Lakeville South

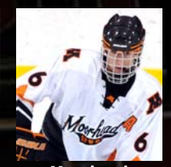
Edina

Eagan

Hill-Murray

Maple Grove

Benilde-SM

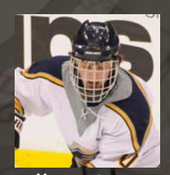

Moorhead

Class AA

Duluth East

The MN Hockey Hub's complete State Tournament Guidebook

March 7-10, 2012


Hermantown

Class A

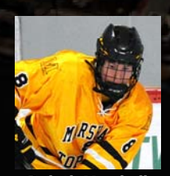
Rochester Lourdes

Breck

New Ulm

St. Thomas Acad.

Little Falls


Duluth Marshall

Thief River Falls

Welcome to the 2012 State High School Hockey Tournament!

Sixteen teams hit the X this week attempting to win state titles; Duluth East and Hermantown earn top seeds

Before you is the most comprehensive guide to the teams involved in this year's tournament. It was published through the efforts of the Minnesota Hockey Hub's editors, writers and contributors, all of whom are partners with the Minnesota Hockey Coaches Association (MHCA).

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, coach's corner, the "Road to the X," and a scouting report on each team with pictures.

Minnesota Hockey Hub editor Loren Nelson tackled many of the Class AA capsules from the metro area. You'll recognize his style as the man with his finger on the pulse of Minnesota high school hockey.

Minnesota Hockey Hub contributors Zack Friedli (northeastern Minnesota) and Walker Orenstein (metro area) also contributed capsules from their respective areas, as did Michael Murakami with Breck and Justin Magill with St. Thomas Academy from Class A.

Tim Kolehmainen, editor of Breakdown Sports USA and a frequent Minnesota Hockey Hub contributor, compiled half of the Class A capsules and Moorhead from Class AA, as well as teaming with Helen Nelson and Adam Crane to provide all the photos in the guide.

There are plenty of old favorites in this year's tournament, including the defending Class A champion, St. Thomas Academy and both of last year's runners-up, Duluth East and Hermantown. But there are also unfamiliar faces -- including the first-timers from Maple Grove. In all, 15 of the 16 top seeds in the section tournaments advanced to state.

We're also priviledged to watch all 10 Mr. Hockey finalists and both goaltenders nominated as finalists for the Frank Brimsek Award (Moorhead's Michael Bitzer and Maple Grove's Kyle Koop). This year's state tournament truly does feature the best teams and players in the state.

Class A action begins the four-day celebration at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. Second-seeded St. Thomas Academy (23-5-0) plays Little Falls (19-9-0) at 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 7, followed by No. 3 Breck (24-3-1) against Duluth Marshall (21-7-0). The evening session kicks off at 6 p.m. with No. 1 Hermantown (28-0-0) taking on Rochester Lourdes (20-8-0), followed by fourth-seeded Thief River Falls (22-4-2) against New Ulm (17-11-0).

The Class AA tournament opens the next morning (Thursday, March 8) at 11 a.m. with No. 2 Maple Grove (24-2-2) against Hill-Murray (22-6-0). At 1 p.m., No. 3 Eagan (24-3-1) faces Moorhead (21-6-0). In the evening, top-seeded Duluth East (27-1-0) gets its tournament underway against Lakeville South (20-8-0) at 6 p.m. The 8 p.m. game features No. 4 Edina (23-5-0) and surging Benilde-St. Margaret's (22-6-0) 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 full spotlight coverage of every game at the Xcel Energy Center for all four days of the tournament.

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 greatest event in high school sports from the Xcel Energy Center.

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

Lakeville South Cougars

Program Info

Nickname: Cougars
Conference: South Suburban
Section: 1AA
Record: 20-8-0
State trips: 2002, 03, 04 (as Lakeville), 2008, 2012
Coach: Kurt Weber

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Justin Kloos	39	60	99
Alex Harvey	36	41	77
Joe Freemark	13	30	43
Patrick Lauderdale	19	22	41
Michael Chuinard	14	15	29
John Wiitala	8	18	26
Justin Doeden	11	12	23
Charlie Heller	2	20	22
Jake Ocken	4	17	21

Goalies	W-L-T	GAA	SV
Hunter Ziniel	12-6-0	2.52	.890
Ty Schumacher	8-2-0	2.52	.886

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Tyler Schumacher	G	11
3	Michael Chuinard	F	12
4	Ben Freemark	F	11
5	Mack Farley	F	11
6	Joe Freemark	D	12
7	Leo Steinmetz	F	11
8	Jake Rahbain	D	11
9	Alex Harvey	F	12
1	John Wiitala	F	11
11	Justin Doeden	F	11
12	Jake Ocken	D	12
15	Justin Kloos	F	12
16	Grant Gangeness	F	12
17	Charlie Heller	D	12
18	Shane Hill	F	12
19	Westin Baumann	F	11
21	Cameron Jackson	D	11
24	Patrick Lauderdale	F	10
27	Drew Byers	F	10
35	Hunter Ziniel	G	12

Can they win?

Lakeville South doesn't figure to have the depth and big-game experience to go the distance with battle-hardened Duluth East. But state scoring leader Justin Kloos is the definition of a gamechanger, and if he can sneak behind the Greyhounds defense, well, who knows?

-- Loren Nelson

By Loren Nelson

Justin Kloos wasn't involved in the draw that determined the quarterfinal matchups for the state Class 2A tournament.

Or so we think.

Because of Kloos' off-the-charts competitiveness, it would easy to believe his fingerprints were all over Lakeville South's pairing with top-seeded and top-ranked Duluth East.

Kloos is the sort of kid who, given the chance to go mountain climbing, wouldn't be satisfied unless he had scaled Everest.

"They are jazzed, they really are," Lakeville South coach Kurt Weber said about the Cougars' reaction to playing high-powered East, high school hockey's version of the world's highest peak. "For us, it is good motivation."

For Kloos, it is a chance to go head-to-head with Duluth East's Jake Randolph. Kloos and Randolph are two of the 10 finalists and, narrowing the field even further, obvious frontrunners for the coveted Mr. Hockey award.

"He's such a competitive kid, I might have to tell him this isn't between you and Jake Randolph," Weber said with a laugh. "But he isn't that type of player. He has more assists than goals. He's got a good head on his shoulders."

Kloos, a senior forward who has committed to play at the University of Minnesota, has 99 points this season as a brilliant follow up to his 90-point junior campaign. With 234 career points (105 goals, 129 assists) he ranks 21st on the state's all-time scoring list.

The Cougars (20-8-0) square off against Duluth East at 6 p.m. on Thursday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"People who haven't seen him are in for the treat," Weber said. "NHL scouts have said some things to me about what they see in him that just floor me."

Weber can tell some stories, too.

There was the time when Kloos, matched up in a scrimmage against a Division I recruit and state scoring leader, made it a point to skate the puck straight at the star player.

"He loves the challenge of playing against the best people," Weber said. "Four times he went across the rink instead of just skating it up along the boards."

Earlier this season against state tournament entrant Hill-Murray, Kloos pounced on a turnover in the Lakeville South defensive zone. Weber said he was astounded to see all five Pioneers players immediately abandon the forecheck and head toward the opposite end of the rink.

"All five Hill guys turned around backward to play defense," Weber said. "This is one of the best-coached teams in the state. (Hill-Murray coach) Bill Lechner is screaming at the top of his lungs. I've never seen anything like it."

Playing with and against most of the state's top players last fall in the Upper Midwest High School Elite Hockey League, Kloos was the league's runaway scoring leader. Weber says Kloos is even more effective playing with longtime teammates and fellow seniors such as linemate Alex Harvey (36-41--77) and defensemen Joe Freemark (13-30--43) and Charlie Heller (2-20--22).

"They are just phenomenal kids," Weber said about his senior class, which has twice lost heartbreaking section championship matchups to intracity rival Lakeville North before this year's breakthrough. "Justin returned to be with his buddies and to play with them in the state tournament.

"I think he was carrying as much burden as I was to get there."

Justin Kloos

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 3	Edina	1-5 L
Dec. 10	Eagan	3-4 L
Dec. 15	Rosemount	6-1 W
Dec. 17	Eastview	8-1 W
Dec. 19	at White Bear Lake	7-1 W
Dec. 22	at Jefferson	8-2 W
Dec. 26	Stillwater (Schwan)	6-3 W
Dec. 27	Breck (Schwan)	4-6 L
Dec. 28	Roseville (Schwan)	7-2 W
Jan. 5	Prior Lake	5-6 L
Jan. 7	Lakeville North	3-4 L
Jan. 10	Rochester Century	10-1 W
Jan. 12	at Apple Valley	3-2 W
Jan. 19	Burnsville	6-3 W
Jan. 21	at Eagan	4-5 L
Jan. 24	Eden Prairie	3-5 L
Jan. 26	at Rosemount	13-1 W
Jan. 28	at Eastview	9-2 W
Feb. 2	Jefferson	5-4 W
Feb. 4	at Prior Lake	5-2 W
Feb. 6	Hill-Murray	3-5 L
Feb. 9	at Lakeville North	4-2 W
Feb. 11	Apple Valley	3-0 W
Feb. 16	at Kennedy	11-1 W
Feb. 18	at Burnsville	4-3 W
Section 1AA playoffs		
Feb. 23	Winona	19-0 W
Feb. 25	Rochester Mayo	7-0 W
Mar. 1	Lakeville North	7-1 W

Coach's Corner

Kurt Weber has been the Cougars' coach since their inception, and he's guided them to two state tournament berths in seven seasons while compiling a 104-90-7 record.

EDINA Hornets

Program Info

Nickname: Hornets
Conference: Lake
Section: 2AA
Record: 23-5-0
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 Champs, 11, 12
Coach: Curt Giles

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Connor Hurley	24	31	55
Dylan Malmquist	26	23	49
Andy Jordahl	10	22	32
Louie Nanne	15	11	26
Tyler Nanne	7	15	22
Matt Nelson	3	15	18
Miguel Fidler	6	12	18
Anthony Walsh	1	15	16
Parker Reno	2	14	16

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Willie Benjamin	18-5-0	2.33	.912
Connor Beaupre	5-0-0	1.13	.936

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Willie Benjamin	G	11
3	Jack Hultstrand	D	10
4	Anthony Walsh	F	11
5	Parker Reno	D	11
6	Matt Nelson	D	11
7	Hayden Anderson	D	11
9	Tyler Nanne	F	10
10	Andy Jordahl	F	11
11	Louie Nanne	F	11
12	Miguel Fidler	F	10
14	Jack Walker	D	9
15	Cullen Munson	F	10
16	Connor Hurley	F	10
17	Tim Spicola	F	11
18	Nick Leer	F	12
19	Bo Brauer	F	11
20	Dylan Malmquist	F	9
21	Ryan Hatch	D	11
27	Henry Rose	F	10
30	Connor Beaupre	G	12

Can they win?

Sophomore Connor Hurley and freshman Dylan Malmquist give Edina two of the state's most dangerous scoring threats, and depth never seems to be an issue for the Hornets.

-- Loren Nelson

By Loren Nelson

Tryouts for the Edina varsity hockey team might just rival the state tournament in terms of competitiveness, intrigue and drama.

It's been that way for years for one of the state's most storied programs.

The Hornets have won seven state titles -- 10 if you count the three that went to Edina East when the posh Minneapolis suburb had two high schools.

Tugging on that classically styled green and white Hornets jersey remains a dream for hundreds upon hundreds of kids rising through Edina's ultra-successful youth program.

This fall, when the ice spray cleared, there were just two seniors on the Hornets' roster. Several others with varsity experience had been cut. Hand-wringing and hard feelings were abundant in the community.

Edina coach Curt Giles found himself squarely in the line of fire.

"What you do at the beginning of the winter is you pick the best players you have and then you go," Giles said. "There is nothing else to this. The kids try out. It is very competitive tryouts.

"We as coaches try to make the best decisions we possibly can and take the best kids we could possibly have. And hopefully go into the season and end up where we are going."

Despite a roster loaded with sophomores and sprinkled with freshmen, the fourth-ranked Hornets are headed to their annual early March destination, namely the state Class 2A tournament in St. Paul. This trip marks their sixth consecutive state tournament appearance, the state's longest active run.

No. 4-ranked Edina (23-5-0) received the No. 4 seed and plays No. 6-ranked Benilde-St. Margaret's (22-6-0) at 8 p.m. on Thursday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul in the most anticipated of the quarterfinal matchups.

"This is probably going to be the best experience of my life," said Hornets sophomore Connor Hurley, one of the state's most dynamic forwards. "All these guys have been telling me it's the greatest feeling. I've wanted the chance to play in this my whole life.

"I am going to remember it forever."

