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EP is two wins away from historic season

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PAWTUCKET -- Sixteen down, two to go.

East Providence High moved two victories away from its first unblemished regular season in team history on Wednesday afternoon by nailing down its 16th triumph, a 7-3 conquest of Middletown High in a clash of division leaders at Lynch Arena.

Louis Peterson, the top scorer in Division 3 with 51 points, scored a pair of goals and had as many assists to lead the Townies, who can achieve a perfect campaign by beating Division 3-Central rival West Warwick High tomorrow on 'Senior Night' at Lynch Arena and Narragansett High on Saturday night in their regular-season finale at the Smithfield Ice Rink.

Both games shouldn't be that much trouble for the Townies -- the Wizards are 6-8-2 and the first-year Mariners are 6-10-1 -- but EP coach Gregg Amore refused to take either team lightly.

"We beat West Warwick 4-0 earlier in the year without Peterson and we haven't seen Narragansett," said Amore after the contest. "If we do what we're supposed to do, we should be OK in those two games."

The Townies were better than OK in skating to their second win in as many days. On Tuesday afternoon, the Townies overcame eight penalties to record a 4-2 win over Mount Hope, which is second in the division with a 10-5-1 mark, and 24 hours later, they knocked off the Islanders, who entered the game owning a nine-game win streak and sitting atop the Division 3-South standings with a 12-2-1 record.

"This was a team we had to be ready for," said Amore, whose crew outshot the Islanders by a 32-15 count. "This was a team everyone told me could move the puck and score and had a good, solid goaltender. But we were pretty geared up for this game and it showed. It was a good effort by everybody."

Like they did in their win over the Huskies, the Townies broke out to a lightning-fast 2-0 lead, netting both goals in the first 2:22 of the game. Tyler Elmasian scored his eighth goal of the year at 1:29 off passes from Mike Cicerone and Ross Amaral, and a minute later, Peterson found the back of the net, as David Hill and Pat Gormley assisted on the goal.

The Islanders sliced their deficit in half at 4:20 on Richard Breen's team-high 16th goal of the season, but Jeff Fontes gave the Townies back their two-goal cushion by beating goalie Kyle Hessler on a breakaway.

In the second period, EP dominated play and outshot Middletown by a 12-2 margin, but only managed to net one goal -- Hill's 12th of the season off a pass by Peterson at 4:47.

The Townies eventually broke the game wide open in the last period on goals by Amaral (his eighth of the season), Peterson (15th), and Gormley (21st). Peterson's goal, scored on a partial breakaway at 3:55, was his team's 100th of the season.

Middletown's final two goals came from Pat Michaud, who received credit for his first score when an EP defenseman accidentally kicked the puck past goalie Cameron Ford 3 1/2 minutes into play.

Amore was also pleased afterwards with his team's forechecking and especially the play of his third line of right wing George Butler, left wing Travis Barao, and center Zachary Palumbo.

"Our third line was really good," remarked Amore. "They got a regular shift the entire game and did what they had to do. They maintained the zone, got a couple of scoring opportunities, and kept the puck down in

the other zone."

After this weekend's action, the Division 3 playoffs will commence, and the Townies can sew up the No. 1 seed by either winning one of their final two contests or having St. Raphael (10-6) defeat Division 3-North leader Scituate High (16-1) in their regular-season finale on Saturday night at Lynch Arena.

"We're ready to start the playoffs," he said. "It's time. I wish we were starting the playoffs this weekend."