

# CLIPPER SPORTS

## Sabres, Barons girls prepare for playoffs

By Tony Zerucha

The Springfield Sabres remarkable improvement in the 2023-24 MWHSHL season has earned them home-ice advantage in their first-round series with the JH Bruns Broncos.

Fans are encouraged to pack the house in Oakbank on Feb. 26 at 3:30 p.m. Following a Feb. 28 game in Southdale, a third game, if necessary, is slated for Oakbank on Feb. 29 at 3:30 p.m.

Coach Natasha Kostenko's club finished with a 12-10 record and a one-point advantage over the Broncos. All three regular-season matchups were one-goal affairs, with Springfield going 1-2. They beat the Broncos 2-1 in their latest matchup on Feb. 5.

Kostenko said the two clubs are very similar. Statistically, they are close, too. Both were plus-six in goal differential. While Springfield scored 19 fewer times, they also gave up 19 fewer.

"We won our last two games, which put us one point up on JH Bruns," Kostenko said. "It gives us home-ice advantage, which is awesome. That is exciting; it's been a while since we've been up there in the standings. It's been really exciting for the girls. All their hard work is paying off."

The Sabres are a strong defensive club; their 41 goals allowed were the second-fewest in the division. Kostenko credits a veteran defence, backchecking forwards and a solid goaltender in Grace Wozney. The Sabres' only netminder, Wozney, posted an 11-9 record with five shutouts, a 1.79 goals-against average, and a .917 save percentage.

They also have some scoring prowess. Leading scorer Alexis Campbell, a veteran of the AAA Dauphin and La Broquerie Habs programs, scored 10 goals and added eight assists in 22 games. Lily Hurley was

close behind with 10 goals and five helpers.

Campbell said the season started slowly, with five consecutive losses. The club kept working in practice, and the new players got accustomed to the systems and, in some cases, the game of hockey itself.

Some players had never played hockey before. Early practices were spent working on basic systems, shooting and passing. Campbell said the veterans helped their new mates with the fundamentals. Over time, that hard work paid off.

"We improved a lot," Campbell observed. "We're building as a team and are coming together really well."

"After our first win, we were so happy. Our confidence was boosted, and we kept winning. Our confidence was through the roof. When you're confident, you play better."

It was also an adjustment period for the coach. Kostenko began the season

with modest goals. She allowed time for players to adjust to her and for her to adjust to the players. Early sessions were a test of what worked and what did not.

"Ultimately, it's the girls' hard work that's led to our success this year," Kostenko said. "If they weren't dedicated and they weren't putting in the effort...I can't make them have effort. At the end of the day, it's the desire of your team. Our team definitely has the desire to win; they want to be the best they can be every game."

The seventh-place École Edward Schreyer Barons (3-17) are also in the quarterfinals as they take on second-place Murdoch Mackay. The two teams played three times this season, with Murdoch winning each time.

Serena Gorski led the team with 12 goals, four assists and 16 points. Lauren Ingeberg chipped in with five scores.



Photo by Darryl Gershman

Kera Lesuk and SCI will face off with JH Bruns.

Emily Kay was a stalwart in net. Facing an average of more than 38 shots per game, Kay posted an .899 save percentage. In her second game of the season, Kay stopped 53 shots in 50 minutes of regulation, 10 more in overtime and 14 in

a shootout to earn the Barons their first-ever point in a 2-2 tie with the Beliveau Barracudas.

Also a best-of-three series, Beausejour's only home game will be at the Sun Gro Centre on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 3:15 p.m.

## Wild move on, Barons ousted

By Tony Zerucha

The École Edward Schreyer Barons' season ended last week after losing their best-of-three quarter-final matchup against the Warren Wildcats in two games.

The Beausejour club lost the opening game 3-1 on Feb. 13. Hunter Minchin's second-period goal accounted for the Barons' offence.

In the second game, the Barons grabbed an early 2-0 lead thanks to a pair of goals from Crosby Liske. Warren poured it on from there, scoring seven of

the next eight goals to win 7-3. Vaughn Senebald scored late for the Barons.

The Powerview-Sagkeeng Wild punched their ticket to the second round with a 7-4 sweetheart of a win over the Windsor Park Royals on Feb. 14. Connor Bruyere was a force with two goals and three assists. Hunter Neepinak and Caleb Campbell had a goal and two assists each.

The Wild are rewarded with a matchup against first-place Murdoch Mackay, but they're not afraid. In their last matchup on Jan. 31 in Transcona, the Wild beat the division leaders 4-3 thanks to a

two-point effort from Syllas Courchene.

Results of the first game on Feb. 20 were unavailable at press time. Game 2 is slated for Sagkeeng on Feb. 21 at 4:30 p.m.

Receiving a bye in the first round, the Pinawa Panthers' schedule was not announced as of press time.

The Springfield Sabres play the John Taylor Pipers in the second round. Results of the Feb. 20 game in Oakbank were unavailable at press time. The second game is in Winnipeg on Feb. 21, with a third game if necessary in Oakbank on Feb. 23 at 4 p.m.



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EVENTS IN WINNIPEG  
MARKING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF FULL-SCALE WAR

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|------------------|---|---|
| <b>23</b><br>FEB |  | <p><b>"20 DAYS IN MARIUPOL"</b><br/>Oscar Nominated Film Screening</p> <p>6:30 PM   Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain</p>   |
| <b>24</b><br>FEB |  | <p><b>PRAYER &amp; MEMORIAL SERVICES</b></p> <p>11:00 am: Moleben at Saint Mary the Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral<br/>11:30 am: Procession from Moleben (prayer) to Pasakhyla (memorial) service<br/>12:30 pm: Pasakhyla at Ukrainian Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Sts. Volodymyr and Olya</p> |
| <b>25</b><br>FEB |  | <p><b>2 YEARS OF RESISTANCE</b><br/>Solidarity Rally</p> <p>2:00 PM   Canadian Museum for Human Rights</p>  |

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