

## 2013 - 2014

### **TOURNAMENT GAME 5 (Semi Final Game): Hershey 2 - Columbus Blue Jackets 5**

Saturday February 22, 2014 @ 7:00PM - Colisee Pepsi

They say all good things must come to an end...unfortunately, that statement couldn't be more true or more understated than it is as I type this. The boys in chocolate and white would take the ice in the semifinals of the 55th edition of the Quebec Peewee hockey tournament to face a very fast and strong side, the Columbus Blue Jackets. The Bears appeared ready to go in the opening minutes as they had back to back chances from Eddie Evaldi and Adam Varga. The tide would turn around the halfway point of the first as goalie Lee Wheeler would be called upon to make a few stops on a hectic flurry in front of his cage. With 4:25 left in the first the Jackets pressure would pay off as they would capitalize on a 2 on 1 down low. Bad got worse when, just :24 seconds later, a Blue Jackets defender's shot was deflected in front of Wheeler and found the back of the net. Down 2-0, Mac Robertson, Darion Benchich and Jake Vitullo got a chance as Benchich's shot was turned away. Just before the period ended, Varga had back to back chances that were denied. The period would end Columbus 2, Hershey 0.

Columbus welcomed the new period rather rudely as they controlled the opening face off and buried the puck to make the score 3-0 just :07 seconds in. With 8:09 left in the second the Blue Jackets would once again convert a scoring chance and the score would now be 4-0. Enter Alex Aslinidis in between the pipes for the Bears. The Bears would be dejected but gave maximum effort as Evaldi would get a scoring chance from Brenden Yingling. Adam Varga had a couple chances that wouldn't find the back of the net. The Bears received a power play with 2:21 left in the first, but things would even up as the Bears would take their own penalty which cancelled their power play. During the 4 on 4 play, Columbus would turn a 2 on 1 opportunity into a 5-0 lead heading into the locker room as the period ended just moments later.

Not sure what was said in the room but the Bears came out flying as Darion Benchich scored a short side goal just 1:01 into the third. There was life on the bench and the boys fed from that goal a bit but the Blue Jackets would stand their ground. Benchich would have a possible chance on a 2 on 1 with Robertson and Eddie Evaldi hit the crossbar on a 2 on 1 with Varga after a Jonathan Wescoe chip sent them flying out of the zone. With 4:06 left in the third Benchich would score his second goal on a breakaway. The play started in the D zone as Gavin Yingling would make a good defensive play and Austin Dipofi would pick up the puck and spring Benchich with a nifty pass up the middle of the ice. The Bears would make more of a push as they rotated the Guy De Larosa, Brady Bowman and Michael Irely line followed by B. Yingling, Evaldi and Caden Freer. The defense would become way more aggressive as Avery Arnold, Hank McDonough, Zachary Baker, Mac Gadowsky, G. Yingling and Dipofi would use their body more effectively.

Unfortunately it was too little, too late and the clock ticked to 0:00 on this incredible run with a great group of kids.

No parent wants to see their child upset or in pain so the emotions were all over the place in the corridor of the Colisee. Pride, hurt, sorrow, happiness for the opportunity and sadness that it was over...you could see them all on everyone's face. Throw in the billet families who have opened their homes to keep our boys as their own for the last 12 days and it was beyond emotional. We have become friends with these people as well and everyone was making plans for future visits. This was like no experience I have ever had in my life and I think I can speak for all of the boys and parents when saying that.

A few special thank you's need to be mentioned. Thank you to the 4 Coaches Assistants...Abraham Miller, Tyler Vokes, Jon Jon Beichler and Sammy Steele for all the help they have given the boys not only taping sticks and demonstrating drills at practice but for also being friends to these boys. Thank you to John Hrabovsky and Franny Bonenberger for helping to keep these kids straight and on the right track during this process. An absolute thank you to Lori Rich for doing well, EVERYTHING! You are irreplaceable and we cannot thank you enough. And last but definitely not least, thank you Coach Matt and Coach Doug. The amount of hockey knowledge you have passed along to these boys is only surpassed by the amount of life lessons you have instilled in them. I heard someone say, "they come to Quebec as 12 year old boys, they leave Quebec as young men". That could not be more true...I have seen it first hand and we haven't even pulled out of here yet. Here's to watching our boys play some great hockey, forging new friendships of our own and having one of the greatest experiences of our lives!

GO BEARS!!!

