

#IT WAS A high-stick

HOCKEY SECURES NUMBER 3 SEED AND PLACE IN SEMIFINALS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2001

Looking back at the hundreds of fans behind him as shouts of support and love flood the arena, **Benjamin Magnuson**¹¹ reflects on his season as left wing.

"This was my favorite year of hockey by far," Magnuson said. "Playing with Tristan and Chris was amazing. Not the way I wanted it to end the Semifinals, but a year to remember for sure."

The last time Liberty qualified for the final rounds of playoffs was in 2001 when Mr.

Aufderheide was still coaching.

"Before the game, we were given a speech by Coach Aufderheide that fired us up," Left Defense Ryan Seder said.

"He provided us with his one of a kind intellect and inspiration. It was at that time when I think all of us realized how proud we all are to be playing for this school."

The Lancers finished their regular season with a 15-4 record before crushing Crested Butte 5-3 in the first round of playoffs and preparing to face Summit in the

State Semi-finals on March 2. The game was intense from the start, with Summit taking a 2-0 lead at the end of the first period. Despite the setback, the Lancers proved resilient and tied the game in the second period with goals from **Ethan Graber**¹² and **Micah Newton**¹². The heat was turned up in the third period as both teams scored and tied 3-3.

In the final minutes of the game, referees allowed a high-stick against Liberty goalie **Logan Gabrielson**¹².

"[A high-stick] means the player that scored the goal had his stick higher than his shoulders," Magnuson said.

The uncalled penalty knocked Gabrielson off balance, leaving room for the puck to bounce into the net and give Summit the winning goal. The Lancers were left with 3 minutes to tie the game, but any attempts at scoring were unsuccessful. As the clock ran down to 0, all hope at making it to State Championships came to a screeching halt.

Despite the utterly disappointing end to their season, the team was left with experiences and relationships that would last a lifetime.

The captains team is made up of **Brandon McIlhany**, **Ryan Seder**, **Tristan Ward** and **Ethan Graber**. Together these boys have made connections and relationships as a team.

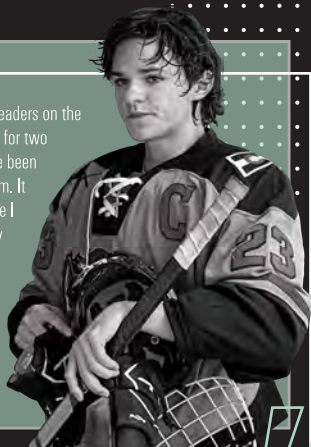
Seder reflected upon the final game of the season.

"Naturally, with it being the semifinal game, we all still felt the jitters pretty badly," Seder said. "It was evident that we felt like this based on how we started the game. We had a disappointing first period, but were able to show our true identity in the second when we tied it up." My message to the guys in the room after the second period was the same as the previous game: "This is it boys. This could be the last period of hockey we ever play together. We need to play for each other. It is do or die right now."

captain's log

Being one of the leaders on the team, and the captain for two years, I couldn't have been more proud of this team. It got to the point where I couldn't even say anything and they just knew how to play, especially come playoff time, and even more in semi finals.

- **Ethan Graber**¹²



1

4



1. AS TIME STOPS, *Tristan Ward*¹² clings to his brother while the Semifinals game comes to a close with a big loss for the Lancers. Ward was the last to the locker room because of this extended moment with his brother who had been just outside the glass watching the game unfold. "My brother and I were wishing things had ended different but excited for the next big thing," Ward said.

photo by emily robertson

The **LOVE** of the game is greater than any **one** game. I'm **SO** proud of the team.

- **Coach Kent McIlhaney**

2. SKATING TO CENTER ICE,

*Ryan Seder*¹² reflects on the Semifinals loss as he makes his way to the locker room. "As soon as the buzzer hit, the emotion hit me right away. We were only one game away from reaching our objective," Seder said. "Yeah this was only my first year playing for Liberty, but I realized then how much I love this school and how much I wish I could've spent all four years playing here. Although we did not get to our goal, I feel as though we created a spark for not only Liberty Hockey but all of Liberty Athletics."

photo by emily robertson

3. DEFENDING THE PUCK, *Christopher Kunze*¹² skates down the ice during the trying to score a goal that would keep the team in the running. "We were losing and I was putting pressure on them trying to score," Kunze said.

photo by emily robertson

4. CHEERING FROM THE STUDENT SECTION, hockey player *Carson Storey*⁰⁹ screams as *Micah Newton*¹² scores a point that would place the Lancers just one point behind Summit in the second period. Storey has played hockey for almost 5 years, planning on joining Liberty's team his freshmen year, but unfortunately broke his leg before the season even started. "When Summit scored in the third period, I got super anxious and all I wanted was to see a goal from us," Storey said. "After the game ended it was super emotional because we had come such a long way and to see us lose like that was super sad."

photo by emily robertson

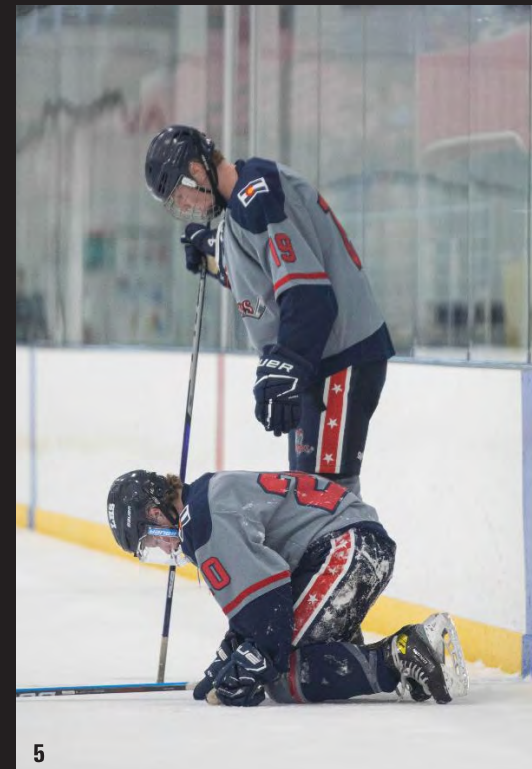
5. HUNCHED IN AGONY, *Nathan McIlhaney*¹⁰ kneels on the ice after being slammed into the wall by a Summit player while skating down the ice. *Micah Newton*¹² stood over him in concern as players cleared the ice and *Brandon McIlhaney*¹² and *Coach Kent McIlhaney* rushed to his aid. "I was worried about my previously hurt shoulder and then realized that it was my wrist," McIlhaney said. "I was furious when I wasn't able to play the rest of the game. It was also only a two minute penalty and not a five minute."



2



3



5