

SPORTS

St. Clair Shores Unified knocks off No. 3 De La Salle, 2-1

Lakers score twice in comeback win.

The Macomb Daily Sports Staff

The St. Clair Shores Unified hockey team picked up a big win when they came from behind to beat Warren De La Salle 2-1 on Saturday at the St. Clair Shores Civic Arena.

The Division 2 Pilots, who last week upset No. 1 Grosse Pointe South, entered the game ranked No. 3 in the state against the unranked Division 1 Lakers. De La Salle took a 1-0 lead in the first period, but SCS Unified scored twice in the second to pull an upset of their own and improve to 10-1-2 overall.

"We played real well," Lakers coach Frank DiCristofaro said. "For us to come up with a win against them was just outstanding for us."

Senior forward Nick Gwozdz scored the tying goal midway through the sec-

Prep Roundup

ond period on an assist from senior forward Shane Christian.

"Nick Gwozdz dug the corners, he was tenacious," DiCristofaro said. "The place just erupted."

Senior defender Vinny DiCristofaro snuck a wrist shot from the blue line past the DLS goalie late in the second period to cap the Lakers comeback.

Coach Frank DiCristofaro lauded the all-around play of Vinny and senior Mark Zasucha, saying they were "the best two players on the ice" for the Lakers.

"Mark took charge of every time he was on the ice," coach DiCristofaro said. "He controlled the flow of the game, even though he didn't score, he was the man out there."

The coaches praise didn't stop there,

as he was equally impressed by the efforts of senior goaltender Ed Thomas.

"He was outstanding the times he had to be," the coach said of his netminder. "If this kid isn't the best goalie in the state, I don't know who is. I've seen a lot of teams play, and this kid has got to be right there."

Thomas turned away 13 shots as the Lakers out shot De La Salle 24-14. DiCristofaro added that his team's forechecking and continual pressure on the De La Salle defense played a major part in the win.

HARRISON TOWNSHIP L'ANSE CREUSE 6, WARREN-STERLING UNITED: David Lafleur netted a pair of goals while Evan Robilliard and Ryan Champine each added a goal and an assist as Harrison Township L'Anse Creuse knocked off Warren-Sterling United in a MAC White contest.

Danny Terenzi and Jacob Koch also scored for the Lancers, with Scott An-

derson and Aaron Zwierzelewski picking up assists. Justin Hentschel had a shutout until the final few minutes of the contest for L'Anse Creuse.

Joe Evanoff and Drew Kwart scored for Warren-Sterling United.

Wrestling

EAST DETROIT SHAMROCK DUALS: Sterling Heights Stevenson went 5-0 to capture the team title. The Titans defeated Royal Oak (54-21), St. Clair Shores Lakeview (52-24), Lake Orion (58-20), Macomb Township L'Anse Creuse North (60-12) and Eastpointe East Detroit (48-22). Finishing the day undefeated for them were Brandon Belfiori (112 pounds), Brett Deburghgraeve (119), Matt Steck (125), Brad Marchwinski (130), Chris Denovchek (135) and Sokol Jakaj (145).

En route to a 5-0 day, Jakaj beat LCN's Mike Lampkin, 9-3. Lampkin beat Jakaj in the semifinals on his way to the 145-

pound title at the Macomb County Tournament last month, 5-1.

Lakeview's Steve Light (lower weights) and East Detroit's Chris Grunberg (upper weights) were named the tournament's most valuable wrestlers.

The Shamrocks finished second at the tournament, followed by L'Anse Creuse North and Royal Oak.

DETROIT CATHOLIC CENTRAL INVITATIONAL: Brennan Brumley took second at 135 pounds to lead a list of five wrestlers that placed for Warren Woods-Tower. Justin Czarniecki (215) was third, while John Popham (112), Eric Manning (125) and Kyle Lowry (130) each took sixth.

SWARTZ CREEK TEAM TOURNAMENT: Macomb Township Lutheran North went 0-4 on the afternoon, falling to Corunna (81-6), Swartz Creek (65-6), Pinconning (58-18) and Troy (73-6). Craig Schreiber finished 2-2 at 130 pounds.

Goaltending big advantage for thriving Predators

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Nashville Predators are not worried about messing up a good thing.

Goaltender Tomas Vokoun is back in the crease after missing 21 games with a torn ligament in his left thumb even though backup Chris Mason, who leads the NHL with a .928 save percentage, is a key reason why the Predators ranked second in the Western Conference going into the weekend.

