

RoughRiders on brink of elimination

Written by Metro Sports Report

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The Cedar Rapids RoughRiders were the best team in the USHL for a major part of the year, but their season is going to come to an abrupt halt if they don't turn their fortunes around in a hurry.

The Dubuque Fighting Saints drubbed the RoughRiders, 5-1, before 1,731 fans at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena Friday night to take a commanding 2-0 lead in their best-of-5 series in the opening round USHL playoffs.

The third game of the series will be played Saturday night at the Ice Arena. If the RoughRiders don't win, they can put their hockey sticks away for the year.

And even if the RoughRiders win Saturday night, they'll have to win three straight games against Dubuque to stay alive.

Cedar Rapids out-shot the Fighting Saints 33-28 Friday night, but that did not matter. Dubuque scored the first four goals of the game and led 4-0 after two periods.

The RoughRiders got a short-handed goal from Andrew Gaus in the third period, but that was the only shot that found the net all night. Dubuque scored into an empty net late in the game to make it 5-1.

Ben Blacker was reached for three goals in 26 minutes, 53 seconds in goal for the RoughRiders. Ryan Larkin replaced Blacker in the second period and allowed one goal.

The reeling RoughRiders have lost five of their last six games and have been outscored by Dubuque, 11-4, in the playoffs.

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Dubuque 1 3 1 - 5

RoughRiders 0 0 1 - 1

DUB - Seamus Malone (power play) (Jacob Benson, Keegan Ford)

DUB - Gordie Green (Mitchell Smith, Hayden Shaw)

DUB - Willie Knierim (Nate Sucece)

DUB - Mitchell Smith (Jacob Benson, Wyatt Ege)

CR - Andrew Gaus (short-handed) (Clark Kuster, Casey Jerry)

DUB - Nate Sucece (empty net) (unassisted)