

Five Express teams vying for AAA provincial crown



By Jake Courtepatte

Ottawa was harsh to the Aurora Panthers, who saw a 2 ? 0 series lead in the opening round of the Provincial Women's Hockey League playoffs diminish over their weekend road trip.

Surprising the fifth-place Nepean Wildcats in the first two games at the Stronach Aurora Rec Complex, Aurora's top girls hockey squad suffered three losses in Ottawa over three days to be booted from the postseason.

With their backs to the wall, the Wildcats bombarded both Carmen Lasis and Kristen Caporusso with shots in game three Friday, taking a 4 ? 0 lead heading into the first intermission. Aurora left the ice with their first loss of the playoffs, 6 ? 1, with Jasmine Grant providing the only goal for the Panthers.

Game four on Saturday was a battle in the crease between Lasis and her Wildcat counterpart, with the score tied at zeros midway through the second. Stopping double digit shots in the period, Lasis was finally beaten on the penalty kill, a 1 ? 0 score that would hold up for the remainder of the game.

Lasis stopped 27 of 28 shots, prompting coaching staff to once again rely on her between the pipes for the fifth and deciding game on Sunday, at the home of the Carleton Ravens.

Fantastic again in regulation, she stoned 29 shooters and killed seven powerplays in her best performance of the postseason.

Unfortunately for the Panthers, Nepean's goaltender was on a similar level, sending the game to overtime.

Both goalies faced a handful of chances in the extra frame and stood their ground, leaving the decision to a shootout.

Nicole Shaw, Jayden Thompson, Mia Rogers, Emerson Elliott, and Maddy Miller all could not solve the Nepean goalie, while Lasis was eventually beaten on the fifth Wildcats shooter.

Nepean moves on to face the Durham West Lightning in round two.