

VERMONT HEAD COACH KEVIN SNEDDON QUOTES

General Thoughts:

“We’re obviously thrilled to be involved in the NCAA tournament in the at-large bid. I think our team certainly earned that throughout the season with a very consistent effort through a very tough schedule, both non-conference and certainly in Hockey East. I think that all coaches agree that every weekend in this conference has provided us with an unbelievable challenge and has prepared all four teams to do well in the national tournament. Obviously our playoffs in Hockey East did not go as we had planned, but our team has done a great job over the last ten days of getting rid of the past and focusing on the future and having a second opportunity to go after something we all dream of is a special opportunity that we want to make the most of.”

On Yale:

“The Yale Bulldogs – having a tremendous season. I think Keith Allain certainly has my vote for coach of the year. He has turned that program from a team that was towards the bottom of the league in the ECAC to a team that is coming off a championship weekend. So in three short years, he has done a great job with the Bulldogs. They play a great style – very up tempo, great speed in their forwards and contributions from their defensemen offensively, and Alex Richards has done a great job in net for them. I think our teams match up very well, but we also have to realize we need to be on our best defensively against a very dangerous team.”

On Special Teams and Goaltending:

“We’ve certainly spent a lot of time – we’ve had time to practice – we’ve spent a lot of time working on both areas. I think one of the nice things about knowing you’re in the tournament, just a matter of finding out where you’re going and who you’re playing against, is we were able to concentrate on what we needed to do to improve. We had no idea who we were going to play or where we were going to go, that was out of our control. So for five or six days, we were focused on what we need to do to get better. A big part of that was penalty kill and to continue to try to improve our power play. We’ve got a great challenge in front of us. Yale’s first or second in most categories in special teams either in their league or nationally. When you’ve got a kill that’s going at 90%, your power play is going to have to do some special things. We’ve just talked a lot about simplifying things, getting shots to the net and being there for second and third opportunities. They’re dangerous offensively on the kill, as well. You know, Brock Little’s got five shorthanded goals and [Sean] Backman’s a dangerous player on the kill, as well. Can’t take any time off playing good defense in any situation against Yale. Our penalty kill has been disappointing this year.

“I feel like it’s gotten better the second half, and I feel like a big part of that is Rob Madore. Goaltending is going to be a big factor in this national tournament. I think Rob’s had a tough stretch of games leading into the playoffs and then felt he wasn’t maybe at his best in the Lowell series. We’ve seen some great things from him in practice during the last week and a half and he’s certainly ready to go and I think he’ll be a big part of it for us.”

On Playing Yale So Close to Their Home in Bridgeport:

“Playing them anywhere would be a difficult challenge. I don’t really think [it makes a difference playing them in Bridgeport]. Obviously they’re going to have a lot of fans there, but so are we and I know Michigan travels well. I’m not certain about Air Force, but they may have great crowds and anywhere you play at this time of year, you’re to playing in front of a lot of people. To my knowledge, I don’t think Yale has played at [Bridgeport Arena at Harbor Yard], so for all four teams it’s a new experience – not like a home-ice advantage. With travel, obviously they’ve got a half-hour to go and we’ve got a bus ride, so I don’t really think there’s any real advantage or disadvantage to this weekend.

On Playing in Big Games:

“I think we’ve played in big games for the last month and a half. The Hockey East schedule towards the end was as intense of hockey as we’ve played all year just because of the quality of teams and the race at all positions that was going on all year – we had ten very good teams this year. We’ve been challenged in a number of different ways in big games. I think the experience of losing to Lowell might have knocked us down a little bit, but that might not be a bad thing. It put us back to realizing what we need to do to be successful and sometimes getting knocked down isn’t the worst thing in the world. That’s how we’re approaching it. It was a big wake up call and to have a second life is a great opportunity; I know our players want to make the most out of it now.

On Three Consecutive Losses:

“We went through a process, obviously with time on our side, rest was first and foremost. We gave the guys some time off, some time to think about what had happened and we all felt pretty lousy about it. If I felt lousy, I know how they felt. We went through a process of talking about all of the emotions and negatives of what happened during the playoff series and kind of got rid of that. A lot of the team had to dump it all out of them and then the next day, we started the process of rebuilding – really focusing on a second opportunity and how few times that happens in your life when you’re going after something you really want. So we saw an immediate relief – we felt mental bricks piling up on our shoulders and we were able to kind of knock those off and talk about a new season. The guys have done a tremendous job from last Wednesday until now, of working on the things we need to work on and they’ve been extremely focused on details and I’m very proud of the way that they’ve responded to our challenges as a coaching staff.

Glaring Difference of Last Four Games vs. Rest of Season:

“I think the UNH series was very uncharacteristic of our team – both offensively and defensively. We don’t typically put up 11 goals on a weekend and I thought we sacrificed – I think we did some good things offensively but took some unnecessary chances at the wrong times in the games. There were some glaring turnovers that were very uncharacteristic of our team, so I kind of chalk that up to a tough weekend and some poor decisions both offensively and defensively. And then we headed into the playoff series and I thought Lowell just played so well, it took us out of our game. Those were two hard-fought games – They score kind of on a bad-luck play, six-on-five, and then went into overtime the first night, and then the next night, it was a pretty tight game again. I think they just outplayed us, quite frankly, and deserved to go on. And we saw

how well they did down in Boston, so it wasn't like we lost those games to a weak club. They might have been the best team in Hockey East by the end there. They probably deserve to be playing this weekend. I think it was a combination of Rob not playing at his best, our defensemen having some bad swings in those games and our forwards probably not helping out with some bad turnovers.

"I don't think [fatigue was a factor in Madore's play]. He lost his confidence a little bit. I think he started to worry about making the second save before the first and got beat on some shots that I know he'd want back. Terry Lovelette, our goalie coach, has done a great job to reach out to him this week and he's had some phenomenal practices and we expect him to be back to the form he was at three weeks ago."

On HEA Sending Four Teams to NCAA Tournament:

"I think top to bottom, we did a better job in our non-conference games. In a big setting, we had some real big wins. As the math plays out, the better your league does against the other conferences, the better your strength of schedule. I think we had a down year last year – teams like ourselves, BU struggled at times and that's why we didn't get the nod despite playing well down the stretch, we didn't get the nod in the national tournament. I just think our league was much better this year, top to bottom and league games prepared our team well for the national tournament. You look at BU, being the best team in the country, and Northeastern – Greg Cronin's done a great job there – Dick Umile obviously in the same situation we're in, where we had some disappointments in the playoffs but are eager to get back it with a second chance. I like our teams, I like the fact that we've got four and I think it gives us a great shot at winning another National Championship."