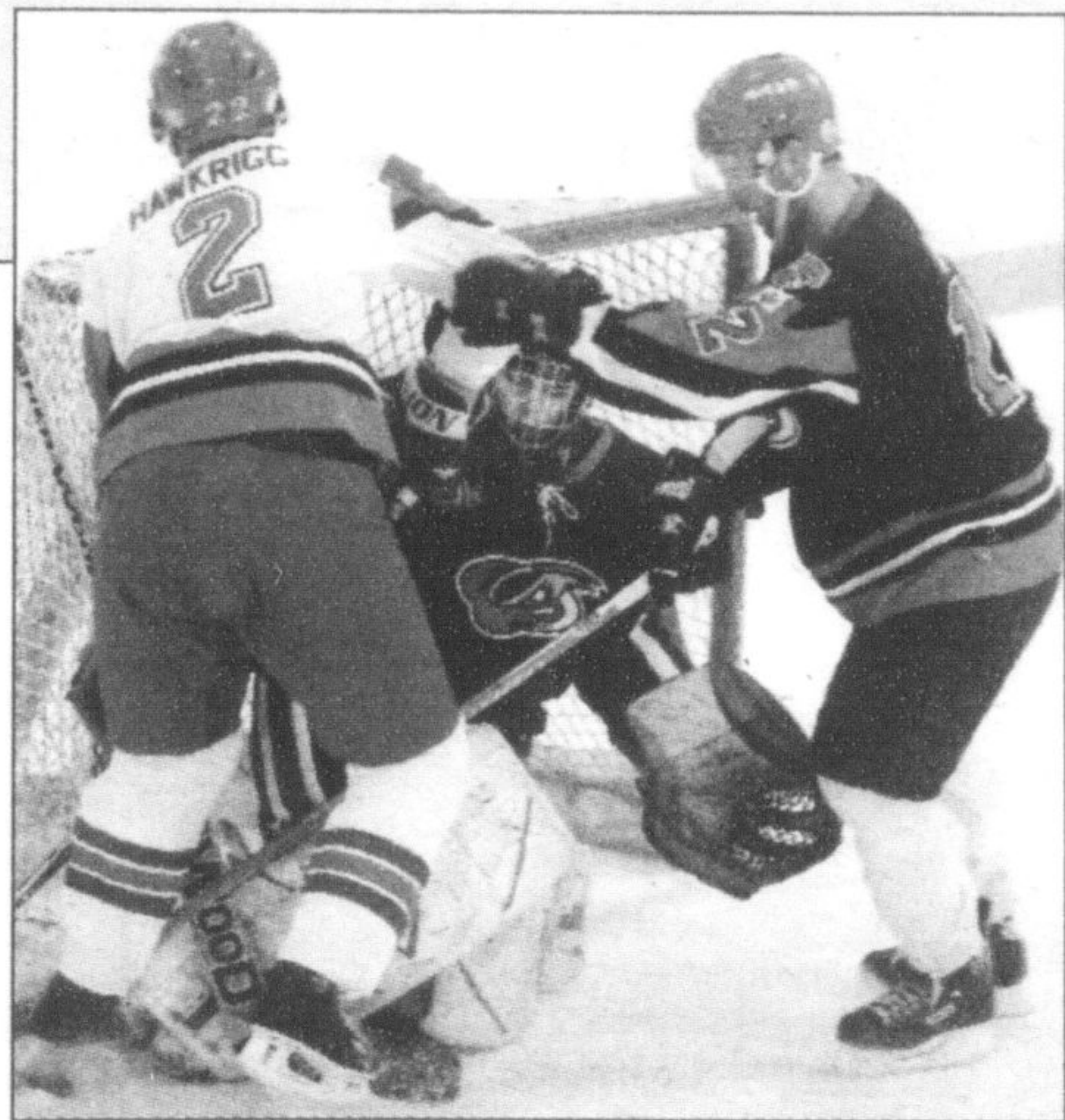
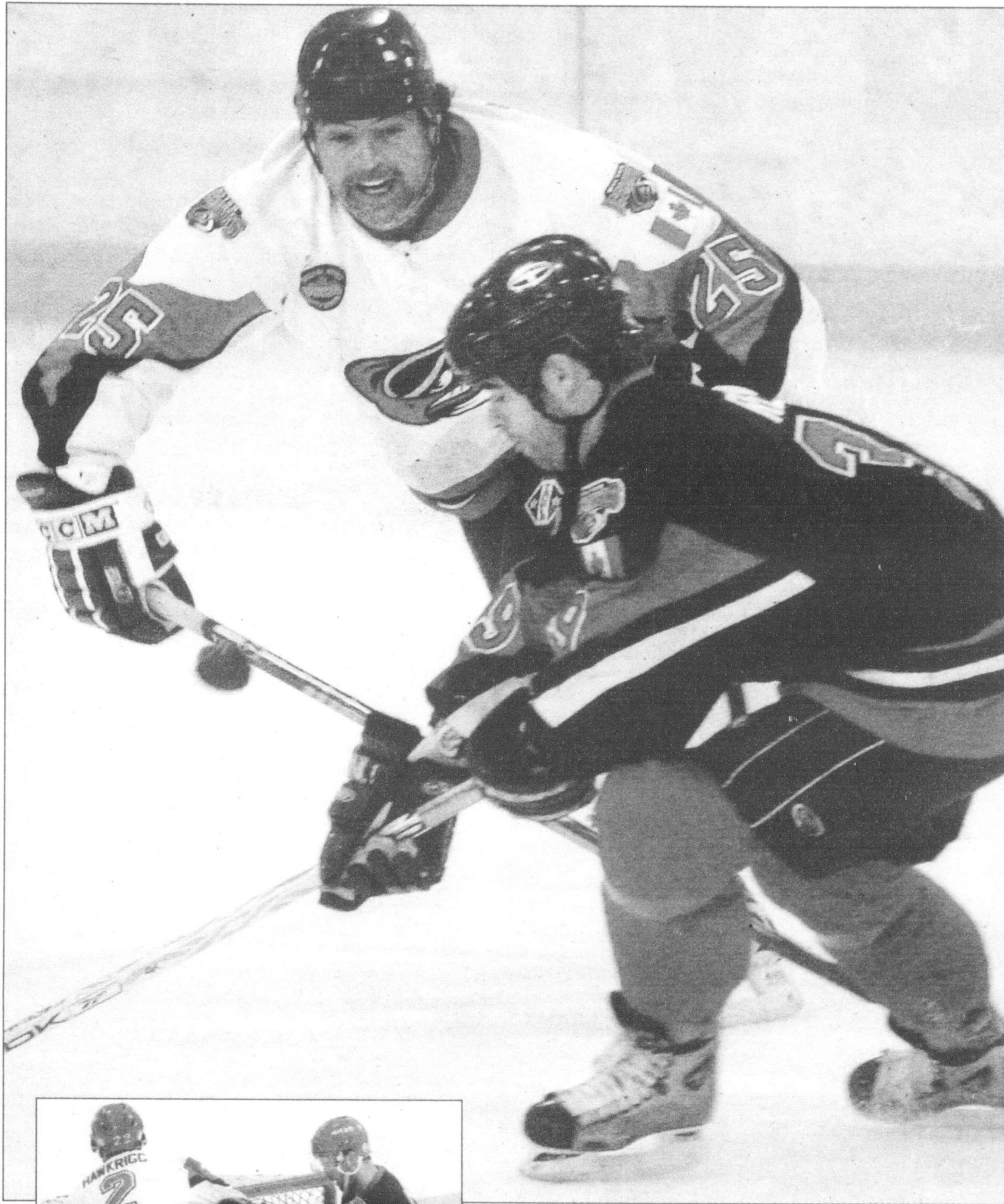


