

Wildcats deny Patriots in Division II final

BY BRAD EMONS
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The puck simply wouldn't bounce Livonia Franklin's way in the Division II boys hockey regional final Friday night at the Novi Ice Arena.

The host Wildcats survived a second-period Franklin barrage while protecting a one-goal lead en route to 4-0 victory — thanks to three third-period goals.

Novi, 22-3-2 overall and ranked No. 1, moves on to the state quarterfinals Tuesday at the Summit in Lansing, while Franklin bows out at 12-1-4.

"I thought we were the best team on the ice tonight, but the score doesn't indicate it," said Franklin coach Terry Jobbitt, whose team outshot Novi, 35-23. "We didn't get any breaks, but I'm not crying. Novi is a great hockey team and I'm proud of our team the way they stepped up — every player, every second on every shift. We played very disciplined hockey."

Novi applied the pressure early, getting a first-period goal by Chaz Bulbuk from Jordan Collins just 3:51 into the game.

But as the period wore on, Franklin began to take command, peppering Novi netminder Dan Morrison with a variety of shots.

The momentum carried well into

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the second period, but the Patriots could not dent the net despite outshooting the Wildcats, 15-4.

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Franklin coach*

"The biggest key was Dan Morrison," said Novi coach Dan Phelps, whose team fought off three Franklin power-plays in the middle period. "They had good opportunities, but he was a stalwart back there."

"And one of the things we take great pride in is our defense. It's gotten us to where we want to be."

The Kensington Valley Conference champions took eight shots in the final period and made three equal against Franklin senior goal-

tender Kyle Susewitz.

Junior Brian Jausai made it 2-0 at 3:04 of the final period from Adam Haberman. And just 3:14 later, Jausai put the Patriots away on assists from Haberman and Bulbuk with 5:42 to go.

Robbie Overfield made it a four-goal cushion on an unassisted goal with 3:04 remaining.

"We know how to play in the third period, we've been a third-period team all year," said Phelps, whose team blanked Franklin 5-0 back on Jan. 5. "Our motors were running, but maybe not the right way those first two periods."

"We knew Franklin would be tough. Terry Jobbitt does a great job of running a defensive system. We knew they'd come out ready to play. It was a championship game and you don't get here just by walking through the door."

The Patriots, who only lost two of their final 11 games, return a solid nucleus intact for 2002-03. They lose only four seniors to graduation — Susewitz, Jason Robinson, Corey and Andrew Garbutt.

"These guys came a long way, we played with more enthusiasm and discipline late in the year," Jobbitt said. "They improved so much this year. They all believed they could win today. They felt confident going in."

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stunning, 4-1 lead with 2:01 left in the second period. The Spartans tallied three unanswered goals in the period despite being outshot 12-7.

CC looked like a three-time defending state champ in the third period, swarming Stevenson at every angle, burying four goals in a 2:16 span early on to take its first lead, 5-4.

Junior Patrick Coldren and senior Ryan O'Dea started the rally with goals just 16 seconds apart.

"After they got their fourth goal, we had a sense of calmness about us," CC co-coach Todd Johnson said. "We were so far behind, our feeling of frustration turned into a feeling of desperation. We have a system instilled in our kids, and we just hoped they went back to those good habits and didn't forget them."

But I feel bad for Livonia Stevenson. They played such a terrific game; they stuck to their game plan, and their goaltender was just outstanding."

Although he was on the losing end of the stick, Stevenson junior goalie Robert Thomas played a terrific game.

He stopped 46 CC shots, including a number of sprawling saves in the third period and overtimes. He made 21 consecutive saves after CC made it a 5-4 game, keeping his team in position to win.

"He really held us in there," Hatley said.

Stevenson's Tommy Zagata started the scoring 6:11 into the game with a quick one-timer off a perfect feed from Christopher Stevens. CC responded with a blast off the stick of sophomore David Kubert to knot the score, 1-1.

Senior forward Jon O'Neill gave the Spartans their second lead of the game by scooping up a loose puck and flipping it past starting goaltender John Garza.

With momentum going against them, the

Shamrocks inserted regular starting goalie Jim Blanchard, who could barely stand due to the flu, according to his coach.

Stevenson junior forward Jared Gaudet cut across the ice to pick up a long pass and put the Spartans up 3-1 less than five minutes into the second period.

Although CC controlled the flow of the game from there, it would take a while for it to show up on the scoreboard.

"We tried to use their aggressiveness against them," Hatley said. "We would fly a rusher out and try to create some odd-man rushes, and we cashed in on a few of them."

CC sophomore Jeff Prough tied the game, 4-4, with a one-on-one move, giving the Shamrocks their third goal in less than a minute, at the 4:56 mark of the third period.

Prough helped to set up the go-ahead goal when his shot was rebounded home by senior John Perkovich, sending the overflow CC crowd into a frenzy and giving CC its first lead of the game.

Thomas and Blanchard made huge saves at the end of regulation and in both overtimes.

Thomas made two split-legged saves and stopped three point-blank chances by the Shamrocks in the second overtime. Blanchard stoned Stevenson's Brian Shekell on a breakaway chance midway through the second overtime.

"Jim is our best player, and I felt like I would be doing our program a disservice by not having him in there," Johnson said, explaining the goaltender switch early in the game. "He really gutted out Monday's win, and tonight he asked for a chance to go in there and help us win."

The Redford Arena regional champ travels Wednesday to face the Trenton regional winner in a 7:30 p.m. quarterfinal matchup.

Glenn champion in year of league parity

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HOOPS

Talk about parity. The Western Lakes Activities Association basketball race was an ideal model of it this season. How else can one explain a conference with two six-team divisions that have five teams share one division title and three have a portion of the other?

If equality explains the WLAA in 2002, then the tournament championship game between Westland John Glenn and regular-season champ Plymouth Salem provided the perfect summary.

Just when it seemed the Rockets would take control, the pivotal force in the game — for both sides — surged once again: defense.

And Glenn had the best of it, forcing Salem into a 0-for-6 finish over the final 5:20 as the Rockets collected the conference tournament crown with a 60-43 victory at Northville High School.

Salem heads into state district play with a 13-7 mark. Glenn is 14-6.

"We pride ourselves on defense," said Glenn coach Joel Lloyd. "We gave up only 43 points to a good ballclub."

"If we play good defense and block out, we've got a good chance."

So how big a factor was each team's defense? The biggest lead either side had was the final score, and that came on a Darnel Wilson layup at the buzzer.

The Rockets' defensive objectives were evident from the start: stop David Hoskins. The 6-foot-4 Salem junior tried to work inside early, but when a pass did reach him, three defenders collapsed on him. Hoskins still managed to score 16 points, 10 of those in the second quarter after going scoreless in the first.

"The bulk of their points are from (Pat) Abraham and Hoskins," said Lloyd. "Hoskins is so good on postbacks. You can't shut him down, but if we can contain him our chances are better."

If one player could be credited as the decisive element, it would be Glenn's Jerret Smith. The 6-2 freshman scored a game-high 17 points, and his last four came when it counted most.

A 6-2 Rocket run had given

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