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# Weekend Preview

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## WEEKEND SERIES AT MAINE COULD PREVIEW TITLE GAMES *Terriers' road to the postseason goes through stingy Mike Ayers*

Even though Boston College was able to wrap up the regular season title last Friday at home, the significance of this weekend's series at Maine is hardly diminished. Both teams appear to be on collision courses that intersect at the FleetCenter following this preview event.

Should the teams meet in two weeks at the FleetCenter, it will be for the 20th Anniversary Hockey East championship. Boston College has five crowns to its credit, three coming vs. Maine. Maine has four, two coming vs. BC.

BC (ranked 2nd in the nation) and Maine (ranked 3rd) could also very easily meet again at the FleetCenter in early April for the NCAA Frozen Four. Each team has made three trips to the Frozen Four over the past five years and each has one championship to show for it.

For the sheer value of great hockey and for the glimpse it provides into the upcoming championship tournaments, nothing can match BC's two-game trip to Maine this weekend, and fans around the region will be able to watch the first contest. Friday's game will be broadcast on a tape delay basis on NESN immediately following the Red Sox preseason game, which features Curt Schilling's debut in a Sox uniform.

But for high stakes playoff implications and for excellent subplots, fans will instead have to focus their attention on the BU-UNH and NU-UMass home-and-home series. BU can put an early end to the drama with a win at home vs. UNH tonight. That would clinch the final Hockey East playoff spot for BU and eliminate Northeastern. Easier said than done, however. Wildcat netminder Mike Ayers has shut out Boston University four straight times, and has done it in four different buildings, most recently on the Terriers' home ice. He blanked BU on 34 shots in early November and the 'Cats cruised to a 4-0 win. He has a shutout streak of 254:24 vs. BU, having stopped no less than 122 straight shots by the Terrier offense. If the Terriers don't win at home tonight, they will have to face the monumental task of trying to win at UNH on Saturday.

A loss by BU tonight sets the table for Northeastern in its series vs. UMass. The Minutemen have been offensively challenged in recent weeks, with an output of just eight total goals over the past five games, yielding four losses and one tie. Northeastern needs at least a win and a tie this weekend to stay alive, while a sweep vs. UMass would clinch the final playoff spot if BU can't win one vs. UNH. Coincidentally, UMass and UNH are fighting for the No. 3 seed in the Hockey East tournament, so motivation will not be in question for any team.

Playoff positioning is also at stake in the other game tonight, Merrimack at UMass Lowell. The winner clinches the No. 6 spot, while the loser will be ticketed for an unenviable quarterfinal series at either Boston College or Maine. Both BC and Maine boast a dominating home record of 13-1-1 this year.

### RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	AHCA	USCHO
Boston College	2	2	2
Maine	3	3	3
New Hampshire	7	8	7
Massachusetts	16	15	-
Providence	19	-	-
UMass Lowell	21	-	-
Boston Univ.	24	-	-
Northeastern	27	-	-
Merrimack	-	-	-

### QUARTERFINALS SCHEDULE

Host sites for the Hockey East quarterfinals are set, as are the dates. Opponents have yet to be determined, but the quarterfinal schedule will be as follows:

#### Thursday, March 11

Game 1 at BC, UMass and UNH

#### Friday, March 12

Game 2 at BC, UMass and UNH

Game 1 at Maine

#### Saturday, March 13

Game 3 at BC, UMass and UNH \*

Game 2 at Maine

#### Sunday, March 14

Game 3 at Maine \*

\* if necessary

### WEEKEND SCHEDULE

#### Thursday, March 4

UNH at Boston University (FSNE) \*

Merrimack at UMass Lowell \*

#### Friday, March 5

Massachusetts at Northeastern \*

Boston College at Maine \*

(Tape delay broadcast on NESN immediately following the Red Sox game)

