

Tigers' hockey defeats South, continues solid play

Senior Matt Allwes scored with one minute left in the game, and sophomore Sean Smith made 22 saves as the Amherst Central Federation hockey team defeated Williamsville South, 3-1, on Saturday afternoon at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Olympic Rink.

In a penalty-filled game, the Tigers overcame 24 infractions to edge the Billies. South had 11 penalties.

"We certainly didn't make it easy on ourselves," said Amherst coach Rich Crozier. "We were very undisciplined as a team and lucky to still be in the hockey game. While there were a number of calls we disagreed with, my team needs to have better composure and handle adversity even if it did seem that the officials were against us."

South was able to get on the board first early. On the power play, Darren Powers knocked down a shot that Smith handled. Powers picked up his own rebound and slid it into the open net.

After killing off eight penalties in a row, the Tigers were able to tie the game, also on the power play. After some really good movement with the man advantage, senior Al McQuiggan passed the puck to junior defenseman Kevin Denny, who took a quick shot on net. South goalie Matt Green handled the initial shot, but senior Blake Napierala picked up the rebound and hammered it home.

"That was a big goal for my hockey team," said Crozier. "We had been working on the power play all week in practice. Our special teams have been much improved as of late."



Williamsville South goalie Matt Green makes a blocker save on Amherst's Dan Hubbard in the third period of Saturday's game. The Tigers won, 3-1.

Photo by David F. Sherman

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The score remained tied at 1-1 until late in the third period. With a minute left in the game, the Tigers put some major pressure on the Billies.

After senior Dan Hubbard was stopped on a breakaway, the Tigers pinned South deep in their zone. Hubbard eventually stole the puck from the South defender and passed it quickly to sophomore defenseman Chris Farnelo. Farnelo fired the puck on net that Allwes tipped perfectly. The puck hit the crossbar and went into the net, giving the Tigers a 2-1 lead with less than a minute left in the game.

"What a great example of determination by Hubbard," said Crozier. "While most players may have given up on the play after missing the breakaway, he stuck

with it and set up the game winner. I spoke to my seniors before the game and told them they needed to start playing like seniors and leading this team."

Allwes, Hubbard, Napierala, McQuiggan and Mike Gruttaduria, all seniors, played a big role in the Tigers' win.

"We were able to get some really good performances from my upperclassmen," said Crozier. "They were the difference in the game."

Senior Mike Gruttaduria sealed the victory for the Tigers when he scored in the empty net with 14 seconds remaining.

"I am just thrilled that we overcame the adversity of the officiating and were able to get our first victory of the season," said Crozier.

"We've worked really hard over the past two months to finally get this win. Hopefully, it's a sign of things to come."

On Thursday night, Amherst took on Niagara Falls High School at Dwyer Arena on the campus on Niagara University.

The Tigers started the scoring on the power play when senior A.J. DiLorenzo scored the first of his career. After some really nice movement on the power play, Farnelo fed the puck to McQuiggan. McQuiggan faked the shot and gave it to DiLorenzo. Crozier said DiLorenzo has one of the hardest shots in the league.

"It was nice to see A.J. notch his first," said Crozier. "We have been telling him that if he can get that

big shot of his on net, good things will happen, and finally he did."

Even though the Tigers controlled most of the play, Niagara Falls tallied the next three, two of which were on the power play, to take a 3-1 lead into the third period.

"Two small breakdowns on the penalty kill cost us bad," said Crozier. "Special teams can be the difference with the competitive nature of our division. We outplayed them for most of the game and still lost the game. It was a tough lesson for my hockey team to learn."

The Tigers made it 3-2 early in the third when McQuiggan scored his second point of the game. After getting a pass from Hubbard, McQuiggan broke down the wing hard. He beat the Falls' defensemen to the net and slid the puck by the goalie. For McQuiggan, it was his sixth point of the young season.

Unfortunately for the Tigers, that was all they could rally in their comeback attempt as Niagara Falls hung on for a 3-2 victory.

"This one might be the most disappointing of the season," said Crozier. "We outplayed and outshot them (30-21), yet still lost the hockey game. The positive is that this team continues to play well. We've been in every game but one this season. We're very close right now. We're keeping it positive, knowing that it's only a matter of time that things will go our way." Smith made 19 saves.

The Tigers face St. Francis at 7 p.m. on Thursday on the Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.



Amherst Central's A.J. DiLorenzo, left, battles Niagara Falls' Matt Paonessa for the puck during the Tigers' 3-2 loss to the Wolverines last Thursday at Niagara University's Dwyer Arena. DiLorenzo scored his first career Federation goal in the game.

Photo by Joe Eberle

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Sweet Home

(Continued from page 20)

5:55 short-handed, to tie the game.

A 1:34 later, Marko (Covel, Campise) gave Sweet Home back the lead on the power play only for Cassidy to score an unassisted goal 33 seconds later.

Timon outshot Sweet Home, 31-28, in Thursday's game. Sweet Home outshot Timon, 33-30, on Saturday. Panther sophomore Chris Koester made 26 saves on Thursday. Senior Rob Castiglia had 26 saves on Saturday.

