

Special teams shine in Merchants' weekend wins

By STEVE LEBLANC
Special to The Champion

Special teams proved to be the key ingredient in the Milton Merchants' success this past weekend as the hometown Junior A hockey squad netted four powerplay goals and one shorthanded marker and claimed a 7-2 victory over the Georgetown Chrysler Raiders Friday evening at Memorial Arena, and a 4-1 win over the Royal York Rangers in Mimico Saturday night.

A big problem for the Merchants last season, Milton turned in some great work on the powerplay last weekend, which helped to boost their season record to 4-2 — good enough for a second place tie with the Burlington Cougars.

"We were slow getting started in the first period, but once we started checking we took control," said Merchant head coach Rick Bince, following Friday evening's win. "We've been working on our powerplay in practice and we capitalized on our opportunities this weekend. However, we have over a dozen new players this season and we haven't quite come together as a cohesive unit yet."

The Merchants couldn't get many shots away in the early going of Friday night's contest and fell behind 1-0 at the 7:44 mark when Georgetown winger Randy Bond fired a blueline slapshot past netminder Carmelo Guirleo.

However, the Raiders lead would be short-lived as Milton centre Jamie Janjevich netted an unassisted marker four minutes later to tie the game at one after the opening period.

Merchant attackers quickly took over in the second period and mounted a 4-2 lead on goals by Pat Henneberry, Jamie Janjevich and newcomer Chad Turner, who was picked up from the Kitchener Dutchman along with defenceman Derek Pajot early last week.

Georgetown's only other goal of the game came at 7:45 by right winger Chris Logue.

Guirleo and a solid Milton defence, led by Colin Anders, stonewalled Raider attackers through the final frame while Henneberry and Turner each notched their second goal of the game. Scoring Milton's last goal Friday night was forward Sean Payne. Collecting assists were team captain Daner Finn, assistant captain Mike Cox, Sean Lindsay, Scott Bertoli, Bob Brandon, Jude Rutland, Ryan Delorande and Mike McPhail.

Guirleo stopped 30 plus shots Friday evening and collected his third straight win of the season.

The following evening back-up puckstopper Jeff Lillie would record his first win of the young season against the Royal York Rangers. He allowed only one goal mid-way through the first period and then stopped Ranger attackers cold through the second and third, halting more than 25 shots on net.

Capitalizing on Royal York penalties were Scott Bertoli and Chad Turner, who notched powerplay goals. Pat Henneberry and Jamie Janjevich scored the other goals while Janjevich also picked up a pair of assists. Also recording assists on the night were Henneberry, Ryan Delorande and Kevin Baird.

However, the week wasn't quite a total success for the Merchants as they were hammered for six powerplay goals and fell 10-6 to the Burlington Cougars last Tuesday for their first loss at home.

Turning in a hat-trick for the home team Tuesday was sniper Ryan Delorande, while Janjevich scored once and collected two assists. Recording singles for Milton were Henneberry and Colin Anders and assists went to Paul Foto, Finn, Rutland, Derek Pajot, Henneberry and Cox.

Lillie was in net for Milton Tuesday and took the loss.

The Merchants opened a home-and-home series with the Streetsville

Derbys last night (Tuesday) in Streetsville. They host the Derbys

Friday evening at Memorial Arena, with an 8 p.m. start.



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