

Howlings

April 20, 2009

WHERE'S THE POWER PLAY?



The Hartford Wolf Pack entered Game Three of their best of seven series against the Worcester Sharks with a two games to none having been outplayed but not outscored by their Massachusetts neighbors. That didn't change in the third game either as Shark right winger, Ryan Vesce's second goal of the game from the slot beat Wolf Pack starter Matt Zaba over the stick in double overtime for a come from behind 3-2 victory in front of an "announced" crowd of 1,620 at the DCU center Monday night.

After the Pack had a chance with a Greg Moore on the rush in the Shark zone, Worcester came back into the offensive zone with gusto. They moved the puck around as they had the entire contest and Patrick Traverse fired what appeared to be a wide shot but it hit the rear skate of the Pack's Bobby Sanguinetti and popped back out to the game's First Star for the winning shot.

In the first three games of the series Worcester has used a relentless forecheck and pressure on the puck carrier to keep the Pack pinned in their own end for long stretches at a time. Hartford would be chasing the puck as shot-after-Worcester-shot pours in on staring goaltender, Matt Zaba (42 saves). This game was no different.

Despite the Sharks controlling the puck and the play, it was Pack defenseman Cory Potter who got the Pack on the scoreboard first. The Michigan native capitalized on a Jason Demers roughing penalty and on the power play took a perfect setup pass from Moore and one-timed it from the left point and blew it right past Shark starter Thomas Greiss (34 saves). Patrick Rissmiller got the secondary assist on the goal at 14:16.

As they have been doing for quite some time, off a score the young Pack players lose focus and do something to get in their own way. In this case, they took a penalty just 15 seconds after the goal light was lit. With his team in trouble once again, it was the sensational play of Zaba that saw them through it. The second year pro and AHL rookie, again stood tall especially making a huge stop on Dan DaSilva who the Colorado College graduate robbed with a high stick save in front of the net.

But the Pack relented at 18:42 when Derek Joslin shot the puck from the top of the circles as Tom Cavanaugh screened Zaba. The puck flew and hit the Pack netminder high and caught some air. Cavanaugh smacked the puck as it fell and sent it to the back of the cage tying the score. Riley Armstrong received the secondary assist on the goal, his first of two on the night.

The Pack were outshot 12-7 in the first.

The second period was much like the first. The Pack just could not get a sustained offensive stand and were retreating into their own end and could not get out for long stretches. Yet, despite the inability to mount offense, it was the Pack who again tallied first regaining the lead on a terrific offensive burst. Potter made a great outlet pass to Brodie Dupont who who gained speed coming out of the neutral zone and carried the puck deep into the Sharks end. As the Pack forward took the puck low, both Joslin and Demers chased after Dupont. Dale Weise followed up the right wing and was all alone in the center of the ice. Dupont saw that and put a tape-to-tape pass that the Winnipeg native roofed for his first AHL playoff goal at 5:01.

Though it sounds like a broken record, the Pack once again could not clear the zone and for the second time in as many tries made mistakes

right after a goal that cost them. After spending a minute plus with the puck, Armstrong passed the puck from the left wing half-boards to the high slot. Mike Moore, no relation to the Pack's Greg Moore, rifled a hard low shot. Meanwhile in front of Zaba, everyone short of Worcester head coach Roy Sommer was screening the Pack netminder. Vesce got his stick blade on the puck and it redirected under Zaba knotting the score at two.

Again, the Pack are outshot in the period this time 13-7 and 24-15 for the game.

The third period started out no different than the first two. Worcester was in Zaba's face so often they could tell what brand of deodorant he was using, at one point in the frame holding a 6-2 lead in shots. But midway through the period, the Pack rediscovered the ability to hold onto the puck in the offensive zone for more than a couple of seconds and began to put pucks in Greiss's kitchen. At 11:14, the Pack got their best chance of the period as Sanguinetti took a shot from the right circle that hit Greiss and bounced hard in front of the net. Tommy Pyatt, playing in his first game since returning from a personal leave to mourn the loss of his brother's fiancé, dove for the puck and caught a bit of it with his stick before Greiss was able to smother the puck.

