

First-place Etobicoke Dolphins end Panthers' nine-game winning streak with emphatic 7-1 win at SARC

Panthers' rookie Lily Paisley extended her goal-scoring streak to five games with a second period marker, but Central York succumbed to the first-place Etobicoke Dolphins 7-1 on Saturday afternoon at SARC.

It was the Junior Panthers' first loss since September 21 and ended the club's nine-game heater during which they had outscored their OWSA U22 Elite opponents 57-19.

Paisley, gracious in defeat, took the one-sided loss to the Dolphins in stride.

"We got down after the first goal and we weren't strong mentally today."

Instead of dwelling on the negative aspects of the game, the speedy left winger complimented her goaltender Claire Hicks on a 44-save performance.

"Claire had quite the game. She's been such a large factor for us; she's backed us up all season. She did all she could out there."

Hicks faced a barrage of vulcanized rubber all afternoon as the Dolphins' high-octane offence outshot the Panthers 51-17.

The stellar goaltender was called upon early and often to fend off numerous scoring opportunities in the first period as the Panthers were outshot 16-5. Etobicoke's Renee Bishop opened the scoring with 11 seconds left on the power play while Paisley served a rare penalty.

After the Dolphins pinned the Panthers in their own end for over a minute, Madeline McCullough ranked second in league scoring feathered a pass to Bishop who fired the puck from the left circle and beat Hicks high glove side at 8:02.

Notably, Hicks made a big breakaway save at 3:55 and flashed the leather at 2:19 to keep the Panthers in the game.

However, Hicks's heroics could only carry the Panthers for so long. The Dolphins' lineup features the top five scorers in the OWSA U22 Elite Division and a host of Top 25 point-getters.

Sofia Ismael ranked fifth in league scoring showed off her shooting prowess with 32 seconds left in the opening period. She snapped a shot from between the circles that beat Hicks high glove side to give the visitors a 2-0 lead.

The Dolphins picked up where they left off at the end of the opening frame by scoring eighteen seconds into the second period.

Haley Box, ranked third in league scoring, broke through the Panthers' defense, deked Hicks to the right, and slid the puck five-hole into the back of the cage to give Etobicoke a three-goal cushion.

Seventy-seven seconds later, Mia Venusio's shot from the left point was tipped by Grace Van Volsen in the slot and past Hicks to make it 4-0.

Panthers' Head Coach Steve Dempsey pressed the re-set button for his laboring hockey club at 13:44 of the second period when he called timeout prior to an important offensive zone faceoff. The timeout allowed Central York to recalibrate and the Panthers pressed the visitors into the waning minutes of the middle frame.

After Annabella Van Berkel's wrist shot was stopped by Dolphins' netminder Maija St. Pierre, Paisley fired her eighth of the season into the back of the cage to get the Panthers on the board at 4:41. Paisley described her marker that cut the Panthers' deficit to three.

?It was at the end of the shift. I saw Berkie taking the shot and I got the rebound. I got to the net and slid it in five-hole.?

Paisley deflected praise about extending her goal-scoring streak to five games and offered a secret to her recent success: ?It's nice to keep the scoring streak going, but it's a team goal-scoring streak. I have a superstition about keeping the streak going. Mackenzie Cote kisses my stick before every game.?

The post-game levity was a much-needed antidote after a rough day at the rink for the Panthers. The Dolphins poured in goals by Rachel Bishop at 15:53, Renee Bishop fired her second of the contest at 9:42, and Van Volsen tallied her second with 2:27 left on the clock to provide the six-goal margin of victory.

The third-place Panthers (11-0-0-1) will host the nineteenth-place London Devilettes (3-6-0-3) on Saturday, November 1. Puck drop at SARC will be 1.55 p.m.

By Jim Stewart