



Wednesday night fights: Colt King (left) of the Guelph Storm and James Ramsay of the Whalers slug it out on the ice. The Whalers slugged the visiting Storm, 8-0.

Whalers rebound in OHL playoffs, whip Storm, 8-0

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HOCKEY

Enough all ready. Twice the Plymouth Whalers had met the Guelph Storm in a first round Ontario Hockey League playoff series. And twice they had been thoroughly frustrated. The Whalers, who rose to the top of the OHL with a 17-game winning streak that stretched from the end of January to mid-March, had lost just five times since December. Losing twice in three days was inconceivable. And unacceptable.

"We had hit a hot goaltender," said Whalers' coach Pete DeBoer, referring to Guelph's Chris Madden. Madden's miracles were a no-show in the third game of the series, played Wednesday at Plymouth's Compuware Arena. Indeed, Madden was sent packing midway through the second period after giving up five goals.

His replacement, Craig Anderson, wasn't any more effective as the Whalers swarmed the goal and simply overwhelmed the Storm in posting an 8-0 victory. "This," said an obviously relieved DeBoer, "was a big-time turnaround. It's just what the doctor ordered."

"We had trouble scoring goals (in the first two games) and we got eight of them tonight. Rob Zepp had given up a few goals and tonight he got a shutout. "You couldn't have ordered a better script."

and Steve Weiss, who also connected for a hatrick.

Williams, who led the Whalers in goals with 27 during the regular season but had been shutout in the first two playoff games, had six points in this one.

The Whalers started the game slowly, almost cautiously. But they started to roll about six minutes in and the Storm couldn't keep pace. A turnover by Guelph at midice, forced by Weiss, led to the Whalers' first goal — scored by Weiss, who knocked in a rebound of a Williams' shot with 12:35 left in the first. Shaun Fisher also assisted.

With 7:05 left in the period, the Whalers made it 2-0 with a power-play goal by Williams on a play started by Damian Surma behind the net. He pushed the puck to Fisher at the point, and Fisher found Williams in the slot for the scoring shot.

With less than a minute left in the first, a Williams' takeaway and pass to Randy Fitzgerald, positioned directly next to the Guelph net, resulted in a third goal.

If the Storm still believed a comeback was possible, the opening 10 minutes of the second period convinced them otherwise.

Williams scored twice in the first 8:16, slamming in his own rebound on the first. On the second he calmly skated through the slot, waiting for Madden to commit. After the Guelph goalie obliged, Williams put his shot top shelf, making it 5-0.

After that, Madden retired to the bench, replaced by Anders-

son. Both sides got feisty, and the rest of the game was marred by a half-dozen fights and a slew of misconducts.

All the goal-scoring, however, belonged to Plymouth. Surma finished a charge to the net by Fisher and Cole Jarrett, making it 6-0 with 6:08 left in the second, and Weiss capped a 2-on-1 break with his second goal of the game with 2:16 left in the second.

Weiss' third goal came just 52 seconds into the third period, tapping in a pass from Fisher. He tallied five points in the game, with Fisher getting four assists and Kris Varnatky and Jarrett adding two apiece.

The resurgence wasn't due to any major alterations, DeBoer said. "We changed the lines around a little bit," the Whalers' coach explained. "But being down 2-0 (in games), I didn't think it was a good time to start changing things too much."

Friday's game in Guelph will be a key matchup in this series. The Whalers can't afford to fall behind 3-1 in games.

Guelph 4, Plymouth 3: Chris Madden continued his mastery over the Whalers by stopping 33 of 40 shots to push the Storm's series lead to 2-0 Monday in Guelph.

The Storm took an early lead, with Brent Kelly scoring at 2:07 of the first period (Joe Gerbe assisting). Lindsay Plunkett made it 2-0 with a goal at the 14:11 mark (Morgan McCormick, Charlie Stephens assisting).

Rob Zepp had 15 saves for Plymouth. Guelph 6, Plymouth 2: The combination of Chris Madden in goal and Eric Beaudin on the ice was too much for the Whalers in Saturday's OHL playoff opener at Compuware Arena.

The Storm upset the league's regular-season champion with Beaudin scoring a hatrick and Madden stopping 31 of 33 shots.

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