

Kent Valley Rainiers California Adventure

Kent, WA. 26 November, 2008 – The Kent Valley Pee Wee Rainiers traveled to Los Angeles this past weekend for exhibition games against top California teams. This weekend was a key milestone for the Rainiers program as they continue their drive to put Pacific Northwest hockey back among the elite programs in the Pacific District and USA Hockey. The exhibition series was coordinated with the traditional Los Angeles powerhouse programs that have dominated the Pacific District and produced USA Hockey national championship squads in recent years. The exhibition series allowed the Rainiers to benchmark their progress against top Pacific District competition.

The Rainiers took on the LA Hockey Club Pee Wee AA team in the opening game. LA Hockey Club plays a national schedule and competed at the Nike/Bauer Invitational in Chicago and traveled to Ontario over Thanksgiving for the Silver Sticks championships. Both teams showed tremendous skating skills. Kent Valley broke out to a 2-1 lead after the first period and extended the lead to 3-1 in the opening minutes of the second period. LA struck back for two quick goals to tie the game midway through the second period. Kent Valley responded with two goals at the end of the period to lead 5-3 going into the 3rd. The Rainiers added another insurance goal and kept LA off the board the remainder of the game to post the 6-3 victory.

The Rainiers played the LA Jr. Kings Pee Wee AAA team in the next two games of the exhibition weekend. The first game was at the historic Paramount Iceland where Frank Zamboni invented an ice resurfacing machine in 1949. Paramount Iceland is the largest rink the team has ever played on (bigger than Olympic sheet) and has many tricky bounces off its irregular boards. The game was a back and forth affair with Kent Valley scoring the first goal only to see the Jr. Kings come back with 2 goals to take the lead at the end of the 2nd period. Kent Valley struck back with 4 minutes remaining in the game for the 2-2 tie.

The rematch with the Jr. Kings was played at the Toyota Sports Center which is the practice home for the Kings and Lakers. This first-class facility hosted last year's Pacific District championships. The game was played on the Olympic sheet which gave both teams plenty of skating room. LA scored first to take the early lead. Kent Valley answered back with 2 goals to end the first period with a 2-1 lead. The goaltenders owned the second period as both teams were held off the scoreboard. Kent Valley added two third period goals to post the 4-1 victory. Both the Jr. Kings and Kent Valley played similar skating and puck movement styles which led to very exciting games with plenty of end-to-end action. Plans are in place to renew the rivalry between the two squads in Seattle in early 2009.

The final game of the exhibition weekend took place against the LA Selects Pee Wee AAA team. Kent Valley played the bigger and stronger team of all 1996 birth year players even through the first period and half of the second period. Rainier players were very impressed with the facial hair of the Selects goaltender. Midway through the second period, the Selects pushed across 3 goals in less than a minute to take control of the game. The physical strength of the Selects and an exhausting schedule of four highly competitive games in two days was too much for Kent Valley to overcome in the 7-1 loss. The LA Selects feature local Kent product, Jake Fricks, who excelled at defense during the game and contributed a goal to close out the scoring. Kent Valley was extremely grateful for the opportunity to play the organization that produced last year's Pee Wee Tier 1 national champion.

Head Coach Adam Kurtenbach commented about the Rainiers effort after the last game. *"Teams from the Pacific Northwest have taken a back seat to the LA teams in recent Pacific District competitions. It was important to see how our team would fare against these squads and dispel the myth that the Pacific Northwest was not capable of producing competitive AAA hockey teams. I was extremely proud of our team's performance and we are looking forward to the balance of our season and upcoming games against top BC and USA Hockey competition. We started our program with the intent of competing for Pacific*

District and USA Hockey national championships. This past weekend proved we are making progress toward our goals."

The Kent Valley Rainiers are back in action at Kent Valley Ice Centre on December 6th at 4:00 PM as they host Chilliwack. Come out and cheer the home team onto victory.

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