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**Forwards:**

Jonathan Wescoe, Eddie Evaldi, Adam Varga  
Mac Robertson, Darion Benchich, Jake Vitullo  
Guy De Le Rosa, Brady Bowman, Michael Irej  
Caden Freer, Jacob Della Vecchia, Brenden Yingling

**Defense:**

Avery Arnold, Hank McDonough  
Mac Gadowsky, Zachary Baker  
Gavin Yingling, Austin Dipofi

**Goalies:**

Lee Wheeler, Alex Aslanidis, Owen Hains

**Head Coach:** Doug Yingst

**Asst. Coaches:** Matt Yingst  
Fran Bonenberger

**Practice Coaches:** Andy Bowman  
Warren Lewis

**Goalie Coach:** Scott Stuccio

**Video Coach:** John Hrabovsky

**Team Manager:** Lori Rich

**Coaches Assistants:** Jon-Jon Biechler  
Tyler Vokes  
Abe Miller  
Sammy Steele

**Bus Driver in Quebec:** Ronny Lindberg

**Game Summaries:** Steve Yingling

**TOURNAMENT GAME 4 (Quarter Final Game): Hershey 5 - Phoenix Jr. Coyotes 2**

Saturday February 22, 2014 @ 8:00AM - Colisee Pepsi

It was a bright and early wake up for players and parents as the bus departed for the Colisee at 6:30 AM for the 8:00 AM face-off with the Phoenix Jr. Coyotes. It did not take long for the boys and parents to wake up as Eddie Evaldi did some work in the corner and Zachary Baker chipped the puck to Adam Varga who would fire a shot from the slot that looked like it hit something in front and ended up going bar down giving the Bears a 1-0 lead just 1:13 into the game. The Bears would not sit back and enjoy the lead. Their pressure was relentless as Darion Benchich got loose on a 2 on 1 with Mac Robertson. The Coyote defender split the forwards so Benchich fired a wrister that was gloved by the Phoenix goalie. With only 2:35 gone in the first, the Bears would receive their first power play chance. After a 2 on 1 shorthanded chance was thwarted by the defense and goalie Alex Aslinidis, Evaldi would receive the puck from Avery Arnold and weave his way to the front and bury a nifty 5 hole power play goal that would put the Bears up 2-0 with 7 minutes left in the first. There would be some back and forth hockey and Aslinidis would be called upon to make a nice save on a Coyote short side attempt. With 3:46 left in the first Varga and Robertson found themselves on a 2 on 1. Varga would slide a nice dish to Robertson who got just enough stick on it to find the back of the net...3-0 Bears. The pressure continued as a Gavin Yingling clapper, a Brenden Yingling chance from the slot and a Guy De Larosa chance in front were all turned away by the Coyote goaltender. At the 8:56 mark of the first, the Bears would take their first penalty and the penalty killers would go to work. Benchich, Varga, Arnold and Hank McDonough would start the kill followed by Jonathan Wescoe, Jacob Dellavachia, G. Yingling and Baker. The first would end with the score 3-0 Bears.

There would be some leftover power play time for the Coyotes at the start of the second and Michael Irely would do some fantastic PK work and the Coyotes would fail to capitalize. With 10:37 left in the second the chocolate and white would be subject to some questionable officiating as a Coyote goal was allowed as it appeared the whistle had blown the play dead before the puck went in...not to mention the fact that the puck appeared to be kicked in. The game would get chippy and a little crazy at this point. The Coyotes would put themselves in a bad situation taking 3 penalties in a row giving the Bears some 5 on 3 time until the Bears themselves would take a penalty. As that penalty was taking place a Coyote player would take exception to the infraction and ended up with a 5 minute major and a game misconduct. The Bears would have a few chances on the power play as Evaldi and Varga had a couple opportunities each. With 3:00 left in the third, the Bears would take a penalty which would negate the remainder of the power play and we would go to 4 on 4 hockey. With 2:20 left, the Coyotes turned a 2 on 2 into a rebound goal and that is how the period would end, 3-2 Bears.

As calm and confident as we were after the first, things started to tighten a bit after the second. Lee Wheeler would take over in the pipes for the Bears and they

would receive another power play just :28 into the third. The boys wasted little time capitalizing as Varga would take an Evaldi pass and bury it into the Phoenix net making it 4-2 good guys. Robertson had a good chance when Benchich sauced a nice pass over the defenders stick but the offering went just wide. Bowman would follow with a chance on a 3 on 1 that was gobbled up by the keeper. With 11:21 left in the third the Bears would take a penalty and Bowman went to work with a shorthanded chance that he fired just wide. Hershey would kill the rest of the penalty and with 8:37 left Evaldi would go "Evaldi" on the Coyotes with a dangle fest that would end with a five hole goal. That one would make the score 5-2 and help the fans breathe a bit easier in section 114. Caden Freer, Dellavechia and B. Yingling would have a few chances in the next shift as would Bowman, Jake Vitullo and De Larosa after them. With 4:17 left, Evaldi received a nice pass from B. Yingling and the Coyote goalie was up to the task. The play would be tilted towards the Coyote end until the Bears took a penalty. The Phoenix coach would also pull his goalie giving them a 6 on 4. Austin Dipofi and Arnold would do a nice job not letting them into the zone and the final seconds would tick off as the Hershey Bears found themselves headed to the semifinals.

Immediately after our game the boys dressed quickly and got up to the arena level to see who they would meet tonight at 6:00 PM. The Columbus Blue Jackets would win that game in a shootout to earn the chance to take on the Bears. This should be a real battle between two unbelievable teams.

Stay tuned...

GO BEARS!!!

