

Dec. 6 Hockey: Spartans win Klockner Klash on Ice



Nottingham goalie Kyle O'Byrne had to concentrate even more intently than usual today as a foggy Mercer rink made things challenging. Teammate Dave Robb is at O'Byrne's side (Photo by Suzette Lucas).

Spartans did not have the foggiest notion of taking Nottingham lightly

By Rich Fisher

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Dec. 6: First-year coach Alex Chis-Luca realizes that just because Nottingham's ice hockey teams have had some lean seasons recently, teams aren't going to feel pity for the Northstars.

Steinert sophomore winger Joe Konrath says the Spartans can't afford to do such things anyway.

Konrath put his actions where his words were as he and Alex Verdi both notched hat tricks and Sean Clinedinst tallied two more goals to pace Steinert to an 8-2 win over Nottingham in the Klockner Klash on ice at foggy Mercer County Rink today.

"We're gonna have to fight for every inch, shift after shift after shift," Chis-Luca said. "No one's gonna give us a break because of our previous record. They're still not gonna take us lightly. They're gonna battle for every inch too."

"A win is a win in everybody's eye, so they won't give us any leniency. Maybe every now and then they'll take us lightly and we can capitalize on that, but we take what we can get and work harder every game."

Konrath said this wasn't a game his team would take lightly.

"Going into a game we're not just gonna go in thinking we're going to beat them," he

said. "You go in with that attitude, and you're not gonna win. You can't get too cocky or it's not gonna work.

"You go in each game whether it's a team you feel you can beat or might have trouble beating, and you play the same way no matter what."

Steinert (2-0) started today's game a little off kilter, although the dense fog caused by heat and humidity might have had something to do with it.

"That was definitely a first," Konrath said.

"This is nuts," coach Ryan DeClerico added.

The fog wasn't thick enough to stop the officials from seeing, however, as Steinert was forced to kill off another early penalty.

"It was tough to see out there, but the guys came out a little sluggish and we addressed it right off the bat," DeClerico said. "We were sluggish, made a few stupid penalties at the beginning that didn't help us. That seems like a recurring theme but once we gave them a kick in the butt they got it going."

They sure did.

Verdi scored with 8:25 remaining (from Kevin Dey) and Clinedinst tallied less than four minutes later from Rob Mulcare. Konrath scored a killer with 5.1 seconds left to make it 3-0.

The Spartans expanded the lead when Verdi set up Clinedinst for his second-straight two goal game.

Nottingham got one back when John Terry and John Pope set up Billy Kriegner, but just 37 seconds later Konrath scored from Ben Kraml to regain the four-goal cushion. Verdi scored on the power play with 43.6 seconds left in the period, and he and Konrath finished their hat tricks with third-period goals. Jorge Bennett notched one for Nottingham.

It was the second career hat trick for Konrath, a hockey veteran who has played travel with the Lawrence Flames and Valley Forge since he was nine. He is once again paired with classmates Tanner Dow and Ryan Zujkowski after the three were linemates as freshmen last year.

"We know how each other plays from last year," said Konrath said. "This year it's working out even better."

"I'm really grateful they got some playing time last year," DeClerico said. "They're a group of talented kids, I'm happy to have them for another two years after this year. The only thing they can do is get better, which we're excited about."

He's also excited about having Verdi on the team, as the senior has gotten off to a nice start centering a line of Clinedinst and either Dey or Christian Clayton.

"Verdi brings good stick handling skills and a decent shot," the coach said. "We saw it today. He's also a hard worker. He gets back for us too. We'll use him as a defenseman at times."

Meanwhile, Chis-Luca is just trying to get the most out of his team in each outing after it lost a lot of offensive firepower last year.

"I was glad to see they kept the intensity up," the coach said. "We had some things that flattened our tires a little, but I told them to keep their heads up."

“We just try to build off every little spark that we can and just improve for the next game. I think they’re capable of being in every single game if the intensity is the same throughout.”