

Minor Midget Express in tough to repeat OHL Cup title



By Jake Courtepatte

In Minor Midget hockey, the Triple Crown is the highest achievement: a Silver Stick title, an OMHA championship, and an OHL Cup.

While this year's crop of York-Simcoe Express talent will not be able to accomplish the feat done by their predecessors one year ago, they still have the opportunity to capture their second straight OMHL Cup this week.

Twenty clubs from across Ontario will be competing in the tournament, in what is the final test for many players before their Junior eligibility.

‘It’s a huge opportunity for our teams to get a final look at who can play at the next level,’ said Darrell Woodley, the Ontario Hockey League’s Director of Central Scouting in an email. ‘These are the players that are right on the cusp of the OHL draft, and it’s the biggest moment of their hockey careers so far.’

York-Simcoe earned a trip to the OMHA finals in February following a 3 ? 0 series sweep of the Markham Waxers in the semifinal series, before falling in three games to the Quinte Red Devils.

The team went 44-19-3 in the AAA regular season.

They kick off the tournament Tuesday following press time, taking on the Mississauga Senators.

The Express won their second OHL Cup in the franchise’s history in 2016, last accomplished in 2004. In front of a nationwide audience, they put up a thrilling 2 ? 1 win over the Toronto Marlboros in overtime.

Current North Bay Battalion rookie Rhys Forhan scored both Express goals, while goaltender Andrei Berezinskiy earned tournament MVP honours playing to a 5-0 record with a 2.09 goals-against-average.

While the Express have been banished from the OMHA’s rankings list, the Marlboros enter the tournament as the fourth-ranked team in the province.

The London Jr. Knights of the Alliance league earned the prestigious tournament’s top ranking.

With action kicking off Tuesday, the tournament plays out at Scotiabank Pond in Toronto through to Monday, before the championship game moves to the Mattamy Athletic Centre Monday night.

The final game will be broadcast on Sportsnet Ontario.