

ESSEX 73's HOCKEY HIGHLIGHTS

Green shines once again

By KEVIN E. NEELS

The Essex 73's have done it once more. Trailing 3-1 heading into period three against the Dresden Jr. Kings, Essex managed to rattle off three unanswered goals, the winner coming off the stick of Ryan Green.

"Mr. Piroski gave me an opportunity to play for this great team, and, the experience has been thrilling to say the least," said Green.

The visitors opened the scoring early in period one on a two-on-one. R.J. Hotts pulled Essex to even terms before the period ended.

Period two was all Dresden from a scoring point of view, as they took a 3-1 lead. Two goals five minutes apart, one on the power play, boosted the visitors' spirits heading into period three.

The 73's pulled closer with a power play marker of

their own early in period three. Mike Roach slid the puck into an empty Kings cage, after a lot of hard work from Mike Lepelaars. With less than six minutes remaining the Kings were called for another infraction. Essex wasted no time in bringing the crowd to its feet.

Twenty seconds in Ryan Green spotted an open R.J. Hotts at the far blueline. Hotts' wrist shot was deflected perfectly by Tyler Gallant, and we were all knotted up at 3-3. Another twenty seconds, and the 73's had the lead for the first time of the night. Green was left all alone in front of Dresden goalkeeper Max Van-Hooren, and his backhand could not be stopped. Dresden managed to get an extra attacker on the ice for the final 45 seconds but could not generate the equalizer.

"We kept it simple in the final period, and, I think the week off hurt a bit," said Green. "It took us a couple of periods to get it going."

Mike Roach added, "We got together in the second intermission and decided we did not want Dresden to beat us here again."

Roach was playing his first game in a while due to injury and said, "I felt a bit off the first period, but overall I feel good."

The holidays are over so now it is time to get back into the swing of things, as we head into the stretch run of the regular season. Essex will get back to a heavier schedule next week with three games. Sunday, Essex will travel to Blenheim, Tuesday, the Kingsville Comets will visit Essex, and Wednesday, Essex will meet up with the Wallaceburg Lakers in Wallaceburg.

Atom AE team takes gold in Christmas Jingle Tournament



The Essex Ravens Atom AE team is the gold medal champion of the first Essex AE Christmas Jingle hockey tournament. Back row (coaching staff): Mark Weissenboeck (trainer), Don Kraynack (Ass't coach), Tim St. Pierre (Ass't coach), Drae Prentice (Coach). Third row: Aidan Garant, Matthew Zelko, Eric Rawlins, Clay Kraynack, Luke Tremblay, Cody Cooper, Alec Robillard, Tyler St. Pierre. Second row: Colton Kitchen, Alex Smith, Danielle Dent, Carter Sherk, Zachary Prentice, Alex Stevenson. First row: Kane Gagnon, Anthony Iacobini, Rob Summerfield. Absent (but still part of the team): Gerard Busko.

Between Christmas and New Year's the Ravens were in the first Annual Essex Christmas Jingle Tournament and were able to capture the championship medal with five wins in a row.

Essex was undefeated in the round robin series, winning 5-4 against Tilbury, 4-1 against Belle River, and 4-1 against Riverside.

The Ravens gave their top performance in the skills competition. Tyler St. Pierre and Zack Prentice were the top forward and backwards skaters, Carter Sherk was the top shooter and Kane Gagnon missed by one goal as top goaltender of the competition.

In the semi-final game the Ravens had to face Riverside again. The defence held the lines allowing the offense to go to work. The first period ended with a score of 2-1 Essex with goals from Tyler and Alex Stevenson. Aidan Garant opened up the scoring in the second period assisted by Eric Rawlins. Riverside was able to sneak one in in this period. In the third period Zack put one past the goalie assisted by Alex and

Clay Kraynack, followed by a beautiful goal from Alex Smith. But they weren't finished yet. Alex Stevenson gave us one more goal for a final score of Essex 6, Riverside 1.

The championship game was against Belle River. Belle River tried to zone in on the Ravens' weaknesses in the most nerve racking game of the tournament. The first period was scoreless but the Ravens had plenty of opportunity only to be shut down by the Rink Rats. The Ravens' defense shut down Belle River just as often. Belle River scored the first goal shortly into the second period followed by a beautiful goal by Zack assisted by Alex Stevenson. Second period ending 1-1.

In the third period Zack gave the puck to Carter who passed it to Tyler St. Pierre who hummed it over the goalie's head giving the Ravens the edge. But Belle River answered back ending the game in a 2-2 tie.

The game went into overtime with the Ravens' defense coming out strong shutting down Belle River

for two overtime periods. It was in the third overtime period with the team playing four-on-four hockey that Carter Sherk carried the puck the length of the ice into the Belle River end and put the puck on the goalie. Zack Prentice was there to pick up the rebound and made a beautiful pass to Tyler St. Pierre at the top of the circle. Tyler made no mistake and buried the puck past the Belle River goalie to win the championship.

The Essex crowd erupted in cheers and the Ravens' team jumped the bench to celebrate. Tyler was voted Player of the Tournament but all the players deserve this award. Great play by our goalie Kane Gagnon who allowed less than two goals a game and to Rod Summerfield who, when called upon, didn't let in a single goal. Also thanks to Alex Smith who came up to fill in for Gerard Busko who was ill. Good luck to the team in their upcoming tournament in Elora. Thank you to all the parents and spectators who came out to cheer the team on.



Bantam A Essex Source for Sports

With the season coming to a close there are only five points separating the league from second place to eighth. The Ravens needed a big win to move up into fourth against Riverside who sits in second. With the team down two boys going into the game, they went to the AE team to bring up Matt McGuire and Awstin Pettit and moved Chad Hedrick to the middle to centre the line.

With five minutes to go in the first period Awstin put one on the board for the Ravens, with assists to Matt and Chad after some nice cycling of the puck in the Riverside end. The Rangers would tie it up

before the end of the period with a power play goal.

In the second period, the boys went up again when Lyle Little scored assisted by Ryan Morris and Ty Queen. This line played most of the night in the Riverside end. The Ravens took a two-goal lead at the end of the second when Alex Thomson fired one in from outside the blue line on the power play and followed it in with another blast to score on his own rebound.

The third period was all Ravens and the boys scored their fourth goal on a blast from the point by Travis Hendricks, with a nice assist going to Chad Hedrick and Matt McGuire.

Some solid goaltending from Wes Strain backstopped the win for the boys and the defensemen for the squad - Ty Raymont, Alex Thomson, Kyle Zelco, Jessy Amyotte and Travis Hendricks - are stepping up as the strongest defense pairings in the league.

This was an off night for the kid line of Tony Spidalieri, Blain Little and Colin Delat but the team has been playing well with contributions from all players on different nights. The Ravens have a full week-end to finish the season next week with three games to see where they will finish. Keep playing strong and stick together.



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