

Riders squander chance against Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

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When the USHL season ends next month, the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders might look back on Wednesday night's game against Dubuque with deep regrets.

The RoughRiders squandered a 3-1 lead and lost to the Fighting Saints, 4-3, before 1,882 fans at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena in a setback that may come back to haunt them.

A victory would have lifted the RoughRiders ahead of Dubuque into second place in the Eastern Conference standings by a single point with just three weeks left in the regular season. Instead, the Riders fell three points behind the Fighting Saints as they continue to jockey for playoff position.

Cedar Rapids has a 29-19-3 record for 61 points, while Dubuque has a 30-16-4 record for 64 points. If the season ended now, Cedar Rapids and Dubuque would meet in the quarterfinals of the Clark Cup Playoffs with the No.2 seed (Dubuque) facing the No.3 seed (Cedar Rapids) in a best-of-five playoff.

The Fighting Saints would have the home-ice advantage with the fifth and decisive game in Dubuque, if necessary, if they finish ahead of the RoughRiders in the standings.

The season series between the two rivals is tied, 3-3, with the seventh and final game scheduled in Dubuque March 22.

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The Fighting Saints have 10 games left in their regular season and the RoughRiders have only nine, making it even harder for the Riders to make up ground. That's why Wednesday night's game was so important and why the loss was so costly.

Andrew Oglevie, Andrew Gaus and Kevin Shand scored to give Cedar Rapids a 3-1 lead, but Karson Kuhlman pulled the Fighting Saints within 3-2 with 2:11 left in the second period. It was the beginning of the end for the home team.

Shane Eiserman tied the game for Dubuque, 3-3, at the 5:01 mark of the third period and Jarrid Privitera scored the go-ahead goal for the Saints with 3:24 left in the game.

Carlos Fornaris drew an untimely penalty for Cedar Rapids with 2:12 remaining when he was called for a five-minute major penalty and a 10-minute game misconduct penalty for checking from behind. That gave Dubuque a power play for the rest of the contest and made it harder for the RoughRiders to pull goalie Danny Tirone for an extra skater until the final seconds.

Nate Widman flicked a shot at Dubuque goalie Kevin Reich in the final moment that was easily batted away as the game ended.

Cedar Rapids hosts Team USA in consecutive home games Friday night and Saturday night.

Dubuque	0	2	2	-	4
Cedar Rapids	1	2	0	-	3

CR - Andrew Oglevie (Alec Marsh, Dylan McLaughlin)

DUB - Shane Eiserman (Max McHugh)

CR - Andrew Gaus (Charlie Curti, Frederik Tiffels)

CR - Kevin Shand (Tiffels)

DUB - Karson Kuhlman (Blake Hillman, Josh Elmes)

DUB - Eiserman (Phil Boje, Dylan Gambrell)

DUB - Jarrid Privitera (Brett Boeing)

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