

Coach Schafer's Notes for January 27, 2015

@CORNELL 3, Harvard 2
Dartmouth 5, @CORNELL 2

We suffered another extremely frustrating weekend. After a huge win on Friday and a loss on Saturday, it's obvious we need to reverse this trend to have a successful season. We can't grab two points the first night and get nothing the second evening, especially at home, but also we need to play our game on the road, too. We played two excellent opponents; just look at who they have defeated, but that's no excuse for being very good the first night, and then not everyone being ready to play the second.

On Friday night, against fourth-ranked Harvard, the Crimson dominated the first 10 minutes, but we out-played them the rest of the period to end scoreless. Sophomore goaltender Mitch Gillam came up big several times, including stops on two semi breakaways. We continued our strong play into the second period, including a season-high 19 shots on goal (for a period) to Harvard's six.

Even so, the Crimson took a 1-0 lead just 2 minutes into the middle stanza when their top scorer converted a rebound. We tied the score a little over 2 minutes after killing a penalty. Sophomore forward Jake Weidner, who had just stepped on the ice after the penalty expired, intercepted a pass and flew up the left side on a 3-on-2 break. Senior forward Cole Bardreau received the pass from Weidner in the slot and fired a shot over the goaltender's glove and just under the crossbar. We continued to roll, and 2 minutes later at 6:23, junior forward Christian Hilbrich scored his team-leading sixth goal of the season. His tally was set up by a pair of freshmen, defenseman Ryan Bliss and forward Dwyer Tschantz. We went into the second intermission with a 2-1 lead.

Harvard tied the score at 2-all at 6:26 of the third period on a shot deflected past Gillam. We continued to play hard and were finally rewarded for our efforts. In the game's final minute, the visitors flipped the puck high in the air out of their own zone while making a line change. Senior defenseman Joakim Ryan stopped the puck mid-air and sent a cross-ice pass to Bardreau skating on the left wing at the Harvard blue line. This created a 3-on-2 break as Bardreau stayed wide into the left circle. He dished the puck off to sophomore forward Eric Freschi who buried a shot under the blocker of the Harvard goalie with 40.5 seconds remaining. You can imagine the noise that winning-goal generated from a sold-out Lynah Faithful crowd! Freschi had entered the game as the nation's leader in short-hand goals per game, and was on the ice because of his hard-nosed defensive ability and tenacity.

Gillam made 21 saves and the Harvard goaltender stopped 25 shots. Both teams were 0-for-3 on the power play.

As much as we were excited about the victory on Friday night, we knew, or should have known, that it meant nothing if we didn't come back and get after it on Saturday evening vs. Dartmouth.

It didn't take long to see what kind of night it was going to be. I thought we came out to play, and we did some good things. Our defensive corps is decimated with injuries, and it cost us dearly right in the opening minutes. A huge mental blunder let a Dartmouth player get behind us, and our defenseman, in pursuit, tripped the player, resulting in a penalty shot. The Dartmouth player scored and the visitors led 1-0 just 1:19 into the first period. Though we dominated play in the first 20 minutes another defensive mistake cost us the second Dartmouth goal at 18:44 and that really seemed to deflate our efforts.

In the second period, Dartmouth made it 3-0 with a power-play goal at 5:07, although it didn't become official until a video review 42 seconds after the play. After review, the officials confirmed the puck was over the line between freshman goaltender Hayden Stewart's pads before he kicked it back out. Their fourth goal came on a breakaway at 10:12 of the second period. At this point, I pulled Stewart (11 saves in 30:12), and inserted Gillam who held Dartmouth scoreless for the rest of the game. The visitors scored an empty-net goal with 3 seconds remaining.

We finally got on the scoreboard at 4:08 of the third period with Bardreau scoring just 3 seconds into a power play. Weidner won a faceoff back to Ryan at the right point. Ryan fired a pass to Bardreau in the high slot, and the assistant captain's shot flew over the right shoulder of the goalie. We played 6-on-5 for the final 3:52 of the game and the strategy paid off with sophomore forward Matt Buckles scoring his sixth goal with 1:01 remaining. Sophomore forward Jeff Kubiak set up Buckles for a shot from the right circle that beat the goaltender low stick side.

Gillam stopped all 13 shots that he faced in 25:56, while the Dartmouth goaltender made 22 saves. We were 1-for-3 on the power play, and the Big Green was 1-for-2.

This coming weekend we play our travel partner, Colgate; Friday night, at Starr Rink in Hamilton and Saturday evening at Lynah Rink in Ithaca. Both games are at 7 PM.