

SPORTS & LEISURE

New-look Jr. A Raiders promise to 'compete'

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

With just four players returning from last year's team, Georgetown Raiders' coach and general manager Greg Walters has pretty much a clean slate to work with entering his first season in the Ontario Jr. A Hockey League.

Walters takes over from James Richmond, who has since moved on to the Aurora Tigers after compiling an .800 winning percentage in Georgetown over the past four seasons.

But the Raiders bowed out to Halton rival Oakville in the previous three play-offs and Georgetown owner Ted Nishi felt it was time to take a different direction.

"The kids have been great adapting to the changes and what my philosophy is and now that we've had time to practise with that, they seem to be comfortable with the system," said Walters, a fourth-round draft pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1990 who had a 12-year minor pro career.

"I'm aggressive and like to pressure the puck. We're a very skilled team and maybe not as big as we would have liked, but nobody is going to push us around. The big thing for me is how they compete, no matter how big you are. The leadership and the character in the room is off the charts and we're happy with where we are right now. But you have to keep in mind that it's a marathon, not a sprint."

Raider fans will get to see the overhauled roster in action this Saturday in the club's home opener against last season's Central Canadian Hockey League-champion Newmarket Hurricanes Saturday at the Alcott Arena beginning at 7:30 p.m.

They will also travel to Malton on Monday to take on the Mississauga

Chargers, who are now coached by former Raider bench boss Dan Cameron.

During the summer, the OJHL and CCHL merged after a year apart and with the contraction of five franchises, the re-established league now has 31 teams, meaning that the Raiders will renew their rivalries with the Hamilton Red Wings and Burlington Cougars in the West Division. West teams will also face North Division opponents twice each this year.

The four returning players do provide Walters with some go-to scoring punch in Scott Wilson, Evan Rodrigues, Justin Basso and Dustin Hebrand, while several other players with Jr. A experience were also acquired.

Veteran snipers Jordan Reed and Josh Burnell figure to be big contributors up front alongside some highly touted prospects such as Patrick Meganety, Brock LaBelle, Travis Fulton, Kyle Camilleri and Roger Sherwood.

On the blue line, towering Tyler McCarthy is the rugged, stay-at-home type set to lead a crew that includes vets Mike Sullivan, Kyle Dube and Tyler Shippo, along with rookies Chris Rygus, Sam Gray of London and Georgetown's Alex D'Oliveira, who is expected to miss the first week or two due to injury.

Handling the goaltending duties will be 20-year-old Derek Mohny, picked up from Buffalo after three years with the Jr. Sabres, and 16-year-old Kitchener Rangers' draftee Michael Stiliadis, who had a 35-2-4 record last season with the Toronto Young Nats' minor midgets.

Prior to Saturday's home opener, the Raiders will honour the Canadian-champion Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs for winning the Founders Cup lacrosse championship last month in Toronto.



GREG WALTERS



Taking the reins

Brian Lachance tries his hand at the reins as Courtney MacGillvray navigates during the recent Ontario Combined Driving Association event held at Glencameron Farm in Limehouse. This was Lachance's first competition as a driver as he normally navigates for MacGillvray when the local pair compete in Europe.

Photo by Jon Borgstrom



SHAWN HILL

Hill starts for Jays

It won't be the first time that Shawn Hill has taken the mound at the Rogers Centre, but this time he'll be in the uniform of the home team.

The 29-year-old righthanded pitcher from Georgetown will get the start for the Toronto Blue Jays tonight (Thursday) when they play host to the Texas Rangers beginning at 7 p.m. on Rogers Sportsnet.

Hill has seen little Major League action over the past four years due to arm injuries and was signed by the Blue Jays in the spring to a minor league deal.

Working his way through Toronto's farm system, the former Montreal Expo threw six shutout innings for the AAA Las Vegas 51s on Saturday in a 9-1 victory over Portland, allowing just two hits while striking out four batters.

Hill had a 2-2 record with Las Vegas with a 3.00 earned run average.

The 6-foot-2, 225-pounder last pitched in Toronto as a member of the Washington Nationals in June of 2006.

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