



Photo by James Paddle-Grant

Charline Labonté (left) looks behind herself with Hilary Knight crashing the net at the CWHL Clarkson Cup final.

Clarkson Cup brings Olympians to Markham

By James Paddle-Grant

There was lots of excitement at the Markham Community Centre as the league-leading Boston Blades took on the Montreal Stars in the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) Clarkson Cup final Saturday afternoon.

For the second straight year, the game went into overtime. Despite exceptional goaltending by Montreal's Charline Labonté, Boston, who had been in their third-straight championship appearance, overcame the Stars with a Janine Weber goal just over two minutes into overtime.

Things were looking bright for the Stars early in the game as Ann-Sophie Bettez jammed the puck in past Boston's Genevieve Lacasse off an odd bounce at the end boards only 31 seconds into the game. Assists on the goal were given to Caroline Ouellette and Emmanuelle Blais.

After a goal that Boston's head coach Digit Murphy described as "annoying,"

the Blades were hungry to tie up the match. Hilary Knight, the team's captain, had finally put the puck past Charline Labonté late in the first period on a one-timer power play goal assisted by Kacey Bellamy and Brianna Decker. Knight's goal marked the first goal allowed by Labonté in the entire Clarkson cup series, which lasted a duration of 136 minutes of action.

Despite numerous scoring chances in the second, Labonté was in a world on her own as she kept the Blades scoreless for the period, leaving a score of 1-1.

Heading into the third period, both teams were looking to catch a lead on the opposition. Five minutes into the period, Montreal's Stacie Tardif was called for a holding penalty putting the Blades on the power play.

Brianna Decker, who has had exceptional success since joining the CWHL, found the back of the net on a power play goal by walking into the slot and firing a high shot over Labonté's shoulder.

Boston's lead was short-lived as the

Stars returned with a goal of their own as a puck bounced off Montreal's Emmanuelle Blais' skate and into the back of the net. Lacasse objected to the goal, arguing that Blais had kicked the puck in, but the official ruled the contact accidental with no distinct kicking motion.

Neither team could exceed the opponent in the dying moments of the game and it was forced into overtime.

Janine Weber went from third-line player to team hero as she scored on a wrist shot in the slot, which was caused by a breakout turnover in the Stars' defensive/neutral zone. The goal was assisted to Tara Watchorn and Corinne Buie.

Blades' coach Digit Murphy said "a lot of coaches, in overtime don't put their third line out, and my kids know that I'm putting them out there and they're going to play. And hopefully that made a difference."

Murphy emphasized the importance of empowerment and belief in her team.

"Part of my shtick as a coach is about

empowerment. If I believe in them, they are going to believe in themselves and I truly believed it. But I think it helps that little extra boost knowing that the coach believes in you."

Murphy had nothing but great things to say about Brianna Decker. "She's a player that has made the biggest impact on a high level team that I have ever coached."

"She is just magic, not only because of the way she plays because she's an excellent player, but she's very self-effacing, she's very humble, and very competitive. Everyone just kind of rallies around the kid," added Murphy.

Decker was awarded the CWHL rookie of the year after scoring 16 goals and 32 points in only 12 games with the Boston Blades. Decker furthermore led the league in Clarkson Cup series points, with eight points in only three games.

Decker, who missed out on a gold medal at the 2014 Sochi winter Olympics, re-deemed herself with the Clarkson Cup win.

"Anytime you can hoist the cup or get a gold medal. That's your goal. So you've got to work your butt off to get to the championship game and grind through that game because you know it's going to be competitive and fun out there and it was good to win today."

It was evident that Digit Murphy is very confident with her team. "In this tournament, we have a really good team, and I believe that is because we are the only team in the U.S. If you look at our team from top to bottom and if we have all our players every single day, honestly there wouldn't be a contest. And that's because essentially it's all team USA players," added the coach.

Murphy further mentioned she has hopes that one day there will be more American teams in the CWHL.

"My take away is when's the next U.S. team going to come, how do we fund it, how do we get more corporate involvement in the states. I think that's what this does."

