

RoughRiders put Muskegon in deep freeze

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 04 October 2014 22:05 -



Some hockey teams try to kill as much time as they can and not allow any goals when the other team has a power play and more skaters on the ice.

Not the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders. When the RoughRiders are short-handed, they attack.

The RoughRiders scored two short-handed goals Saturday night and tacked on three power-play goals in an impressive 6-0 victory over Muskegon in a USHL game before 1,669 fans at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena.

Callahan "Cal" Burke and Casey Jerry collected the short-handed goals. Burke also scored one of the power-play goals as the RoughRiders won their third straight game to start the season and swept the weekend series from Muskegon.

Two short-handed goals in one game does not happen very often.

"Yeah, that's pretty rare," said Burke, who is from Massachusetts. "You've got to be really aggressive. When you see pucks you can get to, you really want to jump on those.

"Obviously you have to play well defensively, but if you get a scoring chance, don't give it up."

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RoughRiders Coach Mark Carlson liked the way his guys performed when Muskegon had those 5-on-4 advantages. "I think our speed is key there," he said.

Ben Blacker, a 17-year-old netminder from Oakville, Ontario, got his third straight victory for the RoughRiders and the first shutout of his young USHL career. He stopped 24 shots and got plenty of help from his buddies, who blocked shots before they reached him and effectively moved Muskegon players away from the goal mouth.

"Having the team in front of me - especially this team - it makes the job a lot easier," said Blacker. "It's always a team experience when it comes to stuff like this."

Blacker committed to Western Michigan when he was just 15 years old and a freshman in high school. He's now a senior at Linn-Mar and plans to enroll in college next year.

"I love their program, I love their facilities, I love the way they run things down there," he said. "To me it was a no-brainer and I'm happy with my decision."

Blacker committed to Western Michigan on Jan. 4, 2013 - on his mother's birthday. "I would say it was a little birthday present for her," he remarked.

Alec Marsh began the scoring for Cedar Rapids with a power-play goal. Burke and Jerry scored their short-handed goals to make it 3-0, then Adam Gaudette found the net for a 4-0 bulge.

The RoughRiders added two more power-play tallies by Andrew Oglevie and Burke.

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Aaron Thow collected three assists. Dylan McLaughlin, Andrew Gaus, Jiri Fronk, Zach Court and Clark Kuster also had assists with sharp passes and unselfish plays.

"I just like how we played as a team," said Carlson. "I thought we stayed disciplined. I think we've improved.

"I think we played better this weekend than we did last weekend, and that's really what it's all about."

Burke liked the way the RoughRiders performed.

"The team played great today," he said. "We really stuck together and stuck to our system. We have great team chemistry out there, as you can tell. We're just real happy to get the sweep."

The RoughRiders host Omaha next Saturday night.