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MEN'S PLAYOFF PICTURE

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PLAYOFF PAIRINGS SET FOR 26TH ANNUAL HOCKEY EAST TOURNAMENT ~Merrimack earns tournament berth for first time in six years~

WAKEFIELD, Mass. -- The Hockey East Association has announced the field for the upcoming 26th annual Hockey East Tournament, which begins on Friday, March 12 on the campus sites (best of three series) of the top four seeded teams. All series begin on Friday and are best of three series in the quarterfinal round of the playoffs. All quarterfinal games will begin at 7 p.m., except for the NESN game on Friday night, which begins at 7:30 p.m. The matchup on NESN will be announced at a later time.

No. 1 seed New Hampshire will face No. 8 seed Vermont at the Whittemore Center Arena in Durham. The Wildcats won the season series 2-0-1. It will mark the first all-time meeting between the teams in the Hockey East Tournament. UNH has been the top seed in the Hockey East Tournament in three of the last four years.

No. 2 seed Boston College will entertain No. 7 seed Massachusetts at Conte Forum. The Eagles earned a clean sweep against the Minutemen in the 2009-10 regular-season. The teams have met three times in the Hockey East tournament, including a BC sweep in the 2005 quarterfinals.

No. 3 seed Boston University will square off with No. 6 seed Merrimack College at Agganis Arena. BU earned a 2-1-0 victory in the season matchup. The Warriors last faced BU in the Hockey East Tournament in 1998, a 2-1 series win for Merrimack in the quarterfinal round. Merrimack earns their first tournament berth since the 2004 playoffs. The Terriers earned the third seed with a 4-2-0 record vs. Maine and UML, who all tied with 28 points. The Warriors earned sixth seed with a series win over UMass this season (2-1-0). The Terriers are the reigning Hockey East Tournament Champions after they defeated UMass-Lowell last year, 1-0, on March 21, 2009 at the TD Garden in Boston.

No. 4 Maine will host No. 5 UMass-Lowell at Alford Arena after the Black Bears were victorious in the season series, 2-1-0, which helped them earn the last home ice spot. The Black Bears last met the River Hawks in the tournament in the 2006 quarterfinal round, as Maine swept with a pair of 4-3 wins in Orono.

Hockey East Tournament games will be available for viewing by a worldwide audience and will be aired through www.hockeyeastonline.com as well as www.b2tv.com. Fans wanting to watch hockey games via B2 Networks will need a high-speed Internet connection and a current version of Microsoft Windows Media Player. Games will be sold on an individual basis for \$8 (US). The Hockey East Tournament men's pass for viewing all games broadcast by B2 will be made available for \$50 dollars. Fans can own a personal copy of each game by going to www.b2tv.com and downloading the event from B2onDemand for a price of just \$19.95 per game.

The winners of each quarterfinal series will advance to the TD Garden in Boston for the 26th annual Hockey East Championships on Friday, March 19 and Saturday, March 20. The semifinals will be played Friday at 5 and 8 p.m. and the title game will be played on Saturday night at 7 p.m. in Boston. All three games will be broadcast live on NESN.

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 six NCAA championships in the past 17 years. The conference also sponsors an eight-team women's league which began play in 2002-03.