

Gophers >> U brutal on boards in loss

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METRO EDITION • SPORTS EDITOR MIKE BASS MBASS@PIONEERPRESS.COM 651-228-5108

SPORTS

Sunday 3-9-2008

Minnesota boys hockey tournament > Championship games

CLASS A

St. Thomas Academy 5, Duluth Marshall 1

CLASS AA

Hill-Murray 3, Edina 0

Pioneer spirit



Hill-Murray's Dan Sova shares the Class AA championship trophy with teammates Bo Dolan (20) and Nick Widing (9) and a whole lot of excited Pioneers fans Saturday night. Ryan Furne scored two goals and Delaney Metcalfe had one to help Hill-Murray win the school's third boys hockey state title. For more photos, go to twincities.com.

Cadets conquer Hilltoppers

St. Thomas Academy erases sting of Duluth Marshall's midseason drubbing with dominant performance

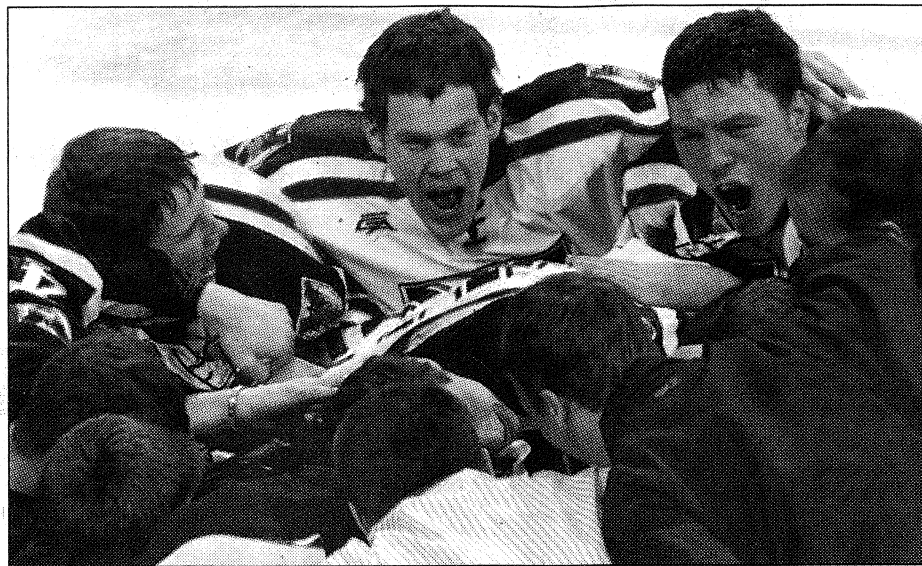
By Tim Leighton
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Redemption never felt so good.

That was the battle cry of the St. Thomas Academy boys hockey team Saturday afternoon after making up for one of its worst performances. Six weeks of pent-up frustration were unleashed in a dazzling display of creative offense and stingy defense as STA rolled past Duluth Marshall 5-1 in the Minnesota Class A championship game at the Xcel Energy Center.

The Cadets made it clear from the start they were serious about avenging an 8-2 drubbing at the hands of the visiting Hilltoppers on Jan. 25. STA needed just 37 seconds to score, built a three-goal lead early in the second period and grabbed its second small-school title in the past three seasons.

STA (26-5), a Mendota Heights-based private school which defeated Duluth Marshall (25-6) for the Class A title in 2006, had lost to the Hilltoppers in last season's semifinals.



PIONEER PRESS: BRANDI JADE THOMAS

St. Thomas Academy players and managers celebrate the Cadets' victory over Duluth Marshall in the Class A championship game Saturday afternoon at the Xcel Energy Center.

"We had that big chip on our shoulders, you know," said sophomore forward Christian Isackson, who scored two goals, including a dandy backhand in the first minute to send the Cadets on their way.

"From the moment we scored that first goal, I knew nothing was going to stop us," said senior forward James Saintey, who also

scored two goals. His first goal with 38.8 seconds remaining in the first period, gave the Cadets a 2-0 lead and left a visible, demoralizing mark on the Hilltoppers, who finished second in the small-school field for the third consecutive season.

CADETS WIN, 14C >

Hill-Murray sheds underdog role with its third state title

By Ray Richardson
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There should be few arguments about whether the Hill-Murray boys hockey team is a legitimate champion.

