

Rampant Hong Kong Tigers make a meal of luckless mainlanders

ICE HOCKEY

John Carney

Hong Kong Tigers iced rivals Beijing Peng Han 4-1 in the final of the International Hockey 5's at Mega Ice in Kowloon Bay last night.

The Tigers always held sway in the decider and had too much firepower for the mainlanders in a one-sided affair.

Bolstered by some of the top players in Hong Kong, the Tigers held sway throughout and, despite Beijing fielding some former China national team players, they were no match for the home side.

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Tournament organiser Keith Fong

"We have a well-balanced team and have been playing well all tournament," Tigers left winger Cal Wong Fook-wai said. "We had played Beijing earlier in the tournament and they gave us a tough game, so we weren't taking them for granted.

"It's all about what you produce on the day and we were able to rise to the occasion."

Cheered on by two young fans, who kept chanting "Play hard, play hard" in Cantonese, the Tigers took off to a great start when they took the

lead after only two minutes when Greg Smyth scored after an assist by Steve Mossing. Some good saves from Tigers goaltender Grant Phillips kept his side in pole position before Jamie Stark pounced to put the home side deservedly in front 2-0 by the end of the second period.

The Tigers looked to have made the game safe after a slap shot from Tom Barnes rebounded to Anthony Devolz, who slid the puck to the net to make it 3-0.

It was a perfect scenario for Barnes, who has been a stalwart of Hong Kong ice hockey for the past 16 years, but is leaving with his family for the US in the next few weeks.

Beijing did their best to ruin Barnes' big night when they pulled a goal back after a great individual score from Xue Liu. But it turned out to be only a consolation effort as Matt Cline grabbed the Tigers' fourth goal after an assist from Smyth.

In the semi-finals, the Tigers easily demolished the People's Republic Gryphons 10-0, while Beijing narrowly beat Tokyo Canadian Hockey Club 4-3 after overtime in a nail-biting encounter.

In the men's Asian final, Sam Wai Hittmen got the better of Taipei Vikings 6-0, while in the women's decider, CCHA Warriors beat Dosuki Sumo 2-1.

Tournament organiser Keith Fong could look back on a job well done after a tournament that proved ice hockey is thriving in Hong Kong.

"Every year we have gone from strength to strength and this year has been the best yet," Fong said.

"The ice hockey that has been played has been of a very high quality."



Hong Kong Tigers' Anthony Devolz tries to skate between Beijing's Wei Li and Yan Fuwang. Photo: Jonathan Wong