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Sports

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INSIDE:
Ford's hockey program is back among the elite in Macomb County - 2C •

U-M seniors look for first bowl victory

By Paula Pasche
Journal Register News Service

ORLANDO, Fla. — Today's Capital One Bowl is much more than just the end of the Lloyd Carr era at Michigan.



Citrus Bowl

Against the Florida Gators, Carr will coach his final game after 13 seasons as Michigan's head coach. Many of his assistants will also find themselves coaching the Wolverines for the final time.

The seniors will have a final chance to showcase their talents in hopes of a good draft leading to an NFL career. It is also their final chance to win a bowl game.

"You know, we haven't won one yet and we don't know what it's like to end the season on a high note

or go out as a champion of a bowl. You know, the seniors really want to work hard, this whole team, to win this game," senior left tackle Jake Long said.

"It means a lot to me and the team as seniors. You can lump Coach Carr in with the seniors because it's his last game. We really want to end on a high note for him, the seniors, this whole team.

We're really practicing hard, want to play a great game, want to come away with a win," Long said.

"I'd want a great game regardless, regardless what happened during the year, what happened during the past. It's my last game as a Wolverine, all of the seniors' last game, Coach Carr's last game. I want to come out and help our team win," tailback Mike Hart said.

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AP photo
Michigan safety Jamar Adams practices in preparation for today's Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Fla., where the Wolverines face the Florida Gators.

Happy New Era

— ORLANDO, Fla. Two million dollars. Four million dollars. Lawsuits. Broken contracts.



Jim Hawkins

COLUMNIST

in the nation, playing in a second-tier bowl under a lame-

duck head coach, favored to lose by 10 points to the Florida Gators and sophomore Heisman sensation Tim Tebow — with appropriately named "Rich" Rodriguez waiting in the wings.

According to my calculations, never before — at least not in what I'll call the modern era, dating back to the beginning of Michigan's incredible run of 33 consecutive bowls — have the Wolverines been such whopping postseason underdogs.

Not in the Rose Bowl or the Orange or the Sugar or the Gator. Not against national powerhouses Oklahoma or

See HAWKINS, Page 3C

Facing off

Dakota hockey coach's son is back on skates — with a rival school.

By Tom Willard
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — If you can't join 'em, beat 'em.

Dave Koons Jr. never got to play for his hockey-coach dad while growing up, but the Chip-

pewa Valley senior will be playing against him when the Big Reds battle rival

High School Hockey

Dakota at Suburban Ice-Macomb on Wednesday night.

Dave Koons Sr. will command the opposing bench, imploring his Cougars to win an early regular-season game that could have major implications in the Macomb Area Conference Red Division.

The game also holds considerable ramifications for the Koons residence in Clinton Township, where a small-scale civil war has broken out in recent weeks as father and son have taken up for their respective schools.

"There's a lot of trash talking going on," said Dave Koons Sr., who described the bluster as

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Macomb Daily staff photo by David Dalton
Chippewa Valley senior Dave Koons Jr., right, and his father, Dakota hockey head coach Dave Koons Sr., carry conflicting allegiances into Wednesday night's game between the Big Reds and Cougars.

Red Wings shut out for first time this season

By Bruce MacLeod
Journal Register News Service

DETROIT — "Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind ..."

Just a couple of hours before the good people of Detroit rang in the new year with those lyrics, the Red Wings were wishing that one particular old acquaintance had never been brought to mind on this New Year's Eve.

Manny Legace — a Red Wing for six seasons, who was part of the 2002 championship team — shut out Detroit, Monday night, leading the St. Louis Blues to a 2-0 victory.

"The years I was here, the fans were just phenomenal to me and the press was good to me," said Legace, who left Detroit as an unrestricted free agent in the summer of 2006. "I made a lot of good friends here. We spend the summers here. I know all the

guys over there. They're always ribbing me and stuff like that. It's fun to play against them."



Up Next

Dallas at Wings
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday
TV: FSN

How unusual is it for the Red Wings to be shut out?

