

Anoka County UNION HERALD SPORTS

Section 7AA Girls Hockey

Defending champs back to state

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

Light on drama. Heavy on dominance.

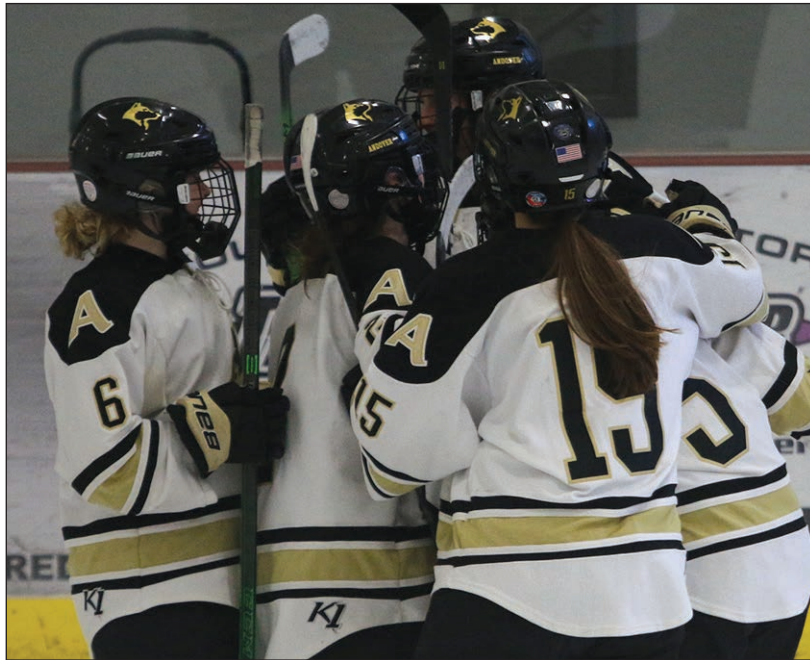
After powering through an undefeated regular season, the top-ranked Andover girls hockey team clinched a chance to defend its state title by defeating Grand Rapids/Greenway 6-1 in the Section 7AA championship March 20.

Any chances of an upset for GR/G were dealt an immediate blow, as Andover's Ella Boerger found the net less than a minute into the action. The Huskies added a goal later in the first period as Gabby Krause scored her 24th goal of the season to make it 2-0.

Andover stretched its advantage to 5-0 in the second period on a pair of goals by Peyton Hemp and a score by Madelynn Jurgensen, then traded goals in the third, with Hemp completing a hat trick as she lifted her season total to 33 goals.

Krause also finished with three assists, Boerger had two assists and Courtney Stagman earned the win in net.

Andover reached the section finals by defeating Princeton 15-0 in the quarterfinals and Elk River/Zimmerman 8-2 in the semifinals March 18, capping a two-month



Andover celebrates after a Gabby Krause goal put them ahead 2-0 in the Section 7AA finals March 20. The Huskies went on to win 6-1 over Grand Rapids/Greenway, earning a return trip to state. Photo by Patrick Slack

stretch in which it navigated a gauntlet consisting of COVID-19 protocols, the pressure of being ranked No. 1 as defending champs and 20 games by outscoring its foes 182-7.

Andover enters the Class AA state tournament as the No. 1 seed and will square off against Farm-

ington (11-8-1) in the quarterfinals March 27 at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. The pairing is a rematch from last year's state quarterfinals, won by Andover 6-0.

Read more player and coach reactions on the team's season journey back to state at tinyurl.com/4d4hes4e

Section 7AA Gymnastics

Anoka's leading trio, SF's Frank reach state

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

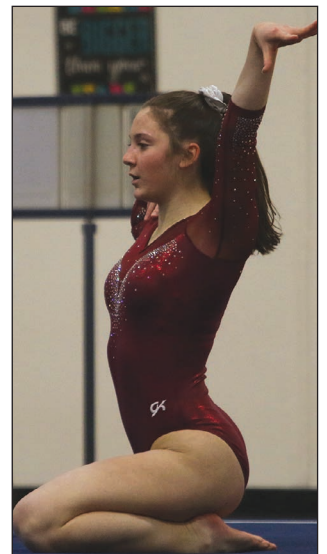
Anoka finished with a trio of state qualifiers and St. Francis had an event champion to lead area gymnasts during the Section 7AA Championships in Forest Lake March 19.

