



HOCKEY HIGHLIGHTS

Croft leads 73's to 2-0 series lead

BY KEVIN E. NEELS

Dan Croft took some of his teammates' comments over the past few weeks to heart. The team knew they were not playing well, and they had run out of excuses as to why. The playoffs had arrived, and someone had to step up and lead the way. Croft was that person.

Croft paced the offense in game one with a four-point effort and was the hero in game two with a huge overtime goal to give the team a 2-0 series lead.

"I guess I'm just having a lucky stretch right now," Croft said.

Game one was Friday in Essex, on a very bitterly cold night. The Flags showed up to play in this one as the first period was an evenly played period with a lot of physical activity. The 73's Mike Roach scored the lone goal late in the period.

Essex increased the lead to 4-1 after two periods, with goals coming off the sticks of Roach, Croft and AJay Sweet.

R.J. Hotts put the nail in the Flags coffin with a red-irect marker early in period three for a 5-1 73's victory.

The score could have been much higher if not for the exceptional play of Mooretown goaltender Jeff Steadman, who stopped 49 of 54 shots.

"I thought it was one of our best games of the entire year," said 73's General Manager Tony Piroski. "We did a lot of good things out there tonight."

"This was a good start to the playoffs," said Chad Slade. "I think we set the tempo for this series. They played with us for the first period, but faded after that. We have to be willing to pay the price more than them to win, and we did that."

"We had a very positive attitude coming into this game, and our intensity was much better than it has been lately. We went at them hard, and we have to continue to do that," added Mike Lepelaars.

The second game went Saturday in Mooretown, and the team knew that the

Flags were not going to roll over and die. They expected to face a different team on this day.

The first period was reminiscent of the first period in game one, very physical, but neither club could score.

The Flags took their first lead of the series at 13:20 of the second period with the only goal of period two.

Essex began period three with the man advantage, and it turned into a two-man advantage within a few seconds. R.J. Hotts made no mistake in evening this game at 1-1. Essex continued to pressure the home team for the remainder of period three, but ran into a wall named Steadman who managed to hold the fort and give his team a chance in overtime.

It was not to be for Mooretown, however, as Croft chipped a perfect feed over the shoulder of Steadman at 4:30 to give Essex a 2-0 series lead.

"Mooretown started well once again, but they seem to back down as the game progresses," said Croft. "I think

it is beneficial for us to continue the hitting. They are still in this series, and a hot goaltender can slow a high scoring team down in a hurry, so we have to continue to press them at every opportunity."

"They played well, so we need to keep pounding them, wear them down," said Tanner Gallant. "We seem to be back to playing the way we need to for us to be successful, we need to keep it rolling, don't give them any hope."

Mooretown Flags versus Essex 73's

- Tue. Feb 20
Mooretown at Essex
7:30pm
- Wed. Feb 21
Essex at Mooretown
8:00pm
- Tue. Feb 27
Mooretown at Essex
7:30pm (if necessary)
- Wed. Feb 28
Essex at Mooretown
8:00pm (if necessary)
- Fri. Mar 2
Mooretown at Essex
7:30pm (if necessary)



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The Ravens travelled to Southpoint for their first game of the Bluewater Playoffs on Sunday afternoon.

Southpoint scored early in the first period. However Essex quickly answered back with an unassisted hard shot by Zack Prentice. Southpoint returned with two more goals.

Midway through the second period Eric Rawlins took a nice pass from Gerard Busko and found the net. Four minutes later Zack fired a shot past the Southpoint goalie assisted



Novice A Drs Hager/Kniaziew

Playdowns are winding down and on Thursday evening the LaSalle Sabres rolled into Essex to face the Ravens.

The Ravens encountered some trouble early on as they found themselves down 3-0 only 88 seconds into the game. In September, this team would have rolled over and accepted defeat but this is a different team and these are play-downs.

After the shaky start, the team regrouped and LaSalle tried to show their muscle and, in doing so, spent most of the third period in the penalty box. The balance of the first period was spent in the LaSalle end. At the 1:13 mark Jared Fuerth found Brett Schmidt in front of the net. Brett popped one in to put Essex on the board 3-1.

As in the first, the second period was highlighted by many Essex scoring opportunities, which kept the Sabres netminder very busy. The Ravens defence did a great job of keeping the puck in the offensive zone. The second period ended as did the first, 3-1.

Dylan Dent won the opening faceoff of the third period getting the puck to Brett. After a give and go with Jared, Dylan took the puck to the net beating the

LaSalle goalie to pull the team within one, 3-2.

With 7:28 remaining in the third, Dylan set up in the corner and threaded a pass to Jared whose shot on goal provided a nice rebound for Brett to notch his second of the game, 3-3.

Late in the third it was all Essex peppering the LaSalle goalie and getting the puck to the goal line but could not find the go ahead tally. Even though the Ravens had many chances to win this game and after digging a deep hole early, the team was happy to skate off with the 3-3 tie.

On Saturday night the Windsor Junior Spitfires stormed into town. At 6:44 of the first, Nash Prieur streaked into the Windsor zone and after a great scoring opportunity dished a rebound off to Jake Maissonneuve who gave Essex the early lead 1-0. Windsor replied at 4:34 on a deflected shot from top of the circle. 1-1. With 33 seconds left in the first Windsor scored shorthanded and began pulling away from the Ravens. Let's just say the final score was too much to not enough.

This week the team finishes the playdowns by hosting Belle River and St. Thomas.

by Tyler St. Pierre and Busko to tie up the game. The rest of the period remained scoreless.

The third period began with both teams battling hard for the puck, however

Southpoint pulled ahead finding our net two more times to make the final Southpoint 5, Essex 3.

Our next game is on Saturday at 7 p.m. in Essex.

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Saturday MARCH 3rd 8am – 1pm

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T-Ball (2002-2001)

Rookie (2000-1998)

Mosquito (1997-1996)

Pee Wee (1995-1993)

Bantam (1992-1990)

Jr. Girls (1998-1996)

Int. Girls (1995-1993)

Sr. Girls (1992-1989)

Travel:

Rookie (2000-1998)

Mosquito (1997-1996)

Pee Wee (1995-1994)

Bantam (1993-1992)

Midget (1991-1989)

Junior (1988-1987)

Fees for 2007:

1 player \$80 • 2 players \$150 • 3 or more \$200 • T-Ball \$40

Registration fees may be claimed as a credit for 2007 income tax purpose for children under the age of 16.

Financial assistance is available to parents who are eligible to receive the National Child Benefit Supplement. Contact the town of Essex for details and please bring completed forms to registration if eligible.

House League coaches and assistants wanted. Late registration will be subject to availability and an additional fee of \$20 per player will apply.