

Whalers 1 victory away from clinch

The Plymouth Whalers moved to within one game of clinching a berth in the Ontario Hockey League's Western Conference finals by routing the Windsor Spitfires 8-3 Friday in Windsor.

Randy Fitzgerald scored the hat-trick for the Whalers, who got rolling early, opening up a 5-2 lead after one period. They led 6-2 after two periods.

The win gave Plymouth a 3-1 lead in games over the Spitfires. Game Five was played at Plymouth's Compuware Arena Saturday night; results will appear in Thursday's Observer.

Rob McBride, Damian Surma, Eric Goodly, Tomas Kurka and George Nistas also got goals for the Whalers. The Spitfires scored three times on the power play, with Patrick Finnegan, Steve Ott and Tim Gleason getting the goals. Plymouth was one-for-six on the power play.

After scoring six unanswered goals in the opening game of the series at Compuware Arena, the Whalers had struggled offensively. They lost in Windsor last Monday 2-1, then held off the

HOCKEY

Spitfires in a 2-1 victory Wednesday at Compuware. At Windsor Arena, Plymouth apparently rediscovered its offense — and did so without its top three point-producers in the playoffs, Stephen Weiss, Shaun Fisher and Justin Williams, scoring a goal. Once again, balance paid dividends for the Whalers' offense.

Rob Zepp turned away 24 of 27 shots on goal for Plymouth. Mike Leighton started in goal for Windsor; he was replaced after one period by Ryan Aschmabr. Combined, they faced 27 shots, stopping 19.

Depending on Saturday's result, tentative games in the series are scheduled at 7:30 p.m. in Windsor Monday and at Compuware Wednesday.

Should the Whalers prevail, they would meet the winners of the Erie Otters/Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds semifinal in the Western Conference final. That semifinal was tied at two-games apiece through Friday, with the Greyhounds winning Erie at 6 p.m. tonight.

Youth hockey champions



House champs: The Firebirds of the Farmington Hills Hockey Association won the Tier II title on March 26, which was Championship Day for house players. The Firebirds won their championship game, 2-1. Connor Carey scored the first goal and Adam Rosen the second. The team members are (front row, left to right): James Imirzian, Michael Carroll, Shane Wechsler, Connor Rice, Jack Nickelhoff, Michael Morrison, Michael Maciag, Alec Rivard, Jacob Zajac, (middle row) Rosen, Cody Loyer, Ian Vanfassel, Carey, Julian Sest, Mark Torres, Tim Pattison, Jonathan Kouza, (back row) assistant coach Art Maciag, head coach Keith Rosen and assistant coach Rich Pattison.

Baseball from page B1

Franklin's Chris Hall was 2-for-2 and scored a run. Joe Ruggiero doubled in a run, and Tony Clark had an RBI single.

The Indians lost 5-3 Friday at Plymouth Salem, failing to 0-2 in the WLAA Lakes Division and 1-2 overall.

Sack hit a solo homer; Vieder had two hits in three official trips; Pat O'Connell had an RBI sacrifice fly and a single.

Jeff Granat was the losing pitcher, giving up nine runs on eight hits and two walks over five innings. He struck out eight.

Falcons take tumble

Farmington dropped its second game in a row Friday after starting the season 5-0.

Walled Lake Central overcame an early Farmington lead to claim a 6-4 victory.

James Claranah hit a two-run homer in the top of the first inning for the Falcons. Ryan Wing smashed a three-run dinger for the hot Vikings, who scored four times in the bottom half.

Each team had eight hits. Claranah and Brett Brown had two apiece, and Justin Gerwatoski had a hit, knocked in a run, stole two bases and scored a

run. Losing pitcher Tony Lutman went three innings and gave up five runs. Gerwatoski finished the game for Farmington, 1-1 in the WLAA Lakes Division.

The Falcons suffered their first loss Wednesday in a WLAA crossover game with visiting Plymouth Canton, 8-2.

The Chiefs scored six runs in five hits (half their total) in the

first inning off Bob Houchins, who was relieved by John Waisanen, who completed the game and allowed two runs in the sixth. Farmington had three hits, two by Brown.

CC splits with ND

Catholic Central whipped Harper Woods Notre Dame in the opener of a doubleheader Thursday, 11-1, but didn't have

the same luck in the nightcap, losing to the Fighting Irish, 6-5.

Andy Smith (3-0) went all five innings in the mercy-rule shortened opener with eight strikeouts and four walks.

Brian Williams broke the game open in the six-run fourth with a bases-loaded double. Ryan Rogowski was 2-for-3 with three RBI; Davy Tovey was 2-for-3 with two runs scored.

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