

An extraordinary fortnight for Cambridge City Junior Hockey Club, starting with the U14 Boys winning the East Regional Finals held at the Leys school on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April followed by the U10 and 12 Boys and U10 and U12 girls representing Cambridgeshire in the Regional finals held at Harleston Magpies Hockey Club on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April.

At both the tournaments I think I have been through every emotion imaginable, from jubilation to sheer frustration. But my overriding feeling is one of pride. At the Harleston tournament I had great pleasure in watching some of the U10 games and to see our boys and girls, some as young as 7 years old, competing with so much spirit and determination even, at times against overwhelming odds, was a joy to behold. Although they did not win any medals they deserve every accolade for their sheer effort and determination. Well done to all those involved.

The U12 girls playing at the same tournament were the unluckiest team at the tournament. After a particularly slow start, with 2 draws from their opening pool matches, they suddenly came to life winning the next 2 matches, one of which was against a very strong Canterbury team, to top the group. Unfortunately the draw in the next round of pool matches did not favour us as we had to play the tournament favourites, Bedford, who had destroyed everybody in one of the other pool groups and, once again, Canterbury. We knew that we had to win both of these matches to progress to the finals as only one team qualified.

Our first match was against Bedford in which we played some of our best hockey of the tournament winning a convincing 4-0 meaning that we only needed a draw against Canterbury in the next game to go through to the finals. In the first half we continued to play in the same manner as against Bedford, creating chances, but this time failing to put the ball into the back of the net. It was 0-0 at half time. The second half was a tense affair with little to choose between the sides, but with just 3 minutes to go the deadlock was broken when a shot from the top of the 'D' by a Canterbury forward sealed them the victory. It was a cruel way to finish the tournament. It was frustrating standing on the side line as I knew that we only had to keep our shape and discipline and we would have been through to the finals.

But, sometimes the difference between winning and losing can be so small. The team gave absolutely everything and are a credit to themselves and the club. They can be proud in the knowledge that they have been the most successful girl's team ever at CCJHC. Congratulations to you all. For those girls who will be leaving us next season, hopefully to join the Junior girls, I wish you every success in the future.

On the Sunday James and I had the pleasure of looking after the U12 Boys. Although we were missing 2 of our most influential U12 boys, due to them already having played in the U14 team, we were still confident that we could do well. In the opening 3 pool matches we cruised past the opposition

winning the matches comfortably. The final pool match was against Harleston Magpies which we lost 2-1 but this result had little meaning as we had already qualified for the final pool matches with Harleston, as both teams had won their opening 3 pool matches. As with the girls on the Saturday the draw did not favour us as we were drawn against Old Loughtonians, the tournament favourites, and once again Harleston Magpies. It was equally very unfortunate that we had lost JJ Lankfer for the rest of the tournament due to a very nasty head injury that he had sustained in the last pool match, which meant that we were down to only 7 players.

The task in front of the team seemed impossible. In their opening match we played again against Harleston Magpies, we took an early lead, but as the match progressed and with no substitutes, we came under more and more pressure and with less than a minute remaining Harleston scored to level the score 1-1. The next match was against the tournament favourites Old Loughtonians who had already beaten Harleston 3-1. We knew that only a victory would secure us a place in the final. Playing back to back games of 20 minutes each with only 7 players was always going to be an uphill task. But, the team played with great passion and resolve giving 110% effort and commitment. Unfortunately we were beaten by a solitary goal. The whole team should be proud of what they have achieved and, like the U12 girls, have become the most successful U12 boys team ever at CCJHC.

Of all our teams at the club, the U14 boys team must take pride of place and team of the season. On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April, the U14 East Regional Finals were held at the Leys school with teams as far away as Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire competing. There were 2 pools of three teams with only the winners qualifying for the Final.

In the opening match we played Ipswich which we won 4-2, this was followed by a 2-1 victory over Beeston Hockey Club whose U16 and U18 boys team had won their respective National finals, so a fantastic result. The final was against Bury St. Edmunds Hockey Club who had beaten the tournament favourites, Belper Hockey Club 4-0. Although we had beaten Bury earlier in the season in the league we knew that it was going to be always a very tight affair. But, the team played magnificently and won 3-1 even missing a penalty stroke! They thoroughly deserved their winners medals. (A more in depth report is posted on our website with team photo).

To achieve this level of success in our first season as a newly formed U14 boys team is truly amazing. Out of a squad of 18 players used in the league matches and in the regional finals, no fewer than 10 players can still play next year and out of these 10 boys 2 can play the year after. They are still a very young side and with Nick Thompson still at the helm I cannot see any reason why we cannot emulate the same success next year.

After writing this newsletter it is clearly evident that the club continues to flourish and the prospects for the future are bright. We have strength in depth and even when we lose players we are still able to compete with the very best. All our players deserve praise, from the very youngest to the oldest, for their commitment and attitude in training and in matches and I am proud to be your Club Chairman.

In this newsletter I have tried not to mention individual names as I think that it is important to recognise the achievement of the teams. I have asked the respective coaches if they have time to give a slightly more comprehensive summary of the tournaments which we then can post on our web site. Hopefully they will mention the scorers by name and the members of the teams.

At this juncture I thought it was only appropriate to mention that at CCJHC we are fortunate to have players, both girls and boys at all ages, who are seriously talented who provide an inspiration to the rest of the club. Although I have not mentioned these players by name they have been instrumental in our success over the season and deserve every accolade. Well done to you all.

We now look forward to next season. During the summer, in conjunction with the senior club, we will be investigating the possibility of running an under U16 boys team on the same lines as our U14 team. I therefore have the intention of contacting the relevant parents to ask for your feedback. So, finally, on behalf of all the coaches, we wish you all an enjoyable summer.