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## Bantam Major team remains dominant

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The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Knights Bantam Major team was finally challenged for two consecutive weekends in November before returning to its dominant ways the day after Thanksgiving.

The Knights got at least three points from seven different players and 21 saves from Gavin Lewis in an 11-0 rout of Suffolk PAL to start a weekend sweep.

After beating Suffolk again, 6-2, the Knights continued to possess the best record in the Atlantic Youth Hockey League.

The Knights won one game and tied the other against strong opposition each of the previous two weekends. They started with a 2-2 tie against Long Island Nov. 19 then ended the series with a 5-4 win to hand the Gulls their first AYHL loss.

Dennis Smirnov had a hat trick in the game that left Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (now 11-0-2-0) on top of the AYHL.

The previous weekend featured hat tricks by Paul DeNaples of Moscow and Smirnov in consecutive games. DeNaples led a 6-4 win over the Connecticut WolfPack before Smirnov had a five-point effort and DeNaples scored two more goals in a 6-6 tie.

"We can credit our fast start to hard work," Alex Vasko, the coach of the team for 1997 birth year players and younger, said in a story on the league Web site. "We prepare the same way every week.

"Our main goal is player development and competing at the national championships."

The Knights showed their ability to compete on a high level earlier in November by winning the Bantam Major Elite Division title at the Bauer International Invitational in Chicago.

After starting with a 5-5 tie against the Mississauga Senators from Ontario, the team gave up just six goals total in five straight wins, including a 6-3 championship game victory over Detroit Compuware.

Youthhockeyreport.com ranks the Knights third in the country in their age group while myhockeyrankings.com has the team sixth.

The Knights had won their first seven games in the AYHL by a combined margin of 66-14 before hitting tougher games in mid-November.

The team features three Lackawanna County players – DeNaples, Patrick West from Dickson City and Elijah Latimer, a defenseman from Carbondale. Along with a strong international flavor, the roster has other northeast Pennsylvania players in David Eifert from West Pittston, Ryan Flanagan from Duryea, and defenseman Marcus Joseph and goalie Lewis, both from Mountain Top.

DeNaples had a goal and four assists in the Nov. 25 rout while Ivan Provorov had two goals and three assists, Nikita Anistratenko had two goals and two assists, and Nikita Pavlychev had two goals and an assist.

Read more:

[http://www.timesleader.com/golackawanna/sports/Bantam\\_Major\\_team\\_remains\\_dominant\\_12-04-2011.html#ixzz1g0DT7QLB](http://www.timesleader.com/golackawanna/sports/Bantam_Major_team_remains_dominant_12-04-2011.html#ixzz1g0DT7QLB)