

Local women help Canada reach Olympic final

By Robert Belardi

The Canadian Women's national team upset the United States of America in the semi-finals of the Olympic Games in Tokyo, 1-0 over the long weekend.

Canada was awarded a penalty kick in the 75 minute and Jessie Fleming stepped up to the spot to tuck home the game-winner.

Caledon East native Ashley Lawrence made her 100 appearance for the Canadian national team.

The 26-year-old who has been a starter throughout this competition has played an integral role in helping lead the Canadian women.

Lawrence, along with other Canadian stalwarts such as Christine Sinclair, Janine Beckie and Kadeisha Buchanan knew coming in this match would arguably be their toughest test yet.

Four minutes into the match, Lawrence pummeled USA midfielder Lindsay Horan. She ended up being okay.

In the 20th minute, USA goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher landed awkwardly after catching a cross into the box. She would have to be substituted by Adrianna Franch.

For the first 60 minutes, believe it or not, not a single shot came on target for either side. It was one of the most tactical games of the competition thus far.

After the USA made a flurry of substitutions in the 61st, bringing on experienced players like Meghan Rapinoe and Carly Lloyd, Lloyd's curling effort was pushed over the bar by Canadian keeper Stephanie Labbe.

The USA poured it on with a few more chances. But in the 72nd minute, USA defender Tierna Davidson tried clearing the zone and kicked Canadian Deanne Rose in the process. The foul would go to VAR and Canada would be awarded a penalty.

Canada did not have a shot on goal until that spot kick. The USA continued to pour on the pressure and in the 86th minute a header from Lloyd rattled the crossbar.

Maple/King City native Adrianna Leon appeared with only a few minutes left in the game to kill time.

The 20-year reign had come to an end. Canada had finally defeated the USA.

At 10 p.m. Thursday tonight, there will be a glorious opportunity for Canada to seize Olympic gold.

According to Canada Soccer on Twitter, the women become the third team to win medals at three consecutive Olympic tournaments (2012-2021) following in the footsteps of the United States and Germany.