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# NCAA Preview

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## THREE TEAMS CHARGE TOWARDS NCAA TOURNEY TITLE *Top seeds BC, Maine joined by Northeast Regional host UNH*

Now that the Hockey East regular season champ (BC) and tournament champ (Maine) have been crowned, both move forward to test their conference dominance against non-conference foes in the NCAA Tournament.

Despite getting bounced in the Hockey East quarterfinals by crosstown rival Boston U., the BC Eagles were granted one of four No. 1 seeds in the tournament, thanks to a 27-game stretch in which they suffered just one defeat. There is no question the Eagles are one of the most talented teams in the nation – the only question is can that talent empower the team to overcome its recent struggles?

Boston College draws CHA champ Niagara in the first round of the Northeast Regional at Manchester, NH. The other semifinal match in that bracket features host UNH vs. perennial contender Michigan. The Wildcats and Wolverines have met twice before in the NCAA Tournament, Michigan defeating UNH 4-0 in the 1998 semifinal and UNH responding with a 2-1 OT win a year later in regional play. BC has

never faced Niagara in NCAA tournament play or otherwise, but for those with short memories, Niagara shocked UNH in the first round of the 2000 West Regional, so there's no looking past any opponent here. An Eagle victory over their purple brethren at Niagara sets up an intense regional final vs. the winner of UNH-Michigan. The BC series vs. both squads are among the richest in Hockey East history.

BC's offense is well-known, and should be firing on all cylinders for the first time this season. But it's BC's defense (ranked No. 2 in the nation) that could be the real difference in the postseason.

If defense is going to win this tournament, Maine has to be the favorite. The Black Bears allowed only 62 goals over 40 games, including four goals in four games en route to the Hockey East tournament championship. They more than doubled the previous team record of five shutouts in a season by blanking their opponents 11 times, while allowing more than two goals on only seven occasions, three of which were Maine victories.

The Black Bears also hold the most coveted card in the entire game – the nation's No. 1 goaltender, Jimmy Howard. Over 19 games this season, Howard has compiled an unbelievable 1.05 goals-against-average and a save percentage of .958. He has four shutouts in his last seven games and has not allowed an even-strength goal since December. If Howard should be unavailable for any reason, the Black Bears won't even blink. Tandem partner Frank Doyle has an 18-4-4 record, a 1.84 GAA and a .922 save percentage.

Maine will be the No. 1 seed at the East Regional in Albany, and will play the first game of the entire tournament Friday at 5pm vs. ECAC champ Harvard.

### RANKINGS

TEAM	AHCA	USCHO
Maine	1	1
Boston College	4	4
New Hampshire	10	10
Massachusetts	14	–

### HEAD-TO-HEAD HISTORY

**Boston College vs. Niagara**  
 All-Time Series: First meeting

**Maine vs. Harvard**  
 All-Time Series: Tied, 4-4  
 Last Meeting: 12/15/02 – Maine 4, Harvard 2  
 Last Meeting in the NCAA Tournament:  
 2002 first round - Maine 4, Harvard 3 (OT)

**New Hampshire vs. Michigan**  
 All-Time Series: Michigan, 4-2  
 Last Meeting: 3/27/99 – UNH 2, Michigan 1 (OT)  
 (1999 NCAA quarterfinal)

### ON TO THE NHL

Hobey Baker Award finalist Thomas Pöck of UMass led all scorers in the Hockey East tournament with seven points in just four games. A little over 24 hours after playing in the Hockey East championship game, Pöck signed an NHL contract with the New York Rangers and scored a goal in his pro debut, a 5-2 loss to Pittsburgh on Monday night. Minuteman teammates Nick Kuiper and Greg Mauldin also inked NHL contracts this week, as did Pöck's fellow Hockey East First-Team All-Star defenseman Stephen Wood of Providence.

### NCAA REGIONAL SCHEDULE

#### Friday, March 26

*East Regional at Albany, NY*

**MAINE vs. Harvard (5pm - NESN)**

*Wisconsin vs. Ohio State (8:30pm - NESN)*

*West Regional at Colorado Springs, CO*

*North Dakota vs. Holy Cross (7:30pm)*

*Miami vs. Denver (11pm - NESN)*

#### Saturday, March 27

*Northeast Regional at Manchester, NH*

**BC vs. Niagara (noon - WB56)**

*Michigan vs. UNH (3:30pm - WMUR)*

*Midwest Regional at Grand Rapids, MI*

*Minnesota vs. Notre Dame (noon)*

*Minnesota-Duluth vs. Michigan St. (3:30pm)*

*East Regional Final (6pm)*

*(WABI and WMTW will air if Maine is in)*

*West Regional Final (9pm)*

#### Sunday, March 28

*Midwest Regional Final (1pm)*

*Northeast Regional Final (4pm - NESN)*

**All times Eastern**

### 2003-04 STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	HE offense	HE defense
Boston College	24	17	4	3	37	27-8-4	3.67 GPG	1.88 GAPG
Maine	24	17	5	2	36	30-7-3	3.21 GPG	1.75 GAPG
Massachusetts	24	12	9	3	27	18-12-6	1.96 GPG	2.62 GAPG
New Hampshire	24	10	8	6	26	20-14-6	3.42 GPG	3.17 GAPG
Providence	24	7	11	6	20	16-14-7	2.75 GPG	3.62 GAPG
UMass Lowell	24	7	12	5	19	10-23-7	2.33 GPG	2.71 GAPG
Merrimack	24	6	12	6	18	11-19-6	2.21 GPG	3.29 GAPG
Boston University	24	6	13	5	17	12-17-9	2.38 GPG	2.96 GAPG
Northeastern	24	5	13	6	16	11-16-7	2.33 GPG	3.00 GAPG