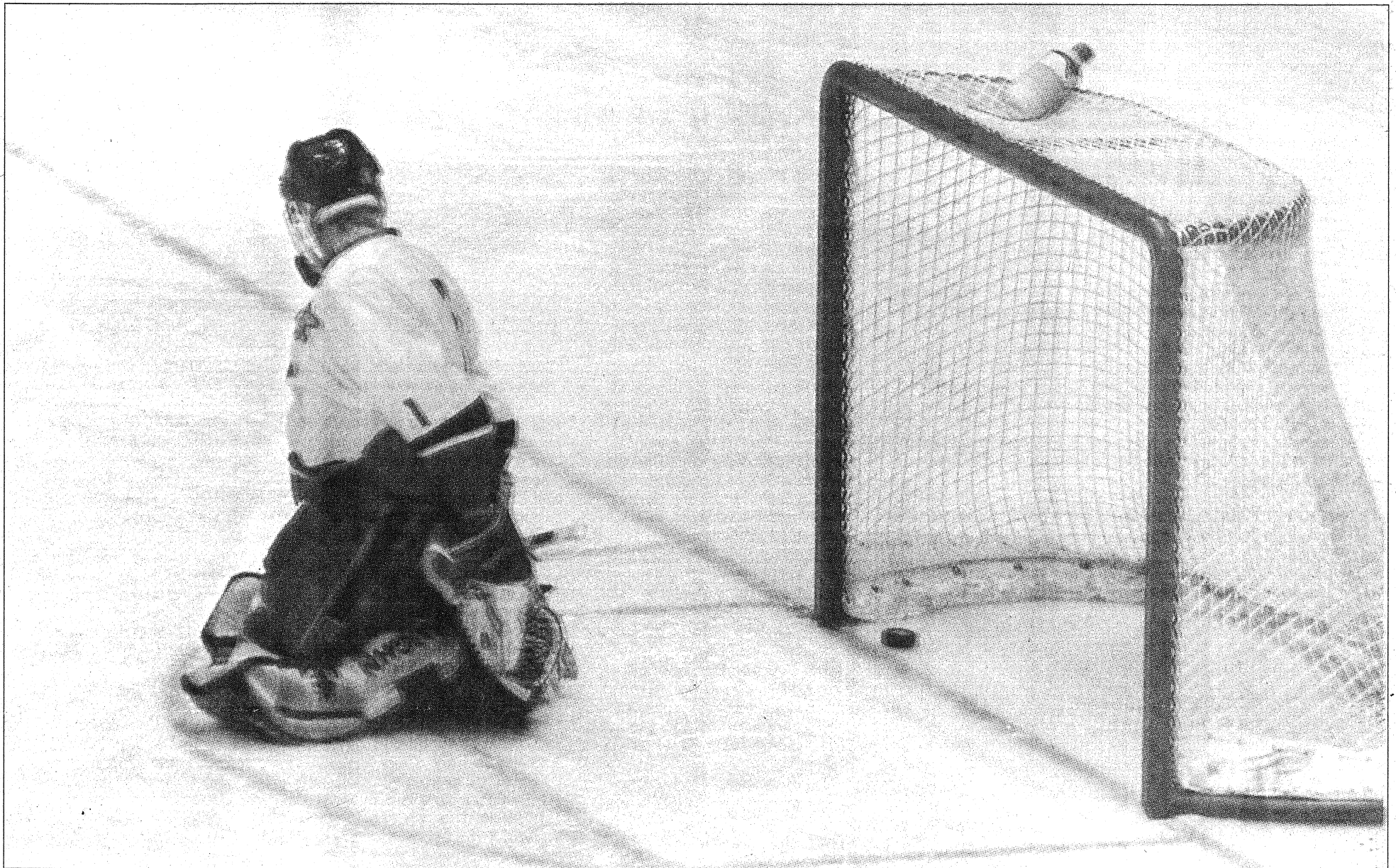


Pioneers stand a tier above



Duluth East goaltender Wade Salzman can't stop Hill-Murray's winning goal, which was scored by Mike Strobel at 7:35 of the third period.

CHRIS POLYDOROFF/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Comeback from 2-goal deficit beats Duluth East

MIKE FERMOYLE STAFF WRITER

Hill-Murray went through the first two rounds of the state hockey tournament without facing much resistance. So there was some question about how the Pioneers would respond Saturday night at the Civic Center if they encountered much adversity.

