

Local Raider enjoying the moment

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

As the lone Georgetown resident playing for the Raiders on the eve of another playoff push, winger Jon Southgate knows the expectations of the local supporters, with anything short of a banner-hanging ceremony to be viewed as a disappointment.

The 20-year-old Southgate is in his third year with the Raiders and he's gone from passenger status in his rookie campaign, when Georgetown made it all the way to the Royal Bank Cup semifinals, to a regular contributor on the 2006-07 squad, scoring 12 goals and 17 assists while missing just two games all season.

Fittingly, it appears that Southgate will be reunited with fellow longest-serving Raiders Wade Finegan and Rob Sgarbossa on one of the forward lines when their first-round OHA Provincial Jr. A Hockey League playoff series with Burlington starts this weekend. Having witnessed several other Raiders finish their junior eligibility over the past two seasons, Southgate would love to go out on a winning note.

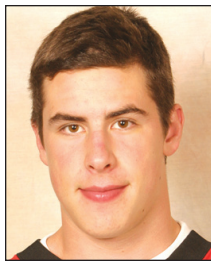
"Everything happens so fast in your last year, you just want to cherish every minute of it," said the second-year University of Guelph business/human resources student. "The potential is there for this team, the firepower is definitely there. People say we've got holes in our roster but it's good to see how we've started to get things going during the last part of the year. We just have to be more consistent."

The fourth-place 31-12-3-3 Raiders finished just one point ahead of Burlington in the OPJHL's West Division standings and at one stage enjoyed a 16-game win streak, which included the Newmarket Showcase Tournament championship in late December. But the 30-12-4-3 Cougars won 10 of their last 12 games and were

the ones who brought that long Raider streak to a halt on Jan. 26 with a 6-2 victory. Georgetown won the season series 3-1-2.

"Burlington plays tough but if we play our game, personally I don't think they have enough to beat us," Southgate added. "If they want to use intimidation to try to get us off our game, we'll let them take penalties and make them pay for it."

Goaltending promises to be an interesting matchup in the best-of-seven series, with veteran starters Keaton Hartigan of Georgetown and Burlington's Oliver Wren backed up by the very capable Marc Stuart and Eddie Davey, respectively. The Cougars are led on the blue line by 6-foot-4, 225-pound Josh Shrum, named the West Division's defenceman of the year, placing second in team scoring with 67 points. Georgetown's backline corps, headed up by Matt Thomson and Ryan Lee, was bolstered by the late-season acquisitions of much-needed left-handed shots in Evan Zych from Milton and Collingwood's Justin Wakewich.



JON SOUTHGATE

After shooting mostly blanks in their second-round playoff series loss to Hamilton last year, the Raiders addressed their offensive shortcomings with some big signings during the summer, such as Kyle Schwende, Ryan Ford and Adam DeJong. Ten players on this season's roster reached double digits in goal scoring, but the Cougars held the edge over Georgetown in both goals for (259-250) and goals against (180-158), crediting the hiring of a personal trainer for their best campaign in a decade.

"Other years we might have one guy with 50 points," said Cougars' coach Wes Wiseman, whose team has five this year. "It will be a lot harder to shut down than it has in the past. And the good thing is we didn't just go out and buy some 20-year-olds. It's been young players like Cory Conacher (22 goals, 62 points), a guy who has come up through the system and has come into his own."



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