

Hockey

North improves to 5-0; Sweet Home doubles up Falls

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

They're not playing their best hockey yet but Williamsville North coach Bob Rosen thinks his team is getting close.

"We're starting to play better but we have a long way to get to where we need to be," said Rosen.

The Spartans, last year's New York State Division I large school runner-up, improved to 5-0 after defeating Clarence, 5-0, on Thursday and Williamsville East, 6-2, last Saturday. Both games were played on the Amherst Pepsi Center's Olympic Rink.

Rosen felt his team played its best hockey against Clarence. North took a 1-0 lead 3:02 into the first period when junior Nick Angelo scored from senior Josh Little.

The Spartans tacked on three goals in the second period. Junior Marc Kadish got the scoring rolling 6:37 into the period on a power-play goal from Angelo and Little. Sophomore Chris Marsack made it 3-0 when he put in a goal on a backdoor pass from Angelo. Freshman Mark Maraschiello knocked in a rebound after a scramble in front of the Clarence net for another Spartan goal.

Sophomore James Nowicki finished off the scoring from Little and Marsack at 9:44 of the third.

Senior goalie Branden Komm made 25 saves as North outshot the Red Devils, 34-25.

Rosen also lauded the Jake Newton-Joey Jacobi-James Nowicki line for controlling Clarence's top line.

East scored first versus North when sophomore Eric Esposito, from sophomore Joey Cantafio, came around the corner and beat Komm with 12:50 left in the first period.

The Spartans answered with a power-play goal by Kadish (Angelo, Mark Smith) in the first period and another three tallies in the second period, the last coming from Angelo (Nick Fronczak) with 55 seconds left.

Angelo also set up Marsack and Little in the second period. Matt Austin also assisted Little.

North outshot East, 10-1, in the second.

"I felt that we pretty much dominated play in the second period," said Rosen. "Besides the Clarence game, it was the best period that we played all year."

"They outthrustled us," added East coach Mike Torrillo. "They seemed to want the puck more than we did. It showed us that we have to play a full 60 minutes. You can't have lapses against a good team because it will cost you."

East cut its deficit to 4-2 at 10:37 of the third on a power-play goal by Bogart (junior Mike DeStefano), and had a good chance to make it 4-3 when North took three penalties, but missed on their chances, Torrillo said.

A power-play goal from Grant Rickan (Fronczak, Nowicki), and an even strength goal by Kadish (Austin, Angelo) with 3:15 and 37 seconds remaining, sealed the North victory.

North outshot East, 27-17. Komm earned the win in net. Torrillo said East goalie

Matt Bradley played well.

North will play Shenendehowa on Friday and Troy LaSalle on Saturday in the Shenendehowa Classic. North has won the event the last two years.

East (2-1-1) has a busy week, playing games Thursday through Sunday. They face Lancaster at 9 p.m. on Thursday on the Pepsi Center Olympic Rink, Clarence at 7 p.m. on Friday and Glens Falls at 1 p.m. on Saturday in the Williamsville South Tournament, and Sweet Home at 5 p.m. on Sunday at Buffalo State College. Sweet Home beat East twice last year.

Sweet Home

Following two non-league Federation losses to Williamsville North and Kenmore West, the Panthers opened league play with a 6-3 win over Niagara Falls last Saturday on the Pepsi Center Feature Rink.

Sweet Home opened a 4-0 lead before Niagara Falls' Dave Kok and TJ Bullock tallied in 1:33 to make the score, 4-2, at the end of the second period.

Sweet Home junior Chris Covell scored from seniors Ryan Marko and Justin Reich with 2:21 left in the third. Marko capped off a hat trick with an unassisted, empty-net goal with 23 seconds remaining.

Marko opened the scoring 1:39 into the first period on the power play from Reich and junior Dominic Puntillo. He picked up his second with 49 seconds left in the first from Covell.

"We were up 4-0 and it seemed like we took the foot off the gas a little bit, and they scored and got some life," said Sweet Home coach Dave Gerspach. "We can't do

that when our goaltending and defense is not as strong as they need to be right now."

Senior Jim Cardinale was great with the man down, scoring two short-handed goals. His first goal came on a two-on-one breakaway with senior Mike Campise at the eight-minute mark of the first period. Cardinale broke up a pass at the blue line, Campise shot the puck and Cardinale knocked in the rebound. His second goal came after forechecking and backhanding a shot into the roof of the Wolverine net with 11:45 left in the second period, unassisted.

"Jim doesn't usually kill penalties but he caused total havoc out there," said Gerspach. "He was blocking and skating in front of shots. They didn't even come in our zone."

AJ Catalano also scored for Niagara Falls.

Sweet Home outshot Niagara Falls, 37-19, but Gerspach said their goalie, Anthony Badolato, stopped four different breakaways in the second period.

Gerspach said his team also took four penalties in the second period, which were way too many.

Castiglia picked up the win in net for Sweet Home (2-2-1).

The Panthers face St. Joe's at 9 p.m. on Thursday on the Pepsi Center Feature Rink and Williamsville East at 5 p.m. on Sunday at Buffalo State College. St. Joe's was the only Federation team to beat Sweet Home last year.

e-mail: pnagy@beenews.com

Competitive games no consolation for Tigers

While the scores may be indicative of an improvement, the 2007-08 Amherst Central Federation hockey team is not taking consolation in the fact that their games this year are more competitive.

"It's an improvement that was expected," said Amherst head coach Rich Crozier. "No one in our locker room is satisfied with a competitive game. Yes, we've been very close in four of our first six games but our focus remains on what we can do different to turn these games into wins. We're very close right now and if we can correct the little mistakes that we are making, the wins will come."

The first of two competitive games this week for the Tigers started on Thursday night when they took on Williamsville East.

