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**INSIDE: The "Sounds Good" Band Scholarship is back. See details on how to win a \$1500 scholarship - page 3**

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Vol. 9, Issue 2

**Is Eden Prairie's Nick Leddy the state's best?**



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## The State Tournament Issue



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# Puck Points

by Jerry Borough



Here we go again: the Boys' State Tournament of Hockey, the best week of the year. They seed the top-four teams in each class and randomly draw the other four teams. There are a lot of critics, but I think the coaches seeded both classes right. In Class AA, Edina is the top-seed followed by Eden Prairie, Blaine and Duluth East, respectively. In Class A, you have Little Falls, St. Cloud Cathedral, Warroad and Breck.

One of the arguments most people have with seeding four teams is the top seed might have to play the top unseeded team, which happened to Edina this year when they drew Moorhead in the first round.

Was Edina that good or was Bloomington Jefferson that bad in Edina's 5-0 victory in the section finals? Maybe Jefferson's weak schedule has something to do with the results, as some people have suggested. Bloomington Jefferson is in a big conference, so they have only about seven non-conference games. The Lake Conference was a little down this year but should improve next year.

Congratulations go to Duluth Northern Stars goalie Laura Bellany, who won the Senior goalie-of-the-year for girls.

The Minnesota State High School Board has tabled the discussion of cutting games for budget reasons until April 9, 2009. This means games will not be cut next year. This would hurt high school hockey big time if it were to pass.

There will be a memorial for Wally Olds Sunday, April 5, 2009 at 1 pm at the Mariucci Arena Club Room. Wally died January 11, 2009 from colon cancer. I personally will miss seeing Wally at the State Tournament.

I have to applaud Max Tardy, Marshall Everson, Zach Buddish, Anders Lee, Nick Leddy, Ben Hanowski and all the elite players who decided to stay in high school and not leave early for Juniors or Ann Arbor. The memories and friendships will be unforgettable. It has been proven over and over that most of the time a player is better off staying home and playing for his high school team. Good luck to all the players who will be playing at the State Tournament this week. This is what it's all about.

Congratulations to Stillwater in Class AA and Blake in Class A for winning the State Championships in girls' hockey.

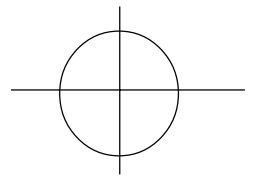
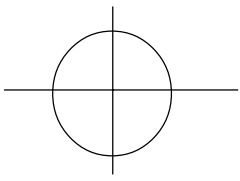
Our condolences go out to the Bill Mork's family. Bill died February 19, 2009 in a car accident. He was on the 1984 Edina's state championship team and was the homecoming king.

The teams with the hottest goalies will probably be in the championship

Photo by Barry Howell

I still remember Centennial's Greg Stutz's three shutout games in 2004 and Hill-Murray's Joe Phillippi in last year's tournament. Goalies to watch in this year's tournament with over a .900 save percentage and fewer than two goals against average this year are Matt Cooper (Duluth East), Andrew Ford (Eden Prairie), Danny Harper (Blaine), and Johnny Ankeny (Edina) in Class AA, and John Russell (Breck), Michael Sperl (Little Falls), Nick Maiers (St. Cloud Cathedral), Jason Goldsmith (Warroad) and Will Lustig (Virginia) in Class A. These goalies are the reason many of these teams are at the state tournament.

See Puck Points, page 6



# 5

# Class A Players to Watch

**Ben Hanowski, Little Falls #9**

*The state's record-breaking forward leads the undefeated Flyers with his scoring and great hands. He will be going to St. Cloud State.*

**Nate Schmidt, St. Cloud Cathedral #21**

*He has been a starter since 8th grade, impressing people with*

*his shot and play-making ability. He will lead one of the favorites at State.*

**Chris Westin, Virginia #15**

*A Senior Forward, he's averaged at least a goal and an assist per game. By playing in the Elite League last fall, he's brought his game up a notch.*

