

2013 USA Hockey's America's Showcase Tournament Recap

The Tournament started for the Illinois Team on Wednesday playing Team Indiana. With Taylor Dignan (Sandburg) in net, Illinois opened the scoring with Ben Kohen (Tom Breitfuss, Anthony Casaletto) tipping in a shot from the point by Tom Breitfuss on the power play. Mike Wiggemansen (Alex Block) gave Illinois a 2 - 0 lead after the first period on a shot from the slot. Kyle Melton (Jonathan Gauger, Sean McDonnell) picked up his first goal on a rebound then Joe Scorpio (Anthony Casaletto, Vince Moschea) scored a power play goal to make it 4 - 0 after the second period. Illinois closed out the scoring in the third with Sean McDonnell (Nick Schaefer, Tom Breitfuss) giving Illinois its first win and Taylor Dignan recording a shutout.

On Thursday, Illinois came up against an always strong New Jersey team. As in the first game, Ben Kohen (David Kellner, Mike Trapp) scored the opening goal with Nick Schaefer (Mike Trap, Tom Breitfuss) making it 2 - 0 after the first period. The second period saw New Jersey with the only scoring making it 2 - 1 after two periods. New Jersey tied it up with a power play goal early in the third before Nick Schaefer (Mike Wiggemansen, Anthony Casaletto) put Illinois ahead midway through the period. Jonathan Gauger (Kyle Melton, Pat Biewald) picked up a power play goal later in the third which proved to be the winning goal as New Jersey got a late power play goal to make the final 5 -4. Zach Danna stopped 34 shots keeping Illinois in the game. Final 4 - 3 Illinois

The next game Illinois saw a determined Ohio team come out to a 3 - 0 lead after the first period. Illinois settled down and got two goals in less than a minute early in the second Tom Breitfuss (Kyle Melton) and Kyle Melton (Vince Moschea) to pull within a goal. Ohio put in a power play goal late in the second to give them a 2 goal lead going into the third. Kyle Melton (Jonathan Gauger) scored first in the third but Ohio less than 2 minutes later extending the 2 goal lead. Mike Wiggemansen (Mike Trapp, Alex Block) got Illinois within a goal late in the third but it ended Ohio 5 Illinois 4. Illinois finished the seeding round with 2 wins, 1 loss to come out top in their bracket of the A pool putting them in the semi - finals.

Saturday saw Illinois matched with New England (2nd seed in the other A bracket pool). New England came out scoring first, their only goal. After that Illinois' Zach Danna was flawless in net stopping 19 shots while a strong Illinois Defense led by Nick Schaefer kept New England in check. This allowed a very determined Kyle Melton to lead the offense with two goals, assists from Nick Schaefer, Ben Kohen in the second period and Sean McDonnell, Jonathan Gauger in the third to put Illinois into the final game.

Sunday, the host city team Pittsburgh, who had run the table outscoring their opponents 24 to 4 and outshot those opponents 132 to 76 was the Illinois opponent. This would be the first meeting of the two teams since the 2012 semifinal game where Team Pittsburgh defeated Illinois 5 - 3. The game started and saw Pittsburgh opening the scoring early in the first period. Illinois got on the board with Kyle Melton (Vince Moschea, Sean McDonnell) tying the game midway through the first before Pittsburgh scored on a power play goal late in the period to take a 2 - 1 lead after one. In this tightly played game Illinois tied the game at 7:50 of the second on a great short-handed goal scored by Jake Novack (David Kellner, Vince Moschea). Then Alex Block (Kurt Oswalt, Mike Wiggemansen) scored the game winner at 15:40 of the third to give Illinois a well-deserved victory.

This was truly a team effort with 16 High School seniors and 6 High School Juniors from Illinois coming together, before many scouts from prep schools, NCAA and ACHA colleges and junior hockey teams, showing their talents in hope of being noticed. In the end, many of the players received invitations from these scouts to participate in their programs extending their future hockey careers.