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Essex mayor wants a measure of revenge

BY MIKE DODD
SPECIAL TO THE FREE PRESS

No stranger to political battles in southwestern Ontario, Ron McDermott rarely, if ever, backs down from a challenge.

With that in mind, McDermott, the Mayor of Essex is willing to put municipal pride on the line one more time.

Last spring, McDermott flew the official flag of the Town of Penetanguishene at the Town of Essex municipal office, after the Penetang Kings defeated the Essex 73's in the 2006 Ontario Jr. C championship hockey final.

Speaking with The Mirror this week, McDermott said he was willing to renew the wager with Penetanguishene



Photo: Mike Dodd

For the second consecutive year Essex mayor Ron McDermott and Penetanguishene mayor Anita Dubeau will be heading up a friendly wager between the two cities. Last spring, McDermott agreed to fly the Town of Penetanguishene official flag in Essex, after the Penetang Kings defeated Essex in the Ontario Jr. C hockey championship final.

Mayor Anita Dubeau, if she was willing to accept the challenge.

"I'm up to it (the

wager)," said McDermott, during a phone conversation.

"I was hoping we'd meet

again," he added, indicating he is looking to another Essex-Penetanguishene rematch.

After Essex lost to the Kings in the deciding game of the series at the Penetanguishene Arena last spring, McDermott graciously accepted the town flag and a Penetanguishene t-shirt from Dubeau.

"I'm looking forward to getting up there (to Penetanguishene) for a game," said McDermott.

"I'll be happy to accept the challenge from the Mayor of Essex once again.

It was a great series last year and hopefully the two teams will give the fans lots to cheer about this time around," said Dubeau, speaking with The Mirror.

After missing games in the Lakefield series, Dubeau said she is looking forward to taking in one or two of the final games at

the Penetanguishene Arena.

After flying the Penetanguishene flag at the municipal offices in Essex last spring, Dubeau said McDermott was gracious enough to ship the flag back to Georgian Bay in good shape.

"We'll be more than happy to let them fly our flag once again this year," said Dubeau.

McDermott is hoping to leave an Essex flag in Penetanguishene at the end of the series.

"Hopefully we can leave one of our flags for Mayor Dubeau to fly at their town hall building," he said.

Mike Dodd is the sports reporter for the Midland Mirror.

ESSEX 73's HOCKEY HIGHLIGHTS

73's take opening game with third period rally

BY KEVIN E. NEELS

Long before the puck dropped in Penetang to open this season's Ontario Junior C final, the battle had begun. A repeat of last year's ongoing agenda between the fans had started. A good sized group of Penetang faithful stood and hollered the entire afternoon, trying to give their home town club the edge. Some of the chants were of the usual, "Go Kings Go", while others were of the variety we don't like to repeat. Nonetheless, a good time was had by all, for the most part.

Essex went into this game having a huge monkey on

their backs. As most will remember from last year, the final was an incredible defensive battle from both sides. A total of only 12 goals were scored, with the 73's getting a mere four of them. In addition, Essex was shut out three times during the five game series, something that is unheard of in Junior hockey. Essex would feel much more at ease this year if they could just ditch that oversized monkey.

When two clubs who don't play each other face off for the first time, it usually takes a game to get to know the other team somewhat, a feel-out game if you will. That was not the case

Sunday. Some bad blood remained from last year, although both clubs have many new faces in their line-ups for the return engagement. This was a very physical contest, but a clean one for the most part.

Essex's 16-year-old rookie Evan Stibbard did the trick for the locals, scoring midway through the opening period to give the 73's their first ever lead against the Kings. The lead lasted a mere three minutes before the home team evened the score with a backhander that eluded a helpless Eddie Wheeler.

Essex played a solid second period but had nothing to show for it as the Kings

made the most of the opportunities they had, scoring twice to take a 3-1 lead into period three. The goals came just 29 seconds apart.

A combination of Essex playing desperate and Penetang sitting on a lead proved to be fatal for the Kings. Brit Ouellette surprised Penetang netminder Dan Earles with a quick wristshot that found the back of the net just over four minutes into the third to keep it close.

Essex continued to pressure Penetang, forcing numerous icings and stoppages of play. Patience knotted this game up at 3-3.

Vince Santia was left all alone in front of Earles with less than six minutes remaining, and made no mistake in pulling the goalkeeper out of the net, waiting for Earles to make the first move, and then roofing the puck from a difficult

angle. It was by far the prettiest goal of the night.

Exactly two minutes later, Tanner Gallant found a loose puck in front of a crowd and banged it home to give Essex a 4-3 lead, which they would not relinquish.

"Going into the third we knew it was now or never," said Vince Santia. "We have come back before, it wasn't like it was the first time. This win makes it vitally important that we win at home now. We do not want to give home ice advantage back to them."

"The first period we had some bad nerves going but I thought we played real well in the final two periods," added Captain Rob Shepley. "We are not looking for any pretty goals. We get most of our goals from hard work and banging the net. For us it seems that when it rains it pours; we go spells where

we don't score and then they come in bunches."

Both Santia and Shepley were asked why they were so successful on the road this season. There's less pressure on the road, they said, "but other than that, we do nothing any different."

Essex 73's vs. Penetang Kings

Sat. April 28
Penetang at Essex 7 pm
Sun. April 29
Penetang at Essex 2 pm
Sat. May 5
Essex at Penetang 7 pm
Sun. May 6
Essex at Penetang 2 pm
Wed. May 9
Penetang at Essex 7 pm*
Fri. May 11
Essex at Penetang 7 pm*

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