**Brock Nelson, Warroad #3**

*A strong Forward who's led Warroad all season, Nelson is*

*another player people don't see much in the Twin Cities but will impress with his style of play.*

**Tyson Fulton, Breck #23**

*Another Fulton family member, Tyson has a bigger framed body but the same skills as his brother, who plays for UMD. Tyson will be playing hockey after high school.*



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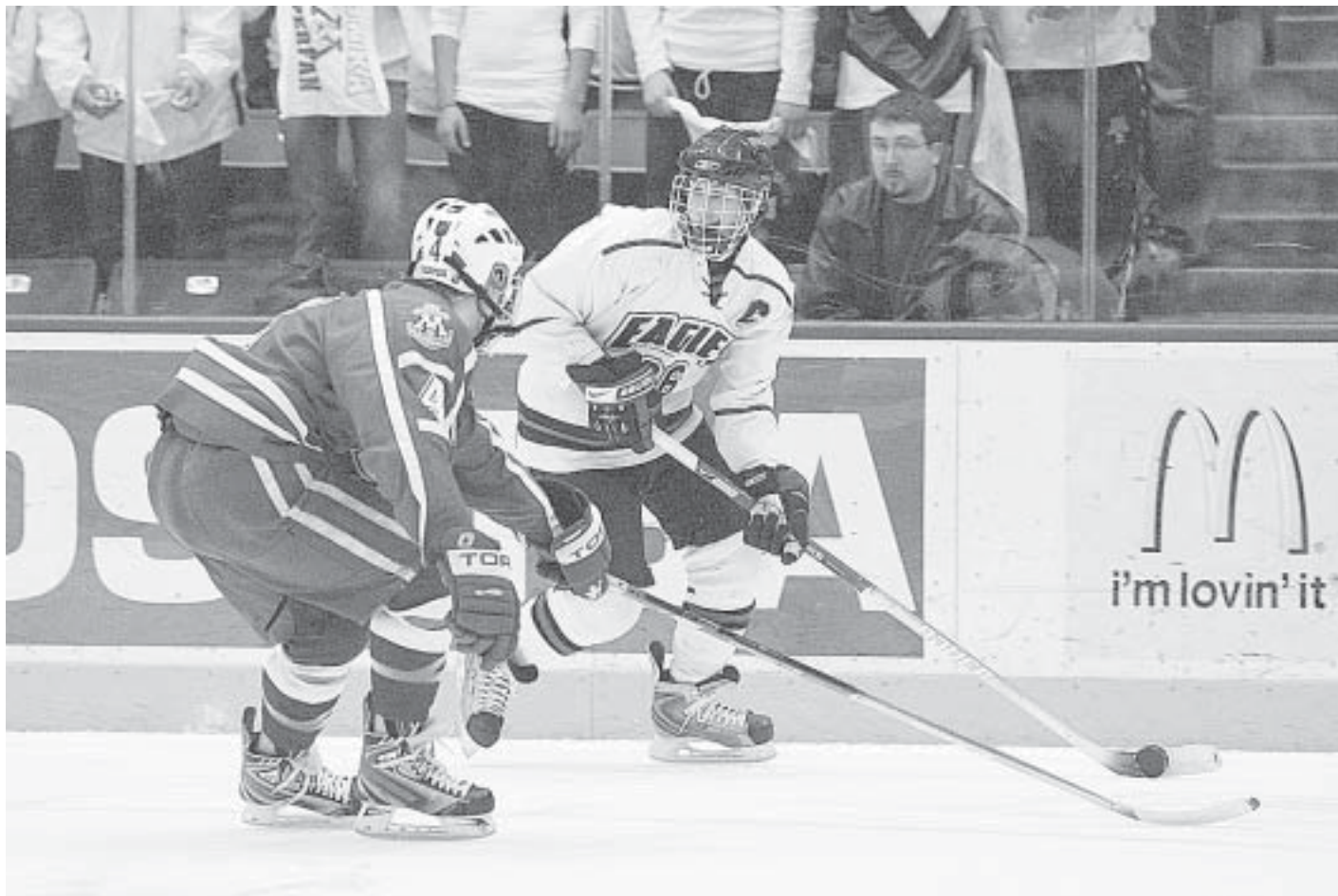
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## Minnesota Prep Sports State Tournament Hockey Rankings

