

Minor bantam A King Rebellion bring home silver

By Robert Belardi

King Rebellion dramatically lost in a shootout to the London Jr. Mustangs White 4-3, falling just shy of another gold medal this year.

The Aurora tournament began on Friday with the finals being hosted on Sunday. Five teams were present in King's group, involving the Aurora Minor Tigers, TNT Tornados, East Gwillimbury Eagles and the London Jr. Mustangs White.

The top four teams were permitted to advance to Sunday's semi-final and finals, so the Rebellion got off to a hot start on Friday.

The Rebellion crushed the Tornados to kick off their tournament 6-0. With confidence oozing in their veins, the boys took care of the Eagles 3-1.

Saturday morning the Rebellion faced the host Minor Tigers seeking a fast 3-0 start and wanting top spot in their group.

In the second period, the goals finally came around. Keaton Walsh centres it in front to a trailing Gianluca Nicolini, who fires it top shelf, past goaltender Aidan Chouinard for a 1-0 lead.

With the Rebellion continuing to press, the Minor Tigers held off the storm and transmitted their defence into potent offence.

The other Aidan on the Tigers, Aiden Miller, slipped the puck past Rebellion goaltender Phillip Renzetti to even it up, heading into the third period.

For majority of this frame, the Rebellion conceded a myriad of chances mid-way through forcing Renzetti to make a flashing glove save.

This bout ended in a 1-1 tie and head coach of the Rebellion Dennis Evangelista, explained how his goal came about and what he works on in practice.

Evangelista said: "In practice we try to work, keeping the forwards in a triangle type of position. We try to keep a guy down low, it's hard for the goalie to keep track of the puck."

Former professional basketball head coach and NBA champion Phil Jackson just might have been proud if he ever heard that one.

In the final game of the group against the Mustangs White, the Rebellion fell 4-1. Evangelista said he didn't know much about them after the Tigers game. He knew about them now.

With Sunday set for a thrilling semi-final, the Rebellion had to take on the Minor Tigers. And, take them on, they did.

Trailing 2-1 in the third period in the semi-final, the Rebellion turned on the afterburners and excelled on both ends of the ice.

To the glee of all parents in the stands and to everyone on the bench, the Rebellion scored two quick goals in under a minute to take a 3-2 lead.

With the Minor Tigers left speechless, Nathan Evangelista added another goal to book a trip to the finals later in the afternoon.

The finals would not be easy. The Mustangs White were waiting.

It didn't take long to notice a difference in play from the Rebellion. The boys' volition was evident from puck drop.

Graddy Duggan initiated the goal scoring. The Rebellion forward tipped in a point shot past Justin Landers for a 1-0 lead.

Hard work seeks well earned rewards. In the second period, Cohen D'Ulisse snipes his shot from the hashmarks past the right shoulder of Landers and the Rebellion had a commanding 2-0 lead.

When you are losing in the finals, two things can happen ??one, you choke and roll over; two, you fight back.

That is exactly what the Mustangs White did; they fought back.

The team sent the Rebellion on the back foot. The boys forechecked hard and held possession in the zone.

With the puck dumped down the zone towards Renzetti, the goaltender mishandles it. A player from the Mustangs capitalized on the chance and now it was a 2-1 game.

In the third period, the Mustangs would find a second goal, forcing overtime.

The three on three overtime solved nothing and due to the fact it is a tournament and ice time is precious, a shootout commenced.

Three rounds in, Andrew Voorn got the Rebellion on the scoresheet. The Mustangs answered.

Two shooters after that, Marcus Rose makes a nifty move around Landers but is denied by the iron.

It all came down to Jayden Amiral who won the shootout for the Mustangs White.

Phillip Renzetti was named MVP of the tournament for the King Rebellion.

After the game, Evangelista had some kind words for his boys.

?I told them I was speechless. I was just so proud of how they played, I'm really proud of how they rebounded because we lost to those guys 4-1. That's sports, you can't write that stuff up.?

?One thing about our team is we are really solid as a group. They all fight for each other, they all play for each other. They're all really good friends,? said Evangelista after all the medals were handed out.

A special thanks goes out to tournament director Mary Ann Cobb, President Joe Bentolila and the volunteers involved to make this a memorable weekend.