

OHA Central Junior "B" preview

Junior clubs start hunt for top dog Derbys

Eight teams go to the post this weekend, as the race for the '77-78 OHA Central Junior "B" League pennant and six play-off berths opens.

Streetsville Derbys, two time group champions and '76-77 OHA finalists, will try to make it three in a row against the '76-77 regular season pennant winners Oakville Blades, Burlington Cougars, Milton Flyers, Georgetown Gemini, Brampton Chevys, Acton Sabres and Dixie Beehives.

There are four new coaches and four returnees. Rookie mentors include Eric Wilson in Brampton, John "Scotty" Watson in Dixie, Bruce Chapman in Acton and Brian McCarthy in Burlington. Back behind the bench again are Streetsville's Tom Barrett, Milton's Gerry Inglis, Oakville's Eric Smith and Georgetown's Paul Robinson.

The Dixie club, formerly known as "Ventures", was renamed "Beehives" when Howard Pallett, veteran hockey exec took over ownership of the club again. The Brampton Minor Hockey Association has bought the junior club there, although the nickname, Logan's Chevys, remains the same.

This week, sports editors Denis Gibbons of The Independent, Georgetown, John Bottomley of The Acton Free Press and Peter McCusker of The Milton Canadian Champion, combine efforts to present the Dills Publishing newspapers' annual preview of OHA Central Junior "B" teams.

DIXIE BEEHIVES

Things appear to be back to normal in "Dixieland". Howard Pallett has his Junior "B" hockey club back and the Junior "B" Beehives really will be a farm club for the Tier 2 Junior "A" squad.

Pallett, one of the most respected junior hockey owners in the province, bought back the Ventures and renamed them the "Beehives", restoring a Junior "B" hockey tradition that has produced NHL stars like Vic Hadfield and Fred Stanfield in the past.

The "Dean of Dixie" is determined to rebuild his Tier 2 Junior "A" Beehives, who have finished in the Provincial League cellar two years in a row, using the Junior "B" club as a training ground for prospects. Bill Buchan, whom Pallett has hired as general manager of both clubs, promises there'll be no repeat of the reverse airlift which saw the Junior "B" Ventures load up with players from the floundering Junior "A" Beehives just before playoff time the past two seasons.

The Junior "A" Beehives have already shown they mean business by winning four straight exhibition games, then upsetting Ron Smith's powerful Guelph Platers right in Guelph Memorial Gardens on the opening night of the regular season. Four ex-Ventures, John Higgins, Rory Carroll, Russ Foster and Bill Shutt are now with the "A" club.

Neither Grant Sloane nor Peter Lennon, who tended goal for the Ventures last season, will be back. Sloane, one of the Central group's best netminders over the last two seasons, has decided to concentrate on first year studies at U of T. Lennon has signed with the Tier 2 Junior "A" Royal York Rangers. The Junior "B" Beehives will also find veterans Robbie May, Guy Mortson and Barry Carroll hard to replace. All three went overage.

Coach John "Scotty" Watson and manager Bill McMahon are left with only two experienced players and a bushel full of rookies. The Junior "B" Beehives are rebuilding and are not expected to hold on to the second place their predecessors, the Ventures, grabbed last season.

Right winger Ross Belcher is the only Venture returning to the "B" club. The only other player with Junior "B" experience signed, so far, is defenceman Lloyd Moore, who toiled last year for the lowly Acton Sabres. Gord Michaud from Mississauga midgets and Rob Spath from the Dorset Park Bruins are the other rearguards on cards, so far.

Up front, Bob Neiser and Tom Raptapoulous from Mississauga midgets, Dave Poulin and Steve Cruikshank from Mississauga juveniles, Sean Mumelequette from Clarkson and Jeff Black, who played college hockey in Western Canada last year, have been inked to cards.

The Beehive Bs will rely on Gary Davis from North York juveniles and Mississauga midgets' grad Orst Opychek to handle their goaltending chores.

The young Beehives have not looked all that bad in preseason games, dropping a pair of close 6-4 decisions to St. Michael's of the Metro Junior "B" group. But it may take the rookies a while to warm up to Junior "B" competition and Beehives will likely be battling to grab a playoff spot, rather than the pennant, come February.

GEORGETOWN GEMINI

Georgetown Gemini surprised all the experts by finishing third with a respectable 19-14-3 record in their first season of Junior "B" competition two years ago, but last year Gems slumped both on the ice and at the box office, finishing fifth with a sub .500 record and dropping an average of 200 fans per game.