This was just the second time that the Red Wings have been blanked in the past three seasons with Legace sharing in the other with Blues teammate Curtis Sanford, Feb. 8. Thus a streak of 65 shutout-less games was

ended. The last time that the Red Wings were shut out at home was Jan. 7, 2004, by Boston's Andrew Raycroft, meaning that a streak of 120 home games without being

shut out was ended last night. And the last time that St. Louis shut out the Red Wings in Detroit was Jan. 11, 1993, with Guy Herbert in net.

Not only hadn't the Red Wings been shut out this season, they hadn't gone the first two periods without a goal in their previous 39 games.

Detroit's power play alone has scored in 29 of the first 39 games this season, averaging more than a goal a game.

"Mule (Johan Franzen) had some good chances; Huds (Jiri Hudler) had some chances," said Detroit's Kris Draper. "But I don't think we had sustained chances for enough of the game to win. It's over. It's done with. We have to regroup here. We have Dallas coming in (Wednesday) that's playing great hockey right now, so we've got to make sure we get right at it."

Hudler had a partial breakaway (Ryan Johnson was on his back) with 8:05 left in the game, but his attempt was stopped by Legace.

"Hit me right in the chest, thank goodness," said the netminder with a grin.

For Legace, the game included a portion of redemption after being in net five days earlier at home for a 5-0 loss to the Red Wings.

"You have to bring your A game or they're going to bury you," said Legace. "They showed us that the day after Christmas."

The outcome of the game turned on a slap shot from the blue line by rookie defenseman Erik Johnson. He let his shot

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AP photo
Milwaukee Bucks forward Charlie Villanueva (31) goes to the basket against Pistons forward Jarvis Hayes (9) in the first half.

Pistons thump Bucks

By Dana Gauruder
Journal Register News Service

AUBURN HILLS — Chauncey Billups' once-a-season dunk paled in comparison to the annual ball drop in Times Square Monday

night. There was nothing fancy about it, though the two-handed slam did teach the Pistons' rookies a lesson.

"Had to show them I could still get up there and swing on that

rim a little bit," said Billups, whose breakaway dunk perfectly capped a monstrous month for his

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SPORTS INSIDER



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Back in the saddle again

After three years of struggles, Ford off to hot start.

"Don't give up. Don't ever give up."

Those words from late North Carolina State basketball coach Jim Valvano have given inspiration to many people suffering from disease and despair.

They might as well be the slogan for the Henry Ford II hockey team.

While the Falcons haven't had to overcome anything as serious as the terminal cancer endured by Jimmy V, they have suffered more than their fair share of defeat.

The Macomb Area Conference started varsity play during the 2004-05 season. Ford suited up for 14 games and came out on the losing end all 14 times. In 2005-06, the Falcons lost every one of the 21 games they competed in. Last year, Ford managed a 4-15 season. They closed the season strongly, falling to Dakota by one goal in the first round of the playoffs. That after being trounced in the first round in both previous playoff appearances.

But still, losing is losing. And a 4-50 record over a three-year period would be enough to cripple most teams' spirit. But these Falcons are different. Coach Lee Jenkins has instilled a sense of pride, discipline and integrity into the program that finally — after the innumerable losses — seems to be paying off.

Ford has roared to a 10-1-1 start to the season, including an eye-

popping 7-0-1 mark in the MAC White Division. They've gone from communal pushover to daunting juggernaut seemingly overnight. But that perception may not be altogether accurate.

The Falcons dominated the 2002 season, before the official formation of the MAC, and Jenkins thought he had a powerhouse in the making.

"We won the regular season and the playoffs and the following year only 13 or 14 kids came out for the team," Jenkins explained. "So, we had to start all over."

Undeterred by the small turnout of players, Jenkins and his assistant Bob Skaleski set their minds to forging a competitive team one tiny step at a time.

"We just kept trying to build a program," Jenkins said. "I always try to look for the bright side and build with what we have. I never once thought about walking away because it was too much of a struggle."

