

Icers look to bounce back

By Tom Kinslow
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As he sat in the locker room after a 4-2 defeat at the hands of Delaware, defenseman John Conte heard a

ICERS

noise. Through the walls, Conte heard the heatbreaking sounds of the Blue Hens raucously celebrating their defeat of Penn State.

At that moment, the captain stood up and told his team they weren't going to experience this moment again.

This weekend, the Icers will attempt to turn Conte's words into reality as they try to rebound against Rhode Island.

In fact, they think they have no choice but to bounce back.

"We're going to have to," defenseman Steve Thurston said. "We have to win two games this weekend and put the other game behind us. You always want to win them all, but sometimes things don't go your way, so we're going to try and recover this weekend and win Friday night."

Throughout the season, Penn State has shown the ability to bounce back from tough defeats.

Following a one-goal loss to Ohio in October, the Icers responded with an overtime victory against the Bobcats. A week later, Penn State fell, 4-3, in a shootout to West Chester, only to go on an 11-game win streak.

It's that short memory the Icers believe will help them move past the events of last Saturday.

Penn State touched on moving forward in practice on Tuesday, and after the brief conversation, the Icers believe they are fully prepared to focus on the Rams this weekend.

"It's something we're going to forget about, especially with Rhode Island coming in this weekend," forward Tim O'Brien said. "We can't remember the loss on Saturday. We've gotta take care of business this week in practice and be ready to get two big wins this weekend."

As Penn State moves on from a tough loss, it's the lessons learned during that loss that will help the most.

Coach Scott Balboni said the problems in the loss to the Blue Hens stemmed from the Icers getting out of their systems in the second period and allowing the game to get out of reach.

However, even after taking that painful blow to its chin, Penn State was able to move on even with the game, with Thurston saying they responded well in the third period to Delaware's offensive flurry.

While a loss is never a good thing, the Icers are looking on the bright side of the last weekend.

"I think it was good that we got that knock on the chin," O'Brien said.

"Maybe it makes us a little more aware of what we have to do and what we have to take care of this week in practice and continue on. Hopefully we can use this past weekend as a stepping stone and learn some things from that and put it towards this weekend coming up."

Until then, the sounds of Delaware's joy and Conte's ears.

"You want people to remember how that feels," Thurston said.

"You want to remember them celebrating in your face. It makes you not want to let that happen again."

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Steph Witt/Collegian

Chris Cerutti sets up a shot against West Chester University Jan. 23.

Senior leadership big going into tough game

By Tom Copain
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Interlaced now between the championship banners at the Greenberg Ice Pavilion are banners of some of this year's Penn State Icers seniors.

Steve Thurston and John Conte are both up on the wall, along with Matt Kirstein and Ryan Paradis. They see it every day at practice, and they'll be up there when the Icers face Rhode Island this weekend.

And with the conference regular-season title on the line, the leadership of the seniors and upperclassmen could play a big role.

"We may go up. We may go down. They may score on us early. Things will happen this weekend that we'll face some adversity," Penn State coach Scott Balboni said.

"There may be some penalties. It'll be a very physical, high emotion game. So we'll need some of that senior leadership to take charge of the game and to take charge of the guys."

Conte was an integral part of the storyline when the two teams last met in November.

In the second game of the weekend, with his team trailing by two after two periods at Rhode Island, Conte gave an impassioned speech that sparked the Icers to a

comeback shootout victory against the Rams.

Since that Saturday night, the Icers have gone 12-2, including winning nine in a row between Dec. 4 and last Saturday.

But Conte doesn't think the senior leaders will have to be as vocal this weekend because they simply don't have to be as talkative now as they were at the beginning of the year.

"I don't think it has to be as much different than any other weekend," Conte said.

"It's just a matter of just keeping guys focused. Some guys gotta hear it, you gotta let them know. Sometimes you don't have to say anything because

everybody's got it together."

The team unity and chemistry also plays a big part in helping the leaders make sure the team as a whole doesn't feel the pressure of a conference title weekend.

Conte said that Rhode Island trip brought the team together, and the team will do different things to keep things loose. He mentioned jokes, cliches and videos, among other things.

"I think it more has to do with them," Thurston said.

"There's a lot more of them than there are of us. They've done a great job with listening to what the coaches have to say or if the older guys have something to say.

They take it and implement it. I give a lot of credit to the younger guys."

But for the younger guys and for the rest of the team, this weekend will probably be the biggest weekend of the season. And Balboni is hoping the seniors can keep the young guys composed in pressure situations.

"I think the emotion will be there without any question. I'm not worried about that this weekend," Balboni said.

"But it will be the calming effect and keeping things in check this weekend that will be important."

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Two former Icers ready for Hall of Fame honor

By Paul Casella
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

This Saturday, two former champions with the Penn State Icers will be returning to the ice at the Greenberg Ice Pavilion. But they won't be playing.

Forward Rob Shaner and goalie Mark Scally, who both played for Penn State from 1996-2000, will be inducted into the Icers Hall of Fame during Saturday's game against No. 10 Rhode Island.

"I'm really looking forward to this weekend," said Scally, who now lives in Miami.

"And just to know I'm going in with Rob Shaner, one of my good friends, it's icing on the cake. It

was great news when I found out and just a really nice surprise."

Scally and Shaner each won a pair of championships with the Icers, one in 1998 and the other in their final year with the team, 2000.

The 2000 team had 13 freshmen, but the leadership of Shaner, who was a team captain, and the play of Scally in net were the main reasons the Icers were still able to win a title, former coach Joe Battista said.

"Rob provided some of the best leadership of any team I ever coached," said Battista, who coached the Icers for 21 years.

"He was just amazing, and then to try to put in perspective what

Mark did, he simply had one of the greatest single seasons ever in the history of our program."

Scally won 21 games that season, his only as a starter, which is still the third-most wins in a single season in Icers history.

He came to Penn State after his freshman year to play golf, but decided he missed hockey and spent the next two years backing up and Anthony Annexy and John Sixt, Penn State's all-time winningest goaltender.

"Next to Mark's picture would be the definition of perseverance," Battista said.

"He just hung in there and hung in there. Then he got a chance and had such a dominant senior year

that he got noticed by a lot of people."

His play that year earned him an invitation to the Pittsburgh Penguins' training camp, where he played in two exhibition games, and he remains the only Icer in Penn State history to play in the NHL.

While Shaner didn't go on to play in the NHL, he still plays competitive hockey and is traveling to Canada next weekend to compete in the 2010 World Pond Hockey Championships.

"If I'm ever some place and get a chance to play with any of these guys," he said, "I take advantage of it and definitely do."

Shaner, who also lives in Florida now, graduated with a finance

degree and currently runs his own online marketing company while Scally has used his civil engineering degree to obtain a position as a project engineer for Chester, a Florida engineering firm.

While Shaner and Scally still occasionally play together in Florida, Battista said having them on the same ice at Penn State one more time will be a truly memorable experience.

"Of all the players that I've coached," Battista said, "they are two of my favorites of all time. They epitomized exactly what we wanted in Penn State hockey players, on and off the ice."

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