

Golden Hawks hit milestone with trip to second round

By Jake Courtepatte

It so happens to be the year of the underdog in the Georgian Mid-Ontario Hockey League playoffs, and with it comes a historic first for the Caledon Golden Hawks franchise.

It took six games for the junior C team to reach its first-ever semifinal series in its six-year history, reaching the post-season each time before being knocked out in the first round.

And the Hawks, though finishing fifth overall in regular season standings, will enjoy home-ice advantage. Joining the Golden Hawks in the semifinal stage are two other lower-seeded teams who advanced over their more difficult opponents, with the seventh-seed Erin Shamrocks upsetting the second-seed Huntsville Otters and the sixth-seed Penetang Kings defeating the third-seed Midland Flyers, both in five games.

The Alliston Hornets are the only top four seed to advance to the second round, quickly disposing of the Schomberg Cougars in a four-game sweep.

Down two games to one against the Stayner Siskins heading into action last week, the Hawks swiftly won three games in a row over four days to eliminate the Siskins before the weekend.

Game four last Tuesday proved to be the turning point in the series, with Sam Procopio earning his first shutout of the post-season in a 1-0 affair. Midway through the second, Procopio made a highlight-reel diving stop to send James Pitsadiotis the other way, and he sent a wrist shot over the glove of goalie Luke Aulthouse for the only goal of the match.

Procopio stopped 31 of 34 shots in game five two days later, as Nicholas McNutt, Ryan Mouser, Randy Chen and Tyler Whitten all got on the board in a 4-3 win.

The series closed out in thrilling fashion Friday when Matt Magliozzi broke a 4-4 tie with only one second remaining on the game clock. Procopio once again earned the win, making 23 of 27 saves.

With the dust settled, the Golden Hawks will now face the Kings in the second round, a rematch of their quarter-final series in the 2015 playoffs in which the Kings swept the Hawks.

The season series between the two teams has been much closer this year: Penetang won the fifth game and rubber match in the final game of the regular season, but the teams finished 24-24 in goals.

The Hawks have also yet to lose on home ice this post-season.

Part of the schedule has been posted, with the remaining games to go up in the coming week. Game one was scheduled for last night (Wednesday) following press-time, while game two can be seen at the Penetang Memorial Community Centre tomorrow (Friday).

The series returns to Caledon Sunday, with game three going at 7 p.m. at Caledon East .

For stats, schedules and more information, visit www.jrcgoldenhawks.pointstreaksites.com



Caledon's Christian Mariconda tries to stuff the puck past Stayner goaltender Luke Aulthouse in game four of the best-of-seven GMOHL series. The Golden Hawks won the series 4-2. Photo by Jake Courtepatte