

WHALERS

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playoffs off a perfect setup from Karl Stewart, who played an outstanding playmaking game. LaRose took the centering pass, moved the puck to his backhand, and Scott Rangers goaltender Brent Dickie with a flip shot that sent the standing-room only crowd into a frenzy.

Dickie had been the star of the series so far, saving 38 of 40 shots in Kitchener's Game 3 win. He was even better in Game 4, stopping 42 of 45 shots on goal.

But thanks to LaRose and center Chris Thorburn, Plymouth was able to light the lamp enough to tie up the series. The 45 shots on goal represents a season-high for the Whalers.

"They trapped us in the third period, and we just came out and took it to them," said Whalers coach Mike Vellucci. "It speaks to the resilience of this team that we were able to do that. It was nice to come out with a win after playing hard and well in their building and not getting the win."

For a time, it appeared Game 4 might be a repeat of Game 3, which featured Plymouth holding a big edge in shots and quality scoring chances over the Rangers, but not get a win.

Kitchener defenseman Steve Eminger scored two goals less than four minutes apart in the second period to transform a

1-0 deficit into a 2-1 Rangers lead.

His second goal came on a butterfly shot from the point that handcuffed Whalers goaltender Paul Drew. The first came on a power play shot along the boards that deflected in off LaRose's stick about 10 feet in front of the net.

Reasons for those two goals, Drew played well in net after being pulled from the game in his previous two outings. His 27 saves were a series high for him, and Vellucci said his teammates never lost confidence in him.

"We knew he would bounce back. He's done that all year for us," Vellucci said. "The two goals they scored were kind of fluky, but he rebounded well from them. He's a confident kid and it showed."

Kitchener appeared to have things going its way, especially after killing off two 5-on-3 power plays by Plymouth. Although the Kitchener penalty kill units played well, coach Pete Miller said the extra effort needed to kill those off was felt.

"I think it took a little out of us, even though we killed them off," he said.

Kitchener came out in a defensive stance at the third period, and Plymouth took advantage.

The Whalers played spirited hockey opening the third period, peppering Dickie with 11 of the first 12 shots by both teams in the first 10 minutes of the period.

Thorburn scored the second of his two goals on the night with 10:49 left in the game, one-timing a quick shot off a perfect feed from Stewart.

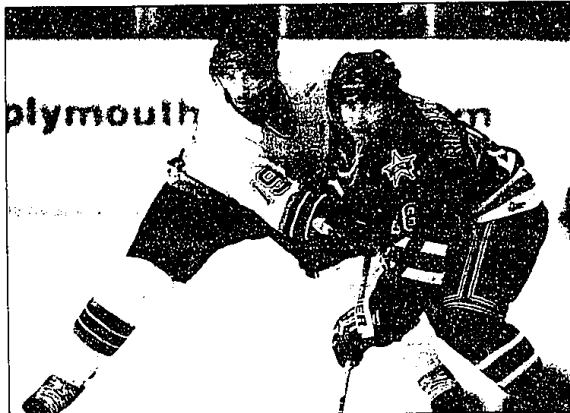
The 6-foot-3 center credited Stewart for his tough play along the boards that allowed Thorburn to tap in both of his goals on nearly identical plays. "All I had to do was keep my stick on the ice, and they did all the work," said Thorburn, who hails from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. "This was a huge win for us. We knew we'd be in trouble if we went down 3-1 to a great team like Kitchener. Now it's a brand new series. We have the experience from last year to know how to get the job done."

DeBoer said he didn't see a need for his team to make any adjustments, feeling confident that the team can win the series by winning its home games.

"We came within a minute and a half of beating a desperate team on their home ice," DeBoer said. "We didn't want to give up any good scoring chances in that third period, but give Plymouth credit. They came out and played their best period of the series."

LaRose also picked up two assists in addition to his game-winning goal, which was his 73rd since the start of the season. Stewart and Ryan Ramsey each had two assists in the game.

