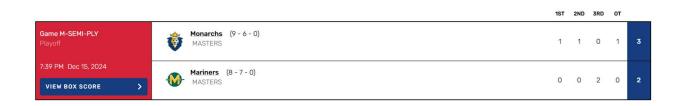


In a nail-biting playoff showdown with a finals berth on the line, the Threshers fended off a ferocious comeback attempt by the Yellowjackets to secure a thrilling 4-3 victory. The atmosphere was electric from the opening puck drop, and both teams left everything on the ice in this do-or-die clash. With action-packed drama, standout performances, and relentless determination, this game epitomized playoff hockey at its finest.

The Threshers came out strong, with Travis Dupuis orchestrating an early goal and assisting on another by Brian Morgan to end the first period up 2-1. The Yellowjackets kept things close thanks to Sean Taylor's snipe, showing they wouldn't go down without a fight. The second period saw the Threshers extend their lead when John Sances capitalized on a defensive lapse with an unassisted beauty, but the Yellowjackets regrouped in the third with renewed energy.

The final period was a spectacle of grit and skill. The Yellowjackets clawed back with goals from Bill McIver and Eric Murray, trimming the deficit to one. However, the Threshers' John Russell delivered the gamewinning dagger on a power play, thanks to a slick feed from Duncan Morrissey. Joe Burke's stellar goaltending sealed the deal, withstanding a late Yellowjackets flurry to punch the Threshers' ticket to the finals. For the Yellowjackets, it was a heartbreaker, but for the Threshers, the dream of championship glory lives on.

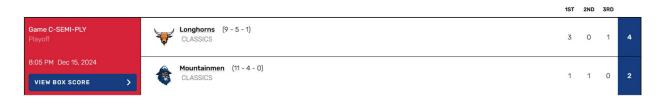


In a playoff game destined to be remembered, Matt McCourt orchestrated a dazzling performance to lead the Monarchs to a 3-2 overtime victory over the Mariners. McCourt's playmaking provess was on full display as he racked up three crucial assists, including the game-winning setup in extra time, proving to be the driving force behind the Monarchs' success. The Mariners put up a valiant fight, but the night belonged to McCourt and his teammates.

The Monarchs struck early in the first period with a slick passing sequence from McCourt and Peter Fallon, setting up Brant Humfryes for the opener. McCourt's impact didn't stop there; he facilitated Dan Buckingham's second-period goal with a perfectly timed feed, doubling the lead. However, the Mariners found life in the third period, scoring twice to send the game to overtime. The Krukiel brothers spearheaded the Mariners' comeback, with John and Peter each involved in the critical goals to keep their hopes alive.

Overtime brought edge-of-your-seat drama, and McCourt rose to the occasion yet again. With the game on the line, McCourt delivered a pinpoint pass to Dan McKinney, who buried the game-winner, sending Monarchs fans into a frenzy. Adam Figlioli's stellar goaltending locked down the victory, while McCourt's masterclass earned him rightful praise as the star of the game. With this win, the Monarchs advance, their championship hopes burning brighter than ever.





The Longhorns stampeded into the playoffs with a stunning 4-2 upset over the top-seeded Mountainmen, setting the tone for a wild night in the Classics Division. In a game that showcased sharp passing and relentless effort, the Longhorns delivered a statement victory, powered by early offensive fireworks and rock-solid defense. Doc Smith stood tall between the pipes, while Jim Hutchinson's first-period game-winner cemented the Longhorns' Cinderella narrative.

The first period was a flurry of action, with both teams trading goals and momentum. Mike Crisp opened the scoring for the Longhorns, only for Pat Scully of the Mountainmen to respond minutes later. The Longhorns struck back swiftly, with Ed Mortell's setup paving the way for Hutchinson's decisive tally. Hutchinson's goal at 6:22 proved to be the dagger, as it energized the Longhorns and deflated the Mountainmen's usually unshakable composure. Despite another effort from Scully in the second period to close the gap, the Mountainmen couldn't match the Longhorns' intensity.

In the third period, the Longhorns' defense tightened as they secured the lead with Paul Lafond netting an insurance goal, courtesy of another smooth connection from Mortell and Scott Varley. Meanwhile, Doc Smith turned away everything the Mountainmen threw at him, showcasing nerves of steel. The upset marks a seismic shift in the Masters Division bracket, with the Longhorns now poised to charge toward an improbable

championship. For the Mountainmen, it's back to the drawing board as their playoff dreams dissolve under the weight of a determined Longhorns squad.



The Hawks soared to an electrifying 4-2 victory over the Spartans in the second playoff upset of the night, fueled by the brilliance of Barry Kaiser between the pipes and a relentless offensive push. Despite the Spartans' best efforts, they simply couldn't penetrate Kaiser's armor in the critical moments, leaving their playoff hopes dashed. The Hawks capitalized on their chances, with Shawn Malloy leading the charge in a gritty, physical contest.

The game began with both teams trading punches. Justin Stratton ignited the Hawks early with a slick goal at 9:26 in the first period, assisted by the sharp duo of Malloy and Frank Elwood. The Spartans answered swiftly, as Bill Petrarca converted a crisp feed from Frank Brinkmann to level the score. The second period saw the Hawks reclaim their edge, with Elwood finding the back of the net, while Glenn Harnish's response for the Spartans kept the contest deadlocked heading into the third.

It was in the final frame that Malloy took over, netting the game-winner with a clinical finish at 3:28. The Spartans pressed desperately, but Kaiser's impeccable goaltending stood as an unyielding wall. Chuck Kilfoye sealed the win with an empty-net dagger at 13 seconds to go, capping off a masterclass performance by the Hawks. For the Spartans, it was a case of too little firepower against an opponent who executed to perfection. The Hawks now ride their momentum into the next round, with Kaiser anchoring a team that looks primed to take on all comers.