

A great playoff week for Cougars

By Robert Belardi

The Schomberg Cougars lead the first round of their playoff series 2-1 against the Orillia Terriers.

It has been a week of stellar hockey. It could arguably be the best hockey the Cougars have played all year. It makes sense, this is the playoffs after all.

The boys came out on the ice with confidence, even though they have only defeated the Terriers once all year and entered the playoffs riding a five-game losing streak.

"Our slump's over," said head coach Brett Delmas, to the team before the start of the game. "We've had a lot of adversity, that's what hockey is all about."

In the first period, the Cougars forechecked aggressively, won battles in deep and forced plenty of mistakes from the Terriers. It was incredible to watch.

Call-up Ethan Belisle scored his first goal as a Cougar, ripping the puck off the draw passed Zach Levac to open the scoring.

The Terriers got one back, thanks to Jack Beck on the power play. That didn't keep the Cougars in the cage. As a matter of fact, in the second period, the boys dominated the Terriers on another level.

Connor Childerhose scored twice in the period, including a nifty breakaway finish on the backhand, and heading into the third period with a 3-1 lead was an excellent sign.

Just over 10 minutes in, the Cougars coughed up two goals. Josh Brown and Zane Morris ensured the Terriers wouldn't back down. In this teeter-totter of a period, Cameron Kokelj paraded down the ice shorthanded to tap in the go-ahead goal with just over six minutes left.

Much to the frustration of the Cougars bench and fans, Josh Brown forced this one into overtime.

In the overtime frame, Childerhose drove the net and the puck squeaked loose behind Levac.

Kokelj hopped on to it like prey, and sealed the victory, sending the entirety of the Trisan Centre into much needed, jubilation.

"We played well tonight and we got to keep raising the bar," said Kokelj, after scoring the game winner.

Heading into Orillia for the second game, the Cougars knew they entered a building they have never won in all year and backed by a committed fan base.

In front of 326 people in attendance, the Cougars silenced the home crowd with an outstanding, 8-4 victory. Three power play goals and 42 shots on goal was too much to handle for the Terriers. Childerhose walked away with two goals, supported by Sam Pink, Anthony Roberts, Owen Heilemann, Alex Cordeiro and Rees Cameron. It was a full team effort on display.

In the third game this past Monday, the Cougars knew it was going to be a tough test. You'd imagine, it would be hard to envision, the Terriers not coming into the Trisan Centre with desperation written on their faces.

That's exactly what it was. The Terriers won this one 5-3.

That didn't mean the Cougars' performance was poor. As a matter of fact, the Cougars outshot the Terriers 41-35.

The only trouble was playing from behind, falling 2-1 after the first and trailing 4-2 after the second. The power play was scoreless in five opportunities. Something to note moving into game four, this Saturday in West Orillia Sports Complex. Puck drop is at 7:30 p.m.