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.