

THE BREAKDOWN AND THE MINNESOTA HOCKEY HUB PRESENT

The complete

March 10-13, 2010

State Tournament Guide



Lakeville North



Edina



Apple Valley



Hill-Murray



Blaine



Duluth East



Roseau

Class AA



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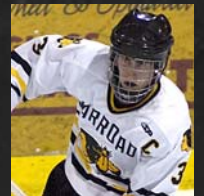
Hermantown



Alexandria



Virginia/MIB



Warroad

Class A

WELCOME TO THE STATE TOURNAMENT!

STATEMENT WEEKEND

Sixteen teams hit the X this week attempting to win state titles;
Minnetonka and Breck earn top seeds

Welcome to the 2010 State High School Hockey Tournament!

You hold in your hands the most comprehensive guide to the teams involved in this year's tournament. It was published through the joint efforts of Breakdown Sports USA, MyFoxHockey and the Minnesota Hockey Hub, the best three sources for high school hockey and all partners with the Minnesota Hockey Coaches Association.

Class AA team capsules are located in the first half of the guide, followed by both the Class AA and Class A brackets in the guide's center and the Class A team capsules in the last half of the guide. Each team capsule includes basic information about the program, statistics of each team's leading scorers and goaltenders, full rosters, the "Road to the X," and a scouting report on each team with pictures.

Minnesota Hockey Hub editor Loren Nelson wrote half of the Class AA and Class A capsules. You'll recognize his style as the man with his finger on the pulse of Minnesota high school hockey.

Tim Kolehmainen, editor of Breakdown Sports USA, compiled the other half of the Class A and AA capsules, as well as teaming with Helen Nelson to provide nearly all the action photos in the guide. The Breakdown publishes the best preseason preview on Minnesota high school hockey, a nearly 300-page encyclopedia on the best game in town. It's available just prior to each season and a must-have for all hockey fans.

There are plenty of old favorites in this year's tournament, with Edina in Class AA and Warroad in Class A teaming for numerous appearances. But there are also unfamiliar faces, programs that have been to St. Paul before, but aren't nearly as frequent guests such as Apple Valley and New Ulm.

Class A action begins the four-day celebration at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. Second-seeded Mahtomedi (23-5-0) plays Alexandria (21-6-1) at 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 10, followed by No. 3 Hermantown (25-3-0) against Virginia/Mt. Iron-Buhl (18-7-3). The evening session kicks off at 6 p.m. with No. 1 and defending state champion Breck (26-2-0) taking on New Ulm (16-9-1), followed by No. 4 Warroad (24-4-0) against Rochester Lourdes (17-8-3).

The Class AA tournament opens the next morning (Thursday, March 11) at 11 a.m. with No. 2 Edina (20-6-2) against Roseau (22-5-1). At 1 p.m., No. 3 Blaine (21-4-3) faces Apple Valley (17-11-0). In the evening, top-seeded Minnetonka (25-1-2) gets its tournament underway against Lakeville North (11-15-2) at 6 p.m. The 8 p.m. game features No. 4 Hill-Murray (25-2-1) and Duluth East (19-5-4) squaring off.

The Minnesota Hockey Hub will be your complete home of the Minnesota High School Hockey tournament. We are pleased to announce that we will feature our live in-game scoring and will also offer audio play-by-play throughout the tournament.

With our team of photographers, images of the action will be updated as the games progress, and we will also be working in conjunction with our other partner, MyFoxHockey.com to post video of post game response from players and coaches.

We look forward to bringing you the most comprehensive news and information of the greatest event in high school sports from the Xcel Energy Center.

Please accept this invitation to join us this week as along with our partners we will bring you the most up-to-date and professional coverage of the State Tournament.

Thank you for viewing our site this season, as it has been a success. We look forward to seeing you all back next winter!

-- Tim Kolehmainen,
Editor, Breakdown Sports USA

-- Loren Nelson,
Editor, Minnesota Hockey Hub

-- Pete Waggoner,
Minnesota Hockey Hub



Pictured above is Hill-Murray's J.D. Cotroneo (27).
Front cover is Breck's Austin Rudnick (24) and
Minnetonka's Max Coatta (9).

LAKEVILLE NORTH

By Tim Kolehmainen

For one night, Lakeville's civil war – emphasis on civil – shifted about 65 miles to the southeast down US Highway 52.

When third-seeded Lakeville North and top-seeded Lakeville South squared off in the Section 1AA finals last Friday night, the Rochester Civic Center was overrun by Cougars and Panthers. It may have been a ways to travel for a game, but no one wanted to miss the party afterwards. Or the reward – a trip to the Class AA state tournament.

South had to be confident after beating North twice during the regular season by a combined 9-1 score. But it was North that earned the state bid, courtesy of a surprising 5-0 victory.

"The kids had worked so hard during the week and in preparation for the playoffs," coach Randy Schmitz said. "There was a lot of excitement and great emotion showed by everybody."

That excitement might have been tempered a bit the next morning, when the seeding was announced for the Class AA state tournament. North (11-15-2), the only team in the tournament field with a losing record, drew No. 1 Minnetonka in the opening round Thursday night.

Schmitz was realistic about the draw, but wasn't ready to concede without a fight.

"You play under great competition throughout the year," Schmitz said, referring to the

Panthers' Lake Conference slate.

"We've been there before, as far as tough games against tough opponents."

That schedule is both a blessing and a curse for the Panthers.

North has certainly played plenty of tough opponents, including 10 teams ranked in the Hockey Hub's top-10 polls. That doesn't even include two games against fellow state tournament qualifier Apple Valley. The Panthers know what a state-tournament quality team looks like.

Unfortunately, they've only gone 1-9-2 in those 11 games, which has some observers scoffing at their sub-.500 record.

"We had some games throughout the year that we played really well in," argued Schmitz. "At the end of the season, we were able to put together four good games in a row (including a 4-4 tie with No. 9AA Jefferson in the regular season finale). The biggest difference was we were able to score some goals and get some offense."

Sophomores have paced North's attack for much of the season. Leading scorers Nate Arentz (20-11-31) and Brady Skjei (10-18-28)

are talented players, but are very young. "They have great hockey skills and they played for us last year as freshmen," Schmitz said. "The mix that we have, good seniors that lead the way, and some juniors and sophomores. It's a nice balance of players."

North has rotated two goaltenders, sophomore Charlie Lindgren (6-7-2, 2.86, .890) and senior Matt Arentz (5-8-0, 3.69, .871).



N. Arentz



B. Skjei



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Panthers

Conference: Lake

Section: 1AA

Record: 11-15-2

State trips: 2006, 10

Coach: Randy Schmitz

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Nate Arentz	20	11	31
Brady Skjei	10	18	28
Tyler Goss	12	11	23
Jack Pahl	6	16	22
Nick Johnson	10	11	21

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Ch. Lindgren	6-7-2	2.86	.890
Matt Arentz	5-8-0	3.69	.871

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Charlie Lindgren	G	10
4	Jack Pahl	F	12
5	Tim Kuzniar	D	12
6	Ben Skelly	D	12
7	Tory Merz	D	11
8	Nick Johnson	F	12
9	Gordon Kappers	F	11
10	Luke Moore	F	11
11	Jake Moore	F	11
12	Nate Arentz	F	10
13	Derek Wypyszynski	F	12
14	Ryan Bochniak	D	11
16	Brady Skjei	D	10
17	Johnny Domina	D	11
19	Tyler Goss	F	12
20	Ben Counters	F	11
23	Ramsey Skjei	F	11
24	Blake Winiecki	F	10
25	Evan Peterson	F	10
25	Charlie Hayes	F	10
36	Shaun Reinhardt	D	11
38	Derek Perkins	F	12
39	Matt Arentz	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 1AA Quarters, 2/25
Lkvl North 4, Farmington 1

Wypyszynski and Paul 1 goal each

Section 1AA Semis, 2/27
Lkvl North 6, Roch Century 3

Lindgren 32 saves

Section 1AA Finals, 3/5
Lkvl North 5, Lkvl South 0

Lindgren 26 saves

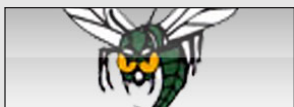
B. Skjei 1 goal, 2 assists

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

THE PANTHERS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Tim Kolehmainen: They can continue playing as they did in the 1AA playoffs -- and against Jefferson during the regular season. Otherwise, the Panthers will be a decided underdog in any game at state.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Hornets**Conference:** Classic Lake**Section:** 2AA**Record:** 20-6-2

State trips: 1973, 74 Champs, 77, 78 Champs, 79 Champs (as East), 81 (as West), 1955, 56, 57, 60, 62, 67, 68, 69 Champs, 70, 71 Champs, 72, 82 Champs, 83, 84 Champs, 87, 88 Champs, 89, 95, 96, 97 Champs, 98, 2000, 07, 08, 09, 10

