



Photos: Pellerins Photography

BACK TO BACK

THE ORANGEVILLE NORTHMEN REPEAT AS JUNIOR 'A' CHAMPIONS TO TOP OFF AN AMAZING MINTO CUP THAT SAW BRAMPTON PLAY HOST TO 10 DAYS OF GREAT LACROSSE

// By Roger Lajoie

In the mind of Dean MacLeod, commissioner of the OLA Junior 'A' League, the 2009 Minto Cup could not have had a better ending.

Not that the commissioner was cheering for the Orangeville Rayburn Construction Northmen to win the round-robin tournament – which it did — he just feels the entire tournament at the Powerade Centre in Brampton, Ont., couldn't have worked out better for everybody involved.

"First and foremost the organizing committee in Brampton did a job that was second to none," MacLeod says. "All of the work they did in the 16 months leading up to the event, and right through the best-of-three final, was great. It was a great 10 days of lacrosse in Brampton and we really couldn't have asked for anything better."

Orangeville completed the round-robin portion of the event with a perfect 3-0 record, including an 8-5 win over its arch-nemesis and gracious host, Brampton Excelsiors. That moved



the Northmen into the final, where they again faced the Excelsiors, who beat Coquitlam 12-6 in the other semi-final game.

The relatively new Minto Cup format then resulted in a best-of-three finals to determine the winners, and that series was indeed a classic. Orangeville won the opener 10-9 but an 11-8 loss in game two set the stage for a sudden-death showdown for the national title.

The Orangemen finally prevailed 8-4 before a near capacity crowd that featured a large contingent of Orangeville fans that saw their local heroes claim their second consecutive Minto Cup title.

"The two best teams were in the final and when you really look at it, the best team won," MacLeod says. "We were obviously pleased from an Ontario perspective to have two teams in the final and to have Orangeville win again was certainly not unexpected."

Both Orangeville and Brampton had been



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“To hear the crowd behind us every night, you can’t ask for more as a player,” he says. “It’s simply an unbelievable way to end your junior career. I can’t say enough about this group of guys.”

Adam Jones was named tournament MVP after an outstanding tournament.

“It was our goal all along to try to defend our championship,” asserts Matt Sawyer, Orangeville’s head coach. “We had a sign up in our room that said: ‘Great teams are not defined by a single championship.’ We wanted to prove we’re a great team. We were more than happy with winning it last year but we were on a mission from the get-go to defend this thing.



“It is so satisfying to win it again,” he adds. “I’m so proud of this team. To be able to do it against our archrivals, Brampton, in front of our fans from 30 minutes down the road makes it a little bit sweeter.”

The Excelsiors were obviously disappointed, but their coach Brian Beisel praised the winners.

“We knew we needed to play our best game to beat them and we didn’t play our best game,” he says. “They deserved it. They played better than us. We’re proud of our guys for taking it to the limit, but congratulations to Orangeville.”



In MacLeod’s mind everyone involved in the tournament deserves congratulations.

“We were in the best facility we’ve probably ever played in and it’s not easy when you have a building this size, especially with all of the costs associated with it,” MacLeod says. “But if you want luxury you have to pay for luxury. For 80 per cent of the fans in Southern Ontario, this was the best place to play and they all got to see a hell of a tournament in the best venue that we could have come up with. It really was a great week.”

The 2010 Minto Cup tournament will be played in Coquitlam, B.C. ♦

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expected to make the finals, but the series was anything but anti-climatic. After splitting the first two games, a crowd of 3,800 looked on as the Northmen roared into an early 3-0 lead and never lost its lead, despite a spirited late Brampton comeback attempt.

The victory was a hard earned one for the Orangeville club, but the taste of victory was every bit as sweet for the team the second time around, especially with so many of the team’s fans on hand.

“They are the greatest supporters anywhere,” says Jesse Gamble, one of the stars of the Northmen. “Right now, I am on such a high, there is nothing else like it. It just all came together and I couldn’t ask for anything more in my last year with this team.”

Final game MVP Nick Rose echoed his teammate’s remarks.

