



Weekend Preview

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10-TEAM LEAGUE ENTERS HIGH GEAR THIS WEEKEND

Five league games on each night signals opening of drive for playoffs

When Hockey East accepted the University of Vermont as its 10th member, what will occur for the first time ever this coming weekend was part of the motivation. All 10 teams will be involved in league play on both Friday and Saturday nights, elevating the significance of each and every contest.

Vermont, the highest ranked team in Hockey East right now at No. 4 in the country, will play two games against a UNH squad that has just two wins in its last eight games and three losses already this season at the once-formidable Whittemore Center. Friday's opener is the first of NESN's *Friday Night Ice* broadcasts this year, all of which will be preceded by the latest episode of *Inside Hockey East*, about to launch its second season. (See related release for more details.)

Despite their recent struggles, the Wildcats boast the most dominating trio in the league in juniors Brett Hemingway, Jacob Micflikier and Daniel Winnik, who have combined for 72 points in just 19 games this season. UNH

has averaged nearly 37 shots per game while Vermont has allowed an average of only 20 shots per game, so the battle line has been drawn. UNH launched 30 shots on goal in their first meeting as Hockey East rivals, a 3-3 tie on Dec. 2 in what evolved into a special teams war. Both teams scored twice on the power play and UVM added another goal while short-handed. Micflikier was the top player in the game with a goal and two assists.

The other single-site series this weekend will be UMass Lowell at Maine, reigniting a hot rivalry recently dominated by Maine. The Black Bears have seven straight wins against the River Hawks, outscoring them 37-12 in that span, and own a 26-2-2 record in the last 30 meetings. The first meeting of this season continued the trend, as Maine skated away with a lopsided 9-2 win on Nov. 11.

Lowell has strung together a few strong performances recently, but still finds itself in an unexpected battle to qualify for the Hockey East playoffs. Many reckoned Lowell would be the dark horse team of this season, but instead it's Providence College, who will have its share of first place tested this weekend with a Friday game at BU followed by a home game against BC. The Eagles and Friars are tied atop the Hockey East standings, and both are coming off big holiday tournament victories. The two hottest forwards in the league will face off in Saturday's match as PC's Torry Gajda

goes head-to-head against BC's Chris Collins. Each has put up 12 points in his last six games.

BC and BU will both also face Northeastern this weekend. At 1-7-2 in league play this season, the Huskies are growing desperate for wins. Merrimack and Massachusetts are in the same situation, and this weekend's home-and-home series may give one team a big advantage when the music stops at season's end. With another team in Hockey East this year, and still only eight playoff chairs, the chance of missing the postseason has multiplied for every team, making every regular season game much more important.

In alumni news, former UNH goaltender Ty Conklin and former Providence sniper Fernando Pisani teamed up Tuesday to lead the Edmonton Oilers to a 5-0 win over the Chicago Blackhawks. Conklin made 23 saves for his 2nd career shutout and Pisani scored twice, giving him 15 points in his last 14 games.

RANKINGS

Team	USAT	USCHO
Vermont	4	4
Boston College	6	5
Maine	9	10
Providence	12	13
New Hampshire	ORV	15
Boston University	-	20

ORV – others receiving votes

WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Friday, January 6

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

Saturday, January 7

Vermont at UNH (NHPTV / ESPNU) *
 Boston College at Providence *
 Boston University at Northeastern (CN8) *
 UMass Lowell at Maine (WABI / WPFO) *
 Massachusetts at Merrimack *

* Hockey East game

Games start at 7pm EST unless indicated.

HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	HE Offense	HE Defense
Boston College	11	8	2	1	17	10-4-2	3.00 GPG	1.73 GAPG
Providence	11	8	2	1	17	11-6-1	3.18 GPG	1.82 GAPG
New Hampshire	12	7	3	2	16	9-7-3	3.17 GPG	2.33 GAPG
Vermont	9	5	3	1	11	13-4-1	3.11 GPG	2.11 GAPG
Boston University	11	5	5	1	11	7-7-2	2.82 GPG	2.73 GAPG
Maine	9	5	4	0	10	12-6-0	3.22 GPG	2.00 GAPG
Massachusetts	10	3	7	0	6	7-11-0	1.60 GPG	3.20 GAPG
UMass Lowell	10	3	7	0	6	6-11-0	2.40 GPG	3.90 GAPG
Northeastern	11	1	6	4	6	1-11-4	2.36 GPG	3.36 GAPG
Merrimack	10	1	7	2	4	4-11-2	1.40 GPG	3.20 GAPG