

Coach Schafer's Notes for March 12, 2018

@CORNELL 9, Quinnipiac 1

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These two games were as different as day and night. On Friday night, we demonstrated offensive power we haven't seen since defeating Clarkson 10-4 in 1999. Saturday evening was completely different, holding off a desperate Quinnipiac team that came back with tremendous intensity. But, our guys gutted it out to win their way to the ECAC semifinal in Lake Placid this coming weekend. As the No. 1 seed, we play Princeton in the first game at 4:05 p.m. No. 2 Clarkson plays No. 3 Harvard at 7:35.

The two-week layoff did wonders for our team. We had a full roster for the first time since the beginning of the season - not completely healed but every man was cleared to play!

On Friday night, it didn't take long to get on the scoreboard. Junior Alec McCrea, named this season's ECAC Best Defensive Defenseman, scored his fifth power play goal of the season just 1:47 into the game. Our defense was strong, holding the Bobcats without a shot on goal until midway of the first period and just three in the first 20 minutes of play, while we had 13. Quinnipiac tied the score with a power-play goal at 12:57 of the first period, but in the final 71 seconds of the period, we added two more goals by senior forward Alex Rauter and sophomore forward Jeff Malott.

Junior forward Mitch Vanderlaan returned to the lineup after a six-game absence due to injury. He scored two of our six goals in the second period to turn the game into a rout. Junior forward Beau Starrett tallied the first of a pair of goals in between Vanderlaan's second score and we led 8-1, 12:53 into the second period. Freshman defenseman Cody Haiskanen recorded his second goal of the season with 4:12 left in the middle stanza. We had 15 shots on goal in the second period and scored six times against two Quinnipiac goaltenders. Freshman forward Brenden Locke and sophomore defenseman Yanni Kaldis had four assists apiece in the opener.

The third period was void of scoring as both teams were already looking forward to Game 2.

Freshman Matt Galajda, named the ECAC Rookie of the Year, made 12 saves in 46 minutes in the net for the Big Red, while Quinnipiac's two goalies stopped 23 shots. Senior Hayden Stewart played the last 13:46 in goal, made five saves and gave Matt a well-deserved rest. We were 2-for-3 on the power play and they were 1-for-5. Quinnipiac has always had great special teams and we knew we didn't want to get into a special team's battle with them.

Our guys were focused all Friday night and they did a lot of things we talked about going into the weekend. Having Vanderlaan back in the lineup was huge because he is our leader and I thought he set the tone.

What a difference a day makes. On Saturday night, we managed just one shot on goal in the entire first period to the visitors' eight. Quinnipiac did exactly what we thought they would do - they came out and played hard and physical.

We took a 1-0 lead at 2:01 of the second period. Freshman forward Tristan Mullin started the play with a backhand pass across the ice in the neutral zone to spring classmate Kyle Betts streaking up the right wing into the Quinnipiac zone. Betts' shot was kicked away by the goalie, but the rebound came up the middle. Rauter collected the puck as he neared the slot, fought through a stick check while sliding past would-be shot-blockers, before eventually winning his stick battle and sliding a shot inside the near post. It was Rauter's 11th goal of the season.

Rauter also collected his ninth assist of the season on the second goal of the game, at 8:46 of the third period, as Vanderlaan buried his third tally of the weekend and seventh of the season.

You can't say enough about the play of Galajda and the shot-blocking of our entire team. They fought adversity through much of the game, killing a 5-minute major penalty at 1:20 of the third period and another one at 16:31. I was frustrated about the review of both majors because there was no malicious intent in either one. Both penalties were against forwards who also received game misconducts, so we were playing two forwards down for the last 4 minutes of the game. And, when Quinnipiac pulled its goalie in the last 2 minutes, our team did a tremendous job blocking shots. Our guys gutted it out against their outstanding power-play unit. They were blocking shots everywhere!

Galajda performed well as usual and especially in the clutch, but really with all the pressure put on him, he had to make just 22 saves because of the tremendous shot blocking of our skaters. We had practiced this in our preparation for the series. The Quinnipiac goaltender made 13 saves. We were 0-for-3 on the power play and the visitors were 0-for-3, including the two 5-minute opportunities.

Princeton, our opponent on Friday afternoon in Lake Placid has been really flying high. In the first round of the playoffs, they scored 15 goals in two games against Brown and then last weekend, dispatched Union, seeded No. 2 for the playoffs, in two games. The Tigers are fourth in the country in scoring offense (3.71 gpg), and No. 1 in power-play efficiency (29.3%).

Lynah Rink was jumping both nights this past weekend and it certainly added to the excitement for our team. We hope many of you will be in Lake Placid this weekend to see a team you can be most proud of.