Midget Clippers win away from capturing OMHA title

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For the Stouffville midget A Clippers it's so far, so good in their first-to-six-point Ontario Minor Hockey Association championship series against defending champion Amherstburg Stars.

Opening the first two games of the series last weekend in Stouffville, the Clippers prevailed in each of the contests 5-2 Saturday and 3-2 Sunday.

The series is scheduled to resume this weekend in Amherstburg.

Clippers head coach Don Easter thought his club's ability to focus their attention on playing solid two-way hockey, as well as limiting damage on their power play were key.

"We recognize that (Amherstburg) are a very good team with some exceptionally skilled offensive players. Our guys have been very committed to playing at both ends of the ice. We've also remained pretty disciplined in an effort to reduce their power play opportunities. That's not easy for hockey players at any age, particularly if the opposition is playing a physical game."

In the first game, which was played at the Stouffville Arena, Curtis Crago paced the Clippers' offence with a pair of goals while James McLeod, Craig Hasler and Marco Mastrangelo added singles.

Josh Machesney, Daniel Perry, Will Brown, Connor Cadaret and Hasler chipped in with assists.

While the game appeared to be rather one-sided, the work of Clippers' netminder Kyle Pontone helped give Stouffville some much-needed breathing room.

PONTONE STRONG

In the second game, which was played at the Clippers Complex, the Clippers broke open a scoreless opening period on a goal by Machesney four minutes into the second period on an assist from Adam Kostandoff.

After the Stars responded with a goal to tie the game just five minutes later, the Clippers regained the upper hand on Machesney's second tally of the contest to take a 2-1 lead entering the third period.

But the Stars battled back in the early moments of the third period to tie the game in what the Clippers felt was a questionable goal, citing the referee had allowed the goal despite the fact the puck appeared to enter the net after he had blown the play dead.

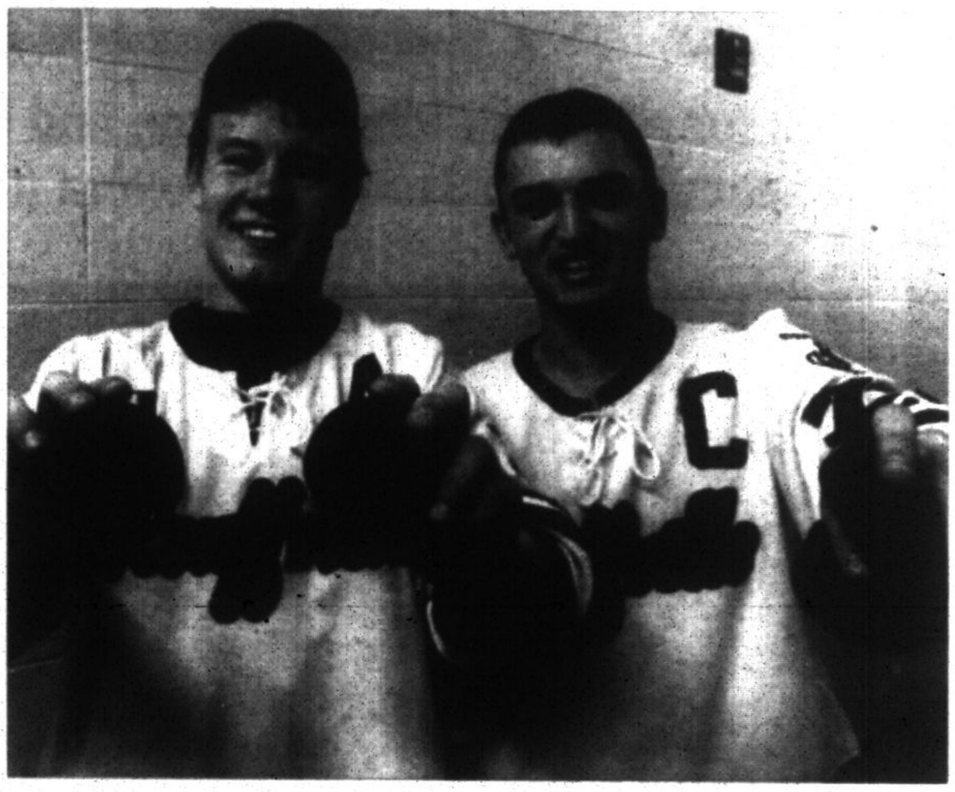
The Clippers overcame that bit of adversity when Kostandoff scored what would be the game-winning marker with 6:10 remaining in the contest.

Once again, some controversy surfaced as there appeared to have been a hand pass in the neutral zone which went undetected by the officials.

Crago, Dalton Mills and Machesney had assists in the game.

The series resumes in Amherstburg this weekend and could return to Stouffville the following weekend, if Games 5 and 6 are necessary.

Both teams have qualified for the Ontario Hockey Federation Midget A Championships to be held at the Stouffville Arena April 8 to 10, along with Credit Valley from the GTHL. Representatives from the Alliance and the Northern Ontario Hockey Association are still to be determined.



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Josh Machesney (left) and Curtis Crago had two-goal games as their Stouffville Clippers won the first two games of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association midget A championship series in Stouffville last weekend. The series shifts to Amherstburg, near Windsor, this weekend.

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