Coach: Curt Giles

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Steven Fogarty	20	16	36
Charlie Taft	17	10	27
Michael Sit	12	15	27
Jake Sampson	10	13	23
Ryan Cutshall	10	9	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Connor Girard	10-3-1	1.77	.915
Johnny Ankeny	10-3-1	1.90	.920

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Connor Girard	G	11
3	Ben Ostlie	D	11
4	Max Everson	D	11
5	Joey Kopp	F	11
6	Parker Reno	D	9
7	Brett Stolpestad	F	12
8	Jake Sampson	F	11
9	Jon Cote	F	11
11	Lou Nanne	F	10
12	Jake Heck	D	12
14	Ben Walker	F	10
15	Blake Chapman	F	12
16	Ryan Cutshall	F	12
17	Michael Sit	F	11
18	Cole Kretzman	F	12
19	Steven Fogarty	F	11
21	Charlie Taft	F	12
24	David Jarrett	D	12
27	Tom Holtzman	D	12
30	John Ankeny	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 2AA Quarters, 2/25
Edina 11, Bloom Kennedy 0

Stolpestad 2 goals, 2 assists

Section 2AA Semis, 2/27
Edina 3, Holy Angels 2

Girard 24 saves

Section 2AA Finals, 3/3
Edina 4, Bloom Jefferson 1

Fogarty 1 goal, 1 assist

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

EDINA

By Loren Nelson

A diversity isn't such a bad thing. Just look at Edina. At the start of the season, the Hornets weren't expected to be particularly good. At least not by Edina's lofty standards. They were outside the top 10 in the state rankings and out of any discussions about state title contenders.

Edina went 1-1-0 at Wayzata's season-opening tournament. Then came a perfect 9-0-0 December. At one point the Hornets, who beat state tournament entrants Duluth East and Blaine and eventual section finalists Elk River, Woodbury and Eden Prairie during their sizzling December, were as high as No. 2 in the state rankings.

The Hornets' followed their meteoric rise with a 2-4-2 January plunge, knocking them out of the state's top 10 once again.

But they wouldn't be down for long. A strong finish to the regular season included a stunning victory over Minnetonka (the Skippers' only loss this season). A tough 3-2 section semifinal win over Holy Angels was followed by a dominating 4-1 triumph over Bloomington Jefferson in the section final.

The Hornets are back. Back to where they were in December, back in the state tournament for the 32nd time. Edina (20-6-2) is the No. 2 seed and opens with Section 8AA champion Roseau in an 11 a.m. quarterfinal on Thursday, March 11 at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"They really dug deep after January to come back off the mat, because they got slapped pretty hard a couple of times," Edina coach Curt Giles said. "We were

really wondering how they were going to react to it, and I've got to give them a lot of credit. They really reacted extremely well."

An amazing 13 players scored for the Hornets in their three section playoff victories, a testament to their depth. While last year's team relied heavily on the dominating line of Marshall Everson, Anders Lee and Connor Gaarder, these Hornets get consistent scoring production from all three of their top lines.

Points leader Steven Fogarty (20 goals, 16 assists) is the only Hornet with 20-plus goals. Charlie Taft (17 goals, 10 assists) and Michael Sit (12 goals, 15 assists) were second-line forwards on last year's team and rank second and third in scoring, respectively.

Max Everson, a junior being recruited by several Division I colleges, leads an underrated defensive corps that includes another standout in senior co-captain David Jarrett. Connor Girard has been solid in goal, keeping his goals-against average under 2 (1.77) and save percentage above .900 (.915).

"I think we got off our little high horse," Taft said about the Hornets' recovery from their January lull. "Everyone was doubting us at the beginning of the season, then we started winning and getting ranked pretty high, those losses kind of brought us down a notch. We realized we're human again."



Sit



Taft



Everson



THE HORNETS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Loren Nelson: They stay out of the penalty box. Edina's uber-aggressive, take-no-prisoners style can wreak havoc on opposing defensemen but also can lead to a parade of penalties.

APPLE VALLEY

By Loren Nelson

Aaron Gretz can proudly say he attended one of the most famous games in Minnesota high school hockey history.

Yes, Apple Valley's junior goaltender was in the stands for the 1996 classic, "The Game That Wouldn't End," a five-overtime state tournament semifinal matchup between the Eagles and Duluth East.

Apple Valley beat the Greyhounds 4-3, halting a game that lasted 93 minutes, 12 seconds of elapsed time and ended at 1:39 a.m. It remains the longest game in state tournament history.

While Gretz was in the old St. Paul Civic Center stands (his older brother was on that Eagles team) that night and early morning, there's no telling how much of the game he actually witnessed.

"I was four years old," he said. "I do not remember it."

After shutting out Woodbury in the Section 3AA title game, Gretz now embarks on a state tournament journey he undoubtedly won't forget. Apple Valley is making its first state tournament appearance since that legendary 1996 team beat Edina to win the school's only state boys hockey title.

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't think we would be good," Apple Valley coach Jerry Hayes said after the Eagles' 3-0 section championship win over the Royals. "But we've had a lot of struggles (in the playoffs) over the years."

Hayes, in his 12th season as Apple Valley's head coach, had gone 0-5 in section championship games before this season.

Propelling the Eagles through that section final roadblock was the play of Gretz and two youngsters, freshman Hudson Fasching and sophomore A.J. Michaelson. They each scored twice against Woodbury in the 4-0 triumph.

Fasching, a star at the Bantam level last season, led the Eagles with 40 points (23 goals, 17 assists) and has been playing on a line with Michaelson, who has a team-best five goals and four assists in three playoff games, since they were Pee Wees.

Apple Valley has yet another potent forward unit featuring Chris Fischer (11 goals, 16 assists) and Kris Goodman (10 goals, 10 assists).

The Eagles (17-11-0) lost six of their final eight regular season games before making their playoff push and are among the four unseeded teams in the Class AA tournament.



Hudson Fasching



Michaelson



Fischer



D. Smith



Gretz



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Eagles

Conference: Lake

Section: 3AA

Record: 17-11-0

State trips: 1981, 92, 93, 96 Champs

Coach: Jerry Hayes

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Hudson Fasching	23	17	40
AJ Michaelson	18	16	34
Chris Fischer	11	16	27
Michael Berens	8	15	23
Kris Goodman	10	10	20

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Aaron Gretz	13-9-0	2.27	.907

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
3	Anthony Leong	D	10
4	Adam Robson	D	12
5	Ryan Geary	D	12
7	Jordan Ocel	F	10
8	Kris Goodman	F	11
9	Chris Fischer	F	12
10	Tate Erickson	F	10
11	Trent Heuer	F	10
12	Dustin LaFrance	F	10
16	Michael Berens	F	11
17	Thomas Obarski	F	11
19	AJ Michaelson	F	10
20	Derek Smith	D	10
21	Peter Sikich	D	12
22	Hudson Fasching	F	9
24	Vince Pedrie	D	10
26	Alex Trenary	F	12
27	John Dirks	F	10
29	Collin Olson	G	10
31	Brett Dahl	D	11
33	Aaron Gretz	G	11
37	Austin Caspar	F	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 3AA Quarters, 2/25
Apple Valley 3, Hastings 0

Michaelson 3 goals

Gretz 18 saves

Section 3AA Semis, 2/27
Apple Valley 3, Eagan 2 OT

Sikich game-winning goal

Section 3AA Finals, 3/4
Apple Valley 4, Woodbury 0

Michaelson 2 goals, 2 assists

Gretz 27 saves

Photos / Helen Nelson

THE EAGLES WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Tim Kolehmainen: The kids grow up fast -- really fast. Apple Valley is a very young team, led in scoring by a freshman (Hudson Fasching) and a sophomore (A.J. Michaelson). They're talented, but this is their first state go-round.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Pioneers**Conference:** Classic Suburban**Section:** 4AA**Record:** 25-2-1**State trips:** 1975, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 83 Champs, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91 Champs, 92, 93, 97, 99, 2000, 02, 06, 07, 08 Champs, 09, 10**Coach:** Bill Lechner

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Willie Faust	22	22	44
Ben Bahe	14	22	36
Chris Casto	13	18	31
Jack Walsh	16	14	30
Kevin Becker	18	12	30

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Shaughnessy	21-2-1	1.54	.926

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	John Dugas	G	9
2	Connor McCallum	D	11
6	Chris Casto	D	12
7	Bobby Bruski	F	11
9	Kevin Becker	F	11
11	Ben Bahe	F	11
12	Ryan Holler	F	11
14	Charlie Sampair	F	10
15	Willie Faust	F	12
16	Jordan Johnson	D	12
17	Jonah Johnson	D	10
18	Zach LaValle	F	9
19	John Phillippi	F	11
21	Jack Walsh	F	12
22	David Bruchu	F	12
25	Andy Faust	F	10
26	Loren French	F	11
27	J.D. Cotroneo	D	11
28	Kevin Schulze	D	11
33	Tim Shaughnessy	G	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 4AA Quarters, 2/27
Hill-Murray 6, StP Como Pk 0

Sampair 2 goals

Faust 1 goal, 3 assists

Section 4AA Semis, 3/3
Hill-Murray 6, Mounds View 0

Becker 2 goals, 2 assists

Shaughnessy 20 saves

Section 4AA Finals, 3/5
Hill-Murray 5, White Bear Lk 1

Walsh 2 goals

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

HILL-MURRAY

By Loren Nelson

A surgical 5-1 dismantling of arch rival White Bear Lake in the Section 4AA final gave Hill-Murray plenty of lead time in putting together its state tournament preparations.

