

# NCAA Men's Frozen Four Semifinal: Massachusetts vs Minnesota Duluth

Friday, April 9, 2021

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

## Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs Coach Scott Sandelin

Postgame Media Conference

Massachusetts - 3, Minnesota Duluth - 2 (OT)

MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Sandelin. Coach, some thoughts as we get started.

COACH SANDELIN: Tough, obviously, to see those guys that spoke ahead of me, to see the emotion.

Anytime you lose, at this point you know this group has won a lot. But I also want to credit Greg and his team. I mean, obviously going through what they've gone through, they've had a great year.

They've got -- like Nick said, they got better as the game went on and certainly got the play at the end. But couldn't be more proud of our team.

To get back here, it's not an easy thing to do. And to be able to do it four years in a row, basically it still leaves a bitter taste losing the game. But certainly proud of our group.

MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. You mentioned an emotional group after this one. It's been a while here now since you've had to address the team after a season-ending loss at this point in the year. What did you say to the guys tonight after that OT battle?**

COACH SANDELIN: There's not a lot I'm going to say to make them feel better, but I wanted to make sure they should be really proud of getting the opportunity to get back here and everybody's gone through a tough year. Everybody's gone through a tough year. So, I'm not going to talk about that. I'm just going to talk about this group.

And obviously I'm not sure going into the year a lot of



people gave us a chance to get back to have a chance to win another championship. This group kind of fought some of those odds and grew together during the year.

And, yeah, we didn't even at the end of the year where we lost some games but we found a way to regroup and win a big game. And they were looking forward to hopefully advancing to Saturday's game, but I just told them to be proud of the accomplishment. It's such a difficult thing to do.

And a lot of those guys, Matt, I mean, they don't know this feeling. And sometimes the highs are unbelievable and the lows are really low. But you can learn from everything. So hopefully we learn from this and use it as motivation to get back here next year.

**Q. In the third period, late in the third period, in overtime, UMass seemed to pour everything at you. From your perspective, was there anything with your players that you saw that fed into that? And Greg Carvel said he thought it may have been that you guys may have ran out of gas playing three forwards for long stretches of the game. Do you think that was the case with you?**

COACH SANDELIN: I'm sure -- I think the difference was we couldn't get out of our zone. When you play defense, you run out of gas quick.

They did a good job. We knew what they liked to do and how they play as far as pressure and keeping pucks alive, playing, we call it, the ground game, getting pucks down low, working.

Their D did a good job shrinking the zone, keeping active, keeping pucks alive as part of their offense. We made a lot of soft plays.

We couldn't get pucks out. Some of it was just decisions. We needed to make better decisions, harder plays. When the puck is in your zone it's difficult. It's difficult. And something that -- that's what we try to do, too, as far as that type of game, where overtime, you just wear teams down. I think that's probably the biggest thing, they kept getting

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pucks in deep, going to work, keeping pucks alive. And we were defending. We blocked a lot of shots but nobody likes to depend. It's tiring.

They made us defend, and, conversely, we didn't have a lot of energy going the other way.

**Q. Is it harder to adjust -- they were better in the third period in the overtime than they had been in the first two periods. Is that tougher to adjust to when your guys had gotten used to them playing at a certain level and all of a sudden it got they were playing looked like harder and faster at that point. Is that a tough thing to adjust on the fly for you guys?**

COACH SANDELIN: No, I mean, I think it's part of these games. I mean, there's ups and downs in every game. And obviously I thought them getting their second goal gave them a lot of life. And I thought they really played well from there on out and obviously carried the play in the overtime.

But, again, when you're playing in your own end, it's -- something's going to happen. And it did. And they made a play at the end and had some other opportunities -- not to say we had a couple of opportunities in overtime.

I thought our guys had those opportunities, but there wasn't a lot of them. And certainly offensively there was a lot of one-and-dones for us. We didn't make them defend very much in the third period of the overtime. And, like I said, that is probably what wore us out.

**Q. In addition that you're obviously focused on your own game, but you were a hockey dad today. Did you get to watch your son's game, any of it. Did you get to talk to him before or after?**

COACH SANDELIN: I saw some of it before we left. Obviously was able to watch a little bit when we were here. But I didn't -- the standard "good luck" before the game and I did see him after. Not a good day for the Sandelins. But real proud of him and their team. And it was a great opportunity for their program too. And nice to see he was a part of that.

**Q. What did you like about Zach's performance, especially as a freshman knowing you'll be able to hang on to him longer?**

COACH SANDELIN: He's gotten better and better as the year went on. I thought he was great tonight at a chance when they were putting the heat on. And, like I said, we blocked a lot of shots. They didn't have a ton of shots through most of the game. But most of their shots came in

the third period and obviously the overtime.

But he was good for us. All you can do is ask your goalie to give you a chance. He did that. No different against North Dakota; he gave us a chance before he went out. The future is bright for him. We're excited about where he's going, what we've seen. I thought he played well.

**Q. What did you think of those first two periods and did you like the direction your team was taking the game in at that time?**

COACH SANDELIN: I thought we were okay. It was good to come out of it with a lead. And I thought there were moments where we were good.

Quite frankly, I didn't think there was a lot going on either way.

And it certainly wasn't the plan to sit back with a 2-to-1 lead. We're a team that likes to get after people and play on our toes and go forward.

I thought I felt comfortable where we were at. We talked about having -- doing some things smartly and harder in the third period. And I thought that goal they got really gave them a lift. They were playing hard. And when you're down, they're going to play with a little more of that urgency. And they did that.

They got the goal and kind of carried the play the rest of the way. It wasn't like we were sitting on our heels. I just think they played well and made, like I keep saying, they made us defend. They made us defend. When you defend a long time, you get tired.

MODERATOR: Congratulations on a great year.

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