### **TOURNAMENT GAME 3: Hershey 3 - Laval Patriotes 2**

Thursday February 20, 2014 @ 2:15PM - Colisee Pepsi

I hope these boys don't make a habit of what happened today at the Colisee...my heart and blood pressure cannot take it! The Bears would take the ice at 2:15 against a big and skilled Laval Patriotes group. The first period saw Michael Irey, Brady Bowman and Guy De Larosa apply good pressure about two minutes in. Jake Dellavechia had a great hustle shift getting the puck out of the zone avoiding trouble. The first period would be a lot of neutral zone play and not many chances either way. With 1:27 left in the first the Patriotes would take an interference penalty. Unfortunately the Bears would not get many opportunities before the horn sounded ending the first period. 0-0

The Bears would have :33 seconds of power play time left to start the second. They would use almost every bit of it before Eddie Evaldi skated out from the corner and went across the slot for a chance that ended up in the goalie's chest. Some more back and forth play would not net any worthy chances until Evaldi copied what he did minutes earlier and the Laval keeper got his left pad on the shot from the slot. The Bears would give up the first goal of the games as a Laval forward, standing all alone in front, received a pass from behind the net and wasted little time burying it into the net. Remember a few days ago when I talked about these boys and adversity, they did it again. Wheeler would be tasked with making a few big saves before the Bears would have a puck sit on the doorstep but no one in chocolate could get there to tap it in. With 3:03 left in the second, the Bears would receive a power play and they went to work. Adam Varga got the puck to Evaldi who made a spectacular pass across the ice to a streaking Avery Arnold who slammed the biscuit home and tied the score at one a piece. The second

would end with the score 1-1 and the large Bears following would know that this third period would be a huge test against the big and fast Patriotes.

Whatever was said in the locker room resonated quickly as Jake Vitullo picked off an errant pass and went backhand five hole into the back of the cage to put the Bears up 2-1 just :27 in. Shortly after Jonathan Wescoe would beat the D who had no choice but to lasso him and take a penalty. Power play again for the Bears. The Bears struggled to get any zone time against the stingy Laval penalty kill and the tables would turn as they got a shorthanded goal off the second rebound at the 11:20 mark to tie the score 2-2. Stress levels were rising in the stands. At 10:55 Bowman turned sheer hustle into a good scoring chance and a couple minutes later the Patriotes committed another infraction and the Bears would go on the man advantage again. Just as the penalty ended Gavin Yingling made a nice defensive play and Mac Robertson chipped the turnover up the boards to Evaldi. Eddie would do the rest as he dangled his way into the zone and used his speed and elusiveness to get by the defender and proceeded to undress the goalie tucking the puck into the open net for the Bears go ahead goal. At 5:30 Wheeler mad an outstanding kick save and about a minute later he stoned a Laval forward on the doorstep. The Bears defensive corp of Mac Gadowsky, Zachary Baker, Yingling, Austin Dipofi, Arnold and Hank McDonough did a great job of forcing the Laval players wide and keeping them out of the middle in the last five minutes. An equally good job was done by the forwards of working the boards in the D zone and getting pucks deep into the offensive zone. Brenden Yingling, Varga and Evaldi had a great shift hemming the Patriotes in for a bit followed by Bowman, De Larosa and Irey. The boys were keeping it simple and getting pucks deep into the zone and making them go the full length of the ice. When they did that, the defense and hard back checking forwards were there to greet them and turn them away. Darion Benchich, Mac Robertson and Jake Vitullo worked the puck out and dumped it in as the seconds ticked off the clock. With 1:00 minute left Laval would pull their goalie and the Bears continued to get the puck out and towards the net. Unfortunately, the Bears would take two icing calls but did a great job on the ensuing face-offs and the crowd would go crazy as the final ticks came off the clock. It was a very hard fought 3-2 victory for the Bears.

Once again, the proud fathers would load the boy's bags on the bus and then wait for them to come up the steps from the locker room. When they did, the halls of the Colisee would turn into the biggest cheering section in the barn as the B-E-A-R-S chant echoed in the corridor. The boys have tomorrow off but face a good Phoenix Coyotes squad at 8:00 AM Saturday morning in the Colisee. Win that one and the Bears are dancing to the semifinals Saturday night at 6:00 PM. The final is slated for 3:30 PM Sunday and these boys have no other plans but to be showering the stands with chocolate and collecting gold on Sunday.

Welcome to Championship weekend.

Side Note: *The Hershey Jr. Bears is the only organization out of 120 teams to make it to the Championship weekend in 6 of the last 7 years.*

GO BEARS!