SPORTS

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WELCOME BACK, GUYS: Above, Jim Cartwright (in white) battles Pat Henneberry for a loose puck during last Friday's Milton Jr. A hockey alumni game — the second in three years — at Memorial Arena. At left, IceHawks back-up goalie Steve Zoffranieri and Mark McPhail (in black) try to prevent Brett McCully from scoring. While no official score was kept, the black team — featuring such well known alumni as Travis Riggin, Mike Cox and Mike Rusk — battled back from an early deficit to edge their fellow former juniors by a goal or two.

MICHAEL IVANIN / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Short-staffed Hawks drop pre-holiday tilts

Injuries, suspensions contribute to rare pointless weekend

The IceHawks headed into the holiday break on a tough note, with just their second pointless weekend of the season.

Short-staffed for its final games of 2007 — most notably with head coach Randy Novak and gritty centre Dean Kulla serving two-game suspensions assessed at the end of a rough battle with Buffalo December 14 — Milton out-shot its opposition in both games but came up short each night.

A 0-for-12 powerplay outage and shaky stretch for Dillon Branco were just too much to overcome at Memorial Arena last Friday, as the IceHawks were dumped 6-2 by the second-place Brampton Capitals.

Five straight goals against in the second period were the difference, as the hosts managed 15 and 17 shots in the first and third respectively but could only pot one past Taylor Hewson in each frame.

Showing no sign of letting his explosive second half cool off, David Vallorani figured in both goals — scoring the first himself and assisting on Ryan Lopes' fourth of the year.

Also helping set up the latter tally was veteran defenceman Jamie Hawkrigg, who reached the score-sheet in his long-awaited return from an ankle injury.

Milton gave the visitors just four powerplay opportunities on the night, but otherwise there were few bright spots, as the Capitals con-

trolled much of the game despite being out-shot 44-26.

Matt Ferreira and Cody Crichton each tallied twice for Brampton.

Back-up Steve Zoffranieri worked the final period for Milton, and would get the call again the following night in Georgetown after Branco surrendered three goals in the opening frame.

The Raiders would add an empty netter for good measure in the closing moments of play to prevail 4-2 and drop the IceHawks to 16-11-5.



Vallorani would record another goal and assist, both on the powerplay, to lift his team-leading point total to 57. With nine goals and 14

helpers in his last eight games, the UMass-Lowell-bound centre remains in contention to win the Western Conference scoring title.

Kevin Caister staked Milton to a 1-0 lead, but Georgetown would erase it just 20 seconds later and chase Branco from the net with two more before the first intermission.

Zoffranieri has given up only one goal in six periods since his recent acquisition from Orangeville, having turned back 46 of 47 shots.

Last weekend marked the debut of 19-year-old defenceman Taylor Farris, picked up from the Capitals. The six-foot-one-inch, 187-pound blueliner had four assists in 14 games with Brampton this year.

Remaining in fifth place in the West, the IceHawks are back in action next Friday at Memorial, where they'll square off with the front-running Oakville Blades, who closed out 2007 on a 15-game winning streak.

Milton's December 16 canceled game with the Burlington Cougars — due to the snowstorm — has yet to be rescheduled.

RECYCLE YOUR TREE... EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE!

- 1 Remove all decorations and ornaments from your tree.
- 2 Place the tree out by the curb, where you put your trash for pick-up.
- 3 The tree will be picked up and recycled,

