

SPORTS

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TEERING UP RETIREMENT

After 29 years of distinguished service, Neal Connell is retiring as director of golf at Sturgeon Valley. See story, page 62.

ON TAP

Volleyball finals

The Metro Edmonton High School Athletic Association serves up its volleyball championship finals today at Austin O'Brien High School. Admission is \$3.

St. Albert teams are competing for playoff honours in the following conferences:

City junior girls

At 11 a.m. the Bellerose Bulldogs (13-1, 40 GW/13 GL) play the Ardrossan Bisons (11-3, 38 GW/16 GL).

The Bulldogs are gunning for their first city conference junior girls' volleyball championship in school history.

In league play Bellerose finished first and Ardrossan was third. In the season opener the Bisons beat the Bulldogs 3-1 in St. Albert.

Bellerose is coming off a 3-1 victory in Tuesday's semifinal against the fifth-place St. Albert Skyhawks, winners of the last two city finals.

Premier junior boys

At 3 p.m. the Paul Kane Blues (7-5, 25 GW/25 GL) battle the Archbishop Jordan Scots (7-4, 25 GW/19 GL).

The Blues have never celebrated a premier conference junior boys' volleyball championship.

The Scots placed second and Paul Kane shared third place in the standings. The teams split the season series with 3-2 scores. The Blues won Sept. 28 in St. Albert and the Scots were victorious Oct. 19 in Sherwood Park.

In Tuesday's semifinal the Blues upset the undefeated O'Leary Spartans in five sets at O'Leary High School.

Premier women

At 5 p.m. Paul Kane (10-3, 33 GW/13 GL) will challenge the defending champion Holy Trinity Trojans (10-3, 32 GW/17 GL).

The Blues can make school history as the first Paul Kane women's volleyball team to win the premier conference crown.

In the regular season the Blues and Trojans tied for third place. The last tilt between the championship contenders was Paul Kane's three-set sweep Oct. 20 in St. Albert.

Last year in the semifinals the Trojans stunned the undefeated Blues in three sets at Paul Kane.

In Monday's semifinals, Paul Kane swept the second-place Spartans at O'Leary and the Trojans knocked off the undefeated Falcons 3-2 in Sherwood Park.

As the only 4A team in the premier final, the Blues are guaranteed a return trip to provincials. They are ranked second provincially in 4A. The Trojans are the team to beat at the 3A level.

On Wednesday at 4:45 p.m., Paul Kane hosts the public league champion to determine the first and second seeds in the Edmonton zone for the Nov. 25 to 27 provincials in Red Deer.



LAURA PEDERSEN/St. Albert Gazette

LORD OF THE RINGS - Henry Stainthorp colours the rings at the St. Albert Curling Club on Tuesday afternoon, in preparation for the beginning of league play Monday. Renovations to the club's front facade pushed back the start of the curling season. The \$2.4-million facelift is just about complete. Construction of the front steps and ramp begins Monday. The entire lower level should be finished by end of next week. The date for full occupancy is Dec. 10.

Prime time for Blues basketball

Rick Stanley joins Paul Kane as basketball coach

BY JEFF HANSEN
 Staff Writer

The Paul Kane Blues trumpeted the arrival of the upcoming basketball season by blowing their horns.

"Paul Kane basketball, girls and boys, are going to make a lot of noise this year," declared Rick Stanley, the new head coach of the varsity men's team, during last Saturday's successful banquet and silent auction at the Paul Kane High School cafeteria. "This program has an incredible amount of kids and athletes that are waiting to explode."

While the parade route through the streets of St. Albert hasn't been finalized, Stanley is confident the Blues will challenge for championship honours.

"I'm really excited about the potential of the teams this year."

A playoff berth for the lady Blues would be a major accomplishment. They haven't made the playoffs the last four seasons. In 2009/10 they finished seventh out of seven teams at 2-10 in the metro Edmonton premier conference. The junior ladies, however, won back-to-back premier titles the past two seasons.

The varsity men haven't got past the premier semifinals or earned a spot in the Edmonton zone 4A provincial qualifying tournament since their second-straight metro playoff championship and historic 4A provincial gold-medal victory in 2008.

Last season was defined by two losses to the Sturgeon Spirits: 79-71 in the second-last game in the regular season that pretty much determined first place in pool B, and 65-62 in the playoff to determine the third metro seed team in the zone tournament.

In league play the Blues finished 8-5 after going 8-4 the previous campaign.

The Blues can potentially return every player but one from last season. The junior boys, premier finalists four consecutive years, also have players that will challenge for roster spots on the senior squad.

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LAURA PEDERSEN/St. Albert Gazette

BOSS OF THE BLUES - Rick Stanley, the new head coach of the Paul Kane Blues' varsity men's basketball team, discusses a drill while Zach Yaremko listens during tryouts Wednesday.

AJHL team poised to gain ground in standings

Steel rise up

BY JEFF HANSEN
 Staff Writer

Building a winning streak is a work in progress for the St. Albert Steel.

The most wins the Steel stacked together in a row are three while going 12-8 to start the season.

"We want to chain together as many wins as we can. That would be perfect," said Rhys Hadfield, net-minder for the seventh-place Steel in the north division.

After winning two of the last three games during last weekend's home-stand, the Steel pulled themselves to within two points of the sixth-place Sherwood Park Crusaders with a whopping five games in hand. They also trailed the fifth-place Grande Prairie Storm by five points with four fewer games played.

"We have to use these games in hand to our advantage and get wins out of them," said Steel newcomer Brandon Fagerheim. "We have to show people that we're a really good hockey team and we can do some damage this year."

The Steel have multiple games in hand on every team above them in the standings.

"The north is really bunched up so if we're going to make a move we've got to hop on it right now and get after it," Hadfield said. "There is more pressure now because of the games in hand but we're just trying to win more than we lose. That's the way you climb back up the ladder."

Friday night the Steel hosted the fourth-place Lloydminster Bobcats but the score was unavailable at press time.

Tonight the Steel travel to Bonnyville to play the third-place Pontiacs at 7 p.m.

"After last weekend everyone is pretty positive in the room and we're looking good for this weekend," Hadfield said. "We want to keep it tight on defence like we did last weekend over the last two games and hopefully we get more production out of the offence like we had Sunday [in the 5-1 win over the Calgary Mustangs]."

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