Luckily, Vokoun and Mason are friends first, competitors second.

Western Conference

"I hope not to disrupt anything," coach Barry Trotz said of putting Vokoun back in the starting lineup.

"The guys are best of friends, and they cheer for each other. They both want to be in net, but they know each other's roles. Hopefully, Tomas gets off to a good start and gets on a roll. And hopefully, we can keep Mase going on his roll because he's really in a good groove right now."

Mason helped the Predators win 14 games during Vokoun's absence after hurting his stick hand against Vancouver on Nov. 23.

"I was just really happy to get a chance to play and help the team win," Mason said of his opportunity. "That's the bottom line. I've dreamed my whole life of getting a chance to play every day in this league, and I got that the last 21 games or so. I loved it."

But Vokoun, 30, is the goalie Nashville made its highest-paid

player, signing him to a four-year contract extension worth \$22.8 million in September.

His teammates are glad Vokoun is back.

"Whenever you can get your top player back in the lineup, it's always a big lift for your hockey team," right wing Steve Sullivan said.

"Chris, he's been very diplomatic about it, and obviously he wants to play. He's let everybody know he's ready to play when he has to, but realizes the situation and that Tomas was the No. 1 goaltender and that he's going to come back and get that opportunity to be it."

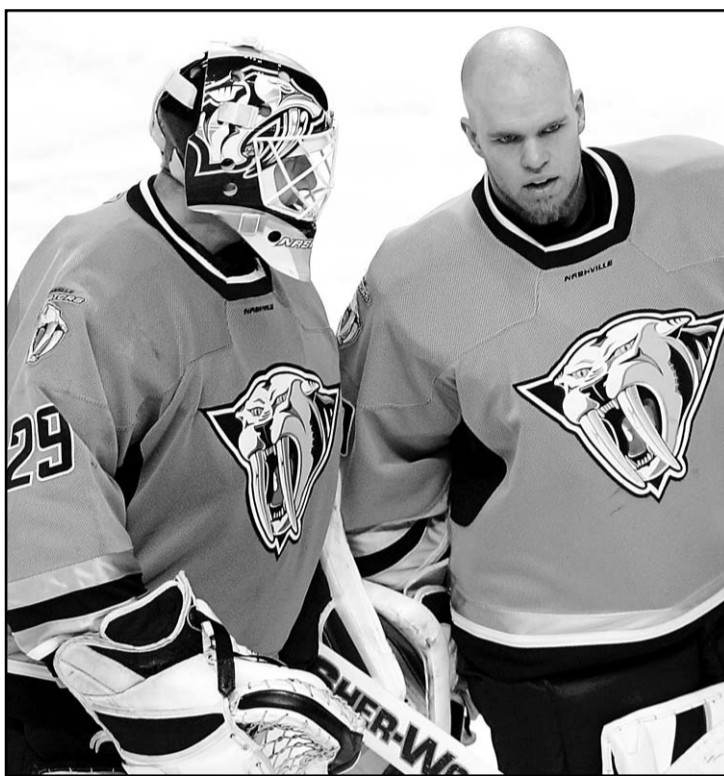
Vokoun is 103-73-27 since taking over as the starter in December 2002.

He was an All-Star in 2004 and won the gold medal at the 2005 World Championship with the Czech Republic. Last season, he finished fourth in the voting for the Vezina Trophy after a career-high 36 victories despite missing the final 13 games with blood clots.

"Naturally you want to be out there," Vokoun said. "That's where the most fun is, to play games."

He used his time off with goalie coach Mitch Korn to stay in condition and work on his footwork.

Vokoun gave up a goal on the first shot he faced Tuesday night but helped the Predators pull out the 5-4 victory over Anaheim by stopping two shots by Teemu Selanne and another by Scott Niedermayer in overtime. Vokoun, who recorded a shutout Friday against Columbus in just his second game back from injury,



Nashville Predators goalie Tomas Vokoun, left, and backup goalie Chris Mason skate off the ice earlier this season. While Vokoun was out of action for 21 games with a torn ligament in his left thumb, Mason helped Nashville stay near the top of the Western Conference.

knows that wasn't one of his best games.

"It's not going to be easy to get back, but that is what the situation is. I'm going to try and get better as I go along," said Vokoun, still wearing a brace to protect his surgically-repaired thumb.

That was Nashville's third straight victory and pulled the Predators within four points of the conference-leading Ducks despite having played two fewer games than Anaheim.

