

the SOURCE

WSU leads area teams with 3rd-place tournament finish

By DON CHAMBERLAIN
Source Associate Editor

If competitive hockey is what Stevenson was looking for when it hosted the inaugural Titan New Year Invitational Tournament last weekend, organizers couldn't have asked for much better results.

Eight teams - including local squads Warren-Sterling United and Ford II in addition to the Titans - participated in the three-day tournament, which took place Jan. 1-3 at Great Lakes Sports City in Fraser, Stevenson's home arena.

Of the 12 games that took place over the three-day span, five were decided by one goal and three more by two. Two of the one-goal games were settled in overtime, including one that went into a second extra session.

Of the area squads, WSU had the best finish, going 2-1, defeating the host Titans 5-2 in the game for third place on Jan. 3. Ford II was edged by Port Huron, 5-4, in double-overtime in the Tier II consolation game the same day.

Kalamazoo won the tournament championship with a 3-2 victory over Auburn Hills Avondale in the Jan. 3 title game. In the Tier II title game, Marysville defeated Lapeer West 5-3.

"Everyone's given me real positive feedback so far, everyone seems to be having a lot of fun," Stevenson coach Al Korolewicz said after his team had played its final tournament game. "The games have been very competitive so far and that's really what we were going for.

"We really had good crowds every single game," he added. "It doesn't matter who was playing, which is great because it just shows how big high school hockey is getting and how important it's getting, too, and that's what we wanted; we wanted a competitive tournament in which each game was close and that's exactly what we got, so you can't complain about that at all."

Korolewicz' team had entered the tournament on a roll, having won the Laker Invitational in St. Clair Shores the previous weekend after playing then-once-beaten Eisenhower to a 4-4 tie. However, after opening with a 5-3 victory over Ford II on Jan. 1, the Titans dropped their final two games, falling to champion Kalamazoo 4-1 on Jan. 2 before the loss to the Thunder in the third-place game.

“We didn't come out with nearly the same effort this entire weekend as we had last weekend after our big tournament victory,” Korolewicz acknowledged. “But every team has a little bit of a lull in the middle of the season and hopefully we're hitting that right now. Hopefully, we'll come out of it because we've got a big league game (against L'Anse Creuse North on Jan. 9).”

WSU, meanwhile, continued its recent strong play with two wins in three tournament games. The Thunder opened with an 8-0 victory over Port Huron, featuring a hat trick by Matt Reno, who also had a goal and an assist in the win over Stevenson. WSU then fell to eventual runner-up Avondale 4-2 on Jan. 2, before winning the third-place battle.

The tournament finish capped a recent 3-2 stretch for the defending MAC White Division-champion Thunder, which had opened the season with three losses in its first four games.

“We're coming a long ways,” WSU coach Andrew Peraino said. “Fore-checking has improved dramatically. We're putting pressure on the puck and we're just coming together as a team.”

The Thunder, which also went 1-1 in a tournament near Grand Rapids over Thanksgiving weekend, has also enjoyed a decrease in goals-against recently, the coach added.

“Our goals-against has dropped significantly in the last four or five games,” Peraino said. “And since our defensive play has improved our results are improving.”

In the Thunder's game against Stevenson, the Titans took leads of 1-0 and 2-1 before WSU tied the game 2-2 at the end of one period. The winners then took control with three second-period goals, including two on their first two power-play opportunities.

Starting Thunder goaltender Chris Schornack helped keep the game even

heading into the second period with key saves in the first frame, before eventually being replaced by Jake Dewalt, who made several big stops in the third period to prevent a Titan rally.

“It’s a good win because Stevenson’s got a strong team,” Peraino said. “They had a good record and for us to come out here and post a win like this ... we had a good tournament.”

In addition to Reno’s goal and assist against the Titans, Ryan Carlton, Alex Stefija, Jamie DiPaolo and Kenny Miller added a goal apiece for WSU. DiPaolo, Kyle Kozey, Dave Pomaville and Marty Case each had an assist.

Stevenson got an unassisted goal from Taylor Weiss and another score by Drew DeMarti, assisted by Justin Zyvon and Jeremy Parker.

WSU improved to 4-5 overall after the tournament heading into its Jan. 8 MAC White Division game against Eisenhower. Stevenson took a 6-3-1 record into Friday’s MAC White Division matchup with L’Anse Creuse North.

Ford, which lost to Marysville 6-2 on Jan. 2, was 2-7 after the tournament.

Utica competed in the Traverse City Tournament over the New Year’s weekend, falling to St. John’s Jesuit 8-1 before rebounding for a 4-1 victory over the Bay Reps, and a come-from-behind 2-2 tie against Saginaw Heritage.

Chris Schwarzkoff had the lone Chieftain goal in the first-game loss Jan. 1 on an assist from Chad Jetts. The game was tied 1-1 early before St. John’s took control the remainder of the way.

Tommy Piccirillo and Casey Pawlak staked Utica to a 2-0 lead against the Bay Reps a day later. After their opponents closed the deficit to one with a goal, Utica responded with a second-period marker by Schwarzkoff. Matt Dasin added an empty-net insurance goal in the final period.

Joey Johnson had two assists in the win, with Dasin, Tyler Benoot and Dave Burke adding one apiece.

In the final game of the tournament on Jan. 3, Utica trailed 2-0 before tying the game with two goals in the third period.

Pawlak got the first Chieftain goal assisted by Jetts and Burke when the Chieftains had a 6-on-4 advantage, pulling their goalie while on a power play. With less than two minutes remaining, Jetts passed to Schwarzkoﬀ, who scored the equalizer, sending the game into overtime. Neither team scored in the eight-minute extra session.

The results left the Chieftains with a 4-3-1 overall record.

Eisenhower was defeated by St. Clair Shores 5-2 in a MAC crossover game Jan. 3. Ryan Huber and Elliott Timpf scored for the Eagles, who got assists from Jacob VanSlembrouck, Nick VanSlembrouck, Adam Nimitz and Ryan Persha.

The Eagles fell to 8-2-1 overall with the loss.

Area teams will play in the Macomb Area Conference Showcase Jan. 16-17 at Suburban Ice-Macomb. The schedule is as follows:

Rink 1

Warren-Sterling United vs. Stevenson, 12:30 p.m.

Warren Mott vs. Ford II, 2:45 p.m.

Dakota vs. St. Clair Shores Unified, 5 p.m.

L'Anse Creuse North vs. Romeo, 7:15 p.m.

Utica vs. Anchor Bay, 9:30 p.m.

TBD vs. St. Clair, 12:45 p.m.

Fraser vs. Lamphere, 3 p.m.

Eisenhower vs. L'Anse Creuse, 5:15 p.m.

Marysville vs. Port Huron, 7 p.m.

Rink 1

Romeo vs. WSU, 10 a.m.

Utica vs. TBD, 12:30 p.m.

SCS Unified vs. Anchor Bay, 3 p.m.

LCN vs. Eisenhower 5:30 p.m.

Dakota vs. St. Clair 8 p.m.

Ford II vs. Fraser, 10:15 a.m.

Port Huron vs. Warren Mott, 12:45 p.m.

Marysville vs. Lamphere, 3:15 p.m.

L'Anse Creuse vs. Stevenson, 5:45 p.m.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.sourcenewspapers.com/stories/011109/spo_story32001.shtml