Three minutes later it was Sanguinetti again as he fired a high shot after coming around the net, but Greiss reached up and made a terrific glove save to keep the game tied.

With just ten seconds remaining in the third period, Vesce had no choice but to take a hooking call on the Pack's Brodie Dupont. After scoring chances by Weise and Artem Anisimov failed to tally but resulted in huge rebounds, the final one fell right to Dupont who had a clear shot at an empty net as Greiss was down on the ice.

An ineffective power play has hurt the Rangers throughout their season and hasn't exactly been an asset for the Wolf Pack either. On this night it likely cost them the game. Not only were the Pack unable to do anything with the first man-advantage from the Vesce penalty, but they got a second chance at 13:08 when Frazer McLaren took an ill-advised slashing call and couldn't do a thing with that opportunity either. In fact on that power play, the Sharks had the better scoring chances. First they benefited from some mishandling of the puck at the point and a 3-on-1 odd man rush developed. Zaba stayed calm and focused and the shot that resulted was handled by the Pack netminder. Seconds later, it was then Brendan Buckley who was denied as Zaba turned his bid from in close from the right circle aside.

By the end of the first overtime period, it was looking increasingly like the Pack were running out of steam. Worcester had a second wind and regained the momentum that they had had earlier in the contest. The Pack did manage to make up a little ground in the shot department outshooting the Sharks 11-8 in the third period and 11-10 in overtime.

Game four with the Pack leading two games to one is Wednesday night at the DCU Center. That game begins at 6:30 as well.

Bob Crawford has the story after calling the game at Hartfordwolfpack.com. Bill Ballou celebrates the home team victory at Telegram.com.

[Game Summary](#) and [Official Scorers Sheet](#).

NOTES:

* Neulion, the parent company of AHL LIVE, has greatly improved their service over the course of the season. Early on there were numerous issues causing all kinds of problems, but the company spent a lot of time and money addressing those issues and offered great customer service to appease their patrons. Overall it was a successful launch of a first season broadcasting the AHL. Howlings is grateful to Neulion for their tremendous assistance all season long.

* The Pack are an atrocious 2-19 (10.5%) on the power play through three games.

* Worcester was the AHL's best team in Overtime over the regular season with a 7-1-4 record in 12 extra periods. The Pack were 6-3-8 in extended play.

* Hartford has a career post season overtime record of 9-13 in their twelve year history. Worcester is now 1-2.

* The Pack are 24 for 25 (96%) on the penalty kill in the series and is the main reason, apart from Zaba's brilliance that they are leading and not trailing in this series.

* Zaba's line: In three games he's faced 130 shots on goal and made 124 saves for a .954 save percentage. He has allowed a total of six goals

over three games for a respectable 2.00 GAA.

* P.A. Parenteau, the best offensive threat and quarterback of the “power-play” was going to start today’s game but had some lingering affects of his concussion and could not go. He is expected to be able to go in Wednesday night’s contest in game four.

* The Pack blew a 1-0 and 2-1 lead in this contest.

* For a team that has been so strong with their forecheck down the stretch there wasn’t even an inkling of a forecheck in this contest. Overall it was not a good game for the boys in the red, white and blue.

LINES:

Byers – Ouellette – Owens

Dupont – Anisimov – Weise

Bell – Rissmiller – Moore ©

Pyatt - McBride - Sugden

Nightingale - Fahey @

Sanguinetti – Potter @

Urquhart – Sauer

Zaba

SCRATCHES:

Denisov – Healthy

Stich – Healthy

Loverock - Healthy

Parenteau – Concussion – Day-to-Day

Zaborsky – Shoulder - Season

Soryal – Hand – Season

Kundratek – Healthy

Glass - Healthy

DiDiomete- Healthy

Crowder – Healthy

THREE STARS:

1. *WOR* - 17 Ryan Vesce
2. *WOR* - 20 Riley Armstrong
3. *HFD* - 3 Corey Potter

ON ICE OFFICIALS:

David Banfield (44), Referee

Jim Briggs (83), Linesman

Frank Murphy (29), Linesman