Which isn't to say the Pioneers were looking past the Bears while still playing them, but they needed only a few minutes – just enough time to collect their sticks and gloves and leave the State Fairgrounds Coliseum ice surface – to switch into state tournament mode.

"Now it's time to move on," Hill-Murray coach Bill Lechner said. "This team had very high goals. Win the conference, this was the sectional one, and obviously everybody knows what we all want with the third goal."

Hill-Murray, which won the state Class AA title in 2009, is making its fifth straight state tournament appearance. Other than Minnetonka, no team enters the Class AA portion of the state tournament with fewer losses than the Pioneers (25-2-1).

Hill-Murray, ranked fourth in the Hockey Hub's final state Class AA poll, received a No. 4 seed behind Minnetonka, Edina and Blaine, respectively. The Pioneers' two losses came against Blaine during the Schwan Cup and Class A powerhouse St. Thomas Academy late in the season.

After beating White Bear Lake and before the state tournament seeds were announced, Lechner said he wasn't too concerned where the Pioneers were slotted.

"Not really, the only thing is that whoever gets the (No. 2) spot plays at 11 o'clock in the morning," he said. "I'm not in love with that."

"We've done well and we've struggled through the years, it's not like one avenue has been the right way. We've been the four seed and won and we've been a higher seed and we haven't won. It's fine."

The Pioneers have a deep and balanced lineup of scorers, led by Willie Faust's 22 goals and 44 points. Seven Hill-Murray players have scored 10 or more goals, including standout defenseman Chris Casto (13 goals, 18 assists), a Minnesota-Duluth recruit.

Kevin Becker led Hill-Murray during the playoffs in goals (four) and points (eight), and Tim Shaughnessy has allowed just one goal in his last 10 periods, dating back to the regular season.



Faust



Casto



Becker



Shaughnessy



Bill Lechner



THE PIONEERS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Loren Nelson: They get superb play from goaltender Tim Shaughnessy, a junior who started on last year's state team. Hill-Murray is a defensive-oriented team that will need to win low-scoring, tight checking games.

BLAINE

By Loren Nelson

At this time of the year, with only the strongest of teams having survived the sectional round of playoffs, it's not uncommon for state-tournament bound coaches to broach the subject of chemistry.

Typically, they'll talk about how close they have become to their players, and how their players don't so much form a team as they do an extended family.

Listen closely to Blaine's Dave Aus, though, and you'll realize these Bengals really do have a special relationship with their coach.

"It's going to be really sad when they are done," Aus said about the seniors on his roster. "First of all, you only get one kid like Nick (Bjugstad) to come along, maybe in a lifetime.



Bjugstad

"And it's not just Nick. Gavin Tufte, we named our son last summer after Gavin, that's how much he means to us. Eric Scheid, Taylor Richart, Danny Harper, who is like a brother to me, Jake Jensen. I could go on and on. They are all such good kids."



Tufte

Good enough to win a state title? Blaine (21-4-3) was ranked No. 5 in the Hockey Hub's final state poll and received the tournament's No. 3 seed in a vote of the eight participating Class AA coaches. The Bengals defeated state tournament entrants Roseau and No. 4 seed Hill-Murray during

the regular season and suffered one-goal losses to two more state qualifiers in top-seeded Minnetonka (4-3) and No. 2 Edina (1-0, 3-2).

Bjugstad, a 6-foot-4 Mr. Hockey candidate projected to be a first-round NHL draft pick this summer, has taken accelerated classes so he can graduate a year early and play for Minnesota. He had six goals and three assists in three sectional playoff games, giving him a team-best 69 points this season.



Harper

Harper was one of the top goaltenders in the Upper Midwest High School Elite League in the fall, and he has allowed just four goals in three playoff games, posting a .920 save percentage.

Scheid, Tufte and fellow forward Jonny Brodzinski, a junior, are joined by star defenseman Tony Larson on a lethal power play that centers around Bjugstad and clicks at a typically unheard of 40-percent success rate.



Larson

"I was really nervous coming into these games just because it was my last year to make it to the state tournament, and that's all I really ever wanted to do," Bjugstad said. "It's the best feeling ever, walking onto that ice at the Xcel in front of 18,000 people. It's unbelievable."



Scheid



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Bengals

Conference: NW Suburban

Section: 5AA

Record: 21-4-3

State trips: 1992, 96, 99, 2000 Champs, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10

Coach: Dave Aus

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Nick Bjugstad	35	34	69
Eric Scheid	23	29	52
Jonny Brodzinski	22	26	48
Gavin Tufte	20	17	37
Tony Larson	6	26	32

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Danny Harper	17-4-3	2.27	.911

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Posr	Gr
3	Tony Larson	D	12
10	Gavin Tufte	D	12
11	Taylor Richart	D	12
12	Brad Benson	W	12
13	Gunnar Meger	W	11
14	Joey Wagamon	D	12
15	Jake Jensen	D	12
20	Michael Brodzinski	D	9
21	Mike Cameron	D	11
22	Jonny Brodzinski	W	11
24	Dylan Dimke	W	12
25	Dylan Lambert	C	10
27	Nick Bjugstad	W	11
31	Danny Harper	G	12
32	Nick Malvin	G	10
33	Briggs Fussy	C	11
35	Matt Arford	W	12
36	Luke Eggerichs	D	12
37	Marshall Johnson	W	12
39	Eric Scheid	W	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 5AA Quarters, 2/27
Blaine 9, Coon Rapids 0

Bjugstad 2 goals, 2 assists

Meger and Scheid 2 goals each

Section 5AA Semis, 3/2
Blaine 4, Osseo 3 OT

Tufte and Bjugstad 2 goals each

Section 5AA Finals, 3/5
Blaine 3, Maple Grove 1

Bjugstad 2 goals, 1 assist

Harper 26 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

THE BENGALS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Loren Nelson: Nick Bjugstad can overcome the special attention he will receive and continue his playoff roll. The Bengals' power play must continue to hit on about half its chances, and Harper's play will need to be razor sharp.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Skippers
Conference: Classic Lake
Section: 6AA
Record: 25-1-2
State trips: 1985, 90, 94, 2006, 10
Coach: Brian Urick

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Derek Frawley	18	33	51
Max Gardiner	19	30	49
Max Coatta	23	22	45
Thomas Schutt	20	22	42
Andrew Prochno	8	31	39

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Jim Kruger	17-1-2	1.58	.935

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Alex Glockner	G	11
3	Michael Prochno	D	10
4	Jake Rossman	D	12
6	Tommy Lundquist	F	12
7	Troy Hesketh	D	12
8	Thomas Schutt	F	11
9	Max Coatta	F	9
10	Justin Holl	D	12
11	Andrew Prochno	D	12
12	Nick Erhart	F	11
14	Michael Helmer	F	11
15	Joe Schuldt	D	10
17	Derek Frawley	F	11
18	Connor Ryan	F	11
21	Jake Thornberg	F	12
22	Erik Baskin	F	10
23	Sam Rothstein	F	10
26	Jess Norman	F	11
27	Max Gardiner	F	12
35	Jim Kruger	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 6AA Quarters, 2/25
Minnetonka 9, Mpls West 0

Ryan and Coatta 2 goals, 1 assist each

Gardiner 4 assists

Section 6AA Semis, 2/27
Minnetonka 3, Benilde 1

Frawley 1 goal, 1 assist
 Kruger 23 saves

Section 6AA Finals, 3/3
Minnetonka 7, Eden Prairie 2

Lundquist 2 goals
 Kruger 31 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

MINNETONKA

By Loren Nelson

How good is Minnetonka? The Skippers won their opening five games this season by a combined score of 39-1.

They twice beat St. Thomas Academy, the state's No. 1-ranked Class A team for most of the season, by identical 5-2 margins.

They routed Duluth East 6-2 and Edina 7-1 in the regular season, and both the Greyhounds and Hornets join the Skippers in this year's Class AA field.

