

Amherst Mite Minor 'AAA' hosts Quebec's Gatineau Chevaliers, wins games

Amherst's Mite Minor "AAA" travel hockey team hosted the Chevaliers Novice "A" team in an extraordinary weekend of international friendship and hockey.

The Chevaliers traveled five hours by car from Gatineau, Quebec, for the opportunity to compete against Amherst and meet Gatineau's hockey prodigy, Buffalo Sabres co-captain Daniel Briere.

Amherst 6, Gatineau 3

On Friday, Amherst and Gatineau had the honor of playing at HSBC arena.

The Chevaliers, comprising players born in 1997, 1998 and 1999, took an early lead with a breakaway goal 1:30 in.

Amherst had several scoring chances in the period, including a post-dinger by Adam Batz and a high shot by Nate Berke that dinged the helmet of Gatineau goalie Maxime Lacasso. With only 34.4 seconds remaining in the first period, Nate Berke lifted a shot over Lacasso's right side to tie the game at 1-1.

Gatineau's Lacasso made several great saves throughout the period, including shots by Colton McKenna and Camden Lock. Halfway

through the second period, Berke won the faceoff and sent the puck to Lock, who scored on a quick shot. With 1:48 remaining, Carson Briere scored on a wraparound shot that stuck just inside the post to give Amherst a 3-1 lead.

The Chevaliers' Alexis Filiou scored on a wide shot to the front of the net to earn Gatineau's second goal of the game. Amherst's Blake Flanders claimed the puck at the next faceoff and took a shot on net that fell just short of the goal line; however, linemate Briere was positioned to earn the rebound goal.

Gatineau's Owen Frenette assisted on a goal by Jonathan Viau that bounced over the pads of Amherst goalie Caleb Hannon. Hannon was sharp in net throughout the game as he used stick and glove to hold off Gatineau's sharpshooters.

Batz caught a pass from defenseman Mark Gilbert and maneuvered around the Gatineau defenders to earn a short-handed goal from the stick side. With only 24.9 seconds remaining, McKenna earned another short-handed goal for Amherst. McKenna picked up the rebound of Jordan Martin and lifted a backhand shot over

the goalie's shoulder to give Amherst a 6-3 victory.

Following the game, Amherst hosted a reception for the Gatineau players and their families. During the reception, the Chevaliers presented Amherst with a plaque in appreciation for the Mite Minor "AAA" team's efforts in making the trip a reality.

In a heartwarming moment, Gatineau Coach Bob Frenette, a long-time friend and former Pee Wee coach of Daniel Briere, presented him with a plaque in appreciation of his efforts to bring the team to Buffalo and for always keeping his Gatineau roots close to his heart.

Amherst 3, Gatineau 1

On Saturday morning, Amherst fans packed the Amherst Pepsi Center to witness the battle between the Chevaliers and the talented Mite Minor "AAA" team. The teams drew cheers in two languages.

Halfway through the first period, Amherst's Blake Flanders capitalized on a sharp pass from Carson Briere and earned the first goal of the game on a low shot on the far side of the Gatineau net. One minute later, the duo was at

it again as Flanders made a nice pass to Briere, who stickhandled through traffic to score and give Amherst a 2-0 lead.

Amherst's defensive pairings of Devin Kasperek-Mark Gilbert, Matt Slick-Jordan Martin, and Ryan Sidorski-Patrick Mangan showcased their talents and were extremely effective in minimizing Gatineau's scoring opportunities.

Early in the second period, Gatineau's Maxime Lacasse made a nice glove save on an attack by the line of Jack Kelly, Frankie Sciolino and Joey Marchese. Undeterred, the relentless Kelly skated through traffic to take a wrist shot from the high slot to earn Amherst's third tally. Lacasse's strong goaltending continued as he stonewalled a shot by Nate Berke and made another glove save on a shot by Devin Kasperek.

Amherst goalie Caleb Hannon played well throughout the game but was denied a shutout after Gatineau's Jacob Darcy ripped a high shot over Hannon's left side midway through the third period. Amherst claimed a 3-1 victory as a result of overall exceptional team play.

Kreuz, Kiefer lead Rangers to 6-1 victory

Michael Kreuz and Cameron Kiefer scored two goals each to lead the Mite Rangers to a stirring 6-1 victory over the Bruins on Sunday. Matt Cohen and Jonathan Phillips also scored for the Rangers, but this was by far the team's most complete game of the young season.

