

GIRLS HOCKEY

NAME OF THE GAME



Bemidji goalie Nettie Kimble stands tall in net, having played between the pipes for the Lumberjacks since she was an eighth-grader. As the junior reaches new milestones, she's more focused on helping her program do the same.

Micah Friez | Bemidji Pioneer

Nettie Kimble aptly named as Bemidji's last line of defense

By Micah Friez
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BEMIDJI

It's obvious by the time her first name is announced, and even more apparent once she plays: Nettie Kimble was destined to be a goalie.

"I got to my 10U team, and they needed a goalie. I decided to play, and I never stopped," the figure skater-turned-netminder said. "I didn't even know, really, what hockey was. I didn't know the game at all. ... (Goalie) just seemed fun. Everyone told me I shouldn't, but I still did."

Kimble was right to go against the crowd. The Bemidji High School junior is a now seasoned veteran for the girls hockey team, having split time in the crease over the past three years before

taking the reigns as the full-time starter this season.

"I was new to the scene last year, and we had a senior goaltender with Brooklyn (Delap)," second-year head coach Mike Johnson said. "In my eyes, the two were pretty even in most ways. They supported each other. (This year) Nettie knows that she's the one who has to be ready every single night. She gets up for that."

"With her experience, it was really nice to walk into this as a new head coach last year and have a player like Nettie. This year, she's raised her game even more."

Kimble first arrived on the varsity scene as an eighth-grader and has been busy adding to her resume ever since. She reached 1,000 career saves

during the Nov. 8 season opener, and she's currently a dozen away from 1,500 stops going into Thursday's 7:30 p.m. puck drop against Roseau at the Bemidji Community Arena.

"It's kind of a surprise, you know what I mean? You don't feel like it's been 1,500," Kimble said. "It's just every shot, you're trying to get it. ... The team has blocked so many shots, too."

Kimble has denied 514 pucks so far this season, already a single-season best, while posting a .908 save percentage and four shutouts. But the most important number has been in the win column, where the Lumberjacks sit 9-9 and are finally seeing fruits of a program revival.

"It's amazing to see the program turn around and to help with that,"

Kimble said. "Growing up with these girls, I knew we could do it."

Already with its most wins since 2015-16, BHS is trying to accomplish a .500 season for the first time in eight years. And Kimble is a big piece of the puzzle.

"We start with team defense," Johnson said. "It's just incredible to have Nettie there as a starting point, and then we have four veteran defensemen who really do their job. And I think the big turnaround this year is that our forwards are more conscientious, they're getting back, they're helping out. ... If we take care of business in the defensive zone, it's going to lead to good offensive opportunities on the other end."

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FOOTBALL



David Samson | Forum News Service

North Dakota State senior and Bemidji native James Hendricks (6) celebrates his touchdown in the second quarter of the NCAA FCS championship game at Toyota Stadium in Frisco, Texas, on Saturday.

Hendricks the hero as Bemidji native clinches NDSU title

By Micah Friez
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FRISCO, Texas — When you share a hometown with Paul Bunyan, it shouldn't come as a surprise when you stand out above the crowd.

Bemidji's own James Hendricks did just that on Saturday, playing hero for the North Dakota State football team in a 28-20 win over James Madison in Frisco, Texas, to clinch the Bison's eighth FCS national championship in nine years.

Hendricks, a 2015 Bemidji High School graduate and former Lumberjack quarterback, finished his collegiate career with a game-sealing interception at the goal line to prevent the potential game-tying score. The safety

jumped the route and picked off Dukes quarterback Ben DiNucci near the pylon for the goal-line stand with two seconds remaining.

"It was on film all year," Hendricks said of the play. "We knew that when they got in that set they were going to run a pick play. And, honestly, they got us in a good call. ... I made that play and the rest is history."

But that wasn't Hendricks' only shining moment of the game. In the second quarter, he scored his first collegiate touchdown on a fake field-goal attempt, jumping up from his holder position and rushing 20 yards to the end zone for the eventual game-winning score.

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WOMEN'S HOCKEY

Beavers knock off No. 1 Wisconsin

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BEMIDJI — The Bemidji State women's hockey team knocked off top-ranked Wisconsin for the second time in as many seasons Saturday afternoon. Lauren Bench made 38 saves between the pipes and Clair DeGeorge scored twice, including the game-winner, in a 3-2 upset victory at the Sanford Center.

The win was the Beavers' fourth over a No. 1 team in program history and the first since a 2-1 home triumph over the Badgers on Feb. 1, 2019.

"I think every year we just get fired up to play them," DeGeorge said. "And we know that we have the ability to beat them. ... We've been playing well together lately as a team, and coming out and just going after them is a great feeling."

Bemidji State is responsible for two of Wisconsin's three losses since last February. The Badgers are 4-2-0 against BSU and an impressive 30-1-3 when playing anyone else during a span that includes a victory in the national title game.

"They're a champion for a reason and you could see that by the response they had in the second and third period in the way they were pushing at the end," BSU head coach Jim Scanlan said. "You've got to have some luck, no doubt about it. You've got to get some bounces and breaks, along with just a belief in your group."

The Beavers (13-10-1, 7-7-0-0 WCHA) came a goal short in the series opener Friday, falling 3-2.

"They were disappointed yesterday," Scanlan said.

"They felt that was a game we should have won. To come out today and compete like they did, I'm just really proud of them."

Goals by DeGeorge and Abby Halluska handed BSU a 2-0 lead after the opening 20 minutes. DeGeorge swept a rebound past goalie Kristen Campbell as the BSU junior tumbled to the ice for the game's first goal at 5:49 of the frame. Halluska doubled the lead by tapping in Lydia Passolt's feed from the corner for a 2-0 advantage at the 13:44 mark.

For only the third time all season, Wisconsin (21-2-1, 11-2-1-0 WCHA) trailed entering the second period. The visitors came out guns ablazing and scored twice in 58 seconds to tie the game.

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Jillian Gandsey | Bemidji Pioneer

Bemidji State junior Clair DeGeorge (26) scores a diving goal against No. 1 Wisconsin on Saturday at the Sanford Center.