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Frozen Four Preview

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BC, MAINE TO BATTLE FOR NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BID

Title game will feature a Hockey East team for the eighth straight year

For a brief time, it looked as though Hockey East might not have a single team in the Frozen Four for the first time since 1992. That would have been a tragedy considering the event is taking place at the FleetCenter, home to the Hockey East tournament since the building's debut in 1995.

As it turns out, both of Hockey East's No. 1 seeds in the NCAA tournament (Boston College and Maine) were able to successfully advance past intense competition at the NCAA regionals, giving Hockey East two Frozen Four teams for the ninth time in the last 15 seasons. Hockey East tourney champ Maine launched an incredible third-period comeback in the East Regional opener vs. Harvard and advanced to the Frozen Four with an overtime win over Wisconsin. BC dispatched a feisty Niagara team to open the Northeast Regional and overcame Michigan in a magnificent finale, a 3-2 OT win for the Eagles.

Now, the two titans of the 2003-04 Hockey East season will face off with everything on the line in the Frozen Four's prime time semifinal on Thursday night. The winner of that match moves on to face the winner of the Denver-Duluth matinee in Saturday's championship game. But no matter who wins, Hockey East is guaranteed to be represented in the title bout for the eighth consecutive season.

BC is seeking its second title in four seasons following a 51-year drought. Maine is also looking for title No. 3, its first coming as recently as 1993. This is Maine's fourth Frozen Four appearance in the last six years. BC returns to the Frozen Four for the first time since 2001, when the Eagles culminated a run of four straight appearances with a national championship. Maine boasts the nation's No. 1 defense (1.60 goals allowed per game) while BC ranks No. 2 (1.93), but neither squad is scared to shoot the puck. The Eagles have a palette of elite offensive talents (Ben and Patrick Eaves, Ryan Shannon, Tony Voce) while the Black Bears counter with a four-line attack led by Colin Shields and Michel Léveillé. BC dealt Maine its first loss of the season way back in November (4-1 in favor of the host Eagles) but Maine countered on the final weekend of the regular season, sweeping BC in a two-game set at Alfond Arena.

The nation's top two teams drop the puck at the FleetCenter at 6pm on Thursday. Only one will return for Saturday's culminating event.

RANKINGS

TEAM	AHCA	USCHO
Maine	1	1
Boston College	2	4
Minnesota Duluth	3	5
Denver	4	8

TEAM CATEGORY COMPARISONS

(National ranking in parentheses)

	Offense	Defense
Maine	3.31 GPG (11)	1.60 GAPG (1)
BC	3.46 GPG (7)	1.93 GAPG (2)
UMD	4.14 GPG (2)	2.68 GAPG (22)
Denver	3.40 GPG (8)	2.79 GAPG (25)

	Power Play	Penalty Kill
Maine	17.0 % (32)	84.3 % (23)
BC	18.5 % (21)	89.4 % (1)
UMD	25.7 % (2)	84.7 % (20)
Denver	19.0 % (16)	85.7 % (12)

NEW ENGLAND HOCKEY JOURNAL FROZEN FOUR RADIO SHOW

The New England Hockey Journal Radio Show will be broadcasting live from Champions Sports Bar at the Boston Copley Marriot this Saturday, April 10th, for two hours of total hockey talk from 10 am to noon. The show is hosted by Mick Colageo and Boston Globe columnist Kevin Paul Dupont. Frozen Four players, coaches and administrators are expected to be interviewed during the show. The event is open to the public. Champions Sports Bar is located on the lobby level of the Boston Copley Marriot at 110 Huntington Ave.

REGIONAL RESULTS

Friday, March 26
East Regional at Albany, NY
***MAINE** 5, Harvard 4*
Wisconsin 1, Ohio State 0 (OT)
West Regional at Colorado Springs, CO
North Dakota 3, Holy Cross 0
Denver 3, Miami 2

Saturday, March 27
Northeast Regional at Manchester, NH
***BOSTON COLLEGE** 5, Niagara 2*
*Michigan 4, **UNH** 1*
Midwest Regional at Grand Rapids, MI
Minnesota 5, Notre Dame 2
Minnesota Duluth 5, Michigan St. 0
East Regional Final
***MAINE** 2, Wisconsin 1 (OT)*
West Regional Final
Denver 1, North Dakota 0

