

# Monroe-Woodbury ends Sweet Home's state title hopes

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

Monroe-Woodbury and Sweet Home have been ranked first and second in New York State throughout the hockey season and their Division II state quarter-final game fit the billing.

Section IX's Monroe-Woodbury defeated Sweet Home, 2-1, on Saturday before an estimated crowd of 1,000 at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink. The win moves the Crusaders into the Division II state final four at 10 a.m. Saturday at Utica's Memorial Auditorium against either Section I's Rye or Section X's Salmon River. Monroe-Woodbury lost to Section III's Clinton in last year's state finals.

"All season we've been ranked one and two," said Monroe-Woodbury coach Paul Bacsardi Sr. "The kids played their hearts out. It's a shame someone had to lose. Both teams skated hard."

Monroe-Woodbury's Ian Mauriello scored the game-winning goal against Sweet Home with 6:36 left in the third period on the power play from Tyler Sloboda and Joe Garnet. Mauriello deked a Sweet Home defenseman and sneaked the puck in between the pads of Panthers goalie Derek Mohney.

"The only thing I remember is Joe Garnet passing it up right on my stick," said Mauriello. "I got past their defense and put it in."

"Every practice we spend the last 10 minutes working on our one and none," said Bacsardi. "I said from the bench he's going to score and he did."

"I thought I had it but it just slipped under my pad," said Mohney, who finished with 30 saves.

Mohney came up especially huge for Sweet Home in the third period. Monroe-Woodbury outshot the Panthers, 14-3, in the period, and 31-18 overall.

"He is a second-team all-state goalie that has really helped put us on the map," said Sweet Home coach Dave Gerspach. "Prior to this season, no one knew who Sweet Home was. Now everybody knows."

The Crusaders took a 1-0 lead four minutes into the second period on a wild play. Julian Carney made a huge hit that forced a loose puck in the Sweet Home end. Teammate Andrew Himelsson took control of the puck and fired a shot which Mohney initially saved but Teddy Sabini poked home the rebound.

The hit caused Carney to vomit as soon as he reached the bench.

"I wasn't even celebrating when we scored," said Carney. "I was just miserable. But scoring the goal made it all better."

"Plays like that go unnoticed," said Bacsardi. "Without that, the puck does not go into the net."

Sweet Home tied the game when, on a five on three advantage, Ryan Marko, the Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation scoring champion, fed Alex Esposito, who beat goalie Sean O'Sullivan on the blocker side. Paul Campise, who couldn't even walk two days earlier because of a hip flexor, also assisted.

As the game wore on, Monroe-Woodbury's speed, combined with some Sweet Home penalties in the third, took the Panthers off their game.

"The kids did everything we asked of them," Gerspach said. "We just came out on the losing end."

Sweet Home finishes 17-4-4. They went 0-23-1 in 2002-03.

Marko and Esposito were first and third in the Federation scoring with 37 and 33 points, respectively.

Including non-league games, Marko led Sweet Home with 43 points (16 goals, 27 assists) in 17 games played. He has 111 career points (49 goals, 62 assists in 61



Sweet Home's Ryan Marko, bottom, battles Monroe-Woodbury's Chris DeThomas for control of the puck during the Panthers' 2-1 loss in the New York State Division II quarterfinals on Saturday at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.

Photo by Joe Eberle  
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games played).

Esposito finished his senior year with 40 points (19 goals, 21 assists in 24 games played) and 99 career points (55 goals, 44 assists in 60 games played).

Campise was seventh in the Federation in scoring (25 points) and including non-league games, scored eight goals and 26 assists for 34 points. He was a plus 38.

Mohney was ranked second in the Federation with a 1.98 goals against average, a 14-3-3 record and a .931 save percentage. In the

last two seasons, Mohney has a 27-11-4 record, .932 save percentage and a 1.99 goals against average.

"Three years ago, we had try-outs on Nov. 1 and teams would laugh at us," said Gerspach. "Who knew we would have the Federation scoring champion for two years (Esposito, Marko), the best defenseman in the league (Campise) and the best goalie in the state (Mohney)?"

