

Dec. 20 Ice Hockey – Hornets win Backyard Brawl on Ice



Hamilton's Joe Olszewski pursues Nottingham's Mike Lombardo (18) as the Northstar puckhandles up the ice during today's battle at Mercer County Rink (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportphoto@aol.com).

Hamilton's stellar play finally pays off with a victory over Nottingham

By Rich Fisher

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Dec. 20: After giving Hopewell Valley all it could handle on Monday night, Hamilton West's ice hockey team felt pretty good about its chances of hitting the win column today.

And that is exactly what happened, as the Hornets won the Backyard Brawl on ice by taking an 8-3 win over rival Nottingham at Mercer Rink.

"It's nice to win this, without a doubt," said Dave Osnato, who led the way with a hat trick. "They're a big rival, we've had some troubles beating them the last two years and we remembered that. So today was a nice day."

Thomas Tramontana continued his strong season with two goals and three assists. Shawn Hrymack had a goal and two assists and Sean Tohill added two assists for the Hornets. Nottingham's Mark MacNeal had a three-point effort with a goal and two assists.

"First win of the year, it good," said co-coach Matt Hamilton, whose team improved to 1-5. "We should have had one already but that's the way the puck bounces sometimes. We just had a great

effort overall from top to bottom today.”

The Hornets were coming off a 5-0 loss to Hopewell, one of the Colonial Valley Conference’s top teams, and allowed four goals in the final six minutes of the second period. Aside from that, they played a stellar game.

“You gotta go into every game thinking you can win,” said Osnato, referring to the Hopewell game. “Sometimes you come out having a good game and it feels like win.”

Today it actually was a win, as Hamilton took a 4-0 lead after one period and remained in control the rest of the way.

Nottingham cut it to 4-1 early in the second period when Mike Lombardo scored from MacNeal, but the Northstars could get no closer.

“We had some positives after they realized they actually had a shot,” said Northstar coach Alex Chis-Luca, whose team had been outscored 33-1 in its previous three games. “I talked to them and built them up a little bit, and a pep talk gave them a little intensity.

“We got a quick goal and tried to go from that. It flattened our tires again for them to rebound and get a goal against us before we could score again. What are you gonna do? That’s life.”

The killer for Nottingham came late in the second period when Lombardo was whistled for a game misconduct and a five-minute major. It became a three-minute uninterrupted power play for Hamilton (which had a two-minute minor at the start of the five-minute major) and the Hornets took advantage when Osnato and Tramontana scored just 43 seconds apart to make it 6-1.

Each team scored two goals in the final period. Kevin Dunphy and Jared Romanski both had a goal for Hamilton, while Kyle Rogers and Joe Olszewski had assists. Nottingham got a goal and an assist from Kyle Fuller, while Jon Pope had an assist.

Kyle O’Byrne had 28 saves for Nottingham, while Evan Morris (5) and Allison Pelke (6) combined for 11 for the Hornets.

It was another strong defensive effort for Hamilton, which is rotating three regular blueliners in Gerry Gomez, Osnato and Hrymack.

“We have three core guys and Tohill is a swing player who can drop back for us,” Hamilton said. “Just the communication between our center men and the back checking with our wings has been great. Everything is clicking on the defensive side and our puck movement is getting a lot better, so if we keep those things up then we’re gonna be OK.”

The only problem is a short bench, as Hamilton admitted that his team does get worn down. But that hasn’t stopped the Hornets from playing teams tough.

“I totally believe so,” said Osnato when asked if this could be something to build on. “From here on out I hope this is the start of something.”