

Pioneer Weekender

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Photos of the month
Life, Page B1

Saturday, March 27, 2021

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'I'm glad to be here'

Bemidji teen escapes scene of Boulder shooting, returns the following day with his cello

By Jillian Gandsey
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BOULDER, Colo., — Whoever told Louis Saxton to "run" as he was walking out of King Soopers on Monday afternoon may have saved his life.

The 18-year-old Bemidji native was simply shopping for groceries on March 22, prior to what would become the scene of a mass shooting at the grocery store in Boulder, Colo.

"I ran for my life," Saxton told the Pioneer on Thursday. "Straight back to my car and drove over the curb and all the way

to Louisville, which is about 10 miles away."

Saxton, who studies at the University of Colorado Boulder on a cello scholarship, lives directly across the street from the store where 10 people were slain. After class, he was picking up frozen fruit at the store, which he shopped at four or five times a week.

"I didn't see anything," he said. "I had serious tunnel vision and I was not able to process anything other than just getting to my car and getting out of there."

SAXTON: Page A5



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

Bemidji State hockey fans cheer at the Bemidji Town and Country Club after the Beavers scored in the first period against No. 1 Wisconsin on Friday, March 26, in the NCAA Tournament.

'BEHIND THE BEAVS'

BSU hockey fans back hometown underdogs in NCAA Tournament

By Bria Barton
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When the clock struck noon on Friday, the excitement was palpable at the Bemidji Town and Country Club's North Shore Grille, where Bemidji State men's hockey fans gathered for a watch party to cheer on their home team for making it to the NCAA Tournament.

Roughly 50 fans showed up to the country club to enjoy some food, have a few drinks, and, most importantly, watch

the Beavers play the Wisconsin Badgers in Bridgeport, Conn.

BSU skated away with a 6-3 victory against the No. 1 Badgers, which means they are now only one win away from the Frozen Four. Friday's game marked the program's fifth NCAA Tournament appearance in its Division I era, and just the second such season with a win.

"We figured 10, maybe 20 people (would come to watch) but it's all good," said Jack Baker, Bemidji Town and Country Club's new general manager.

"We've got a great turnout. I think this is the biggest turnout that we've had. A lot of the big Beaver supporters are here," added Scott Hinners, a member of the club's board of directors.

With 13:27 to go in the first period, cheers erupted from the crowd as the Beavers' Ross Armour scored the opening goal of the game. Fans then shifted into the Beavers' fight song, which they made a habit of singing each time the team scored.

HOCKEY: Page A10



Photo courtesy of TJ Jackson

Bemidji native Louis Saxton plays his cello outside of King Soopers grocery store in Boulder, Colo., on Tuesday, March 23, a day after he survived the mass shooting occurring at the store.

Overcoming obstacles

BSU senior hopes to improve the health of her community and the environment

By Hannah Olson
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BEMIDJI — After years of seeing environmental problems causing hurt in her community, Renee Keezer knew something had to change.

So, she decided to enroll in White Earth Tribal and Community College to get her degree.

Now, a few years later, she's just a couple of months away from graduating



Hannah Olson / Bemidji Pioneer

Justin and Renee Keezer are pictured in the American Indian Resource Center on Thursday, March 18, at Bemidji State University.

from Bemidji State University with a bachelor's degree in environmental science and Indigenous studies, and a number of prestigious internships — including one with NASA — under her belt.

KEEZER: Page A10

ServeMinnesota seeks volunteers for Emergency Response Initiative

By Matthew Liedke
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BEMIDJI — ServeMinnesota, the organization that handles AmeriCorps programs in the state, is hoping to double the number of volunteers in its Emergency Response Initiative.

ServeMinnesota launched the initiative in spring 2020, to help Minnesota organizations impacted by the coronavirus. According to a press release, more than 300 people in 37 communities assisted several agencies, including the Bemidji Community Food Shelf.

This year, ServeMinnesota is looking to get more than 700 people to help with the initiative.

"People are going to be doing some tutoring activities and working with child care and K-12," said

Julia Quanrud of ServeMinnesota. "We're also going to definitely have some projects around food insecurity and housing insecurity. There's also a lot of work around isolation. Last year, we partnered with many agencies for older adults, helping those folks not be isolated, like connecting with loved ones over Zoom."

