

Generals thrown to Wolves

Oshawa, Sudbury begin OHL playoffs Friday at Tribute Communities Centre

Brian McNair

bmcnair@durhamregion.com

OSHAWA — The Oshawa Generals will head into the Ontario Hockey League playoffs as prepared as they can be for an opponent that wasn't determined until two days after the regular season was supposed to have ended.

The Generals know now that they've drawn the Sudbury Wolves in the Eastern Conference quarter-finals, after the Wolves won a re-scheduled game in Mississauga Tuesday and leapfrogged past the Ottawa 67's for sixth place.

That plus the fact they haven't faced the Wolves since Nov. 13 means there's plenty of work to be done by head coach Bob Jones and his staff to get up to speed on a team that finished 24 points behind the Generals in the regular season.

Jones said that he and assistants Greg Nemisz and Nathan McIver will plow through game film of the Wolves prior to the start of the series on Friday, March 24, but mostly will keep doing what they have been doing all along during a 40-23-3-2 campaign.

"Nothing changes in our game plan," he said. "We believe in a defence-first attitude. We make sure that everybody is playing the right way."

The Wolves rose to sixth place by winning their final three regular season games, but otherwise struggled down the stretch, winning only three of their previous 16.

They're led by a top line of Dmitry Sokolov, David Levin and Ryan Valentini, who combined for 174 points, but were also a collective minus-96. Sokolov is particularly dangerous, leading the team with 72 points, and finishing second in the league in goals with 48.

"They're a skilled bunch, especially that line, so we're going to have to have six forwards and four D that are capable of playing against those guys," Jones said. "That's been a strength of our team this year at times, our depth, so nothing is going to change for us here in the playoffs. We still want to roll four lines and we want to make sure everybody is involved in the game."

While nobody on the Generals managed even half of Sokolov's goal production — Eric Henderson and defenceman Medric Mercier shared the team lead with 22 goals — collectively, the Generals scored 228 goals, or 3.35 per game, compared to Sudbury's 207 (3.04).

The biggest Oshawa advantage figures to come in the crease, where over-



Ryan Pfeiffer / Metroland

OSHAWA -- The Oshawa Generals celebrated one of the three goals scored by defenceman Riley Stillman in a regular season-ending 4-2 win over the Peterborough Petes Sunday at the Tribute Communities Centre.

ager Jeremy Brodeur's 33 wins, 2.84 goals-against average and .916 save percentage far exceed the stats of either 18-year-old rookie Jake McGrath (17, 3.77, .896) or 19-year-old Zack Bowman (8, 3.47, .904). All told, the Generals allowed 215 goals this season, or 3.16 per game, while the Wolves coughed up 265 (3.90).

Head-to-head, the teams were dead even, although all four games were played early on, the Wolves winning the first two, 4-3 in Sudbury and 5-3 in Oshawa, and the Generals responding with wins of 3-1 in Sudbury and 4-2 in Oshawa.

The Generals have changed more than the Wolves since those games, dealing away captain Anthony Cirelli and defenceman Mitchell Vande Sompel, but they have managed to stay competitive, going 17-11-1-0 since the trade deadline and battling for first place in the conference deep into the season.

Considering they're still just two years into a rebuild after winning the 2015 Memorial Cup, the Generals' expectations for the playoffs remain modest for now.

"This year we have a little more experience, but we are a very young team again," said Jones, who led the team to eighth place in his first season a year ago. "We're going into the first round, hoping to win a round. That's our goal here, to get into the playoffs and win a round. Once you win one round, then you move on to the second and set your goal for the second."

GENERALLY SPEAKING: Defenceman **Riley Stillman** finished the season with a bang, scoring his first OHL hat trick in a 4-2 win over the Peterborough Petes Sunday at the Tribute Communities Centre ... Captain **Joe Manchurek**

added an empty-net goal in his final OHL regular season game ... **Domenic Commisso** had two assists Sunday to finish the season with a team-high 63 points ... **Medric Mercier** led all OHL defencemen with 22 goals, including 21 with the Generals ... Defenceman **Matt Brassard** had the best plus-minus for Oshawa, a +10 in just 33 games after acquired from Barrie ... The Generals have no significant injuries heading into the playoffs ... Whitby's **Jonah Gadjovich** of the Owen Sound Attack was third in goals scored with 46 in 60 games ... Pickering goalie **Troy Timpano** had the second most wins, 26 with the Otters, despite missing three weeks with pneumonia ... The other playoff series in the Eastern Conference pit No. 1 Peterborough Petes (42-21-2-3) against No. 8 Niagara Ice Dogs (23-35-6-4), No. 2 Mississauga Steelheads (34-21-6-7) against No. 7 Ottawa 67's (26-34-7-1) and No. 4 Kingston Frontenacs (33-26-5-4) against No. 5 Hamilton Bulldogs (33-27-4-4).

Oshawa Generals (40-23-3-2) vs. Sudbury Wolves (27-34-7-0)

Game 1: Friday, March 24 at Oshawa, 7:35 p.m.

Game 2: Sunday, March 26 at Oshawa, 6:05 p.m.

Game 3: Tuesday, March 28 at Sudbury, 7 p.m.

Game 4: Thursday, March 30 at Sudbury, 7 p.m.

x-Game 5: Friday, March 31 at Oshawa, 7:35 p.m.

x-Game 6: Sunday, April 2 at Sudbury, 7 p.m.

x-Game 7: Tuesday, April 4 at Oshawa, 7:05 p.m.

(x-if necessary)



Dr. Douglas Smith
Guest columnist

Learn to train your brain

Train your brain in the same way you train your body and realize your greater potential.

In today's fast-paced world, those who fail to capitalize on developing and sharpening their mindset will be left behind.

Science has determined the brain is the master computer for the body. If the mind is rattled in any way, the body will be weakened and lose power, no matter how much physical training is achieved.

To maximize our physical abilities, we must train the brain to work in harmony with the body. Doubts, insecurities, anxieties, fears and frustrations have a toxic and deleterious effect on the nervous system, and on the smooth, effortless power and performance of the body.

Performing well in practice and playing poorly in competition is one example of the mind getting in the way of performance. Playing well one week and playing poorly the next week is a clue that the mind is misfiring.

Retaliating with anger when things don't go your way makes the body less effective. These examples are just a tiny fraction of the multiple ways our mind diminishes performance.

How many athletes prior to and during competition have experienced trembling muscles and twitches in their hands, feet and legs, nausea and headaches?

These nervous reactions occur when the athlete's mind is unprepared to manage the stress and pressure that inevitably occurs before and during competition.

Strategic thinking, goal-setting, relaxation, communication, visualization and personal development are important. Let's understand that these and other critical mental factors have to be trained and developed just like we do with the key physical skills.

In the past, athletes could get by with their physical talent. Today, we have a more highly developed ball game.

We are now in a new era of greater athletic awareness. It is undeniably clear that the mind and body are crucial components for high level performance.

Playing any sport without a strong mind will result in mediocre performance over the long run.

When the body is strong and the mind is rock solid, the results will be spectacular in sport and life.

Dr. Douglas Smith is a licensed psychologist in Ontario specializing in sport psychology since 1985. Contact him at 905-430-3538 or drdoug@promind.ca; website www.promind.ca