### Class AA

- 1 Edina
- 2 Eden Prairie
- 3 Blaine
- 4 Duluth East
- 5 Moorhead
- 6 Cretin-Derham Hall
- 7 Hill-Murray
- 8 Rochester Century

### Class A

- 1 Little Falls
- 2 Breck
- 3 St. Cloud Cathedral
- 4 Warroad
- 5 Mahtomedi
- 6 Virginia
- 7 Rochester Lourdes
- 8 Hutchinson

☛ The section final officials have to have options to move the games to bigger arenas, if they anticipate an overflow crowd and will have to turn fans away. The games at Mariucci for Section 2 and 6 AA should have been over at the Xcel, where they could have 5,000 more fans. I thought the State High School League was worried about funds.

☛ There will be two private schools in Class AA, Hill-Murray and Cretin-Derham Hall, and three private schools in Class A, Rochester Lourdes, Breck and St. Cloud Cathedral. This will have the fans having fun chanting "private vs. public." It should be funny.

☛ What happened to Centennial this year? There must be some internal problems that I hope get fixed. Centennial's program from mites to high school has been one of the best in the last 10 years and, as a hockey fan, I hope it continues.

☛ Remember the benefit for Jim Perpich to help with expenses in his fight with cancer will be this Sunday, March 15, 2009 from noon to 3 pm at Tom Reid's Hockey Pub.

☛ Congratulations to Hopkins' Becky Kortum (right) for winning the Ms. Hockey award for 2009. The award goes to the top senior girls player.

☛ After talking to some scouts, I found out Edina's Zach Buddish will get some votes for Mr. Hockey. Zach would've been hard to beat this year if he did not get injured at the end of the football season. Just think how scary Edina would be with him on the team. Some team will draft

him in the NHL entry draft.

☛ My prediction for Mr. Hockey is Eden Prairie's Nick Leddy with Duluth East's Max Tardy and Edina's Anders Lee close behind. The award will be given out Sunday, March 15, 2009.

☛ I think we are going to have a great State Tournament with very few upsets. I think seven out of the eight seeds will make it to the semis. In the beginning of the season, I picked Edina in Class AA and Breck in Class A. I think both of teams will have a

tough road to get to the finals. I'm very impressed with all four seeded teams in Class AA (Edina, Eden Prairie, Blaine and Duluth East). These teams are peaking at the right time and could all play Friday night. It would not be an upset if Eden Prairie, Blaine or Duluth East wins the State Championship in Class AA. In Class A, it's going to be a fun tournament with North vs. South, Public vs. Private, and Little Falls trying to stay undefeated. It's going to be a great tournament.

☛ To all the players, coaches, officials,

families, friends and fans: have a great time in St. Paul and have fun. See you at the tournament and email us your experience and fun times at the tournament. [mail@mnprepsports.com](mailto:mail@mnprepsports.com)

Photos by Mark  
Bloom

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# 2009 Boys' Hockey State Tournament

## A TEAM-BY-TEAM ANALYSIS

By Jerry Borough

### Class AA

#### 1. Rochester Century

Might not match up with the seeded teams but finished the year 10-2-2.

#### 2. Edina

When this team runs on all cylinders, they are hard to beat. The first line of Gaarder, Lee and Everson is the best scoring machine in the state.

#### 3. Cretin-Derham Hall

Another team that came on strong at the end of the season, winning twelve of their last thirteen games. This team has nothing to lose and will give any team a tough time.

#### 4. Hill-Murray

Probably one of Bill Lechner's best coaching jobs ever. How could you not be proud of this team with the adversity (suspension of four elite players) it has endured this year? They might not repeat, but they are champions in many eyes.

#### 5. Blaine

This team does not get rattled very often. Coach Dave Aus has the team playing its best hockey right now, which they will have to do to bring home the hardware.

