



Oakville native Mark Bennett poses with the NCAA men's hockey championship trophy following Union College's 7-4 victory over the Minnesota Golden Gophers Saturday in Philadelphia. | photo submitted

Bennett an NCAA champion

by Jon Kuiperij
Beaver Sports Editor

Mark Bennett didn't score any goals for the Union College Dutchmen in the NCAA men's college hockey tournament.

For that matter, he also didn't draw any assists, throw any body checks, block any shots or kill any penalties.

But don't suggest to the 22-year-old Oakville native that he was any less part of Union's first-ever NCAA championship win than defenceman Shayne Gostisbehere, who had a plus-7 rating in the Dutchmen's title-clinching 7-4 win over the top-seeded Minnesota Golden Gophers Saturday in Philadelphia.

At Union College, a 2,200-student liberal arts school in Schenectady, N.Y., they don't measure individual contributions by statistics. In fact, Bennett said, they don't measure individual contributions at all.

"That's the one thing I've noticed here since Day 1. Once people take their equipment off, no one treats you any differently — whether you're the MVP or the captain or the fourth-line guy. Everyone is the same value. We band together. No one's bigger than the team," said the former Oakville Blades forward, who played 22 games this season but none since Feb. 22.

"I think our captain, Mat Bodie, said it best. They asked him what it's like to be captain of a championship team, and he didn't talk about 20 guys. He said 27 guys. It doesn't matter if you play two minutes, five

minutes, 10 minutes. This is for all of us, and everyone's a part of it."

That mentality helped Bennett deal with the disappointment of seeing limited action once again with the Dutchmen. Two years ago as a freshman, Bennett missed six weeks of the season due to mono. Last year, he sprained his MCL early in the campaign and never completely recovered, suiting up in just eight games.

This season, he battled hip issues and once again never felt 100 per cent. While Bennett struggled to find his game, Union — one of just three schools to appear in each of the past four NCAA tournaments, along with Minnesota and Boston College — certainly found its. The Dutchmen went undefeated in their final 18 contests (17-0-1), making it difficult for Bennett to work his way back into the lineup.

"(Not playing) is something that is definitely hard to deal with. At the same time, I love hockey and I love being around the guys. At this level, it's so much more than being on the ice during the games. I'm with these guys 24-7, I live with them, have class with them. We're at the rink for two hours a day," said Bennett, who has four goals and

seven assists in 50 career games at Union.

"The lineup we had at the end of the year kind of got into a groove. When you're winning, it's easy to go along with it and easy to smile," he added. "It's a great feeling to be a national champion. It's a heck of a lot better than losing six weeks ago and already being into training season."

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Mark Bennett
Union College men's hockey player

see Chemistry on p.19

Peewee AA Hornets 'answered the call' at provincials

by Herb Garbutt
Oakville Beaver Staff

Every great team has that one opponent that just seems to have its number. For the Oakville peewee AA Hornets, that team was the London Devilettes.

Despite compiling a 16-3-3 record, Oakville had to settle for second place in the Lower Lakes Female Hockey League after London handed the Hornets a 3-1 loss in the final game of the regular season. That same week, London again beat Oakville 3-1 at the Devilettes tournament.

"It doesn't sound bad, 3-1, but they beat us pretty soundly," said Oakville coach Dominick Hardy. "We told the players they needed to pick it up. As a player, that's not easy to hear, but they understood it and they responded to it. They answered the call."

The Hornets met London again in the second round of the league playoffs and after opening

see Hornets on p.19



The Oakville peewee AA Hornets won the Ontario Women's Hockey Association championship Sunday in Brampton, blanking Belleville 4-0 in the gold-medal game. Oakville outscored its opponents 13-0 in its final four games of the tournament. | photo submitted

Two other champs

The Oakville atom AA Hornets and senior A Hornets also won gold medals at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association championships, part of a seven-medal haul by the local girls' hockey association.



The atom AAs edged the Stoney Creek Sabres 2-1 in their final, while the senior A squad blanked Hamilton 1-0 in their championship game.

Hornets teams added two silver (bantam BB and midget A) and two bronze (novice A and peewee A).

Coverage of Oakville's other OWHA champions will appear in upcoming editions of the Beaver.