The path Hill-Murray took to its first state title in 17 years speaks for itself.

The Pioneers knocked off the top two teams in the state on consecutive nights, an impressive run culminated by Saturday's 3-0 victory over second-ranked Edina at the Xcel Energy Center for the Minnesota Class AA championship.

"I think we belong in discussions with the great teams that have won it," Hill-Murray coach Bill Lechner said. "We proved it the last three days."

It was the third state hockey championship for Hill-Murray, which also won in 1983 and 1991, the last year of the one-class format.

A crowd of 18,689 saw the Pioneers (27-3-1), ranked No. 5 in the final Let's Play Hockey state poll, shed their underdog status. Hill-Murray defeated unranked Lakeville South in Thursday's quarterfinals and top-ranked Roseau on Friday before shutting down Edina (28-3).

Lechner, in fact, felt obligated to apologize to fans after the Pioneers' upset win over Roseau, the

PIONEERS WIN, 15C >

Perkins ready to pitch again, but will he start or relieve?

FORT MYERS, Fla. — It's as if Twins left-hander Glen Perkins hit the rewind button and turned his life back one year. Everything is happening exactly as it did in 2007. It's like an episode of "The Twilight Zone" in which everything seems eerily familiar.

Perkins is having a good spring, just as he did in 2007. He's even getting the same results against the same teams in the same towns. For example, he mowed down the



Toronto Blue Jays in Dunedin last March. On Friday, he pitched three shutout innings there.

And he's the center of the

same debate: Will he be a starter or a reliever?

"We had this conversation last year," he noted.

Creepy, isn't it?

"It's all about what's best for the team," he said.

Wow, that's what he said last year. (OK, I'll stop.)

But his career did take a detour between then and now, one that he doesn't want to

repeat. Immediately after throwing strike three to Texas' Frank Catalanotto in the eighth inning of a game on May 21, Perkins dropped his glove and grabbed his left arm.

"It sounded like knuckles cracking," Perkins recalled. "A ball of fire. I've broken both arms, and it wasn't as painful as that."

Yeah, that cracking sound is

never good. It turned out to be a muscle near his shoulder blade. And it shut him down until September.

"A freak injury," Perkins said, shaking his head.

That derailed, at least temporarily, a major league career that was beginning to gather momentum. All last spring,

TOM POWERS, 11C >

Big Ten wrestling >> Gophers take lead into today's championship finals >> 4C

Phillippi delivers with words, actions

By Brian Murphy
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The clock showed triple zeros on the Xcel Energy Center clock, with Hill-Murray secure in a 3-0 victory over Edina in the Minnesota Class AA boys hockey title game Saturday night, and Pioneers goaltender Joe Phillippi remained a stickler for detail.

He carefully placed his expensive mask on top of the net before hurling blocker, trapper and stick into the traditional equipment shower of champions before his joyous teammates dogpiled their most valuable player in the corner.

It was a picture-perfect ending to a heralded high school career for Phillippi, who ended his four-year reign in the Hill-Murray crease with a sterling performance against the high-octane Hornets.

Phillippi made 31 saves for his second shutout of the state tournament. He also earned the 2008 Herb Brooks Award as the player who best portrayed the values and characteristics of the late coach.

"It's just such an honor," Phillippi said after Brooks'

daughter, Kelly Paradise, presented him the trophy on the ice. "It feels great to be mentioned in the same sentence as him."

This tournament was about redemption for Phillippi and the other Pioneers who had been vanquished from the past three Class AA tournaments. The most painful of the early exits was last year, when they blew a two-goal lead and lost in overtime to Rochester Century in the quarterfinals.

"There's been a lot of doubts about Hill-Murray getting to the tournament and choking," said Phillippi, who finished with a 0.67 goals-against average and .977 save percentage in three games. "It feels great to be able to come out and win."

Phillippi, who only allowed two goals against Roseau in the semifinals, had breathing room after the Pioneers staked him to a 2-0 lead after the first period.

But he was especially sharp late in the second, making a flurry of big saves — none better than snaring Joe Gleason's drive from the left circle — as the Hornets tilted the ice and crashed the net.

He also caught a couple of breaks from longstanding goaltender allies — the pipes. Marshall Everson rang one shot off the far-side post midway through the second period, and Zach Budish clanked the short-side iron behind Phillippi with about eight minutes left in the third.

