

Whalers in slump after loss

HOCKEY

A tough tie with division-leading Sault Ste. Marie Friday night still hurt the Plymouth Whalers Saturday when they hosted the Brampton Battalion at Plymouth's Compuware Arena.

The Whalers spotted Brampton a four-goal lead by the time the second period was two minutes old — far too much a deficit to overcome as the Whalers lost 5-3.

The defeat, Plymouth's second in three games after winning seven straight, left the Whalers in third place in the Ontario Hockey League's West Division, a point behind the Windsor Spitfires.

The Battalion were first in the OHL's Midwest Division with an 18-8-7 record through Sunday.

Brampton's offense was sparked by Raffi Torres, who assisted on three of his team's first three goals. Rich Kearns scored twice in the opening 1:40 of the second period to double the Battalion's lead to 4-0. Lucas Havel added two assists on those first four goals.

The Whalers did mount a comeback, with Rob McBride scoring midway through the second period and Steve Weiss narrowing the gap to 4-2 with a power-play goal with 7:07 left in the second.

But the Battalion pushed their lead back to three goals when Scott Thompson scored at 8:54 of the third. Justin Williams' goal 19 seconds later, his second point of the game, narrowed the deficit but didn't change the outcome.

Scott Dellavedova made 30 stops in goal for Brampton. Rob Zepp and Bill Ruggiero split time in goal for the Whalers, combining to make 17 saves.

The Whalers have a tough double this weekend, traveling to play a 7:30 p.m. game Friday in Sault Ste. Marie against the division-leading Greyhounds, then returning to Plymouth to take on the Owen Sound Platers at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Ambassadors rebound

After suffering a frustrating 2-1 loss to the Cleveland Barons last Friday at Cleveland's Barons Arena, the Compuware Ambassadors rebounded with a pair of lopsided wins Saturday and Sunday over the Rochester Jr. Americans at Compuware Arena.

The two wins boosted the Ambassadors back into first place in the North American Hockey League's East Division with a 23-11-2 record and 40 points, one more than the second place Soo Kewadin Casino Indians.

In all three games, NAHL all-star goalie Craig Kowalewski was superlative. He made 40 saves in the loss at Cleveland, then made 34 stops (on his 18th birthday) in the Friday night win over the Jr. Americans. He followed that up with a 37-save performance Saturday.

Six different players scored in the Ambassadors' win Friday, and in Saturday's victory there were eight different goal-scorers.

Shamrocks dump Trojans, 4-2

Any doubts that Redford Catholic Central is a threat to win the state high school hockey championship yet one more time were dispelled by Trenton.

Actually, it wasn't what Trenton did; it was what the Trojans didn't do. They didn't beat the Shamrocks.

The top-rated Shamrocks topped the No. 3-ranked Trojans, 4-2, Saturday night at Redford Ice Arena to improve to 9-1 and hand Trenton its first loss in 12 games this season.

"They were ranked third in state and were undefeated," Catholic Central coach Gordie St. John said. "Fortunately, we're ranked first."

"Which, when you look at it, doesn't mean a whole lot. The game was hyped a lot."

St. John didn't mind the hype. Just like he didn't mind the full house at Redford Ice Arena, where fans were lined up shortly after 5 p.m. to buy tickets for the 8 p.m. start time.

"The place was jammed," St. John said. "You couldn't get in it. It was a huge crowd. I'd like to have about 10 of those a year."

Catholic Central swept to a 4-0 lead with a pair of goals in the first period then two more in the second before Trenton got on the scoreboard. The Trojans scored their other goal with seven seconds left to play in the contest.

"It's always nice to beat 'em when they're ranked," said St. John, who hasn't been on the short end many times in the past few seasons. "It was nice to get away with a win."

"We play them at the barn Feb. 9."

The Shamrocks started a play in their own end to get their first goal. Dave Moss dropped a pass back to defenseman Ryan Yost and he buried the puck into the upper corner of the net. Joe Moreau also assisted on the play.

Brandon Kaleniecki made it 2-0 later in the period. He scored

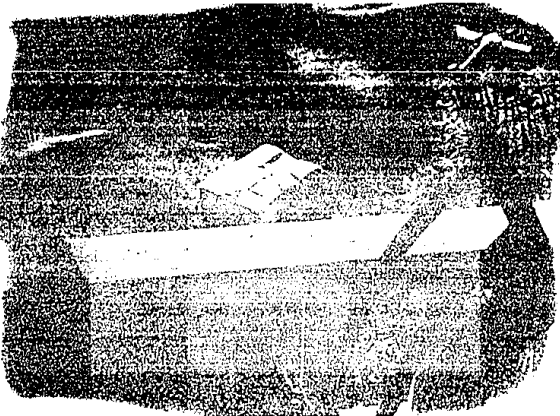
off a 2-on-1 break, taking a pass near the post from Brian Williams and converting it into a goal.

Kaleniecki notched his second goal of the game, taking a pass from Mike Ratigan behind net in the second period and just rapping it home.

Ratigan rounded out the Catholic Central scoring with an unassisted goal later in the second period. He picked off a turnover in the Trenton defensive zone, skated around in front of the net ripped in a high shot on the left side.

"It was a hard-fought game," St. John said. "Both teams skated well and both had their opportunities. We outshot them by a few shots, 32-27 or something like that."

Redford CC has a pair of games this weekend, traveling to East Kentwood on Friday night and then coming back to the Arctic Pond in Plymouth to play the AAA Ice Dogs.



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