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## Saints skate past rival Huskies, 2-0

By MATT SCHOCH  
Times Herald

For Port Huron Northern's hockey team, it was the same old story.

For St. Clair's, it was one of the biggest wins in recent memory.

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The Saints knocked off Northern, 2-0, in an otherwise meaningless nonleague game late in the regular season.

But you wouldn't know it by the reaction of the fired up Saints, who toppled the Huskies for the first time in the programs history on Saturday at McMorran Pavilion.

"That's a storied program, there's no doubt about it," St. Clair Coach Scott Nichols said. "When you play anyone in the area, they are all friends growing up and playing together."

Northern's scoring woes and inconsistency continued throughout the game.

St. Clair's Will Hunter, who got the scoring started in the first period, acknowledged the game doesn't mean much in the standings. However, that didn't stop him from calling it the biggest win of the season.

"We knew if we played smart and played our game, we'd win," the junior said. "This was the game we wanted to win."

Hunter was the beneficiary of a fortunate bounce for the Saints (15-6-2) on his goal. A pass behind Northern's net hit a skate and bounced in front. Hunter then shelved a rebound off a Charlie Cronenworth shot past Wade Holcomb.

"It was kind of a lucky bounce," Hunter said. "After that, we knew our defensive

zone had to be good, we had to stick to our systems, limit shots and limit rebounds."

Rocco Benvenuti and the Saints' defense made it stand. The junior goalie made 19 saves.

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"I've always said, it starts with the goaltending and goes out," said Nichols, himself a former goalie. "Rocco gave us solid goaltending and it worked its way out."

Added Benvenuti: "This is amazing, a big win ... a huge win. They're a tough team, but we knew this year we had to beat them."

Mark Morley added a third-period goal for the Saints, driving a shot from the left side past Holcomb. Kevin Craven assisted on the play.

Northern (10-11-1) Coach Bill Warren said the reason for the loss was plain and simple.

"Scoring consistently has been our biggest problem all year," he said. "It's a failure to put the puck in the net. That's the bottom line. We had opportunities and didn't cash in."

Warren said at the point in the season, it's not about retooling systems or making lineup changes.


"It's pure determination," he said. "It's battling for loose pucks in front of the net. There are times that we're sitting on the bench scratching our heads wondering why the puck didn't get in the back of the net."

Getting the first goal has been key to the Huskies all season, Warren said. That might be a key for the Huskies moving forward.

"Our team plays so much better when we have the lead for whatever reason," he said.

St. Clair plays Thursday at St. Clair Shores, while Northern plays host to Macomb Dakota, the Macomb Area Conference Red Division champions.

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