



Mark Clairmont
Sports Editor

Where will this trophy end up

Gary Ford was standing outside the Dundas dressing room Thursday night, in his sock feet nursing a bottle of beer and minus his sweaty red and white Raider jersey, just a few feet away from where his fellow team-mates were trying to get used to the sudden shock that it was the end of the season, when Merchants' Captain Rick Blinc picked up the United Auto Parts Trophy, symbolic of Georgian Bay Intermediate A hockey supremacy.

Ford and a small contingent of Dundas and Georgetown fans who were still around 10 minutes after the final buzzer had sounded, cheered and jeered the presentation.

It was quite unlike the sixth game of the same series last year when all the Raiders were on this same ice surface to receive the same trophy after defeating Port Elgin.

Ford was a lone Raider on this occasion, as he seemed to be on the ice at different times during the year when his speedy skills never seemed to get the attention from other Georgetown players. The man who still holds the scoring record in the International Hockey League, and who has played more competitive hockey and seen more wins and losses than most of the players on the ice that night, went into the Dundas dressing room to personally congratulate the new winners and see the symbolic trophy he had fought so hard for all year.

BANQUET HALL TABLE

When next he saw that trophy it was sitting on the corner of a banquet hall table upstairs above Gordon Alcott arena, 50 yards away from the ice surface, in the Raider booster club. There amidst a table full of jubilant Dundas players and their beer and champagne, the pain of years of work sat with the top half tilted on a broken angle, the victim of another winning team.

The atmosphere in the booster club was congenial as the new champions mixed freely and friendly with the predominantly Raider and company faithful.

Stan Larouso was pouring the drinks freely (figuratively speaking) and Finn Poulstrup was selling team pictures. Everyone seemed to be taking it easy. Talk was light and encouraging among both teams.

The Dundas team, sitting just inside the entrance door, were having a grand time greeting all the well wishers.

Yet it was somewhat of an odd sight to see Georgetown players pass by and stop to look at what they had devoted most of the past three years to attain. The dangling top of the trophy succumbed to several indignant blows as it bounced around the hands of a few of the Merchant players. Trophies seem to get so little respect.

Several Raiders, it could be seen and heard, wished the series had gone one more game to the limit of seven. However, hindsight is better than foresight after the fact.

MANY CHANGES

Many changes will be implemented next year. Coach Steve Blundy is likely to be asked to return to the helm, a job he rightly deserves. His obvious enthusiasm and approach as a good student of the game both as a coach and former player leave him in good standing with the players, management and his contemporaries around the league.

A few players won't be back, as was the case this year. Some new players are bound to surface. The team needs players who are willing to go with what is there, and work to improve it. Too many hockey teams in Canada have more chiefs than Indians. It's one thing to listen to the way the team is to work and yet another to carry it out on the ice. Most Canadian players think because they have been playing the game since they were knee high to a hockey stick that they know how to play the whole game.

Raider President Bob Hooper says the team is developing back into a "community team" again and the team will be back in there again next year.

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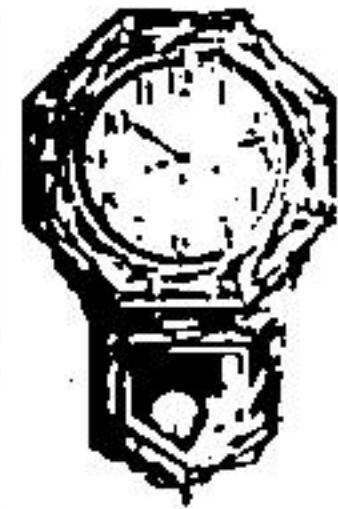
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