

SAC Saints take the 31st MacPherson Tourney



By Jeff Doner

The St. Andrew's College Saints varsity boys' hockey team hosted the 31st annual MacPherson Tournament last weekend and were once again victorious in their bid for the trophy.

"This is my second time winning, and I can honestly say it's the one I circle on my calendar," said Saints captain Matt Graham. "It was an amazing feeling to lift the trophy again and I was proud of all the guys for persevering through all the adversity that we had. The feeling is just exceptional right now."

This year SAC hosted seven other teams that came from Ontario, Quebec and New York State.

Leading up to the championship game on Sunday afternoon, the Saints won four straight over the competition throughout the weekend.

It started with a 7 - 1 win over St. Francis High School from Athol Springs, NY on Friday morning. Austin Cho and JD Falconer each had two goals to pace the offense.

Later that night, the Saints took to the ice again, but this time faced off against Cegep de Sainte-Foy, the team they would eventually meet in the championship.

It was a good close game, but the Saints collected a 5 - 2 win after busting out for four goals in the third period. Graham and Adam Sinclair each scored two for the Saints in that game.

The Saints were scheduled to play two more games on Saturday and did not disappoint.

First it was Upper Canada College, who put up a good fight against the host.

The Saints found themselves down a goal after the first, but a strong second period and solid special teams was all they needed to get back in the game.

Zac Mason scored two power play goals three minutes apart, and Falconer also added a third goal to cap a 3 - 1 win.

That set up the Saints for a semi-final matchup with Northwood School on Saturday night.

After a scoreless first period, Quentin Campbell gave the Saints a 1 ? 0 lead. The teams traded goals in the third period until the score was locked in a 2 ? 2 tie, which eventually sent the game into overtime, where Justin Fregona provided the heroics by scoring the game winning goal for SAC.

That win catapulted the Saints into the championship game on Sunday afternoon for a rematch with Cegep de Sainte-Foy.

With a raucous crowd in the ACC, the Saints immediately made a statement in the game when Cho scored just 27 seconds in to give SAC a 1 ? 0 lead.

However, Cegep Sainte-Foy was unwilling to let this one get away, replying with two straight goals to end the first period.

The second period was a wild one for SAC as they unleashed a relentless attack on an unsuspecting opponent. Two minutes in, while on the power play, Fregona tied the game after picking up a loose puck after a mad scramble in front of the net.

Seconds later, Graham netted the go-ahead goal and, in similar fashion, Warren Foegele scored another goal 15 seconds later to put the Saints up 4 ? 2.

Before the second period concluded, Cegep Sainte-Foy would make it 4 ? 3, setting the stage for an intense third period.

With the Saints holding on to a one goal lead, both teams held each other in check.

It went down to the final seconds when Darren Iwai scored an empty net goal for the Saints as insurance, giving them a 5 ? 3 win.

?We played them on Friday night and it was a close game as well,? Graham said. ?They're an older team with a bit more experience than us, but I thought we did a good job of using our speed to create chances and we pulled it out in the end.?

Graham, originally from Halifax, is in his last season with SAC, which makes the tournament win all the more special.

?It's the history and just seeing the names on the trophy of teams that have won it and for SAC this is our ninth time winning it and it's just such a competitive tournament every year, and it's a big weekend for SAC hockey and Aurora,? he said. ?It means a lot to win it for us and our school. The history and all those things make it an incredible thing to win.?

Saints players Brett Nichol and Austin Cho were named tournament all-stars for their play throughout the weekend, while Foegele earned the Robin Fraser plaque for Leadership and Sportsmanship and Graham was deservedly named tournament MVP.