



**DUBAI SANDSTORMS 4**



**DUBAI MIGHTY CAMELS 5**

## **CAMELS EDGE OUT SANDSTORMS IN THRILLER**

Twidle's heroics in vain as Camels prevail at Al Nasr  
**28 February, 2010**

**Dubai,** A late comeback by the Sandstorms made for a nail biting finish to round off a spicy game against the Might Camels. Playing against a full strength men's lineup, the Sandstorms put on a credible show to come agonizingly close to winning their second straight game against the adults.

The absence of Swedish sensation David Dokakis and Englishwoman Kirsty Evans didn't seem to hamper the Sandstorms, who jumped to an early lead through a stunning individual effort by Drew Gibson. Gibson, fresh from a tournament over the weekend in Qatar, found an opening through the Camel's defense and scored on goaltender Jack Guerreiro.

The lead lasted the better part of five minutes, as the Camel's tied things up via a sweet tic-tac-toe play that left Mathew Jones no chance at all. The rest of the period saw flowing back and forth action between the two evenly matched sides, and some quality saves from both goaltenders.



**Above:** Goaltender Mathew Jones makes a quick glove save **Photo: Ammar Suleman**

In between periods, Diego Kleckner (who was also in Qatar for the weekend) decided to switch sides and play for the men following a run in with the coach and several players on the team. It seemed as though Kleckner felt he was too good to play for a meek, junior club like the Sandstorms. This traitorous act of disloyalty fired up the Sandstorms, who came out onto the ice in the second period like possessed players on pot.

Ronan Twidle scored his first goal of the night when he positively hammered a slapshot from the slot that beat Guerreiro low to his left. The goal was raucously celebrated by the Sandstorms and celebrations were mainly directed at Kleckner. This resulted in a few verbal salvos being exchanged, but the situation was kept under control by referee Billy Dean Gibson.

When play continued after the goal, there was without doubt a more physical element to proceedings. Bodies went flying like birds and tempers were being tested to the limit. It was a time for cool heads and with experience on their side, the Camels played a controlled game and scored a couple of quick goals to restore their lead.

In an attempt to keep his team focused, Coach Thierry VanDurme attempted to cool down his players and succeeded in doing so. The next few minutes saw a more mature Sandstorms team

skating hard, passing the puck around, and taking shots on the Camels most successful goaltender, Jack Guerreiro.

Drew Gibson came close to tying things up, but his wrist shot was snagged by Guerreiro's glove whilst Jason Eid's monster slapshot was met by a lightning quick pad save. Despite the overwhelming illusion that they were shooting on a large brick wall, the Sandstorms continued taking shots and pressurizing the Camels goal.

In the meantime, the Camels offense also had chances to increase their lead but they were met with stubborn resistance from Mathew Jones, who was ripe from a smashing holiday in North America. The Canadian goaltender was determined to match his senior counterpart save for save, and kept his team in the game with a gallery of tight stops. The second period ended with both sides still in with a chance, and a close finish on the cards.

The final period witnessed a fall in standards from the Sandstorms with several defensive errors being committed in their own zone; Mohamed being the culprit on more than one occasion. The Camel's seized on these mistakes and slotted in another couple of goals to increase their lead to a commanding three goals.

"Sometimes it's just the pressure of playing against the big boys, you know. You're so eager to bring out your best and forget the basics. I think that's what happened to some of us," said a disappointed Mohamed after the game. "We let them off the hook in the starting of the third period, which I feel was the turning point in the game."

The score remained stagnant at 5-2 for the better part of the third period before Ronan Twidle found his early game groove and sparked an improbable comeback with just over five minutes to go. He first made it 5-3 by banging in a rebound in the crease, and soon after brought the Sandstorms to within one when he finished off a classic play with Drew Gibson and Jason Eid, who was playing with a torn leg muscle.

Suddenly the Sandstorms sensed that something was brewing, and pushed forward for an equalizer. Mohamed had a golden chance when he went two-on-one with Eid on the Camels goal, but he was caught in two minds on weather to pass or shoot and ended up tamely giving up the puck.



Eric Zurcher, who had had a solid game, also came close when he smashed a snapshot from a mean angle that went off the outside of the post. With a minute and a half remaining in regulation, the Sandstorms pulled their goaltender for an extra attacker. Mohamed came onto the ice and along with Ronan Twidle, Jason Eid, Drew Gibson, Alex Caneborg, and Toby Oakley went all out in search of a tying goal.

**Left:** *The scoreboard tells a story at the end of the game* **Photo: Ammar Suleman**

They came to within inches of scoring only to see the Camels Diego Kleckner take the puck away from danger, and skate with it to the opposite end of the ice. Kleckner's attempt at an insurance goal narrowly missed the empty net, as he sent his low backhand just wide. **(next page)**

A last mad scramble in the Camel's crease with seconds left on the clock ended a riveting game, which could have so easily gone the other way.

The Sandstorms battling spirit earned them the respect of their older opponents: "They're a feisty bunch of kids these Sandstorms," said the Camel's winger Wayne Maher after the game. "They just didn't give up, even when they were down by three with five minutes left."

Goaltender Mathew Jones had yet another impressive outing in goal, and had this to say about the game: "We played alright but I think we need to get more shots on net. They had double the amount of shots we had."

It was a close finish to a crackerjack of a game. The Sandstorms could leave the rink with their heads held high, having pushed the men to their limits. Next months encounter is sure to be an eagerly anticipated one given the competitive nature of these games. Time will also tell weather Diego Kleckner can truly appreciate his value to the Sandstorms, and what he bring to the club as a player and as an individual.

**Mohamed Suleman (a.k.a. Mohamed Mohamed)**