

# Beaufait is hot item in cold country

By Neal Zipser  
staff writer

Unlike most Michiganans trying to escape the cold days of winter to warmer temperatures, Livonia's Mark Beaufait decided to head north to experience the icier days of Marquette and play hockey for Northern Michigan University.

Even though the snow on the ground is much higher, the most significant aspect for Beaufait has been on the ice, where the junior has climbed from playing in 11 games his freshman year, to scoring 24 points last season, to recently being named the Western Collegiate Hockey Association's "Player of the Week."

The 1988 Livonia Stevenson graduate notched a goal and an assist in two consecutive games against Michigan Tech, including the game-winner in the series' first game. His goal in the following day's 4-3 triumph, snapped a 2-2 tie in the third

period. He then assisted on the eventual game-winner.

For the season, Beaufait is the Wildcats' fourth leading scorer with nine goals and nine assists in 17 games. He is only one goal shy of matching last season's goal-scoring totals.

BEAUFAIT has had to adjust to a slightly different lifestyle in the upper peninsula, where he says "they take their hockey very seriously."

"The fans are very supportive and the team is very supportive and in general, people are closer together here," Beaufait said. "It's a very good hockey town. It's also a small town. A lot of people know each other, and in general, people are closer together here."

But those who follow Stevenson hockey may not remember Beaufait's name. The 5-foot-9, 185-pound center did not play high school hockey, opting for junior ranks instead.

## hockey

He spent eight years playing in travel leagues in metro Detroit, before spending one season with the Redford Royals of the North American Junior Hockey League where he was team captain. Beaufait was a first-team selection as a forward and the second leading scorer in the NAJHL in 1988.

"There is more recognition and more traveling in junior hockey than in high school hockey," Beaufait said. "I worked at the Northern Michigan Hockey School and really liked the coaches and the program up here. There were some other schools interested in me, but they wanted me to stay in juniors one more year. But I wanted to go to

college instead."

"I SAW THE potential in him," said NMU coach Rick Comley, the 16th winningest coach in college hockey history. "His freshman year was an adjustment year. It's a big step from junior hockey to college hockey."

"I think his improvement is due to his maturity. Mark also worked hard on the weights and has gotten a lot stronger. He has also gotten smarter."

It took awhile for Beaufait to adjust to his new environment. "I was disappointed my freshman year because I thought I would play more," Beaufait said. "We had a good team then (winning the league playoffs) and I wound up learning a lot by practicing with them."

Beaufait's improvement has not surprised the 14-year coach. "I think he's the most improved player on the team," Comley added. "It has been a fairly dramatic im-

provement which has surprised some people, but not me. I have always seen great potential in him. He's a great kid, always smiling and deserving of the credit he received. It was a great honor he won."

Last season, Beaufait made an impact on the Wildcats, but suffered ankle and chest injuries right after Christmas, which caused him to miss eight games. This season, Beaufait has stayed healthy and is playing his best hockey as a Wildcat.

"I HAVE TO improve on being a more consistent scorer," Beaufait said. "I can score a few goals in a couple of games and then go awhile with no points. I can't be such a streak scorer. I don't know why it happens, but it does. There is always room for improvement in your game — in skating and shooting. But overall, I'm happy with my play so far this year."

NMU is 12-3-2 overall this season and 11-1-2 in the WCHA, and ranked

fifth in the nation according to the Albany (N.Y.) Times-Union poll.

Northern's success is mainly due to a 16-game home unbeaten streak. However, the Wildcats are second in the league to Minnesota, who is 12-1-3. NMU lost and tied a game in a two-game series with the Gophers in mid-November.

"We played both games at their place and we could have won either game," said the Livonian. "They have to come here for a series later on in the season and we'll be looking forward to it."

Beaufait has aspirations of professional hockey, but is focused only on this season.

"I'd like to play as far as hockey takes me, but this year I want to win the league," said Beaufait, who is studying business management. "We start a 10-day road trip this weekend with two tough games against North Dakota. This will be an important stretch for us if we want to win the league championship."

## CC impressive in win over Rice

Redford Catholic Central turned in its best effort of the season today, scoring a 6-4 prep hockey victory over rival Birmingham Brother Rice at the Redford Ice Arena.

"Every kid hustled. It was a great team effort," CC coach John Gumbelton said.

Senior Jesse Hubenschmidt scored two goals and added two assists for the victorious Shamrocks, now 3-2 overall and 2-2 in the Michigan Metro circuit.

Hubenschmidt scored a pair of unassisted first-period goals and Chris Freeman tallied one for Rice.

"We skated hard all night, we came out flying," CC assistant coach Ron Repicky said. "We kept them bottled up in their end."

In the second period, CC exploded for four goals.

Paul Schloss connected twice, the first a power-play effort from Hubenschmidt and Mike Kasper.

Schloss' second goal was assisted by Hubenschmidt.

CC's Mark Lorelli scored from Matt Keenan and Dave Gallagher to make it 5-2.

Tom Vaquera then followed with CC's sixth goal, Kevin Donnelly and Scott Johnson assisting, to make it 6-2. (Brian Hartwell scored Rice's lone goal during the middle period.)

"Hubenschmidt is a smart player, and Schloss has improved every game," Gumbelton said. "He (Schloss) keeps his head up when he has the puck."

Rice scored twice in the final period, including Josh Fryer's goal with

## hockey

1:02 left, but it was too little, too late for the state-ranked Warriors.

Mike Brusseau, who was steady in the CC nets, turned away 17 shots.

"Our lines are starting to skate a little bit," Gumbelton said. "And we had nice support from our student body. That helped."

CC returns to action at 8 p.m. Saturday at Redford Arena against defending state Class A champion East Kentwood.

STEVENSON 4, MILFORD 0: Four different players scored Saturday as Livonia Stevenson (2-2-1) gained a non-league win over the host Redskins (2-3) at Lakeland Ice Arena.

"We played better and with more intensity," said Stevenson coach Paul Ferguson, whose team was coming off a 4-1 tie with Southfield-Lathrup.

Scott Johnson and Frank Duplitz each collected a goal and two assists for the winners.

Johnson opened the scoring in the first period on assists from Nick Sata and Euplitz.

The Spartans made it 3-0 after two periods — Duplitz from Johnson and Chris Rennie, and Rennie, from Johnson and Duplitz.

Mark Peterson added an insurance goal in the final period from Sata and Ryan Gustik.

Stevenson goaltender Mike Williams stopped 18 shots in recording the shutout.

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