

## ONE FOR THE AGES

### Red Lake, Wabasso played state's greatest game 25 years ago

By Micah Friez  
The Bemidji Pioneer

It was heart-stopping. It was record-setting. It was entertainment at its finest and the origin story for a host of hometown heroes. And it was the greatest of all time. "Every year the state tournament comes up, it's talked about," said Delwyn Holthusen, who was Red Lake's sophomore center at the time. "It was nuts. Crazy." In what's arguably (but widely regarded as) the greatest state tournament game in Minnesota high school basketball history, the Red Lake and Wabasso boys put on a semifinal show in 1997 that's still being talked about. Now, 25 years later, relive the mayhem of the double-digit comeback in the final 1:11, one that an entire reservation witnessed inside the St. Paul Civic Center.

The madness can't be described any other way than an instant classic that immediately went down in history. "I know that we ended up losing the game, but with the way we fought back and sent the game into overtime, it almost seemed like we won the fans over," said Gerald Kingbird, a sophomore on that Warriors team. "For me, it was something special to be a part of."

#### Backed by the whole reservation

Red Lake entered the state tournament 25-1, sneaking by Fertile-Beltrami 61-56 in the Section 8A championship game for the program's first-ever section title.

More notably, the Warriors became the first all-Native American team to ever reach the state tournament.

Red Lake then faced undefeated and top-ranked Cherry in the Class A state quarterfinals, winning 65-62 at Bemidji State. (The fact that state quarterfinal games were played at outstate sites and not in the Twin Cities was subject to major criticism, but 2,600 fans still packed inside the BSU Gymnasium to watch the Warriors that night.)

In the semifinals, Red Lake matched up against Wabasso, the Section 3A champions. And Holthusen remembers walking out to a massive sea of fans in St. Paul that state officials estimated featured 10,000 Native Americans.

"They said it was like a ghost town on the reservation," Holthusen said. "It's a tear-jerker, just seeing everyone come together like that. It was pretty crazy coming out before the game and seeing that big arena filled with red."

"With how many fans there were in attendance, it felt like a professional



The Warriors salute their fans after placing fourth in the Class A state tournament in 1997. Red Lake played in one of the greatest games ever in that tournament, pushing Wabasso to overtime in a 117-113 semifinal loss.

game," Kingbird added. "For that game, you felt like you were playing in the pros."

The papers piggy-backed off that professional comparison. The Pioneer recounted that "the two first-time entrants to the state Class A tournament battled through five periods of NBA-style ball before the Rabbits finally prevailed 117-113 in the wildest and highest-scoring game in tournament history."

Points came so fast that nobody but the



The Red Lake bench cheers from the sideline during the 1997 state semifinals against Wabasso at the St. Paul Civic Center.

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#### MEN'S HOCKEY

### Beavers endured a wild ride and wilder finish in 2021-22



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer  
The Beavers await the trophy presentation after what they thought was the end of the CCHA Mason Cup Championship game on March 19 in Mankato. The game later resumed after the winning goal was disallowed.

All seasons are journeys. Teams go through peaks and valleys, stretches of success and fallow periods of failure. But it's not every year that a team goes through all of that in the span of a few months.

That, to me, is the story of the 2021-22 Bemidji State men's hockey team. The Beavers had high hopes of returning to the NCAA Tournament, and for much of the season, it looked like they could meet them. BSU held steady in or near the top third of the Pairwise rankings most of the year and looked like the



CHRISTIAN BABCOCK

second-best team in the CCHA.

Then, the Ferris State series happened. In undeniably the low point of the season for Bemidji State, a Bulldogs team lurking in the basement of the conference rose up to beat the Beavers on back-to-back nights at the Sanford Center, handing BSU a demoralizing home sweep. The score of the

final game was 5-2, which quickly became a motif for the Beavers – they lost both games at Michigan Tech by the same score the following week.

At that point, it looked as though it would be a season to forget for Bemidji State – one marred by a disappointing finish after a promising start that included a road victory over North Dakota and general command of the No. 2 spot in the CCHA standings.

