

SPORTS & LEISURE

Bulldogs, Gaels all square after two games

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

A tense one-goal playoff game, just a few seconds left in regulation time, two of the top offensive teams in Ontario Jr. B lacrosse and not a goalie to be found on the floor.

Trying to predict a winner in the Ontario Lacrosse Association East Conference best-of-5 semifinal series between the Halton Hills Bulldogs and the Green Gaels of Clarington would be a time-wasting exercise, as the first two games provided enough strange occurrences to wipe out any expectations.

After playing an ideal road game Saturday in Clarington to open the series, grabbing a 6-4 win, the Bulldogs were unable to put a stranglehold on the Green Gaels, who evened the matchup 1-1 with a 9-8 triumph at the Alcott Arena on Sunday afternoon.

Each team had lost just once at home during the regular season and the Bulldogs hadn't scored a win on the Gaels' turf in the 'Dogs' 13-year history until shutting down the defending East Conference champs in game one.

Halton Hills took a 4-1 lead after the first period and even after the hosts rallied to tie, goals by Mike Burke and Pat Saunders sent the 'Dogs on a jubilant bus ride home.

Ryan Haynes, Matt Laidlaw, Saunders and Nic Grasby had given the visitors the early advantage.

After the quick turnaround, the Bulldogs looked to be just as determined and effective defensively in game two, holding a 3-2 lead near the midway point of the contest. But two shorthanded goals by Clarington less than a minute apart came thanks to some rare transition miscues by coach Blaine McCauley's side, and the Gaels struck three more times early in the third period, which proved to be the difference in the outcome.

Burke, an 18-year-old forward from



Peter Laidlaw, 11, of the Halton Hills Bulldogs looks for a rebound as Clarington Green Gaels' goalie Zack Higgins, corrals the loose ball during the Gaels' 9-8 win Sunday at Alcott Arena. The Bulldogs won the opener in the best-of-5 semifinal series by posting a 6-4 win in Clarington. Game three goes tomorrow in Clarington with the 'Dogs hosting game four Saturday at Alcott at 7:30 p.m.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

Caledon East, scored four times for Halton Hills on Sunday and nearly potted the equalizer with teammate goalie Mike Cregan on the bench for the extra attacker in the final minute of the third period, with the Gaels leading 9-8, setting the stage for a

frantic finish.

Clarington earned possession of the ball with 17 seconds left on the clock and then decided to pull its netminder, Zack Higgins, to play keepaway and hopefully get a shot at the empty Bulldog goal. A scoring attempt

missed and a couple of Halton Hills players subsequently had shots just miss the target before time expired.

"That was pretty close at the end. A few inches here or there and it could've gone into overtime," said Burke, who has committed to attend Hofstra University at Long Island, N.Y. on a field lacrosse scholarship starting in September 2009.

"We had a great chance to tie six on five and I thought we did a pretty good job. We just didn't capitalize. There were a few mental lapses during the game that hurt us and I thought we needed to move a little more on offence. If we do that and get out on top of them on their shots, then we can beat them. They're a very talented team and we knew it wasn't going to be a three-game sweep, especially after winning in their barn (Saturday) night."

Also finding the net for the Bulldogs Sunday were Grasby, Saunders, Kody Lyons and Mike Brown.

Game three of the series will be played Thursday night in Clarington at 8 p.m., followed by game four at the Alcott Arena Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

If a fifth game is needed it will take place Monday in Clarington at 8 p.m.

Trying to knock off the Gaels may have become more difficult for the Bulldogs as four Clarington players who were attending the World Under-19 Field Lacrosse Championships in B.C. are expected back for game three.

"They're going to have players coming back but it doesn't matter who we play against, we're going to carry out the same game plan," added Burke. "It's only a few players and they don't make a team. Hopefully we'll be able to handle them."

In the other OLA East Conference semifinal, the road team also prevailed in the first two games over the weekend between first-place Oakville and sixth-ranked Mimico.

Local lacrosse stars to host camp next week

ANDREA LEFEBVRE
Advertising Features Writer

Summer is here and the ice has melted, which means that it's time for Canada's other national sport: lacrosse.

Next week, young lacrosse players in Halton Hills will have the chance to learn the game from two guys who really know their stuff. Travis Bland and Matt Lyons, two big names in local lacrosse circles, will be running Behind the Back Lacrosse Camp at Mold-Masters SportsPlex for one week only starting July 21.

Bland and Lyons are well known to local

sports fans. Both played minor lacrosse with the Halton Hills Bulldogs before continuing their careers with other teams. Bland spent the last season playing senior B lacrosse with the Ajax-Pickering Rock, where he led the league in points. Lyons plays professional lacrosse with the Rochester Knighthawks in the National Lacrosse League.

Bland and Lyons are combining their skills and years of experience to share with the next generation of Halton Hills lacrosse players. Each day of the week-long camp will be split between drills and games for both box (indoor) and field (outdoor) lacrosse.

"We want to give the kids a better under-

standing of both box and field lacrosse," Bland says. "Georgetown has a good box lacrosse system, but we want to get all kids playing both."

Behind the Back Lacrosse Camp runs July 21-25 at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex for kids aged 8 to 14. The cost is \$250 and includes a T-shirt and lunch on Friday. Space is still available. For more information, contact Travis Bland at 416-988-9286.

Local lacrosse stars Travis Bland, left, and Matt Lyons will be holding a lacrosse camp next week. *Photo by Ted Brown*



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