



Bay State Winter Games Numbers are up for weekend events

**By Howard Herman, Berkshire Eagle Staff
Tuesday, February 03**

Berkshire County will be the center of the Massachusetts winter sports universe this weekend, as the 24th Bay State Winter Games will take place here.

Competition in figure skating, masters ice hockey and Alpine skiing will commence on Friday and run through Sunday at sites throughout Northern and Central Berkshire County.

"Things are going very, very well," said Kevin Cummings, the executive director of the Massachusetts Amateur Sports Foundation, the organization that runs the Winter and Summer games.

Competition begins Friday afternoon with figure skating at Lansing Chapman Rink on the Williams College campus and masters ice hockey at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Rink in North Adams.

Saturday will have continuing competition in skating and hockey along with the Alpine skiing competition. Alpine skiing is being held at the Bousquet Ski Area in Pittsfield. The sports festival wraps up with skating and hockey's gold medal games on Sunday.

There are 750 athletes expected in the Berkshires for some or all of the weekend competition, and 320 medals will be awarded. That figure was as of Jan. 23.

"The interesting thing about this year, especially with figure skating, with the economy being the way it is and people telling us to expect lower numbers, our numbers are up," said Cummings. "They're up in figure skating, they're up in hockey and we anticipate they'll be up in Alpine as well.

"We're having a really good year this year."

Cummings went on to explain that the increase in competitors could be a direct factor to the recession rather than the economics causing a decrease in competitors.

"People are going to be competing still, but competing more locally," he said. "People are telling us that they can't go to that big trip in Lake Placid (N.Y.), but we can come back this way to the games. That's working out well."

Cummings said that the Bay State Winter Games could see a record number of figure skaters from the U.S. Figure Skating Association and the Ice Skating Institute. There are 12 teams bracketed into the masters ice hockey schedule — six in the Over age-40 division and six in the over-50 division. There are a pair of Berkshire County teams in the U-40 division: The Shamrocks and a team representing Oil Express.

The biggest change in Bay State Games competition is coming in the Alpine skiing event, one of the highlight events for high school-age racers every year. This winter, there will be multiple divisions. Look for skiers in open and masters divisions.

"That's going to add a lot more skiers, so we're hoping to get an increase in those events," said Cummings, who quickly added that the goal is to bring more adults into the competitions.

"That's a trend we're seeing in the Summer Games," he said. "In the Summer Games, some of our big development is in masters swimming, masters track and field and now masters skiing. That really is in reaction to people from Bousquet and (in the Berkshires) saying 'If you did this for masters, there'd really be interest.'

"We're going to try it this year to see how it goes. I don't know if it's going to be huge this year, but I think it'll be a good foundation for this year."

This is the second consecutive year that the Alpine skiing competition has been held at Bousquet.

In addition to the competition, the annual Bay State Skate figure skating show will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, at Lansing Chapman Rink. The show begins at 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$10. It's the only event where a ticket is required. Tickets can be purchased at North Adams City Hall, the Vietnam Veterans Rink, Where'd You Get That in Williamstown, and Smith Brothers-McAndrews Insurance in Adams.

"We're expecting about 1,000 at the event, which is where we've been the last couple of years," said Cummings.



Hockey is a passion for Bay State Gamers

By **STEPHEN DRAVIS**

Posted: 02/04/2009



Berkshire Eagle file photo
A goal is scored in the 2008 Bay State Games gold medal hockey game.

This time next week, the Lanesboro-based Shamrocks hockey team could be the over-40 division hockey champion of the Bay State Winter Games.

Just do not expect the team to remember that accomplishment this time next year.

"We haven't won it a lot, but we've won it a couple of times," Shamrocks founding member Mark Ringie said. "Did we win it last year? I can't really remember."

"We've been pretty competitive. We've gotten medals. We've probably gotten all three - gold, silver and bronze - over the years. It's competitive, and we like to win, but it's more of an outing for us. It is for me anyway."

For the record, the Shamrocks went 2-1 in pool play last year at North Adams' Vietnam Veterans Memorial Rink, but they did not make it to the championship game, according to the Bay State Games Web site, baystategames.org.

The local club will look to improve their lot when they open the three-day tournament Friday at 3:15 p.m. The BSG hockey tournaments are scheduled to wrap up on Sunday with the over-40 gold medal game at 10:45 a.m. and the over-50 finalists facing off at 12:15 p.m.