Edina features an odd mix of battle-tested veterans familiar with the big stage and newbies who will experience the shock of playing in front of 18,000 fans for the first time.

"For those guys, I just say, 'Enjoy it,' " Hornets senior captain Nick Leer said. "This is going to be an awesome week. There is nothing better than playing in the state tournament."

Edina was a one-line team for most of the regular season, receiving the bulk of its goals from the brilliant duo of Hurley (24 goals, 31 assists for a team-best 55 points) and Malmquist (26-23--49).

The scoring has been much more balanced in the postseason, however, as junior Anthony Walsh posted a team-best nine points, and linemate Miguel Fidler, a sophomore, shared the team high in goals with four in three games.

All three of Edina's forward lines contributed at least goal in the Hornets' 6-3 Section 2AA championship game victory over Burnsville.

"We were hoping for something like this to break through, where some of these kids who haven't gotten some of those goals would be rewarded for some of the hard work they have put in," Giles said.

Willie Benjamin

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 25	Buffalo	4-0 W
Nov. 26	Maple Grove	0-3 L
Dec. 1	Eastview	7-1 W
Dec. 3	at Lakeville South	5-1 W
Dec. 6	at Anoka	7-2 W
Dec. 15	Grand Rapids	4-3 W
Dec. 16	Elk River	4-1 W
Dec. 17	Eden Prairie	4-1 W
Dec. 26	Blaine (Schwan)	2-0 W
Dec. 27	Minnetonka (Schn)	0-6 L
Dec. 28	St. Thomas (Schn)	3-2 W
Jan. 3	Cretin-DH	3-2 W
Jan. 5	Holy Angels	6-2 W
Jan. 7	White Bear Lake	3-2 W
Jan. 10	at Burnsville	3-2 W
Jan. 12	Maple Grove	3-5 L
Jan. 19	at Minnetonka	3-2 W
Jan. 26	Hopkins	5-2 W
Jan. 28	Wayzata	5-2 W
Feb. 2	Eden Prairie	4-0 W
Feb. 4	Minnetonka	4-5 L
Feb. 9	Buffalo	7-0 W
Feb. 11	at Hopkins	4-1 W
Feb. 16	at Wayzata	2-3 L
Feb. 18	at Eden Prairie	6-3 W
Section 2AA playoffs		
Feb. 23	Bloom. Kennedy	15-1 W
Feb. 25	Bloom. Jefferson	7-4 W
Feb. 29	Burnsville	6-3 W

Coach's Corner

Curt Giles, a former Minnesota North Stars defenseman, has been well-served by his even-keeled demeanor and matter-of-fact coaching style. He might not show it, but he'll tell you he's having the time of his life coaching the Hornets. "There is nothing like this, there just really isn't. To play in what I think is one of the greatest tournaments in the world ... I have to tell you it never gets old. It's a blast."

EAGAN Wildcats

Program Info

Nickname: Wildcats
Conference: South Suburban
Section: 3AA
Record: 24-3-1
State trips: 2006, 11, 12
Coach: Mike Taylor

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Nick Kuchera	17	37	54
Michael Zajac	25	26	51
Will Merchant	24	26	50
Zach Glienke	27	15	42
Cullen Willox	16	22	38
Eli May	13	18	31
Sam Wolfe	2	29	31
Will Peterson	11	20	31
Cody Mason	7	19	26
Connor McGovern	4	17	21
Eric Peterson	10	11	21
Derick Kuchera	7	14	21

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Christian Butler	15-3-1	1.79	.906
Andrew Lindgren	9-0-0	1.34	.902

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Tommy Muck	D	10
3	Nick Kuchera	F	12
4	Derick Kuchera	D	12
5	Cody Mason	F	12
8	Max Elsenheimer	F	10
9	Connor McGovern	D	12
10	Sam Wolfe	D	12
14	Eli May	D	12
15	Cullen Willox	F	11
16	Michael Zajac	F	12
19	Josh Loew	F	11
20	Tommy Nowariak	F	12
21	Zach Schultz	F	11
22	Eric Peterson	F	12
23	Will Peterson	F	11
24	Will Merchant	F	12
25	Nick Smallidge	D	11
27	Zach Glienke	F	11
31	Christian Butler	G	12
35	Andrew Lindgren	G	9

Can They Win?

The checklist for state tournament success isn't particularly long. Among the must haves are battle-tested seniors hungry for a title and a veteran corps of defensemen, preferably led by a D1 caliber two-way threat. Check and check. A goaltender with game-stealing capabilities is also a must. Christian Butler has had a solid season but doesn't have the pedigree.

-- Loren Nelson

By Loren Nelson

Equal parts hockey players and hell raisers, Eagan's infamous band of seniors didn't endear themselves to some of their middle school teachers.

Too rowdy.

"I'm a middle school teacher, and they were the Rat Pack of our whole school," Wildcats coach Mike Taylor said. "Now, some teachers liked that, and they drove some teachers crazy.

"They've been like that since they were 10 years old."

Taylor, of course, can be counted on the "like" side of the ledger. He's enjoyed every second of his time with a group that has reached the state Class 2A tournament for a second consecutive year.

"They are like brothers," Taylor said. "They are so tight, they are such good friends and they love to compete. Our small-area games in practices are sometimes way more hatchetfests than (during games). They battle.

"And it doesn't hurt that they are skilled."

Skilled? Eagan reached the state tournament by beating Hastings 10-1 for the Section 3AA championship. The Wildcats won their three section playoff games by a combined score of 29-1.

Four Wildcats seniors have committed to play at Division I programs, and it's possible two or three more could someday play at that level.

"I think they match up very well with anyone in the state," said longtime Hastings coach Russ Welch after Thursday's Section 3AA title game. "What do they have, three Division I defensemen? It all starts back there with at least three good defensemen. Then they have two or three Division I forwards.

"They have six (Division I) guys, and we're trying to get somebody into juniors."

No. 4-ranked Eagan opens state Class 2A tournament play at 1 p.m. on Thursday against No. 10-ranked Moorhead at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul in a quarterfinal rematch from last season. The Wildcats beat the Spuds 4-0 last year before losing to eventual champion Eden Prairie 5-1 in the semifinals. Eagan finished third after a 5-3 triumph over Edina.

Almost all of Eagan's top players return from last season's deep playoff run. Senior Division I recruits Eli May (Minnesota State) and Sam Wolfe (Maine) lead one of the state's deepest groups of defensemen, a veteran corps that also includes senior standouts Derick Kuchera and Connor McGovern.

Senior Mr. Hockey finalists Will Merchant (Maine) and Michael Zajac (Princeton) also have committed to Division I programs. Merchant and Zajac have been symbolic of the program's rise to power over the past three seasons.

"I think we've been a lot more mature this year," Zajac said. "This year we know what to expect. Last year was a shellshock stepping on that ice for the first time, seeing 18,000 people screaming.

"When the quarterfinal game comes, having that year of maturity will be nice."

Senior Nick Kuchera is yet another top-end forward who played in the Upper Midwest High School Elite Hockey League last fall, and he shared the Wildcats' regular season scoring title with Zajac with 47 points (Merchant had 45, including a team-best 23 goals).

While Eagan's state tournament fate will undoubtedly ride on its 11 seniors, the wildcard for the Wildcats could be the play of juniors Zach Glienke and Cullen Willox.

They are part of a second line that has emerged as an explosive scoring unit that can rival any in the state. Glienke scored 20 goals in the regular season and has seven more in the section playoffs. Willox shares the team postseason scoring lead with Glienke and Tommy Nowariak with eight points.

As for those middle schoolers who routinely tested their teachers' patience, May admits there was an out-of-control element to their behavior.

"We've been playing together since mites, so we've developed a brotherhood there," May said. "A lot of us live in the same cul-de-sac. We have good chemistry with each other and stuff, always finding each other on the ice.

"I guess maybe we were little punksters growing up, but what can you do?"

Will Merchant

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	Hastings	8-1 W
Dec. 3	at Eden Prairie	1-2 L
Dec. 10	Lakeville South	4-3 W
Dec. 15	Lakeville North	10-1 W
Dec. 17	Rosemount	9-1 W
Dec. 22	at Apple Valley	5-0 W
Dec. 26	Hopkins (SSP)	7-1 W
Dec. 27	Anoka (SSP)	8-1 W
Dec. 28	Woodbury (SSP)	3-2 W
Jan. 3	at Minnetonka	2-4 L
Jan. 5	at Eastview	5-0 W
Jan. 7	at Kennedy	4-0 W
Jan. 12	Jefferson	5-2 W
Jan. 14	at Burnsville	8-2 W
Jan. 19	Prior Lake	8-2 W
Jan. 21	Lakeville South	5-4 W
Jan. 24	East Ridge	5-0 W
Jan. 26	at Lakeville North	4-1 W
Jan. 28	at Rosemount	10-2 W
Jan. 31	at Hill-Murray	4-2 W
Feb. 2	Apple Valley	9-2 W
Feb. 4	Eastview	7-1 W
Feb. 11	at Jefferson	6-6 T
Feb. 16	Burnsville	2-3 L
Feb. 18	at Prior Lake	9-1 W
Section 3AA playoffs		
Feb. 23	Rosemount	12-0 W
Feb. 25	Park	7-1 W
Mar. 1	Hastings	10-1 W

Coach's Corner

Mike Taylor is in his ninth season as head coach of the Wildcats and has a 160-80-1 record heading into the state tournament. He said he doesn't expect much after effect from the Wildcats' stunning 10-1 rout of Hastings in the Section 3AA title game. "They better forget about it. They already celebrated. We've got work to do. We'll prepare like we do for any Thursday game."

HILL-MURRAY Pioneers

Program Info

Nickname: Pioneers
Conference: Classic Suburban
Section: 4AA
Record: 22-6-0
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, 12
Coach: Bill Lechner

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jake Guentzel	22	50	72
Zach La Valle	25	34	59
Charlie Sampair	29	19	48
Andy Faust	16	27	43
Blake Heinrich	11	23	34
Willie Brown	17	15	32
Conrad Sampair	10	11	21
Sam Becker	4	12	16
Dan Cashman	3	9	12
Tyler Funk	4	6	10

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
John Dugas	16-5-1	2.21	.906
Travis Neubeck	5-1-0	2.14	.933

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	John Dugas	G	11
7	Dan Cashman	F	12
8	Zach Mills	F	9
9	Logan Sharp	D	10
10	Brandon Thompson	F	12
12	CJ LaChappelle	F	11
14	Charlie Sampair	F	12
15	Conrad Sampair	F	12
16	Blake Heinrich	D	11
17	Jim Tich	F	11
18	Willie Brown	F	10
19	Andy Faust	F	12
20	Jake Guentzel	F	11
21	Zach La Valle	F	11
22	Dan Dolan	D	11
25	Ryan Black	D	11
26	Tyler Funk	F	10
27	Sam Becker	D	11
28	Davis Zarembinski	D	9
33	Travis Neubeck	G	11

Can they win?

The Pioneers' offense really has to ignite if they want to bust any brackets. Getting past phenomenal goaltender Kyle Koop and Maple Grove in the first round will be tough but Jake Guentzel and company have enough skill to put pucks in the net against anyone.

-- Walker Orenstein

By Walker Orenstein

Ranked first in the state and in its section, Hill-Murray was upended in double overtime by White Bear Lake in last year's Section 4AA championship game, a startling result that ended the high school careers for a talented group of seniors.

To say last season didn't meet the Pioneers' expectations is an understatement.

Besides the loss, the storied program took even more hits with the departure of starting goaltender Tim Shaughnessy and leading goal scorer Ben Bahe, among other seniors. Transfers and early departures to junior leagues also depleted the team, leaving the Pioneers with just four seniors and one returning defenseman.

All of this added up to significantly lowered expectations for Hill-Murray and coach Bill Lechner, who is in his 15th season guiding the program.

Given a second chance however, the No. 9-ranked Pioneers broke through Section 4AA by beating Roseville to earn a trip to the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. They will play No. 2-seeded and No. 3-ranked Maple Grove (24-2-2) at 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 8.

So what was the difference? How did they make it this year and not last time?

"Well, you gotta have some luck," Lechner said. "We started off really young, started off with some guys who were at the football state tournament so they weren't with us yet, took a couple dings early. I admire these guys that they've stuck with it, worked hard to achieve, and started pecking away."

As Lechner noted, the beginning of the season didn't look incredibly promising for the Pioneers. They took a couple of lumps early. Their 4-4-0 record to start the season was mostly a byproduct of the newcomers on the defensive end.

Extremely thin at the blue line, Lechner switched juniors Sam Becker and Ryan Black from forward to defense, and the Pioneers made the best of the situation.

"Ever since the beginning of the season, they've been getting better and better every day," senior forward Charlie Sampair said. "I was a little worried at the beginning of the season for them, but they've come a long way and I think we're going into the state tournament in great position."

