

# Firefighter AE Bantams sweep playoff series with Saugeen Shores

Acton Firefighters Bantam AE Tanners sent blood pressures soaring, heads shaking and hearts stopping in their come-from-behind style in an exciting OMHA quarter-final against Saugeen Shores but swept the best-of-five series in three straight games despite the loss of two players from injuries.

The Tanners overcame a four goal Saugeen lead to take the first game of the series 7-4, doubled the score in

the second for a 4-2 win and squeezed out a 3-2 victory in the third game to pocket a ticket into the OMHA semi-finals.

Home ice advantage brought the first game to Acton Wednesday Feb. 14. The Tanners had not encountered the Saugeen Shores team before and it was a surprise when they found themselves down 4-0 within ten minutes. However, the first period ended with a

## *Come from behind wins keep fans off their seats*

goal from defenceman Ellis Lavallee as he flipped the puck over a downed Saugeen Shores goalie.

The second period saw a much more organized and focused Tanner team. Smooth passing saw Josh McDonell feather a pass over the Saugeen Shore players stick to Jesse Spurrell who put a

perfect redirect on the puck and top-shelfed it. The lead was now cut in half! Less than a minute later with a scramble in front of the net, Josh McDonell poked in a third goal leaving Acton only one down. Then a rebound off a downed goalie gave Josh McDonell a powerplay goal and tied the game up.

Solid play by goalie Colton Wiens kept the visiting team frustrated.

The Tanners built up momentum during the second period and continued to shut down the other team while fighting off half a dozen penalties. Quick coverage and clearing the puck from our zone by defencemen AJ McConville, John White, Brandon Lockyer and Ellis Lavallee allowed the Tanner forwards to up the pressure in the offensive zone. A shot in the slot to a wide open Brandon Masini produced a short-handed goal as he placed a slapshot over the goalie for the go-ahead goal. Now the Tanners were in control.

Another short-handed goal followed as Josh McDonell tried a wrap around which was stopped but he quickly poked in the rebound. The Tanners scored again from a loose puck in front of the net that was shot short side under the goalie's glove by #7 Josh McDonell.

In the final minute Saugeen Shores played 5 on 3 hockey but the Tanners controlled the puck to run the clock down for a 7-4 win.

Assists were awarded to Brandon Masini (3), Jesse Spurrell (2), AJ McConville (2), Brandon Lockyer (1), Josh Knight (1) and Josh McDonell (1).

### **Long bus ride**

Game 2 of the series played Friday night after a long bus ride to Port Elgin saw Saugeen Shores repeat their early lead scoring a power play goal two minutes into the game. However, the Tanners would not let them build much of a lead. Instead, Brandon Masini answered with a short shot top shelf to tie at 1:1. Shortly following this goal, credit was given to AJ as he made a great defensive move to poke the puck off stick as he went one on one with the player trying to rush past him.

Period two saw goaltender Jesse Harris keep the Tanners in the games with two huge back-to-back saves. Minutes later, Ellis picked up the puck at his own blue line and worked his way through the dispersed Saugeen Shore players to net an unassisted go-ahead goal. Within a minute, the home team answered on a power play goal to retie the game.

Concern was expressed when defenceman AJ was checked awkwardly into the boards and had to be helped off the ice. Stefan Smelsky replaced him and held firm with solid defensive moves and a couple of bullet shots right on target.

As in game one the third period opened with the teams tied. Ellis scored his second goal of the game allowing the Tanners to take the lead and it

would prove to be the winner. Cameron Carr came through with an insurance goal at the two minute mark as he worked a nice wrap-around past the goalie.

Phillip Conlin's hustle and efforts in the third period awarded him assists on the final two goals. Other assists went to Josh McDonell (2). This 4:2 victory set the Tanners in the driver's seat for the series with home ice in the third game.

### **Saugeen leads**

The third game did not start well. Two Tanners were in the penalty box within minutes of the initial face-off. It gave Saugeen Shores a power play which they capitalized on for a 1-0 lead. The remainder of the period would be scoreless but have the Tanners fight their way through two more penalties.

Penalty box occupants reversed in the second period and brought about the equalizer as Josh McDonell sent a sharp shot top shelf with help from his two defencemen, AJ and Brandon Lockyer. While this reporter could no longer wait for a bathroom break, the action continued resulting in the Tanners taking the lead. Recounts have a clean win off the face-off by Brandon Masini who fed the puck to Jesse Spurrell. He found the inside of the net which brought huge cheers from the fans as the Tanners took the lead for the first time. However, Saugeen Shores was not giving up either. With less than one minute in the period, they would pull even once more.

It was deja vu! For the third game straight, the Tanners started the third period tied. The crowd was tense, completely silent at times and huge cheers erupted when set-ups and rushes down the ice looked promising. With only 5 minutes left in the game, Josh McDonell made a pass out from behind the net to Ellis who took his shot only to have the goalie save it but he gave up a rebound which Brandon Masini made no mistake on. The Tanners had the lead but five minutes to hold on. Two more overlapping penalties would cause anxious moments but short shifts as the boys were obviously tired; great coverage by goaltender Colton Wiens and good puck handling to play down the clock lead to the final count down and a wildly excited Bantam AE team.

Although one of the visiting coaches commented that this team "is going nowhere," on the contrary the Tanners are going to the OMHA semi-finals, an opponent yet to be determined as the series between Port Perry and Huntsville is not yet completed.