For the issue of housing, Quanrud said last year, the volunteers worked both with Habitat for Humanity to construct housing, as well as help organizations trying to get rental assistance out.

Those interested in serving are asked to apply by May 19 and participants will serve through Aug. 14. Those who participate will receive a

VOLUNTEERS: Page A5



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OPINION.....A4	COMMUNITY.....B3
SPORTS.....A7-9	OBITUARIES.....B4
PUZZLES.....B8	CLASSIFIEDS.....B5-8
	NORTHLAND OUTDOORS...B9-10

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MEN'S HOCKEY



Greg Vasil / Special to the Pioneer

The Beavers celebrate Ross Armour's first-period goal against Wisconsin in the NCAA East Regional semifinals at Bridgeport, Conn., on Friday, March 26.

BEAVERS STUN BADGERS

BSU knocks off Wisconsin in 6-3 win, advances to NCAA regional final

By Austin Monteith
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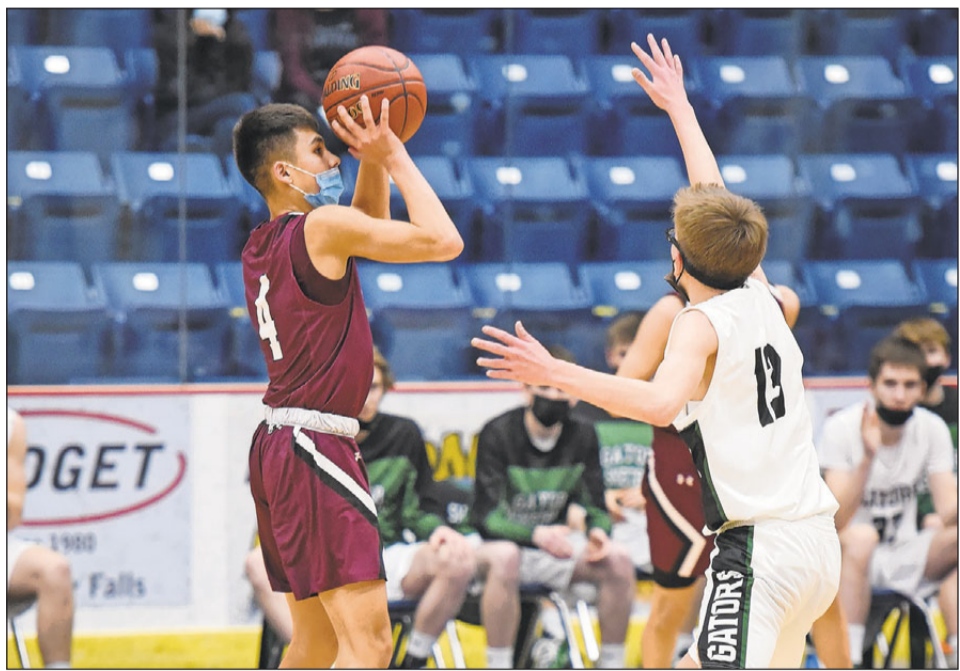
Bridgeport, Conn.
Bemidji State is one win away from the Frozen Four. The fourth-seeded Beavers stormed out to a 2-0 first-period lead and knocked off top-seeded Wisconsin in a 6-3 victory in the NCAA men's hockey East Regional

semifinals Friday afternoon at Bridgeport, Conn. Ethan Somoza bucketed two goals and an assist in the first-round upset in a tenacious performance by BSU (16-9-3). "Our word all week was attack," BSU head coach Tom Serratore said. "That's how we play. We're a puck-pressure team and we wanted to make sure that we played our game." The Badgers (20-10-1) fell behind early and trailed 2-0 at the first intermission. Bemidji State outshot UW 16-7 in the opening frame and

were in control out of the gate, keeping Wisconsin's high-powered scorers in check. "I don't know. Maybe they weren't prepared for it, but we stuck to what we've been doing the whole year," Somoza said. "Our focus is being really aggressive on the forecheck and causing turnovers, keeping things really simple in the defensive zone." BSU took the lead on a fortuitous bounce off a Badger defender. The bouncing puck arrived at the stick of Ross Armour who backhanded it for the opening goal

6:33 into the contest. A turnover gave the Beavers a boost heading into the intermission. Elias Rosén scored an unassisted tally from the point with 15 seconds to go in the period. "We kept the momentum going there," Rosén said. "Taking a 2-0 lead coming into the second period is always huge." A pair of penalties on the Sillinger brothers, Lukas and Owen, gave UW 1:46 on a 5-on-3 opportunity early in the second. **BEAVERS:** Page A8

BOYS BASKETBALL



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

Cass Lake-Bena freshman Dominic Fairbanks (4) shoots to score a 3-pointer in the Section 8A championship game against Badger/Greenbush-Middle River on Thursday, March 25, at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls.