They won their first 19 games of the season and didn't suffer their only loss (to Edina) until Feb 11.

Before the season, three of their defensemen (Troy Hesketh, Wisconsin; Justin Holl, Minnesota; and Andrew Prochno, St. Cloud State) were committed to WCHA schools, as was forward Max Gardiner (Minnesota).

Hesketh already has been drafted, by the Edmonton Oilers, and it's likely Holl and Gardiner also will be selected high in the NHL draft this summer.

Had enough? Wait, there's more.

The latest Skippers' feat in which to marvel at was their 7-2 dismantling of defending state Class AA champion Eden Prairie in the Section 6AA final. Minnetonka scored four times in the final period to turn what was a tight game (the Skippers led 3-2 after two periods) into a rout.

"They kind of smelled blood there, a little bit," Minnetonka coach Brian Urick said about the Skippers' third-period eruption. "Just when they knew they got the lead, I think their spirits just went up. As soon as we could get that lead I knew our guys would get sparked and get those feet moving."

As it turns out, Minnetonka's only loss, a 5-4 overtime setback to Edina on Feb. 11, might have been the best thing that could have happened to the Skippers. They were stunned by the Hornets after taking a 4-0 lead to the locker room after the first period.

"We take it pretty hard that we got too comfortable against Edina," Hesketh said. "From here on out, we're not too comfortable with anything. Even when we were up by that many goals, we keep on going and keep on fighting."

The Skippers (25-1-2) have been ranked No. 1 for all but the first few weeks of the season and, in a formality, received their No. 1 seed in the tournament. They open on Thursday, March 11, at 6 p.m. against Lakeville North, the Section 1AA champion that comes in with the worst record (11-15-2) of any team in the field.



Gardiner



Kruger



Hesketh



Prochno



Holl



Schutt

THE SKIPPERS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Loren Nelson: They play all-out, all the time. Minnetonka showed vulnerability late in the season only when it played tentatively, as if the Skippers were trying not to lose.

DULUTH EAST

By Tim Kolehmainen

Anybody who knows anything about Duluth East and coach Mike Randolph shouldn't have expected anything different.

Despite graduating its All-State goaltender, top five defenseman and leading scorer and Mr. Hockey finalist from last year's state tournament team, East is right back at the X in March.

Such is the height of the bar that Randolph has set during his tenure with the Greyhounds.

Not surprisingly, East is doing it the same way it did last year. Strong goaltending. Tough team defense. Just enough scoring.

It's a tribute to the players who stepped into the immense shoes left behind. The Greyhounds are a team without any true stars, but are solid and balanced up and down the lineup.

"On the back end we came in pretty green," admitted Randolph. "We've come a long way. We kind of knew we'd struggle early on, but we tried to be real patient. We had a mix of bantams that we had to blend in with older kids. The older kids had to accept the younger ones and as the season has gone along, we've become a team."

The Greyhounds are 10-0-2 in their past dozen games, many with emerging star Jo Jo Jeannetta in net. He and the East defense were at their best in the Section 7AA playoffs, allowing just two goals in three games.

In the section semifinals, they shut down Andover and UMD-bound sniper Cal Decowski and then followed it up with a 5-1 near-shutout of Elk River in the section finals. The Elks scored a goal in the third period that broke a 93:59 shutout streak for the junior goaltender.

"He just kind of took off and really took to the job," Randolph said. "He's had a great second half and he shut out Andover, which is as tough a shutout as you can earn."

Junior Andy Welinski (4-17-21) was the only returning defenseman from last year's top six, although he's been paired with veteran Jayce Paulseth, who played forward last year. Nate Repensky, Hunter Bergeson, Jay Amato and Troy Olson round out an underrated defensive corps.

But as with past East tournament squads, scoring could be the key.

After some season-long struggles at scoring goals, the Greyhounds came alive in the section tournament, averaging 5.0 goals a game.

"We're finally starting to put the puck in the net," Randolph said.

No one scorer stands out, unlike Tardy last year, which should make East tough to shut down.

"We hope to bring that offense with the defense, that combo, to the state tournament," Randolph said. "The teams that can do that can go a ways."



Lutzka



Schendel



Welinski



Paulseth



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Greyhounds
Conference: Independent
Section: 7AA
Record: 19-5-4
State trips: 1958, 60 Champs, 61, 64, 75, 91, 94, 95 Champs, 96, 97, 98 Champs, 2000, 03, 04, 05, 09, 10
Coach: Mike Randolph

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jake Randolph	9	27	36
Kyle Lutzka	11	13	24
Phil Johnson	13	11	24
Kenny Mellin	12	10	22
Andy Welinski	4	17	21

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
JoJo Jeannetta	12-4-4	1.83	.910

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
4	Kevin Brazerol	F	12
5	Troy Olson	D	12
6	Andy Welinski	D	11
8	Luke Renier	F	11
9	Kenny Mellin	F	12
10	Kyle Lutzka	F	12
11	Tyler Mass	F	12
12	Trevor Olson	F	10
14	Tim Beddow	F	12
16	Jake Randolph	F	10
17	Jayce Paulseth	F	12
18	Steven Holappa	F	10
19	Zac Schendel	F	11
21	Nate Repensky	D	10
22	Jay Amato	D	12
23	Dom Toninato	F	10
28	Nolan Meyer	F	11
31	Joseph Jeanetta	G	11
34	Phil Johnson	F	11
39	Joel Perlinger	G	11
41	Hunter Bergerson	D	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 7AA Quarters, 2/23
Duluth East 6, Camb-Isanti 1

Johnson 2 goals

Section 7AA Semis, 2/27
Duluth East 4, Andover 0

Jeannetta 26 saves

Johnson 2 goals, 1 assist

Section 7AA Finals, 3/4
Duluth East 5, Elk River 1

Welinski 1 goal, 2 assists

THE GREYHOUNDS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Tim Kolehmainen: Their balanced offense continues to produce throughout the tournament. East doesn't have a true sniper like last year's club with Max Tardy, but can get offensive production from up and down the lineup.

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Rams**Conference:** Mariucci**Section:** 8AA**Record:** 22-5-1

State trips: 1946 Champs, 47, 53, 55, 57, 58 Champs, 59 Champs, 61 Champs, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 71, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84, 90 Champs, 91, 98, 99 Champs, 2000, 06, 07 Champs, 08, 10

Coach: Andy Lundbohm

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Shane Omdahl	27	39	66
A. Knochenmus	21	29	50
Cole Kostrzewski	19	26	45
Trev Baumgartner	10	15	25
Kevin Erickson	8	17	25

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Ethan Kvidt	22-5-1	2.21	.909

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Tim Tesarek	D	12
3	Justin Anderson	D	10
5	Shane Omdahl	C	11
6	Ryan Leverington	F	11
8	Kevin Erickson	W	12
9	Adam Knochenmus	W	12
10	Josh Erickson	C	10
15	Trevor Baumgartner	F	12
16	Zach Johnson	D	11
17	Trevor Johnson	W	9
19	Jordan Olson	W	10
20	Taylor Hedlund	F	12
22	Brandon Gunderson	F	10
24	Cole Kostrzewski	F	12
25	Mike Johnson	W	11
26	Travis Connell	W	11
30	Ethan Kvidt	G	12
31	Ryan Erickson	G	10
33	Lyle Norman	D	11
34	Jesse Braun	D	12
40	Mike Tangen	G	10
44	TJ Erickson	D	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 8AA Quarters, 2/23
Roseau 5, Monticello/AML 1

Omdahl 1 goal, 2 assists

Section 8AA Semis, 2/27
Roseau 3, Brainerd 2 OT-2

Kvidt 26 saves

Section 8AA Finals, 3/3
Roseau 2, Moorhead 1

Kvidt 25 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

ROSEAU

By Tim Kolehmainen

State tournament history hounds might have a problem when it comes to Roseau. Who to keep an eye on?

The current Rams' team, which brought the storied program back to the state tournament for a record 33rd time? Or the guys behind the bench, a coaching staff with just as much star power – and state tournament experience?

It's tough to top a coaching staff that is led by Andy Lundbohm (1995), assisted by Dave Bjugson, Scott Oliver, and NHLers Bryan "Butsy" Erickson (1978) and Aaron Broten (1979), who is also inducted in the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame. Oliver and Broten have both coached Roseau to state berths as head coaches this decade, as well.

The former Rams had a bit of advice for the current Rams entering the state tournament. Back in the late 1970s, the Broten and Erickson Roseau team was an overwhelming favorite to win a state title, yet fell shy each of three straight years. They know the underdog can take down the big boys.

"They say, 'When we went down, we were the favorite team. We were on the one who was supposed to win and it didn't work out that way. You guys aren't going to be the favorites, but you just have to go down there and play your game and see what happens,'" Lundbohm repeated.

