

NZ Ice Blacks Win Gold

The Ice Blacks won the gold medal at the Division III World Ice Hockey Championship, held in Dunedin from April 10th to 16th. New Zealand went undefeated in the tournament and dominated the opposition, defeating Luxembourg 6-2, Turkey 8-2, Greece 4-3 in an overtime thriller, and Ireland 9-0 in the final game. In addition to winning gold, the Ice Blacks are also elevated to Division II for next year's World Championships.

The team wrapped up the gold medal on Thursday night in front of a very rowdy crowd of well over a thousand hockey fans by defeating Ireland. It was a dominant performance from the Ice Blacks, who outclassed the opposition. There is some history between the two teams and although Ireland managed to keep the game close for the first period, the Ice Blacks blew it apart at the start of the second period by scoring three goals in under a minute and a half, kicked off by veteran Stacy Rout's first goal representing New Zealand.

The Ice Blacks closed out the game with a very strong third period, including two goals from Braden Lee, who completed his hat-trick. Rick Parry came up with some great saves when he needed to, and ended up with 27 stops in the goal for the second shutout in Ice Black history and the game MVP award for NZ. Chris Eaden, KC Ball, Dale Harrop, Brett Speirs, and Mitchell Oak also scored for the Ice Blacks.

"We have been working hard and building towards this for months," said Ice Blacks head coach, Jeff Bonazzo. "It was great to win the gold medal at home. There were a lot of standout performances by players on our team, and considering how young we are I think the team will only get stronger."

Overall, the team MVP was Adam Soffer from Christchurch, and Brett Speirs was named the Best Forward of the tournament with five goals and five assists in four games. Parry was unlucky not to take home the best goaltender award, saving 96% of the shots that were directed his way during the tournament.

The next games for the Ice Blacks will be in August at the Winter Games in Dunedin. More information can be found at www.nzicehockey.co.nz or www.iceblacks.com.