

Victory Honda Cup at Ice Cube a Big Success

*Michigan Hockey article (p. 16)
January 29, 2007*

By Christy Hammond

It's a tournament recipe with success built right in: invite the top midget teams in the country to compete against each other in a place that draws lots of college coaches and junior and pro scouts.

The second annual Victory Honda Cup, hosted by USA Hockey's NTDP, did just that over MLK holiday weekend at the Ann Arbor Ice Cube. While only two teams could leave as tournament champs, the strong competition provided a gauge for teams to measure their performance levels at this point in the season.

"You want to see how you fare against the best," Colorado Thunderbirds head coach Angelo Ricci said.

The tournament drew NHL, OHL, and college scouts who were in attendance to watch some of the best youth hockey talent showcased in Ann Arbor. In the end the Anaheim Jr. Ducks won the Midget Major pool, while Honeybaked won the Midget Minor division.

High-end midget squads typically play six to 12 tournaments throughout the season and the Victory Honda squad tries to visit universities along their travels. They have visited New Hampshire, Yale, and Western Michigan and have been able to meet coaches and players to talk about the college experience.

Squads like the Thunderbirds will miss roughly 16 to 20 days a season, which could turn into even more missed days if the team makes the national tournament. Ricci receives three to four progress reports from each player's teachers throughout the semester to make sure they aren't slacking off on their education. Victory Honda's Brian Burke says it is "always school first."

And the Victory Honda head coach was appreciative of this sponsor's support of such a big tournament so close to home.

"The Victory Honda team is very thankful for Jeff Cappo for supporting our team and the tournament. It was a tremendous opportunity for all of the players to be viewed by hundreds of scouts," said Burke.