#### 6. Eden Prairie

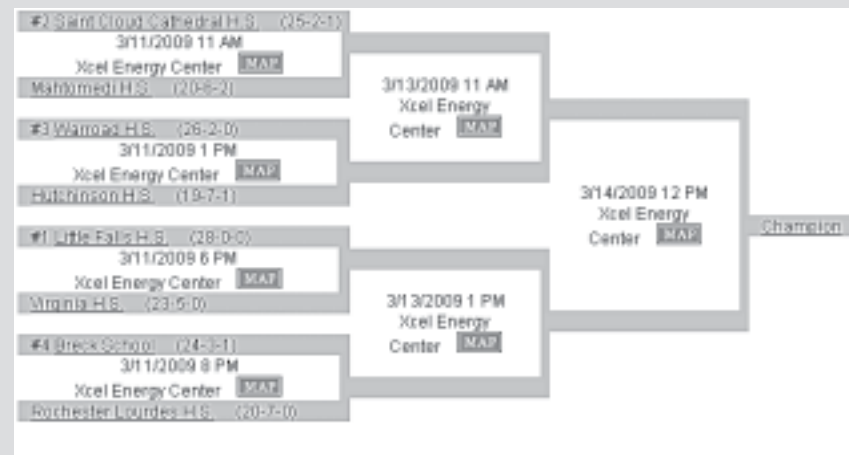
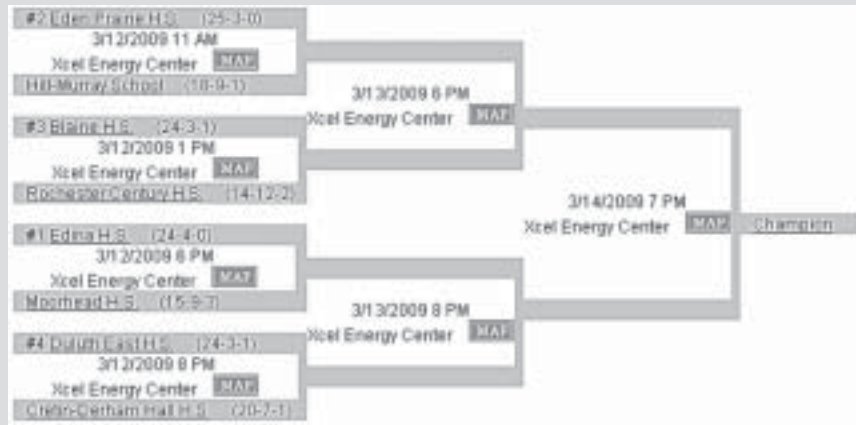
Coach Lee Smith had to cut some seniors for gifted sophomores this season, which has proven to be the right choice. This team will try to beat their opponent to the puck all game long and is as solid as it gets.

#### 7. Duluth East

A defense that is second to none in the state and probably has the most improved player, Mr. Hockey finalist Max Tardy. The team matches up well with all the tournament teams.

#### 8. Moorhead

This is my darkhorse team. They had a problem scoring in the middle of the season but finished strongly. Coach Dave Morinville will have this team ready.



### Class A

#### 1. Rochester Lourdes

A very good team with a solid record.

#### 2. Breck

A very young team with a 20-0-1 in its last twenty-one games. This team could win it all.

#### 3. Hutchinson

Might be in the weakest section and will have to have solid goal-tending to get past the first round.

#### 4. Mahtomedi

This is a very nice team led by Gopher-bound Sophomore defenseman Ben Marshall.

#### 5. St. Cloud Cathedral

This has to be their best team top to bottom in many years. They're led by Junior defenseman and Gopher recruit Nate Schmidt. This team has all the tools to win it all.

#### 6. Little Falls

The only undefeated team in the state. Will they stay that way? Some critics say their weak schedule will hurt them. This team is capable of bringing home the hardware.

#### 7. Virginia

Returns to state after appearing for the first time in 2005 when Dallas Stars defenseman Nate Niskanen led his team. With support from their fans, don't underestimate this team, which plays four lines.

