

## Athletics suffer pair of losses

by Garry Forbes  
Midland Athletics suffered two losses in their first two Ontario Hockey Association Intermediate A league games on the weekend, but they're still far from discouraged.

The A's lost a heart-breaker Friday when the league champion Georgetown Raiders scored with nine seconds left in regulation time and then scored again at 7:33 of overtime to claim a 7-6 win.

In Sunday's home opener, it was Orillia Terriers playing the spoiler, dumping Midland 6-3.

**Terriers 6,  
Athletics 3**



**Raiders 7,  
Athletics 6**

Last year at this time, it was painfully obvious to the Athletics that their first year in business was going to be a long, troublesome one. And they were right, taking it on the chin at every turn and finishing the season in the cellar.

This year, however, manager Shawn Stewart is confident that, despite the two opening losses, the club will spring to life. He says the others will, as happened Friday night, have to put up a good fight to put the A's down this time.

"We just have to work a little more on our systems," Stewart says. "We've got to work on some more plays and get our lines finally straightened out. We're still just feeling things out, and in another couple of games we'll be on top of our game. It's obvious we're an improved club, and by the way we've been playing, and we'll show it by winning soon enough."

The A's opened the scoring Sunday at 1:24 of the first period on a goal by Marc Duquette, assisted by team captain Ken Knapton.

Orillia responded with three goals in the second period before Knapton made it 3-2 late in the frame with assists from Duquette and Hugh Robertson. The Terriers widened the gap to 5-2 early in the third - one a power play goal - before Doug Gillespie added another for Midland on a play from Wayne Dixon.

It just wasn't enough, however, to shake the fast-rushing Terriers from their command, and they put it safely out of reach with a final goal with little more than three minutes remaining.

Terriers goals were scored by Doug Shelswell, Gord Wiles, Steve Bice, Al Fenton, Warren Howes and Doug Taylor.

Midland goaltender Craig Watson had a busy night, facing a total of 50 shots. Terriers netminder Clyde Harris took 33 from A's shooters.

Midland was



### One of 50

Midland Athletics goaltender Craig Watson fields one of the 50 shots aimed his way during Sunday's home opener

against the Orillia Terriers at Midland Arena. Watson allowed six goals in the game and his teammates responded with

only three, giving them their second loss of the young season.

penalized for 18 minutes, Orillia 10.

The Athletics also opened the scoring in Friday's matchup, benefiting from two goals by last year's top scorer Terry Spiker - both assisted by Gary Hansford and Ross Cousineau - to take a 2-1 first period lead.

Then, with a little

more than five minutes gone in the middle frame, Midland found themselves in the unfamiliar position of having a four-goal lead after Doug McMann, Ken Knapton and Hansford all found the net.

But, true to Stewart's observation that "these guys just never stop

coming at you," Georgetown regained their championship form and answered the threat with two goals late in the second and two more up to the midway point of the third. Bruce Guthrie scored once more for Midland to put his club back into the lead, but Georgetown's constant

pressure resulted in their goal with nine seconds showing on the clock.

The overtime rule is a new one in the OHA, allowing a 10-minute sudden-death period. And Georgetown took full advantage of the change, pressuring Midland throughout and robbing them of a point

with a goal three-quarters of the way into the extra frame.

Peter Sturgeon scored twice for the Raiders, and singles were had by Rick Kessell, Steve Lyon, John Cook and Bill Hamelton.

Watson received 44 shots in the Midland net. His teammates fired 34 at the Georgetown goal.



### Sidelines

by Garry Forbes

Be clean then; rot before you do  
A thing they'd not believe of you  
--A. E. Housman,  
"A Shropshire Lad"

It was good weather for rugby: cool breezes, gray skies shielding the sun and ground damp but not soggy.

The referee blew the whistle to end the shortened match. The teams gathered at the sidelines near the dozen or so heavily-bundled spectators, gave the customary rugby cheers, applause and handshakes, and picked up their bags.

Most of the players laughed and joked on the way to their cars. They promised to gather and indulge in another great rugby tradition, the post game pint and chatter.

John Nix, co-coach of the Midland Bulls, wouldn't be taking part in the clubhouse clamor today. It wasn't just because he was upset, but also had a lot to do, as sometimes happens, with his having to get home.

The fact remained, however, that John was upset. Visibly, audibly, physically. Everybody knew why, everybody understood, and nobody blamed him for it.

The Bulls had come to Barrie with nine men of a 15-man team. That meant a forfeit and automatic 9-0 scrawl on the record books. But no matter, the diminished Midland club had come to play

a little rugby. And that they would do. The hosts loaned the Bulls a couple of players and fielded 14 themselves.

They then proceeded to score at will. The Bulls-plus-two gave it everything they had, but it soon became painfully apparent that this was something less than a little rugby. This was almost nothing.

It didn't really bother most of the players. They did what they could against unbeaten Barrie, probably the best club in the Mid-Ontario Rugby Union and probably a division better than Midland. To most of the players, it just didn't matter enough to get upset about.

Most players, however, aren't John Nix. Most players haven't played the game for 18 years, didn't play at the University of Marseilles, haven't been asked to join Canadian clubs touring overseas. And few players love rugby as much as John Nix. He is a proud man, a spirited man, and he becomes frustrated when circumstances cause to happen what happened that cold day in Barrie.

What frustrates him the most is that he knows he has a good band of teammates, others who enjoy the rigour, the physical and mental demands and the basic philosophy of rugby as much as he does. But he also knows there are other able-bodied athletes in Midland and environs

who, through misunderstanding of the game or various other reasons, won't give the sport a chance. Thus, Midland rugby suffers, not from lack of effort on the part of those involved, but from lack of interest from those who might, but refuse to, glance its way.

To those of you who've given it at least this much of a chance by glancing this far down this column, you might as well understand a few basic things about the sport.

First, and foremost, rugby will not kill you. Despite outward appearances and rumours to the opposite, there are very few serious injuries incurred in rugby. Someone counted the number of high school football players carried off the field in a recent local game: there were nine. Nix hasn't seen nine rugby players carried off the field in five seasons' total.

None of the high school players were hurt seriously, just as most of the pro football players who leave the field aren't hurt seriously. Rugby players stay on the field with their bruises, minor cuts and twists - a fact which probably sparked the popular belief that it's a game for crazies. Fact is, many of the players in the Bulls' union are teachers - as Nix is - or doctors or lawyers or university students. And they don't stay on because there are no

substitutions. They stay on because they want to play the game.

Another related view is that it's the world's dirtiest sporting activity. Wrong again, - unless it's a muddy field. Yes, there's a single referee to control 30 players in fast, close, physical action, and you can get elbowed, kneed, tackled hard and stepped on a lot. But fights are virtually unheard of. You've more chance of not making it to work Monday as the result of a Saturday night in a good rollicking bar than from a Saturday afternoon on the rugby field.

For further comfort on this issue, and by way of comparison with a related, but gentler sport, have reference to this old-country adage: That soccer is a game for gentlemen played by animals; rugby is a game for animals played by gentlemen.

One final point: rugby players seldom take shots at other sports, because most of them play a lot of other sports. They play rugby, and enjoy it the most, because it combines their favorite aspects of most popular games. To rugby players, it's the ultimate.

And when you think about it, or watch it, you'll wonder how any real sports fan could disagree.

If you do disagree, though, don't tell it to John Nix. He doesn't need the heartache.

## Don't nix this sport