

Thorold readying for Raiders

The Thorold Athletics are providing the competition for the Georgetown Raiders in the OHA Intermediate "A" southern division final.

The Athletics earned the berth in the final by defeating the Dundas Merchants in the semi-final in an exciting seven-game semi-final.

The Raiders of course advanced to the finals by devastating the hapless Fort Erie Frontiers in four straight games.

The Athletics victory over the Merchants has to be considered an upset. The Merchants finished the regular season in second place behind the Raiders while the Athletics were third place qualifiers.

NOT A HOMER

The series was as close as it could possibly be. The Merchants, although losing, outscored the Athletics 38-37 in the seven games. It was by no means a homer's series as the Athletics took three out of four games in Dundas and the Merchants came out on top in two of the three games in Thorold.

The Athletics jumped out in front in the first game by winning 7-5 in Dundas.

The Merchants came back in the next game with a 8-5 win on Athletic ice.

Thorold then took two games in a row, 7-6 at Dundas and 6-5 at home.

The Merchants came back with two victories of their

own to tie up the series and force a seventh game. They won by identical 5-3 scores.

In the seventh game in Dundas it was a seesaw battle most of the way. The two teams were tied 4-4 in the third period when the Athletics came up with two goals to make it a 6-4 final.

Athletic coach Bob Urquhart said his team's triumph in the series could not be attributed to one factor.

"I don't think it was specifically one aspect that spelled victory for us," he said. "We played good all-round hockey and so did they, but we came out on top."

Urquhart went with former pro Bill Cheropita between the pipes for six of the seven games.

"He's not quite the goalie he was last year," Urquhart said, "but in the last two games he was at his very best."

The coach said he plans to go with Cheropita most of the way against the Raiders.

STRONG CENTRES

Urquhart said he also got excellent work from his centre-men in the series against Dundas.

The newest Athletic is Paul Sheehan, a centreman. He is off the roster of the University of Brock. Urquhart said that Sheehan was excellent against the Merchants. The coach also said that Dave Blair, Peter Mara and Ron Woodhouse were also excel-

lent throughout the series.

The Athletics will have to go up against the Raiders without the services of defenseman Bill Urquhart who separated his shoulder.

Had the Athletics lost that seventh game after leading at one time three games to one it would have been very reminiscent of last year's semi-final. Raider fans will remember last year's semi-final between Georgetown and Thorold.

In that one the Athletics led at one time seven points to one and needed only a tie in the series' last four games to advance. The Raiders romped back with four straight wins and went to the final against the Merchants, who defeated them in five games.

Urquhart said he expects that the series against the Raiders this time around will be very physical.

"Georgetown has a very physical team and they should really be bodying us in the first game," Urquhart said. The first game was played at Alcott Arena last night.

The Athletic coach feels if his club can perform the way it did against Dundas, it should be a close series against the Raiders.

"There isn't too much separating Dundas and Georgetown," he said. "If we can come up big it should be close." Urquhart said he feels Georgetown is the team to beat.

A key to the Athletics succeeding against the Raiders, Urquhart said, is for his players to stay away from the penalty box.

PLAYED HOCKEY

"Against Dundas we concentrated on playing hockey and it paid off," he said.

The Athletics have not had much luck against the Raiders this season. After an early season victory they have not been in the winner's circle since.

There are many Athletic players who were around to suffer that agonizing defeat in the semi-final last year. No doubt it will be added incentive for them this time around.

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Collingwood down

However, as the season wore on the Shipbuilders began to fade. Meanwhile the Port Elgin squad began to come on. Port Elgin constantly gave the Shipbuilders tough games through the season and they took four victories.

DOWN THREE

Until Sunday night Port Elgin led the series three games to none. They took 7-4 victories in the first two games and then a 5-4 verdict in the third.

The Shipbuilders came back with a 5-4 win in Port Elgin to claim their first victory.

The series may prove that come playoff time it is better to go up against a tough team rather than a patsy to better prepare for later rounds. That is a theory that Gerry Inglis, the Georgetown Raider coach, is definitely a believer in.

The Shipbuilders went up against the Orangeville Cougars in the first round and walked all over them.

Meanwhile in their first round Port Elgin went up

against Owen Sound and it proved to be a very tough series.

Collingwood had no trouble defeating Orangeville in four straight games. They outscored them 60 goals to nine in the four games and in three of the games got into double figures. In the third game they won 18-2.

Port Elgin was only able to out score Owen Sound 27-26 in their six game semi-final.

Owen Sound won the first game of the series 7-3 in Port Elgin to go ahead.

Port Elgin men won the next two games by 5-4 and 3-1 scores to take the series lead.

Owen Sound tied it up with a 7-6 win on home ice. In the fifth game Port Elgin won 6-4 and in the final match Port Elgin took the series with a narrow 4-3 victory.

If Collingwood won last night the sixth game would be Friday night in Port Elgin. If a seventh and deciding match is needed it will be April 1 at Collingwood.

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However, the Raider lineup that battled the Athletics last year is not at all like the one that took to the ice last night.

