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ANOTHER SUMMER HAS COME AND GONE.

The warm weather is leaving and the crack of the bat is silent. In the distance, however, you can hear the roar of the crowd still emanating after the Texas Tornado won the USA Hockey Junior A National Championship this past May on their home ice at the Dr Pepper StarCenter. That's right, a National Championship team right in your own back yard! During their first season no less. In case you were not there, it went a little something like this:

As the Tornado headed into the playoffs last season, there was no question as to who the favorite was. With the Tornado enjoying home-ice advantage for the rest of the season, it was no surprise they swept the Texarkana Bandits, a team they had never lost to during the regular season, out of the first round. The Southern Division Finals would match the Tornado against the only team to defeat them at home, the Fairbanks Ice Dogs. After a close 3-2 Game #1 win, the Tornado seized the momentum of the series and outscored the Ice Dogs 11-2 in the next two games to add the South Division Playoff Championship to their growing list of accomplishments.

If the first game of the National Championship Tournament was any indication of how things would go, the Tornado was in good hands. An 8-3 win over Bismarck sent a statement, the Texas Tornado was here to play . . . and win. A microcosm of that attitude came after the third Tornado goal when Luke Flicek scored on a breakaway and was immediately crushed into the boards by a Bobcats player. Team captain Anthony Pellarin came to the rescue and proceeded to dish out punishment to the Bismarck player for the hit. Flicek went on to score three more goals in an 8-3 win.

Two more wins over the Springfield Jr. Blues (1-0) and the Fairbanks Ice Dogs (2-1) would set up a rematch with Bismarck for the title. "We preached all year that if we went out and played the way we were capable of playing, then we would always have a



Tornado Determination

photo by Brent Earles

your hometown national champs return

by alex kyrias



Saturday, September 25th at the Dr Pepper StarCenter in Frisco. A night filled with banner ceremonies and memories of last year's remarkable run, but here's some food for thought for the 2004-2005 season... When head coach Tony Curtale was asked how he would top last season, his reply was this: "I think last year's team had a lot of chemistry, but this year's team should be more talented top to bottom. It is just a question of if they can gel as a team like the last group did. If so, look out." A pretty bold statement, but nevertheless, the Texas Tornado will give their fans another thrill ride during the 2004-2005 season.

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chance to win," said Tornado head coach and general manager Tony Curtale. "Once we arrived at the Championship game, the guys responded like they had all season."

The Championship game turned into a typical Tornado game. The Tornado out shot their opponent by a large margin. The defense and goaltending were airtight. The offense was in high gear and the crowd was supportive like they were on September 17th during opening night 2003. This time, they won, led by a coach who succeeded at every level, but who had never won a National Championship. Led by owners who had the vision when the Dr Pepper StarCenter was a field of dirt. Led by 25 young men whose willingness to pay the price ultimately resulted in something that can never be taken away and will always be remembered a National Championship.

A new season of Texas Tornado Hockey opened on