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### **TOURNAMENT GAME 2: Hershey 3 - Lac St. Lois Lions SUD 0**

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 @ 10:25AM - Colisee Pepsi

Back to the Colisee' today with hopes of continuing the quest to bring the gold back to where it belongs. The Bears would face a tough challenge today in the Lac

St. Louis Lions Sud squad. This team was big and could skate but once again the boys came out determined and looking for the back of the cage. The intensity and energy in the building would once again be impossible to describe. The Mac Robertson, Darion Benchich and Jake Vitullo line would start with Hank McDonough and Avery Arnold on the blue line. Alex Aslinidis would start between the pipes for the Bears. Benchich wasted no time getting a glorious scoring chance right off the draw and Aslinidis was called on to make two big saves just over a minute in. About a minute later the Lions would put pressure on the Bears with a flurry of chances that were turned away by Aslinidis and the defensive pair of Gavin Yingling and Zachary Baker. The Benchich group would get at it again as Vitullo had a nice chance that was denied by the LSL Sud Goalkeeper. At the 3:20 mark of the first the Lions took a hooking penalty followed by a tripping penalty which would give the Bears :37 seconds of 5 on 3 power play time. A Robertson chance would be denied and an Avery Arnold shot at the horn would be gobbled up by the Lions keeper to keep the score at 0-0 heading into the second.

Robertson would have another power play chance at the beginning of the second and a Hank McDonough shot would be gloved. With 10:49 left in the period, the Bears would take a tripping penalty followed by a hooking penalty to give the Lions their own mini 5 on 3 for :41 seconds...sound familiar? The Bears would flawlessly kill of the penalties and would go right on the attack as Mac Gadowsky went D to D with Zach Baker and the Lions Goalie would be up to the task. The Bears pressure would be relentless as Brenden Yingling had a nice tip off of an Arnold shot and the puck laid in the crease for a second before it was swept away by a Lions defender but not out of the zone. Brenden Yingling would pick up the puck and work it to Eddie Evaldi who slid across the slot and neatly placed the puck just inside the other post and bedlam ensued as the Bears and their large fan base erupted. That goal was a sigh of relief because the Bears had chance after chance to no avail. Guy De Larosa, Brady Bowman and Michael Irely applied more pressure after the goal and De Larosa had a good chance turned away. With 2:33 left the Lions took an undisciplined double minor and an Adam Varga chance was followed by an Arnold chance just before the horn sounded for the end of the second. The zamboni would cut the ice and the fans would take a few deep breaths because there was not much breathing going on the first two periods. 1-0 end of second.

The Bears would start the third on the power play and didn't muster much aside from another Arnold chance from the point. Hank McDonough had a great shift on D with a break up of a two on one followed by a blocked shot from the slot. With 10:30 left, Varga sped up the right boards and beat the Lion D only to be denied by the strong Lion goalie. Shortly after Gavin Yingling fed Evaldi with a great outlet pass to send him into the zone with Varga on a 2 on 1. Evaldi slid the pass to Varga but he was once again denied by the Lion goalie...I think by far the best goalie we have seen in the tournament. The Bears persistence paid off as Guy De Larosa buried a McDonough rebound to give the good guys a 2 goal lead. They say that a two goal lead is the toughest in hockey but not for this group of kids. Hard work would net them another power play and Baker would fire one just wide off the side of the net. With 1:33 left the frustration would show and the Lions would take another penalty to give the Bears a short 5 on 3. Just inside a minute left, Arnold fired a clapper off the post but Varga would grab the rebound, fire it to Evaldi who passed to Robertson for a tic tac toe power play goal that would put the game on ice and the Bears into a quarterfinal match up with the Laval Patriotes tomorrow at 2:15 in the historic Colisee.

Every day these boys get closer and closer to making history and us parents couldn't be more proud.

Go Bears!!!

### **EXHIBITION GAME 6: Hershey 4 - LA Kings 0**

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 @ 10:25AM - Complexe 3 Glaces

The Bears would take the ice at Complexe 3 Glaces for their final exhibition test before the big one tomorrow at the Colisee. The boys would face off against the California Kings and Lee Wheeler would start in the blue paint for the Bears. The boys jumped all over the Kings as they had a flurry of chances in the opening minutes. An Eddie Evaldi chance, a Jonathan Wescoe deflection off a Zachary Baker shot and an Adam Varga opportunity as he danced through the Kings D would all be denied by the Kings goalie. At the 7:55 mark, Jake Vitullo took an Evaldi rebound and shoved it in the back of the net for a 1-0 Bears lead. The ice was heavily tilted towards the Kings defensive zone. So much so that Wheeler wasn't asked to make a save till the 6:40 mark of the first. The period would come to an end with the line of Caden Freer, Jacob DellaVechia and Brenden Yingling applying pressure culminating in a good chance by Freer that was once again denied.

The second started pretty much the same as the first. Jake Vitullo, Darion Benchich and Mac Robertson spent some quality time in the black and silver's zone. Brady Bowman then took a Michael Irely chip up the boards and turned it into a 2 on 1 with Guy De Larosa. Bowman would deliver a nice saucer pass to De La Rosa's tape but the Kings goalie would once again be up to the task. The Kings frustration showed just minutes later as one of their defenders took exception to Evaldi's skating and stick handling skill by taking a slashing penalty. Enter Alex Aslinidis between the pipes. Avery Arnold had a nice back door chance from an Evaldi cross-ice pass just before Varga would slam home an Evaldi rebound to make the score 2-0 with 7:19 left in the second. At the 2:32 mark Brenden Yingling would take a pass from Avery Arnold and slide it along to Evaldi who made a nifty move in front to expand the lead to three. The second period would end 3-0 good guys.