Although the Pioneers weren't exactly forgotten, having distance from the spotlight gave the team room to grow, and by the time they got a little seasoning, the Pioneers turned on the heat.

Winning seven-straight games to end the regular season, Hill-Murray hit its stride, mostly by piling up goals.

"We think we're very deep at forward …" Lechner said. "There's some guys that can fly around the rink and are very skilled."

That flashy offensive attack is led by Sampair, one of 10 Mr. Hockey finalists. The offense spins with the punch provided by Sampair, defenseman Blake Heinrich, forward Zach LaValle, and the skillful passing of forward Jake Guentzel, who has racked up 50 assists, third most in the state.

Hill-Murray averaged six goals per game during the regular season.

"Last year was such a disappointment," Sampair said. "I'm just so glad we got it done this year."

Blake Heinrich

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	Benilde	2-3 L
Dec. 3	at Burnsville	2-5 L
Dec. 8	Henry Sibley	12-0 W
Dec. 10	St. Thomas Acad	2-1 W
Dec. 15	Mahtomedi	3-1 W
Dec. 17	Wayzata	4-5 L
Dec. 22	White Bear Lake	7-2 W
Dec. 26	Minnetonka (Schn)	3-7 L
Dec. 27	Blaine (Schwan)	4-2 W
Dec. 28	Burnsville (Schwan)	4-3 W
Jan. 7	at South St. Paul	6-1 W
Jan. 12	at North St. Paul	3-0 W
Jan. 14	Tartan	6-0 W
Jan. 17	at Eden Prairie	3-5 L
Jan. 21	at Henry Sibley	14-0 W
Jan. 26	at St. Thomas Acad	5-2 W
Jan. 28	at Mahtomedi	7-3 W
Jan. 31	Eagan	2-4 L
Feb. 2	at Richfield	16-2 W
Feb. 4	Simley	11-3 W
Feb. 6	at Lakeville South	5-3 W
Feb. 9	South St. Paul	8-2 W
Feb. 11	North St. Paul	5-4 W
Feb. 14	at Tartan	5-1 W
Feb. 18	Moorhead	6-1 W
Section 4AA playoffs		
Feb. 25	Tartan	6-0 W
Feb. 29	Stillwater	4-0 W
Mar. 2	Roseville	3-2 W

Coach's Corner

Bill Lechner is in his 15th season as the head coach at Hill-Murray. He won a state title with the squad in 2008 and also won one in 1983 as a Pioneers' assistant coach. The Cretin-Derham Hall graduate has a 312-101-15 record with Hill-Murray and also serves as the activities director and baseball coach for the school. Under his direction the boys' hockey team has made it to state 10 times.

MAPLE GROVE Crimson

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

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.

BENILDE-ST. MARGARET'S

Red Knights

Program Info

Nickname: Red Knights
Conference: Noth Suburban
Section: 6AA
Record: 22-6-0
State trips: 1991, 99 A Champs, 2001 A Champs, 08, 12
Coach: Ken Pauly

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Grant Besse	44	38	82
TJ Moore	28	37	65
Christian Horn	25	40	65
Dan Labosky	16	47	63
Jake O'Borsky	18	20	38
Jake Horton	13	25	38
Tyler Ellegard	7	15	22
Patrick Graham	2	20	22
Chase Jungels	11	8	19
Jack Glover	2	16	18

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Justin Quale	11-3-0	1.73	.923
Anders Jecha	11-3-0	2.21	.889

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
4	Alec Anderson	F	12
6	Ben Newhouse	D	9
8	Jack Glover	D	10
9	Zack Hale	F	10
11	Chase Jungels	F	9
12	Grant Besse	F	11
14	Nick Lauth	F	12
16	Jake Horton	D	12
17	Patrick Graham	D	11
19	Jonah Johnson	D	12
20	Jake O'Borsky	F	12
21	Christian Horn	F	12
23	TJ Moore	F	11
25	Ryan Collins	D	10
27	Dan Labosky	F	11
31	Justin Quale	G	11
33	Anders Jecha	G	12
34	Seth Chumley	F	11
40	Tyler Ellegard	F	12

Can they win?

Grant Besse is as good of a pure goal scorer as any player in the state, and he will be a treat for fans to watch and nightmare for opposing defenses to stop. The Red Knights are playing for injured teammate Jack Jablonski, and that sort of motivation can be hard to match.

-- Loren Nelson

By Loren Nelson

The Jablonski Factor. It cannot be measured, understood or even adequately described.

But it is out there. Oh, yes.

When Benilde-St. Margaret's players see paralyzed teammate Jack Jablonski watching games through the glass from his wheelchair, the bigger picture comes into focus.

Hockey is a game. They are lucky to be playing it. Make the most of every second on the ice.

"When times get rough for us in a game, you just get that feeling," Benilde-St. Margaret's senior forward Jake O'Borsky said. "He is out there battling. He is out there encouraging us and watching us. It just makes us step up our game knowing he wishes he could be out here."

The No. 6-ranked Red Knights found that higher level in their 5-1 Section 6AA championship game thumping of No. 2 Minnetonka. It was easily Benilde-St. Margaret's best game of the season.

The magic extended into the postgame awards ceremony, when Mariucci Arena's Zamboni doors swung open and out onto the ice rolled Jablonski to a standing ovation.

"That was awesome," Benilde-St. Margaret's senior defenseman Jonah Johnson said about Jablonski's reception. "That's what Minnesota hockey is all about."

The Red Knights (22-6-0) face No. 4-ranked and third-seeded Edina (23-5-0) in an 8 p.m. quarterfinal matchup on Thursday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Don't expect the overriding storyline surrounding Benilde-St. Margaret's to change.

"You can't overplay the Jabby card, but I guess you can't underestimate the power of that sort of motivation, that love for a teammate and what that does for you," Benilde-St. Margaret's coach Ken Pauly said after the section championship game.

Jablonski was severely injured by a check from behind and the resulting impact into the boards during a junior varsity game on Dec. 30. The high school game has changed dramatically since, as stiffer penalties (automatic 5-minute majors) were mandated for checking from behind, boarding and head contact infractions.

Considered among the state's elite three or four teams in the preseason, Benilde-St. Margaret's had its share of struggles during the regular season. Two losses to Maple Grove exposed weaknesses in the Red Knights' defense, as did a befuddling late-season setback to Moorhead.

Those shortcomings have been addressed – and then some. Now the Red Knights are so deep on defense with Johnson, sophomores Ryan Collins and Jack Glover and junior Patrick Graham and freshman Ben Newhouse, that Pauly has the luxury to experiment with senior standout Jake Horton at forward.

The high-energy Horton (13 goals, 28 assists for 41 points) was effective playing alongside seniors Christian Horn (25-39--64) and Jake O'Borsky (18-19--37) against the Skippers, giving the Red Knights a superb second line.

Few lines in the state can match the speed and scoring of Benidle-St. Margaret's all-junior unit of Dan Labosky (15-45--60) , T.J. Moore (29-35--64) and Grant Besse (44-38--42).

Besse (Wisconsin) and Labosky (Colorado College) already have made their Division I college commitments, and a half-dozen more Red Knights could end up playing high-level college hockey.

For now, they are concerned only with the next game. And their injured teammate.

The Jablonski Factor. Do not dismiss it.

"We just want to play for him, and play well," O'Borsky said. "That's all we can do."

Dan Labosky

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 29	at St. Cloud Tech	16-0 W
Dec. 1	at Hill-Murray	3-2 W
Dec. 8	at Burnsville	1-5 L
Dec. 10	Duluth Marshall	5-2 W
Dec. 13	Holy Angels	15-2 W
Dec. 15	at Totino-Grace	6-2 W
Dec. 20	Maple Grove	4-5 L
Dec. 28	Centennial (SLP)	4-3 W
Dec. 29	Moorhead (SLP)	5-3 W
Dec. 30	Maple Grove (SLP)	3-5 L
Jan. 7	St. Louis Park	7-0 W
Jan. 10	Spring Lake Park	15-0 W
Jan. 12	at Minnetonka	3-5 L
Jan. 14	at Robb. Cooper	21-0 W
Jan. 17	St. Francis	8-1 W
Jan. 20	Chisago Lakes	7-2 W
Jan. 26	at Irondale	6-1 W
Jan. 27	Moorhead	2-6 L
Jan. 31	at Bloom. Jefferson	7-1 W
Feb. 4	at Spring Lake Park	15-0 W
Feb. 6	at Wayzata	4-3 W
Feb. 8	at Shattuck	2-5 L
Feb. 11	Totino-Grace	6-0 W
Feb. 14	at Chisago Lakes	5-0 W
Feb. 18	Stillwater	8-4 W
Section 6AA playoffs		
Feb. 23	Holy Family Cath.	7-0 W
Feb. 25	Robb. Armstrong	5-0 W
Feb. 29	Minnetonka	5-1 W

Coach's Corner

Ken Pauly, in his second stint at Benilde-St. Margaret's after a brief but successful run at Minnetonka, has the Red Knights playing their best at the most opportune of times. Pauly, who is approaching 400 career victories, has big-game experience, having led Benilde-St. Margaret's to state Class A titles in 1999 and 2001.

DULUTH EAST Greyhounds

Program Info

Nickname: Greyhounds
Conference: Independent
Section: 7AA
Record: 27-1-0
State trips: 1958, 60 Champs, 61, 64, 75, 91, 94, 95 Champs, 96, 97, 98 Champs, 2000, 03, 04, 05, 09, 10, 11, 12
Coach: Mike Randolph

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jake Randolph	34	38	72
Dom Toninato	30	37	67
Ryan Lundgren	16	35	51
Meirs Moore	13	33	46
Conner Valesano	12	24	36
Alex Toscano	17	15	32
Trevor Olson	9	21	30
Phil Beaulieu	4	18	22
Jack Forbort	8	12	20
Nate Repensky	2	17	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Dylan Parker	16-0-0	1.19	.933
Paige Skoog	11-1-0	2.21	.894

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
3	Andrew Kerr	D	11
4	Steven Holappa	F	12
5	Alex Trapp	D	10
6	Kyle Campion	F	12
12	Trevor Olson	F	12
13	Dom Bergeland	F	12
14	David Lofstuen	F	12
15	Meirs Moore	D	11
16	Jake Randolph	F	12
19	Dom Toninato	F	12
20	Nate Kotter	D	12
21	Ryan Lundgren	F	11
23	Alex Toscano	F	11
25	Phil Beaulieu	D	10
26	Conner Valesano	F	11
27	Jack Forbort	F	11
28	Nate Repensky	D	12
30	Dylan Parker	G	11
37	Hogan Davidson	F	11
41	Paige Skoog	G	12

Can they win?

The Greyhounds know they have the skill to win it all, it's just a matter of playing their game and limiting defensive mistakes. If that happens, Duluth East will be tough to beat.

-- Zack Friedli

By Zack Friedli

A long shot. A loose puck in the crease. Players scrambling to get to the net. The red light flashing.

Pandemonium.

The ending to Duluth East's magical ride at last year's state Class 2A tournament isn't something the team likes to think about.

The coaches don't bring up last year's triple overtime championship-game loss to Eden Prairie. The players don't mention it. Any questions about the classic title game are answered with short responses.

That might change now that the Greyhounds are back in St. Paul for another shot at the big-school championship.

"We didn't really talk about it or think about it this year," senior standout Dom Toninato said after scoring twice to help Duluth East win its fourth straight Section 7AA crown with a 4-1 win over Andover. "As it gets closer to (Thursday), we'll start thinking about it more and more."

"It might add a little something extra."

Whatever inspiration the memories of last year can stir up might be a scary thing for Duluth East's foes.

The Greyhounds have had an incredible season, winning all but one game while playing arguably the most difficult schedule in high school hockey. Mike Randolph's group is a veteran one, with 10 seniors on the roster and numerous other players with a state tournament appearance under their belts.

If anything, the chaotic tournament last year will allow Duluth East to play a calmer brand of hockey this time around.

"Last year can help us with the experience factor," said senior defenseman Nate Repensky. "I think we take a lot of the same guys back there, it's a new season and we try to play our game and do what we can."

Randolph, who is no stranger to the state Class 2A tournament, credits the Greyhounds' ability to defend their section title to the fact that all his players decided to stick around and give it another try.

"A lot of them could of left high school hockey this year and played elsewhere," Randolph said. "They stayed together as a group, and this is the reason they stayed. They want to play in the state tourney, got back and achieved that goal."

Led by Toninato (30-37--67) and fellow Mr. Hockey finalist Jake Randolph (34-38--72), Duluth East's attack is as explosive as any in the state.

Toninato and Randolph have recently been reunited with longtime linemate Trevor Olson (9-21--30), who had been out with a knee injury for the first half of the year.

