

Ready from the get-go

Three goals in the first two minutes carry Cards into semifinals

By Jared Rubado

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It's hard to picture a better way to start a hockey game than having the top three lines score goals on their first shifts, but that's precisely what Alexandria did last Friday night.

The Cardinals (9-9-1) scored three goals in the opening 1:11 of the first period. Those three goals were enough as they went on to beat the Morris-Benson Area Storm (13-5) 7-2 in the quarterfinal round of the Section 6A tournament.

"Three goals in three shifts was pretty awesome," senior captain Jacob Partington said. "We really couldn't have asked for a better start to the game."

With Friday likely being the last home game, the Cardinals opened the game with their seniors on the ice. Senior forward Grant Rebrovich scored 31 seconds into the contest with assists from Partington and senior forward Peyton Doty.

"It was kind of a combination of lines because we put all the seniors out there to start it," Alexandria head coach

Josh Meyers said. "That was pretty cool for them to score on that shift. That was the only time they were together until the last bit of the third period."

The opening tally was followed by a goal from sophomore forward Nick Peterson 10 seconds later. Junior forward Josiah Gronholz made it a 3-0 game on a short-side snipe over MBA goaltender Brady Backman's shoulder.

"To start any game like that with three goals in three shifts is awesome," Meyers said. "Unfortunately, we are a team that when that happens, we think stuff gets really easy. We ended up going in neutral for stretches for about two periods."

The Cardinals cooled off as they couldn't beat Backman until midway through the second when Gronholz scored an unassisted goal to make it 4-1. Gronholz's second goal of the game came after a sluggish start to the second period. The Storm was able to get several high-danger chances in front of Alexandria senior goaltender Chris Loken and was rewarded with Zach Bruns' goal.

Bruns was Section 6A's top scorer in the regular season with 25 goals and 17 assists in 17 games. He picked up two

more points against the Cardinals.

"This is one of the first times (MBA) hasn't played in the play-in round since we've been in high school," Partington said. "Zach is an unreal player, and their goalie was good. I remember playing them through youth. They were excited tonight."

Alexandria added two more goals at the start of the third from sophomore forward Tyler Kludt and junior forward Brycen Berg. But the Storm wouldn't go down quietly.

Bruns' second point of the game came on an assist to Kaleb Breuer. Bruns' shot ricocheted off Loken onto the stick of Breuer.

The Cardinals finished the game with a milestone moment for sophomore defenseman Mason Loch. He scored his first-career goal in the third period's final minutes to put Alexandria up 7-2.

"I dreamt about this as a little kid," Loch said. "It felt good to get it finally. There were a lot of nerves tonight. I didn't play in the first period much. Getting out there in the second felt good."

Meyers has a young team that got its first taste of varsity playoff hockey on Friday. For some, it was their first elimination game in two years.



Eric Morken / Echo Press

Michael Dallum brings the puck into the offensive zone during Alexandria's win over MBA in the first round of the Section 6A tournament on Friday, March 19.

"I didn't realize this before tonight, but our whole sophomore class had their season cut before they played in the playoffs last year," Meyers said. "They haven't played in a playoff-type game in quite a long time. Playoffs are one-and-done, so you have to bring your best. That's how you have to prepare, and I know Fergus Falls is going to do that."

Alexandria's win set up a third game against second-seeded Fergus Falls (14-3) last night, Tuesday. This time, it's for a trip to another Section 6A final. The Cardinals beat the Otters 5-4 in the sea-

son opener on the road before losing the rematch at home 6-2 on Feb. 18. Alex led 2-0 before giving up six unanswered goals.

Visit www.echopress.com for results from the semifinal game or see the March 26 print issue of the *Echo Press*.

MORRIS-BENSON AREA 0 1 1 - 2
ALEXANDRIA 3 1 3 - 7
SCORING - FIRST PERIOD: Alexandria- Grant Rebrovich (Jacob Partington, Peyton Doty) 0:31; Alexandria- Nick Peterson (Joe Lamski) 0:41; Alexandria- Josiah Gronholz (Brycen Berg) 1:11; SECOND PERIOD- MBA- Zach Bruns (Brady DeHaan, Will Breuer) 8:23; Alexandria- Gronholz (unassisted) 12:33; THIRD PERIOD- Alexandria- Tyler Kludt (Peterson) 1:25; Alexandria- Berg (Partington, Pieter Mulder) 3:27; MBA- Kaleb Breuer (Bruns) 4:50; Alexandria- Mason Loch (Lamski) 12:11; PENALTIES- Alexandria- 14 minutes on 2 infractions; GOAL-TENDING- Alexandria- Chris Loken, W, 24 saves, 2 goals allowed; MBA- Brady Backman, L, 25 saves, 7 goals allowed

A boost from the bench

Knights' 8th-graders spark WCA's run into the semifinals

By Eric Morken

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The West Central Area girls basketball team has a consistent nucleus of juniors and seniors who make the Knights section contenders right now, but there's also a trio of 8th-graders on the varsity roster who look like they will keep WCA competitive well into the future.

