

# Lightning strikes Little Irish from ice playoffs

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In a stormy Section 5 Class A semifinal hockey game, top-seeded Aquinas was struck by lightning — Greece Lightning, that is.

Fourth-seeded Greece handed AQ a 3-2 loss at Lakeshore Rinks on Feb. 19, ending any Little Irish hopes of winning back-to-back sectional titles in hockey.

Last year's AQ hockey team advanced to the Class A state semifinals, and this year's team was heavily favored to win another sectional title. The Little Irish entered the game with only one regular-season loss, and that ironically came at the hands of Greece.

Greece's win last week marked the second time in three years that the Lightning knocked heavily touted Aquinas from the sectional semifinals. Greece shocked AQ in the 1989 sectional tournament as well.

The win over Aquinas in this year's semis earned Greece a berth in the state Division 1 playoffs. The Lightning then went on to win the Section 5 Class A title by defeating Batavia, 7-2, on Feb. 23 at the Brockport State Arena.

In order to get to the championship game, Greece pulled off the upset of Aquinas in front of a standing-room-only crowd.

Aquinas dominated the action early as Dave Perrotta stole the puck from a Greece player and broke away for a short-handed goal only four minutes into the first period.

The Little Irish's stingy defense kept Greece off the scoreboard in the first period as AQ enjoyed a 1-0 lead. After Aquinas controlled the action early in the period, Greece came back strong. The shots on goal were almost even as the Little Irish had 10 shots on goal to the Lightning's nine.

After what must have been a rousing pep talk from Greece Coach Ray Maluta, the Lightning came out ready to strike in the



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Aquinas Institute's Dave Perrotta (left) embraces Mike Lipani of Greece after the Lightning's 3-2 win over the Little Irish in the Section 5 Class A hockey semifinals Feb. 19 at Lakeshore. The two hockey players are teammates on the Rochester Midget Americans.

second period. Mike Sippel iced his first power-play goal — assisted by Jason Bonsignore and Mike Dossier — only three minutes into the middle period. Sippel then notched another score five minutes later on assists by Mike Lipani and Fred Snibb.

Greece then scored a back-breaking goal with only one second left in the period when Bonsignore scored off of an assist

from Dossier and Dave Mattucci. The huge goal gave the Lightning a 3-1 lead going into the third period.

Aquinas fans encouraged the Little Irish on with chants of "AQ" as both teams hit the ice for the third period. Fans of the Little Irish were still reeling from several penalties against AQ that they deemed questionable. They also weren't accustomed

to seeing their team trailing by two goals.

Hopes of an Aquinas victory were revived when Brook Lefler iced a power-play goal with the help of Mike Sloan and Perrotta with four minutes left to play. But those dreams were dashed after the Little Irish couldn't muster another score. Aquinas swarmed around the Greece net with at least five good scoring opportunities in the final 10 seconds, but the Little Irish couldn't get the tying goal.

According to Aquinas Coach Dave Montgomery, Greece's goalie Mike Mills was the difference. AQ took 34 shots on secured the win for the Lightning by stopping 32 of Aquinas' attempts.

"He was always there to stop our shots and didn't allow us any rebounds," said Montgomery.

The loss was especially hard on Aquinas' senior players — Perrotta, Tony Ewing and Phil Gratauria — who were looking to close out their high school careers with a sectional title, according to Montgomery. Perrotta finished his season with 32 goals and 16 assists.

Montgomery said the loss was also rough on Grady Monks — the leading scorer in the Monroe County Hockey League — who was unable to notch a goal in the big game.

Despite the game's fierce intensity, both teams were all class afterwards. A poignant moment came when Perrotta and Lipani — two longtime friends who have played hockey together — embraced at center ice with tears in their eyes.

Several standouts from both teams play together on the Rochester Midget Americans, which Montgomery also coaches. Lipani is captain of the team, and Perrotta and Monks are assistant captains.

In fact, the three high school hockey stars will play together for the Midgets in the state playoffs scheduled for Buffalo March 24-26.

Despite the loss, Montgomery saluted his players for a great season in which the Little Irish won yet another league title. Yet even with his team's accomplishments, the Aquinas coach said he had a bitter taste in his mouth because the Little Irish will not be allowed to go to the state playoffs.

Since Section 5 only sends its Class A and B finalists to the states, Aquinas will be staying home. Montgomery said he thinks league champions should be invited to the state tourney along with sectional champions.

"The value of the whole season should be of importance," stated Montgomery, noting that Aquinas won the league title and finished the season with an impressive record of 17-2-2 overall (15-2-2 in the league). "The sectionals are just another tournament."

## Teams

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Mendon High School.

Aaron Boucher poured in 21 points, including a trio of three-pointers, and Jason Newton added 11 for Aquinas.

The Blue Devils scored most of their points from the charity stripe as the Little Irish held Victor (4-18) to only nine field goals for the game.

In a first-round game earlier in the week, Aquinas traveled to Batavia (9-12) and handed the Blue Devils a 56-47 setback on Feb. 19.

Chris Valentino and Newton iced 14 points each. The Little Irish secured the win with clutch foul shooting in the fourth quarter. Valentino went six-for-six from the foul line, and Marcus Price was two-for-two over the final eight minutes.

Over in Section 5 Class DD, second-seeded DeSales (20-2) advanced to the sectional semifinals after routing seventh-seeded Jasper-Troupsburg, 84-59, on Feb. 22, at Marcus Whitman High School.

Bob McFadden registered 20 points, Todd Hardy tallied 18, Ed Marsteiner collected 15 and Jim McDermott scored 14 for the Saints.

The Saints had to get by No. 3 Campbell in a semifinal game at Alfred University on Feb. 26 to play either top-seeded Prattsburg or No. 2 Belfast at the War Memorial on March 2 at 12 p.m.

Against Jasper-Troupsburg, DeSales Coach Tony Alvaro said he took off the full-court press and rested his starters in the fourth quarter. The Wildcats (15-7) scored six baskets in the fourth quarter without pressure from DeSales, according to Alvaro.

In its first-round game, DeSales mauled visiting and 15th-seeded Savonia, 87-43, on Feb. 19.

Hardy iced 18 points, McDermott registered 16, Mark Higgins added 13 and Bill Sweeney popped in 12.

Savonia finished 5-15 for the season.

In the Section 4 Class C tournament, top-seeded Elmira Notre Dame (19-3) defeated ninth-seeded Windsor, 71-64, on Feb. 23, at Maine-Endwell High School (near Binghamton).

The Crusaders needed to defeat fourth-seeded Trumansburg in the semis to advance to the finals.

In the game against the Black Knights, Windsor (13-9) actually led 17-15 at the end of the first quarter and 36-32 at intermission. But Notre Dame rallied for the win in the second half by using a tenacious defense and taking advantage of its scoring opportunities.

Brian Sheehan poured in 27 points, Geoff Woodworth registered 13, Mike Bennett tallied 12 and Rick Shaw added 10 points and 13 rebounds.

The victory in the semifinals came after the Crusaders secured a first-round victory over No. 16 Sidney, 77-62, on Feb. 19 at Owego.

Shaw collected 18 points, Geoff Woodworth registered 15 and Sheehan and Bennett each tallied 14 points. Bryan Woodworth added 13 rebounds.

Although Sidney (6-14) came out on fire and missed only three shots in the first half, Notre Dame picked up its defensive intensity in the second half.

Coach Mike D'Aloisio noted that the toughness of each game prepares his team mentally for the next match.

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