

Chicago ousted from NAJHL

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

What on the surface appears to be a major problem for the North American Junior Hockey League may prove to be a godsend in the long run.

The Chicago franchise has dropped out of the NAJHL, leaving just three teams: Hennepine Engineers, Compuware and the Detroit Falcons. Normally, a three-team league would not be sanctioned by the U.S. Junior Hockey Council. But, because of the circumstances, the council has granted approval to the NAJHL.

"The story I got was that Chicago had just gotten walloped two weeks in a row by Compuware and the Falcons. Four or five guys quit and they asked for time to regroup. That didn't fit into anybody's plans," said A.J. Baker, head coach of the Plymouth-based Engineers.

"The way they handled it was poor, too," Baker added. "Compuware was supposed to play them last week. They called to get the Chicago roster for the program and they were told Chicago wasn't coming."

THAT INITIATED a mad scramble to replace Chicago on the schedule. Here's what will happen: Each of the remaining teams will play a team of Junior B all-stars three times. Two senior-league teams — Masons, based in Livonia, and Downriver Allied — will be fit into the schedule. Also, a team from Buffalo will come in for a weekend to play the three teams and the Engineers plan to play a weekend series in Buffalo in December. Buffalo, a former member of the NAJHL, has reacquired for a franchise for next season.

"The senior teams will be better competition for us than Chicago could ever have hoped to be," Baker said. "These are some guys, just out of Juniors, or former semi-pro guys who have a lot of experience and they let you know they can play the game. The downside, though, is the senior teams can get a little rough and tumble. I'm sure there will be

hockey

complaints about that." Now, about the future.

THE LEAGUE hierarchy met earlier this week and drew up a proposal for the 1987-88 season. That proposal would split the North American Junior Hockey League into two tiers. Tier I would be six Junior A teams. Tier II would be a Junior B league.

There are currently five Junior B teams in the Detroit area. Two of those teams are expected to move up to Junior A next year. Those two, along with the three existing Junior A franchises, would join Buffalo to form a six-team league.

"Buffalo wants back in badly," Baker said. "The league has asked them to send no less than \$2,000 to us by Jan. 15, and that \$2,000 will be non-refundable. We want them to make a definite commitment."

Baker is optimistic that the proposal will go through.

"We have put on the drawing board a plan that is both feasible and workable," he said. "The future of the league looks very promising right now. We have some very bright and dedicated people in the administration and everyone is working together. It's very good to see."

Baker said the league's proposal will be officially voted on Dec. 1.

BACK ON THE ICE: The Engineers stopped their five-game losing streak Friday night with a 7-3 win against Masons. The game counted in the NAJHL standings as Masons replaced Chicago on the schedule.

Larry Pilut and Leif Gustafson led the victory. Pilut had two goals and two assists. Gustafson scored two goals. Dan Franzl, Bryan Kuyler and Steve Ramberg also scored. The Engineers are 4-5 in the league, 10-7 overall. They will host the Falcons Friday night at the Plymouth Cultural Center Ice Arena. Game time is 8:20 p.m.

Regional repeat?

Schoolcraft spikers gird for regional crown

By C.J. Riesak
staff writer

The dates and times are set — well, sort of.

Schoolcraft College's volleyball team knows where it will be today at 5:30 p.m. — at Kalamazoo Valley CC for the 16-team regional volleyball tournament.

Question is, who will the Lady Ocelots be playing, and when?

Their scheduled opponent is Kellogg CC. But SC coach Tom Teeters said Tuesday that KCC may decide not to play because it did not achieve a .500 season.

That would keep the Lady Ocelots idle until 10:30 a.m. Friday, when they would meet the Macomb-Cuyahoga East winner. And it also means that SC could claim the regional title by winning four straight matches.

By comparison, should one of the other teams lose its tournament opener, it would have to play nine matches to win the double-elimination event.

TEETERS KNOWS what it will take for his team to advance to the NJCAA tournament Nov. 24-26 in Miami-Dade CC.

"Our team serve reception has to be stronger," he said. "Our serves will still have to be good. Our defense has improved, and our bench has helped."

A year ago, the Lady Ocelots won the regional title. This season's squad is stronger. SC swept through the Eastern Conference without a defeat for the second straight year and beat several four-year schools. The Lady Ocelots are odds-on favorites to repeat as region champs.

Teeters figures Lake Michigan CC to provide the greatest obstacle between SC and a trip south. "They're the team with the experience. They haven't had the greatest season, but they had some injuries that are healing now. They'll be ready. I think

Schoolcraft sports

they'll be in the finals."

The two teams will meet before then, however. If SC and LMCC win their first matches Friday, they'll play each other at 6 p.m. It won't be their first meeting this season, either. SC beat LMCC in a three-game match in the finals of the LMCC tournament in September and swept a match in three-straight games in St. Louis last month.

INJURIES HAVE been a source of trouble for the Lady Ocelots. Middle blocker Jill Elert is recovering from tendinitis in her Achilles tendon and should be able to play. Jean Bass and Amy Lotero are both experiencing knee problems — Lotero was fitted for a knee brace Tuesday — but both are expected to play. Donna Wilhelm has hurt her back, too.

"That's why I think it's fortunate we have 12 good players," said Teeters. "We've had to use them all during the season."

An experienced bench could be most helpful. Teeters is not counting on an easy road to Miami.

"It'll be a tough battle. They're looking forward to it, they're real excited and all keyed up," he said. "They know it won't be easy, but they are confident."

"The reward of going to nationals in Miami is incentive for them. If we lose two matches, we're done for the year. If we win four straight, we're (region) champions."

It's a simple formula. And should SC perform as it has all season long, that formula will be enough to get the Lady Ocelots an NJCAA tournament berth.



ROB REED
Jean Bass (foreground) and Patti Kozicki have helped Schoolcraft advance to the NJCAA regional tournament in Kalamazoo.

Spartan tankers No. 2

The Windsor Ontario Aquatic Club took first place recently in an A-D Division swim meet hosted by the Livonia Spartan Aquatic Club at Oakland Community College.

The Spartans, who settled for second place, were led by Michele McKenzie and Nicole Drake, who captured three firsts apiece.

Competing in the girls 15-18 year-old division, McKenzie won the 1,650-yard freestyle, 100 freestyle and 200 individual medley. She was also second in the 500 freestyle and fourth in the 50 freestyle and 200 backstroke.

Drake, competing in the girls 13-14 division, won the 200, 500 and 1,650 freestyle. She also won the 100 freestyle and 100 breaststroke; and sixth in the 100 butterfly.

OTHER SPARTAN FINISHERS A Division

Boys 10 and under: Mike Orris — fourth place, 100 and 200-yard freestyles; sixth, 50 freestyle, 100 individual medley and 200 IM. Drew Sogho — second, 200 freestyle; third, 100 freestyle, 50 and 100 breaststroke, 200 IM; fourth, 100 IM, 100 backstroke.

Girls 11-12: Tara Dushoff — second, 50 backstroke; third, 100 backstroke; fourth, 200 IM, 100 IM and 500 freestyle. Pam Fricford — sixth, 50 and 100 freestyle. Amy Anderson — sixth, 50 freestyle.

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