



# Weekend Preview

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 10, 2005

## POSTSEASON FACES OFF TONIGHT AT UNH “Underdogs” Northeastern and Lowell have great chance to advance

The closeness of competitive ability between the top teams and the bottom teams in Hockey East has always been a hallmark of the league. That may never have been more true than it is this season.

For the first time ever, six of the nine teams finished .500 or better in league play, and all six have a good opportunity to advance to the FleetCenter for the Hockey East semifinals. The other three can't be called slouches either: UMass is seeking its third straight trip to the FleetCenter, Providence suffered nearly half of its league losses by only one goal, and Merrimack, absent from the playoffs for the first time since 1996, was 7-4-1 in non-league play, including a win vs. Harvard.

UMass and Providence will have their hands

full playing at top seeds BC and BU, respectively, but don't count either out. BC failed to advance last year despite being the No. 1 seed, and UMass is hoping history repeats itself, much like it is just by Providence facing BU.

The Friars, who tied BC three times this season and are on a three-game winning streak, have met the Terriers a total of 18 times in Hockey East tournament play, by far the most of any two teams head-to-head. Each team has won nine of those games. This will be the fifth time in seven seasons that they have faced in the quarterfinals. Each team has won two of those series.

Despite that compelling storyline, there will be even more drama unfolding in the NU-UNH and UML-Maine series. Although UNH swept NU 3-0 in the regular season and Maine did the same to Lowell, there is a general consensus that the host teams, the higher seeds, are nowhere close to a lock in the postseason.

Northeastern will call on senior stopper Keni Gibson to stifle a UNH offense that has two highly potent lines of attack. The Huskies will also be able to respond effectively with Hockey East scoring champion Jason Guerriero and linemate Mike Morris, who combined for 11 points in their regular season finale last weekend. UNH will have a pronounced home ice advantage, and a wildcard in goal where the choice will come down to veteran Jeff Pietrasiak or rookie Kevin Regan.

UMass Lowell will have the same dilemma

as John Yaros has come back strong from an injury to challenge outstanding rookie Peter Vetri for time between the pipes. The River Hawks will have vengeance in mind at Maine, where they dropped back-to-back games just two weeks ago to halt a lengthy hot streak. The stakes in this series are especially high – both teams are on the bubble for an NCAA Tournament at-large berth, so whoever loses may be done for the year.

### RANKINGS

| TEAM              | PWR | USAT | USCHO |
|-------------------|-----|------|-------|
| Boston College    | 1   | 5    | 5     |
| Boston University | 8   | 8    | 9     |
| New Hampshire     | 13  | 10   | 10    |
| Maine             | 14  | 12   | 12    |
| UMass Lowell      | 16  | 14   | 15    |
| Northeastern      | 21  | –    | –     |

### QUARTERFINAL SCHEDULE

#### Thursday, March 10

#6 Northeastern at #3 UNH (Game 1)

#### Friday, March 11

#7 Providence at #2 BU (Game 1) (NESN)

#8 Massachusetts at #1 BC (Game 1)

#5 UMass Lowell at #4 Maine (Game 1)

#6 Northeastern at #3 UNH (Game 2)

#### Saturday, March 12

#7 Providence at #2 BU. (Game 2)

#8 Massachusetts at #1 BC (Game 2)

#5 UML at #4 Maine (Game 2) (WABI)

#6 Northeastern at #3 UNH (Game 3) \*

#### Sunday, March 13

#7 Providence at #2 BU (Game 3) \*

#8 Massachusetts at #1 BC (Game 3) \*

#5 UMass Lowell at #4 Maine (Game 3) \*

\* if necessary

All games at 7pm



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 Episode No. 5 features Hockey East referee John Gravallese!

## HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

| Seed/Team              | GP | W  | L  | T | Pts | Overall | HE Offense | HE Defense |
|------------------------|----|----|----|---|-----|---------|------------|------------|
| 1. Boston College      | 24 | 14 | 3  | 7 | 35  | 21-6-7  | 3.25 GPG   | 1.96 GAPG  |
| 2. Boston University * | 24 | 15 | 5  | 4 | 34  | 21-11-4 | 3.17 GPG   | 2.25 GAPG  |
| 3. New Hampshire       | 24 | 15 | 5  | 4 | 34  | 22-9-5  | 3.75 GPG   | 2.46 GAPG  |
| 4. Maine               | 24 | 13 | 5  | 5 | 31  | 18-11-7 | 3.12 GPG   | 1.96 GAPG  |
| 5. UMass Lowell        | 24 | 11 | 10 | 3 | 25  | 20-10-4 | 3.17 GPG   | 2.75 GAPG  |
| 6. Northeastern        | 24 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 24  | 15-16-5 | 2.75 GPG   | 2.42 GAPG  |
| 7. Providence          | 24 | 6  | 14 | 4 | 16  | 11-19-4 | 2.25 GPG   | 3.04 GAPG  |
| 8. Massachusetts       | 24 | 6  | 16 | 2 | 14  | 13-21-2 | 2.00 GPG   | 4.00 GAPG  |
| 9. Merrimack           | 24 | 1  | 22 | 1 | 3   | 8-26-2  | 1.71 GPG   | 4.33 GAPG  |

\* – BU awarded the No. 2 seed based on owning the tiebreaker advantage over UNH