Anoka

Adreanna Willodson was the all-around runner-up for Anoka, which finished in second place in the team race. Willodson posted a total all-around score of 37.325, which included second-place finishes on vault (9.625) and floor (9.625) and a third-place finish on beam (9.35).

Lauren Provoncha earned a trip to state on vault, placing sixth with a score of 9.3. Provoncha posted top-10 finishes in all four events to finish seventh in the all-around competition.

Maren Merrick Melberg also qualified for the



Lauren Provoncha earned top-10 finishes in all four events and was one of three Anoka gymnasts to qualify for state at the Section 7AA meet March 19. Photo by Patrick Slack

Tornadoes by securing a fourth-place finish on beam with a score of 9.325 and finished in ninth place in the all-around.

Annie Hjelle earned sev-

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7AAA/8AAA Wrestling State Prelims

Coon Rapids advances 5, Anoka 3 to state's final 8

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

A late flurry of clutch big moves capped a whirlwind week and secured an area-leading five individual qualifiers for Coon Rapids wrestling to the final day of the Class AAA state tournament.

In a span of an hour, a trio of last-minute take-downs and turns were grouped around a pair of dominant title wins for the Cardinals in the Section 7AAA/8AAA

state prelims held in Coon Rapids March 20. The tournament pitted the top four wrestlers from each section's individual tournament earlier in the week to set up brackets of eight, with the top two from each weight class advancing to the final rounds of the Class AAA State Tournament at St. Michael-Albertville March 25.

Coon Rapids
Demetrius Seals, Alex Kowalchik and Gavin

Layton earned individual titles for Coon Rapids, while Dalan Jones and Elijah Madimba both battled back to win true second matches to all move into the top eight in the state in Class AAA.

Seals used a late five-point move to knock off previously undefeated Jonas Anez of Willmar 8-4 in the finals at 152 after opening the day with wins of 7-0 and 13-4. Kowalchik remained undefeated at 170, dominating

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Coon Rapids' Dalan Jones celebrates with coaches Bob Adams and Adam Thronson after clinching a spot in the state's final eight in Class AAA at 145 during the state prelims March 20. Photo by Patrick Slack

PUZZLE BLOCK ANSWERS

A	S	A	P		B	A	B		A	M	A		
R	U	B	I	A	A	C	E		A	B	A	S	
C	L	I	M	B	N	O	R		B	E	N	I	
A	B	A	C	A	A	N	A		E	T	O	N	
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S	P	A	N	I	E	L	E	D	T				
T	E	R	N	E					H	O	S	T	A
			R	D	F	S	A	M	U	R	A	I	
			C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	I	O	N
			C	A	E	S	U	R	A	E			
B	L	A	H	I	V	A	S	A	B	E	R		
A	U	B	E	G	I	S	A	I	L	E	D		
S	C	A	M	N	A	E	R	A	B	B	I		
E	E	L		S	L	R		S	A	S	S		

CRYPTO FUN ANSWERS:
A) hobby
B) yarn
C) art
D) woodworking



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Section Basketball Back-to-back upsets send Cardinals to finals

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

It took reversing a regular season outcome, on the road, in the quarterfinals.

Then it took flipping a pair of previous defeats – the latest by 33 points just two weeks prior – once again on the road, in the semifinals.

But a team built on grit, found a way – and a defensive gem – to navigate a harrowing path into the Section 7AAAA championship, as Coon Rapids topped Blaine 80-67 March 20 and Andover 54-50 March 23.

“This is a tough team,” Coon Rapids head coach Mike Ogorek said. “We have played in some close games all year and we have grown as a unit from those games. When we were down late, there was no panic in our group. We have been there before and persevered.”

The semifinal game was close throughout, with Coon Rapids going ahead by as much as six at 33-27 early in the second half, only for Andover to rally for a 45-41 lead with six minutes to play.