The third period would bring more Bears dominance. If the Kings would happen to get the puck out of their zone they would be quickly denied by the strong defensive corp of Avery Arnold, Hank McDonough, Mac Gadowsky, Zachary Baker, Gavin Yingling and Austin Dipofi. I suppose Varga thought the traditional way of scoring was getting mundane as he tested out his soccer skills a few minutes into the third but the referee caught the infraction and rightfully disallowed the goal. At 12:38 the Bears would take a penalty and Bowman, Benchich, G. Yingling and Irely did a nice job killing it off until a King penalty negated the man advantage. Owen Hains entered the game at the 4:30 mark only to watch his teammates create more chances. Benchich was robbed by a glove save after receiving a nice cross slot pass from G. Yingling. The Kings received a late power play which they probably should have declined as Varga grabbed the puck in the neutral zone and used his great speed to gain the zone and bury a short handed backhand deke. The game would end 4-0 Bears.

At this point in the tournament the boy's bags are getting heavy and the smell is not all that pleasant but I will be more than happy to cart bags till Sunday afternoon. The buses loaded up and met at a fantastic hockey store...a hockey players Holy Grail. The boys shopped and the parents opened their wallets. I think some of the parents did more shopping than the boys actually. It is amazing to see how these boys have come together to form a bond they will never forget. It is a

testament to every player, parent, sibling and most definitely the Quebec team staff. 10:30 AM tomorrow, Colisee...destiny will be continued!

Go Bears!!!

### **EXHIBITION GAME 5: Hershey 3 - Halifax 3**

Monday, February 17, 2014 @ 10:10AM - Galeries de le Capitale

The Hershey Bears came off their first tournament win yesterday to face a big a strong Halifax squad at the mall. You could see right from the start that it was going to be a tight, fast and physical game. At the 13:48 mark, the Bears would go on their first power play which would not lead to any scoring chances for the chocolate and white. Just a couple of seconds after the penalty to the Mooseheads expired, Austin Dipofi made a nice play to break up a 2 on 1 coming our way with Alex Aslanidis making a nice save to turn back Halifax. With 6:51 gone in the first, a Halifax forward made his way out of the corner and buried a short side shot putting them up 1-0. The Bears turned up the intensity after that goal and Avery Arnold hit the post and with just a few ticks left in the first, Eddie Evaldi hit Adam Varga with a pass for a good scoring opportunity, but unable to find the back of the net. The first ended with the Bears down 1-0.

Just :40 seconds into the second period, the Bears took a penalty and Aslanidis made a great save to keep the Bears within one. At 10:51, Evaldi grabbed the puck in the corner and weaved his way to the front and stuffed one home... 1-1.

Sandwiched between that goal and a Mac Robertson chance was a crazy flurry in front of the net that led to an Aslanidis save followed by Hank McDonough clearing the puck from the doorstep to keep the score knotted at 1. Guy De Larosa made a nice play getting into the zone and got a shot on goal that was denied by the Moose goaltender. The Bears received a power play and had back to back chances by Jake Vitullo and Darion Benchich and capitalized on the PP when Hank McDonough banked a shot off a Moosehead defender into the net... 2-1 Bears. Not to be outdone, a Halifax forward returned the favor and bounced a centering pass off a Bears defender to tie the score back up at 2 a piece. That is how the second would end.

15 seconds into the third, goalie replacement Lee Wheeler was tested and made a fantastic left pad save. Bears forwards Brady Bowman, Jacob Dellavechia, Jonathan Wescoe and Varga did a nice job killing off a Bears penalty while the versatile Michael Irey helped out on D as well. After killing off a Bears power play the Mooseheads would get a nifty five hole goal to open up a one goal lead. It seems as though the Bears get angry when they get scored upon (a sign of a determined team). Gavin Yingling chipped the puck up the boards to his brother Brenden Yingling who worked his way into the offensive zone with a couple of players badgering him. Evaldi picked up the puck from Yingling and dangled his way to the front to roof the puck off the back post...at least that is what myself and pretty much everyone else in the rink saw except the guy that matters, the one in the stripes. No goal and play continued. A few neutral zone transitions by Baker and Gadowsky kept the Mooseheads at bay just long enough for B. Yingling to pick up the puck at the red line and head into the opposition's zone on a 2 on 2 with Caden Freer. Yingling let go a pass to Freer that hit a Halifax defender and ended up right where it needed to, the back of the net. That tally would make it 3-3 and that is how the game would end.



Because the disallowed goal was actually in, the fathers grabbed the bags and loaded the boys on the bus to head to Village Valcartier for some more tubing fun. The parents were able to partake as well if they chose to. The boys would then be able to come back to the hotel to shower and relax with their parents and siblings before heading back to the Colisee to meet their billet families. Hockey fans were able to take in a few other games back at the Colisee and believe me, the hockey is just fantastic! The boys will play another exhibition game to gear up for the big one in the Colisee on Wednesday morning.

Go Bears!!!

