

Caledon midget Hawks advance to Tri-County play-off round

The Caledon Hawks midget AA team, sponsored by Tim Hortons, recently advanced to the championship round in the Tri-County Minor Hockey League playoffs.

The Hawks soared over the Burlington Eagles in the quarter-final series, with three convincing wins in one week.

The Tri County semifinal playoff round consisted of exciting back-and-forth matches between the Hawks and Halton Hills Thunder. After a first period power-play goal by host Halton Hills Feb. 25, Tyler Whitten popped in a Caledon goal two minutes later, helped out by hard-working linemates Mitchell Korb and Michael McVeigh. Kevin Pleasance's quick shot put the Hawks ahead, but Halton Hills scored two late ones in the second period. Down 4-2 mid-way in the third, the Hawks fought back with goals from JP Amaral and captain Cameron Frail to force an extra period. Unfortunately, the Hawks suffered a 5-4 overtime loss in game one when Halton Hills scored at 7:10 in the fourth period.

A win back on home ice Feb. 27 evened out the series with Amaral scoring two goals for his team. Amaral's unassisted first goal was a blistering shot early in the opening period. After a scoreless second, Whitten fired a wrist shot over the goalie's blocker to tie up the game 2-2 in the third on a three-way passing play with McVeigh and Korb. Amaral's second and game-winning goal was a nice backhand off the rebound of Lukas Richardson's blistering shot from the blue line. Hawk goaltender Jonathan Pitre performed strongly in net, blocking 24 shots and Caledon took this game 3-2.

Game 3 was a high-scoring event, which the Hawks won 7-5. Michael Marinaccio and Christian Hauck scored in the first. Assists went to Pleasance on the first goal and Shane Sommers and Michael Bozzelli setting up Hauck. Korb put the Hawks in front 3-2 in the second with a fancy backhand goal. Sean Nottle scored on a Caledon power play, assisted by Hauck and then Whitten powered a single with a pass from Jacob Voogel at the end of the second. Hauck completed his four-point game, popping one in himself and then setting up Nottle's second goal in the third period.

The next night, the Hawks outshot the Thunder by 16, but were on the losing end of a 5-2 victory for Halton Hills. Goal scorers for Caledon were Sommers and Nottle, with Hauck being the playmaker for both.

With the series tied at four points each, the Hawks arrived in Georgetown short on defencemen, but full of energy and grit. Bozzelli got the Hawks' first goal with a sleek shot assisted by Marinaccio, followed by McVeigh's breakaway goal, set up by Whitten. Frail's pass sent Amaral down the ice and his whistling shot beat the opposing goalie. Whitten sunk one on a Caledon power play, helped out by McVeigh. Michael Andrews won the face off deep in the opposition end and Shane Sommers crammed in the puck with one second left in the middle period. McVeigh got his second goal of the game in a play with Korb and Sommers. The defence foursome of Voogel, Pleasance, Sommers and Frail consistently controlled the play in the Caledon zone. The game was topped off by a stellar performance by Caledon goalie Nick Doucette who was 2:16 away from a shutout when Halton Hills scored on a powerplay.

The 6-1 victory advanced the midget AAs to the Tri County Bowen championship series against Guelph Gryphons. The series begins this coming Wednesday (March 19) at Caledon East.