

## Bethlehem Blast 16AA vs. W-B Jr. Pens at Steel Ice Center

BETHLEHEM—The Bethlehem Blast Midget Minor 16AA hockey team hosted the Jr. Pens of Wilkes-Barre at Steel Ice Center in a DVHL early season match up.

Head coach Mark Spease said, “We selected the team in May, and started practice in June. The U16 level is where you separate the pretenders from the players, and the cream rises to the top. We didn’t know the players going in like other years. We were new to them, so they were really paying attention. We started from scratch, and put them where we wanted them to play. It takes a team player to do that. The players wrote down goals and gave them to the coaches.”

The Blast won several tournaments during the summer: in Pennsauken, N.J. they went 4-0, at the Prudential Center, which is the home of the N.J. Devils, they went 4-1 against tier I AAA teams, and lost in the

championship to an all Russian team. However, the Blast didn’t lose because the opposition was superior. They only had an hour rest before the final, whereas the Russian team had seven hours, and the Blast just ran out gas.

Spease added out, “We went 15-1 over the summer, it was pleasing because half of our team are first year 16’s. As coaches, we want to teach them more than they’ve learned, make them understand the game a lot better. It can be very complicated and it helps if you understand the effect of your actions, what you are doing and why you are doing it. They’re very receptive. They also have fun, have team meals, watch videos, for team building and bonding that accelerates team chemistry.”

Spease observed, “We’re the only 16AA team that started league play at 4-0. My biggest concern is too much early season success.

We have to avoid complacency, and keep pushing to get better.”

Spease coached the 18’s in past years. The team went to districts two years in row, and now they want to do it again with the 16’s.

“It’s a marathon not a sprint, with over twenty league games remaining, only the top 4 teams make districts.”

Spease’s Assistant Coaches include Mike Rohrer, Keith Rohrer, and Team Manager Dave Diegel.



## Bethlehem Blast Bantam A Black vs. CC Vipers at Steel Ice Center

See color photos on page 29 by Alice Lipe • [www.photosbyajlipe.com](http://www.photosbyajlipe.com)

BETHLEHEM—The Bethlehem Blast Bantam A Black team took on the CC Vipers at Steel Ice Center in a DVHL league game.

Head coach Gerry Chandik said, “The team is doing very well, we have good team chemistry, the players are hard working, and they want to learn.”

The Blast has two Bantam A teams separated by birth year, the Black team is the older ’95 birth year team.

In practice the team works on power plays, breakouts, penalty kills, offensive creativity, zone coverage, and all the individual skills. They always review the basics, because if you can’t take a pass, handle the stick and keep your head up, nothing else matters.

The team first met in June, had summer practices and tournament events, and once the regular season started, it’s all hockey, all the time, with a lot of home games early on, and many double games on weekends.

Chandik said, “I’m originally from Montreal, Canada where an away game was 10 minutes away, there were rinks everywhere. Here it can be 1-2 hours away. Everybody has to buy into the commitment for the length of season that we play.”

Chandik returns to Canada numerous times each year to visit family. He was hoping to take the team up to Canada for a tournament. Everyone gets to know each other on such a different level when you travel.

“You get 20 people together and you’re going to like people on various levels. But on the ice you have to be best friends whether it’s the Blast, the Yankees, or the Flyers. You find a way to get along, and it’s best to learn that here and take it with you as you get older.”

Chandik concluded, “Our dreams are still alive. We have a lot of talent, and as one of our assistant coaches said, ‘If we don’t make it to districts it’s our fault.’”

Chandik’s Assistant Coaches include: Rich Dumbach, Rick Amadeo, Bill Branigan, and Team Manager: Ray DeQuintal.

