

**May 3 – WHEN** the North American Hockey League hosts their Robertson Cup playoff championship tournament this week in Washington State the five-team event will have a definite local flavour to it.

Leading the way will be goaltending duo of Drew Strandberg of Thunder Bay who stops pucks for the Traverse City North Stars and Fort Frances product Ryan Faragher, a netminder for the Bismarck Bobcats.

Strandberg is a perfect 6-0 so far in the postseason heading into the tourney. He along with fellow Lakehead native Kelin Ainsworth helped Traverse City advance to the Robertson Cup by capturing their north division crown.

Over in the NAHL central division, of which Faragher was named top goaltender of this past week, Bismarck too sits unbeaten starting the event, which goes May 4-9 in Wenatchee, Wash.

The previous recipients of the Superior International Junior Hockey League's top netminder award currently share the NAHL playoff lead in goals-against average at 1.00.

Faragher, 2-0, holds down top spot in save percentage at .974 while Strandberg is next at .958 along with a pair of shutouts. Ainsworth has four points in six playoff contests heading into the Robertson Cup where the St. Louis Bandits, Fairbanks Ice Dogs and the host Wenatchee Wild will round out the field.

Meanwhile, there will be yet another local connection at the NAHL event.

Mark Dawd of Thunder Bay was chosen to compete on one of the four squads that will take part in the NAHL prospects tournament that will be held in conjunction with the league championship. Dawd spent this season skating for the Green Bay Jr. Gamblers in the NAHL midget prospects league where he led his club in scoring.

**ANOTHER TITLE:** Yet another local player on the roster of a team in Europe will be coming home with a league championship to talk about.

Mike Kompon of Thunder Bay was an offensive force as he led his Munich side to the title of the German National League.

Kompon paced all skaters in postseason goals with 10 including a pair of game-winners as his club went 11-1 in the playoffs including a sweep of top-ranked Schwenningen in the final.

**ALSO CHOSEN:** While Nathan Cull and Matthew Murray were chosen in the second round of the Ontario Hockey League draft, a number of other area hopefuls were also selected later on.

Next to go was Kenora Thistles defenceman Kevin Raine who was picked by the London Knights in the seventh round.

The Ottawa 67s followed by selecting Jon Carlson from the Thunder Bay Kings in the eighth round while the Sudbury Wolves scooped up a couple of Kings in Brad Cox and Marly Quince in the ninth and 13th rounds respectively.

Rounding out the local OHL draft choices were a trio of Kings in Miguel Lavoie (Belleville Bulls-10th), Matt Alexander (Niagara Ice Dogs-11th) and Mason Prout (Guelph Storm-13th).

**CHL UPDATE:** If the area contingent who are part of the Central Hockey League's Allen Americans want to win a league title, they'll have to do it on the road.

They trail the Rapid City Rush 3-2 in the best-of-seven affair heading into game six Tuesday in the South Dakota community. Game 7, if necessary, will also be in Rapid City.

While Thunder Bay's Colt King in the lone local player on the Rush the first-year Americans have a plethora of local connections led by associate coach Bill McDonald. Among those on the Allen roster are Erik Adams of Thunder Bay and Longlac's Nathan O'Nabigon along with former L.U. Thunderwolves standouts Chris Whitley and Tobias Whelan.

## Net Shots – May 2010 (continued)

**May 10 – REGARDLESS** of the outcome of the Philadelphia Flyers run in the 2010 Stanley Cup playoffs Chris Pronger will have something to call his own for awhile to come.

By registering 10 points so far this postseason Pronger has become the highest point-producing playoff performer among those from Northwestern Ontario.

With 112 career points to his credit the versatile defenceman's efforts have seen him pass Alex Delvecchio to claim top spot all-time among area players in scoring in the playoffs.

Pronger, who sits tied for 60th overall in career postseason offensive numbers, accumulated his totals in 156 contests while Delvecchio only skated in 121 postseason and is number 73 overall in the record books.

Don't expect Pronger to relinquish his spot on top any time soon.

Former NHLer Mike McEwan of Hornpayne is third among locals with 48 points.

Meanwhile the closest active player is Eric Staal with 43 points followed by Mike Richards with 33.

**SILVER LINING:** It was a silver medal performance for a number of area female players on Team Ontario North at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships that wrapped up over the weekend in Ottawa.

Among those on the area squad that fell to Manitoba in the title game were Kylie Cornell and Taylor Savard of the Esso Cup national midget championship winning Thunder Bay Sportop Queens as well as former Queens' player Sara Brady.

The provincial north men's squad also had some area talent on its roster, but they had to settle for a fourth place finish.

Among the skaters from the region on that squad included Nathan Bruyere, Royce King, Tim Kavanaugh, Vallee Quachegan and Kyler Ackewance.

**WHAT A RUSH:** The Central Hockey League final came to an end last week and it was Thunder Bay's Colt King who was celebrating.

King's Rapid City Rush rallied from a three-goal deficit midway through the game to upend the Allen Americans 4-3 in double overtime on May 4 capturing the CHL crown in six games.

