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Pointers Struggle to Keep Up, Skate to a 2-2 Tie

STEVENS POINT, WI- Missed opportunities and offensive shortcomings hurt the UW-Stevens Point men's hockey team as they settled for a 2-2 tie against Trine University on Saturday night at the KB Willett Arena.

The number two nationally ranked Pointers, still fresh into the new season, see their record go to 1-0-1 overall while for Trine, the Thunder remain without a win at 0-1-1.

Stevens Point came out firing to start the first period, wasting no time taking shots on goal. Eight minutes in, the Pointers struck first with a goal scored by forward Zach Zech on a pass from forward Logan Fredericks.

The lead was short-lived, as a minute and a half later, Thunder forward Corey Robertson snuck in the equalizer off the assist from forwards Garrett Hallford and Carmine Taffo. With that response, the game went from looking like it would be in the Pointers' favor to a competitive contest.

With the game all tied up at one, the two teams went back and forth the offensive zones, looking for opportunities to set up another scoring play. Under a minute left in the period, Trine caught a break when Pointers forward BJ Duffin went to the penalty box for high sticking.

Thunder defenseman Blake Robertson capitalized and shot the puck past Pointers goaltender Eli Billing only five seconds into the powerplay to make it a 2-1 Trine lead. The quick goal gave them the momentum going into the first intermission.

"We knew they were going to play hard, they played an extremely tight game," Pointers head coach Tyler Krueger said. "Our goal was to try to wear them out down."

Trine didn't have a great start to the second period as Hallford was called for hooking 20 seconds in, but the Pointers did not score during the powerplay. The offense for Stevens Point kept Thunder goaltender Brett Young mentally awake, but never got him to lose his guard.

The Pointers finally got back to level score with three minutes left in the second period when forward Luke McElhenie slipped the puck outside of Young's reach and got the team back into the game.

However, neither team could find a way to score in the third period and the game would be settled in overtime. Even though the Pointers held the puck in the offensive zone for most of the extra period, the Thunder shut them down and the game ended in a draw.

"Going on the road and in this environment, our guys were able to stay focused and play hard, which is important," Thunder head coach Alex Todd said.

"Tying feels the same as losing the game. We're second in the nation and we shouldn't be tying most teams," Zech said.

For goaltending, it was a tale of two different stories. Billing finished his first career start with 10 saves on 12 shots while Young was on his toes the whole game, saving 44 out of 46 shots. The Pointers had plenty of looks on net, but only tallying two goals on that many attempts wasn't a winning formula.

"We're moving the puck well, but we need to take more opportunities getting the puck into the net," Pointers forward Kelly O'Brien said. O'Brien did not play much during the game but took six shots on goal himself.

The Pointers will look to rebound next weekend in some tough road matchups in Minnesota against Hamline and Bethel University while Trine will return home to face Marian and Lawrence University.