

Coach Schafer's Notes for April 2, 2019

NCAA East Regional Tournament Dunkin Donut Center, Providence, RI

CORNELL 5, Northeastern 1 - Semi-Final Providence 4, CORNELL 0 - Final

Our slogan this year was "Enjoy the Ride". It certainly was a bumpy and at times a long ride. But I told our players after the Providence game: I've been in this business 33 years, and I can't remember seeing a group of athletes who persevered and overcame adversity and never made any excuses all year long.

Near the end of the regular season, we thought we were getting healthy with a full complement of bodies. But it didn't last long, when lost junior forward Jeff Malott and sophomore goaltender Matt Galajda at the ECAC championships.

Going into the opening round with Northeastern I told our guys that there was no pressure to get to the Frozen Four. We knew inside our locker room how we are defined. This team certainly has character and it was demonstrated all season long.

The first night vs. Northeastern, the Hockey East tournament winner, we quickly opened the scoring, as we have done most of the year. Just 4:02 into the game senior forward Beau Starrett snapped a shot from the high slot that edged between the body and the right arm of the goaltender. Assists went to a pair of defensemen, junior Yanni Kaldis and senior Alec McCrea, who recorded three assists in the game. The first period ended with us leading 1-0, and the shots were even at eight apiece.

Senior forward Mitch Vanderlaan scored just 54 seconds into the second period on the end of a 2-on-2 break, as he sniped a shot off the goaltender's glove. Sophomore forward Morgan Barron scored his team-leading 15th goal of the year on an unassisted wraparound goal at 9:47, and freshman forward Michael Regush put home a rebound on the power play at 12:46. It was Regush's sixth extra man goal and 12th overall. We led 4-0 for the third time in the last five games. Northeastern got on the board with a power-play goal of its own with six minutes remaining in the middle stanza.

In the third period, we scored one more time with sophomore forward Brenden Locke finishing off a one-timer.

Sophomore goaltender Austin McGrath, making his first start since Jan. 26, came up big for us with 20 saves. The Northeastern goaltender stopped 14 shots. We knew Austin would rise to the challenge and he played well. We were 1-for-1 on the power play, and Northeastern was 1-for-5. We really played well except for the penalties. That was my only disappointment of the night because of our lack of discipline with our sticks. As the No. 3 seed, we got the job done vs. the No. 2 seed.

The victory placed us in our first Regional Final since 2012 against No. 4 seed Providence. Providence is a good hockey team with 24 wins on the season. They took a page out of our book and scored first on a rebound at 10:20 of the first period. They did exactly what we've been doing to many teams for a lot of years: Get the first goal. I thought they played outstanding staying above us for the rest of the night, making things very difficult. It was a one-goal first period. Just 1:40 into the second period, the Friars made it 2-0 by poking home a loose puck. They held that lead until six-tenths of a second was left in the period and scored on the power play. Making it 3-0 was the dagger. When you get behind like that, you've got to have depth to overcome that kind of team. You've got to sustain the pressure in order to get a break. We just didn't have that depth. Providence scored an empty net goal with 1:47 remaining in the game.

We did finish with a strong third period, but still had only 19 shots on goal. The Providence goaltender recorded his nation-leading eighth shutout of the season. McGrath was called upon for 25 saves.

Adding to our casualty list, Austin played with an injury too and he will have surgery this week. Just the fact that he played knowing that Matty was injured too and he was going for surgery in about five days—how do you get kids like that?

You judge your season on the whole year. You can break down the game....we were disappointed how we reacted to the first goal and we didn't have the jump that we needed to match their effort and intensity.

We wrapped up our season with a 21-11-4 record. We were co-champions of the ECAC hockey regular season, the runner-up in the ECAC Hockey Championships and a winner in an NCAA regional semifinal for the first time since 2012. We also were the Ivy League champions. Although we lose some outstanding senior leadership, we are looking forward to next year with the great group of returnees and a very good freshman class coming to campus.