Duluth East provided the adversity. But the Pioneers simply skated over it — and the Greyhounds — on the way to a 5-3 victory and the 1991 state championship.

Hill-Murray fell behind 2-0 and 3-1 in

the second period, and trailed 3-2 when the third period began. Bryan Zollman tied things up on a power-play goal at 4:17, and Mike Strobel scored the tie-breaker at 7:35.

Strobel gained control of the puck after a Duluth East clearing pass bounced off the Pioneers' Jeff Hasselman. As Strobel skated to the right, he shot the puck back behind East goalie Wade Salzman for his second goal of the night.

Hasselman clinched Hill-Murray's 23rd victory in 29 games this season with an empty-net goal 10 seconds before the final buzzer.

The Pioneers are the first team to

come back from two goals behind to win the championship game.

"We knew we could come back," Hill-Murray coach Jeff Whisler said, "because we had come back from three goals behind against a great White Bear team."

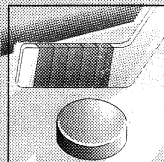
Hill-Murray beat the Bears 4-3 in the Section 3 final. It was their third consecutive one-goal victory in the sectional.

However, in the state tournament, the Pioneers breezed into the final, beating Johnson 7-1 and Grand Rapids 11-3.

This was the 47th and last of Minnesota

PIONEERS CONTINUED ON 10C ►

STATE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT



CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

■ Hill-Murray 5, Duluth East 3

THIRD-PLACE GAME

■ Burnsville 3, Grand Rapids 2

CONSOLATION GAME

■ Richfield 6, Kennedy 1

INSIDE

■ All-tournament team, Page 10C

■ Tournament notebook, Page 10C

■ Richfield's victory, Page 11C

■ Fans bring spirit, Page 11C

NOTEBOOK

Coaches to battle league plan

GREGG WONG STAFF WRITER

Members of the state hockey coaches association cast a landslide vote in opposition to the Minnesota State High School League's two-class tournament plan during their annual meeting Saturday morning at The St. Paul hotel.

The tournament is scheduled to be split into two classes in 1992. And in opposition to the coaches' wishes, the league is planning to hold the tournament at one site the same week. Coaches want separate weeks and separate sites.

On Saturday, the coaches were asked: Do you favor the league's two-class format? The vote was 107 against, 25 in favor.

Those results closely resembled the outcome of a telephone poll that was taken three weeks ago, when the vote was 107-18 against.

The High School League's board of directors was informed of that telephone poll on Wednesday. But the board refused to back away from its two-class plan.

