

Women's hockey beats Czech national team

(continued from page 16)

own performance. "With half a season left to play, the only goal we are looking toward is a National Championship," Ryan said. "Everything else seems to be a minor thing compared to that. A National championship is what we seniors have waited four years to be able to compete for."

As much as the Panther offense and Ryan's heroics were impressive in their Connecticut roadtrip, the Middlebury defense and goaltending also deserve accolades. The defense has been a wall this year, having given up only two goals this season in NCAA play, and only 49 shots on goal. For perspective, the Panthers have scored 49 goals this year. In many of their games, the Panthers have barely afforded their opponent the chance to touch the puck - Trinity and Wesleyan were given no special opportunities.

To start the season, Coach Bill Mandigo instituted a new system that would play two forwards and three defensemen on the ice, instead of the typical three forwards and two defenders. According to Hall, "I think that changing our lines [to two forwards and three backs]... has helped in our defensive zone coverage." Across the board, Hall says that the team has been aided by their overall depth, which can be partially attributed to the strong freshman class.

In earlier action, at the end of the fall semester, the team took to the ice against St. Laurent (Quebec). Last season, the Patriotes of St. Laurent defeated Middlebury 4-2 in Montreal, but saw the Panthers avenge the loss 5-2 in Middlebury. This year, a 3-2 victory allowed Middlebury to finish the first semester undefeated while taking out one of their toughest foes of the season. The Panthers opened the scoring early in the first period, with Kapus putting the puck in the net (assisted by Ryan and Richmond). At 6:11 of the second, Sarah Carpenter '01 took the puck into the St. Laurent zone

and made several moves before tallying the Panthers' second goal.

St. Laurent evened the score, shocking the Panthers with two shorthanded goals in the second period. Late in the second, Ryan notched the game-winning goal (assisted by Kapus and Catherine Pullins '00) to move the score to 3-2, in favor Middlebury.

The third period saw neither team able to score. The Panthers could not convert on three power-play opportunities but hung on for the victory. Hutchinson stopped 13 shots in net, while the Panthers put 26 shots on the Patriotes goalie.

According to Coach Mandigo, the team responded well to a tough opponent who could skate with them. He stressed that the Panthers stepped up to the task of having to play the game without Labbe and McDougall, and that he was pleased with the team's effort and happy that the women came out with the win.

Over the holiday break, the Panthers traveled to Europe for a nine day European Tour that saw them play four games against top-level opponents. The Panthers took on the Swiss National B-team, earning a 5-4 victory, and the Czech National Team, winning a 7-1 blowout. Middlebury's women also met the two best Swiss club teams, losing 4-0 to Illnau and dropping a close 5-3 New Year's Day game to St. Gallen. Mandigo stressed that the tour served the dual purpose of allowing the team to play high-quality competition and to experience some of the culture and sights of Europe.

The Panthers remain in first place in the ECAC Division III league, and retained the US College Hockey Online poll's number one position as the only undefeated women's Division III team in the country. The team next plays at Boston College Thursday evening at 7 p.m., before facing off at home against MIT this Saturday at 7 p.m. and Amherst College this Sunday at 2 p.m.