

SPORTS

Mustangs sweep series against Richmond A2 Blues

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The hometown crowd was treated to a real barnburner in Sunday's final game between the Whitehorse Midget Mustangs and Richmond A2 Blues.

The three-game exhibition series was held over the weekend at the Canada Games Centre.

To the fans' delight, the Mustangs saved the most exciting hockey contest for last. Whitehorse battled back on four separate occasions to even up the score and eventually needed a shoot-out to win 6-5.

Sunday's victory capped a perfect weekend for the Mustangs, which completed a three-game sweep of what is developing into a great rivalry between the two communities.

"It was the best game that we played," said Mustangs coach Jim Stephens. "We wanted to win the series and I wanted more than anything our guys to play well and they did. They played really well as a team."

The majority of the seats at the Canada Games Centre's Northwestel Arena were occupied for the three 20-minute periods. Spectators weren't just limited to the stands and took in Sunday's game from a number of different locations from around the facility.

Mustang players came out sporting their home white jerseys and seemed to feed off of the crowds energy in the pre-game warm-up, however Richmond carried the majority of the play in the first frame after the drop of the puck.

Richmond, which had lost its first two games in Whitehorse by a combined score of 15-3, was on a mission to redeem itself. The squad got off to a quick start, forcing Mustangs goalie Brad Gustafson to make a number of saves early and often.

"Good job Brad," one of the fans yelled out, nearing the halfway point of the period after yet another tough save from the first-year midget netminder.

Despite Gustafson's brilliant effort, Richmond was first to get on the board.

The goal was scored at 11:13 during an odd-man rush, where a Blues player attempted to make a cross ice pass over a sprawling Mustangs' defenceman.

Instead of the completing the pass, the puck ended up deflecting off the defenceman and took a funny bounce over Gustafson's shoulder and into the back of the net.

The Mustangs eventual persistence paid off and the team netted its first goal with less than five minutes remaining



Star photo by BRIELLE WILL

GOING FOR IT - Two Whitehorse Midget Mustang players go for the puck down the ice in an exhibition game against B.C.'s Richmond A2 Blues in which the Mustangs won 6-5 in a shoot-out on Sunday.

in the period.

Receiving a loud ovation, Trevor Hanna netted the puck on a scramble in front of Richmond's net. Gustafson made 12 saves in the opening period, while Blues goalie Blake Kubeska stopped eight. After 20 minutes the score was 1-1.

Hanna's goal sparked his teammates, who came out firing in the second frame. Unfortunately for the Yukon players, none of their shots resulted in a goal and the missed opportunities eventually led to Richmond retaking the lead.

Once again the players on the Mustangs showed some resilience and the team was able to tie it up less than a few minutes after Richmond's goal. The second Whitehorse goal was put in by Jaxon Glass, who had a couple of opportunities earlier in the game.

This time around Glass made no mistake and out-waited Kubeska, sending the puck into the top part of the net.

Both teams traded goals before the

end of the second period with Morris Morrison scoring Whitehorse's third goal at 8:34.

Richmond took its fourth lead of the game in the third period, before Whitehorse tied it up once again on a goal by Travis Park.

Less than six minutes after Park evened it up 4-4, the Midget Mustangs took its first lead of the contest, receiving the loudest crowd ovation of the game.

The goal was put in by Yudii Mercredi on a low shot that found the short side of the net.

The Mustangs looked like they were well on their way to victory, thanks to a spectacular goaltending display from Steven Harlow, who took over for Gustafson halfway through the second period. However, with less than one minute remaining on the clock, Richmond showed some comeback magic of its own.

With the pressure on, the Blues sent the puck into the back of the net on a

perfect cross-ice feed that was tipped in. The goal was scored with 34 seconds remaining in the game.

Glass was the first shooter for the Mustangs and once again came through for the team. He scored the goal on a hard wrist shot that deflected off the goalie's glove and into the net.

Richmond also scored on its first shootout shot.

Ryley O'Connor had the chance to win it for the Mustangs three shooters later. With the shoot-out score still 1-1, O'Connor skated down and fired a low gem of a shot that rippled the mesh, sending the crowd into hysterics.

The loud ovation would be echoed after Harlow made the final save to end the game one shooter later. Staying with the Richmond player the entire way, Harlow with one outstretched glove secured the 6-5 Mustangs win.

"These kids get pretty excited playing in Whitehorse in front of the crowd, so sometimes they get a little too excited, but these guys they did really

well," Stephens said. "That's a good sign for a team being able to come back."

Glass said he was expecting Richmond to get off to a better start in game three.

"It was definitely a rough start," he said. "They came out a lot harder than they did the other games and in the dressing room in the first intermission we were just like we have to get it together and just get it done."

He said his only strategy in the shootout was taking a good shot.

"I usually don't score on the shootouts," Glass said chuckling.

Mustangs centreman Cody Underhill admitted to being a little nervous after Richmond tied it up late in the third period.

"We are a pretty team," he said. "We knew we could pull the sweep off."

Underhill said the team was thinking about the sweep after game two and added it meant a lot to do it in Whitehorse.

Duncans win by four in bantam hockey division; final score 5-1

Balanced scoring helped Duncans to a 5-1 victory over Northwestel Sunday in the Whitehorse Minor Hockey League's

The team had four separate goal scorers in the victory.

Duncans 5, Northwestel 1

With two goals Kyle Lowes was the leading scorer on Sunday. Lowes

also contributed one assist in the win.

Lowell Tait, Daniel Bunn and Graeme Close also scored for Duncans, while Scott Peterson finished with three assists.

James McGrath was named as team MVP.

Reggie Clarke scored the lone goal for Northwestel, which was assisted by Rory Gibson.

Travis Banks was named MVP.

Yukoners finish strong at World Junior Cross Country Ski Championships; Canada places 10th

The World Junior Cross Country Ski Championships have wrapped up successfully in Praz de Lys, France with some fine performances by a pair of young Yukon siblings.

The race series concluded on Friday with four person relay races.

The men's team skied a 4x5-km course, while the women's side had a 4x3.3-km course to cover.

David Greer, following a couple of strong performances earlier in the week where he was the top Canadian in one

race and second Canadian in the other, was given the prestigious anchor leg to ski.

The Canadian team finished in 10th position overall, out of 17 teams contesting the 20-km race.

The race was dominated by the powerhouse Russian team, who finished a full minute ahead of their nearest competitors.

On the women's side, Canada also finished 10th, but in a smaller field. Janelle Greer had the lead leg for

Canada but couldn't stay up with the Norwegians who took the overall title.

Participating in high calibre races like this provides valuable experience for these young up-and-coming skiers. Competition at international levels is intense and for Canadians to do well on the world stage as seniors, they need to rack up meets with the best in the world as juniors.

Story provided by Claude Chabot, spokesman for Cross Country Yukon.