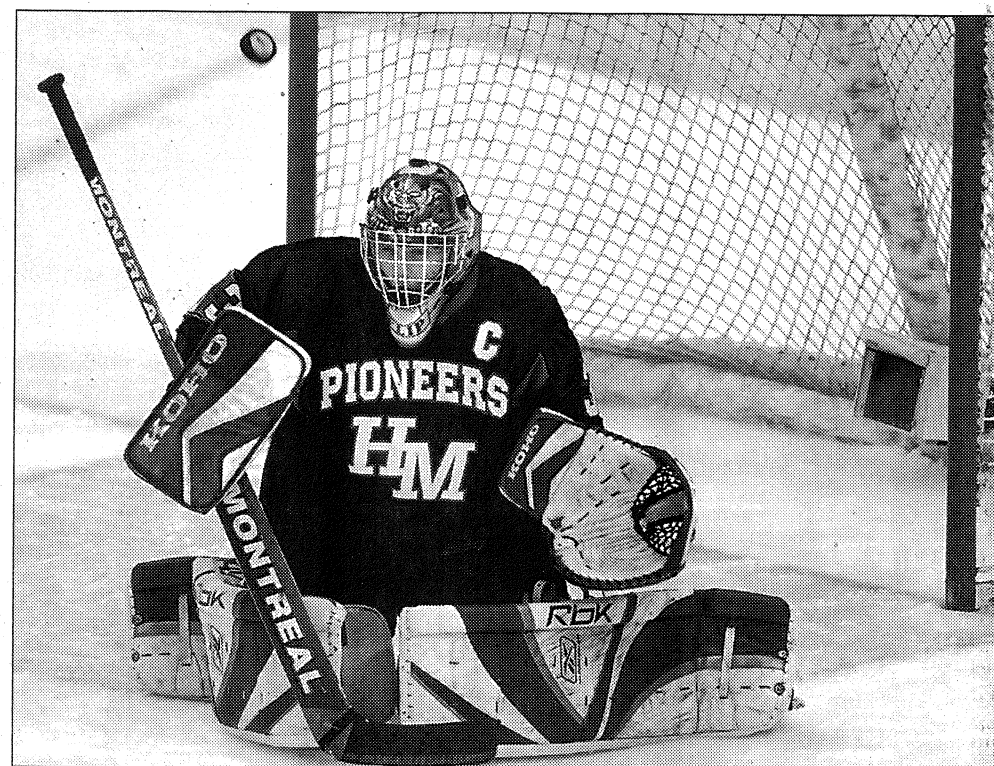
But Phillippi squared up to shooters throughout the night and yielded few rebounds for the Hornets to pounce on.

"Coming into this tournament, section play, he's been there all year," said fellow captain Ryan Furne. "He was really up to the challenge."

His 10th shutout of the season also earned the goalie from Shoreview all-tournament honors and his 63rd prep victory.

"The hard work definitely pays off. We played well tonight," Phillippi said. "I appreciate the dedication of our whole team. We've been working hard since the beginning of last summer. When last season ended we knew this season started."

Phillippi raised the eyebrows of button-downed coach Bill Lechner following the Pioneers' 3-0 win over Lakeville



PIONEER PRESS: BEN GARVIN

Hill-Murray goalie Joe Phillippi makes one of his 31 saves during the Pioneers' 3-0 victory over Edina in the Class AA championship game. Phillippi had two shutouts in the state tournament and was the Class AA winner of the Herb Brooks Award.

South in the quarterfinals. After only facing 18 shots from the Cougars, he publicly challenged undefeated Roseau to bring it on.

He backed up his words with a 34-save performance in a 6-2 victory that lifted the Pioneers into the final.

Lechner has known Phillippi since he was 5 years old and has been able to count on him for four years. The coach

acknowledged graduation makes Saturday's victory somewhat bittersweet.

