

CLASS A

SC CATHEDRAL CRUSADERS

For coach Eric Johnson and St. Cloud Cathedral, the game begins in the crease and extends outward from there. That's no surprise, given the wealth of talent the Crusaders have in their defensive corps.

Cathedral's shut down defense begins with junior goalie Nick Maiers, of whom Johnson says, "Sometimes I think he gets overlooked. They say, 'oh, he has (Nate) Schmidt, (Joe) Nessler, (Jon) Rowe in front of him.' But the fact is he's a great goaltender. One of the best we've had here in a long while."



Schmidt

Maiers is very good on his angles and is very consistent, a necessary trait when his defense isn't allowing many shots per game.

Schmidt is a dominant offensive defenseman who has already committed to the University of Minnesota. He can take over a game on both ends of the ice. Nessler is a big senior with a long wing-span, allowing him to cover plenty of ground on defense. And Rowe also has good size but can skate well.

"They're physical, but they're not into just banging you around. They set up the plays pretty well," said Johnson.

All that focus on defense shortchanges the Crusaders' offense, though. Cathedral averaged more than five goals a game, led by Jordan Palusky with 30. He exploded in the playoffs with six goals in the first two rounds of the Section 5A tourney.

Cathedral is plenty strong up front with forwards who know their defensive responsibilities. And that's what will make them a state

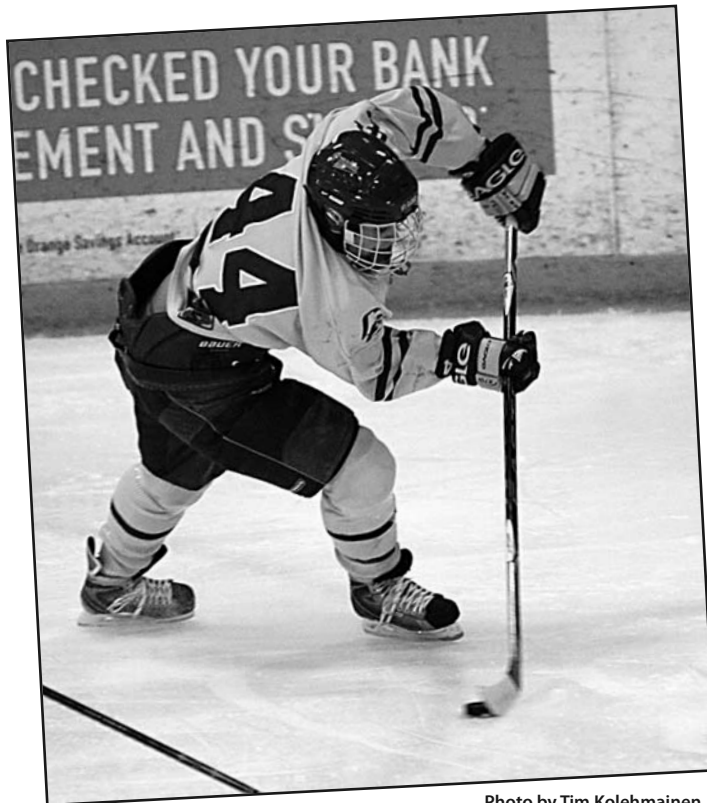


Photo by Tim Kolehmainen

Senior Jon Larkin (44) netted a hat trick in the Crusaders' 5-1 victory over Hermantown in the Section 5A finals.

contender.

"Our forwards work their butts off to get back and help out, too. That's hard to teach high school kids," said Johnson. "We have a team philosophy that every time we show up at the rink our goal is to get out of here with a shutout. If we don't, quite frankly, we're disappointed."

Cathedral has had six straight season with 20+ victories, during which they've made three state tournaments. But they have yet to

win their first title. After beginning the season 3-2-0 in the first five games, the Crusaders have ripped off a 23-game unbeaten streak (22-0-1) the second-longest in the state to Little Falls' 28-gamer. It wouldn't be a surprise to see those same two square off on Saturday at the X in the state title game. ■

Program info

Conference: Wright County
 Section: 5A
 Record: 25-2-1
 State trips: 1993, 94, 2004, 08, 09
 Coach: Eric Johnson
 Assistants: Tom Bruce, Ron Brown, Mike Schmidt, Dave Erickson

Top players

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Jordan Palusky	30	24	54
Nate Schmidt	24	25	49
Alex Koopmeiners	17	28	45
Sam Lommel	14	21	35
Joe Nessler	6	26	32

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Nick Maiers	22-2-1	1.58	.920

Full roster

#	Name	Gr	Pos
1	Calvin Herold	11	G
2	Tyler McMorrow	11	F
3	Robbie Stocker	11	F
4	Jason Janzen	11	D
6	Jeremy Robak	12	F
7	Sam Lommel	12	F
8	Kyle Kudak	11	F
11	Jordan Palusky	11	F
12	Joe Nessler	12	D
13	Alex Koopmeiners	11	F
15	Jared Klimek	12	D
16	Gavin Durant	11	F
20	Jon Rowe	12	D
21	Nate Schmidt	11	D
23	Chase Peyton	10	F
25	Andrew Hammer	12	F
28	TJ Bruce	10	F
30	Nick Maiers	11	G
32	Jordan Revier	9	F
33	Danny Johnston	9	F
35	Evan Koubsky	12	G
44	Jon Larkin	12	F

Road to the X

Section 5A quarterfinals, 2/27
 Cathedral 9, Pine City/RC 0

Palusky 4 goals
 Koopmeiners 1 goal, 3 assists

Section 5A semifinals, 2/28
 Cathedral 8, Sauk Rapids-Rice 4

Palusky 2 goals, 2 assists
 Schmidt 2 goals, 1 assist

Section 5A finals, 3/4
 Cathedral 5, Hermantown 1

Larkin 3 goals

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