

## Panthers ride hot goaltending back to PWHL playoffs



**By Jake Courtepatte**

The Aurora Panthers capped off their turnaround Junior Season last week by winning three of their final four games, en route to a berth in the Provincial Women's Hockey League (PWHL) playoffs.

After a 2013-14 campaign that saw the team win only seven games, this year's squad made a number of improvements defensively to bring Aurora back into Alumni Cup contention.

Following a weekend in the Ottawa area in which the Panthers were shut out in back-to-back games, they returned home to the Aurora Family Recreation Complex last Wednesday to kick off a three-game homestand facing the Durham West Lightning.

The high-powered Lightning were no match for Aurora's Melissa Black, as the goaltender stood on her head to record a shutout of her own. In a game that had the Panthers outshot 39 ? 9, the lone goal was scored by Jaden Head.

Hosting the Southwest Wildcats on Sunday, Black was once again called on to steal the show in a 30-save performance to earn a 3 ? 2 victory. Head had a goal and an assist in the contest, while team leading scorer Tara Morning earned two points of her own to bring her own total to 24.

In Aurora's final regular season home matchup with the Barrie Sharks, it was Taylor Lemmon between the pipes to prove her own goaltending prowess. She held her own making 33 stops on 34 shots faced, leading the Panthers to another victory, 4 ? 1.

While dropping the last game of the regular season to the Stony Creek Sabres, 2 ? 1, the game can be seen as a small victory. The Sabres, who finished the regular season in second-place in the twenty-team league, managed to beat Black only twice on 31 shots in the contest.

Meanwhile, Head extended her goal-scoring streak to four games, picking up the Panthers' lone goal.

The Panthers' goaltending has been quite hot down the stretch, as Black finished the regular season with the highest save percentage in the entire PWHL.

With a fourteenth-place finish, the Panthers will be in need of some solid goaltending and defensive play as they prepare to face the Toronto Aeros. The Aeros were the PWHL's highest scoring team in the regular season, averaging over four goals per game.

At press time, playoff schedules are still in the process of being completed. They will be available online at

[www.pwhl.pointstreaksites.com](http://www.pwhl.pointstreaksites.com).