

Coach Schafer's Game Notes for March 2, 2016

Union 5, @CORNELL 1

@CORNELL 3, Rensselaer 3 OT

Two nights and two different performances sum up the last weekend's games at Lynah Rink. When you play your final home weekend of the regular season, you expect different results than what we saw this past weekend.

On Friday night, we came out sluggish. Thirty-eight seconds into the game, we turned the puck over in our own end and Union capitalized to make it 1-0. That's the second time this year that has happened (Yale was the other). At 8:42 of the first period, the same line gave up the puck again and Union made it 2-0. When you are only averaging about two goals per game yourself, you can't give up two goals to the opposition in the first half of the opening period!

In the first game of the year, we got down, but came back fighting. We didn't get that same performance on Friday night. We had scoring opportunities (out-shot them 16-12 in the first period) but their goaltender stood tall.

We began to turn around in the second period and put up a couple of strong shifts. At 6:04, we cut the deficit to one goal. Junior forward Dwyer Tschantz started the play. Moving into the Union zone, his shot from the top of the right circle was stopped but the rebound came to senior forward Christian Hilbrich on the weak side and he capitalized for his fifth goal of the season. We really began competing to tie the score but the Union goaltender stopped everything we fired at him. We also killed off two power plays. With 1:21 left in the second period another breakdown by a forward gave the visitors a 2-on-1 break and Union made it 3-1.

At 13:47 of the third period Union expanded its lead with another 2-on-1 break to go up 4-1. The final goal came at 15:01 into an empty net.

Junior goaltender Mitch Gillam made 22 saves, while the Union goalie stopped 36 shots, including 28 in the first two periods (16, 12). Both teams were 0-for-2 on the power play.

On Saturday night we honored our four senior players who have been tremendous leaders both on and off the ice: Christian Hilbrich, Reece Wilcox, Teemu Tiitinen and John Knisley. It came so close to being a great night for everyone. With 24 seconds remaining and the RPI net empty, a

3-2 lead slipped away with a shot deflected high of Gillam that hit a second Big Red player and bounced into the net. Obviously, it was really frustrating because we tipped the game-tying goal in for them.

We continued the pressure in overtime but had to settle for a 3-3 tie. The inability to take advantage of the opposition's mistakes plagued us all night because we had the chances.

Saturday night was our time to score early and we did just 28 seconds into the first period. RPI won the faceoff in their end and attempted to ring the puck along the boards. Freshman Alec McCrea stopped the play and the puck found freshman forward Anthony Angello at the top of the circle. Angello fired the puck and it deflected off an RPI defenseman's skate past the goaltender. It was our first opening-period goal since Jan. 30. We continued our offensive pressure but settled for a 1-0 score after 20 minutes of action.

At 8:28 of the second period, the visitors tied the score on an unusual breakaway that is too strange to explain. We remained on the offensive and answered 32 seconds later. Angello scored his team-high 11th goal of the season. McCrea dumped the puck into the RPI end and it went behind the net to Angello, who directed the puck to junior forward Jeff Kubiak. Jeff skated around the net attempting a wraparound. The puck slid along the goal line to Angello at the bottom of the far circle who fired an unbelievable high shot that found the back of the net giving us a 2-1 lead into the second intermission.

At 3:56 of the third period, RPI scored to tie the game 2-2 before McCrea put us back on top at 9:33. Kubiak had the puck in the neutral zone and started to move up ice. As McCrea entered the RPI zone he received a pass from Kubiak and shot the puck off the goaltender's right toe and over the goal line. Kubiak helped the situation by creating havoc in front of the net.

Both teams competed hard but with 24 seconds remaining in regulation, the visitors scored the extra-attacker goal on a deflection.

Looking at the game as a whole, I was happy with the distribution of offense we created. Even though some of the other guys didn't score, they had good opportunities throughout the game. I was proud of the way we competed on Saturday night and hope we continue the momentum into the ECAC first-round playoff with Union.

Against RPI, Gillam had 26 saves; the visitors' goaltender stopped 29 saves. We were 0-for-3 on the power play and they were 0-for-1.

A tough Union team comes to Lynah Rink for the best-of-three ECAC playoffs this weekend. Obviously, we got a pretty good hands-on scouting report last weekend! I'm confident our players will come ready to play and we expect another tough battle from a very good opponent.