Those youngsters in Mya Foslien, Macy Grosz and Addison Staples were a big reason why the third-seeded Knights kept their season alive last Friday. They combined for 37 points off the bench in leading WCA (15-5) to a 67-51 win over the second-seeded Parkers Prairie (15-4) to advance to the Section 6A semifinals on March 23.

"Clutch would be my simplest way to put it," Knights' coach Eric Schoenbauer said of his three 8th-graders. "They definitely have confidence. We just tell them, 'If you're open, you're shooting the ball.' That's the good part about having such a deep bench. If people are on, you keep throwing them in."

Foslien and Grosz combined to hit seven threes. Foslien had four of those and finished with 15 points.

"It's really exciting to get in and really fun," Foslien said with a smile. "When they pass me the ball I'm just like, 'Don't mess up. Don't mess up.'"

There was no messing up for her on Friday.

Parkers Prairie tied the game at 40 apiece before the Knights went on an 11-2 run. Foslien hit two catch-and-shoot threes during that stretch and Grosz added a third. Grosz finished with a team-high 16 points.

"When you make one and you hear people cheering for you, it's like, 'Oh, yeah, I got this.' You don't think about anything else," Grosz said. "When you're pumped up, you make a lot more shots."

Knights' junior guard Lexi Bright just became WCA's all-time leading scorer on March 17, but she was more of a



Eric Morken / Echo Press

West Central Area eighth-grader Mya Foslien knocks down a corner three during the first half on Friday night in Parkers Prairie.

distributor on Friday. Bright finished with 11 points, 14 rebounds, 8 assists, 5 steals and 3 blocks.

"We were keying on Lexi," Parkers Prairie head coach John Noga said. "She's a hell of a player, and some of the other girls who came off the bench and hit shots, I guess I wasn't expecting it. Those girls started making shots and you could see our girls were like, 'What the heck?' Tip your cap to them. They were catching and shooting. They weren't thinking about it."

Foslien, Grosz, Claire Stark and Sydney Ulrich combined to score 28 first-half points off the bench for the Knights. The Knights got 47 points total from their reserves, compared to three for the Panthers. Senior forward Faith Alberts had a game-high 21 for Parkers Prairie.

"I'm not too surprised because of the work they put in," Schoenbauer said of his reserves. "All of them from day one... It's just one of those things where we had some girls who were performing well and ready to go."

The Knights love to speed up the tempo with their full-court pressure defense, and they did that in the second half. What was a 4-point game at the half turned into a 65-47 lead with 6:26 left.

Parkers Prairie senior guard Megan Blake hurt the Knights from three the last time these two teams met on Feb. 16. The Panthers won that game by four points, but Blake was held to seven points Friday, while Ana Marquardt had 10 and Cora Johnson finished with 9.

Noga was proud of the 15-win season his girls put together with seniors in Blake, Alberts and Marquardt making up a small group who returned with experience.

"Really, the rest of my roster had never played any type of varsity basketball," Noga said. "The seniors were super leaders and the rest of the girls learned their roles and played them really well. It was fun to come to practice every day. It was fun to come to games. It was a great year."

The Knights avenged one of their losses from the regular season by getting past Parkers Prairie, and they wanted to see the same result at Hancock in the semifinals on Tuesday. The Owls (18-0) beat WCA 54-46 on Jan. 28 and 62-45 on Feb. 12.

PARKERS PRAIRIE SCORING - Megan Blake - 7; Cora Johnson - 9; Ana Marquardt - 10; Lydia Guenther - 1; Abbi Ruckheim - 3; Faith Alberts - 21
WCA SCORING - Mya Foslien - 15; Brynn Fernholz - 5; Sydney Ulrich - 2; Lexi Bright - 11; Addison Staples - 6; Brooke Anderson - 2; Halle Foslien - 2; Claire Stark - 8; Macy Grosz - 16

WRESTLING

Mason McGrane moves on in state as local programs well represented in quarterfinals

By Eric Morken

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After a long day of state individual wrestling competition on Saturday around Minnesota, the best of the best are all that are left standing with championships now up for grabs when team and individual tournaments take place late this week.

There will be plenty of local athletes wrestling in the state quarterfinals at their weight classes after they qualified from prelims on Saturday. Alexandria freshman Mason McGrane is one of them as he finished first at 106 pounds during the state prelims in Foley on



McGrane

March 20.

