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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



Tracey Clarke, 13, earned a trip to North Bay for the Ontario Gymnastics Championships as she won a silver medal in the Central Ontario Tyro C competition in Oakville last weekend.

Tracey will be one of only six Central region gymnasts to compete in the May 28-29 provincials. (See story below).

Sabres prospects bright as coach, GM return

By PAUL SVOBODA
Herald Sports Editor

For a team that almost didn't get on the ice at all last season, prospects are looking considerably brighter for the Acton Sabres.

The Sabres almost folded operations completely last summer and it took a last-ditch effort to even enter a squad in the Mid-Ontario Jr. C Hockey League which picked up only seven wins in 36 regular season outings. Sabres finished sixth out of seven teams and made a quick four-game playoff exit, courtesy of eventual league-champion Bradford Bulls.

But the Sabres have reason to believe that the worst is over and one big reason for that optimism came in the wake of an announcement made by team president Bruce Cargill last week.

For the first time in at least seven seasons, the Sabres will have a coach returning for a second consecutive campaign behind the Acton bench as Cargill announced last week that Ken Steen, a former Georgetown intermediate-senior Raider, will be back in Acton next season for his second tour of duty as Sabre bench boss.

"He did a lot of things right this year. He did a great job, especially under the conditions and with what he had to work with. He was a worker as a player and that's what he looks for in hockey players. As far as the management of the team is concerned, it's probably the best the team has looked in a good number of years."

Having received the presidential seal of approval, Inscoc and Steen will be hard at it this summer in an attempt to ice a serious Mid-Ontario contender.

"We could have 15 players out of our final roster of 24 back for next season," said Inscoc. "We built with a purpose. We took our whippings early in the season but we kept kids that were a year away. We could end up with only five or six back, you never know, but there's a lot more room for optimism than there was at this time last year."

Indeed, after a strong second-place finish in 1987-88 the Sabres welcomed only three veteran players back (captain Pete Cargill, Steve Wagner and Wayne Rivers) for '88-89. Add to that the summer of doubt over the actual survival of the organization and things looked grim as the first puck was dropped last fall.

But despite recording a 7-28-1 win-loss-tie record last season, Inscoc feels he has more good reason for optimism. "We were extremely fortunate," he says of last fall. "We started with nothing, we were getting beaten badly at the start of the season and we didn't make a whole lot of roster changes. But we showed what we could do in the last eight periods against Bradford." Sabres dropped the third game of the series in a close 4-3 final and were eliminated with a 7-5 loss that included an empty-netter by the eventual Mid-Ontario champs.

That kind of steady improvement, which was evident throughout an otherwise trying season, has Inscoc and Cargill looking forward to next season.

"We've got a list of about 75 prospects right now," said Inscoc. "We hope they'll be in camp. Over the summer we'll talk to them and get their feelings."

Inscoc has set a realistic goal of third place for the Sabres next year and Cargill concurs with that speculation. "I'd like to see us end up second or third in the standings and go about four rounds in the



It's off to Newfoundland for GDHS students John Jickling (left) and Peter Gombocz as the pair of Rebels will accompany their Oakville-based West Side volleyball team to the Canadian finals later this month. Jickling was named to the provincial tournament all-star team and Gombocz also played a key role as West Side defeated Scarborough to capture the Ontario mens midget crown at McMaster University last weekend. (Herald photo)

Rebel duo heads east to national v-ball final

Another winning volleyball season for two Georgetown players didn't end when the GDHS boys junior Rebels won their fourth-straight Halton County title last November.

GDHS students John Jickling and Peter Gombocz each added another gold medal to their respective trophy cases after helping the West Side Volleyball Club of Oakville cruise to the Ontario midget mens championship crown last weekend at Hamilton's McMaster University.

The gold medal win capped a strong season for the West Side club and earned the squad a spot in the Canadian midget mens volleyball final tournament to be held in Gander, Newfoundland, Apr. 21-22.

Jickling added a personal highlight to West Side's gold medal team victory by being named to the Ontario champion-

ship tournament's first all-star team. Both Jickling and Gombocz were key performers on coach Bob McKay's GDHS junior boys Rebel team in 1988.

West Side had a relatively easy time in the Ontario gold medal final as they crushed Scarborough Lunatics 15-5, 15-5, but that came after surviving an exhausting 71-minute marathon semi-final confrontation with a stubborn London team.

West Side overcame London 15-3 in the rubber match after winning the first game 15-12 and losing a tough second game, 11-15.

West Side gained a semi-final berth by clobbering the Gloucester Thunderbirds 2-0 in quarterfinal play (15-7, 15-3) after turning in a sparkling 9-1 win-loss slate in preliminary round robin competition held at Sheridan College in Oakville.

playoffs," he added.

Meanwhile, Cargill said the club is currently working on securing a major sponsor for the team which could be in place in time for the '89-90 campaign. Cargill said that would be preferable to, "begging at the start of the year," which the Sabres were forced to do last fall.

