

Junior C Bandits open OJCLL season with pair of losses

By Jake Courtepatte

The Caledon Bandits junior C lacrosse club is looking to find its feet still after back-to-back losses to open the Ontario Junior C Lacrosse League season.

Close to 100 fans filled the seats at the Mayfield Recreation Complex last Tuesday for the Bandits' season opener, hosting a newly-minted Brantford Warriors team. The Warriors wasted no time making their presence felt in the league, giving the Bandits a five-on-three opportunity in the first minute of the game.

Caledon failed to convert, and it was Brantford that opened the scoring on goalkeeper Jeremy Outopoulos midway through the first frame.

A four-Bethell Hospice hike continues in Boltonminute five-on-three power play closed out the first period for the Bandits, but despite a frenzy of opportunities in front of the Brantford crease, the score remained 1-0 at intermission.

Brantford potted four more goals early in the second before the Bandits could capitalize, with Colin Sinclair scoring Caledon's first goal of the year after some sustained pressure. Sinclair added another in the period, as well as last year's leading point scorer Austin Heughan, but the Warriors took a 7-3 lead into the third period.

Three more quick goals by the Warriors early in the third made the score 10-3, and chased Outopoulos from the net in favour of Adam Brennan. The change was followed by a resurgence by the Bandits, with Mike Paschals and Josh McIsaac getting on the board, as well as Sinclair completing the hat trick.

The deficit was too much to overcome, however, and Brantford added a final marker in the last second of the game, much to the displeasure of the Caledon bench. Final score was 11-6.

The team travelled to Fergus Friday night to face the Thistles, where again they were forced to deal with a large deficit. They crawled back from a 4-0 score to tie the game at fives midway through the second period, off goals from Sinclair, McIsaac, Alex Freethy, Jarett Petrie, and Brandon Marion.

Fergus then exploded for six straight goals to end the second, making the score 11-5. Petrie added another marker in the third, with the Bandits eventually falling 15-6.

After falling out of the first round of the playoffs to the Fergus Thistles in a pair of hard fought games in 2014, it was a bad case of déjà vu last July. They once again drew the Thistles in the first round, and were promptly swept in two games.

Summer of 2015 was hard on the Bandits, as they compiled a 4-12-0 regular season record, the franchise's second sub-.500 record in a decade. Two of their wins came as defaults due to ineligible players used on the Six Nations team.

The Bandits enter this year's season with hopes of returning to the glory days of Caledon lacrosse. Their last OJCLL championship came back in 2009.

They will be looking to rebound on Saturday when they visit the Mimico Mountaineers.

They will be at home every Tuesday, next week hosting the Shelburne Vets, who are also searching for their first win of the season, at the Mayfield Rec Complex. Opening draw is at 8 p.m.

For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.banditslacrosse.com/jrc



Scott Edwards brushes past a Warriors defenseman in the Caledon Bandits' 11-6 loss to Brantford at Mayfield Recreation Complex last Tuesday. Photo by Jake Courtepatte