PENN STATE ICE HOCKEY

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Icers Begin Playoff Push with Victory Over Mountaineers

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – One down, three to go.

The No. 3 ranked Penn State Icers battled a determined No. 14 West Virginia team Saturday, taking a narrow 2-0 victory to move onto the second round of the ACHA National Tournament.

Penn State (32-3-4) will face No. 6 Liberty on Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

The win moves the Icers one step closer to an unprecedented eighth National Championship. With one game in the books, Penn State must win three more to claim the title.

Edward Hume made 15 saves for his third shutout of the season in his first career tournament game.

After a scoreless first period, Scott Dakan scored early in the second frame to give the Icers the lead. Eight minutes later, Jaime Zimmel added a power play goal to give the Icers a 2-0 advantage with nearly half the game still to play.

It was all Penn State would need, despite the efforts of Hume's counterpart, West Virginia's Rastislav Kret, who turned aside 25 shots in a losing effort.

A strong penalty kill helped as well: the Icers killed off all nine West Virginia power plays.

"[Kret] played well," said assistant coach Matt Bertani. "We got some good efforts from our guys on the penalty kill and got some big stops."

The Icers have now won 9 of their last 11 games, including three straight. They have not lost as the designated home team since Nov. 17, a span of 15 games.

That loss was against their next opponent, No. 6 Liberty. After losing 7-1 to Penn State on Nov. 16, the Flames fought back with an overtime win the next day, 5-4.

Liberty, who routed No. 11 Kent State 7-1 to advance to the second round, have been hot of late: After being swept by ACHA D-2 Davenport, the Flames won 7 of their last 8, including four straight leading up to the tournament by margins of six goals or more.

Should the Icers defeat Liberty, the final four teams would be re-seeded to form the final bracket. The semifinals would fall on Tuesday evening, with the National Championship Game on Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.pennstatehockey.com, or the Penn State Team Sports Ice Hockey blog at community.centredaily.com.