

Future Stars

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Seattle, Oshawa and Springfield. The youngest was Brian Finley, a 16-year-old goaltender from Sault Ste. Marie, who is property of Barrie of the OHL. He won't be eligible for the NHL draft until 1999.

The oldest was Tripp Tracy of Grosse Pointe, a goalie who played last year for Richmond of the ECHL and is property of the Carolina Hurricanes.

Many of the players were affiliated with NHL clubs including new Carolina coach (formerly Hartford), the New York Rangers, Toronto, Phoenix and Vancouver.

The Futures '97 Camp drew NHL scouts, agents (such as former Red Wing goaltender Eddie Mio), trainers and coaches. Ranger Adam Graves also stopped by to take a look.

"We're about halfway through the summer and this is kind of a benchmark," said Plymouth Whalers coach and general manager Peter DeBoer, now in his third season. "We bring these guys in here for a week because the NHL camps are only six weeks away. For the player and the team, it's a good idea. It's a good thing for the player because a lot of scouts get a chance to see them play."

"As far as readiness, they're ready to step in a play once camp opens."

Whalers assistants Steve Spott and Greg Stefan (another former Wings netminder) gave players on-ice instruction along with Andy Weidenbach, a local skating coach.

Dave Hilger, who once worked with the U.S. Olympic weightlifting team, also lent his

expertise.

"By the end of the day these guys are so tired, they really don't want to do anything but get back to their rooms (at the Quality Inn)," DeBoer said. "We're going to take them to a Tigers-Blue Jays game."

"There's a lot of conditioning, and Dave (Hilger) doesn't understand the word 'fatigue.' But they do a lot of skill work and they scrimmage. They do a little bit of everything."

The Futures '97 Camp may benefit two local Whaler players the most.

Novi's Kevin Holdridge, a 6-foot-2, 204-pound defenseman who will be a junior this fall at Redford Catholic Central High School, played 55 games last year with the Whalers.

The 16-year-old is eligible for the 1998 NHL draft and could be a late first-round pick.

"The scouts are excited about him because he has lots of potential," DeBoer said. "Kevin was one of the youngest in our league. He's a great physical specimen, a defensive defenseman with good hands. There are a lot of comparisons to the Hatcher brothers (Kevin and Dorian) and Al Infrate. And he's a bright kid who is as nice as a kid off the ice as you'll meet."

Another Whaler eligible for the draft next year is 18-year-old defenseman Jason Lawmaster, who recently graduated from Westland John Glenn High School.

Lawmaster, a tough 5-11, 204-pounder, played 29 games with the Whalers last year after spending the first half of the season with Port Hope, Ontario, a

Tier II team in the Toronto Metro Junior loop.

"Jason was a free agent last year and we were fortunate to get him," DeBoer said of Lawmaster. "He's a guy the scouts haven't seen very much. Last year with us he had to start from scratch and how high he goes (in the draft) depends on what type of season he has with us next year."

"He's big and physical and he likes to stir it up. He has a real presence out on the ice and we look for big things from him."

Holdridge does not concern himself about a possible NHL future. He simply wants to get into the best shape possible for the Whalers camp, which begins Aug. 27.

"I'm just going to try to play better than last year and then see what happens," he said. "You need some place to develop as quickly as possible and this makes the development process quicker."

"You see what you have to do to get to the next level. You learn about new ways to work out in the weight room. We've learned a lot of new lifting techniques."

Holdridge is passing up an opportunity to play collegiate hockey (he forfeited his NCAA eligibility when he signed with the Whalers). He believes the OHL is a more direct route.

"Playing here and being so close to my hometown is good," he said. "It (the OHL) gets you ready for life at the next level, a higher level of hockey."

Lawmaster also believes the OHL is the best avenue to

advance to the pros.

"College is not my type of hockey," he said. "It (the OHL) is more my style — hit, hack and fight back."

The conditioning sessions at the Futures '97 Camp will provide long-range benefits.

"This definitely got me in shape," Lawmaster said. "I'll be feeling it next week. We learned a lot of new Olympic-style lifts."

"It's nice because you don't get a chance to get on the ice much during the summer. Plus, it's a benefit because you get good supervision from the coaches."

Both players were impressed by right winger Dave Brosseau, a 21-year-old Rangers farmhand who played last year at Binghamton (N.Y.) of the American Hockey League.

"He's a smooth skater, with good hands, a guy who can put the puck away," Lawmaster said.

"Brosseau is really good," Holdridge said. "But when it comes to goalies, Robert Escho (of the Whalers) is always up there."

And for many of these players, it may not be long before they'll all be "up there."

MSHL final set

The stage is set for Sunday's Metro Summer Hockey League championship game.

The Huskies, the Bakes Conference champion, will take on the Falcons, the Eagle Conference playoff winner, beginning at 8 p.m. at the Plymouth Cultural Center and Ice Arena.

Matt Henderson had two goals and three assists, while Jack McCoy and Vic Decina each added two goals as the Falcons eliminated the Broncos, 6-3, in a game Thursday at Canfield Arena in Dearborn Heights.

Six unanswered goals by the Falcons all but put the game away.

Scott Lock added one goal and three assists, while Matt Krupa contributed the other Falcon goal.

Jason Hubenschmidt and Tom McNeil split time in goal for the winners.

Jake Wiegand had two goals in a losing cause, while James Wheaton had the other Bronco score.

In the Bakes final, Kevin Swider had four goals and one assist, while Jeremy Klosewski contributed three goals and an

assist as the Huskies ousted the Lakers, 10-5.

A 6-2 surge in the second period gave the Huskies a 3-3 advantage.

Wes Blovin scored twice and added two assists for the winners. Brent Lafond contributed the other goal, while Chad Theuer chipped in with three assists.

Goaltender Joe Sorentino, who went all the way in the nets, also got into the act with two assists.

Jay Vanick scored twice for the Lakers, while Brent Wishart, Jason Couturo and Troy Taylor added one goal apiece.

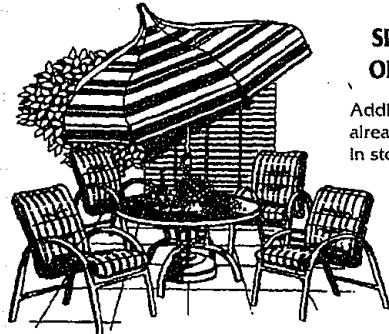
FALCONS 12, SPARTANS 2: Lock scored four goals and added four assists Wednesday as the Lakers routed the Eastern Conference semifinals at Plymouth.

McCoy contributed two goals, while Henderson, Vic Decina, Paolo Decina, Ryan Roemans and Krupa each contributed one.

Trevor Rogan scored both goals for the Falcons, who were outscored 6-0 in the final period.

Lakers goalie Hubenschmidt started before giving way to McNeil midway through the second period.

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