The Crusader Athlete of the Week

Meghan Mahoney
Women’s Hockey
Fr.-Def.
Utica, NY/Proctor

Last weekend Meghan led the Lady ’Saders with four goals en route to an 8-0 blanking versus St. Michaels. Mahoney currently leads Holy Cross in scoring (26 points) and is second on the team in goals (13).

Holy Cross women’s basketball held a record of 4-2 in the Patriot League entering this week after a big win over American University last Saturday, Jan. 26. However, that was not where they needed to be, not where people expected them to be, and it was not first place. The Crusaders had battled back from two tough road losses, returning to the friendly Hart Center where they defeated American 78-61, but they needed more. The games this week against Bucknell and Navy, both on the road, had to be big ones; the Lady Saders had to take the momentum from the American win and play their ball their way, and they did, defeating both Bucknell and Navy and gaining a first place spot in the Patriot League (tied with Bucknell and Lehigh).

Coach Gibbons commented that “this was a huge week, playing terrific basketball and winning tough road games that the team really needed to win.” He also said that he was “very proud of the way the girls responded (to earlier struggles) as they kept working and the Lady Saders had to get back on track to where we belong on top of the league.”

The Crusaders traveled to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania to face Bucknell University on Tuesday Jan. 29. The team looked to keep their momentum and defeat the league-leading Bison in front of their home crowd of 1,013. Holy Cross shut down the Bucknell offense and fought through a close first half to come out with a 76-55 victory. The teams traded baskets and led throughout the first half of the game, with Holy Cross shooting 43 percent and holding Bucknell to 36 percent from the field. Senior guard Jeannette Paukert was instrumental in holding off Bucknell’s leading scorer, junior guard Amanda Abraham, on offense attemps. Preventing Creamer from posting her usual 25 points per game was crucial to the Lady S’aders success. Holy Cross took a 34-31 lead at halftime, with freshman guard Maggie Farrow leading the team with 15 first half points.

The team continued to shoot fairly even in the beginning of the second half; however, Holy Cross went on an 8-0 run to extend their lead to 47-38, with 12:42 remaining in the game. Five minutes later, Bucknell had outscored the Crusaders 12-4, shrinking the Holy Cross lead to 51-47. Holy Cross defense stepped up and held the Bison to just 25 percent shooting in the half, while the offense shot 52 percent and scored 25 more points than Bucknell to secure the win. The Bison were forced to foul the Lady Saders seven times in their last possessions, but Holy Cross shot 78 percent from the charity stripe that half, sinking 12 of their last 14 free throws. The Crusaders also out-rebounded the Bison 44-37 to help the victory. Manager Fontana ended the game with a team-leading 23 points and 10 rebounds for her fourth double-double of the season; she also had eight assists and four steals. Coach Gibbons commented on his senior tri-captains who “knew the importance of the game,” and they answered with senior forward Elisa Zawadzka playing strong, scoring 15 points and adding four rebounds and senior guard Amanda Abraham remaining steady and adding 15 points and seven boards. Gibbons was proud of the performance of all the seniors and felt that “Jeannette Paukert did a tremendous defensive job and had a great floor game” in which she picked up five rebounds and dealt two assists. Junior Katie O’Keefe also grabbed nine rebounds in this important win for the Cross.

Holy Cross next traveled to Annapolis, Maryland to face the Midshipmen of Navy, who they defeated 82-79 in overtime earlier this season at the Hart Center. The Crusaders battled a strong Navy team, coming back from behind to grab a 62-60 victory at Alumni Hall. It was a slow first half for both teams with Holy Cross leading 18-15 with 7:08 remaining in the half. The teams remained close in the half with Navy leading 23-22 at the break. O’Keefe led with eight first half points as the Crusaders shot 41 percent from the floor but were 0-9 from three point land. The teams combined for 19 turnovers, Holy Cross with 10 and Navy with 9, leading to a very fast-paced floor game.

In the first five minutes of the second half, Navy took a 44-34 lead over the Crusaders and were playing strong basketball until Abra- ham broke through the defense to make a clutch jump shot. Following a Holy Cross time out, the Lady Saders went on a 13-4 run sparked by Abra- ham’s jumper and her first three-pointer of the game. In off the bench, sophomore forward MaryRose Campbell helped shut down Navy’s offense with her tough defensive play and added several points to the scoreboard. Crusaders having fought back from their 10 point deficit, Holy Cross was down just 48-47 with 10.31 remaining in the game. The Midshipmen sank a three-pointer to give themselves a 51-47 lead, but junior guard Liz O’Connor had four straight points to start a 10-0 Holy Cross run, giving the Crusaders a 57-51 lead late in the game. After trading baskets for the next four minutes, the teams were tied 60-60 and it seemed another overtime battle would begin. However, with just eight seconds remaining, Campbell was fouled and sent to the free throw line in front of both her sister Abi O’Keefe forward for Navy, and a large family crowd. Campbell sank both her free throws to give the Crusaders a 62-60 lead and the Midshipmen were unable to convert on a last second shot, giving Holy Cross its sixth league win. Coach Gibbons felt that “coming back after being down ten points was a big boost for us and the team had a will to win.” He was also glad to see Campbell’s shooting practice pay off, with her sinking the winning baskets in front of her family.

O’Keefe led the team with 16 points off near-perfect shooting from the floor and Fontanna grabbed 10 rebounds while Abraham added 12 points. Paukert played a strong defensive game, helping to hold the offensive effort of Navy’s Courtney Davidson and also dishing out seven assists. Campbell and O’Connor chipped in eight and seven points, respectively.

Following the big wins of the past two weeks, the Crusaders look to hold their momentum as they face Lafayette at the Hart Center on Tuesday Feb. 5 and travel to Colgate on Saturday, Feb. 9 to play at 1:00 p.m. Coach Gibbons knows that “the team can’t look past any game or take for granted.” However, they are defending their winning streak and will continue. The Lady Saders are now tied for first place in the Patriot League with a 6-2 record in the league, and a 15-6 record overall.