



PRESS RELEASE

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PRESEASON POLL SHOWS RACE IS WIDE OPEN *UMass Lowell expected to make a move towards the top*

Continuing a lengthy trend, the Boston College Eagles have been picked to finish first overall in Hockey East for the sixth time in the last eight seasons. They have won a Hockey East record 10 regular season titles, including three in a row and four of the last five. But this year, they'll have plenty of competition.

The University of New Hampshire was the only one of the five teams cluttered at the top of the preseason poll that did not lose a significant underclassmen from its roster. Accordingly, four of the league's 10 coaches have the Wildcats slated to finish first. Two picked the Eagles, two picked the Maine Black Bears and two picked the Boston University Terriers. Even with its two first-place votes, BU has to settle for a predicted fifth-place finish.

No coach was confident enough in the veteran-laden UMass Lowell River Hawks to pick them to finish first, but there was enough sentiment from the group to have them slotted in a tie for third with Maine. The last time the River Hawks finished as high as third was when they wound up second in 1995-96.

Fresh off a fourth-place finish in the ECACHL last year, new entry Vermont is considered strong enough to finish sixth in Hockey East this year, but has the talent to finish even higher. The poll rounds out with Massachusetts in seventh, Providence in eighth, a new-look Northeastern team in ninth and Merrimack in 10th.

The Hockey East Association is a 10-team, Division-I college hockey conference, with offices based in Wakefield, Mass. Founded in 1983, the league has won four NCAA championships in the past 13 years. The league also sponsors an eight-team women's league which began play in 2002-03.

2005-06 Preseason Coaches' Poll

<u>Team (1st Place Votes)</u>	<u>Pts</u>
1. Boston College (2)	82
2. New Hampshire (4)	79
3. Maine (2)	71
UMass Lowell	71
5. Boston University (2)	67
6. Vermont	47
7. Massachusetts	42
8. Providence	33
9. Northeastern	30
10. Merrimack	18

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