

Caledon Golden Hawks edged 2-1 in overtime by Penetang Kings in PJHL Pre-playoff Showdown]

By Jim Stewart

The Penetang Kings jumped from 9th to 7th place and into the playoffs on Sunday afternoon with a 2-1 overtime victory over the Caledon Golden Hawks at Mayfield Recreation Complex.

The Golden Hawks, Kings, and Midland Flyers jockeyed for the remaining divisional playoff spot on the final weekend of the PJHL regular season. When the Flyers lost 4-1 at home to the Schomberg Cougars on Saturday night, the North Carruthers Division's playoff seeding was determined by the result of the Caledon-Alliston regular season finale.

Unfortunately, a 7-3 loss to the Hornets in Alliston on Monday night eliminated the Golden Hawks from the playoffs.

Penetang, which finished one point ahead of Caledon and Midland, faces Alliston in the opening round.

In Sunday afternoon's contest, Golden Hawks' goaltender Lucas Hillert was brilliant, turning aside 44 of 46 Kings shots. However, Penetang's Aiden McKenzie slipped a sudden-death, power play goal past the heroic Caledon netminder at 6:15 of the extra frame with Golden Hawk Jacob Altomare in the penalty box for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Riley Kennedy and Owen Vandusen drew assists on the game-winning goal that ostensibly clinched a playoff spot for the improving Kings.

The Golden Hawks-Kings game was a chippy affair from the outset and over twenty minor penalties were served. James Ramani and Jacob Altomare of the Golden Hawks were particularly pugnacious for the home side, rolling up 16 and 12 minutes in penalties, respectively. With their season on the line, Caledon jumped out to a 1-0 first period lead when call-up Ram Rallpalli scored at 17:44 on assists from Ramani and Altomare.

Kennedy, on a feed from Kyle Robillard, pulled the Kings even less than two minutes later and the 1-1 deadlock lasted through two penalty-filled periods. The battle for the final divisional playoff spot stayed close through regulation due to the stellar play of Hillert who turned aside 15 and 18 shots in the second and third periods, respectively, to keep the game tied and to send it into overtime.

In Caledon's regular season finale, the Golden Hawks took to the ice with only 12 skaters versus the second-place Alliston Hornets on Monday night at the New Tecumseth Rec Centre. The Caledon squad fought valiantly to keep their flickering playoff hopes alive and took a 1-0 lead on Joey Furlano's 22nd goal of the season ?assisted by Andrew McClure and Carson Bennett ? less than 5 minutes into the game.

The rookie-laden and short-handed Golden Hawks maintained their slim lead going into the first intermission.

However, three consecutive goals by Jacob Power, Andrew Maltby, and Ben Taylor gave the Hornets a 3-1 lead with two minutes left in the second period.

The Golden Hawks responded on a key power play at 18:05 when Caledon's leading scorer, Andrew McClure, fired his 21st goal ? with assists from Furlano and Jared Leite.

Clinging to their one-goal lead, the Hornets stung the Golden Hawks with ten seconds to go in the period when Maltby scored his second of the game and 19th of the season to restore Alliston's 2 goal-advantage.

The Hornets took a commanding 6-2 lead with goals by Gavin Tornoff and Payton Palbiski five minutes into the final period.

The Golden Hawks reduced the deficit to three when Carson Bennett scored at 9:01, but Adam Hoppe's power play goal at 17:33 put

the Hornets back up by four and restored the winning margin. Alliston outshot Caledon 44-30.

Andrew McClure and Joey Furlano were an effective one-two punch for the Golden Hawks during the 2022-23 season and finished first and second, respectively, in team scoring. McClure led Caledon with 21 goals and 18 assists for 39 points in 32 games played. Furlano led the team in goals with 22 and added 16 assists for 38 points in 40 games played.

The Golden Hawks and the Midland Flyers finished the regular season tied for 8th place in the North Carruthers Division; both squads missed the PJHL playoffs by only 1 point.