

SPORTS



Spring training

Softball and baseball practices begin at FHS

B2

QUICK HITS

Dean Blais finalist for NCHC Coach of Year

University of Nebraska Omaha men's hockey head coach Dean Blais is one of three finalists in the running for the National Collegiate Hockey Conference's Coach of the Year.

Blais, who is from International Falls, led the Mavericks to a third-place conference finish for the 2013-14 regular season after the team had been picked last in the NCHC preseason media poll. UNO last week was knocked out of the conference playoffs after losing the best-of-three series to Denver.

The other NCHC head coaches in consideration for Coach of the Year include North Dakota's Dave Hakstol, a former Blais player and assistant at UND, and St. Cloud State's Bob Motzko, who led his team this season to the NCHC regular-season title.

The winner will be announced Thursday at the NCHC Awards Celebration in Minneapolis on the night before the conference's inaugural "Frozen Faceoff" tournament at the Target Center.

Willie Corrin, Jake Youso each record an assist in playoffs

Two Division I men's hockey players from International Falls each recorded an assist in last weekend's conference playoffs, though they both saw their seasons come to an end.

Willie Corrin, a sophomore defenseman for the University of Minnesota Duluth, had an assist in Friday's 3-2 loss to Western Michigan to open the National Collegiate Hockey Conference playoffs at AM-SOIL Arena.

The Bulldogs also lost Saturday to Western Michigan, 4-3, and were eliminated in the best-of-three series. Corrin, who appeared in 24 of 36 games for UMD this season, ended the year with eight assists.

Jake Youso, a junior forward for Holy Cross, had an assist Friday in the Crusaders' 5-4 overtime loss to Mercyhurst in the Atlantic Hockey Association quarterfinals.

Holy Cross also lost Saturday to Mercyhurst, 4-1, and was eliminated in the best-of-three series. Youso, who appeared in 35 of 39 games for the Crusaders this season, ended the year with two goals and nine assists.

14th Men's Hockey Tournament concludes

25 teams participate

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Nagurski Transportation won the six-team Larry Ross Open Division championship at last weekend's Kerry Park Men's Hockey Tournament with a 5-3 victory over the Raiders in Sunday's title game.

Critter Nagurski, who scored two goals in the open division title game, was named by the Tournament Committee as the most valuable player for the 14th annual tournament.

"It's a cool honor," said Nagurski, a 2001 Falls High School graduate who played three years for the Broncos before playing junior hockey and then at the collegiate level at Augsburg College.

Nagurski, who now works in a sales position in the Twin Cities area and noted he first formed the team for the men's hockey tournament about a decade ago with Chad Baldwin, a 2000 FHS graduate, said the team was able to wage a comeback after trailing in the championship game and "had a real fun tournament."

The open division title game was the closest contested of the four division championships decided Sunday.

The six-team Jim

Thompson Division for players age 30 and over was won by Rasmussen Logging/Spot, which defeated Hopper's Bruins, 6-2.

The seven-team Dunn Sampson Division for players age 40 and over had a repeat champion with the Metro Mallards winning the title game over the Viking Bar, 11-3.

The six-team Buck Riley Division for players age 50 and over featured Frank's Taxidermy winning the title game over Super One, 6-2.

The annual men's hockey tournament, which has raised more than \$150,000 over the years for the International Falls Recreation Hockey program and for capital improvements at Kerry Park Arena and Bronco Arena, also functions as reunion for hockey players to get together.

Once the bills are paid from this year's three-day tournament, in which 25 teams participated, Tournament Committee member Scott Riley said the proceeds will once again support local youth hockey programs.

Though no shootout competition was held at this year's tournament like in the past 13 years, Tournament Committee member Paul Nevanen said the committee will revisit the matter to determine whether to bring back the shootout next year.



STAFF PHOTOS BY KEVIN BONESKE

From left, Critter Nagurski of Nagurski Transportation shoots the puck past Raiders goalie Orlando Alamano to score in Sunday's Larry Ross Open Division championship game at Kerry Park Arena.



From right, the Viking Bar's Jude Boulianne advances the puck while being pursued by the Metro Mallards' Steve Elsmore in Sunday's Dunn Sampson Division championship game for players age 40 and older.

Brady Hjelle wraps up his first pro season in Trondheim, Norway

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Goalie Brady Hjelle of International Falls has wrapped up his first season playing pro hockey in Norway for the Rosenborg Elite Ice Hockey Club of Trondheim.

"I've had a ton of fun playing in Norway and it's been great to make some new friends that I'll definitely keep in touch with," Hjelle said. "It's been a really up and down year, but I'm very happy with how it's gone and wouldn't

trade my experience for anything."

Rosenborg's season came to an end last week in the opening round of the playoffs after losing in four straight games to Stavenger.

Hjelle, who played in 43 of 45 games this season, had a record of 12-29 with one shutout. He allowed 161 goals for a 3.85 goals-against average and compiled 1,521 saves for a 90.4 save percentage.

He signed a two-year contract to play for Rosen-

borg.

Following his first season in Norway, Hjelle said he plans on returning to the United States, probably at the end of this month, and be "back in the Falls for a bit."

He also noted he plans on visiting his brother in Idaho and moving back to Columbus, Ohio, in the summer.

Hjelle closed out his collegiate career last year at Ohio State, where he played two seasons, then saw some playing time in



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Brady Hjelle of International Falls, shown in goal for the Rosenborg Elite Ice Hockey Club, has wrapped up his first season playing pro hockey in Norway.

the pro ranks as a back-up goalie for the East Coast

Hockey League's Florida Everblades.