Jenkins has a burning desire to teach and an unflinching sense of belonging at Ford. He's spent his entire career at the school. This is the science teacher's thirty-first year at Ford and after talking to him, it's clear the 53-year-old would stay another 31 years if he could.

"I've always had a strong feeling about school spirit and school sports," Jenkins said. "When my youngest son graduated in 2002 my wife said, 'Now that the boys are done, you'll be done, right?' I looked at her and said, 'We started this in '99 and we can't walk away from it now.'"

Jenkins has allowed himself to vicariously live out some childhood dreams behind the bench at Ford. High school hockey wasn't offered when he was in school and his relationship with his players yields a certain sense of fulfillment. That is especially true now that the team has started to see the fruits of its pro-



Ford goalie Mike Brazier makes a save in his team's 6-0 win over Eisenhower Saturday night. The Falcons are 10-1-1 this season, a near-perfect 7-0-1 in MAC White play.

longed growing pains.

"I never got to play high school hockey," Jenkins said. "It is a really great thing. The cool thing was some of my players telling me that in all their years of hockey, they had the most fun playing high school. That's what did it for me and my staff."

From the players' point of view, being a part of Ford hockey has been quite a ride. All the losing has kept this season's early success in perspective.

Jacob Quick is in his final season with the Falcons. The senior defenseman skated all four years for his school. If anyone can describe what they've been through, it's him.

"It was really hard those first couple of years not winning a

game," Quick said. "This season just shows how it can turn out good in the end for everybody. I think it's a great accomplishment and I like to say that I was a part of it. I think the losing would've got to anybody to some point, but we all stuck together. I learned to be dedicated and stick with it no matter what."

Quick gives a lot of the credit to Jenkins.

"Coach has always been by our side the whole time, no matter what the score was or our record was," Quick said. "He let's us know that someone will always be there for us to guide us through it all. He always wants us to give our best. If we lose 10-0 or win 10-0, as long as we give our best, he's happy."

There are other signs that hockey has taken hold at Ford. An increasing number of students have come out to support the team, and the Falcons were able for the first time to field a junior varsity program. While those JV underclassmen have taken their share of lumps already, it is clear the foundation for the future has been created.

While the Falcons may or may not emerge as serious post-season contenders this season, the team is also exuding something else for the first time: confidence.

"I think we can go far," Quick said. "If we play hard we can beat any team out there. I want to let everyone know that we're here and we're coming."

It sounds like these birds of prey finally are ready to become the hunters.

Power Five

The county high school power rankings

1. Ford — County's only team without a division loss
2. Utica — Winners of four in a row are tops in the Red
3. Warren-Sterling — Hanging with White competition
4. L'Anse Creuse — Just three points back of Falcons
5. Saint Clair Shores Unified — Unbeaten in last four division games

Games of the Week

The county's best matchups this week

Dakota vs. Chippewa Valley; Wednesday; 8:15 p.m. at Suburban Macomb

Warren-Sterling vs. Ford; Thursday; 6:30 p.m. at Hazel Park Viking Arena

Saint Clair Shores Unified vs. Dakota; Saturday; 7:30 p.m. at Saint Clair Shores

Player of the Week

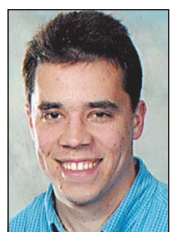
L'Anse Creuse senior forward Anthony Frontiera earned player of the week honors after recording three goals and four as-



FRONTIERA

sists for the Lancers against Warren-Sterling and Romeo. A four-year varsity member, Frontiera is also a co-captain. "I couldn't ask for a more dedicated player in my lineup," Lancers coach Bob Kotowski said. "He has played very solid and is a true leader on the ice. His work ethic is second to none."

Please send comments or player of the week nominations to macombdailyhockey@yahoo.com



Fred Costello

SLAP SHOTS

on the losing end all 14 times. In 2005-06, the Falcons lost every one of the 21 games they competed in. Last year, Ford managed a 4-15 season. They closed the season strongly, falling to Dakota by one goal in the first round of the playoffs. That after being trounced in the first round in both previous playoff appearances.

