

Sports

Dan O'Meara editor/591-2312



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(F1D)

Lindros makes good first impression

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Eric Lindros scored a pair of goals and added three assists in his debut Saturday for the Compuware Junior A hockey team.

But more impressive, maybe, were the numbers Lindros helped produce at the Compuware Ice Arena box office. A sellout crowd of more than 1,500 paid to watch Lindros lead Compuware to an easier-than-expected 8-0 exhibition win over the Windsor Spitfires, an Ontario Hockey League team.

Compuware averaged about 400 fans a

game last year and no doubt Lindros, considered North America's best 16-year-old hockey player, had something to do with Saturday's turnout.

Lindros, a Toronto native, is finishing his senior year of school at Farmington High and staying with the Vollucci family of Farmington Hills.

"I think everybody walked away saying it was the best thing they ever did," Compuware coach Andy Wiedenbach said. "There was a little bit for everybody. Eric was sensational. He lived up to his billing and then some."

hockey

"I haven't seen it (the arena) that rocking in a while. For its being Labor Day weekend, it was a record crowd, by far."

Compuware lost the five previous meetings against the Spitfires, so Lindros believes the Windsor team might have underestimated the home team.

Compuware is the defending North American Junior Hockey League champion, but the Spitfires are a Major A team, considered a level above the NAJHL. The Compuware Corporation owned the Windsor Spitfires before selling the team to a Windsor business group last February.

"I think they thought they'd walk in here and grab a few points," Lindros said. "I think they underestimated us. It was a different experience. There was a lot of pressure but it turned out OK."

LINDROS DIDN'T waste any time in get-

ting the fans enthused, scoring the game's first goal off a pass from Dan Carter.

Carter, a left winger on Lindros' line, also scored two goals and finished with two assists. Lindros' second goal came on a wrist shot from the top of the circle.

The other Compuware goals belonged to Derek Burkhart, Jim Storm (Plymouth), Tony Zaccagn and Andrew Shier.

Dennis Lang and Scott Vetrano split the goalkeeping duties in sharing the shutout. Compuware outshot Windsor 38-33 and has now outscored four exhibition opponents 43-1 in going undefeated.

Marlins gear for another run at Catholic title

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Farmington Hills Mercy has won 22 consecutive Catholic League girls swim championships, and the Marlins should have what it takes to make it 23.

Mercy, which posted an 11-2 record in dual meets and finished 10th in the Class A team standings, returns 22 of 25 letter winners from last year.

The Marlins, who open their season Saturday when they try to defend their title in the Brighton Invitational, are led by prep All-Americans Karen Neyer and Katie Knipper.

Neyer received All-America recognition in the 50-yard freestyle and Knipper in the breaststroke. In addition to Neyer, other returning seniors include Becky Wiquist, Liz DeMattia and Katie Westhoff. Michelle McCaffrey and Polly Tenuta are juniors with varsity experience, while Knipper is entering her sophomore year.

With a veteran group like that, the Marlins might be entertaining thoughts of winning more than just the league championship.

"Last season we set our goals to gain experience and strength and we did both," second-year coach Chuck McClune said. "We had 17 out of 17 season-best swims at state, and 16 were lifetime bests."

"This year only the girls themselves can tell how high their goals will be set. But with all our state scores back and both relays returning, we are in very good shape."

"In 10 years of coaching, I've never seen a team with more depth or one that works so well together and has so much fun," he added.

Neyer, the All-Observer selection in the 50 freestyle, was seventh in that event at state and 12th in the 100 freestyle. She was first honorable mention in the All-America ratings, and Knipper, who placed ninth in the breaststroke at state, was No. 7 in her event.

"Liz DeMattia, Becky Wiquist and

swimming

Katie Westhoff all have a very good chance of making All-America in their best events," McClune said.

"It was a good winter and summer preparing for this season. The girls who placed in one event last year have worked hard to place in a second this year, and the others want to make their first state cut."

