

17 game win streak turns Green Team's season around

Changes to lineup reason behind win streak

by Jack Soble

After going 0 for 2 against Loyola, including a 5-0 loss, in the quad headers in November, New Trier Green has ramped up their game in dramatic fashion, heading into playoff hockey on fire.

Beginning Dec 16, the Trevians won 17 consecutive games, and after a 5-2 loss to DeMatha on Jan 28 that ended their streak, they haven't lost since. The team points to improved chemistry and mindset as a key component of their turnaround as they look to defend their 2017 state title.

"After Winter Break, the whole team has really come together to put up some big wins," said Junior Forward and leading scorer Bobby Soudan. At the time of this writing he is one point shy of 100 on the season.

"I think our team mentality has changed as a whole and allowed us to reach the potential we've known we have all year," he claimed.

Soudan also mentioned leadership from the Class of 2018, a

group who knows what it takes to win a state championship, as something that's helped a relatively young team go on a run like they have.

Junior Defenseman Tyler Baird, tied for the team lead with Soudan in plus/minus, singled out Defenseman Mason Smith as an important senior leader who has led their revival.

"Smith has done a lot to bring the team together. He tells us before every game 'don't take these guys lightly, but if we forecheck and outskate them, they don't stand a chance,'" said Baird.

Leadership and the right mentality isn't all it takes to go on a winning streak in hockey. Something that Chicago Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville likes to do is mix up his line combinations when things aren't going well, and up until the 2017-18 season, it has worked well for him. New Trier is no different in that regard, says Assistant Coach Chad Bidwell.

"After the 5-0 loss to Loyola, the coaches had a few meetings individually and with the team to discuss the season moving forward. We made a lot of line changes and defensive pairing changes and changed our mentality to a team that had to outwork our opponent day in



NT enters playoffs hoping to win third consecutive state title | Wilson

and day out to succeed," he said.

Before they go to the state tournament, New Trier Green will look to take the Scholastic Hockey League tournament, and they have been very successful in that regard thus far. They swept Fenwick and Stevenson and await the winner of Loyola against Glenbrook North (as of this writing Loyola leads the three game series 1-0).

The team has been quite successful in SHL play so far, as indicated by their heavy presence on

its Varsity All-League teams. Soudan was the lone first team representative and they placed forward John Robinson and defenseman Connor Baldwin on the second team.

Something else the Trevians will have to work through is rotating their two goaltenders, Ethan Paul and Hayden Wieczorek. They shared the Stevenson series, both winning their game, and have split playing time relatively equally throughout the season, with Paul starting 61 games and Wieczorek starting 54.

Bidwell does not expect the rotation to change, saying that "we will continue to read how they play in the SHL championship and take it one game at a time moving into state."

The IHSA state championship at the United Center is where New Trier Green is used to ending their season year after year, as they did in 2017 and 2016 and numerous other times over the past two decades. It's also where they fully expect to be come March of this season.

"No team can skate with us 5 on 5," said Baird. "Entering playoffs, we have a lot of confidence but we know we can't back down and take anyone easy."

For a juggernaut like the Trevians' hockey team has always been, underestimating opponents can turn into a problem and this year's squad is taking measures to ensure that doesn't happen.

However, that doesn't stop their high level of confidence heading into postseason play. "Our game and mentality are where it needs to be right now, and all we have to do is do our thing," said senior forward Brendan Michelson. "Mark the calendars. NTG will be competing for a third straight state title come spring break."

Local teens compete on USA hockey team

Alex Vlastic and Cameron Rowe play internationally in the U17 division

by Eli Lieberman

The U-17 USA hockey team selected two New Trier juniors, Alex Vlastic and Cameron Rowe, to be part of their team this season.

The players were chosen as two of the top 23 player in the country for their age group. The boys have been competing for this spot since they were 14, when an original 300 were chosen by team USA scouts.

For Rowe this was something he had been wanting for a long time.

"As a kid I've always had a dream of playing for this team, I would've been really disappointed if I got this close and didn't make it," he said.

After arriving in late August to Plymouth, Michigan, where the team's home ice is located, Rowe and Vlastic helped the team to a strong start. The team won their first eight games in the USHL (United States Hockey League), playing teams from across the country with players ages anywhere from 17 to 20 years old.

