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Minnesota Prep Sports

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November 21, 2007
Vol. 8, Issue 2



**The ups and
downs for
Lakeville South**



Prep Bowl Preview

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Winter Sports Preview

On paper, Edina should be one of the best, but Roseau and St. Thomas Academy top our rankings. See page 14 for full list of rankings.



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FRI	MAR. 14	VS. CHICAGO	7PM
SAT	APR. 5	VS. NEW YORK	7PM
SAT	APR. 12	VS. PHILADELPHIA	7PM
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HEAD COACH BRENDAN FLAHERTY HAS BEGUN TO BUILD A DYNASTY OF SORTS AT DULUTH MARSHALL, YET THEY HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF WINNING A CLASS A STATE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP, FINISHING SECOND EACH OF THE PAST TWO YEARS. FLAHERTY TOOK SOME TIME TO PREVIEW THE NEW SEASON DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH MINNESOTA PREP SPORTS .

6

Questions for Duluth Marshall's Brendan Flaherty

What can we hope to expect to see from your team this year? How will it compare to the last two years?

We never predict, but I think viewers can expect a hard-working team. Strength of team should be defense core led by five Seniors. Maybe not the dynamic scoring from previous years, but plenty of balance up front.

After two second-place finishes at State, how hungry is your team and coaching staff to win it all? How do you use that to your advantage as head coach?

Coaching staff tries to keep things in perspective and focus on the near future. The same for the players. We fully understand that the road to success is continually under construction.

What have been some of the keys to your success in building a very strong program that seems now to

perform well on a yearly basis?

We have been fortunate to coach players that are willing to sacrifice and that have a passion for playing hockey. Tradition is building and the dedication carries over from one year to the next. Currently [there are] five Division 1 hockey players and more Division 3 players that have graduated as Toppers since 2002. Our next step is to foster a program, where the GPA is very high without losing any of the above.

over the Winter months when there is insufficient supply. With declining numbers in our area, maybe the new facility can generate interest for more kids to play.

What are your thoughts on the high school league's new transfer policy?

I am not in favor of kids switching 2-3 times in a High School career, however the new ruling appears a bit extreme and seems to deny kids of certain opportunities.

"I am not in favor of kids switching 2-3 times in a High School career, however the new ruling appears a bit extreme and seems to deny kids of certain opportunities."

How do you respond to some people who think teams like yours and Hermantown should be playing in Class AA? Is it something you would consider in the future?

We looked at the AA model and felt it wasn't best for us. We had 35 players try out this year and took all 35

to just field two teams.

Photo by Josh Holmberg

How much will the new arena that's being built in Duluth affect hockey overall in your city and throughout the Northland?

The new rink should help, especially

Puck Points

by Jerry Borough



My favorite time of the year is when high school hockey starts. To see players and teams improve during the season is exciting. To see the dedication and passion for the game by the coaches is heartwarming. To see the competition that is second-to-none in the USA is why you will see me in arenas supporting these teams.

It seems like all the good girls teams from last year just reloaded. Look for Eden Prairie, Edina, Stillwater and Roseville to be on the top of the rankings this year.

Make sure you go to our website, mnpresports.com, to see our top games of the week schedule of High School, College and Pro in Minnesota. You will see our weekly updated High School Boys rankings, too.

There are many new coaches this year, including John Frazier (Breck) taking over for Wally Chapman, Aaron Johnson (Orono), Brian Urick (Minnetonka), Ken Pauly returning to Benilde-St. Margaret and Drey Bradley and Bart Larson (Eastview).

Our prayers go out to the family and friends of Wayzata assistant varsity coach Martin Schriener, who died in a boating accident October 27. The former Sioux player was one of the most passionate and dedicated coaches in high school hockey. Marty will be sorely missed.

Candidates for the Frank Brimsek award for the best senior goalie are Jack Hanna (Centennial), Joseph Phillippi (Hill-Murray), Derrick Caschetta (Edina), and Matt Hemingway (Alexandria). There will be more to this list as the season progresses.

To see a lot of the best teams in high school hockey this season you must go the Schwan Cup held on three rinks with a total of 24 of the best teams in the state playing December 26-28. The Gold division at the Xcel Center has White Bear Lake vs. Holy Angels, Hill-Murray vs. Duluth East, Centennial vs. Minnetonka and Moorhead vs. Roseville. The Silver Division, played at Aldrich Arena in Maplewood, has Wayzata vs. Breck, Edina vs. Benilde-St. Margaret, Brainerd



Josh Holmberg photo.

vs. Blaine and St. Thomas Academy vs. Cretin-Derham Hall. The Bronze Division, played at Brooklyn Park, has Eastview vs. Orono, Maple Grove vs. Blake, Champlin Park vs. Stillwater and Mahtomedi vs. Burnsville. So go enjoy some of these games during the holidays.

