

Bantam Clippers taking trip of a lifetime next month

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Members of the 2007 club are Josh Machesney, Steven Tait, Joseph Palladino, Sal Rabito, Kyle Pontone, Chris Smith, Curtis Crago, Connor Cadaret, Robbie Acton, Taylor Clifford, Daniel Perry, Kyle Sauro, Brett Hembruff, Adam MacGilvray, David Beloff, Matthew Miniaci and Daniel McMahon.

PARENTS' PROPOSAL

The hockey staff includes coach Don Easter, assistant coaches Bill Crago and Jim Bremner, manager Mark McMahon, goaltender coach Darryl Sauro and trainer Lee Palladino. According to Mr. Easter, the idea of an overseas trip was initiated 15 months ago by a small group of parents. The proposal was immediately embraced by the coaching staff. Other parents soon came on board.

Since it was agreed no player should be prevented from going because of financial restraint, fundraising projects were initiated, Easter said. They included a dinner and silent auction, golf tournament, plant sale,

several raffles and a hockey pool.

"Thanks to the efforts of parents and players plus an outpouring of generosity from within the community, we've been able to cover close to 80 per cent of team travel and accommodation expenses," said Mr. Easter.

In addition, players accepted the responsibility of raising \$500 each towards trip expenses, he noted. They accomplished this through bottle drives, car washes and summer jobs.

Coach Easter made one point clear. Playing a series of exhibition games and attending the World Junior Championships is not the team's primary focus.

"Most of the players have never travelled beyond North America," he said. "For some, this trip represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see other parts of the world and experience other cultures first-hand."

"These kids will see a dream become a reality through the efforts of many people working together towards a common goal. Hopefully, it will represent a

lesson in life that will remain long after their hockey playing days are over."

The team will take with them a multitude of mementoes including pins from all levels of government plus gifts of Canada tuques for their hosts and visiting player exchanges.

UNDEFEATED RECORD

Coach Easter describes his Clipper club as "very good", with a roster core that's played together seven years. Last year, they won the York Simcoe league championship and made it to the OMHA semi-finals. They were also runners-up at the International Silver Stick Tournament.

This season, they're undefeated in York Simcoe League play with a 15-0-2 record.

"Our team is very much looking forward to this experience," captain Josh Machesney said. "We see it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in hockey at the international level."

Seventeen parents will accompany the club. They'll return Jan. 7.



The Stouffville bantam Clippers toured Switzerland before winning an Ontario Minor Hockey Association title in 1972. Toronto Maple Leafs assistant coach and ex-NHLer Keith Acton is in the first row, second from right. The team is assisting this year's bantam team's trip to the Czech Republic. They'll take in the World Junior Hockey Championships.

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