

SPORTS

ONWARD TO STATE



Photo by Eric Hylden/Grand Forks Herald

Fosston infielder Lance Balstad reaches to catch a Sacred Heart Eagles' bunt in the first game of Thursday's Section 8A championship in Bemidji June 10, 2021.

Fosston captures Minnesota Section 8A baseball title

By Wayne Nelson
Grand Forks Herald

Bemidji

A year ago, Fosston was ranked No. 5 in Minnesota state Class A baseball and a favorite to capture the Minnesota Section 8A title.

But COVID wiped out the season.

Fosston may not have been a big favorite this season, but that didn't matter to the Greyhounds, who upended East Grand Forks Sacred Heart 7-4 on Thursday in the Section 8A title game at

Bemidji State University.

The win advances Fosston to next week's Minnesota state Class A tournament in St. Cloud. The Greyhounds are scheduled to play Tuesday and will find out who they'll face this weekend.

"Last year, we were picked to win the section at the beginning of the year," said Fosston coach Ryan Hanlon. "We were ranked No. 5 and then COVID wiped out the season. That was a let down. To be able to go this year is really surprising."

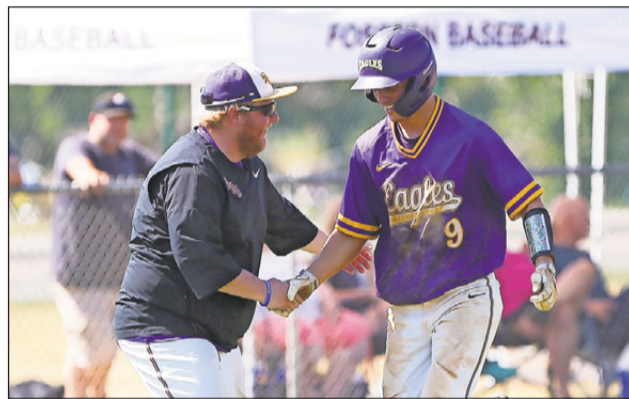
It wasn't easy for Fosston.

Sacred Heart, behind the pitching and hitting of Sam Gapp, beat the Greyhounds 5-0 in the first championship game of the double-elimination tournament. That set up the winner-take-all game.

Momentum was on Sacred Heart's side after the first game.

"That was our fear going into the day," said Hanlon. "If we lost the first game, Sacred Heart would have all the momentum. But you have to give credit to our

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East Grand Forks Sacred Heart's Sam Gapp is congratulated by Chaise Anderson as he rounds third base after hitting a 3 run home run in the 7th inning against Fosston in the first game of two Thursday in Bemidji.

Nelson, Zajac lead Islanders to conference finals

The former UND players are chasing their first Stanley Cup

By Brad E. Schlossman
Grand Forks Herald

Brock Nelson hasn't been sleeping much.

"People don't know," New York Islanders coach Barry Trotz said, "Brock just had a child the other day, him and his wife, and so he's been dealing with that. He played Game 4 (Saturday). . . his wife had a baby in the afternoon. . . he played that night with no sleep. He came to Boston (for Game 5), we got him into Boston late that night, played that game.

"I think today you saw him fresh and happy to have a new child with his wife, his wife home, and all that. I think he settled in and played a Brock Nelson game."

The former Warroad High and UND star scored two goals, including the game-winner, as the Islanders beat the Boston Bruins 6-2 in a series-clinching Game 6 of their Stanley Cup Playoff series on

Wednesday night.

Former UND standout Travis Zajac also scored for the Islanders, who will play the Tampa Bay Lightning in the conference finals for a second-straight year.

"Whenever you have an opportunity to close out a team, you want to bring your best," Nelson said. "You need to bring your 'A' game."

Nelson has been doing that during the playoffs.

He now has six goals this playoff season, two off the NHL's lead.

During the last two Stanley Cup Playoffs, only Tampa Bay Lightning forward Brayden Point (22) and Colorado Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon (17) have more goals than Nelson's 15.

