

SPORTS & LEISURE



Dejected members of the Georgetown Raiders watch from the bench as the final seconds tick down on their season Tuesday in Oakville. The Raiders were ousted from the

Ontario Jr. A Hockey League playoffs for the fourth straight year by the Oakville Blades, this time in five games.
Photo by Eamonn Maher

Raiders cut down by Blades— again

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

It's becoming an all-too-familiar storyline for the Georgetown Raiders and their post-season fortunes.

The names on the rosters might change from year to year, but for four seasons running now, the Oakville Blades have sent the Raiders home from the playoffs.

The host Blades skated to a 5-2 triumph Tuesday at the Sixteen Mile Sports Complex to win the Ontario Junior Hockey League North/West Conference quarterfinal matchup four games to one.

All four Georgetown losses in the series weren't cemented until the late stages of the third period, which was little consolation as players tearfully took off their equipment for the last time in 2010-11—and for a few, never to wear the Raider uniform again.

"They were all close games and our special teams let us down," said first-year head coach and general manager Greg Walters.

"We generated lots of chances, but we just couldn't find a way. All series long, (Oakville) did a great job blocking our shots. They're an older, more experienced team and they're moving on."

In four of the five games, the sixth-place Raiders outshot the third-seeded Blades and controlled play for long stretches, but most of the club's top regular-season

gunners were rendered ineffective by the stingy Oakville back line.

The Raiders were held to just three power-play goals in 33 chances in the series, while the Blades converted on six of their 19 opportunities.

Georgetown couldn't seem to catch a break, either. In the early stages of the third period Tuesday with the Blades ahead 2-1 and threatening to put the game away, veteran Raider Justin Basso blocked a shot and scored on a short-handed breakaway to tie the score, only to have Oakville regain the lead 34 seconds later on a deflected point shot.

"That pretty much sums up how our games went in this series," said Georgetown captain Scott Wilson, who is headed off to UMass-Lowell on a scholarship this fall.

"Coming into the series I thought we were on a roll. We played well, but we just couldn't get the bounces. The hockey gods just weren't with us. Personally, I had a couple of chances tonight that I should have buried, but it didn't happen. It's devastating right now, with the talent we had here, that we couldn't pull through in the end."

Walters, who signed a two-year contract with the Raiders last spring, has already begun scouting to try and replace all of the scoring the Raiders will lose either to age or post-secondary schools, including Basso, Duston Hebebrand, Josh

Burnell, Wilson, Evan Rodrigues and David Friedmann.

There is a solid young core of possible returning forwards in the likes of Patrick Megannety, Travis Fulton and Brock Labelle, along with most of the defensive unit.

"It was a learning experience for me on the GM side. The coaching part comes more naturally," added the 40-year-old Walters, who spent several seasons as the associate coach of the Ontario Hockey League's Sarnia Sting.

"I look back and I made some mistakes—as do all GMs—and you just live

and learn by them. We knew what kind of players we'd need (to beat Oakville), but it's very difficult to get them at this level. A lot of the bigger, stronger guys are in the OHL or we seem to go against them in Oakville.

"I've had a year in the league now and know my way around. This is full-time for me and I love it. I'm out watching games six or seven days a week. We've got everyone except one defenceman coming back next year and it's great to know you've got Fulton, Megannety, Labelle and Walsh to work with. We've got to get the right pieces together."

Acton Tanners grab 2-0 series lead

Acton's Trendz Hair Studio Tanners are on the verge of making it to the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's novice BB-D Central region championship series after taking a 2-0 lead over Dundas in the semifinals.

Game three of the best-of-5 series was played Wednesday night in Dundas and if a fourth game is needed, it will take place Saturday in Acton at 5:30 p.m.

The winner will likely face Erin-Hillsburgh for the championship.

In game two, Spencer Booth notched a hat trick in a 5-3 Tanner victory. Brett Hilt and Stuart Macdonald added single markers.

Booth, Jackson Phillips and Tristan

Wight were the Acton goal scorers in a 3-2 win at Dundas in the opener.

In other OMHA playdowns, Georgetown's minor midget AE Raiders swept Niagara-On-The-Lake in the OMHA Group 1-3 AE semifinal series and will face Richmond Hill for the regional title. Game two is set for the Alcott Arena Saturday at 8:45 p.m.

The Georgetown novice AE Raiders were looking to sweep Woolwich out of the OMHA Group 1 Central semifinals with a win on home ice Wednesday night after posting victories of 5-0 and 7-1 in the first two games.

They would face either Aurora or Richmond Hill in the finals.

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