

No Bull: Lawmaster a champ in OHL

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This season has been pegged: "The Running of the Bulls."

But this storyline is not to be confused with annual event in Pamplona, Spain.

Instead the scene is set in Belleville, Ontario.

These bulls are winners of their first-ever Ontario Hockey League playoff championship, taking a grueling 4-3 series from the London Knights with a 9-2 victory Tuesday at home before 4,000 screaming fans in the arena and diehard game.

"The town has erupted, you'd think the Red Wings had won the Stanley Cup," said Belleville defenseman Jason Lawmaster of Westland. "People are just going crazy. It's by far my greatest feeling in hockey. It was just great to see the look on people's faces."

Lawmaster and the Bulls are headed Sunday to the Ottawa Civic Center to face the Calgary Hitmen, champions of the Western Hockey League for the prestigious Memorial Cup, junior hockey's most coveted prize in Canada.

CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS SUMMARY OF PROCEEDING CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MAY 10, 1999

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Vagozzi at 7:30 p.m. Council Present: Barnett, Bates, Ellis, Grant, Oliverio, Soronen and Vagozzi.

Council Absent: None. Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Dornan, Assistant City Manager Whinney, Directors Beyer, Lasley, Rosch, Police Chief Dwyer and Attorney Doushau.

CITY COUNCIL
TOOK THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

• Recognized Proclamation honoring the outstanding work of The American Arab and Jewish Friends.

• Received Attorney's Report for May.

PROCLAIMED:

• May 15-22, 1999 as Michigan Week; recognized Mayor's Exchange Day.

• May 14, 1999 as Day of Hope.

• May 2-9, 1999 an Arson Awareness Week.

INTRODUCED ORDINANCES TO:

• Require persons less than 16 years of age operating a bicycle, skateboard or using roller-blades to wear a safety helmet.

• State provisions of the City's Employee Retirement System to incorporate accumulated changes, remove obsolete material and conform to applicable provisions of State and Federal law.

APPROVED:

• Transfer of Class C Liquor License with Dance and Entertainment Permit #262500 Grand River from Legacy/Dinner Club, Inc. (Mexico Gardens) to Priya Puri, Inc.

• Resolution designating City Clerk as Freedom of Information Act Coordinator.

• Special Event Permit for Finnish Ethnus Festival, June 4-6, 1999.

• City Council regular meeting minutes of April 10; study session and regular meeting of April 26; budget study session of May 3, 1999.

• Entering into executive session to discuss collective bargaining issues.

AWARDED BIDS/PURCHASE ORDERS FOR:

• Police car conversions to Custom Ordered Police Supply in the amount of \$25,725.76.

• Athletic field stripper for Special Services Department to Kramer in the amount of \$10,694.00.

• Memorial Park project to F. J. LaFontaine & Sons Landscaping in the amount of \$128,635.88.

MAYOR ALDO VAGOZZI
KATHRYN A. DORNAN, City Clerk

Published May 16, 1999

The four-team field also features the host Ottawa 67's and Quebec Junior League champ Acadie-Bathurst Titan from New Brunswick.

The 6-foot, 205-pound Lawmaster, however, is anything but a matador for the Bulls on the ice.

He has been a steady influence and a model of consistency, a far cry from an enforcer role where he racked up a team-high 227 minutes in 62 regular season games.

The playoffs have been a complete different scenario for the 20-year-old. He ranked among the OHL's best in plus-minus category, recording a plus 19.

In 21 games, Lawmaster has scored five goals and had 13 assists (compared with six goals and 32 assists during the regular season).

The most amazing number, however, is penalty in minutes, cutting his average nearly in half—just 34 for the playoffs.

He made a commitment to playing more disciplined hockey.

"You just can't take penalties in the playoffs, it's something I had to address," Lawmaster said. "I just had to take more

control and lead the younger guys."

The Bulls, second in their division, opened the OHL playoffs by sweeping Sudbury in the first four games to open the round.

They stunned Ottawa, which enjoyed the third best regular season record in the OHL, 4-1.

That was followed up by a 4-1 series triumph over Oshawa.

Against London, Belleville jumped out to a 3-1 series lead, but lost the next two, forcing a pivotal Game No. 7.

"It feels great to be champions, especially after the adversity we went through against London," Lawmaster said. "That's what made it all work is that our younger guys stepped up and our big guys came through with key goals."

"There's nothing scientific about the system we play. We just force hard, always keep a guy high and overall just play hard."

Lawmaster has been sort of a guy day during his junior career.

He has played for such teams as the Gaylord Grizzlies, Port Hope (Ontario) Buzzards and the Plymouth Whalers of the OHL.

Lawmaster, who attended John Glenn High one year, thought he'd found a comfy home right in his own backyard when he was signed by the Whalers.

But just one month into the 1997-98 season, Lawmaster found himself traded to the Bulls, joining coach Lou Crawford, younger brother of former Colorado Avalanche coach Marc Crawford.

"I was disappointed, not only to be traded, but not being able to play for my coach, my dad, in front of my family and friends," Lawmaster said. "At first it was a shock, but things worked out beautifully once I made the commitment. And my parents were able to come up a lot and see me play."

Now Lawmaster is getting

much of the credit for Belleville's success. And that's no Bull.

Plymouth, which sported the league's best regular season mark, was bounced by London in the second round, 4-3.

"They (Plymouth) had tons of talent and a lot of first-round (NHL draft) picks," Lawmaster said. "Yes, I was surprised they got knocked out that early. I think everybody was a little shocked."

There is no better place to be right now than Belleville, Ontario, population of 34,881 and located 50 miles northeast of Toronto (just off Lake Ontario).

"There's a lot around it, I'd say it's like Belleville, Michigan," Lawmaster said. "The fans have been really supportive. It was also great see us win for our coach (Dr. Robert Vaughn)."

One of the most famous Bulls' alums is former NHL All-Star defenseman Al MacInnis.

And some day Lawmaster hopes to make it to the NHL.

He's a free agent and will likely wind up either in the American Hockey League, International Hockey League or East Coast Hockey League next season.

This time next year hopefully I'll have a pro career," Lawmaster, who completed school correspondence classes last December.

Another strong showing in the Memorial Cup could put Lawmaster on the priority list for some NHL club.

Twelve long years on the ice are starting to pay off.

"I started playing organized hockey at 8," Lawmaster said. "My dad (Frod) never played hockey. My cousin, Richard Sewell, got me playing. He's my mentor, I give him a lot of the credit."

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THE WEEK AHEAD

PREP BASEBALL

Monday, May 24

Rockford CC at Redford Union, 4 p.m.

Trenton at Wayne, 4 p.m.

Wixom at Franklin, 4 p.m.

John Glenn at Clinton, 4 p.m.

Stevenson vs. W.L. Central, 4 p.m.

W.L. Western at Franklin, 4 p.m.

PCA at Oakland Christ, 4:30 p.m.

Fordson at Franklin, 4 p.m.

Northville at Stevenson, 4 p.m.

Huron Valley at Franklin, 4:30 p.m.

Huron Valley at Algonac, 5 p.m.

Stevenson at Clinton, 4 p.m.

Franklin at Franklin, 4 p.m.

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