

Ladner Pioneers clinch top spot, first round bye

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The Ladner Pioneers dumped Langley Warriors 18-7 last week to clinch first place in the West Coast Senior Lacrosse League. Photograph By Mark Booth

On the strength of back-to-back home floor wins, the Ladner Pioneers locked up first place and a bye into the semifinals of the West Coast Senior Lacrosse League playoffs.

Despite being outshot 54-51, Ladner pounded the Langley Warriors 18-7 last Thursday.

The Pioneers held a 4-3 advantage after the opening frame, but exploded for 10 goals in the second to put the game out of reach.

Former Delta Junior "A" Islanders standout Spencer Bromley, who was signed by the Pioneers on July 1, made an immediate impact, scoring three goals and adding three assists, while Tyler Kirkby had three goals and one assist.

Goalie Rob Cook was outstanding in net stopping 47 of 54 shots.

Ladner then hosted the Victoria Wolves Saturday afternoon, pulling out a 7-6 win.

After the teams traded goals in the first, the Pioneers opened the game up with a five-goal second period before holding off Victoria's rally in the third to win its 11th game of the season.

Bromley and Dave Yee paced the Pioneers' attack with two goals apiece, while goalie Kevin Hill stopped 34 of 40 shots.

"The Langley game was big for us. We win that one and we clinch and then the Victoria game didn't matter much, but we won them both, so that's a bonus," said head coach Ross Frehlick. "To beat Langley and how we beat them really showed something. Our transition game was strong. We had seven or eight goals in transition and I think another three or four

against Victoria, so if we can continue to do that kind of stuff and score off our defence we are going to be a hard team to beat.”

Bromley, who finished fifth in Delta Islanders scoring with 61 points in 21 games last season, adds even more firepower to an already potent Pioneers’ attack.

“It’s a huge move for us. He can play, but he’s a better kid,” said Frehlick. “So to have that kind of quality individual in the locker room is big. Mike Tebbutt is another great addition for us. Both these guys want to play and want to be here. They are both lefties and any team can use more lefties, so we are real happy to have them both.”

The Pioneers wrap up the regular season this Sunday when they pay a visit to the Nanaimo Timbermen.

The top two teams, Ladner and either Langley or Royal City, will get first round byes.

The semifinal series for Ladner will likely start either July 26 or July 27 against the lowest seed remaining from the two quarterfinal series.

By the time that series starts, Sam Clare, Nathan Clare and Dan McDermott will be back from Finland where they are playing for England in the European Box Lacrosse Championships.

Add those players into the line-up and Frehlick has a wealth of options at his disposal.

“We will have 31 people to choose from. Rob Cook has certainly solidified our goalie position, but I still have no idea who I will start in the playoffs. They are all solid in my opinion. We are in good shape for sure.”

Frehlick said the Pioneers will be around town doing fundraising events in the next few weeks for their trip to the President’s Cup, should they qualify, and he’s hoping the community will show their support.

“It’s been a great year for us so far. If we keep playing like we’ve been playing, it’s going to get even better,” he said.