



# Weekend Preview

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## ANOTHER WILD FINISH ON TAP FOR HOCKEY EAST

### *First and fifth separated by five points – no team has clinched home ice*

Midway through the year, it looked as though Boston College was going to run away with the regular season title and that only the middle seedings would be in question. But with only four games remaining for all 10 Hockey East squads, BC is just two points ahead of BU and five points ahead of fourth-place UNH and Providence. There are 19 head-to-head tiebreaker scenarios still in play, not to mention countless other three-way and four-way possibilities.

That sets up another fantastic finish for the league, the norm over the past several seasons. Last year, the top four teams were separated by four points entering the final weekend. The year before, BU converted an overtime goal at UNH in the final game of the regular season to squeak into the playoffs ahead of Northeastern. In 2002-03, tiebreakers were needed to settle the top seed, the key 4th seed

(final home ice berth), and the 8th seed (the final playoff berth). Finishing with a flair is nothing new to Hockey East.

BC can simplify the equation considerably with a win tonight vs. UMass Lowell, which would clinch home ice for the Eagles. A tie muddies the picture somewhat with so many tiebreakers in play, while a River Hawk victory puts BC's regular season title hopes in even greater jeopardy as a streaking BU has come up strong from behind.

Though toppled off their 11-game win streak perch last weekend, the Terriers are focusing on finishing well. They triumphed at UNH last Saturday and will play three of their final four games on the road. A good showing at Vermont this weekend could put them in line for their first regular season title since 1999-2000. But Vermont has other plans. With the widest swing of possibilities for any Hockey East team, the Catamounts can still finish as high as second or as low as eighth in the final standings. At the very least, they are already assured of a playoff spot in their first season in Hockey East.

The most vital series of the weekend, however, will involve Providence and UNH. Tied for fourth, both teams are eyeing a finish there or higher, which would give them a home ice berth in the Hockey East quarterfinals. They could easily end up playing one another in the

first round, at either one of those sites. Providence won the first meeting of the season and thus holds the advantage, for now. The Friars finish their season with a home-and-home series vs. Merrimack, while UNH plays home-and-home vs. first-place Boston College.

UNH and Providence both still have an outside chance to win the regular season crown, but the dark horse to keep an eye on is Maine. The Black Bears close with two games at Merrimack this weekend, and two home games vs. UMass next. If they were to sweep those final four games, the bar for BC or BU to beat would be set at 37 points.

Clinging to hopes for a potential playoff spot, the NU Huskies need at least three points in a home-and-home series vs. UMass this weekend to stay alive. Conversely, the Minutemen can lock up their postseason berth with a single point vs. Northeastern.

### RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	USAT	USCHO
Boston University	4	4	4
Maine	10	7	8
Boston College	11	8	9
Providence	17	ORV	17
New Hampshire	19	14	14
Vermont	23	15	16

ORV – others receiving votes

### WEEKEND SCHEDULE

#### Thursday, February 23

UMass Lowell at Boston College (NESN) \*

#### Friday, February 24

Boston University at Vermont (Adelphia) \*

Maine at Merrimack \*

Massachusetts at Northeastern \*

New Hampshire at Providence (CoxSports) \*

#### Saturday, February 25

Boston College at UMass Lowell \*

Boston University at Vermont (Adelphia) \*

Maine at Merrimack (ESPNU - tape delay) \*

Northeastern at Massachusetts \*

Providence at New Hampshire (NHPTV) \*

\* Hockey East game

Games start at 7pm EST unless indicated

### HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	Remaining Games
Boston College ^	23	16	6	1	33	19-9-2	UML, at UML, UNH, at UNH
Boston University ^	23	15	7	1	31	19-9-2	at UVM (2), at NU, NU
Maine ^	23	14	8	1	29	21-10-1	at MC (2), UMass (2)
New Hampshire ^	23	12	7	4	28	16-11-5	at PC, PC, at BC, BC
Providence ^	23	13	8	2	28	16-12-2	UNH, at UNH, at MC, MC
Vermont ^	23	10	9	4	24	18-10-4	BU (2), at UML (2)
Massachusetts	23	9	14	0	18	12-18-0	at NU, NU, at Maine (2)
UMass Lowell	23	8	13	2	18	11-17-2	at BC, BC, UVM (2)
Northeastern	23	3	14	6	12	3-21-6	UMass, at UMass, BU, at BU
Merrimack	23	2	16	5	9	5-20-5	Maine (2), PC, at PC

^ clinched playoff berth



# Playoff Picture

as of February 23, 2006

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## HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

<u>Team (Possible Seed)</u>	<u>GP</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pts (Pos)</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Remaining Opponents</u>
Boston College (1-5) ^	23	16	6	1	33 (41)	19-9-2	UML, at UML, UNH, at UNH
Boston University (1-6) ^	23	15	7	1	31 (39)	19-9-2	at UVM (2), at NU, NU
Maine (1-6) ^	23	14	8	1	29 (37)	21-10-1	at MC (2), UMass (2)
New Hampshire (1-6) ^	23	12	7	4	28 (36)	16-11-5	at PC, PC, at BC, BC
Providence (1-6) ^	23	13	8	2	28 (36)	16-12-2	UNH, at UNH, at MC, MC
Vermont (2-8) ^	23	10	9	4	24 (32)	18-10-4	BU (2), at UML (2)
Massachusetts (6-8)	23	9	14	0	18 (26)	12-18-0	at NU, NU, at Maine (2)
UMass Lowell (6-8)	23	8	13	2	18 (26)	11-17-2	at BC, BC, UVM (2)
Northeastern (7-8)	23	3	14	6	12 (20)	3-21-6	UMass, at UMass, BU, at BU
Merrimack	23	2	16	5	9 (17)	5-20-5	Maine (2), PC, at PC

^ clinched playoff berth

### Tiebreakers:

If two teams finish with the same number of points in the standings, the following tiebreakers will be used, in this order, to determine seeding:

1. Head-to-head results between the tied teams
2. Number of wins in conference play
3. Best record against the first-place team(s), then the second-place team(s), then the third-place team(s), and so on
4. Coin flip

If more than two teams finish in a tie, the same criteria will be applied to reduce the number of teams tied, and then the process will commence again.

### Potential tiebreaker scenarios:

- BU wins tiebreaker over BC, 2-1
- Maine wins tiebreaker over BC, 3-0
- BC leads tiebreaker vs. UNH, 1-0  
They have a home-and-home series on the final weekend.
- BC wins tiebreaker vs. PC, 3-0
- BU wins tiebreaker vs. Maine, 3-0
- UNH wins tiebreaker vs. BU, 2-1
- PC wins tiebreaker vs. BU, 2-0-1
- BU leads tiebreaker vs. UVM, 1-0  
They have a series at UVM next weekend.
- UNH wins tiebreaker vs. Maine, 2-1
- PC wins tiebreaker vs. Maine, 2-1
- Maine-Vermont series tied, 1-1-1
- PC leads tiebreaker vs. UNH, 1-0  
They have a home-and-home series next weekend.
- UNH wins tiebreaker vs. UVM, 1-0-2
- UVM wins tiebreaker vs. PC, 2-0-1
- UMass wins tiebreaker vs. UVM, 2-1
- UVM leads tiebreaker vs. UML, 1-0  
They have a series at Lowell on the final weekend.
- UML wins tiebreaker vs. UMass, 2-1
- NU leads tiebreaker vs. UMass, 1-0  
They have a home-and-home series on the final weekend.
- NU-UML series tied, 1-1-1

Three-way ties and four-way ties TBD.