

Sports

Ice-cool AQ thumps Batavia to win Section 5 hockey title

By Richard A. Kiley

All season long, a relatively young and inexperienced Aquinas hockey team has played as calmly and coolly as the surface it skates on.

So it wasn't really surprising that the Little Irish (20-3-1) defeated defending Section 5 champion Batavia in the Monroe Hockey League championship game at the War Memorial on Saturday, Feb. 27.

Yet the way in which AQ won its first league title since sharing the 1975-76 crown with Pittsford Sutherland was somewhat unexpected.

In front of more than 2,000 fans at "the big house," Rich Gamble's squad jumped out to a 6-0 lead on the Blue Devils, and was able to survive some chippy play late in the game before notching a 6-3 win.

Aquinas will now play Rome Free Academy (22-0), the top-ranked hockey team in the state, at the State University College at Brockport this Saturday at 5 p.m. The winner of that game will advance to the state tournament in Utica. The Blue Devils (14-7-3) still have a chance to get to Utica, but they must defeat two opponents to reach the state tourney.

Although Gamble admitted that the lopsided win could have been attributed to fatigue on the part of Batavia — which was coming off a 5-4 overtime win over Irondequoit a few days earlier — he felt his game plan of forcing Batavia's defensemen into making mistakes worked to a tee.

"We knew we could take advantage of their slower defensemen, but the key was keeping it way away from Duncan Smith," Gamble said, alluding to one of the top defensemen in Section 5. "We knew if we neutralized him, we could make things easier on ourselves."

Much to the enjoyment of its partisans, Aquinas dominated Batavia from the game's early moments. The Little Irish, who outshot Bata-

via 48-19 in the game, peppered Blue Devil goalie Daryle Luplow with 21 shots in the opening period and scored three times.

Aaron Gibalski began the onslaught at 2:42 of the first period when his shot beat Luplow to the stick side. Chris Fess scored the first of his two for the night on a breakaway at the 7:14 mark, making it 2-0. The goal was a back-breaker for Batavia, which had just failed to take advantage of a power-play opportunity.

Mark Reban made the score 3-0 at 10:21 of the first period when he deflected a pass from Jon Gamble past Luplow.

The second period looked much like the first, as the Little Irish turned the game into a rout by scoring three times before Batavia could get a shot on Aquinas goalie Bob Carello.

Dave Hemmerick, who was voted Most Valuable Player of the tournament after the game, scored on a breakaway off of the opening faceoff to make it 4-0 just :09 into the second period. Jason Mucha blasted a shot from the blue line past Luplow at 2:52 to give AQ a comfortable 5-0 lead, and Fess scored his second of the night on a two-on-one break to close out the scoring for Aquinas.

Two of the three goals scored by Batavia, which jumped out to a 6-0 lead on McQuaid before holding on for an 8-4 win in the championship game last year, came on the power play.

And so the Cinderella season continues for Aquinas, which disposed of Greece, 5-1, to reach the title game. Gamble still has a hard time believing the achievements his team has made this winter.

"You set goals for yourself; I told (Aquinas Athletic Director) Tom Gigliotti that I was hoping to finish in the top four (in Monroe Hockey League's Division 1)," said Gamble, a



Aquinas sophomore Jeff Nuccitelli, shown here deking around a Batavia player, was one of several AQ players who put his speed advantage to good use against the Blue Devils.

native of Canada who is in his first year of coaching at Aquinas. "This season has really been a pleasant surprise. There has always been the potential at Aquinas with the program and the talent they've had here. We've just put it all together."

The Little Irish coach added that his team's schedule was also cooperative this year. Aquinas began the season on December 3, but didn't see Batavia or Irondequoit — the two hockey powerhouses in Section 5 — until late December and early January.

Late-season losses to Irondequoit and Al Vyverberg's McQuaid team seemed to spur AQ as well. "Those losses helped us get hungry again," said Gamble, whose father Dick was a Rochester Americans standout. "We had al-

ready clinched the (Division 1) league title, and I think some of their incentive was lost."

Against Rome Free Academy, which was upset by Batavia in the state tournament last March, the Little Irish will have to come up with their best effort of the season.

"Any team can beat any other in a one-game situation," said Gamble, citing the United States' miracle win over the Soviet Union in the 1980 Olympics as an example.

To beat RFA, Aquinas may need a Jim Craig-like game out of Carello, who has been lonely at times during the team's recent wins over Batavia (16 saves) and Greece (13 saves). Overall this season, Carello averaged 17 saves and had a 1.71 goals-against-average.

Mooney, Mercy advance in AA; DeSales takes Friendship

By Richard A. Kiley

The top eight seeds — which included third-seeded Cardinal Mooney and fifth-seeded Our Lady of Mercy — all advanced to the quarterfinal round of the Section 5 Class AA girls' basketball tournament.

The five-class, 80-school tournament began last Friday, Feb. 26, and will end with the finals on March 8-9. The top-seeded teams in the 16th-annual event are Pittsford Mendon (Class AA, 21-0 record), East Rochester (Class B, 15-5), Keshequa (Class C, 18-1) and Greenwood (Class D, 18-3).

