SPORTS

WOMEN'S SOFTBALL

Voyageurs sweep Vermilion in doubleheader

RRCC now 11-4

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

After not having played a game in almost two weeks, the Rainy River Community College softball team found a playable site outside Friday in Grand Rapids, where the Voyageurs won big over Vermilion in both games of a doubleheader to open their Minnesota College Athletic Conference Northern Division schedule.

"We hit the ball pretty well," said RRCC head coach Dieter Humbert, who also noted the Voyageurs' team batting average for the season now stands at .376

In game one, RRCC shut out Vermilion, 19-0, in five innings.

Of the Voyageurs' 20 hits, Alisha Brinker led the team with four hits – three singles and a double – and also drove in four runs. Oashaja Dobie hit a single and a home run with 3 RBI. Lynsi Emery, Rebecca Dilley and Alexis Fancy each had a single and a double, while Charley Garmaker, Andrea Barylski, Courtney Branham had two singles apiece. Megan Johnson added a double.

Dobie pitched the first four innings and recorded the victory without giving up a run or a hit, facing 14 batters and allowing a walk while striking out nine.

"Oashaja pitched really well," Humbert said.

Oashaja Dobie

Alisha Brinker

Angela McGrath pitched the fifth inning and struck out a batter out of three faced.

RRCC 14, VERMILION 4

The Voyageurs tallied 14 hits in game two when they defeated Vermilion, 14-4, in five innings.

Fancy hit a grand-slam home run and also doubled, driving in five runs, while Barylski homered and singled with an RBI. Branham added three singles. Rachel Clark singled and doubled. Dobie had a pair of singles. Emery doubled.

Dobie pitched four more shutout innings to record another victory, allowing a hit and a walk while striking out eight. McGrath pitched the fifth inning, allowing all four runs, two earned, on three hits and a walk.

The doubleheader sweep improved RRCC's season record to 11-4 overall and 2-0 in the MCAC North. The Voyageurs' next games, weather permitting, are today in Grand Rapids, where they're scheduled to play a doubleheader against Hibbing. If the weather doesn't permit, those games could be rescheduled for Monday.

SEASON STATS

To go along with the .376 team batting average, RRCC has 11 players hitting above .300 with Dobie leading the team with a .533 average (24-45), which is also the second-highest in the MCAC North.

The Voyageurs have hit 11 home runs this season with Brinker leading the team with three round-trippers and Barylski, Dobie and Fancy having two home runs apiece. Brinker also leads the Voyageurs with 22 RBI, tied for second in the MCAC North.

Dobie, who was named the MCAC North's "Pitcher of the Week" for the second time this season, has recorded 10 of RRCC's 11 pitching victories.

In 83 innings pitched, Dobie has allowed 48 runs, 19 earned, on 65 hits with 30 walks and a hit batter while striking out 111. Her earned-run average this season is 1.60, first in the MCAC North.

Game 1
Rainy River 19, Vermilion 0

Rainy River	6-0-5	5-3 –	19	20	2
Vermilion	0-0-0	0-0 –	0	0	3

WP–Oashaja Dobie;
LP–Jess Hoffman

Game 2
Rainy River 14, Vermilion 4

Rainy River	4-7-2	1-0 –	14	14	1
Vermilion	0-0-0	0-4 –	4	4	3

WP–Oashaja Dobie;
LP–Bailey Bergeron

NHL PLAYOFFS PREVIEW

Avalanche back in playoffs, focus on Wild

DENVER (AP) — As the season went along and the Colorado Avalanche kept winning and winning, they broadened their ambitions: From simply making the playoffs to accumulating 100 points to capturing a division title.

This youthful squad pretty much accomplished everything they set their minds to, even if "nobody expected to see us where we are," first-year coach Patrick Roy said.

A turnaround such as this was understandably a little hard to picture, considering a year ago Colorado finished last in the Western Conference.

The Avalanche not only matched a franchise record for wins (52), but secured the Central Division as they return to the postseason for the first time in four years. They host the Minnesota Wild in the opener of a best-of-seven series Thursday night.

"From the get-go, our guys came to camp and were ready," Roy said. "They wanted to be different, they wanted to see a change, and they play hard.

"They were working hard, they were focused and they wanted to have a good year."

Roy will be no doubt be a strong candidate for coach of the year for the job he's done — taking a 16-win team during a lockout-shortened season to 52 victories.

But he's not the only one possibly in line for some prestigious awards: Nathan MacKinnon appears to be a virtual lock for rookie of the year and Semyon Varlamov should be among the favorites for the Vezina Trophy, which is given to the league's best goaltender. Varlamov finished with a franchise-record 41 wins, surpassing Roy's total (40) back when the Hall of Famer led the team to the 2000-01 Stanley Cup title.

"Obviously, our goaltending's been the backbone of our team," forward Paul Stastny said. "As the season went on, we kept getting better."

