



Team celebration photos courtesy of Chris Corbetta.

# Team effort helps Lewiston-Porter mod hockey take title

BY DAVE RICCI

At this level, fun should always be the top priority. Making life-long friends and creating memories.

When winning can also be part of those memories, well, you really can't ask for much more.

Goalie Liam Farnham was named MVP as Lewiston-Porter topped Tonawanda-North Tonawanda, 3-1, in the title game of the WNY Modified Hockey Kick Off Tournament that was held at the LECOM Harborcenter on March 27.

Head coach Chris Corbetta was proud as can be his team won. He was even more thrilled that they went through it with smiles on their faces, because the enjoyment aspect of playing is so essential at this level. Yes, you always want to strive to be your best and to win. But if they aren't having fun, they won't stick with the game.

"Oh, absolutely, especially here at Lewiston-Porter," Corbetta said. "This is my second year coaching the modified team, and we really try to push the fun aspect. At that young age, we really want to push that fun aspect. Have them grow as people as well as hockey players. It's a good mix. We have boys and girls on the team, and I think it's really big for us to push the fundamentals and also the fun aspect into it, too."

Corbetta feels that it's important, especially for players at this age, to have that sense of structuring while at the same time not weigh them down with too much responsibility and creating undo pressure that might rob them of fun. The mindset is to create the fun that makes each player look forward to coming to the rink to enjoy time together, but also be aware that there is a time for laughs and time to work and become better players.

"It's a good balance between the competitiveness and also the fun aspect, too," Corbetta said.

Lew-Port went 3-0-2 overall as they also knocked off Kenmore East and Eden/Lake Shore/Pioneer/Springville (AKA ELPS). The two ties were against ELPS and West Seneca.

James VanEgmond (8 points), Joshua Steimer (7 points) and Grant Jokic (6 points) set the tone offensively for Lew-Port.

What impressed Corbetta the most was the way the team came back from adversity.

They were down 1-0 in both the title and semifinal games, but were able to a score come-from-behind wins.

They also had a hard time staying out of the penalty box. But no matter what seemed to be going wrong at any given time, at no point did the players snipe at each other, talk back to Corbetta, or throw in the towel. They had

the character to keep battling and find a way to solve problems as a team.

"They had no give up," Corbetta said. "To me, it felt like if we were down 4- or 5-nothing in a game we always had a chance, because those kids, you could just see it in their eyes - that they really wanted to come together as a team."

Corbetta credits his eighth-graders for stepping into the roles

of leaders, and for having the awareness to give a teammate a pat on the back or a positive word when it was needed most. This is so very vital in bringing the team together as a family.

"They care about each other," Corbetta said. "You can definitely see they care about each other in the locker room. How they interact with each other."





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