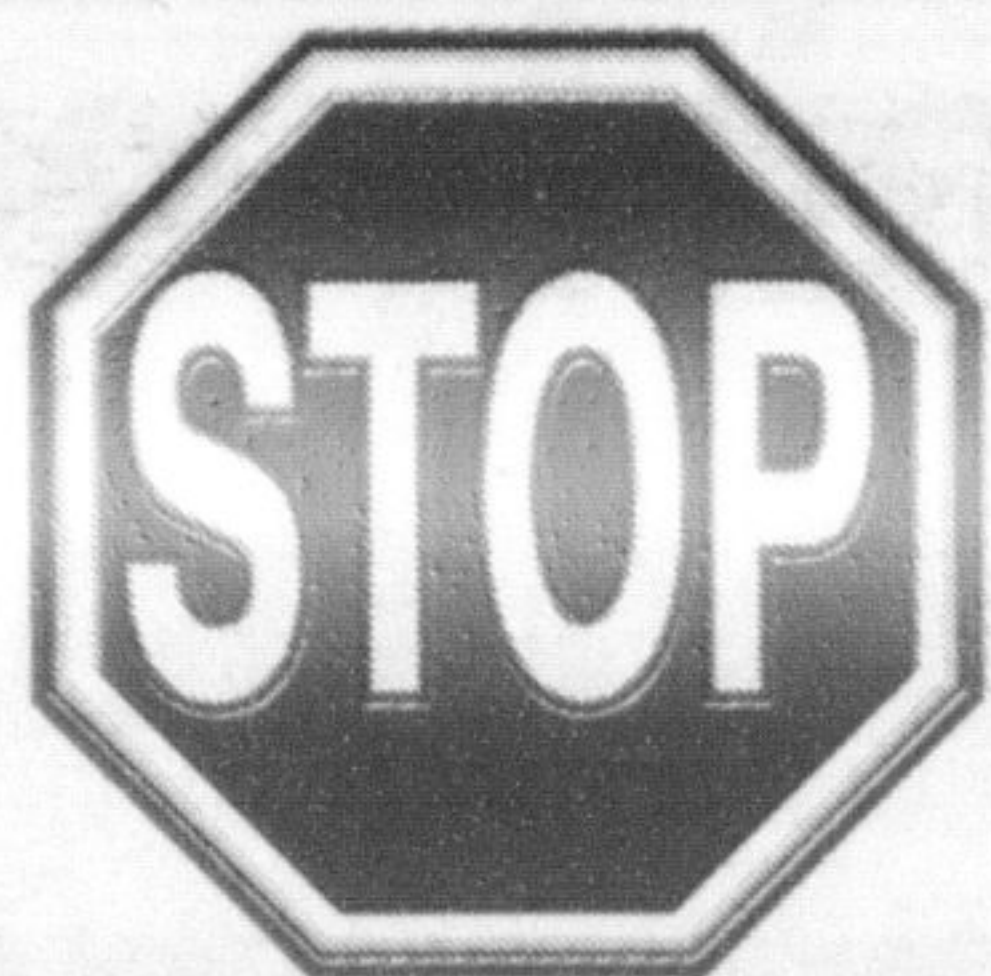
Beyond showing just how much work the IceHawks require to return to their contender status, this past weekend clearly demonstrated just how crucial powerplay efficiency will be within the league's new zero-tolerance-for-obstruction era.

With their even-strength attack all but completely neutralized Friday, Milton relied on the Capitals' evening-long parade to the penalty box in order to minimize their season-opening humbling. The IceHawks' four goals all came on the powerplay, with three scored during five-on-three advantages.

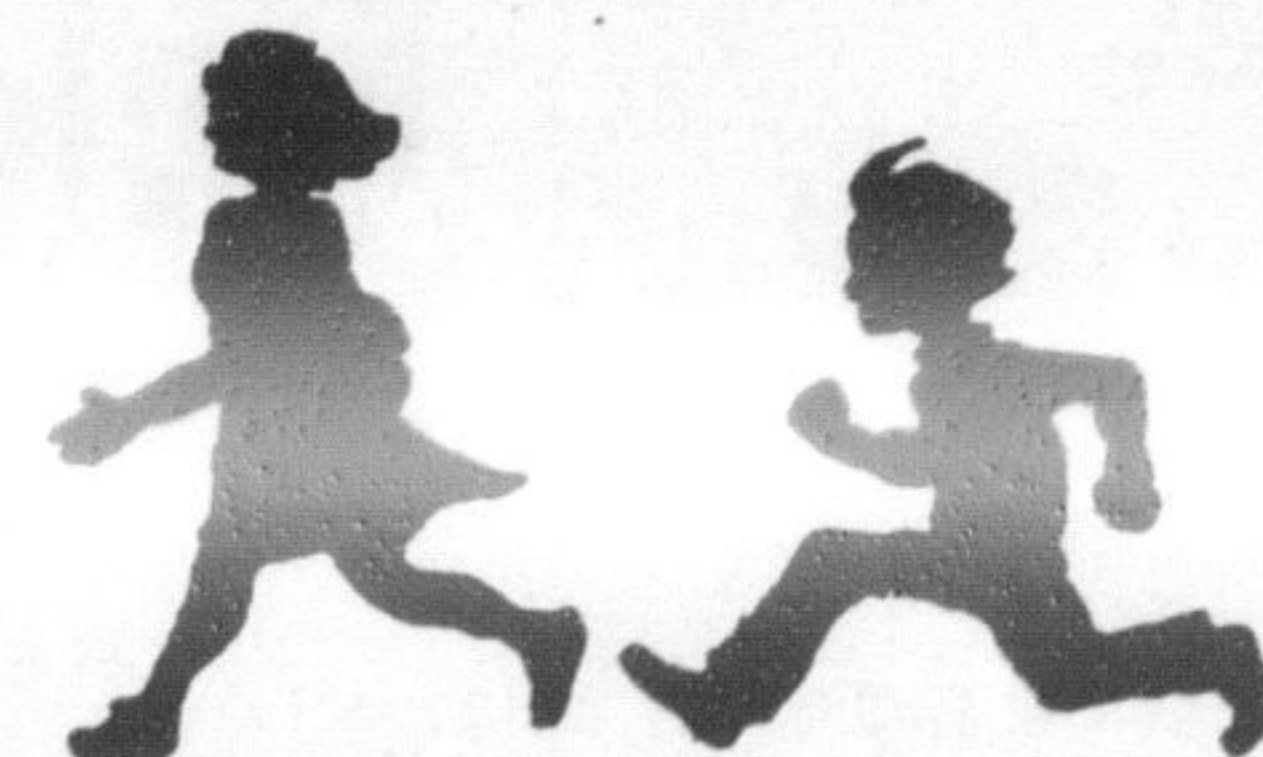
In Georgetown, they kept things competitive by scoring twice with the extra attacker. The latter of these — a big cross-ice redirect deposit by former Glanbrook Jr. C centre David Vallorani — came with just under three minutes left to put a somewhat suspenseful finish on what many figured would be a cakewalk for the Raiders.