Certainly, Roseau (22-5-1) isn't a favorite, as the unseeded Rams drew No. 2 Edina in the opening round.

The Rams have firepower, as the

top line of Adam Knochenmus (21-29-50), Shane Omdahl (27-39-66) and Cole Kostrzewski (19-26-45) is one of the highest-scoring remaining in the state. Knochenmus has come back strong from a mid-season injury, giving Roseau a big boost. Omdahl is an underrated high-energy player who sees the ice well, while Kostrzewski is poised on the puck and a motivating factor.

While they've garnered much of the attention, Lundbohm believes his defense is often overlooked, as they came into the year without much varsity experience.

But perhaps the key to Roseau's successful season has been a terrific senior season from experienced goaltender Ethan Kvidt (22-5-1, 2.21, .909). He's a very athletic goaltender who also stars for the Rams' baseball and football teams. He's a big goaltender who covers much of the net and has spent plenty of time fine-tuning his game.

"He's been such a calming presence," Lundbohm said. "I think that comes from experience."



Omdahl



Erickson



Andy Lundbohm



THE RAMS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Tim Kolehmainen: Goaltender Ethan Kvidt continues his strong playoff run and the Rams' top line outplays their opponents' in each game. A smaller school, Roseau may not be as deep as many, but it is strong at the top.

CLASS AA



2 - Edina (20-6-2)

11am, 3/11
Xcel



Roseau (22-5-1)

6pm, 3/12
Xcel



3 - Blaine (21-4-3)

1pm, 3/11
Xcel



Apple Valley (17-11-0)

7pm, 3/13
Xcel

Champion



1 - Minnetonka (25-1-2)

6pm, 3/11
Xcel



Lakeville North (11-15-2)

8pm, 3/12
Xcel



4 - Hill-Murray (25-2-1)

8pm, 3/11
Xcel



Duluth East (19-5-4)

4pm, 3/13
Xcel

Third place

10am, 3/12
Mariucci

noon, 3/13
Mariucci

Consolation

noon, 3/12
Mariucci

CLASS A



2- Mahtomedi (23-5-0)

11am, 3/10
Xcel

Alexandria (21-6-1)

11am, 3/12
Xcel

3 - Hermantown (25-3-0)

1pm, 3/10
Xcel

Virginia/MIB (18-7-3)

noon, 3/13
Xcel

Champion

1 - Breck (26-2-0)

6pm, 3/10
Xcel

New Ulm (16-9-1)

1pm, 3/12
Xcel

4 - Warroad (24-4-0)

8pm, 3/10
Xcel

Rochester Lourdes (17-8-3)

9am, 3/13
Xcel

Third place

10am, 3/11
Mariucci

10am, 3/13
Mariucci

Consolation

noon, 3/11
Mariucci

ROCHESTER LOURDES

By Loren Nelson

Josh Spaniol knew the numbers weren't good. But he worked the calculation anyway.

It's hard, after all, not to look at the train wreck.

"I think we came up with 92 percent of our scoring from last year graduated," said Spaniol, the first-year Rochester Lourdes coach.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Spaniol lost standout junior goaltender Nick Heimer for an extended period midway through the season with a left shoulder injury.

No, things weren't going well for the Eagles, who weren't scoring, didn't have their No. 1 goaltender and were off to a 4-4-2 start to their season.

"If you were going to tell me two months ago I was going to be in these shoes, I would have said you were crazy," Spaniol said.

Look at Rochester Lourdes now. Heimer is healthy and playing well, freshman Alex Funk has emerged to shoulder a large chunk of the scoring load and Spaniol has the Eagles playing an airtight defensive style well-suited for the playoffs.

Add all that up, and you have a team not only in the state Class A tournament but one that has a chance to engineer an upset or two.

"I ran into a few our kids today," Spaniol said on Sunday. "They are still buzzing right now. Our program is very excited to get a taste of what we had last year."

Last season the Eagles gave eventual state champion Breck its toughest game of the state tournament before losing in the quarterfinals. Lourdes went on to win the consolation championship.

This year Lourdes opens with a quarterfinal game against No. 4 seed Warroad at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

The Eagles did not play the Warriors during the regular season, one of the few high-powered Class A programs not on Lourdes' schedule.

"I don't know much about them," Spaniol said. "But I know they will be like we are in that they will be physical. And that they like to play defensive hockey, too."

The Eagles' regular season schedule included the top two ranked Class A teams in the state for most of the season, St. Thomas Academy and Breck. Lourdes lost to Breck 2-1 and St. Thomas Academy 5-3 in a game that was closer than the score indicated.

"We played two of the top teams in the state very tough," Spaniol said. "That's what gave our players the opportunity to believe in themselves and their abilities."

Funk, one of the state's best freshmen, has a team-high 15 goals to go with 14 assists. Another Lourdes freshman, Jason Samuelson, has 13 goals and 15 assists to tie for second on the team in scoring.



Heimer



Vesel



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Eagles

Conference: Independent

Section: 1A

Record: 17-8-3

State trips: 2000, 01, 02, 03, 09, 10

Coach: Josh Spaniol

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Alex Funk	15	14	29
Rory Vesel	5	23	28
Jason Samuelson	13	15	28
Brandon Chezick	11	15	26
Alex Kurth	9	14	23

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Nick Heimer	10-6-2	2.39	.870

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Mark Greve	G	12
2	Connor Nellans	F	10
3	Ryan Nicolay	F	10
4	Jason Samuelson	F	9
5	Alec Brandrup	D	11
6	Andy Benner	F	11
7	Brandon Chezick	F	12
8	Landon Farrell	F	10
9	Alex Dewitz	F	12
10	Louis Hanson	D	11
12	Karl Krecke	D	9
16	Reed Bjork	F	11
17	Alex Kurth	F	12
18	Eric Potvin	F	10
19	Sam Slightam	D	11
20	Alex Funk	F	9
21	Rory Vesel	D	11
23	Brian Wasz	F	11
24	Nick Schoeberl	D	12
30	Nick Heimer	G	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 1A Quarters, 2/25
Lourdes 2, Northfield 1

Funk 1 goal, 1 assist

Section 1A Semis, 2/27
Lourdes 4, New Prague 1

Funk 1 goal, 1 assist

Krecke 3 assists

Section 1A Finals, 3/4
Lourdes 3, Red Wing 0

Wasz 2 goals

Heimer 16 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

THE EAGLES WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Loren Nelson: Everything falls into place. And by everything we mean goaltender Nick Heimer has to have the three greatest games of his life and Lourdes' diaper dandies, Alex Funk and Jason Samuelson, can continue to provide just enough of an offensive spark.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Mustangs
Conference: Tri-Metro
Section: 2A
Record: 26-2-0
State trips: 1994, 96, 97, 2000
 Champs, 04 Champs, 09
 Champs, 10
Coach: Les Larson

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Tyson Fulton	34	50	84
Mike Morin	33	28	61
Riley Borer	18	40	58
Chase Nystedt	26	23	49
Wesley Iverson	16	23	39

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
John Russell	19-2-0	1.43	.934

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Max McCormick	F	11
3	Michael Mooney	D	12
4	Joe Zeidler	D	12
5	Conor Andrie	F	10
7	Ben Gislason	D	12
8	Mike Morin	F	12
9	Riley Borer	F	12
10	Cameron Born	F	12
14	Grant Opperman	F	10
17	Chase Nystedt	F	12
18	Charlie Borer	F	12
19	Nate Traina	F	10
20	Shayne Ciernia	D	11
22	Brenden Yates	F	12
23	Tyson Fulton	F	12
24	Austin Rudnick	D	10
25	David Crowe	D	12
26	Wesley Iverson	F	10
27	David Zosel	F	11
39	John Russell	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 2A Quarters, 2/26
Breck 8, St. Louis Park 0

Morin 3 goals, 1 assist

Section 2A Semis, 3/2
Breck 8, Orono 0

Traina 3 goals, 2 assists
 Russell 20 saves

Section 2A Finals, 3/4
Breck 5, Blake 1

Opperman and Fulton 1 goal,
 1 assist each

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

BRECK



By Loren Nelson

When John Russell gets his well-padded arms and legs moving, he doesn't so much resemble a goaltender as he does a windmill on blustery day.

Pucks so rarely get through Russell's menagerie of perfectly angled body parts that Breck coach Les Larson can't recall the senior goaltender's last shaky outing.

"I've never seen the guy have a bad game," Larson said. "I've seen him in three years let in a couple of bad goals, but I think it was out of sheer boredom."

Breck, typically, doesn't play a lot of tight games. The defending state Class A champion Mustangs steamrolled through the regular season, posting a 23-2-0 record and losing just once to state high school competition. They breezed to the Tri-Metro Conference title with a 14-0 record to finish seven points ahead of rival Blake, then beat the Bears again, 5-1, to win the Section 2A championship.

