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Weekend Preview

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FRIARS TAKE FOUR-GAME WIN STREAK TO MAINE *Terriers fighting for playoff life in home-and-home series vs. UMass*

Time to break out the calculators.

One team, first-place Boston College, has already clinched home ice in the Hockey East quarterfinals and two others, Maine and UMass, are right on the cusp of doing so. Both teams need only one more win to secure home ice, and Maine can do it with just a tie in this weekend's series vs. Providence.

But the Friars are currently on a four-game winning streak in Hockey East play, the second-longest run of the season behind BC's six-game streak in January, which concluded with a Jan. 30 win vs. Providence. That Friar loss dropped the team to 2-8-5 in league play, just two points ahead of last place. Since then, however, the Friars have posted two wins over UMass Lowell and two over Boston University, and are now legitimately challenging UNH for the final home ice quarterfinal berth. The trip to Maine doesn't look promising, considering the Black Bears are the No. 3 ranked team in the nation, but an identical away weekend late last season yielded three points for the Friars and they went on to slip past BU for Hockey East's No. 4 seed.

The Terriers are in a much-more precarious position this year, with ninth-place Northeastern tailgating just one point behind. Simply making the playoffs will be a challenge, especially with a home-and-home series with UMass on tap, followed by a home-and-home series with Northeastern, which could well lock up a spot for one of the two. There's no relief for BU in the final weekend either, as the Terriers finish up with two games vs. UNH. The worst finish BU has ever suffered in Hockey East is sixth, and that's only happened once.

Northeastern hopes to overtake the Terriers at some point this weekend and will start with a Friday night game at Merrimack. NESN will be on site to air the first live televised contest from Merrimack's rink since 1997. Vastly underrated as a college hockey facility, Lawler Arena's cozy confines (3,000 capacity) have played host to some of the most memorable Hockey East battles in recent history. Look no further than two weeks ago (4-4 tie vs. BC) for evidence. The Warriors are very tough at home and have proven it with 300 wins at Lawler Arena vs. only 173 losses there since the facility opened in 1972.

UMass Lowell posted a fine 4-3 OT win there in mid-January, but later had to forfeit it. Despite the forfeits, the River Hawks have maintained their composure and pace at the middle of the pack. Last weekend, they posted two ties against UNH in a home-and-home series and are therefore optimistic of doing the same this weekend vs. Boston College. BC is almost in cruise control at the top, but would like to lock up the regular season title before travelling to Maine on the final weekend.

RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	AHCA	USCHO
Boston College	2	1	1
Maine	3	4	3
New Hampshire	8	11	9
Massachusetts	13	15	14
Providence	17	-	-
UMass Lowell	21	-	-
Boston Univ.	25	-	-
Northeastern	27	-	-
Merrimack	-	-	-

GOALTENDERS GALORE

Long-known for the large numbers of forward and defense prospects it has sent on to the NHL, Hockey East is suddenly making a name for itself as a goaltending factory. The starting duties for the New York Rangers (Maine's Mike Dunham) and the Minnesota Wild (Lowell's Dwayne Roloson) belong to former Hockey East goalies, while BU's Rick DiPietro and Maine's Garth Snow continue to split time for the New York Islanders. UNH's Ty Conklin was challenging Tommy Salo for the starting job in Edmonton before going down with a hand injury, and one-time Black Bear Mike Morrison was called up to be Salo's reserve in his absence. Scott Clemmensen, a BC staple from 1997 to 2001, recently shut out the Penguins in his first NHL start, while Roloson became the first former Hockey East goaltender to compete in the NHL All-Star game.

WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Friday, February 20

Massachusetts at Boston University *
 Providence at Maine *
 Northeastern at Merrimack (NESN) *
 UMass Lowell at Boston College *

Saturday, February 21

Boston University at Massachusetts *
 Providence at Maine (WABI) *
 Boston College at UMass Lowell *

Sunday, February 22

Northeastern at New Hampshire (4pm) *

* 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 !	18	14	1	3	31	23-3-4	3.89 GPG	1.78 GAPG
Maine	18	12	4	2	26	21-6-3	3.17 GPG	1.78 GAPG
Massachusetts *	20	12	6	2	26	16-8-5	2.10 GPG	2.40 GAPG
New Hampshire	19	8	6	5	21	16-10-5	3.42 GPG	3.05 GAPG
Providence	19	6	8	5	17	14-9-6	2.58 GPG	2.74 GAPG
UMass Lowell *	18	5	9	4	14	8-18-6	2.50 GPG	2.44 GAPG
Merrimack *	20	5	11	4	14	10-16-4	2.15 GPG	3.40 GAPG
Boston University	18	4	12	2	10	8-14-6	2.06 GPG	3.00 GAPG
Northeastern	18	2	11	5	9	8-14-6	1.94 GPG	3.06 GAPG

* - records reflect forfeits by UML ! - clinched home ice in the Hockey East quarterfinals