Wiquist specializes in the 200 and 100 freestyles. DeMattia is the IM and butterfly and Westhoff the backstroke. Wiquist placed 15th in the 200 and 500 freestyles at state last year. DeMattia was 11th in the butterfly and Westhoff was 10th in the backstroke.

McCaffrey is greatly improved, according to McClune, and will swim the 500 freestyle. Tenuta, a state qualifier in the 500 freestyle, also is slated to swim that event.

Freshman Jennifer Duda will be counted on, too. "She's a year-round swimmer with the Birmingham Blue Dolphins and will give us more depth in the IM and breaststroke," McClune said. Joan Huellmantel is another returning swimmer who swims the breast.

In the relays, Mercy returns its entire medley unit of Westhoff, Knipper, DeMattia and Neyer that finished second in Class A and was fifth in the All-American standings.

The Marlins might have the strongest relays in Observerland since the freestyle foursome returns in fact, too. DeMattia, McCaffrey, Knipper and Wiquist were 11th in the state and 18th on the All-American list.

The league meet will be Saturday, Nov. 12, and the state meet Friday, Nov. 17. McClune doesn't want his girls to swim the same events in the league meet they will at state just five days later.

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer



As a freshman, Katie Knipper (above) was an All-America honorable mention in the breaststroke and a member of Mercy's All-American medley relay team as well. Senior Katie Westhoff (left) was one of the top backstrokers in the state last year. The Marlins hope to win their 23rd consecutive Catholic League title and should have the talent to do well in the state tournament.

In case of Jason Wolf, SMU was right choice

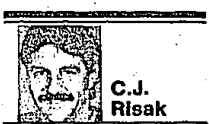
WHAT IF YOU were one of the top high school football players in the state, a running back with the best college programs in the nation pursuing you, a player talented enough to take trips to Michigan, Michigan State and UCLA before deciding which you would honor with your athletic skills?

What kind of decision would you make?

Eighteen months ago, Jason Wolf faced such a dilemma. An all-state standout in Birmingham Hills, Wolf was weighing his options, trying — as carefully as he could — to calculate which of the schools best suited him.

"It's one of the biggest decisions in any young person's life," Wolf says in retrospect. "It's one of the hardest for anyone to make. More times than not, they make the wrong decision."

A remark oozing with irony, considering Wolf's ultimate choice. He said sorry, no thanks, to the big names of college football and did something that didn't seem to make any sense at all.



C.J. Risak

He signed with Southern Methodist University.

WHEN WOLF committed to SMU, the Mustangs were in the midst of the darkest days imaginable — athletically, financially. A football program that had produced runners like Eric Dickerson of the Indianapolis Colts and Craig James of the New England Patriots was blackballed.

Repeated rules violations had earned SMU the NCAA's dreaded Death Penalty. There would be no football for a year, and the number of scholarships would be severely reduced for several more.

SMU has not put a team on the field since 1986, when it was 6-5. It has been scored nationwide, even by its comrades in the lowly Southwestern Conference, where six of nine teams (SMU included) have suffered

some type of NCAA sanction in the past decade.

So when the other choices are MSU, then the reigning Big Ten and Rose Bowl champion, tradition-rich Michigan and sunny California's UCLA, why would anyone choose to attend a school without a team, with a reputation more tarnished than Richard Nixon's?

LISTEN TO WOLF and it makes perfect sense. "I always wanted to leave the state of Michigan," he said. "I always wanted to go down south."

His choice was to play somewhere in the Southeastern Conference — Georgia, Alabama, Auburn, etc. But none of them recruited him. So he considered SMU.

Other factors began weighing on Wolf's decision. "I couldn't see myself going somewhere and practicing three years to play for two years," he said.

That wouldn't happen at SMU. Last Saturday, Wolf — a redshirt freshman — started against Rice in the Mustangs' first game in nearly three years. His starting wasn't so unusual; 17 of 22 SMU starters were freshmen.

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