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Hockey East Approves Expanded Men’s Playoff Format for 2015 Format Includes First 12-School Field and Two “Best-of-Three” Rounds

Hockey East directors approved an expansion of its playoff format during their recent league meetings in Naples, Florida. With the University of Connecticut joining the conference for the start of the 2014-15 season, the directors voted to include all 12 institutions in the post-season tournament. On a second vote, the directors voted to utilize a “Best-of-Three” format in both the opening round of play as well as the quarterfinal round. Those rounds, played at campus sites, precede the Hockey East championship weekend that will again be hosted by the TD Garden in Boston next year.

“The directors heard from the coaches that the best time of the year for the athletes is playoff time and the coaches made a strong argument for increasing those playing opportunities for the students,” said Hockey East Commissioner Joe Bertagna. “The inclusion of a fifth-place team in the opening round may also have been a factor.”

This past season, as Hockey East welcomed the University of Notre Dame as its 11th member institution, the conference directed an 11-school tournament, with teams #6 through #11 paired off in a single game opening round format. The three winners joined the teams seeded #1 through #5 to make up an 8-team quarterfinal field. In 2015, the Hockey East post-season will look like this:

2015 Hockey East Men’s Tournament

Friday - Sunday, March 6-8: Best-of-Three Opening Round Play on Campus
(#5 hosts #12, #6 hosts #11, #7 hosts #10, #8 hosts #9)
Friday - Sunday, March 13-15: Best-of-Three Quarterfinal Round Play on Campus
(Schools #1 - #4 host four opening round winners, highest vs. lowest, etc.)
Friday, March 20 at TD Garden: Semifinal Games
Saturday, March 21 at TD Garden: Championship Final

Hockey East enjoyed a banner year in 2013-14, compiling a winning record against each of the other five NCAA Division I men’s ice hockey conferences and placing five schools in the NCAA Division I Men’s Ice Hockey Championship. More than 72,000 fans turned out to watch the 17 games played in the 2014 Hockey East Tournament, with the two nights at the TD Garden being the two best attended post-season games in the country this past season.

Earlier in the year, the conference hosted two outdoor doubleheaders at Fenway Park in January, drawing an additional 57,000+ fans for “Frozen Fenway.” And during the past year, the conference successfully partnered with the TD Garden to win a bid to bring the 2015 NCAA Division I Men’s Ice Hockey Championship “Frozen Four” to Boston in 2015.

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