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Raiders still a win away

Three hours after the fact, Georgetown Raider defenceman Ryan Hirtle-St. Denis was still in disbelief over his expulsion from Saturday's playoff game against the Streetsville Derbys, and his teammates were just as baffled about the evening's bizarre sequence of events.

Somehow, the stubborn Derbys avoided elimination with a 3-2 double-overtime victory over the favoured Raiders and trailed 3-2 in their increasingly intense series, with Streetsville goalie Tyler Gordon—and some controversial officials' decisions—at the centre of attention.

The Raiders were hoping to close out their best-of-seven OHA Provincial Jr. A Hockey League West Conference quarter-final with a win in Streetsville last night (Tuesday). If not, game seven will be played at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex tonight at 8 p.m.

Things started off well enough for the Raiders in Saturday's contest, with David Jarman scoring just 25 seconds into the game. But shortly after the Derbys tied the score, the proceedings took a strange twist, with Hirtle-St. Denis headed for the dressing room and Streetsville going into the intermission with a 2-1 advantage.

At the 11-minute mark of the opening frame, Derby defender Clayton Windigo

was cut down by an errant Georgetown high stick while the 20-year-old Hirtle-St. Denis was at the other end of the ice, skating off on a line change. Problem was, Raider forward Jeremy Whelan was the real culprit, and despite his protests to referee Dave Koziel, it was Hirtle-St. Denis who was assessed a five-minute major and game misconduct. With just five defencemen starting the match, Georgetown was outshot 42-35 and relied on netminder Ryan Gibb to turn in another first-star effort.

"I guess the linesman thought it was me and told the ref that I did it," said

For details on last night's game go to www.independentfreepress.com

Hirtle-St. Denis, one of just six returning Raiders from last season's Dudley Hewitt Cup championship squad. "Actually, I was on the bench when I found out about it. We can't worry about that now. You shouldn't lose a game like that at home in the playoffs."

Georgetown's Jon Southgate evened the score on a deflected point shot midway through the second period, setting the stage for an entertaining third period in front of more than 600 spectators.

The Raiders thought they had won the series late in the third after a wrap-around attempt by Erik Lundmark was finished off by forward Paul Marchese,



Streetsville's Ryan Silveira is tripped up in front of Georgetown goalkeeper Ryan Gibb on Saturday in the first period of game five of the teams' OPJHL West Conference playoff series. Streetsville won 3-2 in double OT.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

but Koziel disallowed the goal, saying Marchese had a skate in the crease.

In OT, there was another flashpoint involving the officials, one of many on the night that drew howls of protest from supporters of both clubs.

A Travis Kauffeldt goal was waved off after Gordon intentionally pushed the net off its supports with 35 seconds left in the first extra period. Kauffeldt was awarded a penalty shot for the second time in as many games, but this time missed. Then, Scott Lees potted the winner for the Derbys three minutes into the second OT

after a Georgetown defensive miscue left two wide-open forwards in front of Gibb, who felt he was tripped on the play.

In game four Friday, the Raiders again scored first on a two-man advantage before the opening period was half over and killed off all nine Streetsville power plays to grab a 3-1 win. Mike Gurtler, Kauffeldt (penalty shot) and Paul Marchese (empty net) tallied for the Raiders.

If Georgetown eliminates Streetsville, the Raiders will face Hamilton starting tomorrow (Thursday) in Hamilton.

—By Eamonn Maher, staff writer



Acton's Ashley Nixon (left) was a key contributor to the senior Bearcats' 25-21, 25-23 triumph over St. Ignatius of Loyola on Monday in the HSSAA volleyball championship match. Watching Nixon is Bearcats' captain Melissa Bigg. Photo by Eamonn Maher

Senior 'Cats, Jr. Rebels win Halton titles

The undefeated Acton Bearcats claimed their first-ever Halton Secondary School Athletic Association senior girls' AAA volleyball title by knocking off Loyola of Oakville on Monday in two straight sets at Sheridan College.

By far the smallest school by population in the Halton AAA playdowns, the Bearcats were victorious in all eight regular-season matches and both playoff encounters. They're used to being considered giant-killers, however, having won four of the five tournaments they've entered in 2005-06.

"One thing this team has done really well all year is that when they get down in a match, they're able to keep their composure and make their way back into the lead," said Acton coach Joyce Finley.

Not that Monday's match victory was a cakewalk for Acton as Loyola threatened to tie both games with late rallies. In the final set, Ashley Nixon served up the

clinging point despite sporting a goose-egg-sized bruise on her left elbow, earned by diving for a ball. Utilizing an aggressive offence headed up by captain Melissa Bigg and a stingy defence in which Jen Wieck and Kirsten Lowe shut down their opponents at the net, the Bearcats didn't allow Loyola to string many points together.

"It was a little nerve-wracking at the end, but we pulled through," said Nixon before heading to the hospital to have the fluid drained from her elbow.

The senior Bearcats are just one win away from another trip to the provincial finals and they'll host Hamilton's Bishop Ryan tomorrow in the Golden Horse-shoe title match starting at 2 p.m.

Finley was confident her girls could compete at the AAA level, but there were also some travel and financial considerations that came into play when the classifications were made at the start of the season. The OFSAA championships for

the AA level are in Dryden, while the AAA championship tournament is just an hour away in Stratford March 7-8.

Meanwhile, the Georgetown junior girls went unbeaten (10-0) during the regular season as well, and brought home another Halton title after beating Assumption of Burlington in three close games at Sheridan on Monday, prevailing 15-13 in the deciding set.

It's the seventh Halton championship for Georgetown's juniors in the past nine seasons and maintains an incredible run of 11 years for the school's volleyball program in which at least one of the teams has captured a regional crown.

The Rebels beat Nelson 2-1 in the semi-final, after having posted 2-0 sweeps of St. Thomas Aquinas and Iroquois Ridge in the preliminaries.

The senior Rebels, winners of nine of the last 10 Halton finals, lost in the semi-finals Friday to Oakville-Trafalgar 2-0.

—By Eamonn Maher, staff writer

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