

Whalers finally put end to Bulls with 6-2 win

More than five minutes had elapsed in the third period Tuesday, and this Ontario Hockey League quarterfinal playoff game between the Plymouth Whalers and the Belleville Bulls had taken on a familiar look.

When the Bulls' Joel Trotter tipped in a centering pass from Dan Cleary to trim the Whalers' lead to 3-2 with 14:37 remaining to play, it seemed certain this game would end just like its five predecessors: with a single goal separating the winner and loser.

But then, just 24 seconds after Trotter's goal, the forechecking Whalers got possession of the puck behind the Bulls' net. Harold Druken passed it out to an unchecked David Legwand, who was perched less than 15 feet in front of Belleville goalie Shawn Gallant.

Gallant had no chance. Legwand's blast beat him cleanly, restoring the Whalers' two-goal lead and turning the tide in this tightly-played series. Plymouth added two more goals in the final 14 minutes and actually was going away, 6-2, at Plymouth's Compuware Arena.

The series-clinching victory — the Whalers won the first three games by a single goal, then lost

HOCKEY

the next two by a single goal — puts Plymouth into the OHL semifinals against the Guelph Storm, the league's regular-season champions (game dates had not yet been determined).

"They play a totally different style than Belleville," said a relieved Pote DeBoer, the Whalers' coach, after securing the series against the Bulls. "Belleville is one of the best offensive teams in the league, and Guelph is one of the best defensive teams."

"But we're in the semifinals. And this was a team people thought would finish fourth in our division."

The Whalers certainly proved them wrong. One major reason for their success: Legwand, the rookie from Grosse Pointe who has emerged as one of the league's premier players. Named one of the game's three stars Tuesday, Legwand scored twice, giving him seven goals and 19 points in 11 playoff games.

But he isn't the only reason. The Whaler who emerged as the series star was goalie Robert Escho. Up against the league's

most proficient offensive force, Escho was superb, allowing 19 goals in six games (3.18 per game).

"You're not going to totally shut this team down," DeBoer said of the Bulls. "But (Escho) made some big saves when he had to. He played great for us."

That included the opening period of game six. The Whalers did draw first blood when Legwand fed a pass through to Harold Druken on a break, whose shot was stopped by Gallant. Legwand, however, was there to poke in the rebound a moment before the net came off its mooring. Druken and Andrew Taylor assisted.

Belleville tied it with a power-play goal by Justin Papineau with 2:54 left in the period. It was a pivotal point in the game for both teams; after the Legwand goal, the Bulls had started assuming command and, by the end of the period, they were in control.

Indeed, Belleville outshot Ply-

mouth 17-8 in the period, which did not bode well for the Whalers as the second stanza started.

But Escho kept Plymouth from falling behind with several solid saves. Then, with 11:32 left in the second, the Whalers forced a turnover in the Bulls end. Eric Goody got possession of the puck behind the Belleville net; he brought it out on the right side, patiently looking for an opening. He found it, slipping a pass through to defenseman Sergei Fedotov rushing the net on the left side. Fedotov popped the puck in, and the Whalers had a lead they would never lose.

A roughing penalty against the Bulls' Jonathan Cheechoo led to a power play goal for the Whalers, scored by Randy Fitzgerald after Paul Mara fired a shot into a crowd in front of the Bulls' net. Julian Smith also got an assist, and with 7:53 to play in the period Plymouth led 3-1.

At that point, the shots on goal

told the story: After being outshot by nine in the first period, Plymouth had a 15-3 advantage through the first 16 minutes of the second period.

"I thought we kind of felt each other out in the first period," DeBoer said. "Both teams looked tired. But we dug down and found some energy in the second period, and that was the difference."

In the third period, after Legwand's second goal had restored the Whalers' two-goal lead, the Bulls ran out of gas. Plymouth

scored twice in the last 6:14, Fitzgerald getting the first (his second of the game, earning him No. 1 star status) after a Smith takeaway in the Belleville end. Kris Purdy finished the scoring with his first playoff goal, firing a shot from the left wing on what had seemed an innocent play. But Gallant misplayed it, and it trickled into the net.

Strangely, Purdy's score gave the Whalers something they never had in winning the first three games of the series — four more goals than the Bulls.

PUBLIC NOTICE BUDGET HEARING ON PROPOSED 1998-99 BUDGET OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE FISCAL YEAR

July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on April 20th, 1998 at 7:00 P.M. at the George A. Bee Administration Center, 2400 Opdyke Rd., Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, the Board of Trustees of Oakland Community College will hold a public hearing to consider the College's proposed 1998-1999 budget.

The Board may not adopt its proposed 1998-99 budget until after the public hearing. A copy of the proposed 1998-99 budget including the proposed property tax millage rate is available for public inspection during normal business hours at 2400 Opdyke Rd., Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of the hearing.

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and senior Kelly DePottier had two hits apiece to lead the Falcons, who are 2-0 in the WLAA Lakes Division along with the Raiders.

Maureen Buchanan had two hits, including a triple, and three RBI to lead Salem, 0-2 in the Lakes and overall.

MERCY 9-11. BISHOP FOLEY 3-4: Farmington Hills Mercy swept a Catholic League doubleheader Monday from host Madison Heights Bishop Foley.

Sophomore Jennifer Simpson tossed a five-hitter in the first game, allowing only three hits while striking out 10. She walked five.

Seniors Katie Homant and Beth Ann Nowak led the Mercy offense with two RBI apiece.

Senior Leah Moeller was the winning pitcher in the second game, combining with senior reliever Terri Schroeder to scatter seven hits, strike out nine and walk three.

Senior Shayla O'Mara was 3-for-3 with three RBI. Sophomore Dana Falvo and freshman Lauren Monterey also had three hits apiece with three and two RBI, respectively.

The Marlins had a 2-1 record following the victory.

CHURCHILL 4, W.L. WESTERN 3: Jessica Schutte walked with the bases loaded, scoring teammate Kristin Derwich with the game-winning run in the bottom of the eighth inning to give Livonia Churchill (4-0, 2-0) the WLAA-Western Division win over visiting Walled Lake Western (0-3, 0-2).

Meagan Sheehan doubled to lead off the eighth. Christine Fones singled and Ann Senne reached base on a fielder's choice to load the bases.

Winning pitcher Adrienne Doyle racked up a career-high 10 strikeouts in eight innings. She gave up just four hits and one walk.

Doyle also helped her own cause offensively with two hits and an RBI. Schutte had two hits and two RBI.

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