

CONCORD

The final puck drop



ANDREA MORALES / Monitor staff

Ed Repins (15) of the Concord Budmen drives the puck past Chris Halecki (19) of the Agawam Chiefs during the final game in the 35+ division championship at the 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championships at White Park yesterday.

Victors crowned at 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championships

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE
Monitor staff

After day two of the three-day 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championships, the Agawam Chiefs of Manchester, Mass., decided it was time for a new strategy. They had shot at every chance they could that day, scoring more than 50 points in two games to ensure a spot in yesterday morning's semifinals.

So the group of seven, most of whom coach for the Agawam Youth Hockey league in northern Massachusetts, sat down with some beers and devised a new game plan: Two men on defense, one in the middle and one up near the net to score.

It worked. The team overtook Concord High School '92, who had handed them their only loss on the tournament's first day, in the semifinal game

The Champions

18 OPEN DIVISION: Jack Edwards Teeth def. Concord Capitals, 13-10.

18 RECREATIONAL DIVISION: Granite State Minutemen def. Queen City Kings, 7-6.

35+ A DIVISION: Agawam Chiefs def. Concord Budmen, 12-8.

35+ B DIVISION: 180 Proof def. So Sick Swamp Rats, 8-5.

50+ DIVISION: St. Nick PHC def. White Park Hockey Club, 8-5.

WOMENS DIVISION: Newts def. No Stars, 9-7.

and defeated the Concord Budmen 12-8 to be named champions of the 35+ A Men's division of the tournament.

"It took us three games to figure it out, but we finally figured it out," said David Gillis, an Agawam player.

It was the team's first year

in the tournament, although several had played on other teams last year, and they only made it at the last minute when another team dropped out. Like most of the members of the 85 teams in the tournament, the players of both Agawam and the Bud-

men have been playing hockey since childhood. Nearly all of the Budmen players are part of the association that started the tournament three years ago. Between the two teams, the players had once represented the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Merrimack College, Villanova University and Saint Michael's College on the ice.

But pond hockey is a different game than professional or collegiate hockey – it's just like a game of street hockey or shinny that neighborhood kids would play. Each team has four players on the ice at a time. Instead of facing goalies, players must shoot the puck through one of two holes in a wooden box to score points. There's no intentional hitting or fighting, and the closest the game comes to stopping is when the puck goes out of

See **HOCKEY** – A10



ANDREA MORALES / Monitor staff

Black Ice organizer Chris Brown walks out of the players tent with Concord Budmen jerseys tucked under one arm and his hockey equipment under the other yesterday morning. Despite making it to the championship round, the Concord Budmen lost to the Agawam Chiefs, a team from Massachusetts, in the final game of the 35+ division. The Budmen team helped put together the weekend's festivities and had to help break down the site after their game.

HOCKEY Continued from A1

bounds and a monitor has to throw in a new one.

Agawam came into the championship game strong, with Chris Halecki scoring two goals within the first 1:30 of the game. Halecki, who played up front, and Brian Gubbins, who took on the middle position, used quick stick play and sharp, direct shots to dominate offensive play in the first half. Between the two, they ended the half with eight points to the Budmen's two.

Agawam's Ed Davis and Keith Haughey focused more on defending their goal from the Budmen players, who, despite several attempts, struggled to score goals. Tom Carroll, New England College's hockey coach, scored the first goal for the Budmen, and Tom Philbrick delivered the Budmen's last goal of the half.

Like Agawam, the Budmen players each have hockey backgrounds and promote youth hockey in the community. The Black Ice Pond Hockey Association has given more than \$60,000 back to the

"The guys are great to play with. It's a lot of fun."

Ed Repins,
Concord Budmen

community with tournament funds. That money has gone toward creating an outdoor skating area at Rollins Park and will hopefully help create a new skate house in White Park, said Chris Brown, one of the organizers and a Budmen player.

Although the Budmen team members are primarily Concord natives, player Ed Repins came up from Tampa, Fla., to visit his college buddy Carroll and join in on the game. The two played at UW-Madison together, with Carroll winning two national titles and Repins one. This is Repins's first year playing with the Budmen, and he said the camaraderie of the team and the tournament makes it enjoyable. He might

even join the team for other tournaments.

"The guys are great to play with. It's a lot of fun," he said. "Growing up in Wisconsin I played pond hockey, but not this organized."

Despite their ultimate loss, the Budmen did bring a more aggressive style into the second half, with Brown scoring two goals to double the team's score in the first three minutes of play. The Budmen had more control over the puck offensively in the second half, with Repins also scoring two goals to bring the score up to 10-6. Gubbins, of the Chiefs, then scored a goal, but the Budmen quickly responded with two more, making the score 11-8 with three minutes left.

The Budmen's run didn't continue — the teams got into a defensive battle and neither scored for the next several minutes. Then, with less than a minute left, Agawam's lead scorer Halecki slapped in a goal, leaving the final score at 12-8.

After the game, both teams

retired to the players tent to take off their equipment and relax before a trip home for some and a cleanup of the tournament for others. After six games of hockey in the weekend's frigid temperatures, they were cold, tired and one Agawam player even had a cracked skate.

The Agawam players needed to make it home by the afternoon to coach their hockey teams. Their win will provide a good story to share with the players they coach, who are starting the game at a young age just like the Agawam players did. For players from both teams, the tournament provides a way to capture the excitement of the game that they have always loved, win or lose.

"Most of the guys grew up playing pond hockey," Gubbins said. "So it's kind of been in our blood since we were little kids."

(Kathleen Ronayne can be reached at 369-3309 or kronayne@cmonitor.com or on Twitter @kronayne.)