



Monday, March 4, 2002

OU hockey team ranked 6 out of 123 teams

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University's **men's hockey club** finished the season ranked sixth nationally out of 123 Division II club teams after going 2-1 in the **American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II National Championship Tournament**, hosted by New York University Feb. 27-March 2. OU ended the season 15-13-3 overall.

In its first game of the tournament, Oakland lost to tournament semifinalist Miami-Ohio 5-3 on Feb. 27. The Golden Grizzlies won their next two games, beating Utah State 7-3 on Feb. 28 and SUNY-Stony Brook 7-6 on March 1. Miami-Ohio earned six points in its pool while OU earned four, thus OU was unable to advance to the semifinal round. Life University (Atlanta, Ga.) won its second straight tournament championship by defeating Michigan 5-2 on March 2.

"We outplayed our opponents in all three games, but unfortunately were unable to advance," said OU Coach Tony Jalaba. "We outshot Miami-Ohio 32-21, but just couldn't get the right bounces we needed. We were down 4-1, but scored two goals in about 30 seconds with nine minutes left in the game. We were buzzing and had a lot of momentum. Then, with 8:51 remaining, Miami-Ohio got its fifth goal and that sealed it for them.

"It was a very good game – one of the closer games in the entire tournament."

After OU won its second game Feb. 28, the team learned it would not advance to the semifinals. But Jalaba said OU's final game against SUNY-Stony Brook was still significant.

"That game was important as far as placement in the rankings. We were able to finish ranked sixth nationally out of 123 teams in Division II, and we're very happy," Jalaba said. "We've made some strides over last year when we were ranked 11th, and only two of our players this year are seniors. So next year we'll be returning a strong core of players and I expect we'll be one of the serious contenders for the championship."

The team goals for next season is to tighten up its play, have a strong regular season and play its best games in next year's tournament, Jalaba said.

"With so many established teams in the tournament, it really comes down to having a bounce going your way. There's such a fine line between the teams at the tournament level," Jalaba said. "We've certainly established ourselves as one of the top teams and are considered one of the powerhouses.

"Next year, we need to continue having a good regular season to qualify for the tournament and play well for a full 60 minutes per game. If we play at our full maximum, it's the only thing we can do to advance. At the tournament, we need to play our best games of the year. I think we did that this year."

Tryouts for the team take place within the first few weeks of September.

For more information, including statistics, records and a team roster, visit the OU **men's hockey club** Web site.

SUMMARY

OU's men's hockey club finished the season ranked sixth nationally out of 123 Division II club teams after going 2-1 in the American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II National Championship Tournament. The team goals for next season is to tighten up its play, have a strong regular season and play its best games in next year's tournament.

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