MIT downs club hockey

BY BRAD HOLZWART
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

As the Club Hockey team returned to action this past Thursday, Feb. 8 versus MIT, they were unable to feed off their win against second-place Bryant as they were shutout 4-0.

MIT entered the contest in second place in the NECHA Western Conference with a record of 7-6-1 overall. Taking on MIT for the first time this season, the Crusaders were outmatched early. With wingers J.P. Lannon out sick and Greg Dadekian unable to make the entire game, Holy Cross’ top scoring line was unable to generate the offense they had produced in games past. “It was tough to match the level of play tonight,” said Crusader coach Ryan Davis. “The (Chris) Shaker line was incomplete until the second. It was too late to get Young and Dadekian going.”

The few scoring chances that the ‘Saders were able to create were stifled by the MIT defense. “We didn’t support Bennett like we should have.”

While constantly under fire, MIT’s system really well and caused theHoly Cross defense, putting 55 shots on goaltender Dan Bennett. Bennett saw 28 shots in the second period alone. “It was a frustrating night. We hadn’t seen some scoring opportunities,” commented sophomore defenseman Brendan Cohn. “But we just could not capitalize. They played our system really well and caused problems with our breakout.”

While the Crusader offense was stagnant, MIT’s was just the opposite. They continuously plagued the Holy Cross defense, putting 55 shots on goaltender Dan Bennett. Bennett saw 28 shots in the second period alone. “It was a frustrating game to be a part of,” commented defenseman Larry Bruni. “We lost two of our defensemen in the game, one due to a recurring injury and the other to a misconduct, so the defense was understaffed and tired towards the end. We didn’t support Bennett like we should have.”

While constantly under fire, Bennett stood tall in the crease for the Crusaders, making 50 saves on the night. “I felt good tonight and was seeing the puck well,” said Bennett. “MIT had to work for their goals by going to the net hard and taking advantage of rebounds and one breakaway. They aren’t better than us, they just outworked us tonight. We clearly didn’t bring our “A” game to the rink.”

The general consensus proved to be that Holy Cross was simply outworked and out hustled. Entering the game 2-1-1 in their last three outings, including the big win over Bryant, the Crusaders sought to bring their momentum into the postseason. “It was obviously a big letdown,” noted Davis. “I was afraid we may come out a little flat especially with the slow finish we had to the Bryant game. It was tough to get as energized for this game having had two big games in three days. We simply didn’t play up to our ability tonight, but we were certainly bailed out by Bennett, who played unbelievable and held us in the game.”

Despite the loss, the Crusaders are still very much alive in the playoff race. Their record fell to 11-4-1 overall, but they are almost certainly guaranteed a playoff berth. Pending a tie between Bryant and Bridgewater State, Holy Cross will be assured a spot in the tournament. The team returns to the ice this week, taking to the road Thursday through Saturday. Traveling to MIT on Thursday, the Crusaders will look to average last week’s loss as they take on the Engineers once again to make up a canceled match up from November. They will then move on to a key meeting with Eastern Conference number one, Bates, Wednesday or Saturday.

That date has yet to be determined. Finally, the regular season will come to a close Saturday, Feb 17, as Holy Cross will skate against the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is 2-7 on the year, which is good enough for fifth place in the NECHA West, coming off a 6-3 loss to Franklin Pierce February 10.

With three important games left, the Crusaders hope to find themselves 3-0 heading into the post season beginning February 24.

Lady Saders shock visiting Wolverines

BY SUSAN MACWILLIAMS
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

It looks as if the women’s basketball team may just have their sights set on winning yet another Patriot League Title. And why not? Their consecutive winning streak, dating back to the start on Jan. 3, has improved to 13, with nine of those wins being over league opponents.

Last Thursday night, the Crusaders stepped outside their conference to face Big Ten powerhouse University of Michigan at the Hart Center. Michigan was only defeated 73-64 by sixth-ranked Purdue just four days before its meeting with Holy Cross. The Wolverines were sent home with their tails between their legs once again, as the Crusaders beat them by a score of 62-58, in what many would call an upset. There was never a dull moment, as the lead went back and forth, with 17 lead changes and nine ties. The Crusaders led 30-28 at halftime, and HC added to their lead in the second half. Michigan fought back from a six point deficit to tie the game at 56 with 3:18 remaining, but it wasn’t enough.

Senior captain Monika Rothemich led her team to victory when she scored four of the Crusaders’ final six points, including a three-pointer with only 33 seconds left. In addition, Rothemich grabbed six rebounds, while junior teammates Amanda Abraham and Jeanette Paukert contributed to the scoring effort with 16 points apiece. Sophomore Katie O’Keefe also league, were leading 26-25 with 5:11 left in the first half, when the Crusaders went on a 12-0 run to take an 11 point lead, making the score 37-26. Holy Cross continued to shoot 60% from the field to give them a first half lead of 41-30.

The second half gave both teams a chance to lead. It was the Bison who went on the next run (10-1) to cut the lead to just two. But then it was the Crusaders’ turn to answer with a 7-2 run and push the lead back to seven. Bucknell scored the next eight points to take a 50-49 lead with just under ten minutes to go. Their hold on the lead was short-lived, however, because Paukert hit a three-pointer to give her team the lead for good, with an overall score of 66-63.

Paukert contributed 14 points, five rebounds, and three steals, while O’Keefe chipped in with ten points and eight rebounds. Rothemich was recognized for her play as she was honored as the day’s Winter Homecoming Most Valuable Player. She shot 8-for-13 from the field, with a game high 19 points and a clearance of nine rebounds.

Another Crusader was recognized for outstanding play this week. Paukert has been honored for the second straight week as the Patriot League Player of the Week for the week ending Feb. 11. The junior guard guided her team to a 3-0 record last week, averaging 16.7 points and 6.3 assists. Against Lehigh, she led the Crusaders with 20 points on 6-for-7 shooting including 4-for-5 from behind the arc, while dishing out nine assists that same day. In Holy Cross’ upset over Michigan, Paukert again led the team in scoring with 16 points and four three-pointers. The Chicago native also chipped in 14 points and five rebounds against Bucknell last weekend. Paukert currently leads the team in points, assists, three-point field goals, three-point field goal percentage, free throw percentage, and minutes.

The Crusaders will be in action on Saturday for their final home game of the year. Come early and often to give your support to Monika Rothemich, the team’s captain and sole senior as she plays what might be her final game in the Hart Center.