

## **Coach Schafer's Notes for March 20, 2017**

### **ECAC CHAMPIONSHIPS AT LAKE PLACID**

CORNELL 4, Union 1

Harvard 4, CORNELL 1

Hockey can be a cruel game sometimes and we felt its wrath a number of times on Saturday evening. But, we have nothing to be ashamed of and we advance to the NCAA tournament. Our next game is in the Northeast Regional at 12 noon on Saturday in Manchester, NH. Our opponent is Massachusetts-Lowell, winner of both the Hockey East regular season and tournament.

On Friday night, we played a very good Union team and held up our record of being the only team in the ECAC to not lose to the Dutchmen this season. We came out flying on the large (100 feet wide) Olympic oval and put 21 shots on net in the first period, but couldn't buy a goal. On top of this, we held two of the top scorers in the NCAA without a goal for the entire 60 minutes. There's no doubt in my mind that Union's Mike Vecchione should win the Hobey Baker Award. Jake Weidner, our senior leader, has gone head-to-head against Vecchione in three straight games and he hasn't allowed a 5-on-5 goal. Jake leads by example and our guys follow him. The ECAC recognized Weidner as the recipient of the Best Defensive Forward award.

After our impressive first-period shot barrage, we kept firing in the second period and put two scores on the board. Just 3:23 into the middle stanza, freshman forward Noah Bauld lit the red light for his third goal of the season. Bauld fed junior forward Dwyer Tschantz in the slot and his quick turnaround shot bounced off the far post with Bauld camped out on the doorstep to convert the rebound. About 4 minutes later, on the power play, senior defenseman Patrick McCarron fed a long pass from the left point to Weidner at the top of the right circle. Weidner ripped a shot off the goaltender's glove and into the net for his eighth score of 2016-17.

Union put on offensive pressure but senior goaltender Mitch Gillam kept us out of trouble. Sophomore defenseman Matt Nuttle used some excellent stick work to help kill off a Union power play in the final minute of the second period. Nuttle deflected a Vecchione shot and he had five of our 18 shot blocks on the night.

The Dutchmen, co-winners of the ECAC regular season with Harvard, broke into the scoring column at 7:23 of the third period, converting a bad angle rebound into the net but that was it for their offense, even though they had 18 of their 34 shots on goal in the third period.

With 3:12 to play, senior forward Eric Freschi redirected a shot by junior defenseman Alex Rauter from the left point. Freshchi was standing right in front of the goaltender and his stick diverted the shot between the goalie's legs to make the score 3-1. We weren't finished and with 2:10 remaining, sophomore forward Beau Starrett converted his own rebound after sophomore forward Anthony Angelo created a turnover at the Union blue line.

Gillam was called upon for 33 saves and the Union net minder made 29 stops. Both teams were 1-for-4 on the power play.

On Saturday night, we tried for a league-best 13th ECAC championship against Harvard, a team we hadn't beaten during the regular season and last met in the ECAC championship finals in 2006.

As on Friday night, we came out early to draw the advantage. Our guys were really into the game with some hard checks. After our second penalty, Harvard made it 1-0 on the power play at 14:41 of the first period. The Harvard goaltender played well and was named MVP of the tournament. He stopped an excellent scoring chance by Jake Weidner before the end of the period. It was a 1-0 game after 20 minutes of play.

We turned up the pressure in the second period with seven shots on goal from below the hash marks and inside the faceoff circle, but still had nothing to show for. With 3:52 remaining, Harvard made the score 2-0. Shots after 40 minutes of play showed the Crimson leading, 22-20.

Halfway through the third period, Harvard went up 3-0 on a bizarre goal. A dumped in pass rattled the glass, hit a stanchion and popped into the slot as Gillam rounded behind the net to play the puck. A Harvard player fired the puck into the open net. At 11:10, the Crimson recorded another power-play goal to secure the championship. We got on the scoreboard with 1:17 left in the game when freshman forward Jeff Malott scored his sixth goal of the year on a feed from Weidner from behind the net.

Gillam made 32 saves and the Harvard goaltender stopped 25 shots. We were 0-for-2 on the power play and they were 2-for-4.

All the above play into the game but the bottom line is that they capitalized on their scoring chances and we didn't. We had some great opportunities, including one shot that hit the post, a back door that we fanned on, and their goaltender made a couple of great saves. That's the way hockey is sometimes.

Senior Patrick McCarron was named to the all-tournament team with the rest of the players from Harvard.

Our players are very positive going into the NCAA tournament. I told them after the Harvard game that I had no regrets on how we played the game. We came, we didn't play poorly, we went after it and we played with poise. It was just one of those nights when we weren't good enough.

I thought we played well on Friday night, but I don't think we have yet to play our best game of the year. I believe we still have something left in the tank to play even better. I think the depth of our league prepares us really well for the NCAA tournament and I expect the ECAC teams will have an excellent showing.

Repairs to the Lynah Rink roof have begun, so this week, we begin our unique journey by practicing at the local rink in Lansing.