



GENERALS SERIOUS ABOUT WINNING

OSHAWA - It appears that there is a new kind of pride in Oshawa.

The Oshawa Generals Hockey team are having an awesome season under Matt Leyden Trophy as OHL Coach of the year.

Coach Derek Laxdall, surely has the Generals fired up. Win after win. It appears that the winning momentum has hit a fever pitch.

This week in Round 2 Game 4: Oshawa sets Ottawa ablaze with 4-0 Series sweep. The Oshawa Generals sent the TD Place ablaze as they swept the Ottawa 67's Thursday evening after a 4-1 victory.

Oshawa dominated the game with control as rookie Owen Griffin along with Beckett Sennecke grabbed two points each, Dylan Roobroeck earned his lead in the OHL Playoffs in points, and Jacob Oster stopped 31 of 32 shots. Just over the midway point of the first frame, the Ottawa 67's grabbed two back-to-back penalties and found themselves with a two-man disadvantage.

Oshawa hopped onto that opportunity right away as it was Sennecke finding Colorado prospect Cal Ritchie who one-timed it and secured his 13th point and fourth goal of the postseason. This marked the first time the Generals opened the scoring in the series.

The Generals took a minor penalty a few minutes later, which led the 67's to get their payback and tie up the game. Ottawa's Thomas Sirman gained his second of the playoffs after finding a clear slot from the blue line to fire it past Oster.

14:26 on the clock in period two and the Generals gained the offensive zone with a d-to-d pass from Zackary Sandu to David Bedkowski, who then rifled the shot to the net, and Griffin caught a piece of it to secure the 2-1 lead.

Seven and a half minutes remaining for the second and New York Rangers prospect Roobroeck deposited the insurance goal to make it 3-1 Oshawa. A two-on-one and a backhand pass in the slot by Sennecke, Roobroeck snapped the puck to the back of the net, officially leading the OHL Playoffs point scoreboard with 16 and riding a five-game point streak.

Just before the second wrapped up with less than a minute to go, Luke Torrance was on the Ottawa doorstep to tip in a shot from Griffin and take the Generals' lead up to

three for a 4-1 score entering the third.

The third period was filled with action but no proof on the scoreboard with highlight reel hits, saves, and plays.

Connor Lockhart thought he had sealed the deal with the empty net goal, yet it was overturned for a high-sticking major on Rasmus Kumpulainen.

The Oshawa Generals officially got their revenge on the Ottawa 67's from last year's playoff run after they were eliminated in the first round 4-1. With this Round Two Series sweep, the Generals will advance to the Eastern Conference finals against North Bay.

Oshawa has been in the driver's seat this entire series, winning Game One last Friday 4-3, Game Two on Sunday 6-1, and Game Three on Tuesday 4-3. Stand-out players have included the Generals' top forward line, with New York Rangers prospect, Dylan Roobroeck, 2024 Draft prospect Beckett Sennecke, and Colorado Avalanche prospect Calum Ritchie, who are each top-three in the Generals' playoff point, goal, and assist leaderboards. Defenceman Luca D'Amato has racked up eight points, coming in fourth in the top-five and fourth in assists, including four assists on the power play.

Last Tuesday, the Generals came out on top in an almost 80-minute game. Ottawa's Braeden Kressler scored twice in the night while Henry Mews finished with a goal and two assists. It was Kressler who had tied the score at three with 2:10 remaining to force overtime. Connor Lockhart ripped a shot over the shoulder of Collin MacKenzie with 2:53 left on the clock in the extra frame as the Generals climbed ahead 3-0 in the series. Roobroeck had yet another multi-point game with a goal and an assist, defencemen Ben Danford and Connor Punnett got a goal each, and Sennecke picked up a pair of assists. Both teams had 42 shots on goal to wrap up the game, and tonight Ottawa will be putting their best foot forward in order to save themselves from elimination.

Derek Laxdal of the Oshawa Generals is the recipient of the Matt Leyden Trophy awarded annually to the OHL's Coach of the Year.

Completing his second season as Head Coach in Oshawa, Laxdal guided the



Generals to an exciting finish to the regular season as they rode a 12-game winning streak to the top of the Eastern Conference standings, securing the first seed on the final weekend of the schedule. The Generals played to an Eastern Conference-leading 25-6-4-1 record following the turn of the calendar on January 1st, finishing the 68-game campaign with an overall record of 40-19-7-2.

