

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2021

SPORTS

STAR TRIBUNE • C9



PREPS



CLASS 1A FOOTBALL
MAYER LUTHERAN 41, NEW YORK MILLS 6

Crusaders erase doubt, end Prep Bowl drought

By JIM PAULSEN
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Before their Class 1A semifinal game, New York Mills coach Matt Radniecki tried scouting Mayer Lutheran using available video online.

Even he admitted that what he saw didn't do justice to what the Crusaders are capable of.

Mayer Lutheran scored two touchdowns in the first five minutes of the game and cruised to a 41-6 victory, sending the Crusaders (2-1) to the Prep Bowl for the first time in school history.

"I felt like they could throw the ball, but they threw it really well," Radniecki said. "We didn't see that so much on film, because they dominated a lot of their games. [We wondered] how good are they?"

So good that New York Mills (10-2) spent most of the game chasing Mayer Lutheran players. Quarterback Ty Hoese — the third generation of his family to play the position at the school — completed just nine passes, but five went for touchdowns.

Mayer Lutheran coach Dean Aurich said he wasn't surprised how well Hoese threw the ball. The Crusaders had been remarkably efficient in a recent practice

in a local dome. "I've never seen our team connect like that. Talk about dimes [Ty] threw," Aurich said. "We were on. Today, he was laying them out there. He's got some talent."

Hoese hit his exceptional tight end Teigan Martin for a 33-yard touchdown on the Crusaders' second play from scrimmage. He found Elijah Jopp for scores of 40 and 62 yards in the second quarter for a 28-0 halftime lead.

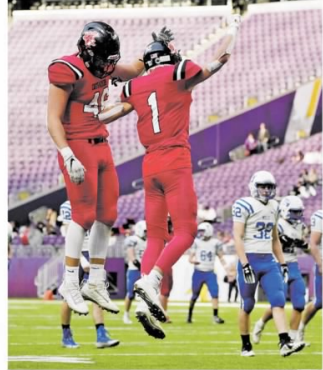
After building that lead, Aurich said he worried a little that his team might have lost its edge.

"I thought we dropped a little bit," said Aurich, who will be making his first Prep Bowl appearance after 40 years at Mayer Lutheran.

No worries. Hoese and his fine set of receivers injected a much-needed dose of adrenaline after halftime with scoring passes of 15 yards to Samuel Dennis and 43 yards to Abram Jopp in the third quarter.

Hoese said that playing in U.S. Bank Stadium was a definite factor in his success.

"We have playmakers all over the field," Hoese said. "They had to pick and choose who they had to stop and that really helped us throwing it deep. In here, there's no wind. You can just let 'er rip."



Mayer Lutheran's Abram Jopp celebrated after scoring a Crusaders touchdown on a 43-yard reception in the second half.

CLASS 1A FOOTBALL
MINNEOTA 26, RUSHFORD-PETERSON 3

Minneota dominates in matchup of powers

By PATRICK JOHNSON
Special to the Star Tribune

In a clash of Class 1A football powers, second-ranked Minneota flexed its muscle on the way to a 26-3 victory over third-ranked Rushford-Peterson on Saturday, punching a ticket to the Prep Bowl.

In a battle of undefeated teams at U.S. Bank Stadium, Minneota (13-0) asserted its dominance early, amassing 248 total yards and three touchdowns in the first half while holding the Trojans (12-1) to 54 yards and forcing two turnovers. The Vikings took a 20-0 lead into the break.

"Sometimes your best defense is being on offense all the time," Minneota coach Chad Johnston said. Minneota's Connor Sik had 19 carries for 174 yards and three touchdowns, while sophomore defensive back Max Rust had two interceptions for the Vikings.

"It helped today that the defensive line could get to the quarterback and get him to throw balls up like that and make it easier for the DBs," Rust said.

