

Mighty Midgets:

KEENE TAKES STATE TITLE WITH CHAMPIONSHIP COMEBACK

November 11, 2013



The state champion Keene Midgets. Front row (l to r): Ryan Strickland and Tommy Troie. Kneeling (l to r): Cody Bragg, Cam Jessup, Nathaniel Todd-Long. Back row (l to r): assistant coach Gary McRae, Max McLaughlin, Evan McCutcheon, Collin Strohshine, Griffin Kane, Phillip Schultz, Joe Epler, Matt Stone, Dom Senerchia, coach Chris Strohshine.

(Courtesy photo)

PLYMOUTH – They barely had enough left in the tank to finish their fourth game in two days, but the Keene Cobras still had the energy to pose for pictures at the end.

Winning does that for a team.

The Cobras didn't have many players – just enough for two lines – but the ones they did have played as well as they could, winning three of four games to capture the New Hampshire Midget Tier II championship at Plymouth State University's Hanaway Rink.

Keene beat the Manchester Flames, 2-1, in Sunday's championship game when **Phillip Schultz** tied the game with 4:27 left in the third period and **Dom Senerchia** scored the game-winner with 27 seconds to go.

Keene trailed 1-0 when the Flames scored late in the first period, but stayed in the game thanks to the goaltending of **Ryan Strickland** and **Tommy Troie**. A desperate flurry of second-chance opportunities late in the game allowed Keene to tie the game and eventually get the game-winner.

Keene, made up mostly of players from Keene High and the Keene area, qualified for the Tier II national tournament in April in Wayne, N.J.

A team that wasn't deep to start was stretched even more Saturday when it skated with three players on the bench. Somehow, the Cobras managed to split a pair of game and get into Sunday's semifinal round.

Keene opened the tournament Saturday with 5-3 win over the Nashua Panthers as **Cam Jessup** scored twice and Schultz, **Griffin Kane** and **Evan McCutcheon** each scored once. **Matt Stone** had two assists, while Jessup, **Collin Stroshine** and **Joe Epler** chipped in with one each.

The win essentially clinched a spot in the semifinals for Keene, which dropped a 5-4 decision to Berlin later in the day. Kane, Schultz, Jessup and **Cody Bragg** all had goals, while Stroshine picked up a pair of assists.

Keene faced the top-seeded New Hampshire East Eagles in Sunday morning's semifinal game and came up with a 4-3 win against a team it had split a pair of games with during the regular season.

Senerchia had two goals in the game, while Jessup and Bragg added one each. **Max McLaughlin**, McCutcheon and **Nathaniel Todd-Long** were among others who had assists.

Strickland, who was a standout in net throughout the weekend, made 20 saves over the second half of the game.

The state title and trip to the nationals is a culmination of three years playing together in the New Hampshire Amateur Hockey Association.

The team first came together three years ago as a tournament team that drew players from several leagues in the tri-state area and began playing in the fall league two years ago.

The team includes Stone, Jessup, McCutcheon, Stroshine, Kane, Bragg and Peter Brown from Keene High, McLaughlin, Strickland and Senerchia from Vermont Academy, Todd-Long from Northfield Mount Hermon, Troie from Bishop Guertin, Epler from Green Mountain Union) and Schultz from the Winchendon School.

Coaches include Chris Stroshine and assistants **Gary McRae**, **Chris McLaughlin**, **Ron Troie** and **Rich Senerchia**.