Everyone on their team is still 16, but Vlastic feels that playing the older competition is beneficial.

"The majority of games in our league we're gonna lose because they're older and stronger than us, but then when we go on international tournaments and play other teams our age, it's usually a little easier because we're stronger than them."

Earlier this season the team won gold at the U-17 World Hockey Challenge in Canada. En route to the championship, they defeated two Canadian teams, Sweden and the Czech Republic, before finally beating out Canada's top team 6-4 in the gold medal game. Rowe tended net and Vlastic scored an empty net goal that sealed the win. Rowe said this has been the highlight from the season so far.



U17 USA hockey, Vlastic back row middle, Rowe back row right | US Hockey

Shortly after, the team flew halfway around the world to Novgorod, Russia where they played three games in three days, beating the national teams from Slovakia, Switzerland, and Russia, some of the world's powerhouses in the sport.

Johnnie Beecher, another member of the team, praised the play styles of Vlastic and Rowe.

"Alex is a great defenseman who you can always rely on to get you out of trouble. On the offensive side he has great vision and makes plays," commented Beecher. "Cam is an amazing goaltender. He's big and takes up space and also very mobile as he moves side to side."

As exciting as this season has been for the two, it required them to live with a host family that lived near the rink in Plymouth, Michigan. Vlastic said "Living with another family was weird at first, you never know how they act and how they run the house. After a while everything worked out well and they're a really nice family."

They are now also attending high schools located in the area. The school Rowe has been going to is roughly the size of New Trier, but with few of the amenities. For him, adjusting to the new school has been

a tough transition.

"I miss New Trier", said Rowe, "but it has helped me realize there's all kinds of people out there and how lucky we are at New Trier to have the things like the technology we have and the support from teachers."

Another change in schooling for Rowe and Vlastic is this they now only take four classes and finish school by noon each day- a change that neither boy seemed too torn up about. After that, they head to the rink, a 15 minute drive from their houses, to start practice. They begin with a meeting, and then practice until five in the evening when they'll have a study hall to do their homework.

Prior to team USA, Rowe and Vlastic played for club teams in the Illinois area. Rowe played for Team Illinois and Vlastic for Chicago Mission, along with two other players making team USA.

The season ends in April, but all players from the U-17 team are expected to play for the U-18 team the following season.

Team USA now heads into the last stretch season with an overall record of 31-9, with no losses to other under 17 teams, and have 13 games left to be played.

Q&A with an athlete: Cate Murdock, senior guard

Murdock reflects on last season of NTGGB after team wins regionals

by Lexi Shoup

Q: Were you guys expecting to win regionals?

A: We were expecting to make it to the regional game, but we were playing a really good team. I knew we could win and I was hoping we would but it wasn't a definite win, especially because we played that team earlier in the year and we lost to them, and they were ranked a little higher than us.

Q: How long have you been playing basketball?

A: I've been playing since second grade, so ten years.

Q: How long have you been on the New Trier basketball team?

A: I started playing for New Trier my freshman year and I was on Varsity sophomore year through senior year.

Q: Why do you like basketball, why do you play?

A: I always have so much fun when I'm playing and being with the team. It's such a good group and it's not stressful. When I'm stressed about school I can just go and play basketball and have fun. I just really love it.

Q: What's it like having your twin sister on the team with you?

A: It makes it easier, there's always someone that I know how she plays, I've been playing with her for ten years. We just have that connection.

Q: Have most of the girls on the team



been playing basketball together for a long time?

A: Yeah, a lot of us have. And a lot of the team this year is the same as last year so it's a lot of the same girls.

Q: Are you planning on playing in college?

A: It depends where I decide to go. At one of the D3 schools I would be on the team but if I go to a D1 school then I would probably play club.

Q: What sports other than basketball have you played?

A: I used to play a lot of other sports. I played volleyball, gymnastics, tennis in the summers, I was on the pre-team for swimming. I was one of those kids that was in every single sport when I was little, even though some of them dropped off quickly.

If you would like to be considered for athlete of the week, please send an email to ntnews@nths.net or tweet us at the New Trier news twitter, and include your name, sport, and grade level