

SPORTS SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023

PREPS BOYS HOCKEY STATE TOURNAMENT

CLASS 2A SEMIFINALS MINNETONKA 4, ANDOVER 1

Minnetonka ousts champ

The Skippers return to title game for first time since winning it in '18.

By DAVID LA VANCE
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Minnetonka boys hockey coach Sean Goldsworthy wrote, "Discipline is going to win this game," on the board in the locker room before Friday's Class 2A state tournament semifinal against defending champion Andover.

Discipline and depth made the difference in the Skippers' 4-1 victory at Xcel Energy Center. Minnetonka sails into Saturday's championship game against Edina seeking its first state title since 2008.

No. 1 seed Minnetonka (22-2) swept the Lake Conference series with the rival Hornets by a combined score of 5-0.

"Our ability to have laser focus and stay on task was pretty evident tonight," Goldsworthy said.

Andover cracked first and trailed 2-0 entering the third period. Then the No. 4 Huskies (22-24) and their vaunted top line finally started cruising. Mr. Hockey Award finalist Garry Thorsen buried his 40th goal this season on passes from Captain Casey and fellow Mr. Hockey Award finalist Clayton Conway. The goal out of the Huskies' deficit to 2-1.

A power play chance followed. Then Thorsen looked all night by the Skippers, got knocked to the ice and slid toward Minnetonka goalie Kasper Nielsen. Thorsen put his stick out and tripped Nielsen to the ice — a "stupid, selfish penalty that killed any momentum we might have had," Andover coach Mark Manary said.

Just after the power play expired, Garry Garry scored his second goal of the game and 20th of the season on crisp passes from Jovan Moore and Hagen Barrows.

"Playing with those two guys," Garry said, "I just stood there and let the puck come to me."

Edina 4, CRETIN-DERRAM HALL 1

Defense, missing for a day, returns strong

The difference Robbie Clarkowski, a senior goalie and finalist for the Frank Bittner Award, stopped at but one of Cretin-Derram Hall's 24 shots on goal a day after he gave up six goals. Ryan Fishery scored twice for Edina, and its defenders blocked 27 shots.

The quote: "It's the same whether he gives up six goals or one. He kept us in this game early tonight." — Edina coach Curt Ulmer about Clarkowski

CLASS 2A CHAMPIONSHIP GAME EDINA VS. MINNETONKA • 7 P.M. AT XCEL ENERGY CENTER (CH. 45)

CLASS 1A SEMIFINALS MAHTOMEDI 2, HERMANTOWN 1

Zephyrs senior in right place, at right time

Mahtomedi senior Charlie Drage saw Hermantown making cross-ice passes all game. With under a minute left in regulation in a tied game, Drage made a perfect interception at center ice, went into the zone and found a hole with his shot high on the blocker side.

The goal fulfilled redemption and a summer's prediction.

"Right before that, I missed," Drage said. "I missed a backdoor tap-in from a great pass from Corey (Bottner). And David (Waldfield) said, 'You're going to get one back.'"

Drage's goal with 48.5 seconds left gave third-seeded Mahtomedi a 2-1 victory over defending champion Hermantown in Friday's first Class 1A semifinal of the boys hockey state tournament at Xcel Energy Center.

After the missed tap-in chance, Waldfield said he saw Drage skate to the corner, his head down. Waldfield gave his buddy a pat on the back and said, "You're going to get another chance, and I'm going in. He looked up at the scoreboard... I said, 'Don't even look at it.'"

Hermantown, seeded second, took a 1-0 lead late in the first period, but the Zephyrs (22-8-0) led it about a minute before intermission. The Hawks (26-3-3) went 0-4 in the power play including 41 seconds of 0-1 in the first period.

"We've got to capitalize on your opportunities in the state tournament," said Hermantown coach Patrick Andrews, who added that his team had "off-target play" on Drage's goal.

HEATHER RULE

WARROAD 4, ORONO 3 (2OT)

Warroad stops Orono in second overtime to remain undefeated

The difference: Senior defenseman Brick Comstock scored 16 seconds into the second overtime period for the top-seeded Warroad (28-0-1). Fourth-seeded Orono (24-6-0) had tied the score 3-3 on goals from Avery Anderson and Brooks Fegers during a 1:57 span in the third period.

The quote: "I saw Jayson looking like he usually does with his great vision. And then I said, 'Trap, I think he can find me.' I just went straight to the net, and it did." — Comstock, on the pass from Jayson Shaugsbay that set up the winner.

CLASS 1A CHAMPIONSHIP GAME MAHTOMEDI VS. WARROAD • NOON AT XCEL ENERGY CENTER (CH. 45)

FRIDAY'S RECAP

STAR TRIBUNE'S THREE STARS

1. Charlie Drage, Mahtomedi senior forward: The Zephyrs' leading scorer got the game-winner in the final minute of their semifinal. He has nine goals during a five-game goal streak.

2. Robbie Clarkowski, Edina senior goalie: One after giving up six goals to Mahtomedi, Clarkowski regrouped and found the form that made him one of three Frank Bittner Award finalists. He stopped all but one of Cretin-Derram Hall's 24 shots in a 4-1 victory.

3. Brick Comstock, Warroad senior defenseman: Scored the double-overtime winner to send Warroad to the state title game. It was his eighth goal of the season, first since Feb. 2 against Thief River Falls.

BY THE NUMBERS

12,494

Attendance Friday afternoon, a record for the Class 1A semifinals. The previous high was 11,764 in 2020.

1

Overtime goal for Mahtomedi, when the puck skittered the length of the goal line but not across in the first period. Hermantown took a 1-0 lead 20 seconds later.

22

Goals this season for Mahtomedi senior Charlie Drage, two seasons removed from a semi-goal, right-assist sophomore campaign despite "some injuries." His coach, Jeff Poeschl, said:

2

Mahtomedi victories over Hermantown in 11 meetings since the start of the 2015-16 season, with both wins coming in the state tournament.

5

Minutes in the box for Mahtomedi's Gaab Bousha after a major penalty for boarding in the third period.

Orono made it 3-2 on the power play.

4

Times this season Warroad has allowed three or more goals, including to Orono on Friday.

3

Orono losses to Class 1A opponents this season, two against Warroad.

2

One goal losses for Orono this season, 2-1 Feb. 1 against Hermantown and 4-3 in overtime to Warroad.

16

Seconds into double overtime for Warroad to end it, with a goal from Brick Comstock.

2

Years in a row Warroad advanced to the Class 1A championship game with an overtime victory as the semifinals.

ATTENDANCE

Class 1A

4,531

Wednesday night

5,380

Friday 12,494

Class 2A

Thursday night

18,080

Thursday night

15,241

Friday 20,382