"He's an elite talent, there's no question about that," Islanders forward Josh Bailey said about Nelson. "Big-game player. I think he probably doesn't get enough



Bill Streicher-USA TODAY Sports

New York Islanders center Brock Nelson (29) celebrates with teammates after scoring during the first period against the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center on Mar 23, 2019.

recognition for what he does defensively out there. He's a complete, 200-foot player, been a real leader for us."

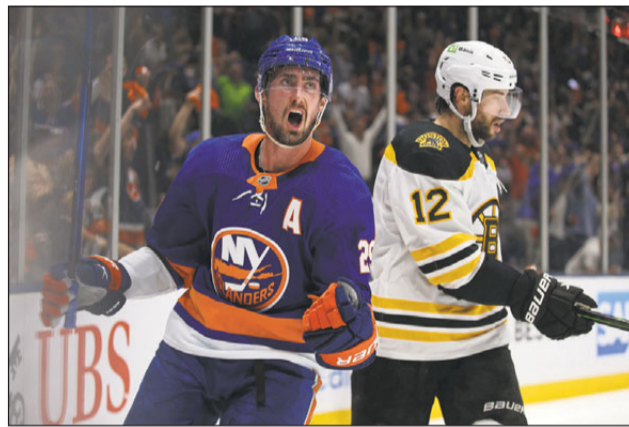
Former UND players scored the first three goals for the Islanders.

Zajac, who was traded from the New Jersey Devils to the Islanders at the deadline, buried the first one at 8:52 of the opening period from the

top of the crease. It was his first playoff goal with the Islanders.

After Boston's Brad Marchand tied the game at 1, Nelson put New York back in front with back-to-back goals in the second period.

The first one was a pretty goal as Nelson poked the puck past Boston defenseman Matt Grzelczyk at the blue



Brad Penner-USA TODAY Sports

New York Islanders center Brock Nelson (29), a former Warroad, Minn., and UND standout, celebrates his goal against the Boston Bruins in front of Bruins right wing Craig Smith (12) during the second period of game six of the second round of the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Wednesday night.

line, skated in alone and scored on goalie Tuukka Rask to make it 2-1 at 5:20.

Just 7:19 later, Nelson added to the Islanders' lead, receiving a pass in the slot, moving the puck to his backhand and slipping it five-hole on Rask.

"The place was rocking tonight," Nelson said of the Nassau Coliseum,

which is in its final year. "The fans were feeding us energy. The team played great. It was one of those nights. Barry touched on it a bit after the game. You always remember moments like that. It was a big game, a big team effort from everybody. It feels good having a full Coliseum behind you there and playing for them."

After record-breaking rookie year, Vikings' Jefferson seeks an even better 2021



Brad Rempel / USA TODAY Sports

Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson (18) participates in drills at OTA on May 26, 2021, at TCO Performance Center in Eagan, Minn.

By Chris Tomasson
St. Paul Pioneer Press

If Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson has 89 catches for 1,401 yards in 2021, that would be just fine with him. He just wants to be better next season than he was as a rookie in 2020.

"As long as I have better numbers this year than last year, then I'll feel like I did a good enough job," Jefferson said this week during organized team activities at the Vikings' head-

quarters in Eagan.

Last season, Jefferson broke Randy Moss' 1998 team rookie record of 69 catches with 88 and his record of 1,313 receiving yards with 1,400. The yardage figure ranked second in league history for a rookie behind Bill Groman's 1,473 for the 1960 Houston Oilers.

The 22nd player picked in the 2020 NFL Draft, Jefferson was named second-team All-Pro, made the Pro Bowl and was second in voting for NFL Offensive Rookie

of the Year. He didn't come close to Moss' Vikings rookie record of 17 touchdown receptions, getting seven, but one presumes that, considering his stated goal, he would be happy with eight this fall.

Jefferson, though, knows it won't be easy to improve on last season. Defensive backs figure to pay a lot more attention to him.

"That's the hard part about the league and doing great things in the league," Jefferson

said. "There's always someone watching your tape and studying your games, so definitely during this offseason I had to learn some new moves and put some new moves into my inventory."

Last month, Jefferson talked about "stealing some moves" from Davante Adams of Green Bay, Odell Beckham Jr. of Cleveland and Keenan Allen of the Los Angeles Chargers. Any moves he

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