

HERMANTOWN

By Loren Nelson

The way Bruce Plante sees it, the hard part is over. For the Hermantown coach, surviving a section final everyone expects your team to win, against a goalie playing so out of his mind the puck might just as well be a beach ball, that's a nerve-fraying experience.

The state tournament?

"The key is to stay relaxed, stay calm, not get too much above yourself," said Plante, in his 20th season as the Hawks' head coach. "Just play your game, the normal game that you've had all year.

"Actually, the section final game is a lot harder. That is a pressure cooker. You are so close to (going to state), you have all these little dreams."

Hermantown typically dreams big when it comes to the state tournament. The Hawks won the Class A title in 2007 and will be making their seventh appearance since 1994. They finished second in 1998, third in 2001 and third in 2006.

To reach the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul this season, the Hawks needed to get past Duluth Marshall and the Hunters' standout freshman goaltender, Zach Thompson. Hermantown outshot Denfeld 48-20 but required a goal from Kevin Danielson with about 7 minutes remaining to get the 3-2 win.

"You always worry about that as a coach that, you will run into one of those hot goaltenders," Plante said, referencing his powerhouse 2004 team that was upended by Hibbing in a section championship game. "It is scary."

Most frightening for Hermantown's opposition is the sight of big senior forward Adam Krause bearing down with the puck. Hermantown's Mr. Hockey finalist and Minnesota-Duluth recruit has team highs of 38 goals and 28 assists.

While no other Hawks player has more than 18 goals, Plante said depth is probably his team's biggest strength.

"All three of our lines scored against Denfeld," Plante said, pointing out the Hawks have 13 seniors on their roster. "Having that many seniors, I think we wore Denfeld down, actually."

The Hawks (25-3-0) got the No. 3 seed behind Breck and Mahtomedi, respectively, and will match up with another northern power, Virginia/Mountain Iron-Buhl in a 1 p.m. quarterfinal game on Wednesday, March 10, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"That was probably the last matchup I wanted," Plante said about a Blue Devils team Hermantown beat 4-2 on Dec. 22. "Just because it would be nice to see the northern teams play each other a little farther down the road."



Banner



LeBlanc



Bruce Plante



PROGRAM INFO

Nickname: Hawks
Conference: Lake Superior
Section: 5A
Record: 25-3-0
State trips: 1994, 98, 99, 2001, 06, 07 Champs, 10
Coach: Bruce Plante

STAT LEADERS

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Adam Krause	36	28	64
Charlie Comnick	18	25	43
Willis Kantonen	16	22	38
Jeff Paczynski	6	22	28
Jared Kolquist	3	25	28

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Tyler Ampe	12-3-0	1.85	.909
Tiegen Brickson	13-0-0	1.51	.921

FULL ROSTER

#	Name	Gr	Pos
4	Jeff Paczynski	D	12
5	Charlie Comnick	W	12
6	Jake Knowles	D	11
7	Brett Ludwig	W	12
8	Corey Kolquist	W	12
9	Willis Kantonen	W	12
10	Jared Thomas	W	10
13	Kevin Danielson	W	12
14	Connor Hady	D	12
16	Jared Kolquist	D	10
17	Garrett Skrbich	C	11
18	Cody Christopherson	W	12
20	Chad Banner	D	12
21	Brian LeBlanc	D	10
23	Jesse Dyson	W	11
26	Mike Robertson	D	10
27	Adam Krause	C	12
29	Andrew Oakes	C	12
30	Tiegen Brickson	G	12
39	Tyler Ampe	G	12

ROAD TO THE X

Section 5A Quarters, 2/25
Hermantown 13, N. Branch 1

Christopherson 3 goals
 Krause 1 goal, 3 assists

Section 5A Semis, 2/27
Hermantown 6, Rogers 0

Ampe 20 saves
 Thomas 1 goal, 2 assists

Section 5A Finals, 3/5
Hermantown 3, Denfeld 2

Comnick, Krause and Danielson 1 goal each

Photos / Helen Nelson

THE HAWKS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...



Loren Nelson: They get stellar goaltending. Tyler Ampe is rock solid, as is the defense in front of him, but he will need to be especially sharp to prevail in one of the deepest and talented Class A lineups in recent history.