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Zetterberg closer to returning

By Bruce MacLeod

Journal Register News Service

DETROIT — Henrik Zetterberg sat at his locker stall, Monday morning, after participating in his first full practice since experiencing back spasms more than a week ago.

When Zetterberg took off his helmet, he revealed a bloody line on the bridge of his nose — the result of getting too close to Tomas Koupecky during the morning skate.

"I've got to make the team," said Zetterberg, who missed his fifth game last night because of the spasms. "Got to work for it."

Zetterberg smiled at the notion of having to prove himself in practice.

The Detroit Red Wings have been good of late — winning the first four games that Zetterberg was sidelined. But they're not so good that Zetterberg has to worry about his job.

And the team will get better when its injured forwards return.

Skating as a fifth line, Monday morning, were Zetterberg, Tomas Holmstrom and Kirk Maltby. The trio wore gray jerseys as opposed to the red or white jerseys worn by the four lines that played last night.

Their prognosis is gray as well.

"Rather than me speculate on how long (Holmstrom) is going to be out, I'll just say it's going good," said Detroit coach Mike Babcock. "Zetterberg is the closest guy. Does that mean the next game or the game after? I don't know, but it's close."

Holmstrom has missed the past five games with a bruised bone in his knee. The team's second leading goal scorer wasn't able to participate in all of Monday's drills and might be sidelined for the remainder of this week.

Maltby has missed the most time — the past 16 games with a back strain — and is likely to be the last of the three to return.

"Malts has been out so long, he's got to practice," said Babcock.

"We haven't practiced in a long time. Malts will have to go through a series (of practices) to get back."

With those three unavailable, Mark Hartigan played in his fifth straight game after getting his third call-up from Grand Rapids.

Matt Ellis, who missed 12 of the first 25 games this season, played in his 15th consecutive game last night. Aaron Downey dressed for the 17th time in the past 19 games after missing 12 of the first 21 games this year.

Contract Talks

Both Chris Osgood and Andreas Lilja said Monday that there is no news on their contract talks. Both have reportedly been offered

multi-year deals (Osgood, three years, Lilja two years). Neither has signed, however.

Osgood said that he would like to play at least three more years for three reasons — win another Stanley Cup, reach 400 wins, top Terry Sawchuk's career win total with the Red Wings (352). Osgood has two Cups, 353 career wins and 269 career wins with the Red Wings.

"We aren't really talking numbers or years, we're just talking just for the sake of talking," said Osgood. "I haven't talked to my agent since before Christmas."

As for parlaying his stellar season into a starting position with another team, Osgood said: "Do you want to take a chance and go to a team that's not very good, that's down in the standings, is terrible defensively and get shelled for another two years? I wouldn't think that would be an option I'd take right now. It would be interesting, but I don't know if it would get that far."

Moving To Flint

Former Red Wing Darren McCarty is going to try a hockey comeback with Flint of the International Hockey League. And he's got former teammate Kris Draper to thank for the opportunity. Draper is a part-owner of the Flint franchise.

McCarty was in Flint Monday,

getting a physical. He's waiting for clearance from the NHL before he can sign with the team.

"When he approached me, I set him up with CORE (training facility)," said Draper. "Every morning, he was there. Whatever time they set, he was there. I talked with a couple of the personal trainers that we deal with and they said that he was great, having a lot of fun, working hard. It looks like Mac has decided to commit himself to give himself the opportunity to get back into the NHL."

Chris Chelios played for the Motor City Mechanics of the United Hockey League during the lock-out season of 2004-05.

"It won't be any different (for McCarty) than being in the NHL," said Chelios. "Guys are going to go after him in the minors."

Special Guest

Former Red Wings Pat Verbeek's oldest child, Kyle, skated with the Red Wings at the morning practice. Kyle Verbeek, 19, plays for Mahoning Valley (Boardman, Ohio) of the North American Hockey League — a junior circuit.

"It's amazing how skilled they are," said Verbeek, who is trying for a college scholarship. "I'm just trying to get my pace up."

