Skating Saints' home opener, ECAC debut tonight
Union invades Appleton Arena tonight, conference favorite Rensselaer visits tomorrow

By Reed Kroh
The St. Lawrence University men's hockey team opens both home action and their ECAC campaign this weekend when Union and Renselaer invade Appleton Arena. The Saints take a 1-2 record into the Union-RII series after road games against the University of Minnesota-Duluth and the University of New Hampshire.

October 22 and 23 they split with Duluth. A 2-1 loss on Friday was followed by a 7-2 win on Saturday. The following Saturday they visited Durham, New Hampshire to play the UNH Bulldogs, but ended up losing 3-1.

The opening non-conference games, returnees have stepped to forward to bear much of the load, both offensively and in net. Sophomore Burke Murphy, who last year was named to the ECAC Rookie of the Year, leads the team in both goals scored (3) and points (4). Meanwhile, senior center Mike Allain has accumulated a 3.37 goals against average and a .913 save percentage.

Despite losing a large number of regulars from last season and the seemingly slow start thus far this season, the Saints faithful should expect far more than rebuilding year. There are several key players returning from last season's 17-12-2 squad and an enormous recruiting class, consisting of eleven freshmen, a transfer and a sophomore who played junior varsity for the younger players to gain much-needed game experience and the following two game-free weeks offered practice time to work on some weak areas.

The first month of the season proved the Saints need not be overconfident against two impressive teams (UMD was a contender in the Hockey East race) are definite signs of promise. When the conference season begins however, speculative words like "promise" become meaningless and victories begin to matter. The perennially poor Union College Dutchmen visit Canton tonight for a 7:30 contest. The Saints need not be overconfident going in, for the Dutchmen bring a two-game winning streak with them, after posting victories against McGill and Army. Freshmen center Troy Stevens and junior wing Chris Albert lead the Union attack with five points each.

The following night, ECAC favorite Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute has a date with the Saints in Appleton at 7:00. The Engineers bring a 2-1 record with them after victories over Army and Boston University and a surprising 6-2 loss to Merrimack College. Saint captain Mike McCourt and his fellow blue liners need to shut down a powerful RPI attack, led by Ron Pucci with five points and Kelly Askew with three goals and one assist.

Fourth quarter RPI burst thwarts Saints comeback in 34-7 rout
Saints, 2-7, host 6-3 Brockport State tomorrow to close out disappointing 1993 campaign

By Pete Costello
St. Lawrence's at-home domination of RPI ended Saturday, as the Engineers were finally able to shake the Saints in the late-going to prevail 34-7. The last time Rensselaer players were able to return home after a successful day in Canton was by win 69 years ago, after a 9-7 win in 1924. However, the outcome was in doubt almost until the final gun, as the Engineers found themselves clinging to a shaky 20-7 lead with just 12 minutes left. The RPI position was made even more precarious by the fact that the Saints were just 35 yards away from cutting seven more points from that 13 point edge. However, Rensselaer's ballpark has been big plays in big situations, and Saturday was no exception to that rule. The Engineer defense stiffened, holding St. Lawrence on downs, and the offensive was able to capitalize on that stand and a later interception to the tune of two scores with five minutes left in the game. Those two touchdowns allowed RPI to escape Weeks Field with the 34-7 victory.

Initially, it looked as though the Engineers would have an easy time ending their decades-long drought, as they took the opening kick-off and proceeded to mount an 11 yard drive. With senior quarterback Brandon Grabowski at the helm, the RPI coaching staff used a variety of plays to start the contest off on the right foot. Big gains by fullback Todd Mucci were augmented by Grabowski's throwing, setting up a four-yard scoring run by J.P. Peterson. However, the point after try sailed wide right, and the Engineers had to settle for a 3-0 lead.

Not content to let it sit, the Saints bounced right back with a 63 yard drive of their own to take the lead. That series' two biggest plays came courtesy of junior running back Jason Felix, whose standout season has been lost to the shuffle of the Saints 2-7 record. A 12 yard gain on a crucial third down play was the first, but the capper came on a favorite Saint play, Felix slipped out of the backfield and slid downfield to gather in a 32 yard scoring strike from Saint signal caller Troy Updyke ('95). Senior Mucci's PAT gave St. Lawrence a 7-3 advantage.

The Engineers were able to strike back on a 51 yard drive to reestablish the lead 13-7 on a Grabowski to Troy White 25 yard TD pass. The Saints seemed poised to reciprocate until an errant Updyke pass was picked off and returned 30 yards to the St. Lawrence 40 yard line. Just one play later, it was 20-7 as Grabowski went "up top lollipop," finding Paul Sullivan, who got behind the Saints' defense for the score.

The second half began with the Saints taking the kick and driving to the RPI 20 yard line before that scoring threat was erased by Updyke's second interception. However, the Saint defense did its part, keeping the Engineers out of the end zone also.

Opening the final quarter, the Saints seemed ready to make a game of it, once again driving deep into RPI territory. Facing a fourth down on the Engineers' 55, the Saints went for it, but were unable to convert, turning the ball over on downs. Thanks to Todd Peureux's ('97) second interception, the Saints had another shot at getting back into it.

St. Lawrence coach Dennis Riccio reached into his bag of tricks, calling for a pitch to Felix, who then looked long for Shannon McDermott ('94). The play worked to perfection, and the Saints looked to be in business again. Unfortunately, a comeback wasn't in the cards, as the Engineers were finally able to capitalize on the many breaks that went their way in the second half, converting their third interception of the afternoon into the game-winning score.

The Saints had another shot at getting back into the game. RPI was able to tack on another tally in the late going, as Grabowski connected for his fourth touchdown of the day on a 23 yard pass with 4:49 left. That left the Saints looking at 2-7, while Rensselaer headed home with their sixth win against two losses.

This Saturday, the Saints are once again at home, looking to close out a disappointing 1993 campaign on a positive note against the 5-2 Brockport State Golden Eagles. Game time is at 1 p.m.