Hockey is just one element of the games, which celebrate their 24th year in Berkshire County with alpine skiing at Bousquet Ski Area on Saturday, Feb. 7, and figure skating at Williams College's Lansing Chapman Rink Friday through Sunday.

And the Shamrocks are just one of the local teams planning to face off at the North Adams rink. Joining them in the over-40 division will be the Dalton-based Oil Express; the over-50 bracket includes the Berkshire Blizzard.

Ringie, 46, of Pittsfield has been playing in the Bay State Games since he and Mike Daly founded the Shamrocks nearly two decades ago, Ringie said.

"We have five of us who have been there almost the whole time," he said.

"Most of us played high school (hockey). Several played on teams in college. It's just a passion we have. It's fast, it's fun, it's free. It's just a passion we share. Some guys like to go to bars. We like to play hockey."

In the past, the Shamrocks' passion has taken the team throughout the Northeast to find competition. Regular stops included Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Winchendon, Mass., and Saxtons River, Vt., Ringie said.

These days, they tend to stay closer to home, focusing on men's leagues in North Adams on Thursdays and Springfield on Sundays. In January, the Shamrocks organized their own tournament in North Adams.

They do still make an annual trip to Lake Placid, N.Y., for a tournament they have played in for about a dozen years, but traveling does not hold the same appeal it did when the Shamrocks were in their late 20s and 30s, Ringie said.

Thanks to the Bay State Games, they will enjoy some home cooking this weekend.

The winter sports festival attracts competitors from throughout the commonwealth and - in hockey - the Northeast. Organizers expect the 2009 edition to be the best attended in several years, BSG spokesman Peter Cohenno said this week.

One year after poor early-season skiing conditions in Massachusetts were blamed for holding down the number of competitors willing to enter the scholastic, open and masters competition at Bousquet, New Englanders are enjoying some of the best conditions in recent memory.

As of Monday, there were 70 skiers registered for the Alpine competition, but the event generally has a strong walk-up registration on the day of the racing, and BSG officials think 100 is a realistic goal.

"One hundred (skiers) would be the most we've had in a few years," Cohenno said. "I think it would be the most in at least the last five years."

Eligible skiers interested in the giant slalom event can enter for \$45 (it was \$35 prior to Jan. 31), which includes two competitive runs and a lift ticket good for the rest of the day. A regular weekend lift ticket at the Pittsfield mountain is \$40.

Skiers compete in one of three divisions: scholastic for boys and girls in ninth through 12th grades, open for men and women ages 19 to 35 (as of Feb. 7) and masters for athletes 36 and older. To be eligible, athletes must either be a Massachusetts resident, a full-time student at a Massachusetts school or a full-time member of a Massachusetts ski club.

Figure skating competition at the Bay State Games is broken into two divisions; each is regulated by one of two figure skating governing bodies, United States Figure Skating and the Ice Skating Institute.

Cohenno said 388 figure skaters have signed up for this year's competition, compared to about 350 in 2008.

That is surprising, since commissioners of USFS and ISI warned BSG officials that participation could fall this winter.

"It's the first big competition we've heard about that was up this year," Cohenno said. "What we think it is - and we've heard this from other state games, too - it's the 'stay-at-home, play-at-home' idea. People, with the way the economy is, can't afford to take the week to go down to Baltimore or wherever the big competitions are held.

"Our competition is here in the state. It's a two-hour drive at most, and you can stay two nights in a hotel. We've been fortunate that a lot of inns and hotels up there have given a good rate to our competitors."

In addition to the competition, which begins with the USFS juvenile girls competition on Friday afternoon, the weekend features the always-popular Bay State Skate Show at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7, at Lansing Chapman Rink.

The show will include top performers from throughout New England, including two teams from the Christmas Brook Figure Skating Club performing at their home rink. Tickets are \$10.

Admission is free at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Rink to see the seniors hockey games. Do not go expecting to see a lot of hard-hitting action, but do not be surprised if you see a little.

"Technically, we're playing in no-check leagues," Ringie said. "It's an unwritten rule in the game when you're playing no-check that there's bumping going on, but it's very rare that someone will hit you blatantly. If two guys are going to get aggressive, they're going to go face-to-face.

"Some of the younger guys have gotten into fights. That's part of the game."



News & Notes: Pittsfield Eyes \$1M Cut; Bay State Games On

By Larry Kratka - February 06, 2009
Berkshire News Networks

Bay State Winter Games Get Under Way

NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — The annual Bay State Winter Games will get under way today and continue through the weekend at various venues in the Berkshires.

