

# Vive LeFrance, and Wenzel too

By STEVE LeBLANC  
Special to The Champion

The Milton Merchants' firepower has dominated the headlines this season, but goaltending provided the big story over the weekend.

Crafty veteran Lloyd LeFrance and rock-steady rookie Jeremy Wenzel were simply outstanding in registering back-to-back goose eggs. The two combined to stop 49 shots in 10-0 and 5-0 shutouts over the Vaughan Vipers and Burlington Cougars respectively.

With newcomer LeFrance's victory following two impressive outings against Bramalea and Hamilton, suddenly Milton's questionable netminding is a question no longer: "Putting up two straight shutouts is a big accomplishment, no matter who you're playing," said skipper Marty Williamson following Sunday's win at Burlington's Central Arena. His team now sits at 28-7-3, and enjoys a three-point lead over second-place Bramalea with 13 games remaining in the regular season.

While a double-digit margin of victory would indicate otherwise, Friday's bout with the Vipers featured plenty of excitement and some of the most intense Merchant hockey this season.

Mark McPhail and T.J. Lee led a feisty defensive corps that allowed only 17 shots, all of which an otherwise idle but focused LeFrance turned aside. Milton's rearguards were particularly effective in the first and final frames, holding Vaughan to a mere four shots in each.

Doug Janjevich was another standout Friday. The 18-year-old fourth-line leftwinger was the offensive star with standout skating and tenacious forechecking through the first two periods and a pair of shorthanded tallies just seconds apart in the third.

These goals played a small but pivotal part in Milton's fine special-teams play. In addition to killing off 11 penalties — two of which they scored on — they converted on all three powerplays Vaughan presented them.

First-year junior defenceman Shawn Smith scored

## Milton Merchants



his third goal this season on their opening powerplay while Travis Riggan and Troy Walczak connected on second-period man-advantage opportunities.

Vaughan goalie Ryan Sherwin, who had no back-up on the night, earned purple heart consideration in facing 46 shots, including 20 in the first period alone. He was beaten twice by Janjevich, Riggan and top sniper Matt Van Arkel and once each by Walczak, Smith, Jeff Haydar and Bill Emra — on a superb individual effort late in the first.

Newly acquired centre Ron Baker continued to demonstrate a deft touch with a three-assist performance. Riggan, Van Arkel, Steve French and Darren Haydar counted two helpers a piece.

Milton didn't escape Friday's game unscathed however, as captain Steve Clarke went down with a broken collarbone following a first-period hit. He is expected to be sidelined for up to six weeks.

A rash of first-period penalties had little effect on Milton's output Sunday night, as they played 10 minutes shorthanded but headed into the first intermission up 3-0. They added a goal each over the last two periods, while Wenzel was fantastic in the first and third periods en route to his third victory over the Cougars.

The 17-year-old MJHL graduate had posted three one-goal efforts prior to his first junior shutout. Former Merchant goalie John Luberá guarded the cage for Burlington, facing 38 Milton shots.

Janjevich took over Clarke's spot on the third line and continued a memorable weekend, scoring Milton's opening marker at 5:49 of the first — on a rebound left by Riggan — and then setting up Riggan on a delayed Cougar penalty late in the first.

Trevor Downey and both Haydar brothers also dented the twine, with Riggan adding two more assists

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