For weeks, the Avalanche appeared on a collision course with the defending Stanley Cup champion Chicago Blackhawks in the playoffs.

Then, the St. Louis Blues began to stumble, opening the door for the Avalanche to clinch their first divisional title since Roy was in net nearly a decade ago.

So now the Avalanche face Minnesota, a team they were 4-0-1 against in the regular season.

Still, the Wild have them worried.

"It's going to be tough," Stastny said. "They're playing well right now."

Especially with Ilya Bryzgalov giving the team some stability in goal. The Wild acquired the veteran in early March from the Edmonton Oilers and Bryzgalov went 7-1-3 down the stretch. His only clunker was in the season-finale Sunday, when Bryzgalov allowed five goals in a 7-3 loss to Nashville.

It hasn't shaken coach Mike Yeo's faith in his goalie, though.

"Bryz has done a fantastic job since he's been here and his teammates have done a fantastic job in front of him to give him that opportunity and that's that mentality that we have to have," Yeo said.

He knows just how dynamic the Avalanche are on offense, how much speed they possess on the ice.

"This is a good team, a really good team," Yeo said. "This is a team that we have to have a lot of respect for. Skill level. Very dynamic. Very creative."

The Avalanche are also banged up. They will be without Matt Duchene, the team's leading scorer, for the start of this series due to a knee injury. They're already missing Alex Tanguay (hip, knee) and sharp-shooting defenseman Tyson Barrie's status remains unknown after he suffered an upper-body injury during the weekend.

"We've never used injuries as an excuse," Stastny said. "We've had different lines step up all year."

MEN'S HOCKEY

Union wins NCAA title, beating Minnesota 7-4

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Tiny Union College skated off with the biggest trophy in college hockey.

And the Dutchmen did it at the expense of two of the sport's giants, toppling Minnesota for its first NCAA title after beating Boston College in the semifinals.

Union scored three times in a 1:54 span in the first period in a 7-4 victory Saturday, two nights after Daniel Ciampini scored three goals in a 5-4 win over Boston College.

"I don't think anyone will call us Cinderella anymore," said Shayne Gostisbehere, who had a goal and two assists against the Gophers.

Union (32-6-4) won its final 12 games and went 16-0-1 in its last 17. The 2,200-student liberal arts college in Schenectady, N.Y., competes in Division III in all other sports.

"They came as advertised," Minnesota coach Don Lucia said. "We knew it going in."

After Minnesota took a 2-1 lead, Mike Vecchione tied it with 4:01 left in the first, Eli Lichtenwald gave Union the lead 57 seconds later, and Ciampini capped the spree with 2:57 to go.

"The staple of our team all year — we come in waves," Union captain Mat Bodie said. "All three of those goals were pack-of-wolf goals where we were just throwing the puck on net."

Bodie, Max Novak and Kevin Sullivan also scored and Colin Stevens made 36 saves.

"A little bit speechless right now," third-year coach Rick Bennett said. "Just happy for our school, for this program and the past players. It's an unbelievable experience."

Justin Kloos, Sam Warning, Taylor Cammarata and Hudson Fasching scored for Minnesota (28-7-6). Adam Wilcox stopped 41 shots for the five-time champion Gophers.

"Both teams are better defensively than a 7-4 score shows," Bodie said. "It's just one of those games where crazy bounces happen. We just wanted to stick with our process. We thought we were playing pretty well and great things happened."

Cammarata pulled Minnesota within one with the lone goal in the second period, but Novak restored the two-goal cushion on a deflection at 5:31 of the third.

Fasching cut it to 5-4 with a power-play goal with 3:40 left. Sullivan put it away with 1:22 to go, and Bodie scored into an empty net with 44.2 seconds remaining.

"Just one shift at a time," Bodie said. "This is the biggest game of our lives, hands down, but you've got to treat it like any other game. It was tough, I had people texting me, people calling me and stuff, and, you know, it was real tough to keep that mindset, but with our sport psychologist we were able to get that done."

Kloos opened the scoring on a rebound 2:37 into the first period. Gostisbehere responded by weaving through three opponents and beating Wilcox with a wrist shot to glove side at 9:26.

"He controlled the game," Lucia said about Gostisbehere. "From my vantage point, he was the best player on the ice tonight."

Less than a minute after Gostisbehere's goal, Warning squeaked a bad-angle shot between Stevens and the pipe to put Minnesota up 2-1.

The Dutchmen took over from there.

Minnesota lost for the seventh time in the title game. The Gophers were making their first appearance in the championship game since winning its second straight title in 2003.

NOTES: The Dutchmen have competed in Division I since 1991-92. ... Philadelphia Flyers general manager Paul Holmgren dropped the ceremonial first puck. Holmgren played for the 1974-75 Minnesota team that lost to Michigan Tech in the national title game. ... The 2015 Frozen Four will be played at TD Garden in Boston.

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