

Pioneers taking care of business

Wins over Coquitlam and Royal City improves Ladner to 5-1-0 on the season

Mark Booth / Delta Optimist

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Wyatt Pinder fends off a Coquitlam opponent during his team's win in West Coast Senior Lacrosse Association action on Thursday night. Photograph By MARK BOOTH

Ross Frehlick doesn't have to be reminded how important games in May can be.

With just an 18-game regular season schedule, jockeying for playoff positioning and home floor advantage starts early. The longtime Ladner Pioneers player and now head coach made it no secret a top two finish will put his team in a desirable position to return to the President's Cup senior "B" lacrosse national championships for a second straight year.

The Pioneers continue to take care of business, posting key wins over Coquitlam and Royal City this week to improve to 5-1-0 on the season. The only team to defeat them and ahead of them in the standings are the Nanaimo Timbermen (5-0-0) — hosts of this year's nationals.

Get to the West Coast Senior Lacrosse Association finals against their Island rival and a President's Cup berth is assured.

Ladner came up with a 17-8 home floor win over Coquitlam on Thursday — handing the Adanacs their first regulation loss of the season. Tyler Kirkby led the way with an eight point night, including four goals as Ladner pulled away by outscoring the visitors 7-2 in the second period.

Homegrown players Ryan Keith and Mike Berekoff each had hat tricks, while Shawn Richardson and Wyatt Pinder chipped in with two goals each. Nathan Clare added a goal and four assists. Jake Carey and Connor Davison also scored. Zach Wickett was solid in net with 35 saves.

Two nights later, the Pioneers held off the Royal City Capitals 9-8 in a rematch of last year's championship series.

Wyatt Pinder's second goal of the game with 3:57 remaining proved to be the game winner after Royal City rounded out the scoring with 12 seconds left.

The visitors took control in the early going by outscoring Royal City 5-1 in the opening period. Richardson led the way with a hat trick. Rookie Patrick Szabo and Berekoff scored two each.

Nathan Wilson got the win in net, making 23 saves. The loss leaves the Capitals at 2-5-0.

The Pioneers host winless Valley Rebels (0-6-0) on Thursday (8 p.m.) before a couple pivotal games with the third place Langley Warriors, starting June 7.

The Warriors (3-2-0) defeated Ladner 13-10 back on May 15 but the result was overturned for dressing a player currently on the WLA holdout list.

Still, Langley will be a factor this season, paced by league scoring leader Bryan Poole with 28 points in four games so far.

Boxla bits...

Jason Jones stint with the Pioneers proved to be a brief one after his WLA playing rights were dealt to the New Westminster Salmonbellies. The former Delta Junior "A" Islander had two assists playing alongside his brother Mitch in New West's season-opening win over Maple Ridge Burrards last week.