The state playoffs begin March 12 at Erie Community College (Classes A and B) and Alfred University (Classes C and D).

In Class AA action from Saturday, Feb. 27, No. 3 Cardinal Mooney (20-1) jumped out to a 10-0 lead in the first quarter against 14th-seeded Edison (10-11) and never looked back in a 52-31 win over the Inventors at Mooney.

Mooney coach Scott Morrison was worried that Edison's size would cause problems for his club, but his Lady Cards made up for the height disadvantage with their speed.

Morrison also received balanced scoring, as Marisa Shackelford led all scorers with 16 points and Margie McGuire and Cheryl Lennox added 14 points apiece.

Mooney was scheduled to play Rush-Henrietta (13-6), which doubled up Hilton 56-28 last weekend, in a quarterfinal game at Mooney on Wednesday, March 2.

Mercy (17-3) advanced to the quarterfinal round with a convincing 53-36 win over visit-

ing Greece Athena on Saturday, Feb. 27.

Kathy Boughton's Monarchs started slowly, mainly because of a box-and-one defense on Julie Buntich deployed by the Lady Trojans.

After stumbling to a 24-16 halftime lead, Mercy opened the game up with a big second half. Buntich was able to wrestle free for nine points in the third quarter, and Boughton received a strong effort from Kim Caccamise. The Mercy reserve came off the bench to score 10 points for the Monarchs.

Buntich led Mercy in scoring with 18 points while Bernadette Fagan scored 11 points and grabbed 12 rebounds.

The Monarchs played at No. 4 Webster — a 56-34 winner over Penfield — in a quarterfinal round game on Wednesday, March 2. The game marked the first meeting between the Monarchs and Warriors since Rita LaForce, a former Mercy player, transferred to Webster.

Boughton said her team was preparing for Webster the way it would any sectional opponent.

"We're just looking at the game as another step to reach the finals. You've got to beat them all to get there," said Boughton, who did admit that her club will have to play particular attention to LaForce. "We'll have to really concentrate on Rita and try to contain her."

LaForce combined 18 points, seven rebounds, six assists and six steals to lead the Warriors over Penfield.

IN CLASS A action from last week, Midlakes' Tricia Sanford achieved a triple double during a 56-33 win over Donna Sortino's Lady

Fighting Kings of Kearney on Saturday, Feb. 27.

Sanford scored 12 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and passed for 10 assists to lead the host and seventh-seeded Screaming Eagles to a first-round win.

Midlakes led 34-14 at intermission. Pam Buddendeck led Sortino's club, which finished 10-11 for the season, with six points for the night.

OVER IN CLASS C, Steve Muzzi may feel a few years older this week after his seventh-seeded Saints (10-10) nipped No. 10 Friendship, 38-36, at DeSales on Saturday, Feb. 26.

The winning points came on a basket by Michele Hughes with :20 remaining in regulation. The game, which was close all the way, was tied 15-15 at the half.

Becky Broomfield led the Saints with 13 points. Stacey Marsteiner added eight points.

Muzzi, who was once again voted Class D Coach of the Year by his peers this season, had to lead his team for a tough game against No. 2 Avoca (15-3) on Wednesday, March 2. The Lady Tigers blasted Arkport, 62-36, in an opening-round game over the weekend.

If DeSales can manage a win against Avoca, its next opponent will likely be third-seeded Whitesville (16-3).

Unlike previous seasons where games in the 60 to 70 point range were common, DeSales has relied more on a stiff man-to-man defense this season.

Muzzi's offense this season has been led by Stacey Marsteiner (10.2 ppg) and Broomfield

(7.8 ppg).

THE SECOND SEASON for Elmira Notre Dame ended with a 55-45 loss to third-seeded Whitney Point (15-4) at Elmira Southside on Saturday, Feb. 26.

Pat Quinn's fourth-seeded Crusaders (12-10) managed to stay close until the midway point of the second quarter. Whitney Point then opened up a 29-21 halftime lead and was able to keep ND from getting close the rest of the way.

The Crusaders were outscored 36-20 in the second and third quarters.

Whitney Point, which had struggled at times in a 48-45 first-round win over Delhi, out-rebounded ND 44-38 for the game. The Crusaders could only manage 15 defensive rebounds.

In her last game at ND, Nat Kozlowski led her team with 14 points. Teammate Lisa Boulas, who will also graduate in June, added 10 points.

Colleen Hoobler, Tina Maloney and Lisa Crisco also played well, to close out strong basketball careers at Notre Dame.

Notre Dame reached the quarterfinal round by drubbing 13th-seeded Greener, 59-30, in an opening round game on Tuesday, Feb. 23.

The Crusaders led 14-8 after one quarter and 31-16 at the half in the tune-up game for Whitney Point.

Kozlowski led ND with 15 points and 10 rebounds. Sophomore Cara Cleveland came off the bench to score six points and grab 12 rebounds.

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