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“It’s the best time to invest in Michigan.”
— Dan Elsea, President, Brokerage Services



Photo by David Schreiber

St. Clair Shores Lake Shore senior Andy DiCristofaro sets to stop a shot from Utica High junior forward Chad Jetts Jan. 19 at St. Clair Shores Civic Ice Arena.

‘Any Day Andy’

St. Clair Shores Unified goalie leading charge

By Brad D. Bates
C & G Sports Writer

ST. CLAIR SHORES — St. Clair Shores Lake Shore senior Andy DiCristofaro is making the most of every game during his final high school hockey season.

Perhaps the reason why the St. Clair Shores Unified netminder has been so stingy — he’s been in net for five of the Lakers’ six shutouts — is because it wasn’t until this year that he was his team’s full-time starter.

“It made me work harder in practice, and I knew I wasn’t going to sit on the bench forever,” DiCristofaro said of backing up 2006-‘07 All-State goalie Eddy Thomas for three years.

“I knew I was going to be out there playing, so I wanted to be ready to help my team. It’s great, because I’ve been a guy waiting for a chance to show what I’ve got.”

Last year, while splitting time with Thomas, DiCristofaro and the Lakers set a new state record with a 1.17 goals against average. This year, with those six shutouts, the Lakers aren’t too far off that mark at 1.93.

“He’s easy to coach, because he’s very quiet and he plays his game,” said Frank DiCristofaro, the coach of the Lakers and the netminder’s uncle.

“He’s the highlight of our team, no doubt. He comes to play every game and comes to work every practice. He’s a coach’s dream.”

DiCristofaro has taken over in net for a Lakers team that is rebuilding after saying goodbye to 12 seniors that had won four straight Macomb Area Conference Red Division titles, and the stability and leadership he has offered have been invaluable.

“You don’t lose anything with ‘Any Day Andy,’” Lakeview junior defenseman Nick Singleton said of adjusting to life with only one No. 1 goalie.

“We only have one senior on defense and three juniors. Andy has helped with his maturity. He’s always talking to us on the ice and doing anything he can to help.”

It isn't just leadership and skill that has helped the Lakers rebuild.

Frank DiCristofaro sees in his nephew the same intangibles that he saw in the goalies that helped him win state championships at Southgate Anderson in 1989 (Richie Nagy) and Allen Park Cabrini in 1994 (Ray Aho) and 1995.

“Kids like Andy, or goalies like Richie Nagy, Ray Aho and Eddie (Thomas), they're in that top five percent of players,” Frank DiCristofaro said. “They're old-time players. They come to play every game. Win, lose or draw, they battle.”

That mix of leadership and strong net play has helped the Lakers to a 7-7-1 mark at press time, 5-4-1 in the MAC Red Division. But it's the prospects of what DiCristofaro might mean come playoff time that has the Lakers really excited.

Set to open the postseason Feb. 25 on home ice at the St. Clair Shores Civic Ice Arena, the Lakers feel that with DiCristofaro in net anything is possible — even in a pre-regional featuring Grosse Pointe North, University of Detroit Jesuit and Warren/Sterling United.

“We've been preaching all year that we're preparing for the playoffs,” Singleton said. “It's not about how we start, it's about how we finish. Being here on home ice, it's going to be real exciting.”

A thought made all the more exciting given the Lakers' situation in goal.

“Goaltenders win state championships, they win Stanley Cups, and they win world championships,” said Frank DiCristofaro. “If you have a goaltender, you can go a long way, even if you're like us and you're a younger team.

“We need to focus on our system and our fundamentals, and we can go a long way. We hope we can go in, play with reckless abandon and let the chips fall where they may.”

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