

The Athens Messenger

Athens hockey Mites take 2 tourneys

By CHRIS KENNEDY Apr 15, 2009 0

When most folks think of March Madness, they think of hoops. However, March Madness means ice hockey for the 5-8 year olds that play for the Athens Mite hockey squad. The month of March brought the end of the hockey season for the area hockey teams. Most teams want to be peaking at this time so that they can enjoy success in the season ending tournaments that follow. For the Bobcat Mites, this success meant winning both tournaments that brought a close to a season of hard work. The 'Cats went on a seven-game winning streak that allowed them to win both their own Athens Spring Invitational as well as the 10th Annual Ice of March Tournament in Mentor.



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On the weekend of March 14th and 15th, the Bobcats hosted three Columbus area teams in the annual Spring Invitational at Ohio University's Bird Arena. The Columbus Area Hockey Association (CAHA), Columbus Chill Youth Hockey Association from Dublin (CCYHA), and Easton had teams representing their respective association in the tourney. The Athens team dominated pool play by defeating CAHA 10-4, CCYHA 2-0, and Easton 11-3.

In the first game, a stingy CAHA battled even through the first period, 3-3. However, the Bobcat defense anchored by Teagan Ries (goalie) and defensemen, Evan Adams, Finn Mitchell, Anthony Koping and A.J. Sammons tightened the screws on the CAHA offense allowing only one more goal the rest of the game. Meanwhile, the Athens offense stayed the course, scoring six more goals. The 'Cats showed a balanced attack with Chase Sammons leading the way with four goals and Storm Walburn with two goals. Nicholas Barga, Finn Mitchell, Henry Welsh and Eli Kennedy added one goal a piece.

The second game against CCYHA out of Dublin proved to be a much more defensive affair. The slick passing, disciplined CCYHA team provided a greater challenge for the Athens squad. However, the 'Cats were up to the challenge. Goalie, Teagan Ries turned away all 19 shots that she saw. The tenacious defense of Adams, Mitchell, Koping, and Kennedy gave the Dubliners fits all game long. Athens put 14 shots on the CCHYA goalie with two finding the net. Chase Sammons led the way with both goals for the 'Cats.

The third game of pool play saw the 'Cats facing a team from the Easton Chiller Rink. While the Athens started a little slow this game, the Bobcat offense eventually dominated this game scoring 11 goals in all. Easton scored two of its four early, but the 'Cats turned on the defense as well allowing only two more goals the rest of the game. Chase Sammons led the way for Athens with five goals and five assists. Eli Kennedy had five goals, while Max Cook added a goal.

This set up the match-up of CCYHA and Athens for the championship. This game proved to be a nail-biter. Athens took an early lead with a Chase Sammons goal only 26 seconds into the game. The rest of the first period was a defensive struggle with Athens only scratching out two shots on goal and CCYHA getting only four shots on goal. The Dublin squad found the scoring column early in the second period to tie the game. However, the Bobcats' Chase Sammons answered the challenge and tallied two more goals to put the score at 3-1 after two period. CCYHA would not go away quietly, as they

scored once again at the beginning of the third to make it 3-2. The rest of the period saw the Bobcats turn up the heat defensively contesting every CCYHA pass and shot. Athens goalie, Teagan Ries, was once again stellar between the pipes. She made several key saves that preserved the win and the championship in the final moments of the game.

Coming off the previous week's tourney win, Coach Steve Sammons took the Bobcat show on the road to the Cleveland suburb's on the weekend of March 20th-22nd. The 'Cats played in the white division (A minor) of the 10th Annual Ice of March Tournament in Mentor which featured teams from Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. In this tournament, the 'Cats were a little short staffed and fighting some illness, yet still able to prevail.

The first foe that the 'Cats faced were the home standing Mentor Cardinals. They dominated this game from the opening puck drop to post the 8-0 victory. Teagan Ries posted her second shut out of tournament play while Chase Sammons would dominate offensively scoring six times and posting one assist. Also scoring for the Bobcats was Storm Walburn on a rebound shot and Eli Kennedy from an Anthony Koping pass. Koping and A.J. Sammons tallied two assists a piece, while Wyatt Wood and Finn Mitchell contributed with one assist a piece.

The second opponent standing in front of the championship game came in the form of the Parma Flyers. The Flyers proved to be a more challenging opponent for the Bobcats, holding Athens to only one first period goal. However, the Bobcats turned on the offense with the help of Chase Sammons who scored four of his six goals for the game in the second. The 'Cats would go on to post another shut-out, 6-0. The defensemen trio of Anthony Koping, Evan Adams, and Finn Mitchell provided stubborn defense that allowed Ries to post her third shutout of tournament play.

The championship game saw a feisty North Olmstead team taking on the Athens squad. The beginning of the first period was a quiet affair in terms of scoring until the 'Cats broke the silence with a Chase Sammons goal at the 5:35 mark. North Olmstead answered with two quick tallies before Sammons would tie the game with a goal just before the buzzer. The game went back and forth for the first few minutes of the second. The Bobcats took a 4-3 lead with 10:34 left in the second and never looked back. With Ries at goal and the trio of defensemen (Koping, Adams, and Mitchell), the Bobcats held North Olmstead scoreless in the third. The final score was 7-4. Offensively, Chase Sammons led the way with all seven goals and took away MVP honors. Kennedy tallied an assist along the way.

The hard working Athens Mite team proved to be a challenging for all opponents the entire season long. Players such as Dominic Norris, Jackson Kohn, and Eric Ferguson contributed with hard skating and good position play all season long. All players on the Bobcat team were double figure contributors in points during the season. With continued hard work and team play, this Bobcat crew could be a force for years to come.