



Champs

The U-14 Wolves captured the league's inline hockey championship Nov. 23 at Soccer Zone in Royal. Team members are: (front L-R) coach David Lubin, Jason Lubin, Mike Rays, Trevor Brown, Richard Pimlott, Neal Palmer, assistant coach Wade Palmer, (back L-R) Jason Turner, Scott Wheat, Bobby Rays, Ben Harney, Nick Habersmith, Ryan Pittich and Max Tepitsky. Not pictured is Chris Bence.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

SPORT SHOW AT FORD FIELD

The 20th Annual Michigan Boat, Sport and Fishing Show will take place Jan. 29 to Feb. 2 at Ford Field in downtown Detroit.

More than 300 trailerable boats from 60 manufacturers will blanket the playing field.

The extra-wide concourse will house the largest exhibition of fishing tackle and boating accessories of any show in Michigan.

Kevin Van Dam, 2001 BassMaster Classic Champion and three-time B.A.S.S. Angler of the Year, will make a special appearance on Thursday, Jan. 29.

RISAK

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"We needed a winger, so we traded a center," DeBoer said, admitting he gave up a first-rate player in Ramsay but adding "So is the guy we got (first center)." "That's all in the past. It's no big deal."

And never mind that DeBoer abruptly left a Plymouth franchise he had guided to the OHL finals two straight seasons for a Kitchener team that had languished in mediocrity for years. Never mind that he has rebuilt that team and that the Rangers are now leading the OHL's Midwest Division, while Vellucci took the Whalers to the best regular-season record in the OHL last year.

It just doesn't matter. It's no big deal.

And it sure as heck doesn't matter that the 2001-02 Whalers, even with the best record in the OHL, couldn't beat DeBoer's Rangers. They went 0-2-2 against them last season.

That had nothing to do with a near-capacity crowd jamming into Plymouth's Compuware Arena Monday afternoon to

watch these two division leaders clash in the first of four meetings this season. More likely all those people were there for the free face-painting.

"That was a playoff-type atmosphere," said Vellucci after his Whaler team finally got a victory against their old boss.

There were so many situations, it would have been hard not to get excited."

Excited? Now? But it's still December. Playoffs don't start for another three months. It's a long season. Players learn to take these games in stride. Certainly Ramsay was. Yes, he's an emotional-type player, but this game against his former team and the coach who perhaps kept him off the all-star squad didn't mean any more to him than any other game. So what if he scored the Whalers' first two goals, one short-handed and unassisted? Those goals didn't mean any more to him than any of his other goals.

And this win didn't mean any more than any other win. It's no big deal. Yeah, right.

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PAUL HURSON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Pete DeBoer guided the Whalers to consecutive OHL Finals appearances before leaving to take over the head coaching position at Kitchener.

WHALERS

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struck again, taking a pass in stride near the Ranger blue line and splitting the Kitchener defense while Plymouth had the man advantage. He slid his shot between Dickie's pads and the Whalers had a 2-1 lead (from Karl Stewart and Cole Jarrett).

The Rangers knotted it at 2-1 with a power-play score from Andre Benoit with a minute left in the first period, but Kitchener could not generate any more offense.

"We're a little short-handed

right now," said DeBoer, noting that his team's top scorer, Derek Roy, and Greg Campbell, another of the team's leading scorers, were at the World Junior Tournament (so was Plymouth's James Wisniewski). "But you don't win any championships in December."

The Whalers kept their unbeaten string alive at 18 games when Liffiton's shot deflected past Dickie with 3:54 left in the second period (Chad LaRose and Stewart assisted). They added the clincher with 6:24 left in the final period, Scott Thompson knocking a loose puck in front of the Kitchener goal in for a fourth score. John Mitchell and Tim

Sestito assisted.

Paul Drew and the Whaler defense did the rest. Drew — leading the OHL with a 2.47 goals-against average — making 28 saves. Dickie had 30 stops.

But the Whalers had another win.

Whalers 4, Spillies 2: On Saturday at Compuware Arena, the Windsor Spillies got two first-period goals and the Whalers got everything else, including a victory. Josh Gratton and, on the power play, Frank Rediker gave the Spills a 2-0 lead after one period. Plymouth's John Mitchell (from Taylor Kaszka) narrowed the gap to 2-1 7:42 into the second period; Karl Stewart's short-handed goal at 16:08 of the second tied it at 2-1.

Four power-play goals in the third period, by Kaszka, Hule Riser, Chad LaRose and Mike

Letitia, gave Plymouth the victory. Jonas Fiedler had two assists for the Whalers.

