

Panthers hold off Mississauga in late game thriller



By Jake Courtepatte

A late game scare led to some late game heroics at Iceland Arena in Mississauga on Saturday, where the Aurora Jr. Panthers defeated the high-flying Mississauga Chiefs.

Facing a Chiefs team that had been on the losing end of only six games this year, it was the Panthers that dominated the first period, utilizing their speed on the Olympic-sized ice to create a few choice opportunities late in the frame. Mississauga goalie Cassie Reale was forced to cover a handful of rebounds, including a frantic scrum in front of her net in the final minute, to keep the game scoreless after fifteen minutes.

Reale was finally solved during an onslaught of Aurora offense during the second period, a period where she was forced to contend with 19 Aurora shots. Mia Rogers broke the shutout just over five minutes in, on a solid individual effort to split the defense and send it over the glove of Reale.

At the other end, Aurora goalie Kristen Caporusso was left mostly unworked though was there to make the stop when called upon. With just six seconds left in the middle period, a blocked shot at the Mississauga blue line led to a clear breakaway, which Caporusso turned aside to preserve the 1 ? 0 lead.

Caporusso was challenged again in the third when two early stick penalties had the Panthers killing a two-man advantage for over a minute. She was successful in blocking all four shots on the kill.

It was actually on an Aurora powerplay with under five minutes to go that the game took a turn in the Mississauga direction. An Aurora shot rang around the boards and turned into a breakaway for the Chiefs, who finally beat Caporusso to tie the game late.

Just 27 seconds later, and on the same penalty kill, the Chiefs were sent on another breakaway and took a 2 ? 1 lead.

It was not over there, however: determined not to let what was almost a surefire win slip away, Maddy Miller scored for the Panthers just eighteen seconds after the Chiefs' second goal, using the defenseman as a screen to find the five hole on Reale.

One minute later, Emerson Elliott potted another for the Panthers, the fourth goal scored in less than two minutes of play. The game winner was a highlight reel goal, pulling a deke through the legs of a Chiefs defender one-on-one and going backhand for a 3 ? 2 win.

The win moved the Panthers to a record of 7-12-4-1, good for fourteenth in the 20-team league. They closed out the week with a 1 ? 1 tie with the Waterloo Rangers, the only Aurora goal coming from Elliott.

A two-week home stand begins this weekend with the Panthers hosting the Nepean Wildcats and Kingston Ice Wolves at the Stronach Aurora Rec Complex. The season runs until mid-February, at which point the top sixteen teams will battle for the Alumni Cup, the league's championship trophy.

The Panthers last made the postseason in 2015, falling to the Toronto Aeros in a five-game series.