Now it's Mason, who signed a new contract in the offseason to return as Vokoun's backup and stay in town with a newborn daughter, who has to readjust to sitting, watching and waiting.

"Anyone will tell you once you get playing, you really get a feel and you feel really comfortable in there every night. I play when coach Trotz tells me to play. I'll just try to be ready and practice for when I do get games, so I'll try to use those as games now," Ma-

son said of practice.

The Predators are off to the best start in franchise history in their eighth season with a record of 29-11-3 through 43 games. Goaltending has been a big reason, with Nashville tied with New Jersey for the NHL's best team save percentage (.921).

They believe they can make a run at the Stanley Cup with offseason additions like center Jason Arnott, who had 28 points through 43 games despite missing 12 games after arthroscopic surgery on his right knee.

Nobody was named an All-Star starter, but 11 Predators have scored at least 20 points this season with Paul Kariya the team leader with 47.

Nashville still has problems goaltending can't cover up.

The Predators are 2-6 when trailing after two periods, and they let up too much in the third period where they have been outshot 481-365 and outscored 47-29.

Wild slip by Hawks in shootout

Disallowed Chicago goal gives Minnesota third straight road win.

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Pavol Demitra scored the only shootout goal, and the Minnesota Wild rallied to beat the Chicago Blackhawks 4-3 on Sunday night.

NHL

A possible shootout goal by Denis Arkipov, Chicago's third shooter, was disallowed after a video review. Minnesota goalie Manny Fernandez stopped the shot, then it nearly trickled over the goal line.

Pierre-Marc Bouchard, Marian Gaborik and Wes Walz scored in regulation for Min-

nesota, which won its third straight overall and on the road. The Wild hadn't posted three consecutive road wins since last February.

Tuomo Ruutu, Martin Havlat, Cam Barker scored in regulation for Chicago, which lost its sixth straight.

The Blackhawks are 1-7-1 in their last nine games, immediately following a 9-3-3 run after Denis Savard took over as coach on Nov. 27. Chicago's Nikolai Khabibulin stopped 24 shots in his 18th straight start.

Mauresmo opens her title defense with win over Perry

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Andy Roddick overcame a shaky start against French wild-card Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the first round of the Australian Open on Monday, rallying from 2-5 in the second set to win 6-7 (18), 7-6 (2), 6-3, 6-3.

Earlier, Amelie Mauresmo opened her title with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Shenay Perry 6-3, 6-4 in the first match on center court.

Apart from dropping serve in the third game and again when serving for the match at 5-2, the second-seeded Mauresmo was in control as she returned to the scene of her biggest breakthrough victory.

In the second match at Rod Laver Arena, defending men's champion Roger Federer faced

Bjorn Phau of Germany. Mario Ancic and Richard Gasquet were among the other men's seeded players advancing.

Gasquet, the 2002 world junior champion, won his first match in four trips to the Australian Open, advancing 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 over Italian Filippo Volandri.

Ninth-seeded Ancic beat Japan's Go Soeda 6-4, 6-3, 6-2. American Amer Delic beat Frenchman Gilles Simon 6-3, 6-0, 6-2, making the second round for the third time in four trips to the majors.

Spaniards Juan Carlos Ferrero and Guillermo Garcia-Lopez progressed to the second round after playing five games between them.

Former top-ranked Ferrero, the 2003 French Open champion, was leading Jan Hajek 3-0 when the Czech player retired because of stomach illness.

Garcia-Lopez was 1-1 with Joachim Johansson when the 6-



Amelie Mauresmo serves during her first round match against Shenay Perry at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Monday.

foot-6 Swede pulled out because of severe blisters on his feet.

In earlier women's results, 16th-seeded Shahar Peer of Israel beat Romina Oprandi of Italy 6-1, 6-3 and Olga Poutchko of Russia beat Poland's Marta Domachowska 6-2, 6-4.

Mavericks nip Raptors in final second

The Associated Press

TORONTO — Dirk Nowitzki had 38 points and Josh Howard made a go-ahead layup with 0.9 seconds left to rally the Dallas

Mavericks past the Toronto Raptors 97-96 on Sunday.

With Nowitzki triple-teamed,

Howard made a wide-open layup to give Dallas the lead. Toronto's Anthony Parker missed a 3-point shot at the buzzer.

Nowitzki had 11 rebounds, five assists, three blocks and two steals for the Mavericks, winners of 17 of their last 18 games.

