

Shattuck St. Mary's School shuts down SAC Saints during PHC Weekend Series

In a PHC battle between the #1 Prep School in the USA and the #1 Prep School in Canada, Aurora hockey fans were treated to fast-paced, entertaining hockey at Le Brier Family Arena this weekend.

Shattuck-St.Mary's School from Fairbault, Minnesota improved its PHC record to 11-3-0 with a weekend sweep of St. Andrew's College.

The Minnesota 'Hockey Factory', whose alumni include Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, and Zach Parise, defeated the Saints 6-2 and 5-3 on Friday night and Saturday afternoon, respectively, at La Brier Family Arena.

SAC's Captain Jonathan Castagna who notched a power play goal versus SSM on Friday night analyzed succinctly his team's challenging weekend.

'It was a tough one. We had some unlucky bounces in both games and SSM is an opportunistic team. We needed to put forth a more mature effort and needed better mistake management. The games were closer than the scoreboard would indicate, but we needed to create more chances to score.'

In the spirited rematch on Saturday afternoon, Castagna felt the Saints 'played a better game' and battled through a scoreless first period with Shattuck-St.Mary's. SSM broke the deadlock with an unassisted goal by Hunter Anderson at 11.41 of the middle frame and Samuel Crane expanded Minnesota's lead at 3.16.

The Saints struck back quickly 23 seconds later when Dean Letourneau notched his 7th goal of the PHC season 'assisted by Jack Pridham and Francesco Dell'Elce' to lift a spirited Saints' team.

However, SSM's forward Hunter Anderson continued to be a thorn in the side of the Saints when he scored his second goal of the game with 57 seconds left in the period. It was Anderson's fifth goal of the weekend series after registering a hat-trick on Friday evening in SSM's 6-2 win.

Jack Pridham cut SSM's lead to 3-2 with a nice finish of Dell'Elece's pass three minutes into the third period.

It was Pridham's 11th goal and Dell'Elece's 14th assist of the PHC season for the highly-productive Saints duo. SSM restored its two-goal lead on Aidan Park's marker at 12.35 of the final frame and Daniel Shlaine delivered the back-breaker with an unassisted short-handed goal at 8.20 that deflated the big crowd gathered at La Brier. Nevertheless, the Saints worked doggedly until the final buzzer and Jared McNeil's power play goal with nine seconds left in the game 'assisted by Tyler Chiovetti and Dean Latourneau' was a morale booster for the home team.

Letourneau was a big presence for the Saints all afternoon and his performance was applauded by his Head Coach David Manning.

'Dean had a great weekend. He played with a ton of pace. He's a big, long player so when he plays fast, he uses it to his advantage.'

Coach Manning regretted that his players 'shot themselves in the foot a few times' versus SSM and felt the Saints 'needed to manage mistakes better.'

The veteran Head Coach also acknowledged the number of Saints on crutches and in casts in the corridor of La Brier Family Arena after the game.

'It's a tough time of the season, but the three ankle injuries have created opportunities for other players to step up.'

The Saints' next game is on Thursday, February 16 versus the Bishop Kearney Selects at 4 p.m. at La Brier Arena.

SAC's PHC record fell to 7-6-1 with the weekend losses to SSM.

SSM's Hunter Anderson finished his impressive road trip to Aurora with 5 goals and 1 assist in the weekend doubleheader with SAC.

By Jim Stewart