

## Central York Panthers lose two road games to Whitby Wolves and West Durham Lightning

The U22 Central York Panthers salvaged a point in a two-game road trip through Whitby and West Durham that featured a pair of narrow losses to two of the top clubs in the OWHL.

The Junior Panthers couldn't contain an impressive four-goal effort by Rylan Haslam in a 5-4 OT loss to the Whitby Wolves on Tuesday night and the slumping squad couldn't find the back of the net in a 3-0 defeat at the hands of second-place Durham West Lightning on Saturday afternoon.

The Panthers appear to have a case of the February blahs, accruing a 1-3-1-1 record over the six games played this month, including four losses in a row.

On Tuesday night, the Wolves howled their way to a 2-0 lead on first period goals by Kate Donegan and Haslam.

Hanna Franz on an assist from Hailey Maguire scored for the Panthers three minutes into the second period, but Haslam tallied her second goal at 13:03 to restore the Wolves' two-goal margin.

Panthers' Captain Hannah Clarke with help from Klaire Essex narrowed the score to 3-2 with six minutes left in the period. However, Haslam completed her hat trick to give Whitby a 4-2 lead heading into the second intermission.

The Panthers rallied in the third period to send the game into overtime and secure a precious road point.

Maguire's short-handed goal, aided by Zoe Li's 17th assist of the season, reduced Central York's deficit to 4-3.

Amber Esterbrooks' dramatic goal with 24 seconds left on the clock tied the game and lifted the spirits of her hockey club.

Esterbrooks leads the Panthers with 19 goals and is ranked 20th in league scoring with 33 points.

Both teams battled in the extra frame before Haslam delivered the game-winning goal at 9:32 her fourth goal of the contest in a display of offensive prowess.

The Wolves' high-scoring forward has 32 goals and 13 assists this season and holds down seventh spot in the OWHL scoring race. With the win, the fifth-place Wolves improved their record to 24-7-0-1.

At the Ajax Community Centre on Saturday, the Panthers' offence stalled as the second-place Lightning (29-5-0-0) prevailed 3-0 on two goals from Dorothy Copetti and one from Abigail Poitras. West Durham outshot Central York 32-21.

The eighth-place Junior Panthers (20-12-1-2) hope to get back on the winning track when they host the fourth-place Stoney Creek Sabres (25-9-1-0) on Sunday, February 25 at 1.25 p.m. at SARC to complete a key weekend home-and-home series. Central York's final seven OWHL regular season games feature tilts with Stoney Creek (2), Toronto Aeros, Burlington Barracudas, Whitby Wolves, North York Storm, and Toronto Leaside Wildcats.

The Panthers' final regular season game is on St. Patrick's Day versus Toronto Leaside.

**By Jim Stewart**