



Photo by Patricia O'Blenes

Fans watch Warren Mott and Port Huron High square off Jan. 17 at Macomb Suburban Ice Arena during the MAC Showcase. The Marauders topped the Big Reds 3-2.

What a show MAC Hockey Showcase draws crowds, rave reviews

By Brad D. Bates
 C & G Sports Writer



MACOMB TOWNSHIP — If the point of the Macomb Area Conference hockey showcase Jan. 16-17 at Macomb Suburban Ice Arena was to turn heads, it was a rousing success.

The showcase's 18 games routinely packed the stands at Suburban Ice Arena and raised more than \$15,000.

"We invested about \$14,000 in the event," said Russ DiCristofaro, St. Clair Shores Unified assistant coach and President of the MAC Hockey Coaches Association. "We brought in between \$16,000 and \$18,000, so we're plus \$4,000 to \$3,000."

The revenue returns to the hands of the MAC Hockey Coaches Association, and it will decide how to best use the funds. One possibility would be to put it toward next season's showcase.

"That's something all us coaches need to get together to see what we want to do," DiCristofaro said. "If I had my say, it would be to put it toward next year, but we need to have a vote on it."

While the event was a success in promoting MAC hockey within the local community, it also saw some success in it's other goal of promoting its players to college and junior hockey coaches, and scouts.

"They've done a great job organizing and advertising the event," said Dave Phillips, a

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scout for the Soo Eagles of the Northern Ontario Junior A Hockey League said.

“They’ve got some good teams with some good kids. Most teams here have a handful of kids who could go to junior (hockey). (The MAC teams) are making great strides with this.”

While the number of scouts wasn’t quite as high as coaches would have liked, the large local support and the prospects of building the event in the future bodes well for further success.

“I love these events, and I was disappointed there weren’t more scouts here,” said Phillips, who also has coached in the Michigan Developmental Hockey League. “They’ll get them, though.

“This is the first MAC Showcase. The Trenton (Michigan Interscholastic Hockey League) Showcase has been going for eight years, so it takes time to build. (The MAC is) going in the right direction though.”

Players like Utica Eisenhower senior Ryan Persha, who is a veteran of travel hockey, was impressed by the event but didn’t need a showcase to realize that MAC hockey is on its way.

“I like it a lot,” Persha said. “So many people come out to see us, a lot more than travel hockey. There, it’s parents, grandparents and maybe girlfriends. Here, it’s your whole school. It’s great.”

As the MAC looks to build its showcase and league notoriety, it plans to include the Oakland Activities Association in 2009-10, which would double the number of teams involved in the event.

“We want to rival the MIHL,” DiCristofaro said. “Combining (with the OAA) puts us in the running for the biggest showcase in the state.”

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