

Sports



CITIZEN PHOTO BY JAMES DOYLE

Midgets in motion

Grady Thomas of the Cariboo Cougars goes wide on Luka Kellerhals of the North Island Silvertips during a B.C. Hockey Major Midget League game last Sunday at Kin 1. The Cougars, who were 6-2 winners, are in Kamloops today and Sunday for games against the Thompson Blazers. The Cougars sit fourth in the 11-team league with a 5-2-1 record while the Blazers are 10th at 2-4-0. Since losing their first two games of the season, the Cats have gone 5-0-1 and are on a four-game winning streak. Meanwhile, the Northern Capitals midget female team is hosting the Fraser Valley Rush this weekend. The clubs played the first of a three-game series Friday night and will be on Kin 1 ice tonight at 7:15 and Sunday at 9:45 a.m.

Oil Kings rule Cats in SO

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Too much Tomas Soustal left a sour taste in the mouths of the Prince George Cougars.

The 20-year-old Edmonton Oil Kings centre scored the only goal of the shootout to give his team a 5-4 WHL victory Friday night in Edmonton. The Cougars came close when their third and final shootout participant Jared Bethune, ripped his shot off the crossbar.

Soustal also scored on a penalty shot to put the Oil Kings ahead 4-3 with 5:14 left in the third period. The Czech import stripped the puck away at the far blueline and took off on a shorthanded breakaway, forcing Kody McDonald to trip him from behind. Soustal, who started the season with the Kelowna Rockets, made the penalty shot count, faking a wrist shot on Cougar goalie Isaiah DiLaura before ripping a low shot in along the ice.

On the same power play 27 seconds later the Cougars tied it. Dennis Cholowski fired a shot on goal from the point and Brogan O'Brien buried the rebound, lifting a high shot over Oil Kings goalie Travis Child. That guaranteed a point for the Cats.

The win ended a two-game losing streak for the Cougars (3-5-2-1) who remained fourth in the B.C. Division. Edmonton (5-7-0-0) moved into second place in the Central Division.

Cougars head coach Richard Matvichuk wanted a different result but was said his players deserved high praise for the effort they gave.

"It's a tough way to lose but we have to learn to defend better," said Matvichuk.

"The goals that we're giving up it's because we're cheating on the offensive side.

"Our guys came out and battled tonight. Having the lead, losing the lead, bouncing back, there was no quit, without a doubt. The way we capitalized on chances and the way we didn't quit was a key for me and it's a positive we can grow on.

"It's a perfect learning lesson, when we show video tomorrow, how important both bluelines are. At the defensive zone pucks have to get out, and in the offensive zone the pucks have to get in."

DiLaura, a 17-year-old from Lakeville, Minn., made 23 saves in his first career WHL game as the Cougars kicked off a three-game Alberta roadtrip. Child also turned aside 23 shots through 60 minutes of regulation time and the five-minute overtime period.

DiLaura is one of three goalies on the Cougars' roster. Tavin Grant backed him up Friday, while rookie Taylor Gauthier

watched from the stands. Gauthier will be leaving the team soon to play for Team Canada in the World Under-17 Hockey Challenge Nov. 5-11 in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek and Matvichuk wants to give DiLaura some playing time.

"Isaiah came in and I thought he did a really good job, I thought he saw the ice really well and it was a hard way to lose for his first one but it's just a matter of time before he gets his first win," said Matvichuk.

Trailing by a goal heading into the second period the Cougars tied it as the result of some aggressive forechecking from the team's top scoring line. Bethune kept his feet moving and gained the puck along the end boards as he skated behind the Edmonton net and he left it for McDonald, who spotted Jackson Leppard in front of the net and swept him a backhanded pass.

Leppard took it on his backhand and swatted in his fourth of the season with 3:41 gone in the period.

The Oil Kings retook the lead about a minute later with one of the strangest goals of the season. Ethan Cap let go a backhand from the face-off circle and the puck skipped high off the leg of Cougars defenceman Jonas Harkins and fluttered in over the shoulder of DiLaura, who had two players in front of him obscuring the flight of the puck and did not move.

Aaron Boyd tied it for the Cougars at 5:48 of the second when he tracked down his own rebound and scored from a sharp angle on Child. The play started in the Cougars' end when 18-year-old Cougars defenceman Peter Kope stole the puck from his 17-year-old brother David, an Oil Kings right winger.

In the first period, Bethune completed a 2-on-1 chance for his fourth goal just 45 seconds into the game, tapping in a goal-mouth feed from McDonald. The Oil Kings responded with goals from Andrei Pavleko and Colton Kehler to grab their first lead.

Cholowski finished with a pair of assists.

The Cougars are back on the ice tonight in Red Deer to face the Rebels (6 p.m. PT, 9:43 PM The Goat), then will travel to Calgary to play the Hitmen on Sunday (3 p.m. PT). The Central-leading Rebels (6-4-0-0) doubled the Hitmen 4-2 Friday in Red Deer.

LOOSE PUCKS: Cougars assistant coach Steve O'Rourke is in Calgary this week as head coach of Team B.C. at the WHL Cup under-16 tournament. The four-team event, formerly known as the Western Branch Challenge, includes four Cougars prospects – Team B.C. forward Tyson Phare; Saskatchewan forwards Boston Maxwell and Stanley Cooley; and Manitoba defenceman Jordan MacFarlane.



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Onyx Stone (yellow) took on JTM Homes (black) on Sept. 16 during the North Cariboo Senior Soccer League open division final at NCSL fields.

Adult soccer leagues amalgamate

Ted CLARKE Citizen staff

After years of discussions about the merits of blending the city's two adult leagues, the men and women who play outdoor soccer will be booting balls as part of the same organization in 2018.

The North Cariboo Senior Soccer League and Prince George Women's Soccer Association have decided to amalgamate under one organizational umbrella.

The male members of the NCSSL voted 85 per cent in favour, while the PGWSA vote drew 87 per cent approval for the women to join forces with the men in one league.

"About a third of our membership voted – they were able to get enough information that they were able to make an informed vote on how two leagues combined together would look in the long term," said PGWSA vice-president Virginia Ashley.

"We want to look at developing our league and our membership and our officials together, there are a lot of benefits. It's a lot of work to manage a sport association."

Both leagues are hoping the amalgamation will raise the profile of adult soccer and result in more players signing up for soccer. The women will be gaining a clubhouse and parking as well as more accessibility to fields to offer more games for their players. Adding the women to the fold will

increase the league's operational budget of the men to pay fixed costs to operate their building, add more field lighting and provide for new change-rooms for the clubhouse, which has been the home of the North Cariboo league since 1998.

The two leagues, which each had about 300 players in 2017, will now share administrative costs, working out of one centralized office which would manage field bookings and referee assignments. Those duties this past season were handled by volunteers on the board of the women's league, while North Cariboo had a paid part-time administrator for that purpose.

The new league, which has yet to decide on a name, will be based at the North Cariboo clubhouse off 15th Avenue just west of the Aquatic Centre, where the city's five adult soccer fields are located. The women have been playing on the two pitches at Michelle Lamarche Field, while the men have had a choice of three fields. Just one of the men's fields is equipped with lights. The women's league has been saving its proceeds for several years to pay for a lighting project.

"With an amalgamated league we'll be sharing the clubhouse and all five fields – the women don't have a paid administrator and we do so that way it will probably be a lot less work on their part as far as volunteers," said North Cariboo league secretary Glen Thompson.

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