

Ice Blacks vs HC Storm – Game One

Game one of two in Auckland was a thriller that hung in the balance to the very end, but the Ice Blacks held on for a tremendous 7 – 5 win. NZ started the game all over the Finns and the packed house was roaring as the Ice Blacks jumped out to lead 2 – 0 at the end of the first period. Rookie Chris Eaden from Christchurch led the Ice Blacks with an impressive three goal hat-trick as the team surged to lead the Storm 6 – 2 by the end of the second. However, the Storm came thundering back in the final period, including two goals in the last 5 minutes, before the Ice Blacks managed to seal it on a wicked slapshot by Dan Nicholls on his debut with only 1.4 seconds left in the game.

The NZ team put in a powerful performance for their first competitive game of 2009. “It was a good game that we will look to build on over the rest of our series with the Storm,” said Corey Down, the Ice Black Captain who leads the team on defence. “The boys were really fired up and it is great to play with incredible support from the home crowd, unlike when we play in Europe. We are looking forward to having vocal fans at the World Champs in April,” added Down. The Ice Blacks take on Ireland, Turkey, Luxembourg, Greece, and Mongolia in Dunedin from April 10th to 16th.

The game was fast and clean but physical, with the Ice Blacks in particular delivering serious physical punishment to the Finns. Shots were a lopsided 45 – 29 in favour of NZ. Brett Speirs, NZ’s all-time leading goalscorer, showed his touch scoring one and adding another assist. Josh Hay and Braden Lee also chipped in with goals. Assistant Captain Danny Smith had two assists, as did KC Ball and Mitchell Oak who both play for the NZ National Ice Hockey League champion Botany Swarm. Rick Parry had a strong game in net for the Ice Blacks, recording 22 saves.

NZ Goals: Eaden (3), Hay (1), Speirs (1), Lee (1), Nicholls (1)

NZ Assists: Ball (2), Smith (2), Oak (2), Lee (1), Hay (1), Speirs (1)

NZ Saves: Parry (24), Nothling (2)

Storm Goals: Icarhunen (1), Karhu (1), Haakana (1), Yoskela (1), Vuorinen (1)

Storm Assists: Yoskela (2), Viltasalo (1), Kuoppala (1), Haakana (1), Icarhunen (1)

Storm Saves: Ruuhinen (38)