



Tim O'Brien (10) chases down the puck Jan. 15 against Ohio. The Icercs can clinch the regular season title this weekend with wins over URI.

# Undefeated on home ice, PSU set for big weekend

By Tom Kinslow  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Fifteen times the Penn State Icercs have taken their home ice this season.

They've faced the ACHA, some ranked higher than others, but the opponents all have one thing in common.

When the buzzer sounded at the end of the third period, they all exited the ice on the losing end of the contest.

Penn State's streak has withstood disallowed goals, near misses, overtime and shootout wins and will once again be tested this weekend as Rhode Island heads to Happy Valley, where the home streak will be put on the line with a title at stake.

The matchup features the top two squads in the ESCHL, with the Icercs a point behind the Rams in the standings, making this

weekend's series almost a de-facto championship.

With that in mind, the Icercs expect a large and exuberant crowd but won't let it distract them from the task at hand.

"A lot of the guys who played last year and years before are coming back, so that should be fun," forward Tim O'Brien said.

"But those are just side things, and we're going to take this just like any other weekend even if there's 150 people in the stands. We've got to get two wins, and our first step is Friday night."

As the two teams fight for the ESCHL regular season crown, Rhode Island is also fighting for its life in the national picture.

The Rams are ranked 10th in the ACHA, and failing to get the automatic bid as league champion could keep Rhode Island on the outside looking in.

"The way we've been playing, every weekend's a big weekend for us," Rhode Island coach Joe

Augustine said about his team. "We haven't been playing well. In fact, right now I've got nine guys with the flu, so we just have to get healthy and go down and hopefully do the best we can."

With so much surrounding the series, Penn State expects a play-off atmosphere all weekend long between the two teams.

Coach Scott Balboni said he believes these two contests will be the most physical the Icercs will have seen all season.

"They need to move up in the rankings to assure themselves to get to nationals. Plus they can sure up the league, so I'm sure they'll be coming out for blood," Balboni said.

"I think it's a situation where we want to win the league and we want to be in the top couple spots at nationals so we get the best seed. There's a lot riding this weekend."

To e-mail reporter: [tpk5016@psu.edu](mailto:tpk5016@psu.edu)

# Penn State, Rhode Island meet for conference title

By Tom Copain  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The No. 2 Penn State Icercs have three season goals this year.

Win the ESCHL regular season title, win the conference tournament and win the ACHA nationals.

The Icercs have two weeks until the ESCHL tournament and about a month before nationals.

But Penn State can come closer to crossing one of its goals off the list when it faces No. 10 Rhode Island this weekend for its third-straight regular season title.

"It's gonna be a big weekend."

forward Tim O'Brien said.

"We know we have to get two wins to take the No. 1 seed, basically. That's something that I said before was a goal at the beginning of the year, and hopefully we can continue and reach that first goal."

The first goal might have seemed improbable back in October, when the Icercs were struggling after splitting series

with Ohio and West Chester.

It wasn't until the first Rhode Island series in November that Penn State started to click.

The Icercs had lost two games in October before Rhode Island.

They've only lost two games since.

"It was a great early win on the road against a good team," defenseman Steve Thurston said of the Rhode Island wins.

"Did a lot for our confidence. A lot of the young guys played well in it."

"It's always good to come from behind. It's harder to come from



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If the Icercs split, then they will need only to split with Drexel next weekend to seal the title.

A regular season title means the Icercs will be the No. 1 seed going into the conference playoffs and a first round bye.

"Our goal is to achieve all three of those goals this year, going into the year," Penn State coach Scott Balboni said.

"The first step of it is sewing up the league title, which we have the ability to do if we can win two games this weekend."

To e-mail reporter: [tec5026@psu.edu](mailto:tec5026@psu.edu)

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