But Bemidji State once again flipped the script in the playoffs, overcoming a one-game deficit in a best-of-

three CCHA quarterfinal series win over Bowling Green, then upsetting that same Michigan Tech team in the CCHA semifinals on the road by a score of – you guessed it – 5 to 2.

The season culminated with an instant classic in Mankato against No. 1 Minnesota State, a 2-1 overtime loss where – as head coach Tom Serratore noted – the Beavers were one shot away from realizing their ultimate goal.

And though they didn't do so, they did prove one thing to themselves – they

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### Bemidji State's season a success despite disappointing finish

By Christian Babcock  
The Bemidji Pioneer

BEMIDJI – The primary goal of the Bemidji State men's hockey team was to return to the NCAA Tournament.

After reaching the promised land in 2020-21 and advancing to the Elite Eight with an upset win over top-seeded Wisconsin, the Beavers were riding high, with hopes of advancing even further in 2021-22. Fifth-year forward Ethan Somoza noted before the season that he hoped to reach the Frozen Four after returning for a final year – and he thought BSU had the team to do it.

Those hopes did not come to pass, but Bemidji State nevertheless finished the season on a high note – playing its best hockey at the end of the year and pushing No. 1 Minnesota State to the brink during the CCHA Mason Cup Championship in Mankato last Saturday.

"Not everybody can go to the tournament," BSU head coach Tom Serratore said. "There's (59) teams, only

16 go, that means (43) of us are not going to the tournament. But we also were one of how many games on Saturday night? Not many. So we had the opportunity of getting into the tournament. So I think it's all about perspective on how you look at a successful season."

The Beavers (19-20, 14-12 CCHA) could have put themselves in a better position for an at-large bid with a more successful regular season, but the finish to the year served as a suitable – if still a bit disappointing – consolation prize.

"The end of the year was where we wanted to be hockey-wise," defenseman Elias Rosén said. "We came up to our level maybe a bit too late. We wanted to be there a bit earlier so we could have had the chance to maybe get a bid into the tournament, but that didn't happen. So we came into the playoffs with a good attitude and we felt right away that we were having

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Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer  
The Beavers and Mavericks shake hands after what they thought was the end of the CCHA Mason Cup Championship game on March 19 in Mankato. The game later resumed after the winning goal was disallowed.

SCOREBOARD

AREA SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

College Women's Tennis  
Bemidji State vs. Bethany Lutheran, 10:30 a.m. (in Grand Forks, N.D.)  
College Baseball

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

College Baseball  
Bemidji State at Augustana, noon

MONDAY, MARCH 28

College Men's Golf  
Bemidji State at NSIC Preview, TBA (in

Blue Springs, Mo.)  
College Women's Golf  
Bemidji State at Spring Swing, TBA (in Ames, Iowa)

TUESDAY, MARCH 29

College Men's Golf  
Bemidji State at NSIC Preview, TBA (in Blue Springs, Mo.)

College Women's Golf  
Bemidji State at Spring Swing, TBA (in Ames, Iowa)

Prep Track and Field  
Bemidji at BSU Open, 11 a.m.

College Softball  
Bemidji State at Minnesota Crookston (DH), 2 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30

No events scheduled

BOWLING

Commercial League  
Team Industries 36, Sand Trap Golf 4

Acme Transport 35.5, FNG'S 4.5  
Silms 33, ABC Seamless 7  
Pinnacle 31, Blind 9  
Rascals 26, Core Craft 14

High Scores

High Game: Tim Hall 297, Ben Filipi 267, Nick Halse 244, Dustin Beighley 244.  
High Series: Ben Filipi 738, Tim Hall 720, Nick Halse 663.

MEN'S HOCKEY

3 BSU seniors sign with AHL, ECHL teams for 2021-22

Pioneer Staff Report  
sports@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI – Three Bemidji State hockey players have signed with professional clubs.

BSU single-season Division I points record-holder Owen Sillinger signed with the AHL's Cleveland Monsters, the top-level affiliate of the Columbus Blue Jackets. Defenseman Brad



Kirkup



Johnson



Sillinger

Johnson signed with the Trois-Rivières Lions, while forward Tyler Kirkup has inked an amateur tryout contract to play with the Reading Royals. Both teams are

members of the ECHL. Sillinger has signed an AHL contract to play professionally with the Monsters for the 2022-23 season, as well as a pro tryout contract for the remainder of the 2021-22 season. Sillinger's younger brother, Cole Sillinger, was drafted 12th overall

in the 2021 NHL Entry Draft by Columbus.

