

## St. Norbert College Men's Hockey: Secret to Success

By: Reese Neumann

The St. Norbert College Men's Hockey team wrapped up its 2023-2024 season finishing with a 15-3 conference record and 23-7-0 overall. The team secured a victory over St. Olaf College in the first round of the DIII NCAA tournament 5-2, losing in the quarterfinals to Adrian College 5-3. Despite ending the season on a loss, the team has a sense of pride following a season full of success. The key to a successful season? Freshman forward Gustav Portillo was able to provide some insight.

Portillo makes it obvious that the secret was simple: teamwork. This may seem like an obvious answer, but few teams are as close as the Green Knights. Portillo is from Gothenburg, Sweden. At many places, an international student would be seen as an outsider, but Portillo said that he never felt this way. This is his third year of hockey in America and his second year in Wisconsin. Last year he played for the Madison Capitols. The year before, he played junior hockey in Fargo, North Dakota. This is his first year at a college, and he "loves being able to combine [his] sport with a great education!"

Despite having played hockey in America for two years prior, the closeness he feels with this team is unique. He noted that this is why the team was so successful, saying, "We are a brotherhood, everyone loves each other, and we do everything together." He continued, "Whether you are a freshman or a senior, it doesn't matter...[we are] this close on and off the ice, which affects the team in a positive way." Hockey runs roughly September to March with little breaks, and the players are asked to stay on campus for longer than most students. They have less free time and shorter breaks, but the extra time together doesn't seem to stop them from growing close as a team.

Portillo mentioned his favorite part of the season: "When we won the conference championship in Adrian, Michigan." The team defeated Adrian 3 -1 on March 2. He remembered it being "such a cool experience, being able to defeat a team ranked number 2 in the nation, in their own building." Through this freshman's insight, it comes as no surprise that the team was so successful this season. Despite the tournament loss, the team is optimistic for next season.