

# Novice team brings community together

By Alfred Romann  
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EMBRO - Occasionally, a young hockey team brings together a small community in the folds of a hockey rink.

In Embro last year it was the novice rep team that won the league final, competed in the international Silver Stick tournament and reached the Ontario Minor Hockey Association final, only to be denied in the last game by Lucan.

"Last year in the finals they were pretty much filling the arena," said team manager Alex McIntosh. "We just kept on building all year."

The team's trek through the ranks of the OMHA did not go unnoticed by Zorra Township, the local municipality that honoured the team last Monday with a plaque.

"The plaque has all the kids names. It was quite impressive," McIntosh said.

"It was just an idea that we should be recognizing athletic accomplishment," said Zorra's director of recreation Pat Hovorka. It

was the third time in six years the town honoured a team for making it to the Ontario championships.

"This just helps heighten what they have done. You saw how they felt, smacking their sticks on the ice," Hovorka said. "It gives these guys a higher profile."

Even a year after the young novice players played through one of the best seasons in the history of Embro D-DD hockey, the memory of the accomplishments lingers.

While the stands in minor hockey games are usually lined with proud mothers and fathers, as the Embro novices moved through the play-offs, the stands were full.

"Some of the fans last year were people that were intrigued, jumping on the bandwagon," Hovorka said. "This is the heartbeat right here. Whatever goes on in the community focuses right here in the community centre."

McIntosh still remembers how people filed into the arena to watch the novices beat BB New Hamburg in the league final and win three



Photo by Alfred Romann  
Last year's Embro Minor Hockey Association novice team was recognized with a plaque from the Township of Zorra after it won its division and reached OMHA finals last year. c. 2000

games in the best-of-five series against Cayuga in the semi-final before falling in the championship series to a strong Lucan squad.

Although bitter, the loss was not unexpected. Lucan has a much bigger centre from which to draw players while Embro made up its 12-member team from 25 players.

The community rallied around the novices last year as the township's other village did behind the Junior Development Thamesford Trojans and the Thamesford atoms, the other teams to be recognized with plaques.

Although this year the novice team that did so well last year is

split with some members playing in the same age category while others moved to the atom age, some people, including McIntosh, are waiting for the team to come together again.

"Next year is a possibility they will all be back together again," McIntosh said.