

## Hall Wolfpack squeak out ROPSSA victory in Mississauga

By Jake Courtepatte

After a hard-fought battle between two of the top teams in high school hockey's ROPSSAA North Conference, the Robert F. Hall Wolfpack emerged victorious to head to the league semifinals.

They took on the St. Francis Xavier Tigers last Wednesday at Iceland Arena in Mississauga, entering the playoffs after posting a 9-0 regular season record.

With the severely undermanned Xavier bench dressing only nine players, Hall set the pace early by delivering a number of big hits. The Tigers retaliated with a penalty less than three minutes into the game, but were able to kill it off with some nice defensive work to keep the Wolfpack players to the outside.

With Hall going back to the powerplay for a tripping call as soon as the first one expired, the Tigers seemed determined to shoot themselves in the foot. However, most of the two minutes was spent in the Wolfpack end, with Xavier eventually opening the scoring for the 1-0 lead.

The momentum seemingly switched, the Wolfpack picked up a slashing call in their own zone to head into the break down a man. On the penalty kill to start the second, a tipped shot had the Xavier players thinking they scored, with the refs ruling that the puck hit the post and did not cross the line.

Despite heavy pressure from the Tigers' offense, Christian Hauck eventually tied the game at one on a rebound that bounced right to his stick in the slot.

That would open the door for Hall, scoring 20 seconds apart midway through the second to jump out to a 3-1 lead.

But with time winding down in the period, the game was far from over. A miscommunication between the Hall goaltender and his defencemen left the puck sitting all alone in front, allowing an alert Xavier player to bury it in the open cage to cut the lead to one. The highlight of the game came early in the third period, when Noah Do Paco fell to his knees while corralling a puck at the top of the Xavier circle.

From his knees, he wristed the puck past the unprepared goaltender for what would eventually be the game winner.

Despite a few close calls after an early goalie-pull, the Wolfpack held on for a 4-3 victory and a berth in the semifinal.

The Wolfpack will vie for a spot in the championship game on the big stage, with the semifinal game being held at the 5,500-seat Hershey Centre in Mississauga.

Mayfield Secondary School awaits a challenger for ROPSSAA supremacy, having already defeated Philip Pocock in a lopsided 6-0 win Monday.



Noah Do Paco celebrates his game-winning goal against the St. Francis Xavier Tigers last Wednesday.