



Q&A
KATIE
BASSETT
SPRING
LAKE PARK

Goalie learns to embrace the pressure

Spring Lake Park's Anthony girls' hockey coach Tom Kulekump offers a blunt scouting report for his team's playoff hopes: It's all about senior goaltender Katie Bassett.

"She has to be at her best in the section playoffs for us to have a chance," Kulekump said. Pressure is nothing new to Bassett, who spent the season under duress. She faced about 88 shots per game for a young team with a 9-12 record, and went through various emotions before arriving at a good place.

Along the way, Bassett kept the Panthers in games almost by herself. She stopped 56 goals in 11 tie games against St. Francis/North Branch. And four days later she posted 41 saves in a 1-0 victory against Lottso-Cramer. She allows 2.85 goals per game and boasts a .930 save percentage.

The Panthers open Class 2A, Section 5 play against Champlin Park at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the section's play-in game held at the Roseville Skating Center. The winner between No. 8 seed Champlin Park and the No. 9 seed Panthers advances to play No. 1 seed Coon Rapids on Saturday.

Bassett spoke with Star Tribune reporter David La Vaquer about her growth this season.

Q You knew coming in this would be a young team (lightweight) and I had to get yourself mentally prepared for the season?

A I knew we'd struggle but I didn't realize I'd see 30-40 shots per game. It was overwhelming and stressful. But now it's a breeze. I'd still see 30-40 shots. I'm like, "What happened? Good job defense!"

Q When did you have that change of heart?

A The Mahomed game (Dec. 4). I did not start that game but I was out in halfway through. We had but I didn't allow any goals. I realized, "You know what? This is what I have to do if we're going to win."

Q Coach Kulekump said he reminds you a lot that your job isn't to win games, it's to give your team a chance to win. Has that finally sunk in?

A He says that a lot. I get a little frustrated when I work hard but don't get the reward. But yeah, my job is to just give us a chance to win.

Q Hockey is a funny game and a lot of that is because of how much a hot goalie can change things. Could you maybe stall some games in the playoffs?

A Definitely. Plus, I like the way we've been scoring goals. We scored at least six goals in two of our past three games. I think we're starting to put it together and we're getting that push.

Q You obviously lead by example with your play. But are you a vocal leader at all?

A On the ice I'm very vocal. You can hear me yelling from the stands. But I try to keep it positive. Some girls were doing the talking in the locker room earlier this season, but they would get mad and I could see it wasn't working. This is kind of a new thing for us. The past three years we've had talent and we've been competitive. This year we're trying to put together our young talent and if you stay positive you get more respect for that.

Q Coach said you had an amazing stretch in January but that you got sick and that hurt your play a little. Are you healthy heading into the playoffs?

A I was sick for awhile but we played St. Louis Park on Feb. 5 and I felt better. And about the time I got sick we had a death close to the team... She was a goalie, too. I kiss her picture before I go on the ice.

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SPOTLIGHT FRIDLEY WRESTLING



Patrick Faber, a three-sport athlete, is 29-1 this season for the Fridley wrestling team. He expects to play football at St. Cloud State. Photos by TOM WALIACI • twal@startribune.com

Numbers cruncher

The Fridley standout ignores statistics and records, and focuses on the task at hand.

By HEATHER JULZ • heather.julz@startribune.com

When measuring success in sports, numbers can be hard to escape. Numbers can affect how athletes approach their opponents. But for Fridley wrestler Patrick Faber, rankings and records don't mean a thing. "Never mind that he's ranked No. 4 at 171 pounds in Class 2A, or that his record is 29-1. The only number he knows is one — his number of losses.

"I seriously have never looked at the Gallitree," Faber said, referring to the largest amateur wrestling website in Minnesota that does team and individual rankings. "I try staying away from that because it just gets into your head. I'm just another wrestler at 171."

That mindset is a great asset for Faber, said his older brother, Josh, a former Fridley wrestler, who recalled a recent match Faber was wrestling against an opponent ranked No. 4 in Class 2A, but when he was told who he was facing, the response was, "Oh, OK, whatever." The score was tied 11 with 15 seconds left when Faber decided to shoot. He won the match 15-11.

