

Schmalz Cup playoffs underway across the province

By Brian Lockhart

The provincial Schmalz Cup playoffs are underway, with eight teams from the Provincial Junior Hockey League currently battling it out for Conference championships in the first round.

Four teams will remain standing and will go on to play this year's Schmalz Cup Championship Tournament, to be held in Woodstock on May 11 to 14.

The four conference champions will compete in a round-robin format to determine rankings for the semi-finals, which will get underway on May 13.

The battle for the North Conference championship pits the Stayner Siskins against the Mount Forest Patriots.

Stayner won the North Carruthers Division championship with a win over the Alliston Hornets in a series that went five games.

Mount Forest came to the Conference championship after winning the North Pollock Division in a final series against the Hanover Barons. That series went five games.

That series got underway on April 21, with Stayner winning game one, 4-2, and following up with a 4-3 OT win on April 23 to lead the series 2-0.

In the East Conference, the Clarington Eagles face the Port Hope Panthers.

Port Hope is a dark horse entry this year. The Panthers finished the regular season well back in fourth place but came alive during the playoffs to win the East Todd Division.

Clarington leads that series 2-0.

The South Conference has the Glanbrook Rangers from the South Bloomfield Division facing the Wellesley Applejacks from the South Doherty Division.

That series was tied 1-1 after the first two games.

In the West Conference, the Lakeshore Canadiens are up against the Thamesford Trojans.

Thamesford is another dark horse entry. They finished the regular season in third place in the West Yeck Division but managed to come out on top in the playoffs to win.

The Canadiens are the defending Schmalz Cup champions, having won the title in 2022.

The Conference championships are scheduled to wrap up on May 2 if the Stayner versus Mount Forest and Clarington versus Port Hope series go seven games.

The remaining teams will then have 11 days to get ready for the Schmalz Cup championship tournament in Woodstock.