The Tigers were able to mount a quick start against East, taking a 1-0 lead three minutes into the first period.

The line of senior Phil Cultrara, and juniors Sean Mullane and Stephen Mugel were able to pin East deep in their zone. Mugel stole the puck from a East de-

fenseman and quickly fired it towards the net. It hit an East player in front and found its way to the back of the net. It was Mugel's second goal of the season.

"It was a great start for us," said Crozier. "To get early production from that line was a big lift for our team."

Two minutes later, a controversial call prevented the Tigers from taking a 2-0 lead. On the power play, senior Mike Gruttaduria threw the puck towards the net. The puck went off senior Al McQuiggan's right skate and into the net. Unfortunately for the Tigers, the goal was disallowed.

"We asked for an explanation and the referee said that Al (McQuiggan) made a kicking motion towards the net," said Crozier. "To be honest, I did not see that, but yelling and screaming about it was not going to change their minds. It certainly was a call that could have gone our way."

That disallowed goal changed the complication of the game and East was able to mount a comeback, tying the game at 1-1 when senior Eric Bogart tied the game from Matt Kweller.

After giving up two late goals in the final minute of the second period, Amherst was able to get on the board again early in the third when Gruttaduria scored a beautiful goal on the power play. McQuiggan moved the puck up the wing to senior Matt Allwes. Allwes skated the puck in and left it for Gruttaduria. Gruttaduria picked up the puck, split the East defense and rifled it into the top corner to make the score 4-2.

"That was a big goal that Mike scored to get us back in the game," said Crozier. "Obviously, there is a lot of pressure on him, McQuiggan and Allwes to produce for us. I was happy to see Mike finally breakthrough and get one."

Unfortunately for the Tigers, that was all they could muster and the game ended 5-2.

"It's an improvement from years past against this team, but we're not satisfied," said Crozier. "The difference in the game was the two late goals we gave up in the final minute of the second period. Those two goals were killers. We need to improve on our intensity, especially in the last minute of a period."

Bogart (Colin Lucey, Joey Cantafio) scored a second goal for East late in the first period.

Flames junior Mike DeStefano scored twice in 22 seconds late in the second period. He tallied on the power play from junior Max Fogel and senior Dan Tyx with 58 seconds remaining and added an even strength goal from Fogel with 36 seconds left. Sophomore James Faran scored his first of the season in the third from Lucey and senior Peter Bouris.

Flames senior goalie Jay Hall made 14 saves.

East coach Mike Torrillo lauded the play of his penalty killers. Eric Esposito, Cantafio, Matt Kweller, Gary Styn, and the entire defense, led by Kyle Murray and Fogel, killed off 13 East penalties throughout the entire game. East held Amherst to two shots in the second period.

On Sunday, the Tigers took on a new opponent to the Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation, Niagara Falls High School, at Buffalo State Ice Arena.

After falling behind 2-0 and playing a lackluster first period, the Tigers struck first in the second period. Gruttaduria, battled behind the Niagara Falls goalie and fed the puck to Allwes. Allwes stepped out in front of the net and buried the puck behind the Falls goalie, making the score 2-1. Senior Steve Rubach also assisted on the play.

After giving up two more, the Tigers struck again when sophomore Dave Rubach lit the lamp. After a hard-working shift from

the Rubach brothers and senior Dan Hubbard, David Rubach picked up the puck from the corner, walked out in front and shot through the goalie's five-hole.

It was David Rubach's first goal of his career, and Steve Rubach's second point of the game.

"It's great to see both Rubachs contribute, but especially Steve," said Crozier. "Steve's one of those seniors we are counting on. He played a good game."

After falling behind 5-2, the Tigers mounted another comeback, when Gruttaduria scored his second in as many games on a breakaway. Gruttaduria took a pass up the middle from junior defenseman Kevin Denny. He then used his speed to slip by the Falls' defensemen and slid it through the goalie's legs. It was Gruttaduria's third point in two games. The Tigers pulled the goalie but to no avail as Niagara Falls hung on for the 5-3 victory.

"Our terrible start in the first period really hurt us," said Crozier. "I would say that it was our game in the second and third period, but we put ourselves in a tough hole and we couldn't recover. It's a tough lesson to learn this early in the season, but we'll look to bounce back from it. In this league, a team needs to play a full 45 minutes to win hockey games and we didn't do that."

Sophomore goalie Sean Smith made 19 saves for the Tigers.

Amherst takes on St. Francis at 3 p.m. on Sunday at Buffalo State College.

(Patrick J. Nagy contributed to this article)

Billies lose one-goal games

Williamsville South had chances in its last two hockey games but was on the short end of two 1-0 scores.

The Billies fell to Niagara Falls last Friday at Niagara University's Dwyer Arena and Bishop Timon-St. Jude on Saturday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink.

"We played well defensively but could not generate goals," said South coach Sean Green. "The work ethic was there."

AJ Catalano scored for Niagara Falls with six minutes left in the third period. South outshot the Wolverines, 35-25, and had 14 shots in the third.

Timon's Zack Williams scored halfway through

the first period.

"We had a couple of chances on the power play but their goalie played well," said Green.

Green said South goalie Matt Green played great in both games, making 24 saves against Niagara Falls and 19 saves versus Timon.

South hosts the Williamsville South Booster Holiday Tournament this weekend. On Friday, Clarence plays Williamsville East at 7 p.m. followed by South against Glens Falls at 9 p.m. On Saturday, East plays Glens Falls at 1 p.m. followed at 3 p.m. by South versus Clarence.

To generate more offense, coach Green said his team has to throw every shot at the net.

Sports brief

Francis Lagona Jr., a 15-year-old who bowls for St. Joe's Collegiate Institute, shot a 300 on Nov. 10 in a Future Stars Saturday morning league at Manor II Lanes.