The Cardinals regrouped, though, going on a quick 7-0 run to take a lead it would not relinquish.

Elijah Smith led Coon Rapids offensively with 22 points in the win over Blaine, joined in double figures by Matthew Elling-



Coon Rapids boys basketball celebrates after knocking off Blaine 80-67 in the Section 7AAAA quarterfinals March 20. The Cardinals went on to defeat Andover in the semifinals, earning a spot in the March 25 finals.

Photo courtesy of Coon Rapids Boys Basketball

son with 17 and Armanti Henry and Jordan Doe with 15 apiece.

Andover couldn't catch a break from the perimeter most of the semifinal, limiting its potent offense. Sam Musungu scored a team-high 22 for the Huskies, who finished with a 13-6 record.

“A lot of factors went into slowing Andover down,” Ogorek said. “For one thing, they did not shoot as well as they did two weeks ago. Secondly, I commend my guys on how much they have committed to defense over these last few weeks.”

“We were more physical and more locked in as a unit on that end. Overall, I loved the way we played. We knew if we were going to win this game we would have to value the basketball and grind out some possessions against their gap defense. We were as patient as we have been all season and were able

to get some good looks on that end. Those good possessions also helped slow down their transition game which they have been great at this season.”

Coon Rapids was scheduled to play at second-seeded Duluth East in the section championship March 25, vying for its first trip to state in nearly 40 years.

“We are thrilled for this opportunity to play for a section championship,” Ogorek said. “As great as it has been to beat two rivals in back-to-back games, a greater prize awaits for us in Duluth: a chance to get to state for the first time since 1983 and the second time in program history.”

Section 4A boys basketball

Senior Jake Wald scored his 1,000th career point as Legacy Christian Academy earned a spot in the Section 4A finals, scheduled for March 25.

Read about Wald's and the Lions' journey at tinyurl.com/npyzh6bx

Girls basketball

Coon Rapids, Andover and Legacy Christian Academy each won their section quarterfinal matchup before falling in the section semifinal round March 23.

In Section 7AAAA, Coon Rapids went on the road to defeat Blaine 67-59 in the quarterfinals March 20, sparked by 28 points from Jenny Ntambwe and 20 from Kate Syverson. The Cardinals fell 70-43 at second-seeded Cambridge-Isanti in the semifinals March 23.

Andover held off Anoka 64-50 in the Section 7AAAA quarterfinals March 20 before falling 78-54 against top-seeded Forest Lake in the semifinals March 23. Jersey Castillo led all scorers with 28 points for Andover in the win over Anoka, with 10 by Annie Feine and eight by Emma Frost. Olivia Anderson led Anoka with 26.

In Section 4A, Legacy Christian Academy won its playoff opener 59-32 over United Christian Academy March 20 before falling 73-23 against top-seeded Mayer Lutheran in the semifinals March 23. Hannah Compton scored 27 and Mya Bredebus had 19 in the win over United.

patrick.slack@apgecm.com

State Boys Swim/Diving CR earns 11th at state

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

Four all-state swims powered an 11th-place team finish for Coon Rapids at the Class AA Boys Swimming and Diving State Championships at the University of Minnesota March 18-19.

Will Melsha provided the top individual placement for the Cardinals, earning fifth place in the 100-yard backstroke in 50.83 seconds to set a new school record.

Tyler Schultze posted a sixth-place finish in the 100 breaststroke in 56.52, also a new school record in addition to an All-American Consideration time.

The 200 medley relay team of Will Melsha, Schultze, Nick Melsha and Brian Tran earned sixth as well and also set a new school record in 1:35.25, with Will Melsha adding a final all-state swim in the 200 IM, earning seventh in 1:53.21.

Schultze also earned 10th in the 100 fly (50.79), Tran earned 11th in the 100 breaststroke (57.69), Jack Simmer earned 14th in diving (330.70), the 400 free relay team of Matthew Strus, Will Melsha, Tran and Schultze earned 17th (3:15.85 – school record) and Nick Melsha earned 21st in the 200 free (1:49.29).