The trio thinks it's starting to get back to what it was last year, when they were one of the top lines in the state.

"We lost a little bit of chemistry with Trev being gone, but we've worked on it," Toninato said. "I think its pretty much back to the way it was last year, and we're hitting our stride right now."

Repensky (2-17--19) anchors a defensive corps that isn't afraid to chip in on offense, along with junior Meirs Moore (13-33--46) andsophomore Phil Beaulieu (4-18--22).

Goaltender Dylan Parker (16-0-0, 1.19, .933) hasn't played in the state tournament, but his time between the pipes this year makes Coach Randolph think Parker and his other less-experienced players are more than ready for the big dance.

"We had a lot of guys step up and play a lot more minutes than they would have (because of injuries)," Randolph said. "We went into some real tough buildings, played some real tough teams, and I think we'retournament ready now.

"We'll see on Thursday."

Jake Randolph

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	at Camb-Isanti	5-0 W
Dec. 3	Wayzata	4-1 W
Dec. 6	at Andover	6-1 W
Dec. 8	at St. Cloud Tech	11-0 W
Dec. 9	White Bear Lake	6-3 W
Dec. 13	at Lakeville North	4-1 W
Dec. 15	at Cloquet	7-0 W
Dec. 22	Centennial	6-1 W
Dec. 26	Burnsville (Schwan)	4-2 W
Dec. 27	St. Thomas (Schn)	5-4 W
Dec. 28	Minnetonka (Schn)	6-2 W
Jan. 4	at Maple Grove	4-1 W
Jan. 7	Moorhead	6-3 W
Jan. 10	Anoka	6-1 W
Jan. 12	at Grand Rapids	4-3 W
Jan. 14	at Eden Prairie	4-2 W
Jan. 17	Apple Valley	6-4 W
Jan. 21	at Minnetonka	3-9 L
Jan. 24	at Forest Lake	9-0 W
Feb. 2	at Superior	4-3 W
Feb. 4	Blaine	9-1 W
Feb. 6	Cloquet	5-2 W
Feb. 8	Duluth Denfeld	4-1 W
Feb. 14	at Hastings	8-0 W
Feb. 18	Tartan	10-0 W
Section 7AA playoffs		
Feb. 21	St. Francis	7-0 W
Feb. 25	Elk River	4-2 W
Mar. 1	Andover	4-1 W

Coach's Corner

Mike Randolph, a former star forward on Duluth Cathedral's powerhouse teams in the late 1960s and early '70s, is one of the winningest coaches in state history. He's approaching the 500-win mark and has won two state championships (in 1995 and '98) in 13 previous state tournament appearances.

MOORHEAD Spuds

Program Info

Nickname: Spuds
Conference: Mariucci
Section: 8AA
Record: 21-6-0
State trips: 1992, 93, 94, 95, 97, 2001, 02, 03, 04, 05, 09, 11, 12
Coach: Dave Morinville

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Tony Uglem	23	13	36
Thomas Carey	8	24	32
Nicholas Uglem	11	20	31
Bryant Christian	10	20	30
Logan Ness	17	8	25
Terry Leabo	3	19	22
Aaron Herdt	10	10	20
Cody Rahman	5	12	17
Zach Quaife	6	11	17
Jesse Doschadis	9	7	16
Ben Welle	1	15	16
Jacob Uglem	6	8	14

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Michael Bitzer	21-6-0	1.85	.931

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Ben Welle	D	12
3	Simon Selberg	F	12
5	Jacob Uglem	D	12
6	Terry Leabo	D	12
7	Jesse Doschadis	F	12
8	Aaron Herdt	F	10
10	Tony Uglem	F	11
11	Bryant Christian	F	12
12	Zach Quaife	F	12
14	Leif Johnson	F	11
17	Nicholas Uglem	F	11
19	Cody Rahman	F	12
20	Crosby Steen	F	12
22	John O'Connor	D	10
24	Nate Johnson	F	12
25	Eric Barker	D	11
26	Logan Ness	F	12
27	Thomas Carey	F	11
30	Peter MacFarlane	G	11
31	Tanner Johnson	G	11
33	Michael Bitzer	G	12

Can they win?

While Moorhead doesn't have a stable of D1 hockey athletes, the Spuds know exactly what they need to do to win. They must get contributions from all three lines and a good effort in goal from senior Michael Bitzer. It's a formula the Spuds have used all season long and are more than capable of providing.

-- Tim Kolehmainen

By Tim Kolehmainen

In the movie Groundhog Day, Bill Murray repeatedly lives the same miserable day over and over and over again – until he finally gets it right.

Moorhead coach Dave Morinville hopes his version doesn't take nearly as long.

Morinville recalled the classic movie when the Class AA quarterfinal match-ups were set, as his Spuds (21-6-0) drew third-seeded Eagan, the same team that knocked Moorhead out in last year's quarterfinals. This year's game is scheduled for 1 p.m. Thursday, March 8 at the Xcel Energy Center.

"When we get to the state tournament, we know what we're going to get," said Morinville, whose team also scrimmaged Eagan early in the season. But while Murray took many turns before he eventually sought redemption, Morinville wasn't averse to a rematch right away.

"At the state tournament if you think there's going to be an easy game, you're going to get beat," Morinville said. "Would we rather have drawn Maple Grove? Edina? Duluth East?

"There is no easy game."

And that includes any game against Moorhead, the champion of Section 8AA for the third time in four years and 13th time since 1992. The Spuds are a tough draw for Eagan, largely because of a style that results in precious little breathing room in prime scoring territory – and arguably the state's best goaltender manning the crease when there is a chance.

As a former goaltender, Morinville knows he has a good one in senior Michael Bitzer (21-6-0, 1.85, .931). A varsity letter winner since his freshman season and one of two finalists for the Frank Brimsek Award given to the state's best senior goaltender, Bitzer is as talented and experienced as any goalie in the state. He's a great athlete with a quick glove hand, but his strongest trait is his ability to limit rebounds – and his confidence between the pipes.

"Knowing Michael, he wants to be the guy being talked about," Morinville said of the media attention given to top goaltenders at the state tournament. "He felt that he should have been the one that was being talked about (last year) and he played well, but he needed help. Now he thinks, 'It's my turn to shine. Last year I could have been better.' Being an old goalie and knowing his mentality, that's great to have.

"But we have to have guys picking people up and clearing rebounds, too."

On rare occasions when the puck bounces away from Bitzer, Moorhead's defense led by seniors Terry Leabo (3-19-22), Jake Uglem (6-8-14) and Ben Welle (1-15-16) is there to cover for the Spuds' superb 'tender.

Offensively, Moorhead's top line of juniors Thomas Carey (8-24-32) and twins Tony Uglem (23-13-36) and Nicholas Uglem (11-20-31) has been powering the squad much of the season. But with six players scoring at least three game-winning goals, the Spuds have three balanced lines. The "second" line of seniors Bryant Christian (10-20-30) and Logan Ness (17-8-25) and sophomore Aaron Herdt (10-10-20) and the third line with Cody Rahman (5-12-17), Zach Quaife (6-11-17) and Jesse Doschadis (9-7-16) have also come up with big goals in close games.

Moorhead is a perfect 4-0-0 in overtime games and 10-3-0 in games decided by two or fewer goals.

"We've found ways to win games," Morinville said. "But for us to win, we can't just have one or two guys show up. We have to have the whole team show up. Everybody has to be ready to go.

"When you play us, you're playing a team. There aren't any guys that you say, 'Wow, we're going to have to keep an eye on that guy.'"

Michael Bitzer

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	Fargo South	4-2 W
Dec. 8	Bemidji	2-1 W
Dec. 10	at Buffalo	5-1 W
Dec. 13	at Roseau	5-2 W
Dec. 17	Alexandria	3-2 W
Dec. 22	St. Cloud Tech	13-0 W
Dec. 28	Eden Prairie (SLP)	5-4 W
Dec. 29	Benilde-SM (SLP)	3-5 L
Dec. 30	Wayzata (SLP)	2-1 W
Jan. 3	Thief River Falls	7-0 W
Jan. 6	Minnetonka	3-5 L
Jan. 7	at Duluth East	3-6 L
Jan. 10	Brainerd	4-1 W
Jan. 14	Breck	5-3 W
Jan. 19	at East Grand Forks	6-0 W
Jan. 21	at Warroad	3-1 W
Jan. 24	Roseau	3-2 W
Jan. 27	at Benilde-SM	6-2 W
Jan. 28	at Centennial	4-0 W
Feb. 4	at Grand Rapids	2-3 L
Feb. 7	Blaine	2-5 L
Feb. 11	at Bemidji	2-1 W
Feb. 14	at Brainerd	4-0 W
Feb. 18	at Hill-Murray	1-6 L
Section 8AA playoffs		
Feb. 21	Monticello/AML	9-0 W
Feb. 25	Roseau	3-0 W
Mar. 1	Brainerd	3-1 W

Coach's Corner

It's been quite a run for the Spuds under 15-year coach Dave Morinville. During his tenure, Moorhead has qualified for eight state tournaments and finished second four times (2001, 04, 05 and 09). Morinville began coaching as an assistant with the Spuds in the mid-1970s. He's also been an assistant at the college and pro levels.

CLASS AA

BRACKET

2 - Maple Grove (24-2-2)

11am, 3/8
Xcel

Hill-Murray (22-6-0)

6pm, 3/9
Xcel

3 - Eagan (24-3-1)

1pm, 3/8
Xcel

Moorhead (21-6-0)

7pm, 3/10
Xcel

Champion

1 - Duluth East (27-1-0)

6pm, 3/8
Xcel

Lakeville South (20-8-0)

8pm, 3/9
Xcel

4 - Edina (23-5-0)

8pm, 3/8
Xcel

Benilde-St. Margaret's (22-6-0)

4pm, 3/10
Xcel

Third place

10am, 3/9
Mariucci

noon, 3/10
Mariucci

Consolation

noon, 3/9
Mariucci

CLASS A

BRACKET

2 - St. Thomas Academy (23-5-0)

11am, 3/7
Xcel

Little Falls (19-9-0)

11am, 3/9
Xcel

3 - Breck (24-3-1)

1pm, 3/7
Xcel

Duluth Marshall (21-7-0)

noon, 3/10
Xcel

Champion

1 - Hermantown (28-0-0)

6pm, 3/7
Xcel

Rochester Lourdes (20-8-0)

1pm, 3/9
Xcel

4 - Thief River Falls (22-4-2)

8pm, 3/7
Xcel

New Ulm (17-11-0)

9am, 3/10
Xcel

Third place

10am, 3/8
Mariucci

10am, 3/10
Mariucci

Consolation

noon, 3/8
Mariucci

ROCH. LOURDES Eagles

Program Info

Nickname: Eagles
Conference: Independent
Section: 1A
Record: 20-8-0
State trips: 2000, 01, 02, 03, 09, 10, 11, 12
Coach: Josh Spaniol

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jason Samuelson	30	33	63
Alex Funk	32	30	62
Landon Farrell	16	35	51
Justin Dewitz	9	26	35
Karl Krecke	10	11	21
Griffin Slightam	4	13	17
Connor Nellans	7	9	16
Ryan Nicolay	9	7	16
Eric Bonapace-Potvin	5	7	12
Ben Weir	7	4	11

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Jesse Neumann	11-6-0	2.69	.870
Andrew Ellingson	8-2-0	2.57	.869

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Jesse Neumann	G	12
2	Connor Nellans	F	12
3	Ryan Nicolay	F	12
4	Ben Weir	F	11
5	Cody Cossette	F	10
7	Jason Samuelson	F	11
8	Landon Farrell	F	12
9	Justin Dewitz	D	12
10	Griffen Buck	F	11
11	Nathan Roth	D	11
12	Karl Krecke	D	11
15	Kane Carstens	F	10
16	McKay Carstens	F	10
17	James Armstead	F	12
18	Eric Bonapace-Potvin	F	12
19	Robby Campbell	D	12
20	Alex Funk	F	11
21	Griffin Slightam	D	9
23	Brian Williamson	F	12
30	Andrew Ellingson	G	11

Can they win?

With a run-and-gun style, it will be a different Rochester Lourdes team that tries to break its recent quarterfinal losing streak. It should be fun to watch the top line of Alex Funk, Jason Samuelson and Landon Farrell blaze up and down the ice against the other Class A powers. If Lourdes it to win, these three burners will play a big factor.

-- Tim Kolehmainen

By Tim Kolehmainen

In leading Rochester Lourdes to the state tournament the prior two winters, head coach Josh Spaniol readily admitted he wasn't a run-and-gun kind of guy. His Eagles' squads relied on a tough, experienced defense and veteran goaltending to get the job done.

Leave the flashy stuff to others.

