

Women's hockey wins third straight ECAC Championship

Middlebury demolishes Bowdoin and Wesleyan to maintain the perfect 52-0 record it has held since the league's inception

By Kendra Slater
Staff Writer

The Middlebury women's hockey team capped off an amazing season this past weekend as they won their third straight ECAC Alliance championship with a 10-1 win over Wesleyan in the final.

However, before the Panthers captured their victory, they had to face a fired-up Bowdoin team on Saturday in the tournament semifinal. Suzanne Chepren '99 gave Middlebury a quick lead when she scored four minutes into the first period. Sophomores Sylvia Ryan and Catherine Pullins helped to increase the Panther edge as each netted goals to make the score 3-0. First-year Katie Lynch then scored as Middlebury developed a 4 goal lead. Bowdoin managed to find the back of the Panther cage to make the score 4-1, yet Kelly Hase '00 answered back with an unassisted goal for Middlebury's final score of the game. Although the Panthers held a 5-1 lead, the Polar Bears refused to quit. As Coach Bill Mandigo said, "Bowdoin did a good job, and they really put the pressure on us in the third period. They didn't pack it in, and you really have to give them credit for their effort." Although Bowdoin scored twice on Middlebury in the third period, the Panthers pulled through for the 5-3 win and a berth in the championship game.

On Sunday, the Panthers faced Wesleyan, another major foe. The Panthers were looking to reassert themselves after Saturday's weak third period, and they did exactly that. Michelle Labbe '01, who has made a huge impact in her first year at Middlebury, scored two first period goals to give Middlebury a 2-0 lead.

Of her performance in the win, Labbe, who connected with Ryan

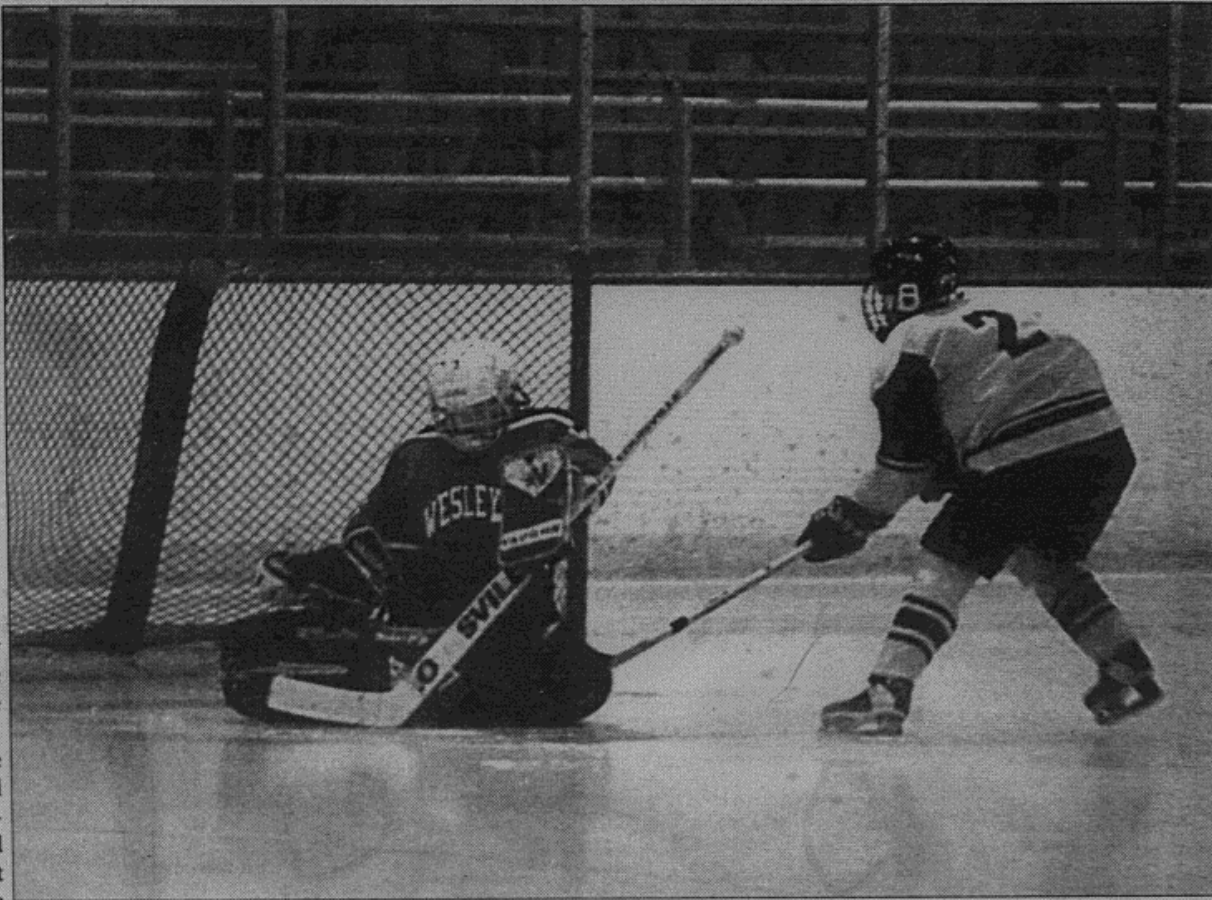
on the first goal, said, "Today, everyone came to play and things just clicked." Pullins used her powerful slap shot to give the Panthers a 3-0 lead in the second period, and then Lynch and Sarah Carpenter '01 combined for a score eight minutes into the same period, as Carpenter fed Lynch a drop pass in front of the goal.

In the third period, Middlebury's offensive juggernaut built up even more power as they scored seven more goals to end the game with a 10-1 victory. This game truly showcased Middlebury's explosiveness and total domination. It was clear from the start that Wesleyan never stood a chance.

Pullins said of the victory, "In the final game we just had a raging desire to win." Mandigo added, "It was the seniors' last game, and they were determined to end their career on a positive note."

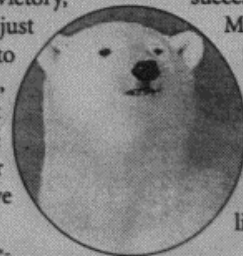
Sophomore Beth Denoncourt made 12 saves in goal for the Panthers, and classmate Ryan was named the tournament's most valuable player.

The championship win over



Pete Huoppi

Sylvia Ryan '00 slams a shot past the Wesleyan goaltender in Middlebury's 10-1 win to secure a third ECAC Alliance championship.



A late surge by the Polar Bears was not enough for to overcome the Panthers, who won 5-3.

Wesleyan capped off a season of success and achievement for Middlebury: a new record for wins in a row, the continuation of Panther domination in ECAC Alliance with a 52-0 record, and a third straight ECAC Alliance championship.

Moreover, a strong work ethic combined with a fun attitude pervaded the entire season. Mandigo had nothing but the high-

est praise for this amazing team:

"They worked so hard, and each day they left the ice better than the day before. They really stayed together and consistently improved."

A newcomer on this year's squad, Labbe described her feelings about the team: "We have so much talent it's unbelievable. But more than just talent, we really love being a team. We love going out there everyday and playing together. And



The Cardinals' goalie was assaulted by the Panther offense making 25 saves but allowing 10 goals.

in big wins such as the one against Wesleyan, it still is never a pushover. We just seem to step up to the competition and play so well. This first-year has been incredible, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

The Panthers are looking forward to next season. They hope to continue their undefeated streak in ECAC Alliance play, and also to resume the great times that they have had together for the past few months.