

Minor bantam Hawks stay alive in Tri-County finals

By Jake Courtepatte

On the brink of elimination, the Caledon minor bantam AE Hawks played their best hockey of the Tri-County finals Monday night in Brampton.

The Hawks entered Tri-County action following a quarter-final departure from the OMHA playoffs, falling to the Flamborough Sabres three games to one in late February.

They immediately went to work within their home Harrison division, their only blip in round-robin play coming in a close 4-3 loss to the Orangeville Flyers.

A 4-1 win over Centre Wellington secured their position in the Tri-County finals with the Brampton 45's, in a race to six points setup.

Things did not go as planned early for the Hawks. Despite three close games, never with a spread greater than two goals, they found themselves down 5-1 in the series after back-to-back losses followed by a tie at home.

Knowing that a tie game would end the series, it was a different story for the Hawks in Monday's Game 4.

Danny O'Donnell was lightning in net for the Hawks in the first, locked in a goaltending battle with his 45's counterpart, whose rebound control was the only reason the Hawks were kept off the score sheet in the first.

O'Donnell was beaten on the flukiest of goals just a minute into the second, when a rebound bounced behind the net and while flat on his back. A Brampton forward centered the puck, bouncing off the head of defenseman Adam Busch, who swiped at the puck in the air unsuccessfully before it landed just inside the goal line.

But the hockey gods evened the play only one minute after that by providing a juicy rebound that was sent home to tie the game 1-1. The Hawks then took their first lead of the game before the midway point of the second period.

Not tested very often in the middle frame, O'Donnell was forced back into stance after Busch took down a Brampton forward on a breakaway, the only play he had available. Cue the most exciting play in hockey, the penalty shot.

O'Donnell came out the victor, making the save on a wrist shot that didn't have much room.

Otherwise, the entire second period belonged to the Hawks. They spent almost two full minutes in the offensive zone following the penalty shot. The lead was extended to two before the second buzzer sounded.

It was much of the same in the third, with O'Donnell standing strong between the pipes, making most of his saves in the final few minutes of the game.

The series continued yesterday (Wednesday) following press time. The Hawks will need to pull off another victory, this time at home in Caledon East Arena, to send the series to a sixth and deciding game.



The Minor Bantam AE Hawks kept their Tri-County hopes alive with a 3-1 win over the Brampton 45's Monday.