

Grateful coach took chance on her

She became the Orange's all-time career blocks leader, collecting eight against Farleigh Dickinson to surpass Holly Oslander (262). Adding three blocks last Wednesday at St. John's, she now has 318.

These numbers are even more noteworthy when one considers that Alexander didn't even start playing basketball until she was in Grade 7.

Dragged out to a team tryout by a friend, she made the cut primarily because of her size.

"The coach said 'I can't teach height, but I can teach skill.' I've always been grateful that he gave me that chance. I guess I wish that my parents had gotten me into basketball sooner, but they've always said that they didn't want to push us into sports. I just wish I'd started earlier so I'd be further ahead now, because I still have a long way to go (in my overall development)."

Adding speed to her natural ability and honing her perimeter skills over the past three years, said Syracuse head coach Quintin Hillsman, has made Alexander a complete player.

"Midway through her sophomore season, when she was pretty much our only post player inside, when she had that load on her shoulders, we knew she was going to be a special talent from that point on," Hillsman told the *Champion* earlier this month. "Pretty much all the interior scoring fell on her, and

night in and night out she showed up, played strong, played aggressive and demanded the ball inside. I think that's what separated her from being someone who was just going to contribute, to now being our best player."

The NCAA standout is quick to redirect some of that praise back to Hillsman and her teammates, whose faith — she stressed — has provided the confidence to take her game to the next level.

A two-time All-Big East selection and pre-season All-Conference honouree, Alexander has been named the Big East Player of the Week twice this season, and netted a career-high 34 points on December 4 to single-handedly outscore Wagner in a 66-28 blowout.

But individual accolades certainly aren't the focus — not with a lengthy post-season run within Syracuse's reach.

"I know I've said this every year, but I really believe this is the best team we've had. We've got a lot of rookies who've come in here and contributed and we've got some strong veterans as well. I say we have a very good chance in the playoffs.

"After that... I'd love to play professionally. There's nothing better than to get paid to play a sport you love. God willing, that'll happen."

Steve LeBlanc can be reached at sleblanc@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @MiltonOnSports.

'A' Minor atoms edged by Oakville

Running into a hot opposing goalie and unable to build on an early lead, Milton's 'A' minor atoms suffered their first loss of the playoffs Saturday — falling 3-1 to fellow preliminary round front-runner Oakville.

The Winterhawks may now have to win their final round-robin game against Oakville — set for February 7 — plus a tiebreaking third game for a shot at advancement to the OMHA quarterfinals.

Mathew Oliver put the Winterhawks ahead in the first period Saturday, but from there they just couldn't beat a red-hot Oakville netminder, despite dominating the third.

Oakville scored all of its goals in the second period — on great individual efforts — while Ryan Scott stood tall between the pipes through the final frame to keep comeback hopes alive.

Ryan Pinto assisted on Milton's lone goal. The Winterhawks came out on a winning side of another 3-1 verdict this past week, beating Hespeler at Milton Sports Centre.

Pinto tallied twice and Elliot Dutil added a single. Showing strongly between the pipes was Scott Coulson.

Now sitting at 5-1, the Winterhawks visit Hespeler Thursday night.

Weekend split for Jr. A IceHawks

Big special-teams play and an impressive performance by call-up goalie Benjamin Blacker provided just the right formula for the IceHawks Friday.

On a night when they were heavily out-shot by visiting Toronto, Blacker served as the equalizer — turning back four dozen shots in a 4-3 overtime victory. This snapped a seven-game losing skid for the IceHawks and shed a little light on fading playoff hopes.

Milton killed 10 of 11 penalties and scored three times on the powerplay. Two of those goals came from evening standout Shane

Bennett, who scored a would-be game winner with 4:10 remaining and struck again 1:29 into sudden death.

Austin Kosack was another bright spot on the night, contributing a goal and two assists.

The IceHawks made a strong bid for a weekend sweep the following night before being edged 3-2 in Toronto.

Jonathan Buttitta put Milton ahead late in the first period, while also finding the back of the net was Michael Capicotto.

Blacker made 31 saves in the narrow loss, which dropped the IceHawks to 14-32.

Georgetown Slopitch Invites you to play ball.

An information meeting for new teams, players and umpires will be held on Thursday, Feb. 21st at 7:00 pm at the McGibbon Hotel.

League commitment fees of \$400 are due by March 6th, 2013.



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