

College icers home for holidays

By John Raby
staff writer

Just how popular is college hockey to Detroit-area fans? Oakland County products now playing in college recently found it good to come home for the holidays. Their respective teams — Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Michigan Tech — battled Tuesday and Wednesday in Joe Louis Arena in the Great Lakes Invitational hockey tournament, which was won by Michigan State.

In fact, one of the largest crowds in North America hockey history — 21,347 — Wednesday night jammed their way into the arena. The looks on the player's faces told the story. After all, these players are used to crowds no larger than 5,000.

Representing the northern suburbs in the tournament were Michigan's Steve Neff and Alex Sosa, both of West Bloomfield, and Notre Dame's Greg Hudak, of Troy.

NEFF, A sophomore defenseman for the Wolverines, has played in every game this season. Neff will find himself as the elder statesman among the Michigan defense next year, with seniors Don Krussman and captain Ted Speers graduating and three other freshmen the only returnees on defense.

However, Neff worries little in forecasting his role as the leader in the future on the Wolverine defense. "I hope just to lead by example," Neff said. "We came back with only two defensemen that had any playing time last year, so I hoped to improve enough to stay in the starting lineup. I had to work for it."

Perhaps work too hard, in the eyes of Coach John Giordano, who says Neff must stick to defense.

He tries to do too much offensively. As long as he just plays defense, he'll be all right," Giordano said. "We're hanging in there with him and hoping that he's going to develop. He can play the game up in his mind. He's a good thinker."

NEFF DESCRIBES himself as a "defensive defenseman" who excels best in hitting and the defensive aspects of hockey. "Some of the things I have to improve on are my puck control and my shots — which are getting better, but still need improving."

"I've basically been a penalty killer for the team this year. It's a tough thing to do, but I like doing it."

Neff said his goal for this season individually was to become a starter and he has realized this with ease, but he would like to be included on the power plays as well, and possibly rack up a few points too. Coming into the Great

Lakes tourney, Neff had two goals and six assists. Neff graduated from Brother Rice and played at the halfback position on the Warrior's 1980 state champion football team. His prep hockey days were spent in Ecorse playing for the Padlock Pool Junior A Saints.

Notre Dame and Ivy League schools were interested in Neff, but chose the Malze and Blue.

Neff is a business major, with a 2.9 grade point average. HUDAS GRADUATED from Harper Woods Baptist Collegiate and is in his freshman year at Notre Dame. He also was a two-sport athlete in high school, playing baseball at Gallagher and hockey in a Canadian Junior B league and Michigan Junior A division.

"I was looking for a college that would allow me to play baseball and hockey too — and the best academic school out of the ones that did," Hudak said. "And when Notre Dame offered me a full-ride and said I could play both, that was the most logical choice."

Unfortunately, the Fighting Irish sit last in the CCHA, losing its contests in the Invitational to Michigan Tech and Michigan.

Hudak, a defenseman, is part of a very young team which consists of 11 freshmen. He says the flight up the playing-time ladder has been rocky and slow.

"I started out playing regularly for

the initial five weeks, but (Coach Charles Smith) decided I wasn't playing the way he wanted. I haven't played the last three weeks."

"I realize the freshman year is always the toughest — that's what they tell me — but as long as I'm progressing each day in practice, that's all I'm looking for."

Hudak said the talent and competition on the team is there, even for younger players, and goals needed to be set in order to have continuous progress.

"My main goal was to improve each week. If I don't play that much my freshman year, that doesn't really bother me because I realize skating three or four hours every day does nothing but help."

"We have a ton of talent on the team, but we can't seem to put it together now. We play good one weekend and the next we play atrociously."

Which makes a holiday break all the more relaxing.

"I've got five days off and making the most out of them," Hudak said.

SOSA IS LISTED as the third-string goalie for the Wolverines, behind sophomores Jon Elliott and Mark Chisamp. The West Bloomfield native has not appeared in any of Michigan's games yet this season, but could see action at any time with the Michigan goalies averaging almost six goals allowed per game this year.

Oak Park captures Troy Tournament title

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

As expected, the "University of Oak Park" captured the Troy Christmas basketball tournament last week as the Redskins posted consecutive victories over Troy Athens and the host Colts. The Redskins wrapped up the title Wednesday night with a 85-45 victory over Troy. The win came on the heels of a 58-55, come-from-behind win over Athens the previous night. Oak Park, a bona fide contender for the Class B state championship, improved its record to 5-1 with the wins.