"To be recognized by your peers is very rewarding not only for me but for the entire organization," said Laxdal of the honour. "This is truly a reflection of the work of the coaching staff, Steve O'Rourke, Mike Farrugia, Austin Washkurak and the players.

"I would like to thank our Owner Rocco Tullio for the opportunity to coach a team with such a rich tradition, and I would also like to acknowledge General Manager Roger Hunt and the scouting staff for the countless hours spent assembling this talented group of players. The players have grown from day one last year, buying into the culture and playing for each other, day in and day out. It has been very rewarding watching these young men continue to develop on and off the ice daily.

"I'd also like to extend thanks to my wife Hali and daughters Jessica and Jaime for their incredible support."

Oshawa surrendered an Eastern Conference-low 204 goals-against, backstopped by the goaltending tandem of Jacob Oster and Noah Bender along with reliable names on the blue line such as Dallas Stars prospect Connor Punnett, veteran Luca D'Amato and draft eligibles Luca Marrelli and Ben Danford.

The Generals have seen the

rapid development of 6-foot-7 New York Rangers prospect Dylan Roobroeck under Laxdal's guidance as he joins other prominent forwards in Colorado Avalanche first round pick Calum Ritchie, overage captain Stuart Rolofs and former OHL champion Connor Lockhart in leading the Oshawa attack.

"We are extremely happy for Derek and the entire coaching staff," said Generals' President and Governor Rocco Tullio. "They work extremely hard and put in long days so our players can have success both on and off the ice. The development of our players and the success of our team is a direct result of the passion Derek and our coaching staff have for the game of hockey. There is no one more deserving of this award and we could not be more proud and happy for Derek and our team for this prestigious award."

Originally from Stonewall, Manitoba, Laxdal boasts a lengthy coaching resume that includes a pair of WHL championships as head coach of the Edmonton Oil Kings from 2010-14, capping his tenure there by hoisting the Memorial Cup. He's also served as an assistant coach of the NHL's Dallas Stars from 2019-22 along with head coaching assignments with the AHL's Texas Stars (2014-20), ECHL's Idaho Steelheads (2005-10) where he won a Kelly Cup title in 2007, as well as with the CHL's Wichita Thunder (2002-05). On the ice, Laxdal played 67 career NHL contests between the Toronto Maple Leafs and New York Islanders between 1984-91 as part of a lengthy professional career.

A right-winger, his junior career was spent between the WHL's Portland Winterhawks, Brandon Wheat Kings and New Westminster Bruins as

he was an eighth round pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1984. Laxdal represented Canada's National Junior Team in 1986.

Laxdal finished as the front-runner for this year's award while colleague Jay McKee of the Brantford Bulldogs finished second in the voting process.

The Matt Leyden Trophy has been awarded annually to the OHL's Coach of the Year as selected by his peers since 1972. The award is in recognition of the contributions of Matt Leyden, past president of the Ontario Hockey Association from 1965-67, and former manager of the Oshawa Generals who spent more than 50 years with the team.

Laxdal joins other past Generals coaches in DJ Smith (2013-14), Paul Theriault (1986-87), Bill White (1977-78) and inaugural winner Gus Bodnar (1971-72) as the fifth coach in franchise history to win the Matt Leyden Trophy.

Laxdal will be the OHL's nominee for the Brian Kilrea Canadian Hockey League Coach of the Year Award which will be presented at the 2024 Memorial Cup presented by Kia, set to take place in Saginaw, Michigan from May 24th through June 2nd. Laxdal will be formally presented with the Matt Leyden Trophy at the OHL's Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, June 12th at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.



Here is how to reach us

By mail: 136 Simcoe St North, Unit 4
Oshawa, Ontario. L1G 4S7
Tel: (905) 432-2657

Administration (General Inquiries)
Tel: (905) 432-2605 Circulation
Tel: (905) 432-9987

Classified/Display Advertising
Tel: (905) 432-9989

News Tips And Information
or Fax: (905) 404-0887

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newspaper@ocentral.com

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