SPORTS

the game

Hockey vs. Miami (Ohio)
Faceoff at 8:05 p.m. Friday/5:05 p.m. Saturday

Follow the game
TV CBS College Sports
Radio Friday, WJIM (1240-AM); Saturday, WVFN (730-AM)

Players to watch
MSU Daultan Leveille - The freshman forward is third on the team in points and slowly establishing himself as the go-to guy for the Spartans. **MIAMI (OHIO)** Carter Camper - The RedHawks sophomore is averaging 1.28 points a game and his 27 total points are tied for ninth nationally.

In the crease
Miami (Ohio)'s penalty kill is first in the CCHA — killing off 127-of-139 power plays this season.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA ZAGATA/THE STATE NEWS

MEANING BEHIND THE MASK

Ice hockey

ALEX DIFILIPPO

I'll never forget the day I bought my first "goalie helmet."

It was my pee-wee season of hockey in my small northeastern Michigan town and my father had agreed to pay for half the helmet if I could save up enough to pay for the other half.

When I finally had enough money, I forced my father to take me to the nearest hockey equipment store (which was about two hours away).

So why was this such a huge event in my life? I wanted to show opposing teams I was a serious goalie.

In that age group in hockey, most teams didn't have an established netminder and everyone was forced to rotate turns between the pipes.

These players obviously used their normal helmets when they took their shift in net — an indication of an inexperienced netminder.

The goalie helmet became an intimidation factor in my mind, even though I'm sure my 4-foot-nothing, 85-pound body wasn't scaring anyone.

While 10 years ago goalie helmets were pricey and rare around hockey rinks, today they are more affordable and have become commonplace.

The goalie helmet is used by netminders everywhere for three main reasons.

First off, it offers more protection to goaltenders than the standard player helmet.

When getting hit in the noggin by an object traveling at more than 70 mph is in the job description, it's pretty important to make sure you have a piece of equipment specifically designed to protect you from any type of head injury.

Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, goalie helmets are used as an intimidation factor. Whether it's a simple design or a crazy paint job, the helmet is one of the first things you notice when a goalie takes the ice.

And finally, goalie helmets offer their owner an opportunity to tap into their creative side. Most goalies find a way to express themselves in a unique way.

Here's an in-depth look at the helmets of the three MSU netminders.

Senior goaltender Jeff Lerg

Lerg was very particular in what he wanted on his helmet this season. He decided to go with a similar design to the helmet he had in 2007 when the Spartans won the National Championship. And yes, he admits he's a bit superstitious.

Sparty is featured at the top of the helmet, and down the sides Sparty is flexing and showing off those Spartan muscles.

But it is the back of the helmet that means the most to Lerg.

On the upper-right corner there is a blue bracelet with the words "Stay Strong and Do It" around the bracelet. This recognizes Brandon Gordon, a great friend to Lerg and many other members of the hockey team, who is fighting cancer.

Lerg also has the "Shoot For A Cure" logo on the top left of his helmet to represent the hockey team's effort to raise money for children's cancer.

A scenic view of the Red Cedar River is also featured on the back of his helmet along with the words "Lil' Guy" to represent his nickname.

Freshman goaltender Drew Palmisano

The goaltender of MSU's future wasn't too picky when it

See MASKS *on page 2B*

To watch a video of MSU players uncovering the meaning of their masks, visit statenews.com/multimedia