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# SPORTS

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## Boys hockey



Photo by Jack Miller

Verona head coach Joel Marshall hands Reece Cordray the runner-up trophy after the Wildcats' Division 1 state final against Notre Dame on Saturday, March 4, at Bob Suter's Capitol Ice Arena.

## Wildcats' state run comes up silver

Notre Dame tops Verona to complete unbeaten state championship

JACK MILLER  
Digital sports editor

Verona was desperately hoping for some state déjà vu.

The Wildcats won their last state championship in 2020 after an overtime win in the semifinals vaulted Verona to the state final

— where they knocked off top-seeded Notre Dame.

An overtime state semifinal victory over two-time defending state champion Hudson sent the Wildcats to the title game this season, but the top-seeded Tritons proved to be too much this time around.

The Verona boys hockey team fell 8-2 in the WIAA Division 1 state championship to Notre Dame on Saturday, March 4, at Bob Suter's Capitol Ice Arena in Middleton.

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## Boys hockey



Photo by Jack Miller

The Verona boys hockey team celebrates after winning a Division 1 state semifinal against Hudson on Friday, March 3, at Bob Suter's Capitol Ice Arena in Middleton.

## Moline's winner sends Verona to state final

Senior forward scores game-winning goal in OT against Hudson

JACK MILLER  
Digital sports editor

Conrad Moline made sure to take a few mental notes while watching the girls state tournament on Thursday night — specifically when Autumn Cooper had a game-winning goal off a nifty move that led to Superior/Northwestern's 3-2 win over Hudson.

Moline made that exact move when he netted the game-winning goal during the Verona boys hockey team's 4-3 overtime win over Hudson in a WIAA Division 1 state semifinal on Friday, March 3, at Bob Suter's Capitol Ice Arena in Middleton.

With the game tied 3-3 in overtime, Moline won a chase down for the puck against a Hudson defender before flicking the puck to himself while moving his stick above the defenders

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## Gymnastics

# Deserving points

VA/ME captures first state championship, Rufenacht repeats in all-around

MARK NESBITT  
Sports editor

The only problem for Verona Area/Madison Edgewood coach Rachael Hauser seemed to be hoisting a large gold trophy above her head for photo ops after the program won its first-ever WIAA Division 1 state championship.

The Wildcat/Crusaders racked up 146.1167 points to edge Franklin/Muskego by 0.8 points for the Division 1 state title on Friday, March 3, at Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School. It marks the closest state meet since 2014 when the Franklin co-op clipped Burlington/Badger/Catholic Central by 0.52 of a point for the title.

"This is a crazy team that is really good," said Verona junior Annika Rufenacht. "We get along so well and I think that helps push each other more. It's so much more fun being on a team that you're friends with and you can push each other. It just makes you better."

It's only the 14th time in the history of the 53-year state meet that the Division 1 race came down to less than one point since the WIAA started a two level or division tournament.

The Wildcat/Crusaders had a 2.06-point lead over Franklin/Muskego going into the final rotation. There were two events VA/ME outscored Franklin/Muskego, including the floor exercise that led to a



Photo by Mark Nesbitt

Verona junior Annika Rufenacht tied junior Denise Ta for a WIAA Division 1 state championship on the balance beam with a score of 9.517 on Saturday, March 4, at Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School.

1.35-point advantage that made up for the 0.81-point edge Franklin had on the uneven bars.

"In my opinion, there is no one more deserving than these girls," Hauser said. "They have worked so hard this season from where we

came from last year."

For an encore, VA/ME had six gymnasts combine to win 10 individual medals and three titles at the Division 1 state individual meet on Saturday, March 4.

Rufenacht repeated as the all-around state

champion — which goes to the state's top gymnast. Rufenacht scored 38.10 points, only 0.21 of a point away from setting a new state record.

Rufenacht captured state titles on the uneven

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## Gymnastics

# Hauser named state's coach of the year

VA/ME head coach helped Wildcat/Crusaders to first-ever state title

MARK NESBITT  
Sports editor

Verona/Edgewood gymnastics coach Rachael Hauser could have left for the WIAA Division 1 state meet a day earlier, but she wasn't going to leave without her rising stars.

That's because Hauser was named the Wisconsin Gymnastic Coaches Association's Coach of the Year during a banquet

on Thursday, March 2, in Wisconsin Rapids, one day before the state meet was set to start at Wisconsin Rapids High School.

"It feels pretty cool," Hauser said. "I'm not going to lie. It was very unexpected. You usually see it go to coaches of some of the top teams in the state."