The frontrunners for the Mr. Hockey award, going to the best high school senior forwards or defenseman are Joe Gleason (Edina), Tyler Barnes (Burnsville), John O'Neill (Anoka), Jake Gardiner (Minnetonka), Aaron Ness (Roseau), if they count him a senior since he is accelerating his class this year, Adam Mueller (Roseville) and Tommy O'Donnell (Jefferson). There are a lot more names but due to injuries and playing fall sports. I will wait for the next issue to mention them and my top-10 finalists.

I watched some Bantam A games the last couple weeks with the top teams in the state. Some of these kids are big and the skill level is very high. Some

coaches are saying these kids will be a top class in the 92 class. Go out and see some of these future high school stars.

Burnsville's Tyler Barnes, a Wisconsin recruit, and teammate Jake Hendrickson, a UMD recruit, were the top Minnesota scorers in the Midwest Elite League this fall. They should be fun to watch this season at Burnsville.

The top teams to start the preseason rankings have one thing in common: they have goalies with experience. There are also a lot of teams that are deep in forwards and defenseman. The teams with the strongest goalies will get to State. So expect a lot of ranking changes this season.

Roseau will start off the season as my number one team in AA, but the hardest thing to do is to repeat as champions. This has not been done since Bloomington Jefferson did a

three-peat in 1992, 1993 and 1994. Edina and Hill-Murray will be the two best teams on paper, but paper has never won a game, especially the last three years when Moorhead and Holy Angels were the favorites but were upset. There will be a few teams that will be solid if their goaltending comes through. The teams I like here are Holy Angels, Duluth East, Moorhead, Anoka, Cloquet and Blaine.

In the Class A, it looks like St. Thomas Academy and Duluth Marshall are the top two teams with many teams going through growing pains and injury issues. Look for Duluth Denfeld, Blake, Breck, Warroad, Orono, Hibbing and Hermantown in the second category.

My preseason predictions for 2008 are Edina in Class AA boys and Duluth Marshall in the A. In the girls' classes, I have Eden Prairie in AA and Blake in A.

See Rankings on page 14.

R e i n v e n t i n g L i v e s



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On The Rebound

Coming off a season that saw its head coach dismissed midseason and later a fourth-place finish at State, Lakeville South's Boys' Basketball team prepares for a new season with no returning starters. Minnesota Prep Sports reporter Corey Butler Jr. looks at the challenges ahead for Lakeville South.

Two years ago the Lakeville South Cougars were a new team at a new school, but made it to state without any seniors.

One year ago they had an odious ending with Coach Matt Addington partway through the season. They persevered, however, and went on to finish fourth in state.

This year they are without 11 seniors from last year. They have a new coach after interim coach Larry Thompson had no desire to continue this season as the man in charge.

November 21, 2007 - 6

Step in Coach John Sheehan, five new starters and a new crux of players, and the team has moved on.

"I think we are going to surprise some people," said starting senior point guard Blake Nicols. "We lost a lot of people from last year, but we have a strong group of core guys that can play and we all now each other really well and we have really good chemistry.

"I'm really excited for this year; we've got a great group of guys. I love

playing at Lakeville South with my teammates. We all really like each other and that's why I feel we're going to have a great year. We all know each other on the court and we understand our roles."

Nicols isn't the only one who believes success is in the future with the revamped team.

"We have some exciting talent coming up. They are definitely unproven players because they didn't get a lot of playing time last year with 11 seniors that really dominated all

the playing time we have," said Neil Strader, Lakeville athletic director. "There's some young talent that really looks like they're going to take over and assume the leadership role. They have been working awfully hard in the off season; I think they're going to do really well. We have three quality captains. I think we're going to surprise some people."

When the season opens December 11, Nicols will be one of the three aforementioned new captains this year. But he isn't

quick to assume sole leadership of the fresh-faced team.

"I feel Nick Ramsey is a very strong starter. He is multi-dimensional; he can shoot it and get to the free-throw line," said Nicols, who plans to continue his basketball career in the collegiate ranks. "Blake Shay is a junior forward for us. He is about 6-foot-6 and has really long arms. He can step out and shoot the ball and is really crafty underneath and plays really good defense.

"Last year we had a core group of seniors with a few young guys like myself and Nick Ramsey getting some time. And now that they're gone, we are playing the role of seniors and getting our young guys to mature quickly, and they're doing a great job and we're becoming a really tight knit bunch. We play really well together and that's why I feel we can surprise people and win a lot of games with our teamwork."

It's apparent the ideology of team is stressed amongst these students. Nobody will be expected to take the majority of the workload, but rather spread the ball around the team and find the best man open.

"Anybody can step up and standout. I have three great senior captains I'm looking forward to working with," said Coach Sheehan.

