

Rebels dump Oil Kings

Four-goal second period seals Red Deer sweep

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Edmonton Oil Kings winger Curtis Lazar collides with Red Deer Rebels winger Colten Mayor during Game 4 Western Hockey League Western playoff action at Rexall Place on Thursday.
Photograph by: Larry Wong , The Journal

A four-goal second period outburst by the Red Deer Rebels quickly put any thoughts of a Game 5 to rest, as they swept the Edmonton Oil Kings in four games to win their best-of-seven quarter-final playoff series. The Rebels coasted to a 5-1 win in Game 4 at Rexall Place on Thursday to advance to the Eastern Conference semifinals.

After a scoreless first period, the Rebels came alive in the middle stanza and there was nothing Edmonton goalie Laurent Brossoit could do to stop the onslaught.

The Rebels broke the deadlock at the 5: 52 mark of the second period, when Mathew Dumba's slapshot from the point beat a screened Brossoit.

Then at 10:01, with Edmonton captain Mark Pysyk and Red Deer's Matthew Pufahl in the penalty box for coincidental unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, the Rebels doubled their lead when a loose puck bounced in off the right leg of Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

The goal was reviewed to determine if Nugent-Hopkins kicked in the puck, but it counted.

"I just went to the net and got a lucky bounce off my leg," Nugent-Hopkins said. "I went through the crease because I thought there was going to be a loose puck maybe pop free. I did not intend to kick the puck in."

Oil Kings head coach Derek Laxdal thought otherwise.

"I thought there was a kicking motion toward the puck, be it knee, or skate, or whatever," Laxdal said.

Thirty-five seconds after Nugent-Hopkins' goal the Rebels found themselves with a five-on-three advantage. Red Deer's power-play, which entered the night four-for-14 in the first three games of the series, clicked when Kudrna blasted a one-timer past a helpless Brossoit to give the Rebels a 3-0 lead.

Nugent-Hopkins drew an assist on Kudrna's goal and finished the series with four goals and five assists.

Just when it seemed the second period couldn't get any worse for the Oil Kings, Brett Ferguson out-waited Brossoit and scored his second goal of the series with 20 seconds left in the period, as the teams played four-on-four.

The Oil Kings ended Darcy Kuemper's shutout bid when 16-year-old Curtis Lazar scored his first career WHL goal with 5:56 left in the third period.

"I sort of have mixed emotions right now," Lazar said. "Of course, I got my first (goal), but it's one of those things that I got (the puck) and instincts took over. I threw it on net, it hit a couple bodies and went in."

Ferguson was awarded his second goal of the game in the final minute to ice the game. He was hauled down by Adrian Van de Mosselaer as he broke in on an empty net.

During the series the Oil Kings didn't get a lot of breaks, but Thursday they didn't play like a team whose season was on the line.

"We couldn't grab a bounce in the first period," Laxdal said.

"We had a couple good opportunities, a couple goalmouth scrambles, and they seemed to get all the bounces in the series," said Laxdal.

One reason for Edmonton's quick playoff exit was a lack of scoring. They went one-for-45 record with the man advantage and only scored six goals total through the series. The team's three leading scorers - Dylan Wruck, Michael St. Croix and Jordan Hickmott - combined for 93 goals in the regular season, but only two in the playoffs.

"I think the biggest difference was obviously special teams, and obviously goaltending," Laxdal said.

The series loss will sting, but Laxdal was proud of his team's effort.

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