



Photo by BRAD REAUME

The Milton Merchants congratulate each other on winning their Ontario semifinal series with St. Catharines in six games. The Merchants took the contest at Garden City Arena 2-1 on Wednesday night. They advance to play either London or Kitchener in the final.

## Falcons call season a success

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(Adam) Hagen and (Ryan) Delaronde together and they just lit a fire under the team."

"I'm more than pleased," Bince added. "Nobody on this team has ever won anything of significance but they smell the chance and go for it. And now we're going to the show."

Milton had a number of great opportunities in the third period when they dominated the play. Jeff Daw had two cracks from the slot and Ritchie had the puck bounce over his stick with an open net before Healey's heroics.

Just after the goal a major fracas marred the proceedings. Still shorthanded, Mike Dunphy picked up a loose puck and streaked down the left wing. As he cut to the net he lost his balance and glanced off Falcon goaltender Boeve who aimed a wicked slash in Dunphy's direction.

Usually of explosive temper, Dunphy didn't react until after the trailing defencemen started knocking him around. He let his teammates take care of the Falcon defence while he circled behind the net to confront Boeve. A wild fight ensued with players still mixing it up to the side of the net; Dunphy, Boeve and a few others going in the crease area and Kelly Leroux and Jake Turner tangoing at the blueline. When the ice spray cleared all the penalties of fact.

"We did it against Aurora and we did it here," said Bince. "We just turned it up a notch. We're not a great club. We're not dominating teams, we're just willing to pay the price in effort."

St. Catharines coach Mark Barrick said that despite the loss the season was a success.

"We came a long way this year," he said, referring to the Falcons playoff win over first place Welland after going 0-5-1 against them during the regular season.

"We believed we could do it even though we had some rocky roads to travel."

"I won't feel bad if we lose to an Ontario champion," Barrick said. "So we'll definitely be cheering for Milton. They should be proud of beating us."

Barrick's thoughts were echoed by team general manager Bob McLaren. The two, both former St. Catharines Falcons, cited weaknesses in their Golden Horseshoe League as problems in the quest for the top.

McLaren said every team makes the playoffs in the Golden Horseshoe which hurts their competitive edge. In addition, lack of proximity makes it more difficult to get players

from the Metro Junior A League, an advantage enjoyed by Central League teams.

Barrick and McLaren have been with the team for four seasons. As former players they took over a team that had had five coaches in the previous two years. They said they wanted to restore pride in the white (home) uniforms of St. Catharines.

"We went to the Ontario final two years ago when we lost to Stratford," Barrick said. "One day we'll win an Ontario championship."

"Loyalty means more to us than

anything. We don't make many changes in our team through the year," said Barrick. "I'll take the loyalty approach over a win-at-all-costs one."

Both Barrick and McLaren praised Milton and coach Rick Bince, citing his determination and recruiting capabilities. The Falcons should be strong next season as they carried seven 16 year-olds, four 17 year olds and four 18 year olds. By comparison Milton is an older team.

Milton now advances to the all-Ontario Junior B final where they will play Kitchener or London.



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