



The Essex Bantam A Ravens are the Bluewater Playoff Champions after a 6-3 win against the Belle River Rink Rats on Easter weekend.

Bantam A Ravens take Bluewater championship

The Essex Bantam A Ravens finished first in the Bluewater playoff round robin and headed to Tecumseh Easter weekend for the championship games.

Good Friday Essex met with the Riverside Rangers. The Ravens started out hard in the first and dominated their opponents. Essex started out the scoring with Lyle Little netting one with the help of his defenseman Jessy Amyotte. The

Rangers tied things up and the first ended with a 1-1 tie. Essex got three in the second. One goal went again to Lyle and two to Colin Delaet. Assisting those goals were Ty Queen, Lyle, Kyle Zelko, Ryan Morris and Blain Little. Essex got sloppy and allowed Riverside two of their own and we ended the second 4-3.

Five minutes into the final period Riverside tied the game up 4-4. Essex did-

n't finish things up until the dying seconds of the third. The winning goal was popped in by Chad Hedrick with help from Lyle and Ty. The winning goalie for this match up was Evan Howson. This semi final win allowed the boys to take part in the finals Saturday.

The finals were against the Belle River Rink Rats. The Ravens were first on the board with a goal by Colin and assists going to Chad and Alex Thomson. Belle River was next on the board tying things up, but not for long. Tony Spidalieri netted number two with help from Blain and Travis Henricks. The second period ended with Essex making the score 4-1 with goals scored by our defensemen Alex and Jessy. Awarded assists were Colin, Chad and Tyler Raymont.

We started out the third with another by Tony and another assist for both Colin and Blain. Essex legs started to grow tired as Belle River got one of their own. The boys worked together again

and this time Colin buried his second of the day with help from Tony and Blain. Belle River would respond one more time, but as the clock winded down Essex would find themselves ahead by three. The game ended with a score of Essex 6 and Belle River 3. Winning tender today was Wesley Strain. This Bluewater championship was a total team effort. Essex was only assessed six penalties all weekend.

Congratulations on your season boys! This team's accomplishments include finishing first amongst the A division teams in the Bluewater division, second in the St. Thomas Tournament and champions in the Tillsonburg Tournament. On behalf of the parents and players a big thank you goes out to our coaching staff, Jeff Brett, Tim Little, Craig Miller and T.J Thorton for all your time and commitment. Enjoy your summer and see you at the rink in the fall.

73's revisit Penetang for All-Ontario finals

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But the 73's shut the door the rest of the way, frustrating the visitors to the point that they went looking for trouble in the final minute going after some of our best players. Many of the 73's penalties were of the lazy variety, something they would need to work on in future games.

"Both teams worked hard and were physical," said Tanner Gallant. "We need to play smarter, as we're still taking too many penalties. Tomorrow's game will be a desperate game for both teams."

"We sure make things hard on ourselves at times," said Mike Lepelaars. "We had them by the throat, then sat back and let them get back into it. They are a great team; we need to play better for the full sixty minutes. After this win, we have the advantage. All the pressure is on them to win tomorrow night."

Wednesday night was game three in Grimsby and the 73's were in a bit of a dilemma: No coach. With Tony Pirotski and Lee Jones suspended, Jamie McDermott sick, and Jordy Pirotski with a work commitment, how would the team cope? A coach from the past, Dave Prpich, would be behind the bench with statistician Chris Dupuis.

One would think that the Peach Kings would throw everything they could muster at the 73's in order to stay alive in this one. It did not happen. Both teams struggled for the first two periods of the game with some very sloppy play. Neither team could get their power play going, and there were some very undisciplined penalties from both sides in this chippy affair. Neither team would score in the first two periods.

Period three was a different story. You had to figure that if someone scored that it

would open things up and get the game moving, and it did.

Essex defenceman Chad Slade could be heard screaming at teammate Tanner Gallant to give him the puck as he streaked out of Essex territory while killing a penalty. Gallant made the pass, sending Slade on his way, catching Grimsby on a line change. Slade made no mistake burying the puck low on the glove side. A minute and twenty eight seconds later, Brit Ouellette was set up with a perfect feed, and it was 2-0 Essex. Midway through the frame Grimsby was on the board, compliments of a fanned clearing attempt. But this was as close as the home team would get for the second night in a row. The Essex defense blanketed the Peach Kings the rest of the way, not even allowing the extra attacker in the dying minutes.

"We stayed positive on the bench the entire game, and were better disciplined in the final period," said Slade. "We gave up very few odd man rushes, it was a total team effort. Having Prpich behind the bench didn't really matter; the only difference was the voice."

"This series is not over yet," Brit Ouellette added. "But it will be tough for them. We broke their backs tonight."

Grimsby saved their best effort for last as they played a hell of a game in game four. There were no tomorrows for this team, and they played like it. The first period was the best of the series for Grimsby. They also took the lead for the first time. How would they play with the lead? How would Essex react being down? The visitors held a 2-0 margin after the first period, the first goal coming off a chip shot after Eddie Wheeler had made a couple of saves. Goal two came off a scramble.

Essex closed the gap in period two with a power play marker late in the period by Cory Hamilton.

The 73's scored the only goal of period three to even the game at 2-2. Anthony Iaquina made a beautiful rush from centre ice and wristed the puck over the shoulder of Peach King goaltender Ryan Penner. This game was headed to overtime.



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