

Women's hockey pummels RIT, prepares to host ECAC tourney

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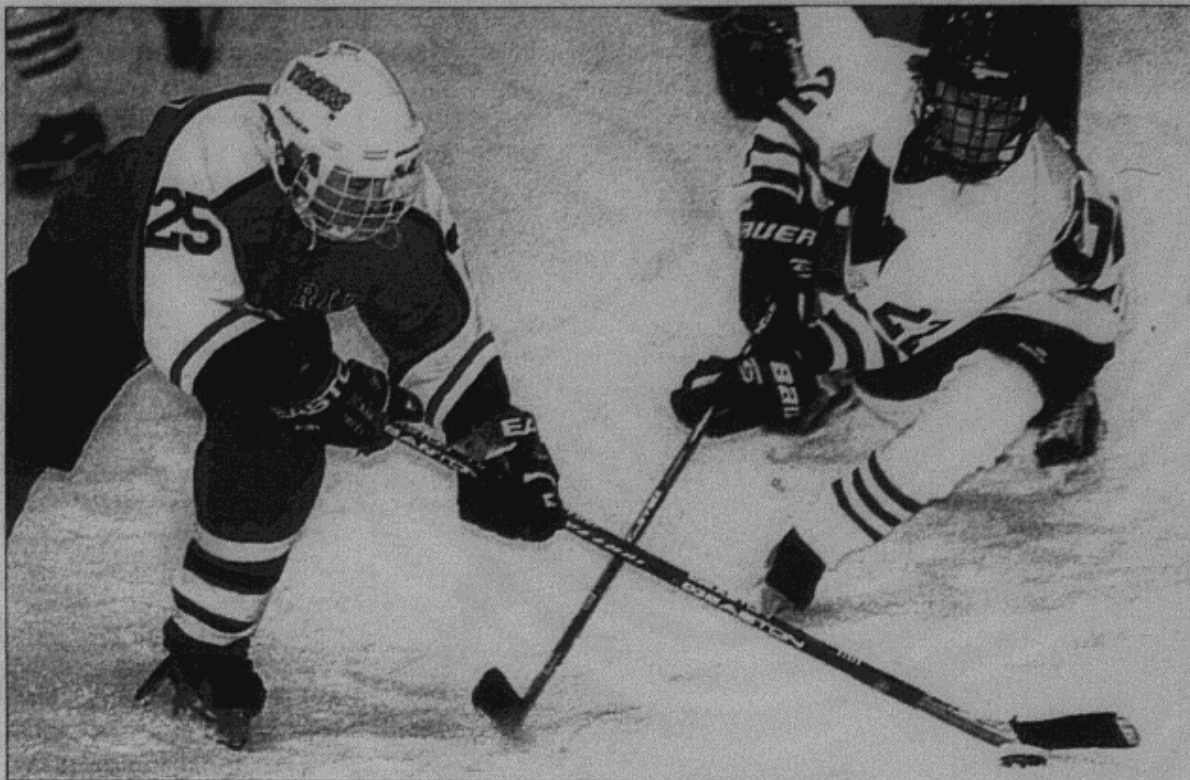
Once again, Middlebury's women's hockey team gave a dominating performance to capture another ECAC win, this time earning the right to host the ECAC Division III semifinal and championship games this coming weekend. Middlebury had to dispatch of number eight RIT in a game that was not as close as the 5-0 final score indicated. In the blowout win, the Panthers, the ECAC tournament number one seed, used a stifling defense and potent offense to make short work of the Tigers for the second time this season and end their season at 12-5-5, while Middlebury moved its record to 22-2-1.

Middlebury started the game off strong and took a 1-0 lead just three minutes into the contest, as Michelle Labbe '01 put the puck past RIT netminder Melissa Norris, on a pass from Sylvia Ryan '00. Early in the second period Catherine Elkins '02 was able to slip the puck through Norris' pads to give Middlebury a 2-0 lead, again on an assist from Ryan. Five minutes later, while on a 5-3 power play, Ryan wristed a shot into the back of the net (assisted by Elkins), giving Middlebury a 3-0 lead against

an RIT team that allowed only 15 goals in conference play all season. During the third period, Middlebury continued to show their scoring punch, as Ryan scored again (assist to Labbe and Amber Neil '03), and Erin Neil '03 also notched a Middlebury goal (assisted by Christa McDougall '00 and Laurie Richmond '02) to bring the final score to 5-0. Middlebury's offense may have provided the fireworks, but the Panther defense was even more impressive, holding RIT to only one shot on goal in the entire game, which goalie Beth Denoncourt '00 easily saved to earn Middlebury's seventeenth shutout victory of the season.

On the win, Labbe commented, "RIT wasn't one of our greatest performances, but we managed to pull it together as a team to get the win. It was definitely an important step in what will hopefully be an exciting series of playoffs."

With the win, the Panthers claimed their place in the semifinal game on Saturday against number five RPI, an upset winner over number four Vermont. In the other semifinal, number two Colgate will face off against number three Williams. The Panthers have played RPI twice this season, earn-



Peter Huoppi

Erin Neil '03 fights for the puck in front of the net during Middlebury's 5-0 ECAC quarterfinal defeat of RIT.

ing a 7-0 conference win early in the season at Kenyon Arena and a narrow 1-0 non-conference win at RPI's Houston Field House in Troy, NY in early February. In the first game, Middlebury exploded for seven third period goals, while in the second game, Sarah Carpenter '01 provided the game's

only goal midway through the third period. The Panthers will play in the early game at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, while the Colgate-Williams game will begin 30 minutes after the first contest. The ECAC Championship game will take place on Sunday, March 5, at 1p.m., with the winner earning a

spot in the ACHA National Championships in Boston in late March. Tickets for the weekend playoff games are \$8.00 for adults and \$3.00 for students. Tickets are good for all three games and may be purchased at the door in Kenyon Arena starting one hour before game time.