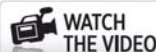


Merchants advance after sweeping Navy Vets



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CORY SMITH
Sentinel-Review

NORWICH – The end result of Woodstock and Norwich's first-round series was as surprising as the last game was exciting.

Norwich completed its Niagara West Division quarter-final sweep of Woodstock Friday, scoring 10 unanswered goals in an 11-1 romp. The Merchants outscored Woodstock 19-4 over the final two games and finally asserted themselves against the younger Navy Vets.

"We just wanted to come out and play our game, get pucks deep, no turnovers at the blue-line, get to the net, get some nice screens, deflections, rebound goals," Norwich head coach Chad Paton said. "The kind of goals we've been stressing that we're going to need to score against a lot of these teams in the later rounds of the playoffs. They did a lot of what I asked and the result was good. It's positive."

Norwich's depth and experience proved too much for the Navy Vets, many of whom were competing in their first playoffs. Travis Horvath scored the lone Woodstock goal to give the Navy Vets a 1-0 lead less than two minutes into Game 4.

"We knew we were coming in

tough coming into this series," Woodstock's Kyle Morris said. "I feel we made a lot of progress, a bunch of new guys in the room, new faces. It's tough to get. I think we did a good job and we'll be good for next year."

“We knew we were coming in tough coming into this series.”

Woodstock's Kyle Morris

Bryan Phillips scored a hat trick in the win. Tom Brady, Brendan Heffernan and Mike Brillhante each scored twice, while Cole Vinnai had a single marker. Norwich will face Aylmer or Paris in the second round. Aylmer had a chance to clinch with Game 5 at home last night. Results were not immediately available.

"We got a week off right now to give us time to rest up, come back with a good practice on Wednesday," Paton said. "I still don't know who we're playing yet so it'd be nice to go and watch a few more games of our opponents and see if we can pick anything up, some tendencies. Other than that, be prepared, stay sharp. That's the main reason we played (and didn't take the bye), we didn't want to sit for three weeks. Now we'll sit for one, not three."

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CORY SMITH Sentinel-Review

Norwich Merchants forward Bryan Phillips reaches around Woodstock Navy Vets goalie Neil Pittock to score in his team's 11-1 Game 4 romp Friday in Norwich.