#### Saturday, March 6

Boston College at Maine (WABI) \*

Boston University at UNH (NHPTV) \*

Northeastern at Massachusetts \*

UMass Lowell at Providence \*

#### \* Hockey East game

Games start at 7pm unless indicated

All times Eastern

## 2003-04 STANDINGS

Team (Pos. Seed)	GP	W	L	T	Pts (Pos)	Overall	Remaining Opponents
Boston College (1) *	22	17	2	3	37 (41)	26-4-4	at Maine (2)
Maine (2) !	22	15	5	2	32 (36)	24-7-3	Boston College (2)
Massachusetts (3-4) !	22	12	7	3	27 (31)	16-9-6	at NU, NU
New Hampshire (3-4) !	22	10	7	5	25 (29)	18-11-5	at BU, BU
Providence (5) ^	23	7	10	6	20 (22)	15-11-7	UMass Lowell
Merrimack (6-8) ^	23	6	12	5	17 (19)	11-17-5	at UMass Lowell
UMass Lowell (6-8) ^	22	6	12	4	16 (20)	9-21-6	Merrimack, at Providence
Boston University (6-9)	22	5	13	4	14 (18)	9-15-8	UNH, at UNH
Northeastern (8-9)	22	3	13	6	12 (16)	9-16-7	UMass, at UMass

\* - clinched reg. season title ! - clinched quarterfinal home ice ^ - clinched playoff berth



# Playoff Picture

as of March 4, 2004

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## HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

<u>Team (Possible Seed)</u>	<u>GP</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pts (Pos)</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Remaining Opponents</u>
Boston College (1) *	22	17	2	3	37 (41)	26-4-4	at Maine (2)
Maine (2) !	22	15	5	2	32 (36)	24-7-3	Boston College (2)
Massachusetts (3-4) !	22	12	7	3	27 (31)	16-9-6	at NU, NU
New Hampshire (3-4) !	22	10	7	5	25 (29)	18-11-5	at BU, BU
Providence (5) ^	23	7	10	6	20 (22)	15-11-7	UMass Lowell
Merrimack (6-8) ^	23	6	12	5	17 (19)	11-17-5	at UMass Lowell
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Boston University (6-9)	22	5	13	4	14 (18)	9-15-8	UNH, at UNH
Northeastern (8-9)	22	3	13	6	12 (16)	9-16-7	UMass, at UMass

\* – clinched regular season title    ! – clinched quarterfinal home ice advantage    ^ – clinched playoff berth

### What can happen tonight?

#### BU LOOKING FOR FINAL PLAYOFF BERTH

##### New Hampshire at Boston University

A BU victory would clinch the final playoff spot and eliminate Northeastern. (BU would win tiebreak vs. Northeastern - more conference wins.) A BU win would also lock UNH into the No. 4 seed and Massachusetts into the No. 3 seed. (UMass would win tiebreak vs. UNH - more conference wins.)

#### MERRIMACK, LOWELL AIM FOR 6TH SEED

##### Merrimack at UMass Lowell

Winner clinches the No. 6 seed. If BU loses to UNH, loser of MC-UML game clinches the No. 7 seed. (UMass Lowell wins head-to-head tiebreak vs. Boston University.)

#### Tiebreakers:

If two teams finish with the same number of points in the standings, the following tiebreakers will be used:

1. Head-to-head results between the tied teams
2. Number of wins in conference play
3. Head-to-head results vs. the first-place team, then the second-place team, etc.

### Potential tiebreaker scenarios:

Between Massachusetts and New Hampshire:

If conference records finish identical, UNH would win based on a win and a tie vs. No. 1 seed BC (UMass was swept.)

If conference records do not finish identical, UMass would win based on more conference wins.

Between Merrimack and UMass Lowell:

Merrimack would win based on head-to-head record.

Between Merrimack and Boston University:

If conference records finish identical, Merrimack would win based on two ties vs. No. 1 seed BC (BU was swept.)

If conference records do not finish identical, BU would win based on more conference wins.

Between UMass Lowell and Boston University:

UMass Lowell would win based on head-to-head record.

Between UMass Lowell and Northeastern:

UMass Lowell would win based on head-to-head record.

Between Boston University and Northeastern:

If conference records finish identical, Northeastern would win based on a win vs. No. 1 seed BC (BU was swept.)

If conference records do not finish identical, BU would win based on more conference wins.