#### 8. Warroad

Year in and year out, Warroad has been one of the elite teams in the state. This year is no exception. Too bad we don't get to see how they would fare in Class AA. (Hint. Hint.)

Photo by Barry Howell. Brackets courtesy of MSHSL.



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# Northland Puck Points

by Jerry Borough



The top defense in the state: Duluth East (left to right) Jake Williams, Joe Arbour, Alex McLean, Alex Holm, Andy Welinski and Derek Forbort.

UMD blew a good chance to have the first round play-offs at home, when they lost to Alaska Anchorage on the same night the Gophers lost Michigan Tech. Now the Bulldogs have to travel to Colorado College and win on the road to get to the Final Five.

Virginia/MIB returns to the Class A tournament for the second time in five years. Last time they appeared, Matt Niskanen led his team. The current team is much deeper at forwards but must open against Little Falls, the top seed and only undefeated team left in the state.



Speaking of Niskanen, he's doing just fine in his second year with the Dallas Stars. He has five goals and 22 assists in the 2008-09 season. Everyone I talk to says Matt is a down-to-earth kid who will do anything to help, something he has done often with youth hockey programs.

Elk River coach Tony Sarsland brought his team up a day early for the Section 7AA finals, which Duluth East won 4-1. This is not keeping costs down.

Former Duluth East defenseman and current Gopher Cabe Fairchild ranks fourth nationally among defensemen in scoring with 29 points in 30 games.

I ran into Dick Stewart, former owner of Stewart's Skate and Bike shop and a longtime supporter of Duluth hockey, at the Section 7 AA final. Dick has been a fixture at the DECC since it opened in 1966. I don't know if the Heritage Sports Center is doing anything for him, but they should have a whole wall in his honor. I have never seen a stronger supporter for youth hockey in this state. The young 89-year-old Mr. Stewart is still cheering at all the games.

The CCM All-Star hockey game will be held at the Eveleth Hippodrome March 17 and at the Heritage Sports Center March 18. The tournament features all-stars from the Range against the best from the Duluth area.

The Duluth East defense (above) is playing better than anyone out there. This must continue at State to bring home the hardware.

## Blog This: Jerry Borough takes on a Northland blogger and defends East

Howie Hanson recently wrote a blog attacking Duluth East High School hockey, and I would like to correct him on a few issues.

The Hounds are not arrogant, as Mr. Hanson suggested in his blog. They're confident and a well-deserving top-seeded team. They did not see a repeat loss in the Section finals. Instead, we saw a dominant 4-1 victory over Elk River in the finals.

Duluth East did not rub it in big-time against Princeton in a 10-0 Section quarterfinal victory, opting instead to play the fourth line most of the third period along with the fifth and sixth defensemen.

Yes, Duluth East lost to Rochester Century, but every team has a bad game once in awhile. Plus, Century is in the Class AA State Tournament, so they can't be that bad.

Mr. Hanson suggested East has a weak schedule. East has played Centennial, Blaine and Minnetonka this season. All were top-10 teams throughout the season. Plus, the Hounds played many teams ranked 11th-20th.

There were suggestions in Mr. Hanson's blog that East has done the public school system of Duluth a disfavor by not scheduling games with Duluth Marshall and Hermantown. I wonder why Marshall and Hermantown don't choose to join Class AA, especially considering their success in recent years. If East had played the Hawks and Hilltoppers this year, the Hounds would've won at least four of five games. I have seen about 100 high school hockey games this year, so I have some knowledge.

Eden Prairie and Bloomington Jefferson only have approximately seven non-conference games each year, so it's almost impossible for them to put East on the schedule. But they almost always scrimmage each other.

Mr. Hanson has suggested East doesn't play with enthusiasm, and it's the coaches' fault. I don't agree. Every time East travels away from the Northland, fans pack the stands to see the Hounds and a very talented and enthusiastic team.

The Duluth area coaches are some of the best in the state with the East coaches second to none. So, Mr. Hanson, if you are a true hockey fan, quit putting down the players, coaches and teams, and instead find a way to support all the teams. And may all the fans in the Northland support the two northern teams at state, East and Virginia. Go Hounds, and go Blue Devils.

