

# Competitive MAC Red Division up for grabs

Dakota finished 10-1-3 in the division last year

By Fred Costello  
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The Macomb Area Conference Red Division has been one of those most consistently strong divisions in the state since it was formed.

## Boys Ice Hockey

Each year since the 2004-05 season, the division has sent at least one team to a regional championship game. Last year, it was Dakota – and the Cougars advanced all the way to the state quarterfinals. Despite the loss of Chippewa Valley, which will not field a team this season, the Red looks to be as competitive as ever:

### Anchor Bay

The Tars finished sixth in the division last year, but coach Dareyl McCarrel saw an explosion in interest as more than 40 kids showed up for tryouts this winter.

“We’re a work in progress and we’ve got a lot of potential,” McCarrel said. “I think goaltending is a strong point and we’ll be really solid defensively.”

Junior goalie AJ Gaglio and senior Jeremy Wierzbowski will likely split time in net. Both players have been with the team for three seasons.

The defense will be led by a trio of brothers. Senior captain Ryan Teal, junior captain Aaron Teal and sophomore Alex Fonstad will all be counted on heavily to limit

**W**e have to realize that there’s a lot of work to do.

— Dave Koons

**Dakota boys ice hockey coach whose team won the MAC Red Division a year ago**



**Fred Costello**

POWER FIVE

the oppositions’ chances.

Up front, senior captain Brian Sullivan and junior captain Anthony Depetro should be productive for the Tars, along with seniors Anthony Shaner and Brett Knybel.

McCarrel and his team have boiled the season down to a few goals they’d like to accomplish. Competing for the Red title, playing well enough to be invited to the Trenton showcase and winning its regional are the key points Anchor Bay hopes to achieve.

### Dakota

The Cougars put together a marvelous season in 2007-08, finishing 10-1-3 against division opponents en route to the Red championship. Then in the playoffs, Dakota knocked off Eisenhower, Utica and Troy Athens before bowing out to Grosse Pointe North in the state quarterfinals. Coach Dave Koons knows expectations will be high for his team, which features 14 new players.

“We have to realize that there’s

## MAC RED DIVISION

**Anchor Bay  
Dakota  
St. Clair  
St. Clair Shores Unified  
Utica**

a lot of work to do,” Koons said. “There are 14 new guys from nine different teams that have to jell together. If they do, we can make a run – but there’s a lot of competition, especially from Utica and Saint Clair Shores.”

Koons considers his goaltending and forwards as the teams biggest strengths. Only one player, junior Shane Allen, returns along the blue line.

Senior goalies Peter Tropper and Spencer Gold will share time between the pipes.

Up front, the Cougars roll out a bevy of experienced forwards.

Senior captains Steve Seaman and Kyler Kolb are joined by junior and fellow captain Matt Demers. All are in their third year of varsity play.

They’ll be joined by juniors Jeff Monfils, Alex Johansons and Doug Andrews to form what should be an explosive offense.

### Saint Clair Shores Unified

There aren’t many teams that could finish 13-7-4 and consider it a ‘down’ year. But that’s the standard the Lakers have set. From 2004-2006, Shores went 35-0-2 against division opponents and claimed three consecutive Red titles. In 2007, they finished fourth in the Red.

Coach Frank DiCristofaro isn’t

yet sure if his team will be able to bounce back to its usual dominance.

“I think the jury is still out on this team,” DiCristofaro said. “Our program has gone through a big transition in the past couple years. I want the kids to compete. You look at everything going on in this country – it’s all about competing. I hope we can compete for the Red. This is a great bunch of kids.”

One question mark is goaltending, as the Lakers have three untested netminders in senior Josh Kelly, senior Jered Jaster and freshman Zach Kosal.

On defense, senior co-captain Nick Singleton will be joined by fellow senior Steve Eatherly and juniors Josh Detrick and Robbie Demers.

Up front, reliable senior co-captain Joe Rutkowski will be counted on heavily. So will bruising junior Joe Kommer and classmate Chris Pontello, who DiCristofaro considers one of the most skilled players he has coached.

### Utica

The Chieftains finished second in the Red with a 9-3-2 record and won a playoff game in a very successful 2007-08 season. This year, Utica returns some of its stand-out players. First team All-MAC forward selection Nick Drenchko returns for his senior season.

## PRESEASON

**1. De La Salle** – Top notch goaltending will keep Pilots in every game

**2. L’Anse Creuse North** – Crusaders have reloaded with senior talent

**3. Dakota** – Cougars are still the team to beat in the MAC Red

**4. Warren-Sterling United** – Thunder offense will be there, but will the rest?

**5. Ford** – Should have a field day against most of the MAC Blue

He’ll be joined by All-MAC second-team pick Dave Burke, also a senior forward. Chad Jetts and fellow senior Steve Eisbrenner are the team’s other returning forwards. Newcomer Dave Weyland also joins the team for his senior year.

Senior goalie Adam Bolton returns between the pipes, where he’ll split time with junior Kyle Martin. Brock Rowe, Joey Johnson, Anthony Fata and Chris Schwarzkooff all return on defense.

“I think we have a lot of potential,” coach Mike Nye said. “We have some returnees and a fairly good mix of talent. I think we’re a pretty complete team. But, the division is a tossup. We’re all kind of doing some rebuilding.”

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