Today, figure skating competition will take place at the Williams College rink beginning at 2:30. At 2, the Masters Ice Hockey competition will take place at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Skating Rink in North Adams. Saturday, more figure skating will take place at Williams but the attention will shift to Bousquet Ski Area in Pittsfield, where an Alpine Skiing Competition kicks off at 9:30 in the morning. Hockey will continue at the Vietnam Veterans Rink in North Adams.

The Bay State Games will wind up on Sunday with the finals in figure skating at Williams College and hockey finals at the Vietnam Veterans Rink in North Adams.



Lancastrian competes this weekend in Bay State Games

Fri Feb 06, 2009

Lancaster - Justin Chien of Lancaster is among the seven adult skaters from the Colonial Figure Skating Club who will compete in the 2009 Bay State Games Feb. 6-8 at Williams College in Williamstown. In all, 47 figure skaters from Colonial and 260 skaters from across Massachusetts will compete.

Bay State Games medal winners will have the opportunity to compete against thousands of medal-winning athletes from similar competitions across the United States in the 2009 State Games of America, July 30 to Aug. 2 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Colonial, which began operations in 1972, has produced Olympic medalists Nancy Kerrigan, Tiffany Scott and Paul Wylie. The club now has more than 400 members and a professional staff of 40 coaches, ranked among the best in the country. Colonial is based at the Nashoba Valley Olympia rink in Boxborough.

— Colonial Figure Skating Club



Salemite to compete in Bay State Winter Games

By Staff reports

Fri Feb 06, 2009

Salem - The Colonial Figure Skating Club Inc. will be sending a record 40-plus USFSA figure skating competitors from 30 local communities — including Salem — to the 2009 Bay State Games.

Colonial Figure Skating Club is an elite 35-year old-coaching organization based out of the Nashoba Valley Olympia rink in Boxborough. It is best known for producing Olympian Nancy Kerrigan, who won the gold medal at the first Bay State Games figure skating competition in 1985.

Seven of the club's skaters going to the 2009 Bay State Winter Games are adult skaters, including Deven Dillon of Salem.

The figure skating events of the Games will be hosted by the Lansing Champman Rink at Williams College, in Williamstown, Mass. from Feb 6-8. The Colonial group will be part of a USFSA field of 260 skaters.

The 2009 Bay State Winter Games is an annual Olympic-style amateur sporting event that is celebrating its 24th year in Northern Berkshire County.



Vincienza Alicandri: North Adams' winter wonder

By Howard Herman, Berkshire Eagle Staff
Sunday, February 08

WILLIAMSTOWN — Sometimes, Vince Lombardi's saying is wrong — winning isn't always the only thing. Eight-year old Vincienza Alicandri of North Adams shows that you can be a champion without finishing first.

Alicandri finished fourth in the girls' pre-preliminary unrestricted group 1 competition Saturday morning at the 24th Bay State Winter Games at Lansing Chapman Rink. Alicandri, a second grader at Brayton Elementary School, competed in a 10-girl field of skaters aged 8-10. She is the youngest figure skater in Bay State Games history, younger by a few months than Christina Quinn of Franklin.

"I like to compete, to perform in front of the audience, to appreciate that I'm here and to please the judges," the precocious youngster said after she performed.

The scores didn't necessarily reflect her performance. But the skater's coach said it was a quality performance for the first time in such a venue.

"I think that it's great for her first time in the Bay State Games," said Erma Magee, Vincienza's coach of two years. "I thought she did a nice job."

"Obviously, the judges had different opinions. She had a first, a second, two fourths and a fifth — and the girl in front of her had maybe the majority of thirds. So it was very, very close between second and fourth place."

For the record, Alanna Kubik of Pembroke won the gold medal in this division, while Ashley Harkins of Bridgewater earned the silver and Lindsey Scally of Avon took the bronze medal. Peyton Wojtkowski of Pittsfield was ninth.

A member of the Christmas Brook Figure Skating Club, Alicandri skates at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Rink in North Adams and at the Knickerbocker Ice Arena in North Troy, N.Y., where Magee coaches her.

"I used to come to public (skating) every single day after school, no miss. Now, I don't do that anymore because they have hockey," Alicandri said.

This is, however, about more than just ice skating. Vincienza Alicandri was diagnosed as autistic at age three, and her mother Mai Linh also said her daughter was diagnosed with ADHD at age seven. Magee, who was born in Pittsfield, is a longtime school teacher and coach, and she believes that the skating has helped her student.