*Editor's note: We welcome Mr. Hanson's and any one else's response to this commentary. Please email us at [mail@mnprepsports.com](mailto:mail@mnprepsports.com).*

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# Next two weeks will say a lot about the Gopher Men's Hockey Team

Thanks to Minnesota's 2-0 win over Michigan Tech, the Gophers will start the play-offs at home against St. Cloud State Friday, March 13. Without the win, they would've gone on the road for the second year in a row.

The Minnesota Wild say Marian Gaborik could be ready to play by the end of March. Minnesota has the lowest goal total in the NHL with 161 goals and will need Gaborik to get the offense going.

Zach Parise is the NHL second-leading goal scorer with 38 goals this season. With a good finish, Zach could get 50 goals this season.

Minnesota's Women's top-ranked hockey team lost to the second-ranked Wisconsin team this past Sunday in the WCHA Women's Final Face-Off at Ridder Arena. These two teams could be playing two weeks from now in the national championship game in Boston.

Kurtis Foster was back playing for the Wild after almost a full year off to rehabilitate a broken femur, which happened last March 19 against San Jose.

The NHL needs to open up the game with more scoring. There should be a reduction in the size of the goalie pads, plus there should be consideration of

awarding a penalty shot when goalies knock off the net intentionally.

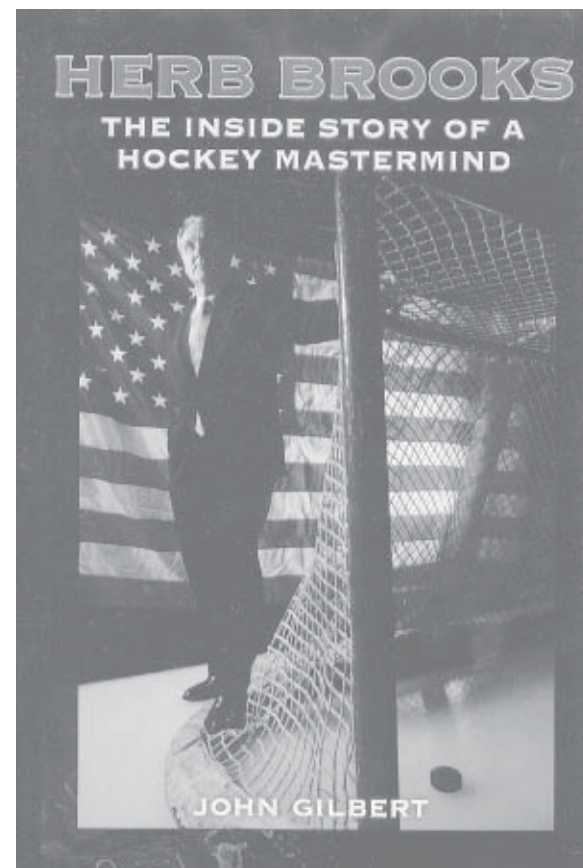
The Wild have reached a contract agreement with Niklas Backstrom. The deal with worth \$24 million over four years. Losing Backstrom would have been huge. Now the Wild need to work on getting some offensive help.

The Minnesota Gophers better pick up the pace if they want to go to the NCAA. They must win the play-off series against St. Cloud State this weekend and do well in the Final Five the following week. Minnesota is the host school for the Western Regionals. It won't go over well if the Gophers aren't there.

There is a lot of pressure for men's coaches in the WCHA at all Minnesota schools, where the teams are not playing up to their potential. The recruiting will be scrutinized a lot more closely.

Minnesota Gopher Women's hockey coach Brad Frost has been named WCHA Coach of the Year for the second year in row.

John Gilbert has written about Herb Brooks. You might have heard him promote it once or twice on local radio. *Herb Brooks: The Inside Story of a Hockey Mastermind (Voyageur)* is a must read for any hockey fan.



