

Far West Regional

Sweet Home can't climb out of early hole

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

If Sweet Home would have played a better first quarter against Fairport, there's a good chance the Panthers would be anticipating its second straight trip to Glens Falls and a chance to

win its first New York State title since 1984.

Instead, Fairport (21-3) are the ones who are celebrating after holding off Sweet Home, 57-53, on Sunday in the Class AA Far West Regional before a crowd of 2,664

at The Blue Cross Arena at the Rochester War Memorial. It's the Red Raiders first trip to the state final four and will meet Section II's Bishop Maginn at 12:30 p.m. Saturday in the Glens Falls Civic Center.

Whether it was opening game jitters or playing at a new venue, the Panthers, last year's Class A state runner-up who moved up to AA because of enrollment, looked out of rhythm throughout the entire first quarter and trailed, 15-7. Take away the first quarter and Sweet Home wins, 46-42.

"The scoreboard ran out of time but we didn't continue to stop fighting," said Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius. "That's been a trademark of this group for their varsity careers. They've never gotten beaten by double digits in 50 games. We just dug ourselves a hole early."

"I had put so much emphasis on their defense," said Fairport coach Scott Fitch. "The first thing I said was 'hey we're a pretty good defensive team too.'... I felt pretty comfortable that if we cleaned up on the glass, we would be in

the game. And I felt we did a good job in the first half."

Sweet Home, who never led and trailed by as many as 14 points in the second quarter, clawed back to cut the deficit to two, 55-53, after Terrell Rankin sank two free throws with 11 seconds remaining in the game.

“The scoreboard ran out of time but we didn't continue to stop fighting.”

— Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius

Fairport's Mark Bruce, who missed a free throw attempt prior to Rankin's attempts, redeemed himself with two free throws with nine seconds left. His second free throw came after a Sweet

Home timeout.

Sweet Home then inbounded the ball to Rankin, who had two three-point attempts rattle out. Rankin, one of eight Sweet Home seniors, finished with 25 points to give him 1,255 for his career, a remarkable feat considering he missed almost his entire junior year after tearing an anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee.

Rankin's 25 points tied him for game high with Fairport's Kyle Downey. Both were 9 of 23 from the floor.

Downey, the 6-foot-1 younger brother of Canisius College standout Kevin Downey, beat Panthers guard Eric Schinrel on several screens in the first half for 18 points. Schinrel, who held Niagara Falls' Johnny Flynn, a McDonald's All-American, to a season-low 16 points in the Section VI Class AA finals, played Downey much better in the second half although Downey drained a huge three to put the Red Raiders ahead, 55-49, with 50 seconds remaining. Schinrel hit a floater 15 seconds earlier that cut the deficit to 52-47. A play earlier,



Terrell Rankin, right, looks for space around a Fairport defender during Sweet Home's 57-53 Class AA Far West Regional loss on Sunday in Rochester. Rankin tied for game-high with 25 points.

Photo by John Rusac

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Schinrel's teammate, senior Glenroy Carr (11 points, eight rebounds) fouled out.

Downey also grabbed nine re-

bounds, eight on defense.

"He's just a gamer," said Fitch.

"You want it in his hands at the end of the game and he has come

through every time so far."

"Last year in the state finals we faced a similar situation," said Schintzius. "The shot clock was running out and a kid from Peekskill hit a three from almost the same spot. He's a kid who you'll see in a Division I jersey someday."

Sweet Home trailed, 36-24, at halftime, but Schintzius and his team weren't about to pack it in.

"It could have easily turned into a double digit win for them but we just kept battling," said Schintzius. "I told them at halftime, 'we've been through 49 games and have never been beaten by double figures.' We willed our way back into it. Terrell put us on his back and he made some big plays. Eric made a couple of tough plays... For us to step up from Class A to be the smallest AA in our section and get through the Falls and battle Fairport, I can't be upset."

Sweet Home outscored Fairport, 13-11, in the third quarter, and 16-10, in the fourth quarter.