### **TOURNAMENT GAME 1: Hershey 5 - Slovakia 1**

Sunday, February 16, 2014 @ 11:45AM - Colisee Pepsi

It was very eloquently put by one of the parents after today's first tournament game..."you can try to explain it but you can't". The energy in that building when the Hershey Bears took the ice for the first tournament game was RIDICULOUS! Cow Bells ringing, chocolate thrown into the stands and tears falling for the sheer fact that this is the culmination of months and months of hard work and determination. The Bears took the ice to play the Slovakia K&B Stars ready to start their tournament march to the promised land. The line of Eddie Evaldi, Adam Varga and Jonathan Wescoe would be backed by Avery Arnold and Hank McDonough with goalie Lee Wheeler as the last line of defense. The first few shifts were sort of a feeling out process for both teams but the Bears had a quality chance as Evaldi deflected an Arnold offering that that Slovak goalie corralled. At the 7:25 mark of the first Gavin Yingling banged a clapper off the left post that could be heard throughout the building regardless of the noise coming from Section 114. Just a minute after that Varga tipped a McDonough shot out of mid-air that clanked off the crossbar. The Bears were rolling and getting their chances as the Jake Vitullo, Darion Benchich and Mac Robertson contingent had back to back scoring chances. A Bears penalty would put an end to their pressure, or so you would think. However, Evaldi had a great scoring chance that was turned away about a minute in to the minor. The first would end 0-0 but the Bears applied a lot of pressure and it seemed momentum was on our side.

The Bears applied more pressure at the start of the second but the Stars found themselves with a breakaway chance that Wheeler turned back with a look of ease. Just seconds later, the Bears would get their first power play chance. At the 9:15 mark, Zach Baker had a nice chance from Evaldi that was denied by the Slovak goalie. The hard work paid off at 8:04 of the second as Wescoe finished a nifty tic tac toe pass by Brenden Yingling and pandemonium ensued in the stands...chocolate everywhere! Gavin Yingling also picked up an assist on the play. The Bears would continue the pressure as Wescoe had another good chance from Varga and Benchich pitched in with an opportunity of his own. With 1:25 left in the second the Stars would tie it up on a rebound off of a 2 on 1 chance. The Bears would not be bothered as Evaldi had another good chance before the end of the stanza. The Bears would head to the locker room for a little zamboni break and some words of wisdom from the coaching staff.

Whatever was said worked and after an early scoring chance that Wheeler turned away with a sprawling save, the chocolate and white took over. Another power play chance came and at 13:21, Mac Robertson chipped the puck to Evaldi who sauced a sweet dish to Varga who found the back of the net...2-1 good guys! The Bears would not let up and following another Benchich chance, Varga buried another one assisted again by Evaldi and Brenden Yingling. The onslaught was on. One of the main reasons for the Bears dominance after the break was matching the Brady Bowman, Guy De Larosa and Michael Irej line against the Stars best line. They hemmed the Slovaks in their own end and gave them no time with the puck. A brilliant coaching move by Coach Yingst and a great effort by those shut down forwards. Just before a whistle at the 8:30 mark, Wescoe, Evaldi, Varga, Baker and Mac Gadowsky put on a crazy show of puck control skills and cycling garnering numerous opportunities only to be denied by the Stars goalie. Varga would complete the hat trick with 5:37 left on a goal assisted by Vitullo and Benchich. Baker made a fantastic outlet pass on the play leading up to the goal. Doing what he does best, Evaldi dangled his way through a couple defenders and the goalie made a great save on his backhand deke. The Bears would finish off the scoring at the 2:54 mark as Vitullo finished a Benchich pass with help from Robertson. Cade Freer had a good chance itoward the end of the game as Austin Dipofi made a nice play at the blue line to keep the puck deep. Alex Aslanidis would finish the game between the pipes and the large Hershey fan base would count down the final seconds standing and cheering loudly for their boys as they would start their tournament with a 5-1 victory.

The fathers would be tasked with carrying the bags to the bus as is tradition with a Bears win. The boys would meet their families and billet families at Mont-Tourbillion for some tubing and the Billet Family Dinner. It is an amazing things these family's do, opening their homes to our children and treating them as their own.

I think I speak for all of the parents when I tell you this is one day I will never forget!!!

GO BEARS!!!

#### **EXHIBITION GAME 4: Hershey 1 - Phoenix Firebirds 1**

Friday, February 14, 2014 @ 2:25PM - Complexe 3 Glaces

After learning the boys would be playing another exhibition game at 2:25 the bus hit the mall for a quick lunch then off to the next rink, or at least what we thought was the next rink. Yes, the parent bus went to the wrong rink. No worries as our bus driver threw the bus in the right direction. We missed most of the first period of the next game against the Phoenix Firebirds so nothing to report on the first. After talking to someone that was there, it seemed it was a very close, tight and physical game.

That trend continued in the second and the Firebirds goaltender made numerous bell ringer stops with one being a Varga breakaway and numerous one time chances on the power play. The second period ended as the first did, deadlocked at zero.

