

## HOCKEY PLAYOFFS

## Lumberjacks teams spark as seasons end

Girls lose to rival;  
Moose Lake hits  
Mirage buzzsaw

Kerry Rodd  
sports@pineknotnews.com

Both the Cloquet-Esko-Carlton and Moose Lake Area girls hockey teams bowed out of the Section 7A hockey tournament Thursday night.

The Lumberjacks were chopped down by the Hilltoppers and the Rebels were beaten 10-1 by No. 1 seed Proctor/Hermantown.

Against Duluth Marshall, the Lumberjacks were dead-even and scoreless through the first 10 minutes of the first period, but a goal at 10:13 by Emelia McGiffert would be the only goal of the period and it gave the Hilltoppers a 1-0 lead.

Any chance of a comeback in the second period was thwarted quickly by the Hilltoppers, who picked up a goal just 1:56 into the period and another before the 5-minute mark of the second period, which put CEC down 3-0. Katrina Thoreson notched the first goal of the second period and Meredith Boettcher added the second goal of the period for the Hilltoppers.

"After their third goal we took a timeout to try and regroup and to try and gather our composure," said CEC coach Courtney Olin. "I was proud of how we bounced back and continued to battle the rest of the game, even when we were losing on the scoreboard."



The final goal of the game came with just 18 seconds remaining when Maren Friday shot the puck into an empty net, making the final 4-0.

"Marshall is very quick and Maren Friday is an outstanding defenseman with poise and that was evident in our game," Olin said.

CEC ends the season with a 9-8 record.

The Lumberjacks lose four seniors: Camden Pollard, Keelee Grashorn, Lily Hanson and Lauren Sertich.

"It was the most challenging season I've had as a coach between injuries, illness and all of the Covid setbacks," Olin said.

"Through all the adversity, our team continued to work hard and have a great attitude."

#### Rebels run out of steam

Thursday night was also not kind to the Moose Lake Area Rebels, who dropped a 10-1 decision to a very good Proctor/Hermantown squad that is undefeated and now 18-0 on the season.

"We knew going into the game that it was going to be a battle," said Rebels coach Reilly Fawcett. "I thought we played a great first period. We kept them outside, won battles and were strong in front of our net."

After Macy Sieger scored at

6:27 to give the Mirage a 1-0 lead, the Rebels responded with a goal of their own from Julia Juszczak at 14:58 with the assist going to Mackenzie Hoffman. That seemed to breathe life into the Rebels who were outshot 26-10 in the period. That would all end in the second period when the Mirage scored eight straight goals.

"We expended a lot of energy in that first period and we just came out flat in the second period," said Fawcett. "The Mirage took advantage of their opportunities and executed on them. I tried to keep our team motivated, but it's never easy coming back from one goal after another."



**Left:** Cloquet-Esko-Carlton goaltender Araya Kiminski kicks away a puck before Marshall's Ilsa Lindaman can get to the rebound, with help from teammates Emily Litchke (17) and Frankie Halverson. The Hilltoppers prevailed 4-0. Above: CEC's Tenley Stewart shoots against Marshall during Thursday's Section 7A semifinal game at Mars Lakeview Arena in Duluth. Photos by Dave Harwig / Pine Knot News

The Mirage outshot the Rebels 20-3 in the second period and then scored the only goal of the third period for the final of 10-1.

The Rebels finish the season with a record of 8-11 and will lose two seniors, as both Jada Jerry and Caitlyn Koecher will graduate this spring.

Boys fall to Rapids  
in section semifinal

Kerry Rodd  
sports@pineknotnews.com

After opening the Section 7AA hockey tournament with a 2-0 home win over Duluth Marshall, the Cloquet-Esko-Carlton boys team was bounced from the tournament Saturday afternoon by a 4-0 score at the hands of Grand Rapids.

The Lumberjacks struggled to start the game and were outshot 13-3 in the opening period, but somehow they kept the game scoreless at that point.

"We had a good game plan of getting out into the neutral zone to create some offense," said CEC coach Shea Walters. "They contained us well. Most of their shots in the first period were from the outside and were able to be seen by our goalie Zach Tyman."