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## North easily wins in regionals, will defend state title this weekend

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

Williamsville North hockey plays all season to win state championships and Saturday the Spartans moved one step closer.

North dominated Seton Catholic of Section VII's Plattsburgh in the Division I New York State playoffs, winning 7-1 at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.

The Spartans (23-3-3), ranked No. 1 in the New York State Sports Writers Association Division I poll and the defending state champions, will play fourth-ranked Canton (23-2-1) of Section X at 3:15 p.m. next Saturday at Utica's Memorial Auditorium. The winner plays on Sunday.

"The first practice of the year we all got together on center ice and our assistant coach Tim Digulio said 'what's our team goal?' and we said, go to states," said North's Justin Kochan, who scored a natural hat trick.

"This is our goal all long," added North coach Bob Rosen. "This is how we gear our season."

North already beat Seton Catholic, 7-1, in the Williamsville District Tournament earlier this season. Despite winning by a lopsided score, Rosen didn't want to take the game lightly.

"We had a good week of practice," said Rosen. "We actually had to cut practice short on Thursday because it was getting so intense so we knew they were ready to play. That was a good sign."

"We knew this game wasn't going to be one of our best games in terms of competition but we wanted to go out there and give our all," added Kochan.

The Spartans outshot Seton Catholic, 19-1, in the first period, and scored three times in the last 6:53 of the first period. Nick Fronczak and Kochan (Pat Mulvihill, Ryan Geary) each tallied goals off slap shots. Kochan added a back-handed goal from Nick Angelo and Geary with 1:15 remaining.

Kochan picked up his third straight goal 43 seconds into the second period, slipping a goal past Jeremy Coupal on the power play from Geary and Fronczak. It was Kochan's second natural hat trick, scoring one last year during the regular season against Kenmore East.

Josh Liddle (Andrew Saint, Fronczak) on the power play, Adam Vinci (Dan Conover, Mike Cusenz) and Grant Rickan (Mark Capenhurst, Saint) scored in the second period for the Spartans.

Kellen Loughan of Seton Catholic scored 2:22 into the third to avoid the shutout.

North outshot Seton Catholic, 36-9.



Williamsville North's Nick Fronczak buries Seton Catholic's Tom McCauley with a thunderous hit during the Spartans' easy 7-1 victory in the New York State Division I quarterfinals on Saturday at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.

Photo by Joe Eberle  
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## Stella falls short at states

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

Nic Stella's first appearance at the New York State Championships is one he'd like to forget.

The Sweet Home junior went 2-2 at 140 pounds and was one match away from placing. The event was held last Friday and Saturday at the Times-Union Center in Albany.

"I don't why but I just wrestled real bad," said Stella. "I probably could have prepared better and trained harder. I really don't know what happened."

"He had a good couple weeks of practice," said Sweet Home coach Chris Nadeau. "I thought he was prepared. I just think he

was feeling the pressure more than anything."

In the first round, Stella beat Ramsey Locke of Section X, 10-4, but in the quarterfinals he was pinned in 1:15 by Austin Meys of Shenendehowa (Section II).

"I did exactly what I thought he was going to do but he cradled me," said Stella. "I just didn't want to bail out and he caught me."

Stella said the loss to Meys, last year's state champion, hurt because he really wanted to place. He also wanted to come back strong in wrestlebacks and he did in his first match, turning over Cory Mahoney of Canandaigua (Section V) at least five times in a 15-2 decision.

But on Saturday, Stella locked up with a much bigger wrestler in

Mike Fennell of Commack (Section XI) and was defeated 11-4. Early in the match, Fennell gave Stella a bloody nose.

"He was big and I couldn't handle his strength," Stella said.

Stella finishes the year 41-2 and with nine tournament first places. He had 106 takedowns, 27 escapes, 86 near falls, 11 pins and 17 technical falls.

He said he will be competing in numerous tournaments in the off-season, including junior nationals in three weeks in Virginia Beach, to train for next season.

"I'm going to train 10 times harder than last year," Stella said. "I don't plan on losing next year at all."

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