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Michele Bloom photo

*Duluth East's Max Tardy has matured into one of the most complete hockey players in the state. Minnesota Prep Sports hockey guru Jerry Borough spoke with Tardy in advance of the State Tournament.*

***This is your third year as a starter. What is the difference this year?***

I don't think we've had a defensive core (before) as we do this year. That's huge. Gives us a lot of confidence and our goaltender a lot of confidence.

***You and the team seem to have great chemistry on and off the ice. How would you describe it?***

We all hang out together away from the rink. It's a big core group of guys, and it really helps.

***You opted to stay in high school instead of going to Juniors. Was that a tough decision?***

Yeah, it was tough on me at first. But after I thought about it, I knew I wanted to come back and play with all my friends for one last year. And I'm really happy about that.

***How much did playing in the Elite League help?***

It was a big factor in staying. It's an extra 20-25 games. It's so much fun. It's a lot of just being creative and going out to have fun.

***You're headed to UMD. Have you talked at all with the coaches there about playing a year of Juniors first?***

They don't really want to discuss anything like that right now with the big tournament coming up this week.

***What does Coach (Mike) Randolph focus on during practice?***

You've got to work hard, otherwise you won't improve. And he stresses the team concept.

***After you lost to Breck and Rochester Century, what adjustments did you make?***

We really started to believe in each other more, especially after the Century game. We really bombed on that. So, we just worked harder in practice and focused more during games.

***What advice do you as a Captain give other players who might be slumping?***

Just keep battling through it and stay focused. We just try to take one shift at a time. If you have a bad shift one time, make sure it's better next time.

***In the Section semi-finals when you went to overtime, did you have that feeling 'Here we go again'?***

I honestly wasn't that worried. When we got to the overtime, that's about when I was most calm and confident. I felt we had a pretty good chance to win.

***Your team seems to be peaking at the right time. Is your best yet to come?***

Hopefully. That's all I can say. That Elk River game was proof that we're playing good hockey right now.

***Your short-handed goal against Elk River reminded me of the Dave Spehar penalty shot in 1995 against Moorhead in the championship game.***

He's one of the best high school hockey players of all time. To be compared to him, I'm just kind of awestruck.

***What went through your mind when the horn sounded?***

A lot of relief. I was so excited and happy. I got interviewed and didn't even know what to say. I was stumbling my words.

***I've never seen such proud parents and family members.***

That was really nice when they came down on the ice, and we had some pictures taken together.

***You've got Cretin in the first game. What are you expecting?***

We've been talking a little bit about how they play. We know they're a great offensive team. We'll try to stay focused on what they do.

For more, check out [www.mnprepsports.com](http://www.mnprepsports.com)

# Prep Talk

Got something you want to say? Know of a good story idea? Sound off here each month. Or just let us know how you think we're doing.

Contact us at  
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5

# Class AA Players to Watch



**Nick Leddy**  
Eden Prairie

He is the leading candidate for Mr. Hockey. By not going to Ann Arbor and staying home instead, he's led his team to the State Tournament. He's a great skater with many skills that will have him going high in the NHL entry draft.

Above photo by Mark Bloom

**Max Tardy, Duluth East #27**

Probably the most improved player in the last year. Max, who led the Elite League in scoring last fall, continues to be one of the most complete and fun players to watch. Max is another player who stayed home to play with his friends with the dream of going to State instead of opting for Juniors.

**Marshall Everson, Edina #21**

A Senior Forward, he has been one of the purest goal scorers in the state over the past couple seasons. With him teaming up with Anders Lee and Connor Gaarder, they comprise the best line in the state. He is headed to Harvard next year.

**Tyler Zeppeda, Hill-Murray #7**

He's playing so well lately we have to repeat what was said in last month's issue. Following the departure of four of the Pioneers' best, Zeppeda is now the team leader for the defending AA champ. The Senior Forward is one of the fastest players in the state and possesses great stick handling skills.

**Zac Frischmon, Blake #18**

He is skating as well as anyone right now after missing most of the first month with an injury. He has seven goals already in the play-offs.

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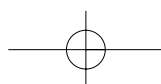
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