

Knights favored to win playoffs

ORILLIA, (CP) — Four surviving teams from the 78 that began the season in Junior A ranks begin a week-long tournament tonight to determine the winner of the Centennial Cup.

Favored to win will be Penticton Knights, with a winning percentage of .904 during the regular season. The British Columbia team swept the Western Canadian championship in four games against Saskatchewan's Estevan Bruins.

The Knights are led by the country's top-rated Junior A player, Joe Murphy. Wooed by all the major U.S. colleges before settling on Michigan State, Murphy had 152 points in 51 league games.

Eastern Canadian representatives will be Cole Harbour (N.S.) Colts, who became only the third Maritime team in the 15-year-history of the Centennial Cup to reach the finals.

The two host teams will be Orillia Travelways, the Ontario Junior Hockey League champions who lost a seven-game Centennial Cup final in Weyburn, Sask., last year, and OJHL runner-up Aurora Tigers.

Although Orillia defeated Aurora for both the league pennant and playoff titles, the Tigers gained a tournament berth by defeating Sudbury Cubs of the Northern Ontario Hockey Association in four straight games.

Orillia has been hampered by a 27-day layoff after defeating Aurora in the minimum four games in the best-of-seven league final.

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association returned the Cup final to a tournament format to increase attendance and give visiting teams a better chance of winning. In best-of-seven finals, the visiting team has won only once in 11 attempts.

The other three Cup finals were tournaments, held in 1979, 1980 and 1981 before the national sponsor withdrew and the series format was reinstated.