Cass Lake-Bena rally denied, Gators go wild as 55-47 Section 8A champions

By Micah Friez
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THIEF RIVER FALLS — The final buzzer signaled what Cass Lake-Bena boys basketball head coach John Wind already knew: "We ran out of time." The Panthers nearly overcame a 16-point deficit in the final 12 minutes on Thursday, sneaking out of Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls with the Section 8A championship. Instead, the comeback ran out of steam and underdog Badger/Green-

bush-Middle River celebrated a dramatic 55-48 win for its first title since 2007. "We had a game plan and we didn't execute it. And then we ran out of time, basically," Wind said. "We came out flat and played flat most of the game. It goes back to us not executing our game plan. We didn't execute our offenses, and our defense just wasn't there. They're a decent team, a good team. They played harder." The Gators, seeded No. 2 in the West subsection, came in and seized

control over the East's top seed in CLB. And so they dictated the start, the stretch and the final celebration. In turn, they denied Cass Lake-Bena its ninth section championship and first since 2018. "We know what we have to do. Because we've done it," Wind said. "We've played games where we've (followed) the game plan, worked our offense and we play good defense. We've done it, tonight it just wasn't there." **BASKETBALL:** Page A9

WRESTLING

Bemidji's Barrick Nelson falls in state quarterfinals

Pioneer Staff Report
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ST. MICHAEL — Barrick Nelson's run at a state title came to an end Thursday. The Bemidji High School sophomore was eliminated from the Class 3A Individual State Wrestling Tournament, falling in the quarterfinals at St. Michael-Albertville High School. Competing at 182 pounds, Nelson was the lone Lumberjack to

advance out of last Saturday's state prelims and qualify for the final eight in his weight class. The sophomore earned All-State honors by virtue of his top-eight finish. In the state quarterfinals, Nelson faced Little Falls senior Gabe Nagel, who entered the day at 33-0 and ranked No. 2 in the state. Nagel won by pin in 50 seconds. Shifting to the consolation bracket, Nelson attempted a comeback

on Wayzata freshman Dominic Heim, ranked No. 10 in the state with a 33-6 record. Heim held on for a narrow 9-8 decision that ended Nelson's tournament. Nagel went on to lose 3-2 in the championship to Waconia's top-ranked sophomore Max McEnelly for the state title. Finishing the year with a 24-8 record, Nelson is set to return for his junior season in 2021-22.



Joe Brown / Forum News Service

Bemidji's Barrick Nelson (left) tries to get away from Little Falls' Gabe Nagel during their Class 3A 182-pound state quarterfinal match on Thursday, March 25, at St. Michael.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

BHS pulls away from Detroit Lakes, advances to section championship

By Robert Williams
Forum News Service



Robert Williams / Forum News Service

Bemidji head coach Steve Schreiber celebrates with his starters, who watched the final minutes from the bench after creating a comfortable lead on the scoreboard in a Section 8-3A semifinal victory over Detroit Lakes on Tuesday, March 23, at Ralph Anderson Gymnasium.

to come together right away this season.

The Lakers have employed steady movement on the offensive end all season, picking up the speed of plays as the year progressed. Tuesday night, Bemidji found a way to throw a wrench in the machine.

“They disrupted the flow and offensively they had a great plan too and when you’re hitting stuff that makes it hard,” Detroit Lakes head coach Rachel Johnson said.

“Just being able to penetrate and finish around the rim and also having to guard the kick out because they’re going to finish their 3-pointers too. It makes it a really difficult challenge for everyone to guard.”

The Lakers got into a groove late in the first half, finishing off a 12-6 run to the halftime horn to go to the break down a half-dozen 26-20. DL freshman Helena Daggett hit a big three from the corner to finish off the run and send the Lakers to the locker room with needed momentum.