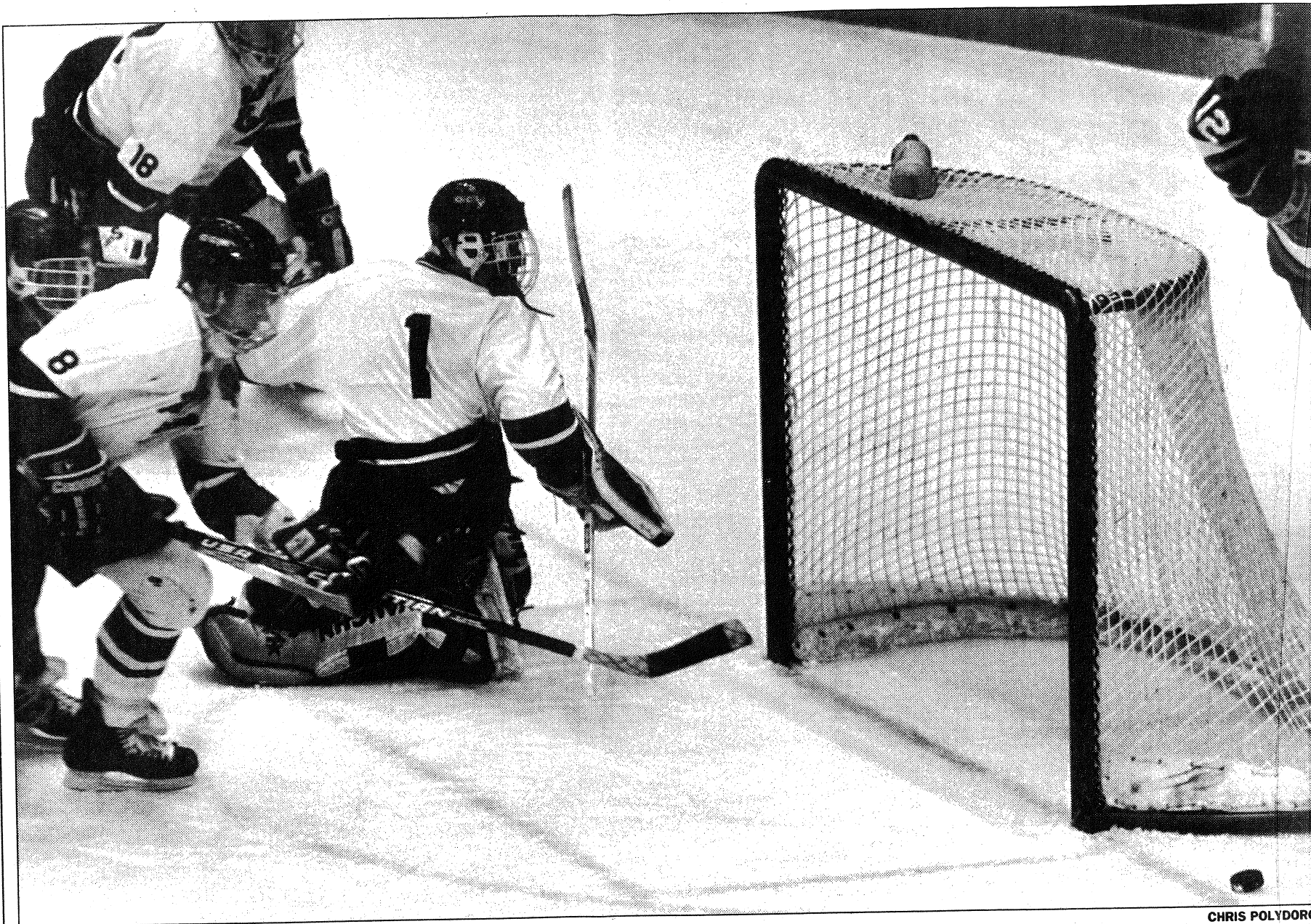
According to a board resolution dated March 15, 1990, the board cannot make any changes in the tournament format without approval of the schools.

The coaches said Saturday that they will go to the state Legislature — and if that fails, to the courts — to force the board to live up to the terms of that resolution.

"We feel we've been betrayed and lied to," Kennedy coach Jerry Peterson said. "Nobody representing the coaches, the players or the hockey schools has been listened to."

Dennis Fermoye of Warroad, president elect of the coaches association, said, "All we want is to be allowed to vote. If the league's plan passes, that's fine. If it doesn't pass, then we'll go back to one class."

Fermoye described Saturday's results as "an anti-league vote," and speculated that if an official vote were taken, it would not be so one-sided.



CHRIS POLYDOR

Duluth East goaltender Wade Salzman and defensemen Kevin Rappana (18) and Tom Abelsen (8) stare the puck away from the net.

Strobel's message is clear: Pioneers don't quit

JIM WELLS STAFF WRITER

The Hill-Murray Pioneers lingered longer than usual in the dressing room Saturday night.

Some of them were savoring the state championship they won 30 minutes earlier. Some of them had tears in their eyes, a teammate said. Others were waiting for the feeling that accompanies such occasions to hit them.

Among the latter group was Mike Strobel, the man of the hour. Strobel scored twice in the 5-3 victory over Duluth East; his second goal was the game-winner.

The two goals may not have

there and stay in the locker room," Strobel said.

There was some confusion about the speech. Pioneers coach Jeff Whisler attributed the remarks to Mark Strobel, Mike's twin brother.

Nevertheless, the message was clear. No one took his skates off.

"If you noticed, all 20 guys were out there on the ice," Whisler said.

Strobel was positioned in front of the Duluth East goal, in the right spot to deflect a clearing pass that he became the winning goal.

"The puck bounced off (Pioneer forward) Jeff Hasselman and came right to me," Strobel said.

chance on Strobel's shot.