Sweet Home finishes 19-5. Its eight seniors — Rankin, Carr, Schinrel, Steven Roberts, Josh Parker, Earl Jackson, Allen Douglas and Jarell Tallington — helped the team go 40-10 over the last two years, win two section titles, and one regional title.

"We were 4-3 at one point and people were asking me what was wrong with us and I said we'll be fine," said Schintzius. "I thought we would continue to get better and we did."

"I'm proud of all my teammates," added Schinrel. "I love the journey we went on. I'm sorry it's over. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We grew together like a family. We might not be the most athletic team but we worked the hardest and played together the best. We believed in each other, battled and almost had it."

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Hockey

Williamsville North loses in double-overtime final

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Williamsville North has seen its share of triumphs and heartbreaks in the Division I New York State Championships, and this year's final tops the list as most heart-breaking.

The Spartans, ranked No. 1 in the state, lost 2-1 in double overtime to Section IV's Ithaca in Sunday's state finals at Utica Memorial Auditorium.

Ithaca's Sean Seyler scored the game-winner 4:15 into the second overtime from Ben Lantz-Subtelny and Tim Kozen. North coach Bob Rosen said Seyler's shot hit one of his player's sticks or skates, changed direction and went into the top left corner of the net.

It was North's sixth appearance in the state finals, winning titles in 2002, 2004 and 2006 and losing in 2001 and 5-4 in overtime to Section V's Brockport in 2003. They lost in the state semifinals in 2005.

"Ithaca played tremendous team de-

fense, but from our standpoint it's a heart-breaker," said Rosen. "We get a little disillusioned of getting to the finals. It's not that easy. We may have made it look easy for the past seven years, but you don't know when you're going to go back again."

It was Ithaca's fifth state title since a 4-0 win over Saratoga in 2000.

Rosen said his team had eight chances in regulation and at least four opportunities in overtime to put Ithaca away but either missed the net or hit a goal post.

Ryan Geary, North's all-time leader scorer in Federation and state playoffs, backhanded in a Justin Kochan rebound 1:27 into the first period.

Ithaca's Tyler St. Denis (Gabe French) tied it at 1-1 when he jammed the puck past Branden Komm (33 saves) at 4:54 into the second.

North almost didn't make it to the finals. The Spartans came back from a 3-1 deficit in the second period against Section X's Canton to win 4-3 in overtime.

Geary scored twice, including the game winner at 6:55 into overtime. Kyle Agius pinched from the blue line, which led to a Spartan three on one. Agius hit Kochan at the top of the circle and threw it to Geary, who shot it into the top of the net.

Geary's first goal came short-handed at 12:20 of the second, when he slipped the puck between a Canton defender and shot it past the goalie on the stick side to cut the North deficit to 3-2.

"He's been the heart and soul of the team," said Rosen. "He's led by example and has always been about the team."

Kochan tied the game with 2:37 left in the third on a great pass from Tom Goehrig and Pat Mulvihill.

"Goehrig took a nice pass from Mulvihill, which sprung a two on one, and Goehrig slid it across to Kochan into a wide-open net," said Rosen.

Kochan shot in his own rebound into the net four minutes in on the power play.

"Right after they made it 3-1, they were on another five on three," said Rosen. "I

called a timeout, and we killed off the five on three. Branden made a couple of big saves to allow us to keep the game in reach... To come back is a testament to this team of how they have battled throughout the whole year."

Komm made 31 saves. North had 35 shots on net.

Pat Sweeney, Shane Laurie and Garrett Sharp (Sweeney, Bryan Zeller) scored power-play goals for Canton.

North finishes 24-4-3. Forwards Geary, Kochan, Mulvihill, Andrew Saint, Dan Conover, Mike Cusenz, Jamie VonHendy, Adam Vinci, John Walter, Goehrig and Charlie Teal and goalie Taylor Gahagen graduate. Rosen returns his entire defense next year.

"The friendships created over the years and the tradition of being part of North hockey — that's the legacy we really push for and I hope these seniors have gotten," said Rosen.

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