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Weekend Preview

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BLACK BEARS LOOKING TO KEEP BU ON THE ROPES Northeastern-Merrimack is key midseason battle

A mere glance at the midseason standings in Hockey East reveals some important facts. Boston College is starting to pull away a bit from the rest of the pack, a four-team bundle that includes a young UMass Lowell squad. At least one of those teams will have to play a road series in the quarterfinals, so the stakes are plenty high. The tier of those in contention for home ice is now significantly above that of the teams in the lower half of the standings, most noticeably Boston University – and who would elect to face the Terriers in the play-offs, either at home or on the road?

BU has plenty of work ahead, not just to try to make a late season challenge for home ice, but simply to qualify for the Hockey East play-offs. The Terriers will have no easy weekend coming up, however, hosting Maine, the No. 3 team in the nation, for two games. Friday's game is this week's offering of NESN's "Friday Night Ice".

The Terriers and Black Bears have already met once this season, a 2-1 Maine triumph at home on Nov. 1, the team's seventh straight win at the start of this season. The two charter members of Hockey East have met in several memorable battles over the years, and this weekend's tilts should only add to the

legacy. The last thing the Terriers want to do is help Boston College, but taking two or more points this weekend from Maine would place the Eagles on an even higher perch ahead of the challengers.

BC has some unfinished business to take care of at Northeastern's Matthews Arena on Friday night. On their last visit across town, the Eagles failed to score, ending their own seven-game winning streak and extending Northeastern's winning streak to five games. It's the only league defeat the BC has suffered this season and interestingly, NU's only league win so far. It may seem surprising, but BC is the one Hockey East foe that the Huskies have proven they can beat – perhaps they can do it once again.

In another unlikely twist earlier this season, Merrimack toppled UNH for the first time in 29 tries. The two teams finish up their season series Friday in North Andover. But the Warriors' biggest faceoff may have to wait until Saturday, when they host Northeastern. The points are especially crucial for both teams – Merrimack has just nine league games remaining, identifying itself as the most opportune hurdle the Huskies could leap to return to the Hockey East playoffs.

Providence is another team that finds itself fighting for survival. On Tuesday, the Friars suffered a disheartening 2-1 OT loss to first-place BC. The Friars travel to Lake Superior State for their final two non-conference games of the year. Offsetting an unenviable 2-7-5 record in league play, Providence boasts a 6-1-1 mark vs. non-conference foes this year. Unheralded junior David Cacciola owns a save percentage of .940, second-best in the nation.

RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	AHCA	USCHO
Boston College	2	2	2
Maine	3	3	3
New Hampshire	7	8	8
Massachusetts	12	14	–
UMass Lowell	21	–	–
Providence	22	–	–
Boston Univ.	24	–	–
Northeastern	30	–	–

TOP FAN AWARD VOTING BEGINS

Interactive online voting for Hockey East's top student fan and top non-student fan has begun at HockeyEastOnline.com. The original field has been narrowed to five finalists in each category. Each finalist has a nominating essay posted online for public viewing and voting. Winners will receive prize packages including tickets and accommodations for Hockey East championship weekend.

MORE NHL SUCCESS STORIES

Former BU captain **Carl Corazzini** didn't take long to make an impact in the Bruins' lineup. He made his NHL debut last Thursday and scored his first NHL goal, short-handed, on Tuesday against New York Rangers' goaltender **Mike Dunham**, a former Black Bear. Corrazini later added another goal to lead the B's to a 4-1 win. At the same time, former BC netminder **Scott Clemmensen** was in the process of posting 25 saves to shut out the Pittsburgh Penguins in his first NHL start.

RESULTS / SCHEDULE

Tuesday, January 20

Boston College 2, at Providence 1 (OT) *
 at Brown 6, Merrimack 2

Friday, January 23

Maine at Boston University (NESN) *
 Boston College at Northeastern *
 New Hampshire at Merrimack *
 Providence at Lake Superior State

Saturday, January 24

Maine at Boston University (FSNE) *
 Northeastern at Merrimack *
 Brown at UMass Lowell
 Providence at Lake Superior State

* Hockey East game

Games start at 7pm unless indicated

All times Eastern

2003-04 STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	HE Offense	HE Defense
Boston College	13	10	1	2	22	18-3-3	3.62 GPG	1.77 GAPG
Maine	12	8	3	1	17	16-5-1	3.00 GPG	1.83 GAPG
Massachusetts	14	7	5	2	16	11-7-5	1.86 GPG	2.14 GAPG
UMass Lowell	12	7	4	1	15	12-10-3	2.67 GPG	2.42 GAPG
New Hampshire	12	6	3	3	15	14-7-3	3.50 GPG	2.92 GAPG
Providence	14	2	7	5	9	8-8-6	2.71 GPG	3.07 GAPG
Merrimack	15	3	9	3	9	8-14-3	2.13 GPG	3.20 GAPG
Boston University	12	3	7	2	8	6-8-6	2.42 GPG	3.08 GAPG
Northeastern	12	1	8	3	5	6-10-4	2.17 GPG	3.42 GAPG