Now comes the state tournament at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, a stage the Mustangs dominated last year. Just two seniors are gone from that powerhouse team.

"I think we are a deeper team and a better team," Larson said about his top-seeded Mustangs, who finished the season ranked No. 1 in the Hockey Hub's final Class A poll. "Statistically, we are a lot better."

"We're just going to do the same thing we did last year. I

honestly don't think we have had our best game yet. I'm hoping that is coming."

Russell allowed one goal in three playoff games and has a 1.43 goals-against average and .934 save percentage in 22 games overall. As great as those numbers are, check out Breck's offensive totals. The Mustangs were the state's highest scoring team in the regular season, averaging 7.40 goals per game. They beat their three sectional tournament opponents (St. Louis Park, Orono and Blake) by a combined score of 21-1.

Breck senior Michael Morin (33 goals, 28 assists) has committed to Colorado College, and linemate Tyson Fulton (34 goals, 50 assists) took a recruiting visit to Nebraska-Omaha after the Mustangs won the sectional crown. The scoring goes three lines deep and then some.

Senior Charlie Borer, a second-line wing, suffered a groin injury in Breck's opening playoff game. Borer's replacement, Nate Traina, one of four players sharing time on the third line, was moved up and responded by scoring a hat trick in Breck's 8-0 sectional semifinal win over Orono.

The story is pretty much the same on defense, where Larson rotates three interchangeable pairs.



Fulton



Morin



R. Borer



Russell

THE MUSTANGS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Loren Nelson: They play like they did last season. If all three of Breck's forward lines and all six of the Mustangs' defensemen are in top form as they were a year ago, it's doubtful any team in the field can match their depth.

NEW ULM

By Tim Kolehmainen

Erik Setterholm remembers the last time New Ulm qualified for the state tournament. It's a fond memory, but not a long one. The Eagles advanced in the first season of the Tier II experiment in 1992, but were shut out by Cambridge-Isanti in the opening round.

"We were so in awe, the game was over before it started," admitted Setterholm.

Minneapolis Roosevelt dispatched the Eagles in the consolation semifinals the next morning. Few thought it would be 18 years before New Ulm returned to state, nor that Setterholm would be behind the bench for the return trip.

Yet nearly two decades later, he's running the show in the Southern Minnesota community. And the Eagles finally made it back to St. Paul, beating Litchfield/Dassel-Cokato, 5-2, in the Section 3A finals last Friday night at Gustavus.

"It was a big relief for me, the team and the whole hockey community," Setterholm said. "It was amazing, but it still hasn't hit me. It was kind of a blur. The place was unreal how loud it was in there."

Days later, Setterholm has the town still buzzing about the state trip.

"The whole town, you can't go and buy gas without five or six people telling you congratulations, people you don't even know," smiled Setterholm.

New Ulm has come close to a return trip to the X in recent years, but fell just shy each time. In each of the past three years, they've

advanced to the section finals as the favorite, but lost in heartbreaking fashion. Perhaps it makes this year's trip even sweeter.

"The last couple of years, things didn't go right in that final game for us," shrugged Setterholm. "We didn't get any bounces and things like that. Hit crossbars and pipes that would have changed the game. But we made the most of our opportunities Friday night against Litchfield."

Ironically, this season New Ulm was the underdog in the section tournament, coming in as a No. 3 seed after graduating All-State sniper Kyle Reinarts. But his former linemates, juniors Adam Loose (14-16-30) and Kaleb Juntunen (18-16-34), teamed up with sophomore Brody Peterson (20-13-33) to make their own high-powered line.

Junior goaltender Blake Burgau (16-9-1, 2.67, .899) also has been solid, playing every minute of every game in nets. He's a focused competitor who will be challenged by the Eagles' tough draw, which is defending state champion and No. 1 seed Breck.

Setterholm admitted that almost no one expects them to win the game. But he's hoping for a longer state tournament experience the second time around.

"The biggest thing for our boys is to show up and play hard and leave it all on the ice. Whatever the outcome is, it is," Setterholm said. "Nobody can take away the fact that we're one of the last 16 teams still playing at this time of the year."



Juntunen



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Eagles
Conference: South Central
Section: 3A
Record: 16-9-1
State trips: 1992, 2010
Coach: Erik Setterholm

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Zach Fisher	18	16	34
Kaleb Juntunen	18	16	34
Brody Peterson	20	13	33
Adam Loose	14	16	30
Zach Hoffman	7	21	28

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Blake Burgau	16-9-1	2.67	.899

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Willie Osborne	G	10
2	Connor Stark	D	10
3	Kaleb Juntunen	C	11
4	Tyler Traulich	D	11
5	Brody Peterson	W	10
6	Bryan Kehren	W	12
7	Zach Munce	W	12
8	Zach Fischer	C	12
9	Aaron Pfaff	W	11
10	Jeff Banal	W	10
11	Ryan Portner	C	12
12	Adam Loose	W	11
13	Dylan Schreckenber	W	10
14	Jason Rolloff	W	12
15	Brent Schiller	C	11
16	Zach Hoffmann	D	11
17	Mitch Turbes	D	12
18	Shane Traulich	D	11
19	Quinn O'Connor	D	12
33	Blake Burgau	G	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 3A Quarters, 2/25
New Ulm 8, Windom Area 0

Fisher 3 goals, 1 assist

Hoffman 1 goal, 3 assists

Section 3A Semis, 3/2
New Ulm 11, Luverne 1

Peterson and Pfaff 2 goals, 2 assists each

Juntunen 2 goals, 1 assist

Section 3A Finals, 3/5
New Ulm 5, Litchfield/D-C 2

Loose 2 goals

Peterson and Juntunen 1 goal, 1 assist each

New Ulm photos / Sue Loose

THE EAGLES WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Tim Kolehmainen: Their play at the X matches their anticipation of this state tournament berth. It's been a long time coming for the Eagles to get back to state - through several tough section final losses.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Zephyrs
Conference: Classic Suburban
Section: 4A
Record: 23-5-0
State trips: 1992, 94, 97, 98, 2001, 09, 10
Coach: Jeff Poeschl

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Brandon Zurn	33	39	72
Charlie Adams	33	33	66
Ben Marshall	19	34	53
Mike Rose	16	17	33
Tanner Jordan	14	13	27

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Brad Wohlers	14-4-0	2.61	.908

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Ryan Brown	D	10
3	Charlie Adams	F	12
4	Nick Nelson	F	10
5	Pat Kegley	F	10
6	Jordan Dittberner	D	12
7	Mike Narrow	D	11
8	Grant Holker	D	10
9	Josh Erickson	F	12
10	Ryan Gregory	F	12
11	Conner Mars	F	11
12	Johno May	F	10
14	Ben Marshall	D	11
15	Matt Moberg	D	11
16	Andrew Blegen	F	11
17	Tanner Jordan	F	10
18	Nick Boreen	D	11
19	John Koenig	F	11
20	Peter Gorman	D	12
21	Mike Rose	F	11
22	Brandon Zurn	F	12
30	Brad Wohlers	G	12
32	Sawyer Marshall	G	10
33	Tanner Marcotte	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 4A Quarters, 2/25
Mahtomedi 9, Chisago Lks 2

Zurn 3 goals, 3 assists
 Adams 4 goals

Section 4A Semis, 3/2
Mahtomedi 5, Totino-Grace 2

Rose 2 goals
 Marshall 1 goal, 2 assists

Section 4A Finals, 3/5
Mahtomedi 2, STA 1

Wohlers 44 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

MAHTOMEDI

By Loren Nelson

For two straight years now, Breck coach Les Larson and his assistant coach, son Peter, have gone to scout Mahtomedi and St. Thomas Academy in the Section 4A championship.

For two straight years, the ritual has been the same.

"My son takes notes on Mahtomedi and I take notes on St. Thomas Academy," Larson said. "And, again, at the end of the game I roll up my notes and throw them away."

Any doubts about the Zephyrs' ability to contend for a state title should be fully laid to rest. Counting last year's sectional final, Mahtomedi has defeated St. Thomas Academy, ranked No. 1 in Class A for most of the season, in three of their last four meetings.

How do they keep doing it? Well, it starts with Brad Wohlers. The epitome of a big-game goaltender, Wohlers made 44 saves against a Cadets team loaded with future Division I forwards. Wohlers' statistics are good (2.61 goals-against average, .908 save percentage) not great, but it would be hard to find a goaltender who plays better in high-pressure situations.

Beyond Wohlers, Mahtomedi merely has elite defenseman Ben Marshall. A junior who committed to play at Minnesota as a sophomore, Marshall has 19 goals, 34 assists and a burst that makes him a threat to go end-to-end at any moment.