While last year might be a distressing standpoint, it's just that: last year. With the mid-season exit of Coach Addington, and Coach Larry Thompson stepping up from within the ranks and bringing the Cougars to a fourth-place finish in the state, this year

is poised to be a genesis of sorts.

Coach Sheehan has brought a new feel to a relatively young team.

"Coach Sheehan has really brought a lot of energy to the program," said Strader. "There's definitely a lot of excitement with what he's calling 'Cougar Nation.' The kids are definitely excited this year and there's a lot of excitement around the school."

The adoration doesn't stop with the athletic director.

"I think Coach Sheehan wants to come in and show people that we're a whole new team. We don't have the attitude we had last year and we're out there playing hard every night to represent our school and ourselves and our team," added Nichols. "[He] really stresses that we play for a bigger purpose and not just to look good for ourselves, so we understand that we need to conduct ourselves with a positive manner on the court and I really like that he's doing that for our team."

"I feel I'm knowledgeable; I'm been involved with the Lake Conference for many years. I know what it takes I think to get a program up and running," said Sheehan. "I'm a pretty positive coach; I try to encourage kids to play hard and motivate themselves. I'm definitely a defensive coach; I feel I don't ever want to be outworked on the court defensively."

For a team only entering its third year, they have been faced with more challenges and turmoil than they bargained for. Splitting from Lakeville North diluted the player

pool, relegating the inaugural Lakeville South varsity team sans any seniors, therefore no solid leaders and teachers of the young students. They enjoyed some success and made it to the state tournament.

The maturation wasn't deterred, however, as they followed up their initial year with a fourth place run in the state tournament, despite the instability at the coaching position.

But they learned and moved on. Now Nichols and the like are poised to take the helm of the proverbial ship. The team has evolved together and it's ready to show it.

"I think we have definitely progressed in a lot of ways. The program as a whole is much larger and there is a lot more numbers in the program," said Strader. "We have a lot of youth coming up. This group of kids that's taking over and coming in without any experience because last year we had an atypical, hugely strong class of seniors with eleven kids. There's not too many programs that can say they had 11 high qual-

ity seniors. And now that they're gone, other kids are going to get a chance to play."

While the development is evident, one would assume the sky is the limit, right? However, the team is realistic about its chances against its formidable foes in the Lake Conference.

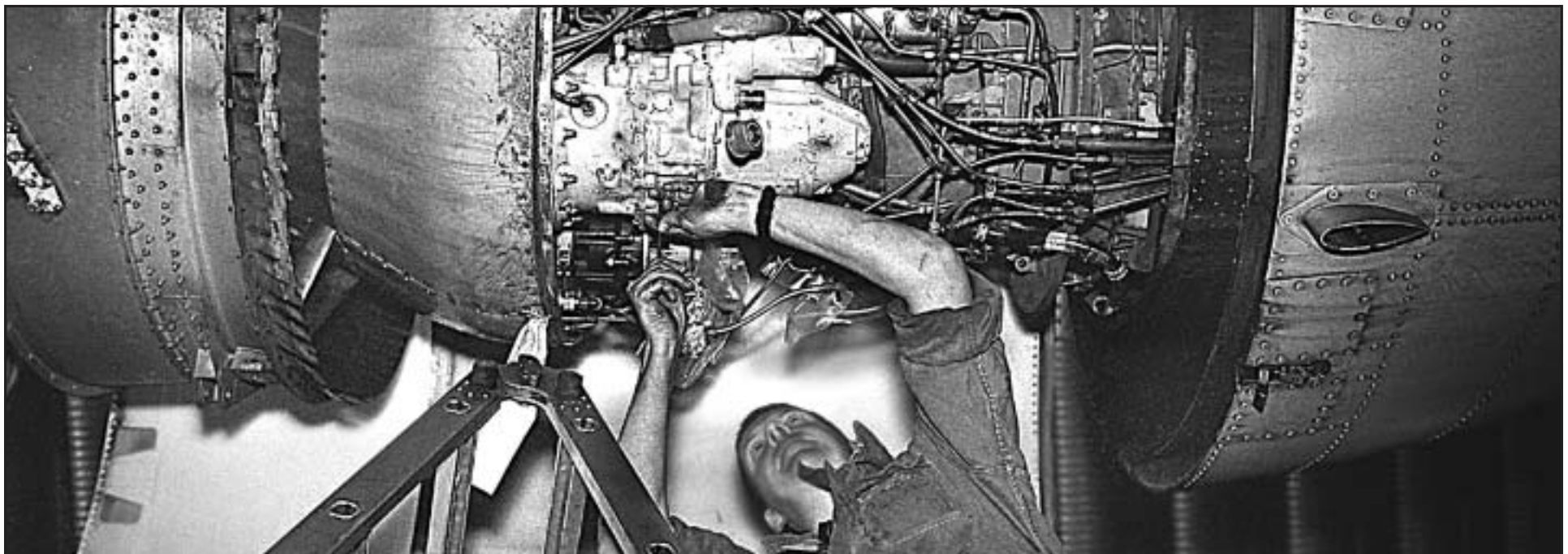
"My expectations would be to go .500 in the regular season; the Lake Conference is so talented and deep this year I feel if we go .500 it would be a really strong year. Then make some noise in the section tournament and see how far we can get," said Nichols.