"With the new rules, special teams is going to be so important," said head coach Pat Cocklin. "Both our powerplay and penalty killing units are going to have to be ready to go."

• see COCKLIN on page A18



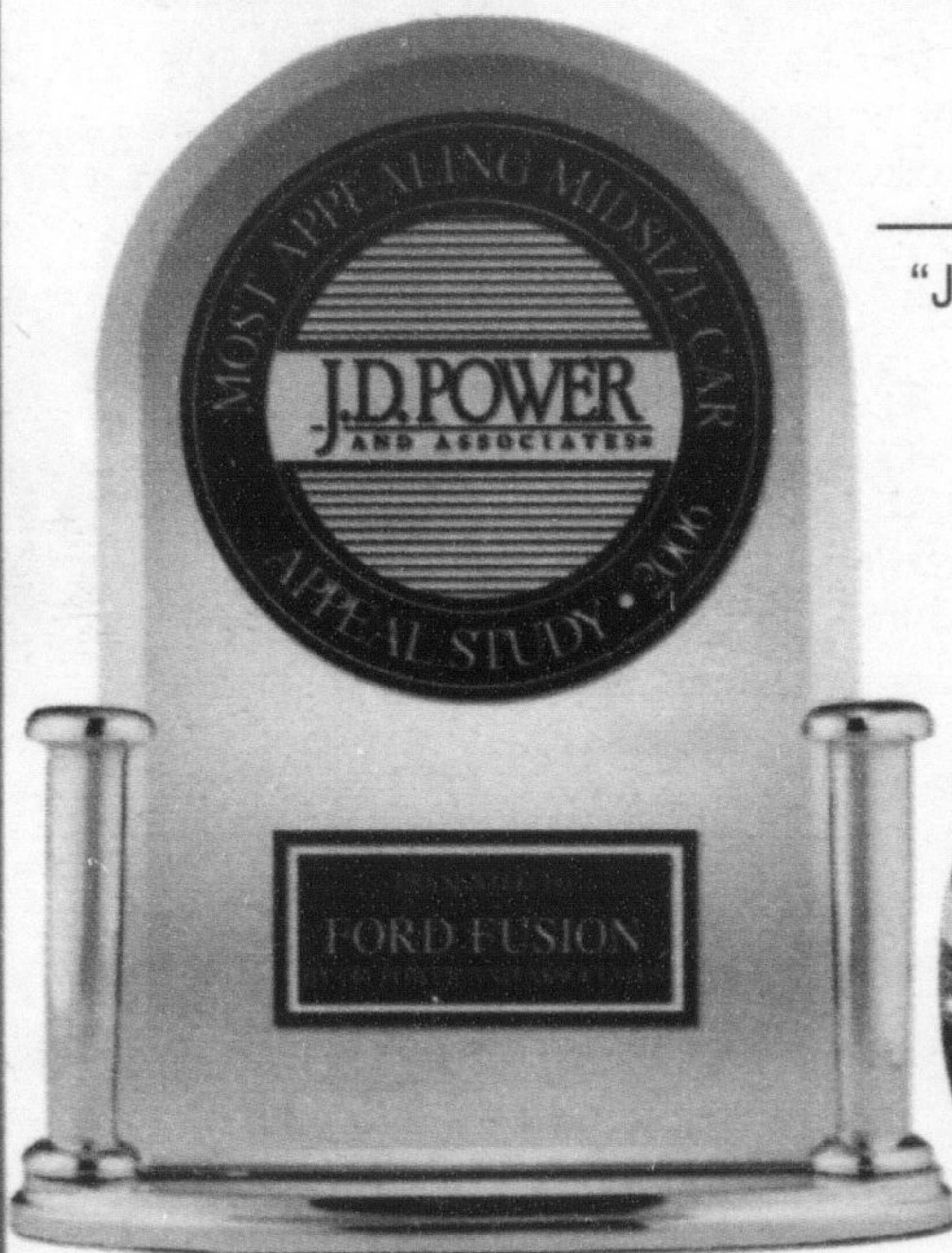
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