

Clarkston falls in OT

BY BRAD WOLFE
STAFF WRITER

The fourth time didn't turn out to be the charm for the Clarkston boys basketball team. Making its fourth appearance in the Class A state quarterfinals in eight years, all under veteran coach Dan Fife, the Wolves came up agonizingly short Tuesday, falling to the Flint Carman-Ainsworth, 68-60, in overtime at Saginaw Valley State University's Ryder Center.

The eighth-ranked Cavaliers (24-2), just one of two Class A ranked teams to reach the state quarterfinals, advance to Friday's state semifinals.

Clarkston, which had won eight straight heading into the Elite 8 matchup with Carman-Ainsworth, finishes its season with a 17-9 mark. Fife's team had lost its previous two quarterfinal games in heartbreaking fashion, and this game wasn't any less gut-wrenching.

The Wolves battled back from a nine-point third-quarter deficit, and after a pair of three-

pointers by sophomore guard Robbie Clark, actually rallied to take a 54-48 lead with 3:54 left in the fourth quarter. Clark's clutch shots capped a 14-2 Clarkston run, but Carman-Ainsworth's Aaron Lawler just wouldn't let his team lose.

After going scoreless in the third quarter, Lawler scored 13 of his career-high 31 points in the fourth quarter and overtime to carry his team to its first-ever semifinal appearance.

"He's a very good player and stepped up at key times for them," said Fife, whose squad also lost in the quarterfinals in 1995, '96 and '98. "They've got 18-year-olds playing against our 15-year-olds, but we're used to that because we've done it all year."

Clark scored 10 points for the Wolves, despite missing most of the first half with foul trouble. Sophomore guard Brad Goodman added eight points, while Whetstone dished out a game-high 10 assists.

Mitchell honored as top girls ski coach

BY DANIEL STICHRADT
STAFF WRITER

After serving as an assistant coach for two years, Timi Mitchell has been the head girls ski coach at Clarkston the past four years — and her team has not left its perch as one of the area's most dominating programs.

The 2003 season was a complete indication of that.

The Wolves finished unbeaten (9-0) in dual meets for the fourth straight season, won the Pine Knob Divisional meet, the OAA Division I meet, the Pine Knob Regional for the seventh straight year and eighth time out of the past 10 years, and captured the SEMSL champi-

onship meet, the only meet Clarkston won this season where it was challenged.

Clarkston also finished fifth at the Traverse City Invitational and finished fourth at the Class A state meet at Marquette Mountain after finishing third the year before. The Wolves were one of four area teams to compete at the Class A state meet this season, while a fifth qualified for the Class B-C-D finals.

"It's an honor not only to have such a good team, but to be honored by other coaches in the area," said a flattered Mitchell, a 1990 Clarkston grad. dmitch1@home.com.net (248) 651-7515, ext. 12

WHALERS

FROM PAGE D1

to Kitchener in the Western Conference and third overall in the OHL.

For another, they probably don't have the talent they had last season. Hey, after all, four guys from last season's squad are currently playing in the NHL. And don't forget — since they aren't No. 1 in the conference, they won't have to go up against the No. 8 (and last) seed. So where are the positives in all that?

Attribute it to lessons learned. "On last year's team, guys already had their pro contracts and we weren't playing particularly well down the stretch," Plymouth coach Mike Vellucci said. "This year's team has been playing very well down the stretch."

"This is a different makeup of kids. These guys are hungry. Last year's disappointing finish should make them finished. This year's Whalers weren't expected to do much — they'd lost nearly all their top scorers, half of their defensemen and their starting goalie — but with the help of a few good moves and the development of some other players, they have."

Still, even though they won their fifth straight West Division title, the Whalers aren't likely to look past Owen Sound, their first-round opponent. Not after last season's debacle. Besides, the Attack beat Plymouth in three of four meetings this season.

"They're well-balanced," Vellucci said. "They think they match up well with us. They're hard-working, they have some speed, and they're a disciplined, well-coached team."

Owen Sound finished fourth in the Midwest Division with a 27-30-7-4 record, scoring 206 goals while giving up 241. The Attack are led by Miguel Delisle with 35 goals and 44 assists (79 points), Brad Richardson with 27 goals and 40 assists (67 points), Matt Passfield with 36 goals and 30 assists (66 points), Pat Jarrett (brother of Plymouth defenseman Cole Jarrett) with 16 goals and 39 assists (55 points) and Mark Giordano with

OHL PLAYOFFS

First round

Plymouth Whalers vs.

Owen Sound Attack

Records: Whalers (No. 2 seed in Western Conference), 43-14-9-2; Owen Sound (No. 7 seed), 27-30-7-4

Game schedule: 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Plymouth's Compuware Arena; 7 p.m. Sunday at Owen Sound; 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Compuware; 7 p.m. March 21 at Owen Sound; 7:30 p.m. March 22 at Compuware (if necessary); 7 p.m. March 30 at Owen Sound (if necessary); 7:30 p.m. April 1 at Compuware (if necessary).

18 goals and 30 assists (48 points).

John Ceci, obtained in a trade with Ottawa, has been solid in goal. He had a 25-13-4 overall record with a 2.77 goals-against average and a .908 save percentage. Among his wins was a 2-1 victory Feb. 22 over Plymouth at Compuware Arena.

Vellucci believes his current team is ready for the challenge, more so than last season's squad. "We have more balanced scoring," he said. "Scoring's never been our problem."