Gems are hoping to climb back up into the first division using a roster divided almost equally between experienced Junior "B" players and 17 year olds, fresh out of midget. The club is trying to forget the internal spats which plagued them last season and start the '77-78 season with a positive outlook. Bob Thompson, who formerly worked successfully with minor hockey in Georgetown, has taken over as club president. Paul Robinson and Bob Tost are back for their third terms as coach and manager, respectively.

A major reason for Gemini optimism is the return of sharpshooter Doug Barnes, whose 39 goals and 39 assists last year, left him just a point shy of Acton's Dave Chapman for the individual scoring championship. Barnes' play is hot and cold, but when he's in high gear, he's the best player in the league.

Also returning are Terry "Tex" Turner, a hard-nosed little centre who tallied 8 goals and 26 assists in the regular season and was Gems' best post-season player, centre Mike Richmond, a 17 goal scorer in his rookie season, winger Paul Martin, who fired 9 goals and assisted on 22 as a rookie, and towering defenceman Joe South, a 1976 draft choice of the Major Junior "A" Kitchener Rangers. Paul Allison another skyscraper who can play both forward and defence has signed as has Marty Kendall, who joined the club after Christmas last year, Allison scored 7 goals after moving up from Georgetown juveniles in mid-season.

Four players are fighting it out for the number 1 goaltending job left vacant by the graduation of reliable Rick Tomkinson. They include Tomkinson's backup man Brad Miller, Ken Eckroth, who played with the Gems two years ago and with Acton Sabres last season, juvenile Glenn Tost and Bill Humphries, a graduate of Georgetown midgets.

Manager Bob Tost has signed three rookies, defenceman Bob McCandless and wingers Tim Turner (Terry's younger brother) and Bob Allison. All three played last season with Georgetown midgets. Locals Andy Broadbent, Terry Crawford, Blake Emmerson and Frank Routheit are also trying out, along with Mississauga youngsters, Tony Gininni, Chris Chapman, Frank Pointeck and Doug Reeves and Bill

Barber, a graduate of the Bolton midget club.

Gems' success will depend to a large degree on what defenceman Bill Allison and winger Dale Mieczanec, a pair of proven Junior "B" players, decide to do. Both have attended training camp sessions, after sitting out last season while they got their feet wet in university studies.

Gems lost eight players to overage, including Tomkinson, defenceman Larry Peterson, who set the league on fire with 52 goals in two seasons of play, 17 goal sniper Charlie Knoepfli, Ian Syme, a 16 goal marksman, Tom Fendley, Bill Kirby, Bruce Bailey and Bill McGilloy, Kevin Reeks and Mike Osborne will concentrate on studies and centre Chris Milne was still with the Tier 2 Junior "A" Guelph Platers at press time.

In exhibition play, Gems downed Thornhill 8-6, but lost 6-4 to Caledonia.

BURLINGTON COUGARS

Optimism abounds with this second year club. The Cougars, formerly Burlington Mohawks, finished in second place behind Oakville last year. In the playoffs they lost out to Streetsville in six games of the opening round.

There are nine returning veterans to the club, and with a tough group of enthusiastic rookies, plan to make waves.

The Cougars had 85 players to training camp and have cut to 23. There are still three cuts to be made but manager Mike McCauley said it will be tough to decide who goes.

The club has four netminders who have all turned in super exhibitions and practises. According to team officials the Cougars are a more balanced club this year with four strong forward lines, a tough defence and four goalies.

One of the outstanding additions is Todd Pearson, who is up from the Burlington Midgets in net. Dave Beckon, also up

work at building enthusiasm on the squad.

He has also done a lot to clean up the Sabres game. He wants his players on the ice for games instead of in the penalty box, and their play in exhibition has shown that they are keeping their heads better than last year.

Ages on the team range from 15-year-old Kelly MacArthur expected to be a standout, to 20-year-olds Chapman, Doug Elliott and Cudney. Overall the team will be fast and small although there are a few larger players.

They have been training since August, so it will be a team in shape from game one, which will give them an edge in the early going.

BRAMPTON

The big news from Brampton is the takeover of the Junior B Chevys by the Brampton Minor Hockey Association. After some initial skepticism on the part of some of last year's players about the move, things have smoothed out and the organization is running fine. All the players approached have agreed to play, according to new coach Eric Wilson.

Wilson has scouted the league for the last few years for the Sudbury Junior A squad, and says he knows the calibre of play needed to win in Junior B. He feels he has it on his team, figuring the title fight will be between his team and the Streetsville Derbys.