Jacee Hauser and Gunderson had big threes in the early going of the second half as DL kept pace and trailed 36-31 at the 13-minute mark.

Bemidji’s Emily Wade scored on back-to-back

possessions, getting to the rim and the foul line to extend the lead to seven. On the ensuing inbounds play, Schreiber sent his team into a full-court press and Wade sniped a Laker pass and scored again to create a nine-point cushion in five seconds.

The Jacks held a 10-point lead for most of the final nine minutes.

Bemidji employed a backdoor cut to Wade with excellent assists from Beth Bolte to get to the rim late and sealed the game shooting freebies in the double bonus.

Wade led all scorers with 22 points; Jackie Johnson had 18. Bolte and Katelyn Milbrandt each scored eight points.

Hauser paced the Lakers with 14 points, and Alex Bettcher scored 12.

Top-seeded Alexandria (16-4) defeated No. 4 Sartell-St. Stephen 50-30 in the other semifinal and hosted the Section 8-3A championship game on Friday, March 26. The game began after press time, but full results are online at bemidjipioneer.com.

No. 3 Bemidji 67, No. 2 Detroit Lakes 51	
BEM 26	41 — 67
DL 20	31 — 51
BEMIDJI (10-10) — Wade 22, Johnson 18, Bolte 8, Milbrandt 8, Tatro 5, Huberty 2, Pemberton 2, Zetlah-Cornelius 2.	
DETROIT LAKES (12-7) — Hauser 14, Bettcher 12, Gunderson 8, Tangen 5, Larson 4, Daggett 3, Jones 3, Anderson 2.	



Photos by Greg Vasil / Special to the Pioneer

Bemidji State junior Ross Armour celebrates his first-period goal against Wisconsin in the NCAA East Regional semifinals at Bridgeport, Conn., on Friday, March 26.

BEAVERS

From Page A7

A 5-on-3 power-play goal by Linus Weissbach 2:38 into the period cut the deficit in half for the Badgers. BSU killed the remainder of the second penalty to limit the damage.

“We sure as heck didn’t get rattled,” Serratore said. “We stuck with it and that’s a testament to the players.”

Bemidji State has played well with a lead all season, and extended the advantage to 3-1 with 5:18 remaining in the stanza. Somoza fired a one-timer past goalie Robbie Beydoun to restore the two-goal cushion off of a dish from Aaron Miller.

The Beavers continued to pressure and forced another Wisconsin miscue.

Owen Sillinger took advantage of a misplayed puck by Beydoun and caught the netminder out of his crease, scoring on a wraparound. The shorthanded goal with only 1:21 to go in the frame proved to be a backbreaker.

Beydoun was pulled following the second period and replaced in net by Cameron Rowe.

Somoza netted his second goal of the day with 13:55 to go in the third, handing BSU a 5-1 lead.

But Cole Caufield wasn’t going to be held scoreless. The Hobey Baker Award favorite went down swinging, potting two goals for the Badgers in the final 12 minutes to raise tensions in the game’s final moments.

Caufield first converted on the power play with 11:41 to play. He then notched a goal at even strength with 5:04 remaining.

Wisconsin’s comeback attempt, however, came up short.

Brendan Harris added an empty-net goal with 1.2 seconds to play and the celebrations were on for the upstart



Bemidji State celebrates at the final horn following a 6-3 victory over Wisconsin.

Beavers.

The win was the third all-time in NCAA Division I tournament play for Bemidji State.

BSU will play the winner of second-seeded Massachusetts and third-seeded Lake Superior State in the East Regional final at 4 p.m. Saturday, March 27. The regional champion advances to the Frozen Four in Pittsburgh.

The Minutemen and Lakers met later Friday afternoon. Results were not available at press time.

Bemidji State’s win continues a streak of a No. 4 seed defeating a No. 1 seed in every NCAA Tournament since 2006.

“I guess they’re called upsets because you might be a lower seed,” Serratore said. “But a lot of times, it’s who’s playing best at that particular time of year as well. ... Nothing surprises us anymore.”