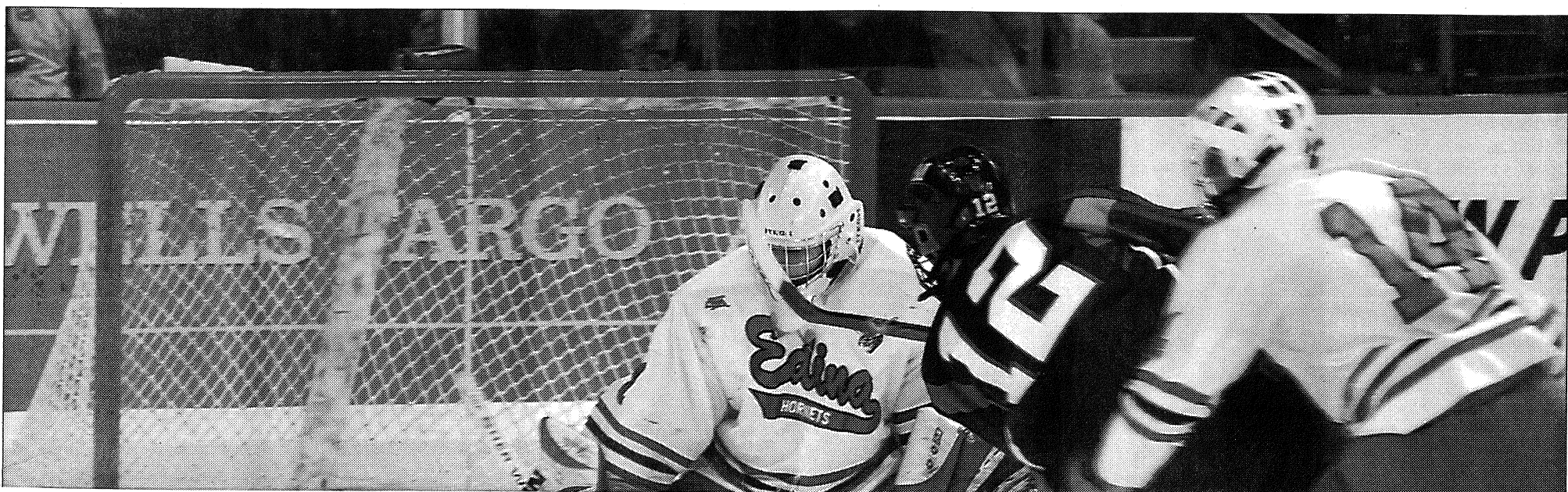
"Joey grew up at Hill-Murray. He had a great senior year. He had a great career. I'm very proud of him, happy that he got the Herb Brooks Award," Lechner said. "He's an outstanding young man that will do well in life, too."

Phillippi, who has not been recruited by any Division I col-

leges, plans to follow the path of his older brother, Michael, who played juniors in the United States Hockey League before joining the University of Nebraska-Omaha this season.

"I just feel like I'm probably not ready to play D-I, but I'm going to try to develop myself and get there," he said.

He'll have plenty of hardware to bring.





Hill-Murray's Ryan Furne (12) scores the Pioneers' first goal during the first period of their 3-0 victory over Edina for the Minnesota Class AA championship Saturday night at Xcel Energy Center. He scored again with one-tenth of a second remaining in the second period.



Hill-Murray's Dan Cecka, right, shares a tearful embrace with teammate Nick Widing after the Pioneers' victory Saturday night. For more photos, go to twincities.com.

CONTINUED FROM 1C

► Pioneers win

defending Class AA state champion. Lechner and his players knew there were hopes of an Edina-Roseau matchup in the title game.

Hill-Murray got another dazzling effort from goalie Joe Phillippi, who made 31 saves — 15 in a crucial second period when Edina made its strongest push. Edina couldn't solve the Pioneers' spirited defense, which frustrated

Edina's top three scorers — forward Marshall Everson and centers Anders Lee and Zach Budish. The Edina trio was a combined 0 for 18 in shots on goal.

After the Roseau game, Lechner talked to his players about avoiding a letdown against Edina. The message was heard loud and clear.

"It was important for us to move on as quickly as we could after the Roseau game," said forward Ryan Furne, who scored two first-period goals. "That was a big win for us, but there was one more to play."

