

Plenty of thrills and chills in '93-94

By Paul Svoboda
The Intelligencer

Junior hockey can be an emotional rollercoaster and the 1993-94 OHL season had its share of ups and downs, thrills and chills — and spills — for the Belleville Bulls.

Bulls entered the season with, arguably, the best goaltender in the Ontario league in the person of Tampa Bay Lightning NHL draft pick Derek Wilkinson. A solid defence was anchored by veterans Dan Preston, Marc Dupuis, Steve Carter and Dan Godbout with the addition of Radim Bicanek, an exciting rushing blueliner from the Czech Republic.

Up front, Richard Park was expected to blossom after his rookie OHL campaign while experience was provided by returnees Paul McCallion, Paul Rushforth and tough winger Doug Doull. First-round pick Travis Riggins and fellow rookie Craig Mills were expected to contribute. Overage scoring sensation Kevin Brown, a 50-goal man from the Niagara Falls Thunder, was added for offensive punch.

General manager and coach Larry Mavety had good reason to expect big things from his '93-94 herd.

By mid-season, Riggins was gone, dealt to the Kitchener Rangers for a second-round pick. Overager Jarret Reid was picked up from the Soo Greyhounds for the stretch run, bringing much

sought after Memorial Cup experience and the reputation of being a proven winner.

And late in the season, Mavety pulled off a bold move, trading the second round pick acquired in the Riggins deal to Niagara Falls for the rights to veteran forward Brandon Convery. Convery, a Toronto Maple Leaf draft pick, was a member of Canada's gold medal-winning national junior team and the trade served notice to others in the OHL's Leyden Division that the Bulls were taking a run at a title.

Convery ended up leading the Bulls in regular season scoring with 40 goals and 48 assists for 88 points. McCallion chipped in with a career-high 36 goals and Brown bagged 29. Other 20 goal-scorers included Park (27), Brian Secord (29) and Rushforth (28). Bicanek, whose blistering point shot soon garnered him the nickname "Boom Boom," picked up 16 goals. Mills turned out to be Belleville's best all-around rookie, playing a physical game while earning 33 points and leading the team in game-winners (5).

Wilkinson saw duty in 56 games, compiling a respectable 3.76 goals against average with two shutouts.

With the North Bay Centennials running away with the Leyden Division crown, four clubs — Ottawa, Sudbury, Kingston and the Bulls — finished in a virtual logjam for the remaining spots in the final standings. Less than 10 points separated second-place Ot-

FINAL STATS '93-94

Brandon Convery
Paul McCallion
Kevin Brown
Richard Park
Brian Secord
Paul Rushforth
Dan Preston
Radim Bicanek
Jarret Reid
Doug Doull
Craig Mills
Corey Isen
Marc Dupuis
Jeff Ambrosio
Joe Coombs
Steve Carter
Rob Boyko
Jeff Smith
Dan Godbout
Derek Wilkinson
Sean Brown
Serge Dunphy
Mark Gowan
GOALTENDERS:
Derek Wilkinson — 56 GP, 179 GA, 3.76 GAA.
Mark Gowan — 24 GP, 79 GA, 4.15 GAA.
PP GOALS: Convery 17; McCallion 12; Park 10.
GW GOALS: Mills 5; McCallion 4; Reid, Rushforth, K. Brown, 3.
PENALTY MINUTES: Doull 143; Isen 136; Rushforth 109.



G	A	P
40	48	88
36	43	79
29	49	78
27	49	76
29	40	69
28	35	63
11	37	48
16	27	43
15	23	38
13	24	37
15	18	33
12	21	33
7	25	32
13	17	30
13	15	28
4	15	19
6	11	17
3	13	16
0	15	15
0	5	5
1	2	3
0	3	3
0	1	1

tawa from fifth-place Kingston. Bulls finished fourth with a 32-28-6 record for 70 points, two better than Kingston.

That set the stage for a traditional Belleville vs. Kingston first-round playoff series. Ironically, the two teams met in the

last game of the regular season and the Frontenacs sent a message that they would try to intimidate the faster-skating Bulls.

Led by behemoth forward Brett Lindros (brother of Philadelphia Flyer star Eric Lindros), the Fronts hit anything in black,

red and gold including Wilkinson. Lindros' challenge was eventually met by Doull and the pair were suspended for the opening of the playoffs.

The series was a battle of the road warriors, with each team showing supremacy on the opposition's home ice. Kingston's physical approach failed to have the desired effect and the Bulls emerged victorious in six tough games.

Next in line, the division champion Centennials. A tall order indeed.