The Lions, based in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, are affiliated with the NHL's Montreal Canadiens and the AHL's Laval Rocket. Johnson will finish the season with the Lions, which includes 16 remaining regular-season games. He completed his BSU career with 37 points, including eight points in 2021-22, which ranked

fourth among the Beavers' defensemen.

Trois-Rivières sits fourth in the ECHL North Division standings with 54 points and a 25-24-3 record.

Reading is the ECHL affiliate of the Philadelphia Flyers. Kirkup will finish the season with the Royals, which includes 13 remaining regular-season contests and the Kelly Cup Playoffs. Reading leads the

ECHL North Division with 80 points and a 36-14-6 record.

Bemidji State hockey fans who purchased a FloHockey.tv subscription will be able to watch Kirkup and Johnson play in the ECHL through the league's partnership with FloHockey.

Kirkup compiled 48 points in his BSU career, including career highs in goals (12) and points (18) this season.

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have the pieces for a run next season. None bigger than freshman goaltender Mattias Sholl, who established himself as not only the future backstop at BSU, but the

present one.

With Sholl solidified in net, Bemidji State played its best hockey of the season. It's enough to make you wonder what would have happened had he played the whole year, but BSU's problems ran deeper than that.

The Beavers were simply in an overall funk toward the end of

the regular season, and it cost them a chance at an at-large NCAA bid. Next year, they'll have to perform without fifth-year seniors Brad Johnson and Ethan Somoza, as well as fourth-years like Tyler Kirkup, the program's single-season Division I points record-holder Owen Sillinger, and

a few others. But the foundation Bemidji State laid down in the final month provides a strong building platform.

I'll let Sholl – who will be even more of a focal point in next year's team – reflect on that.

"All of us coming back next year and having guys coming in, it's going to be something

that we can maybe use as a leadership thing," Sholl said. "When we get back in a situation like that, we can talk to them and help him through that or whatever the case may be. But it's nice to have the confidence that you can get the job done."

Will next year's group reach the NCAA

Tournament? We'll have to see. But one thing's pretty much certain – BSU discovered its winning groove down the stretch this year, and that should only help next year's group get Bemidji State back where it wants to be.

Christian Babcock is a sports reporter at the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9787 or cbabcock@bemidjipioneer.com.

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something special in the playoff games.

"We played our best hockey the last four games and we did everything we could get into the tournament, but at the end of the day, we didn't."

Regret and resolve

It's only natural when a season comes up short to look at everything that could have been. But Serratore chose to focus on Bemidji State's successes in the season's final weeks as proof that this was a special team.

"At the end of the year, these guys stood tall," Serratore said. "They provided everybody in Beaver Nation with (a

chance) to go to the NCAA Tournament, and we just came up a little short. It was an honor playing in that game. It was an honor to play how we did and how close we were, and there was a lot of our fans who were proud of what we accomplished at the end of the year. Overall, I thought it was a positive year and it was sure a positive ending." Forward Eric Martin

wanted to use this season to continue the momentum of BSU's watershed run in 2021. The Beavers did gain some mojo at the end of the season, and while it didn't help them get back to the NCAA Tournament, it did set a standard for how next year's team could perform.

"Winning that game, making it to the Elite Eight, that was just so big for this program and for us," Martin said. "So we would definitely have loved to go back, but we came up just a lit-

tle bit short. Like Rosie said, we were playing our best hockey in the playoffs, and I think that's indicative of the work we put in. It was good to make it to the final, to get that chance. Playing that game, it was a great atmosphere. That was a crazy building."

Even though BSU did not pick up a win against Minnesota State, it did prove something to Serratore – the Beavers have refined their recipe for victory, and they're ready to get cooking next season.