The Whalers, 43-14-9-2 overall, tied for third in the OHL in goals scored with 259 and were first in goals against with 174 ("For the fifth-straight season," Vellucci pointed out).

Chad LaRose helped make up for the loss of last year's leading scorers — Stephen Weiss, Damien Surma, Kris Verner and Brad Yeo — by scoring a team-record 61 goals and leading the OHL in power-play goals (23) and plus/minus rating (+15-51). He totaled 117 points.

But unlike last year, when just one Whaler surpassed 30 goals (LaRose with 32) and four had 20 or more, this season's Whalers featured four players with 30 or more goals. Seven players collected more than 50 points this season; five had that many last season.

So the Attack won't be able to count on LaRose alone, not with Ryan Ramsay (33 goals, 55 assists), Karl Stewart (35 goals, 50 assists), Chris

Thorburn (30 goals, 41 assists), John Mitchell (18 goals, 37 assists) and John Vigilante (15 goals, 24 assists) on the prowl. Also dangerous are defensemen Cole Jarrett (14 goals, 41 assists) and Canton's James Wisniewski (18 goals, 34 assists).

Another Whaler strength is goalie Paul Drew, who was surrounded by uncertainty entering the season simply because he had never been a No. 1 goaltender in the OHL before. He responded, however, leading the OHL in goals-against average (2.49) while posting a 29-12-7 record with three shutouts and a .911 save percentage.

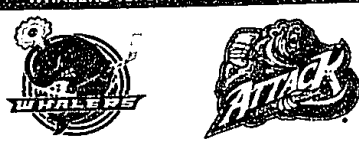
Vellucci believes this season's team won't stumble. "They know," he said. "You can finish 50 points ahead of someone (in the regular season) and it won't matter. It all starts over again."

"I told them if we play our game, we'll be fine."

Vellucci then repeated the catch phrases his coaching staff has used all season: sticking to our system, keeping it simple, pay the price, etc. It all comes down to sacrificing for the good of the team. If the Whalers do that, their run in the playoffs should last a good deal longer than last year's.

crish@home.com.net | (734) 953-709

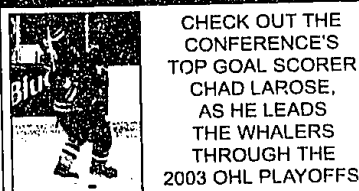
WESTERN CONFERENCE QUARTERFINALS WHALERS vs. OWEN SOUND ATTACK



FIRST ROUND HOME SCHEDULE

GAME 1- SAT., MAR. 22 @ 7:30 p.m.
GAME 3- TUES., MAR. 25 @ 7:30 p.m.
*GAME 5- SAT., MAR. 29 @ 7:30 p.m.
*GAME 7- TUES., APR. 1 @ 7:30 p.m.
* If necessary in best of seven series

Tickets \$10 & \$15
\$7 off for groups of 30 or more
Charge by phone at (734) 153-8100
VISA, MasterCard, Discover and AMEX accepted



CHECK OUT THE CONFERENCE'S TOP GOAL SCORER CHAD LAROSE, AS HE LEADS THE WHALERS THROUGH THE 2003 OHL PLAYOFFS!

COMPUWARE SPORTS ARENA
M-14 & BECK RD. IN PLYMOUTH

Do you live in a Bright House?

High Speed Online
It's faster than ever. It's always connected, so there's no waiting. You can download photographs and video clips super-fast, and you still have a choice of High-Speed Online providers.

Clutter-Free Roof
You can't get a lot of this with a satellite. Which is just as well, because you like your roof the way it is: undisturbed.

On Demand Shows And Movies
Watch your favorite shows and hit movies the instant you want them to start. With just the press of a button.
(Coming Soon)

Control
Miss something? Need a break? You can pause, rewind and fast-forward TV with just the touch of a button on your remote.
(Coming Soon)

High-Definition TV
Stunning resolution. Wide screen TV. High Definition. That's what you get when you have HDTV in a Bright House. Only with Bright House Networks can you get 6 high definition channels including your local favorites, HBO and Showtime.

Recycle
What to do with your satellite dish.

Service
It's easy to live in a Bright House. Just call and we'll offer you convenient service times based on your schedule, like a 2-hour window or evening installation.

Call
Out knowledgeable employees can answer any of your questions, any time of day.

(866)898-9101
The change to Bright House Networks applies to Time Warner Cable customers only. Some restrictions may apply. Not all services available in all areas.

www.mybrighthouse.com

In your neighborhood, Time Warner Cable is becoming Bright House Networks. Which means your house is becoming a Bright House, a house where everything is designed to revolve around you. So what exactly does that mean? It means you'll get to start your favorite shows and hit movies, the instant you want. It means you can pause, rewind and fast-forward premium original programs and movies. Yes, it's all true. And it means you can get the best of the best with HDTV.

But wouldn't it be great if all of our services were designed around you too? They are. You can have a choice of simplified discounted packages that bundle your favorite TV and Internet products. Now when you call us you'll see we have on-line guarantees and convenient service times that fit your schedule, not ours. And if you have questions, you can find the answers simply and quickly over the web or just by calling us.

And that's just the beginning. As technology continues to develop, we'll be sure to bring you the best of it. Your Bright House is your castle. Right? All we're doing is making sure you're king (or queen) of that castle.