

Hawks cash in three crucial points looking to playoffs

By Jake Courtepatte

It's do-or-die time in local Junior C hockey, and the Caledon Golden Hawks are stepping up to the challenge.

In two come-from-behind games last week, the boys in blue, white and gold were able to pick up three of a possible four points in the Georgian Mid-Ontario Hockey League.

Last Thursday night's game in Schomberg was a barnburner, as the two teams with very similar records struggled for the late-season advantage.

The Golden Hawks peppered the Cougar net with shots early, forcing goaltender Taylor Ewart to make 18 stops in the first period alone.

Caledon's Sam Procopio, meanwhile, stopped all seven shots he faced for a scoreless tie after one period.

Neither goalie fared too well in the second, with Schomberg opening up the floodgates just 16 seconds in, beating Procopio. Two more in the first five minutes had the Hawks in a 3-0 hole.

But veteran forward Steve Zeppieri led the charge for the Hawks by notching his eighth of the year shortly thereafter, followed by back-to-back powerplay goals after a number of poor penalties by the Cougars.

Caledon took the lead on their fourth unanswered goal with a minute to play in the second period, ahead for the first time all game. The game headed to a shootout after Schomberg tied it at four late in the third and overtime solved nothing.

It was Procopio who was bested in the shootout, giving up goals on the first two Schomberg shots for the 5-4 loss.

But the extra point in the comeback had the Hawks just one point back of Schomberg for fifth in the standings race.

The Hawks took that extra motivation into Sunday's home game against the Erin Shamrocks, who they handily defeated 3-1.

It was once again a goaltending battle through the first period, as Hawk goaltender James Cyfko and his Erin counterpart kept the game scoreless.

The teams traded goals in the final 10 seconds of the middle period to maintain a tie after the buzzer.

Christian Bonaldi put the Hawks ahead for good early in the third, adding an empty-netter in the final minute.

He contributed to all three Golden Hawk goals, while Cyfko made 25 saves on 26 shots in the game.

With only one game left on the regular season schedule, the Hawks will have to rely on some help from other teams around the league to maintain their fifth-place positioning.

When all is said and done, the Hawks could finish anywhere from fifth to seventh. The Fergus Devils are a dangerous sleeper, currently in seventh, two points behind the Hawks, yet with three games left in their season to make it up.

A seventh-place finish would mean having to go through a play-in best-of-three series against the Midland Flyers.

Friday's game in Penetang against the Kings could very well be a preview of a quarterfinal matchup, should both teams maintain their current positions.

Puck drop is at 8 p.m.

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



Alex Palumbo trades stick checks with an Erin forward. The Golden Hawks beat the Shamrocks 3-1 at home Sunday.