

## Dec. 12 Ice Hockey



*Nottingham's John Terry skates away from a West Windsor-Plainsboro North foe and in front of goalie Kyle O'Byrne during today's game at Mercer Rink (Photo by Wes "The Media Mogul" Kirkpatrick)*

### **Nottingham will graciously accept the lessons learned in tough defeats**

**By Tony Piscotta  
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**Dec. 12:** There are some careers where learning on the job isn't a great idea - heart surgeon, air traffic controller and test pilot are just a few that come to mind.

While playing high school hockey may not be as significant a task, the Nottingham High ice hockey team is finding it can be just as difficult learning on the fly - particularly when an opponent has players who have been playing for many years.

The Northstars faced such a task in their game with West Windsor-Plainsboro North today. While the result was somewhat predictable - the Northern Knights scored the game's first seven goals and cruised to a 10-1 victory - the younger and inexperienced Northstars showed small signs of progress.

"There's positives in every game," said first-year coach Alex Chis-Luca, whose young team fell to 0-4 with the loss. "We have a lot of hard workers, even though we were overmatched, we worked hard and played physical at times."

One of those hard-workers, junior Matthew MacNeal, was rewarded in the second, taking a cross-ice pass from sophomore Kevin Fuller and wristing a shot into the back of the net with 3:44 left in the period to put Nottingham on the board.

"The goal was great," said MacNeal. "It helped the team and it boosted our confidence."

And while the goal would be the only one for the Northstars, it seemed to provide a spark as

the some of the first and second year players seemed to pick up their game - and the physical play - in the latter portion of the contest.

"You just try to get them to realize how great hockey is. It's a great sport and you just have to try your hardest," said MacNeal, one of the "veterans" for a team with several first- and second-year players.

While goalie Kyle O'Byrne is a junior in high school, he too is learning on the fly - making the move to full-time goaltender for the first season after making a handful of appearances in net behind starter Bryan Rock a year ago.

Things did not start off well against North - the Northern Knights' Marc Kolber scored the first of his four goals just 51 seconds into the game. But following the early barrage O'Byrne started to find a groove late in the game. He closed the game out with back-to-back stops on two point blank shots to prevent the Northern Knights from ending the game via the ten-goal rule.

For the Northstars, the road doesn't get any easier - they face perennial power Hopewell Valley in their next game.

"I just tell them you have to work hard and work for every inch," said Chis-Luca. "These teams are not going to give you anything easy. You have to battle game in and game out. Every shift."

While their task may not be as hard as brain surgery, the Northstars appear willing to do the work necessary to one day be a competitive hockey team.