

BANTAM AA BLUES SEEK SMALL SUCCESSES



TORONTO BLUES / The Bantam AA Blues continue to work despite a tough first half of the season.

BY / MARC PAULICHENKO

In just 21 regular season games, the Toronto City Blues Bantam AA team has allowed 177 goals against.

Head coach Allan Donnan wishes the explanation could be simpler.

"Goals against tell a very small story," exclaims Donnan, whose team is 1-20-0. "I have never understood the mentality of someone that looks at goals against and concludes that the goaltending is bad. My goalies are averaging 50-plus shots a game and I would stack them against any tandem in this league. Our highest shots against was 70-plus, so I have only praise for the job that both of my goalies have done."

Donnan admits his team needs to improve in all as-

pects of the game if they want to succeed.

"On every goal there was a mistake made by the forwards then one by the defence and then even the goalies are not perfect. Hockey is a game of mistakes and right now we make more than the other teams. The responsibility for implementing strategies for correcting those mistakes lies with the head coach and not the kids."

The team has been built from scratch, including 13 player changes since last season. The way the team finished last year made it tough to get kids and parents to give the team a chance to rebuild.

And it's tough to keep the kids and parents positive, too, said Donnan, but despite all their losses they celebrate small successes such as the

first goal of the game or a better score than last game.

"As a coach, my job was to turn this team in the right direction and so far that has not happened. I believe we have the kids and the season is not over."

The first two games of the season looked promising for the Blues with two ties in one of two early bird tournaments they participated in. Donnan is hoping his team can get permission to take the team to a far off destination next Christmas.

"At this age, winning is important socially for the kids. You can focus too much on winning and not enough on developing better players and people on and off the ice. We are at the beginning of what I hope is a long and overall successful journey."

BLUES PERSISTENTLY POSITIVE

BY / MARC PAULICHENKO

Winning is always one of the primary objectives for the Toronto City Blues Midget AA team; however, success is not always displayed on the scoreboard.

"The boys have lost games where they've played their best and walked out of the dressing room with their heads held high," said Kenneth MacDonald, Blues head coach.

This season, the Blues are 13-5-3 after 21 games – possibly a cozy spot just as playoff fever begins to loom.

The goal this year for the Blues is to be near the top three positions – not bad considering it's a first year Midget team. At press time, the Blues sat in fourth place despite being short of players due to injuries.

According to MacDonald, the bond between the Blues players this year is strong, which has sparked chemistry amongst them. They get along well and work off each others' strengths. They never give up, even when they are losing. They are well disciplined and take direction well

from the coaching staff.

"It's always exciting when you come into a third period short a few goals and end up winning the game. We recently did this in a game where we were plagued by penalties and short of players. Nothing is more satisfying than seeing the boys remaining focused to win, and giving 110 per cent to win the game."

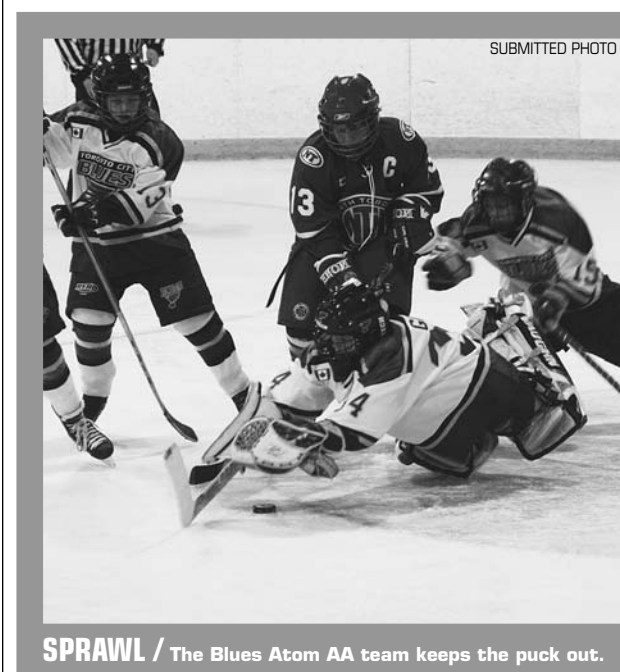
Blues team captain Derek Pigeon has been outstanding this season for his team, including one four goal-game contribution, which included the game winner.

His efforts have inspired the players to come together and work as a team to succeed, noted MacDonald.

The Blues have already played in three tournaments, reaching the semi-final in one, winning the consolation championship in Ann Arbour and playing well in the Silver Stick.

"We ended the tournaments on a winning note knowing that we can keep pace with the top second-year midget teams," said MacDonald.

The Blues will be in the Toronto City Blues Tournament, starting Feb. 1.



SPRAWL / The Blues Atom AA team keeps the puck out.

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