"I'm a D-first kind of guy," he told the Hockey Hub's Loren Nelson on the eve of last year's state tournament. "If you have good defense and good goaltending, I figure the offense will take care of itself."

So imagine Spaniol's discomfort when he confessed that Lourdes (20-8-0) has followed a different path into its Class A quarterfinal matchup against unbeaten and top-seeded Hermantown at 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 7 at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"We've had to change a lot this year, to tell you the truth," Spaniol said. "We've had to take more of a run-and-gun (approach). Get pucks out of our zone and get flying down the ice."

Apparently, tigers can change their stripes. And Eagles certainly do fly – and fast.

In the wake of graduation losses that robbed Lourdes of all but one of its top defensemen and its starting goaltender, Spaniol shed his tight-checking style and let the dogs loose. The Eagles average 5.1 goals per game with a wide-open game based on the speed of their top line of Jason Samuelson (30-33-63), Alex Funk (32-30-62) and Landon Farrell (16-35-51). If Lourdes is to upset Hermantown, it will likely be on the shoulders of the trio of gifted speedsters.

"We just have to use our speed and get around them and get shots when we can," said Spaniol. "Get the puck to the net and get a bounce or two."

While his top line carried the load during the regular season, Spaniol knows he must get contributions from up and down the lineup. Lourdes' second line of Ben Weir (7-4-11), Ryan Nicolay (9-7-16) and Connor Nellans (7-9-16) is a veteran group that could come up big. And true to his roots, Spaniol expects them to be responsible in their own zone.

"They plug away, forecheck as hard as they can and will run you over to get the puck," said Spaniol.

Lourdes has had to adjust defensively to the loss of nearly its entire defensive unit. After some rough games early, the corps has been playing better. Karl Krecke (10-11-21) is the lone veteran, while freshman Griff Slightam (4-13-17) has surged into a big role. Justin Dewitz (9-26-35) and Robby Campbell both moved back to the blue line after playing forward last winter. Senior Jesse Neumann (11-6-0, 2.69, .870) has earned the majority of starts in goal in recent weeks, getting the nod the past nine games.

"We started – not from scratch – but it took a while to get used to (the new roles)," said Spaniol. "They've adjusted well, grown as a unit and shown ownership. They just have to keep it simple. There are no big horses back there that can control a game every other shift."

With the change in style this winter comes hopes of a change in result. The Eagles have lost in the quarterfinals the last two years. It doesn't get any easier with Hermantown on the docket this season.

"We just have to be a little more relaxed," said Spaniol. "Half the squad has been (to state) a few times over the last few years. That leadership has to prevail and we have to have fun and do our jobs."

Alex Funk

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	Red Wing	8-0 W
Dec. 3	Tartan	4-2 W
Dec. 6	New Prague	5-3 W
Dec. 9	at St. Cl Cathedral	4-1 W
Dec. 10	at Little Falls	2-5 L
Dec. 14	St. Thomas Acad	1-8 L
Dec. 17	at Northfield	5-2 W
Dec. 20	Holy Family Cath.	3-5 L
Dec. 22	at Providence Ac	7-3 W
Dec. 28	Richfield (Kiwanis)	12-2 W
Dec. 29	Ashwaubenon (Kw)	9-0 W
Dec. 30	STMA (Kiwanis)	7-0 W
Jan. 7	Duluth Marshall	0-4 L
Jan. 10	at Mankato West	7-1 W
Jan. 12	New Ulm	8-4 W
Jan. 14	Eau Claire Mem.	4-6 L
Jan. 21	at Chanhassen	9-2 W
Jan. 28	at Delano	2-3 L
Jan. 31	at Monticello/AML	5-1 W
Feb. 2	Albert Lea	5-2 W
Feb. 4	at Breck	3-6 L
Feb. 7	at Blake	6-2 W
Feb. 9	Rogers	4-2 W
Feb. 11	at New Prague	2-1 W
Feb. 18	Totino-Grace	4-5 L
Section 1A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Faribault	7-0 W
Feb. 25	Red Wing	5-3 W
Feb. 29	Northfield	4-1 W

Coach's Corner

Josh Spaniol has guided Lourdes to the state tournament in each of his three years as a head coach and also was an assistant on the 2009 squad that made it to the X. Unfortunately, the Eagles are 0-for-2 in the quarterfinals.

BRECK Mustangs

Program Info

Nickname: Mustangs
Conference: Tri-Metro
Section: 2A
Record: 24-3-1
State trips: 1994, 96, 97, 2000 Champs, 04 Champs, 09 Champs, 10 Champs, 11, 12
Coach: Les Larson

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Conor Andrle	27	49	76
Grant Opperman	31	42	73
Thomas Lindstrom	31	37	68
Wesley Iverson	30	32	62
Matt Colford	19	37	56
Keegan Iverson	17	27	44
Austin Rudnick	12	18	30
Nate Breitenfeldt	9	14	23
Jack O'Connor	10	10	20
Benjamin Tegtmeyer	2	17	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Jack Kenney	18-3-1	2.53	.900
Henry Johnson	6-0-0	2.32	.874

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
3	Otto Haeg	D	10
5	Conor Andrle	F	12
7	Nate Breitenfeldt	F	12
9	Keegan Iverson	D	9
12	Andrew Headrick	F	12
14	Grant Opperman	F	12
16	Thomas Lindstrom	F	11
17	Jack O'Connor	F	11
18	Derek Wiitala	D	10
22	Benjamin Tegtmeyer	D	12
23	Matt Colford	F	11
24	Austin Rudnick	D	12
25	Ben Gleekel	F	11
26	Wesley Iverson	F	12
28	Geoffrey Hibbs	F	12
31	Henry Johnson	G	10
33	Joseph Oesterle	D	12
37	Jack Kenney	G	12
41	Mark Sharp	F	10
42	Michael Orke	F	10

Can they win?

Other than Minnetonka's stunningly lopsided 9-3 Hockey Day victory over Duluth East, the most impressive outcome in any game this season might have been Breck's 3-3 tie with Shattuck-St. Mary's Prep in Faribault on Feb. 14. The Mustangs' performance in that game indicates they can compete with, and beat, most any high school program.

-- Michael Murakami

By Michael Murakami

Fourth-seeded Breck headed into its locker room at the Xcel Energy Center after the second period with a two-goal lead over Thief River Falls.

Life was good for the Mustangs.

Maybe too good.

"We were up," Breck senior defenseman Austin Rudnick said. "We kind of just thought, 'We're up, we don't have to try as hard,' and look what happened.

"We lost. They came back."

Thief River Falls scored four straight goals in the third period and added an empty net goal to upset the Mustangs 7-5 last year in the quarterfinals of the state Class 1A tournament.

While Breck would go on to win the consolation tournament, the Mustangs' early exit from the winner's bracket remains a source of motivation.

"That's what you call a learning experience," Breck coach Les Larson said. "Everything that happens to you, you store. You stow it away and you use that because you're going to be faced with those same circumstances again. That's what learning is. That's what experience is. That's what maturity is. And I think that we've got that on this club."

It certainly seems the Mustangs will keep the memory fresh in their minds heading into this year's state tournament.

"We definitely have that in the back of our heads from last year," Breck senior forward Conor Andrle said. "We really, really gotta bear down and play a full game (with) everybody battling hard. The thing is sometimes we get up in the first period and then we're a little bit optimistic, a little bit lazy in the defensive zone. That leads to some defensive breakdowns for some goals.

"You can't do that in the state tournament, that's for sure."

Experience may be the theme for Breck this season as the Mustangs have 11 seniors -- all with state tournament experience.

Powering the Mustangs' offense is Andrle -- who has amassed 76 points (27 goals, 49 assists) this season – along with Mr. Hockey candidate Grant Opperman, who has 73 points (31 goals, 42 assists).

Brothers Wesley and Keegan Iverson have shown their scoring ability and natural chemistry playing together on a line this season, combining for 108 points -- Wesley, a senior forward, has scored 62 points (30 goals, 32 assists) and freshman Keegan has 44 points (17 goals, 27 assists).

Guarding the Breck blue line are senior defensemen Austin Rudnick and Benjamin Tegtmeyer, who have also contributed offensively. Rudnick has 30 points (12 goals, 18 assists) and Tegtmeyer has 19 points (two goals, 17 assists).

Senior goaltender Jack Kenney has played 1,170 minutes, 41 seconds between the pipes for Breck and owns an 18-3-1 record. Kenney has a .900 save percentage, allowing an average of 2.53 goals per game and recording four shutouts.

However, having been replaced by sophomore goaltender Henry Johnson after surrendering five goals in the section championship game against Blake, some may be wondering about the Mustangs' stability in goal.

Larson and his players are not among the worried. They still have confidence in Kenney.

"He had a tough night, but he's played great for us all year," Larson said. "He's our guy. Everybody's allowed to have an average night. Maybe two of the goals were, bad but that happens. That's why you play. That's why you shoot the puck at the net."

Several of Breck's seniors were members of the teams that won back-to-back Class 1A titles in 2009 and 2010. They can think of no better way to graduate than on top.

"We're just going to try to enjoy it as much as possible," Andrle said. "It's always fun to win. We really gotta battle and play like it's our last game ever because it very well could be.

"It's our last shot.

With an overall record of 24-3-1 -- with that tie coming against national powerhouse Shattuck-St. Mary's Prep on Thursday, Feb. 16 -- third-seeded Breck will play Duluth Marshall at 1 p.m. in the quarterfinals on Wednesday, March 7.

"We've got everything in," Larson said. "We've got everything in, it's just a matter of executing.

"We haven't left anything out."

Keegan Iverson

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 25	St. Cl Cathedral	8-1 W
Nov. 26	at Duluth Marshall	7-5 W
Nov. 29	at Mahtomedi	7-4 W
Dec. 8	St. Paul Acad	10-2 W
Dec. 10	at Delano	4-2 W
Dec. 20	at Providence Ac	8-2 W
Dec. 21	at Holy Angels	8-2 W
Dec. 26	Apple Vlly (Schwan)	6-2 W
Dec. 27	Lkvle South (Schwn)	6-4 W
Dec. 28	Forest Lke (Schwan)	5-1 W
Jan. 12	Minnehaha Acad	16-0 W
Jan. 14	at Moorhead	3-5 L
Jan. 17	at SP Como Park	13-0 W
Jan. 19	at SP Johnson	10-4 W
Jan. 21	St. Thomas Acad	2-3 L
Jan. 26	Blake	8-5 W
Jan. 31	Providence Acad	6-4 W
Feb. 2	SP Johnson	10-1 W
Feb. 4	Roch Lourdes	6-3 W
Feb. 7	at Minnehaha Ac	16-3 W
Feb. 9	Totino-Grace	4-7 L
Feb. 11	SP Como Park	11-0 W
Feb. 14	Shattuck	3-3 T
Feb. 16	at St. Paul Acad	3-0 W
Feb. 18	at Blake	9-0 W
Section 2A playoffs		
Feb. 24	Richfield	14-1 W
Feb. 28	Mound-Westonka	8-1 W
Mar. 1	Blake	7-5 W

Coach's Corner

Breck coach Les Larson was part of one of the finest groups of defensemen in state history during his playing days at Hill High School. Surpisingly, his Mustangs have been known most for their fleet of high-scoring forwards. Larson, in his fourth season, has led Breck two to state titles and more than 100 victories.

NEW ULM Eagles

Program Info

Nickname: Eagles
Conference: South Central
Section: 3A
Record: 17-11-0
State trips: 1992, 2010, 11, 12
Coach: Erik Setterholm

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Brody Peterson	41	27	68
Dylan Schreckenberg	19	36	55
Jeff Banal	14	39	53
Judd Davis	16	23	39
Wyatt Peterson	10	13	23
Connor Stark	3	14	17
Blake Neumann	12	5	17
Timmy Kehren	4	10	14
Troy Altmann	7	6	13
Brandon Helget	4	7	11

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Brach Kraus	10-3-0	2.07	.900
Willie Osborne	4-4-0	5.44	.855

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Willie Osborne	G	12
2	Timmy Kehren	D	12
3	Judd Davis	F	10
4	Connor Stark	D	12
5	Brody Peterson	F	12
6	Aaron DuChene	F	12
7	Mitch Neid	D	11
8	Drew Pfaff	F	12
9	Ian Melville	F	12
10	Jeff Banal	D	12
11	Wyatt Peterson	F	9
12	Tanner Weiss	F	12
13	Dylan Schreckenberg	F	12
14	Chad Ludewig	D	11
15	Brandon Helget	F	9
16	Blake Neumann	F	11
17	Colin Kral	F	11
18	Nathan McMullen	D	12
19	Troy Altmann	F	12
33	Brach Kraus	G	10
33	Jordan Kokesch	G	11

Can they win?

