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Meet Bryan Haczyk: National Player of the Month

by *Timothy O'Donnell/CHN Reporter*

On Oct. 23, Bryan Haczyk was held pointless against RPI. It took three months for another team to keep him pointless; Robert Morris held the Niagara senior without a point Jan. 29, a Niagara record 21 games.

“It was fun while it lasted,” Haczyk said.

“It’s sad that it’s over but you have to move on, life goes on.”

With Haczyk on fire, Niagara won seven of its first 10 Atlantic Hockey games and have been near the top of the standings ever since. For his efforts, Haczyk was named today the Hockey Commissioners Association National Player of the Month for January.

The streak was something new to Haczyk, who has never been on a streak like that before, he said. But it does not come as a big surprise to Niagara coach Dave Burkholder, even though Haczyk hasn’t had big numbers in the past three seasons. It was just a matter a Haczyk getting an opportunity.

“He can shoot it,” Burkholder said. “He has a pro shot, a pro release. It was just a matter of Bryan over the course of his career gaining confidence and realizing that ‘Yes, I can be a prime time player. I am a primetime player.’”

And Haczyk knew he had more responsibility as a senior.

“As a senior you’re kind of expected to produce for your team,” Haczyk said. “It’s going out there and getting the job done every night.”

But before this year, Haczyk never stood out from the rest of the team, never scoring more goals than assists. Before this year, Haczyk’s career highs all came last year. This season has more than doubled Haczyk’s career goal total and has set new career highs in goals (22), assists (15), and points (37).

For his first three years, Haczyk had some very talented players in front of him. Players like Chris Moran, Ryan Olidis and Tyler Gotto all carried the Purple Eagles while Haczyk just



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waited in the wings.

“His first three years, he started as a third line guy, best penalty killer, second line guy the next year,” Burkholder

And this year things have changed, with Moran the latest to graduate, the pressure fell to Haczyk. The 21-game point streak has firmly implanted Haczyk in the middle of the Purple Eagles' attack, right next to Paul Zannette. The two combined have scored 44 of the Purple Eagles 95 goals (46 percent).

“Paul Zannette, Dave Ross and Bryan Haczyk, as seniors, were told we’re going as far as they take us,” Burkholder said.

And Haczyk has responded to the added pressure. He recorded multiple points in 11 of the 21 games, including 4 multi-goal games.

“There’s times when our young guys are spinning their tires, but Paul and (Bryan) have saved the day in numerous games,” Burkholder.

Haczyk has also come through in the clutch for the Purple Eagles, scoring eight power play goals and four game winning goals. But Burkholder can’t mention Haczyk without bringing up Zannette.

“For two guys on the same line, on the same team to be leading the nation in goals, usually there’s not enough sharing of the puck,” Burkholder said. “If we’re up a goal, they’re out there protecting a lead. If we’re down two, they’re out there trying to get it done offensively. It’s been fun to just sit back and watch these two.”

Burkholder traces Haczyk’s success this season back to the summer, when he attended New Jersey Devils’ Prospect Camp.

“(He) came out of that realizing that he fit in with New Jersey’s top prospects,” Burkholder said. “That started the year off on the right foot in regards to confidence and starting the year off right.”

And that experience has helped transform Haczyk into a premier scorer in Atlantic Hockey. And while the streak may be over, Haczyk isn’t dwelling on it.

“You have to go out next weekend and start it all over again.”