

OMHA still on the outside looking in

By Colin Gibson

Further to Wednesday's story on the continuing saga of the turmoil surrounding amateur hockey in Ontario (Halton Hills affected by hockey wars). It was confirmed Thursday that the OMHA (Ontario Minor Hockey Association) will indeed be on its own for the 1993/94 season.

As mentioned Wednesday, the OMHA was refused entry into the OHF (Ontario Hockey Federation) for the coming season because of perceived wrongs. The CAHA (Canadian Amateur Hockey Association) had declared that with the exceptions of Ottawa District and Thunder Bay, the OHF was to represent the voice of amateur hockey in the province.

The rejection of the OMHA by the OHF means that OMHA affiliated associations will not be able to compete in CAHA sanctioned tournaments or championships, or play against other International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) affiliated teams, including United States-based teams and European teams.

Both the Acton Minor Hockey Association and the Georgetown Minor Hockey Association, are affiliated with the OMHA.

In another twist of the knife, John Gardner, president of the MTHL (Metropolitan Toronto Hockey League), issued a bulletin to member organizations warning them not to play against any OMHA affiliated teams, with the penalty being voidance of insurance coverage and a review by the MTHL's board of directors which could lead to possible suspensions and/or fines.

In a telephone interview Thursday, OMHA secretary-manager Michael McCauley confirmed the organization's status as being outside the OHF, and subsequently the CAHA, but said "Efforts will continue to resolve the situation."

The OMHA's stance at present, however, according to McCauley, is "Let's get on with the season." He insisted the OMHA had done everything in its power to resolve the dispute, but to no avail.

"We felt we had met the conditions laid down by the OHF for entry into the organization for the 1993/94 season," said McCauley.

On July 26, according to McCauley, the OMHA wrote to the OHF asking for the reasons for the rejection, but the reply, signed by Federation president Justice David Watt, offered little, if any, satisfaction.

"We wanted to inform our membership why we weren't

accepted," explained McCauley, on the reason for the letter.

The answering letter simply explained the process of the rejection, said McCauley. "They (the OHF) did not, could not, or would not tell us why we were rejected. We felt we had complied with their requests."

To gain entry for the 1993/94 season, the OHF had requested that the OMHA pay any outstanding money owed the CAHA; advise the Federation board of directors of changes to the (associations') constitution for next season - specifically dealing with regional representation - discontinue all litigation against the CAHA or the Federation and any of its principals, employees or officers and make a public apology to Watt for having made "unbecoming, unacceptable and derogatory comments concerning him."

In a previously published interview, on the rejection by the OHF, OMHA president Jack White said, "I am disappointed but not surprised. Somebody betrayed us."

White said the money owed the CAHA had been paid and that he had personally signed a letter of apology to Watt. He also claimed he had provided proof that all legal action had been

dropped. "They (the OHF) took our money and ran," he said.

Ironically, both president Dave McIntyre of the AMHA and president Hal Pells of the GMHA reported an increase in registration for the upcoming hockey season locally and both insisted their respective programs wouldn't suffer because of the ongoing OMHA-OHF dispute.

"Our kids will have a place to play, and a quality program," said McIntyre. He also wondered what was behind the hockey higher-ups clash.

McIntyre also said the Acton group would remain within the OMHA.

Pells similarly wanted to assure those youngsters (and parents) that hockey in Georgetown will take precedence over the squabbles about who controls what in the province and nationally,

for that matter. "The kids will play," Pells stated emphatically. "That's all there is to it. We have programs in place and programs in development and there will be no diminishing of any of our programs."

Both Pells and McIntyre didn't feel the cross border hockey exchanges between Buffalo-area squads and Georgetown and Acton teams would be affected. Pells, however, had some concerns about both the annual Georgetown Bantam and Midget tournaments, in light of the decree laid down by MTHL president Gardner.

"Those would be the only areas where would have any real concern," said Pells, because both tournament attract MTHL teams.

"But," he said, ever the optimist, "We'll worry about that when the time comes."

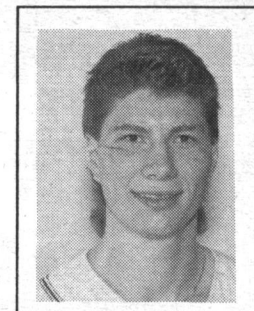


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7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Georgetown Marketplace Mall

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26

6:30 - 9:00 p.m. Alcott Arena (upstairs)

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- ▲ Registering player is requested to attend registration for signature on forms.
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