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Top teams Northern, Saints tie Area's best squads settle nothing

By PAUL COSTANZO
Times Herald

If Thursday's game between Port Huron Northern and St. Clair was to answer who the best Blue Water Area prep hockey team is, it's still in question.

The Huskies and Saints each scored first-period goals before skating to a 1-1 tie in nonconference action at McMorran Pavillion.

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"Obviously you want to win and not tie," Northern Coach Bill Warren said. "But I take my hat off to St. Clair. They played well and at times were the better team on the ice."

Said St. Clair Coach Scott Nichols: "Both teams played hard, each team had scoring chances. I give them credit for doing that with a short bench."

Northern (5-3-2) will be back at the pavilion Saturday to play Marysville, while St. Clair (8-1-1) is off until Jan. 4, when it plays St. Clair Shores Unified.

Each team got goals from a senior captain.

Northern's Jon Dewey opened the scoring 10 minutes and 5 seconds into the first period on a shot from the blue line. The power-play goal was assisted by John Hayes and George Moss.

 Zoom Photo



By KEITH KING, Times Herald

AROUND THE NET: St. Clair's Andrew Carrell, right, battles for the puck with Port Huron Northern's Joe Mathews Thursday at McMorran Pavillion. The teams tied 1-1.

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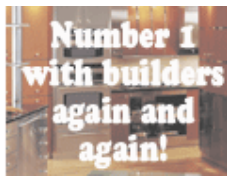
PHHS LOSES TO ROMEO

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By KEITH KING, Times Herald

BATTLE FOR THE PUCK: St. Clair's Andrew Carrell, right, battles for the puck Thursday with Port Huron Northern's Joe Mathews Thursday at McMorran Pavillion in Port Huron. The two teams tied 1-1.



Josh Belanger scored the

game-tying goal for St. Clair with 24 seconds left in the period when he stuffed a loose puck past Northern goaltender Ryan Doherty. Will Hunter and Paul Westrick assisted.

"You never want to give up a goal in the final seconds of any period," Warren said. "Good teams don't do that."

Each team had chances to break the tie, but Doherty and St. Clair's Rocco Benvenuti were strong.

Doherty stopped 29 shots while Benvenuti stopped 20.

"I thought (Doherty) played fantastic," Warren said. "He was our best player tonight, by far. He made some great saves at very important times."

Doherty faced 23 of the 30 shots in the first and third periods, as St. Clair spent a lot of time in the offensive zone in those periods.

He killed off power plays, as St. Clair was 0-7. Perhaps his biggest stop came in the third when Belanger was left alone, but couldn't score.

Benvenuti's top stops came on breakaways. Dustin Farr and Ryan Axsom each had short-handed opportunities turned aside.

Benvenuti and St. Clair dodged a bullet late in the third period, when Northern was given a 5-on-3.

Fifteen seconds in, however, Northern took a penalty. The Saints killed off the power play, and neither team had a great scoring chance the rest of the way.

"(Northern) called a timeout (before the 5-on-3) and we had to review our 5-on-3," Nichols said. "That puts on a lot of pressure."

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