

SPORTS & LEISURE

Bulldogs cruise in Founders Cup opener

Gilbert racks up eight points as locals rout Onondaga 17-3

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Timing is often everything, and as Dylan Gilbert looks back on his lacrosse career, it's funny how things have fallen into place.

The 20-year-old forward was named player of the game Tuesday for the Halton Hills Bulldogs for his four-goal, four-assist effort in their 17-3 rout of Iroquois representative Onondaga in the opening contest of the Founders Cup Canadian Lacrosse Association Jr. B championships at the MasterCard Centre in Etobicoke.

Gilbert was a late-season pickup by the Bulldogs from the Oakville Buzz and has been a key offensive catalyst in the playoffs with 16 goals and 20 assists in helping the organization win its first Ontario championship. It was capped with a final series victory last weekend over the Elora Mohawks, who eliminated the Buzz in the first round.

The 6-foot-1, 200-pounder started playing for Oakville the year after its 2006 Founders Cup victory and figured he'd also get a shot at a national title with the Buzz, yet four seasons later, it's happening with another team.

"My second year in the league, we were favoured to go to the Founders and it just didn't work out," said the Oakville resident.

"In the end it's really turned out well. I loved Oakville and I have nothing bad to say about that organization, but sometimes it's just time to move on. Halton Hills had a place for me and I thank my lucky stars every day that I'm here now."

The Bulldogs come into the Founders Cup as one of the tournament favourites, along with host Mimico and the defending-champion Calgary Mountaineers, whom Halton Hills



Shane Scott (above, right) and player-of-the-game Dylan Gilbert (below, left) of the Halton Hills Bulldogs had little trouble in their opening game of the Founders Cup Canadian Lacrosse Association Jr. B Championships at the MasterCard Centre in Etobicoke, pasting Onondaga of Syracuse, N.Y. 17-3 on Tuesday afternoon. The Bulldogs are gunning for a spot in Sunday afternoon's national championship game.

Photos by Eamonn Maher



faced Wednesday evening in their second game.

Playing on the Olympic-size hockey surface at the MasterCard Centre could be a big advantage for the run-and-gun 'Dogs, who came back improbably from a 2-0 series deficit against the Clarington Green Gaels to win the OLA Eastern Conference title in five games.

"Our coaching staff has been preaching to us from the start that conditioning is going to be huge if we're going to achieve our goal and we see now how important that is," Gilbert added.

Adding to the scoring onslaught Tuesday were Michael MacDonald (2), Jayson Crawford (2), Justin Reid (2), Jordan Dance, Ethan O'Connor, Nic Grasby, Michael Licata, Bradley Kri, Clark De Geer and captain Nik Matwieszyn, with his first of the season.

Halton Hills will play twice Thursday, at 10 a.m. against Saskatchewan and 4 p.m. versus Moncton, both at the Long Branch Arena, before closing out the round-robin Friday in a matchup with the Winnipeg Gryphons.

The semifinals are set for 7 p.m. Saturday and the championship will take place Sunday at 4 p.m. at the MasterCard Centre.

In another touch of irony, the majestic MasterCard facility is the practice facility for the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs and their American Hockey League affiliate, the Toronto Marlies, who were coached by Gilbert's dad Greg until last summer, when his contract wasn't renewed.

The elder Gilbert, who won the Stanley Cup as a player with the 1994 New York Rangers, was immediately signed on by the Philadelphia Flyers' AHL farm club in Adirondack, N.Y.

"It would be nice to add another ring to the family collection hopefully, but we've got a tough week ahead of us," Dylan said.

He will attend the University of Victoria this year to play lacrosse and plans to try out for a couple of Tier II Jr. A hockey teams after taking a couple of years off from that sport.

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