The well-rested Cents, fresh off a first round bye, blew Belleville out in the opening two games in North Bay and Mavety wondered aloud if his crew would answer the challenge. And, they did.

Back at the Sports Centre with two raucous crowds behind them, the Bulls battled back to tie the series at 2-2. Wilkinson was spectacular. One signmaker said it all with a hand-painted banner hanging at the QSC: "Wilkie, we're not worthy!"

Unfortunately for the Bulls, however, the Cents regrouped and won the next two games to seal the series. The only consolation for Belleville was the fact North Bay eventually won the OHL championship and a trip to the 1994 Memorial Cup.

For the Bulls, it was back to the drawing board for 1994-95 and continued dreams of their own trip to the Memorial Cup.

The Gumper, Golden Jet and Slapshot

Did you know?...

...Gump Worsley, NHL Hall of Fame goaltender, was named as the Belleville Bulls goalie coach way back in the early years. No one can recall the Gumper making too many visits to the Friendly City.

...Dan Quinn was the first player selected in the OHL draft the year Belleville entered the league. Other first rounders for the Bulls included Pat Lafontaine, who opted to play in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. Lafontaine told every OHL team he would only play in Cornwall for the Royals. But the Bulls selected before Cornwall in the draft hoping they could con-

vince him to report. He didn't. He was THE star in the QMJHL. He signed a \$22.5 million five year deal with the Buffalo Sabres last week.

...Al Iafrate was another Belleville first rounder. But he made the U.S. Olympic team at the age of 17. He didn't join the Bulls until the final month of the season. The next year he was a Toronto Maple Leaf.

...Scott Thornton, Rob Pearson and Steve Bancroft were all first



Dr. Vaughan.

round picks of the Toronto Maple Leafs four years ago. None are with the Leafs now. Thornton is in Edmonton, Pearson in Washington and Bancroft is in the Pittsburgh organization.

...Wayne Gretzky shared ownership of the Bulls with Dr. Robert Vaughan. Gretzky wanted to purchase the whole team but Doc balked at the offer and decided to buy Gretzky out.

...Brent and Keith Gretzky, younger brothers of the Great One, both played for the Bulls.

...Darren Puppa, former star goalie with Buffalo who now plays for Tampa Bay, was a mid-

round draft pick for the Bulls. He never reported.

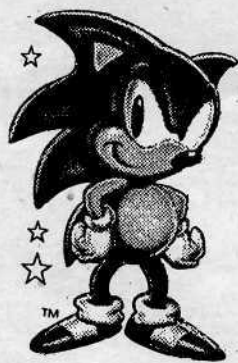
...Bulls GM-coach Larry Mavety had a bit piece in the hockey movie 'Slapshot' that starred Paul Newman.

...Hockey legend Bobby Hull, the Golden Jet, took the Bulls through their paces during a practice when Dan Flynn (now head man in Sault Ste. Marie) was coach here. Flynn didn't like

pucks on the ice early in practice but Hull did. Hull called for a bucket of 'biscuits' and the players took advantage by slapping dozens of pucks into the boards much to the dismay of Flynn.

OHL 1993-94 Final Standings										
Leyden Division										
	G	W	L	T	F	A	P			
North Bay	66	46	15	5	351	226	97			
Ottawa	66	33	22	11	274	229	77			
Sudbury	66	34	26	6	299	275	74			
BELLEVILLE	66	32	28	6	303	264	78			
Kingston	66	30	28	8	265	259	68			
Oshawa	66	26	32	8	272	309	60			
Peterboro	66	15	41	10	252	350	40			
Newmarket	66	9	47	10	231	377	28			
Emms Division										
Detroit	66	42	20	4	312	237	88			
S.S. Marie	66	35	24	7	319	268	77			
Owen Sound	66	34	30	2	303	284	70			
Guelph	66	32	28	6	323	290	70			
Kitchener	66	32	30	4	286	316	68			
London	66	32	30	4	293	279	68			
Windsor	66	25	36	5	253	298	55			
Niagara Falls	66	21	41	4	277	352	46			

Regular season champion: North Bay Centennials.
Playoff champion: North Bay Centennials.
Leading scorer: Jason Allison, London Knights, 55-87-142.
Leading goalscorer: Vitali Yachmenev, North Bay, 61.
Best assists: Jamie Rivers, Sudbury Wolves, 89.
Best goals-against: Matt Mullin, Sudbury, 3.12.
Most penalty minutes: David Ling, Kingston Frontenacs, 254.
Most power play goals: Zdenek Nedved, Sudbury, 26.
Most shorthanded goals: Steve Panson, Kingston, 8.
Most game-winning goals: Allison and Yachmenev, 10 each.



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