

# Numbers down but holiday tournament forges ahead

**By Steve LeBlanc**  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Milton's holiday hockey bash is a go, but will run with its lowest participation in recent memory.

With the novice, minor atom and minor midget divisions all recently cut — after only one out-of-town team had signed up in each age group — next week's 31st annual GoodLife Fitness Beaver Tournament will have less than half the number of overall teams competing compared to last year.

First-time event chairman Henry Psenicka, who's helped out at both the Beaver and Optimist tournaments in a minor capacity, admits the severe decrease in enrollment may have to do with the lateness of promotion on the OMHA Web site.

"I think usually we've started advertising it in the summer, but this year we didn't get it on until the fall," he explained.

Canceled in 1999 and 2002 due to a lack of interest, the holiday tournament's minor peewee and minor bantam ranks currently sit a minimum four and three teams respectively — with organizers scrambling to find one more entry for the latter division.

"We've kind of stuck or necks out with the minor bantams," said Psenicka. "We can run with three teams if need be, but are really hope to find at least one more team."

The only age group holding strong at the Beaver is the tykes, which dropped just slightly from last year's high of 16 teams to 14. Meanwhile, the six-and-under mite division — created last year — will include five squads.

This year's diminished numbers leave some asking if a switch to just one or two divisions at the

younger ages is in order. While not comfortable commenting on the suggestion, Psenicka said that soliciting older teams has been increasingly difficult.

"It's not like we focus more on getting the younger teams, it just naturally falls into place that way."

Slated to run December 27 to 29 at

Milton Sports Centre, the Beaver Tournament will run a skills competition on the first two days and wrap things up with championship play on the Friday.

Perhaps due to this year's tournament running during the week, volunteer support is also quite low right now. Anyone able to help out is asked to call Psenicka at (905) 901-3151.



# IceHawks drop two to Chargers

The Milton IceHawks dropped another rung in the Provincial Jr. A Hockey League standings after being swept by the Mississauga Chargers in a home-and-home series over the weekend.

Milton entered the weekend tied for seventh with the Chargers in the West Conference standings but fell to eighth after two losses extended the IceHawks' losing streak to seven games. Milton now sports an 8-23-4-1 for the season.

Despite a promising start that saw Milton take a 2-0 lead on goals by Louie Santelli and David Vallorani, Mississauga came back with six unanswered goals over the final 23 minutes for a 6-2 victory.

Saturday in Mississauga it was the Chargers taking the early lead, going ahead 2-0 in the opening period. Dylan McEachern got Milton back within one in the opening minute of the second but Mississauga extended its lead to 4-1 in the second and 6-1 in the third.

Vallorani and Erman Ali scored late goals for Milton to make it 6-3 but the five-goal deficit was too much to overcome.

The wins provided a measure of revenge for Chargers' coach Jay Anderson. Anderson was named the IceHawks coach in the off-season but let go before he even started when the team changed ownership.

The IceHawks host Georgetown Friday at 7:30 p.m. before taking two weeks off for Christmas.

# Reding to put undefeated record on the line against rival Georgetown

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Marcas Gray.

Georgetown is also strong with four of five starters returning from last year's team that lost in the Halton AAAA championship game. The Rebels have allowed only 28 points per game this season while averaging 63 on the offensive end.

While Georgetown provides an early measuring stick for the Royals, not to mention north bragging rights, Reding will not have to contend with the Rebels come playoff time. They also won't have to worry about the Pearson Patriots, the team that denied the Royals of a Halton championship each of the last two years.

After several years as a AA school, the recent

growth in Milton has increased enrollment and bumped Bishop Reding into the AAA classification (more than 900 students). Reding was a AAA school until Christ the King opened in Georgetown in 2002, taking a large portion of the student population.

Although Reding will be one of the smaller AAA schools — only exceeding the limit by about 50 students — Royals coach Mark Freeman said bigger doesn't always mean better.

"It's hard to say, the quad A schools are not necessarily the best teams. Sometimes it's the double A or triple A schools," he said. "It will be interesting to see. We have a whole new whack of contenders."

Wednesday's tip-off is at 3:30 p.m. in Georgetown.

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