

Coach Schafer's Notes for March 16, 2015

ECAC FIRST-ROUND PLAYOFFS

Union 4, @CORNELL 2

Union 7, @CORNELL 0

This was not the way we wanted to finish our season. It was very disappointing, especially for our seniors who gave us their all for four seasons.

On Friday night, we had lots of chances in the first period and the shots were even (8-8) after 20 minutes of action. We had two mini-breakaways but couldn't score. The period was a free, open-ice type of game without power-play opportunities for either team

Union took control of the game in the middle of the second period with three goals over 9-minutes. After we got down, we started to take chances in transition and you pay the price.

The visitors took a 4-0 lead at 8:41 of the third period with a short-handed tally. At this point, I pulled sophomore goaltender Mitch Gillam because I thought he was careless playing the puck and it hurt the team Friday night. Mitch has been strong for us throughout the most of the season but he has had some lapses that just shouldn't happen. I thought bringing in freshman Hayden Stewart might provide a spark and he shut down Union with just two saves.

In the third we battled back and kept plugging away. With 6:53 remaining, junior forward Christian Hilbrich scored his team-leading 10th goal, this one coming on the power play. Seniors Cole Bardreau and Joakim Ryan assisted on the play. Bardreau actually provided the screen that enabled Hilbrich to fire his shot inside the far post and past the goaltender's glove hand.

We pulled Stewart for an extra skater with a little over 2 minutes remaining. Playing 6-on-5, sophomore forward Matt Buckles tallied his eighth goal with 30 seconds remaining to make it 4-2, but it was too little, too late. Assists on the Buckles' goal went to classmate Jeff Kubiak and freshman defenseman Ryan Bliss.

For the game, Gillam had 19 saves and Stewart two, while the Union goaltender stopped 28 shots. We were 1-for-2 on the power play and the visitors were 0-for-1. As I said above, we had our chances. One shot hit the knob on the goalie's stick and another hit him in the shoulder. Obviously, we needed to capitalize on those rebounds.

Saturday night's game was an awful disappointment because we completely unraveled. There wasn't an area that excelled, including special teams and goaltending. Everything that could possibly go wrong went wrong for us on Saturday night.

Union scored three goals in the first period between 9:38 to 16:02, the last one on a 5-on-3 power play. In all, we gave them nine power-play opportunities and they converted three times.

During the second period we fired 15 shots on net with more than half of them from in front of the crease but the Union goalie denied all. Meanwhile, the visitors added two more goals to take a 5-0 lead into the final period.

Between the second and third periods, I talked to the team that all I wanted them to do was to stay out of the penalty box but I didn't get through to them. We were called for six penalties in the final 20 minutes, including a 5-minute major for cross-checking.

Stewart started in goal but I pulled him after allowing three goals and making five saves in the first period. Gillam played the rest of the way, stopping 15 of 19 shots. The Union goaltender made 29 saves. We were 0-for-4 on the power play and Union was 3-for-9.

This is the first time we lost a first round ECAC playoff series since the league implemented the current 12-team playoff format in 2002-03.

We need to get back to the drawing board to work on recruiting and improving our work ethic. I tried to make some changes this year and it failed miserably. I've done things a certain way for 19 years then changed this year but I'm going back to my original philosophy.

We have an excellent group coming in next year but we will still be out recruiting to improve the incoming class.

Thanks to all for your tremendous support during a trying season. We will be back with the type of Big Red hockey that you've come to enjoy in the past.