

Junior Panthers settle for silver in 2-1 loss to OHA Mavericks in OWHL Consolation Final

The U22 Central York Panthers had to settle for silver medals in a narrow 2-1 loss to the OHA Mavericks in the OWHL Consolation Championship game in Toronto on Sunday afternoon.

Central York won its Pool by accruing a 2-0-1 record in games on Friday and Saturday to advance to the finals at the Scotiabank Pond.

The Junior Panthers shut out both opponents they faced on Friday to set the tone for the tournament. Central York trounced the Toronto Aeros 6-0 in Game 1 and bounced the Bluewater Hawks 3-0 in Game 2 to open the OWHL Consolation playoffs with two resounding victories.

On Friday morning, the Panthers scored two goals in each period to scuttle the Aeros.

Lifetime-Panther Erica Buckley scored a power play goal less than four minutes into the game to open the scoring.

Klaire Essex and Amber Esterbrooks earned assists on Buckley's game-winner.

With 3:55 left in the opening frame, Captain Cheyenne Degeer's unassisted marker gave the Panthers a 2-0 lead.

Esterbrooks, with an assist from Terry Wang, tickled the twine at 11:48 of the second period and Alessia Stoikos provided Central York with a four-goal margin with 1:35 remaining. Avery Johnston and Clara Williams earned assists on the Panthers' second goal of the period.

Veteran defenders Zoe Li and Rhaea Flint set up Abby Pak's goal with 4:08 left in the period to make it 5-0. Degeer fired her second goal of the game to close the scoring with just over two minutes left. Wang earned her second assist of the game in which the Panthers rediscovered their offensive prowess.

On Friday evening, Central York used a similar formula for success?stretching out their offensive output to one goal per period in their 3-0 grounding of the Hawks.

Annabella Van Berkel converted Li's pass with 2:17 left in the first period to open the scoring versus Bluewater.

A key shorthanded goal less than two minutes into the second period was a game changer.

Li set up Degeer's third of the day while the Panthers were fending off a Hawks' power play. The Captain's goal provided Central York with positive momentum in the middle frame.

Keira Johnson's marker at 11:30 of the third period, with an assist earned by Buckley, provided Central York's margin of victory.

On Saturday morning, the Panthers ran into a surprisingly determined Devilettes squad. After two scoreless periods, Lerissa Stevenson struck first at 16:49 to give London a 1-0 lead. Central York's Ashley Minor tied the game five minutes later with an assist earned by Johnston, but Julie McIntosh restored the Devilettes' lead with 8:32 left in the game.

Clara Williams's goal with 1:46 left in the third period knotted the contest 2-2 and sent the game into overtime, but Stevenson's goal at 8:40 of the overtime period sunk the Panthers.

All was not lost, however, as Central York eked its way into the finals ahead of the Devilettes due to a superior goals differential

(+8) and a 2-0-1 record.

In the Consolation Championship Final on Sunday afternoon, the Panthers offence stalled against the OHA Mavericks as it did last weekend in its playoff series with the Kingston Ice Wolves.

Addison Greve opened the scoring with 1:59 left in the first period to stake the Mavericks to a 1-0 lead. However, Esterbrooks tied it 1-1 with 38 seconds remaining before the first intermission. Buckley earned the assist on Esterbrooks's tying goal.

After a scoreless second period, Michaela Paulinyova notched the game-winner for the Mavericks at 11:30 of the final frame to hand the Panthers a tough defeat?especially after opening the Consolations in such a dominant manner on Friday.

The Junior Panthers will use the week ahead to get prepared for the Provincial Championships that commence on Friday in Mississauga.

By Jim Stewart