



Hopkinton Jr. Hillers Hockey

Hopkinton Jr. Hillers are Champions !

Defeat Middleboro Chiefs 3-2 in Nail-Biter for Title

April 14, 2006

Bridgewater – The **Hopkinton Jr. Hillers**, a team of 6th to 8th graders from Hopkinton, are the 2005-2006 **Champions** of their tier in the South East Mass Hockey (SEMHO) Jr. High league. The Jr. Hillers defeated a tough Middleboro Chiefs (12-8-2) team 3-2 on tonight to win the title and finish the season at 14-6-0. The Jr. Hillers needed to come from behind to win their 13th game out of their last 15. To earn the crown, they also had to beat an adversary that prevailed both times (6-4 & 5-2) in the only two previous meetings between the teams this season. Middleboro was also the defending 2004-2005 Champion.



The Bridgewater Ice Arena was packed with Hopkinton fans, as at least 60 to 75 traveled to Bridgewater to attend this classic Championship Game. Hopkinton High School Varsity Hockey Head Coach Paul Hogan was on hand to show his support for the team and Hopkinton's Jr. High program. The Hopkinton faithful were treated to the most exciting game in this young team's 2 year history.

Head Coach Leo Squatrito had the Jr. Hillers prepared for the game. But the Middleboro Head Coach may have to be awarded a big assist. As the Jr. Hillers waited at Center Ice for the drop of the puck and the opening face off, the Middleboro players headed towards center ice, then reversed, and skated back towards their bench. The Middleboro Coaches then took out cameras and started clicking while the Jr. Hillers watched in amazement. A strategic ploy intended to disrupt the Jr. Hillers psyche? Instead of calling to the referees for a

delay of game penalty, Coach Squatrito called his team back to the Hiller bench, pointed to the Middleboro players, and told his team that Middleboro had elected to take their "Championship Pictures" before the game - a shrewd move by Squatrito. The motivated Jr. Hillers returned to center ice with a new fire burning hot red in their eyes.

The Jr. Hillers completely dominated the 1st period with speed, hard hitting, and pure adrenaline. The Middleboro goalie faced a barrage of shots from all directions, but the Jr. Hillers could not capitalize and the 18 minute period ended knotted at 0-0. Middleboro showed its muscle at the start of the 2nd period and both of the teams each had scoring opportunities.

But Middleboro was the first to capitalize, scoring on a breakaway with 8:21 remaining. This setback snapped the Jr. Hillers into action. Two minutes later at 6:04, Matt Manzella scored on a rebound in front of the net and tied the game 1-1. Andrew Preite and Eric Guilmette assisted. Joe Fujiyoshi gave the Jr. Hillers the lead they would not surrender at 1:07 when he scored an impressive unassisted "wrap around" goal that had the crowd on its feet cheering. The Jr. Hillers had the lead 2-1 after two periods.



5 Matt Manzella

The Jr. Hillers continued to dominate at the start of the third period and with just over a minute of play gone, Matt Manzella put the Jr. Hillers on top 3-1 at 16:48 with a breakaway off a center ice face off. Andrew Preite was there again to assist. However, Middleboro would not go quietly into the night and resurged during the last 8 minutes. Jr. Hiller Goalie Connor Burdick was peppered with repeated shots and made spectacular save after save. Middleboro had the momentum and finally found the back of the net with 3:00 remaining to make the final minutes a cardiac delight. With a Middleboro 6th skater and empty net, the end game was played entirely in the Jr. Hillers zone. The Jr. Hillers had their backs to the wall, and their resilience tested. Yet Goalie Connor Burdick and the Jr. Hillers held on and prevailed, and the buzzer sounded with the Jr. Hillers on top 3-2. This was truly a classic contest for the record books - a total team effort by each and every player. The drive home didn't seem so long as the Hopkinton Jr. Hillers returned with their first league title.

The team was made up of 8th graders Mitch Corsi, Jack Daly, Brandt Davies, Slater DeMont, Will Juffras, Bill Poillucci, J.P. Sriberg; 7th graders Connor Burdick, Colleen Finnerty, Joe Fujiyoshi, Eric Lindquist, Matt Manzella, Alex Peterson, Andrew Preite, Alex Puig, David Ramsey, J.T. Riga, Andrew Surman, and 6th graders Sean Carnes, Mike Decina, Teddy Doherty, Eric Guilmette, and Alec Strain. Head Coach Leo Squatrito was assisted by Ed Doherty and Ned Surman. This was the final Jr. High School game for the veteran 8th graders, as next year Corsi, Daly, DeMont, Poillucci, and Sriberg head to Hopkinton High School, while Davies and Juffras will attend St. John's High School in Shrewsbury.