Strader resonates what Nichols says.

"When we play every night in the Lake Conference, no matter how good you are, there's a chance of walking away with a loss on the scoreboard because of how good the opponents are night in and night out. I think definitely they have a chance of playing .500 ball and being competitive in the Lake Conference and getting into Section III play."

We'll have to wait and see if the third time really is the charm for "Cougar Nation."

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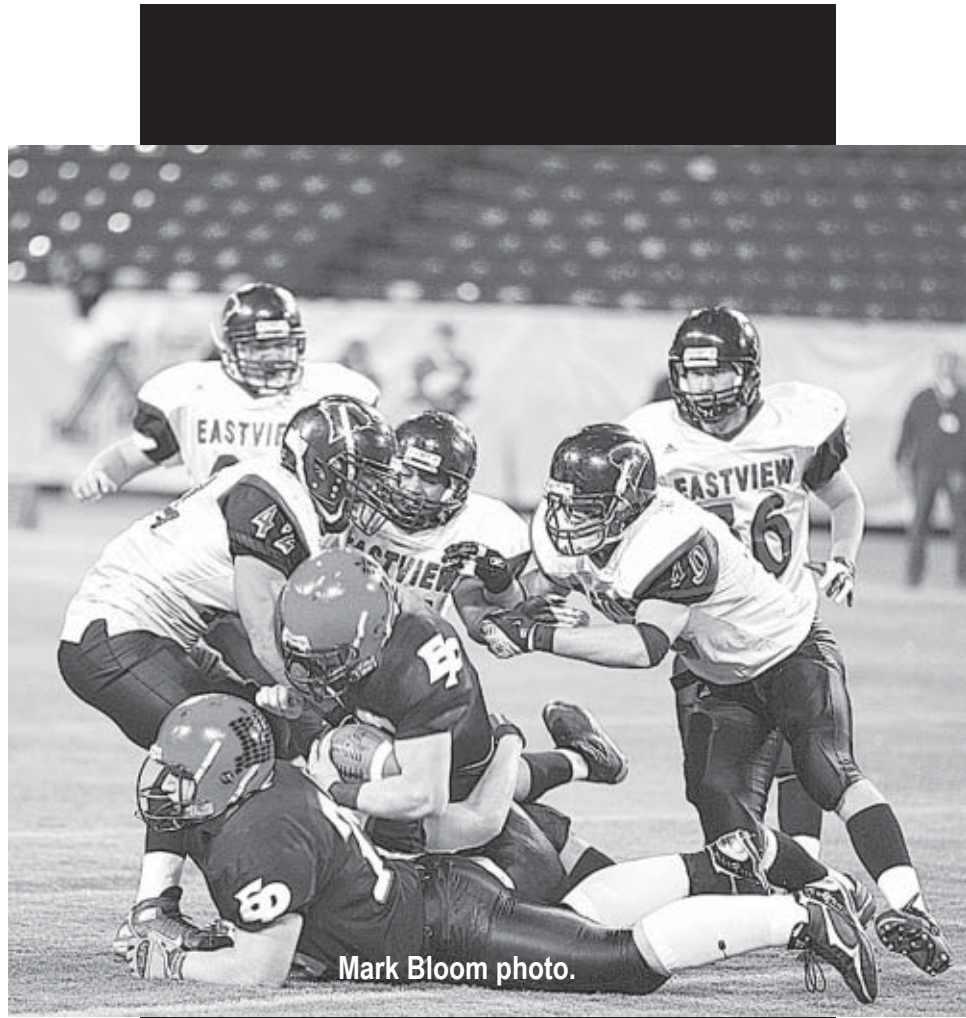
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PREP BOWL Preview



Mark Bloom photo.

By **STUART GROSCKREUTZ**

They are the Yankees and Dodgers of high school football in Minnesota, but even fans tired of the perennial success of Eden Prairie and Cretin-Derham Hall will be hard-pressed to avoid this spotlight attraction — arguably the most anticipated match-up in the 26-year history of the Prep Bowl.

This year's event, with games spread over two days for the first time, could feature four repeat champions. Stephen-Argyle is looking to win its fifth consecutive state championship in 9-Man — and increase its state record winning streak to 67 games — while Glencoe-Silver Lake, Totino-Grace and Eden Prairie are chasing titles for the second year in a row.

Here's a look at this year's games.

