

Triad duo work in unison to help defeat Bethalto in hockey

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EAST ALTON – When it comes to chemistry, arguably few duos in the **Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association** have better chemistry than **Triad's Blake Takmajian and Kyle Kowalski**.

Kowalski, a senior, and Takmajian, a junior, certainly showed it at East Alton Ice Arena Monday night as the duo accounted for six of the Knights' seven goals in a 7-3 win over Bethalto; they both had three goals and three assists each in the win.

“That's our typical playing program,” said Triad coach Pat Culiberk. “When those two are on, then we've got good capabilities. We just have to get someone in front of the net who can pick up what they don't put in.

“They're good players and they play the game just really hard. You can be around and play with their good fortune; it picks the rest of our kids up.”

The two teamed up for a pair of shorthanded goals on the same Bethalto power play in the first period, each of them getting a goal and an assist, which helped Triad establish a lead they wouldn't give up. “It was nice because we didn't panic with the puck,” Culiberk said. “We could have just shot from everywhere; we tried to have better puck placement on goal. If you just bury the puck on the goalie all night, you're not going to get any chances.

“We moved it around and we had plenty of our younger kids get some ice time, so it was good. And they've (Bethalto) got a good squad. We never had a chance to lay back because they kept coming.”

Takmajian opened the scoring just 36 second into the game when he took a pass from Kowalski and beat Eagle goaltender Justin Meyer, but Joe Watson countered just 35 seconds later when he got a feed from Konnor Loewen and scored to tie the game up. Kowalski gave Knights the lead back seven seconds after that on an unassisted goal.

The two shorthanded goals came when Harrison Mohesky was off for cross-checking; Kowalksi and Takmajian scored 47 seconds apart on the man-disadvantage to put Triad firmly in charge at 4-1.

It stayed that way until the 10:52 mark of the second period, when Watson got his second goal, the assist going to Jayden Kahl, to cut the lead to 4-2. Trent Noeltner restored the three-goal lead about midway through the third period, with assists going to Phillip Culiberk and Billy Laycock, and Takmajian scored his second goal with assists from Kowalski and Alex Ebersoldt to make it 6-2. Anthony Russo pulled the Eagles to 6-3 on assists from Jacoby Robinson and Michael Dixon, but Kowalski got a power-play goal form Takmajian with 4:44 left to finish off the scoring.

The Knights had 35 shots on goal, with Meyer getting 28 saves; the Eagles had 34 shots on goal, with Nathan Funk stopping 31.

Triad takes on O'Fallon at 8 p.m. Thursday at Granite City's Wilson Park Ice Rink, while Bethalto meets up with Highland at 7:15 p.m. Tuesday at East Alton.

