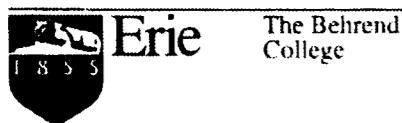


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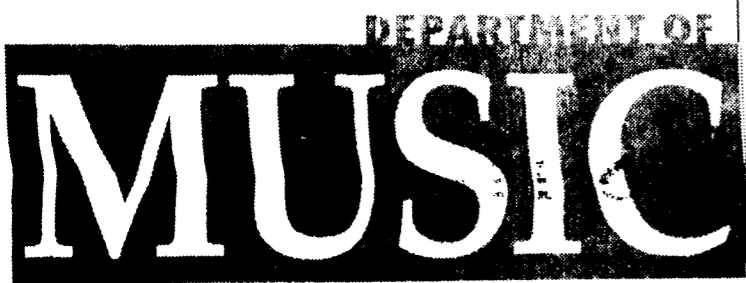
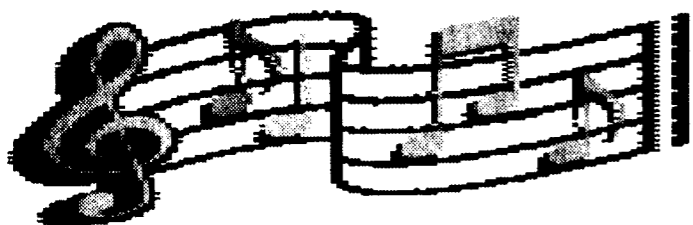
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**Hockey fans at
University of Minnesota
riot in streets**

by Tammy J. Oseid
and Lisa Donovan
Knight Ridder Newspapers

For more than six hours this weekend after the Gophers hockey team won its first national title in 23 years, a growing mob of students smashed street lamps, jumped on passing cars, and torched furniture in a celebration-turned-rampage.

The rioters, estimated between several hundred and more than 1,000, poured into the streets at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, hurling full beer bottles and cans, rocks and insults at officers in riot gear who used tear gas to try to quell the crowd.

In the end, the only injury was to a police officer whose shoulder was hurt by a flying object. Police made 25 arrests. The cost of the damage, including broken windows on homes, businesses and vehicles, had not been tallied by late Sunday.

Using cell phones, students called friends to campus to "join the fun" and followed a Minnesota State Patrol helicopter's spotlight to hotspots.

"We're celebrating," said freshman Emily Tinkham. "We're not doing anything wrong."

Minneapolis Police Chief Robert Olson, who took a rock to the foot during the weekend's out-

bursts, said officers allowed the excited fans to march and cheer in the streets. But when the "youthful exuberance" spun out of control, police here were not about to allow a repeat of what happened at the University of Maryland. After March 30's semifinal and the NCAA basketball championship victory, Terrapin fans took their celebrations to the streets of College Park, Md., looting stores, burning cars and injuring a fan who lost vision in an eye.

Sports sociologist Merrill J. Melnick calls this "indecent emotional exposure" by alcohol-fueled fans whose celebratory waltz in the streets becomes antisocial, destructive behavior.

"This is behavior off the tracks. Whatever parameters would be in effect, laws of decorum, a certain sense of civility - they're pushed aside in this act of excessive exuberance," said Melnick, who teaches "Sports Spectating in the United States" at the State University of New York at Brockport and co-authored the book "Sports Fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators." Three chapters discuss fan misbehavior.

The mob mentality, a type of contagion combined with the sense that there's safety, if not anonymity, in numbers, can make the situation worse, said Melnick.

The presence of police and the

media can often be provocative to fans who may feel at once threatened and called on to perform.

Gophers fans clearly hadn't planned an uprising this weekend. The chaos began just before 10 p.m. Saturday and gathered steam after 11 p.m.

"This is just a celebration of us winning. O A little unity, a little spirit," said sophomore Mark Abdel as his fellow students began facing down cops on University Avenue. "Everybody's having a great time."

Then someone on the street threw a bottle at police. As those in the street screamed for observers to join them and more bottles were hurled at police, the officers began to move toward the rowdy crowd.

By 3:30 a.m., several thousand students had gathered around a bonfire of trash bins, garbage and furniture in the middle of University Avenue. By 4:30 a.m., things had finally calmed down. And by 5 a.m., the police finally felt it was safe enough to leave. In all, about 50 Minneapolis police officers responded to the chaos; the number of university police officers on the scene was not available.

Even though St. Paul hosted the championship hockey tournament, police reported few problems in or around the Xcel Energy Center.

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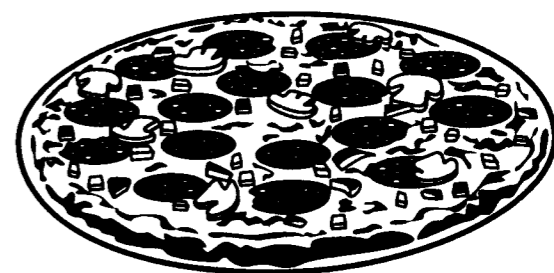
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