Up front, few one-two offensive punches are more effective than

the Zephyrs' Brandon Zurn (33 goals, 39 assists) and Charlie Adams (33 goals, 33 assists).

Add all that up and Mahtomedi has as good a stable of high-end talent as any Class A team in the tournament. The No. 2-seeded Zephyrs (23-5-0) will, however, have to find a way to combat No. 1 seed Breck's depth should the teams meet. The Mustangs beat the Zephyrs twice during the regular season.

Mahtomedi's other losses came against state Class AA entrant Hill-Murray (twice) and St. Thomas Academy.

The Zephyrs reached the state tournament last season but lost their opening game to St. Cloud Cathedral when Marshall, skating at top speed, took a hard spill into the end boards. He was taken to the hospital and did not return.



Adams



Zurn



Wohlers



Sawyer Marshall



THE ZEPHYRS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Loren Nelson: They stay healthy. Mahtomedi can't afford an injury to any of its star players if it has any chance to overcome the depth of the tournament's top teams, most notably Breck.

HERMANTOWN

By Loren Nelson

The way Bruce Plante sees it, the hard part is over. For the Hermantown coach, surviving a section final everyone expects your team to win, against a goalie playing so out of his mind the puck might just as well be a beach ball, that's a nerve-fraying experience.

The state tournament?

"The key is to stay relaxed, stay calm, not get too much above yourself," said Plante, in his 20th season as the Hawks' head coach. "Just play your game, the normal game that you've had all year.

"Actually, the section final game is a lot harder. That is a pressure cooker. You are so close to (going to state), you have all these little dreams."

Hermantown typically dreams big when it comes to the state tournament. The Hawks won the Class A title in 2007 and will be making their seventh appearance since 1994. They finished second in 1998, third in 2001 and third in 2006.

To reach the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul this season, the Hawks needed to get past Duluth Marshall and the Hunters' standout freshman goaltender, Zach Thompson. Hermantown outshot Denfeld 48-20 but required a goal from Kevin Danielson with about 7 minutes remaining to get the 3-2 win.

"You always worry about that as a coach that, you will run into one of those hot goaltenders," Plante said, referencing his powerhouse 2004 team that was upended by Hibbing in a section championship game. "It is scary."

Most frightening for Hermantown's opposition is the sight of big senior forward Adam Krause bearing down with the puck. Hermantown's Mr. Hockey finalist and Minnesota-Duluth recruit has team highs of 38 goals and 28 assists.

While no other Hawks player has more than 18 goals, Plante said depth is probably his team's biggest strength.

"All three of our lines scored against Denfeld," Plante said, pointing out the Hawks have 13 seniors on their roster. "Having that many seniors, I think we wore Denfeld down, actually."

The Hawks (25-3-0) got the No. 3 seed behind Breck and Mahtomedi, respectively, and will match up with another northern power, Virginia/Mountain Iron-Buhl in a 1 p.m. quarterfinal game on Wednesday, March 10, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"That was probably the last matchup I wanted," Plante said about a Blue Devils team Hermantown beat 4-2 on Dec. 22. "Just because it would be nice to see the northern teams play each other a little farther down the road."



Bannor



LeBlanc



Bruce Plante



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Hawks

Conference: Lake Superior

Section: 5A

Record: 25-3-0

State trips: 1994, 98, 99, 2001, 06, 07 Champs, 10

Coach: Bruce Plante

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Adam Krause	36	28	64
Charlie Connick	18	25	43
Willis Kantonen	16	22	38
Jeff Paczynski	6	22	28
Jared Kolquist	3	25	28

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Tyler Ampe	12-3-0	1.85	.909
Tiegen Brickson	13-0-0	1.51	.921

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Gr	Pos
4	Jeff Paczynski	D	12
5	Charlie Connick	W	12
6	Jake Knowles	D	11
7	Brett Ludwig	W	12
8	Corey Kolquist	W	12
9	Willis Kantonen	W	12
10	Jared Thomas	W	10
13	Kevin Danielson	W	12
14	Connor Hadly	D	12
16	Jared Kolquist	D	10
17	Garrett Skrbich	C	11
18	Cody Christopherson	W	12
20	Chad Bannor	D	12
21	Brian LeBlanc	D	10
23	Jesse Dyson	W	11
26	Mike Robertson	D	10
27	Adam Krause	C	12
29	Andrew Oakes	C	12
30	Tiegen Brickson	G	12
39	Tyler Ampe	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 5A Quarters, 2/25

Hermantown 13, N. Branch 1

Christopherson 3 goals

Krause 1 goal, 3 assists

Section 5A Semis, 2/27

Hermantown 6, Rogers 0

Ampe 20 saves

Thomas 1 goal, 2 assists

Section 5A Finals, 3/5

Hermantown 3, Denfeld 2

Connick, Krause and Danielson 1 goal each

Photos / Helen Nelson

THE HAWKS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Loren Nelson: They get stellar goaltending. Tyler Ampe is rock solid, as is the defense in front of him, but he will need to be especially sharp to prevail in one of the deepest and talented Class A lineups in recent history.





PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Cardinals
Conference: Central Lakes
Section: 6A
Record: 21-6-1
State trips: 1992, 96, 2010
Coach: Scott Woods

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Thomas Williams	37	24	61
Casey Vangsness	15	30	45
Ross Thompson	12	31	43
Ashton Gronholz	15	8	23
Tyler Iverson	9	10	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Erich Murphy	16-3-1	1.90	.914

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
4	Tyler Iverson	F	12
5	Jacob Bigger	F	11
6	Kirby Nelson	D	12
7	Ross Thompson	F	12
8	Ashton Gronholz	F	12
9	Thomas Williams	F	12
11	Myles Bjelland	F	11
12	Aaron Rentschler	D	12
14	Scott Hennen	F	11
15	Andrew Hittle	D	11
17	Casey Vangsness	F	12
20	Jacob Smith	F	10
22	Zach Van Orsdel	D	11
23	Nick Swanson	F	11
27	Jordan Domine	F	10
29	Zach Schuck	D	12
30	Dominic Wysoski	G	11
31	Erich Murphy	G	10
36	Charlie Wensman	D	10
37	Garrett Skinner	F	10

ROAD TO THE X

Section 6A Quarters, 2/23
Alexandria 9, SC Apollo 3

Williams, Domine and Gronholz 2 goals each

Section 6A Semis, 2/27
Alexandria 3, Willmar 1

Williams 1 goal, 1 assist

Section 6A Finals, 3/5
Alexandria 4, Sartell 1

Gronholz and Williams 2 goals each

Murphy 30 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

ALEXANDRIA



By Tim Kolehmainen

Alexandria coach Scott Woods had a message for his team. "It's our time."

With his Cardinals leading Sartell-St. Stephen by a single goal during the second intermission of the Section 6A finals last week, Woods looked his players in the eyes and implored them to finish what they'd started months earlier.

"We had a discussion, saying that nobody was taking this away from us this year," Woods said. "I had a sense that this group wasn't going to let it happen. It was our turn to go down there (St. Paul)."

The Cardinals responded, as Ashton Gronholz and Thomas Williams scored in the first five minutes to put the game out of reach – sending Alexandria back to state after some heartbreaking losses in past playoffs.

Alexandria has been one of the better Class A teams in the state in recent years. But continued to run into the Little Falls juggernaut. Last year, the Cardinals lost just five games, but three times to Little Falls – by a single goal each time, including a 3-2 overtime loss in the section finals.

"The last two years we believed we were good enough, but we knew we had a very good opponent," Woods said. "This year, we felt like this was our year. This was the time for us to go."

With the trip to St. Paul secure, the Cardinals waited for their seeding. When it came, they earned a match-up with No. 2 Mahtomedi in the tournament's very first game Wednesday morning at 11 a.m.

Woods immediately had a few more words for his team.

"Number one, don't to go out and play nervous," Woods said. "Number two, know you belong there and play like you belong there. You've accomplished the biggest goal you had, to get there. Now let it all hang out there and have fun."

The Cardinals will have to continue to play as they did in winning the section title, getting good goaltending from sophomore Erich Murphy (16-3-1, 1.90, .914) and a solid team defensive effort in front of him.

Murphy has been a godsend for the Cardinals, who lost All-Stater Matt Hemingway to graduation. He started off on a steep learning curve, but has been very good the past few weeks.

"It took him some time," admitted Woods. "Those were huge shoes to fill and he's been one of our biggest surprises. It was an adjustment with the speed of game and harder shots. Once we were two weeks into the season, he had to keep battling for that spot and that's what has made him better."

Offensively, watch for senior Thomas Williams (37-24-61), who has played on the Cardinals' first line since he was a sophomore. He's a complete player who makes his teammates better and can bury the puck.

Defensively, Alexandria has great experience with seniors Kirby Nelson and Aaron Rentschler leading the way.



