

SPORTS & LEISURE



Georgetown's Jay Sprague (left) of the Michigan State Spartans battles with rival Michigan's Dan Fardig during an NCAA Division I contest earlier this season. The upstart Spartans won the school's first U.S. national championship in 21 years on Saturday, beating Boston College 3-1 in St. Louis. *Submitted photo*

Sprague helps Spartans to NCAA Frozen Four title

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

Flying so low under the radar that they were nearly passed over for selection to the U.S. Division I men's college hockey's 16-team playoff tournament, the Michigan Spartans completed an improbable run by winning the NCAA Frozen Four championship Saturday night at the Scottrade Centre in St. Louis, Mo.

And Georgetown resident Jay Sprague's emergence as a reliable two-way player—a rarity for freshmen in major college hockey programs—was reflected in Michigan State's timely post-season surge—culminating in a dramatic 3-1 victory over the Boston College Eagles in front of an NCAA-final record crowd of over 19,000 fans.

The 20-year-old Sprague was left off a couple of road trips earlier in the year as the Spartans, who have produced prospects such as Buffalo goalie Ryan Miller in recent years, struggled through the regular season with a 15-10-3 league record. They fell to rival Michigan in the CCHA semifinals last month before narrowly squeezing into the NCAA tournament by beating Lake Superior State 7-6 in overtime in the conference consolation final. Sprague, a 6-foot-3, 217-pound right winger, scored two goals during the playoff drive and helped set up the winner in last Thursday's Frozen Four semifinal against the Maine Black Bears late in the third period on a pass out from behind the net that was banged in by Michigan State's S-lineman and Toronto native Nick Sucharski.

"I guess you could say it was a Cinderella story," Sprague said from the Spartans' East Lansing, Mich. campus on Monday. "We had an up and down year and it feels even better to win it knowing that a lot of people counted us out. We knew we could come together when it really mattered and the fans especially believed in us and that's what makes this team so special. We played some great teams that had big offensive stars who were supposed to run all over us and everybody wanted to talk about the players we'd lost to the pros like David Booth and Drew Miller, so hopefully we finally earned some respect around the country."

The hard-working Spartans were bol-



JAY SPRAGUE

stered by the goaltending of 5-foot-6 Jeff Lerg and some clutch late goals in the playoffs. As the last few seconds of regulation ticked down in Saturday's finale, Michigan State's Justin Abdelkader, the Frozen Four MVP, broke a 1-1 tie with 18.9 seconds left just moments after ringing a shot off the goal post.

"When Abs hit the post, I thought we'd missed our chance to win it and we'd be going into OT, then five seconds later he scores," added Sprague, who would like to pursue a career in advertising, but hasn't ruled out playing pro hockey after graduating. "Personally I had a pretty good year, but that doesn't matter right now. My focus right now is just on (Tuesday's) parade and taking in the whole experience."

Sprague's parents, John and Lauren, were in attendance for the championship game while sister Kelly and several of Jay's friends watched the final on satellite dish from the family's Georgetown home. The Spartans' downtown St. Louis hotel was coloured green by Michigan State supporters and a large turnout was expected for a parade scheduled on Tuesday night to celebrate the school's third NCAA Division I men's hockey title.

"I was completely blown away to be in that atmosphere with 19,000 people," said Sprague, a member of the Georgetown Jr. A Raiders' Dudley Hewitt Cup champion side in 2005. "It was crazy. It was so intense, but we were so focused on the game and how much it meant. To be honest you didn't even notice the crowd when you're skating around the ice and it was right before game time."

See WIN, pg. 20

Halton Hills gymnast third at L.A. meet

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

A member of the Halton Hills Gymnastics Club recently achieved what's considered the best-ever showing at an elite level for the local organization at an international-level competition in Los Angeles, Ca.

Fourteen-year-old Marc Gaudet De Lestard of Limehouse placed third overall out of 27 entries from across North America in the Level 6 division for his age group at the Peter Vidmar Gymnastics Invitational, earning gold medals in the parallel bars and rings events, along with a bronze on the vault as the top performer for Team Ontario.

"I didn't expect to do that well," said the Grade 9 Acton District High School student. "It was the toughest competition I've ever had to go against, so to get a medal was great."

Team Ontario, overseen in part by De Lestard's Halton Hills club coach, Nistor Sandro, also finished first overall in the Peter Vidmar competition's team standings.

"That's definitely the highest level any club member from here has achieved," said Sandro. "Marc has excellent potential and it



MARC GAUDET De LESTARD

will be interesting to see what he could do at the nationals."

De Lestard, who is ranked in the top seven for his age category in the province, will attempt to qualify for the Canadian championships next month in Saskatoon at the Eastern Regionals competition April 19-21 in Oakville.

2006 GRAND CARAVAN  White, 3.3L, automatic, 33,985 kms Stk.#P11195 \$23,500 / \$223 BI-WEEKLY/72 MTHS	2005 CARAVAN  Red, 3.3L, automatic, 30,841 kms. Stk.#11204 \$17,400 / \$192 BI-WEEKLY/60 MTHS	2005 CARAVAN  Black, 3.3L, automatic, 81,828 kms. Stk.#P11179-1 \$14,999 / \$167 BI-WEEKLY/60 MTHS	2004 GRAND CARAVAN  Midnight Blue, 3.3L, V6, automatic, 31,798 kms. Stk.#11184 \$18,999 / \$209 BI-WEEKLY/60 MTHS	2004 CARAVAN  Black, 3.3L, automatic, 64,141 kms. Stk.#P11210 \$14,999 / \$167 BI-WEEKLY/60 MTHS
--	---	---	---	--

Example: \$14,999 + GST + PST @ 8.9% = \$167 BI-WEEKLY X 60 MONTHS

GEORGETOWN CHRYSLER JEEP
336 GUELPH ST., GEORGETOWN, ON. 905-877-0149

View our entire inventory at www.monsterauto.ca