



PHOTOS BY JAMES HOGGETT / SPECIAL TO THE OAKVILLE BEAVER

BIG LEAGUE FEEL: More than 300 fans filled the stands of Glen Abbey Recreation Centre last week to watch the Oakville bantam 1 Hawks play their first home game of their box lacrosse season. Pictured clockwise from left, Hawks players take to the floor; fans hold up signs and noisemakers; and the Hawks' mascot revs up the crowd. The Hawks rewarded their supporters with a 7-2 win over Orangeville.

Opener to remember for bantam Hawks

By Lucas Casaletto
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

For young lacrosse players, most games are filled with excitement, teamwork and passion. For the Oakville bantam 1 Hawks, their home opener was one game they will cherish for the rest of their lives.

Coaches and volunteers arranged a wonderfully put-together surprise for the Hawks last Thursday as Glen Abbey Recreation Centre filled up with more than 300 roaring fans and parents. They were quietly ushered into the arena, while the Hawks had no idea what was awaiting them. Banners were dropped; fans were painted in the team's traditional blue, white and gold; and even a mascot cheered and danced around tossing T-shirts into the crowd.

Mark Follows, the Hawks' head coach and also the main organizer of the event, said the inspiration was brought upon by a Super Bowl commercial filmed in Mississauga, which had the same effect on a local men's hockey team.

"We thought about it a few years ago, and then we saw the Budweiser commercial which gave us the push to do something like this," Follows said.

"Running through the tunnel and hearing the noise of the crowd, you couldn't wipe the smile off their faces, they were so excited."

Oakville bantam 1 Hawks head coach Mark Follows

"I think it was really the impression we wanted to leave with the kids, which was that the game is all about teamwork and bringing the kids together."

After the excitement and thrill had set in for the young Hawks, they prepared to face off against a very tough Orangeville team who had success against them in years past. The Hawks won the game 7-2 in front of the large and boisterous crowd. Follows said that the end result could not have been better.

"The parents and volunteers showed them what teamwork could accomplish. The effect on the boys was that they played as a team and beat an Orangeville squad that is traditionally very difficult," he said.

Follows said that after claiming the victory and playing to their full potential, the boys were overwhelmed with happiness. They felt like pro athletes even before the game had even begun.

"The pre-game pep talk really stuck with them. Running through the tunnel and hearing the noise of the crowd, you couldn't wipe the smile off their faces, they were so excited," he said.

Michael Varanesi, president of the Oakville Minor Lacrosse

See Game, page 32

