

Engineers seek fortune reversal in playoff series

By G.J. Risak
staff writer

If there is a message A.J. Baker would like to deliver to his hockey team, it would be the past is past.

Which means what happened before is no certain indicator of what will happen in the future. That's important as Baker's Hennessey Engineers prepared for their North American Junior Hockey League (NAJHL) playoff with the Fraser Falcons.

"We had an informal practice yesterday," Baker said Tuesday, "and I think it helped us to get on the ice. That's what we're trying to focus on now, on what we can do."

Examining the past won't do much good. The Engineers finished third in the three-team NAJHL, Fraser was beaten out of first place Sunday when Compwure edged the Falcons 7-6.

IT WAS AN important win for Compwure. It will host the national Junior A playoffs April 3-6 in Oak Park, and its first-place finish guarantees it a spot in the four-team field. The winner of the Engineers-Falcons seven-game playoff, which began Tuesday in Fraser, also will earn a berth.

"That's why it's incredibly important for us to win this series," said Baker, whose team finished with a 14-16-7 NAJHL record and a 20-10-10 overall mark.

But it won't be easy. The Engineers had few successes against the Falcons this season, going 3-9-1. They lost their last four meetings and only won once at Fraser. The last time they won was by a 6-3 score back on Jan. 30.

Compounding the difficulty of their task was a season-ending slump, in which the Plymouth-based team posted an 0-4-2 record. The last two setbacks were last weekend.

Half a game not enough to keep GC with Glenn

By Bill Parker
staff writer

After dropping two of its last three games during the regular season, Westland John Glenn Rockets "beat back" in the groove Monday, pounding Garden City 88-56 in the opening round of the district basketball tournament hosted by the Rockets.

"This was an important win for us tonight," said Glenn coach Gordie Davis. "We needed to play well and I thought we did, especially in the second half. We needed to play an up-tempo game and the kids did a real nice job of doing that. This win was an important one because it was the first game of the tournament."

The Rockets took advantage of their superior height advantage in the early part of the game as Andy Granulis dominated the middle at both ends of the court. The 6-foot-6 senior center fired in 20 of his game-high 28 points in the first half and also headed in 11 rebounds.

GARDEN CITY was concentrating on its perimeter game behind the hot shooting of Jeremy Krol and Rick Becsiko. Krol tossed in six of his 10 points in the first quarter as the Cougars within range. With 20 seconds remaining in the quarter, Becsiko scored both ends of a two-shot foul to pull his team to within four, 19-12.

Glenn jumped ahead by nine, 31-21, on an inside bucket by Granulis with just over two minutes remaining in the half. But Garden City answered with a seven-point run as they moved back to within two, 31-29. The Cougars also connected on nine of nine from the free throw line

Fraser battled back Friday to edge the Engineers 5-4 at the Plymouth Ice Arena, and on Saturday Compwure claimed a 4-2 triumph at Oak Park.

"That was probably the most disheartening loss for me all year," said Baker of the Falcons defeat. "We've played good hockey, we've played well, but we haven't played winning hockey."

THE ENGINEERS led 4-3 after one period against Fraser Friday. Scott Markiewicz provided the spark, notching a goal and two assists. Steve Ramberg, Darryl Sattler and Dan Franti also scored for the Engineers.

But after a scoreless second period, Craig Colby got two of the Falcons' three third-period goals in the comeback win.

On Saturday against Compwure, Todd Tamburino and Matt Wiljanen collected goals for the Engineers. Todd English scored twice for Compwure.

A six-game winless streak isn't what Baker would like to be saddled with entering an important playoff. A year ago, the Engineers and Fraser battled through their entire seven-game series before the Falcons won and earned a berth in the national tournament. All four Falcons won came at Fraser.

Baker does not foresee a high-scoring series. "Their defense is pretty stingy," he said. "If our goals are hot, we can keep it pretty low. The last three or four times we've played them, five goals has been the most we've needed to win."

BILLY PYE will likely be in the nets for Fraser most of the time. "He's been pretty tough against us," said Baker. "But I thought we got his number a bit last Friday when we got four goals against him."

But all four came in the opening

in the first half to help keep the game close.

Garden City had a chance to tie it with 1:25 remaining in the half when Jeff Longway was tagged with a pushing foul, and the Cougars received possession of the ball. Jim Berghofer missed a shot from the corner, but Granulis grabbed the rebound and drew a foul. He missed the first free throw, but teammate Anson Stromman returned the rebound into the net to give Glenn a four-point lead, 33-29. Marcus Lowe closed the first half with three more Rocket points as Glenn headed to the locker room holding a 35-29 advantage.

HAWLEY AND GRAZULIS opened the third quarter with four points each to push Glenn's lead to 44-31. The game was never close after that.

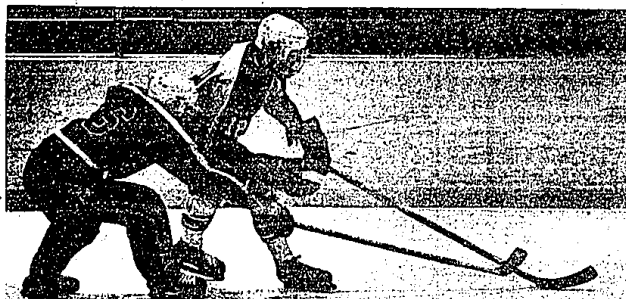
Hawley dumped in eleven points in the third quarter and Stromman added six as the Rockets outscored Garden City 24-13 in the stanza to take a 60-42 lead.