Bemidji State 6, Wisconsin 3
BSU 2 2 — 6
UW 0 1 2 — 3
First period — 1, BSU, Armour (Rosén), 6:33; 2, BSU, Rosén (unassisted), 19:45.
Second period — 3, UW, Weissbach (Caufield, Pelton-Byce), 2:38, 5v3 PP; 4, BSU, Somoza (Miller), 14:42; 5, BSU, O. Sillinger (unassisted), 18:39, SH.
Third period — 6, BSU, Somoza (Harris), 6:08; 7, UW, Caufield (Holloway, Pelton-Byce), 8:19, PP; 8, UW, Caufield (Ahcan, Vorlicky), 14:56; 9, BSU, Harris (Somoza), 19:59, EN, SH.
Goalies (saves-shots) — BSU, Driscoll (30-33); UW, Beydoun (24-28), Rowe (10-11).

Austin Monteith is the sports editor for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9787.

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SCOREBOARD

AREA SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, MARCH 27
College Baseball
 Bemidji State at Sioux Falls (DH), noon
College Women's Tennis
 Bemidji State at Minnesota Duluth, 1 p.m.
Prep Wrestling
 Class A Individual State finals, 2 p.m. (at St. Michael-Albertville)
College Men's Hockey
 NCAA East Regional final (Bridgeport, Conn.)
 Teams TBD, 4 p.m.
Prep Gymnastics
 Class AA State Meet (at Champlin Park), 6 p.m.
College Women's Track & Field
 Wildcat Outdoor Classic, all day (at Wayne, Neb.)

SUNDAY, MARCH 28
College Women's Tennis
 Bemidji State vs. St. Cloud State, 8 a.m. (at Duluth)
College Baseball
 Bemidji State at Sioux Falls, noon

MONDAY, MARCH 29
College Softball
 Minnesota Crookston at Bemidji State (DH), 1 p.m.
College Men's Golf
 Central Region Preview, all day (at Kansas City, Mo.)

TUESDAY, MARCH 30
Prep Girls Basketball
 Class 3A State Tournament quarterfinals, TBA
 Class A State Tournament quarterfinals, TBA
College Baseball
 Bemidji State at Upper Iowa (DH), 1:30 p.m.
College Men's Golf
 Central Region Preview, all day (at Kansas City, Mo.)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31
Prep Girls Basketball
 Class 3A State Tournament quarterfinals, TBA
 Class A State Tournament quarterfinals, TBA

PREP SPORTS

Boys Basketball

Section 8A championship (March 25)
 West No. 2 BGMR 55, East No. 1 Cass Lake-Bena 48
Section 8A East championship (March 23)
 No. 1 Cass Lake-Bena 77, No. 3 Red Lake 31

Girls Basketball

Section 8-3A semifinals (March 23)
 No. 3 Bemidji 67, No. 2 Detroit Lakes 51

Boys Hockey

Section 8AA championship (March 25)
 Moorhead 5, Roseau 1

BOWLING

Commercial League

Pinnacle 37, Blind 3
 Team Industries 34, Slims 6
 Rascals 26.5, Appraisal Associates 13.5
 Sand Trap Golf 21, Acme Transport 19
 High Game: Ben Filipi 242, Scott Hinners 233, Tom Burlingame 224.
 High Series: Ben Filipi 647, Scott Hinners & Tom Burlingame 607.

Cass Lake-Bena rides dominant defensive effort to Section 8A title game

FOSSTON — The Cass Lake-Bena girls basketball team has reached heights it hasn't seen in 16 years. The Panthers smothered Fosston defensively in a 58-30 road victory Tuesday night in the Section 8A semifinals to advance to the program's first section championship game since 2005. East subsection title in hand, Cass Lake-Bena was scheduled to face West subsection champion Stephen-Argyle Friday night at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls for a state tournament berth. Results were not available at press time. The Panthers forced 30 turn-

overs in a dominant defensive performance right out of the gate Tuesday. "That's amazing," CLB head coach Martin Wind told KKCQ radio. "That's a really good job by my girls. They stuck with the game plan." Cass Lake-Bena nearly led from start to finish. The second-seeded Panthers (16-5) embarked on a 21-0 run to go ahead 23-2 eight minutes into the game. The top-seeded Greyhounds (18-2) had no answer for the relentless pressure imposed by the visitors. "We had good ball movement and we pressured on defense,"