Heading into the game, the programs had a combined 22 state tournament appearances and 10 titles. Minneota recently won Class 1A

titles in 2009, '14, '15 and '17. The Vikings have outscored opponents an average of 41-2 this season, with nine shutouts. Before Saturday's loss, Rushford-Peterson had outscored its opponents 404-94.

"We settled in and defensively played a great game and didn't give up any big plays until the very, very end," said Johnston, in his 20th year as Minneota coach. "Offensively I thought we did a great job of nicking-and-diming to keep drives going and getting some big plays to set up some of our scoring. We had things go the way we needed them to. It was a good day for the kids."

Sik started the scoring on the Vikings' second drive. The senior running back raced down the sideline untouched for a 73-yard touchdown run, giving Minneota a 7-0 lead.

Following an interception by the Vikings' next possession — this time with a 3-yard run, barreling over the Trojans defense for a 14-0 lead. Minneota took a three-score lead with 4:05 remaining in the first half as junior quarterback Isaac Pohlen hit a wide-open Peyton Gillund in the end zone, lofting a pass over the Trojans' defense to make it 21-0.

SWIMMING AND DIVING CLASS 2A STATE FINALS



Minnetonka won the Class 2A girls' swimming state meet Saturday, raising the trophy for the first time since 1976.

Every detail is in order for Skippers to win in 2A

Minnetonka dethrones Edina, riding depth to runaway victory.

By HEATHER RULE
Special to the Star Tribune

Minnetonka came close to winning a girls' state swimming and diving title in 2012. But an issue with their relay cards led to the Skippers' disqualifications from all three relays, which would have given them the Class 2A title.

But everything went according to plan for Minnetonka at Saturday's Class 2A state meet at the University of Minnesota's Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center as the Skippers won their first girls' swim and dive title since 1976.

"I can guarantee, we went over the relay cards about a dozen times and made sure that was right," said coach John Bradley, in his first year leading the Skippers.

The team talked about the history of coming close to a title a few years back, said senior Regan Miller. Assistant coach Delaney Ambrose was a member of that 2012 team.

"I think that gave us more motivation to win it for her, win it for our former coach who's here," Miller said. "Just doing it for, not just us, but the people who have helped us get here."

The Skippers celebrated the 381-point victory with hugs, a few tears and championship baseball caps.

They started the evening strong, winning the 200 medley relay in 4:27.97. As their 17 individuals in every event racked up points all night, Minnetonka ended with its only other event victory, in the 400 freestyle relay (3:27.88).

"When you look at the events, we put someone in the top two or three in almost every event, including relays," Bradley said. "That was incredibly gratifying."

Finally getting the victory as a team was "surround," Miller said, who took second in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle events.

"We've been dreaming about this for four years now," Miller said. Four-time defending champion Edina finished second with 223 points, while Stillwater took third with a score of 176.

Edina junior Katie McCarthy won two individual titles in the 200 freestyle (4:49.8) and 500 freestyle (4:52.23). She was also on the winning 200 freestyle relay team (2:34.25) and took second with the 200 medley relay team.

Plenty of firsts

Junior Hailey Zelen won the first state title in program history for Shakopee, taking first in the 100 freestyle in 50.54. She said she was extremely nervous coming into the event but glad that her hard work paid off.

"I touched the wall, and I peeped over a little bit and I noticed I was

there first," Zelen said. "Extremely happy with how it went."

Zelen also took seventh in the 200 freestyle and swam on the second-place 400 freestyle relay team and the medley relay.

Caroline Larsen swam on two Eden Prairie relay teams and took home two individual titles in her first state meet. She won the 50 freestyle in 22.66 before taking the 100 breaststroke title (1:01.35). While Larsen said she's extremely competitive and doesn't like to lose, winning wasn't necessarily the focus.

"I was more worried about having fun and doing my best and getting best times than winning," Larsen said. "Because if you worry too much about it, you'll overthink it."