Financially, the Sabres have a clean slate heading into the summer during which time they hope to have several fundraising events scheduled.

"If we hadn't been in debt at the end of the '87-88 season we might've said to hell with it," admitted Cargill.

Gymnast wins silver

A Georgetown athlete will undertake a trek north next month as a competitor in the provincial gymnastics championships.

Tracey Clarke, 13, of the Georgetown Gymnastics Club, finished second in the Tyro C (under 13) category and sixth overall at the Central Ontario Region gymnastics championships at Oakville on Sunday.

Clarke's sixth-place overall finish earned her the final spot on the Central Ontario representative team that will travel to North Bay for the Ontario finals, tentatively scheduled for May 28-29.

Clarke took a silver medal in the Tyro C vault competition, bronze on the beam and added a fourth on the uneven bars and sixth in floor exercises to earn her division's silver medal. A total of 26 athletes competed in Clarke's category.

The Oakville meet was the third and final competition in the Central Ontario Regional season.



Bruce Cargill

Also confirmed in Cargill's announcement, was the return of Sabre general manager Robin Inscoc for his second term. The former Sabre goaltender stepped into the fore last summer after the departure of former GM Jules Rusian.

If nothing else, the return of Steen and Inscoc will give the Sabres a great deal of stability with an entire summer to prepare for the 1989-90 season, a luxury the club didn't have last year. But Cargill feels the return of the duo is worth much more than just stability for the Sabres.

"Ken Steen seems to have a good rapport with players," said Cargill at his Acton home last Wednesday.

Midgets return

Georgetown's Sunny Acres Farms midgets played three of their best hockey games to date despite losing all three of their outings at the Coquitlam International Midget Tournament last weekend in British Columbia, said team manager Wayne Pries on Monday.

Georgetown faced the host Coquitlam team, that was scheduled to play for the province's "AAA" title after the tourney, in its first game and dropped an 8-0 decision.


In their next game, the locals took an 8-3 shelling from Alberta's "AA" champions before putting in their best effort of the tourney in losing a close 8-7 count to Vancouver West Side.

A high note for Georgetown saw centre Bill McDonald selected to play in the tournament's Gold and Black All-Star Game where he was named the outstanding player. McDonald was in all 10 Georgetown goals scored in the competition.

The midgets were back in Georgetown on Monday and play for the Tri-county title tomorrow in Brampton.

Sabres breathe easier, Raiders have questions

Paul's Call



Paul Svoboda
Herald Sports Editor

For the third time in a year, the Georgetown Jr. B Raiders and Acton Jr. C Sabres find themselves in contrasting situations.

A year ago at this time, the Sabres had come off a strong second-place finish in the Mid-Ontario Jr. C Hockey League while the Raiders (then known as Gemini) had staggered to a next-to-last place finish in the Central Ontario Jr. B league's western group.

Both clubs were eliminated in the first round of playoffs, but

that's where the similarities began and ended.

During the summer, the Raiders had both GM Bob Hooper and coach Pete Sturgeon in place and plans were already in the works for a rebuilt and revamped Raider squad to make moves upward in the western standings. They did.

Meanwhile, in Acton, Robin Inscoc parachuted into the GM job late in August and coach Ken Steen joined him after a long summer of doubt within the Sabre organization. One that looked like the Sabres weren't even going to get a single skate blade on the Acton Arena ice.

The results were painfully predictable. After scrambling for players and working out a last-minute affiliation with Milton Jr. B's that didn't really yield the bodies Acton might've hoped for, the Sabres struggled - and plummeted - in the standings.

In Georgetown, the Raiders improved - up two full positions in the final standings - and played well against the division's top teams.

Again, the only similarity occurred when both clubs were knocked out of the playoffs in the first round.

Now the Raiders and Sabres find themselves, once more, in differing positions.

Sabres have announced that both Inscoc and Steen are back for another kick at the cat in Acton. That announcement, this early in the off-season, has club president Bruce Cargill breathing just a bit easier.

In Georgetown, GM Bob Hooper, a longtime hockey man and for years involved with the intermediate Raider organization, is pondering his future with the Jr. B club. Coach Peter Sturgeon, while it's hard to imagine him not coming back for

another season (even if it's just to kick Oakville's butt) had also not yet made a commitment to Georgetown as of last week.

Of course, it's still mighty early in the spring. There's lots of work to do for both clubs and there's time enough to do it.

But the boys in Acton have to feel just a bit more comfortable than they did last August.

LATE CALLS:

The Acton Minor Lacrosse Association will be holding a free clinic on Saturday at AHS beginning at 10 a.m. and running through until 12 noon. The instructional clinic is open to boys and girls aged four to 16 years.

VOLLEYBALL-MANIA: Today at Centennial there's a boys tourney beginning at 3:30 p.m. while tomorrow there's a girls meet at Centennial (3:30 p.m. start) and an all-day grade three and four competition at Park.