Glenn's pressure defense forced the Cougars into seven turnovers in the fourth quarter as they outscored the visitors 28-13.

"John Glenn is a great basketball team," said Cougars coach Bob Dropp. "Our problem all year has been that we can stay with the big-ger teams for one or two quarters, then they beat us up on the boards."

Becsiko finished with 15 for Garden City, which ended the season at 7-14. Krol and Scott Harvey ended with 10 points each.

Hawley finished with 20 points for the Rockets, while Stromman pumped in 12 points and grabbed 11 boards.



Leif Gustafson (18) leads the Engineers in goal-scoring with 24. He'll have to produce if his team is survive its best-of-seven series with the Fraser Falcons.

period. After that, Pye shut the Engineers down.

Other Falcons to watch are center Don Stone, who leads the NAJHL in scoring, and 6-foot-7, 215-pound defenseman Eric Reisman. "He's a big boy and an experienced defense man," said Baker of Reisman.

"When he starts leaning on people and moving the puck, he can be trouble."

Leading the Engineer scorers are center Larry Pilot (16 goals, 35 assists) and right wing Leif Gustafson (24 goals, 24 assists). Defenseman Tom Madden is one of the few Engi-

neers with playoff experience, and he leads the NAJHL blue-liners in scoring (14 goals, 28 assists).

Baker plans to keep rotating goalsies Doug Brown and Dave Church. The key to the Engineers' success may rest with them, he admitted. "We had a hot goalie last year (in the

WHO: Hennessey Engineers.
WHAT: North American Junior Hockey League (NAJHL) playoffs.
WHEN: Second game of the best-of-seven series is 8:30 p.m. tonight.
WHERE: Tonight at the Plymouth Cultural Center; other games both in Plymouth and at the Fraser Ice Arena.
FACTS AND FIGURES: At stake is a berth in the four-team national Junior A hockey tournament in Oak Park April 3-6. After tonight's game in Plymouth, the Engineers will travel to Fraser for the third contest of the series Saturday. The fourth game will be in Plymouth at 8 p.m. Tuesday, with remaining games (if necessary) in Fraser Thursday, March 19; in Plymouth at 8 p.m. Friday, March 20; and in Fraser Sunday, March 22.
The Engineers enter the series after finishing last in the three-team NAJHL. The Falcons, who missed finishing first when they lost to Compwure 7-6 Sunday, have a commanding 9-3-1 edge over the Engineers this season, including wins in the last four meetings. In last year's NAJHL playoffs, Fraser eliminated Hennessey four games to three.

playoffs) with Mike Williams," said Baker. "We're going to need something stellar like that this year."

Unfortunately, Williams has taken his talents to Ferris State, so if the Engineers are going to challenge Fraser, they'll have to get a spark somewhere else.

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May 9	Saturday	Oak	7:35		
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May 13	Wednesday	Cal	7:35		
May 15	Friday	Chi	7:35		
May 16	Saturday	Chi	7:35		
May 17	Sunday	Chi	1:35		
May 25	Monday	Tex	7:35		
May 26	Tuesday	Tex	7:35		
May 27	Wednesday	Tex	7:35		
May 29	Friday	Minn	7:35		
May 30	Saturday	Minn	7:35		
May 31	Sunday	Minn	1:35		
Jun 9	Tuesday	Mil	7:35		

Date	Day	Opp	Time	Box \$10.50	Res \$8.50
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Jun 11	Thursday	Mil	1:35		
Jun 12	Friday	BoS	7:35		
Jun 13	Saturday	BoS	2:20		
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Jun 23	Tuesday	Tor	7:35		
Jun 24	Wednesday	Tor	7:35		
Jun 26	Friday	Bal	7:35		
Jun 27	Saturday	Bal	7:35		
Jun 28	Sunday	Bal	1:35		
Jul 16	Thursday	Sea	7:35		
Jul 17	Friday	Sea	7:35		
Jul 18	Saturday	Sea	7:35		
Jul 19	Sunday	Sea	1:35		
Jul 20	Monday	Oak	7:35		
Jul 21	Tuesday	Oak	7:35		
Jul 22	Wednesday	Oak	7:35		
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Aug 18	Tuesday	Minn	7:35		
Aug 19	Wednesday	Minn	7:35		
Aug 20	Thursday	Minn	1:35		
Aug 28	Friday	Tex	7:35		
Aug 29	Saturday	Tex	7:35		
Aug 30	Sunday	Tex	1:35		
Aug 31	Monday	Chi	7:35		
Sep 1	Tuesday	Chi	7:35		
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Sep 3	Thursday	Chi	7:35		
Sep 4	Friday	BoS	7:35		
Sep 5	Saturday	BoS	7:35		
Sep 6	Sunday	BoS	7:35		
Sep 16	Wednesday	BoS	7:35		
Sep 18	Friday	Mil	7:35		
Sep 19	Saturday	Mil	1:15		
Sep 20	Sunday	Mil	1:35		
Sep 28	Monday	Bal	7:35		
Sep 29	Tuesday	Bal	7:35		
Sep 30	Wednesday	Bal	7:35		
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Oct 3	Saturday	Tor	1:15		
Oct 4	Sunday	Tor	1:35		

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