

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Denver vs Michigan

Friday, April 10, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

T-Mobile Arena

Michigan Wolverines

Brandon Naurato

Josh Eernisse

TJ Hughes

Semifinal Postgame Media Conference

Denver 4, Michigan 3, 2OT

THE MODERATOR: We will start with some thoughts from Coach then take questions for the players.

BRANDON NAURATO: I thought the city of Las Vegas, the NCAA, they did an unbelievable job with this event. The first game, our game, unbelievable atmosphere. Will help with the growth of college hockey.

So proud of this group. It's a special group. It's hard to have it be over. I don't know if it's hit me yet because what these seniors have done for this program, it's really special. You can tell a little bit from the outside, but if you're in that room, all the conversations we're having, these guys have changed the program. I'm really proud of them for that. I'm proud to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. TJ, to have played for this program for four years, what has it meant to you to play for Michigan?

TJ HUGHES: There's really no words. It means everything. I tried my best to leave it better than I found it. There's so many unbelievable people within Michigan hockey that have impacted my life in a positive way. I'll forever be blessed, forever be grateful to call Coach Nau my coach and the rest of the staff my coach.

The boys from team 101 to team 104, all guys are my teammates and brothers, every single guy has left a positive impact on me. I'll forever be grateful to be a Michigan Wolverine.

Q. TJ and Josh, Coach Carle was up here saying this



Michigan program looks different than when you last faced each other. Over your seasons, in what ways do you feel this program is different now than it was when you arrived?

TJ HUGHES: Yeah, I mean, I wasn't a part of the team when they played Denver last. I just think so many great people, guys who go to work every single day, want to get better, want to push each other.

Like Coach always talks about, it starts with the people. It's so true. We have so many great human beings on our team that want to push each other each day and want to be the best versions of themselves. That's what gave us the success we had this year.

Guys wanting to push each other in such great ways, we had such a great run. Just came up short.

JOSH EERNISSE: Yeah, to piggyback off that, I just think the people are important. The staff have done a really good job of just recruiting guys that want to be here. Guys have bought into our culture, our identity. I think that's continued to grow over the years. You can go up and down the lineup and talk positive about each guy and what they bring to the program.

I think something that was really special about this group this year was how close we got and how quickly we came together from the start of the year. Guys understood their roles, what their strengths were, what they could bring to this team. Guys played to that. I think that's what made this group really special, is each guy played their identity and brought what they could bring to the team every single night. That's what gave us a chance. That's why we ended up where we are today.

I don't know. I just love this group. It's a really special group. It's just hard to have it end like this.

Q. Josh, watching you guys, it's disappointing right now. Is there a sense of pride that you did leave it all out there?

JOSH EERNISSE: Yeah, I think so. I'm proud of the guys.



Like, we fought, we pushed, we pushed. I think we had our chances. They're a good team. They got their bounce, they buried their chance.

I would say every guy left it out there. Every guy did everything they could. We were hard. We laid pucks in, changed sides, got to the net, created our opportunities. I don't know, tip your hats to them. They're a good team and they found a way to win at the end of the day.

Q. What can you say about Jack Ivankovic's performance tonight?

TJ HUGHES: Kovie has been our rock all year, such a great goalie. So smart, so poised. Heartbeat of our team. Gave us a chance every night. He played unbelievable tonight, made so many big saves, kept us in it. They got a bounce at the end, found its way. Good on them.

Yeah, Kovie, nothing but great things to say about that guy. Such an unbelievable person. Unbelievable goalie, oh my gosh. He's going to have a hell of a career in hockey.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, we'll let you go. Thank you very much.

We'll continue with questions for Coach.

Q. What are you going to remember about the contributions your seniors made this year to your team?

BRANDON NAURATO: I know we all keep saying the same thing. It's just the type of people they are. How they treat people, how they push people. All of them, like, their daily habits away from the rink and at the rink have been infectious to the 15 new players and 12 freshmen.

Q. What do you want your young players to take from this experience, how this game went, the guys who will be back next year?

BRANDON NAURATO: It's such a good program over there. They played a great game tonight.

What am I going to take from it? What are they going to take from it? We out-shot them 43 to 16 in the last four periods. I thought we were outstanding. We fought the whole time. In hockey and in life, sometimes you do it the right way and you just don't get the bounces. I think that's real adversity. Then you just keep getting back up. It's how you respond.

How they respond this summer and going into next year. I know it's a lot of pain right now, but I couldn't be more

proud. It didn't feel like this in some of the past losses. I felt like we deserved it. Like I said, it doesn't always happen in life, so...

We'll be better for it.

Q. What did you learn about Jayden Perron this year?

BRANDON NAURATO: He's a student of the game. He is a hockey nerd. I could go into so many different areas of a how big of a stud he is from an on-ice standpoint.

I think he learned how to be a hockey player this year. He over-doubled his production in one year than he had previous two. Hard skill is how I'd describe him. He can fly. He can stick handle. He can manipulate feet on defenders. He was getting inside areas, three or four big-time tracks tonight. He's a winning hockey player. Really learned to be a winning hockey player this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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