

# Women dominate Minnesota tandem to retain top ranking

Panthers take on ECAC rival Rensselaer Saturday at Kenyon

By Sarah Jones  
Staff Writer

Women's hockey continues to roll after posting a 5-0-1 record during J-term break. Their first big game was back on January 27, when the top ranked Panthers faced a tough challenge against the third-ranked Augsburg Auggies. After a three-goal first period eruption, Middlebury held on for a 4-0 victory.

The Auggies, who previously had ranked as high as number two in Division III, came to Middlebury with a 9-2-1 record. Middlebury's fast paced play at the start set the tone as they out-shot the Auggies 16-2 in the first period. Less than five minutes into the game senior co-captain Janice O'Neil found the left side of the net for the game's first score. The assist came from junior Sylvia Ryan, who was tripped up while taking a shot in front of the net. Ryan somehow managed to pass the puck to O'Neil, who then put the score past Meg Schmidt's glove side.

Up 1-0, Middlebury continued their dominant play. Three freshmen helped Middlebury score their second and third goals over the next five minutes. The second goal was set up by a hard blue line shot from Nico Kieves '02. After Schmidt failed to corral the puck, first year Ashley Morton was able to put the loose puck in the back of the net.

It was Morton who scored again less than two minutes later. Middlebury was short-handed from an earlier penalty. Yet, freshman Catherine Elkins made a great play that set up Morton in front of the net. Elkins intercepted an Auggie pass in Middlebury's defensive zone, broke away from the defense, and found Morton on the break-away for the score.

Coach Bill Mandigo was impressed by his team's play, which had Middlebury up 3-0 at the end of the first period. "I think we may have caught them by surprise. We came out excited and played well,

controlled the puck and moved our feet," he commented after the game.

Augsburg did pick up their play in the second period by stopping all nineteen of Middlebury's shots and crossing into Middlebury's zone with much more frequency. "I thought they had spurts where they played very very well, their goalie did an excellent job," said Mandigo.

The Panthers, however, continued to control the game. Both teams were held scoreless in the second period, but Middlebury found the net again early in the third period. It was Ryan who scored the fourth goal, the assist coming from sophomore Michelle Labbe.

The Panthers' defensive play was the key in keeping Augsburg out of their offensive zone. The Auggies only took thirteen shots on goal, all of which were saved by junior goalie Beth Denoncourt. This game was Middlebury's sixth shutout of the year.

The 4-0 win over the number three Auggies improved the Panthers' record, which now stands at 15-2-1. "The team thought of it as a real big game and they did what they had to do," summed up Mandigo. The Panthers took their winning philosophy into February break, where they faced four teams during the week break.

The Panthers first faced Gustavus Adolphus, ranked sixth in Division III. Middlebury dominated the game, winning 8-0. High scorer in the game was Michelle Labbe with a gaudy three goals and three assists. Ryan also had a strong game, scoring twice and adding three assists. Freshman Megan Hutchingson recorded the shutout with 20 saves in goal.

Other games for the week included a 1-1 tie to McGill, an 8-0 trouncing of Trinity, and a close 5-3 win over Wesleyan. "McGill and Wesleyan were good games. Both teams came out wanting to win," said freshman Ashley Morton.



Peter Huoppi

Junior Sylvia Ryan battles for the puck against Wesleyan on January 30. The Panthers beat the Cardinals 5-3.

McGill was a tough non-conference challenger for the Panthers, while Wesleyan's 9-3 record in the ECAC makes them a strong playoff contender. A strong showing by Middlebury in both games helped the Panther keep their first place ranking in Division III.

Up next for Middlebury is their biggest ECAC game of the season. Number two-ranked Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) comes to Middlebury Saturday night. This sets up a matchup between the two best teams in Division III.

RPI is in second place behind

the Panthers in both the latest ECAC standings and national poll. RPI should be Middlebury's toughest ECAC challenger. They sit right behind the Panthers in the ECAC North Division and are looking to gain ground on the Panthers in this weekend's matchup.

"RPI is looking to beat us," said senior Janice O'Neil. "They are going to come into the game fired up. We are ready to play a tough game. They played a strong game when we played them earlier in the season, so we know we have to be

ready."

Back on January 9 the Panthers beat RPI 4-2 in a very close game.

Saturday's game time is 7:30 p.m. in Kenyon Arena. Middlebury also plays a good Williams team at home on Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. The Panthers are looking to extend their unbelievable 63-0 ECAC record in both games since the team's inception back in 1981.

According to freshman Ashley Morton, "our team is psyched for Friday's game. We are focused and want to go out there and play well."

## Nordic skiers make tri-state tour

By Scott Cacciola  
Sports Editor

Didn't see much of the Nordic skiers this J-term? While most Midd-kids were busy with internships, workshops and classes, the Panthers were tearing it up at winter carnivals across the region. After competing at Bates, UNH and intrastate rival UVM, the Panthers continue to ready themselves for NCAA competition come March.

First up for the team was a week-long skiing sabbatical in the woods

of Maine. Arriving on January 14, the team quickly prepared themselves for nationals which were held that Saturday.

Two Middlebury athletes earned special recognition. First-year Hillary Patzer and sophomore Justin Beckwith qualified for the US

Junior World team. As a result, both quickly hopped over to the airport and made the trek to Europe to train

stron, Enman and Chad Salmela recorded a second place finish out of 13 teams participating in the 3 x 5K men's freestyle relay, while Whitcomb, Helminski and junior Eric Goldwarg placed third overall in the Open Mixed men's freestyle relay.

The team of Angst, sophomore

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