Things changed dramatically in the second period when the Thunderhawks opened things up by scoring three goals. Just 1:58 into the second period, Hunter Bischoff tallied the only goal Grand Rapids would need, on assists from John Bonner and Braeden Holcomb. At 10:12 it was Holcomb adding an even strength tally on assists from Jack Peart and Sam Sterle. Exactly six minutes later, the Thunderhawks went ahead 3-0 when Joey

Delgreco scored on assists from Peart and Easton Young.

"We had several opportunities on power plays to generate momentum, but we just struggled to produce anything," Walters said. "Rapids was able to capitalize on some in-zone play. Again, many shots were from the perimeter. They were able to sneak in guys backdoor and able to find them. Our breakdowns in the defensive zone led to the three goals."

The final goal of the game was scored by Peart on an empty net, with Tyman on the bench for an extra attacker.

"Give credit where credit is due. Top to bottom, those Rapids players can skate and play," said Walters. "They moved the puck well, controlled the pace of play, and capitalized on their opportunities. They have a good team, but our failure to execute helped them establish their game."

The Lumberjacks finished the season with an 11-8-1 record and will lose eight seniors to graduation.

"We will lose a fantastic group of seniors this year," Walters said. "They were a great group that I am proud of, and made it very enjoyable to come to the rink every day."

The seniors who will graduate are Cade Anderson, Jaxton Ochis, Logan Dushkin, Travis Berg, Brayden and Zach Tyman, Brock House, Kyle Siiter and Hunter Finnilla.



**Above:** The Lumberjacks' Brayden Tyman fires off a shot at the Marshall net Thursday as the Lumberjacks shut out Marshall 2-0 in Cloquet. **Left:** CEC's Logan Dushkin keeps the puck out of reach of Marshall's Darik Olson as the Lumberjacks defeat the Hilltoppers 2-0 Thursday evening in Cloquet. The win sent the Lumberjacks to a matchup with top section seed Grand Rapids. The Thunderhawks ended the Lumberjacks season. Photos by Dan Saletel / Pine Knot Sports

## BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

# Rebels reach section championship

Kerry Rodd  
sports@pineknotnews.com

The Moose Lake/Willow River boys basketball team was set to face Pequot Lakes in the Section 7AA boys basketball championship game Thursday night, after the issue of the Pine Knot News was printed.

To get there, the red-hot Rebels first defeated No. 14 seed Greenway 91-54 on March 17. Scoring for the Rebels against Greenway were Logan Orvedahl 8, Phillip Sheetz 22, Sam Dewey 6, Brady Watrin 19, Landin Kurhajetz 4, Conner Welch 3, Mason Olson 19, Jimmy Walker 3, Drew Danielson 3, and Carter Johnson 4.

Their next game, against No. 6 seed Pierz on Friday, March 19, was more challenging but the Rebels fought to the win with a score of 59-58. Against Pierz, the Rebels were led by Brady Watrin with 17 points. Landin Kurhajetz scored 16, Mason Olson 10 and both Logan Orvedahl and Carter Johnson finished with eight points. Conner Welch added three points in the win.

The No. 3 seeded Rebels then defeated No. 2 seeded Marshall 87-73.

"It was just a back-and-forth game," said Wes Cummins, head coach of the Rebels. "We built up a 17-point lead, but then they would go on a run and cut it to



Moose Lake/Willow River senior Brady Watrin gets control of a rebound during a quarterfinal game against Pierz Friday night. Moose Lake/Willow River won that game 59-58 and Watrin was the high scorer with 17 points. *Photo courtesy of Shanna Watrin / Watrin 6 Photography*

five, and it went that way the whole game.

The Rebels led the game 43-28 at halftime and much of that had to do with Mason Olson, who scored a game-high 32 points.



"Mason could have had 40 points tonight," Cummins said after the game. "Marshall tried to deny passes and stretched things out on defense, but when you shoot the ball like we did that's tough to defend."

Also in double-digit scoring for the Rebels were Logan Orvedahl with 16 points and Carter Johnson, who added 13 points.

"Johnson had an unbelievable

game for us and 13 points doesn't do justice to the game he played," said Cummins. "He shot the ball well, but his defense was really good."

## Esko falls

In other Section 7AA action, the Eskomos had a good run, but fell to No. 1 seeded Pequot Lakes 74-54 in a semifinal Tuesday.