Organization helps everyone be physically active

By Charles Vilagut

For most, physical activity is something we often take for granted. For those who have a physical or mental disability, it is a dream.

"(Helms is about) accessing community sports programs in an inclusive manner," says Helms co-ordinator Toni Kirby.

The Helms program is an organization that make these otherwise unimaginable activities such as skiing, baseball, and camping, to name a few, something everyone can all enjoy together.

Beginning in 2009, the Helms programs teamed up with five organizations including Batavia Ski Hill, wanting to close the

physical barriers met handicapped people.

Year-round, Helms programs find sports and other activities for their clients to take part in. As a result, they create strong friendships and lifelong passions that these people will be able to continue to grow with and better their physical and social skills.

Since 2009, Helms has joined with a total of 12 agencies around the Quinte area and three fitness centres, including the YMCA.

Though the Helms programs are intended to create opportunities for friendship and a healthier life for those with disabilities, it has helped people without these handicaps more thoroughly under-

stand what these people have, giving them a chance to make friends, says Kirby.

"People are living a healthy lifestyle. They are understanding that being a part of their community is important and that they are important to their community."

They see that with a little attention and care, they can do the exact same things physically and mentally, sometimes even better than they would expect.

"It's definitely giving the opportunity for the instructors to work with the mentally handicapped, and it opens the eyes to the instructors and even to the ski school, to see that even these people can do it," says Bernie Loeffler, operator of the Ba-

tawa Snow School.

"It's just a matter of patience and understanding and they can get through it."

Though the Helms programs have such a great outcome on the community, both for those being helped and those helping, there has not been enough funding, though the government helps.

"It is not enough funding to be able to offer the program to as many people who want it," says Kirby.

Through government grants, partner agencies and fundraising, there still aren't enough funds for what the program would like to do.

With six years of operation under the

program's belt, Helms plans on continuing to grow and create more chances for people to fall in love with sports.

"It is helping to break down the barriers, both external barriers as well as self-imposed barriers. If you don't have self-confidence in yourself, you don't really want to go out and try something new. So we build up people's confidence so they're willing to try new experiences," says Kirby.

"It makes people understand that people with intellectual and physical disabilities have just as much capabilities of doing these sports as anyone else. It might take them a little longer to learn it, but they will learn it."

High schools compete in OFSAA event

By Bryan Eneas

The Trenton Curling Club was filled with the sounds of students shouting, "hurry hard," and the sounds of rocks clinking together on Wednesday afternoon as the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association curling championships entered the quarterfinals.

"This week, we've been curling at three different clubs participating in the OFSAA curling champions," said Andrew Power, the vice-skip from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School, from the Dufferin-Peel District School Board.

Students from across Ontario competed in Brighton, Stirling, and Trenton between March 9 and March 12.

"We were here last year, and we lost in the quarterfinals, so it's a good thing we moved past that milestone this year," said Ethan Urban, a 16-year-old student from Lockerby Composite School in Sudbury, Ont.

"I've been curling since I was about four. Our team has been curling together for about that long as well," said Urban.

Urban is part of a four-man crew



Photo by Andrzej Terence

OFSAA Curling women's quarter finals took place Wednesday at the Stirling Curling Club.

consisting of Tanner Horgan at skip, Jacob Horgan as the vice, while Patrick Huska plays second and Urban rounds out the group as the lead.

"We all met through a program called Little Rocks in Sudbury. Once we got together in elementary school, we formed a team and continued playing together in high school," said Urban on how the team came to be.

The team chemistry paid off on Wednesday afternoon's game against East Northumberland Secondary School, as Urban and his team came out victorious in the quarterfinal round.

"I feel like the game went pretty good. I think there's a few things we can improve on but that is what our next games are for," said Urban.

Lockerby goes on to face Sacred Heart Catholic High School from Newmarket in the semifinals of the OFSAA championships.

The semifinals and finals will be hosted in Brighton today at the Brighton and District Curling Club. The semifinals kicked off at 9 a.m., and the finals are slated to begin at 2 p.m.

For a video of this story, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=51817>