

Shamrocks entertain rival Trojans in big game

This is one of the marquee weeks on the Detroit Catholic Central hockey schedule.

The Shamrocks have two challenges against perennial state powers, including an 8 p.m. Saturday face-off against rival Trenton at Redford Arena.

A big crowd is expected for the game between the two state powerhouses.

"A lot will miss a good game if it's not (sold out)," CC coach Gordie St. John said.

CC also was scheduled to play at Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook, a traditionally strong team in Class B-C-D, on Wednesday, ending a two-week layoff.

The Shamrocks, 8-1 overall, had been idle since Dec. 29 when they won the championship game of a two-day tournament in Milwaukee, Wis.

HOCKEY

What was supposed to be a 10-day layoff between games turned into 14 days when St. Thomas Aquinas in Ontario canceled a visit last Saturday for a game at Redford Arena.

The Shamrocks have picked up a game in place of that one, scheduling the Ice Dogs, a Triple A team, on Saturday, Jan. 22.

Trenton was the only team to beat CC last year. The other meeting ended in a tie but it was remembered more for the fact that Trenton player nearly lost his life after being struck in the neck accidentally by a skate.

The game was called with the score tied and not resumed. CC coach Gordie St. John, who missed several practices last

week because of the flu, knows full well what these two games mean to the Shamrocks.

"It's going to be intense," St. John said. "We had a layoff and that always hurts you. I'm worried about Wednesday in particular because you don't want people looking ahead to Trenton."

"We've had a history of playing tremendously competitive games against Trenton. They've got to be good, ranked third or fourth in the state."

Trenton is led by defenseman Andy Greene, one of the best players in the state regardless of class or position.

"He's a real player," St. John said. "You've always got to know where he is. He's certainly one of the best."

After juggling his lines most of the season, St. John likes the

combination he's found on his top two with Dave Moss, Brett John and Jim Spiewak occupying one and Brian Williams, Brandon Kalenicki and Joe Morou the other.

There are no assurances they'll remain the same, however, he said.

"We keep moving them around and it's good for the kids to learn to play with each other," he said. "We tweak it when kids get complacent and bring in someone else. It keeps them sharp."

Williams leads the Shamrocks with 18 points (eight goals and 10 assists) and Kalenicki has 14 points (eight goals, six assists). Morou (six goals, seven assists) and Moss (six goals, seven assists) are tied for third on the team with 13 points each. Senior goaltender Ben Dunne has a

goals against average of 0.903.

"I like our work ethic," St. John said. "I don't like the fact we've had as long a layoff as we've had. It wouldn't have been bad if we hadn't lost the one game to St. Thomas canceling on us. I could have gotten along with that. Right now these boys are tearing each other apart in practice. They're frustrated not having played games, whacking each other. We want to make sure they don't get hurt."

The Shamrocks still aren't at full strength. Junior defenseman Derek Genrich is out at least another month with an ankle injury, junior forward Ryan Losecki is out for the season with a chest injury and freshman forward Eric Gioia remains out with a hand injury. Junior defenseman Sean Gen-

rich is playing despite a sore foot. The Shamrocks are hoping for the return this week of freshman Andrew Eggers, who missed the Milwaukee tournament with a groin injury.

"We've been hammered with injuries," St. John said.

Compumare Arena may be available with Birmingham Brother Rice no longer playing there but St. John said the Shamrocks are happy at Redford.

"We're pretty loyal to Redford and they've been loyal to us," St. John said. "It's nice to be part of the community the school is in. Bill McSweeney (Redford Unified assistant coach who helps run Redford Arena) has been very cooperative. He's a hockey guy. I've known him a long time and we get along very well together."

Whalers make it 7 wins in row

The Belleville Bulls got a goal with 19 seconds left in the second period and added a second just 6:20 into the third — but by then, it was already too little, too late.

The Plymouth Whalers roared to their seventh-straight win by scoring three first-period goals and adding another in the second en route to a 4-2 triumph over the Bulls Saturday at Plymouth's Compumare Arena.

Defenseman Shaun Fisher, named the game's No. 1 star, and teammates Justin Williams and George Nistas each accounted for a goal and an assist, and goalie Rob Zepp turned away 26 of 28 shots for Plymouth.

The Whalers improved to 23-14-3 and moved into a tie for second place with the Windsor Spitfires in the Ontario Hockey League's West Division; both teams have 50 points (the Spitfires have played two fewer games, however). Belleville is 22-14-1.

Damian Surma got Plymouth going, scoring at the 6:29 mark of the first period, with assists from Williams and Fisher. Fisher made it 2-0 at 14:14 of the first period, Nistas and Eric Goody assisting.

HOCKEY

Nistas' power-play goal at the 18:07 juncture of the first increased the Whalers' lead to 3-0; Goody got his second assist of the game, with Tomas Kurka assisting.

Williams unassisted short-handed goal at 3:15 of the second period made it 4-0 for Plymouth. The Bulls narrowed the margin with a goal from Randy Rowe late in the second and another by Kyle Wellwood early in the third, but they could get no closer.

Corey Batten made 30 saves in the game for Belleville.

Last Friday at London, defense ruled and Plymouth's defense proved more dominant as the Whalers blanked the London Knights, 2-0.

Top scorers from both teams were held pointless, but Plymouth had some others step up when needed. Rob McBride got his third goal of the season (and second in as many games), charging down a puck sent into the corner in London's end of the ice by James Ramsay.

McBride then cut in front of the Knights' goal and lifted a

backhand over the glove of goalie Gene Chiarello.

It would be the only goal Whalers' goalie Bill Ruggiero would need, as he recorded his first-ever OHL shutout against the team he once played for. Ruggiero had 21 saves.

Jamie Lalonde added some insurance when he pounced on a Knights' turnover in front of their net and wristed a shot past Chiarello. Chiarello stopped 32 of 34 Whaler shots.

London was 10-21-5 through the weekend.

AMBASSADORS GET FIVE STARS: Five members of the Compumare Ambassadors — four of them starters — will be on the ice for the North American Hockey League's 2000 All-Star Game, which will be at 7 p.m. Jan. 22 in Geneva, Ill.

A sixth member of the Ambassadors, coach Mike Yellucci, will serve as an assistant to the East team's head coach, Joe Shawhan of the Soo Kowardin Casino Indians.

Forward Michael Smith, defenseman Andy Burnes and goalie Craig Kowalski will start for the East squad. Also on the East team are Compumare forwards Steve Swistak and Alex Sapruk.

Teams were selected by a vote of the coaches within their respective divisions. Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own players.

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