



Weekend Preview

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DECEMBER 7, 2006

RELEASE #19

WARRIORS BLANK MINUTEMEN; UNH CLIPS RIVER HAWKS *UMass-BC square off twice; Maine, PC visit Boston; UVM battles U-18*

The Merrimack Warriors scored a key win at home on Tuesday, while the UNH Wildcats gave themselves a comfortable margin atop Hockey East with two points earned in a hard-fought victory against UMass Lowell on Wednesday, setting the stage for an exciting weekend.

Merrimack sophomore Patrick Watson (Waltham, MA) turned in a brilliant performance Tuesday, kicking out 37 UMass shots, many point blank, to record his first career shutout, 3-0, and sparking the Warriors to their second Hockey East win on the season. UMass Coach Don "Toot" Cahoon's Minutemen attacked relentlessly, outshooting the Warriors by nearly a 2-1 margin, but they couldn't solve Watson. MC freshman Justin Bonitatibus (Arlington, MA) got the game-winner with the first goal of his career in the first period, and captain Ryan Sullivan (Toronto, ON) added an insurance marker when he finished off a post-penalty breakaway in the second stanza. The win was Merrimack's first home victory since a 1-0 triumph over UNH on Nov. 29, 2005 – a span of 371 days and 37 games. It was also the squad's first shutout win since downing the Wildcats.

In Lowell on Wednesday, UNH forward Matt Fornataro (Calgary, AB) tallied twice, including the game-winner, as the Wildcats edged the River Hawks in a seesaw battle at the Tsongas Arena. Lowell battled back to overcome a 2-0 deficit with a pair of second-period goals, but UNH struck back in the third, sealing the win. UNH's Kevin Regan (South Boston, MA) was again solid in the nets, recording 39 saves.

This weekend, UMass is back in action with a cross-state, home-and-home series against

Boston College, while Providence and Maine both visit Boston, UNH hosts St. Lawrence, and Vermont tackles the US U-18 squad in an exhibition tilt. On Friday, the Minutemen aim to play with the same enthusiasm as the MC game but with better results when they take on the Eagles in Amherst. The next night, the venue changes but the combatants stay the same, as UMass and BC face off again in Boston.

Coach Tim Army's Providence Friars will also be looking to increase their goal production (after getting blanked by Maine, 3-0, last Friday) when they skate against Boston University on Friday. The Terriers lost a heartbreaker last Saturday to Boston College, 1-0, as BC goalie Cory Schneider outdueled BU's John Curry. Conversely, the third-ranked Black Bears hope to maintain the momentum gained in their shut-out win over the Friars and a tight 3-2 overtime victory against New Brunswick in exhibition action on Wednesday. That could prove an uphill task if NU's Brad Thiessen (Aldergrove, BC), the reigning Hockey East Player of the Week, is still on top of his game after stopping 52 of 53 shots in back-to-back wins against Merrimack last weekend. The two squads meet on Saturday at Matthews Arena.

Away from Boston, St. Lawrence travels from Canton, NY, to battle league-leading UNH in Durham on Friday. Then, on Sunday, the Saints will rub elbows with the River Hawks at Tsongas Arena in Lowell. In exhibition action on Saturday, the Catamounts of UVM welcome the U-18 National Team to Gutterson Fieldhouse.

In other news, BC sophomore forward Nathan Gerbe (Oxford, MI) was selected to the 2007

U.S. National Junior Team and will compete at the World Junior Championships from Dec. 26, 2006 to Jan. 5, 2007, in Leksand and Mora, Sweden. Meanwhile, BC junior forward Dan Bertram (Calgary, AB) is one of 38 players invited to participate in Canada's National Junior Selection Camp from Dec. 10-15.

Last, here's another tidbit from our Intriguing Statistics Department, unearthed by UNH play-by-play announcer Dan Parkhurst. The league's leading scorer, Trevor Smith (North Vancouver, BC) of UNH, actually has fewer power play points than his team's starting goalie, Kevin Regan. Through Wednesday, Smith was still looking for his first power play point of the season, while Regan registered an assist on a PP goal against Maine on Nov. 12.

RECENT RESULTS

Friday, December 1

at Maine 3, Providence 0 *
 Vermont 2, at UMass Lowell 1 *
 at Northeastern 4, Merrimack 1 * #
 Boston U. at Boston College - postponed *
 at Massachusetts 6, Niagara 2

Saturday, December 2

Boston College 1, at Boston University 0 *
 Northeastern 2, at Merrimack 0 *

Sunday, December 3

at New Hampshire 4, Vermont 1 *

Tuesday, December 5

at Merrimack 3, Massachusetts 0 *

Wednesday, December 6

New Hampshire 4, at UMass Lowell 2 *
 at Maine 3, New Brunswick 2 OT (exh.)

UPCOMING GAMES

Friday, December 8

Boston College at Massachusetts *
 Providence at Boston University *
 St. Lawrence at New Hampshire (NHPTV)

Saturday, December 9

Massachusetts at Boston College *
 Maine at Northeastern *
 U.S. Under-18 Team at Vermont (exh.) #

Sunday, December 10

St. Lawrence at UMass Lowell (3pm)

* Hockey East game

Hannaford/Kraft Kids' Club event
 Games start at 7pm EST unless indicated

2006-07 HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	Goals	Goals Against
New Hampshire	12	10	1	1	21	12-2-1	68	31
Vermont	9	6	2	1	13	9-5-1	39	25
Boston College	8	5	2	1	11	8-4-1	36	33
Boston University	10	3	3	4	10	5-3-5	28	24
Maine	8	4	3	1	9	9-3-1	49	28
Massachusetts	8	4	3	1	9	7-4-2	38	30
Providence	10	3	6	1	7	4-10-1	31	48
UMass Lowell	10	2	6	2	6	3-8-3	32	43
Northeastern	11	2	7	2	6	4-8-2	36	39
Merrimack	10	2	8	0	4	2-12-1	18	53