One thing the team will have according to Wilson, is size. He is looking to play tough clean hockey this year.

Six forwards return to the lineup from last year, including Paul Cook and John Wright, players Wilson is predicting will end up in the top ten in scoring for league. On defence Gord Smith is back, and Wilson describes him as one of the premier defensive players in the loop.

The team is a young one, losing only two players to overage at the end of the season. Average age is 17½ and the team includes at least three overage midgets and one minor midget.

There are three goalies in camp right now, and all are close enough that Wilson is planning to carry all three at the start of the season.

So far the Chevys have been impressive in exhibition play, topping the Toronto Red Wings by a 5-0 margin and smothering the Sheridan Bruins 9-3.

Because of the relative youth of the team, the club is looking to the future, according to team official D. R. Crawford. Nonetheless, he confidently predicted that his team will finish in first place this year, after last year's fifth place showing.



FLYER ROD GOODING let fly with this shot which just skimmed over the Thornhill net in the first period of action Sunday evening. Flyers came out with an 8-6 win and are

ready to host Oakville Sunday in the first regular season game.

STREETSVILLE DERBYS

If they're able to ice enough players for every game, Streetsville Derbys look like a cinch to win their third straight group championship and perhaps the OHA crown that just eluded them last season when they lost to Stratford in the provincial finals.

Tom Barrett's Derbys have never had a problem scoring goals, but they haven't always been able to convince OHA referees that their roughhouse style of play is in the best interest of hockey. Barrett says hockey is a rough game, but opponents have charged Streetsville with intimidation.

Derbys must open the regular season against Georgetown, Friday night, with 11 players out of the lineup. All picked up suspensions in preseason games, as the Derbys lost twice to Hamilton, but beat Waterloo and Toronto Red Wings. Manager Russ Evans says he'll fill out his opening game roster with midgets and juveniles.

Evans feels the '77-78 Derbys will be stronger than the past two group champions, in spite of the loss of several standouts. Jim Gibson the club's MVP, will play at Cornell University, defenceman Danny Sutton has gone to Michigan State, Gord Stanfield is overage, Steve Dickson is headed for St. Mary's U. in Halifax and young Steve Wicklum has signed with the Major Junior "A" Niagara Falls Flyers. Both regular goalies are also gone. Dave Quennell will attend Brock University and Bill Drewery has quit.

Derbys have signed experienced forwards Jim Baker and Bill Brodie, who came to the club in the middle of last season from the Tier 2 Junior "A" Dixie Beehives, and two rookies from North Bay, goalie Rick Laferrriere and defenceman Moe Mantha. Laferrriere played 15 games for the Tier 2 Junior "A" North Bay Trappers as a juvenile last season. Mantha is the son of the ex-pro of the same name.

Reliable returnees, George Chandler, Randy Strong, Gary Venner, Steve Blair, Leo Brideau, Scott Snarr, Reb Brooks, Mike Prestidge and Jim Boyington should give opposition goalies plenty of trouble, if they sign. Boyington has Major Junior "A" experience with Sault Ste. Marie. Also back in camp is rearguard Len Bryant, who left the club to play in the Toronto Marlies' chain last season.

Paul Bates, who played last year with the Tier 2 Junior "A" Toronto Nationals, is trying to grab a regular spot in the Derby Lineup, but the best newcomer in Streetsville this winter could be frontliner Graham Hall. Hall, a graduate of Mississauga midgets, came to the Derbys recently when Barrett traded utility forward Chris Costello, a proven Junior "B" hockey player.

Hall will miss the first six weeks of the schedule with torn knee ligaments, but Barrett has already paid the youngster a compliment by calling him "a young Gibson", in reference to his club's MVP last year. Dixie's Howard Pallett agrees that Hall is a topnotch prospect.

Barrett says Derbys are having their best camp ever in his eight years as coach. He's hinted that there could be some surprise cuts.

Attacking forwards will be pleased to know that Derbys' giant 6'5" 220 lb. defenceman, Gary Purden, is overage.

OAKVILLE BLADES

It was supposed to be a rebuilding year for the Oakville Blades last year but they finished the season in first place. This year, once again, they're supposed to have a raft of young inexperienced rookies with seven returning players.

Team manager Murray Walker said he has a young team with a lot of spirit. "The boys are hustling, eager and have the ability to learn. That's all you can ask for," Walker said. He will make no predictions.

In preseason exhibitions Oakville dumped Dundas 2-0 and 12-2 but fell to Hespler Shamrocks 7-5 and 8-5. Blades open their regular season Sunday when they travel to Milton to meet the Flyers. It was Milton who upset the Blades in the playoffs last year.

