

Farmington Hills Hockey Association champions



Mini-Mite Tier I winners: Farmington Hills Cobras defeated the Fire Devils in overtime, 3-2, to win the Farmington Hills Hockey Association's Mini-Mite (ages 5-6) Tier I championship March 26. The members of the Cobras team are (front row, left to right) Adam Findlay, J.D. Byrne, Michael Gambino, Kyle Rea, Alec Gilhooly, Anthony Ziebarth, Armen Vartanian, (middle row) Alex Minasian, Justin Brereton, Matt Lindman, Colin Sullivan, Michael Jolagh, Daniel Hensley, Cody Allison, Shane Neal, (top row) assistant coach Kevin Rea, head coach Mike Gambino and assistant coach Mike Lindman. Not pictured are Greg Genette and assistant coach Ken Neal.



Mini-Mite Tier II champs: The Rockets won the Farmington Hills Hockey Association Mini-Mite Tier II championship, needing five overtime periods to defeat the Raptors, 2-1. Mark Capaldi's goal from Danay Prokes with 35 seconds remaining in the fifth overtime decided the marathon game. The members of the Rockets team are (front row, left to right) Mark Prokes, Jake Law, Henry Majors, Colby Johns, Eric Miller, Ryan Walker, (second row) Zac Massa, Richard Call, Brian Tulpa, Jon Pierret, Mitch Pepper, (third row) Matthew Giordano, Trevor Roberts, Noah Downs, Danny Prokes, Mark Capaldi, (back row) assistant coach Larry Massa, head coach Steve Prokes and assistant coach Ken Haag.

Whalers from page D1

Conference finals haven't altered anything. Plymouth blanked Erie 3-0 in Saturday's opening game, in Erie. And the Otters won by three goals over the Whalers Tuesday at Compuware.

Example No. 2: The power play. A team like Erie, with a 40-goal scorer (Joe Guenther), two with more than 30 (Brad Boyes, 36, and Cory Pecker, 33) and two more with more than 20 (Jason Baird, 26, and Nikita Alexeev, 24) figures to have a potent power play.

But only one goal has been scored in two games when the Otters have had the extra player — and that was by Plymouth's Tomas Kurka. Erie is 0-for-11 thus far in this series (at 1-for-9, Plymouth isn't much better).

"I thought we got some pretty good chances on our power plays," said MacQueen. "It's eventually going to come."

What's going to come in this series is anybody's guess. It's a best-of-five-games showdown now, with Game Three tonight in Erie. The Whalers host Game Four at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, with a return trip to Erie for Game Five at 7:30 p.m. Sunday.

Plymouth did what they wanted to once again Tuesday, striking early with a power-play goal from Chad Wiseman at 5:47 of the opening period. Stephen Weiss set up the play, getting the puck from Kurka and skating into position to the left of Erie goalie J.F. Perras. Weiss couldn't score, but Wiseman

buried the rebound. That lead lasted less than half-a-minute. Guenther tied it at 1-1 27 seconds later, scoring on what appeared to be a Zepp misplay. Brad Yeo assisted.

"We lost some momentum after their first goal," admitted Plymouth coach Pete DeBoer. "This is a game of momentum. When you have two quality teams like this, you don't want to get down two goals."

With 3:33 of the second period elapsed, the Otters took the lead for good. Yeo knocking home a loose puck that several Whalers failed to clear. Assists went to Guenther and Pecker.

Brad Boyes made it 3-1 at 7:01 of the second period, carrying the puck into the Whaler end on a 2-on-2 break. With Plymouth's defenders charging back to get into the play, Boyes opted to shoot instead of pass, and he beat Zepp. Baird and Carlo Colaciovic assisted.

After that, it was the Whalers scrambling to get something going, but unable to do so. They were either a step behind the Otters, or their passes were slightly off-target, or they just couldn't quite finish the play against Perras.

"You've got to give their goalie credit, he made a lot of good saves," said DeBoer. "When their goalie is the No. 1 star in the game, you know you're in for a long night."

It was a good night for the Erie goalie J.F. Perras, who knew it was a must-win situation. "We had a couple

of meetings with our guys (after Saturday's debacle) and told them if we're going to compete with these guys, we can't stand around and just watch," MacQueen said. "We've got guys in that room who are better hockey players than they showed. They took it upon themselves."

Now it's the Whalers turn to do the same.

Good start for Whalers

The first game of the OHL's Western Conference finals was expected to set a tone for the remainder of the series. If that's the case, Plymouth got the best of it, stretching its unbeaten playoff streak to nine with a 3-0 win Saturday in front of 5,531 fans at Erie's Tullio Arena.

The Whalers got a goal in each period and solid goaltending throughout from Rob Zepp, who turned away 21 shots to record the win, his first shutout of the playoffs.

Damian Surma got Plymouth started with an unassisted goal 3:07 into the game. At 3:42 of the second, defenseman Cole Jarrett powered a shot past Otter goalie

Adam Munro to make it 2-0. Chad LaRose assisted.

Jarrett's goal prompted the removal of Munro. J.F. Perras replaced him.

That didn't alter Erie's fortunes, however. The victory was all but assured (unless you're the Red Wings) when Tomas Kurka scored short-handed with 8:26 remaining to play in the game.

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