

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Michigan vs Denver

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TD Garden

Denver Pioneers

Coach David Carle

Semifinal Media Conference



Q. Michigan's fourth line has been pretty locked down against other teams' top scorers. How does your team's depth give you an advantage heading into the Frozen Four?

COACH CARLE: I think both teams have a lot of weapons. Obviously them with seven first-rounders. You heard Mel talk about their guys, they know how to score. And we have similar players that have had offensive success this year. So I think it's going to be a really exciting matchup for the fans and for college hockey. There's a lot of talent and creativity and hockey on the ice come Thursday next week.

Q. With a guy like Bobby Brink how have you seen his game evolve this season and his times leading up to this season?

COACH CARLE: Bob's been an elite-level hockey player for most of his life. Won a state championship at Minnetonka High School. Fast track that, he came into the USHL, was supposed to play there for two years. Won USHL forward of the year. Accelerated his schooling, came to us a year early. I think sometimes people forget that about Bob, is that he came -- his freshman year he should have been a senior in high school.

And I think what we've seen in his three years is just a natural maturation of his body and how he conducts himself and carries himself. And it's kind of all coming together for him here in his junior year where he can protect more pucks, he can create more separation.

His body can do things, or allow him to do things at this level that his brain and his skill set have wanted to do, and that's not to say he didn't have a very productive and solid freshman year. The sophomore year was very disjointed due to COVID and World Juniors. But I think now in his junior year it's all coming together for him. And there's no doubt he's an elite-level player at the level and one of our best players.

Q. David, if I did the math correctly, you were 14 in the spring of 2004 when your brother was a freshman at

MODERATOR: We're joined by David Carle.

COACH CARLE: Two really good hockey games. Great teams and great programs in Lowell and Duluth obviously. And proud of our team. The efforts in either game were not easy -- both tied going into the third period. We stuck with our game plan and found a way to execute and to get two hard-fought, one-goal games.

Proud of the group, excited to be heading to Boston with obviously a very high-end group of four teams duking it out in the Frozen Four.

Q. Last season was problematic for a lot of teams. It was a down year for DU. What has been the difference this year?

COACH CARLE: I think a huge part of it was just emerging from the COVID world. We were under very tight restrictions. And it was a challenging environment to be able to build a team environment.

And obviously playing just in our league is not an easy thing to do either. We played I think 23, 24 games, seven of which were against North Dakota, who had a great team last year. And we did not get accomplished, though, at the end of the day what we wanted to.

And I give our guys credit. We quickly turned the page from that year into the spring quarter last year in the summer session. Got a lot of people back here in Denver, training, skating. Our incoming class was able to come out here and operate in a normal summer. And we had a full training camp with our team.

I think when you're able to build a foundation, you have a lot stronger house. And I think that's been the biggest difference for us we've actually been able to build that foundation this year and it's led to the successes that this team's been able to have.



Denver and went to Boston and won a national championship there. I'm just wondering what you remember from that and what this means to you to kind of come full circle, bringing a team back to Boston to compete for that same title.

COACH CARLE: Yeah, I mean, that championship was a lot for our program and our university. Obviously George and his staff had been building the program in a real good way and it had some runs.

And in '03, '04, what I remember about it is the team really did struggle for the first half of the year. They didn't have a home regulation conference until February of that year. And then they just went on a run after -- they tied North Dakota, out in North Dakota late in January. They kind of went on a run after that.

And then they got put in the springs in the regional there and shut out North Dakota, Adam Berkhoel played great. That North Dakota team was loaded with NHL players. And I remember as a 13-, 14-year-old that I was very disappointed because my parents did not bring me to Boston to watch the game.

So I was watching at home with family and friends. And just like all of it, the comeback against Duluth in the third period was very exciting. And then who can forget the 6-on-3 and the 1-0 win, the disallowed goal to give, the Gabe Gauthier five-hole goal and then capping it with the 6-on-3 against Maine.

A lot of drama and one of the more chaotic moments in probably our school's history. But an unbelievable year. And I think a championship that put Denver back on the map in the modern college hockey landscape.

Q. Has freshman Jack Devine been a surprise at all this year? And what has he been able to contribute in the lineup?

COACH CARLE: Surprise in what way?

Q. Surprising in just what he's been able to bring to the team as a freshman, as first-year player?

COACH CARLE: No, I don't think so. I mean, we had real good conversation with him and his family coming in. He's a player who accelerated to come to us, again, a year early out of the National Team Development Program. And we love Jack's hockey sense and skill level.

And we thought that this would be a great team for him to grow with, and he's really improved throughout the year to where now he's a contributor. But he's not maybe one of

the guys that has a spotlight on him, but certainly he's ready to take the reins of that come his sophomore and junior years here.

It's been a great year of development for him. He's a player that wants to learn and get better. And we've been really happy with him. And not surprised, I should say. It's kind of gone exactly how we thought it would with him.

Q. You said last weekend that Lowell and Duluth were kind of similar when you prepare, Michigan a different animal. Does it take a lot of changes in your preparation to get ready for next Thursday?

COACH CARLE: Yeah, Michigan, they're dynamic. You don't have to look very far to find really good hockey players in their lineup. So, yeah, very different style and teams than what we played last weekend. And that will be our job as coaches, our leadership group, and our players to get prepared for what will be a different game stylistically.

But Michigan is loaded. Obviously everyone's known that for the past eight to 12 months and it will be a great challenge to try and slow them down.

Q. Shai, where has he seen the biggest growth in his development this season and where does that maybe align or not align with what your expectations were for him coming in as a freshman?

COACH CARLE: Shai's one of our young players who has played a lot and done well with it. I think by this time of the year he's no longer a freshman. I think his defensive play has been what we've been pushing on him the most -- taking away time and space, trying to get in people's way and getting physical in corners and around his net and using his body and his size to help the team in that regard.

And he's working on that and he's continuing to get better at it. And there's a reason that he's able to play for us at a high level like he has been. And so we're real proud of the growth he's had and the growth ahead.

Q. Could you talk about the atmosphere in Loveland and just about the state of hockey in Colorado?

COACH CARLE: It was great for us, going back to '04, it's the first time since '04 that we've played NCAA Tournament hockey in the state of Colorado. It was great to have our fan base there. Really appreciate the support and all the people driving up to Loveland.

Obviously a tied-in connection with Ralph Backstrom and his involvement in getting the Colorado Eagles started, and

someone we're honoring, due to his passing last year, on our jerseys, this year with his initials. So I think it meant the world to our fan base and the Loveland community and people that played for Ralph in our program to be able to have the regional in Loveland.

There's a lot of symmetry there and obviously all the better that we were able to win two really good hockey games against two great programs and move on to Boston to the Frozen Four.

Q. Obviously every goaltender in this division is skilled, what makes Magnus Chrona special. What makes him stand out?

COACH CARLE: Like you said, there's four really good goaltenders. You don't get to this point without good goaltending. I think our guy has really elevated his game in the last four to five weeks, once the calendar turned into playoff hockey.

And he's fighting for sight line, just tracking pucks well. Obviously he's a big body. He's not the only one in the region -- we're going to face one on Thursday who is another big-bodied Swede. But I like his focus right now and his attention to detail is as good as it's been all season. We're really happy with his play currently.

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