Murphy



Williams



THE CARDINALS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Tim Kolehmainen: They play like they belong at the X. This is a program that has been capable of multiple state bids recently, but has always run into Little Falls. With good goaltending and defense, they have now emerged.

VIRGINIA/MIB

By Tim Kolehmainen

Technology has expanded the reach of the Virginia/Mt. Iron-Buhl empire. Minutes after beating Iron Range rival Hibbing/Chisholm in the Section 7A final last Wednesday, Blue Devils coach Keith Hendrickson began receiving a flood of congratulatory text messages.

"We weren't even on the bus yet," laughed Hendrickson, who is enjoying his second straight trip to the state tournament. "Right after the game, I was getting texts from a former player who is now a Major in the Marines, calling from Quantico. (Former Blue Devil star) Matt Niskanen texted from Dallas (where he plays for the NHL's Dallas Stars).

"With technology, people have really been following."

It's a good news, bad news situation. For all the congratulations also come the comments when things don't go as well. Last year, those same text message playfully chided Hendrickson after the Blue Devils lost both games at state.

Virginia is hoping for a better result to this year's state tournament experience. This year's juniors were fresh-faced sophomores last year when the Blue Devils were two-and-done. The pain from those losses was tough to let go.

"Last year, when we lost the second game in the consolation rounds, a bunch of our sophomores wouldn't come out of the locker room for at least an hour," Hendrickson recalled. "Losing two games didn't sit well with them and it was a real motivating factor."

An older and stronger Blue

Devils team awaits its first-round game against Hermantown this time around. The two teams are familiar foes up in the Northeast corner of the state.

Hermantown took a 4-2 victory over Virginia just a few days before Christmas on the Hawks' home rink. Hermantown held a distinct 44-17 shot advantage, but senior goalie Casey Myhre kept the Blue Devils in the game – something he'll be counted for this week.

"No matter who you are, your goaltending has to hold up," Hendrickson said. "You have to have good goaltending to get there throughout the playoff run, but sometimes the bright lights and the Xcel can really throw a curveball at some pretty good hockey players for the first period or so."

Myhre (10-3-3, 1.91, .922) has been a surprise this year, as he has improved into a good varsity goaltender through plenty of hard work.

What hasn't been a surprise is the offensive firepower of the Blue Devils, led by SCSU-bound junior Garrett Hendrickson (32-44-76). But it isn't a one-man show, according to Coach Hendrickson, Garrett's father. He plays all three lines and doesn't shorten his bench.

"They've earned the right to play and I trust them all," Hendrickson said. "These kids have all had played a lot of hockey and they have confidence in themselves. You can't expect kids to have confidence if you don't give them the chance to gain it."



Krebsbach



Hendrickson



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Blue Devils

Conference: Iron Range

Section: 7A

Record: 18-7-3

State trips: 2005, 09, 10

Coach: Keith Hendrickson

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
G. Hendrickson	32	44	76
Andrew Judnick	19	25	44
Dan Chesser	17	23	40
Wes Judnick	8	32	40
Travis Eddy	18	20	38

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Casey Myhre	10-3-3	1.91	.922
Andy Milbridge	8-4-0	3.08	.855

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Casey Myhre	G	12
2	Troy Nichols	F	11
3	Andrew Judnick	F	12
4	Gavin Nichols	F	11
5	John Morgan	F	11
6	Dan Fosslund	D	12
7	Garrett Hendrickson	F	11
8	Wes Judnick	D	11
9	Jordan Krebsbach	D	12
10	Dan Chesser	F	12
12	Derek Judnick	D	10
16	Trey Carlson	F	12
19	Tom Norlander	F	11
20	Tyler Goodrie	F	10
21	Jace Friedlieb	D	11
22	Christian Belobaba	D	12
25	Travis Eddy	F	11
26	Marc Krebsbach	F	10
27	Evan Burchell	D	12
29	Andy Milbridge	G	11

ROAD TO THE X

Section 7A Quarters, 2/25

Virginia/MIB 22, Silver Bay 0

Eddy 4 goals, 4 assists

Chesser and Nichols 3 goals, 2 assists each

Section 7A Semis, 2/27

Virginia/MIB 3, DMarshall 2 OT

Myhre 27 saves

Norlander 1 goal

Section 7A Finals, 3/3

Virginia/MIB 3, Hibbing 0

Myhre 28 saves

Krebsbach 1 goal, 1 assist

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

THE BLUE DEVILS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Tim Kolehmainen: The junior class uses last year's state experience as a springboard to this tournament. They were disappointed by losing both games last year and don't want to suffer a repeat.



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Warriors**Conference:** Mariucci**Section:** 8A**Record:** 24-4-0**State trips:** 1948, 49, 53, 63, 69, 70, 87, 88, 89, 94 Champs, 95, 96 Champs, 97, 2000, 03 Champs, 04, 05 Champs, 07, 08, 09, 10**Coach:** Albert Hasbargen

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Brock Nelson	47	38	85
Brett Hebel	26	44	70
Carson Gray	7	33	40
Nick Stoskopf	17	21	38
Joey Olson	5	20	25

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Andy Foster	8-1-0	1.95	.901

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Tommy Astrup	F	10
3	Brock Nelson	F	12
4	Hayden Timm	D	10
5	Carson Gray	D	11
6	Ben Goldsmith	F	11
8	David Nelson	F	11
9	Brett Hebel	F	12
10	Tanner Pederson	D	10
11	Tyler Elson	F	10
12	Brandon Pearson	F	11
13	Nick Stoskopf	F	11
15	Adam Shaugabay	F	12
17	Conner Pfeiffer	D	10
18	Jase Lamberson	F	10
19	Austin Streiff	F	10
20	Eric Hebel	D	12
21	Aaron Storey	D	12
22	Aaron Rasmusson	F	12
23	Dylan Fowler	F	11
25	Dylan Kezar	D	10
26	Casey Anderson	F	9
31	Andy Foster	G	10
37	Joey Olson	D	12
39	Dillion Thompson	G	10

ROAD TO THE X

Section 8A Quarters, 2/25
Warroad 9, Red Lake Falls 3

Nelson 3 goals, 2 assists

Section 8A Semis, 2/27
Warroad 9, Kittson Central 2

Nelson 4 goals, 2 assists

Section 8A Finals, 3/4
Warroad 2, Thief River Falls 0

Foster 25 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

WARROAD

By Tim Kolehmainen

The memory of last year's Class A state title game loss to Breck still stings up in Warroad.

The Warriors, searching for their fifth state championship, matched up with Breck in a classic showdown that typified the best of the state tournament. Public versus private. Outstate versus metro. Country versus city.

Warroad arguably controlled play for more of the game, outshooting the Mustangs 36-24. But it was Breck that carried the trophy around the X at the final horn, winning 7-3. John Russell shone in nets, stopping 33 shots and hearing chants of "MVP!" from his home crowd.

"Last year, their goaltender won the state title for them," Warroad coach Albert Hasbargen said. "I thought our scoring chances were more than theirs in that championship game, but that young man played an excellent game."

While Breck seemed an easy pick to get back to state, returning 20 letter winners, Warroad's path was much less certain. The Warriors graduated many top players, including goaltender Jason Goldsmith, leaving plenty of holes.

But the fire from that loss still burned in the remaining Warriors, including All-Staters Brock Nelson (47-38-85), Brett Hebel (26-44-70) and defenseman Carson Gray (7-33-40).

"We were pretty hungry for it,

coming off a loss last year," Hebel said. "We just want to come home with some gold."

The Warriors took the first step, edging rival Thief River Falls in the Section 8A championship game last Thursday night. But that only got them to St. Paul.

"Your next job is to win the state title and that's what we go down there for," Hasbargen said.

Warroad's path may have gotten a bit smoother in recent weeks, as well, with the emergence of sophomore goaltender Andy Foster (8-1-0, 1.95, .901).

Foster wasn't expected to see much varsity time this winter, with Shawn Storey carrying the load in his senior season. But when Storey hurt his knee in a Jan. 26 game against Crookston, Foster was thrown in the fire. All he's done since is win 10 of his 11 starts while allowing more than three goals just once. In the past four games, Foster has given up just three goals.

"He's done everything that we've asked of him," Hasbargen said.

As the Warriors know, it's important to have a hot goaltender at this time of the season. They remember peppering Russell with shot after shot last March -- to no avail.

They may just get another chance.

Breck and Warroad are sitting on the same side of the bracket, however, meaning the rematch won't come in the state finals. Should results follow seeding, they'll meet in the semifinals Friday.



B. Nelson



B. Hebel



THE WARRIORS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...

Tim Kolehmainen: Sophomore goalie Andy Foster continues to stand on his head. Last year, Warroad got beat in the finals by Breck's John Russell and his terrific game. The Warriors must turn the tables to win it all.