Wind said. "We got our hands on a lot of steals and then we pushed the ball up the court." Fosston didn't make its first field goal until 8:36 into the game when they finally snapped the 21-0 Panther run as CLB took a 31-12 lead into halftime. The margin grew as wide as 50-19 midway through the second half, punctuated by Krisalyn Seeyle's layup. Seeyle led all scorers with 18 points for the game. Kailee Fineday chipped in 14 points for Cass Lake-Bena. Taylor Kroening totaled 10 points to pace Fosston. Wind's father, John, was

coaching the Panther girls the last time they advanced as far as the section title game in 2005. That year Cass Lake-Bena defeated Barnesville in the Section 6A title game en route to the state tournament. John Wind also found himself coaching in a section title game this week at the helm of the Panther boys, who fell 55-48 to Badger/Greenbush-Middle River on Thursday in Thief River Falls. **No. 2 Cass Lake-Bena 58, No. 1 Fosston 30**
 CLB 31, FOS 27 — 58
 FOS 12, CLB 18 — 30
 CASS LAKE-BENA (16-5) — Seeyle 18, K. Fineday 14, Frazer 6, LaDuke 5, G. Fineday 5, Wright 4, My Reyes 3, M. Mitchell 2, Giffen 1.
 FOSSTON (18-2) — Kroening 10, Norland 5, Dupong 3, Mahlen 2, Noel 2, Rue 2, Vesledahl 2, Carlin 2, Rosendahl 1, J. Manecke 1.

BASKETBALL

From Page A7

Cass Lake-Bena couldn't buy a bucket for much of the first half. Although Leroy Fairbanks scored inside to make it a 3-2 game, the basket was the last for the Panthers (18-4) for the next 7:27.

BGMR had just a 12-2 lead to show for their efforts, as the Gators (19-3) went 7:15 without making a shot during an overlapping stretch. Still, Badger/Greenbush-Middle River's defense allowed just two points over the opening 10 minutes and change.

CLB finally started to hit some shots late in the first half, including 3-pointers from TrayVaughn Lee, Dominic Fairbanks and Timmy Smith, but it seemed like the Gators' own offensive struggles evaporated whenever they needed a big basket.

"Just when we thought we were getting closer, they would do something," Wind said. "They would score or get a three or something because of our lack of defense. We didn't play real good defense, and that kind of killed us. That killed our



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

Badger/Greenbush-Middle River celebrates after winning the Section 8A championship game on Thursday, March 25, at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls.

chance of getting back into the game." BGMR ultimately carried a 24-15 lead into halftime, and Kasen Swenson caught fire out of the locker rooms to extend the Gator advantage. He hit a flurry of corner 3-pointers in the opening three minutes, and Cass Lake-Bena sunk into a 36-20 deficit as the clock ticked under 12 minutes. The Panthers weren't going

to go quietly, and Dominic Fairbanks made sure of that. The freshman guard poured in 16 points after halftime, willing his team back from the dead. He drained a trio of threes to cut back within single digits, flashed his footwork with a Euro-step layup on a fast break. His free throws with 2:40 left had Cass Lake-Bena within 46-42. BGMR's Aaron Westling

answered back with two big free throws, and Adam Benke added two more the next time down.

Kaydin Lee drained a 3-pointer for a 50-45 game with 1:15 left, and then Dominic Fairbanks made it 52-48 on a three with 37 seconds remaining. The defense forced a stop, but Fairbanks missed his next attempt and later committed a charge that all but sealed the game. "We just didn't run our offenses. At this level, you have to run a structured offense," Wind said. "We came back out (in the second half) and things started looking good. But we went back to the same thing."

Dominic Fairbanks led the Panthers with 19 points, while Lee also tallied double figures with 12. Kobey Dallager led the BGMR charge with 15 points, and Benke (14 points) and Swenson (11) joined him in double-digits. Cass Lake-Bena graduates two seniors in Jauquin Sargent and Smith. **No. 2 BGMR 55, No. 1 Cass Lake-Bena 48**
 BGMR 24, CLB 31 — 55
 CLB 15, BGMR 33 — 48
 BADGER/GREENBUSH-MIDDLE RIVER (19-3) — Dallager 15, Benke 14, Swenson 11, Westling 9, Blawat 4, Augustson 2.
 CASS LAKE-BENA (18-4) — D. Fairbanks 19, K. Lee 12, L. Fairbanks 9, T. Lee 3, Smith 3, Lanham 2.

Micah Friez is a sports reporter for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9789.

