

Post-season punishment downs Raiders

The Port Colborne Windjammer Sailors wrapped up the OHA Intermediate "A" Championship last Wednesday night in Port Colborne with a convincing, 6-3 win over the Georgetown Chrysler Raiders. Going into the game, the best of seven series was tied at three games apiece but the final verdict went in favour of the Sailors mainly because, physically, the Raiders were in rough shape.

The Georgetown owners had advanced to the finals on the heels of series wins over Thorold and Oakville but these encounters, particularly the latter, cost the Raiders physically. As game time rolled around on Wednesday night it was obvious that injuries would play a big part in the outcome. Tommy Gilbert was operating with a questionable knee and facial injuries; John Boyce was suffering through a groin injury picked up earlier on in the finals; Bill Wheeler was not up to par, physically. "Hat Trick" Pat Maloney was nursing a knee problem and defenceman, Bill Currie was sidelined throughout the finals with a back malady.

The Raiders were very much in the running in Wednesday night's tilt through the first two periods but faltered in the last 20 minutes and that, as the saying goes, "Was all she wrote."

For a deciding championship game the match was something of a paradox. Fans of both teams expected that defence would play a big part but instead the clubs went all out from the opening whistle. End to end action was featured, as was the gallant antics of Sailor Rob Steart and Raider, Keith Pallett.

The ice was broken at 13:19 of the first by Raider Pat Maloney on a powerplay situation. The Sailors tied the game at 1-1 at the 17:00 mark on another powerplay opportunity as Bob Goss rapped in the nearest effort of the game. Goss led the Sailor charge and picked up the puck on his side of the red line. As he crossed the Raider blue line, he somehow squeezed through two defencemen, faked right then flipped a backhand past Pallett.

Port Colborne took a 2-1 lead in the dying minutes of the opening period on what was a questionable call, or non-call. Tom Polonic was laced into the end boards with what had all the earmarks of a crosscheck but when no whistle sounded, Port's Duane Rutley picked up the puck in front of the Raider net and rammed it home. Port emerged with their lead after 30 minutes but it was the Georgetown squad who dominated play.

Had they been able to convert several of their scoring chances, the momentum of the game might have been turned in their favour. As it happened, Port took control in the second period and held it throughout the game. Steve Latinovich made it 3-1 at the 4:55 mark of the second but midway through the period, Tom Polonic scored to bring the Raiders to within one goal of the lead. Last minute tugaboos once more plagued the Raiders as the Sailor's Ted Denuter scored at the 19:32 mark, off a three on two break, to give Port Colborne a 4-2 lead after 40 minutes.

As play got under way in the third and final period, it was obvious that the Raiders had reached their limit. Perhaps it was the tension leading up to the final 20 minutes, behind two goals, perhaps it was merely sheer exhaustion but the Raiders looked sluggish and in fact didn't really have a good scoring opportunity until well after the ten-minute mark.

Their rejuvenation after this point was held in check by Sailor netminder, Rob Stewart, and Duane Rutley made all speculation academic when he extended the Windjammer's lead to 5-2 at the 17:37 mark.

For Raider fans, it was a very good year

The "Return of the Raiders" has ended, at least for this year. Last Wednesday night in Port Colborne, the seventh and deciding game in the best-of-seven OHA Intermediate "A" Championship series was played and as the final buzzer sounded, the score read, Port Colborne 6, Georgetown 3, giving the Sailors yet another league championship to add to their trophy case.

Last year at this time the Raiders were forced to the sidelines because of a league suspension. Because of the enforced idle period and the questions that arose from it, plus the revenue that was denied the club, it was suggested in some quarters that the team fold. Several public meetings were called and the response from Georgetowners indicated that the team had a strong following and was an integral part of the Georgetown sporting scene.

This vote of confidence from the local citizenry led to the election of a new executive headed by Dave Kentner, and peopled mainly by enthusiastic but inexperienced members. The Raiders were starting fresh, so to speak, and executive decisions reflected a new approach.

It was decided to go with a club that emphasized local talent. There was a full 50 percent changeover in team personnel and a new coach, Junior Tibbetts, took over the handling of the club. The internally instituted changes could have led to a less than successful year, but in true Raider tradition, stumbling blocks were shunted aside, and once more the actual playing of the game took centre stage.

Expressing his appreciation for what he termed "a tremendously successful year, yet one that proved a learning experience," team president Kentner noted that "Togetherness played a big part on the team this year." General manager, Bob Hooper, in summing up his overall feelings for the team's year, said, "We did well to recover from the disappointment of last year's ending and although this year had its ups and downs, I would have to regard it as a reasonably good year."

The Raiders Most Valuable Player, Neil Cotton, had this to say, "For a team that basically was starting all over again, we did a very creditable job. For the talent that we had, we did as well as could be expected." Team captain and leader, John Boyce, felt it was a personally satisfying year. He commented, "There's no question the year went well, particularly in view of the team makeup. The spirit on the club was as good if not better than in years past and the players who did turn out really came to play."

The final word on the season was added by coach Junior Tibbetts. The 1977-78 season was Junior's initial year in the coaching ranks and he did an admirable job in a situation that would be trying indeed even to a veteran coach. "The year went very well. The team pulled together when it had to and actually we went further in the playoffs than was expected. I learned a lot about another dimension of the game, namely, the fellows who actually carry the play. I was given free rein to do things the way I wanted to and I enjoyed the job. Coaching can be nerve-racking at times but it represented a challenge to me and I liked that."

Tibbetts would not commit himself on his plans for next year, preferring to adopt a wait and see attitude. He earned his spurs as a coach this year and from his accomplishments would be a definite asset to any hockey organization.

The Raider year has ended, but on a high note rather than on the dismal curb of defeat. The "Red and White" crew almost took the regular season league title, but had to settle for the number two spot; bumped off Thorold in the best-of-five series after dropping the first two games; swept three straight from Oakville to advance to the league finals and extended the defending league champions, Port Colborne to seven games before finally succumbing, more from fatigue than anything else.

Nice guys finish raider raps second, but...


Well, it's summertime for the Raiders once again! The Raider sweaters were worn for the last time this season in Port Colborne last Wednesday. After an exciting season, the Raiders remained very competitive through three rounds of playoffs. Obviously, many individuals are responsible for such a successful hockey season.

Let's put this success story together from the very beginning. For the formation of the Raider wheeling and dealing of the general manager, Bob Hooper. To put this signed talent into production as a team Junior Tibbetts, assisted by Neil Cotton, provided excellent coaching.

Throughout the season, Junior had the Raiders positioned in the best league position that the Raiders have seen for a few seasons! His dual efforts as player did not go without notice—it'll take him awhile before he loses his form! Keeping order behind the bench and off the ice was team manager and trainer, Red Benoit, affectionately nicknamed "Duffle Bag."



"AND THEY'RE AT THE POST." Unfortunately Darrell Wells couldn't be at GDHS last Monday to announce this race, nevertheless, the runners pictured here are heralding the start of a new fitness concept at the high school. One hundred and fifty students have enrolled in the Itebel Olympic Club and in groups of fifty, during their respective lunch hours, they will be attempting to collectively log 600 miles of running. The winning group will receive T-shirts with the club's logo and it has also been rumoured that a year's supply of Absorbine Junior will be doled out to the runner's up.



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