

Sloan, Abou-Marie, and Lang lead Caledon Admirals to 3-2 win over Burlington Cougars

By Jim Stewart

Blake Sloan's 56-save performance, Nasser Abou-Marie's game-winning goal, and Cam Lang's two-point performance impelled the Caledon Admirals to a 3-2 upset victory over the Cougars in Burlington last Tuesday evening.

The road win at Central Arena revealed significant improvement by Caledon's Junior A hockey team.

The rookie-laden club has won four of its last 10 games after winning only once in its first 21 games.

Admirals' Head Coach Chris Taylor credited the players for sticking together through the tough times earlier in the season.

"We have a team that's beginning to believe in itself after a rough start. So many of our young players came from winning programs so the first month of Junior hockey was a shock to them. We have a team of mostly 17-year-olds growing up together and supporting one another. It's been great to see their improvement as a team."

Caledon's four recent victories have been predicated on solid goaltending and timely scoring which were evident against the playoff-bound Cougars on Tuesday. Coach Taylor complimented Sloan's spectacular performance between the pipes in Burlington.

"He stole the game. Blake's just a young kid. He's just 17, but he's known to make big saves. He was really dialed in against Burlington and made some of those 'wow' saves that picked up his teammates. Sloan backed everybody up and created a great feeling on our bench."

The rookie netminder stymied the Cougars' potent offence which is ranked #1 in the OJHL West. He turned aside all 21 shots in the first period, 19 of 21 in the middle frame, and all 16 in the third period to preserve the Admirals' victory.

Sloan's .966 save percentage earned him First Star of the Game honors as selected by OJHL staff.

While Sloan's Herculean performance was the key to victory, a quick start on the road by the offence was also beneficial to the young club. The Admirals led 2-0 at Central Arena before the game was ten minutes old.

Shyler McGahey opened the scoring with his first goal of the season at 2:43.

Exactly six minutes later, Lang—with assists from Curtis Freeman and Abou-Marie—scored his fifth of the season to create a two-goal cushion for Caledon.

Although the home side tied the game 2-2 with goals by Evan Dantas at 2:58 and Ryan Gagner at 7:51 of the second period, Abou-Marie fired home the game-winner at 14:52 of the final frame with help from Lang. It was Lang's 18th assist of the season. Coach Taylor complimented his team's leading playmaker: "Cam's another young kid on our roster. When he's going, our team is going. Lang sees the ice so well and he makes everyone better. He was able to flip the puck to Nasser and Nasser batted it out of the air into the net for the winning goal. It was a great play by both players. Cam's going to put up some great numbers once he's played 60 Junior games."

Lang leads the Admirals in scoring with 23 points in 28 games. Abou-Marie's big third period goal was his team-leading ninth of the season.

Both are rookies on a Caledon roster comprised of 21 first-year players that are clearly rowing in the right direction as the 2024-25

season unfolds.