

Third straight provincial title for Atom Panthers



By Jake Courtepatte

Chalk up another milestone win for the Atom AA Aurora Panthers.

The minor hockey team concluded its dominating season last weekend at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) Championship in Vaughan, taking home the gold Sunday and the title of the top squad at their age level in the province.

Mikayla Cranney had the late-game heroics against the Clarington Flames, scoring the game's only goal in the final minute of the third period. Jalyn St. Louis was outstanding between the pipes, earning her fifth shutout in six games over the weekend.

The team swept through the round-robin stage with three straight victories, outscoring the Nepean Wildcats, Burlington Barricudas, and Waterloo Ravens by a combined score of 9 ? 0, with four goals off the stick of Cranney, two each from Abby Lunney and Karista Kurtes, and a solo notch from Avery Dempsey.

Meeting the North Halton Twisters in the quarterfinal matchup, St. Louis gave up her only goal of the tournament in a 5 ? 1 win. Lunney stole the show with a four-goal performance, with Hadley McHenry providing the insurance.

The Panthers advanced to the gold medal game on the back of a 4 ? 0 semifinal win over the Barrie Sharks, with Kurtes notching two goals and additions from Gabi Pludra and Colleen Myers.

Cranney's championship-winning goal came on a late two-on-one opportunity, faking a pass and moving around the Clarington defender before burying the tally.

Team manager Lisa Lunney and coach Doug Lunney called the game a "perfect storybook finish" to a memorable season for the Panthers.

For most of the team, the win marked the third-straight OWHA Championship, with the core of the team finding success at the Novice level in 2014 and the Atom BB team in 2015. Their success certainly carried right into 2016, the championship marking the Panthers' fifth tournament title of the season.

Also in the Atoms trophy case for the season are two silver medal finishes, including two weekends ago at the Lower Lakes Female Hockey League Championship in Toronto.