"Autistic children are very focused, and I believe the skating has made her even more focused," said Magee. "She's an A student in school, so you'd never know she's an autistic kid."

Is she an A student on the ice?

"Most of the time, yes," her coach said with a laugh. "She'll get out there and she'll skate for two hours non-stop. She loves it. She's got that drive. If she falls, she just picks herself up and (goes)."

Vincienza's mother said she thought it was a good idea to get her daughter involved in skating.

"She is full of energy and she's not that aware of danger," said Alicandri. "I wanted to use this sport as a therapy for her. I want to let out her energy in a structural environment."

There's another part of this as important.

"She loves to perform. This sport helps her learn how to focus, helps her with social skills," her mother continued. "This sport helps her in a lot of ways — at school and at home."

"She was working on basic skills when I got her, so we pushed her through the basic skills. She had a lot of talent," said Magee. "She entered her very first competition about a year and a half ago in Clifton Park (N.Y.). She competed in the Christmas Brook one last month and she won that, and won the one in Clifton Park this year. She's come along very quickly."

The youngster is on her U.S. Figure Skating Association test for intermediate moves, which her coach says is unusual.

"I started doing basic skills when I was five years old," Vincienza said. "I had a bucket, but I said 'no, I don't need it,' and I pushed it away."

Her mother corroborated and expanded on her daughter's story.

"Next week when we came back, I saw she started to race with hockey boys. Guess who won? She won," her mother said with pride. "A parent came up to me and told me, 'I've been in this sport for a long time because of my daughter. I never saw a child make progress like your daughter made. I think you should support her.' Since then, my job is to support her."

Vincienza Alicandri said she loves skating "with all my heart."

As to getting ready for her 11:30 a.m. session start, Alicandri said she wasn't nervous about taking to the Lansing Chapman Rink ice.

"There's nothing to be nervous about, all you have to do is go out and skate," Vincienza said, "just like you have been practicing."

Vincienza Alicandri swims and dances in addition to her figure skating. Next weekend she'll be doing a ribbon dance at Vietnamese New Year festivities in New Jersey.

"I came here to have fun, and not to be nervous," a smiling Vincienza said. "I'm here to compete like a champion and to lose like a champion."

She may have come in fourth, but Vincienza Alicandri is still a champion.



County skiers dominate Bay State Games Competitors from the Berkshires take 17 of the 23 medals awarded.

**By Chris Carlson, Berkshire Eagle Staff
Sunday, February 08**

PITTSFIELD — Somewhere in a photo album, there's likely a near-replica of the photographs that Courtney Donovan and Tony Cruz posed for yesterday except for one key difference — they don't include Bay State Winter Games medals.

Donovan won the 11th and 12th grade girls division, while Cruz placed second in the 9th and 10th grade boys during the Alpine competition at Bousquet Ski Area on Saturday.

Both led sweeps in their divisions from Bousquet skiers and topped off a bountiful day for Berkshire County, which earned 17 of the 23 medals awarded.

Donovan's victory was the most decisive, with nearly a three-second difference between her and Stockbridge's Morgan Balfanz. Sophia House placed third, giving all three sports to Berkshire County League skiers.

"It was nice to have all three of us up there," Donovan said.

For Donovan, who also represents St. Joseph's during the high school season and competes on an intense Tri-State circuit, the Bay State Games represented an opportunity to ski without too much on the line — just some pride and the fleece jackets awarded to the top three in each division.

Donovan had the best run in each of her two giant slalom efforts, finishing with a combined time of 1:27.81.

"I've done it before," Donovan said. "I think I came in second or third. It's just a fun race. It was really good snow."

The Bousquet skiers had a home course advantage, with some tricky spots that might have left visiting skiers unprepared.

"It definitely helped," said Cruz, who also races for Taconic. "Usually I don't like my home course because I overthink it, but today I just let it go. Coming on to the face and off of it, those were big points."

Eric Brandonlini, a Glastonbury, Conn., resident who skis with the Bousquet ski team, edged out Cruz in one of the most competitive divisions with Lenox's Connor Graham taking third.

Again, all three train at Bousquet. Brandonlini finished in 1:24.59, with Cruz at 1:25.16 and Graham just two-tenths of a second behind him.

"They're some of my best friends," Cruz said. "I like to ski as much as I can, and all my friends were doing it."

Skiers from New York and Connecticut were allowed to compete in the Games if their primary mountain is based in Massachusetts.