Despite the setback former L.U. Thunderwolves and Americans rookie goaltender Chris Whitley earned a spot in the league record books by setting new CHL marks for most appearances, most minutes as well as most playoff saves.

**BIG WINNER:** Thunder Bay's Kale Kerbashian was the big winner at the Sarnia Sting awards banquet Saturday night.

The talented forward with the Ontario Hockey League club was recognized three times being named the Sting player of the year, capturing the club's top scorer award while also bringing home Sarnia three-star honours.

Other league notes sees some of the local products selected in the recent OHL draft getting their first opportunity to showcase their skills this weekend at their respective club's development camps.

Thunder Bay Kings goaltender Matthew Murray will be off to the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds prospects camp May 15-16 while Kenora Thistles captain Kevin Raine will head to London to take part in the Knights mini-camp at the same time.

**SWAZY STAYS:** Despite a shake-up in the ownership and management team of the North Bay Trappers Thunder Bay's Ian Swalucynski is staying on board as head coach and general manager of the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League club.

The club announced they had ratified an agreement to keep Swalucynski behind the bench for another season.

The former NOJHL coach of the year award recipient is just five wins away from a hundred as coach in North Bay.

## Net Shots – May 2010 (continued)

**May 17 – WHILE** the hockey season draws to a conclusion it is interesting to note that 2010 marks the anniversary of a significant number of championships won by local clubs over the years.

No less than seven teams should be recognized for their past on-ice accomplishments.

Looking back, it was 85 years ago in 1925 that the Port Arthur Seniors captured the Allan Cup emblematic of senior hockey supremacy as the Lakehead won its first national title.

Fast forward a half century later to 1975 the Thunder Bay Twins won their first of five Allan Cups upending the Barrie Flyers on Fort William Gardens ice.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of one of Thunder Bay's most storied hockey titles as the Twins rallied from a 3-0 series deficit to shock the Corner Brook Royals in seven games in a final made all the more memorable due to the fact that the entire series was hosted by the Royals in Newfoundland.

1995 was also a big year on the local hockey scene as 15 years ago we saw the Thunder Bay Flyers skate away with the Dudley-Hewitt Cup in an afternoon matinee at the Gardens while later that same day the Thunder Bay Senators won the Colonial Hockey League crown disposing of the Muskegon Fury in six games.

That same year the Thunder Bay Kings brought home their first Air Canada Cup national midget hockey championship.

Rounding out the anniversary list is the Thunder Bay Bombers who, five years ago, won yet another Allan Cup for the city as they too rallied running the table after dropping their first two games at the 2005 tournament in the Saskatchewan-Alberta border town of Lloydminster.

**CANADA CALLS:** Buoyed by the recent success of their Esso Cup national midget hockey championship four members of Thunder Bay Sportop midget Queens have been invited to attend a Hockey Canada women's program strength and conditioning camp May 25-30 in Calgary.

Goaltender Amanda Makela along with forwards Michela Cava, Kaitlyn Tougas and Brittany Zuback will be among 109 prospects, nation-wide, taking part.

The five-day camp will consist of off-ice fitness training as the women's national team begins early preparation for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Current Canadian Olympic team members or any senior program players are not required to attend.

**TOPS IN NAHL:** Riding the stellar goaltending of Fort Frances native Ryan Faragher the Bismarck Bobcats are champions of the North American Hockey League.

Faragher turned aside all 21 shots he faced in the final of the NAHL's Robertson Cup tournament staged in Wenatchee, Wash., as the Bobcats blanked the Fairbanks Ice Dogs 3-0.

The former Superior International Junior Hockey League's top netminder award recipient was unbeaten in three starts at the event posting a stingy 1.33 goals-against average along with a .944 save percentage.

The 19-year-old goaltender has one more year of Jr. hockey eligibility before he heads to Dartmouth College on scholarship in time for the start of the 2011-12 campaign. The division one Big Green compete in the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Overall, Faragher paced all NAHL goaltenders in playoff GAA and save percentage at 1.20 and .959 respectively with a 5-0 record.

Thunder Bay's Drew Strandberg was next in average at 1.58 while registering a 7-1 record in the postseason.

## Net Shots – May 2010 (continued)

**May 24** – AS a star forward at the University of Minnesota-Duluth during his collegiate playing days Tom Milani is among a long line of Thunder Bay products who have worn the maroon and gold Bulldogs hockey jersey over the years.

Now it was announced late last week that Milani will be recognized for his efforts and will be inducted into the UMD Athletic Hall of Fame in the fall.

Milani still holds the school record for most goals scored in a career in the 66-year history of UMD hockey finding the back of the net 100 times. He also currently ranks seventh in all-time scoring with 198 points in 146 games.

The right winger was a two-time All-Western Collegiate Hockey Association second team pick in 1974-75 and 1975-76 finishing as UMD's top point producer in each of those campaigns.

