

Raiders aim to break out of title drought

Not since their run to the Royal Bank Cup Tier II Jr. A national championship tournament in Saskatchewan in 2005 have the Georgetown Raiders been able to hang a banner on the Alcott Arena wall.

And it hasn't been for a lack of effort or recruiting that the Raiders have come up just short of capturing their divisional playoff championship the past three years, bowing out in the final on all three occasions.

Georgetown has consistently been placed amongst the top 15 Jr. A teams in Canada during that time, but post-season glory has eluded head coach and general manager James Richmond in his four years with the club.

Yes, the team has sent a number of players on to higher levels of hockey, including several scholarships to U.S. colleges, yet Richmond, who was an assistant coach for Team Canada East at the World Jr. A Challenge in November, admitted before the season started that the lack of hardware has been "eating away" at the coaching staff.

The third-place Raiders begin the 2010 Ontario Jr. A Hockey League play-

offs with a seemingly favourable opponent, having beaten the sixth-seeded Villanova Knights in all four regular-season matchups.

If successful in that series, a second-round showdown looms for the Raiders against rival Oakville, the team that has knocked Georgetown out the last two seasons with the division championship at stake.

"We're kind of sitting on the fence in that we don't know if this is a team that's going to elevate its game when the playoffs start, or are we going to run into the troubles we had late in the season?" said Richmond.

The Raiders have fared well enough against their fellow heavyweights in the 15-team OJHL, splitting their four-game season series with Oakville and first-place Kingston, holding up physically against those two punishing lineups.

Without a scorer in the league's top 10, Richmond has employed an effective offence-by-committee approach, but depth on the blue line is a concern, which was painfully evident in late-season losses to non-playoff teams such as Buffalo and Mississauga.

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Eamonn Maher



Georgetown Raider winger Jeremy Wick (right) chases down Bramalea Blue Joshua Bunnell Saturday during the final regular season game for both teams at the Alcott Arena. With an assist, the 20-year-old Wick finished the campaign as the Raiders' leading scorer with 40 goals and 34 helpers. For the year-end individual stats and league standings, see page 13.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

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