

An Ice Hockey Weekend – Harry MacGarvey

Each year Ice Sheffield hosts one of the largest Junior Ice Hockey Tournaments in the UK. Each weekend in June is devoted to a different age group. I attended the U15 tournament with my team (Milton Keynes Storm) on the 22/23 June and I was lucky enough to be invited to join the U18 team the following weekend for their tournament also.

MK had entered two U18 teams and my team was made up of the more junior players so there were no expectations that we would win any matches; we were there for experience. However, we won our first match...against the senior MK Team! However, we then lost the second match to Peterborough - our local rivals. But, we didn't let that stop us and we proceeded to win the next three matches. By this point we were lying joint second in the table with 2 other teams. We were told we only needed to draw the last game to make the final. Our final match was versus the hosts, Sheffield. We were drawing 0-0 but with 20 seconds to go Sheffield scored and our hopes of making the final were dashed. Our team had played brilliantly, fought hard and we had come so close but instead we collected our participation medals, said our thank you's and goodbyes and headed for home.

As we were about to pull onto the M1 we received a message; "Please return to the rink, there may have been a miscalculation, you may be in the final after all!" We u-turned and got back to the rink to watch Peterborough win their final match and be announced as being through to the final – their opponents still to be decided! Only half our team had made it back by this stage, some were stuck in traffic on the M1 and some were still heading South to the nearest exit to turn around. Lots of confusion at the rink but finally the magic news, we had qualified for the final as we had beaten some of the other teams on the same points as us and our goal difference was better (the actual maths is still a mystery!). We were to play Peterborough in the final, a team that had already beaten us 3-0 in the tournament.

Our team were still arriving as we were lining up to go onto the ice, many had been getting changed in their cars on the way back to the rink, not the best preparation for a final!

We could hear all our parents and the other MK team shouting for us but the match was drawn after full time which meant 5 minutes of sudden death overtime. After a very tense 5 minutes extra playing we were still tied so it went to penalties – best of 3. The coach asked for volunteers and I and several of my team mates volunteered. I was one of the three picked. One player asked to go third and our captain, who had won the toss and chosen for us to shoot first decided to go second. That meant I was taking the first penalty. I stood in front of the puck on the centre line and when the ref blew the whistle I skated towards the Peterborough goal, I went to the right and as I'd hoped the goalie moved with me so I switch left quickly and shot, the goalie got his stick to me and tripped me up but it didn't matter as the shot had gone in. 1-0 to MK..... Peterborough's first shooter was put off by our goalie, Darragh Wren (Yr 11), and missed, 1-0 to MK. Our captain was up next and scored! 2-0 to MK. The ref skated over to Darragh and told him if he saved the next goal he'd win the final for his team. No pressure! The Peterborough player shot and Darragh caught it in his glove! MK were winners! All the players leapt onto the ice to celebrate and piled on top of Darragh. It was a fantastic way to end the weekend and we were much happier the second time we started to drive home than we were the first time!