

Mercy

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Northern's Amber Altom, who was 3-or-4 and had half of her team's six hits, started the game with a single.

The next batter, Ashley Schmieg, bunted the ball in the air in front of home plate.

The ball eluded the grasp of Mercy catcher Holly Van Clonve.

Mercy pitcher Megan Fediuk tried to get Altom going to third, but the ball rolled to the corner in left field, resulting in two runs before the Marlins had gotten an out.

"Holly" exploded out of the box with great effort and dove for the ball," Falvo said. "If she doesn't touch it, it goes foul and the batter is out. But you can't fault the effort."

"My team was so pumped; they were hustling, trying to make a play. My girls came to play. But once we spotted them two runs, they're a tough team to come back on."

The Huskies (32-8) had just

two hits off Megan Fediuk before the rain delay, which Hamilton said he welcomed.

"I thought we needed it, because we were pretty flat," said Hamilton, who announced his retirement after eight seasons with a 286-40 career record.

The Huskies were accustomed to winning by shutout, "and I think they thought 2-0 was enough," he added.

"They were goofing around and laughing in the back of the bus. I chewed them out pretty well."

With Greer shutting down Mercy, Northern tacked on two more runs in the sixth.

Ashley Smith doubled; Greer singled her home and later scored on an infield error.

Following a one-out single by Kaprice Williams, Falvo replaced Megan Fediuk with Dana Frantz, who retired the next two batters and allowed one hit over the final 1 2/3 innings.

Fediuk struck out two and

walked one.

"I took Megan out because I wanted her to come out in front of the fans, so she would get the recognition she deserved for what she has done for this program," Falvo said.

"Secondarily, I didn't want the game getting out of hand. In Megan's defense, we made some critical mistakes, and that made it tough for her to pitch her game."

It was Mercy's first appearance in the state final but its third straight in the Final Four.

"I feel the Mercy program has achieved the goal it set out to — to compete with the best teams in the state," Falvo said.

"A state title would have been nice, but we're here."

Hamilton said he never dreamed, at the start of the season, the Huskies would repeat as state champs after losing five all-stars.

Northern has been in the state

finals five of the last six years and has won four titles during that time.

"It took a while to figure it all out but, as the season went on, we began plugging holes," Hamilton said.

"The teams the last two years were tremendously talented; this team has tremendous heart."

In the regional final and quarterfinal, the Huskies defeated Brighton and Jensen, two highly-ranked teams, by 1-0 scores.

"If we played them 10 times, they'd probably beat us nine," Hamilton said.

"If anybody deserved to win, we did given the way we did it."

"Anyone else would have to thank Portage Northern for knocking out all those teams."

Northern also won its semifinal game by shutout, 4-0 over Walled Lake Western.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREKLER

Battle Creek blues: Mercy coach Jack Falvo consoles senior Rachel Del Corvo following a loss in the state final. Junior Sarah Roman (left) and sophomore Tammi Karagiosian (middle) watch as Portage players receive their medals.

NHL playoffs done; it's time for MSHL

It's that special time of year again: when the preliminaries in hockey — like the Stanley Cup playoffs — are over and the real fun begins.

The Metro Summer Hockey League got under way with two games Monday and two more Tuesday, all at Farmington's Suburban Training Center.

The first game of the MSHL season featured last year's champions, the Lakers, against the Bulldogs.

The results, however, weren't so good for the defending champs. The visiting 'Dogs built a 5-1 lead by the end of the first period and kept on rolling, all the way to a 13-6 romp over the Lakers.

Jamie Milan and Chris Conner (from Westland) paced the Bulldogs, Milan collecting three goals (two in the first period) and three assists and Conner adding two goals and five assists.

The had plenty of assistance. Rick Morio had two goals and two assists, Ryan Keeler (Livonia) contributed a goal and four assists, David Gill (Canton/Salem HS) got two goals, Mark Nagel (Canton/Salem HS) had a goal and two assists, and Andy Paul and Ian Smith each scored goals.

MSHL HOCKEY

Ryan Rathbun started in goal for the 'Dogs; Bernie McDonnell (Livonia) took over midway through the second period.

The Lakers got two goals and an assist from Mike Vigilante. Matt Frick added a goal and two assists, Brian Jardine had a goal and an assist, Jim Whenton (Plymouth) had two assists, and Andy Howard and John Maley (Livonia Churchill HS) each scored a goal.

Lanny Jardine started in goal for the Lakers; he was replaced midway through the second period by Brian Whetstone (Plymouth).

Huskies 13, Wolverines 4: The Huskies scored the game's first five goals and never let up in pummeling the Wolverines Monday at Farmington's Suburban Training Center.

Dwight Helminen scored four goals for the Huskies, three of them in the second period. Trent Dawettile added two goals and two assists. Lars Helminen had a goal and four assists, Rich Storm, Aaron Kilunen and Kurt Kivisto each had a goal and three assists, Tyler Sturos got a goal and two assists, Robert Sturos had three assists, Josh Daavetila had two assists, and Mark Pietila and Ted Sturos each scored goals.

Art Baker (Canton) started in goal for the Huskies; he was replaced by Will Hamiele midway through the second period.

Chris Powrozniak (Redford) and Jeff Stempel (Livonia) paced the Wolverines with a goal and an assist each. Kevin Bushey and Paolo Declina (Canton) also scored goals. Travis Miller was in goal for the Wolves.

Warriors 6, Broncos 3: Brandon Kalcinski (Livonia) scored two goals and had one assist for the Warriors, who led 4-0 after one period Tuesday.

Scott Loch (Livonia), Joe Hillebrand, Dave Moss (Livonia) and Mike Ryan scored the other goals for the Warriors. Joe Moreau, Ryan Yost (Livonia) and Moss had two assists each.

Adam Krug (Livonia), Pete Mazzoni (Livonia) and Steve Yatter (Livonia) accounted for the Broncos scores.

Wildcats 5, Spartans 8: Todd Bentley's second goal of the game with 5:01 remaining Tuesday enabled the Wildcats to gain a tie with the Spartans.

The Wildcats scored three of the four third-period goals to overcome a 4-2 deficit. Michael Radskovich (Livonia) pulled the Wildcats within one, 5-4, with 11:09 to play.

Jim Stephenson scored three goals for the Spartans; Brad Zarem and Alex Foster (Canton) had one each.

Danny Knapp and Steve Brudzewski had the other Wildcat goals, and Shaun Davis had two assists.

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