

Pennsylvania's Kiski Prep Cougars hand SAC Saints their first lacrosse loss of 2023

Kiski Prep Cougars fired five unanswered goals in the fourth quarter en-route to a 13-7 win over St. Andrew's College at Yuill Field in exhibition lacrosse action on Saturday afternoon.

It was the Saints' first loss of the season after accruing an 8-0-1 exhibition record, including two wins versus Eastview and Aurora and a tie versus St. Mary's during Wednesday's tripleheader on their home turf.

Saturday's tilt with Kiski - the fifth-ranked lacrosse team in Pennsylvania - was played in miserable April conditions, but St. Andrew's College Head Coach Joe Commisso wasn't blaming the weather.

"We've had snowy days to play in so far this season and we won the CISAA championship in 2022 in sideways rain. Some would have described it as an epic rainstorm versus St. Mike's. We have a good vibe in the rain."

SAC proved themselves to be a good inclement weather team again on Saturday by battling the Pennsylvania powerhouse to a 7-7 draw after three quarters of play. However, Kiski's lightning-fast offence created numerous scoring opportunities in the fourth quarter and the Cougars put the game away with five consecutive goals that revealed their marksman-like accuracy.

Coach Commisso confirmed the caliber of players suited up for the contingent from Saltsburg, PA: "Kiski had seven DI commits on the field today. We ran with them for three quarters and it was tied heading into the fourth. Our goaltender Campbell Ellis kept us in the game and made some great saves versus the Cougars. Unfortunately, Kiski capitalized on our mistakes in the midfield during the fourth quarter and made the most of their opportunities."

Undaunted by the team's first loss of the season, the veteran SAC Head Coach extolled the performances of his top performers versus the visitors from Saltsburg.

"Brendan Wright and Anselmo Rego had big offensive games for us this afternoon. Nicolas Belmonte had a great game, too, as did Ryan Brown who was playing with great energy after being selected in the first round of the OHL Draft the night before."

Brown - a 5'9", 151-pound left winger from the York-Simcoe Express and Grade 10 student at SAC - was drafted 17th overall by the Sarnia Sting on Friday night.

Although Commisso praised his four bright lights on offence and in the midfield, he reserved his greatest praise for sophomore netminder Campbell Ellis who "played out his mind in the first three quarters today. He's only in Grade 10, but he is a NCAA D1-calibre lacrosse goalie. Campbell would be the third SAC goalie in a row to go D1."

Saturday's game result was a marked contrast to the Saints' recent pre-season success, including an impressive showing in Wednesday's tripleheader on home turf against Central Ontario competition. SAC opened "An Afternoon of Lacrosse in Aurora" with a 10-1 win over Eastview (Barrie), battled to a 5-5 tie with St. Mary's (Owen Sound), and finished the demanding day with a 10-0 victory over Aurora HS Eagles.

Against their crosstown competition, the Saints jumped out to a quick 3-0 lead seven minutes into their third game of the day and the Eagles called a timeout to stem the White Tide. SAC increased its lead to 4-0 by the end of the first quarter and led 6-0 at half-time.

The Saints built their lead to 8-0 heading into the final quarter of play and netted two more fourth quarter goals to establish their margin of victory against the YRAA Eagles' squad.

Coach Commisso felt the Saints' depth contributed mightily to their wins over Eastview and Aurora and their draw with St. Mary's.

?We used our depth and substituted freely to manage the three games. We were well-prepared for the games today.?

Commisso singled out the performances of three Saints during Wednesday's tripleheader: ?Brendan Wright, Nic Belmonte, and Campbell Ellis were our top players in the three games. They were outstanding against the St. Mary's Mustangs, a Top 5 OFSAA team coached by a former NLL player. Wright, Belmonte, and Ellis are all DI prospects and their play showed that this afternoon.?

Notes:

The Lacrosse Saints are happy to announce that Kai Erkkila has committed to play for the NCAA Division 1 Marist College Red Foxes in Poughkeepsie, New York in September 2023.

The Saints look to defend their 2022 CISAA championship starting in May with home-and-away games versus St. Michael's College, Upper Canada College, and Crestwood. The CISAA playoffs commence May 24 and the championship game is scheduled for May 27.

SAC's next exhibition games are in Michigan on May 5 and 6 against Birmingham and Detroit Jesuit, respectively.

By Jim Stewart