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**Bince deserves praise**

What's going on with the Milton Merchants?

No, it's not some internal turmoil threatening to upset the delicate winning balance. And it's not another rumour regarding the sale of the team to a mysterious foreign interest. And it's not even a walkout by the snack bar staff of Amanda Bain and Tanya MacDonald hoping for better working conditions and fresher popcorn.

It's winning, plain and simple. The Merchants winning. Those two words were only used together 10 times when talking about last year's edition of the Merchants, but have already been used six times in nine contests this year. What's the difference?

The players are partly responsible. Last year's edition had two players better than anyone on this team, Chris Reier and Graham Taylor (as well as Scott Gale, who would be top three this year), but this year's team is much deeper. They have three solid lines as well as good special teams. Last year it was Reier, Taylor and Gale, and then pray a lot.

This year's team is deep enough that on important faceoffs two centres are out there, including juvenile Jason Caccamo.

Another difference is Shawn Healey, who inherited Reier's captaincy. Although he showed flashes of it last year, it wasn't until this season he started playing with confidence and fire. He isn't a rah-rah kind of captain. He leads by example, never afraid to stake out his ground in front of the net or crash some bodies in the corner. If you can't get fired up watching this under-sized dynamo, you shouldn't be playing Jr. B hockey.

The biggest difference, though, is the coach, Rick Bince. He's a demanding, tough, ill-tempered coach whose players love him and everyone else hates him. When he played, he was an uncontrollable brawler. Bigger stories are still legend in most of the leagues he played in. What makes the players want to go to war for this guy?

Well, for one thing, in a war he's

**As I See It**  
with JEFF PASQUALE



the kind of guy you'd want on your side, fiercely loyal. Right now Bince is taking some heat from one of his former teams.

One of his ex-players, who still plays for the former team, is having some personal problems. As a friend Bince had lurch with the kid and lent an understanding ear. Now the kid's team is making noises about tampering. What a load of crap.

Bince had a logical explanation. "There is no way I'm going to turn my back on a friend just because I'm not his coach anymore. The boy lives down the street from me and knew I'd understand what he was going through. I was dealing with him as a friend, not as an opposing coach."

Being a former player, Bince knows how to be a player's coach. He sets fair limits on his players but the limits better respected. If a line is crossed he can be a disciplinarian.

"I'm not a coach who is always praising players. I might say to someone when they come off the ice, 'Hey, Bob, nice shift,' but I'm not going to go on and on for 10 minutes. I show I'm pleased with someone by the way I play them. If you're out on the ice in the last five minutes of a one-goal game, that's my way of saying you played a good game and let's finish these guys off. Every kid knows where he stands with me."

And so do the parents, officials and media because he tells them.

Here and There: And speaking of Graham Taylor. Apparently things didn't work out for him in New Westminster B.C. and he's about to sign with the Merchants. Bince will have his hands full attempting to control this undisciplined but supremely talented player. Murray Walker of the Oakville Blades was elected the G.M. of the West Division all-star team while the coaching duties went to Burlington's Bill Mennie. Bince didn't get the job despite guiding the Etobicoke Capitals to the title last season. Does this make any sense at all?

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