



Weekend Preview

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MAINE, GOPHERS MEET IN CLASSIC EARLY CLASH Vermont heats up Ice Breaker; Six HE squads open with exhibitions

No one can accuse Maine Coach Tim Whitehead and his 11th-ranked Black Bears of ducking an early season challenge. The men from Orono kick off the 2006-07 hockey season by taking on the third-ranked Minnesota Golden Gophers in the US Hockey Hall of Fame Game in St. Paul, MN. Despite the loss of current Boston Bruin Phil Kessel, Minnesota has firepower, and should test Maine's super sophomore goalie, Ben Bishop (Des Peres, MO), and Maine's traditionally solid defense, led by senior rearguard Mike Lundin (Apple Valley, MN). Still, Maine can put the puck in the net as well. Last year, the Black Bears led Hockey East in scoring, and 12 letterman return up front, including senior captain Michel Léveillé (Levis, QC).

The weekend also poses a hefty challenge to the Vermont Catamounts, who open the season at the annual Ice Breaker Invitational against perennial ECACHL powerhouse Colgate. The 14th-ranked Raiders, who are again expected to battle for ECAC supremacy, will be a familiar foe for Vermont. The Catamounts, one year removed from the ECAC, hope to build on their inaugural Hockey East campaign, when they went 10-11-6 (18-14-6 overall),

good for sixth place in the league. Coach Kevin Sneddon will rely heavily on a defense that only lost a single senior, and stalwart netminder Joe Fallon (Bemidji, MN). At forward, the Catamounts are young but fast, and return seven of their Top Ten snipers, including leading scorer Torrey Mitchell (Greenfield Park, QC), Dean Strong (Mississauga, ON), and homegrown Peter Lenex (Shelburne, VT).

Vermont has the added incentive of knowing that five Hockey East squads have won the Ice Breaker in its 10-year history – Boston College (1998, 2003), New Hampshire (2000, 2004), and Boston University (2002). If the Catamounts beat Colgate, they'll take on the winner of Friday's Denver/Miami match.

In more conventional early season fare, six Hockey East teams will face Canadian squads in a series of exhibitions. On Friday, New Brunswick takes on Massachusetts, St. Thomas faces off against Providence, and St. Francis Xavier will be at UMass Lowell. The three Canadian teams are back in action on Saturday, with St. Thomas matching up with Boston College, New Brunswick visiting Boston University, and St. Francis Xavier at New Hampshire.

Northeastern kicks off its regular season on Tuesday, Oct. 10, against Hockey East rival Boston College, which enters the season ranked not only No. 1 in the league's Coaches' Poll, but in the top spot in the major college polls as well. Meanwhile, the Merrimack Warriors have an extra week to warm up before trekking across the continent for their season opener against Alaska-Anchorage in the Nye Frontier Classic on Friday, Oct. 13.

HOCKEY EAST IN THE POLLS

Team	USAT	USCHO
Boston College	1	1
Boston University	5	4
New Hampshire	10	10
Maine	11	11
Providence	ORV	ORV
Vermont	ORV	ORV
Massachusetts	-	ORV
UMass Lowell	-	ORV

ORV – Others Receiving Votes

2005-06 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)	26-10-4
2. Boston College	27	17	8	2	36	86 (3.19)	58 (2.15)	26-13-3
Maine	27	17	8	2	36	93 (3.44)	60 (2.22)	28-12-2
4. New Hampshire	27	14	7	6	34	85 (3.15)	63 (2.33)	20-13-7
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

UPCOMING GAMES

Friday, October 6

Vermont vs. Colgate (4:30pm) #
 Maine at Minnesota (8pm)
 New Brunswick at Massachusetts (ex.)
 St. Thomas at Providence (ex.)
 St. Francis Xavier at UMass Lowell (ex.)

Saturday, October 7

Vermont vs. Denver/Miami (4/7pm) #
 St. Thomas at Boston College (ex.)
 New Brunswick at Boston University (ex.)
 St. Francis Xavier at New Hampshire (ex.)

Tuesday, October 10

Northeastern at Boston College *

* Hockey East game

Ice Breaker Tournament at Miami
 Games start at 7pm unless indicated.
 All game times are Eastern Time.