

Coach Schafer's Notes for March 13, 2017

ECAC QUARTERFINALS

Clarkson 6, @CORNELL 2

@CORNELL 2, Clarkson 1

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We knew we had our hands full coming into this series because Clarkson has a very good hockey team. We had already played two 3-3 ties with them and we really didn't want a three-game series. In the end, it all turned out well, but it didn't have to take three days to earn our trip to Lake Placid.

Our regular season has been full of adversity, including losing half of our defensive corps, but this team has a lot of pride and its ability to bounce back is unbelievable. The first night was a prime example, as Clarkson just completely out played us.

Clarkson jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first 10 minutes of the game and held the lead for the rest of the first period. We had just two shots on goal to 13 for the visitors.

We responded in the second period with 13 shots of our own and two goals to knot the game at 2-2 just 4:45 into the period. Both goals were scored on the power play. The first came when senior defenseman Patrick McCarron took a shot from the left point that was stopped, but junior forward Trevor Yates, our most productive PP forward this season, worked his way free on top of the crease to direct the rebound into the net for his 12th goal and eighth with the man advantage. We weren't finished. Sophomore forward Mitch Vanderlaan, who had a terrific series both offensively and defensively, banged home his 15th goal with assists to junior forward turned defenseman Alex Rauter and freshman blue liner Yanni Kaldis, an All-Ivy first-team performer.

With 44 seconds remaining in the second period playing 4-on-4, Clarkson took advantage of a 2-on-1 break to go ahead, 3-2.

The third period was all Clarkson; we had just one shot on net. Meanwhile, the Golden Knights put three more goals on the board, including an empty-net goal. Senior goaltender Mitch Gillam did his best with a stop on a shorthanded breakaway just 70 seconds into the final period. Gillam had 22 saves and definitely kept us in the game, while the Clarkson netminder had an easy night with 14 stops. We were 2-for-5 on the power play and they were 1-for-4. Five of our 16 shots on goal came when we were a man up.

While I don't particularly like three-game series, this one worked to our advantage. Our players put Friday night's game aside and moved forward. Unlike Friday night, we scored first on Saturday evening. At 7:31 of the first period, McCarron got us on the scoreboard. Senior forward Jake Weidner intercepted a Clarkson clearing attempt and fed senior forward Eric Freschi skating into the slot. Freschi quickly moved the puck to McCarron stationed at the left point and he fired a shot that hit a defender's stick in front and deflected over the goalie's glove. This game was definitely going to be a defensive battle as shots in the first period were 8-7 in Clarkson's favor, but no more scoring.

Gillam, again, was tough in the nets, stopping another shorthanded breakaway just 21 seconds into the middle period. There was no scoring in the second period with shots even at 7-7.

We made it 2-0 at 8:50 of the third. From his own zone, sophomore forward Beau Starrett backhanded a pass up the wall to beat a Clarkson defenseman and senior forward Jeff Kubiak's touch pass sent sophomore forward Anthony Angello up the middle on a 2-on-1 break. Angello fired a shot from the top of the slot that flew past the goaltender's glove. It was a great play by Kubiak and Angello.

Gillam made another great save on a Clarkson shot from the slot early in the third period and continued to play well before Clarkson ruined the shutout with a 6-on-4 goal with 1:57 remaining in the game. Gillam made 24 saves and the Clarkson goalie stopped 16 shots. We were 0-for-4 on the power play and they were 1-for-4.

To get down in the first game and get beat like that was tough but Saturday night's contest was the kind of game that we needed to bounce back. We scored first and even though we were not able to create much, we didn't give up much either.

On Sunday afternoon, after giving up the first goal (11:45), we were able to rally quickly. After that first goal, we bounced back about two minutes later to tie the score. Freshman forward Jeff Malott made a great play with a wraparound goal that was originally waved off. Play continued, but at the next whistle, the two referees skated their way to the video review room to check out the possible goal. In what seemed like eternity, Malott was credited with his fifth goal of the season, coming at 13:58. Malott turned in an outstanding performance all weekend.

We went in front to stay midway through the second period. Angello tipped Kubiak's pass into the neutral zone all the way down the ice where Starrett got to the puck first to halt a possible icing call. Starrett then worked behind the net and slid a pass across to Angello on the far post for his second game-winner in two nights and his career-high 12th goal in a season.

We had two breakaways, crossbar, goal post, missed chances in the second period that would have put the game away, but our guys just kept fighting through to the end. In our 20 victories this season, this was the eighth in which the opposition scored the initial goal.

The third period had no scores but Clarkson outshot us 12-1. That “one” was a big one. The visitors gave us one scary moment with 41 seconds left on the clock. Gillam made an initial save on a shot from the bottom of the right circle. The puck squirted behind him and went off the inside of the far post. Bodies were flying all over the ice on the goal crease but sophomore defenseman Alec McCrea was able to sweep the puck out of the way before the puck was covered up outside of the crease.

Gillam made 31 saves and the Clarkson goalie had just 10 stops. Both teams were 0-for-3 on the power play.

I thought the Weidner line of Vanderlaan and Freschi did a great job against Clarkson’s top line by not giving up a 5-on-5 goal over the entire weekend.

To overcome a challenging season like this one is a testament to the team in the locker room, because they just didn't use anything as an excuse. There was never belly aching or complaining about all the road trips at the beginning of the season. We just went on the road and we did it. That kind of adversity and resiliency has stayed with this hockey team all season long.

Now, we travel to Lake Placid for the ECAC Tournament where only our seniors have ever played. The last time we were there, we also had to beat Clarkson in a three-game series and faced Union in the semifinals. Union won NCAA National championship that season!

This year Union is also our semifinal foe as the No. 2 seed. We are No. 3 and play the Dutchmen at 7:35 PM on Friday evening. Harvard (No. 1) and Quinnipiac (No. 4) play the other semifinal contest at 4:05 PM. The championship game is on Saturday at 7:35 PM.

As always, we expect to see a large Cornell contingent in Lake Placid. With Cornell’s Spring Break not until April, we expect many current students and, of course, our alumni and other Lynah Faithful will be there too.