While their draw is certainly better than the previous two years in which they got eventual champions Breck and St. Thomas Academy, Thief River Falls is no quarterfinal slouch. The Eagles again must hope for fortunate bounces and a strong goaltending effort in order to pull the upset.

-- Tim Kolehmainen

By Tim Kolehmainen

Luck of the draw? Not so much. If New Ulm didn't have bad luck in the annual seeding draw at the Minnesota State High School hockey tournament, they'd have no luck at all.

In each of the previous two years, the Eagles were tabbed as the quarterfinal opponent of a pair of eventual champions, Breck in 2009 and St. Thomas Academy last winter. Both powerhouses rumbled to victories by double-digit goal differentials, sending New Ulm into the consolation bracket in humbling fashion.

No amount of lucky pennies, rabbits' feet or four-leaf clovers could have helped the Eagles.

With a third consecutive Section 3A title in hand this season, New Ulm (17-11-0) probably expected another No. 1 seed to pull its name on seeding Sunday. Instead, the Eagles waited until fourth-seeded Thief River Falls drew them for the final quarterfinal game at 8 p.m., Wednesday, March 7 at the Xcel Energy Center.

Luck was finally on the Eagles' side. At least on paper.

"It's easy to sit back and if we'd gotten Hermantown to say, 'Oh boy, three years in a row with the top seed,'" Eagles' coach Erik Setterholm said. "But I told my guys at practice (Monday) that (seeds) one through four have all been top teams all season. There's not a slouch in any one of them.

"If we don't play the way we want to, it can get out of hand in a hurry."

That's been the story of New Ulm's state tournament experience. In three prior appearances (1992, 2009 and 2010), the Eagles are 0-for-6. The previous two seasons have started with record-setting losses. But that doesn't deter Setterholm and a half dozen current Eagles who were part of both teams.

"We need to do what we're good at and what got us to this point," Setterholm said. "It doesn't matter who you play, your game plan has to stay the same. The last couple of years, we've gotten away from that."

Expect the Eagles to tighten up play in their own zone, clearing the puck when possible and not coughing it up with bad passes. There has been a renewed emphasis on each point with the graduation of goaltender Blake Burgau, the anchor of the previous two state teams. Setterholm admitted he didn't know how his team would react to the loss of their leader between the pipes.

He rotated three goaltenders throughout the season, looking for one to grab the job. In the past two weeks, sophomore Brach Kraus (10-3-0, 2.07, .900) has done just that. He capped an excellent section tournament with 18 saves in a 2-1 victory over high-powered Luverne.

"He was pretty nervous (earlier in the season)," Setterholm said. "He'd watched a lot of our previous state games from the stands and always looked up to Blake as a mentor and role model. It was pretty big news for him to win that job."

While Kraus is new to the state tournament experience, several other key Eagles are veterans of the X, such as defensemen Jeff Banal (14-39-53), Connor Stark (3-14-17) and Tim Kehren (4-10-14). Up front, tourney veteran Brody Peterson (41-27-68) anchors a potent first line with Dylan Schreckenberg (19-36-55) and Judd Davis (16-23-39). Peterson is one of the state's top goal-scorers and made an impression on teams such as Chanhassen and Rochester Lourdes, against whom he scored four goals each.

"When we went through a stretch of our season, our first line – Brody, really -- was the only ones putting the puck in the net," Setterholm confessed. "But down the stretch, we've gotten a lot of production out of our second and third lines. It's easy for teams to stop one guy and one line. But when you get the second line to put the puck in the net, that's your bre and butter."

Of course, a little luck never hu either.

Jeff Banal

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 1	at Holy Family	5-11 L
Dec. 3	Minnehaha Acad	4-5 L
Dec. 6	at Fairmont	14-2 W
Dec. 8	Marshall	3-4 L
Dec. 10	Northfield	2-1 W
Dec. 13	at Hutchinson	3-0 W
Dec. 15	Waseca	4-2 W
Dec. 17	at Delano	2-8 L
Dec. 20	LeSueur-H/StP	2-1 W
Dec. 22	at Mnd-Westonka	2-6 L
Dec. 28	STMA (Kiwanis)	5-7 L
Dec. 29	Dodge Cty (Kiwanis)	8-2 W
Dec. 30	Northfield (Kiwanis)	2-5 L
Jan. 3	Dodge County	9-2 W
Jan. 5	Litchfield/D-C	7-2 W
Jan. 12	at Roch Lourdes	4-8 L
Jan. 14	at Chanhassen	4-5 L
Jan. 17	Fairmont	13-1 W
Jan. 19	Orono	2-4 L
Jan. 27	Chaska	6-2 W
Jan. 30	Prior Lake	1-9 L
Jan. 31	at LeSueur-H/StP	3-2 W
Feb. 2	at Marshall	6-3 W
Feb. 4	at Litchfield/D-C	4-1 W
Feb. 16	at Waseca	8-1 W
Section 3A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Worthington	11-1 W
Feb. 25	Hutchinson	4-3 W
Mar. 2	Luverne	2-1 W

Coach's Corner

Erik Setterholm has guided the Eagles to three straight state tournaments after an 18-year drought -- and also played on the Eagles' first state team in 1992. New Ulm has the longest streak of conference titles in the state, winning the South Central every year since 2001-02. Prior to that, the Eagles claimed the Central Minnesota Conference crown from 1999-2002.

ST. THOMAS ACADEMY Cadets

Program Info

Nickname: Cadets
Conference: Classic Suburban
Section: 4A
Record: 23-5-0
State trips: 1999, 2005, 06 Champs, 07, 08 Champs, 11
Coach: Tom and Greg Vannelli

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Peter Krieger	14	31	45
Alex Johnson	19	24	43
Eric Schurhamer	15	27	42
Andrew Commers	21	19	40
Tom Novak	16	22	38
Tony Bretzman	8	23	31
Henry Hart	13	15	28
Austin Sattler	12	13	25
Matt Perry	12	9	21
Wyatt Schmidt	3	15	18

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
David Zevnik	14-4-1	1.75	.910
Ian West	8-0-0	0.97	.937

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Ian West	G	12
2	Jack Dougherty	D	10
3	TJ Samec	F	11
4	Wyatt Schmidt	D	11
5	Eric Schurhamer	D	12
6	Tony Bretzman	D	11
7	Grant Sattler	D	12
8	Jack Jenson	F	10
10	Pat McFadden	F	11
14	Henry Hart	F	11
15	Tom Novak	F	9
16	Gunnar Regan	F	11
17	Seamus Donahue	D	9
18	Austin Sattler	F	11
19	Alex Johnson	F	11
20	Peter Krieger	F	12
21	Andrew Commers	F	12
22	Dan McManus	F	11
23	Matt Perry	F	11
30	David Zevnik	G	11

Can they win?

The Cadets already have defeated three state tourney entrants in Duluth Marshall, Rochester Lourdes and Breck. Three of St. Thomas Academy's losses this season were by one goal to Class AA powerhouses who have won their sections. "We have played in a lot of close games this year," Cadets co-head coach Greg Vannelli said. "I would think that would help us at state."

-- Justin Magill

By Justin Magill

St. Thomas Academy scored 176 goals last season, averaging 5.7 per game while gunning its way to the state Class A championship.

Almost half of those goals came from Zach Schroeder, A.J. Reid and Matt Kroska, each of whom scored 27. All three graduated last spring.

This year the Cadets have relied on an altogether different approach in their attempt to defend their title.

St. Thomas Academy allowed a stingy 39 goals in 25 regular season games. Through three Section 4A playoff games, the Cadets have allowed just two.

"Last year we were much more offensive," Cadets co-head coach Greg Vannelli said. "We had to reload a little bit, but we have played really well in our own zone."

Contributions on the blue line have been a major role in the Cadets' success in keeping the puck out of their net, but the biggest key has been the play of junior goaltender David Zevnik, who once again has proven to be a more than reliable mainstay in the crease.

"We have a great goalie," senior forward Andrew Commers said. "There have been a lot of times this season that he has come up with big saves in big games.

"There isn't another goalie we would want to have at state than him."

Entering the state Class 1A tournament, Zevnik brings in an impressive 14-4-1 record, 1.75 goals-against average and a .910 save percentage, eerily similar numbers to what he had heading into St. Paul last season.

No. 2-seeded and No. 2-state ranked St. Thomas Academy (23-5-0) plays Little Falls (19-9-0) at 11 a.m. in the first of Wednesday's quarterfinal games at the Xcel Energy Center.

"He's been unbelievable," Vannelli said. "Usually you don't want to have a sophomore starting in net for you, but his demeanor for that position is nearly perfect.

"Whatever he did last year, he has shown no signs of letting up, and you need to have good goaltending in the state tournament."

Even though the Cadets have been strong on defense, they have proven that they are not inept when it comes to scoring.

St. Thomas Academy has four players with 40 or more points.

Peter Krieger, who anchors the Cadets' top line leads the way with 45 points (14 goals, 31 assists) and is joined by linemate Commers (21-19-40) to form a potent one-two scoring punch.

Alex Johnson (19-24-43) and Eric Schurhamer (15-27-42) have also eclipsed the 40-point mark. Schurhamer, a senior defenseman, is one of 10 finalists for the Mr. Hockey award giving annually to the state's top senior skater. He has committed to play at Maine.

Though their scoring totals do not have the glamour compared to what the Cadets put up year ago, they are still getting the results they need.

"We had a lot of talent last year," Commers said. "It's not to say we don't have it this year, but we have guys in our locker room that have a lot of heart and work hard.

"It's been a little different this year, but we are winning games and are back at state."

Totino-Grace coach Mark Loahr has seen his team's season end at the hands of the Cadets for two consecutive seasons, including a 2-1 overtime defeat in the Section 4A finals on March 2.

Loahr has noticed the difference in St. Thomas Academy's play.

"They play really good defense," he said. "Last year everyone knew they had the firepower to score, but this team is really impressive and tough to beat because of their defensive play."

Is this season's version of the Cadets good enough to defend their title?

"I thought anyone who came from our section (4A) would be able to win state," Loahr said. "They have guys like Commers who have been there and done that, and they have a goalie (Zevnik) that is one of the better ones out there."

With the power that represents the Class 1A tournament field, especially the offense, Zevnik and company will have to maintain or even ramp up their play in the defensive zone.

"Defense wins championships," Zevnik said. "We have been playing really well there all season, so hopefully we can keep it up."

In addition to the difficulty of getting through the teams in state tournament, the Cadets have the proverbial target on their back from being the defending state champions.

While that may be strenuous for most teams, Vannelli said it is something that comes with the territory in playing for St. Thomas Academy.

"I think over the past five or six years, we have had that," he said. "We are used to it and that shouldn't be a problem for us."

"We just have to continue to play our game," Commers said. "As long as we do that, we give ourselves a shot."

Austin Sattler

Defending champs!

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 3	Duluth Marshall	4-3 W
Dec. 10	at Hill-Murray	1-2 L
Dec. 14	at Roch Lourdes	8-1 W
Dec. 17	Henry Sibley	11-1 W
Dec. 22	at Cretin-DH	5-2 W
Dec. 26	Holy Angels (Schn)	9-3 W
Dec. 27	Duluth East (Schn)	4-5 L
Dec. 28	Edina (Schwan)	2-3 L
Jan. 5	at South St. Paul	1-0 W
Jan. 7	at Mahtomedi	5-3 W
Jan. 12	at Tartan	5-1 W
Jan. 14	Holy Family Cath.	8-0 W
Jan. 17	North St. Paul	6-1 W
Jan. 21	at Breck	3-2 W
Jan. 26	Hill-Murray	2-5 L
Jan. 28	at Richfield	10-1 W
Jan. 31	at Totino-Grace	1-0 W
Feb. 2	at Henry Sibley	14-0 W
Feb. 4	South St. Paul	8-1 W
Feb. 9	Mahtomedi	4-1 W
Feb. 11	Tartan	3-0 W
Feb. 14	Simley	7-0 W
Feb. 16	at North St. Paul	6-0 W
Feb. 18	at Roseau	7-0 W
Section 4A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Henry Sibley	11-1 W
Feb. 28	South St. Paul	5-0 W
Mar. 2	Totino-Grace	2-1 W

Coach's Corner

Since brothers Greg and Tom Vannelli took over as the co-head coaches at St. Thomas Academy in 2003, state tournament appearances have become the norm. The 2011-2012 season marks the sixth time the Cadets will play at the Xcel Energy Center (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2012). The Cadets won titles in 2006, 2008 and 2011. Tom Vanelli was a standout high school player at St. Paul Academy and later starred at the University of Minnesota.