Esko defeated Proctor 62-46

Esko's Riley Fischer (left) and Cade Berger double-team International Falls' Bryant Koenig during Friday night's Section 7AA playoff basketball game at Esko High School. Dave Harwig / Pine Knot Sports

in the first round on March 17. "Riley Fischer and Eli blue both played well against Proctor scoring 19 and 20 points," said Esko coach Derek Anderson. "Cuinn Berger also had 13 points for us in the win."

They went on to beat International Falls 80-42 in a quarterfinal game Friday, March 19. Against the Broncos, Riley Fischer had 25 points.

## GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

# Esko keeps rolling; Cromwell-Wright knocked out

Kerry Rodd  
news@pineknotnews.com

In the Section 7AA girls basketball playoffs the No. 1 seeded Eskomos, not surprisingly, are still standing and were set to play No. 4 seed Crosby-Ironton Wednesday as this issue of the Pine Knot News went to press.

Esko beat Eveleth-Gilbert 61-31 in the quarterfinals on Saturday after getting a bye in the first round. Jayden Karppinen had a huge night for the Eskomos by scoring 30 points and nearly outscoring the Golden Bears herself.

If the Eskomos won Wednesday, they were set to advance to the championship game at 6 p.m. Friday, March 26, against the winner of the Marshall (No. 2) vs. Pequot Lakes (No. 3) game, also on Wednesday. That game will be played at the high seed. Look for updates on the Pine Knot News Facebook page.

In other 7AA games, Moose Lake/Willow River was eliminated, falling to Proctor 56-34 in the first round Thursday, March 18, before Proctor lost to Crosby-Ironton 51-47 Saturday.

## Section 7AAA

The Cloquet girls basketball team was eliminated from the Section 7AAA tournament in the opening round against Hermantown, losing to the Hawks for the third time this season.

Cloquet came in with a 6-12 record, while the Hawks were 8-10. Hermantown defeated Cloquet in the first game of the regular season 65-56 January 16 and then beat Cloquet once again in mid-February 50-41, so this marked the third time the Lumberjacks fell to the Hawks this season.

A big key to the win by the Hawks was the play of Elly Schmitz, who poured in 25 points to lead Hermantown to

the win.

Maddie Young and Alexa Snestrud led the Lumberjacks with 14 and 11 points.

## Section 7A

After beating No. 13 Nashauk-Keewatin 57-23, the No. 4 seed Cromwell-Wright girls basketball team advanced to the quarterfinals of the 7A section tournament and easily defeated No. 5 seed Chisholm 67-34 Friday, March 19.

Then they ran into their nemesis, the No. 1 seeded Mountain Iron-Buhl team in the semifinals Tuesday, March 23. The Rangers flexed their muscle early and often against the Cards who struggled to stay with MIB. MIB led it 39-19 at halftime and kept the pressure on throughout the second half. The final score was 71-38 and MIB advanced to play Cherry (No. 2 seed) in the final Thursday, after this issue of the Pine Knot News was printed.

Natalie Hakamaki led the Cards with 10 points and Katherine Libbon added nine points for Cromwell in the loss.

In other Section 7A action, No. 3 South Ridge defeated No. 14 Wrenshall 89-10 in the second round on March 17.

"We were not mentally ready to take on the task of competing that day," said Wrens coach Daiman LaFave. "We slowed them early, but the shots weren't falling and it took the wind out of our sails. We had better success against their press, but we just couldn't generate any offense."

Svea Snickers and Adella Olesiak led the Panthers with 21 and 17 points.

South Ridge won again in the quarterfinals Friday, March 19, defeating No. 6 Cook County by a score of 66-48. Olesiak led the Panthers with 23 points, Snickers added 13, and Raina Schneider finished with 10 points.

"We played real well against

Wrenshall and shot very well," said Brad Olesiak, coach of the Panthers. "We struggled a little against Cook County, but Adella got hot in the second half with 19 of her 23 in the second half."

The Panthers were eliminated in the semifinals by Cherry, 61-45. The Tigers jumped out to a 10-point halftime lead and then pulled away to the 16-point semifinal win.

Olesiak led the Panthers with 15 points.

## Section 5A

After beating McGregor 65-47 in the first round of the Section 5A girls basketball playoffs, No. 8 seeded Barnum advanced to play the No. 1 seeded Ogilvie team. Ogilvie showed why it had the top ranking, defeating the Bombers 69-41. Ogilvie lost in the next round. The championship game between Belgrade-Broten-Elrosa and Swanville was set for Thursday, March 25.