Returning for Blades are Doug Taylor, Bruce Vaughan, Eric Medland, Willie McFarlane, Todd Inouye, Brian Marvel and Shane Pavette.

from the midgets, scored a few goals in exhibition series. Tyler Trute and Mike Halstead have shored up the defensive line. Halstead is reported to be big at 6'1" and 185 lbs. and will add ruggedness.

There are nine returning players from last year's team, Jim Cochrane, Kevin Charbonneau, Bob Coppertwaite, Art Joyce, Wayne McLeod and Greg Moore, Rob Rose, Ron Royal and Brian Smith.

In exhibitions Cougars won two and lost two. They edged Hamilton Kilties 6-4 and 7-5 and lost to Caledonia Corvairs 4-2 and Waterloo Siskins 8-2.

In summary Burlington will be strong offensively and no slouches around their own net. They'll have the required muscle and speed. They've had to convert centre men to wingers and changed a few defencemen to forward positions.

MILTON FLYERS

Milton Continental Flyers coach Gerry Inglis said this year they are trying to go with as many local boys as possible, and "they look as good as anyone we can bring in," Inglis said.

Milton had nine rookies in the lineup against Thornhill Sunday night in the 8-6 exhibition win. Inglis said Brett Patterson, Brian Gordon and Mike Murray all played well.

In the goaltending department the Flyers' strength is debatable. Veteran Ian Roberts may have a few problems handling school, a job and playing with Flyers this year as he tackles grade 12 and a few 13 subjects. Mike Shepherd is the rookie goalie who played extremely well in the final two periods Sunday night.

"If everything goes well we should be respectable," Inglis said. He noted that between Milton and Acton they held the league down last year, and the only place left to go is up.

Returning from last year's club are captain Ron Twiss, Bruce Ellison, Rod Gooding, Steve Hannah, Rick Jacklin, Derrick Griffiths, Jeff Lyons, Paul McCann, Pierre Pilote and Ian Roberts.

Milton finished in the final playoff spot last year and took on first place Oakville.

Other rookies in the lineup include Rob Frame, Jamie Vickery, Todd Sheppard, Joe Gardin and Mike Martin.

It should be interesting to see Flyers host Oakville Blades at Milton Memorial Arena on Thompson Rd., Sunday evening at 7 p.m.

ACTON

The Sabres, who were baptized into Junior B play last season with a record of three wins, two ties and 37 losses, definitely plan to do better this year.

