

Merchants shut out in first playoff game

By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to the Champion

The Milton Merchants' Newmarket Tournament title defense hit a brick wall Sunday evening in the form of the Brampton Capitals.

Having steamrolled their way through round-robin play, Brampton not only stopped Milton from advancing past the first playoff round but stymied their scoring punch altogether in a heart-breaking 1-0 decision.

Dan Kerluke's first-period tally stood up as the game-winner while goaltender Jamie Vanek stood tall in Brampton's net.

"We didn't play that bad in the final game and we managed to out-shoot them. However, we were a pretty banged up hockey team with Troy Walczak sitting out and (Matt) Van Arkel fighting through nagging injuries," said skipper Marty Williamson. "Our new goalie Lloyd LeFrance played very well in the Brampton

game."

Merchant supporting cast members took top billing through the round-robin portion of the tournament, and helped their Jr. A hockey squad post a 3-0 record and grab one of five playoff spots.

Fourth-line right-winger Randy Stolec scored the biggest round-robin goal, burying a third-period shot Sunday morning to give Milton a come-from-behind 4-3 decision over the Oakville Blades. Assisting on his game-winner — which won them Division B — were Steve French and rookie defenceman Shawn Smith.

Goals by Bill Emra, T.J. Lee and Matt Van Arkel helped the Merchants rally after falling behind 2-1 in the opening frame. Lloyd LeFrance backstopped the pack.

Stolec also found the back of the net in game one while first-year left-

winger Rich Williams sank a pair in Milton's 7-3 triumph over the lowly Stouffville Spirit — the East Conference's version of the Georgetown Raiders.

Other two-goal efforts came from Travis Riggin and Darren "Mini" Haydar, who added two assists. Captain Steve Clarke collected three helpers. Jeremy Wenzel earned the win between the pipes.

The four-goal margin was a little surprising as the Merchants were missing Van Arkel, LeFrance, Cory Holland, Trevor Downey and Troy Walczak.

Wenzel turned in a spirited effort — in an otherwise lack-lustre outing — to beat the Kingston

Voyageurs 5-3 in game two. He provided clutch goaltending down the stretch, while his teammates rallied with four unanswered goals in the third.

Riggin counted two goals, including a last-minute empty-netter, while "Mini" Haydar came up with the game-winner. Also scoring were Holland and Doug Janjevich, who set-up Riggin's first tally. Walczak drew two assists.

Merchant notes: "After a two-month absence, veteran defenceman Jeff White will return to the lineup this weekend. The Merchants resume league play Friday at home against Streetsville and travel to Bramalea Sunday afternoon (1:15 p.m. start) to battle the Blues.

Love to Skiers hit the slopes across Ontario

For members of the Love to Ski Club, there is never enough snow, or winters long enough because they are too busy skiing either Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

Some members even go more than once a week. From early January through the end of February, the ski club enjoys all the advantages of midweek skiing — short or no line-ups, preferred lift ticket rates and uncrowded areas.

The Halton-area members of the Love to Ski Club ski on Thursdays and are now in the process of forming a Tuesday group as well, says member Hazel Hancock.

Instead of struggling with winter driving conditions, members travel on a chartered bus with departure points from Oakville, Georgetown and Erin/Hillsburgh, she says.

In Collingwood, the Love to Skiers join club members from other areas to enjoy the best ski areas and private clubs southern Ontario has to offer — Blue Mountain, Alpine, Osler Bluff, Craigeith, Georgian Peaks and Devil's Glen.

For more information on the Love to Ski Club, call Hazel Hancock at (905) 827-3927 or Sydnie Young at 873-2592.

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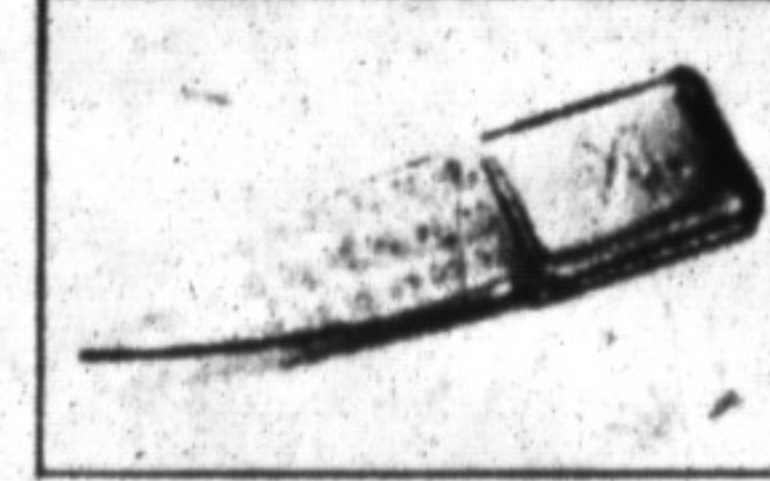
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