

Essex native scores with reality TV

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Ward 1 Councillor Randy Voakes can remember heading to Essex Memorial Arena years ago to watch his nephew Craig strap on his skates and hit the ice for more than a few early-morning hockey games.

Now, all Voakes has to do to see his nephew in action is turn on his TV.

Twenty-year-old Craig Voakes is a feature player on the Global series Making the Cut - Last Man Standing, which is airing this fall.

Craig grew up in Essex and played minor hockey here until 1994 when the family moved to St. Thomas, Ont. His father Ron is part of the Voakes family of four sons and a daughter- Gary, Randy, Ron, Glenn and Jen-A-Lee.

The reality TV show, now in its second season, pits 36 hockey players on two teams against each other. After training, scrimmages and subsequent cuts, only one player remains the 'last man standing.'

Voakes said he remembers visiting Craig in St. Thomas this past summer when he received a call from the office

of Mike Keenan, Stanley Cup winning coach and general manager of the show. Craig didn't send an "audition tape," pitching himself for the program. The five-foot-11-inch centre for the Windsor Spitfires, who scored 24 goals and 29 assists in the 2005-2006 season with the Kitchener Rangers, was recruited.

"Craig was a little surprised," Voakes said. "But I don't think he stalled too much on making that decision. Any time you get a call from someone of that stature in the sport, what else are you going to do but accept it?"

At the time, Craig was enjoying the OHL off-season and didn't expect to return to the ice for the Spitfires until September. He began training for the competition and shortly afterwards flew to Vernon, B.C., where he would face off in front of the cameras against amateur players from every province

and territory. Once there, he recognized a handful from the OHL, and it was clear to Craig that the producers were looking to create a competi-

tive environment for the group.

"It definitely gave me a different perspective," Craig said. "It was cool to see them work behind the scenes. I've



Craig Voakes

watched an episode already and they've made it look a lot more competitive than it really was. It was still competitive, because I think everybody deep down wants to do well."

Craig spent two weeks performing for the cameras both on and off the ice.

According to the show's website, director of hockey operations Jack Birch said players are evaluated on several criteria. He said a combination of skating skills and natural talent is what the judges will be looking for in the players. This includes agility, speed, puck skills,

competitiveness and the desire to win.

The grand prize is a \$250,000 endorsement contract and representation from an NHL agent.

But, as is the case with most reality TV shows, that's about all Craig can reveal. The producers have forbidden all players to speak to anyone about the outcome of the show.

For Voakes, who's followed Craig's hockey career since the beginning, it's a request he can respect.

"As an uncle, I'm proud of Craig," Voakes said. "I think he has a bright future in hockey. He's very respected as a clean, productive player in the OHL."

For now, Craig said he'll be concentrating on having a successful first season with the Spitfires.

"The show was an extra," he said. "Right now I'm just focusing on the OHL. When the show is on, I'll watch it."

The next Making the Cut - Last Man Standing episode airs Oct. 8 at 3:30 p.m. on Global.

Canadian
LAWN CARE
& DESIGN INC.

LANDSCAPING • SPRINKLER INSTALLATIONS • POST HOLES

Ph. 519.776.6826

STEVE WOJTALA
CARPENTRY SERVICES

Specializing in
Kitchens & Bathrooms
and all your interior
& exterior needs.

519-687-3955 • Comber, Ontario

ESSEX MINOR BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

Essex Minor Baseball held its first annual golf tournament at the Belleview golf course on September 23rd. Thanks to all golfers, organizers and sponsors who made this tournament a huge success. Special thanks to Dale Myer, Dave Kigar and John Campbell for all their hard work and to Essex Source for Sports for their generous donation of door prizes. Sponsoring organizations are listed below:

Essex Source For Sports	Essex Pontiac Buick GMC
Ives Insurance	State Farm Insurance
Essex Home Hardware	BDO
Landmark Engineers Inc.	Sonny's Pizza
Schinkel's Meat Market	Nick's Hair Styling
Essex Foodland	Woodslee Credit Union
Zehrs	Essex Feed Warehouse
Essex Walk-In Clinic	Peterson Spring Kingsville
Blue Water Pools	Belleview Golf Course
DPM Insurance	
Factory Recreational	
Essex Pharmacare Pharmacy	
Wells Fargo	
Dairy Freez	
Essex Optometric Clinic	



Midget Major CAW Club 200

On Sept. 29 the Essex boys travelled through the rain to LaSalle Arena. The score stayed at zero through most of the first.

However the penalty box was used a lot throughout the period by both teams.

It wasn't until 1:52 left in the period that Brit Garon found the back of the net. Assists went to Jesse Durocher and Nick Diemer.

Less than a minute into the second period LaSalle was on the scoreboard.

The penalties kept coming for both teams through-

out the second period. On the power play, Mike Devries received a pass from partner Brit Garon and let a howitzer go from the point to take the lead 2-1.

Near the end of the period tempers flared and there were more penalties given out.

During the intermission the coaches' pep talk must have had an effect.

In the third the Ravens stepped up the intensity and put a couple of goals on the board.

Both goals were scored

by Dan Bacon. The first goal was assisted by Spencer Woltz and an unassisted snipe to complete the pair late in the game.

The game ended 4-1 for the Ravens with an outstanding effort by goaltender Chris Zelko.

Congratulations boys on your first win of the season.

Our next game will be on Friday Oct. 6 against the Tecumseh Eagles at 9:30 at the barn.

Come on out and show your support for the Essex Ravens Midget Major club.

Why Replace that Tractor...



We Can Fix It Like New!

**Rad Repair
Done Onsite**

SIEFKER
Performance Machine Inc.

35 Victoria Avenue,
Essex 776-6761
www.siefker.com

Don't Wait til' Spring DO IT NOW

LOOKING FOR A VEHICLE?

WORRIED ABOUT FINANCING?

FREE PRE-APPROVALS!!

www.easycreditcanada.ca

**GOOD OR BAD CREDIT
ALL APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED**