

Collinsville trips Bethalto 6-3 in MVCHA playoff match

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
February 24 2016 4:41 PM



EAST ALTON – **Bethalto's hockey team** knew what they had to do to keep their best-of-three Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association Class 1A Final series alive at East Alton Ice Arena Tuesday night after having dropped a 6-3 decision to **Collinsville** the night before.

The Eagles did everything they could, even holding a lead after the first period and trailed by a goal at two points in the game, keeping the pressure on the Kahoks to try to

get the tying goal. In the end, though, a couple of bounces of the puck that went the Kahoks' way proved to be the difference in a 6-4 Collinsville win that gave them a series sweep and the league title.

“The boys executed well tonight,” said **Eagle coach Derek Kahl**. “We outshot them, I thought we played a good game tonight. We had a lot of pucks that didn't bounce our way in front of the net. It didn't work out; one thing I'm proud about with the boys is that they didn't give up; they battled to the end.

“It's a sad night for our seniors (**Kirklyn Hanson, Gage Wendle, Justin Meyer, Justin Wendle and Alec Hillard**); it's the last night they're going to put the jerseys on, but all the underclassmen are coming out next year and playing in memory of these guys and come back even stronger.”

“They came to play,” said **Kahok coach Doug Levy** of the Eagles. When asked about how the puck bounced in favor of the Kahoks, “It was close enough; it absolutely could have gone either way,” Levy said. “We're just happy the bounces went our way tonight; we were very close to a Game 3, that's for sure.”

“If a couple of pucks had bounced the other way, it would have been a whole different game and we would be back here Thursday night (for the scheduled Game 3),” Kahl said. “That's part of the game; that's why you play the game, you never know what's going to happen.”

The Eagles got on the board first, Hansen scoring off assists from Konnar Loewen and Brendan Bollini 3:21 into the game for a 1-0 Bethalto lead; the Kahoks' Cory Sperry countered a few minutes later when Scrum gave him a feed and beat Hilliard to tie the game at 1-1. Undaunted, the Eagles got the lead back, this time on the power play with Scrum off for slashing, when Loewen got a pass from Joe Watson and beat Kahok netminder Zach Stenger with 51.4 seconds left in the first to put the Eagles up 2-1 through one.

Scrum tied the game on a power play at the start of the second period, with Michael Dixon off on a cross-check, Scrum scoring just 34 seconds into the second with the assist going to Nicholas Hager, putting things even again at 2-2. Kalib Carlyle then came up huge for the Kahoks with 11:08 left in the second when he scored unassisted past Hilliard to give Collinsville their first lead of the game at 3-2.

Jacoby Robinson tied the game up again for Bethalto when he beat Stenger a bit more than two minutes after Carlyle's goal to tie it up again at 3-3. Seven seconds after that,

however, Gage Wendel was called for a trip, but the Kahoks didn't score on the ensuing power play; not long, though, Scrum and Sperry teamed up again with 5:27 left in the second to give the Kahoks the lead back at 4-3, Scrum scoring.

A series of penalties eventually gave the Kahoks a 5-on-3 advantage on Bethalto, but after one Eagle penalty expired, the Kahoks still had a man advantage, Robinson off for tripping. Collinsville cashed in on the opportunity when Hager found the range on Hilliard and scored to put Collinsville up 5-3, the first lead either team had of more than one goal.

Coming down the stretch, the Eagles had an opportunity when Sperry was called for roughing and, with 10 seconds left in the power play, Anthony Russo fired the puck past Stenger to pull the Eagles back to 5-4. With a faceoff in the Collinsville end with less than two minutes left, the decision was made to pull Hilliard for a sixth attacker. Right after the faceoff to Stenger's left, Jacob Scrum got possession and fired the length of the ice into the net for the series-clinching goal to send Collinsville's supporters – including the Kahok Krazies student cheer squad – into a frenzy.

“That was one of the better turnouts we've had,” Levy said. “They were pretty rambunctious out there; it means a lot to us. Nothing like having a strong backing behind you.”