Sunday, March 28
Midwest Regional Final
Minnesota Duluth 3, Minnesota 1
Northeast Regional Final
***BOSTON COLLEGE** 3, Michigan 2 (OT)*

FROZEN FOUR SCHEDULE

(all games at the FleetCenter)

Thursday, April 8
Semifinals
Denver vs. Minnesota Duluth (noon)
***BOSTON COLLEGE** vs. **MAINE** (6pm)*

Saturday, April 10
NCAA Championship Game (7pm)

All Times Eastern (EST)

2003-04 HOCKEY EAST STANDINGS

Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	Overall	HE offense	HE defense
Boston College	24	17	4	3	37	29-8-4	3.67 GPG	1.88 GAPG
Maine	24	17	5	2	36	32-7-3	3.21 GPG	1.75 GAPG
Massachusetts	24	12	9	3	27	18-12-6	1.96 GPG	2.62 GAPG
New Hampshire	24	10	8	6	26	20-15-6	3.42 GPG	3.17 GAPG
Providence	24	7	11	6	20	16-14-7	2.75 GPG	3.62 GAPG
UMass Lowell	24	7	12	5	19	10-23-7	2.33 GPG	2.71 GAPG
Merrimack	24	6	12	6	18	11-19-6	2.21 GPG	3.29 GAPG
Boston University	24	6	13	5	17	12-17-9	2.38 GPG	2.96 GAPG
Northeastern	24	5	13	6	16	11-16-7	2.33 GPG	3.00 GAPG

HOCKEY EAST IN THE NCAA TOURNAMENT

Seasons: 20
NCAA Bids: 59 (2.95 per year)

Championships: Four
(Maine '93, BU '95, Maine '99, BC '01)
Runners-up: 10
Total number of Frozen Four representatives: 28
First Round Byes (15 seasons): 19

Overall Record: 81-70-1
First Round: 25-18-1
Quarterfinals: 37-28
Semifinals: 14-12
Championship Game: 4-10
(Consolation Game: 1-2)

Hockey East Regular Season Champions (23 Total):
(title was shared in 1994-95, 1996-97 and 2002-03)
- Overall Record: 36-25
- 13 qualified for the Frozen Four
- Eight advanced to the championship game
- Three won the NCAA title

Hockey East Tournament Champions (20 Total):
- Overall Record: 35-19
- 15 qualified for the Frozen Four
- 10 advanced to the championship game
- Three won the NCAA title

Hockey East Combined Champions (10 Total):
(won both regular season and tournament)
- Overall Record: 20-8
- Eight qualified for the Frozen Four
- Six advanced to the championship game
- Three won the NCAA title

Regionals

• Since regional tournament play began in 1992, 18 of the 26 teams that have advanced to the Frozen Four from the eastern regional tournaments have been from Hockey East. Four have come from the ECAC, three from the WCHA, and one from the CCHA. (Nine Hockey East teams have been sent to the western egionals, with just two advancing to the Frozen Four.)

Frozen Four

• Over the last seven seasons, Hockey East has boasted 13 of the 28 Frozen Four qualifiers, easily the most of any conference. By comparison:

Hockey East: 13 of 28	WCHA: 6 of 28
CCHA: 7 of 28	ECAC: 2 of 28

• At least one Hockey East team has reached the Frozen Four in each of the last 12 seasons. By comparison:

Hockey East: 12 straight	CCHA: Last in 2003
WCHA: 4 straight	ECAC: Last in 2003

• At least two Hockey East teams have qualified for the Frozen Four in 10 of the conference's 20 seasons, dominating the competition in that span. By comparison:

Hockey East: 10 times in 20 seasons
CCHA: Four times in 20 seasons
WCHA: Three times in 20 seasons
ECAC: Has not occurred in the last 20 seasons

Championship Game

• Hockey East has been represented by at least one team in the NCAA championship game in each of the past seven years and will make it eight this year when the winner of the BC-Maine semifinal advances. That is the most consecutive appearances in the title game by any conference since the inception of Hockey East in 1984-85. The next best is the WCHA's current run of five straight, which includes this year.

• This year will mark the 11th time in 12 seasons that Hockey East places at least one team in the championship game. The WCHA and CCHA have combined for 11 appearances in the title game in that span.

• On two occasions, 1995 and 1999, the NCAA championship game has featured two Hockey East squads. No other conference has been able to make that claim since the inception of Hockey East in 1984-85.