ASK THE EXPERT Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?

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AUDIOLOGY

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Andrea Wilson
 Au.D.

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Matt Morris,
 MS, ATC, LAT

REAL ESTATE

Q: I am in the process of selling an investment property and am worried how taxes on the gain will affect the amount I will have to reinvest. I was told to look into a 1031 Exchange. How would that help?

A: The gain in the sale of a property other than your homestead is open for taxing. It is considered a Capitol Gain and would be taxed at the current Capitol Gains rate. When you pay this tax, it reduces what you then have to reinvest.

There is a method that can be used to legally delay taxes on gain. In a nutshell, you have to pay the taxes on the gain you receive. If you do not receive the gain, you do not have to pay the taxes. How can you accomplish this yet still have the gain? The arrangement you set up is that instead of going directly to you, the gain is directed to an intermediary, which holds the money until you find a like-kind property to purchase and at which time this intermediary company then funds the purchase with your money they have been holding. In practice, you are not receiving the funds, but merely exchanging one property for a like-kind. Having never received the funds, you are not liable for taxes on the gain.

For example, lets say you were looking at a \$400,000 gain. Tax liability could be approximately \$140,000 in combined taxes; leaving \$260,000. Using that for an investment, needing 25% down, you would be eligible for \$1,040,000 replacement property. Choosing the 1031 Exchange you would have the entire \$400,000 available and be eligible for \$1,600,000.

See your tax accountant or financial advisor for advice before venturing into any process as this. Your Realtor can help you find a good 1031 Exchange property.

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The Bemidji Pioneer

HOCKEY

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Almost through the first period, one fan walked in and said, "Good score, eh?"

"As long as (the score) stays something-nothing," Baker said. "I don't care how much 'the something' is as long as it stays a goose egg on the other end."

While BSU went into the tournament as the underdog against Wisconsin, fans at the watch party held strong and voiced confidence in the Beavers.

"I think this is the second time they've been there, and it's a way better team," Hinners said. "This year we have three really strong lines and we can give it to anybody."

The Beavers have made 31 national tournament appearances all-time going back to 1967-68. This 2021 tournament marks the second time Bemidji State has received an at-large bid to the tournament, along with 2010.

Hinners said that in an average year, he can be found at almost every Beaver hockey game. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he hasn't been able to attend games in person this year.

Also in attendance was life-long Beavers fan Paul Friesen, who gathered with friends and ate lunch while watching the tournament. Like Hinners, he said he would have attended games had COVID not prevented it.

However, Friesen said the watch party has been a great opportunity for fans to come together as a community and show their support.

"It's the only Division I sport we have in Bemidji, and it's the biggest thing in the



Photos by Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

About 50 people attended a viewing party at the Bemidji Town and Country to watch the Bemidji State men's hockey team take on No. 1 Wisconsin on Friday, March 26, in the NCAA Tournament.

area. It's as simple as that," Friesen said. "I think it's a great deal for the whole town, and it's the buzz of the town. (We're all) behind the Beavs."

By the end of the second period - with the Beavers up 4-1 - it was obvious that fans were even more confident that the Beavers would hold on in the third period. They would go on to score two additional goals in the game.

So when the seconds on the clock winded down in the last period - and it was clear the Beavers had a hold over the Badgers - deafening hoots and hollers, applause and high-pitched whistles rang

out through the country club as fans celebrated the victory of their team.

"They came out really strong, and we've had a really strong season this year," said Beaver fan Shelly Geerdes. "We knew that they had it in them."

BSU will play the winner of second-seeded Massachusetts and third-seeded Lake Superior State in the East Regional final at 4 p.m. today, March 27. The Minutemen and Lakers played Friday night, but the results came in after press time.

Readers can reach Pioneer reporter Brija Barton at (218) 333-9798.



Bemidji State hockey fans cheer at the Bemidji Town and Country Club during the first period against No. 1 Wisconsin on Friday, March 26, in the NCAA Tournament.

KEEZER

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Post-graduation, Keezer already has a position lined up working for the White Earth Band of Ojibwe as a pesticide coordinator and hopes to continue researching the impacts of agriculture chemicals on people and the environment.

How did she get there? Keezer credits the support of her husband Justin Keezer - who was also recently inspired to go back to school for a business degree - as well as support from her community.

