



Weekend Preview

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NORTHERN RIVALRY RENEWED FOR MAINE AND VERMONT BC, BU on collision course for Beanpot, Hockey East titles

Boston College and Boston University followed an old script on Monday, defeating Northeastern and Harvard, respectively, to set up another head-to-head tilt in the Beanpot championship game. The way they're both playing, Monday's contest could be the first of two title games they play at the TD Banknorth Garden this year, with the other, the Hockey East championship, slated for March 18.

There's plenty of work to be done before then, however, starting with tomorrow's games. Last weekend, UMass killed one giant by defeating Boston College, 3-2. The Minutemen will have a crack at the other on Friday, visiting Boston University, winner of nine straight games. This will be the rubber match of this year's series – UMass defeated BU 4-2 early in the season before the Terriers struck back with a 3-1 win just two weeks ago. The Minutemen have never won a regular

season series against the Terriers, and have tied it (1-1-1) just once.

Boston College faces an even bigger challenge at Providence. The third-place Friars tied BC three times last season, but have lost both meetings this year. With pride and home ice on the line, expect the Friars to bring their best game against the BC Eagles on Friday night. They'll use whatever is left over against UMass on Saturday.

Home ice hopes will weigh heavy at Vermont this weekend, as the Catamounts welcome the University of Maine in what promises to be the best new rivalry in Hockey East. The Catamounts trail the Black Bears by just one point in the Hockey East standings, and are just four points from third. The third and fourth place finishers are granted home ice advantage in the Hockey East quarterfinals, while fifth and sixth must play on the road. The way things are shaking up, these two teams (plus UNH and Providence) will be fighting for those home ice spots against each other.

UNH has a chance to get some breathing room via a home-and-home series vs. 10th-place Merrimack. But remember, it was earlier this season that the Warriors thwarted the Wildcats with a 1-0 win at home. Merrimack thus takes a 1-0 advantage into the season series this weekend, an all-time series that was totally dominated by UNH from 1996 to late 2003, a 25-0-4 stretch in favor of the 'Cats.

In the only other game of the weekend, Northeastern will host UMass Lowell in a game that will be televised live by NESN as part of its Friday Night Ice package. The 2006 Friday Night Ice schedule has already produced three fantastic one-goal games as the players seem especially ratcheted up for the regional television coverage. Last week's 3-2 win for UMass over BC may end up being the most memorable.

A handful of Hockey East alums are set to depart for Torino, Italy, next week to lead Team USA at the 2006 Winter Olympics. Making his first Olympic trip, former BU wunderkind Rick DiPietro is emerging as a future Team USA mainstay in goal. A decade before DiPietro saw the ice at BU's Walter Brown Arena, Team USA teammate Keith Tkachuk was there lighting up opposing goaltenders on a regular basis. He's doing that again this season in the NHL, as his injuries have permitted, with 10 goals and 21 points in just 14 games played. Fellow USAer Brian Gionta has 31 goals.

RESULTS / SCHEDULE

Monday, February 6

Beanpot Tournament at Boston, MA
 Boston College 5, Northeastern 2
 Boston University 5, Harvard 3

Friday, February 10

UMass Lowell at Northeastern (NESN) *
 Providence at Boston College *
 Massachusetts at Boston University *
 Merrimack at New Hampshire *
 Maine at Vermont (CSTV - 8pm) *

Saturday, February 11

Massachusetts at Providence *
 New Hampshire at Merrimack *
 Maine at Vermont *

Monday, February 13

Beanpot Tournament
 Northeastern vs. Harvard (5pm)
 Boston College vs. Boston U. (8pm - NESN)

* Hockey East game

Games start at 7pm EST unless indicated

RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	USAT	USCHO
Boston University	4	6	6
Boston College	6	3	5
Providence	11	14	13
New Hampshire	19	15	16
Maine	20	12	14
Vermont	23	10	12

HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	HE Offense	HE Defense
Boston College	20	15	4	1	31	18-6-2	3.10 GPG	1.70 GAPG
Boston University	20	13	6	1	27	16-8-2	3.30 GPG	2.45 GAPG
Providence	19	11	6	2	24	14-10-2	3.00 GPG	2.21 GAPG
New Hampshire	19	10	6	3	23	14-10-4	3.00 GPG	2.47 GAPG
Maine	19	11	8	0	22	18-10-0	3.47 GPG	2.42 GAPG
Vermont	19	9	7	3	21	17-8-3	2.63 GPG	2.05 GAPG
Massachusetts	19	8	11	0	16	11-15-0	2.26 GPG	2.95 GAPG
UMass Lowell	20	7	12	1	15	10-16-1	2.45 GPG	3.65 GAPG
Northeastern	20	1	13	6	8	1-19-6	1.90 GPG	3.25 GAPG
Merrimack	19	2	14	3	7	5-18-3	1.53 GPG	3.47 GAPG