

# ESSEX 73's HOCKEY HIGHLIGHTS

## Special teams shine in victories over Canadiens and Lakers

BY KEVIN E. NEELS

It may sound like a broken record but the special teams continue to perform well for the Essex 73's. The power play and shorthanded units did much of the damage once again this past week in a pair of victories.

The Belle River Canadiens were in Essex last Tuesday looking for a bit of revenge after Essex shut them out in Belle River the previous Friday. Unfortunately for the visitors it was not meant to be. The Canadiens did not look interested throughout this one as they were outclassed from the start. The largest home crowd of the season received their money's

worth as Essex stormed out of the gate, building up a 3-0 first period lead, and never looking back. Jeremy Venables started things off with an early power play marker before Cory Hamilton and Vince Santia rounded out the first period scoring.

The middle frame was no better for the visiting team as Essex upped their lead to 6-0. R.J. Hotts' power play tally early in the period sent Canadiens starter Dustin Reeves to the bench in favour of backup Tom Lanoue, who did not fare much better. Less than two minutes later AJay Sweet turned the red light on and, later in the period, rookie Evan Stibbard notched

another power play goal, which Lanoue did not have any chance on as he had lost both his glove and stick just before.

Essex went into defense mode in the final twenty minutes and Belle River managed to strike for a pair of goals late to make the final 6-2 Essex.

"We came out flying and really took it to them," said Stibbard. "You could tell they were flustered in period two as they started to take some stupid penalties."

"I did not play hockey last season, as I was injured most of the year, but I can tell you that I am very excited to be in Essex, and am confident we will have a successful year," he added.

"This team is like no other I have ever played on," said newcomer Mike Yovanic. "My teammates are excellent and the morale is phenomenal. Teamwork is what it is all about. I get a great feeling with this team."

You could argue that the most competitive game Essex has faced all season was against the Dresden Jr. Kings, since they have been the only club to beat Essex this season, but Wednesday's match-up with the Wallaceburg Lakers was a very exciting fast-paced game that could have gone either way. Without a doubt the lowly Wallaceburg clubs of the past few seasons are no more, and the large turnout of fans proved that.

The home club got themselves into penalty trouble early in this one, and R.J. Hotts cashed in as he split the defense and backhanded a shot into the far side of the net just 2:27 in. The Lakers evened things up with a

power play marker of their own midway through the period off a point shot, and late in the period took a 2-1 lead as goaltender Eddie Wheeler was beaten on a shot from the top of the circle to his left.

Vince Santia pulled the 73's back on even terms with the only goal in period two, stepping over the Lakers' blueline and ripping a shot over the goaltender's stick side.

The third and final period was a dandy. Wallaceburg did their best to hand the victory to Essex early, as they took numerous penalties but were superb in killing them off. The late stages of the period were just the opposite, as Essex took their turn in taking the penalties. They also did a fantastic job of killing them off, but did one better. Chris Warren took off down the wing and ripped a shot into the lower, right-hand corner of the net to give Essex a slim 3-2 edge. The Lakers

had a two-man advantage for nearly the final two minutes of the game but could not capitalize, letting the visitors escape with a 3-2 win.

"I guess we took them too lightly," Matt Fuerth said. "We were not mentally prepared. Wallaceburg is ten-fold better than what they were; they are a quality team."

"We took these guys way too lightly after our big win against Belle River last night, and some of the bad penalties did not help either," said R.J. Hotts. "We had a bit of an off night, but give them credit. Their penalty kill was excellent. We really couldn't get anything going all night. They are a whole new team."

The 73's will play a pair of games in the upcoming week. Friday they will board the bus and travel to Alvinston, then return home Tuesday to face-off against the much improved Wallaceburg Lakers.



### Bantam A Essex Source for Sports

The Ravens travelled to Belle River Oct. 17 to battle the Rats, a good skating team. The Ravens started the game a little soft defensively and the Rats capitalized, leading 3-0 until the end of the first period when Ryan Morris scored, assisted by Lyle Little and Ty Queen.

The Ravens continued to chip away at the Rat's lead

with a nice hard pass down low from Kyle Zelko to Eddie Sauve for the one timer; score 3-2. Wes Strain made a huge stop, shorthanded, then Alex Thompson and Tyler Raymont killed off a 5 on 3.

Essex started the third period on the powerplay and, working the puck down low, Blain Little

assisted to Colin Delaet who jammed the wrap-around into the net to make it 4-3 Rats.

Belle River didn't let up, and Wes came up with a big glove save on a breakaway to hold them off. With 13 minutes left, Alec Shuttleworth evaded an opponent and passed to Chad Hedrick who made a nice move to score and tie it up 4-4. A nice give and go between Tony Spidalieri and Colin, led to Tony putting in the rebound.

With the game tied 5-5, Tony scored the winner with a great shot on a passing play from Alex and Travis Henricks.

On Friday, the Ravens travelled to Chatham to play against a powerful team at the old Memorial Arena. With solid goaltending again from Wes Strain and spirited two-way play from Jessy Amyotte, the Ravens had to feel good going into the third period down 1-0. The team seemed to let up for a few minutes, and Chatham scored three quick ones. Final score 5-0 Chatham.

Oct. 22 Essex played at South Windsor Arena in a tight game with good goaltending at both ends. Evan Howson was between the pipes for the Ravens.

Windsor scored late in

the first, and early in the second period to go up 2-0. The Ravens were good on the special teams, limiting Windsor's chances on their powerplays. The Essex powerplay created all kinds of chances that the Windsor goalie turned away.

Finally, late in the second period Alec

Shuttleworth found the top corner as he fell to the ice, making it 2-1.

A lot of action at both ends in the third period left the score 2-1 Windsor.

Congratulations on a penalty-free game. Smart hockey is staying out of the box.



### Midget Major CAW Club 200

On Oct. 17 the Essex Ravens Midget Major team travelled to Leamington to take on the Capitals. The Ravens won this game 3-0 with goals going to Dan Bacon, Nick Fournier and Mike Sauve. Picking up assists were Nick Fournier, Mike Sauve and Soupy Campbell.

On Oct. 22 the Ravens were in Chatham for what was rumoured to be Chatham's last game before folding the team. Chatham

could only dress seven regular players and had five AP's to fill the bench. This was not the Chatham team we were used to seeing in years past.

The Ravens beat them 7-1 with goals going to Tyler Montcalm, Mike Sauve, Jesse Durocher, Dan Bacon (2) and Spencer Woltz (2). Assists went to Josh Klein (2), Spencer Woltz (3), Kyle McCammon and Dan Bacon.

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**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2006 AT 7:00 PM**

At Woodslee Credit Union, Essex Branch "Community Room" (side entrance)