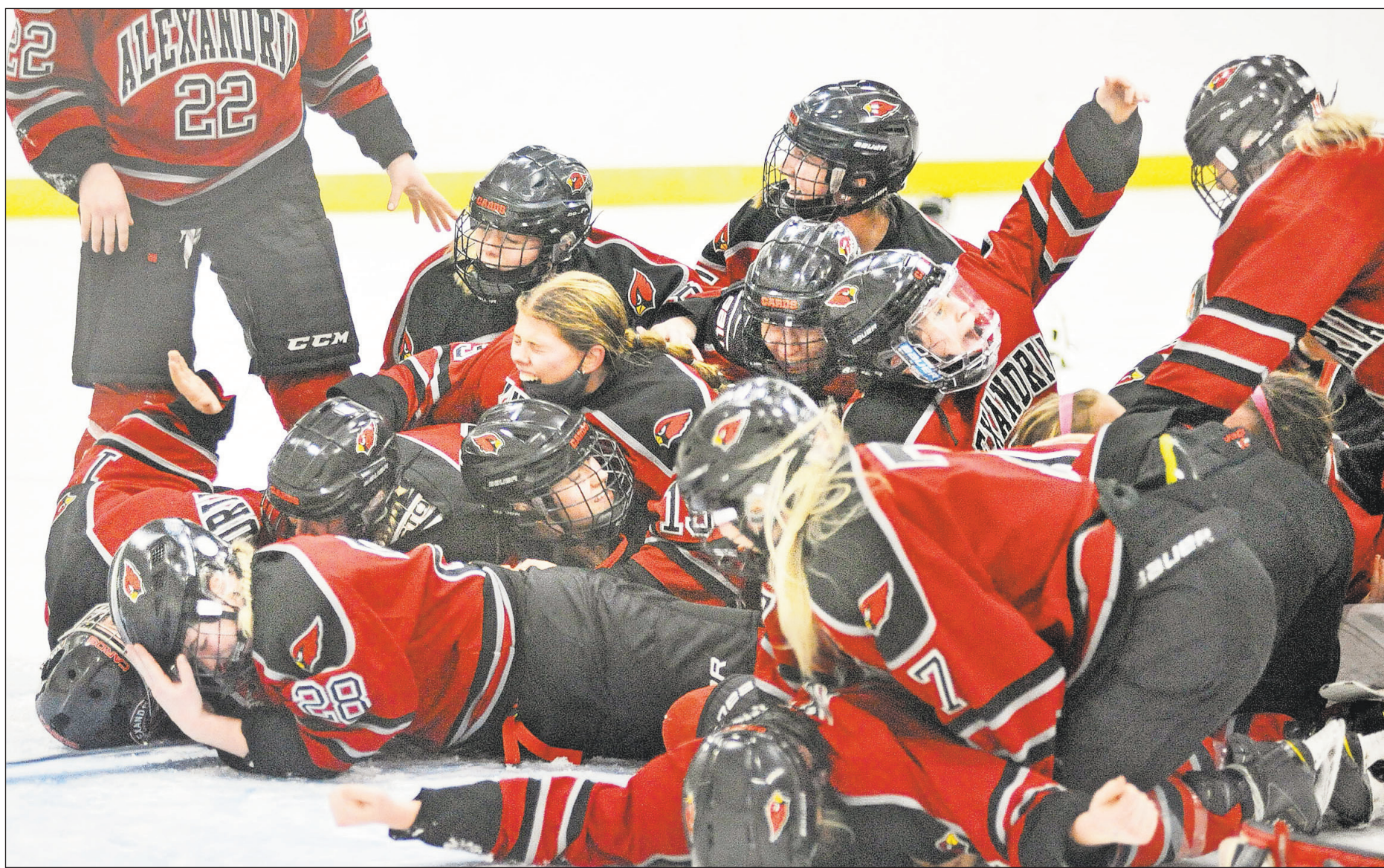


## GIRLS HOCKEY

# 'THE CARDIAC KIDS'



Jared Rubado / Echo Press

The Alexandria girls hockey team celebrates its first Section 8AA title after beating Roseau 2-1 at the Rams Sports Center on Saturday, March 20. Lauren Maras scored two goals and Jordan O'Kane made 36 saves in the win.

## Alexandria dethrones top seeds to earn first Class AA state trip

By Jared Rubado  
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When the final horn of the Section 8AA hockey tournament sounded in Roseau on Saturday night, Alexandria head coach Molly Arola hugged her assistant coach Jeff Doherty.

