

Coach Schafer's Notes for January 9, 2017

CORNELL 1, @Merrimack 0

Our second trip to Merrimack had better results than our early-season game in this small rink, a 1-0 Cornell win, but it was also the weakest we've played in a long time. I told the team that we were fortunate to play so poorly on the road in the first period and come back with a win.

Obviously, I was happy the way the guys came back in the second and third periods, competed and got the job done. At the finish of our non-league schedule, our overall record stands at 9-4-1 (5-2 against non-ECAC teams).

At Merrimack, we survived a very quiet first period in which both teams had a couple of scoring chances and two unsuccessful power-play opportunities. We only had two penalties all night.

Our scoring chances increased towards the middle of the second period. Junior forward Trevor Yates had a shot from the left circle on a rush that clanged off the crossbar and he had another chance a couple of minutes later.

Shortly after missing a scoring opportunity on the power play, senior forward Matt Buckles cashed in with his third goal of the season at 13:17 of the second period. Sophomore forward Mitch Vanderlaan squeezed a pass from the left halfwall to senior forward Jeff Kubiak in the right circle. Kubiak's shot hit the goaltender's arm, but the puck dropped behind the goalie near the crease. Buckles battled for the puck with a couple of Merrimack defensemen and eventually the puck went over the goal line. We had a chance to score again with a 5-minute power play but didn't cash in and went into the locker room up 1-0.

In the third period, Merrimack went on the power play. Senior goaltender Mitch Gillam (9-3-1) went sprawling to make a save and the rebound bounced out into the slot. A Merrimack player shot the rebound but sophomore defenseman Alec McCrea blocked the shot from close in to keep it a 1-0 game.

Gillam made 18 saves; the Merrimack goaltender stopped 17 shots. We were 0-for-3 on the power play and they were 0-for-2. Our penalty kill entered the game ranked fifth in the country and has now killed 31/33 enemy opportunities.

As we enter the meat of the ECAC schedule, I've reflected on how we have performed so far this season: At the start of the year I looked at our schedule and didn't know what to think. With 12 of our first 16 games on the road, I knew it would be a challenge. We studied video and each week preached to our team to ignore records and play hard. We beat Princeton and then they swept the #18 team on the road and then beat Quinnipiac. We beat Miami (Ohio) twice and they went on to sweep ranked St. Cloud and beat Ohio State. We were disappointed losing

to Colorado College in Florida but knew they played well and this week they beat and tied No. 1 Minnesota-Duluth.

The next weekend we are at Princeton on Friday night and Quinnipiac on Saturday. As always, we welcome your support in un-friendly rinks. Our team plays hard and we now have some numbers to make the competition for playing time tough. After this road trip, we play nine of our final 13 games at Lynah Rink.