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#### HIGH SCHOOLS

## Hill-Murray boys' hockey team knocked out of state tournament on eve of first game

A COVID-19 exposure involving a recent opponent will keep the team from playing its scheduled game Wednesday morning against Wayzata.

By Paul Klauda (<https://www.startribune.com/paul-klauda/6370661/>) Star Tribune

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A week ago the Hill-Murray boys' hockey team was coming off the high of a 5-0 victory over White Bear Lake in the section final, securing a trip back to the state tournament for last year's Class 2A champions.

But on Wednesday morning, when the Pioneers were scheduled to open the tournament against Wayzata, no one will be on the ice at Xcel Energy Center.

A COVID-19 exposure case involving a White Bear Lake player meant the team, under virus guidelines, could not have played again until Thursday.

Seeking to prevent the Minnesota State High School League from enforcing the COVID measure, families of nine Hill-Murray players filed a lawsuit Tuesday morning in Washington County. They said the game could be played Thursday, securing support from Wayzata to do so and taking advantage of an off-day in the tournament schedule.

But Washington County Judge Juanita Freeman declined to block the league.

The school, in a letter to hockey families, said it had secured the Minnesota Department of Health's approval for the team to play Thursday. But the high school league, in a letter to school leaders citing its postseason guidelines, said no.

"We're done," coach Bill Lechner said. "We are in quarantine until Thursday. We can't switch venues. They didn't accept the details we gave them."

As a result, unseeded Wayzata advances to the first semifinal at 6 p.m. Friday.

"These situations are difficult for everyone involved and when the experience impacted is in our state hockey tournament, it is magnified even more," high school league Executive Director Erich Martens said. "We would love to have a full tournament bracket for this iconic event, and these interruptions are frustrating and incredibly unfortunate."

According to the suit, the team learned of the possible positive COVID test after the White Bear Lake game on March 24. School officials said they spent the past two days reviewing statutes and orders, meeting with health department officials and closely reviewing video from the game.

The suit and a letter from school officials to hockey families maintain that Hill-Murray players "had almost no contact with the infected player" from White Bear Lake, and that when contact occurred all players were wearing masks.

The court papers provided uniform numbers for 18 players on the team, listing their ice time along with exposure time and contact level with the opponent who later tested positive. Exposure times ranged from no time to four seconds, described as lacking either physical or face-to-face contact, the suit said.



STAR TRIBUNE

Hill-Murray, shown here in a 2018 game, is a traditional power in Minnesota high school hockey.

Efforts to move the game to Thursday found support at opponent Wayzata, which issued a statement earlier Tuesday saying, "We left every option for Hill Murray to find a solution and feel badly about the situation."

The league's rule regarding COVID compliance in the postseason stipulates that "if a team is unable to compete at the scheduled time in the postseason, that team will be eliminated from the postseason," Martens wrote to Hill-Murray school leaders.

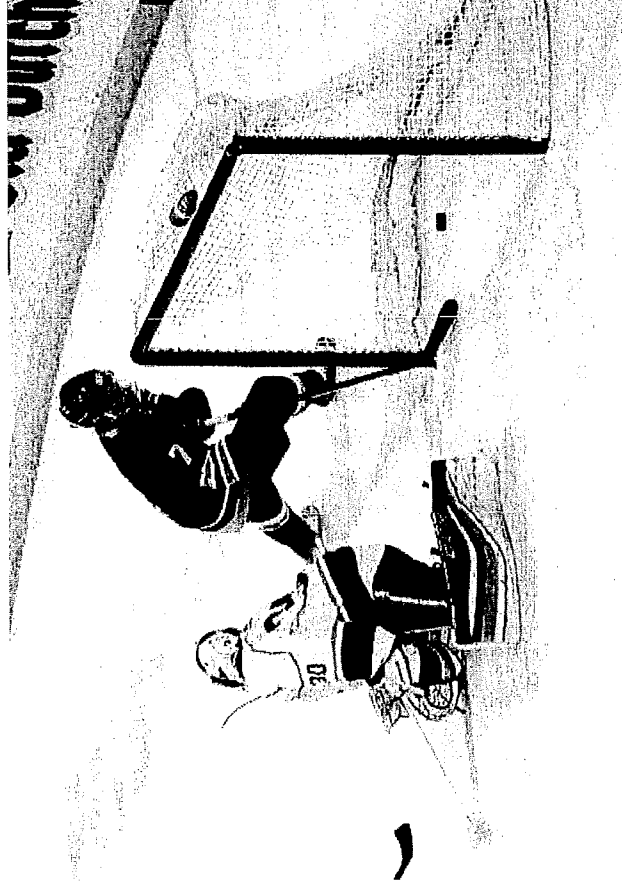
Martens wrote to school officials that the team could play Wednesday "with eligible student athletes who are not subject to quarantine."

Hill-Murray's JV program had ended its season, closing that option. On Tuesday, Hermantown, the No. 1-seed in the Class A tournament, fielded a roster comprised largely of junior varsity players after a COVID exposure forced all but several members of the team into quarantine.

[Hermantown lost 7-3 \(https://www.mnhockeyhub.com/news\\_article/show/1155217\)](https://www.mnhockeyhub.com/news_article/show/1155217) to unseeded Dodge County.

"Although we remain a proud member of the MSHSL, we are deeply saddened by this outcome," Hill-Murray President Jim Hansen and athletics and activities director John Pohl wrote to hockey families. "We know how important the state tournament experience is for our hockey players."

Staff writer David La Vaque contributed to this report.



### After three blowouts, a nail-biter caps Day 1 of state boys' hockey

Eight goal outbursts took center stage in the early session of the 1A tournament before it was the Brody Lamb Show for Dodge County to kick off the evening. Little Falls edged Delano to cap Day I. (<https://www.startribune.com/follow-the-minnesota-boys-state-hockey-tournament-quarterfinals-here/600040212/>)

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