

Frozen 4-midable

Moss, Mink bolster U-M title chances

BY RICHARD L. SHOOK
SPECIAL WRITER

This is the best time of the year for a college hockey player to get frozen.

Only four teams in the country — the "Frozen Four" — are left to battle for the National Collegiate Athletic Association's hockey championship this coming weekend and the University of Michigan is one of those four.

Two former area stars, junior wing Mark Mink and freshman left wing Dave Moss, are soaking up the experience of playing for the pinnacle of college hockey.

"I think everybody is pretty excited," said Mink, who went to high school at Livonia Stevenson. "We're the lowest seed. So we've got the underdog role."

"But nobody expected us to be there, so we're happy for the opportunity. Everybody is pretty excited."

"This definitely a road game for us," said Moss, a Livonia native who played high school hockey at Redford Catholic Central. "This year we've been consistently a pretty good road team. We're just going to go in there and treat it as just another road game."

There's one big difference, though.

On March 23-24, the Wolverines hosted an NCAA Regional and won it in front of a large and boisterous crowd that clearly gave Michigan a home ice advantage.

This coming weekend the ice skates are on the other foot. Michigan will be playing host Minnesota at 7:30 tonight in front of a raucous home crowd at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn.

The winner plays either Maine or New Hampshire in the championship game.

"To win on the road you've got to play hard and check the other team," Moss said. "That's just what we've been doing."

It was an odds-against trip for Michigan, 28-10-5, which lost a host of players from a team that was defeated, 3-2, by Boston College in last year's NCAA semifinals.

"At the start of this year — coming in — we had a big freshman class, 10 players," Mink said. "Nobody really expected us to do much. You've got to give us credit."

"We started to prove people wrong and believing in ourselves as a team. We got better each week. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience last year and getting back this year is an experience in itself."

Michigan needed some adjustment time to get used to the fresh mix of players and was just getting things together when its first adversity hit.

"We started off kind of slow," Moss said. "But we kind of worked through it. In the last half of the year we really picked things up and turned it around."

"The first month of the season we were below .500," Mink said. "We got swept at home against Northern Michigan. That was the big turning point in the season. We realized we had to prove everybody wrong. We got on a roll and won nine in a row and then came the World Juniors (championships)."

"Then we lost (star junior winger) Mike Cammalleri to mononucleosis. We went through adversity the whole season and that kind of made the whole team come together."

"One of our goals at the beginning of the year was to get to the Frozen Four and win the tournament," Moss said. "This season has been great for us. The togetherness of our team, how far we've come in the year, playing at Michigan — it's been unbelievable. Yost (Arenna) is just unbelievable, what with the fans and everything; it's just a great tournament."

Mink, majoring in Organizational Studies as part of the LS&A program at Michigan, has played in 40 games this season with five goals and nine assists. He is a plus-9 for the season, matching coach Red Berenson's team that has scored nine more goals than it has given up with Mink on the ice.

Moss, who has yet to declare a major, has played 43 games with four goals and nine assists. He spent a season with Cedar Rapids (Iowa) of the United States Hockey League after high school before joining the

HOCKEY

Wolverines

"It's a pretty big jump, going from junior hockey to this," he said. "The coaches are great and they're giving me a good opportunity. I love it so far."

Mink was one of the reasons Moss came to Michigan.

"This is where I wanted to go," Moss said. "Knowing him, the good things he had to say about the school, that helped a lot."

"He lives a couple of blocks away from me and we played baseball together and against each other up until seventh or eighth grade," Mink said.

Mink played center field for

the Spartans, but in hockey played juniors in the Compuware program.

"We won the national championships my second year of juniors, my senior year of high school," he said. "Recruiting me was pretty easy. It was my only choice, really."

"It was always a childhood dream to play at Michigan. It was just 20 minutes away and growing up they won a national championship. My dad went to the university."

While he's two years behind Mink in school, Moss is one up on the ice.

He played in the "Cold War" game against Michigan State in Spartan Stadium.

Mink sat in the stands, miss-

ing the first of three games with a broken bone in his hand.

"I was up in the stands with all the other parents and my friends," Mink said. "It was disappointing, but it was definitely an exciting game (3-3 tie)."

"They will both traveled with the team Tuesday to Minnesota, then got a couple of practices in on the ice before the game."

The whole experience, both agree, is going to be something.



Wolverine frosh: Redford Catholic Central graduate Dave Moss, a Livonia native, is in his first year at Michigan.

Foursomes needed for golf fundraiser

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is sponsoring the MS Longest Day of Golf throughout the month of May to raise awareness and funds to benefit the Michigan Chapter of the NMSS.

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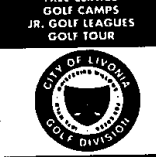
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