Andover freshman Grace Rabb captured her first two state titles as well, in the 200 individual medley (2:01.79) and 100 backstroke. The results were much improved from her first state meet two years ago as a seventh-grader, when she took ninth in the 100 back at state and was disqualified from the IM at the section meet.

"I was hoping to swim my best, and I know if I gave it everything I got and I performed well on the splits I needed to that I would achieve my goals and my times," Rabb said.

Woodbury sophomore diver Gabby Mauder won with a score of 416.45. She improved on her third-place finish in 2019, when she scored 378.80.

SWIMMING AND DIVING CLASS 1A STATE FINALS

Hutch's Hanson sets two marks

Visitation wins eighth straight state title, Tigers finish second.

By HEATHER RULE
Special to the Star Tribune

Hutchinson senior Grace Hanson surprised even herself when she looked up from the water to read the scoreboard in her state championship races in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle.

Class 1A records fell in both events in Saturday's girls' state swimming and diving meet at the Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center at the University of Minnesota. Hanson's first record was 22:57 seconds in the 50 freestyle, beating her own mark from 2019. Hanson followed that up with a 49:36 in the 100 free.

"I was not expecting those times," Hanson said. "I am just so happy with my team and my coaches for getting me here."

Hanson, who will compete at the University of Missouri, helped lead Hutchinson to its fourth runner-up finish in a row. The Tigers also won the 200 medley and 400 freestyle relays, bookending the meet and taking second place (254 points) to Visitation (385 points), which won its eighth consecutive state championship.

Hutchinson's effort in the finals was a testament to its senior swimmers, according to coach Rory Fairbanks.

"To come in with eight swimmers and to be able to do that is just amazing," Fairbanks said.

In contrast, Visitation qualified all three relays and 18 individuals in the finals, being represented in every event except diving and the 100 freestyle. In 16 state meets since 2005, Visitation has won 12 Class 1A team titles.

The Blazers won two events on the way to the team title. Junior Ella Passe won the 500 freestyle (5:05.72). "It was a goal I set at the beginning of the season," said Passe, who's committed to swim at Duke next season. "So getting to achieve it, and then getting to have three of my teammates in the race with me, made it 100 times better."

Elizabeth Burke and Tess Lindstrom finished second and third behind Passe in the 500 freestyle, with Maggie Farley taking fifth. The defending champion, Hutchinson senior Hailey Farrell, took fourth.

Visitation junior Anna Farley won the 200 individual medley in 2:04.39. She swam neck and neck with Farrell (2:04.79), the event's defending champion who set the Class 1A record in 2019. Farley told her coach at the start of the season that she wanted to win the 200 IM at state, said Visitation coach Nate Linsheid.

"That was going to be just another barn-burner kind of event," Linsheid said. "I mean, it couldn't have been closer."

Delano took third as a team with 189 points. Junior Emma Kern won the 100 butterfly in 54.80, swam the first leg of Delano's winning 200 freestyle relay (1:35.01) and won the 100 backstroke (53.77), successfully defending her 2020 title. She already set the 1A record in the preliminaries (53.40) before winning the final in 53.77. She ended the day taking third in the 400 freestyle relay with her teammates.

She typically doesn't swim the 200 freestyle relay often so she can stay fresh for her other events, Kern said. But Saturday, she swam in three of the final four events.

"For state, we decided to take on the challenge of doing all my events in the last half of the meet, which was definitely challenging," Kern said. "I was able to cool down in the dive well, so I was able to stay loose, which was nice."

Blake sophomore Carly Bixby won the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:50.42. Bixby also took second in the 100 freestyle (50.85), anchored the 200 freestyle relay that took third and led off the 400 freestyle relay in which the Bears placed fourth.

McIntire Ana sophomore Halle Drossel won the 100 breaststroke in 1:05.38. She also took eighth place in the 200 individual medley.

Grand Rapids senior Addie Albrecht won the diving title, scoring 440.25. She led after the preliminaries (34.80).