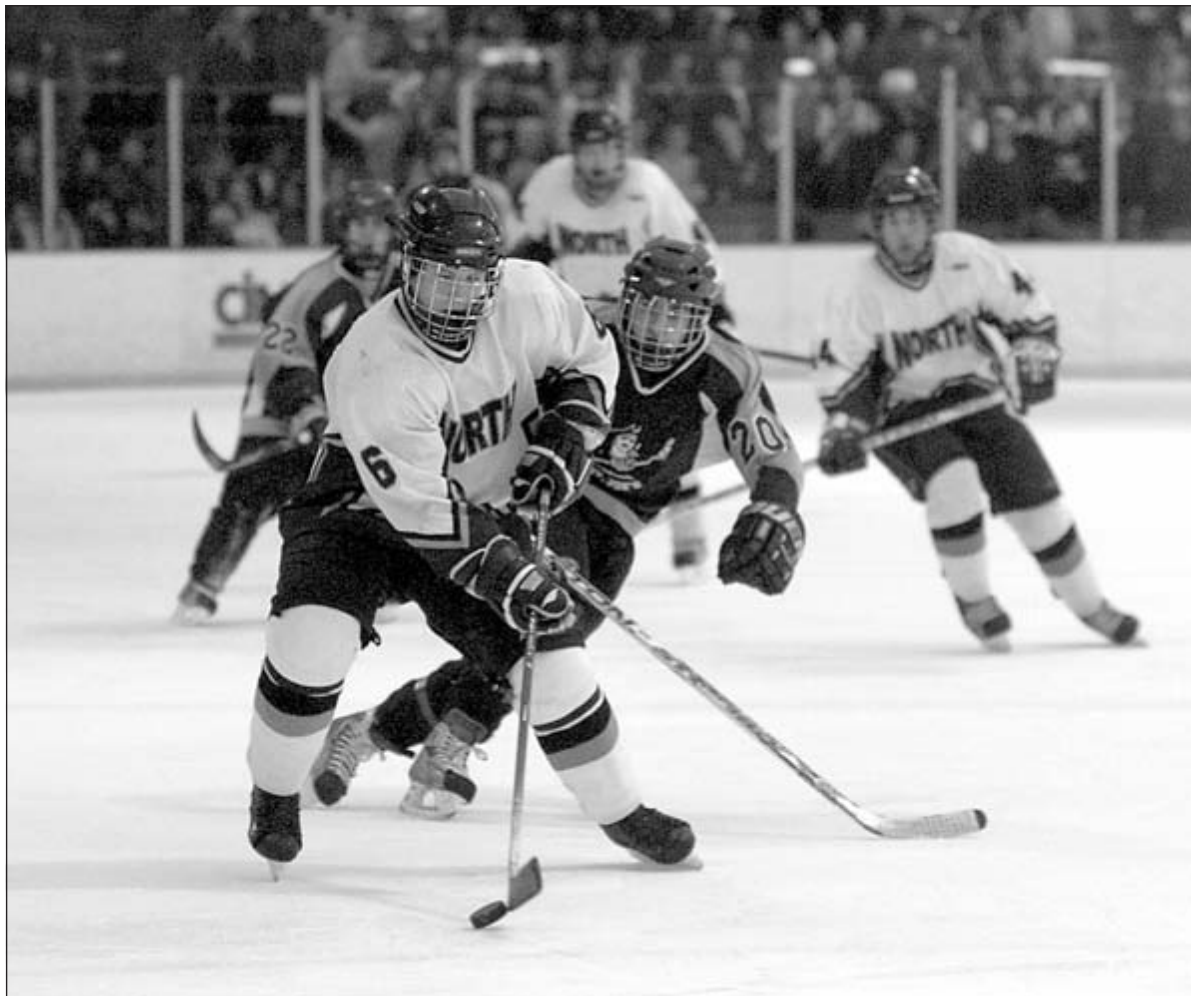


# North hockey's state qualifying chances dwindling

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter



Williamsville North's Jake Newton breaks away from St. Joe's Evan Pizzuto during the teams' Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation

game last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink. St. Joe's won 5-3.

Photo by John Normile

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Ever since the Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation has been allowed to qualify for the New York State Championships, Williamsville North has always been the team leading the way. But after seven years, the Spartans' run, which has included three Division I state championships, could be in serious jeopardy of ending.

