

Coach Schafer's Notes for December 31, 2015

FLORIDA COLLEGE HOCKEY CLASSIC ... Germain Arena in Estero, Florida

CORNELL 2, Providence 1 OT

Ohio State 3, Boston College 2

Ohio State 8, CORNELL 0

If you're wondering if there is a typo in the scores of our two games at the Florida College Hockey Classic in Estero, FL, on Monday and Tuesday nights, there is no mistake. After defeating the defending NCAA champion Providence College (No. 1 and undefeated this season), 2-1 in overtime the first evening, we fell to Ohio State 8-0 in the championship game. The loss ended an eight-game unbeaten streak for us. We are now 9-2-2.

The first night vs. Providence didn't start out the way you want to return to the ice after the long layoff. Twenty-seven seconds into the game on our first shift, the No. 1 team in the country scored on a shot from the right circle past the near post. The key to the game was getting through the first period, as the Friars out-shot us, 12-4, and it wasn't easy. We had to kill off two penalties, including a 2-minute shift from junior forward Jake Weidner and freshman defenseman Alec McCrea. We also had a number of guys step up with big shot blocks.

We came back in the second period and began playing with more speed and became extremely physical. This paid off when we tied the game at 14:25 of the second period. Junior forward Eric Freschi started a 2-on-1 rush with sophomore forward Jared Fiegl. Freschi flew up right wing and slid a perfect pass across to the far side of the slot to Fiegl who sent the puck into the open side of the net.

The third period was played fairly even. We did get a huge shot block by McCrea on a 2-on-1 rush with 4:20 remaining in regulation. Sophomore forward Trevor Yates nearly won it for us with a shot from the slot with 49.8 seconds left but the Providence goaltender gloved the puck.

Overtime is always exciting because a great play here or there can end it for either team. Sophomore defenseman Ryan Bliss started the play for the winning goal by passing to Kubiak in the neutral zone. Freshman forward Anthony Angello then created the scoring opportunity by twisting away from his defender at the bottom of the right circle and cutting toward the middle. Angello's backhanded shot was kicked away by the Providence netminder, but Kubiak was standing in the slot to fire the rebound into the wide side of the net with 2:04 left in the overtime period. That goal was what we've been talking about all season long: getting pucks to the net and being around the front of the net.

Gillam played really well for us making 31 saves, while the Providence goalie stopped 20 shots. We were 0-for-4 on the power play and the Friars were 0-for-3.

This was a tremendous win for us and was the first for us over a top-ranked team since March 15, 2013 vs. Quinnipiac.

Obviously, the result vs. Ohio State was not expected. We actually started the game well with lots of chances and good opportunities to score. Unfortunately, they scored in the first period on a 50-foot shot through traffic and then made it 2-0 when a shot caromed off a shot-blocker's chest and over the shoulder of junior goaltender Mitch Gillam. It marked the first time we had trailed by two goals at this point in a game all season long.

Two of our great chances came when senior forward Christian Hilbrich (named to the all-tournament team) and junior forward Jeff Kubiak each hit the post on the same power play in the first period.

The second period fell apart early as the Buckeyes scored three goals in a 90-second span (3:56, 4:22, 5:26)! We had many breakdowns and it seemed like they scored on every chance and we couldn't. The intensity from the night before just wasn't there and we paid the price. For the first time this season, we seemed to underestimate the opponent. Maybe all the texts and emails of congrats that we received on Monday night made us think we were invincible.

Gillam played the first 24:19 and allowed four goals with 10 saves. Sophomore Hayden Stewart in his first appearance this season stopped 11 shots while allowing four goals. The Ohio State goaltender made 27 saves in his first shutout of the season. We were 0-for-7 on the power play and Ohio State was 2-for-5.

It's now back to work and use the lessons we learned to push forward in the second half. We return to Lynah Rink on Friday and Saturday evening Jan. 8-9 for the final non-league games of the season against Merrimack College from Hockey East. Hope you can make it and support our team.