

SPORTS

Steelheads capture third straight CIHL title

By Nolan Kelly
Smithers/Interior News

The Steelheads are CIHL champions for the third straight year after they defeated the Williams Lake Stampeders 5-2 on the road, in a do-or-die game three on Sunday afternoon.

But the win came after game two on Saturday night, that didn't go as planned.

The Stampeders put on a show of speed and skill in game two and served notice that the Steelheads path to the championship would not be easy.

The first period was evenly played. Five minutes in, the Stampeders took the lead, but the Steelheads came back with one of their own shortly after.

Up 2-1 in the second, the Stamps added two more to lead 4-1 heading into the final frame.

In the third they put the game out of reach with two quick goals in the opening minutes. Trailing 6-1, the Steelheads made a comeback. Ryan DeVries, Calvin Johnson and Darryl Young all scored five minutes apart to pull the Steelheads within two, but that was as close as they would come.

The Stampeders added two more to clinch the 8-4 victory and tie the series up



Steelheads captain Darryl Young scores his fourth goal of the game on Sunday afternoon to give the Steelheads a 5-2 lead. They went on to win the game and the CIHL championship.

Shane Innes photo

at one heading into Sunday afternoon's winner-take-all.

"We were terrible in our own end," goaltender Tyler Perreault said. "I wasn't very good. We had a push there in the third period and if I had stayed on my game we might have been able to pull something off."

They went back to their hotel room and regrouped.

"We took the night off and really tried to focus on the next game and how we were going to play," Perreault said.

A day later, the Steelheads came out with a different

game plan. They got the puck deep, forechecked hard and tried to take away space from the speedy Stamps in the neutral zone.

Early on, the plan wasn't working. The Steelheads gave up a half-dozen odd-man rushes, including three breakaways and a penalty shot.

Perreault stopped them all.

With time ticking down in the first, the Stamps drew first blood, but the Steelheads evened it up a minute later on the powerplay. Mike Wall wristed a shot on net and Adam DeVries tipped it

home while screening Stamps' goalie Justin Foote.

The chess match continued in the second. The period went scoreless until the final two minutes, when, again, the teams exchanged goals in quick succession.

Young got his first of the game on a low snap shot, streaking down the right wing.

The goal was a sign of things to come.

In the third, Young went to work.

He scored his second of the game, two minutes into the period, off his own rebound.

Down a goal, the Stamps started

to press, pinching forwards high and leaving themselves exposed on the back-end.

With five minutes left, Young got himself behind the last Williams Lake defencemen and received an outlet pass from Adam DeVries after Randall Groot did some hard work along the boards to recover the puck. He deked forehand and roofed a backhand into a yawning cage.

Young repeated the feat a minute later, scoring his fourth goal of the game to give the Steelheads an insurmountable 5-2 lead, clinching their

"All of those goals were the result of great plays by my teammates," Young said. "I was just circling and they got me the puck."

Young also singled out the play of Perreault, who held the team in it in the early going.

"Honestly, it was the best game I have ever seen him play.

"He made so many saves to give us the opportunity to go out and win the game for us.

"We went into their barn and won. They had all their big guns and I think it speaks a lot about our team and our coaching staff. We have the ability to pull together when the odds are against us."

Head coach Tom DeVries echoed Young's sentiments.

"It was fantastic," DeVries said.

"They had a great hockey team over there. We knew it was going to be a tough battle and we found a way to win."

Ryan DeVries was named playoff MVP.

The Steelheads season isn't quite finished yet.

They'll head back to Williams Lake next Tuesday to compete in the Coy Cup against two other teams from the CIHL and Fort Nelson.

The Steelheads skipped the Coy Cup last year, but won it two years ago.