UNH Men’s Hockey: Season Filled with Awards and Accomplishments
DURHAM, N.H.- The best record season in 11 years has come to an end for the University of New Hampshire (UNH) men’s hockey team (20-15-1).

The Wildcats took on the University of Maine (UMaine) Black Bears for the fourth and final time this season with a 5-0 loss.

Despite the loss the Wildcats have a lot to be proud of. Their season was filled with much success on and off the ice. Here is a look back at some of the major accomplishments UNH had.

In just the first game of the season UNH was making their mark. The Wildcats defeated the number one nationally ranked Boston University 6-4. This was the first time UNH beat them since 2013. UNH had not beaten a number one seed since April 10, 2003 when they won a Final Four matchup against Cornell.

Throughout the season UNH was in the national rankings for 20 consecutive weeks. Their highest ranking was 10th place. The Wildcats had not been in the top 10 since 2017.

Before the last UMaine game, junior goalie Jakob Hellsten and UNH had three consecutive shutouts, all against UMass Lowell. Those games and some of the UMaine matchup would result in 213 minutes and 30 seconds without a goal allowed. This would become the school record which was previously 204 minutes and 4 seconds, established in 2012-13.

During the season Hellsten was ranked as high as second in the country in goal against average with 1.69 and fifth in save percentage when he was at .925.

Hellsten was put on the Mike Richter Award Watch List, this award goes to the top goaltender in men's hockey.

Hellsten, along with freshman forward Ryan Connolly, was nominated for the Hobey Baker Award. This award is one of the most prestigious awards in men's college ice hockey and is given to the top player.

Connolly had a total of 31 points which consisted of 14 goals and 17 assists. This was the most points by a first-year Wildcat since Patrick Grasso seven seasons ago when he had 33 points. His assists were the most by a freshman since the 2007-08 season when current Boston Bruins player James van Riemsdyke had 23 and Danny Dries had 17.

Junior forward Liam Devlin scored a hat trick to defeat UMass Lowell on Feb. 16. The last time a Wildcat did that was on March 9, 2022 by Tyler Ward.

Junior defenseman and captain Alex Gagne was runner-up for Hockey East Best Defensive Defenseman Award. He was also named to Hockey East Third Team All-Star.

One of the most recent and impressive statistics was that the 20 wins the team had was the first time it happened in 10 years.

Last but not least the head of the team, coach Mike Souza, was in consideration for an award of his own. Souza, along with head coaches: Ben Barr (Maine), Greg Brown (Boston College), and Jay Pandolfo (Boston University) were finalists for Hockey East Coach of the Year. The award ultimately went to Brown. Souza just signed a three year contract extension with UNH.

While through the years there have been debates on whether or not UNH hockey is what it used to be, this season clearly showed the program is looking up. If most players decide to stay instead of transfer there is no telling what the team could do.