"He wrestles the same, no matter who he's wrestling," Lewis said. The senior co-captain for Fridley has been wrestling since he was 5, and he's been on varsity since seventh grade. As a junior, he placed sixth at state at 160 pounds in Class 2A, with a 29-9 overall record. He also

earned all-conference and all-state honors. His goal this year is to become a state champion. He would be following in the footsteps of his father and assistant coach Pat Faber, who was the 1979 state champ for Minneapolis Edison.

"It makes me very proud to see him carry on and try to do the things that I've done," Pat Faber said. "Hope he looks up to it as a nice goal to reach that and finish this year as a state champion. And I think he can." The wrestling tradition runs deep for the Fabers. Older brother Jared was a two-time state entrant and sister Erin also wrestled for Fridley. Faber also said he has a lot of support during the season from aunts, uncles and family friends.

Faber's style of wrestling is fast and physical. During a Feb. 3 match against Zimmerman, he was in control. He added another pin to his season record.



Faber is ranked No. 4 in Minnesota in Class 2A at 171 pounds, and his coach says, "He's the best high school leader I've ever seen, on and off the mat."

total (one that he knows the number, of course) and earned six points to put Fridley up 16-0 on the way to a 45-22 victory. The standout qualities of Faber are not lost on first-year Fridley coach Eric Anderson.

"He's the best high school leader I've ever seen, on and off the mat," Anderson said. "He's vocal at times but also leads by example." Take the Zimmerman match. Faber watched his teammates from the sidelines, and at times he would get up to shout instructions, just like the coaches were doing.

He even passed from his warm-up routine to have a brief chat with a teammate who'd just had a tough match.

"He just knows how to be a friend," said senior co-captain Nick Carlson, who said Faber is "like my second brother."

Wrestling isn't Faber's only athletic activity. He is also a multiple letterwinner in football and baseball. He recently signed a letter of intent to play football for St. Cloud State, where he will pursue a low-entrance-degree with hopes of becoming a police officer.

With the commitment to football next year, this most likely will be Faber's last season of competitive wrestling.

"I'm going to miss it a lot," Faber said. "I kind of want to go out with a bang."

NOTEBOOK

Cooper serious about building momentum

By DAVID LA VAQUER
dla@startribune.com

Cooper senior forward **JJ Cruikshank** can sense something different in the Hawks' hockey team this season.

"Everyone on the team is more serious," Cruikshank said. "Especially now that we have just a few games left."

Cooper started the week 11-0 but players believe they can finish strong and build momentum for the playoffs.

The Hawks posted a 2-2 record in previous meetings against the four teams remaining on the schedule, including a 2-1 loss.

"We know we can beat these teams coming up and we want to because we haven't been above .500

in a while," Cruikshank said. For Cruikshank, motivation comes in many forms.

A broken leg — which he played on for two games — diminished his junior season.

Determined to come back strong this season, he has scored 22 goals through the first 21 games. And his focus on a strong stretch has led to him scoring at least one goal in the past six games.

Cruikshank also played a big role in Cooper's signature victory against Armstrong without scoring a goal.

"I played the last two minutes of that game," Cooper coach **Bill Rowsey** said. "When it was over he just closed his eyes and had this, 'We did it, look on his face.'"

"He's a leader for us."

Elk River's Curtis commits to New Hampshire

Elk River girls' hockey standout **Jenna Curtis** verbally committed to the University of New Hampshire.

Curtis, a junior forward, entered the week with 35 goals and 23 assists.

Ford named camp MVP
Coon Rapids junior running back **Antonio Ford** won MVP honors at the recent IMCA Madden Football Academy Kickoff Weekend in Florida.

Ford was one of 75 athletes from 15 states that attended the camp.

VanEps shines on the court
Justin VanEps is a co-forward on the Mounds View boys' basketball team, took center stage at the Mustangs

handed Roseville its first Suburban East Conference loss.

He scored 17 points and grabbed six rebounds. His points came in large part to effective three-point shooting (five of 10) and free throws (10 of 12).

Since fully recovering from a foot injury, VanEps is averaging 20 points per game and leads Mounds View in rebounding.

The puck stops here
Armstrong freshman goaltender **Ashley Rittner** stopped 47 shots in a 0-0 tie with Maple Grove on Saturday.

Earlier last week, Rittner stopped 42 of 50 shots in an 8-1 loss to high-powered Coon Rapids.

David La Vaquer • 612-473-7374