

Steamers stymied in Blades' barn; lose 7-5

The best defence is a good offence—a tried and true truism that fits most subjects, even hockey. But sooner or later the opposition is going to wade into the defending zone. When that happens there better be more than a good offence to keep them company.

In Oakville Thursday night there was not, for Milton.

Milton Jr. B Steamers lost a close 7-5 game to Oakville Blades thanks largely to Milton miscues in their own zone. It was 6-5 with less than 30 seconds to play but Blades scored an empty-net goal. The puck, as heavy and final as a curling rock, split the abandoned Milton net cleanly to give Blades the two-goal margin.

It was a doubly bitter pill for Milton coach Gary Hudson to swallow. With four games in hand on the league leaders, Hudson wanted to start a major push to gain points. The catalyst was Milton's 10-4 victory over Georgetown on Dec. 22. But the drive faltered in Oakville when Milton goalie Paolo Zulian was forced to make stops and rebound stops time and time again against Oakville attacks.

"When he's got to clear the puck himself he's going to take penalties," Hudson said, in reference to Zulian's three minors. "Our defencemen are killing us. We're running around in our own zone."

The league-leading Blades didn't score on any of Zulian's minors but their high-powered offence took advantage of the opportunities to grind at Milton. There were continual close escapes. Although Oakville



There was a lot of this Thursday in Oakville. Above a Milton defender dives while Steamer Paolo Zulian turns to face the action. Milton's defence was slipshod.

didn't score on Zulian's penalties, they did pop home four power-play goals. Milton scored one.

The two squads appear almost equally matched. Both play strong-skating, offence-oriented hockey. Neither enjoys a marked size advantage. In a small rink, such as the one at Oakville, each club slashed into the opposing zone frequently and effectively.

Steamers could have made the contest even closer than it was, however, if they had kept their heads under provocation. Steamers took 32 minutes in minors to Blades' 26. Several Milton penalties were of the push, punch or poke variety, offered after some real or imagined insult. They are the kind of infractions referees rarely ignore.

The game kept the Oakville crowd on the edge of their seats. When it was over one sardonic spectator said with a wink: "There was never any doubt." The woman he was talking to replied, "It's not over 'til it's over."

The teams swapped goals throughout. In Oakville's small arena the crowd rings the ice surface more closely than elsewhere. One can almost hold a conversation with someone on the other side of the rink while speaking in normal tones. After every Oakville goal the cheers rang out loudly and the scratchy, distorted music system kicked in. It played the "Lone Ranger" theme and then offered a screeching recorded choral cheer. It sounded like the noise one would imagine the Mormon Tabernacle Choir would make

as they plummeted over a cliff in a bus. The first period ended in a 2-2 stalemate. Oakville captain Ron Hoover and Tony Cizinowski scored for Blades, each getting the first of their pairs of goals on the night. Stu Anderson and Bob Landry replied for Milton.

Oakville started the second period strongly. They scored within the first minute when former Milton player John Staios pounded in a slapshot from the blue line after Mark Fisher dug the puck out of the corner and fed him a pass. Milton tied it three minutes later when Landry shovelled in a rebound following Pete Jeffrey's initial shot.

Milton took the lead for the first and only time halfway through the second following a face-off in the Oakville zone. Tim Pollen got behind the entire Oakville defence, including the goalie, to cash in on Perri Hood's passout.

Oakville tied it when Cizinowski got his second during a power play. He picked a high corner over Zulian's trapper while Milton captain Mark Duval sat out a holding call. Oakville went ahead in the last minute of the period when Mike Pelletier laced in a slapshot from 40 feet cleanly beating Zulian.

Steamers started the third with a shot at a comeback; they had a power play going early on but couldn't tie it. Oakville goalie Wayne Cowley made several fine saves to rob the visitors.

In the middle of the period, Zulian held

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Notice

Champion sports deadlines were advanced for the two holiday issues. Coverage reflects events as they stood at press time. Normal scheduling resumes next week.

All locals earn berth in playoff.

By ROB KELLY
Champion Reporter

At press time all five Milton entrants had gained a berth in Beaver tournament playoffs. The four minor squads and the novices faced the playoff challenge with varying degrees of possible success. A re-cap of tournament play to Friday appears below:

Novice

Milton P.L. Robertson Sockets faced an uphill battle in Beaver action because their division features two extremely powerful squads, Sault Ste. Marie and Detroit Compuware. Sault Ste. Marie blew Milton out 6-0 in the first Socket tilt. Milton came back to edge Richmond Hill 4-3 but they faltered in their final game, dropping a 3-1 decision to Georgetown.

