

Westwood Wildcats' Roar Wasn't Enough To Defeat Paris Hockey Team

The St-Lazare Sportsplex held a first-of-its-kind event for youth on Monday, February 6th, 2017. The local high schools, Westwood Junior and Senior hosted a hockey match against a team from Paris, France. Kids of both genders ranging in ages between 12 and 15, regardless of their fitness level were able to take part in this fun experience. Westwood Hockey Coach, Martin Gascon describes the team, "The program started in September, [...] it's fairly new, this is our second game, [...] so we're still trying to work the structure of it all."

The Parisian team, Paris 2003 arrived the day before the match and were warmly welcomed by the Hudson and St. Lazare communities. Paris 2003 is an association that was created by 4 fathers of young hockey players in 2014. The idea behind the program was to promote the practice of Ice Hockey through the organisation of matches, and tournaments in France and internationally.

The Parisians touring team organizes annual trips to a different country, in addition to playing against other teams in their region. Parisian coach Patrick Roy said, "Every year, we do a big trip, we've been to Aosta Italy, Tilburg Holland, Prague, Moscow, Sochi Russia, and Copenhagen. This is the first time we came to Canada." The Paris team has competed against teams around Montreal and other cities.



Before this program was started 2 months ago, none of the English schools offered an Ice Sport Program to their students. Our Westwood team decided to start up this program after Arend Mijnsbergen shared his dreams with the school principal and Lester B. Pearson School Board to get an Ice Sport Program started. It was because of Arend's passion and that of his mother, Samya Mijnsbergen, that the Town of Saint-Lazare and the Complexe Sportif Saint-Lazare worked together to get ice assigned for the Westwood Wildcats.

The hockey program's objective is to promote physical activity, leadership, and team spirit as well as to help the players improve and develop their hockey skills. The goal is for students to compete at various levels with other schools that have implemented similar programs with intramural and exhibition games. The program also explores off-ice workshops to encourage team bonding and acceptance.

According to Adam Rogers, a player from the Westwood team, "We made our own code of conduct and the team is run based on the way we act and how each of us plays". He shared his thoughts on playing against the Parisians; "I'm looking forward to learning new ways to improve and become stronger in shots and speed." Roger's excitement is echoed by his female teammate Bourgeois, "I'm excited to play as well. I just find it cool that from now on, I can tell people that I've played against a different country."

Mathias Charlet from the opposing team had these positive things to say about the Canadian Hockey experience, "We'll maybe learn a bit more about hockey and learn how Canadians play, as this is the country known for this sport." He is hoping to take in the sights of Montreal before heading back home to France. Charlet confirmed that they are an 'Elite' (Double A) team and when asked if their team was nervous, Charlet had this to say, "We are not scared but we know that we will play against great teams because this is Canada, the country that is best at hockey."

The game was quite intense and the teams experienced a bit of conflict as they were both eager to claim victory. Westwood's female defenseman from the senior campus even ended up injured on the ice because of the rising action. All in all though, the players showed respect and good sportsmanship for each other while battling their way down the ice. The Westwood team was very proud of their efforts while walking off the ice even though the final score was 9 - 0.

Coach Roy, proud of his team said, "For us, it's a good first match since we only arrived here yesterday so our players are still suffering from jet lag. It was a game that put them in place. They skated and played together very well."

When asked to explain the 9 - 0 defeat, Westwood Coach Gascon had this to say, "Well first of all, it's important to note that we're two different teams, we're not built the same way. This is a school program that just started, it's more recreational for now. The difference of the level on our team is quite big, we have elite and recreational players so we're not built to win, that's not our main goal, we're built to improve and work together. The other team is completely different. They come here to North America, having built a team that is made to win and try to compete in tournaments. Today was more of an international friendly match and we came out on the short end, they were very good, but from our perspective, we feel that, from the start of the program, we have become better everyday. And I think today, even through the adversity and through the loss, we got better as a group and individually."



It's clear that no matter which team the kids were playing for, they all love the sport of hockey. Each team learned and grew closer throughout this experience. Coach Roy's parting words were of thanks, "Thank you for the invitation and thank you for organizing this all, I hope everyone enjoyed this experience." Surely, everyone did.

By Bella Gav & Liv Dumas