

Robert F. Hall Wolfpack takes over first place in Div. 2 hockey league

Written By ROBERT BELARDI

The Robert F. Hall Wolfpack enter the new year on top of Division 2 hockey in the region of Peel.

To be at the apogee of this division, requires a leader that is resolute. High school hockey uniquely, needs someone who can find a balance between coaching at their highest level while ensuring a child receives their education.

It has been a special time for Wolfpack Head Coach Mike Mattachini at the helm of this hockey club. He has been the coach of the Wolfpack for 24 years while playing hockey on the side twice a week. Mattachini is no stranger to the game, formerly playing Junior B and high school hockey.

As a coach, he has led the Wolfpack to a (7-1-1) record this season heading into the playoffs.

Mattachini could not say enough positive things about his team, reflecting on how they have been as a unit this year.

"Our teams, year, after year, after year, always out work our opponent. We just motivate them to play for each other, play for our school and play for the love of the game," explained Mattachini.

With hard work, requires leaders on the ice. Senior players Jake Merante and Justin Pulis have been playing for four years with their school. On the verge of graduation, a title would be a sweet ending. Merante, might even be heading off to the United States for baseball.

"The other kids pick up on it, and when you're following someone good like that it makes everything work well," explained Mattachini, eulogizing Merante's leadership on this team.

Merante has influenced other players such as Nicholas Amato, Jake Pachaco and Patrick Duffy to work hard on this team. Inevitably, the results from this hard work have followed.

In the past two games, the Wolfpack defeated Heart Lake 7-0 and tied the second-place school Mayfield 1-1.

In the game vs Heart Lake, the Wolfpack went up 6-0 before Mattachini called a timeout. Duffy had scored two goals in the same shift.

"You know, you don't want to embarrass the other team. We've coached against this team for years, they are a good team, they are a classy team. We shut it down after that."

Unintentionally in the third, Greg Nelson scored his first goal of the year to add a seventh goal.

Goaltender Logan Landriault improved to 4-0 and earned his second shutout.

The next game, the Wolfpack took on second place Mayfield in a gruelling 1-1 draw.

Goaltender Marcus DiPassio was outstanding in this game and the young, defensive core that protected him played arguably, their best game of the year.

There is one grade nine, two grade ten's, one grade 11 and one grade 12.

?Our forecheck and our forwards are very strong, so we don't get a lot of play in our end. But, against a good team like Mayfield yesterday, the play was even and our defenceman played wonderful,? said Mattachini.

Heading into the playoffs, with a sound defensive unit and a group of forwards that can score, the goaltending comes down to a coin flip.

DiPassio and Landriault are outstanding goalies to have. Both in grade 11, Mattachini says there is no true number one goaltender and both of them will play in this upcoming playoff run.

?I have complete confidence in both of them. I have asked my coaches several times, you know, do we have a one-A and a one-B here? And, both of them say they are both good.?

?Logan will play the quarterfinal, Marcus will play the semifinals and the coaches will sit down and have a discussion after the two playoff games and if we're in the finals, we'll see then what we'll decide to do for the last game.?

If the Wolfpack reach the finals, there will be a school buyout. Buses will come pick up the students who want to attend the finals at the CAA centre. Historically in past finals, 300-400 students have attended.

It has been three years since the Wolfpack won it all.

The Wolfpack begin their playoff run against Applewood Heights, Wednesday, January 8th at 11:00 a.m.