Ranger defensemen Ryan Arrastia, Drew Elliott, Kreuz, Alex Streng, Patrick Greeley, Jake Kantor and Mark Venditti were all rock solid, keeping the puck in the Bruins' zone all game long and battling back down ice on those rare occasions when the disc escaped.

As they did last week, the Rangers broke open a tight game with an explosion of goals to win convincingly.

Both teams played a very close checking, defensive style through a scoreless first period, but two minutes into the second period, Greeley slid the puck up ice to a racing Kiefer, who fought off a defenseman and buried the puck to get the Rangers on the scoreboard.

A minute later, feisty center Chris Dirienzo fed the puck to Cohen in the Rangers' defensive zone, and Cohen maneuvered through traffic before sliding the puck behind Bruins' goal-

tender Matthew Drewery to make the score 2-0.

Later on that same shift, Cohen picked up a loose puck in his own zone and again went coast to coast through a sea of black and gold, but this time he was denied by a fabulous save by Drewery. But, as he has been all season long, Phillips was in the right spot and banged in the rebound to give the Rangers a 3-0 lead.

With 25 seconds left in the period, Jason Koginos won a faceoff to the left of the Bruins' net and got the

puck cleanly back to Kreuz at the blue line. Kreuz danced into the slot and let go a wicked wrist shot that took flight and caught twine, giving the blue shirts a 4-0 lead.

Joey DeMarco got the Bruins on the score sheet with just 5.6 seconds left in the second period, but Kreuz took a pass from William Mann early in the third period, avoided traffic in the slot and buried the puck for his second goal of the game to extend the Ranger lead to 5-1.

Kiefer then stole the puck at the

Bruins' blue line with seven minutes left in the game and scored his second of the contest to close out the scoring.

For the Rangers, the game featured crisp passing, dogged determination and a commitment to team unmatched thus far this year.

Kreuz, Kiefer, Dirienzo, Patrick Rosen and Austin Stanley were particularly energetic, and goaltender Brennan Hurley was stellar in goal as the team won its fifth game of the year to remain unbeaten.

Black Sabres fly by Stars

The Mite Black Sabres had a great day with a hard fought 6-2 win on Sunday over the Stars.

Six players scored goals. The first goal didn't come until four minutes before the end of the first period by Joey Lupica from Noah Bachwitz. With six seconds to go, the Stars' Michael Callesto knocked in a goal from Connor Bender on the third attempt after two great saves by Dan Mosher in net.

The second period saw lots of tussling over the puck. Game play flew up and down the rink but the first goal of the period wasn't scored until only 2:39 remained on the clock by Jacob Ostrowski, who brought the puck down the length of the ice. Four seconds later, Aaron Bengart knocked the puck in to put the Black Sabres ahead 3-1.

The final four goals were scored in the last half of the third period. Nick Pieri started the scoring with 3:45 to go, closely followed by Noah Bachwitz's first goal of the season 24 seconds later. Joseph Tomczak scored a great goal for the Stars at the 2:02 mark.

With only a minute and a half to go, Elliot Whittaker was able to knock the puck in on a second attempt after he, Matthew Shiring and Charles Rottner, all battled with the Stars defense in front of their net.

All members of the team played a great game. Mosher led the team with a flawless effort in net, throwing himself onto the puck countless times.

The game puck went to Bachwitz who played smart hockey and continually battled to drive the puck back towards the Stars net.

For the Stars, Bender and Bryce Baker had breakaway shots that just failed to score. Goalkeeper Turner Dirrigl did well to withstand the Black Sabres' onslaught.

Christmas comes early for novice program

Christmas came early for the Amherst Youth Hockey Novice 1 Program.

On Saturday, ten skaters represented Novice 1 by skating after the first period of the NHL's Buffalo Sabres-Ottawa Senators game. Each skater individually met former Sabre Rob Ray, who made a visit to the dressing room prior to the skate.

On Sunday, the Novice program played the first of three scheduled holiday games at the Pepsi Center. The action was fast and furious.

