



Tuesday, March 16, 2004

## Women's hockey team wins CCWHA championship

March madness isn't reserved for the hard court as Oakland University's men's and women's hockey clubs have demonstrated these past two weeks. A week after the men's team won the American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II National Championship, the women's team also pulled out a major victory by becoming the Central Collegiate Women's Hockey Association (CCWHA) champions.

Ranked fourth and with a sub .500 record, OU's women's team entered the CCWHA Tournament as a decided underdog. Their underdog status changed to champions after defeating two-time defending champion Michigan State University in a shootout for the team's first-ever CCWHA championship.

"This weekend proved that hard work, dedication and most importantly, heart wins championships," said Assistant Coach Mike Down. "Our girls proved they had the heart to win...They played sick and injured and still overcame adversity. I'm very proud of them."

Seeded in a bracket with an MSU squad that defeated them four times in the regular season was not intimidating for OU's team as a feeling of invincibility swept over them.

"I can't describe it, but everything just clicked for us," said Lauren Brick, assistant captain and a three-year starter. "We knew we were going to win it all. We just wanted it more than anybody else."

The Spartans entered the tournament as the No. 1 seed, with a 24-4-6 record. Their last loss was Feb. 8 against Wisconsin, and during the season, they outscored opponents 116-38. Despite those impressive statistics and losing to MSU in the regular season, OU's optimism was a result of narrow defeat to the Spartans in the final meeting of the regular season.

"We lost by one goal that game, and that's when we knew they were beatable. This time we knew it was going to be different," said Brick, who was on the OU team that finished fourth in last year's CCWHA Tournament.

Oakland started the tournament with a 9-0 decision over sixth-ranked Notre Dame. The women then had their first of two meetings with MSU, defeating the Spartans 2-1 to set up a semi-final match with Northern Michigan University. The women prevailed in that contest, 1-0, and then set their sights on the championship game that would once again feature a heavily favored Spartan team.

In the championship game, Oakland took an early 2-0 lead after the second period with two power play goals, the first made by Jill VanWarner and the second by team captain Kristin Czarnecki. MSU answered with two goals in the third period. With the score tied at two at the end of regulation and a five-minute overtime session that resulted in the same 2-2 score, a shootout took place to determine a champion. Sparked by goals from Jackie Galofaro and Sarah Costigan, tournament Most Valuable Player Jane LeMaux shut out the Spartans for the victory.

"It just got crazy after that. It was incredible beating MSU," said Brick, who along with Czarnecki will be the only two players graduating from this year's team. "It was a great way of ending my time with the team. It's been a lot of fun, and I'm going to miss this team."

A celebration is being planned to honor both the men's and women's hockey clubs and to recognize them for their championship wins for Thursday, March 18, at noon in the Pioneer Food Court.

For more information on OU's club sports, see OU's [Student Organizations](#) Web page.

### SUMMARY

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