

Jr. C Bandits bow out after final game in Hamilton



The Caledon Junior C Bandits battle it out with the Hamilton Bengals in fourth game of their best-of-five series at Mayfield arena. The Bandits pulled off a win in this game but lost the final match in Hamilton. Photo by Brian Lockhart

By Brian Lockhart

The Caledon Bandits Junior C lacrosse squad is done for the season.

The team ended the year last Wednesday night (Aug. 7) with a 9-6 over-time loss to the Hamilton Bengals in Hamilton.

It was the fifth game of their best-of-five series in the Ontario Junior C Lacrosse league playoffs.

The Bandits went the distance after battling back from a two-game deficit at the start when the Hamilton squad won the first match 9-6 then repeated in the second outing with a 7-6 win to be one game away from stealing the series.

The return to their home floor at Mayfield arena made the difference when the Bandits kept the series alive with a comeback win in the third game to leave with a 13-10 victory.

Game four of the series got underway at Mayfield last Tuesday (Aug. 6).

A solid second period saw the Bandits score four to lead 7-4 going into the final frame.

The Bengals fought back and managed to notch three in the third period, but the Caledon squad used brains and tactics to keep the ball out of their end and stop the Hamilton team from tying it up. The Bandits left with an 8-7 win to stay in the series.

‘It comes in bursts. When you’re down you’re down, but one goal after another the momentum builds,’ said Bandit head coach Mike Gillian after last Tuesday’s game. ‘Overall I wasn’t entirely happy with the period (second) but, effort wise, they put forward what they needed to maintain that lead. We finished the first period with a lead, but there was no effort on those balls. There was stupid decisions on passes. We were throwing it away. We were lucky to come out of it 2-1.’

With the clock ticking down to the final minute in the third period, the Bandits used time management to keep the ball away from the Hamilton squad.

‘What we rely on when it comes down to the last five minutes of the game is we have a strong core over veteran players who when we need them to step up, they will,’ Gillian said. ‘That core group of players won’t panic. That last five minutes is clock management.’

The win, Gillian said, provided a mental edge for going down to Hamilton for the final game.

‘The momentum is in our favour,’ he said going in. ‘The one thing that’s not, is that we haven’t won in their barn. If we’re going to take this series, we need to win on the road. They’re (Hamilton) nervous now, because we have all the momentum. We just won two in a row. We climbed our way back into the series. The fact that they lost a 2-0 lead is going to affect them.’

As it turned out, the Caledon team did turn out a solid performance on the road, playing the final game to a 5-5 tie and forcing an overtime period to decide the series winner.

The Bengals took the game and the series by outscoring the Bandits 4-1 in the overtime period.

Caledon had a good season, finishing in third spot in the West Division of the OJCLL with a 9-7 record and 18 points.

They won their first round in the playoffs with a three game sweep over Innisfil before moving on to the Hamilton series.