

Bancroft Jets go down fighting



Caleb Manus holds off an Ilderton player as Jackson Wiltshire battles for the puck. Photo by Tony Pearson

By Tony Pearson

Heading back to Bancroft down two games to one in a five game series, the Bancroft Boyer Midget Jets were determined to force a final deciding game in their All-Ontario Championship Final with the team from Ilderton. They showed this when they jumped out to a 2-1 first period lead when Jackson Wiltshire and Tanner Shatraw scored. Throughout the period, they pressed, and were full value for their lead.

The second period started well, with another goal by Tanner Shatraw. But then it turned into a different story. Bancroft was now down a key player; Tori Howran was ejected from the game when she was called for a hit from behind.

Penalty trouble continued to plague the Jets, and Ilderton capitalized on two power plays. With one full-strength goal, Ilderton took a 4-3 lead into the third period. Forced to kill so many penalties, Bancroft's speed seemed to slow as the period went on. After the fourth Ilderton goal, Coach Wiltshire sent Josh Trotter into net.

Bancroft began the third period fired up and pressing hard for an equalizer. Unfortunately, this left them vulnerable to counter-attack, and an Ilderton break-away and dazzling shot increased their lead to 5-3.

It was then that Bancroft showed its mettle. They continued to push, and were rewarded when Caleb Trotter scored their fourth goal, as the minutes ticked off.

Ilderton then went into extended penalty-kill mode, content to simply dump the puck out of their zone. As the clock wound down to under two minutes, the goalkeeper was pulled in favour of another attacker.

However, things turned bleak when Bancroft drew another penalty. So it was now 5-on-6, with no goalie. But Bancroft kept pressing, and as time ran out, Jackson Wiltshire put the puck in the net. The question was asked whether time had expired, but the ruling was that Wiltshire had scored with half a second left in the game. (Yes, that's 0.5 seconds)

On to overtime, and an even more furious attack by Bancroft. Time after time, they charged into the Ilderton zone and threw shots at the Ilderton net. The momentum was all their way until there were only two minutes left in overtime.

Coach Duane Wiltshire said before, and repeated after the game, that much of the result depends on the bounces. So it happened. A bad bounce left the puck free in front of the Bancroft goal. A quick shot, and their season was over.

Tori Howran summed up the season: "It was exciting. We worked very hard to get all the way to the finals ? game in and game out, practice in and practice out." Coach Wiltshire declared that he was very proud of his team, again stressing that the players had worked hard all the way.

In any final, someone comes out on top and someone doesn't. But in Bancroft on Saturday night, the Jets displayed the characters of winners, never giving up and fighting down to the wire. They truly deserved their silver medals.