

HOCKEY EAST COACHES MEDIA TELECONFERENCE (DEC. 1, 2009)

BOSTON UNIVERSITY HEAD COACH JACK PARKER QUOTES

General comments...

We have a saying at BU that “attitude is everything” and our attitude wasn’t too hot earlier on in the year because of, I think, a hangover of the NCAA championship and feeling sorry for ourselves because a lot of guys were injured. But of late, we’ve jacked up the attitude and the concentration and the competitiveness and we’ve played much, much better with obviously some better results as well.

On the team’s effort last week against ECAC teams Harvard and Cornell...

We played two outside-league games against Harvard and Cornell – obviously big rivals for us, one on the road and one at the neutral site of Madison Square Garden. Both games we ended up tying late in the game and winning the Harvard game in overtime and the Cornell game wound up in a 3-3 tie. In both games, we kind of dominated shot-chart-wise and possession-of-puck-wise. I think we attempted 87 shots against Cornell and outshot them 35-16, and there was a similar situation against Harvard. The Harvard goalie made 43 saves and we had 49 shots on net, so we have jacked up the offense a bit. It’s no small measure that we got (Chris) Connolly back and (Nick) Bonino back and (Alex) Chiasson back. That’s our first line right now and they’re playing very well. When you put those three guys back on the top of the line chart then our first line becomes our second line and the second line becomes the third line and there is a lot more depth involved. More importantly, we’ve played better defensively. I don’t think we’ve gotten great goaltending. Rollheiser had played well of late but I think Kieran Millan has had a bit of the NCAA hangover and some bad breaks as well. In general, we haven’t gotten the goaltending you need to win championships yet, but I think both of these guys are capable of giving us that. Rollheiser gave us a pretty good game the other night after a first period in which he was very jittery. It was the first time that he’s played on a stage like that, Kieran Millan has done it a number of times as a freshman last year but this was Rollie’s first time in front of 18,200 at Madison Square Garden which was a sold-out crowd and an unbelievably loud and enthusiastic crowd. He said he was a little jumpy in the first period, but he settled in pretty well and made some big saves later on, although he didn’t get much action. I think they got five shots in the second period, three shots in the third period and three saves in the third period. He made a couple of big saves in the overtime – the best chances they had were a couple of 2-on-1s in overtime and he made a couple of big saves. If those guys come around and we stay healthy, we could be pretty good as long as we keep going north the way we have been, as far as our attitude and our focus is concerned.

What one area would like to see improvement before the holiday break...

I think positional play. We’ve been getting ourselves caught out of position at times, lately because of too much enthusiasm, too much physical play and trying to do too much. Earlier in the year it was because we were lackadaisical and not focused but it still has been a bugaboo of ours where all of a sudden we’re giving up breakaways or we’re losing our man in the zone and he’s given a great opportunity. I think more than anything else, we still have to be physical, we still have to be emotional but we have to temper that with not letting our emotions take us out of our proper positions. That could just be getting to the right position, when we’re fore-checking you’ve got to be in the right position in order to go to the next player because sometimes we’re late getting there too. That has a lot to do with attitude and focus and we’re getting better at that and that’s something we’d like to see really improve over these last three games here.

On the team's captains this year...

We have three captains; (Kevin) Shattenkirk is a captain and we have two assistant captains in Eric Gryba and Nick Bonino. Shatty is more of a quiet leader, a good student and a real-solid student-athlete. He's a kid that everybody respects because he does the next right thing all the time. Kind of like John McCarthy was last year, not a rah-rah type of guy, not anything but a "watch how I play, watch how I practice, that's what we expect of you" guy. Gryba is more of a vocal captain, he's a really physical guy in practices and games and he gets guys stirred up in the dressing room. Nick Bonino, who has been out of the lineup, will be somewhere in between those two. He just got back in the lineup the last couple of games and is healthy again so it will be interesting to see how he emerges in his role as captain. I think those three guys together will give us real solid leadership. They have given us solid leadership now and will continue to do so, and I think they've stepped it up of late immensely. They've taken over the team and told the coaches "this is our team and we've got to make sure we get it done. You don't have to worry about it, so let us handle it." So far, so good, of recent vintage anyways.

On the upcoming home weekend with games against Vermont and Boston College...

I'm wondering how we'll react. We just came off an unbelievably emotional game in front of a huge crowd at Madison Square Garden and I think that's quite a feather in college hockey's hat and BU and Cornell's hats in particular, that we could draw 18,200 people for the second time down at Madison Square Garden where the night before Duke and Connecticut (basketball) only had about 15,000. The week before that, Syracuse and the defending national champions North Carolina (basketball) only had about 14,000. It was a unique situation for them and an unbelievable atmosphere. We will have a sold-out rink both nights here, but that's 6,300, not 18,000, so one-third of the crowd and certainly not the same type of atmosphere. It will be interesting to see how we react to that. Are we happy we had a nice night in the Big Apple? Or are we looking forward to getting back into Hockey East and getting ourselves straightened out there? We have a long way to go to get ourselves straightened out there with the way we buried ourselves in the league games so far. We better be ready for two teams that are: a) terrific college hockey teams and b.) teams that have really been tough for us to handle. They are both big rivals of ours and certainly give us their best game as well. Vermont is getting great goaltending, and they've played very well all year long as far as team defense is concerned. They're starting to create a bit more offensively and they are a team that plays us and matches up against us very well. The BC-BU game, what else can you say? It's the biggest game on the schedule, one of the most important regular-season games we play and it wouldn't matter if we only had four people there, it would be very emotional and very physical. That game is something that our guys always look forward to and BC players look forward to I'm sure.

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