Read Bruce MacLeod's Red Wings blog at redwingscorner.blogspot.com. Send comments to bruce.macleod@macombdaily.com.



St. Louis' Jay McClement, left, collides with Detroit's Brett Lebda.

WINGS: Shut out, 2-0

Continued from Page 1C

fly six minutes into the third period. The puck found its way through Valtteri Filppula up high and David Backes and Pavel Datsyuk down low before sailing past a screened Dominik Hasek.

That was the lone goal in the contest until Lee Stempniak removed all doubt with 21.2 seconds on the game clock.

"The previous game we won handily," said Detroit coach Mike Babcock. "Tonight, they were better than us. They competed

hard and won more of the races."

The loss also ended a four-game winning streak for the Red Wings, who are now 16-3-2 in their past 21 games. Detroit was undefeated in its previous 10 home games, going 9-0-1 since losing to Chicago, Nov. 17.

Hasek, who stopped 21 shots, was 7-0-1 in his previous eight games.

Detroit maintains the top spot in the NHL's overall standings, but is 6-7-2 against Central Division competition. The Red Wings are 23-1-1 against all other foes.

KOONS: Father to face son in MAC Red battle

Continued from Page 1C

"just the usual — him telling me how much they're going to beat us by and me telling him to bring it."

His wife, Dayna, has had to signal several cease-fires and intends to keep the peace by remaining impartial at Wednesday's game, wearing apparel for both schools and sitting in neutral territory between Cougars and Big Reds supporters.

At 3-1-1, Dakota trails second-place Chippewa Valley (4-1-0) by one point in the MAC Red standings. Both teams have lost to division leader Utica (5-1-1).

"It's a very big matchup," said the younger Koons, a defenseman for the Big Reds. "We have to play strong because they have a lot of guys who can put the puck in the net, but we have three solid lines that can put the puck in the net just as easily. I think we can win but it's going to be tough."

This season marks a return to hockey for the 18-year-old, who played in youth leagues until eighth grade, when he opted for wrestling and basketball. He was cut from the freshman basketball team, however, and after toiling on the mat for three seasons, the 6-3 215-pounder decided it was time to lace up the skates again.

He plays on the Big Reds' second line and scored his first goal of the season in a 7-5 win over Ford on Dec. 12.

"I'm still getting used to it," Koons said of hockey. "I'm hoping to be 100 percent by playoff time, when they really need me."

Dave Sr. said his son's decision to walk away from the game was "never disheartening" but that he's glad to see him playing again — even in an opposing uniform.

"Once the game has started he's going to be just another player," said Dakota's second-year coach. "At least that's how I'm ap-

proaching it. That may change when we get there."

He never coached his boy at any level of hockey, making a conscious decision not to lord over his athletic development.

"I kinda wanted to stay away from coaching him. I didn't want to be too hard on him," said the elder Koons. "I always felt if he had a decent coach (that I would stay out of the picture). It wasn't fair to put that extra pressure on him. I've just stayed on the sidelines and encouraged him."

"I've never been keen on parent-coaches. Normally, the parent ends up being harder on the child and it tends to be a distraction."

While he understands that reasoning, Dave Jr. thinks highly of his dad's coaching abilities.

"He's a straight-up guy. I think he's one of the best coaches around here," he said. "I have the utmost respect for him. He knows the game of hockey, knows when to push his players, when to lay off and knows what to do in the right situations."

Dave Jr. could have enrolled at Dakota High School through its schools of choice program but chose to remain in his home district, he said, because Chippewa Valley boasted superior sports programs when he was a freshman. The Big Reds' first regular-season hockey game against Dakota has been "marked on my calendar for a long time" and a win would give his team important footing in the MAC Red race, as well as bragging rights at home, he said.

"It would be a tough month" if Dakota won, said Dave Jr., whose team plays the Cougars again Feb. 6.

Lest anyone get the wrong idea, Dave Sr. insists all the trash-talk going into the big game is strictly good-natured.

"I love my son dearly," he said. "I hope he scores three goals — and we win by one."

Coaches please call in your scores to (586) 469-4771.