



**PROGRAM INFO**

**Nickname:** Cardinals  
**Conference:** Central Lakes  
**Section:** 6A  
**Record:** 21-6-1  
**State trips:** 1992, 96, 2010  
**Coach:** Scott Woods

**STAT LEADERS**

Scorers	G	A	Pts
Thomas Williams	37	24	61
Casey Vangsness	15	30	45
Ross Thompson	12	31	43
Ashton Gronholz	15	8	23
Tyler Iverson	9	10	19

Goalies	W-L-T	GA	SV
Erich Murphy	16-3-1	1.90	.914

**FULL ROSTER**

#	Name	Pos	Gr
4	Tyler Iverson	F	12
5	Jacob Bigger	F	11
6	Kirby Nelson	D	12
7	Ross Thompson	F	12
8	Ashton Gronholz	F	12
9	Thomas Williams	F	12
11	Myles Bjelland	F	11
12	Aaron Rentschler	D	12
14	Scott Hennen	F	11
15	Andrew Hittle	D	11
17	Casey Vangsness	F	12
20	Jacob Smith	F	10
22	Zach Van Orsdel	D	11
23	Nick Swanson	F	11
27	Jordan Domine	F	10
29	Zach Schuck	D	12
30	Dominic Wysoski	G	11
31	Erich Murphy	G	10
36	Charlie Wensman	D	10
37	Garrett Skinner	F	10

**ROAD TO THE X**

**Section 6A Quarters, 2/23  
 Alexandria 9, SC Apollo 3**

Williams, Domine and Gronholz 2 goals each

**Section 6A Semis, 2/27  
 Alexandria 3, Willmar 1**

Williams 1 goal, 1 assist

**Section 6A Finals, 3/5  
 Alexandria 4, Sartell 1**

Gronholz and Williams 2 goals each

Murphy 30 saves

Photos / Tim Kolehmainen

# ALEXANDRIA



By Tim Kolehmainen

Alexandria coach Scott Woods had a message for his team. "It's our time."

With his Cardinals leading Sartell-St. Stephen by a single goal during the second intermission of the Section 6A finals last week, Woods looked his players in the eyes and implored them to finish what they'd started months earlier.

"We had a discussion, saying that nobody was taking this away from us this year," Woods said. "I had a sense that this group wasn't going to let it happen. It was our turn to go down there (St. Paul)."

The Cardinals responded, as Ashton Gronholz and Thomas Williams scored in the first five minutes to put the game out of reach – sending Alexandria back to state after some heartbreaking losses in past playoffs.

Alexandria has been one of the better Class A teams in the state in recent years. But continued to run into the Little Falls juggernaut. Last year, the Cardinals lost just five games, but three times to Little Falls – by a single goal each time, including a 3-2 overtime loss in the section finals.

"The last two years we believed we were good enough, but we knew we had a very good opponent," Woods said. "This year, we felt like this was our year. This was the time for us to go."

With the trip to St. Paul secure, the Cardinals waited for their seeding. When it came, they earned a match-up with No. 2 Mahtomedi in the tournament's very first game Wednesday morning at 11 a.m.

Woods immediately had a few more words for his team.

"Number one, don't go out and play nervous," Woods said. "Number two, know you belong there and play like you belong there. You've accomplished the biggest goal you had, to get there. Now let it all hang out there and have fun."

The Cardinals will have to continue to play as they did in winning the section title, getting good goaltending from sophomore Erich Murphy (16-3-1, 1.90, .914) and a solid team defensive effort in front of him.



Murphy

Murphy has been a godsend for the Cardinals, who lost All-Stater Matt Hemingway to graduation. He started off on a steep learning curve, but has been very good the past few weeks.

"It took him some time," admitted Woods. "Those were huge shoes to fill and he's been one of our biggest surprises. It was an adjustment with the speed of game and harder shots. Once we were two weeks into the season, he had to keep battling for that spot and that's what has made him better."

Offensively, watch for senior Thomas Williams (37-24-61), who has played on the Cardinals' first line since he was a sophomore. He's a complete player who makes his teammates better and can bury the puck.



Williams

Defensively, Alexandria has great experience with seniors Kirby Nelson and Aaron Rentschler leading the way.

**THE CARDINALS WILL WIN THE STATE TITLE IF...**



**Tim Kolehmainen:** They play like they belong at the X. This is a program that has been capable of multiple state bids recently, but has always run into Little Falls. With good goaltending and defense, they have now emerged.