

Raiders to battle Golden Hawks for OJHL championship

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It's hardly a David vs. Goliath-type matchup, since both teams finished first in their conference, yet the Georgetown Raiders would seem to be the underdogs in their upcoming series against Canada's fourth-ranked team.

Appearing in their first league championship series since 2005, the Ontario Junior Hockey League's South/West Conference-champion Raiders take on the North/East's best, the Trenton Golden Hawks, for the Buckland Cup beginning Friday in Trenton. Game two of the series is set for the Alcott Arena Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

The Golden Hawks posted a 44-6-1-3 record this season to finish 14 points ahead of Georgetown in the standings and have steamrolled through the playoffs, losing just once so far in three rounds.

The teams met just once during the regular season, a 3-2 Trenton win in Georgetown on Jan. 30. Both teams play on relatively small ice surfaces and while the Raiders have successfully employed a lightning-quick forecheck on home ice, they've also posted a 7-1 road record in the post-season.

"The rink in Trenton is very similar to ours and it's going to be a tough, physical series," said Raiders' head coach & GM Greg Walters.

"Trenton is one of the best teams in Canada with nine 20-year-olds and seven 19-year-olds. We've got four 20-year-olds and lost 17 or 18 guys from last year's team. They're old, we're young, and we're just going to keep battling like we have all year. We're extremely proud of what this group has accomplished."

The Raiders clinched their conference championship with a 5-3 victory over the host Burlington Cougars on Sunday night.

Top-seeded Georgetown prevailed in the best-of-7 South/West Conference final series in six games against a stubborn Cougars' squad that

had postponed the Raiders' chance to sew up the title Saturday at the Alcott Arena with a 5-0 win.

Brendan Jacome tallied twice Sunday to add to his OJHL playoff-leading point total of 27 in 17 starts, with Daniel Hardie, Josh Dickinson and Jordan Crocker rounding out the scoring. Goalie Andrew Masters was named first star as the Raiders were outshot 44-12 in the final two periods.

"We've been playing really well on the road this year and teams that can consistently win on the road win championships," said defenceman Matt Cairns, who was a key cog for the Toronto Patriots' run to a Buckland Cup last season and was rated 86th in the NHL Central Scouting Final Rankings for the 2016 Draft released Wednesday.

"We plan to keep playing for a while. There's a lot left in the tank and we're looking forward to a real battle with Trenton."

The Golden Hawks are coached by former NHLer Jerome Dupont, a good friend of Walters who is also an animated communicator from the bench.

"I know Jerome very well and there are going to be a couple of intense coaches going at it," laughed Walters, in his sixth year in Georgetown.

"The fans are going to hear a lot of yelling from both benches."

The matchup also features the league's two best netminders, both 20, with Trenton's Daniel Urbani having the better statistics than Georgetown's Masters, although it was the latter who was named the OJHL's Goaltender of the Year.

Kitchener native Masters was acquired last summer by the Hawks but was released on the eve of the regular season after Dupont picked up Urbani from the rival Kingston Voyageurs. Walters quickly scooped up the available Masters, who'd been cut by the Raiders as a 17-year-old.

"All I can say is thank God for Andrew Masters," Walters said after the game six triumph over Burlington. "We were under siege for a while there after we got the first goal and some of the saves he made just calmed everyone down."



The Georgetown Raiders celebrated their OJHL South/West Conference championship win after eliminating the Burlington Cougars Sunday night with a 5-3 triumph at the Appleby Ice Centre.

Photo by Eamonn Maher



TWISTERS MAKE THE GRADE: Five midget-aged players from the North Halton Girls' Hockey Association have been recruited by U.S. colleges to play varsity women's hockey next season. From left are Nicolle Trivino, Loren Macdonald, Kylie Cameron, Mercedes Chircop, Samantha Scott. To see where this group of Twisters will be skating and studying next year, see pg. 41 Submitted photo

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