

## HOCKEY STATE SEMIFINALS

## Preppers fall to Toledo St. John's

TIM WARSINSKEY  
Plain Dealer Reporter

COLUMBUS — Northeast Ohio has won 20 of the 29 state hockey championships, including the past seven, but at the state tournament's 30th anniversary party this weekend in Nationwide Arena, an argument has broken out.

At issue is whether the dominant ways of Greater Cleveland are coming to an end.

The opening argument was presented by Toledo St. John's Jesuit, which defeated Red North co-champion and Baron Cup winner University School, 5-3, in Saturday's first state semifinal game.

St. John's (25-13-1) can close the case today when it carries the Northwest Hockey Conference's

TOLEDO ST. JOHN'S 5  
UNIVERSITY SCHOOL 3

banner into a 1 p.m. state championship game against Padua (28-9-1). The Titans did a lot of prep work for their trial, having gone 7-3 against Red North teams, including a 1-1 mark against Padua, which was third in the Red North.

"Our conference this year has been by far the toughest conference in the state," St. John's coach Mike Hayes said. "A typical weekend for us is to play Findlay on a Friday night and Sylvania Northview on a Saturday, so this is surely no different. Our guys will be ready."

St. John's will attempt to become the first metropolitan Toledo team to win a state championship. The Titans, playing in their 13th final four, won the

1999 state final, but later forfeited because of an ineligible player.

"What happened in '99, a lot of us know a lot of those players and it's a big deal for us," Titans senior Shane Hetrick said. "We all talk about it. Winning it would be great for our school and the Northwest Hockey Conference. We feel when competing with the Cleveland teams we really don't have much respect from them, and we're just trying to get more respect."

The Titans certainly got University's attention, coming back from a 3-2 deficit in the first period. Both teams got off to a sloppy start. The first three shots resulted in soft goals as St. John's took a 2-1 lead 3:29 into the game.

Defensemen Mike Sotak and

Britt Shroyer and forward Kevin Ryder scored in the first period for University School (22-13-3).

Ryder also had a shot go off the crossbar in both the second and third periods. University School outshot St. John's, 19-18, and Preppers goalie Brian Tighe stopped 14 shots. St. John's final goal was an empty-netter.

The Preppers were a young team, but five seniors leave after losing in two state semifinals and the 2004 state final.

"It's heartbreaking to come down here three times and not leave with a [title]," senior Conor Stalvey said. "There's nothing we can do about it now, but I know we left it all on the ice."

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:  
twarsinskey@plaind.com,  
216-999-6177



WILLSHILLING | SPECIAL TO THE PLAIN DEALER

University School's Gabe Taxman skates past Toledo St. John's Jesuit's Dan Johnson during the second period of their state semifinal game Saturday.