

Coach Schafer's Notes for February 28, 2019

RPI 3, @Cornell 2 (OT)

@CORNELL 3, Union 1

The Friday night overtime loss was tough, but it was great to see the team rebound the following evening. Because of the Saturday night win, we are back in first place in the ECAC race, one point ahead of Quinnipiac and Harvard, and two points in front of Clarkson.

On Friday, we came out sluggish for whatever reason. RPI jumped out to a 2-0 lead on goals at 5:00 and 12:20. This was only the second time this year that we have been down by 2-0. Fortunately, we started to fight back, and 30 seconds later junior forward Jeff Malott scored the first of his two goals in the game. Malott cashed in on a pass that bounced off the heel of senior forward Beau Starrett's stick, and Jeff was there to swat the puck under the goaltender's glove. We went into the first intermission trailing 2-1. Neither team scored in the second period, but we out-shot them, 19-11, after 40 minutes of play.

We tied the score at 2-all 6:39 into the third period. Senior forward Mitch Vanderlaan kept the puck in the zone by stick handling around a defender. He then sent a beautiful pass to Malott in the left circle. Jeff picked his spot and sent a shot over the goaltender's blocker high to the short side for his fifth goal this season. Even though we out-shot them 16-3 in the third period, the score remained deadlocked, sending us into the 5-minute overtime period. In the OT, we had an excellent opportunity to score with a three-man rush, but the goaltender gloved a shot by sophomore forward Morgan Barron.

This set the stage for the unlikely game-winner with 52 seconds remaining in the extra session. We failed to clear the puck along the wall in our own zone, and the RPI player picked up the puck near the left point and skated into the middle. With our defense converging to shut down the angle, the player got to the slot. He took a shot that hit one of our defenders and flew past the catching glove of sophomore goaltender Matthew Galajda. Hockey can be a cruel game sometimes, and at this point, he seemed like every puck sent toward our goal was a threat.

Galajda made 13 saves and the RPI goaltender stopped 35 shots. We were 0-for-3 on the power play and they were 0-for-2. The loss put us one point behind Quinnipiac in the ECAC standings.

Obviously, we rebounded well on Saturday night and it was a completely different game than the night before. The game did become a special-teams battle, which we haven't had in a long time. Our penalty kill was outstanding, many shots were blocked, and when needed, Matty was there for us.

We jumped on top quickly with a power-play goal at 2:19 into the game. Sophomore forward Brenden Locke worked the puck from the top of the left circle down to a wide-open Malott on top of the crease. The puck bounced between his feet, and then Jeff backhanded a pass across to the far post to freshman forward Michael Regush, who roofed the shot for his eighth goal of

the season and fifth tally on the power play. Union tied the score at 14:10 on a defensive miscue that produced a 2-on-2 break. The goal was scored on a snapped shot from the left circle that beat Galajda on the glove side. We went into the first intermission tied at 1-all.

We took the lead again at 14:32 of the second period. With all five Dutchmen skaters collapsed below the hash marks, senior defenseman Alec McCrea and junior blue liner Yanni Kaldis exchanged passes before McCrea fired a shot toward the front of the net. Vanderlaan, standing right in front, redirected the puck downward and it bounced into the net past the goalie's blocker. We went into the locker room up 2-1 even though we had been outshot, 14-3, in the middle stanza.

I still felt that after we got the second goal our guys did a really good job being above them defensively. We blocked a lot of shots.

Our biggest mistake in the third period was a turnover, but Matty kept us in the game by stopping a 3-on-2 with 1:47 to play. With 58 seconds remaining, Barron scored his 13th goal of the season into an empty net. We really locked it down in the third period and it probably was very boring for the Cornell fans.

Galajda was called upon for only 17 saves but a handful were crucial and he played well. The Union goaltender stopped 30 shots. We were 1-for-5 on the power play and the visitors were 0-for-4.

The regular season winds down this coming weekend in our annual trek to the North Country. Both games are extremely important with at least one point guaranteeing us home ice for the quarterfinals and that very important first-round bye. We are at St. Lawrence on Friday night and then play Clarkson in the season finale. If you are in the North Country, please come and cheer us on because I'm sure the locals will be rooting for the home teams.