

## Decision on coaches' suspension expected next week

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Jones of a year-long suspension handed down by the Ontario Hockey Association Jan. 5.

The coaches appeared before an OHA appeal committee in Cambridge Jan. 17

to ask for a softer punishment.

The original decision was handed down after Piroski and Jones were involved in a verbal confrontation with a referee after an overtime

loss to the Wallaceburg Lakers Nov. 14.

OHA president Brent Ladds said a decision on the suspension term was reached after consultations with the two coaches, the game's ref-

eree Ryan Renaud and two linesmen, Mike Aubin and Jeff Weglarz.

The decision bans Piroski and Jones "from all Hockey Canada related programs until Nov. 14, 2007."

Essex lawyer Joe Byrne, who is representing Piroski, said a number of people from the 73's camp gave statements about the incident during the appeal hearing in an attempt to refute claims that the coach threatened Renaud.

"We feel this was a harsh sentence," Byrne said. "We asked that Tony be reinstated forthwith."

"I think everybody's hope is that the 73's make it to the playoffs and Tony is right there behind the bench," Byrne added.

In his submission to the appeal committee, Byrne argued that a year-long suspension would deprive the 73's "from the benefits of (Piroski's) teaching, espe-

cially his emphasis on education, community activism and volunteering."

It would also deprive Piroski of earning a livelihood from hockey.

Byrne said if the OHA decides to carry out the year-long suspension, Piroski would have the option to file another appeal with the Ontario Hockey Federation or take the case to a judge.

OHA referee coordinator Charlie Lennox said new rules mandated by Hockey Canada reinforce a stricter approach to reprimanding players and coaches who harass or abuse officials.

Teams were provided with DVDs and handouts about the rules at the beginning of the season.

"The rules have always been there," Lennox said. "Teams have to realize it's here to stay and teach their players the emphasis on the rules."



**HIGH SCHOOL DUEL** – Justin Brook, left, squares off against Samantha McLean during a meeting of the Essex District High School fencing club last week. The unique club is one of a kind in the area, with 15 members from all grades of the school participating. The fencers practice their footwork, endurance and sparring skills every Friday. Coaches Wayne Han and Greg Levack teach the kids basics to advanced skills in fencing. They are considering contacting other schools in Chatham-Kent to arrange for competitions.



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