Furne, one of nine seniors on the Pioneers' roster, helped the

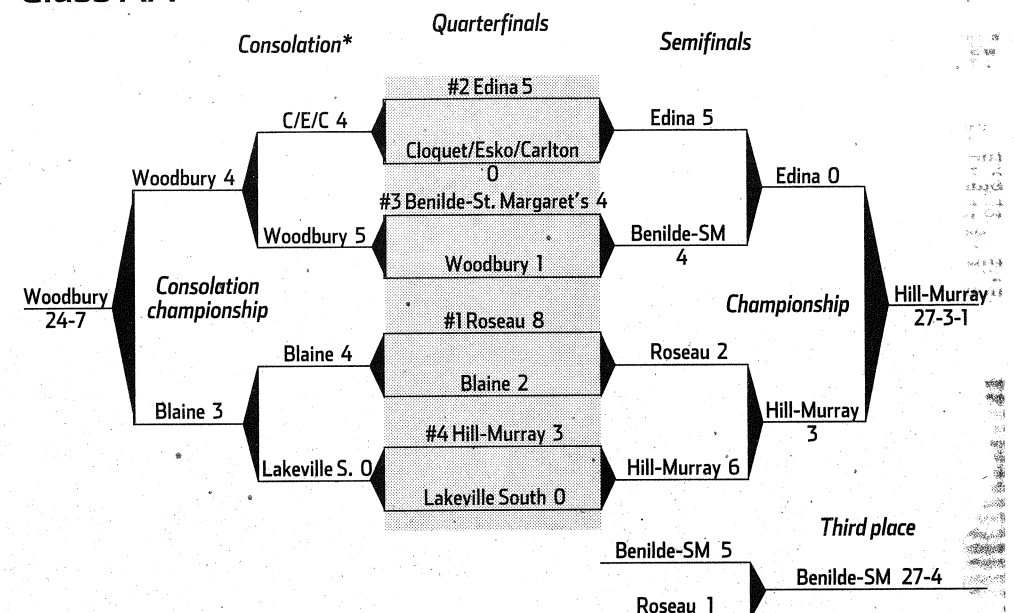
team end any concerns of a let-down early in the first period. He intercepted a pass in the Edina zone and zoomed in on Edina goalie Derrick Caschetta for a quick score.

With one-tenth of a second left in the first period, Furne fired a let's-see-what-happens slap shot from the Edina blue line. Caschetta got his right pad on the shot, but he couldn't control the puck, and it bounced past him into the net. The goal was a back breaker for the Hornets, who thought they were going into the locker room with a 1-0 deficit.

"That second goal gave us the cushion we needed," Lech-

Class AA

All championship bracket games at the Xcel Energy Center



*Consolation games at Mariucci Arena

Hill-Murray	2	0	1	-	3
Edina	0	0	0	-	0

First—1, HM, Furne, 2:30. 2, HM, Furne (Zepe-da, Sov), 16:59.

Second—No scoring.

Third—3, HM, Metcalf (Casto), 4:36.

Saves—HM, Philippi 9-15-7-31; Edina, Caschetta 13-4-6-23. **Records**—HM 27-3-1, Edina 28-3.

CLASS AA

FIFTH PLACE					
Blaine	1	1	1	-	3
Woodbury	1	2	1	-	4

First— 1, Blaine, Jensen (Brovold, Blomquist) 4:29. 2, Woodbury, Goff (Eddy) 12:07 (pp).
Second— 3, Woodbury, Goff (Eddy) 3:30. 4, Blaine, Schaber (Larson, Johnson) 7:29. 5, Woodbury, Goff (Nowicki) 8:20.
Third— 6, Woodbury, Eddy (Pittman, Goff) 1:00. 7, Blaine, Larson (Johnson, Schaber) 13:42 (pp).
Saves—Blaine, Harper 7-4-4—15, Hollerud x-x-1-1; Woodbury, Wigen 10-13-16—39.
Records—Blaine 21-10, Woodbury 24-7.

Benilde-St. Marg.	0	1	4	-	5
Roseau	0	0	1	-	1

First—No scoring.
Second—1, BSM, Nelson (Holmers, Patterson), 6:34.
Third—2, Roseau, Knochenmus (Fabian, Oliver) :46. 3, BSM, Almstrom (Holmers, Dwyer) 2:22. 4, BSM, Bergland (Zierke) 7:22 (pp). 5, BSM, Bergland (McCarthy) 9:48 (pp). 6, BSM, Borer (Almstrom, Dwyer) 15:08 (pp).
Saves—BSM, Shibrowski 10-6-5—21; Roseau, Lee 5-10-4—24; Nelson x-x-0-0. **Records**—BSM 26-9-4; Roseau 29-1.