

Lindsay extends King's winless streak to seven with 5-1 win at Zancor

By Jim Stewart

Kaden Koutroulides fired two goals and George Cote turned aside 34 of 35 shots to lead the Lindsay Muskies to a 5-1 win over the slumping King Junior A Rebellion on Sunday afternoon at the Zancor Centre. Koutroulides credited Cote's stellar play for his club's big road win: "He's an unbelievable goalie for us. Best pickup we made as a team this year. It's on us that he didn't get the shutout. He made big saves for us all game." Rebellion forward Max Anderson foiled Cote's shutout attempt with 2:09 left in the game. Anderson's 12th of the season "set up by team assist leader Ryan Fairbairn (24) and pugnacious defender Matthew Anderson" provided one ray of light in another dismal home ice performance by the Rebellion. Sixty-eight seconds after Anderson's marker made it 4-1, the lights were turned out on King when Koutroulides finished off his three-point game by setting up Braxton Myers and restoring Lindsay's four-goal lead. In addition to earning the primary assist on his team's final goal of the game, Koutroulides scored what turned out to be the game-winner at 12:39 of the first period when he fired a wrist shot from the right faceoff circle. King's agile netminder Noah Mavin got a piece of the puck, but it ricocheted off his blocker, landed inside the right post, and fell into the cage to give Lindsay a 2-0 lead. The congenial Koutroulides was impressed by his marksmanship against one of the best goaltenders in the OJHL: "It had to be well-placed. I tried to shoot it over his pad and blocker in the open space stick side. I was off-balance and didn't see it go in. I realized I scored when my teammates were rushing at me." Even more impressive was Koutroulides's second goal of the game "best described as a 'Savardian Spin-o-Rama' and a laser snap shot between the circles that beat Mavin with 5:26 left in the second period. The smooth-skating centre described the broken play that created his scoring opportunity: "The puck bounced off my teammate's head and right on to my tape. I spun in the slot, saw a small space, and shot it bar down." Koutroulides's deft scoring touch gave the Muskies a commanding 3-0 lead heading into the second intermission. In addition to the Lindsay centre's creative offensive contributions, the Rebellion's undisciplined play gave the visitors countless scoring opportunities on the power play. King was forced to defend four 5-on-3 shorthanded situations as the Sunday matinee featured a parade to the penalty box by Rebellion combatants. Mavin was his team's best penalty killer "piling up dozens of sensational saves to keep the score respectable. The diminutive netminder's cat-like reflexes and athleticism were on full display in Sunday's loss as he turned aside 50 of the 50 shots that the Muskies could muster. In a game with playoff implications for both teams, Koutroulides discussed the significance of his club's road win: "We broke a five-game losing streak with our win today. We've been playing tough teams like Trenton, but we're going to have to keep getting points. We play a physical, hard-hitting game and today we were finishing our checks from the start of the game to the end of the game. We have to get going and play games like this to make the playoffs." With their win at the Zancor Centre, the feisty Muskies solidified their hold on 8th place in the OJHL East playoff race by moving nine points ahead of 9th-place Aurora. The Tigers "after upsetting Wellington 5-3 on Saturday night" dropped a 3-1 matinee matchup in Markham earlier on Sunday. The Rebellion's winless streak reached seven games with Sunday's home ice loss to Lindsay. 7th-place King (19-15-1-0) last victory was a 3-2 decision in Niagara Falls on November 28. Despite the month-long slump, King's Junior A squad remains one point ahead of the 8th-place Mississauga Chargers with three games in hand and five points ahead of the 9th-place Caledon Admirals with one game in hand in the race for the last two playoff spots in the OJHL West. King will look to get back into the win column on Friday, Jan. 9 by hosting the 12th-place Georgetown Raiders. Puck drop will be 7:30 p.m. After hosting the last-place Raiders, King will welcome the first-place Toronto Patriots to the Zancor Centre on Sunday, Jan. 11 at 3 p.m.