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Guelph Platers move to Owen Sound may sever Georgetown ties

## Raiders could be hunting for new OHL affiliation

By PAUL SVOBODA  
Herald Sports Editor

The Raiders-Platers love affair may be over.

Georgetown Jr. B Raiders may be on the hunt for a new major junior affiliation next season after the Ontario Hockey League's Guelph Platers announced last week they're packing their bags and moving to Owen Sound.

Raiders had a working agreement with the local OHL club last season which produced hot-shooting left winger Des Brown for Georgetown, a priority draft pick of the Platers one year ago.

Georgetown also reciprocated on its affiliation with Guelph as goaltender Curtis Green joined the Platers for their OHL playoff round after the Raiders were eliminated from further post-

season action in the Central Ontario Jr. B league.

And, another member of last season's Raiders, 15-year-old defenceman Trent Cull, was Guelph's first pick, seventh overall, in last May's OHL priority



draft. It now looks like the young rearguard will spend next winter on Georgian Bay rather than 30 minutes down the road from Georgetown.

"Right now, I'll be getting back in touch with the Raiders regar-

ding a possible affiliation for next year," said Platers general manager Rob Holody last week. "We'll be part of the community in Owen Sound and will likely work with them but there are no terms yet on a working agreement (with Owen Sound's Jr. B organization). We've had a good relationship with the Raiders, but we haven't really addressed that (an affiliation) yet."

Owen Sound currently has an entry in the Midwestern Jr. B Hockey League known as the Greys and it appears as though the club will continue to operate. While an arrangement with the hometown team would appear to be an obvious move, Holody hasn't written off a possible continuation of the current agreement with Georgetown.

"We're not ruling it out," he said. "But in the same token we're also going to look at working with the local team. We're looking at getting off on the right foot with the Jr. B's there (Owen Sound)."

While praising Georgetown's



past affiliation with the Platers, Raiders president Dave Kentner said the Jr. B squad has plenty of options available should Guelph decide to sever its ties.

"Organizationally we've worked

well with Guelph, and we've worked well and competed well against Owen Sound when they were in the intermediate loop," said Kentner.

"We've had several Jr. A teams contact us, Guelph wasn't our last hope. We can live without them."

We've enjoyed working with them and we had a game plan and would've liked to have seen it come to fruition. I don't know where our options are now."

Kentner added that major junior teams often experience problems picking up affiliate players for

road games. For Guelph, now playing out of Owen Sound, the Raider president said, "that might not be a problem here."

Not just matter of dollars and cents says GM

## Poor attendance blamed for Platers' exodus

By PAUL SVOBODA  
Herald Sports Editor

Last week's announcement by the Guelph Platers that the OHL franchise would relocate in Owen Sound confirmed recent rumors and speculation concerning a possible new home for the seven-

year-old OHL club.

The only question had been where the team might end up.

Rumors suggested such possible new sites for the Platers as St. Catharines, Welland, Brantford, Buffalo, North York and Markham.

As early as two months ago the Kingston Raiders were set to sell their franchise to business interests in Owen Sound but the deal fell through and that club, since renamed "Frontenacs," will remain in Kingston.

Holody said last week poor atten-

dance was the main reason behind the decision by his father Joe Holody (Platers owner) to move the team after 13 years in Guelph, the last seven as members of the OHL.

"It wasn't just dollars and cents," said Holody. "My father's been here since 1936 and I've been in Guelph all my life. We were the last team in Ontario to win the Memorial Cup (1986). But the support outside our diehard 1100-1400 fans wasn't there. It became difficult to make it viable."

According to a report in the Guelph Daily Mercury on June 28, the day the Platers announced their move north, the club figured to lose \$170,000 in 1988-89. Attendance averaged 1431 per game last season at 4000-seat Memorial Gardens and the team said it needed 1900 to break even.

Over the club's seven-year OHL stay in Guelph, attendance averaged 1414 with a one-season high of 1972 per game during the 1985-86 Memorial Cup-winning campaign.

In Owen Sound, the Platers, who will retain their current ownership and team name, will move into the six-year-old Bayshore Community Centre, a sparkling facility situated on the shores of Georgian

Bay. The arena seats 3000 with room for another 1500 standees and the City of Owen Sound apparently has offered the platers a sound financial deal to move there. But Holody said the arena agreement wasn't the determining factor in relocating to Owen Sound.

"The arena deal with Owen Sound is not a major player in the decision to move the club," stated Holody. "It (the move) was first based on attendance. When you get to the point where you know you're working as hard as you can and the

people can't be too offended with what you're doing on the ice, it gets frustrating. On the other hand, we're enthused and excited (about Owen Sound). It has a nice facility, a good deal and the people (there) are excited."

