Welcome Back to Durham Frozen Four

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DURHAM, N.H.-As if hockey wasn’t a fan favorite enough here in Durham and New Hampshire, 2024 marks the fourth time that the Women’s Frozen Four will be hosted at the Whittemore Center Arena (the Whitt). Home to the men’s and women’s hockey teams, and many historic events at the University of New Hampshire.

After finishing up their season and heading into conference tournament play in the Hockey East, UNH men’s hockey is currently ranked at number 17 in the country for division one men’s ice hockey.

The women’s hockey team finished third in the Hockey East with a 14-11-2 conference record, but overall a 18-16-2 record. New Hampshire women’s hockey ended their season on a 4-1 loss against 13 ranked Northeastern University in the semifinals of the Hockey East conference tournament.

The Whittemore Center Arena holds 6,501 fans which is plenty of room for the amazing games of hockey being played there. The arena itself was built for $30 million. It was first a full Olympic-sized ice rink, and later being lessened to NHL size during a 2022 renovation.

The Whitt opened in November of 1995 and has since created talent in and out of the hockey programs. This can be acknowledged in the lobby, as there are men's and women's All-American hockey players portrayed on the walls.

Away from being the home arena of the Wildcats, the Whittemore Center Arena has been able to host not only three NCAA Women’s Frozen Four, but now a fourth this year in March of 2024. The previous years hosted would include 2002, 2005 and 2016.

In the most recent Frozen Fours hosted at the Whittemore Center, Minnesota took on Boston College (BC) in the championship.

BC was undefeated going into the game, however Minnesota snapped their record by winning 3-1.

In the Final Four games leading up to the championship, teams included #1 seed Boston College facing off against Clarkson who came in at number five in the tournament. The other matchup was between two seed Wisconsin and number three Minnesota. Both games would end in an overtime 3-2 win.

The Frozen Four that took place in 2005 at the Whitt consisted of, yet again, Minnesota, Harvard, Dartmouth and St.Lawrence. Minnesota ranked in at the one seed in the tournament taking on the four Dartmouth College, which ended in a 7-2 victory for the Golden Gophers.

As the seventh seed St.Lawrence, had upset the second ranked Minnesota-Duluth in a 3-2 overtime win.

Then, three seed Harvard faced off against St.Lawrence.
Unlike the game against an opponent seeded higher than them, St. Lawrence took a significant loss against Harvard University in a 4-1 game, resulting in a Minnesota versus Harvard National Championship.

The championship game ended with yet another Minnesota victory giving them two titles won in the Whitt. Harvard was outscored, 4-3 against the Gophers when Natalie Darwitz, junior forward, put the finishing touches on the game with a minute left in regulation. This would crown Minnesota their second straight National Championship, previously having beaten Harvard in the 2004.

Darwitz scored off of a rebound in the final minute to give Darwitz and the Gophers the overall victory, but also, the record for NCAA points in the Frozen Four (nine). Her overall performance led to the Most Outstanding Player Award on top of that.

The first ever Frozen Four located at the Whittemore Center Arena ended in a 3-2 victory for Minnesota-Duluth over Brown University.

For the upcoming Frozen Four, some teams to keep an eye on include Ohio State, Wisconsin, Colgate, Clarkson and Minnesota who all take the top five spots in the tournament rankings.

Other teams who may also make a run for the National Championship, facing many challenges ahead, would include Minnesota-Duluth, Stonehill, Cornell, Penn State, Connecticut and St. Lawrence. It can be any of these teams' games to win, ultimately crowning one as the true champion.

Clever and fundamental hockey will give a team their edge to wins, but also to advance in the tournament.

Out of the 11 teams made, Wisconsin and Ohio State are the teams to watch closely as the NCAA Division 1 tourney unfolds soon enough.

These two were winners of the whole tournament within the last three years, where Wisconsin had won in 2021 and in 2023. Ohio State was able to grab one of their own, in 2022, when they beat Minnesota-Duluth.

Wisconsin, coming in at number two, is a team to watch for as the experience with recent play in the tournament. Plus overall coaching has allowed for the Badgers to succeed as much as they have.

The first ranked Ohio State looks to return to the championship game.

Minnesota and Clarkson are very highly ranked hockey teams, despite coming in at four and five in the tournament. They have a very high chance of reaching the final games as the season approaches its close. These two will match up in the quarterfinals, where a battle of a game will take place, only leading to the next exhibition against Ohio State if they win.

With everything mentioned, it's safe to say that the Whitt has had so many historic college hockey moments, only leading to more memories with the 2024 NCAA Women's Frozen Four happening soon.

The Frozen Four games will take place on March 22, 2024 in the Whittemore Center. Days later, the winner of the whole tournament will be announced the champion of division one women's hockey, on March 24th, allowing for the Whittemore Center to have hosted four championship games at that point in time.