-Edith McDonell

## OMHA playoff games

**Saturday, Feb. 24**

4:30p.m. - Novice BB vs Erin-Hillsburgh.

**Sunday, Feb. 25**

11a.m. - Novice BB vs Fergus.

**Monday, Feb. 26**

9p.m. - Bantam BB vs Flamborough.

**Tuesday, Feb. 27**

7p.m. - Atom BB vs Hespeler.

8p.m. - Peewee BB vs Hespeler.

9p.m. - Bantam AE vs Fergus.

**Wednesday, Feb. 28**

7:30p.m. - Bantam AE vs Woolwich.

**Thursday, March 1**

7p.m. - Atom AE vs Dundas, (played at Hillsburg arena).

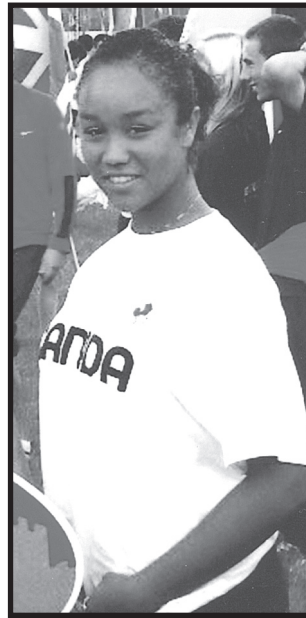


## Kaitlyn continues to shine in Texas

Acton High School graduate, Kaitlyn Andrews has just completed a successful indoor track and field season. Competing as a freshman for Stephen F. Austin State University in the Southland Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships at the University of Houston this past weekend, Kaitlyn placed second in the Women's Shot Put and earned herself All Conference Honours.

Kaitlyn had her best series of throws to date, throwing 14.02, 14.18, 14.64, foul, 14.67 and 14.70 metres. Her throw of 14.70 metres was a new personal best. Her previous best of 14.59 metres was set at the Penn Relays last April. Kaitlyn was second to Abby Rushton, a senior from Texas State University who threw a season best of 16.08 metres.

Kaitlyn is studying Kinesiology at Stephen F. Austin. She completed her first semester by achieving standing on the Deans List with a 3.56 grade point average.



Kaitlyn Andrews

# Atom AE Tanners advance to semi-finals of OMHA playoffs

It has been a busy two weeks for the Denny's Bus Lines Atom AE Tanners. After defeating Fergus in a one-game tie breaker, the Tanners played a best of three elimination against Dundas to determine who would advance in the OMHA playdowns.

Acton took the first game against Dundas 3-1 with Taylor Pickering, Nick Molinaro and David Lafrance recording the goals with assists from Dalton Smith, Molinaro and Pickering recording the assists. In the second game, Acton was looking to make short work of the Blues and that they did on the back of a superb performance by captain Stephen White who recorded five goals in a 6-4 victory.

The win gave Acton a berth in the best-of-five semi-finals against Saugeen Shores.

### **Win first one**

On Friday, Eric from Denny's Bus Lines provided the transport to Southampton and the Tanners provided the entertainment as they recorded a 5-3 victory against an intimidating Saugeen Shores team. The game featured much hitting by the home squad but the Tanners speed, accurate shooting and spectacular goaltending by netminder Zack Ross proved too much for the

## *Oust Dundas and Saugeen Shores*

Saugeen Shore Storm.

Goal scorers for Acton were Kyle Crossman with his first of the year, Stephen White and Nick Molinaro who capped off a hat-trick with an empty net goal to seal the win. Zack Ross made 26 saves including many of a highlight reel variety to give Acton their first win of the series.

On Saturday, the Storm visited Acton and once again the Tanners prevailed in a 7-4 victory. Acton's game plan of pushing the puck past the defence and hustling to the puck led to many scoring chances. Once again, goaltending by Ross provided the team with much needed confidence. Solid defensive work by Avery George, Samantha McCarthy, Connor Mayner, Drake Andrews and Taylor Pickering helped Acton to limit the hard-shooting Saugeen team's opportunities.

Goal scorers for Acton were Drake Andrews, Kyle Crossman, Connor Mayner, Sean McIntosh, Dawson Wright, Nick Molinaro and Stephen White. Assists went to David Lafrance

(2), Mayner, McIntosh, Dalton Smith and goaltender Zack Ross.

Ross faced 30 shots and turned away 26 for the victory.

On Sunday, the Tanners again took the trip to Port Elgin, hoping to end the series and earn a berth in the OMHA semi-finals. Saugeen Shores dressed a new goaltender, looking to change their fortunes in a game with so much on the line.

Acton once again came out strongly and Kevin Giordano got the ball rolling by scoring on rebound with Nick Molinaro and Dawson Wright recording the assists. Shortly afterward, Drake Andrews added to the lead with an unassisted goal following a fine rush up the ice.

Saugeen Shores narrowed the gap to 2-1 before Dalton Smith scored from Molinaro and Tom Potter to restore the two goal advantage. The home team narrowed the gap to 3-2 but fine penalty killing and solid goaltending from Acton were again the order of the day and Zack Ross recorded his third win of the weekend.

The Atom AE Tanners now advance to the OMHA semi-final playoffs against an as-yet undetermined opponent.

-Laurence Lafrance