"It is a battle-tested group," Serratore said. "And we've had a lot of success over the course of the last couple of years. And that success carried over into the last month of the season. So these guys know how to win. Obviously, we're losing some very good players, but we got a lot of good players returning, we got some good recruits coming in. So that's exciting."

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Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

Bemidji State sophomore Eric Martin (11) shoots in the second period against Minnesota State in the CCHA Mason Cup Championship game on March 19 in Mankato.

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# Garfield Lake Ice Racers cap season with awards banquet

By Dennis Peterson  
Special to the Pioneer

LAPORTE — The culmination of seven weeks of racing for the Garfield Lake Ice Racing Club came to an end on Saturday, March 19, at the WoodShed Bar and Grill in Laporte with the end-of-season awards banquet.

This was the 22nd year

the racers have raced at Garfield Lake and raised money to give to needy individuals and groups. In the past year, the club donated \$46,026 to various groups such as the American Legion, Lakes Area Dive Team, Northstar ABATE, Hubbard County Sheriff's Mounted Posse and Canine Unit, Laporte Food Shelf,

Ruby's Pantry, Wreaths Across America, Camp Oak Hills, Take a Kid Fishing, local church groups, veterans groups, and Laporte Schools.

Since 2015, the club has donated \$257,300 in the area. Donations were made possible by proceeds of pull-tab sales at the WoodShed and fees charged to the racers for

membership and daily race fees. The racers are not paid anything for winning.

Club president Kris Baker thanked the many plow truck drivers for their hard work to keep the track and road clear for racing, and he thanked all the flagmen and scorekeepers for keeping the races run-

ning smoothly. He also thanked all the many drivers, riders and crew members who joined and raced with the club in 2022.

Nate Zanter was the A Class champion, while Josh Bitker was the B Class champion. Hunter Weeks was 2022 Rookie of the Year.

**Final Standings (Top 10)**  
A Class  
1. Nate Zanter, 641 points

2. Kalin Honer, 637 points  
3. John Farrington, 636 points  
4. Bonnie Farrington, 633 points  
5. Nick Lewis, 539 points  
6. Reid Watson, 539 points  
7. Josh Sautbine, 410 points  
8. Jon Sharpnak, 381 points  
9. Fritz Meyers, 351 points  
10. Chad Tabaka, 303 points  
11. John Hadrava/Jared Miller, 303 points  
**B Class**  
1. Josh Bitker, 684 points  
2. Abe Forseman, 665 points  
3. Bob Pawlitshek, 662 points  
4. Sam Delaney, 621 points  
5. Skyler Smith, 616 points  
6. Hunter Weeks, 616 points  
7. Mike Moen, 579 points  
8. Gordon Hunter, 556 points  
9. Dan Riggs, 520 points  
10. Dennis Clark, 517 points

## RED LAKE

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players could keep up. Wabasso led 29-23 after the first quarter and held a 53-47 halftime lead after the next eight minutes. The Rabbits seemed to be pulling away when they jumped up 81-62 after three quarters.

But then the fun really started.

### Fourth-quarter fury

Slow and steady wasn't going to win this game. The track meet disguised as a basketball game featured fast breaks on nearly every possession and baskets by the bushel. Still, Red Lake trailed by 18 with under 4:30 left to play.

"During a timeout on the bench (with 5:33 remaining), I don't know what kind of expression I had on my face, but I was looking up at the crowd," Kingbird said. "I remember (teammate) Kyle Garrigan patted me on the back and said, 'We can do this.' It was a little reassurance. And after that, we started making our comeback."

The Warriors start-

ed to rally from there, and each score sent the crowd into ever-building pandemonium. They fed off the energy of players like Charlie Charnoski, who pumped his fists again and again, unabashed and utterly instinctually.

"Charlie Charnoski was pretty hyped after every basket and every steal," Kingbird said. "He was really pumped in the game."

Red Lake was dealt a huge blow when Holthusen fouled out with 1:35 to go. He received a mighty ovation from the crowd after a 30-point, 11-rebound performance, which didn't even fully illustrate his effort.

But what happened next went down in history.

"I played the way I was told to play, to leave it all out on the floor," Holthusen said. "I ended up fouling out, and Gerald went off for like 19 points in the fourth."

