

Ticket plan for junior tourney fails eager fans

People promised packages denied seats

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Team Canada players react after losing to Team Russia in the IIHF World Junior Championship gold medal final in Buffalo, N.Y. on Wednesday, January 5, 2011. The 2012 tournament in Edmonton and Calgary is already sold out.

Photography by: Nathan Denette , The Canadian Press

Got your tickets for the 2012 IIHF World Junior Hockey Championship?

If you do, great. If not, you're not the only one.

Numerous hockey fans who were sent an e-mail telling them that they had won the right to buy tickets for the Alberta-hosted event were left empty-handed and disgruntled after ticket packages sold out Thursday.

"If there is one thing we were surprised by, it's that so many people bought the maximum of six packages they could," said Alberta bid co-chairman Lyle Best.

More than 187,000 fans entered a priority draw, hoping for a chance to purchase ticket packages which include 21 games in Calgary, and 10 tournament games in Edmonton.

Organizers said more than 17,000 packages were sold, amounting to roughly 275,000 tickets made available through the packages.

About half of the tickets were previously set aside for those holding season tickets to either the Edmonton Oilers, Edmonton Oil Kings, Calgary Flames or Calgary Hitmen.

"We need to take care of our best customers," said Best, who also said that a handful of tickets had to be reserved for Hockey Canada and the IIHF.

Although tickets were supposed to be purchased by the "winners" of the priority draw over three days, halfway through the second day the chance to purchase tickets had passed.

"I received an e-mail Monday afternoon saying I could purchase tickets Thursday at 3 p.m.," Edmontonian Robert Blake said.

Blake was one of the fortunate few who was chosen from the priority draw. He and his wife were excited after finding out they had an in to tickets for the medal round in Calgary. But about 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Blake received an e-mail telling him that only single tickets were available in Calgary. By noon, he received another e-mail notifying him that all tickets for the event were sold.

Darrell Winwood is another hockey fan angry with the ticket system used by Hockey Canada.

"What a stupid system. Of course they'd be sold out before Friday came, anyone with a credit card would buy as many tickets as they could," Winwood said in an e-mail.

"I have to try and explain to my wife and family why I can't (get) tickets after all after being very excited about this all week. I'm mad."

There were also rumblings that the prices of packages for the games in Edmonton cost as much if not more than the packages available in Calgary. A rumbling is all it turned out to be. "Packages in Edmonton were in the mid-\$300 range and the high \$400 range in Calgary," Best said.

Wainwright teacher Krista Mac-Donald, whose father was chosen in the draw, was disappointed because she was looking forward to having her family come from Nova Scotia for Christmas. "We were going to go to the hockey games and paint our faces," she said.

MacDonald also said making tickets available on a first-come, first-served basis could have avoided such a fiasco. "I can't believe how a national organization could mess up something so big."

The tournament goes from Dec. 26 to Jan. 5, 2012.

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