Only one defenseman who is at present with the club was around this time last year. That is John Boyce. The remainder of the blue-liners are all new, although Bill Currie played part of last season with the club.

The goaltending last year was handled by Mario MacDonald, with Gregg Hooper backing him up. This year Peter McDuffe is the number one netminder with Bill Humphreys backing him up. Among the forwards, only

Juri Kudrasovs, Tom Daley and Ray Evans were with the club last year. Colin Gordon played the early part of the series but he was not around when it ended.

The Raiders have added much firepower in Peter Sturgeon, Ray Tonelli, a new-look Gordon, Archie Chase and Pat Maloney. All of them are snipers.

The defense, aside from Boyce and Currie, has Ron Twiss and Ron Fogal. The blue-liners have been at their best lately.

And aside from all the above mentioned talent the Raiders also have three players Brad Pirie, Doug

Heaslip and Scott McKenzie all from the University of Guelph squad, joining the club for the remainder of the season.

If Cheropita and the speedy Athletic forwards are at their very best they may be able to make a tough series out of it. But on paper it appears the Raiders should win it in five or six games.

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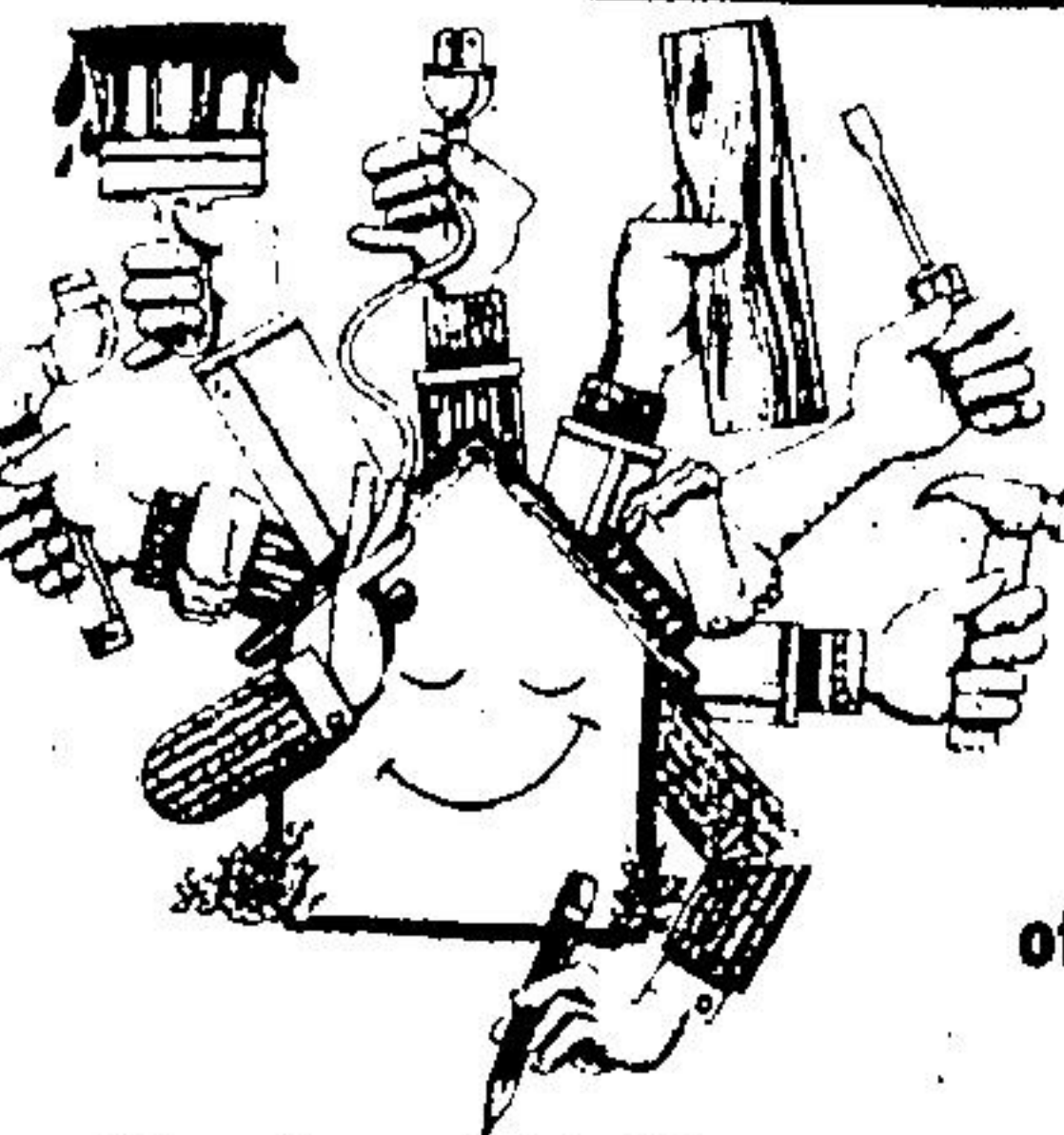
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