She then looked at the wave of Cardinals

accumulated on top of junior goaltender Jordan O'Kane in front of the Alexandria net. Arola had two words to describe that feeling: "Just love."

The third-seeded Cardinals (14-4-2) beat the top-seeded Roseau Rams (14-6-1) 2-1 to clinch their first Section 8AA title. They will now play Minnetonka

(15-3-3) in the first round of the state tournament at 1 p.m. on March 27.

With 4:07 left in regulation on Saturday, the Rams went on the power play trailing by a goal. After killing the penalty, the Cardinals held the puck in the offensive zone. A blue-line collision resulted in another Alexandria penalty

with 1:34 left in the game.

With its goalie pulled, Roseau had a bevy of opportunities on a 6-on-4 advantage, including a shot from senior forward Kate Helgeson that rang off the post with 14 seconds left.

"Oh my gosh, my heart sank to the bottom of my feet," sophomore forward Lauren Maras said. "When

I saw that ref slash his arms out to the side, I knew Jordan had it. I knew we had it."

O'Kane made her 36th save in the final seconds of regulation before the Rams Sports Center turned into Cardinal pandemonium. Players spilled out of the

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## SWIM AND DIVE

## GYMNASTICS



Contributed photo

The Alexandria swimming team brought home a second-place finish at the Class A state meet from the University of Minnesota on Saturday, March 20. Team members at state are (left to right) head coach Kathy Walker, Erik Reineke, Anthony Hoyt, Thomas Williams, Ethan Johnson, Torrey Olson-Rodel, Nicolas Welle, Carter Holm, Logan Tung and assistant coach Steve Kluver. Not pictured are divers Caden Kavanagh and Aidan Staples, who had a hand in the finish but competed two days earlier.

## A storybook ending

Cardinals' talent, dedication pay off with runner-up finish

By Eric Morken  
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Alexandria boys swimming and diving coach Kathy Walker was sitting in the bleachers at the Discovery Middle School pool after Sartell-St. Ste-

phen beat her Cardinals on Feb. 18 when she made a prediction.

"I think (Sartell) can get second in the state," Walker said that day. "I hope we can get third."

Turns out Walker was a little off. Instead of the Sabres finishing runner-up to Class A power Breck-Blake, it was her Alexandria team that

took second at the Class A state meet on Saturday. Walker couldn't be more happy to be wrong.

"The boys disagreed with me," Walker said with a chuckle on Sunday morning. "Our boys swam extremely well. After the emotion of swimming at Sartell in their home pool

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## Kelsey Fletcher heads to state in three events

By Eric Morken  
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Alexandria's Kelsey Fletcher has been a leader for the Cardinals gymnastics team over the last couple seasons, and she will be rewarded for that with a trip to the state meet as a senior.

Fletcher and her Alexandria teammates joined the rest of a competitive Section 8AA field on Saturday where the Cardinals finished fifth as a team

with 139.025 points. That was an improvement from a score of 133.75 last year.

With individual spots at state up for grabs, Fletcher came through with state-qualifying scores in vault (fourth, 9.375), bars (fifth, 8.850) and floor (fourth, 9.325).

"The meet felt super good," Fletcher said. "Going into the meet, our team was really excited because it was sections and we wanted to show off our skills. I knew that I had a chance to make it to state on vault and floor, but I wasn't positive that I would...Two years ago at the start of the season I couldn't imagine flipping my vault, no less a pike!"

Fletcher called it a surprise to make it on bars, which she consid-

ers her weakest event. She credited head coach Tayler Kaufman and her positive approach for a lot of her growth over the last couple of seasons in the high school program.

Due to the pandemic, four teams from the section competed in the morning and four more in the afternoon. Alexandria was in that second group, which Fletcher said helped her focus better.

"That really helped us look at the other teams' scores less and just focus on our team and our scores," she said. "Looking at the downfalls of it, the meet was a little less exciting because all the fans and teams weren't there. It didn't really feel like a normal sections. Also not being able to stand up on the podium and having to find out the results in the bus was a little sad, but we were still able to find out results as a team and celebrate with each other."

Kaufman did not let her athletes know the scores from the morning session in an attempt to try to get them to solely focus on their own routines.

"There were some really big scores happening," Kaufman said. "I didn't let the girls on my team know these scores so they would have complete

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Fletcher

## Hey Alexandria, Gardonville's got my voice.

Greg Tvrdik, First Lutheran Church



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