In Tuesday's semifinals, Oak Park outlasted Athens while Troy clobbered Clawson, 60-47. In the consolation final, Athens dumped Clawson, 75-45.

Prior to the tournament, Troy coach Jim Clary playfully teased about the Redskins, calling the talent-laden team the "University of Oak Park."

"They didn't shut out what we expected them to do," Clary said in the wake of his team's 20-point setback. "I was hoping we'd be able to handle their full-court press a little better than we did, though. We hadn't worked too much with Dave LeMay and Darin Morse at the two guards before."

TROY'S STARTING point guard, Cedric Corera, had family obligations during the holidays and was unable to play in the tournament.

"I didn't think we brought the ball up the floor too well," Clary continued. "Of course, Oak Park didn't let us get into our offense."

Oak Park got its game going midway into the opening quarter when the Redskins overcame Troy's 8-5 advantage to assume a 16-11 edge by the end of the quarter. The Redskins' full-court man-to-man pressure proved to be bothersome as Oak Park stole the ball,

blocked shots and ran its offense to near perfection.

Troy came back within one, 16-15, to start the second quarter, but the Redskins answered with 10 straight points to take a 26-15 lead. By the end of the quarter, Oak Park built a 32-18 advantage.

The third quarter was more of the same as the Redskins increased their lead to 51-32 with a 19-14 scoring advantage. The Colts had a chance to cut the lead to nine points with less than four minutes to play and Oak Park on top, 39-28, but the opportunity slipped away as Troy failed to convert.

Dondero wins tourney

Buzzer shot foils RHS

By John Raby
staff writer

The gift was a little late for Christmas, but host Royal Oak Dondero accepted a 54-53 basketball victory Thursday night compliments of Rochester High in the finals of the Dondero Holiday Classic.

Dave Antonick's jumper at the buzzer gave the Oaks the win after sloppy play in the game's final minute gave each team a chance to put it away.

The Falcons played like the changing of the seasons — warming up like spring in the opening minutes, getting hot near the half, falling in the third period, and turning bone-chilling cold in the final minutes.

"We played two different halves of basketball," Falcon Coach Ed Wright said. "Dondero did some things out there that were interesting to say the least. They took their big people out and played with their guards. We had some trouble containing their guards."

THE FALCONS controlled the first half and took a 31-24 halftime lead. But Rochester's shooting turned cold in the second half. They made key mistakes and Dondero turned these into baskets, whitening the lead to 42-39 and the end of three quarters and eventually tying the game with under three minutes left.

After the Falcons missed turned the ball over twice with 1:45 left, a Dondero bucket gave the

Oaks the lead for the first time at 49-47. The teams traded baskets before a three-point play by Rochester's John Trouba gave the Falcons the edge at 52-51 with 39 seconds left.

Two consecutive Falcon fouls allowed Antonick to tie the game with six seconds left, in which three straight time outs were called, two by Rochester.

The Falcons had hope to move the ball up the court as time ran out, but in his haste, Jeremy Sargent was caught travelling, setting up the game winning shot for Dondero.

"Dondero's offense was very good. I thought they deserved to win the game," Wright said. "They played very well in the second half."

TROUBA LED Rochester, now 2-3, with 22 points; Brent Reed, Sargent and Crosthwaite each had eight.

The Falcons advanced to the finals with a 58-51 victory Wednesday over Warren Mott.

Mott was guilty of the same type of play which doomed Rochester in the final — hot and cold.

Mott led after one quarter, 19-10, and raced to a 32-26 halftime lead, but only scored 19 points the rest of the way. The clincher for Rochester was 21 fourth quarter points.

Sargent led the Falcons against Mott with 15 points; Crosthwaite and Reed had 14 and 10 respectively.

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DCDS hockey tourney coming up

They won't be playing for the Stanley Cup, but the Detroit Country Day Hockey Tournament of Champions will give area fans a chance to see some of the finest high school talent around.

Country Day will host the six-team tourney Jan. 7-9 at the Southfield Civic Center Arena.

The tournament field includes Country Day, Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook, Class A state champion Alpena High School, Southview High School from Sylvania, Ohio, the Culver Military Academy,

and Assumption High from Windsor, Ontario.

On Friday, Jan. 7, Alpena and Assumption face off at 6:30 p.m., and Culver battles Southview at 8:30 p.m. Country Day and Cranbrook take on the respective winners at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday. The championship game is set for noon Sunday.

Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1.50 for students. The Civic Center Arena is located at 26000 Evergreen Road.

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