

## Bears lose 3-2 in OT to Crunch

After five-game road trip, Hershey returns to home ice

by Matthew Bowman

After returning from their road trip with an impressive record of 3-1-0-1 spanning the five games, the Hershey Bears fell victim to the Syracuse Crunch with a 3-2, overtime loss Wednesday night at the Hersheypark Arena.

It was typical Bears hockey when Syracuse put the first point on the board. At 5:03 in the first period, Jan Hrdina lifted a rebound past goaltender Marc Denis after Syracuse's Peter Schaefer knifed his way through the Bear's defense. For the year, the Bears have been outscored 66-47 in the first period

while giving up the first goal 45 times in their 70 games.

Despite giving up the early goal, Hershey appeared to be skating well with better passing and overall good play. They had several scoring opportunities and kept the puck in the Syracuse zone for most of the first period by outshooting the Crunch 12-4.

A major boost for the Bears team came early in the second period. At 2:21, the Hershey bench was called for too many men on the ice and a delay of game penalty giving the Crunch a two-man advantage for the next two minutes of play. With

:25 left in the 5-on-3 power play, Denis made an incredible glove save off a Dominic Pittis slap shot that was heading for the back of the net keeping the deficit to one goal. As the Bears killed off the remainder of the power play, the Hersheypark Arena crowd of 5,306 was on their feet.

Just over one minute later, Syracuse's Darren Sinclair was called for hooking which gave the Bears their fourth power play opportunity of the game. During the man advantage, Christian Matte took a slapshot from the center point. Patrick Traverse redirected the puck past Crunch netminder Corey Hirsch while set up in front of the net to even the score at 1-1. This was Traverse's 12th goal of the season with assists coming from Matte and Rob Shearer.

Half way through the second period, Hershey had a chance to go ahead when they had a two-man advantage for :31. Despite two or three scoring chances, however, the score remained tie.

Traverse got in on the action again along with Yves Sarault during a power play as the two combined for assists on Eric Veinoux's 21st goal of the year which gave Hershey a 2-1 lead at 14:57.

Syracuse answered back with :30 remaining in the second period when Brent Sopel netted a shot from the left point with assists from Sven Butenschon and Brian Bonin. As time expired, the teams entered the locker room for the second intermission knotted at 2-2.

The third period was uneventful as far as scoring goes. However, one thing was clearly evident. It was not the same Hershey team on the ice as it was for the first two periods. At this point they were physically being beaten by the Crunch who outshot them 12-5. It was only a matter of time before the inevitable would happen. It took an overtime period to do it, but with 1:39 remaining in the extra session, Syracuse's Dave Roberts put back a rebound to clinch the victory.

Hershey also played again Sunday and defeated the Kentucky Thoroughblades by a score of 5-3. With 9 games now remaining in the regular season, Hershey currently sits in second place in the Mid-Atlantic Division behind the Philadelphia Phantoms and only needs 8 points to clinch a playoff birth. The Bears play again tonight at Syracuse and return home to host Kentucky again on Wednesday, March 23. Game time is 7:00 p.m.

## And In This Corner..

Opinions on the current hodgepodge

by Matthew Bowman

### The Nykesha Sales Fiasco

The last thing I want to do is beat a dead horse, but this story is too important to be left unsaid. The entire concept of sports being a competition went out the window last month when the University of Connecticut star was given a prearranged layup to beat former UConn basketball scoring leader Kerry Bascom. As the shot was made, a nail was driven into the validity of athletics.

All my life I have participated in sports and I would not change any of it for the world. I've lost in the big games, had losing seasons, thought I should have gotten more playing time, made the big play, won the championship, raised the banner and been named the MVP. And throughout all those games, one thing remained constant. I was taught that athletics is a way to learn about life. I use this same philosophy with my players today. It is a wonderful teacher. Some days you are on top of the world, but the next day you can be as low as they get.

Do not get me wrong. I do think Sales deserved the record. I believe she worked very hard to get to that point, and it must have been devastating to get injured one shot short. But isn't life that way sometimes. We all work so hard at our job only to see our co-worker get the promotion. We don't always get what we deserve. It just isn't fair is the common cry. But let's be real people. Life is not fair. It was wrong to give her the shot because it teaches us that life is cruel, but there is a way to avoid the pain. That is totally wrong. If we sugarcoat the pain now, it will only make it worse later.

### The NCAA Tournament

Does it get more exciting than March Madness? I don't know. There is just something about "tournament time" that gets the juices flowing. What I want to do is to give you the top players that I would want on my team as a coach. The winners are...in no particular order.

Antawn Jamison (UNC) - He is quite possibly the best player in the country right now with moves that are nothing short of spectacular. His best threats are his quickness, leaping ability and unorthodox playing style. At times, he leaves his opponents standing with their jaws to the floor with nothing left to do except pick up their jock strap and come back for more.

Steve Wojciechowski (Duke) - This choice will amaze some people because he is not a big name player other than what it says on the back of his jersey. However, this kid is a scrapper. He's a fighter who won't quit until the final buzzer sounds. He'll get on the floor after a loose ball. He can frustrate even the best of point guards. Also, he shoots around 42 percent from outside the arc.

Raef LaFrentz (Kansas) - This big man would be a perfect match inside with Jamison. He - besides having remarkable talent on the post and being a major catalyst for the Jayhawks - would pose as a major threat when the double team goes to Jamison.

Mike Bibby (Arizona) - He is probably the best point guard in the nation right now with an awesome ability to push the ball up the floor into the transition game. He's an even better player when his supporting cast plays well. He is a great match with "Wojo" in the backcourt as both like to dictate the game's tempo.

The fifth position depends on size and quickness; whether or not to go with a guard-oriented lineup or an inside game. Possible fifth picks include Vince Carter, Baron Davis, Miles Simon, and Trajan Langdon.

### The Baseball Season

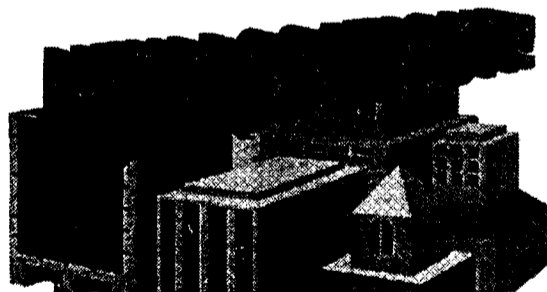
With Spring training underway the leagues look a little different after realignment and expansion, but the major names are still around.

Atlanta still looks like the team to beat in the National League with a championship style team along with Houston, San Diego and Colorado making runs for the top. My surprise team of the year comes out of the West in Arizona. An expansion team, yes. A bad team, no. Most folks pick them dead last in the NL, but seasoned veterans Matt Williams, Jay Bell and Devon White will carry this young ball club and keep them out of the cellar. The major area of concern will be the pitching rotation as well as the bullpen.

The American League's top team appears to be the Orioles with a solid core group of stars in Palmeiro, Ripken, Alomar and Anderson. This team has one of the best batting lineups in the majors, and a pitching staff that looks strong. In the West there is Seattle with Rodriguez, Martinez, Buhner and, of course, Griffey. Also, with Randy Johnson, Jeff Fassero and Jamie Moyer throwing the ball, the Mariners have the AL's top starting threesome. The Indians and Yankees will also be fighting for supremacy.

In general, this year could be one for the history books. Mark McGwire has an excellent chance for the coveted 62 homers as does Griffey. McGwire hit 58 last year to lead all hitters while going yard against 24 of the 25 teams he faced. If he breaks the half-century mark again, he will be the first player in major league history to hit 50 or more in three consecutive seasons.

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