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pre-game with the 1st Pitch at 1:10 pm



## BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

# Cloquet beats Hermantown, loses to Hibbing

Kerry Rodd and Jana Peterson  
sports@pineknotnews.com

In an odd twist of fate, the Cloquet boys basketball team played Hermantown in their final regular season game on Wednesday and then had to turn around and face the Hawks again on Saturday in the Section 7AAA quarterfinals.

In both cases, the Lumberjacks came away with a win.

After taking a 24-point win on Wednesday in the regular season, the Lumberjacks cruised to another win over the Hawks on Saturday — this time by a 79-59 score.

A big key to the win was Cloquet causing the Hawks to turn the ball over 33 times while turning it over only 15 times themselves. In all, the 'Jacks had a 29-9 advantage in scoring off of turnovers.

"I wasn't really surprised, but I wouldn't have been surprised by a close game either," said head coach Steve Battaglia. "They've got young talent that is dangerous, but we've got an old team that has been playing well."

Adam Schneider and Conner Barney led the Jacks with 20 and 19 points, respectively. Dylan Heehn also had a big night with 15 points for Cloquet. Alec Turnbull added nine points, while Caleb Hanson and Jack Sorenson scored five each. Tyler Issendorf recorded four points and Jordan Diver had a pair of points.

The first round win sent Cloquet to a semifinal game against a tough Hibbing team Tuesday evening in Hibbing.

Although the Lumberjacks lost 69-50, Battaglia said it was a good game, and Cloquet had a much better showing than in the regular season game they lost by 52 points.

"We played smart both defensively and offensively — executed our game plan very well," Battaglia said. "It's just hard to put together a scheme to control all of their weapons. We did what we could do, but we needed them to help us out too. Ayden McDonald was the difference for them."

The Bluejackets led by just four points, 33-29, at halftime, but then exploded early in the second half to pull away and secure the victory and a spot in the Section 7AAA championship game. McDonald scored 27 points for the Bluejackets, who were set to face No. 1 seed Princeton Thursday in the finals after this issue of the Pine Knot News was printed.

Cloquet was led in scoring by Adam Schneider and Conner Barney, who each finished with 15 points. Dylan Heehn scored 7 points, Caleb Hansen 6 and Alec Turnbull 5 while Nate Blatchford scored 2.

While Schneider has been a leading scorer for the Lumberjacks for close to three years now, Barney was new to the team this year. The 11th grader attends CHS but had previously played for the Fond du Lac Ojibwe team, which did not play this year due to Covid restrictions.

Battaglia said Barney had to play JV until the MSHSL appeals process played out.

"They made the correct decision to allow him to play in Cloquet since he had no other choice," Battaglia said, adding that Barney told him he's playing in Cloquet again next year. "He's a heck of a player — scores, can rebound, physical defender — he'll be one of the best players in the section next year."

After starting the season facing a lot of tough teams, the Lumberjacks finished by winning nine out of their last 12 games.

"We ended up winning the Lake Superior Conference, which is no small task when you consider Superior, Hermantown, and Grand Rapids all are powerhouse programs in our conference," Battaglia said.

Cloquet finished the season at 13-7.

The Lumberjacks will graduate a number of seniors this year, including Adam Schneider, Dylan Heehn, Nate Blatchford, Tyler Issendorf and Jordan Diver. Battaglia said they will be missed.

"They are great kids who love basketball," he said. "They accomplished a lot."



**Above:** Cloquet's Adam Schneider gains control of the ball as the Lumberjacks take on the Hermantown Hawks Saturday in Cloquet.

**Left:** Cloquet's Alec Turnbull tries to break coverage from Hermantown's Keaton Christianson on a drive to the basket Saturday as the Lumberjacks defeated the Hawks. Photos by Dan Salestel / Pine Knot Sports

# Bombers are marching through Section 5A

Kerry Rodd  
sports@pineknotnews.com

Barnum is the only local team in the Section 5A boys basketball playoffs still standing, after defeating McGregor and St. John's Prep to get to the semifinal game against Upsala set for Wednesday night after this issue of the Pine Knot News went to press.

In the second round, Barnum defeated McGregor 50-41.