Class AAAAA

Cretin-Derham Hall vs. Eden Prairie

Both teams are loaded with Division I recruits and no team has stayed within 21 points of undefeated Eden Prairie and Cretin-Derham Hall. It's fortunate that even without seeding for the state tournament these teams landed in opposite halves of the bracket.

Eden Prairie is tough and physical, outgaining opponents by an average of 250 yards and outscoring them by nearly 30 points per game. The balanced rushing of Matt Swanson and Scott Lindner combined with accurate passing and leadership of quarterback Ryan Grant — who

has never lost as a starter — have carried the offense. Eight of tight end Carter Bykowski's 10 receptions have been touchdowns and the Iowa State recruit's blocking complements a stellar offensive line that also includes Tom Ries. Willie Mobley and Max Pryor anchor an outstanding defensive line for the Raiders.

The Eagles smash-mouth style is a stark contrast to Cretin-Derham Hall's winning formula, which takes advantage of talented playmakers all over the field. Strong-armed quarterback John Nance can sling it with the best of them, but is also capable of beating teams with his feet. Running backs Shady Salamon and Marcus Binns complement the state's most prolific offensive weapon Michael Floyd. Out of the backfield, the Notre Dame recruit is averaging more than 10 yards per carry while accumulating more than 1,000 receiving yards and returning four punts for touchdowns. Wisconsin recruit Joe Schafer leads an offensive line that also includes 6-foot-7, 288-pound sophomore Seantrel Henderson, who has already received scholarship offers from Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

So how do the teams stack up?

— Eden Prairie has not faced an offense with anywhere near the firepower of the Raiders. Same goes for the Raiders against an Eagles defense that allows about seven points and just 171 yards per game. Cretin-Derham Hall has also allowed less than 200 yards per game on defense.

— Offensively, the Raiders have racked up about 450 yards per game while Eden Prairie isn't far behind at nearly 430. Cretin-Derham Hall may have appeared vulnerable while allowing Tartan to run up and down the field in the first half of a 53-32 victory in the Section 4AAAAA finals, but the Raiders were crisp during a 56-14 victory over Brainerd in the state semifinals — despite allowing 341 yards.

— Cretin-Derham Hall allowed 6.1 yards per rush against Brainerd, which is a concern. The Eagles will try to slow the game down with methodical drives and the Raiders can't win if their offense is on the sidelines.

— Despite getting flagged for nine infractions during their semifinal victory over Eastview, the Eagles were penalized about half as much (32 in 11 games) as Cretin-Derham Hall (65 in 10 games) this season. The Raiders can't afford a disparity like that against Eden Prairie.

— Eden Prairie is the more complete team — and kicker Erik Soderberg could make a huge difference in a close game — but no team is more explosive than Cretin-Derham Hall on offense. Third-and-long

situations won't faze the Raiders, but they will need to make big plays against a defense that will put them in a lot of third-and-long situations.

— Eden Prairie has failed to advance to state just once since 1996, winning five championships during that span. With 19 trips to the state tournament since 1984, Cretin-Derham Hall is tied with Stillwater for the most among large-school teams, but has only won one title and sports a 1-4 record in the Prep Bowl. The Eagles, by comparison, are 5-0 in championship games. History doesn't always repeat itself, but the Eagles seem to know something about winning big games.

The pick: Cretin-Derham Hall earns the distinction of being the best runner-up in state history as the Eagles win their sixth title in 12 years.

Class AAAAA

Mahtomedi vs. Totino-Grace

The second of four teams hoping to repeat as state champions, Totino-Grace (12-1) will face Mahtomedi (10-3) for the Class AAAAA title. One of these teams has been in the championship game every year since 2002, with Totino-Grace capturing championships in 2003, 2004 and 2006 and the Zephyrs claiming the 2005 crown.

The Eagles have been stingy defensively with a team that graduated most of its key players from last year's outfit. Since losing to Irondale in the second game of the season, only one team has stayed within 16 points of the Eagles and that was highly-regarded and previously unbeaten Spring Lake Park in the Section 6AAAA championship game. Totino-Grace is balanced offensively with quarterback Jordan Marshall and running backs Pierce Lubinski and Micah Koehn, who is also one of the team's top receiving threats and defensive players.

Mahtomedi has rebounded

nicely since losing three out of four games to close out the regular season. That tough stretch was precipitated by the loss of injured fullback Bross Sivertson, who is back and opening holes for Stephen Johnson — who rushed for 337 yards and four touchdowns on 38 carries in a 34-20 semifinal victory over Sartell-St. Stephen. What the Zephyrs lack in size they make up for with speed and a balanced

Prep Bowl XXVI

Friday's games

9-Man

Stephen-Argyle (12-0) vs. Waubun (11-0), 10 a.m.

Class A

Goodhue (12-1) vs. Adrian (11-2), 1 p.m.

Class AA

Caledonia (12-1) vs. Luverne (12-1), 4 p.m.

