

UNH Men's Hockey: Border Battle Anticipation

Brianna Williams, Sports Editor

DURHAM, N.H.- When someone thinks of men's college hockey rivalries many can come to mind: BU vs BC, Minnesota vs North Dakota, Harvard vs Cornell and the contention between the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Wildcats and the University of Maine (UMaine) Black Bears stands right up there with the best.

UNH and UMaine have been participating in the rivalry since 1979 and are just as fired up now as they were 45 years ago.

UMaine will visit Whittemore Center at Key Auto Group Complex on Feb. 16 and 17 for 7 p.m. games.

The Wildcats and Black Bears have already played twice this season, both games ended up favoring UMaine.

However, just like any Hockey East matchup these could be anyone's games, here is a comparison of the two teams.

Lead Goal Scorers

Right now, leading the Wildcats in goals is first-year forward Ryan Conmy (Alexandria, Va.). Conmy has scored 13 goals this season, his first being on Oct. 10, when the 'Cats lost to Quinnipiac. Conmy had his season high of two goals on Nov. 24 when UNH was visiting RIT and lost 2-5. During his rookie season, Conmy is currently in the running for one of the most prestigious college hockey accomplishments, the Hobey Baker Award. In addition to being first on the team in goals, he is second in assists with 13.

Like UNH, UMaine's leading scorer is also a first-year forward, Josh Nadeau (St-François-de-Madawaska, New Brunswick). Nadeau has been named National Player of the Month during the 2023-24 season. Nadeau was also put on the National Rookie of the Year watchlist. He scored a hat trick against UNH on Dec. 1, this was his highest scoring game. Nadeau and his brother Bradley led the team in assists with 22.

Goaltenders

Standing in net this season for the Wildcats has most consistently been junior Jakob Hellsten (Ljusdal, Sweden). Hellsten is first in Hockey East and second in the nation when it comes to goals against average with 1.69. He is also first in the conference and fifth in the nation in save percentage with .925. He has been put on the Mike Richter Award watchlist. He recorded his first collegiate shutout on Nov. 18 against Northeastern, where he had 21 saves. Hellsten is a transfer student from North Dakota. Along with Conmy, he is also in the running for the Hobey Baker Award.

Goaltending for the Black Bears has usually been senior Victor Ostman (Danderyd, Sweden). Ostman has had five shutouts in his career, they all happened in the 2022-23 season. He has a season high of 38 saves, this occurred on Dec. 3 against the University of Connecticut.

Captains

Leading the charge for UNH has been junior defenseman Alex Gagne (Bedford, N.H.). The New Hampshire native was promoted from alternative captain his sophomore season. Gagne is first on the team in shots blocked with 44 this season. Gagne has won various Hockey East awards throughout his career, most recently being Army ROTC Defender of the Week.



Hannah Smith

Courtesy of UNH Athletics.

The captains for UMaine are junior defenseman David Breazeale (Grandville, Michigan) and senior forward Lynden Breen (Grand Bay-Westfield, New Brunswick). Like Gagne, the two have a history of being the alternative captains in the past. Breen was named to Hockey East Second Team All-Stars last season.

The puck is set to drop and the players are lacing up their skates to take on one of UNH's most anticipated traditions. Will the 19th ranked Wildcats come out on top against the seventh seed Black Bears? Or will UMaine continue to climb the national ranks? Fans who can't make it to the game can watch tonight's on NESN and both on ESPN+.