

Sporting View

Erie Panthers trying to prove last year's playoff disappointment was a fluke

by John Musser
Collegian Sports Editor

Are the Erie Panthers up to their old tricks again?

As local hockey fans may remember, the Panthers won the East Coast Hockey League regular season championship last year, going from doormat at the start of the season to powerhouse by its finish. The Panthers looked like they were ready to blaze through the playoffs and claim the postseason championship as well.

The story changed in the playoffs, as Erie was promptly ousted from the opening round in just three games in a best of five series.

Now, the Cats have made the playoffs again with another strong regular season performance, this time as the runner-up in the ECHL. Erie skated into postseason play on a 12-game winning streak, and promptly extended that run to 13 with a win last Friday night over the Hampton Roads Admirals in the Civic Center. For Coach Ron Hansis and his charges, the lessons of a disappointing '89 series after a highly successful regular season were apparently well learned.

Saturday night proved that the Panthers may still have something to learn. After jumping on Hampton Roads early, Erie raced to a 4-0 lead. Normally, when the home team has a four goal lead and a frenzied crowd supporting them, it's the kind of lead that is insurmountable. Good teams don't let that kind of lead slip away, just like good teams that get behind early don't quit.

Well, either the Panthers are not a good team, or Hampton Roads is a very good one. Perhaps it's a little of both.

Hampton Roads slowly ate away at the deficit and eventually tied the game in the third period, sending the game into overtime. In the extra-period, the Admirals quickly scored their fifth unanswered goal to even the best of five series at one apiece.

The Panthers now have the unenviable task of trying to win on the road, a place where their success has been limited this year. Unless they win one of the two games to be played at Hampton, the Cats will have topped off two consecutive successful regular seasons with equally dismal playoff performances.

I've been wrong before, but I think that Hansis is too good of a coach and has too strong of a team to let the season end early again. Lets just say Hansis' crew is playing with a different bag of tricks this year.

I wonder if the folks at Sports Illustrated still think that Gary Payton should be the NCAA's college player of the year? The Oregon State star gave a dismal performance in his team's first round upset loss to Ball State. Payton failed to reach double figures in scoring and spent most of the game riding the pine with foul trouble.

Payton also didn't help his NBA stock any when he was quoted early this month after an Oregon State loss about not caring about the games outcome, in which State lost.

Speaking of people who are losing stock, Georgetown's Alonzo Mourning isn't as impressive as he was in his rookie year. Mourning has had a tendency to do more trash talking in games this year than anything else, except for those times when he was blowing kisses to Villanova center Tom Greis.

While Mourning has done little to improve himself on the court, teammate Dikembe Mutombo has matured greatly in his second year. In fact, Mutombo has caught up to Mourning and perhaps has even passed him by.

The 7'3" center moved into the starting lineup this year and proved that he could score a few points as well as rebound and reject shots. He has also added a devastating hook shot to his offensive arsenal which, when Mutombo perfects it, will make him nearly unstoppable.

I wasn't surprised that Loyola Marymount beat defending national champ Michigan Sunday, but I was surprised by the final score. Nay, I was almost in shock. LMU pounded the Wolverines, 149-115.

The amount of points scored doesn't shock me. The fact that Loyola beat a team with Michigan's talent does.

For a team that is dedicating their tournament to the memory of a friend, Loyola is certainly doing Hank Gathers proud.

Speaking of the NCAA tournament, I can't recall a time when there have been so many upsets. And when there are upsets, the resulting matchups look a little, well, strange. For instance: UNLV- Ball State and Texas-Xavier. Are these a couple of dream games or what?

Did you realize that yesterday was the first day of spring? And the National Hockey League playoffs are still not underway?

Baseball team begins new season with four losses

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"We're so far behind other teams because of the weather conditions and the lack of indoor facilities."

NOTES: The Lions have a tough schedule to play. Behrend plays 12 games against Division II schools and seven games versus NAIA teams. In Division III contests, the Lions play against Allegheny College, John Carroll University, and SUNY-Fredonia, three very competitive Division III teams.

The Lions also play Washington and Jefferson College, Thiel College, and Grove City College, who all belong to the Presidents Athletic Conference. Today, the Lions play a doubleheader away at Thiel at 1 pm. Behrend also plays a doubleheader Saturday against Mount Union which starts at 1 pm in Ohio.

Sports bits

Behrend student-athletes continue to shine in the classroom as first semester evaluations were recently released.

Overall, the 127 student-athletes earned a grade-point-average (gpa) of 2.77 on a 4.0 scale. This average is higher than the overall college gpa. Female student-athletes earned a solid 2.90 gpa for the fall semester. Forty-nine percent of all female athletes earned 3.0's or better.

Of all student-athletes, 38 percent earned 3.0 gpa's or better. In addition, 16 athletes were named to the Dean's List for the first semester. The Dean's List requires that a student carry a 3.5 gpa.

The men's side was led by the soccer team, coached by Athletic Director Herb Lauffer. The team placed 43 percent of their players at or above the 3.0 mark and carried a team gpa of 2.87.

For the women, 60 percent of Coach Jan Wilson's volleyball players earned 3.0's or better while a team gpa softball average of 3.05 was registered by Coach Brett

Banker's squad.

This past Saturday, the Behrend Track Club traveled to compete in Clarion University's Annual All-Comers Meet. Six other collegiate teams also competed in the event.

Top performers for Behrend included a first place finish by Steve Cooper in the high jump and a third place for Dan Reany in the 100 meter dash with a time of 11.95 seconds. Also, Chris Calhoun recorded two strong performances, capturing fourth position in both the 110 meter high and 400 meter intermediate hurdles. His times in each event were 18.84 and 66 seconds, respectively.

The Track Club will next see action on March 31 when they travel for a meet at Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Persons interested in participating in track practices and meets should contact Captain Jim McCarthy (club advisor) at 898-6218 or Mike Crowley (club president) at 454-7319.

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