St. Paul Journal

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# St. Paul Canadiens fall in home opener but remain positive

**MARIO CABRADILLA**
*Lakeland This Week*

**ST. PAUL** – The St. Paul Canadiens opened their season at the Clancy Richard Arena on Sept. 20 with a 4-1 loss to the Killam Wheat Kings, but the team's effort and energy during the game show promise for the rest of the North Eastern Alberta Jr. B Hockey League season.

Head coach Harvey Smyl said the Canadiens are still finding their rhythm, with about half the roster and most of the coaching staff new this season.

While the team's execution may have slipped at times, the work ethic was there, said Smyl.

"I think they tried, [and] I think they really cared," he said. "We're trying to put it all together, so hopefully as we progress forward, we'll continue to get better."

Smyl credited Killam's goaltender and defensive play for limiting St. Paul's chances, saying the Wheat Kings did a good job shutting down rebounds.

"Any kind of second or third chance that we were trying to get, they did a good job of blocking us out. It just wasn't our night," he said.

St. Paul native Liam Boyko, who is the captain of the Canadiens, echoed Smyl's sentiments.

According to Boyko, the Canadiens generated plenty of shots but struggled to finish around the net. He said cleaner passing, stronger communication, and quicker zone exits will be key areas of improvement.




Mario Cabradilla photo

St. Paul Canadiens Captain Liam Boyko fights for the puck during the Canadiens home opener on Sept. 20.

"I mean, we didn't play badly. We had a lot of shots," said the captain. "We've just got to put the puck in the net, pretty much."

Despite the loss, Boyko remains confident in the team's potential.

"I'm feeling amazing for the rest of the season," Boyko said. "I think it's going to be a really good year this year, and I'm looking forward to it."

Boyko and Smyl thanked all the fans who showed up during the home opener, with Boyko saying it was way busier than he thought it was going to be. "So, thanks everyone for coming out," said Boyko. "We'll get you a win."

Smyl said the crowd's support is always good as the team continues to push through the rest of the season. "We're trying to find players where they fit, who they fit with; [with the] coaches and staff trying to get accustomed to the guys," said the head coach.

"There's going to be a big learning curve for us, and we'll continue to learn through the year."

The Canadiens will be away on Sept. 26, heading to Vegreville to take on the Rangers.



Mario Cabradilla photo

Bryce Coutney of the St. Paul Canadiens, goes up against Killam Wheat Kings' Carson Olson, battling for the puck on Saturday night at the Clancy Richard Arena.




Mario Cabradilla photo

Conor Goofers of the St. Paul Canadiens is ready for the face-off during a Sept. 20 game against Killam.