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Wildcats unseat Titans; Northview beats 2007 state champ; Knights roll

By MARK MONROE BLADE SPORTS WRITER

There will be a new state hockey champion this year, and two local teams loudly proclaimed their status as major contenders last night.

Northview knocked out defending state champion St. John's Jesuit 4-1 in the district semifinals at Tam O'Shanter. In the other semifinal, St. Francis de Sales forward Chris Dyer left no doubt that he is the premier player in the area as he tallied a hat trick in the Knights' 9-0 trouncing of Perrysburg.

The Wildcats (30-3-1) and Knights (18-13-4) meet at 7 p.m. Saturday for the right to earn a berth in the state final four.

Northview scored twice in the first period and twice in the second to beat the Titans for the third time.

"It's a great accomplishment," Northview coach Jim Cooper said. "We have all the respect for St. John's. What they did a year ago was extraordinary. They're the defending state champs, so that makes it even better."

Wildcats senior Brandon Snead scored twice, the first coming less than a minute into the game. Tyler Puhl and Eamonn Reynolds also tallied markers for the Wildcats. Senior goalie Craig Trego finished with 19 saves.

St. John's (26-10-1) got a goal from junior Ray Morris and goalie Steven

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Schmitt finished with 14 saves. The Titans held a 20-18 edge in shots, but trailed by two or three goals throughout.

"We dug ourselves a hole and we couldn't dig out," St. John's coach Mike Hayes said. "But it's not like we didn't have any chances. Give Trego credit: He made key saves."

The Wildcats leapt on the Titans just 42 seconds into the game as Snead created a solo breakaway and beat Schmitt.

"They're our biggest rival and nothing feels better than beating the state champs three times," Snead said.

Northview seized a 2-0 advantage when Puhl lifted a backhand over Schmitt.

Snead's second of the night came with the Wildcats on the power play and made it 3-0.

"Then you dictate terms a little bit. Our goal then was to not give up a silly one," Cooper said.

But St. John's answered immediately when Morris, who was in the penalty box on Northview's previous goal, beat Trego 37 seconds later.

Northview extended its lead late in the second period on Snead's cross-ice pass to Reynolds, who slammed it home. Schmitt had no chance on the one-timer.

Trego came up huge early in the final period with three quality stops on a penalty kill.

"These seniors raised the bar," Hayes said.

"There is no longer a stigma. We showed a state title can be won by a team from northwest Ohio."

In the first semi, Dyer had three goals and two assists to lead the Knights, who led 2-0 after the first period and 5-0 after two before adding four more in the third.

St. Francis also got goals from Scott Loy, Nick Wawrzyniak, Jake Curtis, and Mike Simone to advance. Sophomore Brian Brookover also scored twice and senior goalie Mychael McAninch finished with 14 saves.

"We wanted to play with the lead," St. Francis coach Brian Kinsella said. "Once we got them down we wanted to keep coming."

Dyer came into the game with an incredible 43 goals scored and 51 assists in 33 games. All three of his goals came at even strength in the first two periods.

"I just come out and play hard. It was clicking on all cylinders tonight," Dyer said.

Twelve Knights registered at least a point. Louis Woody had three assists.

"It was nice to spread the scoring through all four lines," said Kinsella, whose Knights have outscored their opponents 30-1 in the postseason.

The Yellow Jackets (26-6-0) could not defeat a third foe from the upper-tier

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Northwest Hockey Conference Red Division in the postseason. Perrysburg has just 12 skaters but went further than any team in school history.

"There wasn't a person in the world that would have expected us to be playing in this game," Perrysburg coach Jeff LaCourse said. "It's quite an accomplishment."

St. Francis outshot the Yellow Jackets 35-14. Perrysburg goalie Chad Kinshaw finished with 26 saves.

Loy opened the scoring and Dyer added another just 58 seconds later. Dyer then scored on the Knights' 12th shot of the second period. Brookover added one more three minutes later as St. Francis went up 4-0. Dyer corralled his own rebound to give the Knights a 5-0 lead with 1:30 left in the second period.

Wawrzyniak racked up the Knights' sixth goal. Curtis, Simone and Brookover completed the scoring.

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