Hauser has coached VA/ME for 12 years. She has coached and judged club gymnastics for 14 years. Hauser has led the Wildcat/Crusades to six state meet appearances, one title and one state runner-up finish.

Verona senior Katie

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Photo by Mark Nesbitt

Verona Area/Madison Edgewood coach Rachael Hauser was named the Wisconsin Gymnastics Coach of the Year on Thursday, March 2, in Wisconsin Rapids. Hauser, right, coaches senior Ella Crowley before a balance beam routine at the WIAA Division 1 state meet on Friday, March 3, in Wisconsin Rapids.

# Semifinals: Wildcats get the edge in power-play department

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head to give himself a clean break-away.

Moline won the one-on-one with the Hudson goalie.

“Reece (Cordray) made a really good defensive play,” said Moline, a senior forward. “Believe it or not I took a piece from the girls game last night – the girl who made the same move – a one-hand windmill around the defender.”

The game-winning goal vaulted the second-seeded Wildcats to the state championship game.

No team led by more than one goal during the contest that saw three equalizing goals. The third-seeded Raiders – the two-time defending state champions in Division 1 – edged the Wildcats 2-1 in Verona’s second-game of the season.

“I did not see this one like one team rolling away with it by any means,” Verona head coach Joel Marshall said. “We were both very similar teams then (first meeting). We both got tremendously better over the course of the season.”

Hudson defeated Verona in the state final in 2021.

“They’ve kind of owned us for my four years at least,” Cordray said. “It’s my first time beating them so it makes it feel even that much better.”

Verona struck first when Cordray sniped a shot past Hudson junior goalie Aidan Tepper-Eng 5 minutes, 19 seconds into the first period. Moline was credited with an assist.

“I was getting closer to the end of my shift, getting tired,” Cordray said. “I beat the one guy wide and thought I had a good look at a shot.”

Just nine seconds of game time later, the Raiders equalized with a score from junior forward Harry Ross.

Verona killed a pair of Hudson power-play opportunities in the first period to keep the game knotted at 1-1. With 3:55 gone in the second period, the Raiders took their first lead at 2-1 with a goal from junior forward Gannon Blaiser.

“We liked our chances the whole time,” Cordray said. “Going down one, we were definitely a little nervous but there was no point where I didn’t believe that we were going to be able to get it done.”

Like after the first goal, the trailing team had a quick response.

Just 31 seconds of game time later, Moline lit the lamp on a power-play score – assisted by Cordray and junior defenseman David Dina. The Wildcats were just 11 seconds into their power play.

Verona took back the lead at 3-2 when senior defenseman Lars Brotzman netted an unassisted power-play goal. The score came 7:31 into the second period.

The Wildcats went 2 for 3 on power-play chances, while holding Hudson to 0 for 5.

Hudson netted the lone goal of the third – a score from senior forward Alex Pottratz 4:19 into the period. Verona had its chances to end the game in regulation. Cordray had shot ting off the crossbar and junior forward Tre Grignon nearly wrapped a goal around the net – but Tepper-Eng blocked the shot with his foot at the last second.

With the game deadlocked at 3-3, both teams got a three-minute rest period before overtime.

“It was rest up, get hydrated,” Marshall said. “It could be a long haul. We bring a ton of snacks and food and drinks... We’ve been in that situation before.”

Marshall recalled an overtime win over Middleton earlier in the



Photos by Jack Miller

**Above:** Verona’s David Dina surveys the ice during the Wildcats’ Division 1 state semifinal against Hudson on Friday, March 3, at Bob Suter’s Capitol Ice Arena in Middleton.

**At right:** Verona’s Jack Marske hugs Conrad Moline (15) after his game-winning goal.

**Bottom right:** Verona’s Tre Grignon (left) and Charlie McGinnis are all smiles after the Wildcats’ semifinal win.

season in the very same arena. Fittingly enough, Cordray also had the game-winning assist in that game as well.

Cordray said he liked Moline’s chances when he saw he got a breakaway just under four minutes into the eight-minute overtime period.

“We were jumping on the bench,” Marshall said. “Obviously he’s scored a boatload of goals this year. If we wanted anyone to do it, it’s him or Reece, for sure. I think I was tackled by one of the coaches. I don’t know if it even hit the back of the net.”

Moline finished with 27 goals in the regular season. Moline and Cordray helped the Wildcats to their state championship in 2020 as freshmen. Moline elected to play AAA hockey his sophomore and junior seasons before wanting one last shot with his high school team.

“It means everything,” Moline said. “There is nothing better. Playing youth together with your best friends and then being able to play with them senior year. Hanging out every night, going to lunch together every day, having classes together. You live with them pretty much. There is nothing better than this.”