It ended an opportunity for Duluth coach Mike Randolph as well.

Randolph shared a bit of history with the Greyhounds earlier Saturday.

In 1970 he played for Duluth Cathedral when the Hilltoppers made it to the championship game in the Minnesota Independent tournament.

The Hilltoppers' opponent in the title game?

Hill High School as it was then known.

"They beat us 4-3 in overtime," Randolph recalled.

Not even that story was inspira-

the net, he also had the winning theory of the tournament.

Powell predicted that this was Hill-Murray's year because the Pioneers had qualified for the tournament six consecutive years and then missed two years before winning their first state title in 1983.

That was the first of six more consecutive tournament appearances, but the Pioneers missed qualifying in 1989 and 1990.

"This year we were coming back after missing two years again, and I thought all along that we were going all the way," Powell said.

"There aren't words to describe it," Whisler said.

Scoring Through game

Name
Mark Strobel,
Matt Mauer, H.
Dan Hendricks,
Mike Strobel,
Brandon Stee,
John Rushin, K.
Kelly Fairchild,
Kevin Rappana,
Darby Hendric,
Nate Gillespie,
Jeff Hasselman,
Chris Porter, F.
Kirk Nielson, C.
Troy Cusey, G.
Greg Pogreba,
Brad Konik, K.
Chris Loken, K.
Jay Geisbauer,
Brent Godbout,
Corey Howe,
Mark Scott, K.
Mike Boberg,

Power-play
Mark Peter,
Rushin vs.,
Cusey, G.
Dale Lunk,
Richfield,
Chad Hall,

I'm sure that when everybody calms down, some of the coaches who voted against the plan today will change their vote," he said. "They have to realize that this might be the only chance they get to have a two-class tournament."

And coaches would not be the only ones voting. A ballot would be given to both a coach and a designated representative at each of the 146 hockey-playing schools in the state.

The league's board of directors has scheduled a special meeting for March 23 to make preparations for next year's tournament.

Strong team unity

No one on the Hill-Murray hockey team left the dressing room after Saturday's championship game until the entire team was ready. Then, the Pioneers emerged as a team.

"It was their decision," coach Jeff Whisler said. "That's the way they wanted to do it."

Mike Strobel, who got the winning goal in the game, explained the decision.

"There are no Mr. Hockey finalists on this team," he said. "Just 20 guys who want to play hockey."

The Pioneers' decision to stay in the locker room caused a few problems for members of the press who were facing deadlines.

This was the first year the Minnesota State High School League didn't allow the media to enter the dressing rooms.

Made aware of the problem, Whisler finally sent word for his team to leave the locker room.

Roseau loses fan

Roseau lost a fixture when one of its fans, Dale Halvorson, collapsed and died Thursday at the Civic Center shortly before the Rams played Burnsville.

Halvorson, who had muscular dystrophy and a heart condition, suffered a heart attack at the top of a vast runway leading into the Civic Center and was pronounced dead at the St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center.

Briefly

■ With a crowd of 16,935 for the championship game and 14,572 for the consolation and third-place games, total tournament attendance was 99,507.

This notebook includes information from the Associated Press.

been Strobel's biggest contribution of the evening, though.

He made a speech after the first period that kept a fire going under the Pioneers even after they twice fell behind by two goals in the second period.

"I just said that if anybody didn't think we could do it they should take their skates off right

The Hill-Murray forward made an instant decision that he will remember for years to come.

"I just felt I could beat (Duluth goalie Wade Salzman) low to the stick side, so that's where I put the shot," he said. "If he stopped it, he stopped it."

Salzman had an incredible tournament but he didn't have a

don't enough for the Greyhounds Saturday. Especially after Strobel's goal, and definitely not after an empty-net goal by Jeff Hasselman with 10 seconds to play.

Strobel shared the glory Saturday with goalie Kevin Powell, who had 27 saves including two stops on Duluth breakaways.

Powell not only came up big in

Even the Pioneers' man of the hour was a bit perplexed by what he and his teammates had accomplished.

"It's hard to believe," Strobel said. "I guess it hasn't sunk in yet. It will probably hit me when I get up and read the newspaper tomorrow."

PIONEERS

▼ CONTINUED FROM 1C

ta's one-class hockey tournaments. The Minnesota State High School League plans to implement a two-class tournament in 1992, to give smaller schools a better chance.