After upsetting the No. 5 seeded Cromwell-Wright Cards last week, the McGregor Mercuries tried to do the same against No. 4 seeded Barnum. However, the Bombers had just enough offensive firepower and defensive moxie to stymie the Mercs as the Bombers took the win to move

on to the semifinals Wednesday night.

"McGregor was a tight game. McGregor played with more energy and hit some big shots to tie it up at about the 6-minute mark," said Bombers coach Rich Newman. "Then we got a couple defensive stops and hit some shots to get the lead to the end."

The Bombers were led by the 11 points of Reed Kornovich, Max Moors added nine, Jake Hultgren scored seven, Garrett Coughlin five, and Willie Richardson four and Joe Peterson contributed three points.

Barnum had an easier time with No. 8 seed St. John's Prep which had won by forfeit in the second round.

In their quarterfinal matchup,

the Bombers stormed out of the gates early as Hultgren and Peterson each racked up 14 points while Kornovich was also in double digits, with 10 points.

The final score was Barnum 73, St. John's 34.

Also scoring for Barnum were Moors with nine points, Coughlin with five and both Matt Berry and Parker Schleret with four points. John Stevens, Evan Gustafson and Layne Wickstrom all recorded three points, and Richards and Hayden Charbonneau each had two points.

"Against St. John's, the boys came out of the gates hard with good defensive pressure and a total team effort in the offensive end," said Newman.

The longtime coach was cau-

tiously optimistic about Wednesday's game against No. 2 Upsala.

"Upsala is a very skilled team," Newman said. "They pass well and can shoot the three. We will have to play good defense and rebound to compete. We have to bring effort and energy. And not turn the ball over against their press."

## Section 7A

Both No. 9 seeded Carlton and No. 12 seed Wrenshall fell in the second round of the Section 7A playoffs on March 18, with Carlton losing to Chisholm 66-42 and Wrenshall falling to Northland 91-52.

Mason Perry led the Wrens with 20 points, Zeke Rousseau added seven, it was six each for

Peyton Johnson, Carter Woodall and Austin Larva, and Joel Lembke finished with two points.

"Right away we were in the game," said Wrens coach Jon Bartczak. "It was back-and-forth and we had a couple of nice runs to put us right back in the game, but they went on a couple of good runs and outscored us by rebounding really well. It was a tough loss. They are a very good shooting team and we just couldn't keep up with them."

The No. 7 seeded South Ridge Panthers were the only local team to make it out of the second round, defeating No. 10 seed Mountain Iron-Buhl 61-59, before falling to No. 2 seeded Deer River Saturday by a score of 77-56.

# Frozen Forester race brings in \$2K for trails

Pine Knot News

This year's annual Frozen Forester races at Pine Valley raised more than \$2,000 to help with trail expansion and maintenance costs for the new bike trails at Cloquet's popular woodland park.

Held on March 13, the unique race offered participants a choice between a 5.5K run/walk/snowshoe — as a family-friendly trails option — or a much more challenging off-trail run. They could also do a 15K fat tire bike ride on groomed trails, or go for both a bike and a run of their choice.

Race turnout has grown from the initial turnout of two people three years ago, with more than 50 participants registering for this year's races.

Eighteen people signed up for the adventure run. The top finisher was Barry Fischer in 1:26:57, followed by David Sunnarborg in 1:29:02 and Sue Ulsby in 1:31:51, the top woman finisher.

Twenty-three people raced in the 15K bike race, making three rounds of the new bike trails through the park. Tom Miller took first place in 55:54, followed by

Travis Jones in 59:39 and Beth Freymiller in 1:02:19.

Freymiller also won the family-friendly 5K race (run on the trails), finishing in 30:44. She was followed by Elizabeth Deluca in 37:55 and Sandra Benney in 40 minutes even.

"We had the luckiest weather that we could have ever had: crisp enough to solidify the snow but warm enough so people were comfortable," Krohn said. "If we had planned it even one day later, it would have been a mess with much warmer temperatures. We could not have asked for a more perfect March day."

Spoken like a true forester.

Sad to have missed it? Look for information on the Lost Forester races coming on Labor Day.

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# KILLING TIME AT THE ARENA



Michael Olson, 10, (right) bounces a ball on his hockey stick while his Superior Blue teammates also burn off some energy between games during this weekend's squirt hockey playoffs at the Pine Valley hockey arenas in Cloquet. Parents said it was a way to stay physically distanced outside. *Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News*

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