Still down 10 with 75 seconds to play, Kingbird put the team on his back by scoring the Warriors' final 13 points of regulation. He started with a pull-up 3-pointer with 1:11 left, then sank a long

two to cut within 102-97.

With 45 seconds left, Kingbird launched a contested three and hit nothing but net. Then he drained two free throws to make it a one-possession game at 104-102 with 33.7 ticks remaining.

After a Wabasso free throw stretched the lead back to three, Kingbird launched the game-tying corner 3-pointer with 19 seconds left — perhaps the shot of his life and the one that sent the game to overtime.

"It was just like being in the zone," Kingbird said. "I felt like I was the only player on the court at the time. It almost felt like a dream. ... Every shot I took, I saw it go through the basket. It seemed like it wasn't real."

On the live broadcast, play-by-play commentator Jeff Grayson was nearly drowned out by the hysterical Red Lake fans. Grayson, like all others, was in awe of Kingbird's dauntless dominance: "In one of the most unbelievable performances we've seen in the state tournament, Gerald Kingbird

has taken the Warriors on his shoulders. Thirty-five points. We're tied at 105. Can you believe this? This place is absolutely bonkers."

### Overtime and over time

The four-minute overtime period went Wabasso's way by a 12-8 margin. Red Lake led 111-109 on a Kingbird layup with 1:25 to go, but Derrick Jenniges answered with the go-ahead three and the Rabbits never trailed again.

At the final buzzer, Wabasso celebrated with whatever energy it had left, then immediately turned to shake hands and hug their equally adept counterparts. A whole lot of respect had developed over 36 lightning-fast minutes.

"You know what's great about this right now? Fans from both sides are giving their teams standing ovations," said Grayson, the play-by-play commentator. "And they deserve it."

"That was a nice comeback by my boys. I'm really proud of them," Red Lake head coach

Doug Desjarlait said in a postgame interview. "One more bucket and I think we would have had them. Give me another half a minute maybe."

The game ended around midnight, and Red Lake had to play in the third-place game at 11 a.m. the next morning. Minnesota Valley Lutheran beat the Warriors 97-60.

But the semifinal showcase is what fans remember now. The teams combined for seven state tournament records, including most combined points in a game, most points by winning and losing teams, and most points in a quarter (Red Lake's 43 in the fourth).

"The next day, people were saying it was one of the greatest games

they'd ever seen," Kingbird said. "Experiencing it myself was pretty cool."

Twenty-five years later, the game sure hasn't lost its luster. And it won't likely be replaced any time soon, either.

"To share that with so many people (was special)," Holthusen added. "I was living in the moment. Sometimes you'll never ever have moments like that again."

Wabasso 117, Red Lake 113 (OT)  
WAB 29 24 28 24  
12-117  
RL 23 24 15 43  
8-113  
WABASSO — Jenniges 31, Moore 29, Brau 25, Louwagie 12, Rohlik 9, Schumacher 7, Guetter 4.  
RED LAKE — Kingbird 37, Holthusen 30, Charnoski 13, Martin 11, Smith 11, Garrigan 7, Neadeau 4.

Micah Friez is the sports editor at the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9789 or mfriez@bemidjipioneer.com.

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In this situation, you are hoping the accepted offer falls through and the Seller will then be in a position to look at and possibly accept your offer. The situation you are in leaves you virtually no leverage so your offer should be as high as you are absolutely willing to offer and you need to make your offer as attractive as possible. You do this by offering your limit in price and exclude as many contingencies as possible.

Although I will seldom recommend purchasing a property without an inspection, you may want to after examination of the disclosures, declare that you will purchase without an inspection. Financing is often why offers fall apart. If you are certain of your financing, you might want to write your offer with no contingency on financing. Have a Letter of Finance ready for the Seller.

Keep in mind that the reason the first offer fell apart was probably due to the Buyer exercising one or more of their contingencies and cancelled their offer. Since the cancellation was due to a contingency, the Buyer received their earnest money back and the Seller was back to Square One. They will now be very leery of offers with contingencies.

My recommendation would be to meet, put together a "Back up Offer" and submit it. The worse case is it is declined but there is that chance we get you that home you want.

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