HERMANTOWN Hawks

Program Info

Nickname: Hawks
Conference: Lake Superior
Section: 5A
Record: 28-0-0
State trips: 1994, 98, 99, 2001, 06, 07 Champs, 10, 11, 12
Coach: Bruce Plante

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jared Thomas	26	51	77
Andrew Mattson	15	25	40
Chris Benson	20	17	37
Jared Kolquist	11	26	37
Brian LeBlanc	17	19	36
Travis Koepke	14	15	29
Jake Zeleznikar	7	18	25
Bo Gronseth	12	13	25
Jeremy Amys	9	15	24
Matt Lord	5	14	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Matt Mensinger	22-0-0	1.30	.940
Zach Edgerton	6-0-0	1.16	.918

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Joe Muehlbauer	D	11
3	Christian Wasbotton	D	11
4	Jake Zeleznikar	D	11
5	Bo Gronseth	F	11
6	Matt Lord	F	12
7	Jeremy Amys	F	12
9	Andrew Mattson	F	12
10	Jared Thomas	F	12
11	Paul Harrold	F	12
13	Zach Kramer	F	10
14	Brian LeBlanc	D	12
16	Jared Kolquist	D	12
19	Neal Pionk	D	10
20	Chris Benson	F	11
21	Owen Stauber	D	12
26	Mike Robertson	D	12
27	Travis Koepke	F	11
29	Grant Sega	F	11
35	Matt Mensinger	G	12
39	Zach Edgerton	G	12

Can they win?

Hermantown is without a doubt the favorite going in, but given the strength of this year's field, it will take great play from high-scoring forward Jared Thomas, defenseman Jared Kolquist and goaltender Matt Mensinger for the Hawks to hoist the hardware on Saturday afternoon.

-- Zack Friedli

By Zack Friedli

Top-seeded Hermantown has the same aspirations as the other teams in this week's Class 1A tournament, and that's to win the whole thing.

There's just a little difference between the Hawks and the rest of the small-school field – Hermantown has a perfect record.

The Hawks (28-0-0) will try to become one of a select group of teams to ever complete a Minnesota high school hockey season without a loss.

Impossible? No.

Since 1990, eight teams have reached the state tournament with unblemished records. Of those teams, four – Bloomington Jefferson (1993), Red Wing (1997), Warroad (2005) and Hermantown (2007) – have completed the season with a state title.

Improbable? Yes.

The four teams that weren't able to complete the unbeaten campaign – Hutchinson (1995), Duluth East (1997), Roseau (2008) and Little Falls (2009) – can attest to that.

Hermantown coach Bruce Plante was behind the bench when the Hawks forever etched their names into Minnesota high school hockey history in 2007. He thinks that there is one defining characteristic that is common between that team and his current group of Hawks.

"These kids are great competitive kids, just like that group was," Plante said following Hermantown's 4-0 win over Rogers in the Section 5A title game. "We can't even have a practice half the time without having fights. They're just nasty competitors."

Perhaps that spirited play is fueled by the tragic endings the Hawks have suffered in the past two Class 1A championship games. In 2010, Hermantown saw its title hopes slip away in the final 1 minute, 40 seconds against Breck when a shot deflected in off a shin pad.

Last year, it was St. Thomas Academy beating the Hawks in an epic overtime thriller.

Senior goalie Matt Mensinger (22-0-0, 1.30, .940) says those finishes aren't at the front of his mind, but they are games the Hawks remember.

"We can't really think about it," Mensinger said. "We just have to go down there and take it one game at a time. We have to go out and try to win the rest of our games."

Success should come easy if Hermantown continues at its ungodly pace. The Hawks average over six goals per game, give up less than two and have one of the best special teams groups in the state.

Senior forwards Jared Thomas (26-51-77) and Andrew Mattson (15-25-40) lead the charge up front, while blue-liners Jared Kolquist (11-26-37) and Brian LeBlanc (17-19-36) run things at the backend.

The improvement of Mensinger has been a giant boost to this team, too. The 6-foot-3 senior has five shutouts, and he hasn't allowed a goal since Feb. 2.

"The strength of the defense has been our strength all year, and that helped Matt at the beginning of the year," Plante said. "That gave him confidence and got him comfortable, and now he's taking charge and has for the last month or so."

Mensinger and the rest of the Hawks will open the state Class 1A tournament at the Xcel Energy Center on Wednesday, March 7, at 6 p.m. against unseeded Rochester Lourdes.

Jared Thomas

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 2	at Sauk Rpds-Rice	8-0 W
Dec. 9	at Hopkins	5-3 W
Dec. 10	Totino-Grace	7-3 W
Dec. 13	Superior	3-2 W
Dec. 17	at Rogers	2-1 W
Dec. 20	Virginia/MIB	8-1 W
Dec. 22	Duluth Denfeld	5-2 W
Dec. 27	at Thief River Falls	3-1 W
Dec. 28	Crookston (TRF)	11-1 W
Dec. 29	Bottineau (TRF)	8-2 W
Jan. 5	at Duluth Marshall	5-1 W
Jan. 7	at Int'l Falls	7-1 W
Jan. 10	at Grand Rapids	5-2 W
Jan. 13	St. Cl Cathedral	2-1 W
Jan. 14	at Monticello/AML	7-1 W
Jan. 17	at Superior	4-3 W
Jan. 19	at Ashland	13-0 W
Jan. 21	Bemidji	10-4 W
Jan. 24	Proctor	7-1 W
Jan. 28	New Prague	5-3 W
Feb. 2	at Cloquet	2-1 W
Feb. 6	at Duluth Denfeld	7-0 W
Feb. 11	Red Wing	6-0 W
Feb. 14	Little Falls	2-0 W
Feb. 17	Hibbing	4-0 W
Section 5A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Moose Lake	11-1 W
Feb. 25	Proctor	7-0 W
Mar. 2	Rogers	4-0 W

Coach's Corner

Bruce Plante was a goaltender for Cloquet in high school, and that helps explain why his teams always seem to plug a talented netminder into the lineup. Tough defense is another Hermantown trademark. Private schools aside, the suburban Duluth program is consistently among the best in Class 1A in the state.

LITTLE FALLS Flyers

Program Info

Nickname: Flyers
Conference: Central Lakes
Section: 6A
Record: 19-9-0
State trips: 2005, 06, 07, 08, 09, 12
Coach: Tony Couture

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Joey Hanowski	31	26	57
Ben Newman	21	24	45
Luke Majerle	14	29	43
Austin Bjorge	17	8	25
Michael Holthaus	7	17	24
Matt Stumpf	6	14	20
Mitch Gregory	5	14	19
Spencer Fensek	4	14	18
Alex Nelson	11	6	17
Mark Anez	7	8	15

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Michael Stumpf	19-9-0	2.09	.913

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
1	Michael Stumpf	G	11
2	Matt Stumpf	D	11
3	Mike Anez	D	12
6	Austin Bjorge	F	11
7	Luke Majerle	F	11
8	Michael Holthaus	F	12
9	Alex Nelson	F	11
10	Ben Newman	F	11
11	Taylor Kottschade	D	11
12	Taylor Drager	F	11
13	Joey Hanowski	F	12
14	Dane Peterson	F	10
18	Mitch Gregory	F	12
19	Mark Anez	F	10
20	Spencer Fenske	D	11
23	Nathan Adamietz	D	11
24	Connor Jorgensen	F	9
26	Jake Schulte	D	10
32	JD Jopp	G	11
33	Auggie Maciej	F	11

Can they win?

This isn't your older brother's Flyers. Little Falls must play a close-to-the-vest style that will result in more 2-1 games than 8-7 games. To win, goaltender Michael Stumpf must come up big in his first state tournament experience and Joey Hanowski must live up to his older namesakes' goal-scoring tradition.

-- Tim Kolehmainen

By Tim Kolehmainen

It's tradition in Tony Couture's physical education classes to play floor hockey during state hockey tournament week. It's also become a tradition that a substitute teacher is the one dropping the plastic puck.

While few of his Lincoln Elementary students know their teacher is also the hockey coach at Little Falls, the rest will get a reminder when a substitute again shows up later this week. Because for the sixth time in eight years, Couture and the Flyers will be at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Little Falls (19-9-0) plays second-seeded and defending state champion St. Thomas Academy in the Class A quarterfinals at 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 7. But elementary school floor hockey games might be the only carry-over from the five previous Flyers' state tournament teams.

This isn't the same high-flying Little Falls club that most hockey fans remember.

"Everybody is kind of excited because it's new to us," admitted Couture, who has won 294 games in 19 years at Little Falls. Only seniors Mitch Gregory and Joey Hanowski remain from the 2009 team that was unbeaten until losing in the state semifinals. And they played minimal roles on the third and fourth lines.

That 2009 club was the fifth straight from Little Falls to advance to St. Paul. Those teams were loaded with high-scoring snipers that went on to play at the college level, such as Jared Festler, Izaak Berglund, Beau Hanowski and the state's all-time leading scorer, Ben Hanowski.

"We were kind of labeled as the team that got up and down the ice and was all offense," said Couture. "This group, we've really had to buckle down defensively. We don't usually score a lot of goals."

Joey Hanowski (31-26-57) is the player who epitomizes the difference between those state tourney teams and this winter's version. His goal totals are impressive (61 the past two years), but they've come in a totally different way than his older brothers, Beau and Ben, who combined for an amazing 285 goals and 642 points in their careers.

While Beau and Ben were silky smooth on the ice, Joey is a self-described grinder and "garbage collector" of goals. He's willing to battle through the muck in the corners and give up his body on defense, just like this year's Flyers team. There won't likely be any shootouts involving Little Falls at the X, but like past years, a Hanowski should be the best gauge of his team's success.

"When Joey plays well, we usually play well," said Couture.

It certainly held in the Section 6A tournament, as Hanowski scored nine goals in three victories over Morris/Benson Area, Sartell-St. Stephen and Fergus Falls by a combined 23-4 score.

"And when Michael Stumpf (19-9-0, 2.09, .913) plays well it gives us some confidence back there (in our own zone)," continued Couture, citing his junior goaltender who had a 180-minute, 52-second shutout streak in January. After starting the season just 3-6-0, Little Falls ripped off 13 straight big wins while only allowing 11 goals – a stretch in which Stumpf was nearly perfect.

"Goaltending is going to be huge in the playoffs, obviously," said Couture, who starred in goal at International Falls for legendary coach Larry Ross in the 1980s and later played three years at the University of North Dakota. "Michael is our workhorse and has been a three-year starter for us, beginning as Bantam-eligible ninth-grader."

Little Falls has plenty of junior leadership, including from captains and defensemen Matt Stumpf (6-14-20) and Spencer Fenske (4-14-18). Along with senior Mike Anez and junior Nathan Adamietz, they provide a formidable quartet on the blue line.

Junior Ben Newman (21-24-45) is second in both goals and points – and played in Couture's floor hockey classes as a fifth-grader. Luke Majerle (14-29-43), Austin Bjorge (17-8-25) and Alex Nelson (11-6-17) also scored double-digit goals.

The Flyers did stumble late in the season with three straight losses, but Couture felt the final loss in that stretch, a 2-0 defeat at unbeaten Hermantown, is the game that turned the team around.

"We didn't play very well (against St. Cloud Cathedral and Princeton), which was surprising for me coming off (the winning streak)," said Couture. "But the Hermantown game gave us some confidence despite the loss."

Matt Stumpf

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 25	Hibbing	4-5 L
Nov. 29	St. Cloud Apollo	3-0 W
Dec. 2	at Virginia/MIB	3-4 L
Dec. 3	at Int'l Falls	5-6 L
Dec. 6	St. Cl Cathedral	3-4 L
Dec. 8	at Fergus Falls	4-2 W
Dec. 10	Roch Lourdes	5-2 W
Dec. 13	Princeton	2-3 L
Dec. 15	at Alexandria	3-4 L
Dec. 22	at Rogers	5-3 W
Dec. 27	Hutchinson	7-1 W
Dec. 28	Willmar	4-0 W
Dec. 29	Mound-Westonka	5-2 W
Jan. 3	Prairie Centre	6-0 W
Jan. 5	at Northern Lakes	6-0 W
Jan. 10	at St. Cloud Tech	5-1 W
Jan. 13	Detroit Lakes	9-1 W
Jan. 17	at Mora/H-F	7-0 W
Jan. 19	Sartell-SS	4-0 W
Jan. 27	Fergus Falls	7-1 W
Jan. 31	Alexandria	4-0 W
Feb. 2	Sauk Rapids-Rice	6-2 W
Feb. 4	at St. Cl Cathedral	1-7 L
Feb. 9	at Princeton	0-4 L
Feb. 14	at Hermantown	0-2 L
Section 6A playoffs		
Feb. 21	Morris/Benson	9-2 W
Feb. 25	Sartell-SS	8-1 W
Mar. 1	Fergus Falls	6-1 W

Coach's Corner

Little Falls coach Tony Couture has been with the Flyers for 19 years and more than 500 games, including 294 victories. He's led the program to its only six state tournament berths – all in the last eight years. In his playing days, Couture was in goal for International Falls under legendary coach Larry Ross before moving on to U.S. International University and the University of North Dakota.