North trails Lancaster by three points in the Federation's large school standings for top public school but Lancaster has played two more state qualifying games. North has 14 points (6-3-2) in 11 state qualifying games. Lancaster has 17 points (8-4-1) with one state qualifying game remaining.

If it's an all-private large school Federation final, whichever public school has the best state qualifying record goes to states.

If Lancaster finishes with more state qualifying points, the only way North can advance to states is if they win the large school Federation final.

The Spartans could have given itself a little wiggle room in state qualifying points if they had beaten St. Joe's last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink. Instead, they fell 5-3 before a crowd of 1,510.

When North and St. Joe's met on Jan. 12, the teams skated to a 0-0 tie, mainly because the Spartans used a defensive-minded game plan to bottle up the Marauders' offensive stars. This time around, St. Joe's, led by Cole Schneider's four goals and an assist, used its team speed to open a 3-0 lead in the second period which forced the Spartans to take more chances on offense than they normally would have.

"Our speed is our key," said St. Joe's coach Pete Schneider. "If we can get up on teams, it forces others to skate. North is a good defensive team and the last time we played them, they did a great job of bottling us up. But when they had to open it up, it created more odd man rush opportunities for us."

"(After they took the lead), We had to be more aggressive, which was tough," added North coach Bob Rosen.

The first three goals of the game came on three St. Joe's special team plays in the second period. Schneider scored the first

two. His first goal came at 10:18 on the power play from Jon Rossi and Jeff Amico. On his second goal, he took a pass from goalie Mark Goulding, slipped past a North defenseman and scored on a short-handed breakaway. Schneider also assisted on Chris Bradley's power-play goal at 3:48. North defenseman Jake Newton accidentally screened Komm on the goal.

Schneider scored twice in the third, scoring on a great two-on-one play with Amico at 8:26 and added one from Ryan White at 4:38. Schneider bowed to the rabid St. Joe's fans in attendance after his fourth goal.

"Cole's having a great season," said Schneider. "He works hard in practice which has allowed him to shine in games."

Rosen also felt his team fell behind early because they were tired from killing off penalties.

The Spartans' best offensive player, Nick Angelo, got a four-minute major penalty and a one-game suspension for a hit from behind one minute into the game. A minute

after killing off Angelo's major penalty, Nick Fronczak was called for high sticking.

In the second, North killed off an early elbowing penalty but allowed the two power-play goals and short-handed goal.

"It wasn't so much the penalties as it was the amount of time we spent penalty killing," said Rosen. "We had the same kids penalty kill and I think we ran out of gas."

North got a late second period goal from junior Marc Kadish (Camren Sroda) and third period tallies from Liddle (Joe Johnson) and a power-play goal by Mark Smith (Fronczak).

St. Joe's outshot North, 26-24.

North closed out the week with a 3-1 victory over Williamsville South on Saturday on the Feature Rink and a 5-1 win against Frontier on Sunday at Buffalo State Sports Arena.

South struck first in the first period against North when sophomore defenseman Trevor Clark scored from freshman Justin DiPasquale and sophomore forward

Daren Powers.

It stayed that way until 6:53 of the second when Fronczak scored on the power play from Smith and Johnson. Kadish broke the tie at 12:16 of the third on a rebound from Liddle and Kyle Agius. Newton put the Spartans up 3-1 at 10:44 on the power play on a nice shot from the point. Kadish assisted.

North outshot South, 34-12. Kim Sass made 11 saves for the Spartans.

"We didn't play particularly well," said Rosen. "Plus, Angelo was not playing and Sroda was hurt."

South coach Sean Green said goalie Matt Green played well.

North seemed to return to its old form against Frontier.

"It was a similar to the effort against St. Joe's but we had a more solid effort from everybody," said Rosen. "If we get a solid effort from everybody, I like our chances. If we don't do that, we're in trouble and we're not a good hockey team."

Rosen felt his team played a good first period. Fronczak, from Kadish, scored the only goal of the period with 1:17 remaining.

Johnson made it 2-0, from Kadish, at 14:14 of the second.

Angelo put the Spartans ahead, 3-0, from Grant Ricken at 8:50 of the third. Rickan took a shot from the point and Angelo slapped home the rebound.

North added two more goals in the third, Johnson at 2:04 from Agius, and Mark Maraschiello, from James Nowicki and Johnson, at 1:01.

Mike Catuzza scored Frontier's only goal from Nick Battista and Mark Smerka at 7:02 of the third.

North outshot Frontier, 29-25. Komm picked up the win in net.

