

# BULLDOGS PLAYOFF PREVIEW

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4 Pages

## Last year's early exit motivating 'Dogs

By **EAMONN MAHER**

*Staff Writer*

Having been swept out of last year's playoffs in the second round by their chief rivals, the Green Gaels of Clarington, the Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs feel there's a bit more snarl in their game this time around due to the earlier-than-expected post-season exit.

Seeded second in the Ontario Jr. B Lacrosse League's East Conference with a 17-2-1 record behind the front-running Gaels, the 'Dogs plan to exact some revenge on the Bowmanville-based squad, but they'll have to win two playoff rounds before getting that opportunity.

The Bulldogs didn't even know who they'll face in the opening round until Wednesday's final regular-season tilt between the Markham Ironheads and Mississauga Tomahawks was completed due to a logjam involving the fifth-to eighth-place clubs that could result in four teams—including Mimico, Nepean and Kahnawake—finishing up with 10-10 records.

A Markham win meant the Bulldogs will face the Ironheads at home Saturday in the opener of the best-of-three series, but a Mississauga upset would mean Halton Hills would have to travel to the Montreal area Friday night for game one of their matchup. Games two and three would be scheduled for Georgetown Saturday and Sunday.

Check the Independent & Free Press website [www.theifp.ca](http://www.theifp.ca) for scheduling updates.

It would seem almost destined that the Bulldogs and Gaels meet again,

since they've met up at some point in the playoffs six years in a row. When they do collide, it's usually a thriller, with the teams winning three series each in the hard-fought rivalry.

This season, the clubs played to a roller-coaster 14-14 tie on June 8 in Georgetown, followed by a 17-8 home win for the Gaels on June 20 against a short-staffed Halton Hills squad.

And while the Bulldogs could have a tough second-round series against the third-seeded Akwesasne Indians with a long weekend trip to eastern Ontario, they haven't forgotten how they were beaten convincingly in the 2012 post-season by Clarington.

"We've had some great battles with the Gaels over the years and what happened last year is in the back of our minds," said fourth-year forward Seth Laidlaw, who led the Bulldogs' offensively with 39 goals and 74 assists, good for third in league scoring.

"You look at how spread out our offence has been this year, it's going to be hard for other teams to focus on just one or two guys. We brought some guys in late in the year and everybody's pretty confident going into the playoffs."

Head coach Blaine McCauley has plenty of experience to call on, starting in goal with 21-year-old Gavin Lecky, while the defence is also grizzled with the likes of Jamie Batten, Jayson Crawford, Dakota Rocco and late pickup Phil Ferchat.

Up front, 17-year-old Connor Brown smashed the franchise's club record for goals with 64 this year. Double-teaming him will just leave more room for Princeton University star Mike Mac-



Halton Hills Bulldogs Tyler Aunon and Tyler LeBlanc celebrate a goal during a recent Ontario Jr. B Lacrosse League home game against the Oakville Buzz at the Alcott Arena. The Bulldogs will take on either the Markham Ironheads or the Kahnawake Hunters in the best-of-3 first-round series. What is known is that the Bulldogs will be hosting a playoff game Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

*Photo by Eamonn Maher*

Donald, Luke Laidlaw (cousin of Seth) and newcomer Tyler LeBlanc.

"We're pretty fortunate to have depth offensively, but our offence is still all about everyone touching the ball to make it work successfully," said McCauley, in his seventh year as bench boss.

"Like we found out when we won the Canadian championship in 2010, everyone has to put their individual goals aside and focus on building a team chemistry. The playoffs are about mak-

ing sacrifices for the good of the team and our common goal."

**NOTES:** The Bulldogs brought in two vets this past week who didn't play a game during the regular season. Defender Leland de Langley, who is one of four remaining 'Dogs from the 2010 Founders Cup-winning team, has returned, while 21-year-old transition man Tim Redwood was acquired from the Guelph Regals.

**Continued on page 4**



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