

Provincial Junior Hockey League moving into Division finals

By Brian Lockhart

Sixteen Junior C hockey teams are going into the Division championship series this week after completing the quarter-final and semi-final rounds of competition.

The Provincial Junior Hockey League is the world's largest Junior hockey league with 61 teams and eight Divisions.

There were few surprises in the playoffs this season. In seven of the divisions, the two teams who placed first and second in the regular season will be meeting for the division championship.

The only exception is in the East Tod Division where the first-place Frankford Huskies lost their semi-final to the fourth-place Napanee Raiders. In that same Division, the third-place Port Hope Panthers defeated the second-place Amherstview Jets in a semi-final in a series that went six games. This means second and fourth place teams will meet for the title series.

The Division championships provide some very exciting hockey for fans and many arenas are packed for the series games. Division champions will go on to play for the Conference championship. Teams that win the Conference will go on to compete for the provincial Schmaltz Cup.

The Stobbs Division final got an early start with game one of the series between the Lakeshore Canadiens and Essex 73's getting underway on Sunday, March 24.

Essex won that opening game to lead 1-0.

In the North Carruthers Division, the Stayner Siskins will be up against the Alliston Hornets. That series is scheduled to start on Thursday, March 28, on Alliston home ice. If it goes the distance, the final game will be held on April 8.

The Pollock Division will see the Hanover Barons facing the Mount Forest Patriots.

The Clarington Eagles will meet the Georgina Ice for the Orr Division championship. That series is slated to start on March 28.

In the Tod Division, the Port Hope Panthers will be up against the Napanee Raiders.

The powerhouse Grimsby Peach Kings, who have won the Division title five times over the past seven years, will be up against the Dundas Blues.

In the Doherty Division, the New Hamburg Firebirds will meet the Woodstock Navy Vets.

The Thamesford Trojans will be up against the Mt. Brydges Bulldogs in the Yeck Division.

The winning teams can expect to be playing a long season as the Schmaltz Cup final takes place after the Conference championships meaning the final series of the Junior C season will take place well into May.