

Raiders need more this weekend

Raider coach Steve Blundy hopes his team can put together six solid periods of hockey this coming weekend to end the regular season schedule in Collingwood Friday and at home Saturday. That is something the team did not do in nine periods of play this past weekend.

At best the Raiders could only say that maybe a third of those 20 minute segments were strong. And those came in the last three chances in Owen Sound where they trounced the Greys 11-3.

As for the remaining six periods, they were "turkeys", said coach Steve Blundy, of their back-to-back losses to the Orillia Terriers. Friday in Orillia Georgetown was defeated 6-1 and at home Saturday night at Alcott the Terriers won 8-6.

The Raiders had better hope they do not meet the Terriers in the first round of the playoffs, as it might seem is somewhat possible. Presently the local team is in third spot where, if they stay, they would meet Port Elgin in post season play. However, theoretically but unrealistically they could end up in second, as they are only three points behind second place Collingwood Merchants, with 37 points. That would then pit them with the Terriers come two weeks. Stranger things have happened to the Georgetown team this year.

The Raider record against Orillia now stands at four to two for Orillia. Three of those games went into overtime.

SPOILERS

"We could be the spoilers this weekend," says Blundy, if they upset both Collingwood and Dundas.

However that is unlikely and the two points Collingwood would pick up Friday would put the Raiders out of reach of second place and relegate them to meet Port Elgin when the playoffs begin.

Blundy who has been juggling lines around most of the season, in an experimental attempt to find the right combination and to deal with the ups and downs in the number of players who have been showing up, says he is going to go with the players who have been playing well.

Those players will probably be the ones who have been travelling on the road with the team most of the season rather than the ones who have only been able to make it to the home games.

The Raiders have been playing their best hockey away from Alcott this year with only a limited number of players suited up. They are the ones who are forced through the necessity of the shortage to play more frequently and hence develop into the better players the team needs in the playoffs.

TOO OFTEN

Too often this season the Raiders have played away games with barely enough of a complement of players to ice a reasonable facsimile of a team, while the home games have the bench overflowing to capacity.

"We have the talent," Blundy maintains, "we can throw out any nine players and a pair of defensemen and do well... Yet when we get everyone out (home) we're

tripping all over ourselves."

Sunday was a typical example. The team played a good solid game for the win with just 10 players suited up. John Cook led the small team with four goals and an assist. Ray Tonelli put three pucks past Owen Sound goaltender Brian Caley. Singles for the Raiders went to Gary Ford, Juri Kudrasovs, Peter Mara and Joe Ens.

Friday in Orillia goaltender Wayne Rutledge shut out a large Raider team, all except Tonelli who managed to beat him late in the first period.

At home Saturday Kudrasovs with a pair and Mike Keeler, Cook, Ford and Mara did the scoring.

The Raiders appear to have the scoring power but seem to be relying so heavily on the outstanding talents of goaltender Peter McDuffe who has been called upon all too often to come up big to cover their defense lapses.

TALENT

The talent, it would seem is there but, as coach Blundy says "talent is such an intangible fleeting thing. If you can't use it or don't know how, then maybe we (the Raiders) don't have it."

Or, if the coach can't get the talent, that obviously appears to be there somewhere, out of the players maybe a coaching change is due now.

With two games left the Raiders will have to show some true consistency this weekend to give their fans some confidence in the team as they head into the playoffs, and to prove to themselves that they are capable of defending their playoff championship title.

Geminis optimistic about their next season

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team and by a team that is practically unbeatable at home.

Brad Miller who had played spectacularly in getting the team this far, came out of the first period a little shaken after missing six shots. He only allowed four goals, two in each of the final periods, the rest of the game. But, it was too much of a task for the Gems to overcome on the Burlington home ice that night.

The Gems had known from the start that they had an uphill grind and that it wasn't going to be easy. Yet, they surprised many by taking the pair of home games last week at Alcott. The mood then was that they could have won the playoffs and gone on to meet Orillia.

The Orillia Travelways management, who followed the final two Gem games after they had put Barrie out, said that they would prefer to have played the Cougars rather than seventh place Georgetown because the Gems played a tougher game against them.

So, who knows? If the Gems had made it past Burlington they may have had an easier time with Orillia and they could have wound up in the Central Ontario championship finals.

"How many figured we'd get this far," said a smiling Daley after the game as he loosened his tie and shirt collar. "We got our .500 season, made the playoffs and made a fairly credible showing."

NO EXCUSES

"No excuses," said Girdwood. "We had a good year

and an excellent series. Aside from an eight minute lull (in the first period of the final game) we were equal with them (Burlington)."

The Gems were continually beaten to the puck in their swan song for the season. The big and powerful Cougar team were obviously up for the game, not about to risk losing it all in a seventh and deciding game the next night, Friday, at the Gardens. After all they had taken the first three games and didn't want to be humiliated by a four game comeback defeat.

Gary Thompson got the lone Georgetown goal in the first period and Bob McCandless and Scott Malcolm added singles in the second. Ben Allen got the last Gem goal of the season in the last minute of the game.

Is Hurley ineligible?

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Sound Greys. League rules state that a player who plays in three hockey games in a higher calibre hockey organization will still be eligible to play industrial hockey in Georgetown, but if he plays any more than three games, the player must be dropped from the industrial team.

Fendley said he accepted a letter from Dick Bowes and Dan Watson of the Owen Sound club at face value, that claimed Brian Hurley had "participated in two games" in mid December. Fendley says that there is no "clear definition of participation in our league rules." He went on to say however that he interprets participation as meaning "your name going on a game sheet with your knowledge."

Fendley also said the timing of the original protest was extremely poor as the league was about to enter its playoffs and the issue should have been "pressed a little sooner."

Korzack, who Fendley described as "honest and above board" claims that when he presented the letter to the executive he told them "don't take my word or Brian's word for it, check back with Owen Sound." Korzack said that it was obvious to him that the executive didn't bother to check the letter out until there was a protest from other un-named teams in the league and by then "we were relegated to fourth place, lost

a large percentage of prize money that is paid to the teams depending on their finish in the league and as a team we have lost credibility.

"We weren't even allowed to sit in on the original protest to present our side of

the story. Most of our players didn't find out about the decision until they picked up the paper on Wednesday morning." Mac Korzack feels it was up to the league executive to check out the validity of the letter.

On Monday of this week The Herald spoke on the phone with Dick Bowes, manager of Owen Sound, and asked him about information received that Brian Hurley

played in three games, missed one game because of a snow storm and was told at the door one game, that he was no longer needed because some injured players had returned. Mr. Bowes affirmed that "yes, Brian didn't play in those (two) games" for the reasons given.

If Hurley had brought that up before Thursday's appeal or the league executive had checked out the information given in the letter, a little more carefully (the executive did get in touch with Bowes but obviously didn't delve deep enough) then perhaps none of this controversy would have arisen and a very fine hockey player would still be playing for Akers-Clark.



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