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LACING UP FOR A WIN

WRITTEN BY KAITLIN SCHULER. DESIGNED BY JACKIE VRESICS.

The University's ice hockey team had their share of adversity in the 2012-2013 season. They began the season ranked number one in the Central Collegiate Hockey Association's preseason media poll, but by January only had an overall record of 7-10-2. They did, however, gain victories against rivals like Notre Dame, Western Michigan and Michigan State. The men were ready for a more consistent second-half of the season despite these wins though. When asked to sum up the season so far in one word, Kinesiology senior and captain AJ Treais had a surprising but fitting response. "Disappointment. We've struggled a lot this season, but I think we're on the upswing now so hopefully that will change. Having everyone on board is really important to turn this season around." Teammate and LSA senior Lindsay Sparks responded similarly: "I think we've had a couple injuries and we went though a bit of a slump as well, so we have to bounce back from that as a team." True to the nature of hockey players, both men have stuck to their sport since they began playing. Sparks started playing hockey when he was two years old. "My dad told me I got a pair of skates for Christmas, and we had a rink in the backyard, really small, you know? He would put my skates on and I would stand out there for ten minutes before I got cold, and then he would take my skates off. I think I did that thirty times that day."

Both said that although there is always going to be disappointment, they have never considered quitting. Treais added that the winning tradition of Michigan is the biggest difference between playing for the University and any other team. "We have the most national championships of any college team so I think there's a little added pressure to win. I'm really focused just on this year though. I've been pretty thankful for where I am and where I am playing right now." The men may have had many hurdles to overcome this season, but they remain a team and stick together out on the ice. Sparks added, "You've got to have players that are willing to take hits for the guys sitting next to them in the locker room. Just doing everything for the team is the most important thing."

1 Team captain and Kinesiology senior AJ Treais watches the referee intently for the puck drop. By January 2013, Treais was tied for third in the nation in goals scored with ten goals total. Photo by Kristie Dzurnak.

2 Kinesiology sophomore Travis Lynch stares down Notre Dame player David Gerths, letting him know that the Wolverines are serious about success. The team may have fallen twice to Notre Dame this season, but they maintain an all-time record against the Irish of 74-51-5. Photo by Nikki Page.

3 The men come together following a goal to congratulate each other. By the second half of the season, they had racked up wins against teams such as Western Michigan, Miami and Michigan State. Photo by Julie Gursha.

4 LSA junior Mac Bennett locks in on the location of the puck and speeds toward it, while LSA freshman Steve Racine looks on from the goal line. Bennett is predicted to be a top player in the NHL following his career at Michigan; he was drafted by the Montreal Canadians in the third round of the 2009 NHL Entry Draft. Photo by Sydney Fine.

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