

SPORTS & LEISURE

'Dogs show bite on road in reaching East final

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

So much for home-floor advantage being important in the playoffs.

The Halton Hills Bulldogs have now gone farther into the Ontario Lacrosse Association Jr. B post-season than ever before in the franchise's 13-year history, knocking off the host Mimico Mountaineers 7-6 on Monday night in front of a rafter-shaking, standing-room-only crowd of approximately 500 spectators.

The away team was victorious in all five games of the closely contested series, which was ironic because the two now-bitter rivals battled for the extra home game until the final days of the regular season. Mimico earned the OLA's South East Division title by just two points—only after the Bulldogs blew a big lead against Oakville in their season finale.

In a series that featured numerous lead changes, tough defence, fantastic skills and several violent incidents, Halton Hills grabbed another 2-0 early lead in Monday's deciding tilt and never trailed during the evening, taking a 6-3 advantage into the third period before hanging on for the euphoric win.

"We took the first two (in Mimico) so we felt a little confident coming in here," said Bulldogs' coach Blaine McCauley. "There are a lot of goals that we've achieved this year but this is just one stop on the way to winning a championship. It's the third stage of the mountain and we want to get to the

peak. It's going to be tough no matter who we play."

The second-year head coach was referring to the club's next opponent, the undefeated Clarington Green Gaels, who went 20-0 during the regular campaign and have swept through the first two rounds of the Eastern Conference playdowns. That series is set to start Sunday evening at the Green Gaels' new home in Bowmanville, giving the 'Dogs a much-needed six-day break to recover from the punishing matchup with Mimico.

In the eye of the storm was Bulldog goalkeeper Manny Hundal, who spent three years with the Etobicoke-based side before moving on to Halton Hills this spring. Mountaineer fans heckled the Mississauga resident relentlessly and he was run over by a former teammate just a couple of minutes into game five while retrieving a loose ball in the corner.

But as the final horn sounded, Hundal saluted his critics and the couple of hundred Halton Hills' fans in attendance before the ceremonial handshake.

"At the start of the year, (Mimico) didn't really want me so I was happy to find a new home in Halton Hills," said Hundal afterward. "Emotions were high this entire series. I've known some of the Mimico guys for 15 to 16 years now and it was tough. We didn't talk during the series until it was over and I have nothing but respect for them. It felt really good to pull this off."

Hundal also had good fortune on his side as the Mounties clanked about a dozen shots off the post or crossbar, while he made several key breakaway stops as well.

"Manny became kind of a rallying point for our boys because he took a lot of abuse and for him to come back and play the way he did in front of his former home crowd, I can't say enough about it," added McCauley. "We talk about mental toughness in our room and that's what you expect from a 21-year-old like Manny."

The visitors were also given a boost with the return of injured leading scorer Nic Grasby, who didn't find the net on Monday but was a threat to score on most shifts. The second-year Brampton Jr. A draftee agreed his team will be the overwhelming underdogs once again against the imposing Green Gaels, but pointed to a 10-8 result between the clubs in Georgetown on June 9 in their only 2007 meeting.

"They're a big team and I think they're going to try to intimidate us with their suc-



Goaltender Manny Hundal of the Halton Hills Bulldogs stops another Mountaineer scoring attempt by Michael MacRory during an OLA second-round playoff game in Mimico on Monday evening. The guest Bulldogs earned their first-ever trip to the league's Eastern Conference finals after beating the Mountaineers 7-6 in a thrilling decisive fifth game.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

cess this year, so what are you going to do? We'll just keep doing what's been successful for us," said the 17-year-old Grasby. "We're a young team but we've got guys who will do anything to win. Our goal is the Founders' Cup and that's not going to change just because we're playing someone who is undefeated."

Many of the returning Bulldogs are familiar with the David vs. Goliath scenario. In the 2006 playoffs, the Bulldogs faced eventual Founders' Cup champion Oakville in the first round, giving the Buzz a tough test in two of the three games. The Green Gaels could present an even stiffer challenge, led by 17-year-old Mark Matthews, who chalked up 99 points during the season.

Kyle Davis (2), J.J. Laforet, Brandon Goodfellow, Evan Whillans, Andrew Marcoux and Mike Burke struck for the

Halton Hills goals against Mimico on Monday night.

In game four Sunday in Georgetown, the teams were tied a three after the first period before the visitors outscored the 'Dogs 3-0 in the middle stanza. Another third-period rally by Halton Hills fell short despite several excellent opportunities, including a four-minute power play that produced nothing.

Pat Saunders tallied twice for the Bulldogs, with singles added by Burke, Laforet, Davis and Greg Henry.

Saunders and Laforet each notched hat tricks in game three on Friday in Mimico, keying a 9-6 victory over the Mounties.

Whillans, Mike Brown and Marcoux rounded out the goal scoring in a contest that was even at five early in the third period before Halton Hills reeled off four straight markers.

Georgetown golfers record early upsets

Two Georgetown golfers pulled off upsets in the first round of the Golf Association of Ontario's Junior Match Play Championships last week at the Galt Country Club and one of them made it to the quarterfinals before bowing out.

Ryan Thomson was seeded 61st out of the 64 players who qualified for the event, but he convincingly knocked off fourth-ranked Miles Thomson, an 18-year-old from Whitby, 5&4 in the opening round.

The 16-year-old Thomson then won both

of his Wednesday matches, defeating #36 Tyler Szela 2&1 of Strathroy and #45 Barrett McCarthy from Oakville 2 up, before being eliminated by #9 Adam Wilson of Port Colborne 2 up in Thursday morning's quarterfinal.

Another North Halton Golf & Country Club member, Luke Ovenden, also 16, was seeded 59th and he began by upsetting #6 Mackenzie Hughes of Dundas 1 up. Ovenden was beaten in round two by #38 Daley Byles of Barrie 1 up.



OLA Jr. B East Conference best-of-five final series

Game 1

Sunday, July 29 @ Bowmanville, 7 p.m.

Game 2

Wednesday, Aug. 1 @ Georgetown, 8 p.m.

Game 3

Thursday, Aug. 2 @ Bowmanville, 8 p.m.

x-Game 4

Saturday, Aug. 4 @ Georgetown, 7 p.m.

x-Game 5

Sunday, Aug. 5 @ Bowmanville, 7 p.m.

x-if necessary

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