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SPOTLIGHT MAPLE GROVE BOYS' HOCKEY

Looking to break out



« WE CAN BE THERE AT THE END AGAIN. WE CAN PLAY WITH ANYBODY. WE WON'T GET OUTWORKED EVER. »

Dylan Steman, Maple Grove forward (18)



Q&A
JOE MAU
AND COVER

Venue change gives coach reason for new five-year plan

Joe Mau is in his first year coaching the Andover boys' swimming and diving team, after six years coaching its Northern Suburban rival Blaine. He's also a chemistry teacher, tennis coach for boys and girls at Andover, and an animated announcer for football, basketball and lacrosse games for the Huskies. Mau was a year-round swimmer in high school, but he didn't pick up a tennis racket until college, where he learned the game and walked on to an NCAA Division II program. He recently chatted with the Star Tribune's Heather Risk.

Q What led you to leave Blaine and come to Andover to coach?

A It's tough to coach outside the building where you're teaching in. It just became a point where it was more and more challenging to coach at a high level to kids you don't necessarily get a chance to create a relationship with.

Q How do you plan to move Andover's team in the right direction?

A You kind of learn as you move that you've got to have what I call a five-year plan. Every year I'll make two or three changes, very important changes. Some of the changes have been morning practice; we're doing two a day. That's significant. No Andover team has ever swam in the morning.

Q What do you anticipate your feelings being for the Blaine defeat?

A Oh, I'm not going to lie, I want to win [laughs]. I want them to do well, but I want these boys [Andover] to do better than [Blaine]. And I think that's just competition.

Q What are some goals you have for your first season at Andover?

A To win sections. You have to have that mindset. And if you never reach for the stars, you're never going to work hard enough to do your best. [The second team goal is to beat Blaine. That's a good benchmark for us to reach.]

Q What are some of your big coaching philosophies?

A Once is luck, twice is skill, that's my No. 1. "Mauism." The other thing I talk to them about is work ethic. Work hard every day and force yourself to push through that commitment and that's a life lesson that'll carry you into success with whatever you do with the rest of your time.

Q Which sport do you like more—swimming or tennis?

A I enjoy both. They both present different things, and they both present a unique challenge. I think I'd miss one without the other, to be honest with you.

Q Has there ever been any confusion any time you're introducing yourself to someone?

A [Laughs] After Friday night of prelims [at state three years ago], we take them [Blaine] to Texas Roadhouse. I call up and say, "I'd like to make a reservation for eight, Joe Mau." They thought I said Joe Mauer. They cleared out a whole corner of the restaurant, cleared a big table, didn't put anybody next to us. And I walk in. Recognition for Joe Mau? And, of course, Andover kids worked there, and [an Andover senior] says, "I told you it's not Mauer... it was Joe Mau." So it was awesome. It was so funny. But that's the only confusion that I've had.

Crimson thinks it has the talent and heart for a successful season.

BY BRIAN STEINBAAR
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One by one, the shots kept piling up for Maple Grove against Blaine last week in a crucial early-season Northwest Suburban Conference tilt.

"From the get-go we threw punches at the net," Maple Grove boys' hockey coach Gary Stehno said. "Scoring chances—quality chances. Any other night, and maybe five or six go in."

Instead, the Crimson had to settle for only two, with the second being scored with 75 seconds left in regulation to force overtime. The teams ultimately tied 2-2 despite Maple Grove holding a 60-12 shot advantage.

Perhaps they deserved the victory, but Crimson faithful weren't too dependent after the game. They know

this was a sign of good things to come. "Getting a lot of shots is important, but now we just have to bury [them]," junior forward Dylan Steman said. "Get over that little hump and we'll be fine. We have a lot of heart on this team, and things will come as we go."

"Stuck in a conference and a section that includes annual boys' hockey stalwarts such as Blaine and Centennial, Maple Grove has never been able to break through to the state tournament. The Crimson has been close, especially last year in the Class 2A, Section 5 final. Maple Grove was even with Blaine 1-1 heading into the third period before Nick Biagstad—now skating for the Gophers—popped in a pair of third-period goals, lift-

ing the Bengals to their ninth state appearance. With Biagstad (60 points) and a host of other key players gone for Blaine, and Centennial rebuilding as well, the door is open for the Crimson.

"We can be there at the end again," Steman said. "We can play with anybody. We won't get outworked ever." Maple Grove could sense this potential changing of the guard coming. It's still far too early in the season to be talking predictions, but before a puck was dropped, the Crimson knew it would have back four players with 15 or more points from last season. Senior Ryan Coyne is also back after logging more than 1,300 minutes in goal. But other teams also have returning talent.

"Champlin Park has a lot of kids

back, and Elk River is a good team," said Stehno, who coached Park Center to its first—and only—state tournament in 1993. "It's going to be a fun year. Probably [the most parity] in many years. The top three or four teams are all going to be right there."

Maple Grove gets by despite not having one player expected to make the change. In the Crimson's five games played heading into this week, 13 different players have recorded at least one point.

The team will show defensively—the Crimson limited Andover to only five shots before holding Blaine to 12. "You can't ask for anything more than that," Coyne said. "We know this is a good team, but we can't just rely on that. We continue to give it everything we've got every game and things will go well for us."

NOTEBOOK

Maranatha Christian does it the hard way

Maranatha Christian Academy doesn't act like a Class 1A program in girls' basketball. One glance at the Mustangs' schedule shows why.

Maranatha has St. Paul Central, Burnsville, Hopkins, DeLaSalle and Minneapolis Roosevelt on the menu, among other larger schools. It's something for which coach Jim Hammond actively lobbies.

"We made it as hard as we could," said Hammond, who acknowledged it's not an easy process.

"The more games we can get like this, the better."

The fact that big schools schedule the small private program is an encouraging sign and indicative of the state of Maranatha basketball. Most large schools balk at the idea

of playing a Class 1A team because it doesn't do them any good, he said.

"It says good things, the fact that they'll give us the game," Hammond said.

The beefy schedule will put the Mustangs in a nice position to end the season strong—hopefully with another trip to the state tournament, where they lost in the quarterfinals one year ago.

"The girls love it," Hammond said. "Etc."

Tip-Off Classic rescheduled
Last weekend's crippling snowstorm forced nearly every sporting

event in the Twin Cities to be canceled or postponed. That included the Tip-Off Classic, at Maranatha High School, which will now be played Jan. 22.

The 1D-game boys' basketball event was to be a collection of some of the best talent around. Maranatha and Osseo were scheduled to compete. Organizers of the event are hoping most—if not all—of the same teams can participate next month, but scheduling conflicts are a given.

Etc.
• The Mc Fossilball banquet is Sunday at the Doubletree Park Place

Hotel in St. Louis Park. Among the 30 finalists for the second Blaine senior quarterback Eric Rline.

• Osseo sophomore Phillip Webb had two big games last week for the Orioles girls' basketball team. Last Tuesday against Armstrong she scored 12 points, and she scored 21 on Thursday against Coon Rapids.

"But most importantly she was excellent on the defensive end," head coach Joey Waters wrote in an e-mail. "Her defense is what transformed her offense."

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