

Junior Panthers? balanced scoring secures sweep of weekend games versus Kingston and Ottawa

The Junior Panthers closed off November with a 10-goal flourish in a pair of home ice wins on the weekend at SARC.

Nine different Panthers scored versus Kingston and Ottawa to reinforce one of the many strengths of this hockey club: balanced scoring.

On Saturday afternoon, Elizabeth Janovski fired the game winner and Lily Paisley, Keira Johnson, and Briar Deckers also tallied one goal each to lead Central York over the Kingston Ice Wolves 4-1.

On Sunday afternoon, Annabella Van Berkel scored two goals including the game winner, Audrey Martone and Elizabeth Shapira delivered three-point performances, and Ellie Lewington, Zoe Ordanis, and Paisley added singles to pace the Panthers to a 6-3 win over the Ottawa Senators.

The Ice Wolves scored early on a bizarre bounce off the SARC ice surface to kick off Saturday's contest.

Kaylynn Fisher's shot took the strangest of hops and the knuckled puck eluded Panthers' goaltender Jamie Sanford at 3:35 into the first period. It was the only goal that Sanford would surrender to the Ice Wolves as she turned in a stellar 29-save performance.

The veteran netminder noted the importance of bouncing back against the Ice Wolves who upset the Panthers in the opening round of the OWSA playoffs last season.

"We didn't let the weird bounce goal get to us."

After Paisley's power play goal at 4:54 tied the game, the productive forward set up Janovski's goal three minutes later that gave the Panthers a 2-1 lead. Sanford praised the stylish game winner fired by the crafty veteran Janovski and felt it was "the turning point in the contest."

"We were practicing the shot that Jano scored with in our shooting drills this week. Once her goal went in, the energy of the team started going up. When we skated off the ice at the end of the first period, I told her "Practice makes perfect."

The erudite netminder thought the key to the team's three-goal victory over Kingston was a return to what made the Panthers successful earlier in the season: "We went back to our team's core values. We've fought hard to get out of our team slump. We all trusted one another today, especially on the PK. We were blocking shots much better today, too."

Sanford did her fair share of blocking shots, especially in the third period where she turned away 12—most of which were fired at her by the Ice Wolves' power play.

After Johnson and Deckers scored two minutes apart to stake Central York to a 4-1 lead near the end of the second period, the Ice Wolves counterattacked in the third period and tried to take advantage of a parade to the penalty box by the Panthers.

However, Sanford shut the door in the final frame and she described her most spectacular save of the period. It foiled a dangerous 2-on-1 Kingston scoring opportunity with 7:08 left in the game and ten seconds remaining in another Panther penalty.

"I was relying on muscle memory on that one. I saw out of the corner of my eye that she was going to be there for the pass and I slid over to where I thought the shot would come from. It was great that the D cleared the rebound."

Sanford believed the Panthers put a little extra into beating the Ice Wolves after last Spring's disappointing playoff exit versus

Kingston: "We had a great team meeting to prep for them. We knew we needed to stop them before they got any momentum today. We wanted to get them back and get an important win for the team."

On Sunday afternoon, the Panthers followed Saturday's first period script to procure a home ice victory over the Ottawa Senators. After giving up an early first goal to the visitors as they did versus the Ice Wolves, Central York roared back with three goals by the end of the frame to take a 3-1 lead.

Lexie Hatoum opened the scoring at 2:54 to give the Senators a 1-0 lead.

Hatoum's marker served as a wake-up call for the home side. Less than one minute later, Martone and Shapira set up Lewington's power play goal to pull the Panthers into a 1-1 tie.

After assisting on Lewington's tying goal, Martone's 13th goal of the season staked the Panthers to their first lead when the sniper finished Shapira's helper midway through the period.

The potent Panthers' power play struck again with 6:47 left on the clock. Paisley scored for the 4th game in a row since returning from injury--including her shootout winner versus Brampton--to give the home side a 3-1 margin heading into the first intermission.

"Big Goal" Van Berkel potted the Panthers' third power play marker of the game and the GWG at 12:14 of the middle frame to provide a three-goal cushion.

After Brook Glynn lit the lamp at 13:18 of the third to cut the Senators' deficit to 4-2, Ordanis stifled any prospective Ottawa rally by finishing a Martone feed with 8:31 remaining in the contest.

Less than two minutes later, Van Berkel's second goal of the game gave the Panthers a 6-2 lead. Shapira earned her third assist of the game on Van Berkel's team-leading 24th of the season. The speedy centre is 10th in league scoring with 32 points.

Naomi Chambers's power play goal for the Senators with 1:02 left on the clock closed the scoring.

The weekend sweep of the Ice Wolves and Senators improved the Panthers' third-place record to 18-5-0-1-2 for 55 points in the OWSA U22 Elite Division, four points ahead of the Durham West Lightning.

By Jim Stewart