Class AAAAA

Cretin-Derham Hall (13-0) vs. Eden Prairie (13-0), 7 p.m.

Saturday's games

Class AAA

DeLaSalle (11-2) vs. Glencoe-Silver Lake (13-0), noon

Class AAAAA

Mahtomedi (10-3) vs. Totino-Grace (12-1), 3 p.m.

See Preview on page 17

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Northland Puck Points

by Jerry Borough



Josh Homberg photo.

• The UMD hockey team is starting the year out very strong at home. This must take a lot of pressure off Coach Scott Sandelin and please him very much. This team looks in very good shape and should be very competitive this season, even after losing two players early to the pros.

• The Minnesota Red Team all-stars won the elite NIT tournament against some of the best teams in the nation. The players from this team were picked from Northern Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin's elite teams. The biggest surprise was these elite teams had few practices, took on the Shattucks and other triple midget teams and won.

• Looks like many Northern high school teams are going to be very competitive in getting to the State. I like Duluth Marshall and Hibbing in section 7A, Duluth Denfeld and Hermantown in 5A, and Duluth East and Cloquet in 7AA.

• Players to watch in the Northland are Rob Johnson, Max Tardy and Joe Arbour (Duluth East), David Brown and Justin Jokinen (Cloquet), Robby Roy and Sam Rendle (Grand Rapids), David Jacques and Zach Mausolf (Duluth Marshall), Joe Krause (Hermantown), Jake Youso (International Falls), Anthony Decenzo (Hibbing) and Jake Johnson and Chris Stafne (Duluth Denfeld). There are many more players I like and will write about as the season progresses.

• Have you noticed that every Northland hockey player who skipped senior year for the Juniors, except Keegan Flaherty of Duluth East, is from a Class A team? Drew Lablanc (Hermantown), Nico Sacchetti (Virginia), Brady Hjelle (International Falls) are all gone. How good would their teams be if they stayed their Senior year?

• Speaking of Keegan Flaherty of Duluth East, who skipped his senior

year to play Juniors at Green Bay in the USHL, his decision is looking like a big mistake. First of all, he would have been captain of the football, hockey and baseball teams. The football team went to state and lost in the quarter finals. How far would they have gone with him on the team? In hockey, Duluth East will have a strong team again and compete for the state title. He could've played in the elite league and a high school schedule second-to-none to accomplish his goals. He is only playing half of the games so far this season. He does not have a point yet. I think he was given some bad advice, and there may be an over zealous parent who thinks his son is a lot better than he actually is. Since he can't return to East, I hope things improve for him and he gets the playing time he needs to improve his game.

• *The Hockey News* is going to follow the Roseau Rams every week this season. This is a worldwide publication and will focus on life in the small hockey town.

• As the Heritage Center goes up in Duluth, there are a lot of people saying the first rink will not be ready until the middle of February, instead of the planned January 1 completion.

• Can you believe this? Some Twin Cities coaches are recommending the State Hockey Tournament go to four sections in each class. This would mean the chance of no Northern team at the State and only one at the most. This would take the spirit away from the tournament if they did this. I guess the big Twin Cities teams are afraid of the little Northern teams beating them up.

• Looks like UMD is recruiting a lot of northern Minnesota kids lately. My only concern is they are a bunch of smaller-sized kids.

More Puck Points and Rankings on following page

Puck Points, from
previous page

• The WCHA top to bottom is by far the most competitive league in D1 hockey. Minnesota is the top recruiting area for most of the teams with over 100 scholarships going to homegrown Minnesota kids.

• The Minnesota Gophers have always gotten the pick of the litter when it comes to Minnesota players, but Wisconsin and North Dakota seem to have done very well lately. North Dakota has picked up Ben Blood, Joe Gleason, Danny Kristo, Danny Mattson, Nick Mattson, Cory Fienhage and Mike Fink. Wisconsin has picked up Chris Hickey, Jordy Murray, Nick Prior, Derek Stepan, Aaron Crandel, Tyler Barnes and Jake Gardiner.

• The Minnesota Wild's Wes Walz is taking a leave of absence from the club for personal reasons. Nobody knows what's going on, but there are a lot of rumors. Wes was seen up in Duluth a couple of weekends ago watching his boy play in a Bantam A tournament for Woodbury. I hope everything works out and Wes gets his things in order because the Wild need him.

Gopher Freshman strong, Hill could be great for Wild

• I'm not too concerned with the slow start for the Gophers. They are moving the puck a lot better on the power play. Some of the experienced players have to start finishing the puck and do the little things when you don't have the puck. I'd rather see a team finish strong like Michigan State did last year. It's a long season and some chemistry will build over time.

• I'm impressed with the Freshman class of the Gophers, who seem to play more poised than the Senior members and are getting better each week.

• There were two nice articles on Cade Fairchild, the Freshman defenseman who is quarterbacking the power play for the Gophers. The former Duluth East and U-18 player is passing the puck as well as anyone and is not afraid to get offensive with the puck.

