

SPORTS

PREPS

GIRLS HOCKEY SECTION FINALS

CLASS 2A, SECTION 6 EDINA 4, BLAKE 0

Edina avenges loss, blanks Blake

After a slow start, the Hornets shut down their rivals.

By HEATHER RILEY
Special to the Star Tribune

Edina hadn't scored against Blake this season. That fact was still true after the first period in Friday's section final.

But in a 32-second span in the second period, Edina scored a couple of power goals to take a lead it wouldn't relinquish.

"I know that we can put two away that quickly, and they weren't beautiful goals, just gritty, not great goals, that's huge," said Edina coach Sami Cowger. "And that led the way for the rest of the game for us."

Edina defeated Blake 4-0 to win its ninth consecutive Class 2A, Section 6 championship at Parade Ice Gardens. The Hornets (22-4-2) return to state for the 10th time since 2009.

It took nearly seven minutes into the second period for the scoring clan to break. Defenseman Sami Hankinson scored her fifth goal of the season on a shot through traffic.

"It was good to get the tone like that," said Hankinson, junior. "We know once that first goal went in, though, that it wasn't done and we had to continue working."

They worked quickly. Thirty-two seconds later, senior Lauren Zawycki cleaned up another loose puck for her eighth goal of the season. Edina's leading scorer, junior Hannah Halverson, fired a wrist shot for her team-leading 15th goal this season to make it 3-0 before she added an empty netter.

Edina got a bit of revenge for a 1-0 defeat against Blake on Jan. 17, the last time Edina lost.

"We've had that game in our minds since," Halverson said. "I only made us play better. We just wanted revenge and to get back at them."

Top-seeded and No. 12-ranked Blake (21-12-0) had its chances Friday, including three first-period power plays, but it ended the game 0-6 on the power play and without a goal.

"Edina pressured really hard, just as all over us," said Blake coach Kieran King. "They also shut down Suri [Higuchi]. And they did a great job at it."

Blake hasn't reached the state tournament since it opened up to Class 2A after winning the 2017 Class 1A title.

Higuchi finished the season as Blake's top scorer with 32 goals and 68 points.



Edina coach Sami Cowger's face showed she didn't care that her team's first two goals "weren't beautiful goals, just gritty, not great goals."

ROBERT MCKENNA/ST. TRIBUNE

CLASS 2A, SECTION 2 MINNETONKA 4, HOLY FAMILY 0

Top-ranked Minnetonka back at state again

The Skippers earned their fifth straight state berth.

By DAVID LA VAGRE
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Minnetonka girls hockey coach Tracy Cassano celebrated her birthday Friday in the best way, with a 4-0 victory against Holy Family for the Class 2A, Section 2 championship.

The stick and gloves tossed by her victorious players were the balloons and streamers. The section championship trophy was a cake of sorts. It held no candies to blow out, but it meant wishes granted in the form of a fifth consecutive trip to the Xcel Energy Center for the state tournament.

No. 1 seed and top-ranked Minnetonka (25-2) placed second in Andover last season. On Friday, they got rolling with two goals scored 76 seconds apart from sophomores Ruby Rank and junior Lindsi Ayer. The duo put the Skippers ahead 2-0 in the second period.

Minnetonka received zero goals from its top three scorers, Ava Lindqvist, Grace Sadura and Kamila Distal. But their less-heralded teammates weren't waiting on the big three to start the party.

"We pride ourselves on being deep and having the mid-set that anyone on the ice can score," Rank said. Each team had allowed just one goal in two previous section playoff games. No. 2 seed Holy Family senior goaltender Sedona Blair kept Minnetonka at bay through one period despite a 18-0 Skippers advantage in shots on goal.

"That was important for our team to feel a little more comfortable," said Blair, who made 37 saves total. "My teammates helped a lot, too. They kept shots wide and blocked some shots. We really battled our best off."

Minnetonka matched the effort and intensity of the Fox (20-7-1). A year ago, the Skippers escaped with an overtime victory against Holy Family in the section final. Friday's result meant an earlier exhale.

"We have a better understanding of what it takes, the small details of the game, to win championships," Cassano said. "We played good team defense. We blocked best and with a purpose."

When Holy Family threatened, sophomore goalie Lyla Hemp kept the shore sealed, she stopped all 24 shots faced for her sixth shutout of the season. She takes a 14-0 record into the state tournament.



Minnetonka girls hockey players rushed to the glass near the student section, with forward Grace Sadura holding up their trophy, after defeating Holy Family for the Class 2A, Section 2 title.

ALEX KUBERANSKI - ST. TRIBUNE

DANCE TEAMS STATE MEET

Maple Grove takes jazz title; Orono, Cathedral also win

Maple Grove won the high school dance team jazz state championship Friday at Target Center, interrupting for at least a day Eastview's dominance of the sport.

Maple Grove won its seventh title in jazz and will go for a sweep Saturday in the high kick competition.

Wayzata finished second in the jazz competition, and Eastview took third.

Eastview had swept the state championships the past three years and had won half of the state titles over a 20-year stretch. The Lightning lost only once in jazz during the regular season, to Maple Grove.

The Lightning has won the jazz state title seven times, six in the past 10 years. Saturday is another day, and they have been even more dominant in high kick, winning the state title 14 times. The Lightning has twice in high kick in the regular season, to Lakeville North and Wayzata.

Orono won Class 2A, followed by Bemidje-St. Margaret's and Mount Wornoka. Orono finished second to Bemidje-St. Margaret's in 2022.

St. Cloud Cathedral repeated as Class 1A champion, ahead of Lac qui Parle Valley-Dawson-Boyd and Yellow Medicine East. Those teams finished in that same order last season.

KEVIN BORTLES



Maple Grove dancers performed their Class 5A-winning routine to the song "Hust" Friday night at Target Center. The Citronom claimed their sixth title in jazz, ending Eastview's three-year run.

MATT BURNETT - SPECIAL TO THE STAR TRIBUNE