

SPORTS

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DOORSTEP SCRAMBLE: At left, Winterhawk AA bantam Vikram Kalia (in white) tries to get his stick on a loose puck as Montreal Lakeshore Panthers defender Andrew Thomas looks to clear it away and netminder Franco Pergugini scrambles to get back into position during exhibition play at Milton Sports Centre Saturday afternoon. Above, Winterhawk's Andrew Browne gets tripped up as he pursues Lakeshore's Sean Planche. Milton fell behind early and lost the physical showdown 4-2, with Kalia and Matt Dupont doing the scoring. Saturday's tilt was part of a weekend swing through the area for the Montreal team, who are among the top-ranked clubs at Quebec's 'BB' level, which is the equivalent of 'AA' hockey in Ontario.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

No Friday the 13th jinx — just a reality check

IceHawks' 12-1 humbling at hands of Hamilton was difficult to watch, but not all that surprising

Had it been any other season of my near decade-and-a-half tenure covering our local juniors, I'd have sworn supernatural forces were at play.

After all, it was Friday the 13th and the IceHawks had just lost 12-1 to the Hamilton Red Wings — a team that by all accounts isn't even that offensively potent.

A Milton defeat of this magnitude just last year — or at any time since the early '90s, for that matter — would have seemed downright unfathomable, and had my mental thesaurus working overtime. Colourfully critical phrases would have flooded to the sur-

face with as much force as a Dion Phaneuf body check, as I struggled to accurately and — dare I say it — amusingly recount the humbling setback.

Any attempt at doing so this season, however, is pretty much a wasted effort.

Fact is, the young and inexperienced IceHawks — with an equally green executive behind them — were bound to get dismantled by one of the division's top-end teams sooner or later. It wasn't so much a case of if it would happen, but when.

And to publicly chastise Milton's new brass would be rather pointless and unfair as



with STEVE LeBLANC

In the stands

well. Having taken over the team just a little over four months ago and having no returning players, owner Rick Heinz and general manager Keith Pandovski faced the ultimate time crunch and — as a result — couldn't possibly have been expected to ice a contender this season.

In actuality, the IceHawks have thus far

done about as well as could have been hoped, with a 4-0 whitewash of the lowly Mississauga Chargers Saturday lifting them to a 'could-be-worse' record of 4-9-3-1.

But Friday's 11-goal loss — in which the well-rested (from a freak 11-day break) and obviously rejuvenated Red Wings recorded a whopping 70 shots on a poor Tayler Dunn — showed just how far Milton has slipped in the Provincial Jr. A League pecking order practically overnight.

And gaining back that ground — or even a sizable chunk of it — will be no easy task, especially for an organization that no longer has deep pockets.

But alas, there is hope.

Perhaps fittingly enough, I suffered through the local juniors' worst loss in

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