Other local winners included Richmond's Cindy Bartlett (women's masters), Otis' Christine Homason (women's open), Pittsfield's Scott Raymakers (men's master) and Pittsfield's Peter Dunham (men's open).

Despite the county control, some of the state's most talented high schoolers were also in attendance.

Feeding Hills' Timothy Olson won the men's 11th and 12th grade event with the fastest time turned in by a male skier (1:22.88), while Slingerlands, N.Y.'s Michaela Maybee won the girls' 9th and 10th grade division with the fastest female time (1:27.42).

"We know who most of them are from other races, and there were a lot of them here," Donovan said.

Agawam, St. John's Shrewsbury and Bromfield all sent contingents.

The addition of open and masters classes led to 20 more skiers competing than last year, though all but a handful of those competitors were from Berkshire County. By reaching out to the adult skiers, Bay State organizers hope to alleviate the loss of some of the younger skiers whose participation has dwindled.

Pittsfield's Peter Dunham, who also coaches the Monument Mountain ski team, said he expects that to change with time.

Dunham competes in an adult ski race league on Tuesday nights and said there's a large contingent of adult ski racers across the state.

"I think it's a great idea," Dunham said. "A lot of us race in leagues where we drive places like Stratton Mountain. I don't see why they wouldn't come here. Word will spread."

Raymakers, who helped push the idea to organizers, said he was pleased with the first year.

"It was a good start for the first year," Raymakers said. "You establish a base and you grow."

Dunham, who won a state championship with Taconic in 1994, said he'd always wanted to ski in the Bay State Games, but the event always seemed to conflict with a more prestigious event, like the Junior Olympics.

This year, at 30, Dunham finally got a chance to compete in the Bay State Games, winning the Men's Open division in 1:25.64, nipping Peru's Frank Krol by three-tenths of a second.

"There was always something going on that I couldn't avoid back then," Dunham said. "It's good to keep that competitive spirit. Mostly, though, it's just a really fun event."

Raymakers, a 46-year-old from Pittsfield who coordinates the adult league on Tuesdays, said he relished the thought of testing himself against the younger racers.

Raymakers passed his exam, crossing in a combined time of 1:24.81, good enough to beat all but three of the high school skiers.

"Not bad for an old man," Raymakers said. "I'm competitive. I wanted to see how I could do against the kids, see if I could still do it."

WICKED LOCAL SALEM

Salemite among medal winners at Bay State Games

**By Staff reports
Fri Feb 13, 2009**

Salem - The Colonial Figure Skating Club, Inc., an elite 35-year-old coaching organization based out of the Nashoba Valley Olympia rink and best known for producing Olympian Nancy Kerrigan, sent more than 40 competitors to the 2009 Bay State Games.

More than 20 took home medals, seven of whom are adult skaters, including Deven Dillon, of Salem, who won the Gold Medal in the Adult Masters Division.

The figure skating events of the Games were held at the Lansing Champman Rink at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. from Feb 6-8.

Bay State Games medal winners will have the opportunity to compete against thousands of medal-winning athletes from state games programs from across the United States. The 2009 State Games of America will be held July 30-Aug. 2, in Colorado Springs, Col.

WICKED LOCAL MIDDLETON

Bankes siblings bring in swimming medals

Thu Feb 19, 2009

Boxford - Jennie Bankes (8) and her brother Peter (9) competed in the District Championships on Feb. 3 at J.F. Kennedy School in Somerville. Jennie is in the 8-and-under (class E) and Peter in the 9-10 age group (class D). They swim for the Andover/North Andover YMCA Hurricanes, for which Bay State Games record-holder Missie Bankes (their mother) is an assistant coach.

Jennie won the 25 breaststroke, got a silver medal in the 25 backstroke and a bronze in the 100 individual medley.

Peter won the 50 freestyle, got a silver in both the 50 backstroke and the 100 freestyle. His medley relay team (he was the anchor doing freestyle) got the gold, as did his freestyle relay.

Both kids have qualified for the New England YMCA Swimming Championships, which are to be held at Harvard University on March 22.

The Republican.

Westfield track friends share All-States aspirations

By JUSTIN A. RICE

Saturday February 21, 2009

BOSTON - Last year Tyler Cumberland attended the All-States indoor track meet to provide moral support for his friend and Westfield teammate Julie McGilpin.

This year, it's unclear if McGilpin will be suiting up for the All-State meet on Friday at the Reggie Lewis Center or returning the favor to Cumberland as he prepares to run the 600 meters.