MEN'S BASEBALL

Rainy River Voyageurs 3-7 following their Florida trip

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Rainy River Community college baseball team closed out its annual trip to Florida late last week by winning two games out of six played in three straight days.

On Thursday, the Voyageurs split a doubleheader with St. Lawrence.

RRCC won the first game, 10-6.

Out of the Voyageurs' 11 hits, Colten Boudreau had four singles and Makana Canda added two more, while Victor Rodriguez, Robert Parrish III, and Sean Deviney each doubled.

Talon Kunkel pitched the first five innings and recorded the victory, allowing four runs, two earned, on four hits with four walks while striking out five. Jake Schulte and Joseph Hudson each allowed a run pitching an inning apiece in relief.

ST. LAWRENCE 12, RRCC 5

The Voyageurs dropped the second game of Thursday's doubleheader to St. Lawrence, 12-5.

Canda homered and doubled, while Gino Strebing

had two doubles, Kunkel doubled and singled, and Boudreau and Wes Gunnerson each doubled as part of the Voyageurs' 10 hits.

Jose Pedraza recorded the pitching loss for RRCC after working the first four innings and giving up four earned runs on six hits with a walk while striking out six. Drew Birss, who threw a third of an inning in relief, allowed seven runs on four hits with two walks.

RRCC 4, ONTARIO 0

The Voyageurs scored all their runs in the first inning when they began Friday's action by shutting out the Ontario Outlaws, 4-0.

Kunkel accounted for two of RRCC's four hits with a run scored. Rodriguez added a hit and drove in two runs.

Strebing recorded the pitching victory with five run-free innings, allowing three hits with three walks while striking out six.

NORTH DELTA 9, RRCC 8

The Voyageurs lost their second game Friday in eight innings to the North Delta



Makana Canda



Gino Strebing

Blue Jays, 9-8.

Both teams had eight errors between them with RRCC committing three.

Canda had two of the Voyageurs' seven hits, while Tanner Helms tripled and Kunkel doubled.

Kris Barber started on the mound for RRCC when he pitched four-plus innings, allowing six earned runs on five hits with four walks while striking out six. Helms recorded the loss pitching the final two innings, allowing an earned run on two hits with two walks while striking out a batter.

NORTHERN ESSEX 6, RRCC 2

The Voyageurs played the two final games of their Florida trip on Sat-

urday with a doubleheader against Northern Essex Community College.

RRCC lost the first game to Northern Essex, 6-2. The game had been tied, 2-2, after the first inning before Northern Essex did the rest of the scoring.

The Voyageurs had more errors (four) than hits (three) with Boudreau, Kunkel and Helms each having a hit. Helms also drove in both RRCC runs.

Parrish pitched the first 4 1/3 innings for the Voyageurs and gave up all six runs, five earned, on seven hits with three walks while striking out seven.

NORTHERN ESSEX 5, RRCC 3

The Voyageurs didn't score until the final inning when they lost the final game Saturday to Northern Essex, 5-3.

Of RRCC's six hits, Helms and Brett Bateman each doubled.

Stephen Rivera started on the mound for the Voyageurs and worked five innings, giving up all five earned runs on eight hits with four walks and two hit batters while

striking out five.

The Voyageurs, whose season record now stands at 3-7, next play a pair of doubleheaders this coming Saturday and Sunday in Mitchell, S.D., against the junior varsity team from Dakota Wesleyan.

Thursday's game 1
RRCC 10, St. Lawrence 6
RRCC 4-0-3 0-0-3 0- 10 11 4
St. Law. 0-0-2 0-2-1 1- 6 4 2

Thursday's game 2
St. Lawrence 12, RRCC 5
St. Law. 0-0-1 3-7-1 0- 12 13 0
RRCC 2-0-0 0-2-1 0- 5 10 2

Friday's game 1
RRCC 4, Ontario 0
RRCC 4-0-0 0-0-0 0- 4 4 0
Ontario 0-0-0 0-0-0 0-0 6 0

Friday's game 2
North Delta 9, RRCC 8
N. Delta 1-0-0 3-4-0 0-1- 9 8 5
RRCC 0-3-0 1-0-4 0-0- 8 7 3

Saturday's game 1
Northern Essex 6, RRCC 2
N. Essex 2-0-2 2-0-0 0- 6 9 1
RRCC 2-0-0 0-0-0 0- 2 3 4

Saturday's game 2
Northern Essex 5, RRCC 3
RRCC 0-0-0 0-0-0 3- 3 6 2
N. Essex 1-2-0 1-1-0 X- 5 8 1

SPORTS SCHEDULE

Today's games

Women's softball

RRCC vs. Anoka-Ramsey/
Mesabi Range/Marshalltown
at Rosemount Irish Dome,
7:15/9/10:45 a.m.

Thursday's games

Women's softball

RRCC vs. Minnesota West/
Itasca/Ridgewater at
Rosemount Irish Dome,
7:15/9/10:45 a.m.

Friday's games

Women's softball

RRCC vs. Itasca/Fergus Falls/
Northland at Rosemount
Irish Dome, 7:15/9/10:45 a.m.

Track and field

I. Falls in Mesabi East Indoor
Meet at UW-Superior, 4 p.m.

Saturday's games

Men's baseball

RRCC at Dakota Wesleyan JV
(DH), 1/3 p.m.

Sunday's games

Men's baseball

RRCC at Dakota Wesleyan JV
(DH), 11 a.m./1 p.m.