



PRESS RELEASE

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BOSTON COLLEGE FAVORED TO REPEAT *Maine also expected to contend for regular season title*

For the fifth time in the last seven seasons, the Boston College Eagles have been picked to finish first overall in Hockey East. A unanimous pick to finish first last season, the Eagles rolled through most of their schedule, clinching the regular season title a full two weeks before the playoffs.

This year, it may not be as easy.

Maine, the defending Hockey East tournament champion and runner-up in the NCAA tournament, finished only two points behind the Eagles in the preseason poll and garnered three first-place votes. The Black Bears have the best goaltender in Hockey East (and possibly the nation) tending their end, as Jimmy Howard returns for his junior season.

Boston University also received a first-place vote, somewhat of a surprise considering the Terriers finished a distant eighth last season. Despite the graduation of former Player of the Year Mike Ayers, UNH is considered deep enough to rebound and finished just behind BU in the annual poll. Massachusetts and UMass Lowell will also likely challenge for a home ice berth in the Hockey East quarterfinals, while Northeastern and Providence will likely be mostly focusing on getting into the playoffs, at least according to the coaches. Merrimack has now been picked last in five of the last six seasons, but has not missed the Hockey East playoffs since 1995-96.

The Hockey East Association is a nine-team, Division-I men's college hockey conference, with offices based in Wakefield, Mass. Founded in 1983, the league recently celebrated its 20th anniversary season, and has won four NCAA championships in the past 12 years. The conference also sponsors a women's league, founded in 2001, which will feature eight Division-I programs in 2005-06.

2004-05 Preseason Coaches' Poll

<u>Team (1st Place Votes)</u>	<u>Pts</u>
1. Boston College (5)	68
2. Maine (3)	66
3. Boston University (1)	52
4. New Hampshire	51
5. UMass Lowell	45
6. Massachusetts	42
7. Northeastern	28
8. Providence	26
9. Merrimack	18