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Raiders' finest season ends with a thud

Local squad hammered 8-2 in Royal Bank Cup semifinal

The Camrose Kodiaks, fresh off an 8-2 dismantling of the Georgetown Raiders, had already left the ice but the Raiders' Dan Rogers stood for a couple of minutes at the edge of the ice, staring out at the Weyburn Colosseum.

"I just soaked up the last couple memories from being on the ice," Rogers said afterward.

Teammate Jay Sprague also couldn't bear to see the end. After going to the dressing room, he returned to sit in the front row and gazed at the empty arena.

"I feel bad. It's not the way we wanted to end it," he said. "It was the best year of my life. I just didn't want it to go away."

After a playoff run that began three months ago and led them to the national Jr. A championship in Saskatchewan, the Georgetown Raiders' hopes of winning the Royal Bank Cup came crashing down in Saturday's semifinal in Weyburn.

The Raiders, who established themselves as a team unable to stay out of the penalty box, allowed their Achilles heel to sink them in their biggest game of the

year. Camrose used three power-play goals to build an insurmountable 6-1 lead by the midway point of the game and

"When it gets to six goals, that's a big deficit," Rogers said. "We were still trying but it just snowballed. It was just too much."

Despite giving Camrose five power plays in the opening period, the Raiders were by no means out of the game, trailing 2-0. Still, they couldn't change their undisciplined ways for 40 minutes for a shot at a national title. Instead, the Raiders handed the Kodiaks five consecutive power plays in the first 12 minutes of the second.

"You can't put yourself in a situation like that or it's going to come back to haunt you," said centre Mike Nelson.

And while opponents had scored on just three of 47 power play opportunities in the tournament, the number one ranked Kodiaks finally made them pay.

Certainly, the loss of goalie John Barrow 12 minutes into the game didn't help. Barrow injured his neck in a goal-mouth pileup on the first Kodiak goal. But with the performance the Raiders put on in front of his replacement Chris Hyk, they weren't going to win with Martin Brodeur in net.

When the Raiders weren't giving Camrose power play opportunities, they were committing turnovers and giving up odd-man breaks, with a breakaway and a pair of two-on-one breaks leading to three of the goals.

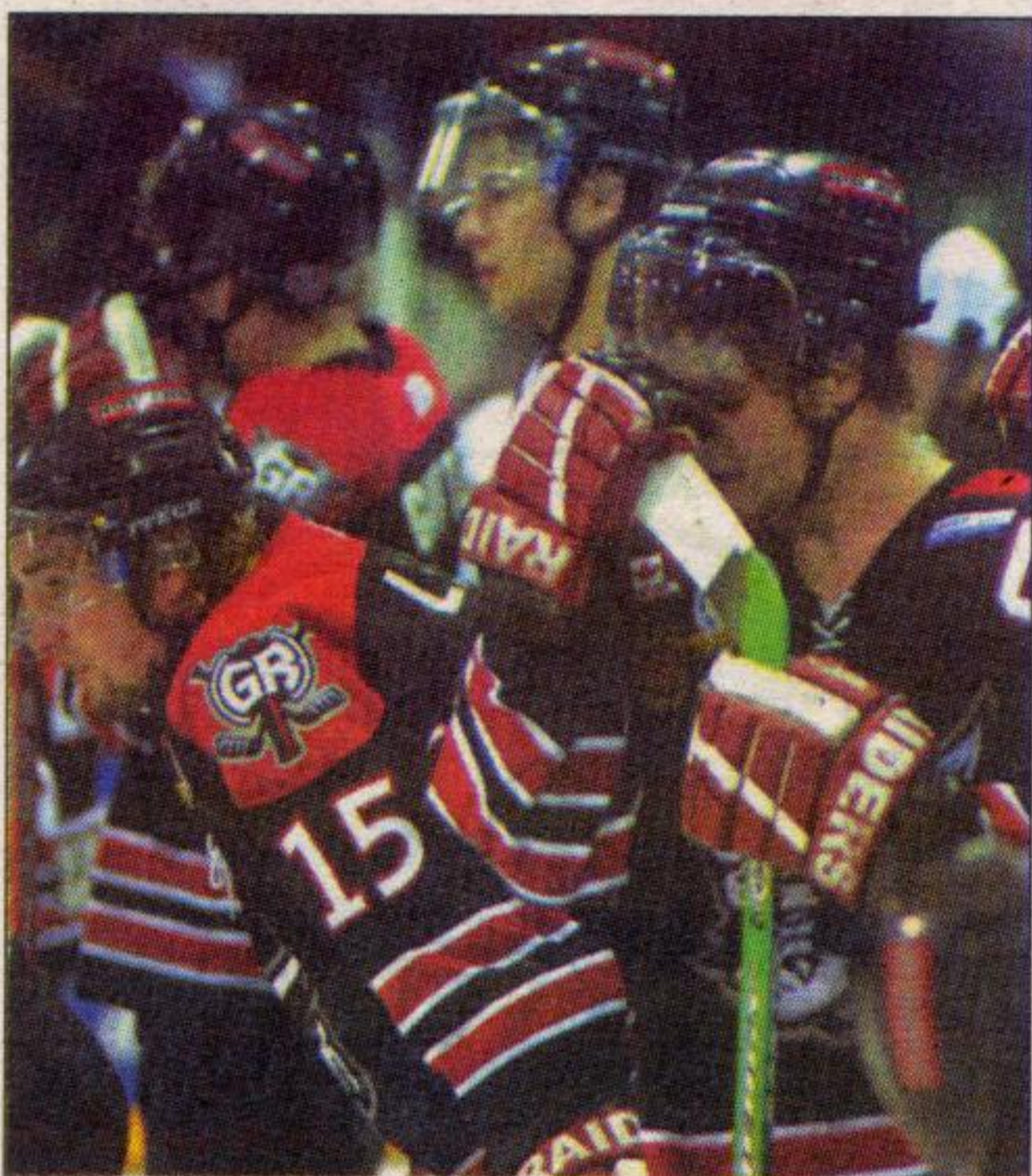
The Raiders had to have an indication that things just weren't going their way when Mason Raymond batted a waist-high clearing pass over Hyk's shoulder from the faceoff circle. Although it was followed shortly by Charles Amodeo's shorthanded goal that gave the Raiders a brief flicker of hope, the Kodiaks quickly snuffed that with two goals in 38 seconds just over two minutes later.

The Raiders were the masters of their own destiny, though. They took 137 minutes in penalties, 51 more than any other team in the tournament. And it was more than both Weyburn and Camrose, the two finalists, combined. And when they needed to keep their



Camrose's Ryan Mayko rocks Georgetown's Matt Sweazey with a hit, sending his helmet flying in Saturday's Royal Bank Cup semifinal. Camrose beat the Raiders 8-2 to advance to the final, where they lost 3-2 to the host Weyburn Red Wings. (Below) Camrose goalie Ryan Thompson gets a piece of John Wheaton's shot to send it wide.

Photos by Herb Garbutt



John Wheaton leans on his stick and Tyler Leggo (15) slumps forward following the Raiders' 8-2 loss to the Camrose Kodiaks in the national Jr. A semifinal Saturday in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

Photo by Herb Garbutt




composure, they couldn't

"The penalties got the best of us," Sprague said. "You can only take so many and we took that many."

At the end, the team that had established themselves as the tournament bad boys, couldn't hold back the tears. It was a shocking, although not entirely surprising, end to the best season in the junior team's history.



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