

Bulldogs hope to show bite in playoffs

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Staff Writer

After a tumultuous regular season, the Halton Hills Bulldogs welcome the opportunity to open the Ontario Lacrosse Association Jr. B playoffs this week and put most thoughts of the last two months behind them.

Suspensions, controversial referees' decisions and four one-goal losses at home were just some of the nagging points that led to a 10-10 record that fell below expectations of team staff.

But as head coach Blaine McCauley said in training camp, the regular season is just a tune-up for the playoffs, and while the Bulldogs just qualified for the post-season, finishing in the eighth and final spot in the OLA's Eastern Conference, all teams are on even terms as of today.

"It's just been the craziest season. We've had so many things thrown at us this year that everyone's just glad to get a week off and start off fresh with a new season," said Bulldogs' GM Mike Hancock.

Halton Hills had a 7-3 mark at one point and looked in good shape to finish the campaign with home-floor advantage for the best-of-3 first round of playoffs. But a 4-6 home record was the worst for the club since its 0-21 washout in 1999 and the Bulldogs face

the daunting task of facing either 18-1 Oakville or 17-1 Barrie in the opening series, pending the final regular-season results this week. The good news is that Halton Hills has nearly beaten Oakville twice and haven't faced the Buzz with its full lineup in four meetings, and that a short series might appear to offer the underdog a ray of hope.



"We're remaining positive but we're not thinking anything's going to be easy," added Hancock, who scouted Oakville's first loss of the year in Mimico last week. "We've played some of our best lacrosse against them this year and the last three times we faced (Oakville) we've proven that we can challenge them. But it's clear that they're an excellent team and Barrie would be very difficult to beat as well."

Halton Hills, which was swept out of the second round of playoffs in 2005 by Oakville, hopes to get key faceoff man Adam Rutz, who has been out with a leg injury, back for the post-season. Hancock has also been impressed with the play of late-season signee David Brock from Jr. A Burlington.

The Bulldogs suffered another one

of those one-goal defeats on their home floor on Sunday night, edged 8-7 by Markham. Braden Artem fired a hat-trick for the hosts, with Cameron Flint adding a pair. Nic Grasby and Nole Coutrouzas added single markers.

Newly acquired netminder Manny Hundal got the start in goal for Halton Hills in the final two regular-season games as veteran Kyle Kennerly was given time off to rest for the playoffs.

Hundal earned the win Saturday evening in Huntsville as the Bulldogs came out slinging against the over-matched Hawks, leading 6-2 at the first intermission and 11-5 after 40 minutes. Scoring in the 13-8 victory were Brock (3), Flint (3), Mike Brown (2), Tim Walinga, Graham Knoepfli, Alex Dube, Coutrouzas and Travis Bland. Brandon Goodfellow collected six assists.

In Clarington on Thursday night, the guest Bulldogs trailed the Green Gaels 7-3 midway through the contest before rallying to tie the score at eight. But three goals in the final seven minutes of the third period sewed up an 11-8 win for the home side. Brock had another hat trick, Flint added a pair and Grasby, Knoepfli and Bland found the net once each.

Check Friday's *Independent & Free Press* for dates and times of the opening round of playoffs.

High schools honour athletes of the year

Continued from pg. 19

Georgetown District High School

Sherelle Sheppard and Corey Carlton helped lead their respective teams to Golden Horseshoe championships at the senior level.

Sheppard's hitting prowess and superb defence at shortstop boosted the Rebels to their third consecutive Halton title in girls' softball, while also excelling for the basketball, volleyball and badminton squads.

Carlton attended OFSAA championships in both boys' volleyball and doubles' badminton, while also playing varsity basketball and soccer. As well, Carlton received the school's Fred Kotani Award for sportsmanship.

GDHS's junior athletes of the year are Aaron Hnatiw and Lauren McCracken, who were also multi-sport stars for various Rebel teams. Hnatiw competed in football, track & field, badminton and swimming, while McCracken suited up for the senior girls' soccer team, badminton, hockey and junior basketball.

Christ the King

Versatility best describes both senior athletes of the year for the Jaguars. Ryan Burns played both wide receiver and defensive back for the football team and also starred in basketball and soccer, while Margareta Josipovic was an all-around standout in basketball, volleyball and tennis.

J.J. Laforet's leadership on the volleyball and basketball teams earned him the junior boys' top athlete honour. Brittney Metcalfe backstopped the Jaguars' junior girls' soccer team to its first-ever Halton title on the pitch and helped the hoops and hockey squads to the regional semi-final stage.

Acton High School

Two Bearcats who have received scholarships to attend universities in the U.S. shared the female athlete-of-the-year honours, while another honour-roll student, Mike Kosziwka, took the boys' award.

With seven golds and a silver medal to show for her four trips to OFSAA for shot put and javelin, Kaitlyn Andrews earned a full ride to Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. She also was a force on the Bearcat girls' basketball and hockey teams.

Star midfielder Melissa Bigg will attend the University of Cincinnati to play soccer for— ironically enough, the Bearcats— but the captain for the Halton champion volleyball team from Acton is multi-talented. She also teamed up with Kosziwka to capture OFSAA gold for mixed doubles in badminton.

Kosziwka also plans on earning an NCAA scholarship for hockey and was a part of the Bearcat volleyball team that qualified for OFSAA. He helped coach the girls' hockey team and will be back for another year at Acton High School in 2006-07.



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