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Weekend Preview

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POSITIONING AT STAKE FOR UNH AND MAINE *BU, Northeastern must focus on league play before Beanpot opener*

After Boston College vs. Boston University, Hockey East's top rivalry is undoubtedly UNH vs. Maine. The northern counterparts have staged countless memorable battles, particularly since the closing weeks of the 1998-99 season, which culminated with a 3-2 OT win for Maine over UNH in the NCAA championship game. Since that dramatic affair, the teams have split the series with six wins each. Five of those games have been decided by just one goal, and there have also been two ties in that span. Last season, they were especially evenly matched, as each team scored exactly seven goals in their three-game series, which Maine won two games to one. UNH got the last laugh, however, winning its second consecutive Hockey East championship and advancing to its fourth Frozen Four in the last six seasons. Meanwhile, Maine qualified for its fifth consecutive trip to the NCAA postseason.

Both teams remain competitive at the highest levels of play this season. Maine is ranked fourth in the nation in the AHCA poll, just two

ahead of UNH. They are second and third, respectively, in the Hockey East standings, but Massachusetts and UMass Lowell aren't far behind. That ups the ante for this weekend's series in Orono which will complete their regular season head-to-head play. UNH was looking at a 3-1 deficit just five minutes into their first meeting this season, but scored five unanswered goals to deliver a 6-3 win for their delighted home crowd on Nov. 8.

Northeastern is getting wide-eyed about Monday's Beanpot opener vs. BU, but must first focus on an unusual Thursday face-off. After getting just one point in their first eight Hockey East contests, the Huskies have six points in their last six league games and are back in the hunt for the playoffs. The ninth-place Huskies are clawing for every point they can get, and UMass may be one place they can find some. Though solid at 11-7-5 overall, the Minutemen are only 1-3-2 at home this year in league play.

Boston University must also hold its Beanpot breath until Monday as a match at UMass Lowell is on deck. BU is by no means a lock for the Hockey East playoffs – a 1-0 win over Maine Saturday gave the Terriers a minimum amount of wiggle room over the teams in the lower bracket, but a false move or two will put them quickly on the bottom. Providence is right there with the Terriers, Huskies and Warriors, making it a four-team battle for only three playoff spots. The Friars have the unenviable task of taking on first-place Boston College in Chestnut Hill on Friday before hosting UMass Lowell. Merrimack, meanwhile, has the same draw as Northeastern, visiting Massachusetts on Saturday.

RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	AHCA	USCHO
Boston College	2	2	2
Maine	3	4	4
New Hampshire	6	6	8
Massachusetts	14	-	-
UMass Lowell	17	-	-
Boston Univ.	19	-	-
Providence	22	-	-
Northeastern	27	-	-

CHAMPIONSHIP TICKETS GOING FAST

Tickets for the Hockey East Championship are quickly becoming a commodity. Only single seats remain available for purchase in the loge sections. Fans can reserve seats through Ticketmaster or by visiting the FleetCenter box office.

THE HOCKEY NEWS FEATURE

The January 27 issue of The Hockey News was littered with references to former Hockey East competitors. Former BC Eagle Bill Guerin was pictured on the cover, while former Friar Tom Fitzgerald was acknowledged with the Quote of the Week on page 5, reflecting on playing his 1000th career NHL game. Fitzgerald joins Brian Leetch (BC), Eric Weinrich (Maine) and Scott Young (BU) as the only Hockey East alums to reach the 1000-game plateau in the NHL. In the team summaries section, one "shift disturber" from each squad was identified, and three of those were former Hockey East skaters: Brian Gionta, Mike Grier, and Brooks Orpik.

WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 29

Northeastern at Massachusetts *

Friday, January 30

Boston U. at UMass Lowell (NESN) *

Providence at Boston College *

New Hampshire at Maine (8pm - CSTV) *

Saturday, January 31

New Hampshire at Maine (WABI) *

UMass Lowell at Providence *

Merrimack at Massachusetts *

Monday, February 2

Beanpot at FleetCenter (NESN)

Boston University vs. Northeastern (5pm)

Boston College vs. Harvard (8pm)

* 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	14	11	1	2	24	18-3-3	3.64 GPG	1.79 GAPG
Maine	14	9	4	1	19	17-6-1	3.14 GPG	1.93 GAPG
New Hampshire	13	7	3	3	17	15-7-3	3.92 GPG	2.77 GAPG
Massachusetts	14	7	5	2	16	11-7-5	1.86 GPG	2.14 GAPG
UMass Lowell	12	7	4	1	15	12-11-3	2.67 GPG	2.42 GAPG
Boston University	14	4	8	2	10	7-9-6	2.43 GPG	3.21 GAPG
Providence	14	2	7	5	9	10-8-6	2.71 GPG	3.07 GAPG
Merrimack	17	3	11	3	9	8-16-3	2.06 GPG	3.53 GAPG
Northeastern	14	2	9	3	7	7-11-4	2.21 GPG	3.36 GAPG