

Women's hockey ranked first in nation

By Mike Hartt & Margaret Aycock
Staff Writers

For the fifth year in a row, Middlebury's women's ice hockey team has finished undefeated in conference play, ranked number one in the nation, and bracketed as number one seed in the ECAC tournament.

The Panthers completed their fifth consecutive regular season title with an amazing 17-0 league record, finishing up the regular season this past week with an exhibition win over Brebeuf (Quebec.) and a league victory over University of Vermont. With the wins, Middlebury can now look ahead to the ECAC Division III women's tournament, and the berth

in the National Championship series that goes to the ECAC victor.

In the exhibition game against Brebeuf, the Panthers came out flat in the first period, and even though they outshot the Dymaniques, entered the first intermission down 1-0. After the break, however, the Panthers came out with the intensity and fire they had been lacking in the first period. They tied the game and took the lead behind two short-handed goals by Sylvia Ryan '00 and Michelle Labbe '01 (assisted by Ryan and Catherine Pullins '00)

within a two minute span midway through the second period.

Also in the second, Middlebury goalie Beth Denoncourt '00 made what was easily the save of the game, taking an airborne puck that was headed for the Middlebury goal and swatting it down with her blocker to prevent the Brebeuf score. Early in the third period, Jacqui Phillips '03 gave Middlebury a 3-1 lead (assisted by Angela Kapus '03 and Anna Hastings '02). Brebeuf scored to cut

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—Michelle Labbe '01

the margin to 3-2, but the Panthers stepped up their play and put the game out of reach. Halfway through the final period, Kapus scored a beautiful goal, lifting the puck up over the shoulder of the Brebeuf goaltender (assisted by Pullins and Phillips), before Labbe tallied Middlebury's fifth goal of the game (assist to Ryan). A late Brebeuf goal brought the final score to 5-3. Denoncourt made 13 saves in net, while Middlebury hit Brebeuf with 41 shots.

On the Brebeuf game, Labbe

commented, "They came out strong and we weren't mentally or physically prepared in the first period. I was really impressed with our ability to turn our play around so well. We made a decision in between periods to win the game and then we went out and proved that. It was a great turn around and says a lot about how far our team has come this season."

To close out the regular season, Middlebury traveled north to the University of Vermont's Gutterson Field House, hoping to run their ECAC league all-time record to 89-0. Middlebury opened the scoring at 5:55 of the first with a

goal by Pullins, assisted by Catherine Elkins '02 and Laurie Richmond '02. In the second, Ryan scored a power-play goal to put Middlebury up 2-0 on a feed from Labbe. Less than a minute into the third, Ryan scored again, on another feed from Labbe, and six minutes in, Labbe scored her own goal, on an assist from Richmond. Vermont slipped a goal past Megan Hutchinson '02 late in the game, but Middlebury answered behind Ryan's third goal of the game (assisted by Labbe and
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