The state prelims started with four individuals from each weight class in each section wrestling the qualifiers from a section nearest to them. Alexandria's Section 8AA qualifiers wrestled those from Section 7 on Saturday, and only the final two from each weight class advance to the final rounds of the state tournament later this week.

McGrane will wrestle with the rest of the Class AA individual qualifiers on March 26 starting at 2 p.m. He is now 27-8 after taking home first place from Foley on Saturday.

McGrane won a 6-5 decision in his opening match. He then pinned ninth-ranked Cyler Ruhoff of Foley in 3:19 and capped off an impressive day with a 5-3 win over Chandler Mickelson (27-5) of Perham in the championship match.

Blaze Nelson (30-6), a three-time state entrant now, almost qualified for the next round with McGrane. Nelson finished third on Saturday at 126 pounds.

He won 7-0 in his opening match, but fell in a 9-8 decision against fifth-ranked Ethan Ballweber of Princeton. Nelson won two more matches by a 9-3 decision and by fall (2:42) to take third, but Ballweber's loss to Owen Carlson (35-2) in the championship match meant no true-second match was wrestled between Ballweber and Nelson after Ballweber had already won that head-to-head match earlier in the day.

Alexandria had three others qualify for the state prelims in Tate Runge (152), Mason Teaser (170), and Luke Maanum. All three finished tied for sixth on Saturday in their first times at state.

Taplin fourth, Grove sixth for Osakis

Osakis freshman Jacob Taplin (24-4) wrapped up a breakout year by taking fourth at 106 pounds in the state prelims in Long Prairie on Saturday.

Taplin won by fall (1:47) in his opening match, but dropped a 5-1 decision to fourth-ranked Connor Flan (25-5) in the semifinals. Taplin went on to win an 8-0 major decision, but a 4-1 loss to Trey Gunderson (32-5) of KMS in the third-place match ended his season.

Senior Logan Grove (19-9) won his

first match with a first-period pin (0:32). David Revering (34-4) pinned Grove in the semifinals, and Ely Johnson (22-13) of KMS took an 8-6 decision against Grove.

Sophomore Kale Drevlow also qualified for the state prelims from Osakis at 145 pounds. Drevlow was pinned in the opening round and then lost a tight 5-4 decision to end his run. See Friday's issue of the *Echo Press* for more on how all three qualified for the state prelims.

Knights qualify five

West Central Area-Ashby-Brandon-Evansville had five athletes qualify for the state quarterfinals later this week in Reubens Swanson (145), Jordan Lohse (152), Anthony Sykora (160), Nathaniel Kisgen (182) and Colton Lindquist (220). All five of them took second place in their weight classes during the state prelims. The Knights' Adam Lohse was WCA-A-B-E's final top-six finisher on Saturday by tying for sixth at 120 pounds.

Lakers' Meyer, Swalla advance

Top-ranked and back-to-back state champion Tyson Meyer of Minnawaska will go for a third state title later this week after winning the 182-pound weight class on Saturday.

Meyer (28-0) won his first two rounds by first-period pins and then won a 5-3 decision against Kisgen of West Central Area-A-B-E in the championship match.

Jakob Swalla will join Meyer at the Class A state quarterfinals on March 27 after he finished second at heavyweight on Saturday.

Swalla (26-2) won by fall (0:56) and major decision (19-5) in his first two rounds before BOLD's Tim Peppel (20-1) pinned Swalla in the championship match in 2:27. Swalla did not need a true second match to advance after he had already beaten third-place finisher Hayden Captain (22-6) of Bertha-Hewitt-Verndale-Parkers Prairie in the semifinals.

Nick Ankeny (106, sixth), Max Reichmann (152, sixth), Dalton Friedrichs (160, sixth) and Ryan VanLuik (170, third) also wrestled in the state prelims and had top-six finishes Saturday.

Raiders send on three

Bertha-Hewitt-Verndale-Parkers Prairie had three move on from Saturday's state prelims in David Revering (113), Hunter Dean (170) and Gideon Ervasti (195). Revering and Ervasti both finished second in their weight classes.

Dean (25-3) won the first-place match at 170 pounds by pinning Bren Salo (22-3) of New York Mills in 5:05. Dean was dominant throughout the day with a pin in his first round and a major decision win (12-4) over VanLuik of Minnawaska in the semifinals.

Other top-six finishes for the Raiders on Saturday came from Bennet Arceneau (106, sixth), Deagan Captain (120, sixth), Aiden Larson (126, third), Reese Thompson (132, fourth), Mason Schroeder (160, sixth), James Grant (220, third) and Hayden Captain (285, third).