

SPORTS

LAKERS WIN BILL SALONEN CUP

Mason Meyer scores series-deciding goal

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

A goal by International Falls native Mason Meyer with 7:18 to play in the final period turned out to be game-winner Wednesday evening when the Fort Frances Lakers rallied to edge the Minnesota Iron Rangers, 3-2, in game 7 of the Superior International Junior Hockey League's Bill Salonen Cup finals in front of a capacity crowd at Ice for Kids Arena.

The Lakers came back from a 3-1 series deficit to win their final three games of the best-of-seven championship to take the series 4-3 overall against the Iron Rangers.

Fort Frances now moves on to represent the league at the Dudley-Hewitt Cup Central Canada Junior A championship April 29-May 3 in Wellington, Ontario.

Game 7 of the SIJHL finals began with the Lakers holding a 15-7 edge in the shots on goal for the opening 20 minutes, but neither team scored with Minnesota goalie Alex Reichle and Jordan Cartney of Fort Frances stopping the opposing shooters.

The Lakers scored first 3:15 into the second period when Bryce Lipinski snapped a shot past Reichle from the left side.

Minnesota tied the game by taking advantage of a Lakers penalty when Evan Erickson scored at 5:42.

The Iron Rangers took the lead later in the period after Fort Frances failed to clear the zone, which led to Jay Routheau being left alone in front where he put the puck over a sprawled Cartney at 16:15.

The Lakers tied the game early in the third period when Falls native Lucas DeBenedet relayed the puck to Lyndon Lipinski, who put a shot past Reichle at 1:43.

Then with just over 7 minutes remaining in regulation, the turning point in the contest came on what would turn out to be a controversial game-winning goal.

After a Minnesota defender attempted to clear the puck from his own zone, Meyer knocked it down near the blue line. Then as the play was ruled to be onside by the linesman, the Lakers' forward skated in and put a shot

past Reichle for the eventual series-deciding goal.

Fort Frances was unable to add an insurance goal as Minnesota stayed in the game until the final buzzer.

The Iron Rangers pulled Reichle late in an effort to produce the tying tally, but time ran out before they could do so to give the Lakers their first SIJHL title in franchise history and the second for a Fort Frances-based team in the 13-year history of the league.

Total shots on goal were 37-26 in favor of the Lakers with Cartney picking up the win and Recihle recording the loss in net.

Fort Frances will be joined next week at the four-team Dudley-Hewitt Cup championship by the Ontario Junior Hockey League Buckland Cup champion Toronto Lakeshore Patriots, the Kirkland Lake Gold Miners, who won in the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League, as well as the host Wellington Dukes.

The Lakers open up play at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday against the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots.



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

In front, Lakers forward Mason Meyer of International Falls advances the puck in Wednesday night's game against the Minnesota Iron Rangers at Ice for Kids Arena in Fort Frances. Meyer scored the series-deciding goal to capture the Bill Salonen Cup.

They'll meet the Kirkland Lake Gold Miners at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday before wrapping up round-robin play next Thursday against the Wellington Dukes at 7:30 p.m.

At stake at the Dudley-Hewitt Cup championship is a berth in the RBC Cup Canadian Junior A championship May 10-18 in Vernon, British Columbia.

Fort Frances 3, Minnesota 2
Minnesota 0 2 0 - 2
Fort Frances 0 1 2 - 3

BOYS BASEBALL

Vikings drop season opener to Giants

BY KEVIN BONESKE
Sports Editor

The Littlefork-Big Falls boys baseball team didn't score until the final inning Wednesday when the Vikings opened the season at home with a 4-1 loss to Mesabi East.

"I thought we played pretty well defensively," said L-BF head coach Dan Beste, who also noted the Vikings had trouble getting a key hit with two outs when they had runners in scoring position. "Caps off to (the Giants') pitchers - they threw well. That reliever (Ben Suslavich) - he throws hard. Hedid a nice job. Overall, a pretty good start (for us)."

The game remained scoreless through three innings. L-BF loaded the bases in the bottom of the third when Taylor DeLack doubled and Darian Erickson and Eric Thydean walked off of Mesabi East starting pitcher Collin Luke. However, Luke was able to pitch out of the jam with two outs when Evan Wimmer came to the plate and watched a called third strike.

The Giants took a 2-0 lead in the top of the fourth when Vikings starting pitcher Rylan Henrickson gave up a pair of hits.

L-BF had another scoring opportunity in the bottom of



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

From left, the Vikings' Tate Promersberger tags out the Giants' Hunter Flom (18) at third base in the fourth inning of Wednesday's game at Littlefork.

the fourth with two outs and runners at the corners when Suslavich was on the mound in relief of Luke. However, the inning ended when Henrickson was tagged out trying to steal second base.

Two Mesabi East runners walked on base in the top of the fifth before Henrickson, who gave up five hits over 4 1/3 innings, moved from pitcher to shortstop and DeLack took the mound. Then a wild pitch brought one runner in and a ground

out scored the other to give the Giants a 4-0 lead. DeLack, who wasn't charged with any earned runs, ended up striking out four batters.

The Vikings' only run in the bottom of the seventh came in after Tate Promersberger walked and DeLack and Tommy Manninen both hit infield singles. DeLack and Manninen ended up with two hits apiece with Manninen also picking up an RBI.

L-BF had two runners on base with two outs in the

bottom of the seventh when Erickson represented the tying run at the plate, but he grounded out to end the game.

"The hits are going to come," Beste said. "We've just got to give that a little bit of time to see some actual live pitching, as opposed to in the gym and all that stuff."

The Vikings, whose conference opener Thursday at Hill City was postponed, are scheduled to play Monday at Northland.

GIRLS SOFTBALL

Vikings shut out Kelliher/Northome in six innings

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Littlefork-Big Falls girls softball team only gave up one hit Tuesday when the Vikings won their second home game in a row with a 10-0 shutout victory over Kelliher/Northome in six innings.

"Our defense played well," said L-BF head coach Mike Imhof, who also noted the pitching staff had better results in weather that was warmer than in Monday's home opener against Deer River.

Amanda Nelson retired all 12 batters she faced, seven on strikeouts, when she pitched the first four innings. Brooke Millerbernd closed out the final two innings when she gave up the

Mustangs' only hit.

The Vikings tallied 10 hits for the game. Millerbernd had a home run as one of her two hits, while Dyana Imhof, Breann Larson and Karli Little also had two hits.

The win improved L-BF's season record to 2-1 going into Friday's rescheduled game at Hill City. The Vikings play today in the Greenbush-Middle River Tournament.



Brooke Millerbernd

L-BF 10, K/N 0
K/N 0-0-0 0-0-0-0
L-BF 0-1-2 0-4-3-10

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We wish to thank our friends, neighbors and relatives for their kindness and sympathy in our bereavement, the death of our dear wife and mother. We are grateful to Pastor Darren Olson for his comforting words, to the pallbearers, to those who sent flowers.

Freeman Forsythe,
and children

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