The Novice 1 skaters consist of Joe Amici, Mike Anders, Connor and Daniel Baetzhold, Anthony Bellacose, Luke Bihary, John Bordonaro, Nicholas Bruno, Michael Bunce, Jack Daley, Matt Dellaneve, Mike Durawa, Andrew Ferenczy, Antonio Ferreira, Tyler Fix, Mitch Floccare, Ethan Goss, Aidan Greene, Gavin Hamilton, Leonard Higgins, Aidan Hillery, Daniele and Michael Irish-Ryan,

Daniel Ivanov, Bryce Kneer, Evan Kumpf, Gunnar Lach, Julianna Lillis, Brandon Lukomski, Kyle Macleay, Matthew Maouad, Sean Marreu, Francisco and Lucas Martinez, Zachary Mecca, Ben Michalowski, Kaden Moyer, Reilly Moyer, Reed Nagel, Josh Novaro, David O'Donoghue, Dominic Ortolano, Kaleb Parke, Ryan Powers, Jack and Ryan Rapini, DJ Reinard, Broderick Ritter, Jonathon Rucinski, Joe Scamurra, William Scherrer, Ryan Scumaci, Daniel Sippel, Sean Slick, James Spence, Hunter Steward, Henry Tetrault, Tyler Walsh, Lucas Wapniewski, Clayton Wehr, Riley Weppner, Michael Wolf and Ethan Yellen.

There are 65 skaters enrolled in the Novice 1 Program (ages 4 to 6) and are coached by Frank Lukomski and Dan Mecca.

The two remaining holiday games are at 10:20 a.m., Sunday Dec. 24 and 31 at the Pepsi Center.

Pee Wee Red Sabres make sushi of Sharks

The Pee Wee Red Sabres continued their recent winning streak with a 5-3 victory over the Sharks on Sunday afternoon.

The Red Sabres came out strong with some early-game pressure, but the Sharks drew first blood with two goals barely a minute apart midway through the first period.

Down 2-0 going into the second, it was up to the Red Sabres to find a way to turn things around.

The momentum changed when center Zach Pinti won a faceoff deep in his own zone and cleared the puck over the blue line to Eric Fiegel. Fiegel raced the puck into Shark territory and got off a nifty backhand on goal. Fiegel's fellow winger Missy Mallon crashed the crease behind him, jamming in the rebound and bringing the Red Sabres to within one.

The team tied the game later in the second when defenseman Matt Berke went on a scintillating end-to-end rush. Berke cut across the crease and slid an off-balance backhand just inside the post. The Sharks would respond before the period ended with a pretty goal by Joe Michotek that got the Sharks off the hook temporarily.

Knights Major 'AA' posts comeback win

The Amherst Knights Pee Wee Major "AA" team improved their league record to 3-3-1 with a come from behind win over the Erie Lions Sunday afternoon at the Amherst Pepsi Center.

After falling behind by two goals at the start of the second period, Christian Curatolo woke up the team with an unassisted goal at 8:18.

Just 30 seconds later, Brad Ferrell scored with an assist from Sam Kraus to tie the game.

Erie counted with their third goal to retake the lead at the midway point of the game but the Knights quickly answered back. Patrick Hurtubise gave Curatolo a break out pass that started a 2 on 1 that was completed with a game tying goal by John Richmond. The Knights continued the offensive explosion with goals from Farrell, unassisted, and a George Zimmermann breakaway assisted by Curatolo.

The Erie Lions would not go home without a fight and pulled within one with a power-play goal two minutes into the third period. The Knights would answer back with an Adam

Hepp goal assisted by defenseman Joe Kersten.

The Lions again pulled within one with their third power-play goal of the game. The Knights took back their two-goal cushion with Zimmermann's second goal of the game, assisted by Kraus. Winning goaltender T.J. Brodzick faced 16 shots in the third period and held off the Erie

game ending onslaught with defense men Nick Kowalski and Benny Ferro keeping Erie's offense at bay as they pulled their goalie for the final 90 seconds.

The Knights will host West Seneca on Wednesday and visit Bud Bakewell on Saturday as warm-ups for The Niagara-On-The-Lake Tournament next week.

Flyers tame Bruins, 4-3

The Pee Wee Flyers and Bruins played an entertaining game this past Sunday, featuring a six-goal outburst by both teams in the second period. The Flyers won 4-3.

After the Flyers jumped out to a 1-0 lead on a goal by Tyler Leo, the Flyers tied the game early in the second with a goal by Dan Schlein. The Flyers went up 2-1 with a goal by Richie Hunter assisted by Zach Morrison.

Twenty-two seconds later, the Bruins tied the score at 2-2, but the tie was short-lived, as Casey Willer made it 3-2 Flyers on an assist from Nick Cieslica. Not to be outdone, the Bruins scored 13 seconds later to knot the game again.

However, Alex Cleeland scored on another great play by Stephen Soos, who had a tremendous game for the Flyers and had two assists, to take the lead for good.

The third period was scoreless thanks to the solid goaltending by Todd Huber of the Bruins and Joe Picone of the Flyers.

Both teams deserve high marks for the hustle they displayed.