

Flyers grounded, Blades dulled as 73's roll

BY KEVIN E. NEELS

The Essex 73's have picked up the pace a notch with another pair of victories in the past week. Since an opening night defeat they have rattled off four consecutive victories, and have looked better with each outing.

Rookie Mike Roach said, "We got off to a slow start but are starting to roll now."

Last Tuesday the club hosted the Alvington Flyers, a team with a successful past against Essex. They did not put up much of a fight in this one as the 73's dominated for most of the game.

This was another special teams' night as all goals came on the power play. The Flyers opened the scoring at the 15:20 mark of period one, but that lead was short lived as the 73's stormed back with a pair before the period ended. Chris Warren was sent in all alone and made no mistake, roofing a shot over the glove of Alvington goaltender Nathan Forsythe. Tanner Gallant ended the period on a high beating Forsythe with less than a minute remaining.

Essex picked up the pace in period two beating the

visitors in every aspect of the game, but managed to score only one time with R.J. Hotts doing the damage.

The final period was a replica of period two, with once again one goal being scored by R.J. Hotts. Final score: 4-1 Essex.

"This team has a lot of offense and speed, but we need to concentrate on defense as well," said Mike Roach. "Defense wins championships. One area we need to work on is our starts. It is much easier to play with the lead than trying to play catch-up."

"We are getting better, but we are still learning the system," said Chris Warren. "Our offensive players will have to learn how to play defense."

Asked which teams he feels will be tough this year Warren said, "Wheatley and Belle River are two of the better teams."

Sunday in Blenheim the club made it look easy, but I am sure it didn't feel that way. The club was faced with killing off four or five 5-on-3 situations during the game and was successful on all of them. The Blades were handed a golden opportunity five minutes after the open-

ing whistle, and failed to capitalize. Mike Roach, who had a big night, gave Essex the lead, scoring with one tick left in a power play, and the locals never looked back. Roach added his second of the night two minutes later, and Brit Ouellette notched his first in a 73's sweater on a pretty three-way passing play late in the period to boost the lead to 3-0 after one period.

The visitors increased the lead in period two as Ouellette added his second at the 15-minute mark.

The final period saw the Blades creep back into the game before the 73's exploded in the final five minutes to put this one out of reach. Blenheim clawed their way back with a pair of power play markers less than three minutes apart. Things settled down for a while before the late game onslaught by Essex. AJay Sweet tipped in a point shot at the 14:34 mark to give Essex a three-goal cushion. R.J. Hotts did all the work setting up Dan Croft for a short-handed marker at 15:59, before Mike Roach put on a clinic to get his hat trick with just over a minute remaining leaving the score at 7-2 Essex.

"Finally, the monkey is off my back," said Brit Ouellette. "It felt good to get that first

goal behind me."

Ouellette added that he considers himself an offensive player, but still needs to adapt to the "Essex style."

"We have a good bond here in Essex, no friction between players, everybody helps everybody, that's just the way it is."

Backup goaltender Ryan Barnett made his first start of the season and played a solid game. He was not tested often, but was very good when he had to be.

"I felt good out there, and the team played well in front of me, everyone did their job tonight."

Asked if it was mentally tough not getting more opportunities to play, Barnett said, "It is no slap in the face being backup to Eddie Wheeler. I'm young yet, and I have to earn my chance to play on this team."

The 73's busy month continues next week with four games scheduled.

Friday and Saturday the club will be on the road with a couple of division games. Friday they will be in Belle River, then travel to Kingsville on Saturday.

Tuesday they will be at home to host Belle River, then head to Wallaceburg.



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Friday, Oct. 6 we played a very exciting game against Riverside. Anthony Iacobini turned on the scoreboard early in the first period with an assist from AP Colton Kitchen. Riverside was able to score on us twice this period. Aidan Garant gave us a beautiful unassisted shot to tie things back up, but Riverside gave it right back to us. Busko gave us two goals, both assisted by Zack Prentice and Matthew Zelko at the end of the second and beginning of the third period. Again Riverside caught back up and nailed us with four more goals in the third. But our hard working Ravens did not give up. Aidan gave us another goal assisted by Alex Stevenson and Zack was able to put one in the net assisted by Clay Kraynack. Final score 8-6 for Riverside.

Saturday afternoon we traveled to Belle River for an exhibition game. The Rink Rats gave us a hard run and scored three goals on us before we could get one on them. Finally in the third period Matthew Zelko snuck one past their goalie assisted by Zack and Clay and put us on the scoreboard. Alex placed a nice goal in the net soon after from Aidan. We were not prepared to lose this game and gave it all we had. Unfortunately we ran out of time. Final score 3-2 for Belle River.

Special thanks to AP Colton Kitchen for helping out while Tyler was sick. Tyler will be back to help us Thursday night against LaSalle at home.



Midget Minor

Essex opened the scoring at Saturday's home game against the LaSalle Sabres with a goal by Kevin Boggs, assisted by Jesse Breault. On the very next faceoff, Spencer McDowell stole the puck from the LaSalle defenseman and put a backhander past the keeper to put the boys up 2-0. Assists went to Mitch Passa and Quinton Rossini.

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