

HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY

By Ross Forman



Andrew Cole has been on the ice for 855 minutes over 19 North-Central Division regular-season games for the BG/H/W Stampede. He faced 457 shots during those games, stopping 420 of them. His save percentage was 92 and he had a 1.95 GAA.

Cole was the warrior of North-Central netminders, playing 28 seconds more than Asael Orozco, the goalie for St. Patrick, who surrendered 81 goals in his 19 games.

Antonio Sciarrotta of the Latin School of Chicago is the only other North-Central goalie to have played in all 19 regular-season. He surrendered 68 goals while facing a league-high 612.

Cole isn't just one of the best goalies in the North-Central, he is one of the best in Illinois – and one of the main reasons the Stampede could again be skating at the United Center for the state championship.

That doesn't mean BG/H/W will even win the North-Central playoff, though.

There are plenty of other challengers for bragging rights to the North-Central crown.

Highland Park, for instance, was the regular-season champion, finishing with a 15-1-3 record, including a league-best 23 goals-against. Maine Township, meanwhile, finished 15-3-1, and with its 31 points finished tied for second with the Stampede.

And I wouldn't be shocked if either New Trier team, Blue or White, makes a run deep into the North-Central playoffs.

Another league title that should be interesting to watch is out West, where it's a four-team race, in my opinion, with York, Glenbard and Neuqua Valley ranking among the darkhorse candidates. But the real battle will be, who can oust Naperville Central from the top spot? Perhaps it'll be Waubonsie Valley. Or Lincoln Way. Or Sandburg.

I'll go out on a limb: Waubonsie will wrangle away the West title, thanks to the dynamic duo of Ben Vietri (43 goals, 25 assists in 23 games played) and Thomas Stobart (34, 33, and 22).

Scott Sunsire has been nothing short of impressive for Naperville Central, netting 31 goals and 26 assists, including 5 powerplay and 6 game-winning goals. The Redhawks also feature goalie Cody Horvath – and his league-leading 1.88 GAA.

Upper Fox Valley, led by sophomore forward Katelynn Russ, claimed the Metro Girls regular-season title – and is eyeing the annual Scholastic Cup crown, too. But I'm going with Barrington to Fill-ies that award. Barrington is led by Nicole Guagliardo, who had 19 goals, 6 assists in 12 regular-season games. New Trier, Fenwick and Loyola also will challenge for the Scholastic Cup, and the Latin School of Chicago also could make some noise.

No one is stopping Providence in the Catholic League race. In fact, the Celtics are a good choice to be skating for state at the United Center. Benet should pose a stiff Kennedy Cup challenge.

New Trier Green stands on top of the Scholastic League, one point ahead of Loyola Gold and five more than Glenbrook North. Matt Solberg has 18 goals and 15 assists in 19 league games.

***Editor's Note:** Ross Forman has written about Illinois high school hockey for nearly 15 years, and is the only sportswriter to have covered Illinois High School hockey every year during that stretch. He played locally and then at Indiana University before becoming a referee. Ross was a referee for the State Championship game several years ago at the United Center. Contact Ross at Rossco814@aol.com.*