The third started with the Bears on the power play and Varga was denied by another spectacular stop by the Phoenix keeper. This one was going to be tight. The Bears kept coming and mounted a relentless attack on the Firebirds net minder to no avail. That is until Varga and Evaldi got loose on a 2 on 1 and Vargs sauced a nice dish to Eddie and he went backhand five hole to put the good guys up 1-0. The Bears penalties unfortunately caught up with them and the Firebirds scored a goal from the left circle to tie the game at one. The Bears kept the pressure up but the Firebirds goalkeeper was equal to the task and the game ended 1-1.

The boys were visibly upset post game and went back to the hotel to spend some time with their parents...who am I kidding they went in the pool and acted like they didn't even know us. That's what it is all about! Tomorrow is a day off for the boys in anticipation for Sunday's big first tournament game in the Colisee'.

GO BEARS!!!

#### **EXHIBITION GAME 3: Hershey 8 - San Jose Sharks 2**

Friday, February 14, 2014 @ 11:00AM - Rejean Lemlin Arena

The parent bus pulled out of the Palace Royal at 10:00 AM ready to watch our boys keep rolling in Quebec. Their opponent for the 11:00 AM tilt was the San Jose Sharks. With the weather issues the Sharks plane rolled in around midnight the night before and without their luggage. However, their equipment made it here and the Cali boys were game for some puck regardless. Aside from a great Varga to Wescoe chance in their first shift the the Sharks looked like they had some jump in spite of their late night. Each team traded some good opportunities but the Sharks goalie and his counterpart Alex Aslanidis were up to the challenge. That is until the Varga, Wescoe and Evaldi connection decided enough was enough. Varga grabbed the puck off the boards, made a great pass to Wescoe who made a great backhand deke that found the padding in the back of the net, 1-0 Bears! Wasting little time to even it back up, a Sharks defender took a wrister from the point that hit something and deflected into the Bears goal. The boys looked like that angered

them a bit and a sleeping bear was awoken. Michael Irej chipped a puck up the boards to a streaking Brady Bowman who proceeded into the Sharks zone with Guy DeLarosa. The D played it nicely and Brady's shot was denied by the blocker of the Sharks goaltender. Not to be outdone, Caden Freer, Jacob Dellavechia and Brenden Yingling hit the ice and had numerous scoring chances but just couldn't seem to find the twine. Not much after that shift, the Sharks jumped the zone and headed in on a 2 on 1 which was turned back nicely by Gavin Yingling. With time ticking down in the first, Adam Varga made a fabulous outlet pass to Johnny Wescoe who neatly slid a dandy pass to Evaldi for the finish with 13 seconds left. 2-1 Bears and believe it or not, the Bears almost got another as a Jake Vitullo poke slid in just after the buzzer at the end of the period.

The second period was filled with chances for the Bears as the D did a great job denying the Sharks the zone. The forwards did a fantastic job getting back as well. After the DeLarosa - Bowman and Irej line had two good chance denied, Brenden Yingling and Avery Arnold thought they would give a try and were turned back as well. The speedy Adam Varga took off on a breakaway and was also unsuccessful. Mac Robertson even went the deflection route as he redirected a Gavin Yingling shot that was swallowed up by the Sharks keeper. Austin Dipofi made a great read on a Sharks pass and moved the puck to Michael Irej who also was stopped and Brady Bowman made a nifty move out of the corner then fired it into the Sharks brick wall. The puck moved to the other end of the rink briefly and there was a crazy flurry in front of Aslanidis and Avery Arnold gave up his body to make a great save in the crease. With 3:07 left in the second, the Bears took a penalty and the penalty kill welcomed the opportunity as Irej and Wescoe found themselves on a 2 on 0 and Irej buried the Wescoe pass for a shorthanded goal. Mac Gadowsky moved the puck nicely to Wescoe as the teal and white got caught in a bad change. The second would end with the Bears up 3-1.

Lee Wheeler stepped in to the blue paint for the third and had a great view of a crazy good spin shot by Evaldi that nearly caught the Sharks goaltender off guard. The Robertson, Benchich and Vitullo line had a great chance as Benchich slide a pass to Robertson who was denied by the Sharks goalie. Shortly after the Bears took a penalty, Adam Varga took a great outlet from Hank McDonough and buried one past the sprawling Sharks goalie. The Bears then took another penalty making it a 5 on 3 for the Northern Californians. In an interesting move, the Shark coach decided to pull the goalie and make it 6 on 3. Turned out to be a costly gamble as Adam Varga fired one about 90 feet into the empty net. That made the score 5-1 and three of the Bears tallies were shorthanded. Still shorthanded, Bowman and Evaldi combined for a great chance but were denied at that moment but shortly after Evaldi made a few sweet dangles around the Sharks players with the last one being the goalie for the 4th shorthanded goal by the chocolate and white. Not to be ignored was a great snag by Wheeler on one of the few Bears breakdowns. Jacob Dellavechia found himself all alone on the doorstep off a great feed from Brenden Yingling but was denied by the keeper. Zac Baker did a nice job keeping the puck in and getting it on goal for another Bears scoring chance that was turned away again. The Sharks would again get on the board with a nice 2 on 1 of their own making the score 6-2. The Bears were not done yet as De Larosa buried an Irej pass and Owen Hains made his way between the pipes. The Sharks once again pulled their goalie and Jake Vitullo took advantage taking a Mac Robertson pass and hitting the open net. 8-2 good guys and 3-0 in exhibition games.

