

Panthers defeat RPI in a battle of Division III juggernauts

Women sweep weekend to retain number one ranking

By Sarah Jones
Staff Writer

Middlebury women's hockey continued their winning ways last weekend with two impressive wins. A 3-1 victory over Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), the number two team in Division III, on Saturday was followed by the 2-0 shutout of Williams on Sunday. These wins improve the Panthers' record to 17-2-1 overall and 14-0 in the Eastern Coast Athletic Conference (ECAC).

Both RPI and Williams came out with the intensity needed to knock off the top-ranked Panthers. No ECAC team has ever beaten Middlebury since the founding of the ECAC in the 1995 season.

RPI played a tight game against the Panthers. Both teams skated evenly coming out in the first period. Middlebury did an excellent job of controlling the puck offensively, forcing the RPI defense to stay in back in their zone. The game's first score came fifteen minutes into the first period when junior Catherine Pullins tapped in the puck off a rebounded shot for the power play goal. Michelle

Labbe '01 swung the puck out to first-year Catherine Elkins in front of the goal for the shot. Elkins' rebound came right to Pullins who put the puck past RPI goalie Laura DeNuccio.

Middlebury held the 1-0 lead for the rest of the first period. However, RPI tied up the game 1-1 early in the second period off a rebound that bounced off of RPI forward Cindy Acropolis into the goal.

RPI had their best chance to take the lead midway through the second period. After two back-to-back Middlebury penalties, RPI had a 5-3 player advantage. Middlebury's three-player triangle defense and goalie Megan Hutchingson '02 limited RPI to two shots on goal during this two-man advantage, preventing a go-ahead goal.

Back at full strength, Middlebury had a number of great shots on DeNuccio but could not connect.

"The goalie play was excellent," Middlebury Coach Bill Mandigo said. "We took a lot of great shots that didn't go in and had some difficulty putting the puck in the net."

The score remained deadlocked



Peter Huoppi

Sophomore Michelle Labbe skates with the puck during Middlebury's 2-0 win against Williams on Sunday.

at 1-1 going into the third period. Middlebury came out with renewed intensity during the final 20 minutes, continuing to drill shots at the RPI goalie. Patience was the key for the Panthers as the puck finally found the net with 7:52 remaining

in the game. Michelle Labbe tapped the puck into the empty side of the net after the goalie lost the puck. Labbe and junior Sylvia Ryan lead the team with 19 goals apiece for the season. The assist on Labbe's goal came from Ryan and Elkins.

Middlebury's last goal iced the game for the Panthers. First-year Ashley Morton found the net after the assist by fellow freshman Laurie Richmond. RPI was unable get their offense going for the rest of
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