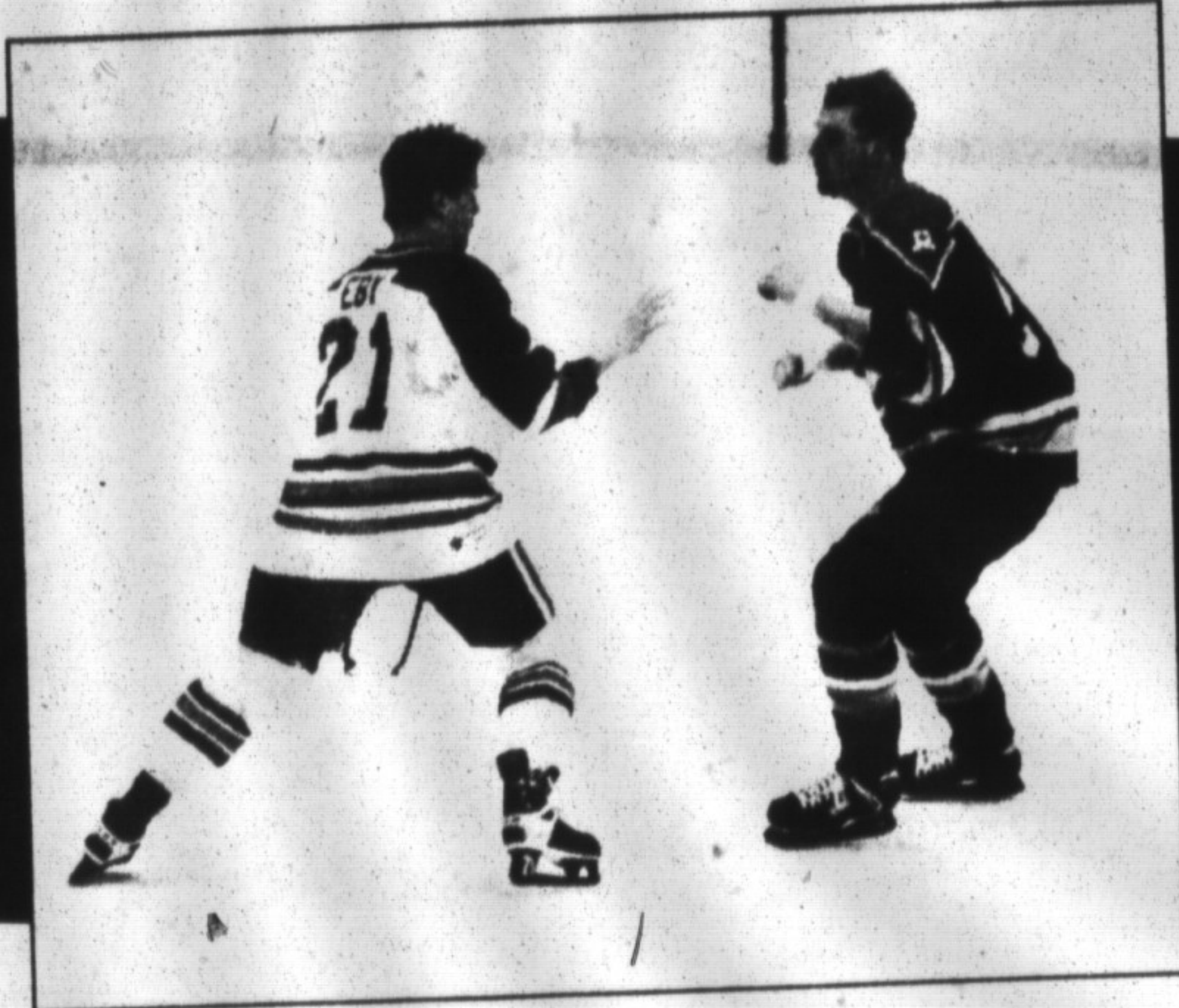




# SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

MARCH 16, 1997



Milton's Shane Sullivan (dark sweater) got the best of Mississauga Charger Ryan Eby in the last game of Milton's playoff series sweep. Frustrations mounted in Mississauga as the Chargers were unable to seriously threaten Milton. Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

## Milton steamrolls Chargers in a second sweep

By STEVE LeBLANC  
Special to The Champion

The Milton Merchants may want to invest in a good set of brooms, because these days they're certainly doing their share of sweeping.

