

Rainiers Make History at Vernon Tournament

Vernon, BC Canada, 15 February, 2010 – The Kent Valley Rainiers traveled to Vernon, BC over the President's Day weekend to participate in the 39th Annual Coca Cola Classic Pee Wee AAA Tournament. The Rainiers made history by becoming the first US team to take home the championship. Kent Valley has their name engraved on the championship trophy alongside past champions from Vancouver, Vernon, Calgary and Edmonton.



The Rainiers breezed through the round-robin games with an impressive display of offensive firepower and lockdown defense and goaltending. The Rainiers took first place in their pool that included Calgary, Chilliwack and Prince George. The Rainiers were matched up against the host Vernon Mustangs in the semi-final. Vernon came out trying to establish a physical presence and knock the Rainiers off their game. The Rainiers countered with their own physical play and scored early and often to coast into the championship game.

Following the semi-final game on Saturday night, the players and coaches from all teams were treated to a banquet hosted by the tournament committee. Stanley Cup champion and Vernon Minor Hockey graduate Brent Gilchrist was the guest speaker and inspired the players to raise their game to a new level for the championship game on Sunday. Parents attended the tournament dance on Saturday night and had a wonderful time. The Coca Cola Classic has earned a reputation as the finest youth hockey tournament in Western Canada and accepts applications from Western US, Alberta and British Columbia teams. The Rainiers were honored to receive an invitation and grateful for the added touches like a locker room attendant, 20-minute periods and ice cuts between each period. The players were treated special and responded with their best performances of the season.

Sunday was an anxious day as the players had to wait until 6:00 PM for the championship game against the Edmonton Renegades who were undefeated in round-robin play and dominated their semi-final match-up against Prince George. Players were introduced prior to the game before a crowd that included parents from participating teams and local Vernon residents. The Rainiers sensed that another strong performance would result in making history as the first US champion. The team came out fast and concluded a dominant first period with a 2-0 lead. The breaks between periods provided each team an opportunity to regroup. Edmonton made some adjustments and came out flying in the 2nd period. Despite their renewed pressure, the Rainiers were able to poke in another goal to take a 3-0 lead. This goal seemed to energize the Edmonton squad and they capitalized on several power play opportunities to knot the score at 3-3 going into the locker room at the end of the 2nd period.

Momentum was clearly with the Renegades and the Rainiers needed a strong 3rd period to make history. The 3rd period didn't get off to a good start as Edmonton immediately scored on a power play to take their first lead of the game. The Rainiers didn't panic and scored the equalizer several minutes later. The score remained tied until eleven minutes remained in regulation when the Rainiers capped a dominant shift with a beautiful backhand goal to take a 5-4 lead. The lead held until 2 minutes remained when Edmonton scored their 5th goal on a power play. Regulation ended with a 5-5 score and the teams were headed to overtime. The Rainiers would start the extra period short-handed and were able to kill off the penalty. The Rainiers dominated the overtime period and put pressure on the Edmonton goalie. With two minutes remaining in the first overtime period, the Rainiers fired a shot from the point that made its way through a crowd of players and found the back of the net. The bench erupted as the Rainiers reached their destiny and became the first US champion of this

prestigious event. Both teams displayed tremendous talent, teamwork, character and heart and provided the Coca Cola Classic a classic championship performance.

Following a week off, the Rainiers begin their preparation for the Pacific District Championships in San Jose, CA in mid-March. The Rainiers will be representing PNAHA against top teams from California with a berth in the USA Hockey Pee Wee Tier 1 National Championship on the line.

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