

# SPORTS & LEISURE

## Jr. A Raiders looking to break Oakville Blades' jinx

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

After having their post-season end at the hands of the Oakville Blades four years in a row, the Georgetown Raiders feel they're ready to break the hex held by their south Halton rivals.

The Ontario Junior Hockey League's best-of-7 West Division championship series is set to begin Wednesday at Georgetown's Alcott Arena at 7:30 p.m. and judging from the regular-season meetings this year, the Raiders would appear to hold an edge.

Along with posting the best record in the 27-team OJHL in 2011-12 with a 39-9-1 mark, the Raiders won five of the six head-to-head matchups with second-place Oakville, although all but one of those contests were decided by one goal.

Georgetown had a little trouble eliminating the Burlington Cougars in five games in the divisional final series, while the Blades dispatched Buffalo with relative ease as well. Oakville has appeared in an unprecedented four straight Buckland Cup OJHL Championship Series, winning it twice while playing in more post-season

games than any other Jr. A team in the country since 2007.

For second-year defender Matt Chiarantano, in his final season of junior eligibility before moving on to the Niagara University Purple Eagles in the fall, beating the Blades would put an end to the frustration felt by the Raiders' organization.

"When I was with Aurora a couple of years ago, (the Blades) beat us out and went on to the Royal Bank Cup (national championship tournament), so I've got a history with Oakville as well," said the 21-year-old from Bolton.

"We did finish first in the league this year but that doesn't mean anything now. We have to stop that run they've got against us and it's going to be a tough battle."

The Blades have 14 returnees from the club that lost to Wellington in last season's OJHL final series, while Raider head coach and GM Greg Walters has constructed a veteran-laden, hard-charging squad that counted six 20-goal scorers in its lineup.

With the broom-closet-like neutral zone at the Alcott Arena and the Olympic-size



**MATT CHIARANTANO**

ice surface at the new Sixteen Mile Sports Complex in Oakville, the teams will need to adjust their strategies from night to night.

"They're completely different games," added Chiarantano, who had six goals and 27 assists in 43 games this season.

"You've got to know your angles as a defenceman and you have to know when and when not to go after them in their big rink or you'll tire yourself out. (In Georgetown), there's not as much room so there's a little bit more body contact. It depends how you approach it. But it shouldn't be that big a deal because we've played Oakville six times already and we'll be ready for anything that happens."

Adding to the spice of the rivalry is that two Georgetown residents, forwards Todd Bannerman and Chris Taylor, are regulars on the Blades this season, while Raider sharpshooter Patrick Megannety and rugged blueliner Nathan Domagala hail from Oakville.

Game two of the series will be played

Friday in Oakville at 7:30 p.m., with game three Saturday in Georgetown at 7:30 p.m.

**NOTES:** Longtime Raiders' trainer Andrew Groombridge has been named the OJHL's inaugural Trainer-of-the-Year Award recipient. The 51-year-old Sarnia native has been with the Raiders for a dozen years and fills the same role with the Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs' lacrosse club. A Level 3 Hockey Canada-certified trainer, Groombridge has been involved with various sports as an athletic trainer for 38 years and participated in over 30 national championship events...Goalie Steven Racine was chosen as the OJHL's North-West Conference player of the month for February, posting an 8-1-0 record...Georgetown residents Robbie Murden and Alex D'Oliveira have played key roles in helping the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots to the OJHL's South Division championship series against the first-place St. Michael's Buzzers after knocking off second-seeded Vaughan 4-2 in a seventh-and-deciding game Saturday. Murden, a 19-year-old centre, has six goals and eight assists in 11 post-season contests while 18-year-old rearguard D'Oliveira has four playoff goals and logs plenty of ice time with the third-place Patriots.

## Bitter ending for hockey Jags

A third-consecutive Halton Secondary School Athletic Association Tier I boys' hockey title was just a goal away from Christ the King's Jaguars last Friday, but Burlington's Assumption Crusaders had an upset in mind.

The Jaguars finished first in the HSSAA's post-tiering standings with an 8-2-1 mark, while the 5-4-2 Crusaders placed sixth and needed big wins over Nelson and Notre Dame to reach the Halton Tier I final at Oakville's Sixteen Mile Sports Complex.

Christ the King, meanwhile, blanked both Georgetown and Holy Trinity last Wednesday in the quarterfinals and semis, respectively, to make a return trip to the championship game.

It turned out to be a cruel finish for CtK netminder Joey Bonsignore, who gave up just one goal in his team's final three games, yet it was a booming slap shot from Assumption's Zac Zinga midway through the final that found the net and ultimately

gave the Crusaders a 1-0 victory.

The Jaguar defence corps of captain Jon Palumbo, Conor Mortimer, Mark Hirst and Kyle Kutlesa were again the backbone of the team, but CtK shooters were frustrated by Crusader netminder Ryan Hiebert on several occasions.

"You'd think that we would have had the advantage here," said Jags' coach Scott Van de Valk. "It sort looked like at the end we were going on fumes. We asked a lot out of a lot of people."

In girls' hockey playoffs, the fourth-place Acton Bearcats have advanced to today's (Tuesday's) HSSAA Tier 2B final against the third-ranked Assumption Crusaders after shocking front-running Burlington Central 2-0 last Friday in the semifinals.

Christine Bennett notched both Bearcat markers and goalie Jaime Laxton recorded the shutout.

The final will be played at Burlington's Central Arena Tuesday at 3 p.m.



T.J. Baker of Christ the King's Jaguars (10) was narrowly beaten to a rebound by an Assumption Crusader defenceman during the Halton Tier I boys' high school hockey championship game last Friday at the Sixteen Mile Sports Complex in Oakville. The Crusaders held on to upset the Jags 1-0.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

**GEORGETOWN**  
TOYOTA

**GAME OF THE WEEK**

Game  
One

**GEORGETOWN JR. A**  
**RAIDERS**  
vs  
**OAKVILLE BLADES**  
Wednesday March 7, 2012  
7:30 pm

Mold-Masters SportsPlex (Alcott Arena)

GO  
RAIDERS  
GO!

GEORGETOWN JUNIOR "A"



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