Indeed, when it looked like previous Kingston owner Lou Kazowski would move his OHL club to the Sound, citizens of the Grey County city bought up 650 seasons tickets. Last season the Platers sold 379 and were at the 370 mark when the move was announced.

"They're making us feel welcome in their community," said Holody of the people of Owen Sound. "Saturday will be hockey night in Owen Sound. It's now up to us to put the product on the ice."

While Owen Sound has a population of 20,000 as opposed to over 80,000 in Guelph, Holody said the team will be able to draw from well over 100,000 people in the Grey-Bruce area surrounding the Crescent City.

Another rumor running rampant during the Platers negotiations to move suggested the club was twisting city hall's arm for a new rink in Guelph. Parking at the downtown facility has always been a problem that's plagued the Platers.

But Holody questioned whether a new facility would have made a difference in the club's decision to leave the city.

"The important thing is basically the support of the fans over and above our hardcore fans," he said. "I don't know if a new facility in the future would have made a difference."

## Business as usual for Cull and Green

At least two potential members of the relocated Owen Sound Platers don't mind the team's recent move north from Guelph.

Georgetown Raider grads Trent Cull and Curtis Green both agreed Monday the location of the team is the least of their concerns.

"It doesn't bother me much as long as I get to play hockey," admitted Cull, Guelph's first pick - seventh overall - at the 1989 OHL priority draft.

Green, who started last season as the Raiders backup goaltender and finished it in a Plater uniform as a playoff call-up, echoed Cull's sentiments. "I've been to Owen Sound and I like the arena," he said.

Both players will travel north for the opening of the Platers

training camp on Aug. 31.

Green said he understood the reasons behind the Platers' decision to move. "If they're not getting the fans, it's better," he said.



Trent Cull

About the only down side in the Platers move is the fact both Green's and Cull's parents will have to travel farther to see the boys play than was earlier expected. But even Cull saw a

bright spot there.

"It's going to be a bit more mileage," said Cull of his father's sojourns to Owen Sound. "But



Curtis Green

he'll get to go to the cottage more often."

The Culls have a summer cottage north of Warton, which is a short drive from Owen Sound.

## Old names come back as teams draw on heritage



### Paul's Call

Paul Svoboda  
Herald Sports Editor

Musings from the sports desk now that summer is "officially" under way:

-Talking to Raider coach Pete Sturgeon the other day about rival bench boss Rick Bince landing in neighboring Milton as general manager-coach of the Jr. B Merchants, Sturgeon said it's too bad his ex-teammate from intermediate Raider days, Gary Ford, got the squeeze in that one. Ford, a very likeable guy who always starts an interview with a joke and answers all questions no matter how poignant they might

be, had a rough time in Milton last year as coach. Saddled with a less-than-disciplined team and one lacking a lot of talent, Ford found himself in the midst of at least two controversies involving a couple of bench-clearing brawls. The former minor pro scoring champ was apparently asked to stay on in an assisting capacity in Milton under the new regime but obviously decided to wash his hands of the team. As for Bince, who's attracted his own controversy wherever he's played and coached, it should be an interesting season in the Central league west next year.

-There'll be no Jr. B team in Brampton next year. After the OHA earlier turned down former Raider assistant coach Jim Storr's bid to start up an expansion team there the provincial hockey governing board recently nixed a potential move by the

Central League's Etobicoke Capitals. In a turnaround from weeks before, the Brampton Minor Hockey Association had apparently freed up enough ice to make the Caps' move possible, but the OHA decided the area was being milked thin enough for junior players.

-Nice to see teams around Ontario harkening back to their hockey heritage. The Raiders did it last year, dropping their bold and original Gemini moniker to dip back into Georgetown's hockey past with the revival of the vaunted "Raider" name, one that inspired several local teams to OHA championships over the past 40 years. In Kingston earlier in the spring, new ownership there adopted the "Frontenac" name, one used by that city's old Eastern Pro League team back in the early 60s. Boston Bruin GM Harry Sinden played on that team. And, in Orillia, the Central

League's eastern division regular season champs recently announced they've renamed their Jr. B franchise the "Terriers," a name synonymous with Allan Cup-winning clubs from the 70s and before.

LAST CALLS: Mixed feelings on the Russians who've recently signed with NHL clubs after months of deliberations. For one thing, they're all over-the-hill, by NHL standards, and one must wonder why North American pro teams should support the Russian minor hockey system with big bucks. Of course, the NHL should feature the world's best players and now it should be interesting to see how the comrades fare... Check out the Expos. See how some timely trades can make a difference?... Good to see John McEnroe back - seriously - in the tennis wars. With stone-faced automatons abounding, the game was getting mighty boring.