

Atom Panthers crowned Provincial champions



By Jake Courtepatte

What a season for the Atom AA Aurora Panthers!

With a Silver Stick gold medal already in their back pockets, Aurora's top ten-and-under girls squad filled their trophy cases with two more championships to round out the season over the past two weeks.

A strong regular season, coming second only to the Whitby Wolves in the Central York Girls Hockey League standings, landed the Panthers in the Lower Lakes Championship in early April to determine the top team in Southern Ontario.

Joined by the Wolves as the East representatives and the Stoney Creek Sabres and London Devilettes from the West, Aurora went unbeaten in round robin play to advance to the gold medal game against the rival Wolves.

A tight game throughout in Vaughan, Erica Buckley put the Panthers up 1 ? 0, a score that held until the final buzzer. Saige Murphy earned the shutout between the pipes.

With little time to celebrate, the Panthers were back at it last weekend in the OWHA Provincials, held in rinks across Brampton against the top teams in Ontario.

They once again cruised through the round robin, opening the series with a decisive 4 ? 0 win over the Etobicoke Dolphins, before tying the Devilettes 3 ? 3. Squeaking out a 1 ? 0 win over the Kanata Rangers set up a quarterfinal matchup with the Sabres, who they toppled 2 ? 1 to reach the final four the next day.

There they met the Wolves for their second crucial meeting in two weeks, matching the previous week's score of 1 ? 0. The Durham West Lightning were the opponent in the championship game, where Aurora earned their second shutout in a row by a score of 3 ? 0.

?The team worked hard all season,? said head coach Sean Murphy. ?They worked as a team and supported each other on and off the ice. They were very motivated.?

Murphy also credits the ?great coaching staff, amazing trainers and positive parent group? in helping the team accomplish their goals, while also implementing off-ice exercises and a nutrition program throughout the season.