

Men's Hockey Season Over After Quarterfinal Loss

Posted: Saturday, February 18, 2006

DE PERE - The eighth-seeded UW-Eau Claire men's hockey team fell 5-1 tonight to top-seeded St. Norbert in quarterfinal action of the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association (NCHA) Peters Cup Playoffs, ending the team's 2005-06 season.

With the playoff format of two-game series, the best Eau Claire could have done was win and force a 20-minute "mini-game," as the team lost a close 3-1 game last night. It was closer than the score indicates, as well, because one of the goals was on an empty net for the St. Norbert team that is ranked No. 1 in the USCHO.com Division III poll. In fact, until this game, the Blugolds had played the Green Knights tough, forcing a 2-2 tie in the first meeting of the season and in the second the 6-0 St. Norbert blowout did not occur until four power-play goals were scored in the third.

While the past three matchups versus these two teams were relatively close for the most part, this one was more lopsided with the shots on goal going 34-9 in favor of the Green Knights. Another St. Norbert asset was the power-play, which made for each Green Knight score. The successful St. Norbert power-play conversion rate of 24 percent rose tonight and paid huge dividends for the Green Knights.

Andrew Derton and Connor Hughes came into this playoff series tied for third in the NCHA for points. Derton put up the first goal while Hughes subsequently added a hat trick. Derton's came 7:04 into the first while Hughes' first two came at 14:52 and 18:12 of the opening period.

Hughes' hat trick had to span two periods, with the first middle period goal coming off his stick at 3:09. Andy Cote had been a power-play threat all year, leading in power-play goals during NCHA play. In fact, he scored one on Eau Claire last night. Tonight's version came 3:42 into the second to make it 5-0. All five came off of power-plays. The Blugolds came up with too little too late, as **Matt Schultz** (Sr.-Menomonie) put in an evenhanded shot at the 10:35 mark off a **Kevin Knapp** (Jr.-Blaine, MN/Spring Lake Park) pass.

Of the 34 shots, **Steffan Braunlich** (Sr.-Los Angeles, CA/Loyola) made 29 saves. His counterpart made eight. The Blugolds went zero for eight on power-plays while the Green Knights cashed in five out of 10.

This marks the second season in a row St. Norbert put Eau Claire out of the playoffs in this round and the third time in four years.

The Blugolds officially end the 2005-06 season 2-21-4.

NCHA Quarterfinal Game Two Box Score

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