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Bragging rights at stake for SC, PHN

By RICK JAKACKI
Times Herald

Who's the best high school hockey team in the Blue Water Area?

A good indicator will come tonight when Port Huron Northern plays St. Clair at the McMorran Pavilion. Faceoff is slated for 6 p.m.

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The Huskies (5-3-1) and Saints (8-1) have the area's top records, and the two are a combined 4-0 against other area teams.

"Obviously, there's a lot of pride on the line," Huskies Coach Bill Warren said. "I think on paper our team and their team are the best two in the area, so it should be a good game."

Added Saints Coach Scott Nichols: "The kids from both teams know this is a bragging-rights game. These kids have played hockey with each other or against each other since the age of 6."

The teams scrimmaged in the preseason with the Huskies prevailing 6-3. But Nichols said that game doesn't mean anything since the Saints had played a 35-minute scrimmage vs. Port Huron High that same day, while the Huskies were fresh.

Both teams are playing well. The Huskies are coming off a victory against state-ranked Muskegon Mona Shores, while the Saints have won six straight.

The Huskies, who struggled scoring in the early season, are finding their niche. They totaled seven goals in two games last week against Mona

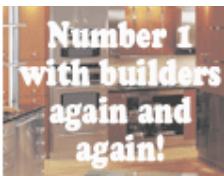
- **WHO:** Port Huron Northern vs. St. Clair
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. today
- **WHERE:** McMorran Pavilion
- **RECORDS:** Northern is 5-3-1; St. Clair is 8-1.

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Shores.

Forwards Ryan Axsom and Matt Thompson lead the way. Ryan Doherty is expected to start in net.

"We're playing well defensively and offensively, too," Warren said. "The guys are really starting to make some creative plays."

Meanwhile, the Saints are averaging about five goals per game, while allowing about two. Their top scorers are Will Hunter, Josh Belanger and Blake Frantz.

"They're well-coached, and they've got a nice team," Warren said. "They've got kids who can make plays, and we've got our work cut out for us."

The Saints will go with Rocco Benvenuti in net.

The Huskies, who have played the past three games with just 12 skaters, recently added two players. Warren now has nine forwards and five defensemen available.

"We're always excited to play Port Huron Northern," Nichols said. "They've been the class of the area for so many years. This will let us know where we stand after our 8-1 start."

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