

# Raiders, IceHawks get back to basics

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

Not since 2005 have the Georgetown Raiders and Milton IceHawks met in the playoffs and a rekindling of the North Halton rivalry couldn't have come at a better time for both Jr. A clubs.

Once one of the better-supported teams in the Ontario Junior Hockey League, the Raiders have dropped to 16th out of the 22 teams in attendance with an average of just 143 spectators per game, according to the league's statistics website [pointstreak.com](http://pointstreak.com), by far the lowest total since those numbers were first compiled in 2005-06. At that time, the Milton franchise boasted the highest attendance figures in the league at 931, which is now one-quarter of that amount.

So both teams are hopeful that their first-round post-season clash between the third-place Raiders and sixth-seeded IceHawks, which

Georgetown led 2-0 heading into game three Wednesday at the Alcott Arena, would be compelling enough to get local residents out to one of the contests.

The Raiders have won both games by a goal in a tightly contested matchup that has been an interesting and entertaining on many fronts, even though the gates weren't much larger than during the regular season in either rink.

Georgetown entered the playoffs as one of the hottest teams in the league with 11 wins in its last 14 starts, including victories over heavyweights Kingston, Toronto Lakeshore and Cobourg.

The IceHawks, meanwhile, have undergone a resurgence under head coach Dan Currie, who was an assistant to Raiders' bench boss & GM Greg Walters until the former left to take the job in Milton. The IceHawks possess one of the top lines in the league in Shane Bennett, Jeremy



**GREG WALTERS**

Gottzmann and Elliot Kane, while Raiders' captain Steve Hladin was second among all OJHL scorers with 38 goals and 45 assists in 53 games.

"It was so close between three and six (in the conference)," said Walters of the

three-point difference separating the teams. Milton won the season series 3-1.

"We dominated them in the last two (regular season) games, scored two goals and lost both because their goalie was spectacular. We're evenly matched teams with two outstanding 16-year-olds in net and it's going to be a battle for sure. We think we're a better team when we're rolling lines and everyone's going. Everyone knows our defensive system and we're not going to get carried away with line matchups. We've been disciplined and that's going to be huge in this series. We've kept our emotions in check and they've got an elite power play unit, so we'll have to stay out of the box."

In past years, the Raiders have acquired 20-year-olds to tend goal but they've found a homegrown gem in Michael McNiven, who'll stare across the ice at another 16-year-old standout in the Milton net in

Ben Blacker, an Oakville resident.

The series also offers a sneak peak at a potential future star in 15-year-old forward Adam Mascherin (see story on page 2), a call-up by the Raiders after his minor midjet AAA team, the Vaughan Kings, were eliminated from their league playoffs.

As for Walters and Currie, who played pro hockey together in the International Hockey League with the Chicago Wolves in 1995-96, there are apparently no side wagers between them on the outcome of the series.

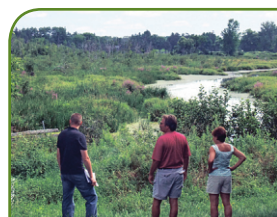
"Dan's a very good friend of myself and (Raiders' assistant coach) Terry (Richardson) and we'll put that aside for the next week or so," chuckled 43-year-old Walters.

"May the best team win, right? There are no bets. We haven't talked to him and we'll keep it that way. Everybody's focused on their own game."



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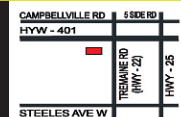
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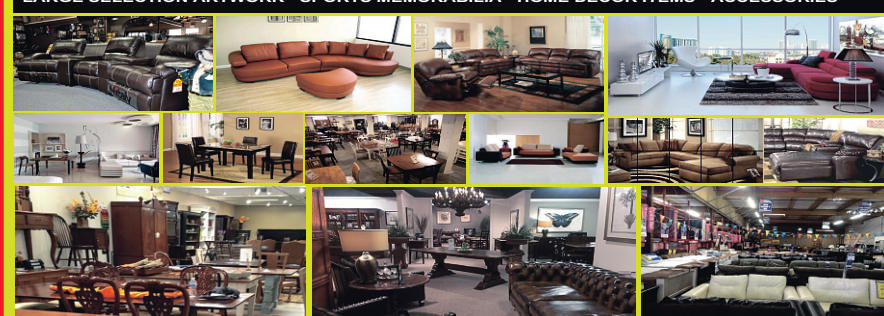
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