

Bandits ousted from playoffs in first round

By Jake Courtepatte

It was a fitting end to a season that the Junior C Caledon Bandits would undoubtedly like to soon forget.

They drew the Fergus Thistles in the first round of the Ontario Junior C Lacrosse League playoffs after splitting their final two games, and finishing with a 4-12 record. Two of those wins came as punishment to the Six Nations Warriors, whose 16-0 record was dropped to 3-13 when it came to light that they had used ineligible players.

The returning Bandits were quickly reminded of their 2014 playoff journey, when they were swept by the Thistles in the best-of-three first round.

Needless to say, it was déjà vu in 2015.

Almost 100 fans packed the Centre Wellington Sportsplex in Fergus Saturday evening for the first game, where the Thistles took it to the Bandits early. Hyatt Walsh opened the scoring just less than two minutes into the game. Mackenzie Davies added two more for the Thistles by the end of the first frame, countered only by a single goal off the stick of Austin Heughan, the Bandits' leading scorer during the regular season.

After exchanging a few tallies in the first few minutes of the second period, the Thistles blew the barn doors right open. Seven unanswered goals put the Bandits in a 13-3 hole after two periods, which despite their best efforts in the third, proved to be insurmountable.

No Bandit player seemed to stand out from the crowd during the match, with Heughan, Sam McCanna, Brad Wilson and Chris Dimartino all notching two points in the match. Meanwhile, Davies, Ryan Bauml and Hyatt Welsh combined for 23 points, and would prove to be the deciding factor in the second game as well.

With the series shifting to Mayfield Recreation Complex Monday, the Bandits had the opportunity to stretch out their season in front of a home crowd of about 80. They came out hot, taking a 3-0 lead off goals from Colin Sinclair, Jordan Oshowy and Heughan within the first six minutes.

It wouldn't last long, however, as four quick Thistle goals had Fergus back on top only midway through the first. The Bandits eventually went to their dressing room down 5-4.

The second period once again proved costly, as five power-play goals were part of an eight-goal period for Fergus and a 13-6 deficit for the Bandits. They tried to rally in the third with an early goal from Heughan, who righteously scored the final goal of the Bandits 2015 season. Three more goals from Fergus put the game out of reach with a final score of 16-7.

The trio of Bauml-Davies-Welsh combined for 18 points in the contest.

It's back to the drawing board for the Bandits, who will be looking to end a two-year first round playoff slump in the 2016 season.

The Thistles move on to face the winner of the Shelburne Vets versus the Oakville Hawks, a series that Oakville led 1-0 heading into press-time.



Austin Heughan led the Bandits in scoring this season with 30 goals and 18 assists over 12 games.



The Caledon Bandits share an embrace after their elimination from the playoffs Monday.