Chris Bosh had 24 points and 15 rebounds, but his turnover after winning a jump ball set up the

Maverick's last play with 6.5 seconds left.

NUGGETS 109, TRAIL BLAZERS 93: At Portland, Ore., Allen Iverson scored 32 points and Steve Blake added a career-high 25 against his former team.

Iverson added nine assists for the Nuggets, who trailed at half-time but outscored the Blazers 41-17 in the third quarter.

Royal Trophy

BANGKOK, Thailand — Lee Westwood beat Toru Taniguchi 4 and 3 and Europe took six of eight singles points for a 12 1/2-3 1/2 victory over Asia in the Royal Trophy.

Joburg Open

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Argentina's Ariel Canete won the Joburg Open, birdieing three of the final four holes for a 4-under 67.

RED WINGS: One-game benching has helped Williams

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"I'm not sure if it was a defensive thing," said Williams, who scored two power play goals against Chicago. I'm just working on winning my battles and working hard because that's all I can control.

"There are some games you're able to finish your checks more than normal," Williams added. "I'm not trying to go out of my way to finish a check, but when the chance comes to finish a check I want to do it."

Schneider on the shelf

Wings defenseman Mathieu Schneider was hoping to return to action from his strained MCL before the All-Star break next week.

That's looking more unlikely as each day passes.

"I'm holding out hope," said Schneider, who missed his third straight game since injuring his knee in the first period at Anaheim.

Schneider said his knee has felt stiff since returning from the Wings' last stop on their west coast trip.

"It felt better when we were still on the road," Schneider said. "I think it stiffened up a bit on the plane ride (back from Phoenix)."

Schneider did skate with the team Saturday morning, prior to the game against Chicago.

"It didn't feel that good," Schneider said. "We'll see how it feels tomorrow. I don't think it's any slower than we thought.

They told me it was going to be a couple weeks. There's no way of telling right now."

Schneider will miss tonight's game against his former team.

"It's been a long time," said Schneider, who began his NHL career with the Canadiens. "I've always liked playing against Montreal."

All-Star snub?

Detroit goalie Dominik Hasek leads the league with a 2.03 goals against average, is fourth in wins with 23 and tied for second in the league with five shutouts. Despite those numbers, Hasek did not receive an invite to participate in next week's All-Star festivities in Dallas.

"I had hoped I would be selected," Hasek said. "I'm sure it was close, but I don't want to make any complaints."

Vancouver's Roberto Luongo



Next Game

Montreal Canadiens at Red Wings

When: 7 p.m. today
Where: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit

TV/Radio: VERSUS, WXYT (1270-AM)

Records: Detroit is 28-12-5 (61 points in 45 games); Montreal is 25-15-5 (55 points in 45 games).

Injuries: Detroit — F Tomas Kopecky (collar bone) is on injured reserve; D Mathieu Schneider (knee) is out. Montreal — F Radek Bonk (neck), F Steve Begin (back) and D Janne Niinimaa (flu) are day-to-day.

Overview: The Canadiens are seemingly healthy compared to what they were going through at this time last week. A stomach virus swept through the dressing room that sidelined a handful of players, staff and coach Guy Carbonneau. Montreal, which has dropped six of its last nine contests, had its two-game win streak snapped Saturday, falling to Ottawa, 8-3. Canadiens defenseman Sheldon Souray has been a sniper on the power play, with a franchise-record 12 goals with the man advantage. He had shared the mark with Guy Lapointe, Mathieu Schneider and Patrice Brisebois. Dominik Hasek will be back between the pipes for Detroit.

Up Next: Nashville Predators at Red Wings, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, FSN, WXYT (1270-AM).

— CHUCK PLEINISS

was voted in as the starter for the Western Conference. Calgary's Miikka Kiprusoff and Dallas' Marty Turco were added Saturday.

"I'm just going to have to change my plans for the All-Star break," Hasek said.

This and that

Defenseman Nicklas Lidstrom and forward Pavel Datsyuk both sat out Sunday's practice at Joe Louis Arena, but are expected to play tonight against Montreal according to Babcock. ... The Wings have 10 power play goals in their last four games. They've scored at least one power play goal in eight of their last nine games. ... Former Red Wing Mathieu Dandaneault returns to Joe Louis Arena for the first time since signing a free agent deal with Montreal in 2005.

Send comments to chuck.pleiniss@macombdaily.com