Rangers take Game 3
Rarely do you see buzzer-



Plymouth's Chris Thorburn (19) and Kitchener's Michael Richards (8) square off in the fourth game of the OHL second-round playoff series Tuesday at Compuware Arena.

beaters in hockey. But the fans in attendance at Game 3 of the Rangers-Whalers series nearly saw one.

After dominating play most of the game, the Whalers saw an apparent goal waved off just as the game ended, sending the team to a heartbreaking 3-2 loss Sunday night at Kitchener.

The Rangers held a 3-1 lead into the final minute when

Plymouth started its rally. Martin Cizek scored his fourth of the playoffs to make it a 3-2 game.

As the clock was winding down, Plymouth's Cole Jarrett appeared to score the game-winning goal. But the officials ruled the goal didn't cross the goal line before time expired, nullifying the goal and ensuring the win for the host Rangers.

Plymouth outshot Kitchener 40-20 in the game, a stark contrast to the Game 2 domination last Friday by the Rangers.

Jarrett scored Plymouth's first goal of the game at the 5:28 mark of the second period.

Nathan O'Nabigon, Greg Campbell and Derek Roy scored the goals for the Rangers.

LACROSSE

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"All those teams have done well in the past," Mehall said. "It's going to be an interesting season."

Farmington lost 12 seniors from last year's team, many of them from the defense.

"We had to do a lot of rebuilding," Mehall said. "Things have come along quite well."

"Our strong players right now are on the offensive side. Defense usually takes a little longer to rebuild, but we're slowly getting there."

A degree of continuity on

defense is provided by senior Wendy Bakken, the team's veteran goalkeeper.

Junior Desiree Wiggins was the backup goalie last year, but she wanted to play a field position and will start at third man on defense.

Junior Mallory Brown was a varsity reserve who steps into a starting role at the defensive point position. Playing cover point is junior Julie Matterna, who moved up from the JV.

The defensive wings are senior captain Kristie Boskey, who was a regular player last year, and sophomore Jamie Hirzel, another varsity newcomer. Farmington has a new

center in sophomore Kathy Hass, who was a JV player and is a good addition to the varsity, Mehall said.

"She played a dominant role in the first game, and I assume she'll continue doing that," he said. "The center plays the whole field, offense as well as defense. She posts up high in the attack and has to help on defense."

Farmington has new attack wings in juniors Britanni Kokko and Ashley Kandt, both of whom were varsity backups. Both played major roles in the first game, according to Mehall.

At the third home position on offense is senior captain

Jenny Adams. Lindsey Hirzel, another senior captain, missed the first game due to illness, but Mehall hopes she'll be back after the break.

When she returns, Hirzel will play third home, and Adams and Hass will rotate at the demanding center position.

Junior Allison Lyon was an attack wing last year but has moved to second home. Senior returnee Christyn Chadwick will play first home.

In the season opener, Lyon scored two goals. Kandt, Kokko, Hass and Boskey scored two goals each. Chadwick and sophomore Casey Shortt added one

apiece. Other returning varsity players include junior attack wing Melanie Bendick, senior third home Rachel Miller, junior second home Jenny Hand and junior defensive wing Bethany Rattal.

Also moving up from the JV are seniors Kaitlin Tierney, Sachiyu Hase and Lauren Brantley, juniors Sara Bloomberg, Rachel Diven, Kelly Hart and Samantha Lehto and sophomores Jamie Wallinger, Ashley Starkey, Mallory Meehan and Maggie Johnson.

"This is the fourth year for the varsity unified program," Mehall said. "I can see the

players who have been playing three years now deal with the strategy of the game more. They're playing with greater efficiency and a higher skill set."

"The level of play and communication of the girls has gotten considerably better this year. The offensive side of the game is improving dramatically."

"We're still working on the defense. Defense is typically the toughest position to play, and I think that will be improving as the season goes on."

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