After Milton's first loss, coach Jeff Cookson admitted things had been a bit slow lately.

"I thought we could have stayed closer to them (Sault Ste. Marie) but they got two early goals—two in the second shift of the game. But our aim is to make the playoffs. We've been on a three game losing streak coming into this (the Beaver) and we're in a bit of a slump. So we shuffled our line-up a little bit. We switched defencemen Kevin Boyle to wing and Blair Kitchen to defence. And we shuffled two lines around completely."

The only line Cookson left intact was the high-scoring Carlo DeVito, Ryan Haydar, Jeff Haydar combination.

That line was responsible for two goals as Milton beat Richmond Hill, with Ryan Haydar and DeVito scoring. Kevin Boyle and Derek Hunter had the other Milton goals.

Against Georgetown, Ryan Haydar scored Milton's sole goal. Milton was slated to meet Detroit in the first round of the playoffs. Detroit Compuware comes from an organization with an \$800,000 yearly hockey budget and a Michigan-wide drawing area.

Minor Atom

At the minor atom level Milton's Docs and Dents were viewed as one of the most dangerous squads in the event but Milton has yet to taste success in tournaments.

"We haven't won one yet this year," Milton coach Tom Sargent pointed out. "We hope that the home ice advantage helps us. I know the boys are ready for it. We've been bridesmaids for the last two years. In league play this year we've won 20 and lost only two but we can't seem to get up for tournaments."



It was an end to end exciting battle when Milton Remax Bantams met West Seneca in Beaver action. Above, a Milton shooter gets set to score.

But with three convincing wins this may be the tournament in which Milton's luck changes. Medics defeated Oshawa 5-1, edged Brantford 3-1 and pounded Oakville 8-2. At press time Medics were scheduled to play Orangeville in the playoffs.

Medics jumped all over Oshawa in the opening game. Ryan Schaeffer had two goals. Jason Cole, Dave Marshall and Jeff McKenzie added one each. "The team played super today," Sargent complimented. "They're starting to play as a team, and not as individuals."

In their second tilt Milton got a pair from McKenzie to spearhead the attack. Schaeffer added a single.

Rick Warren and Marshall had two each in the big win against Oakville. Cole, Randy Symmers, Matt Downs and McKenzie added the others. Milton was scheduled to play Orangeville in the first playoff game at press time.

Minor Pee Wees

The team which beat Milton Optimist minor peewees in their first game of the Beaver tourney made the playoffs and that's just fine with Milton manager Mike Boyle.

"It would be nice to meet Hamilton in the final," he said. "They have a good club, there's no doubt about it."

Hamilton Huskies shaded Milton 3-2 in the tournament opener. Optimists came back to win their next two, defeating Mississauga Royals 4-2, and shutting out Mississauga Iroquois 8-0. Pete Downs was the Milton goalie. Ian Ellis had a hat trick in the game.

"We were a little sloppy in the first game," Boyle admitted. Huskies got the win on a breakaway goal with 35 seconds remaining to play following a Milton giveaway.

"But in the second game the kids were more relaxed," Boyle continued. The jitters wore off and they had it in hand all the way."

That discipline carried over to the final whitewash. In addition to Ellis' hat trick Trevor Brandt scored twice. Todd Mulley, Russ McLean and Mike Cox added the other goals.

Against Royals, McLean, John Cheesman, Brant and Mulley scored. In the



Later it was the visitors' turn, however. Above an American shooter bangs one in. Milton won 4-3.

opening game Mike Cox got both Milton's goals. Milton was slated to go up against Hespeler in first round playoff action at press time. Opts have played Hespeler twice, winning and losing. In Milton Opts beat them 5-3 and at Hespeler the homeowners took it 3-2.

Minor Bantam

Remax coach Doug Vaughan got one of his two wishes. His Milton club made it to the tournament playoffs and had a shot at the final, but they didn't beat Oakville.

The bants shut out Preston in their

opening game (3-0) and then fought an exciting, end-to-end battle with New York's West Seneca. Milton came out on top of a 4-3 score but they had to work hard for it. After that game Vaughan claimed his squad was ready for arch-rival Oakville.

"You walk in that dressing room right now and you'll see they're higher than a kite. They're ready."

But Oakville managed a 3-2 win over Remax with a late tie-breaker.

