



Merchants boasting both talent and experience

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Mark Cooper — one of the last cuts from the OHL Kitchener Rangers.

"One thing I really like about our defense this year is their mobility. The additions of White and Lee give us two guys who can really move the puck," said Carrigan. "We wanted to make improve-

ments to our defense but this surpassed my expectations. We have perhaps the strongest defensive unit in the league."

With four top-notch veteran forwards being joined by a host of talented newcomers, Milton will be second to none — or at least to very few — in the offense department as well.

Leading the forward lines into action once again will be captain Steve Clarke. The third-year Junior A veteran scored 60-plus points last season while centering the team's big defensive line.

He will likely spend some time on the left side this year as he forms a line with former Caledon Canadiens star centre

Troy Walczak, who scored 80 points with the club during the 1994/95 season and helped them to their second Centennial Cup tournament. Last year he was a partner with the OHL Colts.

The two will be joined by returning right winger Cory Holland, who should again supply Milton with some scoring punch and a lot of its toughness and grit.

Playmakers Jeff Haydar and Rich Reid will join Collingwood Blues left winger Trevor Downey for another big scoring line. Downey was one of the top scorers in Collingwood last year while Haydar was the West's Most Improved Player and Reid established himself as a special-teams expert and scored 48 points in his rookie campaign.

While these half dozen players will likely make up Milton's top two lines in the early stages of the season, there's still plenty of talent down the lineup.

A case in point is left winger Matt Van Arkel, a member of Team Illinois last year and a heavily sought talent for the NCAA next fall. The 17-year-old will start the season skating with former Cobourg Cougar Geoff Schomogyi and Toronto Young Nats bantam graduate Rich Williams. Sixteen-year-old Williams helped the Young Nats to the All-Ontario title last season and is expected to be an early-round selection at next spring's ONL Entry Draft.

And while local forwards Darren Haydar and Doug Janjevich may be relegated to the fourth line, their pre-season efforts would mean first-line status with many other West Conference clubs. "Darren has been one of our more consistent scorers in the pre-season and could light up the league," said Carrigan.

Also on hand are Steve French of the Orillia Terriers, Randy Stolec of the Markham Islanders and former North York Canadiens midget Michael Hölker.

"With Cory (Holland) sitting out the first three games with a suspension, we're going to carry two extra forwards for a while. Our third and fourth lines will be far superior to those of any other team," explained head coach Marty Williamson, who will be joined behind the bench by assistants John Neville and Dan O'Brien.

"With all this talent up front, we're going to run and gun at teams right away."

The Merchants will embark on another 50-game schedule this season, with competition coming from Bramalea, Brampton, Mississauga, Oakville, Hamilton, Streetsville, Georgetown, St. Michael's, Burlington and Vaughan (formerly Royal York). Each West Conference club will also play a two-game interlocking series with a representative from the East. Milton's opposition will be Collingwood.

In addition to Friday's home opener against Hamilton, the Merchants will play the Bees again next Tuesday in Hamilton. Sandwiched between these two tilts will be their College Weekend battle Sunday night at St. Michael's Arena, against Lindsay.

Badminton players welcome

The Milton Badminton Club is starting its 1996/97 season next month, and is offering Tuesday and Thursday evening game times for players 14-years and up.

Evening games, from 8:15 to 10 p.m., will be held at the Milton Leisure Centre. All levels of players are welcome and partners are not required.

For more information, call 878-4575.

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