• The Wild are doing the same thing as last year, when they started the season fast and then slowed down when the team was hit a rash of injuries. When

the team is healthy, they are fun to watch.

• Talking about fun to watch, wasn't Sidney Crosby unbelievable when he played the Wild October 30? Too bad this is the only home game with Pittsburgh this year. This is why the NHL has to rethink their scheduling in the future.

• The National Hockey League must suspend Vancouver Canucks Matthias Ohlund for the two handed slash on Mikko Koivu in the November 16 game in Vancouver. The slash cracked the fibula. We've got to stop this goon style hockey.

• Well, today is Sunday, November 18, 2007 as I write this, and Wild defenseman Sean Hill will be starting his first Wild game. This could be great pick up for the Wild. Sean and Mark Parrish are the only Minnesota raised players on the team.

Minnesota Prep Sports Hockey Rankings

Class AA

- 1 Roseau
- 2 Edina
- 3 Hill-Murray
- 4 Holy Angels
- 5 Anoka
- 6 Moorhead
- 7 Blaine
- 8 Centennial
- 9 Benilde-St. Margaret
- 10 Bloomington Jefferson

Teams to watch

Cloquet, Duluth East, White Bear Lake, Burnsville, Minnetonka, Rosemount, Roseville, Eden Prairie, Cretin-Derham Hall

Class A

- 1 St. Thomas Academy
- 2 Duluth Marshall
- 3 Blake
- 4 Warroad
- 5 Orono
- 6 Duluth Denfeld
- 7 Hibbing
- 8 Breck
- 9 Hermantown
- 10 Little Falls

Teams to watch

Totino Grace, Red Wing, Albert Lea, International Falls, Rochester Lourdes

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Prep Bowl, from page 9

offense. Quarterback Vaughn Schmid has completed 58 percent of his passes for 1,688 yards and 23 touchdowns, with Justin Gominsky hauling in 57 passes for 1,083 yards and 18 touchdowns.

The pick: Defense prevails as Totino-Grace earns its fourth title in five years.

Class AAA

DeLaSalle vs. Glencoe-Silver Lake

Making their first Prep Bowl appearance since winning the AAA championship in 1999, the Islanders (11-2) have speed to burn with running back Jeremy Randle and a balanced and swarming defense that limited opponents to less than 14 points per game. Randle has rushed 202 times for 1,783 yards and 21 touchdowns. In addition to completing 69 of 142 passes for 1,281 yards and 19 touchdowns, quarterback Michael Van Leer is averaging a staggering 29 yards on 29 punt returns. The Islanders have averaged more than 49 points in their past seven games.

Glencoe-Silver Lake (13-0) has remained undefeated while navigating a schedule that included Class AAAA powers Hutchinson and Waconia and the always-rugged Wright County Conference. The defending state champions, who also won titles in 2000 and 2003 while placing second in 2002, have outscored opponents 236-56 in the first half of games this season. The Panthers are led by the

1-2 punch of quarterback Matthew Muenchow and running back Dustin Jurek. Muenchow has completed 73-123 passes for 1,163 yards and 15 touchdowns with seven interceptions. He rushed for 115 yards on 12 carries in a 22-8 semifinal victory over Albany. Jurek is closing in on 1,000 yards rushing for the season to go along with 19 touchdowns.

The Panthers don't see speed and big-play potential like DeLaSalle's in the blue-collar Wright County Conference, but the Islanders won't be running up and down the field like they have against most of their Tri-Metro opponents, either.

The pick: Glencoe-Silver Lake is battle-tested and — stop me if you've read this before — should repeat as state champion.

Class AA

Caledonia vs. Luverne

The survivors of the most balanced of the six classes, Caledonia (12-1) and Luverne (12-1) each survived three-point scares in the state quarterfinals and Luverne needed overtime to turn back Pierz in the semifinals. Caledonia was the state runner-up in 2005 and Luverne fell short to Triton in a lop-sided championship game a year ago.

Led by running backs Cody Peterson and Zach Gran, Caledonia had outgained opponents by about 140 yards per game this season. Quarterback Kody Moore has completed 114 of 216 passes for 2,186 yards and 22 touchdowns. Andy

Bauer has 42 receptions for 908 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Luverne quarterback Jeremy Hoff has rushed for 564 yards and thrown for 846, but that is just half the story. At free safety, the senior has intercepted 18 passes in his career. Phillip Paquette is the Cardinals' primary running threat 1,167 yards and 10 touchdowns on 198 attempts. Defensively the Cardinals have intercepted 21 passes this season to help create a plus-19 turnover margin. The Cardinals have also outscored opponents 184-51 in the second half of games this season — while allowing just six points in the fourth quarter.

