



Ladner Pioneers face Nanaimo in semis

Regular season champs begin quest for 1st playoff title since 2007 on Thursday

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July 26, 2017 12:00 AM

From securing a President's Cup berth to potentially hitting the players' own pocketbooks, there are plenty of motivating factors heading into the Ladner Pioneers' semi-final playoff series with the Nanaimo Timbermen.

The Pioneers will begin the quest for their first West Coast Senior Lacrosse Association playoff championship since 2007 when they open a best-of-five affair with the Timbermen on Thursday in Ladner at 7 p.m.

The winning team will not only be off to the finals but also will have the opportunity to represent B.C. at the national senior "B" championships in Six Nations, starting Aug. 27. Ladner and Nanaimo were the only two WCSLA clubs willing to commit to the expensive week-long tournament back east.

Pioneers head coach Ross Frehlick admits he still has to convince his players to attend nationals even if they don't win the WCSLA title, although it's the last thing the organization is thinking about. Ladner enjoyed an impressive regular season with a 11-3-0 record and is the clear team to beat.

"I said last season this was a three-year plan (leading up to the 2018 President's Cup in Nanaimo) and we are ahead of schedule," said Frehlick. "We are a good team and now let's find out just how good we are. The players have been working hard in practice the last week or so. We will be ready."

The Timbermen finished fifth in the league standings at 7-6-0-1 but have been playing their best lacrosse of the season, winning five straight games, including a two-game quarter-final sweep of the Victoria Wolves. Nanaimo also handed Ladner a 10-8 defeat back on July 16, although the locals were missing nine regulars for the Island road encounter.

"We have to play our game and run. We didn't do that on the Island, even with the guys who were in the line-up," continued Frehlick. "We have the full crew back now. Nanaimo is a good team that beat us last year. We just need to play our game and stay out of the penalty box."

As an additional incentive to the players to make this a short series, the club will pay the estimated \$1,200 travel costs for game two on Friday. Should a return trip for game four be required, the players will have to foot the bill.

"We're trying to raise money to go to the President's Cup. We don't want to be paying for two trips to the Island," added Frehlick.