Their latest victims to fall in a minimum four-game series were the Mississauga Chargers — who went in the tank in the series opener and never climbed out.

While their poor performance could be partially blamed on a handful of injuries — mainly however, to supporting cast members — the Chargers showed little heart through the majority of the West Conference semifinal showdown.

Facing elimination at Iceland Arena Tuesday evening, Mississauga couldn't even muster a token defence in a 13-4 massacre. The Merchants hit the double-digit mark before the second-period intermission and spent the night antagonizing netminders Steve Lakas and Bryan Pandovski.

The series win puts Milton back in the West Conference finals for the first time in four years.

"After the first game we took the heart right out of them," said assistant captain Trevor Downey, one of many who are getting better as the playoffs progress. "We're playing heads-up hockey, and there's a lot of spirit and enthusiasm

in the dressing room these days. This team is capable of going all the way."

If stats from this past series are any indication, they certainly may. Milton outscored the Chargers 30-8 and won each game by no less than three goals.

They're also getting superb goaltending from Lloyd Lafrance and more production from a number of forwards, including emerging star Cory Holland. The 20-year-old tough guy has rediscovered his scoring touch from last season and notched nine goals in the last six games.

This surpasses his tally for the entire 1996/97 regular season.

Holland and season-long sniper Matt Van Arkel led the hit parade Tuesday with three-goal, two assist outputs. Other five-point nights came from Jeff White — who tallied twice and added three helpers — and playoff sensation Travis Riffin, who set up all three Holland goals and one of Van Arkel's while scoring at the end of the second. Also denting twine were Mark McPhail, Steve French, Jeff McArthur and the Haydar brothers, Darren and Jeff, who along with fellow local Doug Janjevich showed strongly in second-round play.

Jeremy Wenzel saw his share of rubber in Milton's cage, but wasn't called upon to perform at his best. The night played out like an NHL all-

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TREVOR DOWNEY



star game, with little or no emphasis on defence or positional hockey.

Shane Sullivan finished off his second-round campaign by rag-dolling Charger David Peca. Sporting a new rooster-red hairstyle, the veteran defenceman's antics had once been a detriment but now seem to bolster Milton's intensity.

Milton registered only half the scoring but all the excitement one night earlier at Memorial, in a 6-1 rout. Pumped up by a sizeable Monday night crowd, they held Mississauga to a mere 13 shots, and only seven over the last two frames.

A near-perfect second period saw the home team outshoot their guests 13-2 and unload with three goals. Mississauga barely touched the puck through the middle stanza.

"The communication out there is just terrific.

The guys are talking it up and making it easier on themselves," bench boss Marty Williamson explained. "In addition to Holland, Steve Clarke and Doug Janjevich are really playing well."

Ron Baker turned in great defence and checking and assisted on goals by Van Arkel and Darren Haydar. Holland also scored in the second.

Mississauga showed brief signs of life in the opening frame, but when these efforts produced just one goal they folded like cheap tents.

Lafrance was as lonely as the Maytag repairman, but nevertheless remained focused and turned aside the few shots he did face. Beating him in the opening minute of the contest was Mississauga captain John Guinyou.

Riffin notched first and third period goals while French added a single. Anchoring an effective blueline unit were McPhail, McArthur, T.J. Lee and Shawn Smith. Meanwhile, Randy Stolec saw his first postseason action Monday and Tuesday and turned in robust efforts on Clarke's line. His drive produced a second-period assist on a Van Arkel goal.

**Merchant notes:** Milton will likely face Bramalea for the West title. As of Thursday night the Blues led Brampton 3-0. Milton will again have home-ice advantage in the next series.

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