

## One Game Between Bonnies, Playoffs

Written by Pat Clifton

Friday, 16 November 2012 11:26

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If St. Bonaventure beats Rutgers Saturday and scores four tries in doing so, the Bonnies will advance to the DI-AA Sweet 16 with the Empire Conference's automatic bid. If they do anything less, they will finish third in the league and watch Brockport advance to Nationals.

For a team that hasn't been first or second in the conference standings the entire season due to suffering a mid-season lull, it's an accomplishment that St. Bonaventure is even within reach of the playoffs this late in the race.

"That middle stretch of the season when we lost to Binghamton, tied Army and had a very close win over Fordham, we weren't too high on ourselves by mid-season, but we got things going," said St. Bonaventure coach Clarence Picard.

"We didn't beat Stony Brook, those long road trips are tough...After that, we were kind of like, 'Forget about all this outside stuff, let's just worry about ourselves, get back to having fun, because this is a college sport after all,' and something clicked with the guys. We were able to

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beat Syracuse, we were able to beat Iona, and things have been going a lot better for us.”

St. Bonaventure lost to Stony Brook in the Empire Conference Championship Game last spring and were in line to be considered for an at-large bid to the Sweet 16. Problem was, they would have likely had to travel across the country to compete, so the Bonnies withdrew from consideration. But if they win the Empire, they’re going to the playoffs in the spring.

“I guess it’s kind of funny how things work out. Last year we probably thought our team was a little bit better. I now we were a little more of a veteran team last year, where this year we’re dealing with some young guys. We’ve had five freshmen starting throughout the year, six sophomores, but it would mean a lot just because it would tell us we’re going in the right direction and competing in the Empire Conference,” said Picard.

“Especially to our seniors, they put a lot of work in. They were the first class of guys that came into a DI team, this is our fourth year in DI, so if we’re able to get the job done this weekend, I think it would be a nice feather in their cap over a four-year career.”

Of course, St. Bonaventure still has a job to do before it can make playoff plans – beat Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights are 2-7 in Empire play and in third-to-last place. But their games have been much more competitive on the back end of the season than they were in the beginning of it.

“Everyone I’ve talked to said, ‘Hey we got Rutgers really early on, and they were a young team, but they definitely have some guys that we think by the end of the year are going to be a little more competitive,’” said Picard.

“Rutgers is 2-7, whatever, but I don’t even look at that record. This is a former premier division team, they have coaches who are very experienced who I respect a lot, so their record is out the window in this situation.

“We talk about as a team, all the time, it really doesn’t matter who you’re playing, it’s what you do. Honestly, I haven’t once talked to the team about the playoff scenario. I’ve spoken with the captains about it just to explain what’s going to happen, this is what the standings say, but it

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hasn't even been brought up with the team.”

The game kicks off Saturday at 2pm ET in St. Bonaventure, NY.

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