The only downside to the win was the number of penalties the Spartans took. Rosen said his team committed four penalties in the second and another four in the third.

North (13-5-2) plays Canisius at 7 p.m. on Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Feature Rink and Clarence at 5 p.m. on Saturday on the Olympic Rink.

The Spartans won both meetings earlier in the season, coming from behind to beat Canisius, 3-2, and blanking Clarence, 5-0.

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## Tigers' hockey gets much needed win at tournament

A season of up and downs continued this weekend for the Amherst Central Federation hockey team as they turned heartbreak into triumph at the second annual Geneseo Lakers Invitational Tournament on the campus of Geneseo State College.

The Tigers suffered a heartbreaking 3-2 loss on Friday night against Section V's Victor only to rebound and take home the consolation championship beating host Geneseo, 6-5, on Saturday.

"My team showed a lot of character this weekend," said Amherst head coach Rich Crozier. "After the devastating turn of events last night, to come out here and pull this one out speaks volumes about these boys and the resiliency of this team."

After a scoreless first period that saw the Tigers outshoot Victor, 11-5, the Tigers got on the board early in the second.

Senior Josh Larwood dumped the puck in. Junior Kevin Denny quickly retrieved it and fed it to senior Matt Allwes in the slot.

Allwes took a quick shot that deflected off a defender in front and found its way to the back of the net. For Allwes, it was his third goal of the season.

Ten minutes later, the Tigers struck again to take a 2-0 lead. On the power play, Allwes fed the puck to senior Al McQuiggan. McQuiggan took a quick shot on net and Denny followed up to bury the rebound.

For Denny and Allwes, it was their second point of the game.

The Tigers took a 2-0 lead deep into the third period, but unfortunately were unable to hold on. In heartbreaking fashion, Victor scored three unanswered goals in the last few minutes of the game to win 3-2.

"It doesn't get any tougher than this one," said Crozier. "For 42 minutes, everything was going as planned. We made some tough mental mistakes in the last three minutes and couldn't recover."

Senior DJ Filer made 28 saves in net for the Tigers. McQuiggan was given player of the game for

his strong defensive play.

After falling behind 1-0 early in the first against Geneseo, the Tigers roared back with three unanswered goals. The Tigers tied the game at 1-1 when, off a great forecheck, senior Dan Hubbard tallied.

Junior Sean Mullane followed the play into the Geneseo zone and forced a turnover behind the Geneseo net. Hubbard picked up the puck and quickly slid it into the open side on the net.

A minute later, the Tigers made it 2-1 when Larwood scored his first of the season. Again, after a strong forecheck, Denny forced the turnover in the Geneseo zone. Junior Alex Dennis grabbed the puck and quickly passed it to Larwood in the slot. Larwood fired a one-timer on net that beat the Geneseo netminder through the five-hole.

The Tigers made it 3-1 early in the second when Hubbard recorded his second goal of the game. After receiving a pass from Mullane, McQuiggan carried the

puck into the zone and let a rocket of a slap shot off that hit the post and caromed right to Hubbard's stick. Hubbard made no mistake, firing the puck right away that just barely passed the goal line.

It was McQuiggan's second point of the game.

Penalty trouble allowed Geneseo to tie the game at 3-3 after two periods of play. The Tigers struck early in the third when Mullane recorded his third point of the game.

A solid forecheck from senior Blake Napierala gave Hubbard a break out of the corner. Hubbard fed the puck across to Mullane who shot the puck passed a sprawled out Geneseo goaltender.

The Tigers made it 5-3 when senior Phil Cultrara tallied his second of the year. Senior Mike Gruttaduria laid out his check deep in the Geneseo zone. Cultrara picked up the puck and made a nice wrap around play into the open side.

Geneseo then answered two minutes later, making the score 5-4. Finally, at the five-minute mark of the third, McQuiggan scored the biggest goal of the Tigers' season to date. While killing a four-minute major penalty, McQuiggan stole the puck from the Geneseo defenders and went in on a break way. The senior assistant captain let a razor of a wrist shot off that went off the right post and into the net.

"What a huge goal," said Crozier. "We put ourselves in a bad spot with the penalty and Al (McQuiggan) stepped up right at the perfect time. You expect your big time players to get big time goals, and none were bigger than that one."

Geneseo made it interesting, scoring a fifth goal, but the Tigers held on for the 6-5 win. Filer once again played solid for the Tigers, making 28 saves and earning player of the game honors.

"There has never been a more

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