

## COLLEGE HOCKEY

## OK Crusaders split weekend set with TRU Wolfpack

By LARRY FISHER  
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Kelly Loudoun thanked the hockey gods. He can also thank the University of the Fraser Valley.

Despite falling short of their weekend goal, Loudoun's Okanagan Crusaders inched closer to securing a playoff spot by splitting a two-game homestand against the Thompson Rivers University Wolfpack of Kamloops.

The Crusaders dropped Friday's opener 6-1, but rebounded to post a 7-3 win in Saturday's rematch at Winfield Arena.

Elsewhere in B.C. Intercollegiate Hockey League action on the weekend, the University of the Fraser Valley swept the University of Victoria 5-4 and 5-3. Combined, the results left Okanagan (9-11-2) and UVic (8-10-4) tied for the fourth and final playoff spot with 20 points, but the Crusaders hold the tiebreaker with more victories.

"It seems like the hockey gods gave us a second chance," said Loudoun, president and player for the expansion Crusaders. "We're pretty happy about it."

"Everything turned out fine, and we're in control of our own fate now."

Going into the weekend, UVic had destiny in its hands and Okanagan was gunning for four points rather than two against TRU (13-7-0), which sits second in the seven-team circuit. Now, Okanagan can clinch a playoff berth in its inaugural campaign with a road sweep of last-place Selkirk (1-18-1) in its regular-season finale on Feb. 27 and 28.

"If we sweep, we're in for sure," Loudoun said. "It's not over till it's over, but if we don't sweep (Selkirk), we probably don't deserve to be in the playoffs."

Victoria finishes off this weekend, at home to sixth-place Trinity Western University (9-9-1).

Trinity has won five of its last six contests, including a 5-3 upset of top-ranked SFU (15-5-2) on Sunday. TWU's lone blemish since early January is a 3-3 tie against UVic. TWU hosts next month's playoffs in Langley, with the top four teams also qualifying.

Against TRU, the Crusaders kept their playoff hopes alive by beating the Wolfpack on Saturday. They did so without the services of leading scorer Sasha Golin (27 points) and playmaking forward Micah Anderson (17 points), who sat out the weekend set with injuries.

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"TRU just came off two big wins against SFU — the powerhouse in the league — so for us to beat them like that, and dominate the game that way, it felt pretty good," Loudoun said. "It's a good confidence booster for everybody, especially when Golin and Anderson, two of our top players, are both injured."

"Everybody is pretty pumped right now."

In their absence, defencemen Dave Mann, with two goals and two assists, and Kolby Barnstable, with one goal and two assists, picked up the offensive slack.

Loudoun, Rich Abney, Aaron Hocking and Dekker Mende also scored for the Crusaders, while goalie Adam Butler made 38 saves to backstop the win. J.J. Kalawarny had the lone goal for Okanagan in Friday's letdown.

"We just outplayed them," Loudoun said of Saturday's bounce-back effort.

That game saw Okanagan outscore TRU 6-1 after the game was tied 1-1 through 20 minutes.

"Traditionally, our second periods are pretty slow at Winfield, with the long (line) change and everything," continued Loudoun. "But we came out and got two quick goals, and they just kept going in."

"Then we maintained the lead, which is also something we've struggled with in the past. They scored one in the first minute of the third, but after that, we shut them down and got ourselves a big win."

