

**WOMEN'S HOCKEY EAST SEASON OPENING
COACHES MEDIA TELECONFERENCE
(SEPT. 20, 2012)**

CONNECTICUT HEAD COACH HEATHER LINSTAD

Opening Statement:

“This is the first year where I could say, we’ll probably be one of the youngest teams in the conference, but I’m very excited about the young kids that have come in. We’ve changed our roster a little bit with a couple of transfers from Niagara. We’ve added nine new kids to the lineup, which will make for a good change I think; boost our offense. I’m also excited for the two goalies that we have. Elaine Chuli is a freshman who comes from playing with the Under-18 in Canada and Sarah Moses is the goalie who transferred from Niagara. In looking at her stats, she did pretty well against conference opponents in Hockey East last year. Usually, one of our fortes is goaltending here at UConn so I think we’ll be fine in the net. I do think that we have three very good seniors that are going to lead the show in Casey Knajdek, Kelly Horan and Maude Blain. I think the older kids will lead the young kids, but I think we’ve got a renewed, fresh energy that will do us well in conference and out of conference.”

How challenging will it be to start the season with seven road games?

“I think [the road schedule] is what we were looking for so that we’re built for adversity and going on the road. I hope that kids find their focus and understand what it is going to take to have a successful season. Obviously, I hope it builds team chemistry. You’re on the road together and get to know each other. I’m just hoping that we can get into a rhythm on the road and know that it’s hockey time and be focused on the little things that they have to do. That’s going to be a challenge, but we’ll be ready for it.”

Which players are you looking for to step up in their roles this season?

“I thought the biggest thing for us last year was that we just didn’t have the leadership that we really needed. I really do believe that we’ve got a good core group in our sophomores. Emily Snodgrass led the team [in scoring], but I think a kid like Sarah MacDonnell, who also played for the U-18 in Canada, she’s got some offensive punch. Caitlin Hewes, who’s on defense, Rachel Farrell and the sophomore group took it serious what they had to do in the spring and what they wanted to do in the summer and I think that they’ve come in with the attitude of making sure that they have in impact.”

What newcomers do you expect to have an impact?

“Elaine Chuli is going to be the freshman goalie along with Sarah Moses. You have to count on your goaltending to be solid, but we’ve also got kids like Michela Cava, who has played at a high level, coming in as a freshman. Leah Burress I think will add the depth that we’re looking for. When I look at all of the young kids, I think it is early to tell, but I think that they will develop very quickly. I think they have the right attitude and I think that I’ve already seen the chemistry and focus in our locker room has really changed for this season.”

What are your thoughts on the expanded playoff format?

“All of the coaches agree that our league has gotten so competitive that you can’t really pick on the seventh and eighth teams to be [left] at home. I think everybody can compete; make it very challenging coming down the stretch. The quarterfinals are going to really be the highlight of playing that one game series and the challenges that our student-athletes will face. I think it’s a great compliment to where we’ve taken Hockey East and the type of league we have and certainly teams like Boston College and BU representing us in the Frozen Four really speaks volumes for the league. Kudos to everybody that got to Hyannis last year. It’s a great atmosphere and it does make for a more fun tournament atmosphere for our student-athletes and that’s what it’s about. We want our student-athletes to play in front of the big crowds and know how good they are and that they’re elite athletes and fans should be coming out to see them play.”