

# 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



Scheid

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."



## 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.