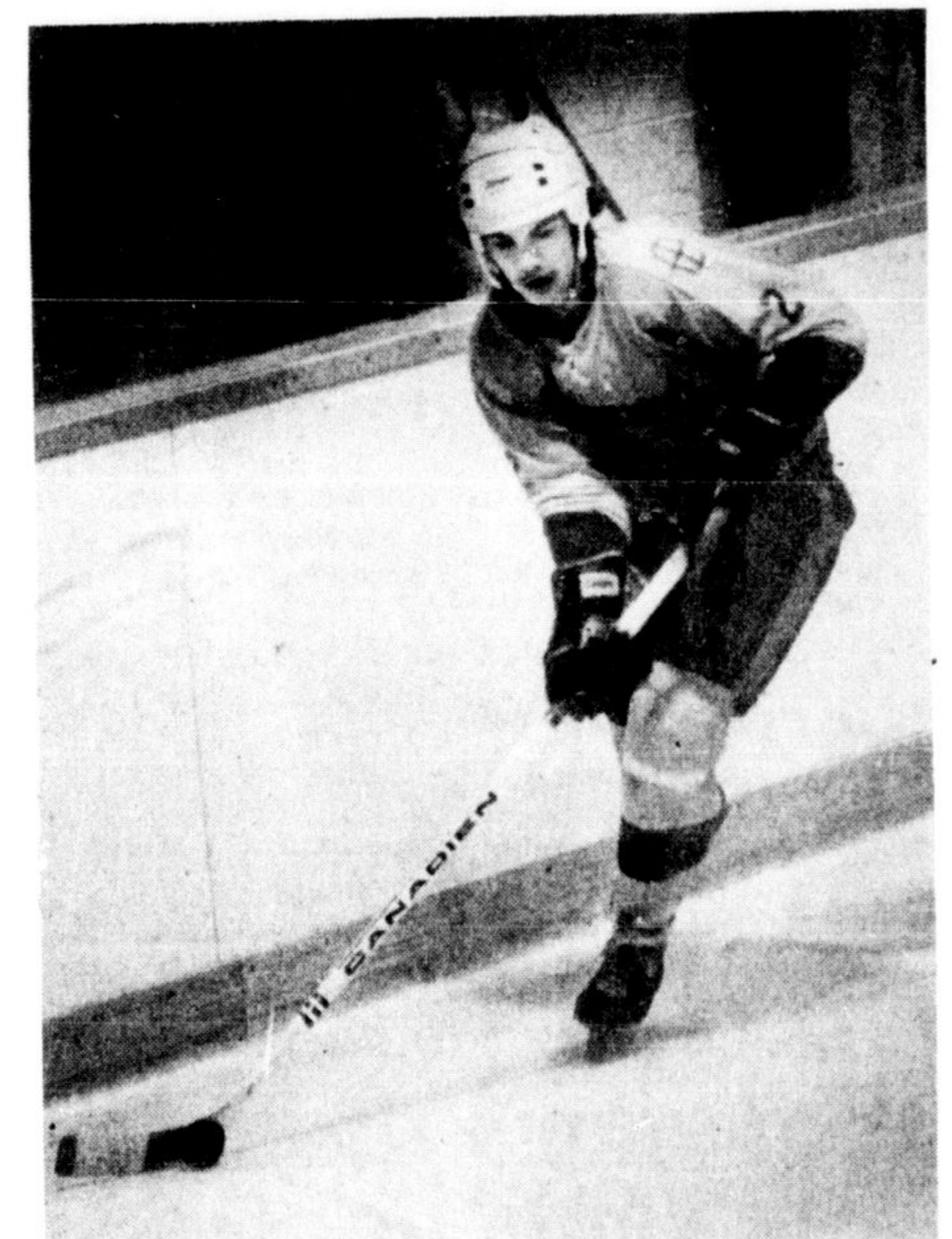
They are helped in their efforts by the return of their two top players from last year, league scoring champion Dave Chapman and goalie Kent Moffatt, one of the best in the loop.

The weak spot on the team will be defence again this year. The only two players returning from last year's defensive unit are Bud Buchanan and Rick Widmont, and the situation has the management looking all around the league for experienced players to help them out. One they expect to sign is Jim Cudney, who played for the Blades two years ago. Mike Major, from Guelph, is also a good looking prospect.

Forwards are looking better this year than last, with Chapman back and Peter Wiklum and the 16-year-old line of Dave McGilloway, Scott Malcolm and Wade Vickery all looking good in the Sabres two exhibition losses.

Both losses came at the hands of Port Colborne, and were considerably closer than last year's 10-0 debacle against the same squad. The improvement has raised hopes in the Sabre camp.

There is a winning attitude among the players this year, as nobody on the team wants to play through a repeat of last year's performance. Partly responsible for the turnaround in attitude is new coach Bruce Chapman who has done a lot of



FLYER RICK JACKLIN scored one and assisted on another in Sunday's exhibition with Thornhill.

Flyers pull win in third period

A third period rally saved Milton Flyers from falling to Thornhill in an exhibition game here Sunday evening. Flyers won 8-6 after tallying four markers in the final period.

It was the first time this year that the new fight ruling was enforced by officials here as Joe Gardin was handed a game misconduct after a fight in the first period.

Gardin wasn't in the fight, he was watching. But the new OHA ruling is that officials can toss a player out of the game if he refuses to return to his team's bench after being ordered to do so by the referee.

So Gardin was in the showers early. In the game Flyers edged Thornhill in a penalty plagued display. Flyers were down 3-1 after the first period of play as Mike Martin tallied the only Milton marker, with Brian Gordon and Paul McCann assisting. Thornhill's Bruce Clatworthy nailed two and Mike Johns scored one for the lead.

At the end of two periods Flyers were still down one goal 5-4 as Pierre Pilote, Bruce Ellison and Rick Jacklin scored for Flyers. Rocky Pantalano and Reg Pitts added singles to keep Thornhill in the lead.

Flyers turned the game around in the third period, blasting four past Thornhill netminder Scott Collins. Captain Ron Twiss scored the first two, assisted by Rod Gooding and Brian Gordon. Paul McCann scored late in the third period assisted by Pilote and Ellison. Brian Gordon scored Flyer's insurance goal unassisted with just over a minute remaining.

Mike McCluskey scored the only third period goal for Thornhill. Flyers open their regular season schedule against Oakville here Oct. 2, travel to Dixie, Oct. 6 and are at home with Burlington Oct. 7.