

Double OT winner nets OHL Cup for Express



By Jake Courtepatte

Over seventy minutes of two-goal, deadlocked hockey came to an abrupt end Monday night in anti-climactic fashion.

Rhys Forhan's goal late in the second overtime period, his second of the night, clinched the prestigious OHL Cup for the York-Simcoe Express: the club's first since 2004.

It came as an unassuming wrister that snuck under the pad of Toronto Marlboro's goaltender Elliott Tang, with the referee calling it a goal after seeing the puck over the line while the play was dead.

"I didn't see anything, I just shot it and hoped it went in," said Forhan, a call-up for the Junior A Aurora Tigers this season. "It feels amazing, there's no place I'd rather be. Doing it for the boys is amazing and being able to capitalize in front of everyone, there's no feeling like it."

It capped off a 2-1 win for the Minor Midget AAA Express, who went down 1-0 in the first period when goaltender Andrei Berezinskiy was beaten over the shoulder by defenceman Pierre-Luc Forget.

It took the Express until the final half of the third period to get on the board, Forhan potting one just after a powerplay that saw sustained pressure in the Marlies end.

Berezinskiy was challenged a handful of times in the final minute of regulation, keeping the puck out to bring the game to its first ten minute 4-on-4 overtime period.

Seventeen minutes later, in the first OHL Cup championship to ever require double overtime, Forhan and his teammates celebrated the winning goal that even he did not initially know went in.

The stunned Marlboros team refused to leave their bench for close to five minutes after the winner in protest, but eventually made their way onto the ice for a group photo with the winning squad.

"The year we've had, it's been a dream year," said York Simcoe head coach Rob Shilton. "It's hard to even describe what a great experience this has been. There's a number of guys here who have been with our program for six, seven years now and it's so satisfying to see everybody rewarded for their hard work."

"I've been working towards this my whole life, ever since I started playing hockey," said Forhan. "There's no better feeling than right now."

Forhan suited up in two games for the Tigers this season, notching one assist and four penalty minutes.

The Marlies, playing in their tenth straight OHL Cup Championship and having won in back-to-back years, met a wall in Berezinskiy, who made 39 saves on 40 shots to earn OHL Cup MVP honours. He was joined on the tournament All-Star team by blueliner Justin MacPherson.

With the win, the Express were able to complete the rare 'Triple Crown' of AAA hockey, winning the Silver Stick in January, the OMHAs earlier this month, and the OHL Cup.