Merchants comé close against Raiders



Mark French (14), of Milton Merchants, looks like he's got the whole net to shoot at during Friday night's Central Ontario Jr. B Hockey league game against Georgetown Raiders. French was stifled on the shot by Georgetown

goalle Curtis Green, though. Georgetown won the closechecking game 3-2, to keep Milton in last place in the seven-team loop.

Photo by JEFF PASQUALE

By JEFF PASQUALE Fast-paced, hard-hitting and exciting.

These words haven't exactly been overused in discussion about the Milton Merchants this year, but they certainly applied to the team in Friday night's 3-2 loss to the Georgetown Raiders in Central Ontario Jr. B Hockey League action.

Coach Gary Ford was pleased with the way his team played despite the score.

"I thought most of the players played 60 good minutes, although two or three could have tried a little harder," said Ford.

Scoring for Milton were Sean Laverty and Mike Foy.

In a league where most final scores resemble football finals and shutouts are as rare as a Tommy Lasorda diet, a game that ends up 3-2 seems like a once-a-year occurrence.

The game opened like so many others this year, Milton falling behind. But, unlike other games, they refused to surrender and fought back to make the contest close.

Georgetown's Brian Gendron scored the only goal of the first period. Georgetown upped their lead to 2-0 early in the second period when Gendron fired his second, this time while on a power play.

It's usually at this point the Merchants roll over and die, but Friday was different. The Merchants fought back and were rewarded with Laverty's goal, a low slapshot which beat Georgetown goalie Curtis Green to the far side. Laverty's goal was set-up with a perfect drop pass by Chris Reier.

Milton carried the play for most of

the third period and tied the score at 2-2 when Mike Foy flipped the puck over Green during a goal-mouth scramble.

Milton couldn't hold on to the lead, though, as Rick Longo scored with 9:23 left in the game to give. Georgetown the win.

The Merchants appeared to have tied the score late in the game, but the referee disallowed the goal, say ing the whistle blew before the puck went in the net. Ford was a little upset with the call.

'That either should have been a goal or a penalty shot. If the puck was frozen, it was frozen by the defenceman in the crease and that means we get a penalty shot." he

"The defencemen played as well as they usually do," said Ford. "The difference was the forwards coming back and picking up their checks. There were a couple of new faces making their debuts with the Merchants. Chad Muldoon started in goal while Robb Wilson was added to the defence corps. Muldoon saw action earlier this year with Pickering Panthers while Wilson was with Mimico Monarchs.

Missing from the lineup was Merchant captain George Bach, serving the third game of his eight-game suspension for molesting an official during Dec. 20's game against the Mimico Monarchs. Wearing the captain's 'C' on his sweater was Reier

Ford refused to comment on who would be captain once Bach returned, saying only that decision would be made when the situation arose.

Merchants' next game is Friday when they host Oakville Blades at 8 p.m. at Memorial Arena.

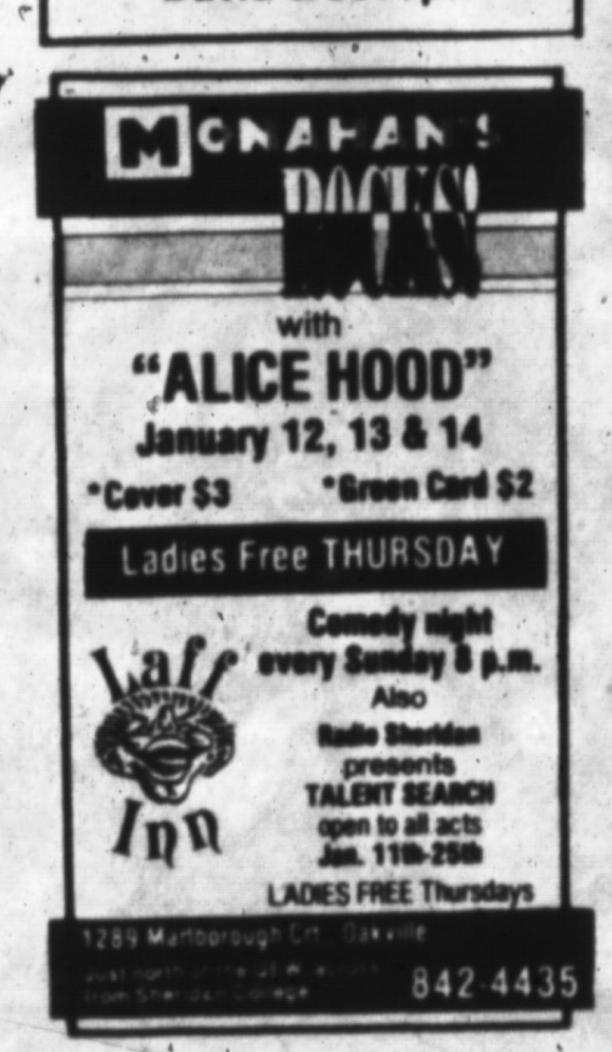


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