GO BEARS!

## **EXHIBITION GAME 2: Hershey 5 - Swiss Eastern Selects 2**

Thursday, February 13, 2014 @ 12:30PM - Galeries de le Capitale

They say good teams are at their best when adversity strikes. Today the Bears showed their resilience after digging themselves a 2-0 hole in their second exhibition game against a quick and skilled Swiss Eastern Selects squad. Just a mere two minutes after the Swiss scored on a rebound to get their lead to two goals, Eddie Evaldi gathered the puck in

the neutral zone and weaved his way toward the Swiss net. The goalie made a nice save on the Evaldi offering but Adam Varga was right there to bury the rebound and that was pretty much all the chocolate and white needed to get them going. The Bears were wheeling now. The line of Caden Freer, Jacob Dellavechia and Brenden Yingling had a great scoring chance with about 4 minutes to go in the first only to be thwarted by the Swiss goalie. The Bears hard work paid off as Mac Robertson fired a sleek wrister into the top shelf to tie the score at 2 with about 2:50 left (running clock makes it difficult to tell the exact time). Forwards Darion Benchich and Jake Vitullo combined with defensemen Zachary Baker and Mac Gadowsky to keep the puck deep. The good guys were not done in the first as the Adam Varga, Eddie Evaldi and Jonathan Wescoe line capitalized again with about 2:15 left as Evaldi shoved a rebound past the Swiss goalie assisted by both Varga and Wescoe. First period ends with the Bears up 3-2.

The red and white were not happy and came out flying in the second but the defense and goaltender Lee Wheeler were up to the task. Wheeler made a stellar glove save at 9:55 and Gavin Yingling swept a puck out of the crease that squeaked behind Wheeler while D partner Austin Dipofi stood tall in front of the net to deny the Swiss during the flurry. As before, the boys stared adversity in the face and laughed as they turned the tables on the visitors. Brady Bowman, Guy De La Rosa and Michael Irely had a great shift and Jonathan Wescoe banged the iron with a wrist shot just before grabbing the puck and feeding an open Adam Varga in the slot. Varga wasted no time depositing a one timer into the back of the net. Enter Alex Aslanidis in net in replace of Wheeler who settled in nicely after the first couple minutes of the game. The second period would end with the Bears up 4-2.

The physical play finally caught up to the Swiss when they took a checking penalty :55 seconds into the third. The Bears wasted little time making them pay. Avery Arnold patrolled the point finding Evaldi in the corner. Evaldi showed great patience taking the puck behind the net and feeding a streaking Hank McDonough who knew exactly what to do with it...5-2 Bears. The Swiss would not go away quietly and Aslanidis made two big saves before the Swiss took another penalty. The Bears power play looked good but they were unable to capitalize on this chance. The Bears also got to work on the penalty kill and were very successful in that venture not allowing much offensive zone time for the Swiss. Owen Hains finished up the game between the pipes. The game would end 5-2 and as tradition goes, the fathers carried the boy's bags out and loaded them on the bus. All the boys look like they are having the time of their lives which is what it's all about! Another update to come tomorrow.

Go Bears!

### **EXHIBITION GAME 1: Hershey 3- Quebec Cyclones 0**

Wednesday, February 12, 2014 @ 1:40PM- Galeries de le Capitale

The Hershey Quebec team started off their quest in Quebec with an exhibition game at Galeries de la Capitale against the Quebec Cyclones. Galeries de la Capitale is an ice rink, inside an amusement park, inside a mall. Wrap your head around that one!

The puck dropped at 1:40 with Hershey in their white jerseys. Each line got the jitters out with their first shift and the boys were forechecking and hemming the red and white in their zone. The good guys got on the board with 3:49 left in the first as Jake Vitullo tapped in a Hank McDonough wrister. The first would end with that being the only tally. The chocolate and white defense stood tall in front of Lee Wheeler as he turned away any Cyclone chance.

The second period started with the Bears putting pressure on the locals. The hard work paid off a couple of minutes in as Darion Benchich buried a rebound of a Mac Gadowsky shot. With the score 2-0, Alex Aslanidis replaced Wheeler in net hoping to keep the Cyclones scoreless. Within a couple minutes of the goaltending change, Brady Bowman made a great chip up the boards to himself for a two on one and made a great pass across to Michael Irej who wasted no time throwing the puck into the back of the net...3-0 Bears. There were a few anxious moments at the end of the second with two scrambles in front but the defense and goalie were up to the task.

The third period saw both teams take two penalties a piece and neither team was able to capitalize on the power play. Owen Hains finished the shutout as the game ended Bears 3 - Cyclones 0.

Stay tuned for tomorrow's update as the boys take the ice at the mall at 12:30 for another exhibition game.

GO BEARS!