

## **BHA Hawks Win State Squirts Tournament**

The Brattleboro Hawks Squirts team capped an undefeated run to the Vermont B Division title with a 6-4 win over Rutland last Monday night in Barre. It was a contest of the Raptors' speed against the Hawks' goal scoring depth. Cam Wright posted a hat trick for Brattleboro, Cody Smith scored two goals and Peter-Owen Hayward added one. Goaltending was good at both ends of the ice, though Rutland's netminder was exercised more throughout the contest.

The team went home after a 6-1 rout of the Harwood squad in the semifinal round wondering which of four potential opponents would face off against them for the title. Essex, Rutland, Harwood, and Barre's Blue team fought through the weekend including a quarterfinal and semifinal match on the same day. In the end the Hawks would face off against the only one of these teams they had never seen. A quick glance at the bracket chart upon entering the Barre BOR rink showed that the Raptors had done about the same damage to Barre-Blue (5-0) as had the Hawks (6-0). This was to be a fitting contest for a championship.

Brattleboro pressured right from the opening face-off, only to find out why no team in the tournament had so far gotten more than two goals against the Raptors – their goalie made big saves throughout the contest. Wright scored on a breakaway and Smith skipped one in from the right circle through traffic, but Rutland came right back with one of their own to end a fast, first period at 2-1.

The Raptors came prepared to key on Cam Wright, who was the most prolific goal scorer of the tournament. They were not as aware of Brattleboro's other danger men until Hayward and Smith started splitting the defense and crashing the net. Wright was stopped in the wraparound attempt but good positioning by Smith was rewarded as the rebound came right to him in front and he easily popped it in. The Raptor goalie later made a spectacular save against Wright, swatting the puck out of the air with the catcher while stretched out on the ice against the right post. The Hawks matched the display in the third period, with Hayward creating the initial opportunity and Wright chipping in his second goal while sliding past the crease on his knees. Throughout the game, the Hawks' second line of Max McLaughlin, Ryan Little, and John Curtis passed around the offensive zone at will and controlled large blocks of time. The third line, composed of first-year Squirts Caleb Paasche, Evan Perkins, and Vincent DiSilva, saw less time but was solid in their own end.

The fact is that the Hawks defensive corps of Nathaniel Todd-Long, Cooper Turner-Renaud, Braxton Lynn, and Ren Chock gave up very few quality scoring chances. The Raptors never set up in the Hawks zone and were continually frustrated by poke-checking, shot-blocking, and good passing.

Coach Chris McLaughlin presented individual awards to the team after the final buzzer. These plaques and the team championship trophy are unusual in that, coming from Barre, they are crafted out of granite. The team plaque can be seen in the trophy case at Nelson Withington Skating Rink, the latest in a long line of Brattleboro Youth Hockey accomplishments.

In other action, the Mites team had a tougher time at the State Tournament. The 7-8 year old team had to travel to Burlington for their games and their tournament ended with the big snowstorm on the 15th. After a harrowing drive involving traffic delays and road closures, half the team arrived at the rink only to discover that the other half had been delayed by a bus stalled across the road. What should have been a fifteen minute drive into Burlington took over an hour. Tournament officials refused to delay the start of the game and the Hawks took to the ice with five players – and no goaltender. Thanks to some fast skating and adrenaline, the score actually stood at 2-1 in favor of the Hawks Mites by the time the rest of the team showed up midway through the second period. The confusion of having half the team start cold resulted in a couple of goals allowed and, facing elimination, coach Elizabeth McLarney opted to

pull the goalie at the end. The Hawks lost the gamble and an empty-netter made the final score 4-2 on a very strange day.

Both Mites and Squirts still face playoff runs in the Greater Springfield (MA) League through March. The public is encouraged to come watch their final home games at 8:30 a.m. And 9:30 a.m., Saturday, March 3rd. The Nelson Withington Skating Rink closes for the season Sunday, March 4th.

*Submitted by Tim Chock*