



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY DECEMBER 20, 1996

Merchants back on top in the west

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to the Champion

It was a night of redemption for the Merchants Tuesday at Memorial Arena as they regained the services of key personnel and their first-place standing in the West Conference.

With defencemen Bill Emra, T.J. Lee and Jeff McArthur, centre Steve French and head coach Marty Williamson back from multi-game suspensions, Milton grabbed their 23rd season victory with a 4-2 count.

The win was one of the most satisfying for local fans this year, as it came against the Bramalea Blues, who had beaten them in their last six outings including last season's four-game playoff sweep.

Milton looks to defend title

The Merchants are hoping history will repeat itself next week when they attempt to defend their Newmarket Junior A Showcase Tournament title.

Milton is slotted in Division B this time around, with the Oakville Blades, Kingston Voyageurs and Stouffville Spirit providing the opposition in round-robin play.

They will begin their title defense Friday, Dec. 27 at 9 a.m. against Stouffville, with game two the following day at 3:45 p.m. against Kingston. Sunday, they'll battle Oakville at 11:15 a.m.

Playoff games will start on the Sunday evening and culminate with the championship tilt Monday evening at 7:30. The tournament will also feature the OHA Junior A Rookie All-Star Game scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 29 at 4 p.m.

On a night when chippy opposition and questionable officiating could have pushed Milton over the edge — as has been known to happen — the hometown boys stayed composed and gutted out a well-deserved win. This followed a convincing 9-1 rout of the Vaughan Vipers Monday evening.

"I had to bench a couple of guys for a few shifts to keep them in line, but overall I thought we played very well," said Williamson, who is taking steps now to prevent a discipline breakdown in the post-season.

Working the net through both contests was rock-steady rookie Jeremy Wenzel, who remains unbeaten at 8-0. Despite infrequent play, the 17-year-old has been impressive in every test thrown his way. He turned aside a total of 67 shots in the 27-hour span.

Former goaltending partner Denver England has been placed on the trading block, and been replaced with incoming Lloyd LeFrance of the Owen Sound Jr. B's. The 20-year-old North Bay native is expected to see his first action in a Merchant jersey this weekend in a home-and-home series with the Georgetown Raiders.

Wenzel stoned Bramalea over the last 33 minutes of Tuesday's contest, with some feisty work by his blueline corp. All four Milton goals came in the opening frame.

• see KEY on page 28



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Savage attack

E.C. Drury's Gareth Savage (front) tries a fireman's carry takedown on Chris Churchill of Cameron Heights in a 141-pound weight class match at Wednesday's Drury Invitational. Savage went on to win by points. For results of the tournament, see Thursday's Boxing Day issue.

5 BUCKS! • 5 BUCKS! • 5 BUCKS!

**BUY ONE MEDIUM PAN PIZZA AT REGULAR PRICE
GET UP TO 4 MORE MEDIUM PIZZAS OF EQUAL
OR LESSER VALUE FOR**

\$5.00
each

**Pizza
Hut**

*You'll love the
stuff we're
made of!*

Hwy. 25 & Derry Rd.
875-4890