DULUTH MARSHALL Hilltoppers

Program Info

Nickname: Hilltoppers
Conference: Lake
Section: 7A
Record: 21-7-0
State trips: 2001, 05, 06, 07, 08, 12
Coach: Brendan Flaherty

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Judd Peterson	44	35	79
Kris McKinzie	22	21	43
Jake Bushey	7	27	34
Anthony Miller	11	20	31
Ryan Gotelaere	3	23	26
Matt Klassen	11	14	25
Cameron McClure	9	11	20
Michael Damberg	5	15	20
Zachary Isaacson	2	16	18
Luke Pavelich	9	9	18

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Chris Coffman	10-5-0	2.05	.925
Caden Flaherty	11-2-0	2.58	.894

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Nick Miller	F	12
3	Doug Lewis	D	12
4	Ryan Gotelaere	D	12
5	Kyle Jones	D	10
7	Joe Daly	F	10
8	Kris McKinzie	F	11
9	Kyle McKinzie	D	10
12	Michael Damberg	F	11
14	Conner Flaherty	F	11
15	Anthony Miller	F	10
16	Luke Pavelich	F	10
17	John Skramstad	F	12
18	Judd Peterson	F	12
19	Matt Klassen	F	11
20	Jake Bushey	D	12
25	Zachary Isaacson	D	12
26	Steve Long Jr.	F	12
27	Cameron McClure	F	9
30	Christian Coffman	G	12
31	Caden Flaherty	G	11

Can they win?

The Hilltoppers need to get back to a simple, successful style of play that benefitted them at times during the year if they want toupset any of the four seeded teams and win the championship.

-- Zack Friedli

By Zack Friedli

It's been a long three years for Duluth Marshall coach Brendan Flaherty.

After a stretch that saw the Hilltoppers reach the state Class 1A tournament every year from 2005-2008, including runner-up finishes all three years, the fortunes of Duluth Marshall haven't been as great since.

With early exits from the playoffs coming at the hands of Virginia/Mountain Iron-Buhl each of the last three seasons, it comes as no surprise that Flaherty was giddy following the Toppers' 2-1 win over Hibbing in the Section 7A final on Saturday, March 3, at Amsoil Arena in Duluth.

"After a three-year sabbatical, its great to get back (to the State tournament). I wanted it for these kids," Flaherty said. "This is a group of seniors that's been with me for three and four years. Virginia has had our number the last few years, and we couldn't even get out of the semis to this game (until this year)."

Those losses to the Blue Devils have instilled a deep drive in the returning players for Duluth Marshall, something that comes out most in talented forward Judd Peterson (44-35-79).

Peterson, who came to Duluth Marshall for more than just hockey, has turned his academics around while taking his game to the next level. People have noticed.

Now a senior, Peterson is a finalist for Mr. Hockey and secured a Division I scholarship with St. Cloud State.

But while Peterson may be the best example of motivation producing results, Flaherty sees that trait in all of his players.

"I really think this group is deserving; they're nice kids," Flaherty said of his team.

The No. 6-ranked Hilltoppers (21-7-0) enter the tournament as one of the four unseeded teams, and they'll square off with perennial power and No. 3 seed and No. 3-ranked Breck (24-3-1) at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 7, at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Duluth Marshall played each of the four seeded teams in the Class 1A field, losing tight games in every instance. Flaherty mentioned how his team hasn't been clicking at its best lately either, something he wants to address before the start of the tournament.

As Flaherty puts it, the Toppers could pull an upset or two if they find their "A" game.

"We got to get it going. We know this team is capable of playing a lot better than we've played," Flaherty said. "We took St. Thomas to overtime and won some big games this year. We're capable of more, and we have to do that at State."

To get to its best, Duluth Marshall will have to rely on players such as senior defenseman Jake Bushey (7-27-34) and several role players to carry the load.

Sophomore forward Cameron McClure (9-11-20) scored the game-winning goal in the Section 7A championship game. Kris McKinzie (22-21-43) and Anthony Miller (11-20-31) have put up good numbers during the year, and senior goalie Christian Coffman (10-5-0, 2.05, .925) is playing his best hockey right now.

Judd Peterson

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 25	Providence Acad	11-1 W
Nov. 26	Breck	5-7 L
Nov. 29	Hibbing	5-2 W
Dec. 3	at St. Thomas	3-4 L
Dec. 6	Ashland	12-0 W
Dec. 10	at Benilde-SM	2-5 L
Dec. 16	at Detroit Lakes	6-1 W
Dec. 17	at Crookston	3-2 W
Dec. 22	Grand Rapids	1-3 L
Dec. 27	Delano	6-3 W
Dec. 28	Mankato West	3-0 W
Dec. 29	Notre Dame Acad	5-3 W
Jan. 3	at Greenway	9-0 W
Jan. 5	Hermantown	1-5 L
Jan. 7	at Roch Lourdes	4-0 W
Jan. 12	Proctor	3-0 W
Jan. 14	Totino-Grace	5-3 W
Jan. 20	at St. Paul Acad	6-0 W
Jan. 24	Cloquet	5-4 W
Jan. 27	Warroad	5-2 W
Jan. 28	Thief River Falls	2-4 L
Feb. 2	at Duluth Denfeld	6-0 W
Feb. 9	at Virginia/MIB	7-2 W
Feb. 11	at Superior	6-4 W
Feb. 18	St. Cl Cathedral	5-7 L
Section 7A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Silver Bay	7-0 W
Feb. 25	Duluth Denfeld	5-2 W
Mar. 3	Hibbing	2-1 W

Coach's Corner

Brendan Flaherty, in his 17th season guiding the Hilltoppers, reached the 300-win plateau this season and has a 305-165-13 record heading into the state tournament.

THIEF RIVER FALLS Prowlers

Program Info

Nickname: Prowlers
Conference: Mariucci
Section: 8A
Record: 22-4-2
State trips: 1945, 51, 52, 54 Champs, 55, 56 Champs, 59, 60, 65, 2006, 11, 12
Coach: Tim Bergland

Stat Leaders

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Riley Soderstrom	27	25	52
Evan Ose	15	23	38
Austin Odberg	16	18	34
Chris Forney	6	16	22
Logan Englestad	12	5	17
Connor Doherty	5	10	15
Tanner Nessen	8	5	13
Andrew Lansing	2	11	13
Adam Pancoast	1	7	8
Isak Bergland	4	4	8

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Jon Narverud	18-1-1	1.66	.915
Tanner Holmes	4-3-1	2.04	.917

Playoff Roster

#	Name	Pos	Gr
2	Andrew Lansing	D	12
3	Kael Fontaine	F	11
4	Isak Bergland	F	10
6	Regan Pederson	F	12
7	Austin Odberg	F	12
8	Chris Forney	D	11
9	Grady Pederson	D	11
10	Evan Ose	F	12
12	Adam Pancoast	F	10
14	Riley Soderstrom	F	12
15	Logan Ose	F	10
17	Logan Engelstad	F	11
19	Tanner Nessen	F	12
21	Ryan Hutton	F	12
22	Riley Olson	D	12
27	Connor Doherty	F	12
29	Ian Lund	F	10
31	Jon Narverud	G	12
35	Tanner Holmes	G	10
66	Murphy Fellman	D	11

Can They Win?

With a veteran goaltender, Jon Narverud, anchoring a tight-checking defensive team, the Prowlers are a club that will be difficult to solve for some of the high-powered Class A qualifiers. Thief River Falls will not allow many goals, so the key to a state championship run will be to create offense from players other than Riley Soderstrom (27 goals).

-- Tim Kolehmainen

by Tim Kolehmainen

So much for been there, done that. Even for a repeat qualifier, playing in the Minnesota high school hockey state tournament never gets old.

"There's a lot of buzz in town," admitted Thief River Falls coach Tim Bergland, who is in his fifth year as head coach of the Prowlers. Bergland is a former local high school star and went on to captain the University of Minnesota and play in the NHL for eight years, so he knows the town's hockey history well.

Thief River Falls, which returned to the northwest corner of the state with a third-place trophy last winter – its first hardware since 1959 -- is just as excited about its return trip to St. Paul this March. The Prowlers (22-4-2) earned the fourth seed and will play Section 3A champion New Ulm at 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 7 at the Xcel Energy Center.

"There are still a decent amount of those guys that played in the 1950s in town," explained Bergland. "They stop by (practice) and send emails. It's fun to hear."

To be fair, Thief River Falls hasn't had a great deal of recent success at state. The Prowlers were one of the early powers in high school hockey, winning state championships in 1954 and 1956. But until the past two winters, the program had only been to state once since 1965. Bergland has helped bring back that tradition – as have a host of talented Prowlers players.

Last year's senior-laden club pulled one of the great comebacks in recent state tournament history, rallying for five goals in the third period to upset two-time defending champion Breck in the quarterfinals. They capped the experience with a third-place victory over Hibbing/Chisholm.

But with the spring melt also came the graduation of 10 important seniors.

That didn't matter to Bergland, whose task was to ignore history and reload for another run at state with a new group of players. By sweeping its Section 8A schedule, including a resounding romp through the section tournament in which it outscored Lake of the Woods, Park Rapids and East Grand Forks by a combined 15-1 score, the Prowlers accomplished just that.

"When we looked at it, we knew we lost half our team and some key guys, including four senior defensemen," said Bergland, who did bring back an veteran goaltender in Jon Narverud (18-1-1, 1.66, .915) and two anchors on defense in junior Chris Forney (6-16-22) and senior Andrew Lansing (2-11-13). Both defensemen have played varsity hockey since their freshman seasons. That trio helped stabilize the stingy Prowlers in their own zone, as did the development of defensemen such as Adam Pancoast (1-7-8) and Grady Pederson.

Narverud split time last winter, but was the go-to guy in the playoffs when he started all three section games and the first two state games. This winter, the senior goalie didn't lose a game until Feb. 6 at Roseau – which incidentally was the last game the Prowlers lost.

"Our team defense has to be there," said Bergland, whose club has allowed just 1.8 goals per game and just four in its current six-game winning streak.

That's not to say the Prowlers are devoid of offensive talent.

The top line of Evan Ose (15-23-38), Austin Odberg (16-18-34) and leading scorer Riley Soderstrom (27-25-52) is a hard-working, gritty bunch that calls to mind the stereotypical "northern hockey" style. Soderstrom is the sniper of the bunch, scoring nearly a goal a game, including five in the section tournament.

Thief River Falls also gets contributions from up and down the lineup. Logan Englestad (12-5-1), Connor Doherty (5-10-15) and Tanner Nessen (8-5-13) have scored big goals.

"To compete at this level, you need to have that," said Bergland.

"We've been there and we've had success there. But we're still a game away from our ultimate goal."

Andrew Lansing

Road to the X

Date	Opponent	Score
Nov. 29	Roseau	6-6 T
Dec. 2	Totino-Grace	4-6 L
Dec. 3	Blake	4-2 W
Dec. 9	at Tartan	5-3 W
Dec. 10	at SP Johnson	2-1 W
Dec. 15	Bemidji	1-0 W
Dec. 17	at Int'l Falls	5-1 W
Dec. 20	at Warroad	3-2 W
Dec. 27	Hermantown	1-3 L
Dec. 28	Bottineau	4-1 W
Dec. 29	Crookston	6-0 W
Jan. 3	at Moorhead	0-7 L
Jan. 5	at Kittson Central	8-2 W
Jan. 10	at Park Rapids	2-1 W
Jan. 12	at Crookston	5-2 W
Jan. 19	Warroad	2-1 W
Jan. 24	East Grand Forks	5-1 W
Jan. 27	at Duluth Denfeld	1-1 T
Jan. 28	at Duluth Marshall	4-2 W
Jan. 31	Lake of the Woods	7-0 W
Feb. 4	Red Wing	4-1 W
Feb. 6	at Roseau	4-5 L
Feb. 10	Red Lake Falls	6-2 W
Feb. 14	at East Grand Forks	3-1 W
Feb. 17	at Bemidji	3-0 W
Section 8A playoffs		
Feb. 23	Lake of the Woods	6-0 W
Feb. 25	Park Rapids	5-0 W
Mar. 1	East Grand Forks	4-1 W

Coach's Corner

After beginning as an assistant coach at Thief River Falls in 2004, Tim Bergland has led the Prowlers for the past five years. Prior to coming back home to Thief River Falls, he coached in Fergus Falls from 1999-2004. The former Prowlers' star was a captain at the University of Minnesota from 1983-87 and played in the NHL for Washington (1987-92) and Tampa Bay (1992-95).