The Cardinals finished with 81 team points in the meet, a 71-point

spike from a year ago. On the season, the Cardinals posted a 10-1 overall record, five school records and 38 additions to the school's top 15 all-time lists.

“What a great meet,” Coon Rapids head coach Doug Donaldson said. “It was a fantastic season!”

Andover

The duo of Ben Linde and Noah Rabb propelled Andover to 21st as a team in Class AA.

Linde delivered an all-state finish in diving, earning fifth place with a total score of 387.45. Rabb earned ninth in the 100 backstroke in 51.46 and 12th in the 200 IM in 1:55.47.

Anoka

Anoka earned 25th place as a team, led by a pair of top-12 individual finishes from Nate Anderson.

Anderson took 10th place in the 50 free in 21.40, then sped to 12th in the 100 free in 47.23.

Earning 13th for the Tornados was the 200 free relay team of Anderson, Noble Singer, Jack Guy and Logan Day (1:29.17), earning 14th was Singer in the 100 breaststroke (58.99) and earning 18th was the 200 medley relay team of Joseph Morphew, Mark Belknap, Singer and Anderson (1:39.35).

patrick.slack@apgecm.com

Section Boys Hockey

Andover powers back to Section 7AA finals

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

A fast start, and quicker responses, secured a return trip to the Section 7AA championship round for Andover boys hockey, defeating Elk River/Zimmerman 7-3 in the semifinals March 20.

Andover was slated to travel to Grand Rapids for the section championship March 24. The Class AA state quarterfinals are March 31, with the semifinals April 2 and the championship April 3.

In the semifinal versus Elk River/Zimmerman, the Huskies jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the opening nine minutes on goals by Logan Gravink and Jacob Pierson, then doubled their advantage to 4-0 in the second period on strikes by Garrett Schifsky and Cooper Conway.

Elk River/Zimmerman got on the board early in the third period,



Garrett Schifsky buries a loose puck before the Elk River/Zimmerman defense can recover in Andover's 7-3 Section 7AA semifinal win March 20.

Photo by Patrick Slack

only for the Huskies to add a pair of goals in the next two minutes by Ethan Lindahl and Gravink.

Elk River/Zimmerman came back with another goal to make it 6-2, but was answered again less than a minute later by Gavyn

Thoreson. Elk River/Zimmerman netted the final goal in the closing minutes with the outcome already decided.

In addition to his two goals, Gravink also had three assists. Goalie Will Larson had 19 saves for the win in net.

Andover opened the playoffs with a 7-0 shutout over Anoka March 18. Anoka stuck around early through stellar goaltending, keeping within 1-0 after one period and 3-0 after two before the Huskies put the game away with a third-period flurry.

Thoreson had a hat trick, Lindahl scored twice and Hudson Zinda and Kylan Andrzczyzak each had a goal. Larson stopped all eight shots he faced for the shutout.

Anoka's Nate Simon had 55 saves.

patrick.slack@apgecm.com

Anoka's leading trio, St. Francis' Frank reach state

Continued from 17A

enth place on floor (9.3) in an 11th-place finish in the all-around.

Cecily Fager earned fifth place on beam (9.125) and Sarah Gatlin added a ninth-place finish on vault (9.225).

St. Francis

St. Francis' Allie Frank was the section champion on beam with a score of 9.45 to earn a trip to the state meet in the event. Frank earned fourth place in the all-around with a total of 36.125.

Lauryn Perry earned 16th in the all-around with a total of 33.575, Lia Mehregan earned 19th in the all-around with a total of 32.2 and Kayla Reid added a 10th-place finish on beam with a score of 8.875 for the Saints, who earned sixth as a team.

Coon Rapids

Cassi Ruschmeyer earned 24th in the all-around with a score of 29.35 and Cecilia Orille earned 27th with a total of 26.85 to lead Coon Rapids

to seventh as a team.

Andover

Malia Wilson (31.325), Savannah Rosenthal (29.375) and Allie Rob-

erts (28.275) each finished in the top 25 in the all-around to lead Andover to eighth as a team.

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