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SPRING TRAINING, PAGE D4

Crede breaks out with
homer in Twins win

Sports

Mixed results cap MSU's 2008-09 season

It was understandable that Minnesota State men's hockey captain Mick Berge was feeling "empty" following Saturday night's Western Collegiate Hockey Association playoff loss to Wisconsin.

When the college-hockey season started back in October, few saw the season ending anywhere but in St. Paul, if not further up the road.

"The goal never changed throughout the year," Berge said after the 4-2 loss. "It was always to make the Final Five and make the national

tournament. That didn't change even after (Friday's 7-1 loss to the Badgers). That's the way it goes."

But if the 2008-09 season proved anything, it was that nothing is automatic and nothing is handed out.

Spots in the Final Five and the NCAA tournament aren't written in ink, even for a team like Minnesota State that

got those berths pulled out from under them a year ago, the former in an epic, double-overtime game and the latter in an undetected flaw

in the complex formula used to figure out the national-tournament field.

Berge, alone, is proof of the unpredictable. A 20-goal scorer as a junior and a player who never had more than seven assists in college, he tied for the team lead in points with seven goals and 24 assists.

Indeed, a Magic 8-Ball might have done a better job predicting what the Mavericks were going to do this season.

Minnesota State saw a little bit of everything — the good, the bad and the ugly — in an entertaining year:

The good: An 8-3-3 start

to the season. ... The first weekend sweep of Minnesota. ... The emergence of Kurt Davis as a point-producing defenseman. ... The arrival of Kael Mouillierat as a reliable goal scorer. ... Record crowds at the Alltel Center, including three over 5,000. ... A national-best 11 short-handed goals. ... Zach Harrison's short-handed hat trick. ... The nation's ninth-best power play.

The bad: A six-game losing streak in December. ... An inexplicable 4-2 home loss to Alaska-Anchorage in January. ... Four third-period leads that turned into three

losses and a tie. ... A 2-13-2 record when trailing after two periods. ... A penalty kill that went out on the ice 256 times and allowed 52 goals.

The ugly: The nation's second-most penalized team. ... Two league suspensions to junior forward Trevor Bruess for rough play, including one for Friday's night's playoff game. ... Nearly 50 man games lost to injury, including defenseman Channing Boe's broken leg on Jan. 30. ... A Division I-era record 66 shots on goal allowed to Wisconsin Friday night.

On Monday, senior goaltender Mike Zacharias was

back on the ice. He had convinced a few teammates to join him and shoot pucks at him as he prepares to turn professional.

It's an exciting time, he said, with a wide-open future in front of him. Of course, he added, he'd rather be practicing for the Final Five.

Zacharias said he wasn't ready to predict exactly where he'd end up next. As he learned this season, nothing's a given.

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