

- by Michael Lazzaro

Plattsburgh, NY – After coming in second place in last year’s State University of New York Athletic Conference annual tournament, the school is kicking off the season with the second seed in the conference.

Defending SUNYAC champion Fredonia ranked 4 entering the season and Oswego took home the 1 seed.

Plattsburgh also earned national recognition with a preseason rank of 14 in the NCAA Division III polls. Since then they’ve moved up ten spots to 4 overall.

With only three seniors on the team nobody is really sure who is going to lead and who is going to follow. “Certain players have to step it up early this season until our younger players mature. We’re hoping the freshmen become a bigger part of the team during the second semester.” Coach Bob Emery said.

Junior Riley Hill is one of those stepping up; he leads the team and is third in the conference with 12 points. Sophomore Ward Smith is second on the team and eighth in the conference with 10 points. Freshman Dylan Clarke, senior Mike Baccaro and Nick Rolls are tied with 9 points, good for eleventh best in the league. But most importantly, freshman goalie Bryan Hince has stepped up and is only allowing an average of one goal per game.

Speed kills, and it appears to be the case for the Cardinals’ continuing success. Coach Emery preaches team speed on getting to the puck, offense and defense. Not to mention that the fact that they’ve been dramatically out-shooting opponents helps; in their season openers against Morrisville they out-shot the Mustangs 50-9 and 48-18 in their two wins of 5-1 and 6-2, respectively. Then they really flexed their skates against Potsdam scoring 11 goals on 52 shots while holding the Bears to 1 goal on just 16 shots. Then they pulled out tough victories against defending conference champions Oneonta 4-2, and Cortland 5-2, both games were close until late. They roughed up Buffalo State 6-1 and stomped defending tournament champions Fredonia 3-0. In seven games they’ve never been out-shot; making goalies work is another part of Coach Emery’s philosophy.

Bob Emery notched his 400 Cardinal career win against SUNY Potsdam as the Cardinals rolled 11-1 only three games into the year. Only 5 NCAA Division III coaches have won more games: Bill Beaney (509 wins), Mike McShane (502 wins), John Rolli (466 wins), John Dunham (441 wins) and Bill O’Neill (424 wins). It is conceivable that, before the end of the year, Bob Emery could move into the top 5.

“We really have not been challenged yet.” Emery said about his team’s hot start.

The men’s team is unstoppable so far this year, as they’ve racked up seven wins in as many games. It was one thing when they were starting the year beating up on teams that were expected to stay in the lower half of the SUNY Athletic Conference, but now, after

they've tangled with Oneonta and Fredonia and are still undefeated, again, they look like the best team in the conference.

Emery doesn't boast his great coaching skills but gives the credit to his players, "Coaching is overrated, you've got to have great players" but he hasn't had a losing season, ever.

Since taking over the head-coaching duties for the Cardinals for the 1989-90 season the coach has posted 18 consecutive winning seasons. His teams have cruised through regular seasons and into SUNYAC Championship games since Emery started coaching. Cardinals teams have won 7 out of the last 10 SUNYAC Championships and 10 total; winning 2 national championships (1992 and 2001) all under Emery's tenure.

The style that Coach Emery preaches is an exciting and winning formula. The Cardinals are the team to watch and people are doing just that. The team draws an average of two-thousand people to a game. A few attendees in the student section enthusiastically added that, "It has to be tough to watch for fans of other teams" and a P.S.U. Resident Assistant, Monica Boulter, couldn't help but love seeing the Cardinals roll past opponents adding, "You always love rooting for a team that keeps on winning year after year."

The Plattsburgh State Cardinals are a force to be reckoned with in the Division III hockey realm. It's going to be more than exciting to watch what the team ends up doing in March 2008 SUNYAC and NCAA tournaments.