

Formenton, Thomas help Canada to top of World Junior group

By Jake Courtepatte

It took Robert Thomas just over five minutes in the red and white to notch his first ever World Junior Championship point.

Just seconds after killing off an early penalty, the Aurora native sent Boris Katchouk in alone on the Finnish goaltender on Boxing Day, in front of a crowd of almost 10,000, to open Canada's 2018 Under-20 Worlds campaign.

Following a 4 ? 2 win over Team Finland in the opening game of the tournament, and a 6 ? 0 drubbing of Slovakia, the table was set for a battle of epic proportions on the World Junior stage.

Close to 45,000 fans, many donning the maple leaf, filled New Era Field in Buffalo for the tournament's first-ever outdoor game, where Thomas etched his name in history early on.

Earning time on a powerplay just a few minutes in, Thomas set up Cale Makar for the game's first goal, though the United States eventually took the game in a shootout 4 ? 3.

Both Thomas and ex-Aurora Tiger Alex Formenton got on the scoreboard in Canada's final round robin matchup, an 8 ? 0 romping of the Danes. Thomas opened the scoring in the first period, capitalizing on a drop pass from Caledon's Taylor Raddysh, while Formenton found twine high over the Danish goaltender's shoulder on a breakaway in the second period.

Using the win to finish atop the Group A standings, the Canadians end round robin play two points up on Team USA and four ahead of Slovakia.

Taking on Switzerland in quarterfinal action on Tuesday following press time, Formenton said he understands the pressure to return to gold after a silver medal last year.

?There's always going to be a little bit of pressure, but you want to put that in the back of your mind and just play your game.?

The tournament wraps up with the medal rounds on Friday.