As a senior team captain in his final season Milani registered 63 points, which equalled a team single-season record while also establishing a school-best mark in hat-tricks and games played.

Others from the area already in the UMD hall of fame include Ron Busniuk, and Norm Maciver of Thunder Bay and Keith Christiansen of Fort Frances.

The UMD Hall of Fame induction ceremony goes Oct. 8 in Duluth.

**BACK TO GERMANY:** Fresh off a season where he led his club in scoring Thunder Bay's Mike Wehrstedt will be heading back to play in Germany next season.

Wehrstedt has agreed to suit up for ESV Kaufbeuren for a second campaign where he'll look to improve on his team-high 28 goals, which was also eighth best in the German National League.

Also back behind the bench for a second year as head coach for the squad will be Thunder Bay native Ken Latta who guided his charges to a playoff berth in his first-year at the helm as bench boss.

Kaufbeuren is also in the process of adding yet another local connection to the line-up in acquiring the services of talented Lakehead University Thunderwolves forward Scott Dobben.

Dobben led the T-wolves in scoring this past season averaging over a point-per-game.

**ITS NO BULL:** Emo's Luke Judson was the big winner at the recently staged Belleville Bulls annual awards banquet.

Judson was named the Ontario Hockey League club's most valuable player and also picked up the team most outstanding forward honour and earlier took home the Bull's fan award as top player.

The 19-year-old Judson led Belleville in goals with 29 as he set went on to set single-season highs in goals, assists and points. He is also the youngest serving captain of any OHL team.

**PWHL BOUND:** After finishing up her minor hockey career while helping lead the Thunder Bay Sportop Queens to a national midget championship, Brittany Zuback, will be heading to Southern Ontario to play in the Provincial Women's Hockey League.

Zuback has signed on with the Kitchener-Waterloo Rangers of the 18-team PWHL for next season.

She served as an assistant captain for the Queens this past season and is also one of four members of that national championship squad that will be in Calgary this week to take part in the Hockey Canada women's program strength and conditioning camp.

Goaltender Amanda Makela, along with forwards Michela Cava and Kaitlyn Tougas are joining Zuback at the event.

## Net Shots – May 2010 (continued)

**May 31** – WITH the plethora of area talent in this year's Stanley Cup final there is certainly added interest among Northwestern Ontario hockey fans.

You have to go all the way back to the 1950 Cup final between the Detroit Red Wings and New York Rangers to find as many local products competing for the NHL title.

That series, 60 years ago, saw Detroit win in seven games with the Rangers having to settle for playing two games at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto because the circus had booked up Madison Square Garden.

On the victorious Red Wings roster put together by manager and local icon Jack Adams were Lakehead products Steve Black and Lee Fogolin Sr.

Skating for the Rangers were Edgar Laprade, Pentti Lund and Kenora's Don Raleigh, who set a record that was unmatched for 43 years having two game-winning goals in overtime in the final.

Detroit would win the Stanley Cup that season without the services of the legendary Gordie Howe who was sidelined with a serious head injury sustained in the first game of the postseason after sliding head first into the boards.

Also of note, Lund led all players in playoff scoring in 1950. Eric Staal is the only other area product to accomplish that feat to date. Mike Richards, who is currently second in point production in this year's playoffs, is looking to join that exclusive group.

**EXTENSION:** Some solid work behind the bench has earned Larry Wintoneak a new deal.

The Kindersley Klippers announced this past week that they have inked the Thunder Bay native to a two-year contract extension to serve as head coach and general manager of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League club.

Wintoneak, who took over the Klippers in 2006, has led the Klippers to three straight winning seasons and to within one victory of a SJHL final.

He will also have some additional coaching responsibilities on his plate when he will serve as head coach of Team Canada West at the upcoming 2010 World Jr. A Challenge in Penticton, B.C., which goes the first week of November.

**GREAT DANE:** Yet another area athlete is celebrating winning a championship in a European league.

Dustin VanBallegooie of Murillo played a pivotal role in helping his squad capture the title in the 9-team Danish premier league.

Skating for Sonderjyske, the elite club in Denmark, VanBallegooie led all defencemen in the league in offensive production with 40 points in 35 games and also finished the regular season tied for seventh overall in scoring.

He was also named a league all-star and tacked on nine more playoff points helping his side capture the crown.

**AROUND THE OHL:** The Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds were quick to sign one of their high draft picks.

The Ontario Hockey League club has signed Thunder Bay's Matthew Murray to a card for the 2010-11 campaign.

Murray, a goaltender with the Thunder Bay Kings, was selected by the Greyhounds in the second round, 35th overall, in the OHL Priority Selection earlier this month.

Meanwhile rival Sudbury was also busy over the weekend holding their rookie camp for draft choices and free agent invitees.

Among those skating in the camp for the Wolves was a pair of Thunder Bay minor midget Kings in Brad Cox and Marly Quince who were both chosen by Sudbury in the recent OHL draft.

Also taking part was another local product in Justin Sefton, the Wolves 2009-10 rookie of the year award recipient.