

# Flyers honour graduating age players

By Bryan Jessop

Although the Leamington Flyers hope to get another six to seven weeks out of the 2019-20 season, they are already certain that nearly half the roster will be sorely missed for 2020-21.

Moments prior to the current campaign's final regular season home game against the rival Chatham Maroons, the Flyers presented their traditional on-ice ceremony for players engaged in their final season of junior hockey. This year's crop of 20 year olds includes forwards Rory DiNiro, Josh King, Nick Smith, Maddux Rychel and Griffin Robinson, defensemen Kade McKibbin, Jaydon Fetter and Zach Taylor and goaltender Matthew Waite.

The graduating age players were met at the red line for the ceremony by parents and other family members prior to the opening faceoff. This season's count of nine 20-year-olds represented the league's allowable maximum since what is known as "The Caledonia Rule" was introduced three seasons ago.

"For guys like Kade McKibbin who's been here his whole Junior B career, it's a special night," noted Flyers head coach Cam Crowder.

**Rory DiNiro**, a Leamington resident, has been a forward with the Flyers since arriving from the Ontario Junior Hockey League's Aurora Tigers during the 2016-'17 season. In 113 GOJHL regular season games, DiNiro tallied 24 goals (including four game winners) and 30 assists for 54 points while adding 48 penalty minutes. In playoff action, he's added 14 points in 27 games and 25 penalty minutes.

On defense, Windsor's **Jaydon Fetter** played 140 regular season games with the Flyers, adding 31 goals with five game winners and 76 assists for 107 points while being assessed 131 penalty minutes. He was the Western Conference's Defensive Player of the Month for October of 2019 and was nominated to the 2017-18 Conference First Team All Stars while participating in that season's GOJHL Prospects' Game.

**Josh King**, an Essex resident, was traded to the Flyers last season. In that time, King contributed 45 goals and 56 assists for 101 points in 178 regular season games, including 10 game winning goals while serving 240 minutes in penalties.

Long-serving defenseman **Kade McKibbin** has contributed with 18 goals and 85 assists for 103 points while adding 129 penalty minutes for the Flyers. Five of his goals were game winners and despite his position



Leamington Flyers general manager Justin Solcz and head coach Cam Crowder congratulate defenseman Kade McKibbin during the team's annual ceremony honouring graduating-age players Thursday, Feb. 20 at Highbury Canco Arena.



Leamington resident and Flyers forward Rory DiNiro is greeted by family members during the team's annual ceremony honouring graduating-age players. (Southpoint Sun Photos)

on the blue line, was declared the Western Conference's Offensive Player of the Month for November of 2019.

**Griffin Robinson**, a forward hailing from Harrow, started with the Flyers before being traded to the Maroons and then midway through the current season, back to Leamington. In 196 regular season games between the two teams, he has scored 105 goals and added 112 assists for 217 points while picking up 16 game winning goals and 156 penalty minutes.

*"With all nine players, whether they've been here for a while or not that long, we've been fortunate to have them as part of our organization."*

— Cam Crowder

**Maddux Rychel** of Tecumseh also played with the Flyers before being dealt to Chatham and then back to Leamington, although his Junior B days began with the LaSalle Vipers. In 221 games, Rychel has scored 74 goals and added 156 assists for 230 points along with 93 penalty minutes and nine game winners. He was the Western Conference's Offensive Player of the Month for February and

September of 2019 and was an eighth round pick of the Hamilton Bulldogs in the 2015 OHL Priority Draft.

Forward **Nick Smith** of Sault Ste. Marie is the most recent 1999-born addition to the Flyers. In 13 games, he's scored eight goals and added five assists for 13 points while adding 23 penalty minutes. Three of his goals have been game winners.

**Zach Taylor**, another Sault Ste. Marie resident, has scored 11 goals and accounted for 39 assists for 49 points in 62 games as a defenseman with the Flyers.

His totals also include a game winning goal and 66 penalty minutes. Taylor is a 15th round pick of the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds in the 2015 OHL Priority Draft.

Goaltender **Matthew Waite** of Sherbrooke, Quebec, was added to the Flyers during the 2019 offseason. In 26 games with Leamington, he tabulated 20 wins, six losses, two shutouts, a goals against average of 2.74 and a .895 save percentage. Waite was the Western Conference Goaltender of the Month for December 2019.

With the 2020 playoffs underway, the Flyers hope to make the most of the post season for their departing veterans.

"With nine guys who've got careers that are about to come to an end, we take pride in trying to give them careers to end on a high note," Crowder explained.

# Kingsville Kings eliminated by Ravens in GMHL semifinals

The Kingsville Kings ended their 2020 playoff run in three straight games to the St. George Ravens in the Greater Metro Hockey League (GMHL).

After eliminating the Northumberland Stars two games to one in the best-of-three games quarter-finals, the Kings met their match in the Ravens in the semifinals.

**Game 1** was in St. George on Thursday, March 7 and was a 10-4 loss for the Kings.

**Game 2** in St. George was the closest battle the Kings experienced with the Ravens. This match ended 5-1. The lone goal scorer for Kingsville was Zachary Dillen, unassisted in the second frame.

**Game 3** in the best-of-five games semifinals ended in Kingsville with a 9-0 loss, ending the Kings' playoff run for the 2019-20 season.



Kingsville Kings Captain Noah Shultz (right) smiles during Game 3 in the Greater Metro Hockey League semifinals on Sunday, March 1 in Kingsville. At left is Zac Harding. (Kingsville Kings Photo)

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