

2A SECTION 7 FINAL ANDOVER & ELK RIVER/ZIMMERMAN 1

Andover finally makes state tourney



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Andover celebrated earning its first trip to the state tournament after beating Elk River/Zimmerman 8-1 on Thursday night in Duluth for the Class 2A, Section 7 championship.

The top-seeded Huskies rolled over Elk River/Zimmerman after losing in the section finals the past two years.

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DULUTH — Though a state tournament newcomer, the Andover boys' hockey team knows the drill.

Not long after routing Elk River/Zimmerman 8-1 in Thursday's Class 2A, Section 7 final at Ansonia Arena, Huskies' coach Mark Manney and his players made their case as the No. 1 seed in the Class 2A field.

"I think we earned it," Manney said.

"We haven't played a super-tough schedule the second half. But at the same time, this team accomplished a lot of great things. We led Class 2A in goals scored and fewest goals against — and power play percentage."

"But we'll play whoever," Manney said. "The students want us to be the No. 2 seed so we get the 11 am games, and they get out of school."

The bracket is selected Saturday morning. Andover lost Elk River/Zimmerman coach Ben Gustafson's endorsement. A third-period goal from the No. 6 seed Elk (12-15) ended Andover's streak of 14 consecutive periods without giving up a goal.

"That's a special team," Gustafson said.

And a hungry team. No. 1 seed Andover (24-3-1) lost its past two section finals in overtime against Duluth East. But Thursday the Huskies turned Ansonia Arena from a house of heartbreak to a historical site.

"Finally," senior defenseman Wayne Kaiser said. "It means everything. We put in so much work for this and it's a dream come true."

The Huskies' run through Section 7 did not offer a chance for a payback as Forest Lake ended Duluth East's season in the quarterfinals. A game crowd announced at 1,000 fans owed to the lack of a northern participant.

But in Andover, Section 7 will have strong state tournament representation.

The Huskies are ranked No. 1 in the most

recent Let's Play Hockey poll.

"I think we've kind of looked at ourselves as No. 1 in the state since Christmas and we're going to state thinking the same thing," Kaiser said.

Senior Thompson assisted on Grant Schifsky's goal just 1:13 into the game then added a goal of his own. Ahead 2-0 after one period, Andover blew it open with six goals in the second period.

An 8-0 lead after the second period provided a welcome relief to a string of tension-filled playoff games the past two seasons.

"It was kind of the leading the Masters by six with a couple holes left," Manney said.

"You can kind of enjoy the walk."

2A SECTION 3 FINAL
ST. THOMAS ACADEMY 2, BURNSVILLE 0



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St. Thomas Academy's Will Soderling tried to find a Burnsville defender in the Class 2A, Section 3 championship game.

St. Thomas Academy makes it four in a row

St. Thomas Academy forward Will Soderling crunched a pass from defenseman Nick Owens just inside the Burnsville blue line, wound up his stick and panned.

Soderling wanted to walk to shoot until the Burnsville defender in front of him slid past, he said after the game. The move worked. His slapshot found the back of the net, and the goal proved to be all the Cadets needed in a 2-0 victory over the Blaine in the Class 2A, Section 3 championship at Ansonia Arena.

"It was kind of a five-on-five moment," Soderling said, adding that he didn't know at first if the shot went in. "When I just heard the crowd going 'was going crazy!'"

Tommy Aikim made 29 saves and defenseman Connor O'Brien scored an empty netter with 1:34 to go for the fifth-seeded Cadets (8-8-2). The Cadets clinched their fourth consecutive state

2A SECTION 5 FINAL
MAPLE GROVE 3, BLAINE 0



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Maple Grove goalie Jack Winneke stopped everything, including an attempt by Blaine's Chris Kahan.

Maple Grove goalie has 'game of his life'

Maple Grove junior goaltender Jack Winneke came into the team locker room the day before his team's section final game and you could see how he'd wanted it," said his coach, Todd Berglund. He wanted a state bid so much that he turned in a season-high, 48-save performance for a 3-0 shutout over Blaine in the Class 2A, Section 5 championship game Thursday at Ansonia Arena.

For Winneke, it was the "game of his life," Berglund said.

Winneke, who held his ground in Blaine's match the Crimson 8-7 in the third period and put a flurry of shots on net in the final two minutes, credited his teammates in front of him for the defensive help.

"The boys, they got in front of me, they cleared pucks out," Winneke said. "I just had to make the first save, and they were right there to clear it out for me."

1A SECTION 2 FINAL
DELANO 3, ARMSTRONG/COOPER 2 (2OT)



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Delano's Jesse Peterson (11) watched his shot hit the back of the net, scoring the game-winning goal in double overtime.

Delano outlasts Armstrong in 2 OTs

Watching as a bantam hockey player from the stands when Delano beat Orono to reach the Class 1A tournament had Jesse Peterson hoping to be on the ice, winning in the game.

"I just dreamt about it everyday," Peterson said.

The Tigers sophomore forward did something bigger than his dreams with a game-winning goal in the second overtime as Delano, Wings senior forward Ben Peterson scored for the first time in the game.

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"I feel heartbroken for the kids," Wings coach Danny Charleston said. "They've given so much life to our (hockey) association, given so much life to our high schools, and given so much life to the program."