

Sports & Leisure

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Georgetown resident Peter Veltman (right) of the Arizona Sting chases Aaron Wilson of the Toronto Rock during the teams' National Lacrosse League season opener at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto Saturday.
Photo by Liesa Kortmann

Helps Arizona 'Sting' Rock in NLL opener Veltman relishes time in the desert

A near-capacity crowd at the Air Canada Centre on Saturday was treated to a thrilling night of lacrosse and Georgetown's Peter Veltman played a key role in helping the visiting Arizona Sting start off the season with a 14-13 overtime victory.

The 23-year-old defensive forward scored two of the Sting's eight second-quarter goals on the National Lacrosse League's reigning champs, the Toronto Rock, to give Arizona a 9-3 halftime lead.

Yet the Sting had to win the contest in extra time after the Rock rallied to tie the score late in the fourth quarter.

"We have a relatively young team and our enthusiasm got the better of us after scoring all of those goals," said Veltman from his parents' Georgetown home on Monday. "(The Rock) changed their gameplan a little in the second half and it's something we'll learn from. It was a great way to start though."

Veltman and several of his Ontario-born teammates will move to the Phoenix area this week as Arizona has three consecutive home games coming up. In his second year with the Sting, Veltman is excited about the fledgling franchise's prospects in

what is basically a virgin lacrosse market. Arizona is owned by the NHL's Phoenix Coyotes, a group headed up by Wayne Gretzky, and the club averaged about 7,000 fans at its home games last season.

Toronto defeated Arizona in last May's Champion's Cup final at the ACC.

"Our season ticket base is up this year and it helps that we've got a young exciting team," Veltman added. "Some of the players will be going into the schools to talk to kids about the sport and there are also some lacrosse camps that we're involved with. We've just got to find ways to get people into the seats."

There is also the dilemma about how he'll spend his off days, what with so many golf courses in the Phoenix area.

On the floor, Veltman is an important defensive cog in the Sting lineup, but is also contributing offensively, albeit not as often as his Jr. A career, when he scored 148 goals in 118 games. Arizona used its quick transition game to burn the Rock during line changes for a few scores in Saturday's opener.

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Raiders looking to beef up attack

The OHA Provincial Jr. A Hockey League's trade deadline passed early Wednesday and the Georgetown Raiders made one move, with perhaps one or two more surprises up their sleeves.

Georgetown dealt 20-year-old forward Austin Corredato to the North Conference's Aurora Tigers for 18-year-old winger Jeremy Whelan of Pickering. Whelan split the first part of the season with Aurora and the Mississauga IceDogs of the OHL before he was dealt to the OHL's Barrie Colts as part of a five-player trade earlier this week.

Corredato had just six goals and six assists in 17 games since being acquired from Oakville for Joey Piccone and Paul Conter in November.

Director of player personnel Peter Mavroudis explained that because the Raiders had the league limit of nine 20-year-olds per team, the trade of Corredato opens up one more spot for a much-needed veteran sniper. Mavroudis has a couple of blank cards remaining with which to sign players before the end of the regular season and said he was confident that help is coming for his offensively struggling squad.

"We really like Whelan's tenacity and aggressiveness and we know he can be a dangerous threat up front," said Mavroudis. "There are a couple of other players out there who we're waiting on to get their releases from their current clubs. We think we're a team that's made for the playoffs. The defence is there and so is the goaltending and we've addressed our goal-scoring situation—maybe."

While the fifth-place Raiders, with an 18-14-3-2 record, were looking for reinforcements, their OPJHL West Conference rivals were also loading up for the post-season. The front-running Milton IceHawks added some toughness by picking up Alex Eaton from the Barrie Colts, with the Oakville Blades and Hamilton Red Wings scooping up veteran help as well.

The Raiders will get a chance to record their first win of the season in five tries over the IceHawks—still ranked the number-one Jr. A team in the country—in Milton tonight. Georgetown will host the third-place Burlington Cougars Saturday at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex beginning at 7:30 p.m.

RAIDER RAP: Three Raiders were selected to play in the OPJHL's Future Stars Game in Bramalea on Wednesday night. Forwards Alex Paiement and George Lovatsis were held pointless in their team's 6-2 win over Georgetown goalie Cameron Healy's squad. The 16-year-old Healy was in for three goals against...The 50/50 draw prize of \$134 from last Saturday's game has so far gone unclaimed. The owner of ticket number 952511 has until 6 p.m. Saturday to claim their winnings or the amount will go into tomorrow night's draw.

—By Eamonn Maher, staff writer

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