

Witness the Power

Coach's Corner

Coaches Corner:

Christmas Break is upon us and probably much needed as we ended with five one goal losses two in overtime. It seems as if we still have trouble in one period and that's our down fall right now we dig ourselves a hole and battle to get back with short comings. Our number one flaw right now is our defensive zone and being to puck focused, not picking up our men and leaving players wide open in vulnerable situations.

Overall though as a coach and staff we are very proud of what our young men have accomplished we are leaps and bounds ahead of where I seen our progression from last season and to be sitting in fourth spot at Christmas Break a few points out of first I think sets us up nicely for a solid run into the playoffs and obtaining our goal of finishing in the top three for the league and going into the playoffs.

From a team front we will look to solidify our roster by the January 10th trade deadline. We are in search of a big solid defenseman. A solid defenseman that will come in and log minutes and bring a physical presence to our defensive core. We still have two cards remaining and as mentioned will search for that defenseman to help as well as make a decision on what we will add up front to strengthen our team. We are debating on a big physical forward or another player who will bring offense to our lineup.

To break down our team at the half point or just over the half point our goaltending has been solid for the most part. Jameson Shortreed has continued his play from last season having a great opportunity to get some experience at the national level with Team Canada West out in Penticton, BC. Jameson hasn't played as much in recent games, but we will surely have to rely on his experience from last year down the stretch. Tyler Ampe has been a present surprise for our hockey team many nights looking like a veteran in net and staying composed when the game is on the line. With twenty-one games in roughly forty-two days we will definitely need both these young men to be ready on any given night.

Our defensive group started off very stingy in the first part of the season and coming into November we were battling for the least amount of goals allowed. Since November though our team has allowed to many easy goals in our staff's opinion. We are not focused on taking care of the area around our net and we have to many defenseman who are too worried about points and not realizing it will be their defensive play that will help them move on to higher leagues not their points. When we get back from break we have to get

back to being accountable for our own end of the ice and working hard on our defense first mentality.

Up front we have had a nice range of players contributing throughout the season. Tyler Stevenson has lead the way goal wise since day one and has been followed by several other forwards helping in the offensive department. Byron Katapaytuk when on his game is a force and he has proven this throughout the year, but especially when he amassed fourteen points in four games earlier this month. We will definitely rely on these two throughout the second half. Jace Balwin has been a great addition to our squad and the play of Blake Boaz has definitely helped our team. Overall before December when he was assaulted by a local one evening many thought he was our best player. He missed some games due to a concussion and is slowly getting back to where we need him on the ice. We are just thankful nothing serious happened from this unlawful event.

While I have spoken about our top guys up front I believe it is our work horses that have made this success happen. Jaret Leclair has played some good hockey throughout the year, Ryan Wildman is proving to be another good addition and is one of our smartest hockey players on the team. Zach McCool seems to be healthy and helping in the little ways he can. With him being a presence in front of the net and drawing many penalties with his pest like work ethic. We feel we have four lines that bring different attributes to our team and with a bit of tweaking we can solidify some depth for our season. In saying all of this many of our forwards have had moments when they have risen up and contributed for our cause. We need the forwards mentioned and others to come back hungry and ready to help solidify our defensive game before the playoffs.

We will be without the services of Garrett Nystedt for a few weeks. We are still waiting to hear about the final diagnoses on his lower body injury, but it is looking at the minimum four weeks before he will be back in the lineup. He will remain back in Sault Ste. Marie until then to get the proper care for his injury. We will await his recovery and hope he can return sooner than later.

The first half hasn't just been successful on the ice. The Lakers' team has been involved in several different functions to help the community. Many of these have been reported in the Times and West End Weekly and we thank both these papers for their continued help. We have also had success with Robert Moore School with our adopt-a-school program and we thank them for their continued support. Our fan support has been the best in the league. We average the most fans around 350 in the league. We thank the community for their support. Without your support we wouldn't be able to operate.

We will resume practice on Monday December 27th and get ready quickly for action against the Senior Thunderhawks on Tuesday December 28th at 7:30 pm. We then will have to travel to Duluth on New Years Eve to play a one game series now as our game on January 1st, 2011 has been rescheduled due to the Wisconsin Badgers football team being

in the rose bowl until January 23rd. Our next home series will be Friday January 7th and 8th at the IFK Arena both start times of 7:30 pm.

On behalf of the board of directors, team and fan club I would like to wish our volunteers, sponsors, fans, and the Rainy River District a safe and happy Merry Christmas and New Year. We would also like to wish the best of luck to sports reporter Dan Falloon on his moving to Portage la Prairie, MB. He will be sorely missed with all he did for our community sports.

"Achieve, Believe and Succeed"

