



Weekend Preview

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BU ENTERS NCAA TOURNAMENT AS NO. 1 IN BOTH POLLS BC, Maine and UNH have work cut out against higher seeded squads

One thing is for sure: it won't be an All-WCHA Frozen Four again, but nor will it be an all-Hockey East Frozen Four. The four Hockey East teams chosen for the NCAA Tournament are tightly grouped in the East and Northeast Regionals. The WCHA's four teams remained in their geographic region as well, in the West and Midwest Regionals. Crossovers between the country's two strongest conferences will have to wait until the Frozen Four, taking place this year in Milwaukee.

But first, both Hockey East and the WCHA will have to advance past the best that the other conferences have to offer, notably the strong collection of four teams advancing from the

CCHA ranks. The primary battleground will be the Northeast Regional in Worcester, where Hockey East's two finalists, Boston College and Boston University, will take on Miami and Nebraska-Omaha, respectively, in the first round on Friday. The winners face-off in Saturday night's finale with a ticket to the Frozen Four on the line.

Boston University enters the tournament as the hottest team in the nation, with an 18-1-2 record over its last 21 games. Other than Atlantic Hockey's Holy Cross, BU was the only No. 1 seed in any conference tournament that managed to win the title. Consequently, the Terriers have taken over the top ranking in both the USCHO and USA Today polls and are considered the favorite by some to win the NCAA Tournament. Should they pull it off, it would be their fifth all-time and first since 1995. It would also be the fifth for Hockey East and first since BC won it in 2001.

Boston College was the only other Hockey East team to achieve a No. 1 national ranking this season, stepping up briefly to the honor in late-January before surrendering it following a loss vs. BU. Since then, the Eagles have posted only a 7-7-1 record, but three of those wins came in the postseason. It will be a tough draw against Miami in the first round, as the Red Hawks have the nation's top-ranked defense, allowing only 1.95 goals-per-game.

At the East Regional in Albany, Harvard fans

are most likely displeased at drawing Maine in the first round once again. The Crimson has lost four straight first round NCAA matches to Hockey East teams, twice to nemesis Maine. Whichever team survives that contest moves on to face the winner of the Michigan State vs. UNH semifinal. Michigan State has a rich history vs. Hockey East in the NCAA Tournament, but although it has had repeated successful showings vs. Maine (4-0 all-time), it's been only frustration vs. first round opponent UNH (0-3 all-time). UNH swept the Spartans in the 1982 NCAA quarterfinals and ended their season again in the 1999 semifinal.

Hockey East managed to avoid what is arguably the most challenging regional, the West Regional in Grand Forks, N.D. Holy Cross enters as possibly the Atlantic's best-ever entry but has a formidable draw in No. 2 overall seed Minnesota. The other West semi features North Dakota (on home ice) and Michigan, the most accomplished program in NCAA history.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Friday, March 24

Northeast Regional at Worcester, MA
Boston Univ. vs. Nebraska-Omaha (4pm) *
Boston College vs. Miami (7pm) *
West Regional at Grand Forks, ND
 Minnesota vs. Holy Cross (6:30pm)
 North Dakota vs. Michigan (9:30pm)

Saturday, March 25

East Regional at Albany, NY
UNH vs. Michigan State (12noon) *
Maine vs. Harvard (WABI - 3pm) *
Midwest Regional at Green Bay, WI
 Wisconsin vs. Bemidji State (2:30pm)
 Cornell vs. Colorado College (5:30pm)
Northeast Regional Final (6pm) *
West Regional Final (9pm) *

Sunday, March 26

East Regional Final (2pm) *
Midwest Regional Final (5pm) *

Thursday, April 6

NCAA Semifinals at Milwaukee, WI (3/8pm)
 Northeast winner vs. West winner
 East winner vs. Midwest winner

Saturday, April 8

2006 NCAA Championship Game (7pm)

All times Eastern
 * live on CN8

RANKINGS

TEAM	PWR	USAT	USCHO
Boston University	3	1	1
Boston College	10	8	9
Maine	12	10	10
New Hampshire	12	11	13
Providence	24	-	ORV
Vermont	26	-	ORV

ORV – others receiving votes

HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	GF (Avg.)	GA (Avg.)	Overall
1. Boston University	27	17	7	3	37	89 (3.40)	67 (2.48)	25-9-4
2. Boston College	27	17	8	2	36	86 (3.19)	58 (2.15)	23-12-3
Maine	27	17	8	2	36	93 (3.44)	60 (2.22)	26-11-2
4. New Hampshire	27	14	7	6	34	85 (3.15)	63 (2.33)	20-12-7
5. Providence	27	14	10	3	31	78 (2.89)	67 (2.48)	17-16-3
6. Vermont	27	10	11	6	26	65 (2.41)	62 (2.30)	18-14-6
7. UMass Lowell	27	11	14	2	24	74 (2.74)	96 (3.56)	14-20-2
8. Massachusetts	27	10	15	2	22	60 (2.22)	77 (2.85)	13-21-2
9. Northeastern	27	3	17	7	13	57 (2.11)	88 (3.26)	3-24-7
10. Merrimack	27	3	19	5	11	43 (1.59)	92 (3.41)	6-23-5