



PROGRAM INFO

**Nickname:** Crimson  
**Conference:** NW Suburban  
**Section:** 5AA  
**Record:** 24-2-2  
**State trips:** 2012  
**Coach:** Gary Stefano

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Dylan Steman	28	38	66
Tony Paulson	25	29	54
Shane Wolden	20	27	47
Jordan Gross	17	29	46
Alex Mason	18	28	46
Spencer Bell	19	25	44
Sam Valerius	14	17	31
Drew Aspinwall	4	18	22
Joe Franta	2	18	20
Jordan Freberg	1	17	18

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Kyle Koop	24-2-2	1.88	.921

PLAYOFF ROSTER

#	Name	Pos	Gr
3	Nate Erickson	F	10
4	Jody Randall	F	11
6	Charlie Thomsen	D	11
7	Jordan Freberg	D	12
8	Sam Valerius	F	10
9	Shane Wolden	F	12
10	Joe Franta	D	11
12	Zach Schafer	F	12
14	Tony Paulson	F	12
15	Alex Mason	F	12
16	Josh Augustine	F	11
17	Drew Aspinwall	D	12
18	Dylan Steman	F	12
19	Chris Fremark	F	11
20	Spencer Bell	F	12
22	Taylor Goetsch	F	12
23	Jordan Gross	D	11
24	Drake Thomsen	D	10
30	John Danielson	G	10
35	Kyle Koop	G	12

CAN THEY WIN?

Despite their 4-1 loss to Duluth East at a packed Maple Grove Community Center on Jan. 4, the Crimson are widely regarded as having the best chance of knocking off the top-ranked and top-seeded Greyhounds. Maple Grove features two reliable scoring lines, one of the state's best defensemen in junior and Notre Dame recruit Jordan Gross and a senior goaltender in Kyle Koop who is one of two finalists for the Frank Brimsek Award.

-- Loren Nelson

# MAPLE GROVE

## Crimson

By Loren Nelson

When facing a roadblock, the sensible option is to find an alternate route.

Maple Grove has been on the slow road to St. Paul for years, earning the Crimson the label of "Best program never to have reached in the state tournament."

Staring once again this year at the Section 5AA blockade that is Blaine, the Crimson plotted a more direct course. They simply punched the gas and drove straight at the six-time defending section champion Bengals.

The result was a breakthrough of historic proportions. Maple Grove's 15-1 victory over Blaine set state records for most goals for one team and largest margin of victory in a section title game.

The Crimson had lost to the Bengals in each of the two previous section championship games.

"This year we knew all along we had a better team, but it was a matter of going out and getting it done," Maple Grove coach Gary Stefano said during the Crimson's lengthy postgame celebration at the State Fairgrounds Coliseum. "It was a big mental barrier. The kids heard all the time, 'Can you get by Blaine? Can you get by Blaine?'

"It was a mental thing that we heard ever since we lost last year. We tried to get that out of the system, and the kids did by coming out here with a terrific effort."

Having purged all those power-blue Blaine demons from their system, the Crimson now face another question, "What will you do for an encore?"

No. 3 ranked Maple Grove (24-2-2) received the No. 2 seed in a vote of tournament coaches and will play Hill-Murray (22-6-0) at 11 a.m. on Thursday to open quarterfinal play in the state Class 2A tournament at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"I think coming to state for the first time, we're going to have a lot more

emotion into it," said forward Spencer Bell, who scored four goals in the win over Blaine. "For teams that have been there before, those guys know what it is like. We don't know what it is like.

"We are going to come out with everything we've got every game."

Only top-ranked and top-seeded Duluth East (27-1-0), which beat Maple Grove 4-1 on Jan. 4 in Maple Grove, has a better record entering the state tournament.

Few teams can match the Crimson's depth. They have such an abundance of top-end talent they boast multiple power-play units capable of shredding opposing defenses. Maple Grove's offensive arsenal was never more apparent than in its dismantling of Blaine. The Crimson scored a stunning four times during a 5-minute major power play early in the opening period.

"We've had a great power play all year," Stefano said. "The good thing was, and people saw it, we rotated two different units. We don't just have one. That's been the key for us all season, that depth."

The Crimson went 5-for-7 on the power play against the Bengals. Maple Grove converted on 34.3 percent of its power-play opportunities during the regular season.

One of Bell's goals came while Maple Grove was killing a 5-minute major penalty in the first period, giving the Crimson 10 shorthanded goals this season.

Statewide rule changes that went into effect on Jan. 15 increased the penalties for checking from behind, boarding and contact to the head to automatic 5-minute majors. The rule changes have played to Maple Grove's considerable strengths.

"We didn't like the rule change when it first came out, but I guess you've got to like it now," Crimson senior forward Tony Paulson said. "It earned us a trip to the state tournament."



Jordan Gross



ROAD TO THE X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 25	Wayzata	3-3 T
Nov. 26	Edina	3-0 W
Dec. 1	at Anoka	8-2 W
Dec. 3	Andover	5-4 W
Dec. 8	at Blaine	6-3 W
Dec. 15	at Champlin Park	6-2 W
Dec. 17	Centennial	4-2 W
Dec. 20	at Benilde	5-4 W
Dec. 22	Armstrong	8-1 W
Dec. 28	Elk River (SLP)	3-1 W
Dec. 29	Wayzata (SLP)	4-2 W
Dec. 30	Benilde (SLP)	5-3 W
Jan. 4	Duluth East	1-4 L
Jan. 5	Coon Rapids	8-0 W
Jan. 7	Osseo	8-0 W
Jan. 12	at Edina	5-3 W
Jan. 19	Anoka	4-2 W
Jan. 21	at Andover	2-2 T
Jan. 26	Blaine	4-2 W
Jan. 28	at Armstrong	9-1 W
Feb. 2	Champlin Park	8-1 W
Feb. 4	at Centennial	3-0 W
Feb. 11	at Elk River	3-5 L
Feb. 14	North Metro	8-1 W
Feb. 18	at Osseo	6-0 W

Section 5AA playoffs

Feb. 23	North Metro	16-1 W
Feb. 28	Osseo	5-1 W
Mar. 2	Blaine	15-1 W



COACH'S CORNER

Gary Stefano has a 234-140-26 record in his 16 seasons guiding the Crimson, who are playing in the state tournament for the first time. This isn't Stefano's first appearance on the big stage, however, as he guided Park Center to the 1993 state tournament. He's built Maple Grove's program into one that has consistently ranked among the state's best in recent years.