



The Holy Grail: Nanooks lose round one in their quest for the Alaska Governor's Cup

By **Kortnie Westfall**
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Last year the University of Alaska Anchorage hockey team took the Alaska Governor's Cup from the Alaska Nanooks for the first time in five years. After the first half of this year's series, reclaiming that title will be more difficult than the Nanooks had hoped.

The Seawolves swept the Nanooks in the weekend's two-game series; 4-3 and 5-3.

Friday night's game was a back-and-forth game on the scoreboard. The Nanooks put a tally on the board just under four minutes into the contest when a shot from junior Adam Naglich rebounded to junior defender Tyler Eckford, who put the puck past Anchorage's sophomore goaltender with a quick one-time shot. The Seawolves responded four minutes later with a goal from sophomore Josh Lunden. The period ended tied.

The Seawolves started off the scoring in the second period, although it took them a while to do it. Junior Mat Robinson put the puck past Alaska goaltender Chad Johnson almost 13 minutes



Counter-Clockwise from top left corner:

Sophomore Dion Knelsen keeps his eye on the puck just before the face-off in Friday's game.

Junior Tyler Eckford lines up for a hit on Anchorage's Tommy Grant.

Senior goaltender Wylie Rogers and senior captain T.J. Campbell protect defend the goal from Anchorage's Craig Parkinson.

A quasi-friendly meeting of Anchorage and Fairbanks fans turns into a cheer-off before the third period of Saturday's game.

Junior Braden Walls beats Seawolf Merit Waldrop to the puck in the second period of Saturday's game.

into the period. The goal didn't hamper the Nanooks' drive; Senior Aaron Lee put the puck past Anchorage's Jon Olthius three minutes later, with another assist from Naglich, and Braden Walls' first point of the season.

In third period action, the Seawolves again started out the score line with a goal from Craig Parkinson eight minutes into the period. Nanook freshman Landon Novotney responded. A three-on-one got him the puck from fellow freshman Dustin Sather and he put it past Olthius for his third career goal in just two games.

With just over four minutes to go, Seawolf freshman Tommy Grant skated circles below the blue-line before putting the puck just under Johnson's pads. In an attempt to swing the momentum back into their favor, the Nanooks pulled Johnson with only 46 seconds to go. It almost reversed on them when a Seawolf shot seemed to be right on target with the empty net, but was blocked by freshman Jeff Penner. The Nanooks were unable to capitalize on the one-man advantage, and the game closed out 4-3.

"It was a good hockey game," Alaska coach Doc DelCastillo said after the game, "I was proud of our guys as far as the way they competed."

Although in Seawolf territory, fans of the Blue and Gold were certainly present. From alumni in Nanook jerseys to groups of students who made the long drive, chants for the Nanooks were abundant. After one Nanook goal, an Anchorage fan turned circles in her seat, seemingly surprised at how many Fairbanks fans were in the arena.

Saturday's game started out with a bang for the Nanooks and it looked like they might tip the scales in their favor. Just 22

seconds into the game, freshman Landon Novotney scored his second goal of the series off of a misplayed puck by rookie Seawolf goalie Matthew Gordon. The Seawolves tied the game up with just 25 seconds to go in the period, leading into a flurry of scoring by the Seawolves in the second session.

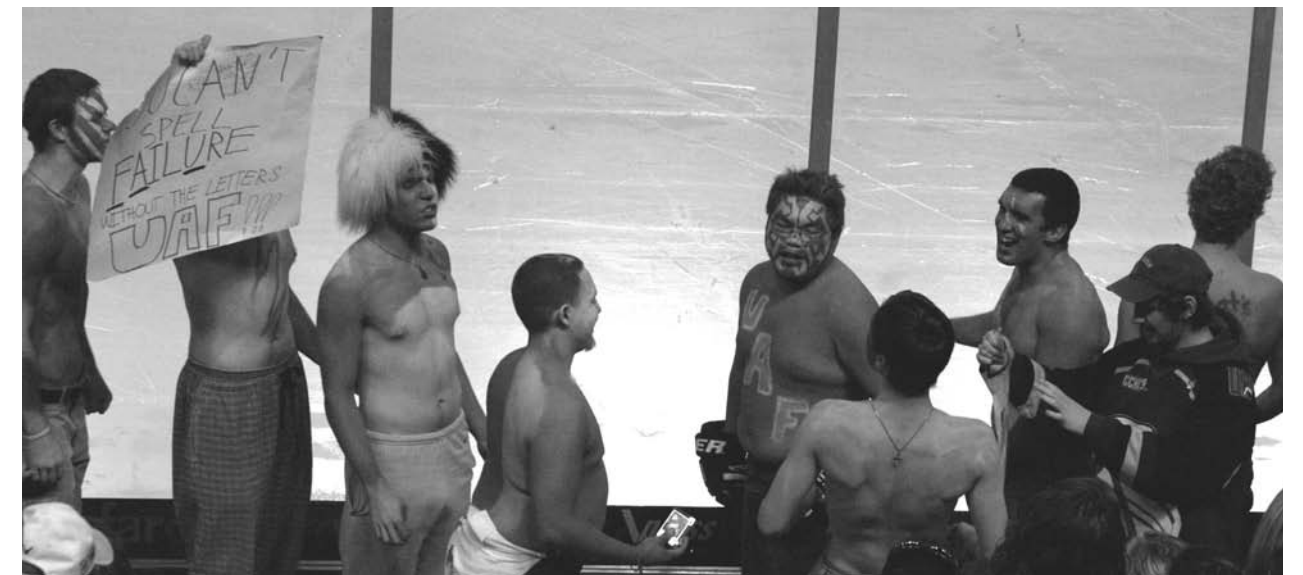
DelCastillo said that the Seawolves' second goal caused the Nanooks to start scrambling and let their emotions get the best of them. Adding to that, in the first period freshman Dustin Sather was ejected from the game for checking from behind. As a first line player, his removal jumbled the team around as well.

The Seawolves scored three goals in the second period, two from freshman Winston DayChief and the other from freshman Luka Vidmar. "Anchorage played a better game than they did a night before," DelCastillo said, "We're just not generating enough offense."

DelCastillo said that the team strayed from their game plan in the second period. "We weren't functioning the way we needed to be functioning," he said.

Alaska's offense did get back up onto their feet in the third period, but it wasn't quite enough. Sophomore Dion Knelsen put in a one-time shot off of a pass from his brother Brandon. Freshman Jeff Penner then put in a puck thanks to a pass from junior Trevor Hyatt with just over two minutes remaining in the period. The Nanooks won the period 2-1, but it wasn't enough to give them a victory.

The Nanooks are now 1-2-0 for the overall season with no conference games so far. With a slow pre-season and sparse beginning of the season, the Nanooks have another week off before facing their first CCHA opponent, Michigan State, in Fairbanks on Nov. 2 and 3. The Spartans were the NCAA champions last year with a 3-1 win over Boston College.



All photos by Kortnie Westfall/Sun Star