



TOP TWENTY TAKEDOWN

Brad Waters

The St. John Fisher men's lacrosse team celebrates its thrilling 12-11 overtime win over then-ranked No. 19 RIT. Sophomore Dave Malone scored four goals in the game, including the game-winner.

STAFF WRITER
JEFF GUARINO

Fisher defeats nationally-ranked team for first time in school history

How does the St. John Fisher College men's lacrosse team respond to adversity?

By beating one of the best teams in the nation.

The Rochester Institute of Technology men's lacrosse team entered April 2 as the 19th best team in the nation, according to a laxpower.com poll, which surveys all of America's best college lacrosse teams.

The poll will surely need to be re-configured now, with a mention of St. John Fisher College more possible than ever, after the Cardinals beat the Tigers, 12-11, in a back-and-forth overtime tilt on April 2.

With just 41 seconds remaining in a hard-fought overtime, sophomore Dave Malone scored his fourth goal of the game, and 18th of the season, to officially earn Fisher its historic victory over RIT at Growney Stadium.

"Dave is a shooter, no question," Cardinals head coach John Johnson said of Malone. "To have a guy like him always in position to make plays for us is very invaluable, and a big reason for

our success."

After having a chance to knock off a nationally-ranked team March 26 against Ithaca College slip through their grasp and currently amidst a two-game Empire 8 conference losing streak, the Cardinals were determined to have an excellent showing against RIT and make history in front of their home fans. Never in the seven-year history of the program have the Cardinals beat a nationally-ranked team, until April 2.

"We really didn't prepare any differently for this one," Johnson said. "We knew how good of a team they were, but we were focused on rebounding after the last two games. We knew we needed a fast start."

Apparently taking their coach's sentiment to heart, the Cardinals jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the first quarter, before the Tigers even knew the game had begun. Malone and sophomore

Chris Schmidt got the scoring started for Fisher with a goal a piece in the opening quarter, helping the Cardinals build their four goal lead.

Though the Tigers finally caught their breath some before the half, Fisher held an 8-4 lead after two. Cardinals sophomore Scott Bowen scored both of his goals in the first half to pace the Cardinals.

The Tigers seemed very worthy of their national recognition, as they never wavered and eventually forced overtime after scoring three goals in the final three and a half minutes of the fourth quarter. Wes Adam scored the game tying goal for RIT, as the momentum seemed to swing back in the favor of the Tigers, heading into the extra frame.

In addition to Malone's four goal day, Bowen and fellow sophomore Jeff Price finished with two goals a piece to propel the Cardinals.

"We deserved to win this game; the guys really earned this victory and I couldn't be more proud of them," Johnson said.

Seemingly lost amongst the excitement of the RIT victory was another Empire 8 matchup earlier in the week against Stevens Institute of Technology for the Cardinals.

A wide open Sunday afternoon game on March 30 saw the score tied heading into the fourth quarter, until Fisher junior Jason Cirulli scored 26 seconds into the final frame to give the Cardinals a 5-4 lead. Although the Ducks responded and tied the game again, the Cardinals proved too much, winning their second one goal decision of the season, 7-6 over a very tough Stevens team.

All seven goals scored in the game were tallied by different Cardinal players, the first time this season such an even distribution of offense has been

displayed. Sophomore Jon Cortina earned the victory in goal for the Cardinals, stopping ten shots.

"With Sunday's win over Stevens and (Wednesday's) win over RIT, we feel as though we have this program headed in the right direction," Johnson said after one of the most positive weeks his program has ever enjoyed.

The Cardinals now stand at 8-2 overall (3-2 in the Empire 8) and now turn their attention to another nationally-ranked team and bitter rival, Nazareth College on April 9. The Golden Flyers, ranked No. 11 in the most recent laxpower.com poll, suffered a blowout loss to SUNY Cortland 21-5 and will undoubtedly be looking to avenge such a callous defeat. Johnson and his Cardinals seem to be in a one-game-at-a-time frame of mind, heading down the final stretch of the season.

"In my 36 years of coaching, regardless of the sport, I've learned that one game at a time is the best way to prepare," Johnson said. "We're going to play the only way we know how to: hard, smart and confident and see what happens the rest of the way."

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ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

Find out who the 2008 honorees are in the April 23 edition of the *Cardinal Courier*.