

Martone, Van Berkel, and Johnson lead Junior Panthers to 5-1 win over Bluewater Hawks

Central York's top two scorers showed off their offensive talents on Sunday afternoon as the Junior Panthers grounded the Bluewater Hawks 5-1 at SARC.

Annabella Van Berkel and Audrey Martone fired two goals each to add to their impressive offensive numbers this season. Captain Keira Johnson, who put forth an excellent two-way game against the Hawks, added a goal and an assist to the relentless Panthers' attack.

The talented and tenacious Martone, who is second in both points scored and penalty minutes, opened the scoring in the second period while on the PK. With 34 seconds left in Elizabeth Janovski's four-minute minor for head contact, Martone intercepted an errant Hawk defender's own zone pass and redirected it past the shocked Bluewater goalie Zoey McKellar.

Martone described the strange shortie scored 66 seconds into the middle frame: "It was one of the weirdest goals I've seen. I don't remember scoring a weirder one. I was angled right on the forecheck and the defenseman's pass hit my blade and it bounced into the net. It was the product of our forechecking."

The red-clad Panthers' forechecking and penalty-killing prowess was on display not only during Janovski's double-minor, but also during a 5-on-3 that the special team killed off in the third period.

Martone acknowledged that killing off the double-minor was a turning point in the game.

"We're a physical team and everyone on the team takes responsibility for the penalties we take. Our job is to kill off the penalties—many of them come because good hockey plays were made. We learn our PK systems over and over again in practice. Everyone knows how to step up when a penalty is taken."

One Panther to step up during the PK was goaltender Jamie Sanford who turned aside 29 of the 30 shots she faced versus Bluewater. Many of the visitors' best scoring opportunities came when the Panthers were short-handed.

Martone complimented the steady Sanford who picked up her 12th W of the season.

"With Jamie in net, we don't worry about much. We trust her to make the big saves for us. We want to play physically, so we're going to get some penalties, and Jamie keeps us in games when we're killing penalties."

The only shot that eluded Sanford was an even strength goal that tied the game with 12:26 left in the second period. Jamie Ryall banged in a rebound in a goal mouth scramble after the Panthers' netminder had stopped a series of rapid-fire shots by the circling Hawks.

The home side responded to Ryall's tying goal four minutes later when Johnson sent a crisp forwarding pass to Van Berkel.

The Panthers' speedy leading scorer created open space down the left wing and snapped the puck from just inside the face-off circle—beating McKellar low glove side to restore Central York's one-goal lead.

The hard-checking Johnson made it 3-1 when she rolled off the right wing and rocketed a wrist shot that handcuffed McKellar high glove side at 2:59.

Johnson's unassisted marker was her eighth of the season.

The Panthers poured it on in the waning minutes of the second period and their tenacity was rewarded with 2:13 left on the clock.

Martone notched her second of the game when she knocked home a pass from Anastasia Trifon on a play started by Briar Deckers at the point.

Martone credited her linemates for her 16th of the season: "We were all saying on the bench that we needed one more goal before the period. Our entire line created the goal-- from Trifon's great pass to Briar's low shot. It was the difference on the goal."

Central York carried its second period momentum into the final frame. Forty-seven seconds into the third period, Van Berkel sniped her 33rd of the season when she one-timed a perfect pass to her tape from Abby Pak.

The low shot slid into the back of the net and gave the Panthers a commanding four-goal lead.

Van Berkel's marker earned Pak and Zoe Ordanis their 16th helpers of the season.

The talented playmakers are tied with defender Rachel Talesnik for the team-lead in assists.

As the fifth-place Panthers (23-11-0) head into the 25-team league's Exam Break, their Top Five Scorers are:

- Annabella Van Berkel?33 goals and 12 assists for 45 points in 31 GP; - Audrey Martone?16 goals and 12 assists for 28 points in 31 GP; - Zoe Ordanis?10 goals and 16 assists for 26 points in 34 GP; - Abby Pak?9 goals and 16 assists for 25 points in 35 GP; - Lily Paisley?14 goals and 10 assists for 24 points in 30 GP;

The U22 Central York squad will battle through a grueling three-game road trip versus the Ottawa 67's, Nepean Wildcats, and Kingston Icewolves on January 30, January 31, and February 1.

The Junior Panthers' next home game is Sunday, February 8 when they host Durham West at 4:15 at SARC to close off the Silver Stick Tournament festivities. The historic tournament's Opening Ceremonies "including a U15 Panthers game-- will be Friday, February 6 at 4 PM at the ACC.

By Jim Stewart