

ATOM BLUES PREPARE FOR PLAYOFF RUN

BY / MARC PAULICHENKO

Last year, the now Atom AA Toronto City Blues goal was to make the playoffs. After finishing sixth in the standings, they played the first place team in the opening round in a best three-of-five.

After winning the first two games of the series, the wins – though expected – caught the Blues off guard. As well, that woke their opponents up and eventually they rumbled back to advance.

Now with the playoff experience, the Blues have a belief they can win this year. Already, the players are talking in the dressing room about how they're going to get past the first round.

"It was all about, 'we're playing the first place team and we're going to lose.' And when we won the first two games there was this, 'gee, maybe we'll win.' Then, because we didn't win... there's almost this belief that we should have won," said Mike Manjuris, Blues head coach.

"This year, we beat a couple of the top teams. It's almost like we're going to do it. There's a whole different confidence level this year."

The goal this season for the Blues (12-12-3) is to surpass

sixth place – where they currently stand – and move into the top five. The opportunity is five points away.

"I can't say we're doing great, but we're just above .500. The middle of the pack," said Manjuris.

"The goal at the beginning of the season was to make the top five and right now...we're sixth. We're not far. Our number one goal is playoffs, but more than that, we want to be in the top five."

A hockey tournament in Ottawa this season really created the team bond. Though the Blues lost in the semi-final with 1.3 seconds remaining, it allowed one door to close on their crushed little hearts and another to quickly opened.

Said Manjuris: "Almost by luck, we ended up staying in a hotel in Ottawa, not too far from the [Ottawa Senators'] rink, which is not too far from the hotel. [The Boston Bruins] were playing the Sens that night. Kind of a way they got over the disappointment fairly quickly was, after our game, we ended up going back to our hotel and we ended up seeing all these Bruins.

"For the kids, too, that was the biggest thrill. Tournaments are good. Tournaments are great way to develop the team bonding issue and tournaments go beyond the game time."



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“THERE'S A
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CONFIDENCE LEVEL
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/ MIKE MANJURIS, Head Coach
Atom AA Toronto City Blues

BREAKAWAY A Toronto Blues Atom player rushes the puck in one-on-one against a North Toronto goaltender.

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