

IceHawks keep playoff hopes alive with huge weekend

Don't look now, but post-season play is actually looking possible for the IceHawks.

That is, if last weekend — their best of the season — is any indication.

With their American offensive cornerstone

leading the charge and a huge goaltending performance on the road, Milton pulled off back-to-back upset victories over two formidable South Division opponents to draw within six points of the Burlington Cougars

for the eighth and final playoff spot in the South-West Conference.

Milton has now won three of its last four games, after dropping 15 of 17 over a dismal two-month stretch.

In front of a season-high crowd of 575 at Milton Sports Centre (MSC) as part of Hockey Day in Milton, the IceHawks enjoyed a fierce finish — netting three goals in the last seven-and-a-half minutes — and a hat-trick by New York's Shane Bennett to surprise the Oakville Blades 6-3 Saturday afternoon.

Milton delivered a strong forecheck over the final two periods, and kept their focus and composure down the stretch when Oakville pulled within a goal twice.

Jonathan Buttitta tallied twice in the last two minutes to put the game away — sealing the deal with an empty netter — while Daniel Plater made 30 saves for the win.

Rounding out the IceHawks' scoring with the eventual game winner was Jake Baird.

Saturday's hat-trick capped a five-goal weekend for Bennett, who was the lone scorer in

Friday's 2-0 shocker over powerhouse St. Michael's.

Although missing top scorer Matt Buckles, the Buzzers have plenty of other offensive weapons and fired 42 shots at Benjamin Blacker. A call-up from the Brampton 45s minor midgets — and the latest in a revolving door of IceHawks goalies this season — Blacker stood on his head

for the shutout, Milton's first since September 20, 2009 (1-0 over Huntsville). Bennett notched both goals in the second period — with Daniel Holt assisting on each — and continues to sit top-five in league scoring with 73 points (38g, 35a).

Busy with his regular team against the Halton Hurricanes across the way at MSC Saturday, Blacker was unavailable for the IceHawks' big home win.

Now 16-32 with seven games remaining, the IceHawks can bolster their playoff hopes this coming Friday, when they host Burlington — who recently traded away top scorer Shane Conacher to St. Michaels — at 7:30 p.m. at Memorial Arena.



Bantam Stags victorious at tourney

Firing on all cylinders at both ends of the court, the bantam girls Stags reigned supreme at the recent Brantford Tournament.

Facing an unbeaten Niagara Falls Raiders team with plenty of height in the final, the Stags relied on a formidable half-court press and a balanced attack to prevail 37-28.

Milton preserved after losing reliable guard Rachael Niles to an ankle injury in the third quarter — thanks to clutch play from Kristin Gallant, Mika Borlongan, Audrey Carin and Alyssa Ireland — while Cassidy Ulholzer led of-

fensively with 12 points. She, Ashley Reid and Lucy Beram showed strongly in the paint.

The Stags stamped their ticket to the championship with a 42-37 semifinal win over London CYO — neutralizing their twin towers with a persistently effective double-team.

Monica Dubria fueled the win with 16 points, while also standing out with eight points and 10 rebounds was Amanda Iannicello.

Round-robin play saw Milton turn back challenges from the Kitchener-Waterloo Lightning (40-32) and Ancaster Magic (47-31).



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