Paul Drew was the game-winning goalie, stopping 18 shots. Ryan Kaszka made 28 saves for Windsor, which through Sunday was second in the West Division to Plymouth with a 23-12-11 record (48 points).

Whalers 4, Spillies 2: On Friday in Saginaw, Karl Stewart scored twice for Plymouth and Taylor Kaszka got a goal and an assist as the Whalers took command in the second period and maintained it.

Tim Sestito's goal 1:44 into the second period gave Plymouth a 2-1 lead. Stewart's first goal came 13 seconds later, giving the Whalers a two-goal edge.

Chad LaRose picked up three assists in the game and Jimmy Gagnon got two. Paul Drew made 35 saves in goal for the Whalers; Tyson Kellerman had 18 stops for the Spillies, who were 6-23-4 (19 points) through the weekend.

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WOODS

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earlier in the year.

The 5-foot-8, 160-pound Woods, who is considering Nebraska, Bowling Green and Toledo, had not made a verbal commitment.

Woods, who was in St. Louis, Mo., this week visiting relatives, had delayed making a decision to concentrate first on his senior season and then to wait for a new coach to be hired at MSU, according to his father, Kevin Woods Sr.

The weekend after Smith was named coach, Woods and his parents were invited to East Lansing to meet Smith and attend a basketball game.

"When we walked into the coach's office 10 to 15 minutes before the game, the first comment to Marcus, before (Smith) said, 'Hello, my name is' or extended a handshake, was 'Why are you so short?' Kevin Sr. said. 'Anita and I were taken aback by that, and it shocked Marcus a little.'

"Marcus asked him later, 'Were you kidding about the short thing?' (Smith) said he had a soft spot in his heart for short people. He didn't make a big deal out of it other than the initial comment.

"After the game, I said to

Marcus, 'What do you think?' He said, 'I don't like him. He's tough; he's going to be a disciplinarian, but I think that's what we need here at State.'

"He was thinking about things and feeling good. We talked about setting up an official visit. Three days later we got a call from (assistant coach Reggie) Mitchell saying they decided to withdraw the offer."

Kevin Sr., who talked to Mitchell because Marcus wasn't home, said he could accept that. What bothered him was the fact Smith didn't make the call himself.

"My issue is with how the whole deal was handled," he said. "I don't know how much tape (Smith) has seen on Marcus; I'm sure Mitchell had talked about him."

"If you don't think he'll be able to do the things to make your offense work, then, fine, you're the head coach; I respect your decision."

"If you really have a problem with his size, tell him. You've got him sitting there the whole game. Don't delegate it to an assistant coach. Be man enough to call my son and say, 'Marcus, here's the deal.'"

"It would have come across a lot better if the guy who made the decision had rendered the decision to Marcus."

Kevin Sr. said Mitchell, the MSU running backs coach, told

him Marcus' size would make it difficult for him to do the amount of blocking that is required in the one-back, spread offense Smith plans to install.

While Marcus was uncommitted, Kevin Sr. said he thought his son was leaning toward MSU and the chance to play in the Big Ten and his home state.

Two of Woods' former Harrison teammates — quarterback Drew Stanton and wide receiver Agim Shalaj — are MSU scholarship players and were first-year Spartans this year.

"He grew up in Michigan; he's a Michigan boy," Kevin Sr. said of Marcus.

"Besides the opportunity to play in this state where he'd have a bit of a following, the opportunity to play with Drew and Agim had some appeal to it."

"He said, 'I like the guy (Smith); I like what he's saying.'"

Kevin Sr. added he wanted the story of what happened between MSU and Marcus told, so that when it's time to make a choice people will know Marcus didn't pass on the Spartans but vice versa.

Marcus was really upset and disappointed initially, according to his father, who told him of MSU's decision but said

Marcus got over it pretty quickly.

"The fortunate thing is he still has some choices, some opportunities," Kevin Sr. said, adding he told his son: "Why get upset about something where you're not wanted. There are some folks who want you and want you bad. You can't do anything about it anyways. He came to grips with it."

"When he gets back (from St. Louis), he'll sit down and start thinking real hard about his choice, and I think he'll probably make a decision in the next week."

Kevin Sr. said reports that Nebraska wants Marcus to play wide receiver or cornerback are untrue. He said the Cornhuskers are recruiting him as an I-back, but they did ask Marcus if he would be interested in playing another position if it didn't work out at tailback.

Bowling Green has continued to pursue Woods despite the departure of former coach Urban Meyer for Utah.

Kevin Sr. said Meyer called Monday to offer a scholarship ask if Marcus would consider visiting the Salt Lake City campus.

The Falcons hired the former offensive coordinator under Meyer as their new coach, so the offense and philosophy will remain the same, according to Kevin Sr.

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