



Friday, February 22, 2002

Men's hockey team going to nationals

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

For the second consecutive season, Oakland University's **men's hockey club** has been invited to participate in the **American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II National Championship Tournament**. This year's tournament, hosted by New York University, is Feb. 27 through March 2 at Sky Rink at Chelsea Piers, which is the practice rink for the New York Rangers NHL team.

The Golden Grizzlies are one of just 16 teams in the tournament. Five of those teams, including Oakland, come from the **Great Midwest Hockey League (GMHL)**.

OU's first game of the round-robin tournament is Wednesday, Feb. 27, at 10 a.m. against Miami-Ohio, the GMHL leader. The Golden Grizzlies lost twice to Miami-Ohio in the regular season and once in the GMHL playoffs.

"Beating Miami-Ohio is key for us because they are expected to go far in the tournament," said OU Assistant Coach Tom Ricketts. "We need to play a little better defensively and emphasize defensive zone coverage. In our first two games against them this season, we had a lead. In this next game, we need to establish a lead and build upon that.

"We've been emphasizing shooting drills in our practices, but we can't let down defensively and let them have an open man in our zone because they have guys who can definitely put the puck in the net."

OU's second game in the national tournament is Thursday, Feb. 28, at 9:45 a.m. against Utah State University, champions of the Rocky Mountain Collegiate Hockey Association. The top teams from each of the tournament's four pools will play in the semifinals on Saturday, March 2, with the final game set for that evening.

OU finished fifth in the GMHL with a 2-6-2 record, nine points behind Miami-Ohio. The Golden Grizzlies advanced in the GMHL playoffs by beating Michigan State 4-3 before losing to Miami-Ohio 8-2 in the semifinals. Overall, OU is 13-12-3, but is considered one of the nations' elite Division II club teams.

"We really weren't disappointed with our finish in the league, but right where we expected to be," Ricketts said. "We kind of expected to be in the middle. We lost to Michigan State twice but beat them in the league playoffs when it really counted. And we tied and lost to Michigan, so our record really doesn't reflect how we performed in league play. The close records of the other teams in our league show that it's a strong league, and that we belong with the best of them."

Several OU players have provided excellent play and leadership during the playoffs.

"Shaun Zeldes, our goalie, has been the backbone of our team," Ricketts said. "He's really picked up his game by working hard in practice to become focused and perform at his best. We've won a few games just by the great saves he's made.

"Our team captain and one of our defensemen, Karl Borgquist, has been the mainstay in terms of having a solid defensive core. He's also the most vocal player on the team as far as rallying the troops. The other players really look up to Karl."

Offensively, Ricketts said the point totals have been distributed among several of the team's forwards.

"Brandon Marineau and Ron Kolito have been our leading point scorers and have gotten some game-winning goals for us," Ricketts said. "But our coaching staff has been really pleased to see the point totals spread out among our other forwards too. We can't have just two forwards provide our offensive attack. We need to have others putting points on the board, in addition to having a strong overall defense."

During last year's national tournament, OU won its first-ever playoff game 5-1 against Central Connecticut State, but lost 6-3 to tournament runner-up Weber State and 7-2 to Miami-Ohio.

For schedules, statistics and a team roster, visit the OU **men's hockey club** Web site. To follow the team's progress at nationals, see the **ACHA Tournament** Web site.

SUMMARY

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