Nudge into science

After graduating high school in 1999, Keezer got her start in continuing education at the White Earth Tribal and Community College in 2014, with the goal of taking Ojibwe language classes.

While Keezer herself is not enrolled or a descendent, her daughter is Anishinaabe, and Keezer felt she could better help her daughter to understand her culture by taking language classes.

Then, she found herself drawn to science. "He gave me the nudge into the science," she said, gesturing to Justin. "We were driving and I was looking around and thought, 'I don't like all these farm chemicals.'" When Justin prompted

her to explain why she thought they were bad for the environment, she didn't have an answer. So, she set out to figure out the kind of impact pesticides and farm chemicals were having on the local environment.

Keezer presented at the American Indian High Education Consortium which led her to an internship with NASA. When most people hear NASA, they think of rocket ships and space exploration. Keezer said this isn't always the case. "A big portion of what they do is with the earth sciences," she explained. "They deal with a lot more than just space, they deal with stuff with the changing climate, changes in vegetation, working on changes in the water and water quality."

Keezer worked to create a vulnerability index showing the potential impacts on the land, water and wild rice from farm chemicals.

"My big focus was the impacts modern agriculture is having on our environment, specifically the impacts it's having on the wild rice and the water quality," she said.

She graduated from WETCC in 2016 with honors and then enrolled at Bemidji State University to study environmental science with an emphasis in environmental health and toxicology. She is also seek-

ing a degree in Indigenous studies and a minor in Ojibwe.

Currently, Keezer is a senior at BSU and is working at the American Indian Resource Center on campus.

During the fall 2020 semester, Keezer was also named the first recipient of the Raymond and Margaret Carlson Public Service Scholarship. The scholarship recognizes a BSU student who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to the community and public service.

"The people here at BSU have been so wonderful and shown such amazing support. I wouldn't have been able to do it if it wasn't for the people here at the AIRC and my teachers," she said. "This is not something I ever would have been able to do on my own, it's been through the support of the community."

Overcoming obstacles

Keezer's accomplishments are made all the more impressive by the hurdles she's overcome to reach them.

"I've had a lot of health issues, I'm a cancer survivor, I've had 15

surgeries, four of them while I've been a student at (BSU)," she said. "I understand the pain of the people who are sick and I don't want anyone to ever be as sick as I've been. A lot of it is environmentally caused. It's from the foods we eat, the chemicals in our water, the pollution in our air."

Keezer said the many health issues present in White Earth and Mahnommen County caused her to want to further investigate agricultural impacts and try to help. She noted that Mahnommen County is currently ranked the least healthy county in the state by the Minnesota Department of Health.

"My theory is it's due to the extensive chemical use. They changed the land, they took out the White Pine and they converted a lot of it to agriculture," she said. "Our ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life and health of the people."

Keezer lost custody of two of her children around 14 years ago and said they are her inspiration to keep pushing

for change - in both herself and the environment.

"I have to do better. I have to do better for my kids than what I was doing," she said. "If I can't be in their lives, I want to at least do something that will make their world a little better. At least give it a good go."

Renee and Justin Keezer are both deeply involved in tribal and local politics, as well as social justice issues.

The Keezers said when they attend protests and take stands on political issues, they want to make sure they are fully informed and can help avoid band-aid solutions and deal with underlying issues.

"It's a lot different when you can sit down and coherently have a conversation and explain why you're mad. You can explain the things that are coming with these problems, and then you get people to start changing their minds," Justin said. "We feel that if you're educated on a subject and you know a little bit more about it, then they're less likely to say,

"Throw those protestors in jail."

The couple has worked to help eradicate harmful drugs in White Earth and prevent overdoses. The two helped organize a "March on Drug Dealers," with a message of, "We love you, we don't want you to die, we don't want to lose any more in our community," Keezer said.

Keezer is hoping to let all of this positive momentum continue to propel her forward. She's already been offered a position working for the White Earth Band of Ojibwe as a pesticide coordinator, which she will officially begin after she graduates in May.

She said her goals for the next five years center around, "trying to implement long term management plans to improve the quality of the environment and human health."

Two of her goals are to implement larger and more concrete buffer regions between farmlands and waterways to help avoid chemical runoff and to push for a ban on Round-Up.

Hannah Olson is a multimedia reporter for the Pioneer. She can be reached at (507) 676-1101.