Against Preston, Todd McLeod, Lee Finch and Shawn Healey scored for Milton. In the West Seneca tilt Chris Leblanc had two and McLeod and Mark French got the other Milton goals. In an earlier contest Oakville had drubbed the Americans 11-1 but the Yanks came out fired up against Milton and played a solid game.

Against Oakville, Leblanc and Healey scored. At press time Milton was slated to meet Richmond Hill in the playoffs. Oakville faced off against Dundas in the other playoff game.

Minor Midget

The midget division features some tough competition. That was evident Thursday night when two other playoff-calibre teams battled it out. Paris edged Aurora 6-5 but Aurora came from behind to close the gap in a tough and fast hockey game.

Tough and fast is the way Milton's Sargent Farms plays it too and at press time they were pencilled in against the Aurora squad in playoff action. Paris faced Flamboro.

Milton beat Flamboro 3-2 in their third preliminary game. Farmer coach Larry

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Tom Sargent



Harry Wiczaryk

Davidson shows no signs of letting up

By ROB KELLY
Champion Reporter

It's more difficult to find teams than in the past. It's like trying to be a diplomat and a judge at the same time. It ends with four days of organized mayhem and a spate of trophies, handshakes and heartbreak. It's the Milton Beaver tournament and for the fourth time Bob Davidson is the chairman.

He haunted the rink throughout last week's extravaganza, leaving only to watch his own major atom rep team compete in Flamboro.

Despite the grinding schedule, amply illustrated by the fatigue etched in his face Friday, Davidson showed no signs of slowing down.

"We (his wife Chris helps out a great deal) like doing it. We've met a lot of good people and made a lot of friends. It's a lot of fun. It really is."

That statement is supported by the amount of return business the tournament receives. A large percentage of teams entered come back and newcomers usually spread favorable comments about the Beaver, Davidson said.

But more and more hockey centres are

using tournaments as a way to earn money to pay the high costs associated with minor hockey. It's starting to tell in Milton, although less so than other centres.

"I think it's out of hand, I really do," Davidson admitted. "I think there are too many tournaments. I've called a lot of other tournament directors and they say the same thing. Right now there are 27 minor tournaments being run simultaneously (within a day's drive, in Ontario) and there are more than 300 OMHA tournaments a year."

"Despite that I think we've maintained a high level of competition," Davidson continued. "I think it's consistent with prior years."

The tournament featured 37 entrants this year, whereas in the past 40 has been the norm. Consequently there were 73 games instead of 75.

Davidson feels that the Milton tournament is a good deal all around, and that's one of the main reasons it remains popular.

"I think it's one of the top 10 tournaments in terms of the cost viewed against the level of competition and the hardware a team can take home. And that's what teams are looking for nowadays, the highest possible

return on their dollar."

It takes \$175 to gain entry to competition. For that, each team is guaranteed three games, each player gets a pennant and six players from each division get all-star trophies. Championship game most valuable players get trophies and both sides in championship tilts take home hardware.

"So there's an opportunity to take a lot out of it," Davidson said. Part of that opportunity was provided by the Milton Lion's Club and the Hockey Moms. They put in a large part of the \$1600 it cost to buy all those new trophies.

Despite that allure, Davidson had a tough time pulling in entrants to the lower age categories this year.

"It's hard to get novices, even minor atom was tough," he admitted. "But then I pulled in Depew, New York (minor atom) and they won their division."

The plight is apparent elsewhere. Other areas have been less successful than Milton in recruiting younger teams. In recent tournaments, Davidson said, Brantford tied only four novice teams and London removed novice competition entirely due to lack of entrants. At an Orillia tournament only six

minor atom teams competed and in St. Catharines there were only six minor pee wee entrants. Milton had five novice squads for the Beaver and a full slate of eight teams in the other four divisions. In most categories Davidson had too many entrants and had to turn some teams away. He forwarded the information to other tournament organizers.

"I give them to Nov. 10 to register and then I pick the teams for the tournament," he pointed out. "It is not first come first served."

Davidson shared the credit for making the tournament a success. "We had a lot of people working behind the scenes," he said. "Chris did a tremendous amount of work. For the first time we used two arenas (Thompson, Laurier) full time and Ed Dunn handled everything over there (at Laurier). The referees did a super job and took a cut in pay to do it."

The tournament has been budgeted to make a profit and funds from the operation go back into Milton minor hockey.

At press time there had been three player injuries, none serious enough to require hospital stays.



Bob Davidson