

State hockey champs hail from Tahoe

By Ted Parkhill

The Tahoe Grizzlies Bantam hockey team won the state championship on Sunday.

The 13- to 15-year-olds entered the April 14 event as the underdogs. But that didn't slow them down.

The boys, who are part of the South Tahoe Amateur Hockey Association, win the California State title at Sharks Ice in San Jose. It is the first state title ever won by a team from Lake Tahoe. Only once before had a team from Tahoe even made it to the state final.



2013 CAHA CHAMPIONSHIPS
SOUTH LAKE TAHOE GRIZZLIES - BANTAM B
State Champions

The South Lake Tahoe Grizzlies are state champions. Photo/HockeyShots Photography

The championship banner will be displayed in the South Lake Tahoe arena.

"These boys came through when it really mattered in the championship game. They were down two players in the second period and the boys stuck to our game plan. They stepped up their tempo and took it to our opponent for the victory," Head

Coach Ken Wood said. "Like we have done all season through injuries, suspensions and a short bench [hockey -speak for not too many players] this Tahoe Grizzlies team played as a team and we won as a team."

Indeed, there was a variety of talent on the team. But every player knew that to win, every player was important.

The state championships began April 12 when the Grizzlies faced the San Diego Jr. Gulls. The Grizzlies were ready and quickly discovered they could compete at the state level. They handily won the game 7-1. The Gulls were surprised by the Grizzlies incredible speed and offensive onslaught.

Later that day they faced their Northern California nemesis, the Fresno Junior Monsters. The Jr. Monsters had beaten the Grizzlies in the Northern California playoffs only two weeks before. Friday night was a hard fought game and Fresno finished just ahead, 3-2.

With this win Fresno qualified to play in the final championship game. It also meant the Grizzlies had to win on Saturday to make it to the final. Saturday night they faced the California Heat from Los Angeles.

It was a battle and the Heat were hungry. They wanted to win. But the Grizzlies did too. They went back and forth with the scoring and there were tied 3-3 in the middle of the third period. With only 2½ minutes left the Grizzlies scored to take the lead. The Grizzlies won the game 4-3.

They would face the Jr. Monsters in the championship game.

On Sunday both teams knew there was a state title at stake. Both teams came out hitting. The Jr. Monsters scored first. But the Grizzlies quickly tied it up.

There were some big hits early in the game and one of the Grizzlies was given a five-minute major penalty and a game

misconduct for a big hit. The Jr. Monsters capitalized on the power play and scored four minutes into the major penalty. The Grizzlies responded with a power play goal of their own to once again tie it up, 2-2.

The Grizzlies scored again to take the lead in the middle of the second.

Then one of the Fresno players hit one of the Grizzlies from behind and in the head. The Grizzly player was knocked unconscious. There was no penalty called on the play. However, the game was delayed for about 30 minutes.

The Grizzlies were now determined to win for themselves, their ejected teammate and the one on his way to the hospital. When play resumed with one minute left in the second period the Grizzlies were on the attack. They scored with one second left in the second period!. The Grizzlies were ahead now 4-2.

The Jr. Monsters did not give up. But at this point the Grizzlies were on a tear. In the third period they scored two unanswered goals and ended up winning 6-2.

These boys came from almost not having a team at all and not being able to play to banding together to form a championship team. It was an incredible effort.

Back in August STAHA tried assembling a Bantam age hockey team. Early on it became clear there might not be enough players to enter a team in NorCal travel hockey. Parents started recruiting. They ended up with boys coming from Carson City, Reno, Incline Village, Stockton, Valley Springs, Roseville and Rocklin.

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Tahoe Grizzlies 2012-13 Bantam Roster:

Spencer Olson, Carson City

Alexander Low, Stockton

Jakob DeGregory, South Lake Tahoe

Edward Parkhill, Incline Village

Reiss Jensen, Reno

Janez Demsar, South Lake Tahoe

Colby Boucher, Sparks

John Moffat, South Lake Tahoe

Adam Contreras, Valley Springs

John Gist, Rocklin

Joseph Cookson, Stockton

Braydon Thompson, Roseville

Reed Legeurica, Carson City

Travis Wood, South Lake Tahoe

Ted Parkhill works for STAHA.