

2016 BOYS' STATE TOURNAMENT

Trojans take down Ponies

Wayzata fends off a late push from Stillwater to pull off the upset

by [Heather Rule](#) [t](#) March 4, 2016



Wayzata goaltender Alex Schilling allowed just one goal on 23 Stillwater shots in the Trojans 2-1 Class 2A Boys' State Hockey Tournament semifinal win over the Ponies on Friday night at Xcel Energy Center. (MHM Photo / Jonny Watkins)

Wayzata fends off a late push from Stillwater to pull off the upset

St. Paul – Wayzata sophomore Griffin Ness came into the state tournament with three goals on the season. His fourth goal turned out to be a game-winner that put his team into the championship game.

The fourth-line forward got a breakaway and put the puck in the net with 1:35 left in the third period for a 2-0 lead. No. 3 seed Wayzata (20-8-1) went on to upset No. 2 seed Stillwater (27-1-1) 2-1 after a fierce scramble at the end of the Class 2A semifinal Friday evening at Xcel Energy Center.

Ness said he just picked his head up and found a corner. Wayzata coach Pat O'Leary said Ness has had plenty of opportunities in the past month, and it's stressful when you're snakebit.

But when Ness got the chance on the big stage, he didn't miss.

"I was a little nervous," he said. "I saw the top right corner open, and I just put it there."

His goal was insurance that his team ended up needing. Stillwater took a timeout after that second Wayzata goal. Stillwater coach Matt Doman reminded his players that there was plenty of time left.

"These guys got no quit in them," he said. "Their compete tonight was fun to watch."

Sure enough, just 35 seconds later as the clock hit 1:00, and with an empty Stillwater cage, senior Jackson Cates put one past Wayzata netminder Alex Schilling.

That made it 2-1 with 60 seconds where anything could happen.

Stillwater nearly tied it as they created a scramble in front of the Wayzata net. Stillwater junior Noah Cates took a backhand shot in the closing seconds, but Schilling stuck out his right pad for the save. There was a flurry of players all around the net, but the puck stayed out, the net came off and the clock struck zero.

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and the clock struck zero.

Those last 10 seconds, "it was a long time," O'Leary said.

Stillwater was hoping to get a bounce, though they knew it wasn't going to be easy, Jackson said.

"We almost got another one at the end," Jackson said.

It was desperation time at the end, Noah said.

"Puck popped out," Noah said. "I just had to get anything to the net."

The final couple minutes of the game were perhaps the most intense. It was a 1-0 contest most of the way. Junior defender Logan Lindstrand scored at 6:55 of the first period for Wayzata. Stillwater got off to a bit of a slow start, with just four shots on goal in the first. But they figured it out and "were never panicked," Doman said.

Schilling made 22 saves in goal, while Stillwater goalie Josh Benson also stopped 22 pucks. There were no penalties in the game.

Stillwater was also without junior forward Luke Manning, who was out with a concussion. He came into the tournament with 21 goals and 22 assists.

"Can't replace a kid like that," Doman said. "He's a bulldog."

Wayzata moves on to the Class 2A title game Saturday night. The Trojans took fourth place in 2013 and are looking for their first state title.

"We always had that belief that we were going to do this," Schilling said. "I can't wait for tomorrow night."



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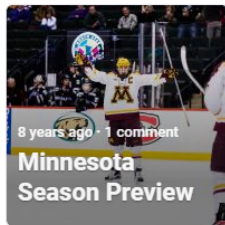
Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as a news reporter in Austin and Fergus Falls, Minn. She enjoys watching sports and closely follows the Wild, Minnesota Twins, IndyCar Series, tennis and prep sports. Heather keeps up her sports blog Thoughts from the Stands. You can follow her on Twitter/X @hrule or Instagram @hrule.

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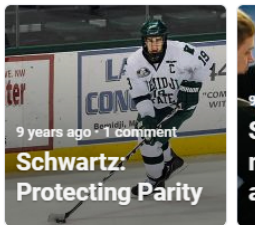
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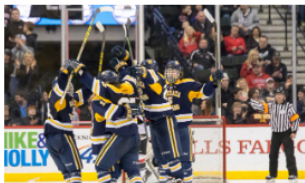


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