

Blades' backs to wall against North York

The Oakville Blades hope the dominance of home teams in their Ontario Junior Hockey League opening-round playoff series with North York lasts for just one more game.

Oakville trails the best-of-seven series 3-2 after dropping a 2-0 decision to the Rangers Wednesday in Game 5 in Toronto. The Blades need a win at Sixteen Mile Sports Complex tonight (Friday, 7:30) to avoid elimination and force a seventh and deciding game that would be played Sunday in Toronto.

The home team has won each of the first five games in the series, with Oakville's two wins coming in overtime. North York's victories have come by a combined score of 11-3.



Wednesday, the Blades were done in by the shutout netminding of Jason Pucciarelli and a two-point night by playoff scoring leader Corey Kalk. Kalk scored 4:34 into the first period and drew an assist on Liam Kerins' power-play marker in the third, and now has 14 points in the series. Pucciarelli stopped all 35 shots he faced.

Evan Buitenhuis made 39 saves in net for the Blades, who went 0-for-4 on the power play and have converted just 7.7 per cent of their man advantages in the series. North York's power play has clicked at a 24.1 per cent clip.

Sunday's contest in Toronto, if necessary, would begin at 3 p.m.



Novice Thunderhawks claim first-ever title

The Oakville novice red Thunderhawks (pictured above) were victorious in five consecutive games to claim gold at the Jayden Elmore Memorial hockey tournament in London.

Oakville locked up the title with a 3-2 win over London North in the final, with Matthew MacPherson providing the game-winning goal late in regulation time. Previously in the competition, the Thunderhawks posted victories of 3-1, 2-1, 4-3 and 8-3.

The Jayden Elmore title is the first-ever tournament gold for the team.

"The determination and teamwork displayed by all the players throughout the weekend

couldn't make the coaches and parents more proud," said Thunderhawks coach Chris Hudson. "Every player played beyond their maximum and showed great fortitude to never give up until the final buzzer."

Other members of the team are Cade Hudson, Connor Waters, Mekaille Carbone, Jack Skinner, Eric Vann, Benito Ritacco, Aidan O'Rourke, Oliver Brenninkmeijer, William Herbert, Graeme Leiper, Aidan Ashall, Andrew Palucci, Keegan Walker, Matthew Grbavac and Ryan Bouwman. Jon Ashall also coaches the team, Heather Forbes is the trainer and Claudia Palucci is the manager.



Minor bantam squad wins Neil Barker Classic

The recent Neil Barker Thunder Classic tournament in London might as well have been the Minor Oaks Hockey Association's minor bantam white house league championships.

All six teams from the Oakville house league participated in the tournament, with two of them — the Blades and Spartans — meeting in the final.

The Blades claimed the title, blanking the Spartans 3-0 to conclude an unbeaten showing at the tournament. The Blades posted 4-1, 5-1 and 3-1 wins in round-robin play, then rallied from two goals down to defeat London's LMHA27 4-2 in the semifinals.

The Spartans shut out all their opponents

in the preliminary round (3-0, 3-0, 7-0) before edging the Oakville Thunderhawks 3-2 in a semifinal contest that required a shootout to decide.

Members of the Blades are Justin Daniel, Joel Hayes, Spencer Festeryga, Matthew Popowycz, Vasily Fedotov, Nathan Dushnisky, Andrew Owen, Austin Fishwick, Ryan Key, Kyle O'Neil, Kyle Fitzgerald, Christopher Barbisan, Tyler Menezes, David Ribble, Mark Salveta and Kyle Damrell.

The team is coached by Peter Popowycz, Mike Salveta and Derrick Fishwick. Andrew Damrell is the Blades' trainer and Jennifer Popowycz is the manager.

Midget SCTA championships at Joshua's Creek

Nine midget teams from the South Central Triple A league will battle it out this weekend in Oakville for a berth in the Ontario Minor Hockey Association championships.

The Oakville Rangers, three-time OMHA champions, are hosting the SCTA tournament at Joshua's Creek Arenas. Oakville was scheduled to open the tournament this morning (Friday, 10:30 a.m.) against Niagara Falls.

The Rangers' other opening-round games are slated for 4 p.m. today against Hamilton; 10 a.m. tomorrow (Saturday) against Halton; and 3 p.m. tomorrow against Niagara Falls.

The championship games will be contested Sunday.

Other teams competing in the SCTA tournament are Guelph, St. Catharines, Burlington, Grey-Bruce and Brampton.

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