



COLLITON NOTCHES FIRST WIN, PUSHES TEMPO AT PRACTICE



New Rockford Head Coach, Jeremy Colliton, led the IceHogs to a 4-0, season-opening win over the Cleveland Monsters in his AHL coaching debut last Saturday. The 32-year-old bench boss said he was pleased with his team’s effort during the shut-out of Cleveland, and is optimistic in his outlook for the full 2017-18 campaign.

“For day one, game one, (the performance) was pretty good,” Colliton said of Rockford’s 4-0 victory. “The way (the team) sits right now, there’s a lot of potential; but they have to run with it.”

Colliton almost literally enforced that mentality when the IceHogs returned to the ice earlier this week in preparation for the Saturday and Sunday’s home-opening series. Colliton and his coaching staff pushed an up-pace tempo throughout morning skate during the week’s practice sessions.

“We don’t dream up practice to kill 60 minutes, were doing everything with a purpose,” said Colliton. “So we’re going to continue push. We want to do things quicker, we want to execute at a high level and then the games going to be easier on Saturday if you execute (at practice) that way.”

VETERAN BERUBE ASSUMING LEADERSHIP ROLE



Rockford goaltender, J.F. Berube, made 32 saves in his IceHogs debut to pace the IceHogs’ 4-0 shutout. The veteran netminder has now posted seven career shut-outs in 111 AHL games since his professional debut in 2009-10.

With a season-opening roster that features just six players above age 24, the 26-year-old Berube acknowledged his responsibility in assuming a leadership role.

“We have a young team, but also we have some good veterans on this team, guys that have been around a couple years,” said Berube. “I think it’s up to us to show the younger guys what it’s like to be in this league and what it’s like to be a pro.”

Berube, who has also played between the pipes in 11 career NHL games, added the team has already meshed well in the early stages of the season.

“You can tell there’s a good chemistry in the locker room, and you can see it on the ice as well,” said Berube.

HIGHMORE ANTICIPATES HOME DEBUT



IceHogs rookie Matthew Highmore scored a goal in his first professional game, potting a power-play strike at 14:27 in the third period Saturday at Cleveland. While his debut was impressive, the winger is already firmly focused on what comes next.

“We’ve been working hard for the last week, so that was huge for us to get off to a good start,” said Highmore. “It’s a new experience for a lot of us...It’s a good start, but we know the hard work’s just beginning.”

After getting some of the early-season nerves out of the way with a win in the first game, Highmore said the team is now looking look ahead to playing their first home game at BMO Harris Bank Center this week.

“I’m very excited,” Highmore said. “I’ve heard nothing but great things about the fans here in Rockford,” he said, “It looks like it’ll be a lot of fun and we’re ready to roll.”