

Coach Schafer's Notes for January 29, 2017

Harvard 4, @CORNELL 1

Dartmouth 4, @CORNELL 2

Over the entire weekend, we had enough bad bounces to last a year. Hopefully, those things turn and go the other way for us. We played in a great college hockey atmosphere both nights and the fans and the returning 1967 National Champions deserved to see better hockey games from all participants.

On Friday night, I thought our team played a great first two periods. The score was 0-0 after 20 minutes and we out-shot them, 9-4. Early in the second period, we went on top, 1-0, at 4:22, as junior forward Alex Rauter scored an unassisted goal. Rauter poked the puck away from the Harvard goaltender and completed a wrap-around-goal for his seventh tally of the year. We were feeling good going into the second intermission because the guys did a solid job, had scoring chances and good pressure. They played a good smothering defense and had some great scoring opportunities. The first 42 minutes of the game before the sellout crowd was electrifying.

Then, Harvard scored at 2:20 of the third period. The goal came from a player breaking his stick as he shot the puck, which ended up being a pass right to their player off the side of the net. Six minutes later, a puck hits two of our players and deflects off our defenseman's skate to make it 2-1. Everyone was stunned when it happened. I think it was the very first time this year that we didn't show the resiliency to get it going. We didn't show that resiliency to push back. The guys wanted to but they didn't play with the poise needed to execute against a team like Harvard.

It didn't get any better when the visitors scored at 16:38 and then added an empty-net goal with 10 seconds remaining. This is a very big rivalry and I thought we kept our poise throughout with just one penalty (Harvard had two) against the No. 1 power-play team in the country. It's tough to have things you can't control go against you.

Senior goaltender Mitch Gillam made 20 saves, and the Harvard netminder stopped 19 shots. Neither team scored on the power play.

Sometimes hockey can be a cruel game and history repeated itself on Saturday night against Dartmouth.

We got off to a great start as our revamped first line set the tone on the opening shift. We scored first on a great passing play in transition. We had an odd-man rush and junior forward Dwyer Tschantz and sophomore forward Beau Starrett exchanged passes up the left wing to find sophomore defenseman Matt Nuttle coming down the slot all alone. Nuttle's one-timer beat the goalie to the glove side just 3:26 into the game. It was Nuttle's first collegiate goal.

Ten minutes later we upped the score to 2-0 with a power-play goal. Sophomore defenseman Alec McCrea fired a shot from the right point that senior forward Matt Buckles redirected over the shoulder of the goaltender. The goal was Buckles fourth of the season and his seventh point in nine games since returning from an injury. We took this two-goal lead into the first intermission even though Dartmouth out-shot us, 12-11.

Now, we get into the historical part. After going on top 2-0, Dartmouth's first power-play goal just 35 seconds into the second period hit our shot blocker and redirected off the ice past Gillam. We still led 2-1 after 40 minutes of action with us now leading in shots on goal, 22-21, but the unlikely goal seemed to give the visitors new life.

The Big Green tied the score (2-2) on the power play at 12:17 of the third period with a goal that went off our back checker's chest. Less than a minute later, we received a pair of controversial penalties 10 seconds apart and that set the stage for the game-winner at 13:19. Dartmouth added a fourth goal into an empty net with 1:31 to play.

We took three penalties in the third period, and I wish I could say I need to discipline our players, but I don't fault them on any of the calls. You always hope that the bounces even out and quick.

Against Dartmouth, Gillam had 26 saves, and the Big Green goalie made 34 stops, including 14 in the third period. We were 1-for-3 on the power play, and Dartmouth was 3-for-6.

Certain things in this sport you can't control. You can't control the officials or when pucks hit your guys and go in. What we can control is how we respond to this tough weekend and prepare for Union and RPI next Friday and Saturday on the road.

Union lost at St. Lawrence on Saturday night and is one of the top teams in the country. That game will start at 8:30 p.m. on Friday night and will be televised by TSN2. We'll have a good week of practice and be ready for our second to the last weekend on the road of the regular season.

It was great to see the many returnees from the 1967 National Championship team introduced at the first intermission of the Saturday evening game. We scheduled a full weekend for them and I'm sure they enjoyed the atmosphere at Lynah Rink even though the games were disappointing.