

No. 2 Wisconsin Stays Hot, Sweeps No. 5 Minnesota

by Evan Epstein

MADISON – The No. 2 Wisconsin Badgers entered their penultimate regular season series against the No. 5 Minnesota Golden Gophers hoisting a 13-game win streak.

The Gophers, who came into the series with an impressive 8-game win streak of their own, started off hot on Friday night. Peyton Hemp found herself wide open from the left circle with just over nine minutes to go in the first period and rifled one past the right of Badgers Goaltender Jane Gervais' glove, finding the back of the net. Minnesota Goaltender Skylar Vettar was stellar throughout the first period, stopping all fifteen shots on goal.

The Badgers would respond with just over ten minutes remaining, Kelly Gorbatenko found Laney Potter in front of the net. Potter buried it over the right shoulder of Vettar.

The game would continue to go back-and-forth, with Marianne Picard deflecting a puck into the net for the Badgers. Then, five minutes into the third period, Josephin Bouveng lobbed a backhanded shot over Gervais to knot the match at 2.

Just two minutes later, Britta Curl's backhanded shot found the five hole of Vettar to put Wisconsin back out in front.

The Badgers looked to be in control in the final minutes of play, preventing Vettar from exiting the goal until there were 90 seconds left. However, with 1:07 remaining, Laila Edwards was called for roughing. The Gophers, the best power play team in the nation (38.8%), quickly took advantage, with Bouveng sending a shot by the right pad of Gervais for her second goal of the game.

In overtime, Edwards would make up for her penalty, managing to finesse the puck past the right pad of Vettar as she was falling to the ice, ending the game 4-3 victory for the Badgers.

“It was a stupid penalty,” Edwards said after the game in an interview with the Wisconsin State Journal. “I had to do my best to make it up, and luckily, I did.”

The Badgers carried this moment into Saturday afternoon. Kirsten Simms, who had a hat trick last weekend at Bemidji State, got the scoring going early in the second period for the Badgers. It was an athletic play as Simms was skating right, fired across her body, and found the top left corner of the goal.

Just four minutes later, it was Simms again, firing a nearly identical shot from the right side of the ice into the left corner of the goal. Simms' strong outing was all the Badgers would need Saturday afternoon, as Freshmen Goaltender Ava McNaughton was a solid presence, tallying 17 saves in her shutout performance. The Badgers would tack on an additional two goals late in the third period for a 4-0 win.

Looking Forward

In the final series of the regular season, the Badgers host the top ranked Ohio State Buckeyes. While this series has no post-season implications, as the Badgers and Buckeyes are respectively locked in at the 2nd and 1st seeds for the WHCA tournament, it could serve as a preview to a Frozen Four matchup. Puck drop will be at 7 p.m. Friday and 8 p.m. Saturday at La Bahn Arena.