

Caledon Golden Hawks eliminated from GMOHL playoffs

By Jake Courtepatte

The Caledon Golden Hawks' best playoff run in franchise history fizzled out with a defensive meltdown in their game seven semifinal with the Penetang Kings Monday.

Making a valiant effort to dig out of a 3-1 hole in the best-of-seven series over the weekend, the junior C club fell behind early in the deciding game and just could not recover.

The comeback-that-wasn't began Friday night at Caledon East, with the home team needing to win three-straight to overcome the Kings. Matt Magliozzi scored the only goal of the first period, followed by a Daniel Cafagna power-play marker early in the second. Goaltender Sam Procopio was broken only once in a 22-shot onslaught from the Kings in the second, giving Caledon a 2-1 lead going into the third.

Call-up Jeffrey Ohashi notched his first goal in a Hawks' uniform in the third, along with Tyler Whitten and Kevin Pleasance, while Procopio continued to shine, stopping a total of 42 of 44 shots in the game for a 5-2 win.

The series returned to Caledon for game six Sunday night, a schedule made wonky as a result of rescheduling due to weather.

Captain Nicholas McNutt had a hat trick to lead his team to a 5-4 victory, holding on in the final seconds when Penetang made it a one-goal game in the final minute of play.

Procopio stopped 39 of 43 shots in another stellar performance between the pipes, setting up a deciding game seven at the Penetang Community Centre Monday.

Goaltending could not be the saviour in this one, as Procopio had an unusual lapse in net, giving up four straight goals by the midway point of the second period.

Magliozzi, Cafagna and Randy Chen all notched goals in the final two periods, but Penetang beat Procopio twice more and added an empty netter to take the game 7-3 and the series 4-3.

Despite the loss, the Golden Hawks can count this year as perhaps their most successful yet, and a stepping stone to improving in the future. In the franchise's six-year history, the team had won only two playoff games, never advancing past the quarter-final round.

Five Hawks put up double-digit point totals in the post-season, led by Ryan Mouser, who developed into an almost point-per-game player in his final junior season.

Procopio's playoff numbers were among the best in the league, improving upon his regular season record in his second year as the team's starting goaltender. He put up a .918 save percentage in 11 games in the postseason, good for third amongst his peers, behind only the starters from the Kings and Alliston Hornets.

His 443 saves were also more than 50 better than any other goaltender up to the completion of the second round.

The Kings are moving on to meet the Hornets in the league championship, last year's winner and the hands-down favourite to repeat.

In the team's semifinal series with Erin, the Shamrocks surprised the Hornets by jumping out to a 2-0 series lead before the Hornets outscored them 34-6 over four straight wins.

Championship action kicks off this Friday at 7:30p.m. at New Tecumseth Rec Centre in Alliston.



Daniel Cafagna braces for a collision with goaltender Sam Procopio in the fifth game of the Golden Hawks' semifinal series against the Penetang Kings. Caledon fell to Penetang 4-3 in the best-of-seven series. Photo by Jake Courtepatte