

Coach Schafer's Notes for January 16, 2017

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CORNELL 2, @Quinnipiac 1

Obviously, we're playing well on the road right now and much of this success is due to early-season away schedule. The team has met this challenge well and now we're happy to play nine of the remaining 13 games in front of the Lynah Faithful but recognize the high caliber of play in the ECAC this season.

On Friday night at Princeton, we came out strong and I felt we did a great job of moving pucks during the first period. Our assistant coaches, Ben Syer and Sean Flanagan worked hard with the players this past week on combined skill work and tips. It paid off on two of the three first-period goals.

Freshman forward Jeff Malott, who has been snake-bitten while playing well during the early season, scored a hat trick during the first period over a span of 14:21. It was our second team hat trick of the season. Jeff, who has a bright future at Cornell, recorded the first freshman hat trick since current NHLer Matt Moulson in 2003. Two hat tricks during a season is also the first for us since 2004.

Malott started the scoring at 5:37 of the first period. On the forecheck, he intercepted a Princeton pass behind the Tiger net and skated around to the left of the goaltender where his shot went past the left side of the goalie. Twenty-nine seconds later, Princeton answered and tied the game 1-1. At 11:32, Malott took advantage of those early-week tip drills and redirected a point shot from senior defenseman Holden Anderson past the goalie. About three minutes later, Malott, positioned in the slot, tipped a shot from senior defenseman Patrick McCarron into the net to give us a 3-1 lead going into the first intermission.

Unfortunately, after scoring his hat trick, Jeff was injured and didn't play the rest of the game. I can't ever remember a similar scenario!

Sophomore forward Mitch Vanderlaan added a power play goal at 7:31 of the second period, adding to his team-leading scoring this season. The final goal was an empty-netter by junior forward Alex Rauter with 17 seconds remaining in the game.

We had to kill off five consecutive power plays in the final two periods, including three in the opening half of the third period. We entered the night ranked fifth in the country on the penalty kill and have successfully killed off 37/39 opponent power plays.

Senior Mitch Gillam, who played a huge role defending on the power play, finished with 31 saves and the Princeton goaltender had 21 stops. We were 1-for-3 on the power play and Princeton was 0-for-5.

The next night we played at Quinnipiac, always a very tough place to play against a talented team and we did to them what they've done to us for a lot of years. We played a very solid game with sustained pressure during a good part of the night and only gave up 10 shots through two periods.

We struck early with a goal at 2:42 of the first period. With Gillam pulled in favor of an extra attacker on a delayed Quinnipiac penalty, sophomore defenseman Brendan Smith fired a shot from the point that missed the short side, caromed hard off the end boards and out the far side. Senior forward Jeff Kubiak took advantage of the opportunity to jam the puck into the net a split second before the net came off its pins. Smith and Vanderlaan got the assists.

Quinnipiac did what all good teams do. It came right back with a power-play goal at 5:41 past a screened Gillam and we had ourselves a hockey game. Kubiak nearly had his second goal of the evening but the officials ruled that the puck was directed into the net by Jeff's hand.

We had a dominating second period with 14 shots on goal to four by the home team. The eventual game-winner came at 11:32 of the middle stanza. On the power play, senior forward Matt Buckles shot the puck to the net from the left corner, the rebound came out, and Alex Rauter poked home his sixth goal of the season, second on the team.

The third period saw the shots on goal even at 8-8, but that stat doesn't reflect the great job by our defense blocking shots. Half of our 16 blocked shots came in the final period. Sophomore defenseman Matt Nuttle came up big with a pair of blocked shots on the Bobcats' first power play and senior captain Jake Weidner took a slap shot off the back of his shoulder on the second extra-man opportunity.

When the game was on the line, we got some big blocks and some big saves. Quinnipiac is hard to beat at home so you know beating them on home ice, you've earned it!

Gillam made 19 saves in the game, while the Bobcats' goaltender stopped 29 shots. What was tremendous was Mitch's composure at the end that pumped up the rest of the defensive corps. It makes you disciplined away from the puck. You move the puck and realize you don't have to do something special to prevent a scoring chance. Just do your job because you know Mitch is going to do his job. There's a lot of trust back there.

We come home for four consecutive games with an 11-4-1 overall record (6-2-1 in the ECAC). The tough North Country teams come to Lynah Rink this weekend; Clarkson on Friday night and St. Lawrence on Saturday.