Cumberland finished third in the 600 meters with a time of 1:22.72. McGilpin, meanwhile, failed to guarantee a slot at All-States in the 1,000 meters after she finished seventh with a time of 3:05.65.

"All this season I knew I wanted to go top 10 in the state since I made 11th last year," Cumberland said. "Last year my friend Julie McGilpin made All-States so I wanted to get in on that."

While only the top five finishers are guaranteed an All-State trip, the next four fastest times in each event regardless of division are taken as well.

"It was a little disappointing for Julie. Hopefully, she'll be able to pull through and be back," Westfield coach Ralph Figy said. "We're hoping she'll be able to come through for next week. We'll know Monday. Tyler had a nice race. Finishing third out of the second heat, that was quite a feat."

Westfield senior Maddilyn Baird is in the same boat as McGilpin. She finished sixth in the long jump with a leap of 16-01.50. She also failed to qualify in the 55-meter hurdles after hitting the fourth hurdle.

McGilpin had one more shot at clinching All-States as a member of the 4x400-meter relay team, but the squad finished 15th with a time of 424.63.

Cumberland was able to improve on last winter's result after finishing ninth at the outdoor All-State meet in the 800 last spring and second in his division in the same race at the Bay State Games last summer.

Last winter Cumberland and McGilpin rushed from the school's science fair to get to the All-State meet. This year they will have to leave the fair early again for at least one more race.

"To be honest," Cumberland, acknowledging his friend's disappointment, said, "I'm just happy I get to skip science fair."

Pino has Masco poised for postseason run

**By Chris Helms
February 24, 2009**

North Andover High senior Jenn Pino didn't grow up playing hockey. Far from it, in fact.

But that hasn't stopped her from becoming one of the top offensive weapons on the Masconomet-North Andover co-op team over the past two seasons.

In just her fourth year of competitive hockey — she played in seventh grade, skipped in eighth, picked it back up freshman year, played club sophomore year, and has been on varsity the past two seasons — Pino has taken the Northeastern Conference-Cape Ann League by storm.

This year, the returning Eagle-Tribune All-Star earned her second straight trip to the NEC/CAL All-Star game thanks to a huge 22-point season (11 goals, 11 assists), and she tied for the team lead in points with 14 (11 goals, 3 assists) last year.

"Yeah, I guess I'm a little surprised," Pino said of the amount of success she's had in a relatively short time in the sport.

For anyone who's seen Pino play, surprising could be an understatement, but she didn't exactly come out of nowhere. She was a competitive figure skater, as she says, for pretty much her entire life up until high school. Not to mention the fact that her siblings, including brother Sam, who played in the 2000 Bay State Games, were heavily involved in the local hockey scene at North Andover.

"My brothers were into hockey, and I watched them a lot," said Pino. "As a figure skater, when I was at the rink, I'd always see the hockey players so I kind of just tried it out. I decided to stop figure skating freshman year because it was at the point where I'd have to start home-schooling and it starts to consume most of your time."

Already knowing how to skate, and skate well, all that was left was for Pino to learn the more unique nuances of the game.

"I think skating is probably the most important part of hockey, being strong on your feet, so I had a pretty big advantage (coming in). I just needed to work on stick-handling and the other skills," the three-sport star said.

Now a more complete player, Pino has helped lead the Chieftains to the 10th seed in the Division 1 state tourney and a 13-3-4 record in the regular season. According to Pino, who anchored one of two top lines from center, a lot of things fell into place for the squad this year.

"I thought it was a really good accomplishment (to go 13-3-4)," said Pino. "Looking at the team last year (when we didn't qualify for the tournament), it shows we've improved as a team and gelled finally. We definitely worked more as a team this year."

Pino, who will be attending Merrimack next fall to play lacrosse and soccer, was pivotal in last night's 4-1 win over 23rd-seed Beverly-Gloucester. In the Chieftains' first-ever tourney victory, Pino had a goal and an assist while fellow North Andover residents Alyssa Sady (two assists) and Lauren Cerretani (assist) combined for three points, as well. Pino's points were crucial as the teams were locked in a 1-1 tie through two periods before the Chieftains erupted for three third-period goals.

If the team can keep up the pace, Pino thinks good things will continue to happen.

"I think we can probably make it to the final four if we put our mindset to playing as hard as we can and putting it all out on the ice," Pino said the day before Masco's huge 4-1 victory. "If we play how we can, we'll definitely get the job done."