

Coach Schafer's Notes for February 6, 2017

CORNELL 5, @ Union 3

CORNELL 4, @ Rensselaer 3

It's always great to get four points on the road! We'll take a four-point weekend anytime; especially with the close race in the ECAC for the first-round bye (top four teams). Just five points separate the top five teams in the ECAC: Union 25, St. Lawrence 25, Harvard 24, Quinnipiac 21, and Cornell 20. And, we have two games in hand (played two less games) than Harvard and Quinnipiac.

Friday night was a complete team effort and like the Dartmouth game, we gave up the lead due to penalties. The players did a great job rallying late in the game, including a power-play goal, and a breakaway tally. The guys played well all three periods and we forgot about things we couldn't control.

Halfway through the first period, junior forward Alex Rauter scored on a breakaway off a great pass from freshman defenseman Yanni Kaldis. Rauter made a move to his backhand and slid the puck through the five-hole for his eighth goal this season. A little over one minute later, Union tied the game on a shorthanded goal by the nation's top scorer.

Then, we were able to score two unanswered goals in the last 8 minutes before the first intermission. With a two-man advantage on the power play, sophomore forward Anthony Angello rifled a shot from the left circle that went high into the back of the net on the short side at 12:57. At the 16:07 mark, junior forward Dwyer Twchantz scored his first goal of the season, making a good move in the slot to put us up 3-1. That two-goal lead vanished quickly, as the No. 1 scorer in the Division I collegiate ranks recorded his second goal of the game (21st of the season) with us down two men. We had five penalties called on us in the second period, but everyone kept moving onward. We went into the locker room up 3-2.

In the third period, Union tied the game at 9:19 with its second PPG. We kept scrapping and scored twice within 39 seconds. The game-winner, at 15:51, came off the stick of senior forward Jake Weidner from the bottom of the right circle that once again went through the legs of the goaltender for a power-play tally. Angello, at 16:30, gave us the cushion with his 8th goal of the season. Anthony picked the pocket of a defenseman and buried his shot on a partial breakaway.

Senior goaltender Mitch Gillam made 27 saves, including 15 in the final period, and the Union goalie stopped 30 shots, including 17 in the opening stanza. We were 2-for-5 on the power play, and Union was 2-for-7.

Saturday night was an uphill battle for 60 minutes against an RPI team that has been coming on strong after a disastrous start to their season. We won our first game at the Houston Field House since Feb. 12, 2011, even though we led the 60-minute game for only the last 25 seconds!

The game was one of many momentum shifts. RPI scored just 25 seconds into the game when Mitch gave up a wraparound goal that he typically denies. Senior defenseman Patrick McCarron scored the first of our three power-play goals at 4:43 of the first period, but the Engineers needed only 4 minutes to go back on top, 2-1, with a power-play goal of their own. With 51 seconds remaining before the first intermission, Weidner tied the score at 2-all with an extra-man goal, as we out-shot the home team, 14-9.

There were 29 shots on goal combined (17 by us) in the second period, but RPI had the lone score, a power-play goal at 8:54. Gillam made a huge save in the second period to keep the score at 3-2.

We started the third period slowly, trying to do too much coming through the neutral zone. If you let RPI get a lead, they're hard to play against. But then, we started advancing pucks and getting on top of them. We got some turnovers and our feet going. This resulted in a pair of third-period goals to pull out the victory.

The first third-period goal was scored by senior forward Matt Buckles at 12:40 with both teams skating five players. It was Buckles' ninth point in the last 11 games since he returned to the lineup after an injury.

The winning goal came from what some people would call, "an unlikely hero". Freshman defenseman Yanni Kaldis has quarterbacked our power-play all season long and now it was his time to be on the scoring end for his first collegiate goal. Sophomore forward Mitch Vanderlaan started toward the net from a sharp angle to the left of the goalie. His pass deflected off a stick into the air. Buckles swung at the puck, sending it to the far side where Kaldis was standing and he fired the puck into the net.

We had the lead for the first time in the game but RPI didn't quit. With 10 seconds remaining and many of the hometown crowd leaving the rink, the Engineers had a shot bounce off the

post to the right of Gillam and we finally closed it out to get the win. Gillam made 21 saves and the RPI netminder stopped 41 shots, including 17 in the second period.

We talk all the time about taking what is given to us. RPI started pushing up on us at the blue line in the second and third periods. So, we made some adjustments with the guys on the ice and had them move pucks quickly. That pressure enabled us to score three power-play goals for the second time this season. I am really proud of our players for the way they bounced back this weekend.

Obviously, we don't have much time to bask in the glory of a four-point weekend. Colgate comes to Lynah Rink on Tuesday night and we play Yale and Brown at home on Friday and Saturday nights. It's no time to let up (maybe there's never such a time), but we've gained some momentum going down the stretch. After Yale/Brown, we take our final regular-season road trip to St. Lawrence and Clarkson. We hope to see you at Lynah or in the North Country.