

RoughRiders rout Dubuque, 4-1

Written by Ryan Suchomel

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It was a fun family weekend for the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders, and they wrapped it up with a 4-1 win over Dubuque Saturday night.

The win is the RoughRiders' sixth straight at home, and improves their record to 11-3-1, putting them ahead of the Fighting Saints (10-4-1) in the Eastern Conference.

"We don't get real into that," RoughRider Coach Mark Carlson said of the standings. "But when there are two points available, we want to fight the battle for them."

It was the first weekend of the season Cedar Rapids hosted two home games, and many players had relatives in town for a 3-2 shootout win over Fargo Friday, and then the win over Dubuque on Saturday.

"There was more juice this weekend," St. Louis, Mo., native Clark Kuster said. "Its exciting to see your family, and walk out of the locker room after the game and get a big hug."

The RoughRiders have five Friday-Saturday home weekends this season.

"It was nice to have my brother and dad come for a visit," said East St. Paul native Corey Petrash. "There are so few weekends we have two at home. Its nice to play in front of friends and family, especailly when you get two wins."

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An announced 2,974 fans -- including those friends and relatives -- filled The Stable on Saturday. Dubuque took an early lead on a goal from Karson Kuhlman, who had a weird angle off a deflection of a shot by Alexx Privitera, but snuck it by RoughRider goalie Chris Birdsall.

It was the only goal Birdsall gave up. He finished with 17 saves.

Cedar Rapids responded quickly, getting the equalizer just over 2 minutes later. On a power play, Nick Master sent a perfect pass and Petrash converted the one-timer 8:34 into the first period.

The RoughRiders took the lead a few minutes later when Kuster found the puck at his feet during a scrum around the Dubuque goal.

"(Andrew Poturalski) called the face off play, and I drove the net," Kuster said. "(Jack Rowe) and Pots were battling in front, and it popped to me."

Kuster found the seam, and Cedar Rapids went up 2-1 with 6:59 left in the period.

Getting two first-period goals was the fast start the RoughRiders wanted after shootouts in their last two games.

"We learned from yesterday," Petrash said. "We knew what we had to do; had more energy today."

Just 6:35 into the second period, Cedar Rapids struck again, this time Andrew Oglevie converting a one-timer from Alec Marsh to make it 3-1.

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The scoring was capped off by an empty net goal by Judd Peterson in the final minute.

Dubuque pulled its goalie to try and make something happen after failing to make any hay on a 5-on-3 advantage late in the third period.

Mark Auk was called for hooking and then Peterson was whistled for boarding within 15 seconds of one another late in the third period.

It gave the Fighting Saints a 5-on-3 advantage for 1:45.

The RoughRiders used several different lines to kill both penalties.

"I liked our energy there," Carlson said. "That was huge."

"We've got to go out there and block shots, and get good clears," Kuster said. "That's what we did."

The Cedar Rapids defense is improving, as well. After giving up 3.2 goals per game over the first 11 contests, the RoughRiders are giving up just 1.5 per game over their last four.

"Guys came up real big blocking shots," Petrash said. "Lots of guys sacrificing; getting a lot of pucks way down the ice."

Cedar Rapids plays at home Friday against Muskegon (9-7-3), which pulled into a tie for third with Dubuque in the Eastern Conference with a 4-3 win over Youngstown Saturday.

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"We were really hungry tonight," Kuster said. "We were making tough plays out there. We looked at yesterday as a positive, and found things we needed to do better."

Dubuque 1 0 0 - 1
Cedar Rapids 2 1 1 - 4

D - Karson Kuhlman (Alexx Privitera).

CR - Corey Petrash (Nick Master, Ivan Provorov).

CR - Clark Kuster (Jack Rowe, Andrew Poturalski).

CR - Andrew Oglevie (Alec Marsh).

CR - Judd Peterson (Dylan McLaughlin).