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## **View from the ice: Tri Valley's Judah Gemmell**

### **Being a teammate extends beyond what happens on the ice**

By Judah Gemmell  
For California Rubber

My alarm rang at 5:20 in the morning and I stumbled out of bed. I was with my hockey team in Riverside for a CAHA weekend tournament and there was no need for me to be up at this unnatural hour. I had separated my shoulder in a game the day before, so I wasn't playing on this day.

However, I wanted to support my team – the Tri Valley Blue Devils' Midget 18AA – in its last regular-season game, and I knew that my teammates would enjoy having me there to watch them. So I managed to sleepwalk out to our van and rode to the rink with my team.

One would think that with it being five o'clock in the morning, my teammates would be a little tired, but they're never tired. As soon as the music is turned on, my teammate Cameron and the rest of the guys start singing and dancing the whole way to the rink.

I'm not sure which I love more, goofing off with my team in the locker room before the game, or actually playing the game. It would be impossible to describe the good times a team can have off the ice. We are like brothers. Being on a hockey team is something you truly need to experience yourself to understand what good friends you become with one another. Not only do you spend time with your teammates off the ice, but you depend on them on the ice.

I walked into our locker room and looked around. Everyone brings something different to the team. My captain Mike was motivating everyone for the game, and DJ always knows exactly how to make everyone laugh on these early mornings. As it gets closer to game time we quiet down to think about the game. Everyone knows what they need to do. Craig establishes a physical presence early, Melka sets the pace of the game with his superb skating ability, and Preston is usually the first to blast one of his famous slap shots on goal.

From the bleachers, I watched my team take to the ice, wishing I could be playing. Each time a player on my team scores, he looks up and points at me in the stands. Watching my team win, and knowing that they wanted me there as a part of the team to support them, made waking up early that morning worthwhile.

Nothing is better than being on a hockey team. Everyone is like family; we are all Blue Devils and proud of it. Every player knows he's playing for the name on the front of the jersey, not the one on the back.

The dedication we show on the ice and the good times we have off the ice makes playing hockey an experience like none other. Win or lose I wouldn't trade my team for the world.

*Judah Gemmell is a forward on the Tri Valley Blue Devils 18U AA team that advanced to the USA Hockey Nationals in 2009.*