The pick: This one is a toss-up. Luverne is the sentimental choice after losing 70-21 in last year's title game, but I like Warriors to win a close one.

Class A

Goodhue vs. Adrian

Looking for its first championship after runner-up finishes in 1997 and 1998 — its only previous state appearances — Adrian (11-2) faces a team that is playing in its fifth straight state tournament and seventh since 1998. Goodhue (12-1) outscored its opponents 84-26 in the quarterfinals and semifinals while Adrian posted its third shutout of the season with a 21-0 semifinal victory over previously undefeated Cook County.

Eric Ryan has been the workhorse for Goodhue with 1,544 yards rushing and 28 touchdowns on 269 attempts. Micah Huneke has rushed for more than 800 yards while Brett Watson accumulated a team-leading 153 yards on just four carries in the semifinal victory over previously unbeaten Kerkhoven-Murdoch-Sunburg. Watson has also caught 30 passes for 892 yards and 16 touchdowns. Quarterback Kelby Buck has thrown 18 touchdowns and just four interceptions while completing 73 of 127 passes for 1,506 yards. The Wildcats are outgaining opponents by an average of 160 yards and more than 25 points per game.

Adrian has three primary options in

the backfield with Jesse Brake (205 carries, 988 yards, 15 touchdowns), Glen Kruger (104-719-11) and Tony Their (105-676-6) leading the way. Sophomore quarterback Brett Nowotny has connected on 38 of 77 passes for 591 yards and seven touchdowns with five interceptions.

The pick: Brake is the only senior among Adrian's primary weapons offensively. Look for experience on both sides of the ball to pay off for the veteran Wildcats.

9-Man

Stephen-Argyle vs. Waubun

With six-point victories in its first two state tournament games, Waubun earns an opportunity to end Stephen-Argyle's five-season winning streak — which now stands at 67 games.

Stephen-Argyle has outscored the runner-ups 151-43 in the past four Prep Bowls and has cruised into this year's finals with 36- and 21-point victories. The Storm (12-0) are averaging more than 40 points and 400 yards while giving up less than 12 points and 210 yards per game. Kyle Gratzek (87 carries for 762 yards with 14 touchdowns) leads a balanced ground attack that also includes Brandon Sorenson (43-559-7) and Matt Borowicz (110-573-7). Taylor Swanson carried 24 times for 132 yards in the semifinal victory over Verndale. Quarterback Kip Thorstenson has completed a 31 of 59 passes for 712 yards — a remarkable 19.8 yards per completion.

Floyd DeGroat leads the Bombers with 1,121 rushing yards on 131 carries while Tyler Voss and Clifford Warren have gained 880 and 699 yards apiece. Quarterback Dustin Spaeth has thrown for 725 yards on 47-of-79 passing with nine touchdowns and four interceptions. Josh Kemper has caught 25 passes for 421 yards and four touchdowns.

The pick: With the new Prep Bowl schedule, this might be the first time you'll watch the 9-Man championship game after breakfast, but the result will be familiar — the Storm make it six in a row.

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Hi,

A few comments about *Minnesota Prep Sports*.

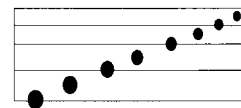
1. Reading the issue (October 23, 2007) with [Michael] Floyd on the front made me think the *Pioneer Press* bought your paper, since it was all about Cretin with the Floyd interview, Salamon story and Jim O'Neill comments. What, did you hire Charley Walters for the day? Or, did you wander over to CDH

for a personal media day?

2. Why in the heck is Jerry Borough writing about the NHL, Gophers hockey and any combo of either in a high school sports paper? That makes no sense.

3. Overall the paper looks great. I wish I would have known about it or heard about it before just now.

Al Tate



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5 Players to Watch



Aaron Ness
Roseau

Gopher recruit with great hand-eye coordination and sees ice as well as any player in state. Great passer, who led Roseau to State Championship in 2007. Aaron will go in the first or second round of NHL entry draft.

Jake Gardiner, Minnetonka Senior Defenseman
Wisconsin recruit and offensive minded defenseman. Pro scouts think he is probably the top NHL prospect in Minnesota this year. Jake should go in first or second round in the entry draft.

Tommy O'Donnell - Bloomington Jefferson Senior Forward
Speedy player with great hands. Not recruited yet and should go in the late rounds of the entry draft.

John O'Neill - Anoka Senior Forward
UMD recruit, has great all around skills and will lead a very strong Anoka team this year. John should go between the third and fifth rounds of the entry draft.

Tyler Barnes, Burnsville Senior Forward
Wisconsin recruit. Led Burnsville to State Tournament last year. Tyler was the highest scorer in the Midwest Elite League this fall for a Minnesota player. Has great teammate in Jake Hendrickson. Tyler will go high in the NHL entry draft in the first or second round.

Photo by Josh Holmberg and text by Jerry Borough.

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