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## Big Reds cruise to crown

Port Huron knocks off Marysville 6-3 in Larry Manz final

BY JOSEPH HAYES  
TIMES HERALD  
• NOVEMBER 29, 2009

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For many years, the Port Huron High [hockey team](#) was merely an afterthought when the favorites of the Larry Manz Invitational were discussed.

The Big Reds normally played second fiddle to the other teams in the field.

This year was much different.


On Friday, Port Huron defeated rival Port Huron Northern for the first time since the 1992-93 season.




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GETTING READY: Marysville goalie Anthony Benvenuti read himself against Port Huron High's Frank Harrison, right, Saturday during first period action in the Larry Manz Thanksgiving Tournament at McMorran Pavilion. Port Huron won 6-3. (By


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Then on Saturday, the Big Reds skated past the Marysville Vikings 6-3 to [win](#) the invitational title before a packed crowd at McMorran Pavilion.

"This is huge," said Port Huron Coach Ben Pionk, who estimated that Port Huron hadn't won the tournament since the early 90s.

"This has been a great weekend for us. Since the start of the season this was one of our goals -- to win this tournament and show everybody what we could do. To accomplish that is a big step for us."

Frank Harrison led Port Huron (4-1) with two goals and two assists. Ryan Rotondi also scored twice and Thomas Mertz and Tyler Jackson each added a goal.

Garrick Hunger had two assists for the Big Reds and Zack Davis, Anthony Wyrembelski, Connor Smith and Jackson each had one.

Mark Pavelek, Drew Johnson and Robbie Farrell scored for the Vikings.

Devin Herr, Tyler Billins, Drew Johnson, Mike Schulte and Ron Nunez each had an assist apiece for Marysville.

Goaltender Anthony Benvenuti had 18 saves for Marysville (3-1).

Both teams got off to fast starts offensively in the first period.

Port Huron got on the board first, just 1 minute, 17 seconds into the [game](#) on Mertz's goal. Marysville answered at the 5-minute mark when Pavelek scored.

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MELISSA WAWZYSKO, Times Herald)



Ben Pionk



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LOOSE PUCK: Port Huron's Tom Jones, right, spots a loose puck as Marysville's Nicholas Bartley makes a move as well Saturday during second period action in the Larry Manz Thanksgiving Tournament at McMorran Pavilion. (By MELISSA WAWZYSKO, Times Herald)

Port Huron took the lead again just 19 seconds later as Jackson scored his first goal of the night. The Vikings battled back and answered before the end of the period on Johnson's tally.

"We might have had a deeper bench," Pionk said. "Our guys might have wanted it more. We had a lot to prove. We knew if we let Marysville stay in the game it would be trouble."

Port Huron scored the lone second-period goal when Rotondi gave the Big Red a 3-2 lead.

Marysville tied the game at 3-3 early on Farrell's goal. But it was all Port Huron the rest of the way.

"Port Huron played great," Marysville Coach Paul Moretz said. "The difference was their players. They capitalized on their chances. They played really well overall."

The decisive play of the game came midway through the third period, after Port Huron High goalie Nick Petre stopped a breakaway. The play continued, and on the other side of the ice, Harrison scored to give the Big Reds the lead for good.

Port Huron went on to score two more goals, including an empty-netter.

"Our defense did a really good job keeping everything to the outside," said Petre after stopping 26 shots in the win. "It feels really good to win the tournament. This is what we've worked for."

Marysville will face Utica Ford Thursday at home. Port Huron will travel to Kalamazoo on Friday to face Mattawan.

"Each game we are improving and getting better and better," Pionk said. "The team is really beginning to come together."

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**avidfaninph** wrote:

All four teams in the Larry Manns Tournament played outstanding. The Big Reds played with a bit more heart. The young men that play for that team are a very classy group of individuals. I had the opportunity to speak to several of them before each game and you can see how down to earth these boys carry themselves. Each conversation was we are going out to play our best. Win or lose we will give it

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