

# The ESSEX FREE PRESS SPORTS

## 73's rookies showcase talents

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Four players of the Essex 73's hockey team were given the opportunity to play for talent scouts during the Great Lakes Junior 'C' annual showcase game in Blenheim Jan. 11.

Only players younger than age 17 were picked to play. Representing the 73's were centres Evan Stibbard and Tanner Gallant, left winger Wes Tan and goaltender Ryan Barnett.

73's head coach Tony Piroski said the game talent scouts from the Junior 'B' league were in attendance "to see if they've overlooked anybody."

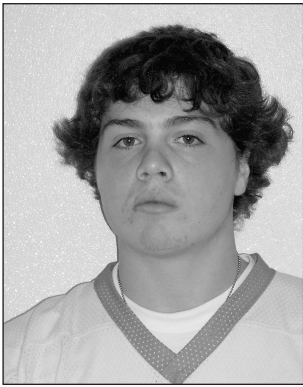
"Another big thing is that the guys get to see how they size up against other players their own age," Piroski said.

Piroski said he is confident that the 73's were well represented during the game.

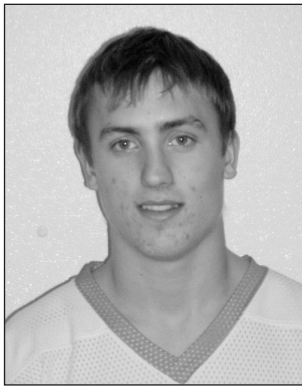
"They're getting some good hockey players," he said.

### Appealing the suspension

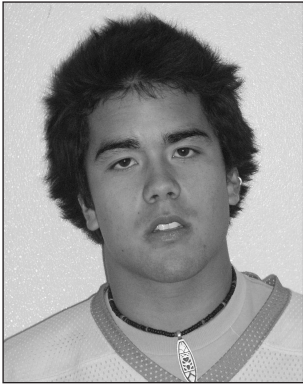
Piroski said he and assistant coach Lee Jones will be appealing the Ontario Hockey Association's deci-



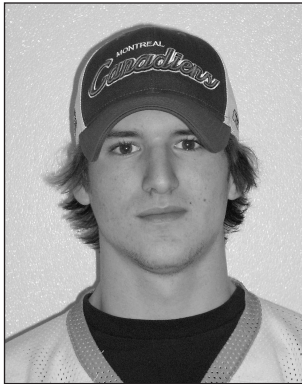
Evan Stibbard



Tanner Gallant



Wes Tan



Ryan Barnett

sion to suspend the two coaches for a year following a verbal confrontation with a referee in November.

The OHA handed down their decision Jan. 5.

The appeal hearing will take place Jan. 17 in Cambridge.

73's assistant general

manager Mark Barnett said since Piroski has been banned from the bench during games, it's been a bit of a transition for the team.

Barnett said Piroski's son and assistant coach Jordy has been filling the role of head coach in his father's absence.

"Jordy's just like his dad," Barnett said. "He's smart and he knows his hockey. The players have stepped up too. They know what's expected of them."

Jamie McDermott has been sharing the role of head coach with Jordy Piroski.

Since Piroski and Jones were temporarily ousted from behind the bench, the team has maintained an impressive 13-0-1 record.

Piroski said he still leads the team's practices but is anxious to coach during games again.

"It's tough," Piroski said. "I'm used to being there."

Essex lawyer Joe Byrne is representing Piroski at the appeal.

"Piroski's record of service to the hockey community is long, accomplished and exemplified by actions of integrity," Byrne said. "I'm really concerned that an outstanding coach is being put outside of teaching kids for a year. It seems like a tremendous loss to the community."



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### Atom A Forest Machine

The Ravens played their final two games of Bluewater Season this week, facing Southpoint Friday on home turf and travelling to LaSalle Saturday to face off against the LaSalle Sabres.

Southpoint leapt ahead early Friday night, catching a quick goal minutes into the first. Undaunted, Essex pushed back. Jordan Hooker flew in from the right and just missed slipping one by the Southpoint goalie. William Wuerch and Adam Zanier fought tirelessly to capitalize on an Essex power play opportunity midway through the first, but couldn't snag the tying goal. As the buzzer sounded to end the first, Southpoint tipped one in from the point to take the

lead 2-0.

Southpoint hit hard early in the second, forcing netminder Josh Myers to make some amazing saves. The Ravens caught a break when Southpoint drew a roughing penalty and was then called for having too many players on the ice. For a minute of play, Essex had a five-on-three advantage, but just couldn't hit the mesh. Back at full capacity, Southpoint battered our net, but outstanding goaltending by Josh Myers kept Essex in the game.

The third saw power play opportunities on both sides, as both teams drew lots of penalties. Again, Southpoint nabbed a goal early in the period, pulling ahead 3-0.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



### Novice A Drs Hager/Kniaziew

After two weeks with no games on the schedule, the team was eager to get back in action. On Friday night the LaSalle Sabres skated into town for their final meeting of the regular season. The Ravens struck first as Brady Rickeard tipped a pass off the LaSalle defencemen and into the net 1-0.

Early in the second period, Dylan Dent skated in alone but was denied as his shot went off the handle of the netminder's stick. At 8:23 Jake Maissonneuve stopped a LaSalle breakaway to keep the Raven lead, but with only 1:13 remaining in the second, the Sabres were finally able to find the back of the net and tied the game at a goal a piece after two periods.

LaSalle went up 2-1 early in the third, and at 7:38 a LaSalle forward was brought down on a breakaway setting up an exciting penalty shot. Goaltender

Adam Amicarelli was up to the task as he read the LaSalle forward perfectly to keep the game within reach. At 6:11 Jake Watters weaved in and out of the Sabre defence and rang a high shot off the post. LaSalle found the insurance marker at 3:09 to go up 3-1. Penalties late in the game, put the game out of reach with a 3-1 final

On Saturday the team traveled to 'the lake' at the Thames Campus in Chatham to face the Maroons on the large ice for the second time this season. Chatham was quick to score at 1:06 of the first, but the teams played end-to-end hockey during the opening period, finishing off with a nice save by Josh Scratch at the buzzer. A screened shot at 8:59 of the second put Chatham up 2-0 and after a Raven hooking call at 5:25, Chatham banged in a rebound on the powerplay to go up 3-0

after two. In the third period the Ravens struggled to clear the puck out of the deep zone and Chatham capitalized three times to finish the game 6-0.

The team will now continue to practice as they await the start of play-downs.

The players, coaching staff, and parents of the Ravens Novice 'A' team send their deepest sympathies to EMHA President Michele Bradt on the recent passing of her husband, Keith.

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