

Coach Schafer's Notes for February 20, 2017

CORNELL 4, @St. Lawrence 2
CORNELL 3, @Clarkson 3 (OT)

Our mission heading into the North Country was to continue improving our play while securing the ECAC first-round bye in the post-season tournament. We accomplished one of these goals with the tie at Clarkson on Saturday evening. This assures us of home ice for the quarterfinals of the tournament beginning March 10.

Right now, we want more than the bye and that's why getting toward the top of the league was so important. It's great. It's something we strive for and it's one of our goals to get home ice advantage. But right now, we've got to address where we are because we just did not play consistently Saturday night.

Our game on Friday night was a very similar type of game to the one we played against St. Lawrence at home in January. It was a big win for us. St. Lawrence entered the game having scored first in 22 of its 29 games but we came out firing 15 shots on goal in the first 20 minutes. We jumped out in front at 13:37, as senior forward Matt Buckles' wrist shot from the right circle whizzed past the goaltender's glove. It was Matt's fifth goal in the last seven games.

Thirty seconds later, we made the score 2-0 when sophomore forward Beau Starrett collected his third tally of the season. The play started as senior defenseman Patrick McCarron fired the puck from the right point that hit traffic. Senior forward Jeff Kubiak battled for the rebound and poked the puck to Starrett who snapped a shot under the crossbar. We were not finished. With four seconds remaining in the first period, sophomore forward Mitch Vanderlaan redirected a McCarron shot from the top of the right circle past the goaltender. It was his team-leading 11th goal of the season. After just 20 minutes of action, we held a 3-0 lead for only the third time this season.

Similar to our first meeting, St. Lawrence came storming back. Halfway through the second period the Saints got on the scoreboard and, less than two minutes later, they scored on the power play and we had ourselves a one-goal game.

Senior forward Jake Weidner, who does yeoman duty at both ends and middle of the ice, gave us some breathing room at 3:04 of the third period with his sixth goal of the season. Weidner picked up the puck behind the St. Lawrence net and moved into the corner. His shot zipped on a bad angle over the goaltender's shoulder for a 4-2 Cornell lead.

For the rest of the game, senior goaltender Mitch Gillam kept us out in front with a number of key saves, especially late in the third period. Gillam made 27 saves and the St. Lawrence goalie stopped 33 shots. We were 0-for-2 on the power play and they were 1-for-5.

We've scored early and we've been scored on early. But, we've really built an identity that it doesn't really matter. It's about how we play and we are continually working on this aspect of our game. Except for a few spurts, we played well on Friday night because it was a big win for us.

On Saturday night, we jumped in front again 9:12 into the game with Weidner scoring his second goal of the weekend (he had the last one vs. St. Lawrence). Vanderlaan skated into the zone through traffic to get a shot on net. Junior forward Alex Rauter, playing just his third career game on defense, settled the puck and found Weidner at the top of the left circle. Weidner's shot went between a would-be shot blocker and the near post to give us a 1-0 lead. Seven minutes later, Clarkson evened the score on a 2-on-1 break when one of our defensemen fell.

The Golden Knights took a 2-1 lead at 3:38 of the second period and took that margin into the second intermission. At 12:47 of the third period, Vanderlaan struck for his 12th goal of the season. The play started with freshman defenseman Yanni Kaldis' hard work at the offensive blue line setting up a one-timer by Vanderlaan from the right circle.

Tied 2-all, sophomore defenseman Matt Nuttle put us back on top at 16:45 with a shot from the top of the right circle that flew past the goaltender's glove. But, with 2:18 remaining in the game, we failed to clear the puck out of our zone and Clarkson knotted the game with a shot that was tipped into the net.

Gillam made 28 saves in 65 minutes, while the Clarkson netminder stopped 23 shots. We were 0-for-5 on the power play and they were 0-for-4. Our power play let us down this game, but we still battled back in the third period.

Obviously, the result was disappointing. We lost an opportunity to move into first place in the league. On the other hand, we came from behind to tie a good hockey team.

We now face two excellent teams at Lynah Rink in our final two games of the regular season. We need a better effort than we saw on Saturday evening. We have 27 points to remain in sole possession of third place in the ECAC standings, two points ahead of St. Lawrence and five points in front of fifth-place Quinnipiac. Harvard is second with 30 points and Union with 31 points will be gunning for the regular-season championship on Saturday night.

I hope that you will be at both games this weekend as we celebrate Senior Night on Saturday evening.