In both games, Gerspach lauded the play of Marko.

"Those two games were the best back-to-back games I've ever seen him play," said Gerspach. "His speed, puck control and vision of the ice was outstanding. A

fan wouldn't need to see two shifts to notice him."

Gerspach hopes his team can build off the Timon games in the Rome Tournament this week in Rome, N.Y. The Panthers (3-4-2, 1-1-1) play Section I's Rye at 5 p.m. on Thursday. The winner plays Section III's Rome or Section II's Queensbury at 3:30 p.m. on Friday in the final. The consolation game is 1 p.m. on Friday. All four teams were in last year's Division II state tournament.

"If we're going to win a state championship, these are the teams who we are going to have to beat in March," said Gerspach.

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East overcomes to beat South, Batavia

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

The theme for the Williamsville East Federation hockey team last week was overcoming adversity.

The Flames (6-3-1) overcame consecutive penalties in the second period against Williamsville South last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink to post a 5-1 victory. On Saturday, East came back from a 3-2 deficit against Batavia to win, 4-3, in overtime, to take third at the Batavia Tournament.

East led South 2-0 after the first period on goals by senior forward Mike Esposito (Matt Kwellner, Jon Gambocorta) and senior defender Dan Tyx (Joey Cantafio) but took three consecutive penalties in the second. South took advantage on one of its power play opportunities when senior Dustin Ditalio (Austin White, Daren Powers) scored at 8:17. South outshot East, 10-4, in the second.

East coach Mike Torrillo said goalie Matt Bradley (17 saves) made some big stops in the second to keep his team in the game.

The Flames came on in the third, scoring three times and outshooting the Billies, 13-5. Cantafio opened the scoring in the third period at 9:41 from senior Eric Bogart. Senior Colin Lucey made the score 3-1 at 5:15 from Mike DeStephano and Bogart. Forty seconds later, senior forward Gary Styn scored from junior forward Simon Fedak.

"They had opportunities and they cashed in on them," said South coach Sean Green.

East had a 2-1 lead against Batavia after the second period, but Batavia scored twice a minute apart in the third to give them a 3-2 lead. Torrillo pulled goalie Steve Bukolt late in the third and with 13 seconds left, 6-foot-4, 304-pound senior Tyler Durinka scored on the power play from Lucey and sophomore forward Eric Esposito.

Bogart scored the game-winner at 5:59 of overtime. Bogart outworked a Batavia player down low and put in a rebound. DeStephano and Durinka assisted.

Cantafio gave East a 1-0 advantage at 2:51 of the first period from Bogart and Eric Esposito. Batavia's Doug Zanski (Tim Laron) tied the game at 1:01 with a short-handed goal. Styn (James Faran, Fedak) put East ahead, 2-1, at 3:21 of the second.

Bukolt made 16 saves in his first action of the season. East fired 24 shots on Batavia.

East opened the Batavia Tournament with an exciting 4-3 loss with Frontier.

The Flames led Frontier, 2-1, going into the second period but like the South game, took three penalties in a row, which led to a power-play goal by Frontier's Nick Battista (Nick White). Just as a power play ended, Chris Gonser (White) put Frontier ahead, 3-2, 38 seconds into the third. East tied the score a minute later by DeStephano (Austin Barnett, Lucey), but Gonser (Mark Smerka) scored again at 6:49.

Torrillo said his team had five or six good scoring chances late but couldn't score.

Kwellner (Gambocorta) scored at 2:32 of the first. Lucey scored unassisted about seven minutes later on the power play on an end-to-end rush.

East senior goalie Jay Hall made 15 saves.

Overall, Torrillo was pleased with how his team played in the Batavia Tournament.

"The seniors stepped up, the defense played solid and the goaltending was solid," said Torrillo. "I thought at the beginning of the season we would be playing in a lot one-goal games. Hopefully, we can keep coming out on the good side of them."

Torrillo also lauded the play of defenseman sophomore Billy Gaffney and senior Matt Foster, who saw action for the first time this week.

East plays two big small-school Federation league games this week. They face Bishop Timon-St. Jude at 7 p.m. on the Pepsi Center Olympic Rink and at 1 p.m. Saturday against Kenmore East.

South's other game last week was a 5-1 loss to Kenmore East on Sunday at Buffalo State College. The Bulldogs led 2-0 after two periods before Leo Schultz (Austin White) scored for South in the third. Kenmore East scored twice in a minute and added a late goal.

South (0-11) will have three chances this week to win its first game of the season. The Billies face Niagara Falls at 9 p.m. on Thursday on the Pepsi Center Olympic Rink, Kenmore West at 6 p.m. on Saturday at Niagara University's Dwyer Arena and Kenmore East at 1 p.m. on Sunday at Buffalo State Sports Arena.

"They've never given up," said Green. "We've played well in spurts and haven't been rewarded with a win. We need to put it together for three periods. I give the kids credit. They're not getting down on themselves."