

Local ball hockey players help team win National Championship

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

It's been a couple of years since the National Ball Hockey Championships took place, but a return to competition gave two local players the opportunity to compete at a high level and take home a National Championship.

Shelburne residents' Jackson Davis and Mason Burke play for the New Tecumseth U15 Extreme team and they travelled to Winnipeg for July 28 ? 31 to compete for a national title in the Canadian Ball Hockey Association 2022 Junior National Championships.

The Championship featured teams from across the country. The Extreme arrived with three full lines of players, two goalies, and coaches.

The team qualified a couple of years ago, but the Championship was cancelled and some players left the team. Players had to try out for the new squad.

?We played four round-robin games, then a semi-final and a final,? explained Jackson. ?It was awesome to play there. The games were really quick, it was really fast. There wasn't any weaknesses on any team ? it was a lot of hard battles ? it was really fun.?

The Extreme won the championship with a 3-2 overtime victory over the British Columbia Wolverines, scoring 48 seconds into the overtime period.

Jackson scored two of the goals in the final game.

?We were losing 2-0 at one point, but then we got a power play in the second period and I scored on the power play to make it 2-1. There was about a minute and a-half left and we pulled the goalie, and fortunately I scored again.?

Mason Burke is a long-time ball hockey player who went to the New Tecumseth League during the pandemic when other leagues stopped playing.

Mason had to try out for the team when they put out a call for players and he played defence.

?It was so cool coming from a small town like Shelburne and flying across the country to play ball hockey,? Mason said of the experience he enjoyed with his team. ?The games were very intense but it was a lot of fun playing against teams from different provinces. We played against Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and two teams from B.C. The final game was really stressful. We went down 2-0 quickly and we didn't come back until the third period. It was 2-1 at the beginning of the third. The overtime period ? I was about as nervous as I've ever been. The overtime period was four-on-four for ten minutes. We had to get our nerves back and keep doing what we were doing for the whole tournament.?

New Tec Extreme National Team head coach, Aaron Walmsley, praised his players for the effort they showed during the tournament.

?Jackson was a clutch goal scorer for us,? Aaron said. ?He found the back of the net in almost every game, including twice in the gold medal game. His second goal of the final game came with our goalie pulled and one minute left in regulation. Mason was a critical player on our team, playing big minutes on defence, including running the first powerplay unit. He was a quiet leader for our group. Both Shelburne boys have been great additions to our New Tec Program.?

Aaron said his team showed a lot of determination during the tournament.

?After losing our first round robin game we made a few adjustments and our team continued to get stronger and stronger with each game ? we never lost again ? momentum and belief kept building. The group showed incredible resiliency, never more evident than in the gold medal game, coming back from a two-goal deficit and winning in OT. This was a group of players who cared more about team success than individual success. They battled with the best players from many provinces and proved successful. I couldn't be prouder of a group than I am of this team.?

The New Tec League sent four teams to the National Championship and they all did well.

Along with the U15 champions, the Leagues U19 team also won the national championship.