



New Jersey Rockets 19-U Tier I headed to Nationals after shootout victory

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The New Jersey Rockets are headed back to Nationals, even if by the slimmest of margins.

The Rockets Tier I 19-Under Girls team made it back-to-back Atlantic District Tournament titles with a 4-3 victory over the rival New Jersey Colonials on March 13 at the Ice House in Hackensack, N.J. Nikola Tomigova tallied the deciding goal, and Kiera Wynne stopped the last four shots she faced in the sudden-death shootout to send the Rockets off to Rochester, Mich., for the March 30-April 3 USA Hockey National Championships.

“We let them tie it up with 23 seconds left, but that’s our season in a nutshell,” Rockets coach Mark Hurle said. “We fall behind, but we come back.”

The Rockets had to come back at the very beginning of the season. They had to offset roster losses from last year’s team that went to the 2010 USA Hockey Nationals in Green Bay, Wis.

“We lost a lot of great players, but we have great leadership,” Hurle said. “We started off slow, but we kept working hard, and it paid off.”

He added that the goal was to get into the playoffs, where anything could happen, including a return trip to Nationals.

“You always shoot for the top,” Hurle said.

The Rockets made that happen by going 3-0 at the District Tournament. They opened Districts with an 8-3 win over the Lady Patriots from Warminster, Pa. They then followed that win with a 4-3 shootout victory the following day against the Quakers Hockey Club from West Chester, Pa. **Nikki Rivera tallied the decisive goal in the extra session.**

The Rockets had previously defeated the Quakers to win the Tier I 19-Under championship of the Mid-Atlantic Women’s Hockey Association, after finishing a perfect 15-0 in MAHWA play.

“We won the league again, and we’ve won it six years or so in a row,” Hurle said.

He added that his team played strong after the holidays. It showed in the results, plus the fact that more scouts came out to watch the Rockets in action.

Miye D'Oench, who led the Rockets in scoring with 56 points (35 goals, 21 assists) has verbally committed to Harvard University for the 2012-13 season. Lauren Wash, who posted 24 goals and 41 points this winter, is also expected to play for a Division I team. Both have one year left to skate with the Rockets. Their former teammate, Christie Cicero, just completed her freshman season at Mercyhurst College.

The Rockets have received strong goaltending from the tandem of Wynne and Isabelle Lazarus. The duo combined to replace last year's starter, Isabella Santore, who also moved on to the college ranks.

"Both goalies have played tremendous for us," Hurle said.

The Rockets made a played regularly against strong competition from outside the Atlantic District in preparation for a postseason run.

"We play in the Midwest tournaments to get exposure," said Hurle, whose team also played teams from New England and Canada.

They'll likely see some familiar faces at Nationals.

Story courtesy of [Red Line Editorial, Inc.](#)