

# NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Minnesota State vs. Minnesota

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

TD Garden

## Minnesota State Mavericks Coach Mike Hastings

### Semifinal Media Conference



We just have to do it a little different way. We do it, this is well chronicled, we recruit a little bit older player. We're still trying to mix in some of the talent that is out there. But at the end of the day, we come in with a little bit heavier roster as far as the experience is concerned.

And for us, it's something that I think we hold and try and develop our players that come in maybe at a little bit older start. But we also know that some of those players, if they continue to develop, are going to leave the program earlier than maybe their four years.

And so we're going to rely upon what we've relied upon all season long, which is a leadership group that has been around the block. They've been here. We've got two super seniors in Jack McNeely and Reggie Lutz and a group of seniors -- which we've talked about with Dryden McKay and NHL draft pick in Nathan Smith. And we're going to let them do what they've done, which is lead us on the ice, off the ice and everywhere in between.

We're going to stick with what's got us here and try to utilize our depth throughout the game on Thursday and try and move on to a national championship game.

**Q. The off day in the regionals was a new thing this year. Wondering how your team spent that day and what did you think of having that extra 24 hours?**

COACH HASTINGS: I liked it, not just because we moved on, but we've seen how sometimes the regionals before can get extended, especially if there's overtime games. Ours was a little unique because we played a noon game. And I don't know about Harvard, but I know we hadn't done that before. So, we had a little bit of extra time after the game to recover. Guys got a good night sleep. We were able to have a really good practice on that off day. I thought that prepared us mentally and physically for the game on Saturday.

**Q. You looked, for years and years you had two Minnesota teams in DI. Now you have half a dozen. How has that changed the balance of power? You had three Minnesota schools in the Frozen Four last year. Now you've got a whole lot of people that seem to be**

MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Hastings.

COACH HASTINGS: First of all, I'd like to congratulate Michigan, Denver and Minnesota to getting to the Frozen Four. And going back to the two games that we had, as you saw, the competition to get to Boston was something special, I think, through all regions.

And for us, I thought we got off to a really good start against Harvard. And then you knew with the roster that they have and the coaching staff that they have that they would make a push. They did. We were able to hold on and win a very tight game and then move on and play a very quality, well-coached Notre Dame team.

And found a way to get the first one and made that stand-up. Dryden McKay did what he does in regional finals for us over the last two years to give us the opportunity to get to a Frozen Four in back-to-back seasons.

We're looking forward to the opportunity in Boston and what's in front of us.

**Q. How does a school like Minnesota State compete against schools that naturally have an advantage in attracting the draft picks and the top talent? And also what are the advantages of having a roster like yours that typically has a lot of experience to it?**

COACH HASTINGS: Well, first of all, I think one thing that's great about college hockey and our sport is you can find a way to be successful many different ways. You'll see over time a number one team be beat by somebody that might be 30 or below in the PairWise. I think the parity in college hockey from top to bottom shows every single season. And this season has been no different.

**very competitive.**

COACH HASTINGS: The recruiting landscape is changing it seems daily but, for us and our footprint -- I was fortunate to play for a guy named Herb Brooks. His team was to have as many Division I opportunities for players within our border. And when he started St. Cloud State and continued to push the idea of having as many Minnesota opportunities for home-grown talent, and now you've got that.

And so I just think right now, with recruiting, with the transfer portal, with the teams we have in our state, with the teams that are out there that are recruiting within our state, we've just got to continue to look at our backyard first, but also understand that we've got to look not only around the United States and Canada, but globally to try and recruit student-athletes that can help us become successful.

**Q. What do you take from last year's experience that you feel will be helpful this year?**

COACH HASTINGS: I can already tell you, from my standpoint and meeting with our leadership group, there's a little bit different vibe, just because they have had an experience of being at a Frozen Four. And it was a little different in Pittsburgh because we were doing that in COVID. And the stresses that were on the student-athletes were daily. And can we just get to puck drop?

Knock on wood, this is something that we don't have to deal with between now and when the puck drops and we can focus on preparation and just have an opportunity to enjoy it a little bit more, just from the standpoint of what's going on around it -- friends, family, people from our community coming out and supporting us, alumni. I just think there's a little bit different vibe that way.

But I can tell you our guys are focused on trying to get through that game on Thursday. It's not something where they're as bright eyed as maybe they were a year ago. And I think experience can teach you something that is hard to get. So we're hoping to lean on that experience throughout this tournament.

**Q. Can you tell us how you built your coaching experience to get you to where you are right now?**

COACH HASTINGS: I'm just fortunate to be around a lot of really good hockey people. Mike Guentzel gave me my first opportunity in Omaha, in the USHL after Craig Dahl allowed a player that was done playing the game to keep his scholarship at St. Cloud State and start in the coaching

world. And I've worked with some incredible people, some of the all-time greats. Like I said, playing for Herb at that time. Bobby Motzko was on the staff at St. Cloud State -- working with Don Lucia and working with Dean Blais.

It's one that I'm incredibly proud of and blessed to be able to learn from people like that. And right now to be surrounded by two fantastic individuals in Todd Knott and Paul Kirtland on my own staff.

I think it's great to see a guy from Northern Minnesota, having an all-Northern Minnesota staff for nine years, and now take a change with Paul and he's made us better. And it's been a great journey and one that I'm very fortunate to be part of and have the people that I have in my life as far as experiences and going to try to continue to move on.

**Q. You talk about your roots in Northern Minnesota. Mankato hosted hockey day this year. You're in the Frozen Four. You've got a coach from Austin who is taking a team to the Frozen Four. And you've got a coach from Rochester who took a team to the regional final -- the old joke about there's not much hockey south of Bloomington doesn't seem hold much. What's the excitement in your region right now?**

COACH HASTINGS: It's changed. I appreciate you asking. I thought the local organizing committee here for Hockey Day in Minnesota knocked it out of the park. And to have roughly 10,000 people at a 6,500-seat football stadium come in and enjoy and see what it is to now understand that hockey in Southern Minnesota throughout our borders now, not just the Iron Range, but down here in Mankato, the saying was, "this is how we hockey." And there's just a lot of quality people and a lot of quality hockey people within this state. We're proud to be a part of it. And I think it just continues to grow the game, which we're all about.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, maybe you could reflect on the first year of a new conference, the CCHA.

COACH HASTINGS: One thing I think that's special there is I don't think any organization or team goes without great leadership. And Don Lucia has done a fabulous job of coming in and having an experience of being in the seat that every one of us coaches have been in, whether it's at the Big Ten school, whether it was at Fairbanks, whether it was at Colorado College.

And his guidance has helped us grow in a hurry. And what the CCHA stands for right now is seeing Michigan Tech get to the NCAA Tournament and battle the way they did against Duluth, and to go through the battle that we went

through with Bemidji State, which a lot of people talked about as far as winning that championship and being part of it. We're proud to be part of the CCHA. And I think it's in great hands moving forward and we're excited about not only where we're at but where we're going to end up.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