Ironically, the last two one-class champions, Roseau and now Hill-Murray, both have enrollments that qualify them as Class A (small) schools.

Hill-Murray has been the most frequent entrant in the state tournament in the 17 years it has been eligible. It has reached the tournament 13 times, and has played in six of the past 12 championship games.

This is the Pioneers' second state title. They won the first in 1983.

They lost championship games in 1980 to Grand Rapids, '85 and '86 to Burnsville, and '88 to Edina.

Derek Locker got the initial goal for Duluth East — his first of two in the game — on a power play at 2:35 of the second period. Kevin Rappana's slap shot from the point dipped under the right leg pad of Hill-Murray goalie Kevin Powell, clanked off the goal post and back out. Jeremy Jeanette took a whack at it and failed to advance the puck, but it bounced over to Locker, who rapped it in.

Less than a minute later, a woe-filled clearing pass by the Hill-Murray defense was intercepted by Adam Vork. His 20-foot shot skidded between Powell's legs to give the Greyhounds a 2-0 lead at 3:26 of the second.

The Pioneers, who had scored 18 goals in their first two tournament games, didn't get their first against Duluth East until 22 minutes had elapsed.

Mark Strobel (Mike's twin brother) passed to Nate Gillespie, who moved around a crowd of people in the middle of the Duluth East zone and drilled a 25-foot shot into the net.



Hill-Murray's Bryan Zollman, foreground, gets the tying goal on a power play at 4:17 of the third period.

CHRIS POLYDOROFF/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Locker retaliated for the Greyhounds just 25 seconds later. He took Jason Rozinka's centering pass from behind the net and blasted it in.

An interference penalty on Rappana gave the Pioneers a power-play opportunity, and they made the most of it. Mike Strobel scored to cut the margin to one goal (3-2), and once again it was a shot that went through the goalie's pads.

The tying goal by Zollman also was scored while Duluth East had a player in custody, and it was the prettiest goal of the night. Zollman worked a give-and-go with Mark Strobel, deked Salzman, and

from an awkward angle to the right of the net, Zollman flipped the puck into the approximately one foot of open net that was available to him.

Mike Strobel then untied the score a little more than three minutes later.

"We had control of the game until we took those penalties," Duluth East coach Mike Randolph said. "Then we lost the momentum, and we never got it back."

Duluth East wound up 22-7.

The final two minutes of the championship game were as furious as the first 15 had been sedate. Duluth East had several good shots, including a 20-footer by

Locker that whistled just over the net.

Hill-Murray	0	2	3-5
Duluth East	0	3	0-3

First period—No scoring. Penalties—Tom Abelsen, Duluth East (hooking), 8:38.

Second period—1, Duluth East, Derek Locker 2 (Jeremy Jeanette, Kevin Rappana), 2:35 (pp). 2, Duluth East, Adam Vork 1, 3:26. 3, Hill-Murray, Nate Gillespie 2 (Mark Strobel), 7:12. 4, Duluth East, Locker 3 (Craig Fellman, Abelsen), 7:37. 5, Hill-Murray, Mike Strobel 2 (Jeff Hasselman, Mark Strobel), 11:27 (pp). Penalties—Brad Marshall, Hill-Murray (tripping), 1:59; Rappana, Duluth East (interference), 10:56; Locker, Duluth East (slashing), 12:28.

Third period—6, Hill-Murray, Bryan Zollman 1 (Mark Strobel, Matt Mauer), 4:17 (pp). 7, Hill-Murray, Mike Strobel 3, 7:35. 8, Hill-Murray, Hasselman 3, 14:50 (en). Penalties—Fellman, Duluth East (high-sticking), 3:13.

Shots on goal—Hill-Murray 6-16-5—27. Duluth East 9-11-10—30. Goalies—Hill-Murray, Kevin Powell (30 shots-27 saves). Duluth East, Wade Salzman (26-22), Kevin Green (14-17 third, 0-0). Attendance—16,935 (Saturday night session); 99,507 (tournament three-day total).

Rappana
Jason E
Jason M
Mauer,
Chris A
Porter,
Jason Z
Derek L
Mike S
Bryan Z
Short-l
Meehan
Pogrebo

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